

**NO PLACE TO HIDE: CONTEMPORARY
SCOTTISH THEATRE AND
POSTCOLONIALITY**

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Appendixes

- 'Scottish Drama and the Popular Tradition' in R. Stevenson and G. Wallace (eds) *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies*, Edinburgh: EUP, 1996, pp176-185
- 'After Borders Warfare?' in *Edinburgh Review*, Issue 100, 1999, pp124-131

Certification

I certify that this thesis is my original work.

ABSTRACT

The thesis is an examination of the connection between politics, culture and the contemporary practice of theatre in Scotland. It looks at Scottish history in the context of the nation's incorporation into the British Union and results in dramatic texts and performances. The reason for this is because Scotland presents an unusual picture of a postcolonial cultural space. The study uses the combination of postcolonial, cultural and performance theories to investigate this connection.

Chapter One is devoted to the cultural sociology of Scotland. It examines the political and social contexts of the national culture, its components and how the interaction between politics and culture occurs. The chapter concludes by pointing out that this interaction frames the postcolonial framework of the country.

Chapter Two examines how the remaking of cultural identity in Scotland is carried out within the postcolonial framework, and how this is reflected in the spheres of representation. The chapter proposes two models of identity conceptualisation; addresses the centrality of language and the roles it plays in the cultural remaking of the subjective national-self. The chapter also examines the nature and character of theatrical practice in Scotland, and concludes that while its activities occur within a postcolonial framework, Scottish theatre fits into the paradigm of a national-popular theatre. This chapter uses dramatic and performance theories to define popular theatre, its conceptual boundaries and functions.

Chapter Three analyses four play texts, which are deemed to portray some aspects of the contingent origin of Scotland's postcolonial identity. These are plays modelled on history. The chapter later addresses the issue of genre, which is raised implicitly by the analysed plays. It concludes that in the wake of the performance of postcolonial subjectivity, postcolonial theatre usually breaks the genre barrier.

Chapter Four continues the analysis of texts. A text that addresses the composite character of Scottish postcoloniality is examined. The thesis contests the attempts by the text to resituate the meaning of the 'composite' as a subject of class analysis. As a result of that attempt, there were tensions generated in the 'reception' of the performance of the text. The chapter concludes by stressing that the tension illustrates the character of postcolonial embodiment in performances.

Chapter Five addresses another set of texts. These are the realist plays. The chapter looks at the meaning and practice of realism in the Scottish contexts. The chapter justifies realism as enabling a representation of national subjectivity from a perspective that other forms of theatre would have made less visible.

The conclusion summarises the theoretical questions of the thesis. The thesis concludes by pointing out that theatre is one of the areas of representation where it is frequently shown that Scotland is a postcolonial cultural space.

Introduction

A cursory look at the history of Scottish theatre from the nineteenth century reveals that one of its most important functions has been as a site for the articulation of cultural space and voice. (Hutchison 1977; Cameron and Scullion 1996; Bell 1998) And this is in spite of the fact that the theatre faced a separate history of attenuation that lasted almost the whole of the two centuries before the nineteenth. Within the many accounts of the fortunes of theatre in Scotland, the presumed roles played by the Reformation figures to 'kill' and discourage this vital area of aesthetics and cultural representation loom large. But as recently acknowledged by Bill Findlay (Findlay 1998 p.ix), the expansion of research and publication on Scottish theatre over the last thirty years has updated the work of early pioneers such as James Dibdin (Dibdin 1871), Anna J. Mill (Mill 1927) and Terence Tobin (Tobin 1968; Tobin 1974). As a result, the widespread belief that the Scottish Reformation alone was responsible for the long attenuation of Scottish theatre is no longer tenable. Though hardly excusable, the roles of the agents of the Reformation nevertheless constituted only one of a number of factors of attenuation.

In as much as any serious study of Scottish theatre cannot ignore those attenuating circumstances of the theatre, it will also discover that their legacies are less pronounced on contemporary theatrical practice. Instead, we have a situation in which the interface between politics and national culture, and how the definition of one is inclusive of the other, is self-evident on the theatrical stage. This has been one of the conditions, perhaps the main condition, reinforcing the growth of a particularly eclectic form of national popular theatre in Scotland. In this theatre, as in other forms of cultural expression in Scotland, culture is usually framed through politics and vice versa. It is this framing of culture in political terms and of politics in cultural terms that constitutes, for some, Scottish cultural dynamism. However for others, mostly native Scottish intellectuals, what is at stake is not dynamism as such, but the continued non-fulfilment of the 'statehood' project, and which continues to be reflected in the practice of representation, theatre inclusive.

This study investigates the causes and the responses to the incompleteness of statehood, which in representational terms has meant a preoccupation with the refashioning of the nation's cultural self. The agonies of this process are apparent in the recent media controversy around the remarks by the Scottish composer, James McMillan, who described Scotland as a cultural wasteland.

Until relatively recently, native Scottish intellectuals have generally shown a reluctance to associate the nation with the 'post-colonial', although much of the analysis they put forward points in no other direction. In Chapter One of the study, I argue that this reluctance derives from a residual 'guilt feeling' about the participation of the Scottish nation in the dubious business and violent expansion of the British Empire. Scotland had a disproportionate share in the running of the Empire relative to its population. In spite of the rewards, Scotland's participation in the Empire business has not removed its own unique post-coloniality, the sense of which has become all too palpable after the termination of the Empire. After Empire, the paradox of having been both a colonised and coloniser could no longer be hidden. It is because of this peculiar status, of being both a colonised and a coloniser that I have tried to put forward the argument that Scotland is a composite post-colonial society. It is in this sense that one might also properly understand the dilemmas of other postcolonial societies.

In Chapter Two, I substantiate my position further by identifying how the nation has tried to create a new identity from the ruins of the British Empire, even with all the contradictions and ironies this new project entails. Here I propose two models of identity construction, which in my view appear to summarise how the project of creation of identity has been approached and the extent to which it has been successful. This is where I also treat some of the questions bound up with postcolonial representation of the national self and reclamation of subjectivities. I then examine Scottish theatre in its theoretical and political contexts.

In Chapter Three, I combine textual and performance analyses (performance theory) of some selected plays to show the connection between postcoloniality and cultural representation. The plays considered here are those that I have classified as drama of contingent origins, all of which are history plays. These plays illustrate the point of contingent origin as I see it.

Chapter Four is devoted to a single play, which, because of the subject it deals with and the method used in dealing with that subject, addresses the questions that often arise in the representation of postcolonial culture. That play is *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil*, by John McGrath and the old 7:84 Scotland Theatre Company. The play addresses a subject that illustrates the composite character of Scottish postcoloniality, better than any written discourse.

In Chapter Five, I take up another set of dramas, the Scottish realist plays, which I see as revealing a different aspect of Scottish subjectivities. The overarching post-colonial theoretical thrust of the work has meant that I lay emphasis on the politics and practice of theatre as a

combined activity, whose purpose is to explore the in-between spaces, the space of conflict and of emergence between two or more cultures.

Inevitably, I have had to leave more plays and playwrights out of the analysis than I would have liked. In this kind of work, it is almost impossible not to face an agonising conflict over such issues. Certain that the line has to be drawn at a particular point, I have selected those plays which I felt are most suitable for contemporary analysis within the terms of a thesis.

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Chapter One

The Hidden Postcolonial Space: Between Nationalism and Representation in Scotland

A full appreciation of the meanings, themes and concepts within contemporary Scottish theatre is difficult to grasp outside the interacting and competing discourses of national space, identity and the politics of statehood. This is also because the persistent clamour for theatrical authenticity (See Bold 1983; Cameron 1986; Brown 1996), which in real terms means having a culturally informed Scottish theatre, is directly related to those unsettled questions about the national space and the Scottish personality. The celebrated poet and polemicist, Edwin Morgan, poses those questions in the following words:

Today, we know that some prehistoric tombs, stone circles and megaliths in Scotland are older, not younger, than similar monuments from the Mediterranean area which were once believed to have inspired them. The western and northern islands of Scotland are about as peripheral to the body of Europe as you can get, but they were also, in their time, a core, a core of great builders who must have had the social organisation (and the language) required to put up these monuments, at dates before the Egyptian pyramids. If Vico had known about carbon dating, he would have loved it. Would he have called the Scottish builders gods, or heroes, or just men? (Morgan 1990 p.3).

In the spirit of Edwin Morgan's last sentence above, we identify a necessity for the competing discourses about Scotland, or what Colin McArthur collectively but erroneously calls 'Scottish Discursive Unconscious' (McArthur 1996), to be organised into a coherent theoretical framework. This is with a view to discussing them and the nation that they are about in a historicist frame. For example, the discourse about the crisis in Scottish national identity and the politics of statehood is thinkable only within the materiality of the consequences that the formation of the British State and the rise and disintegration of the British Empire have had for Scotland. For notwithstanding that Scotland for about three hundred years has been an integral part of the first, and a full and active participant in the second while it lasted, it has remained

emotionally on its own, together with its internal contradictions, while repeatedly questioning the structural context of its association with both the Union and the Empire. The implication of this is that while the formation of the British Union and Scotland's participation in the business of Empire might have been founded on an alliance that was meant to perpetuate colonialism, it also left in Scotland a condition that has continued to be reacted to, a social experience of having been intruded upon or taken over. Alliances such as the one that led to the creation of the British Union might be represented as 'marriages of convenience' but they were never secondary elements in the process of colonisation or 'intrusion' or 'take-over', which describes the case of Scotland. They were instead the fundamental aspects of colonialism. They are the aspects that enhanced the power of some 'native' elites and also created entirely new ones, and in so doing initiated a process of continual and still on-going cultural contestation and translation.

The process of internalisation of hegemonic images and texts, leading to the self-reproducibility of the same, which McArthur claims has continued to dominate the representation of 'Scotland and the Scots in any sign system: literature, easel painting, music, photograph, advertising, journalism and, of course, film and television' (McArthur 1996 p.81) is intelligible within the framework of postcoloniality described above. It is noteworthy, however, that after speaking of 'need to peel away successive layers of discursive hegemony exercised on Scotland'(McArthur 1996 p.82). McArthur himself does not see or identify any tradition of counter-hegemonic discourse. For the purpose of clarity, this is how McArthur sets out the terms of the unmediated reproductivity of the hegemonic discourse, taking as models two books by that *aficionado* of the Scottish past, John Prebble:

... books such as *Culloden* and *Glencoe* are about Scottish history and that when anyone sets out to tell stories about Scotland the 'Scottish Discursive Unconscious' comes into play. Certain forms of narrative beckon Circe-like, unconsciously guiding the writer's hand and setting the tone of the story. Polemically it might be suggested that we tend to be written by the dominant Scottish narratives rather than ourselves writing stories about Scotland. These dominant narratives, local realisations of the 'Scottish Discursive Unconscious', vary according to the time and place within

Scotland the story is set. For example, the dominant (and equally atavistic) narrative about twentieth-century lowland Scotland revolves round taciturn masculinity, drink, sport and explosive violence, a narrative that has its origins as much within reports on public health and housing and journalistic discourses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as within more obviously 'artistic' sites such as the novel (McArthur 1996 p.86).

When McArthur says 'Polemically it might be suggested that we tend to be written by the dominant Scottish narratives rather than ourselves writing stories about Scotland.' he implies that Scots and Scotland are passive consumers of the narrative, which continues to model them. And since that narrative, being a 'colonial discourse' exists rather like an involuntary anatomical muscle that obeys only the laws of its own needs; the very condition of narrative of, or about, Scotland is the reproducibility of the same discourse. Colonial discourse is therefore having a free rein: in McArthur's view, it is neither challenged nor contested. It is this conclusion that weakens the potential of McArthur's analysis, in that the conclusion is misplaced. To borrow McArthur's phrase, 'polemically', it might be suggested that his conclusions represent another example of how a peculiar hypostasis has come to preside over the various debates about Scotland, including the relationship between narrative and nation. The depth of this hypostasis, which is also found in the general discussion of the condition of the nation, is difficult to underestimate. According to the Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy, 'to hypostatize is to regard or treat something that is not a thing or an object as if it were one' (Mautner 1997 p.262). 'To hypostatize' is synonymous with reification of an issue, subject or object. In the context in which the term is used here, however, hypostasis is conceived as the inversion, by paying attention to the formal appearance, of the real condition that forms the background to a discourse. In the case of Scotland, this can be described as the inversion that tends to occlude the real structure of relations between the nation and the *Other* against which all references to the nation are framed. Scotland's *Other* is England, against which Scotland is repeatedly textualised and constructed. Against this background, if the remark by the historian, Colin Kidd, that

Scotland lacks 'a convincing vehicle of historical expression' (Kidd 1994 p.1) sound harsh, it also draws attention to the condition suggested above. What is called for is not an outright dismissal but a careful identification of what might have stood in the way of achieving that 'convincing vehicle of historical expression'. The sociologist, David McCrone has argued that Scotland fits the paradigm of a 'stateless nation', which is possibly another way of saying that the nation exists in a condition of repressed possibilities (McCrone 1992).

When the terms of the condition of Scotland's repressed possibilities are examined, what will be discovered is a nation whose national identity is predicated essentially on the roles of both a colonised and coloniser. In vertical historical terms, one paved the way for the other: Scotland itself was 'colonised' before it too became a coloniser. However, in terms of the horizontal complex relationships between Scotland and its coloniser, the picture remains somewhat less clear and often hidden. I wish to submit that it is this unusual and puzzling status of the nation that is the primary underpinning and the source of the hypostasised condition I have mentioned. The contemporary attitude of Scots to the British Empire business, which provided the framework for the 'coloniser' bit of the Scottish identity, is one of guarded ambivalence. There is of course the occasional self-introspection and what may be described as radical, but still unconvincing denial of full complicity in the Empire. This was demonstrated recently by Owen Dudley Edwards, where he wrote, among others that 'Let us leave to one side all of those Scots, Welsh and Irish who died for the Empire and/or ensured it lived for them. Its first identity is surely English' (Edwards 1997 p.13). Now, what is wrong with assertions such as this is not their stressing that the first identity of the Empire is English, which, from the point of the analysis put forward in this work is true, but the casualness with which Edwards seems to avoid the embarrassment of the situation of Scots, Welsh and Irish dying for the Empire. The overall tenor of Edwards's essay seems designed to absolve the affected Scots, Welsh and Irish from having *actually* died for the Empire or *ensured* that it lived for them, and by extension, for their

different nations. Dressing-up Scotland as a modern Pontius Pilate in the sordid business of Empire adds very little to the understanding of the nation. Unconvincing post-mortem exoneration, however radical it may seem, at best suggests a needless effort to have a one-sided and ultimately non-historicist view of the existing conditions of the nation. At worst, it is another illustration of the hypostasis that underwrites the general discourse of the nation.

Reflecting further on the hypostasis, it is possible to see a parallel between Scotland and Ireland, especially in relation to what Luke Gibbons calls a 'First World' country, a 'Third World' memory affliction (Gibbons 1996, p.3). Like Gibbons' Ireland, Scotland is also a country where the strength and weaknesses of national culture are derived from the confounding of neat polarities: the dislocation between periphery and the Centre, the country and the city, tradition and modernity. However, unlike Ireland where polarities are confounded by recent 'development' or 'integration into the new international order which (then) activates some of the most conservative forces in (Irish) society', and which, according to Gibbons, has been less successful in generating its own 'intellectual terms of reference' (Gibbons 1996 p.3) in Scotland, it is possible to place a metonymic burden on history. Andrew Marr has given a good description of what this metonymic burden on history looks like and how it operates. He writes:

Fundamentally, Scotland is a nation because it believes itself to be one.

Central to that belief is history: Scotland the nation exists because of the way its people understand their own past. But there is more: Scotland is an insecure nation, and we know this because Scots argue about the meaning of that history and have been curiously eager to swallow historical libels about that past. In a happy, well-adjusted nation history is no more politically contentious, for most people, than the study of geography or particle physics. In Scotland, there is too little neutral history. I do not mean by that to libel the eminent professional historians who have been opening up Scottish history and popularizing it. I mean that Scotland is so interested in unravelling its own 'Scotlandness' that the neutral facts these historians recover, order and drill are then pounced upon and squeezed for contemporary political messages (Marr 1992 pp 7-8).

In postcoloniality, the site of culture is also a site for the articulation of space and voice. But while this may have been well realised by those engaged with the discourse of the nation

over the past four decades, even the most intrepid of theoreticians have had their vision touched by the hypostasis referred to above. For example, in his remarkable book, *The Break-Up of Britain* (Nairn 1977), Tom Nairn presents an overtly political reading, which, but for its historicist rationale, would also have been a sensationalist view of Scottish cultural processes. The 'historicist rationale' referred to is how Nairn has conflated two modes of explanations, the classical sociological tradition and historical materialism, as a new critical platform from which to re-open the aporetic discourse of nationalism. And in doing so, Nairn also makes his own contribution to that discourse, using Scotland as his test case. Nairn does not refute some of the assertions often made in favour of nationalism, even going as far as accepting it, in the familiarly Marxist term, as grand delusion of power; but even as delusion, Nationalism, Nairn argues, has unalterable functional purposes. Accordingly, Nairn sees nationalism as representing the best option for underdeveloped nations, the latter being a political and geographic category, to escape the domination of those already in the forefront of development. Describing nationalism as 'a central, inescapable feature of the development of 'modern society'', Nairn argues that nationalism itself constitutes what some would call a process that leads inexorably to the formation of a new, but uniting, historical consciousness for each society: He writes:

This is of course why nationalism has been a central, inescapable feature of the development of 'modern society'. There could only be modern societies, in the plural, and they could not help being very distinct from one another - even those at a similar general stage of development, as in present-day Western Europe. The State-society knot Gramsci is talking about was, so to speak, tied in remarkably different fashions in these different places. So, the normal historiographical and sociological model for it is naturally that of one society-cum-State. It is this modern and contemporary 'nation-State' that 'has become an educator', has 'raised the great mass of the population to a particular cultural level', generated a particular 'apparatus of political and cultural hegemony', and so forth. And we know only too well that once it has done so, in the way corresponding to its particular historical situation, the resultant particular identity is very resistant indeed to change and attack³ (Nairn 1977 p.134).

When the test is applied to Scotland, Nairn sees what he variously describes as an oddity, and an incompleteness of the inescapable historical process. This is that Scotland followed an ahistorical

process of development, which, even if understandable within the context of the legacy of the Enlightenment, especially in its Edinburgh manifestations, nonetheless disabled the nation's own historical progress towards the formation of a nation-state. That ahistorical process, which is represented as a class alliance, between the English and Scottish bourgeoisie, becomes for Nairn the mortal blow to the development of a rounded and mature culture. To sustain this theoretical formulation, Nairn offers a series of complex explanations tied as much to history as to sociology, however, what stands out most is how these explanations read nationalism as facilitator of a mature culture. Hence, Nairn posits that after the Union of England and Scotland,

What we have therefore is the relatively sudden disintegration of a great national culture; an absence of political and cultural nationalism; and an absence of any genuine, developing romanticism, of the kind which was to typify 19th -century cultural life. The three negative phenomena are, surely, closely connected (Nairn 1977 p.116).

It is when describing what came to replace 'the disintegration of a great national culture' that Nairn, adopts his now famous metaphor of neurosis, which, in the words of Cairns Craig, leads 'a powerful life' in how Nairn defines Scottish culture. Craig comments:

Metaphor it may be, but it is to lead a powerful life in Nairn's prose, for the language of 'neurosis' becomes the fundamental category to which is attached all the phenomena of Scottish culture: Scottish popular culture, in which Nairn perceives the unfulfilled residue of the (non-) nation's potential nationalism, is 'this insanely sturdy sub-culture', this 'remarkable assemblage of heterogeneous elements, neurotic double-binds, falsely honoured shades, and brainless vulgarity' (p. 168); as a result, Scottish culture is 'infantile'; it is expressed as the 'dream-nationalism' of the repressed Id' as it erupts in warped forms into the 'British ego-system' (p. 63); the end result is that Scottish identity is, in itself, identical with neurosis, for Nairn can ask of Scotland whether it is 'right to refuse "identity" to a hopeless neurotic, because he is different from others, and unhappy about the fact? (p. 173) (Craig 1996 p.93).

Considering that Nairn makes nationalism a structural principle of development, it is inescapable that he sees structural discontinuity in the failure of the Scottish bourgeoisie to embrace nationalism, and in their failure, a reconfiguration of the national space. The question, however, is whether Nairn himself is right to have suggested that what followed was a series of cultural deformation. This is the issue taken up largely by Craig, who, apart from sieving Nairn's

argument for its multi-layered meanings, provides parallel rebuttals. Hence, Craig notes that however correct Nairn's argument might have been in identifying the motor of nationalism, it is deeply inhibiting and restrictive in relation to the conception of Scottish culture (Craig 1996 p.88). Craig sees Nairn as denying that cultural process is at once synchronic and diachronic. As a result, much of Nairn's argument in the area of cultural formation is informed by a synchronic conception, which, however eclectic it might have made Nairn's argument sound, nonetheless amounted to a denial of historical process, which ironically is one of the issues with which Nairn is concerned. Craig is equally sensitive to the emergence of what is now widely known as Scotch Myth theory, much of which would appear to have been propagated by Nairn. For Craig, the Scotch Myth theories are seeking meanings through the rear-view mirror. His words:

In the world of organised social symbols that is the modern condition, to articulate difference cannot be anything but a conscious construction, but it is a construction that has to be based on something which is part of a culture's common memory. That memory can be recalled, re-awakened, re-invented even, but to do so is not simply to create new ideas out of the heads of intellectuals: those new images and symbols have to become part of the common perception of the culture. To remake existing cultural perceptions is no easy business: you may not like the existing construction; you may wish to replace it with something else; but to negate it, to deny it, to refuse to be associated with it denies the very past which represents, at least in part, the commonality of which you are an inheritor, linking you to the rest of your community, and justifying the need for a cultural identity at all.

What the Scotch Myths theory wanted was to mock the Scottish past out of existence so that we could start over with a clean slate. It wanted Scotland to be in real history, not fake history, and real history, of course, was the one narrative of class operating everywhere the same; real history was the history of our incorporation into a modernity in which all advanced countries were identical with each other and all other places would eventually catch up and share the same identity. Real history, in other words, happened as though geography, and difference, and alternative pasts did not matter, as though we had become inheritors of one past (the development of capitalism; the development of socialism) which was everywhere the same and which was carrying us into a future of identically 'pluralist' societies (Craig 1996 pp.111-2).

From his comments above, Craig seems to have accepted that there is an ever-present agony in the discourse of Scottish culture. His has also been one of the few cases where it is recognised that the culture might in fact show postcolonial traits. As Craig points out, the aim then is not to

reject the past or remould it to suit a particular conception of history or historical progress, but rather to construct the politics of the present in a way that works with and through that past. That is to say that there is need for a new politics that does not freeze or dissolve the space of culture while claiming to be explaining causes. It ought to be remarked though that since Nairn's initial analyses were published, there has been an increased recognition of the fact that there cannot be an essentialist construction of Scotland and Scottishness.

Craig has dealt with the issues raised by Nairn along the same theoretical line as they are raised. However, I want to point out that there is another view, which is the postcolonial view and which I believe is alluded to, but not mentioned directly, by Craig in his analyses.

The Postcolonial case

Always implicit in the theoretical attitude of Scottish intellectuals writing on nationalism and or economic development is an attempt to bypass the critical dimension of how much the business of Empire had shaped Scotland while at the same time distorting the nation's sense of itself. This issue formed the subject of a debate between T.C. Smout (Smout 1980) and Immanuel Wallerstein (Wallerstein 1980) in 1980. In that debate, Smout had reopened one of the key issues raised by Wallerstein in his *The Modern World-System*. As explained by Smout, Wallerstein had argued,

... that certain northern states—England, the United Provinces, France—came to form a developed “core” by the seventeenth century, and that their success (in his opinion) doomed the European “periphery” or “semiperiphery” to the east and south to a long future of poverty.³ For him (meaning Wallerstein), the international division of labour ensured that the well-rewarded tasks in manufacturing industry went to the core, while the badly rewarded labor-intensive production of primary produce went to the periphery. The periphery became satellites to the core and was held to these tasks by the logic of trade itself (Smout 1980 pp.602-3).

Wallerstein had included Scotland among those referred to as peripheries, with England as its

core. But proposing four criteria, which serve as checklist of underdevelopment, Smout argues that Scotland's situation in the seventeenth century was far from being a periphery or dependent nation in its relationship with England. Among them is that

... Scotland, for all its dependent nature around 1700, nevertheless had a remarkably strong native culture below the elite level of the landowners. It had an experienced and well-educated merchant class – not as yet rich or far travelled, but perfectly able to carry on the country's own trade without outside help. ...

The effect of a strong subelite subculture is ultimately to resist swamping influences from the core and to give self-confidence to economic and intellectual experiments in the periphery (Smout 1980 pp.626-7).

Wallerstein's response is as interesting for its counter-analysis, also based on the same set of criteria used by Smout, as it is for its firm restatement of the original thesis. But more crucially, Wallerstein produces the following, which, as an explanation of the nature of what he sees as Scotland's 'domination', is very compelling:

Smout tells us the upturn in Scotland occurred in the latter half of the eighteenth century. But this was precisely the period of the renewed expansion of the capitalist world-economy. Great Britain had for the first time decisively defeated France in the Seven Years' War, itself a key factor in my opinion in the upsurge of innovations in textiles production in England at this time. Given the increase of overall size of the world-economy, England as the nascent hegemonic power needed a wider economic and demographic base. The inclusion of the Lowland Scots as "British" elites was the natural mode for England to expand its base. The defeat of the Jacobite rebellions made the Lowland Scots a reliable political ally, ⁶ who could be used to man an expanding British bureaucracy⁷ (Wallerstein 1980 pp.636-7).

Apart from further revealing the nature of the 'unusualness' of Scotland's case, the debate between the two historians also reveals that the actual cost to Scotland of the relationship with England in the run up to the 1707 Union may not have received sufficient attention. Scottish intellectuals have habitually concentrated on the overall relationship, especially after the Union and the fact that it gave Scotland economic gains that in turn brought development, while leaving out the fact of England's ascendancy 'as the nascent hegemonic power.' Yet as Wallerstein points out above, the indication is that this was exactly the time that England was embarking on its imperial conquest. Scottish intellectuals often appear to see an unbroken

continuity between the Scottish identity before the incorporation of the nation into the United Kingdom and the identity 'assumed' thereafter. This has often led these intellectuals to treat the process of cultural translation (if not culture itself), which followed after 'incorporation', as a secondary process, in the Scotland-England relationship. In Tom Nairn's analysis, for example, there is a degree of opaqueness in his account of what became the 'Scottish nation and identity' after 1707. Although he does not excuse the business of Empire, Nairn nevertheless pushes it down the ladder while seeking an explanation for the condition of the nation. This is well illustrated where Nairn puts all the blames for 'distortions' in Scottish culture on the 'bourgeois character' of the past. The assent that Nairn places on 'blind evolution' is worth bearing in mind since it totally discounts the business of Empire as a factor in the post-Union cultural processes:

Ridiculous or not, it is obviously extremely strong. In this sense, as the main body of cultural sub-nationalism, it appears to represent a national-popular tradition which has persisted more or less in the way one would expect. Precisely because it has been unconnected with a 'higher' or normal, nationalist-style culture during the formative era of modern society, it has evolved blindly. The popular consciousness of separate identity, uncultivated by 'national' experience or culture in the usual sense, has become curiously fixed or fossilized on the level of the image d'Épinal and Auld Lang Syne, of the Scott Monument, Andy Stewart and the Sunday Post - to the point of forming a huge, virtually self-contained universe of Kitsch (Nairn 1977 pp162-3).

The other side of Nairn's displacement of the business of Empire as a primary *process* in the shaping of culture, is that he also makes the generalisation that the cultural terrain became insipid and uninspiring because of the absence of a 'normal, nationalist-style culture during the formative era of modern society.' It also goes without saying that he sees a situation of passive consumption and reproduction of *Kitsch* and that a rival, antagonistic movement capable of challenging that cultural passiveness never developed or emerged. Nineteenth century evidence, which Donaldson has painstakingly put together (Donaldson 1986; Donaldson 1989), challenges this claim. What Nairn calls 'blind evolution' of culture is no more than what is usually regarded, from a postcolonial theoretical perspective, as evidence of paradoxes and irresolution inevitable after the narrative of one group is subsumed under that of another. As Fanon makes

clear in his essay on national culture (Fanon 1990 Ch.4) such irresolutions are liable to be manifested in phases. Similarly, it is to be expected that in the reaction to these irresolutions, paradoxes are inevitable. As Fanon points out, the efforts of the colonised to rehabilitate self 'and to escape from the claws of colonialism are logically inscribed from the same point of view as that of colonialism' (Fanon 1990 p.170). The presence of England in Scotland on the basis of Union meant that all the narratives, signifiers and practices available to Scots and which had hitherto been home-based were at once inscribed within England's modernity. So comprehensive was this that it was Scottish writers, who, according to David Morse, first started the 'construction' of England as 'a model and an ideal type-an example to be held up to the rest of the world, and perhaps to the English as well' (Morse 1993 p.48).

It is often difficult to avoid the conclusion that many contemporary Scottish intellectuals feel a retrospective discomfort about the nation's implication in the Imperial enterprise. This they try to express through what can best be described as an ambiguous stand when it comes to linking the fortunes of their nation to those of Empire. In maintaining an ambiguous stand, however, these intellectuals are only further problematising the paradox and irresolution that dominate the discussion of 'nationhood' and 'culture' in Scotland, and not confronting the hidden history of how that paradox and irresolution had come about. Nairn who, although he rejects the idea of 'post-colonial Scotland', finds it acceptable to describe Scotland as a 'satellite' of England again illustrates this trend (Nairn 1977 p.8). It is possible, however, that these intellectuals are merely guiding against being accused of 'emotional insensitivity' should they openly use the postcolonial argument. Such wariness may not be unfounded, especially in view of some of the controversies that have attended the concept of 'postcoloniality' in the past few years. Some of the controversies are addressed below.

However, postcoloniality is not an ideology of victimhood, or an attempt to construct one. As Homi K. Bhabha, argues, 'Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony

of Third World countries and (also) the discourses of 'minorities' within the geographical divisions of East and West, North and South' (Bhabha 1993 p.171). If we substitute Bhabha's 'minorities' with what Nairn terms a 'satellite' status, the exclusion of Scotland from the post-colonial prism becomes superficial. While post-coloniality is a social experience it is also a framework, especially in the Scottish case, in which to examine the nature of alliances founded in colonialism. No one explains this better than Nairn himself, as we can see from these two paragraphs taken from the pages of *The Break-Up of Britain*:

...MacDiarmid was not quite accurate in saying that Scotland was alone in failing 'to develop a nationalist sentiment strong enough to be a vital factor in its affairs', in the 19th century. In fact, Western Europe is a graveyard of historical nationalities which were suppressed or submerged by the rise of what became the 18th and 19th century 'great powers'. Scotland's real peculiarity lies elsewhere. It lies in the lateness with which such absorption occurred: at the beginning of the 18th century, rather than in the later Middle Ages. It lies in the manner of the fusion: there are many stateless nationalities in history, but only one Act of Union - a peculiarly patrician bargain between two ruling classes, which would have been unthinkable earlier, under absolute monarchy, and impossible later, when the age of democratic nationalism had arrived. And it lies in the results of the bargain: a nationality which resigned statehood but preserved an extraordinary amount of the institutional and psychological baggage normally associated with independence - a decapitated national state, as it were, rather than an ordinary 'assimilated' nationality.

For two centuries after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745-6 this freak by-product of European history posed no particular problem. The reason was simple: on the whole, the Union bargain worked as it had been intended to. Indeed it far surpassed the hopes placed in it. During the prolonged era of Anglo-Scots imperialist expansion, the Scottish ruling order found that it had given up statehood for a hugely profitable junior partnership in the New Rome (Nairn 1977 p.129).

Could a greater case have been made as to why the business of the Empire ought to be regarded as the signifier of the death of the Scottish nationhood project? In the light of the above, we can begin to see the ambiguity towards Empire in the writings of people like Nairn as a refusal, perhaps deliberate, to recognise that what followed after the Act of Union, which brought about the participation in the Empire, was not by itself secondary to the process either of political or cultural translation and transformation, but a complete alteration of that process. That alteration led inevitably to the assumption of a totally new identity of British citizenship. In the cultural

sphere, that new identity was postcolonial, because from that moment of alteration, the whole idea of Scottish culture was transformed into a bulwark against possible erosion of 'authenticity.' To say this is not to imply that the new meaning attached to culture was not without weaknesses, however, the culture that developed was not as insipid as implied all through Nairn's analyses.

Yet having said all this about it, *The Break-Up of Britain* remains an important work in that it offers, even if contrary to what the author would have wished, a postcolonial reading of Scotland even before the term was invented. This is perhaps inevitable, considering that the author may have conceived the book as his own clearing of intellectual space, which may also have been a warning, at a time when Scottish nationalism seemed unstoppable. Moreover notwithstanding its theoretical stance on the 'cultural process' in Scotland, *The Break-Up of Britain* was at the time a new and powerful critical challenge to the pre-existing conceptions about the nature of the relationships between the British *Centre* and its *Peripheries*. This is in many ways illustrated by the polemical responses to *The Break-Up of Britain* at the time. Nairn's most critical opponents were concentrated on the British new Left, of which he himself had been a leading figure.¹ Nairn's most influential critic at the time was Eric Hobsbawm, (see Hobsbawm 1977), who, thirteen years later, published *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*. (Hobsbawm 1990) This was five years after the author collaborated with the Oxford scholar, Terence Ranger, to put together a collection of essays (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), which in all but name is about nationalism.

The overall judgement made in *The Break-Up of Britain* was that political and cultural nationalism became separated in Scotland, and thereby created a vacuum. To that extent, Nairn's analysis — his detailing the different individual progressions of cultural and political

¹ Nairn was officially at the time on the editorial collective of the *New Left Review*, the organ of the British New Left. Moreover, *The Break-Up of Britain* was published under the imprint of the New Left

nationalism(s) and the injury this has caused the nation's self-consciousness, or the nullification of it — should be treated as raw data for a postcolonial re-reading of Scotland rather than used as template for harsh judgement. This is more so because there is the school that says a separation between political and cultural nationalism is not always, nor will always be as fatal as it became in the Scottish case (Hutchinson 1994). The question raised by that hypothesis is not whether it is correct. It is whether the separation ought to exist or remain permanent. It can also be argued that what became unusual in the Scottish case was that it took nearly two full centuries before it began to be realised that the two ought to live together, but even then, the initial efforts to bring them into a union were abysmal.

Katie Trumpener is among scholars whose recent works are revealing a new picture of the integrity of the cultural process that dominated after the Union and beyond. That integrity was located in the deep-seated opposition to the intrusion and take-over that preceded the larger and outward business of Empire itself. This led to the cultural process becoming an anti-hegemonic phenomenon, although the articulation of the opposition was less dramatised as was the political support for the business of Empire. Trumpener writes:

Throughout the nineteenth century, indeed, in the new context of the British overseas colonies, the Anglo-Celtic model of literary nationalism that arose in response to British internal colonialism (and that used a conservative model of memory to buttress a movement of radical self-assertion) continues to manifest its characteristic political strengths and weaknesses. A lasting source of anti-imperialist inspiration, it also helps ensure that cultural nationalism (as long as it separates cultural expression from political sovereignty) can be contained within an imperial framework. Some Irish and Scottish writers see in the empire a restaging of the structural injustices of Britain; their sense of systematic parallels becomes the basis of an international solidarity at once militantly anti-imperialist and militantly nationalist. Although equally resentful of the subordination of Britain to England, others see in the empire (as a place where individual Scottish or Irish settlers can rise to prosperity and influence) the sole compensation for these injustices-and allow their nationalist pride and their ambivalence toward English culture to be subsumed into a support for the imperial project (Trumpener 1997 pp xiii-xiv).

However else it may be interpreted, the model of literary nationalism that arose in response to British internal colonialism and which used 'a conservative model of memory to buttress a movement of radical self-assertion' was a template of postcolonial reaction. The resultant generational discourses of identity, politics of difference may have found new avenues of expressions in post-empire, post-industrial eras, the surviving passion and the questing for self-assertion and self-representation still have their origin in that first moment of awareness of the loss of selfhood.

According to Robert Crawford, 'Scottish Literature offers the longest continuing example of a substantial body of literature produced by a culture pressurized by the threat of English cultural domination'(Crawford 1992 p.8). Building on this hypothesis, Crawford goes on to provide one of the most exhaustive reading of Scottish writings produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to show how Scottish nationalist pride and ambivalence toward English culture were used as framework for a new relationship between narrative and nation in Scotland. Crawford is of course silent on whether Scottish nationalist pride was indeed subsumed into a support for the imperial project, as pointed out by Trumpener above, one of his major theses is that the energy of Scottish writings was the energy of a culture alert to the need to *decentre* itself from that of a powerful and unflinching metropolis. Hence, Crawford believes that if we are looking for anything that may be called the *Scottish grand narrative* in literature, it is not likely to be found in a coherent body of work, or exemplified by a particular writer. Instead it is to be found in the aesthetic representation in Scottish writings of the resistance to the assimilative propensity of Scotland's powerful *Other*. This, I believe, is well illustrated by the following two remarks, also taken from *Devolving English Literature*:

If there is an important sense in which 'English Literature', the university subject, was a Scottish invention, then there was a parallel eighteenth-century Scottish invention in the arena of creative writing. That invention is British Literature. The Union of Parliaments in 1707, and its consequences, had very little effect on literature written in England. That simply went on being English Literature. Certainly, the Englishness of

1789 was scarcely identical to that of 1688. England's own identity altered, reshaped by a Hanoverian monarchy and an American colony in revolt as well as by other factors, but none of this seems to have involved any profound confrontation with the issue of being British as opposed to English. The wish of some Scottish thinkers and teachers to acquire fundamentally Anglocentric mores may have contributed to the shaping of eighteenth-century English-ness in ways that remain to be investigated, but as regards the development of a literature that was in any meaningful sense British, the English showed little or no interest. Panegyrics to 'Britain' were common in early eighteenth-century England, but 'Britain' was usually seen as a synonym for 'England'. Matthew Prior prefaces his *Solomon* by explaining that his 'digressive Panegyric upon Great Britain' is part of his desire to be 'thought a good English-man', and the panegyric sees Britain as England. When Pope in *Windsor Forest* (1713) hymns 'British blood' (l. 367) and 'BRITISH QUEEN' (l. 384), there is no hint that the word 'British' means anything other than 'English' (Crawford 1992 p. 45).

...

If English poets after 1707 changed little in their Anglocentric outlook, the same is surely true of English novelists. This is not to say that English novelists totally avoid characters and attitudes from the areas of Britain beyond England, but these are, at best, small side-issues. The books often seen as the great English novels of the eighteenth-century, such as *Tom Jones*, *Clarissa*, and *Tristram Shandy*, are just that—great English novels. They offer no interrogation of the nature of Britishness, and show no interest in the new Britain as opposed to England. This was not a subject that (despite the Act of Union and the Jacobite Rebellions) particularly impinged on English authors. Though one can find a good supply of insults directed against the Scots in eighteenth-century English writing, few of the major English writers paid much attention to the revised relationship between the united kingdoms.

Through the eighteenth century, though, in response to the cultural and political pressures outlined in the previous chapter, and sometimes in a direct response to the teachings of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, Scottish literature involved a continuing examination of, and response to, the strains and possibilities of Britishness. Insightfully, awkwardly, entrepreneurially, Scottish writing entered its British phase. It is this Britishness which, more than anything else, distinguishes Scottish from English literature in the eighteenth century. The Scots' concern with identity, discrimination, and the possibilities of 'improvement' or advancement makes prejudice one of the main themes of Scottish books in this period. If we wish to see how a society may attempt to articulate a non-English cultural identity while using a (sometimes modified) form of the English language, it is to eighteenth-century Scotland that we must turn for the first full-scale example (Crawford 1992 p. 46).

In these two excerpts, Crawford has outlined the two ends of the postcolonial argument. At the first end is the business, as usual response of the English literati and cultural elite, by which I mean the entire gamut of the articulate class in England, such as writers, philosophers and thinkers, who rather than taking the Union between England and Scotland as the creation of a

new national identity, went on regarding it as furthering the greatness of England and its identity. At the other end is the reaction in Scotland itself, less to the Union as to how the nation was now being seen as an appendage nationality to English identity. This forced the reaction, which, if we go by Crawford's account resulted in a Scottish reinvention of the meaning of Britishness. Could this reinvention have meant the same thing as the intellectual and utopian figuration of the nation that became lost to the imperium, and therefore, the beginning of the separation between cultural and political nationalism? This is a difficult question to answer, what is obvious however, is that the intellectual and utopian figuration of the Scottish nation contributed in tempering the sense of physical loss of 'nation' and at the same time created a basis for an unproblematic accommodation of Britishness.

What all this tells us is that the Scottish cultural environment became constantly engaged with self-definition. It is within the continuum of intellectual activities that defined that engagement that those creative questioning of ideas of nation, tradition and identity must also be located. For it can be argued that it is within the said continuum of intellectual activities that a process of (cultural) space retrieval, production and re-creation is being launched. This sort of creative production of space typified by these intellectual activities is spelled out as follows by David Chaney:

The production of space ... is more than a distribution of buildings or distinctions between public and private spaces. It involves the delineation of cultural space: through the opportunities for performance at a multiplicity of levels of complexity; through the inscription of audiences for performance; and through the character of formulas and scripts for performance (Chaney 1993 p.22).

I have gone thus far to highlight what may be considered to be the discursive environment in which representation functions in Scotland. However, what the situation calls for is not a continual bemoaning of the situation as it is, but an open reading of how the various modes of representation may have responded to the structural context in which various discourses of the nation have developed.

Talking about these discourses of the nation brings Sir Walter Scott, whose work continues to occupy a privileged position in any discussion of how Scotland is defined in narratives, into the story (Noble 1983; Crawford 1992; Welsh 1992; Craig 1996). More often than not, Scott is regarded as the writer who could have, but either refused or failed, to write the Scottish *grand narrative*. Among the many views on Scott in this regard, none has been as painfully expressed as that by Tom Nairn, who notes Scott ‘...showed us, both sentimentally and politically, how not to be nationalists during an age of ascendant political nationalism’ (Nairn 1977 p.149). It is not for a retrospective want of a national hero that many regard Scott’s ‘failure’ or ‘refusal’ in this respect with so much disappointment or disbelief. In real terms, Scott was the first Scottish writer to face the critical task both of how to turn innovation into tradition and how to make it into the operation of culture. Scott however responded to these tasks by maintaining a view of history dominated not by pessimism, but a powerful ambivalence dictated by the incorporation into the British Union. It was this ambivalence that dictated his much-praised ‘construction of historical narrative’. This is what leads Cairns Craig to see Scott’s failure at creating a grand narrative as being more of a conscious *depoliticisation* of the need for one rather than an innocent failure. Craig also believes that Scott was as *culpable* as his intellectual predecessors, the Scottish Enlightenment philosophers:

Scott’s transference of narrative to the past, dehistoricising the present, is a direct outcome of the Scottish Enlightenment’s theories on history and society, which were, as Anand Chitnis points out, to provide the foundations of both the Whig conception of history and of Marx’s schema of the stages of historical development. But in the Enlightenment model, Scotland’s sudden emergence into this modern, commercial world, out of what those theorists saw as a dark and fanatic past, incorporates Scotland into a history whose shape no longer derives from the particularities of its own experience; rather, the past of its present is the evolution of English experience and Scotland’s own past becomes the arena of local narrative no longer teleologically connected to its future (Craig 1996 p.38).

In other words, for Scott as for the Enlightenment philosophers before him, history could not be separated from England or the English experience. For them, history was ‘seen in

largely instrumental terms, that is as a context for economic growth' (Morse 1993 p.49), which was symbolised in England's ascendancy. Having defined history in this way, 'the Enlightenment philosophers and Scott reduced Scottish history to a series of isolated narratives which could not be integrated into the fundamental dynamic of history: in Scotland, therefore, narrative became part of the world that was framed by art, while the order of progress could only be narrated from somewhere else – it would be ungraspable in a Scottish environment (Craig 1996 p.38).

Georg Lukács, the most famous of Scott's admirers, has suggested that Scott should be forgiven for what, based on Craig's analysis above, is clearly an epistemic concealment in Scott's work. In his praise of the writer's 'historical consciousness', for example, Lukács notes that Scott '...does not raise the social questions of contemporary [England] in his novels, the class struggle between bourgeoisie and proletariat which was then beginning to sharpen. As far as he is able to answer these questions for himself, he does so in the indirect way of embodying the most important stages of the whole English history in his writing.' (Lukács 1962 p.33) The important thing for Lukács is Scott's 'indirect way of embodying the most important stages of the whole English history in his writing.' Had Lukács known how much Scott had torn himself from his own immediate environment and nation in the matter, perhaps his views would have been moderated somewhat. Alexander Welsh, for example, has questioned the whole basis of Scott's historical construction, which he links to Scott's political conservatism. Using Scott's *Waverley Novels* for his illustration, Welsh writes:

In terms of history, the *Waverley Novels* endorse stability, the achieved compromise of the past, and the political realities of the present. The passions of dark heroines or romantic heroes are incompatible, or "ill-assorted," with everyday social reality. The very basis of property, or reality, is prescription, the present and reliable ownership of things. The fixed and sufficient laws of morality are the laws as they stand. Even the success of a mountaineering adventure depends upon "the measure of sound sense and reality." In short, the *Waverley Novels* celebrate "reality" or "being realistic." The nature of this reality must be carefully distinguished from concrete reality (Welsh 1992 p.93).

Welsh goes further to suggest that Scott may have ignored 'social questions' of his contemporary Scotland because he saw it as his personal political duty to offer a sop to the bourgeoisie, of which he himself was a part. Scott was supposed to have successfully done so by offering the bourgeoisie a model of counter-reality through his historico-realist experiment, and which may have allayed the fears of that bourgeoisie. What Welsh is driving at here is self-evident. This is that Scott's political conservatism ruled his aesthetic vision and that Scott ignored realism, which was distinctly a nation-formation aesthetic model in the nineteenth-century. Writing on the same theme of Scott's evasion of realism, which he believes has brought enduring bad consequences for the representation of the nation in Scottish writings, Andrew Noble goes on to compare historical fiction with psychoanalysis, all to show that Scott was a bourgeois *par excellence*:

Of course, like psychoanalysis, historical fiction can be merely escapist and self-indulgent. The nineteenth-century historical novel and contemporary psychoanalysis are arguably both products of a wealthy, leisured middle class with a histrionic taste for exotic fantasy and eager to rehearse the new, narcissistic nomenclature for what they thought and think excites and ails them. Perhaps in both modes we see the manipulation of the past in order to justify the present irresponsibility. Determinism, pseudo-science, can be a major source of temporary consolation (Noble 1983 p.142).

Welsh and Noble are obviously as strident as any hostile critic of Scott can be. The central point of their critique, however, is that by ignoring realism, Scott also refused to provide the nation's grand narrative when he was supremely qualified, and in a position, to do so. But is the issue that of evasion of realism as such or just that Scott, a 'prodigy' of the Scottish Enlightenment, simply subsumed, rather as Craig says, 'Scotland into a history whose shape no longer derives from the particularities of its own experience', thus making Scotland an appendage narrative. This is where the Scott enigma lies.

It was not accidental that Scotland was not touched in a fundamental sense as would have altered its history when the rational sentiments of the Enlightenment began to flower into

'political liberal and radical doctrines' (Halsted 1969 p.4), sparking 'the struggles for unification and self-determination' of nations across Europe'(Crawford 1994). All the circumstances were, at the time, in favour of the nation such that it could afford to thumb its nose intellectually at the rest of Europe. Even then, it was still an irony that Scotland was not touched by the struggles for unification and self-determination because its writers, notably Scott, were the exponents of the idea of national liberation. Yet they were, at home, romancing their own almost formless nationhood. But the reason Scotland could thumb its nose at others was that apart from being already steeped in the Enlightenment's 'conception of human society as having to develop through fixed and determined stages as they progress from barbarity to civilisation', those Scottish writers and philosophers saw themselves as 'realist' enlighteners, not romantics. With the Union with England, they had earlier embarked on the journey, which the rest of Europe was just beginning or seeking to begin. In the view of the Enlightenment writers, the Romantic Movement and History share the same thing in common; both are based on *imagination* rather than *reason*. What had taken place in Scotland was reason, not ineffectual imagination: To return to Craig on this issue:

Not for nothing were such paradigms of historical development described as 'theoretical' or 'conjectural' by Enlightenment writers: they point to the persistent awareness of the literary nature of all historical writing and historical interpretation, a literariness which David Hume, in the Treatise on Human Nature, insisted upon when he suggested that, 'The Peloponnesian War is a proper subject for history, the siege of Athens for an epic poem, and the death of Alcibiades for a tragedy'.¹⁰ History, in other words, is a literary genre, and its truth value is the same as the truth value of literature: even the most balanced history is conjecture, is founded not on reason but on the imagination, however circumscribed by common sense (Craig 1996 p.67).

Those remarks by Craig further reveal why the best part of Scott's writings on Scotland amounts to a modernist aestheticisation of the nation, with the Waverley novels as the major examples (see Welsh 1992; Craig 1996). It is tempting to suggest, therefore, that the nation functioned in Scott's work as a non-historical reference in a historical situation. Where the critical importance of the nation in the work should have been visible, it is the attitude towards it that emerges. In

this, Scott returns to another Enlightenment mode, which is irony. In his aestheticisation of the nation, Scott leaves an ironic space between narrative and reality. However, this was not how Scott himself saw it. In place of irony, he saw an accomplished project, the transformation to an enviable modernity, or what Tom Nairn repeatedly calls, tongue-in-cheek, the New Jerusalem. This was why Scott could declare without any embarrassment that

We had better remain in union with England, even at the risk of becoming a subordinate species of Northumberland, as far as national consequence is concerned, than remedy ourselves by even hinting the possibility of a rupture... (Quoted by Nairn 1977 p.148).

Scotland was expected to live happily thereafter. It is no accident that Hugh Trevor-Roper, in a 1976 article that was as widely excoriated as it was excoriating itself, gives Scott fulsome praise for what his 'services rendered to Scotland',

This was one of the services rendered to Scotland (as he supposed) by Sir Walter Scott. He believed that it would be better for Scotland to be an inferior appendage to Northumberland than to be independent, but that its permanent union with England could be sweetened by converting its deplorable past history into an agreeable romance (Trevor-Roper 1976 p.14).

Here Trevor-Roper testifies to the epidemic of a colonial discourse, which likes to borrow its examples from the history of the colonised and then garnish it with its own notion of 'truth'. Where Scott spoke about 'national consequence', an ideal conceived and meant in a strictly bourgeois term, Trevor-Roper sees 'deplorable past' and barbarity, which has to be contained. At the point Scott was speaking, his bourgeois Scotland was an ironic space that was 'ungraspable in terms of the structure of historical narrative', as Craig agonistically puts it.

Reconstruction under stress: Kailyard as continuity and dissociation

There is an unspoken contract here between Mackenzie and his audience. They excuse him from prolonged accurate characterisation (which they might have demanded of Richardson), or an accumulation of instances where a character responds to situation in a way which exhibits personality through repeated exposure (as they might have expected from Fielding).

Beneath the surface of apparent bad writing, we see a very important concession to the author by the audience. "Bad" writing becomes something of an irrelevance when the purpose of the writing is to excite a "good" emotion, good that is in a highly specialised sense agreed on by all parties, and backed up by a philosophical system held in the highest esteem (Campbell 1981 pp.22-3).

Ian Campbell can be forgiven for speaking so lovingly about his subject. Going by those two passages, his intention might have been to establish a 'counter-discourse', one specifically aimed at restoring value and respectability to kailyard writing. It is timely too. Kailyard writings would appear to be the single most disliked category of imaginative work in Scotland. It is among what Nairn calls 'sub-culture', in a remark already quoted in this essay, while it has also recently drawn the attention of sociologists (McCrone, Morris et al. 1995 pp.61-5). However if Campbell's endorsement of the kailyard seems too elaborate, it is not gratuitous. The phenomenon is more than what it is usually taken to be. Buried somewhere in the alleged tradition is the Scottish national narrative that never got written.² And it can be argued that that one of the reasons why kailyard continues to be disdainfully regarded is because it fails to fulfil many of its promises. Craig hits the nail on the head when, using Barrie, he says the writer's 'kailyard stories are the fulfilment of the historyless world that Scott bequeathed' (Craig 1996 p.39). This is the same as saying that Kailyard was at its beginning an attempt at something much loftier, which is the view put forward by Campbell (Campbell 1981 chp.2). Noting that kailyard 'pre-existed and survives' Barrie, Crocket and MacLaren, all practitioners with whom it is normally associated, Campbell writes that,

... the kailyard will be seen in terms of a set of attitudes in theory and practice evolving from certain features in Scottish fiction a hundred years older... Alternatives to the kailyard existed in Scottish fiction throughout, but writers did not elaborate them into "a" tradition-hence the futility of putting our subject into a ready-made tradition of Scottish fiction.(Campbell 1981 p.11)

² I have used the term, *alleged tradition*, especially to register my own apprehension about seeing kailyard in this frame. It is a form of writing, but one that is higher than the kitsch yet not powerful enough to rival some of the more serious accomplishments in the novelistic genre.

If kailyard represents 'a set of attitudes in theory and practice evolving from certain features in Scottish fiction a hundred years older', as suggested by Campbell, the question that arises is what lies behind those attitudes themselves. This of course brings us back to the same question of integrity of cultural representation and formation of tradition. Campbell says further that the philosophical root of the kailyard runs directly from the Scottish Enlightenment, which is perhaps a little exaggeration, his linking it with literary influences of nineteenth century continental Europe, especially the literature of the Romantic Movement is worth considering. As Campbell sees it, kailyard is possibly the nearest in Romantic fiction that is available in Scottish literature. Perhaps so, but there is another view, which when properly considered, provides a case for regarding the kailyard as somewhat filling a vacuum in the nation-narrative relationship. For example, few critics believe that the kailyard can be historicised outside its immediate narrative frame, which is the Scottish country life. Yet at the same time, it is that narrative frame that links the form to the tradition of the 'British rural novel' and its abiding connection to the culture of Empire.

Although the connection between industrialisation, British Empire and aesthetics has often been highlighted, the extent to which Scotland came to feature in that connection has often been subsumed under the larger picture of 'British literature'. Not only has this distorted the Scottish particularity, but also produced a misreading of the Scottish response to those conditions arising from the imperial adventure and which directly affects it. These are social, cultural and aesthetics.

It is instructive that Campbell identifies six features of the kailyard novel which, according to him, are so frequent in their recurrence that they could 'be discussed almost as if they were definitions of the genre'. These features are listed as the preferment of rural setting; the absence of transport; class distinctions; change; Christian values; and finally, realism. Although Campbell attempts to counterpoise those features with other European influences of

the time, it will be more useful to see those influences cumulatively as part of the general trend noticeable in the *British novel* from the late eighteenth through the nineteenth centuries. This was the time when, as Trumpener suggests, 'the British novel remains preoccupied with the integrity and interpenetration of cultural spaces...' and revelled in 'extranovelistic intellectual and political trends'(Trumpener 1997 p.164).

If the imaginative thrust in the kailyard novel of the same period showed no such 'extranovelistic intellectual and political trends'; nor concentrated too heavily on bringing out local flavour, this was not because its authors lacked the skill or vision to do so. The most probable explanation is that the kailyarders saw theirs as a culture under stress, as a result of which its characteristics needed to be disseminated for a wider readership. Among the informing presence for that view, 'modernization and technology; commodity reification; monetary abstraction and its effects on the sign system; the social dialectic of reading publics' (Jameson 1990 p.44) must have played prominent roles. What is being suggested here is that the authorial attitude of the kailyarders must have grown out of a range of historical conjunctions, all of which then burrowed into the 'narrative' vacuum created by Scott and the Enlightenment philosophers. For example, while noting the differences that exist between the respective 'romantic images' of Scott and J.M. Barrie, Craig talks of Barrie as someone whose vision of Scotland and possibly of its place in the world had already been overtaken by events. Hence, as far as his writing goes, he was a perpetually promising child prodigy, who, because of the circumstances all around him, could not reach his full potential. Barrie was therefore always looking in the wrong mirror for the right image, and what often stared back at him was the little world of village life. As noted by Craig, 'condition in nineteenth-century Scotland would not let works of literature rest within the realms of literature' (Craig 1982 p.9). Scotland had been swamped by its incorporation into Britain, and the cultural space could only respond in those terms recommended by that swamping. Barrie possibly failed to realise that and was therefore reconstructing under stress.

Yet

...what Barrie recalls and makes famous throughout the world is not the Scotland of romantic glamour, but a Scotland of parochial insularity, of poor, humble, puritanical folk living out dour lives lightened only by a dark and forbidding religious dogmatism. The Kailyard is established as the primary image of Scottish experience, a world concerned only with its own cabbage patch -which is the literal meaning of Kailyard - and unaware of the parochial absurdity with which it will be viewed by the outside world (Craig 1996 p.7).

It is precisely what Craig calls 'parochial absurdity' that was to become the attraction of kailyard, if William Donaldson's account is to be believed (Donaldson 1986 chp.5). In his study of the origin of kailyard writings, Donaldson gives the credit to one man, a publishing entrepreneur named William Robertson Nicoll. According to Donaldson, it was in his capacity as editor of the *British Weekly*, that Nicoll purveyed kailyard stories. His hold was on both the writers and the readers, the latter located mainly in the expanding Anglo-American book market.

Writes Donaldson on Nicoll:

Nicoll was the Godfather of the kailyard. He pushed the careers of all its chief writers: he bullied one of them, 'Ian Maclaren', who as Dr John Watson of Liverpool was a leading Presbyterian divine and homiletic writer, into producing *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* a major bestseller in England and America, and in the columns of his paper tirelessly championed the new wave of evangelical Scotch novelists.⁴ Nicoll had himself been a free Kirk minister before ill-health forced him to give it up.

... the *British Weekly* carried all before it in the prosperous middle-class middlebrow Nonconformist market in England. For more than a generation, Nicoll dictated what it read. He was the great manufacturer of reputations in the world of circulating library and the six-shilling novel. Without him the kailyard could not have existed (Donaldson 1986 p.145-6).

But the kailyard *would* still have existed without the energetic or enterprising input of Nicoll. This is because the social dialectic of the nineteenth century reading publics and their connection to the British imperial expansion—factors already implied in Donaldson's observations—would have created the writing. The kailyard was as much a ready-made object of 'cultural exhibition', which, though conceived in the most ahistorical frame of mind as Craig has pointed out, as it was a product of an emerging social dialectic of the nineteenth century. From what Donaldson

says of Nicoll, for example, we are able to look upon the man as a nineteenth century moralist, probably anti-industrialisation and opposed to the ethos of the emerging working class and the liberal segments of the middle class. Nicoll describes these as 'Nonconformists', who are remarked as wanting 'in culture.' When kailyard later began to see itself as reflecting 'historical development', it firmly situated itself, paradigmatically, into what Raymond Williams describes as having much to do 'with a strongly surviving national and community sense, as with the economic differences which are accentuated by the fact of marginal land' (Williams 1973 p.269). This is reflected in what Ian Campbell again says about the kailyard's idea of representing community

The kailyard looks back to a just-vanished comfortable certainty; to read it from the cities, from overseas, is to be aware of something remembered first hand, probably lived through, still fully credible, possibly discoverable in remote parts of Scotland. The attractions to all sorts of reader are obvious. The Scot in the cities sees an alternative to a newly created industrial anonymity. The Scot overseas is vividly reminded of a Scotland probably closer to his memories than the actual present would be. The non-Scottish reader is presented with a credible picture of great attractiveness, and-while seeing no immediate need to contradict it having little external evidence on which to judge it increasingly accepts it as his norm (Campbell 1981 p.15).

What we can make of this is that having inherited the sort of ironic space left by Scott and others, the kailyarders, beginning with Barrie, genuinely believed and felt that they were showing concern for the integrity of their cultural space. This they did by projecting its 'nativity', which in this sense meant bringing out its local flavours and life-nourishing essence. That ironically made them part of the general Victorian-era transaction in cultural images (see Richards 1991) and the local but innocent purveyor of 'parochial absurdity', for the larger colonial book market and world. Thus if Scott's writings aestheticised the nation in a manner that might not have fitted the description of what Fredric Jameson calls 'nostalgia-echo', it also laid the ground for others to continue in that manner. Barrie and all those who came after Scott, seeking to create 'the Scottish grand narrative' merely worked from the other side of the pitch. When critics, as different in approaches as Campbell and Craig, or as ideologically set apart as

Crawford and Welsh, see resemblances, however little, in the works of Scott and Barrie, they are talking about how the two men created and sustained an ironic space between narrative and their national reality. And this is why the failure of Scott and Barrie, a failure that was to blemish every subsequent attempt to redress the situation since, can be put to the immemorial postcoloniality of the national space.

Kailyard and Empire

The kailyard is hardly thought of in relation to the business of the Empire. But one of the side effects of Empire is how it created a new notion of space for the nineteenth century writers. Formed in the shadows of the empire, space was for the Victorian novelist a metaphor of unlimited outward opportunities, away from the 'home-land'(See Said 1993 chp.1) The kailyard novel makes so much use of space, both thematically and formalistically along this particular line. The expression 'getting on' which has been coined out of the form is directly related to this metaphorical idea of space. Space is also a moral issue for the hero/heroine, as the reading of the *House with the Green Shutters* reveals especially. Space is both a spatial/external and internal psychological elements in the kailyard hero. As a spatial/external element, it enables the hero/heroine to imagine distances and places far away from him/her. Such far-away places would mean release and freedom from a narrow and constricting world of the village. In this sense, the whole concept of 'getting out' or 'getting on' has dual meaning in a kailyard work. It means physical as well as moral escape, both of which would reasonably be expected to lead to self-regeneration. Hence, the world of the kailyard is not as hermetically sealed as it is often felt to be. The attitude to space in the work is one of careful 'imagining'. In other words, much as 'getting on' could have been a small town or small village way of anybody's success at escaping the narrowness of such a place, there is a reverence for space in how the 'getting on' is finally accomplished. It is perhaps a controversial claim to make now that the critical study of kailyard

appears thoroughly exhausted, but there is a sense in which one feels that the imagination of space found in much kailyard work would have been impossible without the metaphor of space provided by Empire. This is repeating Edward Said's contention that the literature written in the shadows of the Empire 'makes constant references to itself as somehow participating in Europe's overseas expansion, and therefore creates what Williams calls 'structure of feeling' that support, elaborate, and consolidate the practice of empire' (Said 1993 p.14). This will be consistent with the remarks by Ian Campbell that the kailyard novel mirrors the gradual process by which wealth and other forms of prosperity arrived at Scottish cities and villages. Perhaps if Campbell had considered stretching those remarks further, he would have connected the Kailyard to Empire. For example, while Campbell talks of Conrad's 'exploring Scots' and 'Stevenson's sailors', he avoids the embarrassment of saying that the voyages made by those 'explorers' and 'sailors' were an acceptance of 'the notion that distant territories and their native peoples should be subjugated' (Said 1993 p.10). Instead, Campbell proceeds to attribute those voyages to Scotland's own internal dynamism. He writes

Change is more complex than the previous point might suggest. The kailyard, within certain rules, tolerates some change. We have already seen one such case: education and self-help will lead to advancement in a way which social and religious authorities condone—a University chair, a pulpit, an administrative or Civil Service appointment, a business responsibility. An inner tension is visible here between a desire for a static Scotland, and an explosive need for trained administrators and businessmen—Conrad's exploring Scots, Stevenson's sailors, the beery businessmen of Brown's "Howff" in Edinburgh. To men of ability the kailyard offered this possibility, earned as it was through a bitter course of self-help only too familiar to Brown (Campbell 1981 p.14).

These matters should not be severed from our understanding of Scotland's dilemma, of being in and out of the process that created Empire and at the same time left hollowness at the heart of its own nationhood. Whatever Scotland's contributions to the making and sustenance of the empire, and whatever the efforts made by Scott and the Enlightenment philosophers to make the entire process seem less tragic than it was, Scotland has continued to be haunted by the agony of

incompletion.

Scotland and Postcoloniality

Too many hazards now attend the use of the terms 'post-colonial', 'post-colonial theory' and 'postcoloniality'. However, the most demanding of these hazards are not about how to define the overall concept in any precise terms, but how to bridge the gap between the two composite discourses that have now emerged around postcoloniality as a critical paradigm. The choice of discourses here is deliberate and is meant to further indicate the major contestation and refutation brought about by the two composite views of postcolonial theory/criticism. The first discourse, which is the most widely known, is the textual/theoretical critique and is firmly rooted in cultural theory. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin inaugurated this particular discourse in 1989. Although much has since happened, the explicitly textual/theoretical frame in which the trio at the time defined its mission is worth recalling,

We use the term 'post-colonial', however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. In this sense...is concerned with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1989 p.2).

