

**SOUNDS IN THE EMPTY SPACES OF HISTORY:  
RE-PLACING  
CANADIAN AND SCOTTISH LITERATURES**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Following Margaret Atwood's exhortation that "the study of Canadian literature ought to be comparative" (Survival 17), and in response to what post-colonial theorists Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have perceived as the surprising dearth of "cross-cultural comparative studies" in Canadian literary criticism (The Empire Writes Back 36), this thesis engages in a study of Canadian and Scottish narratives from a cross-cultural perspective that foregrounds colonization, and both countries' responses to cultural imperialism. Canadian and Scottish writers wrestle with what Neil Gunn's Highland River refers to as the "sounds in the empty spaces of history": the various and barely audible vibrations of narrative that are suppressed by the monolithic din of a hegemonic historiography (62). Starting with the Highland Clearances, a dynamic and intersecting moment for both Canadian and Scottish literatures, a continuing cross-cultural dialogue between Canada and Scotland is examined as this is inscribed in their literatures. Canada shares with Scotland not only the Gaelic and Lowland literary traditions she has embraced and adapted through Scottish emigration, but also the decolonizing response both have developed to American and English cultural incursions into their respective countries.

The paradoxical role the Scot and the Canadian descendent of white European settler culture play as both an agent and victim of British imperialism--the colonizer and the colonized--is discussed with reference to the work of Neil Gunn, Alistair MacLeod, Alice Munro, Naomi Mitchison, Margaret Laurence, Alasdair Gray, Susan Swan, Margaret Atwood and Sheila Watson.

The thesis examines how the discursive strategies of irony, parody, metafiction and allegory feed into Canadian and Scottish writing as ways of circumventing and subverting hierarchical patterns of writing.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the research reported in it is my own work. Permission has been obtained from the editors of Studies in Canadian Literature and British Journal of Canadian Studies to insert photocopies of "Sounds in the Empty Spaces of History": The Highland Clearances in Neil Gunn's Highland River and Alistair MacLeod's 'The Road to Rankin's Point' and "Eric McCormack's 'Institute for the Lost': The Scottish Expatriate Writer's Reconstruction of Self and Place in English Canadian Literature" as appendices to the thesis.

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## Chapter 1

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### Canadian and Scottish Literatures: A Cross-Cultural Dialogue

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*The many ships that left our country  
With white wings for Canada.  
They are like handkerchiefs in our memories  
and the brine like tears  
and in their masts sailors singing  
like birds on branches.*

Iain Crichton Smith, "The Exiles"

#### INTRODUCTION

Following Margaret Atwood's exhortation that "the study of Canadian literature ought to be comparative" (Survival 17), and in response to what Australian post-colonial theorists Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin have perceived as the surprising dearth of "cross-cultural comparative studies" in Canadian literary criticism (The Empire Writes Back 36), this research project engages in a study of Canadian and Scottish narratives written in English from a cross-cultural perspective foregrounding colonization, and both countries' responses to cultural imperialism.<sup>1</sup> More recently Scottish poet and critic Robert Crawford has advocated a comparative study of Scottish and Canadian literatures (Devolving English Literature 8). Canadian and Scottish writers wrestle with what Neil Gunn's Highland River (1937) refers to as "sounds in the empty spaces of history": the various and barely audible vibrations of narrative that are suppressed by the monolithic din of a hegemonic historiography (62). Starting with the Highland Clearances, a dynamic and intersecting moment for both Canadian and Scottish literatures, a continuing cross-cultural dialogue between Canada and Scotland is examined as this is inscribed in their literatures. Canada shares with Scotland not only the Gaelic and Lowland literary



traditions she has embraced and adapted through Scottish emigration, but also the decolonizing response both literatures have developed towards American and English cultural incursions into their respective countries. By decolonizing, I mean a challenging and dismantling of colonizing systems of thought which seek to subordinate Scottish and Canadian writings to English and American models.

The paradoxical role the Scot and the Canadian descendent of white European settler culture play as both an agent and subject of imperialism--the colonizer and the colonized--is discussed with reference to the work of Neil Gunn, Alistair MacLeod, Alice Munro, Naomi Mitchison, Margaret Laurence, Alasdair Gray, Susan Swan, Margaret Atwood, and Sheila Watson. The thesis examines how the discursive strategies of allegory, irony, metafiction, and parody, feed into Canadian and Scottish writing as ways of circumventing and subverting hierarchical patterns of writing.

#### **CANADA AND SCOTLAND: AN OTHER *AULD ALLIANCE***

The marriage of Scottish and Canadian cultures, unlike the *Auld Alliance* between Scotland and France, was not constructed around mutually beneficial political and military interests, but rather sprang from the massive emigration, forced and voluntary, of Scots to Canada in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Scotland, however, previous to surrendering parliamentary sovereignty to England, once thought of Canada as a colony with prospective military and political value. On August 5, 1621 James VI commanded the poet and statesman Sir William Alexander to establish the colony of New Scotland, a territory that included the present-day Maritime provinces and the Gaspé Peninsula (John G. Reid 3). Although a Scottish settlement was established at Port Royal, Nova Scotia it was evacuated in 1633 under terms dictated by the British-French treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye (7). The most sustained and dynamic intersection of Canadian and Scottish cultures, however, is located

in the Highland Clearances of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Scottish participation in England's administration of overseas territories, whether through enlistment in Highland regiments, or emigration was often precipitated by English interference in the Scottish economy. The incursion of the cheviot sheep into the Highland glens and the subsequent Clearances of the indigenous population may be traced, in part, to England via the Lowlands. During the Napoleonic blockade of Britain, Scotland became a valuable territory for England. As Neil Gunn writes, the Clearances created "a productive area for feeding England with wool and mutton" (Butcher's Broom 169). And, although this situation temporarily raised the prices paid for Highland goods, the vast quantities of wool and mutton required by England demanded depopulation of the region. Lowlanders administrated the exploitation of Highland resources alongside clan chiefs who made possible the separation of a people from their land, and church ministers who expedited this evacuation from their pulpits. Many of the Highland dispossessed were driven to the sea to harvest kelp, but when British imperial policy lifted tariffs on foreign kelp the market collapsed, forcing them to emigrate. Greed, however, was not the sole contributor to the depopulation of the region. As T. C. Smout points out, crop failure and the inability of an antiquated agricultural economy to expand to support an increasing population also played roles in the evictions (328).<sup>2</sup> Of those who were not forced to leave, the prospect of a subsistence existence in a dissolving community encouraged many to board the emigrant ships for Canada. Attracted by the promise of a better life in North America, many Lowland Scots also emigrated to Canada.<sup>3</sup>

Scottish emigrants were the first to colonize large parts of Canada and modelled many of their new nation's churches and schools on institutions of their native land. Scottish culture was further transplanted into a Canadian context with the establishment of Burns'

clubs and St. Andrew's societies across Upper Canada.<sup>4</sup>

Transplantation, an organic metaphor representing Scottish emigrant culture as a foreign plant cultivated in Canadian soil, is frequently used to describe the movement of cultures. And, while this image may seem a cliché, its importance as a means of conveying the process of geographical shifts in population which precipitate the type of cultural metamorphoses discussed here emerges with a glance towards its etymology. Many of the settlers who left Scotland for Canada brought with them seeds, flower cuttings and roots to remind them of home and, as David Bentley writes, "to modify the alien landscape to which they were going" (16). These Scottish seeds took root in a Canadian ground, and flowered in a new landscape, simultaneously transforming the new landscape and being transformed by it. The story of a transplanted Scottish literature is analogous to this organic conception of cultural movement. Literature in the New World was also shaped in part by a Scottish aesthetic as emigrant writers attempted to express their Canadian experience with a Scottish literary sensibility. One early example of Scottish-Canadian literary cross-fertilization is the anonymous verse "The Canadian Boat Song." First published in 1829 in Edinburgh's Blackwood's Magazine, the poem is a lament for the Hebrides supposedly sung by exiled Highland oarsmen living in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

A Scottish influence on Canadian literature is examined by Elizabeth Waterston in her seminal essay "The Lowland Tradition in Canadian Literature," and recently provided the subject for the 1991 conference "Scottish Influences in Canadian Literature" at the University of Edinburgh<sup>6</sup>. Waterston argues that emigrant writers modified the styles and themes of Robert Burns, Walter Scott, and Robert Louis Stevenson to create syncretic works expressing their pioneer experiences in Canada (203-220).<sup>7</sup> As the present enquiry concerns primarily twentieth-century texts, I will discuss briefly writers representing key phases of development in Canadian literature as a whole, and in the cross-cultural dialogue between Canada and

Scotland by way of tracing the development of Scottish-Canadian writing and providing an historical context for the dissertation.

Bogle Corbet (1831), Scottish novelist and Canadian colonial agent John Galt's (1779-1839) tale of life in the bush of early nineteenth-century Ontario provides a locus for the tensions existing between Canadian experience and Scottish sensibility for the early colonial writer.<sup>8</sup> Scotland is an entrenched frame of reference for Bogle, the novel's autoreferential narrator, who sees Edinburgh Castle in Quebec's Chateau of St. Lewis (Galt 29). Bogle exemplifies the cross-cultural dialogue between the New World and the Old World; he writes back to Scotland to advise future emigrants how to best prepare themselves for the challenges that await them in Canada.<sup>9</sup> Glasgow-born poet Alexander McLachlan (1818-96) who emigrated in 1840 came to be known as "the Burns of Canada" for his mimicry of the Ayrshire bard ("Scottish Influences" 209). The fiery destruction of the Clearances is retold in McLachlan's poem The Emigrant (1861) from the Canadian perspective of the displaced crofter Donald Ban, a character Bentley reads as "representing the continuities that can exist through memory and folk culture between the New-World present and the Old-World past" (19). Similar continuities between Scotland and Canada are found today in the literary works of contemporary Scottish emigrants such as Eric McCormack whose novel The Paradise Motel is told from the doubled perspective of an ex-patriate Scot endeavouring to write himself whole in Canada through dialogue with the Old Country.<sup>10</sup>

Two contrasting ways of inscribing the ancestral Scottish past from a Canadian present perspective are to be found in works by Ralph Connor (1860-1937) and Hugh MacLennan (1907-1990), authors of Scottish descent who delineate two important transitions in Canadian history and the Canadian imagination. Connor's The Man from Glengarry (1901) is a text of Empire. Although the novel narrates the shift from colony to Dominion marked by Confederation, at this point in history Canada remains a jewel fixed culturally and

economically in the crown of British Empire. MacLennan's allegorical Barometer Rising (1941) locates the Halifax explosion of 1917 as the moment Canada begins to divest herself of the colonial mentality dominating Connor's novel.

Connor, a pseudonym for Rev. Charles William Gordon, was born and raised in eastern Ontario's Glengarry County, a community settled by a disbanded Highland military regiment, the Glengarry Fencibles, and Gaelic-speaking emigrants from Glengarry in Scotland. Connor and his novel are emblematic of a dependent colonial society. As he was socialized by a community steeped in Scottish culture and studied theology at the University of Edinburgh, it is not surprising that his writing is dependent on Scottish forms to articulate Canadian experience. A didactic tale of morals paralleling the development of the novel's hero, Ranald Macdonald, into adulthood with the growth of Canada toward nationhood, Connor's novel synthesizes Canadian and Scottish cultures. He draws on the sentimental and idealized narratives of the Scottish rural idyll found in the Lowland kailyard school to tell the story of Highlanders building Empire for Britain in Canada.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the influence of the kailyard, linguistic and literary markers of Scottishness characterize The Man from Glengarry. Fragments of untranslated Gaelic are present in the narrative as are phonetic attempts to textualize the English spoken by the community's Gaels. As part of her project to develop the intellect and morals of an adolescent Ranald, the local minister's wife lends him some of Walter Scott's novels, works studied in colonial schools throughout the British Empire (Connor 54).

The Glengarry Highlanders, a people displaced, in part by England's imperial expansion, dislodge others in their subjugation of Canada for Britain. Although Connor, like many of his contemporaries, fails to give this strange irony much consideration in his novel, he does not construct Canada as an entirely empty wilderness waiting to be taken. The narrator of The Man from Glengarry acknowledges the presence of an aboriginal other supplanted

by the colonizing Scots when we are told the men of Glengarry come from "that strip of country running back from the St. Lawrence through Glengarry County, known as the Indian Lands--once an Indian reservation" (3). The fate of these absent native peoples, however, is not something the novel considers, being more concerned with the advancement of Ranald and his people. After Confederation Ranald, and his Glengarry men move westward to conquer what remains of the Canadian wilderness. As a representative of British Columbia Ranald is credited with averting the secession of that province and thus preserving the Dominion for what Connor refers to in his preface to the novel as "making empire" (xiii). Notwithstanding Connor's narration of Canada's birth as a nation, it is a protracted birth leaving the umbilical cord for Hugh MacLennan and other Canadian writers to struggle with.

While Hugh MacLennan was one of the first and most important literary voices advocating Canadian cultural nationalism in essays such as "Boy Meets Girl in Winnipeg and Who Cares," and "Literature in a New Country," and in novels like Barometer Rising, his was a voice that paradoxically carried with it some of the colonial values and insecurities of the country in which he had developed.<sup>12</sup> As much as Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son criticize the Canadian desire for English and American valorizations of things Canadian, many of MacLennan's characters, like MacLennan himself, leave Canada for England or the United States.<sup>13</sup> The Oxford-educated MacLennan's anglocentrism is especially salient to the present discussion when placed in the context of his subordinating inscription of Scottish ancestry. Whereas Connor looks back to his Scottish lineage with pride and notes the strengths of the Highlanders who settled Glengarry, MacLennan perceives his Celtic heritage as a "doom" ("The Scotsman's Return" 1). And although signs of Scottish culture are present in what Cape Breton writer Alistair MacLeod has described as MacLennan's two "most 'Highland' novels," Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son, they are located in "cartoon-like," and simple Highlanders

with exaggerated dialects ("The Writings of Hugh MacLennan" 74). In marked contrast to Alistair MacLeod's lament for the loss of Gaelic-Canadian culture in his stories of the Seventies and Eighties, MacLennan, perhaps a victim of English histories and values he absorbed at Oxford, perceived the Gaelic tongue as "primitive" when compared to the English and French languages, while his work argues that Gaelic must be erased to better the status of Gaels in contemporary Canada ("Scotsman's Return" 9). As MacLeod writes both Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son make strong arguments for the improvement of Highlanders based on their becoming "'more English'" (74).<sup>14</sup> Despite articulating Canada's cultural difference from England and the United States, MacLennan appears to be advocating a type of homogeneity within the country.

The Scottish domination of the Canadian publishing industry and education system ensured that many Canadian readers shared Ranald's experience of reading Walter Scott and other Scottish writers in a context long after the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> One such reader is Canadian novelist, poet, and critic, Margaret Atwood who encountered Scott alongside literature she had not yet come to recognize as Canadian due to the euro-centric values of a school system which failed to acknowledge and valorize the work of Canadian writers (Survival 29). Atwood, a Canadian of United Empire Loyalist stock and author of decolonizing works which uncover Canada's relationship to the power structures of imperialism, encodes elements of Scottish culture into her novel Surfacing for very different reasons than Connor and MacLennan. Works by Scottish poets James Thomson (1700-48) and Robert Burns present among other books in the narrator's cabin emblemize a colonizing of the Canadian imagination (32). The narrator, who severs bonds with a crippling personal and national past feels compelled to destroy these texts along with all the other books in the cabin; she "rips one page from each of the books" to "clear a space" for herself and her culture (171).

**COLONIZER/COLONIZED:  
CANADA'S AND SCOTLAND'S SHARED LIMINAL SPACE**

Not surprisingly Atwood's novel attempts to liberate Canada and Canadian women from the subordinating discourse of colonialism. As Chapter 6 argues, Atwood's exploration of sexual and cultural imperialism in Surfacing invites an allegorical reading of the novel's narrator as a figuration of an oppressed Canada. Imperial British iconography traditionally depicted Canada as a passive woman waiting for the British emigrant to till her soil and violate her forests.<sup>16</sup> Scottish authors contributed to this iconography in pamphlets and books published to encourage emigration to Canada as this verse from John Murray Gibbon's Scots in Canada (1911) illustrates:

I am the land that listens; I am the land that broods,  
Steeped in eternal beauty, crystalline water and  
woods;  
I wait for the man who will win me, and I will not be  
won in a day;  
And I will not be won by weaklings, subtle, suave and  
mild,  
But by men with the hearts of Vikings, and the simple  
faith of a child. (162)

Although the voice of a personified female Canada 'speaks' this invitation to Scottish men, her utterance renders her mute; Canada, as constructed by this Scottish text, is the land that "listens" to the colonizing voice. This imperial cosmology conceives Canada as an empty space to be filled by a Scottish voice. The female subject of Canada expresses a desire to be taken by force; she wishes to be conquered by "Vikings." Vikings is a referent not only for the Scot who will colonize Canada, but also for the Viking colonization of ancient Scotland, an event Scots in Canada enlists to suggest that westward expansion is in the Scottish blood and predestined (12-20). Clive Phillipps-Wooley's jingoistic poem "The Chain of Empire" serves as an epigraph to Gibbon's book textualizing--perhaps unwittingly--the painful and doubled colonizer/colonized position of Scotland. Although Phillipps-Wooley's verse does not recognize the complicit roles played by the English and Scottish ruling classes in



contributing to the necessity for Scottish emigration, he cites the unpleasant realities such interference in the Scottish economy helped to create: "*The air grew foul with smoke, men cried for bread, / With half a world untrod, they prayed for land*" (n. pag.). The poem goes on to state the Scot who emigrates wins "*Bread for the children; ... Empire for Britain;*" the Scot wins Empire for a power associated with the oppression of his or her own people. These colonizing Scots who had been themselves subject to anglicizing cultural processes in Britain, constitute an element of white Canadian settler culture; they dispossessed aboriginal peoples in Canada and established a new society to gain political independence from Britain. Such Scots as those depicted in Margaret Laurence's The Diviners, who were themselves victims of dispossession, become agents of the imperial process in Canada. These Scots and other European settlers soon discovered, however, that it was necessary, as Bill Ashcroft et al suggest, to establish their "indigeneity" and "[distinguish] it from their continuing sense of their European inheritance" (135). Thus the Scottish, who could be considered among the first to be subjugated by the British Empire under the Act of Union, colonize Canada for that Empire, and once again become subject to an imperial process as Canadian colonials.<sup>17</sup>

The Scottish parliamentary vote in favour of Union in 1707 might make some scholars resist identifying Scotland as a colonized society. This decision to merge with England, however, was made by a ruling elite who created a fertile environment for the marginalization of Scottish language and culture, the seeds of which had first been sown with James VI's departure from Holyrood House for London and the English crown in 1603. To the vociferous protest of their countrymen Scotland's colonization was sanctioned by the governing upper class who had much to gain by incorporating Scotland with her powerful and prosperous southern neighbour.<sup>18</sup> Far from the promised revitalizing of the Scottish economy through free trade with English markets, the Union decimated Scottish manufacturing (Andrew

Fletcher and the Treaty of Union 165). Perhaps the polemical comments of George Lockhart most effectively illustrate the way the Union was perceived by many Scots:

It was the kind of Union England designed and desired; because it rivetted the Scots in perpetual slavery, depriving them of any legal method to redress themselves of the injuries they might receive from them, by keeping them poor and under their chains. (Fletcher and the Treaty 15)

The term "free trade" sounds uncomfortably familiar to many Canadians who are presently witnessing a decline in the manufacturing sector of their economy after the ratification of the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement.

The cultural and economic betrayal of the Scottish people by a plutocratic class is significantly similar to what Robin Mathews describes as the American colonization of Canada: "We [Canadians] have chosen not to be part of the most powerful empire in history, though it has colonized us through our ruling class" (3). Like Scottish offshore oil, Canadian natural resources are largely foreign owned, a situation which, as Mathews argues, contributes directly to the erosion of cultural identity: "to believe that the culture of a country and its economy are separate, and--for sensitive and artistic people--unrelated, is to believe in fantasy" (167). Mathews' point is well taken, the aggressive overtures of "profit-making" foreign cinema, television, publishing and learning materials are culturalizing agents that contribute to the americanizing of Canada (168). Canada, however, is not simply a victim of multinational capitalism, but a willing participant; Canadian corporations such as Olympia and York, MacMillan Boedel, and Inco possess large overseas holdings. Canada's participation in global corporate ventures does not abrogate the domination of her own economy by foreign interests. Perhaps the comments of A. W. Johnson, a former Canadian Broadcasting Corporation president, most effectively communicate the American penetration of the Canadian imagination:

Official public policies have had the effect of increasing the viewing of American programs and thus we

have invited into Canada the American value system, American heroes, American institutions, and American touchstones. (211)

William H. New also attributes the decline of some Canadian art forms, such as the death of the fledgling Canadian film industry in 1923, to the economic intrusion of the United States (A History of Canadian Literature 143). American and other foreign interests dominate a Canadian publishing industry recently weakened by the loss of many small presses, a situation which could limit the number of new Canadian authors published.<sup>19</sup> The debate surrounding the Free Trade Agreement between Canada and the United States underlined an already existing perceived threat of an American dismantling of Canadian cultural production.<sup>20</sup> Canadian author Robertson Davies' 1988 observation--"[t]here is in Canada a strong misgiving that a free trade agreement would threaten, and eventually wipe out any indigenous Canadian culture"--remains true today as people anticipate the long term effects of the treaty and the more recent North American Free Trade Agreement (4). Drawing a direct correlation between what they read as an erasure of Canadian cultural identity and increasing American domination of Canadian cultural production the Canadian Film and Television Production Association warns "If Canada hopes to survive as a sovereign nation, it must take steps to repatriate its culture" (Harris A5).

The marginalization of Scottish culture began with the devaluing of the Scots language and literature following the movement of the Scottish court to London in 1603. Subsequently, the language of South-East England displaced Scots as the official language of the court, a court which had long been the centre for literature in Scots. Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil refer to the damaging effects of this move in The Story of English: "now all official documents were in English and the Scottish aristocracy discovered to get on at court they had to have command of London English" (144). Moreover, the Scottish ruling classes began a tradition still in existence today; they sent their children to

tutors and schools south of the Scottish border. McCrum, Cran, and MacNeil observe that following the parliamentary Union of 1707 many educated Scots began to privilege English, eradicating some "Scotticisms" from their writing. Similarly, some Scottish intellectuals began to write in the dominant language of south-eastern England and to denigrate their own language (128). David Hume advocated the use of English over what he referred to as the "peasant" language of Scots (145). This "mimicry of the centre" is characterized by Ashcroft et al as typical of a desire in colonized societies "not only to be accepted but to be adopted and absorbed" by the dominant culture (4). Robert Crawford suggests Hume and other pro Union Scots were not motivated by anti-Scottish sentiment in their moves to erase a Scots tongue, so much as they were endeavouring to advance the progress of Scotland within a Union dominated by English discourse (18, 24). The Gaelic culture of the Highlands was pushed to the periphery of legitimate discourse by the process of anglicization that followed defeat of the clans at Culloden; legislation was passed that outlawed the tartan of the clans and the speaking of the Gaelic language.

The production of Canadian literature was also subject to the tastes and values of foreigners. Unlike Scotland, however, which hasn't had to deal with large scale incursions into its cultural territory from the United States until the twentieth century, Canada had to negotiate both American and English intervention in its cultural production. W. H. New writes with reference to an 1886 collection of Canadian short stories Crowded Out and Other Sketches: "the title story attacks the colonial-mindedness of British publishers, who are willing to accept only wilderness versions of Canada" (A History of Canadian Literature 105). The Canadian publishing industry was under attack not only from British, but also American interests, both of whom used copyright law to exploit Canada and Canadian publications.<sup>21</sup> In similarly self-interested ways, the United States

insisted that foreign books had to be remanufactured in the U.S.A. if reciprocal copyright were to be respected; hence Canadian publishers were still open to pirating, and in effect the Canadian native book market was passing into American hands. (95)

Among the most lethal agents of colonization experienced by both Canada and Scotland was an education system that valorized the literature and history of England, and denigrated or ignored indigenous literature and history. Ironically white settlers in Canada were for the most part similarly dismissive of aboriginal narratives. Ashcroft et al argue

that the study of English has always been a densely political and cultural phenomenon, a practice in which language and literature have both been called into the service of a profound and embracing nationalism. (3)<sup>22</sup>

New writes that not until 1922 was the first series of "'Canadian Literature Manuals'" commissioned by a Catholic school" (A History of Canadian Literature 138). However, it was 1957 before Canadian literature entered the schools on a widely taught basis (197). Speaking with William Findlay, in a 1979 interview for Cencrastus, Margaret Atwood articulates the dilemma of an imperialist intervention that had, until recently, plagued Canada's cultural production:

Canadian readers weren't reading [English] Canadian books. The reason they weren't reading Canadian books was that they were suffused with what we call 'the Colonial Mentality', which views the mother country or the centre of the Imperial Culture as superior. So Canadian readers were reading American and British books but not Canadian ones, so Canadian writers either had to write according to the dictates of one or other of the Imperial Cultures or not get published. (2)

Atwood parallels this Canadian predicament with "the same problem that Scottish writers face, except that [she thinks] there's more acceptance in England for Scottishness than there was for Canadianness, shall we say" (2). She is, however, quick to recognize the English appetite for "quaint" or "rustic" images of Scottishness

restricts the expression of the Scottish experience: "It's almost as if every Canadian writer had to pretend to be a Mountie or some other image like this," she explains (2).

In Scotland Cairns Craig writes about the attempts of the education system to suppress Scottish cultural nationalism with policies designed to "harmonize" Scottish and English literature (History of Scottish Literature V,4 2). The subsequent "annexation" of Scottish writers by the discipline of English literature Craig criticizes (5), is representative of what Ashcroft et al perceive as the imperial centre's attempt to "claim those works and writers of which it approves as British" (Empire 7). As I will discuss later, British in this context may be read as English. This process of annexation was so successful that it wasn't until the 1970s that an introductory course in Scottish literature was introduced at the University of Edinburgh. Prior to this move, Scottish writers were taught in English literature courses, a situation which could potentially obfuscate the political and cultural context out of which their works are written. 'British,' as it has been used in this discussion is a particularly unstable and therefore problematic descriptor which, depending on the addressee, may be received as a referent for the United Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Wales, or for the geographical and cultural space of England. Crawford articulates the variant usages of British in his study of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Scottish writers such as James Thomson, Tobias Smollett, and Sir Walter Scott who, following Union, endeavoured to create a British literature that expressed Scottish experience in a United Kingdom of Great Britain, while English writers continued to equate British with English (45-110).

In Canada the availability of courses in Canadian literature at the university level has only improved within the last twenty-three years. Robin Mathews writes that in 1970 the country's largest Graduate Department of English at the University of Toronto offered only one course in Canadian literature out of 106 possible courses

(175). Mathews goes on to voice his concern over the americanization of Canadian universities during the Sixties and Seventies. Citing numerous cases where foreign and largely American academics were hired to the exclusion of the equally qualified Canadian candidates, and blaming the number of Americans in the academy for the pitiful amount of Canadian Ph D students in Canadian universities (216-224), Mathews concludes that the americanization of the universities means: "U.S. styles of study, the superimposition of U.S. reality upon Canadian experience. It means finally and most dangerously the alienation of Canadian students from Canada" (226). The explosion of Canadian literary talents and the development of Canadian Studies as an academic 'industry' in the 1970s with federal and provincial grants funding publication, research and teaching at home as well as abroad, mean that there are presently more people involved in the study of Canadian culture than ever before.

Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull write of a similar situation in Scotland where they argue that the anglicization of the Scottish universities has perpetuated an inferiorist view of Scottish history, philosophy, and literature.<sup>23</sup> Beveridge and Turnbull cite a wide array of historians who attest to the barbarity and backwardness of Scottish society before union with England brought a civilizing influence to the country (16-20). The most alarming discovery for Beveridge and Turnbull, however, is that "these views emerge in a continuous flow from a strata of English or anglicized academics *within the country*, indeed within the very universities of the culture whose history they so disdain," and that their views "have been so slavishly adopted and developed by an inferiorized native intelligentsia" (28-29). With the publication of books such as The Eclipse of Scottish Culture, Robert Crawford's Devolving English Literature, and the Scottish cultural series "Determinations" edited by Cairns Craig, the anglicized academy Beveridge and Turnbull criticize is beginning to be displaced.

Confronted with aggressive culturalizing agents of imperialism,

Scottish and Canadian writers develop similar and decidedly anti-imperialist modes of articulating cultural identity in relation to the other; they define themselves against the dominant English and American cultures that thwart their construction of self. Paradoxically, the presence of the dominating and silencing other also provides subalterns with a foil against which they can speak their difference. I will not rehearse the valuable and various theses concerning the formulation of both Canadian and Scottish identities here, but suggest that identity is an ever shifting concept constantly negotiated by individuals and nations through the telling of narrative.<sup>24 25</sup> Juxtapositions of such Scottish and Canadian identifying narratives have been invited by Atwood, Crawford and others. P. H. Scott recognizes the correlation between Canada's position with the United States and Scotland's with England, borrowing the title of his pamphlet, In Bed with an Elephant: the Scottish Experience (a tract delineating the Scottish cultural and economic position in Britain) from Pierre Trudeau's famous description of Canada's relation to her southern neighbour. Cairns Craig advocates the comparative study of Scottish and Canadian literatures in his essay "Peripheries" which situates both literatures on the margins of literary discourse. Craig denounces a conception of English literature which reads other literatures written in English as branches growing from the English literary tradition rather than separate bodies of literature. To this end he encourages Scots to read other peripheral literatures of Australia, Canada, and Africa "to know ourselves better" (9). Craig's discussion of difference between English literature and the literatures of England's present and former colonies parallels post-colonial literary responses to imperialism and prompts an examination of the relevance of post-colonial theory to a comparative study of Canadian and Scottish literatures.



## CANADA AND SCOTLAND: CONCEPTUALIZING 'POST-COLONIAL' SPACES

The critical approaches of post-colonial theory provide a framework for the comparative study of Canadian and Scottish literatures written in English. Post-colonialism is a critical practice dedicated to studying the types of cultural marginalization propagated by imperialism, and is a term ascribed to both Canadian and Scottish literatures, although with much greater frequency and less reservation to the former. When Scottish critic Randall Stevenson refers to Scotland as a post-colonial minority he fails to define how this very problematic term means (59). If Scotland is considered a post-colonial culture, it is indeed post-colonial in very different ways from those in which the North American, African and Indian cultures it helped to colonize are understood to be post-colonial. As one of the principles of post-colonial critique is the articulation of difference, the ascription of the term to a literature must be contextualized so as to avoid the potential for homogenizing the colonial experiences of diverse groups. Canadian critic Arun Mukherjee reminds post-colonial critics who "erase differences" that "we have not all been colonized in the same way. 'Race' has made a tremendous difference in how the empire treated us" (2). One of the contributing factors to this assimilating tendency in post-colonialist critical practice might be Ashcroft et al's, general, if ultimately unsatisfactory definition of post-colonial as "all of the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2).

While Ashcroft et al exclude Scottish literatures from their post-colonial community of cross-cultural comparative studies they include Canada, and encourage comparative studies of Canadian literatures with those of Australia, Africa, the Caribbean, and Asia on the bases that each of these literatures

has emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the imperial centre. (2)

The problematic of such a pervasive paradigm as the one stated above became the subject of the first plenary session of the most recent meeting of the Canadian Association of Commonwealth Language and Literature Studies. Here, critics, who ascribe the term post-colonial to so-called Third World literatures and engage in potentially homogenizing cross-cultural studies between disparate cultures under the rubric of post-colonialism, met the authors of literature they had been referring to as post-colonial, only to discover that "post-colonial" is regarded by many of these writers when ascribed to their work as a form of intellectual colonization. The Ghanaian writer Ama Ata Aidoo dismissed post-colonial as a "pernicious fiction" when it is used to describe the literature of her country, and suggested the term might be more relevant to settler cultures.<sup>26</sup>

While acknowledging a debt to the valuable and original work of its authors, we must begin to consider the resistance to the all-embracing definition of post-colonialism offered by The Empire Writes Back and to formulate variant concepts of post-colonialisms. Citing the potential for a totalizing of dissimilar cultures, recent criticism by Linda Hutcheon, Mukherjee and Stephen Slemon has recognized the placement of settler cultures in post-colonial studies as problematic<sup>27</sup>. My research posits a hitherto largely unrecognized conception for a cross-cultural study of settler cultures that avoids such a totalization. I propose an examination of the cross-cultural dialogue between settler cultures such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, and communities of colonial origin such as Scotland where the binaries of colonizer and colonized collide. As in all cross-cultural studies it is imperative to acknowledge difference in the present study of Canadian and Scottish literatures, difference between the two literatures and difference among the various regional and ethnic literatures which compose them. Canadian literatures are created by a heterogeneous immigrant and aboriginal culture in a politically autonomous state while Scottish

literatures are created in a dependent province of a larger British state. This is not to deny the great diversity of Scottish literatures written by Highlanders, Lowlanders, Orcadians, and Shetlanders, of varying ethnic backgrounds. However, a visible body of immigrant writing has yet to emerge in Scotland.

#### **METHODOLOGY**

The thesis is written from a Canadian perspective where, despite the shared history and culture of Scotland and Canada and the insights readings of Scottish texts lend to an understanding of Canadian literatures, Scottish literatures remain other. Canada and Scotland experience crises of identity precipitated by a British imperialism which marks both literatures. The dislocating migration of Scots to Canada fractured genealogy, undermining a valid sense of the self, and impelling many Canadians of Scottish ancestry to write back to their past as a means of locating themselves in the present.<sup>28</sup> Canadian critic and author Robert Kroetsch describes such interrupted genealogies as "the narratives of a discontent with a history that lied to us, violated us, erased us even." Kroetsch writes that as the victims of such a history "we wish to locate our dislocation, and to do so we must confront the impossible sum of our traditions" (65). Points of rupture in Scottish history such as the Clearances and the Jacobite Rebellions provide Scottish writers with an opportunity to locate themselves and Scotland. As Craig writes "Scotland can only be known through narrative in these moments when narrative possibilities are forced upon a society that has lost all sense of its own narrative" ("The Body in the Kit Bag: History and the Scottish Novel" 19). Different pressures have confused the conceptions of identity in both countries. Canada's close proximity to America's print and electronic media have contributed to this confusion, as has the immigrant nature of her population. Canada, writes Linda Hutcheon, "is a country of immigrants where (at least for a time) all of its inhabitants have felt dual allegiances" ("As

Canadian as" 23). Scotland's identity is also complicated by proximity to her large southern neighbour and by the dual allegiance of Scottish and British. Arguing for cross cultural comparative studies of settler cultures with cultures of immigrant origin, the research project concentrates on the narratorial negotiation of these crises of identity in Canadian and Scottish fiction; how dislocation is located in the telling of story.

Metafiction, writing which encodes the process of its production, is studied as one of the predominant devices deployed to translate ancestral past into a narratorial present, thereby creating personal and cultural identities.<sup>29</sup> The autoreferential processes involved in the construction and reception of metafictional narrative are described by Hutcheon:

we as readers make the link between life and art, between the processes of the reception and the creation of texts: the act of reading participates (and indeed posits or implies) the act of textual production too. (The Canadian Postmodern 61)

Narrative structures which foreground the making of story are especially valuable in countries such as Canada and Scotland where cultural production is dominated by a subordinating other. By encoding a mimesis of a narrating process constructing cultural and personal identity the Canadian and Scottish writers studied provide readers with an opportunity to recognize their own participation in cultural production. This type of self-reflexive discourse draws attention to the process of writing culture out from under an effacing gaze. As Helen Tiffin reminds us "decolonization is process, not arrival" ("Post-Colonial Literatures" 17).

The narratorial translation of past into present is just one of three types of translation the thesis analyzes. Also examined in addition to this temporal translation, are acts of cultural and linguistic translation. Translation is a multivalent process defined in part by the Oxford English Dictionary as "to bear, convey, or remove from one person, place or condition to another." This concept of movement from one locale to another facilitates a discussion of

the signs of Scottish culture brought to Canada by emigrants. Scottish emigrants did not simply transpose their culture from one surface to another; they had to reshape or translate the New World into systems of meaning by bridging the gap between the Old World and the one in which they found themselves, and through this process they could begin to recognize the familiar in an alien space. The Old-World signifying systems used to enact this transformation however, are transformed themselves in a marrying of their cultural referents to new signifieds, not unlike the transmutation involved in the organic conception of cultural transplantation discussed earlier. This transformative element of the translation process is central to an understanding of the types of translation under examination here. The Oxford English Dictionary's definition of translation includes: "to change in form, appearance, or substance; to transmute; to transform, alter." The act of bridging a gap between two seemingly incommensurable systems, whether linguistic, temporal or cultural, necessarily creates a new entity. As Walter Benjamin writes

no translation would be possible if in its ultimate essence it strove for likeness to the original. For in its after life--which could not be called that if it were not a transformation and a renewal of something living--the original undergoes a change. (73)

Translation then is a creative process engaged in by the narrators and writers of the works studied to cross the boundaries of time and history and thereby translate past events and personages into a present context. This is achieved through various textual practices. For example, carrying forward narrative structures from the past such as the tales of Clearance in Gunn, MacLeod and Laurence and invasion in Mitchison and Gunn, or the ballad and stories of emigration in Munro and Swan. These structures are then adapted and reinscribed into a present process of narration. Swan and Gray adapt the meanings of particular anterior textual structures by Phyllis Blakely, Robert Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid to frame their own present narrations. These types of translation permit all of the writers considered to construct a present in an historicized space.

Paradoxically, the ugly and destructive underbelly of translation as imperial process may be glimpsed from the perspective of the translated, those who are transformed into the dominant discourse by the repression and destruction of their language. In a discussion of empire in ancient Greece and Rome Eric Cheyfitz writes:

From its beginnings the imperialist mission is, in short, one of translation: the translation of the "other" into the terms of the empire, the prime term of which is "barbarian," or one of its variations such as "savage," which, ironically, but not without its precise politics also alienates the other from the empire. (112)

But Cheyfitz's book about the translation/colonization of Native Americans and their cultures through the annihilation of languages, also recognizes the necessity of translation "between cultures and between groups within our own culture if we are to understand the dynamics of our imperialism" (xvi). Such an understanding may be uncovered in the work of Gunn and MacLeod, and Laurence and Mitchison where Highland, Cape Breton and Manitoba Gaels, and Métis are translated into the larger English-speaking cultures that surround them.

The manner in which indigenous codes of language are used to subvert, and assert difference from dominating linguistic codes will be explored with reference to the problematic of language usage in a colonized space which has long marked debate concerning the telling of story in Canada and Scotland. Northrop Frye speaks of Canada as a space where "traditional standard English collides with the need for a North American vocabulary and phrasing" ("Conclusion" 465).<sup>30</sup> Scottish poet and critic Hugh MacDiarmid's 1923 manifesto "A Theory of Scots Letters" argues for the literary usage of vernacular Scots as it possesses "unused resources corresponding better than English does to the progressive expression of the distinctive characteristics of Scottish life" (128).<sup>31</sup> Crises of identity in both countries are marked linguistically in their literatures by distinctive Scottish and Canadian English usages articulating cultural and personal difference.

The various texts considered in this study are selected from a wide range of readings in Canadian and Scottish literatures to best illustrate a cross-cultural dialogue foregrounding colonization and resistance to hierarchical patterns of writing. Although the political is a dominant in the texts studied, and in the approach to these works, it is important to remember that the representation of the political is inextricably linked to the aesthetic and cultural. Naive readings of literature which privilege the political above representation can reduce art to the level of propaganda. However, many of these writers were and are highly politicized individuals, actively engaged in cultural politics. Moreover, the political role literature plays in constructing cultural community cannot be ignored; as Benedict Anderson reminds us in his challenge to linguistically and culturally based conceptions of national groups "the embryo of the nationally-imagined community" is formed by printed texts (47). The intent of the thesis is to examine the aesthetic, cultural and political interrelatedness of Scottish and Canadian fiction written in English.

#### **SUMMARY**

The second chapter juxtaposes the work of Neil Gunn (1891-1973) and Alistair MacLeod (*b* 1936), writers chosen for comparative study based on their similar positions as Gaels who have lost their language, and are forced to negotiate that loss through English narratives that attempt to translate and preserve stories containing the essence of declining cultures. Both Gunn and MacLeod also represent difference within their respective nations; their Gaelic cultures are under threat of erasure, not only from colonizing agents external to Canada and Scotland, but also from the assimilating larger Canadian and Scottish discourses in English. Gunn, born in the Gaelic community of Caithness was an active member of the Scottish Nationalist Party, and his fiction and essays reflect his concern for Scottish self-determination. His novels The Silver Bough

(1948) and The Other Landscape (1954) share with MacLeod's "The Closing Down of Summer" and "The Tuning of Perfection" (1986) narrative patterns of cultural retrieval and reconstruction, where the traces of a cultural past are self-consciously unearthed, reconstructed, and translated into the narratorial present. Chapter 2 considers the processes of cultural retrieval engaged in by both writers.

Chapter 3 moves from Highland-Canadian ancestral connections to a Lowland-Canadian genealogy of Ontario emerging out of Alice Munro's (b 1931) recent work. As a synthesis of Canadian and Scottish cultures is the subject of inquiry in this chapter, Munro's work is not studied in relation to a contemporary Scottish writer. The chapter discusses how signs of Scottish culture, enclosed in twentieth-century Canadian texts, are attached to a variety of Canadian signifieds by the narratees of "Friend of My Youth," "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" (1990) and "A Wilderness Station" (1992). Munro's research into her Scottish family history and the process through which this history becomes transmuted into fiction are also discussed.

The narrators of Margaret Laurence's (1926-1987) The Diviners (1974) and Naomi Mitchison's (b 1897) The Bull Calves (1947) engage in excavations of ancestral pasts to locate themselves in the present. In both texts genealogy is explored through a discursive and self-reflexive dialogue with history to delineate individual and cultural identity. Laurence and Mitchison, matriarchal figures at the forefront of literary rejuvenations in their respective modern Canadian and Scottish literatures, share interests in imperialism and African culture. Laurence gained insights into the plight of colonized people during her time in Africa, an experience which inspired her The Tomorrow-Tamer and Other Stories (1963), and The Prophet's Camel Bell (1963). She reflected in a 1981 speech that O. Mannoni's Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization was a book which helped her to understand her own experiences in West



Africa and the "terrible outrages" committed against Canadian native peoples, insights which she says returned in her writing of The Diviners ("Books that Mattered to Me" 244-255). Mitchison has also spent time in Africa, befriending and becoming adviser to the Bakgatha tribe of Botswana. She advised the Bakgatha during their transition from colony to nation and played a ceremonial role in the decolonization of Botswana, lowering the Union Jack on the day the colony gained its independence from Britain (Benton 153-155). Laurence shared with Mitchison a pacifism and nationalism which led her to campaign against an American nuclear presence in Canada in her work with Project Ploughshare and Operation Dismantle.<sup>32</sup> Similarly, Mitchison spoke out against the presence of American nuclear bases in Scotland during the latter part of her twenty-six years on the Highland Panel advisory board. Mitchison was also involved with the Scottish Nationalist Party in 1942 (Benton 129). Chapter 4 examines the decolonizing processes by which Laurence's Morag and Mitchison's Catherine narrate themselves into existence, and out from under imperial domination.

Performance artist and novelist Susan Swan (b 1945) began work on The Biggest Modern Woman of the World (1983) partly in response to her personal concern for Canadian autonomy. Alasdair Gray (b 1934) is a visual artist, novelist, and poet whose commitment to an independent Scotland colours his novel 1982, Janine (1984) and is articulated in his non-fiction pamphlet Why the Scots Should Rule Scotland, a self-acknowledged propagandist tract published just before the 1992 British general election. In polemical and carnivalesque novels that play on the politics of gender, Gray and Swan construct allegorical narratives delineating and subverting the imperialist discourses of England and the United States. Chapter 7 examines the types of allegory used in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World and 1982, Janine to engage and intersect with the carnival, as a means of re-reading and re-writing personal and national pasts, and thus constructing identity in the present.

Chapter 6 transcends the emigrant link between the Scottish and Canadian literary traditions, arguing that the dialogue between these two cultures is not limited to the texts of Scottish-Canadian writers, but also encompasses textual pursuits of the self through definitions of cultural identity that do not privilege a Scottish-Canadian ancestral connection.

Neil Gunn's Highland River (1937), Sheila Watson's (b 1909) The Double Hook (1959), and Margaret Atwood's Surfacing (1972) are considered in relation to the creation of identity through the exploitation of the inherently post-colonial dualities of self, history and language. The metafictional discourses entered into by these texts are examined as strategies for negotiating the aggressive and potentially damaging art forms of American and English cultures. All three writers are responding to cultural subordination. Gunn, a member of a political party dedicated to Scottish independence, expresses the difference of his native Caithness in opposition to an oppressive English discourse which threatens to efface the variant culture and history of his community. Atwood, a founding member and past president of the Writers Union of Canada, and ardent campaigner against the Canada-United States Free Trade Agreement, gives voice to a Canadian experience of the American presence in North America. Sheila Watson describes her novel as a narrative resisting an international hegemony which ascribed a pejorative connotation to the terms provincial and local. The Double Hook, she says, is

an answer to a challenge that you could not write about particular places in Canada: that what you'd end up with was a regional novel of some kind. It was at the time, I suppose, when people were thinking that if you wrote a novel it had to be, in some mysterious way, international. It had to be about what I would call something else. And so I thought, I don't see why: how do you ... how are you international if you're not international? if you're very provincial, very local, and very much a part of your own milieu. ("What I'm Going to Do" 14)

This chapter also includes a comparative study of the language of demarcation. The ways in which these texts resist the imposed

historical territorial, and canonical boundaries of empire that attempt to fix Scotland and Canada in a cultural backwater are investigated.

## Notes

1. I am adapting Ashcroft et al's usage of "english" to denote the languages of cultures colonized by the British empire, and to distinguish these englishes from the received 'standard' English of England (8).
2. For discussions of the Highland emigration and the Clearances see Smout 311-337 and Mackenzie. Smout's history details the economic and political events leading up to and following the Clearances. He stresses that the violent forced Clearances of Sutherland (331) were not a universal experience, with some proprietors arranging for and financing emigration as a relief to overcrowding (330). Nonetheless, the crofters really had no other option but to submit to the will of the landowner. Mackenzie offers a more polemical reading of the evictions, with which he hopes to effect a change in the legislation that permitted the "inhuman atrocities" that precipitated the dissolution of a people and a culture (viii).
3. See Duncan and Turner.
4. For more detailed discussions concerning Scottish cultural transplantation to Canada and the Scottish emigrant experience in Canada, see Stanford W. Reid. See also Kerrigan, The Immigrant Experience: Proceedings of a Conference Held at the University of Guelph 8-11 June 1989.
5. The authorship of this poem has been imputed to a variety of hands since it first appeared. For a discussion of the disputed authorship of this verse see MacCurdy.
6. The conference proceedings are published in a special issue of British Journal of Canadian Studies 7.1 (1992).
7. I use syncretic here to mean the synthesis of distinct linguistic and cultural forms. See Ashcroft et al 15.
8. The original title of Galt's novel is Bogle Corbet or the Emigrants, a work in three volumes. I, however, refer to Elizabeth Waterston's 1977 reprint of volume three and some chapters from volume two entitled Bogle Corbet. See Galt.
9. For further discussions of Bogle Corbet and the hybridization of Canadian and Scottish cultures see Campbell, "Dependents of Chance" and Waterston, "Bogle Corbet and the Annals of New World Parishes."
10. For a comparative study of Galt and McCormack see Gittings, "Eric McCormack's 'Institute for the Lost': The Scottish Ex-Patriate Writer's Reconstruction of Self and Place in English Canadian Literature."
11. For a discussion of the kailyard school and its influence on Connor and other turn of the century Canadian writers see Elizabeth Waterston, "The Lowland Tradition in Canadian Literature" 203-231, and T. D. MacLulich, "From Kailyard to Canada" 61-86. MacLulich articulates the importance of the Kailyard in the development of Canadian cultural identity and the regional novel in Canada (64-65).
12. These essays are collected in MacLennan's Scotsman's Return.
13. See Alistair MacLeod, "The Writings of Hugh MacLennan" 74.

14. For a more detailed discussion of the inferiorization of Gaelic culture in Barometer Rising and Each Man's Son, see MacLeod, "Writings."
15. The Scottish influence on Canadian publishing and education is discussed in Waterston, "Lowland Tradition" 215, 227-228.
16. As will be discussed in chapter five, the Glasgow writer Alasdair Gray imports similar representations of a female Scotland to delineate English imperialism in the twentieth century.
17. Michael Hechter stresses that the Union of the Scottish and English parliaments, although reached through a process of negotiation and not a military conquest (67-68), was an English strategy for dismantling an independent Scottish foreign policy (71). He also writes of the English threats to abolish the Scottish parliament and to stop Scottish exports to England, if Scotland rejected the terms of the Union (71-72).
18. P. H. Scott presents evidence suggesting that many of the aristocracy who voted in favour of Union were bribed to do so by the English with sums of cash and promises of trade protection for their business interests. For a discussion of these questionable acts and the Scottish nation's negative response to the Treaty of Union, see P. H. Scott, Andrew Fletcher and the Treaty of Union 176-186.
19. See MacSkimming.
20. See Fuller and Cameron.
21. See New, A History of Canadian Literature 105.
22. See D. J. Palmer, The Rise of English Studies.
23. For further discussion of Scottish control over education and other elements of Scottish culture subject to anglicization, see Calder.
24. For further discussions of Canadian identity and the "garrison mentality" Northrop Frye associates with the Canadian imagination, see his "Conclusion" to the second edition of the Literary History of Canada 471-472. See also Linda Hutcheon's work on irony and the Canadian identity in As Canadian as ... possible under the circumstances, and historian W. L. Morton's The Canadian Identity.
25. For studies concerning the construction of Scottish narratives of identity, see Pittock, Trevor-Roper, and Malzahn.
26. Aidoo made her comments as a member of a panel discussing "Writing and Critique in the Post-Colonial Commonwealth" at the CACLALS conference The Commonwealth in Canada IV: Gender / Colonialism / Post-Colonialism, The University of Guelph, November 5, 1992.
27. See Hutcheon, "'Circling the Downspout of Empire': Post-Colonialism and Postmodernism," Mukherjee, "Whose Post-Colonialism and Whose Postmodernism?" and Slemon, "Unsettling the Empire: Resistance Theory for the Second World."
28. Ashcroft et al discuss dislocation, or what they call displacement as a characteristic of post-colonial literature (9-11).

29. Hutcheon describes metafiction as "a mimesis of process"  
(Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox 5).

30. For further discussions of language, colonialism, and Canadian literature see Lee. See also Kroetsch, "Unhiding the Hidden," and "The Grammar of Silence."

31. See also Morgan, "Registering the Reality of Scotland," and Kerrigan, "Empire and Nation: Literary Language in Scotland after the Great War."

32. For more on Laurence's anti-nuclear stance and Canada see her essay, "My Final Hour."

## Chapter 2

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### READING LANDSCAPE AS A PALIMPSEST TEXT: CULTURAL RETRIEVAL IN NEIL GUNN AND ALISTAIR MACLEOD

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*Neither culture nor its destruction is erotic; it is the seam between them, the fault, the flaw which becomes so.*

Roland Barthes, The Pleasure of the Text

#### INTRODUCTION: PATTERNS OF CULTURAL DISCONTINUITY

Neil Gunn was one of the leading writers, along with Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, and Naomi Mitchison, who came to prominence during the Scottish Renaissance, a period of renewed self-consciousness about Scottish literature in the 1920s and 1930s. Although not a Gaelic speaker himself, Gunn's awareness of the Gaelic and Pictish past of his native Caithness, and his interest in a collective unconscious of Scotland's cultural past and its relation to the present is reflected in most of the twenty novels he wrote between 1926 and 1954. Moments of rupture in Scotland's past are the materials which shape much of Gunn's work. The Viking invasions of Scotland and their tumultuous impact on Pictish-Celtic culture provide the narrative focus for Sun Circle (1933). Butcher's Broom (1934) relates the forced eviction of an entire Gaelic community from their ancestral lands during the Highland Clearances, and the aftermath of the Clearances is felt in Highland River (1937) and The Silver Darlings (1941). A large number of Gunn's novels, like so many of Alistair MacLeod's short stories, are set in isolated fishing communities where the sea is both a nurturing and a threatening force. Highland River, regarded by many critics as Gunn's finest novel and the winner of Scotland's James Tait Black Memorial Prize for 1937, shares with MacLeod's work not only the evocation of the psychic scars of the Clearances, but also a motif of exile and return in Kenn's migration from his native Highlands for university and employment in the south, and his adult return to the Highland river

of his childhood.<sup>1</sup>

Whether they are itinerant miners, students bound for university, or those in pursuit of economic stability, many of the characters who inhabit Alistair MacLeod's two published volumes of haunting and lyrical short stories The Lost Salt Gift of Blood (1976) and As Birds Bring Forth the Sun (1986) are borne away from their Cape Breton homes along what one of the stories' narrators, Calum, refers to as "a big, fast, brutal road that leads into the world," returning home with the doubled perception of outsider and native to the Gaelic culture that informs MacLeod's work (Lost Salt 128). MacLeod's writing, in ways similar to Gunn's highly historicized narratives but in the context of Canada's Gaelic diaspora, textualizes the breakdown of Gaelic culture and simultaneously, in the inscription of this breakdown in narratives that draw on the Gaelic folkways of Cape Breton and the history of the Clearances, moves toward a preservation of this culture.

Although Gaelic was the first language of MacLeod's "parents, grandparents, great grand parents, great great grandparents . . .," he has "very little" of the Gaelic himself for as he says "it takes very little time for a language to disappear" (unpublished interview). In a recent interview the author discusses the agents of pragmatism that advance the rapid erasure of Gaelic language in Cape Breton:

In Cape Breton when you talk to previous generations there's a very strong idea that the way to make it in the New World would be to learn English as fast as you could, and this is an economic reality. So you can't be romantic about [language preservation]. If you were a unilingually speaking Gaelic person today in Canada, what would you do? Where would you work? And I think in a lot of the homes one of the interesting things is that very often the women maintained the Gaelic language; they remained unilingually Gaelic speaking longer than did a lot of men because their labours let's say would be in the home and you can obviously run a home in Gaelic as well as you can in English. But I think for a lot of men who were forced to go out to look for work it was not the same. If somebody said to you pick up the hammer and you didn't know what that meant you were not going to last very long on the job. (unpublished interview)

In discussing the rupture of the Highland Clearances as an intersecting moment between Canadian and Scottish literatures MacLeod



speaks about the reception of his work in Scotland where he is sometimes mistaken for a Scottish writer:

It's interesting that when I say well I'm not a Scottish writer really I'm a Canadian writer, people there sometimes say well no you're a Gael or you're a Gaelic writer (laughter). But I think there is a feeling perhaps over there that a lot of their people did go to Canada or to Australia or wherever half of the population went, that's an historical fact and what became of us over here and what happened to the people who remained there is (laughter) I don't know what it is, but there certainly is a very strong relationship. (unpublished interview)

MacLeod feels "very close" to Scottish writers such as Sorley MacLean and Iain Crichton Smith who share his concerns with the erasure of Gaelic culture, emigration, and the Clearances. He also finds the work of Neil Gunn "very moving" and has a special affinity for Gunn as a writer whom he feels is "somewhat like" himself (unpublished interview).

