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REPRESENTATIONS OF SCOTLAND IN EDWIN MORGAN'S POETRY

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English Composition

by
Theresa Fernandez Mendoza-Kovich

September 2002

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September 2002

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of the poetry of Edwin Morgan. It is a cultural analysis of Morgan's poetry as representation of the Scottish people. Morgan's poetry represents the Scottish people as determined and persistent in dealing with life's adversities while maintaining hope in a better future. This hope, according to Morgan, is largely associated with the advent of technology and the more modern landscape of his native Glasgow. Morgan serves as a leader in modern Scottish poetry by recognizing traditional Scottish values while maintaining a willingness to experiment with new and modern ideas.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Professor Renée Pigeon for her endless assistance and patience with this thesis. I would also like to thank her for her guidance and professionalism throughout my years at California State University, San Bernardino. I would also like to thank Professors Doane and Cotter for assisting me in the final development of this thesis. Many thanks also to all of my professors at California State University, San Bernardino, especially professors Rong Chen, Bruce Golden, and Wendy Smith. Each of my professors made my education at the university, both fulfilling and entertaining.

Many thanks to my good friends and colleagues, Barbara Maguire and Karen Shaw, for their repeated encouragement and belief in my abilities.

Finally, I would also like to give many thanks to all of my family support, especially Dad, Mom, Rosalie, Ray J., Brian, and all of my wonderful nieces and nephews. Mostly, I would like to thank my husband, Ronnie Kovich, for his continued love, support, and friendship during the years.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Throughout Edwin Morgan's expansive body of work--poetry, essays, translations, and critiques--he provides a glimpse into what he views as the true beauty and power of Scotland. In this glimpse, Morgan reveals a Scotland that is divided between past traditions and modern circumstances, thereby presenting raw portraits of the dark side of modernity in his native city of Glasgow and Scotland generally, and bright spots of hope for the future of its people. His admiration for what is new and popular among its people is also reflected.

Morgan's view of Scottish culture is disparate because it is both pessimistic and hopeful. He presents the realities of daily Scottish life and juxtaposes them with fantastical views of the traditional past and an imagined future.

Edwin Morgan's Life and Writing

Edwin Morgan is a modern writer who has distinguished himself in such a way so as to stand out among his contemporaries. Like his predecessors and

contemporaries, Morgan strives to present his own individuality, as well as that of his countrymen while still showing a pride and affection for the land in which he was raised. Morgan was born in a suburb of Glasgow, Scotland, known as the West End in 1920. He grew up in Pollokshields and Rutherglen, two other suburbs of Glasgow, and demonstrated a fondness for reading at a very young age. This fondness bordered on obsession, which worried his mother and father. Morgan's parents were political conservatives and Presbyterian churchgoers who created a "loving but rigorous home life for their son" (McCarra 2). Morgan's voracious appetite for books influenced his writing. However, what was perhaps his greatest influence was the ongoing modernization of the city in which he lived, as is demonstrated in his poems such as "Message Clear" and "Archives." The arrival of more streamlined architecture and the hope for a more technologically advanced future pervaded Glasgow throughout much of Morgan's life. Kevin McCarra, in his brief essay about Morgan's life, points out that "childhood and adolescence left Morgan with the conviction that the future should be something more

than a continuation of the past" (3). Morgan's introspection about life and his moral concerns caused him to register as a conscientious objector in 1940 when called up for military service, but he later realized that war with Germany was necessary, and he soon after joined the Royal Army Medical Corps (McCarra 9). Much of his wartime experiences are presented in his collection of poems entitled The New Divan (1977).

In 1946 he returned to Glasgow and graduated with first class Honors in English Language and English Literature in 1947. At this point he became a lecturer at Glasgow University, but was troubled by his war experience and by the fears of being found out as a homosexual. Such discovery could have caused him to lose his job or become imprisoned. Morgan, however, soon found peace in a sixteen-year relationship with John Scott, which began in 1963. This relationship inspired him to write much of his best poetry. However, Morgan was involved in various other literary pursuits besides poetry. Most notable is his adeptness with other languages, which led him to become a translator, and whose influence is

evidenced in poems such as "Siesta of the Hungarian Snake." He translated from other languages, such as Russian, but he also worked on Anglo-Saxon pieces, such as Beowulf and the "Seafarer." Morgan is often paradoxically described as a loner who has many friends but prefers to keep in contact through letters, e-mails, and postcards. Other than his wartime experience he has never lived abroad, preferring to live in Glasgow as he has done for over eighty years.

Morgan has won numerous awards such as The Scottish Arts Council Award, Salitre Society Award for Best Scottish Book of the Year, Saros Translation Award, and Poet Laureate of Scotland (McCarra 9). They have made him a man of note in Scottish letters and literature. He plays with words, form, and content like no other poet in modern time. Although Morgan is not as beloved for his earlier poems as for his later, he is always able to capture the beauty of Scotland by presenting its many sides (White 35), including the horrors of Glasgow in the 1970s, Glaswegian dialect, pop culture, technology, science fiction, astronomy, religion, and Scottish traditions. Despite his

connection with the past in his translations, his poetry mainly reflects his fascination with the future. Glasgow's skyline drastically changed from the thirties to the sixties, which impressed Morgan and is reflected in his poems about "motorway lights, snack-bars, slum landlords, gang leaders, drunks, and tough children" (McCarra 6). He aims to capture, in his poetry, a portrait of Glasgow and Scotland by conveying what he reads about in the papers, what he sees, and what he hopes for the future. His "Instamatic Poems" such as "Glasgow 5 March 1971" demonstrate the force with which he presents even simple news items. It is perhaps for this reason that Morgan is a popular figure in Scottish secondary education classrooms. It is in that realm that I first encountered Morgan's poetry. When I was a teacher at St. Margaret's Academy in Livingston, Scotland, many of my colleagues lived in Glasgow and their love for Morgan is reflected in his prominence in the curriculum, particularly in Sixth Year Studies (the equivalent of Advanced Placement English Literature and Composition here in the United States). My experiences teaching Morgan's poetry allowed me to

gain a greater appreciation and insight into the love my colleagues had for his writing. They often expressed a connection to Morgan's poetry and his presentation of modern Glasgow.

Scottish National Identity

Morgan breaks from traditional roles of Scottish writers by avoiding the limitations of the "Kailyard" and "Tartanry." The Kailyard is Scottish slang for a cabbage patch but Kailyardism "is usually described as a popular literary style celebrating Scottish rural quaintness at its height from 1880 to 1914... [and it] gives cultural expression to the 'lad o' pairts', the boy of academic talent but little financial means, which became an ideal type in Scottish education ideology" (McCrone 136). Similarly, David McCrone, in his book entitled Understanding Scotland: the Sociology of a Nation, discusses Tartanry as a "cultural formation which has involved the appropriation of Highland symbolism by Lowland Scotland" (132). Further, McCrone points out that "tartanry has come to stand for tourist knick-knackery, sporting kit for football and rugby

supporters, and the Edinburgh Tattoo" (132). These two modes were especially popular prior to the early twentieth century but pervade discussion of Scottish literature and life today.

Despite the influence of Tartanry and Kailyardism, Morgan has tried to create a new vision in his construction of Scottish and Glaswegian identity. As stated by Christopher Harvie in his article entitled "Ballads of a Nation," prior to the twentieth century:

it was the intelligentsia, rather than land or capital, that determined the country's distinctiveness.[...] The Scottish literati's closeness to industry and trade enabled it to incubate capitalist institutions while marketing an artful Scot's romanticism.

Harvie points out that writers like Burns and Scott employed a romanticism that was echoed through images of Scottish heroes, such as Rob Roy. However, as time passed and the role of religion, along with "sectarian brawling" increased, the "character of Scotland became indistinct" (Harvie). It is at this juncture that

Scottish literature begins to be influential, especially with the writing of Hugh MacDiarmid, who presented Scotland in a new light that sided with Scottish working class rather than Scottish upper class or rural class, as did Scott and Burns. However, other MacDiarmid contemporaries "damned nationalism as reactionary, and small nationalism as worse" (Harvie). Gibbon saw MacDiarmid as promoting this working-class nationalism that was not useful to, what he saw as, the beliefs of the country as a whole. It is in relation to Burns, Scott, MacDiarmid, and Gibbon that I place Edwin Morgan. Morgan does not promote a rural Scottish romanticism, nor a working-class ideology in his poetry. Rather, Morgan promotes an appreciation of all people, particularly the Glaswegians, and treasures their ability to overcome difficulties and feel hopeful about the future. His vision is new because it does not depend on previous constructs or ideas of nationalism, rather it is momentary and dependant upon man's status today, providing hope for tomorrow. As Sam Pryke states in his examination of research designed to identify Scottish national identity markers: "national

identity is not akin to a hand of cards that we acquire, shuffle and pragmatically present to others when thought propitious." It is in this light that I view Morgan's attempts at expressing his view of the Glaswegian and Scottish people. He does not attempt to create a national identity in his poetry, rather he hopes to develop a picture of Glasgow and Scotland that is lasting.

Despite Morgan's attempts, Tartanry, Kailyardism, and other literary visions of nationhood have become almost mythic in their presence and influence over both external and many internal views of Scotland. They are by no means the only presentations of Scotland, but have pervaded the discourse of the culture (McCrone 131). I shall consider Tartanry, Kailyardism, and images of Scottish romanticism in my later discussions of his poetry, especially his "Glasgow Sonnets" and "Sonnets from Scotland."

Scotland's History as a Nation

Although how Scotland sees itself as a nation is debatable, Scotland's history is full of conflicted political actions and diverse personal debates.

Scotland, as a nation, has undergone many changes since its original Gaelic inception (Ferguson 306). The search for the identity of the Scottish nation, as in William Ferguson's book of that title, is one which has inspired extensive debate. Who the Scottish are and how they have developed from the image of savage Picts to righteous heroes, such as William Wallace, to politically safe English aligners to devolutionist rebels is detailed and convoluted. However, ultimately, as presented in Morgan's poetry, cultural identity is mainly found in the portraits of the people of the country. Like Morgan, each person has his or her own perspective of Scotland and how it has progressed throughout the years. Each person either relishes or abhors tales of Scottish heroics and defensive battles to regain freedom against the English. It is through the eyes and words of its people that Morgan portrays Scotland and constructs his version of its identity.