Although the trio was richly applauded from the beginning, certain discomfiture about how they specified the terms of postcoloniality, especially their model of post-colonial texts, persisted. For example, African and Africanist scholars whose works cover literatures created in non-colonial (read African) languages have been outspoken in expressing this discomfiture. As a representative opinion from this constituency, Karin Barber's words are illustrative of its objections:

... post-colonial criticism offers a 'generalized model of the world which has had the effect of eliminating (other)-language expression from view. This model has produced

an impoverished and distorted picture of “the colonial experience” and the place of language in that experience (Barber 1995).

The anxiety expressed by Barber can be found in a number of early reactions to postcoloniality as a critical term. And notwithstanding the force with which many of the authors of the anxieties expressed themselves, their reactions taken together hardly qualify as a wholesale rejection of postcoloniality. Instead, the issues they raise constitute strands which are located within the field, but which are in want of further critical clarifications and examination. Among those who have tried to provide such clarifications are Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, who jointly propose that a distinction should be made between ‘oppositional postcolonialism’ and ‘complicit postcolonialism’. They argue

It must be possible to acknowledge difference and insist on a strongly theorized oppositional postcolonialism as crucial to the debate, without claiming that this form is or has been everywhere the same wherever a colonizer’s feet have trod. We can trace the creative process of cultural syncretism and its collapse of distinctions without having to overlook the contradictions and oppositions which still survive, and without disavowing the sometimes violent nature of colonial struggles in non-settler countries before and after independence (Mishra and Hodge 1994 p289).

The second composite discourse of postcoloniality however insists on the primacy of the history of the continued power relationship between the Centre and the peripheries, as a marker of postcoloniality. Saying this is something whose effects cannot be textualised, critics supporting this view have joined with Ella Shoat, in saying that post-coloniality amounts to an ‘ahistorical and universalizing displacements.’(Shoat 1992) And in an essay just as famous, Anne McClintock, after declaring that ‘I am not convinced that one of the most important emerging areas of intellectual and political inquiry is best served by inscribing history as a single issue’, goes on to say that:

My misgivings...are not about the theoretical substance of 'post-colonial theory', much of which I greatly admire. Rather, I wish to question the orientation of the emerging discipline and its concomitant theories and curricula changes, around a singular, monolithic term, organized around a binary axis of time rather than power, and which,

in its premature celebration of the pastness of colonialism, runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power (McClintock 1994 p.294).

And further that

... Asking what single term might adequately replace 'post-colonialism', for example, begs the question of rethinking the global situation as a multiplicity of Powers and histories, which cannot be marshalled obediently under the flag of a single theoretical term, be that 'feminism, marxism or post-colonialism.' Nor does intervening in history mean lifting, again, the mantle of 'progress' or the quill-pen of empiricism. 'For the native', as Fanon said, 'objectivity is always against him.' Rather, a proliferation of historically nuanced theories and strategies is called for, which may enable us to engage more effectively in the politics of affiliation, and the currently calamitous dispensations of power (McClintock 1994 Pp302-3).

McClintock's comments illustrate many of the dilemmas faced by those opposed to postcoloniality, but who recognise its theoretical substance. The theoretical problem she poses can therefore be put as follows. How could postcoloniality, by putting emphasis on textualisation of cultural practices, answer to the more demanding and immediate crisis of continued imbalances in power relationships between the countries of advanced capital and the poor ones? How indeed could the invidious cycle of economic and fiscal domination as well as continued militaristic bullying of the latter countries, which have resulted from that relationship be explained within the postcolonial theoretical framework? Moreover, what are the criteria for organising 'coloniality' around a binary axis of time, when on one hand, the very process of colonisation was not uniform and on the other hand, when all the features of the colonial encounter are still present in many places?

Given the nature of economic exclusion and decline, social anomie and decay in many of the places for which the term postcoloniality was collectively reserved initially, and how those conditions have led to a situation of self-reproducing anarchy, it is almost impossible to answer McClintock's queries. But while an awareness of the issues she raises should inform the formulation of the methodology of post-colonial criticism, or of any critical theory for that

matter, focusing on those issues alone within the empirical field does not have to constitute that methodology. Those who have followed the discussion of the issues raised by McClintock would have recognised an unusual paradox when she herself became the focus of criticism by Aijaz Ahmad, an unabashed and untiring defender of Marxist cultural-literary critique, as well as implacable opponent of 'postcoloniality' as field of study or term of critical engagement. (See for example, Ahmad 1994) McClintock, says Ahmad 'goes on to inflate the meaning of the term 'colonialism' so markedly that all territorial aggressions ever undertaken in human history come to fall under this singular dispensation, thus erasing, among other things, the specificity of that capitalist colonialism which the nation-states of Europe uniquely produced.' (Ahmad 1995 fn.19) A number of the issues generated by this and other aspects of the debate about what may or may not qualify as 'postcolonial' has been addressed by other scholars and there are now texts in which their views are codified (Hutcheon 1989; Slemon 1994; Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1995; Mongia 1996; Moore-Gilbert 1997).

Critics like McClintock, who regard postcoloniality as an inadequate descriptive and judgemental strategy tend to ignore that the crisis of self-consciousness which colonial intrusion saddled its subjects with, lives on after formal colonial withdrawal. This crisis of self-consciousness usually assumes the dimension of a teleological crisis, which then manifests itself in every sphere of national life in the post-colonial space. It is a problem that persists *pari passu* with the 'the calamitous dispensations of power' that Iqbal Ahmad also described as 'power pathology', in many post-colonial states. To deny the existence of the crisis of self-consciousness arising from colonial intrusion is to assume that the intrusion was a superficial affair, possibly a chance encounter (see Slemon 1993).

It is to address this issue that this chapter began with a synthesis of the issues surrounding the general political and cultural discourse of Scotland. Also there are a number of scholars and critics whose opinions on postcoloniality complement this theoretical assumption that Scotland

is indeed a post-colonial space. To dismiss this position, especially on the assumption that Scotland has itself been a coloniser is to lose sense of the 'double inscription' that is deeply buried in the colonial process itself. It is this 'double inscription' that Stuart Hall talks about while defending the integrity of postcoloniality as a critical analytical tool. As Hall sees it, postcoloniality

... refers to a general process of decolonisation which, like colonisation itself, has marked the colonising societies as powerfully as it has the colonised (of course, in different ways). Hence the subverting of the old colonising/colonised binary in the new conjuncture. Indeed, one of the principal values of the term 'post-colonial' has been to direct our attention to the many ways in which colonisation was never simply external to the societies of the imperial metropolis. It was always inscribed deeply within them — as it became indelibly inscribed in the cultures of the colonised. This was a process whose negative effects provided the foundation of anti-colonial political mobilisation, and provoked the attempt to recover an alternative set of cultural origins not contaminated by the colonising experience (Hall 1996 p.66).

At its general level of abstraction, postcoloniality enables us to see the history of colonisation as being more than an encounter between the colonised and the coloniser, but rather as 'part of an essentially transnational and transcultural 'global' process'. One of the immediate advantages of this new way of seeing the colonial process is the emergence of what Hall also calls 'global' re-writing of earlier, nation-centred imperial grand narratives' (Hall 1996 p.247), which also masks the violence perpetrated in the process of nation-making. One good example is the case of the Scottish Highlands and how the series of violence done to the region within the history of the British nation state have come to form part of the Scottish rather than British cultural antinomies. One cannot think of the Highlands in this respect without bringing Stephen Slemon's definition of 'postcoloniality' into the picture. As he puts it,

Definitions of the "postcolonial," of course, vary widely, but for me the concept proves most useful not when it is used synonymously with a post-independence historical period in once-colonized nations, but rather when it locates a specifically anti- or post-colonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist international relations (Slemon 1993 pp428-9).

Every postcolonial space, whether of the appropriated/interventionist and therefore composite kind, as Scotland is or of the occupation type, which form the majority (Africa and parts of Asia), or the settler-invader types such as Australia, New Zealand or Canada, is ultimately a contested space. The contestation is of two kinds: between each colonised society in its organic 'national state' with the colonising power, and contestation within the 'national state' itself; among its inhabitants, the composite elements and interests—ruling elite, citizens, women, workers etc. This latter contestation is also a struggle for essential legitimacy, for control of the public space.

The form in which the domination of Scotland occurred was not the kind that would have made the struggle over space become acrimonious at the public level. There are two reasons for this. The first is because unlike many other postcolonial societies, Scotland at the beginning did not have to suffer all those administrative paraphernalia of colonial rule [the machinery of domination]. Scotland was simply absorbed into an existing national state, and some would say it was initially treated almost too kindly for its own eventual good within that state. For example, it got more seats than its size could justify in the allegedly new national parliament. And the written inclusion in the Act of Union of the continued independence and autonomy of Scotland's Church, its education and legal systems was enough to remove any hint of a colonial take-over. But as scholars from various backgrounds have continued to demonstrate, and Tom Nairn and Cairns Craig would most certainly concur, it was a new Scotland that woke up on the morning after the Act of Union. The story of that Scotland is no longer one that could be told in terms of what was before then or what would-have been, but in terms of what has since been. It is to that extent that the Act of Union has become the main legal animus of the Scotland-England relationship. For example, it is the Act that finally made irreversible the hidden cultural cost of the 1603 Union of Crowns. If the Union of Crowns, as various scholars and commentators have always pointed out, removed direct court approval and

patronage for representational culture in Scotland, it was the Act of Union that substituted something else in the place of that patronage (Daiches 1964). What it substituted was a vigorous cultural practice that became focused as such on the union itself. This cultural practice was more of a defence than affirmation. Hence, it latched on to everything within its sight, from fairytale to mythology, from history to histrionics, to propagate a new culture. Therefore, what developed was, in a truly large sense, a polyphonic cultural response to the new crisis of national identity.

The second reason why the contestation for legitimacy within Scotland has been less acrimonious at the public level is that since the country did not endure settler-invasion or occupation colonialism, it also did not engage in any formal independence struggle, or have to. The absence of such a struggle also means that it did not develop the usual type of visceral association with the nation, which independence struggles foster. If the experience of the directly colonised nations is anything to go by, it is the conjunctures of the struggle for independence and the utopian dream of national liberation enshrined within it that usually always shape the language in which the colonial intrusion is described. Since these have been absent in the Scottish case, the struggle for definition, for retrieval and for affirmation have continued to take place more firmly at textual levels.³

England's 'Other'

³ I am tempted to add here that there is also a beguiling level of amusement at which this struggle has also always occurred. This is at the level of parliamentary politics. Or how else does one react to the sight of implacable political foes such as Michael Forsyth, leader of the Conservative Party in Scotland; Alex Salmond, leader of the Scottish National Party; and George Robertson, leader of the official opposition Labour Party, all turning up at the premier of the film, *BraveHeart!* Such a showing apart, the very tenor of the way politicians discuss and talk about Scotland in Westminster is, even by the standards of the normally amusing emotive language of parliamentary setting, comparably more theatrical. Then there was the spectacle of a Conservative party parliamentary candidate in the May 1st, 1997 election, a former MP, Bill Walker who, kilt and all, turned his election night speech (he lost his seat) into a virtual diatribe against his constituents. His view was that they had voted him out because they wanted a Scottish parliament, something that he cleverly told them all they would live to regret. The pity of Mr. Walker's comments, which I watched on television, was that his former constituents were in too much of a celebratory mood to listen to his speech!

In 1976, at the heat of the devolution debate, the well-known Oxford historian, Hugh Trevor-Roper (later Lord Dacre), posted an article that contained the following in the *London Times*.

For instance, we speak of "the British constitution", whereas we ought to speak of the English constitution; for the Scots had no part in making it. The Scotch political system and political tradition, which they surrendered in 1707, was quite different.

In fact, it was a system of political banditry. Groups of men, organized into factions, competed for power and, once they had got it, held it by force and corruption until they were overthrown by stronger force, which was afterwards sustained by continued corruption. As long as the Crown lived in Scotland, or even afterwards when it visited Scotland, it was at the mercy of these factions. There was no neutral administration, no effective parliament, no political institutions recognizable by us or contiguous with our own.

All this was ended in 1707. After that date, intelligent Scotchmen rejoiced in the removal of their national politics to London. That enabled them to get on with the long delayed improvement of their country which, till then, had remained, as they admitted, "the rudest of all the European nations". In the eighteenth century, the energy which had hitherto been wasted or frustrated in futile politics was devoted to "improvement" and rudest of its nations became the admired model of Europe.

The question now arises whether these political traditions of independent Scotland were really terminated in 1707 or have survived in "cold storage". Some people might argue that, though terminated at national level, they have survived, in modified forms, in local politics. On that subject, I would not venture an opinion. Others would say that they have been neutralized: that is reduced to harmless if historically absurd customs. (Trevor-Roper 1976 p.14)

The article was posted against the background of wide [Scottish] public enthusiasm and support for the devolution project, which of course ended on a nail-biting outcome in 1979. In tone and in meaning, Trevor-Roper's article reflects the kind of colonial discourse to which Scotland can sometimes be subjected at a moment of British constitutional crisis (Royal succession apart, of course). Trevor-Roper in the essay undermines the project of 'devolution' by questioning the 'historical basis' on which the argument for it had been based. Such a phrase as 'reduced to harmless if historically absurd customs' might be entertaining on its own, but it is a deliberately chosen wounding act. This beggar-my-neighbour imperial assertion recalls claims made exactly two hundred years earlier by Samuel Johnson, after his famed Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland (1775). In her critique of those claims, Katie Trumpener has the following to say:

The Journey virtually ignores the intellectual, cultural, and economic renaissance taking place in Edinburgh, Glasgow, and other Lowland cities, using the bleaker

prospects of the Highlands and Islands, areas in political and economic transition, to characterize Scotland as a whole. As Boswell's Journal records, Johnson met Adam Ferguson, Lord Monboddo, and a host of other important Scottish Enlightenment literati during his time in Scotland; Johnson's own account of the journey fails to discuss the work of the Scottish Enlightenment at all.

Yet the Journey does appropriate Scottish Enlightenment paradigms and investigative procedures to criticize the culture from which they sprung. Drawing on the Scottish Enlightenment four-stage theory, Johnson depicts Scotland as a country that subsumes several distinct stages of cultural development. Each presents the traveler with different conceptual problems, and in each, therefore, the observer must develop a distinct mode of analysis: different kinds of places make possible not only different cultural forms but different questions and observations. In the Lowlands, Johnson meditates on ruins, progress, and historical change, drawing on and questioning the premises of Enlightenment historiography.

In the Highlands, observing a society paralyzed by the breakup of the clan system and still resistant to anglicization, he meditates on community loyalties and the physical determinants of culture, interrogating Montesquieu's geographical sociology and Adam Ferguson's historical ethno sociology. On the Hebrides, finally, Johnson reconsiders human knowledge and cultural transmission in terms that question Blackwell's theories of cultural history and extend the epistemological experiments of Diderot or Hume⁷ (Trumpener 1997 pp.68-69).

Johnson obviously went to the Highlands armed with two views. One was a prepossessing idea of 'civilisation'. The second was of the barbarity he was going to encounter there. The text and the counter-text were therefore already well established in Johnson's mind even before he set out on the journey. For the visitor from the heart of England, and especially one who, like Johnson was already involved in the construction of 'national imagery', Scotland suggested a landscape occupied by a people fighting their ways into a modernity that had already been achieved by England.

Nearly two and a half centuries stood between Hugh Trevor-Roper and Johnson in 1996. Yet and not counting the 1603 union of crowns, notwithstanding the 1707 Act of Union, and in spite of the England-Scotland collaboration in the hideous business of Empire, Hugh Trevor-Roper saw no changes in the Scottish landscape. For him, it was in the same state as it was in the age of Johnson.

The focus of my analysis all along has been to describe the Scottish national space, and

in so doing trace the moment of the repression of the nation's possibilities. This is out of the belief that it is by tracing that moment that we can fully justify or reject the very visible 'cultural practice of difference'. That practice is what I have described throughout the analysis above as postcolonial condition. I believe that the two instances of *Othering* of the Scottish space identified above, and standing almost two and a half centuries apart, help to prove the case that such a repression actually exists, and that a form of *discourse* derived from it is still very active.

In the next chapter, I shall be focusing on the internal struggle to liberate the Scottish space from the repression mentioned above, and to see what form of identity is being created in the process.

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Chapter Two

Wresting the space and weaving the discourse: the reconstruction of Scottish cultural identity

I have defined the Scottish space as a composite postcolonial space. This approach posits not merely a possibility, but the validity, of reading that space as a site where representation is repeatedly construed as a contestation between subordination and insubordination. There can be no easy description of the struggle to control or to resist the control of that space, except in such terms as are capable of addressing its moment of take-over colonial domination. In view of the discussion so far, the question arises, inevitably, of how might the construction and translation of Scottish cultural identity be described? In other words, to move away from loose and populist notion of cultural identity, how might the theoretical perspectives offered by postcoloniality help us to understand and relate to Scottish cultural identity? To show this, I have identified two models of identity construction, the expressive and the instrumental.

The Expressive and Instrumental

I use two models, expressive and the instrumental, to describe the many articulations of Scottish cultural identity to date. These terms have been borrowed from sociology (Goodlad 1971). These two terms summarise two dominant trends around which the various ways of seeing and explaining the nation, the *discourses* – the hegemonic, the counter-hegemonic, the essentialist, the non-essentialist and the nationalist and anti-nationalist as well as their various tributaries – can be organised. The *expressive* and the *instrumental* similarly embody the responses to those discourses. For example, as responses, the discourses are considered as individually counter-hegemonic to the externally generated discourse/s about ‘Scottish identity.’ After all, it cannot be ignored that when shorn of theoretical differences and ideological manipulations, there is in every discourse about Scotland the recognition of a Scottish *Identity* or at the very least *Difference*. Arguing about the validity of Scottish identity and difference, for example, Alice

Brown, David McCrone and Lindsay Paterson have stated that 'People's claims to an identity have to be recognised to be valid and operative. We have to be able to read the signs when claims are made, and treat them not as ready-made and fixed characteristics, but as aspirations made in a social and political context' (Brown, McCrone et al. 1996 p.209). Since the ground on which the various discourses on and about Scotland stand is itself shifting, it is important that the two models of articulation I have chosen, the expressive and the instrumental, are considered fluid and on going as well as capable of several manifestations. But overall the two models also summarise the internal pluralism, arising from dialogues and perpetual confrontations from within the Scottish space itself.

The expressive construction of culture and cultural identity is that which pronounces that one culture is as good as the next. In its most open form, it maintains an uncritical, self-assuring view that the process of self-constitution within each culture—the spiritual and material processes through which the society of the culture produces and reproduces itself—is absolute (see Williams 1963; Williams 1977; Cabral 1994).

Those who conceive culture in this mould see it as enshrining an atavistic essence, to which all must pay obeisance. The extension of the expressive definition of culture takes society in the form it is received. Relying thus on an unfathomable abstruseness, the expressive construction of cultural identity blackens out all other cultures. But more than that, it also uses the same abstruseness to simulate a principle of difference. It rejects the reality of culture being caught, as Homi K. Bhabha says, 'in an aporetic, contingent position, in-between a plurality of practices that are different and yet must occupy the same space of adjudication and articulation' (Bhabha 1992 p.57).

Distinguishing between what he calls the subjective and objective points of nationalist ideologies, Tom Nairn, whose work oscillates between the expressive and the instrumental modes, tells us that

The subjective point of nationalist ideology is, of course, always the suggestion that one nationality is as good as another. But the *real* point has always lain in the

objective fact that manifestly, one nationality has never been even remotely as good as, or equal to, the others which figure in its world-view (Nairn 1977 p.96).

What I call the expressive conception of cultural identity can be read as the intensification of what Nairn calls the objective fact of nationalist ideology, although the expressive framework is not the same as that of nationalist discourse. The primary purpose of the expressive conception of cultural identity is to resist the brutal act of definition, and the imposition of superior/inferior demarcation of cultures. In other words, it is an anticipatory gesture of resistance, deployed to forestall the act of definition from being elevated and institutionalised as *knowledge*. Edward Said's study, *Orientalism* (Said 1995), symbolises a text whose primary objective is the prevention of *definition* from becoming *knowledge*. But *Orientalism* also reveals some of the paradoxes that could result from this manner of engagement, for as pointed out by James Clifford, the account set out by Said in *Orientalism* is haunted by redundancy. This redundancy, which is also to be found within the expressive construction of cultural identity, deserves appreciation and at times sympathy, as indicated by Clifford in the following statement:

If redundancy haunts Said's account, this is not, I think, merely the result of a hermeneutical short circuit in which the critic discovers in his topic what he has already put there. Nor is it simply an effect of his insistence on the sheer knitted-togetherness of a textual unity that is constantly in danger of decomposing into its discontinuous functions, authors, institutions, histories, and epistemologically distinct epochs. Beyond these problems (faced by any interpreter of constructed, complex cultural ensembles) lies a substantial and disquieting set of questions about the ways in which distinct groups of humanity (however defined) imagine, describe, and comprehend each other. Are such discourses ultimately condemned to redundancy, the prisoners of their own authoritative images and linguistic protocols? (Clifford 1988 p.260).

Orientalism is an unusual and indeed paradoxical case of a text arriving at almost a dead-end of cultural relativism while genuinely countering epistemological tyranny. The paradox is that even though the text maintains what Said rightly sees as a historicist frame, it still becomes a victim of that which it is seeking to dismantle. This illustrates the irony of the expressive construction of identity, which is that by its own force, it could also render itself ahistorical as it tries to dismantle epistemological tyranny.

The instrumental mode of identity is that which acknowledges culture's historicity in the fact that it is nourished by the 'complex historical processes of appropriation, compromise, subversion, masking, invention, and revival'— processes that 'inform the activity of a people not living alone but "reckoning itself among the nations"'(Clifford 1988 p.338). Hence, it is the mode of identity construction that enables the containment of epistemological tyranny. The mode presages an identity formation that is neither fixed nor unalterable. As a necessary corollary, the instrumental mode leads as matter of course to a notion of society as multiplicity of social groups or networks relating to different yet cross-fertilising types of power. The instrumental mode rejects the conception of society as static and rhetorically given, but endorses it as the bearer and creator of culture 'which is not and never could be the privilege of one or of some sectors of society'(Cabral 1994 p.56).

The kernel of my argument is that in each mode of construction, we also find different modes of representation. In each of these modes, the governing principle is the quality of emphasis placed on subjectivity and subjection as well as on historical consciousness. This however is not unlike drawing attention to the kind of separation made between unreflective 'aesthetic judgement' and 'historical question of meaningful development by W. Wolfgang Holdheim (Holdheim 1984 pp161-72). The former offers a mode of representation that 'is essentially absolute and lays claim to universal validity.' The latter, on the other hand, stresses the fact of the historical world as being flux and never finished. Holdheim has spoken of the opposition between the two thus: 'Unfinished flux and immanence as against total closure and transcendence: the distinction hinges on the nature of time, which is the crux of historicity itself.'(p.165). Holdheim's expositions, like those made by Cairns Craig in Chapter Four of *Out of History* (Craig 1996), summarise the different forms of representation that can be authorised by expressive and instrumental constructions of cultural identity. The expressive, for example, is characterised by self-containment and closure, while the instrumental stresses 'the processual configuration of historical elements.' The instrumental is, therefore, more obtuse

than diverse, more problematic than resolute. Instrumental identity is an identity that contests subjectivity and subjection and even more so refuses to be fixed as any *Otherness*.

In Scotland, the personality and work of Christopher Murray Grieve, better known as Hugh MacDiarmid, bear the most eloquent testimony to the ambiguity and complexity of identity construction. Although Grieve's work, as I intend to argue, tends towards the expressive construction, this is so only when the work is subjected to careful scrutiny, much of which is realisable only now in posthumous discussion. At the time of Grieve's critical intervention, the heavy snow of hegemonic cultural domination was still thickly spread over his native Scotland. While the snow showed signs of thawing, the assurances that it would melt reasonably quickly were far from available. It was the terror of the snow not melting for good that probably directed his work, so much so, that he fashioned both the expressive and the instrumental modes of identity construction in Scotland this century. This was in 'the context of the Scottish Renaissance, a cultural campaign which was born in the aftermath of the First World War with the object of re-invigorating the Scottish sense of identity' (Campbell 1996 p.125).

In 1926 Christopher Murray Grieve published under his better-known pseudonym of Hugh MacDiarmid his burning and searching long poem *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. In it, he wrote of philosophy; the quest for transcendence; of beauty and creativity in arts; of life and the search for truth. Of all these, none has repeatedly drawn the attention of successive critics as what they believe the 2685 line-poem has to say about Scotland. Trevor Royle, for example, summarises the poem as follows:

Central to the poem's interpretation is MacDiarmid's theory of Caledonian Antisyzygy, the balancing of opposites, ... described as the dynamic impulse behind Scotland's poetic literature. Thus, as well as examining man's genesis and his place in eternity, MacDiarmid also refuses to lose sight of the matter of Scotland, and the poem is notable for the sudden, and at times bewildering, switches of mood and pace, and for many seeming contradictions of attitude' (Royle 1984 p.91).

When examined on its own terms, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* raises a number of aesthetic questions, particularly given the unhidden ambition of its author for it to be seen as the twentieth century Scottish reinvention of Romantic poetry. However, the consideration of that

ambition and its implications, takes a secondary place behind the poem's aesthetico-metaphysical character. This is the character that enables the poet's nation as a social fact, its basis and existence, to be religiously but aesthetically questioned and then affirmed. For example, through the motif of drunkenness, the poet brings up the issue of subjectivity and subjection in cultural identity, with the contestation between the two being organised around the person of the drunken man looking at the Thistle. As far as metaphors go, we must never lose sight of the importance of the Thistle to the poem and to the poet's imagination. In its existence as the Scottish national emblem, the thistle stands for plurality; for community that forms culture, a signification of the cultural whole created by the many. However, for the poet personae, the drunken man of the poem, the thistle is less an important Scottish national emblem than a symbol of *absence* and hence, of national inadequacy. By granting the drunken man astoundingly evocative power of imagination that has been much discussed, MacDiarmid is able to use him to contest the many-sided effects of subjection of his native land. Sadly, however, his conclusion is not to see a community of culture 'which is not and never could be the privilege of one or of some sectors of society', but of no culture at all. All that the drunken man sees is cultural and spiritual exhaustion: the landscape that fails the likes of him (the drunken man).

I nicht ha'e been contentit wi' the Rose
Gin I'd had ony reason to suppose
That what the English dae can e'er mak'guid
For what Scots dinna-and first and foremaist should.

I nicht ha'e been contentit-gin the feck
O' my ain folk had grovelled wi' less respec',
But their obsequious devotion
Made it for me a criminal emotion.

I nicht ha'e been contentit-ere I saw
That there were fields on which it couldna draw,
(While strang-er roots ran under't) and a'e threid
O't drew frace Scotland a' that it could need,

And left the maist o' Scotland fallow
(Save for the patch on which the kail-blades wallow),
And saw hoo ither countries' genius drew
Elements like mine that in a rose ne'er grew....

Gin the threid haud'n us to the rose were snapt,
There's no' a'e petal o't that 'ud be clapt.
A' Scotland gi'es gangs but to jags or stalk,
The bloom is English-and 'ud ken nae lack! ... (MacDiarmid 1987 p.62).

A comparison might be drawn here between MacDiarmid and Aimé Césaire, the Martinique poet whose 1939 poem, *Cahier d'un retour au pays natal* was one of the literary foundations of the Negritude movement. In spite of the recognisable differences in MacDiarmid and Césaire's locales, as well as the differences of occasions for their writings, there remains a striking parallel between the individual consciousnesses that informed their separate poems. This is also true of how individual consciousness forms parts of the general 'meta-text' of each of the two poems. Césaire's project was in part psycho-aesthetic, concerned as it was with race retrieval. But 'a "native land" was for Césaire something complex and hybrid, salvaged from a lost origin, constructed out of a squalid present, articulated within and against a colonial tongue' (Clifford 1988 p255). All these were of course the realisations that Césaire sought to make his poem communicate. In the case of MacDiarmid, whose effort preceded Césaire's by about a decade and half, there was no less an ambition. But in addition to 'race', MacDiarmid was also seeking a Scottish authenticity, which perhaps only he, as the visioneer and builder of the new Athens, was capable of constructing. The nearest MacDiarmid comes to disclosing that is in his Shavian polemic that accompanied the poem. There, he explains his reason for using a hitherto untested *language*; braid Scots, for the writing, which he said had been 'expressly designed to show that braid Scots can be effectively applied to all manner of subjects and measures' (as quoted by Royle 1984 p.91). In the brevity of this explanation, we can guess that MacDiarmid, unlike Césaire, is not seeking to return to his native land, but to reinvent it. For him, it is the beginning all over again. In the circumstance, no one should be surprised that MacDiarmid became a major inspiration for a new questioning attitude towards the ideological and epistemological practices that had hitherto shaped the image(s) of his 'native land.'

Yet radical as his intervention on the cultural scene might have been and in spite of his efforts — whose continuing impact upon contemporary Scottish thought cannot be denied — the Scottish identity proposed by MacDiarmid was in the expressive mode. It did not so question a particular subjection as to invent a new subjectivity based, as it were, on the notion of a stronger *Otherness*. Apparently, the necessity of stepping out of the shadow of ‘English culture’, of rejecting the dictates of that culture, of spitting into its imperial eyes, was so much taken as priority that the original inquiring spirit which had spurred MacDiarmid to seek to lead a ‘Renaissance’ was not allowed to secure the vital and necessary discursive reproduction on the subject of identity. MacDiarmid was thinking and writing in the shadows of the exhaustion of the English imperium. The irony, however, is that the discovery of the exhaustion of Englishness and the inevitable collapse of its literary imperium was not peculiar to Scotland. It was felt in every place where that imperium had until then been self-authorised. It was this discovery, which, in Ireland, gave birth to the most successful literary rebellion of all, the Irish Revival and also energises a new mode of thought all over Africa. It was also the occasion for similar but less pronounced endeavours in North America, Australia etc. Yet MacDiarmid would not seek any connection with all these. Instead, he constructs a Scottish essentialism. Even in this, it is not so much the *Other* as referent (which has become the populist way of defining Scottish identity in the post-MacDiarmid era), but a disabling *Otherness* of the self that results from MacDiarmid’s construction. This indeed is the major weakness in MacDiarmid’s work and through him the work of the Renaissance that he inspired. Although both did not claim any superior ancestry on behalf of Scotland, which is understandable, considering how vulnerable that would have made them to charges of Nazi-like essentialism. Nonetheless, MacDiarmid and the Renaissance insisted on being seen as a truer category of the same, which in this case is the European heritage. This belief was then made a foundation, the *foci*, of every action contemplated by both MacDiarmid and Renaissance to consolidate the Scottish identity as they saw it (see Glen 1964). This, of course, was a fashioning of the *Otherness* of the self as a deployable tool for the supposed demystification of the *Other*, which was henceforth subjected

to a rhetoric of reduction. The strategy was and still remains a weak one because the intended *Other* against which it is being deployed is fixed, and easily recognisable. It was England. In place of a concrete discourse of the process (es) and institutions that gave England its power and authority, MacDiarmid and the Renaissance substituted a metaphysical self-elevation of Scotland. Surprisingly, even MacDiarmid refuses to recognise this futile definition of the Other and the counter-promotion of the Otherness of self as opposition, as a 'confusing' return to subjectivity. Hence he continued to give justification to it by endlessly emphasising the deep root of Scottish 'Europeanness', its truer and higher but now dispossessed intellectuality, which he alone, rather egoistically, was ready to restore. Hence, for MacDiarmid, as noted by Buthlay, 'the Caledonian Antisyzygy with its 'swift transitions' provided a similar, much-needed corrective for 'slow English minds' and those of Anglicised Scots' (Buthlay 1987 p.xxxix). The Scotland-England relationship is one underwritten by economic and cultural domination. No amount of mythic reconstruction of Scotland's European ancestry can or would on its own override this.

It was no accident that the metaphysical mooring of 'A Drunk Man' and of much else that MacDiarmid had to say or write on the subject of identity, was moored on the theory of 'Caledonian Antisyzygy.' Even when it was never acknowledged openly, the theory, as implied in the quote from Buthlay above, had for MacDiarmid and possibly for some of his followers a newer and infallible myth of Scottish European origin. The immediate result of the fascination with this myth, of course, was that tension was created between the two ends of the definition of culture: culture as context and culture as product. The discursive seal of approval was, however, tilted towards the latter. This tension was sustained in several ways, but most notably by the fear that there was a pollutant culture around the corner which ought to be avoided at all cost. It was this tension, which was arrived at conceptually, that underwrote many of the reactions and defensive counter-reactions to the objectives of the Scottish Renaissance. And given the background to these reactions and counter-reactions, it is understandable why MacDiarmid

himself became the target of much of the attack by those who held a different view from that of members of the Renaissance movement (Glen 1964 part II).

Antisyzygy as a theory may now seem unpopular, even ignored. However, there is ample evidence in MacDiarmid's poem that he silently embraced it as a kind of new Scottish route towards the rediscovery of European universality of Scottish culture (Buthlay 1977 pp pp.xxv-xxix). Abetted in part by MacDiarmid's own rumbustious personality, and by the general social resentment that dominated the post First World-War era, this formulation of identity was to have considerable impact on the unfolding cultural-intellectual life of Scotland. And as has been pointed out, MacDiarmid himself grew ever more restless and impatient with those whose notion of culture and identity questioned 'authenticity'. MacDiarmid's favoured genre was poetry, but like a wraith, he hovered everywhere, including over drama, a fact that appropriately explains why the movement inspired by him is now referred to as Scottish Renaissance (Glen 1964). If in retrospect we see the Renaissance Movement as having degenerated into a vapid romanticisation of culture and politically reactionary in some of its manifestations, the reason was because its proposal was *ab initio* a fixed and coercive expressive identity. MacDiarmid himself may have been aware of this for he had written in 1927 that his aim of building a 'Scottish Literary Revival', modelled on the differences between Scotland and England, as opposed to the affinities between them was "at once radical and conservative, revolutionary and reactionary" (Glen 1964 p.3). The Renaissance's main target, even while claiming otherwise, was the 'colonising' structure to which the Scottish identity had been shackled. However in tackling that issue the way it did, the renaissance also authorised uncritical plurality of 'cultural spaces, each with a right to an equally uncritical validity. Which was the reason MacDiarmid was, to borrow the words of one of his contemporaries, a 'forlorn and isolated figure' in spite of his well-aimed endeavour 'to find new powers of life' in 'his own racial past' (Speirs 1940 p.178/183). Nonetheless, the overall importance of MacDiarmid's work as indicated earlier, can scarcely be overstated. This applies to the present as to MacDiarmid's own time. Thus, it is not his work *per se*, but the substance of his overall intellectual-cultural intervention with regards to

the problematic issue of Scottish national identity, which is being examined here. If MacDiarmid's intervention at once gave the term 'national identity' historical depth, the same intervention never thought of the term as having an internal pluralism, the concentration on reworking which might have yielded a more confident definition. The 'nation' and its 'Europeanness', as I indicated earlier, recurred too frequently in the imagination of this remarkable culturalist such that it became impossible for him to identify and follow the leads that the consideration of internal pluralism, which he occluded, would have provided. Cultural identity and the modes used in reinforcing it are by their very nature aporetic. To ignore this is to invite a self-contented insularity, the type that can only in turn invite cultural relativism and a totally ahistorical enunciation of culture. It is precisely because MacDiarmid was closer to this kind of self-contented insularity that Tom Nairn's description of him as the 'eponymous' cultural hero of a belated Scottish nationalism and the composer of its epic rings true (Nairn 1977 p.95). If, as Chris Harvie says, all the failings associated with twentieth century Scottish nationalism in its early formulation are also personified in some measures by MacDiarmid (see Harvie 1989), there is one area of the man that deserves praise. Unlike many of his forerunners, the Scottish intellectuals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries especially, MacDiarmid did not reject *the* language as 'Scottitude'. Rather he embraced it as an indispensable costume of identity. For him, Scottishness begins with language and the various effects to which it could be put.

It is clear that cultural identity and representation are related and must, in an embattled context, be interrelated. What MacDiarmid and the Scottish Renaissance attempted to prove conceptually is that cultural identity needs to rest on a foundation, which in turn would provide representation with its metaphorical launch pad. In what follows, I shall turn to Scottish theatre to relate how three different types of dramatic practices make powerful gestures to the two models of identity proposed above. The dramatic practices chosen are those in which history plays and social dramas are the most prominent. The third choice is a practice that straddles the

two, and which at the same time makes copious ideological statements of its own. But first, we need to look at Scottish theatre itself in some detail.

Scottish Theatre as Discursive Site

For most of the period before the mid-nineteenth century, the fate of drama in Scotland was unpredictable. This was due to a number of factors, which is aptly summarised by one critic as follows:

The origins of Scotland's tradition in drama lie in the Middle Ages, but the massive loss and destruction of burgh, church, guild and court records, including dramatic properties and texts, is a major obstacle to trying to re-create the forms that Scottish medieval drama took. This wreckage was the cumulative result of invasions from England, civil and religious wars, and the iconoclasm of the Reformation. The pre-Reformation records are most affected, but even the post-Reformation ones are incomplete (Findlay 1998 p.1).

It is now well known that a pattern of popular, but utilitarian theatre, which achieved its highest standards in Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*, was established in Scotland before the Reformation (Carpenter 1989). This knowledge can be used to speculate and fill some, but admittedly few, of the missing gaps in the story of extant Scottish drama. It is now fairly well established, for example, that by the nineteenth century, theatre had ceased to be regarded suspiciously in many parts of Scotland. Although theatre buildings were occasionally burnt down at the instigation of Church ministers (House 1986), Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh in particular still provided venues for 'performances.' I have put the last word in inverted commas since its implications may not be so clear. According to one critic,

The nineteenth century theatre's thirst for dramatic novelty, stimulated by the lengthy programmes offered each evening, meant that every corner of Scottish literature and history was ransacked to provide mainpieces, curtain-raisers, afterpieces, pantomimes and harlequinades. The subjects chosen ranged from the obvious, like Mary, Queen of Scots, to the seemingly unstageable, such as Tam O'Shanter (Cameron 1988 pp429-30).

the same critic later observes that

By the end of the century, the only place where Scottish plays, performed in Scots and by Scottish actors, were regularly mounted was in the 'geggies', portable wood and canvas theatres which toured the small towns and poor areas of the country (sic). Their repertoire was Shakespeare, melodrama and the 'national drama', all three often truncated, but always sincerely played, and most important for the national drama, kept alive (ibid p.439).

The latter remark attests to the paradox of Scottish theatre history. Although there were a number of attempts by local authors to write for the stage in the nineteenth century, the general pattern, as the first quote above shows, was for adaptation of novelistic and poetic works, which are thought to represent something of the national character and consciousness (Bell 1991). Simultaneous with the trend was an influx of touring companies, mostly but not exclusively from England. These groups provided the locals with a presumed cosmopolitan flavour, which a number of the local writers tried to copy. And while a distinct bifurcation may not have been established between the notion of theatre paraded by these touring groups and the local aspirants, the fact that there was a continuing theatrical practice, the *geggies* referred to in the second quote above, and which was predominantly in Scots shows clearly that efforts were being made from below to use the theatre as major sites for the articulation of the Scottish voice. It is to that extent that theatre has become largely performative. In retrospect, what must have counted most was the fact that the performances, whether melodrama, Shakespeare or adaptation of Walter Scott's novels, were in Scots which enabled every member of the audience to recognise bits of himself in the theatre.

J. F. Arnott may have been right in his assessment that the 'enthusiast for Scottish culture who cried out at the first night of *Douglas* (by John Home) 'Whaur's yer Wullie Shakspeare noo?' overlooked the facts that the cast was English and the play written with production by Garrick at Drury Lane in view' (Arnott 1993 p.79). Laughing off the cry of that lonely enthusiast would miss the significance of both the gesture and the question that was asked. And in any case, *Douglas*, though 'written with production by Garrick at Drury Lane in view' had been a play by a Scottish writer who was eager to entertain his nation's audience (see Campbell 1996 pp 17-8). The *Scottishness* of Scottish theatre in the twentieth century is defined

by a number of characteristics, many of which help to emphasise the theatre's status as one existing within a postcolonial framework. Language is one of such characteristics. Another is that in its manifestation as national cultural institution, the theatre *in practice* unsettles the traditional composition and meaning of genre. Another characteristic is the theatre's use of geography in all its ramifications: as a measurement of the relationships between the component units within the Scottish nation; and as measurement of the relationship between the nation and the outside world. The theatre is involved in cultural space delineation. There is also the theatre's persistent obsessional concern about the multiple textures of the contemporary Scottish life (see Zenzinger 1993). With respect to the last, it is worth pointing out that the standard by which the theatre is sometimes assessed is how it draws from and distils those textures of Scottish life on the stage (Rodger 1997).

When all these characteristics are taken together, the picture offered by the Scottish theatre is that of a theatre of *constituted practice*. This picture is further reinforced by the observation that since the nineteenth century the predominant élan of the Scottish theatre has been its fixation with the national self. This has sometimes affected the form of the critique of the theatre, rather than its substance. For example, the critic Alasdair Cameron, once pointed out that there exists 'an irreconcilable split in Scottish theatre between those who believed the soul of Scotland was to be found in the Highlands and in the folk tradition and those who believed that it was to be found in the political struggles of the industrial Lowlands' (Cameron 1986 p.34). In as much as the split referred to by Cameron can be said to illustrate the sort of contradiction to be expected in the definition of 'national' aesthetics and representation of the nation, its main theme is actually the composite nature of Scotland's postcoloniality. Those who see the history of the Lowlands as a perpetual struggle against the forces of capital are right. However, for the Highlands and those who speak on behalf of that space, the experience of colonialism, structured by the historical fact of near-ancestors being 'shovelled off their land to make way for sheep and sporting estates', as Angus Calder puts it (Calder 1996 p.9), is permanently etched on the memory. Even if that act, from the coloniser's point of view, had

been motivated by economics, it means something else from the victims' point of view, i.e. total displacement and destruction. Moreover, it is an act in which the Lowlanders are implicated. This then is the root of a cultural antinomy between the Highlands and Lowlands. Even when the balance of relationships would appear to have altered and the Highlanders and Lowlanders now live together, the antinomy still survives, to borrow Marshall Walker's phrase in another context, as 'a term in our language of cultural analysis at least as vigorously as the concept of the frontier in American history' (Calder 1996 introduction). Yet, the question that we need to ponder is whether the antinomy would have been as strong and deeply etched as it is, had England's intrusion into Scotland not taken place? The question of where the soul of Scotland lies, which is the terms in which the antinomy has repeatedly been expressed in this century could easily have been contained within the parameters of the politics of the national state. But when that question recurs within the postcolonial setting of politics, it assumes a totally new complexity. That complexity is reflected in the later appropriation of the anti-Highlands barbarity, as *the* history of the whole of Scotland (See Chapter 4).

Language

One of the areas that are often concentrated upon by those calling for the reflection of Scottish identity/presence in the theatre is language (Bold 1983). And in the past two decades especially, there has emerged a confident use of Scots in the theatre (Stevenson 1993; Paterson 1996). A closer look at the use of language in Scottish theatre would lead, perhaps inevitably, to the identification of what may be called linguistic indigenisation of performances. This is illustrated, I think, by the polyphonic nature of individual characters in a typical Scottish performance; how contradictory meanings can be derived by the audience from a single voice, without the integrity of that voice being undermined. Since this turning of language into an aesthetic enabling tool for self-assertion and voice liberation is not accidental, it is worth

considering within a wider context and along with its centrality (i.e. language) to the postcolonial imagination and framework.

If it is true as playfully suggested by one scholar (Collini 1994 p.3), that the idea of national liberation needs an alien oppressor to energise it, we can do no more than see language, when that of the alien oppressor, as an adjunct of the oppression from which liberation is required. Which perhaps explains why the poet, Edwin Morgan, would go as far as adopting the metaphor of military prowess while speaking on the Scottish dimension of the language question:

A language is a dialect that has an army and navy. English itself, now world languages (sic), was once merely the East Midland dialect of Anglo-Saxon. The vision of one world, with the concomitant vision of one language, will never disappear, but in practice the last fifty or sixty years have seen as much interest taken in language difference as in the search for a universal grammar, and the tension or dialect between the two approaches seems to me to be healthy and productive (Morgan 1990 p.7).

Indeed, no other group of people has demonstrated the truth of what Collini and Morgan are saying any better than writers caught in the postcolonial language dilemma. In James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, for example, there is that unforgettable moment of encounter between the young Stephen Dedalus, and one of his priest tutors. It is necessary to recall the encounter, in its fullness:

The little word seemed to have turned a rapier point of his sensitiveness against his courteous and vigilant foe. He felt with a smart of dejection that the man to whom he was speaking was a countryman of Ben Jonson. He thought:
—The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language (Joyce 1992 p.205).

Although Joyce typically refrained from connecting this particular encounter to others in the entire narrative, its poignancy can hardly be missed. Standing before 'a countryman of Ben Jonson', the owner and user of a language loved and admired by Dedalus, forces on the young man an awareness of the *wall* that exists between the two of them. That wall is immediately symbolised by language, which in addition carries the terror of its own power. 'My soul frets in

the shadow of his language', not only establishes the inferiority of the borrower of a language that belongs to another, but also and immediately, affirms the truth of their relationship. It is not the encounter itself but the power, the symbolic authority (Bourdieu 1992) of that language in which the encounter takes place that brings Dedalus, at that moment, to the consciousness of his own racial origin.

The acknowledgement of Joyce as an outstanding craftsman of the modern novel has been based in large part on the recognition of distinctive subjectivity and inwardness, which in his work are founded on both detachment from and association with language. The above is one of the clearest moments when subjectivity and subjection are so masterly played upon and explored, at least in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. The meeting between Dedalus and the priest who 'was a countryman of Ben Jonson', loses its informality and ordinariness from the moment the young man realises the language *differences* between them. The priest at one end, Dedalus at the other; both stand for different things, way beyond the norm of their formal relationship. Dedalus realises this. Yet he also realises that the difference is not about him as a person, but as a racial being. Hence, the nation leaps into Dedalus's consciousness, taking control of it in that moment of encounter. This realisation by Dedalus, a realisation that also heightens his ambition to be a creative person, is an instantiation of what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin define as 'double vision'. According to them,

This vision is one in which identity is constituted by difference; intimately bound up in love or hate (or both) with a metropolis which exercises its hegemony over the immediate cultural world of the post-colonial (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1989 p.26).

The mastery so exhibited by Joyce, his power to detach from and also associate with language, is understandable if examined from the perspective of someone trying to break free of constraints of domination and the cultural distortions imposed by that domination. After all, C.L.R. James did point out that 'to establish his own identity, Caliban, after three centuries, must himself pioneer into regions Caesar never knew' (James 1963 preface). This is precisely what Dedalus announces when he speaks at the end of the novel of being fully formed to go into the world and 'forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.' Dedalus is

Joyce's Caliban. And his statement is far from being a sudden exhibition of hubris. It is part expression of a double vision, part realisation of what hitherto was absent in his own constitution, the deeper understanding of the space to which he belongs. It is also worth noting how from the kind of friendship and interaction that developed between him and Davin, his Irish friend from a peasant background, Dedalus begins to suspect a missing part of himself. This is the part he sees in being Davin: the mastery of the language and ways of Irish peasantry. For Dedalus, therefore, Davin has become one of the characteristics of an unfolding subjectivity. Joyce's Caliban is soon fulfilling what C.L.R. James recommends, namely that he should pioneer into regions Caesar never knew. This is when Dedalus later discovers that he knew more about English language than his interlocutor. Even if this had been a product of personal efforts or striving, helped additionally by his objective distance from the language, it represents a significant victory. With his knowledge, Caliban can now proceed on his own probing mission. For the oppressed, language is an indispensable tool for bringing the self back into narrative and for reclaiming one's subjectivity.

II

Robert McLellan must have felt instinctively that creating a distinctly Scottish linguistic medium would be sufficient to restore part of the Scottish subjectivity, at least as it might be seen on the theatrical stage. And this he tried to do in the writing of *Jamie the Saxt*, one of the first Scottish plays to prove the immense vitality of Scots on the stage. Among factors that account for the play's success is how it stylistically turns language into a contrapuntal theatrical device, which is then used to recapture the relationship between the Scottish and the English courts during the reign of King James VI of Scotland, later I of England. This contrapuntal usage reaches its climactic moment when a minor English character accused of spying for the English ambassador was apprehended and brought to the Scottish court. His response to questions draws the same exasperation from his interviewers as theirs from him.

Unbeknown to each other, but very obvious to the audience, the two parties, the Englishman and the Scots, while supposedly answering each other, trade insults and personal abuses. Yet not being able to reach each other in a mutually comprehensible language, the two accepted that there is a stalemate in communication. The stage direction and the character of the dialogue in that scene are compelling:

THE KING: ... Ay ay, my man, sae ye hae been foun wi a secret document in yer possession? Pou him forrit, Nicoll, and put yer sword to his hin end. (NICOLL *obeys*) Was this letter for Sir Robert Bowes? (*Silence*) Was it, I'm askin? Nicoll, gar him speak.

NICOLL: (*Jabbing the stranger*) Answer when ye're telt!

STRANGER: (*Turning on him indignantly, and speaking with a Cockney accent as remote from the speech of SIR ROBERT BOWES as RAB'S Edinburgh sing-song is from the speech of SIR JAMES MELVILLE*) Avaunt, thou pock-faced villain, sheathe thy sword! I know not what thy master asketh!

THE KING: What is he sayin? Tak him by the collar!

NICOLL *obeys*.

STRANGER: Unhand me or I'll kick thy paunch, thou bottle-nosed bully!

THE KING: Jab him again, Nicoll!

NICOLL *obeys*.

STRANGER: Oh!

NICOLL: Staun at peace, see!

STRANGER: Peace! God's light if this be peace! Call for my master!

THE KING: He said something about his maister! I'll try him in English.

Listen, my man. Art thou the servant of Sir Robert Bowes?

STRANGER: He is my master! Call him here!

THE KING: Ay ay, but listen. Did Sir Robert Bowes send thee to obtain this letter?

STRANGER: Thy scurvy dog of a servant choketh me!

THE KING: Eh? What is he sayin, Jock?

MAITLAND: It bates me.

THE KING: Listen again. Did Sir Robert Bowes send thee to obtain this letter?

STRANGER: He is my master!

MAITLAND: Maister! It's aa he can think o!

THE KING: He's donnart!* Letter, my man! Letter! Dae ye no ken what letter means? Dost thou see this letter?

STRANGER: How can I see? He has me by the throat! Order thy varlet off!

THE KING: It's hopeless. I wish Sir Jamie Melville was here. He kens aa their tongues.

LENNOX: He's at Halhill the nou.

For the fact that they do not understand the stranger's cockney speak, the Scottish nobles in the play remain in blissful ignorance of his abuses and insults. Given what has been seen of the

tempestuous individual characters of these nobles before the present scene, it is unlikely that had they the slightest idea of what the captive was saying, their swords would have been drawn! The King, in that last statement of his above, finally gives voice to the frustration that must have been felt all round. In that statement, the King makes a clear 'identity demarcation', the Othering of the English: '*He kens aa their tongues.*' Like much else in McLellan's play, this language game is highly ideological, perhaps unconsciously so, in that it dismantles the authority of one language, while raising the banner of the other at its expense. We shall return to this play more fully and for a different reason all together in the next chapter.

James Kelman, in a speech read at the ceremony where he was formally presented with the 1994 Booker Award, for his novel, *How late it was, how late*, said among other things that,

... a feature writer for a Quality newspaper [has] suggested that the use of the term 'culture' was inappropriate in relation to my work, that the characters peopling my pages were 'pre-culture'-or was it 'primeval'? I can't quite recall. This was explicit, generally it isn't. ... the gist of the argument amounts to the following, that vernaculars, patois, slangs, dialects, gutter-languages etc. etc. might well have a place in the realms of comedy (and the frequent references to Connolly or Rab C Nesbitt substantiate this) but they are inferior linguistic forms and have no place in literature. And a priori any writer who engages in the use of such so-called language is not really engaged in literature at all (Kelman 1994).

The speech was remarkable for its occasion, for what we find here is a writer reclaiming his own subjectivity. For Kelman above, language has stopped being a simple issue of aesthetics; hence his speech is a declaration of resentment against what he sees as an imposed 'definition' of his world. Though standing among metropolitans, Kelman will nevertheless not allow his soul to fret in the shadow of anyone's language. Like Dedalus (or is it Joyce?), Kelman sees language as having spirituality, since it binds the user to the world he/she inhabits. For a writer who intimately identifies himself with his Glasgow landscape, and who regularly joins with others to contest the 'designer label' view that the city's authorities are perpetually trying to impose on the city (Kelman 1992), it is natural that Kelman see the attack on the language in his work as an attack on his spirituality and space. When Kelman writes, therefore, of the 'right to reply' on the basis of the assault on 'his language', it was for him also a defence of his spirituality, not just the relevance or otherwise of the language used by the characters in his

work. If Joyce's articulation of the reality of language in an embattled context is somehow abstract, Kelman's seems more practical and direct.

There is a literary tradition to which I hope my own work belongs, I see it as part of a much wider process -or movement- toward decolonisation and self-determination: ... It is a tradition premised on a rejection of the cultural values of imperial or colonial authority, offering a defence against cultural assimilation, in particular an imposed assimilation (ibid, 1994)

If those phrases, 'rejection of the cultural values of imperial or colonial authority', 'defence against cultural assimilation', 'imposed assimilation', define Kelman's attitude towards language,¹ they also help to problematise the contemporary understanding of the language question in Scotland. Indeed, Kelman is one of those writers constantly exploiting the performative qualities of Scots to define boundaries. To that extent, his work is at once political and social. This is perhaps more true of Tom Leonard's poetry, two of which are reproduced here:

this is thi /six a clock /news thi /man said n /thi reason /
a talk wia /BBC accent /iz coz yi /widny wahnt /mi ti talk /
about thi /trooth wia /voice lik /wanna yoo /scruff. if /
a toktaboot /thi trooth /lik wanna yoo /scruff yi /widny thingk /
it wuz troo. /jist wanna yoo /scruff tokn./thirza right /way ti spell /
ana right way/ti tok it. this /is me tokn yir /right way a /spellin. this /
is ma trooth. /yooz doant no /thi trooth /yirsellz cawz /yi canny talk /
right. this is /the six a clock /nyooz. belt up. (p.88)

right inuff
ma language is disgraceful
ma maw tellt mi
ma teacher tellt mi
thi doactir tellt mi
thi priest tellt mi

ma boss tellt mi
ma landlady in carrington street tellt mi
thi lassie ah tried tay get aff way in 1969 tellt mi
sum wee smout thit thoat ah hudny read chomsky tellt mi
a calvinistic communist thit thoat ah wuz revisionist tellt mi

¹ In terms of his own general artistic vision and theoretical perspective, Kelman sees language as the delineating tool between the various boundaries we inhabit as human beings. However at the same time, Kelman invests language with political power, which is why language is also for him a weapon to be deployed towards the achievement of racial, political as well as class liberation.

po-faced literati grimly kerryin thi burden a thi past tellt mi
po-faced literati grimly kerryin thi burden a thi future tellt mi
ma wife tellt mi jist-tay-get-inty-this-poem tellt mi
ma wainz came hame fray school an tellt mi
jist about ivry book ah oapnd tellt mi
even thi introduction tay thi Scottish National Dictionary tellt mi

ach well
all livin language is sacred
fuck thi lohta thim (Leonard 1984 p.120).

Leonard in these two poems is affirming the cultural authority of Scots—not necessarily against English or any other language, but as a medium having its own integrity. Hence in these poems the medium is also the subject. Translate it how one will, the poet's defiance, which finally becomes a performance; the verbal riposte, at the end of the second poem, points to the affirmation of the Scottish voice and literary self-sufficiency — a question ultimately bound up with those of Scottish nationhood and self-assertion. Leonard wants, and is showing the way towards a distinctiveness of voice in which the patterns of Scottish tongue and idiosyncrasies will be as much revealed as they are celebrated without any feeling of inferiority. This in essence is staging identity.

Generally in Scotland, the language issue continues to generate intense and well-sustained debates. A contributor to one of such debates, Caroline Macafee, after suggesting that the 'Scottish cultural renaissance' had had some beneficial impacts on Scots language, goes on to say that:

The advent of nationalist politics in Scotland found the population already politically mobilised as an electorate and enjoying the normal standard of literacy for a developed country — in St E (Standard English). The part played by Scots and Gaelic even in nationalist politics is therefore negligible, and it seems unlikely that constitutional changes in Scotland could have any significant effect on this. It follows that Scots and Gaelic are unlikely to undergo any further expansion at the expense of St E (Macafee 1981 pp.31-2).

Macafee seems to suggest that neither Scots nor Gaelic, being the two languages animated by Scottish cultural revival, has any possibility of further expansion beyond the level already achieved. Perhaps so, however that conclusion still leaves those conceptual/ideological questions surrounding the language question in Scotland unanswered. Those questions are why

is it that both Scots and Gaelic suffered repression and how? Furthermore, did the repression suffered by the languages create a split in the identity of the users of those languages? Linguistic marginalisation is as important probably as political, and partly preceded it. Since language is an instrument of self-definition, any assault on it, however slightly, is also an assault on the national will, and more so on the capacity of the culture to be able to rebuild itself.

Officially, Scots was never openly assaulted, at any rate not in the same way as Gaelic, whose case I have treated lengthily elsewhere in this study. Scots, as Charles Jones has demonstrated, was suppressed (Jones 1995). That suppression arguably began in 1606, when the King James Bible was translated into English, and not Scots. It was from that moment on that English began to adhere to the written word, and to acquire power within its written form as the language of authority, contract and government. In short it became the official language. Scots did not have this kind of authority, but by extension, it had a different kind of authority, a cultural one. In as much as this language situation links to a history of Scotland not being part of the first phase of the empire project, which was mainly about English expansionism, it proves the point that Scots language was in a formal sense the first victim of that expansionism. Hence at the peak of the Empire, Scots who considered themselves anti-imperialistic staged their opposition to Empire business in Scots (Donaldson 1989, introduction). The story has been told repeatedly about how Chancellor Seafield, speaking at the last session of the last Scottish Parliament, uttered the famous words, “ow there’s ane end of ane auld sang”, of which Katie Trumpener has written,

The terse phrase announced the end of an autonomous Scotland as the end of an oral, vernacular world, yet it did so with pithy, “couthy” confidence in the survival of the Scots language as a necessary medium for articulating Scottish experience (a confidence amply repaid by the survival, down to the present day, not only of Scots but also of Seafield’s pronouncement as the encapsulation of all that was lost in the Union) (Trumpener 1997 pp73-4).

Although Scots, as a language, has survived to the present day, the same cannot be said about its cultural authority, which has had to be fought for in every generation since that sad day when Chancellor Seafield was compelled to make his pronouncement. While Scots became reduced

from that day on to the oral, English became the official language. Scots became a performative language, like all postcolonial languages, to reclaim its cultural authority. Postcolonial languages do not adhere to the written word in the same way that the language of a colonising power does. The performative qualities of Scots, like that of all postcolonial languages, provide another space in which to articulate Scottish subjectivities. It is not surprising then that language has been the most accessible platform for staging the drama of differences that are firmly enshrined in the colonialist/anti-colonialist discourses that exists between England and Scotland.

There are those who have argued that because of the originary first cousin relationship between English and Scots, it might be going too far to say that English is a colonial imposition on Scotland. This, as a matter of fact, is the obverse side of the claims made by Macafee, to which I referred to earlier. For all its persuasiveness, this view also misses the argument. As Pierre Bourdieu argues, language is one of the most pronounced mediators of power relationships, whether of class politics or domination (Bourdieu 1977 ch.4; Bourdieu 1992 ch.1). The replacement of Scots with English² amounts to what Bourdieu calls 'symbolic production as instruments of domination.' For example, tracing the systematic perpetuation of English as instrument of pedagogy in Scotland from the seventeenth century, Jones provides evidence of systematic perpetuation of colonial hegemony. Or how else do we read the following observations made by him:

... in the cause of promoting 'good English' in Scotland, there was an extensive importation of schoolmasters and grammar teachers into a multitude of language schools in Edinburgh and other major Scottish conurbations throughout the 18th century. Indeed, some of the most ardent proposers and supporters of an English Academy where the linguistic rectitude of 'correct' English would be maintained, were Scotsmen – Smollet, Kames, Hugh Blair, Adam Smith and Hugh Robertson (Jones 1995 p.2).

That Scotsmen were complicit in the project, true in material detail as it may be, is not any reason to describe the process as something less than hegemonic perpetuation. Such complicity as a matter of fact proves the point that conquest and pacification go hand in hand when a

cultural space is intruded upon. Conquest is always a forcible act, and it has its way of cancelling out its own success in the long run. Pacification on the other hand provides an uncomplicated means of keeping the new hegemony safe and sound and of further securing the subjection of the dominated. But pacification cannot succeed unless there are accomplices from within the indigenous population, who will have to keep all the cultural paraphernalia of the hegemonic force going and intact.

Therefore the 'historical accident' in the language question in Scotland is that 'Scotland was an established society with an entire class structure and system of its own and a functioning state with an ancient history' (Hobsbawm 1968 p.257). There is nowhere that it is written that Scotland's 'functioning system' before 1707 conducted its business in English language. Neither is there any evidence that English was formally imposed as an official language after 1707. It simply became the authorised language, the type clarified by Bourdieu thus:

Because any language that can command attention is an "authorized language", invested with the authority of a group, the things it designates are not simply expressed but also authorized and legitimated. This is true not only of establishment language but also of the heretical discourses which draw their legitimacy and authority from the very groups over which they exert their power and which they literally produce by expressing them: they derive their power from their capacity to objectify unformulated experiences, to make them public – a step on the road to officialization and legitimation – and, when the occasion arises, to manifest and reinforce their concordance (Bourdieu 1977 p.170).

It was through a process of privileging of English that the Scottish languages were legitimated as 'inferior', and with that resulted the immediate fracturing of the social space itself. In other words, from the moment of intrusion, language had been a powerful marker, grouping the dominant hegemonic power and its local allies chosen or selected to rule on its behalf on one side and the rest of the nation on the other. This is the classic of the situation also conceptualised by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin that 'Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which

² This is assuming that Scots is the language in contention here, because these commentators are often silent on the case of Gaelic, leading one to conclude that the case for that language is already self-evident

conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become established' (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1989 p.7).

A performative language relies on its own texture and dialects to create a new space for the articulation of subjectivities. This has also been witnessed in Scotland, as the following critical comments by A. J. Aitken illustrates,

Since the seventeenth century, alongside the 'mainstream' or 'Standard' Scots, ... an increasing number of regional standards have been created and developed, most persistently and successfully those of Buchan and of Shetland. Since that time, too, the choice of any of these kinds of Scots, for verse or for dialogue or monologue or other 'oral-referenced' prose, has carried with it some implications as to social attitudes and degree of solemnity intended by the author and for the reader. A regional-cum-social identification has been an especially prominent feature of some recent manifestations of literary Scots, ... (Aitken 1983 p.vii).

It is often suggested that the Scottish writer is faced with making a choice between using Scots, English and Gaelic as the language in which to write. Alan Bold, has even gone as far as saying that 'To write in Scots usually implies a political commitment to autonomy; to write in English is to compete with writers who are blessed with a real tradition. What is the Scottish dramatist to do?' (Bold 1983 p.275). Alas, if only the hegemony of a language such as English could be challenged on such gestural terms as implied by Bold! James Kelman and Tom Leonard are two contemporary Scottish writers who are showing that it is possible for a Scottish writer to creatively challenge the hegemony of English without necessarily having any of those commitments indicated by Alan Bold. It is enough to have a secular commitment to one's culture and on that basis challenge the hegemony of language imposition. The goal, and this is what I believe most postcolonial writers pursue, is the removal of the power of truth from the hegemony of English. Reading the situation thus, we are able to appreciate the full meaning and true sense of what Cairns Craig calls the 'liberation of the voice' as well as the salutary relief it brought to the sphere of (postcolonial) representation. In his words:

What happened in Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s, and what laid the foundation for the enormous creative achievements of the 1980s, was the liberation of the voice. ... The liberation of the voice was at first an acceptance of and an assertion of the vernacular; it happened most obviously in the theatre, where the lack of narrator allowed characters' speech to stand forth undeflected by 'standard' forms of speech. In

that context, however, it retained the coherence of being the realistic presentation of a specific and single class mode of speech (Craig 1996 p.193).

'[A]ssertion of the vernacular', 'coherence of being the realistic presentation', and happen[ing] most obviously in the theatre,...' all tell the story of the nation uniting, in an art form that is capable of authorising such unity, to express and represent itself. Such social integration is peculiar to theatre at specific moments in the social as well as political history of the society on which it is dependent (Williams 1980 ch.4).

