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MacDonald, Kirsty A. (2005) *Spectral ambiguities : the tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism in Scottish fiction*. PhD thesis.

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**Spectral Ambiguities: The Tradition of Psychosomatic
Supernaturalism in Scottish Fiction**

KIRSTY A MACDONALD

In fulfilment of the degree of PhD
University of Glasgow
Department of Scottish Literature
2005

Abstract

This thesis aims to prove that there exists in Scottish literature a previously undervalued, or indeed, overlooked tradition of ‘psychosomatic supernaturalism’, which like other literary traditions, refers to an evolving constellation of texts with similar themes, motifs and techniques. It is widely accepted that the continued presence of supernatural elements is a common feature in Scottish literature. However, the modifier ‘psychosomatic’, a term borrowed from the field of psychiatry, designates those specific supernatural events or beings around which accumulate sustained doubt as to whether their origins are in the actual or the psychological. This supernatural/psychological tension – discussed but rarely analysed closely by critics – occurs primarily in fiction throughout the national literary history from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present day. The evocation of this tension is a subversive strategy, challenging realism and its associated modes of representation.

Perhaps the most renowned example of the tension occurs in James Hogg’s *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). However, Hogg wrote a number of equally significant psychosomatic supernatural tales, including the novel *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823), and the short story ‘The Brownie of the Black Hags’ (1828). The start of the nineteenth century marks the establishment of psychiatry, and the underlining of the distinction between madness and supernatural forces, a demarcation that was previously hazy. This was something Hogg was fully aware of, and as a writer with a documented interest in the supernatural and folk tradition, and in evolving views on mental illness, his work forms the starting point for the thesis. The development of this tradition throughout the nineteenth century is subsequently traced. During this time ‘social realism’ is a prominent mode in fiction. There are, however, critical and subversive exceptions to this in the work of writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Margaret Oliphant and J.M. Barrie. The thesis considers their work, and then examines how this tradition is manifested during the period now referred to by critics as the Scottish Renaissance.

Late twentieth-century manifestations of the tradition are then analysed, against a background of the increasing dominance of realism and its associated metanarratives in Scottish fiction, and mass media contexts such as film and television. During this time, writers such as Muriel Spark, Wilson Harris, Troy Kennedy Martin, Alasdair Gray, A.L. Kennedy and Iain Banks employ the tradition to interrogate the myths of Scottishness that realism perpetuates, particularly those involving urban masculine working-class deprivation. Realism persists as the dominant mode today. Yet this thesis examines the ways in which the tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism continues to maintain a dialogue with realist representation, interrogating from the inside, and evolving over time.

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Acknowledgements

I am ever grateful to my supervisor, Professor Alan Riach, for his unstinting support and continued constructive criticism during my time as a PhD student. Thanks must also go to top research assistants Dorothy and Donald Macdonald of Oban, also known as Mum and Dad, and to Dondie Macdonald, for general big brotherishness. I thank the Arts and Humanities Research Council for feeding and sheltering me, and providing effective research training, and the staff of Glasgow University Library, in particular the Inter Library Loan department, for being consistently helpful. Ken and Bethea MacColl of Oban, and Ian and Janette Hamilton of North Connel must also be thanked for access to their supernatural and folk-tale filled libraries during initial stages of research. For discussions and even arguments about my work I thank Douglas Gifford, Christopher Whyte, Gerry Carruthers, and Margery Palmer McCulloch, all of the Department of Scottish Literature, and Malcolm Nicholson of the Department of History of Medicine. Special thanks go to Theo Van Heijnsbergen for his friendship and enthusiasm, and to all the scot lit postgrads who have known me, in particular Helen Lloyd and Lyndsay Lunan, without whom I would have given up several times over.

Introduction

‘Art is a means of communication by which mind reaches out to mind across great gaps of space and time, as well as across death.’

– Francis Hoyland¹

‘We ask with the desponding and restless scepticism of Pilate, “what is truth”? but the oracle that was so eloquent one moment, is dumb the next, or if it answers, it is with that ambiguity that makes us dread we have to consult again – again – and forever – in vain!’

– Charles Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer*²

Fiction and truth have always been incongruent concepts. Throughout Scottish literary history, a number of texts have set out to examine and interrogate the very idea of ‘truth’ within fictional representation, refusing to identify glib answers or to present one view of events. The texts examined in this thesis ‘consult the oracle’ via the presence of an ambiguous and unresolved supernatural, yet unlike the narrator in Maturin’s novel, expect no answers, and are unperturbed – and even liberated – by ambiguity and silence. In terms of context and status, these texts ‘reach out across great gaps of space and time’, yet their continuity in terms of shared themes and motifs justifies the claim that they form a coherent, and previously obscured tradition in themselves. This ‘tradition’ does not form an untroubled and continuous story, from its first print manifestations in the early nineteenth century to the multiple and divergent examples in various media and genres in the present day. However, the word ‘tradition’ allows us to attempt to describe a definite historical trajectory, and to read closely into a moving constellation of texts, which evolves and transforms under different pressures. These texts are at times connected self-consciously, and at times unconsciously by implicit motifs or ideas that transfer and change from one text to another. On occasion, both forms of connection are present. That the shifting but continuous connectedness of these texts constitutes a tradition in its own right is the contention that will underlie the individual close readings this thesis will present.

Throughout literary history, a concern with the representation of ‘truth’ is evident, and from the late eighteenth century the realist mode in fiction has in some way attempted to articulate a kind of truth, an actual and accurate representation of the reality of the world and society to which the texts belong. Indeed, realism was first defined in 1826 as ‘the literature of truth’.³ The mode became established as a way of

truth telling, however artful, and often more specifically an attempt to reflect and critique the social order of the time. Perhaps the seminal study of realism has been Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, where he defines realism as the endeavour 'to represent the most everyday phenomena of reality in a serious and significant context', to disregard previously ingrained notions of appropriate 'style', and treat the everyday with as much gravity as the sublime.⁴ In Scottish fiction, realism has intermittently been prominent (albeit alongside self-consciously non-realist modes) from the nineteenth century onwards, and, in keeping with Auerbach's definition, has regularly treated poverty with exceptional, even excessive, piety. Inevitably, through this politically motivated attempt to tell the 'truth', homogenising grand narratives about the identity of Scottish society have been sustained and even created. This has been inherited by post-war twentieth-century Scottish fiction, and the realist mode continues to influence and inform the narratives of the nation, where urban working-class – and often violent – masculinity is an over-familiar literary form of representation.

Yet these metanarratives of Scottish identity have not been unquestioningly accepted. Continually, a number of writers have chosen to interrogate the dominance of realism by adopting anti-realist strategies, such as the employment of an ambiguous supernaturalism. It is my dissatisfaction with those texts in Scottish film, television and fiction, lazily labelled and denigrated as 'gritty urban working class realism', that has led me to the texts examined here, texts in which gender and class are not identity-prescriptive. Since its inception in the late nineteenth century, realism has certainly become a prominent mode, yet the habitual portrayal of Scottish culture as a bastion of urban working class realism is more of a critical construct than a perceptive reflection of the actuality of many of the texts labelled thus. In particular, press coverage of Scottish film and fiction has contributed to this.⁵ Furthermore, critic and writer of supernatural tales herself, Margaret Elphinstone, argues that, 'the unique status of Scottish fantasy has been a well-established tenet of Scottish literature and criticism, but the dominant genre at the end of the twentieth century is contemporary, urban and realistic'.⁶ Another example is the 1989 Canongate Classics short story collection edited by Carl MacDougall, *The Devil and the Giro*. One possible interpretation of the title is that it firmly distinguishes two identifiable themes at extreme ends of a vast cultural spectrum. Yet, despite the many merits of this valuable collection, its title might equally imply that the only two options available in Scottish shorter fiction are the traditional or

religious supernatural or a working-class, even unemployed, secularism. This belies the content and concerns of many of the stories the volume contains.

As MacDougall's title suggests, it is equally predictable to cite the presence of the supernatural as a characteristic of the Scottish literary tradition.⁷ Tourist shops and airports are awash with popular and kitsch textual representations of the supernatural in Scotland, often pretending to be non-fiction, with titles such as *Supernatural Scotland* and *Scottish Witchcraft*. Moreover, if a representation of the Scots is required outwith Scotland, it is highly probable that the supernatural or at least superstitious tendencies will accompany it, an unobvious example being the 1954 film musical *Brigadoon*. Consequently, the BBC's 2004 series on Scottish literature, *Writing Scotland*, devoted one of its eight episodes to 'Other Worlds', the presence of the supernatural. This was placed alongside, and therefore given equal importance to, episodes on language, place, and myth.

However, this thesis discusses a very specific type of supernatural representation that has been sporadically and vaguely acknowledged but never fully examined, and that constitutes nothing less than a tradition itself. This is what will be referred to here as the 'psychosomatic supernatural'. The term 'psychosomatic' is on loan from the field of medicine, in which it is vaguely and variously defined. Generally, definitions point towards a conjunction of the mind and the body, the corporeal and the psychological, such as the Oxford English Dictionary definition, 'involving or depending on both the mind and the body'⁸, mirroring the co-presence of interpretations and sustained ambiguity in these texts. 'Psychosomatic' will be used to designate a *seemingly* real supernatural being or event, which is connected to the body and casts an influence over events, but is also consistently ambiguous in its existence and origins. This is the supernatural/psychological tension often mentioned but rarely interrogated by critics, as discussed below.

The psychosomatic supernatural texts examined in this thesis represent the primary and most representative, however diverse, examples belonging to the tradition. The texts are being considered within the context of the general Scottish literary tradition in English and Scots, specifically those conventions that have arisen and found various continuities from the late eighteenth century to the late twentieth century. Scottish literature is closely related to the dominant modes apparent in English literature, yet still has its own distinctive dynamics. Despite numerous instances of the supernatural – whether magic realism, the Gothic, or traditional ghost story – there are no immediate parallels for the themes and motifs examined here in English literature.

Some of these texts are highly canonical and conventionally considered in a Scottish context; some are not. Through comparison, new illuminations can be cast on both the familiar and the surprising. Moreover, despite differences, continuities of representation are clear.

Nineteenth-Century Beginnings

The discussion begins in the early nineteenth century with the work of James Hogg – whose renowned novel the *Justified Sinner* (1824) is the pre-eminent starting point. However, Hogg penned a number of equally significant psychosomatic supernatural tales, and chapter two of this thesis attempts to redress the balance of critical neglect of his other texts such as *The Three Perils of Woman* (1823) and ‘The Brownie of the Black Hags’ (1828). Burns also famously and successfully employed supernatural ambiguity in his 1790 poem ‘Tam o’ Shanter’. Yet Burns’s work will not be widely discussed here, due to the fact that his ambiguity ironically plays on delusions evoked by such forces as dreaming and inebriation, both far more temporary states than madness. Both do, however, still provide access to the unseen or otherworldly, and have proved potent states in a certain strand of Scottish poetry, from James I’s *The Kingis Quair*, the dream visions of Henryson and Dunbar and Montgomerie’s *The Cherrie and the Slae* (1597), through ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, to MacDiarmid’s *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926). Alan Riach makes the connection between ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ and *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* explicit in his article ‘MacDiarmid’s Burns’, arguing that ‘the discursive nature of the poem [*Drunk Man...*] takes its bearings from a setting deliberately reminiscent of – and clearly different from – Burns’s “Tam o’ Shanter” [...] voice is the key to both poems, and in both poems voice is a subtle, slippery, quick and clever thing’.⁹ Rationalisations of Burns’s poem focus convincingly on the figure of Tam, either as drunk man, dreamer or ineffectual husband who concocts the supernatural explanation in desperation. As an attempt to justify his lateness, and more importantly his horse’s missing tail, to the wrathful Kate, the poem only makes sense within its specific context. A horse with no tail would have made a laughing stock of a well-to-do farmer’s wife in such a community, giving testimony, as it may have done, to the drunken japery of Tam and his cronies.

On the other hand this is not enough. The poem is also a traditional ghost story in the vein of the Ballads, and a Calvinist nightmare of repressed desire involving alcohol, lust, and, that worst of sins, music. As Douglas Gifford argues, the poem

‘points towards the creative ambiguities of the great fictions of the nineteenth century’, in that,

At one level, [it] can be read as a simple tale of the supernatural, where, after the witching hour, Tam, in the best traditions of folklore, awakens the wrath of supernatural forces [...] In a diametrically opposed reading, however, Burns’s subtlety, in leaving deeper psychological interpretations available, becomes clear. Tam has yearned for drink, song, human warmth, conviviality and even sexuality; [...] he dreams or hallucinates, creating, in nightmare, dark versions of the experiences of release for which he yearned.¹⁰

The complexity of Burns’s poem in its manipulations of folk and other materials in the context of the late Enlightenment and the period of the 1790s is hugely significant, and the vision and the ambiguity are as powerful and real as that found in any of the texts considered in this thesis. Both supernatural and psychological explanations operate simultaneously. However, this kind of ambiguity is contextualised in quite a different way in poetry than in fiction. The vision poem as a genre has a self-contained poetics, concerned with seeing, with individual perception, and with the quality of ‘voice’ that Riach notes above. The texts I examine are narratives that depict people and location in a referential way, using language potentially drawn from those people and that location. They are also concerned with language as a component of storytelling, rather than as a component of verse, and with language as mimetic rather than poetic. The same argument about representations of reality and truth, and the relationship between text and outside world, does not have to take place in poetry. There are of course exceptions to these general rules, but for these reasons, poetry will largely not be discussed in the chapters that follow. Moreover, the drunken vision in Burns’s poem clearly takes place between the two keystones or arches that Tam crosses: midnight, ‘night’s black arch’ (l.69), and the keystone of the Brig of Doon. Despite the lack of certainty for the reader and for Tam regarding the reality of the events depicted, there is a tangible end to this fantastic episode, however one interprets it, unlike that in the texts examined more extensively in this thesis.

Similarly, Scott’s work will not be a major focus, despite the evident ambiguity surrounding some of the supernatural events in his fiction. This is much more a secondary theme in texts such as ‘The Two Drovers’ (1827), *Waverley* (1814), *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), and ‘Wandering Willie’s Tale’ from *Redgauntlet* (1824), and does not always have a tangible bearing on the action. On the other hand, it is of central importance in much of Hogg’s work. Hogg is a proleptic writer in that he finds a

degree of freedom in his refusal to identify a single centre of truth. Scott's writing, by virtue of its authorial weight and linguistic disposition, almost always emphasises a single authority for truth. He is an immensely important figure in the history of the supernatural in Scottish literature, yet his work generally lies outwith the tradition investigated here.

The turn of the nineteenth century in Scotland marks a pivotal point in the nation's literary history. The psychosomatic supernatural emerges out of the transition between centuries for four main reasons: this was the time of increasingly self-conscious interface and transition between the oral and the written in literary culture; the establishment of print culture – especially the wide dissemination of long poems and the rise of the novel;¹¹ the initial stages of realism as a literary mode; and the time of a great reverberating shift in views on insanity and mental illness in general. Ambiguous supernaturalism had appeared in Scottish literature before this time (for example in many of the ballads, or in potentially dream- or drink-induced visions), but this period marks the point where these energies converge most powerfully, and produce the very distinctive ambiguity being discussed here. The idea that the transition between oral and written forms can be pinpointed to a specific time or is brought about by specifically identifiable forces is a false one. As Penny Fielding states in her study of these ways of telling at this time, 'the more we examine the relationship between "orality" and "writing", the less stable it seems to be, and the less confident we become in deciding quite what these terms signify.'¹² However, it is fair to say that this period marks an increased self-consciousness about the differences between and associations involved in the two, for example the association between orality, purity and originality, or the written word and authority or truth. As Walter Benjamin argues in his essay 'The Storyteller', 'the storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And he in turn makes it the experience of those who are listening to his tale. The novelist has isolated himself.'¹³ The ideas of purity and originality have come to be associated with the oral due to the literal presence of the speaker, authenticity emerging from the level of proximity to the experience. Meanwhile, the written word has gained an authority by virtue of its relative permanence and fixity. The supernatural is clearly linked to the oral through its inheritance from folk literature, and interesting things begin to happen when such forces appear in more 'literary' self-conscious works.

Simultaneously, madness and the supernatural begin for the first time to become two separate entities. Previously, mental illness was frequently viewed as a punishment

from God or as the work of evil spirits, or even the Devil himself. A case in point is the infamous Scottish witchcraft trials, carried out until the eighteenth century, when the witchcraft statutes were repealed in 1736, with the last execution at Dornoch a few years later. Women (and occasionally men) who displayed behaviour considered to be abnormal were open to accusations of witchcraft and communion with the Devil. However, with the emergence of psychiatry as a separate strain of medicine during the early nineteenth century, scientific rational explanations advanced by the Enlightenment won dominance over religious reasoning. As R.A. Houston states in his study of *Madness and Society in Eighteenth Century Scotland*:

The difference between c.1650 and c.1800 is this: at the earlier date a person displaying deviance of thought and deed could either be mad and possessed or bewitched, or mad but not possessed or bewitched. Alternatively, they might be sane and under supernatural influence, or sane and feigning possession. It was believed that they could *only* be mad at the latter date.¹⁴ (my italics)

Later still, the event of psychoanalysis increased the possibility of interpreting seemingly supernatural or magical events and interventions as hallucinations or outward projections of troubled minds and expressions of unconscious desire (for example Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917)¹⁵). In literature, madness provides a more permanent removal from everyday life than dreaming or inebriation. There is also the possibility of social, as well as personal or individual, madness; an entire community can experience trauma and perhaps never recover. The damaged nature of all the protagonists in these texts – brought about by grief, alienation or unconventional upbringing – combines with the often first-person narrative perspective to heighten the ambiguity, and multiply the possibilities of interpretation. Hogg, writing against the background of these shifting energies, had an interest in this burgeoning field,¹⁶ and also maintained an awareness of many of the older beliefs of his native Ettrick, where supernatural events and beings were accepted as part of prosaic life. He was sensitive to both possibilities, and occupied an extremely evocative and creative liminal territory between the two.

The psychosomatic supernatural appears often in fiction after this period, peaking during the late nineteenth century, and again during the late twentieth century (after a trough at the beginning of the century during the initiation of modernist aesthetics and values), possibly due to the proliferation at these times of realism and its

associated metanarratives. Significantly, the texts feature central protagonists of all class backgrounds and both genders, as if the move away from realism has allowed for a move away from Scottish stereotypes, particularly the working class masculine portrayals that have come to be associated with social realism. Such representations are evident in the fiction of William McIlvanney, Alan Spence, Irvine Welsh, and more problematically in the work of James Kelman. There may be a common ancestry in the form of the popular novel by Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, *No Mean City* (1935). This text claimed verisimilitude and social realism while balancing moral authority and sensationalism. The commercial aspects of this can be traced back to Victorian realism, and in particular the financial success of many of Dickens' novels – social realism was and still is a popular, marketable product. As noted above, the supernatural in literature also often proves commercially viable, but the texts focused on here use the supernatural in quite different ways, and are not primarily concerned with the popular, commercial phenomenon but with the literary application. A greater freedom of expression is brought about by a dialogue of possibilities. The refusal to identify a single centre of truth, in terms of interpretation of events, leads into a refusal of any uniform identity. My discussion ends with a sustained focus on some of the late twentieth-century examples of the tradition. These texts permit greater attention due to the deeply entrenched perception of realism as dominant at this time, as well as the relative scarcity of critical material on many of them, and the non-canonical status of some. Appendix A sketches out how these themes and motifs have emerged in fiction during the beginnings of the twenty-first century.

Shared Themes

The study follows a chronological structure, and may be called historical, but not in the traditional sense as I am more concerned with identifying certain strategies and themes that evolve in the portrayal of an ambiguous supernaturalism than in defining a specific literary period. The texts share a number of themes and motifs, but primarily they all use what I shall term the category of 'the psychosomatic supernatural' for subversive purposes. This subversive tendency is intrinsic to the nature of the tradition. All react against and comment upon, either overtly or covertly, the dominant codes of their context. This will be explored more thoroughly in specific chapters, but examples include the way in which the texts subvert political – in the general sense of relating to the context of human interaction – or religious doctrines, and the ways in which they often transgress literary expectations, something that the fantastic mode

does inherently. The juxtaposition of the supernatural with a pragmatic realism has been present in Scottish literature from the ballads onwards. This politically subversive tendency is equally apparent in the tradition's folk roots. The sixteenth-century Reformation altered attitudes to the supernatural in Scotland. Following the denial of purgatory, and changed attitudes to Catholicism, belief in ghosts, and superstition in general was viewed as irrational and dangerous. Yet, as Edward Cowan argues,

The protestants in 1560 declared war on superstition of every kind while their disapproval and condemnation embraced virtually all aspects of folk culture and belief. However, it was not the Reformation which sounded the death knell of such entities as witches and fairies and ballads, as might have been expected, and as many reformers hoped, but the inexorable economic forces of agrarian transformation and industrialisation.¹⁷

This is confirmed in the later study, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, in the discussion of the Reformation, where we are told: 'the extent to which belief traditions, in witches, ghosts, werewolves, or fairies, were redefined or reinvented is immense but also immeasurable. What can be said with confidence is that, if nothing else, popular or folk culture in pre-industrial Scotland was far from moribund.'¹⁸ Folk belief persisted for centuries, despite Church and state, in forms such as the ballads and other oral tales, providing an inheritance for Scottish writers to come.

All the texts addressed in this thesis are concerned with questioning the grand narratives of their communities, from popular conceptions of nineteenth-century rural Scotland to twentieth-century urban Scotland, with challenging and dispelling the homogenisation of identity apparent in much Scottish fiction, producing a plurality and freedom for both individual and culture. A crucial tenet of realism is the false idea of closure and resolution towards the end, whether positive or negative, for the satisfaction of the reader. In these texts, resolution is not possible, and a key example of this (as fully discussed in chapter one) is the contrast between Scott's historical novel *Waverley*, and Hogg's multi-generic response to it in *The Three Perils of Woman: or Love, Leasing and Jealousy*. In *Waverley*, Edward's marriage and settlement form the resolution, but in the conclusion to Hogg's novel, questions are moved sharply into focus and left unanswered. A major theme in all the texts, just as in Hogg's novel, is the subversion of the 'journey north' motif and its associations. The north has frequently been portrayed as an 'exotic' location, the site of a primitive supernaturalism, or at the very least mysterious or archaic happenings, cognate to that which the west

conventionally represents in Irish culture. In effect, this indistinct geographic space has been 'orientalised', to use Edward Said's term.¹⁹ More recently, Peter Davidson has examined this myth of the north from a general perspective in his study *The Idea of North* (2005).²⁰ He examines not the journey into this realm, but rather the place of it in the popular imagination throughout history and throughout the Northern hemisphere, from the Icelandic sagas, through the polar explorations of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to contemporary Russian literature. The book will not be widely referred to in this thesis, precisely due to this broad scope, and the focus on history and visual art as well as literature. Yet it does offer some insights. For Davidson, the idea, or myth, of the north is as 'a harder place, a place of dearth: uplands, adverse weather, remoteness from cities. A voluntary northward journey implies a willingness to encounter the intractable elements of climate, topography and humanity'.²¹ He quotes Polish journalist Mariusz Wilk: 'Reality in the North is thinner than anywhere else, like a jumper worn out at the elbows, and the other world shines through it.'²² What is important for Davidson is that the north is not necessarily an actual geographic location, but rather an idea of universal significance, a place of infinite deferral.

The motif is evident throughout Scottish literary history, from William Dunbar's late fifteenth-century 'The Dance of the Sevin Deidly Sins', where the dance is concluded by the backward Highlanders and 'Erschemen', whose barbaric din even the Devil finds insufferable, to Macpherson's Ossianic poetry of the 1760s, and into the present day, in fiction such as Alice Thompson's 2002 novel *Pharos*, a ghost story set around a remote Highland lighthouse. There is also evidence of this in other media, such as television, with the series *Hamish Macbeth* (1995-1997) – set in 'bonnie Lochdubh', a small west Highland community, and ultimately subscribing to the codes it initially implied it would question or elaborate on; *Monarch of the Glen* (1999 – 2005) – which features a fey Highland gamekeeper; and *Little Britain* (2004) – a comedy series depicting tongue in cheek vignettes of representative figures from around the country. The only Scottish representative is a mad Highland hotelier, Ray MacCooney, who runs a hotel in a castle, is frequently accompanied by two dwarfs whom he believes to be 'sprites', and is menaced by a figure he refers to as 'the dark wizard'. A fuller discussion of such manifestations of the motif will appear in chapter three. The texts discussed here are all highly self-conscious about these conventions, and either directly subvert them or exaggerate them to the point of incredulity. In general, there is a common concern with extremes. Liminality and elusiveness guard against and interrogate extreme positions, allowing for the occupation of new and

creative territories. In the most general sense, they provide a politically engaged alternative to the realist mode.

They all feature initially rational protagonists who are forced to confront and examine their belief systems through encounter with a seemingly supernatural being or event. They demonstrate an interest in myths around place, whether urban or rural, and in re-writing the maps of such familiar places. A concern with the process of transmission, or the technologies and techniques of storytelling, is also evident, either through use of a specific narrative voice or through allusion to the oral.

Above all, the texts are concerned with identity, individual, cultural, and indeed national. They all break down or question boundaries and restrictions of identity. Instead, they advocate heterogeneity, but more importantly they engage in a dialogue with and a constant questioning of the fixities and certainties of the culture. They act to deny uniformity and to reject the constrictions of metanarratives, and this act is similar to what Lyotard has recognised in postmodernism.²³ The nineteenth- and early twentieth-century texts discussed here are proleptic in that they articulate ideas that have only recently been codified and categorized. The ontogenetic and the phylogenetic dialectically co-exist and interfuse in these texts. The ambiguous supernatural performs the translation from individual anxiety to political, communal and national concerns, its radical departure from realism allowing it to metaphorise and embody the macrocosmic within the microcosmic.

The Critics

Although some critics mention this specific type of ambiguous supernaturalism, the evident coherent continuities of such a theme running through particular texts have been largely ignored. In his famous and wide-ranging study of Scott's work, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction*, Coleman O. Parsons includes two concluding chapters on 'Scott's Contemporaries' (Hogg and Galt) and 'The Supernatural in Fiction After Scott'.²⁴ These are necessarily limited, and mainly descriptive rather than analytic, but he does mention a number of writers discussed in more depth here, including Hogg, Stevenson, Oliphant, Gunn and Linklater. Published in 1964, the study was the first of its kind, and necessarily ends with the work of Parsons' contemporary, Linklater. The work has been a useful starting point for my thesis, yet as Parsons himself admits, 'six novelists will have to represent the range of the supernatural in a century of Scottish fiction [...] Comment will be summary.'²⁵

In his studies of the supernatural in Scottish literature, *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey* (1994) and *An Anthology of Scottish Fantasy Literature* (1996) – surprisingly the first general historical studies of this important element of Scottish culture – Colin Manlove demonstrates a lack of terminological discrimination (see the discussion of terminology below). In addition, he focuses obsessively on the differences between Scottish and English supernatural fiction, rather than celebrating the tradition in Scottish writing as an autonomous entity.²⁶ This concern with the English canon is a frustrating aspect of much Scottish literary criticism. He also draws a distinction between ‘Gaelic and Scottish traditions’²⁷, as if Gaelic traditions are somehow not part of Scottish culture. His concern is with proving and validating, and as a result he neglects to analyse why these elements are present within the national tradition, and what sort of cultural work they are performing. This unsatisfying study could have gone much further, but as he himself points out, ‘fantasy literature [...] has often been a neglected or undervalued side of national cultures: and this is particularly the case with Scotland. Despite the fact that Scotland is rich in fantasy, no work on the subject yet exists.’²⁸ In this sense he was endeavouring to break new ground, however unsatisfying his approach might be. Critic and writer of supernatural tales herself, Margaret Elphinstone, has also published on the supernatural. Her article ‘Fantasising Texts: Scottish Fantasy Today’ uses Manlove’s studies as a starting point, stretching their boundaries and needfully elaborating on many of the points he makes.²⁹ She points towards the psychosomatic ambiguity, arguing that:

Scottish fantasy locates the supernatural in the heart of contemporary realism. The implication is that fantasy subverts the assumptions of that world. I think it does more: in a post-structuralist world it destabilises contemporary notions of what is ‘real’, drawing upon past traditions, dreams, subconscious hopes and fears about the supernatural, and giving them a validity which is at least equal to, and often stronger than, the rational laws that supposedly govern the external world. My reading of Scottish fantasy suggests to me not so much a binary opposition: real/fantastic, as a demolishing of the boundary that divides the real from the supernatural.³⁰

Significantly, she observes the concern with realism in much contemporary supernatural literature. (I am reluctant to call this fiction ‘fantasy’ as Manlove and Elphinstone do, for reasons I shall come back to below.) However, her investigation develops in a different direction – rewardingly so – to include ambiguities evoked by forces other than the psychological, and she focuses primarily on contemporary literature. She states,

with reference to Manlove and also Gregory Smith's famous discussion of Scottish literature, that 'both critics also consider fantasy as a method of delineating a psychological state, and the citation of Hogg and Stevenson in this context has become a critical cliché in the study of Scottish literature'.³¹ Yet I argue rather that it has become a cliché to cite this as a cliché without submitting it to analysis, particularly the links between these two, and other comparable writers.

Indeed, this is something recurrent in the work of all the critics who have mentioned this specific ambiguity. Douglas Gifford calls it 'the conventional supernatural/psychological tension', acknowledging that the motif has achieved the status of a convention. Yet in his excellent and comprehensive study '“Nathaniel Gow's Toddy”: The Supernatural in Lowland Scottish Literature from Burns and Scott to the Present Day', the most recent and thorough study of its kind, he provides a more general overview, rather than choosing to tease out the intricacies of this convention.³² Given the limitations of space and the remit of the book in which this article appears, such a general approach is necessary. Yet it points toward the need for a more detailed and extended study. Gifford acknowledges in a footnote that 'there are few general discussions of the supernatural in Scottish literature.' Individual articles and chapters belie the scope of the required examination. This thesis is greatly indebted to these critics, but it also seeks to address the very specific area largely unexplored in their work on the supernatural.

Interrogating the Terms

In his discussion, Gifford usefully defines the supernatural thus:

I must make clear from the outset that in discussing 'the supernatural', I deal mainly with its non-Christian traditional and contemporary manifestations. Since the Christian supernatural, for all its irrational presumptions, is so ubiquitously accepted as 'normality', I am concerned with it only when it engages with the non-Christian and the surreal or fantastic.³³

Similarly, Coleman O. Parsons sets out in the preface to his study that 'the term "supernatural" refers to those unearthly agents, forces and phenomena which men envisage but cannot understand and which operate, for the most part, outside religion'.³⁴ These erudite definitions, removing problematic religious interpretations, will be adhered to here.

Yet the water is muddied when we come to terms such as ‘fantasy’. Largely, the major problem with the above named critical studies is the lack of terminological distinction they confusingly display. Yet this only mirrors the confusion over terms in the field in general. Manlove claims that ‘fantasy literature [...] is fiction involving the supernatural’³⁵, a definition that Elphinstone appears to adhere to. This would designate a huge and divergent body of work, and disallow the claim that fantasy is in any way a coherent genre or even a mode, that unspecific critical term ‘designating a broad but identifiable kind of literary method, mood, or manner that is not tied exclusively to a particular form or genre’.³⁶ Manlove supports this by further arguing that Scottish literature has seen little of that traditionally described as fantasy, texts involving the portrayal of alternative worlds and social orders. Thus, Manlove argues, the role of fantasy is taken up by that fiction featuring supernatural events within a world resembling our familiar one. This is not the case, as Scottish literature has consistently sustained a tradition of fantasy, quite separate from that examined here. Chris Baldick defines fantasy like this:

A general term for any kind of fictional work that is not primarily devoted to realistic representation of the known world. The category includes several literary genres (e.g. dream vision, fable, fairy tale, romance, science fiction) describing imagined worlds in which magical powers and other possibilities are accepted.³⁷

Similarly, T.E. Little defines it thus:

A licence is granted to writers of ‘normal’ creative fiction to change the Primary World for the purpose of their art. Fantasy begins when an author’s Secondary World goes beyond that licence and becomes ‘other’ [...] Such a subcreation should be called a *Tertiary World*.³⁸

If these lucid definitions of fantasy as literature where the action takes place in a tertiary world are accepted, then there are numerous Scottish examples. The literary creation of a parallel world removed from our own, a fantasy world, is something Scottish writers have chosen to portray throughout the tradition. The alternative worlds presented, for example, in George Macdonald’s work (1850s-1890s), Margaret Oliphant’s ‘The Land of Darkness’ (1888), J.M. Barrie’s *Peter Pan* (1904), Iain Banks’s *A Song of Stone* (1997) and Ajay and Quiss’s narrative in *Walking on Glass* (1985), the work of Sian Hayton, Ellen Galford and Margaret Elphinstone (1980s to the present), are worlds that never existed and never will. There is also a strong line of science fiction within the

Scottish tradition, from Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886), through Arthur Conan Doyle's work, to Naomi Mitchison, James Leslie Mitchell, Ken Macleod and Iain M. Banks's short stories and novels, depicting similar imaginary worlds, or speculating on potential future worlds. Special mention should also be made here of David Lindsay's 1920 'science fantasy' novel, *A Voyage to Arcturus*. The location of the star Arcturus proves, like Lanark's context and Oliphant's 'Land of Darkness', to be a critical vision of the nature of our world through defamiliarisation. Such fantasy and science fiction texts are usually unambiguous, with supernatural or futuristic events being accepted, and they also often invite allegorical interpretations.

'Fantastic' is a more appropriate term for the texts discussed here. However, the field of 'fantasy' theory in general is confusingly large, and, in terms of genre distinctions, often dubiously overlaps with that of 'the fantastic'. Critics as prominent as Rosemary Jackson, Neil Cornwell, Kathryn Hume and Luce Armitt use 'fantasy' and 'the fantastic' interchangeably, illustrating a general lack of discrimination in terminology in the field.³⁹ Due to this lack of specificity and the fact that, according to the definitions I favour, the fantastic denotes any kind of supernatural ambiguity and not just that involving potential psychological explanations, the term will not be widely used here, in favour of the 'psychosomatic supernatural'. However, if the lucid but limited definition of the fantastic provided by Tzvetan Todorov in his study, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* is temporarily adopted, it can be seen that fantastic literature represents a stronger interrogation of realism than other non-realist modes such as fantasy, science fiction and magic realism. Todorov would define these modes as 'marvellous', while Rosemary Jackson argues that they 'have recourse to compensatory, transcendental otherworlds.'⁴⁰ Jackson's phrase is loaded with judgmental meanings. However these genres do provide a degree of reader satisfaction and passivity in the reading process not available in the fantastic. Todorov's formulation of the fantastic involves a supernatural manifestation that remains entirely ambiguous, drawing reader and often characters into an unnerving hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations. According to Todorov: 'The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event', yet it only lasts as long as the hesitation does, 'it is the hesitation which sustains its life.'⁴¹ Chris Baldick concurs, arguing that the fantastic is, 'a mode of fiction in which the possible and the impossible are confounded so as to

leave the reader (and often the narrator and/or central character) with no consistent explanation for the story's strange events.'⁴²

Realism represents the illusion of a world that is whole and self-sufficient. Fantasy, with its tertiary worlds, and magic realism, with its unequivocal magical manifestations, also represent such an illusion due to the acceptability of the supernatural within the altered codes of their literary contexts, governed by the laws of a reality removed from literary mimesis. These genres do still comment, however covertly, on the realities of our world, and can have profound political implications, yet in the fantastic the very nature of representations of the 'real' is called into question. The sustained doubt regarding the actuality of the supernatural plays upon, as Jackson states, 'the difficulties of interpreting events/things as objects or as images, thus disorientating the reader's categorisation of the "real"[...] It takes the real and breaks it.'⁴³ Within a Scottish context, the fantastic then unsettles and rejects the metanarratives of Scottish identity and experience – particularly those involving urban working-class deprivation and struggle – so often portrayed through the realist mode.

A paradigmatic example is the kind of realism represented in Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's infamous *No Mean City*⁴⁴ (published in 1935 but still sold and read around the world), and the way this realism is in turn treated in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981). *No Mean City* is a heightened instance of the sensationalised stereotypes that can be employed in social realist fiction to critique poverty and the effect it has on humanity. Although set entirely in Glasgow, it has had an impact on all Scottish urban writing. As Sylvia Bryce-Wunder points out,

No Mean City has left Glasgow and Scotland with a problematic legacy. There is an anxiety of influence at work in modern Scottish urban literature, caused to a large extent by *No Mean City's* hypothesis that participation in class ideology [...] can result in anti-social working-class identities.⁴⁵

She cites Irvine Welsh as well as Gray as contemporary writers who have felt the influence of this crude, if at times vigorous, portrayal of urban life. Book one of *Lanark* (the second book the reader encounters in the novel, after book three) opens in a similar setting, with the young Duncan Thaw encountering secondary characters who could have come from McArthur and Long's overcoloured novel. Yet Gray's novel moves beyond this, critiquing social ills not by displaying garish stereotypes, but by demonstrating the individual's attempts to survive and maintain imaginative possibilities within the post-industrial urban context. The ambiguous, fantastic elements

of the text succeed in placing community-specific concerns within a macrocosmic context, providing the novel with universal significance, and indicating the potential for choice for the individual. As Rosemary Jackson states, in general: 'the fantastic exists as the inside, or underside, of realism, opposing the novel's closed, monological forms with open, dialogical structures, as if the novel had given rise to its own opposite, its unrecognisable reflection.'⁴⁶ This statement might apply precisely to *Lanark*, as it sustains a dynamic dialogue with its own realist narratives. Moreover, the novel as a whole is in perpetual dialogue with the kind of social realism expounded in *No Mean City*, incorporating that dialogue as part of its essential structure, in order to reject the restrictions the mode conventionally imposes.

The tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism is a branch of fantastic literature, yet involving a much more specific ambiguity, and with a culture-specific outcome. The new term has been employed to further remove the potential for confusion. Todorov's study has its faults, particularly the simplistic way it suggests that texts can be unproblematically categorised and the conspicuous absence of any mention of psychoanalytic criticism, a set of theoretical tools cognate to those Todorov uses. It also appears to have become fashionable to criticise it in academic circles.⁴⁷ Yet the work is useful for categorising texts initially, and, with Todorov's discussion of Franz Kafka and Nikolai Gogol, highlighting the wider European traditions cognate with the Scottish.

Todorov's definition shares much with Freud's important examination of the supernatural in literature and in life, 'The Uncanny' (1919).⁴⁸ Freud discusses the uncanny as that which unnerves or even frightens the protagonist, 'that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar'.⁴⁹ Yet, in some of these texts the potentially supernatural experience, if initially unnerving, is often ultimately empowering. Freud's theory also leaves little room for ambiguity; the inexplicable phenomena are attributed solely to the repression and subsequent return of psychical forces, the 'return of the repressed'. Nevertheless, 'The Uncanny' has proved useful in this thesis for highlighting the psychological aspects of the tradition, and also analysing the anxiety experienced by the protagonist(s) when faced with a potential belief their modernity should disallow, or as Freud puts it, 'when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed.'⁵⁰ What is also particularly useful is the under-examined latter part of the essay where he discusses the correspondence between phylogenetic and ontogenetic sources of uncanniness, between which 'the distinction is often a hazy one'⁵¹, providing a useful theoretical hook on

which to hang the evident correspondence between the individual and the cultural in these texts.

A further term must be defined in order to establish clear categories: magic realism. Amaryll Beatrice Chanady carefully defines and differentiates categories in her 1985 study, *Magic Realism and The Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*. She tells us:

In contrast to the fantastic, the supernatural in magical realism does not disconcert the reader, and this is the fundamental difference between the two modes. The same phenomena that are portrayed as problematical by the author of a fantastic narrative are presented in a matter-of-fact manner by the magical realist. Since the supernatural is not perceived as unacceptable because it is antinomious, the characters and reader do not try to find a natural explanation, as is frequently the case with the fantastic.⁵²

Within magic realism, the supernatural is an accepted phenomenon and causes no hesitation or uneasiness for characters or author; the supernatural becomes just another part of the fictional reality, in much the same way as it does in fantasy. Baldick concurs, defining it as, ‘a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the “reliable” tone of the objective realistic report.’⁵³ However, magic realism can still be politically engaged. It can also act as escapism and a straightforward exercise of the imagination. An example of this is the way in which the work of the two pre-eminent Latin American magic realists differ from each other. Gabriel Garcia Marquez and Jorge Luis Borges are the two names most associated with magic realism in fiction, but Marquez presents his altered worlds in such a way that they explicitly comment on the contemporary happenings of his community. An example is his novel *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), where it is possible to interpret the magical events as allegorically commenting on political events in the ‘real’ world outside the text. Borges, on the other hand, remains conservative, and his political stance is not overtly apparent in his creative work. The hermetically sealed world his texts enclose is essentially conservative or reactionary, as that of Marquez is essentially progressive.

However, Graham Dunstan Martin views the fantastic as a much more evocative mode than either magic realism or fantasy, arguing that ‘two meanings are more interesting than one, and four are preferable to three.’⁵⁴ This highlights a further facet of the psychosomatic supernatural. It is important to distinguish between the differing understandings of ambivalence and ambiguity, because in the texts discussed here,

ambiguity provides the dynamic. Ambivalence suggests the favouring of *either one or* an other meaning, however intermittently, and indeed the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘ambivalent’ as ‘acting on or arguing for sometimes one and sometimes the other of two opposites’.⁵⁵ On the other hand, ambiguity implies a dual presence, the ‘capability of being understood in two or more ways’ or ‘double or dubious signification’,⁵⁶ and the sustained ‘openness to different interpretations’ that Baldick notes.⁵⁷ For something to be ambivalent it would have two alternative and certain, although opposing or contradictory, single meanings. On the other hand ambiguity connotes the impossibility of any certainty regarding meaning, whether one, two or multiple. Ambiguity is not either/or, but is both at the same time, just as ‘psychosomatic’ designates the co-existence of both psychological and supernatural explanations simultaneously.

The term ‘Gothic’ has also been applied to a number of the texts discussed here. Despite the fact that ‘Gothic’ refers to non-realist texts, this again proves to be of limited use, when we recognise the diversity of work to which it refers. There did exist a limited time when Gothic denoted a coherent genre, dating from 1764 with the publication of Horace Walpole’s self-proclaimed ‘Gothick novel’, *The Castle of Otranto*.⁵⁸ There are other examples in the English novel around the turn of the nineteenth century, produced by writers such as Anne Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis, who both had a significant influence on Scott and Hogg. Yet it is now questionable whether the Gothic can even be said to exist as a literary mode. Definitions of the Gothic, particularly in a contemporary context involving the diffusion of forms of media, extending from ‘high’ literature to graphic novel to film to computer game, are myriad and consistently lengthy (‘Gothic Fiction’ receives a six-page entry in *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* while other entries scarcely reach half a page)⁵⁹ and often evasively conclude with ‘the growing recognition that there is no such thing as “the Gothic”’.⁶⁰ The tropes of excess, transgression and a concern with taboo are habitually cited, yet it need not necessarily contain supernatural elements – ambiguous or otherwise – and thus will only be used occasionally in this thesis where it is of direct and specific relevance. There is still much to be said about how the Gothic translated and still translates into a Scottish literary context. However, such a discussion would necessarily include texts not belonging to the tradition addressed here.

The Gothic is primarily a fictional mode, and the same too can be said for the fantastic. This thesis focuses principally on fiction – as well as narrative television and

film representations – rather than poetry. This is despite the fact that a few examples of similarly ambiguous supernatural happenings exist in some Scottish poetry, such as a number of the Ballads, and more recently in MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), in particular the episode featuring the dubious presence of the 'silken leddy' (ll. 193-208), some of the work of William Soutar (1930s and 40s), such as 'The Tryst', which features a highly ambiguous ghostly lover, Andrew Greig's *Men on Ice* (1977), a book-length narrative poem where three mountaineers are accompanied on a climb by a mysterious presence, and Edwin Morgan's *Demon* sequence, specifically 'The Demon in Argyle Street' (2002), in which radical uncertainty is evoked around a supernatural presence. Yet this kind of incident is not as incongruous or unsettling in poetry as it appears in fiction. Within fiction, there is at least the potential to attempt to represent the realities of the world outside the text, to mimic and reflect, in however literary a fashion, the world of the author and audience. Poetry refers to this world, but can only represent it in a much more conceptual and metaphorical way. Poetry claims to tell truths in different ways than fiction. Therefore it is principally in narrative fiction, and specifically the novel and short story forms, that a space for interrogating 'truth-telling' is offered, as these forms are involved in story-telling, and open up the question of what is fiction and what is truth. In poetry, the engagement is with poetic possibilities, not with realism. Todorov concurs, arguing that the fantastic can only exist in fiction:

If as we read a text we reject all representation, considering each sentence as a pure semantic combination, the fantastic *could not appear*: for the fantastic requires, it will be recalled, a reaction to events as they occur in the world evoked. For this reason the fantastic can subsist only within fiction; poetry cannot be fantastic [...] In short, the fantastic implies fiction.⁶¹

There thus needs to be narrative for there to be hesitation and sustained ambiguity; there must first be certainty for there then to be uncertainty. Therefore, the tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism is fully manifest only in fiction and other narrative forms that have the potential to attempt a representation of the real, such as television and film.

Due to the myriad and diverse nature of terminology in these non-realist fields, it has been necessary to adopt and define a new term for the very specific themes and motifs apparent within this literary tradition. The individual chapters of the thesis

explore how psychosomatic supernaturalism is played out in particular texts during particular periods.

Chapter Summary

Chapter One discusses the beginning of the nineteenth century as a pivotal time for Scottish literature in general. Historical events, such as the burgeoning of the field of psychiatry and the increasing self-consciousness regarding oral and written modes, had an effect on how the supernatural was treated. It became a literary conceit rather than – or as well as – an actual element in everyday life, while new formulations of psychology provided the potential for ambiguity of interpretation. The reciprocity and dialogue between oral and literary at this time is echoed by the relationship between the actual and psychological. This period of the conversation is where the tectonic plates start to shift. Burns and Scott can be cited as being aware of and involved in these shifts, and are the obvious paradigmatic examples of the supernatural in Scottish literature. Yet it is in the work of James Hogg that we first witness the harnessing of this play between madness and the supernatural for subversive purposes. Hogg's psychosomatic supernatural work is an ideal starting point for the discussion as we find here all the major themes that recur in the later texts. The chapter thus serves as a useful general introduction with specific examples drawn from Hogg's work, including Gatty Bell's strange and potentially supernatural coma in the underrated 1823 novel *The Three Perils of Woman: or Love, Leasing and Jealousy*, the ambiguous presence and influence of Gil Martin in the better known 1824 *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and the obscure origins of Merodach, the potential Brownie, in the 1828 short story from *The Shepherd's Calendar*, 'The Brownie of the Black Haggs'.

Chapter Two continues by scrutinising the literary scene in Scotland throughout the later nineteenth century, and how that scene generated or fed into the texts analysed. A number of writers followed on from Hogg, by managing to elude or assimilate the influence of Scott, who in his infamous review of Galt's *The Omen* in 1826 confined the supernatural to 'the cottage and the nursery'. Robert Louis Stevenson, Margaret Oliphant and James Matthew Barrie, whose geographic distance from Scotland provided a necessary critical perspective, were able to reclaim the supernatural in this ambiguous form, for their own purposes. All three can be viewed as proto-modernists.

In Chapter Three, modernism itself is examined within a Scottish context. There are a number of playful examples of this kind of supernatural, illustrating the renewal of traditional forms, including MacDiarmid's supernatural short stories (1927), Neil

Gunn's 'The Moor' (1929), Lewis Grassie Gibbon's 'Clay' (1934), Naomi Mitchison's 'Five Men and a Swan' (1940) and *The Bull Calves* (1947), and Eric Linklater's 'Sealskin Trousers' (1947). Yet despite modernism's assault on realism, it has come to be perceived as the dominant mode in Scottish fiction in the second half of the twentieth century. A few, however altered, manifestations of the supernatural from the mid to late twentieth century, in particular Muriel Spark's *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) and George Friel's *Mr. Alfred M.A.* (1972), give testimony to the abandonment of consoling mythology in Scottish fiction following the renaissance and World War II.

In Chapter Four, texts from the late twentieth century are examined in light of this inheritance from the earlier texts. The 'journey north' motif is specifically investigated, with the surprising realisation that it is still a potent myth in recent Scottish fiction, and thus is still a target for subversion for authors from this time. The history of the motif is considered, leading on to its continued presence in recent fiction and other narrative texts. Writers apply the subversive aspects of psychosomatic supernaturalism to the motif in a number of works of fiction, both canonical and surprising, including Muriel Spark's novel *Symposium* (1990), Wilson Harris's novel *Black Marsden: A Tabula Rasa Comedy* (1972), Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981), Iain Banks's novels *The Wasp Factory* (1984) and *The Crow Road* (1992), and the quite distinct television serial of *The Crow Road* (1996), adapted by Bryan Elsley. Mention will also be made of Troy Kennedy Martin's television serial *Edge of Darkness* (1985) – his highly-charged and multi-generic political thriller, and A.L. Kennedy's novel *So I Am Glad* (1995) – a ghostly love story set in suburban Glasgow, as texts in which the supernatural appears in unexpected and even unlikely settings.

Chapter Five considers the political implications of the tradition in late twentieth-century Scottish fiction, continuing the focus on this period partly to redress the relative lack of critical material on a number of these more recent writers (something that cannot be said for Hogg, Stevenson and many of the other writers discussed in previous chapters) and also to provide a differing perspective on both familiar and relatively uncanonised texts. Those discussed more fully here include *Black Marsden* and *Lanark* (both investigated in two chapters due to the appropriateness and fruitfulness of their examination in relation to the particular areas of theme and motif investigated in chapters Four and Five), and *Edge of Darkness* and *So I Am Glad*. The term 'political' is in turn interrogated, to provide access to its root meaning involving the drama of human interaction. This is helpful in this context, due to the significance of intersubjectivity and the translation from the individual to the cultural milieu in these

texts. Realism, or at the very least a focus on pessimistic urban working-class portrayals, continues to dominate in fiction, as well as in Scottish film and television at this time.⁶² These texts articulate a further reaction to this, employing the traditional ambiguous supernatural in new, postmodernist ways, and indeed postmodernist and fantastic techniques are here shown to be cognate. As Douglas Gifford states, writers begin to emerge who were 'developing a new kind of imaginative relationship with their country and its culture, a relationship which refused to accept a simple realism of generally bleak and economically deprived urban character.'⁶³

My conclusion summarises the shared themes of all these texts, reaffirming the tradition's status as a coherent and recognisable entity. The major unifying theme of the subversion of dominant codes is looked beyond, to investigate what is left in place following the deconstruction and elision of binaries and stabilities. As Terry Eagleton argues, 'to be inside and outside a position at the same time – to occupy a territory while loitering sceptically on the boundary – is often where the most intensely creative ideas stem from.'⁶⁴ The tradition constantly engages with realism in order to simultaneously reject it, occupying the borderland between realist and anti-realist territories. Thus similarly fitting is Edwin Morgan's recent description of life in his native Glasgow, as 'the best of dramas: you can watch it and act in it at the same time.'⁶⁵

Notes

¹ Francis Hoyland, www.painterskeys.com/auth_search.asp?name=Francis%20Hoyland 24/11/05

² Charles Robert Maturin, *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), (London: Penguin Classics, 2000), p.95

³ The term was first used in relation to literature in France in 1826, in the periodical *Le Mercure Francais*. It was defined as 'the literature of truth.' For a full discussion of the origins of the mode see G. M Carsaniga ed. *The Age of Realism*, (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), p.9

⁴ Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1953), p.555, and epilogue in general.

⁵ In 2005, a debate specifically around Scottish film and television raged in the press, following Channel Four's Regions and Nations Director Stuart Cosgrove's Edinburgh Lecture of February 2005. Cosgrove complained that recent Scottish films give 'the cumulative and relentless impression that Scotland is a failing and criminal society', and are bound by 'the overweening conventions of urban realism' (Cosgrove 2005). Similar comments in relation to Scottish fiction followed, for example Jenny Brown's talk at Glasgow's Aye Write festival in 2005, where she argued that 'Scots are really good at feeling bad. The Scottish novel is marked out by introspection [...] and a setting in deprived areas' (as reported in *The Sunday Herald*, 27th February 2005, p.9). This also received extensive media coverage. Examples of this simplification of Scottish cultural output abound in the press.

⁶ Margaret Elphinstone, 'Fantasising Texts: Scottish Fantasy Today', paper given at the Association of Scottish Literary Studies Conference: *The Shape of Texts to Come: The Writing of a New Scotland*, 14th May 2000, and subsequently published on their website, <http://www.asls.org.uk/>

⁷ It is not my intention here to define or delineate a body of work as 'the Scottish literary tradition'. The debate around this, it is hoped, will continue in a healthy and rigorous manner.