Although the history of Scotland is complex and varied, most historians will agree that the 1707 Act of Union was a turning point in Scottish history. Despite the fact that Scotland had been making deals

with the English for centuries, in order to keep peace and raise the economic situation of its leaders, the Act of Union effectively pushed Scotland under England's cloak. Of course, Englishman Raymond Tong states in his article entitled "Scottish Nationalism: a view from England": "The Scots are a nation and their view of the history and culture of Britain has always been different from that of the English nation." Tong goes on to state that Scots "freely" entered into the Act of Union and cites all of the benefits of such an act to the Scottish nation. This is a sore point with many historians, but writers such as Alastair Gray agree with Tong's view, even though he is outraged by it: "Gray, in his polemic for Scottish independence, rails against the Scottish MPs who agreed to the Union. He suggests their motive was not patriotic but purely financial" (Kaczvinsky 789). The reasons behind the Act of Union, however, are not relevant to my discussion of Morgan other than to say that Scotland became a nation ruled by and dependant upon the English monarchy and parliamentary rule. This caused centuries of Scottish hatred toward the English prior to 1707 to remain after 1707. Although

some may argue that the Union benefited Scotland by helping strengthen economic, technological, and political realms, others see that Scotland lost its "identity" in 1707 (Kaczvinsky 780). Scotland's markers of culture such as its language, music, and literature were largely lost in the merger of 1707. The official language was English and the dominant choices for literature and music were that of the English. The Scots dialect, defiantly promoted by people such as Robert Burns, was pushed aside by writers such as Sir Walter Scott, whose novels are primarily in the dominant culture's English tongue. According to Donald Kaczvinsky in his examination of Alasdair Gray's presentation of Scottish identity in his novel Poor Things, the Scottish novel never developed and, as a marker of Scottish culture, was nonexistent until the modern period. Although the animosity toward the English was not always outward, as with William Wallace, a.k.a. "Braveheart" of Mel Gibson fame, who launched battles and wars with the English, it still existed. This Scottish dislike of the English was reciprocated by the English who have also expressed animosity toward the Scottish and

continue to stereotype and disparage them. As a result, much of Morgan's poetry about Scotland is connected to his feelings that Scotland should be an independent republic (Gregson 6). Since Scotland's own parliament began in July of 1999, Scotland has undergone a resurgence of national pride and empowerment over its new role in relation to England. Morgan's updated collection of Selected Poems in 2000 recaptures his hope for Scotland's future and visits the past. This hope is connected to his native city of Glasgow which also underwent positive change in the late twentieth century. Like Scotland, Glasgow has undergone a makeover which has aided in the resurgence of pride and empowerment for its people. As a native of Glasgow, Morgan has witnessed its changes, much like the changes of Scotland, with pride and enthusiasm over a promised future.

Glasgow History

Although Scottish literature includes a period in which the focus is around the rural images of the Kailyard, later writing shifts to examine the increasing harshness of city life. As Morgan puts it

in discussing the city: "The city is just as capable of stirring a writers' creative imagination as the world of nature is, and this is true whether the reactions are positive or negative" (Morgan 91). It is for this reason that I would like to provide a brief history of Glasgow, Morgan's hometown. As with the history of Scotland's unification and devolution, Glasgow has also undergone many changes within its political and physical landscape. These changes are represented in Morgan's poetry. Historically, Glasgow was a city much like other cities in Scotland. It depended on an agrarian lifestyle and the main occupations of its people were farming or fishing. This, however, soon changed with the arrival of industry. Glasgow by the late 1800s had become a center for the industrial revolution in Scotland. Major cities in Scotland housed nearly one third of the Scottish population as the agrarian industry began to fade and the people moved to the city to earn a living (Devine 108). Glasgow at this time had a huge textile industry, particularly in cotton manufacturing. This great influx of people to the city brought about incredible hardship for the city's

living conditions. People typically lived in close fitting tenements, with no kind of modern plumbing facilities and Glasgow was known as "the unhealthiest city in Britain" (Devine 168). The health conditions were substandard and waste was thrown out into the walkways between the tenements, where people would sit outside to socialize or where the children would play. Also, since the buildings were built so close, the movement of air was minimal, causing the stench of the filth to remain, permeating each of the domiciles. Light was also limited due to the close quarters, causing the walkways between the tenements to be dark and dank, breeding grounds for rats and other pests (Pacione 112). Despite these horrible conditions, the workers came in droves and the city's population continued to grow. Since the shipbuilding business was one of the largest, due to the proximity of the Clyde river, the docks were the primary place of employment.

Many workers came from outside of Scotland, from places such as Northern Ireland, Ireland, and England. This, however, sometimes brought about religious conflicts. One such longstanding conflict in Glasgow

is that between the Catholic and the Protestant (or Orange, as they are often referred). This conflict arose out of the influx of Irish Catholics, but was particularly strengthened with the development of two popular football teams: the Rangers and the Celtics. The significance of the clubs is so entrenched in the Glaswegian community that in 1976 when the Rangers announced their decision to include people of any religion, outcry among the people was huge (Pacione 249). People still felt that this divide should exist. The debate, although somewhat lessened, is still heard at each Rangers and Celtic match played today. This religious divide, although not always present in daily life, especially since Glasgow does not have the religious geographical divide of Northern Ireland, is still entrenched in the culture. Edwin Morgan has taken a stance in his writing that protests against such religious conflicts and defies his traditional Calvinist/Presbyterian roots. Morgan denounces Calvinism's strict theological views but does not embrace any other view. It is as if this religious divide between Catholic and Protestant, Calvinist and Church of Scotland, is equally faulty in

the eyes of Morgan. As is expressed in his poem "Trio," which I will later examine, he sees no place for religion; in his view, salvation is in the hands of man. It is no doubt, however, that Glasgow's religious conflicts impressed themselves on Morgan and shape his view of the city.

Glasgow continued to change throughout Morgan's lifetime. The city magistrates found the living conditions horrible and attempted to correct the problem by building council houses just outside the heart of Glasgow. These other areas, such as Blackhill, were not very successful since these homes continued to include impacted living conditions and the lower income tenants that composed the area were labeled as "rabble" and socially separated (Devine 348). The health conditions of the homes were better but the demand for them was too great and they did little to alleviate the problem. Similarly, in the 1950s, the city tried to create huge high rises that could house thousands of families at a relatively inexpensive price. Once again, these areas became breeding grounds for crime and in the end did little to help the city's housing problems. It wasn't until

the expansion of housing and the better working conditions and wages increased that the outlying areas, suburbs of Glasgow, came to be more highly populated and served as mild solutions for the increasing crime and economic problems that plagued the city.

During this search for a solution, the cityscape of Glasgow became more modern and filled with the latest technological advances. The old ramshackle tenements of the past, including some rather historic buildings that served as great representatives of Victorian architecture, were destroyed to make way for newer buildings. At one such juncture in the teens and twenties, Rennie MacIntosh, a great Glaswegian architect, who is included in the Art Deco and Arts and Crafts movements of the beginning of the twentieth century, helped design and create many of the exteriors and interiors of the buildings in Glasgow. It was this change and modernization that captured Morgan's eye. It is no wonder that Morgan's poetry, such as his sonnets, reflects his love for modernity and hope that such change could provide a better future. In Glasgow this change has made the city

twice "European City of Culture" in the last decade. No doubt, Morgan sees this recognition as a sign of how the modernity of a city is rewarded. Although some might argue that the economic problems of the poor still exist, that the housing problems are still prevalent, and that the city fathers merely wanted to make money by creating superficial change, the move is still a positive start toward the making of a modern city. It is in this light that I think Morgan sees Glasgow. He does not, in his poetry or other writings, discount the sad poignancy of the city's poor and working class, but recognizes their plight and sympathetically presents it. However, he also provides hope and pride in what may come and how a new and modern future (particularly one that includes Scottish independence) may bring hope. These people are presented in some of his most insightful poems such as "King Billy" and "In the Snack Bar."

Morgan was not alone in his view of Glasgow's growth and the changing history of Scotland. The poets of what is now labeled "the Scottish Renaissance," such as: Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, George Mackay Brown, and Norman MacCaig, also wrote

about Scotland's growth. These poets are representative of the ways in which Scotland has changed. They are varied in their presentation of Scotland, and each of them reveals various contrasts about living in Scotland, from religion to technology to modern-day Glasgow. However, it is through Morgan's poetry that I most see a connection to the future as well as the past, the modern and the traditional, the technological and the pastoral, and the love and the violence of Scotland. He ties each contrast together beautifully, but in the process, through his experimentation with so many different forms and themes, he also manages to paint a unique portrait of Scotland in the twentieth century and Scotland today. His portraits of the daily bus rider, the man coming home from the pub, the young couple in love, the street thugs, the invalids, and the pop icons all come together to reveal what he sees as a Scotland that is thriving and feeding on the world around it, not giving into past strife, not dwelling on old traditions, but using it all to best form a culture that is able to cope with contradiction and dichotomies that are hundreds of years old. Morgan's

playfulness and hope for the future reveal a Scotland that has incorporated the antiquated beauty, honor, and tradition of its pastoral past and is hoping, wishing, and creating a wondrous tomorrow. Morgan's message of the poignancy of unabashed human endurance and hope for the future of Scotland's people is present in his poems, as I plan to demonstrate in this thesis.

CHAPTER TWO

MORGAN'S CONCRETE POETRY

Growing up in twentieth-century Glasgow shaped Edwin Morgan, both as a writer and as a person. His first hand experience with the technological advances of a modern culture and constant observations of the changed Glasgow skyline shaped his view of life. This, however, did not disconnect him from a knowledge and understanding of the past; rather, it allowed him to see the connection between what was currently happening in Glasgow and what had happened historically. His translations of Anglo-Saxon poetry, such as Beowulf, reveal his connection to the past and the heroism he hoped for in daily life. Morgan's poetry embodies the idea of the heroic ideal of yesterday with the promised hope of tomorrow.

The mechanistic modern aspect of this view is best displayed in his concrete poetry. It is in this form that Morgan uses the modern form of typeface and placement to alter traditional messages or ideas. This modern attachment to language is best explained by Ian Gregson in his analysis of Morgan's poetry:

Clearly the underlying metaphor is with the taking apart and reassembling of a machine and this is connected with the way that Morgan has ranged himself against those poets (Eliot, Yeats, Stevens, Muir) who, explicitly or implicitly, condemn technology and mostly exclude it from their work, and alongside those (MacDiarmid, Mayakovsky, Voznesensky) who, with some qualifications, accept it and explore its human implications.

