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Struggles over Cultural Identity in Contemporary Scottish Fiction

von

Jürgen Neubauer

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Marburg, July 1999

Literature as Intervention

Das Leben aller Menschen ist von Tagträumen durchzogen, darin ist ein Teil lediglich schale, auch entnervende Flucht, auch Beute für Betrüger, aber ein anderer Teil reizt auf, läßt mit dem schlecht Vorhandenen sich nicht abfinden, läßt eben nicht entsagen. Dieser andere Teil hat das Hoffen im Kern, und er ist lehrbar.

E. BLOCH, *DAS PRINZIP HOFFNUNG.*

Ten pounds for a piece of cheese that has travelled the world by three different forms of transport, signed all the relevant forms, hung about in at least two warehouses and remains absolutely unchanged by its experiences. It is a narrow-minded cheese.

C. MCWILLIAM, *DEBATABLE LAND.*

The fact that this book has, in a sense, crossed the Atlantic twice, to arrive back almost in the same spot that it started out from, greatly appeals to me.

F. KUPPNER, *A VERY QUIET STREET.*

Contents

Introduction	9
1. Literature and the Struggle for Cultural Identity	21
1.1 Imagine Living There	21
1.2 Culture, Nation, Identity: The Scottish Debate	28
1.3 Novel Identities	42
1.3.1 Imagining the Nation	43
1.3.2 Imagining Communities of Difference	49
1.4 Summary	62
2. ‘Putting a Brick Through Somebody’s Window’: Writing as Intervention	65
2.1 Commitment in Times of Difference	65
2.2 The Politics of Scottish Landscapes	73
2.3 Territoriality and Deterritorialisation	84
2.4 Remembering and Forgetting	100
2.4.1 Alternative Histories	101
2.4.2 Histories of Difference	108
2.5 People Like That	119
2.5.1 Postcolonial Hybridity	122
2.5.2 Re-Constructing Gender	126
2.5.3 Working-Class Struggles	134
2.6 Representations of the Mother Tongue	143
2.6.1 Language and Class	148
2.6.2 Language and Realism	151
2.7 Summary	158
3. (Not) Educating a Nation: Reading as Intervention	161
3.1 Education and Meaning	161
3.2 Representations of Pedagogy: Democratic Intellectualism	163
3.2.1 Egalitarianism and Difference	166
3.2.2 Curriculum and Intellectualism: Power and Knowledge	176
3.3 Pedagogies of Representation	190
3.3.1 Canonisation and Meaning	192
3.3.2 Imagining Communities of Difference	197
3.4 Pedagogical Interventions in Scottish Fiction	203
Conclusion: Over the Border and into the Open	219
Bibliography	223

Introduction

During the last two decades, Scottish authors may have produced more fiction of note than in the previous two centuries, and they may have produced some of the most important fiction in the United Kingdom. In 1981, Anthony Burgess greeted Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* as the greatest Scottish novel since Sir Walter Scott. Since then, a veritable avalanche of writers has poured over the Hadrian's Wall into the British and international markets. Over the last three years, Edinburgh writer Irvine Welsh may have become the most renowned British writer internationally: after the surprise success of the movie version of his novel *Trainspotting* (1993), he has won a huge cult following from the UK to the US and Australia. Sponsored by his American publisher Norton and accompanied by James Kelman and Duncan McLean, he toured the US in 1997 to give readings from his most recent novels and stories. Kelman himself, who started writing in the early 1980s, gained notoriety in Britain when his novel *A Disaffection* (1989) was nominated for the Booker Prize, and even more so when he won the Booker in 1994 with *How Late It Was, How Late*. Duncan McLean won a national award for his short story collection *Bucket of Tongues* (1992), and so did Candia McWilliam's *Debatable Land* (1994). A.L. Kennedy's *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* (1990) and Janice Galloway's *Foreign Parts* (1994) also won national and international awards. Though he does not win prizes, Iain Banks writes popular 'postmodern' fiction and is – as Iain M. Banks – one of the best known British Science Fiction writers both at home and abroad. These 'hot items' are joined by a number of authors who are less widely read outside Scotland, among them writers as different as Agnes Owens, Jeff Torrington or the poet-novelists Frank Kuppner and William McIlvanney. Scottish fiction has become a popular event within the British literary scene and seems to address readers far beyond Scotland with a directness rarely achieved by other British authors of the last two decades.

In Scotland, many critics link this success story with the Scottish struggle for national independence. The beginnings of this literary phenomenon coincide roughly with the defeat of the Devolution Bill in 1979, which was supposed to give Scotland its own parliament and a more independent role within the United Kingdom. While the decade after this historic failure was marked by political apathy, fiction began to flourish, 'as though,' Cairns Craig writes, 'the energy that had failed to be harnessed by the politicians flowed into other channels' (Donnachie et al., *Forward!*, v). During the highly unpopular government of Margaret Thatcher, when less than a quarter of the Scottish electorate

was actually represented in Westminster,¹ so the argument goes, politics became cultural: writers were the avant-garde for the shift from Unionism towards an independent Scotland, which culminated in the success of the new referendum after the election of Tony Blair in 1997. For other critics, the 1980s and 90s merely illustrate the predicament of Scottish politics in general: in his introduction to *The Poetry of Scotland*, Roderick Watson writes that ‘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’ (Watson, ‘Maps of Desire’ 285). Like Watson, many critics have argued that when the Scots gave up their political sovereignty with the Union between Scotland and England in 1707, literary texts preserved national identity.

On the surface, there seems to be a much greater concern with things Scottish now than at any other time since the Scottish Renaissance during the second quarter of this century. Unlike many of the prominent Scottish writers of the 1950s, 60s and 70s, who, like Muriel Spark, tended to make little of their Scottish background, most of the ‘new’ authors explore life in contemporary Scotland. Scottish themes and language forms predominate, which may raise the question whether these authors attempt to ‘map’ a state of mind, and to come to terms with what it means to be Scottish. The largely realist texts of Kelman, Welsh and McLean are set in Glasgow, Edinburgh, or rural Aberdeenshire, and they examine these cityscapes and countrysides with unprecedented frankness. Yet, even some of the more surreal or fantastic novels by Banks, Gray and Kennedy have recognisably Scottish backdrops: Gray’s *Lanark* and Banks’s *The Bridge* (1986), for instance, alternate between ‘realist’ narratives of adolescence in Scottish settings (or, especially in *The Bridge*, a Scottish refraction of international popular culture) on the one hand and fantastic dystopian nightmares on the other. The use of Scots demotic, especially in realist fiction, has also become far more widespread than it has ever been. There is of course precedent for this, for instance in McDiarmid’s development of Lallans as a literary form of Scots. In earlier decades the use of Scots and Scottish subjects was often regarded as a sign of parochialism. In the current cultural climate, however, this no longer seems to deter larger audiences and in some cases even seems to be regarded as an asset by publishers and readers alike.

However, in spite of the new visibility of Scottish themes and language forms, I question whether authors like Galloway, Kelman, Welsh, or any of the other writers really ‘map’ a new national community. Above and beyond the realist representation of life in

¹For Scottish election results from 1945 to 1992 see David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland* 148-9, and Andrew Marr, *The Battle for Scotland* 175.

Scotland, these texts address a number of themes that are relevant far beyond the issues of national independence. Besides using a Scottish backdrop for their novels, they also explore questions that are of particular pertinence in a postmodern culture. The novels of Banks, McLean and Welsh are set in contemporary youth cultures in the age of global entertainment industries, drug trafficking and AIDS, which have affected much of the Western hemisphere. Their characters not only speak with a Scottish accent, but with a Hollywood accent, as well. The texts of Galloway or Owens further ask what it means to be a woman in these conditions, while Kelman and McIlvanney explore the situation of the lower classes in a climate of neoliberalism and a largely deregulated global economy. These authors not only present a much more complex picture of identity at the end of the twentieth century than nationalist critics allow, they often criticise or burlesque the nationalist project.

In this study, I explore the connection between literary texts and identity, with particular attention to the postmodern condition. I consider the link Watson and Craig pose between *literature* and *national identity* to be highly problematic, because each of these terms requires clarification. Firstly, nationalist critics rarely if ever raise the question how *literature* can be understood to ‘map’ anything, and how it can be related to social, political and institutional change. Watson’s ‘state of mind’ smacks of the romantic Idealism of a Johann Gottfried von Herder or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe; yet, in the age of Hollywood and satellite TV it is somewhat difficult to imagine a literary text igniting a national spark in the heart of the impressionable reader in the way Goethe’s Romantic nationalist Wilhelm Meister envisioned in his dreams of a national theatre. Other Scottish nationalists often write about the ways in which literary texts preserve, keep alive, recover or reclaim identity, but this suggests that there is such a thing as identity that is then expressed, more or less accurately, by a text.² Yet, if literature merely expresses what is already there, how then can it be of any importance to social change? Therefore, before we can understand if and how literature is related to national identity, we have to address the material and social processes of cultural production.

Secondly, the notion of a national *identity* is itself problematic in a time when the so-called new social movements insist on the recognition of *difference* as crucial to democratic public life. Nationalists often superimpose a single, homogeneous and unchanging identity onto a host of local and often antagonistic identities. Most obviously, there are the old antagonisms between Glasgow and Edinburgh, city and country, Gaelic and Scots, Highland and Lowland, which national independence is somehow supposed to solve. But, more importantly, there are the local

²See for instance Beveridge and Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*.

differences of gender, class, age or ethnicity, which nationalist dreams of a common culture often ignore and suppress. In the face of this difference, nationalists often write a narrative of the decline of an organic community to a society of anonymous monads, and a recovery of national identity. Postmodern theorists like Stuart Hall and Nancy Fraser, on the other hand, argue that new and flexible forms community are possible, not around fixed identities, but around flexible, transitory identifications: individuals do not *have* identities, national or otherwise, but they identify themselves at many different points, over and over again, and they do so in different ways. In this study I therefore argue that contemporary Scottish texts do not map a fixed national community; instead, they often imagine flexible communities of difference.

Finally, it is far from clear what the term '*national identity*' refers to in a time when national boundaries are collapsing everywhere under the impact of what Jürgen Habermas calls the '*postnational constellation*' (*Die Postnationale Konstellation*). The saturation of local cultures with global images and news, global production and distribution of consumer goods, and the acceleration of travel and migration through modern means of transportation make it increasingly difficult to conceive of insular and self-sufficient national identities. In the European Union in particular, the nation is caught in a tension between transnational formations and the move toward regionalisation which '*dismember [the nation state] and rearticulate its components in quite new ways*' (Christopher Harvie, *The Rise of Regional Europe* 5). As we will see, many Scottish nationalists portray national culture as a protection against threats from outside, for instance migration or the Americanisation of popular culture, but this mystifies rather than reverses Scotland's irreversible involvement in global systems of exchange. I argue that, while contemporary Scottish writers are indeed preoccupied with their local environments and especially with social injustices, they represent the local as part of a new global culture. Habermas points out that there is an immense need to imagine democratic public spheres on a global level rather than hide behind national boundaries. I argue that Scottish writers are beginning to imagine life in postnational constellations in which interactions and relationships are both more local and more global than the nation.

Cultural Identity, Cultural Struggle and Cultural Studies

Before I move to a brief survey of the following chapters I want to clarify my use of the central terms *culture* and *identity*, and briefly introduce some of the theories from which I operate. The theories of 'Cultural Studies' are particularly pertinent to my attempt to link

contemporary Scottish fiction with questions of national or postnational identities. These theories in different ways address the complex relationship of culture and identity, but also of culture and material social processes. While I draw on a much larger body of theories, the work that was produced in and around the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies may provide a preliminary frame to discuss the role of literature in social change.³

Raymond Williams, who, together with Richard Hoggart and E.P. Thompson is often named as one of the ‘founding fathers’ of British Cultural Studies, links culture to material social practices and political change. In the preface to *Culture and Society* (1959) he famously describes culture as ‘a whole way of life, material, intellectual and spiritual’ (xvi) and expands this notion in *The Long Revolution* (1961). He specifies this in later texts like *Marxism and Literature* (1981), where he describes cultural production as ‘material social practice’ (165). Williams liberates the term *culture* from the meaning of ‘human perfection’ and its connotations of a timeless sphere of high art that were self-evident for Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot or F.R. Leavis. Instead, Williams redefines culture as part of everyday life, including for instance

the organization of production, the structure of the family, the structure of institutions which express or govern social relationships, the characteristic forms through which members of the society communicate. (*The Long Revolution* 42)

³This is not the place to map the many trajectories of Cultural Studies over the past five decades, or to define what Cultural Studies ‘is.’ Cultural Studies have been frequently anthologised and numerous histories with widely differing genealogies have by now been written, depending on the location of the historian in Britain or the US, in feminism, ethnic studies, media studies, etc. With the arrival of British Cultural Studies in the US in the late 1980s, there has been a veritable avalanche of anthologies. Probably the most influential reader was *Cultural Studies* (1992) edited by Lawrence Grossberg, which helped popularise British Cultural Studies in the US. It provoked a response from Fredric Jameson, which was promptly anthologised in *A Cultural Studies Reader* (1995), edited by Jessica Munns and Gita Rajan. But in spite of Routledge’s publication of not only ‘A’ but *The Cultural Studies Reader* (1993), edited by Simon During, no single anthology can pretend to give a definitive version of Cultural Studies. The trajectory I have chosen follows the work of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) with its mythic ‘founding fathers’ Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, E.P. Thompson and Stuart Hall, without for the moment addressing the debates that make it impossible to speak of a homogeneous theory even here. For histories of British Cultural Studies see for instance Graeme Turner, *British Cultural Studies*, David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (eds.), *Stuart Hall*, or Nick Stevenson, *Culture, Ideology and Socialism*. For self-reflection of Cultural Studies as an emerging discipline see Stuart Hall, ‘Cultural Studies and the Centre,’ ‘Race, Culture and Communications,’ ‘The Emergence of Cultural Studies and the Crisis of the Humanities’ and Lawrence Grossberg, *Bringing It All Back Home*.

Culture is the totality of social processes, and this encompassing definition enables me to understand how literature, literary production, and forms and institutions of communication in general are indeed involved in social transformations in Scotland.

The work of Stuart Hall is also a sustained attempt to describe this totality of social and material processes. Based on structuralist Marxism, John Clarke, Stuart Hall, Tony Jefferson and Brian Roberts redefine culture and cast some light on possible redefinitions of Watson's 'map':

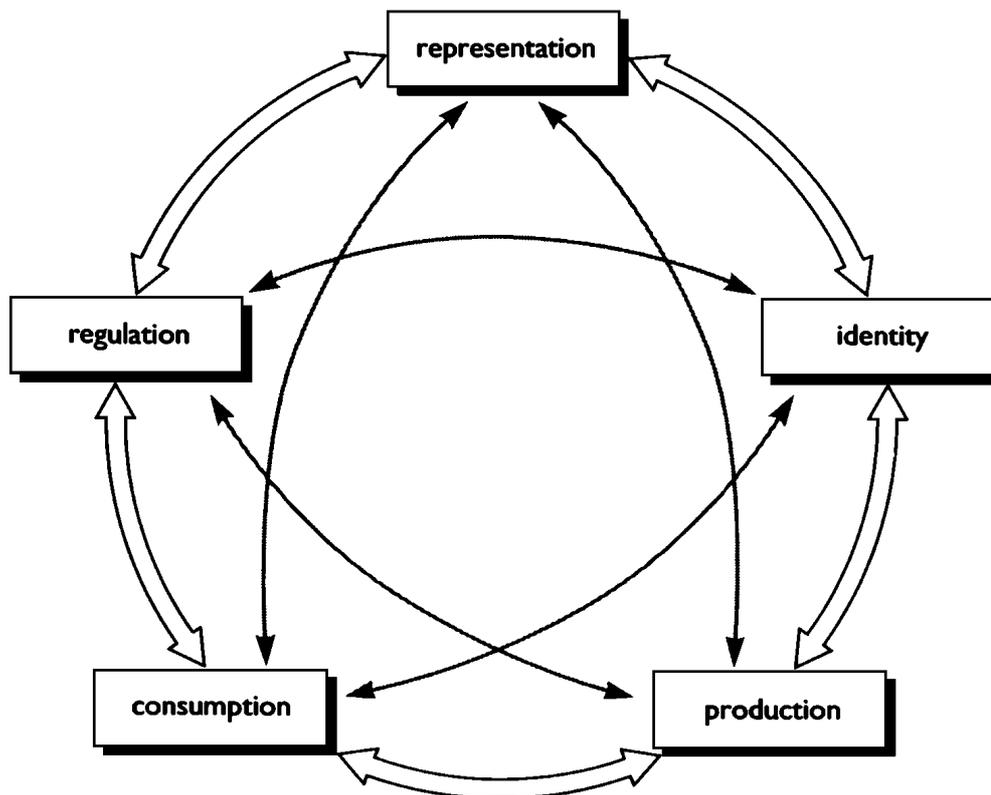
A culture includes the 'maps of meaning' which make things intelligible to its members. These maps of meaning are not simply carried around in the head: they are objectivated in the patterns of social organisation and relationships through which the individual becomes a 'social individual.'

('Subcultures, Cultures and Class' 10-11)

In the late 1970s, Hall and other theorists of the Birmingham Centre moved away from Althusserian Marxism which tended to describe culture as an ideological apparatus that merely ensured the reproduction of existing conditions of production.⁴ Drawing on various theoretical discourses from 'marxist' approaches to cultural production and consumption to Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony and Michel Foucault's theory of discourse, Hall developed a complex theoretical concept for the understanding of cultural processes, which he and Paul du Gay later dubbed the 'circuit of culture.' This circuit is an important part of the theoretical framework through which I discuss contemporary Scottish fiction: with its help it becomes possible to understand Scottish cultural identity non-reductively as a complex interplay of representations, production, consumption and regulation that takes place in all social spheres and, through international systems of production and distribution, across national borders.⁵

⁴The best summary of Althusser's theory of ideology is probably his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.'

⁵Stuart Hall's work is mainly available in essays, and the most comprehensive account of this circuit of culture may be the collaborative *Policing the Crisis* (1978), which marks the 'turn to Gramsci' of the CCCS. This text describes the interplay of various 'relatively autonomous' institutions and cultural producers in the emergence of Thatcherite authoritarian populism as hegemonic force at the end of the 1970s. The term 'circuit of culture' becomes prominent only in his recent pedagogical work, notably *Doing Cultural Studies*.



(Du Gay, 'Introduction' 3)

One of the most important aspects of Hall's circuit of culture is possibly its move beyond Williams's notion of culture as 'a whole way of life.' It is one of the weaknesses of Williams's theory that, like the defensive nationalisms that are everywhere cropping up again as fearful responses to hybridity and change, it does not allow for difference and for the fact that

[m]odern people ... have had, increasingly, as a condition of survival, to be members, simultaneously, of several, overlapping 'imagined communities.' (Hall, 'Culture, Community, Nation' 359)

Beginning with E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the Working Class* (1963) there was a different tradition of British Cultural Studies that theorised culture not as whole, but as fragmented by class struggle and, in later theories, by multiple antagonisms between different social groups. The definition of culture in 'Subcultures, Cultures and Class' was already informed by the pluralisation of cultures and counter-cultures, and the turn to Gramsci and Foucault allowed Hall to retheorise culture as a complex 'war of position'⁶ along a plurality of frontiers. In the words of Henry Giroux, an American theorist of Cultural Studies, this tradition conceptualises culture as

⁶Gramsci uses the military analogy to describe the historic shift from a revolutionary socialism ('war of manœuvre') to the 'passive revolution' of revisionist politics. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 106-114, 229-239.

a field of struggle or of competing interests in which dominant and subordinate groups live out and make sense of their given circumstances and conditions of life within incommensurate hierarchies of power and possibility. ('Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci,' manuscript)

This definition of culture as fractured by multiple antagonisms, together with the complex interplay of the 'circuit of culture,' complicate the nationalist notion of Scottish identity and allow me to address cultural identity as always multiple, changing, constantly emerging from cultural representations and subject to negotiation and struggle between different social groups and classes. Texts by Galloway or Kelman thereby become participants and partisans in a complexity of cultural struggles; rather than being a map, Scottish literature, with all its institutions and practices, becomes a contested terrain on which conflicting visions of the future clash.

Cultural Studies as Cultural Pedagogy

Besides its theoretical legacy, British Cultural Studies as it was practised in and around the CCCS also has a political legacy, which is often neglected in its appropriations. As Frederic Jameson points out in his essay 'On "Cultural Studies",' the theoretical work of Hall and others is itself a political practice which works towards a democratic politics of difference. In Hall's essays, theory (or theorising, as he prefers to call it) is always a form of commitment to political transformation:

Not theory as the will to truth, but theory as a set of contested, localized, conjunctural knowledges, which have to be debated in a dialogic way. But also as a practice which always thinks about its intervention in a world in which it would make a difference, in which it would have some effect.

(*'Cultural Studies and Its Theoretical Legacies'* 286)

In keeping with Gramsci's recognition that '[e]very relation of "hegemony" is necessarily an educational relationship' (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 350) theorising in the CCCS was strongly committed to education as an important way of effecting social change.⁷ In 'The Future of Cultural Studies' Williams underlines the centrality of adult education for his own work as well as that of Hoggart and Thompson and warmly recommends the return to pedagogy as an

⁷See for instance Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour* (1979) or the collective *Women Take Issue* (1979) and *The Empire Strikes Back* (1982).

antidote against ossified academic structures.⁸ In the US, the work of Henry Giroux stands out as a project that connects education and Cultural Studies.⁹

This emphasis on pedagogy and on theorising as political practice has a number of consequences for my approach to Scottish fiction. Firstly, I follow Hall and Giroux in understanding cultural representations as pedagogical:

[R]epresentations are constructed as a means of comprehending the past through the present in order to legitimate and secure a particular view of the future. (Giroux, *Living Dangerously* 115)

In other words, Scottish fiction teaches individuals what it means to belong to a certain class, nation, gender, ethnicity, and so on. The texts of Kelman, Welsh or Owens are pedagogical interventions in the debate about the future of Scotland, and they take positions that are not necessarily sympathetic to the national project. Secondly, I understand the representations of theory as pedagogical as well: Scottish theorists like Roderick Watson and many others frequently apply literary texts in educational institutions like schools and universities to create a national cultural identity. My own theoretical and pedagogical intervention, by contrast, emphasises the openness, fluidity and transnationality of identity. It is an attempt to read contemporary Scottish texts in a way that imagines new, postnational forms of community that are both above and below the nation. With my readings I want to suggest new forms of cultural literacy for the age of global information and image-exchange that open up new possibilities for the representation of self and community.

Survey

In this study I try to accomplish three things: Firstly, to develop a general understanding of cultural work and its role in current social transformations. Secondly, to do so in the highly specific context of Scottish struggles for identity as it manifests itself in contemporary fiction. Finally, to mobilise the local and global meanings of these texts for postnational democratic politics of difference.

⁸Recently, Marjorie Ferguson and Peter Golding have argued in their introduction to *Cultural Studies in Question* that the ‘discovery’ of British Cultural Studies by the US academia late in the 1980s has led to a ‘canon of founding fathers’ who were ‘the object of almost fanzine regard’ (x). Their recommendation of a return to more project-centred work sounds a note similar to Williams’s. See also Hall, ‘On Postmodernism and Articulation’ on the codification of Cultural Studies.

⁹See for instance Hall, ‘Teaching Race’ and Giroux, ‘Is There a Place for Cultural Studies in the Colleges of Education?’

In the first chapter I outline the Scottish debate about literature and culture, their relation to national identity and their capacity to transform the social imaginary. In order to move beyond the limits of the Scottish debate, I introduce various theories that link culture and nation, most prominently Benedict Anderson's theory of the 'imagined community,' which discusses national identity as emerging from complex processes of cultural production. Finally, I employ some of the key concepts of British Cultural Studies to leave the paradigm of the nation altogether, and to introduce a notion of difference into the debate about cultural identity and community.

The second chapter opens with a discussion of the possibilities of writing as political and social commitment, and particularly commitment to non-national, non-essential causes. I use five exemplary discourses to show how nationalists construct the national community, and how various texts by Iain Banks, Janice Galloway, Alasdair Gray, Thomas Healy, James Kelman, Frank Kuppner, William McIlvanney, Duncan McLean, Agnes Owens, Jeff Torrington, Alan Warner and Irvine Welsh deconstruct identity. I argue that in these texts identity is always 'more' and always different from itself. In a discussion of the representations of landscape, territory, history, population and language, I argue that national discourses never manage to close identity, and that the various texts often completely change the terms of the debate and begin to imagine communities of difference. A cautionary remark may be in order: this chapter does not pretend to provide anything like a systematic survey of Scottish literary production of the last two decades. Nor does it provide a complete theory of *the* novel as interventionist practice, that could easily be lifted from its Scottish context and be applied to other contexts without modification.¹⁰ Instead, I see the individual readings themselves as interventions into public debates: my goal is *not* to create a canon of texts and provide definitive multicultural meanings to match the nationalist readings, but to enter into a dialogue with the specifics of various Scottish contexts, and to keep this dialogue open.

The final chapter is an attempt to translate the theories of Cultural Studies into suggestions for a pedagogical practice. First, I show how the meaning of a particular cultural artefact is always contingent on pedagogical interventions. In particular, the emerging nationalist hegemony in Scotland rewrites texts within a nationalist ideology and forges

¹⁰Cates Baldrige, for instance, develops a theory of *the* novel as resistance in *The Dialogics of Dissent in the English Novel*. Baldrige responds to texts like Lennard J. Davis's *Resisting Novels: Ideology and Fiction*, which in best Althusserian manner represent *the* novel as an apparatus for the reproduction of capitalist ideology. Both Davis and Baldrige, however, fall prey to their excessive generalisations and decontextualisation, the former by building an inescapable prison house of the novel, the latter with the aesthetisation of resistance.

a national canon to create certain approved versions of Scottishness. In Scotland, schools are traditionally regarded as safeguards of Scottish identity, and they now become major construction sites of the national community. I discuss representations of Scottish education in various texts by Galloway, Kelman, Kennedy, McIlvanney and McLean, who deconstruct some of the central myths of Scottish identity. In the last section of the chapter I analyse Welsh's *Trainspotting* and *Marabou Stork Nightmares* to sketch possibilities for a postnational pedagogy of difference. This pedagogy, like the entire study, is based on the assumption that, at least in the Western hemisphere, we are in the process of entering a postnational constellation for which national cultural politics can no longer provide sufficient answers. This study addresses all cultural workers like teachers and policy makers, not only in Scotland, but in different spaces across Europe, who feel the need for a transnational cultural politics that recognises differences and opens up new possibilities of democratic agency in a global age.

Literature and the Struggle for Cultural Identity

1.1 Imagine Living There

In a dialogue with a fellow student, Duncan Thaw, the protagonist of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981), complains that Glasgow leads a rather shadowy existence in 'a music hall song and a few bad novels.' He then compares Glasgow to other cities and formulates his artistic programme:

[T]hink of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. (243)

Thaw's conversation with his friend Kenneth McAlpine alludes to a central conversation in James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, where Stephen Dedalus defines art as an abstract system of formal relations. In contrast to Stephen Dedalus, Thaw redefines art in terms of human relations, as the primary source of communal identity and even agency. He rejects Stephen's fin-de-siecle aestheticism which celebrates art for art's sake, and demands art for community's sake. For Thaw, art imagines community, it gives individuals a communal identity and enables them to experience and live community. Yet, what community does Thaw have in mind? And how does art enable inhabitants to 'live there'?

Thaw's much-quoted reflections on Glasgow and the cultural poverty of (then) wealthy Glasgow have often been read as a call to arms for all Scottish artists and writers. In his essay 'Imagine Living There,' a retrospection over Scottish fiction of the last twenty years, Ian Bell interprets Thaw's monologue as a call for national art and national literature. He concludes that the wave of new writers of the 1980s and 90s, prominently Alasdair Gray himself, Janice Galloway, James Kelman, Agnes Owens, Irvine Welsh and many others, has made Duncan Thaw's dream come true:

In response to Gray's rallying-cry ... the tremendous outpouring of fiction from Scotland in the last twenty years can be seen as offering a radical literature of resistance and reclamation, persistently contesting the authority and the finality of the received

imagining of Scots and Scottish culture, thereby both reconfiguring the perennially vexed question of the Scottish national identity and greatly enhancing the formal resources of Scottish fiction. ... At long last, readers in Scotland have been provided with a rich repository of ways of imagining living there appropriate to their own context, of versions of the 'here and now' which may not always be comforting or reassuring but which serve to provide the necessary imaginative support for fully inhabiting any place. (219-220)

In very different ways, both Duncan Thaw and Ian Bell make comprehensive claims for art and literature: cultural artefacts are instrumental to the struggles for identity, dignity and self-determination of a city or even an entire nation. Cultural work contributes to the transformation of community, it challenges ossified representations of identity and creates new possibilities for what Richard Hoggart calls 'the full, rich life' (*The Uses of Literacy*, passim). Bell, like many other critics, claims that the new wave of Scottish writers has contributed significantly to the emergence of a new Scottish national identity not only by offering different answers to the 'vexed' question of what it means to be Scottish, but also by creating an autonomous national literature worthy of its name.

Representing Community?

Bell's enthusiasm, however, may have to be tempered – not because there was no 'tremendous outpouring' of Scottish fiction in the last two decades, but because writers like Galloway, Kelman, Owens or Welsh may be far from imagining a national community. Their representations of Scottish life do not strike all Scots alike as a great 'repository' of identifications. The outraged comments of Michael Kelly, former Lord Provost of Glasgow, after the announcement of James Kelman's *How Late It Was How Late* (1994) as the winner of the 1994 Booker Prize, is representative of the sentiments of a considerable number of middle-class Scots who find some of the 'versions of the "here and now"' in contemporary fiction reprehensible, to say the least.¹¹ In sharp contrast to Kelly's own 'Glasgow's Miles Better' public relations campaign of urban improvement, and in opposition to the spectacular high cultural events of 1992, when Glasgow was European Cultural Capital, Kelman shows an urban landscape of unemployment, gambling, and alcoholism. Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* (1993) is also little apt to be quoted

¹¹Two days after the announcement, the front page of *The Times* sported the gloating headline 'Glasgow Disowns Prize Novel.' Kelly accused Kelman of having no integrity and believed 'that had the Booker judges been Glaswegian, Kelman's novel would never have won.' (Bowditch 1).

in brochures of urban improvement, countering as it does the image of Edinburgh as Scotland's tourist capital with the Castle, Princes Street and the Edinburgh Festival, with images of Edinburgh as Europe's HIV-capital, the waste land of public housing, and the explosion of drugs, rape, hooliganism and other forms of urban violence. Frank Kuppner's novels *A Very Quiet Street* (1989) and *Something Very Like Murder* (1994) extend this gloomy view into the past with their reconstruction of the history of Glasgow as an impenetrable web of unrelated and meaningless murders. The cityscapes of Kelman, Kuppner, and Welsh are fragmented by class conflict, generational warfare, and xenophobic, sexist and racist violence that expose homely notions of *one* nation and national culture as the dream of a secure suburban middle class. But not even the countryside remains as a repository of national hope: in Duncan McLean's *Bunkerman* (1996), Iain Banks's *Wasp Factory* (1984) and *Complicity* (1993), Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (1996), or Agnes Owens's *People Like That* (1996), idyllic visions of a tartan Arcadia are disrupted by perverts, sociopaths, rapists, child molesters, and mass murderers. In Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, finally, the City of Unthank, which is a nightmare version of Glasgow, drowns in metaphysical destruction and despair. This superficial glance at a random selection of recent Scottish texts may well make one wonder how these visions of injustice and violence can provide 'imaginative support' for a fledgling community. These novels are not only 'not always ... comforting or reassuring,' as Bell euphemistically puts it. On the contrary, they question whether it is possible to 'fully inhabit' Scotland at all, or whether this nation, like any other industrialised nation at the end of the twentieth century, is not fractured into incommensurable spaces and ruptured along faultlines that pay little heed to national borders. The disturbing images of life in present day Scotland challenge even pluralist notions of national identity, British, Scottish or otherwise, and raise the question whether the search for national unity and a national border would not exacerbate the injustices and oppressions represented in these texts.

In marked contrast to Bell's celebration of a new national literature, recent Scottish texts often explicitly reject national identity. The most memorable and disaffected expressions of both anti-British and anti-Scottish sentiments may probably be found in Welsh's *Trainspotting*, where Mark Renton ridicules both the British and the *Braveheart* image of Scots as indomitable freedom fighters:

Rule Britannia. Ah've never felt British, because ah'm not. It's ugly and artificial. Ah've never really felt Scottish either, though. Scotland the brave, ma arse; Scotland the shitein cunt. ... Ah've never felt a fuckin thing aboot countries, other than total disgust. They should abolish the fuckin lot ay them. (228)

For the instinctive anarchist Mark Renton, national identity is driven exclusively by the interests of the middle classes and implies a social privilege he cannot attain. An even more passionate outburst against national identity features prominently in the novel's screen adaptation by John Hodge and Danny Boyle. Asked if the beauty of the countryside does not make him proud to be Scottish, Renton breaks into a tirade:

I hate being Scottish. We're the lowest of the fucking low, the scum of the earth, the most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat into civilization. Some people hate the English, but I don't. They're just wankers. We, on the other hand, are colonized by wankers. We can't even pick a decent culture to be colonized by. We are ruled by effete arseholes. (Hodge 46)¹²

Of course, Scottish nationalists know this sentiment all too well and would dismiss Renton's diatribe as 'Scottish inferiorism' (Beveridge and Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*, passim), a typical gesture of self-loathing that Scots allegedly share with other colonised nations. Yet, this would miss Renton's more comprehensive criticism of nationalism as the project of a clearly gendered and class-based elite. In its original context, which is lost in the movie version, this invective is directed not at the Scottish landscape, but at a xenophobic nationalist hooligan, which makes it a clear response to the exclusionary, anti-democratic and violent potential of any nationalism.

Less crudely, but more unmistakably, James Kelman both acknowledges the colonisation of Scotland, and rejects the very idea of a national culture as dangerous mysticism. In his essay 'Oppression and Solidarity' he writes:

So of course Scotland is oppressed. But we have to be clear about what we *don't* mean when we talk in these terms: we don't mean some kind of 'pure, native-born Scottish person' or some mystical 'national culture.' Neither of these entities has ever existed in the past and cannot conceivably exist in the future.

(72; Kelman's italics)

Kelman rejects such constructions for their potential to suppress other identities, mainly of women, workers, lower-class people and 'foreigners.' In his essays and narratives, he therefore emphasises the local, Glaswegian context over the creation of a national culture.

A.L. Kennedy, asked to contribute her views on a national Scottish literature to Ian Bell's anthology *Peripheral Visions*, cautions critics who search for traces of national identity in her fiction, and subtly challenges the very terms of this question. She repudiates the notion of a unified national culture and the possibility that any one author can speak 'for' a

¹²See Welsh, *Trainspotting* 78.

group as complex and contradictory as the Scottish population. Instead, she describes herself as a British and international hybrid:

I am a full human being with a dignity and identity drawn from many sources, both empirical and theoretical. My nationality is beaten together from a mongrel mix of Scots, Welsh, Scots-Irish and Midland English. Because I love Scotland I will always seek to write about it as enough of an outsider to see it clearly. By sharing my intimate, individual humanity – Scottishness included – I hope to communicate a truth beyond poisonous nationalism or bigotry.

(‘Not Changing the World’ 102)

Here, the cultural identity even of one individual is never singular but emerges from a complex of histories of which ‘Scottishness’ may be one, but by no means the only one, and certainly not the most prominent. Like Welsh and Kelman, Kennedy rejects the possibility of a common national culture: as a writer, she scrupulously locates herself in a global context of different and ever shifting allegiances and histories and states that ‘my whole understanding of writing and my method of making it does not stem from literary or national forms and traditions’ (100). Instead, Kennedy positions her work in the context of international literary and media cultures.

For Kelman, Kennedy, Welsh and other writers, opposition to a colonial situation simultaneously has to avoid the easy answer of an essentialised national identity, the kind of answer that in the words of Stuart Hall ‘makes you sleep well at night’ (‘Subjects in History’ 290). They point out the potential of nationalism to colonise other forms of identity such as class, age or gender through nationalised and bureaucratised discourses of culture, literature, education, or morality, to name only a few. They understand national colonisation as only one of a number of different forms of social oppression which transcend national boundaries and are endemic to English, Scottish and other industrialised societies at the end of the twentieth century. If, as Bell writes, fiction is the site for the reclamation of – or better: struggle over – identity, then a whole host of different and conflicting identities are at stake. These differences are not only facets of national identity, but are often radically at odds with it. If Kelman, Kennedy, Welsh and other Scottish writers oppose colonialism, they do not necessarily embrace nationalist politics: they work from socialist, feminist or subcultural positions that are both specifically local and at the same time cut across national borders.

Bell’s leap from Duncan Thaw’s description of Glasgow to conclusions about the state of Scotland in general is typical of nationalist strategies.¹³ Nationalist critics often appropriate literary texts for

¹³For a similar reading of *Lanark* see Harvie, ‘Alasdair Gray and the Condition of Scotland Question.’ For a reading that explores Gray’s local rather than his national affiliations, see Morgan, ‘Gray and Glasgow.’

separatist politics, summarise local differences as ‘Scotland’s fight for independence’ and remarginalise different identities in the process. Bell recognises this danger in his introduction to *Peripheral Visions*:

These writers seem to be actively contesting the status of London as the ‘core’ of British culture, and the corresponding sense that Scotland is part of the ‘periphery,’ demanding the right to record the lives of Scottish figures in forms appropriate to these lives, explicitly contesting the patronizing and belittling assumptions lying behind much more conventional fiction. This is a brave and laudable project, . . . but perhaps it needs to be remembered in this particular case that from a different point of view such writers are simply relocating that ‘core’ in the central belt of urban Scotland, consigning other Scottish voices once again to the ‘periphery.’ (3)

Yet Bell overlooks the role of criticism in this process, as well as the potential of many of these authors to replace identity politics with a politics of difference which makes identity itself problematic. In contrast to Bell, I argue that Scottish writers often subvert nationalism by asserting the existence of different and antagonistic identities in Scottish society, and by insisting both on the specificities of the local and on the necessity to look beyond the nation for new forms of solidarity.

Identity and Consumer Culture

A second question has to be raised if we are to understand how Duncan Thaw can link culture and community, and that concerns the production of culture itself. With a view to Bell’s celebration of national culture, one way to phrase this question is, how is it possible to believe that culture, which is now produced by global or at least transnational media conglomerates, can provide a national community? As Kennedy points out, Scottish writers live in, represent and struggle with a global media culture, and probe the possibilities and limits it offers to individuals in their various locations. But the production of that culture within the economy of an increasingly globalised late capitalism makes it hard to imagine how artificial boundaries can be kept up around particular national territories. Nationalist critics are consequently disconcerted by the involvement of literature with the market, because it seems to suggest that the (comparative) success of Scottish authors in the British bookmarket somehow waters down their authenticity. Looming behind this is the fear that the market will simply reabsorb Scottish fiction into the British fold, a danger that Ian Bell describes in a discussion of English authors like Alan Silitoe and David Storey:

Each of these novelists was writing from within a strong sense of local identity, but (and this point is vital) they were all inevitably writing to a metropolitan audience, satisfying that London-based

audience's appetite for the full sordid details of life 'up North.' Instead of introducing and consolidating a challenging alternative voice, these novelists were unwittingly absorbed into the greater national consciousness, becoming a tokenist presence rather than a fully realized identity. (2-3)¹⁴

It is not only that the existence or even the desirability of such a 'fully realised identity' is more than questionable in itself. It is also dangerous to oppose 'the North' (whether that be Scotland or the north of England) to a metropolitan culture, as if one could exist without the other. It is highly questionable whether many people in Scotland would have read Kelman and Welsh without that metropolitan market. In other words, it may not make sense to ask if Scottish authors sell out, are watered down or lose their authenticity; their fictions may indeed offer ways of 'imagining living there,' where 'there' is not only Britain, Scotland, Glasgow, working-class cultures or youth subcultures but also globally mediated cultures. It seems that contemporary authors not only try to enlarge possibilities of agency on the level of nation, class, gender or ethnicity, but that they also begin to imagine life in postnational consumer cultures, where these identities lose their seeming fixity. Therefore, in order to understand the ways in which different identities and communities are imagined in contemporary Scottish fiction, I intermittently address the very conditions of cultural production and consumption in late capitalism.

Such questions are not to dismiss the recognition of Bell and many others that there is something of a cultural revolution under way in Scotland – it is to make it more complex by addressing the cultural construction of identity and difference, and the production and consumption of culture, in order to move beyond the limiting debate about hypothetical national identities and renaissances. Both Gray and Bell raise important questions about identity and the relation of cultural artefacts and larger social and political struggles not only in the Scottish context, but in a postnational constellation. They redefine art and literature as social interventions and foreground the emancipatory potential of cultural work in a way that is a valuable starting point for my investigation of Scottish fiction as an intervention in numerous struggles.

Before I move on to a discussion of these possibilities, I want to broaden the debate by introducing the Scottish discussion about the role

¹⁴As Peter Hitchcock illustrates in *Working-Class Fiction in Theory and Practice*, the case of Alan Silitoe is much more complex than this simple narrative of the rise, corruption and fall of a popular author suggests. Silitoe continued to write and work even after the literary event of the 'Angry Young Men' had swept him to fame. The idea that a writer can single-handedly create a 'fully realized identity' (whatever that is) and be 'untainted' by the dynamics of the market is exactly informed by the romantic desire for 'authenticity' that fuels the market.

of culture as a vehicle of social change. The question if and how culture is relevant to emancipatory struggles (which in Scotland usually meant national struggles) has occupied Scottish intellectuals at least since the beginnings of the first Gaelic Renaissance late in the nineteenth century and the (Anglophone) Scottish Renaissance around Hugh MacDiarmid in the first quarter of this century. It has resurfaced with renewed vigour during the past twenty years: at least since Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* there has been a debate about the role of cultural production in relation to an emerging nationalism. The following is an attempt to briefly outline the central concerns of the debate since the late 1970s.

1.2 Culture, Nation, Identity: The Scottish Debate

Culture as Sub-Political

When Alasdair Gray wrote *Lanark*, Scottish cultural production was not exactly in demand among intellectuals as a vehicle for social change. This was partly due to a Marxist theory of culture as part of the superstructure, that can at best be an adornment of the machinery of capitalist production. But it also had to do with a widespread sense among intellectuals that Scottish culture was necessarily inferior.

Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain* is paradigmatic for the modernist thinking about the role of culture in social transformations prevalent in the Scotland of the 1970s. This seminal text relegates culture to the sidelines of a largely economic struggle for national independence. Nairn employs Ernest Gellner's theory of 'uneven development,' which attributes the rise of nationalist movements to the asymmetrical distribution of wealth rather than cultural difference:

All nationalisms work through a characteristic repertoire of social and personal mechanisms, many of them highly subjective. But the causation of the drama is not within the bosom of the *Volk*: this way lie the myths of blood and *Geist*. ... The real origins are elsewhere. They are not located in the folk, nor in the individual's repressed passion for some sort of wholeness or identity, but in the machinery of world political economy.

(The Break-Up of Britain 335)

It is not existence of an independent culture, but the relative economic backwardness of Scotland that is responsible for the emergence of a desire for national independence amongst 'conscious, middle-class elites' (41). For Nairn, it was the insult of the British exploitation of oil off the coast of Scotland, added to the injury of the economic crisis of

the 1970s, that was responsible for the rising popularity of separatism amongst Scots.¹⁵

Nairn's argument inherits more than a little of the orthodox Marxist suspicion of culture as a mystification of the 'real' relations of production and part of a superstructure through which the national elite gains the consensus of the masses.¹⁶ In Scotland, whose elite was lured south by the Empire and its promise of wealth and power, culture has degenerated even further into kitsch. It is not at all emancipatory, but rather a sentimental token identity that confirms Scotland's role as junior partner in the United Kingdom. Nairn scornfully describes what he calls Scottish 'cultural sub-nationalism' through which cultural artefacts merely reinscribe a pre-existing inferiority:

It was cultural, because it could not be political, on the other hand this culture was not straightforwardly nationalist either – a direct substitute for political action, like (e.g.) so much Polish literature of the 19th century. It could only be 'sub-nationalist,' in the sense of venting its national content in various crooked ways – neurotically, so to speak, rather than directly. (156)

In this passage he draws on an almost traditional intellectual loathing of Scottish culture as diseased and schizophrenic, which is best captured in Gregory Smith's endearing term 'Caledonian antiszygy,' the mythical split between Scottish head and heart, or Jekyll and Hyde. For Nairn, there is nothing likeable about this schizophrenia: it amounts to little more than Lowlanders destroying the Highlands and then plundering them to create a guilty and sentimental national identity that can never be more than its own parody. His response to that 'diseased' culture is interestingly emotional:

How intolerably vulgar! What unbearable, crass, mindless philistinism! One knows that *Kitsch* is a large constituent of mass popular culture in every land: but this is ridiculous! (162)

This extreme sense of inferiority of an allegedly parochial culture has often been referred to as the 'Scottish Cringe' (McCrone, *Understanding Scotland* 26; Kay 174) and has found its targets particularly in 'tartanry' and 'kailyard.'¹⁷

¹⁵In the early 1970s, the SNP tried to gain ground with slogans like 'It's Scotland's Oil.' See David Simpson, 'Scotland, England and North Sea Oil,' Christopher Harvie, 'North Sea Oil and Scottish Culture' and Frances Wood, 'Scottish Labour in Government and Opposition.'

¹⁶For a more recent and more orthodox attempt to apply Marxist theory to an explanation of Scottish nationalism see Foster, 'Nationality, Social Change and Class.'

¹⁷Strictly speaking, the term kailyard designates a group of writers around J. M. Barrie and Ian Maclaren who wrote around the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. The word 'kailyard' means cabbage patch and derives from a Scottish song Maclaren

Kailyard, Clydesidism and the Question of a National Culture

In his controversial essays of the early 1980s Colin McArthur largely accepts Nairn's framework of a Scottish culture that is 'deformed and "pathological"' ('Introduction' 2) through the hegemony of mythical representations of Scotland as the country of Rob Roy and Bonnie Prince Charlie. This deformity is again largely due to the status of Scotland as a colony that has to accept representations by others: in the realm of film making, the lack of material resources in Scotland makes it impossible to counter these misrepresentations with more adequate representations of 'lived experience of contemporary Scots' ('Scotland and Cinema' 66). Scots therefore learn to recognise themselves through movies like the Hollywood musical *Brigadoon*, starring Gene Kelly, where Scottish identity is travestied as singing in the rain with a kilt wrapped around your knees. Yet, unlike Nairn's, McArthur's theoretical project is informed by the search for a 'confident, flexible, and – both historically and in contemporary terms – relevant Scottish national culture' ('Introduction' 1). McArthur rejects literature and film making in the tradition of the kailyard, which he describes as the hegemonial regime of representations, and demands representations of Scotland as a country of industrial struggles. Though he points to extreme limitations of existing 'Clydesidism,' as the representation of work in urban Scotland is usually called, he regards it as being at least potentially closer to the 'reality of Scottish experience' ('Scotland and Cinema' 56).

Compared to Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain*, McArthur's essays mark a shift to the pre-occupation with culture as the site of the production, or rather the reproduction of identity, although this shift is still very limited. McArthur's Althusserian framework situates the representations of kailyard cinema in a closed ideological system of significations that 'interpellates' Scottish subjects as inferior. In terms of this theory of interpellation, which Althusser lays down in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,' identity is determined by ideological representations that are mediated by cultural and state apparatuses. The individual becomes a subject through a monolithic capitalist ideology which 'interpellates' or calls him or her into place without permitting contradiction. In McArthur's theory, the Scottish subject is therefore necessarily interpellated as tartan-wearing by colonial practices that remove the means and control of cultural production from the reach of

used as a motto for his novel *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush*. In the wake of critics like Tom Nairn and Colin McArthur the term is used rather loosely to refer to representations of the simple bliss of rural life in Scotland, though both have been criticised for overestimating the importance of the Kailyard School and for neglecting its heterogeneity. See Ian Campbell, *Kailyard*.

Scots. Culture is still a secondary discourse which functions, in Althusser's theory, as an apparatus for the reproduction of the conditions of capitalist production, and in McArthur's adaptation, an instrument for the reproduction of Scottish colonisation.

Popular Culture and the Problem of National Identity

The responses to McArthur and Nairn mark a more decisive shift from economism towards cultural politics. In 'Visitors from the Stars' Cairns Craig takes up the issue of identity. While he agrees that kailyard and tartantry are indeed crippling regimes of representation, he questions if Clydesidism can offer more authentic representations. He argues that the construction of Scottish identity, either in kailyard or in Clydesidism's tales of unemployment, results in a new kind of homeliness within comfortably self-pitying images, and ultimately reinforces the notion that Scots are incapable of representing themselves either in art or in politics. In contrast to McArthur, Craig therefore refuses to offer an alternative to either kailyard or Clydesidism and argues that the very attempt to find an essentialised Scottish identity is itself the root of the problem:

The problem of 'identity' – of being at one with oneself – is precisely the problem we should not be trying to solve. . . . The 'identity' we construct will be an essentialising, an idealising, a reduction to paradigmatic features, of Scotland as *home*, a counterbalance to the 'home counties' as core of English/British culture. (8)

Like McArthur, Craig theorises the complexity of cultural production within a capitalist market economy when he links the issue of representation and identity to capitalist media culture and the fact that the cultural apparatuses (e.g. the movie industry and the bookmarket) which produce these images lie mainly outside Scotland. Within the context of this 'multinational image production system' (11) any attempt to arrive at an essential identity must result in frozen and commodified images that do not do justice to 'the on-going nature of our real lives' (9) and reinforce the Scottish sense of 'being exiles in our own culture' (8).

Given these constraints, Cairns Craig turns exactly to popular culture to look for counter-representations. He regards the 'Scottish Cringe' as an inappropriate response to the products of popular culture, because in the context of global media culture, identity has become fluid and is constructed both locally and through a global media culture:

The categorisation of Scottish kitsch as *the* element in the people's identity operates within a simplistic expressivist view of the arts: the same people who participate in that Scottish tradition are also participants in the homogeneous, internationalised mass culture of

jazz/swing/rock/pop; the same people who read the *Sunday Post* are not 'expressed' by the Post, fulfilled, wrung out, their identity secured: they are also the people who watch *Dallas* and listen to Hank Williams – indeed they are very often also the people who read the *Sunday Times* and watch *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. (11)

Within the context of increasingly global popular culture, the identities of people in Scotland are not determined by tartanry but arise from a negotiation of numerous discourses.¹⁸ Instead of hunting the snark of an essential Scottish identity, intellectuals should therefore recognise the multiplicity, fluidity and contradictoriness of identity as always different from itself. Attempts to represent the reality of lived experience should embrace all popular media (including, obviously, the much reviled folk culture). Implicit in this notion of representation are forms of self-representation of people that deconstruct 'high culture' and become continuous with lived experience in a society of difference. Thus, Craig moves away from the quest for positive images of Scottishness and advocates decentralised and democratic forms of cultural production.

Postmodern Identity Politics

In his later work, Cairns Craig himself does not draw the necessary conclusions from his insights: while he has abandoned national identity, he now tries to construct a national culture as unifying principle. The work of David McCrone marks a more decisive shift from identity politics to a postmodern politics of difference. *Scotland: The Brand* draws attention to popular culture and particularly the heritage industry as crucial to identity formation. Unlike Craig and McArthur, he is not convinced that tartanry even as a hegemonic regime of representation automatically reproduces Scotland's cultural deformity; hence, instead of looking for 'more appropriate' discourses, he investigates complex forms of consumption, negotiation and re-appropriation of tartanry as sites of identity formation and agency. Tartanry does not have one meaning, but can be taken up differently in different contexts:

The heritage icons are malleable. They take on radical as well as conservative meanings. (5)

McCrone heretically concludes that in the context of postmodern consumer culture, tartanry can be a 'crucial cultural repository for

¹⁸As we will see especially in 2.3, Craig's characterisation of 'mass culture' as 'homogeneous' has to be rejected in favour of an understanding of popular culture as complex and taking on different meanings in different social locations. See for instance Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*.

answers to the identity question' (6).¹⁹ In *Understanding Scotland* he goes even further when he questions not only the need for new hegemonic discourses to replace those deformities, but for a national culture altogether:

Not only are Tartanry and Kailyard such [hegemonic] discourses, along with Clydesidism, but so is this radical discourse itself. And its problem is that it asks a particularly inappropriate question: What is (distinctive about) Scottish culture? My question is: why should there be an obsessive search to find one; why is the question even framed this way; where does it come from? (169)

McCrone attributes the desire for such a distinctive and unified national culture to a fossilised nationalist rhetoric that is inappropriate to the late-twentieth century globalisation and the existence of multiple local and transnational differences. He contrasts nationalist identity politics with a postmodern notion of plurality and flexibility of identity:

[B]eing black, Glaswegian and female can all characterise one person's culture and social inheritance without one aspect of that identity being paramount (except in terms of self-identification). What is on offer in the late twentieth century is what we call 'pick 'n mix' identity, in which we wear our identities lightly, and change them according to circumstances. . . . The question to ask is not how best do cultural forms reflect an essential national identity, but how do cultural forms actually help to construct and shape identity, or rather, identities – for there is less need to reconcile and prioritise these. Hence, national identity does not take precedence over class or gender identities (or, indeed, vice versa) except insofar as these are subjectively ordered. These identities themselves, in turn, cannot be defined except with reference to the cultural forms which give them shape and meaning. (195)

For McCrone, the time of national identity politics has passed, post-colonial migration poses much more pressing questions. If one can speak of identity at all, it is flexible, hybrid, and contradictory.

Interestingly, McCrone utilises the language of limitless consumer choice to illustrate difference, and de-emphasises the role of power in the construction of identities, among others the power of the emerging nationalist hegemony. In this particular passage, McCrone downplays the possibility that 'being black, Glaswegian and female' may be constructed by powerful marginalising discourses that leave little room

¹⁹The 'tartan army' of Scottish football fans or the phenomenon of 'Brigadoonery' (the parodic adoption of tartan kitsch, not only by 'Scots-wannabes,' but also by middle class urbanites) are illustrations of postmodern negotiations of tartan from different social locations. For football and nationalism see Bairner, 'Football and the Idea of Scotland,' Moorhouse, "'We're Off to Wembley!'", and Jarvie and Walker, 'Ninety Minute Patriots?' For an instance of Brigadoonery see Neil Harding McAlister's website 'Brigadoonery!' <http://www.durham.net/~neilmac>.

for choice and self-identification, but require incessant struggle. In a reply to McCrone, Colin McArthur therefore criticises the notion of a ‘pick’n mix identity’ in which subjects can select and order interpellating discourses as if they were putting together a salad at a salad bar. In ‘Scottish Culture’ McArthur accuses McCrone of underestimating the power of institutions, dominant discourses or economic constraints and of overestimating the capacity of individuals to make real choices within the framework of a capitalist consumer ideology.

In contrast to McCrone, Ian Bell pays closer attention to the discursive construction of identity. In analogy to Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Bell claims that there is a phenomenon called ‘Scotticism.’ In his essay ‘Scotticism,’ he suggests that even for Scots, Scottish identity is organised by powerful English discourses which require Scotland as its constitutive ‘Other.’²⁰ The goal of Scottish culture, and particularly Scottish literature is to ‘reclaim Scotticism from the jaws of Greyfriars Bobby and the Loch Ness monster’ (‘Scotticism’ 136). Bell’s essay is in many ways a postmodern rendition of McArthur’s approach and shares some of its problems. While Bell importantly describes culture as a site of struggle and reclamation, he flattens conflict into an opposition between Scotland and England. Hence, the only identity that can be reclaimed is a Scottish one. Bell disregards the existence of other struggles, of post-colonial migrations, of gendered inequalities, of class locations, and so on, which demand more comprehensive forms of reclamation. Hence, even while he rejects the notion of a unified Scottish character, he still hopes to synthesise Scotland in the common cultural practice of a self-determined Scotticism.