Although I am comparing Gunn's work in the novel genre with MacLeod's short stories, generic conceptions of literature and the constraints of such conceptions are not central issues here. MacLeod's complex and intricately crafted shorter fictions subvert the narrow attempts of early twentieth-century Anglo-American theory to define the short story as unified and autotelic.<sup>2</sup> As Canadian critic Frank Davey argues the Canadian short story developed outside this theoretical framework, and shares "unstable code-systems" with parable, fable, legend, anecdote and essay (143). In this context perceived demarcations of genre dissolve creating a fertile and viable ground for readings of MacLeod's and Gunn's fiction.

Neil Gunn's The Silver Bough and The Other Landscape share with Alistair MacLeod's "The Closing Down of Summer" and "The Tuning of Perfection" narrative patterns of cultural retrieval and reconstruction, where traces of a cultural past are self-consciously unearthed, reconstructed, and translated into a narratorial present. From the remnants of the lost ancestral community he digs out of a Highland cairn in The Silver Bough, Gunn's archaeologist protagonist, Simon Grant, reconstructs a Neolithic people and culture, and through

the patterns of recurrence he detects in their present-day counterparts translates them into a contemporary context. The title The Other Landscape refers to a metaphysical world where the voices of the absent yet present cleared crofters co-exist with those living in the narrative present. The processes of trace collection and reconstruction are foregrounded in the first-person narrator anthropologist Walter Urquhart's efforts to recover the author of an anonymous manuscript.

Moments of rupture are detected in the linguistic traces that mark the discourse of these four works by Gunn and MacLeod. For, as in all linguistic systems each signifier in these texts bears the traces of absent signifiers, however, the Gaelic signifiers that have been lost to Gaels in both Nova Scotia and Scotland are what interest Gunn and MacLeod and are the subject of cultural retrieval and reconstruction projects in The Silver Bough, The Other Landscape, "The Closing Down of Summer" and "The Tuning of Perfection."

An itinerant miner, the autoreferential narrator of MacLeod's "The Closing Down of Summer," is the story's locus of retrieval and regeneration. He excavates his memory and reads the Cape Breton landscape for signs of his disappearing Gaelic culture, noting recurrences he and his people presently share with both their Scottish and Cape Breton ancestors. In "The Tuning of Perfection" an unnamed first-person voice reconstructs the life of Archibald, "the last of the authentic old time Gaelic singers," (108) from the traces of a house "that was no longer there" (102) and inserts deteriorating fragments of songs and linguistic codes from the past into the present narrating. MacLeod emphasizes the archival acts of retrieval and reconstruction which his narrator's utterances represent by including within this narration the recording of Gaelic language patterns, oral narratives and songs by folklorists, and a dubiously motivated television producer.

The processes of cultural retrieval and reconstruction are initiated by a narratorial recognition of, and return to those

moments of rupture encoded in fragments or traces of the past in each of these texts by Gunn and MacLeod. Simon Grant's 'reading' of a Neolithic trace in Donald Martin's skull, prior to the archaeologist's journey into the heart of the cairn of Scotland's past, stimulates a chain of thought which leads him to the concept of cultural conflict and upheaval he later 'reads' in the skeletons he unearths from the cairn. Contemplating what might await him in the tomb Grant considers the possibility of finding "a small hoard of skulls, each one of them, except for the possible 'intrusion' of a round head, as long as...the *Neolithic* one" on Martin (The Silver Bough 10). Grant's discovery of two Neolithic skeletons in an intruding roundhead cist of the cairn turns his thoughts to the cultural conflict he imagines between an invading roundhead tribe from the continent and the Neolithic community that existed at Clachar (210-211). This type of cultural conflict or rupture is a constant in Scottish history and a subject that Grant takes up again with Martin, articulating the significance of such disruptive moments which erode culture leaving behind only fragments of the past, buried in bones and in language.

The language of the Neolithic peoples of Clachar, Grant explains, died; "they took the invader's tongue, perhaps Pictish" (173). He traces the linguistic and cultural history of Clachar in response to Martin's questions. The Picts were displaced "because there were more invaders and a new tongue called Gaelic. And you who are still Neolithic in your bones, literally in your bones," Grant tells Martin "actually speak yet another invaders' language called English" (173).<sup>3</sup> This linguistic discontinuum is something Gunn's writing shares with MacLeod's, although emigration, forced or voluntary (and with it the linguistic translation of Gaelic to Canada) is the event that opens up a gap between Gaelic signifier and signified in North America and hastens the decline of the language.

Robert Kroetsch's work on ethnic Canadian writing detects within the Canadian word "a concealed other experience" ("Unhiding

the Hidden" 58). Within the Scottish word there is also a concealed other experience, inserted not by immigration<sup>4</sup> so much as invasion<sup>5</sup> but, present nonetheless. In his search for a "grammar of the narrative ethnic experience" in Canada, ("The Grammar of Silence" 84) Kroetsch locates "the basic tension between signifier and signified," a phenomenon he accounts for in the "abrupt change" to the new world, a change that opens a chasm "between word and object" (88). Many of the third and fourth generation Cape Breton Gaels in MacLeod's short stories are incapable of bridging this gap between word and object. This semiotic void is present in all language, but is exacerbated by the decay of a linguistic system. The narrator of "The Closing Down of Summer," speaking in the third-person voice of the Gaelic community laments the passing of "our Gaelic" (27), while the granddaughter of Archibald in "The Tuning of Perfection" has no understanding of Gaelic, she merely makes "the noises" (113).<sup>6</sup>

Kroetsch's grammar of ethnic narrative in Canada can be usefully adapted to the Scottish context to contribute to the development of a grammar of colonized narrative where the loss of linguistic distinctiveness through anglicization has gradually created a gap between signified and signifier in the Gaelic community, leaving many Gaels without an understanding of their language. Gunn draws attention to this semiotic chasm in both The Silver Bough and in The Other Landscape where Highland narrator Walter Urquhart remarks on "a distance and a veil" that cuts him off from his native Gaelic as it is spoken by Mrs. Maclellan (39). Kroetsch suggests that "[a] principal way to establish or re-establish narrative coherence in the face of the gap between signifier and signified is through a re-telling of stories," a narrative strategy also found in both Gunn and MacLeod ("Grammar of Silence" 89). This essential relationship between language and story (or *langue* and *parole*) is delineated by Margaret Atwood in a poem concerning the rupture of the Clearances and the irony of recurrence in Canadian and Scottish history:

A language is not words only  
it is the stories  
that are told in it,  
the stories that are never told.  
("Four Small Elegies" 22)

One point of interest for MacLeod regarding conquest and the fate of language is the told stories of the conqueror. "History," MacLeod says

is nearly always written from the point of view of those who conquer, and obviously all these references to Clearance and people speaking the Irish tongue, and speaking gibberish come from this. In some of Neil Gunn's novels there are these references, in Butcher's Broom there's a big section on that, the people are all peculiar because they speak this funny language; well they're not a bit peculiar. So in the story of the Clearances what comes out is told from the English point of view and in the English language of the time.  
(unpublished interview)

Gunn and MacLeod endeavour to close the gap between signifier and signified by "re-telling" stories of invasion and Clearance through recurrences which translate the events of the past into the present in english narrativizations which contain traces of the languages that originally constructed them.<sup>7</sup>

#### UNEARTHING THE SILVER BOUGH

Gunn, a Gael who had "only a few words and phrases of" Gaelic writes to Naomi Mitchison in 1941 about this kind of re-telling or translation of "old traditional Gaelic stories" he knew in his "blood," stories which reflected the communal life of the Gael where "common social good was heightened by the intensifying of the individual." "To disentangle values here," Gunn continues "would be interesting, and then to translate those values into our age (for the translation must take place) might be exciting" (ACC 10201).

In The Silver Bough Gunn translates communal values into the narratorial present through the re-telling of the ancient Silver Bough myth that Grant overhears Mrs. Cameron relating to her granddaughter, Sheena. Encoded within the Silver Bough story the old woman tells is a disruption which is echoed in the family estrangement of Gunn's narrative. A king surrenders his wife and

children for a bough of silver from which hang nine golden apples that make enchanted music. After a year and a day of estrangement from his wife and children the king grows lonely and sets out on a quest to make his fractured family whole again.

Gunn's authorial retrieval of this archetypal narrative of rupture followed by a journey toward integration, and his insertion of it into his novel's narrative present as a structure of integration is reflected in the metafictional activities of Simon Grant who comments on the value of digging up the past:

I think it is extremely important. I think what is really wrong with us all is that we don't know our own history as human beings, and particularly our earliest history. (Silver Bough 33)

In this context Simon is speaking not only of a universal humanity but also of Scottish people and their estrangement from the past. Gunn's essay "On Tradition," makes similar statements about the value of excavating the past. The essay likens the Scot who has forgotten his or her cultural history to a shell-shocked soldier and draws an analogy between the regression techniques employed by psycho-therapy to heal the minds of soldiers, and the dredging up of a collective cultural memory he recommends to Scots:

A people can die. But so long as a people, whose tradition has been driven underground are not yet dead, they will in moments of crisis, of sickness want to liberate their traditions so that they may have life abundantly again. (205)

Gunn's Simon Grant enacts this liberation of the Scottish past on two levels in The Silver Bough; he exhumes the mother and daughter skeletons from the cairn and retrieves and uses the Silver Bough myth as an integrating narrative structure. As an archaeologist Grant's work on the cairn involves a 'reading' and 'writing' of the community of Clachar. From the moment he arrives in the village Grant begins 'reading' the palimpsest text of Clachar where civilizations are built one on top of the other:

from the configuration of the land and the islands of shelter and retreat in the sea, Grant knew that human life had indeed been here since prehistoric times. (20)

Gunn parallels Grant's archaeological excavations with his own novel's textual pursuit of the past in Grant's 'reading' of the cairn site as a text. For Grant the cairn, emblematic of the Scottish past, is "like a book that had never been opened--and might be a masterpiece" (22). Moreover, Grant's poking and pulling at "deliberately chosen spots in the cairn itself" to evolve theories of past events is a mimesis of what Gunn's text does with the past, and what the reader's search for meaning does to Gunn's text (23). As Richard Price observes, juxtaposing Gunn's previous work with The Silver Bough, the author himself had long been a "creative archaeologist" (159). Much in the way that Gunn's fictive prose project endeavours to recover the remains of the past, Grant deciphers the Scottish past as it is symbolized in the cairn, searching for "the passage that goes into the heart of the cairn where the chamber is with the ... remains, the bones and things" (73). Gunn underlines the 'reading' aspect of Grant's fieldwork by representing the landscape as script: "Nothing was too large in mountain conformation nor too small in rabbit scrape to fail to be read like print" (49). Grant records this data in the narrative of his "day-book" in which he is constantly writing ideas for a book (69, 77).<sup>8</sup>

The various disrupted narrative strands of Gunn's novel are brought together by Grant. He uses the integrating narrative of the Silver Bough myth, and recurrence to close the narrative gap that exists between Scottish people and their past. Gunn emblemizes this gap in the space existing between the two civilizations that occupy Clachar's doubled landscape of past and present. Roland Barthes defines the process of "integration in the language of narrative" as "what has been disjoined at a certain level (a sequence for example) is most often joined again at a higher level (a hierarchically important sequence, the global signified of a number of scattered indices, the action of a class of characters)" (122). Patterns of disruption are located in Grant's scenario of the tribal

violence he imagines killed the Cairn's Neolithic mother and daughter. Grant's reconstruction of events narrativizes these deaths as forever separating mother and daughter from the absent "headman" of the tribe who returned to find the bodies of his wife and child and the remnants of his community (Silver Bough 211-212). Martin's war-time estrangement from his lover, Anna, and daughter, Sheena, is another such disruption of narrative. The tribal violence of Martin's World War Two experience so traumatizes him that he continues his isolation from his family after his return from Asia. The archetypal pattern of disruption followed by a journey toward integration present in the Silver Bough myth is encoded in both of these narrative strands (the Neolithic strand and the contemporary strand involving Martin). But in contrast to the myth, which ends with integration, both of these units of narrative are, at this point, still disjointed.

Anna and her daughter represent traces of the past for Grant who sees in their lives recurrences of the Neolithic mother and daughter who lived in Clachar thousands of years previously. "The very attitude, to the disposal of bones," of the sleeping Anna and Sheena are the same to Grant as the mother and child in the cist. In Grant's mind "[t]ime, the cameraman, faded out the bones in the stone cist and faded in the sleeping figures [of Anna and Sheena] by the rock" (86). An archaeologist, Grant possesses a heightened awareness of the space between the two worlds of Clachar, "he actually felt--and almost saw...that he was *between* the skeletons of the woman and child *and* the living Anna and Sheena" (238). His role as a narrativizer within the novel is evident in his correlation of the skeletons with Anna and Sheena. As Gunn's unnamed narrator informs us Grant excels at this type of "map-making"--which is narrative--and is "surprisingly ingenuous where correlations were involved" (49).

Aside from the correlations he finds between the Silver Bough myth, Anna, Sheena and Martin, and the Neolithic skeletons, Grant constructs two other correlative narratives that narrow the gap



between Clachar's past and present. The story of the wolf-puppy Grant tells Sheena regenerates the lost peoples of the young girl's ancestral community, correlating the primordial "puppy wolf" of his story with a local, contemporary puppy (235). Additionally, Grant connects the Gaelic *Urisk* legend of a "hairy monstrous man" who "lived in the cairn and came out only at night" with the retarded lad Andie who is drawn, nocturnally, to the monolith near the cairn which ultimately crushes him to death (62). The archaeologist's theories of a correspondence between Foolish Andie and primitive man (76) will eventually find their way into his day-book under the heading "*Primitive Social Behaviour*" (77).

Grant's sensitivity to the archetypal is apparent in his perception of Foolish Andie's mother:

Grant turned his head and saw Andie's mother approaching. Her shawled head and shoulders gave her the appearance of a woman coming out of a remote place or remote time. . . . Once or twice Grant had been touched by the legendary, by a feeling of something archetypal, larger and more enduring than the individual. (294)

The archetype of the Silver Bough story, however, provides Grant with the narratorial tools he requires to translate the past into the present and write the disrupted narrative strands of the novel and Clachar into integration. The Silver Bough story is the key that opens up the door between Clachar's two communities of past and present. Within the story's original context the Silver Bough represented "the passport in those early days to the land of the gods" (162). In the framework of Gunn's novel the Silver Bough narrative is also a passport, but one providing passage from past to present. Grant immediately recognizes this "magic story" as a narrative of cultural retrieval. "It's out of stories like these that we try to reconstruct the past," he tells Mrs Cameron (71). Gunn's text repeatedly associates the Silver Bough with telling, narrating and writing. The oral narrative of "The Silver Bough" is first presented in Mrs. Cameron's telling and singing of it to her granddaughter. She is also transmitting, unwittingly, this ancestral

narrative to Simon Grant who overhears both performances, perceives the story's value to Clachar and his research, and then re-tells the story. Grant day-dreams about the "The Silver Bough" story while writing in his day-book and decides to have a facsimile of the musical bough built for Sheena. Gunn's reconstruction of the mythical artefact animates the narrative unit of the story; it becomes an instrument of integration wielded by Grant who imagines a romantic solution to what he now called "the Clachar complex" whereby he will assume the role of "*deus ex machina* arranging the proper marriage to the tune of the Silver Bough" (284). This is not mere fancy on his part, for within Gunn's narrative Grant shapes the story of Martin, Anna and Sheena.

This shaping property of myth is something Grant considers earlier, while contemplating the Neolithic skeletons he connects with Anna and Sheena:

he decided that myth was an extraordinarily potent business. Time and space are its plastics which shape and dissolve in essential meanings, like movements from the creator's hands. (87)

The creator's hands are very visible in Gunn's novel and they belong to Simon Grant. Grant places the integrating instrument of the silver bough in the hands of Sheena who plays a charmed music which "seemed to go beyond time," uniting not only her own family but also--on a figurative level--the ruptured Neolithic family that Grant and Gunn create recurring links with, and see living on in Anna, Sheena and Martin (327).

The archaeologist's reconstruction is synonymous with the re-telling of lost stories in Gunn's text, both are acts of creation and constitute a translation of past into present to construct meaning. Grant, a Scottish lowlander comes "home" to the Highlands to create meaning for his compatriots by re-telling the stories of their Neolithic ancestors.<sup>9</sup> His narrativizing invests past and present with meaning by closing the space between the doubled landscape of Clachar, in a rejoining of disjoined narratives. Roland Barthes

describes meaning in language and the language of narrative as being dependent on the "concurrence of two fundamental processes: articulation or segmentation which produces units, and integration which gathers these units into units of a higher rank (this being meaning)" (117-118). In Gunn's novel the ruptured or disjointed narrative units of Clachar's past are rejoined by Grant with corresponding contemporary narrative units. Narrative coherence between past and present is communicated to Fachie in Grant's translation of "the bones of animals that were eaten and that they'll be finding in old prehistoric places" into a story which corresponds to the present, a story Fachie can re-tell to fellow villager Davie:

they [Neolithic peoples] killed the young beasts for just the same reason as you and me must sell them--because there wasn't the winter feed for them. (Silver Bough 318)

The processes of interpretation and translation involved in telling are foregrounded for the reader of Gunn's text, who along with Grant must also examine "the question of the meaning of the symbol in religion and art not only *then* but now" (199). Grant's interest in symbolism and interpretation is a constant in the novel but at this juncture he is referring to the crock of gold he disinters from the cairn, only to have it spirited away by Andie. The crock of gold for which Grant spends most of the novel hunting is, like the silver bough that he has built, "both real and symbolical." Between the symbolical and the real and the past and present Grant detects a "spiritual continuity which might have a profoundly meliorating effect upon our present over indulgence in materialism" (199). Gunn's text emphasizes this type of continuity and the translation of Gaelic communal values he wrote of in his letter to Naomi Mitchison in the burial of Foolish Andie, an event evoking a sense of ritual and community that extends back beyond the Neolithic times of Clachar. In the burial scene Simon Grant is embraced by the community; he is the only stranger invited into the "inner ring" of

locals to participate in lowering the casket into the ground. Grant recognizes this ritual "as more ancient than the Neolithic cairn" (318). Perhaps Fachie's comments following the funeral service of the community's "'simple fellow clansman,'" Foolish Andie, best express the integration between past and present the novel works toward: "We're all the one clan at the end of the day" (317).

The translation of stories or *paroles* from a lost *langue* of the past to a contemporary *langue* (in this case the English spoken in Scotland) narrows the gap opened between signifier and signified through invasion and the subsequent erosion of indigenous languages in Clachar. Grant's narratorial reconstructions or re-tellings--the stories of the Neolithic community, of the wolf puppy, of the small animal bones found in prehistoric places--involve transcriptions of Clachar stories from the signs of bones which give voice in Scottish English to events formerly known in a language, the verbal signs of which have expired.<sup>10</sup> So, objects formerly perceived as bones or skeletons by the contemporary residents of Clachar become people with a culture, or young cows slaughtered to avoid starvation, and thus narrative coherence is established between past and present.

There are, however, contained in Gunn's translation or re-telling of Clachar's past, hidden words which speak the Gaelic of the Highlands that came to Clachar long after the Neolithic period and which is being displaced, contemporaneously with the novel, by English. As Fachie says of the minister's description of Andy ("our simple fellow clansman") there is something "behind the words" of Gunn's text, not only symbolic value but also the traces of the lost or disappearing cultures such as the Neolithic peoples or the Gaels, traces recorded in Gunn's narrative. Fachie's language is informed by the absent presence of Gaelic inscribed in his sentences which are mimetic of Gaelic syntax:

"It was where Himself meant it to go," said Fachie [of a "dram" which had gone to his head]. "Where she got it I wonder; though I'm thinking it will be Mr. Grant, for a nicer gentleman you couldn't meet, and able. Man, I'll tell you a thing he told me no later than yesterday and

it will astonish you, clever as you may think yourself."  
(317)

In this passage Gunn arranges english around Gaelic verb patterns.<sup>11</sup>

The pattern of cultural displacement presented in The Silver Bough recurs in Gunn's and MacLeod's textualizations of the Highland Clearances, a rupture that hastens a decay of language and creates a space between signifier and signified in The Other Landscape, "The Closing Down of Summer," and "The Tuning of Perfection." This distance between word and object is narrowed in re-tellings and translations of disjointed narratives from the past into the narratorial present through the recurrent properties of these works. As in The Silver Bough, doubled landscapes in The Other Landscape and the two MacLeod stories are read as palimpsest texts where the signs of ancestral narratives are retrieved and inserted into present narratives. A literary precursor of this reading and writing of vanished peoples from the marks left on the landscape is found in nineteenth-century Gaelic poetry of the Clearances. The following words of a Gaelic poet, Dr. John MacLachlan, have been recovered from the past and translated into english by Sorley MacLean:

As I look down over the pass  
the view I have is very chill

There is many a poor hut levelled,  
a green site on every side;

and many a roofless dwelling  
a mound beside a spring of water

Where the fire and children were  
the rushes grow the highest. ("The Poetry of the  
Clearances" 58-59)

As he writes in The Silver Darlings, Gunn was very much aware that some of these disappeared peoples were telling their stories across the ocean from his Caithness : "But, a greater number, it was believed, were alive in Nova Scotia and elsewhere in Canada and other lands, though fighting against dreadful tribulations and adversities" (12). The collection and retrieval of these Clearance traces through re-tellings of this rupture continues today in Scotland and Canada

not only in fiction, but also in ethnographic projects such as David Craig's On the Crofter's Trail: In Search of the Clearance Highlanders.

#### **MINING A LANDSCAPE: "THE CLOSING DOWN OF SUMMER"**

Craig travelled Scotland and Canada to collect and record the stories of the displaced crofters extant in the memories of their descendants. Within the Canadian words that compose story Craig hears, as Kroetsch has suggested, an other experience. "Johnny Allan's accent was making me feel at home," writes Craig of a Canadian interview subject's voice:

Its Hebridean undersound was unmistakable, as marked as the North-American nasal, and single words were pure Highland, for example 'peat' and 'eight' which he sounded with a guttural before the final 't.' 'Right' came out almost Irish with a breathed 'h' after the 't.' (99)

This other experience is also present in the Gaelic-informed speech marks of Alistair MacLeod's characters. On the Crofter's Trail provides a unique opportunity to observe MacLeod participating in cultural retrieval through the recovery of narrative, a process enacted by the narrators of both "The Closing Down of Summer" and "The Tuning of Perfection." In David Craig's text MacLeod acts as a guide for the researcher, "gently folding [Craig] into the round of visits [MacLeod] makes each summer when news of deaths and migrations is exchanged" (113). Interestingly enough the news of deaths and migrations help to shape much of MacLeod's work, providing stimuli which provoke the narrator's meditation on and excavation of the past in "The Closing Down of Summer."

The miner who narrates "The Closing Down of Summer" assembles fragments of personal histories and Gaelic songs which shape his story on the day of his crew's departure for a job in South Africa. The imminent migration to South Africa represents a symbolic recurrence of the rupture created by the Clearances which brought the narrator's ancestors to Cape Breton, and also echoes the disjunction of conscription which emptied many Highland glens of their men to

fight for British imperialism on battlefields as far afield as South Africa during the Boer War. MacLeod translates the disjunction of past narratives of migration into the 'now' of his narrator by re-telling them in a present context.<sup>12</sup> The resonance of his text's correspondences with the past are recognized by the narrator, who juxtaposes the migratory patterns precipitated by conscription in the Highlands of Scotland with his own departure for South Africa. Of the clumps of Cape Breton spruce that lodge in the grillwork of the cars that will take himself and his crew away from Cape Breton to Ontario and the airport, the narrator comments:

We will remove them and take them with us to Africa as mementos or talismans or symbols of identity much as our Highland ancestors, for centuries, fashioned crude badges of heather or of whortleberries to accompany them on the battlefields of the world. Perhaps so that in the closeness of their work with death they might find nearness to their homes and an intensified realization of themselves. ("Closing" 16)

The narrator's is a voice of cultural retrieval which signifies both the individual and collective past of community in its shift from the first person singular to the first person plural. In the passage above, and in the entire narrative up to this point the narrator's usage of "we" refers to the community of men he will be travelling with but also the larger community of Cape Breton Gaels. The evocation of ancestral death on foreign battlefields of the past leads to the narrator's memorialization of deaths within the community he has known during his lifetime; at this point he shifts to first person singular, placing the fragments of the remembered past into the now of his narration: "I am thinking of this now, of the many youthful deaths I have been part of and of the long homeward journeys in other seasons of other years" (17). By framing individual with community narrative MacLeod emphasizes the essential links between them. His narrator, much like Gunn's archaeologist in The Silver Bough, psychically, and physically digs up signs from the Canadian-Gaelic past which he then reads into his present Canadian-english narration. To tell his present he must also tell his past.

MacLeod's narrator's excavations uncover both the body of the individual and the cultural body of the Gaelic community. Recalling Grant's exhumation of the cairn's skeletons, the unnamed miner's memory processes retrieve the individual death of his brother and the subsequent grave-digging episode which disinters his father's bones in the local cemetery:

When we had almost reached the required depth one of the walls that had been continuously crumbling and falling suddenly collapsed and with a great woosh sent the box that contained my father's coffin rolling down upon us.  
(20)

The narrator remembers that at the time he had an irrational fear of the "rotting relics...of that past portion of our lives," a fear which his present telling demonstrates he has overcome (20).

Ruminating on his impending departure from his community and his culture, the narrator retrieves from memory related moments of rupture such as death. Funerals elicit responses from the dying community in a Gaelic language and music which are themselves dying:

The bagpiper plays "Flowers of the Forest," as the violinist earlier played haunting laments from the choir loft. The music causes the hair to bristle on the backs of our necks and brings out the wildness of our grief and dredges the depths of our dark sorrow. At the graveside people sometimes shout farewells in Gaelic or throw themselves in to the mud or upon the coffin as it is being lowered on its straps into the gaping earth. (18)

The Gaelic words spoken at death are present in this English narration or re-telling of events by their conspicuous absence. The community and narrator are left as "the witnesses" to, and "survivors" of the brother's death just as the narrator is a witness to the expiration of his culture, for with the deaths of Gaelic speakers--human repositories of music, oral narrative and the Gaelic language--the culture is further eroded.

There are three interpenetrating bodies in this narrative: the landscape and the physical human body both of which are correspondingly mined or 'read' by the narrator and subsequently translated and 'inscribed' into the tertiary body of his text. As the miner suggests "[e]ach segment of the world aspires to the



treasure real or imagined, that lies encased in its vaults of stone" and it is his job, often acting on behalf of dictators and capitalists who exploit mineral wealth, to consolidate their affluence and power, to liberate this treasure from the earth (30-31). Narratorially, the miner is liberating the treasure of Gaelic culture. There also exist for the narrator exploitive forms of cultural mining or retrieval, such as the government-sponsored "'Celtic-Revival'" he cites as being "very different from our own" and co-opted by "the summer culture" as a money-generating tourist attraction, an activity the narrator feels "has little relevance" for his people. The narrative he is constructing, however, is an effort to retrieve signs of the past that have a relevance to and a potency for the Gaelic community.

The "scarred and abandoned coal workings" which mark the body of Cape Breton are 'read' by the narrator as signs or traces of "our previous generations" (35). The corresponding scars marking the bodies of the miners, the men who mark the landscape,--"long running pink welts that course down our inner forearms or jagged saw-toothed ridges on the taut calves of our legs" (13)--are also 'read' by the narrator: "Lying upon the beach we see the external scars on ourselves and on each other and are stirred to the memories of how they occurred" (14). This narrative unit progresses to the violent deaths of the mine shafts where "often the body is so crushed or so blown apart that it cannot be reassembled properly for exposure in the coffin" (17). This reference to a reassembly of the physical body, I would argue, is a *mise en abyme* of the narratorial efforts underway to reassemble, within a textual body, the cultural tissue of Cape Breton which has been entombed with the relatives and ancestors of the miner in the local cemetery or, alternatively, has accompanied economic migrants to Ontario and the west.

The semiosis of text, and images of textuality suffuse "The Closing Down of Summer."<sup>13</sup> As the narrator's comments concerning his interpretation of a change in the weather indicate he is well

aware of his role as an interpreter and generator of signs:

And now I can feel the eyes of the men upon me. They are waiting for me to give interpretations of the signals, waiting for my sign. I hesitate for a moment, running my eyes along the beach, watching water touching sand. And then I nod my head. There is almost a collective sigh that is more sensed than really heard. (32-33)

He comments on the "darkness of the midnight phonecall" signifying the death of a loved one:

It seems somehow to fade with the passing of time, or to change and be recreated like the ballads and folktales of the distant lonely past. Changing with each new telling as the tellers of the tales change, as they become different, older, or more severe. It is possible to hear descriptions of phone calls that you yourself have made some ten or fifteen years ago and to recognize very little about them except the undeniable kernel of truth that was at the centre of the messages they contained. (19)

In its awareness of the processes of narrative construction MacLeod's story exhibits tendencies toward metafiction, that area of literature Larry McCaffery defines as:

fictions which examine fictional systems, how they are created and the way in which reality is transformed by and filtered through narrative assumptions and conventions. (5)

The undeniable kernel of truth the narrator speaks of is present in his translation of his Highland ancestors' symbols of identity from Scottish heather to Cape Breton spruce in the story's present (15-16). And in many ways the miner's narrative as a whole constitutes a symbolic text of personal and cultural identity, translating the past into the now of his telling, a present when Gaelic culture is experiencing a slippage. The narrator compares himself and his Gaelic-speaking crew to "mastodons of an earlier time" who are quickly becoming part of the past, "soon to be replaced or else to be extinct" (34). MacLeod communicates the extinction or slippage of Gaelic in the images of textuality which dominate his narrative. The "erratic designs and patterns" the miners inscribe onto the beach are soon washed away by the sea's waves. "There remains no evidence that we have ever been," the narrator observes "[i]t is as if we have never lain, nor ever walked nor ever thought what thoughts we had.



We leave no art or mark behind. The sea has washed its sand slate clean" (33).

But there are marks left behind, the marks that Alistair MacLeod records through his narrator and leaves 'inked' on the pages that compose this story. As Colin Nicholson writes of the autoreferential or metafictional elements of the story: "The topography of textuality becomes the subject of narrating memory's excavations" ("The Tuning of Memory" 90). The narrative self-consciously re-tells the story of migration that dispersed the Gaels from the Highlands through a recurrent movement towards narrative coherence in a community where migration coupled with assimilation has widened the gap between Gaelic signifier and signified, between one generation of Gaelic speakers and a new generation of Gaels who will not know the tongue of their people, who will not know the stories and culture of their people. MacLeod encodes the rupture of continued migration, not only in the miners' looming departure for Africa, but also in their sons who will not follow their fathers into the mineshafts of the world but "will go to the universities to study dentistry or law and to become fatly affluent before they are thirty" (27), leaving behind Gaelic tradition and their parents in a "sense of anguished isolation" (28).

This crisis in cultural continuity precipitates the narratorial efforts to record the cultural heritage stored in memory. There are two types of cultural recording in the text: the recording of Gaelic songs on tape and the translation of Gaelic culture and story into the Cape Breton english of the narrator's interior monologue. MacLeod privileges the translation of the interior monologue over the tourist taping of Gaelic songs. The narrator finds the experience of performing Gaelic songs for a tourist audience of non-Gaelic speakers and their tape recorders "meaningless" (24). The tape machines remove the language and music from its cultural context; their resonances will be largely lost on non-Gaelic speakers with little or no connection to the island and its history.

MacLeod emphasizes the gap between signifier and signified in his juxtaposition of Cape Breton Gaelic singing with South African Zulu dancing which the narrator concludes "speaks a language whose true meaning will elude [him] forever" (25). This memory of a failed communication in South Africa prompts him to consider his desire to transcend the semiotic abyss:

Yet on those occasions when we did sing at concerts, I would have liked to reach beyond the tape recorders and the faces of the uninvolved to something that might prove more substantial and enduring. (25)

The narrator's fears that the songs of his people "are for the most part local and private and capable of losing all their substance in translation" are assuaged by a passage from his daughter's university textbook, the memory of which he has frequently meditated on in relation to himself: "'the private experience, if articulated with skill, may communicate an appeal that is universal beyond the limitations of time or landscape'" (26). MacLeod succeeds in communicating just such an appeal in "The Closing Down of Summer;" his text is an embodiment of Gaelic stories in translation. Of course, the processes of translation and re-telling do alter narrative but the ancestral stories of death and migration originally shaped by Gaelic become, through recurrences in the narrator's life and his re-creation of these recurrences in his narration, the fabric of the contemporary folktale that is "The Closing Down of Summer." The narrative coherence achieved by translation in this story, however, is far less stable than that of The Silver Bough. The disjoined narratives of MacLeod's story are brought together only in the moment of their telling when the stories of Scottish migration and family rupture are placed alongside Cape Breton migration and family rupture. The voice of these stories frames them with his own disjunction as he hurtles away from Cape Breton toward South Africa. For MacLeod the narrative coherence attained by re-telling and translating stories from Gaelic is a precarious one, destabilized by the ongoing migration of Gaels and the assimilation of Gaelic

speakers into the anglophone community of the island. Gaelic is present in MacLeod's text through its absence; the english text of "The Closing Down of Summer" speaks about Gaelic songs and music but the actual lyrics and notes are not inserted into the narration.

#### **"THE TUNING OF PERFECTION" AND THE OTHER LANDSCAPE**

The rupture of the Highland Clearances which resulted in a break-down of Gaelic language and culture is revisited in MacLeod's "The Tuning of Perfection" and Gunn's The Other Landscape, located in and decoded from the palimpsest text of the landscape by the narrators of both works. This moment of rupture is translated into the present of the narrators through re-tellings. The unnamed narratorial 'I' of MacLeod's story makes reference to what is now the "ex-house" Archibald's great-grandfather built on his arrival in Nova Scotia from the Isle of Skye. Although the house is "no longer there" the narrator reads its presence in "the hollow of its cellar," and "a few moss-covered stones which formed its early foundation" ("Tuning" 101-102). The violence of the Clearances is alluded to as one of the possible reasons for the disappeared house's remote location: "Others thought that because of the violence he had left in Scotland he wanted to be inaccessible in the new world" (102). From the traces of Archibald's ancestors which mark the landscape and provide a context for the present cultural crisis which shakes the Canadian Gaelic community--the loss of Gaelic speakers to western migration--the narrative shifts to a reconstruction of the erecting of Archibald's home, and the stories of his life that it houses.

The home is nailed together, in part, with Gaelic song. Archibald and his young fiancée build the house themselves, often singing in Gaelic while banging their hammers:

On clear still days all of the people living down along the mountain's side and even below in the valley could hear the banging of their hammers and the youthful power of their voices. (105)

Gaelic culture is rooted in the home, a symbol of family and

community where people gather to sing, play music and tell stories in the Gaelic language. The decline or desertion of the home in "The Tuning of Perfection" and The Other Landscape is emblematic of decaying Gaelic cultures on both sides of the Atlantic.

Walter Urquhart, the voice of Gunn's novel and an anthropologist "used to dealing with vanished civilisations" quickly locates the Clearances in the Highland landscape as the evictions are manifest in "the ruins of two cottages in a small hollow" (Other Landscape 8). Urquhart's autoreferential writing attempts to reconstruct the deceased musician/writer Douglas Menzies and his wife Annabel--both repositories of Gaelic culture--and simultaneously recognizes the older cultural patterns of migration and Clearance which are inscribed on the landscape. The signs of the lost crofters prompt Urquhart to comment "[t]he old race seems to be going" (34). The pattern of migration continues on from the nineteenth century into the novel's present as a local woman informs Urquhart:

When I was a little girl there were four crofts. Before my time there were more. You can see where they took in the hillside. (33)

Ah well the young go away. There's not much for them here. (34)

Urquhart regenerates these vanished peoples and their community from the marks left on the landscape by the skeletal remains of their homes, and inserts them into his present narration:

I went on, then looked back over my shoulder and saw what were once little cultivated fields, could hear what cries I wished to hear, young running feet, the woman singing in the byre's deep dusk as she milked the cow. (57)

In this context the other landscape of the novel's title refers to the one present beyond the physical landscape.

The houses of MacLeod's Mackenzies "one of the oldest and best of the singing families" in "The Tuning of Perfection" are becoming "shuttered and boarded and a few of the older ones [are] starting to lean and even fall to the pressures of the wind" (121). The inhabitants of these houses and all of the Mackenzies' best Gaelic singers "have gone to Toronto" (121). Such images of decline and

sterility are found throughout the story. Archibald is the last of the authentic Gaelic singers. The horse that Archibald sells to Carver is the last of its kind (116) and will spend the rest of its days birthing colts that will be "thrown away" (118) at a laboratory farm in Montreal where its urine will be used in the production of birth-control pills (117). Archibald's wife dies after delivering the still body of his "unbreathing son" (118). All of which reflect the atrophy of Gaelic culture in this Cape Breton community, a cultural crisis the narrative negotiates in the folkloric studies in which Archibald participates, and the search for Gaelic singers to appear on the television special *Scots Around the World*.

Both of these projects involve a retrieval, and recording of Gaelic language and song, activities signifying a resistance to cultural erosion. Archibald, similar to the Gaelic speakers in "The Closing Down of Summer" and Gunn's Douglas and Annabel Menzies, is a living repository of Gaelic culture. Actively participating in the recording and study of Gaelic speech sounds, Archibald makes "various tapes and recordings" for folklorists, and faithfully contributes to "the archives at Sydney and Halifax and Ottawa" (109):

He did not really mind the folklorists, enunciating the words over and over again for them, explaining that "bh" was pronounced as "v" (like the "ph" in phone is pronounced "f," he would say), expanding on the more archaic meanings and footnoting himself the words and phrases of local origin. (109)

Archibald's recording is tantamount to translation. He narrows the void between Gaelic and non-Gaelic speakers by decoding Gaelic speech marks. The need for this translation is expressed not only in the folkloric interest, but also in the Gaelic community where Gaels like Archibald's granddaughter grow up without the meaning for the Gaelic "noises" they learn to sing (113).

Moreover, the Halifax producer from the CBC who is responsible for selecting and recording the images of the Gaels and the sounds of their singing for the television special has no sensitivity to the language or culture; his agenda is to capture an atmospheric

soundbite for the cameras. "Look, I really don't understand your language," the producer informs Archibald during the family's audition, "so we're here mainly for effect" (123). This ignorance of Gaelic results in the producer's dismembering of a Gaelic song to fit the time constraints of television, despite Archibald's protests that the song is "a narrative" and will not "make any sense" if shortened (125). Archibald refuses to compromise himself and his culture for the television broadcast, and the producer selects Carver's group and their meaningless Gaelic song "*Brochan Lom*" which as Archibald says "isn't even a song. It's just a bunch of nonsense syllables strung together" (128). Carver's group is chosen over the area's two authentic traditional Gaelic singers Archibald and Mrs. Mackenzie.

The narrator juxtaposes two types of cultural retrieval and recording: the television program which debases Gaelic and the academic work of the folklorists that fixes Gaelic speech sounds on a tape. These recordings may themselves be juxtaposed with a third type of recording, the writing of Alistair MacLeod which encloses them. MacLeod's writing re-tells stories through translation; a figurative translation from past to present effected by recurrence, and a literal translation from Gaelic to English. The story of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century Clearances which first brought Gaels to Cape Breton is retold by MacLeod's narrator in the recurrent contemporary migration of the Mackenzies to Toronto. Archibald detects a recurrence in the televised performance of Carver's group for Britain's Royal Family:

he imagined it was men like they who had given, in their recklessness, all they could think of in that confused and stormy past. Going with their claymores and the misunderstood language of their war cries to "perform" for the Royal families of the past. (134)

MacLeod works towards a restoration of meaning and the type of narrative coherence envisioned by Kroetsch in this narratorial unearthing of such stories from the past and their reinsertion in the present.

In "The Tuning of Perfection" coherence and meaning are



separated by a fissure between Gaelic signifiers that originally constructed these ancestral stories, and the signified they represent. These Gaelic markers are detected by MacLeod's narrator in the protagonist's English name "Archibald" and translated into the Gaelic signifier for the man: "Gilleasbuig" (108). Similarly, Archibald bridges the gap between signifier and signified encountered by the English speakers in his family and the television producer by translating the titles of Gaelic songs:

"*Mo Chridhe Trom*," said Archibald. "It means my heart is heavy"

"*Oran Gillean Alasdair Mhoir*," said Archibald, trying to compose himself. "Song to the Sons of Big Alexander. Sometimes it's known simply as *The Drowning Men*." (124)

MacLeod's re-telling of the complete narrative of "*Mo Chridhe Trom*" in an English translation of the song which appears parallel to the complete Gaelic text underlines the importance of translation, and subverts the untranslatable meaninglessness of Carver's counterfeit Gaelic, thus restoring opportunities for meaning to the text for the non-Gaelic-speaking reader. Meaning then, in Barthes' terms, is achieved--as it is in The Silver Bough--by a rejoining of disjointed narrative units. MacLeod's translations narrow the abyss between signifier and signified opened by the Clearances and the contemporary westward migratory patterns of Cape Breton. Within "The Tuning of Perfection" Gaelic narratives are reborn in an English writing which self-consciously encloses, and refers back to the anterior Gaelic signs which inform the construction of the text. Paradoxically, however, this translation also represents the erosion of Gaelic culture. Most of Archibald's family have already been permanently translated into an English discourse; they depend on him to interpret the Gaelic sounds into story for them. MacLeod's narrative of loss points to the inevitable loss of Archibald as the community's interpreter of Gaelic language and culture and its subsequent further slippage.

The decline of Gaelic culture that concerns MacLeod's narrators

in Cape Breton echoes the break-down of Gaelic culture Gunn's Urquhart must negotiate in the first chapter of The Other Landscape. "Your local culture pattern, if that's what you called it--or Gaelic culture, was it?--is in process of deterioration," an argumentative English Major informs Urquhart (23-24). Recalling both MacLeod's two stories and The Silver Bough, Urquhart's narratorial recovery and preservation of Gaelic culture takes a metafictional form. Urquhart's motivation for narrating or 'writing' the autoreferential The Other Landscape is his reception of an anonymous manuscript entitled Cliffs, the authorship of which he eventually traces to Menzies. In his first encounter with Menzies, Urquhart shares his experience of Cliffs with the author:

It had a terrific effect upon me. I was born and brought up in the Highlands. Apart from anything else, this background came alive, I mean it became part of life, outside and in. It brought things to life I didn't know or had forgotten. (64)

Urquhart is invited to record the experience of his search for Menzies by the editor of a literary journal Serpent, a project which evolves into The Other Landscape, the text Gunn's readers hold in front of them. Discussing his textualization of the search for Menzies Urquhart writes:

I confess it is one of my ambitions to write something on the mind of the primitive hunter, with special reference to the interactions between that mind and the hunting background, particularly the most vivid moments when a certain kind of communion or integration takes place. Then to trace that primitive aspect into our present day island society, with the Highlands as its sporting preserve for the leaders, the headmen (aristocratic or plutocratic), of that society, might add something to our understanding of what politicians call the Highland problem. (10)

Urquhart's metafictional commentary on his own text evokes his creator Gunn's previously quoted letter to Naomi Mitchison, where the value of translating the communal aspect of Gaelic culture into contemporary society is expounded.<sup>14</sup>

There are two levels of metafictional activity at play in the novel. One level is located in Urquhart's writing which both reconstructs Menzies and his wife Annabel, and attempts to recover

the authorial intention of Cliffs. Urquhart, writing a year after Menzies' death, shares the process of reconstructing the writer and his wife with the reader :

I realise that it would save time and make the story more intelligible to the reader if at this point I just set down quite simply what I subsequently learned about Annabel and Douglas Menzies before they came to the white house. I gathered the facts from many sources as will be seen. (76)

In the process of retrieving the Menzies from the past and inserting them into his narrative, Urquhart encounters deteriorating fragments of Gaelic culture such as the Gaelic air sung by hotel chambermaid and his future wife Catherine which he also endeavours to incorporate into his text. Unlike MacLeod's narrator in "The Tuning of Perfection," however, Urquhart, a non-Gaelic speaker, cannot record the actual air but only speculate about its essence:

It was a very old Gaelic air; it went back so far that it was timeless or had transfixed time; it had words and these words told a story of human tragedy; yet that tragedy had been so winnowed by the generations it could be sung, hummed, as a lullaby to a child. I know of no essentializing process more profound than this. (54)

Menzies' authorial intention in Cliffs is pursued in Urquhart's oral exegesis of the story in his first meeting with the author. With reference to the Wrecker's motif of Cliffs Urquhart remarks: "I found myself lost somewhere between symbolism and actuality. That may be your intention. The reader feels that the writer has experienced with an intense clarity of vision what he, the reader, can see only as--as," Menzies finishes the sentence for him "in a glass darkly" (65). Urquhart's writing endeavours to attribute meaning to Scottish discourse with this interpretation of Menzies' manuscript.

The creative projects of Douglas and Annabel Menzies constitute a second level of metafictional activity in the novel. Urquhart, a writer/anthropologist sensitive to cultural patterns, traces the past of Gaelic culture into the present day, in part, by referencing the work of the Menzies, work informed by the Highlands. Although Annabel's "Scotch Features" section for a London woman's magazine

exploits and reduces Highland culture to Scottish tartans and tweeds for a fashion-conscious English audience (90-91), she is the inspiration for Menzies' writing of Cliffs (73). As a Sutherlander who "had the Gaelic" Annabel provides her husband with the "traditional airs" of the Highlands, music which he translates into his contemporary cinema scores (87). In this way Urquhart makes his readers privy to Menzies' creative processes.

Urquhart's anthropological awareness and his proclivity toward analysis move him to share an interpretation of the role tradition plays in Menzies' work:

Tradition had put all the rhythms through a winnowing process. Tradition eliminated the temporary, as the crofter's winnower eliminated the chaff. What was left was cleansed of the personal in the sense that all great art is impersonal and thereby achieves the ultimate expression of the personal. At this point only paradox is left; paradox and the urge to give it shape in myth or image or symbol. (88)

Gunn's association of the crofter's winnower with the process of tradition transmission that eventually delivers Menzies the raw materials for his music, signals the presence of recurrence in The Other Landscape. This recurrence re-tells narratives of the past as a way of re-establishing narrative coherence lost to the Gaelic Highlands through emigration, invasion, and acculturation. Furthermore, the shaping of tradition's paradoxical legacy of personal and impersonal "in myth or image or symbol" is the principal enterprise of the novel as it is enacted by Gunn through his narrator-agent Urquhart's framing of Menzies' musical and literary projects. Menzies and his work constitute a textual mirror reflecting the narrative constructions of both Gunn and Urquhart. 'Recurrence,' as Menzies relates to Urquhart, dominates his life and work:

Remarkable this recurrence. For example, there was first the actual doomed ship and the storm, what is called the 'real thing'; then there was the acting of the real thing for the film; then my music for the acting; after that we came here [the Highlands] and the theme suffered a sea change into music as an art where the actors are the

implications of the themes, reforming and shaping them as though they were so many myths or symbols that come and go. (98)

Cliffs, drawn from notes made by, and discussions between Douglas and Annabel during the composition of the cinema score, adumbrates an incident which recurs in the lives of the Menzies. The doomed ship of the story which takes the life of the hero's woman enters the Menzies' real life in the form of a ship in distress which Douglas is summoned to assist. While he is thus engaged Annabel dies in childbirth.

Within Menzies' story is encoded an archetypal narrative transcending time. The life force is emblemized in the love of the man and woman which Menzies then sets against the Wrecker, the *thanatos* or death force of the storm. As Menzies reflects "what recurrence is a recurrence of does not change" (98); even though the languages (Pictish, Gaelic, english) which communicate these recurrences are subject to deterioration, the essential elements of the story remain.

Urquhart's writing is a palimpsest of writings seeking a textual conduit through which the essence of cultural past may be translated into the present through recurrence. Firstly, there is Gunn's writing which constructs the writing of his characters Urquhart and Menzies. Concomitantly, these writings reconstruct, through recurrence, the 'already written' essential elements of Highland culture as it becomes known in narrative. Urquhart's words frame Menzies as a storyteller "whose spirit was as fiery as that of a man of the Old Stone Age recounting a marvellous hunt" (237). Menzies is an artist figure who uncovers the beginning of a cliff path of "olden times" (232) which he follows to a cave to drink rum, a spirit that eases him into "phantasy," the collective unconscious of the other landscape. The path he unearths to collective cultural unconscious signifies the metaphysical route he takes to create the recurrent text of Cliffs. It also signifies the path Gunn and Urquhart write themselves along to reconstruct and re-tell the

cultural narrative of the past that is inscribed within the pages of The Other Landscape.

Urquhart receives Menzies' transmission of the ancient ancestral past in the primordial setting of the cave, an experience the anthropologist shares with his readers through an illustration that translates past into present. Urquhart "take[s] the simple matter of the ancient hunter at the moment when he has brought down his beast, his red deer for example, in this very district of Scotland where it is still hunted" (239). In this scenario the hunter kills the animal "then claps it on the flank and calls it his dear departed brother" (239). Addressing the reader directly Urquhart articulates the disjoining of ancestral narrative from the contemporary world: "Our circle of sympathy is closed. We don't want to reach an understanding of palaeolithic man, at the moment even if we could" (239). Urquhart, however, negotiates the gap between the primordial world from which the reader has become estranged and the contemporary world by re-telling the story of the hunt, and the ancient code of the hunt that is wired into modern society:

by infiltration, we begin to understand the hunting code which the best kind of modern sportsman observes, the man who is shocked to his marrow at the fellow who fires into a covey of birds instead of selecting one bird, the man who will pursue a wounded beast to the end of his resources, who loves his horses and his dogs, and who reacts to cruelty to animals more swiftly and uncompromisingly than any other in the community. (240)

These ruptures in cultural narrative, as they are represented in the novel by a fracture between present and past, and the division of physical and metaphysical landscapes are also reflected in linguistic erosion. The breakdown of the sign systems which originally constructed the primordial hunt narrative and the stories of the Clearances, opens up a space not only between landscapes of past and present, but also between language and story. This semiotic collapse problematizes meaning. Gunn confronts this crisis in meaning, the gap between signifier and signified that must be negotiated by an addressee, in Urquhart's and Menzies' discussion of

the other, metaphysical landscape that exists beyond words. As Urquhart explains he uses the term "other landscape" as a "useful label" to refer to the metaphysical entity he senses behind the little landscape of the two ruins in which he locates the crofters of the last century (68). During Urquhart's discussion with Menzies concerning systems of communication such as image and symbol, Menzies grows weary of words "that endlessly analyse one another" and he moves into the "'other landscape' where labels or symbols do the work" (68). Urquhart fails to follow this semiotic shift and falls into a void between speech mark and concept. "For presently," explains Urquhart "without my quite noticing how we got there I was at sea" (69). Menzies' language fails to communicate the concepts he labels "bollard" and "spectral bollard" (69). Struggling to impose meaning on those concepts, Urquhart narrows the gap between speech mark and concept by interpreting bollards as "spectral memories ... or nothing" (71). Spectral memories or traces in the forms of the Annabel apparition (72) and the spectre of the lost crofters (57) haunt the psychic landscapes of Urquhart and Menzies as well as that 'other' textual landscape of Urquhart's narrative. As Urquhart states, however, "meaning and memory can elude the mind" (71). John Burns' Zen reading of this section of the novel (147-158) privileges the metaphysical to the exclusion of the textual in a narrative which, as Price remarks, "belongs to those novels concerned with textuality and point of view ... and with artists, art and their exploitation" (188).

Urquhart's narratorial quest to bring meaning to the Scottish cultural memory Gunn encodes in the text, is made problematic by the region's and Urquhart's loss of the Gaelic language. As Urquhart reflects when he is unable to understand Mrs. Maclellan's recitation of a Gaelic verse "[t]hey took more than the language from us up here in the Highlands" (39). Also lost to many are the stories through which the language constructs the culture. The destruction of the language thwarts the transmission of traditional narratives from

generation to generation. To traverse this gap between the signifier and signified Gunn's novel re-tells Gaelic narratives such as the sea legend in the English of Scotland:

A beautiful woman sits on a rock combing her hair and a fisherman captures her before she can get into her seal's skin and escape into the deep. He hides the skin and she rears his children--her earth children--and she listens, at times she listens, to the sea. She listens back; and because what she hears cannot be spoken it is sung. (45)

This image of the displaced seal-woman, translated from the Gaelic, evokes the crofters who were cleared to the sea from the glens.

The Gaelic culture Urquhart says is based not "on empire and not on bloody conquest," but "on personal relations" (18) lives on in the heroism of Menzies who risks his life to rescue a man from the waves of the Wrecker (280-286). Menzies' act of bravery prompts Lachlan to place him in the context of an "old heroic story of the Highlands about which pipe tunes are made" (287).

The essential heroic narrative of the Highlands, originally constructed in Gaelic is re-told in English. Gunn's narrative transcribes such traditional Highland motifs as the second sight and the underworld into The Other Landscape. Annabel foresees the manner and location of her husband's death in a dream in which a body with Menzies' face is sprawled upon the skerries (314). The road to hell is mentioned several times by Urquhart in connection with both the Major and Menzies, who the anthropologist suggests share a knowledge of this route. Urquhart describes Menzies' dog as a virtual hound from hell who follows his master over a precipice to death: "His yelp was a hellish scream as he hurtled down, leaving the smell of hell's brimstone in the wind" (310). Urquhart's rewriting of this narrative paradigm, however, offers a contemporary twist, in its treatment of recurrence. Gunn's Highland hero is a Lowlander who "joked about being a Scot from the borders, where the sheepmen came from who took the land in the Highlands. Some of his people, he said, did actually come north, if not to this part. So he had something to repay, he said" (36). In this passage Gunn again returns to the rupture of the



Clearances, simultaneously acknowledging the schism between Highlanders and Lowlanders and then transcending this divide. The Lowlanders, such as Menzies' people who displaced the Highland crofters, now call the region home just as many Highlanders who migrated south to centres such as Glasgow and Edinburgh call these cities home. The movement of peoples over the Highland boundary makes the story of the Highlands Gunn is telling a story of shared significance for Highlander and Lowlander. Moreover, Menzies' creative work is informed by a tradition of the Highlands, as he receives it from his wife. In this respect Urquhart's "weird notion that all stories should meet in one story" echoes Gunn's aesthetic design (294).

The Other Landscape self-consciously joins disjoined narratives to produce occasions for constructing meaning, and is a narrative model that evokes The Silver Bough. Enfolded into the one story of Urquhart's pursuit of Douglas and Annabel and Cliffs are the stories of the Gaelic seal legend, the Clearances, and the anthropologist's relationship with Catherine.