This means that Morgan employs a mechanistic analogy, not in the condemnatory way that is almost traditional in poetry written in English, but in a celebratory way. It also means that when he treats poetry and language like a machine (as he does in his sound and concrete poems) as something to be deconstructed he is doing so in order to celebrate them. (8)

Gregson clearly understands Morgan's poetry as well as what I see as Morgan's mission in his writing. Morgan strives to celebrate humanity by unconventionally

celebrating its creations. Machines and technology service human needs and are tools by which we express our needs for a better future. By creating "mechanistic" poetry, Morgan is servicing his writing and creative inspiration in a manner which reflects societies methods. The concrete poetry I will examine in this chapter demonstrates Morgan's ability to address human concerns and Scottish cultural dilemmas in the face of a modern, technologically advancing world.

"Message Clear"

Concrete poetry is a method of writing that allows the visual structure of the poem to capture the heart and imagination as much as the content. Morgan's earliest work plays with the concrete form. One poem, "Message Clear," which is also considered an emergent poem, uses technology to question and force the reader to consider notions of religion and Christianity. Morgan does this by scattering letters, which seem to be struggling for meaning, throughout the page and exploring each person's role in that process of religious discovery. He begins the poem

with a question, "am i" (1) which echoes philosophical concerns of being and existence. This also echoes the debate over whether or not people have a soul within the writings of philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle. Morgan's question prompts the reader to follow a philosophical debate via technology. In Morgan's subsequent lines, he states, "i am he" (3) and "her o" (4) which are made more complex with what follows "h ur t" (5), a line that calls into question the preceding two. It does this by causing the reader to question what "he" the "hero" has done to either cause "hurt" or experience it. Morgan is also toying with the traditional split of gender roles by stating that he is both male and female, but by adding a belated "o" to "her" Morgan is calling into question the connection between man and woman and their connection to the idealized, to the hero.

At this point in the poem, notions of Beowulf and the figure of the hero arise. But why split the "o"? Is Morgan saying that she is the hero? Or that he is the hero? Woman, "her", is essentially a hero, a hero with the simple addition of an "o" and O as in ovary?

Ovulation? By adding the "o" later, is one meant to conjure up notions of ♀ that is known to represent women throughout the world? But in the context of the poems conclusion, is this simply a reference to Christ--the hero of Christendom and the salvation of many? The next lines reference to a split "hurt" implies a slow hurt, a hurt that lasts long and continues for eternity. This follows as a paradox or obstacle to faith because the hero is hurt and must, therefore, stumble in his quest (Edgecombe 673). This also seems to confirm Morgan's reference to Christ, but this notion of "hurt" as split up and extended carries further into the hurts of he and her, a man and a woman.

People say that the pains of love last forever, but given Morgan's own sexual tendencies and given that "he" and "her" are on different lines in the poem, one wonders if Morgan is contemplating whether man and woman can ever come together. Will they only hurt one another both "there and" "he re and" "here" as lines five to seven assert? Or is it merely Christ the hero that was hurt by human beings both

"there" (6) in his side, "here" (7) on his crown, and "here" (8) in his heart?

As the poem continues with the continued image of pain with "i am rife" (11) he takes that pain beyond the physical to the mental with tinges of anger and rage. A calm picture of Christ, or even a pain-stricken figure of Christ on the cross does not express rage or anger. Rather than focusing on a picture of an angry, vengeful God, Morgan focuses on Christ's physical torturing and suffering. Morgan wants the reader to feel the psychological pain as well as the physical. Yet "i am rife" comes out slowly as if the wording, as we see it and want to read it, is slow and painful. It is so painful that it must exude slowly. To whom is this meant? Who is rife? He clarifies this as he next says "rife in Scion" which further implies a paradox of "omnipresence and simultaneous incarnation" (Edgecombe 673). The religious exploration and theme continues throughout the poem as he toys with language and seeks out messages. Morgan's experience as a translator encourages such play and is evident here, but his choice of topics and method of deconstruction is

typical of his work and Scottish literature as a whole. In his essay entitled "Morgan's Words" W.N. Herbert comments on Morgan's emergent poems such as "Message Clear":

His work as a whole exhibits a concern to find those messages in things which have been overlooked because of the status of those things. There's something of the cabbalist in this and something of the pop artist but principally, I think there's something Scottish in it, a response to a long-term oppression so insidious as to have become a sub-conscious habit in the Scots themselves. Morgan's search for voices represents an enormous freedom from that oppression. (73)

This search is pivotal in "Message Clear" because it calls into question Christianity by breaking apart such a commonly accepted phrase, as "I am the Resurrection and the Life." Morgan is calling into question all history of religion in Scotland. This exemplifies the debate that has been ongoing since the arrival of the northern Irish shipbuilders in the late

1800s. Morgan's connection to Glasgow and its history, coupled with his explorations abroad, have brought him to this point. He is using the unusual form of concrete poetry to explain Jesus, Christianity, theology as a whole. By deconstructing this commonly accepted term, Morgan is reconstructing the religious views of the people. He is taking what is a traditionally accepted biblical proclamation of Christ and calling into question each aspect of its development and meaning. In essence, he is transforming the stagnant words of a traditional figure and giving them a new meaning in a culture that aims to recreate itself in a new light. This culture may be Glasgow, but it could be any place that is striving for a better future by embracing a modernity that sometimes abandons all that was done or believed before.

Morgan's transformation also turns this Christian statement into a play between the sexes and a new view of life and death. This play continues in the poem with "i d ie" (14) and "am e res ect" (15) along with "am e res ection" (16) which all allude to a death by sex. I die could be the physical

Regardless of his intent, the split between humans and Christ is still strongly felt here.

The split here, however, goes beyond that of man and woman by exploring the connection between Christ and the sexual pleasures of the flesh. Which is more satisfying? A death and resurrection through Christ or a death and resurrection through sex? The ideas behind morality and physical pleasures are questioned and re-examined by calling for a greater understanding of the concept of Christ, salvation, and resurrection. Also in the poem Morgan calls for pagan gods such as "ra" (35) and connects Ra as sun god with Christ as the Son of God. Once again Morgan uses the pagan and the Christian to show a connection between humans and Christ. Ultimately we see that "i" is Christ in that he states "i am the resurrection and the life" (55) but then again, is it Christ speaking or is it humanity? When the speaker states "i resurrect" (49) is he recalling the earlier notion of resurrection through sexual orgasm and people's ability to continually resurrect this feeling of death or otherwise? The ultimate conclusion is not a simple assertion of Christ, but the end of a philosophical

debate that is never ending. Is man the church or is the church man? In this simple play with words and placement, Morgan is able to consider the placement of religion within the life of all people and the way in which they must deal with this placement. This is relevant to the Scottish sense of religious fervor since Scotland is composed of various religious groups. Outside of the Church of Scotland the most prevalent is the Catholic, but Scotland is also increasing in the number of Hindus and Buddhists. Placement becomes a problem too, when simple football matches cause riots or fighting like that between the Rangers and Celtics. To the observer, it is obvious that religious affiliation or fervor is sometimes misplaced. "Message Clear" points that out and that Morgan, like many other Scots, is unsure about that religious placement.

However, in "Message Clear", Morgan is not just dealing with current and past conflicts between religion and gender, but also capturing a reflection of the Scottish people as Herbert suggests. Morgan depicts Scotland, like so many other cultures, as continuously conflicted by the role religion should

play in life and how individuals are meant to respond to that role. "Message Clear" allows us to accept the mundane while also embracing the otherworldly. Perhaps you need one to achieve the other? Although Morgan is no prophet or evangelical figure, in his picture of hope for understanding, he reflects the need we all have to hope for an answer. As is clear in later poems such as "In the Snack Bar" and "Sonnets from Scotland," Morgan is aware of the cruelty of nature and hopes that people can come together to ameliorate the problem.

"Archives"

In his poem, "Archives," Morgan also considers a problematic feature of the Scottish psyche, which is the question of where tradition ends, and modernity takes over. What is forgotten and what remains within us of the past? Is the past ever lost? By fading out the letters in the phrase "generation upon" (1) Morgan is revealing to us that generation upon generation is with us, but that that tradition and reliance on the past proves to be unstable. Or as Watson states:

Time passes and records are lost, or they become fragile and unclear. The very word 'generation' degenerates before our eyes, and the visual effect is like a long, narrow banner frayed and tattered at the end. (177)

This "frayed and tattered" banner is what is left of the past in the poem. Much like the reformation of Glasgow, during the twentieth century, what is in the past is decimated only leaving fragments of what was. In Glasgow, this meant making room for a greater tomorrow, at least as represented in Morgan's poetry. The fraying and tattering, as with blocks of tenement buildings, which were later demolished completely, are what allowed Glasgow to create a new vision of itself and eventually become a European city of culture. I think that it is with this in mind that Morgan presents "Archives." He allows the reader to appreciate and understand the past, with its gaping wholes and repetition of deeds, so that they can move on, incorporating bits of it into their lives.

Morgan's presentation of this disintegration begins with the absence of vowels. This immediately transforms the poem by giving it a more aggressive

and harsh mood. The absence of vowels leaves the reader with consonants such as "g r n n" (29) which seem to release a groan that echoes the lament our elders have of generation's past regrets, sorrows, and errors that shape who we now are. Yet with the final "g" (32) Morgan implies that we need to slowly release our ties to the past and adapt to an ever-changing future. He also implies that we need to keep a bit of the past as a reminder of where we have been. The final "g", possibly suggesting Glasgow itself, is much like the city of Morgan's home. Like Glasgow, Morgan, according to Robert Crawford in his interview with the poet, identifies with "Archives" message:

He likes to present himself as a poet of the new, yet he has also a strong archival sense....This combination of being in one sense a historian-in-disguise of Scottish cultural energy, and in another sense a poet constantly ready to risk and experiment is surely what has mattered so much to younger writers in Scotland, and beyond.

(Crawford "Morgan's Ludic..." 25)

Like Crawford, I see Morgan in "Archives" as expressing the Scottish historical tradition, which is to stay connected with the past. This past, however, is fleeting and only the beginning of what the hope of the future can provide. Morgan leaves the last "g" to show that we should not lose sight of this hope. He leaves the reader of the poem with enough of the familiar to continue on and develop a new future.

The very title, "Archives," reminds one of a deserted library where a modern-day person digs to gather some bit of truth only to find a mere trace of that past. In a country where past grievances and sacrifices are known worldwide, so much so that the past ideals cannot be escaped in the kitsch of modern Scottish commercialism, the need to release this strong, solid presence is necessary to survive. This is especially true when considered with Morgan's poetry, which has been compared to a life which is "bound up with translation, with change" (Crawford 17). Morgan recognizes the need for change in life as he turns to technology for Scotland's future hope.