III

The 1960s liberation of the voice, especially on the stage, has to be seen in relation to what that period was. There was on one hand a general and widespread challenge to authority in the countries of advanced capital, and on the other, a wave of colonial withdrawals from numerous territories where imperialism had established itself. In all such places, there was a new sense of cultural beginning. These interconnections are important because in the final analysis, they have something to say about the periodic resurgence of and obsession with the radical aesthetic forms whose first roots were in those moments. Craig also makes this point where he asks us to observe the hidden connections between *Things Fall Apart*, a novel by Chinua Achebe, 'The Second Coming', a poem by W.B. Yeats and the Gaelic poetry of Sorley MacLean. That hidden connection is the fact that the three works share the same resentment against attenuation brought about by colonial intrusion into the respective cultural spaces of the authors. As Achebe, whom Craig uses as an example, demonstrates, the intrusion did not merely result in suspension of practices, ethos and a whole system of belief, but the weakening of the capacity of the owners of these things to rebuild and refashion themselves. This, it seems to me, is what calls for what Craig describes as the central irony of Achebe's efforts at recuperation: the use of English language, the very medium of domination, as the instrument by which redress (or is it repair?) can now be carried out (Craig 1996 pp.202-6).

However, it is Yeats, more than Achebe, who typifies the postcolonial dilemma and optimism at the same time. As Edward Said points out, 'Yeats is a poet who belongs in a tradition not usually considered his, that of the colonial world ruled by European imperialism during a climactic insurrectionary stage' (Said 1993 p.266). But being Irish and in Ireland were factors that, however much he had wanted to try, he could not overlook. These factors made him into what Said calls 'great *national* poet', in whose work cultural dependence and antagonism meet. Whether in relation to language or content, Yeats represents the dual socialisation, forced by the historical circumstances around him. Then it is Yeats and perhaps Ireland that we may look for a Scottish inspiration on the language question. If we move away from the theoretical issues of syntax, lexis and phonetics, the ultimate political and cultural questions arising from the language issue comes down to how the world is captured and reproduced mentally. The authority of whose/which tongue is used to capture and reproduce experience and to explain them.

This perhaps is one question that Scottish theatre has answered directly and precisely. Theatre being the only form of representation where people **speak out loud**, the choice has naturally fallen on the language in which everybody recognises him/herself. McDiarmid certainly would have relished the irony that after all his efforts, it was not synthetic Scots or any similar animal, but the language to be picked up in the average Scottish street, that became the vehicle of voice liberation. Voice liberation is not meant to be a once and for all thing, but an on-going process, for apart from bringing the marginalized into the sphere of reckoning, it is also the means by which the self-written narrative of the marginalized will be kept going. This has raised a number of issues, especially concerning the perception and meaning of genre, which I hope to address later.

As Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin explain, and Craig would no doubt concur, even when Caliban might have untangled himself in the matter of language, his overall position will still be far from secure. Using the example of how American *voice* was regarded at the outset of the

twentieth century, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin illustrates the kind of new subjectivity process he faces:

Once the American Revolution had forced the question of separate nationality, and the economic and political successes of the emerging nation had begun to be taken for granted, American literature as a distinct collection of texts also began to be accepted. But it was accepted as an offshoot of the 'parent tree'. Such organic metaphors, and others like 'parent-child' and 'stream-tributary' acted to keep the new literature in its place. The plant and parent metaphors stressed age, experience, roots, tradition, and, most importantly, the connection between antiquity and value. They implied the same distinctions as those existing between metropolis and frontier: parents are more experienced, more important, more substantial, less brash than their offspring. Above all they are the origin and therefore claim the final authority in questions of taste and value (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1989 p.16).

In their concentration and also monolithic constitution of Britain as the parent home of Euro-English subjectivity, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin miss the fact that the shaping of national literature 'as a source of important images of national identity' itself emerged from within Britain. This can be forgiven especially as some more recent works on Scottish culture and literature have established that the emergence of the literature of national assertion has been based exactly on the same principles that Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin talk about (see, for example, Crawford 1992; Craig 1996; Trumpener 1997). 'National literature' in the Scottish context has always meant the desire to maintain the cultural coherence long established before a British national identity arose.

In Scottish theatre generally, the presentational mode of theatre is intensified in such a way that every performance becomes an event. This in many ways heightens the connection between the performance and the audience, the theatrical stage and the national space. And since theatre is the only form of representation where people **speak out loud**, it is also the art form that is probably most suited to the exploration of the inter-subjectivity of the performers and the audience. This I believe is one of the aspects of what we commonly call the communality of theatre. It also offers the possibility of collective self-reflexivity in a way that is difficult to achieve in any other art form. Yet because the question of cultural subjectivity has been central in the enunciation of Scottish culture, the presence of the same question in the theatrical sphere has placed the theatre within the popular theatre tradition.

Scottish Theatre as Popular Tradition

The description of Scottish theatre as being in the popular tradition should require very little debate, if any at all. To suggest otherwise is to shut out the areas of vitality and flexibility in the theatre. For example, among the many terms often employed by critics and scholars of practices within the theatre, words and concepts such as 'urban realism', 'agit-prop', 'slum drama' 'plays on and about Scottish national history' and most recently, 'epic drama' are the most common. All these are different summaries of an aesthetic form that aims at a one-to-one dramatic correspondence between actual practice and society by drawing that society into the formation of theatrical aesthetics.

'The key to an understanding of the cultural history of the last two hundred years is the contested significance of the word 'popular', Raymond Williams once wrote (Williams 1991 p.105). It can be expected that in a place like Scotland, the contest around the significance of 'the popular' will be more heightened. For example, Murray Pittock has written that 'From the seventeenth century, patriotic Scottish high culture had been aware of the importance of popular and folk traditions in establishing a locale of speech and context for what it wished to say in defence of the nation' (Pittock 1991 p.148). When observations such as this are counterpoised with the devaluation of the popular sphere found in say Tom Nairn's work, there is immediate problematisation of popular. This is more so because the distinctions which Pittock is trying to establish between 'patriotic Scottish high culture' and 'popular and folk traditions' seems at best tenuous and dubious at worst. A thorough examination of the ecology of culture in Scotland will prove that such a distinction is difficult to sustain. As a matter of fact, a non-folklorist reading of Pittock's remarks points to a need for caution in how we relate the genealogy of *popular* in Scotland. 'Popular', even in the folklorist sense, is not something to be viewed as a sort of intertextuality or simple movement from one aesthetic platform to another. While this may have been the norm in clearly distinguishable oral cultures, which is the folklorists' way of looking at

these things, Scotland's case is entirely different. Not even Gaelic can be described any longer as oral culture, and there may be an element of folklorism too in overlooking this. Apart from the poetry of Sorley Maclean, which has done much to give the culture its modern prominence, there are Gaelic prose, and, of course, theatre which also exist as text (see MacLeod 1989). Of course there are still such practices as bothy songs, (Adams 1991) highland games, folk music, (Munro and MacLeod 1996) border and assorted ballads, galoshins (Hayward 1992), all or some of which are categories of popular aesthetics, and which could also be moderately referred to as rural forms, because they can be geographically located.³ To pursue such a distinction, however, is to underplay the complexity of the general technical and pragmatic aspects of cultural expressions in Scotland, and specifically of the natural affinity existing between the society and these different forms. For example, any investigation of the aesthetic properties and distribution of 'popular' either on the basis of rural/urban or any other distinction is also bound to draw the investigator into the politics of the technical and pragmatic mutation of the *popular*. This is illustrated I believe by the circumstances of what is commonly but erroneously referred to as Gaelic oral culture.⁴

As a result of the continuing appropriation of the Highlands, there seems to have developed what may at best be described as an intellectual industry built around the history and experiences of the Highlands, reflected in the perpetual rediscovery of one Gaelic characteristic after another. So powerful yet so unwieldy is this industry that the term 'revival' has become a perpetual prefix to any modern study of Gaelic arts. By the same token, verbal art has become one of the innumerable recreations of Highlands, through performative culture. Whatever the danger of this attitude towards the Highlands, it is difficult to isolate it from the general issue of

³ In their individual treatment of these forms, each of the title mentioned above also acknowledged, in one form or another, the difficulties and indeed the danger of assuming that these forms exist in a purist or unchanging character.

⁴On this mutation and its implications for classification, See especially Crawford, T. (1983). "The Vernacular Revival and the Poetic Thrill: A Hedonist Approach", in *Scotland and the Lowland Tongue: Studies in the language and literature of Lowland Scotland*. J. D. McClure. Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press: 79-99.. Although this essay does not raise the issue of mutation, there are many useful points in it which anyone interested in the subject could pursue.

'memory' and redrawing of 'cultural space', both of which openly and expressively constitute political acts in the twentieth century. To that extent, the reincorporating of the Highlands into the sphere of popular aesthetics is also a continuation of the politics of postcolonial rejection of narrative imposed from without. And to that extent, the relationship between the popular and whatever may serve as its opposite or antagonistic model cannot be described only in terms of being binary opposites, but as part of general reanimation of the cultural space.

There is, of course, another view of the popular, advanced here by Stuart Hall:

Throughout the long transition into agrarian capitalism and then in the formation and development of industrial capitalism, there is a more or less continuous struggle over the culture of working people, the labouring classes and the poor. This fact must be the starting point for any study, both of the basis for, and of the transformations of, popular culture. The changing balance and relations of social forces throughout that history reveal themselves, time and again, in struggles over the forms of the culture, traditions and ways of life of the popular classes (Hall 1994 p.455).

In as much as there is a recognisable truth in the basic premise, which is that the changing balance and relations of social forces continue to reveal themselves over the meanings and even parameters of 'culture' and 'cultural forms', to adopt fully those explanations with respect to the Scottish case is to ignore an entire area of debate about Scotland's being. In Scotland, transformation to modernity was intimately bound with the politics of colonial intrusion and emasculation of memory (Nairn 1977 Ch.4). Kenneth Logue, for example, has written of the links that existed popular protests and popular art forms in eighteenth century Scotland:

More definite forms of popular protest did... take place throughout the eighteenth century and beyond. It was a period of great change, a period when agricultural life was disrupted, when industrial and commercial activity began to increase rapidly and to affect the lives of hundreds of thousands. It was a period in which the pressure for political change began to build up – slowly at first but as the eighteenth century wore on, and into the nineteenth, more and more rapidly. Not only that, but there was a time, during the first half of the eighteenth century at least, when the fact, in many cases the unpleasant fact, of the Parliamentary Union hung in the background of every Scot's life. We should not, perhaps, exaggerate the apparent pace of social, economic and political change since events generally seem less significant to those experiencing them than to those commenting on them several centuries later (Logue 1991 p.103).

The above clarifies the terms of the conjunctions that took place, and also indicates how a measure of 'nationalist romantic' sentimentality might have seeped into the reinvention of the different aesthetic categories with which the popular masses represented themselves.

The other area to turn in the examination of the genealogy of the popular is a familiar one, the consequences of Presbyterianism. The initial assault by the Church on all forms of secular entertaining activities was in itself serious, however, its far reaching consequences on the culture was the early denial of space to each segment of popular forms of entertainment to exist as such. In consequence, each of these popular modes had to start reinventing itself when the hostility of the Church lessened (Hayward 1992 Ch.1). The critical issue to consider in all this is how that reinvention might also have coincided, in many instances, with Scotland's own awakening to the effects of the loss of statehood. Kenneth Logue's analysis, which is quoted above, indicates that as part of those political and social events that connected the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Scotland, the political consciousness also fed the artistic/aesthetic consciousness directly. To that extent, any consideration of the genealogy of the popular in Scotland ought to see the two centuries as being decisive in the evolution of 'popular.' If 'popular' became the summary of the various ways in which the (Scottish) people-as-nation consciousness was preserved, one critical question arising is how far this came to affect the forms and modes of the various art forms used as the vehicle for the dissemination of that consciousness. A cursory look at the now disappearing Scottish music hall provides a moderate answer to this question. While the history of the form (music hall) in Scotland may be bound with the history of the industrial Lowlands; the form is also reflective, aesthetically, of the cultural struggles that took place throughout Scotland between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries. Adrienne Scullion has written, for example, that the emergence of popular theatre in Scotland might have been unthinkable without the music hall:

The rise of an organised popular theatre in Scotland begins in the middle of the nineteenth century in a rapidly industrialising Glasgow.
... Glasgow's Saltmarket, one of the city's main thoroughfares, was also one of the most deprived areas of the city and home to first the waves of dispossessed Highlanders who came to Glasgow in the wake of the Clearances and subsequently to

the Irish immigrants who came in the wake of famine and in pursuit of work. In the pubs and shebeens of this community drink gave way to ceilidhs and informal sing-songs and music-making (Cameron and Scullion 1996 p.40).

...
...I believe that a particular and significant influence in the evolution towards music halls per se came from this ceilidh tradition, which these communities brought with them to industrialising Glasgow. ... It may indeed be the case that music hall in Glasgow developed slightly ahead of music hall in London (which tends to be dated in the 1850s), and although this needs more careful sourcing, the influence of the immigrant Highlanders moving to Glasgow, combined with the particular scale and reputation of the Glasgow Fair points to an independent (and significantly only) evolution of this type of entertainment (Cameron and Scullion 1996 Fn.3 p.40).

However difficult it might be to sustain the argument, the feeling that the music hall was indeed the lucky inheritor of all that the Church had tried to take out of the mass form of popular entertainment is too powerful to be ignored. This covered everything from music to verbal art, giggling to acting. In a Bakhtinian way, while the pressure on cultural entertainment, represented by Presbytery, might have directly threatened the popular, it also enhanced it. This is in the sense that the puritanism of the Presbytery also drove the populace to carnival as a mask of containment. Music hall's arrival in Scotland eventually brought together the intersection of 'the political, economic and aesthetic spheres', which ultimately paved the way for the emergence of real theatre and the efflorescence of a national theatrical tradition modelled on it (music hall).⁵ In that sense the gain from music hall has accrued to drama. This sort of connection is foreshadowed elsewhere by Loren Kruger,

A comprehensive theory of the institution of theatre cannot ignore the continued dialectic between economic and political constraints and aesthetic norms governing theatre practice, as well as the discourses that may represent one as the other (Kruger 1992 p.13).

The point I am driving at is that on closer examination, we would discover a genetic bonding between what is often described as folk or traditional forms and those sanctioned as their more refined opposites. The separation of that bonding, however skilled the surgeon, would portend

⁵ Too preoccupied perhaps with the search for 'pure' theatre, Scottish critics/theatre scholars have for a long time exhibited surprising ambiguity towards music hall as a legitimate forerunner of the Scottish modern drama/theatre. For example, Alasdair Cameron's writing is unique in its astuteness for recognising the popular base of Scottish drama. Yet his acknowledgement of music hall as a constitutive origin is always at best grudging. See for example, his definition of popular theatre below as well as his

fatal consequences for the understanding of the popular sphere in Scotland. In other words, this bonding is not one that lends either easily to formalistic surgery or to easy typology or the even less demanding task of categorisation.⁶ The bonding is after all not unrelated to the socio-historical complexes of Scotland both as a nation and as a postcolonial society.

Defining Popular Theatre

In spite of sharing the general characteristics of other forms of theatre, popular theatre differs in two distinct ways. First, its aesthetic parameters are informed by a non-mimetic, non-illusionistic attitude to theatre making. Second, it has a demotic coherence, which is lacking in any other kind of drama. This coherence is inflected in continuous reinvention and modification of both indigenous and borrowed artistic elements. These two distinctions operate in symbiosis to give popular drama its national character. They approximate, for example, to what a scholar of the form calls 'national representation'(Davison 1982). Like other traditions of drama, popular drama is variegated, and this variegation provides the room for its eclecticism, continuity as well as openness to influences from other sources for the purpose of self-refinement. Notwithstanding its variegation, however, it is possible to discern a marked pattern of trends, content and function in this kind of drama. As regards characteristics lying outside its aesthetic appearance, the most crucial is that it is a drama which, in all its appearances, whether conventional repertory, amateur or community, touring or going out to meet its audience rather than wait for them to come to it is a constant. All these correspond to the criteria respectively set for popular drama by David Bevington and David Mayer, two scholars of the form (see Bevington 1962, Mayer 1977).

introductory essay in Cameron, A. (1990). Introduction. *Scot-Free: New Scottish Plays*. London, Nick Hern Book: vii-xviii.

⁶ See for example Alasdair Cameron's now classic definition of Scottish popular theatre. '...(it) embraced melodrama, spectacles, pantomime, music hall, variety and Scott. It could be found in a wide variety of geggies, booths, tents, fit-ups and small local theatres throughout Scotland, and it was performed mainly in Scots.' Cameron, A. (1986). "How Popular is Popular?" *Chapman* 46 Vol.IX, Winter(No 3): 31-34.

'A Popular Drama', Bevington suggests, must be one that 'derives its theme and forms of expression to a considerable extent from its own native tradition' and also 'plays to an entire nation rather than to a select group' (Bevington 1962 p.1). In other words, popular drama cannot have such an autonomous aesthetic or thematic existence as might make it indistinguishable from its social environment. Bevington suggests further that these criteria, 'themes' and 'native tradition' in particular must be continuous in representation, and while not manifesting themselves directly, can be reflected as motifs, symbols and the values that govern aesthetic transmission of drama. The question of authorship has always been at the centre of the popular aesthetics debate. Is the author anonymous or known? Bevington offers no direct opinion. However, by locating the popular aesthetics as sets of symbols, motifs and the totality of the tradition that is shared by a people, an answer is implied. Bevington seems to have relied mainly on the mutational power of these symbols and motifs to ensure their survival. How they are documented or utilised is, therefore, of secondary consideration, since their mutability on one hand and their irresistible presence in the national imagination will ensure their continued usage. It is this continued presence and usage, not the form in which they occur that Bevington considers paramount. This also means that Bevington thinks less about text, believing perhaps that its strategies could handicap the flowering of those elements that actually make the drama popular.

In David Mayer's conception of popular drama, considerable attention is given to the relationship between the performers, audience and the performance. This is implied from the onset in his definition, which states that 'Popular drama is that drama produced by and offered for the enjoyment or edification of the largest combinations of groupings possible within (that) society' (Mayer 1977 p.263). Mayer goes on to stress that the drama ought to 'reassure the audience in the validity of traditional values and in the continuity of belief'. Besides these two, other criteria of popular include that the drama must be one that seeks out its audience. The kind of drama envisaged by Mayer is one whose *practice* is based more on performance than text, although he uses the example of Aristophanes to indicate how the textual variant might have

been conditioned by its non-textual properties. Among the questions Mayer asks, as a way of outlining the characteristics of popular aesthetics are 'If the author is known for a style of drama, for sensational scenes, for the use of character types who are amusing in their own right irrespective of the overall unity of the piece' and 'Do the exigencies of public rite, whether political, religious, or social, take precedence over aesthetic considerations? Is the piece intended for a large general audience rather than a select group of spectators?' (Mayer 1977 pp264-5). In Scottish theatre, the intention to amuse with drama is carefully balanced with the need to communicate and represent public mood simultaneously.

Mayer also asks the questions: 'Does the piece reassure the audience in the validity of traditional values and in the continuity of belief rather than reinterpret traditional attitudes, accepted facts, or mythologies? Is the piece traditional, or is much of the material in the piece of a traditional nature?'(Mayer 1977 p.265). These questions, particularly the second, constitute the major area of ambiguity in Mayer's outlines. What, for instance, is the relationship Mayer expects between popular drama and what he calls 'traditional values'? I think it can be suggested that 'tradition' is not formulated as a static phenomenon or something whose material existence is separate from that of the people with whom it can be identified. If we borrow the wisdom of Stuart Hall, it can be seen as a process of response, and an articulation in an historical progression. Writes Hall:

Tradition is a vital element in culture; but it has little to do with the mere persistence of old forms. It has much more to do with the way elements have been linked together or articulated. These arrangements in a national-popular culture have no fixed or inscribed position, and certainly no meaning which is carried along, so to speak, in the stream of historical tradition, unchanged. Not only can the elements of tradition be rearranged, so that they articulate with different practices and positions, and take on a new meaning and relevance. It is also often the case that cultural struggle arises in its sharpest form just at the point where different, opposed traditions meet, intersect. They seek to detach a cultural form from its implantation in one tradition, and to give it a new cultural resonance or accent (Hall 1994 p.463).

Following from Hall, it is suggested that the answer to Mayer's first question above is that popular theatre 'reinterprets traditional attitudes, accepted facts, or mythologies' as an ongoing process of collective renewal and self-affirmation. Such reinterpretation will also form

part of the process of giving the tradition a new cultural resonance or accent. This indeed has been the case with John McGrath, whose work over the past twenty-five years in Scotland has shown a consistency towards giving the Scottish tradition of performative culture a new accent and resonance. (See Bell 1996) Overall, one senses that Mayer is at pains to explain that the vivacity of popular aesthetics is discoverable best in performance, and therefore irreducible to text. Much as Mayer's thinking on the subject clearly corresponds to that of Eagleton and John McGrath, the relative non-clarity about the supposed autonomy between text and performance remains a major critical difficulty in his ideas. Nevertheless, looking at those theoretical positions advanced respectively by Bevington and Mayer, we can draw inferences that the technical and the aesthetic dimensions of the popular theatre are inseparable.

The view that the technical and aesthetic dimensions of popular theatre are inseparable is one of the key themes taken up by Loren Kruger, a contemporary theorist of popular theatre. Kruger is also of the view that the aesthetic dimension of popular theatre is informed principally by the political struggle for hegemonic domination of society. Hence, she sees the popular theatre as always framing what she describes as the struggle for 'national cultural legitimation.' Kruger locates that struggle as emerging from the European Enlightenment's preoccupation with 'staging the nation' and representing 'national destiny'. Stressing that 'popular' had been a contested but manipulable term for 'making a nation out of an audience, citizens out of spectators', she goes on to suggest what reads like a new benchmark test for the 'popular'.

Is the audience spectator or participant? Incoherent crowd or mature nation? And conversely, does mature nationhood call for participation or simply assent? At stake here is the legitimate role of the people as agent or audience of national representation and the resolution of the persistent tension between agency and audience, revolution and reconciliation (Kruger 1992 p.4).

In as much as there are echoes of the definition of popular given by both Bevington and Mayer in those lines, there is also a visible departure. For example, Kruger's conceptualisation of 'nationhood' is one in which 'nation' and 'state' are collapsed as one. What this means is that the boundary of the politics surrounding the formation of 'theatrical nationhood', which is one of the major thrusts of Kruger's investigation, is *ab initio* established as taking place within the

boundary of the state. This would mean that the 'legitimacy' being contested and which is the occasion for her notion of popular drama is that legitimacy framed by the circumstances of power relations within the boundaries of the 'national state' on one hand and the form of cultures enabled by the national state itself on the other hand. In such circumstances, 'national identity' would be defined less by the politics of boundary, cultural difference(s) as by the anticipatory reward from the triumph of a particular ideological viewpoint that is being used to challenge what is perceived as the hegemonic structure within the boundary of the national state. In the circumstance, Kruger's notion of the 'national state' is what in actual political terms amounts to a full functioning state, whose citizens generally believe that they constitute one nation and one people. To that extent, the conflict of legitimation, which Kruger describes as cultural differences, even when it may have all the appearances of culture *qua* culture, will easily qualify as class-based contestation. It will and cannot be on the same scale of contestation of cultural identity or of legitimation of the voice as is encountered in Scottish theatre. This borderline distinction is worth pointing out because Kruger's book is a new and influential contribution to how we may read the politics of the popular. We can even see the effect of the non-recognition of the borderline in Kruger's book itself. All areas of it that deals with the examination of 'national theatre' in Britain concentrates wholly on the English theatre. For Kruger, national theatre in Britain is also synonymous with national theatre in England.

The Scottish context of 'popular' and 'national' are, however, more structured than Kruger's analysis and summary make possible. For example, the contest between hegemonic and non-hegemonic in the struggle over 'national legitimacy' occurs, not just or only at the level of ideological determination of the state, but also, and certainly more forcefully so, at the level of the definition of nation itself. Hence, to be included are geography, boundary, language. It is the consideration of all these that influences the debate about the definition and delineation of the Scottish *national* theatre.

The obvious fact that Scotland once had and then lost its 'statehood' yet remains emotionally attached to that which is lost, as I pointed out at the beginning, means that these

issues of geography, boundary and language cannot be considered as secondary in the struggle over cultural legitimation in Scotland. If fully applied to Scotland, Kruger's analysis would at its most profitable strengthen the centre-periphery, dominant-subordinate argument about cultural reproducibility. It would not allow for a full theorisation of the Scottish situation. The power for such theorisation belongs in any theoretical-analytical model that permits the dissection of the political and aesthetic practices arising out of the intrusion into the Scottish national space from the beginning. It is a post-colonial issue.⁷

Finally to return to the issue of aesthetic and ideological bonding of forms and modes of 'popular' in Scottish theatre. The observation that 'the staging of a politicised, socially-aware vision of the impoverished reality of Scottish urban or working-class life', (Stevenson 1993 p.109) made by Randall Stevenson might at first seem minor, even ordinary. However, anyone familiar with the practice of caustic criticism associated with the folk where sense of community and cultural solidarity are still decisive in the construction of relationships would immediately notice why Stevenson's observation might not be so ordinary after all. This is that this practice now inheres in the drama, and continues to be reproduced through the powerful agency of language and the communicative devices, structural as well as aesthetic, with which drama is associated.

⁷ Stephen Slemon's definition of post-colonial as a term of engagement is worth recalling here. The term, he argues, is much effective when 'it locates a specifically anti- or post-colonial discursive purchase in culture, one which begins in the moment that colonial power inscribes itself onto the body and space of its Others and which continues as an often occulted tradition into the modern theatre of neo-colonialist (international) relations Slemon, S. (1989). "De-Scribing Empire: Post-Colonialism and Textuality." *ARIEL* 20 (4 October): 6-18..

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Chapter Three

Contingent Origin: History, Argon and National Consciousness

It was pointed out in the last chapter that it is W.B. Yeats, more than Chinua Achebe, who typifies postcolonial dilemma and optimism at the same time. This is more so in terms of how Yeats the playwright, makes empowering myth out of history to fashion the process of Irish cultural retrieval. The structure of the myth Yeats makes out of drama is based on finding in the past, an incentive to 'heroic' action or political intervention in the present. This approach is in every respect a means towards retrieval of the collective 'essence', of the 'nation' and its memory, a fashioning of the cultural self, whatever the difficulties involved.

Even within the tradition of popular in which Scottish theatre is located, a number of dramatists have embraced history along lines similar to that found in the theatre of Yeats. This includes playwrights who have made their own myths out of history and those who, finding history itself enigmatic, deliberately adopt an obverse mythological attitude towards the same history. Many of such dramatists, whether knowingly or otherwise, have within the parameters of historical plays, proposed one of the two identities: the expressive and instrumental, which I outlined earlier. Hence I have gone further to label their plays as 'Representation of Contingent Origin', and chosen Sydney Goodsir Smith's *The Wallace* as the first play. The most dominant proposition in this category, however, is instrumental identity. Yet at the same time, we may find their propositions sometimes shortened and punctuated at several points, with offhand appropriation of discursive norms associated with the expressive model of identity. Where such is discovered, it is also forgiven for in the final analysis, we cannot lose sight of the emancipatory power and effect of the expressive. My critical point is that notwithstanding the complexity and ambiguity of moving between the expressive and the instrumental, these dramatists have taken part in a recreation of the Scottish cultural space. Indeed, the criss-cross between the expressive and the instrumental found in the works of the dramatists that I have chosen should be seen in the context of both their discursive environment at the point in time

and of the task that they defined for themselves. That this should be the way of seeing those things is amply illustrated by the case of Hugh MacDiarmid, who, at his most unwary, as I indicated earlier, became complicit with reactionary characteristics of nationalist self-assertion. MacDiarmid's behaviour was not totally unusual in the context of rebellion against manifestly aggressive cultural imperialism. Did Yeats not at some point make recourse to fascism as part of his nationalist consciousness? (Cf: Seamus Deane as quoted by Said, 1990)

Dramatising the Collective Unconscious: Sydney Goodsir Smith's *The Wallace*

Through this lang war, echt year o' fire and sword
And famine, greit and bluid and daith,
Ye've made a nation, sir. Hammer
O' the Scots indeed! By the Rood,
Ye're richter nor ye ken. Ye've hammerit
A nation intil life, ennobled it,
And held it up like a banner til aa men
For evermair-a standart o' the pride
And independence of a folk whase sperit's
Free and winna bou til thirldom ever-
No for land or treisure, consequence
Or pouer, but for ae thing that, wanting,
Leas life wersh and thowless, dozent,
Meaningless; but, possess't, lets man stand
Upricht in the likeness of his God
That made him say: Freedom! Ay, thirldom
Is the soul in chains-e'en in the mid o' plentie,
As libertie is the soul at lairge-though
It be in puirtith and defeat. This we hae wan.
For aa this, Edward, 1, in the name o' Scotland,
First o' the nations, thank ye, for your gift
Til aa humanitie. You should be vauntie, Sir!
Put aff yon dowie look! Your
Immortalitie is in sauf keep, juist
As ye said, SCOTORUM MALLEUS-

(Smith 1985 p.168)¹

¹ All references to the play are to this edition.

Thus spoke William the Wallace, the first hero of Scottish struggle for self-assertion and freedom, at his trial in the Great Hall, Westminster, England on 23 August 1305. Or so he spoke in its recreation by Sydney Goodsir Smith.

As it is not uncommon with history plays, Sydney Smith turns the whole life and struggles of William Wallace into a statement on the nature of sacrifice, heroism and nobility derived from service as opposed to birth. The poetic grandeur in Wallace's speech, which by the way is one of the many to be found in the trial scene, draws attention to the sacrifice of a legend whose blood fertilised his nation's struggle for freedom. The speech is paralleled by the hero's rejection of the offer made by King Edward, in the same scene, for Wallace to become his Viceroy in Scotland with the title of Duke of Scotland.

Sydney Goodsir Smith (1917-1975) was a younger friend, but literary contemporary of Hugh MacDiarmid. And apart from being a poet as well, he was also a fellow-believer in the cause of Scotland to the same degree as MacDiarmid. Roderick Watson numbers him among those constituting the 'generation of Scottish writers whose work, especially in poetry, made up what has been called the 'second wave' of the Scottish Renaissance' (Watson 1985 p.84). The contributor of the entry on Smith in *The New Companion to Scottish Culture* (Daiches 1993) notes that Smith 'dedicated almost his total creative effort to writing verse in Scots, and is generally regarded as, after MacDiarmid, the second finest poet to use the language regularly.' (Lindsay 1993 p.311). The foregoing biographical detail should tell us something about what might have constituted the intellectual framework of *The Wallace*. Described as Smith's 'patriotic excursion into drama', by the same contributor to *The New Companion to Scottish Culture*, the play fits into the Scottish Renaissance's stated programme of retrieval of Scotland's lost history, in a way that much of the often-confused polemics of MacDiarmid failed in conveying. For example, Kenneth Buthlay points out that "Scotland's rôle in history assumed for MacDiarmid the dimensions of myth, a "dynamic myth", and a great creative idea" (Buthlay 1977 p.12). This is as true for Smith and it is visibly reflected as articulatory practice in *The Wallace*. While retelling the story of the historical relationship between Scotland and England

as an heroic tale, admittedly in favour of Scotland, Smith also in the play underscores the 'colonial' character of that relationship. The actual story is well known, that Wallace, an untitled person, became the generalissimo of the Scottish people in the age of chivalry, by heading the resistance against the imperialism of Edward I of England. Legend rightly claims him as the archetype of the nationalist-revolutionary, and the primal ancestor of Scottish national struggle for self-assertion. In following the legend, Sydney Goodsir Smith attempts to show that the Scottish past is neither empty nor lacking in heroic moments. And moreover, that there are models of behaviour within that past against which the present may be measured in a possible search for plausible congruence. With the play, therefore, Scotland's rôle in history is not merely envisaged, but referenced from within history (Scotland's) itself, with Wallace as that history's divine prototype.

The various elements of tragedy are sufficiently present in the original Wallace story. First, the protagonist embodies 'collective will and aspirations' of the community. Second, freedom, in fighting for which the protagonist put himself forward, becomes a tragic issue because without it, the community, which in this case is also the nation, cannot be. By choosing, however, to elevate freedom as both cosmological and teleological in the dramatic action, the playwright of *The Wallace* is also able to turn the suffering of Wallace into a myth-ritual. That conversion of raw tragedy into myth-ritual is framed by the play's sub-title: *A Triumph in Five Acts*. The subtitle consciously extends the legend of the Wallace into both an empowering myth, and the source of creative imagination. In the text, Wallace is no longer just a model of heroism, but the collective will to action and a living essence. The guerrilla war waged by Wallace over an eight-year period, and his heroic submission to suffering following his betrayal, are transformed into 'ritual' and hence metaphor of cultural retrieval.

The plot of *The Wallace* follows the traditional pattern of a tragic plot, in which paradox and irony co-habit from the beginning. At the same time, however, the sense of a tragic ritual, namely a different type of tragedy, whose hero's character flaw lies in *knowingly* embracing his tragic fate, continuously lurks in the background. This is encapsulated by the story-line: the

quarrelsome and treacherous nobility, who force the kingdom's king (Baliol) out of his throne and into exile, continue to wrangle among itself. The two would-be occupants of the throne, Comyn and Bruce, each of them convinced of the purity of his claim, would not succumb otherwise. This is all that is needed by King Edward I of England, to invade the Kingdom and impose his direct rule. With Edward I now in charge, each of the nobles who has a claim to the throne, however dubious, make separate deals in the hope that this would fetch him the crown. Since the Scots nobles, were, as reported by the Scots Chronicler, 'aye at enmitie and made nae concurse, and Edward had his will in Scotland' (p.2).

William Wallace, a non-noble, becomes the tip of the spearhead of the ordinary people, the 'puir folk' in an organised uprising against English domination symbolised by Edward's rule in Scotland. The ensuing drama is the story of the altruism and heroism of Wallace as the defender of the sovereignty of the nation, and freedom as a non-negotiable essence. The idea of Wallace, later described by Edward at the trial scene, as 'a younger son of a petty knight' (p.148) rising to lead the nation's fight for freedom is an irony, given that the nobles who constitute the leadership will not do so. Thus, the nobles in their megalomania and greed for power also undermine their own legitimacy. This might have been the birth of republicanism, but this was the feudal age. The best Wallace can do is to defend the sovereignty of the Scots to have their own King, not depend on an external arbiter, who now seizes on the conflict of succession triggered by lack of coherence among the nobles to impose his own rule and authority over the nation. The lack of coherence within the nobility means that the folk have a right to divorce themselves from that class. This is upsetting the hegemonic order, Scottish as well as English. Not surprisingly, the Scottish nobles, while recognising Edward's direct rule as the erosion of the sovereignty of their nation, would still not consent to fight under Wallace, for as Bruce tells him, '**Ye hae nae rank**' (p.58) or Menteith's '**It's no seemlie for barons o'rank/To serve under your command, Wallace/A landless man**' (p.69). This is the paradox of Wallace's emergence as 'guardian of the realm'. In other words, the same nobles who recognise and occasionally acknowledge Wallace as the source of new strength and possibility

of renewal for the nation are also the forces arranged against him from within. And as it turns out, they are the forces, not Edward, which ultimately defeat Wallace. First the nobles renege on their promise to join with him for the crucial battle of Falkirk, leading to the defeat of Wallace's army, and then one of them sells him to Edward. Menteith who betrays Wallace tells Edward that 'Wallace has lichtlied me, as maybe/Ye ken, Majestie, and my young nephew,/That I loed fu weill, is deid for Wallace's Vainglorie. Sic things canna be forgot (p105).

While Wallace may not have succeeded in surmounting the political forces ranged against him from within, his character is nonetheless a reflection of the historical forces at play. Scotland, before Wallace's emergence is already an infiltrated space, and the *Other* kingdom doing the infiltration has put in place its appurtenances of political authority and cultural power. Thus there is a clear disablement of the national consciousness. In the place of national history comes a vexatious dynamic of power relationships, in which the Scots nobles have been fully complicit, to the detriment of their own nation. In literal terms, the squabbling nobles have killed their own nation. All these are still consistent with my suggestion of paradox and irony as combined principles of aesthetic and ideological construction in the play. For example, it is Wallace, who, consciously aware of the need to restart Scotland's own history again, who repeatedly tries to rise above the squabbles of the nobles, and even to bring them together for a joint-defence of Scotland's freedom. Defending Scotland's freedom constitutes the greatest display of nobility and honour, hence when the nobles show that they feel otherwise, he is driven to exasperation:

Ay, I mean it. I mean black shame
On ye, Carrick, and on your kith
And kin and ilka renegade lord in the land
Whase rank can kneel til the fause Plantagenet
And devour his ain flesh and bluid
For rank's sake. Ay, rank indeed! (p.58)

Notwithstanding such moments of exasperation, Wallace still makes the effort to persuade the nobles to support his war plan. He may not have liked the nobles as individuals, but he sees

them as indispensable to the war against the English King, especially if the Scots desire to win the war. For Wallace, the war with and the anticipated victory over Edward are now a rite of passage for the Scottish nation. It is a ritual that the treacherous nobles ought not to be allowed to disrupt. When one of the nobles, Menteith, asks Wallace to give up his military command 'because 'Nou is the time for wycker heids/To mak the peace aa Scotland's bleeding for', the hero replies

Peace? Wi Edward chappin at the door?
This is midsummer blethers. Menteith, what ails ye?
There can be nae peace but efter victorie,
And nae victorie wiout battle... (P.69)

The reply shows how much Wallace is accepting the principle of violence as a necessity for freedom. At his trial in Westminster, Wallace stresses the philosophy behind that acceptance:

There's be nae peace till Scot and Sudron
Speaks as equals man to man. What man
That's a man speaks peace wi a dirk at craig?
Or wad ye gie the wolf to keep the wedder?
Gin the lion speak peace til the lamb
He maunna eat the lamb!

(p.160)

It is worth noting, that for dramatic emphasis, it is the treacherous Mentieth, who provokes Wallace into making the above statement.

The Wallace is a play emphasizing, through the principle of paradox, the need to reclaim a threatened culture and in doing so make that culture resume its historical progress. In *The Wallace*, the exhaustion in the politics of the realm has brought a real danger of cultural annihilation thus the culture needs a new deliverer who will compel respect and integrity for it. Hence, the ordinariness of Wallace's origin, rather like that of the child Christ, who is born in a manger, is one of the two factors of his significance as archetype. The other is being possessed of the spirit of self-sacrifice, the Promethean essence, to deliver the people. To see the play in this light is also to link it to the moment of its creation, when there was so much talk about Scotland's future, and also a constant reminder of its past. It was a moment of political disaffection with what obtained, and everyone, not least those who had taken up the challenge to

create an alternative value and vision for their society, was seeking a new Jerusalem of political ideas and ideals. It was also the moment that the 'postcolonial dilemma' faced by a culture such as Scotland's became most apparent, because it was also the moment when the British Empire was breathing its last, and the notion of the Scots as an imperial race being shattered, not least by the likes of MacDiarmid and his fellow-travellers. The play is therefore an opportunity for the dramatist to reevaluate historical process, which was a subject very much in contention from the end of the Second World War. Not surprisingly, the view of history distilled here is one that tries to reclaim the subject as collective memory; something that goes beyond the standard remark that history is the past, present and the future. 'If history has conventionally determined the parameters of a past', write Gilbert and Tompkins, 'it has also determined the positioning of the [colonized] subject within that past. Hence, post-colonial reworkings of the ...master historical narrative are not always concerned with construction of history *per se* but with constructing the self *in* history (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 p.109).

The manner that Sydney Smith attempts in *The Wallace* to reconcile Scottish past with its present by using the idiom of myth-ritual is consistent with the post-colonial strategy of 'constructing the self in history', as pointed out above by Gilbert and Tompkins.

Scotland may not have been subjected to the savagery of master historical narrative to the same degree as many settler or occupied postcolonial spaces, its place in history has nevertheless been subjected to a number of interpretations, all of which tend to deny the nation of one virtue or the other. If Hugh Trevor-Roper's constant inveiglement that Scottish history is an addendum to English history represents an extreme denial of that history, the earlier claims by the likes of Tom Nairn that historical progress was halted in Scotland, leaving the nation with grave consequences can also be read as a frenzied reading of the same history. These two views have been addressed in an earlier chapter, but it is worth stressing all the same that they are both wrong and misdirected. What *The Wallace* does is to juxtapose myth and history, with the objective, no doubt, of showing that both have advantages for a proper understanding of Scotland, even if neither may be adequate in explaining the nation satisfactorily. Scotland of

the times of William Wallace was a notoriously divided space. However, disabling that was then, it is not the totality of the nation's medieval history, for there is also within that very story of division and treachery another history, that of resistance to the more powerful 'historical force', one whose imperial ambition was undisguised.

In coming to this reading, we need to bear in mind the fact that *The Wallace* was written and performed at a time when a new and mostly combative anti-imperial, anti-hegemonic politics was becoming more dominant. I have also pointed out in an earlier chapter that when examined on its own, that new politics was a profoundly decolonising or post-colonial project. *The Wallace* makes a contribution to that politics through an intellectual relocation of Scotland in history. The evidence for this lies in the play itself and also in the awareness that its author was one of the leading figures of the Scottish Renaissance with which the new politics was mostly identified.

It is in the light of the objective of using *The Wallace* to relocate Scotland in history that we can begin to see the need for what I described earlier as the ritual metaphor in the play. That metaphor also answers the crucial question of why a minor functionary would rise to carry the banner of the whole nation in the age of chivalry. The point is that the nation is at the moment in want of his kind of figure, a force to cross the rubicund of historical and political circumstances surrounding the nation. In the mythic imagination, ritual, like paradox and irony, is never too far away from the surface. The ritual force of the play begins with the murder by William Heselrig, the English Sheriff of Lanark, of Mirren, Wallace's beloved wife (Pp35-9). It is the murder that gives physical meaning to Wallace's 'fierce hatred of foreign occupation and oppression' (Barrow 1993), and which makes him to accept his leadership of the rebellion against Edward as manifest destiny, so to say. The savagery of the manner in which the death sentence on Wallace is to be carried out, while constituting to the minutest detail a literal destruction of his person, is also what makes possible his realisation as a secular Scottish martyr and patriot. The manner of his death is therefore a ritual, an affirmation of the being of the people he represents. Seen this way, *The Wallace* also becomes a drama of the collective

unconscious, prised open at a moment of national unease or uncertainty. For the playwright, the ethical point about William Wallace is that he unusually embodies the contrasting Promethean and Apollonian virtues at the same time. The Promethean instinct is one of action, and if possible continual action, not of resolution. It is the Apollonian instinct that continuously seeks reconciliation and resolution. Thus while a mythic hero *par excellence*, Wallace's fearless campaigns and daring battles, his organisation of a national army made up of ordinary people are instinctively Promethean. At the same time, however, when Wallace speaks, either to his own followers, his words anticipate reconciliation and resolution. It is always with the dignity of one possessed of the Apollonian instinct that he speaks. Speaking of his mission in the following speech, for example, we see the image of a carrier:

Gin we all dee the morn
And the battle lost, the war is aye wan.
The war was wan at Stirling Brig last year
And weill Edward kens it. We pruvit then
The micht of feudal England can be checked,
Owreset and hurnbelt by the folk o' Scotland
Wi nae lords, nae ither help, their lane.
Win or loss the mom canna
Cheynge yon-for what's dune aince
Can eith be dune again. Yon's our strenth
And yon's our bydin victoric. (Pp77-8)

It is in the same way that the above speech reveals the heroic personality of Wallace that it also indicates the inevitability of his action. The success or otherwise of his assignment is a matter of life and death for the people since it is the whole community that now stands the peril of annihilation which Edward I's presence in Scotland represents. Consistent with the paradox and irony, which also inform the construction of the play, the person to bring this out forcefully, is Bruce, hitherto one of the Scots nobles who felt less enthusiastic to support his battle efforts. For Bruce, the savagery contained in the so-called judgement pronounced on Wallace is a racial humiliation. It is this humiliation that is rejected by Bruce, when he draws attention to Wallace's 'nobility' as 'a man and warrior of honour!'

No! Rebel or nae rebel, Wallace

Is a man and warrior of honour!
Hae his heid, gin ye will, the axe
Is honourable. But no, I beg ye,
No this bluid-shotten butcherie!
This is ignominie! And no to be
Tholit! 'Tis ower dour! I canna
Thole it! And I shall nocht thole it!

(p171)

Bruce's intervention is rich in ironies, both literal and metaphorical. Here is the same man who once refused to fight alongside Wallace because, as he put it at the time 'Ye [meaning Wallace] hae nae rank'. Yet and according to the stage direction, Bruce, first interjecting from his place among the Scots Lords, finally '*struggles from his place on to the floor of the Court*', repulsing the efforts of his fellow Scots Lords who try to restrain him, to announce his own moment of epiphany:

Ah Bruce's road is plain at last-
Wallace, ye win indeed! I winna
Thole it, Edward! Mark me weill-and there's

The stage direction again: He flings down his gauntlet.

My gage upon't to cairrie wi ye
Intae Scotland aince again-
You or your shilpit brat.

Says the stage direction again:

He breenges (sic) out through the crowd of LORDS, OFFICIALS, and SOLDIERS, who are momentarily afraid to lay hand on him.
(pp171-2).

This is an inter-textual, drama-within-drama performance, a device to impress both the resoluteness of the character and its importance within the context of the drama. Bruce's action is important because apart from all else, it signals the final moment of resolution on the Scottish side. Bruce's action and his speech leave us in no doubt that the character has, like Wallace, finally accepted the inevitability of violence as a means of cultural validation in the relationship between Scotland and England. Even if the other Scottish nobles fail to voice out support for

Bruce, their action demonstrates that they are in agreement with him. That this is so is testified by how the dramatist carefully arranges the theatre of it all, is because it signals the moment of a new awareness among the Scottish Lords present, that Wallace has been right all along. Edward sees them as a conquered people, an inferior and savage race to be treated in like manner. This acknowledgement by the Scots Lords is dramatised in the final moment of the play, as they all walk out of the trial venue:

The SCOTS LORDS-all save MENTEITH, who, head high, walks
swiftly out-bow their heads, and, still bowed, not looking at each
other turn their backs, and slowly, not together, but singly, go out.
(p.173)

Thus the play ends on the same ironic level, with Cromyn, emphatically telling Edward that the final word had been said, but not by the presumed conqueror. None other than Wallace, who upon his exit, tells the Scots nobles' Farewill, my lords/This is nocht the end-/Edward- (p.173) said the final word. The judgement pronounced on him has restored the nation to cultural health.

In the way this section, (from Bruce's intervention to the departure of the Scots Lords) is dramatised, Smith blurs the distinction between myth and history, for it is a fact that the historical Bruce took over from where the historical Wallace left off. It was Bruce, who brought the revolution begun by Wallace to its logical conclusion at the battle of Bannockburn, where, in the words of one historian, he overwhelmed 'the army which Edward II had brought to annihilate him' (Barrow 1993 p.280) and thus freed Scotland of the English menace. In view of the actual historical detail, Bruce's action at the trial scene is not intended as heroism, but as rejection of the racial insult that is intended by the *kind* of justice available to a Scots received in an English court. For Wallace himself, Bruce's action merely deepens his sense of resolution, as indicated in his speech:

Ay, he'll be weill awa, Edward!
He was richt, tae. I hae wan. I hae kent it
Echt lang year, and nou it's true.
Ay, I've wan indeed! (p.172)

The point being made here is that Wallace's death is an example of one death assuming both cultural signification as well as spiritual and political importance of epic proportions. It seems a death tailor-made for Wallace's Prometheus-like person:

It has been adjudged... that the accused rebel and traitor William *The Wallace*, ... shall be led from the Palace of Westminster to the Tower of London, and from the Tower to Aldgate, and so through the midst of the City to the Elms of Smithfield, and there, ... he shall be hanged by the neck, and let down half-living, and his parts of manhood cut off, ... that his heart, liver, lungs, and all his inner parts ... shall be drawn and cast into a fire and burnt, before his face, and, ... that he shall be beheaded; and also....

(Pp170-1)

Though meant by Edward and his court as proof of their power over Wallace and all that he may stand for, and as a warning to other Scottish nobles, the savagery built into Wallace's death turns his killing into a ritual dissolution of his person, and precisely for that reason, makes Wallace's transition from a historical to a mythic figure an absolute and a successful one. Even Wallace himself has been taken out of the hall before the final part of the judgment, which is that his body, minus the head, 'shall be cut and divided in four quarters' (p.173), which are to be hung in different parts of England and Scotland, was pronounced. This ritualised death and dismemberment represents the physical transformation of the hero to mythic status.

Whatever the loss that Wallace's capture and subsequent humiliation before his killing may have meant for Scotland, it is now recompensed by this ritual which, as rituals go, means that the bonds between him and the community that he served is renewed. Wallace does not just face the sentence heroically, but showed a spirit of natural acceptance of it, especially in his debate with Edward over the latter's right to govern Scotland. Repeatedly, Wallace let it be known that he owes no allegiance to Edward, thereby putting the propriety of his trial for treason in legal doubts (p.147).

Although *The Wallace* is suffused in poetry, and much intellectual talk about freedom and independence, the latter being most pronounced in the final act where the trial of Wallace takes place, it is a play in which language is used both to delineate and to reinforce opposing

dramatic spaces. The allocation respectively of Scots to the Scottish characters and English to the English ones is done to bring out the differences in the worldview and values of the two opposing sets of characters. However, the evocative richness of the Scots adds more than passing originality to the artistic efforts of Smith. Here, the critic who writes that *The Wallace* 'does not often reach far beyond the rhetoric' (Lindsay 1993 p.311) may have suffered a curious slippage. Smith is more concerned about the unity of theme and expression, much less by any aesthetics high end. This perhaps explains why the trial scene is packed with much of the intellectual argument of the play, which is about the desire for untrammelled freedom and the context that may make it possible. *The Wallace* certainly does better than being dour rhetoric. Its force, as often with Scottish texts, is in the performative quality of the language.

It is noted earlier that *The Wallace* is a play setting as its objective the relocation of Scotland in history. To that extent, it can also be described as a play of political unconscious. How relevant is the play as a mirror of identity in either of the two modes, expressive or instrumental, that that I proposed earlier? In answering the question, the plot of the drama is worth drawing attention to once more. It is said that the plot is informed by paradox and irony, although ritual, as opposed to the tragic immolation of the hero, constantly lurks in its background. In as much as they may be described as aesthetic resources, paradox and irony also have ontological purposes for the actual incidents of the play. To put this straightforwardly, the playwright obviously recognises that paradox and irony, like contradiction, are not supposed to be treated or explained as irrationalities, but as possessing their own power as routes to the heart and meaning of 'nation', 'history' and 'culture'. Hence, Smith has attempted to distil both the political and the cultural in the same text. The invasion of Scotland by Edward is a clear political incident, and is shown as an act of imperialism. However, the mytho-ritual process, through which the invasion is annulled, is cultural. This is where the instrumental and the performative meet in a dynamic relationship in *The Wallace*.

History as Enigma: Robert McLellan's *Jamie the Saxt*

If *The Wallace* is a play in which Scotland's role in history is referenced from within history itself, and in which Wallace is now revealed as the divine prototype of that history, *Jamie the Saxt* by Robert McLellan, presents a somewhat more dramatic picture of Scotland's national history. Some critics would perhaps see the play as capturing the actual moment of that condition.

Jamie the Saxt is based on a set of actual incidents in the court of King James VI of Scotland, between February 1591 and September 1594, a time when the King was caught in a web of political intrigues and power machinations. According to the play's rather complicated but skilfully woven plot, while the King and his cousin, the Earl of Bothwell, engage in a bitter power rivalry, the most senior ministers of the Church of Scotland also rise in rebellion against the King. This is for his failure to raise a military campaign against Catholic bishops and nobles in the kingdom, as part of the general advance of the Protestant movement, which the King is sworn to defend. Edinburgh merchants, to some of whom the King is indebted for his administrative running costs, soon join in on the sides of the King's enemies. But while taking on his two main opponents: Bothwell and his fellow backers and the Church, the King is also plotting his way to the English Crown, to which he has a legitimate claim. It is in the same way that his opponents manipulate faith for political ends that the King himself manipulates all of them for his own personal ambition. And at the end of the play, he alone stands triumphant. Bothwell is crushed in all but name, the rest of his rebellious nobles have been subdued, the leaders of the Church are shamed, and firm assurances had been received from Elizabeth I, through the English ambassador, Sir Bowes, that James's succession to the throne of England was now inviolate. The King glows in the celebration of his own skill:

... Oho, but fortune's favoured me the day! There's naething in my wey! Aa that I hae wished for is promised at last! Bothwell on the scaffold, the Papists houndit down, the Kirk in my pouer, England ahint me, and then, in the end, the dream o my life come true! It gars my pulse quicken! It gafs my hairt loup! It gars my een fill wi tears! To think hou the twa pair countries hae focht and struggled.

To think o the bluid they hae shed atween them, the touns they hae blackent wi fire, the bonnie green howes they hae laid waste. And then to think, as ae day it sall come to pass, that I, Jamie Stewart, will ride to London, and the twa countries sall become ane.

(p.144)

As a canonical play, *Jamie the Saxt* has come to be regarded as the best fulfilment in drama of the aims and objectives of the Scottish Renaissance movement, in whose objective Robert McLellan was an ardent believer.² MacDiarmid himself was thoroughly fascinated with *Jamie the Saxt* that he at least on one occasion nominated it as the ideal to be held up to other Scottish dramatists (MacDiarmid 1998 Pp162-5). MacDiarmid's commendation is a very logical thing to do for a man who sought to reinvent Scots language and letters single-handedly since McLellan himself took the resuscitation of the Scots language as a very serious cultural project. Although attention has already been drawn to the language vitality of the play in the preceding chapter, I shall have one or two things more to say about it here, especially in the relationship between form and language in the play.

Although MacLellan, going by the play, shows sympathies for James, he strategically does not endorse him as a hero in any conventional sense. Rather, he puts him in the midst of events, every single incident of which brings something new, except bravery or heroism, out of the king. James is the consummate political monarch, who is keener about the political value of running a Christian realm rather than the evangelical one his Bishops want. More significantly, he believes that the latter is the business of the Church, provided it does nothing more, such as seeing itself as the alternative to the crown, for example. This is what he impresses on the English ambassador, Sir Robert Bowes, when he tells him:

They winna acknowledge their Sovereign as their speeritual heid!
They elect men o their ain to tak the place o my bishops in the
Three Estates! ...My fecht with the Kirk, Sir Robert, is a fecht
against government frae the pulpit, and yer mistress suld be the last
to encourage that! (P. 142).

² See, for example, the introduction by Alexander Scott to the Collected Plays Volume 1 of Robert McLellan, as well as the introduction by Ian Campbell and Ronnie Jack to the stand-alone text of the play. The text used in this analysis is taken from the Collected Plays. This text incorporates the annotation by Ronnie Jack, although with slight differences in pagination and numbering of annotation.

James further reveals his keen sense of politics when he equates the claim, made by the English ambassador, that his friendship with the Catholics makes Elizabeth 'feared Spanish invasion and the loss of her throne' with saying he lacked circumspection:

Spanish invasion! Did she think for a meenit that I wad jeyn wi Spain to put Phillip on the throne o England and destroy my ain claim to succeed her! Ye wad think Sir Robert, that I had nae intelligence at aa! (p.142).

James's keenness about politics is matched only by his lack of attention to even the most intimate details of his own family life. He is the uncaring husband who would reduce his queen to tears in the presence of the nobles and others (act III), or even suspect her of adultery. And when he hears that the Queen is pregnant (and it is worth stressing that it is Melville, his adviser, who informs the King of this rather personal development), which in effect means that an heir is on the way, it is to the politics of succession that his mind goes. He instantly begins to feel his hands strengthened. He tells Melville:

THE KING: Haud on, though. I hae thocht o something else. Yer news has gien me hairt. Dae ye no see? It'll strengthen my posection in regaird to the English Croun. What the English want, Sir Jamie, efter aa thae years o wonering whaur to turn in the event o their Queen's daith, is a settled succession. They'll hae that nou gin they hae me.

MELVILLE: They'll hae to be shair that baith King and heir are soond in their releegion, yer Grace.

THE KING: Hae nae fear o that, Sir Jamie. Ance I can redd mysell Bothwell I'll win my wey clear o the Papists. Man, I wad dearly luv to see her English Majesty's face whan she hears what ye hae telt me in the nicht. It'll be a bitter dose for her to swallow, that's a barren stock hersell. Whan ye hae waukent Lodovick, Sir Jamie, try to win through to Sir Robert Bowes. I wad sweir he's been in tow wi Bothwell, but I neir thocht till this meenit to challenge him till his face. He winna daur acknowledge it. He'll hae to tak my side. And I'll mebbe gie him a hint o hou the wind blows. Man, that wad tickle him up.
(p.111)

One commentator, Alexander Scott describes *Jamie the Saxt* as a comedy of intrigue and goes on to say that 'the intrigues are not a matter of the manipulation of stage mechanics but emerge dramatically from a clash of personalities and principles' (McLellan 1981 p.viii). It will be more

to the point to characterise the play as a comedy of character, with a graceful, if demanding simplicity of construction. This is because much of the intrigues and events that inform the plot of the drama invariably succumb to the machinations of its central character, King James VI, a shrewd, but cowardly monarch. In the words of Donald Campbell, one of the reasons why the play will remain etched in the memory of many people is because the lead role, which is that of the king, has been one of the most demanding ever seen on the Scottish stage (Campbell 1996 p.130). But perhaps unknown to the playwright, by putting the King in the midst of the sort of the textually re-worked, but historically verifiable events, he has also provided a basis for the play to be regarded as an effort at a narrative of Scotland from the moment of its historical fragmentation. James is portrayed as a coward and a highly manipulative character. Not for him is the Promethean bravery of a Wallace or the daring resoluteness of Mary, Queen of Scots. Yet, the wily King goes on to dominate all around him and moreover makes the dream of his life come true.

It will be understandable if at the end of a performance or reading of *Jamie the Saxt* its audience or reader is still left wondering what its purpose is. The theatre scholar, David Hutchison, quotes McLellan as saying that 'he felt that what he was doing was to create the kind of drama which would have been written in previous eras had there been a thriving Scottish theatre then' (Hutchison 1989 p.173). The playwright is also quoted to have said on a different occasion that "If we are to have any reasonably well-presented Scots drama at all we shall require a company with such a command of the rhythms, idiom and vocabulary of living Scots speech as would bring classical Scots well within its grasp" (McLellan 1970 p.10). The playwright might have added on that last occasion that he was prepared to take on the mantle of writing such a drama.

Jamie the Saxt takes a rather acquiescent view of the roles played by its main subject, King James VI, in the making of the incompleteness of the Scottish statehood (some might say the very abortion of the project of statehood). What we have instead is a play in which an uncomfortable historical incident is played up aesthetically and then left possibly just as that: an

issue of aesthetic amusement. But even in doing so, the agony of incompleteness is all too visible. This is why I think *Jamie the Sixth* is an unconsciously ideological play, which mirrors the postcolonial consciousness of its creator, which manifests itself as a major ambivalence in the play.

For example, when we stop admiring James as a likeable schemer, we would still have to confront the fact that the play does not dramatise the force of his personality or prove the inevitability of his action except in relation to his selfish, personal survival. In as much as the play translates into Jamie's personal triumph, and a 'happy ending', the fact still remains that the King's sole objective, the driving force of his action, which is the succession to the English throne, was historically for Scotland a disaster and terrible ending. This is the eventual departure of king and court to London, and its tragic consequences for Scotland since. It is significant that thirty-three years after *Jamie the Sixth*, another playwright, Stewart Conn, again examines the same period and presents James as a malicious character, who sometimes acted on the fringe of moral political perversion (Conn 1973).

That the historical King James was the last 'home-grown' Scottish monarch and also the last monarch to reign in Scotland make him an important subject in Scottish history. His being the monarch who eventuated the Union of the Scottish and English crowns further raises his importance in Scottish history. However, his status as 'first' also leaves him with a debatable reputation in both British and, especially Scottish political culture and history. In Scotland, the attitude towards the King can at best be described as shifty, when compared to how his mother, Mary Queen of Scots is remembered. This is partly because he did not save the life of his mother, who was beheaded in 1587 and partly because he saw to the abolition of the Scottish crown. However, where his activities and unpopularity in England may have been treated as a secondary matter in Scotland, everything he did while reigning and residing in Scotland are of primary importance. Walter Scott in *Fortunes of Nigel* presents James as a very Scottish character that, though comic is intrinsically loveable. Such a depiction of the monarch is one that gels with how the seventeenth century Edinburgh bourgeoisie saw and

accommodated James. Even McLellan has not departed from that general view, as is clear from the incident in the final scene of Act Two. This is where Earl Morton's daughter, newly arrived to the palace, strikes a conversation with the King, without realising who he is. James, while cleverly teasing out information out of the innocent girl, asks what she has heard about the King. She replies

That he's faur frae braw, and weirs the maist horrid auld claes. And he's a gey glutton, and sweirs and drinks ower muckle. But he's a great scholar and writes poetry (p.102).

The historian, Angus Calder, however thinks that James's position might have been somewhat different, he writes,

James VI and I grew up in a chaos of faction and internecine violence and then, despite his physical timidity, secured a grip on Scotland in the 1580s which he held for forty years. He raised up lesser landowners, especially men who gave him loyal service, so as to balance the great feudal magnates. He brought to submission the group of Catholic lords led by the Gordon Earl of Huntly. He persuaded the Kirk to bow to his authority, despite its strong Presbyterian faction. But he could not boost the royal revenue to the point where he could pay his own way. Used from infancy to deficit and bungling, he developed irresponsible habits which he took with him to England and which proved fatal to his son and heir. He scrounged when in pressing need. He devalued the Scottish coinage to his own short-term advantage. He made extravagant gifts to his favourites (Calder 1981, p111).

An earlier authority was even less charitable in his portrait of the historical James. J. R. Green writes,

No sovereign could have jarred against the conception of an English ruler which had grown up under Plantagenet or Tudor more utterly than James the First. His big head, his slobbering tongue, his quilted clothes, his rickety legs, stood out in as grotesque a contrast with all that men recalled of Henry or Elizabeth as his gabble and rhodomontade, his want of personal dignity, his buffoonery, his coarseness of speech, his pedantry, his contemptible cowardice. Under this ridiculous exterior however lay a man of much natural ability, a ripe scholar with a considerable fund of shrewdness, of mother-wit, and ready repartee. His canny humour lights up the political and theological controversies of the time with quaint incisive phrases, with puns and epigrams and touches of irony, which still retain their savour. His reading, especially in theological matters, was extensive; and he was a voluminous author on subjects which ranged from predestination to tobacco. But his shrewdness and learning only left him, in the phrase of Henry the Fourth, "the wisest fool in Christendom." He had the temper of a pedant, a pedant's conceit, a pedant's love of theories, and a pedant's inability to bring his theories into any relation with actual facts. All might have gone well had he confined himself to speculations about witchcraft, about predestination, about the noxiousness of smoking. Unhappily for England and for his successor, he

clung yet more passionately to theories of government which contained within them the seeds of a death-struggle between his people and the Crown. Even before his accession to the English throne, he had formulated his theory of rule in a work on "The True Law of Free Monarchy:" and announced that, " although a good King will frame his actions to be according to law, yet he is not bound thereto, but of his own will and for example-giving to his subjects" (Green 1888 pp477-8).

The kernel of the remarks by both Calder and Green is that James did possess a natural ability to impose his own not so inconsiderable wiles on events and circumstances with an astounding success. Perhaps because he tended to be underestimated, more so by those who chose as the first measure of his person and ability, 'his want of personal dignity, his buffoonery, his coarseness of speech, his pedantry' he always emerged the smiling person at the end of the day. All of which would make him a natural anti-hero. In the light of all this, then, can James's handling of the Bothwell rebellion, which is the primary issue in the play, be seen as influenced mainly by his calculations of self-gain, which is the succession to the English crown? He himself indicates as much in that grand speech of the final scene in Act IV, quoted earlier. McLellan however leaves unexplained which exactly comes first to James, whether the fulfilment of his life long ambition of securing the English throne or securing the merger of the two nations, 'the twa countries sall become ane'. Another unreflected issue is whether in the pursuit of either of these ambitions, James inevitably became *the* anti-hero of Scottish history? Given the circumstances of his birth, the tragedies of his two parents and how all these had formed major elements in the politics of succession to the English crown, it is not inconceivable that the young James was inculcated with the notion of 'manifest destiny' by his educator George Buchanan, himself a part of the Scottish Church establishment that denounced James's mother (Mary, Queen of Scots) as 'hoor', after the 1566 murder of his father, Darnley. One biographer describes Buchanan as a rationalist Protestant, a fact that may have accounted for the no-barrier on learning attitude he implanted in his ward. The consensus among historians is Buchanan's prejudice against the Queen after they fell out was such that he taught her son to hate her. It is also suggested that James took this seriously to heart that he showed 'delight' at

his mother's death.³ My point about 'manifest destiny' would be that Buchanan taught James not only to regard the English crown as his by right, but also to regard himself in moral terms as the person to bring a lacking intellectual authority to the crown. This is the view strengthened somewhat by Green's unflattering portrait of the King. Even if all these are true, they still not explain the acquiescence in McLellan's text.