Bell and McCrone introduce postmodern concerns of textuality and identity into the Scottish debate, but they also illustrate the limits of postmodern theorising. McCrone points to the existence of different locations in society, and the role of consumption as constitutive of identity and difference, but disregards the existence of power in the production of meanings. Bell on the other hand fails to move beyond a nationalism in postmodern garb. In the third part of this chapter, I will make suggestions to overcome this theoretical impasse, and sketch a theory that combines economic conditions, regulating discourses, and a notion of multiple social antagonisms and difference. However, before that, I want introduce some developments in cultural and literary theory

²⁰The transfer from *Orientalism* to ‘Scotticism’ is somewhat ironic. When he defines Scotland as England’s ‘Other,’ Bell seems to recast Scotland as Ireland. He ignores that Scotland was not the hapless victim of British Imperialism, but actually a partner, as Said points out. (101-102). It seems that especially in the current nationalist climate, closer attention to Scotland’s role in the Empire could open truly post-colonial perspectives. See also Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* who begins to unravel the ‘rapturous embrace’ (xiv) of the Empire by Scots.

of the last ten years that should explain the urgency of such a theory of difference.

The 'Recovery' of National Identity

Since the late 1980s there has been something of a cultural turn among nationalists. In 1989, David McCrone still wrote:

There is a reluctance among many Scottish Nationalists today to mobilize simply around the signs and motifs bequeathed from the Scottish past. (‘Representing Scotland’ 161)

Hindsight shows that McCrone may have underestimated the power of the national past and culture even then, but since 1989 cultural nationalists have become far more visible. There is now a nationalist tradition of criticism which is largely oblivious to McArthur’s and Craig’s concern with interaction of identity, culture and production, and vehemently opposed to McCrone’s postmodern notion of the fluidity and hybridity of identity. In the cultural debate of the 1990s, cultural nationalism appears to have become a new hegemonic discourse. Many nationalists take a disconcertingly unproblematic view of identity and believe that Scottish identity can somehow be ‘recovered’ in a national culture. Culture is often regarded as the ‘expression’ of national characteristics or the manifestation of cultural autonomy, and there is a strong tendency to create canons of national culture.

Craig Beveridge’s and Ronald Turnbull’s *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* is a milestone in this recent attempt to rewrite Scottish intellectual history as a canon of national culture, and to treat cultural texts as evidence of national independence. Following Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*, Beveridge and Turnbull reject Nairn’s and McArthur’s ‘Scottish Cringe’ as ‘inferiorist’ and the result of internalised colonialism:

Fanon uses the idea [inferiorisation] to describe those processes in a relationship of national dependence which lead the native to doubt the worth and significance of inherited ways of life and embrace the styles and values of the coloniser. These processes are not to be seen as merely ‘superstructural’; it is through the undermining of the native’s self-belief and the disintegration of local identity that political control is secured. (5)

Beveridge and Turnbull connect cultural representations with forms of community and agency, but in contrast to Craig and McCrone, they attempt the reconstruction of a continuous national tradition of elitist intellectuality from the work of psychologists, educators and philosophers like R.D. Laing, John Anderson or Alasdair MacIntyre. The theorists assembled in *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* seem to have little

more in common than their nationality, yet for Beveridge and Turnbull, this is sufficient reason to mould them into a national canon. The choice of intellectual tradition is also interesting for the kind of community it projects: MacIntyre advocates a philosophy of ‘common good’ and ‘virtue’ that is opposed to difference.²¹ Anderson explicitly rejects participatory forms of education and culture in favour of an elitist classicism.²² Equally conspicuous is the absence of protagonists like the socialist John Maclean, or even the political philosopher C.B. Macpherson (who as a born Canadian may have almost as much of a justification in a Scottish canon as John Anderson, whose work is situated in Australian debates), who could have been central to a radical democratic tradition of difference.

In *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*, culture is central to political struggles, yet the danger is, as McCrone points out, that in the process the existence of a unified national culture is taken for granted. To be so neatly opposed to the supposedly uniform culture of the coloniser, the colonised has to be seen as possessing a complete, unchanging and uniformly suppressed cultural identity. Any contact with an ‘other’ necessarily equals contamination and destruction, and the possible new hybrids that emerge from negotiations of cultural difference are to be rejected as ‘inauthentic.’ Beveridge and Turnbull limit cultural liberation to ‘recovery’ and ‘re-assertion’ of a ‘lost’ identity, and deny internal heterogeneity of regional identities, immigrant cultures, gender difference, age divisions or class antagonisms.

The dangers of such simplifications become more apparent in texts like Paul Scott’s pamphlet *In Bed With an Elephant*, which is driven by disconcerting degrees of Anglophobia and xenophobia. Scott, one of the vice presidents of the Scottish National Party (SNP), describes a homogeneous national culture as the terrain on which Scottish identity can be preserved and defended against an onslaught from England. His pamphlet specifies this Scottish identity with references to myths of Scotland as a more egalitarian and intellectual society that has greater cultural affinities with the Continent than with the much-despised England. The ‘auld alliance’ of pre-Union Scotland and France figures prominently in Scott’s rhetoric, which is a strange populist mix of sabre-rattling tribalism and liberal pluralism. If it comes to the difference of Scotland and England, Scott, advocate of the common culture, is miraculously transformed into an outspoken advocate of cultural diversity:

²¹For a critique of Alasdair MacIntyre’s civic republicanism see Mouffe, *The Return of the Political*.

²²For a discussion of John Anderson see chapter 3.2.2.

The world as a whole has never had more need to defend its diversity than today. The forces working towards a monotonous uniformity have never been stronger from the power of mass consumerism, mass advertising and mass entertainment. The rich diversity of human cultures is threatened by a stifling overlay of a meretricious appeal to the lowest common denominator . . . It is in the interest of mankind that each of us should preserve our identity from the flood which threatens to engulf all of us. The Scottish struggle is part of a world struggle. (34)

In Scott's populist nationalism, that 'rich diversity' is always defined in opposition to England and shrinks to an empty elitism that disguises itself as multiculturalism but has nothing to do with radical difference.²³ Scottish identity is embalmed in a high culture that has to be protected from mass culture and the 'lowest common denominator,' which Scott rather unsubtly equates with a lazy English culture and its alleged lack of 'precision and logic' (36). Ironically, his elitist and essentialist rhetoric is an almost exact replication of the colonial chauvinism and 'Little Englandism' of Margaret Thatcher. He barely disguises that other cultural identities are less than welcome, and that the project of the Scotisation of Scotland through the SNP has the very real potential to take a xenophobic turn:

To the activities of the internal anglicisers, who are always with us, are added an increasing number of immigrants who actually are English. This is a new phenomenon on anything like the present scale. We welcome them, as is proper, with our traditional hospitality. Many of them take the trouble to learn about us and bring with them qualities of real value. Others live in a cocoon of deliberate and complacent ignorance of the society that surrounds them. . . . We are sometimes left feeling like strangers in our own country who are gradually being displaced by a colonial regime. (43-44)

Scott's unproblematic use of the word 'we' transforms Scottish culture into a *laager* against hostile influences from England and the rest of the world. A simple substitution of the word *English* with *Pakistani*, *Ugandan*, *Caribbean* or just *foreigner* opens the racist depths of a

²³Homi Bhabha distinguishes between 'cultural diversity' and 'cultural difference.' In 'The Third Space' he compares the liberal notion of diversity to a '*musée imaginaire*' of 'Western connoisseurship,' whereas difference 'is based on unequal, uneven, multiple, and *potentially antagonistic*, political identities' (208). A statement made by Alasdair Gray in an interview with Sean Figgis and Andrew McAllister illustrates how the internal heterogeneity of Scotland can be transformed into a sign of identity when he opposes it to the alleged uniformity of England: 'Scotland has so many complex different sorts of region and feeling and language, even within itself. More than England has nowadays' (30).

nationalist indignation worthy of an Enoch Powell.²⁴ The reduction of inequality to the national dimension, the disregard for other forms of identity within and across the nation, the lack of a profound critique of the unequal distribution of cultural power and the adoption of an elitist vocabulary turns a dream of independence into the nightmare of ‘Scots supremacy.’

Canon Building and Nation Building

Of course, the struggle around national identity has been carried into literary theory as well. There appears to be a consensus among ‘Scotticists’ that there is an autonomous Scottish literary history that can be discussed without reference to other English-language literatures, that there is a distinct Scottish literary tradition with its own characteristic motifs, and that this synchronically and diachronically independent literature is the expression and celebration of a – however varied – national community. The proliferation over the last two decades of booklength studies of Scottish literary history testifies not only to a heightened interest in literature as a carrier of national identity, it also indicates how important literature and literary theory have become to political struggles. Alan Bold’s *Modern Scottish Literature* (1983) and *Scotland: A Literary Guide* (1989), Roderick Watson’s *The Literature of Scotland* (1984), the collaborative four volume *History of Scottish Literature* (1987), the re-edition of Maurice Lindsay’s *History of Scottish Literature* (1977; 1992), Gavin Wallace’s and Randall Stevenson’s *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (1993), Marshall Walker’s *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (1996) and Douglas Gifford’s and Dorothy McMillan’s *A History of Scottish Women’s Writing* (1997) are some of the more ambitious publications of the last two decades. Together with countless articles they contribute to the project of creating a Scottish literary canon distinct from an English or British canon, which interestingly includes many of the more discomfiting texts by Kelman or Welsh. In this effort they are joined by anthologies like *The Oxford Book of Scottish Short Stories* (1995) or the Edinburgh University

²⁴Enoch Powell (1912-1998), Tory MP (1950-1974) and Ulster Unionist MP (1974-1992) is best known for his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech in 1968. According to Kobena Mercer’s ‘1968,’ Powell’s speech ‘The Enemy Within’ paved the way for the culturalist racism of Margaret Thatcher: his ‘new racism’ sheds the biologist rhetoric of racial superiority and appropriates the language of cultural difference to legitimate the ‘cultural construction of Little England as a domain of ethnic homogeneity, a unified and monocultural “imagined community”’ (435). See also Mercer, ‘Welcome to the Jungle’ (62).

Press's *The Poetry of Scotland* (1995), to name only a few.²⁵ There are also the beginnings of a national infrastructure of print media that would seem to meet the demands of Colin McArthur for the existence of a Scottish 'culture industry' with the material clout to counter misrepresentations à la Hollywood: the publishing company Polygon specialises in the publication of contemporary Scottish authors and critics, and literary journals like *New Writing Scotland* provide an annual forum for Scottish authors. Finally, there is an increasingly vociferous call for an institutionalisation of Scottish literature with the establishment of Departments of Scottish Studies in Scottish universities and the substitution of an English curriculum in schools with a Scottish one. With the publication of the three volume series *Scottish Language and Literature* (1997/8), and especially with the second volume *Teaching Scottish Literature*, editor Douglas Gifford has initiated a project that might carry this minor cultural revolution into Scottish classrooms.

The sheer number of such histories, anthologies and classroom manuals testifies to a broad attempt to absorb literature into the new hegemonic project of nation building. But again, this initiative, like those of Scott, Beveridge and Turnbull often disregard the complexities of culture and identity. In its institutional and economic heterogeneity, this project is also rather different from Duncan Thaw's dream of an imagined city, or from Bell's somewhat idealistic notion of a national literature as a 'repository of ways of imagining living there.' Literature may be part of the creation of a national identity, but it is so as part of a complex relationship with cultural production (e.g. the book market as part of a larger global communications economy), forms of consumption, academic institutions and normative discourses which on the one hand appear to develop as secondary discourses around this literature and which on the other create the very conditions for its emergence.

Yet in most of the recent debates about Scottish literature, the complexity of cultural production as it was addressed by McArthur, Craig or McCrone is often lost. Rarely do theorists engage in any serious discussions of the complex relationships of representation, production, consumption, regulation and identity of Stuart Hall's 'circuit of culture.' The terms *nation*, *identity* and *culture* are hardly ever clarified. As a result, the concept of national identity is often flawed by romantic hankerings after forms of identity that, as McCrone insists, have little to do with the complexities of life in postnational, postcolonial and global contexts.

²⁵An interestingly different project is Tom Leonard's anthology *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War: By Poets Born, or Sometime Resident in, the County of Renfrewshire* (1990).

The most blatant example of such a naturalisation of nationalist ideology in literary theory may be Manfred Malzahn's *Aspects of Identity: The Contemporary Scottish Novel as National Self-Expression*. The title alone creates a chain of ideological equivalences that is never for a moment questioned: 'identity' is always 'national' and singular; the novel (also singular) as a cultural artefact is an 'expression' of the underlying national reality. Malzahn recognises that there is some diversity within Scottish society, but he reduces this to 'aspects' of an otherwise rounded national identity. For him, the task of literature is the discovery of this Scottish identity, and the goal for 'Scottish culture as a whole' is to 'overcome the issue of identity' (14), by which he presumably means the creation of a single and unified identity. The critic becomes fully implicated in the nationalist project when Malzahn writes:

[T]he study of Scottish writing as a national literature should be able to single out those elements of individual works which can be referred to an abstract national consciousness. (17)

The critic here becomes a nationalist ideologue whose task is to legitimate separatist politics through the distillation of national themes and motifs and the creation of a national literature. Theory with its language of almost scientific objectivity becomes a mask for nationalist desires and dreams.²⁶

Many other projects, like Alan Bold's *Modern Scottish Literature*, to some degree share these unexamined notions of culture, cultural theory, nation and identity. Like many before and after him, Bold bases his history on the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy' that haunts Scottish literary criticism since Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature* (1919):

Perhaps in the combination of opposites ... we have a reflection of the contrasts which *the Scot* shows at every turn, in *his* political and ecclesiastical history, in *his* polemical restlessness ... If therefore Scottish history and life are, as an old northern writer said of

²⁶In Malzahn's case, the overemphasis on unity and identity is due to a transportation of American theories of the Cold War era (most notably R.W.B. Lewis's 'American Adam') to the Scottish context, without any examination of its historical agenda. In his essay 'Nationalism in Twentieth-Century Scottish Literary Criticism,' Peter Zeninger describes the national approach as characteristic of the first half of this century, and cautions critics to be guided by their sympathies. Yet, he agrees that 'nationalism ... is as necessary to life as food and drink' (144) and concludes:

[T]he exact nature of its [nationality's] workings in literary texts has as yet remained largely unexplored, in spite of recent progress in cultural semiotics. ... Perhaps if Scottish and English critics join forces in a common effort to clarify the intricate problems of this issue, much will be gained for the understanding and development of each national literary tradition. (152)

Again, national identity is a quantifiable, objective given, and again it is the task of cultural critics to extract it with quasi-scientific means, and to 'discover' a distinctive canon of literary texts.

something else, 'varied with a clean contrair spirit,' we need not be surprised to find that in *his* literature *the Scot* presents two aspects which appear contradictory. (quoted in Bold 3; my emphases)

Again, there is an underlying national identity that is expressed in literature: as Smith's consistent use of the masculine singular shows, even doubleness and schizophrenia are in effect a single solid identity.

A number of critics like Douglas Gifford or Neil McMillan have recognised the necessity to address difference. In 'Scottish Literature and the Challenge of Theory' they express the need for an understanding of Scotland as a community of difference and warn:

[I]n so far as it [Scottish literature] seeks to close itself off and refuses to acknowledge its difference with itself ... thus creating a new centre, some kind of absolute essence of Scotland and its literature it ... ceases to be transformational. (23)

Gifford and McMillan have given up the quest for a single national identity, but like Ian Bell, they now locate identity in cultural production itself: where nature can no longer provide unity, culture has to step in. Gifford and Neil McMillan regard the doubleness of identity as a potential starting point for a deconstruction of Scottishness and discard the hallowed Caledonian Antisyzygy on the grounds that it can become the origin of a new monocultural agenda:

To tie binarisms like head/heart, highland/lowland, passion/reason and so on to the unicity of an organic Scottish tradition is to oversimplify and to limit the kind of liberating opening out that deconstructive reading always involves.

(*'Scottish Literature and the Challenge of Theory'* 23)

Theoretically, the goal would then be the deconstruction of national identity and the reconstruction of identity around different forms of community. Yet the deconstructive move is never completed in their actual readings: in Gifford's 'Imagining Scotlands' or Dorothy McMillan's 'Constructed out of Bewilderment,' Scottish novels and stories are read as national allegories which all, in one way or another, have only one referent, namely Scottish national identity, even if – in accordance with Cairns Craig – the problem of that identity itself is never solved. The publication of *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* illustrates a theoretical politics that recognises differences only within the fixed parameters of the nation: written from the perspective of a Scottish literary history, it becomes impossible to locate Scottish women within larger European or global struggles for emancipation, the gender difference becomes a mere displacement of the national antagonism between Scotland and England. Empowering transnational alliances between women in England and Scotland are not even thinkable within the insular terms of a national literary history. Gifford concedes that there is disagreement as to the nature of 'Scottishness' and therefore

prefers ‘Scotlands’ over a single ‘Scotland.’²⁷ Yet, this pluralisation of Scotland continues to be, as Berthold Schoene-Harwood points out, a ‘potentially essentialist term’ and prevents the reading of Scottish texts as ‘contributions to the heterogeneous canons of feminist, gay, post-modern/dystopian, or working-class literatures written in English’ (55). Different aspects of Scottishness may be articulated, but Gifford and others do not regard these aspects as antagonistic to an extent that deconstructs the national project: they still come together in the project of a single Scottish literature and a single canon.

This final example of the Scottish debate about culture again illuminates the limits of nationalist literary and cultural theorising: the emancipatory language of Gifford turns into its opposite because it remains blind to the existence of radically different locations and historical trajectories within Scotland. Therefore, the Scottish tradition of cultural and literary criticism can only give limiting answers to the question how cultural work can transform the social imaginary. What is therefore required is a criticism that moves beyond the limits of nationalism; in the words of Christopher Whyte, a nationalist approach ‘can only describe patterns of dominance and marginalisation’ (63); it

does not allow us even to conceive of a situation that transcends them. If postmodernism has succeeded in undermining the notion of cultural centres and giving full value to the excentric then it has also opened up a whole new range of possible interactions both within the various communities and regions of the territory named Scotland *and beyond*. (‘Postmodernism, Gender and Belief in Recent Scottish Fiction’ 63; my emphasis)

To move beyond the limits of a criticism that merely reinscribes or displaces the dynamics of margin and centre, I would like to broaden the debate again by drawing from the theories of British and American Cultural Studies that examine the complex interplay of representation, cultural production, consumption, regulatory discourses, and identity.

1.3 Novel Identities

The Scottish debate raises the question to what extent literature and literary theory (as well as other cultural artefacts) can produce identities and communities. Alasdair Gray’s *Duncan Thaw* would have us believe that artistic production has the ability to transform society into community. For the cultural politics of nationalism, even if it comes in

²⁷ ‘Scotlands’ has become a catch phrase in the Scottish debate about national identity. See Ian Campbell, ‘Seeing Ourselves.’

the trappings of multiculturalism, it is clear that the nation is the only true community, wherefore transformative cultural work ‘naturally’ aims at an independent nation state. But the nation is neither a natural form of organising social life, nor a satisfactory answer to the requirements and pressures of postcolonial and postnational constellations. The first part of this chapter is an attempt to clarify the relation between cultural practices and community with the help of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities*, and to denaturalise the nation as a textual formation in the way already hinted at by Ian Bell. In the second part, I will draw on recent theories of British and American Cultural Studies to move beyond the nation to imagine possibilities of difference in a postnational constellation.

1.3.1 Imagining the Nation

In *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson describes the nation not as a natural phenomenon or spontaneous expression of an underlying identity, but as a cultural project:

[N]ationality, or, as one might prefer to put it in view of that word’s multiple significations, nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind. (4)

The nation is not a ‘natural object’ but emerges from cultural interaction in specific historical conditions; it is, in Anderson’s words, an ‘imagined political community’ (6). Anderson does not limit this to the modern nation: community in general can only come into existence through cultural interaction:

[A]ll communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. (6)

According to Anderson, the narratives through which the nation in particular is imagined, serve the double purpose of creating an internal coherence and cohesion to guarantee its sovereignty, and of creating an outside and a limit to the nation, that guarantee its uniqueness.

Imagination, Identity, Agency

Anderson’s term *imagination* may suggest somewhat romantic relation between culture and nation and requires some clarification. There is a latent danger of confusing *imagination* with *imagery*, a form of artistic embellishment of an already existing community. Anthony D. Smith,

whose work revives ethno-genetic theories of the modern nation, does just that when he limits the role of intellectuals and artists to ‘intellectual narrators and artist-celebrators’ (‘The Nation’ 23). In *National Identity*, he elaborates:

It is the intellectuals – poets, musicians, painters, sculptors, novelists, historians and archaeologists, playwrights, philologists, anthropologists and folklorists – who have proposed and elaborated the concepts and language of the nation and nationalism and have, through their musings and research, given voice to wider aspirations that they have conveyed in appropriate images, myths and symbols. (93)

Smith reduces cultural work to archaeology and embroidery: historical research becomes a treasure hunt for the truth of the nation, while language and culture are appropriate expressions of that truth. In his rejection of Anderson’s concept of the imagined community, Smith deliberately misreads ‘imagination’ as ‘imagery’:

Imagery has ... played an important part in the creation in the creation of national consciousness: the figure of the French Marianne or British John Bull, the symbolism of the double-headed Tsarist eagle or Israeli Star of David, the appropriation of the ruins of Zimbabwe or the Great Pyramids of Egypt. (‘The Nation’ 9)

Of course, Smith is right when he points out that in spite of the importance of national symbols (which he misleadingly calls ‘imagery’) as rallying points in times of crisis, the effect of ‘imagery’ is ‘far more circumscribed than present approaches suggest’ (23): Marianne is certainly not responsible for the foundation of the French Republic, nor did the thistle by itself do much for Scottish independence.²⁸ However, this is not at all what Anderson suggests: his *imagination* is not an exhortation to put out more flags in celebration of an always-already existing nation.

Instead, *imagination* describes a system of signification that allows individuals to become acting subjects within their community. Anderson’s imagined community is close to the ‘symbolic construction of community’ of social anthropologist Anthony P. Cohen, who argues that ‘the community itself and everything within it, conceptual as well as material, has a symbolic dimension’ (*The Symbolic Construction of Community* 19). Within the symbolic universe of the community, every action, every object comes to connote the community itself. More importantly, the community provides a system of significations that makes actions and social relations recognisable. For both Anderson and

²⁸In fact, the various symbols that are sometimes taken to represent Scotland, be that tartan or thistle, may be far more likely to nettle Scots than to further the cause of national independence. If Scotland had to wait for its own parliament for almost 300 years, it is not due to a shortage of national symbols.

Cohen, the nation becomes a form of ideology that saturates all interactions with its meanings. In the words of Cohen:

[The symbolic dimension] exists as something for people 'to think with.' The symbols of the community are mental constructs: they provide people with the means to make meaning. In so doing, they also provide them with the means to express particular meanings which the community has for them. (19)

Symbolic communities are therefore not only imagined in the grand literary, artistic or architectural monuments of 'high culture' but also, as Cairns Craig reminds us, in popular culture, and finally in the interactions of everyday life. The nation, the region, even kinship and ethnic communities require these communal signifying systems, and their terms define both the possibilities and the limits of human action. In his essay 'Geschichtsbewußtsein und Posttraditionale Identität' Jürgen Habermas describes this as follows:

Um kollektive Identität formen und tragen zu können, muß der sprachlich-kulturelle Lebenszusammenhang auf eine sinnstiftende Weise vergegenwärtigt werden. Nur die narrative Konstruktion eines auf das eigene Kollektiv zugeschnittenen sinnhaften Geschehens bietet handlungsorientierte Zukunftsperspektiven und deckt den Bedarf an Affirmation und Selbstbestätigung. (165)²⁹

Culture is therefore not something that is put on display on national holidays: it is the very mode of existence of community.

The Nation as Discursive Formation

Though Anderson makes it clear that the nation is not, as nationalists tend to claim, a chosen people with a historic mission and an appropriate cultural identity, *Imagined Communities* is not an attempt to deconstruct the nation.³⁰ The nation is not merely a textual phenomenon, but a

²⁹As a bearer of collective identity, the linguistic and cultural life-world has to be made present in meaningful ways. Only the narrative construction of a meaningful history with one's own collective as a protagonist offers perspectives for the future, opens possibilities for agency and meets the need for self-affirmation. (my translation)

³⁰Deconstructive approaches tend to highlight the circular nature of identities and the teleology of their foundational texts. They point to the ruptures in the surface unity that result from traces of the different submerged texts, and to the contradictions, absences and aporias which result from attempts to naturalise identities with a reference to 'authenticity.' This approach is aptly summarised by Geoffrey Bennington's statement that '[a]t the origin of the nation, we find a story of the nation's origin' (121). Neither is the nation a spectacle or simulacrum that replaces the no-longer available human community, as Jean Baudrillard claims, when he describes the nation as a form of 'nostalgia' and surrogate in response to the

nation-state with certain cultural practices, whether or not these are contradictory. Again, Anderson's *imagination* remains ambiguous; therefore, Craig Calhoun uses Michel Foucault's 'discursive formation' to describe the nation as a cultural narrative that is at the same time a practice (Calhoun, *Nationalism* 3).

For Foucault, discourse is never just a mental operation or language, but is 'itself ... a practice' (*The Archaeology of Knowledge* 46). The nation-state as discursive formation produces its own regulatory apparatuses like schools, law courts, governments and bureaucracies, which then create and reproduce systems of signification, i.e. knowledges and rules for individual and collective action. These institutions and systems of meaning in turn produce favoured subject positions, i.e. they produce behaviours which best 'make sense' within a given context. In *New Reflections on the Revolution of our Time*, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe explain this notion of discourse as follows:

[T]urning to the term discourse itself, we use it to emphasise the fact that every social configuration is *meaningful*. If I kick a spherical object in the street or if I kick a ball in a football match, the *physical* fact is the same, but *its meaning* is different. The object is a football only to the extent that it establishes a system of relations with other objects, and these relations are not given by the mere referential materiality of the objects, but, rather, are socially constructed. This systematic set of relations we call discourse. ... [I]t is the discourse which constitutes the subject position of the social agent which is the origin of discourse. (100, italics in the original)

In other words, the nation-state with its institutions, regulations and norms produces the systems of relations, meanings and knowledges which constitute individuals as social agents who in turn reproduce the nation. The 'national subject' is a position from which relations within the national community are meaningful, it implies certain behaviours and relations to other national subjects. The nation-state also provides a social imaginary, a limit for the possible relations between individuals, and a jealously guarded border within which community, social justice or the future can be imagined. There is an abundance of institutions that educate individuals in what it means to be a national subject. Schooling is the most straightforward producer of cultural knowledges: as we will see in chapter three, a national curriculum of literary texts is central to the construction of Scottish identities. While cultural institutions are sites

postmodern sensation that 'the real is no longer what it used to be' (in Morley and Robins 91). After a brief sketch of a deconstructive approach to Irish conflict, Terry Eagleton caustically remarks: 'All that remains is now to explain this on the Falls and Shankill roads. Even those who had the insolence to do so would no doubt soon be brought to realize that their assertion of the metaphysical emptiness of Catholic and Protestant identities was itself metaphysically empty' ('Nationalism: Irony and Commitment' 25).

where power gains the consent of its subjects, there are of course coercive institutions like the police, the judiciary, or penal institutions, which also to some degree educate citizens.³¹

In 'Scotticism,' Ian Bell applies a more text-oriented variant of the discursive formation to Scotland and Scottish culture. For him, the struggle around 'Scottishness' becomes a question of 'textual attitudes' (127): the national Scottish identity is constantly recreated in cultural representations of both literature and literary theory, but also in historical and any number of other cultural narratives. Either in the stereotypical images of national characteristics or in the representation of a unified national culture, these narratives provide maps of past, present and future. They limit or expand individual or collective possibilities. With reference to Foucault, Bell writes:

The accumulated imagery of Scotland in all these texts and contexts, held together by the ideological cement of a clearly defined 'national character,' becomes first of all a repository of knowledge, invested with academic authority and popular appeal. Subsequently, from pretending to describe certain essential conditions of Scottishness, the discourse sets the agenda for future creations, and actually provides restrictive and exhaustive criteria for the recognition of anything Scottish. (132)

As part of institutionalised practice, cultural texts like novels or literary histories create Scottish subject positions. The Scottish subject is not the origin of a discourse of Scottishness, but is called into place by cultural formations that reach far beyond the borders of Scotland, into stereotypical narratives of Scotland as 'the North' of Britain, the land of tartan and shortbread.

Imagination as Cultural Production

It should by now be clear that to use the term 'imagined community' is not to suggest that Scotland is J.M Barrie's 'Never-Never Land' of myth and mist. Particularly, the misleading term *imagination* does not imply that nations are 'phantoms formed in the human brain' (Karl Marx, *The Portable Karl Marx* 169), or varieties of 'false consciousness,' as Ernest Gellner likes to call them ('Nationalism and the Development of European Societies' 19). Anderson explicitly rejects Gellner:

With a certain ferocity Gellner ... rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where they do not exist.' The drawback of this formulation,

³¹The distinction between 'coercion' and 'consent' is Antonio Gramsci's, who uses it to describe different hegemonic strategies. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 259.

however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity,' rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation.'

(6, Anderson's emphasis)

Nations and national cultures are indeed 'produced' within capitalist forms of production, but Anderson, like most recent theorists of Cultural Studies, collapses the orthodox opposition of 'base' and 'superstructure' that underpins both Gellner's and Nairn's theories. The result is a re-conceptualisation of imagination as 'a constitutive element of material social practice' (Williams, *Marxism and Literature* 165) within historically specific modes of production.

According to Anderson, it was the material social practice of print-capitalism and its products that paved the way for early modern European nations. Print-capitalism transformed texts into commodities thus giving them unprecedented reach and mobility as well as the potential for social transformation. These widely distributed texts provided the necessary conditions for standardised vernaculars, popular literacy, knowledges, regulatory institutions like the public school, and finally national bureaucracies, all of which transformed social life around the now imaginable national community:

[T]he convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation. (46)

For Anderson, novels and newspapers as the typical products of print-capitalism are instrumental to the emergence of national consciousness and national subjects. If historical forms of community 'are to be distinguished ... by the style in which they are imagined' then the representations of novel and newspaper are the 'styles' of the modern nation. The page of the newspaper creates a semblance of simultaneity and a unified space for all the different and seemingly disjointed events that take place within the national borders. According to Anderson, this allows readers to think themselves as parts of the national unit that provides meaning and order in a world characterised by discontinuity.

The novel works in a similar way by reducing the sheer size of the nation and the abstract nature of social relationships in a capitalist mass society to narratives of individual protagonists. The form of the modern novel with its new 'realist' conception of characters, space and time is based on a plot of coincidence, simultaneity, cause and effect which is itself a representation and reimagination of the individual in the modern capitalist nation state. Coincidence and simultaneity promise meaning in a complex world, while the 'realistic' descriptions of social anonymity in a 'world of plurals' (32) represents 'the fatal diversity' of life as a picturesque play of colours on the clearly limited canvass of the nation.

The novel therefore creates order out of apparent chaos and re-presents community as nation by creating national readers and providing them with the knowledge and assurance that allows them to interact meaningfully with others. Timothy Brennan rephrases Anderson's notion of the novel as follows:

The novel's created world allowed for multitudinous actions occurring simultaneously within a single, definable community, filled with 'calendrical coincidences.' ... Read in isolation, the novel was nevertheless a mass ceremony. (52)

In other words, Anderson and Brennan pose a necessary link between nation and novel: the reader becomes a national subject through the style, the production and the distribution of cultural fictions.

1.3.2 Imagining Communities of Difference

Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* gives a theoretical account of Duncan Thaw's instinctive connection between culture, community and identity by linking the 'imagination' of cultural producers with institutions and with material production. However, it has a number of related blind spots. Firstly, it lacks a theory of difference. Like nationalist theories, Anderson's universal history of the nation conceptualises identity as singular and monolithic rather than plural and antagonistic. The nation seems to be the *only* and therefore quasi-natural discourse that can position subjects as social agents. In Anderson's narrative, the nation simply emerges at a certain historical juncture, and other historical formations disappear without trace. Secondly, missing from Anderson's account is a sense of social antagonisms along the faultlines of class, age, gender, ethnicity, and so on. He accepts national identity as one-dimensional and unchanging, whereas I will suggest a notion of identity as composite and fluid, always re-constituting itself in dialogue and struggle with others. Thirdly, Anderson constructs culture as a kind of national short circuit (to appropriate Stuart Hall's metaphor). Regardless of their social location, their class, gender, age and ethnicity, readers of novels and newspapers have no choice but to become national subjects: culture becomes an ideological apparatus in the narrowest Althusserian sense. Instead, I will argue for the possibility of antagonistic readings from a number of discursive locations, which resist the smooth reproduction of the nation. Finally, Anderson does not move beyond national print-capitalism with its vernaculars to more recent forms of global cultural production, mainly image-production, which challenges the vernacular with visions of a global village.

Difference

In contrast to Anderson, who understands identity as monolithically national, Eric Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism* reminds us that the nation can never attain the degree of homogeneity the ideology of nationalism suggests:

[W]e cannot assume that for most people national identification – when it exists – excludes or is always or ever superior to, the remainder of the set of identifications which constitute the social being. In fact, it is always combined with identifications of another kind, even when it is felt to be superior to them. (11)

Community implies struggle over different forms of subjectivity and identifications, be they ethnicity, class, gender, or any other possible discursive location. As a community of multiple cultural differences and shifting alliances between different social groups, Scotland is no exception.

Historically, Scotland is a multiethnic community. National formations always had to be established against the particular interests of various ethnic and tribal groups.³² But the national narrative was not powerful enough to guarantee the continued existence of an independent Scotland. With the Union of Parliaments in 1707, the narrative of 'Britishness' became the hegemonic (though not uncontested) discourse in Scotland. Also, the mix of races and languages characterised Scotland through the Middle Ages, beyond the ban of Gaelic after the Jacobite rising into the present coexistence of different cultures in the lowlands, highlands and islands, as well as Orkney and Shetland. In the nineteenth century, new waves of immigration began with the arrival of the Irish and, as Bashir Maan develops in *The New Scots*, Italians, Lithuanians, Poles and, most recently, Afro-Caribbeans, Indians, Pakistani, Chinese and English, who turn Scotland into a multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural community.

Anthony P. Cohen attributes the failure of the 1979 referendum exactly to the heterogeneity of specific local identifications in Scotland.³³ But the success of the 1997 referendum and the increase of popular support for the SNP and complete political independence after the referendum do not indicate that Scots have now found their 'manifest destiny.' Support continues to be strong for Tony Blair's New Labour

³²See Gray, *Independence*; Hastings, *The Construction of Nationhood*; Maan, *The New Scots*.

³³See *The Symbolic Construction of Community* 13.

and the programme of devolution without independence,³⁴ as is support for trade unions, which traditionally favour British politics.

British identifications, though significantly diminished by the ‘Little Englandism’ of Margaret Thatcher, continue to be a strong factor in Scottish politics.³⁵ Following the Scottish Labour MP John P. Mackintosh, McCrone writes that ‘Scots were “Scottish” for certain purposes and “British” for other purposes’ (*Understanding Scotland* 194); therefore ‘it was quite logical to have dual identities’ (*Scotland – The Brand* 70). Of course these identifications are further complicated e.g. by class differences: arguably, this duality of Britishness/Scottishness was different for trade union members who worked in factories along the Clyde and their MPs who travelled between London and their Scottish constituencies. Hence, the duality may always have been more than just dual. Feminisms, post-colonialisms and other discourses have multiplied these differences along other axes, and it is now possible to speak not only of dual, but of multiple Scottish identities. In the words of Douglas and Ouainé Bain and Gillian Skirrow, Scotland is ‘a multiplicity of sub-culture and identity groupings’ (‘Woman, Women and Scotland’ 6), which opens the possibility of emancipatory struggles on a number of levels.

To move from the particular instance of Scotland to the theory of the nation in general, Anderson disregards the existence of identifications like gender, class, age, ethnicity or other supra- and sub-national identities against which national unity has to be established, with which national elites have to forge alliances, and which finally leave their traces in national discourses. In *Imagined Communities*, the transition from pre-national societies to the nation is represented as a historical rupture: once the nation is conceived, it seems to exist full-blown while former communities have withered away without a trace. Anderson uses the example of different concepts of time to illustrate this leap from pre-national communities to the modern nation: in contrast to mediaeval time, which was ahistorical and represented the individual in an eternal present where events of the past and the expected salvation in

³⁴The System 3 Polls of voting preferences for the Scottish Parliament show a steady increase of votes for the SNP from 29% (11/97) to 48% (7/98), followed by a decline to below 30% on election day in May 1999. There was a corresponding decline of votes for Labour from 48% (11/97) to 34% (7/98) and an increase to just under 40% (6/99). Voting preferences for the UK Parliament show a majority for Labour, which may serve as an illustration that nationalists have not won hegemony and national independence continues to be a highly contested issue.

³⁵On the impact of Margaret Thatcher on Scottish attitudes towards the Union see for instance James Mitchell, ‘Scotland in the Union’ and Tony Dickson, ‘Scotland is Different, OK?’

the future could exist simultaneously, modern time is ‘homogeneous, empty time’,³⁶

in which simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfilment, but by temporal coincidence, and measured by clock and calendar. (24)

This secularised understanding of time is an effect of ‘economic change, “discoveries” (social and scientific), and the development of increasingly rapid communications’ (36). According to Anderson, this notion of time and its sense of contingency and arbitrariness causes an identity crisis, which is magically resolved by the nation and its new meanings and continuities. With protagonists who move through linear, measurable time simultaneously and meet only through fateful coincidence, the novel is a representation of the new community and its new forms of subjectivity:

The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which is also conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history. (26)

However, as Homi Bhabha points out in ‘DissemiNation,’ this experience of time is by no means the universal experience of modernity, but is located within specific hegemonic interests, which had to be established against other concepts of time and community, which continued to exist as double or other.³⁷ The move from one regime of time to another is actually linked to social struggles, which inscribe themselves in the surface of novels. Novelistic representations of time therefore always utter a ‘ghostly time’ which is surmounted by the hegemonic notion of linear time. Hence, novelistic time is never uniform, but always ‘double’ or ‘split’:

Such an apprehension of the ‘double and split’ time of national representation, as I am proposing, leads us to question the homogeneous and horizontal view familiarly associated with it. We are led to ask, provocatively, whether the *emergence* of a national

³⁶This famous phrase is from Walter Benjamin’s ‘Theses on the Philosophy of History.’ Benjamin is not concerned with a description of *the* time of modernity, but with the time of the historicist method, which aims at a universal history and ‘musters a mass of data to fill the homogeneous, empty time’ (*Illuminations* 254). It is telling that in his own attempt to write a universal history of *the* nation, Anderson should conflate the theoretical narrative of historicism with the time of modernity itself.

³⁷See Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* for a complex account of the shift in representations of time in a variety of material cultural practices around the turn of the century. Kern describes the emergence of heterogeneous and even contradictory discourses, and the resistances for instance against ‘linear’ time. This account makes clear that even by that time, ‘empty, homogeneous time’ was far from being established, and continued to be contested by other regimes of time.

perspective – of an élite or subaltern nature – within a culture of social contestation, can ever articulate its ‘representative’ authority in that fullness of narrative time. (295; Bhabha’s italics)

In Scotland, there are the different times of migrants that settle in Scotland; the daily rounds of work; the cyclical return of the tourist economy; new forms of simultaneity in the virtual reality of global information exchange; or the global system of just-in-time production that dislodges national industries and societies, to name only a few. These times, as well as different forms of subjectivity and identity haunt the texts of contemporary Scottish authors and prevent the writing of a universal history. In the words of Mikhail Bakhtin, their texts are embodiments of ‘social multiaccentuality’ or ‘heteroglossia’:

[V]arious different classes will use one and the same language. As a result, differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of class struggle. (Vološinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* 23)

Within this class struggle – which may here stand for a number of other social struggles – the hegemonic group or class attempts to naturalise the meaning of the sign or cultural text and to impose its own ‘uniaccentual’ meaning. However, this project can never be completed: Scotland continued to exist as a double or other of England in the British context even while other identities continue to haunt the Scottish nation with their voices. These differences prevent the complete closure of discourses of British, English or Scottish identities and makes it necessary to rethink identity as constant re-negotiation of different discursive positions.

Articulation

If Anderson ignores difference, he cannot address the antagonism between different groups or the attempt to form alliances. According to Antonio Gramsci, different groups struggle for hegemony in a society and attempt to take over the institutions of the state. But rather than take over the state with a single revolutionary act and through coercion of all other classes, their strategy is one of compromise and consent through which they try to form a coalition or ‘historic bloc.’ Stuart Hall introduces the semiotic concept of ‘articulation’ to describe both the historic processes of alliance-formation and the compositeness of identity in general:

[T]he term has a nice double meaning because ‘articulate’ means to utter, to speak forth, to be articulate. It carries that sense of language-ing, of expressing, etc. But we also speak of an articulated lorry (truck): a lorry where the front (cab) and back

(trailer) can, but need not necessarily, be connected to one another. The two parts are connected to each other, but through a specific linkage that can be broken. ... It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask, under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made? So the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness.' ('On Postmodernism and Articulation' 141)

Identity is therefore subject to constant articulation, dis-articulation, and re-articulation of different discourses, it has to be understood as a form of strategic positioning, alliance and struggle.

Ernesto Laclau and Chantall Mouffe use this concept in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* to deconstruct the orthodox notion of the 'working class' as a privileged and transhistorical agent. Instead, they address it as a 'historic bloc' that emerges from strategic alliances between otherwise disparate social groups.³⁸ A similar move can be made in the case of the nation: the Scottish nation is not a privileged agent with universal properties, but an alliance between groups and classes, the terms of which constantly have to be renegotiated and re-imagined in on-going cultural struggles. Therefore, other articulations and other hegemonic constellations are always imaginable.

Laclau and Mouffe importantly point out that the elements that are being articulated are never essential, but themselves discursive:

Objects appear articulated not like pieces in a clockwork mechanism, but because the presence of some in the others hinders the suturing of identity in any of them. (104)

Therefore, if the UK is one such historical alliance, then neither Scottish nor English identities remained unchanged by the articulation: Scottishness is present in English and British identities and vice versa. Conversely, here can be no return to an essential Scottish identity, there is no original point of departure that can be recovered. Similarly, the politics of Scottish workers or women will always have to be positional, linked with specific historical conditions. There can be no return to an autonomous and pre-discursive Self of romantic philosophy or the essential forms of identity which characterised the exclusionary 'identity politics' of some of the new social movements, including nationalism, socialism and feminism. Instead, the post-deconstructive subject emerges from discourses as plural subject *positions*.

³⁸For a contextualisation of the theory of hegemony and articulation in the larger theoretical debates on the Left during the 1980s and specifically in cultural studies see for instance Stuart Hall, 'The Problem of Ideology' and 'Gramsci's Relevance for the Study of Race and Ethnicity,' John Fiske, 'Opening the Hallway' and Jorge Larrain, 'Stuart Hall and the Marxist Concept of Ideology.'

Hall therefore redefines ‘identity’ as ‘positional and strategic’ identification; ‘identity politics’ is transformed into a ‘politics of location’ (‘Who Needs Identity?’ 2) in which identity is never fixed but always in the process of emerging:

The concept of identity deployed here is ... not an essentialist, but a strategic and positional one. That is to say, directly contrary to what appears to be its settled semantic career, this concept of identity does *not* signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already ‘the same,’ identical to itself across time. Nor – if we translate this essentializing conception to the stage of cultural identity – is it that ‘collective or true self hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed “selves” which a people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common’ and which can stabilize, fix or guarantee an unchanging ‘oneness’ or cultural belongingness underlying all other superficial differences. It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (3-4)³⁹

For Hall, different subject positions arise from different overlapping and often antagonistic discourses: there is never just one history (the history of the Scottish nation), never one discourse (the discourse of Scottish identity) but a number of histories and discourses that all variously intersect within the subject. In the way Habermas described, all of these cultural narratives open up spaces of agency and possibilities for the transformation of the social imaginary and versions of happiness. This suggests the possibility of postnational communities that no longer rely on fixed and bordered identities, but on ‘identifications,’ transitory and local processes. For these new communities, Hall translates the totalitarian call of Althusser’s ideology into a far more relative appeal: ‘you, this time, in this space, for this purpose, by this barricade with these folks’ (‘Subjects in History’ 292). Postnationalist identifications are therefore moments of ‘arbitrary closure’ (Slack, ‘The Theory and Method of Articulation’ 115), strategic positions that can be adopted in specific contexts to create new possibilities for agency.

Translated into the terms of the nation and nationalism this means that neither the nation nor cultural artefacts like the novel can be what Timothy Brennan calls a ‘clearly bordered jumble’ (49); national identity is *not* a natural umbrella for other identities. Instead, national identity is always articulated with other identities such as gender, age, class or

³⁹The in-quote is from Hall, ‘Cultural Identity and Diaspora.’

ethnicity, and it is from the different articulations and conflicts that different subject positions emerge. In the present historical moment in Scotland, there is an increasing conviction that national identification creates new possibilities for agency that were stifled before: the new Scottish Parliament holds the promise that the bureaucratic administration of the Scottish Office can be replaced by new forms of democratic participation, and – at least in the eyes of nationalists – complete independence beckons with greater prosperity. Yet, Scottish nationalism – like all other nationalisms – is a historical alliance of different social groups and the new forms of agency are perceived differently in different locations of Scottish society: some social groups may well fear that some articulations will be privileged over others, and that they stand to gain little from an alliance with the national project.

Representation and Meaning

In Anderson's theory, novel and newspaper evenly reproduce the national ideology. By virtue of its form, Anderson's novel translates into national identity without so much as a ripple, there is no space for the transitory articulation of different discourses. The meaning of a text is the same everywhere, regardless who reads a novel, under what circumstances and in what historical period. There is no sense that meaning may be imposed by historical powers. Neither is there a sense that this power, its discourses and institutions can be resisted. There is no possibility for intervention, because readers are merely the mirror images of a completely homogeneous national culture. In his essay 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,' Louis Althusser illustrates the power of ideology with the example of the Jewish God who calls Moses from the cloud. Like Althusser's God, the novel hails its readers as national subjects, and these readers have no choice but to recognise themselves in that call, to turn around and answer with an obedient 'Yes?'

The problem becomes apparent in Dorothy McMillan's 'Constructed out of Bewilderment.' McMillan regards the Scottish novel as 'inextricably implicated' in the emergence of the Scottish nation, as if the genre of the novel was simply a nation-producing machine. Through Brennan in particular, who has stripped Anderson's imagination of its historical specificities, McMillan can read 'the' Scottish novel as 'national allegory' (86):

[H]istorically the very project of the novel involved the celebration and organization of that heterogeneity that also characterizes the raw material of nationhood. For Balzac the 'novel is the private history of nations' and its great flowering in the nineteenth century went hand in hand with European nationalism and the demarcation

of national literary boundaries. And, of course, in Latin America and the Third World the novel is inextricably implicated in the formation or critique of national consciousness. (81)

Though McMillan allows for a 'critique' of national consciousness, passages like these highlight a number of problems in the argument of Anderson and Brennan. Disregarding the historical and regional specificities of production, consumption, identities, and cultural narratives, McMillan can leap from the France of Balzac to present day Latin America to a vague 'Third World' and finally to Scotland, as if the novel is a novel is a novel regardless of particular historical and socio-economic contexts. In the hands of Brennan and McMillan, the concept neither allows for the radical changes nationalism has undergone in the past two centuries, nor the widely differing histories of nations even in the same period.⁴⁰ Moreover, it does not consider the changes in the production of the novel since the days of Balzac, nor does it allow for the possibility that novels were consumed differently by men and women, workers, landowners or domestic labourers even then.⁴¹

Stuart Hall's theoretical work arises from a dissatisfaction with the framework of identity as ideologically interpellated and allows me to rethink the relation of cultural representations and identity. Beginning with his analysis of television in 'Encoding, Decoding,' Hall complicates the concept of representation, which in Althusser and Anderson appears as an unmediated translation from representation to identity.⁴² Hall insists that there is 'no necessary correspondence' (100) between representation and identity and distinguishes four separate 'moments': production, circulation, consumption and reproduction. In the 'circuit of culture' Hall modifies his model and adds 'identity' and 'regulation.' These 'moments' form complex interactions with each other as Hall's graphic representation illustrates very well (see Introduction). I would like to single out one element to illustrate a few isolated aspects of Hall's theory. Representations, for instance in a movie like *Trainspotting*, are produced within certain discursive and economic conditions. The producers target certain consumer groups, for example young suburban audiences. Therefore they try to shape their product according to the assumed needs of that target group. At the same time, the representations

⁴⁰For attempts to address the extreme heterogeneity of nations, see Cohen, *Nationalism* and Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*.

⁴¹Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* presents a much more complex picture of the consumption of the novel, which makes it difficult indeed to regard it as a simple apparatus for the reproduction of national meanings.

⁴²This essay is an early formulation of the 'circuit of culture.' On the development of encoding/decoding see Sparks, 'Stuart Hall, Cultural Studies and Marxism,' Slack, 'The Theory and Method of Articulation' and Grossberg, 'History, Politics and Postmodernism.'

of *Trainspotting* also to some extent *create* viewers with certain needs, and they influence the way in which these viewers identify themselves for instance as youths and how they imagine possibilities of participation. The movie is also produced within certain discursive regulations, its representations of drug users respond to larger social debates about youth, drugs, or masculinity. Nevertheless, the codes of these representations never completely match those of the actual viewers, and representations may have some entirely unintended consequences. Representations do not have what might be called an identity effect, but have ‘very complex perceptual, cognitive, emotional, ideological or behavioural consequences’ (93). Encoding and decoding depend on differently situated knowledges and codes, which may not only be asymmetrical, but actually antagonistic. In Hall’s theory, consumption is an active process of negotiation of meaning from different locations, never a pre-programmed response.⁴³ Consumers always have the possibility to misread, to resist, and to appropriate the text in ways that were never intended.

Hence, the novels of Iain Banks, Janice Galloway, or Alasdair Gray cannot automatically reproduce a Scottish national ideology and interpellate Scottish readers as subjects of a Scottish nation. Firstly, their novels differ too much from the nineteenth century genre of that name to permit McMillan’s sweeping conclusions about the necessary relation between Balzac’s novel and present-day Scottish nationalism. Secondly, different readers negotiate the meaning of these novels within a number of representations in different media, and within numerous transnational and local discourses, which makes the meanings of novels part of an ongoing contestation.

A cautionary remark may be in order to prevent confusion of Hall’s theory with varieties of reader response theory or with celebrations of performance in depoliticised versions of postmodernism.⁴⁴ To emphasise that there is ‘no necessary correspondence’ between

⁴³For similar approaches to Scottish TV news programming, see the Glasgow Media Group’s *Bad News, More Bad News* and *Really Bad News* and Kendrick, ‘Scotland, Social Change and Politics.’ In Kendrick’s study, the viewers of Scottish news programming were not mechanistically interpellated by the news broadcasts, but responded differently, depending on their social locations: Kendrick claims that the new identity offered by BBC Scotland and STV had little appeal for people with strong local and family allegiances and attracted mainly young urbanites, who lacked strong identifications and therefore responded most favourably to the national messages. For viewers with strong non-national identifications, most notably maybe British working-class allegiances, such identifications are problematic, and the interpellation has to be negotiated between different identifications, or even completely refused.

⁴⁴See e.g. Norman Holland, *The Dynamics of Literary Response*, which reduces reading to psychoanalysis. In Wolfgang Iser’s *The Act of Reading* reception becomes

cultural representations and identity cannot mean that there is no correspondence: readers do not 'pick'n mix' their individual meanings from the salad bar of identity. Cultural texts are always subject to power, social institutions, and political economies which try to naturalise 'uniaccentual' meanings of texts:

Any society/culture tends, with varying degrees of closure, to impose its classifications of the social and cultural and political world. These constitute a dominant cultural order, though it is neither univocal nor uncontested. ('Encoding, Decoding' 98)

Through its regulatory institutions and discourses, the hegemonic social order produces certain 'dominant or preferred meanings' (98). These meanings do not emerge spontaneously, but have to be created in a continuous process, or even enforced, by the dominant group or class, its institutions and regulatory mechanisms:

In speaking of dominant meanings, then, we are not talking about a one-sided process which governs how all events will be signified. It consists of the 'work' required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a decoding of the event within the limit of the dominant definitions. (99)

Dominant meanings therefore gain currency not because they are 'true,' but because they are linked to power and are, in Foucault's terms, part of a 'regime of truth.' They have certain 'truth effects' in social relations, interactions, behaviours and social imaginaries. These truths are distributed through institutions like schools, bureaucracies, legal institutions, political formations or economic structures, but their hegemony is by no means total: they continue to be engaged in social struggles with other meanings that may be part of 'residual' or 'emergent' discourses, as Raymond Williams calls them (*Marxism and Literature* 122-125).

To describe this social struggle about meaning Hall, Laclau and Mouffe appropriate Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Cultural work is of immense importance for the hegemonic project, because it is here that consensus for a particular version of community is either lost or won. For Gramsci, cultural work is largely pedagogical work: in the *Prison Notebooks*, he describes the institutions of the state (and, Hall would add, the cultural institutions) as pedagogical institutions in which the hegemonic bloc wins the consensus of the population by transmitting

a hermeneutic exercise between text and a socially indeterminate reader, a view that mars Iser's attempt to move toward a 'literary anthropology' in his more recent *Prospecting*. Even Stanley Fish's *Is There A Text In This Class?* which introduces the concept of 'interpretive communities' disregards the asymmetrical relations of social power within which such communities are constituted.

certain knowledges and offering a range of subject positions.⁴⁵ Henry Giroux describes the pervasiveness of pedagogy as follows:

Pedagogy occurs wherever knowledge is produced, wherever culture is given the possibility of translating experience and constructing truths, even if such truths appear unrelentingly redundant, superficial, and commonsensical. On the other hand, there are standardized pedagogies that codify experience and shape meaning production in predictable and in conventional ways, and in doing so naturalize meaning and the social structures and cultural forms, which help to reproduce such meaning. (*Border Crossings* 218-9)

While schooling most obviously produces such meanings, all cultural and social institutions and their representations are ultimately pedagogical. But both for Hall and Giroux, there is always the possibility of resistance against dominant pedagogies and knowledges. There is space for oppositional pedagogies which

resist such formalized production of meaning by offering new channels of communication, new codifications of experience, and new perspectives of reception which unmask the political linkage between images, their means of production and reception, and the social practices they legitimate. (*Border Crossings* 219)

Meaning, though dominant, is never total, and there is always the possibility of imagining differently.

Postnational Production

Finally, I want to address the changed conditions of production and consumption particularly of novels within late capitalism. The genre of the novel has been transformed with the emergence of visual media, globalised communications technologies, new modes of production and consumption, and new notions of subjectivity. Scotland is 'imagined' in a time when print technology has become absorbed by the larger image production systems of late capitalism, and new styles of imagination project new postnational forms of community. The new simultaneity of telecommunications, satellite TV and virtual reality makes it necessary to negotiate identity within the images of a new world order rather than the nation. In the corporatised economy of global image production, Anderson's notion of imagination as material production is as valid as ever, but a consequent continuation of his theory requires the consideration of the global communications empires of Disney, Time Warner, Murdoch, Berlusconi or Bertelsmann, which have absorbed the

⁴⁵For a discussion of the relevance of pedagogy to Gramsci's theory of hegemony see Giroux and Simon, 'A Pedagogy of Pleasure and Meaning' and Giroux, 'Rethinking Cultural Politics and Radical Pedagogy in the Work of Antonio Gramsci.'

publication and international distribution of novels. Their deregulated modes of production and global marketing produce knowledges of the global village and are a powerful challenge to the nation as the provider of both economic security and meaning. Therefore, the imagined community has to be rethought within global image production systems rather than national print-capitalism. Neither novel nor nation are fixed in their meanings or in the forms of subjectivity they favour, but take on completely different meanings within the context of what one might call global image- or information-capitalism.