Gunn's and MacLeod's foregrounding of the recovery of cultural history contextualizes this past as an essential component of community and self-identity in the present. Rosalind Mitchison, writing in Why Scottish History Matters, explains why this connection between past and present is so important:

For an individual the destruction of memory means the destruction of personality. Human beings are the embodiment of their own past. It is only by contact with this past in thinking and in relationships, that we exist. The same is true for societies: their history is the main component of their present identity. (vii)

Metafiction, a form of narrative examining the construction of narrative itself, is uniquely suited to textualize these types of contact with the past. Gunn's and MacLeod's fiction make remembering and re-telling of the past the subject of narration, emphasizing their own construction and thus, by implication, underlining the fictive processes involved in the creation of

supposedly more powerful (because posited as more truthful) discourses which marginalize the Gaelic cultures of Cape Breton and the Highlands of Scotland. The self-reflexive discourses of both Gunn and MacLeod also involve an investigation of the languages which form them. Both writers inscribe the decay of Gaelic language in english language texts which are interspersed with references to absent Gaelic markers, and the insertion of Gaelic words and phrases, as well as english sentences mimicking Gaelic syntax. The inscription of Gaelic words in a predominantly english text, contrary to the problematic argument of post-colonial theorists Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin connotes Gaelic culture.

Ashcroft et al posit that,

[s]uch an essentialist view of language...is false because it confuses usage with property in its view of meaning, and it is ultimately contradictory, since, if it is asserted that words do have some essential cultural essence not subject to changing usage, the post-colonial literatures in english, predicated upon this very changing usage could not have come into being. (53)

These critics maintain the insertion of language into a text as untranslated words is solely "metonymic of that cultural difference which is imputed by the linguistic variation" (53). Such insertions, however, are potentially representative of the culture itself, and not just cultural difference. The ability of untranslated words to signify a specific culture is dependent on the addressee or receptor of a text, and context, elements Ashcroft et al Tiffin neglect to include in their totalizing paradigm. If the addressee of a given english text recognizes a sign as Gaelic, the concept of a Gaelic culture has been communicated by the text synecdochically, even if the reader cannot attribute a specific meaning to that sign. Bilingual Gaels who understand both english and Gaelic would recognize the sign as representative of Gaelic culture and would also be capable of attributing meaning to it. The addressee without Gaelic is provided certain clues in the form of context which might illuminate the following Gaelic phrase Alistair MacLeod inserts into "The Tuning of Perfection":

And he had come to be regarded as "'the last of the authentic old-time Gaelic singers.'" He was faithfully recorded in the archives at Sydney and Halifax and Ottawa and his picture had appeared in various scholarly journals sometimes with the arms of the folklorists around him, sometimes holding one of his horses and sometimes standing beside his shining pickup truck which bore a bumper sticker which read "*Suas Leis A'Ghaidlig*." (109)

This Gaelic phrase is placed in a passage communicating the struggle to preserve Gaelic language and cultural heritage, a narrative unit signalling the reader that the untranslated words are Gaelic, and possibly, as they are emblazoned on a bumper sticker, a proclamation of pride in Gaelic language.

Fredric Jameson in his work on the political unconscious writes "all literature must be read as a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community" (70 emphasis mine). Gunn and MacLeod write their work in this manner, self-consciously narrativizing the inscription and reception of the symbolic value of landscape as a palimpsest text in which the traces of language, culture, and ancestry may be located and recovered.

## Notes

1. See Gittings, "Sounds in the Empty Spaces of History: The Highland Clearances in Neil Gunn's Highland River and Alistair MacLeod's 'The Road to Rankin's Point.'"
2. For recent discussions of short story theory and the challenging of early twentieth-century conceptions of the short story, see Wright, Brown, and Leitch.
3. For more on the displacement of Pictish and Gaelic, and a discussion of language competition and language death in Sutherland see Dorion.
4. Of course, the other experience concealed in the Scottish word has also been to some extent that of the immigrant, in the past French and Italian, and more recently, Asian.
5. See Murison.
6. This is reminiscent of the experience of Margaret Laurence's Morag in The Diviners for whom Gaelic is "[j]ust a lot of garbled sounds" (264).
7. The term "narrativization" meaning narrative construction or ordering of events is White's, see his "The Value of Narrativity in the Representation of Reality" 793-798.
8. This presents us with a potential archaeological dig for authorship. Is the book we hold in our hands a transcription of the field notes inscribed by Grant in the third-person?
9. "'That's it,' he said softly to himself, as if the stones were waiting for him to come home" (Silver Bough 21).
10. As Umberto Eco writes "signs are not only words, or images; they can also be forms of social behaviour, political acts, artificial landscapes" (xi Travels in Hyperreality).
11. I am indebted to Dr. Donald Meek of the University of Aberdeen's Celtic Department for his assistance in analyzing this passage.
12. See Vauthier's essay in which she examines MacLeod's employment of the historical present:  
  
*A la différence peut-être du présent narratif simultané, le présent historique permet d'inscrire l'expérience individuelle dans un remoré collectif et le moment présent dans l'Histoire. La nouvelle peut approprier au récit de la journée de Calum un espace-temps qui la déborde de toutes parts, peut insérer dans le présent l'expérience canadienne originaire, qui est rupture et d'exil tout en nous parlant d'un retour aux sources canadiennes.* (156)
13. I use semiosis in a Peircian sense here to describe the continuous and circular interaction between elements in a chain of signification. See Eco, A Theory of Semiotics 15, 71.

14. As Hutcheon writes "the point of metafiction is that it constitutes its own first critical commentary, and in so doing ... sets up the theoretical frame of reference in which it must be considered" (Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox 6).

### Chapter 3

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#### TRANSFORMING MEMORY: FAMILY HISTORY AND CULTURAL TRANSLATION IN ALICE MUNRO

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*It was not the individual names that were important, but the whole solid intricate structure of lives supporting us from the past.*

Alice Munro, Lives of Girls and Women

#### INTRODUCTION

Alice Munro's family arrived in Canada from Scotland's Vale of Ettrick in 1818. Unlike Alistair MacLeod's Gaelic-speaking Highland ancestors who came to the island of Cape Breton eighteen years earlier, Munro's father's family, the Laidlaws, were Lowlanders who settled first in southern Ontario's Halton County and then in the 1850s in the province's Huron County. While living on an island helped to preserve the Gaelic culture and language of MacLeod's family, the larger culture of Ontario would have eroded the Laidlaw's Scots tongue long before Munro's birth in 1931. Nevertheless, Munro is very much aware of her family's Scottish past and the influence of the Lowland Scots on Huron County, and like MacLeod this knowledge provides materials for her fiction. The repressive religion of Scottish Calvinism marks the twentieth-century stories that emerge from Munro's fictional communities of Jubilee, Hanratty, and more recently Walley, Ontario. When she travelled to the Scottish Borders region to research the Laidlaw family history Munro saw connections back to her own Huron County and became very interested in the Covenanting movement, and the "radical fundamentalist wing" of the Presbyterian church Scotland exported to Canada (unpublished interview).

Munro's interest in her Scottish ancestry--she counts the early nineteenth-century Scottish novelist and poet James Hogg among her forbears--is reflected in her stories which reference the history of

Scottish cultural transplantation to Canada (unpublished interview). Del Jordan's family historian, Uncle Craig, chronicles the intermarriage of his Irish protestant family to "Scotch Presbyterians" (Lives of Girls and Women 26). The narrator of "The Stone in the Field" (1982) relates her mother's sorrowful and disgusted response to the harsh and fanatical Presbyterianism she perceives in the lives of her husband's family:

Did you see those hands? They must have got a  
Presbyterian dispensation to let them scrub on Sundays.

Their religion did them in, and their upbringing. (The  
Moons of Jupiter 26, 30)

Munro's most recent collection of stories, Friend of My Youth (1990), inscribes the ongoing cross-cultural dialogue between Canada and Scotland in the historical narratives of the seventeenth-century Scottish Covenanters which are enclosed by, and provide a link between the title story and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass." "A Wilderness Station," an uncollected and recently published story draws on Munro's own family history and the Calvinist theology espoused by the preachers of the Glasgow Mission, a fundamentalist sect of the Scottish Presbytery that came to southern Ontario in the mid-nineteenth century.

Scotland's is one of the many national pasts married to Canada's through emigration, and this hybridized Scottish-Canadian past must be negotiated by the narrator of "Friend of My Youth" and Hazel, the protagonist of "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass," if they are to unravel their personal histories and discover who they are. As Homi Bhabha suggests, a nexus of personal and national narratives may be read as "a national allegory" where, he writes, quoting Fredric Jameson, "'the telling of the individual story and the individual experience cannot but ultimately include the whole laborious process of the collectivity itself'" (292). The Scots-Presbyterian elements of "Friend of My Youth," "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass," and "A Wilderness Station" exemplify the textualization of nation Bhabha describes in his study:

The nation reveals in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference. (300)

Both the narrator of "Friend of My Youth" and Hazel engage in a dialogic relationship with the past to establish personal and cultural identity in the present. The narrative voice in "Friend of My Youth" reaches out toward her late mother, a woman reduced to an aberration by the unfolding of time, and her daughter's own rigid image of her. To recover her mother the narrator delves into memory and retells her mother's story of the Scots-Cameronian Grieves family, tethering her personal history to the Grieves narrative of emigration and the translation of their faith and culture to Canada.

A Canadian whose memories of a Scottish village and its people have been imaginatively reconstructed from the war-time experiences of her late husband Jack in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass," Hazel makes a journey of return to the Scottish community she has preserved in memory. Hazel hopes to disinter a lost fragment of her self through an enquiry into the time her husband spent in a Scottish community before they met and married. Jack's stories of his Aunt Margaret Dobie and Scotland become a part of Hazel's imaginary landscape tying her to him, just as the Grieves and Cameronianism compose the connective tissue through which the narrator of "Friend of My Youth" remembers her relationship to her mother. Cameronianism provides an intertextual connection between these two stories, inviting a comparative study. Following the retrieval of her mother from memory the voice of "Friend of My Youth" closes her narrative by tracing the Grieves' Cameronian ancestry:

an uncompromising remnant of the Covenanters--those Scots who in the seventeenth century bound themselves with God, to resist prayer books, bishops, any taint of popery or interference from the King. ... They hacked the haughty Bishop of St. Andrews to death on the highway and rode their horses over his body. (26)

The Covenanters were Scottish Presbyterians who signed the National Covenant in 1638, a document establishing the independence of the Scottish Kirk from the English crown and prelates. Abolishing



bishops and any other form of mediation between the word of God and the individual, the Covenanters hoped to make the presence of God more immediate in their own lives and the life of the state (Smout 62). The Covenanters' attempts to liberate God's word from the dominating and definitive interpretive auspices of bishops soon became a tyrannical and self-righteous structure in and of itself, with the Covenanting armies engaging in a cruel and bloody holy war to cleanse Scotland and England of all forms of popery (62). Although most of the Covenanters were subdued after the battle of Bothwell Bridge in 1679, one of their leaders Richard Cameron formed a splinter group called the Cameronians who rejected the terms offered to the Covenanters by the government and renounced allegiance to Charles II. The dissenting Cameronians continued to assemble and preach against the established church and government, only to be hunted down and executed or forced to accept the authority of the reconstituted Church of Scotland (63-66).<sup>1</sup>

"Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" continues Munro's discourse on the bloody history of the Covenanting armies. Hazel's enquiry into her husband's past in Scotland leads to her research on the Covenanters deeds at Philiphaugh, a history supplemented by Dudley, a local solicitor. "The Covenanters hanged all their prisoners," he tells her "[t]hen they butchered all the women and children on the field" (86). Cultural translation is enacted in these two stories through a self-conscious remembering of microcosmic family histories which are correlated with the macrocosmic sphere of national histories. In the moment of remembering, however, the incident of cultural translation reconstructed by the narratees shifts to adapt Scottish stories into a Canadian context.

The process of remembering as a creative act of transformation becomes the subjectivity of narrative in much of Munro's work. The narrator of "Tell Me Yes or No" (1974), for example, ends her story with a metafictional commentary on the way the narrative about a deceased lover and his widow has been shaped by an inventing memory:

Never mind. I invented her. I invented you as far as my purposes go. I invented loving you and I invented your death. I have my tricks and my trap doors, too. I don't understand their workings, at the present moment, but I have to be careful I won't speak against them.  
(Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You 101)<sup>2</sup>

Munro elaborates on the role remembering plays for her as a writer in an essay: "Now I distrust the way I used the word *remember* ... I could have said invent; the kind of fictional remembering I mean is what fictional invention is" ("The Colonel's Hash Resettled" 183). Reading, writing, storytelling and the recitation of oral narrative constitute the fictional remembering which embeds the discourse of cultural translation in "Friend of My Youth" and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass." The metamorphoses of remembering that transform Jack in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass," and Flora, and the narrator's mother in "Friend of My Youth" also transmute the markers for Scottish culture which appear in these texts. The speaking subjects of these two stories compose their narratives from Scottish-Canadian materials, and it is this grounding of Scottish Reformation history, the kailyard genre, and the Scottish ballad in a Canadian context which I want to examine here. These signs of Scottish culture enclosed in twentieth-century Canadian texts are attached to a variety of Canadian signifieds by the narratees of "Friend of My Youth" and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass." When questioned about the ways her characters use narratives of Scottish culture as connective tissue to their own personal stories Munro replied:

Oh I think people do this you know ... people use--well a lot of people use music for instance. You know the way people are about the Beatles, they are remembering whole chunks of their lives in a very strong and definite way. And people use poetry, they use stories. I could go through my life now from the age of about ten on just thinking about what I was reading, and the images and the different kinds of excitement, [stimulated by] the different sorts of reading you go through. This is something people don't generally write about, how big a part reading plays in your life. But it does, it's like a constant other room you go into besides the room you're living in.

Writing on the polyphonic nature of narrative performance Marie Maclean advises:

One must remember that through the speaking subject is heard not just the voice of the teller but the voices of language, of narrative tradition, of ideology, of the whole social context. (7)

Among the many voices in the fictive world of Alice Munro are the Scottish and Scots-Canadian cadences of seventeenth and nineteenth-century fundamentalist Presbyterian preachers, and fragments of Scots balladry. As we will see in chapter three Munro is not alone in transformative remembering or invention. Through the mythical figure of Piper Gunn Margaret Laurence's Morag invents her family history in creative acts of remembering which trace the translation of Gaelic language and culture to Manitoba.

#### "FRIEND OF MY YOUTH"

Scottish Cameronianism shapes the narrative of "Friend of My Youth." Although she is not a Cameronian the narrator's discourse is grounded in "the whole social context" of her childhood; she has grown up with tales of this Scottish belief system and as an adult she translates these stories into a narrative route toward her mother. The form and content of Alice Munro's "Friend of My Youth" are underpinned by the concept of doubleness: a duality of character, narrative, and ideology that the narrator must work through to discover and liberate both herself and "the friend of [her] youth," her mother. In the telling of her own story--the recovery of her mother--the narrator interrogates the fraudulent and static narrative frames in which both she and her mother have enclosed Flora Grieves, a woman who merges with the unnamed narrator's mother at the end of the story, effectively collapsing the narrator's restrictive and potentially damaging image of her mother. David Williams sees a recurring pattern of self-reflexive narratorial investigation involving mother figures in Munro's work:

For Munro's female metafictional work, at their deepest level, to interrogate an ideology which is quintessentially male in its rejection of influence. To a daughter, the inescapable (because shared) body of the mother makes it a much more immediate, and less selfish model of the creative act; she can never distance herself

from the poetic corpus of the mother without doing violence to herself. (34)

The narrating daughter in "Friend of My Youth" recognizes at the end of her inquiries that she herself is transformed by her Mother's metamorphosis (26). Interrogation is implemented by variant retellings of Flora which develop into retellings of the narrator's mother thereby challenging previous narrativizations of both women. Ironically, this same interrogation of narrative reveals the binary oppositions of the damned and the elect embraced by Flora's "monstrous" Cameronianism as an ideology reflecting the narrator's predilection for reading static and totalizing identities in people, more accurately than it does Flora's adherence to this brand of Calvinism (12).

The narrator indicates the doubled nature of her fictive universe in the first pages of her story when she presents the dichotomous mother of her waking and dream worlds:

I recovered then what in waking life I had lost--my mother's liveliness of face and voice before her throat muscles stiffened and a woeful, impersonal mask fastened itself over her features. (4-5)

In this shift from a dying to a waking state we trace Munro's longstanding concern with writing an autobiographical mother figure out from under the oppressive "bugbear" of memory (5).<sup>3</sup> One of her earliest stories, "The Peace of Utrecht," revolves around the death of a mother after a prolonged illness. The narrator here also has dreams where her mother emerges from behind the paralytic mask of Parkinson's disease, prompting the narrator to think "why did I exaggerate so to myself, see, she is alright, only that her hands are trembling" (Dance of the Happy Shades 200).<sup>4</sup> The daughter in "The Peace of Utrecht" begins the process of retrieving a multi-faceted image of this mother figure, something Munro develops in "Ottawa Valley" where another daughter-narrator confesses elegiacally at the end of her story:

The problem, the only problem, is my mother. And she is the one of course that I am trying to get; it is to reach her that this whole journey has been undertaken. With

what purpose? To mark her off, to get rid of her; and it did not work, for she looms too close, just as she always did. She is heavy as always, she weighs everything down, and yet she is indistinct, her edges melt and flow. Which means she has stuck to me as close as ever and refused to fall away, and I could go on, and on, applying what skills I have, using what tricks I know, and it would always be the same. (Something I've Been Meaning to Tell You 197)

If Munro is indeed attempting in discursive ways to dispose of her mother in this story she is, as she predicts, unsuccessful, for her mother, to whom Friend of My Youth is dedicated, surfaces in the title story of this collection. Munro comments on these stories in which she is "reworking the close personal material" of her relationship to her mother :

I think what really has happened through those stories is that in a sense you become more and more dissatisfied with fiction, but of course you don't really or you wouldn't continue to write it. But the limitations of your own vision ... I mean when you are about twenty you think you see your parents' lives very clearly and generally very negatively, and then this changes as you grow older. You see things you didn't see before. Your whole judgement of that early landscape changes.  
(unpublished interview)

"Friend of My Youth" negotiates these changes in perspective and further advances the process of setting Munro's mother figure free.<sup>5</sup> In a conversation with Elanor Watchel, Munro discusses how the Grieves family narrative came to be twinned with her mother's story:

I was trying to figure out why I needed to write this story. The germ of it was given to me, in the story about the two sisters and the farm-worker. I thought about them and their self-dramatization, with the aid of their religion, and what happened to them. Then suddenly my mother's story began to weave around it, without me making a decision. When I started, I was going to write about Flora and Ellie. Then I wrote about my mother-- sort of circling around the Flora and Ellie story. Then I began to write about writing a story, which is where I finally ended up. Then I come back to the mother. I knew I was struggling with the subject matter of my mother, which I hadn't thought I would go back to again.  
(291-292)

Writing a story about a story, Munro foregrounds the narrative construction both of the mother, Flora, and of the narrator. Munro explains her interest in such autoreferential narration:

I'm talking about the way people make stories. It's not just writers; everybody is making the story--at least many people make the story of their lives all the time

and I think that's what interests me ... sort of using the way one writes fiction to get at how we see our lives. (unpublished interview)

Through these acts of remembering or fictional invention, elements of Scottish culture are synthesized and placed in Canadian story. The narrator's mother encounters Scottish emigrants, and tells a version of their story to her daughter. The daughter reconstructs her version of her mother's narrative, and juxtaposes it with her own version of the Grieves story; this juxtaposition generates duplicitous and seemingly incongruous versions of the narrator's mother which become the subject of narrative investigation. Magadalene Redekop suggests that the dominance of matrilineal narrative in Munro's stories may be related to the fact that she traces her own lineage back to James Hogg's mother who helped Sir Walter Scott compile Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (xiv).

Just as the narrator and her mother attempt to imprison Flora in the narrative strait jackets of "Maiden Lady" and "Presbyterian witch," the narrator reduces to "the bugbear" (5) of an "impersonal mask," a "stricken shadow" (24), the vitality of her mother's character as it is revealed to her in the dream. The narrator's mother has selected from "the various versions" available to her, a particular reading of Flora Grieves, that of the long-suffering saint (8). She ignores all information that refutes her vision of Flora as The Maiden Lady, fixing Nurse Atkinson--"she would always be called Nurse Atkinson"--as the villain of her fiction and Flora as the nurse's "unworldly" victim (14). From her friend at the post office, the narrator's mother receives the community's scandal-framed story of Flora's second jilting, and writes the surviving Grieves sister a letter of "sympathy" and "outrage" in response to the perceived betrayal and humiliation of Flora by Robert and Audrey Atkinson (19). Concerning her mother's misguided but well-intentioned missive the narrator remarks "she may have lost sight of the kind of person she was writing to." The narrator herself loses sight of the kind of person her mother was until she probes beneath the surface of the

motionless mask behind which she has hidden her. Facets of Flora's character are selected out by the narrator so that she might fit more readily into what the narrator imagines would be her mother's sentimental novel, The Maiden Lady:

I could see into my mother's mind. I could see what she would do with Flora, what she had already done. She would make her into a noble figure, one who accepts defection, treachery, who forgives and stands aside not once but twice. Never a moment of complaint. (19)

In response to what she believes her mother's narrative excludes, the narrator elects to make her Flora "as black" as her mother's version is "white": a "Presbyterian witch" who taunts her dying sister with the hellfire of the "poisonous book" of Cameronianism (20-21).

The "real Flora," manifest in letters, resists the restrictive and hyperbolic narrative frames imposed by both mother and daughter. Flora contradicts the mother's interpretation of her former fiancé's marriage to Audrey Atkinson, writing that "she was happy and satisfied in her life, as she had always been, and she did not interfere with what others did or wanted, because such things did not concern her" (19). Shortly before her death the narrator's mother receives a letter from Flora that further erodes the narrow and opposing binary myths of long-suffering saint and "Presbyterian witch" that have been imposed upon her: "She went on to say that she had been living in town for some years now, and that she had a job clerking in a store" (23). This letter is disconcerting for our narrator whose singular and fixed vision is warmed by this note into something more malleable, something fluid enough to accommodate not only alternative images of Flora, but through this new-found vision of Flora a dynamic image of her mother. The narrator at first resists this shift of vision; it does not fit with her reified conception of Flora: "[a]n unsettling letter leaving so many things out. Nothing in it about God's will or His role in our afflictions. No mention of whether Flora still went to church" (24). Perhaps it is this letter that precipitates the narrator's interrogation of the Flora narratives, an investigation that

eventually unearths her mother. Years later, haunted by the dream of her mother she describes in the first pages of the story, the narrator's thoughts turn to Flora and she once again attempts through a series of fictions to fix Flora in various situations:

I had lost interest in Flora by then. I was always thinking of stories, and by this time I probably had a new one on my mind.

But I have thought of her since. I have wondered what kind of a store. A hardware store or a five-and-ten, where she has to wear a coverall, or a drugstore, where she is uniformed like a nurse, or a Ladies' Wear, where she is expected to be genteelly fashionable? She might have to learn about foodblenders or chain saws, negligees, cosmetics or even condoms.... How could she go on being Cameronian? She might go on holidays. She might rent a cottage on a lake for a week, learn to swim, visit a city. She might eat meals in a restaurant ...

(24)

Although the narrator's tone here is speculative, she betrays that it is a singular idea of Flora she searches for when she imagines her meeting with the surviving Grieves sister:

She is not surprised that I am telling her this, but she is weary of it, of me and my idea of her, my information, my notion that I can know anything about her. (26)

At this moment the narrator has her anagnorisis; she realizes that she has locked not only Flora but also her mother into fraudulent and static narrative frames:

Of course it's my mother I'm thinking of, my mother as she was in those dreams, saying, It's nothing, just this little tremor, saying with such astonishing lighthearted forgiveness, Oh, I knew you'd come someday. My mother surprising me, and doing it almost indifferently. Her mask, her fate, and most of her affliction taken away. How relieved I was, and happy. But I now recall that I was disconcerted as well. I would have to say that I felt slightly cheated. Yes. Offended, tricked by this welcome turnaround, this reprieve. My mother moving rather carelessly out of her old prison, showing options and powers I never dreamed she had, changes more than herself. (26)

The narrator is the architect of her mother's image prison, and it is only through her pursuit of Flora and Ellie Grieves, women who collectively constitute a *doppelgänger* for her mother, that she is capable of collapsing this unsound structure.

As the story progresses the lines that define Flora, Ellie, and the narrator's mother as separate entities dissolve. Ellie is "like



a copy of Flora" (9). In the narrator's imaginative world, the narrative of "Friend of My Youth," the Grieves sisters are emblematic of the doubled, sleeping and waking image of her mother. Flora's apparently light-hearted forgiveness of Ellie, Nurse Atkinson, and of Robert echoes the "astonishing light-hearted forgiveness" offered to the narrator by her mother. The "stretched out and ruined ... shape" of the decaying Ellie reflects the narrator's waking vision of her mother's paralysed and ruined body (6).

The binary oppositions of the elect and the damned encompassed by Cameronianism provide a central motif echoed throughout the story. Cameronianism is the ideological centre to which all of the story's elements are tied. Caution, however, must be exercised in interpreting how this motif may be read. The division of the Grieves' farmhouse could be read figuratively as textual support that Flora is among the elect and Ellie one of the damned. The chaste, loyal and forgiving Flora occupies the "cheerful" back rooms of the house while her sister Ellie is subject to a series of painfully violent still births in the "sickroom atmosphere of the front rooms" (16). The house was divided by Flora when she discovered that her sister was pregnant by her fiancé Robert. In her treatment of her mother's Maiden Lady the narrator suggests that Flora is among the elect: "The wicked flourish. But it is all right. It is all right--the elect are veiled in patience and humility and lighted by a certainty that events cannot disturb" (20). This reading of Flora as a member of the elect is flawed. Munro's story subverts such static and totalizing concepts as predestination; her characters exercise free will. Flora and the narrator's mother explode the constricting frames of representation which the story's narrative voice attempts to impose upon them. The violence to the concept of predestination that the narrator's investigations lead to is prefigured in the book-burning she includes in her "Presbyterian witch" story: "the elect, the damned, the slim hopes, the mighty torments--up in smoke. There was the ending" (21). Ironically, the narrator practices, as a

secular ideology, the religion that she condemns as "poisonous" (21). Just as the Calvinist doctrine of Cameronianism locks individuals into the prisons of the damned and the elect, the narrator attempts to fix her mother and Flora in a universe that does not acknowledge the free will of its inhabitants. Redekop detects echoes of Munro's ancestral past here, and reads the author's investigation of "the crazy Calvinist context" as a "retelling of stories told by her ancestor, James Hogg" in his novel of a destructive Calvinism, The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner (211, 213).

Exclusive and totalizing systems of belief such as the narrator's image prison and Cameronianism create an intellectual and emotional malaise that is just as crippling as the "paralysing disease" that grips the body of the narrator's mother (1). The narrator's uncompromising and single-minded perception of her mother cripples her memory of the woman she discovers to have been the friend of her youth, not a "bugbear." Only after she deflates the fraudulent image of her mother does she discover

that [her] mother's ideas were in line with some progressive notions of her times, and mine echoed the notions that were favoured in my time. This in spite of the fact that we both believed ourselves independent, and lived in backwaters that did not register changes. (23)

The paralytic properties of Cameronianism are underlined by the Cameronian history with which the narrator closes her investigations:

They [the Cameronians] hacked the haughty Bishop of St. Andrews to death on the highway and rode their horses over his body. One of their ministers, in a mood of firm rejoicing at his own hanging, excommunicated all the other preachers in the world." (26)

The tenets of Cameronianism freeze the intellectual and moral faculties of its followers to such an extent that they compromise the laws of Christianity to further the cause of Cameronianism, a supposedly Christian doctrine.

The sentimental, caricatured, and idealized tales of Scottish rural life which typify the Scottish kailyard genre are present in Munro's story in the narrator's remembering of her Mother's narrative of Flora's nightly readings to Ellie, and in the mother's

"sentimental" Maiden Lady representation of Flora's life (19).<sup>6</sup> Flora read "[s]tories about Scottish life--not classics. Stories about urchins and comic grandmothers" in an affected "Scots dialect" or "with that thick accent" (12). This act of reading is a locus for cultural translation where the Scottish kailyard is transmitted to the narrator's mother who encodes it in the fictive construction of Flora she relates to her daughter.<sup>7</sup> Munro, however, resists a reading of The Maiden Lady as pure kailyard and says of the novel she imagines her mother writing "hers would be more the novel of sentimental power, it would be much more tragic" (unpublished interview). Another artefact of Scottish culture embedded in Munro's work is the ballad, a form translated onto a Canadian ground in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass."

#### "HOLD ME FAST, DON'T LET ME PASS"

Distinct personal and cultural identity emerges from this story when the memory processes of Hazel are stimulated by ballad sequences, and the physical and social geography of the imagined and existing communities of Walley, Ontario and a Scottish village.

Munro's story offers a variation on the archetypal genealogical quest that is pervasive in Canadian Literature.<sup>8</sup> Like and unlike her fictive predecessor, Margaret Laurence's Morag Gunn, who also travels to Scotland in search of ancestral roots (The Diviners 354), Munro's Hazel ostensibly comes to Scotland to research the ancestral past of another, her late husband. Similar to Morag's experience, however, Hazel finds herself "in a corner of the world where she didn't belong," and where the present is often confused by the past (Munro 75). Hazel's responses to the landscape and history of Scotland are partially responsible for this dissolution of linear time. The journal entries Hazel writes, an embedded text constituting the story's first paragraph, transpose her husband's personal World War Two past onto his ancestral, Scottish history: "Now she noticed the date she'd written beside 'Philiphaugh': 1945. Instead of 1645"

(75). Scottish signifiers are ascribed to personal Canadian signifieds by Hazel. Her confusion of time is attributed to the influence of the hotel lounge; a room where Hazel's husband may have sat when he came to the hotel during the war:

Glass-brick window, dark-red carpet with a swirly pattern, cretonne curtains with red flowers and green leaves on a beige background. Blocky, dusty dark upholstered furniture. Floor lamps. All of this could have been here when Hazel's husband, Jack, used to come to this hotel, during the war. (75-76)

Munro's provisional third person voice of limited omniscience shifts from the Scottish history of Philiphaugh to the present day where it deviates toward the Canadian past of Walley, Ontario, providing an effective mimesis for the erratic and magical turns of Hazel's memory. Immediately following Hazel's imaginative reconstruction of the lounge as it might have existed for Jack in 1945, the narrative moves to Walley: the first meeting of Jack and Hazel at a highschool dance, and their subsequent marriage. From here, Hazel's consciousness drifts back to Jack's past in Scotland, and to the stories about his cousin Margaret Dobie and war-time lover, Antoinette, stories that have enticed Hazel across the Atlantic to this very room. Hazel's imagined Scotland is assembled from conflicting narratives: her reconstruction of Jack's memories, popular myth, and official history. In her voyage to Scotland--the physical place--Hazel challenges these conflicting frames of reference in an effort to discover some definitive, and authoritative reality concerning events of personal and cultural history, while repudiating 'fraudulent' narratives which lack such authority. Incongruities between authoritative texts and experience surface for Hazel after Antoinette's outspoken commentary on Dudley:

People were supposed to be so reserved in Britain--that was what Hazel had been led to believe by her reading, if not by Jack--but it didn't always seem to be the case.  
(83)

Research in the Encyclopaedia Britannica prior to her departure from Canada has prompted Hazel to dismiss popular myths; she "knew ... that Macbeth killed Duncan in battle instead of murdering him in bed"

(85). She is learning about the provisionality of narrative construction and its translation into myth. Hazel's hitherto book-based enquiry into the history of the Covenanters at Philiphaugh is supplemented by Dudley's grisly oral history. Asking her if she knows what happened following the Battle of Philiphaugh, Dudley, without giving Hazel a chance to respond, relates how "the covenanters hanged all their prisoners. Right out there in the town square; under the dining room windows. Then they butchered all the women and children on the field" (86). Dudley's prefacing of this history with the song fragment "[a]t Philiphaugh the fray began," and his reference to the site of the executions as "under the dining-room windows" merge a present narrative with the cultural past of Scotland and the personal Canadian past of Hazel. The "genial voice" and smile with which Dudley presents his history produce deep resonances in Hazel's memory and effect a narrative transition from the violent tales of Philiphaugh to Walley, Ontario and to Jack's stories of World War Two:

Hazel had met [Dudley's] smile before and she had never been sure what it meant. Was a man who smiled in this way daring you not to believe, not to acknowledge, not to agree, that this was how things must be, forever? (86)

In response to this question Hazel's memory projects the image of Jack as "a hard man to argue with," extending Dudley's demystification of seventeenth-century Scottish war images to her late husband and his confrontations with narratives that conflict with his version of World War Two (86). Jack's reception of the war was challenged by televised peace demonstrators and newspaper articles that claimed "NOBODY WINS IN A WAR," reporting voices of people who in Jack's perception were "determined to spoil the image of the best part of his life" (87). "Ten or fifteen years" of the same war stories transform Hazel from a "meek and proud" young wife "distracted by desire" to a woman who "absented" herself during the telling of these tired old stories, in the same way she comes to absent herself from Jack's life.

Married life alters Hazel; she discards the confining shell "of her increasingly doubtful and expensive prettiness," something that Antoinette, "preserved to within an inch of her life," is unable to do (82). In her mid-thirties Hazel was confined to her bed for two months by a nervous breakdown, but recovered control of her life by distancing herself from her marriage: enrolling in college courses and pursuing a teaching career (83). As Hazel acknowledges, however, the breakdown dislodged a part of her self:

she knew that when she got out of bed (this is what she doesn't say,) she was leaving some part of herself behind. She suspected this was a part that had to do with Jack. But she didn't think the abandonment had to be permanent. (83)

Hazel's efforts to forge connections with the various images of Jack she has collected constitute a quest for self through a better understanding of her late husband, and of her relationship to him. Only by recovering a sense of her late husband can Hazel locate the lost part of herself that is inextricably bound to Jack. After leaving her sick bed she constructs a new identity for herself, burying elements of the "Hazel Joudry" who married Jack (82). In Scotland she is pursuing a redefinition of self, of who she is in relation to her husband, her past, and the world at large. She is twice forced to define her cultural identity when mistaken for an American:

"So have you come over here looking for your roots?" he said. He gave the word its most exaggerated American pronunciation. "I'm Canadian," Hazel said quite pleasantly. "We don't say 'roots' that way." (79)

.....  
"You see, even the Americans," Dudley said. "Even the Americans won't eat that frozen stuff. And you'd think they'd be used to it; they have everything frozen."  
"I'm Canadian," Hazel said. She thought he'd apologize, remembering he'd been told this once already. But neither he nor Antoinette paid any attention to her." (81)

Unlike the American, the Canadian abroad is invisible, her identity is erased, displaced by the dominant North American identity of the United States.

Hazel's response to the stimuli of Scotland precipitates the projection of a series of Jacks through her memory: a young man who

frolicked with Antoinette and drove Miss Dobie's motorcycle during the war (89), a returning war hero "taut with proved courage" (87), a long-winded storyteller, and the "ghostly" man whose life is reduced to "two or three nights a week at the Legion, the other nights spent lying on the sofa from supper to bedtime, watching television, drinking" (104). Miss Dobie's recitation of the traditional Scots ballad "Tam Lin" with the unstable, ever-shifting image of Tom who must be embraced by the fair Jennet if she is to recover her bairn's father, effectively underscores the significance of the fluid image of Jack for both Hazel and Munro's reader. Munro's contextualization of the ballad transforms it into a narrative of conflation, a space where the story's incongruous time frames collide through the ironic reconstructions its presence in the text invites. Hazel has previously juxtaposed herself with Antoinette and Judy, and drawn parallels between Dudley and Jack, but it is the ballad "Tam Lin" that crystallizes these thoughts for her. Hazel contrasts her appearance to the "preserved within an inch of her life" look of Antoinette (82). And as I have already stated Dudley's smile suggests the smile of Jack to Hazel (86).

Munro's embedded ballad excerpts create a dialogic relationship between "Tam Lin" and the Hazel narrative; their intersecting contexts generate a series of duplicitous reconstructions for both Hazel and Munro's reader. The "bits and pieces" of the ballad that Hazel picks up strike responsive chords in her memory, and connect her with the community she is visiting, with her late husband, and with herself (95). The fairies' transformation of Tom into an "esk, but and an adder," recalls the fluid configurations of Hazel's memory which shape her various versions of Jack (96). If she is to unearth the part of herself "that had to do with Jack" (83), Hazel, much like Jennet who "held [Tom] fast in every shape," must embrace all of the Jacks who inhabit memory (96). The embrace of a multiplicity of versions as opposed to a singular and authoritative account is tantamount to a rejection of the exclusive history Hazel had

previously endeavoured to impose on the conflicting narratives of Macbeth and Philiphaugh. The segregation of so called authoritative narratives from the narratives of oral tradition, myth and popular culture, fractures the context of an event's reception, limits perspective and ultimately hinders comprehension. Munro's resistance to totalizing narrative systems is also expressed in "A Friend of My Youth" where narrative interrogation shatters the fixed images in which the story's narrator has confined her mother and Flora. Munro's approach to the past is perhaps best described by Hayden White for whom historical pluralism "presupposes a number of equally plausible accounts of the past, or alternatively a number of different but equally meaningful constructions of that indeterminate field we call history" (484).

Hazel's quest for identity is inscribed in the Scots ballad recited by Miss Dobie. Traditionally, the ballad is an expression of the identifying relationship that exists between individual and community; the individual creates a work which the community must then, as Alan Bold writes, "weigh, sift and select from the mass of individual suggestions those which most accurately express the popular taste and popular ideal" (5). Although Hazel does not participate in the synthesis that formulates the version of "Tam Lin" sung by Miss Dobie, her mental retention of whole verses of the ballad, and her exchange of these verses with Dudley suggest that she has bonded with this Scottish community. Prior to the recitation Hazel feels ignored by the community; Dudley and Antoinette are deaf to her protestations that she is not an American. After the recitation, however, Hazel feels she is in "the middle of these people's lives" (101). The ballad provides a space for the unrecorded history of the women in this story. For, as Catherine Kerrigan writes, "in its power to tell a story, in providing a place for unrecorded experience" the ballad became "for many women poets the home of their history" (5).

The dialogic relationship that exists between "Tam Lin" and the



primary narrative strand of "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" invites a reading of the text on an ironic plane where the Fair Jennet of the ballad may be reconstructed alternatively, and simultaneously as Antoinette, Judy or Hazel, and where Tom may similarly be read as Jack and/or Dudley.<sup>9</sup> Munro's three maidens, like the Jennet of "Tam Lin," all attempt to hold on to a shape-shifting man. Tania, Judy's illegitimate child by Dudley, provides Miss Dobie with the inspiration for her recitation. Judy is determined to maintain her grasp on Dudley as "her bairn's father" (96). Judy's romantic aspirations for Dudley and her image of him as a father to her child, conflict with Antoinette's perception of Dudley as a lover and future husband. Antoinette drives Hazel to Miss Dobie's to prevent Judy and Dudley from resuming their relationship, and makes it very clear to Judy, who has brushed her hair to a gloss and baked a fruitcake in the hope of a visit from Dudley, that Mr. Brown "was too busy" to come (94). Miss Dobie's singing of "Tam Lin" creates a convergence of memory and time frames for Antoinette and Hazel which is emblemized in the surrender of their maidenhead to Jack. On their return from Miss Dobie's Antoinette makes a point of showing Hazel Cathaw:

They were going past a low field by the river. "Where in that poem," Antoinette said--speaking hastily, as one might if one was afraid of being overtaken by further vomiting--"the girl goes out and loses her maiden head, and so on." (98)

This reference to the ballad elicits, to Hazel's surprise, the surfacing of an entire verse from her memory:

Now, gowd rings ye may buy, maidens,  
Green mantles ye may spin;  
But, gin ye lose your maidenheid,  
Ye'll ne're get that agen! (99)

There is, however, some incongruity between Antoinette's location of the deflowering at Cathaw, depicted in "Tam Lin," and Dudley's location of the event at Carterhaugh:

"Carterhaugh?" Dudley said, sounding scornful and excited. "That's not down by the river! Antoinette doesn't know what she's talking about! That's the high field, it overlooks the river. That's where the fairy

rings were. Fungi. If the moon were out, we could drive out tonight and look at it." (101)

Perhaps Antoinette does know exactly what she is talking about. Antoinette's Cathaw is suspiciously similar to Hazel's reconstructed memories of the riverbank where a young Jack ventured for romantic encounters during the war. *En route* to Miss Dobie's Hazel shares an anecdote with Antoinette describing one of Jack's nocturnal river visits:

"Jack borrowed Miss Dobie's shoes once," she said to Antoinette. ... Anyway, he wore her shoes to a dance and he went down to the river, I don't know what for"--it was to meet a girl of course, probably to meet Antoinette-- "and he got the shoes soaked, covered with muck." (89-90)

Prior to the recitation of "Tam Lin," Antoinette has failed or refused to recognize Hazel's overt attempts to connect her with Jack's past. The ballad touches Antoinette in a way that Hazel is incapable of, shattering the time barriers separating her from Jack, and permitting her to acknowledge, at least covertly, her relationship to him; she takes Jack's widow to the site of her passion with Jack, and invokes the words of "Tam Lin." For Antoinette the "moaning and droning" of the ballad also speaks of the relationship of Dudley and Judy, a memory that makes her violently ill (97,98). Judy's child by Dudley is a constant reminder to Antoinette both of her lover's past indiscretions, and the possibility of future infidelity.

In Hazel's memory the ballad becomes a point of intersection for the relationships between herself and Jack, Dudley and Antoinette, and Dudley and Judy. After exchanging lines of "Tam Lin" with Dudley, lines that reflect his relationship to Tania and Judy--

"First dip me in a stand of milk?" she said tentatively. "Then in a stand of water?"

"But hold me fast, don't let me pass," Dudley cried, very pleased. "I'll be your bairn's father!" (100)--

Hazel contemplates Dudley's relationship to Antoinette and Judy, and recognizes a parallel between Dudley's statement "I can't make two women happy," and Jack's comment "I could make you very happy." This

recognition forces Hazel to confront the question "[w]hat makes a man happy?" (104-105). Jack's perception of female happiness is sexual; he proposes to make "the whole worrying, striving, complicated bundle of Hazel" happy by taking her maidenhead, giving her an orgasm (103). And although Jack succeeds in giving Hazel an orgasm, he also takes away an identifying, emotional and psychological part of her: "But, gin ye lose your maidenheid, / Ye'll ne're get that agen!" (99). Similarly, Dudley's conception of happiness has sexual connotations, and implies that he would be content keeping two women 'happy.' Munro's narrative defines female happiness as something more complex than the shallow, sexual equation formulated by Jack and Dudley; the women in her story are not happy. Antoinette is tortured by thoughts of Dudley and Judy: "She might shut her eyes to a secret visit once and a while (she'd be sick though; she'd have to turn her head away and vomit)" (103). And Judy, if her strange behaviour during the tea at Miss Dobie's is an indication, is similarly upset by Dudley's relations with Antoinette. Hazel, however, is moving toward a better understanding of her own happiness by observing this love triangle, and retrieving the submerged part of herself it invites to surface.

A Scottish element of Canada's diverse ethnographic history is uncovered by the transformative acts of memorializing family history which occur in these two stories from Friend of My Youth where cultural translation is textualized in reading and writing in the title story, and the recitation of oral narrative in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass". Literature has long been a vehicle for cultural translation, as such nineteenth-century colonizing or settler texts as John Galt's Bogle Corbet, and the poetry of Alexander McLachlan exemplify. Galt's early Canadian novel chronicles the Atlantic passage of Scottish emigrants to Ontario, and McLachlan's collection The Emigrant also relates the settling of Scots in Canada, something Munro explores in "A Wilderness Station". Where the settler works of Galt and McLachlan enact cultural translation in their attempts to establish identity in, and ownership over a new land, Munro's two

stories in Friend of My Youth remember that past with the ironic distance of time. Munro exploits the gap between Scottish historical markers and their referents in her narratees' twinning of these signs with their own personal Canadian signs to construct a world. The process of cultural transplantation enacted in texts such as Bogle Corbet and The Emigrant--a process which helped to establish the Scots-Canadian ground Munro inscribes on, and from which she constructs "Friend of My Youth" and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass"--is inverted in the latter story. Hazel travels from Canada to Scotland and finds identity and self-actualization by expressing her difference from Americans, and from Antoinette, a Scot. In both of "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" and "Friend of My Youth" transforming memories reconstruct personal and national pasts by writing back to what Del Jordan describes as "the whole solid, intricate structure of lives supporting us from the past" (Lives 26).

#### **"A WILDERNESS STATION": SETTLING A SCOTS-CANADIAN GROUND**

Munro's personal interest in a network of ancestors supporting her from the past prompted her to research the history of her father's family, the Laidlaws. "As I became middle aged," Munro explains, speaking about the development of her interest in the Laidlaw genealogy, "and around the time my father died I started getting these feelings, and I think that many people do, that the time for ancestors seems to be middle age ... and so I started to get very interested because then I found to my surprise that the poet Hogg was a connection" (unpublished interview). For the last several years Munro has been spending part of her time working on what she thought would be "a pleasant change": a non-fiction project chronicling her family history. As she reveals, however, this writing of history has proven problematic, sometimes merging with her fiction:

I've found it's difficult because if you're used to writing fiction keeping oneself within the bounds of fact instead of taking that fictional germ and doing something

with it is very difficult.

The Laidlaw family history finds its way into Munro's recently published "A Wilderness Station," a piece she says "takes off from my ancestors coming up to Huron county, except that I have completely invented a dreadful macabre incident that takes place, and I have no justification for this at all" (Unpublished interview).

Transformative rememberings of the Laidlaw past run in the family. A novel by Munro's father Robert Laidlaw, The McGregor's: A Novel of an Ontario Pioneer Family, is based on his memories of the family and was published posthumously in 1979. "A Wilderness Station" locates the construction of the Scottish-Canadian ground which informs "Friend of My Youth" and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" in the nineteenth-century Scottish settling of Huron County bush just outside of Walley, Ontario.

Epistolary in form, "A Wilderness Station" encodes an awareness of its own narrativity in the variant emplotments of a death in the wilds of mid-nineteenth-century Ontario as this event is reconstructed in a newspaper article and a series of letters that have been assembled as a text by an unknown third-person archivist/narrator. The first letter, dated January 15, 1852, is written to Mr. Simon Herron from the Matron of a Toronto home for girls. In response to his request for a Presbyterian marriage candidate to assist him in homesteading, the Matron suggests a Miss Annie McKillop whose deceased parents emigrated to Canada from Fife. The death of Simon and the role Annie played in that death are the subjects of a newspaper article by the deceased's brother George Herron, and letters between Simon's minister, the Reverend William McBain, and the Clerk of the Peace at Walley, Mr. James Mullen. Appended to Mullen's letters is Annie's first-person testimony on her husband's death recorded in a letter intercepted by the Clerk of the Peace.

"Recollections of Mr. George Herron" published in the Carstairs Argus in 1907 is a pioneer history of the harsh conditions

under which Huron County was settled in the 1850s. George tells of his parents' untimely deaths from fever five weeks after the family landed in Canada from Scotland, and relates how his brother Simon was killed by a falling tree branch in April 1852 as the two were clearing their land. Fifty-five years after his brother's death George narrativizes the event as a tragic accident, and explains how he and Simon's widow were forced to bury the body themselves in the middle of a blinding snow storm. The next letter in Munro's narrative addressed to Mullen and dated September 10, 1852 is from McBain and relates the psychological and physical deterioration of Simon's widow. McBain tells the clerk to expect a visit from the distraught young woman whom he believes is on her way to the Gaol at Walley (38).

Mullen's response to McBain confirms Annie's arrival at Walley Gaol and includes the clerk's reconstruction of her confession to the murder of her husband. In this version of events Annie kills her husband in the woods by striking him on the head with a rock in order to put an end to his repeated beatings. After consulting with George, McBain writes back to Mullen refuting Annie's story as "invention" (40). Subsequent correspondence between McBain and Mullen reveals their shared interest in bringing order both to the wilderness they find themselves in, and to the life of Annie Herron who insists on remaining in Walley's Gaol. Following a letter from McBain's landlord informing Mullen of the minister's death, Munro's archivist/narrator inserts a letter from Annie to Sadie Johnstone, which in all likelihood was returned to Mullen as all previous letters to this person have been. In this epistle Annie remembers or constructs yet another--fratricidal--version of Simon Herron's death. This narrative supports George's newspaper account of his return to the shanty with Simon's body and includes the story of the falling tree branch that he tells Annie killed her husband. Annie's narrative, however, deviates from the officially accepted story of Simon's death at the point of bathing Simon's corpse. When the

corpse was lying face down Annie saw where George's "axe had cut" into her husband's scalp. Annie responds to Simon's death with relief, as she and George will no longer have to fear his violence. Although she comforts George and agrees to corroborate his story, she soon perceives him as a threat when he looks at her "the same way his brother used to look but worse" after she asks him if he told the neighbours the death by falling tree branch scenario (44). She begins to have dreams in which the two brothers are trying to kill her, and soon moves out of the shanty preferring to sleep out of doors where she feels safer. At the onset of winter she decides to seek refuge in Walley Gaol, writing her friend: "I am safe from George here is the main thing" (45). The story's final letter, written by Mullen's granddaughter to a historian researching a biography of George's grandson in 1959, further problematizes Annie's reliability as a narrator.

The narrative of the falling tree branch became deeply embedded in the imagination of the Laidlaw family. Robert Laidlaw's novel adumbrates his daughter's emplotment of this tragic death from family history in the two brothers, Jim and Dan MacDonald, "who always worked together when they were clearing" and the novel's warning that a "loose branch or a slip of the razor-sharp axe and a man could lie helplessly to die in the snow" (70). Furthermore, the death of Munro's great-uncle from a falling tree branch is considered a significant enough event to warrant recording in Catherine Sheldrick Ross' biography of the author (28).

In ways very similar to "Friend of My Youth" and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" acts of reading/writing encode the hybridization of Scottish and Canadian cultures and foreground an awareness of narrative construction in "A Wilderness Station." The play amongst the texts within Munro's narrative creates a tension between what is perceived publicly as the definitive official story of Simon's death as it is told by George, the church and the community in the persons of the Reverend McBain and Clerk of the Peace Mullen, and the

disruption of this singular version by the anarchic stories of Annie Herron. A similar tension exists between narratives thought to be definitive, static fact, and pluralistic constructions of the past, for example, the dissolving of the constricting frame the narrator of "Friend of My Youth" builds around her mother, and the multiplicity of Jacks Hazel learns to embrace in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass." Extremist Presbyterian ideology plays a major role in the settling or ordering of the New World wilderness in which the characters of "A Wilderness Station" find themselves. The Glasgow Mission of William McBain is another mutation of the repressive Presbyterianism that generated the Cameronianism which shapes the narrative of "Friend of My Youth." McBain arrives in Huron county from the West of Scotland armed with the narrow settling narrative of his church. The Herron brothers' efforts to clear the physical landscape of trees and wilderness to impose order and their authority on the landscape are paralleled on a psycho-social level by the Reverend William McBain's attempts to eradicate disorder or wilderness from the social landscape, and to inscribe the authority of the Glasgow mission on the souls of his Huron county parish. McBain equates the oppositional forces of good and evil, sinner and saint with order and disorder.

The rigid narrative structure McBain hopes to impose on his community emerges in his correspondence with Mullen in the form of those evil entities that resist the ordering impulse of the cleric and his theology. "I am under difficulties at present," writes McBain,

not only of my wretched corpus but of being lodged in a foul and noisy place obliged to hear day and night such uproars as destroy sleep and study and intrude even on my prayers. The wind blows bitterly through the logs, but if I go down to the fire there is swilling of spirits and foulest insolence. And outside nothing but trees to choke off every exit and icy bog to swallow man and horse. (40)

Drink, immorality, the natural elements that compose the wilderness, and his own physical body are perceived by McBain as "difficulties"



to be eliminated, translated into Christian order in the course of his ministry. Mullen, although he is "a member of the Church of England," shares McBain's vision of the church's role in settling the wilds and writes the Scottish minister an encouraging letter communicating his "high regard for the work being done by other Protestant denominations in bringing an orderly life to this part of the world we find ourselves in" (40).

Annie Herron, a Canadian child of Scottish parents, is an affront to McBain and the theocratic conformity his mission hopes to establish. Annie and her variant narrativizations of Simon's death personify the wilderness that McBain is committed to destroy. Although McBain in his letters emplots Annie as "a child of the Free Church and the Covenant" and claims her as "a soul in [his] charge," he also admits that she will not yield to his ministrations. "When I talked to her," he recounts, "she would not give any answer or sign that her soul was coming into submission" (38). Annie will not submit. She destabilizes McBain's Presbyterian narrative of moral and spiritual uniformity by becoming a disordering agent of the wilderness; as McBain writes,

she stopped appearing at services and the deterioration of her property showed the state of her mind and spirit. She would not plant peas and potatoes though they were given to here to grow among the stumps. She did not chop down the wild vines around her door. Most often she did not light a fire so she could have oatcake or porridge. Her brother-in-law being removed, there was no order imposed on her days. When I visited her the door was open and it was evident that animals came and went in her house. If she was there she hid herself, to mock me. Those who caught sight of her said that her clothing was filthy and torn from scrambling about in the bushes, and she was scratched by thorns and bitten by the mosquito insects and let her<sup>hair</sup> go uncombed and unplaited. (38)

Annie describes herself as a person at one with the wilderness, and views it as place of safety:

I didn't stay in the house where he could find me and when I gave up sleeping inside and slept outside I didn't have the dream so often. It got warm quickly and the flies and mosquitoes came but they hardly bothered me. I would see their bites but not feel them, which was another sign that in the outside I was protected. I got down when I heard anybody coming. I ate berries both red and black and god protected me from any badness in them. (45)

Annie's writing of the bush does violence to the authoritative conception of the wilderness as adversary found in the writings of McBain and George Herron. For Annie the wilderness is a space where she is protected not only from George and her menacing dreams about him, but also from the totalizing discourse of settlement espoused by Walter McBain. The cleric's narrative presumes to be all-encompassing, and refuses to accommodate Annie's fluid visions of self and the world.