"Siesta of the Hungarian Snake"

In contrast to Morgan's emergent and unemergent poems, a truly classic concrete poem such as the "Siesta of the Hungarian Snake" is noteworthy. Although seemingly out of place in this discussion, the poem captures exactly what "Message Clear" and "Archives" achieve. Morgan's playfulness with form is emblematic of the hope he sees for the future of Scotland. Morgan opposes letters to form one sinuous vision. The fact that the snake is Hungarian arises from Morgan's own familiarity with the language and his experience translating it (McCarey 104). But it also arises from the juxtaposition of "s" and "z", two very common letters used to express the sounds of the Hungarian language, but also two visually contrasting letters that express the differences between people and cultures. Perhaps the differences are merely a siesta, but Morgan presents them as harmonious figures that are part of the movement needed to breathe, to survive. Visually, the "s" is smooth and flowing while the "z" is harsh and ragged in its presentation. Undoubtedly, these letters capture the beauty yet guttural quality of the Hungarian language. However,

they also offer a picture of a harsh and a calm world where both beauty and ugliness can coexist. This comparison has also been made of Glasgow, which has made major renovations to its exterior but ignored larger issues related to social problems of the city (Maver 222). In the poem, Morgan may have been merely echoing some of the issues that were problematic for Glasgow as it made attempts at revitalization. As in much of Morgan's poetry, the "Siesta of the Hungarian Snake" captures the dichotomy of trying to remember the past while moving on to a better future. This contrast, however, goes beyond a physical or social debate, but echoes biblical concerns in the Garden of Eden. The "s" and "z" alteration creates a creature that is beautiful in its stagnant sleep but also, in relation to Christianity, responsible for evil and temptation. Like "Message Clear," Morgan is calling into question the issue of religious doctrine. By merely presenting a snake, Morgan reveals a section of religion that questions original sin. It evokes images of blame, upon women and men, for allowing themselves to be duped. That gullibility or lack of moral standing are what some see as problematic today.

This was no less problematic after World War II when Scottish membership in the Church of Scotland was declining (Maver 280) and when Morgan wrote this poem. Morgan uses contrast to reinforce his view of Scotland and of what he saw for its future.

In expressing his view, Morgan goes beyond Scotland or England, and the problems of North and South, by extending to a foreign clime such as Hungary. He ignores the seeming inability of Scotland to coexist with England, an ongoing battle that has occurred over the past three hundred years, and moves to a European view of sinuous coexistence. But even the existence within Scotland is difficult to ascertain with the prevalent drug abuse and gang violence that occurred in the 1960s and 1970s in Morgan's native town of Glasgow. McCarra points out how this affected Morgan's poetry: "In the 1960s above all, his own fascination produced fascinating poems about motorway lights, snack-bars, slum landlords, gang leaders, drunks, and tough children" (6). Perhaps Morgan needs to look elsewhere to gain a better understanding of life within his hometown. Morgan seems to be looking for the answers beyond

Glasgow and Scotland: "His attempt to rid writers of their obsession with Scottishness, with languages, is of course, part of his wider concern that poetry, if it is to be honest, must deal with the world of its time..." (Rillie 112). Morgan's hope is that Scottish writers look beyond their nationality to write. Yet in saying this he himself is displaying a hope that more Scottish people will represent themselves to the global community. His own affection for Scotland is never lost despite the universality of his writing.

CHAPTER THREE

MORGAN'S GLASWEGIAN PORTRAITS

Despite the universal appeal that Morgan holds for many, some of his most memorable poems are his portraits of the Glaswegian people. Morgan's poetry is not a particularly idealized view of the world. Rather, he characterizes the world via portraits of people. Sometimes these portraits are unflattering. However, inherent in them is Morgan's commentary and hope for humanity, especially for the people of Glasgow. One such portrait which perfectly reflects the darker side of Glasgow life is his poem entitled "King Billy." "King Billy" along with another poem entitled "In the Snack Bar" capture the face of Scotland for Morgan and demonstrate the strength behind it.

"King Billy"

Sometimes that strength was brutal and rough as with Billy Fullerton, memorialized by Morgan as "King Billy." In his poem, Morgan uses the figure of King Billy to display various facets of the modern Scot. In the poem, Billy turns to vice, evil, and self

empowerment to cope with the otherwise hostile world of Glasgow. This "big man" motif presents itself via a conflicted figure that is unable to take on both roles. Morgan creates a character that reflects the inner and outer struggle between the private and the personal. Although this doesn't necessarily exemplify any single culture, McCrone convincingly argues for a Scottish inferiority complex that must be allowed to vent itself. Perhaps the best form of release is through literature.

Despite the notion that McCrone puts forth, I think Morgan was merely capturing a moment in time, as he does with more precision later in his "Instamatic Poetry." Growing up in twentieth-century Glasgow, sectarianism was familiar to Morgan. According to Maver, "sectarianism was an ingrained feature of inter-war gangs like the Billy Boys of Bridgeton, who flaunted their allegiance to Orangeism on and off the football terraces" (254). The Billy Boys rivals were known as the Catholic Norman Conquerors, or the Conks, and were often engaged in gang warfare with the Billy Boys. The Billy Boys, led by Billy Fullerton, were quite popular in Glasgow since anti-Catholic sentiment

was popular, especially in the 1930s, when the gang was at its height (Maver 254-5). Gang activity in Glasgow was spurred by these major rival gangs and up until the 1970s, gang violence was a frequent problem in the city. Morgan witnessed this and must have seen, in his early years, the prevalence of gang fervor in the city:

The Billy Boys even charged subscriptions and issued membership cards, which pledged patriotic allegiance to crown and constitution. The funds were used for paying court fines, showing that gang activity in Glasgow could be rather more organised than the mindless, razor-wielding image of the newspapers. (Maver 254)

The fact that the gangs were becoming organized, like many American gangs, caused the then-chief constable, Percy Sillitoe to turn to J. Edgar Hoover for assistance. The result was the capture and imprisonment of Billy Fullerton (Maver 255). Although gang crime continued to be a problem in Glasgow, the imprisonment of Billy Fullerton was certainly felt throughout the city. It is Billy Fullerton's impact

on the city and his ultimate demise that are depicted in Morgan's poem "King Billy."

The first stanza sets the scene for the rest of the poem. Morgan is very cinematic in his depiction, first starting with the clouds and sky, then following the rain down to the cemetery gates. The reader is led beyond the gates, much like we are led beyond the gates of Citizen Kane's home in the movie of that title: "Grey over Riddrie the clouds piled up, / dragged their rain through the cemetery trees. / The gates shone cold" (1-3). This image sets the tone of the poem but does not necessarily present a favorable attitude toward Billy Fullerton. Rather, by having the clouds be made to "drag" their rain and the gates presented as "cold," Morgan is causing the reader, like the clouds, to feel reluctant in developing sympathies for the scene. This is furthered in his next few lines: "Wind rose / flaring the hissing leaves, the branches swung, heavy, across the lamps" (3-5). By using verbs such as "flaring" and "hissing" Morgan creates a feeling of resentment or foreboding that lessens any sympathy the reader may have toward the scene. Also, the use of sibilance throughout the

lines further that hissing and flaring throughout the reading. Morgan's negative presentation of this funeral scene is felt. However, Morgan then turns to the graveyard itself and the mood slightly changes: "Gravestones huddled in drizzling shadow / flickering streetlight scanned the requiescats, / a name and an urn, a date, a dove / picked out, lost, half-regained" (6-9). The fact that the gravestones are "huddled" shows some fear. Why would the gravestones need to huddle closer together? Is it so cold? Or are they afraid? The flickering streetlight and the list of items found in the graveyard seem to share the nameless fear. Morgan's next lines, to end the stanza, give a clue: "What is this dripping wreath, blown from its grave / red, white, blue, and gold / 'To Our Leader of Thirty Years Ago'-" (10-12). This depiction of the dead leader serves its purpose in this opener. First, it creates a reason for the fear by naming the person who, doubtless, caused fear among the people in the town by leading the Billy Boys in many criminal exploits. The dripping wreath connotes images of blood falling, especially when joined with the first color of red. Secondly, the other colors

also break up the poem into segments of King Billy's fame. The red, as mentioned previously, captures the idea of blood, linking Billy to his criminal actions while he was alive. The next two colors, however, white and blue, are the colors of Scotland's flag and connect the antics of King Billy with the state of the Glasgow people.

Many Glaswegians felt that Billy served the Scottish public in aiming to rid the Catholics from the city. In that sense Billy was a hero for the people. Finally, the gold represents the money or fame that were associated with Billy. He raised money to booster his own economic success but also to help his gang members to free themselves from jail. These colors, although typical of a funerary wreath, serve to represent the many roles in which Morgan placed King Billy. Finally, the message on the wreath, which is aimlessly floating about, captures the idea that it has been thirty years since Billy led the Billy Boys. The fact that the wreath is floating about the graveyard and the message dates Billy's leadership indicates that things may have changed and Billy's impact is not so heavily felt anymore. Morgan's aim

in this first stanza is pivotal because he represents Scotland and Glasgow here. This notable figure in the community has passed, yet Morgan aims to lessen the sympathy felt at the passing and cause the reader to see the slight impact left by King Billy.

