

# Forms of Memory in Late Twentieth and Twenty-first Century Scottish Fiction

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I hereby declare that this thesis, submitted in candidature for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, and the research contained herein is of my own composition, except where explicitly stated in the text, and was not previously submitted for the award of any other degree or professional qualification at this or any other university.

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## Thesis Abstract

According to Pierre Nora, “[m]emory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition” (8). Drawing on theories of memory and psychoanalysis, my thesis examines the role of memory as a narrative of the past in late twentieth-century and twenty-first-century Scottish literature. I challenge Nora’s supposition that memory and history are fundamentally opposed and I argue that modern Scottish literature uses a variety of forms of memory to interrogate traditional forms of history.

In my Introduction, I set the paradigms for my investigation of memory. I examine the perceived paradox in Scottish literature between memory and history as appropriate ways to depict the past. Tracing the origins of this debate to the work of Walter Scott, I argue that he sets the precedent for writers of modernity, where the concerns are amplified in late twentieth and twenty-first century literature and criticism. While literary criticism, such as the work of Cairns Craig and Eleanor Bell, studies the trope of history, Scottish fiction, such as the writing of Alasdair Gray, James Robertson, and John Burnside, asserts the position of memory as a useful way of studying the past.

Chapter One examines the transmission of memory. Using George Mackay Brown’s *Greenvoe*, I consider the implications of three methods of transferring memory. Mrs McKee’s refusal to disclose her experience indicates a refusal to mourn loss and to transmit memory. Skarf’s revision of historical narratives indicates a desire to share experience. The *Mystery of the Ancient Horsemen* demonstrates the

use of ritual in the preservation and the communication of the past for future generations.

Chapter Two studies the Gothic fiction of Emma Tennant and Elspeth Barker. I examine sensory experience as indicative of the interior and non-linear structure of memory. I argue that the refusal to accept personal and familial loss reveals problematic forms of memory.

Chapter Three traces unacknowledged memory in Alice Thompson's *Pharos*. I use Nicolas Abraham's theory of the transgenerational phantom to consider the effects of this undisclosed memory. I argue that the past and its deliberate suppression haunt future generations.

Chapter Four considers the use of nostalgia as a form of memory. I investigate the perceptions and definitions of nostalgia, particularly its use as a representation of the Scottish national past. Using Neil Gunn's *Highland River*, I identify nostalgia's diverse functions. I examine nostalgia as a way in which, through the Scottish diaspora, memory is transferred and exhibited beyond national boundaries.

Chapter Five builds on the previous chapter and extends the analysis of the ways nostalgia functions. I study nostalgia's manifestations in the diasporic Scottish-Canadian literature of Sara Jeanette Duncan, John Buchan, Eric McCormack, and Alastair MacLeod.

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## Introduction

The present is a perpetual renegotiation of the past; however, concern is often raised as to the appropriate and accurate way of representing the past. According to Pierre Nora, “[m]emory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition” (8). In this statement, Nora makes two claims: first, that memory and history were once identical in meaning; second, that a change has occurred – memory and history now have entirely different connotations. If we follow Nora’s claim that history and memory are fundamentally opposed, emphasis is placed on history and memory as contradictory, binary accounts of the past. A brief look at the denotations of history and memory, however, offers a contrary conclusion.

Memory is directly linked to an individual’s sensory experience as the past is commemorated, recollected, or remembered (“Memory”). It involves not just physical and mental constituents, but also personal action. As an individual encounters an external surrounding through sensation, the experience is confirmed through the activity of mental stimulation. Memory, therefore, is an internal reaction to an external event. Turning to an examination of history’s denotations, we can see it is often explained as a written record or as a “branch of knowledge which deals with past events” (“History”). The descriptions of history call attention to it as a composition of documents, an accumulation of knowledge, and an external event. History is dissociated from the personal and, instead, becomes a narrative object – a descriptor of experience. From these brief descriptions, memory and history do

appear to differ in representation; nevertheless, it is clear that memory and history are each a mode of describing the past.

Recognising that history and memory are ways in which we can depict, analyze, and understand events of the past, recent scholarship has begun to interrogate representations of the past, particularly the assumption that history is an objective, linear narrative. Studies, such as Raphael Samuel's *Theatres of Memory* (1994), Simon Schama's *Landscape and Memory* (1995), and Tim Edensor's *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (2002), incorporate seemingly disparate cultural and social forms in their call for a revision of historiography. In a more localised sphere, the critique of history is also of particular importance in the criticism of Scottish culture. Attention to the multiple narratives of the Scottish past is evident, for example, in the work of T. M. Devine's *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2007* (2006). In *The Scots Imagination and Modern Memory* (2010), Andrew Blaikie examines the construction of value and morality in Scottish identity. Using theories of memory to frame his study, Blaikie traces the tropes of the parish, the landscape, and the visual to demonstrate the relationship between personal and cultural forms of memory. Blaikie argues that the intersection of cultural communication creates a sense of community and belonging; therefore, Scotland exists because "people recognise in it an affirmation of their social experience. A particular combination of images, objects, symbols and descriptions will evoke 'Scottishness' or 'being Scottish'" (7). The critical interest in history and memory, however, stems beyond the recent Scottish socio-political studies: modern Scottish literature, too, has a persistent awareness of its own past.



## Scotland, History, and Memory

Prose fiction is intimately coupled with the representation of memory and history not only of personal identity, but also of the national past. Concurrent with the eighteenth-century development of the modern nation, the novel was used to inspire individuals to ascribe to belief in a geographically based political community. The expansive structure of the novel and the gradual development of the plot allowed readers to ruminate on the ideas espoused within the text. The novel lent itself not only to the dissemination of political rhetoric, but also to the interiorised depiction of the self. Narrative prose was an extended form of literature, meant to be indulged in over time. Unlike a poem or a play, a novel could rarely be consumed within one sitting. During each encounter with the text, the readers' personal experience with the narrative varied as their reading progressed. The novel fostered the imagination of the readers as they engaged personally with the printed material. Physically stimulated through the sensory experience of touch and sight, intellectually engaged with the ideas inscribed on the page, and emotionally invested in the narrative development, readers of the novel participated in an act that melded internal and external experience. Thus, concepts of the self became intimately associated with the act of reading prose fiction. Foregrounding the relationship of history and memory in narrative structure, modern Scottish fiction perpetuates the development of personal identity for readers and reveals the predominance of the debate surrounding representations of the past. Within modern Scottish fiction, personal memory and national history are not in "fundamental opposition"; yet, this literature refrains from supplying any simplistic resolution to this debate. Instead, persistent questions are

raised: How are narratives of the past constructed? Do history and memory rival as authentic versions of the past or, perhaps, do they complement each other? The prevalence of these concerns in Scottish literature is not new: we can see one origin of this debate initiated in the fiction of Walter Scott.

In his historical novels, Scott interrogates the relationship between memory and history and thus, underscores the complexity of representing the past. As Ian Duncan explains in *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (2007), Scott's fiction inaugurates a modern phase in the representation of Scotland. Duncan writes, "[t]he ideological force of Scott's novels lies in their explicit representation of modernization as an overdetermined historical process, in which a complex set of social and psychic transformations comes to bear on an inevitable outcome: here and now, the real world, the commercial society of the post-1707 United Kingdom" (97). An introduction to the importance of memory in Scottish fiction can be found, for example, in Scott's *The Antiquary* (1816). In this novel, we can see evidence of Scott's interest in the complexities of the past as he offers a direct staging of the juxtaposition of history and memory.

An illustration of the confrontation of these apparently incongruous approaches to the past occurs in the fourth chapter of *The Antiquary*. The scene depicts Mr. Oldbuck and Mr. Lovel standing on a small hill, Kaim of Kinprunes. According to Oldbuck, it is not simply soil: it is an ancient ruin from the Roman conquest of Scotland. Describing the conflict between the Caledonians and Agricola, Oldbuck identifies the geographical features of the battle as the same location as Kaim of Kinprunes. His hypothesis, Oldbuck claims, is based solely on fact. Not only do historical accounts describe topographical similarities, but historical artefacts

substantiate the evidence. A stone, found on the hill, is a “sacrificing vessel” and bears an inscription (Scott *Antiquary* 74). The letters “A. D. L. L. which may stand, without much violence,” Oldbuck insists, as an abbreviation for the Latin, “*Agricola Dicavit Libens Lubens*” (74). To Oldbuck, the historical narratives, relics, and etymology conclusively confirm the validity of his hypothesis. Oldbuck’s confident assertion of the superiority of history, however, is immediately challenged. Edie Ochiltree, a local beggar, interrupts. “I mind the bigging o’t,” Ochiltree declares (77). The hill, Ochiltree recounts, was built twenty years earlier, for a local wedding celebration; the stone, he explains, was cut by a stonemason and engraved with an abbreviation meaning “Aiken Drum’s Lang Ladle” (80). To Ochiltree, the memory of personal engagement in an event irrefutably verifies the authenticity of his account.

As we can see, the relationship between history and memory is captured in the characters. While Oldbuck presents a seemingly authoritative historical account of the past based on factual description and evidence, Ochiltree offers a personalised account of the past based on memory, lived experience, and related through oral narrative. Furthermore, language is used to accentuate the apparent incongruity of fact and fiction. Oldbuck’s knowledge of Latin and his use of English diction appear to be more succinct than Ochiltree’s use of Scots idioms. Although the reader may draw conclusions from the men’s interaction, Scott neither explains this contradictory presentation of memory and history, nor elevates one in a position of superiority. Instead, the characters defer a conclusive summary and leave the hill and the secrets of its origins for the reader to ponder. Clearly, in *The Antiquary*, memory and history are not seen as categorically opposed; rather, they offer two narratives of

the past, neither of which can be authenticated. The past is a composite of memory *and* history.

*The Antiquary* is not Scott's only attempt to address the complexity of the historical process: we can see a similar concern with modernity occurring in *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819). While in *The Antiquary* Scott encapsulates the seeming rivalry of history and memory in just one scene, in *The Bride of Lammermoor* he prolongs the contest. In this novel, the structure of the entire narrative centres on the confrontation between history and memory. Incorporating not only oral and written records, but also individual and communal experience, the novel probes into the accuracy of depictions of the past. Multiple and occasionally contradictory layers of narrative are evident in the recurrence of familial disgrace and in the disruption of an apparently linear narrative. Modern historiography is manifested as the Ashton family gains prominence, while folk memory is revealed in the decline of the Ravenswood progeny. At first glance, one could assume that the modern conquers. After all, Colonel Ashton survives Ravenswood. Such a simplistic conclusion, however, would diminish the complexity of the novel's ending. As the faithful servant Caleb remembers the prophecy that "the Lord of Ravenswood should perish on the Kelpie's Flow," he observes Ravenswood "reach the fatal spot," but does not witness his death (Scott *Bride* 267). Likewise, Colonel Ashton only watches as "the figure [becomes] invisible, as if it melt[s] into the air" (268). When the men reach the location, "[n]o trace whatever of horse or rider could be discerned" (268). Untraceable, Ravenswood's demise simply points to a narrative elision. The disappearance of Ravenswood does not elevate the superiority of the "new" or "modern"; rather, it endorses the oral and folk memory as valid and containing truth

– what is prophesied occurs. However, just as he avoids declaring a position in *The Antiquary*, Scott again refuses to prioritise accounts of the past in *The Bride of Lammermoor*. He neither elevates linear projections of history nor denigrates non-linear accounts of memory; instead, he maintains an inconclusive position. Although the Ravenswood family is destroyed, the Ashton usurpers do “not long survive that of Ravenswood” (268). The modern is not privileged over the ancient.

### After Scott: Twentieth-Century Approaches to History and Memory

As *The Antiquary* and *The Bride of Lammermoor* reveal, the distinction between memory and history is not always clear or easily identifiable. The complex debate about memory and history as representations of the past, inaugurated in Scott’s writing, remained the focus of Scottish socio-political criticism. In the twentieth century, Scottish cultural and political discussions were consistently concerned with representations of Scotland’s past. Two approaches to the past, both centred on nationalism, became prevalent: attention to Scotland’s fragmented national history and concentration on Scotland’s apparently unbroken “traditional” memory.

The first approach to the past, exemplified by cultural commentators from Edwin Muir to Tom Nairn, concerned itself with history. Adamant that a linear construction of history was needed to validate national identity, these critics viewed Scotland’s position within Great Britain as problematic. Scotland’s political dependence was an indication of not only the fragmentation of Scottish history, but also the failure of Scottish culture. In 1936, Edwin Muir famously transferred this

critique of Scottish history directly into Scottish literary criticism. Arguing that literature can only occur where “a nation’s history lies in its continuity,” Muir maintained that “where national unity is lost the past is lost too, for the connection between the present and the past has been broken, and the past turns therefore into legend, into the poetry of pure memory” (100). Muir’s assertions prompted the tone of many twentieth-century Scottish cultural and political analyses. In 1977, Tom Nairn echoed Muir’s concerns in *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* and argued that Scots were “a nationality which resigned statehood but preserved an extraordinary amount of the institutional and psychological baggage normally associated with independence – a decapitated national state, as it were, rather than an ordinary ‘assimilated’ nationality” (129). The emphasis placed upon having a unified, “assimilated” identity only intensified the sense of failure following the Referendum in 1979. For if, as Muir and Nairn suggested, the Scottish past could only be validated through historical continuity and national solidarity, then Scotland had surely failed.

While some critics were concerned with Scotland’s fragmented history, a second sphere of cultural commentators professed that coherence of the past could be found in Scotland’s folk tradition. The nationalist platforms of the Scottish Renaissance, identified in the work of Hugh MacDiarmid and Lewis Grassie Gibbon, and the folksong movements of the 1950s and 1960s, seen in the work of Hamish Henderson, sought to ground Scotland’s past in memory. Mythic narratives and vernacular accounts, used to assert and define Scottish identity, became recurring emblems of the continuity between the past and present. Following the increased political independence that Scotland gained in 1997, the importance of representing

the past remained at the forefront of debate. Scottish cultural and political debates became framed not only by what the nation *had been*, but also by what the nation *would be*.

As the critical work of Eleanor Bell and Alan Riach suggests, the first decade of the twenty-first century was concerned with re-evaluating the fatalistic attitude of Scottish criticism. Alan Riach's study *Representing Scotland in Literature, Popular Culture and Iconography: The Masks of the Modern Nation* (2005) traces the positive and diverse influences of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that have continued to affect the development of popular identity in modern Scotland. Bell also comments on the changes in Scottish identity as attention shifted from a strictly regional to a wider global approach. Throughout these metamorphoses, the relationship with the Scottish diaspora became increasingly important. As national identity shifted, Scotland could not only redefine itself within Great Britain, but also within the international sphere.

Just as questions of history and memory have been embedded within Scottish cultural and political criticism, so too have these debates structured much of Scottish literary criticism. However, in literary criticism, the discussion of history and memory has been centred on the construction of nationality and historiography. The work of Cairns Craig has been important to this field. In *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (1996), Craig first develops his argument that the focus on historical themes in nineteenth-century and twentieth-century Scottish novels challenged the notion of history as a linear progress and presented, instead, a "counter-historical tradition" (*History* 81). Scottish literature, Craig maintains, transcends the historical and the "historyless" (56). Craig further

expounds the role of history in *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (1999). Here, Craig argues that the novel, as a “force of modernisation,” shaped Scottish national culture. He writes, “[t]he condition of living in history, in the expectation or the angst of knowing that the future will be necessarily different from the present, required a medium by which a common past and a common stock of cultural memories can be defined, and by which a possible route towards that future can be charted without loss of continuity with a founding past” (Craig *Modern* 11). While Craig acknowledges that the novel has offered alternatives to history, in his need to establish a unified, coherent structure in Scottish literature – “a common past and a common stock of cultural memories” – he oversimplifies the role of the novel in establishing cultural diversity through memory (11). My own study builds upon Craig’s analyses of the importance of history in Scottish literature and I examine specific examples of interiorised depictions of the past. I argue that the novel does not offer unity; it does not negate history. The novel consciously reworks the past, in form and theme, and offers a diversity of cultural memories.

While Craig’s late twentieth-century critical work provided a useful starting point for my analysis of modern Scottish fiction, the work of other critics has aided my interest in post-devolutionary literature. In *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (2004), Eleanor Bell challenges the trajectory of seminal studies of twentieth-century Scottish literary criticism. Arguing against essentialist readings of Scottish culture, politics, and literature, Bell identifies an inherent circularity and parochialism in much of the work, which too often relies on nationalistic readings. Scottish fiction, Bell asserts, gestures to the “ethical



imperative to interrogate the nature of belonging” (123). Bell calls for the use of internationalist approaches, for “[i]t is this indeterminacy of nationhood and identity that is being associated with a postmodern predicament and postmodern ‘state’, where borderlines are now everywhere in question. Hence it is also this intermediary space of potential re-articulation of identity that is being associated here with an ethical imperative” (99). Thus, Bell proposes that criticism employ an open-ended approach to Scotland and Scottishness.

I agree that exploring postmodern and internationalist approaches is integral to the study of modern Scottish literature; however, unlike work of writers such as Craig and Bell, who focus on culturalist or internationalist approaches, I do not propose the recategorisation of Scottish literature. Indeed, I challenge straightforward nationalist paradigms through the examination of the specific model of Scottish-Canadian diasporic fiction. The borders of Scottish nationalism are no longer bound to the mapped outlines of geographical territory. Identifying specific forms of memory that proliferate in Scottish-Canadian literature, I proceed in my analysis through an examination of textual case studies. I argue that the meaning of national identity is challenged when that identity is transferred abroad. Beyond the geographical borders of Scotland, Scottish identity still assumes a powerful force in shaping perceptions and constructions of both individual and national identities.

In addition to studies of national and post-national dynamics within literary criticism, recent scholarship has also begun to address the literature of non-canonical Scottish authors. In the collection of essays *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers* (2000), editors Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden draw attention to the need to address the work of women writers. In the attempt to reclaim the importance of

female writing in Scotland since the 1970s, the essays examine the work of key contemporary poets, authors, and playwrights. The editors Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden trace the resurgence in literature after the failed 1979 referendum and this text serves as a continuation of Carol Anderson and Aileen Christianson's study *Scottish Women's Fiction, 1920s to 1960s: Journeys into Being* (2000). The collection on contemporary work emphasizes a primarily feminist approach to address the role of women's participation in national and gender concerns. The chapters, rather than engaging with nationalistic debates, concentrate on the multiple nature of identity in women's writing and contrast it with the often noted dualistic aspect of Scottish identity. Although more than fifteen authors are studied, only three authors are addressed in connection with the past, memory, history, and time: Candia McWilliam, Janice Galloway, and A. L. Kennedy. Candia McWilliam's writing is seen to play with notions of narrative memory. Writing of Janice Galloway's work, Glenda Norquay emphasizes Galloway's manipulation of national and spatial boundaries through memory. Norquay writes,

Galloway's fiction goes beyond this idea of spatial traversal which is still structured through national identification, with 'origin' and 'purpose', and calls into question models of history and national identity based upon such grand narratives; it questions the extent to which they can speak to women of 'hame'. Rather than filling in 'gaps' in history, [her work] problematises predominant and confining notions of history and identity. (141)

Using memory, Galloway manipulates narratives of the past to subvert traditional expectations of historical and literary frameworks. Similarly, the work of A. L. Kennedy is also identified as using the past in non-traditional ways. Sarah Dunnigan

maintains that Kennedy's writing "articulates verbal and psychological thresholds between disclosure and revelation, and the trope of memory – the immanence of the past within present lives – is a constant. Most Kennedy protagonists are haunted by ghosts. The underlying structure of Kennedy's novels is loss and their 'quest' a restoration, whether moral, sexual or spiritual" (Dunnigan 154). In their narratives, these authors, McWilliams, Galloway, and Kennedy, disrupt perceptions of the past through the manipulation of chronological sequence, personal memory of the characters, or paradigms set by Scottish male authors. Thus, these studies into women's writing have been of great importance in my research as they not only assert the importance of examining the work of lesser-known authors, but also maintain that these contemporary authors deliberately challenge traditional approaches to nation, history, and identity.

As I have identified in Scott's fiction, the debate between history and memory is prevalent in Scottish literature. To date, the majority of Scottish literary criticism has focused on the historical and national elements of this literature. While these studies are useful examinations, my thesis investigates memory as it operates across a variety of texts. This thesis does not trace a specific linear movement in modern Scottish literature; instead, it selects texts that illustrate the broader, operative structures of memory within three distinct spheres: the individual, the family, and the nation. As a representation of the past, memory is contained within the psyche of the individual and can also be transferred and shared within the familial and national contexts; therefore, the depiction of memory is multifaceted and diverse. I have chosen novels that highlight the fragmentary nature of memory in modern Scottish writing. The narrative elements such as description, form, language,

point of view, and setting are replete with the complexity of memory. The novels I discuss in my thesis encourage the reader to question narratives of the past and to examine the ways in which memory can disrupt assumptions about history.

Twentieth and twenty-first century Scottish literature both mirrors and interrogates cultural and political debates about the past. Modern Scottish fiction has been shaped by questions such as: How is the past represented? What categories shape memory? In what ways does memory help to bring greater clarity and understanding of the past? These questions, surrounding representations of the past, permeate Scottish literature and continue to be at the forefront of the discussion. While the novels I have selected are representative of the concerns of memory and history that haunt the literature of Scotland, a brief look at other fiction demonstrates the frequency with which Scottish literature broaches examination of the past, reworking history through personalised narratives of memory.

Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things: Episodes from the Early Life of Archibald McCandless M.D., Scottish Public Health Officer* (1992) uses neo-Victorian themes to famously demonstrate the manipulation of memory. The Gothic tale of Glaswegian Dr. Baxter's surgical replacement of an infant's brain into the adult body of its mother not only underscores the loss of memory, but also the difficulty and controversial ways in which it is retrieved. The manipulation of memory is also explored in Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* (1996). The disturbing account of Morvern, a young woman who deliberately conceals her boyfriend's suicide and wilfully assumes his identity as a writer, presents a grotesque and fragmented account of an individual's chosen entrapment. In the attempt to suppress her personal

history, Morvern appropriates another's memory. The physical dismemberment and burial of her boyfriend's body illustrates Morvern's mental severance from her past.

History intersects with the personal in A. L. Kennedy's *Day* (2007). Set after the Second World War, the novel focuses on Alfred Day's attempt to integrate his previous experience as a soldier into his present life as an actor for a war film. Intermingling past and present, the narrative integrates Day's memory of his lover, family, and war comrades with his daily life. Reminded of childhood abuse and of war catastrophes, Day struggles to comprehend both missing memories and glaring remembrances from his past.

While Kennedy integrates an external historical experience into the personalised narrative of one man, James Robertson complicates the intersections of past and present in his work. Robertson's historical novel *The Fanatic* (2000), not only invokes literary and religious precursors, but also subverts the superiority of either history or memory. *The Fanatic* unites the story of mid-seventeenth century religious fanatics Major Weir and James Mitchel with the late twentieth-century account of Andrew Carlin, a ghost in an Edinburgh tour. Carlin's personal interest in the history of Presbyterian extremists exceeds the boundaries of historical accounts and begins to plague his daily life. Creating the embodiment of the Caledonian Antisyzygy in Carlin's character, Robertson explores the understanding of the past and the use of historical documents to validate narratives of the past. Carlin's primary source of Weir and Mitchel's existence, John Lauder's manuscript *Ane Secret Book*, strangely disappears from the library. The physical disappearance of a text thus emphasizes the gaps in accepted, linear forms of history (Robertson *Fanatic* 249). Robertson successfully interrogates perceptions of history through the

manipulation of textual artefact and personal experience. The instability of narrative, reflected through the personal memory of Mitchel and Carlin, provokes investigation into the apparent legitimacy of history.

In *The Testament of Gideon Mack* (2007), James Robertson continues his discussion of the narrative dichotomy of the past. Clearly imitating the structure of James Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), Robertson's novel not only invokes literary predecessors, but also addresses concerns of authenticity and reliability. An atheistic minister, Gideon Mack abruptly changes his belief in the supernatural after a personal encounter with the devil. The contradiction between documented, historical evidence and Mack's revised, personal memoir gestures to the disruption of linearity and the multiplicity of narratives in the past.

John Burnside's *The Dumb House: A Chamber Novel* (1997) highlights the concerns of personal memory and the manipulation of identity. Luke's morbid fascination with the development of language inspires him to commit murder. The deliberate silencing of other people's lives and narratives points to the erasure of memory. In *The Devil's Footprints* (2007), Burnside intertwines folktale and reality. The story circles around the folktale of the devil walking on newly fallen snow through the village of Coldhaven. Undisclosed secrets haunt the tale as familial murder is repeated in fratricide and filicide. In Stona Fitch's *Printer's Devil* (2009), the protagonist Ian is offered multiple and conflicting accounts of his father's death. Fitch, in this novel, emphasizes the manipulation of historical evidence. The characters' political involvement in the printing industry demonstrates the

unreliability of textual sources, while oral authority is also questioned as it is procured from untrustworthy people.

As these textual examples demonstrate, memory and history as narratives of the past are examined in abundant and varied ways in Scottish literature. In my thesis, I have chosen novels that highlight the complexity and fragmentary nature of memory in modern Scottish literature. In George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe* (1972), I examine the act of transmitting the past as it is manifested in a variety of ways: the refusal to transfer memory, the need to create narratives of the past, and the importance of ritual. Each method of examining the past highlights the importance of the interaction with memory. The novel raises questions as to the role of memory both to the individual and to the community. Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* (1979) encourages examination of sensory experience and questions the authenticity of familial narratives, while the relationship between orality and memory comes to the forefront of Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991). Memory as an act of unearthing the unacknowledged familial past is seen in Alice Thompson's *Pharos* (2002). Nostalgia, in its multiple forms, encourages negotiation of the diasporic past. This can be seen in fiction as diverse as Neil Gunn's *Highland River* (1937), Sara Jeannette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904), John Buchan's *Sick Heart River* (1941), Eric McCormack's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1997), and Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief* (2000).

## Memory: Theories and Frameworks

Clearly, the proposition that memory and history are in “fundamental opposition” demands interrogation, particularly in relation to Scottish literature (Nora 8). In the novels discussed above, memory is not a binary of history: it is an alternative depiction of the past. However, as a version of the past, how do we define and identify memory? If we turn to the field of memory studies, we can find insights into how memory is understood and theorised. Three areas of memory studies have greatly influenced my research: the spatial, the relational, and the national.

The pioneering work of Frances Yates is critical in the field of memory studies. In *The Art of Memory* (1966), she traces the long history of mnemonics from early Greek sources through the Medieval and Renaissance eras. Consistently, memory has been understood in spatial or geographical terms. Memory is located within the mind and the repeated use of buildings, imprints, and images to represent memory emphasizes its inherent physicality. The physicality of memory directly corresponds to the view that memory is the union of mental and emotional topography.

In addition to Yates’ historiographical examination of memory studies, which foregrounds the spatiality of memory, Mary Warnock’s *Memory* (1987) has also influenced my approach. Warnock’s focus is on the personal and interpersonal nature of memory. Using the concepts of moral philosophy, Warnock traces the shifting focus of memory studies from mnemonic techniques to the study of the individual. Personal identity, she argues, is directly related to the concepts of cause, space, and time. A sense of a continuous identity, she maintains, connects an individual’s



present experience with one's past (62-63). To understand an individual's identity, we must identify and accept that the same person has lived through a specific time: "The *continuity* thus established is the continuity of a spatial object, which can move and change, but yet be said to be the same" (66-67 – emphasis original). Memory, therefore, enables us to maintain that sense of continuity, but it is both a mental and a "*physical continuity of body over time*" (69 – emphasis original). Memory, Warnock admits, extends far beyond the individual. To her, the emphasis in memory studies should not be the continuity of an individual, but rather the survival of memory. Survival, she argues, "can be a one/many relation between an individual at one time and any number of individuals at another time" (72). The use of memory to establish relationships between individuals will encourage consideration "not just of ourselves in the future, but of all the people with whom we were, more or less, physiologically or psychologically connected. Survival, unlike identity, is a matter of degree" (72). Warnock's work not only acknowledges the importance of individual specificity, but also establishes the importance of interpersonal relationships when examining memory.

While the seminal studies of Yates and Warnock have influenced my approach to the spatial, personal, and interpersonal nature of memory, Jonathan Boyarin's "Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory" (1994), has greatly informed my use of memory as a tool to understand the interpersonal dynamics of nationalism. Using theories of time and space, Boyarin argues for a reconceptualisation of "memory, embodiment, and nationhood" (24). He contends that memory cannot be strictly individual because it is symbolic and intersubjective; however, it also cannot be literally collective because it is embodied (26). These seemingly incompatible

elements, he insists, disappear if the emphasis is placed upon “the constitution of both group ‘membership’ and individual ‘identity’ out of a dynamically chosen selection of memories, and the constant reshaping, reinvention, and reinforcement of those memories as members contest and create the boundaries and links among themselves” (26). Boyarin’s identification of the need to incorporate both individual and collective memory encourages the renegotiation of identity in the national sphere.

In addition to the field of memory studies, I have relied on theories of psychoanalysis, which establish the importance of memory in the creation and negotiation of individual identity. Psychoanalysis emphasizes exploration of the individual’s past as an essential means to successfully negotiating the present and motivating future change and growth. To achieve its goals, the process of psychoanalysis is largely dependent on the use of memory and language. Through language – in both what *is* said and what *is not* said – access to the individual’s memory is attained. In addition to studying memories that are easily retrieved, psychoanalysis also addresses the unconscious and its (often) unrecognised effect on the individual. The inability or refusal to remember is singularly significant and is often expressed in linguistic gaps and silences. The novels I study address the problematic aspects in the relation and representation of memory. Many of these novels are concerned with both the non-communication and miscommunication of memory. The refusal to acknowledge loss figures prominently in the plots of these novels, which are filled with acts of incomplete mourning. Because of the prevalence of loss in the literature, I have used theories of mourning to discuss memory in these texts. As I trace the manifestations of memory through the language of these novels,

I use Sigmund Freud's widely known theories of object-relations and the uncanny. Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok's concepts of introjection, incorporation, and the phantom are also particularly useful in my study.

Freud's identification of mourning and melancholia as complex psychic processes is further articulated in Abraham and Torok's psychoanalytic research. In their study, Abraham and Torok focus on the individual's mourning process as expressed through language. Healthy mourning results in the individual's ability to introject, or to include, the unconscious in the ego, which stimulates the person's psychic development. Sorrow for the lost love-object is expressed through the oral cavity. As the individual accepts this loss, language is used to fill the emptiness.