McBain's fixed vision of God and His justice is also fractured by Annie who displaces the cleric and his authority when she becomes spiritual counsellor to her husband's murderer. Comforting George after he has killed his abusive brother in a moment of anger, Annie reports herself as saying:

I am religious too. I pray to God every night and my prayers are answered. I know what God wants as well as any preacher knows and I know that he does not want a good lad like you to be hanged. All you have to do is say you are sorry. Say you are sorry and mean it well and God will forgive you. (43)

Annie's vision of a forgiving God conflicts with the moral code of McBain's parish where fratricide would tear a hole in the spiritual fabric of the community that could only be restored by the death of the murderer. As she relates to George: "If you own up what do you think will happen? They will hang you" (42). McBain's concept of an authoritative Biblical exegesis is supplanted by Annie, whose interpretation of random and decontextualized passages of scripture suggests that George should not confess his crime since he is destined to live and have children (43). The same text in the hands of McBain would be used to encourage confession and justify a killer's execution. Annie, in one version of events, further contravenes the world of the Reverend McBain by bearing false witness to corroborate George's fiction of the falling tree branch. "A tree branch fell on him," she tells George,

It was just what you told me. I can see it falling. I can see it coming down so fast like a streak and little

branches and crackling all the way, it hardly takes any longer than a gun going off and you say, what is that? and it has hit him and he is dead [sic]. (44)

Ironically, this emplotment of events that Annie helps George establish as truth becomes the officially sanctioned story of Simon's death, the text which seeks to establish narrative conformity by refuting her subsequent and variant tellings of the event. She soon collapses this account to protect herself from George as her letter to Sadie reports:

I told them the very same lie that George told me so often in my dreams, trying to get me to believe it was me and not him. I am safe from George here is the main thing. If they think I am crazy and I know the difference I am safe. (45)

Annie's imagination will not submit to a definitive concept of narrative truth, she continues to speak her multiple reconstructions of past events. Her anarchic resistance to totalizing structure writes its way into a twentieth-century historian's research on George Herron's grandson. Dated July 8, 1959 and addressed to Mr. Leopold Henry, Department of History Queen's University, Kingston, the final document in Munro's text is James Mullen's granddaughter's first person account of a motor trip she and Annie make to visit George Herron in June 1907. Christena Mullen figures Annie as "Old Annie" her grandparent's seamstress, a woman who refuses to be fixed, who constructs and occupies an ever shifting diegetic wilderness. Stories told to Christena by Annie confuse the settings of the House of Industry where she first met Simon, and the Gaol: sometimes she "called the Gaol the home" (47). The story of her marriage is also emploted indeterminately: "About being married herself, she sometimes said she had been and sometimes not" (47). Christena's letter offers yet another variation on the death of Simon Herron from the metamorphosising memory of Annie. In this version, which is almost fairy-tale like in its structure, Annie refigures Simon as a wealthy suitor who arrives at the Home to whisk her away in a carriage, "[t]hen she said a bear killed her husband, in the woods and [Christena's] grandfather had killed the bear and wrapped her in its

skin and taken her home from the Gaol" (47). Possessing a very strict sense of the truth Christena's mother cautions her daughters not to "believe a word [Old Annie] says" (47). As Hayden White suggests, when telling the story of our lives we, like Annie:

may seek to give our lives a meaning of some specific kind by telling now one and now another kind of story about them. But this is a work of construction rather than of discovery--and so it is with groups, nations, and whole classes of people who wish to regard themselves as parts of organic entities capable of living storylike lives. (487)

And Annie's story is a Scots-Canadian strand of the perpetually shifting ethnographic narrating of the Canadian nation.

Annie Herron, like her creator, is a storyteller who cannot resist the fictionalizing impulse of her inventing memory; like Munro she finds it difficult to keep herself "within the bounds of fact instead of taking that fictional germ and doing something with it." This becomes quite evident at the end of the story when any desire on the reader's part to fix Annie as a reliable source through which the 'true' story of Simon Herron's death can be established is effectively subverted by Munro in Old Annie's fantastic story of the baby born from a boil. Christena recalls Annie

telling me another time that a girl in the Home had a baby out of a big boil that burst on her stomach and it was the size of a rat and had no life in it, but they put it in the oven and it puffed up to the right size and baked to a good colour and started to kick its legs.

I told her after that wasn't possible, it must have been a dream.

She said, "They took it afterwards, anyway, I never got to see it anymore." Then she said, "I did used to have the terriblest dreams." ("Wilderness" 51)

Annie and her multiple tellings of her husband's death provide a mimesis for the process Munro engages with to fictionalize her own family history. In "A Wilderness Station" Munro takes the story of her ancestors and "completely [invents] a dreadful macabre incident" with "no justification for this at all." Munro selects an element of documented Laidlaw genealogy, the death of a great-uncle, and through the narrating agency of Annie proceeds to tell many other alternative emplotments of that story.

Munro explodes the constricting mononarrative of a Scots-Calvinist based truth in "A Wilderness Station" by introducing a multiplicity of alternatives to that interpretation. McBain's quotation from a sermon by the Ettrick Valley's Rev. Thomas Boston (1676-1732) emphasizes a narrative tension between Christian order, and both a physical wilderness and the wilderness of an unfettered imagination, and contains the story's title:

*Whatsoever crook there is in one's lot,  
it is of God's making. Thomas Boston.  
This world is a wilderness, in which  
we may indeed get our station changed,  
but the move will be out of one wilder-  
ness station unto another. Ibid. ("Wilderness" 40)*

The Rev. Boston equates "crook" with adversity in human life precipitated by the fall (Boston 14). Annie is a crook in the lot of the Rev. McBain who seeks to straighten out her stories and her life, contrary to the advice of the minister he quotes and reveres who writes that as it is God who makes the "crook in thy lot," only God can "make it straight" (11-12). McBain, however, dies committed to straightening and ordering God's fallen world. By contrast, Annie moves from one wilderness station to another by constructing what may be read as "crooks" in the context of Munro's story; she tells lies. In this manner she, not God creates what McBain regards as adversity, her stay in Walley Gaol. However, for Annie this is not adversity, but a safe haven. Annie's actions undermine the dominant notions of adversity as these are inscribed by the Scottish Presbytery. McBain's tyrannical 'true' story of predestination and the omnipotence of God is challenged by Annie's usurpation of God. Annie exercises free will; she constructs and exploits crooks in her lot to make the best of the situations she finds herself in. She tells stories received officially as 'untrue.' A pursuit of the true story is, as Margaret Atwood suggests, illusory:

*The true story lies  
among the other stories,  
a mess of colors, like jumbled clothing  
thrown off or far away,  
like hearts on marble, like syllables, like  
butcher's discards.*

The true story is vicious  
and multiple and untrue  
after all. Why do you  
need it? Don't ever  
ask for the true story. ("True Stories" 58)

Don't ask Annie or Munro for the true story; the truths of "A Wilderness Station," "Friend of My Youth," and "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass" are multiple and contradictory, and located in the play amongst stories.

"A Wilderness Station" inverts the historiographic process that displaces Annie and her stories. Annie speaks past the deaths of McBain and Mullen to visit a mute George Herron who has recently suffered a stroke; he cannot talk back to Annie, he cannot challenge her narrating voice. But as Annie says to Christena Mullen "I could talk to him" (51). Although Annie appears to be a marginal and incidental figure in the authoritative biography of Treece Herron written by Henry Leopold, Munro's history pushes Treece to the periphery; he becomes an incidental figure in the life of Annie Herron. The narrative of Simon Herron's death that Annie corroborates, and her construction of Biblical exegesis to convince George that he was predestined to have a son, are instrumental in creating the possibility of Treece Herron's existence, and a documentation of that existence. "Narrative accounts of real historical events, then," writes White, "admit as many equally plausible versions in their representation as there are plot structures available in a given story for endowing stories, whether fictional or real, with meanings" (489).

Munro's three stories artfully expose narratives of origin, marking their convergence with myth by foregrounding the processes of narrative construction that form them, and destabilizing the truth claims encoded into the master narratives of inherited Calvinist belief systems. "Friend of My Youth," "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass," and "A Wilderness Station" reveal how a fallacious belief in an all pervasive truth, present in the latter stories in Cameronianism, and in the former in the theology of the Glasgow

Mission, becomes translated or secularized into a wider consciousness where a quest for a singular interpretation of individuals and events becomes just as tyrannical and unsatisfactory as the Calvinist interpretation of the world.

Of the Canadian interest in figuratively disinterring old-world ancestors such as the Covenanters and McBain, and reinventing them in the unlimited plot structures of fiction, Munro says

we never really repudiated what we call the "old country" the way Americans did, and the way Australians to a later extent have. This may be a difficulty about forming a country, about our nationalism, I don't know. And when I found the Hogg connection it was especially important for me, because you would not have guessed in my family as I was growing up that there would be a poet, even though my father became a writer later on, all of this was so much buried beneath the importance of being a practical person and working hard in daily life. But it was all a great surprise to me. (unpublished interview)

The writing back of a transforming memory to an ancestral past to question pre-scribed officially received versions of history is very much a part of the self-reflexive narrative construction shaping Margaret Laurence's The Diviners and Naomi Mitchison's The Bull Calves.

## Notes

1. For a history of the Covenanting armies, see Furgol.
2. See Struthers' comments on Munro and metafiction.
3. For a study of memory and the relationship of mothers and daughters in Munro's work prior to Friend of My Youth, see Carrington 184-205.
4. Munro has had similar dreams about her deceased mother, who, like the character in this story was afflicted by Parkinson's disease. See her conversation with Watchel.
5. For a discussion of what she reads as a parade of mothering clowns in Munro's work, see Redekop.
6. See Campbell's study, Kailyard.
7. Among the stories Flora reads is Wee MacGregor, a work Munro read as a young girl and remembers as "an enormously popular sentimental novel of the Kailyard school" (unpublished interview).
8. See Kroetsch, "Beyond Nationalism: A Prologue" 165.
9. When presented with this reading of the ballad as a space of ironic reconstruction within her story, Munro commented: "I sort of didn't choose the ballad for that reason, but then I began to see that I had chosen it without realizing it because I know a lot of ballads and why did I choose that one? I chose it just because it always seemed to me so wonderful" (unpublished interview).



RE-READING AND RE-WRITING: DIALOGUES WITH HISTORY IN MARGARET LAURENCE'S THE DIVINERS AND NAOMI MITCHISON'S THE BULL CALVES

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*To reveal all is to end the story. To conceal all is to fail to begin the story. Individuals, communities, religions, even nations, narrate themselves into existence by selecting out, by working variations upon, a few of the possible strategies that lie between these two extremes.*

Robert Kroetsch, "The Veil of Knowing"

INTRODUCTION

Margaret Laurence, for many "a founding mother of [modern] Canadian literature," and Naomi Mitchison, the grand dame of modern Scottish letters, share in The Diviners and The Bull Calves a heightened awareness of the ancestral past as a fabric from which cultural myths are woven (Gunnars x). In both texts genealogy is explored through a discursive and self-reflexive dialogue with history to delineate individual and cultural identity. Although published 27 years apart and written from two distinct cultural perspectives, both novels confront the dilemma of cultural erasure by delving into the ancestral past to refigure historical events and personages, and relate them to the textual and extratextual present. The interdependence of past, present, and future is critical to an understanding of personal and cultural identity for both Morag Gunn, the narrative voice of Laurence's *Künstlerroman*, and the voice of the constructed Naomi Mitchison persona who narrates The Bull Calves. Morag Gunn's genealogical excavation, a work in progress which eventually evolves into The Diviners, traces her life through reconstructed "Memorybank Movies," photographs, and oral narratives sketching out her lineal relationship to the dispossessed Gael Piper Gunn and such cultural ancestors as Catharine Parr Trail, Louis Riel

and Sir John A. Macdonald. In this way Morag transmits both cultural and personal identity to her daughter Pique, and Laurence conveys a sense of Canadian cultural identity to her readers.

Similarly, in The Bull Calves exploration of the Haldane family tree Naomi Mitchison recounts the events of a past that has forged her present day Scotland. Mitchison juxtaposes herself and Scotland in the 1940s to her ancestors Kirstie Haldane and William of Borlum and the Scotland of 1747. The Haldane history Kirstie relates to her niece Catherine over a two day period, together with the third-person narrating of a projected authorial personae, recounts the Jacobite rebellions and the acculturating process of Union with England which divided both the state of Scotland and the Haldane family<sup>1</sup>.

Writing partly in response to what they see as the americanization and anglicization of their respective cultures, Laurence and Mitchison draw on indigenous myths, histories and legends to subvert the marginalizing received histories which thwart the expression of cultural and individual identity in Canada and Scotland. Conscious of the "colonial sway" Britain once had over Canada and the present American "colonial sway" Canada is under ("Ivory Tower or Grass Roots?" 24), Laurence says she writes to express

a strong sense of place and of our own culture ... to give Canadians a ... sense of who they are, where they come from, and where they may be going ... by forging our myths and giving voice to our history, to our legends and to our cultural being. ("Uses of the Past" 201).<sup>2</sup>

In The Bull Calves Mitchison creates what Douglas Gifford has called a "healing mythology for Scotland," a balm to remedy the tear in Highland and Lowland relations caused by the defeat of the Jacobites, Union with England, and the Highland Clearances (14). The Bull Calves, Mitchison explains, is written for "the generality of Scots folk" and the "minority in southern England who want a real understanding of Scotland" (457). Mitchison writes with the hope of imbuing Highlanders and Lowlanders with a sense of cultural pride. She uses the Highland and Lowland languages in the novel to "help

those who speak and use the current Highland speech to be proud and notable of so bonny a thing--never to think that it is in any way worse than the written English of books and newspapers." She goes on to explain further her motivation for writing the novel:

I hope it may help those who naturally enliven their speech with Lowland words and phrases, to be equally proud of that, to know it is a living thing, not merely something that died with Burns. I hope that, if this book is taken seriously by school and University teachers as some of my other historical novels have been (and I believe this one is away better as history!) it may encourage them, and the school inspectors too, to allow the children under their charge in Scotland to express themselves in the spoken and written Scots of their own district. (411)

#### **GAPS BETWEEN HISTORY AND STORY: SPACES FOR TRANSLATION AND FICTION-MAKING**

Both Laurence's Canadian, and Mitchison's Scottish mythologies, are self-consciously aware of their own narrativization. The process of narrativization is foregrounded by Laurence in Morag's interrogation and subsequent selection of history and memory fragments for her work in progress, and by Mitchison in the metafictional apparatus of her novel's historical notes section; both undermining the credibility of any singular interpretation of events and consistently reminding the reader of the complementary relationship that exists between fiction and history. In a discussion of narrativity in history and fiction Robert Kroetsch writes that "[i]ndividuals, communities, religions, even nations, narrate themselves into existence by selecting out" ("The Veil of Knowing" 179). Through a process of selecting out Laurence and Mitchison recover their ancestral past and through this past their cultural identity in the present. This procedure of selection simultaneously scrutinizes the problematic of privilege concerning oral and written texts and the distortion that occurs in the transcription of the oral text. Relating history, fiction, and the recovery of cultural ancestry to the novels of Canadians Margaret Laurence and Rudy Wiebe, Kroetsch says:

Oral history is not likely to go back more than two

generations--to parents and grandparents. Beyond that little remains--with huge consequences for our sense of history. Within that time-framework exists an enormous prospect of fiction-making. Individuals in a lifetime become characters. Events become story, become folklore, edge towards the condition of myth. ("The Moment of the Discovery of America Continues" 6)

Within the pages and time-frameworks of The Diviners and The Bull Calves the reader is granted some insight into the processes of telling, reception, interpretation, re-telling, and recording, processes which transmute events into story and individuals into characters. Louis Riel, Sir John A. Macdonald, Catharine Parr Trail, Piper Gunn, and Rider Tonnerre, have become figures of history--some more mythicized than others--while the events and lives of Old Jules, Christie, Lazarus, Jules, Pique and Morag are in the process of becoming history as Morag writes them into The Diviners.

Mitchison's novel is particularly interesting with respect to self-conscious narrativizing for although the individuals and events that compose it have already passed into the realia of narrative--recorded in journals, letters and other historical documents--Mitchison imaginatively reworks these source materials to animate the processes of telling, reception, re-telling and re-writing. Kirstie tells Catherine the history of the Scottish nation and her own tragic tale of life with the Reverend Andrew Shaw, and confesses her involvement with witchery to William. And William reveals to Kirstie and her brother Patrick versions of his time in North America and his relations with the native peoples there. There are two voices behind these narratives: the third-person omniscient narratorial voice of Naomi the story-teller, and the Naomi of the historical notes who shares with the reader the processes of research and imaginative reconstruction which constitute her narrativization.

As Michael Holquist has said of the difference between history and the novel, The Diviners, and The Bull Calves "dramatize the gaps that always exist between what is told and the telling of it," and as such incessantly question the veracity of narrative (The Dialogic Imagination xxviii). In re-creating her family and Scottish history

for her novel Mitchison constantly referred to General Aylmer Haldane's book, The Haldanes of Gleneagles, as well as his personal documents and the oral histories she received from her grandmother. With reference to the transmutation of these materials into novel form Mitchison writes:

It is a queer business altogether this family continuity, in time and place. And it can be used well and ill. If used well one may perhaps be justified in trimming it into a kind of mythology. (412)

Elaborating on the interweaving of fiction and reality which composes the fabric of myth, Mitchison throws into question the reliability of her grandmother's stories, suggesting that the old woman amused herself by seeing how much the young Naomi could be made to believe (Bull Calves 412). This, however, does not deter Naomi--nor should it deter her readers--from believing good stories "whether they were true or not!" (412). Moreover, although received history yields nothing more than the names of Kirstie Haldane and William Macintosh of Borlum and the knowledge of their premature deaths, it does not compromise the truth of eighteenth-century Scotland with which Mitchison has imbued what she says are "the lives they might have had," for echoed in the lives of Kirstie and William, on an allegorical level, is the relationship between Highland and Lowland Scotland (Bull Calves 407). Morag Gunn also grapples with the seemingly paradoxical and complex relationship between truth and reality as it relates to her reception and re-telling of her ancestral past. As a writer in the process of constructing her life through the narrative of The Diviners, Morag is forever negotiating the often contradictory space between documented history and mythical narratives, an activity which prompts her to consider and appreciate "the thought of history and fiction interweaving" (444).<sup>3</sup> Morag, a shaper of narrative herself, is acutely aware of the wilful and unwilful distortions that occur when real events are recorded. Language often fails to communicate what the speaker or writer hears or sees, as Morag suggests when she rebukes her own attempt to

transcribe the effect of wind on water into words: "Naturally, the river wasn't wrinkled or creased at all--wrong words, implying something unfluid like skin." Morag again points out the failure of language when she attempts to describe the colour of swallows' breast feathers:

How could that colour be caught in words? A sort of rosy peach colour, but that sounded corny and was also inaccurate. *I used to think words could do anything. Magic. Sorcery. Even Miracle. But no only occasionally.* (12-13)

The misrepresentation of reality is not always as innocent as the honest shortcomings of language Morag experiences above. The "Memorybank Movies" Morag draws upon to construct the various narratives which constitute her personal past and identity are constantly revised, and fictionalized by the author. Morag is, in David Williams' words, "her own aesthetic creation" (88). As Gayle Greene observes

Morag understands that the past, present, and the self in its 'many versions' (Diviners 36) are comprised of tales we tell ourselves and one another, constructs of the fictionalizing imagination, and that these fictions are constantly being revised. (Critical Approaches 194)

With reference to these memory films the third-person retrospective voice of Morag comments that her younger, and presently textualized self "could not even guess at their veracity, nor guess how many times they had been refilmed, a scene deleted here, another added there" (Diviners 36).

The Memorybank Movie "Once Upon a Time There Was" is a hybrid of reality and fiction in which a third-person Morag has shaped the events surrounding her parents' deaths into story form. Morag herself cannot discern how much of it she "embroidered later on" (26). In a *mise en abyme* of The Diviners Morag takes seemingly fixed photographic representations of her past and attempts to impose chronological order upon them. As with the narrativizing of the events in The Diviners however, Morag recognizes any such ordering as provisional and questions the notion of "chronological order, or any order at all" (14). She keeps these photographs for their hidden,

fluid property; "not for what they show but what is hidden in them" (13). The photographs of her parents provide her with the impetus for her wilful invention of the family life she never knew. After creating a snapshot-based memory vignette extolling the virtues of her mother who "is not the sort of mother who yells at kids," and in which a young Morag romps playfully with Snap, the family dog, the mature Morag comments in italics: "All this is crazy of course, and quite untrue. Or maybe true and maybe not. I am remembering myself composing this interpretation in Christie and Prin's house (16).

Narrativization, the interpretation and refiguring of events and individuals, is a political act which often distorts the facts, for as Linda Hutcheon says "to write anyone's history is to order, to give form to disparate facts; in short to fictionalize" (The Canadian Postmodern 82). Morag in her dialogue with history exposes the fictive nature of singular, definitive official histories and clears a space for alternative versions of a past selected out by official record keepers. Laurence and Morag are, in this sense, pan-textualists, the term Hayden White ascribes to writers to whom

history appears either as a text subject to many different readings (like a novel, poem or play) or as an absent presence the nature of which is perceivable only by prior textualizations (documents and historical accounts) that must be read and rewritten, in response to present interests, concerns, desires, aspirations and the like. ("Historical Pluralism" 485)

In Morag's juxtaposition of the official history of the Battle of Bourlon Wood, as it is emplotted in The 60th Canadian Field Artillery Battery Book, with her own reconstruction of Christie's tale of the battle, Laurence re-reads and re-writes history. The official history of the battle excludes many of its participants and their points of view. Morag's father and Christie are both absent from the pages of this text; the identities of the troops are obscured by the official record, the regimental photograph which distorts individual faces into uniform blurs (100). Searching this photograph for his likeness Christie despairs "Lord, Morag, I can't even find my own self" (101). To make war palatable to their readers the historians

who recorded the battle have omitted the carnage and horror of combat in the trenches, making war sound "like a Sunday School picnic" (101). In Morag's pan-textual re-reading and re-writing of the Battle of Bourlon Wood, Christie presents the visceral and gruesome realities of trench warfare, filling in the gaps left by the official version. He describes a battle scene as filled "with bleeding bits of a man. Blown to smithereens. A leg. A hand. Guts which was that red and wet you would not credit it at all" (102). Christie's comments concerning the book's selective version of events--"it was like the book says, but it wasn't like that also. That is the strangeness"--summarize the dilemma all readers of narrative must confront. Some narrative "strangeness" surfaces for Morag when she reads the newspaper accounts of Dieppe, "full of stories of bravery, courage, camaraderie, initiative, gallantry, and determination in the face of heavy enemy fire" (159). Doubting the credibility of these stories Morag asks "[w]hat is a true story? Is there any such thing?" (159). This history of truth's relationship to story is one that haunts Morag in her reconstruction of the ancestral past, and Laurence in her generation of a national mythology for Canadians. As Laurence says, she cares "about the ancestral past very much, but in a kind of mythical way. The ancestors in the end become everyone's ancestors. But the history that one can feel personally encompasses only a very few generations" (Heart of A Stranger 156-7).

Louis Riel, Piper Gunn, and Rider Tonnerre are the mythical ancestors who reach Morag through oral and written histories, narratives to which Morag must also pose the question "[w]hat is a true story?" Riel, the only one of these ancestral figures to be recognized by 'legitimate' historical discourse, is, like Piper Gunn and Rider Tonnerre, first revealed to Morag in the disparate narrativizations of Christie's tales. Morag's "History" lessons purport to be the definitive truth against which she measures the credibility of Christie's tales, narratives she had previously accepted as true stories. In this section of the novel the third-



person Morag, narratorial architect of The Diviners, includes the younger Morag's "History"-infected challenges to Christie's story of "Reel," a "short little man ... with burning eyes" who led an insurrection of his "half breeds" only to be defeated by Piper Gunn's Sutherlanders. Christie's narrative is emplotted from the perspective of the dispossessed and defeated Highlanders from Sutherland who were themselves in the process of colonizing Métis lands (144). In response to Morag's history which claims that the Army from Ontario put down the Métis rebellions, Christie states his truth:

Well, some say that. Others say different. Of course, I *know* the Army and that came out like, but the truth of the matter is that them Sutherlands had *taken back the Fort* before even a smell of an army got there. (145)

The official version of Riel and the rebellions was shaped in the context of a power struggle between the ruling, predominantly white, English-speaking peoples who were expanding westward and the Métis people whose ancestral claims to the land obstructed this expansion. To legitimize the dispossession of the Métis and the execution of Riel, the white government's emplotment of events discredits these people. Morag questions the veracity of this history:

(The book in History said he was nuts, but he didn't seem so nuts to me. The Métis were losing the land--it was taken from them. All he wanted was for them to have their rights. The government hanged him for that.) (146)

The Métis legend of Riel as it has been transmitted to Skinner Tonnerre contradicts both official history and Christie's tale. The "Prophet," as Skinner refers to Riel, is not short, as Christie would have him, but a very tall man whose magic properties--"[h]e can stop bullets"--bring his people victory over the land-robbing "Scotchmen" and English (159-160).

Christie's thoughts on life--"[i]t's all true and it's not true"--provide an insightful commentary on the multiplicity of Riel stories and the "Ossian" poems he reads to Morag. Believing the "Ossian" poems to embody his and Morag's cultural inheritance, Christie dismisses those English who labelled the works forgeries as

"bloody liars" (75). As he explains to Morag, after denigrating Wordsworth's "Daffodils" as "crap," the man who wrote "Ossian"

was the greatest song-maker of them all, and all this was set down years later, pieced together from what old men and old women remembered, see them living on crofts hither and yon, and they sang and recited the poems as they had been handed down over the generations. (73)

Morag, the child, embraces this ancestral legacy, weaving from it her own myth by incorporating the chariot of Macpherson's "Ossian" and narrative strands from Christie's "Tales of Piper Gunn" and placing them all in a Canadian context (97-98).<sup>4</sup> As an adult she sews together these same narrative strands and her own memories in a formal paradigm that echoes both the piecing together of "Ossian," and the attention to the thematic concerns of textual veracity which surround "Ossian" and dominate The Diviners.

Much like James Macpherson who merged fragments of the Gaelic cycle of heroic tales with his own imagination to create an ancestral folk culture for Scotland, Morag Gunn constructs a syncretic cultural mythology for Canadians from the fragments of Scottish and Métis narratives she synthesizes in her Canadian imagination.<sup>5</sup> Both writers engage in a process of translation to create their mythologies of origin. As George Steiner writes of inter and intra-linguistic translation:

a source-language passes into a receptor-language via a transformational process. The barrier is the obvious fact that one language differs from the other, sometimes, albeit misleadingly, described as encoding and decoding, must occur so that the message 'gets through.' Exactly the same model, this is what is rarely stressed, is operative within a single language. But here the barrier between source and receptor is time. (29)

Macpherson translates across the barriers of time and language to make the third-century Gaelic warrior poems of the legendary Ossian comprehensible to an English-speaking readership. The "re-creative intuition" Steiner sees at work in the translation process is enacted by Macpherson's altering of the poems' thematic content to suit eighteenth-century sensibilities and his incorporation of the poem's found fragments with episodes of his own creation (Stafford 3).

Morag translates Macpherson's "Ossian" across time and culture into a Canadian myth of origin. Like the cultural translation of Alice Munro's narratives, Laurence does violence to two incommensurable systems by tethering Scottish signifiers to Canadian signifieds in Morag's translation of Ossian's chariot into a vehicle of the Canadian bush. Contrary to Macpherson, however, Morag exploits the tensions between truth and fiction by acknowledging that although all discourses are in some ways fictional, they are also true<sup>6</sup>. Laurence herself became familiar with the translation process during her work on A Tree for Poverty: Somali Poetry and Prose (1954), a collection of Somali folk tales and poetry she and two Somali scholars translated into English.

Contemplating the work of writing Morag ruminates:

A daft profession. Wordsmith. Liar, more likely, weaving fabrications. Yet, with typical ambiguity, convinced that fiction was more true than fact. Or that fact was in fact fiction. (33)<sup>7</sup>

Morag's daughter, Pique, is frustrated by the truth/fiction tensions of the myth-laden genealogical narratives Morag has transmitted to her, and demands to "know what really happened." But of course, as Morag explains to Pique "there's no one version" (373). Morag believed Christie's stories for years but also went through a period of disbelief, of looking for a definitive story, until she recognized history as an indeterminate field from which Christie drew his tales: "they'd been taken from things that happened, and who's to know what really happened?" After she arrives at this realization Morag starts to believe in Christie's tales "again, in a different way" (391). Morag Gunn finds truth in the unreal, as she explains in a letter to Ella following the publication of Shadow of Eden, a work dealing with the same historical materials Christie's Piper Gunn tales draw on:

Christie always said they walked about a thousand miles-- it was about a hundred and fifty, in fact, but you know he was right; it must've felt like a thousand. The man who led them on that march and on the trip by water to Red River, was young Archie Macdonald, but in my mind the piper that played them on will always be that giant of a man, Piper Gunn, who probably never lived in so-called real life but who lives forever. Christie knew things

about inner truths that I'm only just beginning to understand. (443)

Mitchison, like Laurence, is a pan-textualist who re-reads and re-writes history in The Bull Calves, creating a dynamic tension between truth and reality. While she sees her novel as "a historically truthful interpretation of another time," Mitchison reminds her readers that her novel is "a work of art and therefore a selection" (Bull Calves 407, emphasis added). In developing an aesthetic vision which fuses history and fiction, Mitchison suggests that writers draw on "the social relationships which are in a state of change" to fashion "the continuous garb of significant stories, or mythology, with which they must clothe naked historical action" (456). Similar to the correlative relationship between past and present that Laurence creates in Morag's reception and inscription of the genealogical narratives from which she subsequently constructs cultural and personal identity, Mitchison underlines the interdependence of past and present in the 1940 poem "Clemency Ealasaid" which prefaces the story of the eighteenth-century Haldanes. The poem opens with Mitchison's haunting lament for her miscarried child, a tragedy echoed in the ancestral world of Kirstie Haldane, who has herself lost children. Mitchison overtly juxtaposes her own life and times to those of Kirstie and William in the novel's extensive notes section where she writes of her forbears: "they and I are on the same road," a road toward the social, economic, and cultural recovery of a whole Scotland (464). Reflecting on the temporal translation involved in writing historical fiction Mitchison comments:

To write something historical means writing about something that has gone on and continues to go on. You can't write about something which totally disappeared; even if you are going right back in history that past has got to be in some way translated into now. (Unpublished Interview)

Much like The Diviners and Laurence's "River of Now and Then" where time and history flow both ways "ahead into the past, and back into the future" (Diviners 477), Mitchison's narrative also flows both

ways. She sees some of her "book people ... working towards the same green pastures as lie in view for the bull calves of my own and the next generation" (Bull Calves 464). The first lines of the poem then--"Blindly, gingerly, beginning to grope through the prickly/future,"--speak of a future which leads to the past--in the Haldane history which follows the poem--and the present, and back to the future in the historical notes where she, presently, discusses the future of Scotland. The poem also articulates the acute awareness of narrativization and the interpretive aspects of the historicizing process that Mitchison's novel shares with The Diviners. Juxtaposing the historicization of her ancestors with the same process she imagines awaits herself and her generation Mitchison writes in "Clemency Ealasaid":

The roughest day is not yet. This was a rough day  
For me and perhaps for Carradale. But the roughest day,  
The day lived through by Macbeth who had been king,  
Some say a good king, and by Gruach, my ancestors,  
Hangs now in the future, the unturned page, the history book  
So far unwritten ... . (iv--pages unnumbered)

Mitchison's reference to Macbeth challenges the credibility of prior refigurings of Scottish ancestors by providing an alternative version. The syntax used to present this version--"some say"--is similar to Laurence's expression of the provisional nature of history as it is manifested in Christie's comments on the emplotment of past events: "Well some say that. Others say different" (Diviners 145). There is no one version. Mitchison's poem recognizes the fiction-making that occurs in the spaces that exist between the transpiration of events and their narrativization, and it prefigures the novel's exploitation of this dynamic in its author's anticipation of future histories:

We shall be dead, at last out of the running of events and  
hours. The page will have been turned,  
The history written, and we, anonymous,  
Shall be condemned or not condemned, gently upbraided  
For folly of not foreseeing, for dithered watching hours  
While the roughest day runs by. (v--pages unnumbered)

The ancestries of Mitchison and Morag intersect in the Highlands of Scotland from where they draw self and nation for Pique

and Catherine. In their dialogue with prior textualizations of the Highlander both Morag's and Mitchison's genealogical projects subvert the image of the Gael as it is reconstructed by Sir Walter Scott. Laurence fashions Piper Gunn and his band of Sutherlanders with a sensitivity to what she recognizes as the heart-broken and forsaken "reality" of the Highlanders, writing against "the romantic swashbuckling figures in Sir Walter Scott's novels" ("Road from the Isles" 148).<sup>8</sup> Mitchison, in her 1978 poem "The Cleansing of the Knife," stresses the importance for Scots, as painful as it might be, of looking back at Scotland's tragic past of betrayal and transcending the opaque romanticism of Scott:

Peer back as Scott did once  
But clearer than ever he did,  
Seeing our folk in bond  
In a poor and hard land,  
But slowly getting freed. (The Cleansing of the Knife 45)

Mitchison's novel and poem contribute to this process of liberation from the stultifying pain of the past by confronting it and moving forward. The Gaels as refigured in The Bull Calves in Borlum and his compatriots are an oppressed and betrayed people, disarmed clansmen

who need to stay at home among their own folk where there was no forgetting of what had passed where the men in the bothy and the girls at the sheiling went about dour and sad now, in the harsh hodden grey of the English labourer, those would wear their sword belts empty as a sign of what had been done, a sharing of what once was pride but had been turned to a shame, only to be borne all together. (36)

In her representation of the Highland pacification Mitchison effectively subverts the Highland romanticism of Scott. Despite their challenging response to Scott's representation of Scotland's Jacobite past the debt of The Bull Calves and The Diviners to Scott's Waverley is substantial. The first historical novel in English, Waverley has been described by Robert Crawford as "a book of cultural investigation, a book about prejudice and the crossing of [cultural and linguistic] boundaries" (123). The cultural and linguistic borders of the Scottish Lowlands and Highlands crossed by Scott's Englishman Edward Waverley are traversed anew by Mitchison's

Kirstie who speaks fragments of Scots and Gaelic in her tales of marriage to the Highland Jacobite Borlum and the relationship of the Highlands to the Lowlands. Mitchison also inherits her novel's metafictional historical notes section from Scott's penchant for footnotes as markers of historicity in Waverley. Mitchison's notes provide the same type of reading space suspended "between creative writing and historiography" that Crawford detects in Scott's footnotes (126). And, echoing Scott's authorial intrusions into his text (Waverley 115-116), Mitchison's voice interrupts her narrative to emphasize the novel's contiguous time frames of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the notes and the main body of the narrative (464, 101).

Furthermore, a crossing of linguistic and cultural borders similar to that found in Scott is present in The Diviners. Morag, an ancestral Highlander, bonds with a Métis to give birth to Pique who represents the hybridization of both traditions. Morag is a cultural translator who can interpret between the Métis and the white settler communities in the novel. She lays down both the Métis and Highland myths of origin she collects from Jules and Christie in her own narrative and passes these stories on to Pique who herself has passed through Morag's body to bridge the gap between the two cultures. Crawford sees Edward Waverley as fulfilling a similar role for Scott as a linguistic and cultural translator who "comes to unite three language cultures--English, Scots, and Gaelic" (128-129). Similarly, Kirstie is the translating centre of consciousness in Mitchison's novel who interprets between the Highland and Lowland cultures for Catherine.

The self-conscious storytelling of Morag and Kirstie narrates into existence self and nation for Pique and Catherine, demystifying lineal and historical patterns by re-reading and re-telling, yet simultaneously and paradoxically superimposing another layer of myth over these patterns through their own narrativizations of them. Like Morag, Kirstie grapples with, and acknowledges, the limitations of

language when attempting to transmit the inextricably bound personal and cultural histories of the Haldanes and Scotland to Catherine:

But ach none of yon words are making my meaning right,  
none ava! And every generation has its own words, new  
minted, and the old words must be cast out onto the  
midden of past thought that's ever growing at the door of  
human experience. (78)

Just as Pique is Morag's motivation for writing The Diviners, so Catherine is Kirstie's motivation for telling the story of Scotland and the Haldanes<sup>9</sup>. Laurence shares with Mitchison the healing element of telling which is designed to eradicate the ill will existing between the dispossessed and the dispossessor.

The oral and written transmission of these genealogical stories is vital to cultural survival--the survival and recognition of both Canadian and Scottish cultures and of the distinct elements which compose them, in the present context, the Métis and Scots-Canadian components of Canada and the Highland and Lowland components of Scotland. Margaret Laurence explains her writing as

my own attempt to come to terms with the past. I see this process as the gradual one of freeing oneself from the stultifying aspect of the past, while at the same time beginning to see its true value--which, in the case of my own people (by which I mean the total community, not just my particular family), was a determination to survive against the odds. ("A Place to Stand On" 18)

Morag too writes to come to terms with the "ghosts of people and of tales," the past, for herself and for Pique and the generations who follow. She surrounds herself with physical and psychic totems of the ancestral and cultural past, such as the Cooper homestead in which she composes The Diviners, her own memorybank movies, and the apparition of Catharine Parr Trail she projects to debate the correlation between early pioneer life and her own present pioneering situation as a single parent. Pique, within whom flow the blood of the Gael and the Métis, is painfully aware of the expanse that continues to separate these two groups in contemporary Canada: "I don't want to be split," she tells her mother, "I want to be together. But I'm not. I don't know where I belong" (373). Laurence weaves together the discourses of the Highland diaspora and



the dispossessed Métis in the union of Morag and Skinner, and the birth of their child, Pique, who inherits the cultural legacy of both parents yet, like many Canadians who experience a multicultural legacy, is unsure of her place in society.

Morag's relationship with Skinner as she inscribes it in The Diviners, on an allegorical level emblemizes the process of reconciliation necessary for a closing of the gap between their two peoples, and provides Pique with a way to make herself whole. Morag's understanding and appreciation of her own and Jules' genealogy is central to their relationship. In their first meeting outside of the classroom at the Nuisance Grounds the rift between white and Métis is clear in their genealogical confrontation: a historical duel with narratives which both lay rightful claim to the land. Morag initiates the genealogical competition by informing Skinner that "[her] family's been around here for longer than anybody in this whole god damn-town" (82). Skinner refutes Morag's claim, dismissing Piper Gunn as "crap" and asserting the Tonnerre family's ancestral claims to the land by citing the story of Old Jules who fought with Riel to keep the land at the time of "The Troubles" (83). This altercation, however, evolves into a loving relationship which allows for the space each requires to live and grow. Morag comes to see the Métis side of the Red River Rebellions through Jules' eyes, placing both Tonnerre and Gunn narratives alongside each other in her writing. Although these narratives are "split" in Pique's present reception of them there is a potential for some type of synthesis in her desire to go to Galloping Mountain and experience, first-hand, that Tonnerre side of her heritage she has hitherto known only through Morag's re-telling, and the intermittent visits of her father and his songs (373). After her experience at Galloping Mountain, perhaps Pique will not have to be "either/or," and will embrace both sides of her Canadian heritage as her mother has (373). For although Morag does not have Métis blood flowing through her veins, she is, in her inheritance of Lazarus' knife, and as a Canadian, an heir to what

Laurence calls "a collective cultural memory" ("Time and the Narrative Voice" 155). Similarly, Jules' inheritance of the plaid pin symbolizes the cross-fertilization of cultures which creates Canadians such as Pique and syncretic works like The Diviners.

Insight into the value Mitchison places on the dialogue with the past she engages in The Bull Calves, may be gained by a reading of her poem "The Cleansing of the Knife" in which she asks:

What can we do for Scotland?  
The past that must not be forgotten  
For all our wish to forget:  
Ourselves in the stream of the dead,  
Pushed on ahead of them  
Through a night that shows no clearing,  
To a future we cannot see  
And if we did would be fearing. (45)

The answer to this challenging and provocative question is, as Mitchison says, "to clear the blood from the knife," to confront the pain of the past without the anaesthetic of drink which (in an echo of Hugh MacDiarmid's "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle") Mitchison suggests has for too long arrested Scotland's development (70). This philosophy of looking to the past to move forward is the driving force behind Kirstie's emplotment of family history for Catherine. Similar to Mitchison who assumes "the voice of Scotland/ In cold and chilly print" in "The Cleansing of the Knife" (61), and her narration of The Bull Calves, Kirstie gives voice to Alba in the oral history she provides for Catherine. Contrary to her remonstrations that her story is mere "blethering about past times," Kirstie demystifies Scotland's past for her young niece who had previously avoided the harsher elements of Scotland's history by viewing it through the gauze of romantic "old songs and ballads" depicting "knights in armour and distressed ladies and poetry and enchantments" (The Bull Calves 39). Kirstie supplants these flights of fancy with a pragmatic knowledge of agricultural development in Scotland (43), and the grim plight of the oppressed colliers, "serfs and savages for whom John Knox had ordained no good Scots schooling" (98). The Presbytery and the doctrine of Calvin are repeatedly cited by Kirstie

as an instrument of class and individual tyranny, for it is predestination which maintains the status quo in Scotland as Kirstie knows only too well from her disastrous marriage to the Reverend Shaw (115). Certainly one of the most important components of Scottish heritage with which Kirstie apprises Catherine is the damaging history of dissension between Highlands and Lowlands. Catherine's delusions of Lowlanders as fair, orderly, and honest people are dissolved by Kirstie's revelation of Lowland Scots as enslavers of other Scots: predominantly displaced Highlanders, and impoverished Lowlanders in coal, silver, and salt mining (45, 54).

Both The Bull Calves and "The Cleansing of the Knife" seek to re-read the "Whig-twisted history" of Scotland" ("Cleansing" 57) to make good "an often broke promise/ After ill and false intending of all the centuries past, Faith between Highlands and Lowlands" ("Cleansing" 72). Kirstie, the Lowland wife of a Highlander, communicates to Catherine the cultural differences between Highlands and Lowlands that must be understood to end "hate and fear between the two nations of Scotland" (Bull Calves 55):

But I would say that the root of the matter might be that [the Highlanders] have not the same idea of property as ourselves. The laird is no' exactly the laird, he is still the chief, one of a great kind of family.

[Highlanders] do best with <sup>...</sup>everything in common, the old way. Indeed they are altogether against progress as we see it in the Lowlands. (54-55)

Recalling Laurence's allegorical conception of union between Métis and Scots-Canadians, as it is manifest in the relationship of Morag and Jules, Mitchison provides an allegory for the healing of the rift between Lowlands and Highlands in Kirstie's marriage to the Highlander William of Borlum. The story of Kirstie's adventures which her niece begs to be told, ironically tells Catherine who she is: a divided Scot whose family and nation have been torn in two by Jacobite uprisings, Union with England and the betrayal of her Highland brothers and sisters.

## JUNG, LAURENCE, MITCHISON, AND THE FRACTURED SELF

As both The Diviners and The Bull Calves draw on collective cultural memory, and their authors consciously create narratives which contribute to specific discourses of identity and cultural mythology, it is not surprising that they share parallels and connect with Carl Jung's theories of identity and the collective unconscious. Jung's argument for individuation, the integration of disparate components of the psyche, is reflected in the union of Métis and white settlers in Laurence's Canada, and the union of Highlander and Lowlander in Mitchison's Scotland as these are manifest in the Jungian anima and animus with which both writers invest their allegorical figures. At this juncture it is useful to refer to Nancy Bailey's Jungian reading of The Diviners as a means of informing my discussion of Jung, Laurence and Mitchison. Bailey correlates Morag's river that flows both ways with the Jungian concept of the "self as process, as always in a fluid state of becoming as opposed to a frozen state of being," a conception of the self found in the relationship of Naomi Mitchison's Kirstie and William (Bailey 307). Morag works toward self-realization through her writing which stimulates her unconscious, and as Bailey suggests prepares her for Jules "who represents a deeper level of being for her, a content of the collective unconscious and another projection of her soul-image or animus" (307). Jung posits that the integration of personality is dependent upon an encounter with this soul image, an encounter Bailey cites in Morag's sexual and spiritual union with Jules--"her true animus projection"--as the event which "releases [her] on her night journey to selfhood" (315). Laurence's perception of Jules as "a tribal brother to Morag" supports Bailey's reading of the novel. Laurence explains to Rosemary Sullivan that

[b]oth [Morag and Jules] have been oppressed by their culture, Jules particularly of course, but Morag growing up as a foster child of Christie and Prin Logan has been discriminated against by the town too, so they do have that in common right from their early childhoods. The other thing that they have in common, which they don't really discover until some time later, is that they are

both diviners. And this we see, in a sense, foreshadowed, or we get a kind of adumbration of this, early in the book when Morag hears Christie's tales and begins to write herself, and when Skinner Tonnerre suggests to her that his people have tales too" ("Interview with Margaret Laurence" 75).

Elaborating on this bond between the ancestral Highlander and the North American Indian in her essay "Road from the Isles," Laurence writes:

I have a feeling that the Highlander today is in somewhat the same position as the North American Indian. What he really was in the past is not comprehended by anyone outside his own tribe, but he has been taken up and glamourized and is expected to act a part. The Dance of the Ancestors--slicked up, prettified, and performed forever in the same way. (Heart of a Stranger 154)

Mitchison also senses an affinity between the Highlander and the aboriginals of North America. William of Borlum explains the parallels that exist between Highland and Indian dress to his brother-in-law:

There is tunic and robe with meaningful and thick embroidery of beads and bears' teeth and moose hair and porcupine quills. They are heavy on one, the same as a plaid is, aye and the same way proud and comforting, and the pattern on them telling as much as the tartan tells. (Bull Calves 274)

Mitchison's Borlum bonds with an Indian woman, Ohnawiyo, whom he perceives as "the same as the fairy woman that could have been watching among the birches of Knocknasidhe beyond Borlum, in the twilights when Benjie and Lachie and I would dare each other to the widdershins run" (275).

Mitchison discusses her reading of Jung's The Integration of the Personality, and its subsequent influence on her then work in progress, The Bull Calves, in the novel's historical notes section:

It then became apparent to me that Kirstie in her witch episode (during a psychosis induced by great personal unhappiness combined with the shattering of such religious symbols, especially the Tables of Communion, as Calvinism had left for her) had almost drowned in the dark waters of her own unconscious and was about to submit to her animus conceived of as the Devil ... But at the moment of her crisis, the animus was projected on to a real person, William, who thus became her soul, her breath, and in whom she was bound to have the utmost faith since he represented something stronger than her conscious self. (513)

Mitchison's Jungian exegesis of her own work examines William's relationship to his North American Indian wife and Kirstie in what the author articulates as her hero's descent "into the dark waters" where he finds "his soul of the one part in Ohnawiyo and the other in Kirstie. He puts his dream on Kirstie at the beginning, but does not come to her in the flesh until one side of the dream has met and sickened of itself in the shape of Ohnawiyo" (514).

As Bailey argues, Jung's propositions that "the individual who is not furnished with a meaningful social role or set of symbols on which to build a strong psyche will be prey to neurosis," and that the only route to liberty from this neurosis is through "an effort to find new symbols which would surface in archetypes from the past" are especially relevant to Canadian literature and The Diviners (Bailey 317). I would argue, furthermore, that these concepts are integral to a full appreciation of cultural and personal identity in The Bull Calves and The Diviners, novels where searches for meaning culminate in the surfacing of archetypes from the past. Both Morag and Jules struggle to unearth meaning through their respective novel and song-writing projects, subversive narratives which challenge the histories that have denied them a sense of self. Although they probably are not the type of archetypal symbols envisioned by Jung, the Tonnerre knife and the Highland plaid pin which surface toward the end of the novel link Christie and Morag with Jules' family and provide meaning in the form of ancestral identity.<sup>10</sup>

The search for meaning through identity is the driving force which advances the plot in The Bull Calves. The symbols through which William of Borlum defined himself deteriorate during the pacification of the Highlands, an event that leads to his withdrawal from his society and exile in North America. Kirstie too is removed from her family, and experiences something very much akin to Jung's neurotic phase during her marriage to the Reverend Shaw whose extreme brand of Calvinism represses his wife's natural instincts, and so shatters her Calvinist belief system that she turns to witchcraft in

an attempt to liberate herself from his tyranny. The narrative of The Bull Calves, like The Diviners, dislodges archetypes from the past as a means of constructing meaning through a defining of identity. Although semblances of identity and hence opportunities for meaning are discovered on one level in the integration of personality that occurs for William and Kirstie (the allegorical integration of Scotland's Highlands and Lowlands), this individuation constitutes a first step in a process of defining identity which traverses the two days covered by the novel. In the course of these two days William and Kirstie both reach back into their pasts to confront and confess their respective flirtations with 'pagan' spirituality. Kirstie's transmission of cultural, national, and personal identity to Catherine retrieves the spectre of the Jacobite rebellion, illustrating how a people can tear themselves in two, and recounts her relationship with William, thus emphasizing the potential for a mutually agreeable, productive and complementary relationship between Highlander and Lowlander which would ensure the preservation and valuing of Scottish culture as a whole. Mitchison, writing in the 1940s goes back to these symbols of Scotland's past to work toward finding meaning through identity for Scotland, in the present and future.

The transposition of Jung's theories on identity from the individuation of the individual psyche to the questions of cultural and national identity in The Bull Calves and The Diviners is invited by both Laurence's and Mitchison's stated interests in these issues as they relate to their novels and the allegory found in both of these texts. Kirstie's misadventures are paralleled to those of Scotland by her husband. William, contemplating his timely arrival at Kirstie's door (an event which saved her from surrendering to what she though would be the Devil) comments "[a]nd maybe, lassie, you were like poor Scotland herself, and one more betrayal would have spoilt you clean" (Bull Calves 170). In Kirstie's acceptance of William's proposal of marriage, Highlands and Lowlands achieve mutual

salvation through union; William ends his wanderings in the wilderness to return to society and Kirstie turns her back on witchery to be at one with William in Scotland. This theme of salvation from neurosis through union between Highlands and Lowlands is reiterated in "The Cleansing of the Knife" where Mitchison's prescription to remedy Scotland's lack of meaning, manifest in the poem in the country's neurotic drunken state, is "[f]aith between Highlands and Lowlands" (72). Mitchison underlines the necessity for a fusion of Highland and Lowland cultures in the notes that accompany the novel:

The cultural problem of Highlands and Lowlands and what might come of their fusion was never taken seriously between the eighteenth-century, which broke the Highland pattern of development, and now when tentative regionalism and a scowner at the culture of cities has begun to open possibilities even for the remote Islands. By and large the Highlands have suffered two centuries of being looked down upon, oppressed, killed off and at the same time sentimentally exploited. It may be too late to take them seriously. But I believe--and think--not. (465)

As Duncan Forbes, the Lord President, tells those assembled at Gleneagles:

We in Scotland have been over much battered to be able to spare any man who will be able to set his hand and mind to the future ... . We must act together to build ourselves up slowly and surely by way of peaceful arts and trades through commerce and agriculture, until we are well of our wounds.

Aye Scotland will need all of us. And in a while things will begin to go as they should. (389)

The movement toward integration of personality in Laurence's novel and the national and cultural implications for Canada of this integration on an allegorical level contrast with Mitchison's vision of bicultural fusion. Unlike Kirstie and William who share the same spiritual and physical space, Morag and Jules although they bond physically and spiritually, separate for long periods of time to allow each other the space necessary for the continued growth that will lead to a further definition of identity. As Bailey observes regarding The Diviners and Laurence's other novels "the social archetypes that appear are not expressive of unity" (317). This lack



of unity is an archetype of the Canadian identity which according to Robert Kroetsch's thesis may be defined by "disunity as unity." Kroetsch argues that Canadians "survive by working with a low level of self-definition and national definition. We insist on staying multiple, and by that strategy we accommodate to our climate, our economic situation, and our neighbours ("Disunity as Unity" 28). Applying this thesis to Laurence's Morag and the genealogical sources she taps, Kroetsch writes: "The abundance, the disunity, is her saving unity" (27).

#### **CULTURAL ERASURE: RESISTING THE DOMINANT**

In their distinctive use of allegory to pursue cultural identity for both Scotland and Canada, and the subversive dialogues with which they engage history to thwart cultural erasure in their respective countries, The Bull Calves and The Diviners make a valuable contribution to post-colonial discourse. To clear a space for Canadian and Scottish voices Laurence and Mitchison foreground the decolonizing process by which they narrate themselves into existence, and out from under imperial domination. As Helen Tiffin writes "[d]ecolonization is process, not arrival; it involves an ongoing dialectic between hegemonic centrist systems and peripheral subversion of them" ("Post-Colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse" 17)<sup>11</sup>. An awareness of the impact of English imperialism on cultural production in Canada and Scotland is one important aspect of the process of decolonization as it is manifest in The Bull Calves and The Diviners. Morag Gunn's novel Spear of Innocence is marginalized by English reviewers who describe it "[a]s a pleasant enough novel from the Canadian backwoods which attempts with limited success to inject a little sophistication in the form of bizarre if somewhat unlikely shenanigans" (Diviners 328). Morag's refusal to mimic the centre--to invest her work with the values of London--results in the devaluing of her work by that centre.<sup>12</sup> Mitchison's narrative is critical of those Scots who allow themselves to be

seduced by the centre of the Empire. Catherine Duncan is one such Scot who embraces the "imported culture" of the centre, as one superior to her own (Ashcroft et al 4). Asked by her Aunt Kirstie if the embroidery pattern she is working on comes from Edinburgh, Catherine responds with indignation "[i]ndeed no! ... It is from London. Can you not see, Aunt Kirstie, it is away more modish?" (Bull Calves 23). The story of the Haldanes and Scotland which Kirstie is about to unfold for Catherine attempts to turn Catherine away from the patterns of London and toward the rich cultural patterns of her own Scotland, just as Mitchison hopes to awaken her compatriots to a larger appreciation of Scottish culture in the narrative patterns of The Bull Calves. For as Kirstie suggests, Catherine takes "more than her needlework patterns from London": a suggestion Catherine associates with potential Jacobite sympathies. Kirstie, however, dismisses the labelling of herself as a Jacobite to introduce a far more relevant topic into their conversation: "'Acch no!' said Kirstie, 'but maybe I am more of a Scot than you are. Likely it will be the way we were living in my time. London was scarcely so near'" (24). The distance between London and Scotland had diminished through advances in transportation, but the proximity of the two had also increased politically, and culturally through Union with England in 1707; the influence of London homogenizes Scottish and English cultural identity for Catherine and others like her. Discussing the strong anti-Scottish feeling in England following the Union, Mitchison comments on the attempts by "respectable Scots" "to remedy this state of affairs" by an anglicizing mimicry of the centre:

In Edinburgh, quantities of imitation London publications were issued. As the eighteenth century went on one finds more and more Tatler style essays and verse some way after Pope. The Edinburgh writers are aggressively apologetic, and wary; they are expressing themselves in a half foreign tongue, and proud of their success in so doing. Allan Ramsay tried from time to time to Anglicize his verse. So, rather disastrously, did Burns. All this set the tone for historians and biographers: the Union was a good thing. (521)

As Jill Benton observes Mitchison's novel was not well received by London critics:

In having chosen to enact her Scottish nationalism both thematically and linguistically, Naomi was choosing to isolate herself from standards of taste prized by the London publishing world, the central clearing house to all Commonwealth literatures, be they Scottish, Nigerian, Kenyan, Indian, or whatever. (136)

While Benton's placement of Scottish literature in the Commonwealth is problematic and misleading, given the role played by Scots in the colonization of Africa and India, her point concerning London as an arbiter of literary taste is well taken.

English imperialist enterprises such as the Union with Scotland, and the colonizing of Canada which incorporated Scots into the English colonial machine fracture and obscure cultural and personal identity. In Laurence's novel *Gaels displaced by the Clearances*--a tragedy due in part to English interference in the Scottish economy and the collusion of unscrupulous London-residing clan chiefs such as the Duchess of Sutherland, with Lowland and English property speculators--help to make the Métis people invisible. Morag first touches on the imperial process of cultural erasure as it relates to Jules and the Métis while singing the words to "The Maple Leaf Forever," words which reinforce the imperialist status quo and relegate Jules and his people to the margins of Canadian society:

In days of yore  
From Britain's shore  
Wolfe the donkless hero CAME (titters; but what means  
*Donkless?*)  
And planted firm  
Britannia's flag  
On Ca-na-da's fair do-MAIN.  
Here may it wave  
Our boas' our pride  
And join in LUV together  
The THISTLE SHAMROCK ROSE entwine  
The MAPLE LEAF FOREVER! (*Diviners* 79-80) <sup>13</sup>

Although, as the bracketed aside "what means *Donkless?*" and the other miscues in this passage indicate, the young Morag does not comprehend fully the language of demarcation and Empire, she does realize, when she sees an unusually silent Skinner, that the song not only excludes

him but also denies his existence: "He is not singing now. He comes from nowhere. He isn't anybody. She stops singing not knowing why. Then she feels silly about stopping, so sings again" (80). In its celebration of the imperial trinity of Great Britain this anthem denies the existence of Canada, Jules' birthplace, instilling the belief in Morag that it is "nowhere" (80). Perhaps this belief takes her to London, a city she sees as a "kind of centre of writing," where, ironically, she spends her time exploring the Canadian literary landscape (354).