As he begins the next stanza, which completes the poem, Morgan looks less at objects and weather conditions, and more on the effect King Billy's passing has on the people. He moves slightly back in time, revealing the details of King Billy's funeral procession. "Bareheaded, in dark suits, with flutes / and drums, they brought him here, in procession / seriously" (13-15). Like Morgan's somber opening, the people who come to pay homage to their fallen leader, also are somber. Rather than the bitterness and unsympathetic portrayal of Morgan's first stanza, however, this stanza shows the people as respectful and saddened by their loss. The fact that they are "bareheaded" and walk "seriously" shows that they don't take this death lightly and that they respected this man. Morgan follows this portrait of the procession with a listing of King Billy's background and activities, such as his usually poverty-stricken

or violent life. This continues until Morgan comes back to the funeral procession:

No, but it isn't the violence they remember
but the legend of a violent man
born poor, gang leader in the bad times
of idleness and boredom, lost in better
days,
a bouncer in a betting club,
a quiet man at last, dying
alone in Bridgeton in a box bed. (26-32)

Morgan seems to qualify the respect and feelings of loss the people are feeling. Rather than label them as rabble rousers who loved King Billy's violent acts, he shows them as people who loved the man "the legend." Perhaps his progression from poverty to leader of a gang is admirable for them because they too are poverty stricken and remember how tough things used to be and still are. Perhaps the fear of the gravestones in Morgan's opening are reflected in the people of the procession, who fear to go out like Billy, "alone in a box bed." Morgan doesn't condemn their view of Billy, nor does he approve it, but at the very least, he understands it. He goes on in the

poem to show their love: "So a thousand people stopped the traffic / for the hearse of a folk hero and the flutes / threw 'Onward Christian Soldiers' to the winds / from unironic lips" (32-34). In this small portion of the poem, Morgan captures both the magnitude of the fervor associated with Billy and the belief that the people had in Billy's ideas. These ideas are what made Billy a "folk hero" and caused songs to be sung about him. Morgan's presentation of Billy shows him as a martyr for the people who felt that his motivations in Orangeism were right, in every sense. Morgan reflects the views of the Glaswegian people here by providing a snapshot into their existence. He lets the reader feel the power of their beliefs, but not without his own personal commentary. Morgan's use of two words "unironic lips" seems to reflect more than the meaning behind the people's songs, but his own surprise at how they could sing such songs as "Onward Christian Soldiers" without irony. Billy Fullerton, who used violence in an attempt to silence or humiliate the Catholics, would be one that a person could hardly consider a Christian soldier. But rather than condemning them for their

martyrdom of Billy, Morgan allows the reader to make up his or her own mind. As onlooker and observer of the mourners who "kept in step" and "wept" (34-35) the reader decides whether or not this is a scene for which one should shed tears. They too saw themselves as soldiers keeping in step with Billy's lead. Morgan reveals the sad condition of these people who feel that they need a hero like Billy to give them purpose, to keep them "in step" with their vision of superior religious control or Orangeism.

Ultimately, at the poem's close, Morgan returns to the time after the funeral procession to make a final comment. Morgan states: "Go from the grave. The shrill flutes / are silent, the march dispersed. / Deplore what is to be deplored, / and then find out the rest" (36-39). What he seems to be saying here is that once this ritual of homage has been paid to this "folk hero" it's time to consider what it all means for you, in your life. He instructs us to "deplore" what we must but then to "find out the rest." This confirms Morgan's own understanding of the ambivalence that many must face upon looking at a scene such as this. Neither he nor I can condemn these people for

praising a person who has given them a purpose and has supported their life and views. Morgan wants the reader to figure out what was good about Billy and see how this knowledge can help with the issues of poverty and isolation, that many of these people face. Rather than preaching to the reader, Morgan does what he often does in his poems; he gives the reader hope while confirming and affirming the darkness and bleakness around us. As with King Billy, who died alone, so with Glasgow, which must face up to its devils and move forward to provide a brighter future.

"In the Snack Bar"

A poem with a similar theme, but focusing on the living, is "In the Snack Bar." This poem along with "King Billy" was published in a collection called Second Life in 1968. At the time of publication, Glasgow was a city overcrowded despite many attempts to ease the congestion of the city: "The overall aim was to demolish 97,000 dwellings.... The magnitude of redevelopment was stressed, above all the preference for multi-storey apartment blocks as a quick and cost effective housing solution" (Maver 265). The building

of this type of housing often did little more than relocate congested areas. People were placed in high rise buildings but given little more to accommodate the social and personal needs of their households: "Despite the modernity of high-rise living, the environment proved to be isolating, insecure and alienating for many of the residents" and the corporation responsible for such building was accused of creating "costly 'new slums'" (Maver 265,267). This feeling of isolation, insecurity, and alienation, whether in the "new slums" or in the old part of Glasgow, are what inspired Morgan to put a face to the troubles of the city. "In the Snack Bar" demonstrates the adversity which the handicapped and poor must face in daily living, but also showcases the humanity of the city.

After describing the setting of the snack bar, Morgan quickly moves to a description of the elderly patron who needs assistance. The crowd and the movement of those in the snack bar aid in gaining a better understanding of the man's experience:

An old man is trying to get to his feet
from the low round stool fixed to the floor.

Slowly he levers himself up, his hands have
no power.

He is as far as he can get. The dismal hump
looming over him forces his head down.

He stands in his stained beltless gaberdine
like a monstrous animal caught in a tent
in some story. (4-11)

Morgan begins by presenting a rather unpleasant picture of this man who, at this point, is little more than a portrait of Quasimodo. The slow and determined way he "levers himself up" despite the lack of power in his hands allows the reader to catch its first glimpse at his strength. Regardless of physical limitations, he still rises to the challenge of daily living by steadily performing his mundane tasks. However, as Morgan describes his humped back and stance which appears like a swaying animal fighting for release, the figure of the old man is pitiable. His struggle to stand, to raise his head, is negligible when compared with his first statement: "'I want - to go to the - toilet'" (22). This man, who is also blind, struggles and stands to announce his most personal needs to the crowd in the snack bar.

His shame and embarrassment aren't mentioned or recognized by Morgan. Rather, it is his calm demeanor that Morgan shows us.

As the scene continues, we are placed in the mind of the man who assists the old man with his most basic needs. Is this man Morgan or simply another Glaswegian citizen who is compassionate enough to assist this man? Regardless, as we follow him down the stairs, the old man's familiarity with this deed reveals itself: "I take his arm. 'Give me - your arm - it's better,' he says" (24). Morgan captures what must be the daily routine of this old man by putting him in control of a situation that he knows so well. Morgan shows that the old man knows the best way to escort the guide down the steps, thereby revealing the old man's forced reminder of his own humiliating situation. The dashes, both here and previously, emphasize the old man's slow yet deliberate effort. By putting us in the mind and actions of the helper in the poem, we are made to look at our own compassionate nature and consider what our own actions might be should a similar situation present itself. Were this portrait only of the old man, we would give our

compassion and pity freely, without hesitation.

However, since we are put in the position of the old man's helper, we are forced to come to terms with our own fears of aging and illness:

I concentrate
my life to his: crunch of spilt sugar,
slidy puddle from the night's umbrellas,
table edges, people's feet,
hiss of the coffee-machine, voices and
laughter,
smell of a cigar, hamburgers, wet coats
steaming,
and the slow dangerous inches to the stairs.
I put his right hand on the rail
and take his stick. He clings to me.

(28-36)

By itemizing each sound and sensation of the trip to the stairs, the narrator seems to be inhabiting the life of the old man. The crowd is little more than oblivious to the old man's plight, but this one helper guides him along, trying to build trust in the old man. Morgan records each moment in their journey to the bathroom, allowing the reader to be a part of the

experience, coming to terms with her own feelings toward the old man. In a discussion of Baudelaire and the poetry of the city Morgan says:

The poet's eye is keen, but so is his mind, thinking about poverty, [...] growing old, and love, and loneliness. The crowds, though anonymous, are in fact crowds of individuals, and he swims with them, and makes their lives the matter of his poetry.

(Morgan "The Poetry of the City" 94)

It is exactly this keenness of eye that Morgan employs in this poem. He sees the individual in the crowd, despite the fact that others do not, and writes of him. To Morgan, this old clinging man, who must depend on others to survive in this world, is of value and worth noticing. The slow, steady pace with which he must move, the calm demeanor, the direct manner of speaking, all matter to Morgan, and therefore, matter to us in this poem.

The narrator continues with each step of his experience, commenting on what he thinks it all means. He even notes that "the trickle of his water is thin and slow, / an old man's apology for living" (45-6).

The narrator takes a lot on in helping this man. This is evident through each step he details, such as washing the old man's hands and climbing up the stairs: "He climbs, and steadily enough. / He climbs, we climb. He climbs / with many pauses but with that one / persisting patience of the undefeated / which is the nature of man when all is said" (57-61). It is here that the narrator unites with the old man in climbing side-by-side with him and in recognizing how this old man's persistence has a greater significance. The narrator claims that the nature of all people is to continue on despite adversity. I think that this is Morgan's purpose in the poem, because as with many of his other poems, he uses a single person to reveal the struggles of many others. He does this with "King Billy" and other poems such as "The Second Life" and "Good Friday."

As the narrator watches the old man helped onto a bus, he reflects on the meaning of this exchange:

Does he know how frightening he is in his
strangeness

under his mountainous coat, his hands like
wet leaves

stuck to the half-white stick?

His life depends on many who would evade
him.

But he cannot reckon up the chances,
having one thing to do,
to haul his blind hump through these rains
of August.

Dear Christ, to be born for this! (73-80)

Here Morgan presents the narrator as confused and distanced from the man with whom, only moments before, he had practically become one. The insertion of a fear and pity of the old man echoes the early description of him. However, the narrator, despite his earlier empathy, can't seem to overcome the struggles that the old man must daily face. This only strengthens the portrayal of the old man because it gives him a credibility and power that is unattainable by the narrator. In fact, the narrator is so shocked that he invokes Christ when he says "to be born for this!" Erik Frykman claims that there is a sense of "tragic waste" (147) in the poem, but I think that is only the case if you fully adopt the narrator's conclusion. Morgan's aim here isn't so much about the

old man as a figure of "tragic waste," rather it is to invoke a sense of humility and empathy in the reader. Morgan seems to say that despite the horrid condition in which we sometimes find ourselves, as with the old man, we must hold on to the hope that persistence, experimentation, and communal growth can provide. This is certainly true of Glasgow, but it is also true for the people who live there. I agree with Frykman in his earlier explanation of Morgan's intent in his poetry, especially "In the Snack Bar": "Morgan is perturbed about the future of mankind; but what seems equally, perhaps more, striking is his empathy when individual destinies are concerned, and 'In the Snack-bar' is a case in point" (145). Morgan doesn't present a sad waste of a man, but uses the narrator to make that point. What Morgan points out is more meaningful; that the beautiful thing about human beings is that they survive, depend on a community, and are capable of retaining a humanity and dignity, despite the negative hand that life sometimes deals them. What we make of our life, like Billy Fullerton, isn't always positive, but it serves a purpose and

makes us strive to discover our own purpose in the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

MORGAN'S INSTAMATIC POETRY

As demonstrated in the last chapter, Morgan does not limit his discussions to religious, philosophical, or political issues. He broadens his outlook by examining the Scottish situation in a more day-to-day manner, through portraits of its people, particularly the people of Glasgow. As mentioned previously, Glasgow is Morgan's hometown and a city that experienced problems of overcrowding and overzealous city leaders in the 1970s. Since then, however, it has twice been named European City of Culture. But as Morgan experiences the good and bad of Glasgow he grows closer and closer to it. Seemingly in direct response to the Kailyard poetry of the past, Morgan writes that "the city is just as capable of stirring a writer's creative imagination as the world of nature is, and this is true whether the reactions are positive or negative" ("Poetry of the City" 91). A series of poems, entitled "Instamatic Poems," aim to capture, more than just individuals, but snapshots in time which are usually based on newspaper articles and

current events daily presented in Scotland. The "Instamatic Poems," are a raw and sometimes disheartening vision of the ways in which the Glaswegian people must cope with the hardships of their life. This echoes "In the Snack Bar" and "King Billy" but in the "Instamatic Poems" Morgan also considers media presentation and journalistic commentary.