Incorporation, or unhealthy mourning, results when the individual denies the loss of the love-object. Although overwhelmed with grief, the individual's inability to use certain linguistic elements may point to the unconscious refusal to mourn. Unable to express or to fill personal emptiness through adequate linguistic structures, the individual substitutes other objects to fill the void.

While the concepts of introjection and incorporation address psychic processes of the individual, the phantom involves familial psychic structures. The phantom is an unacknowledged remnant of an individual's past that returns to haunt his/her descendants. Although unaware of the inherited secret, the living descendent experiences disruptions in personal psychic experience due to this transgenerational phenomenon.

## Thesis Outline

My thesis investigates the increasingly sophisticated position of memory and its dual function in the representation of the past. As a noun, memory is a personal narrative of lived experience. Buried within the psychic framework of the individual, memory becomes an integral element in the construction of identity. As a verb, memory operates; it directs the process that involves the communication and transmission of an individual's identity to others. Memory informs and shapes the communal representation of the past in familial and national spheres as individuals share their experience. For the purposes of my study, I engage with memory as a literary device in prose fiction that is traceable through plot, characterisation, and form. The novel is a textual manifestation of an individual's psyche that integrates communal concerns through the use of ritual enactments, transgenerational narratives, and political forums. As a narrative device in fiction, memory is employed to expose, mend, or repress the disruptive nature of Scottish history in the literature of twentieth and twenty-first century Scottish authors.

My concern with the psychic space of memory as represented in fiction frames my discussion; however, I also consider memory as a theoretical construct. In my analysis of modern Scottish fiction, I use psychoanalytic theories that draw attention to linguistic structures, individuals, and interpersonal relationships to examine the ways in which memory, as a non-linear representation of the past contained within psychic space, interacts with and mirrors physical space. As with psychoanalysis, the use of language to express memory in the novel is essential. Language not only opens ways of understanding fiction's multiple layers through

character, plot, and narrative structure, but also constructs the form through which the past is represented. In novels, the characters' experiences and memories both demonstrate the interiority of memory and emphasize the process of memory as a way of exploring the past. There is an obvious danger in the oversimplification of this concept: treating characters as individuals to be psychoanalysed is problematic. It is, nevertheless, important to see the process of characterisation in literary form as indicative of the psychic process of understanding the past. To observe and to analyze this is not to undermine the singularity of either the individual experience or the specificity of historical events. I argue that memory, like history, is an effective tool that inspires a better understanding not only of the past, but also of the present. In addition to using psychoanalytic theories, I engage with historiographical, philosophical, and socio-political theories to analyze memory as it operates within the personal, familial, and national contexts.

Mirroring the structure of memory and the multiplicity of narrative, my thesis is neither strictly linear in its approach nor chronological in its textual selection. Through the examination of personalised narratives of the past, the voice and articulation of the individual challenge the simplistic and binary division between memory and history. The novels that I have chosen foreground interaction between historical context and individual interiority to underscore problematic manifestations of memory. The literature self-consciously gestures to Scottish national and literary history, while interrogating the transmission of the past through memory. The vast temporal range of the selected fiction demonstrates the complex transitions of the past and their effect on the individual, familial, and national spheres. The transitions contained within the narratives include the multifaceted effects of war, displacement,

migration, slavery, and industrialisation. These literary concerns, however, are not bounded within the confines of Scotland's geographical borders for memory shifts perpetually. Porous and malleable, narratives contain traces of the past and are transferred into other national territories through the fiction of both Scots and Scottish descendants. This thesis not only manifests the adaptability of memory, but also highlights the continuously evolving nature of memory.

In Chapter One, I begin my study of memory with a close reading of George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe* (1972) to investigate how memory, as a personalised, internalised, psychic representation of the past, is transferred into the interpersonal context. Using Pierre Nora's explication that "memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual," I outline the multiple and problematic ways that narratives of the past are transferred into the present (Nora 9). *Greenvoe*, in its focus on a community of disparate characters, offers a non-linear depiction of history: personal and communal memory is transferred in specific ways. I position the discussion of the text in relation to the socio-political context in which it was written. The increase in Scottish nationalism and interest in folk culture as an important part of Scottish identity in the 1950s and 1960s, I argue, is mirrored in the novel's interest in the communicability of experience. I examine three ways in which memory is transferred in the novel. Mrs McKee demonstrates the refusal to share personal memory. Although she carefully traces her past, she refuses to share her experience with her son. Mrs McKee's refusal to share demonstrates the refusal to accept loss. The second example of memory transmission I examine is Skarf's account of Hellyan history. Here, Skarf's revision of the narrative of the past creates a subjective account of experience. Skarf attempts to revise larger historical accounts

into a non-linear and personalised narrative. Finally, I examine the initiation rites of the Ancient Mystery of The Horsemen to demonstrate the use of ritual and language in the transmission of memory. The members' deliberate and conscious repetition of ritual perpetuates memory and is shared between generations.

The second chapter of the thesis investigates memory in novelistic depictions of sensory experience. Examining how the past is used and manipulated in the present, I consider memory as a threshold or liminal site that is filtered through, and yet simultaneously affects, the senses. Gothic novels such as Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* (1979) and Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991) are key texts for studying the relationship between objects and memory. The elaborate utilization of aural, visual, gustatory, olfactory, and tactile descriptions offers a useful depiction of sensory experience as memory. As a genre, Gothic fiction provides a forum for the exploration of historical paradigms and the transgression of perceived boundaries. The psychoanalytical theories of mourning aid my investigation of how Gothic fiction rewrites and revives Scottish history. I argue that the shifts of geographic and psychic space and of sensorial experience are indicative of alterations to personal and familial identity.

Chapter Three investigates the problematic manifestation of unacknowledged memory as it is perpetuated in the present. Although memory may be shared intentionally, it may also be transmitted unconsciously. I argue that Scottish fiction demonstrates a tradition of using fiction to rework unsettled narratives of history. Using Abraham and Torok's concept of the transgenerational phantom, I examine the ways in which undisclosed aspects of familial pasts affect future generations in Alice Thompson's *Pharos* (2002). Transgenerational memory problematizes the concept of

memory as a series of events retained within an individual's mind and allows for the examination of patterns not only in an individual's behaviour, but also in a nation's past. The figure of Lucia gestures to the unsettled memory of Scotland's participation in the slave trade and thereby encourages the acknowledgement of a past that is shared across generations.

My fourth chapter addresses the role and prevalence of nostalgia in Scottish literature and investigates the problem of belonging. I argue that nostalgia's multiple denotations invite investigation into the shifting nature of identity. I consider how the shifts in the space of memory affect national identity as it pertains to the concept of home as the familiar. The Scottish diaspora experience shifts in the space of memory and in national geographic space, which necessitate a renegotiation of their identity. Nostalgia is often used to depict idealistic versions of the past and to romanticize individual and national histories; however, I argue that nostalgia is a complex and useful form of memory. I briefly identify and outline four traits of nostalgia in Neil Gunn's *Highland River* (1937). I then extend analysis of nostalgia to include representation of national identity beyond the borders of Scotland. Studying how nostalgia's topographical dimensions are used in geographical locations for commodification purposes in the tourist industry, I argue that nostalgia can be used to renegotiate both psychic and geographical surroundings, particularly in Scotland's relationship with its diaspora.

Because of nostalgia's diverse and complex manifestations in literature, I address it in two chapters. In Chapter Five, I extend my initial analysis of nostalgia and return to the investigation of problematic issues addressed in each of my earlier chapters. I examine these concerns in the context of narratives that have shifted both



the space of identity and the place of memory – the literature of the Scottish-Canadian diaspora. The myth of a stable national memory based on a secure history and the fixation on identity found in Scottish fiction can be seen in the literature of Scottish-Canadian immigrants and their descendants. First, I examine the transferral of memory in Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist* (1904), an early example of the negotiation of nation in the British empire. As immigrants and their descendants adapt to their new surroundings, their longing for home shifts. In this novel, the boundaries of nation are disrupted and renegotiated as citizens become more fully integrated within the Canadian nation. Second, I turn to John Buchan's *Sick Heart River* (1941) as an example of the deliberate navigation and intentional use of memory in the renegotiation of identity. In the novel, nostalgia mirrors the physical journey of Leithen and encourages a healthy renegotiation of the past into the present. Third, I examine Eric McCormack's novel *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1997). McCormack intentionally invokes Scottish religious history by reference to John Knox's sermon on the position of women within the Christian church. Written as a fictional memoir, the novel not only relocates the protagonist from Scotland to Canada, but also investigates the unknown. In this novel, the mutations of familial and national memory have a direct affect on individual identity. The uncanny, as an inversion of the familiar, serves to disrupt assumptions about the past and familial memory. The last novel I investigate is Alastair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief* (2000). In this novel, I return to a consideration of the desire to belong and argue that the familial memory of Scotland reveals problematic and complex associations. The characters' refusal to mourn loss, exemplified as melancholia, demonstrates the appropriation of

the past for a specific purpose. Although seemingly disparate, the selected Scottish-Canadian diasporic fiction permits the investigation of the diverse uses and the complex implications of nostalgia. The literature demonstrates the versatility of nostalgia: it may be used not only for reductive purposes, but also for the renegotiation of identity and thus it has potential merit as a form of memory.

## Chapter One

### Transmitting Memory in George Mackay Brown's

#### *Greenvoe*

Memory, initially private and unique to the individual's experience, has the ability, if shared, to expand into communal spheres: the family, the community, the nation. In this chapter, I explore the influence of memory as a representation of the individual's past; I also examine the effect of memory on both the individual and the group. In his discussion of history and memory, Pierre Nora argues that history, as a reconstruction of the past, is "always problematic and incomplete," whereas memory is "life" and is continuously evolving (8). The interplay of memory and history creates *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory, where the "consciousness of a break with the past" causes memory to become crystallized at a "particular historical moment" (7). Nora strives to make a clear distinction between history and memory:

memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority. Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images, and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and to relations between things. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive the relative. (9)

If, as Nora suggests, memory is evolving and is "life," then memory's changes and permutations allow for its transmission between individuals. The transferral of narratives of the past enables personal memory to accrue significance beyond the self; its transmission also facilitates the examination of the past's effect on the present. The communication of the past offers insights into the ways in which

attitudes and memories of particular events and experiences are perpetuated in the communal sphere. The difference between individual and communal memory in Scottish literature is often scarcely noted, so closely are the two fused. It is, however, in the transferral of memory between the two spheres that the past continues to have unprecedented and diverse effects in the present. George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe* (1972) is representative of a broad pattern in my thesis where memory is manifested and transmitted in a variety of ways: unresolved and incommunicable memory as part of the psychic framework of the individual; internalised memory adapted from external experience; and communal memory re-enacted through ritual and tradition. *Greenvoe* refuses to maintain a distinction between history and memory. In doing so, the novel reveals the transferral of intermingled personal and communal pasts and the creation of sites of memory.

*Greenvoe* describes the daily life of members of a small community on Orkney. Although geographically limited to the space of the island of Hellya, the novel's boundaries are extended through the psychic spaces of its numerous characters. While the members of the *Greenvoe* community provide narrative diversity, the text also juxtaposes personal memory and communal history to reveal a variety of ways that memory can be transferred. Mackay Brown's use of an omniscient narrator throughout the novel initially offers an objective viewpoint that simply describes the characters' activities and behaviours. However, as the plot develops, the narrator's focus becomes increasingly concentrated on the secretive behaviours and inner thoughts of the characters. Through the relationships of the *Greenvoe* citizens, we can explore the transferral of memory between the individual and the community and, conversely, between the community and the individual. The

multiplicity of characters – there are over twenty – not only complicates the plot, but also underscores the importance of communal relationships within the town.

According to Timothy C. Baker, the individual narratives not only compete for attention, but also call attention to the novel's unceasing repetition. In his article "George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe* as Impossible Community," Baker argues that *Greenvoe* is "not a novel of community, but a novel that questions community and seeks in the documentation of individual voices to explore the possibility of community, even as it recognises that community itself is impossible" (59). Baker's attention to the structure of community emphasizes the importance of collective structures within the novel: through the communion of the characters, community is established. I argue that it is through the transferral of memory that the characters of *Greenvoe* carry the past into the present. It is, however, the decision of those who share and participate in the narrative – both in the telling and the hearing – whether the memory will become part of individual and collective experience.

In "The Storyteller," Walter Benjamin discusses the communicability of experience – both personal and communal – through story (86-87). Inherent in the telling of the story is the communication not of simply practical information, but of wisdom (88). According to Benjamin, wisdom is inextricably coupled with both lived experience and with the act of telling the story. As wisdom is shared, the listener's participation allows the story to be absorbed into memory and thus shares in the communication of wisdom. Embedded within the listener's memory, the story "does not expend itself. It preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time" (90). Once the story is fully integrated into the listener's memory, the listener is inclined to share it with another (91). Benjamin

explains, “[m]emory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation” (98 – emphasis original). Through the act of sharing between persons, the story gains an heir, who will perpetuate the wisdom of that experience (98). In modernity, however, the sharing of experience through story has been fractured. Benjamin traces the disintegration of wisdom and the communicability of experience to the First World War, where its horrors exceeded the bounds of understanding: “For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power” (84). The effects of war, inflation, and societal degradation instigated the inability to convey experience with others. In modernity, wisdom is no longer shared. Indeed, according to Benjamin, the modern condition is fated to communicate only the transmission of information, not of wisdom.

The failure to transmit wisdom through memory that Benjamin identifies as indicative of modernity is similar to the disintegration of communication in *Greenvoe*. In the novel, both the refusal and the attempt to communicate experience through memory is addressed directly. The novel’s use of memory echoes the concerns of sharing experience, provoking questions such as: What is the relationship between individual memory and collective history? How is dialogue between the personal and the communal past maintained? Is there a responsibility to transfer personal memories into a wider, communal sphere? It is in the specific narrative accounts of *Greenvoe*’s community members that we can see the exploration of the variations of memory and the ways in which it is transmitted.

Within the novel, memory is a spectrum that spans the personal to the archetypal: it extends beyond the limits of geography and escapes the boundaries of linear history.

The discussion of memory in *Greenvoe* offers a complex relationship between the past and present; however, criticism of the novel is often repetitive. Analysis tends to concentrate on the novel's form, its archetypal tendencies, or its anti-progressive attitude. In "Greenvoe: A Poet's Novel," David S. Robb observes that Mackay Brown's writing is "in the form of the short story" and is "written with great humanity and an obvious sensitivity to words"; however, Robb cautions that "the pattern of values offered by the book seems fairly obvious and it is tempting to turn immediately to issues of structure, of narrative technique, of the co-presence of the realistic and the non-realistic, and of the anti-Progressive ideology for which Brown is well known" (47). Although he presumes the patterns are "fairly obvious," Robb's analysis harbours a perplexed discussion of the novel's form. He writes,

it seems neither in the paradisaical tradition of the Kailyard, nor in the denunciatory tradition of *The House with the Green Shutters*. It does not even seem to function as does *Sunset Song* in combining both traditions in a work of both explicit condemnation and celebration. (50-51)

Robb accurately notes that *Greenvoe* is neither in the Kailyard nor the realist traditions: *Greenvoe* demonstrates reliance on and writes in response to both literary traditions. Mackay Brown deliberately manipulates the style of the novel and relies on a variety of literary forms. The novel commences in a style strongly reminiscent of Kailyard fiction, such as J. M. Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy: The Story of His Boyhood* (1896): setting descriptions are scenic, character occupations are simplistic, and dialogue is straightforward. Like S. R. Crockett's *The Lilac Sunbonnet* (1893), Mackay Brown uses the fervent religiosity of the opening characters, Samuel and Rachel (whose names remind the reader of the Biblical characters' devotion and

patience), the idyllic depictions of landscape, and the habitual, daily activities of the islanders to instil a sense of simplicity to the narrative. Although the novel's beginning invokes the Kailyard techniques of picturesque scenes and simple language, embracing the reader in a sense of an idealized and unified community, the style shifts to include epistles, journal entries, and historical records as the novel progresses.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast to the focus on the novel's form, critics also maintain that *Greenvoe* is archetypal and historically limited. The editors of *Scottish Literature in English and Scots* generalize Mackay Brown's writing and argue that "[v]irtually everything he has written has presented Orkney life, past and present, as archetypal, an elemental expression of the meaning of life itself, conveyed through a consistent and overwhelming symbolism of land and sea, of seasonal change and the rites of passage of birth, fruition and death" (Gifford, Dunnigan, and MacGillivray 840). Similarly, Robb contends that while "Mackay Brown does not set past over against present," progress is expressed as "the ultimate poverty and horror of a contemporary life impoverished in comparison with a better, richer past" (50, 48). Cairns Craig's analysis extends this condemnation of the novel. Highlighting Mackay Brown's tendency to employ mythic patterns and diminishing his use of history, Craig writes:

The loss and recovery of that alternative to history structures much of the narrative of the Scottish imagination in the twentieth century, and precisely because the mythic is beyond history its fulfilment must come in a moment which denies the very narrative resources upon which history, and the novel, are based[.] . . . This is the suspension of temporality that Mackay Brown celebrates in many of his novels, as in *Greenvoe* when, at the conclusion of each section of the novel, we are presented with a ritual which enacts the

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<sup>1</sup> For example, the entire third chapter is an epistle from Dewas (Johnny) Singh, a travelling Indian merchant, to his uncle. Johnny's letter recounts his interactions with each household and presents subjective and personalised impressions of the characters.



mythic pattern, the fable, which underlies the story of the lives on the island, a fable which cannot be reached through the story but must be gestured to as continuing to exist beyond it, in a drama whose mythic content emphasizes the cyclic return that denies the forward trajectory of the furrow of history.  
(*Modern* 161)

Craig's suggestion that Mackay Brown "denies the forward trajectory of the furrow of history" reduces the novel to a work that retains the past in a deliberate attempt to forestall the future. The implication is that *Greenvoe* is a text that looks longingly at an idealized, mythical past that is completely detached from the present. Craig further argues that the novel's conclusion emphasizes the importance of refusing history and maintains that the conclusion of the novel ascribes to "the purposes to which much Scottish fiction has been dedicated – the denial of the history which makes the novel itself necessary" (162).

Craig's assertion, however, deserves interrogation. Does the novel simply negate history and thereby refuse progress? According to Isobel Murray and Bob Tait in *Ten Modern Scottish Novels*, Mackay Brown's "imaginative writing is concerned to celebrate the natural lives of small communities, close to nature, to natural rhythms, and to their own past" and the stories are "often set in the present, a timeless present, suffused with continuity and awareness of history" (147). Likewise, I argue that *Greenvoe* does not offer a simplistic, straightforward depiction of history; rather, personal memory bleeds into communal history, highlighting the confluence between these apparently distinct discussions of the past. Mackay Brown not only uses personalised narratives and mythic images to experiment with the various methods of transferring memory, but also refers to nationalist concerns that were contemporary to the writing of the novel.

## Political Context of *Greenvoe*: Currents of Nationalism

The discussions of memory and its transmission in *Greenvoe* mirror contemporary cultural and political debates surrounding Scottish identity throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Scottish nationalism vacillated throughout the early and mid-twentieth century. Although vibrant during the 1920s and 1930s, nationalism declined in popularity during the Second World War and then resurged due to post-War economic recession.<sup>2</sup> A prelude, or perhaps a parallel, to mid-twentieth-century Scottish political revival was the resurging interest in Scottish folk singing in the 1950s.<sup>3</sup> Although the folk revival initially began in academia, it was inherently political. Not only did it spark debates about the authenticity of Scottish folk (oral) tradition, it also inspired pride in the nation's past (Henderson "Some Thoughts" 11-12). In 1951, Hamish Henderson organized the first People's Festival Ceilidhs, which featured national folk singers (MacNaughton 194).<sup>4</sup> Henderson recalls that "when Calum Maclean and I began working at the School of Scottish Studies in the early fifties, our activities were looked at askance by quite a number of characters, both inside and outside the University, and we rapidly came to realise that by embarking on the study and collection of folk material we were engaged willy-nilly in a political act" ("Some Thoughts" 11). The interest in both historical ballads and contemporary folk music was perceived as a political act due to the assertion of the

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<sup>2</sup> For extensive analysis of early twentieth-century Scottish nationalism, see H. J. Hanham's *Scottish Nationalism*, pp. 10-11, T. C. Smout's *Scottish Voices*, p. 391; and J. M. Reid's *Scotland Past and Present*.

<sup>3</sup> For further discussion of folk music and its impact on Scottish history, see Edward J. Cowan's edited collection *The People's Past*.

<sup>4</sup> MacNaughton argues that the revival was due not only to the dedication of its organizers, but also to the technology of the tape-recorder that made collecting folk songs easier and the songs more accessible to the public. See pp. 195-197.

uniqueness of Scottish music and the invested interest in Scottish history. Coinciding with increased academic attention, folksong gained popularity among the public sphere through festivals and folk clubs.

The renewed interest in oral tradition corresponded with the increased sense of nationalism that was simultaneously occurring in the political sphere following the Second World War. H. J. Hanham's investigation of politics in *Scottish Nationalism* provides a perspective nearly concurrent with the publication of *Greenvoe*.

Appearing in 1969, his argument stated:

There was a burst of nationalist fervour at the end of the 1920s and in the early 1930s, there was another one at the end of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, and there has been another one since 1964. . . . What is clear is that the scale of these nationalist revivals has changed. The first one was very small indeed by the standards of modern democracy, and flourished chiefly outside the mainstream of politics. The second revival took the form of a covenant movement which secured the backing of something like two million people for a measure of Home Rule (not independence). The third revival has taken the form of a massive campaign at parliamentary and municipal elections which must lead to the capture of the majority of the Scottish seats in parliament or it will be a failure. (Hanham 12)

The nationalistic political revival in the 1960s was also noted by William Ferguson. According to Ferguson, in just two years (1962-1964), the membership of the Scottish National Party (S.N.P.) grew from 2,000 members to over 20,000 and became widespread throughout the country (*Scotland* 395). Following the increased membership, the S.N.P. gained significant votes in the 1966 election.<sup>5</sup> In 1968, Ferguson concluded that

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<sup>5</sup> In *Scotland: 1689 to the Present*, Ferguson reports that following the general election of 1966 “[t]he Nationalist vote more than doubled; in three seats their candidates came second, and in most of the 23 constituencies in which S.N.P. candidates stood (many of them for the first time) they polled well, gaining over 5,000 votes in eleven of them and saving 13 deposits” (401).

[t]he Union with England, which was regarded as the ark of the covenant a century ago, is not now generally regarded as sacrosanct, and this more questioning attitude undoubtedly has been reinforced by the changed situation in which the [United Kingdom] now finds itself. The passing of empire, the eclipse of the commonwealth, and a half-century of economic decline have put a very different face on things. . . . Now, all has changed, and the essence of the new situation seems to be uncertainty. The hub of the problem would seem to be, as Dean Acheson (a former American secretary of state) put it in December 1962, that England had lost an empire and failed to find a role in the world. The analysis was sound and deserved more consideration than the howl of jingoism that greeted it in Britain. But English nationalism, which is real enough though it assumes various disguises, can only with difficulty adjust itself to new realities. The Scots have this considerable advantage: they have retained the mentality of a small nation, and, realistically, see no profit in what many regard as the continuing delusion of Great Britain as a world power. If, the argument runs, economic and social regeneration is to be sacrificed to such a phantasm, then radical, and perhaps even desperate, expedients may have to be adopted to make Scotland's continued existence feasible. Whether the will to survive as a nation exists, or whether it could successfully assert itself, are deep questions that admit of no answer. (*Scotland* 414-415)

Ferguson's quick assertion that England's loss of empire can be advantageous to Scotland and his speculation of its independence reinforces the detected shift towards Scottish nationalism during the mid-twentieth century. Hanham's observations echo Ferguson's sentiment, claiming that

[t]he economic advantages of the Union have, however, until recently always seemed so great that it was scarcely worthwhile to break the link with England. Indeed, during the Victorian age Scotland enjoyed a prosperity so great by comparison with that of the past that unionist sentiment seemed likely to destroy Scottish national self-consciousness altogether. But though Scotland had no Mazzini, no Kossuth, no O'Connell, no Parnell, popular nationalism was always a force to be reckoned with in Scotland. . . . And from the First World War onwards there has always been a Scottish nationalist political movement in being. (Hanham 10-11)

As Hanham's and Ferguson's historio-political discussions reveal, in the mid-twentieth century, Scotland continued to be identified within the wider context of British identity. The discussions of renewed Scottish nationalism in the mid-twentieth century recalled not only the recent British role in the First and Second

World Wars, but also Scotland's entire involvement in the empire.<sup>6</sup> The negotiation of Scottish identity in relation to Britain not only underscored concerns of history and community, but also called attention to the need for identifying the past and negotiating the ways in which it is maintained and transferred to the future. Despite the timid belief in an independent Scottish nation, the critical literature demonstrates the resurgence of nationalist debates in the mid-twentieth century.

In my Introduction, I identified the apparent paradox between the use of history and memory as representations of the past in modern Scottish literature. The renewal of nationalism in the mid-twentieth century that I have traced underscores the perpetual nature of this debate. While political analysts drew upon the historical connections between Scotland, Great Britain, and the empire to instigate nationalist discussions, another concurrent, yet seemingly contradictory movement was active. The folk movement, initiated by Calum Maclean and Hamish Henderson, relied on communally shared oral tradition to spark national fervour. Although the two movements used diverse methods, they were united in the desire to regenerate Scottish national pride. In the correlation between the political emphasis on history and the folk emphasis on memory, we can see the attempt to communicate experience. Despite the disruption of modernity that Benjamin so aptly identified, the Scottish nationalist movement sought to explore the experience of the past. Through the sharing and communication of that wisdom, a sense of national identity was created.

The mid-twentieth century national concerns of communicating the past and thereby establishing a sense of unity are clearly embedded within *Greenvoe*. Through

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<sup>6</sup> I will further discuss Scotland's participation and position in the British empire in Chapters Four and Five.

the interiority of individual characters, the novel offers a definition and description of the communication of experience. In my analysis of the characters' transmission of memory, I will return to Walter Benjamin's concept of the communication of experience. I will also refer to Sigmund Freud's theory of mourning to elucidate the interiority of the characters' memory and to Northrop Frye's discussion of archetypal memory to examine communal structures of memory. Three key narratives within the novel, the characters of Mrs McKee, Skarf, and the Master Horsemen, demonstrate the complex and varied effects of memory's transferral and address the concerns of both personal memory and communal history.

### Mrs McKee: Refusing Loss

The story of Mrs McKee, the most developed narrative in the novel, provides insight into the relationship between problematic personal memory and its transferral to others. Originally from Edinburgh, elderly Mrs McKee now lives in Hellya with her son Simon, the island's minister. As she ages, Mrs McKee methodically catalogues her past and although she is physically situated in the present timeframe of the novel, her psychic journeys span the decades of her youth and adulthood. Aware of her imminent death, Mrs McKee's deliberate remembrance of her life demonstrates the psychic process of encountering loss.

Freud identifies the ego's reaction to the loss of a love object in two ways: mourning or melancholia. In the normal mourning process, the individual "overcomes the loss of the object while at the same time absorbing all the energies of the ego during the period of its existence" (Freud "Mourning" 214). Over time, the

individual is able to accept this loss through introjection. While the mourning process is a healthy psychic reaction, melancholia is a pathological condition. Within the ego, a psychic battle rages due to the inability to accept the loss of a love object. In the stark terror of impoverishment, the melancholic ego may create a substitute, for “[i]f the love of the object, which cannot be abandoned while the object itself is abandoned, has fled into narcissistic identification, hatred goes to work on this substitute object, insulting it, humiliating it, making it suffer and deriving a sadistic satisfaction from that suffering” (“Mourning” 211).<sup>7</sup>

As she contemplates her younger days, Mrs. McKee’s internalisation of her memories points to her psychic negotiation of loss. Reliving memories of shameful behaviour, she continues to feel personal responsibility and guilt. She remembers moments such as kissing a stranger while she was engaged, accompanying her young niece Winnie into a Catholic cathedral, and serving alcohol to Simon when he was a child.<sup>8</sup> Years later, Mrs McKee’s retreat into her memory coincides with Simon’s alcoholic binges and during these occasions, she creates an imaginative judicial community: “On every bright and dark wind they came, her accusers, four times a year; they gathered in the manse of Hellya to inquire into certain hidden events of her life” (Mackay Brown 9). The text reveals that

the tribunal was secret; nobody in the village or island knew about it but herself, not even her son Simon who was the parish minister; though Simon shrewdly guessed, she felt sure, that something preoccupied his mother sorely on such occasions; and moreover – this was very strange – the assize usually assembled when Simon was bearing or was about to bear his own little private cross. For a few days, sometimes for as long as a week, the manse was an abode of secret suffering. (9)

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<sup>7</sup> In Chapter Two, I will explore the concepts of introjection and incorporation in greater depth.

<sup>8</sup> See Mackay Brown pp. 23-26 (kiss); pp. 106-125 (Winnie); and pp. 154-179 (Simon).

Simon's "private cross" and its effect on his mother's "secret suffering" points to their convoluted relationship. As a staunch Presbyterian, Mrs McKee embodies the conflicting attributes of Calvinistic doctrine. Although Christianity promotes a doctrine of grace, the tenets of Calvinism emphasize the imperative separation of Protestant faith and Catholic belief. Calvinism also stresses the essential conviction that God elects certain people to be saved. Years earlier, Mrs McKee, by allowing Winnie to enter a Catholic cathedral, became the vessel "whose hand plucked an innocent girl out of a Highland rainstorm into – Lord have mercy on this poor Scotland of ours – the abode of The Scarlet Woman" (125). Conjuring her memories into ghosts and shadows that haunt her present, Mrs McKee believes that her dishonourable and secretive behaviour has pre-destined others to become the bearers of her shame.