"One of the main forms of imperial oppression is control over language. The imperial education system installs a 'standard' version of the metropolitan language as the norm, and marginalizes the variants as impurities" (Ashcroft et al 7). The preceding thesis of Ashcroft et al is substantiated in both The Diviners, which textualizes the erasure of Gaelic, Cree and French for the Logans, Gunns, and Tonnerres, and The Bull Calves, where Mitchison discusses the political agenda of an education system which destroys Scottish culture. Again, we see the other, destructive side of translation as a tool of imperialism that Eric Cheyfitz is concerned with. The depopulation of the Highlands and the immersion of Laurence's Logans and Gunns in what is, for all intents and purposes, an English colony results in the atrophy of the Gaelic language and culture in western Canada and Scotland. Gaelic is pushed to the periphery in Manawaka where a Gaelic Holy Bible is unearthed from the town nuisance grounds (Diviners 51). For Morag Gaelic is "[j]ust a lot of garbled sounds," yet it is a language she desperately wants to penetrate to "have its meaning revealed to her" (264). Alistair MacLeod, whose characters suffer a similar loss of language, contrasts the situation of Laurence's Manitoba Gaels with the Gaels of Cape Breton:

I think that group of people who went to Manitoba, the Selkirk people, were again surrounded by another culture, their Gaelic slipped away on them faster than it would have in a place like Cape Breton. So memory succeeded their language faster than what it would in a place like Cape Breton where for all kinds of people over a certain age, their first language is still Gaelic. But people

who are about forty in this situation, their first language is not Gaelic anymore. So these are people who have memories, whereas the other people still have the memories and the language to go with it. (unpublished interview)

The tongue of his ancestors is alien to Christie who tells "the old tales in his only speech, English, with hardly any trace of a Scots accent, and yet with echoes in his voice that went back and back" (264). Morag's Highland lover Dan McRaith and many of his people have also "lost the Gaelic," while Skinner retains only broken fragments of both French and Cree" (395, 264). Pique cannot understand the French words of her heritage in the Louis Riel song she sings: "I only know how to make the sounds. I don't know what they mean" (263). Morag, in her archaeological dig for these lost languages and cultures continues Christie's tradition of unearthing and retrieving cultural archetypes of the past such as the Gaelic Bible from the midden in which English cultural imperialism buries them. This process of retrieval is, for Morag, a syncretic one; although the original languages and cultures are lost to her in their totality, she takes the fragments she finds and places them in a Canadian context to forge a distinctly Canadian identity and culture. As she tells Dan McRaith "[t]he myths are [her] reality" (415). The language of Morag's English husband, a professor of English, temporarily pushes the "protean oaths upon which she was raised," Christie's language, to the periphery of Morag's discourse. The "bland as tapioca pudding" language of Brooke and his students and his hegemonic moniker of "little one" which Brooke, a son of the British raj, imposes upon Morag provoke the explosion of Christie's language with which Morag announces her independence from Brooke:

*Little one.* Brooke, I am twenty-eight years old, and I am five-feet eight inches tall, which has always seemed too bloody christly tall to me but there it is, and by judas priest and all the sodden saints in fucking Beulah Land, I am stuck with it and I do not *mind* like I did once, in fact the goddamn reverse if you really want to know, for I've gone against it long enough, and I'm no actress at heart, then, and that's the everlasting christly truth of it. (277)

This declaration of independence from the Englishman Brooke Skelton's

sexual imperialism--his placement of Morag in a perpetual colony of girlhood (264, 220)--is tantamount to a Canadian pronouncement of cultural independence from the Empire. Morag will no longer provide Brooke with the reflection of the image he imposes upon her.

Ashcroft et al argue that post-colonial writing defines itself by "seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place," a strategy that characterizes, not only the Canadian-english prose of The Diviners but also the Scots of The Bull Calves (39). Mitchison's historical novel uses Scots to capture the language of the period in her characters' dialogue and in her narratorial voice to instill her compatriots with a sense of pride in their linguistic heritage, and to subvert the anglicization of Scottish languages (Bull Calves 411). In her discussion of language Mitchison recognizes the acculturating agenda of a Scottish education system under the influence of London:

Of course schools were started with a definite political intention, to break the old customs and loyalties. That was why it was so firmly insisted upon that English should be learnt. We have seen the tail end of this policy in our own time, with the final decay of Gaelic. (438-439)

This type of cultural erasure is one of Mitchison's chief concerns in the writing of her novel, a cultural erasure she associates with mercantilism and "the international mill of capitalism" which she believes has ground many Scots into "a featureless, history-less, culture-less pulp" (458). The Union many Scots were in favour of did not, as they hoped, create a fairer economic relationship between Scotland and England, on the contrary it cemented into place the previously existing mercantilist one between the two countries. Explaining the Highland interpretation of the Union with England William says "the Union with England was destroying Scotland. It had been bad enough under Queen Anne, but the new lot had no interest at all in Scotland; we were thought of as a kind of county of England" (72). The English attitude toward their new acquisition is exemplified in Mungo's repetition of a comment he heard at

Westminster: "'Have we not bought the Scots and the right to tax them?'" (72). Mitchison places eighteenth-century Scotland in a colonial context--"England against the colonies and Scotland"--which she suggests is more clearly delineated in American history books than it is in British histories "which are concerned, more or less passionately, to show that Scotland gained from the Union" (477)<sup>14</sup>. Culturally speaking, the Union weakened Scotland as Mitchison concludes in a passage in which she reflects on what might have been had Union not occurred:

If everything had not been orientated towards London, it seems likely that Scots would have developed a culture which might have been stronger because less imitative and self-conscious. I cannot think that our Scots writers, scientists, painters and inventors would have been crushed out of existence in a Scottish as opposed to an Anglo-Scottish society. (523)

It is a tragic and yet a telling irony that the Gaels who were placed under cultural erasure by England during the Highland Clearances were soon dispatched to Canada by the "god-damn Anglais" to assist in the dispossession and cultural destruction of the Métis people. As Laurence's Jules tells the story the English men and their "hired guns the Arknays [Orkneys]" invaded Manitoba "to take away the Métis land and to stop the people from hunting buffalo" (Diviners 160).

Laurence's and Mitchison's pan-textual reworkings of personal and national histories generate healing mythologies of identity for their native Canada and Scotland, nations pushed to the periphery of discourse by the cultural imperialism of England and the United States. Through discursive narrative patterns which foreground the processes of writing out from under the imperial gaze Mitchison and Laurence place their texts outside of, and thus usurp, the homogenizing and hegemonic centre of empire which marginalizes difference. The Diviners and The Bull Calves subvert this marginalization by asserting "the 'complex' of intersecting peripheries" that compose Scotland and Canada as the very substance of experience in these novels (Ashcroft et al 78).

## Notes

1. Mitchison blames "political pressure from London" for the schism between the Highlands and Lowlands (The Bull Calves 523).
2. As quoted by Greene from Bernice Lever's "Literature and Canadian Culture: An Interview with Margaret Laurence." See Lever in New, Critical Views on Canadian Writing: Margaret Laurence 27.
3. See Fabre 205.
4. For another valuable discussion of myth, history and Morag's fusion of Ossian with her own narrative, see Thomas.
5. For a discussion of Macpherson and his creation of the Ossian poems from found materials, see Stafford.
6. In her discussion of Wordsworth's "Daffodils" as a recurring motif of English cultural imperialism in Canadian literature, Diana Brydon suggests that "[n]either Wordsworth nor Ossian" can help Morag find her "own voice as a Canadian woman" ("Wordsworth's Daffodils" 8). I would argue, however, that Morag's childhood syncretic reconstruction of "Ossian," and the echoes of the poem's construction and textual veracity found in her adult writing indicate otherwise. Thomas also cites the importance of Ossian as "a dynamic factor in Morag's search for her own identity" (144).
7. Laurence expresses views very similar to Morag's: "In one way fiction may be viewed as history, just as history may be viewed as fiction." See "Ivory Tower or Grass Roots?: The Novelist As Socio-Political Being" 15.
8. See Alexander's essay for further discussion of Laurence's treatment of the Highlander.
9. Pique provides the first audience for Morag's retelling of Christie's tales and her first attempts at refiguring Christie. Buss also sees Pique as Morag's motivation for writing The Diviners (162).
10. For a discussion of the pin and the plaid as archetypes, see Bailey 317.
11. Although Tiffin limits her essay to "the post-colonial dis/mantling" of British discourses, her concept of decolonization is usefully applied to the "dis/mantling" of English discourses by Scots such as Mitchison.
12. For a discussion of colonial mimicry of the imperial centre, see Ashcroft et al 4.
13. Atwood's Surfacing (13) also plays on the iconography of Wolfe and his conquering of Canada for England in "The Maple Beaver Forever," as a means of expressing the cultural and sexual imperialism experienced by the novel's narrator. The song, joining the Scottish, Irish and English in a trinity celebrating British empire through Wolfe's victory, was written by a Scottish-born Toronto school principal in 1867 (A History of Canadian Literature 86). More recently, Alistair MacLeod's novel in progress, No Great Mischief if They Fall, takes its title from Wolfe's comments regarding the Scottish troops he deployed for the assault on Mount Royal.



14. Beveridge and Turnbull examine what they describe as the "inferiorist historiography" of post-Union Scotland. They contend that this subordinating discourse constructs pre-Union Scotland as economically and culturally backward before 1707, when, it suggests, amalgamation with England brought the country forward (16-30).

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RE-MEMBERING SELF: ALLEGORY, CARNIVAL AND THE DECOLONIZING VOICE  
IN ALASDAIR GRAY AND SUSAN SWAN

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*O Tongue of the Nation! Why don't you speak for yourself?*

Leonard Cohen, Beautiful Losers

**INTRODUCTION**

Writers in Canada and Scotland continue to grapple with a colonial past and present that marginalize, and threaten to homogenize their heterogeneous voices. In polemical novels which play on the politics of gender Scotland's Alasdair Gray and Canada's Susan Swan construct allegorical narratives that delineate and then subvert the acculturating discourses of England and the United States. Jock MacLeish and Anna Swan, the first person narrators of 1982, Janine and The Biggest Modern Woman of the World, are self-conscious allegorists whose autobiographical accounts of identity-fracturing oppression, violation, and exploitation textualize the dilemmas suffered by their respective Scotland and Canada, nations subject to the aggressive and culturally subordinating discourses of England and America. Both Jock and Anna engage in dialogues with personal and national pasts in efforts to move toward an autonomous identity in the present, and in both novels first person re-readings of this past are interrupted and challenged by a multiplicity of other voices. The telling of these stories constitutes a narratorial attempt to escape the trap of binary oppositions in political and gender relations as national, political, and sexual power struggles are inextricably linked.

Anna Swan, the Canadian giantess who performed at the American Museum for P. T. Barnum in the nineteenth century, speaks to the reader from a space outside the linear time of history, from beyond

her own death. She re-reads and re-writes her self with a knowledge of the twentieth-century, incorporating her own journal notes, testimonials and documents by friends and associates (Biggest Modern Woman of the World 2). Anna is seduced, manipulated and exploited to benefit men, primarily the American showman Phineas T. Barnum and the Kentucky Giant Martin Van Buren Bates but also by a 'Yankeefied' Australian manager Judge Hiram Percival Ingalls.<sup>1</sup> Anna's carnivalesque autobiography re-evaluates her career as an entertainer of both British and American empires. She refigures her journey to Barnum's New York as a descent into a fiery underworld where she is persuaded to perform farcical and humiliating roles for American audiences, and re-writes her audience with Queen Victoria as a demeaning gynaecological examination.

Gray's Jock McLeish, an alcoholic employed as a security systems supervisor, tells his life story and inadvertently reinvents himself through a subconscious psychological process that eventually explodes into his conscious thoughts. Jock settles down with a bottle of whisky in a hotel room in what could be Peebles, Greenock, or Selkirk for an evening of drinking and the performance of masturbatory bondage and rape fantasies. An oppressed and damaged Scot, Jock brutally rapes imaginary women who are eventually revealed as allegorical referents for Jock and Scotland. The fracturing of these wicked fantasies by the persistent surfacing of a traumatic national and personal past he is trying to suppress brings about Jock's near death and his descent into a space he recognizes as hell; he attempts suicide by washing back a handful of barbiturates with whisky. The subsequent dissolution of his voice into the polyphonic "MINISTRY OF VOICES" emblemizes the multiplicity of selves he endeavours to write whole through a process of individuation by the end of the novel.

Allegory, a trope that operates through a dialogue with previously existing signs, enables "historyless peoples"--such as Canadians and Scots whose histories have been written by an other--to

reappropriate and reinterpret the concept of history as it relates to a re-writing of their past ("Post-Colonial Allegory and the Transformation of History" 158-159).<sup>2</sup> The decolonizing personification allegory of Swan and Gray owes a debt to the allegoric abrogation of empire and expression of national identity found in previous generations of Canadian and Scottish writing. Linda Hutcheon suggests that Susan Swan's political allegory defining Canadian self and nation against American and British models is derived from T. C. Haliburton's Sam Slick tales (The Canadian Postmodern 120). Unlike Haliburton, however, whose work advocated the reform of colonial institutions within the structure of empire, Swan's novel textualizes empire as a restrictive structure that attempts to thwart the cultural growth of the colony. This stultifying vision of imperialism is shared by Hugh MacLennan in his allegorical novel of 1941, Barometer Rising, a work that enacts the death of colonial Canada and its rebirth as an autonomous entity in the Halifax explosion of 1917. The explosion kills Geoffrey Wain, the novel's personification allegory for empire, who is "a descendent of [English] military and colonists" and "essentially a colonist himself," and uncovers Neil MacRae, who signifies the independence and originality of the new autonomous Canada (208). Despite her criticism of his "quaint" views on women Swan thinks of MacLennan as "a kind of literary father" and includes him in her novel's list of acknowledgements for a letter of reference he wrote her to secure a writer's grant (unpublished interview). Swan, who "grew up inside [MacLennan's] work" and studied creative writing with him as an undergraduate, says she rereads him for insights into Canada. Asked if she was influenced by MacLennan's use of allegory to define the Canadian experience, she says "I hadn't thought of that, it's possible that I just picked that up from him by osmosis" (unpublished interview).

Gray credits Hugh MacDiarmid's A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (1926) as the inspiration for his allegory of a Scotland "refracted

through alcoholic reverie" (Janine, 1982 343). Gray also acknowledges a debt to Canadian novelist, poet, and song-writer Leonard Cohen's Beautiful Losers (1966), a novel providing another important allegorical intertext for 1982, Janine (Letter to the author). Struck by Cohen's correlation of the political with the sexual, Gray remarks that Beautiful Losers "used the Canadian difference from the U.S.A in some very funny scenes: one of them making great fun of a nationalist demo [sic] which the narrator enjoys as a sexual event!" For Jock the sexual and the political are inseparable. Gray's recognition of Cohen's novel as a source of ideas he "could steal and use" refers only to this marriage of the sexual and political, however, it is not difficult to see that the pornographic paradigm of 1982, Janine shares much with the pornographic narrative structure of Beautiful Losers. Both authors allegorize the female body as colonized territory, a fetish object subject to sexual violation. The Iroquois saint Catherine Tekakwitha and the English-Canadian historian's Indian wife Edith are brutally raped by colonizing forces in Cohen's novel and, as it does in Gray's pornographic allegory, multinational capitalism provides a context for rape in Beautiful Losers. Edith is violated with ball point pens, twigs, and pipes in an American-owned quarry in Quebec (64-65).<sup>3</sup>

Stephen Slemon's recent work on allegory in post-colonial writing provides a useful lens through which to read The Biggest Modern Woman of the World and 1982, Janine. For Slemon

allegory becomes the site upon which post-colonial cultures seek to contest and subvert colonial appropriation through the production of a literary and specifically anti-imperialist figurative opposition or textual counter-discourse. ("Monuments of Empire 11)

With reference to Richard Terdiman, Slemon explains that counter-discourses

inherently situate themselves as 'other' to a dominant discourse which by definition attempts to exclude heterogeneity from the domain of utterance and is thus functionally incapable of even conceiving the possibility of discursive opposition to it" (11)<sup>4</sup>.

Discussing allegory's dependence on an anterior text and its interrogation of historiography, Slemon suggests that

allegorical writing, and its inherent investment in history provides the post-colonial writer with a means not only of presenting this proposition, but also building it into a structuring principle of the fictional work of art. ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 159)

A structuring principle of both The Biggest Modern Woman of the World and 1982, Janine may be found in the series of doubled performances offered by Anna and Jock in which precisely this type of anti-imperialist discourse is located. These performances function on a literal level as the creative projects of two characters, Anna and Jock, and on an allegorical level as the colonial performances of two nations, Canada and Scotland, for imperial audiences. On the one hand Anna and Jock are imprisoned by the roles they play and yet on the other these roles, once Jock and Anna begin self-consciously to subvert them, become structures which enable them to escape the status of colonial object/victim.

#### **ALLEGORIES OF PERFORMANCE AND OBJECTIFICATION**

Labelled as a freak, the young giantess Anna Swan finds herself under the objectifying gaze of an audience from birth; she soon splinters the ceiling of her parents' shanty in a meteoric growth spasm as the INCREDIBLE KNOTSUCKING LUMBER LASS (Biggest Modern Woman 1). Anna's autobiographical refiguring of the past comments ironically on this objectification by inscribing the various titles her promoters and audiences impose upon her in upper case type, and thus by recognizing and foregrounding this process she begins to dismantle it. She also inverts the process of objectification, referring to Barnum not as a person but as a symbol: the "GREAT SHOWMAN" (2). Anna's narratorial performance in the present dismantles the structure of imperial history which obstructs the development of her selfhood and Canada's identity. One of the first performances she narrates is the "sky-breaking crash" she makes when a hyperactive pituitary gland causes her to shatter the roof of the

structure that houses her (1), a structure the "GIRL GIANTESS" reads and writes as her "colonial box" (2).

The Biggest Modern Woman of the World re-writes and re-reads "the colonial box" of Anna's and Canada's past to confront and demystify a history which has ensured the political and cultural domination of Canada by England and more recently the United States of America, asserting Canadian identity in the face of that domination. When she first approached the novel Susan Swan says she knew that Anna's story

in some way was a story about Canada, which is I think like a great big woman who doesn't know how to put her size to best use, and the United States is like a great big giant man who pushes the world around because he thinks he knows what's best for them, so I did see Anna's story in a large sense as an allegory. (unpublished interview)

Anna's dialogue with history is metafictional; she is self-consciously clearing a space for her voice, writing her version of a past with a twentieth-century vision that does violence to linear history by transcending her death. In this manner she writes from a doubled space of concomitant past and present where she can escape the margins of history and be what she refers to as in "full voice." "This is my final appearance," she tells her present audience of readers "and I promise to tell all. What really happened to THE BIGGEST MODERN WOMAN OF THE WORLD in a never before revealed autobiography" (2). Note the tenses our giantess uses. She is speaking to us in the present and will tell all of what happened to her in the past as well as, a few sentences later, "what my hometown will say about me 100 years from now" (2). Anna's doubled vision of a past and present, however destabilizes the "now"; it is not simply 1877 as the 1977 dating of her hometown Sunrise Trail Museum spiel might indicate, but an ontologically ambiguous and liminal zone straddling 1877 and 1977 and thus invading the reader's present (5). Anna performs what Ihab Hassan would call a postmodern act of translation, she crosses the boundaries of time and space to reshape or translate herself and Canadian history; she does violence to the

metanarratives of linear time and history ("Pragmatism, Postmodernism and Theory").<sup>5</sup> Susan Swan's novel constitutes what is in Fredric Jameson's conception of postmodernity an "attempt to think the present historically;" the text references twentieth-century threats to Canadian sovereignty by agents of American multinational capital and the American military within a nineteenth-century framework (Postmodernism ix). Susan Swan says of this narrative time travelling: "I wanted Anna to speak through the ages, I wanted her to be speaking to us right now, and for awhile I had a vision of the novel where Anna would get on jet planes and come and visit Toronto" (unpublished interview). Slemon's reading of the novel overlooks this problematizing of time and perhaps too hastily concludes that The Biggest Modern Woman of the World "demonstrates how a fictional character attempts and fails to escape her subordinate allegorical role in a national allegory of imperial domination" ("Monuments of Empire" 12).

Although Slemon supplies no textual support for his interpretation of the novel in his brief reference to it in a discussion of post-colonial allegory, I assume his exegesis is based on Anna's American husband, Martin's apparent editing of the text. The battle for narrative supremacy of Anna's text is foreshadowed by Martin's comments preceding their marriage: "If the Lord smiles on me, perhaps Anna's history and mine will be written as one" (Biggest Modern Woman 165). Following her marriage, Anna temporarily loses her voice, and moreover toward the end of her life she writes "I will leave these memoirs to Martin to amend and publish" after her death (332). In her writing beyond the ending--past the point of her own death and beyond the ending that Martin might have given her--Anna collapses the hegemonic relationship between herself and Martin, between Canada and the United States.<sup>6</sup> For Anna and Canada linear history is an abstraction that thwarts the quest for identity.

Commenting on Mikhail Bakhtin's conception of linear history as abstraction, Julia Kristeva suggests that



the only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is through the practice of signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure. (36).

There are two groups of signifying structures that work to re-read and re-write history in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World. There is the structure of an anterior text, Nova Scotia's Two Remarkable Giants, a history written by Phyllis Blakely which Susan Swan's novel allegorizes through the intertextual discourse of parody. The second signifying structure in the novel is the political personification allegory of Anna Swan's relationship to P. T. Barnum and Major Bates which emblemizes Canada's relationship to the United States of America. As Stephen Slemon says of post-colonial allegorical works which seek to destabilize received and reified historiography:

received images of history are projected into an implied level of meaning that runs parallel to the implied meaning of the text. A series of textual triggers signals this implied level of meaning, resonating against the cultural context in which the text is located so as to specify which historical events or processes are being allegorized. ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 159)

This process is visible in Anna's performances and perhaps most transparent in the operetta of "political conceit" she writes with Ingalls (178) and performs with future husband Martin Bates (Swan 184).<sup>7</sup> This performance re-enacts the imperial rape fantasies of America's 'Manifest Destiny' through Bates' obscene and violent overtures to Anna:

The scent of your breath/is the fragrance of gas/and oil" pants Bates. A resource-hungry and forceful American, Bates demands to possess Anna's (Canada's) "essence" willing it to flow "without restraint/into [his] appealing fist" (182).

Anna's exhibition in Barnum's American Museum and in a travelling circus moves her performances into the realm of the carnival. "A carnival participant," writes Julia Kristeva "is both actor and spectator; he loses his sense of individuality, passes through a zero point of carnivalesque activity and splits into a subject and object of that game" (49). Anna Swan is both actor and spectator, subject and object, in Barnum's carnivalesque America.

She observes and records the humiliating performances of Jane Campbell the CELEBRATED MOUNTAIN OF FLESH, THE THIN MAN, the THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLAR NUTT and other objects in the museum's menagerie and is herself reduced to object status. Most of these identity-denying roles are penned by men. Susan Swan, a woman who is "fascinated by the relationship between power and sexuality," writes of her personal experience with gender performance:

To a great extent, many women I know (and I include myself) have been obliged to perform their gender as a way of being in a world where men have held political and economic power. This performance often keeps us from loving men. Men aren't candidates for intimacy; they are more like an audience for a species of theatre, locked into their own performances of male sexuality. ("Desire" 261)

Swan's description of men accurately describes Jock's situation as spectator and participant in a pornographic theatre of the mind in 1982, Janine. Anna's life-long objectification as an entertaining diversion for an audience she refers to as "the beast which makes loud noises when it loves or hates" begins early in life. As a young girl she is imprisoned by the male writing of her father's and a marauding American Sea captain's urine. Mr. Swan becomes embroiled in a "male rite" of competitive urination with the American Dunseith while inscribing his initials in the snow (15). The subsequent cascades of urine issuing from the two men encase Anna, who is playing in a nearby snow tunnel she has constructed, behind "two toy stalactites! A miniature Niagara and Montmorency Falls in the bosom of a single snowdrift" (15). Despite their vigorous efforts, Mr. Swan and Dunseith cannot liberate Anna from their frozen bodily fluids. As Mrs Swan and her butter-churning songs demonstrate, only the love and traditional oral forms of women can break down reified male forms (15-16). This incident adumbrates the scene in which a "woman-made sea" of urine from the Giantess and other female refugees from the fire-ravaged American Museum submerges the typewriters and pens of male reporters, "rapidly smudging sentences" (145-146). Indeed, both scenes provide *mises en abymes* for the novel: the

breaking down of male dominated imperial historiography by female writing. Soon after her urinary entrapment Anna is objectified by her dwarf neighbour Hubert Belacourt who transforms a private function, Anna urinating, into a public performance (31). Anna's vast body, similar to the great land mass of Canada with which she is continually associated, becomes an object that is to be measured and mapped by others. Hubert's measurement of Anna's alimentary canal with a large icicle ruptures her maidenhead and punctures her belief in herself "as a magic being" (35). From this episode Anna becomes aware of her vulnerability in a male dominated world as "a female who, like every other female, could be penetrated in a way that no man could" (35). Violation of Anna's private and physical space becomes the novel's central motif; an allegory for the voyeuristic mapping and mining of the Canadian landscape by imperial others. Martin Bates, the novel's allegorical figuration of the United States views Anna Swan primarily as "a biological find" (189), "an unspoiled natural resource" he wishes to impregnate to produce a race of American giants (172). Similar to Hubert's stolen glances of Anna urinating, Bates' observation through a peep-hole of Anna's shipboard gynecological examination reifies her; his presence transforms a medical examination into a peep-show performance. The language Bates uses to describe Anna as quoted above from the Major's "Species Development or A Tract Toward Continual Anatomical Wonders" reduces her to genitalia. "The doctor proceeded to strap the giantess down and arrange her legs in a frog-like position," writes Bates,

[t]his time I could see the pudenda clearly. Its magnificent foyer glistened before me, wreathed in purple. Within lay the mighty organ of gestation: the hope of the renewal of our species. (172)

His description of a gynaecological examination in which the giantess is in a vulnerable position, physically restrained, fixed, and penetrated by men who are exposing her genitals to another man, belies his own mercenary interest in this woman, and what Susan Swan sees as American interest in Canada. Bates desires to possess Anna's

body, to further his own means, and fails to recognize any of her rights or desires as an autonomous being.

Although Queen Victoria displays herself to Anna as a freak "riddled with imperfections," she is representative of the foremost of patriarchal empires and as such dehumanizes Anna, reducing her to an object of amusement by exposing and observing the giantess' genitals. After walking under the Giantess's groin area while two of her minions lift Anna's skirts, the Queen informs Anna "Miss Swan, you have amused me and thus done the empire a great service" (197). Anna, the allegorical figuration of Canada, is made an object of amusement for the British empire. She, however, is well aware of these processes of objectification and subjugation. Under the gaze of the Queen, Anna Swan "had the unpleasant sensation that [she] had ceased to exist for [Queen Victoria] as a person" (195). The giantess recognizes that although the Queen meant her no harm she has been manipulated and so confides to her readers:

It struck me that I should be angry with the little Queen. She had used me like the Lilliputian king who had ordered Gulliver to stand while the Lilliputian armies marched through his legs. (197)

Anna's awareness of imperial domination, in the forms of Bates and Victoria, and the novel's carnivalesque textualizing of this objectification as damaging and dehumanizing, challenges the received historical images of Canada's relationship to her 'good neighbour' America and her 'mother country' Great Britain. For a friendly next door neighbour and a mother, Bates and Victoria exhibit an unhealthy interest in Anna's genitals.

#### **ALLEGORY AND THE CARNIVAL**

Mikhail Bakhtin, whose work on Rabelais is the basis for Kristeva's interpretation of the carnival, sees the carnival as a destabilizing form "that celebrated temporary liberation from the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and

prohibitions" (Rabelais and His World 10). For Rabelais' medieval world the carnival, in which giants such as Pentagruel and Gargantua played important roles (Rabelais 343), provides a forum for the uncrowning of kings. As Bakhtin explains the ritual of uncrowning,

...the king is the clown. He is elected by all the people and marked by all the people. He is abused and beaten when the time of his reign is over, just as the carnival dummy of winter or the dying year is marked, beaten, torn to pieces, burned or drowned even in our time. (Rabelais 197)<sup>8</sup>

Susan Swan's adaptation of the carnival translates the uncrowning of kings into a displacement of dominant others: English and American imperialists. Swan's text signals its awareness of itself as carnivalesque in the imagery of the circus, birth and bodily fluids, and the Giantess' proclamation that she "was Rabelaisian in [her] giant core" (Swan 115).<sup>9</sup> Canadian writer and critic Robert Kroetsch, commenting on what he perceives as the dissolution of hierarchies in the New World suggests that "North American culture itself became a kind of carnivalesque response to the 'authority' of European cultures and European versions of history" (104). It must be noted, however, that although such hierarchies as European class systems appeared to wither away in North America, the white colonists constructed new hierarchical structures which placed non-whites and native peoples at the very bottom of society.

The subversive, and I would argue, interrelated forms of allegory and carnival intersect to interrogate, expose and ultimately break down the discourse of American and British imperialism in Susan Swan's novel. Recalling Slemon's vision of allegory as a site where a given text interacts with an anterior text, Kristeva interprets the carnival as a space where texts meet and interact with each other. For Kristeva the carnival is a category of dialogical discourse where "writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis" (47). The dialogical process Kristeva describes as carnivalesque is very similar to the processes of counter-discourse and re-visioning that Slemon sees at work in post-colonial allegory ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 165). Both

Kristeva's carnival and Slemon's allegory involve a destabilizing dialogue between texts that produces a renewed or re-written textual body.

Allegory and carnival intersect most notably in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World in the performance of the 'Giants' Hymeneal' where the signifying structures of the novel's personification allegory are made most apparent in the overture of Martin's America to Anna's Canada. Here, Susan Swan's text re-reads both the received images of America's munificent good neighbour relations with Canada and Blakely's romantic documentation of Martin Bates' relationship with, and noble interest in Anna Swan, and re-writes these texts as imperial and self-gratifying rape fantasies. Blakely's version of Anna's life represents the giantess's relationship with Martin Bates as a successful and fulfilling romance (Blakely 14), while Susan Swan challenges this prior textualization with a vision of Martin as a mercenary and colonizing American philanderer who wishes to purchase Anna's womb to produce a race of American giants.<sup>10</sup> Anna's and Ingalls' drama allegorizes the relationship of the Canadas and the United States as a marriage with Martin and Anna playing bride and groom. Martin's matrimonial overtures to Anna's Canada sound like the hostile take-over bids of a corporation; he attempts to force his will upon his prospective bride:

I will speak my will to Anna  
that she will lie down  
and tip south her giant womb  
all by herself  
she is the giantess next door  
her name shall be  
my all American girl. (180)

In this verse of Martin's hymeneal Susan Swan delineates America's colonizing impulse toward Canada, not only in the submissive and sexually vulnerable position in which Martin places Anna--a position which recalls her gynecological examination--but also in the American re-naming of the Canadian. This renaming is an effort to obscure Anna's Canadian and individual identity; it is a colonizing allegory

which seeks to destroy difference and harmonize Canada with the United States. Citing the example of Columbus' naming of Caribbean islands for the Christian deity, the virgin and the Spanish royal family, Slemon writes

the rhetorical structure of this ritual of naming is inalienably allegorical, for here Columbus 'reads' the site of otherness by reference to an anterior set of signs that is already situated within an overarching, supposedly universal, metaphysical and political master code of recognition. ("Monuments of Empire" 8)

Martin's use of this rhetorical structure of naming 'reads' Canada and Anna as objects of desire within the political master code of American manifest destiny. In the tradition of the carnivalesque fragmentation and erasure of identity, Martin's wedding poem objectifies Anna, reducing her to a body of mineral, lumber, and agricultural commodities. He lusts after her "trade staples" and perceives her breasts as "cod canneries/a continental refuge/for America's old head" (Biggest Modern Woman 180). For Martin and the United States Anna and Canada are feminine bodies to dominate and penetrate. "O beautiful mass," coos Martin in a reference to twentieth-century America's naval penetration of Canadian waters "[y]our lips are the north-west/passage waiting/for underglacial submarines" (181).<sup>11</sup> The appropriation of Canada by American interests is allegorized in the novel through Barnum's seduction of both Anna Swan and her giant Nova Scotian lover, Angus McAskill, by America. In the American Museum Barnum decorates the papier-maché volcano that is Angus' exhibition space with American stars and stripes and a sign reading "SEE THE CANADIAN ALPS AND TOUR MOUNT MCASKILL" (44). Under the colonizing gaze of Barnum's United States, Canada is a rugged landscape that must be conquered. As the GREAT SHOWMAN tells the crowd who have come to stare at the Canadian freak, "every American has to master rugged environments." Barnum also transforms Anna into a geographical feature, an object to be vanquished in a performance entitled "Jack-the-Giant-Killer." Anna, playing the giant's wife is scaled by a pick-axe wielding midget as

if she is a mountain (94). This representation of American violence as an assault on the Canadian landscape is a means of acknowledging and challenging American imperialism. And it recalls the pitting of the landscape by the American military in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing (3).

Susan Swan's pen re-writes American interests in Canada as they are manifest in Martin's hymeneal to Anna as a violent and physical assault on the body for monetary gain:

You will fall down  
and invite me  
your skin dripping sap  
over my coffer knobs  
...  
Beloved--I will rise up  
in your empty heights  
and plunge through your  
regions of softwood  
to the end of your Atlantic  
depth once more  
your grass bowl  
will be exotic  
with tropical life. (182)

The hymeneal Ingalls and Anna write for Martin depicts America as a power bent on squeezing a subservient Canada's life-blood or "sap" into its coffers. The American dream of absorbing Canada to form one gigantic nation is symbolized in Martin's reifying vision of Anna: "O Anna you are the American dream/My will shall grow in your void" (182). Swan's hymeneal comments on the American purchase of the Canadian economy and anticipates the dissatisfying marriage of Free Trade. The domination and abrogation of Canadian culture by America is reflected in the novel in Anna Swan's loss of voice during her courtship with Martin (185-186), and her nightmare vision of herself as a ship captained by the American. "Last night," she writes in her journal,

I dreamt I was the *CITY OF BRUSSELS*, and Martin the captain, declaiming to all my gross tonnage, displacement and overall length. As he talked, I sailed on my back, too close to the wind--into the eye of disaster. (185)

As the hymeneal and this dream sequence illustrate, Anna has an acute sense of the allegorical role she plays in her relationship with Martin. In a letter to her mother in which she describes her



marriage to Martin, Anna writes:

I feel I am acting out America's relationship to the  
Canadas. Martin is the imperial ogre while I play the  
role of the genteel mate who believes that if everyone is  
well-mannered, we can inhabit a peaceable kingdom. (273-  
274)

Immediately following the ceremony Anna regrets her marriage to  
Martin, describing it as a "disastrous act" (203). The giantess'  
autobiography is a self-conscious response to this "disastrous act,"  
a counter-discourse to America's imperialist advances toward Canada.  
Susan Swan's Anna rejects Martin's invitation to become the "stolen  
limits" of an American resource pool (181), and warns that she, as an  
allegory for Canada, will do everything in her power to prevent  
American appropriation of her soil:

I'll pull the continent  
about me to stop you  
from making more of yourself-  
The Wisconsin could freeze  
your grasping hand up my skirts  
before you respect my rights  
(let alone learn to acknowledge them).  
I'll be damned, Martin  
if I'll be crammed  
on the seat of your  
imperial fantasy,  
The world knows  
we have an eternal engagement-  
but I'm not the sort of giantess  
who gets laid  
for one or two silly visions.  
Such is the heart of your fresh-water virgin,  
Sons of America. (183)

This verse tells Martin that Canada refuses to be named, that she  
will speak her difference in the face of American colonization. In  
this manner Anna Swan transforms the objectification process of  
performance; she ceases to be a passive object by self-consciously  
writing herself out from under the imperial gaze. Allegory in Swan's  
novel becomes a mechanism of translation. Susan Swan translates  
Blakely's reconstruction of Anna out of history and into a liminal  
temporal zone between past and present where the giantess self-  
consciously translates herself into an emblem for Canada through her  
allegorizing activities.

The hymeneal and the history-transcending autobiography itself

are metafictional systems Anna Swan creates to circumvent the hegemonic relationship between herself and Martin and Canada and the United States. Larry McCaffery, writing about metafictional trends in contemporary American fiction, suggests that characters "who feel victimized by a repressive cold social order," to such an extent that their lives feel meaningless, drab and fragmented, respond to this deprivation by creating "a system of meaning which will help to supply their lives with hope [and] order" (Metafictional Muse 4). The creation of such fictional systems as these is not limited to twentieth-century America but cuts across world literatures, finding a distinct practice in cultures such as Canada and Scotland that are under attack from the culturalizing agents of dominating others, in these two cases England and the United States. Not only does Susan Swan's alternative to Blakely's fulfilled Ohio housewife refuse to be Americanized, she hopes to re-write this tradition and invert the process of acculturation: "Yes, it's true," she writes her mother, "the BIGGEST MODERN WOMAN wants to Canadianize the KENTUCKY GIANT" (166). This effort to destabilize American domination again underlines the subversive nature of Swan's carnivalesque allegory as does Angus' refusal to permit an American sea captain to disfigure the Cape Breton landscape. Incensed that Americans would steal his granite boulders for ballast, Angus heaves "a shower of boulders" at their ship forcing them to restore the landscape, and explains Canada's policy on natural resources:

Sir [the granite boulders] might look like worthless lumps to you but now I know they are valuable to Yankee captains and the next one that sails in and minds his manners can pay me for them (137).<sup>12</sup>

In these instances allegory enables Susan Swan to acknowledge and critique American exploitation of Canadian mineral wealth.

In opposition to Martin's patriarchal fantasies of exploitation and conquest Anna writes what it is to be Canadian: "We possess no fantasies of conquest or domination. Indeed to be from the Canadas is to feel as women feel--cut-off from the base of power" (274).

Although Susan Swan places these words in a nineteenth-century context twenty-three years after Confederation, both she and Anna construct The Biggest Modern Woman of the World with twentieth-century Canadian insights, enabling them to comment on the contemporary political realities facing the country.

If a Canadian writer such as Susan Swan feels it is necessary to feminize her supposedly autonomous country through allegory, as a way of articulating its political, cultural, and economic domination and violation by a patriarchal figuration of America, it is not surprising that Scottish writer Alasdair Gray feminizes a Scotland ruled from Westminster as a rape victim named Janine to express the political, cultural, and economic molestation of his country at the hands of English and American multinational corporations. Similar to Swan's allegoric treatment of Canada, Gray's figuration of Scotland involves a re-reading and re-writing of personal and national pasts. In a marked contrast to Anna Swan, however, Jock MacLeish does not consciously endeavour to recover his personal and cultural past; it surfaces amidst his failed attempts to deflect it with pornographic fantasies. Kristeva's suggestion for a writer's participation in history--the transgression of the linear abstraction of history through a process of "reading-writing"--is just as relevant to Gray in Scotland as it is to Swan in Canada ("Word, Dialogue, and Novel" 36). Gray transgresses the dominant and harmonizing historiography of Scotland's Union with England by allegorizing the ramifications of this union as a series of brutal rapes. In 1982, Janine, as in Swan's novel this "reading-writing" takes the form of allegory or what Kristeva calls "the practice of signifying structure in relation or opposition to another structure" (36).

#### **GRAY AND THE ANTERIOR TEXT OF SCOTTISH CULTURE**

With his intertextual references to Hugh MacDiarmid's The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, a poem of cultural nationalism that questions prior textualizations of Scotland, Gray's narrative signals

the anterior text of Scottish cultural history as a signifying structure to which 1982, Janine is inextricably linked. Gray's dialogue with Scotland's cultural past begins in the "Epilogue" section of his most celebrated novel Lanark: A Life in Four Books (1981). As Beat Witschi has noted, the epilogue, with its marginalia of footnotes and sidenotes, many of which refer the reader to Scottish writers, "presents the reader with a 'cultural map' of Scotland, yet a map on which readers have to find their own paths toward a Scottish identity" (5). As Witschi goes on to explain, the exploration of Gray's labyrinthine structure of notes on a range of Scottish writing from George Douglas Brown, Robert Burns, and Thomas Carlyle, to James Kelman, Liz Lochhead, and Hugh MacDiarmid, is a move toward a conception of Scottish identity (6). Witschi reads Nastler's (the print and paper Gray's) criticism of the excessive conversations with clergymen in Lanark, the novel's abundance of "asthma, frustration, and shadow" and its lack of "countryside, kind women and honest toil" (Lanark 494) as the author's acknowledgement of the "problematic legacy of the west of Scotland novel with its emphasis on guilt and its George Douglas Brown syndrome of 'too much black'" (Witschi 6). Citing this apparent authorial recognition of problems in the Scottish literary tradition, Witschi argues that in Lanark Gray "self-consciously pokes the reader and makes him ask questions by undermining traditional notions and concepts of Scottishness" (Witschi 6).

Gray's interaction with prior textualizations of Scotland is continued in 1982, Janine where Jock accuses Robert Burns of spreading the untrue "story that Scots are an INDEPENDENT people" (Janine 65). Refuting the sentiment of Burns' "A Man's a Man" and underlining the political subservience of Scotland to England, Jock declares "the truth is we are a nation of arselickers," who among other things "commit suicide on Hogmanay by leaping from fountains in Trafalgar Square" (65). Elsewhere in the novel Gray comments on the damaging construction of masculinity in Scottish literary history, a

past which his novel struggles to confront and begins to resolve. The speech of a Mr. Hume reminds Jock of a novel he has read, "a novel which gave an impression of curt masculine authority by having a single name for the title. *Gillespie* by Hay? No. *McIlvannie* by Docherty? No. *Docherty* by McIlvannie" (298). Jock ponders the problematic but ultimately healing demythologizing of a national and personal past to define identity following his discovery that his ex-wife Helen had lied to him about her virginity:

I can put up with a lot of present misery if it is solidly based, but if I am wrong about my past WHO AM I? If the reality I believed is wrong, how can I right it? What solid truth can we find in our mistaken heads? My head is a windy cave, a narrow but bottomless pit where true and false memories, hopes, dreams and information blow up and down like dust in a draught. (329)

Read allegorically, the voice of Jock is also the voice of Scotland echoing what Gray refers to as "the matter of Scotland refracted through alcoholic reverie" that he borrows from MacDiarmid's The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle (Janine 343). As MacDiarmid's Drunk Man says: "The secret clyre of Scotland's life/Has burst and reams through me" (lines 258-259). And like Gray's Jock, MacDiarmid's narrator images a colonial Scotland "subjugated to mak way/For England's poo'er, and to enrich/the kinds o' English, and o' Scots/The least congenial to my thoughts" (lines 2385-2388). The voyeuristic striptease Jock has Janine perform is also an allusion to MacDiarmid's Drunk Man and to Burns' peeping Tam in "Tam o' Shanter." S. J. Boyd has read voyeurism and striptease as points of intertextuality between these works (108-109). Gray translates Burns' and MacDiarmid's images of voyeurism and striptease out of the cultural past to refigure Scotland and Jock as objectified performers for multinational capital in 1982, Janine.

#### **JOCK'S PORNOGRAPHIC ALLEGORY: PERFORMANCE AND OBJECTIFICATION**

The allegorical play between masturbatory bondage and rape fantasies in which Jock victimizes Janine and the personal and national pasts these fantasies encode is a structuring principle for

1982, Janine. Sexual fantasy fails to liberate Jock from a past which he likens to "a flowering minefield" where all the goodness he has ever known grows "among explosives which drive shrapnel into [his] brain whenever [he] disturb[s] them" (Janine 133). In Gray's complicated allegorical design Jock is at once a figuration of Scotland and of Janine. Jock's self-generated rape victim is herself the manifestation of his divided self and so a signifier for Scotland. Jock's will to self-allegorization is acknowledged in his discussion of his development of the Janine narratives:

I had started telling myself stories about a very free attractive greedy woman who, confident in her powers begins an exciting adventure and finds she is not free at all but completely at the disposal of others. As I aged the story grew very elaborate. The woman is corrupted into enjoying her bondage and trapping others into it. I did not notice that this was the story of my own life. I avoided doing so by insisting on the *femaleness* of the main character. The parts of the story which came to excite me the most were not the physical humiliations but the moment when the trap starts closing and the victim feels the torture of being in two minds: wanting to believe, struggling to believe that what is happening cannot be happening, can only happen to someone else. (193)

Jock responds to the pressure exerted by the operations of multinational capitalism by inventing 'someone else,' Janine, upon whom he can transpose the bondage and torture he experiences. The sexual bondage fantasies in which Jock imprisons and rapes Janine and her counterparts Big Mamma and Superb are allegories that emblemize the pornographic trap of multinational capitalism which has ensnared both Jock and Scotland. Subconsciously, Jock translates his own situation into an allegory for the state of his nation. The fantasies are signifiers for anterior signs from the Scottish history that is a correlation of Jock's memory, suppressed signs which are released, paradoxically, through the subliminal process of signification that Jock engages in when attempting to divert his mind away from the past through fantasy. Much like Anna Swan, Jock self-consciously associates himself with his country, at one point linking his own personal decline with the departure of capital from Scotland (309). He goes on to tell us how his lover Sontag regarded herself as

a sexual missionary to his Scotland: "I was Scotland, something frozen and dumb which she was going to liberate" (41). This passage provides a *mise en abyme* for the novel; the liberation of a repressed and oppressed Scotland as she is located in the text in the figuration of Jock, and of his soul and fantasy object Janine.

Echoing Swan's treatment of American involvement in Canadian affairs, Gray textualizes the aggressive cultural and economic incursions of England and America into Scotland by conflating national power struggles with the struggle for autonomy between genders in the allegoric structure of Jock's pornographic fantasies. Sontag emphasizes the political nature of Jock's sexual fantasies when she responds to his request that they forget about politics and return to sex by asking "[h]ow can I forget politics when your fantasy has such a convincing political structure?" (67). For as Sontag has previously commented, Jock's imagined Forensic Research Punishment and Sexual Gratification Clinic, the corporate headquarters of his imaginary international rape cartel, is disturbingly true to life:

This combination brothel and police station which you have devised is not, I hope you realise, a fantasy. A form of it exists in all nations except perhaps Scandinavia and the Netherlands. (60)

Sontag goes on to recite a litany of horrific incidents where the rape of women is permitted and enacted by the patriarchal security structures which are entrusted with the protection of the public from sexual assault (60-61). Moreover, the "convincing political structure" of the rape fantasy, its relation to multinational capitalism, is elucidated in Jock's "A RECIPE FOR PORNOGRAPHY" (29). Suggesting that pornography should offer the reader a series of masturbatory climaxes before delivering a final and tumultuous orgasm Jock says that he will structure his fantasy like a historian describing the causes and effects of World War Two:

I will work like a historian describing in turn Germany Britain France Russia America China, showing depression and dread growing within each for domestic reasons, but distracted by challenges and threats from abroad until

the heads of government move to their controls in the hidden bunkers, and make certain declarations, and then the tanks start rolling through the streets with evacuations, firestorms, frantic last-minute propaganda and the awful togetherness of total calamity before the last huge final bang. That is how a big piece of pornography should go. (29)

Imperial powers, however, need not resort to military means to violate a country. Jock articulates what he sees as the destruction that multinational capitalism has wreaked on Scotland:

Our firms have been bought by bigger non-Scottish firms and then reduced in size or closed. Scottish investors prefer putting their money into business which operates in coolie nations where trade unions never had a chance. (136)

If Glasgow is destroyed in a hypothetical nuclear holocaust Jock concludes that this destruction will "logically conclude a steady peacetime process." The recognition of Scottish collusion in this process is an important element of Jock's re-membering of self and national history. Jock's victimization of self as it is manifest in the rape of Janine is a constant in Gray's delineation of the Scottish colonial experience. Furthermore, Jock links the erosion of the Scottish economy by foreign agents with interference in the nation's cultural production, stating that the Edinburgh Festival is "mostly the work of foreigners" (136). Gray develops this theme in his most recent novel, Something Leather, where an upper-class English character reveals that the cultural production of Scotland, a country "slightly like Rhodesia in the early yias [sic] of this century" (172) is "directed and mostly administrated by the English, of course" (174). Gray subordinates the Received Pronounced English of upper class discourse here by reducing it to one english among many, a dialect which he reproduces phonetically.

1982, Janine parallels foreign cultural and economic incursions into Scotland with the brutal rape of Janine. Jock links the rape and exploitation of Scottish natural resources with his physical violation of Janine in his diatribe against the failure of the Scots to secure Home Rule, and Westminster's subsequent ability to "spend the North Sea oil reserves building a fucking tunnel under the



English Channel" (66). In the heat of this monologue Jock tries to divert his attention away from the political 'fucking' of Scotland to the sexual 'fucking' of his imaginary women: "... cool down cool down you are goading yourself into a FRENZY my friend think about fucking Superb, think about fucking Janine, don't think about fucking POLITICS" (66). Yet again traversing the novel's multivalent narrative matrix of rape fantasy, Scotland's political and cultural history, and his own personal past Jock explains how the Scotland he imagines to be "shaped as a fat messy woman" (28) has been raped:

But if a country is not just a tract of land but a whole people then clearly Scotland has been fucked. I mean that word in the vulgar sense of *misused to give satisfaction or advantage to another*. (136)

Jock argues that Scottish oil resources will neither benefit Scotland nor the whole of Britain: "now most of our oil goes to Americans who pay less for it than we do, and they'll have exhausted the supply within twenty-five years" (145). This situation closely parallels an episode in Susan Swan's novel where the American appetite for Canadian natural gas at exploitively low prices is enacted in the rape fantasies of Martin Bates' hymeneal. By projecting received images of history "into an implied level of meaning that runs parallel to the implied literal meaning of the text," both Swan and Gray re-enact the rape of the colonized by the colonizer.

The textual triggers of Jock's and Janine's bondage and rape that Gray uses to indicate the continuing colonizing process Scotland is subject to and object of become clear at moments when the anterior sign allegory is dependent on, and its signifier appear in close proximity. This configuration of sign and signifier usually occurs when the rape fantasy disintegrates. For example, in the following passage the image of Janine, who is both a manifestation of Jock's damaged and divided self and hence along with Jock a personification allegory for Scotland, soon dissolves back into an image of Jock:

But Janine is not (here come the clothes) happy with the white silk shirt not quite reaching the thick harness--leather belt which is not holding up the miniskirt but hangs in loops round the waistband of the white suede

miniskirt supported by her hips and unbuttoned as high as the top of the black fishnet stockings whose mesh is wide enough to insert three fingers I HATED when I was young. My mother made me wear far too many of them mostly jackets and coats. (18)

Janine's clothing with its harness belt and fishnet stockings both fetter her body, and make her vulnerable to physical violation; these garments of male fantasy anatomize and frame the female body transforming it into a corrupted object of desire, just as the trappings of colonization transform Jock and Scotland into passive objects vulnerable to violation by the colonizer. Although in this context the immediate link between Jock and Janine's bondage gear is the restrictive layers of clothing Jock's mother forces him to wear, in the larger allegorical context of the novel Jock is representative of Scotland in colonial bondage. Like both Scotland and Janine Jock believes that he too has been raped. "I have been raped," says Jock "and it was pleasant at the time but afterwards I felt like a miserable nothing, I wished I was dead" (58). Jock is equating the hysterical pregnancy Helen used to manipulate him into what he comes to regard was a marriage trap, with a type of rape. Allegorical play between the signifying structures of the bondage-rape fantasy and Jock's personal past surfaces again in a passage where the lochgelly used to beat Superb and Jock's other fantasy women into submission is linked to the famous lochgelly with which Jock's sadistic headmaster Hislop beat him (80-81). The bondage and torture to which Jock subjects his female prisoners, his entrapment of a "quivering" scantily clad Helga amidst barbed wire (101) and the binding of Superb with handcuffs and rope are emblematic of the oppression he himself feels in a country metaphorized as an imperialist trap (179).

Jock sees himself and Denny as prisoners in a Scotland which has become one large multinational-dominated stockade. As he perceives it, late twentieth-century capitalism and its manipulation of technology to "accumulate wealth, not spread it" transfigures Scotland into a trap: "I was born in the long town, a trap for colliers. When the pits shut down next year it will be a trap for

the unemployed" (215). Jock feels that his mother "by a skilful use of restrictive clothing" trapped him into doing his homework, a process which leads him to choose a job working for the "trapmakers" at National Security Systems. Gray's trap is a figuration of the imperialist discourse that fetters Scotland. This incarceration is emblemized in the text by Jock's and Janine's recognition that they are characters in a narrative that is written by a dominant other. Just as Scotland is trapped in a narrative written by Westminster and others Janine is "a character in a story by someone who dictates every one of her movements and emotions" (332) and Jock is a character who performs in "a script written by National Security" (333).

Gray's textual counter-discourse to Scotland's colonial status may be found, in part, in Jock's decision to resign from the National Securities Corporation (333). Gray begins to dismantle imperial discourse through a figurative and linguistic process reminiscent of Swan's novel; he re-reads and then re-writes the imperial project in the language of conquest, subjugating and demarcating the Scottish landscape, and juxtaposing these violations of the landscape with violations of the female body. Gray's feminization of Scotland as a captive woman subjected to the driving of a male's "stiff etcetera again and again through her etcetera" (106) is a structure which signifies the forceful penetration of the Scottish landscape by a dominant other. His imaging of Scotland as a country "wired" for war where "Between Loch Lomond and Gareloch one hill at least is honeycombed with galleries where the multimegaton warheads are stockpiled," and a Clyde awash with "American and British missile submarines" is reminiscent of Canadian concerns about American military bases that inscribed their authority on the Canadian landscape (136). Although the Americans in Margaret Atwood's Surfacing, have supposedly departed, "the pit" they "hollowed out" remains, a scar on the landscape that reminds the narrator and her friends of the dominant power with which they share the continent

(Surfacing 3). Atwood's novel emblemizes the objectification and violation of Canadian resources by multinationals through the figuration of the narrator as a Canada who feels that Americans "have been sent to hunt for [her]" (177). As discussed earlier, Swan in a way similar to Gray's use of the submarine image in 1982, Janine, textualizes Canada as a woman whose physical passage ways are targeted for penetration by American "underglacial submarines" (Biggest Modern Woman 181).