Coping often translates into hardness, but never without hope. In a discussion of Morgan's "Instamatic Poems," Roderick Watson writes: "In the global village of the modern news media we learn to distance ourselves from the stories of pain and human suffering which assail us at every turn. And yet we remain indecently intimate with such images, at least for the moment before we change channels or turn to the next page of news" (16). It is images like these that Morgan deals with in his "Instamatic Poems." Morgan examines the way the media controls the responses of the reader and presents news so as to best shock and sell papers. However, Morgan in his usual positive outlook on the city does not refrain from including

bits of humor and hope throughout his "Instamatic Poems."

"Glasgow 5 March 1971"

One poem which presents a grim look at the daily events that occur in Scotland is "Glasgow 5 March 1971." The poem's opening is abrupt and unsettling while providing extensive information about the victims of the crime:

With a ragged diamond
of shattered plate-glass
a young man and his girl
are falling backwards into a shop-window.

(1-4)

In these four short lines, Morgan is able to tell a story of hope and promise that is shocking in its present condition. The "ragged diamond" conjures up images of love, marriage, innocence, hope for a better future, and greed. It is in these third and fourth words of the poem that the motivation for the attack lies. The couple, walking along Sauchiehall Street merely pauses to glance upon a window of diamond engagement rings. Maybe a promise is made, maybe not.

Either way, the couple's "diamond" turns "ragged" as they are used as a means by which some hoodlums wish to achieve their own "diamond." They have disrupted the hopefulness and joy that a man and his girl are enjoying by throwing them into a window to gather their own riches. Morgan uses the objectification often presented in news articles to cause us to react. His own presentation of a Glasgow news item asserts his feelings of disgust and concern (Watson 17). The news article is seemingly like any other; however, Morgan pulls the reader into the scene by conveying the power and harshness of the crime, by jarring us into a reality that we all wish to avoid, and making us face our own fears.

We do not see the throw, but Morgan does show the couple "falling" into the window and the shards of plate glass encircling them in the blast: "The young man's face / bristling with fragments of glass" (5-6). This is also meant to shatter the hopeful image of the couple because the young man, rather than developing whiskers through age and happy domestic bliss, is given fragments of glass for whiskers, forced to age instantly and painfully, forced to mature through

experience and hard knocks, rather than through ease and love. The girl is made to endure a similar fate:

and the girl's leg has caught

on the broken window

and spurts arterial blood

over her wet-look white coat. (7-10)

Morgan uses assonance here to keep your mouth open in shock and dismay as you read this scene. The reader is meant to say "oh" and "ah" as he/she sees the leg "caught" and the "arterial" blood flowing. The use of this device is affirmed when considered with the visual image that he displays. The red blood squirting over the white coat destroys her purity and innocence. Much like her young lover, she is also forced into a premature wisdom or aging. Her blood flows on this "ragged diamond" of glass and is forced to erupt in a fountain of blood over her youthful stylish coat. The contrast of the white and the red also sets up a contrast between the dispassionate and the passionate, those involved and those on-looking. This also parallels the very city in which they live, where each bit of old is replaced by something new. Age and decay are unacceptable and were, before

Morgan's eyes, replaced by something more modern, newer. But as the problems of the city still found a home, despite the more modern facade of the city, so the blood of the girl finds a home on her stylish new coat. The girls image reflects the problem of Glasgow, one in which old prejudices and acts of violence exist. As with "Archives" Morgan does not want to linger on the past but reminds the reader that it stays with us, even if ever so slightly, to rediscover itself. Morgan seems to be reminding the people of Glasgow, especially the city leaders, that the old problems must be dealt with or demolished, like the buildings have, to reach a better future.

Morgan follows this picture of the defiled couple with an image of their shock and pain. Morgan has stopped the camera at the very moment of their baptism through blood and has captured each step of their new awakening:

 Their arms are starfished out
 braced for impact,
 their faces show surprise, shock,
 and the beginning of pain. (11-14)

What is most prominent in this scene is what Morgan shows as their arms pulled far out from their sides, in the shape of a star, yet they are somehow braced for impact. When one is usually braced for impact, they become tight and taut often curled up with appendages close to their chest. Morgan, however, has them in a stiff pulling out which certainly adds to our understanding of their shock, but also lets the reader know that the impact is not one for which a physical expression can prepare you. The couple is utterly unprepared for the impact that the event will cause in them should they survive. But they have begun to feel the "pain" and are crudely entering a new world. The star image also conjures up religious ideas such as the star of Bethlehem, which shone over Jesus's birth. In each individual, as with the young couple here, the potential for salvation exists: salvation of the city, each other, the technologically advanced future, and the criminals themselves. Morgan seems to be using these figures to represent the greater potential of the people, but they too, like Christ sacrificed on the cross, must suffer to make

serving as a symbol for what we need to improve in it, the drivers have presumably learned that information already, and only seek to avoid it again. Further, the drivers have not learned the lesson of salvation and choose to complicitly take part in the destruction of the city.

It is too painful to witness. Yet Morgan takes the readers through this pain and initiation step-by-step, moment-by-moment. Watson describes Morgan's aims in his "Instamatic Poems":

documentary detachment, along the lines of 'I am a camera', but the cumulative result of reading a number of them is less like objectivity and more like a kind of moral blankness. First we are shocked, then there is a frisson of morbid interest, and then we turn away. This is the essence of human experience daily in our crowded cities.

It's how we sustain our privacy, and also, perhaps, our personal security. (16)

The violence in the poem has a shocking effect, both by the reader of the newspaper article and the reader of the poem, but Morgan questions their willingness to

change things and partake in a cure for the problem. Morgan is no social fighter for justice, but he is a keen observer of the problems before him. These problems, as with the gang violence and overcrowding of Glasgow, are not unsolvable in Morgan's eyes. This type of writing is exactly what Glasgow city planners and leaders needed, so that the problems of the city were more than just words on page. Morgan takes those words and powerfully arranges them to have the greatest impact. He seems to present a solution for the city leaders--one of compassion and personal risks.

"Trio"

Morgan, in an earlier poem, which is not an "Instamatic Poem," but just as detailed in presenting Scottish figures, examines life on a Scottish Street. In "Trio" the street is not Sauchiehall, but located in a slightly southern area of Glasgow, Buchanan Street. Whereas Sauchiehall is considered a higher end of Glasgow, containing museums and theaters, Buchanan is more closely linked with the shopping district and the more commercialized end. Considering

that this part of Glasgow is more commercial, one would expect a poem such as "Glasgow 5 March 1971" to take place here. Instead, Morgan celebrates the Christmas season by setting it here. He doesn't make Buchanan Street a street where a bleak encounter takes place; rather he makes it a place to express hope in laughter and joy.

Unlike "Glasgow 5 March 1971", "Trio" uses the nameless and faceless figures to teach a different kind of lesson. Rather than trying to demonstrate the defects of a sometimes violent Glasgow, he presents the positive aspects of a Glasgow filled with people of purpose and love. The portrait begins with a "young man and two girls, under the Christmas lights" (2) as they rush home after having bought a Christmas present. Although many might look at this scene and discuss growing commercialism and the disintegration of the "true meaning of Christmas," Morgan takes the opposite stance and conveys that this joy, this innocence and laughter is what life is all about: "The young man carries a new guitar in his arms, / the girl on the inside carries a very young baby, / and the girl on the outside carries a chihuahua" (3-5).

The young man and the girl with the baby conjure up images of the young couple thrown through the plate glass in "Glasgow 5 March 1971." This is perhaps how happy they might have been. But the trio here is more than a group of people shopping. By positioning a young girl with a baby in the middle, Morgan symbolically holds the baby as the center of love and hope in the scene. The baby's innocence and beauty are what hold the picture together, saving it from darkness. As with the starfished figures of "Glasgow 5 March 1971" Morgan uses an individual to show salvation in this poem as well, the baby. This is deliberately done to contrast with the figure of the Christ child in Bethlehem, but also to remind the reader of the salvation we each hold in our arms—our innocence, our beauty.

Morgan presents a modern-day image of the three kings of Nazareth who came bearing gifts. Each of them has a bundle that represents a different gift. The boy carries music to celebrate the joyous occasion, the second girl carries a child full of sweetness, tenderness, and laughter, and the third girl carries a beast dressed in "Royal Stewart tartan"

(9), echoing the wise men's royal lineage but also presenting the warmth a beast may bring. In his essay about teaching Morgan's poetry to young people, Geddes Thomson comments on the Christian feel of the poem:

"Further consideration of the poem will reveal that much of the art is in Morgan's gentle irony, which is realized through the use of Christian elements in what is not a conventionally Christian poem" (130).

Therefore, in these figures, Morgan presents a happier lot than those of Christianity and gives them a greater power: "Monsters of the year / go blank, are scattered back, / can't bear this march of three" (17-19). Unlike Morgan's later creation of the maimed couple in "Glasgow 5 March 1971," Morgan endows upon these three a power that defies the "monsters" of Glasgow and warns others not to harm the sanctity of the group. The monsters could be any Glasgow criminal, even King Billy. As King Billy represented the protestant majority, so the trio represent the goodness that goes beyond religion and imposed morality. This idea "stuns" the monsters making them "go blank" and feel confused. What they know to be true is shattered, causing them to withdraw and

contemplate the state of their convictions. Only the trio knows what is meaningful on these Glasgow streets. Morgan himself is unable to withhold his joy upon seeing them: "Orphean sprig! Melting baby! Warm chihuahua!" (12) He gives them mythological characteristics and a heat that destroys the frost of the cold winter around them. Naturally, they are related to pagan figures because they have not bought into what the protestant majority wants from them. They are neither Billy Boys nor Cronks. They don't serve the false faiths that the others do. Morgan is clear on the distinction, by attributing their nature with pagan gods.