During the oracles of her past, Mrs McKee's accusers condemn her not only for temporary irresponsibility, but also for continued culpability. They insist that her mediocre marriage, Winnie's conversion to Catholicism and illegitimate children, and Simon's alcoholism are direct consequences of Mrs McKee's behaviour. Mrs McKee's reaction to the psychic trials, however, demands closer attention. She derives sadistic pleasure from her past. Rather than dreading the excavation of her memory, she has a perverse enjoyment in

the vivid resurrection of the past, however painful. There was a whole team of accusers, and it gave her pleasure to recognize their distinctive turns of phrase and the rhythms of their speaking (though some of them no doubt were very unpleasant dangerous persons indeed). It was all too plain what their purpose was: they wished to nip her as soon as possible from the tree of living, to gather her for good and all among ancient shadows and memories; and she was equally determined not to go until such time as the finger of God stroked her leaf from the branch. (9-10)



Despite the accusations and catalogued evidence, Mrs McKee defiantly refuses to “say she was guilty or not guilty” or to allow others to condemn or exonerate her past (10). She wishes to maintain her innocence until judged by God.

Mrs McKee’s narrative of memory to absolve her past demonstrates the pathological condition of melancholia and the inability to introject loss. Mrs McKee’s internal struggle also provides insight into the relationship between personal and communal memory. Her refusal to share her memories not only exposes her fear of impoverishment, but also blocks the transferral of her experience.

Catherine Kerrigan and Deborah A. Symonds have argued that women, as bearers of story and song in the Scottish ballad tradition, ensured the survival of personal memory through the transmission of oral narratives, which then became part of a wider, nationalist history.<sup>9</sup> In *Writing and Orality: Nationality, Culture, and Nineteenth-Century Scottish Fiction*, Penny Fielding suggests that although the oral is a

source of unofficial power and an important repository of personal and historical memory, yet it either remains on the margins of, or is sacrificed to, a more dominant authority. Characters associated with orality move in and out of novels, exercising powers often outside the law yet usually ending up dead, or exiled from a social order which cannot contain them. The oral, as the territory of the irrational and the illegitimate, is frequently associated with the dangerously female. Oral women question the assumption that the oral is

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<sup>9</sup> See Catherine Kerrigan’s “Introduction” to *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets* where she discusses Scottish women poets and she concludes that “women played such a significant role as tradition bearers and transmitters that it can be claimed that the ballad tradition is one of the most readily identifiable areas of literary performance by women” (2). Kerrigan’s argument, although it advocates the inclusion of women poets into the Scottish literary canon, presents a rather idealized discussion of their role as bearers of history. See also Deborah A. Symonds’s *Weep Not for Me: Women, Ballads, and Infanticide in Early Modern Scotland* for an interesting study of women who mourned and shared the experience of loss through song. I will return to the discussion of women’s position as ballad bearers in Scotland in Chapter Two.

natural; they are either 'unnatural' . . . or too natural . . . . Such women threaten the social law and the laws of family relationships. (27)<sup>10</sup>

Mrs McKee, as a repository of personal memory, not only threatens the assumed laws of family relationships, but also fails to adhere to the common literary symbol of the feminine figure who bequeaths wisdom and experience. Her refusal to disclose her memories to her son alters the archetypal image of maternal transmission of the past. She refuses to share her reminiscences with her son and deliberately conceals her thoughts because she fears exposure

to the whole world as a wicked woman. Then her substance would crumble into shadow; but not like those dear dead ones, a fragrant shadow; no, a cursed shadow that could only be lifted from the gates with the candles and waters of exorcism. (Mackay Brown 10)

Instead of provoking interest in narratives of her past and transferring it to the future, Mrs McKee detaches from her familial relationships and recedes from the present. Because of her inability to introject loss, Mrs McKee's memory assumes a restrictive role within the framework of family relationships. Despite Mrs McKee's psychic explorations, her failure to accept loss results in the inability to share her experience and wisdom: the transmission of her memory does not occur.

Rather than allowing her memories to retain vitality beyond her existence, Mrs McKee's refusal to transfer her memories results in the erasure of her experience from record. Mrs McKee's secret and solitary enjoyment of the past eventually subsumes her: "Her communion with the shadows was almost perfect now. A very

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<sup>10</sup> Although Fielding here discusses the oral in connection with the characters of Walter Scott's novels, I feel her argument holds true throughout Scottish fiction and resonates in particularly interesting ways in the fiction of George Mackay Brown. Like his literary forefather Scott, Mackay Brown writes the female out of the text, yet retains the oral as a vital mode for the transferral of memory.

pure thing it was” (219). As Mrs McKee unites with her past, she dissolves into the landscape, her aging body mirroring the destruction of the island:

The island she had known for four years was dying. There were new throbbing pulses all over Hellya. What was the name of this place now, Keelyfaa. The loom of another cliff. Caves and rocks. She stood in the shadow of the cliff. She was enfolded in the sea silence once more. *I am very tired. It is going to rain. I should not have come out with you in the first place. The sun is hurting my eyes.* She sat down on a rock. The cliff yielded its glow to a cloud. The cloud surged on. The cliff kindled to red again. Drops of rain fell. Her thighs were cold. She felt as if the stone was entering into her. Rain and sun on her face, wearing it away. She was very old. An age of sun and rain had washed her features away and her face was a blank. She was part of the rock she sat on. The rain had scoured her eyes smooth. The rain had obliterated her mouth. She could not speak any more. The rain surged through the bones of her face. The rain stopped. Her stone eyes kindled to red. (217-218 – emphasis original)

Mrs McKee’s inability to introject loss and dismissal of the responsibility to share her personal narrative with others results in the stagnation of memory. For years, Mrs McKee would not speak of her past and now, as she ages, she cannot.

Because her memories remain undisclosed, the past is refused any rejuvenating or liberating potential – it simply remains to oppress her last days until she can no longer be sustained by narrative and is no longer inscribed in the novel. Mrs McKee and her memories then join the ranks of ghosts and shadows that, intangible and inaccessible to the living, remain to haunt the island’s landscape.

### Skarf: Communicating Memory

The narrative of Mrs McKee demonstrates that the inability to accept loss and refusal to transmit memory results in the stagnation of the past. A different approach to the transferral of memory occurs in the account of Skarf, a fisherman turned historian. Skarf’s narrative illustrates the attempt to transfer an integrated version of

personal and communal memory. As discussed above, Benjamin identifies the storyteller as one who communicates experience. The transmission of historical experience, he suggests, is the role of the chronicler as “the history-teller” (Benjamin 95). Rather than focusing on the mere explanation of history, the chronicler focuses on the interpretation of the past (96). As he narrates the past events of Orkney, Skarf is not just a story-teller; he becomes a history-teller. Skarf’s writings demonstrate the adaptation of communal past into personalised narrative; however, the chronicle of Hellyan history also exposes the problematic transferral of memory.

Beginning his account, Skarf writes of “[d]arkness and silence, darkness and silence” identifying the dawn of history on the Orkney islands as occurring prior to language (Mackay Brown 18). Island life germinated through “instinctive circuits,” for “these gleams of instinct are not light, the quick thrustings at the sun; the sun itself is a darkness until the mind of man is there to take cognizance” (18). Skarf identifies the first island inhabitants as citizens of the Dark Kingdom. Although the “children of darkness” did not leave written records, Skarf interprets the story of their past from buried remains discovered on a farm (18). From the twelve skeletons laid in barrows, Skarf condenses their experience into a short statement: ““this,”” he writes, ““is all we know about the first dwellers in the island”” (19).<sup>11</sup> Despite a lack of knowledge, Skarf assumes that “in what manner they were borne into the kingdom of death, that we know well” (18). Thus, as an account of history, Skarf’s narrative suggests that the memory of the experience is communally shared and is individually innate to its dwellers. Skarf initially describes his chronicle as “the history” (2). His

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<sup>11</sup> Although Skarf’s primary concern is the transmission of narratives of the past in oral and written form, the discovery of the skeletons alludes to evidence that memory may exist in other sensorial forms, such as visual and aural experience.

emphasis of the article – “the” – highlights history as an external event that is not (yet) part of his personal experience (2). Although Skarf writes chronologically, tracing the island’s history from before civilization to *The Children of the Sun*, the nation he believes will usher in modernity, the narrative focus changes. The omniscient narrator shifts indiscriminately between asserting universal claims about civilization to focusing on minute detail of specific individuals.

The shift from a broad, communal description of the past to a more specific and individual framework is demonstrated in the description of Thorvald Gormson, “the first laird of Hellya” (45). History, Skarf asserts, has “passed beyond the age of anonymity” (45). Of the first laird’s fifteen children, only two, “the wise ghost and the fragrant ghost,” are identified by name as Sven and Ingibiorg (45). Thorvald, however, is re-animated through Skarf’s narrative. As he writes the account of Thorvald’s family and his death, Skarf incorporates the past into his own experience. The era of Thorvald becomes “the dawning of our history” (46). The past is no longer simply an account of communal experience, but is now integrated into personal experience: it is “our history” (46). Skarf’s use of the possessive adjective underscores the flux between communal narratives of history and personal revisions of memory. Skarf’s account demonstrates that when the communal is reclaimed from “the long corridor of history” and made particular through narrative, it gains significance and relevance (49). The account is not concerned with either historical accuracy or explanation; instead, it is the recreation of experience that provides veracity and legitimacy to the past.

Skarf’s personalisation of the past, however, is problematic. Although he narrates the experience of an individual such as Thorvald Harvest Happy, Skarf

simultaneously reduces the experience of thousands in a vast narrative that disregards the particularities of time and location. Despite Skarf's conscious attempt to write a chronological history, the narrative escapes the boundaries of linear structure and shifts between accounts of particular individuals and descriptions of collective memory. As he writes, Skarf elides several generations in his narrative of Hellyan history, for the island "drops out of history; all records are lost; not even a ballad survives" (69). However, Skarf is not concerned with historical continuity, but with specific pockets or moments that he can tease into meaning. He internalizes the external, communal history and possesses it as his own. From a young woman burned at the stake for witchcraft to a sailor's voyage to Africa, Skarf writes the character of Mansie Hellyaman into the embodiment of all Orkney islanders' experience. Rather than simply imparting specific dates and events, Skarf tells the tale of Everyman, the collectivised experience of one born and raised on Hellya, and assumes that bonds exist beyond a particularized gender, location, or genealogy. Commanding the listener to "[s]ee him then" in the ages of history, Skarf generalizes the Hellyan traveller's experience in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (134). Skarf inverts the experience of the individual into an account that may apply to the collective and asks:

‘Mansie Hellyaman, what news of him, how does he fare now in his quest for light? In the days of Earl Patrick Stewart he fell on evil times, he was humiliated and scourged, he dragged his plough through alien acres like an ox. Yet a flame had been kindled in him that could never go out. Sometimes the flame sank to a glim, to the merest bud of light.’ (134)

Regardless of distance travelled or time passed, Hellyaman remains connected to the island and emigration to South Africa, Canada, or Australia only ensures that

Hellyaman will come “home again” and will live “according to another light” (136, 137).

Skarf uses light as a metaphor for memory to indicate the increase of knowledge as experience is shared between generations, but his assumption of historical progress deserves careful attention. Succumbing to the perceived advantages of modernity, Skarf’s account is riddled with prejudiced readings of the past. He writes of four distinct circles of life, which refer to knowledge and light.

The islanders’ knowledge relies upon the development of “civilization”:

The cow, the butterkirk, the cheese-press, the beef board, made one circle of life. The sheep, the spinning wheel, the harmonious loom, the mutton trencher, made a circle of life for these gay people. The boat, the net, the fish, the bone needle, the oil lamp, made a third circle of life. The ox, the plough, the seedjar, the harrow, the sickle, the flail, the quern, the oven, made a great circle of fruition, as if the round life-giving sun had smitten the earth with its own burgeoning image. (20)

Devaluing the first three, Skarf identifies the fourth circle as the modern era in which the people of Hellya currently reside.<sup>12</sup> Because Skarf believes in the inevitability of progress, he does not mourn the changes that occur with the arrival of Black Star. He explains,

Industrial man, bureaucratic man, was a superior creature to agricultural man; he could bear a greater infusion of the light; just as the farmer’s cycle was a stage beyond the dark blunderings and intuitions of the hunter. Hellya was a microcosm; this was how it must happen, inevitably, all over the universe. (221)

Despite the disintegration of the community and the disruption in the transferral of experience, Skarf is confident that future islanders will have an innate knowledge of

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<sup>12</sup> As I will demonstrate below, the symbols of the ox, plough, seedjar, harrow, sickle, flail, quern, and oven continue to hold power in the rites of the Master Horsemen as the men seek to fertilise the land and ensure the perpetual generation of their traditions.

the past. He insists that “[w]hat’s coming to this island is beyond prose. It will be poetry and music. The Song of the Children of the Sun” (202). According to Skarf, future island inhabitants will embrace the past and perpetuate their experience not just through language, but through sound and rhythm. Memory, Skarf assures, is immutable across generations: “the folk of Hellya will know it when they experience it” (202). The progression of history, however, inevitably becomes enjambed with the present. With the arrival of Black Star, Skarf first seeks employment with the project, but is soon fired for being labelled as “*a high security risk*” (222 – emphasis original). Skarf is no longer able to edit the past or to adapt it into personal experience. Instead, he must encounter change, progress, and modernity. Like Benjamin’s storyteller, Skarf “is the man who could let the wick of his life be consumed completely by the gentle flame of his story,” and believing that the era of the Children of the Sun has begun, Skarf sails westward on a suicidal voyage (Benjamin 108-109).

In Skarf’s chronicle, the vacillation in narrative structure between generalised historical accounts and specific individual stories not only demonstrates the amalgamation of communal past into personal memory, but also reveals the complex effects of this integration. Skarf’s account demands a close analysis of the revision of the past: can the experiences of another who is no longer living be passed to the individual who exists in the present? Who is responsible for the collection of the past’s narratives and what is the role of the editor? Does the sweeping transmission of memory across generations and between genders reduce personal experience or retain its authenticity? The exploration of the transferral of memory in Skarf’s narrative suggests that it is in the personalization of the past that it becomes



sustainable through memory and integral to history; however, the text cautions against the creation of mere “entertainment” lest, like Skarf’s account, the past bears “as much resemblance to the truth as a cinder to a diamond: for the flame of prejudice had shrivelled it” (Mackay Brown 70).

## The Ancient Mystery of The Horsemen: Ritualising the Past

While both Mrs McKee and Skarf exemplify the individual’s attempt to negotiate memory and its transferral, *Greenvoe* also offers episodes of communal transmission through the enactments of the Ancient Mystery of The Horsemen. The six initiation rites of the Ancient Mystery of The Horsemen as transferral of knowledge through ceremonial legacy are woven into the conclusion of each chapter. Mackay Brown uses archetypal images to extend memory beyond a personal act into one that bears universal significance and ensures the sustainability of memory across generations.<sup>13</sup> Written in dramatic form, the scenes of the Master Horsemen’s rites not only emphasize the physical performance of bequeathing memories between the generations of society members, but also invite the reader to observe the act of memory’s transferral. In the novel’s first chapter, the prequel to the ceremony depicts the farmers gathering within the stable of the Bu farm, casually chatting with one another as they prepare for the ceremony; however, with the commencement of the initiation rite, the use of dramatic sequence and elevated language establishes a sense

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<sup>13</sup> In *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, Northrop Frye outlines the archetypal structures of literature. While I do not wish to use prescriptive equations in Mackay Brown’s writing, I have found Frye’s discussion of dramatic comedy and mythic conventions particularly insightful.

of formality and secrecy. The members are no longer referred to by their proper names, but rather are identified by their role within the society.

Initially, the acts of the Master Horsemen appear secretive and mysterious. However, the fraternal ceremonies serve to transfer ancient agricultural rites and thereby, to bequeath rituals of the past to future generations. The ceremonies are modelled after religious services and are conducted with appropriate gravity: the members are told ““to behave as solemn as if you were in a kirk”” (23). The relics they use replace the traditional Christian symbols. Rather than placing a crucifix upon the wall, the men hang a horse-shoe, which they kiss with reverence. The Master Horsemen’s ceremonies also incorporate the traditional Christian belief in salvation: it is through the symbolic death, burial, and resurrection of a saviour, the Novice, that their traditions and history will be redeemed.<sup>14</sup>

The rituals adhere to two archetypal structures: the cycle of life and the quest. During the first five ceremonies, the six members are initiating a youth into the patriarchal society. The ceremonies not only metaphorically follow the annual cycle of the seasons and the cycle of life, but also invoke the plough, the seed, the green corn, the yellow corn, death, and stone or the winter. Each stage is significant: corn is the sustenance of life in an agricultural society. The act also initiates the younger men into the secrets of the elder generation. There are six male members of the community, who represent six distinct geographical locations on the island: The Glebe, Isbister, Skail, Rossiter, Blinkbonny, and the Bu. Although each farm is demolished with the arrival of Black Star, three of the men succeed in sharing their

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<sup>14</sup> For an extensive discussion on symbolism of the agricultural and fertility cycle, see Robb’s “*Greenvoe: A Poet’s Novel*,” p. 56; for an analysis of the symbolic importance of resurrection, see Murray and Tait’s *Ten Modern Scottish Novels*, pp. 145-146.

traditions with the next generation. The Corrigan, Manson, and Anderson families are original participants in the rites of passage and remain as contributors in the final ceremony of renewal. Thus, the initiation ceremony not only incorporates the annual agricultural cycle and the geographical districts of the island, but also ensures the transmission of the entire history between generations.

The second archetypal structure depicted through the ceremonies is the journey of a quest. As the Novice achieves success in each stage, his role changes. He graduates from a Novice, to a Ploughman, a Sower, a Reaper, and lastly, a Harvester, yet the goal of his quest remains the same. Perpetually, he seeks “[a] kingdom” (23, 56, 90, 137). Throughout his search, the Novice’s journey follows three stages that Northrop Frye identifies as part of a successful quest:

The stage of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero. We may call these three stages respectively, using Greek terms, the *agon* or conflict, the *pathos* or death-struggle, and the *anagnorisis* or discovery, the recognition of the hero, who has clearly proved himself to be a hero even if he does not survive the conflict. (Frye 187)

Repeatedly, the Novice experiences challenges that prevent him from attaining his goal throughout several stages of his quest. He is prevented from the kingdom because of blindness and darkness. These visual deficiencies symbolize not only his reliance on the guidance of his fraternity to assist him through the process, but also his lack of knowledge about the quest. Although he hears “an utterance of the wind in the corn,” he has only “half understood that word” (Mackay Brown 138). The word, uttered by the Lord of the Harvest, is “Death” (138). The Novice’s death-struggle extends beyond his role of the Reaper. Like the Biblical figure of Christ who assumed the traits of humanity in his role as Saviour, the Reaper assumes the role of

the Corn. He must experience “the death of circling millstones” and “the death of twisting flames” (138). It is not until the final Station of Stones, that the initiate is informed that ““the road goes no further. It is winter. Thou wast long in search of a kingdom. Thou hast come to thy kingdom. It is the kingdom of the dead”” (241).

Although the quest is apparently fulfilled in death, it is only when he is recognised as a hero that his quest is truly accomplished and the cycle of life is complete. The goal of his quest is achieved when he speaks the word(s) of new hope.

The rituals of the Master Horsemen not only subscribe to archetypal tropes of memory, but also demonstrate reliance on national forms of history. As I have discussed previously, the novel’s depiction of memory exhibits participation in the contemporary Scottish debate about the relationship between the historical in politics and the oral in folk music and their contribution to Scottish nationalism. In his discussion of the ballad and folk in oral tradition, Henderson suggests that “[t]he bawdry was ritualised in the secret society of the ploughmen which was called The Horsemen’s Word; this was a kind of cross between a farm servant freemasonry, a working-class Hellfire Club, and a ‘primitive rebel’ trade union” and was specifically connected to the geographical setting of the novel (“The Ballad” 84). Tracing the origins of this organization to the “witch cult of the seventeenth century,” Henderson notes that The Horsemen’s Word was most popular from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century: “Initiations into the brotherhood of the Horseman’s Word were still being carried out after the end of World War II in Angus, and there are still a fair number of ‘Made Horsemen’ in Perthshire, Stirlingshire and Lanarkshire. The most northerly outpost of the brotherhood seems to have been Orkney” (“The Ballad” 104). The parallels between the brotherhood of The Horsemen’s Word and

Hellya's Master Horsemen indicate the reliance upon national history in the novel and also serve to disrupt modernity through the transmission of wisdom.

The account of the Master Horsemen incorporates oral language as an integral component in the transferral of memory. Just as the agricultural cycle of implantation, fertilisation, growth, and harvest ensures the continuation of life, the rituals of the Master Horsemen foster memory through the word to ensure the vitality of communication to others. Through vocalisation, the word becomes the conduit of memory's transmission. The rejuvenation of the island occurs not only through the fertilising seed of the Novice's body, but also through the propagating incantation of language. In the Master Horsemen rituals, the word and orality is symbolic of knowledge and of sustainability. Twice during the ritual cycle the Novice is planted. Initially, the Novice assumes the identity of corn and willingly enters "the earth womb" to "suffer the passion of the seed" (Mackay Brown 56). However, as the Seed, the Novice becomes "blind and dumb" and is unable to "find the word" (91). Walter Ong argues for two attributes of the oral: first, that "orality situates knowledge within a context of struggle" and second, that "[s]ight isolates, sound incorporates. Whereas sight situates the observer outside what he views, at a distance, sound pours into the hearer" (Ong 44, 71). It is in the context of struggle – of the quest for life and the continuity of memory – that the word assumes potent proportions in the novel. The use of orality in the ritual ceremonies of the Master Horsemen underscores the unifying attributes of the word – it incorporates those within reach into a community of sound – a community of language that transfers the past. Upon the Novice's burial, however, he is no longer able to communicate effectively in the Master Horsemen's community of sound. Because he can only half

understand the word, he is completely severed from the community (Mackay Brown 138). The Lord of the Harvest intones:

Now art thou cancelled, crossed out. Thou art nothing. Thou hast no part in the estate of man any more, nor ever can have, being dead, having suffered the pain beyond death, being now ashes and cinders and dust; departed out of the sweetness of the sun and the knowledge of men, a thing of darkness and silence. (206)

The Novice's metaphorical blindness reveals his lack of knowledge; his silence illustrates his inability to articulate himself through language.

In the final scene of the novel, the Novice's second burial not only symbolically completes the quest and the cycle of life, but also figuratively establishes the supremacy of language in the transmission and communication of memory. A decade after the demolition of the community, the exiled islanders return home. Seven men row to the island in the middle of the night, returning to the site of their ancestors where architecture of the past and present intertwine:

Over the centuries, parts of the cliff had fallen away and carried some of the masonry with it, for only an arc of the original keep was left. From this place the early people of Hellya had defended themselves from sea-borne enemies and from the shadowy aboriginals who dwelt in the interior bogs, those who slipped out with noose and knife after sunset. Round here they had sown Hellya's first grain and reaped its first harvests; this was where they had made their music and laws and myths. This navel had attached many generations of Hellya men to the nourishing earth. (241)

Returning to the metaphoric womb of their birth, the Master Horsemen hope desperately for affirmation that their traditions will continue; but, within its core, the site of life now holds the insidious and unidentifiable Black Star. Once abandoned, the island assumes the image of a hardened, wizened old woman – it is “seedless” and frozen (239). The archetypal image of the fertile maternal island is inverted, for the island is desolate. Unlike Mrs McKee's sterile refusal to transfer her memory, the

Master Horsemen seek the re-creation of their communal past. The men's need to perpetuate the history of the island is imperative: it must occur before the past becomes irretrievable.

Having returned to the island, the Master Horsemen gather again for the burial ceremony.

There was a long silence. The Master Horsemen, standing round the dead Harvester, bowed their heads.

A slow shiver went through the corpse. He whispered. He uttered four syllables – 'Rain. Share. Yoke. Sun.' (241)

Initially, these words appear to be a reminder of the ceremony's agricultural connections. The Lord of the Harvest, however, is not satisfied with this reference: "He was looking for *a* word. Unless he has found *the* word we ourselves are locked in the stone. We belong to the kingdom of death" (242 – emphasis added). The men rely on the transmission of language – not any sound, but, as the pronouns emphasize, the articulation of a single word. The four words, enunciated by the Novice, unite to form four syllables of "a new word": "*Resurrection*" (242 – emphasis original). The pronouncement of the "dead word-man" signifies more than a word of renewal: it is an invocation to preserve the past, to renew and revive memory in preparation for the future (242). Upon the articulation of the word, not only is the quest completed, but the resurrection of the past and the transferral of memory are ensured. The Master Horsemen's ceremonies do not rely upon the creation of entirely new experience; rather, the rituals actively demonstrate the importance of memory's transferral and consciously perpetuate the narrative throughout the generations.

In this chapter, I have examined the various ways in which memory offers a non-linear portrayal of the past and can be transmitted through three characters in

George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe*. I have positioned the discussion of communicating experience in the mid-twentieth century debates of Scottish nationalism. As the writings of Ferguson, Hanham, and Henderson indicate, the resurgence in Scottish nationalism coincided with interest in folksong and Scots language. Although critics argue that *Greenvoe* is anti-progressive, the text does not reject modernity; rather, it interrogates the relationship between the past and the present. *Greenvoe* depicts the transmission of memory through narrative depictions that communicate experience. The character of Mrs McKee's inability to accept loss reveals the ways in which memory's transmission may be blocked. Mrs McKee, thoroughly invested in her refusal to acknowledge loss, is trapped in melancholia and unable to mourn. Her experience is not shared. Skarf, in his revision and editing of history, demonstrates the ways in which both forms of representing the past can be used to share that experience with others. His accrual of wider history into a subjective, edited narrative encourages consideration of how the past is revised. In contrast to these depictions of stagnant and adapted history, the mysterious rites of the Ancient Mystery of The Horsemen reveal the use of ritual to transfer memory and to communicate experience between generations. The ceremonies of the Master Horsemen demonstrate the benefits of conscious, active transferral of memory into the communal sphere. As *Greenvoe* illustrates, memory and history are not paradoxical; rather, it is in the communication and sharing of experience that the past becomes an active element within the present.



## Chapter Two

### Reviving History: Sensory Experience and Memory in Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* and Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia*

In this chapter, I turn to an examination of sensory memory as a complex form of interiority and a non-linear representation of the past. The novels I examine are not direct responses to overarching narratives of the past; however, in the use of Gothic form to represent individual experience, this literature reveals fissures in personal and national histories. In these texts, the physical manifestation of interiorised psychic gaps encourages a reinterpretation of the past. As I outlined in my Introduction, the emphasis that psychoanalysis places on the importance of interior narratives and non-linear forms of history is extremely valuable. In the previous chapter, I examined the manifestation of melancholia, the inability to introject loss. In this chapter, I continue to study mourning as an important element in the negotiation and representation of memory. In particular, I refer to Sigmund Freud's and Melanie Klein's theories of object-relations and to Nicolas Abraham's and Maria Torok's concepts of introjection and incorporation. These psychoanalytic approaches not only emphasize the importance of the individual's past, but also recognise the value of memory's non-linear structure as a way to negotiate loss.

I first consider Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* (1979) as a representation of the problematic account of personal memory and its relationship to the acceptance of

familial loss. The Gothic trope of shifting boundaries, in this novel, is indicative of sensory experience and the manipulation of memory. The variations of physical, temporal, and familial boundaries not only mirror memory's adaptability, but also point to its problematic forms. Like *Wild Nights*, the second novel I examine also depicts the refusal to accept loss. Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* (1991), however, concentrates on orality as a manifestation of this refusal. The attempted reconstruction of a young girl's past demonstrates the vital role of the female narrative voice in transmitting history. *Wild Nights* and *O Caledonia* do not directly address social and political aspects of Scottish history; rather, the indirect, non-linear individual and familial accounts are indicative of larger structures, such as national historiography. The richly evocative descriptions of sensory experience in the novels provide access to the characters' memories. As sensory histories of the family and the individual, the novels illustrate the importance of memory in the acceptance of the past and the creation of identity.

Gothic fiction experiments with the deliberate exploration and transgression of perceived boundaries. In doing so, it facilitates the investigation of the transmission of history and the formation of identity. According to David Punter and Glennis Byron, the "Gothic has always had to do with disruptions of scale and perspective, with a terrain that we might . . . refer to as 'the moment under the moment.' No point on the map is exactly where or what it seems; on the contrary, it opens into other spaces, and it does not even do that in a stable fashion" (*Gothic* 50-51). Gothic literature's provocation of stability not only disrupts perceptions of reality, but also challenges apparently stable views of the past.

As I discussed in the Introduction, Scottish writing has an unsettled relationship with the past and its manifestations in modernity. This is mirrored in the continuous tradition of Scottish Gothic writing. Critics such as Alan Bissett and Douglas S. Mack argue that Gothic tropes are frequently found in contemporary Scottish fiction and are usefully employed as the literature grapples with ways of presenting the past. Alan Bissett suggests that the Gothic tradition “has always acted as a way of re-examining the past, and the past is the place where Scotland, a country obsessed with re-examining itself, can view itself whole, vibrant, mythic” (6). The concept of a whole and vibrant past, however, is a concept that is perpetually challenged in modernity. Ian Duncan insightfully articulates the function of the Gothic in Scottish literature in this way:

The thematic core of Scottish Gothic consists of an association between the *national* and the *uncanny or supernatural*. To put it schematically: Scottish Gothic represents . . . the uncanny recursion of an ancestral identity alienated from modern life. Its fictions elaborate a set of historically determinate institutions about the nature of modernity. (“Scottish Gothic” 70)

The nature of modernity is debated and questioned in the Gothic writing of Walter Scott and James Hogg. As examined above, Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819) offers both linear and non-linear accounts as it probes into familial and national past. In the novel, the Gothic tropes of a castle, a disintegrating family, and a tragic love affair transgress and challenge accepted boundaries of narrative. James Hogg’s *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) similarly employs Gothic strategies to defy the assumed borders of spiritual faith and rational understanding. Later nineteenth-century writers Margaret Oliphant and R. L. Stevenson also perpetuated the use of the Gothic. In the work of these authors, the

Gothic takes on a specific resonance: the transgressions and revisions of the texts explore the way modernity is founded on an uneasy and unsettled relationship with the past.