Within image-capitalism, both local and transnational identities like ethnicity, gender or class gain new and different significance, while the nation loses some of its relevance. As David Morley and Kevin Robins point out in *Spaces of Identity*, postmodern image-capitalism challenges the nation from above and below by offering both international and new regional forms of identification: while media conglomerates integrate horizontally on a global scale, production and consumption are decentralised vertically, which strengthens specific local identities (34). At the same time, subjectivity and community are depoliticised and recreated in the image of global consumption, centred around the individual and his or her consumer choices, while, as Habermas points out in *Die Postnationale Konstellation*, democratic political and social interactions have not yet been sufficiently imagined.

Both the struggle over Scottish independence and the role of novels in the creation of national or other forms of community therefore have to be rethought within the postnational dynamics of privatisation, globalisation and corporatisation of imagination. There is now an international culture of best-selling fiction in English: Jamaican, American, Canadian, Scottish, Indian, English, Pakistani, Nigerian or Australian writers mingle on the shelves of international chain stores, often without being immediately recognisable as such, and an increasing number of translations make French, Chinese, Spanish, Norwegian, German or Hungarian texts readily available. Novels also interact with other media: embedded in an increasingly visual society, novelistic 'techniques' often take up elements of that visual culture. Successful novels like *Trainspotting* are often remade as movies, their images set afloat in the global communications channels, where specific social struggles are in danger of being reduced to readily consumable signifiers of regional quaintness within a homogeneous global community.

However, just as it is problematic to interpret the novel as the fixed medium of the nation, it would be misleading to assume that the global amalgamate of print and image-capitalism necessarily reproduces a global consumer ideology. In the second chapter I will argue that contemporary Scottish fiction indeed intervenes in national as well as international discourses and the ways in which both limit notions of

subjectivity and agency. The novel can indeed become the site of complex struggles and resistances to both these discourses: even as internationally marketed writers, James Kelman, Alasdair Gray or Irvine Welsh are never fully determined either by the nation or by the market. They can and do challenge both these narratives of unproblematic diversity with their own narratives of politicised regional identities, radical difference and social agency.

1.4 Summary

These excursions into the Scottish debate around national identity and culture as well as into the theories of Cultural Studies complicate the claims of Iain Bell and Alasdair Gray considerably. Benedict Anderson, Stuart Hall and other theorists agree that literary representations shape identities and communities, but they have clarified that this cannot be understood as a sentimental education. Cultural identities are part of a complex 'circuit of culture' and constantly emerge from a negotiation of contradictory representations, regulatory discourses and institutions, and the conditions of consumption and production. This circuit does not reproduce identity evenly: there is no necessary relation between identity and representations of a certain community. At every point there are possibilities for intervention: texts can subvert dominant discourses, or they can be read against the grain and appropriated in unintended ways. Anderson, Bhabha, Gramsci, Hall, Laclau, Mouffe and other theorists of Cultural Studies have not only made culture thoroughly political, they have moved it to the centre stage of struggles for different visions of community.

National culture and identity are therefore not natural, as nationalists continue to claim, but deeply implicated in political projects. As part of the circuit of culture, identity has to be conceptualised as cultural, fractured, relational, composite, and subject to hegemonic struggles. Scottish nationalists form an alliance of different social groups that attempts to establish its hegemony within various institutions. Scottish literature becomes part of this cultural struggle, for instance when nationalists rewrite texts as national allegories, forge them into a curriculum of national literature, teach these texts in newly established Scottish Departments in universities, and create outlets for Scottish material, etc.

But again this process is not a symmetrical process of reproduction, and an emerging nationalist hegemony need not be accepted as a natural given by those who fear a national apartheid. In the next chapter I argue that literary texts are always articulated from various

positions, and resist complete national absorption. A cultural politics of difference can intervene with counter-readings that challenge closed meanings, mobilise the multiaccentuality of texts and create a new social imaginary that is heterogeneous, decentred, open, and democratic.

‘Putting a Brick Through Somebody’s Window’: Writing as Intervention

2.1 Commitment in Times of Difference

Many writers in contemporary Scotland feel strongly about writing as a form of social participation, commitment or activism. For Kelman, one of the most outspoken advocates of art as social and political involvement, writing is coterminous with commitment. In his essay ‘The Importance of Glasgow in My Work’ he defines his work as a writer in a characteristically careful manner:

How to define being a writer. I’d like to use the term ‘artist’ in its general sense; an artist can be a poet, a novelist, a sculptor, a songwriter, a painter and so on. For myself being an artist comes second to being a person. If a person is committed to some project or other and the person happens to be an artist, then that person is an artist who is committed. This applies also where the ‘project’ the artist is committed to is social or political change. Artists have their own ideas and opinions on that. For some artists in other parts of the world, being committed to a political cause often requires they stop working at what they do best, their art; their perception of their place in that particular society doesn’t permit them the ‘luxury’ – there are many instances of this, artists forced into exile and devoting themselves to the liberation of their country. They become organisers, activists, soldiers, with little or no time left for their own art.

(Some Recent Attacks 79)

While at least in the first half of this statement Kelman may sound as if non-commitment was a valid option, a later passage in which he bluntly asserts that he has ‘nothing to say to writers who aren’t committed’ (80) makes it quite clear that it is not.

In recent years, writers have participated actively in a variety of public debates ranging from the compensation of asbestos victims in Glasgow to Scottish independence. Campaigns against Glasgow as the ‘European City of Culture’ brought together an alliance of writers like Tom Leonard, Alasdair Gray and James Kelman. In the preface to the screen adaptation of his novel *Trainspotting* Irvine Welsh calls writers ‘cultural activists’ (‘City Tripper’ [13]), and in an interview with Euen

Kerr, Duncan McLean describes his writing as ‘cultural intervention’ and a way of ‘putting a brick through somebody’s window’ (6).

However, unlike Hugh MacDiarmid, the mythologised giant of the Scottish Renaissance, writers like Gray, Kelman, McLean or Galloway no longer comfortably inhabit any one emancipatory narrative, nationalist, socialist or otherwise.⁴⁶ In spite of persistent attempts by a number of Scottish critics like Douglas Gifford, Dorothy McMillan, Beth Dickson, Christopher Harvie and others to construct a national literary canon, these writers refuse easy identification with a populism that locates a single faultline between two nationalities. Within the context of deterritorialised economies and bureaucracies, transnational popular culture or global migrancy, oppression and social injustice are far more complex than they were for Hugh MacDiarmid: it has become impossible to resort to the comfort of a national identity like the Caledonian Antisyzygy. While it would be difficult to deny that in one way or another writers like Kelman, Welsh or Galloway participate in the fight against British rule and in favour of local forms of self-determination, it would be just as difficult to absorb them into the project of the Scottish Nationalist Party. These writers are often concerned with much more local issues that are remarginalised by nationalist discourses, be that Glasgow’s working class, Edinburgh’s junkies or women of the urban belt. At the same time, they are part of a British and global popular culture as it manifests itself locally in Scottish contexts.

Kelman’s circumstantial definition of writing as commitment highlights that there is no necessary connection between writing and any one particular political project, national or otherwise. Unlike Jean-Paul Sartre or Bertolt Brecht, both of whom articulate writing with *the* class struggle, he does not link commitment with a universal emancipatory project that sets out to redress injustice *per se*. Instead, Kelman offers a more postmodern variant of commitment as localised and articulated with different projects and struggles at different times. But even in the absence of a master narrative of social transformation, politically committed art is always continuous with other forms of social activism, from organising civic resistance to taking up arms. In his essay, Kelman names working-class Glaswegians and their daily struggles for survival as his own cause, but not because there is something inherently privileged about either the working class or Glasgow. On the contrary, he insists that ‘Glasgow isn’t important’ (78) as such and could be replaced by ‘any other town or city in Great Britain’ (80); it becomes his cause for the simple reason that this is where he finds himself. I argue

⁴⁶Even though between Socialism, Sovietism, Nationalism and Fascism Hugh MacDiarmid was himself quite a political proteus and more complex than is often acknowledged (see Hagemann, *Die Schottische Renaissance*).

that Kelman articulates a model of cultural work that is characteristic of the debate in postmodern Scotland and of the transnational postcolonial debate.

The Postmodern Predicament

In these ‘times of the posts’ (Best and Kellner), it has become difficult to answer the question exactly who is putting what kind of brick through whose window and to what effect. ‘Commitment’ has taken on highly problematic connotations because it can no longer be represented as a form of ‘organic’ belonging to a unified and disempowered class or group that struggles for its rights against a single dominant group. Additionally, the ‘death of the subject’ in economic, philosophical, psychoanalytic, sociological or linguistic discourses that begins with ‘modernists’ like Marx, Nietzsche, Freud, Weber or Saussure and culminates in the often self-conscious ‘postmodernists’ Lyotard, Baudrillard, Lacan, Foucault or Derrida seems to leave little room for emancipatory narratives based on individual or collective subjects. How can one defend Kelman’s notion of writing as ‘social commitment’ in a time when both terms have been largely discredited; when Jean-François Lyotard’s declaration of the end of all great narratives of emancipation would equate the Marxist *commitment* of a Sartre or Brecht with Stalinist terrorism; or when Jean Baudrillard’s slogan of the ‘implosion of the *social*’ and its substitution through the ‘simulacrum’ or the ‘hyperreality’ of unlimited consumption of signs has for many theorists taken on the status of a self-evident truth?⁴⁷

But as Stuart Hall points out in his criticism of the fashionable Left Bank, the question has to be rephrased: in other words, is it necessary to throw out the baby of commitment to social justice with the bathwater of the unitary and autonomous subject, pure reason and orthodox notions of historical necessity? Is it necessary to ground emancipation in quasi-metaphysical identities and essentialised oppositions, as both orthodox Marxists and their postmodernist critics seem to claim in strange unison? Or can commitment be represented in more strategic terms of historically contingent and multiple antagonisms? Does the notion of identity as plural, contradictory, socially constructed and historically located somehow preclude the consideration of social justice and a broadening and deepening of democratic struggle? How can commitment be redefined in a way that acknowledges the plurality and

⁴⁷For a critique of Lyotard see Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* 44-7 and McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture* 229-259; for a critique of Baudrillard see Best and Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn* 95-118.

discursive constructedness of identity without succumbing to the postmodern paralysis and/or celebration of unlimited meaning and floating signifiers?

In answering these questions, two related and ‘postmodern’ issues have to be addressed that seem to remove the basis for meaningful or critical engagement with discourses. On the one hand, the ‘death of the real,’ the deconstruction of the opposition of base and superstructure, the subsequent impossibility to ground political struggles in the ‘real’ conditions of production, has led some of the protagonists of postmodernist theory to declare the end of all emancipatory struggles. For Baudrillard, postmodernism is the dawn of an age when ‘reality’ is transformed into the ‘hyperreality’ of an endlessly reproducible fiction, a move which simply reverses the Marxist opposition of base and superstructure. On the other hand, there is the proliferation of post-Marxist or postcolonial struggles that are often lumped together as the so-called ‘new social movements,’ a term which masks a diversity of struggles against various forms of subordination: ‘urban, ecological, anti-authoritarian, anti-institutional, feminist, anti-racist, ethnic, regional or that of sexual minorities’ (Laclau and Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* 159).⁴⁸ Even if there is disagreement concerning the significance of this multiplication of struggles, different theorists agree that it questions meta-narratives of emancipation: while Jürgen Habermas regards this new *Unübersichtlichkeit* (*Die Moderne – ein unvollendetes Projekt* 112) or tangle of local struggles as a threat to the emancipatory project of the Enlightenment (which he conceives of as the struggle for rational communication in a unified public sphere), Lyotard celebrates it as the death of terroristic reason.

Beyond the Postmodern Condition

In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe try to overcome the postmodern condition and suggest new forms of collective agency. They develop a notion of social justice not around consensus and a unified public sphere, but around multiple antagonisms in which no identity and no form of oppression can be privileged over others:

The rejection of privileged points of rupture and the confluence of struggles into a unified political space, and the acceptance, on the contrary, of the plurality and indeterminacy of the social, seem to

⁴⁸The Scottish struggles for independence, by the way, should also be located among these new cultural struggles, in spite of the SNP’s resentment of the term ‘neo-nationalism’ and their claim that their nationalism marks a historically privileged point of intervention.

us the two fundamental bases from which a new political imaginary can be constructed. (152)

For Laclau and Mouffe, the discursiveness of the social and the withering away of privileged struggles and foundational narratives are no obstacle to agency, difference is not the irrational threat it is for Habermas. On the contrary, the construction of the subject in numerous contradictory narratives becomes the very condition of agency and social transformation. What they describe as the ‘criss-crossing’ (153) of antagonistic discourses prevents closure: discourses always have an ‘outside’ in other discourses, but are also always penetrated by them. Therefore, no element ever becomes completely exhausted within a single discourse, there is always a surplus of meaning that intrudes from ‘outside.’ This surplus, rather than the fixed point of identity, can be a new lever for resistance and transformation.

In *The Return of the Political*, Chantal Mouffe develops the concept of radical democratic citizenship on the basis of a philosophy of rights as the necessary referent for all political struggle, a notion of community which transcends both liberal notions of free floating identities and various forms of communitarianism (which includes nationalisms). For her, democratic citizenship

is an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent ... while allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances and for the respect of individual liberty. (69-70)

Even in the absence of unifying public spheres, Mouffe’s notion of radical democratic citizenship as articulating principle becomes a political referent for the renegotiation of identities in different public spheres. This allows a redefinition of commitment not as communitarianism with its exclusive identities, but as an openness to new articulations. The commitment of artists or what Henry Giroux calls more generally ‘cultural workers’ can therefore be located in the radical democratic mobilisation of the surplus of meaning against the naturalisation of ever new relations of subordination and suppression. Emancipatory cultural work now often insists on that ‘more’ of identity that challenges ideological closure.⁴⁹

⁴⁹For different attempts to theorise difference within political theory see for instance Benhabib, ‘Introduction’; Fraser, *Justice Interruptus*; Habermas, *Die Moderne*; Wolin, ‘Fugitive Democracy’ or Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

Writers as Intellectuals

Antonio Gramsci's theory of 'intellectuals' which he develops at various points in the *Prison Notebooks* is a particularly useful contribution to an understanding of the possibilities for commitment of writers in a postmodern context. Gramsci understands political and cultural work as largely educational; therefore, his 'intellectuals' are educators in the widest possible sense. But being intellectual does not necessarily imply association with a particular social group. Gramsci distinguishes two types of intellectuals: 'traditional' and 'organic.' Traditional intellectuals like teachers, doctors or administrators are largely defined through the institutions they inhabit. They 'represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in political and social forms' (*Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 7). Organic intellectuals like journalists or writers, on the other hand, belong to a particular social group, give it 'an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields' (5) and take over leadership in the struggle for power. As Alvin Gouldner or Stanley Aronowitz argue, in the information age especially organic intellectuals have become important social actors and have almost taken on the status of a class themselves.

In his essay 'Nationalism, Journalism and Cultural Politics' the Scottish theorist Christopher Harvie links Gramsci's organic intellectuals with Scotland's struggles for independence. He concludes that for most of its post-Union history Scotland was a country of traditional intellectuals supportive of the (British) institutions in which they worked, while it lacked organic intellectuals, i.e. intellectuals committed to the Scottish cause. Until the beginning of the century, the vast majority of Scottish intellectuals were clergy, teachers and university intellectuals, who in Harvie's words 'inoculated the country against any awkward radicalism' (33). Yet with the emergence of a mainly cultural and literary nationalist movement early in the twentieth century, new kinds of organic intellectuals like journalists, poets and novelists began to populate the Scottish scene. Like Gramsci, Harvie describes these cultural workers as educators, who taught Scots new ways of being Scottish:

Such cultural conditioners of nationalism have entered an important long term effect, both by direct political interventions and by influencing the way the Scottish populace identifies itself. (34)

However, in Harvie's definition of the organic intellectual, the nation is represented as a single and unified historical agent instead of a 'historic bloc,' i.e. a contradictory alliance of different regional and social groups. Lacking from Harvie's concept is an understanding of the complexity of

political struggles both at the beginning of the century and especially in the present. Harvie minimises the role of ‘class’ in the Scotland of the early twentieth century, not to mention other social agents like women’s groups that emerged later in the century. Very much in the manner of Anthony Smith, he reduces organic intellectuals to a nationalist vanguard whose historic mission is to ‘express’ the nation and to awaken the dormant national consciousness with a magical kiss.

It seems that for Harvie intellectuals are only ‘really’ organic if they work for the only ‘real’ historical agent, the nation. I argue, however, that Scottish writers are only tangentially allied to the national project while at the same time articulating their solidarity for workers, women or youth in contemporary Scotland. In the age of difference, Scottish writers participate in numerous debates that are as uncomfortable for Scottish orthodoxies as they are for British ones.⁵⁰ Rather than describe these authors as organic, I would describe them with Henry Giroux’s term ‘transformative intellectuals’:

This differs from Gramsci’s notion of radical organic intellectuals in that we believe that such intellectuals can emerge from and work with a number of groups which resist the suffocating knowledge and practices that constitute their social formation. Transformative intellectuals provide the moral, political and pedagogical leadership for those groups which take as their starting point the transformative critique of the conditions of oppression.

(Teachers as Intellectuals 151-2)

Intellectuals are no longer ‘universal intellectuals’ as Foucault calls them with reference to Sartre,⁵¹ but ‘specific’ intellectuals. Located in particular local and historical circumstances, they can cast oppression as much broader and more pervasive than Harvie’s nationalist organicism permits. Their critical performance, which is at the same time above and below the level of the nation, constantly ruptures the seemingly closed codes of the nation.⁵²

But Scottish writers not only challenge dominant orthodoxies, they also intervene in the very production of representations and address the way power works through culture to produce preferred identities. In his essay Homi Bhabha ‘The Postcolonial and the Postmodern’ describes this strategy as follows:

To reconstitute the discourse of cultural difference demands not simply a change of cultural contents and symbols; a replacement within the same time-frame of representation is never adequate. It requires a radical revision of the social temporality in which

⁵⁰See also Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* 9.

⁵¹See Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*.

⁵²See Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* for a discussion of the situatedness of intellectuals between local and transnational commitment.

emergent histories may be written, the rearticulation of the 'sign' in which cultural identities may be inscribed.

(*The Location of Culture* 171)

For Giroux and Bhabha, the emphasis on transformative cultural practice as self-reflexive pedagogy is part of an interventionist politics in the conditions of postmodernity. Both call for a politics of representation that democratises the relation between power and knowledge by inviting a dialogue about representations and the relation of power and knowledge they imply.

Literature and Nationalism

In the individual sections of this chapter I ask how Scottish writers can be seen as transformative intellectuals who are always situated in specific locations, yet inhabit more than one place at the same time; cross from one space to the next; translate knowledges into new contexts; expose the workings of power through representational regimes; and offer new subject positions for postnational communities. I ask how Scottish writers represent cultural identities, and how their various commitments open up new politics of representation.

I take the debates about the Scottish nation and nationalism as a starting point to discuss how various Scottish writers challenge nationalist wisdom. This is in part a strategic choice that should not suggest the primacy of the national as the natural border of a 'jumble' of differences, as Timothy Brennan and others suggest. This choice allows me to illustrate how writing can function as an intervention into a variety of discourses in which nationalists have historically sought to ground themselves, and to use this as a very specific context to discuss how writing can function as discursive intervention in general. Of course, by setting up a conversation between Scottish nationalism and a number of contemporary writers, I also pay tribute to the fact that in Scotland as well as elsewhere the nation continues to play an important part in the political imaginary. The nation state remains an indispensable strategic referent in any theoretical attempt to move beyond it and develop new forms of democratic participation in the new political constellations of post-Maastricht Europe, a global economy, global popular cultures and postcolonial migrations.⁵³

⁵³Habermas calls this situation paradoxical, because postnational communities have to be imagined from 'within' the parameters of the nation and writes: "Die Tendenzen, die eine postnationale Konstellation anbahnen, nehmen wir nur als politische Herausforderung wahr, weil wir sie noch aus der gewohnten nationalstaatlichen Perspektive beschreiben." (*Die Postnationale Konstellation* 94-5).

Craig Calhoun's theory of nationalism provides a useful starting point to discuss how Scottish literary texts intervene in national debates. In *Nationalism*, Calhoun describes the project of national 'unity' and independence as a cultural struggle that takes place in ten discursive sites. The following six are relevant to the present study:

1. Boundaries, of territory, population, or both.
2. Indivisibility – the notion that the nation is an integral unit.
- ...
7. Culture, including some combination of language, shared beliefs and values, habitual practices.
8. Temporal depth ...
9. Common descent or racial characteristics.
10. Special historical or even sacred relations to a certain territory.

(4-5)

But if Scotland emerges at all from any of these sites, it does so in contestation with other discourses like Unionism, gender, class, ethnicity, age and others. Following Calhoun, I will show how 'Scotland' materialises as an object of knowledge from various educational and cultural representations. Choosing issues of landscape (Calhoun's 7, 10), territory (1, 2), history (8), population (1, 2 and 9), language (7) I will engage these representations of the nation in a critical dialogue with counter-representations by different writers, who often shift attention to that which is silenced by national discourses and change the very terms of the debate.

Again I would like to make a cautionary remark: the following is not an attempt to provide a normative account of difference. Any discussion of difference has to be discontinuous and fragmentary and cannot become a normative construct. Radical difference is not a 'being,' but a 'becoming,' a discontinuous and fragmentary intervention of diasporic identities. The texts I discuss here are by no means part of a single project, though I bring them together in an attempt to imagine possibilities for democratic, postnational communities of difference.

2.2 The Politics of Scottish Landscapes

In *Understanding Scotland*, David McCrone stresses the importance of Scottish landscapes, and especially rural landscapes, as the bearers of national meanings and identity in Scotland:

The following is therefore partly an attempt to bring the national imaginary to a point of crisis with new, anticipated forms of postnationality.

At the most basic, Scotland refers to a geographical place, a territory on the map, a collection of rocks, earth and water, defined by its topography, its climate and natural resources. (16)

As a mere collection of rocks, landscape would of course be literally meaningless. These rocks, however, are written into powerful narratives of Scotland in which they figure for instance as ‘the last wilderness’ of Europe, as the almost mythical ‘highlands’ complete with lairds and bagpipes, or finally as a place where Scotland continues to be colonised through the kitsch of tartanry. From James Boswell’s public relations tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson and Sir Walter Scott’s novelistic project to the contemporary tourist industry and what Deirdre Chapman has called the ‘designer kailyard’ of Rosamunde Pilcher, cultural representations have again and again transformed the bens and glens into complex ideologies of Scottishness. Rural landscapes have become nationally overdetermined: the reforestation of the bare hills of the highlands is not just an issue of the forestry department, or even an ecological question, but primarily a national concern. It may be at the level of lochs, glens and moors, that ‘Scotland’ is most vividly imagined and evokes the most powerful identifications. Consider the following anecdote by Fintan O’Toole of a Glaswegian disenchanted with nationalist promises:

Recently, a ‘community development group’ had taken her round the country on a study tour. She visited, for the first time, the countryside and the small towns, the kinds of places that appear in books and movies. ‘What was interesting,’ she said, ‘was that it was really the first time I’d been in Scotland.’ She was born and brought up in the suburbs of Glasgow; she had lived there all her life. But it seemed to her that she had never been in Scotland.

(‘Imagining Scotland’ 68)

For McCrone, Scotland is therefore a ‘landscape of the mind, which carries potent resonances for cultural and political action’ (16). Articulated with historical narratives, criss-crossed by a network of battlefields, the countryside becomes a residue of collective memory and an inspiration for future action. It can indeed mobilise desires for a ‘home’ and create a sense of collective past and a focal point in the imagination of a future community.

Tartanry, Kailyard

Cultural critics like Tom Nairn and Colin McArthur are often suspicious of the popular nationalism that gathers around rural landscape. They are very wary of tartanry kitsch as a perpetuation of Scottish inferiority. Firstly, the ideological purification often paints a picture of a more or

less depopulated wilderness and denies that the landscape was and continues to be produced in cultural practice, e.g. through narrative, cultivation of the soil, or historical exploitation such as deforestation. According to McArthur, the representations of kailyard and tartanry romanticise cultural practices like agricultural labour and make it difficult if not impossible to imagine a here and now in these communities. Secondly, as McArthur points out in *Scotch Reels*, the representation of Scotland as all tartan and thistle also serves to prevent the development of a language for the experience of Scotland as industrialised nation.

McArthur identifies tartanry and kailyard as the hegemonic regime of representations of Scotland; in 'Scottish Culture' he argues that these representations have entered the 'Scottish discursive unconscious' and in 'Culloden' claims that all 'discourse production (novels, plays, films, television programmes, painting, history books, etc.) which set out to tell stories about Scotland' is subject to 'automatic piloting' (97):

That is, when telling about Scotland narrators tend not so much to invent stories (or in the case of non-fiction lay out the facts) as to succumb to powerful and historically deep-seated pre-existing narratives which shape the tone and substance of their work.

('Culloden' 97-8)

According to McArthur, kailyard and more particularly tartanry go back beyond the turn of the century and the historic Kailyard School to the eighteenth century rave about *Ossian* and the Rousseauian fascination with wilderness and nature as sites of utopian innocence. Through more than two centuries of romantic utopianism, the representation of Scotland as a magical landscape has developed its very own momentum in contemporary image production systems and continues to haunt native cultural production. An anecdote by Forsyth Hardy in *Scotland in Film* may illustrate McArthur's claim: Hardy describes the visit of Hollywood producer Arthur Freed who was looking for a site to shoot what was to be his movie *Brigadoon*. None of the villages Hardy showed him met the approval of the producer, who went back to Hollywood to say 'I went to Scotland but I could find nothing that looked like Scotland' (1). Freed then shot the movie in a studio, where he could recreate what seemed to him a more authentic Scotland. The Scottish novels of Rosamunde Pilcher also prove McArthur's point: here, landscape is completely disconnected from contemporary social practices, society has regressed to the middle class dream of an understated aristocratic life style where the new bourgeois lairds live in quaint country-houses, unencumbered by any but the most banal personal problems. In novels like Pilcher's *September*, Scottish landscape is transformed into a desiring machine for an international audience eager to forget their daily grievances and to lose themselves in the reactionary utopia of an archaic landscape and

equally archaic social relationships. Here, Scottish rocks and boulders are indeed thickly overgrown with ideological lichen and mosses of the Never-Never-Land of bourgeois happiness.

McArthur claims that these representations of Scotland as ‘magical realm’ (*Scottish Culture* 101) have not only colonised the country but have become completely naturalised, thus silencing alternative representations of identity and alienating Scots from their own culture. The problem is less that Scotland is under-imagined, but that it is imagined in ways that limit Scottish subject positions to the uncritical consumption of a pre-packaged and farcical identity without possibilities to imagine different communities. However, the rather orthodox pessimism with which McArthur buries these representations in a Jamesonian ‘political unconscious’ effectively removes any possibility for critical readings or even the production of counter-discourses. If he uses the term ‘hegemonic’ in his earlier essays to describe the pervasiveness of the representations of tartanry and kailyard, he ignores Gramsci’s use of the term to describe cultural *struggle* rather than accomplished domination of one regime of representation. He ignores that meanings are never objects of passive consumption, that they are negotiated from different subject positions, and that his ‘discursive unconscious’ is criss-crossed by antagonisms which resist such easy ideological closure.

Counter-Tartanry, Counter-Kailyard

Of course its ideological purchase makes Scottish landscapes an important referent in much of contemporary Scottish fiction, but not as an ideal to be emulated or mechanistically reproduced, but in the form of reversals, carnivalisations, parody of popular myths, and the production of counternarratives that easily dislodge the narrative of the alleged hegemony of kailyard and tartanry. Alasdair Gray’s *Lanark* (1981), for instance, ironises the exclusive identification of Scotland with the beauty of the Highlands and Islands. The realistic parts of the novel tell the life story of the painter Duncan Thaw. Thaw grows up in Glasgow, visits art school there, but fails to identify with family, friends, colleagues, or any other human being. The archetypal landscapes of rural Scotland play an ironic role in this part of the novel, because they symbolise Thaw’s frustrations and impossibility of love and community. During a bus trip to an island, his family’s refuge during World War II, the protagonist Duncan Thaw overhears the following conversation:

An elderly man said to his neighbour, ‘Aye, a remarkable vista, a remarkable vista.’

‘You’re right. If these stones could talk they would tell us some stories, eh? I bet they could tell us some stories.’

‘Aye, from scenes like these Auld Scotia’s grandeur springs.’ (178)

At the same rest stop, Thaw watches a pair of lovers climb the picturesque ‘heathery slopes,’ a scene that could be lifted straight from any kailyard text. But instead of enjoying the view, Thaw almost chokes with sexual frustration and anger while watching the lovers. For him, the countryside is a place not of grandeur but of unceasing asthmatic fits; a the setting not of love, but of repressive sexual mores and humiliation at the hands of hypocrites and bigots like the village doctor and priest. The countryside does not invite him into a national community, but excludes him: national identity, at least articulated with landscape, is indeed a hindrance to the development of an artistic language that addresses the here and now of his own existence. For his huge canvasses, Thaw needs Glasgow with its complex interrelations among classes and sexes, temptations and frustrations. Quite appropriately, Thaw eventually commits suicide on a later trip to the island, by swimming out into the ocean.

Within the quasi-Rousseauian myths of kailyard and tartanry, landscape often comes to signify a countryside that is morally superior to the city, the safeguard of family values and religiousness, and an overall bulwark of Scottish identity. This provincial life of decent hardship, limited aspirations and moral purity becomes the target in the novels of Iain Banks, Alan Warner and Duncan McLean, who put bricks through the image of blissful small town life with shocking images of horror, arbitrary violence and psychopathic obsessions.

Taken together, the numerous novels of Iain Banks’s fiction factory are altogether ambiguous concerning national identity and the role of landscapes. There are moments when the simplicity of the Scottish countryside indeed holds an Arcadian promise, but the majority of his texts paint a different picture. *Complicity* (1993), for instance, is a crime novel which is for the most part set in the country. Cameron, a journalist, is accused of a series of cold-blooded murders of leading figures of British public life. His search for the real murderer leads him to his childhood buddy Andy, who lives in this parents’ house in the country, and to an event in their common past, which was far from Arcadian. One day, when the boys roamed the countryside and were lying amidst Scottish brambles, they were surprised by a stranger, who raped Andy. The boys eventually manage to kill the man and dispose of his body in a disused railway tunnel; however, this is only the beginning of violence. To avenge himself of all the treason he has experienced, Andy years later begins an irrational campaign of vengeance, which he conducts from his base in the decaying Highland mansion. In

Complicity, the countryside is not the repository of national hope, but the site of random violence.

In Banks's earlier *The Wasp Factory* (1984), images of the blissful life in the countryside and of childhood innocence are rudely stood on their heads in the character of 'Frank,' a young teenager who tortures and kills animals with sadistic pleasure and commits a series of chilling murders amongst his cousins and siblings. 'Nature' is not only the scene of sadistic violence, but becomes itself a murder weapon when Frank uses a poisonous snake to kill his cousin Blyth, or when he ties another cousin, Esmerelda, to a huge kite and sends her flying out over the North Sea.

Banks's *The Crow Road* (1992), finally, is a kind of family soap opera set in the fictionalised Northwest of Scotland. A wealthy country laird who, though a philanderer, could easily be a twin of any Pilcherian rural worthy, murders a relative in cold blood and is ready to commit more crimes in order to keep his glass manufacturing business.⁵⁴

In the vein of Iain Banks, Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (1996) represents the countryside as deeply implicated in the 'moral decay' usually blamed on urban life. When Morvern, a sales assistant, discovers her lover's body after he has committed suicide, she coolly decides to cut him up and bury him piece by piece on a nearby hill in order to enjoy the royalties of a novel he has just published.

Duncan McLean's *Bunker Man* (1996) goes even further in reversing the myth of the pure countryside when he makes village life the cradle of pathological desires and crimes. Rob Catto, newly-wed janitor in a village school in north-east Scotland accuses his wife Karen of adultery and spies on her. He himself blackmails a student into an abusive sexual relationship and rapes her in his locker room. On the surface the (increasingly militant) upholder of conservative moral values in his school and private life, he is ridden by obsessions and fantasies that explode his personal and professional relationships. The 'Bunker Man' of the title is a harmless drifter who lives in an abandoned bunker on the beach and lurks around the outskirts of the town. In Rob's fantasies, Bunker Man metamorphoses into a threat to civilisation and the incarnation of every imaginable evil and sexual perversion. Eventually, 'Jannie Man' manipulates Bunker Man to rape his wife, so he can watch unobserved, then 'surprise' him in the act and split his skull with a meat cleaver.

⁵⁴In 'Constructed Out of Bewilderment,' Dorothy McMillan tries to read *The Crow Road* as Ian Banks's 'first big attempt to grapple with the idea of the nation, an idea which in any case rises predictably out of the family' (88). However, McMillan's reading breaks down and she has to admit that the national unity she seeks in the family is more than brittle.

In the collection *People Like That* (1996), Agnes Owens also employs random and shocking moments of violence that shatter the myth of rural bliss. In 'The Lighthouse,' a girl is killed and her brother raped on a beach by a passing stranger, and in 'People Like That' a woman escapes from an institution and is raped in an alley. Yet, unlike Banks or Warner, Owens cannot be accused of using violence gratuitously: her stories usually explore the meaning of the countryside from the position of lower class women and girls. Though Banks toys with issues of sexuality in *The Wasp Factory*, when he makes his protagonist a girl who grows up thinking that she is a boy, and though *Bunker Man* shows morality and violence to be gendered, neither of these texts addresses the social positionality of the experience and the potential horror of rural Scotland particularly for marginalised populations in the way Owens does. Her characters are lost children, single mothers and abandoned women; tinkers, drifters and unemployed labourers; winos, glue sniffers and heroin addicts; they live on the edge of society for whom the picturesque beauty of countryside signifies poverty, not luxury. In her autobiographical sketch 'Marching to the Highlands and into the Unknown' she writes:

We set off through this mountainous region, possibly beautiful if you were a tourist, but to me desolate and harsh, gushing rivers and jagged rocks.
(*People Like That* 172)

For the lower class men and women of her stories, the countryside is a 'Sahara' (171), a place of bare survival. The violence they experience is due not to some vague moral decay but to forms of social injustice and exploitation that particularly affect those already on the margin. Therefore, in *A Working Mother* (1994) and *People Like That* Owens deals less in spectacular images of violence, but addresses the effects of different forms of oppression on a female *Lumpenproletariat* in rural Scotland, and their often futile struggles for dignity.

Other texts move further toward a re-presentation of the Scottish countryside not as idyllic lochs and crofters cottages, but in the complexity of lived relations of micro-communities transformed by British and European macro-economic and cultural changes. For the teenage boys in Duncan McLean's *Blackden* (1994), for instance, village life is not a ninety-minute sequence of picturesque poses and actions, but a crushing routine of cruising through the town, going to dances, drinking in pubs, hoping to get laid or watching American football on satellite TV. The novel narrates the events of a random weekend in the life of its nineteen year old protagonist Paddy; nothing of any significance happens in the novel, because nothing ever happens in *Blackden*. Doused in global pop culture, the town is not unlike larger towns or cities in Scotland or Britain, though arguably worse off economically. For lack of a future, young people in particular have no

choice but to leave; Paddy describes life in Blackden as a deadening recurrence of the ever-same:

That was the problem with this part of the world, this hollow in the hills: if you didn't watch out you'd spend your whole life whizzing round and round the walls of the den like a motorbiker on a wall of death. Going a hell of a speed, maybe, but never actually getting anywhere. (229)

The inhabitants of Blackden commute to Aberdeen to work while traditional occupations related to farming have been made redundant by the agricultural politics of the European Community. The only profitable jobs are connected with the demolition of the town's economy: Paddy works as an auctioneer's assistant and helps sell off farms and old farming equipment, thus reducing his own possibility of staying and finding meaningful work. The second variant of the demolition job is marketing the depopulated landscape as a curious tourist resort: when the English photographer Brindle buys a farm house in Blackden, he offers Paddy a position in the mailroom of what he proudly declares to be the 'fourteenth-largest producer of picture postcards and associated goods in Scotland' (124). Brindle intends to run a business selling tea-towels, calendars, postcards and various other souvenirs with imprints of Scotland's beauty spots and hopes to make a special impact on the market with his new series called 'The Sun Sets on the Great Scottish Industries ... but the sun's aye risin' somewhair' (126). To top off the irony, the whole business is 'financed by grants from the local authorities and European agricultural-improvement funds' (128). *Blackden* thus lays bare the very economic processes that are the conditions for the emergence of a Pilcherian Scotland: the romantic countryside of much tartan fiction is in fact produced by historical processes the most recent of which is the European agricultural reform, which has taken on the dimensions of a new highland clearance and transforms village culture into a magical resort for affluent yuppies.

Postnational Differences?

McArthur's main concern is of course that tartanry and kailyard cannot represent the lived reality of urban and industrial Scotland, and this deficiency is addressed in a number of texts. In William McIlvanney's *Strange Loyalties* (1991), his most recent Glaswegian detective novel featuring the philosopher-detective Jack Laidlaw, the discomfiting gap between available representations and the industrial experience is captured in Scott Laidlaw's painting 'Scotland':

It was a big canvas dominated by a kitchen window. ... Through the window was a fantastic cityscape of bleak places and deprived

people and cranes and furnaces. ... On the left of the kitchen window was a small, square picture. It was painted in sugary colours in vivid contrast to the scene outside. It showed an idealised highland glen with heather and a cottage pluming smoke from the chimney and a shepherd and his dog heading towards it. Scott had called his painting 'Scotland.'

(36)

The contrast between the working world and the arcadia of popular art forms highlights the lack of narratives and histories to make sense of working-class experience, and the speechlessness which makes it necessary to articulate hopes and dreams in an alienated pastoral mode. But the novelistic project of McIlvanney and other writers is not limited to the helpless reproduction of bucolic landscapes in the face of a grimy reality, and not even to the mourning of the gap between an insufficient regime of representations and reality, but is indeed motivated by the desire to provide counter-representations.

If for example the movie version of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) quotes images of Scotland as all hills and straths, it converts them into a political referent for the representation of a very different Scotland. Set in the drug world of Edinburgh, the novel demands the representation of a long neglected youthful, urban lower-class life. The movie version quotes images of Scottish Arcadia to lampoon the inadequacy of traditional representations. In one of the scenes, Tommy, Mark Renton, Spud and Sick Boy take a day trip to an unidentified location in the highlands. They get off the train only to find themselves on a platform surrounded by 'Scotland,' signified by the absence of human habitation and an abundance of prickly plants. Tommy immediately identifies the barren landscape as the quintessence of Scotland that makes him 'proud to be Scottish' (Hodge 46), and proceeds to march towards the closest hill. The rest of the group despondently sit down in the grass and open cans of beer, strikingly out of place in their urban 'techno' outfits and city suits. In an outburst of frustration, Mark Renton breaks into his famous tirade against Scotland as a nation that cannot take its affairs into its own hands (quoted in chapter 1). Instead of being a national unifier, the countryside signifies the alienation from an ideology that has neglected the concerns of urban youth and indulged in sentimental representations of natural beauty.

Novels like Gray's *Lanark* and Welsh's *Trainspotting* testify to the possibility to challenge hegemonic regimes of representation with counter-representations: the alienation from the rural landscape that is supposed to signify 'home' merges into a different politics of representation which not only offers new identifications through the representation of youth culture in urban and suburban landscapes, but addresses the practice of representation itself. Cairns Craig points to the

danger of simply substituting one form of kailyard for another when he writes:

The danger of the present very real achievements in Scottish culture is that ... the search for a significant identity will harden into merely another emblem of our cultural powerlessness. What is worrying in the contemporary situation is the way that the death-throes of industrial West-Central Scotland have become the touchstone of authenticity for our culture. (9)

According to David McCrone, Craig continues to hanker after some form of stable 'we' of national culture. McCrone therefore comes to the more radical conclusion that the search for a national culture does nothing to meet the needs of postnational societies:

The search for a distinct identity is likely to degenerate into a pessimistic conclusion that none is possible because we are prevented from seeing it by the power of regressive Scotch Myths, rather than because in modern, pluralistic societies no single 'national' culture is to be found. In other words, the argument has been that we cannot find it precisely because the myths are hegemonic, when the real answer should be that the search itself is illegitimate. ('Representing Scotland' 172)

The novels and stories of Banks, Gray, McLean, Warner, Welsh and other contemporary Scottish writers are in the process of imagining life in postnational societies beyond the certainty of cosy national identifications. In their narratives, identity is often de-essentialised, they no longer seek to create national identities around rural or urban kailyards. I would even argue that they do not imagine life in a clearly bordered Scotland, but are concerned with the specificities of the local on the one hand, and with the conditions of life and the possibilities for democratic participation in a postnational popular culture.

Thus, the desire of Gray's Duncan Thaw to represent his own community does not extend to all of Scotland, but concentrates on the people and cityscape of Glasgow. His paintings are concerned with his immediate social world, and with the spiritual and material life of the shifting communities of the poor, workers, fellow pupils or artists through which he metaphorically travels. Contrary to Bell's interpretation, who looks for essentialisations of national identity in *Lanark*, Thaw is not concerned with Scotland or even with Glasgow as such, but with the imagination of the here and now of his very own locatedness at the intersection of changing identities. In Thaw's artistic career, class and sexuality are much more important than Glasgow or the Islands, he struggles more with the lack of representations of his working-class background, with the predominance of middle and upper class students in his art school, and with the poverty of conventional images of and attitudes towards sexuality, than with his nationality.

Like Kelman, to whom Glasgow is *not* important, although he writes about nothing else, Welsh also calls for more localised, yet also de-essentialised representations, in this case of urban life and ‘schemies,’ as he calls the working-class youth from the housing schemes around Edinburgh. In his essay ‘City Tripper’ Welsh criticises a middle-class cultural politics that capitalises on the country’s tourist attractions and confuses local colour with local culture. He describes *Trainspotting* as an intervention for a different politics that pays attention to the local as it is lived and experienced, because “[f]or cultural activists, it only makes sense to define a culture as the people participating in it see it” (‘City Tripper’ [13]). The barrenness of the Scottish wilderness as the signifier of a sentimental nationalist culture does not mobilise the desires of urban youths who grow up in a specifically Scottish urban landscape with its housing schemes, while also inhabiting a Western youth culture with its discourses of sexuality, drugs and AIDS. Welsh is grappling with a new constellation in which identity is composite, a hotchpotch of local and global fragments. For Welsh, it is not enough to move from country to city, because the dominant representations of life in Edinburgh are little more than urban kailyard and affirm the same class-based notion of Scottish identities while again ignoring local specificities. Welsh therefore calls for a radical break with what he identifies as middle-class and puritan art, and considers his own writing a step towards a new cultural politics of difference and location:

The ‘city’ (the city centre) is this alliance of new and old bourgeois, new and old puritans, and so therefore must its ‘art’ be. It has to be ‘life-affirming,’ or, more accurately, reaffirm those liberal middle-class values that everything and everyone is jolly, decent and wonderful. Fuck that for a laugh, if we’re truly a diverse multicultural society, and we are, let’s have some diverse, multi-cultural art and art criticism. ([15])

Welsh regards *Trainspotting* as an intervention from the specific locations of the urban working class and youth in the 1980s and 90s. His writing has to cross a number of discursive borders: as a representation of urban and rural landscapes, it participates in a specific debate about the possibilities of cultural production in Scotland. Yet, when he takes up the ‘liberal, middle-class values’ he intervenes in a class conflict that is never just Scottish, but British, and even European. Finally, his representations of popular youth culture, drug use and AIDS add a European and even global element. Welsh’s texts therefore emerge at the intersection of discourses that are both ‘above’ and ‘below’ the nation, and he demands a politics of representation that opens new possibilities for a postnational constellation, beyond the limits of nation, class and other fixed identities. Welsh is not alone in this project, and it is this

struggle for a cultural politics of difference and location that I will trace in the following sections.

2.3 Territoriality and Deterritorialisation

Cultural, political and economic formations, historical contracts and brute force mould various landscapes into national territory, one of the most important elements for any modern nationalism. The representation of national space in maps, the characteristic coastline riven by lochs and firths, and dotted with islands, carries a powerful conviction in the definition of Scotland: McCrone's question 'What is Scotland?' can be answered with deceptive ease by pointing at a political map. The map's representation of borders around a national territory circumscribes the validity of administrative, civic and political institutions, and like the image of bens and glens, the colour coding of the map becomes a convenient metaphor and shorthand for community.

The territory of the modern nation is a historical product that emerged with the concept of 'absolute space,' a space that is always identical with itself or, in Newton's words, 'always similar and immutable' (quoted in Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space* 132). Thus understood, space is 'empty, homogeneous' and neutral, it is endlessly divisible into equal parts and therefore the perfect object for property transactions, and can be represented most 'realistically' and 'objectively' in maps. This is also the territorialised space of the nationalist and imperialist projects that parcelled out quantifiable space first amongst the various rulers, then amongst colonial powers. Neil Smith and Cindi Katz describe the connection between the notion of absolute space and territoriality as follows:

The inauguration of private property as the general basis of the social economy, and the division of the land into privately held and precisely demarcated plots; the juridical assumption of the individual body as the basic social unit; the progressive outward expansion of European hegemony through the conquest, colonisation and defence of new territories; the division of global space into mutually exclusive nation-states on the basis of some presumed internal homogeneity of culture ...: these and other shifts marked the emerging space economy of capitalism from the sixteenth century onwards and represented a powerful enactment of absolute space as the geographical space of social intercourse. ('Grounding Metaphor' 75)

Thus, in opting for an independent nation state, the anti-colonial struggles of Scottish nationalism ironically take place on a terrain staked out by imperialism itself. However, the deceptiveness of the territorial reference makes Scotland what Candia McWilliam calls a 'debatable

land' and, in the words of one her characters, a 'prickly place to grasp' (*Debatable Land* 197).

Alasdair Gray and the Problems of Territorial Identity

The problems of the definition of Scotland through territory are illustrated by the controversy between Alasdair Gray and Allan Massie about Gray's pamphlet *Independence*. Gray's argument is based exclusively on the definition of Scotland as a geographical location that has become a basin for the confluence of different populations over the past two thousand years. To define a functional community, Gray excludes from political participation all those Scots who have emigrated to England or the Commonwealth, while he includes everybody who lives within the geographically defined boundaries of Scotland:

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.

(5)

For all practical and political purposes, Scots are defined as inhabitants of a territory called Scotland, even, as Gray tongue-in-cheek remarks, if they were born in England. In this argument, Scottish identity gains a certain fluidity and allows Scotland to be thought of as a multicultural community that is open to all newcomers. When he calls Scotland 'a pool filled by waves of immigrants' (8) in which even '[t]he first people who called themselves Scots were immigrants' (5), Gray seems to avoid cultural or ethnic essentialism and to be on the way to imagining what is actually a postnational nation. At first glance Gray's Scotland has the potential to become an assemblage of the diasporic and strategic spaces of agency which Lawrence Grossberg describes as

[T]emporary points of belonging and identification, of orientation and installation, creating sites of strategic historical possibilities and activities. ('Identity and Cultural Studies' 102)

However, Gray's argument has a tendency to become tautological because it continues ground agency in 'Scottishness': in order to become political agents, the people who live in Scotland, no matter what their place of birth, have to be Scots, that is, they have to share a certain identity. But if Scots are people who live in a territory called Scotland, then the question arises if the territory is itself an objective and natural given, instead of a historical and ideological construction. This circularity has the unfortunate effect of forcing Gray to search for a new form of Scottish essence that distinguishes Scotland from England and legitimates the existence of Scotland, and he locates this difference in the geologically defined territory itself. Referring to a lecture given by

Patrick Geddes in 1923, Gray concludes that people who live in Scotland are ‘Scottish’ mainly because of the experience of the landscape, and particularly agricultural labour. According to this logic, the frugality of an inhospitable landscape determined the historical events that shaped the Scottish people, its institutions and its relationship with England.

In a review in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Allan Massie rejects this surprisingly crude environmental determinism as well as Gray’s representation of Scots as ‘the poor peasant’ versus the ‘rich farmer’ from England. He questions the historical accuracy of Gray’s argument and its determinism and polemically concludes:

[I]t is hard to see how ... the Declaration of Arbroath (1320) or even the Highland Clearances can have done much to form the minds of Pakistani grocers, Chinese restaurateurs, and recent English immigrants ... all of whom Gray open-handedly includes among his fellow Scots. (11)

Though Massie is less interested in the fate of possible immigrants or the heterogeneity of Scotland than in Scottish identity, his interjection illustrates how the emphasis on territoriality and on the unity of experience within that territory repeats the very colonial move Gray tries to eschew: Pakistani and Chinese; Highlanders, Lowlanders, and Scots from the Border Counties; farmers, workers and office clerks; men, women and children, have no choice but to be ‘Scots,’ there is no room for different identities and experiences within Gray’s homogenised territory. The geographical border hardens into an impermeable membrane of ideology that seals off ‘Scotland’ from all other places.

Redefining Space

Like Alasdair Gray, Angus Calder argues in his introduction to *Revolving Culture* that ‘all culture derives from place.’ But unlike Gray, he manages to separate space and identity. Here, place (rather than territorial space) is the confluence of carnival identities: the ‘authenticity’ Gray connects with landscape and territory is ‘a word to be howled down whenever used’ (1) and essentialised identity is even ‘the sixth Horseperson of the Apocalypse’ (6). Identity is always fluid and hybrid, and space only comes into existence as a set of contradictory practices of the heterogeneous people who inhabit it.

Aside from its more obviously colonial assumptions about the homogeneity of a certain population within a given territory, the discourse of territoriality takes for granted that space exists before any human activity; that it merely becomes the neutral terrain of interaction, habitation and government, and the object of division and financial transaction; and that there is only one single space. This assumption of

space as the *a priori* of human perception and experience is opposed to what Henri Lefebvre calls the 'production of space' by which he means the continuous emergence of space from social and cultural practices. His redefinition of space as ongoing process of cultural representation leads to the recognition of widely differing conceptualisations of space not only between different societies, but also within them. In *The Condition of Postmodernity* David Harvey writes:

The historical and anthropological record is full of examples of how varied the concept of space can be, while investigations of the spatial world of children, ... oppressed minorities, women and men of different class, rural and urban dwellers illustrate a similar diversity within outwardly homogeneous populations. (203)

In Candia McWilliam's *Debatable Land* (1994), a painter from a working-class background who used to roam Edinburgh as a child, can tell a woman from the upper middle class, who visited the city to shop and go to concerts: 'we had different cities' (146). Space has to be reconceptualised not as given, but as constantly redefined and produced in contradictory social and cultural practices and representations. In the laconism of Buckminster Fuller, 'we have relationships – but no space' (*Synergetics* 526.04).

In a way, then, 'space' is a representation of the way in which different groups imagine community and subjectivity, and it is therefore subject to antagonisms. Harvey describes this production of space in changing social relationships and particularly the naturalisation of spatial practices as part of hegemonic social struggles:

Beneath the of common-sense and seemingly 'natural' ideas about space and time, there lie hidden terrains of ambiguity, contradiction and struggle. Conflicts arise not merely out of admittedly diverse subjective appreciations, but because different objective material qualities of space and time are deemed relevant to social life in different situations. Important battles likewise occur in the realms of scientific, social and aesthetic theory, as well as in practice. How we represent space and time in theory matters, because it affects how we and others interpret and then act with respect to the world. (205)

Of course, space is not only produced in the representations of theory, but in cultural and social work, which also limits or expands the way in which social formations and individuals understand subjectivity and agency.

Deregulation and Deterritorialisation

In the age of deregulation and venture capital, the struggle around space continues in the new spatial practices of global capitalism and the way in

which they re-present space and community, which expands the horizon of possibility for some while severely limiting it for others. These practices contest national notions of territoriality and warp space in ways reminiscent of non-linear, non-Euclidean geometries: in the information age, distances can shrink until points at opposite ends of the globe collapse into each other, whereas new divisions of wealth can create infinite distances between places apparently next to each other, in the same country, city or even street. The national space of Scotland is folded and fragmented by the globalisation of exchange and the deterritorialisation of production, the combined mechanisms of centralisation of capital and the decentralisation and dispersal of production and consumption.

Global popular culture links the apparently most intimate and local with different spaces and places across the globe in a non-linear way: the boys who play football in the yard of an abandoned factory in James Kelman's short story 'Joe Laughed' in *The Good Times* (1998) play on a field levelled by the dynamics of global capitalism that relocates shipyards to Korea. There is more than a 70% chance that they kick around a ball sown by a Pakistani girl for next to nothing. In William McIlvanney's *The Big Man* (1985) teenagers in a Scottish provincial town symbolically live under the sign of the global economy:

The letters ... announced a brand of cigarettes, so that it was as if the identity of the place, obviously a focal point of the village, was dependent on a company that had no connections here. (3)

The irony is of course, that the cigarette company has no connections anywhere, because it exists in a virtual reality where production is 'outsourced' and no longer territorial. McIlvanney's *The Big Man* is set in a fictional Ayrshire town called Graithnock, which has been sucked into the eddy of unfettered global dynamics and moved from the control of British institutions to deregulated market forces located in the cyberspace of monetary transactions:

By the time the coal was gone, Graithnock hardly noticed because it had other things to do: there was whisky-distilling and heavy engineering and the shoe factory and later the making of farm machinery. But the shoe factory closed and the world-famous engineering plant was bought by Americans and mysteriously run down and the making of farm machinery was transferred to France and the distillery didn't seem to be doing so well. (*The Big Man* 9)

Scottish mining is typical of the grounded, territorialised, nation-based – and recently heavily subsidised – industry of modern capitalism, but new dynamics, in Scotland most notably Thatcherism, have 'opened' the country to more 'flexible' forms of production. Life in the homes of Graithnock; the intimate domestic crises between big man Dan Scoular and his wife; Dan's need to prove his manhood and to earn money in an

illegal bare-knuckle fight; and what McIlvanney depicts as the deterioration of communal values are all caught in the accelerating vortex of global exchange that escapes national, let alone regional control. The virtual reality of global capital transactions and just-in-time production dries up the tap in Graithnock's pubs.

Jeff Torrington uses a similar backdrop for his short story collection *The Devil's Carousel* (1996), set in the fictional town of Chimeford: the 'Centaur' car plant is taken over by an American corporation and eventually closed down, which leaves the entire working-class population of Chimeford unemployed. Like territory, deterritorialisation develops dynamics that are very class and gender specific: it affects the working classes in the form of unemployment and changing working conditions, while granting property owners new forms of investment and capital gain. Produced within deregulated and uneven social and cultural relationships, space is multiply warped: the medium for easy travel in one direction, it can be as impenetrable as a wall in another, depending on one's class, gender or ethnic location.

Global Popular Culture

Even in the face of deregulation, the 'return' or better the invention of a singular national space is neither possible nor desirable. Nationalist territoriality and cultural politics have become defensive reactions to the economic deregulation and deterritorialisation of transnational capitalism, regardless of the fact that this territorial discourse opened up the spaces of colonial practice and the later post-Fordist deterritorialisation to begin with. Populist nationalism often mobilises a clearly bordered national high culture as a bulwark in the struggle against internationalisation, migration and the global exchange of 'mass' culture.