The general tendency is always to read historical plays with a mind on the present, making their actions conform to contemporary meanings. However, when that test is applied to *Jamie the Saxt*, we are left somewhat in a quandary. This is because what the play does is to celebrate, sometimes with enthusiasm; King James VI's scheming. By extension, this appropriates the King's triumph as a Scottish success story, perhaps a proof of the Scots' political ingenuity. Has the playwright in effect manipulated history to create his own meaning or has decided to separate the particular historical events depicted from their political effects? The question that arises however is whether James VI's success in outfoxing his way to the English throne has had a successful outcome for Scotland in the final balance? James VI and his appetite for the English throne created one of the great conjectures of Scottish history, but in *Jamie the Saxt*, the playwright seems to have attempted to resolve that particular conjecture by weighing in on the side of the King. Outside of the theatre, however, the conjecture remains. Would the path of Scotland's history have been different had King James VI been a different kind of monarch, or a less power hungry one? McLellan's treatment of that question is to leave it undefined in the play. We guess that it is to cover-up that question up that our playwright seeks to construct a Scottish dramatic epistemology around the vitality of Scots language on the stage, but to leave ideologically understated an important area of contingency within Scottish history.

In the more openly postcolonial settings, it is fairly easy to point out how imperial narrative has supplanted the very idea of indigenous histories. Whether in the case of occupation

³ According to Ronald Jack, however, that the historian mostly relied upon by McLellan, David Moysie, contradicts the story that James showed no emotion when told of his mother sad end. In his words, James

or settler colonialism, history is what the official records of contact and whatever transpired afterwards privilege. For that reason it has become axiomatic in postcolonial settings, as pointed out by Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, that recuperating from imperial history is not simply a matter of re-writing, or, to 'contest the message of history'. It is 'also to engage the medium of narrativity itself, to re-inscribe the 'rhetoric', the heterogeneity of historical representation as [Hayden] White describes it' (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1995 p.356). This is the background to the formulation of counter-discursive histories in postcolonial theory. In situations such as the Scottish case, however, the fact of being 'in and out' of imperial history would naturally place additional burden on the medium of narrativity, because then, the picture is much more complex. What is not easily achievable in say historical methodology may however be relatively easier to accomplish in representational modes, such as in theatre for example. After all, theatre, in the words of Gilbert and Tompkins, 'facilitates the telling/showing of oppositional versions of the past that propose not only different constitutive events but different ways of constructing that past in the present' (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 p.109).

Jamie the Saxt follows in the tradition of those historical plays seeking a counterdiscursive version of the past. At the same time, the play demonstrates that all such plays may not necessarily be revolutionary or even radical. And that with some inventiveness, it may be possible for them to make their impact. The impact of *Jamie the Saxt* is that it builds its success on its aesthetic inventiveness, while leaving an ironic space between narrative and historical reality. This is where the play becomes an uncritical negotiation of Scottish identity in the expressive mode.

This is where we again return to the playwright's choice of the comic mode. What emerges from this choice is a complete disavowal of England as Scotland's *Other* from the interpretation of the events that takes place. Yet that disavowal is cancelled out at another level, which is that of language. The admirable use of Scots, not least in the demarcation of the cultural spaces occupied by the play's opposing characters is a conscious opening up of the

"was in great displeasure and went to bed without supper". See fn 89 of Act II of the play.

space of discourse, both literally and metaphorically. And nothing illustrates this better than the section to which I referred in the earlier chapter. This is the section where the English servant is apprehended and incriminating documents found on him. The problem, however, is that beyond the opening up, the text remains acquiescent to the wider implications of its own meanings. Katja Lenz, who takes McLellan up on the ideological purpose of his language use must have had the acquiescence of the text in mind. Suggesting that the playwright's choice of 'ideal Scots' may after all not be too far from the sentimental, Lenz writes,

McLellan's choice of 'ideal' Scots, in conjunction with naturalist conventions, rules out a contemporary urban setting. The plays are therefore usually set either in remote times and places, where and when such usage may at least seem authentic - with all the problems this creates because of its contemporary base. Or they are located in a fairy-tale world, where socio-historical linguistic facts do not apply and audiences have to take it for granted that this type of Scots is spoken (Brown 1996).

The implication here is that McLellan may have been using language to conceal his failure for dealing directly with 'contemporary issues' adumbrated perhaps in his own plays. Perhaps we should look at the language consciousness in the play differently, but without compromising the basic premise of Lenz's observation, which at any rate is difficult to fault. Even though the word 'genre' does not occur in Lenz's argument, her views on McLellan go directly to the heart of how postcolonial theatre can be read in relations to the established notions of genre. This connection deserves therefore to be addressed.

Genre and postcolonial theatre

One major consequence of the liberation of the voice worldwide is that it also brought alteration to the concept of genre. This alteration has meant changes to how poetry and drama, whose structural lives depend upon and are accentuated in every context by the activation of the voice, may be perceived in the translation of cultural identity. The need to see and engage with those changes has been one of the key themes of postcolonial theory. For example, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have noted that 'Theories of style and genre, assumptions about the universal features

of language, epistemologies and value systems are all radically questioned by the practices of post-colonial writing' (Ashcroft, Griffiths et al. 1989 p.11).

Although genre remains, as Raymond Williams once made clear, 'a central issue in the complex modern conflicts between different kinds of theory and different kinds of empiricism' (Williams 1977 p.180), its meaning in our era of combative postmodernism has become highly fragmented. If the dominant scholarly attitude towards genre hitherto moved between the coercively prescriptive and the sometimes apologetically descriptive, not to talk of the many in-between positions, the postmodernist rationalisation seems to deny the possibility of sustainable genre altogether (see Jameson 1983; Eagleton 1996). In its usual will-to-truth manner, postmodernism has replaced the prescriptive and descriptive notions of genre with its now familiar political iconoclasm. It now questions whether genre actually matters after all. In other words, neither the logic of genre, however, problematic or contentious, nor its politics is worth addressing according to postmodernism.⁴ This fragmentation, and the attempted cancelling out of genre, has been felt deeply in drama (See Innes 1992; Kershaw 1992) and poetry, obviously for the same reasons identified earlier, namely that they are the two most visible areas of voice liberation. In drama in particular, there now exists a loose concept of genre that appears to be driven more by a 'rootless' and 'restless empiricism', rather than any social historical appreciation. Even within the field of postcolonial studies where the dismantling of the exercise of power aesthetically concealed through representation is rightly regarded as a project (cf Said 1993), propositions about genre have all but become frozen into an attitude, which although claims to be radical, but is in truth an imitation of the postmodern reconfigurations. This attitude consists of flagging every seeming act of departure in genre formation as specifically directed as an act of violation of 'hegemonic' institution of genre; or a well-heeled subversion, etc., of the

⁴ Talking about the politics of genre is worth drawing attention to the alleged reason that prompted the late Raymond Williams to write his *Modern Tragedy*. As recounted by one scholar, Williams had used the book to react to the claim sensationally made by George Steiner in his book, *The Death of Tragedy* that tragedy is dead. For more on this, Surin, K. (1995). Raymond Williams on Tragedy and Revolution. *Cultural Materialism: On Raymond Williams*. C. Prendergast. Minneapolis and London, University of Minnesota Press: 143-172..

Eurocentric canonical imposition. This is noticeable, for example, in how the authors of the book, *Post-Colonial Drama* move in and out of the genre discussion, deploying terms like 'hybridising of genre', disrupting the 'tragedy-comedy binary' and 'the influence exerted by classical traditions'.⁵ This is understandable imprecision, in view of the fact that much postcolonial analysis promote a radical discursive strategy for counterpoising and reclaiming centuries of cultural denigration and misrepresentation embedded in imperial and various other hegemonic epistemologies. However, I argue that it is an imprecision that should not be retained, as it can only undermine the revolutionary potential of postcolonial theory. It can also displace the more dialectical method and strategy of cultural intervention already emerging from it.⁶ A more rewarding approach to genre perhaps would be to situate it more firmly within the frame of 'constitutive practice.' This is what has been suggested by a number of scholars, among them those whose work can be described as associated with postcolonial study, such as Cairns Craig (Craig 1996 chp.6), for example and cultural field workers like Rustom Bharucha (Bharucha 1993). Such a resituating of genre is bound to add more to the understanding of those violent textual impositions often analysed by Edward Said, Bhabha and a host of other critics of imperial/hegemonic discourses. As Said especially continues to point out, we cannot afford to overlook the fact these impositions occurred at the same time as the world was being agonistically linked. He writes,

One of the salient traits of modern imperialism is that in most places it set out quite consciously to modernize, develop, instruct, and civilize the natives. An entire massive chapter in cultural history across five continents grows up out of it. The annals of schools, missions, universities scholarly societies, hospitals in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and America, fill its pages, and have had the effect over time of establishing the so-called modernizing trends in the colonial regions, as well as muting or humanizing the harsher aspects of imperialist domination—all of them bridging the gap between imperial center and peripheral territories. In paying respect to it, acknowledging the shared and combined experiences that produced many of us, we must at the same time note how at its center it nevertheless preserved the nineteenth-century imperial divide between native and Westerner. The great colonial schools, for example, taught generations of the native bourgeoisie important truths

⁵ It is not necessary to point out a specific example as such references, casually made most of the time, runs through the authors's general and specific analyses.

⁶ One can think of the works of critics such as Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and many others in the field as already providing such revolutionary possibilities.

about history, science, culture. And out of that learning process millions grasped the fundamentals of modern life, yet remained subordinate dependents of an authority based elsewhere than in their lives (Said 1990 pp74-5).

Said's words are worth recalling each time we think of the critical dimensions of genre, because ultimately, to question genre is also to question the elaborate institution of knowledge reproduction that has acted as vehicle to modernity. In addition to the advantages of its adding to the understanding of violent textual impositions described earlier, a resituating of genre will cancel out the self-subverting rejection that often accompany any mention of genre. The point being stressed here is that there is ample room for merging the political and the aesthetic without necessarily allowing one to vitiate the other in how we relate to the phenomenon of genre. Hence it might be useful to draw inspiration from the writing of Raymond Williams on the topic. According to Williams, the genre question is neither fixed nor settled, and this is a point that needs to be stressed to the remnants of 'Eurocentric' discourse these days. Williams points out that genre theory can only be productive if based upon 'an adequate social theory.' By 'adequate', Williams means a social theory that is sufficient to overcome 'the problem of the mobility of the category of totality between an ideal (non-alienated) state and an empirical (but then also differentiated) social whole.'

For any adequate social theory, the question is defined by the recognition of two facts: first, that there are clear social and historical relations between particular literary forms and the societies and periods in which they were originated or practised; second, that there are undoubted continuities of literary forms through and beyond the societies and periods to which they have such relations. In genre theory, everything depends on the character and process of such continuities.

[Hence] We can distinguish, first, between nominal continuity and substantial continuity (Williams 1977 pp182-3).

What Williams has proposed is that any consideration of genre, rather than being tied down to academic formalism, should be alert to those connections and interpenetrations which are occurring across space and time, and obviously across cultures. Williams himself has demonstrated how his proposal may be applied, when using tragedy as an example, he privileges 'nominal' over 'substantial' continuity:

'Tragedy' for example, has been written, if intermittently and unevenly, in what can appear to be a clear line between fifth-century B.C. Athens and the present day. A relevant factor of this continuity is that authors and others described successive works as 'tragedies'. But to assume that this is a simple case of the continuity of a 'genre' is unhelpful. It leads either to abstract categorization of a supposed single essence, reducing or overriding the extraordinary variations which the name 'tragedy' holds together; or to definitions of 'true tragedy', 'mixed tragedy', 'false tragedy', and so on, which cancel the continuity. This way of defining genre is a familiar case of giving category priority over substance' (Williams 1977 p.183).

To bring all the foregoing to the issue of the liberation of the voice and how it has made possible a new attitude of counter-hegemonic cultural translation is to ask for a more rigorous analysis of the 'nominal continuity' of genre. In practical terms, nominal continuity is not necessarily an implicit or explicit reworking of known categories, forms of writings, or outright rejection of them. It is the actual substance of what is being privileged as new genre formation. This is particularly so because in those circumstances where the voice has been liberated, those connections arising from the moment of first contact between the colonial/imperial culture and the colonised, and which Said spoke about above, will always exist as historical factors. However much we may have to try, such factors cannot be bleached off the culture that has rediscovered itself, or is struggling to do so. The gains from these factors, also adumbrated by Said, are at best to be exploited and where this may be necessary appropriated in plotting the way forward. The last sentence may also be taken as the summary of the reflection, so far, on genre. Rather than looking at genre as inviolate natural law, it should be seen in terms of its nominal continuity. This seems to be the only strategy that leaves substantial room for us to be able to address the possibility of the intellectual enrichment of the linkages and continuities of genre across cultures, including continuities arising from colonial experience or intrusion.

To return to McLellan's play, it is worth repeating that what we have is a text that is silent or acquiescent, leaving a number of questions on its vision of Scottish history unanswered. In spite of its troubling ambivalence, the integrity of the play's artistry and how it inevitably challenges the authority of genre is hard to dismiss. McLellan's determination to indigenise theatre linguistically is as much about establishing the parameters of Scottish

difference in the theatre as about genre. The obstacle here, however, is that genre is not normally talked about or theorised as language. Yet it is impossible to embark on the reconfiguration of one without touching on the other. This is a common feature of theatre practice in postcolonial settings or culture (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 chap. 1-2). If we apply this text to McLellan's play, the first observation to make will be that it is not for nothing that the play is described as 'historical comedy', which in itself negates naturalist faithfulness. McLellan is thus not merely re-working either comedy or historical play, but actually using the agencies of both to re-work genre in pursuit of establishing the Scottish presence in the theatre. That the rework is awkward or leaves room for critical and even ideological doubts at the thematic level is secondary. The overall intent to carry out that rework ought to be seen as the playwright's reaction, consciously or otherwise, to the demands of postcoloniality, which is at the heart of the question of modern subjectivity in Scottish cultural writings.

Jamie the Saxt can be read as a mere comedy of intrigues by ignoring all the historical details on which its plot is based. It is also possible to read the play as historical, naturalist drama, in which case everything about its being comic will also have to be interpreted as some kind of structural 'double entendre' or mock-irony. Either way, one fact that has to be contended with is that McLellan's play is also a text that self-consciously sets out to create a practice of theatre. It should not be surprising therefore that as a result it found itself in 'an agonistic encounter' with established conventions. To that extent, the alterity that McLellan brings to the notion of genre, and which Lenz seems to find unconvincing, has to be seen as the obverse side of the same postcolonial consciousness behind McLellan's creativity. Although they do not talk about genre here, the contributions of Gilbert and Tompkins are worth borrowing as conclusion. '...alterity', they write, 'is not simply unlocked by 'translations' from standard to non-standard linguistic forms; language functions as a basic medium through which meaning is filtered, but it also acts as a cultural and political system that has meaning in itself' (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 pp166-7).

History as Metaphor: Stewart Conn's *The Burning*

The Burning did not spring from any predisposition on my part toward Scots historical drama; but from what struck me as the theatrical potential of the theme, and its relevance today. Our own age is as 'mocking and hostile' as that of James and Bothwell; as brutal towards those caught in the middle of any battle of creeds, or for power; and as ready to identify 'evil' with the other side (Conn 1973 p.8).

Going by his own admission above, it is apparent that Stewart Conn was not thinking either about the question of Scottish identity in the theatre or about indigenising the theatrical stage linguistically with *The Burning*. Perhaps on that account, the play ought not to have been included among those considered in this study. After all, what could be more convincing than an author saying what his or her work is not about? The authorial self-dissociation from historical drama is interesting in another sense. It immediately removes the play from the profile of those that make appeal as stated earlier to either of the two models of identity, the expressive and the instrumental. But having ended the discussion of McLellan's play with remarks about the alterity of genre and language in postcolonial theatre, it becomes impossible to ignore *The Burning* as it presents a different stage poesis, one that is as frightening as it is iconoclastic. And however much Conn may try to dissociate his play from historical drama, Robert McLellan's *Jamie the Saxt* will always remain in the background as the text against which *The Burning* will first be assessed. Inevitably therefore, even when Conn says that his play 'did not spring from any predisposition on his part toward Scots historical drama,' any discussion of *The Burning* still has to acknowledge the visible 'inspirational continuity' that links the play with Robert McLellan's *Jamie the Saxt*. Hence the critical question arising is whether the playwright's motivation and also thematic exploration are not somewhat equal to attacking some of the myths erected on the past, in this case that of James VI as a lovable character? After all, *The Burning* and Robert McLellan's *Jamie the Saxt* seem so related that but for the authorial warning, it would have been too easy to see the latter play as the obverse of the other. First they both have

the same two principal characters, King James VI and his cousin, Bothwell. Secondly, the two characters are similarly engaged in a power struggle in the two plays. Thirdly, the events in the two plays are historically verifiable as having taken place, even if there may now be disagreement over their true causative factors. Fourthly and finally, both plays are related, although not closely, in style. It is worth pointing out that various critics and scholars have commented on one or more of these connections between *Jamies the Saxt* and *The Burning*, while at the same time pointing out their different meanings, and also their individual standing within the national canon (see Stevenson 1989; Brown 1996; Smith 1998).

Still on Conn's insistence that his play is not about history, it is worth noting that the playwright nevertheless goes on to say that 'Our own age is as 'mocking and hostile' as that of James and Bothwell.' And apart from the suggestion of parallels between two different and widely far apart epochs, this sentence also carries a gesture of doubts about the real character of the past. The playwright certainly sees the past, and especially, the age of James and Bothwell differently; at least differently from the way that McLellan seems to have apprehended the same period. Where McLellan's play is celebratory of the achievement of a schemer-Monarch, Conn's seems to question the very terms of that achievement by calling into question the individual particularities of both James and his constant nemesis, Bothwell. *The Burning* is therefore an antithesis of the heroic celebration found in *Jamie the Saxt*, and a reworking of 'events', meant as antidote against the irrationality of authority and power. For this reason, we see the play as a radical contribution to the debate about 'identity'. This it does by presenting what in effect is a 'rebellious' as opposed to an alternative view of one of the nation's historical figures, and thereby making a larger statement about national myths. Thus, while Conn is unclear about what calls 'the theatrical potential of the theme', the actions of the play leaves no one in doubt that whatever it is, the theme is taken from actual historical events. The power rivalry between James and Bothwell was real. Burning people for witchcraft during James's era was real, and moreover, James had an unusual fascination with the subject, and it is also true that James was a scheming Monarch. When situated within the climate of the 1970s, when it

was first performed, we could see *The Burning* as an experimental drama that walks through history to deal with contemporary anxieties about power and authority. Taken together, the play's dramatic actions is a symbolic arrangement that allows historical figures to embody the view that the weirdness and particularity of those wielding power is a key factor and damaging limitation in the power that they wield. Hence, James VI is seen as a power psychopath with something of Oedipal deficiency:

JAMES. It is right you should serve us, who rule this land by policy.

BOTHWELL. Policy demands wisdom

JAMES. There are our councillors. Besides, the King is the true child and servant of God. Wisdom is investit in him, through heavenly grace. He has the key to the nation's sa'ety.

BOTHWELL. A King should not shiver at the sight of steel.

HOME. It is discourteous to cite that. It was instillit in the King in the womb, when those men burst into his mother's chamber to despatch David Rizzio'.

James's justification for his actions is that he is protecting the kingdom from irrationality, arbitrariness and lawlessness all of which are symbolised by Bothwell and his anti-Christian practices. Yet in his own self-fulfilling search for 'evidence' of 'unchristian behaviours, James makes himself into an absolute authority and the mind of the people. Officials of the state are therefore compelled to accept and reflect whatever interpretations he gives to events or incidents and moreover act accordingly:

MAITLAND. (impatiently) His Grace condemns all that are of counsel of such crafts.

HERALD. Surely, since this crime be so severely punisht, Judges must beware condemning any, but as are truly guilty?

JAMES. Judges ought indeed. For it is as great a crime - as Solomon hath said - 'to condemn the innocent, as to let the guilty escape free'. Neither ought the report of one infamous person be admittit as sufficient proof, which can stand of no law.

HERALD. What of the guilty confessions that may work against one so accusit?

MAITLAND. The assize must serve for interpreter in that respect.

JAMES. But in our opinion, since in matter of treason against the Prince wives and bairns may serve as sufficient proof, it would seem the more adequate in matters of high treason against God. For who but witches can witness the acts of other witches? Further proof rests in the finding of witches' marks, and also in their fleeing by water. Together with the gushing of blood from the carcass of one destroyit by them. These are God's supernatural signs. Which we interpret as we may.

Since the events are arranged against the issue of witchcraft and religious persecution, which operate at the surface, naturalistic level, the overall structure of the play is a parody of religious ritual and liturgies. However, the purpose of that parody is to present the surreal dimension of power villainy and psychopathology symbolised especially by James and Bothwell. The deployment of 'powerfully realistic and poetic-form of non-naturalistic Scots' both of which heighten the relevant dramatic actions also serves as deliberate ironic contrast between the two different worlds of politics and that of ordinary life. In the latter case, especially, we see how ordinary people are subjected to the idiosyncratic structures of power. Thus, in the case of the Duncan Giles, who is forced to be released to the inquisitorial minister of Tranent, and who is eventually burnt for witchcraft, the victim is not only the hapless country girl, but also David Seaton, a depute bailiff and Giles' master. Though an official of the state who should know better about justice and related things, Seaton is made to surrender the girl against his own better judgement and sense of proportion and justice. Thus both master and servant are the victim of the same irrationality put in place by the governors. Seaton's frustration as he struggles futilely to convince the minister about natural justice may be typical of the frustration of anyone caught in such helplessness:

SEATON. You make her out to be already guilty.

MINISTER. So she is. Till and unless her innocence shine like a light.

SEATON. She is of honest parentage.

MINISTER. There is an evil in this land, that propagates in every shire,
never showing its face but undermining the structure of the state,
like a warren.

SEATON. She... attends the Kirk.

MINISTER. Did not Antide Colas confess she did attend midnight
prayer on Christmas eve, then go to a profane meeting, only to
return to break holy bread at dawn? No wonder the Inquisitors
have been sore exercisit in dealing with such gross offence, when it
matures within the marrow of the body politic, the very kernel of
the Kirk.

SEATON. We deal with a simple country lass.

MINISTER. We deal with a Beast. Foreign to the laws of God's
kingdom. And the decencies of His people. God is so vigilant for
the weale of His own, that he disappoints the will of those that
conspire against His holy throne. By this same power have been

put down of late, here in Lothian, a number of ungodly creature little better than devils. That have arisen in guise of innocence, like this 'simple lass'. They have entered into league with the Devil, in their souls' despite.

SEATON. It is surely never God's will that-

MINISTER. It is not for you to question God's will. (Pause) ...

We note how the minister's 'It is not for you to question God's will', with which the rational Seaton is silenced is very similar to the statement made by James elsewhere in the play, where he describes himself as 'God's instrument':

JAMES. ...in this place, against the lawlessness that shakes loose the commonweal. It is God's cause, that we are fighting.

Thus between the casual ruthlessness of James and the enthusiasm of the minister of Tranent, lies the proof that no principle of government is sufficiently independent of the governors. The arbitrary logic of James and Bothwell corresponds to the arbitrariness of power, whether masked as protection of faith or secular authority of the state:

EFFIE: Whom you torture, for your own satisfaction. You dream up devils, so that you can put them down. What purpose does such cruelty serve? Or is it because we are Catholics, that we are treated so?

MAITLAND: Not because you are Catholics. But to show our Kirk is as vigilant as yours, in its zeal against the powers of Darkness.

The arbitrariness assumes its macabre dimension in the scene where Effie is interrogated. James, casting aside all the dignity of his throne partakes in the interrogation and in his manner of doing so becomes something of a grotesque figure. It is a moving scene of intense theatricality, whose essence has been captured by Alan Bold thus: 'When young Effie (whose affair with Bothwell leads up to her burning) is interrogated by the King, James VI acts like a man disfigured by perversion'(Bold 1983 p.303). As the King and his chancellor jointly take over the interrogation of the accused in this scene, the extremity of bigotry and single-minded absolutism of James, especially, are dramatised as psychosis. The dramatist rather self-consciously puts emphasis on the language of both James and Maitland, with their voice rising

in concentric rhythm signalling how far they have become possessed. If James's actions reveal that his is a highly individualised but arbitrary logic of power, those of his nemesis, Bothwell, do not paint any different picture. In action as in speeches, Bothwell admits to his villainy. The purpose of his magic rituals, into which he draws others, such as Fian, the schoolmaster, and even his admirer and lover, Effie, is not because these rituals are meant to work. As he tells Effie, their purpose is to continue to create 'A confusion, in the land. Only thus may we change the larger climate of the times.' Effie, however, becomes trapped in Bothwell's fantasies of power and of revenge and she gets burned at the stake. Bothwell is however unmoved:

What is McCalayan...to me? Nothing! She is past...and done with...It cannot be...otherwise...But must...be so...Past...and no more...to me...or anything...in this stinking pit of a world...this rotten cell...where kings smile...and strut...
(His tone changes:)...
God help her...God help them all...for no one-else will...

To Bothwell, people have no other significance apart from serving as appurtenances of power. For Bothwell, as for James, power is the end of all relationships.

The Burning was first performed in 1971, at the Edinburgh Royal Lyceum Theatre. The 1970s were remarkable in the history of modern Scottish theatre. Audrey Bain has noted that it was one rare moment when there was a rewarding combination of theatre economics and politics to yield some lasting results. She writes

During the 1970s Scottish Arts Council bursaries for playwrights, artistic directors receptive to new indigenous writing and the heady scent of devolution in the air, amongst other factors, resulted in an outpouring of talent and a crop of great plays which came to symbolise a 'Golden Age' of Scottish theatre (Bain 1996 p139).

But to suggest that it was not all a perfect New World, Bain also notes that the 'golden age', was one dominated by the male playwright, writing about class issues from a predominantly male perspective, leading to what the critic calls the creation of 'a certain orthodoxy in taste.' That orthodoxy, she insists, has endured into the 1990s. While these qualifications are worth noting, this is not the place to address them. Stewart Conn whose reputation as a major playwright was established in the 1960s, was one of the major new forces of the 1970 theatre (Bold 1983; Stevenson 1989; Smith 1998). Attributing to Conn's

background in radio drama, Randall Stevenson has observed that 'speech, verse and song are the most consistently successful aspects of his staging' (Stevenson 1989).

Stevenson's observation is useful for contextualising Conn's work within the 1970s upsurge of new theatrical forms and styles on the Scottish stage. The sense of style is certainly obvious in *The Burning*, with all the echoes of the 1970s' development in theatrical style, not only in Scotland but also right across Britain (Innes 1992; Kershaw 1992). It is also possible to talk about the plays of the period as drawing inspirations from Brecht's epic theatre, although it has to be acknowledged that Brecht's impact was often 'hardly coincidental', given the circumstances. As pointed out by Innes, while 'the consistency and sophistication of Brecht's approach might be novel, ... its rationalism, with its demystifying of the stage, its anti-illusionistic theatricality or its thematic emphasis on the linkage of character and social context are not new' (Innes 1992 p.2). Innes, of course, is talking about English theatre, but his argument may reasonably be adopted to suit the Scottish case, especially since the 1970s. Elsewhere, Elisabeth Angel-Perez points out that there was in the 1970s a new form of political theatre, which rejected all forms of delusion, while prosecuting its ideological aim of arousing political consciousness among the people. The 'structure it chooses to vectorize this ideology is as much deprived of theatrical illusion as theatre itself can allow' (Angel-Perez 1997 p.27).

For instance, it is possible to describe *The Burning* as episodic in the sense that it is held together by its author's central thematic objective rather than by a chronology of plot. The scenes are also designed to work conventionally, to move as any good theatre should. However, the play is far from being fully or even conventionally Brechtian in its instincts. Side by side with its epic style, for example, is also a choric air, which sometimes gives the play a sense of a ritual performance. The songs may have been indispensable as episodic elements, but they also look like supporting the choric air, and in this respect a contributory factor in the heightening of the play's nominal ritual appearance. The purpose of all that is to achieve a theatrical mood that will be capable of making the arena of 'performance' into an allegorical space. This way, it intends to drive home the message of witch-hunt, bigotry and intolerance as if it were all these

things are happening, rather than the actions of a play unfolding. What is being suggested here is that *The Burning* has its native sense of theatre, which may have been helped by other influences such as Brecht's, but certainly, its theatre is not created by any of those influences. One of its native senses is the use of Scots, which the playwright would appear to have treated as given. But while language is not an issue highlighted as a subject within the play itself, such as is the case in Robert McLellan's *Jamie the Saxt*, any use of Scots on the stage made a strong statement, political and theatrical, such as could not have been easily made on the pages of a newspaper or at academic fora.

Stewart Conn himself has remarked, with regard to language, that his principal interest in *The Burning* was to realise 'suppleness of rhythm, capable of suggesting the period (16th Century) and coping with the play's contemporary concepts'. Hence, where McLellan uses Scots in *Jamie the Saxt* as a central element in the construction of character and the delineation of cultural space, notably in historical terms, Conn appears to have concentrated mainly on the expressiveness of Scots in *The Burning*. Thus the Scots in the play seems more vocalised and less extant than what we have in the former play. What this indicates is that unlike McLellan, Conn has taken 'the fact' of Scots language for granted, in which case, he does not have to use it as a consciously derived marker of *difference* from English. This could only have been a result of the noticeably steadier attitudes towards the language. One cannot exhaust the argument to be made for the use of Scots in the theatre, more so as each encounter with its successful usage tends to provoke reconsiderations of earlier positions, be they theoretical or merely observational. As a matter of theoretical principle, I think that we need to adopt the basic writing-orality distinction when talking about the language issue in Scottish theatre. Thus we may begin to look at the Scots-speak text as having been vocally or verbally constructed, which, apart from all other intentions, was meant to make the language appeal to its oral/verbal milieu.⁷ Such an appeal and construction may "envelope even a highly developed textuality" and

“deeply effect both the composition of texts and their interpretation” this would make the playwright/author an automatic interpreter of the language tradition he is attempting to represent. This in a way is a restatement, although in an encapsulated form, of the argument I made in the last chapter while talking about language in Scottish theatre, and how Scots-speak has in its own way come to stand as vehicle for the expression of collective ethos and national identity.

Finally on the subject of the play and the issue of identity, which is my immediate concern here. I have previously described the play as a counter myth. In saying this, it is being suggested that the play’s actual importance lies in its being seen within the context of the social dialectic of Scotland in the 1970s. The conducts of James and Bothwell in their days were not merely intrinsically appealing as evidence of power megalomania; it has meaning and relevance for the society of the 1970s. Hence, the audience is likely to take Bothwell’s words to James before their final reconciliation as the message Conn wants the modern society to reflect upon.

You see yourself as the one and only true power. Absolute. And any force opposing you, not power but violation of power. Mere violence. In time to come you will realise you are but an infringer of power. Already there are movements afoot. To make rulers act in accord with the will of their people, not their own whim.

Bothwell, a no less scoundrel than James, had spoken against the run of his own conduct so far in the universe of the play, yet his truthful admission that ‘power is a game’ between and among the powerful with the rest of human kind as appurtenances, answers to many people’s anxieties about the unconscionable behaviour of those who held power. With specific reference to Scotland, the mere choice of the era of James as a subject for theatre could then have been meant to provoke the conscience of an age that had begun to idolise its own national history, while sparing little time to reflect on the existing manipulation of the levers of power. Consciously or otherwise, Conn in the play undermines the general Scottish way of seeing some aspects of its history as an unblemished past. And if we read it against the background of *Jamie*

⁷ I am merely tugging at what on its own ought to be a full study. And in so doing, I am thinking of how the work of theorists such as Walter Ong, might prove useful in analysing this important divide between

the Saxt, the undermining also becomes a legitimate question about claims to impartiality in how history is constructed or interpreted. The 1970s were eras of expansion in political consciousness, in which it was all right to pronounce oneself a Scottish nationalist (although not a member of SNP) without feeling in any sense diminished. It was the beginning in real terms of what Andrew Marr figuratively describes as the battle for Scotland, when on both sides of the political divide, Scottish history became all things to all men (Marr 1992 chp.1). The terrain of narrative also naturally shifted, and one senses that Conn was somehow moved “to split open the fissures” in the past being energetically reconstructed and reclaimed by all sides of the political spectrum.

It is given those perspectives that we ought to see *The Burning* as a play very much the part of the new consciousness of the late 60s and early 70s, although in a self-distancing way that offered its audience an alternative perspective on history. This then is its force as a play conceived in the instrumental mode. It may not have provoked all the arguments related to identity or national destiny; it nonetheless makes its case against the authority of uncritical reading of history. It can safely be deduced that among the playwright’s message is that to build the future on an uncritical reading of history is to build on sand.

Dramatising National Antinomies: Liz Lochhead’s *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*

Country: Scotland. Whit like is it?
It's a peatbog, it's a daurk forest.
It's a cauldron o' lye, a saltpan or a coal mine.
If you're gey lucky it's a bricht here meadow or a park o' kye.
Or mibbe ... it's a field o' stanes. It's a tenement or a merchant's ha'.
It's a hure hoose or a humble cot. Princes Street or Paddy's

Scots as an oral/verbal medium and its displacement by English as the formal medium.

Merkit.
It's a fistfu' o' fish or a pickle o' oatmeal.
It's a queen's banquet o' roast meats and junketts.
It depends. It depends ... Ah dinna ken whit like *your* Scotland
is. Here's mines.
National flower: the thistle.
National pastime: nostalgia.
National weather: smirr, haar, drizzle, snow.
National bird: the crow, the corbie, le corbeau, moi!
(Lochhead 1989 p.11)⁸

Coming to Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* from all the other plays treated so far is to come to the dramatisation of Scottish national antinomies, which are already signposted in the opening epigraph above. Episodically structured and intended for a bare stage, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* is thematically a multifaceted play, but with a superficial theatre architectonics. Not surprisingly, the play has often suffered from the pervasive assumption that everything episodic in the theatre owes to Brecht. Similarly, the discussion of the play is often overshadowed at another level by its feminist iconoclasm. In as much as all this is a tribute, it can sometimes obscure the play's complexity. I want to argue that much of that complexity is about Scottish subjectivity and national landscape. Another dimension to that complexity concerns the place of history as collective memory. All these are succinctly put together in the words of one scholar, Ian Brown, who in his remarks on the play, notes that:

[*Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*] explores the dialectics of creativity and oppression, puritanism and pleasure and does so using forward-looking techniques. It represents one of the greatest achievements so far of the deconstructionist approach and has been particularly important in having received probably the widest range of production of any of the [deconstructionist] plays...' (Brown 1996 p.95).

Brown's ebullient description of *Mary Queen of Scots* is justified. The series of paradoxes with which the play opens, through La Corbie, indicate the diversity of the playwright's objectives.

⁸ All subsequent references to the play are to this text.

Though the story of the play is based on a familiar Scottish subject, the life and travails of Mary, Queen of Scots, who was beheaded in 1587, the striking playfulness of its title, evident particularly from the point of the verb *got* and the following full sentence, while performing a bewitching theatrical function, can also be taken for a signal of how the playwright now sees that particular aspect of the nation's history. The playfulness of that title is both cynical and questioning at the same time. This is not surprising, for Lochhead is renowned for her well-honed skill of seeing that language fulfils performative function, as one or two critics have remarked (see Stevenson 1993). For example, at a moment when Mary seems to be having the upper hand against the immoderate John Knox during their meeting, Knox suddenly tells her 'I see madam kens her scriptures.' Mary replies:

I ken ma scriptures. I hae baith heard and read. (Pause.)
Maister Knox, because I am by nature douce, and queyet,
dinna think I hae nae convictions or beliefs locked in ma
silent heart-though I dae not trumpet them abroad (p.21).

That reply bears all the marks of the distinctiveness of the play. What we see here is an abbreviated but deeply performative language, the substance of which is located as much in the stage action as in the shared cultural and political history of the two characters and the audience. It is a meeting that draws attention to the cultural and intellectual antinomies whose investigation forms part of the scope of the play. Mary, a resolute Queen, who will not be intimidated, rebuffs the malice of a monstrous preacher and at the same time hints at her own sense of moderation and tolerance. What happens next is that a temporarily chastened Knox immediately redraws the boundaries of his diatribe, saying his target was actually Elizabeth of England! The scene, of course, is one of the several instances where the playwright deploys all the power of paradox she possibly could muster, reinforced by the resources of irony, to give poetic flavour to a multidimensional topic.

If the story of Mary is familiar from history, the plot of Lochhead's play makes it even more familiar because it combines elements from history and everyday folklore. In the play, Mary, like her cousin, Elizabeth of England, faces the dilemma of choosing a husband. There

are arrays of suitors, princes and nobles, from within and outside their respective kingdoms. This makes the choice even more difficult for the two queens, for what they have to contend with is the political and social consequences of their femininity. In the case of Mary, there are other considerations too, such as whether the chosen husband will have to be a Catholic or a Protestant, the resolution of which will affect Mary's rightful claim to the English throne. Mary herself is Catholic and the source of hope yet for English Catholics, all of whom despise the protestant Elizabeth who currently occupies the throne. In Scotland where she presides meanwhile, the John Knox Brigade has effectively taken charge of the country, refusing to let go the power it inherited before Mary assumed the throne. Knox is spreading religious pestilence and intolerance against all Catholics. Against Mary, he unites his anti-Catholicism, religious autocracy and misogynous beliefs so much that there is no telling which cause he is pursuing at a particular time. For example, meeting Bothwell, Act 2, Scene 4, Knox who obviously had expected a conspiratorial gossip about the Queen, suddenly finds Bothwell defending her. Knox's response is to rail on Bothwell...

Then beware o' yir ain een, Bothwell. Beware of
women, the charms o' their hair – beware for adultery begins
wi' the eyes. Are ye mair virtuous than David? Are ye wiser
than Solomon? Are ye stronger than Samson?

And to Bothwell's remarks that the Queen's practice of celebrating Mass in private poses no threat, religious or political to the realm, Knox replies

...it were mair fearfu' tae me that yin Mass
be heard in this realm than ten thousand men, armed and
bristlin', were landed in a hundred foreign men o' war upon
oor shores. (p.48)

Mary eventually chooses to marry Darnley, but the marriage proves unsuccessful, partly because Darnley has his own ambition, which is to be King, not the Queen's consort. When they fall apart, Darnley, encouraged by Scottish nobles, authorises the death of Riccio, Mary's trusted secretary and adviser, in the belief that he has Mary's love. When Mary plots Darnley's murder in retaliation and flees into the arms of Bothwell, there is a general cry of 'Burn the

hoor! Burn the hoor! Burn the hoor!'. It signals the end of Mary who runs to Elizabeth for protection and support, but meets with execution.

When it comes to the question of communication, that is the play as representation of certain ideas, there are three dimensions worth considering. The first is how the subject/story line is less based on Mary's life as recorded by historians as on her folklore image. The second dimension is how the play follows partially in the same direction as Stewart Conn's play, which is to look at the past, even if only to make some irreverent jokes about some historical figures. Lochhead's play is more determinedly a drama of national self-reflexivity, and a politically incisive one at that, because of its ironic edge. The third dimension is the theatricality of the play, or the well-worked integration of performance space with theatrical materials.

Taking the last dimension first, it is somewhat misleading to describe the plot of *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* as Brechtian, as Ilona S. Koren-Deutsch does in her essay on the play (Koren-Deutsch 1992 Sept). Even though it is episodic, the text shows all the same that the playwright learnt more than a few things from the many theatrical experiments before it, especially from the hard to forget redrawing of the boundaries of form and genre in Scottish theatre spearheaded by John McGrath and the 7:84 Scotland Company in the 1970s. Hence it will be more appropriate to see the play on its own terms, and as one playwright's continuation of the continuing search for appropriate model of native form of theatre (Smith 1998). In addition, the very performative model of language is as much an element of that plot as of the general theatricality of the play. One instance has already been pointed out. Another, which is perhaps the most easily recognisable, is the use of the chorus, LA CORBIE, for semiotic purposes, providing emphasis of both comedy and commentary on the issues focused upon in each section of the play. Thus to commence the scene where Riccio, Mary's trusted secretary is murdered (act two, scene five), La Corbie cries 'Dominoes', suggesting that the act (of murder) to be performed in the next scene will lead to chain reactions. If the audience unsuspectingly takes the shout of 'dominoes' to mean a reference to the opening of the scene, where Mary, her maidservant, Bessie and Riccio are seen playing dominoes, the picture

becomes clearer when at the end of the scene, Mary is seen swearing that she would avenge Riccio's murder.

La Corbie's presence and actions seem designed to reinforce the strength of the play as an exploration of paradoxes. Described as 'an interesting, ragged ambiguous creature' (p.11), her rhetorical flourishes with which the play opens contrasts sharply with the tone of the lone 'fiddler', who 'charges up the space with eldritch (a weird) tune, wild and sad'. When the tune played by the fiddler and La Corbie's gay, but scabrous introduction of the landscape are taken together, we obtain a picture of the sort of psychological meanings the play is attempting to project. The metaphor of harshness, of the collusion between (biological, environmental) nature and human nature, attempts to describe an emotional landscape while introducing the tragedy of Queen Mary.

Lochhead does not attempt to repeat the life of Mary, or to even show any uncritical sympathy for her. Instead, she puts what may be considered the whole picture of her life in a different perspective — one that tries to interrogate the folklore image of the Queen, and at the same time re-examine her rather complex character within the context of the events and situations around her. One of the situations around Mary was the presence of Elizabeth in England, and her designs to be in control of events in Scotland. In the play, Elizabeth's designs become a tension between Scotland and England and the two queens, and often invite comparisons between the different personalities of the two women. Having centralised their differences around how each of them resolved the question of whether to have a husband or not, Lochhead may have inadvertently narrowed the interpretative scope of what is an otherwise a major dimension of Mary's tragedy by reducing it to a psychological category in the play. Even if this is the case, part of the opening of the play tries to describe the tension as having a firm economic base:

Once upon a time there were twa queens on the wan green island, and the
wan green island was split inty twa kingdoms. But no equal
kingdoms, natbody in their richt mind would insist on that.
For the northern kingdom was cauld and sma'. And the
people were low-statured and ignorant and feart o' their lords

and poor! They were starvin'. And their queen was beautiful and tall and fair and ... Frenchified. The other kingdom in the island was large, and prosperous, with wheat and barley and fat kye in the fields o' her yeoman fermers, and wool in her looms, and beer in her barrels and, at the mouth of her greatest river, a great port, a glistening city that sucked all wealth to its centre which was a palace and a court of a queen. She was a cousin, a clever cousin a wee bit aulder, and mibbe no sae braw as the other queen, but a queen nevertheless. Queen o' a country wi' an army, an' a navy and dominion over many lands.

Rendered by La Corbie, these lines contain a lyrical summary of the Scotland-England relationship as well as touching on the two different social environments and the different institutions of power in which the two queens are functioning. This leads us to the character of Elizabeth in the play. Addressing the English troops in 1558, at the approach of the Spanish Armada, the historical Elizabeth is reported to have said,

I know I have the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I have the heart and stomach of a king, and of a king of England too; and think foul scorn that Parma or Spain, or any prince of Europe, should dare to invade the borders of my realm. (OUP 1981 p.95)

Notwithstanding the military context of the address, Elizabeth's projection of herself as a male in a female body may have answered to her subliminal urge to be male. It also throws some light on how Lochhead's own dramatisation of Elizabeth's character has been tailored as a dramatic foil, less to enhance Mary's feminine subtlety, as to further draw out the Scottish antinomies embodied by her tragedy.

In the repressed love scene (Act 1, Scene 5) Lochhead uses the Freudian method of sleep exploration, to suggest precisely that Elizabeth is indeed a male in a female body. Thus where Mary is vivacious in nature, Elizabeth is hard and brutal. Where Mary cherishes a rounded life as a woman first and a queen second, Elizabeth cherishes very little outside her duties as a queen and ruler. In contrast to Mary's speech that I want to marry ... I want to marry and begin my reign at last (p.17), there is Elizabeth's If we, the Queen, were to follow our own nature's inclinations it would be this: we would rather be a beggar woman and single than a queen and married (p.14). In spite of the character differences between the two queens,

however, Lochhead in the play also makes much of their sisterhood, the bond between them as women. This is often implied in stage directions and technique of performance, rather than dramatised as part of the dramatic story itself. To that extent, therefore, the play is self-referentially feminist. For example, when La Corbie says in Act 1, scene 5, that

Sae oor Queen wha'd rule by gentleness
Is but a pair fendless craiture —
An'in England' the Lass-Wha-Was-Born-To-Be-King
Maun dowse her womanische nature

the speech points both to the dilemma faced by the two women as queens and also to the different implications their inherited offices would have on their 'femininity' in their different kingdoms. The queen aiming to rule by gentleness would become an unprotected creature. This is Mary. On the other hand, Elizabeth, even when it is recognised that she is born to the duty, nonetheless has to 'dowse her womanische nature' to be a successful ruler. The contradictions in how the two queens individually embrace their joint-destiny is often played out through the technique of role reversals, when the maid of each queen will swap role with her mistress.

The different speech strategies adopted by Elizabeth and Mary illustrate, however, that one of them, Elizabeth, is pleased to adopt gender subjection and to deny *difference* between her and any possible male king. Even if this makes her 'successful' as a consummate power player in the universe of the play, it does not vitiate the playwright's working of an implicitly feminist statement into the play. Mary, who rejects gender subjection and who acknowledges difference, becomes, on the other hand, a tragic character.

Ironically, if the dilemma faced by the two women can be interpreted in feminist terms, I think how the play depicts the consequences of how each of them is able to manipulate the situation and environments in which they found themselves also puts it in line for another interpretation: that of the uneasy relationship between Scotland and England. It is not only that Elizabeth gets away with the 'gender subjection', while Mary does not, but Elizabeth also goes on to project that subjection on the relationship between her England and Mary's Scotland. That projection turns England into the male, while Scotland, on account of the representation of the

personality of Mary, becomes the emotionally passionate but logically irrational 'female', in the relationship between the two kingdoms. Which perhaps explains why Elizabeth sees nothing wrong in being persuaded to order the beheading of Mary. It is worth pointing out in this respect that Mary is the only female monarch who is known to history to have been beheaded.

It was suggested earlier that the dramatisation of Elizabeth's character has been tailored to suit the purpose of a dramatic foil, less to enhance Mary's feminine subtlety, as to further draw out the Scottish antinomies embodied by her tragedy. This of course is within the play's overall ironic framework. For example, one inevitable question that arises from the comparison of the characters of Elizabeth and Mary in the play is why Elizabeth gets away with her gender subjection while Mary does not? This is more so because given all the factors surrounding both, Mary's decision would seem more congenial. If for no other reason, there is at least the question of producing a heir to the throne. In as much as Lochhead seems to leave the Elizabeth-Mary relationship, and by extension that between England and Scotland, open-ended, the comparisons of the individual positions of the two characters suggests that Lochhead ultimately sees the causative factors of Mary's tragedy as being located within the Scottish end of the power struggle of the time.

There are two areas of the play that point in this direction. First, there is where those three Scots nobles arguing and failing to agree among themselves about who Mary should marry, draw swords when eventually, La Corbie, quite characteristically and humorously suggests that she marries a 'Lennox-Stewart.' According to the stage directions, 'all draw their swords, saying together 'Ower ma deid body!' In contrast, it is the English commoners who make light and almost saturnalian jokes about Elizabeth (p.14), while business of life goes on thereafter. Secondly, when Elizabeth, asks her advisers, 'Is she a witch', they reply in unison, 'Ask the Scotch' (p.62).

Mary ultimately is a character caught between extremes, both internally and externally located. However, it is the internal extremes that accelerate her tragic destruction. For example, using plain but extended metaphors of light and darkness, La Corbie says at the end of the scene

where that issue is explored that *Oh, in England there's a wild floo'er in love/That the saicret daurkness nourishes/But in Scotlan' – in the braid daylight! -/the daurk bloom o'hatred flourishes* (p.19).

Appropriately, these comments are made in the scene that devolves directly to the encounter between John Knox and Mary, and in which Knox is introduced as an authoritarian dictator, whose image taken together with that of the barren landscape makes a surreal picture. Knox is therefore depicted as something of a *genus*, a frozen entity at one with the harsh landscape, and who in his behaviour is unwilling to recognise the creative essence that may reside in individuality.

Knox's character is self-introduced. And so is his petulance against the person and authority of Mary, as indeed against all women in general. Thus, Mary 'lives in bondage of darkness and error' because of her Catholicism, while Elizabeth, though a Protestant, is nonetheless 'bloody Jezebel o' England!' More intriguingly, perhaps is that Knox, in his preaching, talks about 'this my realm', a hint not only about the preacher's hold on the country, but also of how deeply he has come to believe himself as the most important authority in the land. At no time does Knox's discourse rise above his fixed hatred and unapologetic bigotry. Ironically for a character who is himself a *genus* of bigotry and petulance, he divides the queen into two, the *individual* Mary, a Catholic and the *genus*, a woman. To the individual, he directs the anti-Catholic bigotry:

When it shall please God to deliver you frae that bondage
of darkness and error into the one true religion your majesty shall
find the liberty o'my tongue as a soothing unto ye (p.19).

And to the *genus*, he directs his misogyny:

Your majesty, if this realm finds no inconveniency in
the regiment o'a woman, then that which they approve shall I
not further disallow (p.20).

Yet later on, in a conversation with Bothwell, Knox makes his case against the individual and *genus* apparent when he says,

We, the people, should choose a husband fur a lassie rather than a silly wee furin lassie should choose a king for a hale people. (p.34)

The 'We' in the sentence is of course deceitful. Knox is already programmed the people, as Mary tells him in the scene of their encounter, into psychological insurrection against the queen. The Scottish nobles we saw drawing their swords earlier at the mention of Mary marrying Lennox-Stewart, would said exactly the same we, without necessarily meaning it as 'the people.'

To return to the scene of the encounter between Mary and Knox, it can be seen that against Knox's volatility, Mary constantly insists on specificity and the freedom of the individual to pursue happiness. It is what Mary tries to defend when she tells Knox that 'I see in you yin wha is convincit he be moved by love of God, but is in truth fired rather by hatred o'mankind.'

Knox's reply is lame, perhaps because there is none, or perhaps because to accept Mary's word is to renounce the platform on which he stands. That platform has its theory of subjectivity, which is that the individual should consciously embrace subjection. To that extent Knox stands for an unappeasable essence. Mary's opposition to Knox is as much a rejection of conscious subjection as of everything else that Knox represents. This is what makes the subject of Mary's marriage also a metaphor within the context of the Mary-Knox encounter. If wanting to marry a man of her choice symbolises the queen's yearning for life and repudiation of the 'conscious subjection' recommended by Knox, Knox's own opposition to the marriage represents the very capriciousness that the preacher stands for. Again, it is left to La Corbie, to lead the audience's imagination on the meaning of the encounter:

Knox has torn the Mother of God from oot the sky o'Scotland
and trampit her celestial blue goon amang the muck and mire and has
blotted oot every name by which ye praise her – Stella Maris, Star of the
Sea,
Holy Mother, Notre Dame, Oor Lady o'Perpetual Succour.

Leaving nothing but
A black hole, a jaggit gash, naethin'.

Before Lochhead's play, Mary's story is embedded in Scottish life and imagination in the same way as the story of William *The Wallace*, although with different meanings. It is also a story, which because of its peculiarities, has been visited more often than any other perhaps because, unlike any other, it is the most malleable and also the most open-ended among stories that could be used for the politicisation of identity within Scottish history. This due to the fact that the main story itself contains various elements, any of which can be selected for any purpose, whether to damn or to elevate the character of the Queen. To that extent, the *myth* of Mary has probably grown stronger than the actual history. Yet a commentator, speaking as recently as 1987, seems to have identified the general animadversion of Mary's story, when he points out that

If we are going to use Mary's own voluntary actions to make an assessment of her, we can draw on only the six years, from 1561 to 1567, during which she was personally ruling in Scotland, a young woman between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four. When people form a mental picture of Mary during those years in Scotland, they are apt to think of her as listening to David Riccio playing the lute at Holyrood, or golfing at Seton, or making progresses throughout the country, or dancing with an abandon which scandalised some of her more godly subjects: some may visualise her enjoying certain less innocent pastimes, or perhaps even plotting the murder of her second husband, Lord Darnley. She is not so often thought of as taking part in the day-to-day tasks of government (Donaldson 1987 p.3).

In other words, the uncritical mythology has come to replace every other conceivable picture of what Mary must have looked like or done. This is exactly the other side of myth, and although this is not addressed directly in the play, it is apparent that it is one of the issues informing Lochhead's text. Willing to project and protect her individuality, the Mary in the play embodies romantic aspirations and a somewhat conflicting singleness of purpose. When her romantic aspirations are projected unto her environment, an environment that is politically and materially harsh and hostile. From the play's point of view, her tragedy begins from that moment when, in her grief over Riccio's murder, she also swears to avenge it. It is Riccio's murder that awakens Mary to the monstrosity of the forces that are is also the moment from which she begins to be assertive, overall, as a person. She had earlier established her assertiveness as queen, by

emphatically refusing Darnley 'the crown matrimonial' which the latter seeks (Act 2, Scene 1, pp39-40). The basis on which she does this is not made very clear by the play, but there is a hint of her distrust of Henry in one of the speeches of that scene: 'So, Henry Darnley, You ha'e nae richt to ma throne eftir ma death – even if it werena for *you*, ma son.' That Mary does not want Henry to succeed her, even if her son (provided it is a son she is carrying) is unable to, may have had as much to do with her sense of outrage that Henry has actually come to Scotland to be king, and not the Queen's husband. If Mary suddenly reads this as part of a Protestant plot against her, she does not say, but she probably realises that her personal romantic aspirations are not quite compatible with the demands of power. This is when Mary herself suddenly becomes a consummate politician in her own right. To that extent, Riccio's murder, would seem to have presented her with an opportunity to enforce assertiveness all round. However at the same time, it is hard to divorce her resolve to avenge Riccio's death from her sense of 'double betrayal' by Darnley, her husband. Mary may not have held Darnley liable for the failure of their marriage, but she seems to resent his wanting to be King in name and function. Darnley ambition looks to the Queen as audacious and treacherous when she had married him in the hope that Darnley was giving her genuine love. It is therefore a betrayal. Another act of betrayal is Darnley's allying with Scottish nobles and notables, including Knox, who ironically, opposed his marrying Mary in the first place, to plot Riccio's murder.

Mary may not now qualify as a Scottish avatar, but when we think of her in terms of the beleaguered female character created by Lochhead's play, the possibility of thinking that the myth of Queen Mary may have preceded her tragedy seems incontestable. For example, one of the strands that have continually fuelled the mythology surrounding Mary's life is her being the immediate post-Reformation Scottish monarch. She had returned from France in 1561, barely a year after the Scottish parliament, at the instigation of the Lords of Congregation who dominated it, enacted Reformation Legislation. Mary's arrival meant that the Lords of Congregation, who themselves had invited John Knox earlier in 1557 to return from Geneva as their head, needed to cede authority to the crown. Mary was, of course, a Catholic. But as one

historian points, out, the queen thought it wise to wear 'the mask of religious indifference' 'with the view of securing the general support of her subjects' (Green 1888 p.385). Mary returned from France, it ought to be said, armed with a new doctrine 'that the Prince should be a 'politique', putting the welfare of his state before the claims of contending faiths'(Mackie 1962 p.164). That doctrine was formulated as an attempt to make a political order out of the fragmentation of opinions among the various Protestant movements as well as the equally divided Catholics. This was in recognition that the Reformation was everywhere being conditioned not only by questions of politics and economics, but also of nationalism. This was especially the case in England and France where the Reformation was also the template for the assertion of English and French nationalism respectively (Mackie 1962). Mary, 'six days after landing in Scotland, [she] issued a proclamation which forbade, on pain of death, any attempt to alter the state of religion and the form of public worship which she found at the time of her arrival' (Donaldson 1987 p.3). That action makes her an early force of a heroic secularism, which was constantly defeated. Also, Mary let it be known from the on-set of her reign that her inclination was to establish herself in the hearts of her subjects. Whether Mary was thus able to overcome the petulance of the Scottish reformers or not remains a subject of debate, even now. The truth of what might have actually happened is virtually lost in the mythology of Mary's relationships with the Scottish Church. What we do know from history, however, is that the John Knox made himself an implacable enemy of the Queen, denouncing her wherever and whenever he had the opportunity to do so. Another element in the Mary story is in her rightful claim to the English throne. Before she left France, she had been asked, but refused, to renounce that claim. Her refusal in turn made Elizabeth "declined to give her a safe conduct across the North Sea." The purpose for stressing this historical background is to bring the sometimes hidden meanings of the play into greater relief. For example, in the scene of the encounter between Mary and Knox, we note that La Corbie persistently cries out that Mary 'must destroy this man.'

Knox, nox as black as nicht, nox lik'a'the bitter poisons, nox

Lik' three fearfu' chaps at the door, did ding her doon. Knox did lead the rebels. Knox did break yer mither's heart and Knox did laugh when she did dee. Hark at him — 'The Guid Lord says, and I agree wi' him!' Hark. Cark. Cark. (p.20)

Attention has already been drawn to the encounter between Knox and Mary, for its abbreviated but deeply performative language. It needs to be stressed that the encounter also has an overarching centrality to the meaning of the play as exploration of antinomies. Owen Dudley Edwards, writing on the premier production of the play had noted that '*... Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Chopped Off* [integrates] historical pageant/tragedy with finale in playground confrontation. The genius of it was that it made characteristically shrewd anatomisations of bigotry and rivalry, sexism and power-hunger, court intrigue and human psychology, all come to serve our contemporary understanding of history within ourselves' (Edwards 1996 p.41).

All these are not put together until the final scene of the play, when the characters transform into children, playing in a contemporary setting. The children now more openly act out the folk rhyme of Mary, Queen of Scots, based as it were on the legend of the Queen. There is a frightening ritualistic air about the children's play, which represents the repetitiveness of the emotional brutality illustrated by the story of Queen Mary. We see a mixture of sexual and religious spitefulness in the children, and in their behaviour towards one another. The severity associated with the John Knox of the play is transferred to wee Knooxy, with the other children giving same a real life inflection to actually terrify him. This seems a deliberate metaphor, especially when read against Wee Knooxy's 'Ah doan't like lassies. Ma faither says I'm no' tae play wi' lassies!' (p. 65) This and the boy's earlier parodic song of being happy and saved, point to the still lethal hold on the imagination of the old puritanism. Whether as sexual callousness, religious intolerance, or severity, the puritanism constitutes a life-denying force. The contemporaneity of the scene is signalled by its 'Jock Tamson's Bairns' heading, a clear suggestion that the relations between the present and the representation of history becomes unusually reciprocal, perhaps more so for Scots playwrights because of the ironic space that exists between national narrative and the reality of national politics. Lochhead's play is an

attempt to further explore that ironic space, and in doing, it has highlighted the historical and spiritual abrasions as well as the contingency in national origin. The lesson of the play, and this is where it becomes an instrumental model of identity formation, is its emphasis that the Scottish identity is a living complex of multiple determinations. To acknowledge this is to begin to think culture and cultural translation anew.

The next play to be considered is John McGrath's *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. It is a structured text, by which I mean that its medium and the subject are inseparable. However, because of the subject it deals with and the centrality of that subject to the creation of a postcolonial cultural space in Scotland, it is a text that raises a number of questions, theatrical and ideological, about the performance of postcoloniality. It is for this reason that I have chosen to treat the play on its own in the next chapter.

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Chapter Four

Politicising the Landscape: John McGrath and 7:84 Scotland

The Scottish national identity of the late nineteenth century was largely founded on a vision of the Scots as an 'imperial race'. Scottish achievements in the Empire formed a focus of national pride; it was claimed that the Scottish militia played a prominent role in its conquest and defence, the 'workshop of the Empire' furnished it with manufactured goods, Scottish governor generals, administered vast territories, Scottish colonists formed significant parts of the new dominion nations and Scottish missionaries spread Presbyterianism to all quarters of the globe (Finlay 1993 p.20).

'Scotland', in the sense of Lowland civil society, was a partner with England in this process. It represented one of the strongest common interests of the Scottish and English bourgeoisies. However, the catastrophe of Celtic Scotland had a curious effect upon the Lowlanders. It has haunted them in a remarkable way from the early 19th century to the present day (Nairn 1977 p.148).

The 'reformation' occurred. It did not, however, show the slightest signs in the later 1970s of achieving the fertilizing, disruptive union with practice which theory demanded. Marxist sectarianism swelled its ranks, but affected the labour movement very little. Here was the context in which a third avenue of advance began to look appealing. The alliance of workers and alienated intellectuals was indispensable - so the key argument of Break-up of Britain went - but such forces can come together in reality only upon a national terrain. Workerism and intellectualism shared an internationalist philosophy rooted in a pre-nation-state inheritance. But all actual examples of revolution are necessarily national in origin and effective scope. Common cause between a restive proletariat and a dissident intelligentsia can be made only in that dimension - hence, exploration of the latter had become a precondition of farther progress.

This thought naturally raised all the problems of United Kingdom territoriality - problems habitually demoted from the socialist problematic, if not effaced altogether. Exactly like the ruling elite, the left took a sort of all-British homogeneity for granted. It duplicated the airless universe of 'this small, crowded island of ours' with its crushing metropolitan dominance, pervasive media control, and ideologically obscure 'regions'. But clearly such cohesion was a myth. The political and civil strength of British unity had been such that the myth was rarely seriously challenged - in the sense of opposed, or attacked. At the same time, however, nobody denied that there were at least four nationalities included in the British state territory, together with a number of fragmentary or marginal cases like Cornwall, the Isle of Man, and Shetland. Less acute and confused than the similar situation afflicting the Hapsburg empire in its later days, the question was still the same: what does 'national' mean, in this context? (Nairn 1981 pp367-8)

The image of a self-satisfied nation of 'imperial race' contained in the first epigraph above is in sharp contrast to the brutality that took place in the Scottish Highlands in the middle of the same century, and whose resonance has still not disappeared at the twilight of the twentieth century. That barbarity was the forced removal and forced emigration of people from Highlands for the introduction of sheep farming. The Highland Clearances, as the incident has

come to be known, has remained a topical issue since, even as it continues to be roundly appropriated as the ultimate historical perspective on the travails of the whole of the Scottish nation (Webb 1978 chp.3; Withers 1992). The case of the Highlands illustrates the composite character of Scotland's postcoloniality. It is to underline that 'composite' nature and the continuity of the dilemma at its heart that I have adopted Nairn for the second epigraph. The third and last epigraph, also taken from Nairn, signposts a problem to be encountered, when we come to look at John McGrath's play of the Highland Clearances, *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil* and in particular the reception given to it. But before coming to that play, we need to have our own historical overview of the Highlands and those issues that dominate the region's continued history.

An economic historian, A. J. Youngson, speaks of the Highlands as presenting a fascinating, even dramatic picture of a civilisation that fought for its life—and lost. But perhaps as an afterthought, Youngson adds that the case of the Highlands is a unique example of a struggle between economic development and 'traditional society' or 'modernisation' versus resentment' (Youngson 1973). Youngson can be forgiven for this generous turn of mind, which is not supported, even by his own brilliant analysis. Youngson traces the fate of the Highlands to earlier times before the 1745 Jacobite rebellion and the brutal reprisals that followed. Before the Jacobite rebellion, the Highlands had been placed within a self-feeding narrative of opposites, as a mixture of sublime landscape, in a true Burkean reflection and as a space of mysterious probabilities inhabited by primeval beings that also conducted their collective life as such. The 'Ossian discoveries' later did much to encourage those perceptions, but did not create either of them. Even the Highlands were as a region, historically constituted by two distinct formations, the Northern and Western, with different social organisations based on different cultural antecedents (Shaw 1980 p.3), much of the early cultural construction took this for granted and imposed the narrative that the Highlander was barbarous and ill equipped for civilisation. Notes Youngson:

Early writers on the Highlands often failed to appreciate the diversity of the region they were dealing with, or were baffled by it, and then failed to grasp its principal characteristics. This was partly because knowledge was so fragmentary, travellers so few. The Highlands were not a trade route. They were remarkably inaccessible, and in the first half of the eighteenth century the civil and even the military authorities were far from being able to exercise complete control. There are few accounts of life in the Highlands before 1780, and large parts of the area then remained, as Knox said in 1787, 'an almost undescribed country'.⁹ Those few who visited the Highlands to extend their knowledge and then to pass on their discoveries to the polite world were chiefly interested in manners, political allegiances, flora and fauna, or-too often-the authenticity of the poems of Ossian (Youngson 1973 pp5-6).