The desire to rework stories of the past continues to be an integral element in twentieth-century Scottish literature. Carol Anderson notes the sophisticated use of the Gothic in contemporary Scottish writing. She observes:

Historical parallels are discernible between the period of ‘Old Gothic’ and the late twentieth century; that Gothic, itself arguably a parodic form, is so easy to parody also makes it attractive in an age of parody and pastiche. Its presence is detectable in many post-war fictions . . . and it is fashionable among critics. Contemporary novelists, attracted to typically Gothic subject-matter – violence, tabooed desires, paranoia, the nature of evil – explore, like their antecedents, contemporary anxieties. Modern Gothic fiction, including work by various Scottish writers, offers cultural self-analysis, and examination of the relationship between past and present. (118)

Anderson’s assertion that the authors deliberately rework earlier Gothic texts demonstrates the fixation on national history and identity that pervades Scottish literature. According to Douglas S. Mack, “Scottish Gothic, like many other aspects of post-Union Scottish culture, draws some of its specifically Scottish nature from a desire to collect, to polish, and to re-create the traditions . . . of pre-Union Scottish culture” (209). A text that directly interrogates pre-Union Scottish historical narratives is James Robertson’s *The Fanatic* (2000). In this novel, Robertson collects and re-creates aspects of Calvinist religious culture, but refuses to establish a cohesive or unified view of nation, religion, or even of the individual believer. Texts such as Muriel Spark’s *The Driver’s Seat* (1970), Janice Galloway’s *The Trick Is to Keep Breathing* (1989), and Alan Warner’s *Morvern Callar* (1996) present fragmented, often grotesque, accounts that manipulate narrative structure to depict

the interiorised, psychic grappling of the characters and to illustrate severance from the past and suppression of memory.

The anxiety so frequently depicted in Gothic literature is evident in the utilization of sensory experience to manipulate the interior psyche. It is this aspect of Gothic writing that is particularly important in the novels examined in this chapter. As Gothic fiction, Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* and Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia* are particularly interesting not only for their interrogation of the past and identity, but also for their depiction of sensory experience as an integral part of memory. Over thirty years ago, Ellen Moers was the first to define "Female Gothic" as "the work that women writers have done in the literary mode that, since the eighteenth century, we have called the Gothic" (90).<sup>15</sup> Her observation not only provides a useful classification within the genre, but also identifies the physicality of Gothic writing. She writes,

what I mean – or anyone else means – by 'the Gothic' is not so easily stated except that it has to do with fear[,] . . . [n]ot, that is, to reach down into the depths of the soul and purge it with pity and terror (as we say tragedy does), but to get to the body itself, its glands, muscles, epidermis, and circulatory system, quickly arousing and quickly allaying the physiological reactions to fear. (90)

The relationship between Gothic techniques and tangible, bodily sensations has been further articulated in Noël Carroll's *The Philosophy of Horror or Paradoxes of the*

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<sup>15</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, I have retained the straightforward (and simple) definition of Female Gothic. In the special issue on Female Gothic Writing of *Women's Writing: The Elizabethan to Victorian Period*, Robert Miles argues that "[g]ender, one may say, is the law of the Gothic genre. Its origins in romance, the history of its readership, its obsession with plot-lines turning on heroines suffering at the hands of patrilineage, its links with hysteria: in every respect, in one manner or another, gender governs the Gothic genre during its first, 'classic' phase. To describe the contours gender takes in the Gothic is no longer the critical task (as it once was). The task, rather, is to unlock these shapes. In this respect gender is not the key to the Gothic genre (still less the reverse)" (134).

*Heart*. In his discussion of art-horror, Carroll argues that emotion evoked by horror “involves a physical state—a sense of a physiological moving of some sort—a felt agitation or feeling sensation” (24). Gothic fiction exploits the reader’s bodily response to fear by utilizing the body of the text to convey the physical sensations of the characters and settings. As sensations are experienced, they are encoded within memory: textual descriptions of sensory experience are transferred from the character’s memory to that of the reader’s. Like other writers of Gothic literature, Barker and Tennant utilize the characters’ sensory experience – and the memory of that experience – not only to interrogate the ongoing cultural debate of fragmented history and identity, but also to engage in the alteration of personal and national narratives of the past.

### Shifting Structures: Emma Tennant’s *Wild Nights*

Although clearly a work of Scottish Gothic, I will use *Wild Nights* as a concentrated example of problematic memory in the familial framework before I move to a discussion of memory in the national context in Elspeth Barker’s *O Caledonia*. In *Wild Nights*, the instability of sensory experience mimics the instability of memory. Throughout the convoluted narrative, the stability of location and time is contested frequently. Using Gothic tropes and sensory references, the narrative shifts in geographical, temporal, and familial identity mirror the fissures of the past.

The novel does not use standard chapter divisions; instead, it is divided into just two parts. The majority of the narrative occurs in Part One, “North.” Although Scotland is not specifically identified as the North, Tennant’s use of geographical

descriptions, place-specific terms such as “cleuchs filled with heather,” and repeated references to the north wind provides textual clues to the location (Tennant 195). Entitled “South,” Part Two not only offers a contrasting narrative with descriptions of a civilized and warm setting, but also establishes the locale, for “when the north still lay in darkness, and there were rumours of spring from England” the family travels south (283). The use of the preposition “from” gestures to a movement between England, in the south, and Scotland, in the north. The binary locations that create the novel’s sections are reminiscent of Gothic fiction’s repeated use of geographical markers, where the North is frequently associated with Scotland. In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), the North is figured as a site that exceeds the boundaries of rational thought. As Victor Frankenstein desperately attempts to rid himself of the monster, he retreats to the North. It is only when Frankenstein is segregated from society and secluded on an Orkney island that he can begin work on the creation of the monster’s partner. Like the North, the South also holds a prominent position in Gothic writing: it is in the South where the religious and political Other resides. In *The Italian* (1797), for example, Ann Radcliffe situates the narrative beyond Protestant shores and selects the Catholic South as the setting for her Gothic story.

While longitudinal positions indicate the modification of *Wild Nights*’ formal structure, the novel also describes topographical shifts. The landscape, itself, serves to detach the events of the novel from the reality of the external environment:

“Already the mists were coming down, first in thin furls separated by purple strips of heather, so that the base of the mountain seemed to be detached from the ground and to have become a great tapestry, a menacing wall-hanging striped with flares of dim

purple. Beyond this uncertain fabric was the land where Aunt Zita's family lived" (Tennant 208). The use of the verb "seemed" insinuates instability in the geographical description and creates a paranormal setting for the fragmented account. Topographical alterations of the Gothic home serve as an external stimulus for the internal workings of memory. Within this shifting environment, the narrator recalls the effect of Aunt Zita's annual visit. Emulating the atmosphere, the narrator refuses to provide a unified, coherent narrative and instead, deliberately exacerbates the changes in emotion, setting, and comprehension. Evading all gender definitions, a child, who is identified neither by name nor gender, narrates the novel.<sup>16</sup>

The narrator's descriptions focus on the adaptability of structure. The castle manipulates and changes itself to show partiality to those who belong within it. The estate recedes into an unrecognisable state: the "walls and turrets – all of them unoccupied – of the mock castle his [the father's] grandfather had built seemed to hang in folds, uncertain, waiting for the new season, for the advent of Aunt Zita" (182). Perception is skewed as the house transforms from a safe haven into an unrecognisable space. The narrator remembers,

In the old nurseries, which we reached after twisting and turning in corridors as black and airless as Roman streets, there was darkness and absence of calm. The fat yew trees outside the window, once trim and gathered in at head and foot, had stray branches like escaping hair. The branches waved vaguely at the window. (214-215)

Boundaries of geography blur into realms of identity as the home is compared with Rome and inanimate tree branches are personified into life. Cupboards lock, rooms

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<sup>16</sup> Because the novel does not use an intermediate, non-gendered pronoun, I will identify the narrator as female. See also Susanne Schmid's "Fantasy and Realism in Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* and *Queen of Stones*," a feminist analysis that also identifies the child as female (32).



disappear, and corridors extend as the “unfamiliar house” defies its occupants and shifts into new shapes invoking emotional tension in the uncanny void (204).

The novel incorporates not only geographical transitions, but also temporal shifts. The living family members each represent different eras of historical progress. While the father is “firmly rooted in the mechanical age,” the mother still lives “in the age of cause and consequence, of foreshadowings and outcomes” (187). The changing of the seasons forms a structure around the narrative sequence. Each autumn, Aunt Zita, an agent of alterations, arrives at the family estate. When she first appears, there are “changes everywhere” within the family dwelling (181). Tension is created as the house becomes populated not just with the living, but with the ancestral ghosts, who arrive “only when it was time to welcome Aunt Zita” (190). Subsumed into the conflation of past and present, the living become lifeless: the mother’s eyes become “dead, staring” (182). Unable to vocalise her emotions, she suffers, instead, in silence.

The curious modifications of space and structure mirror the shifts of the past. The castle’s changing configuration exposes the tenuous power relations within the family. Although now an adult, Aunt Zita is unable to control the effect of the house upon her. She wanders “often to the old nurseries, as if trying to exorcize the power of her family in the surroundings where she had been most helpless and dependent on them” (211). In an attempt to regain authority, Aunt Zita deliberately uses location to stimulate her memory. When this fails, Aunt Zita seeks escape from the structural borders of the castle through fantasy. On many nights, Aunt Zita guides her niece on extraordinary adventures beyond the limitations of the home in “Portugal, or France, or a French Caribbean island like Guadeloupe” (200). Although

the narrator professes that she enjoys these journeys, she observes a perplexing stagnation. She recalls that despite the various environments, the “temperature never affected us. And the house where the ball was given was always the same” (200). As time passes, the changes that Aunt Zita has brought no longer appear innovative. Her presence in the house produces “an effect of stasis, of absolute limbo, where the house seemed destined to waver constantly between the present and the hours of Aunt Zita’s youth” (219).

In the cloistered Gothic rooms, where “the walls might lean in on her and suffocate her,” Aunt Zita negotiates between her past and present through communication with the dead (214). Overhearing Aunt Zita in conversation with her deceased relatives, the narrator admits, “the strange part was that despite the quietness I could never understand what they were saying. In these lost conversations with the dead, the vowels and inflexions were far away and incomprehensible” (208). The intangibility of the phantoms and their ancestral secrets is illustrated through language; communication with the dead escapes the oral articulation. Although the narrator insists that she does not understand these ghostly dialogues, she construes their meaning by relying upon Aunt Zita’s display of emotion. The narrator declares, “it would be clear to anyone” that Aunt Zita is “in search of love”; however, she confesses that she is ignorant of love and is “then quite incapable of translating” it (214). The narrator’s use of a sequential word, ‘then,’ exposes the temporal inconsistencies that occur not only within the familial history, but also within the novel itself. Although written from a child’s perspective, the narrator speaks in past tense. The narrator deliberately revises and translates the events, assembling the fragments of the past into a coherent and unified narrative. Like the ghostly ancestors

to whom Aunt Zita speaks, the events are now mere relics within the narrator's memory.

As I have demonstrated, the shifting geographical and temporal boundaries within the Gothic novel are shaped through narratives of sensory memory. *Wild Nights* presents intricate descriptions of sensory experience that not only create a magical environment wherein the adventures occur, but also betray an inherent anxiety about historical linearity through the depiction of conflicted familial relationships. The novel depicts structural and temporal metamorphoses as well as familial evolutions. The Gothic trope of ghosts draws attention to the disjointed temporal structures within the novel. It also underscores the eruption of the past into the present. The ancestral spectres function as an uncanny regime over those still alive and reveal a troubled past that is repeatedly memorialised; yet refused release. Within the unstable Gothic environment of fastened doors and disguised spaces lives a family unit; however, like the shifting temporal and geographical frameworks, the familial structures are questioned, undermined, and reconstructed to expose the refusal to acknowledge loss.

Aunt Zita's arrival not only disrupts spatial and temporal boundaries, but also familial structures. Friction between Aunt Zita and the narrator's mother frequently erupts due to Aunt Zita's manipulation not just of the castle's environs, but also of the familial relationships. Aware of the family's inability to mourn the premature death of their eldest brother, the mother re-stages a spectral christening to conjure the family history. The mother gathers the family together in an attempt to purge their grief: the "whole family had to be present" (205). Decorated with "bouquets of white flowers, sickeningly sweet in smell, mementoes of the calm days of the long

summer,” the hall holds the guests – the ancestral ghosts, the living family, and the townsfolk – who gather for the christening (202). The ceremony, however, is a play: “the tragedy of the family was being re-enacted before their eyes” (205). Observing the shifting temporal and familial borders, the narrator expresses concern: “Was the child already dead? Its head fell back too softly” (202). The limp form of the infant, as though exhumed from the dead, is met with great disapproval from the hordes of ghostly ancestors. The baptized child is the eldest brother. The mother forces the family to witness the event “to underline the child’s doom, its death before its twentieth year: to show them how unhappy they would feel when he had gone: to remind my father and Aunt Zita how different their lives would have been if he had lived” (206). The mother’s revival of the past disrupts the conventional progression of familial history. The christening is not used to honour the past, but is re-staged to exhibit the past’s effect on the present and to remind the living of their refusal to accept loss.

In the “Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality,” Freud establishes the relationship between identity and orality, which he relates to the search for a sexual object. According to Freud, the infant, during its pregenital oral or cannibalistic phase, instinctually identifies the mother’s breast as the sexual object (Freud *On Sexuality* 144). The infant does not distinguish between sexual activity and the intake of food and, as Freud explains, the purpose of both activities is to include the object into the ego (117). Freud notes that one manifestation of the oral phase is thumb-sucking. As the infant sucks its thumb, it detaches sexual activity from the acquisition of nutrition and attaches an auto-erotic purpose to its own body (117). Melanie Klein furthers Freud’s study of object relations in “The Psychological

Principles of Infant Analysis.” She explains that as a child develops an increased awareness, it will separate the libido from its ego and, instead, will form relationships based upon the pleasure obtained from objects (Klein *Selected* 58). Klein observes that as a child’s super-ego develops, so does its sense of guilt due to the introjection of the Oedipal love-object (70). While the young child will be able to successfully introject the object, the desire to destroy the love-object will also cause intense guilt and fear of punishment from the object (71). Fearing that it will be “devoured and destroyed” by the object, a child will search for protection and will attempt “to destroy the libidinal object by biting, devouring and cutting it, which leads to anxiety” (71). A child’s anxiety and fear of the object, Klein suggests, is due to its simultaneous awareness of desire for the object and frustration at the inability to express this desire through speech. Because a child has not developed language skills, it wishes to direct questions to the object, but they “cannot yet be expressed in words, [and] remain unanswered” (72).

In *The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*, Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok extend Freud’s theories of object relations and Klein’s concepts of the importance of language in the development of identity. Abraham and Torok establish the relationship between the loss of the love-object and the mourning process. According to Abraham and Torok, mourning is expressed in two ways: introjection or incorporation. Introjection is a healthy process that “does not tend toward compensation, but growth” as the Unconscious is included in the ego and the individual accepts the loss of the object (Abraham and Torok 113). Like Freud and Klein, Abraham and Torok connect the process of introjection to the development of orality in infancy, when “the mouth’s emptiness is experienced alongside the

mother's simultaneous presence" (127). Initially, the infant explores the empty oral cavity with the tongue and acknowledges the oral void through unidentifiable sounds such as crying and sobbing. As the infant begins to understand and to develop language skills, it successfully transitions from filling the oral cavity with the maternal object to satisfying the emptiness with words. The absence of the object – the loss – is satiated with words. As the individual matures, the oral void continues to be filled with language. Using language, the individual is not only to interpret experience, but also to establish "verbal relationships with the speaking community at large" (128). Abraham and Torok explain,

[i]ntrojecting a desire, a pain, a situation means channelling them through language into a communion of empty mouths. This is how the literal ingestion of foods becomes introjection when viewed figuratively. The passage from food to language in the mouth presupposes the successful replacement of the object's presence with the self's cognizance of its absence. Since language acts and makes up for absence by representing, by *giving figurative shape* to presence, it can only be *comprehended* or *shared* in a 'community of empty mouths.' (128 – emphasis original)

The use of language not only helps the individual to introject loss, but also creates bonds with others. Although a difficult process, introjection of loss results in a healthy, positive readjustment of the ego.

Unlike the process of introjection, incorporation is a fantasy and "the illness of mourning" (Rand "Introductions and Notes" 103).<sup>17</sup> In this circumstance, the loss of a love-object causes unwanted desire towards the object. Incorporation occurs when the desire attached to the object has not been released and, instead, becomes a secret,

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<sup>17</sup> Abraham and Torok define reality as "everything, whether exogenous or endogenous, that affects the psyche by inflicting a topographical shift on it" (125). Alternatively, they define fantasy as "all those representations, beliefs, or bodily states that gravitate toward the opposite effect, that is, the preservation of the status quo" (125).

buried within the individual's psyche (Abraham and Torok 125). The individual is unable or unwilling to acknowledge the secret of "the lost pleasure and the failed introjection" (113). According to Abraham and Torok, the individual may fantasise either oral "forms of possession or feigned dispossession" by "[i]ntroducing all or part of a love object or a thing into one's own body, possessing, expelling or alternately acquiring, keeping, losing it" (126). If unable to speak certain words, the individual may fantasise that the unnameable object is ingested through the mouth. Abraham and Torok clarify that incorporation simulates the transformation of the ego "by implementing literally something that has only figurative meaning. So in order not to have to 'swallow' a loss, we fantasize swallowing (or having swallowed) that which has been lost, as if it were some kind of thing" (126). Incorporation, therefore, allows the individual to bypass the painful process of psychic renegotiation. The refusal to mourn allows us to "shun the consequences of mourning even though our psyche is fully bereaved" (127). Abraham and Torok explain that

incorporation is the refusal to acknowledge the full import of the loss, a loss that, if recognized as such, would effectively transform us. In fine, incorporation is the refusal to introject loss. The fantasy of incorporation reveals a gap within the psyche; it points to something that is missing just where introjection should have occurred. (127)

For Abraham and Torok, the illness of mourning is not the result of grief for the lost object; instead, it is due to an inappropriate desire towards the object at the moment of loss (110). When the loss occurs, an inappropriate desire is manifested and because the individual cannot express that desire, it will become a secret.

The refusal to mourn and manifestation of inappropriate desire is threaded throughout the family narrative of *Wild Nights*. The re-presentation of the elder

brother's christening withdraws it from its original temporal context, emphasizing the fragmentation of familial bonds; however, the mother's revision of the scene deliberately manipulates the past in an act of memorialisation. She does not mourn the death of the brother; instead, she attempts to re-construct the familial history. The ghostly family ritual commemorates the brother's life: it does not acknowledge his death. Nevertheless, the staged christening reminds the ghostly and living audience of the fissures in the family narrative.

The presence of the spectral ancestors simultaneously provokes and gratifies Aunt Zita. Reminders of her youth, like the ghosts, hover near and she feels "certainly disturbed by having her family handed to her like this. The horrible limitations of her childhood returned to her, and she squirmed on the hard bench, narrow as a coffin lid, under the family coat of arms" (Tennant 203). The reminder of childhood restrictions also incites Aunt Zita's brazen refusal to mourn, for, "[o]nce summoned, the long-dead relations never entirely went away, and after her first anguish at coming up against the past, Aunt Zita would introduce them and laugh in triumph" (207). Aunt Zita's refuted introjection of the loss of her elder brother culminates in a spectral encounter of fantasy. Desiring the lost love-object, Aunt Zita is "only possessed of the craving when her spirits were low and the world was no longer at her command" (214). Aunt Zita's inability to command the world indicates the failure of her linguistic abilities. As Abraham and Torok explain,

[t]he words that cannot be uttered, the scenes that cannot be recalled, the tears that cannot be shed—everything will be swallowed along with the trauma that led to the loss. Swallowed and preserved. Inexpressible mourning erects a secret tomb inside the subject. Reconstituted from the memories of words, scenes, and affects, the objectal correlative of the loss is buried alive in the crypt as a full-fledged person, complete with its own topography. The crypt also includes the actual or supposed traumas that made introjection



impracticable. A whole world of unconscious fantasy is created, one that leads its own separate and concealed existence. Sometimes in the dead of the night, when libidinal fulfillments have their way, the ghost of the crypt comes back to haunt the cemetery guard, giving him strange and incomprehensible signals, making him perform bizarre acts, or subjecting him to unexpected sensations. (130)

In a frantic attempt to regain her loss, Aunt Zita retreats to the corridors and rooms of her childhood. Upon finding the nursery, Aunt Zita begins to sway rhythmically, using her body as an incantation. The narrator watches from a distance and later recalls: “I could feel her [Aunt Zita’s] desire, but as it was unknown to me I thought instead that I heard the first stirrings of the north wind struggling in the thick centres of the yews, trying to reach the window, to blow away the branches” (Tennant 215). However, the narrator’s initial misinterpretation of the scene is soon clarified. Aunt Zita’s incorporative aim “is to recover, in secret and through magic,” the object of her desire (Abraham and Torok 114).

Near the nursery windows hovers Aunt Zita’s elder brother. His ghostly presence is visually conflated with the interior of the room: “The bright yew berries on the wallpaper, with their little dabs of white to show transparency, hung from his hair in clusters. An unpleasant whiteness came into the room, like the white light before a storm, and the ceramic lamb gleamed on the wall” (Tennant 216). As visual perception melds the remnants of the past with the present, Aunt Zita meets the spectre of her brother in an incestuous embrace. Lying naked on the floor, Aunt Zita spreads her legs, while her brother kneels between her “gaping thighs” (216). In the light of a fire that spreads from her body,

Aunt Zita and her elder brother rocked on the threadbare carpet, which had once carried the same design as the walls and where, rubbed out by the passage of Aunt Zita and her brothers’ childish feet, there remained the shadows of pigeons and the lost key of interlocking branches. . . .

The fire diminished and went out. It left a pool on the carpet, like an inkspot. It seemed thick, and didn't creep towards Aunt Zita and her elder brother, who now lay without moving in each other's arms. . . . The look of intense joy and suffering had left her face, and she seemed obliterated, as if her elder brother had given her the punishment she craved. (217-218)

Aunt Zita's mental and sexual re-creative act with the spectre indicates the refusal to accept loss. Aunt Zita's physical incorporation of her brother's ghost and her "increase in libido is a desperate and final attempt at introjection, a sudden amorous fulfillment with the object" (Abraham and Torok 117). Introducing part of the love-object, her brother, into her own body, Aunt Zita attempts to possess him and thereby refuses to acknowledge the full import of his loss.

## Mourning a Nation

The refusal to acknowledge loss is evident within a personal and familial context in Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights*; however, I am also interested in the ways that incorporation is manifested in wider national and historical contexts. The way in which to represent the past is a perpetual concern in Scottish culture, particularly with regard to what constitutes Scotland as a nation. Scholars frequently argue that since the Act of Union with England in 1707 Scotland's political and historical narrative has been disjointed and fragmented. The need for historical continuity and national solidarity is embedded deep within Scottish cultural and political criticism, which has repeatedly attempted to create a cohesive narrative of the past. As I explored in the previous chapter, Scotland experienced an upsurge in both cultural and political nationalism following the Second World War. In addition, the economic collapse after the Second World War, increased urbanization, and rising interest in

Home Rule, were all factors in that stimulated a revival of interest in identifying and defining the narrative of Scottish history.<sup>18</sup>

The work of two contemporary and prominent Scottish nationalist critics, Tom Nairn and Cairns Craig, not only indicates the prevailing trends about Scottish history and identity, but also illustrates the persistent interrogation that occurred in political and cultural forums and extended the debate from the mid-twentieth century into the early twenty-first century. Between 1968 and 2007, Nairn wrote no fewer than sixteen articles in the *New Left Review* that broached issues of Scottish nationalism and history. In 1968, Nairn argued that Scotland's wish for autonomy only highlighted "the long, central hopelessness of Scottish history within a framework of archaic bourgeois nationality" ("Dreams" 5). According to his article, "The Three Dreams of Scottish Nationalism," Nairn proposes that Scottish identity has been based upon three idealistic creations: the dreams and myths of the Protestant Reformation, Romanticism, and Nationalism. He writes:

A most exact historical sense can therefore be give [*sic*] to the assertion that Scotland is peculiarly haunted by the past. She is doubly dominated by her dead generations. At bottom there is the bedrock of Calvinism, the iron, abstract moralism of a people that distrusts this world and itself; then overlaying this, the sentimental, shadow-appropriation of this world and itself through romantic fantasy. Naturally, these strata are also in conflict with one another much of the time[,] . . . present in some form in everything distinctively Scottish. (8)

Nairn's identification of an inherent anxiety in Scottish culture points to its unsettled relationship with the past. Long before the 1979 referendum and 1997 devolution, Nairn asserts that to succeed, Scottish nationalism must be

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<sup>18</sup> See James Mitchell's "Scotland in the Union, 1945-95: The Changing Nature of the Union State" for a discussion of the nature of the union state in the second half of the twentieth century. See also Peter L. Payne's "The Economy" for an examination of the economic shifts in twentieth-century Scotland.

sharply combaing [*sic*] the overpowering past which conventional Nationalism drools over, that it must see cultural liberation from Scotland's pervasive myths as a precondition of political action, and that it must utterly condemn the kind of garrulous, narcissistic windbaggery to which the intelligentsia has so often resorted—in the absence of anything better—as its special contribution to the problem. . . . Is it really impossible that Scotland, which has dwelt so long and so hopelessly on the idea of a nation, should produce a liberated and revolutionary Nationalism worthy of the name and the times? (17-18)

Nairn's cynical call to action demands a "cultural liberation from Scotland's pervasive myths"; however, these are the myths on which Scotland's culture is founded. His repeated association of the Scots' inability to articulate their history and their desire for a unified national identity occurs not just in his 1968 publication, but throughout the writing of his career. In the January-February 2007 issue of the *New Left Review*, Nairn's return to the topic of Scottish nationalism not only calls attention to the continued discussion of historical reality versus myth in Scotland, but also underscores its relevance in the study of Scottish literature. Nairn's book review of Michael Fry's *The Union: England, Scotland and the Treaty of 1707* emphasizes the importance of historical mythology in the construction of Scottish nationalism. Scotland, according to Nairn, "is irretrievably composite in origin, and to a striking extent unified more by institutions and past statehood than by either language, customs or culture ("Union" 127). Nairn argues that if Scotland is to progress as a nation, it must embrace a modernity that dismisses the mythology of its past. His belief that modernity requires a rejection of historical myths, however, reinforces the infirmity of Scottish identity. Although Scotland has maintained consistency in the institutions of the Church, education, and the law, Nairn's position that Scotland is

less unified by customs or culture than by institutions points to an apparent gap within the narrative of Scottish history.<sup>19</sup>

Cultural and literary critic Cairns Craig has also thoroughly investigated the debate surrounding the linearity of Scottish history and creation of Scottish identity. Like Nairn, Craig argues that Scots frequently claim a fractured and dislocated history; however, he refuses to accept a simplistic or disparaging account of the perceived gaps in Scottish history. Instead, Craig argues that

[i]f we are to engage constructively with the traditions of the nation we need a sense of tradition which is essentialist neither in its historical mode – identifying the ‘real’ nation with one portion of its past – nor in its denial that the nation exists in a continual series of interchanges with other nations, and with ideas and forms of life which can be traced to an origin outside of the nation itself. (*Modern* 30)

Through the examination of Scottish novels, Craig attempts to ascertain a novelistic tradition within Scottish literature that will serve “as a dialogue between the variety of discourses which, in debating with each other, constitute the space that is the imagining of Scotland and Scotland’s imagination” (33). While refusing to essentialise or historicise Scottish tradition, Craig returns precisely to the topic that Nairn so frequently identified as a hindrance to Scotland: the imagination. For Craig, the imagination has also been problematic. Superstition and anxiety, he argues, haunt Scottish fiction and these fears have had a debilitating effect on both literature and culture. Although he maintains that Scotland’s past is of value, Craig suggests that the fear of fractured identity has continued to plague Scottish identity and to dominate contemporary society (74). The prevalence of a languishing hope for a unified history and the perpetual lamenting of nationalistic inertia that is present in

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<sup>19</sup> See Michael Lynch’s *Scotland, 1850-1979: Society, Politics and the Union*, p. 6 and T. M. Devine’s *The Scottish Nation, 1700-2007*, pp. 23-24.

the debates of Cairns Craig and Tom Nairn indicate the bias upon which Scottish culture, itself, has been founded. However, the dominance of these discussions also invites questions as to the creation of identity based upon history and memory. If Scotland's historical narrative has been consciously and deliberately constructed through institutions, rather than actualized as a linear whole, how does this affect Scottish identity? Must Scotland, if it is to adopt 'modernity,' cast off its historical myths? The frequency of discussion in Scottish political and literary criticism surrounding the topics of a non-linear history, the centrality of imagination, and the fragmentation of the past provokes my consideration of these debates.

### Consuming Memory: Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia*

I have discussed the relationship of personal memory and familial loss in Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* and I now turn to an investigation into the engagement between personal memory and national identity in Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia*. The richly evocative sensorial descriptions of both novels focus on the experience of children. While the narrator of *Wild Nights* has full narrative authority, providing uncannily observant details as she recounts her youthful experiences, in *O Caledonia*, the child protagonist Janet is unable to personally articulate her life story. The intricate depictions of sensorial experience and memory in Elspeth Barker's Gothic novel not only reasserts the role of the female narrative voice, but also encourages the use of memory as a non-linear approach to the past. *O Caledonia* refutes an impoverished view of history and provides a more encompassing view of national modernity. Defying traditionally patriarchal fears of fragmentation, this text

investigates history through a reconstruction of an individual's memory and thereby provokes the reconsideration of Scottish history and identity.

As Female Gothic literature, *O Caledonia* gestures towards a distinct aspect of Scottish identity: the transmission of history through the female narrative voice. In her article "The Fiction of Feminine Desires: not the mirror but the lamp," Anne Williams argues that "the feminist consensus about these [Female Gothic] narratives has been mistaken; rather than reinforcing – or protesting – patriarchal conditions and assumptions, female Gothic conventions unconsciously and spontaneously rewrite them" (229). Williams attempts to expand traditional feminist readings of Female Gothic. However, Williams implies that women authors do not intentionally interact with patriarchal constructs and thus indicates her failure to acknowledge integral aspects of their writing. In contrast to Williams' dismissal of the intentionality of women's writing, Anderson and Christianson argue that Scottish women's writing stems directly from interwoven traditions from Scottish culture. According to Anderson and Christianson,

[t]here is a self-consciousness and, sometimes, anxiety about national identity frequently related to a conscious engagement with aspects of Scottish culture: the oral tradition (ballad, song and storytelling) as well as a variety of male literary forebears, such as Burns, Scott, Hogg and Stevenson. ("Introduction" 10)

As I will explore in depth, the work of Elspeth Barker not only blends the distinctions between a particularly Scottish experience of a non-linear history and the Gothic examination of the past, but also directly engages with Scott, a male literary forebear. Barker's writing consciously undertakes the oral tradition and contests the patriarchal amalgamation of this form.