⁸ 'psychosomatic' in *The Oxford English Dictionary* vol XII, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.770

⁹ Alan Riach, 'MacDiarmid's Burns', in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. Robert Crawford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p.206

¹⁰ Douglas Gifford, '“Nathaniel Gow's Toddy”: The Supernatural in Lowland Scottish Literature from Burns and Scott to the Present Day', in *Fantastical Imaginations: The Supernatural in Scottish Culture*, ed. Lizanne Henderson, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2006 forthcoming)

¹¹ The initiation of the historical novel also occurs at this time, a form that provides for the reader a historical and often geographical distance, and is thus a form of escapism itself. Significantly, the psychosomatic supernatural in fiction represents a piece of the past, whether an actual supernatural effect or the product of a haunted memory, within the 'realist' present of a materialist society, and thus the novel is an appropriate form for such expression.

¹² Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.3

¹³ Walter Benjamin, 'The Storyteller: Reflections on the Works of Nikolai Leskov' (1936), in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (London: Fontana Press, 1999), p.87

¹⁴ R.A. Houston, *Madness and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p.321

¹⁵ In *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917), Freud discusses how grief especially 'can be so intense that a turning away from reality takes place and a clinging to the object through the medium of a hallucinatory wishful psychosis.' See *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, vol XVI*, trans. and ed. James Strachey, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1957), pp.238-258, p.244

¹⁶ For well-researched evidence of this interest, see Allan Beveridge, 'James Hogg and Abnormal Psychology: Some Background Notes', in *Studies in Hogg and His World* No. 2 (1991), pp.91-94. Beveridge outlines the establishment of psychiatry and asylums during Hogg's time, and despite subsequently claiming that 'to what extent he was influenced by it remains unclear' (92), he builds up a very convincing case that Hogg was indeed influenced by the new field, providing evidence from Hogg's fiction and historical documentation.

¹⁷ Edward J. Cowan (ed.), *The Ballad in Scottish History*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p.13

¹⁸ Edward J. Cowan and Lizanne Henderson, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2001), p.118

¹⁹ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, (1978) (London: Penguin, 1995). This seminal text will be employed more fully in chapter three.

²⁰ Peter Davidson, *The Idea of North*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2005)

²¹ *Ibid.*, p.9

²² *Ibid.*, p.48

²³ Jean-Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (1979). In this study, he defines postmodernism as 'incredulity towards metanarratives'.

²⁴ Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction, With Chapters on the Supernatural in Scottish Literature*, (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1964)

²⁵ *Ibid.* p.310

²⁶ Colin Manlove, *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Academic, 1994), and *An Anthology of Scottish Fantasy Literature*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996)

²⁷ *An Anthology of Scottish Fantasy Literature*, p.7

²⁸ *Scottish Fantasy Literature*, p.1

²⁹ Margaret Elphinstone, 'Fantasising Texts: Scottish Fantasy Today', paper given at the Association for Scottish Literary Studies Conference: *The Shape of Texts to Come: The Writing of a New Scotland*, 14th May 2000, subsequently published on their website, www.asls.org.uk

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p.1

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Douglas Gifford, '“Nathaniel Gow's Toddy”: The Supernatural in Lowland Scottish Literature from Burns and Scott to the Present Day'

³³ *Ibid.*, p.?

³⁴ *Witchcraft and Demonology*, preface

³⁵ *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey*, p.1

³⁶ 'mode', in Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 2nd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.159

³⁷ 'fantasy', *Ibid.*, p.95

³⁸ T.E. Little, *The Fantasts*, (Amersham: Avebury 1984), p.10

³⁹ Luce Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic*, (London: Arnold, 1996)

Neil Cornwell, *The Literary Fantastic: From Gothic to Postmodernism*, (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf 1990)

Kathryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, (London: Methuen, 1984)

Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, (London: Methuen, 1981)

⁴⁰ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*

⁴¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, p.25, p.31

⁴² 'fantastic, the' in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p.94

⁴³ *Fantasy*, p.20

⁴⁴ Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, *No Mean City: A Story of the Glasgow Slums*, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1935)

⁴⁵ Sylvia Bryce-Wunder, 'Of Hard Men and Hairies: *No Mean City* and Modern Scottish Urban Fiction', in *Scottish Studies Review* vol. 4, no.1 (Spring 2003), pp.112-125, p.122

⁴⁶ *Fantasy*, p.25

⁴⁷ See for example Graham Dunstan Martin's criticism of Todorov in his *An Enquiry into the Nature of Speculative Fiction – Fantasy and Truth*, (*Studies in Comparative Literature* vol. 58, The Edwin Mellin Press, 2003), especially pp.12-14, and p.24. In general, I have found that the mention of Todorov to academics in this field causes frowns, tutting and even laughter.

⁴⁸ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVII*, trans and ed. James Strachey, (London: Vintage, 1955; 2001)

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p.220

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.249

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Amaryll Beatrice Chanady, *Magic Realism and the Fantastic: Resolved Versus Unresolved Antinomy*, (New York and London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1985) p. 24

⁵³ 'magic realism', in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p.146

⁵⁴ *An Enquiry into the Nature of Speculative Fiction – Fantasy and Truth*, p.147

⁵⁵ *Oxford English Dictionary*, volume I, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.388

⁵⁶ *ibid.* p.386

⁵⁷ 'ambiguity', in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p.7/8

⁵⁸ Horace Walpole, *The Castle of Otranto*, (1764). Walpole gave it the subtitle 'A Gothick Story', inventing the Gothic novel in one step.

⁵⁹ J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, (London: Penguin Books, 1976; 1992), pp.381-386

⁶⁰ Allen W. Grove, 'Coming out of the castle: gothic, sexuality and the limits of language', in *Historical Reflections/Reflexions Historiques*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (2000), pp.429-446, p.429

⁶¹ *The Fantastic*, p.60

⁶² Examples include the aforementioned works of fiction, the work of Ken Loach and Lynne Ramsay in film, and television serials such as *Taggart*, (SMG for Scottish Television, 1985-2005), and *The Key* dir. David Blair (BBC Scotland, 2003).

⁶³ ' "Nathaniel Gow's Toddy"', p.?

⁶⁴ Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*, (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p.40

⁶⁵ Edwin Morgan, back cover, Donny O'Rourke and Hamish Whyte, (eds.), *Back to the Light. New Glasgow Poems*, (Glasgow: Mariscat Press & Glasgow City Council, 2001)

'It will never be in the power of man to decide'¹: James Hogg and Psychosomatic Supernaturalism

'I dare not venture a judgement, for I do not understand it.'

– the Editor, *The Justified Sinner*²

' "Instead of conceiving only one, I imagine many, so I become the slave of none."'

– William of Baskerville, Umberto Eco's *The Name of the Rose*³

James Hogg's 1820 story 'Adam Bell' opens with the warning that in the narrative we are about to encounter, 'even conjecture is left to wander in a labyrinth, unable to get hold of the thread that leads to the catastrophe.' (75) Correspondingly, in his 1824 novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Mrs. Logan and Mrs. Calvert find that during their investigations into the activities of Robert and his mysterious companion, 'their minds were wandering and groping in a chaos of mystery.' (84) Hogg's deliberate seduction of the readers into their own chaos of mystery in a range of works undermines the conventional surety and stability with which we encounter texts.

The supernatural/psychological tension evident in later Scottish literature, by then a tradition in its own right as the following chapters will demonstrate, is distinguished from other similar ambiguities such as dream/reality, drunk/sober and fantasy/imagination through its potential links with mental illness. Madness is a more permanent state than inebriation or dreaming, and thus disturbingly lacks the prospect of closure; there may never be an ending, let alone a happy one. Hogg, living as he did during a period of increasing psychiatric awareness and increasing secularism, where madness and the supernatural had only recently become distinguished from each other⁴, was the first to fully codify this specific type of ambiguous supernaturalism in Scottish literature, and to harness it for subversive purposes. Moreover, at this time, when the realist novel and the short story form were still in their infancy as published genres, Hogg's radical departure from early conventions, such as his deliberate refutation of reader expectations and conscious cultivation of ambiguity was, in a Scottish context, indeed groundbreaking. Luce Armitt theorises the fantastic by asserting that in general, 'literary narratives create a hunger to know more [...] which stimulates the attendant

desire for gratification that keeps us turning the page.' On the other hand, fantastic narratives, such as Hogg's, 'challenge the reader's sense of gratification', and cease 'to fulfil our expectant desires'.⁵ This in part accounts for Hogg's recent growth in popularity: his texts continue to challenge and remain satisfyingly unsatisfying.

Late twentieth-century criticism of the *Justified Sinner*, of which there is a relatively large body, repeatedly acknowledges the essential importance of radical ambiguity to any interpretation of the text, often focussing on the figure of Gil Martin. However, that this ambiguity is the central theme and dynamic behind a number of Hogg's other texts has largely been ignored in favour of a focus on his allegedly greatest novel, or recognised only in relation and as a complement to the *Justified Sinner*. In this chapter, Hogg's other radically ambiguous texts, where episodes of psychosomatic supernaturalism are intrinsic to their structure, themes and outcomes, in particular *The Three Perils of Woman: or Love, Leasing and Jealousy* (1823) and 'The Brownie of the Black Haggs' (1828) will be considered alongside the more familiar text. These are often perceived as minor in comparison to his widely regarded 'masterpiece', as reflected in critical responses. In his book-length study of Hogg's work, Douglas Gifford designates the *Justified Sinner* Hogg's 'finest work'⁶, and it is moreover the only text to warrant an entire chapter, while Colin Waters refers to it as 'the book that secured his place in literary Valhalla'⁷, and Douglas Mack criticises 'the "non-specialist" view that Hogg was a one-book wonder.'⁸ Yet, in terms of their use of ambiguity these other texts, in particular 'The Brownie of the Black Haggs', are surely as deserving of critical attention as Hogg's great novel.

Hogg and Scott

Hogg's position in early nineteenth-century Scotland is as ambiguous as the tricks and techniques of his fiction. It is all too easy to polarise his use of the supernatural with that of his more renowned contemporary, Scott. Hogg's supernatural is corporeal – such as in 'The Barber of Duncow', which is ironically subtitled 'A Real Ghost Story' – while Scott's is ethereal – such as that represented intangibly by the Bodach Glas in *Waverley*, and later by the spirit in *The Highland Widow*. Scott also uses the device of the 'explained supernatural', where supernatural beings are ultimately resolved as rational, as in *Old Mortality* with Henry Morton's ghost, or in *Peeveril of the Peak*, where Julian follows the mute Fenella and momentarily believes her to be a Banshie. Meanwhile, although Hogg uses this technique once in his first novel *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* (1818), it appears he was unsatisfied that the mysterious beings

supposed to be brownies by the inhabitants of Chapelhope and surrounding farms, are ultimately rationally explained as Covenanters, in hiding from Claverhouse, whose forms are distorted by the fact that they are forced to exist in extreme conditions with little food and sunlight. In a letter to William Blackwood of 31st January 1818, Hogg indicates that he would have preferred to 'leave some mysterious incidents unexplained'.⁹ Scott's supernatural is often based on the persistence of legends as echoes of the past to provide local colour, as in the fountain in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. Meanwhile in Hogg's work legends and tradition are very much a part of everyday reality, such as when the narrator of 'The Mysterious Bride' names the location of the mysterious visitations as a place he still passes often, and in 'Tibby Hyslop's Dream', which begins with the claim that 'I learned the following story on the spot where the incidents occurred, and even went and visited all those connected with it, so that there is no doubt with regard to its authenticity'.¹⁰ Where ambiguity remains in Scott's supernatural fiction, it often exists as part of the background to the main action, whereas Hogg's inexplicable beings and events – whether real or indicative of madness – always command consideration.

The writers' own comments play on this perceived polarisation. In a review of Galt's *The Omen* in 1826, Scott comments:

The reader will easily imagine that we do not allude to the superstition of the olden time, which believed in spectres, fairies and other supernatural apparitions. These airy squadrons have been long routed, and are banished to the cottage and the nursery.¹¹

The supernatural is acceptable, provided it originates from childhood stories or from an older rural way of life. It has no place in the minds of sophisticated Enlightened moderns, and is a tolerable fictional diversion provided its origins are taken into consideration. In response to Scott's position,¹² Hogg begins his short story of 1830, 'The Mysterious Bride', with this complaint:

A great number of people now a days are beginning broadly to insinuate that there are no such things as ghosts or spiritual beings visible to mortal sight. Even Sir Walter Scott is turned renegade and with his stories made up of half-an-half like Nathaniel Gow's toddy is trying to throw cold water on the most certain though most impalpable phenomena of human nature. The bodies are daft.¹³

Nathaniel Gow was a traditional fiddle-player and a contemporary of Scott and Hogg's, who – in an attempt to aid his performances by avoiding inebriation – began taking water with his whisky. Yet ironically much of Hogg's own fiction is made up of another kind of 'half an half', not that of the supposedly 'watered down' supernatural explained away rationally but that of the either/or kind examined in this chapter. Thus, to construct a straightforward binary of Hogg/Scott, as they playfully do themselves, is to over-simplify their positions in the early nineteenth-century Scottish literary scene.

Given that there is an immense volume of material written about and by Scott, it is easy to see him as a great but easily situated and identifiable writer. However, his position becomes more ambiguous as his career progresses – he is antiquarian, fictionist, historian, but does he corrupt the histories he fictionalises, and does he preserve or destroy the traditions and histories he sets down on the printed page? There is the now famous example of the conversation he had with Hogg's mother, Margaret Laidlaw, when collecting songs for his *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* (1802-1803), during which he is indignantly told that, 'they war made for singin, an' no for readin, but ye hae broken the charm noo, an they'll never be sung mair.'¹⁴ Yet without his predilection for collecting, it is questionable whether such things would have survived at all. The Nigerian writer Ben Okri discusses culture and kitsch in relation to a visit to Scotland he made in 1986. He concludes that while culture, 'during a time of political impotence, can become kitsch, it can also function as continual declaration and resistance.'¹⁵ Just so, much of Scott's iconography, costumery and general depictions verge on the kitsch, but can also be read as an affirmation and promotion of the culture from which they draw. In addition, Scott's perspective on Scotland, as intimated in his work, is similarly ambiguous. Is he ultimately Nationalist or Unionist? His stance is generally perceived as 'North British', but the anti-Union side of the events of 1707 is articulated sympathetically in a number of texts,¹⁶ including the supernatural-tinged novel, *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819).¹⁷ The novel is an allegorical and deeply tragic love story where no redemption or renewal is possible, its characters engulfed by a destiny beyond their control. With the figure of Scott, interpretation often struggles to negotiate a sense of uncertain cultural identity and the co-existence of multiple possibilities.

Conversely, Hogg becomes more canonical as time progresses, during his own lifetime, and moreover in recent criticism. Douglas Mack states that the fact that Hogg's work was widely, if often unfavourably, reviewed contemporaneously 'was to be expected, because Hogg was generally regarded as a major figure in the 1820s'.¹⁸

Indeed, despite avowedly humble literary beginnings as a self-taught shepherd obliged to leave school at the age of seven after family bankruptcy, Hogg was one of the most prominent writers in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, or *Maga*, during the 1820s, among such figures as John Gibson Lockhart (Scott's son-in-law) and John Wilson (Professor of Moral Philosophy at Edinburgh University from 1820, whose alias was 'Christopher North'). The 'Noctes Ambrosianae' series of sketches that appeared in *Maga* between March 1822 and February 1835 record the often fictional conversations held in Ambrose's pub amongst the literati and their aliases, including the 'boozing buffoon'¹⁹ of the group and arguably the most popular character, the Shepherd. Described as 'somewhere between journalism and literature' by Hogg's biographer Karl Miller²⁰, the series – more than his own work – confirmed Hogg's contemporary fame, while the Shepherd represents 'a complex embodiment of profoundly intuitive responses to experience, standing in a teasing and stimulating relationship with his original'.²¹

The fictional quality to Hogg's life survives now as then. Recently, criticism of Hogg's *Justified Sinner* – following Andre Gide's seminal introduction to the 1947 Cresset Press edition of the novel, where he suggests that it was Europe's first great psychological fiction – has reinvented it as a twentieth-century, 'postmodern' text, and somehow timeless. It should be noted, however, that Gide first encountered the novel in the 1920s, alongside Kafka and others who were exploiting Modernist themes of fragmentation and examinations of the self, with which the *Justified Sinner* reverberates. Gide's interpretation performs the transmission from modernist to postmodernist readings.

In her excellent article on the novel, Magdalene Redekop argues that it 'appears designed for the purpose of satisfying a contemporary reader's appetite for indeterminacy [...] The implicit consensus appears to be that a *Justified Sinner* is a kind of premature postmodernist novel'.²² Similarly, with reference to the *Justified Sinner*, Iain Crichton Smith deracinatingly claimed:

Now it is no use comparing Hogg with Scott or, as far as I can see, with anyone in his century [...] This novel seems to me to be psychologically far in advance of Hogg's time and can only be properly understood in the twentieth century.²³

In this chapter, such dehistoricised readings will be avoided, and the novel will be recontextualised by examination alongside Hogg's other psychosomatic works.

Scott and Hogg shared a complex literary relationship. There is no doubt of a self-consciousness regarding the other's work in much of their own, and as Douglas Mack states when arguing that the *Justified Sinner* is a 'both devastating and respectful' response to *Old Mortality*, 'Hogg's fictions again and again enter into dispute with Scott's, but this is precisely because Hogg felt that Scott's fictions mattered.'²⁴ Elsewhere, Mack convincingly argues that *The Three Perils of Woman* is similarly a response to *Waverley*. Yet to dichotomise the two is to force a false template upon these remarkable, polyphonous writers, and to suggest an interdependence that is at best doubtful. Scott and Hogg's personal and professional relationships are well documented, but beyond this, access to authorial intention, particularly amongst writers who often published anonymously (as Scott did with *Waverley* in 1814 and Hogg with the *Justified Sinner* in 1824) is impossible.

Indeed, within the fiction about and by Hogg himself, simple binaries are inappropriate and even obstreperous. He is often positioned as a transitory figure, oscillating between the limits of various dichotomies, including: Enlightenment and Romanticism; past and present; tradition and modernity; oral and literary; and rural and urban. These simplify his position; he moves through the indefinite space between extremes. As will be illustrated in this chapter, he is acutely aware of the extremes he must negotiate, and he succeeds in harnessing and exploiting these to great literary effect. Douglas Gifford's first chapter in his 1976 study of Hogg's work is entitled 'Ettrick Hogg and Edinburgh Hogg', and sets up a firm distinction between the pre-1810 work of the self-taught rural shepherd and the post-1810 writer conscious of his position in a wider literary scene. Gifford states:

Since his work is so marked on the one hand by the distinction between what he inherited from his Border background, giving an authenticity of vision which is true to his basic nature, and on the other his perpetually shifting, ever-imitative desire to find a 'vision' and form acceptable to a polite Edinburgh and British audience, I feel one should consider these two sides separately.²⁵

The year Hogg moved to Edinburgh, 1810, does mark a degree of change, especially since prior to this he had only published poetry and non-fiction. Yet as Penny Fielding argues, these separate spheres overlap and meld into one another. In Fielding's words, 'Hogg was in the world of the Edinburgh literati but not of it; the odour of sheep pursued him'.²⁶ Hogg's experiences in his first community come to inhabit and inform those of the second. However, was he resentful, as critics have suggested, of the spaces

created for him by the literati? Or, as others argue, did he play up to the notion of the 'heaven-taught' autodidact writer (for example with the fact that he claimed the same birth date as Robert Burns) and use the associations of 'original genius' and 'purity' to his advantage?²⁷ Was the polarisation of Edinburgh and Ettrick, and all that came with it, useful to him, or was it restrictive? As the Editor in the *Justified Sinner* remarks, 'I cannot tell.' (240)

Yet it is clear that Hogg does not sit comfortably with the false narratives perpetuated around him – he is neither postmodernist, nor 'heaven-taught' shepherd nor noble savage. Comparable to the reactions against metanarratives and constructions of identity evident in the later psychosomatic supernatural texts examined in subsequent chapters, Hogg's work eludes straightforward classification, and his representations of identity and place are open-ended and incomplete. Because of the nature of enquiry this incompleteness suggests, it is more fruitful to consider the subversive functions of Hogg's psychosomatic supernaturalism thematically rather than strictly chronologically. Each main theme, however, may be related to key texts chronologically in an attempt to ascertain how this motif develops sequentially in Hogg's work. The *Justified Sinner* represents one stage amongst others in this development.

Ganging to Houk up Hunder-year-auld Banes²⁸: Temporal Subversion

The subversive potentiality of Hogg's technique is realised fully in the depiction and dissection of historical progress in much of his work. Following experiments in his first novel *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, where any mystery is ultimately explained rationally, and in short stories such as 'Adam Bell', *The Three Perils of Woman* represents his first truly sustained and self-conscious construction of this kind of literary and philosophical ambiguity. The *Perils of Woman* features three seemingly independent narratives depicting each peril in turn, and representing a diversity of communities, from polite urban Edinburgh to the Borders farming community to the poverty-stricken Highlands. The chronologically separate narratives are presented through the novel's unconventional non-linear structure, so that the reader encounters the contemporary before the historical. We first encounter a coming-of-age 'national tale' set in 1820s bourgeois Edinburgh, then a comedy involving a rural Highland parish during the 1745 uprising, and finally a tragedy depicting the same characters following the '45 and the bloody aftermath of Culloden, which forms the disturbing and unredeemed conclusion to the novel. Each narrative, or peril, represents a variation on a recurring theme, and is divided into 'circles' rather than chapters, structurally

embodying and reflecting the metaphysical themes contained within: the liminal positions of the characters, the uncanny recurrence of events between narratives, and the repetition compulsion of human history. As the narrator of the novel states: 'and thus by a retrograde motion round a small but complete circle, am I come again to the very beginning of my story.' (25) The suggestion of the supernatural is evident in the contemporary and historical narratives, featuring what have come to be known, since Ian Duncan first coined the memorable phrase, as 'upright corpses'.²⁹ Sigmund Freud theorises the supernatural in literature and its connection to the progression of time in his seminal essay 'The Uncanny', and following on from Freud, Duncan discusses the intersection of history and the supernatural in Romantic texts from Scotland, thus:

Scottish Gothic represents (with greater historical and anthropological specificity than in England) the uncanny recursion of an ancestral identity alienated from modern life. Its fictions [...(feature)] a wholesale temporal distinction between Scottish modernity – the domain of the middle-class literary subject – and a category of cultural otherness designated as pre-modern.³⁰

It is when this distinction is unsettled and transgressed that Romantic becomes Gothic,³¹ and when novels such as Hogg's (and later Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)) appear. Hogg repeatedly examines the contrast between the assumptions of a modern civilisation and those exemplified by an older, pre-modern supernatural view of the world, and what happens when this temporal binary is deconstructed through uncanny recursions of the apparent past. As Freud argues, this succeeds in 'betraying us to [...(the beliefs)] which we have ostensibly surmounted'.³²

In the *Perils of Woman*, the historical Highland-set tales are strewn with corpses that appear to be alive and live bodies that appear dead and are often then reanimated as tangible re-visitations from the past. The apparent resurrections of Davie Duff and Sally Niven foreshadow and give testimony to the horrific reality of Culloden and its aftermath. The construction of the North, especially the Highlands, so evident in Hogg's time following Macpherson's Ossianic poetry as the site of the primitive, barbaric and preternatural is here initially maintained, as is the literary motif of the journey North, undertaken by a seemingly more sophisticated Southern protagonist. Yet the upright corpses of history are further disturbingly and uncannily reflected by the strange illness that the heroine, Gatty Bell, falls victim to in the earlier, although chronologically later, narrative, set firmly and tellingly away from the North in the metropolitan centre, Edinburgh. Gatty enters a strange, coma-like state after being involved in a dubious love

triangle with lover then husband, the Highlander M'Ion, and cousin Cherry, problematised by Gatty's concern with emerging notions of femininity, propriety and gentility. Cherry dies, supposedly of a broken heart, after M'Ion and Gatty marry, and it is during the guilt-ridden aftermath of this that Gatty falls ill. The other characters initially debate whether she is alive or dead, until her liminal state is interrupted by a horrific occurrence:

...behold the corpse sat up in the bed in one moment! The body sprung up with a power resembling that produced by electricity. It did not rise up like one wakening out of a sleep, but with a jerk so violent that it struck the old man on the cheek, almost stupefying him; and there sat the corpse, dressed as it was in its dead-clothes, a most appalling sight as man ever beheld [...] No human heart could stand this; for though the body seemed to have life, it was altogether an unnatural life; or rather, the frame seemed as if agitated by some demon that knew not how to exercise or act upon any one of the human powers or faculties. (199/200)

Gatty is later referred to as 'the animated corpse', 'the creature', 'this ghastly automaton', and 'this incomprehensible being' (200-202), further heightening the ambiguity of her state. The fact that this incongruously occurs within the bosom of bourgeois Edinburgh, rather than on the war-ravaged moorlands of the Highlands, amplifies its sense of violence and horror. Following the incident, Gatty returns to a stagnant state and unconsciously gives birth to a healthy son after a few months, remaining comatose for three years and a day in total and being cared for all the while in an Edinburgh asylum. The origins of this state of living death have been hotly debated by critics, from divine intervention to hysteria and catatonic schizophrenia to animal magnetism to venereal disease (perhaps also the cause of Cherry's death, the common factor being contact with M'Ion)³³. Even Gatty herself, upon eventually waking, exclaims:

"I know not what to believe, or what to doubt [...] Where have I been? Or rather, *what* have I been? Have I been in a sleep for three years and a day? Have I been in the grave? Or in a madhouse? Or in the land of spirits. Or have I been lying in a state of total insensibility, dead to all the issues of life?" (223)

Ambiguity is essential to any interpretation of the illness. Multiple possibilities contribute to the overall complexity of the text, and to Hogg's destabilisation of this safe world of the new middle classes as represented in 'women's' genres such as the National Tale and the novel of manners. Gatty effectively loses three years of her past,

of her history, believing when she awakens that only a matter of days have elapsed: 'the period was lost in her estimation, as if it had never been' (215). Yet unlike the uncanny resurrections of the post-'45 narratives, such as Sally who haunts the former battlefields as a being lacking reason, nursing her own dead child, and 'bereft and traumatised by the violence of historical progress',³⁴ Gatty's return to life has a positive outcome.³⁵ She accepts her now post-infant son, and she and family look hopefully and affirmatively to the future. However, the central enigma of Gatty's illness, combined with the Gothic horror of the succeeding narrative, serves to undercut the idealistic optimism of the linear conclusion, indicating an ironic treatment of newly established conventions. Ambiguity and animated corpses appear incongruous within the conventionally safe world of women's fiction.

Duncan interprets the upright corpses of the novel, along with the parallels between contemporary and historical narratives and the fact that the historical comes after the contemporary as the disturbing conclusion to the text, as demonstrating a profound concern with Enlightenment notions of historical progress. He states:

The spectral persistence of ancient forms beyond the cessation of their life in social practice unsettles that linear, developmental unfolding which constitutes the progressive chronology of modern history [...] In the moment of the uncanny we read a dissolution of the temporal categories that sustain the identity of the modern, unitary subject.³⁶

The temporal categories Duncan refers to include the 'four stages' model of history as inevitable progress and improvement espoused by Enlightenment philosophers such as Adam Smith,³⁷ and upheld in Scott's historical novels. One such is *Waverley*, and Douglas Mack interprets the *Perils of Woman* as a response to *Waverley* on the subject of the '45, as well as a critique of the novel's evasion of any discussion of Culloden, further provoked by Scott's stage management of George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822.³⁸ Mack argues that, 'Scott's novel sees this convulsion (the '45) as the decisive moment at which the old, feudal, world of the Jacobites died – the decisive moment at which the forces of social progress brought Scotland into the new, rational, modern, law-abiding, Enlightened world presided over by the Hanoverian British monarchy.'³⁹ Hogg's novel demonstrates the old world's ability to revisit upon the modern Enlightened present, depicting the past as far from absolute, and Enlightenment views of history as inevitable progress as unrealistically optimistic. He insists that the Enlightenment is built upon the blood and barbarism of Culloden and its aftermath, in the way Walter Benjamin analogously insists that, 'there is no document of civilisation

which is not at the same time a document of barbarism.'⁴⁰ Although in novels such as *Waverley* and *Rob Roy* Scott laments that which is lost in historical evolution, history is still confined to the absolute past, from which it cannot return. Yet if, as Hogg's novel suggests, death can be returned from, and the historical can follow the contemporary, then the past is far from safely resolved, and the passing of time does not always represent progress. In fact, the novel portrays, as Anthony Hasler states in his brilliant introduction to the recent edition, 'a vision of history as black farce, of ignorant armies clashing by night.'⁴¹ These ignorant armies, Hogg's novel suggests, continue to clash.

Similarly, the *Justified Sinner* presents an historical account of events following a contemporary narrative with a concluding contemporary frame, making the historical 'an uncanny presence inside' the contemporary.⁴² The first account, the Editor's narrative, relates from a position of Enlightenment superiority the strange and unexplained events surrounding the Colwan family over a hundred years ago. Here, the contemporary form of the historical novel is self-consciously and not unquestioningly adopted. As Douglas Mack states, on the face of it:

Hogg's Editor [...] would appear to be in some sense a representative of the world of Scott and his circle; and his narrative of the life of Robert Wringhim would appear to be very much in tune with the attempt in Scott's *Waverley* novels to present an objective and 'unbiased' (sic) account of Scotland's past, after a judicious and even-handed evaluation of the evidence.⁴³

The Editor's seemingly impartial stance is interrogated through the subversion of his rational Enlightenment assumptions by the (however ambiguous) presence of an old-world supernaturalism, in the form of the mysterious Gil-Martin, who as his name and manner suggest, may be an agent of the Devil himself, an ancient presence.⁴⁴ This is also the kind of supernaturalism related by the 'auld wives of the clachan' (195) to Samuel Scrape in Robert's account, warning that there are 'mony deils aneath the masks o' zealous professors' (198). Such zealous professors (those who publicly profess a set of beliefs) are Robert (Calvinism) and the Editor (Enlightenment values). At the end of the novel, in his concluding frame to Robert's narrative, the Editor asserts that 'in this day, and with the present generation, it will not go down, that a man should be daily tempted by the devil'. (254) Yet, despite claiming disbelief in his age of advanced thinking, he still presents Robert's account, as well as the mysteries of his own 'history', to his contemporaries as emanating neither, as Scott suggested such things should, from the cottage or the nursery. As well as in the land of the cottage, the rural

Borders, these mysteries occur in the metropolitan centres of Glasgow and Edinburgh. They also arise amongst educated men with whom the Editor paradoxically encourages the reader to sympathise through his extreme lack of any compassion or attempt to empathise. He concludes that Robert must be either 'not only the greatest fool, but the greatest wretch, on whom was ever stamped the form of humanity; or that he was a religious maniac'. (254)

Moreover, the Editor instigates two important incidents driven by his curiosity regarding the primitive darkness of superstition, appearing incongruous with what he asserts is his methodology, based on the 'powerful monitors' (1) of history as a source of truth. Firstly, when considering changing the title of Robert's memoir prior to publication to *A Self-justified Sinner*, he decides, 'there being a curse pronounced by the writer on him that should dare to alter or amend, I have let it stand as it is.' (253) In addition, he goes so far as to visit the suicide's grave described in a letter from one Border shepherd, James Hogg, to *Blackwood's Magazine*. The letter relates the opening of the grave by two local men who find therein a remarkably preserved corpse, which we can assume was once Robert. Rebecca Pope convincingly argues for a connection between the preservation of Robert's corpse, which is assigned to the presence in the grave of the manuscript of his memoirs (' "it has been for the preservation o' that little book"' [252]), and the literary embalming carried out by the genre of the autobiography, preserving the past life of the protagonist.⁴⁵ The Editor displays a 'perverse' interest in Robert's autobiography – the very text he dismisses at the end of the novel as the fantasies of a maniac or religious fanatic – and also that which he appears to deem untenable, the supernatural. Upon reaching the grave, he confesses, 'I felt a singular sensation, when I saw the grey stone standing at the head, and another at the feet, and one half of the grave manifestly new digged, and closed up again as had been described.' (249) In Freud's words, the 'rational' Editor betrays himself to the beliefs he has ostensibly surmounted.⁴⁶

Indeed, the repeated grave-openings in this final section shed further light on an analysis of the representation of the processes of history in the novel as a whole. The mysterious metafictional character 'James Hogg' tells the Edinburgh relic-hunters who are intent on finding the suicide's grave that he is far too busy selling sheep to guide them: 'I hae mair ado than I can manage the day, foreby ganging to houk up hunder-year-auld banes.' (247) And houking up hunder-year-auld banes is precisely what the Editor does, literally when visiting the grave, but also metaphorically by publishing and commenting on Robert's memoirs. The opening of the grave by the Editor and his party

is the third in a line of symbolic unsettlings of the past, taking from the corpse as they do momentos and relics. The past is once again left open-ended and unresolved, and as Mack points out: 'At the end of the text we look into Robert's opened grave; and we are then confronted by disconcerting and disturbing questions, rather than by comforting and lucid answers.'⁴⁷ This kind of ambiguity again proves to be far from gratifying, relying on active reader intervention. Along similar lines, Duncan states that, 'unlike the liquefying corpse [...] a writing can be reanimated, by the act of reading', warning the reader of 'Hogg's disconcerting challenge, that in our own imaginations the narrative must speak again'.⁴⁸ We in turn undertake a process of hooking up the past, by allowing both narratives to speak again, and undergo a second reading in our imaginations.

'A view of my own state, at which I shuddered'⁴⁹: political subversion

Ambiguity also contributes to deep and sustained political subversion. Politics is defined here in its most general sense, as pertaining to social relations involving authority or power. As critics Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal argue, 'any relationship among humans, or between humans and other entities [...] can be said to have a politics.'⁵⁰ The politics of the relationships amongst Hogg's characters in these texts become destabilised and transformed both ontogenetically and phylogenetically through the presence of possible madness, or the potentially supernatural. In his own context, Hogg as a literary figure was politically subversive in this sense. His texts often articulate an interrogation of his relationship with both modern Edinburgh and superstitious Ettrick. Despite contributing to and being part of the establishment of the conservative, Tory-championing *Maga*, the radicalism of his position is often covertly evident, something that contemporary critics picked up on and used to denigrate his work.

Upon its publication, critics were outraged by the sexual connotations implicit in the events of the *Perils of Woman*. The review in the *Literary Gazette* warned that any qualities in the novel 'are disgraced by coarseness and gross vulgarities' and lamented the 'allusions to women of ill-fame', while the *British Magazine* reviewer felt that strong characterisation was 'spoiled by overwhelming vulgarity'.⁵¹ When the Bell children move to Edinburgh from the Borders to study, Gatty writes to her parents expressing surprise at the number of seemingly idle women wandering the streets around their residence. She writes: 'There are a great number of girls here [...] I suppose they lie, and swear, and cheat, and steal for a livelihood; at least, I can find out no other occupation that they have.' (39) Her father has inadvertently moved his

children to the red light district of the city. The wealthy Diarmid M'Ion, on the other hand, has *chosen* to make this area his place of residence. Both Cherry's and Gatty's mysterious illnesses have been attributed by some commentators to venereal disease, contracted from the shady M'Ion, who – Gatty tells her parents – 'is apt to make a boast of favours obtained from our sex'. (38) M'Ion also shows symptoms, and sends for a specialist despite his own medical background, and as David Groves states, 'many readers in 1823 would surely have assumed, especially in view of the previous allusions to prostitution in this work, that the unnameable illness is either syphilis or gonorrhoea.'⁵² As we have seen, these illnesses are ambiguous, and unnamed, but a bodily interpretation has an effect similar to that of attributing the symptoms to the mind, that is, a realist and rational, as opposed to supernatural, explanation. The literary subversion of the popular genre of the national tale evident in the novel has been well documented by critics, illustrating Hogg's concern with invoking then undermining readerly expectations. Yet by introducing the possibility that even the upper classes are prone to weaknesses of the mind, or a potentially sexually transmitted disease, an overtly political statement is made. High and low cultures, both prostitute and decorous bourgeois lady, are shown to be equally flawed and susceptible to such boundary-flouting and levelling infections.

Indeed, in *Peril Third*, the narrator states that: 'Death is the great queller of rancour and human pride; even his seen approach subdues them, levels rank, and consumes the substance of the fiery passions.' (388) Death, like infection or madness, refuses to respect rank. However, these states remain ambiguous, and the recurrent transgression of boundaries, from life to death and back again, from health to infection, from madness to sanity, and from class to class, makes solid identity elusive. Hogg's revision of the national tale amplifies this, and indeed extrapolates from the condition of the individual a phylogenetic statement on the nation. The national tale, exemplified in Maria Edgeworth's fiction, such as the novel *Castle Rackrent* (1800), in Scottish literature by Susan Ferrier's *Marriage* (1818), and played with and elaborated on in Scott's *Waverley* (1814) (where three divided sides instead of the conventional two are portrayed), usually involves a contemporary journey through the nation, to the fringes and back, which reveals deep divisions. Traditionally, resolution comes in the form of marriage between two people from opposite sides of the divide, such as Southern women Gatty and Sally and Highland men M'Ion and Alaster Mackenzie (whom Sally marries). National identity is a chief concern, with the individual often becoming synecdoche for the nation. However, in Hogg's tale, resolution is far from

straightforward or restorative. Anthony Hasler describes Hogg's treatment of these conventions thus:

His characters from both periods shuttle to and fro between the confines of a claustrophobic Scotland in travels which have no regenerative dimension, but mirror and engender at best comic confusion, at worst tragedy and trauma. A circling narrative enacts throughout what is for the most part a disturbingly fluid version of human identity [...] It is impossible – as the first reviewers disapprovingly noted – to draw from Hogg's depiction of personality a unitary, morally inflected cast of character.⁵³

Both individual and nation struggle to maintain a coherent identity, a poignant comment coming just after George IV's visit to Edinburgh, and his accompanying attempt to resolve historical rifts.⁵⁴

The concern with dissolution of identity is also apparent in the *Justified Sinner*. Much has been written about the subversive qualities of this text (for example David Groves' and Douglas Mack's articles and essays on the *Justified Sinner*), and familiar arguments will be summarised here, but with an attempt to extrapolate and revise. It is evident that in much of his work Hogg reacts against and subverts dominant codes, and in the *Justified Sinner* a number of positions are destabilised. As David Groves states, in the novel,

We are shown the folly of extreme Calvinism as represented by Robert Wringhim, but at the same time we are encouraged to sympathise with Wringhim to some extent and, finally, to see also the analogous foibles of Wringhims's counterpart 'the editor', with his extreme rationalism, his obtuseness and his deceitfulness. Hogg's satire is complex and two-dimensional, since it encourages readers to perceive strengths and weaknesses in every human being, and to admit the difficult lesson of human unity and kinship.⁵⁵

Robert represents an uncanny incursion into the present of a piece of older, superstitious Scotland, clearly deranged, bigoted and insular. Yet the very fact that he is entertained at all by the supposed Enlightenment rationalist, represents that the temporal and cultural location of the Editor's narrative may not be as faultless and advanced as he has led us to believe. Both Enlightenment and pre-Enlightenment Scotland are interrogated. The Editor constructs for himself a position of safety, but the historical narrative suggests how easily that position can be destabilised, and how dangerous extremism and excessive conviction of any kind of certainty can be. Even as an individual, or rather through his failure to maintain individuation, Robert and his psychological position

become a comment on society. A stable, independent self, simultaneously a product and component of a steady and unified community, would also essentially be a coherent, unfragmented self. Yet Robert's conscious identity progressively disintegrates to the point when he is no longer certain whether he is him'self, two people or a fragment of another whole. As he tells us in his memoir:

I generally conceived myself to be two people. When I lay in bed, I deemed there were two of us in it; when I sat up, I always beheld another person, and always in the same position from the place where I sat or stood, which was about three paces off me towards my left side [...] The most perverse part of it was, that I rarely conceived myself to be any of the two persons. (154)

Intersubjectivity is the defining feature of character depiction here, demonstrating the struggle an individual endures to maintain autonomous identity against a societal background of chaos, in the novel the chaos of religious controversy and extreme political change, including the events leading up to the Act of Union of 1707.⁵⁶ The Editor, in turn, is doubled with Robert, his intersubject in the sense that there exist attitudinal, if not ideological, similarities between them, and in the sense that between their two narratives, they make up the whole 'subject' of the novel.

Intersubjectivity as a source of horror is theorised by Julia Kristeva in her study, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*.⁵⁷ Gil-Martin is Robert's abject 'Other'; Robert is the Editor's, that which is 'repulsed', 'rejected' and 'thrown up': 'what I permanently thrust aside in order to live'. Yet abjection also involves 'the ambiguous opposition I/Other, Inside/Outside',⁵⁸ ambiguous in the sense that what is perceived to be externally other may well actually be internal, implicated in the 'I', just as Gil-Martin is implicated in Robert's identity, and Robert in the Editor's. The moment of horror occurs when this is recognised.

The abject is also ambiguous in a further sense. Kristeva tells us that it 'simultaneously beseeches and pulverises the subject', that it is both repulsive and attractive, and that this is what makes it so dangerous to coherent identity: 'One thus understands why so many victims of the abject are its fascinated victims – if not its submissive and willing ones.'⁵⁹ Indeed, this is the case for both the Editor and Robert and their respective abject others. In view of his rationalist position, the Editor should be dismissive of Robert's narrative – that which he finds in his very grave – but rather he seeks to publish it, immortalising and disseminating. Similarly, as a Christian Robert

should shun the company of the potentially diabolic Gil-martin, whose words are often double-tongued, 'equivocal, and susceptible of being rendered in a meaning perfectly dreadful'. (238) However, he does not, and refers to him as his 'elevated and dreaded friend'. (223) Following this, Robert acknowledges the very moment of abjection, 'the horror with which I now regarded him [that] was unaccountable to myself.' (223) Yet, for the Editor the abject moment of horrific recognition is yet to come: he speculates on Robert's narrative that he 'wrote and wrote about a deluded creature, till he [...] believed himself the very object whom he had been all along describing'. (254) As David Groves observes, 'the irony here is that the editor has been writing at (almost) equal length about a "deluded creature", without ever recognising his affinity with that creature.'⁶⁰

Robert and Gil-Martin share a further mutual identity, in that they are both rebellious sons. The Devil is the definitive rebellious son, but Robert has also rejected his father's influence and instruction in favour of a terrible liberty. Yet, however destructive this commonality might be, it is the maternal connection that Kristeva discusses as the ultimate abject relationship, stating that 'abjection preserves what existed in the archaism of pre-objectal relationship, in the immemorial violence with which a body becomes separated from another body in order to be'. (10) Just so, Gil-Martin's relationship with Robert becomes at times almost maternal. Gil-Martin tells Robert at one point:

"Sooner shall you make the mother abandon the child of her bosom [...] than separate me from your side. Our beings are amalgamated, as it were, and consociated in one, and never shall I depart from this country until I carry you in triumph with me."(189)

The mother's body is the ambiguous space where identity is both generated – through birth – and threatened – through the risk to autonomy represented by the mother. At certain points in the novel, Robert's identity is reliant upon Gil-Martin, whether he is actual devil or projection of the mind, but is also dangerously threatened by total amalgamation with this ambiguous being. Moreover, in this sense Robert's suicide also becomes matricide, as it directly results in the cessation of the mother/child relationship.

A similar relationship exists between Lady Wheelhope and her servant Merodach in Hogg's 1828 short story, 'The Brownie of the Black Haggs'. The tale relates the compulsive and destructive interaction of the aristocrat and her servant, the potential brownie of the title.⁶¹ Lady Wheelhope 'was an inexorable tyrant in her

family, quarrelled with her servants, often cursing them, striking them, and turning them away; especially if they were religious, for these she could not endure, but suspected them of every bad thing'. (242) Yet she meets her match in the unearthly Merodach, a 'fiendish creature' (254), whom most people

began to regard as a creature that was not canny. They had seen him eat, and drink, and work like other people; still he had that about him that was not like other men. He was a boy in form, and an antediluvian in feature. Some thought he was a mule, between a Jew and an ape; some a wizard, some a kelpie, or a fairy, but most of all, that he was really and truly a Brownie. (250)

Their relationship develops to the point of obsession, so that towards the conclusion of the narrative the lady casts a telling look on Merodach: 'It was not a look of love nor of hatred exclusively; neither was it of desire or disgust, but it was a combination of them all.' (253) This is what Douglas Mack discusses as 'a powerful cocktail of lust and hatred. A trail of violence, havoc and death ensues; and Hogg's powerful, savage story ends after the lady follows Merodach into the black hags of the moorland, where madness and death await her'.⁶² It is possible that Merodach is guilt personified. The lady may have brought retribution upon herself, and 'Merodach of Babylon' as he is sometimes known, may have been sent by some sinister force to deliver this reckoning. However, ambiguity again provides the dynamic, and no conclusions are reached as to whether Merodach is a malevolent Brownie, or simply a clever but ill-natured old man, whose disproportionately huge influence on the lady comes from her troubled state of mind.

Both interpretations operate analogously. What is definite, however, is the story's elision of the disparity between high and low, comparable to that in *Perils of Woman* and the *Justified Sinner*. The aristocratic lady and the 'jotteryman', or dogsbody servant, exist at points in a mutually dependent relationship, each providing the other with a focus for their energies, something to react against. Merodach ultimately kills her, but not before she has been driven mad with hatred and lust for him. The conventional power relationship is subverted.

Another interpretation connected to this is the possibility that the story is an ironic allegory for Hogg's relationship with the Edinburgh literati. Hogg, a shrewd but lowly rustic figure is at this time both loved and loathed, celebrated and censured by Scott, Wilson, Blackwood and their literary cronies (as witnessed in the discussion of the 'Noctes Ambrosianae' above). The persistent bombastic ridicule of the character of

the Shepherd in the *Noctes Ambrosianae* demonstrates this. The Shepherd is generally drunk and obtuse, and the other characters protest his rustic buffoonery rather too much. It is as if to label and subordinate this clever man from the sticks as the drunken Shepherd, not to be taken seriously, would neutralise his subversive potential. The supporters of the Tory-championing *Maga*, as opposed to those of the Whig *Edinburgh Review*, appreciated Hogg's (at first reading) traditional tales of rural life. As Douglas Mack states in his introduction to *The Shepherd's Calendar*, the collection that contained 'The Brownie of the Black Hags',

The periodical's concerns tended to lie with agriculture, the landed gentry, and rural affairs as opposed to industry, trade, and urban affairs. Contributions by Hogg on the quaint ways of the stalwart Ettrick peasantry (salt of the earth, our loyal peasantry, just what we need to keep the Radicals at bay) must have seemed a good idea in theory.⁶³

What these stories provided in practice, however, was somewhat more subversive. 'The Brownie' is Hogg's gentle reminder to the Tory hierarchy of the potential powers of peasant superstition and a self-educated lower class. Further, just as Lady Wheelhope's attempts to rid herself and her household of a threatening figure disastrously misfire, so too do the literati's attempts to emasculate the incongruous Ettrick shepherd. Autonomous identity is superseded by a collective identity, and thus these stories can be read as social allegories.

The dangers of accepting any ideology or system of belief unquestioningly are thus illustrated time and again in Hogg's work. The safety of positions of power, whether personal, religious or political, is undermined. Extremism is shown to be a precarious force, in all its various aspects. Instead, humanity is advocated, ever flawed but also optimistically ever open to questioning and change.

'Beyond the power of utterance'⁶⁴: Literary Subversion

Hogg's strategies also have an aesthetic impact, foregrounding a connection between the aesthetic and the political in his work. Ambiguity allows for the subversion of literary conventions, including emerging ideas of realism and romanticism, and linguistic propriety. The literary use of the supernatural alludes to an older, superstitious folk tradition, still primarily orally transmitted in Hogg's time. Yet Hogg writes for a highly literate book-buying audience, and as Douglas Gifford states, his 'whole creative identity can be seen as held in tension between these oral and written traditions.'⁶⁵ Penny Fielding notes a further element to this tension. The contemporary popularity of

the notion of original genius was connected to the idea of a purity inherent in orality. Yet as Fielding points out, 'the paradox of orality made Hogg's position precarious. On the one hand, there is the 'natural genius' of the Ettrick Shepherd, on the other, the 'boozing buffoon' in literary circle [...] it might seem important for him to establish a clear demarcation between the purity of orality and the corruption of illiteracy.' (75) Hogg was simultaneously perceived as original genius and uneducated primitive, something self-consciously handled in his fiction. This tension between writing and orality parallels that between supernatural and rational explanations, past and present, North and South. Also connected to this tension are concerns surrounding the representation of the vernacular idiom.

In the *Perils of Woman*, as we have seen, genre expectations are established only to be undermined, with a number of different types of genre being adopted, and once adopted often transgressed or interrogated. The novel is a self-consciously metafictional text, entailing historical novel, national tale, novel of manners and supernatural folk tale, and also being divided into 'circles' rather than chapters. Hogg explains these divisions in this way:

And thus, by a retrograde motion round a small but complete circle, I am come again to the very beginning of my story.

I like that way of telling a story exceedingly. Just to go always round and round my hero, in the same way as the moon keeps moving round the sun; thus darkening my plot on the one side of him, and enlightening it on the other, thereby displaying both the lights and shadows of Scottish life. (25)

He self-consciously proffers a piece of fiction, albeit one that comments on the realities of society. The last line above displays an intertextual reference to John Wilson's 1822 collection of short stories, *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*. Critics have argued that Hogg's text is a response to this collection, a means of counteracting the sentimental and unrealistic portrait of Scottish life painted therein.⁶⁶ Yet by introducing potentially supernatural elements, Hogg is already creating a clearly fictional text and stretching the boundaries of credible truth for much of his audience. Hogg's intermediary position, between Ettrick and Edinburgh, oral and written, provided him with an awareness of both scepticism and superstition. The tension is increased by the acceptability for this audience of a psychological explanation of these seemingly unnatural elements. Penny Fielding discusses how 'Hogg, caught in the centre of the paradox of orality, characteristically plays both ends against the middle'.⁶⁷ Regardless of background, a

reader can conclude in favour of a specific explanation, but always with the uneasy sense of the other hovering in the background.

The representation of speech in the novel is connected to this tension. At a time of increasing anglicising pressures on newly rich Scots during the Regency period, Gatty's father Daniel Bell represents an older Scots-speaking perspective. As Douglas Mack states, 'the comically unsophisticated Daniel Bell is an unreconstructed Border farmer of the old school.' Meanwhile, however, his wife and daughter aspire to civilised North Britishness through the adoption of English manners, customs and the language. In this situation, as Mack points out, 'one would expect Richard Rickleton, Peril First's most prominent English character, to be the most admirable person in the story. And indeed he is, although this is not exactly because of his elegance, refinement and sophistication.'⁶⁸ Rickleton is Gatty's amorous Northern English cousin, who speaks with a strong Northumbrian dialect. When attempting to court his cousin, he says to her, ' "Why, because, d'ye see, cousin, that baith thee dress and thee cheek looks something wife-like – And a devilish bonny wifie thou wad be too!"' (57) Despite his youth and upward mobility, his tongue employs older modes of speech. He represents an incongruity within his own society, but also a further haunting of the corporeal present by the past, specific to Scotland. The Scots language originated from the survival of elements of the Old Northumbrian dialect of Old English, due to the relatively isolated geographic location of speakers, and hence less contact with other languages. A ghost of geography and language tangibly exists in the present of the novel.

A similar tension is apparent in the *Justified Sinner*. The oral accounts of Bell Calvert in the Editor's narrative, unreliable witness to the presence of Gil-Martin, are articulated in her native Scots, as Hogg parodies the notion that Scots speakers are uneducated and untrustworthy. In reality, we find Bell to possess integrity and nobility. Similarly, in the Sinner's account, the supernatural parable articulated by Samuel Scrape following his master Wringhim's illness or possession is a Scots folk tale, outlining and echoing what 'the auld wives o' the clachan' have been saying:

'Oo, I trow it's a' stuff;- folk shouldna heed what's said by auld crazy kimmers. But there are some o' them weel kend for witches too; an' they say – lord have a care o' us! – they say the deil's often seen gaun sidie for sidie w'ye, whiles in ae shape, an' whiles in another. An' they say that he whiles takes your ain shape, or else enters into you, and then you turn a deil yourself.'(195)

Samuel relates the tale of the village of Auchtermuchty, which was taken in by the devil in the figure of a hell-fire preacher, almost to the point of the community's destruction. Unfortunately for Robert, it turns out that folk should 'heed what's said by auld crazy kimmers', as the echoes of his own situation in this tale are apparent to the reader, if not to him. Within the two self-consciously 'written', literary narratives, Robert's memoirs and the literati Editor's account, these oral narratives act as ghostly shadows, uncanny recursions of the spoken into the written. Moreover, these speech forms are preserved in the (literally) longer enduring written and printed form, as the apparently spontaneous moment of speech is located in the art of the novel. As Douglas Mack states: 'Bell's oral tale is told towards the end of the Editor's main narrative, and this tale helps us to read the Editor's Narrative more deeply and more perceptively. Samuel's oral tale likewise helps us to read Robert's Private Memoirs more deeply and more perceptively.'⁶⁹ The question of truth is again foregrounded; which narrative is to be relied upon? The oral is perceived to have access to purity and originality, but the written, however superficially, contains the authority of print. Orality haunts writing, heightening ambiguity, and further problematising the question of the real.