The Highlands in modern times are still thought of in one of the images of the past, that is as an idyllic and spiritually uplifting landscape (nobody talks about the Highlanders again), however the structural differences between the region and the Lowland region are still indeterminable. So overwhelming are the differences between the region and the rest of the UK that the Government seems to have tacitly accepted the failures of past efforts, by now willingly granting the inclusion of the region under the EC programme of 'Structural Development and Adjustment of regions whose development is lagging behind' (See European Communities 1995).

An explicit attack on the legitimacy of the Highlands society began in the sixteenth century when, as Hobsbawm points out, 'the Scottish Kingdom [up to the reign of James VI and I] had (wrongly) attempted to assimilate' the Highland chieftains 'to a feudal noble, and English eighteenth-century society (even more wrongly) to an aristocratic landowner.' Hobsbawm continues,

This assimilation gave the chiefs the legal – but by clan standards immoral – right to do what they wanted with their 'property', and entangled them in the expensive status-competition of British aristocratic life, for which they had neither the resources nor the financial sense (Hobsbawm 1968 p.259).

The policy only partially succeeded as it was rejected in the Western Islands (Shaw 1980). The failure of the policy made the Crown shift tactics by engaging in the double ploy of co-option and divide-and-rule, that eventually set the Highlands on the path of 'mordant' anarchy. Charles Withers has perceptively written of this divide and rule and the resentment it generated among the people of the Highlands as a crucial but often ignored factor in what he

calls the 'historical creation of the Highlands' (Withers 1992). Precisely because these efforts to control and dominate the Highlands from the outside were resented by the people, the place was routinely described as an ungovernable hotbed of barbarous activities. At the outset of the seventeenth century the terms most associated with the Highlands and the people were those of 'barbaritie' and 'incivilitie', which are supposedly indicated by the manifest *vices* and *terror* in the behaviour of the people. It is not surprising therefore that in 1609, and 1616, enactments, which formally gave official coherence to entrenched anti-Highlands sentiments and beliefs were made. From their tone, the purposes of the enactments were very clear, namely that they were intended for the *civilising* of the Highlanders. Shaw summarises the enactments, beginning with the Statutes of Iona, which was the first, as follows:

Chiefs were declared to be responsible for the actions of their followers and were to support the ministers of the reformed church; the carrying of firearms and the importing of wine were forbidden to the islanders as was the practice of 'sorning', the forcible exaction of hospitality; persons with no visible means of support were to be denied residence there; and chiefs and substantial gentlemen were to send their eldest sons to school in the Lowlands to learn the use of the English tongue, since their native Gaelic was equated by the government with barbarism.⁴ All these measures were underpinned by putting the chiefs under heavy caution to appear before the privy council each year to account for their conduct and the payment of their obligations. In 1616 a second major series of enactments reinforced and extended the earlier regulations. This time the chiefs had to agree to drive idle men from their lands, to limit the number of their own personal attendants, their consumption of wine and bearing of firearms; their residences were to be fixed and well maintained, and their lands set at clearly defined rents; all their children were now to be educated in the Lowlands, and if they did not master the English language they were not to be served heir to their fathers⁵ (Shaw 1980 p.5).

The statutes summarised above were enacted before 1745 and show the extent to which the Highlands before that date had been marked off from what the philosophers of the Enlightenment considered to be history (See Craig 1996). After 1745, the series of informal and formal attack on the legitimacy of the Highlands society became synthesised into one formal response. As noted by Charles Withers, for example, '... a 1747 proposal 'for civilising that Barbarous people' noted, '... the numbers of woods, mountains, and Secret Glens ... are great allurements to incite that perverse Disposition that reigns amongst all Ranks of them, stimulated

by the rudeness of their Nature' (Withers 1992 p.146). The stage was set for anti-Highlands barbarity.

Among scholars who see the question of the Highlands as a straight fight between 'traditional society and modernisation', the clan system of the Highlands, which was considered to be a drawback on development, was a factor in the clearances of the Highlands, because it needed to be changed. 'The clan system', writes Youngson, 'was supposed by (earlier) writers to be responsible for three fundamental obstacles to progress: uneconomically small holdings; insecurity of tenure; and labour services which were both excessive and uncertain' (Youngson 1973 p.14). But even if the clan system had been all that it was described as, the feudalism, which was introduced to the Highlands, albeit from the Lowlands as a cleansing measure, produced no radical results. For example, new feudalism was in many respects despotic and more destructive than what it was meant to get rid of. It significantly removed the mutual advantage inherent in the old tribal system that sustained the clan arrangement, thus exposing the ordinary people of the Highlands to the whims and often the irrationality of the landowners. The imposition of feudalism on the Highlands was concurrent with the rapid convergence of the Lowland economy with the English economy in the aftermath of the Union. Nairn has argued, albeit counterfactually, that the wipe-out of the Highlands 'would not have been so easy (as other examples show) if there had been a Gaelic middle class and some Gaelic towns — if social conditions had developed even to this later-feudal stage' (Nairn 1977 p.148). Well, these things were lacking, but there was a cohesive 'national' culture, the obverse of the social and political system in the Highlands, whose destruction has since become the main animus of the destruction of the Highlands. That culture, according to Cregeen, was made up of 'a distinctive language, Scottish Gaelic, and a rich body of poetry, music, tales and traditional lore which was cultivated and transmitted mainly, but not exclusively, by families of hereditary bards, musicians and historians...' (Cregeen 1993 p.140). What obtained therefore was a culture that served as a repository of its own continuity and ideological beliefs. That was the culture that became locked in brutal antagonism with Anglicisation and imperial expansion dating back to

the fifteenth century. It was the culture whose wipeout suddenly became a possibility in the post-1745 reprisals.

To that extent, the subjugation of the Highlands, in as much as it formed part of the process of the patrician adventure that was the Union between England and Scotland, was also a process of colonial encounter, an agonistic one. Yet if it is possible to see and explain the defencelessness of the Highlands and the occupants, the participation of Lowlanders in the whole business is somewhat difficult to understand, or is it? The truth is that having embraced Union on the terms it was offered, the Lowlands was all too ready to act the internal policeman, an earliest variation in the making of Scots into the advance guards of the imperial army. Even if Lowland Scotland had retained its own prejudices against the Highland and had as a result gleefully participated in the ruthless occupation of the Highlands, it was the new identity platform offered by Union that gave justification to Lowland Scotland's complicity in the occupation. The British Union had come to mean a general transition to modernity and the Lowland was glad to be part of it. To that extent, the Lowlands played the role of a surrogate translator of the new model of 'British' power vis-a-vis the Highlands (Hobsbawm 1968 chp.15). The subjugation of the Highlands was the earliest sign of how brutal and determined the British imperium would be willing to act as an occupying force elsewhere in the world. Notes John Prebble:

... during the military occupation of the glens, the British government first defeated a tribal uprising and then destroyed the society that had made it possible. The exploitation of the country during the next hundred years was within the same pattern of colonial development - new economies introduced for the greater wealth of the few, and the unproductive obstacle of a native population removed or reduced. In the beginning the men who imposed the change were of the same blood, tongue and family as the people. They used the advantages given them by the old society to profit from the new, but in the end they were gone with their clans.

The Lowlander has inherited the hills, and the tartan is a shroud (Prebble 1963 p.304).

In comparison with other colonial or ex-colonial territories, the Highlands would appear to have fared even worse, considering that it was never able to recover from that initial assault in any substantial manner. In other [occupied and settler] colonial territories, the subsequent

emergence of native elite and intellectuals made it possible for such territories to reclaim their space, whether by 'velvet' or acrimonious struggles for independence, the Highland was unable to produce such an elite, at any rate not in the number that would have made an impact on its own development subsequently. The Highlanders were forced into dispersal and their young and able-bodied men conscripted into the army of the New Jerusalem. Thus was a process of 'effacement of memory' built into the annihilation of the Highlands space from the beginning. What the Highlands suffered was not a case of conquest or incursion. It was a wipe out, which was what necessitated the creation of a new Highlands, albeit one that is sustainable only by mythologies and repeated focus on memory of that first encounter between the Highlanders and the forces of colonial intrusion into their space. Unbearable as the fate of the Highlands might have seem in the wake of that colonial intrusion, it was one of the two processes running at parallel. The second process was in the Lowlands, where, the participation in the subjugation of the Highlands notwithstanding, a similar process of intrusion and subsequent take-over was in progress. It was an intrusion that at first had all the appearance of 'capital' or economics. Writes Hobsbawm:

The Scots Lowlands were a separate and dynamic economy, though one which deliberately sought its opportunities – and found them – in closer association with the vast markets of England, and rapidly converged with the English economy, of which it was to form a particularly dynamic sector (Hobsbawm 1968 Pp257-8).

The fact that the intrusion was at first based on capital formation and accumulation may at once make it seem voluntary and possibly inevitable. But when we come to look closely at how the intrusion gradually but firmly extended itself as an unstoppable process of take-over, we cannot but begin to see the 'capital' argument as defective. Continuing his analysis, for example, Hobsbawm notes further that:

...Scotland was too small and too poor to provide much of a domestic market. Its economic growth had to depend on the exploitation of the much greater English market, and even more on the world market to which it had access through its English connection. Scots industry therefore developed essentially as a low-cost producer of export goods, and this gave it unusual buoyancy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century: and, conversely, led to its collapse between the wars (ibid.).

The importance of Hobsbawm's remarks lies in what is not expressed, namely that the Lowlands dissolved itself into its quest for a share of the markets controlled by England. Capitalism, of course, breeds complex contradictory interactions. The same market that integrates at one level also atomises and fragments at another. While it was possible for Scotland to integrate with England at the level of commerce, the logical push of that integration was that any recourse to an idea of organic national culture was immediately seen as both a regression into economic barbarity and a threat to the anticipated prosperously new Scotland. Nairn, echoing earlier authorities, describes the process as the forward march of 'the economic structure' at the expense of nationalism and 'a developed or mature cultural romanticism' (Nairn 1977 Pp.113-4). For Lowland Scotland, market integration with England became a dissolving, destructive phenomenon. If market integration between Scotland and England generated its own morality, the consequences were not very long in unfolding themselves. One of the consequences, and perhaps the most enduring, was the fragmentation of the Scottish Lowlands between two classes of entrepreneurs and workers. That fragmentation became exacerbated with the post-second World War industrial decline of the nation, by which time the need to recreate the entire Scotland, as one organic culture had become a pressing duty on the cultural, economic and political fronts.

It was the need to recreate the entire Scotland that led to the appropriation of the Highlands as Scottish national collective totem about a century later after the Highlands Clearances. Although the appropriation might have seemed remarkable largely because one of the implications is that the Lowlands was embracing a convenient amnesia about its own roles in the subjugation, it is an appropriation that can be justified. It is a suggestion about the nature of the wound at the heart of the Scottish nation, a wound arising from the obvious absence of the nation-people psychic affiliation. It is the affiliation that is usually born of common suffering or mythic ancestry, and which can then be processed into a basis for (national) political sovereignty. The appropriation of the Highlands marked an attempt to re-invent a nation, through a new interpretation of an event that had all the traces of communal tragedy, but

lacking a clearly defined tragic villain. In the words of Charles Withers, 'the Highlands figure as a major part of Scottish national identity because of the attention given to the mythic creation of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The created Highlands served to justify a self-sustaining larger myth about the cultural and national development of Scotland itself' (Withers 1992 p.156).

In the quest for such self-sustaining larger myth about the cultural and national development of Scotland itself, attempts have even been made to read the Highlands myth rather positively. An example of this is founded in the work of Peter Womack. He writes:

Thus, when we say that the myth — the form of the core's knowledge of the periphery — is a function of domination, we don't mean simply that it is a bland tale in which the whole relationship is presented as ideally harmonious. Of course, the claim is made that the core culture is better, or that its effect on the periphery is benign. But this is not the main ideological embodiment of the assymetrical (sic) power relations. Rather, what counts is the proposition, unchallengeably diffused and repeated throughout the discourse of Improvement, that the core's representation of the world is not a representation at all, but reality. The Highlands are subordinated to the sign-system of the metropolis, not on the basis that the latter is superior, but on the basis that it is inescapable. You don't have to prefer it, because it is in any case coercive (Womack 1989 p.167).

Womack's work, it ought to be pointed out, concentrates primarily on how the Highlands came to be textualised and structure into a myth after the Clearances. Womack, who looks at the whole tragedy from the perspective of a core Vs periphery relationship and the coercion of the latter by the former, implicitly rejects the idea held by a number of scholars, that the Clearances themselves were a colonial intrusion. For Womack, the Highlanders were only subjected to the 'historical progress', however brutally and painfully that might have been for them. It is not surprising therefore that Womack's comments above fail to acknowledge that the power by one group, to be able to subordinate any other group to its sign-system does not always begin at a formal level. It is a process, which, at first will proclaim the *inferiority* of the group to be subordinated, by defining the group as such. Naming is an exercise of power. What Womack creatively calls 'assymetrical (sic) power relations' is nothing more than the power possessed by a group to name and exclude on one hand, and its ability to make the group so named and excluded to acquiesce as such on the other hand. Even though one tends to disagree with

Womack's overall interpretation of the Clearances, his description of the self-reproducibility of the Highlands myth, which, in his opinion, has become a Scottish national romance, cannot be dismissed. The 'romance' of the Highlands presents the whole of Scotland with the objective fact of a loss of statehood on one hand and the possibility of a more authentic national reawakening on the other hand. After all, the romance of the Highlands embodies the deep roots upon which a recreated or rediscovered Scotland can draw. This is precisely what is illustrated by the work of John McGrath and the 7:84 (Scotland) Theatre Company. McGrath had set out to write a play based on the Highlands Clearances, with the clearly stated objective of presenting the story as an instance of capitalist and class exploitation. For the numerous audiences of the play around Scotland, however, what emerged from the play was not a story of capitalist or class exploitation. Rather, it was a story of the colonial subjugation of Scotland itself.

Staging the Impossible? *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil*

John McGrath, to borrow his own words, is not 'an ethnic Scots' (sic), except by marriage and domicile (McGrath 1996 pp. vii-ix). But while his theatre career dates back to the late 1950s, it is the Scottish space that has given the career its most productive realisation in over thirty years (Bell 1996). McGrath's 7:84 Theatre Company was first established in England in 1971, but in 1973, McGrath and three other members of the company, came up to Scotland to start a Scottish company of the same name (see MacLennan 1990; DiCenzo 1996).

McGrath and the 7:84 (Scotland) Theatre Company could hardly have entered the Scottish cultural field at a better time. The distinctions between politics and culture, culture and nation were undergoing radical shifts. In Scotland, the British nationhood was under siege (and some would argue that it has not recovered since, not in Scotland at any rate). John McGrath and his friends of the 7:84 Company, used their art to worsen the condition of the patient. Speaking on the work of the company years later, one of its founding members, Elizabeth

MacLennan, makes clear that the reception in Scotland fell in with their expectations. She writes:

We had become increasingly aware of the cultural and political differences between the situation in the south-east and the north of England and Wales, and between their preoccupations and those of people in Scotland. Scotland is distinguished by its socialist, egalitarian tradition, its Labour history, its cultural cohesion and energetic participation in argument and contemporary issues. Within its separate educational, legal and religious systems is a strong but not chauvinist sense of cultural identity. Culture and Politics are not dirty words. We felt our plays there should reflect and celebrate these differences in language, music, political identification and carry on the arguments (MacLennan 1990 p.43).

The play that launched the company, helping it to give justifications to the view held by its members about Scotland is *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil*. At another level, *The Cheviot* put the company in the forefront of other participants in the debate about culture and nation, which dominated Britain in the 1970s. Although there is a noticeable tension in the play, which lies in its simultaneous articulation of the 'cultural' and the combatively 'political', it nevertheless remains one of the most powerful critiques to-date, from the theatrical stage, of Scotland's condition. As such the play raises a number of questions, the most crucial of which are, perhaps, conceptual in terms of theatrical performance, and thematic in terms of a play based on national history. Central to these questions is also the manner in which the play was received and interpreted by its audiences.

In his book of theatre essays published a decade after his first encounter with the Scottish audience, McGrath says with emphasis that he does not believe in any so-called universal grammar of theatre. As he puts it,

My belief, and the basis of my practice as a writer in the theatre ... has been that there are indeed different kinds of audiences, with different theatrical values and expectations, and that we have to be very careful before consigning one audience and its values to the critical dustbin. Unfortunately, almost all the current assumptions of critical thought do precisely that, by universalising white middle-class sensitive but sophisticated taste to the status of exclusive arbiter of a true art or culture (McGrath 1981 p.3).

One of the deductions to be made from the above is that the playwright construes 'theatre' as indissoluble from its reception by the audience. Another is that the audience is not a

faceless mass, but an identifiable group, distinguished by its possession of a common culture or geography. McGrath's notion of theatre confirms a number of points raised in chapter two about the status of popular theatre. And in terms of the relationship between theatre and its audience, McGrath's ideas also foreshadows a number of points recently made by Susan Bennett in her exploration of the subject (Bennett 1997 p.86). Bennett reminds us again that '... theatre is an obviously social phenomenon. It is an event which relies on the physical presence of an audience to confirm its cultural status' In as much McGrath's comments above bear the same implications, the playwright's inclusion of the sentence that 'there are indeed different kinds of audiences, with different theatrical values and expectations' ought not to be taken lightly. That sentence bears the recognition that McGrath sees theatre as ultimately about visible organic spaces and how they may be defined in relation to human aspirations. The evidence from McGrath's practice is that he construes those organic spaces as sites of contestation between classes. This manner of construing spaces accounts for the tension that permeates all of McGrath's Scottish work, but is most easily recognisable in *The Cheviot*. This tension is described by John Hill, who comments that that '7:84 Scotland's experience of a class politics has in Scotland been received exclusively in nationalist terms' (Hill 1978 p.27). This is truer of *The Cheviot*, whose reception has been less based on class than on nationalist ideology, than of many other plays by 7:84 Scotland. Whatever discomforts this reception of his work might have caused McGrath, neither the audience nor 7:84 (Scotland) Company needs to be blamed. In the final analysis, the audience's attitude is illustrative of the kinetic tension that holds class and politics together in Scotland. Also the fact that McGrath is unable to overcome this kinetic tension in his (Scottish) plays, and therefore continues to create the basis for the audience to receive the class politics of these plays exclusively in nationalist terms says a great deal about the political power of theatre in a place such as Scotland.

Although the unusualness of Scotland in being more working-class in population than England, and also in having a more fluid movement from working- to middle-class, may seem a contingent factor that makes class-based representation to be receivable in nationalist terms, the

issue, is far more complex. Tom Nairn's remarks, used as third epigraph at the opening of this chapter, goes to the heart of that complexity (The class-nation conjunction is treated in greater detail in the chapter on realistic plays).

The Cheviot as a remapping of historical memory

One of the effects on the dramatist of wanting to define and contest, if not reclaim cultural space is that he/she becomes a mythoclast voluntarily and a mythmaker involuntarily. This is what has happened in the case of *The Cheviot*, where the dramatist as both mythmaker and mythoclast is even-handedly successful, perhaps beyond his own imagination.

The Cheviot retells the story of the Highland Clearances in a manner hitherto unavailable to the greater percentage of the national population, using an emotionally charged narrative style. The style allows [officially] documented and eyewitness's accounts to be presented on the stage. And while the objective of the style may have been to bring the particular history to life, the *manner* in which the presentation takes place creates the type of condition that summons the audiences to question the official version of that history and replace it with theirs. The overall success of the playwright in this endeavour established a pattern both for the reception and interpretation of the play. The manner in which *The Cheviot* retells the story of the Clearances succeeds partially because both the moment of the narrative (the occurrence) has become mythicised and partially because that moment is also inseparable from the main Clearances. In as much as the latter can be treated as a historical subject, it can also be treated as a signifier of *something else*. To understand and to be able to give meanings to that *something else*, however, that mythicised moment has to be recalled.

This is what *The Cheviot*, does. In its dramatic actions, the past becomes the present when the Clearances are used as a template for focusing on the political economy of North Sea Oil, which in the Scotland of the late 1960s through the early 1970s, like the nineteenth-century Clearances, was also an emotional and passionate subject. And from the moment that the oil

begins to feature in the play, it becomes possible for the audiences to apply their earlier reading of the Clearances as signifier of colonial domination to the politics of the North-Sea Oil. The reason this was so is the fact that the North Sea oil, apart from having become part of the emotional politics of Scottish identity at the time, was also an intractable economic issue for the (British) Westminster Government, which at the time faced an unprecedented crisis in the management of the political economy of the British State. Keith Webb has observed, and David McCrone has concurred, from the moment of discovery of North Sea Oil, the politics of irresolution of Scottish national identity within the United Kingdom became galvanised. The fact that the discovery gave the Scots a sense of being depended upon by the rest of the United Kingdom was a 'reverse of what Scots were used to,' hence their 'status of being Scots increased' (Webb 1978 pp.158; McCrone 1992 p.164/212). But while the playwright intended with *The Cheviot* to raise discussions about the place of the North Sea Oil in the crisis pervading the management of the political economy of the British state, his audiences could only use the play to authenticate their postcolonial anxieties. For them, the oil question further illustrated the problem of domination, and **not** the crisis of political economy. It is not surprising therefore that many of the speeches in the play, which purport to be making a case for the play to be read in class terms, often end in presenting a picture of symmetrical dominance of the Scottish national landscape, by forces whose interest are as colonial as it is capitalist. Consider these two speeches taken from different areas of the play,

SELLAR: The highlands of Scotland may sell £200,000 worth of lean cattle this year. The same ground, under the Cheviot, may produce as much as £900,000 worth of fine wool. The effects of such arrangements in advancing this estate in wealth, civilisation, comfort, industry, virtue and happiness are palpable.
(p.145)

WHITEHALL: You see we just didn't have the money to squander on this sort of thing.

...

There is a certain amount of disagreement about

exactly how much oil there actually is out there.
Some say 100 million tons a year, others as much
as 600 million. I find myself awfully confused.
(p. 189)

The nineteenth-century displacement of the Highlanders for the introduction of cheviot and conversion of the landscape into stag-hunting estates suddenly become one and the same with the invasion of the North Sea and the East of Scotland by giant oil corporations. The historical attack on the legitimacy of the Highlands society, which eventually paved the way for Clearances in the nineteenth century, transforms into twentieth-century condescension by Anglo-American oil multinationals, with the encouragement of the British national government, towards local communities and their culture.

According to the play,

‘In 1811 Rogart in Sutherland had a population of 2,148. By 1911 it was 892.’

‘During the time of the Clearances, the population Of the parishes of Killarow and Kilmeny — in Islay was reduced from 7, 100 to 2, 700. The population of the entire Island was halved.’

Ceal na Coille, Strathnaver. ‘The people were pushed further and further down to the coast. They suffered very much for the want of houses and threw up earthen walls with blankets over the top, and four or five families lived like this throughout the winter while the last of their cattle died. They were removed as many as four or five times until they could go no further, unless by taking a ship for the colonies.’

With the coming of the giant American oil corporation in the twentieth century, the displacement takes on a new complexion, but no less brutal and inhuman. One of the victims of the new situation is the character called the Aberdonian Rigger. He tells the audience:

When it comes to the jobs all the big boys are Americans. All the technicians are American. Only about half the riggers are local. The American companies ‘ll no take Union men, and some of the fellows recruiting for the Union have been beaten up. The fellows who get taken on as roustabouts are on a contract; 84 hours a week in 12 hour shifts, two weeks on and one week off. They have to do overtime when they're tell't. No accommodation, no leave, no sick-pay, and the company can sack them

whenever they want to. And all that for £27.00 a week basic before tax. It's not what I'd cry a steady job for a family man. of course, there's building jobs going but in a few years that'll be over, and by then we'll not be able to afford to live here. Some English property company has just sold 80 acres of Aberdeenshire for one million pounds. Even a stairhead tenement with a shared lavatory will cost you four thousand pounds in Aberdeen.

Then there is the Crofter, who in his wife's words, 'had to get a job on the oil rigs', because with oil exploration, fishing is no longer safe especially 'with the aerial bombs they're testing in the Sound.' Besides the pollution of the waters has meant 'all the fish buggered off to Iceland.' Working on the oil rigs, the Crofter falls down, shattering his spine.

WIFE: And now he can't move out of his chair. But he has a grand view of the oil rig, to give him something to look at ...

CROFTER: No, no, no compensation –

The similarities in the individual fates of the Aberdonian Rigger and the Crofter summarises the tragedy that the coming of the oil companies has translated into for the local people. Economic displacement and ruined ecology, then inhuman working conditions: the Crofter, physically incapacitated, 'now has a grand view of the oil rig', where his life was shattered. His has therefore become a world of dream and illusion. Through the combination of verbal metaphors, layers of ironies and plain grotesquery, the play makes efforts to draw out a number of hidden meanings and aspects of the two experiences of Clearances and Oil exploration. When very early in the play, the Young Highlander reports that two gentlemen are approaching, the two women who so far have been talking to themselves in Gaelic, the Young Highlander hands them a bucket of piss, saying 'you might find a good use for this.' The startled response of the women, the interrogative style in which one of them repeats the word 'gentlemen?' and her next 'Oh, look at the style of me ... to her companion's 'I hope they have not come to improve us' (p. 143) all carry double, but ironic meanings and testify to the functioning of the play's performance as a historical text and cultural tool. These remarks by the three characters are

abbreviated references that are meant to recall the type of language and manner in which the Highlanders were described during the Highlands Clearances — a rustic, barbaric and idle people needing to be improved!

After Whitehall has finished repeating all the government excuses for allowing the American corporations to take charge of the North Sea Oil tells the audience ...

... There's jobs and there's prospects so please have
no fears,
There's building of oil rigs and houses and piers,
There's a boom-time-a-coming, let's celebrate —
cheers —

(p.190)

The Clearances are validly seen by the play as an ancient wrong and the Oil business as its modern equivalent. Through the use of ironies, parodies and the grotesque, the play is turned into a modern satire of exploitation, which is at once colonial, and surrogate. Where in the nineteenth century, James Loch and Patrick Sellar, factotums respectively to Highland landlords, are agents of this capital symbolised by Lord Selkirk, the Duke of Sutherland, etc, and their networks of international friends, in the twentieth century the agents is Whitehall, the very administrative structure of British government. In line with the framework of comic grotesquery used by the play, Sellar and Loch are represented as bruisers on behalf of their masters, while Whitehall is represented as a vacuous creature without any sense of originality. He is the archetype of the parrot that echoes the master's voice. It is not a coincidence that the roles of Sellar and Whitehall are played by the same character in the play. It is a deliberate strategy of composition to maintain the continuity of exploitation from one era to another. The symbolism of this construction becomes visual towards the end of the play when the actor playing the two roles comes forward in succession. Speaking first as Sellar, he says 'I'm not the cruel man you say I am', and speaking immediately after as Whitehall, he says 'I am a Government spokesman and not responsible for my actions...' (p.192)

Using a number of deflationary techniques, ranging from caricature to irony and grotesquery, *The Cheviot* highlights and underscores the roles played by individuals and

agencies in the Highlands Clearances and in the exploitation of the North Sea Oil, and in so doing register the message that both the Clearances and the North Sea Oil exploitation were class actions, conducted in furtherance of internal and global capitalism. Hence, the play goes on to say rather grandly in its closing scene,

The people do not own the land.

The people do not control the land.
Any more than they did before the arrival of the Great Sheep.

...

In those days the capital belonged to southern
Industrialists.

Now it belongs to multi-national corporations with
Even less feeling for the people than Patrick Sellar.

In other parts of the world – Bolivia, Panama,
Guatemala, Venezuela, Brazil, Angola, Mozambique,
Nigeria, Biafra, Muscat and Oman and many other
Countries-the same corporations have torn out
the mineral wealth from the land. The same people
always suffer.

Yet for all its evocative power, this thematic symmetry of past and present exploitation often seems secondary in *The Cheviot*, secondary that is to the story of the Clearances. It is what dominates the universe of the play. This is where the play raises a conceptual problem, one that is theatrical, and which also relates to the politics of representation in a postcolonial context.

At the level of style, *The Cheviot* has rightly been proclaimed as devising a new strategy and form of popular performance (Kershaw 1992; DiCenzo 1996; McCullough 1996). This is in clear reference to how the play appropriates the indigenous *ceilidh* and turns it into a formal theatrical form. According to McCullough:

The *ceilidh* is a predominantly Gaelic communal art form that combines different strategies within the single event; elements of songs, dance, and storytelling all combine together to produce an interactive relationship with an audience; the experience of the event is 'owned' by both performers and the audience (McCullough 1996 p.54).

By adopting the ceilidh, which in this case is not independent either of the subject of the play itself nor of that aspect of its theme dealing with cultural suppression, the medium and the subject become one. Merely doing theatre that way about the Highlands, and before Highlands's audiences, apart from having a quality of surprise, also touches historical memory. This extends as well to audiences elsewhere in Scotland, for as McGrath himself has pointed out, a strong bond exists 'between the Highlands and the Clyde, and of course with Edinburgh: the families of well over half the working class of those areas settled there from the Highlands for precisely the reasons given in the play' (McGrath 1981 p.70). Raymond Williams once commented enthusiastically on the form of *The Cheviot* as follows:

(I have been telling people all over Europe that) *The Cheviot* is the most important recent play in Britain. I don't have to be persuaded of that. But I think it is a rather special case. For the play enjoyed the advantage of a precise cultural location in Scotland which not only ensured the very specific relation of the audience to the form, but also made available certain materials for use as new conventions - that is to say, the continuity of a body of popular song. It was a very considerable part of the rapport between the company and the audience that the songs were shared: they did not have to be produced to be learnt, they already in a sense existed as a bond. *The Cheviot* in that sense benefited from one of the relatively isolated cases of continuity with a traditional culture that is at once working-class and nationalist. There is a possibility of this kind of link in Welsh culture. I had thought these links were much less available in industrial England - they're obviously more difficult - but McGrath himself has recently persuaded me that they may be there if actively sought (Williams 1981 p.225).

The emphasis Williams puts on 'popular songs' to summarise the dynamism of the form of *The Cheviot* may have been deliberate, possibly meant to validate some of the ideas raised in his own work about continuity of dramatic forms (See Williams 1952; Williams 1961; Williams 1965; Williams 1966). This is because this emphasis by Williams fails to respond to the issue of how *The Cheviot* answers more successfully to the politics of nationalism as opposed to the politics of class, which is supposed to be its immediate focus. Of course, there is the sentence in Williams's remarks, namely that 'The Cheviot ... benefited from one of the relatively isolated cases of continuity with a traditional culture that is at once working-class and nationalist.' This sentence indicates that Williams is well aware of the kinetic tension between nationalism and class politics in the reception of the play. At the same time, however, Williams prefers to

resolve that tension in favour of class politics, leaving as opaque, the question of whether the ceilidh, as a theatrical form, does no more than being symbolic of a 'tradition that is at once working-class and nationalist' in *The Cheviot*?

To answer this question will require breaking the play's aesthetic details down, with the objective of picking out what qualifies as 'traditional', 'working-class', 'nationalist' etc. Considering, however, that *The Cheviot* is a play which, theatre architectonics considered, the overall tableaux is the sum of the parts, such a dismantling is as difficult as it is inadvisable. At best, a breakdown will only yield a multiplicity of aesthetic elements, not of form and at worst a mangled play lacking a coherent focus. The obvious answer is that although *The Cheviot* combines a number of working class aesthetic elements, notably the gags, music-hall turns and jokes, it is also a play that parades a new form of theatre. The form is peculiar in its newness; indeed specific to the experience the play tries to communicate directly to its audience. In her reminiscence on the play, for example, Elizabeth MacLennan, one of the founding members of the 7:84 Scotland Company, notes that:

Nowadays critics and academics refer confidently to 'the ceilidh-play', as though people had been writing them for years. But it was a new form. On the poster we called it 'a ceilidh play with scenes, songs and music of Highland history from the Clearances to the oil strike', but it was not a play in any accepted sense at that time. In the newspaper ads we called it 'a ceilidh entertainment with dance to follow'. But people in the villages described it as a concert which is the usual term for any entertainment' (MacLennan 1990 p.54)

I want to argue, based on this first hand testimony of someone who was intimately connected to the making of the play that what we have in *The Cheviot* is a text that obeys the logic of the politics of that that it seeks primarily to represent. That is the hidden history of the Highlands Clearances, which has also become, both in its realistic and mythologized versions, the history of colonial intrusion into Scotland. It is not a history that can be narrated or received in class terms, partly because behind that history is the story of how the subjectivity of the Highlands and of the Highlanders became suppressed. Secondly, the very form of the play, even though arrived at by careful research, contributes to giving the new narration of that story vividness,

which may have been otherwise difficult to achieve. Moreover, ceilidh itself has a signifying role within the play, in that it becomes a material representation of the Highlands culture destroyed as part of the Clearances. It is thus an integral part of the Highlands/Scottish subjectivity, which *The Cheviot* is bringing to the front. The connection between ceilidh and theatre may have existed, even practised at low levels before, but no one before McGrath and 7:84 Scotland Company made use of it in such a visibly political manner as witnessed *The Cheviot*. It is given all these points that we ought to see the use of ceilidh in *The Cheviot* not as the continuity of a form or even of the rediscovery of a working-class form of entertainment, but a particular discovery of a form which also connects the subject to a specific and particular meaning. To that extent, the play is a double embodiment of a postcolonial (Highlands/Scottish) subjectivity that is not merely 'inscribed in written discourse but embodied through performance' (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 p.109). If the postcolonial authority of *The Cheviot* lies in its being a performance, the ceilidh also forms the expressiveness of that performance. It is as part of the play's embodiment of a postcolonial subjectivity that its audiences prefer to treat its theme of class-politics as secondary issue, and instead making what they often consider to be the subjective Scottishness (the so-called Scottish nationalist interpretation) in the play their primary concern. In the staging of postcolonial consciousness, the medium is also often the subject. Whether McGrath and the 7:84 Scotland Company intended things to turn out this way or not is irrelevant. What has occurred is that having created a unique theatrical form, they could not prevent it from pursuing the logic of the circumstances that led to that creation. Those circumstances were those belonging to the project of decolonisation. In saying this, it is worth pointing out that while McGrath and 7:84 Scotland Company went on to do a number of plays, still exploring the subject of class politics, and still using the same form, albeit in a more condensed manner, the success and the glory of *The Cheviot* was never repeated.

Reading *The Cheviot*: Text or Performance?

The foregoing also explains why I think it is misplaced to keep drawing comparisons between the work of McGrath and Bertolt Brecht, or more appropriately to keep seeing McGrath's work in the shadow of Brecht's (See DiCenzo 1996).¹ In terms of the history of contemporary theatre, McGrath belongs among the generation that once enthusiastically embraced Brecht, but which in its years of maturity parted ways with him. Although he often self-consciously excludes himself from membership and sometimes refers to his praxis as a rebuttal of the aesthetics of its individual members² (McGrath 1981 pp10-11), McGrath nevertheless belongs to the same 'generation of playwrights who began their writing careers at the Royal Court theatre between 1956 and 1966.' In his own words, it is the generation whose members 'have gone on to create what is in fact the current dominant mode of theatre, and who are said to have allowed the voice of the working class into the British theatre for the first time since Shakespeare, or even the Mystery plays' (p.6). Although McGrath, as I indicated, has self-consciously continued to dissociate himself from the generation of the 'Angry Young Men' playwrights, he, in some ways, remains faithful to the idea of utopia that was behind the early work of members of that generation. This is reflected in his constant search for what may be described as an appropriate popular form, thinking about which makes one to ponder whether *The Cheviot* does *The Cheviot* not present a test-case for redefining a new sense of popular theatre in Scotland. McGrath himself has made the following observation about the ceilidh form:

...the ceilidh [is a form of entertainment] which is not unique to the Highlands, but is very common there... where everybody goes along, sings a song, tells a story, plays a piece of music and so on. We used the form to create a historical play – again with lots of variety in it, lots of jokes. And the role of the ceilidh in the nineteenth century was very much a double one – of reinforcing the Gaelic culture, which we were also trying to do, and of political get-together. The ceilidh became a way of people getting

¹ Perhaps I should add that the comparisons DiCenzo makes between Brecht and McGrath are not to suggest Brecht's influence as such, but to indicate similarities and various areas of departures.

² During one of the five meetings I had with McGrath in the early stage of this work, this question of his being part of the mid to late 1950s through 1960s 'Royal Court Dramatists' cropped up in our conversations. On these occasions, McGrath would narrate one incident after another, the lesson of which always was to bring out why he parted company with a number of the dramatists of the generation.

together about what was going on, and this is very much what's in *The Cheviot* as well – people are talking about what's going on, what went on, and keeping the folk memory alive (McGrath 1975 p.51).

The adaptation of ceildh in *The Cheviot* does not merely provide the basis for a dynamic three-way communication of audience-performance-meaning, but becomes the actual force of what McGrath also calls, 'direct plot' style presentation of historical materials for the knowing audience. But how has the idea of direct plot worked to contextualise history and politicise the 'national space' in *The Cheviot*?

First there is the two-way reproduction of characters. Historical figures, whose names, offices or activities have been linked in one form or another to either the Clearances, or its justification afterwards, are stereotyped in the play. Many of the recreated characters are given hilarious, but deeply ironic speeches in the play. Here we have names such as James Lock and Patrick Sellar, the Duke of Sutherland, Lords Selkirk, Crask, Lady Phosphate and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The speeches of these characters are always in the mode of visual irony, whose purpose is always to disinherit the verifiable details contained in such speeches and to reallocate them to the new meaning the play is attempting to communicate. Let us consider, the following speech by Lord Selkirk, for example,

I am Lord Selkirk and I have a plan. The people of the glens have become a redundant population. I favour their going where they have a better prospect of happiness and prosperity so long as they are not lost to Britain. The present stream of emigration must be diverted so as to strengthen Britain overseas. My partners and I have recently acquired stock worth just over £12,000 in the Hudson's Bay Company of Canada and Fenchurch Street. It is not a controlling interest, but it is a large interest. Our rivals, the Northwest Company, a collection of Frenchmen, have so far ingratiated themselves with the natives (Indicates them.) - as to become a serious threat to our trading operations throughout the colony. They are ruthless and unprincipled. The only hope for the Hudson's Bay Company is to combine the needs of the Highlanders for land with our own most urgent interest, and settle the place. I had at first thought of settling it with Irishmen, but the Colonial Officer pointed out that a colony made up

of people so intractable - not to say wild - was foredoomed and unsuitable for our purposes. So I have acquired a tract of land five times the size of Scotland (Indicates the number.) and several boat loads of sturdy Highlanders. There is no point in placing them on land that is already tamed. They must go to the Red River Valley and curtail the activities of the Northwest Company and their Indian friends.

(p.59)

The declamatory style of presenting such historical details contained in the speech, not counting also that it contains all the elements of the nineteenth-century self-justification of imperial domination, seems designed to nudge the audience to a new awareness of 'truths' already known but kept beneath the everyday perception. Second there are the representational characters, those that stand for the modern structures of power and the economic relationships fashioned by those structures. Texas Jim (American Oil interests), Whitehall (the British bureaucracy/official face of British capitalism). On the obverse side of the representational characters are caricatures of local interests such as the Glasgow property developer, Andy McChuckemup and the mad young laird, Lord Vat of Glenlivet (both Vat and Glenlivet are names of two popular brands of Scotch Whiskey).

One of the areas of strength of the presentational status of *The Cheviot* lies in how the entertainment and the communication motives cohere in the play. For example, looking at how the play employs direct address, what is noticed is that the addresses are not geared towards the well-known purpose of character disclosure, but mostly as a device of 'magnification' and 'exaggeration' of the actual historical characters. Kershaw has observed, rightly, that such magnification and exaggeration are aimed at 'deflating the pretensions of the powerful' (Kershaw 1992 p.158). This is one of the means by which the performance draws attention to itself as performance and also as ideological critique. The deflation of the pretensions of the powerful is most successful where the play turns on such figures as the nineteenth century American novelist, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and the play's own invented aristocrats, Lady Phosphate and Lord Crask:

HARRIET B S: Good evening. My name is Harriet Beecher Stowe, and I am a lady novelist from Cincinnati, Ohio. You may have heard of my Uncle Tom's Cabin. (Confidentially.) Well, that was about the negro slaves, and my new book - Sunny Memories of a Stay in Scotland - is about your dreamy Highlanders. And my dear friend and namesake, Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland - I've been visiting with her you know, at her delightful home in London, Stafford House, and her country home in the Midlands, Trentham House, and her ancestral home Dunrobin Castle, Scotland ... where was I? Oh yes - well she is a very enlightened, charming lady, and she is known for her undying support of the oppressed people of the world - the negroes, the slaves, Mr Garibaldi's Italians - she thinks they all ought to be treated much nicer.

(p.158)

The comedy in this speech lies precisely in what it is supposed to be saying, namely the character's description of the self. The childishness of the character, even though she is supposed to be talking about herself as one of society's eminent persons, invites the audience to judge the real human worth of the character for themselves. The appearance and speech of character Stowe, however, brings a sense of connection between the Highlands Clearances and near parallel happenings in other parts of the world. The experiences of Negro slaves in America and that of the impoverished southern Italians, all of which are historically simultaneous form one single process with the Highlands Clearances: the advent of global capitalism in the nineteenth century.

The characters of the invented aristocrats, Lady Phosphate and Lord Crask are even more wickedly drawn. Every action, sentence and movement of theirs is in the form of grotesquery. This depiction makes us to see them as people who have been twisted by their wealth. All that the two characters do in their conversation is to draw attention to their own economic and political power. Hence their performance is that of *demonstration* of both economic and political power and the fact that the two are ultimately inseparable:

LORD CRASK: (speaking over the music). Oh they all come here, you know - Lady Phosphate of Runcorn - her husband's big in chemicals - she has a great interest

in Highland culture.
 LADY PH: How I wish that I could paint -
 For the people are so quaint
 I said so at our ceilidh
 To dear Benjamin Disraeli.
 Mr Landseer showed the way -
 He gets commissions every day -
 The Silvery Tay.
 LORD CRASK: The Stag at Bay
 LADY PH: The misty Moor -
 LORD CRASK: Sir George McClure
 BOTH: We are the Monarchs of the Glen -
 LADY PH: The Shepherd Boy
 LORD CRASK: Old Man of Hoy
 LADY PH: And Fingal's Cave
 LORD CRASK: The Chieftain Brave
 BOTH: We are the Monarchs of the Glen
 LORD CRASK: We love to dress as Highland lads
 In our tartans, kilts and plaids -
 LADY PH: And to dance the shean trew-oo-ooos
 in our bonnie, ghillie, shoes -
 BOTH: And the skirling of the pi-broch
 As it echoes o'er the wee-loch
 ...
 LORD CRASK: We love the games
 LADY PH: Their funny names
 LORD CRASK: The sporran's swing
 LADY PH: The Highland fling
 BOTH: We are more Scottish than Scotch
 LADY PH: The Camera-ha
 LORD CRASK: The Slainte-Vah
 LADY PH: Is that the lot?
 BOTH: Sir Walter Scott -
 We are more Scottish than the Scotch.

(p. 172)

They become more serious. They turn their guns on the audience.

...

The essence of making the shooting party of the two characters, Lady Phosphate and Lord Crask, to be preceded by the gestural appearance of the character named Queen Victoria, lies in the song 'These are our mountains.' Both character and song constitute a joint-ironic reference to the economic imperialism of the British Empire, and how it fed English self-interest. Note how the last two lines of the first stanza of the song refers to appropriation of space:

These are our mountains
And this is our glen
The braes of your childhood
Are English again

Though wide is our Empire
Balmoral is best
Yes these are our mountains
And we are impressed.

(p. 169)

It is very difficult to speak of characterisation in *The Cheviot* in the formal sense we would normally expect in a theatre performance. This is because the structural framework of the play is not aimed at the copying of nature, not even in the minimal sense we see in counter-realist theatre. Rather, what it aims at is to bring forth a specific reality, 'a metanature', to borrow the words of Darko Suvin (Suvin 1967).

The metanature of *The Cheviot* consists in being able to embody debates at the same time as it attempts to reveal hidden meanings. For example, the fleeting appearance of the character named Queen Victoria and the manic behaviour of the invented aristocrats also point towards the romanticisation of the Highlands, later summarised by one of the characters that 'the tragedy of the Highlands has become a saleable commodity.' But at the same time, the play, through one of its performers, presents its own view of the situation in the Highlands at the time of the Clearances:

What was really going on? There is no doubt that a change had to come to the Highlands: the population was growing too fast for the old, inefficient methods of agriculture to keep everyone fed. Even before the Clearances, emigration had been the only way out for some. But this coincided with something else: English - and Scottish - capital was growing powerful and needed to expand. Huge profits were being made already as a result of the Industrial Revolution, and improved methods of agriculture. This accumulated wealth had to be used, to make profit - because this is the law of capitalism. It expanded all over the globe. And just as it saw in Africa, the West Indies, Canada, the Middle East and China, ways of increasing itself, so in the Highlands of Scotland it saw the same opportunity. The technological innovation was there: the Cheviot, a breed of sheep that would survive the Highland winter and produce fine wool. The money was there. Unfortunately, the people were there too. But the law of capitalism had to be obeyed. And this was how it was done.

(p. 151).

This speech goes to the heart of a major issue that continues to haunt the discourse of Scotland: How Scottish national life and identity were shaped in the shadows of what Katie Trumpener elsewhere describes as ‘the development of imperial ideologies and economies’ (Trumpener 1997 p.165). Even though it is intended to point out the pernicious nature of the idea behind the Highland Clearances, the speech nevertheless reminds us of that inseparable connection between pre-colonial injustices and post-colonial memory, to which the Clearances have been reduced. There are those who, drawing inspirations from what follows in the play, after the above speech, would object to the Clearances being read mono-dimensionally, as simply a tale of victims. For what happens next is that the play goes on to describe one of the major ironic consequences of the Clearances: the making of the male Highlander into the ferocious guardian of the imperial frontiers: ...

These parts were still raided for men; almost as fast as they cleared them off the land, they later recruited them into the Army. The old tradition of loyal soldiering was fostered and exploited with careful calculation.

In the words of General Wolfe, hero of Quebec – ‘Some Highland Divisions might be of some use they are hardy, used to difficult country and no great mischief if they fall.’

They were used to expand the Empire and to Subdue other countries, whose natural resources Were needed to feed the industrial machine of Great Britain.

(p. 176)

This is the clearest reference *The Cheviot* makes to the Othering of the Highlands and also the usefulness to which that Othering was put towards the consolidation of the Empire. It is worth noting in passing that *The Cheviot* is silent on the strange brutalities of the Highlanders when they were being used to expand the Empire and to subdue other countries, whose natural resources were needed to feed the industrial machine of Great Britain. That omission does not however detract from the immediate picture, which is how the beginning of the Highlands tragedy was made. The final segment of the Highlands story in *The Cheviot* ends with the

direct, agit-prop question, 'Who owns the land' by one of the MC. He gets the following sequence of replies:

The same families – the Macleods, the Lovats, the Argylls, the MacDonalds, the Sinclairs, the Crichton-Stewarts, and the Sutherlands.

(p. 183).

The succeeding dramatic sequences show how, from that very 'humble, but collaborative beginning' sketched out by Hobsbawm, the Highland chiefs have become players in an obtuse network of alliances, property dealings and state power.

- MC: One thing's for certain, these men are not just figures of fun. They are determined, **powerful and** have the rest of the ruling class on their side. Their network is international.
- MC4: Question: What does a meat-packer in the Argentine, a merchant seaman on the high seas, a docker in London, a container-lorry driver on the motorways, have in common with a crofter in Lochinver?
- MC: Nothing at all.
- MC4: Wrong. They are all wholly-owned subsidiaries of the Vestey Brothers.
- MC: Ah! The Vestey's - owners of over 100,000 acres in Sutherland and Wester Ross! - and directors of approximately 127 companies, including:
- MC4: Red Bank Meatworks
Monarch Bacon
Blue Star Line
Booth's Steamship Company
Shipping and Associated Industries
Premier Stevedoring
Aberdeen Cold Storage
International Fish
Norwest Whaling
Commercial Properties
Albion Insurance
Assynt Minerals
Assynt Trading
Lochinver Ice and Scottish- Canadian Oil and Transportation.

(p.185)

Although the two characters are on the stage at the same time, and are actually responding to each other's statement, they do not speak directly to each other. They address the issue and

speak directly to the audience. This provides a continuity of the metatheatrical technique, which enables the very act of representation, of playing, to also be the very act of meaning. Not unlike the formalist setting, the two MCs join in here to serve as the chorus, although they are less detached from the narrative or meaning as might be associated with the standard chorus. Rather, they join in the dialogue, effortlessly presenting statistics, or comments to corroborate or reveal the other side of whatever Texas Jim or Whitehall says:

MC 1: By 1963 the North Sea was divided into blocks.

MC2: By 1964 100,000 square miles of sea-bed had been handed out for exploration.

WHITEHALL: We didn't charge these chaps a lot of money, we didn't want to put them off.

TEXAS JIM: Good thinking, good thinking. Your wonderful labourite government was real nice: thank God they weren't socialists.
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MC 1: The Norwegian Government took over 50 per cent of the shares in exploration of their sector.

MC2: The Algerian Government control 80 per cent of the oil industry in Algeria.

MC 1: The Libyan Government are fighting to control 100 per cent of the oil industry in Libya.

Guitar.

WHITEHALL: Our allies in NATO were pressing us to get the oil flowing. There were Reds under the Med. Revolutions in the middle-east.

TEXAS JIM: Yeah, Britain is a stable country and we can make sure you stay that way. (*Fingers pistol.*)

WHITEHALL: There is a certain amount of disagreement about exactly how much oil there actually is out there. Some say 100 million tons a year, others as much as 600 million. I find myself awfully confused.

TEXAS JIM: Good thinking. Good thinking.

WHITEHALL: Besides if we produce our own oil, it'll be cheaper, and we won't have to import it - will we?

MC 1: As in all Third World countries exploited by American business, the raw material will be processed under the control of American capital - and sold back to us at three or four times the price –

MC2: To the detriment of our balance of payments, our cost of living and our way of life.

TEXAS JIM: And to the greater glory of the economy of the US of A.

(pp. 188-9)

As a critique of the character of Anglo-American capitalism, this section, with its humour and blend of statistical details and other facts, topical issues (NATO, for example) is convincing. However, it does also raise major issue, which is that of sub-imperialism within the Anglo-American relationship. *The Cheviot* locates the basis of that sub-imperialism in the unconscionable practice of capital accumulation, by attempting to actually pooh-pooh the often-claimed complexity of that relationship – the defence of Europe, military integrity, special Anglo-American relationship, and containment of communism.

It is from this point on that *The Cheviot* commences its critique of the management of the North Sea Oil. From theatre's point of view, the whole segment is metatheatrical in the sense that it contains both verifiable statements and vital statistics, yet deployed in such a way that the text as performance is never compromised. The overt exaggeration of the two characters, Texas Jim and Whitehall, being the vehicles for conveying the messages here helps the text to tame some of its own agit-prop rigidity.

The Cheviot's dismissal of nationalism is embodied in its understanding of what the SNP stands for, an obverse side of capitalism, but one disguised as fronting 'indigenous solutions.' This is what paves the way for the representation of Lord Polwarth, who though not a Scottish nationalist in the sense of the SNP employer, is nonetheless seen by the play as representing a dangerous, but often imperceptible, strand within the culture-politics nexus. Hence his status as a proven 'Scottish captain of industry' is contested by the play as not

meaning quite the same thing as 'captain of Scottish industry'. He is therefore given a speech which also deflates itself at the end:

I am Lord Polwarth, and I have a plan. The present government seems to have no control over the hooligans of the American oil companies and their overpaid government servants, so the government has appointed me to be a knot-cutter, a trouble shooter, a clearer of blockages, and a broad forum to cover the whole spectrum. However, I am not a supremo. In this way, the people of Scotland - or at least the Bank of Scotland - will benefit from the destruction of their country.

(p. 193)

However well Lord Polwarth may be able to use words, which because they are space-connected, make emotive appeal to the people, he is still a servant to international capital, a marionette. This is why he is thoroughly debunked through a listing of his association with and interest with international capital. The meaning of this is that it is important not to lose sight of the fact that Lord Polwarth typifies the alliance, which the sort of exploitation being condemned often facilitates:

Before becoming Minister of State, Lord Polwarth was Governor of the Bank of Scotland, Chairman of the Save and Prosper Unit Trust, a Director of ICI and was heavily involved in British Assets Trust, Second British Assets Trust and Atlantic Assets Trust, which at that time owned 50 per cent of our old friend, Mount St Bernard Trust.

(p. 193)

In other words, Lord Polwarth represents a class or group that can never be expected to supervise its own liquidation. Hence in the final segment of the play, there are series of direct statements, all pointing out the powerlessness of the people. Using the song composed by a nineteenth-century victim of the clearances, Mary MacPherson, as a reminder, the play points out the necessity of 'organised resistance', and ends on that note.

The Cheviot is a structured play, whose every part also constitutes the whole. We can either look at it in its all-round character or not look at it at all. Its experiment with form, the theatrical ideology it brings forward, the politics inherent in its subject are all central to its being a work that redefines space in cultural as well as political terms. But – and it's a big but, the kinetic tension between politics of class and nation at its heart remains unsolved and is probably irresolvable, given the radical Marxist perspective of its writer and his collaborator. This may represent the failure of the play for some critics. The idea that the play represents an example of British alternative theatre seems to me discredited by the form of the play itself, but if we go by McGrath's own writings, it is not unlikely that he sees himself as performing in cultural terms exactly those counter-hegemonic roles that the alternative theatre movement is supposed to be performing. How far this relates to the Scottish issue is an open-ended question. By describing the play as embodying the very act of postcolonial representation of that which cannot be reduced to textual analysis, but realisable in performance, I am also suggesting that the issues it deals with in substantial detail, that is Highland Clearances and what they stand for, are of a nature that belongs to memory. What the representation contained in *The Cheviot* has done is to confirm that view. Hence it is a play of postcolonial enunciation, not of resolution.

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Chapter Five

Mirror from Below: Popular-realism as National Theatre

There was...a post-war working class realist theatre alive and kicking before Osborne et al. appeared on the scene, only it was in Scotland. A number of established Scottish dramatists, such as George Munro, Joe Corrie and Robert McLeish, had all written plays set among the contemporary Scottish working-class, and which were performed in the late forties and through the fifties... (underline for emphasis) (Lacey 1995 p.3).

The Violence of Naming

The substantial overlap between politics and aesthetics, and the very strong dominance of realism as a mode of representation in the Scottish theatre has created a condition whereby the theatre is seen in absolute political terms. As a result, it is customary to find critics and scholars designating the theatre as embodying the so-called 'alternative theatre' tradition. Alternative, in this respect, means a self-conscious opposition to the tradition and practice of drama sanctioned by the West End of London (Kershaw 1992, Wesley Monroe Shrum 1996). The politicality of Scottish theatre is apparent enough. But this is of a much wider critical issue than the narrow subsuming of the theatre under the 'alternative tradition'. Of course, what this wholesale categorisation brings into focus is how deeply the study of theatre practice in Scotland has become the study of the roles allotted by hegemonic criticism to the Scottish theatre. This is well illustrated by a recent critical work on British Theatre from 1890 to 1990, by C.L. Innes (Innes 1992). Apart from J.M. Barrie and John McGrath, the latter usually referred to in passing, and as an illustration of the generic agitprop, no other Scottish dramatists of the closing century appears in this far-reaching study. In the universe of the author of the study, the **Scottish** theatre space is muted. Nonetheless, Innes cannot be blamed, for ultimately what the scholar has demonstrated by way of that complete exclusion is how the metropolitan structure of thinking on the question of culture operates. Ironically, it is precisely because Scottish theatre practitioners want to escape this sort of annihilation and exclusion, and the

larger cultural and political implications that they [Scottish theatre practitioners] regularly brace themselves into politics, especially of cultural identity and its place in the theatre.

This is the crux of the remarks by the critic Lacey, which is reproduced at the beginning of this chapter. A natural way of reading those remarks will be to situate them within the context of the British theatre history, especially as mirrored by the founding of the repertory movement at the beginning of the twentieth century on one hand, and the subsequently frequent tensions between London and the so-called provincial theatres on the other hand (Richards 1978 pp.105-212). However, a more compelling reading of Lacey's remarks will be to see them in terms of their larger implications. This concerns, among others, the process by which cultural authority and critical orthodoxy are confirmed within a multi-national culture. After all, it was not that the Scottish realist theatre, which Lacey speaks about, was not available to the London critical establishment before the emergence of Osborne and the other angry young men, but rather that the theatre was ignored. This is illustrated, for example, by the reception given in the 1940s to the visiting Glasgow Unity Theatre in London. *The Gorbals Story* (McLeish 1985), which the company took on tour to England, had won wide acclaim all over Scotland. The play's strength had been its penetrating realism, which was based on the abject housing conditions and poverty in the Gorbals area of Glasgow, and its highly invective use of Scots as a language of theatre, as opposed to that of comic distraction, on stage. For the metropolitan London critics, however, none of these mattered. All the moving vividness of the play disappeared from their assessment of the play, and that which had been its major strength back home in Scotland, the use of demotic, Glasgow working-class Scots, became an object of attraction. Its language was thus seen and treated as exotic amusement, which dwarfed all the other ingredients of the play (see Hill 1978).¹ Yet, it was *The Gorbals Story*, which, perhaps more than any other play in the post-

¹ While talking about this, it is worth pointing out that among scholars of English theatre, the validity of English realism is mostly accounted for by the faithfulness of a play to the English language (Styan 1981; Cohn 1991). Without that fidelity, the general rule is that realism suffers. Indeed, the basis of English realism can be said to have been built on a playwright's relationship with the English language. It also follows that the competence of an English theatre critic will depend to a large, if not all extent on his knowledge of the language habits and behaviour of the English. All of which makes a positive case for

war Scottish national theatre repertory, gave firmness to the Scottish realist tradition. Its use of Scots language was interventionary, and therefore political *ab initio*. We shall return to this play in greater detail later.

The assimilation of Scottish theatre – regarded here as a whole area of national-cultural representation–by and into the ‘British alternative theatre’ tradition limits the understanding of the issues and themes within the theatre. That assimilation, even when done by the supposedly liberal literary scholars and critics, constitutes part of a larger practice of cultural and intellectual colonialism, which is enshrined in the uneasy relationship between Scotland and England. Even when done in praise, it is the ‘natural presence’ of a functioning colonial framework that makes it possible for the entire Scottish theatre to be so unquestionably assimilated and named as alternative. In talking about the ‘assimilation’ and ‘naming’ of Scottish theatre therefore, we are dealing with another aspect of a highly structured form of discourse, that is reflective of a relationship construed in colonial terms.

It is worth noting that much of what passes for ‘political representation’ in Scottish theatre is also underwritten by a desire to validate what is more generally accepted as working-class experience. Given the alleged ‘post-industrial’, ‘post-class’ and ‘post-modern’ character of contemporary society and politics, the term ‘working-class’ would seem to carry certain uneasiness with it. This must however not be used to eliminate the fact that the dominant representation of Scottish identity has been based mostly on, and reworked from working class values and aspirations (Foster 1992; Whatley 1992). There is an undeniable, even if agonising, sense of reality, in how easily Scottish identity could move from being Scottish to working class and vice versa, or to be both simultaneously. For all its visibility, this easy interchange between ‘Scottish’ and ‘working class’ calls for a more nuanced understanding, as opposed to the easy exaggerations and omissions to which explanations based on ‘class’ or ‘nationalist’ politics may lead. It is bound with the political and cultural economy of Scotland’s postcoloniality, and bears

interventionary, counter-hegemonic reading of the critical epistemology built around English realism.

directly on how economic profiteering that was central to the imposition of the postcolonial condition also institutionalised a nation/class-based discursive rejection of domination.

Generally in Britain, the rise of industrial culture went hand in hand with class struggle. Specifically in Scotland, however, both were compounded by two factors. First was internal geography—the question of cultural integration or lack of it between the Highlands and Lowlands. Second was the imprisonment of what was left of the Scottish aristocracy, after the Act of Union, in a situation that blinded them to the turn that events were taking. By using the phrase ‘the turn that events were taking’, I am suggesting, after Tom Nairn (Nairn 1997), that the origin of the politics of social division and fragmentation caused by industrialisation in Scotland went beyond that which can be explained, retroactively, solely within the paradigm of ‘modernist’ theory of development, and of nationalism. As Nairn has pointed out, ‘all the actual experiences of mass-nationalism from the American Civil War down to the second wave of post-1989 suggest there must be ‘more to it’ than the characteristic idiom and emphases of modernism allow. Unevenness came to be the name of the game – the only game in town. Yet that game did not itself originate unevenness, or diversity’ (*ibid*, p.9). Nairn argued further that in as much as modernisation theory may explain the transformation of society, made possible as it were, by early natural science, and the application of scientific ideas as technology, ‘the transition was essentially ‘blind’ in the sense of producing a novel or unexpected array of societal forces and pressures whose meaning and possibilities – among them, nationalism – only became conscious, or self-conscious, much later’ (Nairn, *ibid*, p.12).

By describing what was left of the Scottish aristocracy, after the Act of Union, as having been imprisoned, I am suggesting that they were victims of a colonial intrusion that *ab initio* made a possible collective psychological rapport between the upper and lower crusts of the society difficult to achieve, and in that failure emerged a vacuum which industrialisation brutally exploited. That exploitation was made all the more cruel because those who increased the population of Scotland during the period were deemed as mostly inferior migrants from the Highlands. Lacking what may thus be described as a wholesome ‘national’ society, with a

convincing organic character, Scotland was unable to produce the England's model of what E. P. Thompson describes as tension between the 'kingdom without' and the 'kingdom within' (Thompson 1968 p.54) in the manner its early class struggle was fought out at the beginning. The consequence of all this, of course, was that during the nineteenth century industrial expansion Scotland became a perfect setting for an unusual social stratification. Lacking its own 'gentlemanly' aristocracy, except a few land owners, to knead industrialism with enabling nationalism, it also became subservient to the whims of the landed and financial elite in the south of England and in the City of London. The historians, Gardiner and Wenborn, have pointed out that the landed and financial elite in question constituted an 'older (English) aristocratic society and culture, dating back to the English Glorious Revolution possibly' (Gardiner and Wenborn 1995 p.333). This aristocracy, Gardiner and Wenborn further pointed out, has traditionally proved too resilient for both industry and the industrial bourgeoisie to dominate. This England-based aristocratic society did not merely take-over Scotland through its subservient proxies, but also made it into one of its obtuse networks of accumulation. This, however, was not the entire history of class relations in Scotland. Industrial development usually always necessitates the formation of its two most useful classes, the entrepreneurial, professional middle and working classes. These are always to be based *in situ*, even when they are under the supervision of a comprador bourgeoisie. But while the industrial expansion of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries saw to the creation and rapid expansion of the Scottish working class, the anthropology of what became the Scottish professional middle class has a deeper and somewhat dramatic origin. As a class, it was already in existence before industrial expansion. Its flag-bearers were mostly in the reformed Church, a fact that, even today, often colours how the post-Reformation educated elite might be grouped ideologically. The industrial expansion changed the class's fortunes for the better. First it gave the class the visibility subsequently associated with it. Second, it enabled it to play the historic role of shaping the 'national character' in its own image. This is captured in the famous phrase of the 'protean Scot', skilled, hard working and unencumbered in the deployment of modern knowledge to

purposeful gains. Nevertheless, the institutionalisation of the professional middle class in this role, and also the formalisation of its ascendancy, can be said to have followed the same trajectory of economic profiteering that underlined the 1707 Act of Union (see Wallerstein 1980).

With the nation's aristocracy and landed gentry (the latter was always a tiny minority), fully co-opted into the English system, the progression from 'Union' to colonial take-over of the nation was assured. In lieu of a resident aristocracy, it was left to the 'elect' professionals, the slightly improved model of Gramsci's traditional intellectuals to assume the mantle of running the nation, although remaining obsequious to the far-away aristocrats at the same time. As Tom Nairn and others, mostly left-wing critics have argued, this is another example of what made Scotland's case a first in terms of how a nation could embrace its own repression (Nairn 1997 chs.13-14). Yet, it is not all of this that needs to be interpreted negatively. In terms of the internal dynamics of Scotland, this process of unconscious ceding of the nation to 'traditional intellectuals' also gave birth to the 'aristocracy of culture', whose members were gratifyingly looked upon as the models of 'good Scots'. True to the character of the professional/ middle class in history, the same aristocracy of culture exploited the absence the 'natural' aristocracy to reconstitute itself. What does this say about the origin of the 'national bourgeoisie' then? It is this: that in as much as its creation goes back to the moments of Scottish Reformation and later Enlightenment, it was after 1603, when the Crown moved to London that it began to acquire political powers that would make it different from its counterparts all over Europe.

In saying this, we also need to emphasise the Scottishness of the Reformation of 1559, and also recognise that the Spartan will shown by the Reformers to create that society of traditional intellectuals à la Gramsci, paid off (See Harvie 1989). This is what must have made Eric Hobsbawm to describe the Reformation as 'Revolution of 1559, which was made under the banner of Calvin and John Knox'. Writes Hobsbawm

It had clearly not been a 'middle class revolution', however that may be defined, and what was to become the Scots entrepreneurial and middle class in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, tended to soften its theological zeal considerably, leaving the

undiluted liquor of Geneva to be drunk in the more backward regions and by the less propertied strata (Hobsbawm 1968 p.261).