The title of Elspeth Barker's novel illustrates the palpability with which the text engages with the sensorial – particularly oral – transmissions of Scotland's national and literary past. *O Caledonia* associates two key areas of Scottish history: the era of the Caledonians and the era of Walter Scott. First, it refers to an ancient Roman term for Scotland. The Romans used the term "Caledonia" in reference to the northern area of the British isle. Cornelius Tacitus, a first-century historian, describes the inhabitants of Caledonia as "barbarians" who lead large-scale attacks on Roman forts (Tacitus 61). Tacitus depicts the Caledonian leader Calgacus as "a man of outstanding valour and nobility," whose speeches inspire the indigenous troops (79). In his record of the Caledonians, Tacitus associates the transmission of history with orality. Tacitus writes only "the substance of what he [Calgacus] is reported to have said" and records that the speech called the soldiers to "think of those that went before . . . and of those that shall come after" (83). Tacitus' description establishes the relationship between Caledonians and the transmission of history; however, by only writing "the substance" of a report, he undermines the role of oral narratives.<sup>20</sup>

Second, Barker's title, repeated and extended in the novel's epigraph, refers to two short lines from Walter Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805): "O Caledonia! stern and wild, / Meet nurse for a poetic child!" (6.2.1-2). The direct reference to Scott, the quintessential Scottish male author, underscores the novel's

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<sup>20</sup> Another interesting account of Caledonia may be found in Cassius Dio's *Epitome of Book 77*, where he describes two Briton races: the Caledonians and the Maeatae. Cassius Dio explains that the Caledonians live beyond the Roman occupied areas, locating the tribes in the North. Thus, Scotland is firmly situated as a nation outside and beyond the colonized and civilized areas. In addition to these ancient sources, *Caledonia* is the title of George Chalmers' extensive three-volume text on the history and geography of Scotland, which was printed in 1807. This conception of Scotland carried into the twentieth century, evidenced in works such as G. M. Thomson's *Caledonia, or the Future of the Scots* (1927) and C. M. Grieve's *Albyn or Scotland and the Future* (1927).



engagement with Scottish patriarchal literary tradition. In *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3), Scott collected and published a series of ballads, which not only established him as a literary figurehead within Scotland, but also as a creator of national myth in modernity. Perpetually evolving and non-linear by nature, these oral narratives were essential to the transmission of the past within Scotland. Like his later approach to the paradox of memory and history in his novels, Scott dismisses the apparent incongruity of editing and transcribing these oral narratives. By gathering these historical accounts, Scott hoped to contain them within written texts and thereby to establish Scottish history as linear and concrete.<sup>21</sup>

Traditionally, ballads were shared through oral re-tellings, most commonly related by a woman; however, in his “Introduction” to *Minstrelsy*, Scott only peripherally gestures to the role of women in the transmission of Scottish history.<sup>22</sup> Scott acknowledges just two women, Mrs. Farquhar and her niece, Mrs. Brown (Anna Gordon). A careful transcription of a letter from the latter’s father, Mr. Thomas Gordon, explains that initially the ballads were sung by Mrs. Farquhar. In the epistle, Mr. Gordon idealistically depicts her as

a good old woman, who spent the best part of her life among flocks and herds, resided in her latter days in the town of Aberdeen. She was possess of a most tenacious memory, which retained all the songs she had heard from nurses and countrywomen in that sequestered part of the country. Being maternally fond of my children, when young, she had them much

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<sup>21</sup> For further discussion of Scott’s deliberate positioning as a writer of Scottish historiography, see Edwin Muir’s *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer*, pp. 75-109; Penny Fielding’s *Writing and Orality*, pp. 44-58; and Ian Duncan’s *Scott’s Shadow* p. 66.

<sup>22</sup> For extensive analysis of women’s role in the ballad tradition, see Catherine Kerrigan and Meg Bateman’s *An Anthology of Scottish Women Poets*; Edward J. Cowan’s *The Ballad in Scottish History*; and Deborah A. Symonds’s *Weep Not for Me: Women, Ballads, and Infanticide in Early Modern Scotland*. See Penny Fielding’s *Writing and Orality* for a thorough discussion of the role and importance of female orality in nineteenth-century Scotland.

about her, and delighted them with her songs, and tales of chivalry. My youngest daughter, Mrs Brown, at Falkland, is blest with a memory as good as her aunt, and has almost the whole of her songs by heart. (Scott *Minstrelsy* cv)

While Mrs. Farquhar is a model singer, Mrs. Brown is credited as “the ingenious lady to whose taste and memory the world is indebted for the preservation of the tales which they contain” (cvi).

Despite his brief recognition of two women who maintained the balladic tradition, Scott’s modification of the ballads is problematic. Scott not only notes that the stories are transmitted orally through song, but also that their reliability is subject to the bearer’s memory. Scott’s underlying insinuation is that as time progresses, the authenticity of the oral narratives and the accuracy of history decline. The songs are not documented; they are only retained within the memory, learned “almost the whole . . . by heart” (cv). While emphasizing the unreliability of female oral narratives, Scott promotes the role of men and of a recorded, linear history. Although Scott did not personally know the women, he acknowledges receipt of their ballads through a lengthy progression of five male sources.<sup>23</sup> The emphatic genealogical structure with which Scott traces the ballad’s progression through patriarchy adopts a near Biblical authority. In doing so, Scott not only asserts the linear evolution of history, but also elevates his duty to collect these “gradually decaying” songs (c). To save the ballads for posterity, he must transcribe the songs. He writes:

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<sup>23</sup> Scott transcribes a letter from his friend Alexander Fraser Tytler. In his letter, Tytler explains that following Mrs. Farquhar’s tutelage of Mrs. Brown, the ballads were recorded by Mr. Scott, who gave them to Mr. Gordon, who then presented the written songs to William Tytler, Alexander’s father.

No liberties have been taken either with the recited or written copies of these ballads, farther than that, where they disagreed, the editor, in justice to the author, has uniformly preserved what seemed to him the best or most poetical reading of the passage. Such discrepancies must very frequently occur, wherever poetry is preserved by oral tradition; for the reciter, making it a uniform principle to proceed at all hazards, is very often, when his memory fails him, apt to substitute large portions from some other tale, altogether distinct from that which he has commenced. Besides, the prejudices of clans and of districts have occasioned variations in the mode of telling the same story. Some arrangement was also occasionally necessary to recover the rhyme, which was often, by the ignorance of the reciters, transposed or thrown into the middle of the line. With these freedoms, which were essentially necessary to remove obvious corruptions, and fit the ballads for the press, the editor presents them to the public, under the complete assurance, that they carry with them the most indisputable marks of their authenticity. (cii-ciii)

Although he has adapted the ballads and tales from a largely female collective, Scott uses the masculine pronoun when referring to the reciter – “his memory” – thus, promoting the role of men within the balladic tradition and the transmission of history. Furthermore, Scott’s avowal that he has retained the authenticity of the ballads is undermined by his admission that he has manipulated the texts, if only to maintain the oral elements of rhyme and rhythm.

Scott’s alterations of the ballads, however, extend far beyond the poetic structure. While Scott’s writings depict the connection between women, orality, and the non-linear transmission of Scottish history, they simultaneously undermine the validity of these sources and forge a patriarchal, linear history. In his efforts to establish distinctive elements of Scottish literature, Scott’s very act of collection exemplifies the attempted construction of a narrative of the national past. Scott’s rearrangement and revision of oral texts creates an artificially cohesive narrative. In addition to collecting the ballads and thereby locating them within male discourse, Scott asserts his integral position within Scottish history. Scott’s careful inclusion of

men establishes his role as editor: when the reciter's "memory fails," the tale may change (ciii). To avoid the possibility of corruption, the lyrics must be transcribed. The emphasis Scott places on the apparent unreliability of personal memory highlights the need for a collector and an editor to maintain the consistency of the tales. He claims that the ballads, "if not now collected, must soon have been totally forgotten" (cix). Rationalizing his efforts, Scott writes:

By such efforts, feeble as they are, I may contribute somewhat to the history of my native country; the peculiar features of whose manners and character are daily melting and dissolving into those of her sister and ally. And, trivial as may appear such an offering, to the manes of a kingdom, once proud and independent, I hang it upon her altar with a mixture of feelings, which I shall not attempt to describe. (cix-cx)

Scott's two-fold gesture is particularly interesting: he wishes, first, to construct the history of Scotland as something different and separate from England; and second, to establish his own position within Scottish literary tradition and culture. In his memorialisation of history, Scott not only hopes to present a clearer, causal narrative of the past, but also to be *the* transmitter of this knowledge. Scott champions himself as National Bard, bearer of Scottish history.

The interaction with and modification of Scotland's history in *Minstrelsy*, Scott's collection of female oral narratives, set a precedent for his work. Only a year after the publication of *Minstrelsy*, Scott published *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which demonstrated many of his arguments in fictional, rather than historical terms. In the 1831 introduction to his poem, Scott explains his desire to set the tone of the poem. His use of "the Old Minstrel, as an appropriate prolocutor, by whom the lay might be sung, or spoken, and the introduction of whom betwixt the cantos, might remind the reader at intervals, of the time, place, and circumstances of the recitation"

(*Lay ix*). Like his patriarchal assertion in *Minstrelsy*, Scott again presents a male in the role of balladeer. As editor of oral history and writer of fictional ballad, Scott adapted a previously female role for his purposes and thus set a new precedent for women writers in Scotland. Women, who previously had the authority to distribute historical knowledge through oral narration, were now to rely on the patriarchal traditions that Scott constructed through writing.

It is in relation to Scott's literary template of patriarchal constructed linear accounts of history that I will consider Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia*. In selecting *O Caledonia* both as a title and as a part of the epigraph to her text, Barker clearly announces her engagement with the historical and patriarchal tradition of Scotland. Her writing interacts with a long and disjointed past, which includes both a national history that has been declared to be incomplete by those in power and a traditional method of narrative that has been altered from a female to a male role. While Scott strove to maintain the dominance of the male voice, Barker, in contrast, seeks to restore the primacy of the female voice. The novel, which relates the story of a marginalized and demonized Scottish girl, uses explicit depictions of oral sensory experience and non-linear memory to reassert the role of the female narrative voice in the transmission of history. The novel does not specifically address national history; rather, it describes a history of the first sixteen years of Janet's life.

The text commences with a description of her murdered figure. Beneath the Gothic arch of the castle's "great stone staircase," Janet's body is found, "oddly attired in her mother's black lace evening dress, twisted and slumped in bloody, murderous death" (Barker 1). Janet's horrific death only underscores, for her family, the embarrassment of her life. Ashamed of her in life and death, the family "no

longer mentioned” her name: “She was to be forgotten” (2). They carefully bury her body far from the family plot, fearful that “[h]er restless spirit might wish to engage with theirs in eternal self-justifying conversation or, worse still, accusation. She had blighted their lives; let her not also blight their death” (2). The shadows of Janet’s life, however, escape the boundaries of family restrictions. In death, the winds carry her spirit “far north of love or grief, until their withdrawing was no more than the sigh of the sea in a shell” (151). Nevertheless, Janet is remembered. Like the inscription on the family crest, “‘Moriens sed Invictus’, dying but unconquered,” Janet is not conquered by death (1). Proceeding to describe her life in a gesture of catharsis, the novel, itself, is an act of dislocated memory and troubled mourning: *O Caledonia* is a history – a reconstruction – of Janet’s existence.

The depiction of Janet’s oral sensory experience indicates the narrative attempt to re-construct her fragmented identity using memory as a non-linear history of her life. Janet is murdered – silenced – prior to the commencement of the text and is unable to vocalize her own history. Her story, however, remains. The relation of her experience relies on the remembered description of her life, just as the narrative use of a Gothic setting encourages the examination of the past. Janet’s home is a castle, Auchnasaugh, named for the lamenting winds that swirl around it “almost all the year” (32). Invoking an image of loneliness and ghostliness, the castle is a “gaunt place,” as though its emptiness is the result of insufficient food and nourishment. The castle is surrounded by “treacherous” fords and the forest had once been the “hunting ground of a Scottish king” (32, 34). Myths of the past highlight the geographical features of the land near Auchnasaugh. According to legend, the Mormaer’s lady, distraught over her son’s execution, had murdered the King and

fled through the forest “until she reached the coast and the cliffs and flung herself a hundred feet down into the boulder-strewn breakers” (34). The ghost of the Mormaer’s lady is said to haunt the castle and as she listens to the tale of death, Janet identifies emotionally with the ghost:

Indeed, for her [Janet] Auchnasaugh was a place of delight and absolute beauty, all her soul had ever yearned for, so although she could understand that many a spirit might wish to return to it, and she hoped that in time she too might do so, she felt the circumstances and mood of such visitations could only be joyous. (35)

The lady’s ghost is not the only spectral figure that haunts Janet in life. Following the death of her beloved grandmother Ningning, Janet continues to see her, “holding her hand as she climbed the stairs, walking beside her in the sunlit garden up the long path. . . . Once they stood together in the greenhouse under the rampant tomato vines” (7). Janet’s ability to connect emotionally and visually with ghostly figures not only foreshadows Janet’s own fate, but also gestures to the refusal to mourn. The circular narrative of deceased women, each unable to recount her life, points to the non-linearity of the past and the inability to accept loss.

The extensive use of oral sensory experience in the novel also reveals the failure to introject loss. As a child, Janet searches for an oral love-object to establish her identity and thereby, to create the narrative of her history. Finding comfort and refuge in the fairytales that her mother reads each night, Janet imagines herself as a heroine and princess: Snow White is “the person she most wanted to be” (17). Happiness, for Janet, is not available in reality. Janet’s fractured history and fragile identity are accentuated in her frustrated attempts to vocalize her emotions and detached use of language. Although the novel is written with lengthy, blocked paragraphs, which are densely packed with sensorial descriptions, the omniscient

narrator only reports Janet's thought and feelings. Janet's intentions and motives are rarely expressed as interior discourse or as spoken dialogue. Puzzled at the contradictory depictions of a loving, yet vengeful God, Janet wants to address her questions to her Grandfather, but can "not find the words" (16). Instead, like the infantile use of sound to express sadness over the loss of the love-object, Janet is overwhelmed with an "agonized pity, a powerless pity which made her cry sometimes" (16).

While Janet is unable to articulate herself through language at home, her inability is only exacerbated when she attends school. When Janet convinces her childhood sweethearts to save an imaginary kitten in the schoolyard barn and they are injured in the attempt, she screams until she finds "a voice, unusually high and staccato" (24). It is significant that the voice is not personal. It is not *her* voice that erupts into sound; rather, it is an unidentified vocalization that is abnormal (24). Despite the harsh scolding she receives for deceiving her playmates, Janet refuses to speak. Rejecting the opportunity to tell her story, she simply weeps and retreats into "mutinous silence" (25). Years later, at boarding school, Janet continues to be incapable of communicating through conversation. She separates herself from the other girls: "She was in retreat from the world, in a state of numb and impotent horror. Francis [her brother] told her that she was a boring monolith, concentrated all in self. He was right, she thought, but she knew no way of expressing her state in words, no way of escaping her carapace" (108). Encased within her thoughts, Janet is unable to speak or to connect with others.

Janet's inability to articulate herself verbally mirrors the act of incorporation. Although Janet's oral sensations centre in the narrative of her life, just as speech fails



her, her body also refuses to accept objects through taste. Unable to use words effectively, Janet often fills her oral cavity with objects, such as her thumb. When she is a child, Janet vividly imagines witches, but by sucking “her thumb so hard that her jaws ached,” she finds comfort from stories of their terror (11). Janet’s thumb not only provides physical comfort, but also signals verbal deficiency. An early family photograph is “marred only a trifle by Janet’s gaping black mouth; she was yelling because the photographer had plucked her thumb from its comfortable residence in her palate” (6). The description of the scene portrays its significance to Janet’s inability to use verbal expression. She is not recorded as protesting with words; rather, it is only the inarticulate noise of “yelling” that alerts others of her frustration. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of her thumb. Searching to fill the void of her “gaping” mouth, Janet uses her thumb as a substitute for language.

Janet’s attempt to ingest the love-object “in the form of imaginary or real nourishment” also points to the refusal to mourn (Abraham and Torok 127).

Abraham and Torok explain that

[a]s the empty mouth calls out in vain to be filled with introjective speech, it reverts to being the food-craving mouth it was prior to the acquisition of speech. Failing to feed itself on words to be exchanged with others, the mouth absorbs in fantasy all or part of a person—the genuine depository of what is now nameless. The crucial move away from introjection (clearly rendered impossible) to incorporation is made when *words* fail to fill the subject’s void and hence an imaginary thing is inserted into the mouth in their place. The desperate ploy of filling the mouth with illusory nourishment has the equally illusory effect of eradicating the idea of a void to be filled with words. (128-129)

Unable to satisfy her loss with language, Janet physically and mentally detaches herself from her oral sensations and desperately fills her mouth with illusory nourishment. To avoid eating rabbit stew, Janet concocts various

counter-stratagems, some more disgusting than others. While patting her lips daintily with her voluminous table napkin she could systematically disgorge her mouth's contents and enfold them in the snowy linen. At the end of the meal napkins were rolled, ringed and placed tidily in a drawer. Janet would return in stealth and shake the grisly wreckage out of the window; the feral cats who lived in the rhododendron thickets would streak out and crouch greedily over it. Near the dining table stood an old harmonium, long disused and silent. Behind its pedals a substantial cavity offered a refuge for food too repulsive even to enter her mouth, chiefly herrings and kippers. It was quite easy to drop her napkin, bend down to retrieve it and, with a deft flick of the wrist, lob the fish into the dark recess. Vera's dog Clover could be relied upon to clear it out later. (Barker 37)

Janet repeatedly and adeptly identifies other hollow spaces, whether in the mouths of animals or in the cavernous enclosures of the harmonium. The use of these cavities as alternatives for her mouth reveals the abject horror with which Janet selects and rejects substitutes for language. Even when eating pink junket as pudding, Janet perfects "a way of ingesting it with almost no physical contact by tipping tiny fragments into the very back of her mouth and swallowing quickly" (38). Once, while chewing lettuce, Janet discovers "a slug in her mouth. It felt enormous and thrashed about" (37). Afraid that she will be told to swallow it, Janet spits the slug out of her mouth and, desperate to conceal it, squashes the "vast, ribbed, grey and viscous" slug with her plate (37). Just as sensory experience and memory defy linearity, Janet's violent oral rejection of the slug symbolically emulates the refutation of loss.

Occasionally, Janet seeks control of her oral sensations by forcing herself to vomit; however, even more frequently, she is unable to control her body's physical rejection and abhorrence of oral substitutions. In addition to suffering nausea during car rides, Janet often becomes sick from mere thoughts. Upon reading "the mad old prophet Tiresias' description of fat floating in the blood of sacrificial beasts," Janet

vomits “hugely” (126). At school, she is disgusted that the nativity play will be performed in German. She insists that a play in Latin

would be more honourable and at least it would sound beautiful, apart, of course, from the yells of the Innocents. The hideous short ‘u’ which occurred in so many English words of disparagement, insult or plain dreariness, she ascribed to the Teutonic influence. ‘Rut,’ she thought. ‘Ugh. Lump.’ And there were worse, far worse. (119)

Janet’s fixation on the sound of the words directly correlates to how the words are shaped in the mouth. The guttural sound of the ‘Uh’ vowel is formed with the same muscular contractions of the gut and back of the throat that echo the sounds of vomiting. Unable to articulate her distress and to accept her loss, Janet physically rejects her internal feelings. Neither words nor vomit can fill Janet’s oral void.

Janet’s death precedes the record of her experience: her narrative is merely a reconstruction of memory, a textual attempt to mourn her loss. Mirroring the non-linear nature of history, Janet’s narrative is disjointed by accounts of Scotland’s fractured past. Unable to articulate her own history, Janet utilizes Scottish stories to speak for her. As her family drives along the coast, Janet realizes that they are near the “dreadful caves once inhabited by Sawney Bean and his descendants” (55). Wishing to escape the impending discovery that her sister fell out of the car, Janet silently chants “*Rise again Sawney Bean, Sawney Bean, Sawney Bean, / Rise again Sawney Bean, come from your cave and eat me*” (56 – emphasis original). Like other oral accounts that circulate in Scottish myth, the legend of Sawney Bean and his family of incestuous cannibals has been carefully edited out of Scottish history. Janet’s incantation not only summons Sawney Bean’s spirit, but also demonstrates her desire for the incorporation of her memory. Janet’s command to a legendary figure to ingest her indicates her wish for her narrative not only to be consumed by

the past, but also to be devoured by the present. However, regardless of Janet's personal refusal to mourn, the narrative permits the introjection of loss. As the reader partakes of the account of Janet's life, the past protrudes into the present. Language is the medium through which the memory of her life can be communicated and mourned. Demonstrating the non-linearity of memory in the transmission of the past, the descriptions of oral sensory experience in *O Caledonia* create a juncture where narratives of the past are remembered, consumed, and introjected.

## Chapter Three

### Transmitting History: Transgenerational Memory and The Phantom in Alice Thompson's *Pharos*

Memory is a key element that may be used not only to retain a sense of self-identity and to construct the identity of a nation, but also to critique these notions. As a non-linear mode of history, memory provokes the analysis of accepted and standardized depictions of the past. Literature operates as an ideal site where narratives of individual and familial experiences engage with wider social, political, cultural, and historical contexts. While some may argue that the aesthetic value of a text lies within itself, I maintain that it is the text's situatedness in history that displays the full spectrum of its value. This thesis concentrates not on a specific linear movement of twentieth-century and contemporary literature, but rather selects texts that illustrate the broader, operative structures of memory. In the previous chapter, I explored the connection between memory and sensory experience in the Female Gothic literature of Emma Tennant and Elspeth Barker. I argued that the shifts within geographical, temporal, and familial structures in *Wild Nights* not only demonstrated the concerns of Gothic literature, but also revealed the refusal to accept bereavement. My analysis of *O Caledonia* considered the intimate relationship between Scottish women and the sharing of history through song. I argued that Janet's inability to use oral structures revealed the incorporation of loss.

In this chapter, I investigate the ways in which an individual's memory of a shameful past affects others through transgenerational memory. Transgenerational

memory stems from a tradition of sharing histories – oral and written – between people of different ages. This type of memory is a form of the past that is preserved in narrative form, demonstrated through words, actions, and behaviour, and is passed between generations. As I examined the transmission of memory in George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe*, the importance of the memory lies not only in the meaning of the original narrative, but also in the act of sharing the information with another person – an act that thereby renews the memory and ensures its sustainability. Although the past may be shared deliberately, it may also be shared unconsciously.

Transgenerational memory is a useful way to investigate the transferral of problematic memory, especially memory that transcends a particular individual psyche or historical moment. The questions that arise include: What is the function of memory? How is memory transferred between generations and in what ways does it bear personal and familial significance? How are the attitudes and memories of particular events and experiences perpetuated? What is the effect of the past on the present generation?

To address these questions, I first outline the role of transgenerational memory in twentieth-century Scottish literature where, I argue, the authors repeatedly rework aspects of familial and national history, often in the form of historical fiction. The work of Alice Thompson, particularly in her short historical-fantasy novel *Pharos* (2002), uses individualized, psychological accounts of memory. These psychic narratives provoke a re-investigation of problematic gaps within national history. To situate Thompson's novel, I turn to a brief examination of the tradition of historical fiction in Scottish literature, focusing particularly on R. L. Stevenson's island narratives. In my analysis of this literature, I look to the theories

of Gillian Beer as well as Robert Helmer MacArthur and Edward O. Wilson, which explicate the usefulness of the island setting in the examination of history. I argue that the geography of the island in *Pharos* is an effective site for the examination of the topography of transgenerational familial memory. Although familial structures in this novel are not based upon usual genetic formations, I refer to Nicolas Abraham's psychoanalytic theory of the phantom to address the complexity of transgenerational memory in this context. As an unconscious transmission of a shameful past, the phantom represents the transferral of memory into the future. The figure of Lucia in the novel, I argue, embodies not only the disgraceful personal past of characters within the text, but also points to the shameful national history of Scotland's participation in the British slave trade. The transferral of transgenerational familial memory within the text demonstrates the need to examine the disrupted and hidden past and to readdress the gaps within history.

If we are to examine the role of transgenerational memory in Scottish literature, we must consider issues that are central to twentieth-century and contemporary literature. The transferral of personal, familial, and even national memories between generations occurs frequently in Scottish literature. Critics have noted a movement in twentieth-century Scottish literature away from a focus on an idealized depiction of rural, pastoral, mythic Scotland to an increased concentration on history and realism during the Scottish Renaissance. Examples of this shift include Nan Shepherd's *The Weatherhouse* (1930), Lewis Grassie Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* (1932, 1933, 1934), and Neil Gunn's *Butcher's Broom* (1934). While *A Scots Quair* follows Chris Guthrie's individual account of memory and *The Weatherhouse* focuses on familial interpretations of past relationships, *Butcher's*

*Broom* depicts memory as an overarching communal myth that is limited neither by generation, nor by time. Although early twentieth-century authors appear to have appealed to a more “refined” and idealistic palate, according to F. R. Hart and Cairns Craig, mid-century authors sought to disengage from their overly nationalistic literary ancestors and instead, to engage with a wider international sphere (Hart 310-311). Craig argues that there is “an underlying pattern in many twentieth-century Scottish novels, novels which oppose a static community, by-passed by history, to a world whose essential meanings are defined by the historical” (*History* 32). One such novel that underscores this shift is William McIllvanney’s *Docherty* (1975), which employs the historicity of an early twentieth-century coal mining working-class family. The historical context serves as a framework to display the texture of individual and familial memory as shared between generations. Despite reliance upon history and provision of communal memory, these novels often emphasize contexts of gender and genealogy: mothers share important cultural and family traditions with their daughters; fathers instil a sense of patriotism and patriarchal authority within their sons.

Later Scottish fiction, however, problematizes the simplistic definition of genetically linked transgenerational memory. John Burnside, for example, addresses the complexity of transgenerational memory in *The Devil’s Footprints* (2007). As I will further discuss below in Alice Thompson’s *Pharos*, *The Devil’s Footprints* evokes the suppression of familial past and an intimate relationship with the border between land and sea. The narrative of this novel commences with reference to an unacknowledged myth that circulates in the gossip of a small fishing village, Coldhaven. The villagers are “obdurate, seagoing folk with their own superstitions



and terrors, their own logic, their own memories of sandbanks and tides and the treachery of water – and though their children’s children have all but lost that kinship with the sea, a kinship part-love, part-dread” the stories continue to shape the villagers’ identity (Burnside *Devil’s* 1). It is not just the language of superstition that plagues the locals’ narrative; the tale points to repressed elements within the family. Michael Gardiner’s family, fitfully transplanted into the surroundings of eastern Scotland, has troubled filial and fraternal relationships. Michael Gardiner acts as narrator to the story; therefore, the validity of the story is not only subject to the reliability of his memory, but also based upon the items he chooses to share with the reader. Like other local town gossips, Michael constructs the narrative of his past by “talking to people, listening, filling in odd gaps in the puzzle, piece by piece” (20). The story that emerges is that of a disrupted and disjointed familial past. Hidden moments of destruction erupt not just once, but in subsequent generations.

Initially, the reader gravitates towards Michael’s account. As a child, Michael learns to cater the disclosure of events to fit the particular audience. Michael is repeatedly terrorized by his playmate Malcolm Kennedy and the graphically disturbing descriptions of relentless bullying assault the reader’s visceral experience. Despite enduring several significantly fierce persecutions and witnessing the murder of a chick, Michael decides to conceal Malcolm’s behaviour from his parents. Michael admits, “[a]ll I knew was, I couldn’t tell the truth” (39). Eventually, Michael devises Malcolm’s punishment, which results in his death. In the novel, Michael’s twisted desire for revenge is almost justified: Malcolm’s death is a retribution for the daily horror and abuse Michael experienced. As he matures, Michael becomes

fascinated with Malcolm's sister Moira and they have an affair.<sup>24</sup> Years later, contrived death again affects the Kennedy family, but is initiated by its own member. Paranoid and distraught, Moira kills her children because she believes her husband is the devil and that their sons "were the devil's children" (22). The only surviving member of the Kennedy family is Hazel, whom Michael believes to be his daughter. Incorporating community and family myths, Burnside's tragic narrative demonstrates the complicated and convoluted ways in which non-genetically linked memory can cross the generations.

As in Burnside's novel, the concerns of individual, familial, and national memory are subjects that are integral to the work of Alice Thompson. An acclaimed writer who won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for Literature in 1996, Alice Thompson has published five short novels, each of which provokes reconsideration of established attitudes towards memory. *Justine* (1996), her prize-winning novel, is a first-person narrative of a psychotic man obsessed with aesthetics and art. A wealthy opium addict, the unnamed narrator attends his mother's funeral where he encounters Justine, a woman who epitomizes his concept of beauty and also embodies his favourite painting. She is not only elusive, but also – apparently – has an identical twin sister Juliette. The strange juxtaposition of the woman/women further complicates the man's affections as he is coerced into murdering their ex-lover and then confined within a Gothic mansion. The novel interrogates the ego's narcissistic desire to assimilate the Other and illustrates the manipulations of internal

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<sup>24</sup> The novel implies a pattern of the man falling in love with the sister of the deceased friend: Michael's father married his deceased friend's sister Kate Mallon and Michael has had an affair with Malcolm's sister Moira.

memory upon external reality.<sup>25</sup> Thompson's second novel, *Pandora's Box* (1998), examines the ability of imagination and memory to subvert rational thought and science. Dr. Noah Close is an experienced, pragmatic surgeon who wakes one night to discover a burning woman on his doorstep. After rushing her to the hospital, he carefully reconstructs her body and face into the ideal woman. As a *tabula rasa*, she embodies his desires. He names her Pandora and begins to consider her as his wife, although she does not speak. Following her disappearance, Noah embarks on a quest to solve her probable murder and in doing so, encounters the dissolution of his identity, memory, and ideals. *The Falconer* (2008) also addresses the search to regain a lost past as a woman seeks to understand her sister's suicide. Iris Tennant attempts to reconstruct the past through the prism of her psychic memory and of the historical and political contingencies of the mid-1930s. In Thompson's most recent work, *The Existential Detective* (2010), she again offers the figure of a missing woman as a symbol of lost innocence and memory. Thompson writes of troubled relationships as well as of the effect of lost memory on personal and familial identity. In this short novel, Adam Verver hires Private Investigator William Blake to locate his amnesiac wife Louise. Blake is personally invested in the search for missing persons, as fifteen years previously, his own daughter Emily disappeared. However, Blake fears personal involvement in the case: "There seemed to be, at the heart of it, a story about memory, people having trouble with their memories . . . there was someone out there capturing, stealing their memories, memories that could diffuse

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<sup>25</sup> Thompson's novel is a direct reference to Marquis de Sade's *Justine; or, The Misfortunes of Virtue* (1787). For a feminist study of Thompson's *Justine* and an analysis of its similarity to de Sade's work, see Monica Germana's "Real Gorgons or Fantastic Chimeras? Re-Shaping Myth and Tradition: Alice Thompson's *Justine*."

into thin air like the souls of the dead” (Thompson *Detective* 84). As Blake traces Louise’s existence, he is forced to negotiate seemingly contradictory pieces of evidence. In this detective novel, Thompson incorporates elements of fantasy to disrupt the stability of the narrative as she explores the uncanny relationship between visual perception and factual assumption.<sup>26</sup> Blake has visions that blur the temporal divisions of reality.<sup>27</sup> As he hovers between the past and present during his visions, Blake finds himself unable to connect the traces and imprints of the past with the reality of current experience. Like the missing amnesiac woman, Blake, unable to remember key details, is stripped of his identity. Without imprints on his memory, he no longer has any sense of self.