In his Saltire pamphlet *In Bed With an Elephant*, Paul Scott formulates his culturalism as an explicit rejection of global popular culture with its 'monotonous uniformity' of 'mass consumerism, mass advertising and mass entertainment' (34; see above), which for him are coterminous with 'English' culture. But when Scott recommends national culture as a tonic against alleged cultural monotony, he disregards the heterogeneity of popular culture while advocating national uniformity. At the same time, he tries to close the national door on a global culture that will not be kept out, and misses the necessity to develop new forms of democratic agency within that global culture. As has been remarked above, the populist elitism of politicians like Scott, especially in conjunction with their outspoken xenophobia, amounts to a kind of Scottish supremacism that is literally indistinguishable from what Stuart Hall has described as the 'authoritarian populism' of Enoch

Powell and Margaret Thatcher.⁵⁵ Cairns Craig was more far-sighted when he pointed out even at the beginning of the 1980s that national culture becomes an impossibility within a postmodern economy that offers identifications through the consumption of globally distributed products like food, music and images.⁵⁶

The lived experience of global popular culture and the irreversible globalisation of identity have become the backdrop of a large number of Scottish texts, of which I want to name only a few. In Thomas Healy's *A Hurting Business* (1996), for instance, the author narrates his autobiography of growing up in the 'rough' Glaswegian subculture of violence and unemployment through his fascination with heavy weight boxing, which seems to accompany him as an indispensable point of reference throughout every phase of his life. In *Lone Star Swing* (1997), a largely autobiographical travel narrative, Duncan McLean describes his journey through Texas; this enterprise was motivated by a 1930s record of the rather obscure Western Swing band 'Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys' which he found in a junk shop in Edinburgh. Tourism in its various forms and both to and from Scotland brings different locations to the doorstep of consumers, and though the exotism of the touristic framework severely limits cultural exchange and the experience of otherness, it also transgresses and breaks down national boundaries. Janice Galloway's *Foreign Parts* (1994), which will be discussed later, tells the story of two women travelling to France, and in Irvine Welsh's story 'Disnae Matter' from the collection *The Acid House* (1995) a laid off worker uses his redundancy money to travel to Disneyland in Florida with his wife and child.

In the remarkable collection *Lean Tales* (1985), James Kelman tells travel stories of a quite different kind. Here Scottish labourers travel through the British Isles to the continent, vaguely searching for seasonal employment. Stories like 'Busted Scotch,' 'The Glencked Effort,' 'O Jesus, Here Come the Dwarfs,' but also 'Renee' in *Greyhound for Breakfast* (1987) give voice to a largely unacknowledged migratory culture of people on the margins of society, people outside of the attention of government statistics and advertising strategies.

In most of Iain Banks's novels, the experience of growing up in Scotland is intimately linked with international popular culture and especially pop music; *Espedair Street* (1987), for instance, is the story of

⁵⁵*The Hard Road to Renewal* (123-60) and 'The Toad in the Garden.' According to Hall, Thatcherism can roughly be described as a coalition of conservative nationalism and neoliberal economics. Though Scott's populist elitism lacks the aggressive neoliberalism of Margaret Thatcher, his rhetoric of cultural superiority shares her conservative authoritarianism.

⁵⁶Though Craig himself agreed with Scott about the 'homogeneity' of 'mass' culture (see 1.2).

guitar player and rock composer Daniel Weir who becomes immersed in the international business of rock music and has to negotiate his global fame with his loyalty to friends at home and traditional Scottish culture. Daniel experiences his contact with the glitz and glamour of popular culture as ultimately devastating, and in the end gives up fame and wealth and returns to the fold of folk culture and his childhood sweetheart Jean at a traditional Christmas celebration. Yet, this return is ironic at best, because with the entrance even of a purified Daniel Weir, the traditional celebration has taken on a different meaning.

The Bridge (1986) also illustrates Banks's ambiguous relation to Scottish culture. The nameless I-narrator, obviously from a lower-middle-class background, has a relationship with Andrea, an upper-class intellectual who eventually leaves Scotland to live in Paris. The protagonist occasionally visits her there, but then learns to his dismay that he has a rival there. Back in Scotland, he has a car-accident on the Firth Bridge and falls into a coma, during which he lives in a labyrinthine structure, a technocratic dystopia. When he awakens from his coma, he looks into the eyes of Andrea, who has apparently returned to live with him happily ever after. *The Bridge* also has its vague moments of regret over the loss of an indigenous culture, when the nameless narrator describes 'our collective dream, our corporate imagery' (283) of global culture as a technocratic nightmare. At the same time, however, the culture of Burns and bagpipes is that of the narrator's father (102), while his own experience is inextricably bound up with the popular culture of the West, exemplified by the records and tapes of The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan, John Peel or Al Stewart, journeys across Europe, North America and Africa with international rail passes, and visits to Paris in German sports cars and limousines. For the narrator this global culture, with all its tensions for individuals and personal relationships, has become synonymous with life itself:

We live the dream; call it American, call it Western, call it Northern or call it just that of all we humans, all life. (283)

Consequently, the novel's fairy tale reunion between the protagonist and Andrea, as well as that between Daniel Weir and Jean, with all their overtones of 'return,' do not seal national pacts, but mark tentative syntheses within global culture.

All of these texts represent a new popular culture that is, in the words of Homi Bhabha, both 'transnational and translational' (*The Location of Culture* 172). That is to say, it is produced within international systems of production, but has different meanings depending on class, gender, ethnic, or regional location of individuals. Popular culture is not simply entertainment for the deadened masses, as Paul Scott implies, nor does it produce Herbert Marcuse's famous 'one-

dimensional man.’ Instead, it can be mobilised as a form of resistance, as in Jeff Torrington’s epigraph to *The Devil’s Carousel*:

Lissen, Mistah Ford,
 You ain't stuck for room
 Lyin there real easy
 In your big fancy tomb.
 Wisha had me a stick or two
 Of nitro-g.
 I'd blow you both t'Hell
 You'n your old Model T!

Modelled on the blues as part of the resistance of African Americans against the conditions of oppression, the ‘Auto-Build Blues’ illustrates the potential of global culture to engender new identifications and resistances. Even though it reaches Scotland through global consumer culture, it does not come with a prescription of use, but can have unpredictable effects when appropriated locally. Though it is necessary not to overrate and romanticise popular culture as a source of unlimited resistance, it is not the homogenous and deadening mass entertainment that cultural elitists like Scott describe in apocalyptic scenarios.

In spite of the deceptive stability of its territorial boundaries, Scottish identity is by no means determined by a uniform culture, be it urban or rural: in the context of global exchange, Scotland leaks into the cultures of other nations and contributes to a global repertoire of images, just as Scotland is unthinkable without those transnational cultures. Through popular culture, identity has become deterritorialised, subject positions are articulated almost regardless of ‘absolute’ space, one’s ‘location’ may have to be understood less in terms of space than of discourses that intersect at any given moment. Depending on one’s class or gender location, a city like Edinburgh can be fragmented into incommensurable spaces, some of which may have closer affiliations with London, Amsterdam, Liverpool, or Tahiti than with the next street, let alone the Highlands and Islands. In the following pages I discuss two novels, Candia McWilliam’s *Debatable Land* and Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* as illustrations of texts by authors from opposite ends of the social spectrum which address the issue of global identities and the end of national territoriality.

***Debatable Land*, or: Possibilities for Postnational Communities?**

Candia McWilliam’s *Debatable Land* is best described as a travel narrative. Alec Dundas (from Edinburgh), Elspeth Urquart (from outside Edinburgh), Logan Urquart (her husband, a rich Scots-American), Nick Pedersen (born in Essex), Sandro Hughes (born in New Zealand) and

Gabriel Shepherd (from England) come together on the sailboat *Ardent Spirit* to sail from Tahiti to New Zealand. Especially for Alec, the voyage becomes a prism that refracts his experience and allows him to reflect on his past as the son of a fisherwoman and an unhappy lover. Before the boat reaches New Zealand, the *Ardent Spirit* is caught in a storm, which clarifies the relations of the different crew members.

The voyage becomes a way to defamiliarise Scottish experience and to represent ways of being in an age of global difference. *Debatable Land* represents Edinburgh as inseparably part of the late capitalist exchange of images, products, and behaviours of popular culture. Distant locations enter Edinburgh restaurants in the shape of cocoa palms and other signs of the exotic, 'built at blistering expense by a gang from Clydeside with experience in tropical themes' (81). The citizens of Edinburgh are lured into the open air by the different foods and life styles of Italians, translated into the northern European climate where they become something else altogether, new hybrids which are 'neither Italian nor Scottish, but understood by the Scots as Italian' (121). Even the 'characteristic' look of the city may owe more to a history of cultural exchange with Italy than one would guess from the actual number of immigrants from that country:

[D]o you see ... the shallow dome of the McEwan Hall, the dark circular building, built in the Venetian style. It's all built for the teaching of medicine, yet it's in the style of Italian church architecture. ... There are courtyards and parts of the building that are deliberately modelled on Italian palaces too. (*Debatable Land* 123)

Postmodern pastiche seems to have been around before the days of Charles Jencks and the 'hyperreal' Disney architecture of Michael Graves: Edinburgh has had an eccentric, carnival identity for at least a few centuries, its streets, buildings and cloisters are part of a history of international exchange. In the words of Frederic Jameson, even daily life in the imperialist and post-imperialist metropolis 'no longer has its meaning, its deeper reason for being, within itself' ('Modernism and Imperialism' 50).

But McWilliam's novel leads beyond the aesthetic and commodified 'diversity' that reduces cultural difference to the choice of wallpaper with cocoa pods and the collection of colonial bric-a-brac in old Commander Bruce's living room display cabinet. Instead, *Debatable Land* is a reminder that difference and hybridity are global, that identities are everywhere pieced together from fragments shored up from all over the globe, and that there is no 'authenticity'; in the words of Alec, one of the protagonists:

There is no human purity. It is a lie. The combinations of peoples are without end. (199)

Set on the sail boat *Ardent Spirit* that cruises from Tahiti to New Zealand, the novel illustrates the futility of a quest for ‘purity’ and ‘authenticity.’ The islands along the route are a carnivalesque blend of European and indigenous cultures, but no more and no less so than Scotland itself. Two of the characters, Nick and Logan, seem to be on a Quixotic quest to find ‘true authenticity’ and are disgusted by the cultural hybridity they discover everywhere:

A place that offered flying-fish pizza in a neon-lettered bar named Chang’s Gaff, a meal for which one paid in francs before taking a bus to a neatly labelled site of human sacrifice; this could not amuse him. In such confusion he saw not energy but degeneration.
(88)

Logan’s modernist complaint of ‘degeneration’ through hybridity is supplemented by the more postmodern form of cultural pessimism in Nick’s concern about representation and the disappearance of ‘authenticity’:

Replication and surrogacy are the future. ... Everything will have its substitute, its empty double.
(95)

But *Debatable Land* challenges such Baudrillardian pessimism and raises the question whether there ever was the kind of ‘purity’ and ‘originality’ that is suggested by the territorial boundaries and the colonial narratives of the exotic other.

In *Debatable Land*, identity is not only pieced together from global fragments, but is, with Stuart Hall, ‘transitory,’ always changing with the places touched upon during a journey. Identity itself becomes a form of travel, the reminders of origin can go overboard without substantial loss:

Elspeth, leaning over the side to get her breath ready for a new stage in her life, held on to her handbag. For one moment she had almost let the earthly thing, containing all the papers that placed her precisely where she *was* placed on the globe, age, place of birth, credit rating, nationality, into the sea. Letting go was easy if you did it so fast.
(152)

This journey is unlike the tourist trip from which one may return to an unchanging home firmly anchored on dry land: difference is not ‘otherness’ from which tourists may return unscathed, but is the very condition of existence. Elspeth cannot remember having been on dry land for an extended period of time. For Alec, who joins the crew on this last leg of the trip, ‘home’ with all its conflicting experiences changes and becomes both stranger and more ‘present’ from the antipodes. As in Einstein’s theory of relativity, space becomes ‘an infinite number of spaces, which are in motion with respect to each other’ (Einstein quoted in Kern 136) and identity is a continual movement from place to place, in which the fluidity of sea travel becomes the metaphor for new forms

of relationship and interaction. In *Debatable Land*, human relationships are elective affinities: parents adopted by a wandering child in an Edinburgh playground, two ships meeting in a harbour, each carrying one spouse, or a crew thrown together from all corners of the globe for one particular journey only.

The ship itself, the narrow deck in the midst of a rather small-seeming Pacific, is neither merely the vehicle of transportation from place to place, nor is it one unified space that has the same meaning for each of the six crew-members – on the contrary, the *Ardent Spirit* takes on more meanings than crew-members and is ‘produced’ only through the interaction of individual experiences. While Logan, whom the final storm transforms into a kind of nouveau riche Ahab, moves on the planks of the Pequod with an unquenchable thirst for authenticity, his wife Elspeth lives on a houseboat where she alternately loses and wins her self-respect in her struggles with her husband. Alec, finally, travels on a Kontiki to his own prehistory, where he confronts his fear of commitment and gains a new sense of self. The ship becomes a terrain on which the different characters rewrite the different local narratives in which they find themselves: where Logan hammers out a new relationship to his masculinity and a past lost in a global business culture, Alec confronts his biography as a working-class male and his relationships with women, and Elspeth works out the history of her relationships with her father and husband.

Debatable Land is part of a long tradition of novels in which the voyage becomes a metaphor for a historically specific community. Almost inevitably, Flora Alexander’s article on Candia McWilliam in *A History of Scottish Women’s Writing* reads the voyage as a national allegory in which the ship itself becomes a symbol of a national space that ‘accommodates’ (640) difference. But Alexander’s epithet ‘Conradian’ for McWilliam’s novel allows a qualification of her reading. Her comparison brings to mind Joseph Conrad’s *The Nigger of the Narcissus* or his short story ‘Typhoon’ as two of the most famous narratives in which ships, the confrontation with the elements and between crew members becomes a metaphor for community. But where Conrad’s novel represents the sea as the last frontier, which has to be overcome in a form of existential struggle of a loyal crew, and which reveals the ‘truth’ about individual characters, this is only one of numerous subjective meanings of the ship in *Debatable Land*, namely Logan’s. The difference between the two ships consists not only in the degree of existential danger which leaves Conrad’s sailors struggling for their lives and moral integrity, whereas McWilliam’s characters are put out by seasickness and the failure of fridges. It is the relation of crew members that distinguishes the two imagined communities: Conrad’s ships are organised hierarchically, differences of ethnicity and

nationality on board the ship are fixed in a system of ranks not unlike that used in British colonies. Conrad's story 'Typhoon' is a particularly interesting point of comparison: bearing the white man's burden, the Scottish captain McWhirr steers his ship through a storm while below deck the Chinese sailors are killing each other in a mutiny. In McWilliam's novel on the other hand, community is voluntary and based on more or less flexible identities which move along different trajectories, and meet only strategically for the solution of one particular problem. Where Conrad's ship becomes a representation of imperial authority and the necessity for loyalty in the confined territory of the ship, the *Ardent Spirit* represents community as transitory and strategic association whose meaning has to be renewed and redefined continually. While for Conrad the ship symbolises a world that can be left honourably only at the end of the service, McWilliam's characters are on board the ship for less than half the story, they stop *en route* to meet people, they interrupt their voyage to fly to different islands and return the next day, they can even consider jumping ship. Memory creates additional spaces that cannot be contained by the railing. There is nothing existential, essential or national about McWilliam's community; unlike Conrad's ships, the *Ardent Spirit* is not a 'clearly bordered jumble' but represents individuals as participants in several voluntary communities through memory, travel and communication.

Trainspotting, or: The End of the World as We Know It?

Transnational movement in *Debatable Land* is clearly anchored in a highly privileged class that is not so much 'floating freely' as it is propelled across the seven seas by the unearned income of global entrepreneurship. It is only Logan's generous donation of an air plane ticket that enables Alec to participate, which illustrates that – at least on McWilliam's globe – travel is a matter of privilege. The narrative moves forward untrammelled by the class dynamics of globalisation that set *the world* in motion around the largely immobilised workers in McIlvanney's Graithnock and Torrington's Chimeford.

While Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* is also completely immersed in global culture, it is in many ways a caricature of the class assumptions that inform the search for flexible global communities in *Debatable Land*. The loosely organised episodes of the lives of Edinburgh junkies are set in the 1980s in a city that has no name in McWilliam's *Debatable Land*, that lies beyond the already taboo New Town which Alec roams in search of innocent childhood adventures, and is a very 'different city' indeed. The novel is set in the suburbs and 'schemes' of Edinburgh like West Granton or Leith, well out of view of the castle, Princes Street,

High Street and all those parts of Edinburgh which ‘aw the tourist cunts ken’ (*Trainspotting* 115).

Like William’s genteel Edinburgh, Welsh’s Leith is saturated with global popular culture: for the twenty- and thirty-somethings, movies like *The Exorcist*, *Planet of the Apes*, *The Accused* or *Taxi Driver*, and Hollywood actors like Jean-Claude Van Damme or Sean Connery are points of reference for shared meanings. The lyrics of Velvet Underground, Lou Reed, Iggy Pop, The Smiths, Human League, The Doors, The Clash and many other internationally famous pop, rock, wave and punk bands of the 70s and 80s have entered the very texture of their language. Leith, like McWilliam’s Edinburgh, participates in the global commodity exchange and the culture of travel that makes it impossible to think of a unified national space; in Leith, however, the involvement is more intense, and the cost incomparably higher. While McWilliam’s characters relish Italian wines and cheeses or sip South American cocoa amidst postmodern decor, Welsh’s protagonists Mark Renton, Tommy, Spud and Sick Boy inject stretched Pakistani heroin in the derelict shooting galleries and are slowly dying of AIDS from infected needles. While Logan sails the seas in a high-tech sail boat to find his true self on picturesque beaches while reaping the gains of his global financial transactions *en route*, Mark Renton and his friends shuttle to London or Amsterdam in overcrowded trains and busses to buy and sell heroin and collect money from their giro frauds.

As part of the lower classes of Edinburgh, the characters in *Trainspotting* experience the darker side of globalisation and deterritorialisation. They are part of the ongoing global production of ‘superfluous’ or ‘problem populations’ by deregulated capital, the relocation of industrial production and the re-distribution of wealth in favour of global corporations and new managerial castes. All of these developments have destroyed post-war systems of meaning and solidarity, particularly around the Western concept of labour, and have left individuals redundant, stranded and bored. Welsh’s protagonists are part of the flourishing globalism of international drug trade and the resurgence of heroin as ‘in’ drug in the late 1980s, which promises at least a pastime in an era of mass unemployment. Finally, they are part of the global spread of the AIDS epidemic, especially amongst those ‘problem populations.’

Of course, these aspects of globalisation are usually silenced by the neoliberal rhetoric that likes to disown drug trafficking as the ‘other,’ when it is really just the same side of the same capitalist coin. Under the regimes of Reagan and Thatcher, drug use was rightly seen as a threat to the national community, but for the wrong reasons: it was regarded as a threatening moral aberration that constantly undermined the national common sense, the sovereignty of national territory and executive and

judiciary institutions of the nation. Yet, the drug culture of *Trainspotting* is the perfect realisation of the Thatcherite dream of a globally liberated entrepreneurial and consumer culture. It is the self-regulating rhythm of buying and selling of unfettered capitalist exchange and the oscillation between desire and instant gratification, that are so perfectly aped in the heroin culture, and that destroy any sense of communality. What Reeves and Campbell write in *Cracked Coverage* about the drug culture in the US is no less true of the British scene:

The ... infatuation with getting high is not 'epidemic' but 'endemic': endemic to the socio-economic system based on an ethic of consumption, on the instant gratifications of short-term profit, on turning a buck no matter who gets hurt. It only stands to reason that a society addicted to waste would be overpopulated by 'the wasted.' For us, then, the self-indulgent, live-for-today values of consumerism and the predatory, dog-eat-dog imperatives of entrepreneurialism are what have driven both Reaganomics and the drug underworld. (2)

The junkies in *Trainspotting* burlesque Margaret Thatcher's call for a market unfettered by government control, and the competitive individualism that informed her infamous dictum, made in *Women's Own* in 1987, that 'there is no such thing as society.' In the words of Mark Renton:

Ah'm tempted tae quote Johnny n say that we wir aw acquaintances now. It sounds good in ma heid: 'We are all acquaintances now.' It seems tae go beyond our personal junk circumstances; a brilliant metaphor for our times. (11)

Welsh's drug culture is clearly not, as politicians like Reagan and Thatcher propagated, a moral aberration, but a carnivalesque replica of deregulated consumer capitalism, in which 'the need' has long obliterated any sense of solidarity:

Ah love nothing (except junk), ah hate nothing (except forces that prevent me getting any) and ah fear nothing (except scoring). (21)

In the moment of need (i.e. at every moment except the orgasmic high itself), the narcissistic ego tramples all social relations and altruist sentiments underfoot. Simon, another junky better known as Sick Boy, neatly summarises the neoliberal creed of limitless individualism and ego-inflation that feeds both drug culture and global laissez-faire liberalism:

[T]he socialists go on about your comrades, your class, your union, and society. Fuck all that shite. The Tories go on about your employer, your country, your family. Fuck that even mair. It's me, me, fucking ME, Simon David Williamson, NUMERO FUCKING UNO, versus the world, and it's a one-sided swedge. (30)

The family, the last bastion of values in the conservative backlash of the 1980s, is sent up as an utter sham in *Trainspotting*: Baby Dawn dies while her mother and father are tripping with their friends, Begbie poses as father and moralist, while regularly abandoning the women who have given birth to his children. But it is again not the ‘irresponsibility’ of individual users, the moral decay of the twenty- and thirty-somethings, but the lived reality of entrepreneurial individualism that destroys all social bonds and reduces friends and family to acquaintances and associates. This cold logic of competition also allows Mark Renton to betray his so-called mates in the final episode of the novel, and to run off to Amsterdam with the £16,000 they had collected after a drug deal in London.

Unlike Iain Banks’s *Espedair Street*, *Trainspotting* ridicules the notion that national culture could possibly be a space for the recuperation of solidarity and ethical values. National community is utterly farcical and sentimental make-believe that exhausts itself in a few Irish battlesongs and IRA-hymns, howled in a semi-conscious state at Hogmanay:

It was as if by singing loudly enough, they would weld themselves
into a powerful brotherhood. (46)

In *Trainspotting*, Scottish nationalism is at best hypocritical and bigoted; at the worst, however, it is expressed in the vandalism of football hooligans and the xenophobic and racist violence of skinheads. Johnny Swan, one of the heroin dealers and addicts mimics the opportunist exploitation of nationalist sentiments by politicians like Paul Scott and Margaret Thatcher: when he loses his leg, he unabashedly disguises as a Falklands veteran and begs at the Market Street exit of Waverley Station. His example shows that nationalism is not a shield against, but an integral part of the logic of exploitation and greed.

Welsh seems little inclined to share McWilliam’s hope that in the absence of a national space, there can be new elective affinities on a global level. When Renton leaves for Amsterdam, he reflects:

He had done what he wanted to do. He could now never go back to
Leith, to Edinburgh, even to Scotland, ever again. There he could
not be anything other than he was. Now, free from them all, for
good, he could be what he wanted to be. He’d stand or fall alone.

(344)

Within the logic of rampant neoliberal individualism, freedom can only be conceived as the possibility for endless self-improvement and the complete absence of relationships. In *Trainspotting*, post-territorial space is atomised into a myriad of islands that cannot be connected with new solidarities.

Trainspotting tells no story, or rather, in its episodic character it tells the same story of ‘junk dilemma,’ of highs and withdrawals over and over again. Its narrative structure is far from imagining a national community: the eternal recurrence of the same, terminated only by an overdose or AIDS disrupts any national space-time continuum and questions the possibility of shared meanings and narrative continuities. The narrative sets in at an arbitrary point and ends equally arbitrarily, its protagonists and partly anonymous narrators move in and out of the text randomly: there is no border around this jumble. Like *Debatable Land*, *Trainspotting* questions whether the genre of the novel is indeed, as Benedict Anderson rules, the ‘style’ in which the nation is imagined, but the two novels offer different answers to the question whether the novel can possibly imagine new, post-territorial forms of community. However, both Welsh and McWilliam point to the pressing need for new understandings of community that can no longer rely on old singular certainties and borders.

2.4 Remembering and Forgetting

History is one of the central narratives of the nation: ‘identity, ... because it cannot be “remembered,” must be narrated’ (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 204). However, history is never about the past: it is a way of using specific versions of the past to represent the present and imagine the future. The past is important, because, as Maeghan Morris put it, ‘in the culture I live in, history is the name of the space where we define what matters’ (Graeme Turner 66).

Ernest Renan’s essay ‘What Is a Nation?’ still offers one of the most concise summaries of the centrality of history for communal and individual agency:

A nation is a soul, a spiritual principle. Two things, which in truth are but one, constitute this soul or spiritual principle. One lies in the past, one in the present. One is the possession in common of a rich legacy of memories; the other is the present-day consent, the desire to live together, the will to perpetuate the value of the heritage that one has received in an undivided form. ... More valuable by far than common customs, posts and frontiers conforming to strategic ideas is the fact of sharing, in the past, a glorious heritage and regrets, and of having, in the future, [a shared] programme put into effect, or the fact of having suffered, enjoyed, and hoped together.

(19)

Renan describes the nation as a ‘daily plebiscite’ (19) on the will to live together as a community, in which past as well as present become a matter of consent that cannot be enforced by violence. In Gramscian terms, history is a contested terrain between different groups and classes,

and there is constant war of position between different versions of the past and the future. To win the future, it is necessary to win the past. For Renan, communal memory is always complemented by a collective process of forgetting, which is just as important, if not more so, for the national compromise:

Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation. ... [T]he essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. (11)

The legitimation of community requires a tacit agreement on a common narrative, on what is remembered, and what is forgotten.

In Scotland, the emergence of a potentially hegemonic nationalism with its narratives of oppression through English imperialism and its celebration of national heroes like William Wallace has led to a re-evaluation of history as a possible source of communal identity. The return to Scotland of the Stone of Scone, a boulder that may or may not have served in the coronation ceremonies of Irish kings in Dalraida, the Ancient Kingdom of Scots, and the alleged discovery of the heart of Robert the Bruce in Melrose Abbey, also in 1996, are only two recent instances of the nationalist turn to history.⁵⁷ At the same time the recovery of suppressed narratives from the past has led to a renewed struggle between different versions of Scottish history. The narrative of the Empire as communal enterprise had to suppress the public memory of the Jacobite rising, but the historical narrative of Scotland as colony suppresses other memories and differences.⁵⁸ Therefore Scottish struggle is often characterised by the dual strategy of anti-colonialism and anti-nationalism.

2.4.1 Alternative Histories

Alternative histories are often self-conscious attempts to remember those submerged and repressed narratives Renan refers to, and to imagine

⁵⁷See also Fintan O'Toole, 'Imagining Scotland.'

⁵⁸In spite of Scotland's highly ambiguous role as junior partner in the British Empire, the problems of a 'recovery' of history are in many ways similar to Irish struggles. Compare for instance Seamus Deane's 'Introduction' to *Nationalism, Colonialism, Literature*, where he writes:

Because they [imperial nations] universalize themselves, they regard any insurgency against them as necessarily provincial. In response, insurgent nationalisms attempt to create a version of history for themselves in which their intrinsic essence has always manifested itself, thereby producing readings of the past that are as monolithic as that which they are trying to supplant. (9)

different communities. Renan mentions the Bartholomew Night as a historical incident the French had to ‘forget’ to forge a national compromise. He considers the rediscovery of such incidents troubling and therefore warns that ‘progress in historical studies constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality’ (11). As we have been witnessing throughout Europe and the former Soviet Union since the beginning of the 1990s, the remembrance of things collectively ‘forgotten’ or suppressed by authoritative versions of history disturbs or upsets the national equilibrium by drawing attention to historical injustices and demanding the renegotiation of historical compromises. Postmodern cultural politics is characterised by what Linda Hutcheon calls the ‘de-totalisation’ of ‘total history’ (*The Politics of Post-modernism* 62) in the singular, the recovery of such forgotten moments and the emergence of counter-histories. In this respect, Scottish cultural politics are no exception, both as attempts to de-totalise British history, but also with its alternative narratives which in turn challenge new orthodoxies of Scottish historiography.

James Kelman and Alternative Histories

James Kelman seeks such counter-histories that threaten both the British and the Scottish equilibrium. In his interview with McNeill, for instance, he points to the cultural and political work of British proto-socialists as a referent for his own work:

In 1792 there was *Black Dwarf* – a libertarian socialist magazine – getting passed between say London and Glasgow. It was being read by weavers, lawyers, fucking labourers, miners. Why are we still having to argue that the literate class isn’t logically distinct from the working class, that folk read and write literature from every social distinction. (7)

He challenges a Renanian moment of historical amnesia in his play *Hardie and Baird* (1991) in which he remembers the crushing of the weaver’s rebellion of 1820 and the subsequent execution of Andrew Hardie and John Baird as ‘an episode of suppressed radical history in Scotland’ (*Hardie and Baird* 107). As the speaker of the Prologue explains:

[N]either the two men nor the Scottish Insurrection in general are referred to officially, while within our educational system this part of history, like so many other connected with the Radical movement, remains almost entirely neglected. (109)

The historical compromise between Scotland and England required the suppression of this incident, but so does the class compromise within Scotland which attempts to represent the national community as a

community of equals. The execution of Hardie and Baird, and Kelman's remembrance ruptures both the narrative of the Union and that of the Scottish nation. *Hardie and Baird* locates itself in a tradition of historical resistance and marks an attempt to write a counter-history as a possibility for counter-hegemonial forms of agency.

William McIlvanney and the Limits of Alternative Histories

William McIlvanney uses his detective novels to explore the relationship between past and present in the history of the working class, to bring to light disconcerting visions of crimes and oppression hidden by collective amnesia. In his novel *Strange Loyalties* (1991), for instance, McIlvanney can address the need of the present for a past; the detective novel becomes an instrument for the reconstruction of the 'facts' behind a surface narrative of omissions and forgetting. The choice of the detective novel is also partly a strategic choice: as Keith Dixon writes, McIlvanney chooses this popular genre to re-present 'the novelistic misrepresentations of the working class' ('No Fairies. No Monsters. Just People' 197).

The action of *Strange Loyalties* is triggered by the death of the painter, Scott Laidlaw, who is run over by a car. His brother, police detective Jack Laidlaw finds the clue to the mystery of Scott's death in a painting which turns out to hide a sinister secret of Scott's and Scottish history:

'What do you think the painting's about?' I said as I sat down.

It was a pastiche of Da Vinci's last supper. Five men were at table, facing out. The man in the centre had no features. His hands were by his side. The other four were bearded. One of them could have been Scott. The meal and the clothes were contemporary. The perspective allowed you to see the plates, still empty, before them. The plate of the man in the middle was blank. The other four faces had the image of the same face on them, a calm but mournful face of a balding man in his fifties, looking out at you. ...

'I'm not sure,' John said. 'Maybe that the four are feeding off the man in the middle?' (41)

The painting of the last supper and the mystery of the identities of the three other men and the man they are feeding off leads Jack Laidlaw to a crime that symbolically implicates all of present day Scotland. One by one Laidlaw identifies the three diners, former friends of Scott, who are now affluent and respected pillars of Scottish society. Their wealth and influence is based on the suppression and forgetting of a crime they committed just after graduating from university. When Scott and his three friends steal a car to celebrate their graduation, they run over a man in a dark country lane. Instead of helping the victim, who is still alive

when they climb out of the car, they decide to drive on. This decision saves them from a prison sentence and allows them to embark on their successful careers as newscasters, entrepreneurs, scientists and artists. Scott, however, is tortured by his guilty memory: he feels the urge to confess to the police, but he is forced to be silent. Immediately after the accident, he destroys his paintings in a moment of despair, but his work is tormented by guilt from that moment: in his later painting, the man becomes the Christ figure on whose death the life of the other four depends. For him, the death of the individual victim takes on a collective dimension: it metamorphoses into the murder of the ‘man in the street’ (352), the symbol of a ritual offering society agreed to conceal, and an allegory for a Renanian moment of amnesia that is the foundation for the middle-class compromise of present day Scotland.

Scott Laidlaw’s art, though, can hardly be seen as a convincing attempt to address the causes of his individual guilt, let alone redress the collective misrepresentations of historical narratives that silence the working class: his work is driven by self-pity, not by the desire for change, individual or social. Scott’s paintings represent the working class (of which he himself used to be a part) as a faceless entity and projection of middle-class guilt. The large canvas ‘Scotland’ described earlier⁵⁹ contains some significant details:

The people were part of the objects, seemed somehow enslaved by them. I remember a face looking out of a closed tenement window as if through bars. It was meant, Scott had told me, to be an echo of the face that was looking at his painting. I remember a man’s face seeming liquid in the glow of his own blowtorch, as if he were melting down himself. (36)

The working class becomes a silent, featureless mass, seen from outside only. Its history is a nightmare from which it can never awake. Both of Scott’s paintings draw attention to the lack of self-representation and the absence of a working-class voice in the representations of Scottish life and history, but they do not offer any remedies for that lack. From the perspective of Scott, who has adopted the life style of another class without taking root there, his paintings are more expressive of the paralysis of self-pity and guilt than of a desire for transformative action. Rather than open different spaces of agency, it sentimentalises the working class and fixes it behind prison bars. In Scott’s paintings, art is not the articulation of possibilities but the hollow gesture of refusal to imagine differently.

The shortcomings of Scott’s painting become an interesting foil for McIlvanney’s novels and raises the question whether he himself moves far beyond the work of his character in his attempt to write a

⁵⁹See chapter 2.2.

counter-history from a working-class perspective. Much has been written about the socialist perspective of McIlvanney's novels: Beth Dickson, for instance, describes his first novel *Docherty* (1975) as 'based on a socialist analysis of society which locates evil precisely among capitalist individuals and structures' ('Class and Being' 61). With *Docherty* he began a project of historical recovery of working-class life that continues e.g. in *The Big Man* (1985) and has probably not come to a conclusion with his most recent novel *The Kiln* (1996). In these novels, he locates a forgotten form of identity in the community of Graithnock, an Ayrshire mining town during the first quarter of the twentieth century. It would, however, be an exaggeration to call this view socialist in the strict sense of the word. Graithnock distinguishes itself through a fixed life style rather than a political stance. In its prime, this community is characterised by a tough sense of local pride and working-class honour:

High Street was very strong on rights. Though these might not be easily discernible to an outsider, they were very real in the life of the place, formed an invisible network of barriers and rights-of-way. It was morality by reflex to some extent, motivated often by not making the terms of an already difficult life impossible. (26)

Here, at the margins of Scottish society, there seems to be a forgotten sense of community and individual identity that is founded on masculine work and an inarticulate honour code. In *The Big Man*, which is set in the 1980s, a visitor from Glasgow describes the sense of otherness Graithnock evokes to an encounter with a Marsian population and reflects on a conversation with a few of the 'natives':

He had sensed in the talk with them a formed and complicated life about the place, a strong awareness among them of who they were, mysterious yet coherent with a coherence he couldn't understand. (6)

From the perspective of the centre, the life in the periphery is simply other, unspeakable, unnameable; McIlvanney's goal might now be to name this community and allow it to speak.

However, that sense of community is always already spoken by the past. In *The Kiln*, which plays in the present as well as in the 1950s, it has receded behind the horizon of individual memory into the myth of Tam Docherty, a turn-of-the-century working-class hero and incarnation of the values of High Street. Yet in *Docherty*, which has Tam Docherty as its protagonist, the community of tough, honest and hard working miners is already in the process of disintegration. Tam's sons in their various ways question the values of High Street: Mick, crippled by the First World War, becomes a cynical communist hiding behind books, while Angus sells himself to new forms of entrepreneurship and tries to change sides in the class antagonism. Conn alone promises to carry on the values of his father when he chooses mining over schooling, but the three brothers no longer bond, and the mining community begins to

crumble in the wake of the war. In *The Big Man*, the Graithnock of the 1980s is deeply disrupted by the closure of the mines, the subsequent failure of new industries and mass unemployment. The sense of community has completely been destroyed, and the values of High Street have been reversed:

Something like honour, something as difficult to define and as difficult to live decently without, had gone from the people's sense of themselves. ... An old woman could be mugged in a park, an old man tied and tortured in his home for the sake of a few pounds, five boys can beat up a sixth, a girl raped because she was alone, the houses of the poor broken into as if they had been mansions. (11)

Honour as the sign of the 'old' community has withdrawn to Thornbank, the suburb of Graithnock, where people still seem to be 'themselves' (13), but even here it has become nostalgic memory rather than actually lived community.

In the novels of McIlvanney, whether they are set in the 1910s or 1980s, the ideal community is always frozen in the past and becomes a curse for the subsequent generations, who are forced to wear the fixed identity of the working-class hero as a mask. Dan Scoular, 'the big man' is an example:

'He's his own man, that one,' was a refrain that no one contradicted. But it was more appearance than a fact. Dan Scoular didn't know who he was. He felt daily that people were giving him back a sense of him that in no way matched what was going on. His statue didn't fit. (15)

Without access to new and different forms of agency, McIlvanney's workers are doubly paralysed: not only are they trapped in their local history and myths, they are imprisoned in their material conditions, like the figures in Scott Laidlaw's paintings. As Douglas Gifford writes, 'there is only a 'fragmented and non-communal future where ... lonely individuals search in a disconnected society ... for their identity and integrity' ('Imagining Scotlands' 26). Dan Scoular embodies this lonely struggle: in a bare-knuckle fight with former heavy weight champion Cutty Dawson arranged by the Glasgow racketeer Matt Mason, he indeed 'becomes what he is' through affirmation of a fixed identity of the past, and learns to fill out the statue of the decent worker projected by generations of mythic miners. In a furious rage Dan batters his opponent blind, but he throws his most important punch after the actual fight: to win some compensation for Cutty, he knocks out Mason, who stands for a life 'without responsibility to what was past' (226). At Cutty's hospital bed he affirms the values of his father and forges a continuity between the past and his own lonely struggle for identity in a world of greed and isolation. Yet, while this gesture of decency reasserts the existence of a counter-history and an alternative value system, it also

removes all possibility for new forms of communal agency: since Mason has sworn to take his revenge, the recovered historical link becomes Dan's death sentence⁶⁰. Not only is this masculine and working-class counter-history a crumbling bulwark against the destructiveness of the present, but in the absence of substantial forms of community in the here and now it becomes isolating and finally destructive. Frozen into the gesture of defiance of a 'proletarian romanticism' (*Bold Modern Scottish Literature* 241), or what McIlvanney himself has called an 'elegiac celebration' of the working class ('Plato in a Boilersuit' 139), McIlvanney's alternative history becomes a prison.

Between the High Street of *Docherty* and the boxing ring of *The Big Man* female subject positions are even more limited than male roles. '[W]omen ... remain remarkably stereotyped' (Beth Dickson, 'Class and Being' 59), their place is firmly at the stove in a position of care taker and home maker. In his essay 'Writing on the Borderline,' Keith Dixon attempts to rebut the critique of McIlvanney as working-class chauvinist with a passage from *The Big Man*, which he reads as almost 'a feminist critique of the condition of a generation of Scottish working-class women' (144):

They had sown comfort out of rags, brewed surprising satisfaction from unimpressive ingredients, calmed storms and taught decency in the face of the injustice their own lives suffered. But the cost of it had often been themselves. They were the ingredients of their own magic, last ounce of spirit, last shred of ambition, smallest fragment of dream. The wastage – the good minds starved, the talents denied, the potentials distorted – was beyond computation.

(*The Big Man* 173)

Almost, but not quite. This passage affirms what Dixon is trying his hardest to deny: that McIlvanney's representations of working-class women are exceedingly limited and limiting. For women, working-class history is an even more effective prison: in *Docherty*, female characters remain in the background, locked into representations of passively suffering mothers and battered wives whose fates may be regretted but not changed. McIlvanney's women can merely watch their husbands and sons battle against a rising tide of corrosive changes, but they have nothing substantial to contribute to the articulation of a new community. They do not even seem to have a history of their own that could be recovered, with whatever effect. Betty Scoular is trapped in the representations this masculinist community offers:

These days she ... created a role as self-consciously as an actress might with stage make-up: the wife. ... By the time she reached the bottom of the stairs, she had become 'the mother.' (19)

⁶⁰Though *The Big Man* leaves it open whether or not Mason will exact retribution, Dan Scoular is killed by Mason's henchmen in *Strange Loyalties*.

For Betty, the role of wife is actually an improvement over the role of daughter. She experiences her period of courtship as a time of liberation, but she soon finds that marriage is only another form of infantilisation. However, in the world of *The Big Man* her only option to liberate herself from the constraints of that marriage is an affair with yet another man. In spite of her sense that these roles are ‘a denial of some basic potential in her’ (19), she has no access to a language or a historical traditions through which to articulate that potential.

Jeff Torrington’s recovery of working-class histories goes even further in silencing women. His novel *Swing Hammer, Swing!* and short story collection *The Devil’s Carousel* not only celebrate masculine working-class history in the pubs of the demolished Glaswegian Gorbals and the myth of the resilient industrial labourer. His representations of women also reverberate with the most degrading misogyny. Torrington’s work is an instance of a politics of representation that merely resituates the margin at the centre without questioning their dynamics. This makes it necessary to understand representational interventions not just as the recuperation of lost, forgotten or suppressed subaltern histories, but as a politics of representation that understands identity as difference, and challenges the dynamics of margin and centre.

2.4.2 Histories of Difference

The working-class myths of William McIlvanney and Jeff Torrington illustrate the danger of alternative histories slipping into an essentialist mode by resituating marginalised groups at the centre of the new master narrative. James Kelman is generally more suspicious of history, suspends most of his characters in an eternal present and only in *Hardie and Baird* attempts to redress the collective amnesia around working-class history. Alasdair Gray’s *Poor Things* (1992) and *A History Maker* (1994) or Frank Kuppner’s *A Very Quiet Street* (1989), *Something Very Like Murder* (1994), and the enigmatic *A Concussed History of Scotland* (1990) offer a third way of looking at history that not only deconstructs official narratives of identity but addresses the very narrativity of histories, dominant or alternative, and their authority to ‘represent’ identity and community. These texts employ what Linda Hutcheon calls ‘de-doxifying’ strategies, they employ ‘formalist self-reflexivity and parody’ (*The Politics of Postmodernism* 7) to expose historical certainty as narrative construction:

Knowing the past becomes a question of representing, that is, of constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording. ... [T]he metafictional aspects of historiographic metafiction ... highlights

the areas in which interpretation enters the domain of historiographic representation (in the choice of narrative strategy, explanatory paradigm, or ideological encoding) (74)

But metafiction is not an end in itself, the historical narratives of Gray and Kuppner are not the kinds of self-referential forms of navel-gazing which are characteristic of what Teresa Ebert has called 'ludic postmodernism' (115). Instead, metafiction becomes a way of addressing the particular power relations within which representations are constructed. In the texts of Gray and Kuppner, postmodern self-reflexiveness is in the service of a political imagination that looks for new representations of difference.

Frank Kuppner and Supplementarity

Frank Kuppner's *A Very Quiet Street* asks whether history can be represented, i.e. whether there can even be one authoritative representation of any historic event. He also asks how authoritative histories can attempt to construct identity in the present, and how such authoritative narratives can be contested. With scrupulous attention to detail, the narrator attempts to unravel the murder of 83-year old Marion Gilchrist, who was brutally battered to death with a chair in 49 West Princess Street at or around 7pm on the 21st of December 1908, and the subsequent trial and conviction of Oscar Slater. Apparently, Slater, a German Jew who had merely come to Glasgow to embark on a ship to the US, had no connection with the crime whatsoever except that he happened to live in the same street, and even at the time his conviction was widely held to be a grave error. The narrator, also named Frank Kuppner, is driven by the desire to solve this historic case once and for all, discover the 'real' murderer and find the 'real' version of the crime amongst the hopelessly contradictory police records, protocols, court reports, newspaper articles and later reconstructions of the case in popular books on the subject. Yet this epistemological quest for a knowledge of history breaks down: instead of yielding the desired answer his research leads to a proliferation of narratives and a new understanding of historical knowledge as a representation of power.

At first, the case seems deceptively close to the narrator and to present day Glasgow: many of the relevant street names are the same, the murder took place in the house next to the one in which the narrator spent his childhood. The answer seems to be woven into the very texture of the streets the narrator walks every day, waiting to be discovered. Yet, the closer the apparent resemblance, the more incomprehensible the case seems to become. The narrator soon discovers that the urban recon-

struction of Glasgow during the 1960s has destroyed much of Marion Gilchrist's Glasgow as well as the Glasgow of his own childhood:

It would take a dead man not to notice the vast changes that have taken place in the area. Entire streets have disappeared. The familiar layout has been utterly disrupted. It is normal to travel abroad, and return after half a lifetime to discover that the magical backdrops of one's childhood have been crudely and garishly over-painted; but to inhabit continuously the same city, and be subject to more or less random reminders, after a rushed assemblage of far too few years, of the total loss of some of the most treasured venues and landmarks of the private eternity of one's earliest youth, is to find oneself the baffled victim of transience at its most callous.

(104)

The urban landscape as a form of spatialised history is transformed over time, and the deceptively familiar generic name 'Glasgow' hides an assembly of differences, displacements and mutations that have no common denominator. To his chagrin the narrator finds that even contemporaneous events, taking place simultaneously and in the same location are subject to uncertainty. In the contradictory and mutually exclusive accounts even of alleged eye witnesses of the crime, space constantly loses its identity with itself to the point where one may doubt whether the witnesses actually inhabit the same universe. Even 49 West Princess Street is never the same house twice in any of the reports. Reconstruction of the events is constantly sabotaged by a Heisenbergian indeterminacy of time, space and identity: although Marion Gilchrist's house is probably similar to the one in which the narrator spent most of his childhood, although he played in its backyard as a child, and although he now passes the house almost daily, crucial details of the site of the crime remain elusive until the last. Space itself appears to be a baroque, or better, fractal movement, details multiply exponentially exactly when the narrator seems to have reached momentarily convincing conclusions. Every newly discovered document shifts historical reality with more incommensurable details and moves the case further from a solution.

The narrator's position as researcher vis-à-vis his material, i.e. the conditions under which he constructs knowledge and meaning, are characterised by the same radical indeterminacy. He conducts his research in Glasgow's Mitchell library, and discovers any number of coincidences that link him with his object of study:

The Mitchell Library was founded in 1877 . . . After 40 years it had outgrown its cramped central location (in Ingram Street, I think) and a new building was constructed to house it, in North Street (One minute's walk from Charing Cross.) The foundation stone was laid by some local worthy whose name I have more than once read on the inscribed slab near the elaborate old entrance, but I have

usually walked blindly past it, and I could not even attempt to guess his name with the least likelihood of success. This was done in 1907. Miss Gilchrist was still alive, over 80 years old, living five or so minutes away in West Princess Street, among her habitual neighbours. (25)

Of course, none of these coincidences and apparent links between past and present provide any answers; on the contrary, true to the Heisenbergian law questions of identity appear to wriggle from the narrator's grasp as soon as he has established a spatial and temporal connection and vice versa. Add to that the positionality of perception, the failure of memory and the contradictory desires that motivate narrator, witnesses, judges, jury and police in their search for 'truth,' and the past is completely irrecoverable, truth and identity become performative.

The narrator also creates a link to official versions of history by pulling the arch-chronicler of Scottish history into his narrative:

(Of late, by the way, I have been desultorily reading Sir Walter Scott's journal. (Indeed, now that I think of it, the edition which I bought a few months ago (there seems to be no modern edition) was dated 1898 or some such year (certainly, late nineteenth-century) – published, that is, when both Slater and Gilchrist were alive (and Mary Barrowman was a very young girl of three or thereabouts, beginning to walk, talk, invent stories, etc.); the former not yet having visited Glasgow, the latter already an old woman of 70-odd, who had lived in West Princess Street for 20 or so years by now, and whose death in her sleep, need I repeat, would not have been the cause for much concern or comment anywhere.) I have not yet finished the book, but it is a little eerie to consider that, doubtless on one of those myriad days when the good-hearted author spent eight or so hours in the library writing well below standard more or less non-stop (his day being enlivened only by a long walk, or a couple of hours of jovial tree-feeling) Miss Gilchrist put in her first appearance in the world.) (20)

Again, the interconnectedness of the present and different times of the past through the seeming identity of space appears to guarantee some kind of historical coherence. There is the deceptive closeness of the small nation where, as the narrator of Kelman's 'Oh My Darling' says, 'we all know each other' (*The Good Times* 72), and in which the lives of people usually considered insignificant by official historians are made 'meaningful' because they inhabit the same space of complex interactions as the famous few. Yet there is no 'meaning' in these imaginary relationships, these coincidences provide no narrative coherence. Through their place of writing, their contents, and the coincidences of their publication, Sir Walter Scott's diaries would appear to provide a national continuum and a bridge between past and present, yet this connection is an illusion, the past does not yield its meaning to

objective investigation, because it has no inherent meaning and only leads to more narrated facts.

Of course, while the narrator fails to find the desired solution and eventually abandons his project almost in mid-sentence, others have found more or less meaningful answers. Police and prosecution managed to fabricate a highly unlikely case against Slater and defended it even when confronted with its absurdity, the jury reached a 'guilty' verdict, and the judge sermonised on the moral depravity of the ruthless killer Oscar Slater. The novel questions the foundation of 'knowledge' and 'truth' in a natural order of so-called facts. In the police report, which bristles with contradictions, not even narrative ingenuity and coherence seems to be an important factor; instead, knowledge, truth and narrative closure are simply functions of power. Reinvestigations of the case are prohibited by the judge, who by virtue of his power defines what is legitimate knowledge and how it is narrated. A police officer who later comes forth with an alternative version of the Slater case is discredited, discharged and deprived of his pension. In Slater's case, knowledge is tied to the legal system, which alone has the power to act on this knowledge and enforce it as the truth, while alternative knowledges without access to power are suppressed.

The origins of these regimes of truth and the violence with which they are enforced draw attention to Scotland's double status as partner in the Union and quasi-independent nation. Kuppner alludes to the hybridity of the legal system whose arbitrary violence is the result of both British Unionism and its Scottish elements. On the one hand, the judiciary, whose police fabricates evidence and witness statements, whose prosecution falsifies evidence, whose judge is a hypocritical moralist and whose representatives are xenophobic and anti-Semitic, is an independent national institution, and cause for much national pride. The narrator's ironic exclamation: 'Scottish justice: the envy of the world!' (60) casts some doubt on the claims to democratic tradition which Scottish myths usually articulate with national institutions. On the other hand, having ceded its legislature to the Westminster Parliament, Scotland is deprived of a legislative arm, which leaves the judiciary incapable of adopting changes made necessary by historical changes:

Scotland was, and indeed is, one of those (I imagine) comparatively few areas of the earth which possess an indigenous legal system, but have no indigenous capacity to create new laws, or abrogate or alter old ones. The wisdom and rightness of this hardly need to be commented on. (57)

This leads to the strange situation that Slater is sentenced to death, then pardoned to a life sentence in spite of the fact that his innocence seemed blatantly obvious. For lack of procedures, appeal becomes almost impossible.

The implications of Kuppner's novel are far-reaching for the national project as a whole. In contradiction to Benedict Anderson, Timothy Brennan or Dorothy McMillan, the various printed texts and protocols do not even provide the semblance of spatial and temporal unity, national, municipal or otherwise; instead, narratives multiply, their contradictions deconstruct any pretence of unity, knowledge is based on arbitrary acts of power. Kuppner's 'novel of sorts' questions Anderson's notion of the historic mission of the novel as a 'national style.' Its parenthetic and fractal style (of which the passages quoted above offer perfect examples) transforms the epistemological quest for the name of the murderer into the ever-growing collection of equally (ir)relevant details which can only be made to cohere in an act of violence. History is a clearly *unbordered* jumble of afterthoughts, and identity a perpetual supplement. In contrast to Anderson's and Brennan's grand narratives of national identity, *A Very Quiet Street* represents history and identity as fractal, perspectival, 'all tangents, ... endlessly digressive' (Crawford, 'Frank Kuppner in the 1980s' 70) and subject to constant supplementation. Kuppner's novel offers a counter-representation of identity that radically challenges nationalist demands for homogeneity and unity and approaches Homi Bhabha's demands for post-colonial identity:

We must always keep open a supplementary space for the articulation of cultural knowledges that are adjacent and adjunct but not necessarily accumulative, teleological, or dialectical. The 'difference' of cultural knowledge that 'adds to' but does not 'add up' is the enemy of the *implicit* generalization of knowledge or the implicit homogenization of experience. ('DissemiNation' 313)

Bhabha's notion of 'adding-to' that does not 'add up' is a form of resistance directed against the 'calculation of power and knowledge' (312) that tries to suppress 'subaltern' knowledges. For Bhabha, post-colonial counter-histories represent a kind of struggle that does not replace one fixed identity with another, but deconstructs identity and reconstructs it as difference. Counter-histories are far from emancipating if they repeat the totality and violence of the single colonial narrative. Kuppner's novel represents the kind of history that continuously opens new spaces.

Alasdair Gray and the Duplicity of History

Like Frank Kuppner, Alasdair Gray uses his novels to explore the fictionality of national history. *Poor Things* and *A History Maker* pretend to be historical narratives, and both draw attention to their narrativity. Both texts are framed by elaborate introductions, and textual apparatuses of notes and explanations which on the one hand lend them an aura of

historicity, and on the other undermine their authority with contradictory information. In the following I look more closely at *Poor Things* as the more complex of the two novels.

Poor Things is introduced by an editor named Alasdair Gray who informs the reader of the history of the text as the private print called ‘Episodes from the Early Life of a Scottish Public Health Officer’ written by Archibald McCandless MD during the first decade of the twentieth century. In spite of its title, the text turns out to be the biography of Victoria McCandless, MD, a socialist activist and wife of Archibald. According to this document, Victoria, whose ‘real’ is here given as Bella, lived in Manchester, where she was married to a General Blessington, a tyrant who held her as a domestic slave. In the last days of her pregnancy, she escaped and travelled to Scotland to commit suicide. This is the prehistory, which is given at a later point in the narrative. Archibald’s text sets in when her body is fished from the Clyde and lands on the operating table of medical prodigy Godwin Baxter, who saves her life by implanting the baby’s brain in the adult body. The novel gradually unravels the mystery of her origin, and tells the story of her intellectual and sexual growth after her re-birth, her journeys through half the world, and her final marriage with Archibald McCandless.

The fictional editor Alasdair Gray claims to have received this biography from Michael Donnelly, assistant curator of a Glasgow museum, who had in turn salvaged it from a demolished building. Needless to say, the original book was lost ‘somewhere between editor, publisher, typesetter and photographer’ (xvi). The historical narrative is the object of struggles over textual authority when the almost Nabokovian editor has to consider the inclusion of a letter written by Victoria (or Bella) McCandless, in which she disclaims Archibald’s entire story as a ‘cunning lie’ (274) entirely motivated by her husband’s low self-esteem. In her words,

[T]o my nostrils the book stinks of Victorianism. It is as sham-gothic as the Scott Monument, Glasgow University, St. Pancras Station and the Houses of Parliament. I hate such structures. (275)

Her own narrative presents a very different picture of a hard-working socialist doctor who has to fight against the prejudices of her times. The editor doubly discredits her autobiographical accounts by publishing her ‘Letter to Posterity’ after McCandless’s fantastic narrative: contrary to Donnelly’s wish, he does not use her letter as an introduction, arguing rather bluntly that ‘no book needs two introductions and I am writing this one’ (xiii). He also frames both Archibald McCandless’s book and Victoria’s letter with his introduction and ‘Notes Critical and Historical’ in which he amasses dubious historical evidence in support of Archibald McCandless’s narrative. There, he also links Victoria McCandless with prominent Edwardians like Bernard Shaw, Beatrice Webb, H.G. Wells or

Ford Madox Hueffer and Scottish radicals like John Maclean and C. M. Grieve (alias Hugh MacDiarmid).