Realism is interrogated in further ways throughout Hogg's text. Like the *Perils of Woman*, the *Justified Sinner* is highly metafictional, similarly playing with genre expectations, with contemporary ideas of realism and romance. Rebecca Pope notes an additional literary subversive quality to the intersubjectivity discussed above, and also a connection between the aesthetic and the political in the novel. She states:

Realism, as many commentators have observed, is inseparable from the traditional notion of the subject as unified, conscious, present to itself, and capable of using language [...] as a vehicle of expression. The self-divisions which Robert's narrative recounts and enacts constitute a sustained assault on this tenet of the realist faith [...] Hogg's novel begins its sustained dismantling of the assumptions upon which autobiography and realism have traditionally depended: that the subject is unified, that 'fact' and 'fiction' are separate categories.⁷⁰

Realism, as a literary representation of a recognisable reality, is broken down, suggesting a concurrent breakdown of the logic of what actually exists in this society. Moreover, the distinction between 'fact' or 'reality' and fiction becomes blurred, and a metafictional awareness of the restrictions of realism is apparent.

There is one particularly self-conscious metafictional episode in the Editor's concluding narrative where a certain local shepherd, James Hogg, makes an appearance. The Editor seeks him out as a guide to the suicide's grave following the publication of a

letter in *Maga* detailing the history and mystery of the grave (this letter did actually appear in *Maga* in August 1823, preceding publication of the novel). The author appears in his own novel in what critics would now designate a postmodernist strategy⁷¹ but ironically as if he has nothing to do with the action of the text. He is outwith the narrator's control, refusing to guide this Editor and his fellow relic-hunters, and indeed proving downright uncooperative, declining to contribute his 'author'itative knowledge. As Peter Garside states:

In the case of the Editor's narrative, the appearance of Hogg in propria persona has been taken as indicating not only a determination not to enter into the Editor's way of finding 'truth', but also as representing a more general refusal to offer explicit or extractable 'meaning' as the author.⁷²

As a character in his own fiction, Hogg shows us the way. He wants nothing to do with either extreme rationalism or superstition – he is too busy being human and going about his daily business to become involved in the dealings of fanatics. His priorities are commercial, indicating an awareness of economic realities, and an anti-romantic, even anti-aristocratic sentiment from Hogg the author. Again, fiction and reality, at least the literary representations thereof, prove less and less certain, not just because of the presence of potentially supernatural forces, but also due to the presence of potentially 'real' characters.

Similarly, 'The Brownie of the Black Haggs' exploits genre tensions and evokes questions around mode of transmission. The story was originally collected in *The Shepherd's Calendar* and Douglas Mack comments on how, in this collection, 'Hogg attempts to re-create on paper the manner and content of the traditional oral tales which he had been used to hearing in the long dark winter evenings during his childhood and youth in Ettrick Forest.'⁷³ The story is constructed to echo the nuances of traditional folk tale, with orality and heritage being foregrounded by the narrator, who tells us, 'this story was told to me by an old man, named Adam Halliday, whose great grandfather, Thomas Halliday, was one of those that found the body and buried it. It is many years since I heard it'. (254) Yet, as we have seen, the potential exists to read the story as sophisticated allegory, satirising Hogg's relationship with the literati, or as an informed psychological study of obsessive-compulsive disorder. It is simultaneously both oral folk tale and highly literate construction, mirroring the way in which both supernatural and psychological, and superstitious and rational explanations of events operate concurrently.

The Art of Indeterminacy

Indeed, as the narrator of the *Perils of Woman* declares, 'It will never be in the power of man to decide'. Multiple interpretations operate simultaneously, intensifying the power and experience of the narratives. Extreme positions, whether originating from sophisticated Edinburgh or superstitious Ettrick, are interrogated throughout these texts, and instead a sympathetic humanity is advocated, acknowledging the communality of the human condition. In this, the art of indeterminacy, ambiguity provides the dynamic, and allows for the subversion of dominant codes. With subversion comes a degree of freedom. Instead of conceiving only one, Hogg imagines many, and so becomes the slave of none.

This legacy and these potentialities were to be inherited by a number of subsequent writers. In the following chapter, later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century manifestations of the tradition, first fully codified by Hogg, will be explored in relation to their own specific contextual pressures.

Notes

¹ James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman: or Love, Leasing and Jealousy*, (1823), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p.168. Subsequent references will appear in brackets following the quotation.

² *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, (1824), (Oxford: Oxford University Press World's Classics, 1995), p.253. Subsequent references will appear in brackets following the quotation.

³ Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose*, (1980), (London: Minerva, 1996), p.306

⁴ Madness and the supernatural only came to be considered separate forces during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Previously, madness was often ascribed to demonic possession or witchcraft. See R.A. Houston, *Madness and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000)

⁵ Luce Armitt, *Theorising the Fantastic*, (London: Arnold, 1996), p.35

⁶ Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg*, (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1976), p.138

⁷ Colin Waters, 'One Man and His Hogg: a review of Karl Miller's *Electric Shepherd*', *Sunday Herald*, 13th July 2003

⁸ Douglas Mack, 'Revisiting *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*', in *Studies in Hogg and His World 10* (1999), pp.1- 26, p.1

⁹ Letter from James Hogg to William Blackwood, 31st January 1818, National Library of Scotland, MS. 4003, fol.87: 'In copying it [*The Brownie*] I have been greatly puzzled about leaving out or keeping in the last chapter which is wholly an explanatory one and of course not animated; or of still leaving some mysterious incidents unexplained'.

¹⁰ James Hogg, 'Tibby Hyslop's Dream' (1828), in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, Stirling/South Carolina Research Edition, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp.142-162, p.142

¹¹ Walter Scott, review of John Galt's *The Omen*, from *Blackwood's Magazine*, vol. XX July 1826

¹² There is some critical contention as to whether Hogg's comments in 'The Mysterious Bride' are a direct response to Scott's review of *The Omen*. Given the dates of each, and the close literary relationship the pair shared, it is certainly possible.

¹³ James Hogg, 'The Mysterious Bride' (1830), in *Selected Stories and Sketches*, ed. Douglas S. Mack, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982), pp.145-157, p.145

¹⁴ As quoted in James Hogg, *Anecdotes of Scott*, ed. Jill Rubenstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.37-38

¹⁵ Ben Okri, 'Diary', *New Statesman*, vol.112, no.2889 (8th August 1986), p.16

¹⁶ Other examples are: *The Letters of Malachi Malagrowther* (1826), in which he argues against the English tendency to assume 'the management of affairs entirely and exclusively proper to Scotland, as if it were totally unworthy of having the management of our own concerns', his collection *Tales of a Grandfather* (1827), and his own journal, most recently published as *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. W.E.K. Anderson (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1998).

¹⁷ 'The character of the times aggravated these suspicions. "In those days there was no king in Israel." Since the departure of James VI to assume the richer and more powerful crown of England, there had existed in Scotland contending parties, formed among the aristocracy, by whom, as their intrigues at the court of St. James's chanced to prevail, the delegated powers of sovereignty were alternately swayed. The evils attending upon this system of government, resembled those which afflict the tenants of an Irish estate owned by an absentee.' *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995). On pages 16 and 17, an analysis of the political climate in Scotland prior to the Union articulates a deep sympathy towards the tenants of this 'absentee landlord'.

¹⁸ Douglas Mack, 'Frankenstein, *The Three Perils of Woman* and *Wuthering Heights*: Romantic and Victorian Perspectives on the Fiction of James Hogg', in *Victorian Keats and Romantic Carlyle: The Fusions and Confusions of Literary Periods*, ed. C.C. Barfoot, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), p.283

¹⁹ This was a term coined by John Gibson Lockhart to demean the Hogg/Shepherd figure in *Quarterly Review* 44 (January 1831), p.82

²⁰ Karl Miller, *Electric Shepherd: A Likeness of James Hogg*, (London: Faber, 2003)

²¹ J.H. Alexander, *The Tavern Sages: Selections from the 'Noctes Ambrosianae'*, (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1992), p.viii

²² Magdalene Redekop, 'Beyond closure: Buried Alive with Hogg's *Justified Sinner*', *ELH Vol. 52, No. 1* (Spring 1985), pp.159-184, p.162

²³ Iain Crichton Smith, 'A Work of Genius: James Hogg's *Justified Sinner*', in *Studies in Scottish Literature vol. 28* (1993), pp.1-11, p.1

²⁴ Douglas S. Mack, 'Revisiting the Confessions' in *Studies in Hogg and His World* 10, p.24

²⁵ Gifford, *James Hogg*, p.10/11

²⁶ Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, p.75

²⁷ Douglas Mack suggests this in his introduction to the 2002 Stirling/South Carolina Research edition of *The Shepherd's Calendar*, as well as elsewhere, whereas Hogg's bitterness at his treatment by the Edinburgh literati is argued by Anthony Hassler in his introduction to the 2002 edition of *The Three Perils of Woman*. The debate as to Hogg's motivation in his relationship with the literati is evident and continuous throughout the increasing body of criticism on his work.

²⁸ *The Justified Sinner*, p.247

²⁹ Ian Duncan, 'The Upright Corpse', in *Studies in Hogg and His World* 5. Upright corpses are liminal beings, neither dead nor alive, and possessing the attribute that Jacques Derrida notes as essential to the deconstructive process: undecidability.

³⁰ Ian Duncan, 'Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish Gothic', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp70-80, p.70

³¹ Gothic is defined by a number of critics as analogous to Romantic fiction, but involving excess, transgression and a concern with taboo. For definitions see Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London: Routledge New Critical Idiom Series, 1996), and David Punter, *The Literature of Terror, vol.1* (London: Longman, 1996)

³² Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans and ed James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955; 2001), p.250

³³ See the following articles for varying interpretations of Gatty's illness: Douglas S. Mack 'Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life: James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Woman*' and 'Gatty's Illness in *The Three Perils of Woman*', Valentina Bold, 'Traditional Narrative Elements in *The Three Perils of Woman*', in *Studies in Hogg and His World* 3 (1992), 42-56 (note 17), Ian Duncan, 'The Upright Corpse', and David Groves, 'Urban Corruption and the Pastoral Ideal in James Hogg's *Three Perils of Woman*'. However, Meiko O'Halloran offers the most appropriate explanation in his article 'Treading the Borders of Fiction', when he states: 'We cannot point to any single factor, be it Love, collective guilt, historical circumstance, a disease, or an angry God, to explain Gatty's coma. She also has a destructive impulse within. We remain as mystified about Gatty's experience as she is.' (48)

³⁴ Ian Duncan, 'The Upright Corpse', in *Studies in Hogg and His World* 5, p.46

³⁵ It is interesting to note that such ideas were in the literary air at this time. Washington Irving's 'Rip Van Winkle' had just been published in his collection *The Sketch Book 1819-20*, where Rip falls asleep for twenty years and upon awakening must adjust to significantly altered circumstances. The theme of Irving's story derives from Diogenes Laertius, *Epimenides* (c. 200), in which Epimenides is sent by his father into the field to look for a sheep; he lays down in a cave and sleeps fifty-seven years. When awake, he goes on looking for the sheep, thinking that he has only had a short nap.

³⁶ 'The Upright Corpse', p.35

³⁷ Adam Smith, 'The Four Stages of Society' (1776), in *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology* ed. Alexander Broadie (Edinburgh: Cannongate Classics, 1996) Smith espoused the view, widely accepted at the time, that societies progressed and developed naturally through four hierarchical stages – from hunting, to shepherding, to farming, and finally to commercial economies.

³⁸ Mack argues that the novel is a response to *Waverley* in, amongst other places, 'Romantic and Victorian Perspectives on the Fiction of James Hogg'. During his management of George IV's visit to Edinburgh, Scott placed the King in the midst of tartan pageantry, dressing him in the kilt and designating him 'Chief of chiefs.' This was an attempt to heal historical rifts and evoke a sense of common British identity.

³⁹ 'Romantic and Victorian Perspectives on the Fiction of James Hogg', p.286

⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1950), in *Illuminations*, (London: Fontana Press, 1999) Thesis VII, p.248

⁴¹ Anthony Hasler, introduction to James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman: or Love, Leasing and Jealousy*, ed. Anthony Hasler and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press/Stirling-South Carolina edition 2002), p.xxvi

⁴² Rebecca Pope, 'Hogg, Wordsworth and Gothic Autobiography', *Studies in Scottish Literature* 27 (1992), pp.218-40, p.220

⁴³ 'Revisiting the Confessions', p.2

⁴⁴ Gil-Martin is surrounded by diabolic symbolism. His very name may come from the folk name for the Devil used elsewhere by Hogg, 'Gil-Moules' or 'Gil-Mouly'. When Robert, and the reader, first encounters him, he carries what appears to be a Bible in red characters, and claims that his name is not his 'Christian name', but something else. He also possesses the ability to shape-shift, for example when he assumes a likeness of Robert himself, George, and Thomas Drummond, whom he effectively frames for George's murder. However, all this does not preclude a psychological interpretation.

⁴⁵ 'Hogg, Wordsworth and Gothic Autobiography'

⁴⁶ see note 31

⁴⁷ 'Revisiting...', p.23

⁴⁸ 'The Upright Corpse', p.

⁴⁹ *Justified Sinner*, p.203/4

⁵⁰ Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal ed., *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.2

⁵¹ These anonymous reviews appeared in the *Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres*, 30th August 1823, pp.546-48, and the *British Magazine; or, Miscellany of Polite Literature*, 1st October 1823, pp.364-74, as quoted in the 'Afterword' to James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman*, ed. Groves, Hasler and Mack.

⁵² David Groves, 'Urban Corruption and the Pastoral Ideal in James Hogg's *Three Perils of Woman*', in *Studies in Scottish Literature* 27 (1992), p.83

⁵³ Anthony Hasler, introduction to *The Three Perils of Woman: or, Love, Leasing and Jealousy*, p.xxx

⁵⁴ see note 37

⁵⁵ David Groves, 'The Satirist and his Age: Hogg's Development of a Romantic Brand of Satire', in *Studies in Hogg and His World* 1 (1990), p.7

⁵⁶ See Douglas Mack's 'Revisiting the Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner' for a thorough account of the religious and political background and the latent comments thereon in the novel.

⁵⁷ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, (1980), trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982)

⁵⁸ Ibid. pp. 3-7

⁵⁹ Ibid. p.5, p.9

⁶⁰ David Groves, 'Parallel Narratives in Hogg's *Justified Sinner*', in *Scottish Literary Journal* 9, no.2 (December 1982), pp-37-44, p.43

⁶¹ In Scottish folklore, brownies are male beings, who are generally helpful and hard working on the domestic front, until crossed, when they become particularly malevolent. Traditionally, they become attached to one member of a family in particular, for good or ill. They can be notorious misogynists. See Harry Campbell, *Supernatural Scotland*, (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1999) and Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction*, (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd LTD, 1964), for more information on these supernatural figures.

⁶² Douglas S Mack, 'James Hogg, Elizabeth Gaskell and the Tradition of Oral Storytelling', in *Gaskell Society Journal* 8 (1994), pp.70-76, p.74

⁶³ Douglas S Mack, introduction to *The Shepherd's Calendar*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p.xiii

⁶⁴ James Hogg, 'Tibby Hyslop's Dream' (1828), in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, p.150

⁶⁵ Douglas Gifford, 'Chapter 17: James Hogg: *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*', in *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, ed. Douglas Gifford, Sarah Dunnigan and Alan MacGillivray, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p.289

⁶⁶ See Douglas S Mack, 'Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life: James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Woman*', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century*, ed. Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985), pp.15-27

⁶⁷ Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, p.122

⁶⁸ Douglas Mack, 'Historical and Geographical Note' to *The Three Perils of Woman*, (2002), p.421

⁶⁹ 'Revisiting the Confessions', p.15

⁷⁰ 'Hogg, Wordsworth and Gothic Autobiography', p.220

⁷¹ Recent studies of 'metafiction' as a postmodern feature include Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*. See also my discussion of the intrusion of Nastler in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* in Chapter Four. In reality, metafictional techniques have been around since the initial stages of the novel as a form, most famously in Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767).

⁷² Peter Garside, 'Hogg's Confessions and Scotland', in *Studies in Hogg and His World* 12 (2001) pp118-138, p.124

⁷³ Douglas Mack, introduction to *James Hogg: Selected Stories and Sketches*, p.vii

Identity with the Dead:**Turn of the century transformations of psychosomatic supernaturalism**

‘That is the mark of the Scot of all classes: that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkable to Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forebears, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation.’

– Robert Louis Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*¹

‘[With the establishment of psychiatry,] more indirectly the sense of shame, prejudice, defeatism, and moral failure which, traditionally, has always been associated with any form of mental illness is likely to vanish. Even its mystery and uncanniness, verging so often on the supernatural, may give up its secret so that it will no longer be regarded as a form of possession, or a punishment from God which requires to be exorcised or expiated by violent, retributive methods such as chains, flogging, starvation, and even burning at the stake.’

– David Kennedy Henderson, *The Evolution of Psychiatry in Scotland*²

In his essay of 1881, ‘The Foreigner at Home’, Robert Louis Stevenson commented of the exiled Scot that, ‘even though his tongue acquire the Southern knack, he will still have a strong Scots accent of the mind.’³ In much of his fiction, Stevenson expresses this ‘accent of the mind’ as literally psychological, an identity manifest through the potential for madness, extremes, ambiguity, and the ‘wars of the members’.⁴ Stevenson’s contemporary and fellow exiled Scot, Margaret Oliphant, displays a comparable concern with identity in her own psychosomatic supernatural fictions, while James Barrie – one of the most famous exiled literary Scotsmen – constructs the ultimate psychosomatic supernatural tale in *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan*, a meditation on identity and repression, both personal and national. Although published in 1931, *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan* represents the culmination of the author’s years of rumination on the previous century’s fiction. In general these writers’ specific and comparable use of the supernatural becomes exceptionally significant when the evolution of nineteenth-century Scottish literature is considered. In turn, their work portends the next fundamental crisis in aesthetics, namely modernism. The ways in which modernism and the supernatural intersect within a Scottish context also demands exploration.

Throughout the nineteenth-century Scottish literary scene, traditional supernatural and folk elements remained, as Scott suggested they should, confined to the cottage and the nursery. Social realism increased its presence throughout Europe as the dominant mode in fiction, for example in the work of Emil Zola, Leo Tolstoy,

Fyodor Dostoevsky, George Eliot and Charles Dickens. Meanwhile, the social perception and treatment of mental illness continued to evolve. Madness became further secularised, developing its own discourse separate from that of the good/evil polarisation of religious language, as the distinction between the mind and the soul was further pronounced. Medics contended – much to the consternation of the Church – that maladies of the mind were not spiritual but pathological, and psychiatry (and subsequently psychoanalysis – requiring a dialogue in treatment, rather than just observation and confinement) became further established as a science.⁵ Against this background of the perceived inappropriateness of the supernatural and increasing secular rationality, writers largely ignored spectres and superstition, in line with their Victorian English counterparts. As Douglas Gifford argues: ‘Nineteenth-century treatment of the supernatural – in Europe and America as well as Scotland – was profoundly affected by Scott's reorientation [...] Again, we are reminded of Hogg's argument that Sir Walter Scott had “turned renegade” so that his stories were made up of “half and half” – Hogg implying that rationality had now bested the irrational and supernatural.’⁶

In English literature, the social novel emerged as a way of reflecting a new concern with the condition of communities developed during the industrial revolution. Charles Dickens, Elisabeth Gaskell and Charles Kingsley were amongst the first novelists to advance a new awareness of the plight of the working classes in their fiction. Yet it was arguably a Scot, Thomas Carlyle, who may well have established the Victorian literary anxiety surrounding social conditions, thanks to the publication in 1829 of his *Signs of the Times*, his emigration to London in 1834, and his strong influence on Dickens. The impact of this trend for social observation and comment was felt in Scottish literature, as evident in the work of Henry Cockburn, David Pae and William Alexander.⁷ Yet on the other hand, other Scottish writers simultaneously retract from serious social and political engagement at this time, producing pre-Kailyard, Scott-influenced Romantic fiction, for example: Thomas Lauder's *The Wolf of Badenoch: A Historical Romance of the Fourteenth Century* (1827), a Scottish historical novel where the ‘journey North’ motif proves just as evocative as it was for Scott; William Stirling-Maxwell's novels; and Robert Ballantyne's *The Young Fur Traders* (1856), and *Coral Island* (1858), among numerous other tales. The latter illustrates how Scott's influence fed into the development of children's adventure fiction, Ballantyne's clear successor being Robert Louis Stevenson. Yet the scene is more complex than this straightforward

polarisation would suggest, given Scotland's evolving political and cultural status during the nineteenth-century. In Lyndsay Lunan's words:

A newly industrialised, class-conscious society that had witnessed the effect of the American and French Revolutions, a nation that had recently entered into an imperial British Union and a Presbyterian country that was facing the impact of sceptical philosophy, scientific materialism and the threat of Erastianism provides the context for the vexed politics of Scottish literature during the nineteenth century.⁸

In Scottish fiction, then, we see this complexity and disorientation reflected, with the production of grim realism and social observation (as with Pae, Alexander and Cockburn), radical vernacular poetry and fiction (for example the poetry collected in *Radical Renfrew*, and again in Alexander's fiction) and pre-Kailyard Romanticism (as with Lauder, Stirling-Maxwell and Ballantyne). Writers largely ignored traditional supernatural and folk elements, due to the associations they now carried: provincial, dissociated from reality and inappropriate both religiously and politically.

There are, however, two notable exceptions. Trained minister and author of *Phantastes* (1858) George MacDonald justified his use of the traditional secular supernatural with reference to a wider European fantastic tradition, such as German romanticism, where ideas of God did not conflict with folklore, but were part of the same supernatural continuum. Meanwhile, writer, collector and geologist Hugh Miller makes repeated reference throughout his fiction and non-fiction, in particular in his collection *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland* (1835 – expanded edition 1850) to the folklore and superstitions of his rural North East background. Lunan points out how

Scott's utilisation of the machinery of the supernatural in his novels prior to 1820 had stamped the Scottish supernatural upon nineteenth-century Romanticism. Miller's interest in what was increasingly regarded as 'distasteful primitivism' could then, nevertheless, take Scott as its precedent, and he repeatedly invokes Scott's name and fiction in his treatment of the supernatural [...] The alliance with Scott, however, is two-pointed. While it marks the supernatural subject as one befitting literary treatment it also serves to refract the tale through the lens of contemporaneous detachment, thus evading the charge of ill-informed credulity.⁹

He used the haunting authority of Scott to justify his deployment of the supernatural and give authority to his claims to literary establishment. And like Scott, Miller's

supernatural is connected to a rural way of life and lower-class figures, those of 'the cottage'. It took exiled Scottish writers Stevenson, Oliphant, and Barrie to break the trend, use and review Scott's authority in different ways, and re-incorporate traditional supernatural elements into ambiguous, potentially psychological tales, with middle-class, educated protagonists.

The cliché nonetheless remains true, that questions of the identity of the centre can be more critically evaluated from the position of the other. Yet more than this, could it be that these Scottish writers – who had the benefit of experiences outwith Scotland – had access to the necessary critical distance to use traditional elements in new ways, avoiding clichés and illuminating new directions? Certainly, Stevenson's shifting position in the diaspora allowed him to interrogate his Calvinist Edinburgh upbringing, and create a fiction remarkable in its range. Indeed, many of Stevenson's commentators note this elusiveness of position as a literary quality. Douglas Gifford discusses how:

Stevenson developed the use of ambiguity in Scottish fiction till it profoundly challenged conventional moral reading. More often than not his stories offer not only mutually exclusive perspectives of the rational and irrational, but deepen the implication of their opposition to offer reversible perspectives of morality.¹⁰

As with Hogg, no position is left sacred in Stevenson's fiction, no single 'truth' is upheld. His subtle use of the traditional supernatural re-opened possibilities for a number of subsequent writers, including John Buchan, Barrie, and those of the Scottish Renaissance. The secularisation of madness throughout the nineteenth century is linked to this re-adoption of the 'secular' supernatural, or non-religious folk elements. For these writers, a return to the traditional supernatural seems linked to an acceptance of the new secular status of mental illness, as well as a concern equal to that which Hogg demonstrates, with questions of identity, history and literary representation, and the interrogation and subversion of dominant codes therein. Ambiguity and the associated questioning and challenging of conventional moral perspectives provide the dynamic for these writers' psychosomatic supernatural texts.

Strange Looks and Solitary Lives: Robert Louis Stevenson

Stevenson's views on the realist mode are well documented, particularly by himself in his own critical writings. Examples include the 1883 essay 'A Note on Realism' and the more fully developed discussion of 1884, 'A Humble Remonstrance', written as a reply to Henry James's previous piece, 'The Art of Fiction'. Stevenson

states: 'The novel, which is a work of art, exists, not by its resemblances to life, which are forced and material, as a shoe must still consist of leather, but by its immeasurable difference from life, which is designed and significant and is both the method and the meaning of the work.'¹¹ It is no surprise then that we find an absence of straightforward literary mimesis and attempts to locate a single 'truth' in Stevenson's work, and when realism is adopted it is often juxtaposed with high romance or fantastic episodes.

Douglas Gifford has described Stevenson's 'anti-realist' metafictional methodology¹² by contending that he established two creative characteristics, the first being the pairing of opposites. The second characteristic 'led him increasingly to deal with these or his other worlds with ambivalence, allowing neither of the groups and their values, or even the worlds of rationalism or the supernatural, to have a final indubitable value'.¹³ Stevenson's literary relationship with religion and the supernatural is as ambivalent as his own with Scottish identity: 'the happiest lot on earth is to be born a Scotsman. You must pay for it in many ways'.¹⁴ This doubleness is evident in his stories 'Thrawn Janet' (1881), 'The Merry Men' (1882) and 'Markheim' (1886)¹⁵, where traditional folk elements meet, intersect and clash with religious and scientific, psychological explanations. As Jerold Hogle argues, despite his increasing religious scepticism, Stevenson always retained a concern 'that made him keep recalling the stark good-and-evil dualisms of folk characterisations and mixing them in with his complex portraits of people who wrestled with conflicting moral positions, much as he did'.¹⁶ In these stories, madness and the supernatural lie outwith the sphere of acceptable religious interpretation, but always with the menacing and disapproving possibility of orthodoxy in the background. In this way, the limitations and repressions of orthodox religious interpretations are exposed.

'Thrawn Janet', the intense tale of diabolic intervention and folk superstition, can also be read as a sophisticated study of nervous breakdown. The ambiguous morality in Stevenson's work hinted at by Hogle is here apparent. Is Janet M'Clour, unmarried mother, suspected witch and housekeeper to the Reverend Murdoch Soulis, victim or agent of the devil? Does the Reverend Soulis encounter the devil in the form of a tall and 'unco' (14) black man, or is this simply a delusion projected by his troubled mind, precipitated by isolation and encouraged by the gossiping superstitions of his community? The text is both supernatural folk tale and more complex existential contemplation of what Roderick Watson has described as 'the terror of being'.¹⁷ Through his brush with madness or the supernatural, the Reverend Soulis becomes, as his name implies, 'soul-less', 'the man ye ken the day' (19), 'a severe, bleak-faced old

man, dreadful to his hearers [...] his eye was wild, scared, and uncertain'. (9) Like Robert Wringhim in Hogg's text, this encounter is his undoing, leaving little room for redemption. The story has other similarities to Hogg's texts: there are two narratives that intersect and conflict in places, and also an interplay between the oral and the written. The Standard English voice of the anonymous narrator introduces the folk voice of the Scots-speaking resident of Soulis's parish, 'one of the older folk' who warms 'into courage over his third tumbler' and recounts 'the cause of the minister's strange looks and solitary life'. (10)

The cause of this change, we learn, dates back to Soulis's early days in the parish, 'fifty years syne'. (10) Janet is recommended to Soulis as a house-keeper, but believed to be a witch by the community because, as the community voice tells us: 'she had had a wean to a dragoon; she hadna come forrit for maybe thretty year; and bairns had seen her mumblin' to hersel' up on Key's Loan in the gloamin', whilk was an unco time an' place for a God-fearin' woman.' Graham Balfour, Stevenson's cousin, wrote in his biography of Stevenson that the story has two faults: 'it is true only historically, true for a hill parish in Scotland in old days, not true for mankind and the world'¹⁸; the tale's 'truth' is specific only to its temporal *and* geographic location. Yet the vague time-scale of the story, with Soulis's encounter occurring 'fifty years syne', sometime after the Glorious Revolution (reference is made by the Scots narrator to the minister's 'forebears o' the persecution' (11), and to a time 'before the blessed licht shone upon the kingdom' (14)), conveys a sense of the events occurring out of history. The carefully constructed binary oppositions are floating signifiers applicable universally, and a layer of national significance is indicated by the symbolic tension between Scots and English.

Moreover, as Marshall Walker points out, ' "Thrawn Janet" illustrates a valid general truth about the incapacity of fanaticism to cope with an extreme situation for which its rules make no provision, breaking because it cannot bend.'¹⁹ The tale represents a general political engagement with and interrogation of extremism, through its examination of, on the one hand, the unforgiving nature of folk belief and on the other the intolerance of fanatic Presbyterianism, in the form of the Covenanting tradition. The community reject Janet due to her transgressions of the dominant moral code, which allow for accusations of witchcraft. Soulis in turn rejects these accusations, performing his own transgression, and in doing so incurs the wrath of old Scotland, manifest in the appearance of the Devil as a black man. Stevenson refuses to identify a single centre of truth.

However, the tale also demonstrates an early concern with the position of women in society, and the extremes of patriarchy. The women's movement had begun to gather pace in late nineteenth-century Britain²⁰, yet it would be deracinating to claim Stevenson as a proto-feminist. However, what we know of his biography certainly implies the influence of strong women throughout his life, from his nanny 'Cummie' (Alison Cunningham) in Edinburgh who regaled him with folk and Covenanting tales, to his wife Fanny, a divorced mother of two when Stevenson met her. And the literary, if not the political, potential for development of ideas of gender equality is evident. In 'Thrawn Janet', the evidence of witchcraft against Janet M'Clour seems to amount to the fact that she leads a solitary life, is a spinster and 'had had a wean to a dragoon'. (11) Feminist readings of the witch hunts in Scotland point out that over 84 per cent of those charged with witchcraft in the country from the period 1563-1736 were women, and consistently conclude that the hunts were a tool of patriarchy, employed primarily by the church to discourage women from seeking emancipation and to keep threatening folk beliefs and customs at bay.²¹ As historian Julian Goodare argues:

The witch-hunt was a witch-hunt first and foremost, and a woman-hunt only indirectly. But it was still an attack on women as *women*; [...] the few men who were attacked had divided loyalties; either they were linked to female witches, or they failed to distance themselves from categories of behaviour (mainly folk healing) associated with female roles, or both. In hunting witches, the authorities were recognising certain female qualities, first as deviant, second as being linked to witchcraft, and third as being punishable by the state.²²

The tale alludes to this view of witchcraft, and is itself an early interrogation of patriarchy. Janet is a threat to conventional roles and values and therefore patriarchy attempts to contain her. Soulis fails to distance himself from Janet's subversive behaviour and is punished as a result. His sanity is corrupted by contact with the supernatural, irrational, and even diabolic female. There is a degree of humour behind these events. Stevenson consistently failed to distance himself from female qualities and from folk traditions in his own literary life – is he equally to be damned?

The interrogation of patriarchy is underlined if we examine the association of women with orality in the tale. A conventional cultural assumption is that women were believed to be the agents of the oral tradition. As Penny Fielding states, 'The oral, as the territory of the irrational and the illegitimate, is frequently associated with the dangerously female.'²³ We are introduced to the minister from the outset, but it is only in the oral Scots narrative that we encounter Janet and the black man. Moreover, a

binary is set up between the bookish minister and the oral Janet. Soulis is purveyor of ‘the Word’, ‘fu’ on book-learnin’’ (10), and as we are told, ‘wad sit half the day and half the nicht forbye, which was scant decent – writin’, nae less [...] and syne it proved he was writin’ a book himsel’.’ (11) On the other hand, Janet is she who has been seen ‘mumblin’ to hersel’ up on Key’s Loan in the gloamin’ (11), who when angry ‘had a tongue to deave the miller’ (12), and who after her stroke, or supernatural experience as the community would have it, ‘couldna speak like a Christian woman, but slavered an’ played click wi’ her teeth like a pair o’ shears’. (13) After Soulis encounters the black man, Janet becomes even less comprehensible, the folk narrator implying that she is possessed by this devil: ‘she didna speak plain, ye maun understand; but yam-yammered, like a powney wi’ the bit in its moo.’ (15) Soulis commands the devil to be gone, ‘“if you be dead, to the grave – if you be damned, to hell”’, and his words win over. In her seminal post-structuralist study of signification, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, Julia Kristeva formulates an unstable binary involving the two elements of meaning: the symbolic and the semiotic. The semiotic is the non-verbal potentially annihilitic aspect of signification, and thus requires to be kept in check by the symbolic, the referential, grammatical, structural part of meaning, and that which is essentially patriarchal, for signification to be communicable. Since, for Kristeva, the semiotic originally emanates from the maternal body, it is possible to read Janet’s elimination as the rejection of the mother’s body. This concurs with the folk belief that her damnation is connected to her ‘original’ sin of single motherhood. She must be rejected, and indeed she is literally eliminated, for language to be allowable. Yet Soulis – the symbolic agent – is far from unchanged by his brush with madness or the supernatural. ‘Lang, lang he lay ravin’ in his bed’ following the incident, and is now ‘the man ye ken the day’, the man of ‘strange looks and solitary life’ (10). He inherits Janet’s non-verbalism, her semiotic tendencies, confirming what Kristeva calls the three ‘privileged moments’ when the semiotic is allowed to dominate, one of which is madness. As Fielding further argues:

Inarticulate orality somehow manages to survive the disintegration of the woman’s body, to render Soulis as unintelligible as Janet herself [...] Soulis, himself a bookman, is unable to control this female orality and becomes engulfed by it, reversing the normal order of events in which speech is supposed to be contained in writing.²⁴

Rather than gaining enlightenment from the knowledge and experience provided by his encounter, Soulis becomes 'a moral anomaly',²⁵ damaged, and even made 'soul-less', by his encounter.

A similar concern with modes of signification is evident in Stevenson's novella 'The Merry Men', probably written just after 'Thrawn Janet', but not published until 1887. The patriarchal family is again the model of normality, but with the threatening sense of something lying beneath – family secrets, tensions and ambivalence. The tale is unreliably narrated in a carefully measured standard English by a Southern educated protagonist (straight from university in Enlightenment Edinburgh), Charles Darnaway, who journeys North to the mysterious tidal island of Aros to visit the Highland branch of his family. Once there, he clashes with the discordant moral codes of his Scots-speaking uncle Gordon Darnaway, and through these elements the story superficially appears Stevenson's most Scott-like fiction. Yet in its depiction of malevolent supernatural visitation and violent, murderous madness, it moves well beyond Scott's 'journey North' tales, and in terms of concentrated terror, proves darker even than Hogg's most chilling narratives. However, it is with the depiction and juxtaposition of folklore, religious extremism and Enlightenment rationality that the story's real subversive powers lie.

A number of excellent critical studies have dealt with the ambiguity of 'The Merry Men', including specifically those by Penny Fielding and Douglas Gifford. Fielding reads the story as a series of transgressions and 'collapsed distinctions' between life and death, real and unreal, rational and irrational, written and oral. With reference to Freud's 'The Uncanny', she illuminates how the tale deals with the return of the repressed and the oppressed, that which is initially covered over and superficially kept in check by Gordon Darnaway's strong Presbyterian beliefs. She describes how the etymology of the name 'Darnaway' provides the clue to this:

"Dem" or "darn" in Scots means either "secret, hidden", or "to hide, to conceal", so Darnaway carries the possible meanings of both to hide away, and to do away with concealment, to bring to light. Thus it has the same connotations as Freud's "Unheimliche", or uncanny: that which reverses both the familiar (homely) and the strange (secretive) through the return of the repressed.²⁶

Freud describes the fear of revenants as an example of the uncanny: 'the old belief that the dead man becomes the enemy of his survivor and seeks to carry him off to share his new life with him.'²⁷ This is what is experienced by old Gordon, when he believes that

the black man who appears on Aros following the wreck of a schooner on the island's rocky shore (rationalised by Charles as a shipwrecked slave) to be – like Soulis's black man in 'Thrawn Janet' – the Devil come to collect retribution for the murder of a previous shipwreck survivor from the *Christ-Anna* Gordon had killed for his treasure. Like Hogg's Merodach in 'The Brownie of the Black Hags', the black man may be a most corporeal example of guilt personified. Gordon's orthodox Christian beliefs conflict with his greed for plunder and the spectacle of shipwreck. Yet this greed is strangely impotent. The Darnaway house is incongruously equipped with grand furnishings from ships: 'two massive candlesticks of wrought silver were added to the table equipage, already so unsuited to that rough seaside farm.' (168) For Charles, the landscape of home is already becoming unhomely, strange or, in a Freudian sense, *unheimliche*; as he tells his cousin, ' "Mary, girl [...] this is the place I had learned to call my home, and I do not know it." ' (166)

Fielding goes on to equate the oral with the unconscious and semiotic and the written with the conscious and symbolic, and argues that in the tale the oral brings to light that which was previously repressed within the unconscious. She interprets the 'sea-runes', or fragments and shapes that appear through the foam and currents of the water around Aros first shown to Charles by his uncle, as 'apparently free-floating signifiers [that] make up a metonymic chain'²⁸ which falls into place when we have heard the story out. Indeed, in the sea-runes the viewer reads their own preoccupations; Charles interprets the 'M' he believes inscribed therein first as signifying 'Mary', his cousin with whom he is in love, and then as 'murder', implying the murderous capabilities of Gordon. This reveals the subjective nature of truth and interpretation, as the sea acts as a mirror in which the protagonists see not only themselves, but also the wider deficiencies of their world. As Charles tells us in the story, the merry men, or aggressive, reef-driven waves of the title, seem to him a 'part of the world's evil and the tragic side of life'. (205) Conveniently, this provides a neat conclusion for Charles's narrative, ending with the tragic but natural death of his uncle and the black man amongst the merry men themselves, the waves off Aros. Critic Francis Hart argues that:

'The Merry Men' is not folk ballad, romance or allegory [...] Its morality is unambiguous. The evil of greed drives old Gordon to murder and madness. The nephew gives up the treasure hunt, prays for the souls of all at sea, and chooses to help the poor survivor rather than pursue his 'dismal lunatic' uncle. There are real evil and real redemption, but they are natural and human.²⁹

Through his carefully constructed narrative, this is what Charles would indeed like the reader to believe. However, the author would prefer us to resist and read between the runes. Charles's Enlightenment sensibilities, along with Hart's limited interpretation, fail to cope with the unknown, the 'unnatural', and with multiplicity. As with the sea-runes, interpretation is subjective and almost limitless, implying the impossibility of certainty or stable meaning.

In his analysis in *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, Douglas Gifford successfully stresses the ambiguity of the tale, as well as the opposition between orthodox religion and folk belief. In the story, Gordon's employee Rorie regales the company with tales of sea-kelpies, bogles and mermen, and these stories, as Gifford points out, 'bring, increasingly, foreboding and fear [...] Charles believes his uncle's fears are caused by a guilty conscience, and heightened by the man's religious outlook.'³⁰ Folk and religious superstitions combine to drive old Gordon mad. When they first encounter the black man, Charles tells us how Gordon:

began swearing and praying in a mingled stream [...] at each step of the castaway's the pitch of his voice rose, the volubility of his utterance and the fervour of his language redoubled. I call it prayer, for it was addressed to God; but surely no such ranting incongruities were ever before addressed to the Creator by a creature. (200)

And in response to Rorie's tales, Gordon exclaims, ' "I find nae word o' mermen in the Scriptures"', to which Rorie replies, ' "And you will find nae word of Aros Roost, maybe"' . (172) Religious and folk beliefs remain continuously incongruous, but meet violently in the mind of Gordon Darnaway. Gifford also highlights the constructed Highland/lowland binary, and particularly how, in an echo of Scott's Highland fiction, Charles and his uncle both originate from the low country, and encounter superstition and older ways of life in the North. However, this binary is not straightforwardly accepted but rather subverted in the story, in the vein of Hogg's work. It is lowland, Scots-speaking Gordon who is driven mad by superstition and belief in the corporeal presence of the Devil. The two ethnically Highland protagonists, Rorie and Mary, and the supposedly 'primitive' black slave (if so he is) appear to remain calm and rational throughout events, and Mary demonstrates a pragmatism beyond the influence of her circumstances. Indeed, the subversive powers of this story are generally overlooked by critics in favour of a focus on ambiguity, character and landscape. Yet it is the way in which these elements are used to subvert dominant ideas and conventions that is significant. The tale does indeed evoke a strong sense of place, but it is first and

foremost a literary construct, presenting, unsettling and exploding a number of dualities and oppositions, such as Highland and Lowland. 'The Merry Men' is a piece of metafiction, a story about storytelling. The fantastic ambiguities surrounding the exact nature of the potentially supernatural beings and events intensify its self-consciously literary status and rejection of realism.

The simultaneous death of Darnaway and his 'other', the black man, at the end of the novella prefigures Stevenson's interest in duality and doubles, most fully and notoriously expressed in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). However, the theme is also skilfully treated in the sinister short story 'Markheim' (written 1884, published 1886), which, whilst still containing psychological possibilities, differs from *Jekyll and Hyde* in its deployment of the traditional supernatural.

The abundance of literary expressions of duality from the Romantic period onwards is clearly linked to the developing study of psychology, in particular emerging ideas on schizophrenia.³¹ Concurrently, it has been documented that Stevenson was interested in such ideas. According to Fanny Stevenson (in a prefatory note to the Tusitala Edition of *Jekyll and Hyde*), 'Deacon Brodie', 'Markheim', and *Jekyll and Hyde* drew on a paper on 'subconsciousness' that Stevenson had read in a French scientific journal.³² In addition, Julia Reid documents Stevenson's engagement with late nineteenth-century anthropological and psychological debate, and also illuminates the dynamic intersections between literature and science, in her book *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siecle*.³³

'Markheim' is a much more straightforwardly didactic tale than 'Thrawn Janet' and 'The Merry Men', yet the amenable moral message retains a universal quality, and is engagingly and unnervingly conveyed. The story takes place in one room of an antique dealer's shop over a short period on Christmas day in an anonymous town. We are given little information about the eponymous Markheim beyond that which we can infer from his dialogue with the dealer, whom he subsequently attacks and murders. He is clearly agitated and undergoes several violent mood swings; referring to the mirror he feigns interest in buying as a 'hand-conscience' (211), and being unable to bear seeing his face in it. Thus a degree of mental disturbance or underlying sinister intent is indicated from the outset. He murders the dealer by stabbing his turned back with a dagger, primarily for economic gain – the money concealed in the dealer's cabinet. While searching for the keys Markheim develops acute paranoia, believing every noise he hears to be someone about to discover his crime. We are told that 'he was now so

pulled about by different alarms, that, while one portion of his mind was still alert and cunning, another trembled on the brink of lunacy' (214), and that 'the sense that he was not alone grew upon him to the verge of madness. On every side he was haunted and begirt by presences'. (217) Eventually, this haunting solidifies into a visitation, but from an extremely ambiguous and shadowy figure, whom we see through Markheim's eyes, thus:

The outlines of the new-comer seemed to change and waver like those of the idols in the wavering candlelight of the shop; and at times he thought he knew him; and at times he thought he bore a likeness to himself; and always, like a lump of living terror, there lay in his bosom the conviction that this thing was not of the earth and not of God. (220)

The 'thing' may be an unearthly messenger, either angelic or diabolic, or simply a projection of Markheim's troubled mind, a phantom from his guilt-ridden unconscious. He is both stranger and familiar, an exemplar of uncanniness. The likeness in appearance to Markheim himself would suggest that his origins lie in the mind, but again the figure has a certain corporeality (he has 'a strange air of the commonplace' (220), and his step is heard on the stair), implying an actual material existence. Earlier, however, we are told that Markheim recalled 'tales of other murderers and the fear they were said to entertain of heavenly avengers' (218), demonstrating that such ideas are already within the reach of his imagination. Once again, both psychological and supernatural possibilities coexist; the ambiguity is sustained to the end.

Yet, in stark contrast to what has come before in Stevenson's fiction, and what will follow in the form of *Jekyll and Hyde*, this encounter proves to be remedial rather than destructive, again exemplifying the author's shifting and elusive moral perspective. Markheim assumes the being to be diabolic in origin, as it taunts and encourages him in turn, seemingly attempting to goad him into killing off the dealer's maid too, to ensure the concealment of his crime. In response to this, Markheim admits, ' "Evil and good run strong in me, haling me both ways"' (223), just as they appear to do in the uncanny visitor. After a sustained psychomachic struggle, in which the encouragements and criticisms of the visitor play a vital role, and during which his identity becomes increasingly unstable, Markheim decides to admit his crime and face the consequences. At the very point of Markheim's mental shift, the narrator describes how 'the features of the visitor began to undergo a wonderful and lovely change: they brightened, faded and dislimned'. (225) The use of the archaic 'dislimned' here provides a very visual, almost filmic image; the dislimning is the removal of light from the vision until it becomes one

with the backdrop. The visual quality heightens the ambiguity: do we, like Markheim, actually see the visitor? In terms of his nature, it is possible that, as Francis Hart puts it, he is 'no devil but a guardian angel', and that the object all along has been to aid Markheim in making amends. Yet the exact origins of this agent remain unidentifiable. The narrative is simultaneously religious parable, disturbing ghost story, and portrayal of hallucinogenic paranoia and the initiation of recovery.

Equally significant to the story's ambiguity, however, is its examination of identity. As Markheim first struggles with paranoia, and then with the being who may well be the externalisation of his guilty conscience, the mask of certainty and stability begins to slip. He is forced to review past actions, and evaluate the evolution of his character from childhood to this point. The being tells Markheim:

"For six-and-thirty years that you have been in this world [...] through many changes of fortune and varieties of humour, I have watched you steadily fall. Fifteen years ago you would have started at a theft. Three years back you would have blanched at the name of murder. Is there any crime, is there any cruelty or meanness from which you still recoil? - five years from now I shall detect you in the fact! Downward, downward lies your way; nor can anything but death avail to stop you." (224)

In his defence, Markheim argues that all people 'take on the tone of their surroundings'". (224) He wishes to 'plunge into a bath of London multitudes' (215), and to become 'girt in by walls, buried among bedclothes, and invisible to all but God' (218), to become anonymous as a defence against guilt. Again, we find in this reluctant individual, something akin to the Reverend Soulis's fear of 'the terror of being'.³⁴ In this way, Stevenson prefigures the modernist concern with the fragmentation of the self. In a Lacanian sense, if the being is interpreted as a projection of the mind, he represents the externalised 'other'. Lacan distinguishes between the big 'O' Other of radical alterity, and the small 'o' other, not a real other but a reflection and projection of the ego, existing only in the imaginary.³⁵ If the being is accepted as Markheim's 'other', then not only is his self fragmented but the fragments move apart and take on independent forms. Markheim's aversion to mirrors is evident throughout the story, from his repulsion of the 'hand-conscience' the dealer presents him with to the numerous other mirrors in the shop, in which 'he saw his face repeated and repeated, as it were an army of spies; his own eyes met and detected him'. (213) His face is repeated and repeated until it – as the outward signifier of his identity – becomes meaningless. This can be theorised using Lacan's formulation of the mirror stage as an essential part

of the process of identity construction.³⁶ Markheim's rejection of his reflection suggests a reluctance to develop an autonomous identity, concurrent with his desire for anonymity. Yet Markheim's specific status, torn between individuality and anonymity, and between good and evil, provides access to a growing consciousness of a more universal human identity. We all are capable of good and evil, and also like Markheim of ultimately redeeming ourselves.

Just in the way that many of Stevenson's other characters are portrayed, such as Alan Breck, Long John Silver, Henry and James Durie³⁷ and Jekyll and Hyde (being two aspects of the *same man*), Markheim is shown to be intrinsically both good and evil. When Henry Jekyll articulates his epiphany that 'man is not truly one, but truly two', what he really means is that he and Hyde are not two separate identities, but one. It is when he attempts to reject and purge the evil aspects of his self that the process of his destruction is set in motion. Humanity is not straightforwardly polarised and labelled by Stevenson, and this, his account of morality, marks a pivotal point in the transition from nineteenth-century to twentieth-century fiction. Dickens polarised his characters into recognisably good and evil groups, and even Scott to an extent portrayed recognisable villains (if in a more problematic way in novels such as *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*). After Stevenson's proto-modernist explorations, writers such as Conrad – who, despite being fully canonised within English literature, is a similarly 'dislocated' writer – Barrie, and MacDiarmid are able to illustrate the human condition as much more problematic and variegated. In Conrad's novel *Lord Jim* (1900), Stein explains to Marlow that all experience in life, whether good or bad, should be welcomed as constructive:

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns – *nicht wahr?* ...No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up.³⁸

In the way that Henry Jekyll attempts to avoid, it is man's duty to submit to the destructive element, to both positive and negative, to be truly human. Hugh MacDiarmid also touches upon this in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, when he makes the point that, 'ony man s'ud wish/ To dree the goat's weird tae as weel's the sheep's!' (ll. 28-29) All men should actually desire to endure the sinner's fate as well as that of the saved; the whole range of human experience is essential for coherence of identity and knowledge. Polarised Christian morality is in this way countered.

Stevenson's morality, as expounded in his fiction, can be regarded in this sense as modernist, and even a prefiguration of the mode of perception that fed into Cubism: the idea that humanity might only be understood by examining it from multiple points of view simultaneously.

Despite being apparent within other literary traditions, there is something of this that contributes to the characteristic Scottishness touched upon at the beginning of this chapter. Stevenson perceived a distinctive Scottish propensity for seeing into and exploring multiplicity, simultaneity and ambiguity, and negotiating between poles. As he argued in his travel memoir *The Silverado Squatters*: 'Scotland is indefinable; it has no unity except upon the map.'³⁹ On the one hand, this position could lead to oversimplification, glib definitions and nationalist compensations, yet on the other, it attests much greater complexity, involving the cultural implications of Scotland's unique political position. Defining Scottishness proves an endlessly exfoliating situation, yet it is fair to say that Stevenson recognised and even celebrated it as a meaningful category, for example the 'identity with the dead' he acknowledges in *Weir of Hermiston*, as quoted as the epigraph of this chapter. Additionally, in a letter to S.R. Crockett in 1888, he made this firm request: 'don't put "N.B." in your paper: put SCOTLAND, and be done with it. Alas, that I should be thus stabbed in the home of my friends! The name of my native land is not NORTH BRITAIN, whatever may be the name of yours.'⁴⁰ Scotland is one place, and Scottishness is one word, but both carry many significations. This is the paradox of the single word.

'Multiplying peradventures'⁴¹: Margaret Oliphant

Around the same time that Stevenson was creating these pre-modernist psychosomatic supernatural tales, Margaret Oliphant was able to conclude her short story 'The Open Door' (1882) with the realisation that 'things have effects so different on the minds of different men'. The psychological realism of this insight is in keeping with her other largely realist work, yet it occurs within a text that evinces the existence of something 'unseen', beyond death. This tension is played out more ambiguously in her other 'tales of the seen and the unseen', 'The Secret Chamber' (1876), 'Earthbound' (1880), 'The Land of Darkness' (1887),⁴² and most skilfully and significantly in 'The Library Window' (1896).⁴³ Oliphant's psychosomatic supernatural texts sit uneasily alongside her social realism, but at the same time they provide the more 'conventional', and often more renowned texts – such as the novels *Kirsteen* (1890) and *The Chronicles of Carlingford* series of the 1860s – with added resonance.