#### GRAY AND THE PORNOGRAPHIC

Although both Swan and Gray endeavour to decolonize their cultures by re-reading and refiguring self and nation as women raped by what both writers perceive to be the patriarchal structure of imperialism, the construction of Janine and the importation of pornography to signify victimization in 1982, Janine provide a sharp contrast to Swan's novel. The Biggest Modern Woman of the World relates the objectification of woman by man from a female perspective while Gray's novel depicts a man who constructs pornographic paradigms in which women are tortured and raped. It is the element of pornography which Susan Kappeler defines "as one of the most patriarchal structures in our culture" which could problematize Gray's allegory in 1982, Janine for some readers ("The White Brothel" 329). In an essay which stridently questions the politics behind the male writer's textualization of pornography as a literary genre, Kappeler, citing D. H. Thomas' controversial novel The White Hotel as an example, argues that "the literary provides a frame in which this element [the purely sexual], which otherwise might appear gratuitous, can be anchored; it provides artistic purpose" (329). Thomas, posits Kappeler, by writing a literary structure around an open-ended piece of pornography, the poetic pieces which compose the "Don Giovanni" sections of The White Hotel, "as well as one of his enraptured critics, exonerates the pornographic in the highest literary terms, exonerates it in the name of the literary" ("The White Brothel" 330).

At the risk of what Kappeler and other feminist critics might perceive as my collusion with Gray to exonerate pornography, I would argue that in 1982, Janine, the pornographic is not employed to titillate the male reader, thereby affirming patriarchal dominance under the valorizing rubric of the literary. Rather, Gray uses these figures to exemplify the damage caused by what he perceives to be pornographic structures such as multinational capitalism and its counterpart imperialism which legitimize the "misuse" of one group for the "satisfaction or advantage" of "another" (Janine 136). Under the impact of imperialism's pornographic structures both Jock and Scotland experience a decline. Gray's pornographic vision of multinational capitalism--its intervention in the Scottish economy and cultural production--is emblemized as a force destroying the nation of Scotland and her people, it is responsible for what the author calls the "BREAKING" of "A COUNTRY" (146).

Like some of the corporate opportunists who appropriate Scottish national resources, the pornographic paradigm upon which Jock bases his fantasies is from America, "a land of endless pornographic possibility" (17). His first encounter with the sexual objectification of woman is in the form of a publicity photo of Jane Russell--one of the original pin-up girls--as she appears in the Hollywood film *The Outlaw*: "her blouse pulled off both shoulders, leaning back against some straw glaring at me with this inviting defiance" (19). This image of Jane Russell is juxtaposed to our first encounter with Janine who is objectified in Jock's imagination in a similar manner (18); Janine, however, as Jock reports is "not happy with the white silk shirt shaped by the way it hangs from her etcetera I mean BREASTS" (18). Beneath Jock's twisted images of men and women is a moral man whose imagination cannot sustain the sick fantasies that his split and damaged psyche demand. Explaining the development of his Janine fantasies Jock touches on the damaging and learned male roles of rescuer and torturer of women, and his inability to sustain these unrealistic fantasies:

When I had freed her from the Roman arena the pirates or the Gestapo, she vanished. I couldn't believe in her any more. She was a decent girl in those days, like the girls in my class at school, and I was decent too. But the balls sank into my scrotum, the wet dreams began, I gained a crude notion of what to put where, and now Janine has only one thing in common with the attractive women I know, she never stays long with me if she can leave. (16)

The resentment Jock feels toward his mother and Helen--one woman abandoned him, the other tricked him into marriage--might account for Jock's shift from the patriarchal rescuer role to the authoritarian torturer.

Elsewhere in the novel the destructive potential of Jock's pornographic fantasies is expressed in his comparison of them to the international arms race:

Our defence systems run like my fantasies which can only continue by getting much bigger and nastier than were first intended. Nobody can keep control of a process like that forever. In 1914 and 1939 the big industrial nations having fucked the rest of the planet (in the vulgar sense of the word) started wanking all over each other. None of them enjoyed it but they could not stop. (151)

Jock is driven to alcoholism, self-loathing and finally a failed suicide attempt, partly by the degrading fantasies which he uses to suppress his past and his inability to confront that past. After washing back three handfuls of pills, Jock's pornography-deprived imagination produces a scene in which Big Mamma leads around a "leashed tethered barefoot nude-under-white denim-dungarees Superb" while another voice of his fractured psyche cries out in despair: "Stop seeing, stop thinking such things I am not a very bad man parents were good folk were noble folk in a quiet way what condemns me to this filth filth filth ... " (178). Douglas Gifford correctly identifies the derivation of Jock's fantasies as the stuff of the "clichéd, parodic Hollywood and Penthouse materials," and Gifford goes on to say "[the fantasies] are finally meant to disgust, to shame us; we have all helped spawn these stereotypes of male domination over hapless or compliant ladies of utter unreality" ("Private Confession and Public Satire in the Fiction of Alasdair

Gray" 114).

Gray's concerns about pornography and its negative effect on gender relations are first expressed in Lanark's interaction with women. The devouring of entire cultures in Lanark by a creature signifying multinational capitalism is made possible, in part, by pornographic narratives generated through the mass media to divide the sexes and divert their attention away from the corporate greed which is destroying their world. Similar to Jock "sex and history" are problems Lanark struggles to solve (Lanark 330). The objectification of women that occurs in the advertisement of a film called Test Pilot in Lanark anticipates the poster for Outlaw that obsesses Jock in 1982, Janine:

A strong slightly pained male head looked skyward out of a padded husk hung with microphones, cables and dials. A woman stood nearby in profile, her back to the pilot but glancing at him with a sidelong inviting provocative smile. ... She was barefoot and wore bangles and black gauze trousers with a slit from ankle to waist. A sleeveless black gauze shirt covered her breasts but left bare the valley between them and her throat and midriff. (Lanark 341)

This image so excites Thaw/Lanark that his sexual imagination "began slowly to rip and toy with her" (341). American comics where "a nearly naked blonde smiling as if her body was a joke she wanted to share, a cowering dishevelled girl with eyes and mouth apprehensively open, a big-breasted woman with legs astride and hands on hips and a sullen selfish stare which seemed to invite the most savage kind of assault" also distort Thaw's/Lanark's conception of women (179). Thaw's fixation with these images of male sexual power over female victims leads first to an imaginative life where he interacts with women as a torturer and rapist (290) and eventually surfaces in his real life relationship with a woman, Marjory Laidlaw. Laidlaw becomes an object of sexual desire for Duncan Thaw, and when she does not respond to his overtures in the way he expects, he tries to kill her (348). As Nastor, the textual manifestation of Gray present in the novel, explains the work's doubled narrative to Lanark: "The Thaw narrative shows a man dying because he is bad at loving. It is

enclosed by your narrative which shows civilization collapsing for the same reason" (Lanark 484). Similarly, the doubled or allegoric narrative of 1982, Janine shows a man dying because his ability to love has been destroyed by pornography. Concomitantly, through the device of allegory this narrative shows a part of civilization, Scotland, that is collapsing for the same reason.

Gray's Something Leather, however, is an anomaly when placed in the context of his previous works' representation of bondage fantasies as damaging and degrading pornography. The sexual violence in this novel appears to be gratuitous; it does not constitute an allegorical reference to the insightful and witty political commentary Gray offers elsewhere in the novel, but denotes the sexual subjugation of a woman by other women. The rape, bondage, beating, head-shaving, and tattooing of the character June by a group of loving, well-meaning lesbians (204-219) are depicted not as damaging but liberating activities for the victim and the rapists. Supposedly the rapists' destruction of June's patriarchy-pleasing identity enables her to rediscover her female self. After dressing in the leather garments her rapists leave for her she affirms that she is now happy (231). Gray's awkward attempt to legitimize his sensational depiction of lesbian sexual violence by claiming, in the voice of a very Gray-like middle-aged Scottish writer named Dad, that his "sly" and "cruel" marauding lesbians are his own personal fantasies and bear no resemblance to the "rational folk" he knows lesbians to be are, ultimately, unsuccessful (197). This sounds too much like a disclaimer, an afterthought thrown in as a defence against potential accusations of misogyny. Moreover, the female torturers and rapists read transparently as politically more acceptable ciphers for Gray's usual complement of male bullies. What is perhaps most disheartening about the sexual violence in Something Leather is Gray's admission that during the writing of the novel's first chapter, originally a short story around which he constructed the rest of the novel after being offered advance money by his



publisher Jonathan Cape, he "enjoyed a prolonged, cold blooded sexual thrill of a sort common among some writers and lizards" (234). I do not believe, however, that Gray's "exoneration of the pornographic in the name of the literary" in this novel diminishes his textualization of the pornographic to dismantle imperialist discourses in Lanark and 1982, Janine.<sup>13</sup>

The novel's fantasy episodes are carnivalesque spaces where "writing reads another writing, reads itself and constructs itself through a process of destructive genesis" (Kristeva 47). Similar to the functioning principle of allegory the writing that is Jock's life reads (an)other writing, the pornographic rape of cultures committed by multinational capitalism and imperialism, and then reads itself into pornographic rape fantasies which allegorize the rape of Scotland by imperialism. The "process of destructive genesis" in 1982, Janine is encoded in the novel's allegorical play between the signifying structures of Scottish history and Jock's life that are highlighted in the fantasies. The pornographic "filth" Jock finds himself trapped in, and the fragments of his past re-membered through the fantasy process--his ill-treatment of his girlfriend Denny and his own perceived victimization at the hands of Helen, as well as his membership of a culture targetted for erasure by agents of imperialism--drive Jock to suicide. In this failed act of self-destruction Jock is reborn; he temporarily abandons the fractured pornographic narrative which paradoxically thwarted and stimulated his re-remembering of the past to confront directly that past by retelling it in a conventional "straightforward story" (195). Although Jock briefly returns to the Janine pornography narrative toward the end of his straightforward story, he does so to emphasize the dismantling of a narrative that has enslaved him for most of his life. Contrasting himself with his allegorical counterpart Janine who has recognized that she is destined to forever be a character in someone else's story Jock declares:

I have been free nearly ten whole minutes. For more than

twenty-five years before these minutes I was a character in a script written by National Security. That script governed my main movements, and therefore my emotions. How could I learn to love my wife when for half the week I never even slept with her? I made myself completely predictable so that the firm could predict me. (332-333)

Through this dialogical process where carnival and allegory intersect, Gray textualizes and then subverts the hierarchical discourses that threaten to consume Jock, Janine, and Scotland.

#### **THE CARNIVAL VICTIM/VICTOR**

The process of objectification Gray deploys to articulate Scotland's position as a victim of a pornographic economics and cultural rape by imperial powers embraces the carnival. Jock's pornographic fantasies constitute a carnival in which he participates as "both actor and spectator; he loses his sense of individuality and passes through a zero point of carnivalesque activity and splits into a subject and object of that game" (Kristeva 49). Jock's identity is split, he is both the female Janine, an object of sexual violence, and the male subject who performs these acts of sexual violence, just as he is both a Scot victimized or "fucked" by the imperialism of multinational capitalism and, as an employee of National Security Systems, "[o]ne of the fuckers" who "fucked" Scotland (1982, Janine 136). Not so dissimilar to Anna Swan, Janine finds herself under the objectifying gaze of a man who expects her to perform for him, yet unlike Swan's male objectifiers, Martin Bates and P. T. Barnum, Jock himself is placed under an objectifying gaze. Gray uses cinematographic images to impress upon his reader that Janine is a passive object captured by the camera of Jock's imagination where she will be forced to perform for an audience of his construction seated behind that camera. Jock attempts to subdue his lust for what he creates "by keeping the eye of the imagination as cool as a camera lens" (89). He describes Janine in the terms of the cinema pin-up girl, an object he can shape: "With make-up she can look like almost any female stereotype from the dumb adolescent to the cool

aristocrat. Just now she looks like Jane Russell in a forties film, The Outlaw" (14). Like Anna Swan, Janine and Jane Russell are women exploited by men to make money for men. They are placed in the male-constructed female roles of sexual objects to entertain largely male audiences. Jock dehumanizes the objects of his lust by reducing them to a "catalogue of caged beauties for [him] to divide, rule, tattoo, massage and variously goad into ecstasies of shameless wantonness" (153). In this catalogue Janine is described as one of Jock's "PRISONERS" (152), and placed in a performance role. She is reduced to an object that is paraded in a "white suede mini-skirt" and "black net" stockings, in front of an audience obscured by darkness. She is auditioning for a pornographic film (153).

Jock is also reduced to an object; multinational imperialism in the guise of the novel's National Security company uses Jock as an instrument to attain its ends. "I am not a man, I am an instrument," confesses Jock who goes on to explain:

I am the instrument of a firm which installs instruments to protect the instruments of firms which produce meat cloth machines and whisky, instruments to feed dress and stupefy us. But the National installs most of its instruments around nuclear reactors --instruments powering instruments which light heat and entertain us-- and banks--instruments to protect and increase the profits of the instrument owners ... . (105)

Jock and many of his compatriots collude with the trap-makers, transforming themselves into instruments by pursuing "safety and pleasure" at any cost (106). As Jock admits, the safety and pleasure of job security and a good income drive him to "drink and wank in a Peebles hotel," drive him to create fantasies in which he can reduce women to objects that allow him to achieve his own selfish ends (106). Furthermore, Jock directly links his objectification of women with his own dehumanization:

I am sick of being an instrument joining instruments to instruments so that an imaginary Superb, handcuffed and nude facedown and writhing screams NO NO PLEASE DON'T DO IT AGAIN ... . (106)

In both The Biggest Modern Woman in the World and 1982, Janine cultures threatened with erasure by dominating others are allegorized

as victims. Margaret Atwood correlates what she perceives as the inordinate number of victims in Canadian literature with imperialism, a theory that may be usefully applied to Scottish literature. Scottish writers share with their Canadian counterparts a preoccupation with victims. In Neil Gunn's Highland River and Butcher's Broom the Gaels are victims of a cultural erasure that destroys a language and a past. Naomi Mitchison writes in "The Cleansing of the Knife" and The Bull Calves of a Highland people betrayed by their own clan chiefs and their Lowland sisters and brothers. John McGrath's play The Cheviot, The Stag, and The Black, Black Oil depicts Scotland as a collective victim bilked of her cultural and natural resources by a multinational capitalism that flies the flags of the United States and England. Victims abound in the Canadian fiction discussed in this dissertation, from Atwood's narrator in Surfacing, Sheila Watson's Greta, and the miners of Alistair MacLeod's "The Closing Down of Summer" to Margaret Laurence's Tonnerres in The Diviners and Susan Swan's Anna. Atwood supposes "for the sake of argument, that Canada as a whole is a victim," "exploited," "a colony" (Survival 35). Her partial definition of the term colony as a "place where profit is made, but not by the people who live there" could quite readily be transposed to the Scotland of Gray's 1982, Janine, where Scottish capital is sucked to the south of England. Of course, one major difference between Canada's political situation and Scotland's is Canada's position as an autonomous state that severed colonial ties with Great Britain in 1867 while Scotland is a nation that after the political Union of 1707 was reduced to provincial status in a global empire. If the central symbol for Canada is, as Atwood suggests "survival" in the face of an historically English imperialist government and contemporaneously the aggressive neo-imperialism of the United States, Scotland may also be identified, literarily, with the symbol of survival. Gray is not only aware of Atwood's Survival, but cites it as a study which "influenced my thoughts and work" and gave him

ideas he "could steal and use" (Letter to the Author). Both Jock and Anna are survivors who despite temporary collusions with their imperial victors ultimately manage to escape their victimization.

Like Swan's Anna who chose to be exhibited by America's Barnum, Jock "chose to work for the trapmakers" at National Security, ironically undermining Scottish culture and his own sense of self (1982, Janine 215). Both Anna and Jock by their wilful entry into the trap of colonialism are complicit in their subsequent objectification as colonial performers. By acknowledging that some elements of a colonial culture benefit by colluding with imperial powers, Gray articulates one of the obstacles encountered by Scotland in the decolonization process. Jock self-consciously parallels his complicity in his objectification with his alter-ego Janine; commenting on a scene in which Janine accepts money from her agent to compromise herself in a performance at the Forensic Research Institute, Jock says:

And I have placed this last bit of dialogue very carefully. Later when Janine is trapped and trying to escape, she will remember that she was given a chance to leave and refused because of money. (26)

Similarly, Jock refuses to

deplore the process which has helped [him] become the sort of man [he] want[s] to be: a selfish shit but a comfortable selfish shit, like everyone I meet nowadays. The militarisation and depression has been good for the security business. (137)

Jock McLeish and Anna Swan may both be plotted on Atwood's BASIC VICTIM POSITIONS CONTINUUM at a point which is, as Atwood writes, where "you can distinguish between the role of Victim (which probably leads you to seek victimization even when there's no call for it), and the *objective experience* that is making you a victim" (Survival 38). The major activity of this position is "repudiating the Victim role" by directing anger against "the real source of oppression," and channelling energy "into constructive action" (Survival 38).<sup>14</sup> Anna Swan has already arrived at this position by the time she begins to

write her narrative, as has Jock's author Alasdair Gray. Jock, however, moves from acknowledging his victimization as predetermined to taking affirmative action to escape his victimization by endeavouring to dismantle the imperial system that victimizes him. Part of this process of decolonization is the creation of a figurative counter-discourse which provides the colony with a means of escape from the exploitation of the imperial trap. Jock accomplishes this by transforming the allegorical structures for the objectifying imperial rape performance Max enacts upon Janine into a structure which could potentially liberate her:

Why *should* Janine feel helpless when she realizes Max has lied to her and is abducting her? He is driving a fast car along a motorway, his hands are occupied if she removes one of her ridiculous shoes and threatens his eye with the heel he will certainly stop or change direction if he sees she is serious. (1982, Janine 194)

Jock endeavours to escape objectification by deciding to resign from National Security and confronting honest versions of Scotland's past, for as he says he "will not do nothing" (340). At the end of the novel Jock lists the things he will do to subvert his victimization:

I will work among the people I know; I will not squander myself in fantasies; I will think to a purpose, think harder and drink less. I will be recognised by my neighbours; I will converse and speak my mind. (340)

Very much like the presence of carnival in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World Gray's inscription of the carnival in 1982, Janine translates Bakhtin's uncrowning of kings into a revealing displacement of dominant others. In his refiguring of dominant others as pornographers who benefit from the oppression and cultural erasure of their colonial victims, Gray exposes Scotland's relationship to English and American multinational corporations thereby challenging their power, "uncrowning" them by reducing their positions of privilege to the level of the pornographer.

#### **DESCENTS INTO HELL--JOCK**

In articulations of figurative counter-discourse both Swan and Gray allegorize the more traditional, positive textualizations of

their countries' relationships to imperial powers as an imperial process that transforms the colonial into a captive in a hell on earth.<sup>15</sup> Susan Swan signifies her Anna's hell in Barnum's New York, while in Gray's novel pornographic fantasy comprises the hell where Jock languishes. In both novels hell is a space where the acculturating pressure of dominating others fractures cultural and personal identity; it is a carnivalesque space where, in the words of Kristeva, its participant "loses his sense of individuality ... and splits into a subject of the spectacle and an object of the game" (49). The carnivalesque hell of Gray's novel reaches its highest point in the polyphonic "THE MINISTRY OF VOICES" which chronicles Jock's accelerated descent into hell after he consumes barbiturates and whisky. Here, Gray again underlines Scottish complicity in the nation's cultural erasure in Jock's attempt to take his own life, a decision prompted as much by an inability to face his own personal past as it is by the external pressures of multinational capitalism on Scotland. The narrative movement toward this descent into an identity fracturing hell is first alluded to by Jock after the failure of a pornographic fantasy finds him alone in bed: "I am alone. Alone. Alone. I am absolutely alone. O hell hell hell hell hell hell hell hell hell hell ..." (55-56). The preceding quotation goes on to fill half a page with the word hell reproduced in various typographical styles--lower case, italics, and upper case--adumbrating and thus connecting it with the typographical play encountered in "THE MINISTRY OF VOICES" where the configuration of typography plays a large role in constructing hell.

The dissolution of Jock's identity is symbolized in a multiplicity of voices, some of which speak simultaneously in "THE MINISTRY OF VOICES" section of the novel. With this multiplicity Gray conveys the disorientation of a mind drowning in barbiturates and alcohol; the pornographic fantasy voice of Jock is placed in the centre of the page where it is framed by the various manifestations of Jock's fragmented self: God, Satan, memories of the old

schoolmaster Hislop and, briefly, the beleaguered voice of a cohesive Jock that is "SUFFUFFUFFUFFUFUCKUCKUCKUCKATING" in this hellish cacophony of voices. Gray distinguishes the voices from each other by inscribing them in a variety of type faces and sizes. His physical arrangement of this text imports the techniques of concrete poetry; he literally shapes his text to represent its content, at one point drawing a triangular form with type faces to construct an italicized vagina in which Jock's pornographic voice rambles on about "piercing" a woman's "cunt" with a boa constrictor, an image of rape that disgusts Jock as much as it should his readers (184). Immediately following this grotesque image of patriarchal penetration Jock recognizes where his fantasies have taken him, declaring ... o o/o this is hell/hell o please/help o God ... ((184). The inverted triangular text also represents Jock's descent into hades, he is at its narrowest point when he realizes he is in hell and calls on God's help to escape. The correlation between this allegorical hell and its anterior signs--Jock's personal past, the pornographic fantasies and the pornography of multinational capitalism (traps which incarcerate Jock)--presents itself in the last sequence of "THE MINISTRY OF VOICES" just before a thoughtful life-affirming fragment of Jock's fractured self assumes control of his psyche and forces him to save himself by vomiting up the pills and whisky:

whipstattosleatherLochgellytawsprickscuntsjeans  
 bikinisfishnetstockingsblousesthreepiece  
 suitscollarstiesdungareesoverallsex  
 surveillancealarmdefencetraps  
 securefamilysalarytraps  
 lovesecuritysex  
 happiness  
 trap

(185)

Jock's division into both a subject and an object of this carnivalesque hell which is "both discourse and spectacle" is initiated earlier in the novel (Kristeva 49). After consuming some whisky Jock comments:

The parts of this mind are blissfully disconnecting,  
 thoughts separating from memories, memories from  
 fantasies. If I am lucky nothing now will float to my



surface but delicious fragments. (1982, Janine 69)

The "delicious fragments" that Jock anticipates, however, are not quite as palatable as he imagines. This dissolution of self results in a battle for narrative supremacy that is fought in Jock's psyche among his fragmented selves. At one point Jock's pornographic voice competes against a dialogue between Jock as a manifestation of God and a voice identifiable as the Jock who, until this point in the narrative, had been the novel's dominant voice. As God explains to Jock "my only intelligence is what you lend when you forget yourself;"<sup>16</sup> God is Jock's intelligent, responsible conscience, the moralizing voice that previously interrupted the pornographic fantasies and recognized them as filth. But in this maelstrom of voices God is having difficulty making himself heard as he complains to Jock from what is literally the margin of the text: "listen i came because you called and now your hot and cold floods of speech hardly allow me a word in edgeways" (178). The voice narrating the pornographic fantasies in the centre of the page encourages the audience, which is comprised of both Jock and the reader to "ignore," Jock and God, "the couple signalling from the wings" of this discourse (178). Encoded in the dialogue between Jock and God is an allegoric counter-discourse for Scotland and Jock to follow if they wish to escape the hellish trap of imperialism. The God fragment of Jock's dismembered psyche informs him that he is the prime architect of this hell and the principal generator of its many voices: "You are of me for me making light by opening your eyes building space with each movement reforming the world with each thought for better or worse" (184).

Jock's construction of fictional systems to escape a damaging and incarcerating structure of imperialist discourse is reminiscent of Anna Swan's metafictional writings. The fictive pornographic fantasies and the hell to which they eventually take him ultimately provide Jock with a means of recovering his fractured identity and so of escaping the colonial trap. The God into which Jock transforms

part of his psyche advises him that

he cannot stop being God by splitting into a roman circus  
where sense feeling memory hope dreams and reason fight  
bind torment each other to amuse this forlornly plotting  
almost amputated head. (184)

Jock, in the voice of God, goes on to lend himself insights into the  
process of history-making which has hitherto prevented him from  
living in the present and looking toward the future:

Your weakness cowardice indifference create history as  
much as your strength courage intelligence but too much  
is made by default sliding down into depression pain  
warping war poisoning seed you can make mend things no  
need to die. (185)

Until this point in the novel the pain of the past placed  
insurmountable obstacles between Jock, the present and the future, a  
situation which led him to the threshold of death. The counter-  
discourse to cultural erasure that Gray encodes in God's text  
releases Jock and Scotland from hell:

Listen come alive for gods sake work as if you were in  
the early days of a better nation ... go quick to the  
sink bend down hold on tight fingers in gullet let it  
come let it come let it come ... . (185)

As God is a fragment of Jock who is an allegoric refiguring of the  
Scottish nation, the strategy for liberation, for escaping hell is  
communicated from one Scot to another--from the pen of Alasdair Gray  
to the nation. As Gray tells Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay he is  
aware of writing for other Scots as well as a larger audience:

A proper understanding and presentation of Scottish  
peculiarities will firstly, be handy to ourselves and  
secondly to other folk, if our language is as skilfully  
exact and arresting as we can make it, while acquiring  
and begetting a temper that gives it smoothness (so that  
it slips easily into other heads). ("Interview with  
Alasdair Gray" 9)

Jock escapes from hell by vomiting up a past he swallowed but  
refused to understand, for ultimately it was his inability to deal  
with his own and Scotland's past that induced him to imbibe his  
suicide cocktail in the first place. In Gray's carnivalesque hell  
Jock's narrative reads fragments of past writings, reads itself and  
constructs itself through the destructive genesis of the suicide  
attempt which paradoxically gives him back his present and future by

affording him an opportunity to recover and work through his past, something he spends the second half of the novel pursuing. A quotation from the poet Alan Jackson that Gray has inscribed on the front board of the first edition hardcover of the novel provides some insight into the workings of the illness and disease metaphors as they apply to Jock's sickness and his relationship with the past:

TRULY THE REMEDY'S  
INSIDE THE DISEASE  
AND THE MEANING OF BEING ILL  
IS TO BRING THE EYE  
TO THE HEART

Jock finds the remedy for his pornographic fantasies--a recognition of the past--inside his fantasies themselves; through the fantasies Jock looks into his heart and is made violently ill by what he finds there and through this illness begins to recover. Multinational capitalism which dismembers Jock's past and by extension his self provides the insight he requires to move forward to re-member that past and his self. Douglas Gifford's suggestion that the novel's "condemnation of what happened in Scotland, in its defeat of the first half's self-indulgence by the second half's hurtful autobiographical honesty, after Jock tries to commit suicide" places 1982, Janine as "a new stage in Scottish culture wherein the complete investigation of our benighted personal and public aesthetics is not dodged by recourse to British or transatlantic or parochial modes; but confronted and, if not overcome, admitted and placed clearly in focus as the materialistic, Anglicised, snobby, phoney tradition which must be fought" ("Recent Fiction" 10). While I agree with Gifford that 1982, Janine stands at this stage in Scottish culture, I question how recent a development this stage is, for in her 1947 novel, The Bull Calves, Naomi Mitchison also examines personal and public aesthetics and endeavours to liberate both her characters and Scotland from the arresting pain of the past by confronting that past and moving forward without resorting to "British or transatlantic or parochial models." Moreover, Mitchison, like Gray in his twentieth-century setting, delineates the anglicization of eighteenth-century

Scotland and criticizes the self-effacing roles Scots played in erasing their own culture by mimicking London (Bull Calves 521).

#### TOWARDS INDIVIDUATION: JOCK'S RE-MEMBERING OF SELF

1982, Janine also shares with The Bull Calves an allegorical struggle toward selfhood, the structure of which suggests Carl Jung's theories of identity and the collective unconscious. Both novels draw on collective cultural memory to construct narratives which contribute to a re-membering of a forgotten past: identity for nation and self. Within Mitchison's allegory the union of Kirstie and Borlum ends Scotland's neurotic phase by figuratively healing the rift between Highlands and Lowlands, and writing the Scottish nation whole. In Jungian terms the fragmentation of Jock's identity and his subsequent descent into hell may be read as a neurosis, or what Jung defines as an "absence of meaning" that afflicts Jock when he cuts himself off from the past (Bailey 317).<sup>17</sup> Transposing Jung's ideas to a context of national identity and speaking allegorically, Jock is emblematic of Scotland and the neurotic state or lack of meaning she experiences in her refusal to deal honestly with a divisive and powerful past that has seen Scotland purchased by multinational interests. This process of imperialist acquisition has led to the estrangement of Scotland from herself. Like Jock, she has become dismembered; she dis(re)members this fracturing process. Jock's narrative is a textual pursuit of his estranged self; to become whole, to integrate his divided self he must encounter his soul image or anima, Janine. Following his exit from hell and "THE MINISTRY OF VOICES," Jock comments on the multinational traps with reference to his pornographic fictions and their contribution to his neurotic state as a division into two minds, and speaks of the potential to change this state:

The parts of the story which came to excite me the most were not the physical humiliations but the moment when the trap starts closing and the victim feels the torture of being in two minds ... And I was right to be excited by that moment because it is the moment when, with

courage, we change things. (194)

Gray makes his allegorical intentions very clear in the novel's Table of Contents where he labels the pages which describe his break down as "FROM THE CAGE TO THE TRAP: or: *How I Reached and Lost Three Crowded Months of Glorious Life: or: How I Became Perfect, Married Two Wives Then Embraced Cowardice: or: Scotland 1952-1982.*" In his inscription of the dissolution of a psyche Gray takes his cues from Scottish writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson and James Hogg. Duality has long been recognized as a characteristic of Scottish literature. The dual nationalities of British and Scottish, the Calvinist dichotomy of damned and elect and the bicultural nature of Highland and Lowland Scotland, have all contributed to making dualism a characteristic of Scottish writing. In contrast to their predecessors, however, Gray and Mitchison not only textualize the divided Scottish self but also the individuation of this self through a narratorial process that looks back toward the past, confronts and accepts what happened and then moves forward toward the future.<sup>18</sup>

Jung's work suggests that an individual such as Jock whose neurosis has developed due, in part, to his society's failure to provide a meaningful set of symbols on which he might build a cohesive identity, or a "strong psyche," can only escape this state of neurosis or lack of meaning through a quest to unearth new symbols "which would surface in archetypes from the past" (Bailey 317). Although probably not the type of archetypal symbols envisioned by Jung, the lochgelly that surfaces as the device Jock uses to torture Janine and his other fantasy women, and the allegory of Janine herself, provide meaning for Jock by defining his identity in the past and thus in the present. The lochgelly belonged to a former teacher of Jock's, the tyrannical Hislop, a man who bullies his students with beatings (182). Hislop is also a Scot who divorces himself from his own culture, subordinating it to valorize English culture. The incident in Jock's past which floats to the surface in the form of the lochgelly that is present in some of the fantasy

sequences quickly becomes buried by his suppression of this memory. However, the memory successfully breaks through this suppression in the last few pages of the novel. At this point Jock's pursuit of self yields a recognition of his potential for "brave good and unselfish action" in his rescue of a fellow student from Hislop's beatings (340). Only after this recognition can Jock get in touch with his emotional self; he cries for Hislop's descent into madness, his dead father, his estranged mother, his lost girlfriend Denny, his ex-wife Helen, and all of the relationships he had formerly been drinking to forget. Jock is reborn, as he says, after tears dampen his face:

I feel different. A new man? Not exactly the same man, anyway. What is this queer slight bright fluttering sensation as if a thing weighted down for a long time was released and starting, a little to stir? (340)

This fluttering sensation marks the beginning of the integration of Jock's estranged selves. Following this sensation Janine appears in yet another pornographic fantasy, Jock however, finally recognizes this symbol from his past as his soul and abandons the fantasy to embrace his anima: "O Janine, my silly soul, come to me now. I will be gentle I will be kind" (341). In the instance of this embrace Jock re-members himself (he reassembles and remembers that which has been dis(re)membered), and on the figurative level Scotland re-members herself, embracing her estranged past and preparing to move forward into the future. This movement toward the future is emblemized in Jock's plan to take affirmative action and cease being a victim:

I will have the poise of an acrobat about to step on a high wire, of an actor about to take the stage in a wholly new play. Nobody will guess what I am going to do. I do not know it myself. But I will not do nothing. (341)

Asked if he had Jung's theories of identity in mind when writing about Jock's estrangement from himself and what I read as his journey toward integration with his soul, Janine, Gray responded: "Yes,

though in the subconscious bit of the mind where all the books we once enjoyed are working" (Letter to the author).

#### DESCENTS INTO HELL--ANNA

The centre of the American empire, Barnum's New York City, is the locus of the imperial hell that fractures Anna Swan's Canadian identity. Barnum's American Museum--"a Yankee temple"--allegorizes the ugly underworld of the American dream where those who are unable to conform to the dominant or those who speak or exhibit their difference from the dominant are met with ill-treatment (Biggest Modern Woman 142). The museum houses animals kept docile by laudanum, a black dwarf named Zip, and an immigrant family of Dutch Albinos, beings cruelly exploited as freaks on the basis of their difference. Accidentally killed by Angus, Zip's corpse is stuffed by the novel's figuration of American enterprise, P. T. Barnum. Outside the museum Anna is depressed by "the city's vile anti-Negro lynchings" (132). That this is indeed hell is underlined in Anna's description of a museum mural:

the front wall displayed a huge mural known as the "Moral Spectacular Drama," which my poor parents thought represented the interior of Barnum's building until they realized it described a scenario of Hell. In it, ghastly demons scrambled out of coal pits below. (39)

Ironically, the disparity between the mural's hell and the interior of Barnum's museum is negligible, the museum is a hellish structure where Barnum, a man known "as a Connecticut devil," reigns supreme (65). The mural not only comments on New York and the museum, but also prefigures the fires that later ravage the museum and its inhabitants. Susan Swan says her Barnum is not evil "in the sense that Anna's parents would consider him," but "a seducer who will lead you away from what is true and strong about you because his interests are elsewhere" (unpublished interview). Swan's literary father Hugh MacLennan also creates an entrepreneurial American seducer who leads Canadians astray in his figure of Sam Downey, the boxing promoter who exploits and destroys Archie MacNeil in Each Man's Son (13-14).

Archie, like Anna, is brought to the United States to entertain American audiences.

Similar to the fantasies of 1982, Janine, hell in Susan Swan's novel is inscribed as a performance venue, a trap where objectified colonial Anna performs for the pleasure of an imperial audience. Even Anna's escape from the flames of Barnum's inferno is transformed into a performance by a spectacle-hungry American audience that Anna depicts as insensitive and blood-thirsty:

the crowd rejoiced in the deaths of the museum animals, screaming for tastes of "boiled whale" and "fried snake" and calling out to dying Ned, the LEARNED SEAL, "How are you?" (142)

Although the audience don't cry out for a taste of smoked giantess their voyeuristic appetites are wetted by her escape from the museum, at which point she says she is "pursued by the heathen mudsills who shrieked with joy because they didn't need a ticket for the spectacle" (143). A compulsive allegorist, Anna re-writes the performance her American audience make of her escape as a figuration of the humiliating and exploitive economic dance Canada is forced to perform to generate capital for United States' multinationals:

Yes, Mama Reuss needed wide egress so she could hang over the embers and make the profits climb. Fly for free enterprise, giantess! Swing for Wall Street--its bulls and its bears! And kick your heels up so the crowd can be fired by a peek at the steaming mystery of your unspeakables! (143)

In her response to her treatment by the "mudsills," as she calls New Yorkers, Anna provides a figurative counter-discourse to the American Edenic myth by refiguring New Yorkers as Baal-worshipping primitives who "stage fiery holocausts to make their cities grow" (141). Susan Swan articulates the American acculturation of Canada in the fragmentation of Anna's identity of which the giantess speaks following the museum fire:

I wept for my self and the selves I was in my growth, including the AGORAPHOBIC VICTIM who cowered as the tackle ball broke the museum wall, the VICTORIAN LADY hauled like a pachyderm over the heads in the street, the GIANT ACTRESS who smiled as she was lowered to the roaring crowds and, finally, the BIG SURVIVOR ... . (145)



Angus McAskill, a Canadian who perceives New York as a "hell-hole" (89) and believes Anna's presence there has "Yankeefied" her (138), writes a poem to Anna from Nova Scotia in which he refers to New York city's fracturing of the giantess' identity:

Whose the one-selved mountain man  
Shut out of Anna's city garden?  
*Gille mor Gille mor*  
Whose sickle scoops empty meadows  
in search of Anna's secret city selves  
and finds no blade of grass  
petty enough to contain him? (86)

The mitosis of Anna's self which reaches a high point in New York city is part of a process of a United States' induced dissolution that began in Nova Scotia, where an American presence invades Canadian cultural space in the form of Dunseith (an American who "butchered moose in winter" to take "revenge" on the Canadas). Acting as Barnum's talent scout Dunseith entices Anna to enter the American Museum's underworld (15). Similar to Jock's experience in Scotland, the presence of a dominant cultural other contributes to a state resembling Jung's neurotic meaninglessness in Anna. Anna responds to this lack of meaning by embarking on a symbolic quest for self that takes her to the United States and Britain. Reflecting Canada's traditional glances toward the United States as a model upon which she might construct herself, Anna looks south to Barnum for meaning<sup>19</sup>. "I suspected he held the answer for my search for a way to put my size to best use," she writes (39). In New York, however, Anna meets with more misadventure than she does meaning; she plays a series of "hackneyed old female roles" (157) for Barnum, roles that culminate in her fire performances in the burning museum before she realizes that Barnum is incapable of showing her how to put her size to its best use, and that a continued residency in New York could further shatter her sense of self. "New York," she writes in her journal,

is no longer satisfactory--not for a giantess such as me.  
The mudsills are stronger than I dreamt, and will  
willingly suck the life out of any large being foolish  
enough to entertain them. Angus is right. (I still  
cannot use the past tense--not yet!) All normals are

stronger than they look and it is unwise to feel obliged to look after them. I must protect myself instead from those of smaller stature who wish to exploit me. ... I do not want to be worn down by emblem fatigue, like Angus. (157-158)

Before his death Angus writes Anna warning her of American avarice and her susceptibility to "emblem fatigue": "an affliction peculiar to giants, who are always having to shoulder giant expectations from normal folk" (139). Anna later admits to Angus that he was

right about the mudsills and their barbarous ways. Of course, it has taken me longer than you thought to understand I do not belong among these energetic and warlike people who will sacrifice all to please their heathen god of financial gain. (140)

Anna's acculturation in New York, and the dominating presence of the American Martin Bates foil an opportunity for individuation, or an integration of her divided psyche. In Angus McAskill, despite his chauvinistic ways, Anna has found what she calls "my vegetable spirit budding in the timber," her soul brother or animus projection (51). Anna's determination to remain in New York, and her unfortunate marriage to Bates, thwart this movement toward an integration of the self.

Rejecting the American model as a source of meaning Anna turns to another imperial power, Great Britain, where she marries a figurative representation of the American model of avarice and greed she had left the States to escape, Bates. In the United Kingdom Anna is also a subject of objectification. She is reduced to a freak who entertains Queen Victoria, a human sofa "ordered ... from the colonies" for a friend of the Prince of Wales (Dr. Buckland, the same man who spies on her while she is urinating) (216), and a love conquest for the Prince himself (219). Her treatment by the British leads Anna to conclude that the Brits "are polite on the outside but cruel underneath," they are a nation who make her feel "like a performing monkey for people who live inside a fairy tale and don't understand anything except their own humiliations" (218).

Repudiating the British as a valid frame of reference from where she might draw some healing meaning, Anna returns to the United States

where she pursues individuation, asserting her native identity against that of Americans in Seville, Ohio:

Their open manner is refreshing after the self-conscious air of us backwoods Blue-noses. They are farmers who belong to a nation that has known few defeats and we come from a land which prides itself on surviving. (266)

As she discovered with New York and Great Britain, so Anna discovers Seville cannot provide her with a paradigm of meaning that will lead to an integration of her fractured selves. For in Ohio, as in New York, Anna finds Americans "seem to think difference is deserving of ill-treatment" (273). The role of Ohio housewife is yet one other emblem that does not fit *THE BIGGEST MODERN WOMAN OF THE WORLD* (278). Looking back on her lifelong quest for meaning Anna writes in her journal:

My life was a cliché--a farce acted out on an Ohio plain where the marvellous was diminished by the perception of those who dwell within material reality. And I was a prisoner in the dimension of ordinary life, looking for a way out. (306)

#### **TOWARDS INDIVIDUATION: ANNA'S RE-MEMBERING OF SELF**

Anna only connects with her true soul image or animus ten years before her death when, in labour with Babe, she is visited by a vision of the deceased Angus whose presence releases her from her "trapped animal" status:

... Angus trudged into the room. His beaver hat was in his hands, his head and shoulders were covered with snow, and his freckled face was half-frozen in a case of ice. He moved his lips and whispered, "Anna." (324)

Angus' presence and his speaking of Anna's name calm her shivering body and provide her with the engagement with her animus that is essential for her rebirth and subsequent voyage toward selfhood. Anna's narratorial access to the twentieth century effects a type of narrative rebirth that leads to a process of self-integration several decades after her death, an experience that is textualized in her telling of The Biggest Modern Woman of the World. In the allegorical context of Swan's novel the neurotic state or lack of meaning that is the catalyst for Anna's symbolic quest for selfhood is emblematic of

Canada's much discussed national neurosis: the pursuit of a Canadian identity. In its efforts to dredge up archetypes from the past in which new and viable symbols may be located, Susan Swan's novel echoes Jung's symbolic quest for the self in which the surfacing of archetypes from the past provides a route to liberation from neurosis (Bailey 317). The narrative of Anna Swan is an archetype not from Jung's primordial past, but from Canada's history that offers a figurative counter-discourse to invest the lives of late twentieth-century Canadians with a meaning that could strengthen Canadian cultural identity. Anna's voice floats up from the waters of a nineteenth-century past to comment on the threats to Canadian identity by American neo-imperialism in ways that anticipate the current constitutional crisis and the Canada--United States Free Trade Agreement.

Published in 1983, Swan's allegory for the Americanization of Canada comments on free trade discussions between the two countries dating back at least as far as 1947 (Securing Canada's Future 3), and anticipates the potential erasure of Canadian culture that the implementation of the FTA would bring to Canada. Writing in 1991, Colleen Fuller reports that despite the Mulroney government's claim of exemption from the free trade negotiations for Canadian culture and communications--"the cornerstone of the country's ability to exercise its sovereign rights and responsibilities as a nation"--it is precisely the legislative definition of this exemption that places them at risk (Fuller 6). Fuller goes on to conclude that

[t]he economic, social, and constitutional readjustments demanded by the FTA combined with a steady assault since the Conservatives were elected have begun to dismantle the framework required to sustain Canada's vulnerable cultural sector. (7)

The Canadian political situation that Anna describes to Barnum shortly after Confederation places contemporary twentieth-century problems in the light of the past:

The atmosphere is charged with political hostility and suspicion. Already some leaders want the Blue-noses to separate because they think the new situation is ruining

trade with the Yankees. (154)

Susan Swan also touches on the problematic relationship Québec has with English Canada in the allegory of Anna's friendship with the Québécois giant Louis Cyr. Fending off American misconceptions of a homogeneous nation where everyone speaks French Anna articulates that difference is characteristic of Canada. "We are a country of two nations," she informs the Americans, "[a]nd we are not part of the American empire" (265). Louis agrees embracing Anna and telling her, "[t]he Americans.... They'll never understand" (265). The potential for misunderstanding between Canadians, however, is emphasized in Louis' physical attack on Anna resulting from his mistaken belief that her singing of a French song is an attempt to ridicule the way he speaks (268). Anna's rejection of both American and British models as routes toward identity and meaning, and the projection of her anima onto a Canadian Angus McAskill to escape her neurotic state, comprise the figurative counter-discourse or symbols from the past that provide Canada with a prescription for liberation from a neurotic identity crisis within Confederation.

#### **ALLEGORIC, IRONIC, AND LINGUISTIC COUNTER-DISCOURSES**

The counter-discourse of Anna Swan's and Jock McLeish's narratives are textualized not only allegorically, but also ironically, and linguistically, to displace dominating American and British discourses which subordinate, homogenize, and ultimately endeavour to erase difference as it is expressed in Anna's Canadianness and Jock's Scottishness. In addition to the various types of allegory in both novels, I would like to examine some further examples of Swan's and Gray's allegoric delineation of dominating American and British discourses, and Anna and Jock's counter-discursive responses to them. With regard to cultural peripheralization, Anna impresses upon her readers the hegemonic relationship of British and American culture to Canadian culture in the twentieth-century in her comments on entertainments in

nineteenth-century British North America: "When there weren't American or British companies to see, there were local plays" (14). Since the 1970s a significant number of Canadians have begun to valorize their own cultural products, reading Canadian books, listening to Canadian pop groups, and viewing Canadian films; this was a trend made possible by federal policies which promoted and nurtured Canadian culture to a point where in 1989 the cultural sector of the Canadian economy, comprising telecommunications, broadcasting, publishing, film and recording, generated \$12 billion (Fuller 5-6). In the early 1990s cuts in subsidies to the arts in Canada, and the potential impact of the Free Trade Agreement to Canadian culture work to undermine this encouraging trend in cultural production.

Not unlike Margaret Laurence's Morag Gunn, whose novel is marginalized by an English reviewer as being from "the Canadian backwoods" and devoid of English sophistication (The Diviners 328), Anna Swan's critical reception by Charles Dickens is biased in its privileging of British values. Dickens finds Anna "uninspiring," and complains that she lacks the training required by British theatre (Biggest Modern Woman 250). Similarly, one of the novel's allegoric figurations of the United States, Barnum, maligns Anna's provocative pamphlet, "Giant Etiquette," by arguing that audiences do not want to think and, if they did would hardly be interested in the "views of a big curiosa" like Anna, like Canada (110). In the American Museum--an imperial structure which inferiorizes various cultural objects plundered from around the world by placing them alongside "a ball of hair, from the stomach of a sow" in a sensational sideshow context--Canadian culture is exhibited with victims of cultural exploitation and erasure (43). Angus and Mount McAskill are displayed with an "Algerian boarding pike; African pocketbook; Chinese pillow;" and a "wrought metal stirrup" (43). Furthermore, Barnum demonstrates both his and America's inability to appreciate cultural difference by telling Angus that "[h]owever uncouth" the "unsightly" displays of

foreign sculpture in the museum might be, "[t]hey are highly revered by millions of ignorant Heathens" (43). Bates, another allegorical figuration of the United States, designs an anthropometric system that excludes Canadians on the basis that they are "[n]ot evolved enough" (120), and finds the Celtic peoples lacking in "tenacity of purpose and mental hardihood" when compared to the superior "*Americanus*" (119).

Jock's personal losses signify what Scotland has lost through its effacing economic and cultural subordination to England:

What a lot I have lost: a little pencil sharpener shaped like the world, Denny, Allan, Mother, father, wife, many familiar streets and buildings, whole districts and industries suddenly not there anymore. (Janine 315)

The structure of this passage echoes the structure of the novel. It begins with Jock's small personal microcosmic pencil sharpener-shaped world and moves out to embrace the macrocosm of a Scottish nation. In his life Jock has learned that the voices of Scotland are not heard over the roar of the omnipotent discourses emanating from London and Washington:

The NATO nuclear bombers have come to the Isle of Skye. Apart from a handful of landowners and clergymen the local folk don't want them but no government need be moved by the wishes of the northern native, especially not the Gaelic native. (134)

As Jock observes, however, this erasure of democratic process in Scotland is nothing new but a practice that has been in place for hundreds of years, one which has included the clearing of the Highlanders by force from their glens and islands by a conspiracy of Scotland's plutocratic classes and some English (310). And, similar to Margaret Atwood's *Canada* (Survival 18), the process of cultural erasure and inferiorization is aided and abetted in Alasdair Gray's *Scotland* by an education system that teaches Jock "that history was made in a few important places"--"London, or Cape Canaveral, or Hollywood"--"by a few important people who manufactured it for the good of the rest" (Janine 340). Jock recognizes this dominant discourse as patently false, and with this recognition, removes power

from imperial 'others,' furnishing Scotland with an empowering counter-discourse:

But the Famous Few have no power now but the power to threaten and destroy and history is what we all make everywhere, each moment of our lives, whether we notice it or not. (340)

Read allegorically, Jock's response to this recognition constitutes a route out of imperialist historicizations of the past and the anaesthetic of alcohol, toward Scottish political, cultural, and economic autonomy: "I will work among the people I know; I will not squander myself in fantasies; I will to a purpose think harder and drink less" (340).

Anna Swan too, as a personification allegory for Canada, provides a figurative counter-discourse to the acculturating and annexing discourse of manifest destiny threatening Canada from the United States in her refusal to salute the American flag. Miss Beasley, Anna's American tutor in New York, who has a tiny 'Old Glory' pinned on the north pole of her atlas, believes that "to be American is the true destiny of each of us" (Biggest Modern Woman 84-85). Anna, however, despite, Miss Beasley's "meaningful looks" at her during the former's singing of the American national anthem, will not oblige her with a show of allegiance to the stars and stripes (84-85).

Irony is another tropological tool Anna and Jock incorporate into the counter-discourses they generate to foil American and English attempts to marginalize the Canadian and the Scottish. In response to Barnum's depreciation of Canada's technical achievements in the development of cough syrup, Anna makes a speech steeped in irony:

Contrary to the opinion of the rest of the world, which sees us as a backwater of medical research, the development of cough suppressors is a major scientific field in my country as well as a philosophical principle.

...

The Canadian cough drop is unequalled as an oesophaged elixir, and if administered in regular doses, along with maple leaves, our pills produce a calming effect. In time, the user will exhibit an agreeable tendency to avoid confrontation and seek consensus instead. A desire



to avoid war-like behaviour, a failure to sustain violent controversy such as the calamitous war you are fighting with your southern brothers--what more (C41) a scientist ask of a drug? (69)

Writing about this passage in her discussion of Canadian ironies as a defense against American cultural domination, Linda Hutcheon comments that "Anna Swan goes to the United States ... and becomes very aware of the differences between the two nations' ideologies. And those differences provoke double-edged ironies" (As Canadian as ...possible... 45). This doubleness, Hutcheon argues, is located in the self-deprecating and demystifying ironies Anna directs against both herself and the United States.<sup>20</sup> As Hutcheon says, Anna's irony is initially directed at herself and Canadians but soon shifts to "deflate and criticize its American target" (45).

Similarly, Angus subverts the deprecating discourse of American imperialism, represented in the novel by Barnum and his museum, through the doubled voice of irony, saying one thing to mean another. Angus speaks of his time with Barnum as an education, and constructs himself as a laggard whose intellectual shortcomings prevent him from comprehending the great wisdom of Barnum, whom he constructs as a Philistine devaluing the work of "ignorant heathens": "How could I learn to appreciate his scholarly lore? Could I start to comprehend the educational materials my master had crammed behind one pane of glass?" (Biggest Modern Woman 43). Here, the supposed valorizing of Barnum as an intellect gives way to a vision of a cretin who unthinkingly packages objects from diverse cultures with "mangy toucans and stuffed monkeys," other victims of his artefact collection (43).

Jock's rape of Janine as an allegory for Scotland's peripheralization by American and English discourses invests 1982, Janine with Hutcheon's *Irony-oppositional*, "the subversive doubling within and against the dominant" (As Canadian...as possible.. 15). This type of irony is characteristic of Scotland's doubled position in Britain, it is at once a nation and a province of a nation.

Jock's position is particularly ironic; he is both the Scot who is 'fucked' by inferiorizing discourses which cause his mental breakdown, and he is also, in his role as an employee of National Security, contributing to that discourse (137). Jock debunks the British and American military discourses through the duplicity of irony:

The militarisation and depression of Scotland has been good for the security business. Apart from the breweries my firm has been the only one to expand here in recent years. But the picture is bright in other areas. The worsened housing situation is enriching the building societies. The public health cuts and middle-class return to private medicine is enriching the insurance companies and the doctors. Greater unemployment and crime have brought new recruits to the army, power to the police. (137)

The bright picture becomes a critique of Westminster policies that have depressed Scotland to consolidate a minority holding of wealth and power, and to profit multinational corporations such as Jock's security firm.

Language in both of these novels turns on the duplicitous trope of irony. Anna and Jock speak their heterogeneity in counter-discourses that challenge the homogenizing voice of standard received English. Both texts house linguistic carnivals which draw dialogically on the languages of Scotland to create a syncretic english capable of expressing difference and dismantling the cultural domination of English in Canada and Scotland. The linguistic diversity of these two narratives constitutes what Kristeva would read as carnivalesque discourse. "Carnavalesque discourse," she writes,

breaks through the laws of language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. (36)

Susan Swan and Alasdair Gray work toward decolonizing their respective cultures by inscribing their narratives with the other languages which inform their characters' cultural sense of self. Both writers reject the domination by the language of England over

communication, and subvert its official linguistic codes through a process of "remoulding " and "reconstruction" (Ashcroft et al 38) that brings English under the vernacular tongues of the englishes spoken in Canada and Scotland (39).

Susan Swan writes out of a multicultural and liminal space between the immigrant worlds of the old country and the new where, contemporaneously, French, Native languages, Germanic, Slavic, Japanese, Chinese, Hindi and a multiplicity of other languages interact with Canada's regional englishes to generate a polyphonic national discourse. Her character, Anna Swan, a daughter of Scots crofters who immigrated to Canada, negotiates the space between the old world her parents speak and the new one she lives in by expressing herself and her developing nation in a hybridized Canadian english that is punctuated with Gaelic. Anna's syncretic voice is invested with what her Uncle Geordie calls "the power of the *sithichean*," a nurturing force that lends her growing songs the potency necessary to draw "forth the seeds from their sleep in the mussel mud of [her] father's garden" (Biggest Modern Woman 11). This usage of Gaelic, as with most Gaelic in the novel is not translated by Anna for her readers. Anna's text includes a letter she receives from her mother in which Mrs. Swan uses the Gaelic to transmit cultural heritage to her daughter:

I should tell you Uncle Geordie told me *before your birth* the little people were bringing me a *bean-grugach* they'd found in a pine grove. In the old country *bean-grugach* are women of large size and intelligence (like you, dear) who are looked upon with respect. I know young people don't believe in the *sithichean*; you like to feel the clink in your purse. But Uncle Geordie had the *an da shealladh* and he wasn't wrong about you or the train he saw crashing through the forest, with its headlights burning up the darkness, before no train tracks were there, or invented. (258)

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin have read this type of linguistic variance, the inscription of untranslated words, in settler colonies as "code-switching" (72-73). Susan Swan's incorporation of untranslated Gaelic words, however, brings an added dimension to code-switching, for Gaelic was a language placed under erasure by the

dominant English language even in the old country. The syncretic nature of Canadian identity is again textualized in Anna's cultural translation of the Gaelic ballad to a Canadian context:

At night, as my siblings drowsed on the straw heap before our hearth, I sang the growing song I had adapted from a Gaelic love ballad. (There were many ballads to choose from as the settlers in Colchester County believed the Highland proverb that if an end comes to the world, music and love will endure). (Biggest Modern Woman 27)

Anna later employs this hybridized Canadian form of expression as a counter-discourse, aimed at the United States and its foiling of her romance with Angus in her attempt to shrink the seat of America's capital by singing her song backwards (134). This Canadian celebration of cultural difference as an expression of identity and a counter-discourse to a globally homogenizing imperial discourse is contrasted by Swan to nineteenth-century America and the ideology of the cultural melting pot. Anna reports an altercation between her friend the French-speaking Louis and the American Bideman who takes exception to Louis' singing while the group travels through Ohio: "Suddenly, Bideman whirled around and glared at Louis. 'Shut up your caterwauling, Frenchie. We're in America now and nobody speaks that lingo here'" (261). As much as there were people in the States at this time who spoke French, in Louisiana for example, the dominant political power structure was working for a monolingual America. In the late twentieth-century, however, this monolingual paradigm is beginning to crumble with the growth of the Spanish-speaking population in the States.