Of course, the Revolution went on to create its own terrible anomalies this remains another matter entirely. What is important is that the same Revolution left the nation with an important institutional framework. However disingenuous they might have been in their personal motives, the patricians who negotiated the Act of Union recognised the need to protect that framework. The point of all this is to be able to point out how the Reformation laid the basis for the 'reproducibility' of the 'meritocratic' elite whose role it later became to 'govern' the nation. Those, like Lindsay Patterson, who write of a top-heavy civil society Scotland, and of a Scotland where the industrial bourgeoisie seemed, for a time, to have been saddled with shaping the notion of culture, obviously have their minds on the process that I have sketched above (Paterson 1994).

One of the effects of this uniquely Scottish elite formation is that it created a basis for the class-consciousness of the professional/middle to be tempered by its awareness of its own members' history. For example, the industrial bourgeoisie, in spite of its wealth-creating ability and doggedness was made up essentially of Scots who were one or two generations away from agrarian life. For those of its members who navigated far-away places — Canada, Australia, working and rising in the service of the Empire, the Scottish professional/middle class was, in the balance, made up of people who turned their personal need for identity into an existential necessity, symbolised by devotion to causes and services which they believed the people of their new territories needed (see Trumpener 1997 p.287). Those of the group that remained at home often made common purpose with the 'rapidly-growing proletariat' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, because the same force of memory and personal histories that governed how those abroad saw their duties was also at work. To that extent, the relationship between the two classes has traditionally been one of recognisable hierarchy, based less on birth as on personal striving. Into the origin of that hierarchy must be read the controlling operation of what one scholar calls 'the fierce Presbyterian energy', meaning everyone's resolve to suffer self-

denial to 'get on' (Coveney 1990 p.6). It was a relationship that necessitated a constant and unbroken intimacy with the realities of 'national' political history and geography. We are compelled to regard these connections as one having a profound effect on how 'culture' was defined, whether as a material everyday intercourse or in its expressiveness, in art, literature and performance.

The point of all this is to say that the origin of the 'radical culture' in Scotland needs to be viewed differently from what obtains in England, and not merely treated as similar. It is not just the case that radical culture in Scotland always made contradistinctive claim to 'national difference', but persistently used that very claim to sustain its high visibility. It was pointed out in one of the preceding chapters that the institutional vacuum in Scotland, the absence of self-managed state apparatus, has continually multiplied the consequences of that absence. More importantly, the vacuum has directly helped in creating further interstitial connections between the translation of national culture and political awareness. In Scotland, for example, it is not only that British hegemonic views are generally treated as conservative, but also, they are interpreted as bearing duplicitous intent against the Scottish nation (Mitchell 1993; Mitchison 1993). For example, whereas the birth of the post-Second World War Welfare state was supposed to have become the basis for a new British national politics and identity after 1945 (Lacey 1995 p.4), the recognisable achievements of the Welfare State have not lessened the 'ancient' widespread scepticism about the actual interests of the British State in Scottish affairs. As the historian, Rosalind Mitchison, points out, notwithstanding the pluralistic British parliamentary system, there are strong feelings that Scottish needs are still not being given deserved attention:

In the late nineteenth century Scotland's unsolved problems seem conspicuous and her self-confidence abated. The country was also suffering from political and governmental neglect. After 1885 the separate institutions of government, grudgingly created, were bound together in the Scottish Office to give something of coherence, but Westminster and the main parties found it difficult to give time or attention to specifically Scottish needs. Basic legislation was often delayed for English expedience-this had been particularly conspicuous over the efforts to refound the school system (Mitchison 1993 p.286).

In Mitchison's view, the cumulative effect of Scotland's inclusion in the British super-state structure is that all the energy, which Scotland could have expended solving its own myriad problems, are expended in furtherance of the politics of the British state. The disadvantage suffered by Scotland is compounded by the complicated international cosmopolitanism of the central British economy. In as much as there is always a tension 'between governmental control over the aspects of the whole economy which have international or general monetary effects and the need to allow for individual or local initiatives', the nature of the British super state makes the competition between local needs and the need for continuity of global prestige irresolvable and a cause for serious concerns. For example, the need to maintain continuity of British global prestige means centralisation of the apparatuses of the state to such a level that the quality of input that Scotland may be able to make into issues of municipal concerns is severely limited. Mitchison is, of course, aware that Scotland's situation in this regard is not entirely unique. What appears to be of concern to her, however, is how the need to continue to sustain British global prestige is inversely exacerbating the anxieties felt in Scotland about the participation in the British super state. In the final analysis, Mitchison seems to be suggesting that economic decision making at the level of central government is never value-free, and while some of the prejudices that go into the process can easily be concealed under lofty words, the outcome often betray their hidden meanings. Writes Mitchison:

In the twentieth century economic problems have forced frequent interventions which, though intended to have a general effect, have usually in practice reserved the benefits for the southeast of England and the disadvantages to all the more remote areas (Mitchison 1993 p.287).

The implications of the case Mitchison makes is that in spite of the Welfare state, the politics of the British state has nonetheless provided Scotland more, rather than less, of excuses for national self-affirmation as opposed to ideological accommodation with, or assimilation into 'Britishness'. Even if this is ironic, it is not illogical. Tom Nairn would probably have described the situation as the classic case of nationalism at its non-irrational level. Writes Nairn

In dealing with what 'underlies' the manifest phenomena of nationalism - collective

actions on a certain scale, and often on a huge scale – I argued that we are forced back on to ‘human nature’. Though partly this can be construed as the pre-history and history of human society, we can be reasonably sure that all too little will be literally discoverable there, and nothing comparable to the great leap forward in genetic science (Nairn 1997 p.14).

The Dramatist’s Dilemma: Choosing Between Class and Nation

If ‘working-class’ identity was the platform on which questions could be posed about the hegemony of the British Welfare state in the aftermath of the Empire, it was also the most accessible platform for raising the question of Scottish national consciousness. This may shed some light on why the idea of a ‘radical Scotland - a Scotland seen as predominantly ‘egalitarian’ in spirit and overwhelmingly ‘working-class’ in population- became a constitutive factor in the ‘re-creation’ of Scottish nationalism since the end of the Second World War. This way of seeing and imagining Scotland was to become an indispensable component, and the basis for much ‘intertextuality’ in how Scottish culture is subsequently presented and represented in the post-Second World War years². It was also a major force in the way realism was to become the dominant form of representation in Scottish theatre.

What all this tells us is that in as much as the parallel that exists between social class formation and hegemonic, colonial domination of the national space in Scotland is structured, it at the same time operates in a way that it makes it difficult for clear cut distinctions to be made between ‘postcolonial subjects’ and ‘class subjects’ in the evolution of Scottish national culture. Since the end of the Second World War, the criteria for culture have come to rest on how the two notions of nation and class, with the latter being increasingly narrowly defined to mean working-class, may be fused as one. In this respect, the figures ‘7:84’ in the name of the theatre company formed by John McGrath and others could as well have referred to Scotland, more than the rest of the UK. As has been explained repeatedly by McGrath himself, those figures are a representation of the statistics (reportedly published in 1966 by the London-based international magazine, *The Economist*), which said that seven percent of the population owned

² Two scholars who have explored this background better than many others are Tom Nairn and Cairns

eighty-four percent of the wealth in Britain in 1971. In Scotland, in 1801, 'rural and small-town Scotland' constituted eighty-seven percent of the population. In the 1830s, the figure was eighty percent (Hobsbawm 1968 pp262-3). It is difficult to say how fundamentally these population statistics have altered over the century. However, the framework of social hierarchy still remains fluid. This fluidity has as much to do with the continuity of community-infused radical class politics established from the nineteenth century onward, as with the 'institutional system the country had acquired in the Revolution of 1559' (Hobsbawm 1968 p.261). All these factors have continued to create a basis for the uniquely interstitial connections between politics and aesthetics in the representation of Scotland and Scottish issues.

What started as working-class theatre in Scotland is now a firmly entrenched tradition, which is at once popular and national. Until the 1970s, it was the form in which any sense of national theatre was most easily recognisable. Similarly, it is largely a realistic theatre, whose power has not waned that significantly, in spite of the spread of postmodern ethos. To the extent that this form of theatre exists and has large following throughout the nation, no serious discussion of it can be complete without a mention of realism, or rather the kind of realism seen through the theatre.

Debates about realism are not easily resolvable, as no one can say with accuracy what the term now stands for. For example, one theatre scholar has written that:

Realism is a critical term that is used of other cultural forms, too, and the resurgence of realism in the cinema and the novel as well as the theatre testified not only to the existence of roughly comparable aesthetic strategies but also of a similar cultural politics. Realism usually becomes an issue in a culture when the representation, exploration and analysis of a society is on the agenda, ... (Lacey 1995 p.63).

The remarks above are useful starting point. Yet, considering how distant we are now from the age of the known earliest practitioners of that form of drama that put their societies on the agenda (Ibsen, Strinberg, and Bernard Shaw readily come to mind), we are most likely to look back on their achievements as the beginning of the construction of the 'well-made play'.

Craig (see, for example, Nairn 1977; Nairn 1996; Nairn 1997) and (Craig 1982; Craig 1996).

Raymond Williams, however, tells us that realism 'emerges as a fully constituted dramatic form only in the nineteenth century'. According to him, realism, historically speaking, has three defining characteristics: 'The three emphases which are then often consciously described as realism are the secular, the contemporary and the socially extended' (as quoted by Lacey 1995 p.64). Williams goes on to describe each of the three emphases. The *secular* refers to the displacement of the metaphysical or religious elements in dramatic construction or consciousness, by human action, which is also played through in exclusively human terms. The *contemporary* makes dramatic construction to put assent on actions as happening in the present. This is amplified by Lacey to mean 'an increasing reliance on colloquial speech, on dramatic language which approximates the everyday conversation of its audience (Lacey 1995 p.64). By *social extension*, Williams means the displacement of the bourgeoisie as the main focus of dramatic events in the theatre, and their replacement by the working-class, whose experience was thought to be more representative of the general social life of the nineteenth century. Williams, perhaps to properly distinguish realism from other kinds of drama that inhabit some of the territories marked out by the first three criteria, but which might not qualify as realism as such, add this fourth criterion. This is that realism should be 'consciously interpretative from a particular political viewpoint'. Again, this is improved upon by Lacey where he suggests that it 'makes it clear that realism in this sense is defined primarily by the ambition not only to represent but also to interpret the world politically, to show 'how things really are' (Lacey 1995 p.65).

The elaborate definition of realism by Williams, and Lacey's improvement on same, offer us useful analytical categories for assessing the Scottish realist theatre tradition. Such assessment is all the more necessary because the realist tradition itself has always been a controversial subject within the politics of the representation of the national space. Inspired, no doubt, by the often fierce competition between the numerous versions of Scotland that may be suitable for representation on the theatrical stage, this controversy around the realist tradition can be seen as adding to the postcolonial tension already apparent in the discursive purchase of

national culture.

The Scottish realist theatre is a theatre that deals mainly and exclusively with human actions and also plays them out in exclusively human terms. In its dealing with those human actions, it uses as dramatic language, a colloquial speech which approximates to the everyday conversation of its audience. Further, it attempts to deal mostly with social experience at the very bottom of society. Finally, it is a theatre that takes a political view, interpreting the world according to ideological precepts. Its form and technique are oriented towards the communication of that which counts for everyday social, communal ethos as opposed to the celebration of the individual archetype. These characteristics can sometimes lead to conceptual difficulties, such as the one identified by Alasdair Cameron, where he notes that

Even if we have yet to create an instantly recognisable Scottish dramatic genre, there are certain features which seem to be shared by most plays, which can be described as 'Scottish'. For example, an overwhelming number of plays, from Joe Corrie's *In Time O' Strife* to John Byrne's *The Slab Boys*, seem to belong to a genre which could best be described as 'serio-comic naturalism' (Cameron 1990 p.ix).

Although it is doubtful whether 'serio-comic naturalism' is a suitable word for describing the genre to which those plays mentioned by Cameron belongs, the implication of that description should be clear. The Scottish realist theatre exists, and moreover, asks for a new critical method, which goes beyond the existing theatre criticism. This is well brought out, I think, by David Hutchison, who, while writing on Scottish Drama from 1900 to 1950, says that

It is clear from an examination of Scottish dramatic writing in more recent times that urban naturalism has become the dominant mode ... when significant commitment to indigenous writing is to be found, and that is far from universal, it is the urban naturalistic play which has been presented most often (Hutchison 1989 p.176).

Incorporating the views of the two critics in a more recent observation is Randall Stevenson, who notes that the predominance of naturalist mode,

also shows Scottish theatre – tagging for so long behind developments elsewhere – catching up at last with the styles which dominated the continental (and often the English) stage at the end of the nineteenth century; styles which moved away from melodrama and the well-made play in favour of accurate reflection of everyday life' (Stevenson 1996 p.105).

Perhaps we should remind ourselves that the claim of naturalism echoes that of realism, and as

such, the habit of taking one for the other while, sometimes confusing, is not all that unusual in theatre criticism. It is noticed, therefore, that while still keeping with the conceptual term of 'naturalism' as used in earlier comments by Cameron and Hutchinson, Stevenson concludes by defining the concept as 'accurate reflection of everyday life'. Implicit in the respective comments by Cameron, Hutchinson and Stevenson, is the acceptance of naturalism/realism as a dominant form that is as national as it is popular because it often answers to the ideological mood of the nation. In other words, Scottish realism offers an example of being 'consciously interpretative from a particular political viewpoint.'

'Realism', Lacey points out, is 'always potentially counter-hegemonic' (Lacey 1995 p.74). One of the forces that have often driven realism in Scottish theatre is the belief that the truth an audience perceives in a dramatic performance is the condition of being of that performance. By prioritising realism as the dominant mode and genre of representation, therefore, Scottish theatre is also making a profound statement, which is often either a challenge to the existing official view of/about the nation, or the offer of an alternative model. Put differently the realist theatre always positions itself as a platform for counter-critique. Central to how it performs that role is the fact that while it may problematise issues; it rarely worries about the 'meaning of the nation' in geographical terms. In a situation where the parameters for defining the nation are continually shifting and repeatedly conjoined to the larger politics of British imperialism³, we ought to see this as a major strength of the theatre. It is true, of course, that modern practice of representation in Scotland shows a remarkable exploration of the competing versions of Scotland.⁴ Far from denying the existence of these different versions of

³ The sociologist, David McCrone, writes on the shifting definition of Scotland as follows: "There are, of course, competing versions of Scotland, using distinctions which have a mythological base: Scotland of the past and the present; Scotland of the Highlands or the Lowlands; small-town east-coast Scotland versus Scotland of the west-coast conurbation. At any point in history for example, some versions of Scotland may win out over others. For example, the relegation of 'Catholic' history in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Protestant Scotland (Ash 1980: 129); the association of Scotland with Unionism in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and in the late twentieth their almost complete dissociation" (McCrone 1992 p.31).

⁴ A particular writer that comes to mind here is Alasdair Gray, whose novel, *Lanark*, is, both in form and theme, an exploration of Scotland along the lines of its competing versions. In this novel, Gray confounds narrative strategies by mixing fantasy with realism, epistolary form with epic, utopia with dystopia etc.

Scotland, what the breathless exploitation of realism on the Scottish stage is attempting to do is to unite the nation around common, but unofficial, themes. One plausible explanation for this may well be that realism lends itself more easily to a discursive political approach to theatre making, and therefore suits the purpose better than any other form. In other words, if the politics of the national space is entrenched in contradictions and uncertainties about national-cultural identity, the theatrical stage offers, through realism, a model of nationhood. This too is an imaginary nationhood, but it can be less controversial than many others, because it derives its authority from the material culture of everyday life.⁵ The widespread association of ‘culture’ with everyday social experience within the Scottish realist theatre corroborates this view. For example, Alasdair Cameron, in his comments on the social parameters of Scottish theatre, notes further that:

In Scotland, however, the assumptions made on the part of the playwright are less class-based and more national. It seems safe for Scottish playwrights to assume that their audiences will all understand Scots, of a sort; that they are all from the great maw of the lower-middle/upper-working class; that there are certain historical events – The Clearances – about which the audience will share common feelings; that there is a certain culture – embodied in *The Sunday Post* – and certain political assumptions which they all share. The Scottish dramatist often gets a laugh from a presumed common social background (Cameron 1990 p.x).

Joe Corrie and Popular Realism

The contemporary Scottish realist theatre can be said to have begun with the miner-playwright, Joe Corrie. Even though Corrie himself was silent on the debate about ‘national identity’ in his days, the implications that his kind of theatre had for that debate was not lost on many people in the cultural establishment of the day. Hence Corrie and his work were persistently embroiled in that debate. Although Corrie himself had done no more than merely

The objective of this approach is itself to point out the impossibility of retaining a single version of Scotland.

⁵ This is again confirmed in the way the later realist plays, such as Hector MacMillan’s *The Sash My Father Wore*, Tom McGrath’s *The Hard Man* and others which are discussed in this chapter, were enthusiastically received as Scottish ‘national plays’ at their first round of staging. John McGrath’s *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil*, examined in the last chapter, also benefits from this fount of consensus building theatre, leading to its acceptance as ‘Scotland’s play’. Those elements of *The Cheviot*,

speaking in defence of his writing, his defences clearly anticipated some of the deeper intellectual issues that the likes of Kelman and Tom Leonard, for example, have had to address, while similarly defending the statuses of their work in the 1990s.⁶ And but for Corrie's personal doggedness, coupled with what we may now call his 'class consciousness', the realist theatre would have died prematurely (see, for example, Cameron 1986; Mackenny 1986).

For reasons, which perhaps are not unrelated to the cultural politics of his days, Joe Corrie is fairly unknown outside Scotland. Within the country itself, he seems to have held the fascination of only a handful of scholars, mainly theatre historians and researchers. This at least was the case until 7:84 (Scotland) Theatre Company in 1980s resurrected Corrie's and other early realist plays in the Scottish repertoire. The objective of the company in doing this was to prove the existence of a Scottish working-class theatre, which it then used to validate its own work. An outcome of the resurrection was the publication of the only available single publication of Corrie's known work, and comprised plays, poems and theatre writings (Corrie 1985).

In contrast, the name of James Bridie, who was a contemporary (and some would say an opponent and social superior) of Corrie, resurfaces more regularly in any discussion of the contemporary Scottish theatre. Yet, while Bridie may be famous, especially beyond Scotland, where he is often seen as the successor to J.M Barrie, for example, succeeding generations of Scottish theatre practitioners and critics have been at best ambivalent about him.⁷ Bridie may not have been ignored, but few critics and theatre workers think of him as an exemplary playwright, in so far as the making of a non-official national theatre goes. For such critics and theatre practitioners, Bridie's success lies elsewhere. This is in the arena of service to theatre,

which can rightly be classified as 'realist', are vital ingredient in the making of that acceptance.

⁶ See Chapter 2, section 4.

⁷ I have spoken to a number of Scottish playwrights since I began my research. In all of these conversations, the name of Joe Corrie is repeatedly mentioned as the leading Scottish great. It is also noted that Donald Campbell, himself a leading contemporary Scottish playwright, in his book (Campbell 1996), devotes a whole chapter to Corrie, while Bridie is treated only as part of the general discussion in the book. I think the statement in Campbell's approach is self-evident, considering that the title of Campbell's book is *Playing for Scotland*. Corrie, it would seem, was more faithful to Scotland, while Bridie obviously was not.

rather than in his actual theatrical work. His leading roles in the founding of the Glasgow Citizens' Theatre, and other arts-administration work are frequently pointed out as examples of his achievements. It would seem then that Bridie's reputation within Scotland runs in parallel to the view held of his work by those who would want to regard him as the successor to J.M. Barrie in the pantheon of Scottish playwrights. Yet, if Bridie now inhabits a Jekyll and Hyde world in the estimation of later generations of theatre practitioners and critics, the blame lies squarely with Bridie himself. It is impossible to talk about this subject without making a brief comparison between Bridie, and Barrie, to whom he is often thought of as a successor.

Barrie's theatrical work, which actually began and flourished in London, both fulfilled and departed from the Scottish yearning for a presence on the theatrical stage. It fulfilled that aspiration to the extent that he was a Scotsman who could make an impact in theatre, even doing so far away from home and in London. Barrie did distinguish himself in London, to become, in the words of John Russell Taylor, 'The only really notable figure to emerge in British drama during the 1890s, apart from Shaw' (Taylor 1978 p.181). But at the same time, Barrie's theatre, which is rooted in fantasy and the super-natural, departs from the Scottish yearning for stage presence because the kind of imagination that fuelled the theatre later became an issue, which the succeeding generation of playwrights sought to remove, having considered it an obstacle to proper historical thinking about the future of the Scottish nation. This is the kailyard imagination, which I addressed in Chapter One. If Barrie's Scottishness became submerged to the demands of London's theatrical establishment, leading him to generate kailyard *exotica*, admittedly of an intellectual taste, he can be excused on the grounds that he was working in London, and moreover, was affected by the economy of theatre in the 1890s.

Bridie's case was however different. He worked as hard as any other notable theatre figure of his days to see thriving a Scottish theatre of the type he believed would be appropriate to be called 'Scottish and national'. David Hutchison has traced Bridie's efforts along those lines in the following words:

... Bridie's interest in the theatre had been stimulated by the work of the Glasgow

Repertory Company. ... Some years after its formation, Bridie joined the board of the Scottish National Players and was one of the directors most determined that they should turn professional. When the Players chose not to do so, he left the board. The formation of the Citizens' theatre in Glasgow during the Second World War marks the start of the period in Bridie's life when he made his greatest contribution: he was chairman of the Citizens' from its inception until his death; he played the main role in the establishment, in 1950, of the Glasgow College of Drama as an extension of the Royal Scottish Academy of Music; he was a member of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, the forerunner of the Arts Council, and at one point its Scottish chairman; and he was adviser on drama to the Edinburgh Festival (Hutchison 1998 pp235-6).

Bridie's overall contribution to the theatre was also matched by a substantial output of his own dramatic writings. The problem however is that Bridie's writings, which, even though they occurred at a time of significant changes in theatrical consciousness generally, and singularly of form, seemed a denial of that new consciousness. Bridie's weakness was in his definition of 'Scottish and national' as his efforts seemed at best to have been focused on the creation of a drama suitable only to the palate of the new Scottish bourgeoisie of the day. However, his themes and forms were of such that could not sustain their own appeals beyond the stage. Bridie loathed the realist theatre of his days, which he regarded as failing artistically and for dealing too much with politics. He believed that whereas a good theatre should be for all times, the realist theatre was dated. According to one biographer and admirer of his, Bridie was ultimately a playwright who did not want to be associated with a period play (Bannister 1955 p.13). Thus, at a time that God and Cosmos were being taken out of theatre, Bridie, in the words of Hutchison, was evolving the idea that 'man as a species should accept his cosmic limitations and individual men should accept their personal shortcomings' (Hutchison 1998). It was like attempting to roll back the theatrical revolution begun earlier by Ibsen, and which no playwright since had been able to ignore.

Unlike Bridie, Joe Corrie, a man of lesser means and social status, preached that men should make the rejection of their cosmic limitations the very purpose for living. Joe Corrie once wrote that he loved Ibsen, O'Neill, and O'Casey, but that his fascination for these playwrights faded when he discovered that for all the gifts and insight of the three men, 'they have not enough faith in the goodness of mankind' (Corrie 1985 p.184). For Corrie, faith in the

goodness of mankind was an essential credo for artistic work. This was what he sought to demonstrate all the time with his theatre work, which located their themes, characters, and actions among the people below. Corrie self-consciously tapped into the already existing tradition of popular theatre by exploring its hitherto hidden potential, namely the extent to which it could be used to bring the aspirations and lives of the lower classes to the stage. His characters speak not only in Scots, but also in the everyday Scots that people at their level of society use in pursuit of daily social intercourse. If popular theatre is insouciant by nature, infusing it with class perspective is bound to heighten the danger it poses. Hence it was daring that Corrie attempted this in a context where there was an on-going national self-questioning. Before Corrie began that exploration, the 'popular theatre was commercial, professional and non-political though it could be anarchic; it also had a clearly defined view of right and wrong, exposing abuses of power and, though it was sentimental, it was also bawdy' (Cameron 1986 p.32).

Corrie's exuberance was quickly noticed, but not everyone was an admirer. This was forcefully brought out when 'One SCDA (Scottish Community Drama Association) adjudicator argued, rather hysterically, "something must be done about Joe Corrie ... He attacks almost every institution and tradition of the British race – almost with genius ..."' (Mackenny 1986 p.45). When Corrie's plays are measured against later developments, these remarks by his SCDA antagonist would indeed read hysterical. But when viewed against the 1920s Scotland background, the intuitive political instincts behind the remarks cannot be ignored. Though Corrie had lacked the sort of formal education, training and connections possessed by the 'cultural elite' of his days, his approach to theatre, which was both populist and aesthetically daring at the same time, posed a challenge to a number of conventional wisdoms, not least of which was what theatre should stand for. Realism in Corrie's hands had become a rebellious form, and was liable, while supposedly presenting society as it was, to unsettle the moral frameworks of his society. The adjudicator's disapproval of Corrie draws attention to itself with the use of the emotional phrase 'institution and tradition of the British race'. What institution

and tradition the adjudicator had in mind, were, of course, not stated. They are, however, not difficult to guess. They are the prowess of Britishness: industry, trade, military strength and the administrative network that kept all these together. The adjudicator naturally ignored that those 'institution and tradition of the British race' had been shaped by concentric exploitation, with imperialism and colonialism at the base, and internal class exploitation resting on them. Not one of Corrie's [working class] characters would have thought him/herself as sharing in an heritage when all they see is continued abuse of their own humanism through appalling wages, bad working conditions and exercise of power by authoritarian managers.

Corrie's masterpiece is *In Time O' Strife* (Corrie 1985)⁸, a play inspired by, and based on the 1926 General Strike and Lockout of miners, which took place from May to November (see MacDougall 1978). In terms of Scottish theatre history, what the play did was to bring to the theatrical stage, the raw experience of a part of the 'hitherto neglected sections of the population'. For not only is *In Time O' Strife* about the sufferings and human tragedies the miners had to endure during that memorable, but killing strike, but actually drew all its performers from the rank of the same miners and members of their community.

Donald Campbell has pointed out that the Bowhill players, later known as Fife Miner Players, had 'no grandiose notions of 'the initiation and development of purely Scottish drama' or, indeed, any theatrical ambitions whatsoever, other than to perform with as much truth and conviction as they possibly could' (Campbell 1996 p.105). Campbell can be forgiven for over-determining the innocence and raw talent of the Bowhill Players. Even though Campbell is being complementary, nevertheless, his remarks suggest poor appreciation of the theoretical implications of both the coming together of the group and their successes. Indeed, what was demonstrated in the coming together and the success of the Bowhill Players is the politics of implications in realism. The coming together of the performers, their lack of formal theatrical training should be read in conjunction with the ideological underpinning of *In Time O' Strife*. Corrie's plays are an attack on what the playwright saw as the inhumanity at the heart of the

laws and conventions that held the British society together, and in doing this, the plays are not only critical, but also interventionary towards the dominant system of values. Having discovered *sotto voce* in his encounter with the Reading Committee of the Scottish National Players, that the existing dominant 'structure' of theatre would be hostile to his efforts, Corrie found that he needed to 'create' an equally interventionary structure. The overwhelming success of the performers and of the play both fulfilled realism's sleight of hand subjugation of the dominant, and its parallel search for new audiences. The SCDA adjudicator, who criticised Corrie for his alleged irreverence towards 'every institution and tradition of the British race', was apparently able to make the necessary mind-leap that enabled him/her to see Corrie's critique beyond the merely discursive.

Although the background of *In Time O' Strife* is the conflict between miners and the state, the immediate subject of the play is the tension and sacrifices to be found in, and often demanded by the conditions of working class life. Corrie, from the evidence provided by the play, sees those tensions, conflicts and sacrifices in a wider perspective, which is that of contestation of values among the forces of labour and authority in society. It is worth noting, however, that the circumstances surrounding its writing and performance notwithstanding, *In Time O' Strife* does not dissolve into polemical platitudes about workers' triumph. On the contrary, its strength is its humanism, even if this is sometimes brought out in speeches full of angst. For example, the leading character, Jock Smith, in a speech designed to demand new morality among the ruling elite, says bitterly, when it is announced that Agnes Pettigrew, a sickly neighbour who has been without food for weeks as a result of the strike, is being taken to hospital, that:

Starvation! And they write to America to say that there's nae distress
in the coalfields. Christians! I wonder what Christ would think o'
them if He was here? (Corrie 1985 p.60)

Corrie's audiences are likely to have found this verbal repudiation Jock Smith makes of the image of a 'happy land' fulfilling. This is one of the many examples of Corrie's ability to speak

⁸ All references to this play are to the edition contained in this collection of Corrie's writings.

directly to his audiences. Such simplicity of language and narrative structure in *In Time O' Strife*, coupled with how the play dispenses with hero/heroine characters, make for easy audience participation and appropriation.

The immediate narrative in *In Time O' Strife* is of a strike by miners and how the entire mining community: husbands, wives, and children; become drawn into the strike. This concerns the execution of the strike; resistance to various attempts to break it, both from within the miners' fold and through official intervention; and finally the repercussions. The families of two ageing miners, Jock Smith and Tam Pettigrew, occupy the centre of the play, but are by no means its main centre of attention. The experiences of the two families, as they go through the strike, typify the excruciating circumstances of other members of the community. The idea of the common good, as an aspiration worth dying for is never far from the dramatic action. The families of Jock Smith and Tam Pettigrew are able to see the strike through, transformed but diminished.

Jock Smith's eldest daughter, Jenny (22), discovers her fiancé, Wull Baxter, to be an anti-hero, cowardly young man who is willing to break a strike. This makes her to break-off their engagement. Her brother, the seventeen-year old Bob, discovers through the strike, the wisdom of the conventional saying that there is 'strength in number'. The steadfastness of the elderly miners appeals to him, and he begins to see himself playing a future Union leadership role. Although his revolutionary optimism lacks any serious understanding or depth at the moment, there are indications that he would grow in both commitment and knowledge as time goes by. Jock Smith remains an average character, perhaps the archetypal miner who yearns for nothing more than a life of decency. His speeches and actions all through the play are communicated and carried out with humour, and an undertone of camaraderie.

On the side of the Pettigrews, the picture at the end of the strike is somewhat tragic, but humanised all the same. Here is a family that lives in an appalling misery in normal times. Already sickening for hunger, Agnes Pettigrews, Tam's wife, dies for lack of food during the strike. The suddenly widowed Tam, unable to cope with the loss of his wife, turns himself to

drinking. It is left to his eldest daughter, Kate, to rescue him. But for her, Tam would have drunk himself to death almost immediately after his wife's death. Kate's misery is compounded by the fact that her fiancé, Tam Anderson, is sentenced to jail term, for having stood at the picket line, obstructing strike-breakers.

At the end of the strike, everyone is expected to live, if not happily, at least well educated about the gloomy days ahead. But there is also the powerful message that the gloomy days ahead can be met with good old communal and social responsibility. The play also puts some future expectations and hope in the younger characters. Their participation in the current strike, and the rather painful choices they are compelled by conscience to make represent are collectively a statement about the future. To that extent, the transformation of the two families becomes the transformation of the entire mining community.

What significant aspect of the play, in terms of thematic engagement, is that although tragedy, pain and agony always lurk in the background as events unfold, the community always 'triumph', as it unites to confront whatever emerges. Twice, Jean Smith, the ever-present wife of Jock, and mother of the family, cries out, that ...This strike's gaun to break a'oor he'rts' (Pp.57, 70). Hearts are indeed broken. One death, two romances shattered. One of the young male lovers goes to jail, the other into exile. An old man, upon the tragic death of his wife becomes drink-sodden. It is all pretty grim yet there is no absence of humour in the presentation.

The personal/family template is what is used to mirror the strength of the community, of the social collective. 'Sacrifices (the Smith family)', 'retention of personal dignity and honour', even when doing so might result in slow and very painful death such as of Agnes Pettigrew's, are revealed as the collective force behind the community. At the same time as the play is celebrating communal strength, it is also projecting a philosophical message. This is that collective happiness, whether seen from the personal or family life, will continue to be thwarted, and that human beings will always need to rise against this thwarting. This is Corrie's moral philosophy, which is communicated through Jean, the mother figure of the play. In a moving

scene, where Jean and Jock are alone on stage, Jean speaks philosophically about how the miners are victims of a heartless labour structure rather than a one-off injustice (i.e. inadequate pay):

You're no' gaun to be much better if you've to go back/to the pit on the maister' terms. It's been a hard time,/richt enough, and mony a nicht I have lain doon/wonderin' where oor breakfast was to come frae, but,/Jock, it's nae mair he'rt-rendin' than watchin' thae/wheels turnin' every day, and never lookin' oot the/windie but dreadin' to see some o' ye cairrit hame a/corpse or maimed for life. There are plenty o' women/never bother their heids, they have seen that much and/come through that much, that they have got hardened/to it. But I havena reached that stage yet, na, thae/wheels are ay between me and the sun, throwin' their/lang, black shadows on the doorstep. It's mebbe been/a time o' want since the strike started, but it's been a/time o' peace; I was ay sure o' you and Bob comin'/hame at nights; but there's nae such faith when the/wheels are turnin'. But you men dinna think o' thae/things, you'll likely laugh at us when we tell ye about/it? (Act II, p.59)

Jean's daughter, Jenny, speaks in a similar, but very angry tone at the very end of the play. This is where she addresses her younger brother, Bob, who says flippantly that she should be pleased to be rid of Wull Baxter, Jenny's fiancé who, having been for strike breaking, now wants to leave the community on immigration to Canada.

Ay, you would vex yoursel' tae; hunger and rags we can get ower but no' the like o'this... Every dream and every hope shattered into a thousand bits. Oh! Is there to be nae peace...ha'e we ay to be gropin' in the darkness? Nae sunshine ava! Oh, God, dae something to tak' the load off oor shouthers or we'll gang mad! (P.79)

One needs to read these speeches with an awareness of the repeated occurrences in Corrie's polemical writing of the clamour for a theatre that humanises. Such an informed reading could make us appreciate better how much Corrie's idea of an interventionary aesthetics, found in realism, had been driven by ethical concerns, similar to that at the heart of realism itself. For example, Corrie, in one article, had argued that:

Take any of the real serious plays of today. In how many of them do you get the stirring trumpet call that man will yet be a god? Cannot the tragedy of life be shown, not to show us how hopeless a proposition Man is, but to show us that only by conquering — not lying down to — life's difficulties and sorrows can we emerge to something

greater?'(Corrie 1985 p.184)

The character of Jean Smith, the ever-present mother figure, in *In Time O' Strife*, and possibly the strongest of all Corrie's characters, owes to the same desire by the playwright to write a play that humanises. Though not the central character, Jean Smith's presence and roles frame the various aspirations that are the thematic undertones of the play. Admirable in her own right, and respected by all around her, Jean Smith fulfils the roles of mother, the sympathetic wife and an understanding neighbour. However, her real strength lies in being able to see beyond the moment, or to 'philosophise', an alternative ethical model of social relationships. Her relationship with members of her family, especially her husband, is one of direct influence. Yet she is not a character who can be said to subjugate either family or husband, nor subjugated to either of them. One suggestion will be to see her character as having been 'constructed' also to challenge conventional perception of married working class women, as truculent and a nightmare to their husbands. She can be described, therefore, as a thematic repudiation of the stereotype of this particular social group.

Yet, when read in terms of contemporary feminist theories, particularly feminism's re-reading of realism and the female character on stage (Wandor 1987; Case 1988), Corrie's play might seem flawed, as it is the female characters who are touched mainly by the tragedy in the play. Agnes dies, her daughter, Kate, loses her fiancé to the vindictive authority that sends him to jail for three years. Jenny, Smith's daughter, breaks her engagement to a man who seem to truly love her, but whose cowardice is considered an ethical issue. The question about what might happen to Kate and Jenny is left open-ended. Going by the moral universe of the play, it is more likely that Kate is condemned to firmly tightening her chastity belt, awaiting the return of her lover from prison. Jenny has however sacrificed love for communal happiness. The hard choice Jenny makes helps to situate the drama in its own times, and reflecting on its own notion of higher values.

It needs to be stressed that this is a play about the 1920s, and its author was more interested in the erosion of community through labour-power relationships on one hand and the

general march into a new society on the other hand. Jock Smith's family is not the heroic kind, not even Jean is heroic, in spite of the qualities bestowed upon her by Corrie. The family is social not archetypal. As there is no central character in the play, one of its theatrical and also thematic strategies is the construction of characters as opposites. One character serves as the foil for its opposite: Jock Smith and Tam Pettigrew; Jean Smith and Agnes Pettigrew; Kate Pettigrew and Jenny Smith; Tam Anderson and Wull Baxter. Where one is weak, the other is resilient and formidable; where one is fearful, the other is daring.

For those who find popular realism inadequate, the 'construction' of Jock Smith's family would be where the weakness in Corrie's plays lies. All the 'actions' are confined to the narrow family environment. Similarly, all the events taking place elsewhere, and which are part of the structure of the play—the picket lines, the shaming of strike-breakers, the progression of Agnes's fatal illness—are reported and discussed solely within the Jock family living room. The consequence of all these is that no issue or subject is pursued exhaustively. It also leads to the intrusion of several gratuitous dialogues, some of which occur, *deux ex machinae*. For example, the lines 'I ken what's needed, it's a revolution that's needed' (p.43), occurs nine times (pp.43, 53, 58, 65, 66, 72). In fairness though, that the lines are given to Bob, the seventeen-year old dreamy-eyed revolutionary, adds no more than a dimension of entertainment to the dialogue.

That Corrie struggled pronouncedly to work his own convention out of realism has often been ignored, and instead, attention is wrongly placed on the weaknesses of his style of narrative (see, for example, Cameron 1986 p.33). Such critiques tend to underestimate the economic and ideological importance of popular realism and to remove the plays themselves from their actual historical and social contexts. Corrie's efforts to give 1920s' realism a local resonance as well as immediacy shows that while he may have been well aware of the theatrical developments around him, he was at the same time conscious of being immediately relevant to his own locale. Hence his characters are not just simple and true to life, those who acted those characters in the 1920s, acted them with 'truth and conviction' that suggested that they took their cues from their own personal lives.

In the short, two-act anti-war play, *Martha*, Corrie tries to move away from the realistic mode, but with very little success. The conceptual technique of *Martha* is expressionistic, but like all of Corrie's plays, the 'social' dimension of the subject gets the better of the play. The play is about war and the anguish it brings. The war in question is the First World War. If war affects everybody, both those who fight in it as soldiers and those whose freedom and liberty they are supposedly fighting to preserve, any woman whose son goes into battle can then be presumed to be doubly affected. This is exactly what happens in *Martha*. Martha, the main character is a mother of four children, all males, and all of whom have been called up for service. One by one, the four boys died on the battlefield. The youngest, Jimmy, happens to be the last to be killed. However, the anguish of losing the previous three, one after another, had fragmented Martha's mind, and also made her to build an emotional wall of protection around her little Jimmy. This becomes a tragic fantasy with which Martha has to live, and we can only sympathise, not mock her. Martha constantly imagines her Jimmy returning home to be reunited with her:

Half-past seven exactly. He shouted to me as he left the trenches.

...

I'm comin' home, Mither; hame for good this time;
put on the kettle!" And, d'ye ken he was laughin', and
shoutin', and wavin' his hand to me! (p.126)

However, the voice Martha heard was that of a dying Jimmy, for it was at that 'Half-past seven exactly', that Jimmy was killed in battle in France. That Martha 'heard her son's voice' is very typical of expressionistic construction of characters. Martha's is a tormented soul. She has become an isolated and suffering individual. These lines therefore bring out the dreamy state of Martha's mind, which paradoxically, conveys how much her suffering has pushed her to the edge of dementia. The audience knows from the beginning that Jimmy won't be coming home; having died at exactly the same time Martha says his voice was heard. This way, the audience is invited knowingly to participate in Martha's agony. It is also in her speeches that Martha exposes the other side of war, the destructiveness beyond the battlegrounds. Martha,

reminiscing on what she has gone through to bring her children up, says:

It's fine to have peace, isn't it, John? ... (As if dreaming)./ But there's only the yin comin' hame-only the yin.../Jimmy the bairn... Ay, the days were happy when they/were just bits O'bairns playin' at my feet; hard times,/maybe, but happy. Comin' hame frae my work in the/fields gey tired and weary whiles, but the sicht o'my/bairns soon cheered up my he'rt. And noo, after a' the/long years o'struggle, I'm just left wi' Jimmy.... Oh,/what has a' this sorrow and tears been for?... Why had/they to take them awa' frae me? ... It canna be the will/o'God, as the minister says, for I never harmed a soul/or a creature in my life. A' ever wanted was peace.../Three bonnie lads. Oh, there's a load on my he'rt that's/heavier than the hale world.... But, thank God,/YOU'RE comin' hame, Jimmy. If I had lost you, tae, I/would have gone stark, ravin' mad. (p.127)

The audience at this point already knows that Jimmy has died, in which case her prophecy about going 'stark, ravin' mad' is already being fulfilled before the audience's own eyes. These lines appear more 'realistic' than expressionistic. This is because although not aware of Jimmy's death yet, Martha is still able to *identify* the cause of her suffering, which is the war.

It canna be the will
o'God, as the minister says, for I never harmed a soul
or a creature in my life. A' ever wanted was peace...
Three bonnie lads.

These kind of direct lines in which a character directly identifies causes of his/her sufferings and explains them in such clear personal terms are unusual of expressionistic technique. The only basis for them in *Martha* is that Corrie wants to increase the audience's sympathy for the speaking character, as a way of drawing out another dimension of personal sufferings usually inflicted by war. Hence, Corrie's belief that theatre should serve 'humanistic' purposes, which found its best outlet in realism, has once again defeated his incursion into expressionistic technique.

It has been suggested by David Hutchison that had Corrie not allied himself, perhaps uncritically, with the Scottish Community Drama Association, at whose annual competitions he was often the *prima donna* for several years, his great talent as a dramatist might have prospered

more rewardingly (Hutchison 1989).⁹ This is a harsh, but needless judgment on Corrie. The playwright's association with the CDA can only be deemed unwise now that it is being examined in retrospect. It certainly overstates the case to suggest that he took refuge in amateur movement because this allowed him to conveniently overlook the critical shortcomings in his own practise. Corrie's association with community drama has to be read in conjunction with what he says in his theatre writings. These are writings, which, in spite of all his limitations of a self-educated person and playwright, reveal Corrie as someone who felt a deep and monastic commitment to the creation of a new 'ideology' of theatre in Scotland. These same writings suggest that Corrie saw the kind of theatre occurring at the level of Community Drama as the way to the future. On occasion in his writing, for example, he argued, not without good cause, that 'the good that can accrue from a community drama is considerable'(Corrie 1985 p.177).

Corrie's personal first-hand experience of cultural politics, the rejection of his style of theatre by the cultural genteel, and the subsequent success of the same style with the popular audiences, is certainly a contributory factor to his unflinching belief in the good that could come from community drama. It should be stressed also that his commitment to the CDA was, in fact, not as uncritical as it might now look as any second reading of his writings on theatre will make apparent. Corrie's writings are silent on either Scottish identity or Scottish political nation. For him, the matter seemed to have been resolved explicitly, through concentration on realism, which, as far as politics of representation goes, is a consensus-shaping style. When remarks such as 'the first signs of Scotland's dramatic awakening will come from very close to the soil', or others similar to them, occurs in his writing therefore, they are meant as embracement of the consensual sense of identity implicit in realism. Here for example, is how his idea of a theatre that is close to the soil, was once articulated:

The common folk and their new hope will be the inspiration. The technique will be

⁹ Hutchison, in a private conversation with this writer in 1998, disclosed that he (Hutchison) has been able to establish through research, that Corrie was the first Scottish dramatist of modern times to live mainly by his dramatic writings. Considering the time and environment in which this happened, this was indeed no mean achievement. Hutchison's contention is that Corrie could have developed into a great dramatist, possibly as great and renowned as Sean O'Casey, Synge etc. in play quality and output.

simple, the setting may even be in a kitchen, but the theme will be vital and the urge behind it will be irresistible ... (Corrie 1985 p.183)

The emphasis on common folk, and on a theme that will be vital could easily be interpreted as ordinary people using theatre as a mirror from below. It is the meeting of such aims in Corrie's own work that enables us to re-evaluate his legacy in the history of contemporary Scottish theatre. His work remains the first crucial attempt towards fulfilling one of the major intellectual objectives of realism in contemporary Scottish theatre. That is using theatre to enunciate 'call of artistic movements for fidelity to 'real' life — for a contemporary image of the world and an inclusion of hitherto neglected sections of the population' (Hill 1978 p.28). Corrie was the playwright from a double margin. Coming as he did from a social group whose self-consciousness is often thought to be incapable of handling serious issues of cultural representation in any form, Corrie himself sought to correct that notion by taking the working class above its aesthetic weight. Scotland's lack of a coherent tradition of drama in Corrie's day, which, had one been available, could have furnished him or any other playwright at the time with a sense of form, placed him in another margin. Yet coming from such a double margin has proved to be more of an advantage than a drawback considering how much it enabled the playwright to write about the Scottish experience without any artistic constraint whatsoever. His passions as a dramatist, consisting a feeling for community, elevation of the social being and representation of human aspirations, are not easily reducible to statements of credos.

Corrie's sense of theatrical realism is one that was balanced by his reading of the 'human condition', not least relationship of labour in his days. For example, he saw the acceleration towards a full industrial society, symbolised by new inventions and apparent transformations of social relationships, as some irresistible force that would compound an already problematic social existence. His philosophy of culture would appear to have been hinged mainly on two ideas. First was how to prevent erosion of human feelings and dignity in the midst of unavoidable changes. Second was how active political engagement might be used

to resolve the crisis into which the advancing forces of modernisation, especially their economic imperatives, were throwing the question of culture and its translation. Thus in one of his writings on theatre, he wrote

At one time the masses were their own entertainers. They made their own music and plays and told their own stories.

Nowadays their music comes out of a box they call a gramophone, their plays are the 'talkies' and the old traditional story-tellers have died out.

Most of the forces of modern times are making for an ever-increasing specialisation and stultification of mankind, and I regard the recent enthusiasm for play-making as the best of antidotes (Corrie 1985 pp177-8).

Though Corrie concentrated mainly on the representation of the working class experience, which constituted the main thread of his idea of Scottish theatre, such concentration did not exclude other [class] experiences. Had Corrie's 'cultural philosophy' been developed more systematically, he probably would have made a case in his own words that the conflict among the classes is a subject worthy of reflection in the theatre. It was a bold act for a working-class playwright to venture to rescue theatre from its leisured patronage and high culture definition of those days as Corrie manifestly attempted. It was even more spectacular that with his one major play Corrie could draw an audience numbering between eight hundred and one thousand people per night for eleven months running. This was not only throughout Scotland but also beyond (Corrie 1985 p.11). What Corrie did was to write about the Scotland of 1920s in its own social idiom. He might have been a less fulfilled Emille Zola, or Sean O'Casey, to both of whom he was often likened (*Ibid.*), but then neither was Scotland a France or an Ireland.

Glasgow Unity Theatre and the legitimization of 'National-Popular'

Glasgow Unity Theatre is perhaps the most single phenomenal occurrence in the history of Scottish theatre since the Second World War. GUT could rightly be credited with having made the sort of theatre envisaged by Joe Corrie irreversible and permanent. Indeed, anyone seeking to trace the outline of tradition and continuity in the modern Scottish theatre can do no better than starting with GUT. Since the demise of the company, only one theatre group, the 7:84

Scotland, has achieved a similar level of success. This is perhaps not surprising considering that 7:84 Scotland followed exactly in the footsteps of the GUT, by seeking on one hand a new social language of theatre and on the other hand, a new theatre-audience relationship. While in its prime, 7:84 Scotland repaid its indebtedness to GUT by revising the company's work for the benefit of the contemporary Scottish audience. This was during 7:84 Scotland's *Clydebuilt Season* of 1982. According to Elizabeth MacLennan, one of the founding members of 7:84 Scotland, *Clydebuilt Season* was 'to pay tribute to our popular theatre antecedents such as the Unity Theatre, the Bowhill Players, the Theatre Workshop and the Workers' Theatre Movement and to resurrect some of the then neglected socialist writers of the 20s, 30s, and 40s...' (MacLennan 1990 p.149).¹⁰

John Hill, who has researched into Glasgow Unity Theatre Company, and its works, describes what might have been the philosophical mooring of the company in the following words. 'For them, Scots drama had been a broken-backed effort unable to come to terms with the urban, lowland experience of most of the nation' (Hill 1978 p.28). This is corroborated and improved upon by Linda Mackenney:

Glasgow Unity's true origins lay in the independent Scottish popular, political theatre tradition which had enriched Scottish working class cultural life for twenty years or more. The new company had less in common with its British counterparts than with its Scottish precursors, such as the Fife Miner Players, formed by Joe Corrie, the Scottish miner-playwright, in the 1920s (McLeish 1985 p.7).

By indicating that the GUT 'had less in common with its British counterparts than with its Scottish precursors, such as the Fife Miner Players, formed by Joe Corrie,' Mackenney here returns us to that earlier point made by David Lacey, about the realist theatre having started much earlier in Scotland than is usually admitted by critics. When Mackenney and Lacey are taken together, and considered in conjunction with the successful revival by 7:84 Scotland, of

¹⁰ It can be said now in retrospect that even though *Clydebuilt Season* came after 7:84 Scotland had done the widely acclaimed *The Cheviot*, the company actually found, or created their Scottish antecedents in that *Clydebuilt Season*. Long after he had left 7:84 Scotland, for example, John McGrath, the founding director, went right back to [re] write *Ane Satyre of the Three (Four) Estaitis*, which was performed at the 1996 Edinburgh International Festival, drawing together almost everyone who had been involved in the

the early Scottish realist plays for the audiences of the 1980s, the picture obtained can be disturbing. It reveals, for example, that the achievements of the GUT may have been undeservedly underwritten. An extension of this is that the contributions which Glasgow and Scotland could be said to have made to the modern British theatre have been effaced. But as I argued at the beginning of this chapter, those issues are at the heart of an ideological complex: the recurring ideological relationship between Scotland and England.

Mackenny offers a small, if challenging, resolution to the recurring issue of continuity and tradition in Scottish theatre, when she links the roots of GUT to Joe Corrie and his Fife Miner Players. Indeed, if Joe Corrie created a newly indigenised form of theatre, it was the GUT players that consolidated and extended his achievement, by making popular realism into what might be described as an engaging autochthonal Scottish form. Loren Kruger points out in *The National Stage* that 'A comprehensive theory of the institution of theatre cannot ignore the continued dialectic between economic and political constraints and aesthetic norms governing theatre practice, as well as the discourses that represent one as the other' (Kruger 1992 p.13). GUT proved convincingly that intimacy between the institutional framework of theatre (place, economy of performance, status of performers) and the aesthetic logic of the performances offered within that framework are inseparable. As outlined by John Hill, GUT approached issues surrounding the 'dialectic between economic and political constraints and aesthetic norms governing theatre practice' frontally:

The response of Unity to ... would take two forms. On the one hand, some members have suggested that the choice of form was not an aesthetic or political one at all, but a technical one – in an absence of the skills and resources of a well-trained company the possibilities of dramatic expression were automatically circumscribed. The alternative strategy of, for example, Theatre Workshop (who played under their auspices in 1946) was familiar to them, but the technical equipment to reproduce it was lacking. On the other hand there would be an argument (not dissimilar from those of contemporary 'realists') that as a form realism was the one best suited to its circumstances, allowing rather than blocking as technical experiment might, a maximum contact and communication' (Hill 1978 p.30).

The GUT was started by 'ordinary working class people', that included ship and steel yard

old 7:84 Scotland company.

workers, miners, electricians, factory workers, shop assistants, clerical workers and typists, who also happened to be writers, directors, designers, musicians, actors and actresses' (McLeish 1985 p.7). These people came from different theatrical backgrounds, which were to prove useful, because when brought together, their individual sense of theatre was complementarily reoriented. The bulk of GUT membership had come from the ranks of the Workers Theatre Group, the Clarion Players, the Glasgow Players, the Transport Players, and the Jewish Institute Players, 'each with its own distinct traditions' (Hill 1977).

Although its formation had been part of the cultural expansion that saw the UK-wide rise in amateur theatre movements in the 1930s, the Glasgow Unity Theatre adopted a *conscientious* approach to theatre making from the beginning, and also left an open room for adaptation to the 'national circumstances' of Scotland. John Hill writes:

Being in Scotland it from the start became embroiled in concerns which could have no meaning for the rest of the Unity movement- that is to say, problems of 'Scottishness', and of what constituted a uniquely Scottish theatre and drama. As such its heritage lay as much in the number of attempts during the century to develop theatrical activity and a native dramatic tradition in Scotland (most notably through the Glasgow Repertory Theatre and the Scottish National Players) as in the working class cultural movements of the 1920s and 1930s... (Hill 1977).

Precisely because it nursed the ambition, as outlined by Hill above, to fuse the different, even if competing, aspects of the pre-existing 'national theatre' into one easily perceptible tradition, the GUT may now be spoken of as a kind of theatre laboratory. Since its activities were underwritten by a strong desire to develop an appropriate mode and form for the Scottish national drama, the company in effect had to refunction theatre. It adopted the strategy of 'stimulating the social and theatrical engagement' of an audience hitherto under-represented or unrepresented on the Scottish stage.

Art was by and large not a problem for Glasgow Unity – it was there, could be identified, and could be encouraged. The problem then was not the dominant definitions and understandings of art they had inherited, but rather the lack of access to that art for broad mass of people, and the consequent necessity of working class self-education and self-advancement (Hill 1978 p.29).

Here is another critic, who, like Campbell when describing the success of Corrie and the

Bowhill Players, has understated the theoretical implications of his own discovery. Hill might have been sounding complementary in his assessment that the problem faced by GUT was not of the identification or value of the art, but of the access to that art by the broad mass of people. Given that GUT declared its manifesto as 'a wider refurbishment of the traditional social imagery and 'ways of seeing'', which in real terms meant anti-kailyardery and reintroduction of 'the repressed components of the [national] culture' (Hill 1978 p.28), GUT also made a statement for the kind of art it felt was lacking, and which it wanted to produce. At the centre of the idea of art formulated by the GUT was an interchangeable vocabulary in which national-culture is working-class culture, and working-class politics is national-politics. The company in other words collapsed class and nation into one entity in its work. This in turn produced theatrical experiments, which at its most successful unsettled the conventional meanings of genre.

The 'national-culture is working-class culture, and working-class politics is national-politics' vocabulary could be seen as the informing principle in the GUT's two most successful plays, *The Gorbals Story* and *Men Should Weep*. Being models for GUT's successes, these two plays raise a number of questions, which are less about how GUT defined Scottish identity as they are about how theatre might instantiate the moment postcolonial resistance begins. The writers of the two plays in question proceeded on the basis of the GUT vocabulary that 'national-culture is working-class culture, and working-class politics is national-politics' or vice-versa, to present a theatrical picture and commentary of Scotland of their day. The more often performed of the two plays was *The Gorbals Story*. A brief look at the general and critical reception given to this play at the time, respectively in Scotland and England (London), reveal that while the play had been received on its own terms in Scotland, its reception in England turned its performance there into an unconscious 'act of cultural resistance'. The two different receptions demonstrated vividly how the linguistic and cultural differences between Scotland and England also informed the larger question of how England had traditionally exercised the authority of naming, or cultural hegemony over Scottish letters. This also means that we are

able to clarify the 'hidden' cultural status of Scottish writings as acts of resistance to that hegemony.

In Scotland, the general tone for the reception of *The Gorbals Story* treated the play as both unique and an example of what the persistently yearned-for national drama ought to be. Some reviewers went as far as speaking of the play, as indeed of other plays already put up by GUT, as non-hegemonic affirmation of national/cultural continuity. One reviewer commented on what he saw as an unwise attempt to restrict the meaning and message of the play thus:

It's a pity, I think, that it should be introduced as a play with a political and social moral—a strong argument in support of the squatters. The message is there, of course; nobody could miss it even if all the topical gags were cut away. But the real point about THE GORBALS STORY is that its characters are living people and not the sort of cardboard figures which propagandists are apt to make use of (McLeish 1985 p.97).

In England on the contrary, while the work was praised for its energetic pacing, there was no mistaken the discomfort felt by the metropolitan critics, some of whom felt that the play caused grievous bodily harm to the rules of genre. Thus a play that was an example of a living theatre in Glasgow and the rest of Scotland suddenly became an embarrassing experiment. The central concern of the criticism *The Gorbals Story* was the perceived violence it had done to genre rules. It was not the case that the London critics evaded the questions of the dynamics behind the play, or the cultural logic that propelled the works of the GUT, but actually erected a barrier between themselves and the play. John Hill has attacked the English attitude, rather harshly in my view, that 'Unity's Scottishness placed it for the English theatre more in the realms of exotica than realism' (Hill 1978 30). It is perhaps more accurate to suggest that the English reacted from within an already established assimilative colonial 'structure of feeling'. When about a decade later, John Osborne emerged, producing the same realist plays, along with the other notable playwrights whose works have since defined what is now widely celebrated as the advent of a new movement in British theatre, no critic was able to remember that something similar had been seen previously. As I pointed out above (see footnote 1), when the 'new wave', as the Osborne-led 'new theatre' at the London West End subsequently became known, unfolded, one of its defining characteristics for critics was the **Englishness** of its language (See

Cohn 1991). What the GUT was able to accomplish with *The Gorbals Story*, on one hand, was to have assaulted the integrity of prescriptive genre by generating works for which the then genre vocabulary could not find easy accommodation. On the other hand, the company was able to demonstrate with the play that there is after all an interface between genre and culture, and that genre is as useful as any other device for establishing cultural 'difference'.

To turn attention to Scotland itself, we will find that implicit in the way the GUT was able to assert itself as playing for and representing the whole of Scotland was an assertion that the Scottish nation-space was *liminal*, to borrow the words of Homi K. Bhabha. This is to say in essence that 'no political ideologies could claim transcendent or metaphysical authority for themselves' (Bhabha 1993 p.148). For example, in placing assent on the national life as *being lived*, *The Gorbals Story* attempts to transcend all the existing competing notions of Scotland, and projecting itself as a new textual reading of the national culture. *The Gorbals Story* and *Men Should Weep*, which came later as its female-focused counterpart, could be read as GUT's 'performative intervention' in the ideological contestation of the national space.

Through Glasgow's Eyes: City Consciousness and National Subjectivities in Realist Theatre

More than any other Scottish city, Glasgow, the home of the GUT, has been used repeatedly as the fictional space for the enunciation of dramas of unceasing reflections on the problems of urban life in Scotland. Even though such dramas have become prominent in the national repertoire, they have also aroused mixed feelings and, sometimes, severe criticism. Randall Stevenson notes for example that phrases such as 'urban kailyard' or 'industrial kailyard' had been invented to deride 'plays set in Scottish cities' (Stevenson 1996 pp104-5).

In as much as such derisions of the urban drama are misconceived, the motivation for the terms chosen in describing those plays ought to be set in its context. The derisive phrases

'urban kailyard', 'industrial kailyard' come against the background of the usual contestation of social space, which has always dominated Scottish culture. Kailyard, as I pointed out in chapter one has not levitated from nowhere. It also emerged from the nineteenth-century efforts to create a Scottish national distinctiveness, which many believed to have either disappeared or was disappearing following the incorporation of Scotland into the British super state. Even if kailyard ended being incompetent at doing so, its emergence nevertheless puts it on the same pedestal as other similar attempts in all postcolonial societies. The question of national identity often walks side by side with that of national identity. Although national distinctiveness can be described in terms of language and things like, say, the perceived mien and public temperament of a 'national group'— characteristics often termed cultural, national identity is still a psychological and nebulous concept. National identity can be a fact, but it is a fact fuelled by continuities between past and present, on-going constellation with events, and above all the material culture, which defines the possessors of the identity. Behind the criticisms of the urban plays as 'urban kailyard' or 'industrial kailyard' are deeper motives that are aimed at challenging a whole range of 'phenomenological' issues built around what version of Scotland should be acceptable. Describing these plays as 'urban kailyard' or 'industrial kailyard' is asking, in an indirect way, whether the Scottish national distinctiveness is best promoted by choosing the Highlands or the Lowlands versions of Scottishness? If the basis of the rejection of ordinary kailyard in the past was because of its promotion of an Highlands heathery image of Scotland, would the promotion of the experiences of the urbanised modern Scotland, often sensationalised in the poor housing conditions and health and poverty problems of cities such as Glasgow be a suitable replacement? Whatever the merits of the arguments on both sides, to the cultural sociologist, the central issue involved is not as much as about where to locate the heart of Scotland as about the unbridgeable Scottish national antinomy. Yet, the embrace of realism in Scottish drama has made possible the reconciliation of some of the more divisive elements of that antinomy. For example, in his defence of urban plays, Randall Stevenson, points out that:

The vision and energy which results may not be the most subtle the theatre can offer,

but it is nevertheless fundamental to its powers, enabling audiences to engage more fully, even outwith the theatre, with experiences they have found so deeply implicated in its spectacle (Stevenson 1996 pp104-5).

The experiences often so deeply implicated in the spectacle offered by urban drama are those that link the people, the subjects of such plays, with the space they inhabit. Such spectacle offers a textual re-reading of the social landscape, and also a critique of the psychological ways the landscape is often imagined. If Glasgow has become the model of the 'urban landscape' in Scottish realist theatre, this is because no other Scottish city has been dominated to the same degree as Glasgow, by the complexities and ambiguities of Scotland's participation in the British Empire on one hand and industrial capitalism on the other. But it is also a city that depicts how the traditional relationship between Scotland and its people was thoroughly rebuilt on a relationship between capitalism and imperialism. This is how Katie Trumpener describes Glasgow:

An early node of imperial trade (and therefore one of Britain's earliest industrial centres), Glasgow's boom periods were punctuated by recurrent, devastating crashes, often precipitated by events in the colonies. The tobacco trade, the first basis of the city's mercantile fortunes, collapsed in the wake of the American Revolutionary War, and the crash of the 1790s was precipitated by the collapse of a major Glasgow West India House. Attempting to corner the salve trade, Alexander Huston and Company transported thousands of Africans to the West Indies. There proved to be no market for so many slaves; many of them starved to death, the West India house declared bankruptcy, and the Glasgow banks failed.¹¹⁴ As Glasgow's economic life made visible, the enormous financial gains of empire were matched not only by enormous financial risks but also by the erosion of social stability and moral values (Trumpener 1997 p.279).

Glasgow is then a microscopic representation of the paradoxes of the economic aspect of the Empire business as well as of the industrial capitalism that grew so successfully in its wake. Yet, Glasgow's good fortune also brought forward some of the depressing characteristics later associated with it. If the city enjoyed the boom and the affluence which empire brought, it also had to contend with the bruises, against which it could no longer insure itself once it had enthusiastically embraced the project of Empire. The bruises occurred in the form of the uncontrollable alteration of 'social stability and moral values', which Trumpener writes about

above. Glasgow's industries, and its famed industrial prowess whose outlets into the wider world was facilitated by the Empire, were also magnets that drew 'alien' and 'migrant' settlers into the city (Edward 1993). Before the 1707 Act of Union, which paved the way for Scottish merchants to engage in aggressive overseas trade, the population of Glasgow was around twelve thousand. In 1770, an Empire induced thriving commerce had raised the population to thirty thousand. By 1801, this has risen to seventy-seven thousand. Fifty years later, in 1851, the population was three hundred and fifty-nine thousand. In 1901, at full blast of industrialisation, it was seven hundred and fifty thousand. Such was the population pressure brought by migration into Glasgow that the city, which was affectionately called 'Second City of the Empire' in the nineteenth century was being described in 1917 as 'a clotted mass of slums' and 'Cancer of Empire' (Edward 1993 p.41). Although due primarily to industrialisation, the accelerated growth in the population of Glasgow sooner unmasked the hidden side of Scotland's status, as both a nation and part of the British imperial state. Eric Hobsbawm summarises that 'hidden side' very well when he writes that the lack of a native entrepreneurial class, except for the very small ranks of the landed aristocracy, exposed the whole of Scotland to an unbridled capitalism in the wake of industrialisation. According to Hobsbawm, the new merchants being created by Empire 'trade and industry', aware of the boom and burst nature of the old economy, so much so that they ensured that wages were kept moderately low. Their strategy was to create a situation that made Scotland 'retained the advantages of a low-cost producer' (Hobsbawm 1968 p.258). Put differently, this means that a new framework of wealth making was imposed on an already stratified social structure, creating further stratification.