Oliphant, like her younger contemporary and admirer Stevenson,⁴⁴ was for most of her life one of the 'wandering Scots' whose geographic distance from their homeland allowed for new insight, but also the persistence of 'a strong Scots accent of the mind'. However, she differs from Stevenson theologically in being a believer in a Christian God. Having moved away from the formal Presbyterianism of her childhood and teenage years, Oliphant developed her own theology, sympathising much with Catholicism and its position on life after death, following the death of three of her children. There are two further strands of influence on her supernatural fiction: the Gothic, which by Victorian times had established itself as a coherent literary genre with clearly identifiable machinery, and also Scottish folk literature, in particular the Ballads, the influence of which is evident in much of her work.⁴⁵ And like Stevenson, her concern with psychology and the dynamics of individual, and in turn collective, identity is apparent. Much of her fiction represents a continuation of the concerns surrounding Scottish identity articulated in her journalism. Richard and Vineta Colby point out how 'the novels transfer to the realm of fiction a campaign she conducted intermittently through the pages of *Maga* [*Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*] to break down what she regarded as naïve stereotypes retained by English readers about Scotland and the Scottish people based on prejudice or on accounts by unreliable witnesses'.⁴⁶ Moreover, a concern with female identity and women's role in her society is also evident in her fiction. In her supernatural texts both conventional national and gender identities are explored and often subverted through her treatment of the association between the north and superstition, and women, madness and the irrational. Protagonists have both an individual and collective, although not necessarily that which is conventionally recognisable, identity. She employs the conventions of folk literature, and of the contemporary Gothic to portray this dual identity. Yet as critic Margarete Rubik states: 'she is not concerned with the usual Gothic shock effects, but with psychological portraits of the "spirits" and with analysing the effects of the supernatural on the minds of the living.'⁴⁷ This mutually reliant dichotomy between the living and the dead, the seen and the unseen, is a shared motif in all of her supernatural texts.

Oliphant's short story 'The Secret Chamber' is considered one of her weakest by a number of critics⁴⁸, possibly due to the frustratingly ungratifying ending, where the narrator simply admits, 'I cannot tell the reader what [happened...] It may not be known, perhaps, for another generation, and it will not be for me to write that concluding chapter'. (135) All the trappings of the Gothic are there: the ancient castle, aristocratic family, rational 'modern' protagonist entering the realms of the primitive

and superstitious, and family secrets. Yet these are amplified to the point of cliché, especially when conjectures about what is actually contained in Castle Gowrie's secret chamber reach fever pitch:

Some thought there had been a treacherous massacre there, and that the Secret Chamber was blocked by the skeletons of murdered guests [...] Some said, on the other hand, that Earl Robert, the wicked Earl, was shut up there in everlasting penance, playing cards with the devil for his soul [...] What a thing it would be to know where to lay one's hand upon the Prince of Darkness, and prove him once for all, cloven foot and everything else, to the confusion of gainsayers! (110)

Generic codes, then, are being played with and exploded here. The reader's 'horizon of expectations' is the real target, in particular expectations surrounding the cultural work that the Gothic had conventionally performed prior to this; warning modernity of the threat to it posed by the ancient and the primitive. It is true that history and modernity clash violently in the story (David Sandner has written an excellent article on this aspect of the tale⁴⁹), but the real interest lies in the text's juxtaposition of rational and supernatural explanations, and its lack of any firm conclusion or resolution. The narrator does not know what happens, and so the reader is certainly not expected to. We feel ungratified by this story, frustrated of knowledge – a strategy for making us examine the purpose of reading fiction, and the nature of fiction itself. No realist 'truth' is reflected here, but rather an evasion or denial of such solutions.

Like 'The Merry Men', the tale appears superficially Scott-like, with its Southern educated protagonist, John, Lord Lindores, son of the present Earl of Gowrie, journeying North to Scotland, into a primitive landscape. He has been successful at Oxford University, and is returning home to take part in a ceremony to mark his coming of age. And like one of Scott's protagonists, Lindores attempts to rationalise the uncanny occurrences in the castle. He explains the fact that the portrait of the old Earl Robert in the castle matches exactly the vision of a face he sees during his journey as 'unconscious cerebration'. (117) And when he first looks upon the living-dead Earl within the secret chamber, he asks himself: 'What could it be but optical delusions, unconscious cerebration, occult seizure by the impressed and struggling mind of this one countenance?' (119) He finally begins to doubt his rationalisations, after the earl demonstrates the power he has over his mind and body, magnified by ancestry:

The face was familiar, the voice was that of the race. Supernatural! was it supernatural that this man should live here shut up for ages? and why?

and how? Was there any explanation of it? The young man's brain began to reel. He could not tell which was real – the life he had left half an hour ago, or this. (121/2)

Lindores' disorientation and sense of helplessness mirrors the reader's. Yet the subversive crux of the matter is that neither we nor even the narrator know what ultimately happens. It is possible that Lindores' impassioned mind has become prone to hallucination and paranoia. This would concur with Freud's theories on paranoia, that it is inherently masculine, and is a symptom of homosexual panic whereby the male protagonist is 'not only persecuted by, but considers himself transparent to and often under the compulsion of, another male'.⁵⁰ Lindores fears becoming like his father, who 'had felt himself watched, surrounded, spied upon, day after day, since he was the age of Lindores'. (130) On the other hand, Earl Robert may actually be a tangible being, kept alive for centuries by supernatural means, involving the consumption of the life-spirit of his male descendents. Interestingly, whether corporeal phantom or phantom of the mind, Earl Robert is one of Oliphant's few destructive and malevolent spirits. Many of the others are tortured beings themselves, remaining in this world to resolve issues lingering from their own lives. 'The Secret Chamber' appears a more conventional Gothic ghost story, but the conventions are undermined by not being fully played out due to the abrupt interruption at the end.

Before the false ending, the story appears to be an affirmation of faith, as we witness Lindores seeking for answers within superstition. He escapes from the chamber by abandoning his modernity and placing his faith in God, using his ancestral sword as a cross to fend off Earl Robert, whom he perceives to be an evil spirit. The Southern rational protagonist must adopt something of the North, of the primitive and superstitious, to counter the malevolent intentions of its representatives – almost a homeopathic response. The irrational, whether for good or evil, is thus empowered to a degree. However, again, we do not and cannot know the outcome of this encounter; we have no access to whether good or evil wins out in the end, and thus as readers we are made frustratingly powerless, as notions of reality and truth are beyond our cognition. To paraphrase James Hogg, 'it will never be in the power of the reader to decide'.

The target in the equally subversive tale of the unseen, 'Earthbound', is the Victorian perception of the female. Again, the central protagonist is a young, educated and idealistic man, who encounters a seemingly impossible being and attempts to rationalise her existence. Well-off but orphaned Edmund Coventry visits the aristocratic Beresford family during the Christmas period, as a potential suitor to the sensible and

kind daughter, Maud Beresford. However, during his time at the estate he encounters and falls in love with a mysterious woman he repeatedly meets out walking at night. This jeopardises his match with Maud, and the esteem in which the family hold him. The woman, who is also significantly named Maud, or as she tells us in the past tense ‘I was Maud’ (160), may be an ‘earthbound’ spirit, who when alive, by her own admission, ‘loved the earth and all that was on it’ (169) too much, and is thus condemned to haunt as a punishment. Alternatively, the events in the story may be, as Margarete Rubik suggests, ‘hallucinations and phantasms of the imagination, fantasies that are evoked in the moody protagonist by the ghost stories told at Christmas.’⁵¹ We are told that as entertainment the party at the house ‘talked about what is called spiritualism, and of many things, both in that fantastic faith and in the older ghostly traditions, which we are all half glad to think cannot be explained.’ (140) Oliphant indicates her understanding of human psychology here, and the satisfaction that can come with frustration and unfulfilled desire for knowledge. In addition, the discussion of ghosts and spirits amongst the extended family highlights the transgenerational pull of such concerns, or as Stevenson designates it, the persistent ‘identity with the dead.’

The origins of Edmund’s visitor remain unexplained to the end. Her particularly attractive appearance and forthcoming manner suggest that she is a projection of Edmund’s idealised yearnings. Yet the contrast between Edmund’s initial calm and rational manner, ‘an ingratiating, lovable young man, very gentle in manners, very tender in his friendships’ (139), and the emotional turmoil and ecstasy into which he is thrown following his encounters, including in his mind ‘a roaring of echoes, a clanging of noises, a blast of great trumpets and music’ (169), provide evidence for a supernatural explanation.

What is glaringly unambiguous, however, is Oliphant’s self-conscious construction, and subsequent subversion, of the hackneyed association between women, madness and the supernatural.⁵² June Sturrock argues of Oliphant’s supernatural fiction in general, that ‘it is those characteristics culturally associated with the feminine that allow for such negotiations between the dead and the living. Qualities such as unquestioning love and openness to the irrational permit such liminal activity’.⁵³ Yet in ‘Earthbound’ Oliphant plays with this association in order to undermine it. It is Edmund the young upper class male who encounters the potentially supernatural, and in an ironic twist first believes the ethereal Maud to be mad herself. As a consequence of her ambiguous observations on time and identity, Edmund concludes ‘that this tender, beautiful creature must be, not mad – that was too harsh a word – but like Ophelia,

distraught'. (154) Later, Edmund again observes that she is like 'Ophelia – but far more sweet in her madness'. (157) These references to this other psychosomatic supernatural text, *Hamlet*, are suggestive for a gendered reading of the story. Like the disenfranchised Ophelia who is eventually driven to suicide and non-signification, when she gradually becomes less and less coherent as she approaches self-destruction, if Maud is simply a madwoman then she is safe, and her power is limited. Edmund also attempts to defuse her dangerous potential by proposing marriage, so that he can contain her within a conventional Victorian structure.

Yet, by speculating on her seemingly irrational behaviour, Edmund draws attention to his own mental turmoil. Young Fred Beresford pleads with his father: ' "I wish you'd come out, father, into the Lime-tree Walk to Edmund – he's gone mad"' (163), while the patriarch Beresford himself tries to convince Edmund,

"My dear fellow, this is all a delusion. You have seen no lady. It has been your imagination working. How in the name of all that is reasonable could you see a woman who was dead for a hundred years?" (166)

The answer is that Edmund has ceased to be 'reasonable', gaining access to the female realm of the semiotic chora, either through his 'privileged' madness, or through his contact with the dead. As in 'The Secret Chamber', the ending of the tale is abrupt, with a sense of incompleteness. What we are told, however, is that Edmund marries the earthly Maud, but will never return to the family home of Daintrey. His experience reverberates through the rest of his life.

Oliphant's critique of the enclosing female roles of her society reaches its height in the long short story 'The Library Window' (1896), one of her final, and indeed finest, pieces of fiction. Merryn Williams describes the tale as 'a flawless piece of work' (178), while Jenni Calder rates it 'among the best in the English language'.⁵⁴ The window of the title represents a portal into the world of the 'unseen'. Yet significantly even its existence – either as material or supernatural entity – is questioned. The young, bookish narrator believes she sees a window in the building opposite her aunt's house, while spending the summer there. Through this window, she intermittently witnesses the work of an indefatigable scholar, to whom she gradually develops an almost sexual attraction. However, the existence of the window is denied by her aunt's friends, and proves unlocatable when she herself visits the building, the College Library.

The girl is eventually removed from her aunt's house as her interest in the phantom window and what lies beyond develops into obsession. In discussing Oliphant in general, Penny Fielding has pointed out that 'some of her texts are strikingly close to Freudian analyses of the operations of repression and its consequences'.⁵⁵ Indeed, a Freudian reading of the tale can take us far. The scholar appears in a study that almost precisely echoes the narrator's father's place of work, suggesting an Electra scenario where the child projects her sexual desire for her father.⁵⁶ Moreover, the narrator herself admits that the scene is reminiscent of the legend of prolificacy surrounding Walter Scott: 'I trembled with impatience to see him turn the page, or perhaps throw down his finished sheet on the floor, as somebody looking into a window once saw Sir Walter do, sheet after sheet.' (380) In Lockhart's *Life*⁵⁷, Scott is famously seen through a window, covering page after page with writing. Again, Scott is the haunting authority. Freud pinpoints a moment of uncanniness in his famous essay, as being when that which is assumed to be imaginary or fictional appears in reality. This legend is made uncannily tangible for the bookish protagonist.

The girl's belief is put down to delusion by others, and to an ancestral curse by her aunt, whereby women of their family are at some point in their lives haunted by the apparition of a scholar murdered by their ancestor's brothers, after he rejected her because he 'liked his books more than any lady's love'. (399) Yet one incident at the conclusion of the story maintains the ambiguity. Eventually, the figure behind the window stands up, opens the window and salutes the narrator. The open window is seen and remarked upon as impossible by a local boy. This ambiguity can be read as representing Oliphant's views on the inaccessibility of artistic pursuit for women of her time. The narrator yearns for what the scholar has, believing, or at least hoping, it to be a tangible reality. Yet she is judged unhinged for this yearning by those around her, who assume this is a projection of her unconscious. The fantastic ambiguity suggests a reality, but also a permanent unattainability.

For Oliphant, then, those who attempt to access the semiotic, in Kristevan terms, as an alternative to the (patriarchal) symbolic as a means of signification and expression of identity, ultimately face madness or death. Both Edmund and the narrator of 'The Library Window' are judged psychologically unstable, whilst Lindores' fate remains an enigma, but the menacing possibilities of both these fates are oppressively present. The solution advocated by Oliphant is, much like that proposed by Hogg, a balanced view of humanity, an acknowledgement and acquiescence without either rationalisation or sensation. As psychiatrist R.D. Laing groundbreakingly argued: 'Madness need not be

all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potential liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death.’⁵⁸

‘The fancies of a crazy man’⁵⁹: J.M. Barrie and *Farewell, Miss Julie Logan*

This is also acknowledged in J.M. Barrie’s novella *Farewell Miss Julie Logan*. Despite being published in 1931, there is a case to be made for claiming Barrie’s novella as a nineteenth-century text, with much more in common with the work of Stevenson and Oliphant than its contemporaries. It represents the culmination of years of meditation on nineteenth-century supernatural fiction, almost a love letter to it. Douglas Gifford claims that

Barrie’s novella [...] can be read as the ultimate version of the classic Scottish supernatural-psychological tale – and indeed as a conscious farewell on Barrie’s part, in a world which he felt was increasingly dismissive of legend and magic, to the classic traditional and ambivalent supernatural tale as begun by Burns and developed by writers like Scott, Hogg, Oliphant, Stevenson and Munro.⁶⁰

Indeed, the tale is a tightly executed and concentrated example of the psychosomatic supernatural tale, drawing self-consciously from the *Justified Sinner*, and ‘Thrawn Janet’ specifically. Yet the idea that it represents a consignment to history for such texts is unconvincing, operating as it does as a conscious homage. Moreover, the title can be read as ironic, if we take into consideration that, although Julie Logan leaves the scene of the text, she does not leave the mind of central protagonist and narrator the Reverend Adam Yestreen, nor that of the reader. Twenty-five years after the events depicted in the text, the minister reminisces and discusses the actions of his younger self. He concludes that, ‘when I am gone it may be that he will away back to that glen.’ (88) The etymology of the word ‘farewell’ can be traced back to Middle English ‘faren’, meaning to journey or travel. Thus, Barrie is wishing Julie Logan and all that she signifies a ‘good journey’ – she is still moving, still dynamic and potent, and we are not, as Gifford suggests, confining her to a past or leaving her behind. Equally, the fragmented selves of Yestreen are still vigorous, and will become a new echo in the future themselves. Both words, ‘farewell’ and his very name, ‘yestreen’, look to the past while resonating into the future.

The tale takes the form of a diary written by Yestreen during his first winter in his new Highland glen parish, where he has taken up the position of minister at the young age of just twenty-six. The form adds a sense of immediacy to events, as they

unfold day to day, and also often becomes a self-revelatory dramatic monologue. During the winter months the glen often becomes 'locked', 'meaning it may be so happy in snow that no one who is in can get out of it, and no one who is out can get in'. (7) During this time mysterious happenings are rumoured to take place, specifically visitations by 'Strangers', or the ghosts of Jacobites, including the Pretender himself at one point, who once hid in the glen during the '45 uprising. Yestreen is visited by his own 'stranger', Miss Julie Logan, who is rumoured to be the former secret lover of Bonnie Prince Charlie who sacrificed her life in trying to save him and has remained a ghost ever since, compelled to haunt the place of her undoing. Again, as with Hogg's *Perils of Woman*, the Jacobite Rebellions provide the source of uncanny history, compelled to return and recur. Immediately, the author signals to the reader that this parish is far removed from the Kailyard representations presented by Barrie's contemporaries, and somewhat more problematically by himself.

In *Farewell Miss Julie Logan*, with its analysis of lust, delusion and prejudice, we see a reaction against such overly sentimental portrayals of a timeless rural way of life. This 'bucolic misrepresentation' that Douglas Gifford discusses⁶¹ is, like that which comes with realism, another metanarrative of Scottish identity. Lynnette Hunter argues that

J.M. Barrie has often been accused of being a fantasist and sentimentalist, yet his later novels and his plays are mainly concerned with exploring the delusions of fantasy and sentimentalism. The indictment stems from his early writing about small-town Scotland which defined him in the public eye for a long time.⁶²

Indeed, Barrie is primarily remembered as an exponent of the Kailyard, and the dearth of criticism on this novella – despite its canonical status in terms of its appearance in university courses – reflects this view. In a conspicuous oversight, while attempting a revision of Barrie's reputation, Hunter herself does not mention *Farewell Miss Julie Logan*. Similarly, several other critics strangely neglect the novella when discussing Barrie's fiction. For example, in his entry on 'Barrie's Later Works' in his *The Literature of Scotland*, Roderick Watson does not mention the novella, despite the fact that it was Barrie's last, while similarly Marshall Walker omits the tale in his discussion of much of Barrie's other work. Susan Bivin Aller and Andrew Birkin in their Barrie-specific studies *J M Barrie: The Magic Behind Peter Pan* and *J M Barrie and The Lost Boys* respectively,⁶³ also fail to include this important text. In Andrew Nash's words: 'The result [of the label 'Kailyard'] has been the comparative neglect of Barrie's later,

more ambitious works of fiction, where he moved his attention away from genres of local colour and social realism, towards a more reflexive concern with art, creativity and fantasy.’⁶⁴

It is this move away from realism that allows Barrie to cover the ground that he does in the novella. No more the Kailyard concern with locality, or as Alistair McCleery puts it, ‘the absence of any sense of national as opposed to local or communal identity’⁶⁵, but now a potential allegory for the nation, akin to the simultaneous focus on the individual and the national we have seen in the work of Hogg and Stevenson. Julie Logan may either be a tangible ‘spectrum’, or she may be the projection and embodiment of Yestreen’s repressed desires – she certainly is attractive and sensual, and at one point the minister admits, “I cannot help saying or doing whatever Miss Julie Logan wants.” (57) Yestreen can be read as an emblem of Scotland, as, like Nathaniel Gow’s toddy, the minister is ‘half an half’ himself. He tells us that ‘my Intellectuals suffered from an addiction to putting away my books and playing on the fiddle’ (8), and describes his origins by saying, ‘though but half a Highlander, I have the Gaelic sufficiently to be able to preach in it once every Sabbath, as enjoined; but the attendances are small, as, except for stravaigers, there are not so many pure Heilandmen nowadays in the glen.’ (9) He exemplifies the clichéd head and heart division formulated by Edwin Muir in relation to Scott as characteristically Scottish⁶⁶, an oversimplification that may still be useful. As well as this, he encapsulates the Highland/Lowland division, drawing from both the supposedly rational south and the purportedly superstitious north. He is also slightly in awe of the southern summer-only visitors he refers to as ‘the English’, to whose manners he aspires, but whom he also occasionally finds conceited, audacious and alien. He extrapolates from their behaviour and idiosyncrasies the character of the entire country, denoting them, ‘this strange race’.

(19)

Similarly indicative is his reaction to Logan’s admission of her religious background, for which the tale has been criticised as being overly dramatic. In his *History of Scottish Literature*, Maurice Lindsay discusses this episode, and consequently dismisses the tale, thus:

The fey ghost story, “Farewell, Miss Julie Logan” [sic](1931) is an attempt at the macabre rendered ridiculous by the negative character of the teller, the Reverend Adam Festeen [sic], and by the absurdity of the fatal words that made him drop the beautiful phantasy of his thwarted sexuality in the river.⁶⁷

Yet, when Yestreen drops Logan in the river after proclaiming his love for her and carrying her across the torrent, it is he and not she that is the target of Barrie's invective – we are supposed to find this over-the-top and bordering on the farcical. All his declarations of love and offers of sacrifice are quelled with the mere utterance of four words, ‘“I am a Papist.”’ (77) Yestreen's emotions come up against age-old and deeply embedded prejudices, in the face of which they prove impotent.

Yestreen is Scotland, replete with all its unities and divisions. Yet he is persistently, possibly even eternally, haunted by Scotland past, the Scotland of Highland history, Jacobitism, superstition and Catholicism. It will not leave him alone to coherency of identity, and the North and what it represents is not safely confined to an absolute past. The past is in his name, ‘Yestreen’ – yesterday evening, implying an inescapable concern with what has gone before. Julie Logan, whether actual or psychological, represents this past, and is significantly given her name by a type of rock that sits on the mountainside around this glen: ‘There are Logan stones, I am told, throughout the world, and they are rocking stones. It is said they may be seen rocking in the wind, and yet hold on for centuries.’ (26) Although her exact origins waver from interpretation to interpretation, her effect persists, reflecting the tradition as a whole.

Rocking in the wind, yet holding on for centuries

Barrie's work in general represents a significant transitional point in the tradition, portending the greatest single crisis in artistic representation – the Modern Movement. As Douglas Gifford observes, ‘Barrie marks the point where simple Kailyard crosses over into parody and irony’.⁶⁸ Nowhere is this more evident than in his important yet largely overlooked *fin de siècle* novels, *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), and *Tommy and Grizel* (1900), its sequel and elaboration.

These texts represent an explicit rejection of Kailyard idealism, and also an experimentation with narrative form comparable to Modernist reassessments. All the machinery of the Kailyard is present in the first novel: idealised rural values with the emphasis on the local rather than the national, and nostalgia. However, *Tommy and Grizel* articulates the second half of the story, and through its divergence from the first, becomes a *Justified Sinner*-like re-narration of events. Tommy is consistently inconsistent, a perpetual fantasist whose identity is drawn entirely from imaginary role-play. He believes so utterly in any invented scenario that he ceases to recognise the boundary between fantasy and reality, and is thus incapable of generating a coherent self. This is tolerable when he is a child, but as we follow his development into his

twenties, the dangers for himself and those around him of this inability to distinguish between actuality and pretence become increasingly apparent. The ending collapses, as the narrative voice fragments and meanings become destabilised. Tragedy is the inevitable conclusion. The same pieces of the puzzle of the first novel are assembled in a different way, and the safe assurances of the Kailyard prove to be no longer adequate.

The beginning of modernism is often cited as c.1890, the same date often proposed for the end of the dominance of the realist mode in the European novel.⁶⁹ Stevenson and Oliphant both have been cited as ‘pre-modernists’ by critics, portending and feeding into this time of aesthetic crisis and transformation. Alan Sandison has written an entire critical book on Stevenson’s work and its ‘future feeling’, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*⁷⁰, while Penny Fielding has said of Oliphant that:

Her work engages with an idea of the modern that was not so much a casting-off of earlier traditions as a negotiation with them [...] for her the condition of being modern was difficult, beleaguered, fractured – not a clean break with the past but a sense of tenuous connections or overlapping circles, of other worlds which collide with the familiar.⁷¹

Modernism represents a break with the past, but these texts constantly illustrate the past’s uncanny ability to return. All three writers look forward to modernism, but this is modernism in a Scottish context, where the ‘identity with the dead’, that which Stevenson saw as the quintessential national characteristic, is maintained. This is evident in the primary translation of literary modernism into the Scottish tradition, the Scottish Renaissance. As Douglas Gifford states of Stevenson:

He (together with writers like Oliphant and Macdonald) initiated the movement of recovery of older Scottish culture and belief which would burgeon in the ‘Scottish Renaissance’ so commonly associated with MacDiarmid, but which owes much more to previous Scottish writers like Stevenson than MacDiarmid and too many critics have yet allowed. Stevenson’s subtle use of the traditional supernatural re-opened possibilities for many writers.⁷²

The following chapter will explore how modernism and psychosomatic supernaturalism intersect in early twentieth-century Scottish fiction, and how this is inherited, or often rejected, by post-war Scottish writers.

Notes

¹ Robert Louis Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*, (1896), Chapter V, III: A Border Family, in *The Scottish Novels: Robert Louis Stevenson*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1995), p.46

² David Kennedy Henderson, *The Evolution of Psychiatry in Scotland*, (Edinburgh: E& S Livingstone LTD., 1964), p.2

³ Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Foreigner at Home' (1881), collected in *Robert Louis Stevenson: The Scottish Stories and Essays*, ed. Kenneth Gelder (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989) p.241

⁴ This is a paraphrase of Henry Jekyll's famous description of his 'consciousness of the perennial war among my members', from Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1885), (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1995), p.278

⁵ See David K. Henderson, *The Evolution of Psychiatry in Scotland*, and Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) – 'Opposition to religious models of madness was largely expressed through the concepts and language of medicine. In time doctors replaced clergy in handling the insane.' p.33 'In the late nineteenth century the priority lay, for many psychiatrists, upon establishing their discipline as a truly scientific enterprise, capable of taking its rightful place in the pantheon of the "hard" biomedical sciences, alongside neurology and pathology, and utterly distinct from such quackish and fringy embarrassments as mesmerism and spiritualism.' p.183 I wish also to thank Dr. Malcolm Nicholson of the Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine, University of Glasgow, for conversations on the sociological position of the insane in nineteenth century Scotland.

⁶ Douglas Gifford, '“Nathaniel Gow's Toddy”', p.?

⁷ *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk* (1871), *The Laird of Drammochdyle*, and *My Uncle the Bailie* (both published post-humously in 1986 and 1995 respectively). As critic William Donaldson argues: 'His work demonstrates the presence of a sophisticated literary realism in a tradition previously dismissed as having dwindled into Kailyard sentimentality. It is central to the revaluation of nineteenth century Scottish literature now taking place.' See William Donaldson, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986), chapter four, 'A Prophet...and From Galilee', for a fuller discussion of Alexander's work.

⁸ Lyndsay Lunan, *The Fiction of Identity: Hugh Miller and the Working Man's Search for Voice in Nineteenth Century Scottish Literature*, (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Glasgow, 2004), Chapter One, p.23. For a more in-depth discussion of the nineteenth-century Scottish literary scene and its complexities, see chapter one in its entirety.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.95-96

¹⁰ '“Nathaniel Gow's Toddy”, p.?

¹¹ Robert Louis Stevenson, 'A Humble Remonstrance' (1884), collected in *R.L. Stevenson on Fiction: An Anthology of Literary and Critical Essays*, edited by Glenda Norquay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp.80-91, p.85

¹² I believe it is fair to apply this term to Stevenson's fiction, more so perhaps than other writers, as he did clearly consider aspects of form, structure and reception as connected to the creative process, as evinced in his critical writing. An excellent collection is Glenda Norquay's anthology.

¹³ Gifford, *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.419

¹⁴ *The Silverado Squatters* (1883), Chapter Four: The Scot Abroad (London: Everyman, 1993), p.236

¹⁵ References to all the stories come from the editions contained in Roderick Watson ed. *Robert Louis Stevenson: Shorter Scottish Fiction*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics 1995). References will appear in brackets following quotations.

¹⁶ Jerold E. Hogle, entry on Stevenson in *The Handbook to Gothic Literature*, ed. Marie Mulvey-Roberts (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p.221

¹⁷ Roderick Watson, introduction to *Robert Louis Stevenson: Shorter Scottish Fiction*, p.ix

¹⁸ Graham Balfour, *The Life of Robert Louis Stevenson*, 6th edn (London 1911), p.134

¹⁹ Marshall Walker, *Scottish Literature Since 1707*, (London: Longman 1996), p.208

²⁰ Women began to become much more politically organised during the later nineteenth century in Britain. In 1851 and 1866 petitions were presented to parliament demanding that women should have the same political rights as men. Following the disappointing defeats of these, members of the Kensington Society went on to form the London Society for Women's Suffrage. Similar Women's Suffrage groups were formed all over Britain, and in 1887 seventeen of these individual groups joined together to form the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS), the organisation intrinsic in the attainment of the vote for women.

²¹ Witchcraft is often theorised as a gauge of 'social strain'. As one critic states: 'Those accused are usually people in the weakest positions in society, such as old women living alone. The threat of witchcraft serves as a double-edged means of social control. As well as controlling the weak, it also attempts to ensure that proper social relations are maintained [...] One of the main ideas that underlies most feminist views of witchcraft is that the women who were single with children, spinsters or widows

were outside the control of the patriarchal family, and that the threat and terror of an accusation of witchcraft were used as a method of containing them.' <http://www.bloomsbury.com/ARC/detail.asp?entryid=103083&bid=2> 24/11/2005

²² Julian Goodare, 'Women and the witch-hunt in Scotland', in *Social History* 23 (1998), pp.288-308, p.308

²³ *Writing and Orality*, p.27

²⁴ *Writing and Orality*, p.151/2

²⁵ Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction*, p.314

²⁶ *Writing and Orality*, p.203

²⁷ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey, p.242

²⁸ *Writing and Orality*, p.205

²⁹ Francis R. Hart, 'Robert Louis Stevenson in Prose', in *The History of Scottish Literature vol.3: Nineteenth Century*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p.295

³⁰ *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.406

³¹ Although psychiatrist Eugen Bleuler first coined the term 'schizophrenia' in 1911, similar psychological states had been diagnosed under various names since the mid-nineteenth century. It remains a contested and divisive term amongst the medical community, but has passed into common usage. See Rhodri Walters, 'Schizophrenia: A cyclical and heterogeneous dysfunction of cognitive and sensory processing?', <http://www.cellscience.com/shdss2.html> 24/11/2005

³² Gifford, 'Chapter 23: Robert Louis Stevenson', in *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.409

³³ Julia Reid, *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science and the Fin de Siecle*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

³⁴ see note 13

³⁵ Lacan employs this distinction throughout his later work. He first distinguishes between the two in 1955, as outlined in Seminar 2, chapter 19, but for a fuller discussion of the other in relation to the subject in Lacan's widely used schema L, see 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis', in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), p.193

³⁶ Lacan discusses this primarily in his essay, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' (1966), in *Ecrits: A Selection*. Yet he also argues that the recognition of coherence and autonomy at the mirror stage is crucially a *misrecognition*, a false belief essential for entry into the symbolic order. Markheim significantly refuses this misrecognition.

³⁷ The suggestion of the supernatural or diabolic around James Durie is, to borrow Douglas Gifford's wonderful phrase, a 'symbolic demonism', just in the way that the Baron's in Hogg's *The Baron St. Gio*, John Gourlay's in Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* or Dr. Knox's in Bridie's *The Anatomist* is. Gifford first uses this phrase in his introduction to *Scottish Short stories 1800-1900*, (London: Calder and Boyars, 1971), p.8

³⁸ Stein in Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim* (1900), (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), p.129

³⁹ *The Silverado Squatters*, Chapter Four: The Scot Abroad, p.235

⁴⁰ Robert Louis Stevenson, letter to S.R. Crockett, 10th April 1888, collected in *Selected Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, ed. Ernest Mehew, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), p.367

⁴¹ Margaret Oliphant, 'Earthbound' (1880), collected in *Selected Short Stories of the Supernatural*, ed. Margaret K. Gray (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), p.35

⁴² 'The Land of Darkness' will not be extensively discussed here due to the fact that its dynamic works on a different ambiguity. The protagonist is clearly in some kind of otherworld removed from our own and cannot be read as suffering from mental deterioration apart from that induced by his change in circumstances. Social Realism is evident in the story's oblique or allegorical critique of poverty, disenfranchisement and industrialisation. Fascinating parallels, however, can be drawn between this text and the purgatorial afterlife portrayed in Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*. See chapters 3 and 4.

⁴³ These stories are collected in Margaret Oliphant, *A Beleaguered City and Other Tales of the Seen and Unseen*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2000). Subsequent citations will refer to this edition and will appear in brackets.

⁴⁴ Stevenson hugely admired Oliphant's novella *A Beleaguered City*, and wrote her a highly enthusiastic letter after reading it. See R.L. Stevenson to Margaret Oliphant, *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson*, vol. 2, ed. Bradford A. Booth and Ernest Mehew (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995) p. 301. Amongst Oliphant's other admirers was Henry James.

⁴⁵ Richard and Vineta Colby, 'Mrs. Oliphant's Scotland: The Romance of Reality', in *Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction: Critical Essays* ed. Ian Campbell (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1979), p.90: 'Not herself drawn to superstition or spiritualism, she nevertheless was fascinated by Scottish folklore and legends.' See also the convincing argument that Oliphant was influenced by an older brand of 'Celtic Christianity', accommodating myth and folklore, presented in Anne Scriven, *A Scotswoman in the Text: Margaret*

Oliphant's Literary Negotiations with National Identity, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Strathclyde, 2004) 'Chapter One: Seer and Seannachaidh'.

⁴⁶ 'Mrs. Oliphant's Scotland', p.93

⁴⁷ Margarete Rubik, *The Novels of Mrs. Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), p.285

⁴⁸ see for example *ibid.*, p.296, and Scriven, *A Scotswoman in the Text*.

⁴⁹ David Sandner, 'Up-to-Date with a Vengeance: Modern Monsters in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and Margaret Oliphant's "The Secret Chamber"', in *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts* 1997 (31), pp.294-309

⁵⁰ Sigmund Freud, 'Notes on a Case of Paranoia' (1911) in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* vol. XII, p.60 onwards

⁵¹ Margarete Rubik, *The Novels of Mrs. Oliphant: A Subversive View of Traditional Themes*, (New York: Peter Lang, 1994), p.294

⁵² A host of critical work has appeared on this subject. See for example Gilbert and Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic*, and Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady*.

⁵³ June Sturrock, 'Mr. Sludge and Mrs. Oliphant: Victorian Negotiations with the Dead', in *The Victorian Newsletter* 101 (Spring 2002), p.4

⁵⁴ Jenni Calder, introduction to *A Beleaguered City and Other Tales of the Seen and the Unseen by Margaret Oliphant*, (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2000), p.vii

⁵⁵ *Writing and Orality*, p.210

⁵⁶ Freud believed that all daughters unconsciously want to sleep with their fathers, in what he called the Electra complex, which he believed to be the female counterpart to the Oedipus complex in males. Freud also believed that, as part of the Electra complex, women have unconscious penis envy, the tragic desire to possess the same sexual organ as men. Feminists generally regard this theory as sexist, although it appears less offensive and outlandish when placed in its historical context.

⁵⁷ John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott*, (7 vols., Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1837), vol. 3, 128-9

⁵⁸ R.D. Laing, as quoted in Roy Porter, *Madness: A Brief History*, p.210

⁵⁹ J.M. Barrie, *Farewell Miss Julie Logan* (1931), (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1989), p.86. Further references will appear in brackets following the quotation.

⁶⁰ 'Nathaniel Gow's Toddy', p.?

⁶¹ *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.324

⁶² Lynette Hunter, 'J.M. Barrie: The Rejection of Fantasy' in *Scottish Literary Journal* 5, no.1 (May 1978), pp.39-52, p.39

⁶³ Susan Bivin Aller, *JM Barrie: The Magic Behind Peter Pan*, (Minneapolis: Learner Publications, 1994), and Andrew Birkin, *JM Barrie and the Lost Boys*, (London: Constable, 1979)

⁶⁴ Andrew Nash, introduction to the *Farewell Miss Julie Logan Omnibus*, (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 2000), p.viii

⁶⁵ Alistair McCleery, 'Afterword', to *Farewell Miss Julie Logan*, (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1989), p.89

⁶⁶ Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer*, (London: Routledge, 1936)

⁶⁷ Maurice Lindsay, *The History of Scottish Literature*, (London: Robert Hale 1977), p.352

⁶⁸ *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.485

⁶⁹ See for example Peter Childs, *Modernism*, (London: Routledge New Critical Idiom Series, 2000), and F.W.J. Hemmings ed. *The Age of Realism*, (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1978)

⁷⁰ Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*, (London: Macmillan Press LTD, 1996)

⁷¹ Penny Fielding, 'Other Worlds: Oliphant's spectralisation of the modern', in *Women's Writing* volume 6, number 2 (1999), pp.201-213, p.201

⁷² 'Nathaniel Gow's Toddy', p.?

Ancient Identities and Dark Voids: The Scottish Renaissance and Post-war**Scepticism**

‘The collective unconscious is common to all: it is the foundation of what the ancients called the sympathy of all things. It is through the medium of the collective unconscious that information about a particular time and place can be transferred to another individual mind.’

– Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*¹

‘When Tod left him Mr. Alfred wasn’t sure where he was. He was with himself but outside himself, as if there were two of him. He looked up at the night sky like an ancient mariner trying to take his bearings from the stars. But he couldn’t see any stars in the narrow vault between the buildings. All he saw was a crescent reflector hanging in the dark void.’

– George Friel, *Mr Alfred M.A.*²

Manifestations of psychosomatic supernaturalism are altered again during the primary translation of literary modernism into the Scottish tradition, the Scottish Renaissance. Thanks to the re-energised employment of traditional supernatural elements by Stevenson and Oliphant, amongst others, the supernatural was available to be drawn upon by writers of the Renaissance. Gunn, Gibbon, Linklater, Mitchison and MacDiarmid all adopt such folk elements, transforming and defamiliarising traditional sources. By now, the ideas of Freud and Jung on the imagination and the unconscious were passing into common currency, in part due to the influence of texts such as James Frazer’s anthropological work *The Golden Bough* (1890-1915). These and other works lent academic credence to theories such as Diffusionism and the perceived ‘identity with the dead’ that Stevenson cites as the defining characteristic of ‘Scottishness’ (see chapter two). Indeed, this period is characterised by the utilisation of myth and magic, engendering a connection with the ancient and ancestral through awareness and acknowledgement of current psychological research.

However, not all writers, contemporaneously or subsequently, accepted or subscribed to the ideals behind this movement, and following World War II in particular there is an evident backlash against the Renaissance mythology of belonging, heritage, organic communities and associated traditions. This period of post-war cynicism produced very little work drawing from or feeding into the tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism, and indeed encouraged the prominence of stark social realism instead. However, a few pronounced examples are significant, and illuminate the development and proliferation of the tradition in the late twentieth century.

Thus, there is an evident sea change in the treatment of the supernatural in Scottish fiction at this time, through which psychosomatic variations run and transform: from a sustaining, myth-based treatment to a superseding scepticism and even rejection of consoling myths.

The Scottish Renaissance

The term 'Scottish Renaissance' is often inaccurately said to have been coined by the French Languedoc poet and scholar Denis Saurat in his article 'Le Groupe de la Renaissance Écossaise', which was published in the *Revue Anglo-Américaine* in April 1924. It had appeared much earlier, however, in the work of the polymathic Patrick Geddes and in a 1922 book review by Christopher Murray Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) for the Scottish Chapbook that predicted a 'Scottish Renaissance as swift and irresistible as was the Belgian Revival between 1880 and 1910.'³ However, the diversity within the body of literature referred to as the Scottish Renaissance was only fully acknowledged by later critics. Initially, the term was used contemporaneously to refer to texts linked specifically by degree of literary and linguistic experimentation; the contribution of some women writers and others not employing the Scots language ran the risk of being overlooked. There are only a few specific examples of a psychosomatic or fantastic supernatural dating from this period, from the twenties to the forties. This can be attributed to the fact that realism was already being destabilised and interrogated, via other means of literary experimentation and innovation. As Alan Riach states:

Developing through the nineteenth century [...] realism in prose fiction held up for the reader's apprehension the secure contemplation of a reality fixed by a stable text [...] The key characteristic of Modernism, a movement that lasted from the end of the nineteenth century until some time around the middle of the twentieth, was a disruption of this security through a disintegrated text where the reader's vantage point was no longer fixed but challenged, by the text itself.⁴

During the mid to late nineteenth century and the late twentieth century, realism, or at the very least urban-centric working-class representations, were a predominant mode of literary expression, and remain so today (for example in the work of Alan Spence, William McIllvanney or James Kelman, amongst others as discussed in the introduction). The Scottish Renaissance was in a sense a revisitation of older forms combined with modern psychological and philosophical ideas; it is appropriate within this context to acknowledge and summarise Renaissance achievement in terms of the literary exploitation of the supernatural.

In some of his early poetry and eclectic fiction, such as that collected in the volume *Annals of the Five Senses and Other Stories, Sketches and Plays*,⁵ Hugh MacDiarmid exemplifies the acknowledged 'spiritual and psychological implications' of the Renaissance.⁶ In much of MacDiarmid's work, as with other renaissance texts, avant-garde experimentation is merged with folk elements. In *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926)⁷, the section 'O, Wha's the Bride' (ll.612-635) draws on the sparse language and mysterious otherworldly aspects of the Ballads, specifically here the motif of the ghostly lover, comparable to William Soutar's poignant application of the psychosomatic supernatural tension to poetry in 'The Tryst'. A phantom girl revisits the living in unambiguous form in the story 'A'body's Lassie' (1927), while death and what lies beyond are sinister and tangible presences in 'Old Miss Beattie' (1927). In 'The Visitor' (1927), a man is visited by an alternative version of his self – a confirmed bachelor who had 'nae idea what a wumman was, tho' he was gleggit at the very thocht o' ane'. (*Annals* - 170) When the visitor realises this version of himself is submissive and pathetic where his overbearing wife is concerned, he returns to his own dimension in disgust. This is the only fully ambiguous tale in the collection. Was the husband really visited by such a being, did he project this visitor as an outward manifestation of a nagging mental issue, or did he make up the story as a means of covertly illustrating to his wife his repugnance at his hen-pecked position? The matter is unresolved, but humorously expressed. As the narrator admits from the outset, 'I mebbe haena got the hang o't just richt. It's a queer story.' (167) These short stories, unlike those of the *Annals of the Five Senses* itself which are written in the modernist mode, were written for magazines, and are popular and conventional, drawing on traditional ghostly elements and structures. Similarly, Neil Munro's supernatural short stories, such as those in the collection *The Lost Pibroch and Other Sheiling Stories* (1896), should not be overlooked in a discussion of this period. Like MacDiarmid's tales, they appear highly traditional, and not modernist in terms of technique. However, they are part of the bridge between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and as Douglas Gifford points out, part of the 'classic traditional and ambivalent supernatural tale as begun by Burns and developed by writers like Scott, Hogg, Oliphant, Stevenson and Munro.'⁸ Like MacDiarmid, Munro's work is part of the transmission system of this tradition.

Another 'queer story', equally as ambiguous as 'The Visitor', is Neil Gunn's 'The Moor' (1929).⁹ Again, the modern and the traditional are interfused here into an ambiguous and at times even opaque whole, or as Carl MacDougall puts it: 'The action takes place as much in the imagination as in real life and this duality of substance is

built into a narrative that might have come from the old ballads themselves.’¹⁰ It is difficult to know exactly what happens in the story in terms of plot. However, it centres on the encounter between a male artist – whether painter or writer – and an attractive young woman and her insane elderly mother on the remote Highland moor where the women live. Again, the north is the location of mysterious occurrences. Madness and the supernatural are co-present, and may well be two stages or versions of the same state. The man’s confusion at his potentially supernatural, and at the very least mysterious, encounter becomes a shared experience, as the reader is drawn into events and emotions through evocative although often ambiguous descriptions. An example is the artist’s attempted explanation to the girl of why he is drawn to her, almost enchanted by her: ‘ “For what I see is you who are the moor, and myself with the moor about me, and in us there is dawn, and out of the moor comes more of us”’. (337) The same self-conscious ‘ambivalent opacity’¹¹ of language that is evident in Wilson Harris’s work, as discussed in chapters four and five, is apparent here.

However, Margery G. McCulloch views this straightforwardly as bad writing. She argues that ‘ “The Moor” suffers from intensive over-writing [...] the girl being painted in the manner of Russell Flint with a degree of titillation which appears to have no necessary function in the working out of the action.’¹² She takes exception to the overtly sexual and objectifying language used to describe the young woman, for example the initial description of her appearance:

Her eyes were gipsy dark [...] a tight drawn bodice just covered and repressed her breasts. Her beauty held the still, deep mesmerism of places at the back of beyond [...] the whole covering for her rich young body was ragged as ever, ragged and extraordinarily potent, as if it sheathed the red pulse at white beauty’s core. (331)

It would be easy to mock such passages as seriously overloaded, and as such they could be a further example of Gunn’s stereotyping and homogenisation of the feminine, in keeping with the female characters in novels such as *Butcher’s Broom* and *The Silver Darlings*.¹³ However, it is possible that Gunn self-consciously adopts this degree of sensation to heighten the ambiguity of the tale as a whole. The omniscient narrative voice allows us to witness events through the male protagonist’s eyes – is the young woman then nothing more than a male construct, the fulfilment of a repressed desire, and therefore an intangible projection of his mind? If he is an artist, is she an idealised work of art created by him? It is possible that we are supposed to read resistantly. However, again, resolution is remote, and any single truth is conspicuously absent.

Similarly, a potentially preternatural connection with the land alternates with a psychological interpretation in Lewis Grassie Gibbon's short story 'Clay' (published in 1934 as part of *Scottish Scene*).¹⁴ Gunn, Gibbon and MacDiarmid are the three names conventionally associated with the literary Renaissance, and it is therefore of great significance that they should chose to employ motifs and themes connected to psychosomatic supernaturalism in their work. Although this is primarily and most recognisably evident in their less commercially successful short stories, a further claim to centrality is supported by the fact that some aspects of the tradition are evident in the pre-eminent novel of the Renaissance, Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (1932), specifically in the ambiguous ghostly visions of Chris Guthrie and Chae Strachan. During the Guthrie family's initial nocturnal journey to Kinraddie, Chris witnesses a man emerge running from the night: 'And as he came he wrung his hands, he was mad and singing, a foreign creature, black-bearded, half-naked he was; and he cried in the Greek *The ships of Pytheas! The ships of Pytheas!* And went by into the smore of the sleet-storm of the Grampian hills [...] if she hadn't been dreaming she must have been daft.' (39) Later in the novel, on making his way home after a few libations with Long Rob, Chae Strachan believes he sees a Roman soldier. He subsequently concedes that the experience may have been augmented by 'Rob's Glenlivet', in an allusion to a tradition of drunken vision stretching from *Tam o' Shanter* to some of the work of Irvine Welsh. These visions function in the novel to illuminate links with an ancient way of life, a past to which the present is still inherently and metaphysically connected.

In 'Clay', however, there is a central and sustained tension between supernatural and psychological explanations of events. Farmer Rob Galt of Drumbogs takes on the lease of his own place following an argument with his father, one of the 'coarse' Galts the community narrator so vehemently warns us about from the outset of the story. Rob, we are told, initially appears 'the best of the bunch' (671), an abnormally honourable Galt, until his habits and manners noticeably alter following his arrival at Pittaulds farm with his wife and daughter. His connection to the parks and moor around Pittaulds, the name already implying an ancient association with the Picts, develops to the point of obsession. As his wife puts it, ' "he's just mad on Pittaulds." ' (677)

A symbolic 'tongue' of moorland juts between the farmhouse and the cultivated land, a wild place personified by Rob as a capricious but sensual woman: 'Aye, quean, I've got you in fettle at last', he announces during his labours, and refers to the land as a 'bitch' (674-6). It is this that exerts the strongest pull on him. He decides to break it up for farming, 'the coarse bit moor that lay north of the biggings he coddled as though

'twas his own blood and bone, he fed it manure and cross-ploughed it twice-thrice, and would harrow it, tend it, and roll the damn thing till the Segget joke seemed more than a joke, that he'd take it to bed with him if he could.' (676) Buried underneath he discovers 'a rickle of stone grey sticks, the bones of a man of antique time', 'some childe [that] had once farmed up here.' (679) Through his connection to the ancient farming ground of Pittaulds, Rob demonstrates access to a Jungian collective unconscious; when participating in the same activities as his ancestors on the same land, past and present exist in one moment for him. Rob dies shortly after his discovery, and leaves his daughter unable to decide on the nature of the cause of events. She reflects:

All life – just clay that awoke and strove to return again to its mother's breast. And she thought of the men who had made these rigs and the windy days of their toil and years, the daftness of toil had been Rob Galt's, that had been that of the many men long on the land, though seldom seen now, was it good, was it bad? What power had that been that woke once on this brae and was gone at last from the parks of Pittaulds? (680)

Does he develop a kind of obsessive compulsive disorder, catalysed by the trauma of an unforgiving and demanding life on the land, or is he under the compulsion of some supernatural force, linked to the skeleton of the ancient Pict he finds buried under Pittaulds moorland? Again, the narrative prohibits us from concluding.

The proximity of the potentially supernatural and the sexual is also found in Naomi Mitchison's folkloric short story, 'Five Men and a Swan' (written in 1940, although not published until 1957).¹⁵ Again, the story has the feel and features of a ballad: the sparse but evocative language and presence of the supernatural. It relates the encounter between five fishermen who work on the same boat, the *Highland Mary*, and a being who can shape-shift between existing as a swan and a beautiful young girl. The being is unambiguously supernatural, appearing only in human form 'once a month on the Saturday of full moon', and the story can perhaps be categorised as magic realism, due to the fact that the characters unhesitatingly accept the girl's origins, and believe her to be a harbinger of bad luck. However there is also a psychological aspect to her existence. The story opens onboard the boat, with a discussion about sex: 'all went on talking about women, though it was little enough they knew when it came to the bit, and less they had done.' (93) It is suggested that these lonely, unfulfilled men have somehow evoked her presence through their repressed desires.

The supernatural features in much of Mitchison's other work, for example in the form of ritual and magic in *The Corn King and the Spring Queen* (1931). Perhaps more

relevant here, however, is a particularly ambiguous supernatural episode in her historical novel *The Bull Calves* (1947), a monumental text that has been seen as marking the end of the Scottish Renaissance as a recognisable movement.¹⁶ The shift in Mitchison's treatment of the supernatural from the early magic of *The Corn King and The Spring Queen*, through 'Five Men and a Swan', to the increasingly psychologically attributable supernatural of *The Bull Calves*, mirrors the shift in its treatment in Scottish fiction throughout the century in general. *The Bull Calves* is a historical novel, occasionally coloured with suggestions of witchcraft, which focus on the character of Kirstie Haldane. Again, one of Mitchison's central themes is evident – the subversive association of the female, 'magic', and active sexuality.

In chapter two of part two, Kirstie confesses to her second husband, the Highlander Black William, the details of her dark past during her marriage to unforgiving Presbyterian minister Andrew Shaw, specifically her rebellion in the form of her involvement with witchcraft. Her confession conflates the potentially supernatural powers of the coven she has been a member of with the possibility of a psychological explanation. She tells William of her state of delirium and hallucination when he visits her to propose marriage, and how she initially believed him to be the Devil come to tempt her further:

'I could see fine that you were looking for evil and hurt from me, though I hadna so clear a notion of why as I have this night, and I knew there could be only one cure for that, so I gave you good. Do you mind yet what I said?'

'Aye', she said. 'I will mind through all eternity. That one from whom I expected the utmost evil, on whom I could almost smell the Pit-reek, he looked at me and said: "*I am asking you to be my wife in the name of God.*"'¹⁷

Kirstie accepts William's, or as she sees it then the Devil's, Highland accent as a confirmation of the supernatural associations of the north. She says mischievously, 'it is true after all what is said and there is a connection between the Highlands and hell!' (169) The stereotypical associations of the North as a barbaric, uncivilised and even sinister or evil location are played with and undermined here. The entire novel presents the subversion of prejudices and the healing of tribal and personal rifts. For a much more detailed analysis of Mitchison's use of the supernatural see Moira Burgess's work.¹⁸ However, it is important to mention these texts here as fascinating offshoots of the tradition.

The final clear example of psychosomatic supernaturalism from this time is Eric Linklater's late-Renaissance short story 'Sealskin Trousers' (1947)¹⁹, which prefigures the playfulness of late twentieth century manifestations of the tradition. Here he makes the fusion of the ancient and the modern starkly explicit by juxtaposing happenings based on a traditional ballad, 'The Great Selkie of Sule Skerry', with cutting edge biological ideas, such as the theory of 'psychobiology' expounded in the book the young female graduate is reading when she encounters the selkie. The selkie in his human form, or 'Roger Fairfield' as the girl then knows him, reads aloud one reverberatingly significant passage from the book: "The physical factor in a germ-cell is beyond our analysis or assessment, but can we deny subjectivity to the primordial initiatives? [...] It is common knowledge that the mind may influence the body both greatly and in little unseen ways; but how it is done, we do not know. Psychobiology is still in its infancy." (112) Roger Fairfield is the name of a dead sailor, whose passbook our 'Roger' finds in the sea. The girl has known him from her time at Edinburgh University, but unbeknownst to her he is actually an investigator sent by the seal-people to observe and report back on human behaviour and evolution, their subjectivity, and the possibilities of alteration during the 'primordial initiatives'.