Although Thompson’s first two works, *Justine* and *Pandora’s Box*, concentrated on the individual’s psychology and memory, it is in her third publication, *Pharos* (2002) wherein the discussion of memory is extended beyond the individual to include not just familial, but also national aspects. *Pharos*, a “ghost story,” blurs the boundaries of genre, embracing aspects of both Gothic and historical fiction. Thompson admits that there is “a dark side to Scottish writing,” as in the work of Emma Tennant and Elspeth Barker (Thompson “Interview”). The dark, Gothic elements are also clearly present in Thompson’s writing; however, it is

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<sup>26</sup> Thompson uses excerpts of both Pat Ballard’s song “Mister Sandman” and E. T. A. Hoffmann’s story “The Sandman” as epigraphs to the novel. There are also clear connections to Freud’s discussion of Hoffmann in “The Uncanny,” which emphasize the themes of unsettled reality and lack of foresight.

<sup>27</sup> The protagonist clearly mirrors the artist and poet William Blake, who also professed to have visions. Thompson also refers to Blake’s poetry collection *Songs of Innocence and Songs of Experience*, specifically the poem “The Sick Rose” (Thompson *Detective* 54).

Thompson's evocation of the genre of historical fiction on which I will concentrate my analysis.<sup>28</sup>

## Writing History as Fiction

The genre of historical fiction within Scottish literature was largely established by the writing of Walter Scott.<sup>29</sup> As I discussed in the previous chapter, Scott's collection and revision of key historical narratives was a deliberate attempt to assert his position within Scottish national and literary spheres. Cairns Craig observes that the importance of Scott to Scottish literature is immense: "The powerful and dramatic vehicle which Scott invented for analysing history was also a vehicle for analysing the individual psyche as a 'historical' creation, for what he does is to have his protagonist's psyche alter in parallel with the historical status of the environment in which he acts" (*History* 44).<sup>30</sup> According to Craig, other nineteenth-century writers followed Scott's example. Repeatedly, the themes of

[t]he confrontation between what is outside history and unamenable to it, and what believes itself to be inside history, is the major theme of Scottish thought . . . and the major concern not only of Scott, but of Hogg, MacDonald and Stevenson. Rather than an escape from reality into romance, the tradition of the nineteenth-century novel in Scotland inaugurated by Scott confronted the historical in radical ways – by challenging it with what it had left out of its ideological conception of social life, by reminding it of what it had excluded but could not forget, by pointing forwards to the barbarity which would turn out to be waiting around every corner of the progress of civilisation. If the trajectory of the historical belonged to England, there was

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<sup>28</sup> See Carol Anderson's "Emma Tennant, Elspeth Barker, Alice Thompson: Gothic Revisited" for an excellent discussion of Thompson's Gothic exploration of regeneration and her interpretation of femininity.

<sup>29</sup> See Ian Duncan's *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* and Cairns Craig's *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination*.

<sup>30</sup> See Cairns Craig's chapter "The Body in the Kit Bag" for an extended analysis of the influence of Scott's historical fiction on the nation's culture (*History* 31-63).

no point in documenting it: its reality, like the reality of civilised capitalism, was only skin deep: it was what lay beyond that history, what refused to be accepted into it, what *could* not be accepted into it but would always be returning to claim our recognition of its kinship with us, that the Scottish writers sought to document. (46)

Scott's use of the historical genre set the precedent for investigating Scotland's placement within history, which other nineteenth-century writers such as R. L. Stevenson adopted. Scott's fictional strategy towards history sparked a tradition that has continued throughout modernity. Despite its integral position as a classic genre within the Scottish literary tradition, the historical novel – particularly the historical romance – is one that hovers in the periphery of academic criticism in the form of short articles and chapters within edited books.<sup>31</sup> The insufficient criticism of historical fiction highlights a wider problem: what is the most effective method for authors of fiction to address history?

Historical romance novels, such as those written by Nigel G. Tranter, D. K. Broster, and Allan Massie rely heavily on sentimental characters and present a didactic account of history.<sup>32</sup> One such text is Tranter's *Druid Sacrifice* (1993). Here, the text focuses on Princess Thanea, the Scottish niece of King Arthur and sister to Gawain. While clearly attempting to explore issues of patriarchal dominance,

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<sup>31</sup> Moira Burgess, in "The Modern Historical Tradition," surveys the historical accuracy, gender discussions, and the "magical" tendencies of early twentieth-century women authors such as Naomi Mitchison and Jane Oliver. Burgess's article, however, offers an explanation of historical fiction within Scotland that seems too simple and reductive. She argues that the historical genre is too often dismissed in the academic context and the writing of historical novels and Scottish women novelists frequently coincide; however, Burgess fails to explain how and why the genre might be redeemed (456).

For a more thorough analysis of historical fiction, see the chapter "The Ethics of Historical Fiction," where Middleton and Woods address the limited critical attention that the genre has received (54-80).

<sup>32</sup> For a brief, but useful explanation of the historical romance trend in popular fiction, see Gavin Wallace's "Compton Mackenzie and the Scottish Popular Novel."

religious conflict, and historical context, the plot fails to interrogate these issues: the story merely paints the heroine as a rebellious and defiant woman who is disowned by her family, is raped, and is nearly murdered. The narrative traces Thanea as she becomes mother to an illegitimate child, who grows up to be St. Mungo of Glasgow; however, despite the extensive passage of time, Thanea remains a flat character. Tranter's descriptions often lend a soft-pornographic aspect, ingratiating readers with elements of sexualized images of women, yet undercutting this aspect by ensuring they are women of power: "Guinevere, in a night-robe which revealed much of her magnificent figure, led Thanea and the others into the house – and even here they had to step over a body near the door, still with a dagger projecting from the throat. In the circumstances the queen was remarkably calm and lucid – but then she was herself a warrior chieftainess" (*Druid* 218). Although problematic issues related to religious belief, sexual expression, and personal loyalty are addressed, the tone is emotionally detached. The novel contains little dialogue and Tranter excessively employs ellipses and dashes in the characters' conversations, requiring the reader imaginatively enhance the space. The writing, however, is an unsuccessful attempt to portray the characters as being too emotionally distraught to articulate themselves. Tranter's pedantic incorporation of historical details serves as an attempt to legitimate his account. He glosses historical explanations as he carefully instructs his readers of the narrative context: "Cruithne was the true name for the inhabitants of Alba, although the Romans had called them Picts because they used a pictorial or symbolic language instead of a written one" (87). By repeatedly providing the reader with Pictish, Roman, English, and Irish names for geographical locations, Tranter superimposes historical "credibility" on the narrative. Although the use of formal

language, elaborate descriptions of daily life, and detailed genealogy lays claim to authenticity, the work fails to add an individualized, psychologically complex element to the narrative.

It is this strand of Scottish historical fiction to which Alice Thompson provides a revisionist account. In her writing, she returns to another tradition of Scottish historical fiction that focuses on psychological disruption: in particular, the island stories of R. L. Stevenson. Stevenson's work set a precedent for modern narratives that are concerned with Scottish national history. In contrast to Tranter's simplistic historical romance novels, Stevenson's writing reassesses historical gaps and fractures from an interiorised, psychological perspective. Stevenson's historical fiction offers a more internalised interrogation of history through personal memory, rather than an imperialistic, standardization of history. Representing historical problems in terms of complex internal workings, Stevenson's texts feature psychological blockages, which gesture towards forms of problematic history. Not only does his literature emphasize the importance of exploring the interiority of the psyche, Stevenson's work also uses the island setting as an ideal location for the investigation of the past. Incorporating elements of history in his fiction, Stevenson crafts increasingly sinister island narratives, such as in the tale "The Merry Men" (1882).

The narrative "The Merry Men" combines the emphasis on history with the use of an island setting. The plot centres on a young man, Charles Darnaway, who upon finishing studies at Edinburgh University, returns to visit his only remaining relatives, an eccentric Uncle Gordon and a cousin Mary Ellen. Charles' relatives live on a small island farm, on the west coast of Scotland. The location of Aros is



particularly interesting because it is only connected to a promontory, the Ross. Aros is “not properly a piece of the Ross, nor was it quite an islet. It formed the south-west corner of the land, fitted close to it, and was in one place only separated from the coast by a little gut of the sea, not forty feet across the narrowest” (Stevenson 112). The island of Aros, therefore, is not part of the mainland. Neither is it a completely independent space. In “Discourses of the Island,” Gillian Beer discusses the importance of the island as a form of space wherein to situate narratives: “The double nature of the island – both a fragmentary upheaving of land from below the surface and a complete and autonomous form – is part of its imaginative attraction and makes it possible to play many nature/culture variations within its zone” (13). Likewise, in their seminal study of the biodiversity on island populations, *The Theory of Island Biogeography* (1967), MacArthur and Wilson explain that “[a]n island is certainly an intrinsically appealing study object. It is simpler than a continent or an ocean, a visibly discrete object that can be labelled with a name and its resident populations identified” (3). It is this appeal of a limited geographical space and a limited population that lends itself to fiction. The island acts as a miniature space wherein debates of historical and national concern may occur, yet remain moderately distanced from reality. Spatially limited, the island contains its inhabitants within a restricted location and reduces their means of entry and exit. Stevenson’s “The Merry Men” exhibits the usefulness of an island setting: the Uncle’s depravity occurs on Aros, a location that is only connected with the mainland for a few days each month. By setting psychological and moral decay away from the mainland, Stevenson is able to interrogate disturbing behaviour and,

simultaneously, to maintain an acceptable distance from Scotland.<sup>33</sup> Although in “The Merry Men” Stevenson explores repression of personal guilt, the limited discussion of race and slavery gestures to an unacknowledged blemish on Scottish history. The dark island story hints at many forms of repression – both psychological and societal. Gordon’s inner psychological disturbances are manifested in Calvinistic religious fervour and alcoholism: he releases his psychic turmoil through incomprehensible verbal ejaculations and erratic outbursts of temper that frighten those around him. In addition to divulging Gordon’s internal repression, Stevenson signals repression within the wider societal context. During his search for the wrecked ship *Espirito Santo*, Charles tangibly encounters the remnants of death as he swims in the sea and clutches onto the bones of the drowned. The disturbed human remains, however, are mere markers of the degradation of those still alive. Following the storm, Charles meets a black man, who, unable to communicate in English or Gaelic, mimes the fate of his sunken ship. Charles’ encounter with the survivor of the ship directly links the Scottish coast with the slave trade. Furthermore, the clear association between the appearance of the black man and Gordon’s psychic fever reveals the terrors that haunt the island. Contained within the island, the internal, psychological repressions erupt, as do those that are external and societal. The plot, rather than pausing for analysis of or reflection on the moral implications of either Gordon’s past or the events of the present, rushes to a tragic end. Stevenson’s island narrative, “The Merry Men,” offers an increasingly disruptive and psychologically

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<sup>33</sup> For a useful examination of the oral unconscious and the written conscious in “The Merry Men,” see Penny Fielding’s *Writing and Orality*, pp. 201-207. In her article “Burial Letters: Death and Dreaming in Hogg’s ‘Cousin Mattie,’” Fielding also has an interesting discussion of the psychologisation and the fictionalisation of history.

complex representation of history, a tradition of historical fiction that remains central to modern Scottish writing.

## Locating Memory: Island Geography and Familial Topography

The imperative to address the unacknowledged past continued far beyond the writing of Stevenson. As I discussed above, concentration on the multifaceted narratives of history has become increasingly prominent in more recent Scottish historical fiction. Cairns Craig observes this literary inclination and acknowledges the intricacy with which historical fiction represents the past. He argues that

[n]either geography nor psychology changes in step with history, and either can therefore collude to oppose history's apparently inevitable progress: those 'barbarian' modes of society which 'history' would appear to have consigned to the past are always lurking, in the depths of the mind, across the boundaries of geography, waiting to erupt back into the present and to disrupt the progressive narrative of the historical.

The consequences of this are twofold: first, history as the narrative of orderly progress can never finally win; wherever it establishes itself there is always territory further out, or uncontrolled territory within it – whether in the lower classes or the dispositions of the individual mind – where the antithetical forces of the capricious and the random can assert themselves again. Second, and more importantly, however, the conflict between the linear narrative order and the capricious and the random is structured as a conflict between the rational (the orderly) and the imaginative (the capricious). The reversal of history is a reversal from reason to imagination. But that reversal implicates the novel itself, for, as an imaginative medium, it is *in collusion* with the very forces that its author regards as dangerous to progressive society. The act of the imagination required of the reader in reading a historical novel is a psychological equivalent to the crossing of a geographical boundary into a more primitive world. As fiction, the historical novel encourages the very modes of consciousness which, in terms of progressive history, it tries to consign to the past as inappropriate to the modern world. (*History* 71)

Between these apparently contradictory categories of the personal psyche and the reality of history and modernity is precisely where Alice Thompson situates

*Pharos*. Although it is Alice Thompson's third novel, *Pharos* is her first to be set concretely within a Scottish context. The short novel describes the solitary, scripted life of lighthouse keepers who live on Jacob's Rock, a small island twenty-seven miles from the west coast of Scotland. Labelled as "a ghost story" on its cover, *Pharos* hovers on the boundary of reality and fantasy, where a particular date, 1826, and the horrific societal acts such as slavery provide the realistic background to a fantastical tale. Thompson not only positions the narrative within a particular historical era, but also employs elements of the fantastic to engage with darker, more psychological elements of shameful history – both of an individual and of a nation. Thompson openly admits that these elements are intertwined in her writing. She explains,

slavery haunts *Pharos*. [A] country is not just made up of its rocks and its trees. And while you can acknowledge their beauty, I think one also has to – it's interesting and to see the historical context of the landscape as well. . . . As soon as I have that place – that sense of place which really starts a novel off for me, I'll immediately be looking at what makes up that place. So I think the history comes out of the landscape. . . . It's an interesting idea also, I suppose, this idea of escaping history and the idea that you come to the landscape is a place of escape, but actually you carry that history with you and the beauty is transcendent. But there's also a side to the landscape that is marked and no matter how isolated you are. I suppose Scotland attracts me to write about, because there are these apparently romantic isolated spots in Scotland that seem beyond anything to do with man, but actually, wherever man is we take our histories. And I like that attempt to escape, but also that impossibility of escape from our humanity really, and all that goes with it. (Thompson "Interview")

Thompson's acknowledgment of the relationship between national space and the history of that space is clearly evident in her work. *Pharos* is not a re-enactment of the Scottish past; however, repressed historical elements haunt the interiority of the characters' memory. Within the liminal space between the binary categories of reality/imagination and history/fantasy, Thompson reworks concepts of memory to

allow for an engagement with the unconscious past and to address the gaps in established and accepted versions of history.

The island is central to *Pharos* – a map of it is provided for the reader before the narrative begins. Evoking other island stories, providing a map for the reader, for Thompson, “was a kind of a homage to Robert Louis Stevenson and *Treasure Island*. It was a little thing I wanted to do” (“Interview”). The map highlights the external physical boundaries and emphasizes the internal perimeters of memory, but the map also implies the invitation and guidance to visit and to discover that which another has previously experienced and explored.<sup>34</sup> Thompson’s choice of title, *Pharos*, recalls the Alexandrian lighthouse built for Ptolemy II of Egypt on the island of Pharos in the fourth century BC as well as the meaning of “lamp” or “candelabrum” (“Pharos”).<sup>35</sup> Like the island of Pharos, Jacob’s Rock is set apart from the mainland and has a lighthouse, which warns mariners of the dangers that surround the perimeter of the island. Peril, however, is also contained within the island. The narrative not only identifies the dangers and barriers to the investigation of this space, but also invites and encourages the exploration of the undisclosed past. Although Simon, Cameron, and Charlotte are Scottish, Thompson cleverly sets the events twenty-seven miles from the west coast, gesturing to the established context of island narratives within Scottish literature and ensuring the ability to discuss problematic history and transgenerational memory in a distanced location.

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<sup>34</sup> Interestingly, *NLV Pharos* is the name of Northern Lighthouse Board’s ship specifically designated to care for lighthouses along the coast of Scotland. In addition to these references, Robert Louis Stevenson was the grandson of Robert Stevenson (1772-1850), the builder of the Bell Rock lighthouse among other Scottish lighthouses.

<sup>35</sup> The allusion to the Egyptian island also serves as a reminder of the ancient Egyptian subjugation and enslavement of the Hebrews. Like the Egyptians, the inhabitants of Pharos participate in the slave trade. See Exodus 1:6-14.

The island setting in *Pharos* not only creates a securely defined territory, but also ensures an artificially limited population. While the external mapping of Jacob's Rock is crucial to the story, it is within this island that the geography of family becomes of essential importance as it is mapped in the unusual geography of the text.<sup>36</sup> The novel, itself, is one continuous narrative, defying traditional allocations of chapter divisions and only separated by paragraph indentations. Likewise, the traditional genetic structures that define a family are blurred. There are five main characters: Cameron, in his mid-sixties, has been the lighthouse keeper for years; Simon, in his mid-twenties, was a farmer and is now the lighthouse keeper trainee; Cameron's sister Charlotte, who visits the island to help with housekeeping; a woman, Lucia, who is rescued from the sea; and a wandering child, Grace. Here, the family unit does not consist of the typical nuclear family of father, mother, and children; rather, it is an artificially constructed family. Parental roles are filled by Cameron and his sister Charlotte. Simon is the surrogate child, while Lucia and Grace fill liminal familial roles. This family is defined not by genetics, but is verbally verified when Charlotte declares to Lucia, "Cameron and Simon are my family. . . . And you are too, now. . . . It is as if we are a complete family" (Thompson *Pharos* 54-55).

Although the novel disrupts traditional genetic structures, the characters are patterned after long-established familial narratives. The depiction of Cameron and Simon alludes to the Biblical brothers Cain and Abel, who, true to the competitive nature of siblings, vie for God's blessing. Cain, the eldest, gives the first fruits of his

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<sup>36</sup> The island setting and complex familial relationships in *Pharos* are reminiscent of Virginia Woolf's *To The Lighthouse* (1927), which also centres on family dynamics and an island.

garden as an offering to God; Abel, the second, offers an unblemished lamb. God's acceptance of the lamb and rejection of the fruit sparks a rivalry between the brothers. In anger, Cain kills Abel, committing the first murder.<sup>37</sup> This story is paralleled and subverted in the novel. Cameron is the older, wiser, yet more traditionally religious man; Simon is the younger, inexperienced animist, who is physically connected to nature. Simon is "all surface and instinct" and indulges in the "pagan worship of nature" (40). Cameron will often "watch Simon tend his garden, come back dirty and exalted, arms brimming with cauliflowers, turnips and potatoes, and think he looked like he had been dug up from the earth too. That he had burst up from the ground covered in dirt, born of the earth" (40). The relationship between the men is complex, for Cameron acts as both father and brother to Simon. Like the God of Genesis, who formed Adam from the dust of the ground, so Cameron adopts the stance of a distanced creator and paternal figure towards Simon. Cameron has "a fondness for Simon too, so he restrained his judgement of him and treated him like a child who knew no better" (40). However, just as Cain was marked for his sin of murder and his descendants were forced to separate from the rest of humanity, it is Cameron's 'sin,' or secret from the past that haunts Simon and the other inhabitants of the island.

The modification of traditional family structures allows for a unique interrogation of transgenerational memory. If a location is not one's own or one's home, then it is not imbued with personal memory: the memories held within the

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<sup>37</sup> See Genesis 4.

space are Other.<sup>38</sup> Jacob's Rock is only an adopted home and the familial bond is formed because the inhabitants share a lack of personal and individual memory. Lucia has no memory and the narrative pivots on her attempt to remember; however, she is not the only character who is separated from the past. Like Lucia, it is "as if Charlotte didn't have a memory either," for she "never talked about her past" (54). The sense of familial identity is grounded in the loss of the past, in Charlotte's reminder to Lucia that they are a family. Charlotte insists, "[w]e will be loath to let you go. Sometimes I don't want your memory to come back at all" (55). The characters do not disclose stories of their pasts; instead, their experience centres entirely on their daily routine of keeping the lighthouse. Just as a community inhabits an identifiable geographical space, memory has an identifiable topographical space that may be shared within a family. In the novel, however, personal memory is seen as a possession that segregates. An individual's memory causes detachment from the other members of the family community; hence, is a danger to the collective familial unit.

## Charting Another's Past: The Transgenerational Phantom and Psychoanalysis

I will now turn to the psychoanalytical concept of the phantom as a useful tool in the study of memory and its transferral between generations. In the study of memory, theories of psychoanalysis, which emphasize the importance of individual

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<sup>38</sup> I examine the relationship between location and memory further in Chapters Four and Five. In my discussion, I focus on nostalgia as the Other – the uncanny – in diasporic fiction.



narratives and non-linear forms of history, provide useful methods for investigating contested elements of the past. I have found the work of Nicolas Abraham particularly useful in my study of transgenerational memory. In 1975, Abraham published a series of essays that developed the concept of the phantom. While the focus of psychoanalysis is often primarily on the individual, Abraham's concept of the phantom extends the study of the unconscious beyond an individual's present and explores it in the context of a larger community (Rand "Introductions and Notes" 166). Simply stated, the phantom extends beyond the individual because "some people unwittingly inherit the secret psychic substance of their ancestors' lives" (166). As I explained in the previous chapter, introjection is a healthy form of mourning, where the individual successfully processes a loss and integrates it into an overall sense of self. As I examined in *Wild Nights* and *O Caledonia*, however, the illness of mourning may result in incorporation – the refusal to admit loss. Abraham's theory of the phantom considers the implications of mourning beyond the individual. What happens when the refusal to mourn and the psychic disturbances it causes are never expressed and are secret?

The phantom is the delayed manifestation of an individual's undisclosed and unacknowledged unconscious. An individual's unconscious contains shameful secrets of the past that are hidden and unspoken, yet later erupt to haunt future generations, who are unaware of this disgraceful past. As Nicholas Rand describes it, the psychic disruptions of an individual may "adversely and unconsciously affect someone else. Abraham likens the foreign presence to ventriloquism and calls it a 'phantom,' a 'haunting,' or a 'phantomatic haunting'" (166). Here, memory is not

rejuvenating or liberating; a memory that is another's returns to oppress the unconscious of an unsuspecting individual.

There are four primary aspects of the phantom and its operation. First, it is a manifestation of the past and points to an unspeakable gap in the psyche of the dead. The phantom disturbs the present individual who is unaware of this secret past. Because the transmission of these shameful memories is unconscious, the phantom cannot be recognized by the individual – it hovers and haunts (Abraham and Torok 174). Second, the individual may have an aversion to revealing a family secret or transgressing familial integrity. The phantom “counteracts libidinal introjection,” for the words that invoke the presence of the phantom “point to a gap, they refer to the unspeakable” (174). Third, the phantom is silent, repetitive, and operates through secreted words; therefore, the individual is unable to recognise the phantom because it is unknown. Of key importance is that the subject *is not* aware of its presence – it is not a repressed experience: “*The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other*” (175 – emphasis original). Although the phantom “has no energy of its own,” it “gives rise to endless repetition and . . . eludes rationalization” (175). Abraham also observes that “[i]t is crucial to emphasize that the words giving sustenance to the phantom return to haunt from the unconscious. These are often the very words that rule an entire family’s history and function as the tokens of its pitiable articulations” (176). The final characteristic of the phantom is that it may be exorcised and may decrease through the generations. Abraham speculates that the “phantom effect” may eventually disappear and that hope may lie in the attempt “to relieve the unconscious by placing the effects of the phantom in the social realm” (176).

## The Phantom of History: Scotland, Empire, and Slavery

Returning to a discussion of *Pharos*, the concept of the phantom provides useful insight into the operations of memory within the text and the transferral of memory across generations.<sup>39</sup> A ghost is said to haunt the island, although “[n]o one has seen the ghost clearly, its sex, age or race. But it is said that the ghost is the curse of the slave ship that went down ten years ago off Jacob’s Rock, with all the slaves, women, men and children, on board” (Thompson *Pharos* 63). The curse of the slave trade, however, not only haunts the text: it is a figure that hovers in Scotland’s history. By broaching slavery, Thompson not only addresses Scotland’s role within the construction of the British empire, but also interrogates Scotland’s participation in the slave trade. In an interview for *The Sunday Herald*, Alice Thompson insists on the relevance of integrating history into narratives of fantasy: “‘Places like Glasgow and Leith were founded on slavery,’ she says. ‘It’s partly why I wanted to use the motif of the ghost story – to explore how slavery haunts us, the legacy of our responsibility in what happened. I also liked the idea of setting it on an island, to use an island as a place of escape but it’s never possible to escape completely from history’” (McDowell). Gillian Beer, in her examination of island geography, describes the setting of the island as “both total and local” (“Discourses” 21). In situating the story of *Pharos* on an island, the location postures as a miniaturized version of Britain. Jacob’s Rock becomes a site not only of the local Scottish past, but also of the total British history. In aiding the expansion of the British empire, Scotland also participated in the commercial exchange of human lives. Within the

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<sup>39</sup> For a useful study of phantomic operations in literature, see Esther Rashkin’s *Family Secrets and the Psychoanalysis of Narrative*.

island, Thompson articulates the elisions within Scottish history and writes into *Pharos* a direct engagement with these repressed aspects of Scotland's role in the British empire. Positioning the narrative within the wider context of historical events is imperative, for "[d]iscourse does not take place outside history. But no historical period consists only of its own present. Not only architecture and legal systems give evidence of this, but – with particular intensity – past writing when read within and read into the present. History is in this sense less linear than constellatory" (Beer "Discourses" 6).

It is in reference to Scotland's role within Great Britain and the British empire that the acknowledgement of participation in the slave trade becomes imperative. Scotland's role in colonialism appears to be contradictory. Scotland is a country that has been subsumed into the larger national structure of Great Britain; however, when incorporated into this collective political entity, Scotland became an active participant in the British empire's colonization of the globe. Like Scotland's role in British imperialism, historical accounts have often diminished Scotland's participation in the slave trade, perhaps due to the paradox of Scotland's role in the colonial enterprise. As T. M. Devine explains, the influence of Scots in the colonization and expansion of the British empire was extremely significant (*Empire* xxvi). The unusual position as a dominated, "lesser" nation that, in turn, has oppressed and displaced other cultures is a problematic aspect of Scottish history.

The enslavement of colonized peoples during colonial expansion was embraced by Scotland. The adoption of the role not just as an oppressed, "lesser" nation, but also as an oppressor nation is a crucial aspect of Scottish history. Although Britain passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act in 1807 that served to

reduce the slave trade, it was not until the 1833 Abolition of Slavery Act that slavery became illegal and the law was actively enforced. Scottish history is haunted by the unexplained gaps in Scotland's participation in the empire and the slave trade; gaps that are evident even in twentieth-century accounts of the empire's history. Despite Glasgow's position as a port for the west coast of Britain, T. M. Devine and Gordon Jackson's extensive volume, *Glasgow Volume 1: Beginnings to 1830*, does not include references to the slave trade: the index lacks entries to 'Africa,' 'slavery,' and 'anti-slavery.'<sup>40</sup> Devine's discussion of the tobacco trade centres on economics, but fails to mention the slaves, the primary labourers who made the enormous financial gains possible. Ironically, it is not until 2003 that Devine, himself, acknowledges this historical omission. In *Scotland's Empire, 1600-1815* (2003), he observes that little scholarship in Scottish studies has focused on slavery and cites *The Oxford Companion to Scottish History* (2001) as having only one reference in the index to the West Indies. Indignantly, Devine explains,

[t]here is no index entry to 'slavery' and the single 'slave trade' reference is exclusively concerned with the campaigns of the Scottish missionary societies in the nineteenth century against the immoral commerce in human beings. The omission is surprising because, as will become apparent, the role of the Scots in the British Caribbean was deeply significant. The transience of the Scottish presence, which left little cultural trace compared with the long-term impact of the Scots in North America, may be one explanation for the neglect. Another may be that economic historians in particular have been bewitched by the extraordinary success story of Scottish merchants in the Chesapeake tobacco trade and have marginalized other key aspects of transatlantic commerce. The darker side of Scottish business in the slave economies could also have caused them to have been overlooked in the past, especially by Victorian writers who much preferred tales of heroism, achievement and genius in constructing their saga of the Scot abroad. (*Empire* 226-227)

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<sup>40</sup> The index to *Glasgow. Vol. 1, Beginnings to 1830* does include an entry for "emancipation"; however, the citation refers to Scottish coal miners, not slaves.

It appears that a mere eight years earlier Devine, too, had been bewitched with the economic achievements of the Scottish tobacco trade. The repetitive elisions within historical examinations of Scotland's role in the slave trade are clearly demonstrated not only in general accounts, but also in Devine's own writing and editing of history.

Unlike the historians who expound on Scotland's deliberate participation in the construction of the empire, as a literary critic Craig broaches the colonial project and its ensuing effects differently. He argues that "[e]ntry into the hell of history, or the entry of a hellish history upon one's historyless world, is the narrative paradigm that dominates much Scottish novel writing in the twentieth century" (*History* 50). According to Craig, twentieth-century Scottish literature is constantly seeking to elevate itself from the "trivially local" into a dialogue with "the meta-narrative of History itself"; the Scottish novel is divided between a "historyless reality" and a "hellish history" (51, 50). The only escape is to either "go through history to whatever conclusion it may bring, or one has to find an alternative" (51). Craig's argument, however, offers only binary divisions for Scottish literature: literature must either be historyless or adhere to another's version of history. What is the alternative for a nation that refuses to be historyless, yet rejects elements within its own history?