The metafictional play with sources and authority undermines the veracity of historical accounts by drawing attention to the narrativity of history, in which different versions compete with each other and are selected in an act of historiographic violence. In Hutcheon's words:

Knowing the past becomes a question of representing, that is, of constructing and interpreting, not of objective recording. ... [T]he metafictional aspects of historiographic metafiction also highlight the areas in which interpretation enters the domain of historiographic representation. (74)

Gray's textual apparatus of contradictory introductions and notes questions the possibility of stable historical narratives of identity. These textual strategies should caution critics against the kind of hasty reading of *Poor Things* as a form of national allegory that Dorothy McMillan offers in her essay 'Constructed out of Bewilderment.' McMillan pins her analysis on one of Gray's engravings which portrays Bella Baxter as Mona Lisa, with the shipyards of the Clyde in the background and a caption reading 'Bella Caledonia' (*Poor Things* 45). She accepts the narrator's deceptive invitation to identify the 'secret' meaning of the novel as a nationalist pamphlet:

Reinforcing this is the secret message concealed under the dust-jacket of the book: 'Work as if you live in the early days of a better nation,' a message that will be discovered sooner or later depending on how one reads. (McMillan 86-7)

The concealed 'message,' though, is part of an undertow of intertextual references, this time to Gray's 1982 *Janine*, which not only lends the motto a slightly ironic edge, but always threatens to hollow out meaning and textual authority.

Of course, Archibald McCandless offers a tempting reading of Bella as a Scottish Marianne: after all, Bella's pre-history is that of wife and domestic slave of General 'Thunderbolt' Blessington, a venerated imperial hero whose service led him from China, India and Burma around the Cape of Good Hope to Patagonia and up to Canada. The failure of this multiply wounded and patched-up hero to kidnap Bella from her friends in Scotland after her recovery, and his subsequent suicide fit the mould of Tom Nairn's break-up of Britain. Bella's subsequent happy life in Scotland as the wife of Archibald McCandless, the public health officer, seems to provide a wonderfully gratifying ending to a national fairy tale. However, the textual apparatus exposes this Victorian conceit: the footnotes and disclaimers present a very different picture in which a General Blessington as imperial bogey man has no place. *Poor Things* seems to suggest an allegorical reading, but

simultaneously refuses and ironises the national allegory as the magical narrative of wishful thinking.

Even the narrative that unfolds in the ‘Episodes from the Early Life of a Scottish Public Health Officer’ is full of pitfalls and far more ambiguous concerning the history of Scotland than McMillan concedes. Bella Baxter is the ‘product’ of the medical ingenuity of Godwin Baxter, who saves her life by implanting the brain of her unborn infant. But Bella is not only a biological hybrid of mother and daughter, but a cultural border crosser, too. When she relearns speech, she speaks not with a Glaswegian but with a Manchester accent, assembles her sentences from fragments of both English and Scottish literature and writes letters in imitation of Shakespearean blank verse. Her travels lead her far beyond the British Isles and even the British Empire into the casinos of the Continent, the poor quarters of Alexandria and the brothels of Paris. As she proudly states, ‘I am a woman of the world’ (142): just as her body is assembled from different parts, her cultural education transcends national and class boundaries. McMillan grants that the novel does not offer a straightforward nationalist tract, but has a handy explanation:

[W]hat sort of a nation do we find? Well, first of all it is a nation that has to be invented, it will not simply evolve in the natural way of things and when it is invented it will be a monster; it will contain, but may have forgotten its own history; it will combine the perceptions of innocence with the power of experience. (87)

Contradictions and conflicts are again resolved with reference to the nation as Timothy Brennan’s ‘clearly bordered jumble’ and Benedict Anderson’s ‘imagined community,’ but the specificities of the invention are lost in the process.

The allegorical reading can accommodate the national body as ‘monstrous’ only by neglecting that this body is never whole: though stitched together, it does not ‘add up.’ Bella’s body is always more than its parts, it constantly overflows its boundaries into other bodies and cannot be contained within the unified space and time of the nation. Rather than ‘monstrous,’ Bella’s body is in the Bakhtinian sense ‘grotesque’: the combination of infant brain and adult body turns, as Bakhtin writes, ‘the essential topographical element of the bodily hierarchy ... upside down: the lower stratum replaces the upper stratum’ (*Rabelais* 309). During her ‘education,’ the satisfaction of sexual appetite is Bella’s preferred mode of social interaction, males become a mere extension of her physical desire. After the transplant, Bella has lost all memory of moral conditioning and cultural constraints and lives out her voracious sexual appetite with every willing male in reach. During a grand tour of Europe with her ‘creator’ Godwin Baxtor she ‘cuddles’ every man she can grab; after her return she announces her engagement

with Archibald McCandless, only to elope with Duncan Wedderburn immediately thereafter. For her companion, not quite her match, their journey across Europe is a series of orgiastic nights in hotels and days spent in coma in hotels or trains, whereas Bella takes in all the knowledge and all the men she can along the way. At the end of their journey, she temporarily ends up in a brothel in Paris before she returns to Glasgow to marry McCandless. Bella's body and its appetite defies the boundaries of morality, Victorian or otherwise, and deconstructs them as 'convenient habits, not natural laws' (*Poor Things* 70). Not only that, she burlesques the mythic Continental connection with which Scottish intellectuals like Beveridge and Turnbull like to leap over their allegedly non-philosophical English neighbours into the history of European Enlightenment. Bella's Grand Tour is less an intellectual or even a sentimental journey than a carnivalesque education of the body that would make John Knox flinch.

Bella's grotesque body also situates her outside the regime of the calendar and national history in what Bhabha calls a 'double time' ('DissemiNation'), where she is both object of the pedagogy of nation and empire and subject of the performance of her body with its double history. Her fiancée McCandless complains to Godwin Baxter:

Her worst fault ... is her infantile sense of time and space. She feels short intervals are huge, yet thinks she can grasp all the things she wants at once, no matter how far they are from her and each other. She talked as if her engagement to marry me and her elopement with Wedderburn were simultaneous. I had no heart to tell her time and space forbid this. (70)

When a British nobleman and an American bible salesman show her the slums of Alexandria, the double vantage point of infant and adult allows Bella to challenge the dominant narratives of time and space, i.e. of imperial, national and religious chauvinism. When her tour guide Lord Astley tries to explain the poverty of the Egyptians away with colonial and Darwinist narratives, she bites him. Her spontaneous 'infantile' reaction deconstructs the stable historical rationalisations for what they are: acts of violence. Her double perspective refuses Lord Astley's intellectual cynicism with which he both explains and affirms the ideology of colonialism. This doubleness also becomes the starting point for Bella's own narrative of social justice as physical care which transcends the boundaries of the nation and acknowledges the existence of class, gender and ethnicity as specific transnational locations. The notion of evolutionary and linear time embodied in the social Darwinism of Astley's imperial pedagogy cannot surmount Bella's local and double time of the body.

McMillan regards Bella's recovery of memory as the allegorical representation of the nation searching for its historical identity, but her

romantisation of Bella as the combination of the ‘perceptions of innocence’ and the ‘power of experience’ neglects Bella’s doubleness as both mother and child of colonial oppression. This complexity blurs the line between coloniser and colonised, which makes it impossible for Scots to ‘return’ to a mythic prelapsarian identity in the singular. The memory that is lost in the struggle for Scottish independence is less that of a pure state before the Union but more often the memory of involvement in the colonial project. Though a useful strategic position in the struggle for new political subject positions, the national struggle and its desire for national harmony seems to cause local amnesia of continuing postcolonial conflicts. McMillan’s oversimplified representation of the nation as the Wordsworthian synthesis of innocence and experience disregards the specificity of the different gendered and class histories that converge in Bella’s – and Scotland’s – experiences.

When Bella discovers the history of her body, it is not the history of the occupation of one country by another, but the history of a woman abused by her father and husband. Interestingly, the recovery of that forgotten history has little impact on Bella’s actions and decisions: her new experience has already repeated and overcome the experience of patriarchal oppression that her body had lived through. The clean slate of her new brain places her outside the ideological constraints that were part of her socialisation, and has allowed her to liberate herself from oppression. The new Bella can refuse the Victorian representations of women and move outside convention to establish her own narratives, she liberates herself from history, which for her is a gendered history of oppression.

However, as Jonathan Coe points out, Bella remains the object of male narration: Archibald’s Pygmalion narrative restores male power and makes emancipation contingent upon Godwin Baxter’s benevolence and – also gendered – scientific progress. It turns Bella’s spontaneous physical presence into a masculinist myth of a femininity, places Bella outside history and social discourses and leaves little space for feminist counterhistories. Victoria McCandless’s letter, however, as well as the editor’s concluding footnote provide an interesting counterpoint in that they resituate the protagonist in the concrete political struggles of women at the turn of the century and sketch an emancipatory narrative. According to her letter, Victoria McCandless experiences both the deprivation and hardship of working-class life and the cultural oppressiveness of the new bourgeoisie from a specifically female perspective. She becomes a Fabian socialist who struggles for the emancipation of women through sex education and birth control as well as ‘a Britain where everyone has a good clean home and is well paid for useful work’ (307). She turns to the Scottish Workers’ Republican Party and home rule, but as an Englishwoman, her association with this

struggle is voluntary. After World War Two she hopes that her emancipatory goals can be achieved without this detour through nationalism and returns to Britain as the stage of emancipation. In a letter to C. M. Grieve she writes:

It seems John Maclean was wrong. A workers' co-operative nation will be created from London, without an independent Scotland showing the way. (316)

In spite of Archibald's Brontëan exclamation, 'reader, she married me!' (240), *Poor Things* is far from being what Brennan calls the national 'mass ceremony' a Victorian novel might (or might not) have been. Instead, the ironic intertextual reference highlights the very unconventionality of the union within an ideology based on the sanctity of the family. In the stutter of one character, the marriage of Victoria and Archibald becomes a 'mumarrriage' (229), a concession to convention, but no cornerstone for a social contract. Rather than create a new community, the contradictions of text and textual apparatus as well as the double time of Bella's experience as adult and infant, mother and daughter of imperialism, introduces an irreducible ambiguity that undermines Anderson's notion of novelistic and national time as 'homogeneous, empty time' (26). *Poor Things* thereby defies the narrative closure and what Bhabha calls the "'representative" authority' ('DissemiNation' 295) of the national allegory and opens a 'third space' through which difference enters the text as a radical indeterminacy.

2.5 People Like That

Benedict Anderson describes the cultural process of the imagination of the nation as a double mechanism of exclusion and inclusion: the nation is 'imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (6). The national border suggests an absolute difference from an 'outside,' and the narrative of sovereignty an internal homogeneity. Nationalists therefore generally represent their respective people as both unique and united, in which an outside figures as 'other,' and 'difference' is either a permissible 'diversity' of an exotic minority, or dangerously transgressive, un-American, un-German, un-Scottish.

Within the logic of the nation, boundaries are the most important locations for the signification of community; though apparently naturalised with reference to topography and geography, these boundaries emerge from cultural practices and struggles which reinforce the sense of self and otherness. In the words of Anthony P. Cohen:

Th[e] consciousness of community is ... encapsuled in perception of its boundaries, boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction. (13)

Borders are constructed symbolically, and in this process of signification, the 'other' on the other side of the border guarantees identity. As Cohen observes, insistence on distinctive elements intensifies 'as the *apparent* similarity between forms on each side of the boundary increases' (40; Cohen's italics). This assertion of distinctiveness in turn necessitates a degree of unity within to legitimate the boundary. According to Cohen, this unity is mainly constituted on a symbolic level, i.e. through representations, which of course includes communal institutions like schools, bureaucracies, the media, etc, all of which produce and distribute representations. National identities and boundaries are also sites of intensive struggle between different groups within that community, and for the suppression of doubleness and difference.

Scottish and/or British Identities

Within the ideology of Britishness so recently reinforced by Margaret Thatcher, Scotland is little more than a marginal and slightly exotic location, its boundary is represented as the sub-national marker of a region within Britain. Not only tourists collapse the distinction between Britain and England and greet Scots as tartan-wearing Englishmen and -women. The following almost stereotypical exchange in McWilliam's *Debatable Land* between the Scotswoman Elspeth and an Englishman who steps on board her yacht in Tahiti, summarises a common grievance amongst Scots:

'Where's Home?' she asked.

'The old country. Same as yourselves.'

On the stern *Ardent Spirit* bore her name and her port of registration, Aberdeen.

'Scotland, then?' asked Elspeth, although she did not think it likely. The man had a southern voice, overlaid by the bark of the sea.

'No, England.' (50-1)

This widespread confusion cannot be limited to subjective (mis)apprehension, but implies a hegemonic representational politics that systematically reproduces the subordination of Scotland as integral part of *England*, and not as part of a voluntary union in a United Kingdom. This may explain the desire of Scottish nationalists for an absolute boundary

between the two nations on the one hand, and the necessity to find a unified Scottish character on the other.

Yet, the consequence of the search for a national character is a representational politics of self and other that in turn results in the suppression of difference within Scotland and, ironically, reproduces the colonial dynamics of margin and centre. In this scenario, the internal foe is not Britishness, even in the shape of the 'internal anglicisers, who are always with us' (Scott, *In Bed With an Elephant* 44). Much more threatening are internal voices which stubbornly resist unification and categorisation as either self or other, and insist that one can be on both sides of many borders at the same time. But between the polarising national politics in which one can belong either to 'us' or to 'them' there is what Homi Bhabha calls a 'third space' which is less a 'space' in the territorial sense than a temporary point of intervention which

challenges our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenizing, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past, kept alive in the national tradition of the People.

(Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* 37)

The famous exchange between John P. Mackintosh and Stephen Maxwell testifies to this suspicion of the mixed and messy on the part of nationalists. To explain the defeat of the Devolution Bill in 1977, Labour MP Mackintosh had the audacity to claim that Scots have a dual nationality, that they in fact inhabit two identities at once:

For over 200 years there had been a Scottish tradition fostered by the law, education, separate Church and local government, but the Scots were also British and had taken pride in British traditions.

(John P. Mackintosh and Scotland 141)

In his reply 'The Trouble with John P. Mackintosh' Maxwell, then SNP leader, furiously denied the hybridity of Scottish culture:

If such a hybrid as British culture ever existed it was surely only in the nineteenth century through such Anglo-Scottish figures as the Mills, Macaulay, Carlyle and Ruskin. (146)

Maxwell insisted that this time was over and that Scotland indeed had a 'genuine Nationalism' (144) by which he meant a political movement that had its origins in a single national identity.

A certain kind of hybridity has long been an important *topos* in Scottish literature and criticism, from Robert Louis Stephenson's *Doctor Jekyll and Mister Hyde* to the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy' of Gregory Smith and Hugh MacDiarmid. But this split, variously located between highlands and lowlands or the Scottish heart and the British head has itself ossified into a unified identity. Thus, Alan Bold celebrates the alleged national characteristic as 'a way of life' (*Modern Scottish*

Literature 2) that is reflected in Scottish ‘artistic techniques’ of ‘contrast and counterpoint, juxtaposition and antithesis, paradox and parallelism’ (2). Ian Bell dismisses such constructions in his criticism of Nigel Tranter’s *The Story of Scotland* exactly because ‘in a remarkably untroubled way it ... promises eventually to naturalise and integrate these contending forces within some wholly absorbent and emollient unity called “Scottishness”’ (224). The hybridity of Scots goes far beyond such rather comforting narratives of a split and eccentric personality, into actual historical conflicts which open faultlines right across the borders of the imagined communities of Scotland and Britain.

2.5.1 Postcolonial Hybridity

If, as Alasdair Gray reminds us, even ‘[t]he first people who called themselves Scots were immigrants’ (*Independence* 5), difference goes to the heart of the national self. Now, as former junior-partner in the British Empire, Scotland enters the era of postcolonial migration: Afro-Caribbeans, Pakistani, Indians and Chinese, or the ‘new Scots,’ as Bashir Maan calls them, change the concept of what it means to be Scottish, and Scotland has to be rethought as a meeting place for exiles:

Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of ‘foreign’ cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gatherings in the ghettos or cafés of city centers; gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another’s language; gathering the signs of approval and acceptance, degrees, discourses, disciplines; gathering the memories of underdevelopment, of other worlds lived retroactively; gathering in the past in a ritual of revival; gathering the present.

(Bhabha, ‘DissemiNation’ 291)

In an article in *The Herald* Hardeep Kohli describes the first stirrings of a Pakistani and Indian subculture in Scottish cities and the response of BBC Scotland with its drama initiative *Migrations*. Authors like Kelman, Welsh, Kuppner and McWilliam also address this transformation of Scottish society. Out of the corner of an eye, the protagonist of Kelman’s *A Disaffection* notes that the typically Scottish fish and chip shop is now run by an Italian family. In Frank Kuppner’s *Something Very Like Murder*, the narrator reflects on the Lithuanian and/or German origin of his father who came to Scotland after the first World War, continued to speak with a rather distinct accent and live with a memory he was reluctant to share. Scotland lies at the intersection of migratory paths, it is settled by émigrés, exiles and returning exiles with different memories, experiences, knowledges, and ways of being in the world. Even within living memory, the country has changed under the impact of

people leaving for new found lands, sometimes returning, either with comforting memorabilia like Commander Bruce in *Debatable Land*, or sociopathic memories of rape and violence like Roy Strang in Irvine Welsh *Marabou Stork Nightmares*.

Frank Kuppner's *A Very Quiet Street* plays with the changes Glasgow witnessed under the impact, among others, of global migration. The narrator grapples with Glasgow as a diasporic community that can never be identical with itself. At times, he tries to locate a 'real' Glasgow in reference to its immigrant population, but cannot make up his mind whether there ever was a time before the arrival of Asians:

As to what Miss Gilchrist would make of the 'real' West Princess Street – that is to say, the place as it was in the late 1950's and early 1960's – I can only assume that she would be horrified by the countless changes for the worse. (Even so, some things would be pleasantly familiar. One of the policemen spoke to seeing Slater loitering in, at, on, or near the chemist's at the foot of the road. This sounds to me suspiciously like that well-known landmark of my youth, MacSween's the Chemist. It closed soon after we left, despite having given the impression of being eternal – for its interior was strangely heavy-wooded, dark, and glowing, and the panels of stonework outside boasted of a lengthy pedigree in a manner utterly suggestive of permanence.

(This edifice is now the store for a Chinese supermarket – the Wah Sang – itself just a block or two up the road, in the direction of Slater's house. I saw as I passed there last evening, a small notice in the doorway of this, which consisted of a battery of Chinese ideographs, which I did not put myself to the trouble of examining closely, interspersed with the words 'Falkirk' and 'Johnstone.' (Both of these towns are moderately near Glasgow, but, to the best of my knowledge, I have never so much as walked a step in either of them.) I think it is safe to assume that Miss Gilchrist would have, initially at least, horrendous difficulties in assimilating the *raison d'être* of a change like this, even though one of the minor beneficiaries of her will was, as I remember, a missionary resident in China. (More generally, I myself at times almost believe I am dreaming as I walk through these remnants of the location of my childhood. I have no sense that these are the same old streets. Somehow I feel certain that the same old streets are still in existence elsewhere (in fact, I do often dream about them), and it seems I am actually in quite another part of town.)) (106)

When, then, was Glasgow? In the late nineteenth century? in the 1950s? in the present? or in the world of dreams? The narrator cheerfully subverts all of these possible answers, including his own initial assumption that the 'real' Glasgow might be located sometime before the arrival of Asian immigrants, in other words his own childhood: then already, things had changed 'for the worse.' Both the community of Miss

Gilchrist and the seemingly timeless community of childhood nostalgia have simply melted into air and evaporated in dreams.

The arrival of the Chinese – an event which, the narrator at first somewhat hastily assumes, might have horrified poor old Miss Gilchrist – momentarily comes to signify this change for the worse, but then the narrator remembers that Glasgow has indeed always already been immersed in transnational culture, and that there may be no single point of origin for these changes. In this context of constant transformation, Scottish culture is re-written in Chinese ideographs, but in a way that does not naturalise either culture as part of the other but suspends them in tension. It seems that Glasgow can never be whole, can never be entirely knowable and representable as a whole: the unreadability of Chinese script resists the desired ideological closure of the imagined community. The Chinese are neither cause nor effect of this unintelligibility: their arrival is part of the continuous revolution of Glasgow, a decentred dynamic that somehow links the colonisation of Hong Kong and the destruction of the old city with new motorways (though the narrator never bothers to find out where that link might be). In a sense, therefore, Scotland has always been half-Chinese; for the narrator, community has never been complete, it has (and always has had) an outside in space and time that intrudes to rupture total representation. In this sense, community is always double, split or hybrid, it exists in the parallel and contradictory worlds of unreliable memory, unknowable present, and uncertain future and is shot through with elements that refuse stable representation. Such a hybrid community requires a politics of representation that does not enforce closure: in all of Kuppner's novels, the attempt to capture reality 'realistically' in a totalising narrative therefore breaks down. The style performs this unceasing break-down of representation and evolves in contradictory and parenthetical afterthoughts which question the knowability and wholeness of community.

In the face of the inability to represent community as a whole, Anthony Cohen suggests 'that rather than thinking of community as an *integrating* mechanism, it should be regarded as an *aggregating* device' (20; Cohen's italics). This constant supplementation requires a new politics of representation that does not subsume difference in a new total but retains the doubleness; Bhabha therefore proposes:

The aim of cultural difference is to rearticulate the sum of knowledge from the perspective of the signifying *singularity* of the 'other' that resists totalization – the repetition that will not return as the same, the minus-in-origin that results in political and subversive strategies where adding-*to* does not add-up but serves to disturb the calculation of power and knowledge, producing other spaces of subaltern signification. ('DissemiNation' 312; Bhabha's italics)

The goal of this ‘subaltern signification’ is to escape the logic of colonialism by not simply exchanging the subject of discrimination and marginalising representation; therefore it does not articulate every conceivable identity with its own territory and history that freeze it forever in space and time. It cannot be the task of writers of particular groups to *represent* their respective groups to a voyeuristic audience and become witnesses of ethnic, female or working-class authenticity. Asim Ullah summarises the impossibility of being such a representative when he says: ‘The BBC wants to encourage Asian writers, but that’s the last thing I want to be’ (Kohli 17). Instead, Bhabha’s adding-to that does not add up emphasises the fluidity of identity as always ‘more’ than can be represented within any one discourse, and locates articulation in the ‘third spaces’ that are always in-between. He therefore suggests a new approach to identity that subverts essentialisation:

The discourse of *nationalism* is not my main concern. In some ways it is the historical certainty and settled nature of that term against which I am attempting to write of the western nation as an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture. This locality is more *around* temporality than *about* historicity: a form of living that is more complex than ‘community’; more symbolic than ‘society’; more connotative than ‘country’; less patriotic than *patrie*; more rhetorical than the reason of state; more mythological than ideology; less homogeneous than hegemony; less centred than the citizen; more collective than ‘the subject’; more psychic than civility; 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.

(‘DissemiNation’ 291-2)

Insisting on the locality rather than the universality of culture therefore resists the creation of ever more specific locations of authenticity. It recognises the fluidity, performativity, hybridity and duality of identity as more often on both sides of the fence than not, a constant differing of identity from itself, which requires ceaseless renegotiation, reconstitution of spaces, and re-presentation. It recognises the difference that enters every local interaction as the impossibility of total signification, and the potential of identity-as-performance to parody or subvert authoritarian constructions of identity.

However, a politics of difference cannot be equivalent to the celebration of the free play of the signifier. It requires a recognition of the pedagogical authority of dominant regimes of truth and knowledge that naturalise boundaries and preferred meanings as common sense, and normalise difference as diversity within a total universe of signification. Like identity, difference is neither natural nor given, but an intervention in cultural and pedagogical struggles which requires the complementary strategies of exposing the dominant politics of representation and the

relations of power and knowledge that inform it, and countering it with new hybrid representations. If I have introduced discussion of ‘the people’ around the issue of ethnicity, the following sections address gender and class as subjects and objects of cultural struggles and different politics of representation. In particular, I discuss the novels of Janice Galloway and James Kelman as examples of local interventions that disturb the calculations of nationalism with elements of unsettling difference. These texts address the national question from the locations of gender and class, and show how national discourses represent difference to fit the mould of ‘the people.’ They show that identity is always subject to struggle about representations and offer various representational strategies that counter and subvert the representations of power.

2.5.2 Re-Constructing Gender

In an article in the *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, Janice Galloway praises Alasdair Gray’s sensitivity to the gendering of speaking and writing subjects in literature, but she regrets that Gray is an exception within a Scottish context that continues to be rather unconcerned by questions of gender:

It seems uncontentious to say that Scotland, a country still weighed down psychologically by its own political impotence and perceived secondary status, seems to consider gender and sex questions as relatively unimportant. (‘Different Oracles’ 195)

In a manner reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir, Galloway poses a link between Scottish and feminist struggles as both of ‘perceived secondary status’ and objects of invisible regimes of representation which cast them as ‘other’ and inferior. What seems to enrage Galloway is that even academic nationalists dismiss the parallels between national and feminist struggles, that they refuse to recognise feminist concerns at all, and that they thereby relegate women to ‘tertiary status’:

Work by women, for example, if it’s noticed at all, is usually noticed reductively. Sidelined or misunderstood as a rather recalcitrant part of objective (i.e. masculinist) discourse, the things in it which have nothing to do with established notions of ‘significance’ or ‘importance’ are rendered invisible. (194)

There are efforts to change this situation and to appropriate Scottish literature for feminist struggle, but literary nationalism continues under ‘masculinist’ aegis when it reconstructs women’s literature within its own norms of relevance and value.

Literary History and Gender

The recently published *History of Scottish Women's Writing* is an example of a normative project that rewrites the texts written by women within the project of a national literature. This history argues that ultimately the nation is the only signified of cultural production and that the specificity of the situations of women is once again secondary to that of the nation. Note the recourse to the familiar metaphor of national territoriality in the following passage from the introduction written by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan:

Scottish literature presents a terrain which has not hitherto been mapped in a relief which shows where *its* women came from, and the real contribution they make to Scottish culture and culture generally. (ix; my emphasis)

For Gifford and McMillan, nationalist territoriality and rationalist mapping are the horizon of cultural struggle; within this already mapped-out national space, women have always had their fixed place, and the project of nationalist literary critique is to recognise their hitherto underestimated contribution to a project that is itself beyond debate.

While Gifford and McMillan admit that the very title of their history contains four controversial terms, namely “History,” “Scottish,” “Women,” and “Writing” (xv), they discuss the last two terms, whereas the first two, barely brushed in their essay, become the unacknowledged dynamic driving the entire project. Within the project of a new national canon, the already written history of national literature becomes a location where women have ‘really’ always been grounded, and, as the use of the possessive ‘*its* women’ indicates, to which they still belong, although their contributions have not been duly appreciated. The national project removes the canon from critique as a regulatory discourse of cultural value and ‘significance’; this move limits feminist intervention to a very narrow process of ‘recovery’ and makes it impossible to explore transformative interventions that redefine, extend and explode the spaces provided by the nation and the national canon, let alone to imagine ‘third spaces.’ Rather than render the tension between these two emancipatory projects transparent and articulate them as an alliance with the potential to radically broaden and deepen the notion of ‘democratic analytic discourse,’ as Galloway suggests (194), projects like *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* create new boundaries and hierarchies. By refusing to take seriously the specificities of feminist struggle, nationalist theory becomes part of a politics of representation that limits the possibilities of agency.

The Trick Is To Keep Breathing

In her novels, Janice Galloway addresses what Judith Butler calls the 'regulatory practices of gender formation' (16) and the possibilities of interventionist counter-representations. *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* and *Foreign Parts* show that the issue of gender cannot be limited by a nationalist debate, because the discourses that represent women are largely transnational. Like Candia McWilliam's *Debatable Land*, Galloway's novels are narratives of travel and of travelling popular culture, the protagonists are shaped by experiences outside the boundaries of Scotland. In *Foreign Parts* Rona and Cassie work out their relationships with men and their sexual orientation while they travel through France. In *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing*, Joy Stone witnesses the death of her partner Michael Fisher in a swimming accident while on holiday in the Mediterranean; the novel describes her disintegration and recovery after her return to Glasgow. The transnationality of contemporary culture and identity is central to both these novels: in *Foreign Parts* identity is literally constituted through travel, whereas *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* also shows how the travelling popular cultural discourses of femininity and the bureaucratic and moral institutions of Scotland come together to create 'Scottish women.'

Galloway's first novel *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* shows how gender identity is in Judith Butler's words 'a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience' (16). The novel raises the question how gendered identities and even the body are produced culturally, and how resistance or self-representation are possible within powerful signifying economies. After her return to Glasgow, Joy Stone becomes the object of discourses of femininity which for a while at least punch the breath out of her and lead her to the verge of self-destruction. These discourses treat her as a non-entity, because in her sexual relationship she has 'fail[ed] to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility' (Butler 17). Joy's struggle with the moral and social norms of Scottish society can be summarised in Butler's sense as a struggle against a 'substantive grammar of sex' that 'suppresses the subversive multiplicity of ... sexuality' (19).

Within the moral binarisms of Presbyterianism and the law, Joy's relationship with her still married colleague Michael Fisher is an adulterous transgression, her grief after his death is unrepresentable in terms of conventional morality. In the manner of a John Knox, Mr Peach, the headmaster of the school where both worked as teachers, takes on the position of moral authority and enforces the values of monogamy. When he arranges a memorial service for Michael, he calls Joy into his office to invite her personally, but the seemingly considerate

gesture turns out to be censoring, excludes her from the community of mourners and condemns her to ‘non-existence’ (79):

He smiled then thought better of it, looked me deep in the eye and lowered his voice.

Mrs Fisher will have to be invited. Of course.

The *of course* was thoughtful but unnecessary. I wanted to be civilised and polite. I had a thing about being civilised and polite: it would have driven me crazy for anyone to think I was petty-minded or spiteful.

Yes of course, of course Mrs Fisher should be there of course. I appreciated being asked. This was my workplace. It made me warm to be so valued. Of course of course of course. (73)

The complete humiliation follows promptly at the hands of the priest presiding this official ceremony, who does not acknowledge her presence at all and addresses only Michael’s lawfully wedded wife as official mourner. The moral grammar of the authority of the school and the Church of Scotland leaves Joy no choice but to accept the scarlet letter of adultery. While she senses the injustice, she has no recourse to alternative discourses that would convincingly delegitimize the moral binarisms; she is tongue-tied by an education which makes meekness, civility, self-hate and guilt the only appropriate responses to every insult she might incur. The family in particular is an apparatus for the reproduction of oppressive morality: even as a mere memory, Joy’s mother exerts more pressure and instils more guilt than priest and headmaster combined:

My mother was right. I have no common sense. I don’t know a damn thing worth knowing.

THE CHURCH

THE MARRIED

THE LAW

WHAT’S WHAT

I haven’t a clue. (84)

Joy turns to a number of national institutions in the hope of finding out what’s what and to struggle against non-existence for some form of personhood. The national health system with its psychiatric institutions is one; however, the bureaucratised notion of psychological health again represents her as non-existent. The depersonalised exchanges construct her as a less than two-dimensional ‘patient’ with certain lines to speak:

DOCTOR How are things / what’s new / how’s the week been treating you?

I try to remember things in the notepad. They get jumbled and I think I’m going to cry. This is terrible so I say anything.

PATIENT I’m not sleeping. I’m still not sleeping.

DOCTOR Try taking the yellow things an hour earlier in the evening. And the red things later. There’s nothing left

to do to the green things on this theme. [Already writing prescription]

...

I come out like a steamrollered cartoon: two dimensions to start with then flattened some more till I'm tissue. (51)

The grammar of these dialogues follows Joy in waking nightmares, in which she tries to adopt various roles vis-à-vis the administrators of well-being, but all of these scenarios immediately break down in the overpowering presence of bureaucratic institutions. The dialogues between Joy and the various doctors deteriorate into absurd repetitions of the same lines in which every pretence of care is dropped; like Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon, Joy can only survive through a grim sense of humour.

Joy also seeks help in popular cultural representations of grief and mourning in international self-help books and the advice columns and horoscopes in women's magazines. Yet, these texts trivialise her grief in their limited notions of health and happiness. The American self-help book *Courage and Bereavement*, for instance, prescribes modes of recovery that are unavailable to her:

Chapter 3 says to get my family around me. My family will be a source of great strength and comfort if I let them. Blood is thicker than water.

Chapter 4 says to get my friends around me and talk. Talk. Remember the person as they were in life and the times they made me laugh. Laugh. Laughter is the best medicine. (171)

These representations construct recovery within the happy family and circle of friends, but Joy's sister is an alcoholic; memory of her deceased mother is more likely to increase guilt than appease grief; her best friend is a continent away; and it appears that the unrepresentability of Joy's relationship has disrupted her social relationships. To find that her grief is not resolvable in ten easy steps does little to boost her sense of self-worth, all the more because *Courage and Bereavement* personalises loss and grief, leaving her no language to address the social causes of her depression in society's refusal to let her mourn.

The repeated condemnations to non-existence inscribe themselves on Joy's body and drive her into silence, exile and anorexia. Her body becomes the terrain where dominant discourses of femininity are inscribed, but where she can eventually regain limited liberty and self-representation. The narratives of international women's magazines represent her body as busying itself with domestic labour, motherhood and bodily care. Joy has to negotiate her identity between representations of women as wonderful cooks who can feed the family in minutes, turn a house into a home, take care of the emotional needs of kids and husbands with the expertise of psychologists, look like models and be

willing to put up with sexual frustration (26-7). Initially, she responds to the experience of negation in these discourses with acts of self-mutilation through which she both contests and assents to this pedagogy of domesticity: throwing up food, she refuses to swallow the various institutional and cultural representations of 'womanhood' that are shoved down her throat, yet her thinness comes to embody the reified image of the female body. Mutilating herself in various cleaning crusades, she mimics the ideal of domesticity, yet she eventually manages to wash off memories and guilt and clean the path for her own re-presentation.

Joy cannot 'find herself' outside popular and bureaucratic representations of the female body: the process of liberation moves through the appropriation of discourses. As Judith Butler points out with a hint at Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, the body itself is never 'prediscursive' but literally embodies the disciplinary discourses of morality and sexuality. In Butler's theory the body itself becomes a performance:

[A]cts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (*Gender Trouble* 136)

The body is therefore not a prediscursive 'being,' but a never ending process of signification or impersonation, a mask hiding no 'truth.' Therefore, no disciplinary and pedagogical discourse of gender can be fully determining, there is always an 'excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all' (Butler 143). Agency is neither the discovery of the 'truth' of the body, nor the self-recognition of the female subject, because, Butler argues, the prediscursive subject is itself a fiction. Therefore, agency develops within that excess of meaning that escapes closure and permits the permutations which allow Joy to parody and subvert the pedagogies of femininity. It is in part her carnivalisation of the body, what Butler calls a 'parodic repetition' (31) that leads her beyond the 'of course of course of course' to a different representation of herself:

With a pair of dressmaking scissors I face the mirror and cut my hair short. Spiky. I colour it purple with permanent dye I bought ages ago and never used. While the colour sets I use the scissors to cut short my nails. I tint my eyebrows black. Tomorrow I will have my ears pierced, twice on each side. (232)

Thus, in the end, Joy manages to appropriate the discourses of femininity to liberate and refashion herself.

Foreign Parts

Galloway's latest novel *Foreign Parts* also addresses the discursive construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of 'women' in a way that is at once more carnivalesque and probes the issues of gendered identities and heterosexuality more deeply. In this road novel, the inevitable guide book (appropriately called *Potted France*) is an instance of the construction of identities through regulatory discourses as well as the capitalist conditions of production and consumption: its not-to-be-misseds educate Cassie and Rona to become one-dimensional 'tourists' who find perfect consumer bliss in skating across the surface of a reified France and taking in the country as one huge desert cake:

I don't believe this thing, Rona. This book.

...

What's wrong with it? she said.

It says not to miss the local pancakes or the cemeteries. (19)

In the touristic chain of equivalences with its glossy images, pancakes and war victims are indistinguishable as different chunks in a stale stew. But if the reifying gaze of tourism does not distinguish the quick from the dead, its logic of unlimited consumption does imply a gender distinction: it constructs tourists as male voyeurs and the object of tourism as a female body. The representation of art in 'Potted France' as objects of visual consumption amounts to the prescription of gendered reading strategies: in Angers, for instance, readers are invited to visit a gallery and share the enthusiasm for the mysogyny of mediaeval representations of women. However, both in the museum and in reading the text, Cassie manages to resist these representations by inserting herself and subverting them:

<p>It is easy to love ANGERS. ... Take a leisurely visit and do not let Angers' natural modesty lead you to miss the hidden architectural jewels: the Angel indicating the Great Whore with whom kings have fornicated and who has intoxicated the inhabitants of the earth with her wine of lasciviousness (The Tapestry of the Apocalypse, scene 64, text from St John) <i>forgets to indicate that masterpiece of soft porn which is 'woman caressing a chimera' beneath a tree in the garden.</i></p>

Christ's teeth Rona.

(145; my italics)

Just as Cassie has her strategies to refuse and counter the prescriptions of the guidebook with her angry jibes, the entire journey becomes a struggle against, and a tentative liberation from oppressive representations. Cassie's struggle with potted identities extends beyond the representations of women in art to the treatment Cassie and Rona receive as two single women travelling abroad and, finally, to an understanding of her own relationships with men and the role of popular

cultural narratives that trap her in heterosexual relationships and emotional dependency on men:

I think I also have a problem getting over the training, all sorts of addictive shite I learned from fairy tales and bride dolls and out the Jackie and every bloody pop song since the year dot and godknows. I keep thinking Love is possible. (249)

Like McWilliam's ship, the car is more than a means of transportation: the relative liberty of movement makes it a space for the contestation of the norms of gender and heterosexuality, and a redefinition of femininity. Travel as a form of carnivalisation of the 'normal' allows Rona and particularly Cassie to see themselves at a strange angle, in passing as it were. Distance and movement de-familiarise the familiar and de-naturalise the natural: they allow Cassie to work out her relationships with men and to redefine her sexual orientation. The car and the hotel rooms become places where she can reconsider her failed relationships, make a preliminary attempt to question her heterosexuality, and dream of a life with Rona that is not dominated by the false hopes of what Butler calls 'compulsive heterosexuality':

We could make a go of it ourselves. Look after each other. A big flat on the Southside maybe: one with corniced ceilings, a tiled close and a drying green. Cut costs, save fuel, half the time spent washing up; enjoy stimulating conversation and witty exchange at any time of the day or night with an in-house companion. (251)

More clearly than *Debatable Land*, which often represents identity as postmodern play, *Foreign Parts* addresses the social constructedness of subject positions, and metaphorical travel as a strategy against terminal identities. While *Debatable Land* foregrounds individual biographies and the possibility of choice, Galloway represents identity as struggle with the various national and transnational representations that frame women.

While *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* and *Foreign Parts* raise questions about feminist issues like sex, gender, the body, and agency, a largely nationalist criticism rewrites Galloway's work within a nationalist narrative that almost completely disregards the existence of feminism. In *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, Douglas Gifford hints that *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* is 'one of the strongest of the new statements of the need to redefine the place of women in society' (607), but instead of elaborating this insight, he frames his discussion in 'the context of that astonishing revival of fiction in the West of Scotland' (607) and with reference to the work of Alasdair Gray's 1982 *Janine* and James Kelman's *Busconductor Hines*, rather than, say, the work of A.L. Kennedy, Candia McWilliam, or even Jeanette Winterson, Angela Carter or Alice Walker. His reading trivialises Cassie's argument with heterosexuality as 'sounding off about men,' while Joy's grief becomes a

search for individual healing and forgiveness very much in the manner suggested by the useless self-help manual. Gifford's article culminates in an appreciation of the way Galloway represents '*our* deepest selves' (608; my italics) with 'deep human compassion' (612). In the nationalist calculation, feminism equals humanism equals nationalism, without regard for the specificities of social locations. Without a radical notion of antagonistic multiplicity, hybridity and difference, Gifford's frequently reiterated declaration that contemporary Scottish literature imagines various 'Scotlands' rather than one single Scotland (see e.g. Gifford, 'Imagining Scotlands') is mere lip-service to a pluralist formula of diversity: merely attaching the plural-s leaves the nation in the singular. Without a politics of difference, the nationalist struggle establishes itself firmly at the centre of a new marginalising dynamic. Galloway's novels on the other hand disturb that calculation with an excess of meaning that can be mobilised in the struggle against such framing discourses.

2.5.3 Working-Class Struggles

Like Galloway's, James Kelman's work resists regimes of representation and counters them not only with new representations but with a completely new politics of representation. From the position of the working class of Glasgow, he attacks stereotypical images especially of lower class Glaswegians in English fiction:

How do you recognise a Glaswegian in English literature? He – bearing in mind that in English literature you don't get female Glaswegians . . . – he's the cut-out figure who wields a razor blade, gets moroculous drunk and never has a single solitary 'thought' in his entire life. He beats his wife and beats his kids and beats his next door neighbour. (*Some Recent Attacks* 82)⁶¹

As an institution of and for the middle classes, 'English' literature (a term denoting privilege rather than nationality for Kelman) peoples its urban kailyard with lower-class characters that lack interiority, are all outside and 'other.' Kelman criticises a voyeurism that projects bourgeois fears and desires onto an urban life to make it both dangerous and exotic, and that offers extremely limiting subject positions for working-class men and women. His goal is to counter these stereotypes by showing the 'day-to-day horror of existence' (*Some Recent Attacks* 73) experienced by many Glaswegians, and to do so from their very locations.

⁶¹For the importance of alcohol in the stereotypical image of the Scottish working class see Paton, 'The Legend of Drunken Scotland.'

In the introduction to his *East End Anthology* he describes his task as the representation of Glaswegians on the margins of the official narrative of reality; he wants to

create a literature of poetry, prose, drama and song about the homeless folk having to survive out in the streets or living off the edges of rubbish dumps, ... about old people surviving the outrageous costs of medicine, heating and public transport; the latest round of humiliations being endured in the offices of the DHSS or the Gas Board or the Housing Department or wherever daily humiliation happens to be occurring this morning; police brutality, trade union corruption and political corruption and everything else that comprises what reality actually is in this country.

(Watson, 'The Rage of Caliban' 54)

What Kelman proposes here is not so much an 'outstandingly negative' (Mars-Jones 19) literature of despair and 'paranoia' (O'Hagan, 'The Paranoid Sublime' 9) that represents nothing but 'no-hopers' (Jacobs 33) as some of his less sympathetic reviewers repeat *ad nauseam*, but should on the contrary be described as a literature of survival, and even, maybe paradoxically, of hope. For Kelman, the representation of disenfranchisement and victimisation is not an aesthetic question, but the referent for a counter-pedagogy that gives voice to those who are made speechless by representations of *the Glaswegian* as two-dimensional 'hard man.'

Working-Class Intellectuality

Rather than merely voice despair, Kelman's resilient characters nourish resistance. In an interview with Kirsty McNeill he describes one of his characters as a working-class intellectual:

To me, the very existence of a novel like *The Busconductor Hines* is like introducing a person to a critic, and asking that critic to agree that the existence of this person is a possibility. ... As far as I'm concerned, Hines is a general, he isn't specific. Working class intellectuals are simply a fact; that's the way things are. (6-7)

As we have seen in the introduction to this chapter, Kelman regards fictional work as a form of political commitment that ranks beside other forms of activism. For Kelman, writing is political work and includes the formation of strategic alliances through workshops, public appearances, or the publication of anthologies. Referring to the collaborations of Alasdair Gray, James Kelman and Tom Leonard, Gustav Klaus speaks of a 'community ... of social purpose and aesthetic commitment' (186). Beyond these regional alliances, Kelman allies himself with dissident writers in South Africa and South America. He also writes himself into his very own tradition of European 'realism,' which includes writers like

Gogol or Kafka.⁶² For Kelman, ‘good art is usually dissent’ (3); local and international alliances break the isolation, uniqueness and originality which are the hallmarks of commodified dissent.

In his interview with McNeill, Kelman describes *The Bus-conductor Hines* (1984) as a renegotiation of the terms in which lower class interiority and intellectuality can be represented, and so are all his novels and stories. But it would be absurd to measure either Rab Hines or any other character in Kelman’s fictions by Gramscian definitions of ‘the’ intellectual as leader of a revolutionary proletariat. Critics like Simon Baker, Cairns Craig or Gustav Klaus have remarked that there is no hint of traditional socialist forms of working-class organisation in any of Kelman’s texts. Klaus notes:

In the traditional working-class novel, the exceptionally gifted hero, usually ‘of the male variety’ employs his talents either to become a fighter in the cause of Socialism or ... to turn his back on his native milieu. Neither route suggests itself to Hines. ... He remains throughout an oddly passive character, intellectually sharp and witty, but otherwise inert and self-absorbed. (193)

In ‘Resisting Arrest,’ Craig similarly argues:

Kelman’s depiction is not of a working-class *community* so much as of a working-class world which has become atomised, fragmented, and in which individuals are isolated from each other – a world in which political hope has been severed and only economic deprivation remains. (101)

While Klaus develops his argument within the genre of working-class fiction, Craig points to a post-industrial ‘reality’ in which the traditional agents of working-class solidarity and struggle have disappeared, the post-war welfare compromise has weakened the labour movement, trade unions have been smashed by Thatcherism, and the global relocation of industrial production has obliterated a way of life.

The absence of traditional forms of life and solidarity raises the question how working-class intellectuality can be understood. Craig simply concludes that because *traditional* forms of action have become impossible, *all* social struggle collapses. He completely decontextualises Kelman’s work and argues for an existential interpretation of Kelman’s protagonists:

The alienation of the working class becomes the context not for the exploration of social issues and possible political improvement, but for the exploration of humanity’s existential condition. Kelman’s tormented characters become heroic because of their continuous and restless need to confront the fact of being absurdly and gratuitously thrown into an existence which makes no sense and has no place for them. (105)

⁶²See James Kelman, ‘Alex La Guma.’

With Craig's reference to Kafka, Kelman's protagonists metamorphose into 'allegories of Being' (106). Especially Hines becomes an 'emblem of modernity' (109), a modernity that – in true Heideggerian fashion – is all emptiness and *Angst*. In this theoretical frame, the notion of agency is indeed absurd, because the question of Being is removed into metaphysics. The 'day-to-day horror of existence experienced by a great many ... Glaswegian people' is removed to the realm of the transcendental where it has neither cause nor remedy.

However, what Craig describes as metaphysical despair may better be described with reference to so-called post-industrial capitalism and the bureaucratisation of daily life, which may have decentralised and naturalised power so as to make it almost invisible, but have not quite managed to make it metaphysical yet. Though socialist politics and communities can no longer serve as privileged referents in a collective struggle for emancipation, and though notions of 'organicity' and a natural 'belongingness' of intellectuals have to be discarded, Kelman's notion of working-class intellectuals clearly points beyond existentialist bleakness. With the possible exception of Tammis in *A Chancer* (1985), all of Kelman's characters are driven by the sense that there is gap between what is and what ought to be, their struggles are fuelled by a Blochian hope that may not have found its language, but that operates as unease and a constant desire for the something better that is 'not yet,' as Ernst Bloch puts it in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*.

In contrast to Cairns Craig in particular I argue that in the absence of traditional identities and modes of collective action, Kelman's working-class intellectuals move closer to the struggles around identity and difference of Judith Butler and Janice Galloway, both in their concern with representation and their anarchist carnival. Identity is not an ontological question of 'being' but of representation, and Kelman's, like Galloway's protagonists develop strategies to struggle with the way they are represented by hegemonic discourses. Klaus notes that Kelman's protagonists 'shield themselves from despair by means of irony, humour and self-mockery' (194). However, in Kelman this is more than a stylistic device, but amounts to a new politics of representation.

Carnavalesque Identities in *How Late It Was How Late*

Kelman's latest novel *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) in particular addresses regulatory discourses and the need for counter-representations that refuse stable and closed identities like 'worker,' 'Glaswegian' or 'Scotsman.' Its protagonist Sammy is the kind of working-class intellectual Kelman describes in his interview: constantly represented as

two-dimensional, he creates counter-representational strategies that allow him to survive in unlikely spaces.

As unemployed ex-convict, Sammy has indeed been pushed to the margin of the margin. One Sunday morning he finds himself lying in a Glasgow alley with his best pair of trousers, somebody else's shoes and a dreadful hangover, but without his wallet. He hits on two plain clothes policemen for the bus fare and after punching one of them, he is beaten unconscious and dropped off at a police station. When Sammy regains consciousness, he realises he has lost his eyesight. The officers accuse him of putting on an act and throw him out; he stumbles home by himself, only to find that his girlfriend Helen has disappeared, leaving him to organise his survival by himself. If survival is central to Sammy's story, it does not mean visiting a hospital; more importantly, he has to secure his unemployment benefits with the DSS and be certified as officially blind. While this seems fairly straightforward, bureaucratic hurdles and continued harassment by the police make re-registration impossible. Sammy therefore decides to disappear.

Like Galloway, Kelman is concerned with regulatory discourses and their institutions: again and again, Sammy encounters bureaucratic apparatuses with their representations of 'the' Glaswegian worker. From the first, these apparatuses represent him as ignorant; unable to take care of his own affairs; a social parasite who feigns blindness; a criminal; the murderer of his girlfriend; even the accomplice of terrorists. Police, DSS and medical staff reject his every attempt at self-representation, beginning with his Glaswegian working-class accent and vocabulary. Thus, when interrogated by the police, an officer tells him: 'Don't use the word 'cunts' again, it doesn't fit in the computer' (160). The doctor, likewise, informs Sammy that he finds his language 'offensive' and persists in calling Sammy's blindness an 'alleged dysfunction.' He represents Sammy in a way that makes him incomprehensible to himself and dashes his hope of registering as disabled:

Aye sorry for interrupting doctor but when see when you say
'alleged'?

Yes?

Are ye saying that you dont think I'm really blind?

...

In respect of the visual stimuli presented you appeared unable to
respond.

So ye're no saying I'm blind?

It isn't for me to say.

(225)

At the DSS, finally, a sightless specialist informs him that his own representations of himself are insufficient:

What's entered here is the phrase 'they gave me a doing,' and it's
entered expressly as a quotation. But it's a colloquialism and not
everyone who deals with yer claim will understand what it means. I

felt that it was fair to use physical beating by way of an exposition.
(103)

The computer becomes the instrument of a politics of representation that constructs Sammy within the language of officialdom and power. He is denied all access to the medium in which he is represented and to the files which, after all, determine his future.

Sammy develops several strategies of survival to cope with his representation through the ‘powers that be.’ Firstly, reminiscent of Joy’s mummery, he parodies the authoritative narrative of the stereotypical Glaswegian in order to protect himself. When interrogated by the British secret police, he poses as a ‘Glaswegian’ and gives them a wee music hall jig:

I’m no kidding ye, he said, even just out walking first thing in the morning, ye forget where ye are, then that first Glasgow voice hits ye; it makes ye smile, know what I’m saying, cause it’s a real surprise.

And ye feel good, ye know, ye feel good, cheery. Then in the pub christ ye dont mean to get drunk. Ye just go for a jar and ye wind up having one too many. An auld story but true. Ye meet guys and ye sit on blethering. That Glasgow scene man cunts buy ye drink and ye have to buy them one back.
(160)

While the auld story of the ‘moroculous drunk’ Glaswegian does not entirely convince the officers, they eventually let Sammy go without further explanation. If identity is a pastiche, then Sammy, like Joy, manages to appropriate excesses of meaning for his own purposes.

Sammy’s second strategy involves the mobilisation of popular culture like song lyrics as forms of resistance and counter-representations. While Sammy despises most music played on the radio as inane propoganda, he regards country music as ‘adult’ and potentially subversive:

That’s how ye hardly got it on the radio, they don’t fucking like ye listening to it, the powers-that-be, know what I’m saying, adult music, they don’t like ye listening to it.
(156)

He dreams of writing his own song that would be broadcast by a famous country singer: ‘one of these days he was gony write his own song, that would show the bastards’ (186). Sammy’s choice of country music as a cultural weapon again illustrates the character even of local culture as a transnational and translational form of border crossing.

Finally, like most of Kelman’s characters, Sammy is extremely literate in urban culture. He lives in a world of daily exchanges in pubs, and though they appear more alienating in *How Late It Was, How Late* than in most of Kelman’s fiction, they become a grid of beacons when Sammy stumbles home from the police office. From his experiences as

worker and prisoner he has specific local knowledges and a repertoire of Glaswegian oral culture which protect him and educate him to survive:

Ah fuck it man stories, stories, life's full of stories, they're there to help ye out, when ye're in trouble, deep shit, they come to the rescue, and one thing ye learn in life is stories, Sammy's head was fucking full of them. (52)

These stories are part of a specifically Glaswegian oral culture and are handed on by prisoners, petty criminals, unemployed labourers, or plain regulars in the Glaswegian pub scene. They provide him with counter-representations, alternative knowledges and a defence for his encounters with the police and the DSS. They also allow him to tell his own burlesque stories of hope and survival, if only to himself, which help him actively resituate himself within ever new situations that are otherwise completely beyond his control.

In *How Late It Was, How Late* struggle for recognition and justice is representational, but no longer representative: being an intellectual *in* the working class, Sammy can no longer speak *for* its members. Sammy has no recourse to the grand narratives of emancipation, but he can appropriate local as well as transnational narratives of popular culture. The absence of the metanarratives of emancipation, however, is not equal to the end of social struggle as such: the experience of injustice, of the gap between what is and what ought to be is as poignant as ever in Kelman's novels, even if there are fewer readily available solutions.

Multiaccentual Subjectivities

In *How Late It Was, How Late* Kelman offers a new form of interiority in a self-conscious politics of representation. But he does not simply replace middle-class contents of consciousness with those of working-class experience, while retaining the notion of bourgeois subjectivity. Kelman's politics of representation more importantly undermines both the certainty of a solitary subject as the origin of agency, and its unproblematic representation, and replaces it with hybrid identities and representations. In his interview with McNeill he criticises the 'third party voice' (5) that is 'common to "major" English writers' like Graham Greene or William Golding because it 'gets rid of people and produces culture.' This authoritative voice assumes a complicity between reader and narrator and relies on a dominant system of meanings and values:

But none of them seems to have bothered working out that this 'third party voice' they use to tell their stories is totally biased and elitist, economically secure, eats good food and plenty of it, is upper middle class paternalist. ... [T]hey all share the same cultural

experience, they never seem to have been alienated by literature at any time in their lives – not even as writers. (5)

Any attempt on his part to imitate such a strategy in the representation of subaltern identities, and to construct an ‘authenticity’ that legitimates certain meanings would merely reproduce the ‘paternalist’ gaze and the ‘elitist’ discourse of value and significance. In *How Late It Was, How Late*, this authoritarian and normative voice is incorporated in the protocols of the DSS or the police, and as Sammy tries to dodge them, the novel becomes a struggle for a hybrid and non-oppressive politics of representation.

Kelman’s remark reverberates with Bakhtin’s recognition that a politics of style is the key to ideological struggles at work in a text:

Let us stress once again that we have in mind here not those ideological evaluations that are incorporated into the content of a work in the form of judgements or conclusions, but that deeper, more ingrained kind of *evaluation via form* that finds expression in the very way in which the artistic material is viewed and deployed.

(‘Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art’ 110; Bakhtin’s italics)⁶³

The term ‘evaluation’ refers to the social positioning of author and hero, or, in Bakhtin’s words, ‘the evaluative rank of the depicted event and its agent – the hero ..., taken in strict correlation with the rank of the creator or contemplator’ (110). This relation can take the form of ‘master-slave, ruler-subject, comrade-comrade, and the like’ (110).

The form of a poetic work is determined, therefore, in many of its factors by *how the author perceives his [sic] hero* – the hero who serves as the organising centre of the utterance. The form of *objective narration* are determined precisely by the *degree of proximity between author and hero*. (111; Bakhtin’s italics)

Kelman’s discussion of hegemonic representations of Glaswegians would imply a large distance between narrator and hero, while his representations argue for a different relation. A number of critics, like Adam Mars-Jones, Laura Cumming, or Drew Milne use the term ‘interior monologue’ to describe the style of *How Late It Was, How Late* and its representations of consciousness. Interestingly, most grant or refuse the term ‘interior monologue’ as a kind of award to ask whether or not Kelman as a self-styled working-class writer can master a technique of ‘high literature’ i.e. whether or not working-class intellectuality can measure up to bourgeois prescriptions, but most fail to question the applicability of the term. I would argue, though, that the term ‘interior monologue’ does not apply to *How Late It Was How Late* and that the

⁶³The essay was published under the name Valentin Vološinov, but is now generally attributed to Mikhail Bakhtin. See Albert J. Wehrle’s ‘Introduction’ to *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship*.