The commercial and later industrial expansion required working hands, and Scotland was, and remains, a sparsely populated country.. The labour shortage 'was eventually remedied by a mass immigration' from both Highlands and Ireland. Each wave of migration came with its own history, and every migrant, Highlander, Irish and much more later, others, settled into the framework of national antinomy already on the grounds. Expansion also required housing for the workers, and everything else, churches, roads, and food. Not all of this could be conjured

into being, although they were all necessitated by Empire-induced commercial and industrial expansion. Glasgow was very slow in developing the kind of intense commercial activity in the form of shop-keeping and related things that partly defined London as the 'First City of Empire'. Much depended on agriculture and Industry, and these were the spheres where these migrants made contributions. Such immigration can be expected to have had an impact on and consequences for Glasgow life. It is not surprising, for example, that the non-acquiescent spirit of Jacobinism fed directly into the confluence of factors reshaping Glasgow from the mid-eighteenth century, and partly fuelled the popular radicalism with which the city is sometimes rightly associated. If those who saw virtues in imperial adventures touted Glasgow as their city, it was also the city of those who were victims of the same imperial intrusion and occupation that the 'natives' wanted to celebrate. All this represents one aspect of the Glasgow complexity. It is a city that is both ancient and new at the same time. If its ancient pedigree gives it the right to claim to have a character, a distinctiveness that sets it apart from anywhere else, its datable newness, symbolises confluences of history, slavery, immigration and of course industrial expansion. If it is easy to grasp the newness of Glasgow in terms of its 'complicated modernity', the cultural effects of that newness remains contentious for all the parts involved as they indeed remain unavoidable issues of consideration in the sociology of Scottish national culture and national identity. Another way of seeing all this, perhaps is to argue that For example, in the case of the Highlanders, settling in Glasgow post-Clearances was less a haven as finding a new site from which to remap memory, and to recover from recent brutal experiences. These were tasks that they could not settle into immediately because they were stepping into a place whose vocabulary had predeterminedly separated them (Highlanders) from itself (Lowlands), both spatially and developmentally. This point is brought out, for example in *The Gorbals Story*, where Hector, the Highlander character, tells Peggie:

People smile. After twenty years in Glsagow I still se them smile when they hear the lilt of the Islands in a man's tongue—you can see them sendin' searching looks into your face an' them all ready to laugh because you're a Highland man.

(McLeish 1985 p.19)

In the circumstances, the relationship of the Highlanders to Glasgow was obviously constructed in antagonistic terms. Whatever its kailyard sentiments, the early century play, *Campbell of Kilmohr*, by J.A Fergusson's, which attempts to 'contrast the integrity of the Highlander with the dishonesty and roguery of the Lowland' (Hutchison 1998), confirms and consecrates the antagonism the Highlander encountered on his initial arrival. But all this apart, the real historical peculiarity is that Scotland was involved more fully than many a nation in industrialisation, and acquisition from the Empire. Glasgow bears the telltale experience of that involvement. Hence, the city's experience can be more representative at a national level than say that of Dundee or Edinburgh, which have also played substantial roles in the making of Scotland.

To return to the presence of Glasgow in urban Scottish theatre, those like Randall Stevenson, who continue to insist on the vitality of urban plays, and suggesting that they may contain more meaningful stories about national origin than most other stories buried in antiquity are performing the realist job by other means. They are seeking, rather like the realist dramatists, what truths those historically verifiable, shared national experience hold for the meaning of nationhood. I see such critics as attempting to demarcate between what in an earlier chapter I described as expressive and instrumental cultural/national identity. Glasgow, like those plays which purloin its experiences to make statements on the nation, aggregates a Scottish experience of instrumental remaking of the national culture in many ways.

That the Glasgow Unity Theatre appropriated the city as its platform for the new practice of 'national theatre' can be seen as another fulfilment of the politics of realism. Since the GUT was interested in developing a consensual acceptance of 'national theatre', it was natural that it looked for the space that most easily aggregated the sense of national.

The Gorbals Story

The immediate narrative space of *The Gorbals Story* is that area of Glasgow from which the play takes its title, the Gorbals. For the greater part of the 1920s through the 60s, it was

practically impossible to distinguish which was the more famous between the Gorbals and Glasgow, notwithstanding that the former was located within the latter. The Gorbals was the subject of considerable interest and attraction to virtually every professional, from the novelist to the opera-writer; the filmmaker, the oral historian; the sociologists to the community worker, and even the dilettante politicians. Originally a small village settlement, the Gorbals grew with the changing fortunes of Glasgow from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. Its first transformation was from a village settlement into a respectable residential suburb, occupied by Glasgow's rich merchants. When these merchants prospered the more, and sought bigger and more opulent houses, they turned their Gorbals dwellings into a mass of tenement buildings, to be occupied by those working in the burgeoning industries and shipyards of the Clyde (Bryant 1982). This was how the Gorbals came to be populated massively by manual and factory workers and their families. Soon, the Gorbals, especially that of the 1940s, which is the one mirrored in *The Gorbals Story*, began to constitute a different and parallel world from the rest of Glasgow. The Gorbals was characterised less by genteelness as by volatility. It was a world defined essentially by work, and possibly excesses—from religious excesses to that of football; excesses of pleasure to that of hardships, of hard drinking to that of hard crime. Macho and machismo dominated, with men joining the work conveyor-belt from their very early age, barely out of their teens. In their spare times, which were normally weekends and public holidays, these men sought pleasure in their drinking, argument and brawling. On other times, they sought distractions in ancient rites and hostilities (Glasser 1986; Faley 1990).¹¹ The visibility of those social and cultural characteristics that defined the Gorbals was heightened by the mongrel complexity of its population—aliens and migrants—pulled together by Glasgow industries.

Because of the peculiar concentration of workers, majority of whom were aliens to Glasgow as they were to the country itself, the Gorbals offered an alternative model of Scotland.

¹¹ These two biographies present a warmer picture of the Gorbals, which contrasts sharply with that found in the 1935 novel *No Mean City* by A. McArthur and H. Kingsley Long,

Consequently, it is no accident that some of the most suggestive comments about the intents of *The Gorbals Story* (McLeish 1985),¹² are made within the opening first three minutes of the play. These comments, apart from setting the tone for the biting sarcasm that pervades the play, are also readable as deliberate undermining of the institutionalised definition of Scotland. And by rendering the speeches embodying those comments, the characters are relocating the definition of *nation* within a working class anticipatory nostalgia for a more humanising society. For example, many critics have, in their analyses of the play, repeatedly pointed out the centrality of the following lines at the beginning of the play:

Ach, Scotland doesna mean much tae Glesca folk, Hector –
yon pictures they print on boxes o’ shortbread – big blue
hills and coos that need a hair cut (21-2)

This is Peggie talking to Hector. And these lines bring their long conversation, which is what the play opens with to an end. The conversation between the two also integrates their personal histories, which, one suspects are used as a kind of reflective mirror for the on-going discussion, outwith the stage, about the nation. Hence, it is a conversation that covers as many issues as the two are able to think about. These range from life on the Islands to emigration; abandonment of land that ought to have been cultivated for food with which to feed the people to Means Test, and the amusing, but deceitful ways of politicians such as ‘one of thae Scottish Nationalist fellas’.

Although Peggie and Hector are supposed to represent an aspect of the Scottish national antinomy, one a Lowlander, the other a Highlander, nevertheless, they appear to share a common belief and are even willing to mock those who play on that division. The fact that both of them have ‘rural’ backgrounds makes their dismissal of the ‘Celtic-twilit, pastoral landscape’ notion of Scotland more convincing.

HECTOR: Sometimes I wish I could have gone back. But I
wouldn't be much use on the land now. I've
forgotten the trade, Peggie.

PEGGIE: Aye, you're kinda like a farmer's boy, Hector.
Och, farmin's a hard life. I wance got the

¹² All references are to this text.

chance to go to Canada when I was a lassie.
Yon miles and miles o' long grass and no' a
tram caur in sight. Naw, no' me.

HECTOR: A man could get on in Canada. A man could
get on in Scotland, too - if things were put to
rights. Handin' over our country to people who
let the bracken strangle it, so that it's only fit for
sheep to live on. When you get on the train to
come to Glasgow, your eye grows weary looking
at the miles and miles of good land lying fallow,
and it's so easy to pretend it's lyin' fat an' sleepy
under a heavy crop. And when you come into
the Gorbals, the people are walking about with a
hungry look in their hearts, so you want to rush
up to them and say - look up there, up there,
there's acres and acres all lyin' useless.

PEGGIE: Its no' acres we want in Glesca, Hector — it's
bakers, just like yoursel'.

HECTOR: I'm boring you, Peggie?

PEGGIE: (*Putting tumip in soup*). Don't be daft, Hector.
I once listened tae one o' thae Scottish
Nationalist fellas - he had on a kilt and was
fair gaun his dinger about Scotland - terrify ye,
listenin' tae him. Staunin' up there like Wallace,
fair bashin' it oot o' him. My, it was a lovely
kilt he had on - it must have cost a lot o'
money.

HECTOR: (*Coming down from sink*). Aye, people are tired
of Guy Fawksin' - the longer they live the
bigger the scunner they get. You know you can't
educate people by telling them they're damn
fools.

When Peggie says matter-of-factly that 'Its no' acres we want in Glesca, Hector — it's bakers, just like yoursel', it is an emphatic rejection, by the play, of the idea of a Scotland of a beautiful landscape, but socially deprived people. The two characters are therefore communicating a disapproval of the material squalor that that frames the theatrical story of the play, while also expressing a longing for an alternative. The disapproval is a critique of industrial life, which in the views of the two characters turns people into an extension of the machinery that they operate. For example, when Hector offers a detour of how life is lived in the Highlands, he concludes that it is 'a better but hard life.' Yet, he is not offering a romantic picture of the Highlands, for he is comparing working on the farm in the Highlands, or of going

to the seas in Islands with working in the Glasgow factories. He finds agricultural work more ennobling, partly because the result is measurable in the quality and quantity of harvests. Work in the factory is however different. It is a conveyor belt and one man's labour is hardly distinguishable from that of the next person. Peggie, obviously an urbanite, learns about the Highlands through Hector, and for her the picture is not any different from that offered by everyday life in Glasgow. Both see themselves as being caught up in the altering circumstances of their different native landscapes. Thus, their reflections offer a picture of their own individual consciousness as well as an awareness of the social and cultural dislocations occurring all around them. Both seem to have accepted the inevitability of these dislocations, although Hector remains conscience-stricken at having been drawn away from his rural home. This is not the effect of any nostalgia, but a personal reflection on the anonymity of city life. Peggie is less troubled about the anonymity of city life, and while she may be lacking in deep knowledge of how things work, she is, like nearly every other character in the play, very sensitive about her immediate social and economic conditions. This is what makes their conversation to dovetail frequently into events and occurrences in the social political arena:

(MRS REILLY enters and puts knickers on pulley).

PEGGIE: I see by the papers that somebody says there should be about ten million folk in Scotland. Is that a lot?

HECTOR: *(Smiling)*. Aye, it's wan or two!

PEGGIE: Well, I hope they don't bring them in tae the Gorbals - I think there must be about ten million weans up this close. That stair's terrible. It's nae sooner done than it's needin' doin' ower again.

Mrs. Reilly's act of hanging knickers on pulley, which is located in the central living place of the house, that also houses the communal kitchen, is probably unanticipated by Hector and Peggie. It is, however, a theatrical intervention at that moment of their conversation as it becomes the metaphor for how the population of the Gorbals is not only overrunning the facilities, but also how it is impossible for every individual who lives in the slum housing to

have the minimum of privacy. It is through metaphorical interventions such as this that the play's actions switch from being a mirror of the Gorbals one moment to being that of Scotland itself the next. Notice, for example, how the pun on breeding in the Gorbals is used to contrast the national population! What do all these tell us about *The Gorbals Story*? I would think that it is a play that has gone beyond its own immediate scope to become a disruptive syntax, about the perception and description of the national life. On the face of it, *The Gorbals Story* is far from being a play with any interest in the debate about 'national spirit' and 'national culture' or image of Scotland. But when its discursive nature is set against the background of the political discussion of the time, it becomes implicated in that debate. This is where and how the play responds positively to the politics of realism. In its depiction of everyday life, it presents a picture of a national community that seems occluded from the political debate of the day.

With respect to plot and narrative, *The Gorbals Story* bears close resemblance to Joe Corrie's *In Time O' Strife*, in that neither has a central plot or any outstanding character(s), who could be taken as their main hero(es) or heroine(s). But nevertheless, and very much like *In Time O' Strife*, the play is able to sustain its narrative. *The Gorbals Story* is at once about everybody and anybody who has had to share in the grimness of daily life in the Gorbals part of Glasgow. The personal individual and the social predicaments meet so often that the dividing line between them becomes impossible to distinguish. The more intimate the meeting of the personal and the social predicaments gets in the play, the more the speeches take on the appearance of literal reproduction of actualities as opposed to metaphors. How the characters of the play are drawn also has significance for the way the play's verbal metaphor conflates with its visual representation. Each of the characters, as Linda Mackenney points out, represents a segment of the population, the sum of which makes up the entire Glasgow community (McLeish 1985 pp12-3). These are characters from distant and different parts of the country and of the world, now mingling and who are now compelled to submit their inherited 'local characteristics' to the sensational ways of the city. It is this submission, or the weakening by the city of ancestral bonds, that we find in Act II (pp47-9). This is where the Reilly couple learns, to their

horror, of a developing romance between their daughter, Nora, and Johnnie. Until that moment, the Reillies and Johnnie are distinguished by their accent as Irish. Apart from that, there is nothing else to tell them apart, except of course that Johnnie is at times rather brash. For any audience outside Glasgow the reaction of the Reilly couple to the news of their daughter's tryst with Johnnie would have seemed no more than a good piece of theatre. For the Glasgow audience, however, the mere hint of a relationship between the two is hinting at something else, which is the sectarian bigotry that was so common in the west coast of Scotland until the 1970s, and which repeatedly produced communal violence. It is scenes such as this that gives credence to what Randall Stevenson says about urban plays, that they possess the power 'enabling audiences to engage more fully, even outwith the theatre, with experiences they have found so deeply implicated in its spectacle.' Anywhere but Glasgow and the rest of the west coast of Scotland, Mr. Reillies's gruesome incentive to murder would have been a good piece of theatre. When issues of daily social concern are so dramatised in a way that the audiences are able to make instant connections with it as a reflection of the life they endure, we see the vitality of popular realism.

In *The Gorbals Story*, the vitality often draws attention to the discursive aspect of the play. For example, in the succeeding scene to the one described above, we are brought face to face with the misery of family life, in the story of Francis Potter. A drink-sodden Potter announces that his wife is putting to bed, when in fact the woman is dying at childbirth. Potter may look a model of the alienated and self-pitying working-class male who lives in psychological self-denial, what strikes us from his predicament, however, is not his own position as the circumstance of his wife who is dying tragically. The circumstances of Potter and his wife cast an ominous shadow over those of young and newly married couple, Alec Cameron and his wife, since both are known to be expecting their first child. The fears of the two young couple, hinted at in the stage direction, are exacerbated when Magdalene comes in to announce the death of Potter's wife. Mrs Mutrie, speaking to no one in particular, summarises the paradox of the aspirations and hopelessness of the young couple, when she says:

A' this talk about a new world an' people
canna' get a place tae sleep. (p.52)

The speaker maintains the personal-public dialectics of the play by connecting her observation to the language of 'progress' being heard in public discussions. A few more dialogues, Peggie enters. Then the full scale of the crisis upstairs (Mrs Potter's death) begins to dawn as Peggie, already affected by the experience, confirms what is going on.

PEGGIE: (Nods). The doctor's there, tae. (Puts her hand
 across her forehead). Poor people havin' weans
 is the saddest thing in the world.
 (MAGGIE drops her gaze. ...)(p.53)

The overwhelming conflation of verbal metaphor and visual representation in *The Gorbals Story* is, of course, an arresting strategy of theatre that works successfully. Apart from bringing out the flavour of speech and local humour with which the audiences can readily identify, it also unleashes the force of a good theatre. Let us take the final scene of the play, which apart from continuing with the sort of conflation I have described, also contains a flippant if not insurrectionary re-writing of Calvinism. This scene is one of the most enjoyable in the play and it is worth recalling for its slow dramatic effects:

MR MUTTRIE: I didna – I didna post the coupon.
MRS MUTTRIE: (Sadly). What?
MR MUTTRIE: I didna post the coupon. (He runs his hands
 through his hair). I bought you a fish supper wi'
 the money.
MRS MUTTRIE: (Sits down, puts the two cups and saucer on her
 lap as though they had become too heavy to
 hold). A fish supper! (She looks at him and
 smiles sadly). Poor Wullie! Ye tried that hard. (p.82)

The plotless structure of *The Gorbals Story* necessitates that the events of this scene occur *deus ex machinae* to bring the play to an end. From the perspective of the play's theatricality, however, I suspect that the scene was designed to get all the characters onto the stage, to unleash comic *bonhomie*, which finally proclaims the metatheatrical character of *The Gorbals Story*.

Men Should Weep

The Gorbals Story, after its Scotland-wide success, naturally became the standard by which everybody wanted to assess GUT's activities. But sadly, it is a play whose metatheatrical nature imposes heavy demands on both producers and players. It soon became apparent that it is a play whose rhythm and power can be sustained only through a non-pretentious acting style and panache. That this awareness became lacking in the subsequent production of the play may have accounted for the disappointment felt by a reviewer for the *Glasgow Herald* who saw the play for the second time in Glasgow in 1948. This was after GUT's London tour. This was what the reviewer wrote:

When Robert McLeish wrote THE GORBALS STORY and it was presented by Glasgow Unity Theatre about three years ago, audiences saw a cross-section of Gorbals tenement life, the motif being the housing problem, garnished with native humour that rose naturally from the situation. Since then, however, virtue has gone out of the play. The dominant theme is now swamped by laughter, and ... THE GORBALS STORY as it is presented... is played almost throughout for laughs. The characters now have an air of caricature; indeed, the play as it could be entitled 'Fun in the Gorbals'. It is a pity, for in its original presentation it was not only good drama but a social document of some value (McLeish 1985 p.109).

This loss of reputation by *The Gorbals Story* seemed to have affected the reception of a later play by Ena Lamont Stewart. *Men Should Weep* has been described generally as a kind of sequel to *The Gorbals Story*. But while it may have lacked the bonhomie of *The Gorbals Story*, it still retains the same sense of realistic portrayal of working class life, and therefore an important piece of theatre in its own right. Alasdair Cameron, a respected critic and scholar of Scottish theatre, once remarked that *Men Should Weep* 'is often misleadingly described as 'realistic'' (Cameron 1986 p.33). It is a remark suggesting that there is more to the surface simplicity of the play. *Men Should Weep* is indeed a realistic play. However, its realism also contains a sleight-of-hand examination of gender relationships amidst the poverty of working class life. This may have put the play ahead of the average realistic theatre of its days, but not decidedly outside the realm of realism. With the increase in the scholarly study and appreciation

of the modern Scottish theatre, *Men Should Weep* is being restored to its rightful canonical status as arguably the first feminist work in Scottish theatre (McMillan 1986; Bain 1996).¹³ The ideological 'deception' in *Men Should Weep* is located in its central plot and action, both of which the contemporary critic will find dated and also consistent with the ideological belief behind the theatrical realism of the 1940s. That ideological belief was the urge to recreate on the stage life as it was being lived, which for the radical dramatists, also meant bringing the experience of the under/unrepresented segments of the national populace to the stage.

Unlike *The Gorbals Story*, there are recognisable plot and story lines in *Men Should Weep*. The central plot is about a family, whose breadwinner is out of job, as a result of which the condition of poverty in which the family lives become escalated. The burden of keeping the family together then falls on the *woman*, who is the play's central character. But notwithstanding the humour and the carefulness with which Ena Lamont Stewart sets out to handle the basic story of family coping with everyday poverty, *Men Should Weep* looks like a play rooted in an anticipatory belief that 1940s gender relationships was in want of a revolution. The claim by Ena Lamont Stewart that the sexual politics in the play came rather naturally (McMillan 1986 p.71), goes to confirm one of the points I made earlier about realism always having a politics of implication.

The 'personal is political' approach to sexual politics in *Men Should Weep* is complemented by a parallel theme of conflict between youth and old age, implicating a clash of ideas and values between new and old. It is in pooling all these ideas together that the play is able to transcend the limitations of the early form of realism. The two complementary but

¹³ It needs to be pointed out that this play has gone through two transformations, at least as far as I have been able to establish. I presume that it was the first version that Alasdair Cameron describes as 'Temperance drama, full of black humour.' Based on Cameron's analysis, I think it is safe to conclude that the title of that version, *Poor Men's Riches* was also indicative of the pessimistic strains that ran through it. Surprisingly, there is no reference whatsoever to the title in any of the appraisals of the work of the GUT in the 1940s. The likelihood therefore is that that earliest version must itself have been transformed into the title we all now seem to know well. Sadly, it is difficult to tell how much changes, apart from the way the play ended, took place between that earliest version and its successor, which must have been the version performed in the 1940s. The better-known version today is that 'revised and in part re-written 1974'. Apart from being the version brought to life to great acclaim by Giles Havergal in 1970, this version would appear to have taken in a substantially fresh view of the subject with which the play

parallel ideas of sexual politics and conflict between youth and old age serve as the basis for four of the five main characters of the play, namely, Maggie, Isa, John and Alec to be placed symmetrically, while Jenny, the fifth main character, is kept out of the symmetry. Jenny is also the character in whom the competing wills that separate the others are unified. In terms of the bolder view held by the playwright, Jenny represents the vision of a new gender relationship, albeit a relationship whose attainment can be made possible only when women accept to distance themselves from the existing values of their society. This is the message of the 'confrontation' between Jenny and her aunt, Lilly towards the end of the play:

LILY Ben the back room wi the midwife, likely. (PAUSE) It's as weel ye came tae yer senses; yon's no the way tae tak oot o yer troubles; a river. But ye're daein fine noo? Ye merriet?

JENNY No.

LILY O h. Livin in sin, as they ca it these days, eh?

JENNY (SUDDENLY FLARING UP) Aye, if ye want tae ca it sin! I don't. The man I'm livin wi is kind, an generous.

LILY Oh aye, we can see that. We've had an eye-fu o yer wages o sin.

MAGGIE (MOURNFUL) Aw Jenny, I wisht ye'd earned it.

LILY (COARSE LAUGH) Oh, she'll hae earned it, Maggie. On her back. Lily!

MAGGIE

LILY So the Bible's a wrang, is it? the wages o sin's nae deith; it's fancy hair-dos an a swanky coat an pure silk stockings.

JENNY You seem tae ken yer Bible, Auntie Lily. I never pretended tae. But I'm Happy, an I'm makin *him* happy. We've a nice wee flat in a clean district, wi trees an wee gardens.

LILY A wee love-nest oot west! Great! Juist great -till yer tired business man gets tired o you an ye're oot on yer ear.

JENNY Well, you hevnae changed, Auntie Lily. I've got tae laugh at you.

LILY Laugh awa. I'n no mindin. I've kept ma self-respect.

JENNY Aye. An that's about a ye've got.

Jenny's character transformation at the end of the play becomes an ideological necessity whose deeper meaning is about the subtlety of new gender relationship and the knowledge required for bringing it about. Jenny speaks genuinely about the moral choice she is making, but in the simplicity of her mind, she lets it be known that she has outgrown the exuberance of youth. Her newly acquired views of the world are a direct challenge to the biblical moralism of her aunt Lilly. For Jenny, male-female relationship is not a simple matter of the female preserving her

deals, and also made some careful character changes to drive that message home.

chastity or described in simple moralism. Lily is convention-bound, and for that she is now lost between simple moralities and personal essentialism, in a changing world. Although she is able to recollect how proudly she 'went oot respectable! No wi a the riff-raff o the toon, an a dressed up like a bloomin tart wi peroxide hair', and that 'I'm wantin nae man's arms roon me. They're a dirty beasts', Lilly is still fundamentally a sad and unhappy person. Even though Lilly is presenting herself as being common-sensical, her views suggest the mind of a cynical old maid. As Maggie pointedly tells her 'Lilly, ye're mind's twisted. You canna see a man as a man. Ye've got them a lumped together. Ye're daft!'

There exists a gulf of difference between the world of the older women and the younger ones. Although the older women enjoy and even admire the assertiveness of the younger women, the latter remain full of suspicion for them. This is because the younger women see the older ones as being complicit to their own oppression.

JENNY AND ISA LOOK AT EACH OTHER, LIFT THEIR SHOULDERS, HEAVE
MOCK SIGHS.

JENNY (TO ISA) See Whit I mean, Isa?

THEY BOTH SLOWLY SURVEY THE OTHER WOMEN, LOOKING THEM
OVER, UP AND DOWN AND SHAKING THEIR HEADS.

ISA Aye Jenny. I see whit ye mean nae
 Ach well. . . they canna help it. (TO ALEC WHO HAS
 FOUND HIMSELF A CHAIR OF SOME SORT) Get aff that an
 let me sit doon!

ALEC No, I'll no! I had it first. (FOR A BRIEF MOMENT HE FACES
 HER BOLDLY, THEN HE WILTS AND REMOVES HIMSELF
 TO LEAN MOROSELY AGAINST THE WALL).

MRS BONE (ENVIOUSLY) My, Isa! I could dae wi a leaf out o your book!
 ISA GIVES HER A LONG HARD STARE.

ISA Oh aye You're the yin that lives up the stair?Ye
 lost the battle years ago, hen.

However, this gulf in perception between the older and younger generations is somewhat also connected to the beliefs held by each of the generations. Where the older women hold to a strong sense of communal association, the younger ones are more inclined towards radical individualism. This contrast, of course lays the play open to many other interpretations. For

example, are the young women to be seen as path-breakers or simply iconoclastic individuals who are determined to fight their ways out of poverty and social deprivation? The play offers no direct answer, except that suggested by the character of Isa. At once a wide-eyed teenager who runs away from home and into marriage to escape a life of poverty, and since then a sort of *femme fatale*. Isa is perhaps the most complex character in the play. She once tells her mother-in-law that 'A woman disnae respect a man that's nae a man' (Act II). And later in the same scene, while speaking about her husband with his parents, she tells them, 'I like a man tae be a man. Staun up for hissel.' This line returns in different forms whenever Isa and Alec are alone and quarrelling, as they do throughout the play, and until she disappears from the actions. Isa may not have been intended as the model of a feminist heroine, but she is, warts and all, an anticipated radical figure who wishes to submit to the 'usual', male-dominated social order, as long as she is able to retain her person-subjectivity. To that extent, Lamont Stewart has in the creation of Isa's character, perhaps unknowingly, attempted to shift the terms of the passage from sex-role stereotyping to a new female subjectivity. Isa and her sister-in-law, Jenny, are both able to gain and establish authority over their individual reality by rebelling against the dominant construction of reality. It is more intriguing that the two young women are rebelling against the same 'reality', although taking different approaches. Isa is already settled within the reality of marriage, but walks out of it, while Jenny goes out to live with a man, but insist that she is not doing, nor would do so on self-subjugatory terms.

What the tow young women think or do about marriage is central to the meaning of *Men Should Weep* because the more the symmetry of the play develops, the more Isa becomes a younger and less encumbered Maggie. In other words, it is Isa, the daughter-in-law, and not Jenny the daughter, who represents the youth Maggie has lost. This is an unusual plot development, but it is a credible one, in that it projects the complexity and ambivalence that define any woman's life. Isa is a lazy, wide-eyed teenager who had believed that marriage would sustain her in a moderate existence, but she soon discovers that her husband is useless at making that possible. She then turns to berating and belittling him. Nothing is known or said

about Isa's background, but given her expectations about her marriage, and what she says about her husband, the conclusion may be drawn that she is a character who is faced with choosing between a spiritual place and a place defined for her by the convention of marriage. Finding the spiritual place unattainable, Isa rejects the place that is defined for her by the convention of marriage. Her walking out on Alec may have shattered him, but there is nothing in their relationship to compel anybody's sympathy for Alec.

Magie's relationship with Isa is rooted in suspicions, which makes her less than accommodating towards the younger woman. But this is not without reasons. Maggie sees Isa as the mirror image of what she (Maggie) had been—look, spirit and character, and still wonders how family life has destroyed all. Isa's presence is therefore a remembrance of the happy days Maggie no longer feels are worth remembering. In this respect, Maggie's lashing speech in the final scene, that is where she tells John, 'And don't you kid yersel that I didna see the way ye looked at yer ain son's wife trailin about the hoose wi her breasts fa'in oot o her fancy claes' ought to be read as having a double meaning. It addresses the idea of men as constantly seeking sexual dominance of women, and also addresses Maggie's personal sense of loss; her dwindling attractiveness due to years of childbirth and other harshness of a domestic life lived in poverty. The relationship between the two women seems therefore to be more psychological than social, as Isa brings out in that scene where she flirts with her father-in-law:

ISA	My! Your eyes when ye laugh (PAUSE) Listen, don't you bother yer bunner; it's no you she's mad at; it's me. She cannae staun the sight o me. Never could.
JOHN	Och, I wouldnae sae that, Isa.
ISA	Right frae the stert. I took her wee boy away frae her. They're a the same, mothers. The first yin's aye his mither's big tumphy.

It is Maggie herself who, in an indirect way, confirms much of what Isa says about the origin of the psychological tension between them. This is where, when talking in relation to her son, she says '... Once they've been laid in yer airms, they're in yer heart tae the end o yer days, no maitter whit way they turn oot.'

Does Isa's conversation with her father-in-law indicate that she would have preferred to live a life of poverty with a man who has 'an air about hissel'? This may have been the case, but the conjecture ought not to be used to underplay the question of female subliminality brought out in that conversation. Is it possible that Maggie herself once felt about her husband the way Isa now feels about her's? It seems that Lamont Stewart in the scene is suggesting that women faces a delicate situation when it comes to relationships. However, it is also a question that has to be situated within the larger context of an impoverished social milieu. In such situations, dreams and reality travel differently.

The ending of *Men Should Weep* is one more instance of the celebratory, communal vision that is dominant in Scottish theatre generally, and which in my view also goes a long way in the shaping of the performative structure of a Scottish *dramatic* text. The fact that two versions of the play existed before the 1970s would seem to me to raise an important question about social and political influences around dramatic texts. Between 1947 when the play was staged by GUT to great applause and 1974 when the text was written, so many developments had taken place in both theatre and in the apprehension of women's roles deriving from feminist influences at the end of the 1960s. The feminist influences are clearly visible in the text, and seem to be what guided the construction of the two young women characters in the play.

There are three central elements of GUT's work, which are remarked in the success of *The Gorbals Story* and *Men Should Weep*. The first is the use of Glasgow dialect; second is the native acting style while the third is the apprehension of the need for theatre to breathe a life whose context is well understood by its audience.

The appreciation of *The Gorbals Story* as a 'Scottish play' has traditionally been based on two factors. First is its sense of inclusiveness. This means its ability to communicate all that it surveys about life in the Gorbals through the stage, especially through its representation of characters. The second is its nearness to the actuality of life in that area. As a matter of fact, many Scottish critics and reviewers who knew the cultural terrain very well did not separate these two issues, as any examination of the various comments inspired by the play might reveal

(See McLeish 1985 pp98-9).

If the GUT dramatists were less politically combative than Joe Corrie was before them, they compensated for that shortcoming with their carbon-copy representation of the realities of life among the industrial working-class. However, it is the company's emphatic insistence, through practice, on the 'people's' culture as a non-exclusionary, non-ambiguous fact of the national life that would seem to have generated a metatheatrical style of presentation for which the GUT became justly famous. This metatheatrical style is also what must have led almost every Scottish reviewer to receive the play in exclusively national, rather than Glasgow, terms. The discovery of this style I think has had more transformational power on the Scottish theatre than the GUT itself must have anticipated. For example, the 'formless' structure of *The Gorbals Story*, is almost a reproduction of the structure of a carnival. This is easily visible in how 'theatre business or happenings', including music and dance, are often generated in the play. They occur at precise moments and in relation to the convivial atmosphere already created by way of dialogue and sometimes actions. It is due to this carnivalesque strategy that the play cheerfully dissolves the usual demarcation between performer and audience, auditorium and the street outside. Gilbert and Tompkins have suggested that when carnival dissolves the demarcation between performer and audience, it is not only claiming a right to all public space, but also creating 'a theatre wherever there is a confluence of people, thus giving the marginalised access to the privilege of self-representation' (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 p.84). The hints are clear I would think, and it is that within the double meaning of carnival, every metaphor, including that of space destabilisation counts. The metaphor of space within carnival is particularly useful for understanding how works such as those carried out by Unity can be said to stand for the entire Scottish nation. This is in the sense that 'while the facts of 'real' place impose a certain character on performance, the performers continuously present another 'place' through their enactments'(Gilbert and Tompkins, *ibid*).

Finally, the theatrical simulation of high carnivalesque environment that occurs in *The Gorbals Story*, however unintended, is difficult to dissociate from the fact that the play is as

much concerned with space as with the people who inhabit that space. The operating word here, perhaps, should be 'confluence'. It is the sort of confluence to be found at the heart of carnival: the space and the people flowing together in aesthetic unity. This leads directly to the unlikely connection between the popular realism of the play and carnival. Carnival normally projects an unrestrained social exuberance, the display of which 'undermines virtually all categories of social privilege and thus prevents their unproblematic reassemblage' (Gilbert and Tompkins 1996 p.84). One can see something similar happening in Scottish realism, whose choice from Corrie to GUT and even to many of today's theatre groups, has always been based less on the political or aesthetic arguments, but simply on the technical ground that realism allows 'a maximum contact and communication' (Hill 1978 p.30). It thus follows that realism is only a means, a strategy for unleashing the force of 'maximum contact and communication' in the theatre.

The Later Realists

The realist theatre has moved on since the days of GUT, to embrace other issues and areas of working-class life. That the post-Corrie, post-GUT realist theatre takes the working-class life as embodying national subjectivity is evident in many of the plays of the 1960s and 1970s and beyond. Often by using the platform of social critique, these plays turn themselves into discourses of some of the 'myths', against which a particular form of Scottish collective subjectivity is frequently defined. And these plays examine the processes by which these myths are further turned into the very definition of quotidian life. In other words, many of the plays attempt to generate discussions around the self-feeding and self-reproducing 'street level' 'internalisation' of the subjective 'national' character formed in the shadows of powerful mythologies.

Of all the myths against which discourses have been mobilised, none has been more

powerful and pervasive as the myth of the 'hard man'. In the subtle manner that myths work to take over the collective unconscious, the myth of the hard man authorises alienating behaviours and distortion of communal identities. It is profoundly sexist in that inscribed in it is a normative male identity, under which all other notions of identities are then subsumed.

The plays that I have chosen are *The Sash* (Hector MacMillan), *The Hard Man* (Tom McGrath), *The Boxer Benny Lynch* (Peter Arnott), and *The Life of Stuff* (Simon Donald). The first two are plays of the 1970s, while the last two are more recently dated, both being plays of the 1990s. The four plays provide illustrations of themes common to realist plays from the 1970s onwards.

Hector MacMillan: *The Sash My Father Wore*

Hector MacMillan's *The Sash My Father Wore* (MacMillan 1974)¹⁴ has been hailed generally as one of the great successes of the 1970s. Part of its success, of course, lies in the fact that audiences across Scotland connected with its subject matter as one that reflected an experience that they engaged with daily outwith the theatre. While the theme, communication strategy and the underpinning ideology of *The Sash* may have been different from that of *The Cheviot* and *The Gorbals Story*, they share the same status as plays which made lasting impressions on audiences and which were instantly adopted as part of the canon of national theatre.¹⁵ Like nearly all the other major plays of the 1970s, *The Sash* was first performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, on 13 August 1973, followed by another performance, ten months later, at the Pavilion Theatre, Glasgow. The play's main target is religious bigotry in general and the division and hatred between Protestants and Catholics in the west of Scotland in particular.

¹⁴ All future references to this play, indicated by page number, will be to this particular text and edition.

¹⁵ Of course, that there continues to be argument, even today, about the desirability or otherwise of a Scottish national theatre does not remove from the fact that such plays have been written since the end of the Second World War. This thesis does not address the issue of a national theatre mainly because I consider this to be in the realm of what kind of administrative infrastructure exists for the institution of theatre to function. The scholars' idea of a National Theatre, I believe, should mean more than mortar and

Realism dominates *The Sash* as much as the urge by the playwright to communicate the evil of religious bigotry. Set against the background of the annual July 12th 'Orange Day' March by Protestants, it depicts Bill MacWilliam, who prides himself on being 'a staunch Orangeman', preparing for that event. Since it seems the only day MacWilliam lives for from one year to the next, his preparation has a metaphysical elaborateness, which on the surface, turns him into a wild and uncontrollable animal. Together with the young daughter of a fellow-Protestant neighbour, Bill turns the preparation for the march into a ritual, letting off a demonstration that is full of stage energy and physical action. All this occurs in the presence of Bill's Catholic neighbour, Bridget, and for a long time the object of Bill's sectarian hatred and insults, who had come up to complain about the noise Bill and his young female friend were making. Bill loses control of himself while making his usual Orangeman attack on Bridget, and almost falls through the windows.

As a play of character and ideas, *The Sash* raises the question of subjectivity, while blending socialist ideological perspective with plain condemnation of bigotry. In relation to the first, the text attempts to depict the false consciousness among the working classes. Bill MacWilliam, its central character, is not presented as embodying bigotry alone, but also as representing a kind of working class self-destructiveness. This is in that his feelings on the religion question are conditioned absolutely by the politics of a history whose understanding goes beyond his mental capacity. There is therefore a dramatic irreconcilability between his psychological and his social worlds. For Bill, being an Orangeman is not about being part of the annual spectacle of July 12 marches. Rather, Orangeism represents the very meaning of life itself. Thus every symbol and sign of Protestantism touches directly on the metaphysics of his being. Even though his wife has lately died, Bill's sense of grief remains at best minimal, non-existent at the worst. The only occasion, he talks about, it is to remind their son how she was as 'staunch as me!', and how she used to fondly prepare his Orangeman uniform ready for the July 12 parade (pp. 8-9).

brick or enormous concrete.

MacMillan constructs the disclosure of false consciousness by 'persuading' the characters to their non-mythical and therefore more easily verifiable material conditions, in other words, he makes the efforts to re-direct them towards their jointly shared predicament of being working class. Such redirection is treated almost literally, as when Bridget, seeing the inside of Bill's room for the first time, reports her discovery to her niece, Una:

BRIDGET (*enters from kitchen, stops*) Oh, Una, d'you know what?
Una looks over, shakes her head.
(of the room she has just left) This house isn't wan bit better than me own.

...

Not wan bit better. (*moves around the room, sizing it up*) And it's not wan bit bigger either!

...

BRIDGET Ah but you wouldn'ta thought that had you seen th'airs an graces of her! (*joining Una at the window*) Must be the extra elevation does it! (*just as Una opens her mouth to speak*) *I've heard tell it can, eh., (sampling the feel of it)* provoke a misplaced sense of power in some people.
(p. 41).

Bridget lacks the kind of rigorous ideological insight possessed by Una to be able to relate fully to the similarities she has just discovered to exist between her material conditions and those of Bill. However, her quick ability to be able to explain those similarities in their stark, bread and butter terms, is striking and may be saying something about the character of her own sectarianism. For Bridget is also sectarian, although as we soon discover, especially in this act, she will more readily qualify as an obedient Catholic, a puritan with a small 'p' rather than another hate-filled figure.

Una and Cameron, Bridget's niece and Bill's son are used to reflect the play's strong sense of the new generation as offering a way out of the restrictions of the old. This is where the two characters discuss, and in the process open up the common history of the Irish people, and underscores the reason why that history seems hidden from the people themselves.

We have so much legend and music in common. So much shared history. So many shared attitudes. Yet a government in London and an hierarchy in Rome have for centuries been able to set one against the other. And because the people of both countries have allowed themselves to be manipulated in this way they now have two other things in common. Between them, Scotland and Ireland share the worst

housing and highest unemployment in Europe: ... I don't think that's unconnected with our history...

It is as part of the play's faith in the younger generations that Cameron is represented as his father's opposite. Even though he remains a working class youth himself, he is able to tell his father '... your numbers're declining every year', meaning that Bill's bigotry-ridden generation is on its way out, about to pave the way for that hopefully new future.

One of the strategies of communication used by the playwright, I think, is the deflation of the superior Protestant airs paraded by Bill, and in so doing, MacMillan proposes him as a working-class Protestant archetype. His militancy, his abject chauvinistic valorisation of the Protestant values, also places him as a version of the hardman (this topic is treated more fully in the next play examined). Bill openly links himself to a generations of proud, bold 'no surrender' Orangemen, the direct descendants of King William of Orange himself. It is an analogy that goes as far as nomenclature. Bill=William MacWilliam, William, son of William, therefore a King William/Billy surrogate even at the level of naming. As he tells Georgina, these ancestors may not all have been perfect, especially King William, who may have 'had his wee bit lapses', but still went ahead to fight dutifully for the 'Prodisant' ascendancy. By pushing this logic, Bill is asking the younger woman to overlook his own moment of 'error', or at best dismiss it as a minor physical failing in the larger interest of the cause, '...An whit could be mair important than the Prodisant cause?' (p. 27)

The principle of Orangeism is par excellence a male principle. Its totemic figure, King Billy, is forever represented on horseback, his sword held in phallic triumphalism, as the conqueror of the effeminate Catholics. If there is a mutually propelling relationship between Orangeism and Scottish working class male chauvinism, this is where it is located. The whole environment of *The Sash* is male-oriented, for while the play's Catholic protagonists are women, individually, their vitality does not match of Bill. Georgina, who repeatedly eggs Bill on in his maniacal display of Orange prowess, is a one-dimensional character. At any rate, Georgina herself is almost a victim of Bill's aggressive masculinity, when he tries to rape her.

The incident and how quickly Bill is able to talk the younger woman out of taking it seriously lend force to the idea that Orangeism is fundamentally a masculine culture. Bill's dynamism each time he attacks the Catholics both registers and reinforces this masculine image of the culture. The gender dimension of the play, which also suggests culture as a hierarchical structure, may have been less visible during the 1970s' explosion of radical consciousness in Scotland. Since the focus was more insistently on the mapping of a relevant Scottish identity, all representational appropriation of that consciousness was more or less one-sided as far as gender must have been concerned.

But MacMillan also redeems Bill somewhat for he remains faithful to that jaundiced worldview of his, and whatever its weakness, it provides him with the metaphysics of coping. Paradoxically, he himself comes to express this at precisely the moment when the extent of his injury from his fall is being discovered (one half of his body being paralysed). This follows another argument between him and his son. Unlike in their previous arguments, Bill is beginning to realise that he is indeed losing as Cameron repeatedly tells him. However, Bill is unwilling to admit his defeat openly, because as he sees it, he would rather die with his dignity intact.

Cameron turns away as Bill subsides. Georgina moves tentatively forward.

GEORGINA: (gently) Mister MacWilliam?

BILL: (slowly losing the struggle) He's tryin t'take ma faith away f'me.

GEORGINA: (very concerned) C'mon back on the sofa.

BILL: Take that away an ma life's been wastit!

Struggling to get back to settee, with the left side of his body apparently useless.

Well he's no gawnie waste ma life! He's no gawnie waste it!

And much later on, he performs the ultimate in the self-preservation of his dignity

GEORGINA: (very upset) Oh Mister MacWilliam, you cannae go on the Walk noo! You cannae!

BILL: Maybe no. But the Papes in this street'll get nae cheap laugh at Bill MacWilliam getting cartit away in an ambulance on the Twelfth... See's it ower.

(pp68-9)

Thus is Bill able to go down, so to say, fighting as an Orangeman. What makes Bill credible is also what makes him pitiable. With him, or rather with his situation, we can begin to

appreciate the deeper and very complicated political argument MacMillan intends us to grasp. At the level of complicated politics, the play deals with what I would call 'replacement culture', the self-internalisation of a process of domination or manipulation to the extent that domination itself becomes a culture. Bill and his Catholic neighbour, Bridget, express this in Freudian metaphor during one of their violent altercations:

CAMERON: Eh, look, Missis (quickly) Miss..It's a kinna...special day. Y'know?

BRIDGET: (bitter) I'm not needin a half-grown boy t'tell me the day it is!

BILL: Bloody right!

BRIDGET: Don't all our troubles date from this day, two-hundred-and-eighty-three years since!

BILL: Ahh, but this is Scotland. And Scotland's Prodisant

BRIDGET: Prodisant it might be, but b'Gawd an if it was civilised we wouldn't have to suffer as we do!

(p.18)

Although what follows these lines are the familiarly silly but playful 'you did not need to be here' remark, the overall exchanges are significant as authorial coding, the relevance of which cannot be overlooked in a postcolonial reading of Scottish culture— which also extends in this particular case to the culture of Ireland. To that extent, Bill symbolises the Scottish failure of consciousness and the unhappy embrace of the situation arising therefrom. However, still keeping with the classic Marxist position, the sort that must have given vitality to the struggle of the 1960s and the 70s, that all struggles in society are primarily economic, MacMillan wraps the complicated political message around the person of a dynamic but severely flawed working class character.

Tom McGrath: *The Hard Man*

Peter Zenzinger, describing the myth of the hardman, writes that it 'is an indirect legacy of Calvinism with its emphasis on male dominance and often sadistic cruelty' (Zenzinger 1993 p.202). The essence of the comment by Zenzinger, I think, is that the hardman, although a myth, has taken root as an aspect of the Scottish subjective persona. In Tom McGrath's *The Hard*

Man, the emphasis is less on the historical antecedent of this myth as on its brutal day-to-day operation at the street level. In focusing on the brutality, the play attempts to interrogate the meaning(s) behind the myth. Commenting on the play in particular, Peter Zenzinger, has suggested that it 'is indebted to Brecht's idea of an epic theatre.' This is in clear reference to the play's ideology and structural form. This may well be so, although and notwithstanding that the 1970s were a period of many and mostly interesting theatrical experiments, its overt stylisation and novelty of design makes *The Hard Man* less Brechtian but reasonably unusual of the 1970s environment. Employed possibly to establish the play's milieu, these two aspects — stylisation and design — are also used to convey a sense of vividness about the world occupied by the hardmen characters of the play.

Jimmy Boyle, whose life story provides the basic materials of *The Hard Man*, and who collaborated with the playwright in the writing, is one of the most sensational Scottish male characters of modern times. He was a criminal gangster and sometime one of the bosses of the Glasgow underworld. His fame also stretched outwith Glasgow and Scotland, reaching London where other famous crime bosses routinely courted him. Yet *The Hard Man*, strictly speaking, is not a biographical play. It is a social documentary, but one whose realism is also deliberately undermined. One guesses that this undermining of realism is brought about not because the playwright despises realism, but principally because he wants to achieve other theatrical effects.

A percussionist features throughout, as an essential component of the play, providing the music, which in the words of Sarah Rutherford 'emphasised the primitive ritualistic aspect of the violence' (Rutherford 1996 p.119). It is sensed that Tom McGrath may have been searching for two ideals simultaneously in the construction of *The Hard Man*. The first is to be able to produce a theatre whose aesthetic priority is to communicate with magical precision. The second is to forge a vital correspondence between a radical social ethics and aesthetics. The efforts to unify these two ideals are what give the play its somewhat mythic circularity. One or two critics have pointed out albeit in a discreet manner how McGrath's background as a former editor of *Peace News* and *International Times* and his interest in music (reputed to be a jazz

enthusiast) may have played central roles in the evolution of his aesthetics of performance (Stevenson 1989 p.359; Rutherford 1996 p.119).

The play is almost programmatic in the way it simulates the atmosphere of violence, which is said to be ‘calculated to release energy in the audience.’ And while the very sensational nature of the subject that it deals with may have ‘distracted attention from the unusualness of its technique’, I do not think that the play’s effectiveness has either way been compromised. Its simulation of violence is neither gratuitous nor glorifying, and does not underplay the tragedy that shadows every action of the play’s main character. This is reflected, for example, when in one of the early scenes, Byrne addresses the audience directly as an already hardened street thug, but a budding gang leader:

BYRNE: Blades. Hammers. A splinter of glass. Anything did – just so long as it made a mark. A new dimension had entered my life. A new reality had opened up for me. Violence. It was inevitable. Sometimes violence has a reason on the streets—its political, or religious, or a junkie killing for drugs— either a reason or an excuse. But in the world that I come from, violence is its own reason. Violence is an art form practised in and for itself. And you soon get to know your audience and what it is impresses them. You cut a man’s face and somebody asks you, “How many stitches?” “Twenty” you say, and they look at you—“Twenty? Only twenty? Christ, you hardly marked him.” The next time you cut a face you make a bit more certain it will be news.

(p. 16)

The stage directions before and after this address are precise enough as to have indicated the sort of impact the playwright is seeking. The first says *SLUGGER and BANDIT stage a mock fight behind BYRNE as he speaks to audience. They have weapons and they stalk one another, leap on one another pretending to stab and hit.* The second describes Byrne’s reaction to the mock fight: *He (Byrne) turns aside and doubles up holding his head. Rock beat. BANDIT and SLUGGER attend to him.*

Although Byrne’s age is not disclosed here, we are given the impression that he is in his early teens when he begins what seems an irreversible life of crime and street violence. However, he is projected simultaneously as a creation and victim of the Scottish social and moral environments. Surprisingly, while he is also sometimes depicted as a danger to the same

environment, even its enemy, he is treated as merely an extreme character. This we can see from the tone and style of conversation of Maggie and Lizzie, the two characters described in the stage direction as 'Windae-hingers'. For example, talking about Byrne during their own second appearance, the windae-hangers have this to say:

MAGGIE: That's the thurd fight this week. It's time Johnny Byrne grew up so it is.

LIZZIE: It's his maw ah feel sorry for. She works aw day fur those boys so she does. She must be heartbroken.

MAGGIE: He's gonnae end up in Barlinnie the way he's goin. It's time he goat himsel a lassie an thoot about settlin doon.

LIZZIE: Aye. Aw him an his pals dae is sit in that pub aw day long drinking an swearin, an that gaffer o the pub's just as bad because he gies thaim drink fur nuthin.

(p. 22)

Although functioning primarily as the play's chorus, they are also representative of a specific category of public voice in the play. That category is the dwellers of the Gorbals, that area of Glasgow long accustomed to the behaviour of hardmen, apart from the place itself being the breeding ground of many of those so qualified. What draws attention to these two characters mainly is their dialectal and ironic tongue-twists on one hand and the swiftness of their conversation on the other. Such language facility must of course be seen as part of the larger repository of Scots language, as I have described previously. In each of their brief appearance, Liz and Maggie switch effortlessly from one topic to another, from the closely domestic and personal to the more open social gossips. All of these underscore on one hand the communal primacy of the general dramatic actions and on the other the continuity of social life amidst the happenings, even the tragic and life-threatening ones, of the physical environment. It is from the very first appearance of the windae-hangers, which incidentally, is also the very opening of the play that this combined atmosphere of 'social continuity' and 'communal solidarity' is brought out as a part of dramatic device. Not only do the two characters introduce themselves, so to say, in that opening, but they also introduced their social environment when they talk (or perhaps converse) about the killing of 'McTaggart the Mad Spaniard' in Seymour Street, the 'other night'. (P. 7) the warmth of the dialectal twists and irony in the two characters' language is

however more forcefully brought out during their second appearance, which I think is worth quoting in some detail:

MAGGIE: Howurr things, Lizzie?

LIZZIE: No bad. They could be better. Ma back's killin me an that doctoar doon the street's nae use at aw.

MAGGIE: Aye. Ah've changed away frae him. No so much because o him but o that bitch that cleans his office. Just because she writes oot his prescriptions fur him, she thinks she's a nurse.

LIZZIE: aye, she bloody annoys me so she does, the way she struts aboot that surgery like the Queen o Sheba an'hur wae hur hoose like a midden an thae weans o hurs in a terrible state. She ought tae be ashamed o hursel.

MAGGIE: She hud the cheek tae tap a shilling aff o me fur the meter an ah huvnae seen her since. Ah'll be needin it back by Friday tae-ah need every penny!

LIZZIE Ah'm in the same boat. Ah've goat the man comin in tae empty the meter this afternoon because ah need the rebate. Ah've nae money tae get the tea in fur him comin hame fae work. (p. 15)

In Scottish theatre generally, the bewitching dialectal tone, or what I have described elsewhere in this work as 'performativity of language' can sometimes undermine the seriousness of the subject on which it is focused. Lizzie's last sentence above is somewhat akin to the life of scarcity and the accompanied sacrifice within domestic family life so memorably captured in Ena Lamont Stewart's *Men Should Weep*. But more importantly is the tonal structure of the dialogue between Maggie and Liz and how the dialogue paints a picture of what was earlier referred to as 'continuity of social life'.

It is because of the communal rationality placed on the conversation between the two women and which is further expressed in how they comment directly on the main dramatic actions that we begin to look at their presence as that of chorus-participants. This is a stylistic departure from the practice of having a chorus that will be detached from the emotive aspect of the dramatic actions.

This style of commentary by Maggies and Lizzie alters the normal 'chorus as narrator' roles, and goes further as a reprisal of the sense of theatre traceable to earlier Scottish realist dramatists already discussed in this chapter. In view of how Maggie and Lizzie comment of these dramatic actions, by offering external perspectives, but which bear directly on the actions,

their representation is that of the *voice* of a community. That community is as much victim of 'the system' as is the loathed criminals who turn on everybody.

On his part, Byrne sees himself as a natural blend of his landscape, and not the wide-eyed criminal everyone hates. He thus insinuates that he does not want to be regarded as an object of pity:

I can't tell you about my chromosomes or genetic structure and I can't say anything about my Oedipus Complex or my Ego and my Id. Battered babies grow up to be people who batter babies. But I got nothing but affection when I was young—from my mother. My father—sometimes we wouldn't see him for days on end then he'd come home triumphant wae presents for everybody and half-bottle of whisky in his back pocket. (p.10)

Placed against conventional rationality, Byrne is a no-good who has embarked on an irrevocable collision path with society. And this is why it is necessary for that society to force him into committing character suicide, as the only chance of rebirth. It is this notion, the very necessity of committing character suicide, that Byrne's mother challenges almost immediately after she has seen his son off with 'a dollar' for him to indulge his fancy. Speaking to the audience, she complains:

Och, he wusnae a bad boy really. It wus the company he kept. Ah could never believe aw the bad things people said about him, no even after he went tae prison. He wus ma son and he wus never any boather tae me. Ah mean, whit chance did he huv? He went alang tae the youth club an him an his mates were barred the very first night. Troublemakers! They were the very wans that needed some help. When he was younger, he wantit tae be an altar boy. But he wusnae allowed because he didnae huv any sandshoes—and ah couldnae afford tae buy him any. It wus oonly the toaffs that could afford tae kneel oan God's altar. Of course, toaffs tae us wur the people that lived jist up the street....
(p.11)

In this speech, Byrne's mother is not necessarily begging sympathy for her son, but reaffirming the earlier picture painted by Bryne of himself. Bryne is the product of society-as-the-antithesis of what it is supposed to be. He is a character excluded, at an impressionable age, by every sector of society — Church, Youth Club— from which he is supposed to learn about community and compassion. The reason for the exclusion is that the poverty of his parents often

stands him out. 'When he was younger, he wantit tae be an altar boy. But he wusnae allowed because he didnae huv any sandshoes—and ah couldnae afford tae buy him any.' All these go to make a separation between the *individual* and the criminal *genus* in Jimmy Boyle, literally a separation of reality (Jimmy Boyle) from the myth (the criminal). This is an aspect of the reflexivity of the text, an attempt to interrogate the social basis on which myths, such as Jimmy Boyle's are often founded.

Bryne grows up according to the logic of society-as-the-antithesis of itself, his values thoroughly deteriorated. Having so grown, he becomes not part of that antithesis, but the very embodiment of it. If Bryne's savagery seems out of proportion to what is required for supporting a life of crime, this is also because he is sending back to the society that created him the result of its creation. It is this pastoral dilemma that lies at the heart of the play. Bryne's savagery, whose excess is pithily acknowledged by a member of his gang who says 'That yin doesnae huv a heart. He's an animal' (p.34), is counterpointed by his talent (crime requires its own resourcefulness), which he puts to very good use in outsmarting other crime leaders, invariably older ones, to become a big boss himself. This counterpointing is more strongly reflected in the prison scenes. The playwright using the principle of opposition constructs these scenes to make the audience see Byrne, the terror creature, now himself becoming the terrorised. When the audience comes face to face with the more invidious system of terror carried out within the prison system, itself a powerful symbolic representation of the state, the notion of the 'hard man' as the self-destroying 'man of violence' or 'street crime' assumes a different but not unrelated meaning. The prison is really the maggot-infested end of what Byrne at another point in the play calls 'shit-heap system.' The structure of the play from the prison scenes—series of tableaux, ranging from courtroom appearances to discussions with defence lawyers, the prisoner receiving visitors and his relationship with the prison warders—corresponds to the system at work. All that we see in these scenes vindicate Bryne's description of the system as shit-heap, and show in addition that it is a system that is organised to destroy any instinctive moral goodness. But at the same time, characters like Byrne who pose a moral

challenge to the system, not by any alternative and credible moral conduct, but by confronting it with similar violence as it perpetrates, is seen as threatening the already overturned order. For that reason he has to be cowed completely, but in a way that will make him revere the system. In the eyes of the play, this is the purpose that the likes of Commando, the prison's assistant governor and warders like Paisley are meant to serve, the agents of the system who helps the system to sharpen its instincts for violence. In a way therefore, the Commandos and the Paisleys are the composite parallels to the beast in the street, a point that Paisley is all too eager to stress:

... *Pause* screws don't like me because they know I'm the one that does the dirty work for them.

They know what this prison would be like if we didn't get tough from time to time. They don't want to walk in fear of their life from day to day when they're going about their job, any more than you would. So they tolerate me. I'm their hard man. And they feel a wee bit guilty about me because I'm an aspect of themselves they don't like to admit to. Just like you should be feeling guilty about us because we're the garbage disposal squad for the social sewage system. You people out there, that's the way it works for you—you've got a crime problem so you just flush it away one thug after another in behind bars and safely locked away. The cistern's clanked and you can think you can leave it floating away from you to the depth of the sea. Well, ah've goat news fur you—its pollution. Yir gonnae huv tae look ut it. Because if yae don't, wun day its gonnae destroy yae. But in the meantime, dirties like me, well, lets just say we're a necessary evil. Very necessary.

(p. 57)

The reward for the principle of opposition used by the playwright for the prison scenes reveals itself in the way Byrne, after his brutalisation becomes the person reflecting on human nature. But this is not to mock the character. It is to reveal the spiritual, inner side of the physical energy he has been demonstrating so far, both as the 'animal' and now the victim. If as the torturer in the street, Byrne is self-destroying, now in prison he faces the choice of real destruction. He therefore has to think about 'self-preservation', which is defined in precisely the same terms as he defined his activities while still at liberty. Hence he could act violently to Commando, his prison nemesis:

BYRNE: You'll have to excuse me. You know, it must've been that life imprisonment sentence the judge passed oan me, it must have give me a shock or something but a strange thing has happened since ah came in here-ah've started thinking. And wan o the things ah've been thinking, it's a funny thing this but I

don't really think you think there's a security disk involved at all, you don't seriously think ah wid try tae escape, dae yae? Naw. You're just withholding ma witnesses frae me because (Grabs hold of him) you're so... fucking... vindictive! (p. 53)

Byrne's speech above is followed by a routine of physical violence, after which Byrne breaks down.

BYRNE: Shouting. SOME FUCKING COMMANDO!

His laughter dies away and he is sobbing and gasping. He is desperate and sad. He escapes down the door with his hands, the side of his face pressed against it. He lies on the floor silent, his face resting forehead-down on his arm (p. 54)

What this points to, I think, is that the routine of violence just witnessed is an expression of the prisoner's spiritual need. What that need is in real terms is difficult to know, but it is a need that goes beyond his wanting to be freed from prison at the moment. Perhaps freedom in another respect: the freedom to be creative, which he lost from the series of exclusions suffered in childhood. It is from his behaviour in prison that all the violence in his life so far is the expression of the needs denied him by society.

This goes to reinforce the fact that the primordial violence in *The Hard Man* is aimed at deconstructing the myth of the same subject. In the final analysis, there are three necessities for the violence. The first is that it enables the playwright to mobilise a discourse about social order and civilisation. The second is the metaphysical discourse of violence, as a primordial, benign aspect of the human character. The third is to challenge the whole process of myth making. Those three necessities are tied together in the final tableau of the play, where Byrne's past is invoked and characters from that past, victims and collaborators, all appear to him as if he is dreaming. Then there is Byrne himself who, while speaking to Johnstone and Renfrew, says ironically that 'If yir gonnae break me, yir gonnae break yersels tae....' It is also significant that after the speech, Byrne proceeds to cover himself with his own faeces. And going by the stage direction, which says that, the 'screws' have their batons held up menacingly and BYRNE stands facing them. At the ready.', we can see the same ironic role reversal. The prison system

is in theory part of the instrument for organising society and civilisation, but here in practice, it functions more as additional machinery of destruction of life and society. That ironic twist is complemented by the unmasking of the various characters, who then deliver their words 'wearily and sadly as they exit.' The use of the phrase 'rats' as metaphor, at once descriptive of the social conditions in which the characters exist as individuals, and a summary of how they perceive themselves, stresses the need for the eradication of the conditions that create everything that has just been dramatised.

Peter Arnott: *The Boxer Benny Lynch*

If Tom McGrath's play attempts to debunk the supposed 'truth' of the myth of the hard man through the examination of its enabling social contexts, Peter Arnott, a younger playwright and one of those to emerge in the 1980s has gone a little further. Arnott's approach is a somewhat provocative critique of the class dimensions in the reproduction and sustenance of the 'hard man' myth. Like Tom McGrath before him, Arnott also uses the story of another famous Glasgow figure as the template for his critique. The figure is Benny Lynch, who once held one of the most cherished positions in boxing's, the flyweight champion of the world. Yet, and notwithstanding that he earned what at the time was good money, and enjoying a folk-hero status, Benny Lynch died in the street, aged thirty-three, penniless and abandoned.¹⁶

Arnott is not the first to bring the life of Benny Lynch to the stage. An earlier play on the boxer, *Benny Lynch, scenes from a short life* (Bryden 1975) by Bill Bryden was performed at the Royal Lyceum Theatre, Edinburgh on 1 March 1974. Arnott's play, which was first

¹⁶ In the course of writing this section, I made two trips to Glasgow, to seek more information about both Jimmy Boyle and Benny Lynch, but especially the latter. The trips were partly to satisfy my personal curiosity about Lynch whose life history I still consider somewhat bizarre and utterly unusual, even as a tragic illustration. My trips were also partly to discover if it was possible, which of the two plays modelled on his life is remembered most and why. My discovery was rather astonishing. My visits, apart from the libraries, were mostly to pubs, where as soon as I mentioned Benny Lynch, some one would answer, 'the boxer. He died in penury.' Thus was I able to confirm that he has actually entered the Glasgow folklore in two almost conflicting respects. He is warmly remembered on one hand for his

produced in 1983, is titled *The Boxer Benny Lynch*.¹⁷

Explaining why he chose to write about Benny Lynch, Peter Arnott refers to the boxer as 'probably the single most popular Glaswegian ever, until Billy Connolly anyway' and goes on to say the play is meant as homage to Glasgow, 'as a place where some sort of vitality could come from' (Giesekam 1990 Nov p.521).

Yet in indicating the sort of vitality that could come out of Glasgow, the story of Benny Lynch also deals with what could be the obverse of that vitality. This is the destruction, both wilful and orchestrated, to which the unwary may as easily be prone in Glasgow. In my view, it is this duality and how it might be suggestive of the paradox of the Scottish character, if only to reappropriate David Daiches's famous phrase, is one of the attractions in the life history of the historical Benny Lynch. By all accounts, the boxer, a simple lad who rose from the dirt and poverty of the predominantly working-class Gorbals to become the flyweight champion of the world in boxing. He was also the first Scot to win a world championship. Hence he is still an all-time folk-hero and will possibly never be forgotten *by* Glasgow. But Benny Lynch was also a tragic archetype, the course of whose life seemed programmed for self-destruction.

Arnott's line of narrative presents Benny as a talented individual. Boxing for him is not about physical aggression, but something of artistry: a medium of creativity and expression. When his talent brings him the world championship, it also puts him into the 'capitalist circuit.' Benny enjoys the limelight and delights in the adulation he gets. As he indulges himself in these adulations, he also corrupts his body. This is where Benny fails to realise that if his talent had brought him the world championship, his skill was needed to keep it, and that without the skill, those adulations are bound to disappear. Eventually, the drink and other abuses take their toll. Benny goes out to fight and he loses. The tragedy of his life is that his reign as world

remarkable achievement and also sadly remembered for his folly of ending up like that.