Gray's novel self-consciously challenges the dominant anglicizing discourse that subordinates Scottish language and culture and locates this discourse in an Anglo-centric education system that valorizes only that which is English. Poor Hislop, Jock's disturbed school teacher, is one of those Scots who has bowed down to the dominant discourse, rejecting his own as inferior and embracing English culture and language as superior. As Jock relates, Hislop "recited all the great poets by heart apart from Burns," the voice of

vernacular language, Scots, "who he despised" (1982, Janine 71).<sup>21</sup> Hislop, a representative in the novel of British empire, interprets his students' usage of Scots, what he terms "the local slang," as "either a conscious or unconscious effort to destroy communication between the provinces of a once great empire" (84). The acculturation of his students through the erasure of their Scots tongue is what Hislop aims at; he endeavours to euphonize their voices through what Jock remembers as echolaliac lessons:

"Euphony! O Euphony!" screamed Hislop (you funny little man). "Who will give me back a single euphonious line! You are a gang of barbarians but God knows I have toiled honestly to improve you, I have persistently dinned into your ears the purest verbal melodies in English literature has no good come of that? The lowland Scots have a native incapacity for euphony but need they detest and reject what they are powerless to produce? (182)

In Hislop's Anglo-centric universe English is a pure and poetic language while Scots is an impure and unpoetic one; he too, like the Americans in Swan's novel, reads difference as "deserving of ill-treatment" (Biggest Modern Woman 273).

Elsewhere in the novel, this institutionalized deprecation of the Scots language is reflected in the erasure of Scots accents in Scottish people as they approach positions of power, and the correlative affectation of English accents by these same Scots. As the English actor informs the cast and company of Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp, the play the young Jock is involved with in Edinburgh, "[t]he Scotch change their accents when they get into positions of power" (1982, Janine 248). Rehearsals for the play emphasize this acquiescence to London by Scots who are all too ready to erase their own voices, and thereby their identity. Brian, the plays Glasgow-born director speaks with a "shrill Oxford-accented, phoney, fury" (222), yet his attempts to speak his own Glaswegian dialect sound like "the corniest sort of ham" (221). His inability to speak the voice of his own culture prompts Brian to suggest to the writer of Aladdin that he play the Glaswegian McGrotty as a cockney, a prospect of cultural erasure the writer is not willing to

entertain: "I will not let you turn my play into a vehicle for your national inferiority complex and your London West End ambitions" (222).<sup>22</sup> Gray, however, provides a heterogeneous counter-discourse to challenge the official linguistic codes of English as disseminated by Hislop in his incorporation of Lowland Scots into the novel's narrative. Moreover, Gray invests Scots with some authority and power when Jock's God employs the Scots word 'thrapple' (Adam's apple), which appears unglossed in the text (195). The dialogue between Gray's characters is peppered with unglossed Scots words such as Old Red's usage of "blether" (199) and Jock's and Denny's Scots verb forms of "arenae" and "isnae" (207).

The decolonizing voice, then, in both novels is marked, linguistically by heterogeneous codes that work to foreground the diversity of Canadian and Scottish cultures and to displace the dominating code of English with syncretic englishes which re-member the self through subversive post-colonial allegories.

Confronted with culturally effacing and inferiorist discourses emanating from England and the United States, Swan and Gray construct post-colonial allegories to promote what Stephen Slemon, quoting Michael Dash, refers to as "that way of seeing that rejects 'history' in favour of those aspects of culture that have been subject to historical erasure" ("Post-Colonial Allegory" 65). In the case of Anna's Canada, the history rejected by her text ignores the American and British discourses that construct Canada as inferior and an object of economic rape. Similarly Jock's text rejects a history erasing English and American discourses that construct Scotland as an object of economic rape.

The intersection of the carnival and allegory is located in both novels' uncrowning of dominant others through an acculturally precipitated splitting of the self into subject and object fragments. A subsequent descent into an allegorical hell effectively delineates the destructive influence of imperialist discourse and reveals the progenitors of this discourse as sexual deviants with a predilection

for giant genitalia in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World and pornography in 1982, Janine. Through a carnivalesque process of "destructive genesis" as it is reflected in the dismembering and subsequent re-membering of Anna and Jock, Swan and Gray begin to decolonize their respective cultures and arrive at moments where the processes of personal and national integration of the psyche may begin.

## Notes

1. Susan Swan based a large part of her portrait of Martin Bates on oral narratives she recorded in Seville, Ohio from people who "remembered him walking down the streets and spitting tobacco on the heads of the people who walked underneath him." She says her research found him to be "a totally unloveable man" (unpublished interview).
2. Colonial historiography reconstructed what little Canadian and Scottish history that was taught in the public school systems of both countries from a predominantly English perspective. This anglocentric approach to history has been displaced over the last century by Canadians and Scots who have begun to re-write their pasts. As Scottish historian Rosalind Mitchison suggests "[t]here has been very little Scottish history in the experience of school children, beyond stories about Robert the Bruce and other monarchs and some naming of battle sites. Some prejudices, particularly those shown in Sir Walter Scott's The Grandfather have also been incorporated. But otherwise history has mainly meant English history" (viii). Canadian critic Linda Hutcheon writes "Canadian writers must return to their history (as do Wiebe, Swan, Bowering, Kogawa, and so many others) in order to discover (before they can contest) their historical myths.... However, Canadian writers have first had to deconstruct British social and literary myths in order to redefine their colonial history" (The Canadian Postmodern 6).
3. For a detailed discussion of the pornographic in Cohen's novel, see Söderlind.
4. See Terdiman 343.
5. For a further discussion of ontological ambiguity and the collision of worlds as characteristics of postmodernism, see McHale 59-72.
6. The lines Anna writes for Martin's Hymeneal referring to the penetration of Canada's waters by underglacial submarines further illustrate a twentieth-century frame of reference that violates the construct of linear time (181). As Swan says of the many voices in her narrative, "I didn't want to suggest that this array of perspectives was edited by Martin, because if it had been, he would have done something more diabolical" (unpublished interview).
7. Kamboureli incorrectly reads Anna's "literary agents" as the authors of these spiels, erroneously concluding that Anna is displaced from her own discourse. See Kamboureli 7.
8. One problem with reading the medieval carnival as an unqualified subversion of hierarchy is the manipulation of the event by church and state, as a safety valve which could be opened up to provide a vicarious purge of social tensions and prevent a real uncrowning or revolution.
9. Swan told me she read Rabelais while working on her novel and "liked his idea of size as a wonderful extravagance and the body being kind of an extravagance that wasn't rational" (unpublished interview).
10. Discussing Blakely's documentation of Anna's marriage, Swan suggests that because Anna was "in conventional terms such a success story, this giant woman who finds a giant husband, that maybe scholars like Blakely wanted to congratulate her for that on some



level, maybe unconsciously and not dig too deep into what the actual implications of that marriage were. But from what I've found in my research, he was a most unlikeable man and I suspect that he gave Anna a sense of respectability. But I wonder about their marriage" (unpublished interview).

11. Atwood speaks of the penetration of Canada's Northwest Passage by American icebreakers as a "violation of [Canadians'] mental space." See her conversation with Hancock 192.

12. MacLennan's Each Man's Son provides a variation on this encounter between McAskill and an American sea captain, in which the giant blows the intruding and subordinating American across the bay on winds of flatulence. See Each Man's Son 166-67.

13. For further discussion of 1982, Janine and Something Leather, as they relate to the pornographic, see Boyd 108-123.

14. Although Atwood's Survival was an important text toward the recognition and valorization of Canadian literatures and did much to promote the teaching and study of Canadian fiction, it is marred by a narrow thematic approach and its Ontario-centric perspective. For a critique of these and other problems in Survival, see Davey, "Survival: The Victim Theme."

15. Gray's Lanark also descends into hell. See Cairns Craig, "Going Down to Hell is Easy: Lanark, Realism and the Limits of the Imagination."

16. Unfortunately, I cannot replicate Gray's typography which is positioned vertically, along the margins of the pornographic fantasy.

17. See Bailey's discussion of Jungian theory and the work of Margaret Laurence 317.

18. Although the works of Sir Walter Scott may be read as working toward an individuation of the Scottish psyche in their uniting of Highlander and Lowlander, his novels perpetuate the mythology of a glorious tartan past which clouds interpretations of history and thwarts the process of individuation.

19. For example, William Mackenzie and Louis Joseph Papineau, two of the reformers who instigated the 1837 Rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada, both pointed to the United States as a model for democratization of the electoral system in the Canadas. See McNaught 85-87.

20. Hutcheon quotes Nancy Walker to define what she calls *Irony Self-deprecating*, as that which "acknowledges the opinion of the dominant culture--even appears to confirm it--and allows the speaker or writer to participate in the humorous process without alienating the members of the majority (as quoted in As Canadian as 13-14).

*Irony Demystifying* is defined by Hutcheon as "the critical, debunking, judging irony" (15).

21. See Ashcroft et al's discussion of Edward Said and V. S. Naipaul and mimicry of the dominant power 4, 88.

22. As Gifford has noted, McGrotty and the play are references to Gray's novella McGrotty and Ludmilla. See "Private Confessions" 115.

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ABOVE ALL REFUSE TO BE A VICTIM: NARRATIVES TOWARD SELF AND COMMUNITY

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*... they were suffused with what we call 'the Colonial Mentality,' which views the mother country or the centre of the Imperial Culture as superior.*

Margaret Atwood, Cencrastus

INTRODUCTION

Neil Gunn's Highland River, Margaret Atwood's Surfacing, and Sheila Watson's The Double Hook are fictions seeking to dismantle the fraudulent, static, and damaging concepts of self as these are imposed upon their respective cultures by imperial powers. The microcosmic investigation of the personal self in these novels comes to define the macrocosmic community or cultural identity to which the personal self is inextricably linked. Gunn, Atwood, and Watson create identity by exploiting the pluralities of self, history and language that are complicated by colonialism.

Cairns Craig has suggested that when history or its equivalent within the individual psyche, memory, is destroyed identity is denied a people and the personal and collective imagination is transformed into a destructive force ("Unearthing the Body"). Canada and Scotland are the victims of such a denial. Margaret Atwood writes on the Canadian perception of history with reference to Carol Bolt's play Buffalo Jump: "history and culture were things that took place elsewhere"--the United States or England (Survival 18). Similarly, Craig has argued that English imperialism made Scotland a "historyless" community ("The Body in the Kit Bag" 19). The conventional historiography of empire attempts to limit voices and versions of reality to one all-encompassing interpretation by selectively ordering subversive events into a single narrative.

Scottish and Canadian writers must struggle to create alternative and equally meaningful histories through the reconstruction of an imposed and excluding historiography. In this sense many Scottish and Canadian narrators play god, displacing damaging narratives and creating more appropriate ones. As Ashcroft et al suggest, this historical dynamism is representative of post-colonial literatures: "received histories are tampered with, rewritten, and realigned from the point of view of the victims of its destructive process" (34). The totalizing nature of Craig's hypothesis--that removal of identity or history is solely destructive--must be amended, however, when applied to Highland River, Surfacing, and The Double Hook. The destructive processes these characters engage in are ultimately, and paradoxically constructive. Gunn's Kenn and Watson's James define themselves by the end of their narratives, and Atwood's unnamed narrator at least determines who she is not in the final pages of Surfacing.

#### **EXCAVATION AND FISHING: UNCOVERING SELF AND NATION**

The shared motifs of 'archaeological dig' and 'fishing' employed by Gunn, Atwood and Watson articulate their dialogues with the past. I am particularly interested in how Neil Gunn's Kenn, the narrative voice of Atwood's Surfacing, and Sheila Watson's James negotiate the death-dealing and artificial borders of colonialism, and how two of these writers deal with the doubled reality of being both hunter and the hunted. The 'hunt' or 'fishing expedition' for identity, embarked upon by both Kenn and the narrator of Surfacing, is problematized by the interference of the dominant culture in each society. Kenn and Scotland become the hunted rabbits of an imperialist English war and the narrator of Atwood's novel perceives herself to be the prey of invading Americans.

In Gunn's novel, young Kenn recognizes that through the exclusive nature of an English historicism, disseminated in Scottish schools, he has been denied an identity. The history Kenn is taught

concerning "English kings and queens and the dates of battles" is not relevant to himself or his community (28). Kenn and his people have been "robbed of a background of their own" (219). This English history displaces the Scottish past of Gael, Viking, and Pict, leaving Kenn to decode the "sounds in the empty spaces of history," (62) to unearth a body of ancestors who tell him he is one of the folk (218). Gunn, in a manner similar to Atwood and Watson, invokes fishing as an allegory for the dialogue with history and the enquiry into self that Kenn makes. Gunn relates Kenn's search into "the lost times" of ancestral past to a fishing toward the source for the novel's allegorical "'salmon of knowledge'" (35,212). Part of what Kenn wants to catch through the salmon is "inside himself," and involves a voyage back to "the very spot where he himself was spawned" (36, 35). The first encounter with the salmon provides Kenn with the visceral experience that makes him aware of his innate sense of self and ancestral past:

Out of that noiseless world in the grey of the morning, all his ancestors came at him. They tapped his breast until the bird inside it fluttered madly; they drew a hand along his hair until the scalp crinkled; they made the blood within him tingle to a dance that had him leaping from boulder to boulder before he rightly knew to what desperate venture he was committed. (8)

To reach the "source of the river and the source of himself," Kenn continues his subversion of the exclusive and reified body of English history by initiating a dialogue with pre-history:

the carcasses putrefy and decay leaving clean bones that he and Beel may throw at each other in summer fields. Time deals with decay evenly, and all the mess of blood and flesh is resumed into the black aseptic ooze. (61, 119)

The bones that Kenn plays with are the bones of pre-history that he unearths on his archaeological dig for the folk and for self-identity.

Kenn's search for the source takes him out of human history and into the primordial mire of his ancestors. He finds that "the smallest things throw his mind back to the cave days" (118). For Kenn the smell of heath smoke contains "something definitely

primordial," something that conjures up "tribes hunting and trekking through lands beyond the horizons of history" (121). Kenn's entry into the non-human world is prefigured when the narrative voice of the mature Kenn juxtaposes the image of sleeping animals to the young Kenn: "[t]he picture [of the sleeping animals] made him snuggle in his own den and smell the thick warmth of his own pelt" (81). On his journey to the source as a mature adult, the narratorial voice of Kenn associates himself and the "life flowing through him" with the non-human world: "[t]his was the health out of which one looked as brown eyes out of a curled furry body" (239). Kenn's arrival at the source of the river is equated with a liberation from the linear time of history: "time was gone. Human relationship was gone. He had entered into the non-human, not only in the moor but in himself" (244). Kenn transcends the human world, defined by such fabricated trappings of civilization as time, history, and the bloody attrition of imperial power struggles to arrive at what he refers to as "a once upon a time" golden age (123). His appearance at the source, the metaphysical location of his culture's beginnings, dissolves the unnatural constraints of time and history that have worked to unravel Kenn's Gaelic culture.

The experience of history confronting Atwood's narrator in Surfacing is not dissimilar to Kenn's. She remembers highschool history lessons that were taught

neutrally, a long list of wars and treaties and alliances, people taking power over other people; but nobody would ever go into the motives, why they wanted it, whether it was good or bad. They used long words like "demarcation" and "sovereignty," they wouldn't say what they meant and you couldn't ask. (91)

The "taking and losing power over other people" suggests the cultural and sexual imperialism the narrator experiences as a Canadian woman. Her subjection to the sexual power plays of men in the novel relates in complicated ways to Canada's subjection to a cultural and economic possession emanating from the United States. The received history of the classroom reduces both the narrator and her country to

marginalia; it fixes them "in the margins around the Treaty of Versailles" where the narrator doodles "invisibly" (92). Both the narrator and Canada have suffered a damaging divorce from a past that has deprived them of identity. As she says "a divorce is like an amputation, you survive but there is less of you" (36). The narrator has 'amputated' a part of herself; her unborn child. Although, for the present, she refuses to acknowledge the abortion and clings to a history of her own construction that provides her with an ex-husband who has custody of their living child. She has returned to the North, the land of her past, to unearth and breathe life into a past she has abrogated with her fictions: the bodies of her father, mother, and aborted child. The narrator says of her memories:

I have to be sure they're my own and not the memories of other people telling me what I felt, how I acted, what I said: if the events are wrong, the feelings I remember about them will be wrong too, I'll start inventing them and there will be no way of correcting it. (67)

These words provide insight into not only the effect of identity deprivation on the individual, but also the dilemma of history experienced by the post-colonial culture that must struggle to be sure its history is its own, and not simply the aberrations of an imperializing other. The narrator observes that "to have the past and not the present, that means you're going senile" (67). She, however, chooses to ignore the fraudulent nature of a past that deprives her of her present and threatens her with early senility. For the narrator, received history is a corrupting force that in addition to precipitating senility in herself can transform her father into a "rag bundle of decaying leaves. History I thought quick" (72).

The narrator's search of her childhood home for "the will, the deed, the property title" uncovers the primordial legacy left to her by her father:

The body was long, a snake or a fish; it had four limbs or arms and a tail and on the head were two branched horns. Lengthwise it was like an animal, an alligator; upright it was more human, but only in the positions of the arms and the front-facing eyes. (95)

Parallel to Kenn's entry into the pre-historical world, a "fishing trip" provides a conduit to the non-human world for the narrator of Surfacing (99). Recalling Kenn's allegorical "salmon of knowledge," the fish Atwood's narrator seeks is both an abstraction--an icon for her transformed father and the primordial world--and a real fish:

A fish jumps, carved wooden fish with dots painted on the sides, no, antlered fish thing drawn in red on cliffstone, protecting spirit. It hangs in the air suspended, flesh turned to icon, he has changed again, returned to the water. How many shapes can he take.  
I watch for an hour or so; then it drops and softens, the circles widen, it becomes an ordinary fish again. (181)

As John Thieme (15) and others have suggested, Atwood adumbrates the transition between the human and non-human worlds when the narrator speaks of the hunt for her father as "an archaeological problem" (140). For the narrator, the personal and cultural past merge when her father's map to prehistoric rock paintings takes her to a confrontation with a very different primordial entity than she had anticipated, her foetus:

It was there but it wasn't a painting, it wasn't on the rock. It was below me drifting towards me from the furthest level where there was no life, a dark oval trailing limbs. It was blurred but it had eyes, they were open, it was something I knew about, a dead thing, it was dead. (136)

At this point the narrator's history becomes entwined with the aboriginal history of Québec. Although this vision stimulates the narrator's memory, and she begins to recover a part of her past, her history is still riddled with artifice. As the narrator acknowledges, her past is "a faked album, the memories as fraudulent as passports, ... a paper house" which she can no longer live in (138).

Only the destruction of this "paper house"--an act of violence against constructed imperial history--will uncover the narrator's parents and ultimately the narrator herself. For the narrator, the primordial world occupied by the ancestral aboriginal artists of the rock paintings is emblematic of "the places where you could learn truth" (139). The removal of identity unleashes the narrator's

destructive imagination; to get to the true place of the primordial world, "everything from history must be eliminated" (170). The scrapbooks and photo albums where she had previously looked "for something [she] could recognize as [herself]" are burned (171, 84). She has to "clear a space" in time for herself. Like Kenn, she strips off the restrictive clothing of 'civilization' and waits for the fur to grow (171). Entry into the primeval world permits her, however briefly, to recover her lost mother (176) and to become "a part of the landscape" (181) she formerly referred to as "my home ground, foreign territory" (5). The constructive aspects of her destructive imaginings are manifest in a rejection of the Christian belief system in favour of the aboriginal gods she thanks for her vision (139). The narrator creates a hybridized belief system that permits her to share the aboriginal rootedness in the landscape: "I lean against a tree, I am a tree leaning" (175).

A major component of the colonizing process is the displacement of indigenous belief systems by the colonizer's religion, a phenomenon Atwood, Watson, and Gunn explore in their novels by connecting their narratives with vanished or vanishing aboriginal peoples. Distinct differences must be noted concerning these authors' textualizations of aboriginal peoples to effect a bond with place. Gunn is related genetically to the Picts, Vikings, Druids and Gaels he conjures up to give Kenn a sense of himself and his culture. However, Watson and Atwood may claim the aboriginal culture they translate into their narratives only as part of what Margaret Laurence refers to as a larger, mythical Canadian ancestry (Heart of a Stranger 156-157). Some critics, however, might challenge my interpretation of these Canadian texts as settler culture establishing indigeneity through cultural hybridity, and read Atwood's and Watson's references to native culture as a type of colonization or appropriation of the aboriginal imagination.<sup>1</sup> Watson herself has had reservations about her usage of the novel's Coyote figure ("What I'm Going To Do" 15).



Atwood discusses the problematic of grafting an alien religion onto a colonial space in a conversation with Graeme Gibson:

if you import a god from somewhere else, it's fake; it's like importing your culture from somewhere else. The only good, authentic thing is something that comes out of the place where you are, or the reality of your life. The assumption of the book [Surfacing], if there is one, is that there are gods that do exist here, but nobody knows about them...The other thing that the imported gods will always tell you to do is to destroy what is there, to destroy what is in the place and to make a replica of the god's place, so that what you do is you cut down all the trees and you build a Gothic church, or imitation thereof. The authentic religion has been destroyed; you have to discover it in some other way.  
(19)<sup>2</sup>

For Atwood the history and the acculturating processes of imperialism destroy the "authentic religion" of Canada, thwarting her narrator's journey through the anthropological past of place toward her lost parents and self. Christianity and the English language, markers of colonialism, are barriers which must be removed if the narrator is to recover an indigenous cultural tradition and translate it into her present. I use the term indigenous here to refer not only to aboriginal culture, but also the hybrid of aboriginal and settler culture the narrator creates, and thus indigenizes; she uses her childhood "pictographs" of a fused God/Devil (152) as guides toward her parents and the prehistoric pictographs her father photographed.<sup>3</sup> Atwood has said elsewhere that Calvinism, one of the Christian religions brought to Canada by many Scottish colonists, and colonialism, "have always fed each other, and their interaction is circular: Calvinism gives rise to the 'I am doomed' attitude, which fits into the Colonial 'I am powerless' one" (Survival 239). The narrator renounces English and immerses herself in "the other language" of nature affecting a break with the "past present and future" she reads in the lifeline of her palm (153). Such a departure from the dead hegemonic culture of imperialism makes her feel that "everything is alive," and enables her to see ancestral connections that transcend the human: "A frog is there, leopard frog with green spots and gold-rimmed eyes, ancestor. It includes me, it

shines, nothing moves but its throat breathing" (173). In this "other way" the narrator discovers what Atwood calls an authentic religion of place.

Sheila Watson shares Atwood's predicament as a writer forced to use imported and long since atrophied linguistic and spiritual materials to shape a world. Watson discusses this cultural alienation as the motivation for her writing The Double Hook:

And there was something I wanted to say: about how people are driven, how if they have no art, how if they have no tradition, how if they have no ritual, they are driven in one of two ways, either towards violence or towards insensibility--if they have no mediating rituals which manifest themselves in what I suppose we call art forms. And so it was with this that the novel began. ("What I'm Going to Do" 15).

Whereas Atwood borrows from the fossilized traces of prehistoric aboriginal culture, Watson interprets extant fragments of native tradition to establish a hybridized form of Canadian representation. Watson "wanted to write something about the West, which wasn't a Western; and about Indians which wasn't about...Indians" (14). She expresses her cultural alienation indirectly through the objective correlative of the Indians.<sup>4</sup> Canadian critic Barbara Godard reads the Potter family as descendants of the Thompson Indian tribe and the village of Nineveh as a Métis settlement (154). Watson indicates the cultural crisis experienced by Nineveh in her comments on colonization and the village's ethnographic make-up:

the problem of an indigenous population which had lost or was losing its own mythic structure, which had had its images destroyed, its myths interpreted for it by various missionary societies and later by anthropologists--a group intermarried or intermingled with people of other beliefs--French Catholics who had come into the West with the Hudson Bay Company, Biblical puritanical elements--all now virtually isolated from their source. All these voices echo in The Double Hook. (Meyer and O'Riordan 159)

In contrast to Atwood the syncretic relationship between American Indian and European cultures is constructed by Watson as a stultifying force inhibiting an understanding of self and community, and alternatively as the dynamic force behind such an understanding. Felix speaks a non-sensical discourse of fragmented Catholic and

secular ritual: "His mind sifted ritual phrases. Some half forgotten. Your welcome. Put your horse in. Pull up. Ave Maria. *Benedictus fructus ventris. Introibo*" (51). As Godard observes, however, Christian and aboriginal religions are interwoven in the voice of the trickster figure Coyote "from whose mouth issue phrases echoing Jeremiah and Isaiah" (155). Paradoxically, Coyote is a source of cultural dynamism in *Nineveh*. He is a figure who removes the oppressive body of the colonial past emblemized by Mrs. Potter, and who saves James, the novel's source of community and self-definition, from suicide (Double Hook 47, 98).

The layers of colonizing invasion that compose Scotland's past outstrip the relatively recent large scale invasion of North America by Europeans. Neil Gunn's Kenn reads place names in Gaelic and Norse inscribed onto his landscape by these invaders from the North (Highland River 61). The various tribes constituting Kenn's present culture and self<sup>5</sup>--Picts, Vikings, Druids, Gaels--celebrated their communion with the glen in pagan rituals which have been silenced by Christianity and history. Unlike Atwood's narrator, Gunn does not dismiss Christianity, but challenges the rigid Calvinist theology of Scotland by exposing pagan elements in a Christian society. Beel's and Kenn's "orgy of fire raising" evokes primitive ritual:

The fire became a lust in the blood. They danced, throwing their arms about; they leapt daringly through flame on outer edges; they appeared choking from voluting smoke. Personal names and challenges went up with the flames, screamed from reddened, stinging faces smudged with soot. (120)

Kenn's efforts to "recapture" a spiritual bond with the land lead to a retracing of the pagan peoples who once inhabited it and hypotheses about their spiritual beliefs (63). After considering the early Christians who inhabited the glen, he reconstructs the ancient Druids, dismantling the blood-thirsty figuration of them he first encountered in a school reader. "Though why," asks Kenn, "of all practices, select this peculiar one of burning the living? After all, very little is positively known about the Druidic practice, and

that most certainly from a Roman or two" (131). Furthermore, Christians were still burning heretics in the seventeenth century. Received history is usually written from the perspective of a conquering imperial power. In North America, and the Scotland defeated by the Roman Empire, historical discourse was used to subordinate indigenous religions and colonize the mind of the subaltern with the belief systems of the dominating power.

Kenn questions whether the Calvinism through which he and his people have most recently sought the face of God shapes the spiritual beliefs of the maritime community as much as the sea itself forges the brand of Calvinism peculiar to this region:

For the seamen were Calvinists in religion. Yet he does not quite believe this, because the discipline and austerity, the cleanness and precision of action, arose necessarily from the traffic with the sea.... The fury of the wind was the fury of a ravaging beast that a man, thigh-booted, must never for a moment cease to stare in the eye. If he carried this discipline over to his God, in greater measure, there was at least a logic in the process. (54)

Ultimately, Kenn rejects Calvinism's rigid binaries of damned and elect, evading an authoritarian conception of God: "He has never been one of the chosen, of the elect. His instinct is against them" (212). A metaphor widely read in western culture as possessing a peculiarly Christian connotation, fishing is constructed by Gunn, Atwood, and Watson as a means of pursuing a spiritual relationship with place through communion with an ancestral and pre-Christian past.

Fishing again connotes a dialogue with the past for the characters of Sheila Watson's The Double Hook. As its title suggests, however, The Double Hook turns on an ironic trope. There are at least two types of fishing going on here: the selfish, glory-defying fishing of Mrs. Potter that denies James identity and fractures the community, and James' search for a personal definition that eventually unites the community. Mrs. Potter fished for and caught the darkness. She is dead; she is death. Her spectral figure is described as "fishing upstream toward the source," to "the bones

of the hills." When Ara observes this scene she feels "death rising to the loins" (21). Mrs. Potter's fishing for fish that is never eaten (31, 39) exhausts the water of Nineveh (21). The loci of the damage caused by Mrs. Potter's relentless "defying" search for "something hid from every living thing" are the previously mentioned drought and the woman's two adult children, James and Greta, who, until their mother's death could define themselves only through her. Greta complains to Angel, while polishing a lamp, that she has been denied a life and an identity by her mother's single-minded and tyrannical fishing:

I've seen Ma standing with the lamp by the fence, she said. Holding it up in broad daylight. ... I've seen her defying. I've seen her take her hat off in the sun at noon, baring her head and asking for the sun to strike her. Holding the lamp and looking where there's nothing to be found. Nothing but dust. No person's got a right to keep looking. To keep looking and blackening lamp globes for others to clean. (31)

Greta, has had to live in her mother's shadow, tethered to the house, cooking and cleaning for "Ma," an occupation that has prevented her from having a life of her own (37). Similarly, James' mother has prevented him from defining himself outside of her home. As Kip says James "wanted the old woman out of the way" so that he could pursue a life away from his mother with Lenchen, his pregnant lover (64). James reclaims his life and selfhood when, "tangling her line and breaking her rod" (52), he pushes his mother to her death:

The old lady falling. There under the jaw of the roof.  
In the vault of the bed loft. Into the shadow of death.  
Pushed by James's will. By James's hand. By James's  
words: This is my day you'll not fish today. (19)

As John Grube has suggested, this action is an attempt by James to "liberate himself and the entire settlement from his mother and through her from the dead hand of the past" (6).

James' fishing, however, has just begun. And, like Kenn and Atwood's narrator, his dialogue with history is initiated by acts of destruction which ultimately result in the construction of definition for both James and Nineveh. After murdering his past--his mother--James literally lashes out at Kip with a whip, blinding the man who

confronts him with his crime. This act of violence, paradoxically, heals the fragmented community. All of Nineveh are united in their hearing of James' departure for town. Angel returns to Felix to nurse the injured Kip (87). The people of Nineveh become more aware of their interdependence and the importance of community mindedness when confronted with the ramifications of James' actions, as this exchange between the Widow's son and William illustrates:

Why are you going to James's? the boy asked.  
What would be more natural? William said. James  
and Gretta are in trouble, he said. And it's my trouble  
too. (82)

In contrast to Kenn and the narrator of Surfacing, James does not consciously traverse the boundary between received history and pre-history, but Watson's novel does incorporate the aboriginal ancestor figure of Coyote, linking the world of the novel to the primordial.

Not unlike Kenn and the narrator of Surfacing, James wants "to bolt noisily and violently out of the present" in search of self and to effect this shift in time he must, like Gunn's and Atwood's characters move spatially; he must leave Nineveh (91). The town to which James travels is emblematic of the darkness that is caught on one half of the novel's double hook; it is a damaging and fraudulent form of identity. Before developing this concept of darkness as a fraudulent frame of reference it is useful to discuss the ironic dualities of the 'double hook.'

The glory and the darkness of Watson's novel are multivalent images which an entire dissertation might be devoted to analyzing. This chapter will attempt only to look at the glory and the darkness as they relate to the concept of identity in the novel. Kip sees an alarming similarity between the fishing of Mrs. Potter and her son James:

He's like his old lady, Kip thought. There's a thing he doesn't know. He doesn't know you can't catch the glory on a hook and hold on to it. That when you fish for the glory you catch twice the darkness too. That if you hook twice the glory you hook twice the fear. That Coyote plotting to catch the glory for himself is fooled and every day fools others. (61)

Mrs. Potter hooks the darkness of death and is carried away by Coyote "like a rabbit in his mouth" (57). James, on the other hand, hooks the darkness on his journey to the generic town, but recognizing it as such throws it back. I would like to suggest that the darkness may be read as a damaging death-dealing form of definition while the glory may be read as a life-affirming power which illuminates identity. The paradigm of 'the macho male stranger on the run from the law,' who takes comfort in the local saloon and brothel, is an artificial American one which James eventually rejects. This rejection connects with the narrator's repudiation of American culture in Surfacing; she refuses to define herself through the culturalizing agents of the United States that are transforming her friends into Americans. Similarly, Neil Gunn's Kenn rejects English history as a damaging and false frame of reference. Watson's parody of the American film Western effectively subverts it as a viable form of expression for Canadians.

The town James visits has no name. It's bank, hotel, bar and brothel could be made of cardboard, put up for a day for the filming of a Western ... Mrs. Watson wishes to demonstrate that the film Western, although it contains all the materials for a great work of art, has so far failed to produce one. (Grube 12).

James' visit to this American forgery ends when a prostitute steals from him: "the flick of a girl's hand freed James from freedom" (121). Freed from the destructive American model he perceived as freedom, James returns to a united Nineveh bringing with him a "light that defined the world" (126). James' and the community's sense of identity is restored. The novel ends with James holding his child amidst the women of the community who have assisted in the bringing of new life to Nineveh (134).

#### **DUALITIES OF SELF AND PLACE**

The dualities of The Double Hook have their counterparts in Highland River and Surfacing. In each of these novels characters fractured by an identity-denying past engage in a dialogue with

history in an attempt to make themselves whole. Doubleness is present in The Double Hook in the dichotomy Watson constructs between the glory and the darkness, and Nineveh and the cardboard no-name town. In Highland River and Surfacing the doubled narrator is emblematic of the fragmentation of the personal self. The narrative of Highland River is an auto-referential one told in the third person by the mature Kenn. The mature third person Kenn is moving back through time not only toward his ancestors, but also toward himself, to observe and record the progress his younger self makes in constructing a personal identity through cultural excavations:

In the last few moments before he had risen he had seen himself walking toward the mountain, much as, in the last year or two, he had seen the little figure of the boy Kenn adventuring into the strath. What older mind, in this curious regress, was now the observer might be difficult to say, for its apprehension seemed profounder than individual thought. Pict, and Viking too, and Gael; the folk through immense eras of time; sea and river, moor and loch; the abiding land: of which the departing figure was a silent emanation more inevitable than any figure to any vision. (256)

This older mind is Kenn's, individually, but in the larger sense of a collective unconscious it is an entity composed of the Pictish, Viking and Gaelic cultural traditions. Earlier in the novel the third person Kenn grapples with the "ineffectiveness of the recording machine" which is his creative imagination, the narratorial consciousness that retrieves and generates his story across time and cultures (122).

"Paranoid schizophrenia," diagnoses Margaret Atwood is "Canada's national mental illness" (The Journals of Susanna Moodie 62). This condition is then fictively explored by the narrator of Surfacing. The narrator is fragmented by her abortion and the fictions of mother and wife she has generated to camouflage this traumatic past. Anna detects the doubled nature of the narrator while reading her palm: "Do you have a twin? ... because some of your lines are double" (Surfacing 2). Anna's reading of the history encoded in the narrator's palm alludes to the "funny break" in her past, the abortion that has precipitated the production of a twin



(2). The narrator references the contradictory nature of her doubled imagination in her explanation of the loss of self she associates with her abortion:

I have to behave as though it doesn't exist [her unborn child], because for me it can't, it was taken away from me exported, deported. A section of my own life sliced off from me like a Siamese twin, my own flesh cancelled.  
(42)

To fill the vacuum created in her sense of self by the removal of her foetus, the narrator dissociates herself from the abortion and creates an alter ego: divorced mother; child's whereabouts unknown (138). In both her decision to abort the child, and in her subsequent designing of fictions to obscure the truth, the narrator realizes that she has "allowed [herself] to be cut in two" (102). To become whole she must destroy the "miraculous double woman" of her own creation (171). After murdering her forged past the narrator sheds her "false body" in the lake, the locus of her confrontation with her true and formerly abrogated other self, her lost child (172).

The dualities of 'hunter' and 'hunted' experienced by Canada and Scotland as post-colonial cultures are implicit in an allegorical reading of Kenn and the narrator of Surfacing. Both characters, while attempting to define themselves in opposition to the imperial powers of England and America, find themselves the target of the imperial power struggles of these cultures.

Kenn's hunt for the source of himself and his people is transposed to the trenches of France where he searches for his 'Canadian' brother Angus. The hunt, however, has been turned on its head as both brothers have become the hunted cannon fodder for English war-fighting. Kenn juxtaposes the sniper fire that all but kills him on his search for the Canadian trench with "the scene of the rabbit snaring" he remembers from his glen (163). Although Kenn avoids death, his brother and too many others are rabbits who are slaughtered for empire. Kenn is not the only colonial subjected to the horrors of France. An intersecting moment between Canada and

Scotland is presented in the "Canadian-born clansman" Guss Mackay, who meets his Celtic brothers Kenn and Angus in France under the flag of British Empire, and speaks to them about sharing their "ancient heritage" in a trip to their Scottish source after the war (167, 168). Kenn's experience of imperial violence on the battlefields of France is one shared with Canadian literary figures such as Margaret Laurence's Christie, Morag's father, Colin, and Jules Tonnerre in The Diviners, and Timothy Findley's Robert Ross in The Wars.<sup>6</sup>

Margaret Atwood writes that "Canada is now the place where Americans come to hunt" (Survival 78). The narrator of Surfacing perceives Americans as the hunters of Canadian natural resources, game, and herself. For her the Americans are "the disease that is spreading up from the south," infecting the Canadian landscape and people (1). She describes the construction of the American military base as a form of violence to the landscape: "the pit the Americans hollowed out" (3). Echoing the "basic victim positions" of Survival, Atwood's Surfacing interrogates the complicity with which both Canada and the novel's narrator make themselves victims (Survival 35): "[t]he city invited [the Americans] to stay, they were good for business, they drank a lot" (Surfacing 3). Similarly, the narrator is prepared to compromise Canadian culture to satisfy the tastes and values of the imperial centres:

It isn't my territory but I need the money ... I can do that I can do anything: fake Walt Disney, Victorian etchings in sepia, Bavarian cookies, Ersatz Eskimo for the home market. Though what they like best is something they hope will interest English and American publishers too. (46-47)

The narrator, like her country, is selling out to the dominant economic powers. The image of Canada and her people as commodities to be purchased by Americans is reinforced by the narrator's comments on the sale of hydro-electric power to the United States, and the subsequent deforestation of the North:

My country sold or drowned, a reservoir; the people were sold along with the land and the animals, a bargain, sale, solde. Les soldes they called them, sell outs, the

flood would depend on who got elected, not here but somewhere else. (126)

The narrator acknowledges that she and her country are partially responsible for their victimization in her response to the 'American' hunters' killing of the heron:

I felt a sickening complicity, sticky as glue, blood on my hands, as though I had been there and watched without saying No or doing anything to stop it: one of the silent guarded faces in the crowd. (124)

David views Americans with a similar suspicion, waiting for the "Yank pigs" to attack Canada to gain access to her resources (91). David's nightmare vision of American marines occupying his country, although extremist, is grounded in palpable and legitimate fears.<sup>7</sup> The doctrine of Manifest Destiny has never died in the United States, conversely it has been bolstered by some American senators during the recent "Free Trade" debate which, contrary to claims made by the Mulroney government, moved Canadian resources and art forms closer to American appropriation.<sup>8</sup>

Atwood's novel explores both cultural and sexual imperialism. Read allegorically, Surfacing is the story of Canada as a woman victimized by the bullying and paternal monster-empire to her southern border. This figuration of Canada as an oppressed woman becomes a literary antecedent for Susan Swan's The Biggest Modern Woman of the World. Swan acknowledges this influence, saying Atwood "was very important to me, I was interested in the way she used fiction to express ideas" (unpublished interview). Very much like Anna Swan, Atwood's narrator's quest for her history and her self is impeded by a threatening American presence; she has become the hunted: "binoculars trained on me, I could feel the eye rays, cross of the rifle sight on my forehead, in case I made a false move" (112). She feels that the Americans "have been sent to hunt for [her]," that she'll be mistaken for "a naked woman wrapped in a blanket: possibly that's what they've come here for, if it's running around loose, ownerless why not take it" (177). The allegorical level of the text becomes quite clear when this American 'hunt' for

sex is juxtaposed to that nation's lust for Canadian property. Bill Malmstrom, a representative of the American Wildlife Protection Agency, a group with a "flourishing little branch" in Canada, wants the narrator's tract of land to do a "little hunting and fishing" (188).

David's stalking of the narrator to demand sexual favours is also juxtaposed to cultural imperialism, for in the eyes of the narrator David's suggestion of the "geometrical sex" equation makes him an American:

... he didn't know what language to use, he'd forgotten his own. Second-hand American was spreading over him in patches, like mange or lichen. He was infested, garbled, and I couldn't help him: it would take such time to heal, unearthen him, scrape down to where he was true. (146)

Although supposedly cognizant of American imperialism, David's role as exploiter, and his perception of woman as a natural resource there to be plundered, makes David an American for the narrator. David himself draws the analogy between sexual and cultural imperialism in his recitation of "The Maple Beaver For Ever":

In days of yore, from Britain's shore  
Wolfe, the gallant hero, came:  
It spread all o'er the hooer house floor  
On Canada's fair domain. (113)

David relates the British colonization of Canada to sexual violation by replacing a line from "The Maple Leaf Forever," which describes the planting of Britain's flag in Canadian soil, with the pornographic image of legs spread for sexual penetration on the floor of a brothel. Recalling Alasdair Gray's, Leonard Cohen's and Susan Swan's metaphoric equations of colonized territory with sexual violence against women, Atwood's narrative plays on the doubled meaning of beaver in David's title; beaver is the animal icon for Canada that appears on a nickel, and also a derogatory term for female genitalia. The image of prostitution points to the collusion of Canadians in what is constructed as an economic transaction between colonized and colonizer.

## DISCOURSES OF DEMARCATION

Restrictive and death-dealing boundaries in Highland River, Surfacing, and The Double Hook emblemize a colonizing process that thwarts the realization of identity in these textual communities. It becomes imperative to the survival of Kenn, Atwood's narrator, and James and Nineveh, that they dismantle these demarcating constructs of colonialism.

The "keepers" of Highland River are the security guards paid by the novel's southern landowner to prohibit Kenn from fishing in the river of his people; they attempt to prevent him from escaping the present and from delving into his lost past (123-124). For Kenn, however, "keepers" is a doubled term that articulates the death-mongering tyranny of empire. Kenn's attempt to escape "the keepers"--his "denial of all the codes"--causes him to ruminate on the centuries-long tradition of empire that he perceives as culminating "in the Great War" (124). The "keepers" are tantamount to the arbitrary and artificial borders which, during the Great War, became the corpse-strewn trenches of empire:

Under the gorgeous palaces and the solemn temples of the Nile, what millennia of dark and bloody rites! Rome crucifying her slaves, crucifying Christ. Rome of the Inquisition torturing in the name of Christ. The slave hordes turned into slave armies wheeled by Napoleons to gut each other on the plains of Europe. The ride of the Industrial Age. Machines as the new torturers and the new war-weapons. The hordes marshalled in millions. High explosive for mangling the bodies. Poison gas for disintegrating the lungs. Barbed wire for exhibiting the spectacle of a slow writhing to death. (125)

For Kenn the ever-expanding borders of empire are jaws that consume not only cultures, but also human beings.

Atwood's narrator also seeks to escape the border of imperialism, although in her case it is the doubled border of sexual and cultural imperialism that she must negotiate if she is to recover her past and survive her present<sup>9</sup>. Reflecting, in some ways, a Canadian literature that has been imprisoned by the paternalism of imperial reception and perception, the narrator finds herself among the "captured girls" who are tied up by their male classmates: "I

spent many afternoons looped to fences and gates and convenient trees, waiting for a benevolent adult to pass and free me." The narrator must learn to free herself. She becomes an "escape artist of sorts, expert at undoing knots" (66). The narrator's subversive narrative is emblematic of the undoing of the knots of empire restricting Canadian self-expression. This liberation of the Canadian imagination from the borders of empire is mirrored in the narrator's freeing of the "invisible captured images" of the Canadian north recorded by Dave and Joe for "Random Samples" (160).<sup>10</sup>

The "fence" is the border between worlds, it separates the narrator from the primordial world occupied by her parents and the present:

Now I understand the rule. They [her parents] can't be anywhere that's marked out, enclosed: even if I opened the doors and fences they could not pass in, to houses and cages, they can move only in the spaces between them, they are against borders. (174)

Post-colonial literatures also operate "in the spaces between" and are "against borders," like the narrator they "resist the fence" and refuse to be named--defined--by the colonizing "system" of imperial order "the fence" represents (174).<sup>11</sup> The fence symbolizes colonial order: the imposition of a static organizational grid on a dynamic landscape. It is this "machine" that colonizes the narrator's friends, transforming them into Americans (163) with "skins galvanizing, heads congealing to brass knobs, components and intricate wires ripening inside" (153). As the narrator says of the colonization process, "the machine is gradual it takes a little of you at a time, it leaves the shell" (159). In her resistance to "the fence" the narrator has eradicated the "disease" of the south (1) from her imagination. She is wary of "captivity in any of its forms" but is willing to consider the possibilities of identity and self offered by Joe whom she now recognizes "isn't an American ... he isn't anything, he is only half-formed, and for that reason I can trust him" (186). The narrator and Joe, like Canada and other post-colonial cultures are only partially formed, unfixed; one of the

characteristics of their identity is that it is composed of a fluid series of narratives toward reinvention.<sup>12</sup> As Robert Kroetsch has said, Canadian fiction presents the reader with "the idea of identity itself as the labyrinth," words that also apply to such Scottish fictions as James Hogg's The Confessions of a Justified Sinner and Alasdair Gray's 1982, Janine ("No Name is My Name" 50).

The people of Nineveh are a product of the colonizing machine that settled the Canadian West. As the term 'settling' connotes the inhabitants of Nineveh soon find that they must enclose the landscape within the static grid work of fencing to bring order to what is perceived as disorder. Mrs. Potter's poaching on her neighbour's lands precipitates the erection of the fences, and the closing of doors that fracture the community of Nineveh in The Double Hook. Felix's response to the old woman's fishing in "his best pool" is to "chase her out" and to "someday put a catcher on the fence and catch her once and for all" (23). The Widow's boy is so angered by the presence of James' mother that he decides "it's her I'm going to fence out" (28). This fencing out, although it is directed at Mrs. Potter, ruptures the entire community. Greta shuts her door on Nineveh, admonishing her neighbours to "Get out" and "Go away" (47). Like the "paper house" of fraudulent history that the narrator of Atwood's Surfacing destroys by fire, Greta recognizes the Potter home as a cage that must be destroyed (Surfacing 138,174). As James says they "both had good reason to wish the place gone and everything in it" (The Double Hook 132). The burning of her mother's house is Greta's way of escaping the past, of exploding the boundaries of herself as defined by Mrs. Potter. To Greta the homestead is tantamount to parental imperialism; the house is haunted by the tyranny of the past, and only by destroying it can Greta sever the umbilical cord that enables her mother to incarcerate her in a perpetual 'colony' of childhood. This destruction of the home is, as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin write "a recurring and evocative figure for the problematic of post-colonial identity" (28). Greta's

final act is one of defiance against her dominating mother who attempts to control her daughter's destiny from beyond the grave: "Don't play with [matches] Greta, she said. They're hard to get. A person has to know how to play with fire" (85). The relationship of Mrs. Potter to her children is a microcosmic reflection of the macrocosmic relationship of mother-country and colony that the settlers of Nineveh experience with England.

Watson's narrator, commenting on the death of Greta, equates borders with destruction and death: "Greta had inherited destruction like a section surveyed and fenced" (113). Kip who is "fenced out" by Theophil thinks the construction of borders in the community promotes the growth of fear:

All the time he thought, people go shutting  
their doors. Tying things up. Fencing them in.  
Shutting out what they never rightly know.  
He thought: Angel can see but Theophil's let  
fear grow like fur over his eyes. (59)

Again, the correlation of borders and death is suggested, for fear is described in this novel as "walking round in the living shape of the dead" (61).

James, like Kenn, and similar to Atwood's narrator who must "clear a space" (Surfacing 171), needs to make an escape from the present, from Nineveh--an escape that collapses the borders that deprive him and his town of unity and identity. James' bid to "bolt noisily and violently from the present" is a circular escape abrogating borders (91). James tells the Widow's boy "I ran away ... but I circled and ended here the way a man does when he's lost." And William offers his notion "that a person only escapes in circles no matter how far the rope spins" (132). The circular and inclusive configuration of James' escape displaces the linear and exclusive frames of the fences erected in the community to thwart Mrs. Potter's selfish fishing. James leaves a damaged and death-riddled community isolated from itself by self-imposed borders, to circle and thereby return to a place defined by light, and life in the birth of his son (134). By effecting spatial shifts that displace borders James



averts destruction, and is "turned once more into the first pasture of things" (131).

#### LANGUAGE AND THE SUBVERSION OF DOMINATING DISCOURSES

The voices of Highland River, Surfacing, and The Double Hook define themselves as post-colonial by endeavouring to re-assert control over the means of communication: language. In this respect, Gunn, Atwood and Watson define themselves in relation to the dominant other by encoding a cultural distinctiveness in the written word. Neil Gunn, although he makes some attempts at "code switching," for the most part appropriates the language of the English centre to inscribe alterity between Scotland and England into his text. "Code-switching" as defined by Ashcroft et al is the interspersion of standard English and the dialogue of characters (72). Gunn inserts the odd "Ach" to punctuate conversation and to indicate that his characters are grounded in the linguistic tradition of the Gaelic-speaking Highlands, but pervasively his characters and narrator use the dominant language of standard English (Highland River 90). Gunn's ironic use of the English language to subvert English culture--the irrelevance of English history and Kenn's denial of the codes of empire (28,124-125)--reflects what critics such as W. H. New define as the "challenge ... to use the existing language, even if it is the voice of a dominant language in order to reclaim speech for itself" (Dreams of Speech and Violence x).

Atwood's linguistic subversion differs from Gunn's. Her narrator comes to reject the language of empire: "English words seemed imported, foreign" (144). Moreover, Atwood's novel encompasses the discourse of both cultural and sexual politics, and her narrator discovers that language, the medium that constructs relationships of "power over other people" (91), "divides us into fragments" (140). For these reasons the narrator, during her time in the primordial world, temporarily divorces herself from language. Similar to Gunn, however, Atwood's narrative communicates the

problems peculiar to English hegemony in the existing language of dominance in Canada, Canadian english. Atwood suggests that Canada requires a "third language," in addition to English and French, to move past the literary traditions of England and France left to the culture by history ("Where Were You When I Really Needed You" 92).

The Double Hook reveals the English language of the dominant culture as an obstacle thwarting expression. As Barbara Godard suggests, Watson's shifts from English to Latin reflect an inability to articulate an affirmative vision in her own language (157). The novel is written in a highly symbolic mode and is a hybrid of prose and poetry. Stylistically it resembles the oral tradition of Canada's aboriginal peoples, a syncretic design reinforced by Watson's incorporation of the aboriginal figure Coyote who speaks in verse:

I have set his feet on soft ground;  
I have set his feet on the sloping shoulders  
of the world. (134)

All three writers create alternate histories, languages, and selves, to develop works and characters that "above all ... refuse to become a victim" of English and American literary tastes (Surfacing 185). These narratives voice their cultural distinctiveness by effectively defining themselves against dominating cultures. In his discussion of Frederick Philip Grove's Search for America Robin Mathews sets against an American model of individual and community a preferred Canadian practice which provides a useful frame of reference for an examination of Scottish and Canadian identity:

it is ... a concept of existence in which the person unites with the community in order to make it possible and at the same time, in the struggle with community defines himself. The Canadian is both essential and existential. (3)

These words have meaningful resonances for not only Atwood and Watson, but also for the Scottish writer. Gunn's Kenn in his genealogical enquiries struggles with the communal past in order to identify himself as one of the folk.

Metafiction is a dominant trope in the works discussed. Linda Hutcheon writes that this "self-reflexivity," combined with "irony allows a text to work within the constraints of the dominant while foregrounding those constraints as constraints and thus undermining their power" ("Circling the Downspout of Empire" 163). Both Kenn and Atwood's anonymous narrator occupy an ironic because doubled space between worlds (Scottish-British for Kenn, and Colonizer-Colonized, New World-Old World for the speaking voice of Surfacing) where they work "within the constraints of the dominant" to rewrite, self-consciously, their histories in such a way that these constraints are made visible. Kenn foregrounds the counter-discursive practices of re-writing the anglo-centric history lessons he was forced to learn as a child within the dominant discourse of the english language which has displaced his ancestral Gaelic. The narrator of Surfacing earns a living in the cultural sector of the Canadian economy as an artist. She "can imitate anything," producing ersatz and clichéd objects primarily designed for success in foreign markets (47). Within the context of this type of cultural production which pushes original indigenous expressions of Canadian experience to the periphery, Atwood's narrator gives voice to a narrative destabilizing a cultural production that mimics the artistic and market values of foreign capital. The Double Hook is not autoreferential in the same ways as Highland River and Surfacing, but belongs to the parodic arena of metafictional discourse. Larry McCaffery's suggestion that metafiction "comments or speculates about the forms and language of previous fictions" (Muse 16), reflects Hutcheon's association of parody with metafiction and intertextuality: "the act of decoding texts in the light of other texts" (Parody 2, 37). As a metafictional text The Double Hook engages in a dialogue with the previous texts of the Bible, and the larger texts of native culture and settler narratives of the North American west by including references to those texts within its own narrative. As Hutcheon writes "overt narratorial comment or an internal self-reflecting

mirror" are not the only indicators of the "dual ontological status" of the self-reflexive text. As is the case with Watson's novel,

the pointing to the literariness of the text may be achieved by using parody: in the background will stand another text<sup>h</sup> which the new creation is implicitly to be both measured and understood. (31)

The parodic inter-art discourse of Watson's novel does not refer to an individual text of settlement on the North American frontier, but to a larger body of popular cultural artifacts, such as film and popular novels, which have stereotyped and reduced the story of settlement to the paradigm of saloons, prostitutes and cowboys that we encounter in James' journey to town. It is from within the constraints of, and against, this tradition that The Double Hook situates itself to be both measured and understood.

The process of reinventing history that is shared with the reader in Highland River and Surfacing, and the inter-art discourse associated with parody exhibited by The Double Hook, are characteristic of the ironic and self-reflexive strategies Canadian and Scottish writers develop to "clear a space" amidst the cacophony of imperialist overtures (Surfacing 171). Robert Kroetsch has equated the arduous destruction and invention of history accomplished by Atwood's narrator at the end of Surfacing with the process of birth. Kroetsch believes the narrator will eventually "give birth to her true identity" (60). And, it is this idea of giving birth to the individual and community self that underpins so many Canadian and Scottish texts.