In "Trio," what is perhaps Morgan's strongest work against the traditional Christian views of Scotland, he expresses what he sees as the irrelevance of Christianity by saying: "Whether Christ is born, or is not born, you / put paid to fate, it abdicates / under the Christmas lights" (14-16). Morgan is not forcing the common explication about consumerism, rather he is showing the warmth, good feelings, and tenderness of the scene as a commentary to all those naysayers who feel that those feelings cannot exist

without Christ. Although it is likely that these shoppers are Christian, since they're shopping "under the Christmas lights" it is the lights and warmth of the scene that make them miraculous gift givers, not Christ. Morgan's "Orphean sprig!" even recalls pagan connections to the beauty of the scene. Like Orpheus with his lyre, this trio can ward off evil and charm even the most dastardly of beasts. The trio transcends either time or description--"melting baby!"--but still bears the love that the three wise men were meant to bear to Christ. The receiver of the guitar is the one who will receive their love and warmth.

Instead of the coldness and unfeeling attitude of the perpetrators in "Glasgow 5 March 1971," here we see an intense sense of warmth at the poem's close. Rather than hopelessness for the victims, we see no victims, but a group with "laughter ringing them round like a guard." They are protected by their good cheer and Morgan's use of consonance with rolling "r"s and growling "g"s that seem to reflect his desire to protect this trio--to embrace them and guarantee their defense against the "monsters" that lurk about. The

"g"s and "r"s are reminiscent of the groans of "Archives" but here the past they relinquish is the Christian past with Christ as the method of salvation. Also, the spirit of Christmas seems to have been replaced by this trio's cheerful spirits. Morgan states:

- And the three have passed, vanished in the
crowd
(yet not vanished, for in their arms they
wind
the life of men and beasts, and music,
laughter ringing them round like a guard)
at the end of this winter's day. (20-24)

They have vanished, but not vanished. It is as if they remain in spirit to embody and protect all of the lives of "men and beasts" and perpetuate continual music and laughter in the world. In contrast to the winter's day, which has come to an end with the vanishing trio, we are meant to experience the light and warmth such tenderness and joy can bring.

This poem is full of contrasts and echoes the questioning of religion and strict religious beliefs that have been a part of Scottish life for hundreds of

years (McCrone 149). It goes against the puritanical strain of Calvinism and embraces an open giving spirit of life that follows no strict religious guidelines.

"Morgan's 'march of three' (with baby in shawl, chihuahua in tartan coat and guitar in plastic cover), will triumph 'whether Christ is born, or is not born'" (Watson 15). This dichotomy between religious and pagan encapsulates Morgan's view of this trio and raises them, in Morgan's eyes and in the eyes of the reader, to the level of adoration and homage. Also, in light of the Glaswegian connection, like "King Billy" this homage is irreverent but necessary. The procession to bury Billy has now resulted in this happy procession toward a more justifiably revered salvation. Morgan connects the trio with Billy by contrasting their processions, but also by more clearly reflecting the commentary he seemed to want to give in "King Billy." You can admire these three "unironically" in a way that you cannot for King Billy's mourners. This trio serves Morgan by reflecting what he sees as a hope for Glasgow, a hope that is not found through King Billy or any other leader of the city.

CHAPTER FIVE

MORGAN'S SONNETS

Morgan continues his look at the city in many of his later poems, but it is his sonnets that best capture his ability to present what he sees as Scotland's true face. Morgan loves to play with words and structures as in his concrete and emergent poems, but he also likes to go beyond more mundane topics, like those presented in the previous chapter, to consider the possibilities that our future holds. He explores the potential for growth and change through technology and space exploration. Barry Wood in his essay "Scots, Poets and the City" comments on Morgan's sonnets:

Within the plurality of styles in Morgan's work, and considering his commitment to 'openness,' it is perhaps surprising to find that he also uses the closed form of the sonnet. [...] the challenge in the ten 'Glasgow Sonnets' is clearly to incorporate the complex materials of the modern city within the tight form of the sonnet. (344)

Although capturing the daily experience of living in Glasgow in his "Glasgow Sonnets," Morgan's representation of the dual nature of the people who live in the city is less obvious. However, he captures, in his tragic portraits, the real-world conditions of an otherwise vivacious and dynamic culture. His sequence of ten poems demonstrates a weary and worn-out world in Glasgow, yet many of his other pictures of the city and its inhabitants are quite hopeful. They are similar to portraits by other Scottish poet and prose writers. Morgan captures both power and humiliation in his poems. I will focus on three of his Glasgow poems in this chapter. The first two are part ii and iv of his "Glasgow Sonnets," the second is "Computer Error: Neuron Strike," which is one of his "Sonnets from Scotland."

Glasgow Sonnets

The graphic imagery of sonnet number two stands above that of the other "Glasgow Sonnets," but its shocking statements are meant to jar the reader into a vivid realization of the inverted way of life faced by many in the Glasgow slums. Morgan begins with the

phrase: "A shilpit dog fucks grimly by the close" (1)

The reader is confronted with the filth stench and graphic lovemaking of an animal. The "close" is not only a small Scottish street, usually between tenements, but it demonstrates the tight quarters of the flats in many of Scotland's high-rise tenements such as Glasgow's Queen Elizabeth's flats in Hutchesontown, also referred to as the Gorbals.

Morgan could have easily captured a scene in London or any other major city here, but by setting it in Glasgow and in sonnet form, he is presenting an ode to the city he knows so well. Also, the sonnet form, as mentioned by Wood, contrasts the structure of the poem with the loose presentation of the city environs.

Despite the filth and scum that he often presents in his poems, Morgan is expressing his love for all aspects of Glasgow because it is the city in which Morgan has lived most of his life. His poetry reflects Glasgow's changing skyline that fascinated Morgan, always an advocate of change and modernity: "Glasgow was bent on refashioning itself, solving its problems with headlong solutions such as motorways, tower-blocks and housing estates. [...] The scale of

the ambition delighted Morgan and it continues to do so now, when nostalgia for a fictitious past grips Glasgow" (McCarra 6). Morgan does not convey in his poetry a sense that he wants to fully abandon the past, but he does not demonstrate any desire for fuzzy-headed nostalgia as McCarra suggests many Glaswegians might. Rather, Morgan aims in his sonnets to recognize the tradition, via the form, but to further the idea that, with all its ugliness, the city is still a great place--a place where change and hope live side-by-side.

Throughout sonnet ii, Morgan uses alliteration and consonance, which add to the fervor and rapidity of action and thought. This also expresses his aggression and passion over the sights he sees. "Late shadows lengthen slowly, slogans fade" (2). In his second line, Morgan's use of consonance causes the line to stretch out and have an extended reading. You are forced to linger on the words and feel the fade that has become modern Glasgow. He does this in lines three to five as well, which further extends through the notes of a "lost libera nos a malo" (4-5). We are meant to see a wasteland from which "no deliverer ever

rose" (5) nor no deliverer ever saved. Once again, the theme of salvation for the city and its inhabitants enter Morgan's poetry. Everything from the "weans" (7) who don't perform well in school, to the gray images of the street where the children play, shows a wasted world where emptiness and a form of penance for unsaid crimes is being played for all eternity. This penitential mood is further expressed when Morgan states "Under the darkness of a twisted pram / a cat's eyes glitter" (9-10). This glittering eye is reminiscent of Coleridge's Ancient Mariner who is forced to wander the earth paying for his crime against God by reliving the tale each time he tells it. Like the Mariner, the Glaswegian city dwellers must pay for some unknown crime against God. The "twisted pram" indicates an infant like innocence that has been warped. For instance, the innocence of the babe in "Trio" could have existed in that pram. However, the watchful cat now inhabits the babe's abode, leaving the city with no sign of salvation from God or from its own people.

Morgan's Glasgow is also a place where children and beasts are forced to wander among the gray to,

like the adults, pay some unknown price. But whose penance do they serve? The "glittering stars" (9) that are only given a brief glimpse, are the only signs of nature, and in the transcendental sense, God in the scene. However, Morgan doesn't put these signs there as a means of salvation, seeking God through nature, like Coleridge; rather he states that the stars are "press[ed] between the silent chimney-cowls and cram the higher spaces with their SOS" (11-12). The stars themselves are in need of help and salvation. The presentation of the cold and wind, other elements of the natural world or God's world, are seen as evil and can't even be kept out by the warmth of a man-made coat. But it is this coat that represents man's hope in the promise of industrialized Glasgow. This man-made coat has replaced the innocent babe, but carries with it the same message.

Morgan's admiration of the new urban industrialization is criticized by Douglas Dunn in his look at Morgan's sonnets: "He disregards the possibility of how a transaction between country and city, weekend and working week, attractive and unattractive, the natural and industrial, might, for

many, be preferable to monolithic architecture designed by an ideology infatuated with the new" (78). Dunn accurately presents the many contrasts one must face in contemplating Glaswegian people and culture, but he ignores the fact that Morgan's "preference" doesn't exclude all of these contrasts, rather he expresses a hope, that the technological and industrial advances of the future can provide for those who currently have little means to even keep themselves warm. Morgan sees the industrialization of Glasgow as a means of salvation, unlike that which the people have yet to find in religious faith. Morgan is not pleading for a God-like salvation, but instead displaying a world where nature is the enemy--the beasts fucking, the stars pleading for help, and the evil, cold wind encircling them. By inverting the order of things, Morgan is essentially commenting on the inverted order of life in Glasgow. It is hard to believe in the Calvinistic God of predestination or the Jesus of the Church of Scotland when the world before him seems to be abandoned by God and all means of salvation. The only hope that Morgan presents is the hope that man can overcome the evil that God has

placed before them. The duality between good and evil is inverted for Morgan. Rather than man as an unjustified sinner, it is God who has sinned and man who must provide the salvation.