Bakhtinian term ‘proximity’ offers a more appropriate description of the style as well as a different way of discussing Kelman as a post-colonial writer.

What the term ‘interior monologue’ hides is the Bakhtinian *multiaccentuality* and dialogicity of the novel. Rather than a monologue, Kelman’s style resembles an ‘interior dialogue,’ albeit one which, as Drew Milne writes, ‘offers neither a representation of speech as speech, nor an authoritative written register which might distinguish author [*sic*] from character’ (395). The style is itself a hybrid, narrated neither by a clearly distinguishable narrator, nor by the character himself, but is constantly renegotiated between those two poles. The dialogic or conversational character of the style is at times reminiscent of intimate and swaggering conversations in pubs, but can shift to the different proximity of interrogator and interrogatee. The proximity between narrator and protagonist and thus between reader and protagonist constantly varies, exteriority follows interiority, pronouns for Sammy alternate from ‘I’ to ‘you’ to ‘he,’ and at times, Sammy can refuse collaboration completely and shut the door on the narrator:

Okay, cutting a long story short here cause Sammy’s head was getting into a state and what was coming out was always very good. The guy was fuckt I mean put it that way, he was fuckt, so there’s nay sense prolonging it. If ye’re wanting to play fair: alright? let it go, fucking let it go, just let it go, a wee bit of privacy, know what I’m talking about, ye give a guy a break, fuck sake, sometimes its best just accepting that.

Fuck off.

(51)

Both in Sammy’s resistance to state institutions and in the struggle over proximity, representation is the result of ceaseless antagonism and negotiation. Our knowledge of Sammy’s inner life emerges in a tug-of-war between narrator and hero, in which the very terms of representation are constantly renegotiated. Sammy anticipates moves on the part of an interrogator and appears to embellish, select, distort and withhold information, if he does not lie altogether: there is no guarantee that any of the ‘facts’ of the narrative are at all reliable. Therefore, the narrative has innumerable ruptures ranging from breaks in mid sentence to such major questions as: whose shoes is Sammy wearing? what happened the night before Sammy woke up in the gutter? where is his girlfriend Helen? is Sammy part of a terrorist conspiracy? Answers to these questions would be essential to a ‘satisfying’ resolution, but the narration refuses any gratification. This strategy of subterfuge and evasion culminates in the ending of the novel, when Sammy climbs into a taxi and simply disappears, dodging reader and police alike:

He tapped forwards, waving his stick in the air. It was for hire, he heard it pulling in, then the squeaky brakes. The driver had opened

the door. Sammy slung in the bag and stepped inside, then the door slammed shut and that was him, out of sight. (374)

We neither know where he goes, nor even if he does: Sammy terminates his collaboration, and if there is some kind of liberty at the other end of the taxi ride, the reader is not to know.

Kelman's representations of a Glaswegian voice challenge the notion that identity can be prediscursive, closed or uniform. The hybridity of his style challenges notions of interiority of a fixed self that predates representation and sociality and instead represents interiority as dialogic, representational, and subject to unceasing power struggles. 'Self' is not the bourgeois or nationalist self that expresses itself through language, but is constituted by language, or better, by various accents. There are those accents that imprison Sammy as terrorist, and those that tell stories of survival. Resistance is the ability to perform in many different modes and voices, and ultimately to escape *full* representation by any one regime of representation.

Though Sammy's struggles are no longer organically related to socialist or nationalist projects, they continue to be waged in the name of justice. Chantal Mouffe reminds us that the referent for such struggles is not equality within a normative community, but democratic equivalence of radically different forms of being in the world. Sammy is driven by an unquenchable hope for something better, and though this something can no longer be named with reference to traditional utopian metanarratives, it is still desired. Sammy's life is full of those daydreams Bloch describes in his philosophy of hope, and though he may never move far into the utopian imagination and a more deliberate search, he is still driven by the dream of a better life. If Sammy's is therefore an existential struggle, as Cairns Craig and others have maintained, it is informed by Blochian hope and driven by an impulse that

erträgt kein Hundeleben, das sich ins Seiende nur passiv geworfen fühlt, in undurchschautes, gar jämmerlich anerkanntes.

(Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* 1)⁶⁴

2.6 Representations of the Mother Tongue

While Benedict Anderson and Eric Hobsbawm disagree as to the actual importance of language as a prerequisite for national unity, both agree that national languages are largely constructed:

⁶⁴...cannot tolerate a dog's life that feels passively thrown into a Being which is never examined, and even accepted as wretched. (my translation)

National languages are ... almost always semi-artificial constructs ... They are the opposite of what nationalist mythology supposes them to be, namely the primordial foundations of national culture and the matrices of the national mind. They are usually attempts to devise a standardized idiom out of a multiplicity of actually spoken idioms, which are thereafter downgraded to dialects. (Hobsbawm 54)

Hobsbawm acknowledges the importance of linguistic nationalism in some historical periods and places, but denies that language is a necessary ingredient in the formation of the nation. He plays down the importance of language when he points to nations like Wales which gave up their language to merge with a larger culture. For Anderson, on the other hand, national identity is only possible with national languages as they are distributed by print capitalism; the shared language is the very precondition of the imagined community.

As far as the present surge of nationalisms in the United Kingdom is concerned, Hobsbawm may well have underestimated the affective power of an independent language. Scotland may be at a disadvantage compared to the nationalist movement in Wales, where Cymric has survived in more places and offers a more convincing linguistic alternative than Gaelic does in Scotland, where by far the majority of the population speaks variants of Scots, while Gaelic is largely limited to the Hebrides and the north-west Highlands. After a Gaelic Renaissance at the beginning of the century, interest in Gaelic culture reawakened in the 1980s, and there is now even a Gaelic college on the Isle of Skye.⁶⁵ However, due to the small number of actual Gaelic speakers, and the historic limitation of Gaelic to a comparatively small area of Scotland, the Gaelic revival cannot serve as a model for the entire nation.⁶⁶

Nevertheless, popular neo-nationalism in Scotland is often characterised by an emotional language politics which includes both Gaelic and Scots. In 'Scots and English' David Black maps a language politics that rallies around a highly emotional narrative of the rise and fall of Scots. Narratives like his focus on the emergence of a relatively autonomous Old Scots as a mix of Old English and Old Norse with its distinctive vocabulary and phonetic realisations; the near-standardisation of Scots in the poetry of John Dunbar and the Scottish court; and the decline of Scots to a regional, sub-literary variant subsequent to the Union of Crowns, the removal of the court to London in 1603 and the influence of the King James Bible on the Reformation in Scotland. At least some of the writers of the Scottish Renaissance attempted to reinstate Scots or a Scottish standard as an independent literary language.

⁶⁵For a critical study of the recent 'Gaelic Renaissance' and its language politics see Sharon Macdonald, *Reimagining Culture: Histories, Identities and the Gaelic Renaissance*.

⁶⁶See Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism* 17.

Of course, poetry continued to be written in Scots, but for Hugh MacDiarmid, the continued use of Scots by poets like Burns merely re-affirmed the status of Scots as a parochial accent. Edwin Muir even went so far as to argue in *Scott and Scotland* that after the sixteenth century, Scots was permanently incapacitated as a medium for a national literature. But unlike Muir, who favoured the use of English because he feared Scottish provincialism, MacDiarmid tried to establish a Scottish standard as a printed literary language that could become the central element in the re-imagining of a culturally and politically independent Scotland. MacDiarmid developed Lallans as a national poetic idiom because he believed that without a printed standard with a distinct lexicon and morphology, no literary and cultural self-renewal, and no national consciousness are possible.⁶⁷

Language and the question of a written national standard continues to be a sensitive issue in present debates about cultural independence. Alex Salmond, head of the SNP, writes addresses to the party in English, Gaelic and Lallans,⁶⁸ while cultural nationalists like Paul Scott demand the recognition of Scots as an independent variant of English rather than a set of regional accents; in his manifesto *In Bed With an Elephant* Scott writes:

In Scotland we have had long experience of the consequences of the imposition through the schools and social pressures of external cultural standards. For over 200 years our schools have tried to suppress natural speech, Gaelic or Scots, and make their pupils ape English. They have diverted attention from our own history, literature and achievement to those of England. The consequence has been a loss of articulacy, spontaneity and self-confidence. (35)

Within this logic, Standard English makes schools as well as cultural production the apparatuses of British cultural imperialism; like MacDiarmid, Scott regards printed language and education an important terrain for the contestation of a form of colonial rule. Critics like Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, on the other hand, raise the question whether the use of Standard English necessarily leads to the production of ‘the inarticulate Scot’ (Beveridge and Turnbull 10) and write a Scottish intellectual history that is largely international and above any criticism of the parochial.

In popular culture it is especially pronunciation, i.e. the difference between the BBC standard and Scottish pronunciation that becomes a

⁶⁷On the impact of the Reformation on the role of Scots see Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* 4-8 and Black, ‘Scots and English’ 12; on Scots and Muir see Herdmann, ‘Muir, Scotland, Drink and Free Will’ 10; on Lallans see Hagemann, *Die Schottische Renaissance* 19-31.

⁶⁸See Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* 14-15 for a Lallans passage from Salmond’s 1993 ‘Message frae the National Convener.’

rallying point for national identification, and the subject of emotional debate. In *The Crow Road* and *Complicity* Iain Banks burlesques the rage of cultural purists over the suppression of Scottish pronunciation by evil Anglicising forces. In *The Crow Road* the protagonist watches reports on 'Operation Desert Storm' and mockingly remarks on the ability of the English commentator to pronounce Arabic consonants:

The English could pronounce the soft *ch* sound after all. The little rascals had only been teasing us all these years, saying 'Lock' Lomond and 'Lock' Ness! Why, it must be something genetic, we'd all thought. But no! Places like Bah'rain and Dah'ran were rolled confidently off the tongue by newsreader after newsreader and correspondent after correspondent as though they'd been using the technique for years. Unfortunately, ... nowhere unfortunate enough to be located to the north of London seemed able to benefit from this new-found facility. (443)

This is of course reminiscent of the struggle of Scotland as well as English regions to have their accents represented on the BBC news, and the comparatively recent erosion of the monopoly of Home Counties pronunciation. In this passage, language and the media are terrains of colonial subjugation, in which every utterance of coloniser or colonised reinscribes or contests cultural inferiority. Vocabulary is of course no less important than pronunciation: in *Complicity*, a journalist seems to spend every spare minute running Scottish place names through the spell check of his word processor. Of course, the programme stubbornly returns names like Carnoustie, Kirkton of Bourtie or Cumbernauld as spelling errors and suggests corrections like 'Carousing,' 'Kickoff of Blurted' or 'Cumbered' (40, 78, 91). The national geography of place names has to be defended against a colonialism and negation that has reached the seemingly incontestable level of virtual reality.

But Banks's mild satire is a reminder that there may be more to a Scottish language than phonetics or a map of quaint place names as the most immediate signs of difference from Standard English. If there is a call for the recognition of Scots, then the next question has to be: which Scots? The generic term projects a unity that obscures the internal difference of Scots as a patchwork of, for instance, the Anglo-Norse Scots of Orkney and Shetland, the Doric spoken around Aberdeen, or the urban patois of Glasgow, with its strong Irish influence (Corbett 10-14). It also conceals the fluidity of the linguistic border between Scotland and England, and the relatedness of Yorkshire accents and the Scots of the borders. Historically, Scotland is a multicultural community, and regional differences are embodied in the hybridity of spoken Scots. Attempts to create a standard to match the Standard English of the Home Counties are problematic at best, because a hypothetical BBC Scots would continue the language politics of BBC English. The assertion of

difference of Scots from English, which challenges the dynamics of margin and centre within the United Kingdom, would in the same movement re-establish a centre of power around an artificial or semi-artificial standard, and with it create new margins.

Margin and Centre

In 'Discourse in the Novel' Mikhail Bakhtin describes the dynamics of margin and centre as a dialectic of centrifugal and centripetal forces around a centralised language politics; but such a language politics merely marks one instance within wider social and cultural attempts to suppress heteroglossia and difference:

Unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical processes of linguistic unification and centralization, an expression of the centripetal forces of language. A unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited – and at every moment of its linguistic life opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. ... Thus a unitary language gives expression to forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develop in vital connection with the processes of sociopolitical and cultural centralization.

(The Dialogic Imagination 270-1)

For Bakhtin, language becomes the site of an ideological struggle in which antagonistic social relations inscribe themselves in every utterance:

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in every utterance. (272)

One might add that both the 'verbal and ideological unification' and the forces of disunification are of course historically situated in social antagonisms, print or visual media, and educational institutions. Neither centralisation nor decentralisation are the 'natural' properties of language itself, as if language could exist independently of socio-cultural and institutional practices. As we will see more clearly in chapter 3, the construction of a Scottish language and vernacular cultures is part of a larger national struggle around institutions and representations. On the nationalist side, this struggle is driven by what McCrone calls an underlying 'nationalist assumption that all societies worthy of the name should have a distinctive culture' ('Representing Scotland' 169). Intervention on the side of radical heteroglossia, or other-voicedness, on the other hand, is an intervention against what Joy Hendry calls the "divide and rule" tactics of English cultural imperialism' (quoted in Black 11), and an intervention on the side of those silenced by the national voice.

As a socio-cultural and institutional process, Scottish language politics cannot only be a way of establishing a Scottish difference from English or British identity, but also of producing a preferred Scottish identity that suppresses Scottish multiaccentuality.

The infamous introduction to the *Scottish National Dictionary* is an instance of such a centripetal language politics and its suppression of difference. In the search for a Scots standard this specific project privileges rural forms of Scots and explicitly excludes Glaswegian Scots because of its alleged impurity, claiming that '[o]wing to the influx of Irish and foreign immigrants in the industrial area near Glasgow, the dialect has become hopelessly corrupt' (quoted in Kay, *Scots* 172). For Billy Kay, such a dismissal is indeed ideological and amounts to the 'disenfranchisement of the huge immigrant population which is now completely Scottish' (172). In her editorial to the Scots Language special of *Chapman*, Joy Hendry also rejects such a restrictive language politics with reference to 'the tyrannical mean which standard English has become' (1). The project of unitary language is driven by the notion of some archetypal Scottishness that speaks itself through language; in an ironic reinstatement of imperial normativity, it would exclude hybridity and heteroglossia, like Scots itself is excluded within Britain as a deviation. Recent theory on the other hand becomes an intervention on the side of heteroglossia and advocates a language politics that emphasises the performativity of Scots in regional, ethnic, and age-, class- and gender-specific utterances. John Corbett, for instance, opens his handbook *Language and Scottish Literature* with a chapter called 'Varieties of Scots' and Billy Kay insists on the hybridity and heteroglossia of Scottish identity and the Scots language when he writes that 'Scots is also the language of the ethnic groups who have added their distinctive contribution to the Scottish society' (172).

2.6.1 Language and Class

Even after the Scottish Renaissance, literature and literary language remain central to the definition of Scottish identity, but the issue is now rendered in terms that are slightly more complex than they were for MacDiarmid or Muir. A passage from William McIlvanney's *Docherty* can serve as an instance for the increased awareness that language is not just subject to struggles between nations, but between classes as well, and that institutions play a crucial role in the enforcement of certain standardised identities.

In *Docherty*, McIlvanney addresses the class dynamic inherent in Scots heteroglossia and translates the issue from national into class terms: Conn Docherty earns a bruise in a fist fight with a classmate;

asked by his teacher Mr Pirrie how he came by the bruise, Conn tells a rather transparent lie: ‘Ah fell an’ bumped ma heid in the sheuch, sur’ (114). Mr Pirrie pretends not to have understood and has Conn repeat twice, then slaps his face. This unusually degrading form of punishment – the ‘correct’ form of chastisement being administered with a leather strap, paddle or stick to an outstretched hand – comes as a reaction not to Conn’s lie, but to his use of the Scottish word *sheuch* instead of *gutter*. Conn’s Ayrshire Scots is banned from the school, and it appears that Mr Pirrie considers its use a personal affront and a sign of unspeakable depravity. After slapping Conn, he demands to hear the sentence again, this time with the ‘correct’ word: ‘That Docherty, is impertinence. You will translate, please, into the mother-tongue’ (114) – the mother-tongue being Standard English, not Ayrshire Scots. In this scene, the school becomes an institution for the enforcement of a standard, but this process of linguistic homogenisation is neither uncontested, nor can it simply be read as the enforcement of colonial rule of English over Scots.

Language can also become a weapon of resistance, and is central to Conn’s sense of identity. He can mobilise it against the negation he experiences from the administration of Standard English; the lexicon in particular, his own ‘other’ voice, becomes a weapon in his fight against oppressive norms and conditions. Thus, Conn repeats the offensive sentence to his teacher, well knowing the reason for Mr Pirrie’s insistence, and while punished, he recites it under his breath like a prayer. After he returns home, he compiles a list of words he and his family use, and translates them into Standard English, in order to assure himself of his identity in the face of the injustice he has experienced:

<i>sheuch</i>	gutter
<i>speugh</i>	sparrow
<i>lum</i>	chimney [<i>sic</i>]
<i>brace</i>	mantalpiece [<i>sic</i>]
<i>bine</i>	tub
<i>coom</i>	soot
<i>coomie</i>	foolish man (Mr Pirrie)
<i>gomeril</i>	another foolish man
<i>spicket</i>	tab
<i>glaur</i>	muck what is in a puddle after the puddle
goes away	
<i>wabbit</i>	tired
<i>whaup</i>	curloo
<i>tumshie</i>	turnip
<i>breeks</i>	trousers [<i>sic</i>]
<i>chanty</i>	po
<i>preuch</i>	anything you can get
<i>I was taigled</i>	I was kept back for a more longer
<i>longer</i>	time than I desired.
<i>nor I ettled</i>	

While the first few words seem to be translatable effortlessly enough, equivalences are harder to find halfway through the list, and English itself becomes a mongrel Scots. Eventually, translation breaks down altogether and Conn's 'other-voicedness' takes over:

One side of the paper was filled. He didn't start on the other side because now he wanted to write things that he couldn't find any English for. When something sad had happened and his mother was meaning that there wasn't anything you could do about it, she would say 'ye maun dree yer weird.' When she was busy, she said she was 'saund-papered tae a whuppet.' 'Pit a raker oan the fire.' 'Hand-cuffed to Mackindoe's ghost.' 'A face tae follow a flittin'.' If his father had to give him a row but wasn't really angry, he said, 'Ah'll skelp yer bum wi' a tea-leaf tae yer nose bluids.'

Conn despaired of English. Suddenly, with the desperation of a man trying to amputate his own infected arm, he savagely scored out all the English equivalents. (118-9)

The authority of the standard creates a strict binarism and leaves Conn with the simple choice either to renounce his language for the standard, or to renounce education; but in this choice, which is no choice, Conn can only lose. He symbolically renounces Standard English as a form of mental slavery, but is effectively silenced: his act of renunciation is more than a symbolic act of self-mutilation, because it condemns Conn to work in the mines.

Of course this scene partly reverberates with the claim of cultural nationalism that Standard English is a form of British cultural imperialism, and it seems to affirm the 1985 Report of the Consultative Committee on the Curriculum and '[t]heir recommendation that "the Scottish dimension, Scottish language, literature, geography and history are not frills, but should be central to the education of the children who attend Scottish schools"' (P.H. Scott 43). But where the terms of cultural nationalism would have to construct a simple opposition between an 'authentic' Scottish identity and an accepted and artificial Anglo-Scottish or British identity, there is a more complex dynamic at work. Billy Kay opens a second dimension to the struggle around language when he writes that Scots is unacceptable in the classroom not because it is Scottish, but because 'it is spoken mainly by the working class – and their speech could never be accepted as a model' (21). Conn is not punished for the national denotation of the word *sheuch*, but for its class connotations, which Mr Pirrie's contempt drives home unmistakably:

'I am waiting, Docherty. What happened?'

'I bumped my head, sir.'

'Where? Where did you bump it, Docherty?'

'In the gutter, sir.'

'Not an inappropriate setting for you, if I may say so.' (114)

Hence, the other voice that is being suppressed by the centripetal dynamic of a unitary language politics is plural and cannot be reduced to one opposition at the cost of all others. The creation of a new national standard would invariably continue the class dynamic.

2.6.2 Language and Realism

At least in contemporary Scottish fiction, the use specific regional and class variants is no longer punished, and seems to be gaining acceptance. There seems to be little fear on the part of writers that without a literary standard – either English, as in the case of Muir, or Lallans in MacDiarmid's – Scottish culture is condemned to regress to the kailyard and 'acquiesce in a diminishment' as David Black claims in 'Scots and English' (14). Writers like James Kelman or Irvine Welsh not only use Scots in their dialogues, but render entire stories and novels in the accents of the working classes of Glasgow and Edinburgh without fear of appearing parochial. Again and again critics both in Scotland and outside applaud their 'realistic' representation of different Scottish accents, and comment that the rendition of local and class accents no longer seems to imply provincialism.

Cairns Craig, for instance, praises Kelman's 'authenticity to the presentation of his characters' voices' with which he 'refuses to compromise with traditional conceptions of "Scots"' ('Resisting Arrest' 102) while Drew Milne locates Kelman in 'the broader context of a modernist poetics of realism' (399). Some critics applaud this general trend toward 'realism' as a way of 'talking to the people' (Dixon). Contrary to the assumption of Muir and MacDiarmid, the marks of the 'real' are often regarded as a sign of literariness in a new aestheticism that values authenticity and 'slumspeak' (Dixon, 'Talking to the People' 92) over genteel diction. In this not unfashionable approach, writers like Kelman and Welsh often come to stand for a raw 'Scottishness' and a hallowed subcultural authenticity, which sometimes seems to be measured by the amount of obscenities per page, as Milne points out.

Yet, the issue of the representation of urban demotic is more complex than the accuracy of orthographic transliteration, the frequency of four-letter words or even the term 'realism' allows. Questions of 'authenticity' cannot be reduced to 'formalist questions about particular words' (Milne 396). For one thing, it is impossible to establish the exact nature of the urban demotic that is then supposedly represented, because urban speech cannot be reduced to one stable (written) accent. But more importantly, in contemporary Scottish fiction (and not only there) 'realism' is not the impossible 'degree zero' of objectivity in which

representation completely withdraws behind the 'real'; in the words of Roderick Watson:

It is tempting to see these writers as 'realists,' pure and simple, as if there were no philosophical implications to their position, but this would not be accurate. (‘Maps of Desire’ 300)

One might add that realism has political implications, as well, and points not just to a philosophical concept of mimesis, but to a politics of representation that does not mirror the real, but actually creates it. Language, here the spoken language with its local accents, is not the innocent medium of representation, but is itself represented:⁶⁹ the representation of spoken accents in particular cannot be seen as naturalist record but as an intervention in a number of discourses about 'reality,' 'literature' and what it means to be Scottish.

Urban Demotic and Postcolonial Heteroglossia

Of course, traditionalists are often more than reluctant to recognise Kelman's and Welsh's representations of working-class demotic, fraught as it is with taboos, as a 'realistic' representation of Scots at all; Corbett quotes poet Neil MacCallum's somewhat disgusted letter to *The Herald* (20 March 1995):

When posing the question about how modern we must be, Stuart McHardy claims Irvine Welsh and James Kelman as writers in the Scots language. I too want Scots work to deal with contemporary concerns yet would never suggest that these two operate in that medium. (21)

But neither Kelman nor Welsh are interested in developing or abiding by written standards of Scots. Their stories are local, and so is their language in its use of vocabulary and adaptation of orthography to the specific phonetics of the lower class speech of Glasgow and Edinburgh. As Kelman writes in his essays, he does not pretend to write from an all-Scottish perspective, but from 'my own background ... as one of my own people.' In his introduction in *Three Glasgow Writers*, he remarks:

In my writings the accent is in Glasgow
I am always from Glasgow and I speak English always
Always with this Glasgow accent. (Milne 399)

Thus, representing the lower-class accents of Glasgow and Edinburgh is already a centripetal moment of resistance against the standardisation of both English and Scots, and the notions of literariness articulated with

⁶⁹As Gérard Genette points out in *Narrative Discourse*, Plato's use of the term mimesis is actually limited to the representation of speech, while only Aristotle includes the imitation of action.

both. As Drew Milne argues in his discussion of Kelman's use of obscenities, this realism of language inserts itself in the dominant discourses of identity and prevents their closure; as an anti-literary language it challenges the 'claim to objectivity of the class which controls writing' (Milne 396) and offers different idioms of identity.

But here the difficulties with 'realism' begin, because it is by no means certain what this Glasgow accent *is*: Kelman may favour an accent that is considered inferior for its ethnic and class connotations, but there is no indication that he regards his use of accent as the authentic expression of subcultural identity. On the contrary, he insists on the hybridity not only of Glaswegian demotic, but of languages and accents from all over Britain as constantly in flux, or, in Bakhtin's words, 'at any given moment of its historical existence ... heteroglot from top to bottom' (*The Dialogic Imagination* 291):

There is nothing about the language as used by folk in and around Glasgow ... that makes it generally distinct from any other city in the sense that it is a language composed of all sorts of particular influences, the usual industrial or post industrial situation where different cultures have intermingled for a great number of years. In the case of my own family we fit neatly into the pattern, one grandparent was a Gaelic speaker from Lewis, another was from a non-Gaelic speaking family in Dalmally My wife is Welsh, but her people are Irish and Irish Canadian stock including some whose first language is French. All of these are at play in my work, as filtered in through my own perspective that, okay, is Glaswegian, but in these terms 'Glaswegian' is a late twentieth century construct.

(*Some Recent Attacks* 84)

Where Conn Docherty's Lowland lexicon guarantees an identity located within geography and a class hierarchy, Kelman describes a heteroglot language that cannot be fixed either geographically or socially, and while Conn's resistance is 'expressed' in a language that purports to signify belongingness to nation, class and family and promises a form of pre-linguistic authenticity from which resistance can be orchestrated, Kelman's use of Glaswegian cannot point to such a stable identity. In the post-colonial context of migration, accent is no longer located in territory, but articulates itself with different contexts and survives in diaspora. As in Kuppner's sign on which Chinese ideographs are juxtaposed with Scots place names, urban spaces are polyglot in a way that makes them literally unrepresentable as a totality, representation will always be preliminary and a transition to more representations.

But if Kelman describes urban Scots as in itself multiaccentual and a dynamic amalgam of various regional and social languages, Alasdair Gray pushes heteroglossia even further in his essay 'A Modest Proposal' where he describes the English language as a diachronic amalgam of

Celtic, Germanic, Latin, French, Indian (and, Gray quibbles, even Oxfordian) languages, not to mention the synchronic difference of the various technical, regional, or class languages. Vertically as well as horizontally, the English language is heteroglot; therefore, the ‘phoney old *local versus international* doublebind’ (9) should be dismissed. Gray rejects the notion that there can be any pure standard, Scottish, English, or otherwise, and insists on the living heteroglossia of writing:

When a writer is using English ... the verbal colouring (if his characters are not bound to one social class in one emotional state) will be tinted with idioms which vary from biblical to the Johnsonian, from American film-commercial to local cockney, Oxbridge or Glaswegian. (8)

This radically changes what one might regard as ‘local’ language, because the local is suddenly in Bhabha’s words ‘transnational’ as well as ‘translational,’ a transitional intersection of different accents in local utterances. In this context, the ‘authenticity’ of an accent becomes itself problematic, not to mention its ‘realistic’ representation.

In the above passage, Gray might be describing Kelman’s story ‘Comic Cuts,’ where popular culture provides both the theme and the language of the conversation. International curses and snippets from popular songs and rock music mingle with fragments from Shakespeare, Dickens, the Bible, medical and philosophical terms, and references to local landmarks. On the surface, a form of Glaswegian with a muted but recognisable morphology is the ‘medium’ of a conversation about rock music, but this Glaswegian dialect is saturated with global culture spanning three millennia:

Apart from direct experience I have access to other experiences, foreign experience, I have access to all the areas of human endeavour, right back from the annals of ancient history.

(*Some Recent Attacks* 84)

In *How Late It Was, How Late* the popular cultural heteroglossia finds itself in interspersed country-songs, but also in fragments and thoughts, when Sammy thinks that he ‘wasn’t exactly Dracula’s fucking uncle’ (287); when phrases float into his mind that sound like movie titles (127); but particularly when he makes up country songs about his condition:

he had always been crazy,
it’s kept him from going insane (189)

If the national conflict is resituated within a larger transnational language politics, this can of course not mean that heteroglossia is the peaceful coexistence of various languages and accents. Multiaccentuality marks the struggle between antagonistic discourses whose dynamics of unification and disunification develop along a plurality of axes. For

Sammy, this other-voicedness, the ability to resort to a different language or dialect, be it from local narrative, international urban folklore or global pop culture, is a protection against the monoglot forces of bureaucracy and police.

In Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* there is a similar struggle between Mark Renton and the psychologists in the mandatory drug rehabilitation programme. In the chapter 'Searching for the Inner Man,' the different languages of his counsellors meander in an out of Renton's reflections on his own situation. Here, what he considers to be his 'self' is a parodic negotiation of different therapeutic accents. Here is the anal Renton of Freudian psychoanalysis:

Ah have oedipal feelings towards ma mother and an attendant unresolved jealousy towards ma faither. Ma junk behaviour is anal in concept, attention-seeking, yes, but instead of withholding ma faeces tae rebel against parental authority, ah'm pittin smack intae ma body tae claim power over it vis-à-vis society in general. Radge, eh?

Aw this might or might not be true. (185)

and the Renton of Carl Rogers's client-centred counselling:

So according to Tom, it's nae good tellin us that ah've done well in ma exams, or got a good job, or got off wi a nice burd; that kind ay acclaim means nowt tae us. Of course, ah enjoy these things at the time, or for themselves, but their value cannae be sustained because there's nae recognition ay the society which values them. What Tom's trying tae say, ah suppose, is that ah dinnae gie a fuck. (186)

Of course, these narratives of identity are themselves contradictory, but they share the attempt with the judicial language to frame Renton within regulatory discourses of youth, drug taking, and criminality, all of which impose some kind of 'normalcy.' But, almost like Joy Stone in *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing*, Renton lacks faith in any of these discourses, which allows him to appropriate their vocabularies in order to carnivalise them. This strategy of juxtaposing different and antagonistic languages reveals the relation of knowledge and power: Renton coolly reflects that the unified languages that set out to describe his drug taking in its totality are merely functions of the state power that punishes deviation from the societal norm:

Why is it that because ye use hard drugs every cunt feels that they huv a right tae dissect and analyse ye?

Once ye accept that they huv that right, ye'll join them in the search fir this holy grail, this thing that makes ye tick. ... Society invents a spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and change people whae's behaviour is outside its mainstream. (187)

The different accents, therapeutic and judicial in the case of Mark Renton; medical, bureaucratic and legal in the case of Sammy, or moral

and psychological in Joy Stone's case, all mark the centralising power of centripetal language politics, which try to fix identities within a rigid set of meanings. The strategies of Renton, Sammy and Joy are all similarly attempts to disperse that meaning, to appropriate language in order to respond with caricature and parody that mobilises excesses of meaning that disunify and disrupt monolingualism.

Kelman's and Welsh's representations of urban dialects as radically hybrid should under no circumstances be understood as 'naturalist' voice recordings of the typical Glaswegian, ex-convict, schemie, or drug user; their representations are not 'representative' of certain segments of the population, because such a representational politics would be exactly a search for the holy grail of oppressive normalcy. In an interview with *The Guardian*, Welsh therefore states quite unambiguously: 'I don't want to be a spokesperson for anyone' (Turner, 'Love's Chemistry' 17). With his insistence on the particular as an ever-shifting transition between antagonistic discourses, Kelman also rejects what Shohar and Stam call the 'burden of representation' (*Unthinking Eurocentrism* 182) in which speaking with a certain voice presupposes an organic relation with a certain group or class and is taken to be equivalent with speaking *for* that group or class. Though he articulates experience from a certain location and with a particular voice, Kelman is not the spokesman for Glaswegian outcasts, let alone a new Scotland centred around Glasgow's margin. Instead, in Kelman, Welsh and Galloway, representations of language as dialogue and struggle between different discourses is a way of opening possibilities for agency that do not depend on the fixing of identities in new and oppressive subculturalisms. Though Kelman speaks 'always with this Glasgow accent,' he is not dedicated to an aesthetic that claims to end the process of representation with the one dialectal signifier that completely exhausts the meaning of all working-class Glaswegian identities. Insistence on the plurality of accents implies a supplementary process of signification which does not come to a standstill at a particularly authentic-seeming form. His realism is not formal, but, as we will see, a strategy: it does not suture identity in the four-letter gestures of commodifiable resistance, but keeps discourses open.

The Surrealism of the Real

The 'realism' of Kelman and Welsh is positional and located at the interstices of antagonistic discourses. There can be no question of an organic belongingness in space and time 'expressed' through orthographic representation of a certain cadence or intonation. Realism is

therefore not a question of mimesis, but of a politics of representation that intervenes on the side of difference and multiaccentuality.

In his essay 'Alex La Guma' Kelman himself defines realism as a 'continual struggle with the daily facts of existence of ordinary people' (120) and a way of advocating social change. Kelman's choice of Franz Kafka as 'probably the greatest realist in literary art in the twentieth century' (120) is instructive for the way in which Kelman understands realism not as an aesthetic of verisimilitude and documentary accuracy but as a referent for a politics of representation that is – for Kelman at least – a form of social commitment. Ella Shohat and Robert Stam usefully distinguish between realism as goal and as effect:

We must distinguish ... between realism as a goal – Brecht's 'laying bare the causal network' – and realism as a style or constellation of strategies aimed at producing an illusionistic 'reality effect.' Realism as a goal is quite compatible with a style which is reflexive and deconstructive. (*Unthinking Eurocentrism* 180)

For Kelman and Welsh, the representation of accents is not an issue of documentary objectivity but of addressing power relations that work through language. Kafka is an appropriate comparison, because in the fiction of both writers, real and surreal are easily blurred. In stories like 'Acid' from the collection *Not Not While The Giro* (1983), Kelman shows the 'horror' of daily experience in images bordering on the surreal: images like the father drowning his own son in a vat of acid as a form of euthanasia are immensely discomfoting, because they are neither what one would immediately want to recognise as 'real,' nor are they easily dismissable as fantasy. Kelman's factory is not like Kafka's prison camp, the horror of the image is that it brings out the surreal and scarcely believable in the living and working conditions of what is largely accepted as 'everyday life.' In the title story of *Greyhound for Breakfast* (1987) the protagonist Ronnie uses his giro to buy a race dog in the hope of 'making it big,' but since he doesn't dare face his wife, he wanders through the city aimlessly. The greyhound introduces an alien and surreal element that defamiliarises Ronnie's routines, relationships, hopes and possibilities, and grotesquely distorts them. Stoically following its owner through Glasgow's pubs and parks, the greyhound is as alienated as Salvador Dali's lobster reclining on a telephone, but instead of accomplishing André Breton's vertiginous descent into the subconscious, the greyhound opens the delirious depths of Glasgow's class and power relationships. Sammy's blindness in *How Late It Was, How Late* is part of a similar strategy of throwing the incredible and surreal element of 'daily facts of existence' into stark relief. Similarly in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, when Begbie goes for a piss in the abandoned Leith Central Station only to meet his drunk father there, the

lived reality of Edinburgh's schemes flares up in strange lights and becomes more than a little surreal itself.

Acid, greyhound, blindness and trainspotting in Leith Central Station can neither be wholly real nor wholly unreal, they insert themselves into regimes of representation that represent the 'real' as 'normal,' and mobilise excesses of meaning. Similarly, the juxtaposition of privileged knowledges on the one hand and a mix of urban demotic, obscenities, and fragments of popular culture in the reflections of Mark Renton or Sammy introduces a defamiliarising element that pries open the sutured discourses of power and knowledge.

Down to the level of the word, language enters the surreal: Milne describes Kelman's use of obscenities as the intrusion of an element of speech into writing that *prevents* closure over a subcultural identity, especially when the swear word is inserted into another word to form 'surreal' compounds like 'malnufuckingtrition,' 'exploifuckingtation' or 'defuckingplorable.' (395). Swear words, the regional lexicon and unorthodox orthography are not the signifiers of stable regional identities and an aesthetic of verisimilitude, but refer to a cultural struggle between different antagonisms that play themselves out on the terrain of literary language itself.

For Kelman in particular, but also for Welsh, the 'realism' of the representation of language is therefore a strategy rather than an illusionistic effect: representation is not the attempt to capture 'reality' and normalise it as a new allegory of experience, but to transform reality in an unceasing process of representation. Realism as a goal that is never reached can address the horror of daily existence, but it is also a way of showing 'that the existence of this person is a possibility' and of opening third spaces of agency: intellectuality is not limited to the privileged accents of the middle and upper classes, but is extended to the transitional, transnational urban cadences of Rab Hines, Sammy or Mark Renton.

2.7 Summary

Janice Galloway, James Kelman, Frank Kuppner, Agnes Owens, Irvine Welsh and other contemporary authors in various way challenge the notion of a unified national identity and culture and move to a postnational understanding of cultural identity as plural, hybrid and flexible. In their novels and stories, cultural identity is not merely the product of a national subconscious that drives all cultural production. Instead, identity emerges from discontinuous cultural practices and representations.

While Scottish cultural theorists like Ian Bell and especially Paul Scott often pillory the misrepresentations of Scotland and call for an emancipation from these representations, they disregard the radical heterogeneity of Scottish identities. Also, though Ian Bell and Douglas Gifford insist on the discursiveness of identity, many critics seem to believe that resistance to hegemonic (i.e. British) representations of Scottishness equals a 'return' to 'true' Scottishness. In both respects, writers like Galloway, Kelman and Welsh paint a much more complex picture. Firstly, 'Scottish' identity is not the only identity that is at stake: Galloway demands re-presentations of gender, McIlvanney and Kelman of class, Welsh of age, and Kuppner of ethnicity and of representation itself, to name only a few. These writers show a very heterogeneous population that participates in numerous struggles of liberation. Quite ironically, nationalists re-marginalise the emancipatory narratives of those groups with a new colonial narrative of identity which assumes that all Scots are equally oppressed, and are oppressed *as Scots*.

Secondly, Gray, Galloway, Kelman, Kuppner and Welsh in various ways acknowledge the cultural contingency of identity and do not participate in the creation of new foundational narratives. In their texts, individuals are always constructed by various antagonistic discourses as women, men, sons, daughters, parents, workers, unemployed, Scots, British, Asians, heterosexual, homosexual, drug users, criminals, rural population, urbanites, schemies, oedipal, addicted, clean, etc. In the postnational society, these discourses cannot be contained by national boundaries: in Kelman's *How Late It Was How Late*, it is British bureaucracy, in Galloway's and Welsh's novels it is global popular culture, in McIlvanney's texts global deregulation that constructs different subjects and their spaces of agency. These discourses have a much larger impact on the construction of Scottish subjects than national discourses; therefore, a return to national culture as a defence against these discourses (in the way Paul Scott suggests) is impossible. In the texts I have discussed, the respective characters do not return to the promised land of identity: Galloway does not 'return' to a unified female subject in her struggle for dignity, nor does Kelman offer a new organic working-class intellectual. Instead they move toward re-presentation of spaces, sometimes through 'parodic repetition' or through mobilisation of other available discourses, and they explore new politics of representation that acknowledge the multiplicity and provisionality of identity.

With exemplary discussions of landscape, territory, history, population and language I have argued that different writers intervene in current cultural debates to challenge dominant representations and create new spaces of agency. Not only do these writers challenge the predominance of one narrative that suppresses other forms of identity.

They move beyond polar oppositions like Scottish/English to a recognition of the inescapable doubleness and hybridity of identity. Identity is therefore always difference, it is endlessly supplementary and differs from itself from one moment to the next. The texts I have discussed can therefore be seen as interventions against a multiplicity of intersecting oppressions, and as complex attempts to redefine liberty within a postmodern politics of location.

Of course it would be naive to assume that these texts can simply 'mean' a postnational society into existence. It would be short-sighted to overlook the concerted effort of an emerging nationalist *bloc* to incorporate these heterogeneous texts in a nationalist cultural politics and a Scottish canon, to support their claims not for a postnational, but a national community. The next chapter will therefore look at the way in which these texts interact with national institutions in Scotland, particularly educational institutions. Finally, I want to suggest a pedagogy of difference that mobilises the excesses of meaning that I have just identified, and that has as its goal the broadening and deepening of possibilities in a postnational democracy.

(Not) Educating a Nation: Reading as Intervention

3.1 Education and Meaning

In spite of their complex attitudes towards identity, most of the novels and stories discussed in the previous chapter have in one context or another been read as signifiers of a national community or a cultural revival of Scotland. In the literary histories of Douglas Gifford or Dorothy McMillan and in the archetypal and thematic criticism of Alan Bold or Manfred Malzahn, these heterogeneous texts are written into a narrative of national culture that spans the last millennium and points to the future of an independent Scotland. Like the literary texts themselves, these theoretical narratives are ways of imagining community: in the controversy about Scottish independence, both play important roles in the struggle over different versions of identity. Reading, like writing, is a cultural intervention. But more obviously than writing, reading works through regulatory institutions like schools and universities, where these narratives of community become institutionalised.

Texts never ‘mean’ as such, they are not carriers of fixed transhistorical, ideological, radical, local, national or transnational meanings that can then be ‘uncovered’ by the astute critic. Neither Scottish national consciousness nor multicultural identities slumber ‘in’ any of the contemporary Scottish texts, merely waiting for the kiss of life by the solitary reader. Contrary to the assumptions both of ideological and nationalist critics, cultural representations do not emerge from a monologic political unconscious, nor do they ‘interpellate’ subjects as if subjects were mere reflections in the mirror of the univocal cultural text. As we have seen, literary texts have the potential to disturb nationalist calculations with excesses of meaning that open up ever new forms of subjectivity. However, in trying to understand the interventionist character of literary texts, it is important to remember that they do not simply reproduce dominant ideologies and identities; neither do counter-representations automatically produce liberated subjects. There is little in a potentially resistant text like *How Late It Was, How Late* that would prohibit its appropriation by nationalist formations. Indeed, theoretical

and pedagogical projects often name the ‘pessimist’ Kelman first and foremost among the ‘founding fathers’ of a cultural renewal and regained national self-confidence.⁷⁰ Conversely, as David McCrone’s reading of the Scottish heritage industry in *Scotland – The Brand* illustrates, even highly restrictive traditions like tartanry can be mobilised within emancipatory contexts and probed for elements of hope and social transformation. In the words of Stuart Hall:

The meaning of a cultural form and its place or position in the cultural field is not inscribed inside its form. Nor is its position fixed once and forever. This year’s radical symbol or slogan will be neutralised into next year’s fashion; the year after it will be the object of a profound cultural nostalgia. ... The meaning of the cultural symbol is given in part by the social field into which it is incorporated, the practises with which it articulates and is made to resonate. What matters is not the intrinsic or historically fixed objects of culture, but the state of play in cultural relations.

(‘Notes on Deconstructing the Popular’ 235)

As Hall’s circuit of culture reminds us, texts become meaningful because they interact with a multiplicity of cultural practices and institutions, which more or less successfully regulate the ways in which texts can be read and identities conceived. The various meanings of these texts are part of complex processes of social production and negotiation within contested relations of power. Put simply, meanings are negotiated in cultural struggle. To ‘make sense’ of a cultural text means to rewrite it in terms of one version of subjectivity and community rather than another. Therefore, a text does not spontaneously translate into nationalist or postnational consciousness, but is mobilised by partisan readings and practices which are themselves interventions into the social imaginary. While a particular novel like *How Late It Was, How Late* responds to and shapes social debates, the national, postnational, feminist and other ‘meanings’ of the novel have to be mobilised in different interventionist readings and alternative cultural practices.

In this chapter I take a closer look at the institutional aspects of literature, and particularly at the ways in which educational institutions like schools and universities regulate the meanings of literary texts produced in Scotland, by Scots, or about Scotland. Educational institutions play an important role in the production and circulation of meanings. Though they are themselves by no means homogeneous, they encourage some meanings while prohibiting others. They generate knowledges about literary texts in certain relations of power and

⁷⁰In ‘Imagining Scotlands’ Gifford reads *How Late It Was, How Late* and *Foreign Parts* as ‘moving towards [national] synthesis’ and ‘expressing a new mood of human acceptance, qualified optimism, reconciliation’ (46). See also Bell, ‘James Kelman,’ Dorothy McMillan, ‘Constructed out of Bewilderment.’

knowledge (or ‘power/knowledge’ as Foucault would have us spell it), and these knowledges are in turn representations of preferred forms of subjectivity and community.

In Scotland, schools and universities have long been at the forefront of national struggles, because education was one of the few independent Scottish institutions after 1707. But it was only comparatively recently that Scottish educators began to call for a curriculum that accommodated Scottish language and literature. In this chapter I look at the way in which educational practices articulate cultural texts with a national community, and how different practices can be devised that link them with other, postnational communities of difference. In the following part I outline the political and philosophical framework of schooling in Scotland, and analyse how educational institutions and theories are refracted in novels by Janice Galloway, James Kelman and William McIlvanney. The third part analyses how these texts are in turn taken up in nationalist educational discourses. I argue that within educational spaces like schools, universities or public debates, these theoretical discourses streamline the heterogeneous body of literary texts as a homogeneous national canon and reconfigure radical difference and social antagonisms as aspects of national culture. In the concluding part, I give an exemplary reading of Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* (1993) and *Marabou Stork Nightmare* (1995) and make suggestions for a critical pedagogical practice that mobilises texts for postnational communities of difference.

3.2 Representations of Pedagogy: Democratic Intellectualism

Education has traditionally been an important element in the formation of nations, as Eric Hobsbawm points out in *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780* (110-116). Based on the medium of print and a standardised curriculum, modern education is one of the pillars of the nation. The centrality of the Scottish educational system to the issue of national identity is historical. When the Union of Parliaments in 1707 formally sealed the process of unification begun a century earlier with the ascension of James VI of Scotland to the English throne, Scotland retained control over local government, the judiciary, the church and education. In *Scotland and Nationalism* (7-11), Christopher Harvie describes how in the absence of other autonomous political institutions, these formations became important locations for the construction and contestation of Scottish national identity and, with the possible exception of the Church of Scotland, have remained so until the present.

In Scotland, there is something of a popular consensus that the educational system is uniquely Scottish. In the tradition of nineteenth century Romantic nationalism of continental Europe, education is a site for the ‘preservation’ of a national identity, but unlike Czech or Hungarian nationalists of the nineteenth century, Scottish educators (at least until the cultural revival in the 1980s) did not consider the school primarily an instrument for the recovery and transmission of national culture. Due to the sense of cultural inferiority which critics from McArthur to Beveridge and Turnbull have identified as a central element of Scottish cultural politics, there was even a suspicion of ‘folkloric’ elements.⁷¹ While this is no longer true in the 1990s, it was partly this sense of the inferiority of Scottish culture that led educators to locate national identity in the form of the educational institutions themselves. As R. D. Anderson writes in *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland*:

In the history of European nationalism, education often had a vital role in transmitting, or helping to revive, national languages and cultures. In Scotland this was not the case – indeed, the schools became notorious for their neglect of Scottish literature and history. Instead it was the institutional forms of the educational system, and their articulation with each other, which were seen as the distinctive heritage to be preserved against alien influences and unsympathetic reforms. (1)

These ‘alien influences’ are of course English. The form of Scottish education thus became a battleground for national independence: educational philosophers like George Davie therefore write a narrative in which Scottish education is always ‘under siege’ and always has to be defended against the threat of Anglicisation (Davie vi).

Walter Elliot’s term ‘democratic intellectualism’ is central to Scottish educational philosophy. This term implies two central tenets which are supposed to oppose it squarely to English education: Scottish education is both more egalitarian and more universal than English education. This means that it provides equality of opportunity for all Scots alike, and that it is organised around a classical curriculum, in opposition to an English system that is branded as elitist, pragmatist and anti-intellectual.⁷² Educational theorists like George Davie and Andrew Lockheart Walker have pointed to these two characteristics of Scottish educational philosophy to argue that Scottish education and society are not only fundamentally different from their English counterparts, but superior. However, according to Davie there has been a gradual process of erosion of Scottish values by a English pragmatism and competitiveness since the beginning of this century. In his narrative of the rise

⁷¹See McCrone, ‘Representing Scotland’ 161.

⁷²See particularly Beveridge and Turnbull 83-94.

and fall of the Scottish democratic intellect a ‘university system of open access, non-specialised’ has been ‘choked to death in Victorian Oxbridge’s serpentine coils,’ as Andrew Noble ironically puts it (‘Who Were the College Asses Then?’ 11). Davie therefore demands a return to the traditional virtues of democratic intellectualism. The recent ‘cultural turn’ of nationalist education e.g. in *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* by Beveridge and Turnbull is explicitly grafted onto Davie’s philosophy. Beveridge and Turnbull regard education as the site where the *topoi* of Scottish ‘inferiorism’ can be challenged, a new national culture can be created, and a new national elite can emerge.

This optimism is not generally shared, least of all, it would seem, by the intellectuals whom Beveridge and Turnbull try to mobilise. The tradition of democratic intellectualism with its dual goal of equality of opportunity and universality of education is highly problematic, not the least because the two elements seem to be mutually exclusive – a problem which is by no means diminished when the universal curriculum is simply replaced by a national one. There appears to be a pervasive scepticism among Scottish writers concerning both the past and the present of Scottish schooling: in James Kelman’s *A Disaffection* (1989), the school is not an emancipatory institution but a prison for teachers and students alike, and in Duncan McLean’s *Bunker Man* (1994), the fantasies of a psychopathological janitor reduce the school to an internment camp for potential juvenile delinquents. William McIlvanney adds historical depth to this critique: in *Docherty* (1975) and *The Kiln* (1996), set in the early years of this century and the 1950s respectively, working-class students become victims rather than beneficiaries of education and drop out either because they lack the financial means to continue their education or because they feel silenced. Teachers are far from being democratic intellectuals: either they are sadistic torturers of their students, as Mad Hislop in Alasdair Gray’s *1982 Janine* or they become victims of educational institutions themselves, as Joy Stone in Janice Galloway’s *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989) or Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection*.

If schooling is part of the struggle for national emancipation, it is also, as Hobsbawm reminds us, a space in which other social antagonisms between different groups and classes are played out (116-122). Nationalist theories of Scottish education often erase these antagonisms and the complexity of social identities, and it is partly this erasure that is addressed in recent fictional texts. In contrast to nationalist pedagogies, these texts represent a variety of different and antagonistic identities, educational institutions figure as contested spaces in the struggle for different versions of community.

3.2.1 Egalitarianism and Difference

The national educational philosophy is grounded in the faith that Scotland is an egalitarian nation, whereas England is trapped in a feudal order. This belief has taken on dimensions of an ‘egalitarian myth’⁷³ (McCrone, Kendrick and Straw 3); in *Understanding Scotland*, David McCrone remarks:

Few myths are more powerful and prevalent in and about Scotland than that it is a more egalitarian society than England, and that the commitment to ‘getting on’ is greater. (88)

In the light of this myth, which in its present form dates back to Victorian Scotland, Scottish cultural institutions like the Church of Scotland or the schools are the cornerstones of Scottish identity.⁷⁴ In the ideology of Scottishness the educational system is supposed to provide educational and social equality in that it reaches all geographical locations within the country and is accessible to all social classes, including those lower classes that were barred from entering especially higher education in England.⁷⁵ As spaces in which members from different classes interact and form a national unity without regional or social barriers, schools and universities become miniature models of an egalitarian Scottish society.⁷⁶ However, the notion of egalitarian education has recently come under criticism from numerous groups within Scotland for its blind spots that serve to perpetuate forms of injustice and inequality.

Popular literature played an important part in the creation and distribution of the myth of educational equality: McCrone traces the influence back to the kailyard writers J. M. Barrie and Ian McLaren and a popular protagonist called the ‘lad o’ pairts,’ who incarnated educational egalitarianism:

⁷³As R.D. Anderson points out, to state that the egalitarian nature of the Scottish educational system is a myth is not to equate it with a form of false consciousness or to deny that education succeeded in some of these areas: it seems that at least during the Victorian era, literacy rates in Scotland indeed exceed those in England. Even as a myth it continues to shape educational policy and notions of agency. (see R.D. Anderson 8).

⁷⁴See McCrone, *Understanding Scotland* 115-118.

⁷⁵In *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity* R.A. Houston traces the myth back to the establishment of state-sponsored schooling in Scotland in the seventeenth century. He reaches the conclusion that, while the myth is not wholly divorced from fact, there is no empirical proof that literacy rates in Lowland Scotland significantly differed from those in Northern England. He therefore cautiously concludes that ‘we can question the views of authorities who believe that ‘it would be meaningless ... to speak of Scotland ... in the same breath as England’ (257). R.D. Anderson and Andrew McPherson come to similar conclusions for the 19th and 20th centuries.

⁷⁶See R.D. Anderson 1-2.

The virtues of Scottish education carried their own personum, the lad o' pairts. The lad o' pairts was . . . a 'talented youth,' often the son of a crofter or peasant who had the ability but not the means to benefit from education. (95)

This character makes his first appearance in Ian McLaren's story 'Domsie.' In this story, the egalitarian nature of the educational system allows the lad to succeed in spite of his humble origins. It is the role of the 'dominie' (as the local schoolteacher is called) to recognise talent and secure the funds for the university education of his talented pupils, which are available through bursary competitions. The institutional framework and the personality of the teacher come together to make the school an instrument of upward mobility. There are indeed some historical precedents for this from-ewe-to-uni narrative: Thomas Carlyle was the son of a small farmer in Dumfriesshire, and Alexander Murray, professor of Hebrew in the late eighteenth century, started his career as shepherd.⁷⁷ Narratives of this kind successfully established the myth of an educational system that provides equal educational opportunity and supports social mobility in an open, democratic society, and this myth informs attitudes towards education even today.

However, it seems that from the first the myth of egalitarian education systematically by-passed urban schools.⁷⁸ In recent years, this myth has come under attack from different social groups for the inequalities it conceals. McCrone's criticism of educational opportunity as embodied in the lad o' pairts indicates some of the problems:

This 'opportunity' did not relate to equality of educational achievement or outcome for broad classes or collectivities. Instead it referred to the formal opportunity afforded to an able pupil to proceed through the parish school to university. In this regard, it drew upon a meritocratic tradition rather than an egalitarian one.

(97)

In her foreword to *Girls in their Prime*, Gaby Weiner goes even further in her critique when she challenges 'the desire to place the blame for *all*

⁷⁷See R.D. Anderson 6.

⁷⁸R. D. Anderson quotes George Lewis's *Scotland, a Half-Educated Nation*, who writes in 1834:

We look in vain, in the large towns of Scotland ... for those kindly feelings between all classes, which arose in the parish schools of Scotland, and were cherished in her parish churches, sweetening the bands of the intercourse, and strengthening the bands, of society. (12)

See also Andrew McPherson, 'An Angle on the Geist' and Lindsay Paterson, 'Liberation or Control' for instances of the current debate about the reality and possibilities of Scottish education.

the ills of modern Scottish life on English colonialism' (viii; Weiner's italics). She claims that

[W]here the Scots have had greater autonomy, such as in education, there is little evidence that lofty ideals have been translated into truly egalitarian practices. (viii)

Within the framework of individual achievement, class and gender inequalities are reinscribed rather than overcome. Since Scottish education is also a representation of the national community, these absences have profound reverberations on the way in which this particular community is imagined. Therefore, recent struggles aim at redressing those institutionalised injustices with a view of the kind of community that Scotland is or imagines itself to be. Once again, literary texts become important forms of intervention in these social and cultural struggles, and offer spaces to re-imagine community. If narratives of the Kailyard School helped create the image of the lad o' pairts, contemporary literature often lays bare the class and gender bias of that image.