¹⁷ I am very grateful to the playwright for making the unpublished manuscript of this play and some of his other works available to me. Since the play remains unpublished at the time of writing, due to Arnott's insistence that he would rather carry out a comprehensive revision first as I gathered, I have relied on the copy of the manuscript in the Scottish Theatre Archive, Glasgow. This is classified in the archive as STA J.g. Box8/5.

champion and as a boxer of worth ends within a year. This is where the element of corrupting environment and capitalist destruction of the champion comes in.

One central element in how Arnott retells Benny's story in the play is how the champion is almost always a creation of other people, with very little if any direct input from the man himself. His trainer, Sammy, when he discovers Benny, gives thanks to his God and sings 'And Sammy will go a-rivetting no more. Sammy will rivet no more.' (p.12). Sammy himself had been a failed boxer, possibly ran out of the boxing by men of the underworld (p. 23), but now he has someone to be his surrogate and accomplish that which he fails at. The key issue however is that boxing also means coping with physical pain, the inability to survive which drove Sammy out originally. There is also the case of Eamonn MacBrayne, who organises touring boxing booths across the UK. He had been the first to discover and realise Benny's potential. It was he who advised the boxer to seek the professional ring. But that advice was given when MacBrayne himself was ready to pack up his illegal touring. So, had he wanted to remain, he certainly would have kept Benny as his most productive money making machine (sc. 5, pp 14-17). Then there is the lawyer, George. He more or less fixes his contractual fee of 30% of Benny earnings (sc. 8, pp 24-8). He is possibly the most unscrupulous character Arnott has so far created for the stage. Sammy takes 25% while Puggy takes 5%. George's terms, determined by himself, covers 'full control over bookings, legal affairs, press relations etc.'. He literally converts Benny into his personal possession, as the controller of 'Everything but [your] actual coaching.' George begins to introduce Benny to the high society of pretty women and assortments of drink, to enhance the commodity usefulness of the boxer and to keep his (George's) power over him. All these dazzles Benny as George expected they would (See London hotel reception, sc. 9, pp 28-36).

At one level, the story of Benny Lynch, as told by Arnott, is in the tradition of 'classical' naturalism. This is that the play attempts a 'scientific' analysis of how Benny's background and character have shaped his tragedy. However, Arnott seems to have approached the story more as a form of morality and allegory combined. The morality is about the talented

individual caught in a depraved environment. The corrupting forces of the environment seize on his innocence and naivety. Both are exploited in a manner that brings the individual into psychological conflicts that are beyond his human will. He is thus overwhelmed, and inevitably succumbs to the destructive forces. This is where the allegorical aspects of the play begin. What is it that the same environment that enthusiastically celebrates Benny as its own goes on to literally murder him? In the universe of the play, Benny's fall is caused, on the surface, by his love of drink and women. The deeper meaning however is that there were forces around Benny who further indulge him in those things, but doing so for their own selfish purposes. The reason they had to do this was because Benny was for them a commodity to be exploited. The play goes on to suggest that it was possible for Benny to be so exploited and in the process destroyed because of his working class origin. In one of the cinematic sequences of the play, Benny's elder brother schools his sibling:

...In this world, son, if yer gonnae get anywhere, you've at least got to get out of here. I went up to Kelvingside the other day to get an entry form for the Under 19s. You wouldn't believe it was the same city. You could fit this whole close in one of their outside toilets. The streets were empty, mebbe cos ye feel like stoppin in when you live in that kind of house, but they were big, wide streets. There were some kids goin to school in blue jayckets, and not one of them had a baldy for the nits. Fucking amazing. It wasn't my idea of heaven, but you felt you had time to think what kinda heaven you wanted when you were up there. (p. 10)

Coming from a background where poverty is the norm, and where everyone is dreaming about escape, Benny's sudden arrival at wealth, which is his own escape, also immediately exposes him to conditions for which he was not and could not have been prepared. All this is to suggest that if Benny offers a model of the hardman, his story also testifies to how that myth is being used as a weapon of subjection in inter-class relationship. However talented and determined a working class person, it is not enough, ultimately, for him to imagine that he could defeat those forces of politics and economics, which define class relations.

Thus, Benny's story is a story of disempowerment, environmental and by human forces both of which translate into the system. This is why the play opens with Benny playing homage

to Glasgow, using typical Glasgow humour:

Ladies and gentlemen. A toast to the good people of Glasgow, who know how to take it on the chin, and to give as good as they get. (He drinks) Herre's to Johnnie Walker, a decent old soul to whom I give my every penny without grudge or stint. (He drinks) Here's to all the ladies, and especially my dear and faithful wife, who sleeps upstairs with her baby boys, each one in their very own room. (He drinks). Mind you, she never cleans the place. It stinks, y'know. Still, an expensive midden it is, which nobody can deny. (He drinks) (p. 1)

When after this exuberant speech, Anne, Benny's mortified wife comes into view, she does so to indicate, through her speech, how far the 'the good people of Glasgow' have unknowingly corrupted their champion. This is because it emerges that Benny has been away from home for three days drinking around Glasgow. Benny has lost the power of personal will. Hence that same scene hosts Benny's minders, who after some perfunctory gestures such as asking about his whereabouts so far, proceed to take off the boxer's clothes:

Gorilla: How d'you know what day it is
Benny: The pubs are shut, ye big fart
Sammy: That's enough. G'wan, boys, scoot. (Puggy and the gorilla exit)
You
led us a hell of a dance, sonny. We've been looking for you for three days.
Benny: You looked in the wrong places, Sammy.
Sammy: So where were you?
Benny: Motherwell. I was kidnapped.
Sammy: That's not very funny.
Benny: I've been drunk for four days. What d'ye want.

(pp. 4-5)

The minders have come to purify Benny, because another fight is on hand. Benny's life has been taken away from him.

Arnott also makes references to a number of issues often connected to Glasgow and which form part of the complex of Benny's story in the play. One of these is religion. Benny is a Catholic, who goes to a Protestant part of Belfast and wins a fight against the local hero. Even if the fight audience is divided along sectarian line, it does not stop them from recognising Benny's talent and gracefulness as a boxer. Benny is the artist-boxer, not a pugilist murderer.

This is what Mike Fullerton, a better-defined hard man of his day and perhaps a lesser-known forerunner of Jimmy Boyle, compliments when he goes to visit Benny in his dressing room after that fight. This is to confirm the folk-hero status of Benny as transcending barriers. All this underscores the tragedy in the story of Benny Lynch.

Yet Arnott in the play tries to make a separation between the individual and the *genus* in Benny Lynch. The *genus* is the one who gives gracefulness to boxing and hope mixed with fulfilment to Glasgow. In the final scene of the play, a passer-by, unable to reconcile the image of the destitute Benny with that of the champion a year before reminisces:

I saw you at Bellohouston Park when you beat that Peter Kane guy in 15 rounds. That was the best night of my life. That was the best night of my life. I won thirty-five pound on you, and you did something bloody marvellous. (p. 47)

That however was the *genus* the passer-by talks about, not the individual about to die in the street as victim of circumstances that tuned him into a self-destroyer. What we see in Arnott's construction of the Boxer's story is the talented and gifted individual, who is however caught in a motion that lacks progress. It is true that the individual makes some promising even dazzling start, but these were not enough to propel the individual beyond the spot where he stood. This is the recognition that Benny arrives at in the final scene of the play when out of self-pity, he tells his tormentor:

See, I was always here, really. All that stuff in London was the kid-on. Cocktails with Lord and Lady Shitemuck. I really thought I'd got somewhere 'cos I had cherries in a my glass. (p. 48)

Peter Arnott writes with a radical exuberance that belongs to the nationalist consciousness of the late 1970s, but which was struck, almost fatally, by the outcome of the 1979 devolution campaign. After the devolution fiasco, the more prosaically radical wing of this consciousness went into a retreat, from where it began a new process of self-examination. The wing has quite literally taken to the words of the Ibo-Nigerian novelist, Chinua Achebe, by

seeking to discover from whence and how 'the rain began to beat us.' Arnott's imbibement of this dictum can be seen in how his works have been shaped by a new ethos and vision. One noticeable central concern in Arnott's work has been the re-opening of the self-construction that may be inscribed in the Scottish experience. It is a subversive re-opening, whose purpose is to underscore the nation's internal differences and to remark on how those differences could be said to have formed the making of the 'dialectic of history.'

This is further reflected in the kind of topics and personages Arnott often choose to write about. The playwright, Ian Brown, has noted that

Arnott finds in hidden history material which allows him to address, through the quandary of an individual, larger questions of power and autonomy, of democracy and authority, and of personal and political identity within both Scotland and the framework of the United Kingdom (Brown 1996 p.95).

Another Scottish real life figure whose experience has attracted Arnott's attention is the eighteenth century campaigner for constitutional reform, Thomas Muir. Muir was sentenced to 14-years imprisonment after he was convicted of sedition. His prosecutors had accused him of distributing Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*. After his trial, Muir was banished to Australia.

There is also some personal element in Arnott's interest in Scottish history, as he told this writer on one occasion.¹⁸ Arnott is himself the son of a wealthy and proud Glasgow middle class father, who is a successful lawyer. His mother is a nurse who gave up work to look after their children. The older Arnott wanted his children to be as successful as himself, which perhaps explains why Peter and his brother are both Cambridge-educated. Yet in Arnott's world-view, his father's type of success only breeds chauvinism, the type that reduces mankind to one-dimensional economic subject:

My father and Mrs. Thatcher were from the same background – grocers' kids, and basically the attitude which was given to me through schooling, through my father and his business acquaintances, was really of contempt, a dismissal of any human qualities being available to anyone who was not

¹⁸ From personal interview with the playwright.

like us, who had less money than we had.
... no, the upper classes weren't human either-because they were also idle.
This is the real Thatcherite number, which is that it's only the middle strata
who work, and everyone else is a parasite of one sort or another. (Giesekam
1990 Nov p.319)

Arnott sees in the behaviour of his father what he feels to be a typical Scottish upper class disdain for the talents and the achievements of the working class people. For him this illustrates why the Scottish bourgeoisie of old 'lost the nation', while thinking solely in terms of economics. It is on the basis of that assumption that the playwright sees 'the dialectic of history' as something more than a phrase, and that it deserves to be explored. This background view of the author helps to put the lack of proper character exploration in *The Boxer Benny Lynch* in some context. It seems that the play is meant, ultimately, as a cerebral contribution to the debate about the Scottish subjectivity and the manipulability of its definition by powerful forces.

Hence there is an aspect of the 'dialectic of history', which Arnott introduces into the play. This relates to Glasgow's historic status and roles as the 'industrial engine house' of the British Empire and by extension how empire has rewarded the City. When Jimmy Lynch is fined or surcharged for tipping over his paint in the shipyard, he says it was because he suddenly finds himself in revelry about ships going out to sea, bringing sugar for everyone's tea...

The SS Jamaica is in drydock in Queens. We're just finishing repairs. You should have seen her when she came in. I was painting the name on the side. 'SS Jamaica' in letters eight feet high, thirty-five feet across. I'd just finished the 'J'. And I thought, 'Jamaica, eh? Off to get sugar for for everybody's tea. Here I am painting a shipoff to get sugar for everybody's tea.' And then I thought, 'Jimmy Lynch' in letters eight feet high and thirty-five feet across so the darkies in Jamaica would know who sent it. I got that excited I kicked the paint over, all down the side and into the river. It was one of they big Galvey buckets, y'know. And there was the foreman on the dock, I could see him with the other blokes, guttin himself, pointing, asking them, 'Who's that balloon wi' the big feet?' and them telling him, that's John Lynch's boy Jimmy. And they were still laughing when the foreman made me pay for it. (ms. p.9)

What our playwright is illustrating here is the crossing-of-narrative between the history of Glasgow and that of the Scottish working class, a point which was addressed in this chapter earlier. Even though everyone laughs at the accident of Jimmy, because it is laughable at any

rate, he is still made to pay for the waste of the paint. In the same way that the exploitation of the Scottish working class had seemed a natural thing to its wheeling-dealing merchant class, so did the empire seem natural to the Scottish working class, who even in their own oppression can still make a joke out of it? The empire dimension is, like the story of Benny Lynch, an open-ended issue. However much we try, it will be difficult to separate from the many definitions of the character of the nation.

Simon Donald: *The Life of Stuff*

One of the major significances of Simon Donald's *The Life of Stuff* (Donald 1995)¹⁹ lies perhaps in the manner it refocuses the idea of the city in modern times. It has never been possible to have a singular view of the city in Scottish drama. The reason is that the plays of the city have often had to wrestle with the idea of the community, which, other harshness and the unreflecting behaviour that notoriously marked out a city such as Glasgow apart, is still a major essence of these plays. The repudiation, condemnation or opening up for criticism of anything that seems to be thwarting the community spirit goes hand in hand with the celebration of the city. The odious bigotry depicted in *The Sash* and the animal violence of *The Hard Man* are also paralleled by an anticipatory feeling and search for community in these plays. Peter Arnott's *The Boxer Benny Lynch* encapsulates, as the playwright himself points out, both a celebration of the vitality of Glasgow and a re-examination of the power relationships around one of the city's most renowned citizens.

While playwrights like Peter Arnott may have approached the more openly political issues generated by the new political and social atmosphere of the late 1970s/early 1980s through a class-based teleological analysis of power structure, some others like Simon Donald provide a narrower but by no means insubstantial mirror of the personal sides of the emergent social dislocations. This is where the Thatcherite 1980s, with its peculiar new economic policy

¹⁹ All references to this text

that tacitly approved the concept of a natural rate of joblessness. This is the background to the rethinking of city and community consciousness in the dramas of the 1980s.

Simon Donald's *The Life of Stuff* has been widely acknowledged as a play of the 1980s, with many critics seeing it as bringing a fresher and more contemporaneous angle to an old debate. This is in its redefining the city as a place that fosters, nourishes and translates myths. In *The Life of Stuff*, it is a generation of youths who are attempting to translate myths into reality thereby creating their own mythology of modern life. In its wider context, *The Life of Stuff* applies realism to characters whose social subjectivity the play reinterprets. This is the link between the play and the three preceding plays examined above. The play reworks the mythology of the hard man in the shifting environments of the 1980s. However, the hard man is no longer the individual, or unreflecting rebel who makes violence a way of life or the self-destroying *genus* unable to convert talent to good use. The hard man now symbolises an alienated generation. The phrase has transformed into the collective, but generational pronoun, 'we'.

Hence the narrative frame of the play focuses on a group of urban youths, which depend on drugs and build their lives on the illusions that drugs may sustain. In a larger sense however their story illustrates the sort of nihilism, rootlessness and the irrationality that have become a dominant social trend in the 1980s. Behind much of their fanciful talk and 'tough character' posturing lays fears and all kinds of inadequacies and personality complexes.

The main story line is about Willie Dobie, who in another context might have been an upwardly mobile thirty-something male, and his attempt to dominate the drug-business environment or the inhabitants. Dobie wears the mask of a property developer but is in real terms a drug-dealer, who spares nothing to get rid of rivals, whether potential or actual. One major rival is Alec Sneddon, whom Dobie conspires to murder, having first used Janice, an inept two-timing character as the *femme fatale* of Sneddon's doom. However, the attempt to murder Sneddon fails, but this is not realised until Sneddon eventually turns up towards the end of the play to take his revenge. This is at a time in the play when Dobie seems finally to be

triumphant. Dobie gets killed and so does Arbogast, his assistant. The form of the play is, however, not so straightforward. It is cinematic in dramatic pace and minimalist in construction.

Dobie and Sneddon as drug merchants notwithstanding, all the characters of the play fit the description supplied by one of them, Holly. That is 'meant to be long term unemployed' because they are 'unemployable'. This is the condition for which the characters invent a deceptive sense of reality, a darkly parodic and absurd world where everything from sexual prowess to having actual power is fantasised. As a result, the logic of these characters' dreams and aspirations determine their perception of reality itself: the expectation of 'something big' about to happen takes over the lives of the characters. This sense of waiting also becomes a way of masking the individual incompetence of the characters. The 'something' about to happen is invariably involves drugs, which is the 'stuff' in the title of the play. 'Stuff' is also the accessory of other expectations, like indiscriminate sex. Evelyn, one of the 'dolls', turns up for the opening of Dobie's nightclub in the search for 'stuff':

Funny guy. I only turned up because Holly promised me he promised her. there'd be sex and drugs. Cept I informed her I wasnt interested in any sex. just the drugs. I've never had good drugs. I told her I'd come if she promised me he'd promised her good big proper chemicals. Anyway she says she wasnt interested in the sex either and then about the first thing she goes and says to him is by the way we're not your sex-slaves, which is the sort of thing she always says to men that give us drugs. So you can see his wee eyes light up and he thinks 'sex slaves - Nice Idea'. And he just ignores the 'we're not' bit. Anyway you can tell by the way she said it that she never meant it anyway. She might as well just have said to him -'Has the idea of us being your sex slaves ever crossed your mind?' And he's been telling us crap jokes. Nightmare. If I wasnt so bad at heights I'd have flung myself off the roof. And there's not so much as a sniff of good drugs just this rubbish that makes both your nostrils haemorrhage simultaneously. Does either of your pair possess such a thing as a clean hanky?

(p. 80)

Evelyn's 'he' and 'him' is refers separately to Dobie. Dobie's perception of all the other characters is that they are his personal accessories, the props for his preferred self-image of a rising entrepreneur and man of power. Thus when he takes two of the 'dolls', Holly and Evelyn, to the roof, he acts the medieval knight surveyed his kingdom as he tells them' *Take a look at that fuckin view will you. Eh? EH? I fuckin love views. They are like being in dreams* (p.70).

Another feature of *The Life of Stuff* is how its author blends different dramatic styles, ranging from serio-comic realism to expressionism and the theatre of the absurd. As the above speech indicates, the irrationality and emptiness that define the lives of the characters are brought out in their language and manner of speaking. The roof, which gives Dobie an extensive view of the city serves here as a metaphor for the aspiration of the character. The aspiration so metaphorically defined is 'to reach the top'. However, the value of the metaphor also dissolves simultaneously into irony when Dobie says that views 'are like being in dreams'. Dobie, as a close reading of the rest of the above speech demonstrates, is indeed a dreamer, besides which however is also a thorough incompetent but one who is given to airs of self-importance or image makeover:

The girls take a look at the view

Gets me every single time. First time I saw this place and looked at this view ... I recognised my own dream. Whoof! What do you see? Eh?

Holly Well it's quite a long way down isnt it ...

Dobie Every individual a dot. And every dot a customer.

Holly I mean you wouldnt be a dot, you'd be a splotch

Evelyn Holly dont ...

Dobie A Heaving Metropolis of Desperate Dots!

Evelyn ... do you mind if I dont look cause I'm not personally very good at heights.

Dobie A Swirling Galaxy of Bottomless Opportunities!

In what obviously is a warning to the would-be producer/director of the play, Donald points out that 'the language [in the play] is a wrestling match and the actors must resist the temptation to paraphrase clauses into submission.' (p.122).

We can see that sense of wrestling first in how the characters struggle to communicate and second in how language is used overwhelmingly as dexterous play on irony and metaphor. While the former may have brought out the ineffectuality and hollowness of the characters as a symbolic group, the latter use of language help to accentuate the complex subject at the heart of the play. This is the theme of all-embracing emptiness, a world where there are neither ideals

nor binding principles. It is a return to the Hobbesian state of nature. This I think is well borne out in Sneddon's words towards the end of the play where he attempts to stamp his own view of morality and the world in an all too personal cosmic hallo. He tells Dobie:

Sneddon Oh. Right. (His attention comes back to Dobie. He concentrates.) See Raymond told me that current thinking is that this universe was created in one huge big explosion that produced loads and loads of ... stuff. I think it was hydrogen he said. And that's all there was. And it swirled about for... Oh ... hundreds of years until it made stars. And then inside of these stars, Willie, the hydrogen got turned into other stuff. You know by the heat or something. The pressure. And I can appreciate that. I'm not a hundred per cent sure but anyway. It made gold and lead and iron and uranium and all the expensive precious stuff. And that's what makes us. All these chemicals inside us that make us work came from the inside of a star. Is that not an exceptional piece of knowledge. Willie. (Pause.) You agree with me. That you and me and David Arbogast and everybody else, no matter what they're like as a person, is made out of stardust. I found that exceptionally moving.

(p. 119)

The world and its inhabitants then is nothing but stardust. Upon reading this and similar speeches in the play, one's mind turns immediately to the world of the characters of Harold Pinter or more closer to home, Stanley Eveling, who always dress their personal inadequacies in mysterious words, which always hide their complexes. The above speech is in another respect a grand parody of the usual 'dust to dust' final word at funerals. The parody also signifies Sneddon's immediate intention, which is to kill Dobie as he finally does.

The importance of *The Life Of Stuff* goes beyond its being part of what Peter Zenzinger has referred to as the 1980s dramatic 'new wave.' It touches instead on the kind of characters the play puts on the stage and the manner of the language with which these characters express themselves. In saying this, we need to look beyond the familiarly bewitching cadences of Glasgow speech or its West of Edinburgh's near equivalent. The 'dolls' and the 'guys' represent a new generation of Scots, more marooned and disillusioned than precocious, who had been victims of a stagnant world. Of the eight characters, four are in their early twenties, one in mid-twenties with the two would-be gang leaders, Dobie and Sneddon in their thirties. Only Arbogast, Dobie's incompetent assistant is forty-odd, and probably the most dangerous. But Dobie speaks of him, in the same ironic context of the play as having 'Got himself educated at

the College of Hard Knocks. The University of Life.' They are a group of anti-heroes who have become lost to a formless culture and the irrational, not-so-brave world of the nineteen eighties.

In as much as the economic situation of the industrial belt of Scotland may not account for the type of moral vacuum and 'rootlessness' narrated in the play, it can partially explain why its author has departed from the familiar longing for community and working-class solidarity that is found in many earlier plays. If one looks at the issue closely from the perspective of social cohesiveness that has represented the bedrock of culture and social struggle in Scotland, the 1980s were a period of anti-heroes. This is where the play becomes another critical comment on 'the state of the nation'. The play's realism is indebted to Scottish dramatic tradition and in this sense the play acknowledges the past as it describes the peculiarities of Scotland's contemporaneous urban experience. As a Scottish play *The Life of Stuff* is predicated upon a sense of cultural difference. Unlike earlier plays in the same dramatic tradition, however, the characters in *The Life of Stuff* have a new sense of uncertainty about what constitutes their own identity. The characters in Joe Corrie's plays, as well as those in *The Gorbals Story* and all the former plays considered, operate within a social setting characterised by a firm and unchanging sense of identity. For those characters, being Scottish meant validating a working-class identity.

In *The Life of Stuff*, however, Joe Corrie's 'bairns' have all grown up and the coalmines have disappeared. The children of the old working-class now live according to new rules and conform to new role models that have entered their parent's landscape through the dissatisfaction of a whole generation. These children as new adults no longer dress in workplace dungarees, because the shipyards have disappeared. At this time of political, social and economic uncertainty, the play's characters are unwilling to discern any common identity in terms of culture, nationality or class. It is only within this free floating, unanchored and ultimately, troubling conceptual framework that a weak joke finds a special place in the *Life of Stuff*. This is when Dobie confusedly tries to conduct Holly round his nightclub building:

Holly (breathlessly whooping with laughter at what she obviously thinks is the best

joke the world has ever heard) So then ... then the baby bear turns to the daddy bear and says 'Dad...?' and the daddy bear says, 'What, son?' and the baby bear says, 'Dad, what kind of bears actually are we?' And the daddy bear says, 'I'm not quite sure I get your drift, son.' And the wee baby bear says, 'I mean are we koala bears or brown bears or grizzly bears...?' And the daddy bear says, 'Well, son, I think we're what's commonly known as polar bears. Why were you asking son?' and the baby bear says ... he says . . . 'cause I'm BLOODY FREEZIN!!!'

(p. 81)

All the plays considered in this chapter, beginning with Joe Corrie's *In Time O'Strife*, illustrate the many and different uses to which realism has been put in Scottish theatre. As I pointed out earlier, the last four plays provide illustrations of themes common to realist plays from the 1970s onwards. One of the key issues in these four plays is the extent to which all the principal characters—Bill MacWilliam, John Byrne, Benny Lynch and the characters in *Life of Stuff* can be taken as occupying strategic mythic/metaphoric roles. In the manner these plays deal with aspects of Scottish subjectivity, they also attempt to historicise the nation itself within a postcolonial-nationalist construction of the self. This is apparent where Peter Arnott turns the story of Benny Lynch into a cerebral debate about the Scottish subjectivity and how powerful forces can manipulate it. It is also apparent where the performers in Tom McGrath's play, either refer to themselves as 'a product of this shit-hip system' or as rats in the final moments of the play. J.L. Styan has pointed out that 'realism must finally be evaluated, not by the style of a play or a performance, but by the image of truth its audience perceives.' (Styan 1981 p.1) The image of truth perceived in the Scottish realist text is that myths and consensus about the national space are resituated and interpreted in relations to wider debates about national status.

I began the chapter by drawing attention to the 'violence of naming' that often occurs in the reaction to Scottish realist plays and pointed out that the source of that violence is the intrinsic politicality of these plays. The focus of my argument here is that the political character of the plays does not simply project an alternative British theatre but contests the space and definition of Scottishness within the framework of the British nation. To that extent the plays seek Scottish audiences and attempt to articulate what it means to be Scottish.

As I have indicated in the early part of the analysis, class and nation regularly conflate

in Scotland. The process guiding class formation has also been part of the colonised/coloniser structure of the modern nation. William Donaldson, for example, has spoken of nineteenth-century Scottish prose as national, but 'anti-Imperialistic, routinely anti-Clerical' and predominantly working-class in humour and consciousness (Donaldson 1989 introduction). There are those who may want to argue that indeed, it is the working class experience that mirrors the postcolonial experience of the nation in its most truthful form. This is because in the representation of working-class experience for the stage, what is often brought out is the corruption of subjectivity and the destruction of ethics and values produced by Scottish ideas of community

Thus, the realist plays are linked to the larger project of detaching Scottish subjectivity from a dominant political discourse and relocating it in the realm of a new self-reflexivity. It is a realism that always attempts to enforce an egalitarian discipline on the national-community by fashioning a new communal goal. Scottish realism becomes a means for setting up dialogue between local/peripheral cultures and identities, and central/dominant ones on Scottish terms.

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Conclusion

This study examines the relationship between politics, culture and theatrical representation in Scotland. The Scottish national space is an implicitly post-colonial one. Within the British Empire the nation participated in a remarkable project of imperial domination yet Scotland's relationship with the cultural expansionism of empire was ambiguous even if its economic and political role was well defined. Scotland's historical relationship with England is beyond the remit of this thesis. However it's impossible to study Scottish drama and not engage with the difficult legacy of Scotland's history, which is so often represented in theatre. Many of the characters in the plays I've written about in this study often seem loaded and burdened with the weight of this history, as such they cannot be fully accounted for within existential terms. A number of theatre scholars, researchers and critics have indicated that personhood in Scottish drama always overlaps with nationhood, but none, to the best of my knowledge, has probingly asked why this is so, except by talking about the 'egalitarian spirit' of Scottish culture. I argue, however, that it is the history of the nation that makes characterisation in Scottish drama so complex. That history offers an astonishing model of postcoloniality, and this study goes on to offer explanations of Scotland's postcoloniality and the various terms in which it has been described.

The study argues that the Scottish cultural space, and its attendant perception of cultural identity are not complacent, having been able to see the repression of its own possibilities more clearly after the collapse of the Empire. In its reaction to this repression of the nation's cultural possibilities, Scottish intellectuals and cultural workers/artists, of various persuasions, are staging a late but not belated process of retrieval. In the field of theatre, for example, one of the constituents of that process has been the revaluation of the supporting structures of identity—language, artistic value, genre, theatre and the whole broad area of representation. It is this revaluation that has authorised a totally new term of cultural engagement in Scotland since the end of the Second World War, even though the representation of postcoloniality in the national culture dates further back than this period.

I have tried to examine the theatre as a major site where the process of retrieval is taking place. This has prompted me to look at the recurring question of theatrical tradition, and the issues related to it.

The study goes on to argue that since one of the purposes of Scottish theatre is to function as a site for an obscured national subjectivity, its tradition has to be located in the practice that embodies the enunciation of the performative. Hence I have looked at some of the strategies which theatre uses to stage resistance to the domination of the Scottish space. I have demonstrated that the language of Scottish theatre, its performative qualities, are not only a signifier of cultural difference, but also present audiences with a subliminal critique of cultural and political authority in the British state. The functions of the English language in the Empire were diverse but always underpinned by a written equivalent against which social status and authority might be measured. In a nation so implicated with the politics and power of empire, Scottish dialects in theatre, used not as a caricature, but instead as a *lingua franca*, provide an escape from the terms of Empire. The performative qualities of Scots and of Scots dialects provide another space in which to articulate Scottish subjectivities.

As I pointed out in Chapter One, 'postcolonial' as a term for critical engagement has always attracted controversies, not the least from scholars in the countries of non-advanced capital. The claim by many of such scholars that the term is an attempt to re-cloth and then push the tragic legacy of European colonialism on many cultures in a celebratory direction cannot be ignored. Of course, such scholars and critics are wrong. They are even more wrong to have assumed that postcolonial criticism wishes to be complicit in such a gratuitous surrender of memory. Besides, postcolonial criticism has not achieved such homogenous form as to warrant a call to arm. At its first emergence, postcoloniality was no more than an outline of a new theory, which sought to unite the perspectives emerging from colonial testimony of the Third World and the discourses of those locked within the internal empire of the metropolis. The latter went by an assortment of names; regions, minorities, peripheries. In reality, however, they were united by a common aspiration. This was to resume their destinies from the point where colonialism truncated them.

On the face of it, Scotland should not fit into the postcolonial framework, but as I have argued throughout the thesis, it sadly does. The evidence, this thesis argues, is found in the existence of those body of work connected to a critical colonial tradition on one hand, and the experience of empire against the background of the transcolonial consciousness and transperipheral circuits of the influence it creates', on the other hand. The years since the end of the Second World War and the virtual collapse of the British

Empire have seen the rise of a self-conscious reanimation of *culture, of Scottishness* in Scottish literary and theatre pursuits, with a reckoning that goes back to the critical colonial and later anti-colonial traditions.

It is hoped that by the time that postcoloniality has overcome some of the problems that beset it, it will prove to be an even more systematic framework with which areas that this thesis has neglected can be examined. One of the areas that I believe to be still requiring rigorous critical work is the way language has come to assume the status of performance within Scottish theatre and the relationship between this and the enunciation of a new consciousness. Another area that is in want of additional work is that of 'tradition', or how the concept might be approached in Scottish theatre. This study has challenged the existing view, which is that a Scottish tradition of theatre, if it exists at all, does so fitfully. This study challenges this view by identifying a tradition of popular theatre. But because of its primary focus, the study itself could not deal with this matter at length. It is hoped that some future researcher will be able to seize on the lead that I hope the work has provided.

Fourteen

Scottish Drama and the Popular Tradition

Femi Folorunso

Ella: I thought Scotsmen were supposed to be strong and silent.
 Dennis: Aye, well, that's the A side of the cliché. On the other side's me, a Scottish joke invented by Harry Lauder and the English, all stuck up with tufts of Tartan, wi'a wee bent stee and a clacking tongue, standing forever in front of the footlights by the banks of Loch Lomond, singing 'Oh, you'll tak the high road and I'll tak the low road . . .' Mind you, Ella, you've got a grand wee foghorn of a voice yersell . . .

Stanley Eveling, *Mister!*¹

When Stanley Eveling decided to write a play incorporating the myth of the hard man, arguably the most extensively quarried among those myths that continue to animate Scottish writing, it seemed perfectly natural that he had to recall, as the above lines suggest, the role and impact of the music hall in fastening that myth to popular imagination.²

It is not only Eveling who has been attracted to the music hall in this way. In nearly every modern Scottish play, recognisable bits and pieces of music-hall aesthetics can be found. Where they are not explicit – for example in techniques of performance – they are implicit in dramatic consciousness. From the irreverent jokes and scabrous humour in Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, to the witticism and songs in almost every play John McGrath wrote for 7:84 Scotland – even Peter Arnott's sombre reevaluation of national themes, symbols and characters – the impact of the music hall is everywhere discernible.

Eveling's recalling of music hall, moreover, is more than an intertextual experiment. From Dennis's speech, it is clear that the playwright is criticising 'the structure of attitude and reference' (to borrow Edward

Said's words³) which has been built around the Scottish personality, much of it ingeniously disseminated through popular artistic forms. As it happens, probably no other cultural form has exerted as much imaginative influence on the popular mind in Scotland as the music hall and its confederates. So it is not surprising that there is no other cultural phenomenon – the Kailyard school of writings apart – that is being more rigorously reassessed in contemporary discussion. Regrettably, much of the resulting reassessment (which constraints of space will not allow us to examine here⁴) has been unfavourable. But whatever the prejudice against the music hall, a number of facts about it are worth noting. Firstly, there is David Hutchison's important observation that a native (Scottish) tradition of theatrical entertainment developed around this colourful form.⁵ Secondly, it needs to be pointed out that from its introduction until the late 1940s, it was the most popular and richest form of entertainment in Scotland: it is also important to note that it has declined more slowly in Scotland than anywhere else in the United Kingdom. Thirdly and more importantly, the music hall occupied the middle space in a direct line from seventeenth-century popular entertainment to contemporary drama in Scotland.

It is against the norm, whether in literary criticism or cultural debate, to suggest that there *is* a tradition of drama in Scotland. Yet, if one looks critically at Scottish drama as a whole and not the works of lauded playwrights or theatre companies, its continuity and commitment cannot be doubted. The drama has consistently sought to be at the social centre, continuing to do so throughout the twentieth century – the works of the coal-miner playwright, Joe Corrie in the late 1920s, or more recently, John McGrath's, inevitably generating controversy because of the immediacy of their politics.⁶ Remaining close to the issues of daily life, Scottish drama aims to capture and reconstruct experience and reality from and for the popular consciousness.

As well as McGrath's work, there have been many examples of this since the 1920s. Whether through social realism, workers' theatre movements, working-class drama, plays dealing with historical subjects/themes, or even the innocuous drama of entertainment of amateur drama groups, what is encountered is a drama which keeps close to the popular spirit. The techniques of popular performance, its conventions and goals are freely adopted, adapted and utilised. The dominant attitude in this drama is to speak about the nation, to reinforce the sense of values of community, either directly through plays that draw on national symbols or motifs, or indirectly through plays that question them and chart new courses altogether. Consequently, what we have is an art which deliberately dramatises, addresses or legitimises national

feelings. Thus, when its aesthetic structure, language and the author's and the audience's attitude to the drama are scrutinised, what emerges is a tradition of popular drama, a drama driven as much by a desire to please as by socio-national complexities. The historical emergence of this drama and its growth are to be seen both in terms of its roots in the traditional performing arts of the Scottish people and its more direct, immediate antecedent in the agents of the transformation of these performing arts.

Contrary to what always seems to be the first impression, popular drama is neither inferior nor subordinate to what is often assumed to be the aesthetic drama. Indeed, critical examination of the inner movements and the crucial points of theatre history will reveal that the division between the two is often tenuous and unnecessary. As David Mayer points out, 'those plays which have received the respectful attention of critics are those which reveal the material of popular culture worked and controlled by an artist'.⁷ There is truth in the basic premise, which is that popular materials have a greater vitality and flexibility, which cannot be ignored or passed over even by supposedly 'serious' dramatists. This of course makes light of the complex relationship between the popular and the aesthetic drama and may give the impression that popular drama simply serves as raw material for aesthetic drama. Bearing in mind that all drama, popular drama included, is united by certain shared characteristics such as mimesis, presence of participants, a recognisable structure and an audience, we will need to set out the differences between popular and non-popular aesthetics more clearly, even if only in the form of a rough guide.

In critical terms, popular drama is antithetical to the aesthetic drama in two important areas. Firstly, the dramatic experience it tries to generate in its audience is not private, but rather communal and consensual. At the heart of this is the subordination of aesthetic considerations to 'the exigencies of public rite, whether political, religious, or social'.⁸ It is often the case, therefore, that popular drama more readily responds, formally and thematically, to pressures external to drama. Secondly, the audience of popular drama is on the whole not a select one, for the drama is always playing to a large and general audience – an entire nation, rather than a select group or class.

A census of plays written in Scotland between 1900 and 1980 would perhaps reveal that about 85 per cent are based on Scottish history, mythologies or issues within the Scottish social environment.⁹ Of the remaining 15 per cent 10 would probably be those plays

aiming at 'high art' while the last 5 per cent will occupy the grey area between the two. We can ignore for the moment what attitude or position a particular play or playwright takes to a particular myth, or what interpretation is given to a particular aspect of history. What is important is the selection itself, the decision to write about Scottish history and issues, although of course the idea of dramatists using history and myths as source material is not new. In popular drama, however, the idea has a depth which goes beyond a mere search for heroic models. Popular dramatists have an intuitive attitude towards history and myth as sources of creative power. As repositories of values and the ethos which informs a particular society's definition of itself, myth and history embody their own meanings and attributes. Since they are usually well known and easily recognised by everybody within that society, they can be a powerful means of communication between the creative artist and his audience; a means of establishing the kind of collectivity Michael Bristol identifies when he remarks that 'by favouring a certain style of representation and a particular etiquette of reception, the institutional setting of a performance informs and focuses the meaning of a dramatic text and facilitates the dissemination of that meaning through the collective activity of the audience'.¹⁰

Randall Stevenson, in surveying Scottish drama from the 1950s to the late 1980s, not only acknowledges the high number of plays dealing with history, but goes on to defend such plays with his comment that 'contemporary political feelings made recreations on stage of certain parts of our history significant gestures in themselves'.¹¹ This comment is in effect suggesting that there can be a direct political response to events which goes further than the material of the plays themselves. What needs to be carefully examined, then, is the nature of such events and what the response to them is intended to achieve. If, on one hand, the producers and the audience of this drama are united in the interpretations given to these external events, and if on the other, the agreed interpretations reveal the nature, fears and sentiments of their own society, then we need no further proof that here is a popular drama.

Writing about her experience as an actress and co-founder in what was the original 7:84 Scotland Theatre Company, Elizabeth MacLennan draws attention to how the self-defining cultural practice in the country was a dominant factor in shaping the orientation and direction of the company. She remarks that:

We had become increasingly aware of the cultural and political differences between the situation in the south-east and the north of England and Wales, and between their preoccupations and those of people in Scotland. Scotland is distinguished by its socialist, egalitarian tradition, its Labour history, its cultural cohesion and energetic participation in argument and contemporary issues. Within its separate educational, legal and religious systems is a strong but not chauvinist sense of cultural identity. Culture and politics are not dirty words. We felt our plays there should reflect and celebrate these differences in language, music, political identification and carry on the arguments. This would need a different but related company.¹²

Other Scottish playwrights have made similar comments. Peter Arnott and Liz Lochhead, for example, indicate that their works often respond to the kind of interplay of culture and history MacLennan identifies.¹³ This culture-as-social-practice MacLennan discusses obviously defines the experience of audiences as much as artists.

The difference between Scotland and other parts of the UK is neither as superficial – not just a matter of stepping over a border – nor as tenuous as it might seem from discussions of Scotland's participation in the Enlightenment, for example, or recognitions of its full collaboration in the building of the British empire. The practice of difference has recognisably deeper historical roots, going back, as scholars and commentators always acknowledge, to the union of the Scottish and English crowns, and later parliaments, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Consequently, the cultural practice of difference is ultimately an articulation of what has always been, from the point of view of the Scots, a disturbing historical accident. In a recent article, Martin Kettle describes as follows this aspect of 'difference':

The persistence of this seemingly ineradicable difference after so many centuries is a powerful fact. However much England and Scotland are united under common rule, by a common currency, by a common language and the rest, they remain clearly different from one another. They have experienced so much together, yet they remain quite distinct.¹⁴

Conflicting affiliations to 'Scottishness' and 'Britishness' continue to inform political and cultural debate, and are a source of urgent concern among the Scottish intelligentsia.¹⁵ Consciously or unconsciously, it has become part of ideological commitment on nearly every subject, and through artistic forms and cultural expressions it is being kept

alive and continuously rekindled among the populace. David Daiches obviously has this in mind where he remarks that Scottish literature has often seen itself as the most credible symbol of the opposition to the Scotland-England relationship.¹⁶

In the words of the sociologist David McCrone, Scotland was the second nation to undergo 'the comprehensive process of industrialisation',¹⁷ but has suffered an equally comprehensive post-industrial decline. Although the discovery of oil and gas off its coasts in the 1970s ignited a new optimism about economic renewal and prosperity, none of it seems to have been realised. Though such developments clearly have more to do with the crisis of capitalism on a global scale, they have of course added to the specific complexities of Scottish 'difference'. It is in a bid to come to terms with these complexities that 'difference' has taken the form of a more assertive but non-xenophobic nationalism in recent years.

As Raymond Williams once pointed out, one of the difficulties of criticism is that while there is a general acceptance that some relation must exist between social and material environments on the one hand, and on the other the nature of artistic creativity and the changes taking place within it, this is always very difficult to demonstrate in detail. Williams argues further that it is because of this difficulty that 'people (usually) find good reasons for joining in the general retreat which would promote or relegate art to an autonomous area'.¹⁸ I believe that Scottish drama does demonstrate the truth of the relationship between art and socio-political developments, although also the retreat that usually arises from the difficulty of demonstrating this relationship in detail. Since the 1920s, when the drama became a marked addition to Scottish writing, its tone and orientation have been towards public affairs – whether in the plays of Red Clydeside, or of the workers' theatre movement, whose best achievement is probably Joe Corrie's work, particularly *In Time o' Strife* (1928),¹⁹ or in the post-Glasgow Repertory explosion of drama on Scottish themes, from Anthony Rowley's *A Weaver's Shuttle* (1910) to J. A. Ferguson's *Campbell of Kilmohr* (1914). According to one critic, James Bridie's interest in drama was stimulated by plays put on at the Glasgow Repertory,²⁰ and indeed his first play, *The Switchback*, was offered to (and rejected by) the company in the second phase of its existence.²¹ The same orientation towards public affairs also appears in the urban realism or historical interests of drama from the 1940s to the 1960s, in plays such as James Barke's *Major Operation* (1941), Robert McLeish's *The Gorbals Story* (1946), Ena Lamont Stewart's *Men Should Weep* (1947), Robert McLellan's

Flowers o' Edinburgh (1948) and Stewart Conn's *I Didn't Always Live Here* (1967). Much the same interests remain in the contemporary drama, which has made serious questioning of accepted truths the norm in plays such as Peter Arnott's *Thomas Muir's Voyage to Australia* (1986) or Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got her Head Chopped Off*. What we have in all these plays is a drama which, collectively, most often sees itself directly responding to the physical and psychological conditions of the nation. Collectivity of response has occasionally even led playwrights to focus on the same theme or character, as when Bill Bryden and Peter Arnott each modelled a play on the life of Benny Lynch, the 1935 Scottish world flyweight boxing champion. Consequently, the forms, modes and meanings of this drama can be appreciated as structured reflections of society in all its complexity, from the pattern of social relations to the principles – ideological, intellectual, political – which guide it. This is the sense in which Scottish drama represents both the expressive and instrumental elements of Scottish culture and nationalism – as a crucial, and inherently populist response to 'difference'.

I began by drawing attention to the role and impact of the music hall, and conclude by re-emphasising its importance as a repository of what may be described as the Scottish tradition. Although music hall came to Scotland in the early nineteenth century purely as a commercial enterprise, it immediately encountered a number of other factors. The most significant of these was the slow recovery by the nation from the assault on secular and especially dramatic entertainments made by the Scottish reformed church from the mid-sixteenth century onwards. Although various critics offer substantial discussion of this assault, its severity and very long-lasting effects are still largely under-investigated. We now know, for instance, that a pattern of utilitarian drama was established in Scotland before the Reformation.²² This pattern achieved its highest standards in Sir David Lyndsay's *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*. A close scrutiny of the language and techniques of this play suggests very much the kind of imposition, discussed earlier, of literary order on popular elements in order to make some urgent, serious political statements. While there are still many gaps to be filled in the subsequent history of Scottish drama, I believe that what is already known can be used as basis for some productive speculations. One such is that from the sixteenth century – especially after the time of *Ane Satyre* – many of the growing or already advanced forms of entertainment

in Scotland were submerged or forced into undesired, incongruous mergers by the brutality of the Reformers. Another is that by looking closely at the Scottish pantomime, we can see it perpetuating elements of the weird, wonderful and supernatural which may initially have been inspired by Celtic folklore, or descended partly from seventeenth-century circus and mountebank shows. If we examine closely the patterns of development apparent in the various popular forms, we would become less inclined to support the whimsical argument that Scotland lacks a tradition of drama. Instead, this tradition can be seen as continuously inflected in forms of popular entertainment. Despite the Reformation's assault on Scottish drama, it remained strong, if in one way silenced, or, in Eveling's terms, with only its 'B' side, its popular forms, still clearly playing.

Further evidence for the strength of popular tradition may be drawn, for example, from George Emmerson's well-researched *Social History of Scottish Dance*, in which he draws attention to the dramatic features of all well-known Scottish dances, pointing out that these have often been ignored in analyses of them. He concludes that there are other traditional performances which include such dramatic elements, though these are unrecognised because so little attention has been paid to them.²³ Surveying the various forms of popular entertainment in Scotland, it is difficult to disagree with Emmerson. From the Highland games to the ceilidh, or the Burns supper, the dramatic impulse has a very strong presence. One unavoidable speculation concerning the dynamism of the Scottish music hall is that once it secured a footing, it became the agent for coalescing and transforming the diffused elements of Scottish popular arts, which it then used to expand its own scope. As entertainment, it was convivial and full of revelry. As theatre, its core was the spontaneous recreation of popular experience and reality.

Materials from the music hall and its confederates have not only been appropriated in contemporary Scottish drama: the appropriation has itself become the technical means of continuing the popular base of the drama. Like much of music hall, contemporary drama has continued to draw from living arts and discourses – the embodiments of current feelings and sentiments of the people in the form of songs and newly borrowed popular witticisms, for example. In so far as we cannot speak of a progressive evolution from music hall to real drama, since every form of artistic entertainment ultimately derives its values from the circumstances which

foster it, the continued occurrence of music-hall motifs, routines and awareness in contemporary drama ought to be seen as a key aspect of the powerful popular impulse that dominates Scottish entertainment.

NOTES

1. *A Decade's Drama: Six Scottish Plays* (Lancaster: Woodhouse Books, 1980), p.55.
2. The myth of the hard man is a derived popular myth, which goes back to the Calvinist ideas that influenced the Scottish Reformation. See Trevor Royle, *The Macmillan Companion to Scottish Literature* (London & Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), p.56, and also his entry on John Knox, pp.166-7.
3. Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1993), p.73.
4. The Scottish sociologist David McCrone has provided a summary of these views in an essay appropriately titled 'Representing Scotland: Culture and Nationalism' in McCrone, et al (eds), *The Making of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), pp.161-74.
5. Cf. David Hutchison's 'Scottish Drama 1900-1950' in Cairns Craig (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature*, Vol.4 (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1989), p.164.
6. See Linda Mackenney's 'A National or Popular Theatre' in *Chapman* 43-4, on the kind of controversies that surrounded Joe Corrie's works. The controversies generated by the works and attitudes of John McGrath and the 7:84 Scotland Company are yet to be documented in a full and comprehensive manner. However, there are bits and pieces of explanation and references to it by Elizabeth MacLennan throughout her book, *The Moon Belongs to Everyone* (London: Methuen, 1990).
7. David Mayer, 'Towards a Definition of Popular Drama', David Mayer & Kenneth Richards (eds), *Western Popular Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1977), p.267.
8. *Ibid.*, p.265.
9. See also Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* (Essex: Longman, 1983), p.275.
10. Michael D. Bristol, *Carnival and Theatre* (New York & London: Methuen, 1985), p.3.
11. Randall Stevenson, 'Recent Scottish Theatre: Dramatic Developments?' in *Scotland: Literature, Culture, Politics* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag, 1989), p.196.
12. Elizabeth MacLennan, *The Moon Belongs to Everyone* (London: Methuen, 1990), p.43.
13. Cf. Greg Giesekam, 'Connecting with the Audience: Writing for a Scottish Stage. Interview with Peter Arnott', *New Theatre Quarterly*, 6, (Nov.1990), pp.318-34; Ilona S. Koren-Deutsch, 'Feminist Nationalism in Scotland: *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*', *Modern Drama*, 32, 3 (Sept. 1992), pp.424-32.
14. Martin Kettle, *The Guardian*, 23 September 1995, p.23.
15. The references here are too numerous and cut across disciplines. Representative examples can, however, be found in the critical work of Robert Crawford, David McCrone, Christopher Harvie etc. But it is in the activities of the Saltire Society that the aspiration has its most eloquent expression. Any of the society's numerous publications will do for reading.
16. David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964).
17. McCrone, op. cit. p.7.
18. Raymond Williams, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), pp.271-2.
19. This date and others cited refer to the first performance of each play.
20. David Hutchison, op. cit., p.172.

21. Alan Bold, op. cit., p.287.
22. Cf. Robb Lawson, *The Story of the Scots Stage* (Paisley: Alexander Gardner, 1917) and James Dibdin, *Annals of the Edinburgh Stage* (Edinburgh: 1871). Although these books are very useful, especially as general introduction, they both lack detailed analysis. The best work I have come across in that direction is Sarah Carpenter's 'Drama and Politics: Scotland in the 1530s', Meg Twycross et al (eds), *Medieval English Theatre*, 10, 2 (1988).
23. George S. Emmerson, *A Social History of Scottish Dance* (Montreal and London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1972).

After Borders Warfare?

Scottish Theatre, Scottish Parliament and the Postcolonial Question

Femi Folorunso

COMMENTING LAST NOVEMBER on the controversy about what story the objects displayed inside the new museum of Scotland should tell, Neal Ascherson seized the opportunity to draw attention to the less visible yet overarching culture-politics nexus of such disputes in Scotland. Thus he has written:

Anywhere else this would be an academic controversy about the presentation of the past, a discussion of the 'integrity' of concrete objects as opposed to the myths and narrative which coagulate around them. But here it is sharply relevant to the general public – and it's political. In six months' time, a Scottish Parliament will meet again for the first time in almost 300 years. Fervently and sometimes feverishly, a (Scottish) national identity is being rediscovered and embroidered.

It is worth pointing out, by the way, that the controversy in question was vigorously but quietly pursued among the cultural and intellectual elite. Yet as Ascherson himself correctly implies, that controversy was a reflection, more than anything else, of the still profoundly unsettling issue of Scottish 'national identity'. That the incoming Scottish parliament is being regarded as the furnisher of 'rediscovered' national identity was made clear at a conference in Edinburgh last September on 'Three Decades of Scottish Theatre.' The most animated sessions at the conference were those which enabled participants to steer discussion towards the question of how to represent Scotland under devolution. Given that the declared theme of that conference was 'staging the nation' this was perhaps to be predicted. However, the passion with which issues such as the question of language in Scottish theatre, the aesthetics of nationalism and the case for a national theatre were discussed left little room for a more detached *post-modern* standpoint. The more the conference discussed different aspects of theatre, the more the questions of cultural identity surfaced. On occasions such as this,

Scotland manifests all the characteristics of a post-colonial cultural terrain. It is against this background that I wish to contextualise my comments on what the new Scottish parliament might mean for Scottish theatre.

The complexity of Scotland's postcoloniality is built I think around a rather uncomfortable duality. This is the dilemma of being both a 'nation before nationalism', and a nation forming part of the British Union or what Perry Anderson, echoing an earlier authority, calls 'territorial nationality'. On the face of it, being part of a territorial nationality ought to have provided Scotland with a greater space in which to contest, improvise and ultimately expand its national identity. This would have been a reasonable expectation given that the ideological underpinning of the negotiation that led to the Union was, from the Scottish point of view, predominantly economic. However, in a situation where the drive towards Union was part of the will-to-power of England's ascendant imperialism, as Angus Calder eloquently argues in *Revolutionary Empire*, what occurred to Scotland can only be described as negotiation of a new identity. That identity was not integral to Scotland, but produced in relation to the powerful ideology of empire. In that context, the Scottish patriarchs who, at the height of the Empire, described the Scots as an 'imperial race' cannot now be said to have exhibited loss of historical memory. They were accepting, with some vulgarity, what had become the logical aspirations of a new national identity. However much subsequent writings and political declarations have sought to make the negotiation seem at best voluntary and at worst wilful, careful reading of the circumstances preceding it show clearly that neither of these interpretations will be quite accurate. The Act of Union guaranteed the independence of Scotland's institutional framework – legal, education, religion and local administration – but that guarantee also made it impossible for a Scottish identity to flourish administratively outside the homeland. This is not necessarily an argument that is hostile to scholars, such as John Mackenzie, who believe that Scotland's cerebral contributions to the administration of Empire were the same as the exportation of Scottish 'national ethos'. The issue is really about the form of the political authority and framework that constituted the conditions of the Empire on one hand and the power effects that those conditions engendered on the other hand. However far-reaching the cerebral contributions of Scots to the spirit of Empire, as a nation, they were 'suborned in the English imperial thrust.'

In an article immediately after the 1997 General Elections, Tom Nairn rejects the idea that Scotland might be postcolonial, yet his own efforts elsewhere at explaining the anxieties surrounding the

Scottish 'nationhood' indicate no other conclusion. Nairn's rejection of postcoloniality, though controversial, is understandable. Always implicit in the theoretical attitude of Scottish intellectuals writing on nationalism and or economic development is an attempt to bypass the critical dimension of how much the business of Empire had shaped Scotland while at the same time distorting her sense of the self.

Many of such intellectuals seem to see an unbroken continuity between Scottish identity before the incorporation of the nation into the United Kingdom and the identity 'assumed' thereafter. This has often led them to treat the process of cultural translation (if not culture itself) which followed after 'incorporation', as a secondary process, which it is not, in the Scotland-England relationship. Of course, there have been those among the intellectuals who sometimes concede to the corruption of Scottish culture by the Union. A notable example here is Nairn himself who suggests in *The Break-up of Britain* that incorporation into Union disabled Scottish politics, and led to a cultural sub-nationalism which, 'because it has been unconnected with a "higher" or normal, nationalist-style culture during the formative era of modern society, has evolved blindly.' However, what Nairn calls 'blind evolution' of culture is, from a postcolonial theoretical perspective, evidence of paradoxes and irresolution inevitable after Union with a 'partner' whose level of development was considerably higher. The presence of England in Scotland on the basis of Union meant that all the narratives, signifiers and practices available to Scots and which had hitherto been home-based were at once inscribed within England's modernity. So comprehensive was this that it was Scottish writers, who, according to David Morse, first started the 'construction' of England as 'a model and an ideal type – an example to be held up to the rest of the world, and perhaps to the English as well.'

It is often difficult to avoid the conclusion that many contemporary Scottish intellectuals feel a retrospective discomfort about the nation's implication in the Imperial enterprise. This they try to express through what can best be described as an ambiguous stand when it comes to linking the fortunes of their nation to the business of Empire. Nonetheless, the ambiguity can be problematised by the nature of the paradox and irresolution that dominate the discussion of 'nationhood' and 'culture' in Scotland itself. This is again illustrated by Nairn who, although he rejects the idea of 'post-colonial Scotland', finds it acceptable to describe Scotland as a 'satellite' of England. It is therefore not as much that Scottish intellectuals distrust the theoretical orientation of postcoloniality as that they may be wary of its direct application in the Scottish case.

However, postcoloniality is not an ideology of victimhood, or an attempt to construct one. As Homi K. Bhabha, argues, 'Postcolonial perspectives emerge from the colonial testimony of Third World countries and (also) the discourses of "minorities" within the geographical divisions of East and West, North and South.' If we substitute Bhabha's 'minorities' with what Nairn terms a 'satellite' status, the exclusion of Scotland from the post-colonial prism becomes superficial. While post-coloniality is a social experience it is also a framework in which to examine the nature of alliances founded in colonialism. These alliances enhanced the power of some 'native' elites and also created entirely new ones in a process of continual and still on-going cultural translation. These alliances might be represented as 'marriages of convenience' but they were never a secondary element in the process of colonisation, they were instead the fundamental aspects of colonialism, which do not go away with the departure of the last District Officer or the rise of a new national flag. Indeed, the case of the Scottish Highlands illustrates the process being described here.

Long before the 1707 Union, the Highlands had been marked off from the Lowland in a general rather than specifically economic sense. The difference in Highlands's physical geography was as a matter of fact repeatedly employed to reinforce the *Otherness* of the inhabitants. In short, there was nothing to choose between the rude landscape occupied by the Highlanders and their manners. Both were deemed excruciatingly insufferable. The new identity platform offered by Union made the complicity of Lowland Scotland in the occupation and disarming of the Highlands justifiable as part of the general transition to modernity. In this way, the Lowland played the role of a surrogate translator of the new model of 'British' power vis-à-vis the Highlands. The appropriation, about a century later, of the Highlands as collective Scottish national totem is remarkable but not surprising – remarkable because it might have suggested a convenient amnesia. However, it was also suggesting something deeper, namely the hollowness at the heart of the Scottish nation. This explains why much of the appropriation of the Highlands had to take place at a time when the nation-people psychic affiliation was being pushed to its logical end in other European settings, to become the basis of (national) political sovereignty. The appropriation of the Highlands by the Lowlands was therefore not a case of showing belated sympathy with the Highlanders, rather it marked an attempt to re-invent a nation, through reinterpretation of the shared experience of domination, even when the strategies of that domination had been different.

Given that the British nation state was the culmination of a series

of alliances within and between powerful interests in its four countries it would seem to be logical to ask what are the contemporary ramifications of what is, by now, a deeply embodied national and cultural hybridity. Within this critical perspective and in the context of Scotland one might, for example, be able to more realistically problematise the idea of an independent Scotland from a nationalist standpoint. There is another ground on which to justify the use of a post colonial analysis of Scotland, a ground that Nairn himself has been one of the most eloquent to point out. Simply, that it was the collapse of the British Empire that brought out the extent to which Scotland had become a 'satellite' of the actual imperial centre. And however much the realisation must have been perceived in practical, developmental terms, the one area it could be confronted decisively was in *discourses* and *performance* of identity.

MacDiarmid was not just the model of a rebel. He was one and this he demonstrated fully when he sought single-handedly to reanimate the 'psychic' affiliation between nation and people and channelling it into a new principle of representation. MacDiarmid's work enabled and complicated the recuperative process in so far as his strategies were to seek a unifying (Scottish) theory of cultural resistance. Yet for all his theoretical shortcomings, MacDiarmid's attempt at a new cultural-nationalist poetics was significant, in as much as his work tried to subvert the wholeness and philosophical logic of British identity. MacDiarmid would probably relish the idea that he dealt with 'whole logic', while launching into his *performances* of Scottish identity. His opponents, who took his shortcomings as evidence of incipient anarchism, were only helping to confirm the complexity of the representational matrix in which 'satellites' or colonised subjects exist. In that respect, MacDiarmid's effort was consistent with the trend of reaction, from the numerous 'satellites', and those newly released from the imperial bondage, against the exhaustion of the notion of culture dispersed by the Empire.

The articulation of identity as essentially a performance has been most effective in poetry and theatre, as the example of MacDiarmid in one and his activist interest in the other further shows. Elsewhere, I have described Scottish drama as resolutely popular and irresistibly drawn to politics and social issues. It is a theatre in which the struggle to be able to summon 'a representative audience that will in turn recognise itself as nation on stage', in Kruger's words, is unmistakably central to aesthetic structure. This in itself makes the theatre seem a part of the process of voice dispersal, and also an engagement with the complexity of postcolonial nationhood I tried to sketch above. For example, it was the absence of a commonly

agreed idea of nation, that at one time led the 'national identity' being imagined on the Scottish stage to be subjected to quarrelsome definition and rejection. Like most quarrels of the sort, the discursive formation of 'national identity' was marked by a struggle between a presumed higher culture and an antagonistic popular one. However, unlike most other struggles, the element of geography, the internal spaces of the nation and the injustices based upon the separation of those spaces and landscapes, also significantly coloured the struggle, thus making reconciliation doubly difficult. This led in time to a bifurcation of dramatic practice between two boundaries each claiming to be popular and national. On one hand, there were those who sought to define the national theatre with minds on the modular forms provided by the West-end of London, and on the other hand, those who wished to pay close attention to the energetic performative practices from which new aesthetic forms could be derived.

Similarly, the attempt to reinvent the nation through appropriation, and within that appropriation, a reconstruction, of the Highlands experience led to the ominous charges of 'nativism' and of a false consciousness seeking to culturally remap the nation. The attempt to construct a more unifying picture for the stage, one based on the more verifiable post-Union material culture, did not fare any better. This was not because the experience being so distilled was not credible, but because it was felt to have prioritised the urban over the rural, the city above the country. Moreover, it was decidedly political and combatively so. Thus, while one attempted effort at remapping of the nation was rejected because it was felt to be sentimental, falsely romantic, patronising and patriarchal, the other was felt to be too troublesome, excessive and overtly polemical.

On the basis of all this then, it is possible to argue that the discursive formation of 'national identity' has become as much a matter of form as of content for Scottish drama. Crucially, the theatre has become another platform for staging the anxieties surrounding nationhood, including the very definition of how the nation is constituted in political as well as in dramatic or aesthetic terms. In other words, the theatre has not escaped from the 'persistent contradiction' between the various tendencies juggling for a definition of the nation. The three-dimensional live context of theatre and the political complexity of the Scottish environment have combined to create a uniquely theatrical aesthetic with an internal dynamism. This is illustrated I think by the polyphonic nature of individual characters in Scottish drama, how contradictory meanings can be derived by the audience from a single voice,

without the integrity of that voice being undermined. One of the dominant views about Scottish theatre is that it is *sui generis* 'alternative' or 'leftist'. Valid as that view might be, it offers only a partial description.

It will always be possible to see in the new Scottish parliament a means for reconfiguring the existing bureaucratic structures for managing the arts in Scotland, including theatre. This might include reanimating the debate about the need for a Scottish national theatre. All these will of course be familiarly desirable, particularly if the parliament was to be no more than part of the general post-Thatcherite nose-thumping politics, sometimes qualified as New Labour's 'rebuilding of Britain' project. However, a parliament is usually expected to perform a greater function and symbolise a greater concept than an Assembly. To do this, a parliament must also have greater powers and here lies the moot question of the new constitutional arrangement and how it might influence and affect the institutions of culture and the practices of representation.

In principle, Scottish theatre, in the way it has always conflated crisis of 'identity' with that of political economy and treating both as indivisible, is already far-ahead of whatever the bureaucrats of a presumably new or retooled Arts Council might come up with as the advantages of devolution. There is already *in situ* a performative practice which at its most creative poses a direct challenge to the dominant norms of drama which playwrights are supposed to aspire to. Scottish theatre has been a victim of the violence of naming, a condition peculiar to postcolonial theatres. Its performative practice is overshadowed by a sense of distance from the notions of 'centrality' and 'metropolitanism', which are deemed to have the power to confer universality. To the extent that the violence of naming has been a key factor among what the theatre has had to contend with, its history since the 1920s also presents itself as a history of cultural resistance and survival. This helps to account for why, in spite of the persistent contradictions that attend the discursive formation of 'nation' and 'national' on the Scottish stage, there is an unmistakable continuity in the aesthetic character of Scottish drama. For example, it is possible to trace the affinity, theatrical as well as formal, between plays that were inspired by the Scotland of the 1920s, 30s and 50s and those that have tried to capture the flavour of the more recent contemporary life. Indeed, it is significant that where quotidian life eludes dramatisation as a result of its tediousness, playwrights have often used history to suggest a more heroic way of responding to the present. Earlier works by the likes of Joe Corrie or the Glasgow Unity Theatre illustrate how an overwhelming sense of community was usually the

only means of defeating the harshness of an alienated everyday existence. The more recent plays have attempted to depict both the loss of that communal spirit and the consequences of that loss. Whether depicted through the self-mutilating circumstances in Simon Donald's *Life of Stuff*; the single-mindedness memorably dramatised in *Elizabeth Gordon Quinn*; or the convivial eagerness to share secrets and laughter that run through Tony Roper's *The Steamie*, the centrality of the social is the key element. The rich theatre of these plays apart; each of them shows an intensity of social spirit and makes a powerful case for why they ought to feature in the canon of what Randall Stevenson calls the 'unfolding dramatic tradition'. It is the norm in Scottish theatre that various conceptions of social identity are used as templates for larger discussions in which the nation becomes the major referent.

How the Scottish parliament responds to being the institutional framework for the restoration of nationhood will be decisive in how the 'national' is henceforth conceptualised within Scottish drama. It will not be simply that a restored sense of nationhood will refuel and reinsure creative confidence, it will bring forward the much-needed debate on how to solemnise rather than continue the aimless search for the 'authentic' in Scottish drama. If this became the first step towards giving the Scottish performative practice its own authority, it would also have been the most significant thing to happen to Scottish theatre since the collapse of the British Empire. After all, it was from the moment of that disintegration that the long-term effects and the critical harm that the business of Empire had done to Scottish culture could no longer be hidden or disputed.