### The Phantom Manifested: History Contested

Jonathan Boyarin points out the necessary inclusion of the past in personal and national history. He describes the imperative as follows:

one of the ways that life is maintained is through a constant effort to retain the image of the past—to rescue the dead and oppressed ancestors by giving their lives new meaning. Much as genetic information is a ‘narrative,’ memory resists the disintegration of consciousness. And the most powerful memory for this purpose is that of one’s own ‘generations’—those from whom one stems ‘body and soul’—or those who can be metaphorically described as one’s ancestors. (27)

In identifying memory’s resistance to disintegration and inclination to regeneration, Boyarin insists that it is only through integrating “the embodied memories of our distant contemporaries” that a meaningful life can be achieved (27). The failure to confront Scottish participation in the empire and slave trade, I wish to argue, results in an unacknowledged blot on accepted versions of history and haunts the Scottish psyche. The memory of Scotland’s role in the empire and participation in the slave trade is problematic: is Scotland a victim of the colonial enterprise or a perpetrator of the empire?

The deliberate refusal to discuss and acknowledge the shades of a darker past, so prevalent in historical accounts, has had an inverse effect in literature. Concern with past involvement in the slave trade has seeped into the consciousness of Scottish authors and erupted as individualized, personal narratives of history. James Robertson’s *Joseph Knight* (2003), for example, probes into the Scottish participation in slavery. His novel expands the late eighteenth-century story of the Jamaican slave who successfully fought a court battle for his freedom against his Scottish owner John Wedderburn. Robertson’s historical realist fiction places the characters securely within key Scottish episodes such as the Battle of Culloden and the Enlightenment. Situating the narrative securely within the geographical and historical context, Robertson sketches the interiorised dilemmas of the characters as they negotiate issues of slavery, race, and freedom. The relationship between master

and slave is revealed to be complex as it shifts between that of authority and friendship. Like Robertson, it is the (un)acknowledged and (un)contested fissures in Scottish history that Thompson addresses; however, she neither adopts another's history nor embraces a historyless position. Erecting a story within history, Thompson carefully inscribes the characters with memory not just of their own history, but also of their ancestral past. Returning to the concept of island geography, Beer argues that "[t]he word 'island' has peculiar force in English which emphasizes its connection with individualism. The sounded 'I' at the beginning of the word creates a habituating consonance between the ego and the island" ("Discourses" 15). The particularized island location of *Pharos* provides an ideal framework where Thompson explores the personal, psychological elements of memory within a transgenerational context to interrogate the fractures within Scottish history, not to reinvent, but to readdress.

Thompson historically situates the story in the early nineteenth century: the slave trade is illegal, but slavery has not yet been abolished. Although the present narrative occurs in 1826, Cameron explains that ten years earlier, a

British galley was carrying slaves illegally from Africa to the Caribbean plantations. The naval patrols had chased them badly off course. The ship hit the reef. All the slaves drowned. They went down with the ship, still manacled to their seats. The body of one female slave was washed up on the beach. (Thompson *Pharos* 46)

The impossibility of escaping the history of slavery figures prominently in the novel. It is in the liminal space between day and night that a rapping, "very specific and loud, as if demanding her attention" alerts Lucia and drives her into the service room (41). There, she discovers a map of the world in the service room that depicts "a trade route from the west coast of Scotland to Jacob's Rock, twenty-seven miles off



the coast, down to the west coast of Africa, across to the West Indies and then back to Jacob's Rock" (41). Although Lucia fails to recognise the correlation between the persistent rapping and the map, it reminds the reader of the shadow that slavery has cast upon Scotland's past. The map explicitly identifies the island as both "total and local" (Beer 21). The geographical mapping of the slave route not only unmask the slave trade that occurred within the borders of the island, but also exposes the human trafficking in the wider, global community.

Despite including echoes of Scotland's direct involvement in the slave trade, Thompson does not focus on the guilt of the nation; rather, she foregrounds the smear of slavery on personal culpability.<sup>41</sup> The lighthouse keeper's participation in the trade ten years earlier haunts the present. Although Cameron claims that the female slave had been washed ashore dead, she had, in fact, survived – only to be raped, to bear the child Grace, and then to die. When Grace was still young, Cameron banished her from the lighthouse and she now forages the island to survive, segregated from the rest of the "family." Linda Colley suggests that slaves "existed overwhelmingly outside Britain's own geographical and mental boundaries. . . . Most Britons still lived and died without encountering anyone whose skin colour was different from their own" (355). Just as slaves were cast out with the imagined boundaries of the nation, so Grace is cast beyond the familial territory. Once Cameron rejects her, she is no longer permitted inside the lighthouse and instead,

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<sup>41</sup> Ironically, like the evasion of the topic of slavery in historical accounts, Thompson's address of slavery was subject to similar elision in book reviews. She remarks,

I think the history of the Scottish slave trade is something that's, really, not been talked about. And it's very interesting, Linda, in the reviews of the book, very few of them mentioned the theme of slavery. And that is just – to me – so weird. Because it was the whole theme of the book, and yet they didn't really talk about it. ("Interview")

finds security in the island's crypt. However, just as Cameron cannot rid himself of the reminder of his guilt and involvement in slavery and rape, so the horrors of slavery seep beyond the limitations of time. Although Grace has not experienced slavery, she becomes the transgenerational vessel for her mother's experience. Through voodoo incantations and trances, Grace transmits her mother's story of passage on the slave ships.

In stark contrast to the alienation of a genetically related child, Lucia is subsumed into the family structure. Initially, she is referred to as "the woman" as it is clear she has "lost her memory" (Thompson *Pharos* 18). Only after the locket she wears is opened to reveal a small galleon *Lucia*, is the woman named. Like Cameron, the island cannot be rid of its guilt: the land itself is tainted. When she emerges onto the shoreline, where the land intersects with the sea, Lucia becomes a haunting reminder to those who attempted to bury the remains of slavery in the water. The sea, the maternal womb, gives birth to the phantomic presence of Lucia. Like a drowned, bloated body, the dark, repressed elements of Scotland's history surface in the novel's unconscious. Although her identity is clearly articulated by the end of the novel – she is the figure-head of the slave ship, animated by Simon's magical touch when he rescues her from the sea – Lucia does not hold the complete memories of her former existence.<sup>42</sup>

Because "[e]verything on Jacob's Rock seemed to be about the lighthouse, its past and its present, and the lighthouse had dominated, obliterated her own history. She needed a history" (79). Lucia's history, however, is Cameron's. He

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<sup>42</sup> As a ship's figure-head, Lucia may be a further indication of Thompson's acknowledged debt to R. L. Stevenson. In *Ebb-Tide* (1894), a ship's figure-head features prominently on the slaver Attwater's island, providing yet another link between Scottish island narratives and slavery.

never speaks “about his family or past and never invited questions about them either. She knew nothing about his history, his background or who he was” (109).

His omission is her existence. To her, time is

in black and white. Black was her past and white her present. Black was what she had forgotten and white was the experience of life. And she longed for the shadows of things remembered, of being haunted by memories, by the ghosts of her previous life. (38)

Her lack of memory is insinuated as the result of both a deliberate act – it is “mislaide” – and an event over which she has no control, for Lucia provides a tangible representation of the phantom (38). As the embodiment of another’s secretive and haunted past, her memory *is* outwith her control. Lucia can only be defined in relation to Cameron’s history: she is “possessed” by Cameron (90). Lucia recognises her liminality, she is

in the middle trying to recover my own character, which seems tenuous and amorphous; not mine yet. I want to fight off the invasions of these other characters, whose qualities are surreptitiously seeping into my own consciousness. I am powerless over their secret desires. (70)

Although the phantom points to an unspeakable gap, it may operate through secreted words: language allows the translation of an indefinable and inadmissible past. Language frames memory. It is through language that thoughts are articulated and in the moment of verbal or physical articulation, the thought passes and is fixed within the mind – it is already a memory. Grace’s presence is never acknowledged by Cameron or Charlotte, but Lucia often sees Grace on the island. Unsure of the little girl’s identity, Lucia tries to explain the sightings of Grace to the others, but they dismiss the stories as inventions of Lucia’s imagination.

On this island, the only sense of security is found in reliance on the guidance of others. Lucia is unable to trust her own memory – since she has none – yet she is also unsure if she can trust others. Following an encounter with Simon and Grace, Lucia is certain that “[e]ither Simon had played one of his tricks on her or her imagination was misleading her again. This inability to trust herself, she thought, or what she saw with her own eyes, made the world frighteningly indeterminate” (60). The direct correlation between the unreliability and instability of memory and the world causes an odd juxtaposition: if one cannot rely on memory and the past to connect that moment to the present and cause a stable sense of self, then there is no consistency to maintain that sense of self in relation to an external whole.

Because her adoptive family refuse to believe the oral relation of her experiences, Lucia creates an imaginary, but tangible record of her past. One dark night, Simon creeps into her room to give her “a blank book” (65). Lucia is outraged and tears the pages into pieces: “She felt as she tore that it was herself she was ripping up, tearing into tiny pieces” (65). However, soon afterwards Lucia begins to write imaginary memories about the slave ship onto the blank pages, hoping that the physical inscription of language on paper will validate the intangibility of past experience. It is “the ritual of human beings, to order their worlds, to make sense of chaos, with the position of a pen” (67). Titling the first page of the book “*The Book of False Memories*,” Lucia’s entries are written in the present tense; even the inscription of language cannot intrude upon the past – it cannot inscribe a memory on a past that has not existed (71).

I wish to return to Craig’s discussion of Scotland and its role within history. Although Craig maintains that the only escape from a historyless condition is to

confront history or to find an alternative, the alternative that Craig suggests is one where

[t]he historyless in this context is no longer the primitive (though it has the cyclic qualities of the primitive) and it is no longer simply a suspension of narrative (though it is beyond narration): it is a condition in which the historical, with its determined trajectory towards the future, is seen as a deformation; it is a consciousness in which the cyclic is no longer an oppressive repetition but a revelation of a fundamental pattern that releases the individual from the constraints of temporality. (*History* 51-52)

While *Pharos* does not present itself as a metaphor for Scottish history as a whole, the figure of Lucia as the phantom, who carries the unspoken memories of another into future generations, demonstrates one alternative to a “historyless” condition. Her presence, rather than a cyclical, “oppressive repetition,” ensures the possibility that past guilt may be released. In the novel, there is an unusual positioning between the physical articulation of language through the act of writing and the intangible process of memory. Lucia finds comfort in detachment from the physical world:

Bodies rotted and faded away, broken like pieces of wood, or grew flatulent like decaying blossoms. Lucia felt safer in the realms of the mind than in the confines of the body. Thoughts relieved her. She would slip into them like a child into a mountain pool, the coldness of her liquid ideas easing the heat of the day. As soon as she became aware of her body she started to sink, to gasp for breath. Her body would be the end of her. A recognition of her body was a recognition of death. And she was not prepared for an ending. (Thompson *Pharos* 95)

Although Lucia does not want “an ending,” she realizes two things: that she must “invent” her memories to “get away” and that she “cannot live for much longer in this gossamer world of tenuous relationships between shadowy figures where I am the most ghost-like of them all” (112, 113). Her life, however, is not her own. Just as a map both delineates and points to a location, Lucia – the light – has a dual role: her presence elucidates the past and illuminates the future. It is not only Lucia, who

writes herself into existence, but also Cameron. She is the embodiment of his unspeakable guilt – the phantom buried within his unconscious. In his logbook, he notes that “[a]s the woman regains her memory I will recognize who she is. I already think I know who she is. It will be as if her memory is forming her face anew, writing her past on it for me to read in detail” (68). As Lucia continues to write, she feels “possessed, as if in a trance. She suddenly felt a nameless fear, as if someone else was in the room beside her, watching her write, actually causing the words to flow” (107). Attempting to free herself of this past that is not hers, Lucia throws the book out her bedroom window and it floats through the air “like a dead white bird, an albatross,” settles on the water and miraculously, it is found and returned to her the next morning (107). Like the Ancient Mariner’s albatross – that emblem of guilt and shame – *The Book of False Memories* refuses to release Lucia.

As the narrative climaxes, Cameron becomes both blind and insane. He is no longer able to articulate himself through writing: “[m]ore often than not he was overwhelmed by the desire *not* to say something. For him, it was inarticulacy which was absolute” (135 – emphasis original). As his thoughts become increasingly convoluted, he relies upon Lucia to transcribe his rants. Cameron’s guilt is secreted through language and his shameful memories influence the generations: his adamant refusal to acknowledge his shameful past results not only in the murder of his sister, but also in his own demise. After several weeks, the District Superintendent discovers Cameron, blind and naked, surrounded by pages of notes pinned to the wall, “a giant depiction of his life with the meaning taken out: no narrative, no analysis, no thought. Just excerpts” (147). Simon and Grace, who Lucia locked up to keep safe from Cameron, are rescued and taken to the mainland, but the story

continues. Lucia's shadowy figure remains on the island. The "recognition of death" and the "ending" that Lucia has feared is *not* her own: it *cannot* be her own, for the phantom remains to haunt future generations (95). It is only "an ending" – not identified with a pronoun or defined by a noun.

This chapter has examined the manifestations of transgenerational memory. As the psychoanalytic concept of the phantom demonstrates, memory – whether transmitted consciously or unconsciously – will be transferred between generations. The ambiguous ending of *Pharos* illustrates the phantomic operations of history: like Lucia's haunting presence on the island of Jacob's Rock, which serves as a reminder of Cameron's personal guilt, historical records of the slave trade prompt reflections of Scotland's national shame. Abraham argues that the effects of the phantom may decrease from generation to generation and may, some day, disappear, yet as history is transcribed, it is imperative that a nation study how the importance of the past is defined. Although the disappearance of the phantom would not change history, it could, however, allow the secret to be acknowledged and revealed in the social realm (Abraham and Torok 176). Perhaps, it is in the acknowledgement of a shameful past that Scotland can avoid the "oppressive repetition" of history (Craig *History* 52). Through the transferral of memory across generations, history may be personalised, internalised, and readdressed.

## Chapter Four

### Longing for the Familiar: Nostalgia at Home and Abroad

My thesis has examined memory as a representation of the past and I have argued that memory may be either contained within the psyche of the individual or may be transferred to another individual or to a group. Memory is subjective and therefore, is often problematic. I have examined problematic memory such as the conscious refusal to acknowledge loss, which prevents the transferral of the past. In other cases, memory is transmitted unconsciously. Because of the internal nature of memory, I have used the psychoanalytical theories of introjection, incorporation, and the phantom to study the ways in which memory is manifested in the psyche. These theories have also helped to better understand how memory operates in two primary contexts: memory and the individual; memory and the familial. I now turn to examine the ways in which memory operates in the national sphere.

I have established the importance and prevalence of memory in the Scottish context: concern with the past has dominated cultural, political, and literary discussions. My study has focused on the interpretation of memory in modern Scottish literature; however, I now turn to an analysis of memory specifically in relation to national identity. What is the Scottish nation? How is national identity represented in Scottish literature? The examination of national identity in Scotland results in a complicated discussion. As Benedict Anderson argues in his influential study of nationalism, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, the nation is “an imagined political community – and imagined as



both inherently limited and sovereign” (6). In a similar discussion of the elements that construct a nation, Jonathan Boyarin argues “*that our reified notions of objective and separate space and time are peculiarly linked to the modern identification of a nation with a sharply bounded, continuously occupied space controlled by a single sovereign state, comprising a set of autonomous yet essentially identical individuals*” (2 – emphasis original). Although the nation is commonly considered to be a specific geographical space, Scotland’s position in Britain, I argue, complicates the discussion of nationalism.

In the previous chapter on Alice Thompson’s *Pharos*, I discussed the ways in which the geography of being an island nation has shaped the identity of Great Britain and, therefore, of Scotland. In this chapter, I am interested in how memory has shaped perceptions of national identity. I will first discuss nationalism in relation to Scotland and Great Britain. I will then extend my analysis of the nation to include the empire and the Scottish diaspora. A self-governing nation until 1707, Scotland then relinquished its independence to become part of Great Britain.<sup>43</sup> National identity became doubled: Scots continued to see themselves as distinct, yet also as part of the wider British construction. The union of the British Isles is a particularly interesting example of nation not only as an imagined political community that escapes geographical boundaries, but also as an imperial, global force. I argue that the multilayered and conflicting identities that construct Great Britain are due to its political history – not only as a nation, but also as an empire. The notion of a

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<sup>43</sup> See also John M. MacKenzie’s “Empire and National Identities the Case of Scotland.” MacKenzie argues that the historiography of Britain is difficult to place and its origins are debatable. He suggests that the nation could have begun at various points between the sixteenth and the nineteenth centuries; however, he does point to the 1603 Union of Crowns and the 1707 Act of Union as defining moments, specifically for Scotland (217).

cohesive national history and identity is moulded from a contrived unification of disparate memories and identities.

In literature, critical discussions, and personal anecdotes, the Scottish past is often idealized and romanticized. When the concept of an individual's memory is added to these depictions of the national, analysis becomes even more complex. The origins of these stereotypical and sentimentalized images are directly traceable to the eighteenth century when, following the suppression of the Jacobite rebellion in 1745-46, perceived symbols of Scottish identity, such as Highland dress, were banned. In a tactical effort to support the empire and to integrate Scotland and, specifically, the Highlands into the economic and trade systems, the British Parliament deliberately restricted use of tartan, taught English rather than Gaelic in the school system, and subsidised Highland industries such as tanning, whaling, and paper-making. In addition to ensuring Scotland's economic involvement with the Empire in the late eighteenth century, the British government only permitted members of the military to wear tartan, thus creating a romanticized image of the Highlander. Scottish emblems, however, were not only employed for political purposes, but also for cultural ends. Tales of bravery and individual prowess, such as the rebellion of William Wallace, exalted pre-Union Scotland. Tartans and bagpipes, supposed reminders of the Highland Clearances, elevated picturesque symbols of Scottish identity. Celtic and Highland culture gained popularity due to James MacPherson's *The Poems of Ossian* (1765) and, in the early nineteenth century, Walter Scott's careful grooming of idealized and sentimental depictions of the Highlands. Scott not only used the image of the enlisted Highlander – a rugged, manly figure dressed in a kilt – in his literature, but also adopted the dress for the visit of George IV to Scotland in 1822.

The cultivation of this image led to direct economic benefits. Tourism within Scotland, popularized by George IV's visit to Edinburgh and Queen Victoria's obsession with Balmoral and the Highlands, became increasingly prevalent throughout the nineteenth century.

In *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life*, Tim Edensor examines the deliberate creation of popular culture in Scotland.<sup>44</sup> According to Edensor, nations possess ideologies that are “charged with affective and symbolic meaning. So ideologically charged are they, that they are apt to act upon our sense of belonging so that to dwell within them, even if for a short time, can be to achieve a kind of national self-realisation, to return to ‘our’ roots where the self, freed from its inauthentic – usually urban – existence, is re-authenticated” (40). The attempted “return to one’s roots” is a significant element in Scotland. The idealization and romanticization of the Scottish past appears to be insidious and ubiquitous. Nostalgia, the “[s]entimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past” and the “sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past,” pervades Scottish culture (“Nostalgia”). Fixed within these phrases lie the shades that tinge nostalgia. In *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Susan Stewart discusses nostalgia as a form of longing that denies the present. Suggesting that nostalgia is a “social disease,” Stewart uses the souvenir to underscore key assumptions about nostalgia: it is restrictive, inauthentic, limiting (*Longing* ix). In this study, we cannot avoid confronting the issue of false, commodified memory that is prevalent in Scottish culture. Nostalgia has, indeed, become a “social disease” in Scotland.

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<sup>44</sup> Edensor uses the key example of William Wallace in Hollywood's production of *Braveheart* as shaping and romanticising contemporary Scottish identity.

What is the function of the persistent and pervasive presence of nostalgia in Scottish culture? In my research, I have observed a thread of memory that not only shades descriptions of Scottish history, but also haunts many Scottish narratives. The idealization of the past is clearly an essential part to my discussion of memory in modern Scottish literature. However, just as it is imperative that representations of the past are examined, I argue it is also essential to investigate the terms we use to discuss the past. Inaccurate connotations can lead to misinterpretations and misunderstandings. What is nostalgia? As a form of memory, how is it represented? Nostalgia is often seen as problematic memory and a significant misconception of the past.<sup>45</sup> Nostalgia is also easily labelled as a stale and shallow type of memory. Throughout the course of my research, however, I have come to question such trite descriptions of the term. I have asked: Is nostalgia, in fact, limited to these simplistic concepts?

I wish to challenge the assumption that nostalgia is only a simplistic representation of the past. In this chapter, I argue that while nostalgia may be an idealistic way of depicting the past through memory, nostalgia is also multiple and diverse. I will first explore the working definitions of nostalgia. I will then

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<sup>45</sup> Nostalgia has been the subject of extensive and numerous critical studies; however, general analysis of nostalgia either focuses on particular literary eras or invokes personalised accounts of the past. For these studies on nostalgia, see Nicholas Dames' *Amnesiac Selves: Nostalgia, Forgetting, and British Fiction 1810-1870*; Paul Gilroy's *After Empire: Melancholia or Convivial Culture?*; Lynne Huffer's *Maternal Pasts, Feminist Futures: Nostalgia, Ethics, and the Question of Difference*; Nicola King's *Memory, Narrative, Identity: Remembering the Self*; Jean Pickering and Suzanne Kehde's *Narratives of Nostalgia, Gender and Nationalism*; and Tamara S. Wagner's *Longing: Narratives of Nostalgia in the British Novel 1740-1890*.

The exception to strictly literary or personal studies of nostalgia is Susan Stewart's critical work. In her seminal text *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Stewart examines nostalgia as longing and draws attention to the creation of cultural desire through objects.

problematize the notion that nostalgia is a sentimental and stagnant depiction of the past. I probe the fundamental components of nostalgia, for intrinsic to the definitions of nostalgia, I argue, is a spatial representation of the past.

## The Definitions of Nostalgia

Turning to the definitions of nostalgia, we can see that it inherently refers to concepts of the spatial and the past. “Nostalgia,” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, has two definitions. While the most common, as I described above, has to do with sentimentality and regret, the earliest definition is “[a]cute longing for familiar surroundings, esp[ecially] regarded as a medical condition; homesickness” (“Nostalgia”). The origins of this definition of nostalgia can be found in Johannes Hofer’s 1688 medical thesis. Initially, Hofer coined the term “nostalgia” from the Greek “*Nosos*, return to the native land” and “*Algos*,” which “signifies suffering or grief . . . to define the sad mood originating from the desire for the return to one’s native land” (Hofer 381). For over two centuries, homesickness, the “[a]cute longing for familiar surroundings,” was simply a medical diagnosis (“Nostalgia”). It was not until the early twentieth-century when, according to the second definition, nostalgia became linked with memory and associated with sentimentality and regret. These emotions were experienced from the memory of “an individual’s own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past” (“Nostalgia”). Nostalgia’s shifting connotation from that of a physical to a psychological ailment was perpetuated throughout the twentieth-century as it became identified as a deficient, overly emotional form of memory. In the 1970s, nostalgia also accrued

association with objects and memorabilia. As “[s]omething which causes nostalgia” or “things which evoke a former (remembered) era,” nostalgia was dissociated from the personal and emotional: nostalgia became an object that extended beyond its physical dimensions to refer to the past (“Nostalgia”). In the twenty-first century, nostalgia is no longer connected only with a medical illness or an emotional response. Nostalgia has become a simplistic memory – a mere crystallization of the past. The past, depicted through nostalgia, becomes a sentimental and stagnant memory.

I have addressed concepts of the spatial in connection to memory in my Introduction. In addition, I have considered the spatial in terms of the geographical structure of islands in Chapter Three. I now consider the relationship between the spatial and representations of nostalgia. I ask: What is the role of the spatial in nostalgic memory? If nostalgia is associated with familiar surroundings, then it is connected to a location that *has been* experienced. The site has been understood, lived, and embedded within an individual’s memory. I argue that as the “acute longing for familiar surroundings,” nostalgia concerns the desire for a specific geographical space – the space of home. The need to retain elements of the familiar is closely intertwined with development of identity and a sense of well-being. However, ultimately the concept of home is malleable and traceable through the psychic map of memory. As an affective, imaginary space, home may be identified as a personal, a familial, or a national location. If an individual is separated from their home, memory becomes embedded with the longing for that familiar location. The experience and encounter with a particular space – the memory of that space – can be shared. In the transferral of memory, nostalgia’s impact, therefore, can be

wide-ranging and far-reaching.

Doreen Massey has usefully described the relationship of space and time as multidimensional and personal. For her, space is not “a flat, immobilized surface, as stasis, even as no more than threatening chaos – the opposite of stasis – which is to see space as the opposite of History, and as the (consequently) depoliticized” (*Space, Place and Gender* 4). Instead, Massey suggests that social relations may be configured in terms of the spatial: “Moreover, since social relations are inevitably and everywhere imbued with power and meaning and symbolism, this view of the spatial is an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification” (3).<sup>46</sup> Social relationships, whether within a family, community, or nation, perpetually shift. Massey argues that “[t]he identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple. And the particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that ‘beyond’. Places viewed this way are open and porous” (5 – emphasis original).

Adapting Massey’s discussion of space, I employ her concepts in my analysis of nostalgia and nationalism. Nostalgia as a longing for the space of the familiar, a memory of home, is not simply an idealization of the past. Instead,

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<sup>46</sup> Doreen Massey’s insightful research centres on the call for a reconceptualization of time/space theories. See also Jonathan Boyarin’s “Space, Time, and the Politics of Memory.” Like Massey, Boyarin calls for a renegotiation of space and dimensionality. Boyarin encourages the reconsideration of the concepts of nationalism and the state. He summarizes theories of time and space; the practicality of these theories; the difficulty of power in nation-states in the study of memory and dimensionality; then examines “the body” as a way to understand the state. Another useful collection on the subject is Jon May and N. J. Thrift’s *Timespace: Geographies of Temporality*.

nostalgia can also become a dynamic, highly politicised way of depicting the past. Like the identity of place, the memories of that place are “unfixed, contested and multiple” (5). If we adapt this view, nostalgia too, becomes “open and porous” (5). Doreen Massey maintains that “the spatial is integral to the production of history, and thus to the possibility of politics, just as the temporal is to geography” (“Politics and Space/Time” 159). Massey suggests that there is a binaristic aspect to the conceptualization of space and time, where

[o]ver and over again, time is defined by such things as change, movement, history, dynamism; while space, rather lamely by comparison, is simply the absence of these things. There are two aspects of this. First, this kind of definition means that it is time, and the characteristics associated with time, which are the primary constituents of both space and time; time is the nodal point, the privileged signifier. And, second, this kind of definition means that space is defined by absence, by lack. This is clear in the simple (and often implicit) definitions (time equals change/movement, space equals the lack of these things) . . . in the whole tone of the argument it is in fact space which is associated with negativity and absence. (148)

Massey’s identification of the argument that space is too often associated with absence, negativity, and lack is a pertinent observation. If space is defined by absence—by lack—then I am interested in how nostalgia, as the longing for familiar surroundings, defines the space of memory. Does nostalgia point to a lack within the space of memory?

In *Place and the Politics of Identity*, Michael Keith and Steve Pile caution that spatially constructed discourses are often “assumed to be narrow-minded, bounded – coming complete with a self-confessed specificity that, it is frequently assumed, restricts their relevance. Working within common sense understandings of knowledge, the markings of spatiality can become the stigmata of parochialism” (“Politics of Place” 16). In the event that memory becomes crystallized, it may lose the ability to be a dynamic and constructive way of examining the present. I would



extend Keith and Pile's cautioning argument to include the spatially constructed conventions of memory and the ways in which nostalgia has "the stigmata of parochialism" (16). I contend that exploration of the unbounded structures of memory in fiction reveals not just nostalgia replete with restrictive markings, but nostalgia saturated with porous borders. As Jonathan Boyarin suggests, "memory is neither something preexistent and dormant in the past nor a projection from the present, but a potential for creative collaboration between present consciousness and the experience or expression of the past" (22). The internal conversation simultaneously forms and shapes the individual's identity. It is the psychic dialogue between the past and the present that changes the individual's memory.

In Scottish culture, nostalgia appears most commonly as an exaltation and employment of an idealized form of the past. The excessive use of sentimental nostalgia is often associated with the historical-romance fiction I discussed in the previous chapter or, more typically, with Kailyard literature. As F. R. Hart describes it, "[r]omance in the 1890s turned to fatalistic escape and antimaterialistic melancholy; in Neil Munro it turned to a strange elegiac irony. Regionalism was spiritualized in the twilit Celticism of Fiona Macleod and sentimentalized in the pathetic, ironic idylls of the Kailyard" (399).<sup>47</sup> However, I wish to shift the focus of nostalgia from its connection to Kailyard fiction and to problematize the critical assumptions of nostalgia's role in Scottish literature.

Sentimental nostalgia is not the only form used in fiction: multiple and varied depictions of nostalgia are evident in Scottish literature. Through the space of narrative, the representation of nostalgic memory is diversified and problematized.

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<sup>47</sup> A recent study that conducts a careful and useful examination of Kailyard literature is Andrew Nash's *Kailyard and Scottish Literature* (2007).

Literature uses nostalgia to present cultural memory. The memory, written as text, allows the reader to consume and, therefore, to confront the complexities of history, memory, and identity. To illustrate the ways in which nostalgia is revealed, I will turn to a brief examination of Neil Gunn's *Highland River* (1937). Having considered Massey's useful discussion of the spatial and the observations of Keith and Pile as well as those of Boyarin, I have identified four manifestations of nostalgia and this novel offers insight into nostalgia's complex nature. The use of memory in *Highland River* reveals the functions of nostalgia, an "acute longing for familiar surroundings" as the space of home, in both personal and national contexts. I map the following forms of nostalgia in the novel: Nostalgia is the recognition of the familiar situated in physical and psychic space; it is the defamiliarization of the familiar; it is the sentimentalization of the familiar; and finally, it is the use of the familiar to integrate the past into present experience.