## Notes

1. Canadian writers discuss the issue of cultural appropriation in "Whose Voice Is it, Anyway? A Symposium on Who Should Be Speaking for Whom." See Birdsell et al.
2. Scottish poet Iain Crichton Smith describes a process of cultural importation similar to Atwood's in his poem "When They Reached the New Land": "When they reached the new land they rebuilt the old one, / they called the new mountains by old names, / they carved a Presbyterian church on the hill" (20).
3. Guédon's reading of Amerindian themes in Surfacing attributes much of the native tradition Atwood's narrative incorporates to the North Algonkian tribes, and identifies the figure in the rock-paintings as the water monster Misshipeshu. See Guédon.
4. See Godard 165.
5. "... those dark Picts who left, as their record of thousands of years of habitation of that land, his own slim dark-eyed body" (Highland River 86).
6. In a range of writing Scotland becomes a hunting ground for the imperial other. More recently, George Mackay Brown's Greenvoe looks at the destruction of an Orkney fishing community by multinational corporations hunting for oil in Scotland. John McGrath's drama The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil traces the history of exploitation that has characterized the Highlands' relationship with the south.
7. For more on Atwood's perception of Canadian-American relations, see her essay "Canadian-American Relations: Surviving the Eighties."
8. The Meech Lake impasse also afforded some expansionist American politicians an opportunity to legitimize the concept of incorporating Canada and other sovereign territories into the United States. See former presidential aid and presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan's comments concerning the potential for American exploitation of the Canadian unity crisis: "There is nothing wrong with Americans dreaming of a republic that, by the year 2000 encompasses the Maritime and Western provinces of Canada, the Yukon and Northwest Territories all the way to the pole, and contains the world's largest island, Greenland (to be purchased from Denmark), giving the United States a land mass rivalling that of the Soviet Union under a constitution permitting all of its people freedom to realize all their dreams."
9. For a related discussion of borders as a site of novelistic and gender investigation in Canadian literature, see Hutcheon, "The Postmodern Challenge to Boundaries," The Canadian Postmodern 78-104.
10. For more on the theme of a Canadian identity defined against American culture in Atwood's work, see Broege. See also Atwood's essay "Canadian and American Relations."
11. Paradoxically, however, borders can also work to delineate national sovereignty, and cultural difference.

12. For additional commentary on borders in Surfacing and in Canadian literature in general, see Russell M. Brown.

NOTES TOWARD A CONCLUSION

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*I once thought I would have done better in London, or Cape Canaveral, or Hollywood even. I had been taught that history was made in a few important places by a few important people who manufactured it for the good of the rest. But the Famous Few have no power now but the power to threaten and destroy and history is what we all make, everywhere, each moment of our lives, whether we notice it or not.*

Alasdair Gray, 1982, Janine

Immigration, colonization, and the liminal space of colonizer/colonized shared by Scots and descendants of white Canadian settler culture have forged connections between Canadian and Scottish literatures which, when uncovered and examined, lend insights into translational concerns with language, genealogy, imperial history, and metafictional re-writings of the latter two categories in the fiction of both countries. The protagonists and narrating voices of the Canadian and Scottish texts considered respond to personal moments of crisis and dislocation by telling stories which seek to locate and explore dislocation in their enfolding of multivalent myths of origin which simultaneously write personal, cultural, and national narratives.

Fractures in family structures precipitated by death, migration and war provide occasions for constructing myths of personal and national genealogies in Neil Gunn and Alistair MacLeod. The estrangement of Martin from Sheena and Anna in The Silver Bough is correlated with the separation of the headman from his family that archaeologist Simon Grant reads in the skeletons of the ancient cairn. Annabel Menzies' death, and the death of her husband become focal points around which anthropologist Walter Urquhart traces

larger cultural patterns of national disruption, such as the Clearances, in The Other Landscape. In both novels interruptions in individual story are related to breaks in cultural narrative between past and present, and in the language systems which originally composed these narratives.

The imminent departure of MacLeod's narrator for a mining job in South Africa is the familial and personal disruption which prompts a narratorial meditation on the origins and deaths of Gaelic community, language and culture on Cape Breton in "The Closing Down of Summer." The physical dislocation of members of the MacKenzie family from Cape Breton to Ontario, and the inability of Archibald's family to comprehend the songs of their ancestors constitute the breakdown of Gaelic culture in "The Tuning of Perfection" that provides the context for re-narrating the Clearances which first brought Archibald's grandfather and many of the community's ancestors to the island from Scotland.

The deaths of the narrator's mother in "Friend of My Youth," Hazel's husband Jack in "Hold Me Fast, Don't Let Me Pass," and Simon Herron in "A Wilderness Station" initiate the narrativization of individual and collective myths of Scots-Canadian genealogy in Munro's work. Telling the story of her relationship with her late mother in an attempt to flesh-out a more dynamic image of her parent and herself, the narrator of "Friend of My Youth" exposes the relationship of Scottish Cameronianism to her own thinking and Canadian culture. Hazel is also searching for self-definition after Jack's death, a quest which takes her to Jack's relatives and war-time lover in Scotland where she observes a convergence of personal, national, and cultural myths and histories. An unnamed historian's investigation of Simon Herron's death in "A Wilderness Station" reveals the influence of Scottish Calvinism and emigration on a pioneer settling narrative of Southern Ontario.

Morag Gunn's writing of her lineal history following the deaths of Christie and Jules, gives voice to the Gunn-Tonnerre genealogy for



Pique who feels alienated from history. Laurence's The Diviners also unwinds strands of Gaelic-Métis-Canadian ethnographic mythology in its location of a British imperialism that displaced both Gaels and Métis. Kirstie translates the telling of her marriage to the Jacobite Highlander William of Borlum and the disruption it brought to the Haldane family into an emplotment of the Scottish national crisis of Jacobitism and the estrangement of Highlands and Lowlands in Mitchison's The Bull Calves. And, as Mitchison frequently reminds her readers, she, as an author, is delving into her own family history to tell the story of the Scottish nation and its survival in the face of strident anglicizing policies from Westminster.

Anna Swan, an ex-patriate Canadian who died in the United States, exploits the ultimate personal dislocation, her own death, to re-establish her Canadian identity in an autobiographical narrative from beyond the grave. She traces her Highland roots in Nova Scotia and, allegorically, the origins of the Canadian nation in The Biggest Modern Woman of the World. Jock McLeish's estrangement from self and his ensuing suicide attempt result in an introspective narrating of his personal past, a narrating which is, on one level, a dialogue with Scotland's cultural past and recent history. Jock talks himself and his country back from the brink of suicide to facilitate a rebirth of self and nation by the end of Gray's 1982, Janine.

Following the disappearance of her father, the narrator of Surfacing embarks on a journey into her family history, returning to her childhood home in Québec. A voyage into the personal and familial past soon translates into an expedition in search of Canada's aboriginal origins as the narrator merges the signs of her heritage, that she believes her parents have left for her, with aboriginal pictographs. Allegorically, her experience of sexual manipulation and subjugation is representative of the colonial experience of Canada her narrative references. Recalling Atwood's narrator's return to the source of her origins, Kenn's dislocation

from the Highland glen of his boyhood precipitates his return to northern Scotland and an investigation of his childhood memories and landscape that becomes an anthropological and metaphysical inquiry into the source(s) of his existence in Highland River. James Potter, who lives in a present dominated by the past, kills that past as it is manifest in The Double Hook in the form of his mother. James' personal crisis becomes a crisis of community, unifying Nineveh, a village of Métis and European settlers and, as such, a genealogical testament to Canada's cultural hybridity.

Each of these texts, in their self-reflexive construction of narrative that gives voice to Canadian and Scottish experience in emplotments of colonial pasts and neo-colonial presents, constitute counter-discourses to American and English forms of cultural and economic hegemony.

Situating itself in alignment with the resistance of Ama Ata Aidoo, Arun P. Mukherjee, and Linda Hutcheon to Ashcroft et al's all-pervasive and homogenizing definition of post-colonialism and its attendant comparative community of literatures, the thesis advances a more discriminating and heterogeneous conception of cross-cultural comparative studies providing a context for the comparative consideration of settler culture literatures with literatures of colonial origin. In the present study the literatures of Canada and Scotland, two cultures where the binaries of colonized and colonizer collide, are read foregrounding marginalization by dominating others. While Ashcroft et al recognize the possibility of an argument placing Irish, Welsh and Scottish cultures as the first victims of English expansion, they perceive any move to develop this line of thought into a case for linking the literatures of Ireland Wales and Scotland to the post-colonial as problematic, given the "subsequent complicity" of these cultures in the British imperial enterprise (33). Having constructed the doubled colonizer/colonized roles of Ireland, Wales and Scotland as a "difficult" problem Ashcroft et al refuse, or fail, to engage this problem substantively, choosing

instead to dismiss, under the camouflage of semantics, configurations of colonialism which fail to fit their conception of post-coloniality. The less problematic categorization for these British cultures, they say, is Max Dorsinville's "dominated-dominating," a hierarchy which "neatly" accounts for British literary history "as a process of hierarchical interchange in internal and external group relationships." "Neatly," reverberates alarmingly for me in this last quotation; the complexity and paradoxical qualities of the interrelationships among British cultures and between themselves and the New World is anything but neat, and theories formulating tidy categorizations for such literary histories should be approached with scepticism and caution. The seeds for a destabilizing of Ashcroft et al's argument that those who participated in the British imperial enterprise should not be regarded as post-colonial are contained in their own work which recognizes the descendants of British imperialists living in Australia, Canada, the United States, and New Zealand as post-colonial (25).

The thesis constructs a critical framework that goes beyond merely acknowledging the internal colonialism of Britain as problematic, and explores the ramifications of this project inside the United Kingdom, and outside in the acquisition of empire for that imperial entity. Despite the problems inherent in the term 'post-colonial,' it is a term like 'postmodern' which is deeply entrenched in critical discourse and necessarily redefined and reevaluated with each usage. Moreover, because of the large purchase of 'post-colonial' as a marker for cultures affected by imperial processes, I elected to retain it to refer to the Canadian and Scottish literatures cited in this study as a means of mapping an alternative conception (Settler Culture Literatures and Literatures of Colonial Origin) for cross-cultural literary studies privileging colonization, and to further define one category of post-colonialism and mark its difference amongst a multiplicity of post-colonialisms.

Centre-periphery discourses posited by post-colonial theory are

not exclusive phenomena of an empire-colony paradigm, but are to be found within empire and colony as the thesis illustrates in the work of MacLeod, where Toronto is the centre to Cape Breton's periphery, and in Gunn's and Mitchison's work where London and Edinburgh are centres to the Highlands and Islands peripheries.<sup>1</sup> The peripheral positions of Canadian and Scottish literatures are beginning to shift. Canadian writer Michael Ondaatje was the joint recipient with Barry Unsworth of Britain's Booker Prize for 1992. Canadian author Robertson Davies was short-listed for the Nobel Prize for 1992, and has previously been short-listed for the Booker, as have compatriots Margaret Atwood, Alice Munro, and Mordecai Richler. Furthermore, Toronto has recently been awarded the ironic distinction, given its international literary reputation before the 1970s, of being called "the new literary center of the northern hemisphere" by Alfred A. Knopf editor Sonny Mehta (Iyer 58). In Scotland, Glasgow writer James Kelman was short-listed for the Booker in 1989.<sup>2</sup> The Booker Prize is not cited here to re-inscribe the English centre as a privileged arbiter of literary value above Scottish and Canadian literary prizes, but rather to emphasize the wider dissemination of Canadian and Scottish writing.

The work that is undertaken by this thesis of re-placing Canadian and Scottish literatures in a comparative cross-cultural framework focussing on the repercussions of colonization in both literatures, could be adapted for similar studies juxtaposing Scottish literatures with the literatures of Australia, New Zealand, the United States, and other cultures colonized by the Scottish diaspora. The literature of New Zealand, for example, has been influenced considerably by Scottish literature as Alan Riach writes in a report on Scottish literary studies in New Zealand (69). Riach supports his claim with a survey of New Zealand writers influenced by Scottish literature, including nineteenth-century New Zealand poetry in Scots and a contemporary New Zealand writer, John Summers, whose novel Fernie Brae is also written in Scots.

As citizens of an immigrant or multicultural society Canadians occupy a space between worlds, and much of our literature traverses these worlds, often emplotting our attempts to come to terms with that other world we or our ancestors were dislocated from. Whether these narratives which confront moments of dislocation are found in the ethnic-Scottish writings of the authors considered here, in the ethnic-Indian writings of Rohinton Mistry, in the ethnic-Japanese writings of Joy Kogawa or in the ethnic-Italian writings of Nino Ricci, cross-cultural comparative studies offer the critic a viable and potentially insightful approach for reading a wide range of Canadian texts.

Many individuals in settler cultures are working toward understandings of the imperial process and the roles it has played in shaping our literatures and repressing the culture of aboriginal peoples. If we are to be successful in this endeavour, it is important that we attempt to appreciate the social, political, and cultural context of a colonialism within Britain that contributed to the displacement and translation of so many of our ancestors and their cultural traditions onto a Canadian ground.

## Notes

1. See Mukherjee's comments on post-colonial theory and the construction of centre-periphery discourses 6.
2. Kelman, well known for his dislike of London's literary establishment, refused to attend the twenty-first annual Booker awards ceremony. See Billen.

"SOUNDS IN THE EMPTY SPACES OF HISTORY": THE HIGHLAND CLEARANCES IN NEIL GUNN'S *HIGHLAND RIVER* AND ALISTAIR MACLEOD'S "THE ROAD TO RANKIN'S POINT"

*Christopher Gittings*

The recent work of both Canadian and Scottish literary critics suggests that the writers in both of these countries wrestle with what Scottish novelist Neil Gunn's *Highland River* refers to as "sounds in the empty spaces of history": the various and barely audible vibrations of narrative that are suppressed by the monolithic din of official historiography (62). The exclusive nature of received history thwarts the quest for individual and cultural identity in both Canada and Scotland. As W. H. New writes in his 1989 *A History of Canadian Literature*, "for several prominent writers" of the Sixties, Seventies, and early Eighties "the historicity of heritage was a motif that shaped still larger canvases, in which the autonomy of historical events and the subjectivity of the individual record of history are related but separate measures of the reality of experience" (242). The thematizing of what New refers to as the "historicity of heritage" is manifest in the Scottish-Canadian genealogical explorations which characterize such Canadian works as Margaret Laurence's *The Diviners*, and Alistair MacLeod's short story "The Road to Rankin's Point." In Scotland, a country where the cultural past has been obscured by the exclusive historiography of English imperialism,<sup>1</sup> Cairns Craig writes:

[W]hat Scottish novelists have had to do again and again in recent times is to link their novel to some moment of historical dynamism which intrudes upon the historyless Scottish community: Scotland can only be known through narrative in these moments when narrative possibilities are forced

upon a society that has lost all sense of its own narrative.  
 ("The Body in the Kit Bag: History and the Scottish Novel"  
 19)

One of the moments Craig refers to in this essay is the Highland Clearances, a dynamic and intersecting moment for both Scottish and Canadian literatures. *The Diviners*, "The Road to Rankin's Point," *Highland River*, and Scottish novelist and poet Iain Chrichton Smith's *Consider the Lilies* all draw on the upheaval and dislocation created by the Clearances. Laurence's Morag Gunn attempts to locate herself in the present by excavating her ancestral past in a work in progress which eventually evolves into *The Diviners*. Morag's excavations sketch out her lineal relationship to the dispossessed Gael Piper Gunn, who led his band of evicted Sutherland Highlanders from Scotland to Canada where they displaced the Métis. Laurence's linking of Morag's personal experience to moments in history such as the Clearances and the Riel rebellions makes audible hitherto inaudible utterances from the past. For example, Morag's relationships with Métis Jules Tonnerre and ancestral Scot Christie Logan expose her to alternative reconstructions of the clash between Louis Riel and the Canadian militia at Batoche, subversive histories she gives voice to in her narrative (Laurence 144, 159-160).

For Iain Chrichton Smith the Clearances mark the dispersal and fracturing of Highland families, and a dissolution of Gaelic culture in Scotland. Chrichton Smith's 1968 novel *Consider the Lilies* personalizes this history of estrangement and cultural erasure in the story of Mrs. Scott, an elderly woman of the Highlands who faces eviction from her ancestral home, and loses her son through emigration to Canada where he seeks a more substantial life than a future in a dissolving Highland community can offer him. The scene of the son's departure suggests the ongoing cross-cultural dialogue between Canada and Scotland. Mrs. Scott and the other women of the community find themselves singing a Gaelic psalm to their departing loved ones. Blinded by tears, her voice cracking with emotion, Mrs. Scott stops singing, at which point she hears "the answering voices" of those bound for Canada "floating across the water, the two groups—those on the ship and those on shore—united across water by the psalm" (Chrichton Smith 115). Unfortunately, the morass of history and



the vast expanses of ocean and time will distort these sounds, cutting off those who remain in Scotland from those forced to leave, thereby creating an absent presence on both sides of the Atlantic. The narrators in these works by Chrichton Smith, Laurence, Gunn, and MacLeod return to these moments of disjunction to recover parts of themselves and their cultures through a reconstruction of the lost peoples in their ancestral pasts from the remnants of oral narrative, music, and the ruins which mark the landscape.

The genealogical explorations of *Highland River* and "The Road to Rankin's Point" are especially evocative of the genealogies Canadian critic and author Robert Kroetsch describes as "the narratives of a discontent with a history that lied to us, violated us, erased us even." Kroetsch writes that as the victims of such a history "we wish to locate our dislocation, and to do so we must confront the impossible sum of our traditions" (65). It is such a confrontation that is sought by Calum, the narrator of MacLeod's short story, and Kenn, the voice of Gunn's novel. Both Calum, a Canadian descendent of displaced Scottish crofters, and Kenn, a native Scot, struggle to decode the barely audible notes emanating from the vacuum created by received notions of history. Metaphorically, Gunn's and MacLeod's narrators can be read as straining to hear each other in their efforts to unearth a shared ancestral past, the utterances of which are manifest in the telling of these textually separate, yet culturally related narratives of Gaelic displacement and cultural erasure.

Neil Gunn (1891-1973) was one of the leading writers, along with Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, and Naomi Mitchison, who came to prominence during the Scottish Renaissance, a period of renewed interest in Scottish literature in the 1920s and 1930s. Although not a Gaelic speaker himself, Gunn's awareness of the Gaelic and Pictish past of his native Caithness, and his interest in a collective unconscious of Scotland's cultural past and its relation to the present is reflected in most of the twenty novels he wrote between 1926 and 1954. Moments of rupture in Scotland's past are the materials which shape much of Gunn's work. The Viking invasions of Scotland and their tumultuous impact on Pictish-Celtic culture provide the narrative focus for *Sun Circle* (1933). *Butcher's Broom* (1934) relates the forced eviction of an entire Gaelic community from their ancestral lands during the

Highland Clearances, and the Clearances figure prominently in *Highland River*. A large number of Gunn's novels, like so many of MacLeod's short stories, are set in isolated fishing communities where the sea is both a nurturing and a threatening force. *Highland River*, regarded by many critics as Gunn's finest novel and the winner of Scotland's James Tait Black Memorial Prize for 1937, shares with MacLeod's work not only the evocation of the psychic scars of the Clearances, but also a motif of exile and return in Kenn's migration from his native Highlands for university and employment in the south, and his adult return to the Highland river of his childhood.

Whether they are itinerant miners, students bound for university, or those in pursuit of economic stability, many of the characters who inhabit MacLeod's two published volumes of haunting and lyrical short stories *The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* (1976) and *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun* (1986) are borne away from their Cape Breton homes along what Calum refers to as "a big, fast, brutal road that leads into the world," returning home with the doubled perception of outsider and native to the Gaelic culture that informs MacLeod's work. "The Closing Down of Summer" from MacLeod's second volume of short stories is a roving miner's first-person meditation on the fragile destiny of the Gaelic community in Cape Breton and the traditional vocation of mining. On the day of his departure from Nova Scotia for the depths of South Africa he unfolds a history of tragic deaths and contemplates the reduction of Gaelic culture, as it is manifest in song, to "everything that song should not be, contrived and artificial and non-spontaneous and lacking in communication" (24). In "The Tuning of Perfection," from the same collection, the violence of the Highland Clearances that brought the grandfather of the story's protagonist, Archibald, to Canada provides a larger context for the contemporary, economically-motivated migration of Gaelic speakers from Nova Scotia, an exodus that leaves Archibald as "'the last of the authentic old-time Gaelic singers'" (108). MacLeod's writing, in ways similar to Gunn's highly historicized narratives but in the context of Canada's Gaelic diaspora, textualizes the breakdown of Gaelic culture and simultaneously, in the inscription of this breakdown in narratives that draw on the Gaelic folkways of Cape Breton and the history of the Clearances, moves toward a preservation of this culture.

The dying Calum's journey along the road to Rankin's Point to visit his grandmother becomes a metaphysical quest for life and self through knowledge of his ancestral past, a journey that echoes Kenn's transcendent odyssey up the Highland River. Kenn's journey to the source of the river "became in the end a thrilling exploration into the source of the river and the source of himself" (*Highland River* 61). A large part of this exploration is comprised of a delving into the "lost times" of Kenn's ancestral past to locate himself through his estranged people: the Picts, Vikings, Celts, Druids, and the dispossessed crofters of the Clearances such as Alistair MacLeod's MacCrimmons of Rankin's Point (*Highland River* 35, 62). As a young boy Kenn discovers that the history and geography taught by the schoolmaster are devoid of the "joy" he feels when tracking salmon up the Highland River. "The history," Kenn complains, "was concerned with English kings and queens and the dates of battles" while the geography study of English industrial towns was "an even worse ordeal" (28). Joy is absent from these lessons because they are not relevant to Kenn or his classmates; these lessons displace the vitality of Scottish history and geography that Kenn taps into through the novel's allegorical "'salmon of knowledge'" (212).

As the omniscient voice of the mature Kenn comments, however, this "'salmon of knowledge'" is not simply an abstraction; "it has real silver scales and a desirable shape" and is Kenn's link to the spiritual and physical ecosystem of the glen (212). The first encounter with the salmon provides Kenn with the visceral experience that makes him aware of his innate sense of ancestral past and self:

[O]ut of that noiseless world in the grey of the morning, all his ancestors came at him. They tapped his breast until the bird inside it fluttered madly; they drew a hand along his hair until his scalp crinkled; they made the blood within him tingle to a dance that had him leaping from boulder to boulder before he rightly knew to what desperate venture he was committed. (8)

This moment stimulates Kenn's "perfect hunger" for more knowledge of the physical Highland River and the spiritual river of self, and to know self he must investigate the many layers of ancestry of which it is composed (76). Only after his encounter

with the salmon does Kenn become aware of his innate sense of ancestral history:

Kenn in his boyhood had certainly no glimmering of an idea of how [Gael, Viking, or Pict] had filled his own glen with peaceful and violent history, with cunning tunes for the chanter, with odd laughable twists of thought, with courage for the sea. And yet in some unaccountable way he seemed to be aware of the living essence of this history without having been explicitly taught it. (62-63)

He soon discovers "how the races that had gone to his making had each left its signature on the river bank," inscriptions of place names in Gaelic and Norse that he collects to reconstruct his past (61). The concept of history as an absent presence is impressed upon Kenn by the departure of his brother for Canada. From this experience Kenn learns that the processes of migration and estrangement are as much a part of his present as they are his past.

In contrast to the youthful Kenn's initiation into what will be a life-long genealogical enquiry, Alistair MacLeod's twenty-six-year-old leukaemia-afflicted narrator has but a few months to live when he embarks on his voyage into family history. Calum travels the road to Rankin's Point seeking to "realize and understand . . . [his] grandmother's perception of death in all of its diversity," in the knowledge of his past that he seeks through his unseen and unknown grandfather (*The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 140). MacLeod's road to Rankin's Point leads, paradoxically, to both life and death. Calum, a dying man, travels down the road on which his grandfather bled to death (and upon which his grandmother will eventually die), toward a dying woman who lives on a desolate and deteriorating farm, to retrieve a knowledge of what appears to be a dead past. Calum says of the road: "[I]t winds its tortuous clinging way for some eight miles before it ends quite abruptly and permanently in my grandmother's yard." Rankin's Point itself is described as "an end in every way" (128). Calum, however, declares death is not what he will find at the end of this road but "only the intensity of life." He hopes to find vitality in the cultural history of his grandfather's family, the MacCrimmons, a history which the nar-

rator hopes might, like the hot tea he drinks "burn [him] more fiercely into life" (138).

Unfortunately, Calum cannot effectively translate the invigorating music of his cultural past into his narrative present where Highland culture, although living in the Gaelic songs played by his family, is, simultaneously, dying. Economic necessity and career aspirations have displaced many of the family members who return to their grandmother's dilapidated farm from "their scattered destinations on the roads of the larger world" (145). As Calum observes, three of his cousins fail to return to sing the ancient songs of the MacCrimmons; alternatively they "gyrate and play the music of their time, the early 1970s" in Las Vegas and Toronto (139). Calum himself has only recently returned from the larger world to die in Cape Breton. Furthermore, the Gaelic language is no longer understood by the staff at the local old-age home where it is reduced to the covert whisperings of senile old women (146). The very narrativizing of Calum's deteriorating personal and cultural history in English underlines the ongoing erosion of identity confronting his community. Colin Nicholson notes that MacLeod's work memorializes

an immigrant culture from the Highlands and Islands at a time when its historical purchase is beginning to slip: both memorializing and since he is writing in English, enacting that moment of slippage. (Nicholson 98)

Calum initiates his lineal investigation with his grandfather—a man he knows "only through recreated images of his life and death" (*The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 140)—by trying to decode the sole message the man leaves for him, a rather cryptic inscription on the rafters of the family barn: "[W]e are the children of our own despair, of Skye and Rum and Barra and Tiree" (139). It is with some trepidation, however, that Calum begins to trace his lineage. He responds to his grandfather's message with a question: "what is the significance of ancestral islands long left and never seen?" (140). To answer this question Calum turns to his family's crofter past, and to the "prickly Scottish thistles" that connote the road to Rankin's Point as a route to his family's history (129). Calum's grandmother transmits the family history to her grandson through the music of the dispossessed crofters she plays upon the violin that "came from the Scotland of

her ancestors from the crumbled foundations that now dot and haunt Lochaber's shores" (138-139). Like the Highland River in Gunn's novel, Calum's grandmother is the source of identity in MacLeod's short story. Not only does she provide Calum with the MacCrimmon lament "Never More Shall I Return" (*Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 139)—music that Calum recognizes as "our sound" (149)—but she also serves as a personal exemplar of survival.<sup>2</sup> She is a survivor by birthright of both the Highland Clearances and Canadian "Clearances" to which she refuses to acquiesce. In the conflict between Calum's grandmother and "'authorities'" from Halifax MacLeod creates a syncretic moment where the cultural and historical legacies of Scotland and Canada merge. In a situation reminiscent of the Highland Clearances that brought her family to Canada, Calum's grandmother is confronted by people who suggest, given her situation as a single mother in an increasingly isolated and economically depressed region, that she move or "put up some of her children for adoption" (150). In explaining her resolve against the authorities the grandmother draws an analogy between her situation in Canada and that of her ancestors in nineteenth-century Scotland: "I would never have my children taken from me to be scattered about like the down of a dead thistle" (150). Unlike her own ancestral mother, Scotland, who was coerced into scattering her people about the globe during the Clearances, Calum's grandmother endeavours to preserve the sanctity of life and of family.

Through the music and stories of his shaman-like grandmother Calum unearths his past to create responses to his own question concerning the significance of unseen ancestral islands: cultural continuity and self-preservation. He attempts to prolong his own life with the history of the MacCrimmons:

[S]ometimes when seeing the end of our present our past looms ever larger because it is all we have or think we know. I feel myself falling back into the past now, hoping to have more and more past as I have less and less future. (153)

Similar to Kenn's travels through time to comprehend the "source" or "eternity" (*Highland River* 212), Calum attempts to traverse time, to

go back through the superstitions and the herbal remedies and the fatalistic war cries, and the haunting violins and the

cancer cures of cobwebs. Back through the knowledge of being and its end as understood through the second sight and spectral visions and the intuitive dog and the seabird's cry. (*Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 153-154)

Calum takes as his own the supernatural gifts of the MacCrimmons: "the gift of music and the gift of foreseeing their own deaths" (139). The music of the MacCrimmons alerts Calum to the death of his grandmother, and just as MacCrimmon "quietly [composed] the music of his own death," so Calum in his first-person narrative creates the music of his own end (154). Calum's leukaemia is emblematic of the insidious disease of migration, a hemorrhaging that, coupled with assimilation, threatens to destroy the Gaelic community of Cape Breton.

Kenn's Highland River is also a world steeped in the supernatural. The river's relationship to him as a portal to the times of the crofters and other vanished peoples of the glen is certainly not a manifestation of the empirical world (Gunn 8). Both Kenn and Calum live on landscapes haunted by a sense of desolation and loss. The abandoned "fallen houses" and the empty hills of Rankin's Point (*The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 133) recall the ruins of "the ordinary rectangular croft houses" of Ken's glen, burned down by nineteenth-century landowners when they cleared the ancestors of Kenn and Calum from the Highlands (*Highland River* 242). The disappeared people of Rankin's point, although they were not forcibly and brutally evicted from their land like the Scots crofters, were, nonetheless, victims of an economic disparity which forced them to move west.

When Calum and Kenn unearth the moment of their dislocation—the Highland Clearances (although for Kenn this is only one in a series of dislocating episodes)—they discover a new equilibrium. Kenn recognizes that he is one of the folk and learns why the history of England was always problematic for him:

[F]or on this night too—though he did not realise it until he began to retrace his steps by his Highland river with some care—substance was given to his belief in the folk, of whom he was one. This belief has accompanied him with an elusive assurance of power. It explains to him why in history he always found the greatest difficulty in remembering the genealogical trees of kings or dates of dynastic wars. In a

profound sense, they were of no interest to him. (*Highland River* 218)

Similarly, Calum finds the balance he has been struggling to attain when he accepts the gifts of the MacCrimmons. Prior to this point Calum grapples with the significance of his Scottish ancestry, considering the possibility that it might be a fraudulent frame of reference. The thistle brooch he makes a present of to his grandmother is emblematic of the discord within Calum; he is "struck by the falseness of the brooch [sic] . . . for Scottish thistles do not twine." He thinks that "perhaps at the time of its purchase [he] was being more symbolic than [he] ever thought" (*Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 142). The unconscious symbolism Calum presently detects suggests a desire for unity: the conflation of the fragments of Scottish family history with his life and his family in Canada. The Scottish past and Canadian present merge in the syncretic episode of Calum's death:

[T]he music that my grandmother played in the long-ago morning of this day moves slowly through my mind. I cannot tell if it comes from without or from within and then it does not seem to matter. The darkness rises within me in dizzying swirls and seems to yearn for that other darkness that lies without. I reach for the steadying gate post or the chair's firm seat but there is nothing for the hand to touch. And then as with the music, the internal and the external darkness reach to become as one. Flowing toward one another they become enjoined and indistinct and as single as perfection. Without a seam, without a sound, they meet and unite all. (156)

The Scottish ancestral past—the darkness of the diseased blood and the music that rise within Calum—becomes viable for him when it merges with the darkness that is without, the Cape Breton evening and death. The music has created a symmetry within; the narrator contextualizes the dislocation of the Lament of the MacCrimmons so that it is easily transposed to the "Clearances" of Rankin's Point, the loss of family history, and his own impending death. A similar sense of balance associated with death and history is found in Neil Gunn's *Highland River*. Contemplating his relationship to the vanished peoples of the glen, Kenn discerns the cyclical nature of life and death: "the carcasses



putrefy and decay leaving clean bones that he and Beel may throw at each other in summer fields. Time deals with decay evenly, and all the mess of blood and flesh is resumed into the black aseptic ooze" (*Highland River* 119). The bones Kenn plays with are the bones of history that he unearths on his archaeological dig for the folk, for self-identity, and for the vanished peoples such as Calum and the MacCrimmons. In this context Calum's sense of equilibrium becomes significant; it coincides with his fall from the rock promontory of Rankin's Point, off the east coast of Canada toward the "long left and never seen" islands of Scotland (*Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 140).

In their attempts to hear each other's music—to define the faint sounds that are left in the vacuum of received history, sounds emanating from the intersecting and dislocating moments of Canada and Scotland—Calum and Kenn create ancestral and personal narratives which further develop their perception of self, empowering them to move forward in, and in Calum's case out of, time. MacLeod's cross-cultural dialogue with the Clearances depicted in Gunn's *Highland River* is emphasized in what Calum refers to as the "timelessness" of the white-faced Cheviots kept by his grandmother (*The Lost Salt Gift of Blood* 133). The ending of MacLeod's story leaves Rankin's Point to the Cheviot sheep and other livestock after the deaths of Calum and his grandmother, evoking a connection with the Cheviot domination of the Highland glens following the forced emigration of the last century. Calum's ruminations before his fatal fall further parallel the disintegration of the Scottish Highland community with the dissolution of the contemporary Gaelic-speaking community in Cape Breton: "[F]or the first time in the centuries since the Scottish emigrations there is no human life at the end of the dark road" (155).

In a conversation with Colin Nicholson, MacLeod discusses the significance of what he detects in the empty spaces of history that exist between the Highlands and Islands of Scotland and Canada's Cape Breton:

... if you look at my ancestry and my wife's ancestry, there's no-one who's not from the Highlands and Islands of Scotland. All our ancestors bear those names: MacLeod, MacIellan, Macdonald, Rankin, Beaton, Walker, MacIssaac, Gillis, MacDonnell. . . . In 1985, this is still who we are. And

that is why there is this felt affinity on the part of those who emigrated for those who remain. . . . Although my wife has adequate Gaelic we are really the first generation where the breakdown of that culture is beginning to occur. (92)

For both MacLeod and Gunn the dislocation and cultural erasure of the nineteenth-century Highland Clearances have deep resonances in the twentieth-century communities they write out of, where the disintegration of Highland culture is perpetuated, contemporaneously, through migration.

Scottish and Canadian writers such as Gunn, MacLeod, Chrichton Smith, and Laurence textualize the historically dynamic, culturally disruptive, and in this disruption which is cultural transfer, highly syncretic moments of the Clearances when our two cultures intersect, to establish personal identity in the present, and make visible, through the subjectivity of personal narrative, what received history has rendered invisible. In *Highland River* and "The Road to Rankin's Point" the invisible is made visible (or the inaudible audible), through a narratorial reconstruction of disappeared peoples from the inscriptions they have made on the spiritual and physical landscape of the community as these are manifest in the foundations of abandoned crofts, oral narratives and music. Ultimately, these traces or markings, which simultaneously signify the historicity of heritage and cultural dislocation, shape the narratives of those who write out of the empty spaces of history on both sides of the Atlantic to construct identifying relationships with their cultural heritage and touch that part of their present self that has been obfuscated by historiography. Calum's text not only gathers the traces of his vanished forbears but also constitutes his own inscription on the spiritual landscape, a trace that remains after his disappearance from Rankin's Point.

As citizens of an immigrant or multicultural society Canadians occupy a space between worlds and much of our literature traverses these worlds, often emplotting our attempts to come to terms with that other world we or our ancestors were dislocated from. Whether these narratives which confront moments of dislocation are found in the ethnic-Scottish writings of Margaret Laurence and Alistair MacLeod, in the ethnic-Indian writings of Rohinton Mistry, or in the ethnic-Italian writings of Nino Ricci, cross-cultural or comparative studies offer the critic a

viable and potentially insightful approach for reading a wide range of Canadian texts.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of English marginalization of Scottish culture see Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Another lament from this same MacCrimmon clan, "The Lament for the Children," memorializes the deterioration of Gaelic culture, and adumbrates the eviction of a Gaelic community in Gunn's *Butcher's Broom* (*Butcher's Broom* 247).

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Christopher Gittings

ERIC McCORMACK'S  
"INSTITUTE FOR THE LOST":  
THE SCOTTISH EXPATRIATE WRITER'S  
RECONSTRUCTION OF SELF AND PLACE  
IN ENGLISH CANADIAN LITERATURE

*A decision to emigrate for ever... is... analogous to quitting life*  
John Galt

*For many of us who are travellers, in mind or in body...  
Canada is one of the last good places*  
Eric McCormack

Eric McCormack's first novel *The Paradise Motel* creates a cross-cultural dialogue between his native Scotland and his adoptive Canada. While a reading of this self-conscious and often surreal fiction provokes intertextual references to Italo Calvino, Luis Jorge Borges, John Barth, and Bruce Chatwin among others, *The Paradise Motel* is especially relevant to Canadian and Scottish literatures. A self-reflexive narrative chronicling Ezra Stevenson's uncovering of the grotesque Mackenzie family mystery, the novel defines itself against both Scottish and Canadian literary models. This compulsion to write back to Scotland from the inherently ironic perspective of a voice between cultures may be better understood if placed in the context of what Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin term the 'post-colonial crisis of identity'. Dislocation caused by migration may undermine 'a valid sense of the self' precipitating the expatriate writer's 'concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, p.9). The voice we know as Ezra Stevenson, the genesis behind the multiplicity of voices which reverberate within *The Paradise Motel*, is, it may be argued, fractured by emigration from Scotland to Canada. Consequently, Ezra, like John Galt's Bogle Corbet before him, enters into an auto-referential discourse with Scotland

and Canada in his struggle to create 'an identifying relationship between self and place' (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, p.9). John Galt's early nineteenth century novel of life in colonial Canada, from the perspective of a Glaswegian emigrant, provides a frame of reference in the discussion of such a discourse. Both novels occupy the ironic post-colonial space that exists between Canada and Scotland, and as such textualize a preoccupation with dual identity, self-conscious writing, and genealogical sleuthing.

Eric McCormack is cognizant of the Scottish models he has incorporated into Daniel Stevenson's macabre tale of the Mackenzie family, citing what he calls the 'violent and bizarre' elements of the Scottish Border ballads he heard as a child as an influence on his monstrous story of murder, dismemberment, and mutilation (Personal Interview). McCormack's tale bears a formal as well as a thematic similarity to the Border ballads of his childhood in the oral transmission of the Mackenzie story from Zachary Mackenzie to Daniel Stevenson who, in turn, tells the story to Ezra who records it for the reader. This process resembles the reconstructive manner in which the ballad singer creates his or her song from the key moments of a tale, and embroiders it with personal touches during performance (Watson, p.132). Ezra's story of the Mackenzies is a performance of voice that has been, and will be reconstructed as is indicated by its circular composition. The novel revolves around the story of the Mackenzie family. Dr Mackenzie murders and dismembers his wife, surgically entombing her body parts into the bellies of each of their four children: Esther, Zachary, Rachel, and Amos. *The Paradise Motel* relates Ezra Stevenson's duplicitous search for these children, and himself. Ezra is an acronym for Esther, Zachary, Rachel, and Amos, characters who are the fictive constructs of the novel's dominant narrative voice Ezra. Not surprisingly, the creator of a multifarious entity such as Ezra Stevenson regards Robert Louis Stevenson as 'one of the writers who most affected' him (Personal Interview). The intertextual ruminations of the doubled self prompted by Ezra's surname and its relation to the author of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* are unlikely to have been lost on Eric McCormack. Like both Ezra and McCormack himself, Stevenson is another Scot who ventured away from home.

Robert Louis Stevenson exemplifies a Scottish literary history rich in the psychology of the double. From the doubled narrative and fractured identity of Robert Wringham in James Hogg's *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, and Dr Jekyll's contention that the human condition would one day be recognized as 'a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous, and independent denizens' (as quoted by Karl Miller, p.215), to the contemporary schizophrenia of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, Scottish literature has been recognised as encompassing a variety of polarities, among them the dual nationalities of British and Scottish, the Calvinist

dichotomy of damned and elect, and the bicultural nature of Highland and Lowland Scotland. Canada's literary heritage also embraces duality. Elizabeth Waterston's work on the Scottish influence in Canadian literature connects the dualistic psychology of Scottish literature with the Canadian novel. She suggests that Canadian writers of Scots ancestry such as Hugh MacLennan transpose the dual psychology of their heritage to the Canadian literary landscape where it reflects the bicultural strains of Canada (pp.230-231).

'Canada's voice is often a doubled one, that of the forked tongue of irony,' says Linda Hutcheon (p.9). The binary tensions of French and English cultures, and the multicultural nature of Canada create 'a country of immigrants where (at least for a time) all of its inhabitants have felt dual allegiances' (Hutcheon, p.23). Dual allegiances which prompt Ezra Stevenson to design a narrative that permits him to travel back to Scotland, and encourage Bogle Corbet to warn potential emigrants to Canada of the trials that await them. 'The man must indeed be strangely constituted,' writes Bogle 'who above fifty emigrates for life, with the habits and notions of the old country rivetted upon him, and yet expects to meet with aught much better than discomfort' (p.198). Irony, 'a discourse whose signs create specifically doubled meanings,' is the trope through which the cross-cultural dialogues of *The Paradise Motel* and *Bogle Corbet* communicate (Hutcheon, p.18). Eric McCormack's Institute for the Lost provides a useful analogy for Canadian post-colonial space as it exists in both his novel and *Bogle Corbet*. Located in the South Pacific, a former sphere of European imperialism, and specializing in the treatment of amnesia, the Institute for the Lost, like Eric McCormack's and John Galt's Canada, is a place that demands a duplicity of self. Dr Yerdeli, the director of the Institute for the Lost, constructs new identities for 'students' who lose their memories either through a trauma or self-conscious erasure. As Ezra says:

Simply put, she had to create for each student in her care a story with a main persona. . . , a stock of subsidiary figures, all of them developed enough to be credible, and a vast array of appropriate facts (McCormack, p.55).

Canada may also be read as a community of the lost; a country where displaced emigrants reinvent themselves. Similar to Dr Yerdeli's practice of sculpting the imagination – 'cutting away residual rot and reshaping what [is] left,' the emigrants of Galt's *Bogle Corbet* attempt to divorce themselves from the failure of their Scottish past to recast their essence in Canada (McCormack, p.57). Bogle tells his reader that like the settlers, he takes with him to Canada, individuals 'unable to preserve their caste in the social system of [Scotland], . . . poverty causes [him] to seek a new country' (p.10). Mrs Paddock hopes to hide the illegitimacy of her grandchildren in Canada (p.3), while the enigmatic Colonel Jocelyn who

'wishes to remain unknown,' reduces himself from the privileged status he enjoyed as a gentleman in Scotland to a 'humble level' of obscurity in Canada (p.133).

As Dr Yerdeli senses, Ezra Stevenson has more than a passing familiarity with multiple identity; the doctor's thoughts on the fallibility of individual and collective memory are Ezra's, and contribute to the dialogue between self and place that his fractured and displaced imagination generates. Ezra enters into this conversation with self and place while looking 'across a beach onto the North Atlantic'. He perceives the expanse of sea that separates his adoptive Canada from the land of his birth as 'a huge handwritten manuscript, covered as far as the eye can see with regular lines of neat cursive writing' (McCormack, p.3). The handwriting is his own, it is the manuscript for *The Paradise Motel*, a narrative that gives voice(s) to his search for the four Scottish emigrants who compose himself, and provides him with a medium through which he may reconnect with Scotland. *The Paradise Motel* is more the story of an emigrant's metaphysical return than it is a journey to exotic locales. Patagonia, the birthplace of the story which eventually leads Ezra back to Scotland, is a setting steeped in irony; it is a doubled place, emblematic of Scotland for both Ezra's grandfather and Eric McCormack. Daniel Stevenson says he finds Patagonia 'unpleasantly familiar... the swirls of mist on the squat hills, the treeless swamps reminded him of the country around Muirton' (p.10). That there is more to this familiarity than coincidence, is evident in McCormack's discussion of this Patagonian setting:

Well, a book that I really liked a few years ago was Bruce Chatwin's *In Patagonia*, and the thing was that somebody had told me that Patagonia is exactly the same as... well you know it's almost the image of Southern Scotland. That is to say it is all hilly country with lots of bogs, lots of rain, very little sunshine, you know plants like heather and bracken, so I thought wouldn't it be a curious thing to set the thing down in one of these Patagonian areas (Personal Interview).

Ezra's dialogue with place is not limited to geography but touches the historical and political. His imagined pursuit of the Mackenzies takes him back to the 'capital' city, recognizable as Edinburgh from the description of the castle and the references to the 'stinging wind from the Firth' (McCormack, p.197). Here Ezra 'climbed the hill to the squat castle and looked out from the ramparts down at the huddled city' (p.197). Navigating the expanse between himself and his homeland, Ezra returns to Edinburgh Castle, an icon for Scottish culture and history that shares a status of reconstructed artefact with *The Paradise Motel*. Similar to Ezra's relationship to Scotland, as it is manifested in the text, Edinburgh Castle has been deconstructed and reassembled, and both text and castle are

the *loci* for continuing archaeological excavations. Ezra's text attempts to unearth what his relationship is to the traditions and history of Scotland. Ezra's description of 'The Last Minstrel,' a pub where he confronts Zachary's story, suggests a paralytic and static past:

It was a respectable bar, one wall bristling with dusty claymores and targes on a tartan cloth whose veins seemed to have been bled, long ago, by a handful of rusty skean-dhus. On another wall a dozen brown portraits looked at us. They might have been the ancestors of the handful of gloomy customers (none of them women) who sat at plastic tables along the walls (p.168).

The pub is a pejorative reference to one of the architects of Scotland's invented tartan past, Sir Walter Scott and his ballad 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' The 'stern and wild' Caledonia of Scott's ballad becomes an oppressive tartan-clad cliché for Ezra (Scott, 6.2.1). Ezra relates to Scottish tradition politically at one point, by engaging in a discussion of Scottish nationalism, the proponents of which he depicts, via Gib Douglas, as a sadistic and intolerant lot who burn Zachary Mackenzie's books, and inadvertently Zachary himself (p.185). This image of the artist consumed by the flames of his own words prefigures the fate of Ezra.

Although not as preoccupied with itself as a literary artefact as is *The Paradise Motel*, *Bogle Corbet* is a self-reflexive, first person narrative defining identity of self and place. Bogle is transformed from financial failure in Scotland to a leader of settlers in Canada. And even before he sets sail for the New World, he makes a conscientious effort to write about this new role:

Hitherto I have written these reminiscences of accident and feeling retrospectively, and although my stock of materials is far from being exhausted, I have now only detached notes to make merely to keep a connection in the narrative, until I shall have been settled on our land (Galt, p.18).

Bogle writes back to Scotland to advise future emigrants how to best prepare themselves for the challenges that await them in Canada, and to communicate his criticism of an ineffectual imperial government:

... instead of encouraging the helpless to come abroad, and then leaving them to shift for themselves, I would have them prospectively prepared by some instruction in the handicrafts.

Our colonies are peopled on too lax a system – a system indeed so bad, that it might almost justify the supposition that Government, in permitting it to remain unaltered, practised some occult policy to repress the progress of improvement (pp.117-118).

Bogle equates the British colonial system with 'the sending of troops to keep possession, and of making a few civil appointments for the sake



of patronage,' and offers suggestions for making the colonies more self-sufficient economically, his prime concern being the colonial drain on the British purse. Scotland is an entrenched frame of reference for Bogle Corbet who compares the Chateau of St. Lewis, 'dark in shadow' to 'the western view of Edinburgh Castle' (p.29). For both Bogle and Ezra, Edinburgh Castle provides an imaginative link to their estranged Scotland.

Bogle writes back to Scotland in a very literal and real way; his manuscript, complete with an appendix of soil samples for future *émigrés*, is to be sent across the North Atlantic with Colonel Jocelyn who is returning to Scotland to claim his rightful inheritance as a member of the gentry.

Although Colonel Jocelyn eventually dispels the mystery surrounding his binary persona of Highland gentleman and penniless emigrant, Bogle's detective acumen is engaged by this enigmatic figure; he feels compelled to interrogate Dugowan and the other settlers to ascertain Jocelyn's identity. As Bogle explains:

... with all these seemingly worldly exhortations, with which Dugowan at this time endeavours to soothe my curiosity, and to which I can oppose no reasonable answer, the crave to learn the history of Jocelyn continues (p.150).

Bogle's sleuthing for Colonel Jocelyn's identity is a nineteenth century example of a pervasive thematic concern in late twentieth century Canadian literature: the examination of personal and cultural identity, or what Robert Kroetsch calls the 'genealogical quest' ('Beyond Nationalism', p.65). Canadian writers find a variety of metaphors to express their concern with ancestral heritage: the archaeological digs embarked upon by Margaret Atwood's narrator in *Surfacing* and Kroetsch's Anna Dawe in *Badlands*, the detective paradigm enacted by Dorf in Kroetsch's *Alibi*, and Webb in Michael Ondaatje's *Coming through Slaughter*, and the archival searches that characterize the narrative structures of Jack Hodgkin's *The Invention of the World*, Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*, and Timothy Findley's *The Wars*. *The Paradise Motel* inscribes both the detective model and the archaeological dig in Ezra's quest for the Mackenzie children and himself. Here, again, Ezra is straddling Canadian and Scottish territory. The archaeological dig he embarks upon—an image used by Neil Gunn to symbolize the Scottish genealogical quest in *Highland River* and *The Silver Bough*—is coloured by the macabre influences and bodily violations of the Scots Border ballads; it is an excavation within the physical body. Ezra creates an analogous relationship between the severed body parts buried in the multiplicity of selves he recognizes as Esther, Zachary, Rachel, and Amos, and the textual body of *The Paradise Motel*. The Mackenzies, compositely, represent a second self—at once physical and textual—that Ezra has constructed as the locus for enquiry into his divided and dislocated

emigrant imagination. The conflation of text and body is implicit in Ezra's comparison of the Mackenzie story to 'a thing made of words [that] can grow inside the body, like gallstones which will one day make their necessary and painful exit' (p.44). Moreover, Ezra's *alter ego*, Amos Mackenzie has an avid interest in 'anthropology and archaeology,' he is 'exhilarated' by 'the idea of probing the roots of human culture and of unearthing lost artifacts' (p.50). The words of Mikhail Bakhtin become useful in understanding McCormack's play with the grotesque image of the body in *The Paradise Motel*. 'The grotesque body,' Bakhtin posits 'is a body in the act of becoming. It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body' (p.317). Similarly, the text of *The Paradise Motel*, and Ezra are bodies in the act of becoming, entities that are continually created.<sup>1</sup>

The crescent-shaped scar of the Mackenzie children's mutilation provides a unifying metaphor for Ezra, and the textualized double that comprise his narrative. I use the term 'textualized double' here to distinguish the narratorial progenitor Ezra from his invented self—the text.<sup>2</sup> Daniel Stevenson hears the Mackenzie narrative in the glow of firelight that is 'a brilliant incision in the great belly of the Patagonian night' (p.13). Daniel Stevenson's expedition has ventured to this 'famed dinosaur graveyard,' the surface of which archaeologists have long 'ripped open to expose strange and massive relics,' with the hope of finding a 'live monster' (p.9). The creator of this narrative, Ezra, is the monster that is sought on the textual excavation that is *The Paradise Motel*. In a dream sequence, Ezra discovers what he describes as 'an angular protrusion right in the middle of [his] belly, . . . straining against the flesh.' The dream transports him to an operating theatre where surgery unearths 'a roll of parchment dripping blood and puss' from Ezra's stomach (p.197). The words inscribed on this parchment constitute the gruesome text of *The Paradise Motel*, and provoke the surgeon's condemnation of Ezra as a 'monster' (p.200-201). With this operation, Ezra disinters all of the bodies he has created and buried within the textualized body of his twin. For Ezra, all histories, fictive or otherwise, must be examined to define self.

The detective story paradigm provides an added dimension to Ezra's archaeological confrontation with his dislocation. McCormack's text, in the tradition of murder mysteries and the Border ballads is littered with corpses; they are the corpus of Ezra's prolific imagination. The guests of *The Paradise Motel*, its readers, are invited, along with the house detective, Donald Cromarty, to discover 'whether there is any substance to the story': to solve the riddle of Ezra Stevenson (p.45). Ezra acknowledges the fictive nature of his narrative through the voice of Cromarty, who confronts him with the fraudulent nature of the novel's characters. When he accuses Ezra of fabricating the entire narrative of

*The Paradise Motel*, Cromarty uninvents himself and threatens the very existence of the novel's narrator:

No Daniel Stevenson ever worked at a mine in Muirton. Muirton itself does not exist. As for you, Ezra Stevenson, your name is not registered at the university at which you say we were old friends. There are no records anywhere of the people you have called Daniel Stevenson, John and Elizabeth Stevenson, Joanna Stevenson, Isabel Jaggard, Gib Douglas, Angus Cameron, Amos Mackenzie, Rachel Mackenzie, Esther Mackenzie, and Zachary Mackenzie. Absolutely no records. In addition, your reports are a mishmash of anachronisms and impossibilities (p.208).

Challenged with the unreality of his constructed world, Ezra decides to put a temporal 'end' to the novel and his dialogue with self and place by pulling the plug on Cromarty:

'What about you, then, Cromarty? If none of those others exist, if none of those things happened, where does that leave you, my friend?'

Because, all at once, I was sick of the whole thing, weary of keeping company with such demanding, ungrateful people, all of them depending upon me for their lives and their deaths, absorbing me limb by limb, making me feel so insubstantial, I hardly knew if I existed, myself, and more (p.209).

This discontinuation of plot is only a temporal end, for the novel's narrative is a circular one. The last paragraph of *The Paradise Motel* is a replication of its first: Ezra 'sitting in a wicker chair on a balcony of,' that metaphysical *locus* of invention, 'the Paradise Motel,' looks over the North Atlantic and contemplates the 'handwritten manuscript' of ocean that separates him from Scotland, preparing to reinvent himself yet again (p.210). This circuitous narrative structure suggests the value in the process of creating a self or selves in the post-colonial space of Canada where identity is not a fixed homogenous entity but a fluid construct that must be written by the emigrant. As Ezra says of archaeological digs through the voice of Daniel Stevenson 'the adventure [is] what counts' (p.10).

Eric McCormack's emigrant text negotiates the space between Canada and Scotland by '[recognizing] that all communicational codes especially language are [as Linda Hutcheon writes]—in practice—ambiguous, doubled, even duplicitous' (Hutcheon, p.18). Such a recognition encourages the cross-cultural dialogue in which *The Paradise Motel* engages. Unlike the Canadian-Scottish discourse of John Galt's *Bogle Corbet*, Eric McCormack's novel privileges the process of the 'recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place' above the actual recovery (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, p.9). Identity at the end of *The Paradise Motel*, is about to be absorbed in the polyphonic story-telling of the

Paradise Motel, whereas Galt's novel presents the uncovered definitive identity of Colonel Jocelyn who will return to Scotland permanently to recover his ancestral seat. Reflecting Robert Kroetsch's suspicion that the task of Canadian writers is to 'un-name' or 'uninvent' themselves and their world, McCormack's novel presents the reader with a named character, Ezra, who writes himself invisible by the novel's last page, reappearing in recognizable form only to begin the whole process anew ('Unhiding the Hidden', p.58). If, as Kroetsch has suggested, 'there is in the Canadian word a concealed other experience' it is, in the cases of Eric McCormack and John Galt, a Scottish one ('Unhiding the Hidden', p.58).

#### ENDNOTES

1. Although this image of the grotesque body is associated with the bowels and the genital organs, Bakhtin goes on to state that 'grotesque images may, of course, present other members, organs and parts of the body (especially dismembered parts), but they play a minor role in the drama. They are never stressed unless they replace a leading image' (p.318).
2. McCormack's interest in the physical body as a repository for text first appears in the title story of *Inspecting the Vaults* with the discovery of a female body 'completely tattooed from head to toe with columns of words' (p.18).

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