Egalitarianism and Class

William McIlvanney and James Kelman deconstruct the myth of educational egalitarianism as incorporated by the personae of lad o' pairts and dominie from the perspective of rural and urban working classes. In William McIlvanney's novels *Docherty* and *The Kiln*, the protagonists are certainly exceptionally 'talented youths' of the kind the kailyard narrative requires, yet their careers are stunted and frustrated by teachers, financial constraints or a narrow educational philosophy. *Docherty* is set in the fictional mining town Graithnock, located in Ayr in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the heyday of kailyard fiction and the egalitarian myth. Conn Docherty, the novel's protagonist, is the son of a miner and exactly the 'talented youth' predestined to become the 'lad o' pairts': he reads Ralph Waldo Emerson, the only book he possesses, and his father even dreams of sending him to university. To the disappointment of his father, however, Conn eventually decides to become a miner rather than continue his education. Yet the father's disappointment is caused by unrealistic expectations concerning the openness of the educational system: Conn's choice to become a miner is no choice at all but merely the ironic fulfilment of the opportunities the educational system creates for him:

Conn later understood what was so obvious, that his father couldn't have afforded to keep him on at school anyway. It had never been a serious possibility. (179)

No dominie steps in to support Conn, no financial resources are available to the son of a miner. On the contrary, the teacher, himself of working-class origin, plays an important part in Conn's choice of arduous manual labour over education.⁷⁹

Far from being the benign dominie, Conn's teacher Mr Pirrie is an example of the background required for upward mobility. Mr Pirrie punishes Conn for using a lower class word, and afterwards reminisces that he himself grew up in the working class, but managed to cross the border into the middle class because, even though his father is a worker, his mother comes from a bourgeois family. In order to become a teacher, he has to exorcise his working-class culture with the help of his mother's culture:

He comes from a working class home himself, he says. He isn't afraid to admit what his father was – a pig walking upright. Troughing it at the table. Swearing. They're all the same. Afraid to better themselves. They need the comfort of the herd. They have the place they want. They have to be taught to keep it. He blessed his mother who married beneath herself and found that you couldn't convert them. No wonder Livingstone left Blantyre. Africa was an easier proposition. But she at least managed to save her son. He will be forever grateful for what she has helped him to become.

(116)

Mr Pirrie is 'saved' through the middle-class origins of his mother and by suppressing his working-class side. This exorcism makes it necessary for him to bestialise his working-class students. Mr Pirrie's comparison with the Scottish 'explorer' Livingstone is instructive for the complex interaction of national and class dynamics at work in the novel. Firstly, it highlights the Scottish integration into the *British* imperialist project rather than representing Scotland exclusively as the victim of *English* imperialism. It serves as a reminder that Scottish nabobs did not merely bob along in the wake of the Empire but as often as not were at the helm; they took a relatively more active part in its expansion, which considerably weakens the Scottish nationalists' model of straightforward colonial suppression as an explanation for every form of injustice existing in Scotland today. Secondly, the comparison with Livingstone also illustrates the mechanisms of a kind of 'internal imperialism' in which the Scottish middle classes colonise the working class through education. Within the ideology of Empire, education becomes a kind of

⁷⁹This pattern is repeated in *The Kiln*, set in the same town of Graithnock half a century later, when Conn Docherty's son Tom leaves school before his final year. Unlike his father, Tom Docherty has the opportunity to study at university and become a teacher; however, both as student and as teacher, he remains alienated in an educational system that is actually quite status-oriented, and eventually he chooses exile over a better position.

charitable ‘civilising’ project, which claims to lift workers, like Livingstone’s Africans, from a state of animal behaviour to the lower ranks of humanity. Not unlike Kipling’s ‘white man,’ the teacher bears the ‘burden’ of humanising his lower class pupils, but in spite of his heroic efforts the project of ‘improvement’ fails, due, of course, to the base instincts of the working class. Within this rationale, the main function of the educational system is the containment of the lower classes, whose bestiality is a constant threat to civility, or rather the hegemony of the middle and upper classes. Even in the heyday of the democratic myth, schooling is far from being a guarantor of social mobility; instead, it reinforces existing class hierarchies by making workers docile and keeping them in their place. It makes education a humiliating experience and upward mobility a ridiculous impossibility.

While Mr Pirrie’s explicit colonialism questions the validity of the egalitarian myth in a golden age of Scottish education around the turn of the century, Kelman’s *A Disaffection* presents a similarly disillusioned view of the present. *A Disaffection* is the story of Patrick Doyle, a teacher at a Glasgow school, who eventually despairs of the injustices of educational institutions and decides to quit because, contrary to his expectations, he experiences schooling as a prison. Like *Docherty*, Kelman’s novel leaves no doubt that there is only one choice for urban working-class children: to repeat the lives of injustice which their parents endure already. In the Glasgow of the 1980s, however, this does not mean manual or industrial labour, as it does for Conn Docherty, but unemployment and a life at the margin.

In a highly ironic scene, Patrick Doyle demonstrates that the creed of social mobility is no more than an affirmation of social injustice. Patrick Doyle has his students repeat in a chorus:

Now, all of yous, all you wee first-yearers, cause that’s what you are, wee first-yearers. You are here being fenced in by us teachers at the behest of the government in explicit simulation of your parents viz. the suppressed poor. Repeat after me: We are being fenced in by the teachers

We are being fenced in by the teachers
at the behest of a dictatorship government
at the behest of a dictatorship government
in explicit simulation of our fucking parents the silly bastards
in explicit simulation of our fucking parents the silly bastards
Laughter.

. . . Okay then that last bit: viz. the suppressed poor!
viz. the suppressed poor!

Cheering.

(25)

In this cynical exercise, Patrick uses his authority as a teacher to parody the very suppression he criticises, and to demonstrate the involuntary complicity of both students and teachers in their own disempowerment.

In a complete reversal of the kailyard myth of education as a road to a democratic society, it is the primary function of schooling to reproduce existing power relations between classes and actively prevent social mobility. In this scenario, Scottish society is completely closed, and it utilises the education system to contain the 'dangerous' classes rather than offer them a chance of participation.

Kelman invokes the metaphor of schooling as imprisonment for the children of working-class families. The image of the school as prison is echoed in Patrick's constant concern with the physical space of the school, for instance the fence around the school and the police officers patrolling the gates. The school becomes an instrument of an authoritarian society, and it is partly Patrick's sense of being the accomplice of a totalitarian regime that prompts him to reconsider his choice of profession. He tells his sister-in-law:

I'm gonni pack it in all the gether. Uch Nicola I'm just bloody sick of working for the government, I'm sick of doing my bit to suppress the weans, not unless the headmaster starts letting me wear a polis uniform – if I can wear one that's a different story. (317)

Patrick's description of the school as prison is perilously close to the nightmare vision of the school as a kind of concentration camp in the fantasies of Rob Catto, the quasi-fascist janitor in Duncan McLean's *Bunker Man*. Rob writes memos like the following to the headmaster:

In recognition of the janitorial staff's recently established role as guardians of moral good in the school, I propose a change to our uniforms. Eventually peaked caps, camouflage jackets and leather holsters should be issued. With regards to this last item, there is, of course, no need to arm us immediately (though I believe that caretakers in many urban American schools have been given weapons, with a very positive effect on corridor discipline.) But they would be an impressive accessory, handy for holding a notebook and pencil, which could be whipped out and used for recording details of pupils' names and crimes. (249-50)

The mission statement Rob proposes for the badge on the janitors' uniform is 'In Salutem Omnium,' for the benefit of all: an ominous satirical distortion of an egalitarian creed of education in which an authoritarian force prescribes and enforces a national creed of moral good. In *Bunker Man*, schooling is completely stripped of all utopian potential as a space for the imagination of a better society, and becomes the site of authoritarian violence.

But while McLean individualises issues of power and control and represents them as forms of psychopathology, Kelman's critique of the school as prison is firmly embedded in the context of contemporary social antagonisms in Scotland. Kelman adopts the viewpoint of the urban working (or unemployed) classes, thereby reversing the image of

Scottish egalitarianism. He challenges the rhetoric which opposes an egalitarian Scotland to an undemocratic England while conveniently overlooking structural inequalities within Scotland. Scotland may not be the hapless victim of ruthless English colonialism; on the contrary, Kelman asks whether the undemocratic structures that are held to be safely south of the border may not find their equivalent within Scotland, in a kind of internal colonisation of so-called problem populations, and whether the democratic myth may not render the actual injustices invisible.

In *A Disaffection* and especially in *Docherty* schooling becomes a class apparatus whose sole function is to reproduce existing divisions. Yet it does so not by segregating students and teaching them the values required for a predestined occupation and social station, but rather in a more complex, indirect way. Interestingly, the complex mechanisms of social reproduction in *Docherty* do not significantly differ from the analyses of English schooling conducted by the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in the 1970s. Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour* sets out to show, as its subtitle indicates, 'how working class kids get working class jobs' through a complex negotiation of their working-class identity in schools. In Willis's account, schools not only in England, but in all capitalist countries, offer a certain notion of democratic and egalitarian education which is supposed to provide opportunities for academic achievement and upward mobility; however, their cultural background leads working-class kids (more specifically, working-class boys) to resist this form of education. According to Willis, it is not education, but this necessary resistance to it which condemns working-class kids to industrial labour:

In the sense, therefore, that I argue that it is their own culture which most effectively prepares some working class lads for the manual giving of their labour power we may say that there is an element of self-damnation in the taking on of subordinate roles in Western capitalism. However, this damnation is experienced, paradoxically, as true learning, affirmation, appropriation, and as a form of resistance. (3)

Both Conn's culture and that of Willis's 'working class lads' are from the first overdetermined by a certain masculine working-class ethos. This ethos is eagerly appropriated in the resistance against a form of education which these boys ultimately experience as inferior and feminine. Like Willis's lads, Conn proudly embraces the culture of his father as a form of resistance against the humiliations of education: the Christmas before he leaves school, the only gifts he requests are mining tools such as a pit-lamp and working clothes. These become symbols of instantaneous liberation from school:

Putting the things on was for Conn a confused, fevered experience, haunted by half-remembered stories of magical garments and astonishing transformations wrought in seconds and secret truths stunning those to whom they were suddenly revealed. The nearest thing to clarity in him was a sense of the defeat of the stifling narrowness of school, the negation of its lies. But the feeling didn't occupy him long, for school was instantly and utterly irrelevant. When the frog becomes a prince, he bears no malice towards rodents. The bonnet gave him a new identity. The shoulders of the jacket drooped like inconspicuous wings. (208)

In the imagery of this passage, Conn's descent into the pits is rendered as a flight and a form of liberation from the prison of egalitarian education. For Willis and McIlvanney, the overtly democratic goals of educational philosophy merely legitimate education as an instrument of inequality.

The deconstruction of the kailyard myth of education incorporated in the lad o' pairts remains relevant to the current social and political debates and the ways in which agency and community can be imagined. As Judith Fewell and Fiona Paterson write in 'Girls in their Prime':

Born in pre-industrial times, even now this myth, for this is what it is, provides a powerful expression of the idealised image of the land of equal opportunity. It is a convenient shorthand conveying a meritocratic culture in which Scots may take pride. It is also a political weapon, for, especially when invoked against outsiders (typically the English), it is an appeal to unity and a foreclosure on internal challenges posed by alternative explanations. (4)

Especially among nationalists, the myth of democratic education continues to inform the current debate, but its inherent injustices have not been examined and it becomes a shorthand for a primarily anglo-phobic politics.

Yet, even a deconstruction of the egalitarian ideology as a mystification of middle-class hegemony may in its turn create new forms of fixed identities which legitimate other forms of oppression. There is a historical tendency amongst Scottish radicals to stabilise alternative forms of Scottish identity around working-class lifestyles. Gaby Weiner describes this as the 'romanticism of the male, working-class, white activist, whether in politics or on the sports field, as the true embodiment of authentic Scottish culture' (viii). While James Kelman is as suspicious of working-class sentimentality as he is of every other form of fixed identity, William McIlvanney can be accused of such romanticisations of working-class life styles.

Egalitarianism and Gender

The celebration of working-class heroism may well give rise to new forms of oppression, as Gaby Weiner and other Scottish feminists point out: if injustice is merely constructed along the axis of class, other forms of difference and oppression again become invisible. In their essay 'Promoting Men: Women, Power and Schooling,' the Lothian Women in Education Group paint a picture of a Scottish culture dominated by males:

The strength of machismo in contemporary Scottish culture can be seen reflected in the many images of Scotland portrayed by the media – the Scottish football fan, the beer-drinking man among men in the pub, the 'hard man' are a few examples. Where are the women in this stereotype? At home of course. (139)

In educational institutions as well as most other public spheres, and even in radical politics, female images are either limited to traditional roles or conspicuous through their absence. In their essay 'Girls in their Prime,' Judith Fewell and Fiona Paterson remark that there is no lass o' pairts to match the image of the lad o' pairts:

The image is one of priority being given to individual merit over socio-economic position: but the image is gender-blind. Having mythical status, the lad o' pairts is a symbolic representation rather than a direct reflection of reality. What it symbolises can be illustrated if we consider, for a moment, the female equivalent, the lass o' pairts. This image, by contrast, does bear a close resemblance to the status of women in Scottish education; which is to say that the lass o' pairts has no status at all in the Scottish education tradition. (5)

Egalitarian education therefore serves to reinforce what Arthur McIvor calls the 'gender apartheid' in Scottish society. The egalitarian myth offers a very limited range of subject positions for women, and while they may not be restricted to the home, education may not have to offer them much more.

In A.L. Kennedy's *Looking for the Possible Dance* (1993), the narrator makes a list of ten commandments that inform 'the Scottish Method (for the perfection of children),' and when she arrives at the issue of gender she writes:

The chosen and male shall go forth unto professions while the chosen and female shall be homely, fecund, docile and slightly artistic.

(15)

In this list, 'those not chosen,' apparently of both sexes, are 'cast out into utter darkness, even unto the ranks of Her Majesty's Armed Forces and

Industry' (15). While chosen women, presumably of the middle classes, can at least be 'slightly artistic,' working-class women completely disappear in the list of those not chosen: gender is not experienced in the same manner in all social locations, and working-class women and girls are twice removed from meaningful participation in the national community.

Janice Galloway's novel *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* also takes a partisan view of Scottish education. Set at least partly in a school in Glasgow, the institutionalised inequality of the Scottish educational system becomes a backdrop of the narrative. The novel's protagonist, Joy Stone, is a teacher in a suburb of Glasgow. For her the school becomes one of many institutions which try to fix her identity in limited, prefabricated roles. She says of the school:

This is my workplace.
This is where I earn my definition, the place that tells me what I
am. (11)

In some respects, Joy's opinion of the school as a place that reproduces and exacerbates already existing injustices differs little from Conn's experience:

I teach children.
I teach them:
1. routine
2. when to keep their mouths shut
3. how to put up with boredom and unfairness
4. how to sublimate anger politely
5. not to go into teaching. (12)

From the first, the educational institution assigns Joy a role at the very bottom of the school hierarchy: as a drama teacher she has studied a subject that is deemed sufficiently 'feminine.' As Leslie Hills writes in 'The Senga Syndrome,' subjects continue to be gendered in Scottish education. While the sciences are dominated by men, languages and art are considered 'suitable courses for young women' (149). These academic subjects position female teachers safely at the lower end of the ladder and give them only a modest chance of ever being promoted to leading positions within the schools. Joy is subject to what the Lothian Women in Education Group have called the 'institutionalised sexism' (132) of the Scottish educational system.

Yet in the course of the novel, she herself as a teacher more than her students becomes the subject of educational discourses that severely limit the ways in which she can imagine possibilities for action. In the case of Joy, schooling could ironically be called an institution for women's continuing education, an education that locks them into powerlessness. But the education of women is not limited to schooling: the school itself is structured by a whole host of discourses that organise

everyday life, and produce exactly the kinds of knowledges that are needed for 'the' modern woman.⁸⁰ Ranging from global popular culture to the psychiatric institutions of the British Health Service, cultural formations produce authoritative versions of female subjectivity and happiness. Rather than question these, schools merely reaffirm these knowledges and codes.

3.2.2 Curriculum and Intellectualism: Power and Knowledge

The debate about schooling cannot be limited to interactions in schools. Beyond the notion of educational egalitarianism and the lad o' pairts, the question of a national curriculum is of particular relevance. George Davie, John Anderson as well as Beveridge and Turnbull have recognised educational philosophy as an important terrain for emancipatory political struggles. As part of their project of cultural change, these writers not only take for granted that Scottish educational institutions are more egalitarian than English schools and universities; this underexamined prejudice then becomes the starting point for a politics aimed at changing the content of education, as well. Many writers demand various forms of a national curriculum which they justify through reference to the democratic myth of education. From the issue of the form of education, we therefore move to the curriculum as a very particular way of imagining community. In this section I look at a very important tradition in Scottish educational philosophy which identifies democratic Scottish education with a 'universal' curriculum, which is to say a philosophical and classical education. I discuss the ways in which McIlvanney's *The Kiln* and particularly Kelman's *A Disaffection* engage this educational philosophy and challenge the universal curriculum as an instrument of an authoritarian rather than a democratic pedagogy.

If thus far I have addressed the 'democratic' component of the concept of 'democratic intellectualism,' I can now turn to 'intellectualism.' This aspect was developed by George Davie's highly influential texts *The Democratic Intellect* and *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect*, and taken up again by Beveridge and Turnbull in *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* and most recently by Andrew Lockhart Walker in *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect*. Democratic intellectualism as Davie and others have understood it is primarily a

⁸⁰For the importance of popular culture as an educational formation for working class girls see Angela McRobbie, 'Working Class Girls and the Culture of Femininity.' Like Paul Willis, who analysed 'working class lads' her ethnographic field concludes (among other things) that schooling does nothing to recognise, let alone counteract its own role in the (non-necessary) reproduction of women's subordination.

classical and philosophical education in schools and universities. As late as 1986, Davie justifies the need for philosophical education as follows:

[T]here is one central point which I want to get over, namely that the Scotland of our own century is still a metaphysical country and that no one will make sense of what is going on without a modicum of philosophy. (*The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* iii)

Davie's texts form a narrative spanning the past 200 years, in which the original comprehensiveness and universality of Scottish education was gradually eroded by English rationalism, pragmatism and the notion of education as specialised 'training.' According to this narrative, traces of classicism remain in the universities and schools, but Davie and his followers advocate a reinstatement of the classics and philosophy at the heart of a more democratic and Scottish education.

In their search for a model of a democratic and classical curriculum, recent educators have drawn heavily on the work of John Anderson, a Scottish educator who emigrated to Australia in 1926. Though Anderson wrote in the context of Australian educational reform in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Davie and others take his work to reflect essentially Scottish qualities. Particularly important in this context is Anderson's critique of rational and technocratic models of education as 'training' that were promoted by the new Labour government as part of the 'modernisation' of Australia; Davie as well as Beveridge and Turnbull go to great lengths to rewrite this Australian controversy in terms of the antagonism between the educational philosophies of Scotland and England.⁸¹

Central to John Anderson's theory of education is a return to Matthew Arnold's concepts of 'judgement' and 'criticism' as the essential goals of education. In 'Lectures on the Educational Theories of Spenser and Dewey' he elaborates that the development of 'criticism' which according to Arnold requires logical, psychological, cultural and historical education, can function as a balance and control of instrumental rationality and its notions of education as training for particular skills.⁸² For Anderson, 'judgement' offers the promise of

⁸¹See Davie 62-7; Beveridge and Turnbull 89.

⁸²Anderson refers among other passages to Arnold's definition of criticism in 'On Translating Homer' (1861), where Arnold chastises English writers for lacking 'the endeavour, in all branches of knowledge – theology, philosophy, history, art, science – to see the object as in itself it really is' (*Selected Prose* 84). Arnold elaborates on this definition in *Essays in Criticism* (1865) and *Culture and Anarchy* (1869). That the conjunction of Arnoldian 'criticism' and popular democracy are strange bedfellows indeed may become most apparent in *The Popular Education of France* (1861) and especially the chapter 'Democracy' and Arnold's ominous forebodings of anarchy in *Culture and Anarchy*. One might suspect that for critics like Davie the most appealing aspect of Arnold's work is his sustained polemic against English

exerting democratic control over a technocratic modernism which, as Davie puts it, ‘has given us “the Bomb”’ (82). In the wake of Arnold, who equates ‘criticism’ with ‘a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world’ (Anderson 116), Anderson and Davie demand an education with a core curriculum of classical literature and philosophy.⁸³ The reference to Arnold, however, is problematic exactly because his notion of education creates a very specific canon of cultural texts that deliberately excludes others; for Arnold this implies – quite ironically, when transferred to Scottish emancipatory struggles – an imperial canon whose goal it is to create an English elite as the heir of Western culture. The knowledges of other nations, classes, and ethnic groups which do not fit this imperial and allegedly disinterested standard are shoved toward the anarchic periphery.⁸⁴ The universal education of Anderson and Davie dismisses cultural difference as irrelevant to education and imposes a notion of classicism which effectively transforms education into a disciplinary instrument and an elitist rather than an emancipatory practice. Anderson quite logically concludes:

My contention is that education as such (that is, liberal education) is aesthetic; and that, allowing for the confused and narrow way in which ‘taste’ is commonly spoken of, we can still refer to education as a training in taste or, using the broader term which we find in Arnold, a training in judgement. (103)

The definition of education as ‘training in judgement’ or ‘training in taste’ effectively removes any ethical referent, which should, one would think, be central to any definition of intellectualism as ‘democratic.’

The aesthetisation of criticism and its articulation with classical literature effect the disarticulation of education and politics, and thus the depoliticisation of aesthetics and the aesthetisation of politics which Eagleton describes as typical of Romantic philosophy.⁸⁵ This disavowal of politics finds its logical conclusion when John Anderson explicitly rejects John Dewey’s notion of education as a means for democratic transformation:

pragmatism and philistinism and his preference for Continental philosophy, which might well bring back memories of the ‘auld alliance’ of Scotland and France.

⁸³ Arnold repeats this maxim throughout *Essays in Criticism*; in *Culture and Anarchy*, ‘the best’ is at the heart of a pedagogical programme that ‘seeks to do away with all classes’ (226) with the help of a curriculum marked by the values of the aristocracy and the haute bourgeoisie.

⁸⁴For a critique of Arnold’s canonical project see Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* 142.

⁸⁵See *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, where Eagleton traces the individualisation and aesthetisation of judgement mainly through German philosophy, beginning with Kant and Schiller (who were formative influences on Arnold) to Freudian psychoanalysis.

[W]e have to do two things: *first*, to see 'education' as having a constant meaning and not varying from individual to individual; and, *second*, to reject the view of education as a vehicle for social change, the means by which society reorganizes itself. (129)

Anderson shows no awareness that knowledge, especially 'the best,' is always defined within the interests of dominant social groups. More specifically, reference to the humanistic universality of a single body of knowledge masks the de-authorisation of other equally valid knowledges. He criticises Dewey's notion of the curriculum as the result of a dialogue between students and teachers with the words '[t]here can be no education where truth is decided by voting or by fighting' (112). But this merely means that the fight is already won by an authority that removes itself from dialogue and interrogation and becomes by definition authoritarian. The pedagogy that emerges from this conservative critique of social modernism marks a return to a Victorian elitism. It reinscribes forms of social injustice along the lines of class, gender and ethnicity and explicitly disavows the goal of the democratic transformation of society which Davie claims to have discovered in Anderson's work.

In spite of Anderson's problematic elitism and its colonial reverberations, Davie, Beveridge and Turnbull wholeheartedly recommend his classicism as 'spearhead of a high-quality counter-culture' (Davie 62) and as essentially Scottish. In the translation to the Scottish context, Beveridge and Turnbull in particular completely separate knowledge from power and naturalise a certain canon as the common good of the nation. For them, the ultimate test of the 'excellence' of knowledge seems to be the amount of 'discipline' that can be enforced through it; they maintain that 'sacrifice, complexity, difficulty, struggle' are 'intrinsic to any worthwhile human project, including the attempt to enter into the educated life' (89). As we will see below, this sense of excellence also informs much of the 'cultural turn' in pedagogy, and the discovery of Scottish literature for a Scottish canon. Neither the classicists nor the Scottish culturalists show any sense that the 'educated life,' especially when enforced through standards of excellence, may veil the dominance of one particular social group and fall far short of being the universal property it pretends to be.

The Universal Curriculum

The universal curriculum has found its way into a number of novels, usually as an instrument that silences lower-class students. In *Lanark*, Alasdair Gray lampoons the Arnoldian sermon of 'the best': when

Duncan Thaw first enters Whitehill Senior Secondary School, his Classics teacher introduces himself with the following words:

He said, 'My name is Walkenshaw. I'm senior Classics master. Classics. That's what we call the study of Latin and Greek. Perhaps you've heard the word before? Who hasn't heard of classical music? Put your hand up if you haven't heard of classical music. No hands? Good. Classical music, you see, is the *best* sort of music, music by the *best* composers. In the same way study of the Classics is the study of the *best*.' (149; Gray's italics)

In Gray's novel, 'the best' becomes a thinly veiled form of authoritarianism; it signifies a form of knowledge that is imposed with despotic authority, without tolerating so much as a clarifying question. In scenes like these, which are repeated in the sadistic excesses of Mad Hislop in *1982 Janine* (1984), Scottish education is not democratic, but an exercise in what T.C. Smout has called 'trying to smash facts into children.' (19). Duncan Thaw experiences the curriculum as an arbitrary disciplining force that does nothing to empower him or to make him a member of a democratic community. On his very first day in Senior Secondary school, Thaw learns that the kinds of knowledge he will be taught have little or nothing to do with his needs and desires:

A furtive knot from Riddrie huddled together trying to seem blasé. One said to Thaw, 'What are ye taking, Latin or French?'
 'French.'
 'I'm taking Latin. Ye need it tae get to university.'
 'But Latin's a dead language!' said Thaw. 'My mother wants me to take Latin but I tell her there are more good books in French. And ye can use French tae travel.'
 'Aye, mibby, but ye need Latin tae get to university.' (148)

In *Lanark*, the curriculum requires no legitimation: it merely expects obedience. For Duncan Thaw, there are only two ways of interacting with this authority: submission, or complete self-effacement:

He was in a world where he could not do well, and he wanted to give an impression of obedience that would make the authorities treat him leniently. (151)

Education is simply one more site where Thaw is humiliated in his attempt to find a voice for himself, and one more way of preventing Glaswegians from imagining themselves. Education even becomes part of the darkness of indifference and lack of imagination which leads to the eventual self-destruction of the city in *Lanark*.

In a similar way, Tom Docherty, the protagonist of William McIlvanney's *The Kiln* recollects having to study Greek in school and realises that schooling failed to meet his needs:

He remembers having to translate *The Anabasis* in the Greek class.
 And that's another thing: Latin and Greek at school – what does
 that have to do with living in Graithnock? (4)

The Kiln shows more clearly than *Lanark* that there is a relation between educational authoritarianism and the silence of the protagonist, and between classical education and the inability to find a language to come to terms with working-class experience. Education certainly provides Tom Docherty with a language, but this language is inappropriate to articulate his own location. Tom stages his rebellion against the school in the Classics classroom: first he attempts to introduce 'forbidden' words into the lesson, later he drops Greek in order to find more time for his own writing. But the idiom he chooses is still heavily coloured by the silencing language of 'the best' and illustrates the disparity between his education and his experience. He tells an 'educated' friend and mentor about a secret poetic project he has hatched:

'It will,' he says carefully, 'be a blank verse play about working class experience, Ah suppose. But just a play for reading. Not for performance.' (96)

This and a similar project earn him mild ridicule from his friend:

'Verse?' John says. 'Is it set in contemporary times? Just now?'
 'Aye. It's about the people around me, Ah suppose. The way they live. I want to try and catch some kind of essence of my life so far. Before it goes.'
 'You've probably got time. Do you think blank verse is an ideal medium for expressing working-class life?' (98)

Ultimately, Tom has to abandon his heroic attempt of establishing some communication between alien middle-class models of culture and his own origins. Philosophical education and democratic intellectualism have little to do with his experiences. Rather than provide the kind of self-determination the educational ideology promises, the curriculum of 'the best' increases his alienation from himself and from his working-class background. Tom eventually becomes a teacher himself, but his relation to knowledge continues to be marked by class difference. On the one hand, knowledge drives a wedge between him and his family. On the other hand, unlike his middle-class colleagues and superiors, he cannot regard school knowledge as a kind of natural furniture of the mind. For him, knowledge is a form of usurpation and self-empowerment; he retains his faith in the possibilities of self-determination with a naiveté that causes embarrassment in those who comfortably 'inhabit' that knowledge as a birthright.⁸⁶ These are eventualities the 'democratic in-

⁸⁶There is a strong autobiographical element in McIlvanney's novels, especially in *The Kiln*. In an interview given in 1984, he anticipates many of the subjects of the

tellec' does not foresee: it seems that Davie and his followers could not foresee that canonical knowledge can have different meanings in different social spaces, that it can be oppressive, have class connotations, be enforced, rejected or appropriated as a weapon in struggles that have nothing to do with the nation.

Cultural Capital

In *A Disaffection* James Kelman shows the link of power and knowledge more clearly than either Gray or McIlvanney. Kelman's protagonist Patrick Doyle teaches Latin among other subjects, but he realises that it is less the subject as such than the curriculum in general that suppresses working-class children. Therefore he sees himself as a puppet of the powers-that-be:

I became a registered civilian on behalf of the forces that corrupt. I am the messenger. I have to convey the tidings. I am the means to their end. I perform in public. 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. (210)

The knowledge he is supposed to transmit in his classroom merely serves to keep students in their place and hide from them the fact that they have little or no chance of finding meaningful employment after school.

Patrick himself, who has to some degree crossed the border into the middle-class realm of the teaching profession, has been crippled rather than emancipated by education. He had hoped that university education would be 'something massive' (53), but it merely severed his working-class roots and estranged him from his family. Patrick has immense difficulties communicating with his brother and parents, he is overwhelmed with guilt when he imagines what he takes to be their unspoken expectations and hides from them in order to avoid confrontation. Unlike Conn and Tom Docherty, who can to varying degrees tap into working-class culture as a source of strength in their struggles for self-determination, he has difficulties seeing the culture of his family as more than an assembly of xenophobic, sexist, and nationalist attitudes.

At the same time, Patrick remains an alien to the middle-class culture of his colleagues at school and his fellow students at university. Class differences make it impossible for him to relate to his colleagues

The Kiln, particularly his difficulty as a working class teenager to find a voice. See Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, 'Plato in a Boilersuit.'

and to share his thoughts on the role of the teacher as an instrument of authoritarianism:

Occasionally he could bore them stupid about it in the staffroom. Very occasionally. In fact, not very often. Far better remaining silent in the midst of such crassness, in the midst of such utter cant and hypocrisy. (7)

Sporadically, he attempts to break through the silence surrounding him and tries to point to the link between power and knowledge, but with little success. After a few exchanges, a conversation with his colleague Alison ends in the usual silence:

Patrick sniffed: I think about their parents Alison. The way they just stand back and let their weans' heids get totally swollen with all that rightwing keech we've got to stuff into them so's we can sit back with the big wagepackets. It's us that keep the things from falling apart. It's us. Who else? We're responsible for it, the present polity.

Alison stared at him.

It is; us.

Is that what ye believe? Her eyes screwed up: genuine puzzlement. (149)

Stranded between two worlds, Patrick takes shelter in his living room. His only companions are two cardboard pipes of different size, which he tries to convert into musical instruments. But this exile does not protect him from himself: unlike Tom Docherty, who regards knowledge as a powerful weapon and can at least to some extent mobilise it for his own purposes, Patrick turns this knowledge against himself in endless and painful self-analysis. His university education supplied him with the languages of philosophy, literature and art, in short, a kind of Arnoldian 'judgement,' but throughout the novel these languages signally fail to provide him with an understanding of his own situation. His head is filled with a Babel of different 'educated' languages and idioms which constantly rupture his sense of self: he is haunted by the 'black period' of Goya, imagines himself as a character in a Dostoevsky story, and identifies with the plight of Hölderlin. For Patrick, Kafka's existentialism does not come in a fake-leather bookclub edition that can be conveniently shelved in a home library of 'the best that is known and thought in the world'; instead, the dilemmas of Joseph K and Gregor Samsa are yet more voices to disrupt his sense of self (55, 164). Patrick has no single key to these different knowledges: unlike most of his middle-class colleagues, he cannot rest assured in a sense of rightful ownership of what Pierre Bourdieu has called 'cultural capital' that would guarantee the unity of these conflicting voices. The middle-class upbringing of his colleagues allows them to homogenise even the most discordant voices as Arnoldian signifiers of 'taste,' 'judgement'

and ‘criticism,’ not to forget social privilege. Thus, their identity is affirmed and stabilised by the very knowledge that completely fractures Patrick’s sense of self and isolates him in a perpetual state of existential anxiety.

Patrick’s existentialist confusion and inability to find unity behind the diversity of knowledge is not a psychological shortcoming. It is endemic to the notion of democratic intellectualism and the class assumptions of its curriculum. For both Patrick and his students, the knowledge prescribed by the curriculum becomes an instrument for what Pierre Bourdieu describes as the ‘reproduction of the structure of power relationships and symbolic relationships between classes’ (‘Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction’ 487). Bourdieu highlights the intimate relation of knowledge and power which is disregarded by Davie and Anderson and which Patrick cannot escape or address with a new political language. Bourdieu describes how the appropriation of knowledge as a symbolic good requires a certain cultural competence. Using the example of art education, he writes:

[T]he action of the educational system can attain full effectiveness only to the extent that it bears upon individuals who have been previously granted a certain familiarity with the world of art by their family upbringing. Indeed, it would seem that the action of the school, whose effect is unequal ... among children from different social classes, and whose success varies considerably among those upon whom it has an effect, tends to reinforce and to consecrate by its sanctions the initial inequalities. (493)

For the middle-class teachers in *The Kiln* and *A Disaffection* ‘universal’ knowledge is a birthright which largely affirms their various identities. For Tom Docherty and Patrick Doyle, on the other hand, this knowledge is linked to struggle and fragmentation of identity, whereas for Conn Docherty, Duncan Thaw and the majority of the lower class students in Patrick’s classrooms it is simply a rejection of their own voices.

Though Bourdieu limits his analysis to questions of class, the issues addressed by the notion of ‘cultural capital’ have to be extended beyond this division to include other location such as gender or ethnicity. ‘Cultural capital’ cannot be understood in absolute terms as always belonging to one social group, but has to be understood as relational and therefore fluctuating and transformable. The canon is not necessarily characterised by a fixed content such as ‘classical education’ – as we will see, ‘the best that is known and thought in the world’ can easily be substituted by ‘the best that is known and thought in Scotland’ – but through the way in which it functions to structure the relations between different social groups. It is the articulation of the curriculum with institutional forms of authority that are never open to social debate, that makes knowledge itself an instrument of social inequality. The search for

democracy on the level of the curriculum alone is therefore misguided. As the Lothian Women in Education Group write of the gendering of education:

Creating a girl friendly curriculum in this context can never be more than a token gesture whilst the whole structure of Scottish education, first and formative societal model which children experience beyond the family, remains a living example of sex discrimination. (132)

John Anderson and his culturalist followers fail to see that even the most emancipatory contents, even a curriculum of national literature that includes the texts of Janice Galloway and James Kelman can perpetuate inequality if the relation between power and knowledge is not addressed.

In some ways, Patrick falls victim to a similar oversight: because his critique does not go far enough, he remains trapped within the different 'educated' languages. With their emphasis on the individual, these liberal or bourgeois knowledges do not allow him to represent his sense of oppression to himself in social terms. Therefore, he tries to remedy the situation with individual action, first of all in the classroom, which ultimately leads to – again individualised – despair. As Ian Bell points out in his essay 'James Kelman,' *A Disaffection* is a 'disturbing critique of those like his central figure who believe in the possibilities of change from within' (21), especially if that change from within is understood as individualised guerrilla warfare. However, in spite of this conspicuous absence of a language that would embed Patrick's apparently existential pains within larger social and political struggles, and in spite of his oversight of institutionalised inequalities that cannot be resolved on the level of the classroom, his pedagogical strategies open new avenues of educational possibilities. A different notion of classroom practice and educational possibility emerges from Kelman's novel.

Dialogue, Rage and Resistance

If one were to believe Kelman's critics, then *A Disaffection* does not offer much beyond bleak despair. In his essay 'Resisting Arrest,' Cairns Craig maintains that while William McIlvanney still holds on to 'a belief in a fundamental set of communal values,' Kelman's characters have 'no faith in traditional modes of working class improvement' (101). Even though he acknowledges such 'traditional modes of solidarity' to be largely redundant, Craig overlooks the fact that at least in *Docherty*, McIlvanney merely reaffirms the rather limiting notion of schools as prisons for working-class children and apparatuses for the reproduction

of existing class hierarchies.⁸⁷ In ‘Voices in Empty Houses’ Gavin Wallace even reaches the bleak conclusion that in *A Disaffection* ‘[t]he classroom has above all become the symbolic clinic for indigenous angst’ (218). Contrary to both critics I argue that Kelman challenges the ‘reproductive ideology’ of schooling and opens spaces for hope, even though his protagonist does not carry his strategies far enough and ultimately fails. Though on the surface *A Disaffection* seems much more pessimistic than McIlvanney’s novels – ending as it does with its protagonist wandering through Glasgow in severe depression, uncertain whether he can survive a return to his profession as teacher – it offers glimpses of an alternative democratic pedagogy that Wallace and Craig miss.

A Disaffection engages pedagogical discourses that represent education as a national monologue, and challenges them with a dialogic model of a pedagogy of difference. Between the protagonist’s spells of existential despair there are intimations of a form of education that has its affiliations not only with John Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* but also, more importantly, with the dialogic liberation pedagogy of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. The universal curriculum of both Anderson and Davie is developed as an explicit rejection of dialogic models of education. Their main target is a variant of dialogic pedagogy found in the philosophy of John Dewey, who envisioned the classroom as the site of a social experiment in which the dialogic interaction of teachers and students provides a model for communicative interaction for a future classless society in general.⁸⁸ Kelman takes up the issue of dialogic pedagogy in *A Disaffection*. In one of his many attempts at discussing the state of education and the role of teachers, Patrick Doyle criticises that students are never really asked questions. Instead, what looks like a question is usually a disguised statement that permits only one answer, which is known to the teacher and which the students have to find out. Such question-statements do little more than affirm the authority of the teacher and the power/knowledge he or she represents. In a conversation with a friend quite ironically named Davie, Patrick explains this kind of pedagogy and its implications for social interaction in general:

Notice but, how when we as adults are discussing what’s to happen to weans, the only ones we dont ask are the weans themselves! It’s the same with all exploited groups; they never get asked a question if the question’s to do with them. It’s always the bosses that have

⁸⁷According to Henry Giroux’s *Theory and Resistance in Education*, this ‘reproductive ideology’ (222), a theoretical paradigm that regards schooling as an ideological apparatus for the reproduction of social hierarchies, has long dominated accounts of education on the Left, and McIlvanney’s texts are no exception.

⁸⁸See Henry Giroux, *Teachers as Intellectuals* 159-60, Davie 66.

the dialogue and then arrive at the decisions for them – well in fact it's for themselves really but they kid on it's for the slaves they're doing it. (289)

Patrick's critique is an expression of the hope for a dialogic education that in many respects reverberates with the liberation pedagogy of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire starts from a critique of what he calls a 'banking concept of education' (53) which is characterised by exactly the kind of monologue Patrick criticises:

Education becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. (53)

In contrast to this authoritarian model of education, Freire develops a notion of pedagogy as a transformative practice, in which teachers and students are equally involved in a communal learning process, and which enables students 'to name the world, to change it' (69). This process of naming takes place in a dialogue for instance between teachers and students:

Dialogue is the encounter between men [*sic*], mediated by the world, in order to name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name the world and those who do not wish this naming – between those who deny others the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied them. Those who have been denied their primordial right to speak their word must first reclaim this right and prevent the continuation of this dehumanizing aggression. (69)

For Patrick, dialogue is central to pedagogy. Teachers for him are not so much 'democratic intellectuals' in the sense of Anderson and Davie, but 'transformative intellectuals' in the sense of Freire and Henry Giroux. Drawing largely on the philosophy of Freire, Giroux demands that transformative intellectuals

develop counter-hegemonic pedagogies that not only empower students by giving them the knowledge and social skills they will need to be able to function in the larger society as critical agents, but also educate them for transformative action.

(*Teachers as Intellectuals* xxxiii)

Patrick's classroom practice is at least partly an attempt to return the right to students to make their own voices heard, and thus to name and transform their worlds. One of his students is a 16-year old mother, who is continuing her education in spite of the difficulties and pressures she experienced after having had a child:

Fiona Grindlay was talking. Her da was still giving her a hard time because she wouldnt reveal the name of the father of her baby. Fiona was relating it to a short story she had read where there was this romance between young lass and young lad plus the dreaded mixture of horrendous parents and relatives, ending in death for the young couple. Fair enough; slightly sentimental but so what, you're entitled to be slightly sentimental about something like that. Fiona went on to develop her own position in reference to the media. (244)

Patrick's classroom practice leaves the centre stage to the voice of the student. Rather than instructing literature in an educational monologue and forcing students to repeat prefabricated 'criticisms' about canonical texts, Patrick hands the initiative over to the students, who can use the classroom to articulate their own experience. Fiona selects her own text (in this case a popular rendition of *Romeo and Juliet*) and situates herself in relation to it. Learning as dialogue and struggle takes up students' experiences, but at the same time makes them critical by engaging them in a conversation with other voices and discourses. Fiona discusses the media, but in turn also measures her experience against cultural representations. Patrick's pedagogy struggles to make the lives and experiences of students relevant to learning and provides them with the opportunity to engage discourses that shape their sense of identity, be that literature, the media, or other discourses. He thereby redefines the relationship between power and knowledge: Patrick does not accept the definition of literacy as the ability to read canonical texts 'properly,' but defines it in a radical democratic fashion as the ability and the power to become a critical agent. Beyond the language of existential pessimism the novel is therefore informed by an understanding of pedagogy as what Henry Giroux calls a 'pedagogy of student voice' and a practice in which 'teachers and students ... recover their own voices so they can tell their histories' (*Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life* 160).

It is important to re-emphasise the difference of the notion of a critical pedagogy of voice from a nationalist pedagogy. Beveridge and Turnbull also see education as a way of overcoming silence, particularly the myth of the 'Inarticulate Scot' and the belief that 'Scots are tongue-tied in some distinctive way' (10). Their concept of articulacy is a form of literacy that is exclusively in the service of national identity and does not differentiate between class, gender, ethnicity, etc. In such a context, pedagogy may amount to little more than telling teachers and students what their voice should be, instead of allowing them to find out for themselves. Patrick's pedagogy of voice, on the other hand, includes historical and local specificity in a way that undermines this unanimous voice. Identity emerges again and again in negotiation between different discourses: Fiona Grindlay is not taught to recognise herself in stable monologues of national identity, but instead to have the power to negotiate different representations and discourses in a dialogue. These

identities therefore emerge at a level far below the national, in everyday struggles, and they are not only defined by one fixed (national) opposition, but by numerous and changing antagonisms. In this context, education is not a national space in which students recognise themselves as subjects of one particular community, acquire one set of practices and learn to tell one story. Instead, it becomes a continuously transforming third space in which students learn to become agents, negotiate numerous subject positions and articulate different 'stories' in a never-ending transformative process.

Education, understood as transformative practice, can of course not be limited to the classroom but permeates every aspect of public and private life and becomes the model of social interaction. Dialogue is the basis of Patrick's interactions outside the classroom as well. During a visit at his brother's, he strikes up an argument about a racist remark. His brother had commented on a driver who may or not have been a Pakistani, and who had run over a boy in the neighbourhood. At first, Patrick deliberates whether or not to take up the challenge:

Let us just for fuck sake go up and visit the wee boy in intensive care and then go and visit the guy that was driving the car that knocked him down: let us just do that as a beginning. Me and you o brother ya bastard except that we cannot talk, as a beginning. Let us talk. Even just as a beginning. ... I say to my big brother, dont for fuck sake do what you are doing but listen to me as an equal, and let us talk to each other, and in that talking we shall be finding the way ahead. (305/306)

In spite of the difficulties he experiences in addressing the issue, he finally confronts Gavin with his racism. The conversation results in a stand off and becomes an exchange of silences rather than viewpoints. Patrick's goal, however, is not necessarily to reach a kind of consensus and to enforce compromise under the guise of a superior moral viewpoint. Patrick greets the mere idea of compromise with characteristic derision:

What a pile of fucking shite! What a pile of absolute gibbers! The very idea that such conflict can be resolved! This is straight bourgeois intellectual wank. These liberal fucking excesses taken to the very limits of fucking hyping hypocritical tollie. (306)

Instead of this liberal notion of compromise, Patrick advocates a pedagogy of rage, in which positions confront each other without having to reach any preordained conclusions. After his argument with his brother, he tells his sister-in-law Nicola:

What I try to do, he said, in the classroom I mean, is just make the weans angry. And other folk as well; I try to make them angry.

That includes relations! ... Because making them angry's a start.
(320)

Making others angry is a way of bringing their world view to a crisis. Patrick's own anger on the other hand is a way of sounding his own voice as a response to another. It demands accountability and change, and shatters the notion of consent and uniformity. Within the working class, this anger may serve as a means to get beyond the resentment of an ossified 'us versus them' mentality. Enacted in the classroom, a pedagogy of rage can also challenge the notion of schools as merely sites of ideological reproduction.

However, Patrick's resistance remains rudimentary. Anger may well be a start, but it is only a start. It personalises education and fails to provide social and political languages for education. In *A Disaffection*, Patrick's pedagogy based on anger rather than political work allows little more than despair. In his understanding, the link between state power and school knowledge turns the school into an inescapable prison for working-class children; in the course of the novel his rage, not accompanied by a larger political perspective, merely acknowledges and affirms those limits. Also, his attempts to make the school a site of dialogue, to lead students from rage to resistance and to enable them to articulate their different identities, collapse in the face of a systemic power that he experiences as overwhelming and for which he fails to find an adequate social language. At the end of the novel, Patrick therefore seems ready to resign from his job. The strain of being a teacher, his sense of mediating power while being disempowered himself, the experience of being removed from his own working-class allegiance into a world of middle-class values, as well as the experience of having to defend the very social injustices of which he himself becomes a victim, finally take their toll on him. But while Wallace and Craig rightly point out this bleak ending, they accept Patrick's individualist existentialist vocabulary as the horizon that cannot be transcended and neglect the novel's engagement with pedagogy and its intervention into contemporary Scottish debates.

3.3 Pedagogies of Representation

In the opening of this chapter I have argued that educational institutions regulate the meanings of literary texts, and that even radical texts cannot escape being appropriated by conservative pedagogies. *A Disaffection* is a perfect illustration of a text that critiques national educational institutions only to be reabsorbed by them and rewritten as an

affirmation and legitimation of these institutions. As Dorothy McMillan remarks dryly in ‘Constructed out of Bewilderment’:

The revenge of the middle-class fuckers in my university has been to put *A Disaffection* on the second-year course and lecture it to 200 students. (84)

This is not a case of a *misreading*, it merely illustrates that the production of meaning through reading is always an interventionist practice. It is also a perfect example of a new trend within Scottish curricular politics. While George Davie and Andrew Lockheart Walker propagate traditional classical training, there is now a move towards an integration of Scottish language and literature into the Scottish curriculum. This new cultural turn seems to share many of the assumptions of democratic intellectualism concerning the status of knowledge, yet it marks a paradigmatic shift from a universal to a Scottish curriculum.

What we are witnessing here is a minor cultural revolution that is beginning to affect large areas of Scottish cultural life. Demands for such a national curriculum now begin to reverberate through the publications of institutions like the Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum (SCCC) or the Scottish Office Education Department (SOED), and there are numerous teaching handbooks.⁸⁹ There are also increased calls for new Departments of Scottish Literature at Scottish Universities, not the least to meet the future demand for teachers with the necessary training. In the long run, this will also lead to the republication of texts that are now out of print, while the market opens up for new publications as well.

This interaction between literary texts, production, regulatory discourses of identity and the establishment of educational institutions (which in turn produce new regulatory discourses, cultural knowledges, practices and identities) illustrates the complex and contradictory ways in which texts become meaningful and position subjects. As Stuart Hall argues in his model of encoding/decoding and his theory of articulation, this is not a symmetrical process of the reproduction of subjects, but one of struggle between antagonistic discourses and institutions. I will show how nationalist pedagogies attempt to fix the meaning of texts within a nationalist discourse. At the same time I argue that the heteroglossia of contemporary Scottish fiction resists nationalist pedagogies. It opens spaces for counter-pedagogies of difference that mobilise excesses of meaning and offer different, postnational subject positions.

⁸⁹For a list of recent publications by various institutions see Alison 38-39.

3.3.1 Canonisation and Meaning

The production of a Scottish canon and its institutionalisation at the core of a Scottish curriculum is at the centre of the pedagogical interventions of cultural nationalism. I want to single out a recent project, the series *Scottish Language and Literature* (1997/98), edited by Douglas Gifford and Beth Dickson, for closer analysis of nationalist cultural politics. This project not only theoretically legitimates the implementation of Scottish texts in the curriculum, it also offers practical classroom projects and builds a tentative canon of texts suitable for teaching at different levels from primary school to University. In the words of Douglas Gifford, the series wants to familiarise cultural workers with Scottish language and literary history:

Recognising that many teachers and students are unfamiliar with Scottish literature, and considering the wide range of genres and approaches within its traditions of nearly 700 years, the volumes seek to supply essential guidance to older periods as well as modern. (Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* ix)

The background for this series is the ‘Scottish Cringe,’ or what Beveridge and Turnbull have described as ‘inferiorism.’ For Beveridge and Turnbull, the ‘recovery’ of Scottish literature as a historical tradition in its own right marks a moment of cultural empowerment that overcomes a number of popular inferiorist *topoi*, such as

[t]he darkness of pre-union Scotland, the catastrophic influence of Calvinism, Scottish inarticulacy, the peculiarly deformed character of Scottish popular culture. (*The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* 14)

Like Beveridge and Turnbull, Gifford, Dickson and the contributors to the series aim at ‘combating this dismal orientation’ and ‘reasserting the practices which define our own culture’ (Beveridge and Turnbull 15). As Alan MacGillivray writes in his ‘Editor’s Foreword’ to *Teaching Scottish Literature*, the educational offensive wants to put this ‘indefensible prejudice firmly in the bin of history where it belongs’ (x).

Undoubtedly, pedagogical work of the past two decades rescues writers who address Scottish issues or who use local dialects from the stigma of the ‘parochial.’ It may also result in a wave of cultural production that moves beyond the reproduction of debilitating Scottish stereotypes and finally support an infrastructure of cultural production that challenges the representational authority of Pilcherean novels or Hollywood movies like *Brigadoon*, *Highlander* or *Braveheart*. However, in spite of its emancipatory potential, the project of canonisation in *Scottish Language and Literature* is double-edged, because it only recognises Scottish writers *as Scottish*, it seeks to create pedagogical re-

presentations of identity as *Scottish* identity only, and it implies a problematic relation of power and knowledge.

The rationale for canonisation is usually given in pragmatic terms: allegedly, it enhances the ‘efficiency’ of teaching and offers a systematic introduction to Scottish literature (MacGillivray 127). However, this pragmatic language completely removes the project itself from criticism and naturalises the nationalist ideology that informs it. While it sets out to recognise the validity of cultural production in Scotland, it creates new norms for what can and what can not be recognised as Scottish and circulated through schools. This canonisation consolidates a literary tradition around certain national subjects and genres, and institutionalises some identities while delegitimising others.⁹⁰ Canon, curriculum, and testing practices, which formerly served to exclude the cultural production of Scotland, now create new preferred and unnameable identities. In the following I want to analyse the contributions to *Teaching Scottish Literature* to show firstly, how they take national identity for granted as an umbrella for all other forms of identity, and secondly how they employ an authoritarian concept of the canon which reinscribes an asymmetrical distribution of cultural power.

Curriculum and National Identity

As Henry Giroux writes in *Schooling and the Struggle for Public Life*, curriculum with its ‘organization of knowledge, social relations, values and forms of assessment’ (165) represents the time-space of community and preferred forms of citizenship. The nationalist curriculum is ‘constructed around particular silences and omissions’ (100), it imagines only one form of community and identity, and makes others unthinkable, unliveable. One of the central problems of *Teaching Scottish Literature* is that most contributors merely replace a monologic British with an equally monologic Scottish curriculum and thus renew the oppressive dynamics of margin and centre.

James Alison’s definition of a teachable Scottish text illustrates this problem:

⁹⁰An example of the critical treatment of ‘un-Scottish’ writers are the so-called Anglo-Scots (see e.g. Gifford and McMillan, *A History of Scottish Women’s Writing*), authors like William Boyd, Candia McWilliam or Alan Massie who have little in common except their Scottish origin and their lack of interest in Scottish subjects. Though their texts may well be read as implicit statements on the project of national culture and identity, the hegemony of nationalist criticism already seems to distinguish quite carefully between what is and what is not ‘really’ Scottish. In ‘Divergent Scottishness,’ Douglas Dunn therefore argues for an inclusion of ‘Anglo-Scots’ authors.

The criteria are that the text:

1. makes some use of Scots language forms ...
2. uses Scottish literary forms ...
3. deals centrally with Scottish topics or aspects of life and is set in Scotland past or present, though the writer is not necessarily a Scot ...
4. does not have an obvious Scottish dimension but emerges from an oeuvre which does ...
5. has no obvious Scottish dimension but the writer was born or educated or lived in Scotland ...
6. is from another literature but translated into some form of Scots.

(34-35)

Read as an academic definition of Scottish literature, this catalogue is remarkably broad and inclusive, because it does not insist on narrow definitions of national origin and even allows the inclusion of English and American texts like *Macbeth* or *Braveheart*. Yet, the problem of this catalogue is in its silences and omissions: national identity is the only valid criterion for the inclusion of a text in the curriculum, while all other forms of identity are from the first ruled out as irrelevant. The task of literary education is to teach ‘our students’ and ‘us all’ about ‘our country’s distinctive past,’ ‘our music and art,’ ‘our political, social and economic history’ and ‘our cultural identity’ vis-à-vis that of ‘our neighbours’ and with a view of ‘our present and future’ (all passages Alison 33; my italics). But like the collective pronoun, this national education silences different voices by speaking for them. Implemented in the classroom, this strategy of inclusion and exclusion institutionalises valid forms of identity and cultural production, and rigorously subordinates others.

As Hardeep Kohli points out, within such a cultural politics a Pakistani writing in Glasgow will only be recognised if he or she takes on the ‘burden of representation’ and writes as *the* ‘Asian writer in Scotland.’ Similarly, the texts of Janice Galloway and A.L. Kennedy are primarily Scottish texts, articulations with feminist discourses which address the construction of sex and gender in transnational culture are ruled out from the start. Also, Welsh’s representations of the heroin and AIDS cultures of Edinburgh have to be isolated from European and global contexts and from other representations of that culture for instance in current US movies like Larry Clark’s *Kids*, which are also available and popular in Scotland.

The pedagogical erasure of all social antagonisms in cultural texts and the ‘national community’ may be illustrated with Anne Donovan’s contribution. Donovan demands the inclusion of controversial contemporary texts like Irvine Welsh’s *Trainspotting* or Iain Banks’s *The Wasp Factory* in the curriculum. She recognises the ‘radical use of the narrative voice’ in Kelman’s fiction as a way of ‘giv[ing] an inner

life to the kind of characters that are usually marginalised.’ However, instead of addressing these marginalised voices, she argues that these texts should be read as examples of the greatness of Scottish literature:

Students can be made aware of the richness and diversity of Scottish writing through discussion of different styles, themes and approaches. (110)

Donovan’s facile nationalisation of Kelman, Welsh and others trivialises the voices of the marginalised characters they represent, it re-articulates difference as the facet of an unproblematic Scottishness. Literature is less an active and committed engagement of one’s lived relations than a form of worship of the ‘richness’ of ‘our’ cultural production.⁹¹ But the problem is less the absence of this or that identity from a Scottish canon: the problem is the canon itself, with its dichotomies of inside and outside, its naturalisation of arbitrary hierarchies, and its institutionalisation of authoritarian relations of power and knowledge, that will continue the erasure of antagonistic discourses, and of the excesses of meaning, no matter how many marginalised identities are included as fig leaves of ‘diversity.’