However, by choosing to quote this particular passage, he provides the reader with a clue concerning his potentially psychosomatic, or at the very least ambiguous, origins, making this an exemplar of the tradition. Douglas Gifford says of the story that:

Linklater's blend of ancient folklore and modern science is beautifully balanced, drawing the reader into his narrator's ambiguous account, so that it works in the classic tradition of the ambiguous Scottish story, which can be read as a study of psychological breakdown or genuine supernatural occurrence, as in Hogg's *Justified Sinner* (1824), Stevenson's 'Thrawn Janet' and Barrie's *Farewell Miss Julie Logan* (1932) [sic].²⁰

The ambiguity comes with the recognition that the entire story is narrated by the girl's fiancé, who attempts to 'rationalise', or rather de-rationalise, her disappearance through the construction of an elaborate supernatural tale, instead of accepting that she may well have simply left him for another man. He opens his tale by claiming from the outset 'I AM NOT MAD'. (107) Following the 'disappearance' of his Elizabeth whilst they are holidaying in a remote fishing village on a Scottish Island – possibly one of the Orkneys – he is confined to bed for several weeks as a result of shock:

A double or conjoint shock: for as well as the obvious concussion of a brutal event, there was the more dreadful necessity of recognising the material evidence of a happening so monstrously implausible that even my friends here, who in general are quite extraordinarily kind and understanding, will not believe in the occurrence. (107)

The event he refers to is the seduction of his girlfriend by the selkie, and her subsequent decision to transform into a selkie herself, and enjoy a carefree life under the waves. The story proper represents his conjectures concerning the event, which are based entirely upon the fact that he discovers her clothes neatly folded on a cliff edge, next to the eponymous sealskin trousers – the garments shed by the two lovers before they begin their new life together under water. This pile of clothing provides for the narrator ‘the clear and simple testimony’ to his beliefs.

The action, whether actually supernatural or a psychological compensatory narrative, takes place in a rural hinterland, an ‘other’ world removed from the centre, in keeping with the associations of the ‘journey north’ motif. However, Linklater subverts these associations by giving his selkie an MA from the University of Edinburgh, the very centre of Enlightenment, and allowing him a degree of sophisticated scientific knowledge conventionally contradictory to superstition and folk belief.

Post-war Scepticism

Linklater’s work appropriately bridges the shift in attitude following the Scottish Renaissance. His novel *Magnus Merriman* (1934) is both a part of and attack on the values of much of the literature of the Renaissance. Post-war, critics have noted a rejection of the most common values of the Renaissance, and a stark shift in the treatment of the supernatural in Scottish literature. As Douglas Gifford argues:

Presumably the main reason for the values of the ‘Scottish Renaissance’ petering out and becoming distasteful to Scottish writers after the War was precisely because its values seemed to share aspects of the international and particularly the German National Socialism of the thirties and forties [...] True or False, suspicion of “Renaissance values” nagged uneasily after the Second World War and this, alongside the drab urban greyness of the fifties, led to a gradual rejection of writers identifying with the values of the Renaissance [...] sceptically and savagely repudiating organic and mythopoetic ideas of Scottish destiny.²¹

Post-war, a degree of pessimism appears to become the dominant mood in Scottish fiction. There are very few examples of psychosomatic supernaturalism at this time, writers concerning themselves with rejecting myth and false consolation by adopting a

harsh and often hopeless urban realism rather than utilising modes that might draw from Renaissance influences, such as the supernatural. The few examples that were produced at this time contribute to an understanding of how the ambiguous supernatural evolved and appeared in renewed and new forms in the late twentieth century, as explored in chapters four and five.

The supernatural in the work of Muriel Spark, within religious and ethical contexts, is often ambiguous. Her later Scottish novel *Symposium* (1990) is discussed in detail in chapter four as an exemplar of psychosomatic supernaturalism. However, a number of her other works invoke different, although equally evocative, supernatural potentialities including her 1959 novel *Memento Mori*, her 1967 short story 'Black Madonna' and her renowned 1961 novel *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. The latter features a 'symbolic demonism' akin to that explored in relation to Stevenson in chapter two. Jean Brodie is a symbolic witch, in that her power is probably most 'real', but the more sinister aspects of this are expressed through supernatural metaphor, for example the 'whiff of sulphur' Sandy detects around Miss Brodie's plans.²²

Most directly relevant to the ambiguity analysed here is Spark's 1960 novella *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*, where the eccentric young Scot Dougal Douglas may be a demon, or may be 'different' in other, more cerebral ways. The journey north is reversed here, as Dougal is the interloper who travels south to Peckham, and proves a catalyst for change. He situates his origins even further North, and simultaneously heightens the interrogation of the associations, by claiming at one point, ' "I'm fey. I've got Highland blood." ' (67). Another untrustworthy Master of Arts, like the selkie in Linklater's story and Mr. Alfred, as discussed below, he joins the textile firm of Meadows, Meade and Grindley as 'the Arts man', to research the workers' way of life in an attempt to reduce absenteeism and raise morale. Regardless of his supernatural potentialities, he is definitely a shape-shifter of sorts, in that he performs different roles depending on the context, and more specifically depending on the effect, often manipulatory, he wishes to have on those he comes into contact with. For example, in his interview for the position at the factory he role-plays as appropriate: 'Dougal changed his shape and became a professor. He leaned one elbow over the back of his chair and reflected kindly [...] Dougal turned sideways in his chair and gazed out of the window at the railway bridge; he was now a man of vision with a deformed shoulder.'(16-17)

In a conversation with a fellow lodger in his boarding house, he playfully and matter-of-factly reveals his true origins:

“You supposed to be the Devil, then?” Humphrey asked.

“No, oh, no, I’m only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls. Have you mended those beams in the roof yet?”(77)

And sporadically throughout the novella he asks various acquaintances to feel the two bumps on his head, explaining that these represent where his horns were removed. Exchanges like this with Dougal lead several characters in turn to have nervous breakdowns, commit murder and leave Peckham altogether. Yet his potential supernaturalism is not cause but catalyst of evil and deterioration. What he reveals is the corruption and immorality already existent within those he encounters. The damaged nature of the entire community of Peckham, rather than the mental instability of one specific character, is inferred.

Another key novel at this time, illuminating and speaking out of the ‘dark void’, is George Friel’s *Mr. Alfred M.A.* (1972). The novel begins familiarly enough, with what initially appears to be a realist tale in the vein of other familiar Glasgow novels, and Friel’s own previous and more straightforwardly realist fiction. It also features a savage repudiation of consoling myths, evinced in the Gaelic place-name ‘Tordoch’. The residents’ differing reactions to the place name highlight growing class divisions:

Since they had never been part of any housing-scheme these people [the wealthier residents who live on the outskirts] objected if anyone accused them of living in Tordoch. Regretting the present, they turned to the past [...] An amateur etymologist said the name came from the Gaelic *torran*, a hill or knoll, and *dubh* or *dugh*, signifying dark or gloomy, implicitly ascribing a touch of the Gaelic second-sight to those who had first named the place. For now indeed it was a black spot. The police knew it as a nexus of thieves and resettlers. (20-1)

This is a location that might have promised rural and ancestral refuge from contemporary problems in earlier renaissance and Kailyard texts, that which Gifford refers to as ‘mythopoetic representations of Scotland’.²³ However, in this post-war, disillusioned, pessimistic vision, it now proves impotent and contaminated. This is not realism, but neither is it optimism.

The most pertinent section of the novel in terms of psychosomatic supernaturalism is chapter twenty-nine, which features an encounter between the ineffectual anti-hero Mr. Alfred and the mysterious Tod. Tod appears to ‘find’ Mr. Alfred in a close-mouth after he passes out following an attack and attempted mugging by a local gang. He takes him to a liminal location referred to as ‘The Flat’, ‘a three-

roomed house on the first floor of an abandoned tenement, condemned as unsafe, where teenagers of both sexes who had left home lived rough and slept together on the bare boards.' (155). This may be a supernatural territory, a 'lair' for the potentially demonic Tod, or a nightmare landscape projected by Mr. Alfred during his unconsciousness. Mr. Alfred struggles to comprehend Tod's existence and locate the origins of his power:

'You think you're God perhaps?' said Mr. Alfred.

'No, the other One', said Tod. 'The Adversary [...] That's me,' said Tod. [...] 'I say No to you and your likes. I'm nibbling away at the roots of your civilisation. I'll bring it down. The felt-pen is mightier than the sword.'

'You've made my city ugly,' said Mr. Alfred. 'Apart from all the stabbings and fighting in the street, this writing on the wall everywhere – it's an offence against civilisation.' (162)

It is possible, and even probable the text suggests, that Mr. Alfred has unconsciously invented Tod as the embodiment of his community's ills, the malign spirit of urban negativity. It is easier for him to ascribe degeneration to the influence of some sinister higher power. This explanation leaves humanity somewhat intact, with a distant promise of hope in the degree of choice involved in succumbing to malign preternatural influence. However, following this, towards the end of the novel meanings break down further, and a lack of choice is foregrounded. Mr. Alfred suffers a breakdown, supporting the interpretation that everything we witness in chapter twenty nine may well have been a simple nightmare, a literary man's way of symbolising and making sense of what is inevitably happening to his society. He is put in hospital, where he sees out his days. We are told that:

Since he wasn't all that old and beds in the geriatric ward were scarce, he was moved to a mental asylum. It may have been that crack on his skull when he was rolled in a back-closet. It may have been a natural decay. He lived on without knowing. (178)

We must also live on without knowing; we are no longer allowed to find refuge in the old consolations. The novel is an achingly pessimistic portrayal of the 'dark void' left by deprivation, a lack of hope and concurrent loss of self-respect and respect for others.

Mr. Alfred MA has much in common with the landmark Glasgow novel that was to follow it into print nine years later, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*. Both are set in a familiar urban landscape of schemes and gangs, which is then defamiliarised via the inclusion of the potentially supernatural, and the quest for improvement by an intellectual and sensitive yet flawed and often pathetic central male protagonist. Yet *Lanark* is

ultimately much less pessimistic than *Mr. Alfred MA*. It represents the budding of another trend in Scottish fiction, one that, however ambiguously, allows for the glimmer of hope within the dark void, and that embraces a 'return to mythology'. Indeed, *Lanark's* importance in this respect, as well as its merits as an autonomous text and its transformation of psychosomatic supernaturalism, justifies its inclusion in two chapters of this thesis. The novel heralded the later rediscovery of the ambiguous supernaturalism, cognate to what Douglas Gifford has recognised as the 'return to mythology in modern Scottish fiction' in his article of the same name. Here, he observes a significant break 'with the scepticism of the urban-fixated anti-historicism of the post-war period' (31), and pinpoints *Lanark* as the book 'which most dramatically changed literally creative consciousness in the eighties and nineties.'²⁴ (33) In addition, he outlines the quality and huge wealth of recent non-realist fiction – including supernatural tales, fantasy, magic realism and postmodernist fiction.

Much of what Gifford appropriately acknowledges can be classed as 'fantasy' or 'magic realism' (see my introduction for definitions of these terms) and thus will not be examined here, but the foremost examples include: Margaret Elphinstone's future and historical fantasies such as *A Sparrow's Flight* (1989) and *Islanders* (1994), and her short story collection *An Apple from a Tree* (1991), Sian Hayton's *Hidden Daughters* trilogy (1989-1993), Emma Tennant's feminist revisionings of older fantasies, much of Iain Banks's other work, including his science fiction, and fantastic or futuristic fiction such as *Walking on Glass* (1985), *Canal Dreams* (1989), *The Bridge* (1986) and *A Song of Stone* (1997), Ken Macleod's science fiction, and John Herdman's works, amongst many others. These and similar texts are omitted from the discussion of the late-twentieth century in the next two chapters not as a judgement on their merits, but because a much more specific non-realist ambiguity is to be dealt with. There is a concurrent proliferation of psychosomatic supernatural fiction at this time, where the doubt centres around potential psychological explanations of seemingly supernatural events.

The following chapter examines specifically how late twentieth-century texts belonging to the psychosomatic supernatural tradition interrogate and subvert the associations of the 'journey north' motif. Their rejection of the motif's predictability is akin to that witnessed in much of the earlier work examined in previous chapters.

Notes

¹ Carl Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961), (London: Vintage, 1989), p.138

- ² George Friel, *Mr. Alfred M.A.* (1972), Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1987), pp.164-5
- ³ As quoted in Margery Palmer McCulloch ed., *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918-1939*, (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2004), pp. 52-53.
- ⁴ Alan Riach, 'The Unnatural Scene: The Fiction of Irvine Welsh', in *The Contemporary British Novel* ed. James Acheson and Sara C.E. Ross, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp.35-47, p.35
- ⁵ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Annals of the Five Senses and Other Stories, Sketches and Plays*, ed. Roderick Watson and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1999). Subsequent references will appear in brackets following the quotation.
- ⁶ *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.515
- ⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1926)
- ⁸ Douglas Gifford, ' "Nathaniel Gow's Toddy": The Supernatural in Lowland Scottish Literature from Burns and Scott to the Present Day', p.?
- ⁹ Neil M. Gunn, 'The Moor' (1929), collected in *The Devil and the Giro: Two Centuries of Scottish Stories*, ed. Carl MacDougall (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1989), pp.329-337. Subsequent references will follow quotations.
- ¹⁰ Carl MacDougall, introduction to 'The Moor' in *The Devil and The Giro*.
- ¹¹ Alan Riach on Wilson Harris – see chapter three.
- ¹² Margery G. McCulloch, Margery G. McCulloch, *Scottish and International Themes in the Work of Edwin Muir and Neil M. Gunn*, (PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow 1982), p.29
- ¹³ For a fuller discussion of Gunn's problematic representations of gender, see Christopher Whyte, 'Fishy Masculinities: Neil Gunn's *The Silver Darlings*', in *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed Christopher Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), pp.49-68
- ¹⁴ Lewis Grassie Gibbon, 'Clay' (1934), in *The Devil and the Giro*, pp.669-80. Specific page references will follow quotations.
- ¹⁵ Naomi Mitchison, 'Five Men and a Swan' (1940), collected in *Five Men and a Swan*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957)
- ¹⁶ In her 1989 doctoral thesis, *Division and Wholeness: The Scottish Novel 1896-1947* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Strathclyde, 1989), Beth Dickson examines Mitchison's work within a larger study of the Scottish Renaissance and names 1947, the publication date of *The Bull Calves*, as the outer reaches of Scottish modernism.
- ¹⁷ Naomi Mitchison, *The Bull Calves* (1947), (London: Virago, 1997), p.169
- ¹⁸ Moira Burgess, ' "Between the Words of a Song": Supernatural and Mystical Elements in the Scottish Fiction of Naomi Mitchison', (unpublished Doctoral Thesis: University of Glasgow, 2006)
- ¹⁹ Eric Linklater, 'Sealskin Trousers', in *Sealskin Trousers and Other Stories*, (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1947). Subsequent references will follow quotations. Linklater wrote a number of other short stories that exploit the traditional supernatural, the most striking of which is 'The Goose Girl' also contained in this collection.
- ²⁰ 'Chapter 32: Lewis Grassie Gibbon and Eric Linklater', in *Scottish Literature in English and Scots*, p.618
- ²¹ Douglas Gifford, 'The Return to Mythology in Modern Scottish Fiction', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* ed. Susanne Hagemann, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), pp.17-49, p.21/2
- ²² Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), (London: Penguin, 1965), p.109
- ²³ 'The Return to Mythology in Modern Scottish Fiction', p.26
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p.31 and 33

The Journey North in the Late Twentieth Century: The Other Interrogated

‘The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences [...] one of its [Europe’s] deepest and most recurring images of the Other.’

– Edward Said, *Orientalism*¹

‘Scotland as “country” is, then, a landscape of the mind, a place of the imagination.’

– David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation*²

Said details how the West has constructed the East as a place of Otherness, even otherworldliness, opposed to the Western values of rationality and modernity, while McCrone argues that any concept of a coherent Scottish identity is similarly contrived, existing only as fiction. Orientalised constructions of a homogeneous Scotland persist in Scottish texts well into and beyond the twentieth century. In particular these focus on the Highlands or the margins and are often related in a romanticised discourse somewhat sinisterly coloured with the preternatural. Examples are myriad and include: the sickly sweet Northern kailyard of the television series *Hamish Macbeth* (1995-1997); the later *Monarch of the Glen* (1999-2004), loosely based on Compton Mackenzie’s Highland novels, which features a fey Highland gamekeeper who possesses the ability to communicate with animals; Alice Thompson’s Highland-set ghost story *Pharos* (2001); and the darker visions of the North presented in the 2002 werewolf film set in the Highlands, *Dog Soldiers*, and the more sophisticated 2003 horror film *The Last Great Wilderness*.³ In all of these texts, southern protagonists journey north to find that it is still a primitive, ancient and marginal place where superstition reigns and the conventional rules of the centre do not apply.

Possessing a long and notable history – as discussed in the previous chapters⁴ – this view of the North was consolidated and validated primarily in the eighteenth century as the inevitable product of historical events. However, as with Said’s study of the East published in 1978, and McCrone’s study of 1992, it has not been until the later twentieth century that critics have begun to analyse the phenomenon. Once again, creative writers prove to be prognostic. In his study *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (1989), Peter Womack pinpoints the romanticisation of the Highlands to a specific historical event:

It began, fairly decisively, with the military defeat of the Jacobite clans in 1746, and can be regarded as complete by 1810-11, when a flurry of

publications, including most notably Scott's *The Lady of the Lake*, both depended on and confirmed a settled cultural construction of the Highlands as a 'romantic country' inhabited by a people whose ancient manners and customs were 'peculiarly adapted to poetry.'⁵

Similarly, Ian Duncan discusses 'a modern tradition of representations of the Gaelic Highlands. Critics have interpreted that tradition as the literary arm of a historical relationship of "internal colonialism" between the metropolitan core of the new British state [...] and its so-called Celtic fringe'.⁶ It was imperative that any kind of distinctive and specific Northern identity be relegated to the past in the attempt to heal historical rifts, such as the Jacobite rebellions, and evoke a sense of a unified British identity to match the new unified British state. The literary symptoms of this are apparent in James Macpherson's 'Ossianic' poetry of the 1760s, the single most influential Scottish text of the time in terms of its construction of the North as the seat of a primitive supernaturalism; the north as an idea, a vague mythic trope rather than an actual topography. Macpherson was from Badenoch in the Highlands and belonged to one of the clans most heavily involved in the '45, but was also university-educated and groomed by the Edinburgh literati, whose early Enlightenment viewpoint came to dominate his later career. Despite claims and counter-claims regarding the originality or morality of Macpherson's project, he succeeded for a time in negotiating between and synthesising North and South, ancient and modern, and oral and literary, and in making the Highlands fashionable with southern readers in a way that to some extent countered the post-Culloden anti-Scot prejudice. Yet, as Duncan states elsewhere:

The significance of the Ossianic vision lay in its inclusiveness and portability. Macpherson's translations were promoted and subsidised by Lowland Enlightenment intellectuals, the very agents of assimilation and anglicisation; the rediscovered native epic supplied all Scots, not just Highlanders, with a consoling mythology of virtuous ancestors inhabiting a common ancient British heritage [...] Crucially, however, Macpherson's ancestral nation is lost, extinct, confined to the immateriality of an absolute past.⁷

Like the ethereal and impotent ghosts that feature throughout Macpherson's eclectic prose-poetry, any sense of a coherent, original and noble identity is safely locked in the past, allowed only to ineffectually haunt the present. The future lies in the sophisticated metropolitan South.

This was an ideology promoted, in however a more complex and problematic way, by Walter Scott. This is confirmed by his similar use of an etherealised

supernaturalism, for example the intangible 'Bodach Glas' of *Waverley*, or a comparable supernaturalism restricted to the background action, such as the prophetic visions of Old Janet in 'The Two Drovers'. Scott constructed the Highlands as a laboratory of the exotic and unknown, into which a Southern hero could be dropped and tested. The transgression is only temporary, however: conventional codes are ultimately reinstated. Yet it wasn't long after these ideas were consolidated by Scott that a challenge to the myth emerged. As we have seen, James Hogg's 1823 novel, *The Three Perils of Woman: or Love, Leasing and Jealousy*, acts as a reply to *Waverley* on the subject of the '45, and contests such constructions of the Highlands, which may go some way towards explaining its contemporary unpopularity. In Hogg's North the bloody aftermath of the '45 and Culloden is portrayed as horrific, not heroic, and, by means of various echoes of the historical narrative within the contemporary story, as far from resolved in the present day. This is reinforced by the presence of 'supernatural' beings that exist in a far more potent form than Macpherson's wraiths and Scott's spectres. His 'upright corpses', or the reanimated bodies of those who are perceived to be dead, signify the return of the past in a most tangible and directly interventionist way. Moreover, his Highlanders more often than not turn out to be the sophisticated rational thinkers operating at a more advanced level, while the Lowlanders are regularly governed by superstition.

Yet despite Hogg's subversive take on convention, the myth of the North persisted. Movements such as the late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Celtic Twilight, Celtic Revival and Kailyard, and some aspects of the Scottish Renaissance, perpetuated the misrepresentation of the Highlander as a mystical and primitive anachronism. This is particularly evident in some of the fiction of 'Fiona MacLeod' (William Sharp) and Neil M. Gunn. The legacy is inherited still, and not just in the literary text. As we have seen, popular forms such as television and film have increasingly 'familiarised' us with constructions of the Highlands as exotic or 'other'. In texts such as these, the 'exocitised' realm of the North is transgressed, and this journey subverts established order merely momentarily, only for that order to then be reaffirmed and strengthened.

Yet a number of recent Scottish writers are concerned, as Hogg and others after him were, with redressing the balance of representation and articulating a reply from the North. Homogenising and restrictive portrayals of Scotland, through urban realism or rural romanticism, are unacceptable to writers whose identities, and those of the communities to which they belong, are hybrid and heterogeneous. The texts discussed

here, primarily Muriel Spark's *Symposium* (1990); Wilson Harris's *Black Marsden* (1972); Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (1981); and Iain Banks' *The Wasp Factory* (1984) and *The Crow Road* (1992), as well as the quite distinct television drama adapted from the latter novel by Bryan Elsley (1996), are self-consciously aware of Scottish and Highland constructs. Rather than a momentary transgression, in these texts there exists a permanent intrusive threat: the other is always at the gate. They employ the subversive tendencies of the psychosomatic supernatural tradition, and through this seek to deconstruct such myths through direct subversion, ironic exaggeration and pastiche. Concurrently, due to the North's associations with the primitive and the past, any interrogation of the myth of the North will also re-evaluate conventional views of history as linear progress.

The Gothic mode, originating alongside Orientalised constructions of the North in the eighteenth century and similarly subversively employed by Hogg, Oliphant and others, is often evocatively employed in these texts to abet such a re-evaluation of history and of the North. Gothic, despite the diversity of texts to which the term refers and its only loosely-identifiable features of transgression, excess, opposition to realist aesthetics and a concern with taboo⁸, is clearly involved in the works of these writers, as are the features of the Gothic that David Punter specifically notes in contemporary Scottish fiction:

Some kinds of remaking of the past might be Gothic, are Gothic if seen in terms of an awareness of Gothic's chief mode of functioning, which has to do with a certain dealing with the necessary distortions of history.

Gothic has always functioned as a way of viewing the past, and the appositeness of viewing the past as a key to unlocking Scottish culture.⁹

In dealing with the past, often made tangible as a place located in the North or as the representatives thereof, and allowing that past to transgress the boundaries of history by uncannily intruding into the present, these texts expose modernity and its associations to interrogation. Colin Manlove has noted a trend for portraying such intrusions specifically in the supernatural work of Margaret Elphinstone, but this is an observation that can be applied to many of the texts examined here. He explains that:

The most constant use of the supernatural in these stories is to deconstruct modern rational awareness through its 'otherness'. Most of the central figures of the stories are intellectuals who have lost touch with their primal, instinctual selves, and those lost selves are for them

precisely 'supernatural' and 'other'. So it is the object of several of these stories to show those sophisticated people being variously confronted by the primitive, the mysterious and the suppressed [...As a counteraction to] too much knowledge [...] superstition is invoked.¹⁰

Thus, the texts not only become contemporary critiques of the margins presented as 'Other', but also that to which it is 'Other', the sophisticated centre, be that urban Scotland or – on a British scale – the superlative southern centre, London. The psychoanalytic notion of the 'Other', as formulated famously by Jacques Lacan, can take two not entirely distinct forms. The upper case 'O' is the Other of radical alterity, often representing the external Symbolic order for the subject, whereas the lower case 'o' other appears not as a real other but as a reflection and projection of the ego, existing only internally in the imaginary.¹¹ These can overlap and interpenetrate, proving, as Judith Butler states, that 'the self is from the start radically implicated in the "Other"'.¹² In her seminal work *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Julia Kristeva further theorises this unstable distinction as implicit in evoking horror in literature. Kristeva's formulation of the abject represents the 'expelled', 'repulsed', 'rejected' and 'thrown up',¹³ other which coherent definition of the self requires: 'what I permanently thrust aside in order to live'.¹⁴ The abject unsettles the self/other, North/South binary, exposing the centre to interrogation and subverting safe conventionality. Moreover, in these texts, otherness can have an often simultaneous third meaning involving the otherworldly or unearthly; the North embodies all three.

Symposium

In Muriel Spark's *Symposium*, her twentieth novel but one of the few to have distinctively Scottish subject matter and themes, the *other* is invested with a number of meanings. Otherness involves radical alterity apart from the self, but also refers to polarities of or within the self; it additionally signifies the otherworldliness of visceral and spectral presences. All three meanings intersect and transmutate. The concept has particular resonance in a novel involving many inexplicable and potentially supernatural occurrences, as well as the prevalence of themes concerning contrast and binary conflict, both cultural and social, and the presence of mental illness. Central protagonist Margaret explains that the philosophy of 'Les Autres' ('the others'), to which she subscribes, ' "is a revival of something old. Very new and very old. It means we have to centre our thoughts and actions away from ourselves and entirely onto other people." ' (35) L'autre red-haired Scottish Margaret, who attempts to insinuate herself into upper-

middle class London society through her marriage to prospectively wealthy William Damien, may or may not have the evil eye, the ability to execute evil via will-power alone. Meanwhile her ambiguous adviser and 'guru' Uncle Magnus may or may not be clinically insane.

The typically Sparkian convoluted narrative opens with the Symposium (or gathering) of the Classically-allusive title, in the form of a London socialite dinner party. We encounter the delegates to this symposium as their personalities dictate. Amongst these are the newly-weds, William and Margaret, and the rest of the narrative traces, through analepsis and prolepsis, Margaret's eventful and disturbing life so far. This has included her repeatedly close proximity to death and murder and her contrivance of her nuptials with William under the guidance of her mentor, mad Magnus. More importantly, the narrative relates how she comes to this conclusion: ' "I almost think it's time for me to take my life and destiny in my own hands, and actively make disasters come about [...to] perpetrate evil."' (143/4) The consequence of these contemplations is Margaret's premeditation of her mother-in-law's death, which would leave only William to inherit her wealth. Yet, as we learn in stages through the asymmetrically unfolding narrative, she is effectively outdone by other contending human evil, in the form of an organised gang of burglars, originating from within bourgeois London, who kill Hilda Damien themselves during a bungled robbery. The other proves to be closer than initially perceived, resulting in the radical destabilisation of the customarily fixed central position.

Otherness, then, is likened to evil and the unearthly, but also to cultural, national and social difference. Otherness implies the existence of a central identifiable norm from which deviation occurs. This is something Spark self-consciously plays on through her evocation of all three types of otherness, and the blending and blurring of these through complex narrative structure. Consistent with a text through which the Gothic tradition resonates, no strict polarisation of good and evil is allowed as the centre and the margins merge and certainties are disturbingly undermined. Margaret, as delegate from the North, becomes the centre's abject other, the space upon which they can project fears and anxieties. Indeed, those of the metropolitan centre, bourgeois London, who first encounter Margaret, experience a strange sense of unease. This is evoked superficially by her appearance. Her antiquated dress, stunning red hair (associated with witchcraft in Scottish folklore), 'aggressive' (p.86), protruding teeth, and unfamiliar background all signal difference from comfortably acceptable norms of more familiar identity. Moreover, her attempted usurpation of the central position through her

marriage to William and the questionable motives behind this give her an aura of inimical mystery.

These fears are translated into national difference by the characters. Magnus, who himself ambiguously embodies all three types of otherness, ironically asserts this: ‘“Here in Scotland” said Magnus, “people are more capable of perpetrating good or evil than anywhere else. I don’t know why it is, but so it is.”’ (159) The most modern of the sophisticated moderns, businesswoman Chris Donovan and artist Hurley Reed who host the symposium, discuss Hilda’s reaction to Margaret and her son’s marriage thus:

“She told me that it was very spooky there in Fife at the wedding. Nothing you could put your finger on.”

“Oh, that’s Scotland. All the families are odd, very odd.” (87)

These and similar remarks are related in a neutral voice with no authorial comment, as if the novel were a straightforward middle-class comedy of manners. It is left to the reader to recognise Spark’s ironic viewpoint, and acknowledge the subtleties of her simultaneous adoption and rejection of conventional modes, and exploitation of literary convention in her ambiguous foregrounding of this aspect of ‘Scottishness’. This is reinforced by Chris and Hurley’s explanation of their chef Corby’s suspicions, which prove accurate, regarding the criminality of the other house staff: ‘“Of course Mauritius still has a very primitive element, you know. Their witchcraft. They sense things.”’ (179) The same uncoloured tone pervades, but the outlandishness of the claims alerts the reader to the pastiche. By constructing a definable abject other, a symbolic Orientalised embodiment or ‘monster’¹⁵, upon which they can project the allegedly more primitive and undesirable aspects of the self (anything, like Margaret’s ‘very old’ philosophy of *les autres* that cannot be accommodated by modernity), they exhibit their own identity as a stable definite. Scottish and Mauritian “natives” are polarised into one, ostensibly inferior, opposite group and this certainty potentially provides safety. In Sandy Stranger’s famous words with reference to Calvinism in Spark’s earlier novel, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), the abject other provides ‘something to react against’.¹⁶ This is not a paradigm culturally specific to Scotland, or to the later twentieth century. It has a universal resonance. The idea that these primitives are essential to the centre’s identity is a notion aptly captured by C.P. Cavafy in his 1904 poem ‘Waiting for the Barbarians’:

And some of our men just in from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.
Now what’s going to happen to us without barbarians?

They were, those people, a kind of solution.’¹⁷

Indeed, as Cavafy highlights, the centre often maintains a dynamic relationship with its other: paradoxically, each depends upon the other. Kristeva describes this reciprocity in relation to abjection thus: ‘And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master.’¹⁸ She goes on to explain this apparently contradictory aspect of abjection, at once repulsive and substantive, saying:

If it is true that the abject simultaneously beseeches and pulverises the subject, one can understand that it is experienced at the peak of its strength when that subject, weary of fruitless attempts to identify with something on the outside, finds the impossible within; when it finds that the impossible constitutes its very *being*, that is none other than the abject.¹⁹

The subject is both defined and deconstructed by its abject, and this accurately theorises Margaret’s ambivalent relationship with the centre and in turn the centre’s ambivalent other. Evil proves to be both external and internal, when we discover that the real threat to security takes the form of a group of criminals from within bourgeois London, who have carried out a number of burglaries. This group is responsible – we are shown only at the end – for the murder of Hilda Damien, and they include some of the house staff of the symposium delegates. At one point during a dinner party after Brian Suzy has been burgled by the same group, Annabel Treece conjectures upon their motives:

‘Or maybe’ she says, ‘they are history blocked.’

This puzzles Brian Suzy. Annabel [...] has evolved a theory that people are psychologically of a certain era. ‘Some people’, she now informs Brian, ‘are eighteenth century, some fifteenth, some third century, some twentieth. All practising psychiatrists should be students of history. Most patients are blocked’, she says, ‘in their historical era and cannot cope with the claims and habits of our century.’

‘The people who broke into my house must belong to the Neanderthal era,’ says Brian. (16/17)

Yet these ‘Neanderthals’ prove to be far less distant than Brian Suzy believes, or indeed hopes. Like the people of the North, they are perceived as operating at an earlier historical stage than those of the advanced centre, when in reality they constitute part of that centre. The abject is portrayed here ‘at the peak of its strength’, at the point of realisation and forced recognition of the other within by the subject, foregrounding the fundamentally subversive nature of the text.

The abject is also 'what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.'²⁰ If this abject malignance is within as well as without then the Northern Other is also the other of the central ego, projected and made tangible. If borders are transgressed and binaries elided then certainties are wholly obscured, identity is disturbingly no longer so easy to defend and the subject becomes decentred. Margaret's intrusion into the centre, motivated by malicious and perhaps unearthly intent, proves an impotent threat when she is pre-empted and outdone by the evil already existent within the centre.

The Orientalist tradition of portraying the North as the locus of superstition, mysticism and primitivism is as old as Scottish literature itself, although as we have seen it is consolidated after the Union and the Highland-focussed Jacobite rebellions. The significance or value of the 'other' exoticised location as wilderness increases following the growth of cities in the nineteenth-century.²¹ This partly endorses the North as the location of exotic transgressions, but it also partly fosters the myth of nostalgic ever-present stasis, which conveniently chimes with the Celtic idea of Heaven – Tir Nan Og – the land of the ever young, which resonates through *Peter Pan to Brigadoon*, but also redemptively and seriously in Margaret Elphinstone's 2002 novel, *Hy Brasil*, and in the recent film about Barrie's life, *Finding Neverland* (2004).²²

Margaret's initial apparent opposition to the sophisticated urban centre echoes Scotland's general perceived otherness, since the eighteenth century, within Britain. This is a tradition of which Spark is clearly and playfully aware, as is, moreover, the conventional national tale. As discussed in chapter one, the national tale in the nineteenth century was exemplified by Susan Ferrier's *Marriage*, altered but still subscribed to in Scott's *Waverley* and savagely subverted in Hogg's *Perils of Woman*. The form involves a contemporary journey through the nation, to the fringes and back, which reveals deep divisions. Traditionally, resolution comes in the form of marriage between two people from opposite sides of the divide. Spark subverts this by means of the novel's complex structure, which discloses the marriage of Northern Margaret and Southern William and its suspect nature some time prior to the conclusion. It is thus implied that resolution will be far from happy and neat. The journeys between centre and margin, mainly undertaken by Margaret and Hilda, have, as Hasler says of Hogg's novel, 'no regenerative dimension, but mirror and engender at best comic confusion, at worst tragedy and trauma.'²³ North and South ultimately prove negatively cognate from the outset, and so a union provides no conciliatory conclusion.

The North is also constructed as other through its association with madness. Magnus is 'decidedly mad' (143), but on the other hand 'it was only his overwhelming fits of wild and savage mania, lasting sometimes for as much as three weeks, even with the pills, that distinguished him from a normal Scottish eccentric and made necessary his permanence in hospital'. (144) Eccentricity, this implies, is a 'normal' state in Scotland, as reinforced by Hurley Reed's claim that 'all the families are odd, very odd' (87): the North, like madness, exists outwith the rational realms and the usual rules do not apply.

Michel Foucault's discussion of *The Order of Things* echoes the qualities of Kristeva's ambiguous abjection when he argues that:

The history of madness would be the history of the Other – of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcise the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness).²⁴

Indeed, this accurately describes the treatment of those perceived to be other in the novel. Mad Magnus is literally both excluded and shut away, safely incarcerated as he is in a mental institution. Meanwhile Margaret is mentally excluded. She is viewed as psychologically unsound and different by the friends and acquaintances of her husband, who contemplate doubts about her that they do not act upon, and simultaneously shut her away in their institution of dinner parties and intellectual conversations, as if to enclose her in something familiar would make this dangerous woman safe.

Magnus, however, ambiguously provides an amplified example of this particular trait of Scottishness. He carefully cultivates his otherness through eclectic and extravagant dress and behaviour: 'dressed, for instance, in a bright blue Harris tweed coat and bright brown Harris tweed trousers, and, as it might be, a purple tie'. (141) He also ostensibly possesses the ability to control his dubious mental illness. We are told that 'there was no doubt that Magnus's capacity for arranging his own life was formidable' (144), and that 'many of his contemporaries were convinced there was nothing much wrong with Magnus'. (145) To be considered insane and other provides a degree of freedom not available to the centre. Just so, despite being constructed and excluded, and provided you are within its jurisdiction, Northern-ness has its liberating qualities that the repressed and decorous South prohibits. Again Manlove's comment on Elphinstone's fiction can be applied: 'it is the object of several of these stories to show those sophisticated people being variously confronted by the primitive, the mysterious

and the suppressed'.²⁵ As a result of this freedom, it may well be Magnus, and not Margaret, who is the malignant factor in the drama being played out. Madness provides him with an alibi for some of his more sinister comments and actions. He regularly appears to possess the ability to know that which he should or could not. For example, when Margaret is a child her schoolteacher disappears, one in a long line of unexplained incidents surrounding Margaret. Magnus talks about the teacher in the past tense as if he knows she is dead. (139) He, like Margaret, may not be all he seems.

Further, this is reinforced by Magnus's invocation of the otherworldly. He refers frequently to the Ballads and discusses 'hypnotism' and 'witchcraft' (108), a possible reference to his implied involvement in the murder of his mother carried out by an escaped patient normally resident in the same hospital as him. The supernatural acts as a further way of refracting reality in the novel, providing a state similar to madness where transgression is readily possible. Margaret's potentially paranormal abilities, implied more strongly than Magnus's, are also ironically equated with her Scottishness. We are told that: 'there was absolutely no link of any rational, physical or psychological nature between Margaret's personal activities and what went on around her.' (142) Yet the text suggests, through its repeated appeals to folklore, that there may be other kinds of link. After all, as Magnus maliciously and accusatorily states, ' "Chronology is not causality." ' (122)

Taking her cue from Magnus, Margaret also quotes passages from what Child designated the 'magical and marvellous' Ballads²⁶, and these are intertextually employed throughout. The very names William and Margaret are amongst the most common for Ballad protagonists, and Margaret is often presented in green dress, a motif associated with the fairy world or even the diabolic. Incremental repetition complements the convoluted structure while a sparse Ballad-like narrative prevents intrusive emotional or moral comment from the narrator, such as when we are casually told, close to the beginning, of Hilda's death:

"Your mother's coming in after dinner", says Chris. "I spoke to her on the phone this afternoon. She said she'd look in after dinner."

"Good."

But Hilda Damien will not come in after dinner. She is dying, now, as they speak. (45)

This barren, matter-of-fact style, which often heightens the irony of the outlandish statements related through it, makes the revelations it articulates all the more disturbing. It also often produces humour, the type of humour that Norman MacCaig recognises in

his poem 'Space Travel' (1968), with the astute phrase 'the homicidal hilarity of a laugh in a Ballad.' The disparity between voice and subject matter emphasises the horrific nature of the event, a technique Spark uses analogously in her 1956 novel, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye*.²⁷ *The Ballad* also features an uncanny Scottish stranger who attempts assimilation into a small and enclosed world within London, governed by its own strict codes and customs, for his own malicious purposes. Like Margaret, he is rejected due to his otherness, and his encounter with the centre equally upsets the tenuously held equilibrium, providing the potential for change.

Elsewhere, Magnus quotes a passage from the Ballad 'The Demon Lover' with reference to Margaret:

O where hae ye been, my long, long love,
 These seven long years and more? –
 O I'm come to seek my former vows,
 That ye promised me before. (140)

Here, the dead husband of a re-married wife returns to reclaim her and carry her off to Hell. Like the gate-like lines of Balladry²⁸, these passages provide access to the otherworld, the suggestion of which in turn casts supernatural shadows over the events in the novel. Just so, Margaret enacts the part of William's demon lover, hoping through their union to have a deadly effect on his mother with the ultimate goal of wealth.

The implications of her physical appearance, such as her red hair and physical abnormality in the form of her teeth, and her recurring proximity to inexplicable death, are witch-like. Historically, witches were thought to be in league with the Devil, often forming a sexual relationship with him, and Margaret's conception of *les autres* as a revival of something 'very old' is linked to these ancient and primitive notions. What makes this also 'very new' is its application to a modern context; the eruption of the ancient into modern sophisticated society, exposing that sophistication to interrogation. Margaret Elphinstone traces a tradition of these anachronistic 'dangerous women' throughout Scottish literature:

In twentieth-century writing she may sometimes seem to align herself with a feminist perspective, but she refuses to become quite ideologically sound. She is too sinister for that. She has appeared since the ballads as the daughter of the otherworld, with all the danger and glamour that that implies [...] with the other world open to her, she becomes more than subversive, she is perilous, and perhaps, in terms of accepted moralities, downright evil. She has a long and questionable history.²⁹

Margaret initially appears subversive in terms of her transgression of boundaries, her attempted usurpation of the centre and the disregard for realism displayed by the evocation of the unearthly around her. Yet in Spark's tale the dangerous woman is not allowed to be as threatening, or indeed as other, as she'd like to be; Spark subverts the tradition outlined by Elphinstone, revising even the already subversive. Thus, when directed at her mother-in-law, Margaret's 'evil eye' is outdone by a perfectly earthly and very real evil in the form of the organised gang linked to the house staff of bourgeois London. In a shocking episode where the detached style amplifies the horror, they murder Hilda almost casually. In this abject moment, the subject is simultaneously defined and deconstructed as the other manifests itself within as a constituent of the centre. This throws central certitude into question, evoking uneasiness and undermining assurance. The North as margin and the South as centre are simultaneously questioned; nothing is sacred in this revisionist interrogatory tale.

Indeed, any single authoritative interpretation is appropriately undermined in a text where the unhinging of certainties is a primary theme, and the truth is purposely as elusive as the nature of the theoretically over-determined 'other' itself. Conclusive evidence is never provided as to whether Margaret is paranormally evil or just, despite defeat at the end, exceptionally clever and manipulative. Meanwhile Magnus may be truly mad or may only present himself thus to disguise his own potentially unearthly, evil leanings. Yet the techniques employed to evoke the potentially preternatural and to construct the uncanny Scots as other are conventional to the point of absurdity. The extreme Gothic exaggeration of supernatural motifs, Margaret's red hair, green dress, her very name, and frequent quotations from the Ballads, indicate the acute irony behind the uncoloured narrative voice and heighten the ambiguity surrounding such events: hyperbole is intentionally unconvincing. Alan Freeman identifies this ironic treatment of excess when he argues that: '*Symposium* plays with the cultural artefacts by which collective identity in [Scotland] is forged, manipulated, trivialised, shaped and misshaped.'³⁰ Scotland is 'spooky' (87) and otherworldly, but Spark evades being trapped by caricature. She simultaneously adopts and rejects conventional modes, denying motifs such as 'the journey north' their predictability. Initially promising to be a highly malignant force, the supernatural in the novel proves ultimately impotent, outdone by a force most worldly and 'real', and rooted in the south: the commercial reality of burglary and organised crime. The myth of the north is deconstructed.

Black Marsden

Similarly, in Wilson Harris's *Black Marsden*, conventional constructions of Scottishness, this time specifically the Highlands, are denied any predictability and myths are subsequently questioned. A similar supernatural/psychological tension resonates through *Black Marsden* and *Symposium*, and a comparable simultaneous adoption and rejection of convention is apparent, evolving and updating the traits of Scottish fiction. As Alan Riach says of Harris, 'his departures from the more predictable conventions of Scottish literature are as radical as those of Muriel Spark, with whom his writing shares a certain quality of ambivalent opacity.'³¹ Like Spark, Harris is concerned with examining untruths by exaggerating them and inviting interrogation and anatomisation, but unlike Spark, he reconstructs identity into something more plural and positive. Following the purgation of myths what is left behind is the potential for regeneration, whereas in Spark's novel, identity is left a skeleton, scoured clean of its previous falsity. Their differing positions help explain their divergent stances. Spark's position rests upon her status as a 'major Scottish novelist', fully canonised and labelled both within Scottish and English literature. Meanwhile Harris is an external observer, who despite being regarded as canonical in the field of postcolonial literature, is an 'other' himself in this context, as a Guyanese-born writer, now living in England, and writing in this one instance specifically about Scotland. Spark must take a harder line to ensure full questioning of something she herself is part of and therefore may be partial to, while Harris's more distanced perspective allows him to construct different capacities in language and narrative form, to illustrate the remaining potential for regeneration. He himself admits that his variegated background 'has assisted me to occupy a conscientious place at the margins (if I may so put it) of the prevailing cultural and political vested interests'³², and thus to recognise the dominance of certain discourses at the expense of others. Wilson Harris may well be unfamiliar to readers of Scottish literature and of Spark. Yet as a postcolonial writer he offers an insight analogous to Spark's distance (or exile) from Scotland.

In *Black Marsden*, the defamiliarised otherworldly or 'other'-worldly death-space of 'Namless' that central protagonist Clive Goodrich visits in a highly ambiguous episode, is a hybrid landscape, and the reader is uncertain whether it is a town, a geographical region or a mapped territory. It seems to encompass global features, including those of the Scottish Highlands:

Now all of a sudden, as if with a wave of a wand, Goodrich was struck by a fantastic assembly of features – to which he already possessed a prelude on the rickety road or ribbon of sea across which Knife drove – features which may have been plucked from the loneliest reaches of the Highlands of Scotland like transplanted snow from the Cairn Gorms to the Cordillera Real in the Bolivian-Peruvian Andes which reach to Lake Titicaca on one hand, but on the other descend phenomenally to the Amazon basin. Such a spectre in which blister turns cool, ice beckons to fire, snow to rainforest was a family tree of contrasting elements. (72)

Goodrich journeys North from his home of Edinburgh towards Namless, and yet the landscape resembles not only that which lies to the North, but also a collage of South American features, a ‘mosaic overlapping features of [...] original heartlands.’ (72) The effect of this Highland hybridisation is twofold, and Alan Riach describes it thus:

By interleaving images of both, Harris suggests a vivid cultural affinity and a sense beyond that of the whole human community. He refuses the self-righteous indignation which would arise from a sense of unitary identity. He accepts, and asks his reader to accept, a global theatre where the actors take more than one part, where roles change and the bias towards the absolute has been corrected.³³

Hybridisation succeeds in defamiliarising and repudiating romantic images of lonely glens and snow-peaked mountains, but also in localising the exotic. New perspectives on both landscapes are provided and the restrictions encoded within certain settings are denied their predictability. A plurality of potentials for the identities inherently associated with familiar geographies are evoked, as nationality becomes less important than shared humanity, and actors as well as scenes take on multiple roles and meanings, ‘on the shores of Scotland and around the globe.’ (60) John Berger discusses the perceived link between person and place in relation to what he refers to as a landscape’s ‘address’. He states: ‘By “address” I mean what a given landscape addresses to the indigenous imagination [...] consisting of the way a landscape’s “character” determines the imagination of those born there.’³⁴ Harris opens out this questionable notion, conventional in much Scottish literature particularly of the early twentieth century Scottish Renaissance³⁵, that there must needs be some metaphysical link between communities and the land they inhabit. He demonstrates that such a dictation of identity can be restrictive through the fact that its expansion in the novel into an international context proves liberating and stimulating, for example in the way that South American and Scottish landscapes, as well as those who inhabit these lands, contrast but also coincide. Goodrich returns from his journey to Namless a transformed and autonomous

individual, as symbolised by the new and bright clothes he then buys, which after changing into, 'he made his way into the hall with a sensation of the swirling currents of life come to a controlled head in him at last.' (107)

Concurrently, the eponymous Black Marsden himself reinforces the hybridity of land embodied in character. The ambiguous figure of Dr. Marsden appears suddenly in Goodrich's life, and may be a supernatural being or a symptom of 'psychological trauma. The first remarkably evocative and intriguing sentence of the novel describes how Goodrich initially discovers Marsden: 'I came upon him in a corner of the ruined Dunfermline Abbey of Fife like a curious frozen bundle that may have been blown across seas and landscapes to lodge here at my feet.' (11) Again, as in *Symposium*, Fife is the 'spooky' place, a Northeastern extremity of otherness compared to the centre, and the initial location of this potentially otherworldly agent. Yet Marsden goes on to become more comfortable than even Goodrich in the cultured centrality of Edinburgh, directing a play at the Festival and surrounding himself with his equally ambiguous and sophisticated associates, all musicians and performers.

Concomitant with his recurrent associations with the plural Namless, Marsden is also like something 'blown across seas and landscapes', something exotic 'lodged here', or localised. Towards the end of the novel this is reinforced with Goodrich's observation that 'Marsden's complexion seemed a shade darker this morning, half-Oriental, half-Celtic.' (100) He is other but also self. Berger goes on to argue that: 'the address of western Ireland or Scotland is tidal, recurring, ghost-filled. (This is why it makes sense to talk of a Celtic landscape.)'³⁶ He implies that just as people assume their personalities from their surroundings, so too does landscape gain characteristics from its inhabitants. Marsden's characteristics, however, are not dictated by his location. They are a collage of recognisable possibilities, of fixed identities that break and reform. This is appropriate for a being who, Goodrich tells us in the opening line of the novel, 'may have been blown across seas and landscapes to lodge here at my feet.' (11) He is half-Celtic, and may well be ghostly, a 'diabolic' (100) agent from the underworld of Namless, but any notion of a direct link is upset by the extreme ambivalence surrounding his exact origins, which is maintained to the last. He also looks, one morning, 'half-Oriental', and as we have seen this term is wrought with connotations of falsely constructed identities, Orientalised half-truths and un-truths, to the extent that it connotes only a fiction and blots out indigenous identity for both other and centre. As Said states, 'like any set of durable ideas, Orientalist notions influenced the people who were called Orientals as well as those called Occidental, European, or Western; in short,

Orientalism is better grasped as a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought'.³⁷ Authenticity does not exist, as even those peoples whose identity has been constructed will begin to subscribe to the all-pervasive construct, resulting, Said argues, on externally *and* internally imposed limitations on imaginative possibilities. Marsden may be supernatural being or clever, cruel and manipulative man consciously adopting and playing upon a constructed identity; but his origins, like his personality, remain consistently undisclosed whether performed upon an Edinburgh or 'other' stage.

Namless is inhabited by 'diverse peoples' (72), but one specific group consists of 'Scottish refugees who came to Namless in the eighteenth century to escape Butcher Cumberland'. (93) The evocation here of the Jacobite risings and the violent aftermath of Culloden is an example of what the narrator elsewhere terms 'an ancient spectre (which) drew one closer to the enigma of modern times'. (37) The haunting past returns tangibly with the presence of a ghostly 'nameless piper' in a remarkably poignant and evocative episode:

Night was crystal clear, wild and beautiful with stars [...] As he spoke a distant piping music rose from across the Basin of Namless. Goodrich felt his hair stand on end at the extraordinary plaintive lament associated with a nameless piper who had played it in order to warn his master of a threatened ambush knowing that with each note his life was growing forfeit. He was prisoner in enemy hands. The piper's master Coll Ciotach (left-handed Coll) hearing the music in time turned back and saved his life. The Gaelic words associated with the tune were:

*Cholla mo run, seachain an Dùn.
Cholla mo ghaol, seachain an Caol;
Tha mise an laimh, tha mise an laimh.*

Translated into English this runs:

*Coll my dear, avoid the Fort.
Coll my beloved, avoid the Narrows;
I am in their hands, I am in their hands.*

Knife pricked up his ears as the strange fire music threaded its way into the stars. Then suddenly there was silence, an abrupt eclipse or silence. The piper had been seized by the enemy, his fingers were severed and he was killed on the spot. (92)³⁸

With a skilful shift in predictable narrative movement, an historical incident from eighteenth-century Scotland is translated into the present day, inserted into an ambiguous and variegated territory. Knife is Goodrich's ambivalent guide through Namless, initially appearing trustworthy. Goodrich recognises the pipe tune as a warning concerning the annihilating possibilities of continuing his journey into Namless, or death, but Knife, who also exists as one of Marsden's 'attractive demons'

in Edinburgh, attempts to convince him that 'it's an agreed signal from the guerrillas in Namless that we are safe tonight and may take the road tomorrow through the narrow pass in the mountains [...] the *Piper's Warning* has been converted into its opposite role by the present folk in the hills'. (93) Goodrich refuses to accept this explanation, however, learning to distrust Knife, and thus indirectly also Marsden and the rest of his followers.

The hackneyed motif of the Highland piper, a couthy cultural signifier of tradition and locality, is distorted into something much more disturbing. It is as if a familiar figure suddenly becomes inimical or unreliable. The failed Jacobite Rebellions, one element in 'a centuries-old pattern of uprising followed by repression' (72/3) in Namless and the Highlands alike, were as we have seen the stimulus for a wide body of literature, including Hogg's subversive *Perils of Woman*, and have consequently become a pivotal myth in Scotland. Murray Pittock states of this legacy that: 'The lustre of depoliticised sentiment casts a glow over political defeat symbolised by images torn out of history to grace the niches of romantic veneration and its commercial pastiche.'³⁹ Pittock interestingly adopts his own romanticised discourse to describe and critique this romanticism of history, as if it is impossible to escape such an all-pervasive convention when discussing Scottish history.