This notion is furthered in the fourth sonnet of the series. Morgan, an admirer, but pointedly different writer than Hugh MacDiarmid, comments on and makes fun of the decidedly traditional view of Scotland that MacDiarmid and his predecessors presented in their poetry. MacDiarmid, like Morgan, wrote about a more modern Scotland, but usually in Scots language, which transformed the popularity of this as a mode. Morgan, who primarily writes in English, credits MacDiarmid and his poetry but didn't always agree with his means of presenting Scotland. In his fourth sonnet from the "Glasgow Sonnets" Morgan compares MacDiarmid's view of 1960 with Morgan's "real" view of Glasgow. In the poem Morgan points out that "Hugh MacDiarmid forgot / in 'Glasgow 1960' that the feast / of reason and the flow of soul has ceased / to matter to the long unfinished plot / of heating frozen hands" (3-7). The search for warmth and basic needs is what concerns Morgan in his presentation of

Glasgow here, not whether the mind and soul are metaphorically feasting. MacDiarmid's idea of feasting also contrasts with Morgan's comment that "soup-kitchens have gone out" (2) since it is no longer the thirties but at least "down by the brickworks you can get warm" (1). Morgan may seem overly defensive about MacDiarmid's writing, but his concern is to express a more realistic presentation of Scotland rather than one based on standard Scottish Tartanry. McCrone explains this by stating that "There are, of course, competing versions of Scotland, using distinctions which have a mythological base: Scotland of the past and the present; Scotland of the Highlands or the Lowlands; small-town east-coast Scotland versus Scotland of the west-coast conurbation" (31).

Naturally Morgan favors the Scotland of the present but he isn't afraid to present the darker side of the city. This is especially evident as he presents the difficulties with gangs and street violence in the 1970s. Morgan continues his criticism of MacDiarmid's poetry by saying:

So you have nothing to lose but your chains,
dear Seventies. Dalmarnock, Maryhill,
Blackhill and Govan, better sticks and
 stanes
 should break your banes, for poets' words
 are ill
 to hurt ye. (9-13)

Dalmarnock, Maryhill, Blackhill, and Govan are all dilapidated areas of Glasgow that are the result of a well-intentioned desire to provide housing. As mentioned in the introduction, the overcrowding and slum-like conditions only proved to be a recipe for failure. Morgan's use of a childhood saying, "sticks and stanes," captures what he feels about misrepresentations, such as MacDiarmid's, of the condition of these people. MacDiarmid, who is well-intentioned in his poetry, presenting an atheistic, fun-loving, and mythical Scotland, only furthers the misconceptions of others outside of Scotland. The misconceptions, as Morgan sees them, further conflict the Scottish psyche as it comes to terms with what "should be" and what is. To conclude the sonnet, Morgan poignantly states that, "on the wrecker's ball

the rains of greeting cities drop and drink their fill" (13-14). The wrecker's ball is a welcome sight for the inhabitants of these slums. Morgan's ability to follow the traditional structure of the sonnet yet still characterize what he views as an impoverished city, with all of its horrors and complexities reveals his broad-ranging abilities.

The contrast of the lyric form with the images of the Glasgow slums exemplifies Morgan's power to represent his hope in the face of adverse conditions. His poetry reflects the country's ability to deal with the many contrasts of life. Morgan is examining what he expresses in his poetry as a split in the Scottish self view. One side of the split is that the Scottish are heroic and brave in the face of adversity and don't need to rely on outside forces to preserve themselves. Morgan reveals the battle between that view and the reality of the Scottish city dweller who is struggling, with no Rob Roy or William Wallace to save the day. Morgan's view has no hero shouting "Freedom" leading the troops to battle. Morgan presents the sonnets as a:

response of the poet as humanist with a clear sense of the classic moral and social configurations of the city. The burden and tension that the ideal and the real place upon each other is paralleled by the tension between the sonnet form (with its echoes of the ideal city) and the subject matter.

(Wood 345)

Morgan is able to present Glasgow as a "real place" without letting go of his hope for an ideal city. It is this hope that later carries Morgan to outer space in his "Sonnets from Scotland."

"Sonnets from Scotland"

Morgan's "Sonnets from Scotland" capture a world that has been destroyed by a nuclear explosion. What's left is a bleak land that eventually separates itself into an island and floats off to Jupiter. The speaker captures the beauty of the land while also capturing the horror of the destruction of its people. In "Computer Error: Neuron Strike" Morgan presents a bleak, apocalyptic vision of Aberdeen, which was once a prosperous fishing community. "No one was left to

hear the All Clear. / Hot wind swept through the streets of Aberdeen / and stirred the corpse-clogged harbour" (1-3). The rhythm of the line with its use of alliteration and assonance causes the reader to slower and lengthen her reading of these opening lines. Through this reading we get the first glimpse of the horror as we see the emptiness and disgust of the "corpse-clogged harbour." Morgan contrasts the beauty of his rhythm and words with the heat and anguish left behind. Like MacDiarmid, Morgan is able to write beautifully, but rather than write about past histories and myths, Morgan creates a future myth that represents a real fear. It echoes the biblical apocalypse, but a Christian sense of justice is not what Morgan presents here. Rather, he shows a destruction that is caused by a glitch in man's creations.

The fact that this is all a result of a computer error, as the title suggests, carries that fear further, largely because by 1984, when these sonnets were written, the computer industry and globalization had taken force in Scotland. Much of the area between Ayrshire and Dundee was filled with computer companies

opening plants and hiring skilled workers to assemble computer chips (Devine 596). Perhaps that is why Morgan's use of consonance with the repetition of "c"s and "s"s, the first and last letters of "computers" is so prevalent in the next horror-filled lines that follow:

Each machine,
each building, tank, car, college, crane,
stood sheer
and clean but that a shred of skin, a hand,
a blackened child driven like tumbleweed
would give the lack of ruins leave to feed
on horrors we were slow to understand
but did. (3-9)

These images resonate with a sad view of the speakers realization about the horrors of the scene. The "blackened child" and images of the hand and skin are even more shocking when contrasted with the sound and image of the computer that was behind it all.

Although typically a fan of technology and further explorations into science and space, Morgan's underlying comment affirms the possible fears of technology gone wrong, of a society destroyed by its

creations. Although man has ceased to exist, the technological world in the poem remains. The automated "All Clear" and the "videos ran on, sham death, sham love" (11) because they are all that is left of humanity. Even the "air-conditioners kept steady sound" (12) which seems crazy in an otherwise obliterated civilization. The simplicity and continual functioning of these creations seems to violate the humanity that has been destroyed before them. Morgan reveals these technological wonders to be deranged monsters that have successfully killed their Victor Frankenstein, for no other purpose than to exist in peace and solitude. No remorse or regret inhabit the scene: "An automatic foghorn, and its light / warned out to none below, and none above" (13-14). This reiterates what many of Morgan's poems say about man and God. Here, there is neither man nor God to be warned because both have been destroyed. As in "Archives" and "Message Clear" the technology is what wipes out past prejudices and histories. The technology here, has also wiped out connections to God. By allowing the technology to survive, rather than destroying it with all of humanity, he is perhaps

hanging on to his lingering hope that the modernization of Scotland will provide hope in the future. After all, it is the technology that can destroy and give in this poem, not God and not man. Perhaps here, Morgan sees technology as our salvation.

Therefore, in the last poem in the sequence, "The Summons," Morgan leaves the reader with hope for Scotland's future. As Scotland has detached from England and floated off to Jupiter, the speaker says: "Despite our countdown, we were loath to go [...] We sighed, climbed in, locked. / If it was love we felt, would it not keep, and travel where we travelled?" (2, 10-12) Morgan carries with him the love and hope for a better and brighter Scotland. This poem reflects his disappointment over "the failure of the Referendum to deliver any kind of assembly" and served the purpose of giving him hope beyond the "political numbness" he was feeling at that time (Nicholson 9). This poem not only presents a "what if?" situation, but it also represents the ultimate feelings of hope and concern for the future that Morgan feels for Scotland and its people. Considering the problems that still existed in Glasgow and Scotland, Morgan

tried to provide a better world, a novel world that could change the isolation of the Scottish people into a communal embrace. He clings to the new, as the old man from "In the Snack Bar" clung to his guide when he was scared, and looks to change Scotland. But in the 1980s, as he wrote these sonnets, he had no fear of showing the horror and loneliness that sometimes accompany a country that is split. It was split by tradition, by technology, and by the fear of an unknown future.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Edwin Morgan's poetry is emblematic of Scotland, its people and its cities. Morgan consistently pushes the limits of what is accepted and known and directly confronts each issue. Ultimately, in his poetry, Morgan aims to present a view of the world that he has come to value. However, what he often ends up doing is serving Scotland by providing hope for its people despite their adverse home, social, or living conditions. By explicitly showing the difficulties of its people, Morgan reveals his own connection to his fellow Scots. This connection is not always close, since not all Glaswegians embrace the modernization of the city as Morgan does, but it is nonetheless pertinent and meaningful in the construction of the city. He avoids stereotypical views of its people with clinging connection to historical events and moves toward a more modern hope that creates a larger picture of the Scottish people. It is this identification of the present conditions and hope for

the future that Morgan best presents, and what other Scottish writers are now doing as well.

Morgan's hope is not always present in his writing, but his insight and what he perceives as the current Scottish mindset persists. Morgan's poetry represents his view of Scotland, but in prose other writers such as Robin Jenkins, Muriel Spark, and Iain Banks capture another complex side of Scotland. Each of these writers, like Morgan, is hoping to reveal Scotland's many ways of dealing with the variety and complexity of Scottish life. Poets and novelists are consistently shocking and confronting today's Scotland. One such writer is Iain Banks, whose novels cover the sublime world of "what if?" and the confusions of "what is." In his novel Wasp Factory, for example, he presents the ultimate inner and outer conflict through a young boy, Frank Cauldhame, who finds out that he is really a girl. This book confronts the social taboos of family secrets and the gender debate between men and women. Much like Morgan, Banks is able to deal with the horrors of "what is" and brings in humor and playfulness to confront it head on. Banks is just one of many

writers who is able to present his own view of Scotland through the recognition of its many sides. Although Banks is not part of the Glaswegian crowd of new writers, his work embodies the conflicts taking place in Scotland today.

Part of Morgan's power as poet, critic, and translator is that he has challenged many accepted views of Scotland and its people. He has pushed forward into the new and been critical and hopeful. In a discussion of the contemporary Scottish writers, Peter Kravitz comments that:

When Alan Warner [a contemporary fiction writer from Oban] was interviewed in the style magazine I-D in a feature on young talent to watch for in 1995 he said, 'There are many Scotlands within Scotland. I wanted to capture the strangeness of the one I know.' This embracing of the plurality that is Scotland is characteristic of the new writing coming from the country which goes way beyond a table in The Abbotsford Bar. (xxxiv)

Writers like Warner and Banks are able to be open about how they perceive Scotland because they had an Edwin Morgan before them to pave the way.

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