Power and Knowledge

In his polemic contribution to *Teaching Scottish Literature*, editor Alan MacGillivray justifies the need to teach Scottish literature in schools with reference to relations of power and knowledge that can themselves only be described as colonialist. He opens with a refutation of three hypothetical objections to the project of national canonisation:

The first would be that Scotland is not a sufficiently identifiable national community to make the teaching of its culture valid. The second would be that Scottish literature and culture are not of sufficient merit to justify the special attention. The third would be that national origin should not be a criterion in the selection of literary texts. (‘Beyond the Cringe’ 119)

While MacGillivray chastises proponents of these positions in turn as ‘malicious,’ ‘ignorant[t]’ or ‘dreamers,’ these positions, and his rejection of them would seem to justify some more attention.

⁹¹The SNP has also recognised the enormous appeal of *Trainspotting* and used it to mobilise audiences for their separatist politics. Surprisingly, Mark Renton’s diatribe against Scottish nationalism was greeted enthusiastically by the SNP, who distributed leaflets with the speech to movie goers outside Scottish cinemas. Here, the dynamics of nationalist cultural work become very apparent: the emerging nationalist hegemony appropriates cultural texts produced by Scots or in Scotland and systematically transforms them into a national culture. See Fintan O’Toole, ‘Imagining Scotland.’

Firstly, as we have seen, the term ‘national community’ itself is by no means as unambiguous or even natural as MacGillivray’s usage suggests: the attribution of an ‘individual community identity’ to Scotland is an oversimplification of continuing historical and social processes, differences and social antagonisms. Though he calls Scottish literature the ‘*natural* element’ (120) of the Scottish curriculum, and the creation of a canon the *logical* conclusion of teaching Scottish literature (127), the canonical project is neither as natural nor as logical as he makes out, but implies both the exclusion of all other possible sources of cultural production, and an authoritarian relation of power and knowledge.

Secondly, the question of ‘merit’ presupposes an elitist pedagogy reminiscent of the late nineteenth century. In his defence of the ‘merit’ of Scottish literature, MacGillivray lists the ‘six great vernacular literatures of the modern age’ and then concludes that ‘of all the many other smaller national literatures of Europe, Scottish literature is almost certainly the most significant in terms of longevity, variety and quality’ (119). MacGillivray transforms literature into the vehicle of nationalist chauvinism within an antiquated world of insular rival nations: his rhetoric smacks of the revival of the ‘auld alliance’ with France against the arch-enemy England and seems somewhat anachronistic within a unifying Europe and a globalising culture.⁹² In MacGillivray’s pedagogy literature is a national fetish rather than the object of critical engagement, let alone empowerment. His pedagogy merely replaces one set of classroom texts with another without addressing the power/knowledge of colonialism.

Finally, MacGillivray is of course right when he points out that throughout many European countries, current pedagogical practice continues to emphasise national literatures. However, this does not mean that this nineteenth century practice is particularly appropriate in a late-twentieth century context of European unification, globalisation, the necessary redefinition of regional identities in numerous and shifting transnational discourses, not to mention the pressing need to develop new democratic possibilities within these changed conditions.

MacGillivray’s nationalist populism limits cultural production to the single criterion of national identity and conceives of culture not as a constant becoming, but as a fixed being; not as a dynamic of production, negotiation, contestation and transformation, but as static, authoritarian and in the words of Paulo Freire, ‘necrophilic’ (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 58). For MacGillivray and the other contributors to *Teaching*

⁹²Europe and the ‘auld alliance’ with France play an important part in the SNP’s campaigns for Scottish independence, but again it is a Europe of stable nation states rather than a decentralised Europe. See P.H. Scott, “‘A Severed and Withered Branch,’” and Isobel Lindsay, ‘The SNP and the Lure of Europe.’

Scottish Literature, literary texts are the objects of an authoritarian pedagogy of ‘excellence’ that positions students as passive recipients rather than active producers of knowledge. As a legitimation for his own project of canonisation Alison refers to Leonard Bloom’s *The Western Canon*, a controversial pedagogical text notorious for its encyclopaedic approach to culture, its systematic expurgation of cultural difference and its authoritarian top-down pedagogy. Like Bloom and Alison, MacGillivray dismisses ‘fashionable critical theory’ and advocates the return to a pedagogy of ‘great names in literature’ because it provides a ‘mental map of literature’ (124). Ironically, he embraces the pedagogical authoritarianism of the Leavisite ‘Great Tradition’ or Arnoldian ‘culture’ that established the hegemony of the English over other traditions in the first place, obviously hoping that a mere exchange of contents will right all cultural wrongs. In spite of his claim to relocate the centres of cultural power, he never addresses students as active producers of culture, but sees them as empty vessels into which canonical knowledges can be poured, while the ‘value’ of these knowledges is removed beyond all critical interrogation.⁹³

3.3.2 Imagining Communities of Difference

If a nationalist pedagogy wants to educate national subjects, postnational pedagogies, obviously, want to enable individuals to live self-determined lives in postnational societies. They want to give learners the literacy that is necessary to live in a world in which the certainties of identity have been replaced by the need to recognise differences. They also try to open up new possibilities for democratic interaction, emancipation and self-determination in a world that is becoming more complex. Literary education as suggested by MacGillivray and Allison can be usefully re-interpreted for such a project, but there is also a need to include popular cultural texts like movies, which now play an important part in the construction of identities. The ability to decode such texts and to understand how they represent different identities and thus limit or expand possibilities for agency seems a necessary prerequisite for a radically democratic society. In the final part of this chapter I therefore discuss ways in which *Trainspotting*, as novel and movie, can figure in a postnational education. However, before that, I briefly offer a theoretical

⁹³In the face of such vehement appropriation of cultural power, the critical approaches with which Gifford and Neil McMillan introduce the book become mere fig leaves; correspondingly, it is not surprising that only 5 of the 53 ‘exemplars’ of classroom application raise the question of cultural difference at all, while only 3 explicitly address students as cultural producers.

frame for this discussion that elaborates on the Freirean notion of dialogic education.

Postnational Identities

It would be a mistake for an emancipatory pedagogy to dismiss the transformative potential of Scottish culturalism and its ability to mobilise the solidarity of individuals against social injustices. However, it would be a grave mistake indeed to accept the limiting premises of nationalist identity politics and to restrict culture to the singular, one-dimensional production of national meanings, of which all local identities are merely 'aspects.' In the times of globalisation with its new forms of oppression, there is a need for new, non-territorial forms of solidarity that recognise new and complex forms of identity formation. There have to be possibilities for an imaginary working-class woman in Dumbarton to act in solidarity with her imaginary sister in Liverpool, rather than being unconditionally lumped together with an equally imaginary fisherman in Orkney, just because he also happens to be Scottish. In terms of a cultural pedagogy, there is a need for what can loosely be termed a pedagogy of difference that recognises the specificities of local, i.e. regional as well as transnational identifications.

In their essay 'Radical Pedagogy as Cultural Politics,' Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren specify a cultural politics that respects different forms of subjectivity and oppression and develops new forms of solidarity and community across existing borders:

These new kinds of subjectivities and alternative forms of community must recognize the multiplicity, contradictoriness, mutually informing and historically discontinuous character of discourses and social practices. This suggests, for us, the self-conscious production of post-colonial modes of subjectivity and multiple communities of solidarity and resistance which actively contest oppression both as a conscious subjective act and as forms of collective political praxis as part of an ongoing effort to rethink the social world from the perspective of the omnipresence of oppression. (50)

In the struggle for the meaning of Scottish texts, this implies teaching not just national oppositions, but allowing students to experience the existence of multiple differences. Individuals always occupy a plurality of subject positions, participate in more than one struggle against oppression, and can imagine numerous communities. Hence, there is a need for what Giroux calls a 'border pedagogy' that transgresses the borders of traditional territorialised identities, and looks for new forms of

solidarity and new possibilities of self-determination in a postnational, post-Fordist society.⁹⁴

A Pedagogy of Possibility

A democratic, postnational pedagogy bids farewell to the celebration of the kind of common culture that allows Anne Donovan to read a text as controversial as *Trainspotting* as an expression of cultural diversity, while ignoring any of the other questions the novel and especially the movie may raise. Instead, such a pedagogy addresses the relation of power and knowledge in traditional pedagogies and their curricula. In the words of Peter McLaren, a radical democratic pedagogy asks:

Who has the power to exercise meaning, to create the grid from which Otherness is defined, to create identifications that invite closure on meanings, on interpretations and traditions?

(*Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture* 213)

Canonical pedagogies fail to raise these fundamental issues and inscribe oppressive meanings and forms of community in the curriculum. Henry Giroux on the other hand demands a democratic curriculum that does not simply presuppose (or impose) one identity and one form of oppression, as Davie or MacGillivray do, but that is open to constant interrogation and transformation:

What educators need is a pedagogy that redefines national identity ... as part of a postmodern politics of cultural difference in which identities are constantly being renegotiated and reinvented within complex and contradictory notions of national belonging.

('National Identity and the Politics of Multiculturalism' 42)

Like Paulo Freire, Giroux starts with the experience of the students themselves, which is to say that he starts, as Kelman's Patrick Doyle demands, not with answers, but with questions which permit the subjective experiences, histories, and desires of students.

However, experience is itself always constructed by all manner cultural representations (among them those of literary texts), as James Kelman's *How Late It Was How Late*, Janice Galloway's *The Trick Is To Keep Breathing* and Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* impressively illustrate. Therefore the experience of students cannot be the horizon of pedagogy. Consequently, Giroux's goal is a 'pedagogy of representation' that allows students to understand how their own experiences and desires are produced within the circuit of culture:

⁹⁴For a discussion of the multiple meanings of border pedagogy see Giroux, *Border Crossings* 28-36.

I am referring to the various ways in which representations are constructed as a means of comprehending the past through the present in order to legitimate and secure a particular view of the future. How students can come to interrogate the historical, semiotic and relational dynamics involved in the production of various regimes of representations and their respective politics. In other words, a pedagogy of representation focuses on demystifying the act and process of representation by revealing how meanings are produced within relations of power that narrate identities through history, social forms, and modes of ethical address that appear objective, universally valid and consensual. (*Living Dangerously* 115)

This suggests not only teaching literature, but permitting popular culture and movies into the curriculum as immensely relevant texts through which students often experience themselves and through which they often learn to articulate their desires and hopes. Giroux's pedagogy of representation promotes a form of literacy necessary to expand social justice and democratic citizenship in an age of global representations. However, this does not imply a single normative emancipatory project, but a democratic dialogue that allows students to speak from their specific locations, while at the same time understanding that their experience is positional and constructed by powerful regimes of representation.

While theorists like MacGillivray seem to define literacy as the ability to repeat certain predefined knowledges, Freire and Giroux redefine it as the ability to understand relations of power and to develop a transformative language for the specific conditions within which one finds oneself. Scottish nationalist pedagogies simply assume one form of oppression and offer a single one-size-fits-all strategy of liberation.⁹⁵ In his 'Introduction' to *Between Borders*, Lawrence Grossberg describes the problems of such a monologic 'praxical pedagogy' (16) as follows:

The problem with this practice is ... that it assumes that the teacher already understands the right skills which would enable emancipatory and transformative action, as if such skills were themselves not contextually determined. (17)

Instead, Grossberg demands what he calls an open-ended 'pedagogy of articulation and risk' that 'aims not to predefine its outcome' (18).

⁹⁵Early critical pedagogies share the same problem. Theodor W. Adorno for instance describes his pedagogical strategy as an 'Erziehung des "Madigmachens"' (*Erziehung zur Mündigkeit* 145), an intervention intended to spoil learners' enjoyment of cultural consumption with a monologic theory of the culture industry. See also Horkheimer, *Gesellschaft im Übergang* and Giroux's critique of the Frankfurt School for instance in *Theory and Resistance in Education* and *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope*.

This is exactly the goal of Giroux's critical pedagogy, which tries to determine positional meanings in a dialogue between learners and teachers:

[Giroux's 'border pedagogy'] enables educators to affirm and legitimate local meanings ... but at the same time interrogate the interests, ideologies, and social practices that such knowledges serve. (McLaren, *Critical Pedagogy and Predatory Culture* 223)

There are numerous theoretical projects that redefine cultural struggle beyond the magisterial emancipatory programmes of nationalism or Marxism. Nancy Fraser's *Justice Interruptus* is one instance of a de-essentialised notion of social justice; she elaborates on the difference between a politics of redistribution and a politics of recognition, and demands a post-structural understanding of community around multiple public spheres.⁹⁶ In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Marion Young develops another approach to the specificities of oppression and distinguishes between five faces of oppression which require specific strategies of emancipation.⁹⁷ Both approaches have in common that in the face of postmodern pessimism à la Lyotard or Baudrillard they develop new notions of what Chantal Mouffe describes as the struggle for 'radical democratic citizenship' and 'democratic equivalence' (*The Return of the Political* 69). Fraser, Freire, Giroux, Mouffe, Young and many other theorists take as their point of departure the recognition that emancipation cannot be imposed through one single narrative, but that emancipatory strategies have to be developed in close dialogue with people in very specific and by no means unambiguous situations.⁹⁸

Dialogic notions of ethics ensure that emancipation is what Paolo Freire calls a 'co-intentional' process (*Pedagogy of the Oppressed* 49) in which both educators and learners are subjects, not objects of transformation. In the pedagogies of radical difference of Freire and Giroux, the project of liberation takes place *with* the oppressed rather than *for* them. Consequently, education for cultural literacy cannot be limited to providing a national or multicultural manual for the consumption of cultural representations: students are never just passive recipients, but active producers of culture and meanings. Therefore, the critique of existing practice of representation cannot be an end in itself: it is the starting point for the re-presentation of the social imaginary.⁹⁹ The

⁹⁶See *Justice Interruptus* 11-39, 69-98.

⁹⁷Young differentiates exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. *Justice and the Politics of Difference* 39-65.

⁹⁸See for instance Seyla Benhabib's reader *Democracy and Difference*, which offers a platform for different attempts to analyse the 'the conceptual, cultural, and institutional quandaries of the present 'democratic moment' in the face of the questions of identity/difference' (Introduction 5).

⁹⁹See Giroux, *Border Crossings* 29.

goal of Giroux's 'representational pedagogy' is therefore the ability for students and more generally for citizens to critically rewrite cultural representations like those in literary texts, and to enable students to represent themselves in their own terms.

The contributions to *Teaching Scottish Literature* position students mainly as consumers of cultural change. An appendix of a mere three curricular 'exemplars' focuses on the production of writing by students, but even this cultural production is to be guided by Scottish concerns and framed by the use of Scottish classroom materials. The activities take as their starting points the annual publication *New Writing Scotland*, a set of Scottish ballads or a Scottish painting respectively, none of which are interrogated critically for the kinds of subjectivity they project. Instead, they are set up as models for student writing. Of course, the nationalist pedagogy cannot reproduce national subjects in a simple, deterministic fashion, and the performativity of writing always has the potential to disrupt preferred identities;¹⁰⁰ yet, it is easy to see how a pedagogy of excellence with its attendant practice of evaluating and grading can serve to encourage and reward some productions (predictably those that best imitate the respective model), while discouraging or even punishing productions that are outside certain patterns of recognisable 'Scottishness.'

In Giroux's practice, on the other hand, the critical re-writing of representations becomes a way of re-imagining communities of difference. Giroux's radical democratic pedagogy is an attempt to bring out the specificity of social locations and to encourage cultural practices that empower learners 'to reconstruct their world in new ways, and to rearticulate their future in unimagined and perhaps even unimaginable ways' (Grossberg, 'Introduction' 18).

In the concluding part of this chapter I make tentative suggestions for a critical pedagogical approach to contemporary Scottish texts in the context of a postnational constellation. To illustrate a critical cultural pedagogy I discuss the fiction of Irvine Welsh, particularly the novel *Trainspotting* and the movie version of Danny Boyle and John Hodge. Of course the kinds of theoretical and pedagogical questions can be raised about most of the texts discussed so far in this study. Yet, due to its immense popularity especially among young audiences, *Trainspotting* seems to be a particularly interesting text that illustrates many aspects of a possible pedagogy of difference. As part of global popular culture, *Trainspotting* also offers interesting representations of that culture, and of the possibilities people of different social locations have within its ideologies. I analyse how *Trainspotting* positions its mainly young

¹⁰⁰For a discussion of performativity and pedagogy see Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' 297-302.

readers and viewers, how it represents youth, gender, class and ethnicity, and how these representations register with larger public debates. If I do not make explicit suggestions for a pedagogical ‘application’ of my analysis, it is exactly because any practice has to take local specificities into consideration. Another reason is that it seems far too limited to understand education merely as traditional schooling. Instead, I envision a pedagogy that takes the form of public debates about the ways in which subjects are represented in contemporary culture, and about possibilities for critically re-writing those representations with a view to a democratic society.

3.4 Pedagogical Interventions in Scottish Fiction

Trainspotting and the Deregulation of Popular Culture

The texts of popular culture are an important and often neglected terrain for pedagogical interventions: as the cult status of *Trainspotting* shows, they mobilise desires of their mainly young audiences across the borders of nations and continents, and have immense pedagogical authority in shaping attitudes and beliefs far from their origins. This raises questions about new democratic forms of cultural literacy, agency, citizenship and accountability for a postnational constellation in which national territories have long ago imploded under the impact of global image-capitalism, but where no new forms of democratic participation have as yet emerged. To contain *Trainspotting* in an anachronistic national literature of Scotland, as Anne Donovan does, is to overlook the numerous pedagogical challenges the text provides as both participant in and representation of global pop culture.

It is no longer possible to contain a text like *Trainspotting* with the terms *nation* or *literature*. As novel, movie and soundtrack *Trainspotting* has become a global pop event: Irvine Welsh has advanced to a darling of the British and American press who line up for – hopefully scandalous – interviews with the new *enfant terrible*; after the success of *Trainspotting*, every new novel or short story collection is part of a media hype of interviews, reviews and even glossaries;¹⁰¹ book publishers like Jonathan Cape in the UK and Norton in the US target a variety of consumer groups from teenage hipsters to middle-class

¹⁰¹See for instance ‘A *Trainspotting* Glossary’ by Gerald Howard, editor of Norton, in the *Paris Review*, or the glossary in the programme of the Whitehall Theatre’s stage production.

voyeurs with specific ads and articles in a broad range of media from club magazines to academic journals;¹⁰² film distributors like the US firm Miramax launched *Trainspotting* with a massive publicity blitz which, as usual, was far more expensive than the actual production of the movie;¹⁰³ alongside a whole array of products like soundtracks, videos, posters, T-shirts, stickers, buttons and mugs, Welsh's books are prominently displayed in Virgin Megastores, HMVs, and other temples of popular culture that one would not immediately associate with the printed word; and, finally, even a cursory glance at the internet opens up no less than 50,000 websites with reviews in online magazines, internet bookstores and private homepages, sample chapters from the novel, photos, clips and soundbites from the movie, commercial poster galleries, advertisements, chat rooms, discussion forums, etc. In short, *Trainspotting* is marketed to and consumed by huge, yet highly diverse global audiences outside the traditional national middle-class culture of the printed word. No wonder Welsh claims that 'half the people who have bought the book have never bought a book before, never even read a book before' (Berman 58).

This heterogeneous readership has of course widely differing reactions to *Trainspotting*: there is the bourgeois disgust over the moral nihilism of the protagonists, for example in a review by Christiane Peitz, who describes the protagonists of *Trainspotting* as apathetic nihilists. On the other hand, many middle-class reviewers in Britain celebrate what they describe as the 'authenticity' of *Trainspotting* with voyeurist connoisseurship: thus, John Mulholland praises it as 'the definitive novel of Edinburgh's underbelly' (8) while Elizabeth Young, who seems to confuse present-day Britain with a Dickensian themepark, even praises Welsh for his

unparalleled ability to represent *the real lives of most people in Britain today* – the lives of poor accommodation, indifferent health, scams, deals and fantasies of escape, long days with the curtains drawn and the video on, with the dope and the Carlsberg and the speed or the smack. (14, my italics)

Especially in the US and other European countries, advertising campaigns for both novel and movie foreground 'gritty realism' to appeal to such voyeurism in their different audiences.¹⁰⁴ Irvine Welsh,

¹⁰²See John Mulholland, 'Acid Wit,' 9.

¹⁰³See Berman, 'Irvine Welsh,' 61.

¹⁰⁴The strategies employed to market Welsh also have profound effects on how other Scottish authors are read, especially outside Scotland. Compare for instance the online review 'Hanging with the Scottish Homeboys: Adventures in Literature with James Kelman, Duncan McLean and Irvine Welsh' in which editor Gerald Howard introduces the new Norton authors to a US audience. Howard places Welsh's texts at the centre of his review, thus creating the impression that the three authors form a

finally, rejects such slumming: in his interview with Jenifer Berman he describes his novel as a countercultural text that sounds the subaltern voices of working-class youth and aims at a democratisation of culture (58). Yet, regardless whether he is reviewed with distaste or crowned as ‘poet laureate of the chemical generation,’ Welsh is often treated as the spokesman of a nation, and the authentic voice of a class and a generation.

Among the celebrations of Scottish or subcultural authenticity, the global dynamics often remain invisible: there is as yet no critical or pedagogical language to address this new global culture. What is often neglected is the way in which the novel and especially the movie are marketed to Western teenage audiences as embodiments of a hip lifestyle, and how these audiences are called into place with new models of agency. Like Sick Boy, who imitates his favourite actor Sean Connery, viewers across national and class boundaries mimic Renton’s film gesture of ‘tapping up a vein’ and repeat ‘cool’ lines in a fake Leith accent that has come to signify the hip dangers of the drug-world. With its spin-offs, the movie has entered the image repertoire of consumer culture: Calvin Klein greets potential customers among trainspotters with Vincent Gallo in Mark Renton’s famous hunched-over pose from the movie poster, while a radio or TV documentary need only play the first notes of Underworld’s song ‘Born Slippy,’ which accompanies Renton’s exit in the movie, to suggest that the following programme will be about drugs or rehabilitation. *Trainspotting* functions as a highly convincing teaching machine that educates various publics to adopt certain attitudes toward drugs, the lower classes or social justice.

What makes this text in its various adaptations relevant to pedagogy is that it offers certain privileged identities, forms of communal interaction, and possibilities for navigating contemporary culture, which have to be interrogated for their possibilities and limits. Of course these representations are appropriated quite differently in different locations across the borders of nation, class, gender or ethnicity. It would be a mistake to assume, as critics like Herbert Marcuse have done, that popular cultural products like *Trainspotting* merely reproduce a single cultural logic, or that it is a ‘mass’ event that evenly reproduces a docile audience of trainspotters and cultural robots. John Fiske therefore maintains in *Understanding Popular Culture* and *Reading the Popular* that popular texts are produced in a dialectic of dominant ‘incorporation’ and subversive ‘excorporation,’ in which corporate powers try, but always fail to appropriate and control popular creativity.

movement. The review addresses the casual middle class reader who has enjoyed bratpack and Britpack and is now ready to move on to Scotspack, which promises even more exotic, but actually quite safe trips.

Quoting Umberto Eco's description of this dynamic as 'semiotic guerrilla warfare' he represents popular culture as a space of resistance against the homogenising logic of global capital and the authoritarianism of national or bureaucratic discourses.¹⁰⁵

In *Trainspotting*, the international popular culture of music and the representations of Hollywood motion pictures are not only central to the identifications of working-class youths in Edinburgh, whose language is saturated with snippets from movie dialogues and song lyrics; pop also becomes a counterpublic for working-class youth and drug cultures that challenge the middle-class values of the dominant consumer and national cultures, and it offers a range of counter-positions to groups that are marginalised by national and neoliberal constructions of subjectivity. The pedagogical challenge is to avoid the romanticisation of popular cultural resistance, as Fiske is likely to do, because such celebrations are always in danger of aestheticising resistance as a lifestyle rather than positional political commitment. Instead, it is necessary to analyse what forms of agency are encoded in the representations of the text, to address the limits of these representations, and to ask if and how these limits can be overcome. This implies a form of cultural and pedagogical work that neither uncritically affirms the possible identifications of readers and celebrates *Trainspotting* as a monument of counterculture, nor discards the investments of readers as irrelevant and applies a pre-fabricated critical hermeneutics to read universal ideological constraints off the text. Positional pedagogical interventions therefore have to begin by asking, first of all, if that text is at all relevant to the experience of learners, and if it is, what identifications it invites in readers and viewers in their different locations. Pedagogical interventions should then make these often affective identifications critical, for instance by setting up a dialogue between different responses to the text, by contrasting novel and movie, or by introducing material that offers different representations of subjectivity. The goal of such interventions is to allow readers to understand how they are constructed by a whole range of local and global discourses of class, gender, ethnicity, youth, etc., and ultimately to find voices with which to represent themselves and extend their sense of agency.

***Trainspotting*, Counterculture and Representations of Identity**

In the novel *Trainspotting* the popular culture of movies, concerts, discos, pubs, football, or shooting galleries is represented as a defensive counterculture where marginalised working-class youths seek empower-

¹⁰⁵See for instance John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* 1-21.

ment in their struggle against a society that silences them. Tommy describes his visit at an Iggy Pop concert in a way that summarises the relevance of popular culture for his sense of self, and the importance of drugs as a defence against the exclusionary dynamics of bourgeois and neoliberal normalcy:

Ah'm pure jumping around at the front of the stage, a few feet away from The Man. The are playing 'Neon Forest.' ... Iggy Pop looks right at me as he sings the line: 'America takes drugs in psychic defense'; only he changes 'America' for 'Scatlin,' and defines us mair accurately in a single sentence than all the others have ever done. (75)

Tommy is quite literally called into place by Iggy Pop as a part of a local and global counterculture that reclaims its freedom with the help of drugs.

As Mark Renton points out after his experience with psychoanalysis, 'ah'm pitting smack intae ma body tae claim power over it vis-à-vis society in general' (185). For Renton, injecting heroin is a liberation from the petit-bourgeois dream of happiness that holds his working-class parents hostage, a nightmare that caricatures liberty as the choice of household appliances and TV channels:

Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life.

Well, ah choose not tae choose life. If the cunts cannae handle that, it's thair fucking problem. (187-8)

Instead, Renton chooses heroin. As Paul Willis, member of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies points out in 'The Cultural Meaning of Drug Use,' drugs do not merely have a physiological effect, but order society: their importance lies in their creation of a 'great symbolic barrier' (107) between subcultures and the dominant culture. Heroin is therefore a symbolic border: Renton sees himself 'outside' the mainstream and constructs drug use as an escape from the dominant logic of normalcy in a catalogue world, while those 'inside' the mainstream criminalise users as a particular threat to their version of the normal, but also constitute and legitimate themselves in opposition to heroin.

Obviously, heroin is an extreme form of symbolic reclamation that develops its own destructive dynamics, as is well illustrated in the various deaths in *Trainspotting*. However, 'shooting up' is not categorically different from other activities of youth culture like dancing, watching movies, but also drinking, violence, or football hooliganism

that are the recurrent themes in all of Welsh's stories and novels, in that it symbolically cordons off spaces which promise possibilities for the reclamation of agency. *Trainspotting* addresses the desire of specific young audiences for self-determination that is becoming harder to win in bureaucratised and corporatised Western societies. Yet these representations of resistance are obviously very limited and even self-destructive and ultimately affirm the very cultural logic they set out to challenge. Substance abuse is no substantive challenge to the logic of late capitalism: the ritualised boundary between inside and outside of drug culture suggests a categorical otherness where, as we have seen above, drug culture at least partly mimics the dominant culture. The ritualised resistance of 'shooting up' always takes place within the confines of the dominant cultural order without radically questioning the assumptions that inform consumerism. Welsh's substance abusers affirm that order by becoming its victims and its moral foil.¹⁰⁶

Accordingly, Renton can only envision liberation from the logic of consumption as itself a form of consumption, even though the neoliberal reduction of agency to choice and his experience of the emptiness of a community based on commodity exchange are at the very heart of his alienation. Thus his resistance to the middle-class consumer logic takes the paradoxical form of 'choosing not to choose.' Interrogated in court for a book by Kierkegaard which he had lifted from a bookshop, he gives an ironic explanation of this notion of choice to the unsuspecting judge:

I'm interested in his [Kierkegaard's] concepts of subjectivity and truth, and particularly his ideas concerning choice; the notion that genuine choice is made out of doubt and uncertainty, and without recourse to the experience or advice of others. It could be argued, with some justification, that it's primarily a bourgeois, existential philosophy and would therefore seek to undermine collective societal wisdom. However, it's also a liberating philosophy, because when such societal wisdom is negated, the basis for social control over the individual becomes weakened. (166)

Here, Renton constructs his escape from 'choice' within that very logic, albeit in a paradoxical way: if the bourgeois notion of subjectivity is founded on the freedom of choice within that ever-recurring necessity to choose one product over another, then the 'genuine choice' of heroin can remove him from this cycle and the societal wisdom that informs it. In a sense, the heroin addict becomes the culmination of both the competitive entrepreneur and the romantic individual, a kind of *Übermensch* who has moved beyond the ethics of good and evil and stands or falls alone.

¹⁰⁶See Alan Freeman, 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith' 258. For an analysis of the conservatives' exploitation of the drug issue for the creation of a 'moral panic' and a 'thoroughly modern morality tale' (15) see Reeves and Campbell, *Cracked Coverage*.

Heroin is quite literally the choice that ends all choice, and Renton's perfect version of the Kierkegaardian leap of faith that liberates him from choice would be the choice of suicide through a heroin overdose.

The script of John Hodge loses the subtleties of the argument and borders on a celebration of the freedom of choice. The movie completely skips the critique of property and bourgeois notions of happiness and represents the logic of choice in a way that makes it more palatable to popcorn munching audiences. The movie famously opens with an incantatory version of the choose-life speech, spoken as a voice-over by Ewan McGregor, the actor who played Mark Renton, which concludes:

I chose not to choose life: I chose something else. And the reasons?
There are no reasons. Who needs reasons when you've got heroin?
(Hodge 5)

The rhythmic patterning of the voice-over alone, amplified by the drum-beat of Iggy Pop's 'Lust for Life,' seem to justify Gesa Stedman's criticism in 'Scotland, the Brave, Ma Arse' that Danny Boyle has rewritten the novel as 'Britpop' videoclip (84). In another voice-over about half-way through the movie, Renton describes drugs in the terms of choice from a catalogue that sounds only slightly different from the prologue:

We took morphine, diamorphine, cyclozine, codeine, temazepam, nitrezepam, phenobarbitone, sodium amytal dextropropoxyphene, methadone, nalbuphine, pethidine, pentazocine, buprenorphine, dextromoramide, chlormethiazole. The streets are awash with drugs that you can have for unhappiness and pain, and we took them all. Fuck it, we would have injected Vitamin C if only they'd made it illegal.
(Hodge 51)

And the reasons? In the movie, there are no reasons, except the performance of resistance-as-lifestyle. Where the novel situates the protagonists in an environment of poverty and powerlessness, the movie remains completely silent about the sources of unhappiness and pain. The drug market is no different from the drug store, and while the novel ironises this similarity, the movie celebrates it as the freedom of consumer choice. Therefore it comes as no surprise that at the end of the movie, Renton marches off into a clean future, ironically choosing all the consumer goods he had chosen not to choose in the prologue:

I'm cleaning up and I'm moving on, going straight and choosing life. ... I am going to be just like you: the job, the family, the fucking big television, the washing machine, the car, the compact disc and electrical tin opener, good health, low cholesterol, dental insurance, mortgage, starter home, leisurewear, luggage, three-piece suite, DIY, game shows, junk food, children, walks in the park, nine to five, good at golf, washing the car, choice of sweaters, family Christmas, indexed pension, tax exemption, clearing the gutters, getting by, looking ahead, to the day you die. (Hodge 106)

While this final rap-like voice-over is of course highly ambiguous and continues to ironise the choices of bourgeois life, it no longer questions choice itself. For those who miss the mild irony, it becomes a straightforward endorsement of the ‘normalcy’ of John Major’s classless middle-class society. In the words of Alan Sinfield,

[T]he film cancels Renton’s leftish rebellion, making Thatcherite selfishness the ‘natural’ way, on or off heroin, to live. (xxvii)

The merchandise that accompanies novel and movie accompanies the process of incorporation in the market ideology: one of the many posters featured a grinning and altogether pleased Renton captioned by ‘I’m cleaning up and I’m moving on, going straight and choosing life. I am going to be just like you.’ Here, irony is completely obliterated, and Renton has miraculously metamorphosed into a spokesman of Nancy Reagan’s ‘Just Say No’ campaign.

Yet it is clearly very dissatisfactory merely to regret the loss of critical edge and authenticity in the transition from novel to movie, as Sinfield and Stedman do.¹⁰⁷ A critical pedagogy that works with the actual ‘consumers’ of *Trainspotting* could begin by taking up the movie and the subject positions it offers to various audiences, and contrasting them with the representations of the novel in order to return the critical edge. Cultural work could thus instigate a discussion about the ways in which different audiences are constructed by movies like *Trainspotting* and other popular representations.

The novel *Trainspotting* itself employs critical pedagogical strategies, which could also be taken up in critical cultural work. It intervenes in the public discussion of drugs and critiques the terms of the debate as it continues to dominate the US and much of Europe. In contrasting various attitudes towards the ‘habit,’ it becomes itself a critical pedagogical intervention that reveals the discursive construction of drug use and users, and the production of knowledges about drugs that ultimately function as a way of ordering society. Renton’s ironic commentaries show that the therapeutic discourses of Freudianism and client-centred counselling are no different from the conservative discourses epitomised by Nancy Reagan’s ‘Just Say No’ campaign, in that they locate the blame in the individual who is unwilling to change his or her behaviour and become a ‘happy’ person. Renton’s contrasting of different therapeutic languages shows that ‘happiness’ is itself constructed within a neoliberal discourse of middle-class individualism

¹⁰⁷Stedman even employs a discourse of national authenticity when she claims that ‘the film loses ... its critical edge by losing its “Scottishness”’ (85). This is misleading, because it suggests that this mythic national quality can somehow exist outside such popular representations. On the contrary, *Trainspotting* as movie and novel rewrites ‘Scottishness.’

that dismisses socio-political explanations of ‘unhappiness’ as ‘projecting the blame oantae society’ (186). But again, the scope of this pedagogical intervention is limited: Renton may carnivalise the normative discourses of psychological health, but this strategy is incapable of moving beyond a gesture of defiance. On the contrary, underlying Renton’s parodic politics is the sense that ‘society cannae be changed tae make it significantly better’ (186).

Of course, as Welsh points out in his interview with Berman, his pessimism has to be seen in the context of Thatcherist cynicism which systematically smashed ‘[t]he old routes of radical social change’ (57) and institutions of solidarity. Public life has disappeared, ‘[t]he only ways that young working-class people can get together are raves and parties’ (60). Statements like these illustrate the crux of all of Welsh’s texts: his novels and stories demand a different world, but they cannot imagine it. Renton’s statement remains problematic in a text that elsewhere represents popular culture as a space of resistance: it suggests that the only alternative to the ‘spirit-crushing’ realities of consumer culture is the consumption of counterculture, either in the form of drugs, or, vicariously, in the popular representations of counterculture and resistance in texts like *Trainspotting*. For most audiences of the movie, particularly those of the suburban middle classes all over the UK, Europe and the US, cultural struggle would therefore be exhausted in the imitation of the signs and gestures of a decontextualised countercultural lifestyle.

However, a critical cultural pedagogy cannot accept this as the last word on social transformation, it cannot yield to the Baudrillardian rhetoric of the death of the social and its rebirth as an acid house party. It has to question the rampant neoliberal egotism that pervades Welsh’s counterculture and take up the kernels of hope inherent in *Trainspotting*’s critique of consumerism to radicalise them with the help of a political language that reimagines public life around new forms of solidarity. What Henry Giroux calls a ‘pedagogy of representations’ would involve a strategy of excorporation that self-consciously counters the movement of incorporation through which resistance is offered up as a commodity. A contrast between novel and movie could begin this process of excorporation by submitting the consumer ideology of the movie to a critical discussion, but since the novel is itself necessarily limited in its representations this can only be a beginning of a critical strategy.

In order to discourage a voyeurism that merely consumes free-floating subcultural lifestyles, a critical pedagogy has to recontextualise the text. This would include resituating the text in discourses of the urban working-class youth in the particular conditions of an industrialised nation at the end of the twentieth century. But part of the

recontextualisation would also be an understanding of how films are made, distributed and consumed in a global media culture.

At the same time such a pedagogy should engage learners in a dialogue about their own experience of the novel or movie, the ways in which it affirms (or questions) their identities, and to ask just what it is about its representation of resistance that makes it attractive (or unattractive) to them. Of course, it would be a particular pedagogical challenge to take up either novel or movie in a school or adult education programme in Leith; however, since the movie creates identifications in locations far removed from this origin, a highschool in Snowshoe, Pennsylvania may prove to be an equally important point of intervention. In either place, a critical pedagogy would have to address the affective investments which the movie encourages, and bring them to a crisis by engaging them in a dialogue with different readings of the text, either by peers or in critical texts. Learners could engage movie and novel in a dialogue in a way that allows them to understand how cinematic representations construct them e.g. as working class, youths, residents of Leith, Scots, or consumers, and how their own beliefs about themselves, their communities and their possibilities are created by cultural texts in general. Both in Leith and Snowshoe, movie and novel could become the starting point for the reconstruction of local narratives and histories that may well be antagonistic to the text, or missing from it. The goal of a critical pedagogical intervention would be to begin a dialogue between texts, readers and their cultures, to radicalise the hopes and desires that are mobilised or frustrated by the representations of 'cool' subcultural resistance, and to broaden the possibilities of resistance and agency in the various locations in which audiences find themselves.

Beyond the Limits of Countercultures

One group of narratives and histories that can be developed in opposition to the text both in Leith and Snowshoe concerns women. Welsh's narrative of working-class counterculture is inevitably gendered and excludes female stories almost completely. In this respect, *Trainspotting* is not untypical of traditional representations of working-class subcultures: in their essay 'Girls and Subcultures' Birmingham Centre theorists Angela McRobbie and Jenny Garber make clear that there is a venerable tradition that represents women as the pillion riders of romanticised masculine countercultures. At the same time, the spaces

and conditions in which women create meanings are systematically made invisible.¹⁰⁸

In *Trainspotting*, males move with ease through the subcultures of heroin, alcohol, football or violence, but female roles are extremely restrictive. Gesa Stedman identifies three female stereotypes in the movie, ‘the hysterical female, the teenage vamp and “mum”’ (83); in spite of the fact that three short episodes (the least convincing ones, Stedman argues) are actually narrated by female characters, the novel does not significantly improve on this cast. In the novel, female characters, if they are not mothers, usually figure as ‘burds’ or even ‘fannies’: they are reduced to genital organs, and are either attached to males who inevitably abuse them, or unattached, which makes them dangerously unpredictable for the men.

To begin with Stedman’s ‘hysterical female,’ there is Lesley, the mother of Baby Dawn. When she discovers her dead baby, all she does is scream ‘the bairn’s away ... the bairn’s away’ (51), while Renton, the narrator of this episode thinks: ‘Ah wanted her tae stoap. Now’ (51). Throughout the episode, Lesley seems to be screaming inarticulately, while the other characters discuss the situation, pity the supposed father, take another hit and eventually leave her alone with the dead baby. When in ‘Inter Shitty’ Begbie leaves his nameless and pregnant girlfriend, whom he refers to as a ‘lazy, fat cunt,’ she also does little more than shriek ‘THE BAIRN! THE BAIRN’ (110) as he coolly buttons up his 501s, then kicks and beats her as a final farewell.

Throughout, there is always more than a hint that women consent to male brutality: in the episode ‘Her Man’ a ‘wee ferret-faced fucker’ (58) beats up his girlfriend in a pub, while she repeatedly dares him to continue:

– Hit us again, fucking big man. Gaun then.
He does. (58)

When Tommy, after a long debate with his friends, recognises that it is indeed not enough to tolerate such crass violence as a private tiff, and finally decides to stop the brutality, she hits him and yells at him to leave ‘ma man’ alone.

Within Welsh’s sexual politics, women lead the lives of shadows, dependent on, but dispensable for ‘their’ men. While male characters like Begbie and especially Renton have their own histories, families and social networks, the female characters remain one-dimensional and have no recourse to female solidarity: when their man leaves them, they are

¹⁰⁸See also Angela McRobbie, ‘Settling Accounts With Subcultures: A Feminist Critique’ which criticises studies of male theorists of the Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, prominently Paul Willis’s *Pop Music and Youth Groups* and Dick Hebdidge’s *Subcultures and the Meaning of Style*.

alone with the bairn. 'Feeling Free' is the only episode in the entire novel with an all-female cast, narrated by a female I-narrator. In the opening scene, Alison and Kelly, two characters who have silently hovered around the margins of some previous episodes, are in a café, but even here, their conversation exclusively revolves around the absent men. After leaving the café, when the two women are accosted by construction workers, Ali actually defends herself against sexist slurs; she is supported by two women from New Zealand, and together they are 'stickin up for thirsels' (275). But it seems that in *Trainspotting* female empowerment is coterminous with the imitation of masculinity and male sexism. When Kelly finds out that the two self-confident New Zealanders are lesbians, she immediately identifies them as masculine and muses: 'Ali n me maybe should have been born men' (277). It seems that in the world of *Trainspotting* cultural power is inevitably gendered masculine.

Women like Kelly also personify the second female stereotype in the novel: the devouring, castrating woman, or 'teenage vamp,' as Stedman calls her. For Renton and his friends, these are strange, incomprehensible women with a hyperreal sexual appetite who use the men for their pleasure and then either cling to them, or dispose of them with chilling indifference. The fifteen-year old Dianne belongs to the first category: Renton picks her up in a disco and has sex with her. When he finds out at her parents' breakfast table the next morning that she is under age, he fears that she will blackmail him into a relationship. Laura belongs to the second category: in 'There Is A Light That Never Goes Out' she conducts a sexual experiment with Spud, in the course of which he is seriously injured; rumour has it that immediately after she has shipped him off to the emergency room, 'a frustrated Laura phoned up Sick Boy ... who came and stood in for his friend' (270). These women emanate an aura of kinky danger for the men in *Trainspotting*: like Kelly, the waitress who squeezes her tampon into the tomato soup of an obnoxious customer, they use their bodily fluids and sexual organs to manipulate men.

The oscillation between victim and vamp marks a pervasive sexual politics in all of Welsh's texts. This underlines Angela McRobbie's suspicion of celebrations of working-class subcultures as sites of resistance, and mars his attempt in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* to raise the issue of rape. In *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, which is set in the subculture of football hooligans, the protagonist Roy Strang and his friends rape an anonymous woman at a party, and are found 'not guilty' after a farcical trial. Within the terms of Welsh's limited notions of female identity, the response of 'Miss X' is to revenge herself on the hospitalised Roy by cutting off his penis and stuffing it into his mouth, which is no more than a simple switch from the stereotypical role of the

victim to the male adolescent fear of the castrating vamp. The narrative of the rape, which is at the heart of the novel, is not about Miss X at all, but about Roy's tormented male psyche. In his interview with Berman, Welsh explicitly describes his representation of rape as a pedagogical project that tries to educate men about the consequences of their violence, but within his narrow representations of women, the educational project is necessarily limited as well, if it does not fail altogether.

Marabou Stork Nightmares participates in the public debate about rape with its representations of a trial in which the rape victim actually becomes the defendant, and by borrowing from a series of posters and ads published by the Zero Tolerance campaign which originated in Edinburgh. Posters like the following slowly seep into Roy's unconscious as he walks through Edinburgh, and then surface while he is in a coma:



(226)

But the campaign, at least in the few ads quoted in the novel, again addresses only men, while women remain the silent 'other.' While the novel focuses at length on the unhappy childhood and the inferiority complex of the schemie Roy Strang, it does not give voice to the experience of the appropriately nameless woman at all. It is thus educational in a very different way in that it re-establishes the stereotypes of the naturally passive and victimised woman and the complex and misunderstood man. Though the Zero Tolerance campaign underlines that there is no excuse for rape, it is again the rapist, not the woman who demands our compassionate understanding in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*.

Asked about the systematic absence of representations of female interiority by Jenifer Berman, Welsh unimpressively retreats behind a rhetoric of political correctness:

[I]t's not so much I can't write women characters, it's a question of being wary of doing it. It's about acknowledging that you're not a woman and acknowledging the other-ness of how women characters think, feel, react differently. But again, it's this whole imperialist thing. You've got to be aware of the issues and

acknowledge the possibility of other-ness. So it's been a tentative process, for me, writing about women characters. (59)

Within this rhetoric, 'other-ness' is part of an essentialist sexual politics in which women are always the unrepresentable and irrational 'other.' This strategy guarantees male superiority and actually perpetuates this 'imperialist thing': it is exactly through her silence that Miss X is entirely represented in male terms.

But a cultural politics that wants to address violence against women cannot tolerate a representational politics based on the silence of suffering women. Neither can a democratic cultural politics limit itself to the perfection of representations of agony from whatever perspective: it has to move courageously toward a transformation of the social imaginary and the redefinition of female spaces. Texts like *Trainspotting* or *Marabou Stork Nightmares* can become springboards for pedagogical work that allows, encourages and explores a plurality of female voices and subject positions. Such work can address the 'other' side of male violence and female suffering that is often left blank in dominant cultural representations of rape and of gender identities in general. It can also open up new spaces of interiority and agency for men and women. Such a cultural intervention aims at the recognition of and respect for gender difference, but not as an essentialised otherness, but as a cultural construction that is always open to negotiation and struggle, and as a border that can be transgressed. Critical cultural work aims at strategies that show how representations, regulatory discourses, institutions, and conditions of production construct gender identities, and it raises the question how dominant representations perpetuate injustices in different locations. Ultimately, however, such cultural work aims at a critical cultural literacy that allows learners to appropriate the means of representation, create new representations and critically redefine gender identities.

Welsh's politics of silence analogously affects other marginalised groups: like women, homosexuals and ethnic minorities are represented as voiceless victims of violent subcultural racism or homophobia, and again this silence can be construed as a form of complicity.¹⁰⁹ Pedagogical interventions would engage Welsh's representations with other cultural texts in order to deconstruct this silence as part of a dominant cultural strategy that is not anti-imperialist at all, and to introduce different representations of these marginalised identities to readers. Of the texts discussed so far, the novels and stories of Janice Galloway come to mind that could fruitfully be contrasted with Welsh's representations of female identity. However, her texts must not be

¹⁰⁹For Welsh's latent sexism and heterosexism see Christopher Whyte's 'Introduction' to *Gendering the Nation* (xv).

privileged points of intervention, since ‘Scottishness’ should be no limit to cultural work in the classroom or outside. In a context which debates for instance the confluence of nation, class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity, texts like *My Beautiful Launderette* by Hanif Kureishi, or Caryl Phillips’s *The Final Passage*, to name two random English language texts, would provide useful points of intervention to interrogate and move beyond Welsh’s representations.

However, as Henry Giroux insists, a critical pedagogy of difference has to go beyond the critique and deconstruction of representations and move on to the re-presentation of identities. Unlike a nationalist pedagogy, which builds new walls around allegedly fixed identities, such a pedagogy looks for ‘third spaces’: the knowledge that identities are constructed in cultural representations leads to a politics that is itself always representational, not essentialist. Therefore, the goal of critical cultural work is not the quest for truths, essences, or even permanent representations, but the constant re-presentation of community and citizenship in view of constantly evolving definitions of social justice.

Conclusion:

Over the Border and into the Open

Salman Rushdie once wrote an article called “‘Commonwealth Literature’ Does Not Exist’ (*Imaginary Homelands* 61-70). In this polemic he complains that publishers and literature departments, when they ‘discovered’ ‘Commonwealth Literature,’ created a chimera by stitching together incommensurable texts from countries as different as Canada, Nigeria, Hong Kong or Pakistan. He sees two regrettable consequences of this institutionalisation: on the one hand, what used to be known as English literature is now no longer English-language literature, but becomes ‘something topographical, nationalistic, possibly even racially segregationist’ (63). On the other hand, ‘Commonwealth authors’ are suddenly haunted by the ‘bogy of authenticity’ which ‘demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogeneous and unbroken tradition. Or else’ (67). On the whole, there is a new ghetto mentality, and ‘the reality of mixed tradition is replaced by the fantasy of purity’ (67-8). Of course, Rushdie knows that ‘Commonwealth Literature’ exists, if only for the fact that it is daily taught in universities and sold in bookstores – but he concludes that it *should not exist*.

Polemically, I would also conclude that ‘Scottish Literature’ should not exist: not, as nationalists could now assume, because no writing of ‘merit’ is being produced in Scotland, but exactly because so many important texts have been written there that have a lot to say about the complexities of life at the end of the twentieth century. ‘Scottish Literature,’ as a special shelf in High Street bookstores and as an academic discipline, is segregationist, and demands authentic and codified expressions of Scottishness. Iain Banks, Irvine Welsh or A.L. Kennedy *may* have more in common than ‘Commonwealth’ authors like Salman Rushdie, Ken Saro-Wiwa or Margaret Atwood, but ‘Scottish Literature’ suggests that all three participate in the same exclusive project, while they have nothing whatsoever in common with English authors like Mervin Peake, Alan Sillitoe, or Jeannette Winterson. It silences critical voices like those of Janice Galloway or James Kelman with a deafening roar of nationalist hoorays and erases all possibility of transnational solidarity from its clearly bordered maps. Most importantly, ‘Scottish Literature’ has no answers for the urgent questions of European unification, global cultural exchange and postcolonial migrations, which writers in Scotland have long addressed.

The canonisation of Galloway and Kelman or the appropriation of *Trainspotting* by the SNP is of course evidence that 'Scottish Literature' does indeed exist. It also illustrates that Scottish nationalists have recognised the political importance of culture, and that they have developed pedagogical strategies to instrumentalise cultural texts for their segregationist politics. A 'multicultural' pedagogy of difference, on the other hand, that would mobilise the multivoicedness of these texts and overcome national apartheid, has been slower in developing. Yet, there is an urgent need to courageously shape the new postcolonial constellation; to come to terms with difference in increasingly complex and migratory cultures; to redefine 'the local' in dialogue with 'the global'; to democratise those new transnational spaces which are now controlled either by obscure bureaucracies or the unfettered market; and to imagine transnational forms of solidarity where now the images of a global consumer society run rampant. Nonetheless, amidst the turbulences of post-Fordism, the political imagination in Scotland and elsewhere short-sightedly returns to a homely pedagogy of national separatism where seemingly secure national borders promise a safe haven against the onslaught of new times. But this nationalist resurgence should not discourage pedagogical work that takes the risk of tearing down national, gender, class, ethnic and all other boundaries in search of democratic cultural politics and new communities.

The age of global difference is only just beginning, and there are still far more questions than answers. While my readings of Scottish texts are attempts to illustrate what postnational pedagogical work might have to take into consideration, one of the questions that remains is surely where such work might take place, and whom it might address. A simple answer would be that learning takes place all the time and everywhere, that it cannot be limited to the legal 'school age' or to those national institutions that are explicitly designated 'educational.' What Stuart Hall calls the 'circuit of culture' – the local and global systems of cultural production and consumption, the regulatory institutions of everyday life, and the cultural representations of movies like *Trainspotting* and all the other texts discussed in this study – educates us to make sense of this world of difference, albeit in often contradictory and limiting terms. Therefore, emancipatory pedagogical work also has to be an ongoing process that overcomes limits everywhere in order to remake the whole circuit of culture. This may not be a very satisfactory answer to someone who has experienced education as sitting in rows and repeating (or resisting) textbook knowledge; of course a pedagogy of difference would have to win over traditional schooling, but it would then have to redefine these institutions as part of the struggle for a radical democratic society, and create a dialogic curriculum that moves beyond the enforcement of identities through canonical texts.

Yet, this is only a partial answer to the question of the ‘place’ of critical education in the postnational constellation. Stuart Hall reminds us that radical cultural politics have to be wary of being codified, but he insists on the need for a platform, an ‘organizational moment’ that makes it possible ‘to get people together, to build some kind of collective intellectual project’ (‘On Postmodernism and Articulation’ 149). In his essay ‘The Future of Cultural Studies,’ Raymond Williams mentions the Open University (established in the late 1960s) as a site of pedagogical intervention and an attempt to provide ‘open-access democratic culture of an educational kind’ (156) without degree requirements and disciplinary boundaries and with a flexible syllabus shaped by the needs of students in various locations. For Stuart Hall, who now teaches Sociology at the Open University, this ‘interdisciplinary, unconventional setting’ opens the possibility to circulate critical knowledges among a much larger public.¹¹⁰ Much of Hall’s recent work has been written for the Open University, most recently the collaborative series *Culture, Media and Identities* which aims at the development of critical media literacy that is indispensable for democratic participation and agency in the global information age.

In his essay, Williams also suggest a reconsideration of the adult education programmes of working-class organisations like the Co-operative Guild, from which his own and the writings of Richard Hoggart or Edward Thompson emerged in the 1940s and 50s. Whatever their limitations,¹¹¹ the writings and adult classes of these educators responded to the need for a democratic culture in the context of the new ‘mass’ media and popular culture on the one hand, and Leavisite elitism on the other, and were important in redefining cultural literacy even at university level. Williams’s essay is a timely reminder that there is a long tradition of cultural and educational work outside nationally organised schooling and the ‘minority institutions’ of higher education. It is not so much a recommendation to return to Fabian education for the working classes, than a suggestion to redefine a much broader range of public institutions like trade unions, women’s co-operatives, consumer groups and others as educational institutions where counter-literacies can be developed and different groups can enter into a dialogue about the future of their communities. In his recent work, Henry Giroux suggests such a redefinition of all political work as pedagogical, and sketches possibilities for groups of cultural workers and citizens to acquire

¹¹⁰See ‘The Formation of a Diasporic Intellectual’ 501.

¹¹¹The most problematic aspect of the work, especially of Thompson and Hoggart is the notion of ‘organicity,’ which leads to a romanticisation of working class culture. Richard Hoggart’s *The Uses of Literacy* defines literacy as a defense against commercial popular culture with its ice cream parlours and juke boxes, and a nostalgic return to an ‘authentic’ working class lifestyle around clubs and bingo.

important knowledges and re-present themselves differently.¹¹² Such groups can form democratic and open counterpublics that are both more radically local and more attentive to transnational solidarities than the dominant public as represented by the institutions of the nation state. Ideally, these pedagogical spheres are not linked to particular groups and institutions, but are in-between, in Bhabha's hybrid 'third spaces,' where culture can be reclaimed for a variety of open-ended projects. Loosely organised workshops could analyse cultural texts for their representations of difference or democratic possibilities, and become platforms for new enunciations and cultural practices.

The texts of Janice Galloway, Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Frank Kuppner, William McIlvanney, Agnes Owens or Irvine Welsh form such a hybrid counterpublic that resists nationalist unison with heteroglot and insurgent meanings. They do not describe what it means to 'be' Scottish, but they represent what it means to live – and struggle – in different locations in Scotland in the times of the globalisation of everyday life. But their work has to be supplemented by a democratic cultural pedagogy that liberates these texts from the institutionalised celebrations of 'Scottish Literature' and mobilises their heteroglot meanings to tear down national borders. 'Scottish Literature' should not exist: instead, we should read Scottish writers to help us imagine postnational forms of cultural work, identity, liberty, solidarity, and democratic agency.

¹¹²See for instance 'Borderline Artists, Cultural Workers and the Crisis of Democracy,' *Disturbing Pleasures, Fugitive Cultures* or *Channel Surfing*.

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