Yet Harris, like Hogg before him, succeeds in escaping the entrapments of this particular myth. Roland Barthes theorises the concept of the myth as 'a system of communication [...] a message [...] with a type of social usage which is added to pure matter'⁴⁰, a signifier or collection of signifiers which have their own direct meaning, but at the same time serve an idea with secondary meanings. Barthes goes on to argue, however, that:

In actual fact, the knowledge contained in a mythical concept is confused, made of yielding, shapeless associations. One must firmly stress this open character of the concept; it is not at all an abstract, purified essence; it is a formless, unstable, nebulous condensation, whose unity and coherence are above all due to its function [...] Myth is a value, truth is no guarantee for it.⁴¹

Harris concurs that myth is empty and malleable, a concept not necessarily fortified by absolute truth. He describes how the ancient pipe tune meant one thing to the Highlanders after Culloden, but now means something entirely different for both Knife and Goodrich alike; for Knife a potential way of deceiving Goodrich and luring him towards death, but for Goodrich a warning catalysing the 'illumination [that...] had he

gone forward [...he] would have literally collapsed into coming face to face with the Nameless Other in a death for which he was unprepared'. (98) Goodrich is not yet ready to journey as far North as the undiscovered country, the psychological or supernatural afterlife that this represents, and through acknowledging this he learns an acute appreciation of life and its potentialities.

Yet mythology is also played on in the novel, as the Jacobite uprisings as myth are self-consciously invoked through carefully chosen words and images, such as the piper, the use of Gaelic, and the deserted land inhabited by 'a hidden population'. (78) The fact that these elements of a violent past are excessively present during Goodrich's contemporary journey pastiches the weight of history such mythologised legacies encumber the Highlands with. Death and namelessness – an anonymous history – suspend Namless in stasis, locating it outwith the boundaries of conventional time and preventing progression. This is the ambiguity of kitsch, harnessed here by Harris: it can signify cultural impotence and stagnation, but can also, as Ben Okri states as we have seen in chapter one, 'function as continual declaration and resistance.'⁴² The symbols evoked in Namless – the bagpipes, Gaelic, and Highland dress – were outlawed during the 1745 rebellion, and this adds extra resonance to their presence here. They attain a different symbolic status, no longer referring to something other and abstract, but rather becoming symbols of themselves, heightened and dangerous. Goodrich ultimately rejects death after receiving the far from empty warning from the piper, a signifier which now carries new and enriched meanings for the individual involving a progression away from stagnant inertia and dissolution in death towards coherence and autonomy of identity in life, however challenging that life might be. Goodrich leaves behind his dubious past in Namless and now stands upon 'a post-hypnotic threshold to life' (100) and the future with the potential for transformation, which still contains the promise of new histories. Thus paradigmatically, all hauntings and repressive histories are rejected.

Additionally, Harris locates the doorway to this Highland underworld of death and history in the rational centre, Edinburgh. Specifically, the doorway is the Dean Bridge, where 'many a poor devil had taken his life [...] leapt from this bridge; leapt from Sky into Creek, sudden pouring light into inexplicable darkness; suspended pawn in the workshop of the gods'. (63/4) Goodrich steps off the bridge and is almost hit by a car, his brush with death inspiring him to revisit Namless by revising an account of an earlier visit recorded in his diary. Through this near-fatal episode the possibilities of death are exposed for Goodrich, and just as he then 'needed to revisualise (and revise)

his journey across Namless' (70), so too does Harris revisualise and revise, and in turn evoke and revoke literary constructions of the Highlands. Furthermore, when standing on the bridge, Goodrich hears 'the unearthly sound of bagpipes' from below (67), a prefiguration of the ghostly piper in Namless. The otherworldly and the past, then, are no longer restricted to the North, to the margins, but are equally present in the contemporary Southern centre. In a discussion of *Black Marsden*, Harris states that:

The intention, in part, is to bring into play a certain *rapport* or architectonic relationship between northern and southern cultures through the gateway of the Dean Bridge as given appearance, now modified by a density of roots born of subjective dialogue with the values of the past written into time and place.⁴³

Here he refers to the use of an 'Edinburgh stage' upon which to play out the negotiation of Northern extremity alongside his hybridisation technique involving the introduction of global features into the local, 'a density of roots'. The past, conventionally constructed as homogeneous and containing an abstract and static purity absent from fluid immediacy, exists in dialogue with an unstable and changeable present and is thus interrogated as mythologised untruth. 'Otherness', as Alan Riach argues, is shown to be 'part and parcel of the self'.⁴⁴ The city is no longer the rational 'real' as opposed to a Northern primitive and mythical unreality, and if Scotland no longer possesses an easily identifiable unitary, therefore restrictive, identity firmly distinct from other imagined communities, it can no longer be seen as isolated from these communities. Identity is then a matter of dialogue rather than homogeneity.

Lanark

Conversely, in his 1981 novel *Lanark*, Alasdair Gray presents characters – as well as land – in both realist and fantastic worlds as static, trapped in the past and unresponsive to change. The gateway to his initial otherworld is located in the North rather than the centre. Yet, in a twist on Harris's subversive positioning, the actual otherworld, or afterlife, appears as a grotesque translation or defamiliarisation of the urban centre, far removed from the conventional rural wilderness of the North. Towards the end of the realist Glasgow narrative in book two, central protagonist Duncan Thaw travels North to the Highlands seemingly searching for something. This may be 'the way out' promised by the mouth in the fantastic city Unthank in book three – which the reader encounters before book two – that swallows Lanark down into the Institute. Yet in Glasgow Thaw seeks a way out of the internal wilderness he has created for himself,

projected externally by Lanark after death as the sunless and desolate, although clearly urban and central, Unthank. As Nastler tells Lanark: 'You are Thaw with the neurotic imagination trimmed off and built into the furniture of the world you occupy.' (493)

Thaw's journey is prefigured by his previous trips to the Highlands, first when he and his family relocate to the North during the Second World War, and later when holidaying as a teenager. It is during this visit that Thaw suffers severe periods of psychosomatic illness and mental deterioration, and at two points direct references are made to words said to Lanark during his second afterlife in book four by characters in the Institute. The North again initially seems to be the gateway to the underworld, triggering semiotic episodes. Thaw hears voices, one saying: ' "...ferns and grass what's wonderful about grass..."' (181) This is Rima's exact complaint to Lanark in the intercalendrical zone. (381) He later states: ' "Men are pies that bake and eat themselves, and the recipe is hate"' (188), which echoes Monsignor Noakes' comment to Lanark on the Institute-wide practice of eating the dead, encountered before Thaw's comments due to the non-chronological ordering of the book: ' "Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself and the recipe is separation."' (101) Yet the notion of geographic location as trigger is undermined by suggestions in the novel of a purely psychological interpretation of these outbreaks, such as when we are told that the first episode is 'a murmuring in his [Thaw's] own head [...] almost heard', and when we witness that the second reference coincides with a further acute deterioration in his physical and mental health. The wilderness, or other, is internal, regardless of physical context. The ambiguity that a possible psychological interpretation evokes prohibits any clear conclusions about the North in the novel, as reinforced by the metropolitan nature of the 'other' world or afterlife that the Highland setting superficially provides access to.

When Thaw sets out on his final northwards quest, the narrator tells us that he 'thought of going to London, of sliding down the globe into the cluttered and peopled south, but at the station the needle of his mental compass swung completely and pointed to the northern firths and mountains'. (351) It is in this more conventional wilderness of rocky coastline and heathery moors somewhere northwest of Fort William that Thaw finds his way out via an ambiguous suicide when he drowns himself, during which he experiences 'not pain, but annihilating sweetness'. (354) Like the abject, which 'beseeches and pulverises the subject'⁴⁵, death is simultaneously attractive and repulsive, destructive and formative, for Thaw. This journey, as with the other 'national tale'-style journeys that he makes to the margins, and as comparable to those made by the characters of Hogg's and Spark's novels, has 'no regenerative dimension'.⁴⁶ Thaw's

death transforms him into something different, but change here is not necessarily progress. The suicide is ambiguous as it is never conclusively revealed whether Thaw actually kills himself and enters into a hellish afterlife in Unthank and the Institute, or whether he has some sort of mental breakdown which results in an alteration of his perceptions of his world, hence the defamiliarised but still recognisable setting in books three and four. In this reading, the transformed descriptions articulated by the narrative voice would seem to reflect his corrupted state of mind. In the Prologue, which precedes book one but succeeds book three, the oracle, who also relates Thaw's story to Lanark as an account of his previous life, tells Lanark of his own unstable past life. At one point the oracle states:

I wanted madness to blot out the memories with the strong tones and colours of a delusion, however monstrous. I had a romantic notion that madness was an exit from unbearable existence. But madness is like cancer or bronchitis, not everyone is capable of it [...] Death is the only dependable exit. (116)

This prefigures Thaw's attempted exit, but death for him proves far from dependable. Even if his 'death' is nothing more than a transformation brought about by the unhinging of mental certainties, proving that he is more than capable of delusion, then an exit still proves elusive. What Thaw escapes into in both worlds, through madness or death, is his own personal hell.

In folklore, water is traditionally a gateway to the otherworld⁴⁷, but the world which Thaw/Lanark enters after death or breakdown is far from 'other', representing many of the worst aspects of the world he occupied in life, the industrial nucleus of Scotland and the second city of the Empire, Glasgow. Death or madness is no longer the other against which life or sanity can be defined, firmly locatable away from the centre, but is all around as a metaphor for stasis, apathy and oblivion. David Punter discusses the motif of journeying within Scottish Gothic as 'journeys without result, journeys within the crypt, journeys within the unconscious'.⁴⁸ The geographic margins are now the margins of the mind, as otherness moves within.

The Wasp Factory

Iain Banks, however, initially maintains the conventional association subverted by Gray between the North, madness and death. Yet by using techniques similar to Harris's, involving exaggeration and pastiche, he undermines the convention and exposes it to interrogation. In his novel *The Crow Road* and the excellent yet quite

independent television production adapted by Bryan Elsley, death and the Highlands are almost synonymous and the gateways to an ambiguous supernaturalism. Meanwhile in *The Wasp Factory*, as in Spark's novel, Banks invokes the mythical North as the site of a potential primitive supernaturalism, which again may only be a symptom of the troubled state of mind of the perpetrator. Central protagonist and inventor of the wasp factory, Frank Cauldhame, adopts the persona of lord of the isle on his native island off the northeast coast of Scotland. Frank will be referred to as 'he', despite the concluding revelation of his actual biological sex, because his adopted gender identity remains consistently masculine; he believes he is 'he', and the pronoun would seem to have more to do with perceived and performed gender identity than with biology. Yet Banks is notorious throughout his work for playing games with, hyperbolising and subverting genre, as well as gender. As Cairns Craig puts it:

The expectations of readers are shaped by their awareness that what they are reading belongs to a particular literary game [...] Part of the bemusement that Banks's novels cause, even to his critical admirers, is that each novel plays a different game with the possibilities of genre, subverting the distinctions by which genres are defined and engaging in combinations – not to say copulations – of apparently incompatible genres.⁴⁹

The Wasp Factory – at once psychosomatic supernatural text, Bildungsroman set against the sympathetic background of the rugged northeast coast of Scotland, Gothic horror, and interrogation of gender performativity – is just such a game.

Through Frank's dubious first person perspective, its elusive nature both complementing and drawing from the novel's distorted genre delineation, the south is constructed as other and therefore the sight of barbarism and madness. Frank's northern location exists in extreme isolation even to the closest town and the mainland from which it is entirely separated during high tide, and acts as a fortress protecting him from his other. He says:

I don't need to travel or see foreign climes or know different people. I know who I am and I know my limitations. I restrict my horizons for my own good reasons; fear – oh, yes, I admit it [...] Also, I have the lesson of Eric. (136)

The lesson of Eric, Frank's elder brother, is interpreted by Frank as a paradigm for the malign influence of the outside world. Eric becomes the inevitable product of southernisation after he loses his mind in a particularly macabre episode in the novel.

He leaves home to study medicine in Glasgow, and whilst there volunteers in a hospital, working with badly deformed children, 'down in the guts of the hospital with human rejects' (139) in Frank's words. Frank also refers to the hospital as a 'ghoulish place' (140), the supernatural imagery reinforcing the link between madness and the unearthly.⁵⁰ One hot summer evening at work, while suffering from severe migraines, Eric notices something amiss with one of the children who must wear a metal plate over its underdeveloped skull to protect its brain:

What Eric saw when he lifted that plate up, what he saw with all that weight of human suffering above, with all that mighty spread of closed-in, heat-struck darkened city all around, what he saw with his own skull splitting, was a slowly writhing nest of fat maggots, swimming in their combined digestive juices as they consumed the brain of the child. (142)

In the weeks and months following this, Eric's aggressive and irrational behaviour results in his incarceration in a mental institution, and Frank's narrative traces Eric's escape and return to the island. Yet Frank is able to identify the cause of Eric's insanity as a specific moment occurring well before the horrific incident with the child:

Eric went away. Eric, with all his brightness, all his intelligence and sensitivity and promise, left the island and tried to make his way; chose a path and followed it. That path led to the destruction of most of what he was, changed him into a quite different person in whom the similarities to the sane young man he had been before only appeared obscene [...] So south he went [...] he came back, but he was changed. (136, 138)

Frank interprets Eric's journey south to university in the rational urban centre as the stimulant of his descent into madness.

Yet ironically it is Frank who displays behaviour that could be considered abnormal. He kills animals, and as we are led to believe occasionally people, for enjoyment, he creates his own religion around his eccentric, ritualised way of life, and he has constructed a large wasp-torturing machine in the attic of his family home that he genuinely believes can predict the future through the means by which the wasp dies. Meanwhile, he maintains that it is Eric who is mad and he who is sane: 'Eric was crazy all right, even if he was my brother. He was lucky to have somebody sane who still liked him.' (103) Through the perverted perspective the reader is given access to, it is he who appears psychologically unhinged. Yet his very name, Frank, underlines the sincerity of, and therefore lack of conscious control over, his warped beliefs. Like the character of Isis in Banks's novel dealing with a religious cult, *Whit* (1995), who is an

innocent abroad, able only to apply the distorted logic she has learned since birth to unfamiliar situations, Frank's perspective is childlike in its naive candidness. Yet his misdeeds are also versions, however grossly exaggerated, of the darker features the centre cares to gloss over, such as the sustenance of the 'human rejects' Eric formerly works with for the purposes of teaching and exhibition, a practice comparable to the 'cannibalism' of the institute in *Lanark* (discussed more fully in chapter four). Frank's norm becomes the abject other, that which must be rejected and expelled, but which may also subversively share identifiable features with the repressed aspects of the centre's self. The customary supposition of the opposite position is challenged in the act of reading, just as the abject 'does not cease challenging its master'.⁵¹

In addition, Eric is repeatedly described, as above, in a conventionally feminine way. His 'sensitivity' and 'delicacy' are in part blamed by Frank for his susceptibility to southernisation and/or madness. Frank states: 'I suspect that Eric was the victim of a self with just a little too much of the woman in it.' (148) He also relates how their father would dress Eric in girls' clothes during childhood, ironic given that Frank is biologically female, even if his gender identity remains male. The south, femininity and madness overlap and intertwine. If the south is feminine, by implication the north is thus masculine. Just so, Frank's territory, consisting of the island and surrounding area, has a specific 'address', Berger's term for 'the background of meaning which a landscape suggests'⁵², that is indeed masculine. Thom Nairn has commented on this aspect of the novel, saying: 'set in the North of Scotland, it focuses intensely on growing up in a society where machismo is paramount.'⁵³ With its conventional rugged surface of rocks, scrubby grass and dunes, extremes of weather, and the man-made additions of remnants of World War Two, including bunkers and even a bomb, the landscape addresses Frank's male identity, acting as a sympathetic background to the cultivation of his excessive masculinity. Following the revelation of his actual biological identity, Frank admits that: 'I decided [...] I – the unmanned – would out-man those around me, and so I became the killer, a small image of the ruthless soldier-hero almost all I've ever seen or read seems to pay strict homage to.' (183) It is ironic, then, that Frank is in fact female, and again 'nature' or essence and geographic origin are incongruous. Moreover, Frank implies that his contrived identity comes from the outside world, from 'all I've ever seen or read', and not from some essential connection with the land. Frank, then, inhabits a psychological landscape, and his true wilderness, like Thaw/*Lanark's*, is within. Northerness is coincidental to the self.

Connected to Frank's prior belief in his gender identity is his evocation of a religion of the self, which he firmly believes endows him with the preternatural ability of second sight. He ritualises his life as a means of desensitising himself to and normalising the often horrific and violent deeds he commits, justifying his actions as transcendently sanctioned. His religion comes complete with temple (the World War Two bunker), altar, omens and artefacts. These include the skull of Old Saul, the dog he has been told 'castrated' him when a child, family pictures and totemic 'sacrifice poles', incorporating the putrefying heads of ritually killed animals. He invests these symbols with a metaphysical power, claiming to be able to sense things through them. At one point he attempts to telepathically contact Eric via this power. Frank relates:

I knelt in the pungent darkness before the altar, head bowed. I thought of Eric [...] I leaned forward and put my right hand palm down on the top of the old dog's cranium, keeping my eyes closed. The candle was not long lit, and the bone was only warm [...] I felt my stomach clench itself involuntarily and a wave of what felt like fiery excitement swept up from it. Only acids and glands, I knew, but I felt it transport me, from one skull through another to another. Eric! I was getting through! I could feel him; feel the aching feet, the blistered soles, the quivering legs, the sweat-stuck grimy hands'. (125/6)

The reader can dismiss this episode straightforwardly as the delusions of a troubled mind, however sincerely related by the subjective first person voice. Yet Frank firmly believes in the potency of his 'supernatural' powers, and invests in them therefore. It is Frank's belief that is significant, as well as the probability that this belief will be questioned, along with myriad others, following his discovery of the Gothic family secret, that he is biologically she, and the unhinging of identity that occurs as a result. If the supernaturalism of the novel, including Frank's supposed quasi-spiritual connection with his habitat, is shown to consist of nothing more than the impotent signifiers of psychological ambiguity, then the conventional image of the North as otherworldly is derided.

Banks exposes this through exaggeration and ultimate rejection. Cairns Craig notes this when he states that:

The Wasp Factory is shocking precisely because it turns the conventions of Gothic fiction, which readers are used to treating as belonging in a purely imaginary realm, into the assumed realities of ordinary life in the North of Scotland.⁵⁴

The supernatural, primitivism bordering on the barbaric, madness and eccentric family relationships – often portrayed as characterising the Highlands as well as being traditional motifs in Gothic fiction – are Gothically exaggerated to the point of grotesquery in the novel. This excessiveness becomes part of the critique, as hyperbole undermines the possibility that such characteristics have a rooting in reality, and consigns them to the imaginary. Moreover, this is reinforced by the fact that the entire narrative is related in Frank's voice, unreliable to say the least. However, the novel's overall message is clear when Frank, concluding his narrative, muses that:

Our destination is the same in the end, but our journey, part chosen, part determined – is different for us all, and changes even as we live and grow. I thought one door had snicked shut behind me years ago; in fact I was still crawling about the face. *Now* the door closes, and my journey begins. (184)

Conventions and indoctrinated beliefs are restrictive and dogmatic. Freedom of identity comes when these are interrogated and undermined, or simply left behind. In the novel, the myth of the North, like the myth of constructed gender identity, is rejected and the potentialities for the self are optimistically proliferated. Frank's conclusion above is reminiscent of the feelings with which David Balfour begins his own journey north in Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886). Davie tells us, in the first line of the novel, 'I will begin the story of my adventures with a certain morning early in the month of June, the year of grace 1751, when I took the key for the last time out of the door of my father's house.' Questions of free will and predestination accumulate in both novels, and also the idea of what you take with you on such journeys. Both Davie and Frank must ultimately recognise but move towards abandoning their encumbering ancestries and inheritances.

The Crow Road

Similarly, in *The Crow Road* this weight of ancestry is apparent, and the traditional Highland associations are initially maintained only to be ultimately questioned. The opening paragraph of the novel, narrated by central protagonist Prentice McHoan, reads: 'It was the day my grandmother exploded. I sat in the crematorium, [...] and I reflected that it always seemed to be death that drew me back to Gallanach' (3), his Argyllshire hometown. Death generates the journey North, this time the death of his grandmother, the matriarchal and ambiguously supernatural Margot McHoan. Again, the supernatural, the Highlands, and death (all gateways to an 'other' world) are

correlated and exaggerated, and therefore exposed to potential interrogation. The use of the term 'crow road' itself is a symptom of simultaneous acceptance and rejection of convention. Its first meaning is signified by an archaic folk saying for death: 'away the Crow Road [...] It meant dying: being dead. "Aye, he's away the crow road", meant, "He's dead."' (126) Death is represented as a journey along the 'crow road' to some final but tangible destination. Yet the Crow Road is also the title of Prentice's Uncle Rory's pre-humus unfinished collection of writings, literarily sophisticated and eloquent, and also a bustling main street in Glasgow's cosmopolitan west end in close proximity to the university. It is when these meanings collide, involving the abject moment of distortion of boundaries entailing centre and other, that modern rational awareness and the associated perceptions of the North are deconstructed. As Manlove argues, the supernatural is evoked to depict 'sophisticated people being variously confronted by the primitive, the mysterious and the suppressed [...as a counteraction to] too much knowledge'.⁵⁵ Knowledge is interrogated, and the resultant ambiguity combined with a dubious supernaturalism destabilises certainties.

Just so, Frank's conviction in *The Wasp Factory* that he possesses a degree of second sight is echoed by Margot McHoan's belief in her ambiguous and unresolved ability in *The Crow Road*. When discussing the disappearance of Rory eight years previously, around which the narrative pivots, Margot tells Prentice, ' "I think he might be dead"', explaining that she bases this belief on her extra-sensory moles: ' "I can tell what's going on in this family by my moles. They itch when people are talking about me, or when something [...] remarkable is happening to the person."' Rory's melanomic representative, located on Margot's wrist, has emitted: ' "Not a sausage [...] for eight years, not a hint, not a sensation."' (12/13) Margot's conviction proves to be true when we discover towards the conclusion of the novel that Rory was indeed murdered eight years ago, but her supposedly paranormal ability to know this remains unexplained. The ambiguity is underlined by Prentice's narratorial comment: 'I stared at the dormant eruption with a sort of nervous respect, mingled with outright disbelief.' (13) His sophisticated modern self dictates disbelief, while the primitive, superstitious and suppressed element of his psyche cannot help but have a grudging respect for something that in times past would have been wholly accepted. Lucie Armitt has interpreted Grandma Margot's mysterious moles as a straightforward example of the twentieth-century literary phenomena of magic realism. She states:

This is a motif which would not be out of place in a Salman Rushdie novel and which is proven to be a correct gauge in the context of Uncle Rory's death [...] Magic realism is a disruptive, foreign, fantastic narrative style that fractures the flow of an otherwise seamlessly realist text [...] its etymology is one that looks to return to the real and reinvest realism with its own magic'.⁵⁶

Yet, firstly, the novel is far from 'otherwise seamlessly realist'. It is strewn with magic and potential ghosts in the form of haunting past memories represented as analepsis, and depicted through a carefully cultivated unfolding structure involving past and present scenes punctuated with dead Rory's writings, which appear regularly in chapters eight, ten and twelve. Secondly, magic realism leaves no room for hesitation or consternation regarding the supernatural; it requires belief and acceptance, something that neither Prentice nor the reader are prepared to give to Margot's perceived powers.

Additionally, Armitt ignores the distinctively Scottish and folkloric quality of Margot's ambiguous ability. Her moles exist in the realms of lore and superstition as witch-marks. Traditionally, these were the bodily indicators of the practice of witchcraft, much relied upon as evidence in the spate of witch trials in Scotland in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. They appeared, as Robert Kirk states, as 'a small mole, horny and brown-coloured', through which the devil or some familiar was supposedly to have suckled milk or blood.⁵⁷ Margot is witch-like in that she yields a degree of power, and like Magnus in *Symposium* performs the role of family guru whose wise yet ambiguous advice is often sought. Moreover, her personal moral code is somewhat unconventional for an elderly Highland lady. She smokes because, as she says herself, ' "I'm seventy-two years old now, and I don't give a damn" '(10), and talks about sex to her grandson: ' "The last time I had sex was on that back seat [...] Don't look so shocked, Prentice." ' (6) She is one of Elphinstone's dangerous women, refusing:

to become quite ideologically sound. She is too sinister for that. She has appeared since the ballads as the daughter of the otherworld, with all the danger and glamour that that implies [...] with the other world open to her, she becomes more than subversive, she is perilous, and perhaps, in terms of accepted moralities, downright evil. She has a long and questionable history.⁵⁸

Elphinstone's reference to the Ballads is important here. When Armitt argues that in contemporary literature, 'what we find in magic realism (particularly at the dark end of its spectrum where it meets the Gothic) is a double-edged frisson which oscillates

around the disturbing aspects of the everyday'⁵⁹, she could be describing the supernatural elements of the Ballads, which have existed orally in Scotland for centuries. The Ballads often feature the unexplained entry of something magical or even evil into a prosaic setting, and just so Margot brings an element of magic into the most commonplace context of a woman advising her grandson during a stroll. The sinister and subversive edge comes when we realise that what she is referring to is the mysterious and obscure death of her son.

This entire episode is not included in the 1996 television serialisation of *The Crow Road*, adapted from the novel by screenwriter Bryan Elsley. What takes its place, maintaining the presence of a psychosomatic supernaturalism concurrent with the spirit of the original text, is an equally ambiguous feature. The ghost of Rory himself regularly appears, always accompanied by a haunting strain of ethereal string music which increases the ambiguity of his presence: we the audience can see and hear him but none of the protagonists besides Prentice appear to. Rory makes visceral and gives voice to the pieces of his creative writing scattered throughout the novel, already themselves like a voice from beyond the grave. In an interview, Elsley justifies his metamorphosis of Rory's manuscripts into the actual but ambiguous ghost, thus:

Rory was a script response to a prose manifestation. I needed to keep Rory in the story and put him in a relationship with the central character [Prentice], because I realised that they almost never met in the book. I wanted to give them a chance to talk together. Also, because the book is in so many ways about ghosts, it was a short step to create one.⁶⁰

Rory only appears to Prentice to guide and direct him in his investigation, in a manner recalling the relationship between Emma and her father Ronnie Craven in *Edge of Darkness*, a fuller discussion of which is to be found in chapter four. Likewise, there is one incident where a straightforward psychological reading is not possible. Rory's eighth and final appearance occurs in the last episode, entitled 'Rory'. He talks to Prentice about what he has discovered during his investigations, and then makes to leave:

PRENTICE: Where are you going?

RORY: Up the crow road.

PRENTICE: She's not there any more Uncle Rory. She moved in with Gavin.

RORY: I know.

He then exits, leaving Prentice bewildered due to the fact that this exchange occurs before Prentice has concluded his investigations and before he knows for sure that Rory is dead. Prentice initially believes Rory is referring to the factual Crow Road in Glasgow where his girlfriend Janice used to live, but the ghost actually alludes to the supernatural crow road, the road to death and his final destination from which he will not return. If Rory is merely a psychological projection, why would he say this when Prentice does not yet possess the certain knowledge that Rory is 'away the crow road'? No easy answers are allowed, and the either/or tension is again maintained to the last.

Yet a significant and solid element of Rory the ghost's characterisation is the fact that, like Emma in *Edge of Darkness* and Savinien in *So I Am Glad*, he is not restricted to the North or to the rural, those environments which traditionally appear to operate at an earlier and more superstitious historical stage than the urban, but makes regular sojourns into the city. Moreover, he confronts not the elderly, conventionally Highland characters of the serial whose cultural mentality would be more suitable for ghostly visitation, but the young, university educated Prentice. Like Emma's and Savinien's earthly counterparts Craven and Jennifer, Prentice is one of Manlove's 'sophisticated people [...] confronted by the primitive, the mysterious and the suppressed'⁶¹, however ambiguous this force may be. Clad in black biker's leathers and accompanied by his habitual companions of helmet and cigarette, Rory is far removed from the purely metaphorical wraith-like and intangible spectres of many Scottish ghost stories, from Ossian to Ian Rankin.⁶² He eludes predictability.

One possible and indeed plausible interpretation of Rory and what he signifies is provided by the theory of the 'phantom', as formulated by psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Marie Torok.⁶³ The theory posits that ghosts and hauntings are possible signs or symptoms of the unwitting introjection by the subject of a family or ancestral secret. As Torok states: 'in general terms, the "phantom" is a formation in the dynamic unconscious that is found there not because of the subject's own repression but on account of a direct empathy with the unconscious or rejected psychic matter of a parental object.'⁶⁴ The afflicted individual is unwittingly compelled to repeat, act out or stage displaced representations of the repressed family secret, just as Prentice is inexplicably driven to discover what happened to his Uncle Rory regardless of the implications. The phantom 'gives rise to endless repetition and, more often than not, eludes rationalisation'.⁶⁵ In the series we witness Prentice promising Margot he will find Rory, but in the novel his hunger to know is given no starting point or reason, and often gets in the way of university work and relationships with others. The reason lies outwith

the narrative, as does the McHoan family secret that Fergus Urvill, Prentice's uncle through marriage to Fiona McHoan, murdered his wife and then Rory after Rory uncovered the initial murderous secret. They are one and the same thing, signified by the phantom made tangible in the spectral body of Rory, and inherited by Prentice as a disturbance in the collective generational psychology. Abraham discusses the 'unspeakable' nature of the secrets that past generations have taken with them to the grave, the fact that they remain buried and unresolved for so long adding to their potency and increasing the effects of the phantom.⁶⁶ It is only when the McHoan family secret, unspoken for so long, is articulated – uncovered and explained by Prentice – that Rory the phantom can and does depart. His final destination remains ambiguous – he may reach an actual afterlife that lies up the crow road, or alternatively return to Prentice's mind as the neutralised Lacanian 'other'. Either way, a form of resolution is finally achieved.

As a piece of the past made tangible in the present, Rory transgresses the boundaries of history. He disallows the notion that the passing of time marks progress and change for the better, and his return indicates – as formulated through the theory of the phantom – a degree of unfinished business with the future. Ian Duncan discusses this quality of the ghost in general, pointing out that:

The spectral persistence of ancient forms beyond the cessation of their life in social practice unsettles that linear, developmental unfolding which constitutes the progressive chronology of modern history [...] In the moment of the uncanny we read a dissolution of the temporal categories that sustain the identity of the modern, unitary subject. Just as the borders blur between past and present and future, so the developmental seams of an evolutionary formation come apart. The surface of the present is revealed as jagged with the fragments of archaic formations, not buried after all, whose meanings we no longer command.⁶⁷

Rory, Savinien and Emma, all in some way phantoms who return to resolve unfinished business, transgress boundaries and interrogate the certainty of superiority over the past that the present rests upon. Those sophisticated moderns who live solely in the present and future, believing themselves to have progressed from the primitive past, are forced to confront and re-evaluate their identities through contact with these 'ancient forms', in just the way the London socialites who encounter the archaic and ambiguously supernatural Margaret in *Symposium* must. The surface of the present is shown to be far from smooth, as modern rationality is deconstructed.

An uncanny history – a canny future

The journey North in these texts is characterised by temporality. History is evoked as uncanny, in the Freudian sense, involving a ‘factor of involuntary repetition [...] the idea of something fateful and inescapable.’⁶⁸ The North’s, and therefore the past’s, ability to transmutate and appear or return within the midst of the southern centre, or the present, is one such uncanny repetition. This interrogation of the conventional view of history as linear progress is reinforced in a number of ways. Wilson Harris argues that: ‘There are two kinds of relationship to the past – one which *derives* from the past, and one which is profound *dialogue* with the past (one which asks pertinent questions of the past).’⁶⁹ All these texts articulate such a dialogue. While the latter description is true of Wilson Harris’s writing technique itself, as a description of narrative structuring and the appearance of the potentially dead as emissaries from the past, it is accurate for each of the texts examined in this chapter. Unconventional and non-linear structures combine with the presence of the ambiguous anachronistic beings to unsettle the forward progression of time and undermine the allegedly advanced status of specific protagonists. Analepsis and prolepsis are used in *Symposium* to inform the reader of what will happen and what has already happened, so that past, present and future exist on the same axis. *The Crow Road* similarly flashes back to fill in the narrative gaps and unsettle linearity. *So I Am Glad* and *The Wasp Factory* depict narratives related partly in the present tense, and detail how this present was reached through the distressing but necessary articulation of past pain, while in *Black Marsden* and *Edge of Darkness* Goodrich and Craven regularly revisit past episodes of their lives in an attempt to heal the wounds of the present. *Lanark*, however, represents the strongest interrogation of history. The novel begins *in medias res*, with the four ‘books’ of the text being numbered unchronologically as three, one, two and four, and prologue and epilogue coming after book three and in the middle of book four respectively. Yet more significant are the semiotic echoes between first life and afterlives, as discussed above, which elide the perceived distance between worlds. These echoes imply that Thaw the child, Thaw the adult and Lanark the inhabitant of an ambiguous personal Hell exist at the same level of development, in the same static time frame; like a picture, one can see all at the same time. The uncanny possibility of recurrence of the dark incidents of the past is thus often pessimistically suggested throughout these texts.

Overriding this pessimism, however, is the potential for immediate personal healing provided by a re-examination and re-evaluation of the past. We are told in *Black*

Marsden that: 'an ancient spectre drew one closer to the enigma of modern times' (37), while in Lanark's world, the tide of apocalypse recedes and the sun rises. (558) By purging themselves of repressive histories, characters such as Prentice, Frank, Goodrich, Lanark, Jennifer and Craven lay phantoms to rest and ultimately reject hauntings. The failure by many characters to reject the weight of history and move forward in the static worlds of *Lanark* and *Symposium*, on the other hand, acts as an appeal to the reader to avoid such stasis. David Punter argues that the Gothic 'paradoxically points, even while it is apparently dealing in things of the remote and barbaric past, towards the possibility of a deeper engagement with the difficulties of the present'.⁷⁰ The difficulties of the present in these texts are not always wholly resolved, but are at least exposed and articulated. A more dialogic negotiation is engaged in than would be possible if the ultimate goal were repression rather than acknowledgment and change. The potential for resolution, or at least a resolved sense of the value of openness and dialogue, is thus created.

We have seen here how these late twentieth-century texts challenge persistent literary conventions and myths, such as the motif of the journey North. The political implications of the subversive tendency of this tradition in the late twentieth century will be explored in the following chapter. Similar potentialities come to the fore in the tradition when the texts are analysed from a differing perspective, as the cognate postmodern and fantastic techniques allow an engagement with the predicaments of individual protagonists as well as the wider political context, and a general interrogation of hierarchies and extremes.

Notes

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (1978), (London: Penguin, 1995), p.1

² David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.17

³ *Hamish Macbeth*, based on the mystery novels by M.C. Beaton, adapted by Danny Boyle, directed by Patrick Lau and Nicholas Renton (BBC Scotland 1995). For supernatural occurrences, see in particular the concluding two-part episode of season 3, 'Destiny', which played upon notions of second sight and mythology. *Monarch of the Glen*, directed by Edward Bennett et al. (Acorn Media UK Ltd. Production for BBC Scotland, 1999-2004). *Dog Soldiers*, directed by Neil Marshall (Fox, 2002), follows six soldiers from England on exercise in the Highlands, where they encounter some rather menacing, man-eating locals on the night of a full moon. *The Last Great Wilderness*, directed by David Mackenzie (Glasgow: Sigma Films 2003), features a journey North from London to the deserted and misty Highlands somewhere on the way to Skye, where the protagonists discover a secluded hotel which functions as a retreat for various 'damaged' characters, and which is also haunted by an ambiguous ghost. Within this retreat, 'healing' is performed by the leader Rory via various cultish practices reminiscent of the pagan rituals featured in earlier 'journey North' film, *The Wickerman* (1973).

⁴ Further early recorded examples of this include William Dunbar's 'Flyting' where he accuses Walter Kennedy of being a backward Highlander, and the general perception during the height of the witch trials in Scotland in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century that the Highlands were a hotbed of witchcraft due to their association with Catholicism. Ironically, there were significantly fewer witch trials

in the Highlands than the Lowlands. Another early example which closely prefigures Macpherson's writings and influenced the establishment of the Gothic novel is English poet William Collins' 'An Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, considered as the Subject of Poetry' (1749-50), in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700-1820* ed. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000) pp.41-47. This ode was addressed to the Scottish writer John Home, who was in turn to have a great influence on the young Macpherson, and who actively encouraged him in his 'discovery' of a native Scottish epic.

⁵ Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands*, (London: Macmillan, 1989), p.2

⁶ Ian Duncan, introduction to Walter Scott's *Rob Roy* (1817), (Oxford World's Classics: Oxford University Press, 1998), p.viii

⁷ Ian Duncan, 'Walter Scott, James Hogg and Scottish Gothic', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p.72

⁸ For a discussion of these characteristics see two of the standard Gothic 'textbooks', David Punter, *The Literature of Terror Vol. 1 & 2*, 2nd ed. (London: Longman, 1996), and Fred Botting, *Gothic*, (London: Routledge New Critical Idiom Series, 1996)

⁹ David Punter, 'Heartlands: Contemporary Scottish Gothic' in *Gothic Studies 1/1* (August 1999), Manchester University Press, pp.101-118, p.101

¹⁰ Colin Manlove, *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey*, (Edinburgh: Cannongate Academic, 1994), p.216

¹¹ Lacan's distinction between the little 'other' and the big 'Other' is discussed and employed throughout his later work. He first draws the distinction in 1955, as outlined in Seminar 2, chapter 19, but for its application to the subject in Lacan's widely applied schema L, see 'On a question preliminary to any possible treatment of psychosis', in *Ecrits: A Selection*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Tavistock, 1977)

¹² Judith Butler, 'Imitation and Gender Insubordination', in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1998), p.726

¹³ Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.4 - 6

¹⁴ Ibid. p.3

¹⁵ The monstrous, as that which can be superficially identified as 'other' and to which fear and horror can be relegated and made tangible, has been a continuous central concern of the Gothic since its origins.

¹⁶ Muriel Spark, *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, (London: Penguin, 1961), p.35

¹⁷ C.P. Cavafy, 'Waiting for the Barbarians' (1904), in *Collected Poems*, trans. Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, ed. George Savidis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), p.18

¹⁸ *Powers of Horror*, p.2

¹⁹ Ibid. p.5

²⁰ Ibid. p.4

²¹ For a fuller discussion of this pivotal time in Scottish literary history, see my introduction and Chapter One.

²² *Finding Neverland*, dir. Marc Forster, (Miramax, 2004)

²³ See Chapter 2. Anthony Hasler, introduction to *The Three Perils of Woman, or Love, Leasing and Jealousy* by James Hogg (1823), ed. David Groves, Anthony Hasler and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p.xxx

²⁴ Michel Foucault, Preface to 'The Order of Things' (1966), in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers 2000), p.384

²⁵ See note 6

²⁶ F.J Child ed., *The English and Scottish Ballads*, 5 volumes (New York: Folklore Press, 1957) This is an authoritative and continually useful work on the Ballads, and the first to classify the texts according to recurrent subject matter.

²⁷ Muriel Spark, *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (London: Macmillan, 1960)

²⁸ Pools of water often provide access to the otherworld in the Ballads. See for example 'The Ballad of Tam Lin', and J. Wood, 'Lakes and Wells: Mediation Between the Real World and Otherworld in Scottish Folklore', in Horst W. Drescher and Dietrich Strauss ed., *Scottish Language and Literature, Medieval and Renaissance: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference, 1984*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1986), pp.523-32

²⁹ Margaret Elphinstone, 'Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition', in *Tea and Leg-Irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*, ed. Caroline Gonda (London: Open Letters, 1992), p.47

³⁰ Allan Freeman, 'A Bit of the Other: Symposium, Futility and Scotland', in *Theorising Muriel Spark*, ed. Martin MacQuillan (London: Palgrave, 2002), p.135

³¹ Alan Riach, 'The Scottish Element in Wilson Harris', in *Scottish Literary Journal* vl.18, no.1 (May 1991), p.72

- ³² Wilson Harris, quoted in Michael Fabre, 'Wilson Harris and the Language of Imagination', in *Wilson Harris: The Uncompromising Imagination*, ed. Hene Maes-Jelinek (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1991), p.47
- ³³ 'The Scottish Element in Wilson Harris', p.75
- ³⁴ John Berger, *Keeping a Rendezvous*, (New York: Vintage International, 1991), p.68
- ³⁵ See for example Neil M. Gunn, *The Silver Darlings* (1941), and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, *A Scots Quair* (1946), amongst others.
- ³⁶ *Keeping a Rendezvous*, p.69
- ³⁷ *Orientalism*, p.42
- ³⁸ Duntrune Castle in Mid-Argyll has a legend attached to it involving a ghostly piper whose hands were cut off after he was caught trying to warn his master's approaching army of an ambush during the '45, as recorded in Harry Campbell, *Supernatural Scotland*, (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p.56
- ³⁹ Murray Pittock, 'Forging North Briton in the Age of Macpherson', in *Edinburgh Review 93* (Spring 1995), p.136
- ⁴⁰ Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, (1957) trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993), p.109
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p.119 & 123
- ⁴² Ben Okri, 'Diary', *New Statesman*, vol. 112, no. 2889, (8th August 1986), p.16
- ⁴³ Wilson Harris, 'A Talk on the Subjective Imagination', in *Explorations: A Selection of Talks and Articles 1966 – 1981*, ed. Hene Maes-Jelinek (Denmark: Dangaroo Press, 1981), p.66
- ⁴⁴ 'The Scottish Element in Wilson Harris', p.79
- ⁴⁵ See note 14
- ⁴⁶ See note 17
- ⁴⁷ See note 22
- ⁴⁸ 'Heartlands: Contemporary Scottish Gothic', p.113
- ⁴⁹ Cairns Craig, *Iain Banks's Complicity: A Reader's Guide*, (New York: Continuum Contemporaries Series, 2002), p.23/4
- ⁵⁰ This link, perpetuated by *Symposium*, originates in pre-modern times, as discussed in my introduction and in Chapter One. These beliefs survive even into the present day, attested to by a recent article in the *Sunday Herald Magazine* (16/03/2003), entitled 'The exorcist files', which notes that the practise of carrying out exorcisms on mental patients is still performed.
- ⁵¹ See note 13
- ⁵² *Keeping a Rendezvous*, p.68
- ⁵³ Thom Nairn, 'Iain Banks and the Fiction Factory', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, ed. Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994) p.128
- ⁵⁴ *Iain Banks's Complicity: A Reader's Guide*, p.24
- ⁵⁵ See notes 6 and 19
- ⁵⁶ Lucie Armitt, 'The Magic Realism of Contemporary Gothic', in *A Companion to the Gothic*, ed. David Punter (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), p.305
- ⁵⁷ Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, *Witchcraft in Scotland* (1884), ed. Raymond Lamont Brown, (Wakefield: S.R. Publishers 1972), Appendix 2: 'The Marks of a Witch.' See also Coleman O. Parsons, *Witchcraft and Demonology in Scott's Fiction*, (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd LTD, 1964), p.147
- ⁵⁸ Elphinstone, 'Contemporary Feminist Fantasy', p.47
- ⁵⁹ 'The Magic Realism of Contemporary Gothic', p.306
- ⁶⁰ Bryan Elsley, e-mail interview conducted on 12/03/03
- ⁶¹ See note 6
- ⁶² See for example the etherealised spectres of Macpherson's Ossianic poetry, and the ineffectual ghosts existing only as mere suggested presences that conventionally signify the importance of history, in much recent Scottish literature, including the work of Neil Gunn (e.g. *The Silver Darlings*), and Ian Rankin (e.g. *The Flood*).
- ⁶³ Nicholas Abraham and Marie Torok first posit their theory of the phantom in 1975 in the essays 'Notes on the Phantom: A Complement to Freud's Metapsychology' (Abraham) and 'Story of Fear: The Symptoms of Phobia – the Return of the Repressed or the Return of the Phantom?' (Torok), in *The Shell and the Kernel Volume 1*, ed. Nicholas T. Rand (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- ⁶⁴ Torok, 'Story of Fear: The Symptoms of Phobia – the Return of the Repressed or the Return of the Phantom?', p.181
- ⁶⁵ Abraham, 'Notes on the Phantom', p.175
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p.172/3
- ⁶⁷ Ian Duncan, 'The Upright Corpse' in *Studies in Hogg and His World 5* (1994), pp-29-54, p.35
- ⁶⁸ Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny' (1919), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud Volume XVII*, trans. & ed. James Strachey (London: Vintage, 2001), p.237
- ⁶⁹ 'A Talk on the Subjective Imagination', p.63.
- ⁷⁰ 'Heartlands: Contemporary Scottish Gothic', p.115

Preternatural Politics: Metafictions without Metanarratives

‘The tenets of our dominant ideology (to which we, perhaps somewhat simplistically, give the label “liberal humanist”) are what is being contested by postmodernism: from the notion of authorial originality and authority to the separation of the aesthetic from the political.’

– Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*¹

‘The familial and cultural networks in which we exist [...] are as much a part of what, psychologically, we are, as that we fallaciously designate ourselves.’

– Robert Miles, ‘“Tranced Griefs”’²

Linda Hutcheon suggests evidence of a reconnection between the politically radical and the aesthetically radical within postmodernist literature, texts that she also proposes are already inherently subversive and interrogative of inscribed codes. Meanwhile, Robert Miles suggests that personal is political, that the individual is as much constituted by the power structures governing their context as by any erroneous notion of a coherent transcendental self. These arguments gain significance when applied in the Scottish literary context. The links between aesthetic and political stances, and between the individual and society are apparent throughout Scottish literary history, and in particular with reference to the psychosomatic supernatural tradition, from the work of James Hogg to the late twentieth-century texts discussed here, primarily *Lanark*, *Black Marsden*, *Edge of Darkness*, and *So I Am Glad*. *Lanark* and *Black Marsden* are discussed in the previous chapter, and also examined more extensively here, due to their indubitable relevance to, and even poignancy in terms of, the investigations featured in both chapters. Through their introduction of an ambiguous supernaturalism into an otherwise prosaic context, all four texts articulate an aesthetic opposition to the realist mode, and therefore to the graphic urban masculine working-class portrayals that have dominated twentieth-century Scottish political narratives.

Moreover, the simultaneous focus on the individual and the cultural that the quasi-supernatural context emphasises combines with the portrayal of characters from all class backgrounds and both genders to allow the texts to maintain a specific political position within a genre conventionally perceived as a form of escapism removed from ‘real’ concerns. The texts examined in this chapter reconnect the reader with the ‘real’ world outside the text, via fantastic co-ordinates, in a way that is challenging yet affirming. This represents a significant development from modernism.

Modernism may be described as the cultural movement through which art and audience were stimulated to enter into a dynamic relationship, with the work of art requiring engagement rather than passive observation (which was normal in terms of nineteenth-century conventional appreciation of art and the novel, for example), and demanding reflection on its own construction. This is to generalise broadly, of course, and yet it is evident in Cubism in visual art, in modernist theatre, such as Brecht's 'verfremdungseffekt', and in paradigmatic modernist literary texts such as Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) or Eliot's *The Wasteland* (1922). However, in terms of treatment of character, in the texts examined in this chapter the movement is away from both the Romantic notion of selfhood, and a modernist 'fragmented' self, towards the recognition of the reciprocity between subject and context. These texts aspire not simply to address the reader, but to enable the reader to more fully address the world and their own position within it. The texts' progress through uncertainties maintains connections with the matter of political value which modernism initiated in its break with the conventions of the nineteenth century.

In this chapter, the translation between the aesthetic and the political in late twentieth-century psychosomatic supernatural texts will be investigated. The term 'aesthetic' is interpreted as including anti-realist and metafictional strategies, primarily the depiction of an equivocal supernaturalism, while 'political' is defined in its most general sense, as in chapter one, in the way that critics Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal have described the present state of the evolving term: 'Now it covers the mechanisms by which relations among variously – often differentially – empowered individuals and groups are conducted. Any relationship among humans, or between humans and other entities [...] can be said to have a politics.'³ As a result of these texts' specific employment of the supernatural, involving heightened ambiguity and the potential for multiple interpretation, their interrogation of realism becomes all the more profound. As discussed in my introduction, the term 'fantastic' is problematic due to the deficiency of terminological discrimination within the field, and will not be widely used in this thesis. Instead, the concept of 'psychosomatic supernaturalism' will be employed, a supernaturalism which involves 'both the mind *and* the body as mutually dependent entities'.⁴

However, if Tzvetan Todorov's definition is temporarily adopted, it can be seen how fantastic literature represents a more intense interrogation of realism than other non-realist modes such as fantasy and magic realism. Todorov would define these modes as 'marvellous', concerned with representing removed, although still often

referential, otherworlds – that which is manifestly unreal. Todorov's formulation of the fantastic, on the other hand, involves a supernatural manifestation within a realist or mimetic context that remains entirely ambiguous, drawing reader and often characters into an unnerving hesitation between natural and supernatural explanations. According to Todorov: 'The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event', yet it only lasts as long as the hesitation does, 'it is the hesitation which sustains its life'.⁵ In the fantastic, the very nature of representations of the 'real' is called into question. The sustained doubt regarding the origins of the supernatural plays upon, as Rosemary Jackson states, 'the difficulties of interpreting events/things as objects or as images, thus disorientating the reader's categorisation of the "real" [...] It takes the real and breaks it.'⁶ Within a Scottish context, the fantastic then unsettles and rejects the metanarratives of national identity and experience – particularly those involving rural orientalisation, and urban working-class deprivation and struggle – so often portrayed through the realist mode. Such representations remain dominant in Scottish fiction, film and television.

The fantastic is thus subversive in an aesthetic sense, undermining dominant assumptions and rules. Within the fantastic texts examined here, this aesthetic subversion is translated into a political one. The problematising of any definite interpretation unsettles sureties, including any fallacious sense of a coherent, homogeneous culture and autonomous self. The transgression of dominant codes and artistic playfulness involved in these texts can be termed postmodern, as can their refutation of grand narratives, reminiscent of the 'incredulity towards metanarratives'⁷ that, according to Jean-Francois Lyotard, characterises postmodernism. Yet it should be noted that postmodernism can also prove disempowering. Endless artifice and play can disguise superficiality and meaninglessness. The resultant lack of closure, and therefore outcome, will disallow political change. Lyotard's use of the word 'incredulity' suggests apathy and a lack of political engagement. It is then problematic when applied to these texts, which boldly exhibit their political concerns. Postmodernism is also problematic when compared to the fantastic in general. Brian McHale draws the link between fantastic and postmodernist literary strategies, thus:

It is precisely by preserving *a bit* of representation that postmodernist fiction can mount its challenge *to* representation [...] in the context of postmodernism the fantastic has been co-opted as one of a number of strategies of an ontological poetics that pluralises the 'real' and thus problematises representation. The postmodernist fantastic can be seen as

a sort of jiu-jitsu that uses representation itself to overthrow representation.⁸

Both modes interrogate representations of the real in similar ways. Indeed, they concur in many late twentieth-century texts in a way that foregrounds the texts' self-conscious metafictionality, drawing attention to its means of construction. Yet this comparison problematises postmodernism, in that, if it overlaps with and performs similar functions to the fantastic, implicating but also interrogating realism, and also involves the flaunting of its own fictionality, how *new* can the techniques that this vague and fluid term incorporates be said to be? As is evident in the work of Hogg, Stevenson and Barrie, amongst others explored in previous chapters, such concerns have existed throughout the tradition.⁹ This is a well-documented criticism of postmodernist theory in general, and the texts examined here have an inherent historical dimension that is often overlooked in such readings. Yet, however unsatisfying the term in itself is, it does prove useful (the best test for any theoretical approach) for describing some of the cultural work being performed by these texts, and is more aptly used here than within the analyses of other historical periods in the tradition, as postmodernism itself is a post-World War Two critical phenomenon. Notions such as metafictionality, fragmentation, a shift from the modernist focus on the internal to a simultaneous scrutiny of the internal and external, incredulity towards (and even outright rejection of) metanarratives and the reconnection of the aesthetic and the political have particular resonance in these late twentieth-century fantastic narratives.

Indeed, these texts are not simply incredulous towards metanarratives, such as the representation of Scottishness as working-class and masculine often expounded in realist fiction; they are actively interrogative of them. They seek to deconstruct false dichotomies such as self/other, personal/political, and low/high, just as many other texts labelled postmodern do. Yet they then offer the possibility of regeneration and freedom following the destabilisation and rejection of these binaries; there is an assertion of other alternative structural relations. The encounter with the potentially supernatural becomes a *felix culpa*. Modernism was also altered by its translation into a Scottish context, as is evident in Hugh MacDiarmid's innovatory work, such as his early lyrics, which were indeed experimental, but also resonated with many of the concerns of the traditional Ballads. Conventionally, modernism is viewed as a movement in which texts are concerned with aesthetic experimentation over the articulation of an explicit political stance, as in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922). However, in MacDiarmid's work, in particular, in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), it is evident that the aesthetic

and the political are already working together to allow a simultaneous inward and outward perspective, on one individual and on the nation, to refute homogenised constructions of Scottish identity. Interestingly, the poem contains some ambiguously supernatural visions itself, which, as with so many happenings in Scottish literature, is the implied result of over-indulgence in the bottle.¹⁰ Moreover, despite modernism's assault on its tenets, realism persisted in the Scottish tradition – along with its accompanying urban working-class pessimistic portrayals – and still maintains a significant position today.¹¹ Hence the enduring need to engage with the mode, and to find new strategies to do so, which, as will be seen, so often involve the simultaneous rejection and reworking of tradition.

Lanark

In *Lanark*, Alasdair Gray adopts a number of strategies to undermine cultural dominants, including the evocation of an ambiguous supernaturalism, potentially ascribable to psychological breakdown. Whether the worlds of Unthank and the Institute are some kind of Hellish or purgatorial afterlife following Thaw's suicide, or simply the product of altered perceptions of our world brought about by his mental deterioration is a fantastic ambiguity sustained to the end. There are a number of other possible interpretations of the juxtaposition of worlds in the novel, explored fruitfully elsewhere, but this psychosomatic ambiguity will be examined here as the reading that has the greatest political resonance. Applying postmodernist theory to *Lanark* is by no means a new endeavour in Scottish literary studies – Beat Witschi's, Randall Stevenson's and Eilidh M. Whiteford's studies all pursue such lines of enquiry¹² – but a sustained analysis of the supernatural aspects of the novel from a postmodernist and political perspective will develop previous arguments. Moreover, the common theoretical approaches typically and fruitfully applied to *Lanark* will be used to shed new light on some of the less familiar texts subsequently examined.

In her study of the metafictional aspect of postmodernist literature, Patricia Waugh states:

Another fictional response to the sense of oppression by the endless systems and structures of present-day society – with its technologies, bureaucracies, ideologies, institutions and traditions – is the construction of a play world which consists of similar endless systems and structures.¹³

Gray uses and abuses, simultaneously adopts and rejects, those structures in his portrayal of a potentially allegorical Glasgow, either as that which exists after death or mental breakdown. In the same way, conventions and genres – including realism, fantasy, bildungsroman, and the pervasive either/or tension – are played with, employed, reworked and often abandoned. At one point in book one of the novel, part of the ‘realist’ bildungsroman, the following exchange takes place between Thaw and his dying mother:

“Duncan, do you think there’s anything afterwards?”

He said, “No, I don’t think so. It’s just sleep.”

Something wistful in the tone of the question made him add. “Mind you, many wiser folk than me have believed there’s a new life afterwards. If there is, it won’t be worse than this one.” (196)

Initially, the afterlives of Unthank and the Institute in which Lanark (who may be a translation of Thaw) exists, appear considerably worse than Thaw’s Glasgow. Yet, as the similarities between worlds become apparent, the result is the frightening realisation that these worlds are equally bad, and that neither has primacy. The fantastic death-worlds of Unthank and the institute are translations and grotesque exaggerations of the ‘real’ world. As ‘the author’, Nastler, explains to Lanark with reference to Thaw in a highly metafictional episode in book four:

his death gave me a chance to shift him into a wider social context. You are Thaw with the neurotic imagination trimmed off and built into the furniture of the world you occupy. This makes you much more capable of action and slightly more capable of love. (493)

Nastler – a pleasurable interloper rather than a threatening ‘author’ity – may be a translation of Gray, or another version of the central protagonist. The Formalist concept of *ostranenie* or defamiliarisation, first formulated by Viktor Shklovsky, makes clear Gray’s technique: the everyday and conventional is made strange and therefore emphasised to allow for renewed perception and necessary interrogation. As Thaw’s art teacher asks him of his work, ‘ “Why all the ugly distortions?”’, and Thaw defensively replies, ‘ “I may have over-emphasised some shapes to make them clearer.”’ (280) In books three and four, Glasgow becomes the sunless wasteland of Unthank, capitalism is made tangible in the form of the creature and all authoritative and corrupt Western institutions are melded to become the institute and the council. Cairns Craig describes how Lanark’s world ‘repeats the real world in fantasy form, both de-forming it and

revealing the truths that its realistic surface conceals'.¹⁴ These truths are the ordinarily untold narratives of the consequences of late capitalism's disregard for humanity, and its use and abuse of the individual. This is referred to in the novel as 'cannibalism': "Cannibalism has always been the main human problem [...] Since the institute joined with the council it seems that half the continents are feeding on the other half. Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself, and the recipe is separation." (101) However, the narrative of the diseased cannibalistic cities in books three and four is related in the same carefully measured prose as the account of twentieth-century Glasgow. The ambiguity regarding whether the change is a result of death or mental alteration is thus reinforced, and the reader must turn to other factors to account for the sense of disorientation.

Lanark's own estrangement as he enters this altered context is matched by the reader's, with both asking ontological questions, those which Brian McHale names as 'the dominant of postmodernist fiction'¹⁵, concerning who he is, why he is there, where 'there' is and why he doesn't know. As the narrator tells us: 'This restlessness happened whenever his thoughts blundered on the question of who he was.' (15) Yet Thaw also feels this way within his profane context. We are told that during his early teenage years, 'He was as much estranged from imagination as from reality.' (159) Moreover, to further disorientate, the fantastic and desolate city of Unthank acts as an introduction to the 'real', as book three is encountered before book one, and the 'real' narrative of books one and two is presented as a story told to Lanark by the oracle in the institute, as if the 'real' is the actual fiction. This again foregrounds the ambiguity of interpretation, further interrogates the existence of the 'real', and undermines the possibility of any solid conclusions.

The estrangement experienced by both protagonist and reader is amplified by the extrapolation of traits and the literalisation of metaphors that the supernatural allows for. After death or madness, Unthank, as an extrapolation of Glasgow, is literally without sun and almost constantly rained upon, and capitalism becomes literal cannibalism, as the corporate class profits by consumption of "the less efficient half and grows stronger [...] using the other half for food, heat, machinery and sexual pleasure." (411) Personal illness is also grotesquely exaggerated, so that psychosomatic afflictions actually dictate and reflect the personality of the individual. In Lanark's case, Thaw's psychosomatic illnesses, such as eczema, become Lanark's 'dragonhide', a literalisation of his alienation and separation from his society, as his emotions enclose his body with hard, armour-like dragon skin. Alternative types include sponges and

leeches, who feed off the strength and emotions of others, and rigourists, who have a strong backbone but very little soul. Those who cannot be cured in the institute are recycled as fuel, as a source either of heat, light, or food.

This translation from the microcosmic to the macrocosmic, and its affinity with the ambiguously supernatural in literature, is theorised in the often-applied essay by Freud, 'The Uncanny'. Here, Freud defines the uncanny in a way akin to Todorov's fantastic: 'an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolises, and so on.'¹⁶ This is precisely what happens in *Lanark*, with the translation between worlds, the literalisation of metaphors and the defamiliarising of the familiar. As Freud argues: 'the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar.'¹⁷ He also traces how the origins of uncanniness can be located ontogenetically in the repression and due return of infantile complexes, and also phylogenetically in the case of general primitive and superstitious beliefs which have been surmounted, but which then appear to be confirmed by some impression. In literature, such impressions take forms that could be interpreted as supernatural. Freud states, however, that:

We must not let our predilection for smooth solutions and lucid exposition blind us to the fact that these two classes of uncanny experience are not always sharply distinguishable. When we consider that primitive beliefs are most intimately connected with infantile complexes, and are, in fact, based on them, we shall not be greatly astonished to find that the distinction is often a hazy one.¹⁸

Indeed, *Lanark* confirms this lack of distinction. The problems and concerns of Duncan Thaw as he struggles with and fails in the transition from underdeveloped adolescent to full member of society become writ large in the world of Lanark, as with the way Lanark ages in rapid, sporadic bursts. As Nastler elsewhere tells Lanark: ' "The Thaw narrative shows a man dying because he is bad at loving. It is enclosed by your narrative which shows civilisation collapsing for the same reasons." ' (484) The personal becomes political, and the 'illusory distinction between public and private'¹⁹ is addressed, a concern throughout Gray's work. Furthermore, the persona of Thaw/Lanark comes to represent more than a single being, and, moreover, something wider than the degradation and alienation of late twentieth-century Glasgow. As Beat Witschi says of Gray's work in general:

His vision of the 'near' and the 'far', of the 'local' and the 'international', and its dynamic fusion into a panoramic vision of modern industrialised life, are the qualities which not only make Gray's work easily accessible for Scots and non-Scots alike but which also challenge many of the cherished myths of Scottish and western societies.²⁰

This technique of exoticising the local, as further discussed in chapter three, furnishes the text with a universal relevance, and provides an accessibility not present in other Glasgow literature. An example is the very Scottish reference to the ruling power of Lord Monboddo, eighteenth-century scientist, politician and eccentric, but whose name Gray specifically chose for its ambivalent qualities, at once familiar and unfamiliar. As MacDiarmid says in his *Scottish Eccentrics*: 'Monboddo is scarcely remembered today, except by some vague recollection that he upheld an extraordinary doctrine about men having tails'.²¹ Gray ironically defends his 'inappropriate' use of the title in his 'Index of Plagiarisms' in the Epilogue, saying: 'By plagiarising and annexing his name to a dynasty of scientific Caesars the author can only be motivated by Scottish chauvinism or a penchant for resounding nomenclature.' (494) The bearer of the title of Monboddo erratically changes, and the role comes to represent all non-specific corrupt hegemonic positions. Lanark refers to such titles, along with the 'council' and the 'institute', as 'these big vague names that power keeps hiding behind' (409), reminiscent of Stephen Dedalus's comment in Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922): 'I fear those big words [...] which make us so unhappy',²² the big concepts that have become abstractions and now refer only to themselves. The grotesque images of impotence, degeneration and corruption, drawn from the 'real' world and exaggerated and made tangible in Lanark's world, become a wider critique of the industrialised west, as the novel takes a further shift, from the fantastic along an allegorical trajectory, as prefigured in James Thomson's 1874 poem, *The City of Dreadful Night*. Yet Lanark's context is also comparable to Thomson's poem in that it exists simultaneously as, according to R.J. Lyall, 'an interior landscape, a city of the mind.'²³ Thus it has a synchronous significance to humanity *and* to one man, existing psychologically, supernaturally and allegorically.

This is the simultaneous inward and outward vision of postmodernism, allowing interrogation of the subject but also of the context. In a crucial scene in the novel, the young artist Thaw's restless painting of the Blackhill locks embodies this, for which:

He invented a perspective showing the locks from below when looked at from left to right and from above when seen from right to left; he painted

them as they would appear to a giant lying on his side, with eyes more than a hundred feet apart and tilted at an angle of 45 degrees [...] his favourite views had nearly all been combined into one. (279)

As with Cubism, where the object of study is only understood by examining it from multiple points of view simultaneously, any sole perspective is a distortion.²⁴ The painting acts as a socialist metaphor for the rigid stratification that controls both Thaw and Lanark's societies; different views are seen from different levels on the social ladder, directly proportional to the amount of power wielded. Accuracy can only come with the relationship between perspectives, and between individuals. These multiple perspectives are crucial to the novel, as they create the possibility of seeing stasis *or* movement. Gray's work constantly yearns for both, and contradiction is its dynamic. The novel maintains the notion that society consists of citizens, but that the citizen is also made from society. Moreover, if, as Nastler indicates, the subject is fragmenting while the context is disintegrating, the reciprocity of their relationship may well allow for something positive to emerge from this de(con)struction.

At the conclusion of the novel, after Lanark has been informed by the chamberlain that he will die the following day in an intertextual episode that recalls the button-moulder in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt* (as listed in Gray's Index of Plagiarisms), we are told that Lanark faces the prospect of death as 'a slightly worried, ordinary old man but glad to see the light in the sky.' (560) There is hope for Lanark the individual despite his consistent failure to affect change, and therefore, by extrapolation, there must be for society. The possibility of regeneration amidst the almost apocalyptic ending is understated, but it is still stated, as we witness the recession of the flood tide and the first glimmerings of a sunrise in this sunless city. (558) Despite Lanark's detached position, the novel acts as an encouragement to the reader to try to succeed where he has failed. The esoteric final lines of the novel, capitalised so that their origins remain ambiguous, read: 'I HAVE GROWN UP. MY MAPS ARE OUT OF DATE. THE LAND LIES OVER ME NOW. I CANNOT MOVE. IT IS TIME TO GO.' (560) As Lanark's final thoughts before death, this is a straightforward statement: it is time to give up and accept oblivion. (There is also the obvious contradiction in being unable to move when 'it is time to go', reminiscent of the ending of Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953), where Vladimir asks 'Shall we go?' and Estragon replies 'Yes, let's go'. This exchange is then followed and negated by the stage direction 'They do not move.') Yet, as a message from the elusive author, whether Nastler, Gray or some other persona, the meaning changes. Lanark 'cannot move', entrenched as he is in pathos and passively

accepting the probability of death, yet the reader still can. As Rodge Glass argues, 'Thaw/Lanark's weaknesses are what make him so engaging [...] hope can only be found by suffering along with this most flawed of characters.'²⁵ For us, 'it is time to go' and affect change and thus depart from our own hypnotised acceptance of reality. Just so, the word as object 'cannot move', fixed as it is on the page. Yet in a sense words do move, across the page and through the book, as will be seen, in syntactic and aesthetic, and visual and aural relations and structures, and from the book itself to the reader. The literal closure of the book, ending the act of reading, signals the activation of a deeper reading of each text within the mind of the reader. At one point Lanark tells Nastler: 'I want to know why your readers in their world should be entertained by the sight of me failing to do any good in mine.' (485) Lanark the somnambulist affects no change before his final promised death, after which the chamberlain informs him 'nothing personal will remain.' (559) Yet his ultimate afterlife, the novel – which is indeed something personal – prevails as a warning against failure and surrender in a hostile world.

This fluidity between the individual and the collective is matched by the interrelation between characters. Thaw may be Lanark, Marjory may be Rima, and Thaw's fellow students from Art school may be the crowd who frequent the Elite Café with Lanark – groups from which Thaw and Lanark feel equally alienated. Similarly, many of the characters adopt and share multiple roles. In the afterlife, Munro is a doctor as well as a chamberlain, Ozenfant moves from Professor to Lord Monboddo, and Sludden and Lanark both have their turn at being Provost of Unthank. This intersubjectivity, connected to the supernatural literary trait of the double, indicates the impossibility of coherence of identity within an incoherent world. Structured correspondences between books are implied, but are ultimately left unexplained.

The political implications of the disintegration of identity in *Lanark* can be further theorised using Julia Kristeva's post-structuralist study of signification, *Revolution in Poetic Language*.²⁶ Here Kristeva formulates an unstable binary involving the two elements of meaning: the symbolic and the semiotic. The semiotic is comparable to Lacan's imaginary – associated with the mother (prior to entry into the symbolic order) and therefore an ambiguous location of both the production and annihilation of the subject, and connoting the rhythms, drives and non-referential meaning of signification. The symbolic is the referential, the grammar and structure of signification, and thus the binary parallels that of 'real' life and psychosomatic afterlife in the text. Both elements are essential in the construction of textual meaning, allowing

for a relationship between language and life. If the semiotic is that which precedes the formation of a coherent identity within society, or the symbolic order, then that which succeeds this – death, and the correlative dissolution of identity – is also part of this semiotic force. Indeed, Kristeva describes the semiotic chora, the conceptual realm of these drives, thus: ‘This is to say that the semiotic chora is no more than the place where the subject is both generated and negated, the place where his unity succumbs before the process of charges and stases that produce him.’²⁷ It is a space where birth and death co-exist. She also warns that a total retreat into the semiotic will result in death or madness, two forms of dissolution of conventional identity and two of the possible interpretations of books three and four of the novel. Thus, Lanark’s world is a kind of corporeal semiotic chora, a tangible space invoked either by madness (one of Kristeva’s ‘priveleged moments’) or death, and where drives, including the death drive, have a greater degree of jurisdiction.

The interdependence of the signifiatory elements can, thus, be played with in literature, and with reference to the possible artistic and political applications of the destabilising of the binary (the ‘revolution’ of her title), Kristeva argues that:

In returning, through the event of death, towards that which produces its break; in exporting semiotic motility across the border on which the symbolic is established, the artist sketches out a kind of second birth.²⁸

In *Lanark*, this journey from life to afterlife does ultimately, as we have seen, become a potential beginning rather than an end, for the reader if not for Lanark. However, it is not just the afterlife in which the semiotic is entailed. In a further subversion, this semiotic world erupts into and through ‘reality’, primarily through language, which frequently transgresses boundaries in the text, including the strict delineation of worlds into numbered books. If, as Kristeva maintains, all signification is composed of two modalities – the semiotic and the symbolic – then semiotic intrusion into conventionally balanced realms such as Duncan Thaw’s realist context continually disrupts and threatens to unhinge reality. When the semiotic becomes too prevalent and exceeds its remit of one part of meaning, things go awry. Chapter nineteen, situated within the realist Glasgow narrative, is entitled ‘Mrs. Thaw Disappears.’ This is a direct reference to the Unthankian term for death, connoting the ‘disappearance’ of Thaw’s mother as a result of terminal illness. In *Unthank*, ‘disappearance’ is part of everyday life, as is apparent in a conversation between Lanark and his landlady, Mrs. Fleck:

Lanark said uneasily, 'Why should I disappear?'
 'I've told you already I don't know why folk disappear.'
 'If I had been in the bedroom and...and disappeared, how would you
 have known?'
 'Oh, there's usually a sign.' (13)

Death here is about disappearing, going somewhere else, or at least not being present. This echoes the notion of the underclass of society as those who are conveniently made 'invisible' through unemployment, ghetto-isation and general disenfranchisement. Terry Eagleton discusses the "non-being" of those who have been shut out of the current system, who have no real stake in it, and who thus serve as an empty signifier of an alternative future'.²⁹ Those who 'disappear' from *Unthank* are similarly abandoned by signification.

Another eruption occurs during a period of mental deterioration, when a young Thaw disturbingly tells his mother and sister: 'Men are pies that bake and eat themselves, and the recipe is hate.' (188) This is a repetition of a phrase that occurs often in Lanark's world: from the disembodied echoes heard in the corridors of the institute (' "...is the pie that bakes and eats itself..." (62), ' "...the recipe is separation..." (72)); to Monsignor Noakes's comments on cannibalism as quoted previously (' "man is the pie that bakes and eats himself and the recipe is separation." (101)); to shop steward Grant's comments on the civil war within the council (' "Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself and the recipe is separation." (411)). Madness as well as death provides access to the semiotic, and reading then becomes an act of intervention where the reader recognises the repetition of the phrase and makes the link between worlds. Moreover, the incongruity of the child Thaw's words and the term 'disappeared' within their domestic and realist contexts signal to the reader that this resonatingly metaphorical language would be better suited to the macrocosmic and politically interrogative world of Lanark. Aesthetic allegiance to the semiotic as the dominant mode rather than one half of signification allows the 'norm' to be interrogated and deconstructed. As a consequence of the initial breakdown of signification (reflected in the difficulties of interpretation of the text), the very means by which culture constructs meaning are called into question. Therefore, as critics Donaldson and Lee point out, 'to reveal the constructedness and tentativeness of order is to liberate the subject.'³⁰ The semiotic, then, by undermining order (the symbolic, the dominant tenets of realism), and by representing that which exists before and after conforming societal pressures have shaped the individual, can be a liberating force. As Lanark states: ' "I've never wanted anything long. Except freedom." (74) Provided recourse to the semiotic

is not total, resulting in madness or death, it can free the subject from homogenising constraints. The text's exposure and interrogation of cruelty and injustice and its intimation of the possibilities of regeneration are thus reinforced by language.

Semiotic eruptions thus further displace realism, and the semiotic chora's links with the unconscious, the other and death foreground the ambiguity of interpretation surrounding the relationship between Thaw and Lanark. They are clearly two versions of the same individual, but how this alteration has come to take place remains an enigma. The defamiliarisation brought about by the unsettling of signification and by supernatural ambiguity allows for engagement with and interrogation of the familiar.

Black Marsden

Such an unsettling of signification intensifies in Wilson Harris's *Black Marsden*, with the inevitable consequence of abstraction and obscurity of meaning. In *Lanark*, linearity is confirmed rather than denied by the lucid prose and categorisation into books. By numbering the books non-sequentially, Gray almost apologises for the atypical structuring. However, in Harris's text, analepsis and the switching of narrative voice from first to third are employed without such warning. In both texts, death is part of what transforms the 'reality' of life. Yet, unlike Thaw/Lanark who experiences an unconscious translation from life to ambiguous afterlife, Clive Goodrich in *Black Marsden* embarks upon an informed and deliberate journey towards death. This journey, like Lanark's context, assumes the tangible contours of an actual geographic space. Again, we find a postmodernist otherworld comparable to that which Patricia Waugh observes in metafiction, a 'fictional response to the sense of oppression by the endless systems and structures of present-day society', which takes the form of 'the construction of a play world which consists of similar endless systems and structures.'³¹

Goodrich's decision to journey to the semiotic death-land of Namless, that place 'which is ripening for each or every man' (71) and is 'our ultimate destination' (73), from his home in Edinburgh is stimulated by an encounter with the eponymous Black Marsden, whom Goodrich initially describes as 'a half-frozen spectre of a man' as he experiences 'an uncanny twist or stab from within myself as if I knew him though I had not seen him before'. (11) Marsden is an ambiguous, 'diabolic' (100) agent whose exact nature – along with that of his hellish associates – remains unclear throughout. Are he and his counterparts supernatural beings intent on driving Goodrich towards death for their own wicked ends, examples of the demonic figures so familiar in the Scottish literary tradition? Are they rather the daemons of pre- or non-Christianity and folk

tradition, neither good nor evil, whose influence can be ultimately affirming? As well as 'diabolic', Marsden is described as appearing 'half-Oriental, half-Celtic' (100), both traditionally non-Christian races. In Conrad's *Lord Jim*, encountered previously in chapter two of this thesis, Stein explains to Marlow that all experience in life, whether good or bad, should be embraced as edifying:

A man that is born falls into a dream like a man who falls into the sea. If he tries to climb out into the air as inexperienced people endeavour to do, he drowns – *nicht wahr?* [...] No! I tell you! The way is to the destructive element submit yourself, and with the exertions of your hands and feet in the water make the deep, deep sea keep you up.³²

Concurrently, Goodrich's encounter with these potentially amoral figures proves constructive, bringing about self-realisation and an open future. It is through his own exertions that he returns from Namless to life as 'a post-hypnotic threshold' (111), or a beginning, and his experiences, positive or negative, are an essential part of his transformation. On the other hand, as Mark A. McWatt concludes, it is possible that Marsden's group have 'been summoned into existence by strange longings and perceptions on the part of Goodrich, and might not actually exist'.³³ This is to offer a rational explanation of the novel's literary conceits. Whatever their origins, it is when Goodrich submits himself to the destructive element – including his voluntary journey to and return from Namless as well as his associations with Marsden and his followers – that he then goes on to develop autonomy in the face of dissolution, acquiring 'a strange inner fire of secret resolution'. (111) Goodrich's journey towards Namless has been discussed in chapter three, but its relevance to the discussion in this chapter is that what he encounters there is a defamiliarisation of twentieth-century Scotland, which again is shown to have wider global significance. The narrative mapping of relations between individual and collective worlds collapses.

Like Kristeva's semiotic chora, Namless is a place where birth and death co-exist. 'I was born here in Namless' (71), Goodrich tells us when setting out on his journey to that annihilating place, related in the novel as a flashback to and revision of a past journey. However, once again, the semiotic is not restricted solely to the realm existing after death or madness. It is the dominant modality throughout the novel, as realism and linearity are further usurped from their position of prominence in twentieth-century Scottish fiction. The resultant 'ambivalent opacity', as Alan Riach terms the dense and often impenetrable quality of the text, which 'works through continual disclosures of its own semantic ambivalence and demands concentrated attention',³⁴

characterises Harris's idiosyncratic style. The 'real' episodes of the novel, prior to and after the journey to Namless, do contain some limited straightforwardly interpretable passages, such as the detailed descriptions of the landscape of Edinburgh. Yet even in these episodes the semiotic erratically dominates, breaking down the necessary dialectic between semiotic and symbolic, and this results in a near-loss of signification. Punctuation becomes conspicuous by its absence, layers of imagery are built up and sentences can extend unpredictably.

However, as Goodrich travels towards death, and subsequent loss of identity or 'namelessness', metaphors extend, combine and interpenetrate, and meaning concurrently becomes even harder to decipher. In Namless, the narrator tells of a sexual encounter Goodrich has with one of the inhabitants, a mysterious woman: 'A toppling world and yet he clung to the pinnacle of fear, the pinnacle of hate, the pinnacle of love, sleepwalking bull of night, the gigantic robot of sex which now bestrode space like the genius of the avalanche.' (80) This is undoubtedly evocative, but of what exactly it is hard to say. Such imagery cannot be interpreted concretely, but along with the semiotic chora's inherent connection with the body, is certainly suggestive in terms of proximities, of bodies, of positive and negative, fear and wonder, sexuality and violence. Harris's images signify by connoting rather than denoting. His technique of placing apparently unconnected notions and images in proximity, combining and splicing rather than juxtaposing opposites, underlies all his subversive strategies. As frustrating and disorienting as this may often be for the reader, the result is indeed stimulating and liberating, as new possibilities emerge from the breakdown of binaries. Expected senses are denied, with the creation of new ones in their place. This is not non-signification or lack of meaning, but rather alteration. The authors of *The Empire Writes Back* explain: 'Harris sees language as the key to these transformations. Language must be altered, its power to lock in fixed beliefs and attitudes must be exposed, and words and concepts "freed" to associate in new ways.'³⁵ As in *Lanark*, the solid interpretation of allegory is ultimately denied and contradiction and combination provide the dynamic and access to meaning.

The fragmentation of meaning reflects Goodrich's troubled state of mind, ambiguously again either as an episode of mental deterioration or simply as the oscillating emotions felt when near death and the supernatural. However, this also has a more general significance. Conventional expressions and interpretations of 'meaning' and 'reality' are challenged. A loss of signification results in a loss of the way a culture

designates itself and controls its members, as well as a subsequent breakdown in power structures.

The consequences of this linguistic subversiveness are confirmed by the juxtaposition of worlds or perspectives. Although the semiotic and the potentially supernatural are found both in Edinburgh and Namless, there is a marked contrast between the two spaces, each commenting upon the other. Namless, as a defamiliarisation and grotesque exaggeration of that which Goodrich temporarily leaves behind in life in 'one of the oldest cities in Europe' (111), comes complete with unions, strikes, poverty, intricate hierarchies and inevitable tyranny and corruption. In Namless, Goodrich is a penniless traveller on a 'primitive road', whereas in Edinburgh he is wealthy and can fund Marsden's theatrical endeavours in the Festival, and appease his own explorative desire by travelling around the globe 'since winning a fortune from the Football pools'. (11) He is 'new money', his wealth is arbitrary. By providing Goodrich with plenty in one context and nothing in another, Harris interrogates western materialist values, just as he does by abandoning the western staples of binarism, linearity and coherence of meaning. Goodrich's very name, while indicating his status as a sympathetically portrayed Everyman figure – good, even though he is rich – highlights the contradiction. This is reinforced by the vignette of another rich man, Willie, that Goodrich overhears offered by two of Willie's friends at a bus stop in Edinburgh. Willie dies, but leaves his entire wealth behind to be fought over by friends and family, and Goodrich notes how he feels that, 'his fortune becomes a pooled reflection to sum up the state of the world in which I live' (95); in which every man lives. Again, the individual becomes synecdoche for the nation. 'You can't take it with you', so the saying goes, and Goodrich is no exception, as all are shown to be equal and undifferentiated in death.

Mark A. McWatt comments on the relationship between the two worlds of the novel, thus: 'By juxtaposing opposites one achieves an erasure of their implacable powers and imprisoning fastness – material, moral and ideological, and creates space for new beginnings and the possibilities of freedom and love.'³⁶ As in *Lanark*, freedom is the ultimate aspiration; freedom from metanarratives involving both the collective – realism and its associated homogenisation of Scottish identity, and the individual – the post-psychoanalysis late-twentieth century pressure to project a coherent and autonomous persona or self, or at least to analyse and treat incoherence. In the way that a degree of semiotic recourse provides the potential for what Kristeva calls 'a kind of second birth', this juxtaposition generates a dialogue between worlds, allowing each to

interrogate the other. The result is the unsettling of 'imprisoning fastnesses', the undermining of sureties, and the liberation of the individual from an oppressive past. Yet, as Goodrich rhetorically asks in his diary: ' "What is freedom without the blackest self-mockery – without intense creativity and care – without seasonal dress and undress and the unravelling of self-portraits and self-deceptions?"' (23/4) To be truly free, one has to question oneself as well as the power structures that govern society, to unfetter the fixities of those very units of which society consists.

Indeed, Goodrich's arduous journey from Edinburgh to Namless and back does not leave him unchanged. On his return he realises: "My name is Clive Goodrich. Yet a name is but a cloak and sometimes a strange denuded nameless "I" steps forth.' (94) Death is namelessness is non-identity, and, like the semiotic, its influence liberates – provided recourse is not taken too far, for beyond there is only oblivion. This is why Goodrich ultimately rejects Namless and returns to his particular life. Awareness of the possibilities of regeneration initiates his new vision of life as, 'a never-ending river of sweetness, fountain of love'. (104) Through his brush with death and the annihilating possibility of inertia, he learns to live more fully in what he now recognises as a complex, provisional world.

Yet, this opening up of individuality and dissolution of the boundaries of the self has a further political function. By challenging and reworking the conventions of signification, Harris interrogates the notion of identity in general, so that relationships and distinctions between those who, under the unchallenged code, would have been the advocates of autonomous identity – that which we have previously defined as political – become deeply problematic. Binaries, already inherently hierarchical, are deconstructed as the traditional site of power is uprooted and made unstable. With reference to *Lanark*, Eilidh M. Whiteford has noted that:

Subjectivity has become a controversial topic of cultural debate because its breakdown *can* be seen as a politically destabilising strategy. If the individual human subject is 'decentred', in what ground can the identities necessary for human agency be related?³⁷

In *Black Marsden*, intersubjectivity replaces individuality as the natural state. In a reworking of the conventional motif of the double, Goodrich recognises Marsden with 'an uncanny twist or stab...as if I knew him'. (11) Marsden is translated in Namless to become the nameless and Janus-like Director-General: 'that curious figure with two faces – one apparently on a pillar of establishment, the other roofed by a revolutionary

firmament.’(89) The Director-General is the tyrannical figure of power in Namless who pulls the strings behind many seemingly contradictory events, including directing a people’s strike against the very authority he represents like a theatrical performance: ‘ “Instead of troops the Authorities sent to Namless a Director-General of Cosmic Theatre. Imagine that. For centuries they had persecuted every form of strike as an immoral species of drop-out, risen-up thing. But now they were in league...” ’ (74) Here, the postmodern reconnection of the political and the aesthetic is made tangible; the metaphor is literalised, as theatre becomes a propaganda tool. The phylogenetic implications of what Marsden literally and metaphorically does in Edinburgh – directing his Festival play, but also directing and manipulating the lives of his associates – are played out in Namless. As a piece of political art itself, however, it is intended that the novel (subtitled like a piece of drama as ‘a tabula rasa comedy’) will have the converse effect of Marsden’s machinations, encouraging regeneration and new vision rather than annihilation.

The text is thus self-consciously fictional. This is reinforced by the various metafictional strategies employed, such as ambiguity, the shifting first- to third-person narrative voice, for example the unannounced shift from the first three chapters in which Goodrich is the narrator, to chapter four which begins, ‘Goodrich woke with the dream fresh in his mind’ (23), and the ‘ambivalent opacity’ of the language. A conspicuous rejection of realism is once again apparent, as with all the texts addressed in this thesis, and in keeping with Harris’s general literary schema.³⁸ As he comments with reference to another text:

They were not interested in what they already knew about themselves, but in something more. So realism was not the answer. Their own resources went deeper than their predicament.³⁹

Here, Harris implies that to say something new one must have recourse to alternatives to realism; to reach beyond the restrictions of convention is also to question and transcend the ‘real’, its allusions and illusions. Jennifer Gorgon is one of Marsden’s followers, and is another psychosomatic character, inexplicably present yet also, it seems, a projection of Goodrich’s mind. She confirms this when she remonstrates with Goodrich, thus: “ “You are a cunning one, Clive. Come now, confess. First a kiss to prove me real. Then something more to prove me even more real. Then more and still more. How permissive is reality? Is there an end to the question of proof?” (33) Coming from the lips of a fictional character, who may only be an imaginary projection of one man’s troubled

mind, this avowal is indeed significant. The real is shown to be a construct from the outset, and the supposed truths, power structures and preconceptions that make up that construct are presented as arbitrary and unstable, and therefore open to interrogation and reinterpretation. As in *Lanark*, in particular Thaw's unsettled interpretation of the Blackhill locks, 'seen simultaneously from above and below and containing north, east and south', truth is shown to rely on the ability to see from various different perspectives, and to hold that variability in mind, even as one recognises that movement requires initial fixity. The partiality of interpretations of reality is repeatedly exposed, from the multiple melding perceptions of the hybrid Namless – as when Goodrich observes of the fantastic perspectives available in that land, that 'there was a third vision or sensation as the road swung and they began to ascend [...] but now one was looking not up – not vertically into the spaces of night – but horizontally into the spaces of day' (84) – to the altered ontological perspectives on characters between worlds. Just as no single interpretation of the novel, whether supernatural or psychological, is sufficient, no one 'reality' can be relied upon.

Edge of Darkness

A similar concern with unsettling the 'real' pervades Troy Kennedy Martin's *Edge of Darkness*. Martin articulates his general anti-naturalist stance throughout his critical writing, for example in his bold 1964 article, 'Nats Go Home', which was to prefigure the agenda behind many of the techniques he employs in *Edge of Darkness*, and in his 1986 McTaggart Lecture, where he defines naturalism thus:

I can define naturalism in television as actors talking in contemporary dress against a contemporaneous background. Their purpose being to make you feel you are watching a replication of real life [...] Naturalism is basically phoney. Few people who watch a naturalist play today can possibly fool themselves that they are watching real life.⁴⁰

In the lecture he also argues that realism 'sets out to do the same thing as naturalism – to make you think you are watching a replication of real life – but without the emphasis on dialogue (or actors)'.⁴¹ Martin adopts various strategies to distance his work from both naturalist and realist restrictions, including evocations of an ambiguous supernaturalism. John Caughie places *Edge of Darkness* within a group of series which all 'trace [...] the gradual, sometimes imperceptible intrusion of madness – of individuals and institutions – and the transformation of realism into the surreal [...This is evidence of] the adaptability of the realist tradition and its ability to subvert its own rationality from

within.’⁴² Here, Caughie highlights the postmodern nature of the work, as, in Hutcheon’s words, ‘a contradictory phenomenon, one that uses and abuses, installs and then subverts, the very concepts it challenges’,⁴³ resulting in a thorough reworking of conventions. The series exploits the generic trappings of the political thriller and the detective narrative, but refuses to be trapped, oscillating from the naturalist to the supernatural and allegorical, to the satiric and downright comic, with what Norman McCaig brilliantly and accurately terms, ‘the homicidal hilarity of a laugh in a Ballad.’⁴⁴ The result is something both poignant and accessible, what Alan Riach has called: ‘a profoundly ethical critique of the politics of the nuclear state.’⁴⁵

Yet, the chief question throughout this highly complex text, with its labyrinthine plot and layers of ambiguity and signification, asks what exactly the questions are. What is the mystery, what is real and unreal, known and unknown, and by whom? In treating the series as a text, I follow Alan Riach’s argument, with specific reference to *Edge of Darkness*, that ‘television is literature’⁴⁶, a set of signs to be read and interpreted in a way cognate to written texts, with comparable symbols, resonance and systems: it is therefore part of the continuity and proliferation of the literary. However, one major difference should be highlighted. As a visual text, as well as oral and even literary when the published script is taken into consideration, *Edge of Darkness* transports, providing immediate access to another space. Moreover, as John McGrath has said of the televisual medium in general: ‘television drama, in this country at least, exists as a relatively powerful social force and as a challenge to every dramatic writer who is at all concerned with writing for a mass audience.’⁴⁷ It is a much more accessed mode than literary fiction, and therefore the ideal medium for disseminating a complex political argument in implicit form. Indeed, fantasy, the fantastic, ghost and detective stories are commonly perceived as ‘popular’ forms, and are therefore ideal for Martin’s subversive purposes. The speed of the medium and rapid scene-change involved in the text prevents on-going close scrutiny, and initially the viewer accepts what is presented, more than the reader would. Seeing is ‘passive’, in the sense that it is an activity we constantly perform without thinking about it, while reading is a chosen activity. Yet a visual text such as *Edge of Darkness*, with its persistent ambiguity and dynamic juxtaposition, encourages the viewer to engage with and analyse what is seen, heightening rather than resolving the ambiguity. The exact nature of the mystery remains a mystery, and again this crucial partiality of perceptions of reality is apparent. This is developed as a theme in the text, for as one character – the magnificent rogue Texan CIA agent Darius Jedburgh – twice says: ‘To know is to die’ (88, 145). To solve

the mystery and form any solid conclusion is to kill the narrative and nullify the power and provocation that comes with ambiguity.

In addition, John Caughie pinpoints the dual concerns of the text as 'individuals and institutions'. Like *Lanark* and *Black Marsden*, *Edge of Darkness* deals with the personal effects of political machinations, while also allowing the personal and microcosmic to signify and exist in dialogue with more comprehensive concerns. The struggles of Detective Inspector Ronnie Craven, as he reacts to and deals with the murder of his daughter Emma, her ambiguous return as a grief-symptom ghost, and that which he uncovers about her dangerous, politically subversive lifestyle become the struggles of humanity to deal with what Jedburgh terms 'the dark forces who would rule this planet'. (142) During his grief-driven investigations into Emma's death, Craven uncovers international corruption and the human motivations of the nuclear power industry, illustrating the reciprocity in the text between ontogenetic and phylogenetic categories. The preternatural figures of Emma, and even more ambiguously of Craven and Jedburgh themselves, symbolise and catalyse the exposure and potential resolution of individual pain and national malignancy, the radical departure from the conventions of realism allowing these characters to metaphorise and embody the macrocosmic within the microcosmic.

In this respect, *Edge of Darkness* is a splendidly and appropriately symmetrical text. The story begins and ends with the personal, and moves through political realms in between, increasing the poignancy of the political message for the individual viewer and ultimately reconnecting the allegorical to the everyday. Some of the very first scenes portray the intimate relationship between father and daughter. Concurrently in the final scene after the stolen plutonium has been recovered by the 'dark forces', when Jedburgh has been assassinated and Craven approaches the inevitable annihilating end of his radiation sickness, he stands overlooking the loch from which the plutonium has been salvaged, and with an animalistic and desperate cry, shouts simply 'Emma!' Ultimately, this is what has been important to him, not the uncovering of corruption at every level of power nor the discovery of the potential opposition between humanity and the planet, but his deeply held love for his daughter and the destroying pain of losing a loved one, described in *Black Marsden* as that which cannot be escaped from 'except across a sea of tears'. (91) However refracted through the story's engagement with imaginary and fantastic characters and its occasionally allegorical trajectory, this is something to which the viewer can immediately and emotionally relate.

Indeed, Emma is a fascinatingly ambiguous ghost, an ambiguity that is once more sustained to the end. The conventional supernatural/psychological tension is again radically reworked, as she exists within an almost entirely secular context, and is in no way malevolent, proving remedial rather than diabolic. How are we intended to interpret her visual presence on the screen? Is she simply an outward projection of Craven's extreme grief, a compensatory vision, or is she an actual revenant, returned from the dead to confront the unfinished business of life? A psychological interpretation is attractive, given the extreme grief Craven is undergoing – he is even briefly signed in to a psychiatric hospital – and the fact that no-one else appears to witness Emma's presence. Yet there is one point in the action where she directly intervenes. During his investigation she directs him towards a list of underground stations, which actually turns out to be a map of access to the Northmoor nuclear facility, hidden in a cookery book between the pages of the recipe Craven was going to cook for Emma on the night of her death. Craven could not have known of the map's existence or location without some unexplained assistance. Through the voice-over technique Martin employs to heighten ambiguity, in that we hear Emma yet are still led to question her reality, she says to her father: 'I've been trying to tell you about this for ages'. (103) The either/or tension is again maintained to the last, as the high speed and rapid scene-change involved in the medium combines with the extreme ambiguity of events to elude any solid conclusion.

However we understand her, just as the ghost of Rory is for Prentice in *The Crow Road* as discussed in chapter three, she is the motivation behind Craven's unerring hunger to discover. Intersubjectivity again proves a more evocative force than individuality, destabilising the boundaries between subjects, intimating a desire for freedom and paradigmatically proving a politically (in the general sense of power relationships) interrogative strategy. If Emma is a psychological projection, she is literally 'part of' Ronnie, and is often perceived by other characters to be virtually indistinguishable from her father, as in this exchange between dubious government agents Pendleton and Harcourt:

PENDLETON: First GAIA, then Northmoor, now Craven.
 HARCOURT: Which one, Ronnie or Emma?' (113)

Pendleton and Harcourt are also continually sceptical of the extent of Ronnie's ignorance concerning Emma's involvements. They even begin to believe he may have sanctioned them, as does Jedburgh, something that the viewer is left to doubt, especially as the relationship develops beyond the grave, and we are provided with access to

Ronnie's emotions, surprise and fright when he discovers just how deeply Emma is implicated. The known and the unknown once again become confused, revealing the arbitrary nature of knowledge, and its dissociation from actual understanding. Yet moreover, Emma becomes a symbol, the automatic subversion of the rules of the 'real' that allow for her introduction magnifying and foregrounding a deeper political critique and interrogation.

However, in many ways more significant than Emma's potential liminality is the suggestion of the supernatural around other characters, in particular Craven himself, his other guide the formidable yet fun Jedburgh, and nuclear boss Jerry Grogan. Jedburgh himself tells Craven early on in their relationship, 'I'm your magic helper' (67), a direct reference to the supernatural agents discussed by Vladimir Propp in his *Morphology of the Folktale*.⁴⁸ Moreover, when commenting on the misdoings of Grogan as head of the Fusion Corporation of Kansas, Jedburgh instigates the following exchange:

JEDBURGH: He's part of the dark forces who would rule this planet.

CRAVEN: You believe in all that stuff?

JEDBURGH: Yeah, sure. Why not? Look at yourself. You think of yourself as an English provincial Detective...whose daughter died in tragic circumstances. Yet where she fell a well sprang, Flowers grew. Now what kind of power is that? (142)

In the place where Emma's body first fell after she was shot in front of her father, a mysterious well appears and, along with it, an increased growth of plant life. Jedburgh refuses to let Craven dwell in his personal pain and forces him to witness and play a part in the wider global implications of what he is uncovering. He discovers that Emma was murdered indirectly by the representatives of a conspiracy involving certain government officials and the company running the Northmoor nuclear power plant, International Irradiated Fuels, due to her membership of the direct action environmental group GAIA and her subsequent discovery of an illegal and dangerous 'hot cell' with nuclear reprocessing capabilities within the plant.

Gaia, the Greek earth-goddess, is also the name of a theory expounded by NASA scientist James Lovelock, explaining how the earth will always maintain its equilibrium regardless of humanity's actions, pollution, climate change and other factors.⁴⁹ Gaia is the phylogenetic role Emma metaphorically assumes for Craven at some points in the action, becoming more than his daughter and instructing him on how the planet will regulate itself and always in the end overcome adversity. Emma pleads

with her father before he dies: ‘...don’t spend your last hours seeking revenge, Dad. The planet will do it for us...in time.’ (165) This is something that Craven eventually accepts, telling the Falstaffian people’s man Jedburgh (who maintains that ‘man will always win against nature’ (174)) that he, Craven, is ‘on the side of the planet’. (175) As the story veers towards global allegory, Craven comes to represent the figure of the Green Man of nature from Celtic legend, a man yet ‘on the side of the planet’. This was to have been affirmed in the original ending of the series, which Martin agreed to scrap after discussion with director Martin Campbell. Craven was to have been shot by a sniper under the direction of the conspiracy due to the knowledge he held, his body then metamorphosing into a tree over many years. As a literary metaphor this may well have been acceptable, but visually it would probably have been somewhat excessive. Instead, black flowers begin to grow – the black flowers Emma discusses as the representatives of the spirit of Gaia and indicators that the planet may be about to shed itself of its human hindrance. The image is highly ambiguous in itself: beautiful, resonant of fragility and hope, but also sinister and threatening. Darkness is literally on the screen in the petals of the flower, and this recalls the black flower Emma brings Craven in hospital, as a harbinger of death, just as he awakens to discover he is terminally ill with radiation sickness. With either ending, Craven’s personal history and struggle become paradigmatic for that of the planet. No straightforward allegorical interpretation is possible; Craven continually retains both ontogenetic and phylogenetic significance, representing the deeply personal and the universal.

The bodies of Craven and Jedburgh add a further layer of meaning to this theme. During their illegal expedition into Northmoor to discover what happened to Emma, and what exactly is held there, they willingly expose themselves to radiation. Jedburgh even goes so far as to steal several bars of plutonium and carry them out of the facility in a plastic Harrods bag. As the final episodes progress, we witness the men’s steady deterioration towards death, radiation sickness effectively corrupting them from the inside out. The outward visual symptoms – the dark lesions that begin to disfigure and dehumanise their faces – are the last signs to appear, an impotent and ironic warning as by then death is inevitable. In a contemporary review of the series, Ruth Baumgarten brilliantly comments on the rotting bodies of Jedburgh and Craven thus:

They resurface as contagious, deadly spectres whose one and only ally against the greedy, power-hungry plutonium lords and politicians is their own disintegration, their own physical alliance with the earth’s merciful power to decompose.⁵⁰

They willingly return to the earth and to inertia, that which according to Freud all humanity ultimately desires as a means of concluding pain and anxiety⁵¹ – but not before their symbolic bodies have given testimony to and interrogated the concealed corruption at the heart of the nuclear industry. Signifying and prefiguring the effect large-scale nuclear accident or war would have on the planet, their physical deterioration acts as a bleak warning to humanity. Yet the visible manifestations of this individual, and as the metaphor suggests, potentially global illness indicate irretrievability. This increases the poignancy and immediacy of a warning that in Thatcherite Britain during the Cold War would have already been terrifyingly current for many. The series seemed to crystallise contemporary fears in an era of escalating nuclear threat, symbolised in the way in which the body becomes the potential national body, internally corrupt and inevitably drawn towards self-annihilation and death.

Prior to death and during their final meeting, Jedburgh and Craven recall the words of the Willie Nelson ballad they discovered they had a mutual appreciation of during their first encounter, 'The Time of the Preacher'. The ballad was also on Emma's turntable after she died, another potential intersubjective link between the preternatural triumvirate. One particularly poignant line warns that: 'when you think it's all over, it has only begun'. (173) An apposite epitaph for all three, this is also a warning to the viewer. Rather a beginning than an ending, the onus of transformation is placed firmly on the audience at the conclusion of the series. As Joe Sanders states:

The film [sic] uses fantastic devices to break its audience loose from trust in policemen, government, or passive compromise. Instead, it leaves the audience with the responsibility for saving itself.⁵²

In this ambiguous world where characters interpenetrate, the 'real' is elusive, and everything is open to interrogation, it is difficult to trust anything. The viewer is left aware of the unnerving but liberating possibilities of change, as a pretext for decision.

Also at the conclusion of the series, the strongest hint of the supernatural around the fourth ambiguous and almost allegorical figure, Jerry Grogan, is given. Harcourt's voice is heard over the final scene, relating the narrative to its conclusion. He states that: 'Grogan was there, watching the proceedings like some twentieth-century vampire, although after his exposure to Jedburgh's plutonium at the conference I don't hold out much for his chances.' (178) The reference to plutonium – what Jedburgh scathingly calls 'that stuff' – suggests an intertextuality with Superman. Plutonium, like

Kryptonite, proves to be the Achilles' heel of all the quasi-supernatural figures, the only thing that can kill them: Craven, Jedburgh and Grogan directly, and Emma indirectly. This is reinforced by Jedburgh's intertextual reference to the Superman comic strip, when, with reference to Grogan's buy-out of the Northmoor plant, he observes that there will be 'Trouble, right here in River City'. (72) He is referring to London, but the allusion is to the *Superman* comic book city, Metropolis. The reference to vampirism is also significant. The figure of the vampire was originally the literalisation of a political metaphor, long before it became inscribed in the domain of western Gothic fiction from eastern European folklore,⁵³ as this extract from the 1732 English pamphlet, 'Political Vampyres', shows:

The whole Story is a *Fable*, us'd to convey a satirical Invective against some *living Oppressor*; [...] The Blood which *Arnold* lost in driving the stake thro' his Heart, might figurate the making him refund the *corrupt Wages*, which he had suck'd out of the Veins of his Countrymen. History, especially our own, supplies us with so many Instances of *Vampyres* in this Sense, that it wou'd fill Volumes to enumerate them.⁵⁴

Grogan, 'part of the dark forces who would rule this planet', is also a political vampire, existing like the capitalist cannibals in *Lanark*, as a parasite, feeding off the labours of others. This left-wing message resonates in recent readings of vampire texts, such as Franco Morretti's well-known Marxist reading of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897).⁵⁵ Equally, in much popular literature, vampires are portrayed as aristocratic and decadent figures who have the wealth and leisure to enjoy the finer things in life, a portrayal that invites materialist interpretations. The reference to 'fable' in the above extract suggests a further level on which the text can be read. As the struggle between the dark forces of humanity and the planet, along with its human representatives Gaia and the Green Man, is projected upwards to the level of allegory, the defamiliarisation of one community's struggles from this aerial perspective allows its universal relevance to be seen more clearly. As in *Lanark*, the dynamic of the text is provided by the possibilities these contingent perspectives allow.

So I Am Glad

Defamiliarisation is also a potent subversive technique in A.L. Kennedy's equally metafictional text, *So I Am Glad*. Through the untrained eyes of Martin, who is potentially the ghost of Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac somehow translated from seventeenth-century Paris to present-day urban Scotland, we are provided with access to

an altered perspective on a familiar world. With reference to Kennedy's work in general, Will Self complains of a 'sense of vagueness about period and place in the novels [and] her failure to adequately render a sense of place'.⁵⁶ This rather unfair criticism highlights Kennedy's postmodernist interrogation of metanarratives. Scotland is not just one city, she argues, and her work is not just relevant to one section of society. This is reinforced by her estrangement of the familiar literary depiction of urban Scotland, via its refraction through a fantastic lens. Savinien is an alien, literally a 'man who fell to earth', who – or so he claims – finds himself dropped into Jennifer's middle-class home in Glasgow to become the 'household's resident dead Frenchman'. (95) Yet, his presence remains ambiguous, as Kennedy employs fantastic techniques to present the love affair between Jennifer, 'the professionally calm', and Savinien, 'the long-term dead'. (100) Is he supernatural or psychological? Once again, the conventional tension is radically reworked, as he, like Emma and Rory, is secularised and far from diabolic. In fact, whether real or imaginary, his function remains the same. In Douglas Gifford's words:

Jennifer needs both to avoid and atone; Cyrano answers both needs. He has lived with violence yet has a code of honour; is disfigured yet acceptable; and has sensitivity unavailable to modern males. He can understand distortion and articulate dilemma – and Jennifer desperately needs to understand and articulate. He is the correlative for her yearning to be free of herself. Read thus, the book is about a process of self-healing in a nasty modern world.⁵⁷

However, intimating a wholly psychological reading, this interpretation fails to satisfy and leaves many questions unanswered. Savinien is seen by others, and forms a close fraternal bond with Jennifer's housemate Arthur. Moreover, in an appealing magical touch, he glows in the dark, something that Jennifer initially finds frightening. She tells us:

The kitchen is really quite gloomy by this time and it should be difficult to see Martin, but in fact he is far more visible than he has any right to be. When he opens his mouth for any length of time there is a pale gleam which reminds me insanely of the light from a self-sealing envelope if you peel it apart in the dark. An unnatural, static blue flash. His hands and face are simply burning. (12)

If inventing an imaginary lover, why choose an alien and unnerving detail such as this? A fabrication has the potential to be perfect, whereas Savinien is attractively flawed.

The ambiguity, however, is maintained to the last through the fact that Jennifer relates the entire story. She places a disclaimer at the beginning of the story herself, saying, 'If you find what I tell you now rather difficult to believe, please treat it as fiction. I won't be offended' (12), and at the end that 'sometimes the best beginning is a lie'. (280) Savinien's origins, then, become of secondary importance. What is significant is the function he performs in the novel. As a seventeenth-century French gentleman whose favoured pastimes were writing and fighting, he is estranged in terms of time, place and social class. He talks of his altered context, as ' "when my world was struck new and so remarkable"' (18), and asks Jennifer, when she articulates her doubts about his claims concerning his origins, ' "Do you think I would choose to be so out of place? After a lifetime of finding my world as hospitable as the moon I would elect to be this different again?"' (81) The fantastic ambiguity means that it is possible that Jennifer elected he should be this different. His incongruous perspective becomes a political critique as he comes up against the poverty, crime, homelessness and drug addiction of our familiar world. In an episode where he fails to understand why he cannot wreak revenge on an adversary, as his code of honour clashes with the laws of the novel's society, he exclaims:

"You are defenceless and your world is breaking in half. In all honesty, I believe your world has broken, it has split itself apart. There is such savagery and darkness and then such ridiculous openness." (228)

This sounds uncannily like a contemporary re-eruption of the Caledonian Antisyzygy; that ghost which haunts twentieth-century Scottish literary criticism. It also suggests the motif of proximities witnessed in *Black Marsden*: the proximity of violence and tenderness throughout Jennifer's troubled life, and the earthliness and spirituality embodied by the at once corporeal and supernatural Savinien. What is revealed through Savinien's untrained eyes is the horrific actuality of society, violent and malevolent, but also the kindness and love an individual is capable of within that society. To invoke Hugh MacDiarmid's description of the place where the creative artist should be, in order to find the ability to articulate their own contradictory position, modern urban Scotland is the place 'whaur extremes meet'. In *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, MacDiarmid proclaims that this is where we will find him, in order 'to dodge the curst conceit o' bein' richt/That damns the vast majority o' men.' This is, as Jennifer begins to understand with Savinien's help, to find the courage to be self-confident in a minority – to be not 'wrong' if not 'richt'.

Savinien's outburst is the product of a whole series of failures to grasp the 'reality' of his situation, something that as their relationship develops and her perspective consequently begins to alter, Jennifer increasingly shares. Viewed through the glass of her love for Savinien and the change that provides access to, Jennifer states that 'reality would seem just the same as always but an eighth of an inch to one side.'(39) Savinien's influence continues to change Jennifer from the outset. She develops what her employers refer to as a 'tone' (218) in her voice during her radio announcements. This 'tone' gives her voice a politically critical edge, so that she finds she can no longer read news reports in her customary passive and detached manner about how:

Our prime minister wishes to fine the penniless and homeless for being homeless – not to mention shabby and down at heel. Unforthcoming fines will be used to build prisons in which to store those homeless persons unable to pay fines. (218)

As she states: 'My tone was the only protest I could make. I went into the studio with my mouth tasting of ash, and when I stood up to leave it, the taste was worse.' (221) Savinien's existence in her life, in whatever form, permits Jennifer the necessary distance and objectivity to criticise, as she is granted access to his distinctive perspective. He becomes the tangible manifestation of her discontent with her world.

Yet, more than this, he becomes part of her. If he in fact is an externalisation of her troubled mind, rather than an 'actual' ghost, then he is already literally part of her. But whether 'other' or 'Other', her understanding of their bond increases as their relationship intensifies. Intersubjectivity once again proves the motivating force behind relationships. Hutcheon claims that postmodernist texts 'challenge the humanist assumption of a unified self and an integrated consciousness by both installing coherent subjectivity and subverting it'.⁵⁸ This indeed proves true for *So I Am Glad*. Jennifer initially prides herself on her autonomy, or as she says: 'Like manholes and poison bottles I was made to be self-locking [...] I stopped trying to be normal and began to enjoy a small, still life that fitted very snugly around nobody but me.' (4) But when the transcendent figure of Savinien arrives, her defences are broken down, and the dissociation between subjects – the individualism upon which traditional power relationships are founded – is transgressed and disintegrated. Or, as Whiteford states with reference to *Lanark*: 'If the individual human subject is 'decentred', in what ground can the identities necessary for human agency be related?'⁵⁹ At one point during

her love affair with Savinien, Jennifer observes a chess game on television, and notes how the relationship between the initially polarised participants metamorphoses over time. She acknowledges:

their identities extending, exploring, exchanging [...] I understood where they were going together because I was going there, too.

Of course, nothing tangible happened between Savinien and myself. What could happen between the professionally calm and the long-term dead? But I knew I moved my hands the way that he did and I knew he had one of my laughs and I knew I didn't care. There was nothing to stop us being together so we didn't stop. (100)

Savinien, 'the long-term dead', is a liminal figure, existing between worlds. Yet unlike the undead figure of the vampire discussed previously, his role is to give rather than take. Intersubjectivity and liminality are comparable states. The presence of the liminal figure of Savinien allows Jennifer the freedom of becoming, in a sense, liminal herself, to exist in an unbounded state between binaries, of self and other, individuality and communality, past and present.

In *Spectres of Marx*, Jacques Derrida employs the trope of the ghost to illustrate specific aspects of deconstruction.⁶⁰ The significance of the sign of the spectre to deconstruction is apparent. As Peter Buse and Andrew Stott argue:

Ghosts are neither dead nor alive, neither corporeal objects nor stern absences. As such, they are the stock-in-trade of the Derridean enterprise, standing in defiance of binary oppositions such as presence and absence, body and spirit, past and present, life and death. For deconstruction, these terms cannot stand in clear, independent opposition to one another, as each can be shown to possess an element or trace of the term that it is meant to oppose.⁶¹

As a ghost and as a visualised externalisation of Jennifer's thoughts and emotions, Savinien exists between such binaries, exposing their arbitrariness and constructedness. Jennifer's similarly numinous position, existing between subjective states, allows her the distance to interrogate, undermine and deconstruct restrictive and simplistic polarisations, such as real/fantasy, mad/sane, past/present, and personal/political.

This last binary is further deconstructed by Kennedy's evocation on one level of Savinien's body, which – like the rotting bodies of Craven and Jedburgh in *Edge of Darkness* – exists as a further comment on society. The state of the nation is temporarily metaphorised in his illness-riddled body when he returns to Jennifer after several months' absence, having experienced the urban underworld of homelessness and drug

addiction. It should be noted, however, that – in an elaboration of Kennedy’s anti-realist stance – it is not a traditional ‘hard man’ that experiences the Glasgow underworld of conventional realism, but a seventeenth-century French gentleman, and a ghost to boot. Along with the middle-class position of most of the protagonists, this incongruity further defamiliarises something that particularly a Scottish reading public may be all too well-acquainted with. In this novel, disfunctionality is not only the realm of the working classes. Jennifer notes of Savinien on his return that, ‘it was obvious he had lost a good deal of weight. His arms and legs were pale, marked with old and new bruises, cuts, his feet were raw, swollen’ (152), and later tells us that, ‘I couldn’t describe how he seemed – it was other than I would have wished, or frail, or like a damaged animal, or almost frightening’. (183) Savinien’s return forces his withdrawal from an addiction to ‘atties’, Ativan or ‘happy pills’ (162), which involves copious vomiting, shaking, sweating and aggressive behaviour. This incident is prefigured by Jennifer’s socially critical comments on the contents of a skip: ‘Probably there are some abandoned syringes in there, too. We have passed the time when anywhere in this city will be entirely free of used syringes, of our public sicknesses.’ (95) Public sickness is translated into Savinien’s personal suffering. Later, when observing her friend and lover in his misery, Jennifer tells us:

I moved close enough to notice the whole bed was shaking. The hands clutching the quilt to his throat were shuddering. I watched his mechanism breaking down and didn’t know if there would be anything to replace it... (163)

Yet Savinien does get better, an alternative mechanism presenting itself in the form of his love for Jennifer. This proves a different kind of dependency from which they must both later undergo a withdrawal. His process of healing optimistically implies the possible resolution and rectification of society’s ills. However, this remains a potential unfulfilled as yet, as confirmed after Savinien’s return to the otherworld of death or the mind, by Jennifer’s future tense concluding statement: ‘I will be glad’. (280) The novel’s exposure of these ills, like the decomposing bodies of Jedburgh and Craven, acts as a call for change. Healing is possible for the individual, but for society it remains to be seen.

Affirming multiplicity

As with the other texts, the ontogenetic and the phylogenetic exist in a dynamic relationship. Douglas Gifford comments that: 'Kennedy constantly juxtaposes Jennifer's personal problems with glimpses through her of a sick society, a world of atrocity and sadistic exploitation'⁶², highlighting the simultaneous inward and outward postmodernist perspective. The supernatural performs the translation from personal pain and suffering to political corruption and national malignancy, its radical departure from realism allowing it to metaphorise and embody the macrocosmic within the microcosmic. As Jennifer states: 'Apart from all the bad things in the world and all the bad things in my head, we were all right'. (222) And, indeed, the novel implies that things will be 'all right' for both categories. The subversive introduction of that which is self-consciously 'not-real', transgressing the conventions of urban and political literature, sanctions a further and more recondite interrogation of how things are. What is offered through the call for change this critical text represents is the optimistic possibility of the human ability to transform.

Just as the other texts do, *So I Am Glad* at times follows an allegorical trajectory. Yet, according to Tzvetan Todorov, allegory and the fantastic cannot co-exist. He states:

If what we read describes a supernatural event, yet we take the words not in their literal meaning but in another sense which refers to nothing supernatural, there is no longer any space in which the fantastic can exist. There exists then a scale of literary sub-genres, between the fantastic (which belongs to that type of text which must be read literally) and pure allegory (which retains only the second, allegorical meaning)⁶³.

Despite the suggestion of allegory around some of the events depicted, these texts confirm Todorov's rather concretising claims. Allegory involves the removal of a concept from its context, and its subsequent connection with external referents to create meaning. Yet, as we have seen, the texts examined here maintain both external and internal significance, reconnecting the reader to individual concerns via fantastic and political perspectives. No simple allegory is applicable in texts where the only access to truth is through multiple interpretations. Like Thaw's painting of the Blackhill Locks in *Lanark*, no single view or explanation is enough. Totalising, allegorical interpretations are inadequate in texts where dialogue and plurality are the main concerns – resulting in the problematising of subjectivity, homogenised identities, contrived binaries, and all metanarratives. The rigid imposition of allegory is as much a metanarrative as any other. Madness and the supernatural are states during which conventional rules do not apply. By being ungoverned by the established codes, they therefore highlight the

shortcomings of these codes, and provide a degree of freedom for those touched by their altering forces.

The connection between non-realist form and political imperative in these texts thus foregrounds the translation from a focus on the individual subject to a more universal social relevance. The trauma haunting these characters and their communities is resolved and transformed through an eventually empowering encounter with the potentially supernatural, or at least with some kind of psychological change. Ambiguity offers multiple interpretations, and thus multiple applications, treading the middle ground between the either/or binary, and simultaneously that between the individual and the cultural. The recognition of the reciprocity between subject and context prevents the imposition of a single restrictive identity upon the individual, which in turn allows for the rejection of homogenising metanarratives and a dialogue of possibilities for the community at large.

Notes

¹ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*, (London: Routledge, 1988) p.xii

² Robert Miles, '“Tranced Griefs”: Melville's *Pierre* and the Origins of the Gothic', in *ELH* 66 (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp.157-177, p.169

³ Ivan Gaskell and Salim Kemal ed., *Politics and Aesthetics in the Arts*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000) p.2

⁴ 'psychosomatic' in *Oxford English Dictionary volume XII*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.770

⁵ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1970), trans. Richard Howard, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), p.25, p.31

⁶ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p.20

⁷ Jean Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a report on knowledge* (1979), trans. from the French by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p.xxiv

⁸ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), (London: Routledge 1991), p.75

⁹ In Hogg's *Confessions*, the editor makes reference to a letter written by a James Hogg, as if that person had nothing to do with the novel. The identification of Hogg's self-conscious techniques reflects his literary ability and to an extent how prophetic his work is. On the other hand, it is also perhaps a better indicator of a change in the way critics have read his work, from Andre Gide's seminal preface to the *Confessions* in 1947, and since the event of psychoanalytic criticism. This incident in the novel is discussed at greater length in Chapter One.

¹⁰ Examples of ambiguous, potentially drink-induced visions and supernatural events in Scottish literature include Burns' *Tam o' Shanter*, and Robert Wringhim's loss of three months in the *Confessions*, where a local woman accuses Robert thus: 'for months and days you have been in such a state of extreme inebriety, that your time has gone over like a dream that has been forgotten. I believe, that from the day you cam first to my house, you have been in a state of utter delirium, and that principally from the fumes of wine and ardent spirits.' (176) In Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (1932), Chae Strachan has a vision of a Roman soldier whilst walking home after a heavy whisky-drinking session. He himself admits that it may have been brought about 'by Rob's Glenlivet'. Contemporary evolutions of this motif are the visions induced by ecstasy in Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995). Alcohol and farcical 'supernatural' occurrences are found in close proximity, making the jest more conducive to belief, in *The Freiris of Berwick* (c.1480)

¹¹ Social realism and the accompanying urban working-class portrayals are evident in a number of recent texts, such as the television serials *Taggart*, *Roughnecks*, *The Plan Man* and *The Key* (dir. David Blair), and in the fiction of Agnes Owens, Duncan Maclean and William McIlvaney. Realism is also adopted somewhat more problematically by James Kelman, and whether his 'hyper-realist' techniques actually challenge and/or re-inscribe restrictive conventions in a matter of some contention.

¹² Randall Stevenson, 'Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991); Eilidh M. Whiteford, *Political Histories, Politicised Spaces: Discourses of Power in the Fiction of Alasdair Gray*, (PhD Thesis: University of Glasgow, 1997); Beat Witschi, *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism: A Study of Alasdair Gray's Fiction*, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991)

¹³ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: the Theory and Practice of Self-conscious Fiction*, (London: Routledge, 1988), p.38

¹⁴ Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p.228

¹⁵ *Postmodernist Fiction*, p.10

- ¹⁶ Sigmund Freud (1919), 'The Uncanny', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, volume XVII, trans. from the German by James Strachey (1955), (London: Vintage 2001), p.244
- ¹⁷ Ibid. p.220
- ¹⁸ Ibid. p.249
- ¹⁹ George Donaldson and Alison Lee, 'Is eating people really wrong? Dining with Alasdair Gray', in *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 15, no.2 (Summer 1995), pp.155-162, p.155
- ²⁰ *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism*, p.9
- ²¹ Hugh MacDiarmid, *Scottish Eccentrics* (1936), ed. Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet Press Ltd., 1993), p.194
- ²² Stephen Dedalus in James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922), (Oxford World's Classics, 1998), p.31
- ²³ R.J. Lyall, 'Postmodernist otherworld, postcalvinist purgatory: An approach to *Lanark* and *The Bridge*', in *Etudes Ecossaises* 2 (1992), p.43
- ²⁴ This is confirmed in Gray's manuscripts of *Lanark*, housed in Glasgow University library Special Collections department, where he regularly incorporates faces and eyes looking in multiple directions into the hand-written pages.
- ²⁵ Rodge Glass, 'When Worlds Collide – A Nomination for *Lanark*' in 'The Best Scottish Book Ever?' supplement, *Sunday Herald*, 26th June, 2005, p.4
- ²⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in Poetic Language*, trans. Margaret Waller (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984). See especially pp.23-30
- ²⁷ Ibid., p.28
- ²⁸ Ibid., p.70
- ²⁹ Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*, (London: Allen Lane, 2003) p.220
- ³⁰ Donaldson and Lee, '“Is eating people really wrong?” Dining with Alasdair Gray', p.156
- ³¹ See note 14
- ³² Stein in Joseph Conrad, *Lord Jim*, (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996; 1900), p.129
- ³³ Mark A McWatt, '“A Late Dazzle of Sun”: Aspects of Wilson Harris's Comic Vision in *Black Marsden*', in *Wilson Harris: The Uncompromising Imagination*, ed. Hene Maes-Jelinek (Sydney: Dangaroo Press, 1991), pp.148-158, p.149
- ³⁴ Alan Riach, introduction to *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks, Wilson Harris*, ed. Alan Riach and Mark Williams (Liege: Department of English, University of Liege, 1992), p.12
- ³⁵ B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths, and H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, (London: Routledge, 1989), p.151
- ³⁶ '“A Late Dazzle of Sun”', p.155
- ³⁷ *Political Histories, Politicised Spaces*, p.40
- ³⁸ Harris is fully aware of this engagement with and interrogation of realism throughout the Scottish literary tradition. He quotes from Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man* as epigraphs to his novel, and has elsewhere, in his critical work, addressed Hogg's *Confessions* (Wilson Harris, 'The Fabric of Imagination' in *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 12, issue 1 (January 1990), p.175)
- ³⁹ Wilson Harris, quoted in T.J. Cribb, 'T.W. Harris – Sworn Surveyor' in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Volume XXIX, number 1* (1993), p.13
- ⁴⁰ Troy Kennedy Martin, The McTaggart Lecture, Edinburgh International Television Festival 1986, published in *The Listener*, 28th August 1986, p.10
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism and British Culture*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.205
- ⁴³ *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.3
- ⁴⁴ Norman McCaig, 'Space Travel', from *Rings on a Tree*, (1968)
- ⁴⁵ Alan Riach, 'It Happened Fast and It Was Dark: Cinema, Theatre and Television, Comic Books', in *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.195-222, p.214
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., p.206
- ⁴⁷ John McGrath, quoted in *British Television Drama: Past, Present and Future*, ed. Jonathan Bignell, Stephen Lacey and Madeleine MacMurrough, (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000) p.82
- ⁴⁸ Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), pp.43-46
- ⁴⁹ James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979)
- ⁵⁰ Ruth Baumgarten, 'Nukes and Spooks', in *The Listener - 31st October 1985*, p.36
- ⁵¹ See Freud's discussion of the 'death instinct' – according to him the strongest drive a human experiences – in 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle'.
- ⁵² Joe Sanders, '“Edge of Darkness” as Transhuman Thriller', in *The Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, (1993), pp.83-91, p.90
- ⁵³ The folkloric vampire entered Western literature as a result of the convergence of two factors: the famous vampire sightings of the eighteenth century, and the rise of Gothic literature. The word "vampyre" made its first appearance in the English language in the early 1730s, with a rash of vampire sightings documented in several parts of central and Eastern Europe that were eventually reported in the British press. These reports coincided with (and maybe contributed to) a rising interest in Gothic literature. The first British writers to feature vampires were the Romantic poets, notably Robert Southey and Lord Byron. Southey included a vampire in *Thalaba the Destroyer* (1799), while Byron's narrative poem *The Giaour* (1813) contains a famous vampire curse. The image of the vampire became more romanticized and eroticized during the nineteenth century with literary works such as John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), and Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1872).

⁵⁴ Anon., (1732), 'Political Vampyres', in *Gothic Documents: A Sourcebook 1700 – 1820*, ed. E.J. Clery and Robert Miles

⁵⁵ Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken for Wonders: Essays in the Sociology of Literature*, trans. Susan Fischer et al. (London: Verso, 1983), pp.83-108

⁵⁶ Will Self, 'Come down from your tower, Alison', in *Independent on Sunday*, 22nd August 1999

⁵⁷ Douglas Gifford, 'Contemporary Fiction II: Seven Writers in Scotland', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. Douglas Gifford and Dorothy Macmillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p.620

⁵⁸ *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p.xii

⁵⁹ See note 29

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (London: Routledge, 1994)

⁶¹ Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, 'Introduction: A Future for Haunting', in *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History*, (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p.10

⁶² Douglas Gifford, p.959/60

⁶³ *The Fantastic*, p.63/4

Conclusion: 'To know is to die.'

'They were not interested in what they already knew about themselves, but in something more. So realism was not the answer. Their own resources went deeper than their predicament.'¹

– Wilson Harris

For these writers, realism is not the answer to the question of how to portray identity within Scottish fiction. My primary claim in this thesis is that the, admittedly various, texts examined herein form the constituents of a previously unexplored and even unrecognised tradition within Scottish fiction. This tradition rejects or questions the metanarratives of Scottish identity and experience – particularly those involving rural orientalisation, and urban working-class deprivation and struggle – so often portrayed through and sustained by the realist mode. Like other literary traditions, psychosomatic supernaturalism evolves over time, transforming under the various social and political conditions of its context. Yet it consistently involves comparable themes, techniques and concerns.

The interpretational tension between supernatural and psychological is something that critics occasionally and tantalisingly mention, but fail to investigate. This thesis represents the first sustained analysis of this motif of spectral ambiguity, and the first time these writers have been examined collectively. No critical work has looked at these texts in this way before, or made explicit the links and parallels, important because the tradition includes some of the most canonical of Scottish texts, as well as some of the more surprising, and is still apparent in some of the most recent work to come from Scotland (see Appendix A). The texts are both familiar and non-canonical, ranging from the early nineteenth to the late twentieth and into the twenty first century, and appear as fiction, film and television. However, when we look at them as a connected constellation – in the form of a tradition – then it can be seen how issues of individual and collective identity, and the subversion of dominant codes of representation can consistently be given expression through an ambiguous supernaturalism. The co-existence of multiple interpretational possibilities, as events are ambiguously ascribed to madness, the supernatural, or some other force, prevents the identification of a single centre of truth. 'Truth' in these texts, that which the realist mode in fiction professes to tell, is at best a suspect concept. As Jennifer in *So I Am Glad* asserts, 'sometimes the best beginning is a lie.' (280) In all these texts, the best

endings are questions rather than assertions. The reader's role is to negotiate these questions as an alternative to the conventional comforting answers of realism.

The title for this conclusion takes its name from the enigmatic phrase uttered by Darius Jedburgh just before he himself dies in *Edge of Darkness*. Its application here is apt: in all of these texts, certain knowledge brings an end to the dynamic of ambiguity. Insecurity, inconsistency, and contradiction allow for the proliferation of possibilities. As Wole Soyinka states in his essay 'The Fourth Stage': 'it is true that to understand, to understand profoundly, is to be unnerved, deprived of the will to act.'² Soyinka addresses theatre, and the space in tragedy that represents the transition between worlds, the chaotic realm that lies beyond the conventional three stages of birth, life and death, signifying past, present and future. However, in this context, as applied to this tradition in Scottish fiction, to understand or decide on one specific interpretation is to neutralise some of the power of these narratives. Like Soyinka's own position as a revisionist writer who works on principals of combination and hybridisation, this tradition has the potential to be radical, allowing for the possibility of interrogation of norms, and disallowing easy answers and glib resolutions.

On the other hand, this is not to suggest that fixities are entirely absent in these texts. In his elucidating study *After Theory*, Terry Eagleton bears witness to what he views as a return to essentials in literary critical and theoretical practice. He argues, as we have seen in the introduction, that 'to be inside and outside a position at the same time – to occupy a territory while loitering sceptically on the boundary – is often where the most intensely creative ideas stem from.'³ One can only move on from a fixed point; one cannot push against air. This double position is taken up by these texts: they occupy the territories of realism (the psychological explanation of events) and the traditional ghost story (the supernatural explanation), while evoking ambiguity and even suspicion around both. To be in dialogue with something is to engage with it more firmly than straightforwardly accepting it, or outrightly rejecting it. Dialogue with these fixities is the key to full questioning and subversion. As Rosemary Jackson argues of the fantastic and its engagement with realism: 'the fantastic exists as the inside, or underside, of realism, opposing the novel's closed, monological forms with open, dialogical structures, as if the novel had given rise to its own opposite, its unrecognisable reflection.'⁴ Liminality and elusiveness guard against and interrogate extreme positions, allowing for the occupation of new and creative territories. These texts are all still connected to realism, but in the sense that they provide a politically engaged alternative to the mode.

Concurrent with their multiplicity in terms of mode, any sole perspective within these texts is a distortion. The simultaneous inward and outward vision, provided by the multiple narratives in Hogg's, Harris's and Gray's novels and Stevenson's stories, the wider political significance of the individual's actions in all the texts, and the defamiliarisation of the everyday in *Black Marsden*, *Lanark* and *So I Am Glad*, blurs the distinction between imagination and reality. The texts have synchronous significance to humanity *and* to the individual, existing psychologically, supernaturally and allegorically. The experiences portrayed are given familiar locations, either rural or urban, in the vein of the social realists, but they are also universal, as differing and hugely divergent perspectives combine to provide access to many shared realities. Exclusive perception would only provide misrepresentation, and instead heterogeneous possibilities are offered. Ambiguity, interrogation and unsatisfied desire, rather than knowledge and resolution, become the motivation for reading. These writers try to reach beyond the restrictions of convention, to question and transcend the 'real', its allusions and illusions.

The protagonists are generally flawed but likeable, and where they succeed we are happy for them. Where they fail, as they so often do, we learn from their mistakes. Their bewilderment as they are faced with the potentially supernatural, those beliefs which they ought to have surmounted, is mirrored by our own hesitation in concluding in favour of either interpretation of events. However, whether supernatural or psychological, for the protagonists these ambiguous experiences are consistently tangible, from Gatty's coma in the *Perils of Woman* (1823), to Jennifer's love affair with the corporeal Savinien in *So I Am Glad* (1995). This paradox, ambiguous yet tangible, requires configuration in a more physical aspect, and can be theorised with reference again to Soyinka's writing. In 'The Fourth Stage', Soyinka describes this space of transition as a chaotic location where contradictions appropriately but irresolvably collide. The theatre is the tangible representation of this stage, the space between worlds. The Yoruba god Ogun's journey through the fourth stage is for Soyinka a metaphor for the creative process. As he states:

I was using Ogun very much as an analogue: what happens when one steps out into the unknown? [...] This I took as a kind of model of the artist's role, the artist as a visionary explorer, a creature dissatisfied with the immediate reality – so he has to cut through the obscuring growth, to enter a totally new terrain of being; a new terrain of sensing, a new terrain of relationships. And *Ogun* represented that kind of artist to me.⁵

For the characters in these texts, paradox produces something akin to creativity: the chance to create a 'way out' or explore a new terrain, whether that chance is taken up or not. Within this tradition, contradiction is appropriate.

Although psychosomatic supernaturalism is primarily a tradition in fiction, it proves apt to view it through a theatrical lens, as I have done at points throughout this thesis, because theatre provides a space for physicality, just in the way that the psychological/supernatural ambiguity does in these texts. The paradox of ambiguity and tangibility is evocative rather than awkward. As Samuel Johnson pleasingly put it: 'Inconsistencies cannot both be right, but, imputed to man, they may both be true.'⁶

This tradition challenges and questions the metanarratives of Scottish identity, conventionally represented in Scottish fiction against a backdrop of urban realism or rural romanticism. However, it does not necessarily implode myths. Absolute freedom, from fixities, myths, or shared narratives, is paradoxically limiting too, something that postmodernist advocates of endless plurality and play overlook. As Terry Eagleton argues: 'Freedom, however, cannot be represented. It is elusive, quicksilver stuff which slips through our fingers and refuses to be imaged. To define it is to destroy it.' (195) Limitlessness can be annihilating, and is, moreover, problematic in terms of artistic representation. Literary texts will always work with myths. It just depends on what writers and critics alike chose to do with those myths – whether they are allowed to restrict, or turned into ennobling, positive fixities to push against or question, providing what Muriel Spark calls 'something definite to reject'.

My examination of the tradition is itself necessarily limited, in that I have focussed on specific texts, some apparent and some not so, to trace its chronological evolution. There is with certainty more to do in researching this in fiction, but also how it translates into other forms and media. Equally, there may well be other work that, like Harris's novel, is not conventionally considered within a Scottish literary context, but which is similarly influenced by Hogg's work, or Stevenson's variations on the tradition, or even Gray's now world-renowned *Lanark*. Moreover, the tradition is apparent, in however mutated forms, in recent texts. Just as it continues to resonate without foreseeable end, I refuse to offer a definitive conclusion to my examination of the tradition so far. Moreover, these texts offer no sound resolution of events themselves, and thus it may be inappropriate to offer one to their critical analysis. An apt conclusion may be to refer to theatre again, with James Bridie's view on what a good piece of drama should achieve, in terms of motivating its audience: 'Only God can

write last acts, and He seldom does. You should go out of the theatre with your head whirling with speculations.'⁷

Notes

¹ Wilson Harris, quoted in T.J. Cribb, 'T.W. Harris – Sworn Surveyor' in *Journal of Commonwealth Literature, Volume XXIX, number 1* (1993), p.13

² Wole Soyinka, 'The Fourth Stage' (1988), in *Art, Dialogue and Outrage: Essays on Literature and Culture*, (London: Methuen, 1993), pp.27-39, p.35

³ Terry Eagleton, *After Theory*, (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p.40. See introduction.

⁴ Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, (London: Methuen, 1981), p.25

⁵ Interview with Wole Soyinka, *Isokan Yoruba Magazine*, Summer 1997, volume III, number III: <http://www.yoruba.org/Magazine/Summer97/File3.htm>

⁶ Samuel Johnson, *The History of Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia* (1759), ed. D.J. Enright (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1976), p.56

⁷ James Bridie, *One Way of Living: An Autobiography*, (London: Constable, 1939), p.298

Appendix A

'Stepping in and out of two worlds'¹: Early Twenty-First Century Evolutions of the Tradition

This section will seek to highlight recently published or released texts that have come to my attention since the beginning of the research for this thesis, and that have a link with or form the next stage of development of the tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism in Scottish literature. It is necessarily summarative rather than keenly analytical, suggesting further reading and viewing, and highlighting again that further research into this and related fields is viable. The supernatural is still a significant facet of Scottish culture (however one chooses to define that shady entity), something evident in the volume of Scottish texts with supernatural elements, from television serials such as BBC Scotland's *Sea of Souls*², which features a constant dialogue between rational and supernatural explanations of paranormal happenings, to the proliferation of 'ghost tours' of a number of Scottish cities, in particular Edinburgh. It appears that this cliché still has something irresistible to offer to the contemporary imagination. The tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism is still evident in literary texts, texts that continue to occupy both the territories of the traditional ghost story and of realism, employing spectral ambiguity to allow them to do so.

Andrew Greig's 1999 novel, *When They Lay Bare*, is one such text. The novel in its entirety is steeped in supernatural possibility, with conscious intertextual references throughout to the Border ballads (it is structured around the picture series on a set of antique plates illustrating the Border ballad 'The Twa Corbies') and the works of Scott and Hogg. However, there are a few specifically psychosomatic supernatural episodes, in keeping with the spectral ambiguity of his book-length 1977 poem *Men on Ice* (see my introduction). These ambiguous episodes accumulate around the character of Jinny Lauder. Jinny dies many years before the action of the novel, and we learn her fate through the flashbacks of the elderly Sim Elliot, the damaged and lonely local laird of a Borders estate. Jinny and Sim were carefree lovers in the sixties, until one day when Jinny falls from a cliff edge to her death. Was she pushed by Sim, did she slip, or did she choose to die? These questions are left unanswered; as are the origins of the mysterious entity that Sim, and at times his right-hand man and estate worker Tat, catch sight of. In the most tangible encounter, Jinny appears to Tat, and he describes her thus:

This is no Banquo's ghost. She isn't covered in blood, head caved in, last breath hissing from her battered mouth. She is just his friend Jinny, nodding to him to follow her as they start to wander slowly down through the trees [...] She smiles to him again, almost slyly, like there's some secret joke he hasn't got yet but soon will [...] Maybe he's dead. Jinny's dead. He clutches his mind round that.

But you're dead, he says.³

Is it Jinny's ghost, returned to tie up loose ends, or is she the product of the guilty consciences and/or wishful thinking of the men who loved her? The ambiguity remains unresolved. Greig's engagement in this novel with pre-existing representations of Scottishness comment on the encumbrance that the weight of history can often prove to be. Yet it also nods to an alternative future, with its unexpected but successful presentation of bisexuality and modern forms of older religions. He shows in this novel that, as he himself says, 'loss is inevitable and renewal is possible.'⁴

Ali Smith's 1999 short story, 'The hanging girl'⁵ also engages with previous representations, as it contains a number of allusions to Stevenson's 'Thrawn Janet' (see chapter two). It is similarly ambiguous, but is ultimately weighted toward the psychological explanation, due to the evidently very damaged nature of the first person narrator, Pauline. And again, as with a number of the texts investigated here, this story plays on the traditional association between women and madness. Conventional, middle-class, stable Pauline beings to see a 'hanging girl', an impression of a young woman who may have been hanged years before, in the most prosaic contexts, for example in her home, or on the street outside her local shop, concurrent with the juxtaposition of the realist and the fantastic throughout the tradition. At one point we witness 'Pauline talking to the ghost as she walked, but quietly so nobody would think her deranged' (23), and later we are told that 'at the newsagent's she bought a newspaper and a bottle of water. When she came out she saw the girl hanging from a lamppost'. (24) She develops an intimate bond with this 'ghost', and in the end loses her equally conventional and stable, even repressive, partner, friends and job due to her 'episodes'. The suggestion is, however, that she only loses that which she needs to, those who have played their part in the repression of her natural behaviour and desires, proving once again in R.D. Laing's words, that madness can be 'breakthrough' as well as 'break down'.

There is little that is ambiguous about the ghost of Sara Wilby in Smith's follow-up 2001 novel, *Hotel World*. In fact, she initially narrates her own story from beyond the grave, at one point referring to the picture of her on her own gravestone as her 'passport photograph for entry to other worlds'.⁶ Yet there is one episode that has

particular resonance in terms of the tradition of psychosomatic supernaturalism. Her 'spirit', our narrator, exists in a liminal realm somewhere between alive and dead, and at one point chooses to go and interrogate Sara's dead and rotting body in search of answers. Sara's body, however, merely wants to rest, and to return to, in Freud's terms, the 'comforting inertia' of death. The body commands:

Go away. You said you would. I've told you. Don't you have a home to go to?
Aren't you supposed to go to heaven, or hell, or somewhere?
 Soon enough, I said (to God knows where)
 Sooner the better, she said. I'm tired. Go away. Don't come back. We've
no business with each other any more.'⁷

The body clearly favours death, whereas the spirit, as she tells us herself, has a message for us: 'Remember you must live'. She exists between two states just in the way that the supernatural beings or events in the other texts discussed here exist somewhere between the psychological and the supernatural, often simultaneously inhabiting both territories.

John Herdman alludes to the tradition in his 2001 novel *The Sinister Cabaret*.⁸ This satirical, picaresque piece features a potentially paranoid central protagonist, Donald Humbie, 'a considerably successful advocate in his mid-fifties' (11), who journeys north to the West Highlands to escape the stresses of his cosmopolitan lifestyle in Edinburgh. His psychological instability comes to the fore as we witness his increasing ensnarement in the web of influence of the potentially supernatural figure, Motion. Motion appears to possess the ability to be in several places at the one time, and influence events in a super-human way. However, as the story is narrated by Humbie, in an increasingly erratic manner, the reality of Motion's powers remains ambiguous throughout.

Another example of the evolution of the tradition is David Mackenzie's 2002 directorial debut, the 'journey north' feature film *The Last Great Wilderness*. Again, there is a suggestion of the supernatural throughout the film, with its eerie setting in a barren corner of the West Highlands, 'somewhere on the way to Skye', and the Gothic location of a remote hotel that has been converted into a retreat for those seeking to escape various 'problems', from domestic abuse, to agoraphobia, to paedophilic tendencies. This suggestion is deepened by the religious cult-like practices carried out by the residents of the retreat as 'treatment' for their problems. Yet, again, there is one specific psychosomatic allusion in the connection between the characters Vince, a male prostitute from London who ends up at the retreat on the run from a contract killing, and Flora, the daughter of local gillie Magnus, who died in a fire some years before.

Flora appears to Vince repeatedly, but only to him alone, so that we are left unsure as to her status. She may be a harbinger of his own death, which violently takes place towards the end of the film, or a projection of Vince's mind, the encapsulation of something he desires, but equally something unattainable for him: purity. The overall message of the film is summarised by the advice that guru-like figure Rory gives to Southern protagonist Charlie. He says: 'You know Charlie, the last great wilderness is not out there (pointing out the window). It's in here' (pointing to his head).

A recent text that should be mentioned here, despite its ultimate divergence from the tradition, is Rodge Glass's 2005 novel, *No Fireworks*. The novel traces eight days in the life of 61-year-old Abraham Stone, immediately following the death of his eccentric and imperious mother Evelyn. After the funeral, Abe starts receiving letters from his mother, seemingly from beyond the grave. The psychosomatic ambiguity is evoked as we discover that Abe is an alcoholic with depressive tendencies. It seems possible he has invented the ghostly letters so that he can continue to blame his mother for being overbearing and trying to control his life, thus delegating responsibility for his own failures. However, at the end we discover that Evelyn had written the letters before her death, and instructed her lawyer to post them out in the days following the final event. This resolution places us firmly back in the territory of realism, but not before we have had a fantastic journey to get there. Abe Stone takes his place in a long line of ineffectual and frustratingly flawed but ultimately likeable characters, from Edward Waverley to Duncan Thaw/Lanark.

It is now a cliché in Scottish literary criticism to cite deployment of the supernatural as a traditional characteristic, and yet, with an abundance of recent Scottish literature featuring supernatural elements, it is evident that this cliché, handled self-consciously, continues to produce evocative literary effects. The psychosomatic supernatural continues to be employed in intricate and subtle representational modulations of reality, allowing modes conventionally perceived as escapist and popular to be renegotiated as politically pertinent.

Notes

¹ Andrew Greig, *When They Lay Bare*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1999), p.42

² *Sea of Souls*, produced by Phil Collinson, (BBC Scotland, 2004 – 2005)

³ *Ibid.*, p.291

⁴ Andrew Greig, as quoted on the British Council's 'contemporary writers' website: <http://www.contemporarywriters.com/authors/?p=auth02D9L38071262742724/11/2005>

⁵ Ali Smith, 'The hanging girl', in *Other Stories and Other Stories*, (London: Granta, 1999), pp.13-35

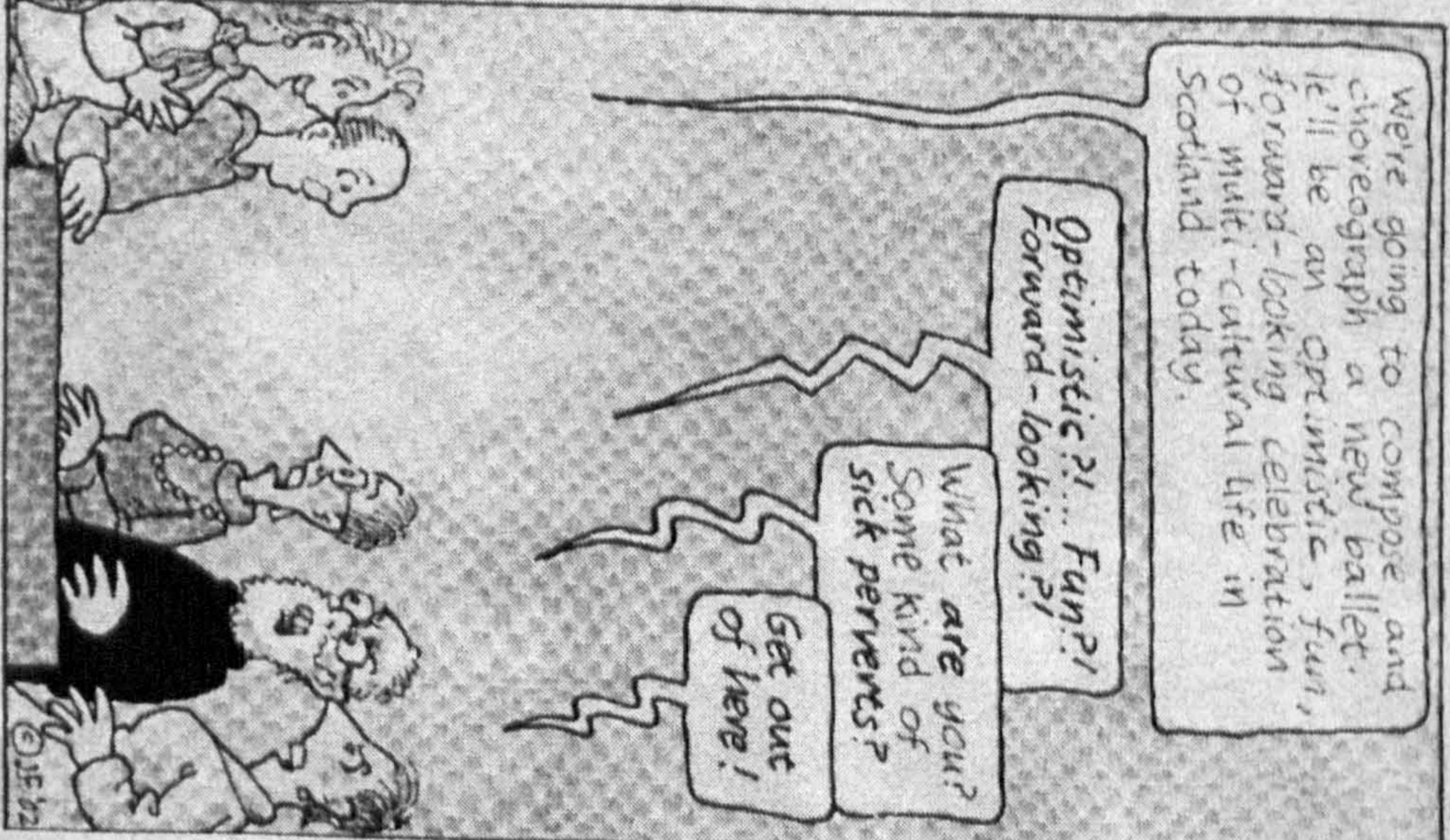
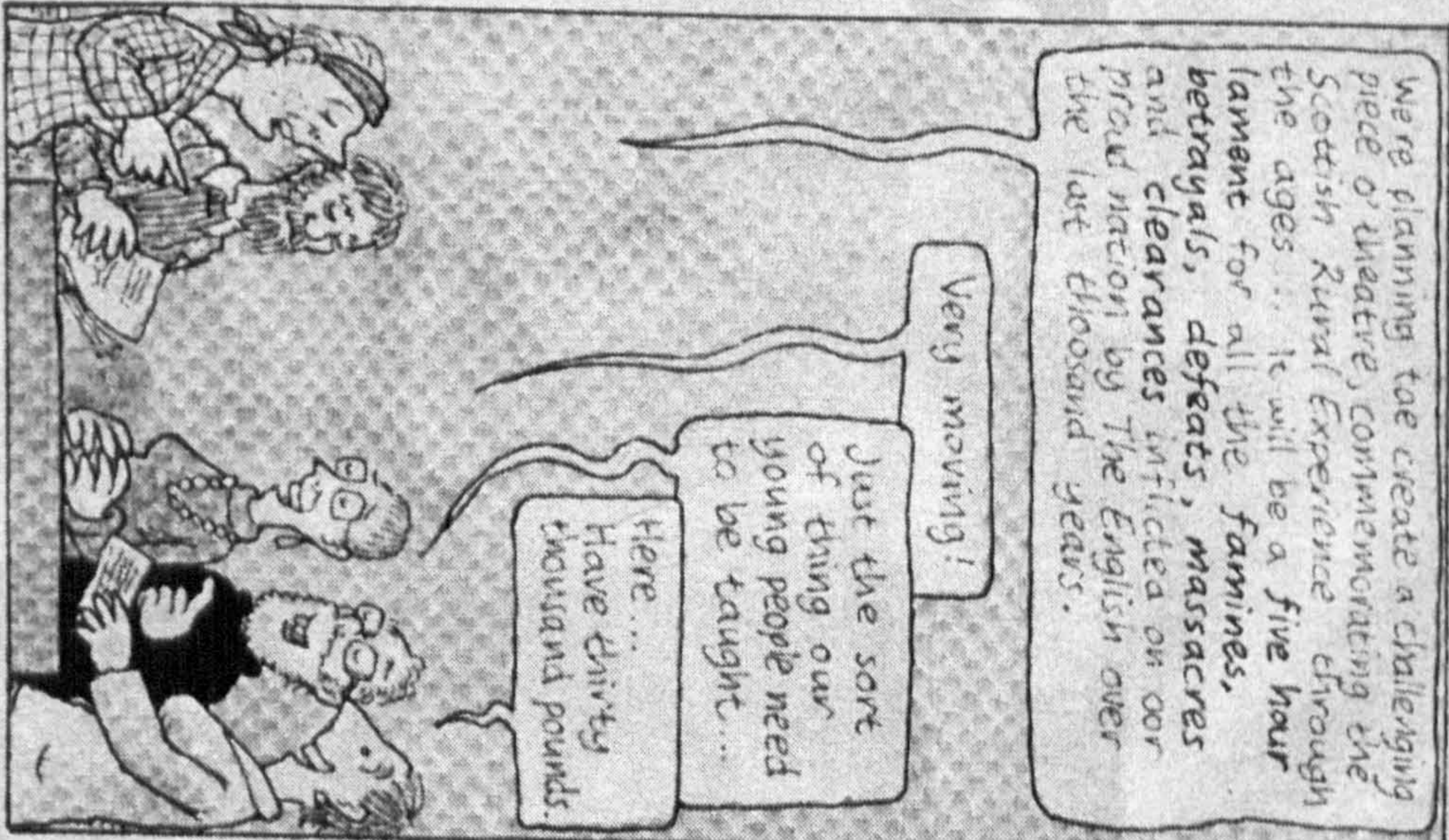
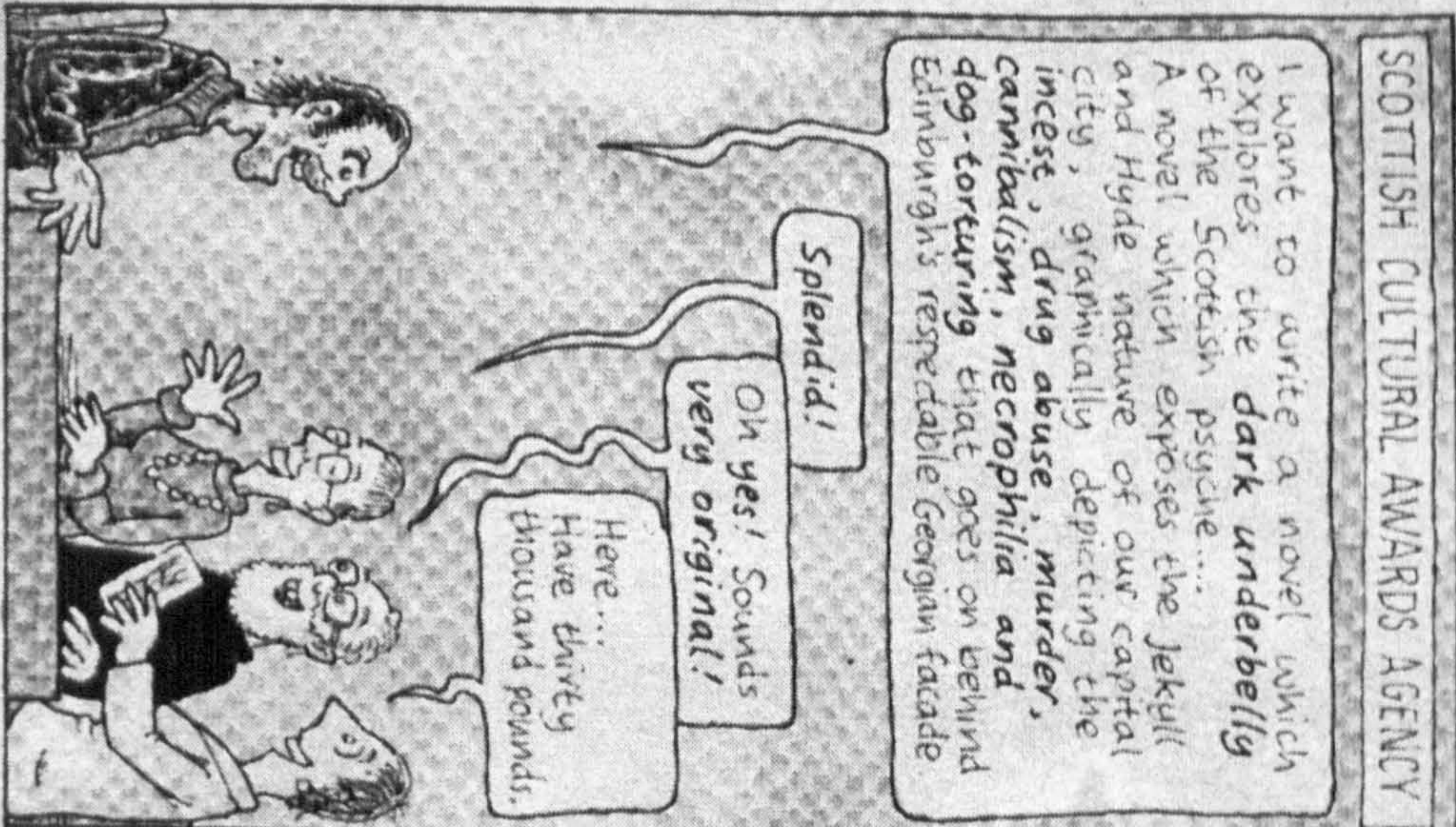
⁶ Ali Smith, *Hotel World*, (London: Penguin, 2001), p.12

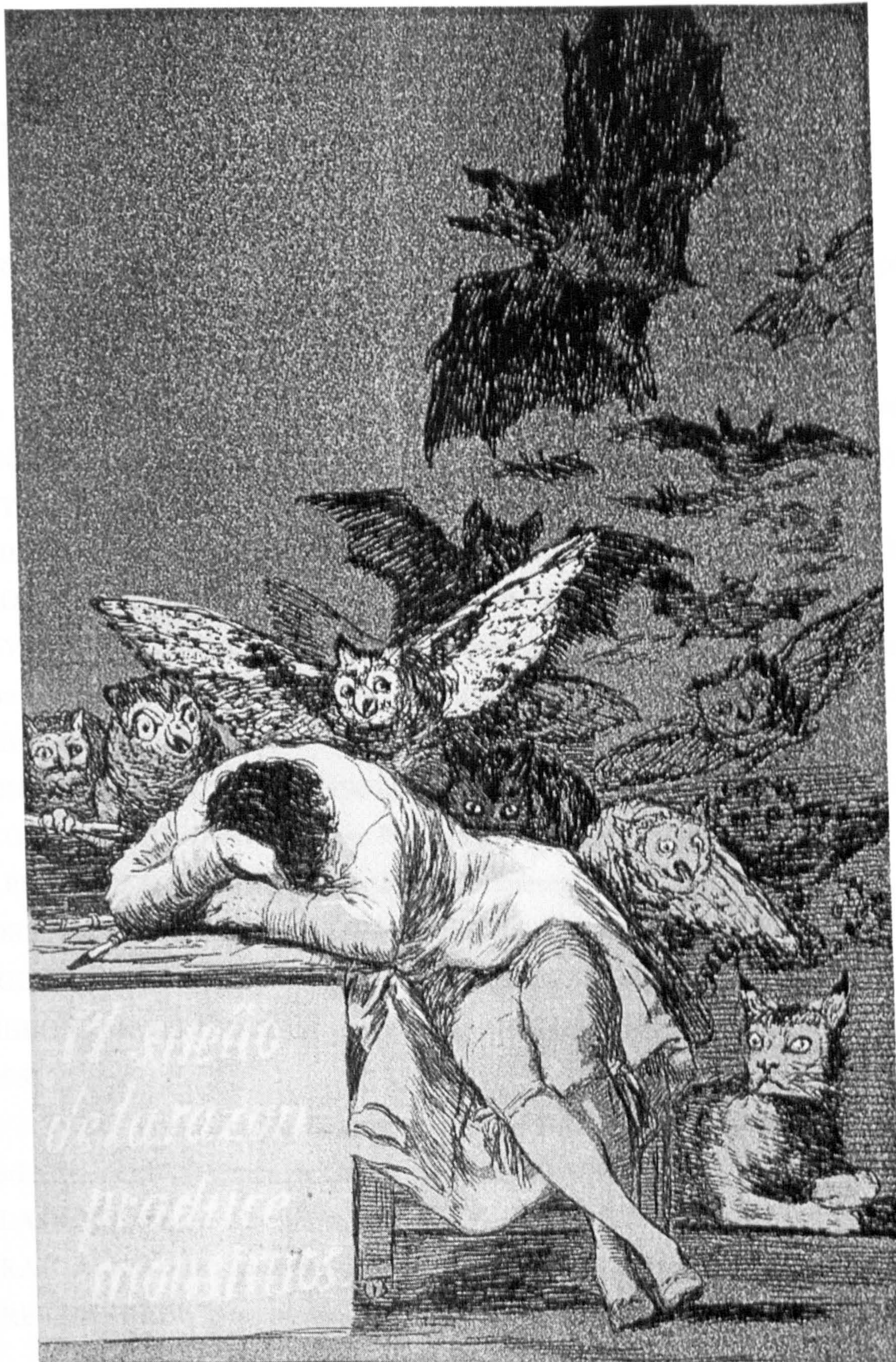
⁷ *Ibid.*, p.26

⁸ John Herdman, *The Sinister Cabaret*, (Forfar: Black Ace Books, 2001)

Appendix B: *The List, 14th-28th February 2002* – ‘A really shocking artistic proposal...’

A really shocking artistic proposal....





Appendix C: Francisco de Goya, 'The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters' (1798)

In this etching, the reasonless dreamer is menacingly surrounded by dark creatures, ambiguous in their origins. 'Imagination deserted by reason begets impossible monsters', Goya explained of his work. The texts examined in this thesis present the possibilities of what happens when the artist consciously 'begets impossible monsters.'

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24/11/2005