### The Forms of Nostalgia in Literature: Neil Gunn's *Highland River*

*Highland River* focuses on a young Highland boy, Kenn, who has an intimate connection with his home and the surrounding landscape. The narrative intersperses Kenn's boyhood adventures that often involve a river with events from his adulthood. Throughout the novel, Gunn carefully constructs a relationship between the particularity of the Scottish setting and the universality of its application. Gunn evokes the familiarity of territory to engage the reader:

[t]he little Highland community in which Kenn lived was typical of what might be found anywhere round the northern and western shores of Scotland: the river coming down out of the wooded glen or strath into the little harbour; the sloping croft lands, with their small cultivated fields; the croft houses here

and there, with an odd one on a far ridge against the sky; the school, the post office, and the old church, where the houses herded loosely into a township; and inland the moors lifting to blue mountains. (24)

Here, nostalgia is the familiar located within a particular physical space. Gunn situates the familiar within the physical space not just of a Highland home, but also within the national Scottish home. The location is both “typical” of Scotland and yet the topographical features of a village, fields, woods, and distant mountains could depict settings in many nations. The events of the novel, therefore, while firmly situated within the unique geographical location of Scotland, also remind the reader of other similar locations. The reader is invited to draw a parallel between the setting of the familiar in the text and the reader’s own familiar territory.

The familiar is not, however, only situated within physical space: it is also located within psychic space. Topographical details mirror the psychic spaces of memory. Although the river near Kenn’s home is particular to his experience and emphasizes the specificity of the familiar in geographical location, the river also serves as a stimulus for remembrance. Revisiting the family home after years away, Kenn imagines seeing the boyish figure of himself. While the landscape retains similarities to when he was a child, Kenn admits that

[w]hen everything is said, that figure and himself are all he can be sure of. The rest, however, near and dear, are alien. Kenn suddenly feels this with extraordinary force. He apprehends its truth in a flash of vision. Green trees shut them off and straths and silence. They are forever isolated. The line between them is their line, and when they take it into familiar places it remains itself. (115)

It is the memory of himself – his childhood and his experience – that retains and maintains Kenn’s identity and sense of familiarity. Landscape and surroundings may be familiar or alien, but memory ensures that “their line” will remain “itself” (115).

Kenn's reflection on his childhood illuminates the desire for familiar surroundings.

Although the novel primarily evokes the individual's encounter within the territory of Scotland, it also positions the emigrant's experience as an important element in the longing for familiar surroundings. I will further examine the experience of the Scottish diaspora below; however, it is important to note its presence in *Highland River*. While serving in the First World War, Kenn is reunited with his brother Angus, who had previously emigrated to Canada. As the brothers reminisce about their childhood, Angus expresses his desire to return home to Scotland; however, his commander refuses to allow him leave. Angus' disappointment and regret demonstrates not only his acute longing for familiar surroundings, but also his sentimental longing for a period of the past. He is unable to return to his original home; yet, he is equally unable to integrate his memories into his present situation. Angus' premature death aborts his ability to integrate his nostalgia for Scotland into a new location.

Despite familiarity of physical and psychic spaces, temporality may disrupt the sense of legitimacy and authenticity of memory, which has been located in a familiar setting. Although the novel firmly establishes familiarity in location, it also exposes the defamiliarization of memory that may occur with the passage of time. As he remembers his childhood, Kenn becomes engaged simultaneously with the past and the present. Kenn's memory is unstable as the contemplation of adulthood clouds earlier judgement. The narrator observes that

[i]t is difficult to be sure, a long time afterwards, that one actually did experience certain delicate or subtle feelings at a very young age. What established the certainty of this in Kenn's case was the clear memory of a sudden sight of the Well Pool from a turn on the high road to the school. It came upon him with a sensation of familiar strangeness, and he stopped, forgetting his companions, and gazed at it. There was no-one there now. (26)

Kenn's memory and its "familiar strangeness" highlights the paradox of the familiar. Embedded within both location and memory, the familiar can become disrupted, disjointed, and unfamiliar. Nostalgia, rooted both in physical and psychic space, may simultaneously escape and exceed these boundaries. Because of the modification of the geography or the memory, the familiar may become defamiliarized.

In addition to being implanted in topographical or mental space and causing defamiliarization, nostalgia – the familiar – may also be sentimentalized. *Highland River* does not restrict depictions of nostalgia to those involving personal memory; it also broaches the commodification of a national past. During a visit to Edinburgh, Kenn is confronted with Edinburgh Castle, a conspicuous symbol of idealized Scottish nostalgia. The castle's description illustrates the complex effects of the appropriation of memory. Mortared to the crest of the hill in centuries past, the castle stands in the present, a foreboding reminder of the temporality and spatiality of nostalgia. To tourists, the castle is merely a symbol of an impersonal and commodified history: "the fairy castle in a German legend. A peep-show" (218). To Kenn, however, the castle is a testament to "the broken strength, of his country's history; hunted men of the Covenant, troopers of the moss hags, the old ballad poetry, the gathering of clans, the pomp and treacheries of courts and kings—the castle on its rock abiding them all, the eternal yea of the Scots spirit" (218). Kenn expresses regret for the "broken strength" of his nation and gravitates to feelings of sentimentality. While the castle is historically and culturally important to Scotland, the misappropriation of the past for individual, affective use highlights the sentimentalization of nostalgia and its problematic aspects.

The final aspect of nostalgia in *Highland River* is the utilization of memory

in the present. In addition to exploring the personal and national past, the novel presents nostalgia as a way to integrate the past into the present. When, as an adult, Kenn returns to his childhood home, his nostalgia achieves resilience based upon his personal past and present experience. Realising that he has never seen the source of the river, Kenn becomes possessed with a “slowly growing impulsive need” (236). Kenn yearns to begin on “this long, intricate quest, a quest of lost times and places, but not for the mere sake of evoking them, or of indulging pleasant or sentimental memories, but of capturing, of isolating, a quality of awareness and delight in order to provide the core of life with warmth and light” (236). The quest for the river’s source is symbolic of Kenn’s nostalgia. Although he yearns to immerse himself in memory, he recognises the futility of desiring what is lost or of sentimentalizing the past. As Kenn explores the landscape, his nostalgic memory escapes geographical, temporal, and personal limitations: it becomes an integration both of the past and of the present. Like the landscape through which he travels, Kenn’s deliberate probing into his memory stimulates the negotiation of the past and allows him to situate himself successfully in the present. As Kenn discovers the river’s source, his emotions defy his expectations:

The excitement in this was deep because it was surprising. Somehow he had expected it would all, in a sense, be a looking back, or, at best, an effort to recapture something of the past in the present. Nothing altogether nostalgic or sentimental, because he was prepared for that, but still a certain deliberate use of the past to enrich the present.

And lo! he had entered absolutely into the present itself. (238-239)

As *Highland River* demonstrates, nostalgia offers diverse and useful ways to represent the past. The novel indicates the ways in which nostalgia is grounded in a particular geographical location, yet is simultaneously embedded within the specific psychic space of memory. The memory of that location, however, can also

become unsettling. The disruption of the past can cause an inversion of what is familiar, causing defamiliarization. Sentimentalization of the past can instigate an overly idealistic perception in what occurred. Lastly, nostalgic memory can be used to weave experience from the past into experience of the present.

## Nostalgia and the Scottish Diaspora

I have briefly identified four manifestations of nostalgia in *Highland River* and connected this form of memory to both the individual and the national spheres. As I discussed above, nostalgia may be intimately connected to concepts of the spatial and the past. I have argued that nostalgia – the longing for familiar surroundings – can be connected to the conception of a national home. I now turn to consider a further aspect of the connection between nostalgia and nation. As I have explained, nostalgia exposes the spatial structure of the past; however, nostalgia also challenges the conceptualisation of national identity. Although the concept of the nation is intertwined with the understanding of a particular geographical space, I am interested in the ways in which nationalism extends into the psychic spheres of memory. How is the space of the familiar as home – the nation – represented in nostalgic memory when transposed into a new location?

Nostalgic memory, as a representation of the national past, can help us to see how the transferral of memory operates. Using the concepts of spatial relations, I argue that the psychic space of memory permits the permeability of national identity. Nostalgia can offer insights into the role of memory not just of narratives within Scotland's national space, but also of those that have travelled beyond its

geographical boundaries. Like the porous nature of space and location, the concept of a national home may also be open. Secured within the psychic space of memory, the national home may be adapted into new geographical locations. The mapping of the mind through memory allows for the image of “home” to be linked with multiple locations and thus, permits the mutability of national identity. The specific location of home is fluid and negotiable because both memory and nationalism are not spatially limited. Secured within memory, nationalism becomes grounded not solely on a particular idealized, romanticized national image, but rather on the complex relationship between memory, identity, and the individual. Nationalism can assume particularly potent force when transported to a new space. Emigrants, carrying memories from their homeland, embark on a journey and settle in a new territory. In the new surroundings, the immigrants long for and desire familiarity. Reviving the experiences of their past, immigrants instil the new and present space of home with memory. The memory of a once familiar national home will be transplanted into a new geographical setting. Nostalgia, as the “acute longing for familiar surroundings” concerns the desire for a particular geographical space, but how is home represented when its location is changed?

These behaviours and psychic patterns have caused me to investigate the role of Scottish nationalism in the depiction of Scottish diasporic narratives of memory.

“Diaspora,” means simply “to disperse” or to “sow, scatter” (“Diaspora”).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Diaspora has become an extremely potent term. It is especially used to refer to the dispersion following the Jewish Holocaust of the Second World War. Critics have also adapted the term in reference to any displaced peoples; however, the use of the term in relation to other peoples is highly controversial. Critics such as Paul Basu and Robin Cohen debate the validity of the Scottish claim to diaspora. However, based on Cohen’s list of diasporic identifications, I maintain the view that Scottish emigrants have been part of a diaspora, due to the dispersal following the Highland



Although many critics debate the use of the term in connection with Scottish emigrants, Robin Cohen's compelling explication reveals there are multiple indicators that are applicable to the Scottish experience, specifically: "[d]ispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions"; "a collective memory and myth about the homeland"; "an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home"; a desire to return to the homeland; a strong group of people who believe themselves to be distinct and to share a common history; and finally, growth in pluralistic host nations (17).<sup>49</sup> These characteristics helpfully identify the shifting masses of Scottish emigrants as a diaspora.

My interest, however, is in the narratives of the Scottish diaspora. When they

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Clearances, the participation in the British Empire, and Scotland's continued close ties with colonial nations, such as Canada. For extensive and thorough debate on this topic, see Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*; Paul Basu's *Highland Homecomings: Genealogy and Heritage Tourism in the Scottish Diaspora*; Michelle Keown, David Murphy, and James Procter's *Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas*; and R. Celeste Ray's *Transatlantic Scots*.

<sup>49</sup> Cohen's list of nine diasporic indicators are:

1. Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions;
2. alternatively or additionally, the expansion from a homeland in search of work, in pursuit of trade or to further colonial ambitions;
3. a collective memory and myth about the homeland, including its location, history, suffering and achievements;
4. an idealization of the real or imagined ancestral home and a collective commitment to its maintenance, restoration, safety and prosperity, even to its creation;
5. the frequent development of a return movement to the homeland that gains collective approbation even if many in the group are satisfied with only a vicarious relationship or intermittent visits to the homeland;
6. a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history, the transmission of a common cultural and religious heritage and the belief in a common fate;
7. a troubled relationship with host societies, suggesting a lack of acceptance or the possibility that another calamity might befall the group;
8. a sense of empathy and co-responsibility with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement even where home has become more vestigial; and
9. the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism. (17)

are no longer geographically situated within the nation's boundaries, how do Scottish immigrants and their descendants represent Scotland? What is the role of nostalgia in diasporic narratives? Does diasporic nostalgia retain only a simplistic representation of the Scottish cultural and national past or does it depict the complex and diverse nature of nostalgia? Diasporic narratives provide evidence for the ways in which the "longing for familiar surroundings," both of geographical and psychical space, may be refigured as the longing for home. As I approach this discussion, I acknowledge the challenging crux between the politics of memory and the construction of identity, as Jonathan Boyarin poses in his question:

Are we dealing here with the politics of memory or the construction of identity? Insofar as consciousness, the ground of 'identity,' is constituted by the sum of all the impressions and imaginings retained in the brain, my hypothesis would be that identity and memory are virtually the same concept. But even if this hypothesis is correct, we need to be extremely careful about metaphorical transpositions from the individual to any collective. Here again we must bear in mind that memory is at once physical, intersubjective, and technical. It is worth restating the commonsense notion that the 'place' of memory on the most material level remains the individual brain—not to reify the body once again, but rather to warn against any idea of memory as superorganic, and to recall as well that in *our* world, the notion of the individual cannot be transcended merely with a word. (23 – emphasis original)

Boyarin's cautionary statement is of essential importance in my examination of nostalgia. Although the place of memory is buried within the psychic structure of the individual, Boyarin's reference to the politics of memory alludes to the unavoidable affect that nationhood has on identity. Indeed, globalisation has further complicated this effect. Tim Edensor suggests that globalization has mutated national identity, which "has become detached from the nation-state, proliferates in diasporic settings far from its original home, appears in syncretic cultural forms and practices and exists in 'hyphenated' identities. Thus globalisation and national identity should not

be conceived in binary terms but as two inextricably interlinked processes” (*National Identity* 29).

As I will discuss in the next chapter, the interconnections of globalisation and national identity can be seen in the Scottish-Canadian literature. The nationalistic tropes of Scotland escape the physical boundaries of the island of Great Britain and, through the narratives of personal and familial memory of emigrants, become a part of Canadian literary geography. Throughout the various stages and eras of migration, the Scottish diaspora has maintained close ties with the homeland. Scotland has carefully established itself as the ultimate, unique home, a concept that has been intensified in emigrant narratives. Indeed, according to Paul Basu, “[m]any diasporic Scots identify Scotland as home in a profound sense” (*Homecomings* 47). Basu asserts that “[f]or diasporic Scots, the myth of the Highlands is, of course, also the myth of the homeland, and, indeed, it is in the diaspora – particularly in North America – that this mythic idealisation is most forcefully invoked and where it continues to expand and transmogrify” (19). The image of Scotland as the site of the familiar – as *home* – provokes investigation into the role nostalgia plays in creating potent national narratives.

For the Scottish emigrant, the familiar was the home that had been left behind – the home of the nation; however, identifying this in Scottish diasporic literatures is a perpetual challenge. The identity of diasporic peoples is in constant negotiation. As they adapt to a new surrounding, they must traverse between situatedness in a temporal and geographical past, and interaction with a present location. For the Scottish-Canadian immigrant the concept of a national home is challenging: is it located in Scotland, Great Britain, or Canada? Considering the Scottish context, the

spatial relations and collective identity within the British Empire were multi-layered; hence, there is a complicated depiction of British and Scottish identity in Scottish-Canadian literature.

## The Locations of Home: Scotland, Britain, Empire

To better understand how nostalgia operates in the Scottish diaspora, I turn to an examination of Scotland's role in the development of the British empire.<sup>50</sup>

Shifting political identification from a specifically Scottish to a wider British identity was a key component in the establishment of the British empire. Opportunities that were available to Scots throughout the empire tempted them to leave the confines of their island nation. Scottish emigrants – not only those in religious and military positions, but also those involved in political and economic ventures – were vital to the development of the newly acquired British territories.<sup>51</sup> According to T. M. Devine, “[t]he Scots thoroughly and systematically colonized all areas of the British Empire from commerce to administration, soldiering to medicine, colonial education to the expansion of emigrant settlements. They were also much to the fore in the transformation of the demographic profile of the North American colonies” (*Empire* xxvi). Ironically, the expansion of the empire appeared to blur internal British divisions:

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<sup>50</sup> For an overview of changing historical attitudes towards the concepts of imperialism, see P. J. Cain and Mark Harrison's *Imperialism: Critical Concepts in Historical Studies*; specifically, A.P. Thorton's discussion in "Imperialism in the Twentieth Century" in the second volume of the collection.

<sup>51</sup> For an extensive examination of the Scotland's importance in the development of both Britain and the empire, see Linda Colley and Michael Fry. See also, T. M. Devine's *The Scottish Nation 1707-2007*, pp. 24-30.

For some Scots, though, it was less the job and trading opportunities that empire provided, than the *idea* of empire that proved most compelling. If Britain's primary identity was to be an imperial one, then the English were put firmly and forever in their place, reduced to a component part of a much greater whole, exactly like the Scots, and no longer the people who ran virtually the whole show. A British imperium, in other words, enabled Scots to feel themselves peers of the English in a way still denied them in an island kingdom. The language bears this out very clearly. The English and the foreign are still all too inclined today to refer to the island of Great Britain as 'England'. But at no time have they ever customarily referred to an *English* empire. When it existed, as in retrospect, the empire has always been emphatically British. In terms of self-respect, then, as well as for the profits it could bestow, imperialism served as Scotland's opportunity. (Colley 130 – emphasis original)<sup>52</sup>

Scots were integral to the construction of the British empire; however, throughout its

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<sup>52</sup> T. M. Devine explains that, during the conquest and settling of the colonies, "'England' might still be often used to describe the new union state in Britain. But the term 'the English Empire' was less common. . . . [T]he widespread acceptance that the developing empire was 'British' and not simply 'English' had a practical rationale which went far beyond mere political symbolism" (*Empire* xxiii).

Although Canada was not an independent, cohesive "nation" prior to British rule, Canada, too, holds a challenging and problematic position within the former British Empire and Scottish-Canadian literature reflects the diverse layers of British, Scottish, and Canadian identities. As Scottish citizens travelled across the empire, the narratives of the past that they carried changed. The exploration and expansion of the colonies, particularly of Canada, was largely due to the role of Scots. For example, the Hudson's Bay Company was integral to the development of the Canadian economy. Hudson's Bay Company recruited extensively from Scotland, particularly Orkney as it was the last stopping point for ships before crossing the Atlantic to Canada. Devine explains the Scottish impact:

In a sense, however, even more important than these mass migrations of Highland Gaels, Lowland farmers and Ulster Scots was the relentless penetration of Empire by Scottish educators, doctors, plantation overseers, army officers, government officials, merchants and clerics. When the statistical record for virtually any area of professional employment in the empire is examined, Scots are seen to be over-represented, and in some cases, like the senior military ranks in India, massively so. In both North America and India after the 1750s, as one writer has put it, they claimed 'not merely a reasonable but a quite indecent share of the spoils'. By mid-century, Scots also dominated the Hudson's Bay Company, which laid claim to the vast expanse of what is now Canada, as well as its great rival in the fur trade, the North West Company. (*Empire* xxvii)

While Devine offers a historical analysis of the Scottish role in the empire, see Fred Stenson's novel *The Trade* (2000) for a fictional depiction of the Hudson's Bay Company's presence in Canada and the Scottish role in its development.

development, the empire often misunderstood the nationalistic differences and concerns within Britain. In an effort to present a united front to its empire as well as for political and economic ends, formerly conflicting ties such as those between Scotland and England were deliberately minimised.<sup>53</sup>

The observations of Devine and Colley, however, are not the only viewpoints on the political dynamics within Britain. John M. MacKenzie offers a different perspective on the function of identity in the British empire. He suggests that the multiple and apparently conflicting identities within the British empire had a positive function. “Instead of creating an overall national identity,” MacKenzie argues, “it enabled the sub-nationalisms of the United Kingdom to survive and flourish. Each was able to create a loop beyond the English, a loop whereby ethnic myths could be reciprocally nurtured and developed. Perhaps the Empire was more notable in preserving a plurality of British identities than in welding together a common imperial tradition” (“Empire and National Identities” 230). Scottish identity was just one British sub-nationalism that not only survived, but thrived. Beyond the geographical confines of the island of Great Britain and transferred to the spaces of the empire, Scottish identity retained unusual adaptability and sustainability.

The implications of the Scottish and Canadian roles in the British empire have been thoroughly investigated. The effect of Scottish emigration was keenly felt

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<sup>53</sup> Linda Colley explains that the nation of Britain was constructed primarily due to war – initially religious wars and later colonial wars – where Britons “came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores” (6). Similarly, Devine argues that Scots developed a dual allegiance towards both Scotland and Britain (*Nation* 30). See also Tom Nairn, who maintains that there was no Scottish nationalism between 1800-1870. Nairn argues that the insignificant Scottish nationalism was largely due to the construction of the British Empire (*Break-Up* 105).

not only in Scotland, but also in the new colonial territories.<sup>54</sup> In my research, I have found two historical approaches to the study of Scottish immigration. The first is a survey of individual narratives. James Hunter, for example, explores the diverse personal accounts of Scottish immigrants in his writing on the diaspora and its results. Similarly, Marjory Harper examines the effects of British emigration throughout North America, paying particular attention to the role of the political and religious influences on emigration.<sup>55</sup> The second approach to the historical study of the diaspora is more empirical. Historians such as T. M. Devine and Michael Fry observe the wider implications of Scotland's role in the empire and in colonial history. Of Scotland's extensive history of emigration, the Highland Clearances of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have been the most common focus. Devine suggests that until the 1820s, "the Highland emigrations can be regarded as attempts to resist the forces which were transforming the old ways so painfully and

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<sup>54</sup> Scotland's Janus-faced role as both colonizer and colonized is problematic. In many ways, Scotland itself is a colonized nation: it was repeatedly invaded, politically and culturally. Scotland was subsumed into the construction of a British nation and therefore, may be considered a colonized nation. However, in contrast to being colonized, Scotland deliberately and willingly participated in the establishment and colonization of the British empire. Considering Scotland's dual role, the relationship between Scotland and Canada is rather ironic. Edensor argues that colonising nations frequently compared themselves with the places they colonised. Because they were asserted to be both rooted in history and in the process of developing modern characteristics, colonial missions and colonising adventures could be justified. For those being colonised were conceived to be suffering from a historical lack and therefore were bereft of any hope for the future. (*National Identity* 18)

Edensor's observation, perhaps, explains the nostalgia that continues to exist in the diasporic context.

<sup>55</sup> Marjory Harper argues that the role of the church was to "protect and promote the temporal and spiritual interests" not only of those who emigrated because of economic difficulties or government incentives, but also those who emigrated for employment and adventure (201). For additional sources that focus on personal accounts, see also, James Hunter's *Scottish Exodus: Travels among a Worldwide Clan* and *A Dance Called America: The Scottish Highlands, the United States and Canada*.

rapidly. Internal protest was muted but emigration was extensive and was preferred to migration to the south because of the independence which came from holding land and because the preservation of traditional values could be more easily ensured” (“Paradox” 9).

Besides citing the Highland Clearances as a cause of emigration, scholars have recently argued for other migratory motives. Scottish emigrants had marketable skills and were from urban centres (“Paradox” 2-3). Marjory Harper argues that nineteenth-century Scottish emigrants were not just Highlanders; a variety of people emigrated due to diverse motivations. Nevertheless, these emigrants sought to construct “a single, enduring image of Scottish identity overseas, achieving this corporate identity through formal and informal mechanisms which they developed both as ethnic anchors and as practical tools for their economic or social advancement” (Harper 5). Scottish emigration was not limited to the era of the Clearances. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, over half the natural increase of the Scottish population emigrated, surpassed only by emigration between the World Wars (Devine “Paradox” 1). Despite the fervour of diasporic patriotism, the resulting drain on the population due to Scottish emigration was met with strong resistance in the twentieth-century. According to Harper,

[c]omfort and prosperity in other lands . . . were being won selfishly at the expense of continuing economic and political stagnation in Scotland as citizens with skill and ambition, believing that their homeland was ‘done’, abdicated their responsibilities of nationhood and, on settling overseas, degenerated into a sentimental nationalism and the constant, but futile, ‘reiteration of undying affection for Scotland.’ (203)

In addition to the loss of population, the exacerbation of nostalgia and poignant feelings of regret were among the negative repercussions of Scottish emigration. No



longer situated within the familiar space of Scotland, the emigrants' "undying affection" for the national home simply stagnated and resulted in sentimental protestations of longing.

## The Commodification of the Space of Home

Idealized and romanticized images have been deliberately constructed and are rampant in Scottish culture. The fixation on these artificial icons also fills the diasporic space of memory. I now turn to an examination of the Scottish diasporic population's "sentimental nationalism" and the effect this form of nostalgia has on Scotland. I argue that the Scottish tourist industry has used the "sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past," to carefully construct an economically viable, yet historically inauthentic version of Scotland that is available for purchase and possession ("Nostalgia"). While the commodification of memory can be traced to the institutions originating in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the effects of this market continue to be seen in the tourist campaigns of the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries.<sup>56</sup> As Tom Nairn suggested in 1977, "we are . . . conscious of the importance in Scotland itself of a kind of pervasive, second-rate, sentimental slop associated with tartan, nostalgia, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Dr

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<sup>56</sup> As I stated above, the attention of British monarchs culminated in Scotland's central position in the British Empire. In addition to the visits of the monarchs, Scotland's importance in Britain was clear when the imperial exhibition was held in Glasgow in 1901 and a similar event in Edinburgh in 1907. According to MacKenzie, Scotland was promoted "as a destination for tourism, as a romantic and sublime landscape worthy of being visited in association with the exhibition, particularly by returning imperial migrants" ("Empire and National Identities" 227). Although Scotland's imperial connections are no longer relevant, tourism has remained an integral part of the Scottish commercial system.

Finlay, and so on” (*Break-Up* 114). According to Susan Stewart’s study of nostalgia and longing, desire is always concerned with the “future-past” – such as the mother’s desire that is transferred to the child like a trace or scar (*Longing* x). Similarly, Scotland’s maternal relationship with its diaspora fosters a longing—a desire—for the past that becomes the visible scar of sentimental nostalgia. The pervasive and apparently innate Scottish characteristics are used not only to promote a cohesive, palatable, and familiar identity to tourists, but also to commodify the past. For economic profit, the Scottish tourist industry uses the space of the familiar, of both landscape and history, to elicit nostalgia.

In *Scotland – the Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage*, McCrone, Morris, and Kiely trace the current British obsession and commodification of its past. They attribute the instigation of this trend to the legislations of the Thatcherite government.<sup>57</sup> During the 1980s, the creation of government-funded organizations not only encouraged the specialization of history in Britain, but also sparked the excessive consumption of heritage in Scotland (Urry 45). In 1992, the number of visitors to Scottish heritage attractions was “over six times the size of the population” (McCrone *et al* 137). According to Kevin Robins, there has been an important shift in the promotion of local and regional culture within Britain: “There is a growing interest (*sic*) in the embeddedness of life histories within the boundaries of place, and with the continuities of identity and community through local memory and heritage” (“Tradition and translation” 34). He predicts not only that “local

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<sup>57</sup> In 1980, both The Scottish Tourist Board and Historic Scotland were established with the passing of the National Heritage Act. This Act was instated by the Thatcherite government. See McCrone, Morris, and Kiely’s *Scotland – the Brand: The Making of Scottish Heritage* for a discussion of the instigation of Heritage in Britain and its effect on Scottish tourism.

fragmentation . . . may inspire a nostalgic, introverted and parochial sense of local attachment and identity,” but also that through the process of enterprise, culture and heritage will be “exploited” to encourage investment (36, 38). Robins writes: “[a]n emphasis on tradition and heritage is also, of course, important in the development of tourism as a major industry. Here, too, there is a premium on difference and particularity. In a world where differences are being erased, the commodification of place is about creating distinct place-identities in the eyes of global tourists” (38).<sup>58</sup>

Globalization has increased the permeability of territory and has encouraged the marketing of iconic national and local representations for economic purposes. An integral element in the Scottish tourist industry is the commodification of place. Tim Edensor explains that landscape is a key component in the construction of national and cultural identity:

Specific geographical features may provide symbolic and political boundaries, natural borders formed by seas, rivers and mountains, that forestall invasion and contain culture and history, sustaining mythical continuities. Out of the transformation of raw nature has emerged the most treasured national attributes, and the agricultural means by which the nation has been nourished. Moreover, landscapes come to stand as symbols of continuity, the product of land worked over and produced, etched with the past, so that ‘history runs through geography.’ (*National Identity* 40)

Similarly, Cosgrove and Daniels assert in their examination of landscape and

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<sup>58</sup> Ironically, the critical literature discussing tourism and heritage expresses an underlying acceptance of the distinction between heritage and history. Although critics view this as vaguely problematic, they tend to find it acceptable if the difference between heritage and history is made evident. For example, Corner and Harvey maintain that “if the spirit of enterprise offers itself as the motor of change, innovation, and development, the spirit of heritage offers the reassurance of continuity with a shared past” (“Mediating” 72). They further emphasize, “it is worth noting that heritage appeals tend to differ from those of patriotism in so far as the latter require a sense of *loyalty* rather than of *possession* to be the primary focus of feeling and action, and they can therefore work more freely alongside a popular recognition (and acceptance) of established structures of difference” (50 – emphasis original).

environmental iconography that a “landscape is a cultural image, a pictorial way of representing, structuring or symbolising surroundings” (“Introduction” 1).<sup>59</sup> As iconic descriptions of the Scottish landscape – particularly the Highlands – illustrate, topographical images help to form a unique national mythography.

An important technique in perpetuating these cultural depictions is through the objectification of space. John Urry explains that landscape is often used to direct the tourists’ attention away from the actual, daily experience of their immediate surroundings. Instead, it is used to shift their gaze to unusual geographical features, “which is then normally visually objectified or captured through photographs, postcards, films, models and so on. These enable the gaze to be endlessly reproduced and recaptured” (3). The landscape, therefore, serves not only to distract tourists from the realities of modernity, but also to imply possession of the space. Encapsulated in photographs and postcards, the territory is condensed into a tangible object that the tourists can own and manipulate. Referring specifically to the use of landscape and the gaze in Scottish tourism, Paul Basu writes:

As might be expected, the ‘tourist gaze’ is perpetuated in the promotional material produced by tourism agencies such as the Scottish Tourist Board, which consistently represent Scotland as existing outside time and as modernity’s other: a place where traditions survive and people figure small in vast natural wildernesses. From a marketing perspective, the combined motifs of Highlandism constitute an internationally recognised brand identity and, therefore, a significant economic asset. (*Homecomings* 69)

Basu’s lucid identification of the use of Highland space for tourism and economic benefit underscores the interests of my discussion. Here, I wish to emphasize the

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<sup>59</sup> For an interesting discussion of the importance of landscape in cultural identity, see Arjun Appadurai’s *Modernity at Large*. He examines “five dimensions of global cultural flows that can be termed (a) *ethnoscapes*, (b) *mediascapes*, (c) *technoscapes*, (d) *financescapes*, and (e) *ideoscapes*” (33). Appadurai argues that the “suffix *-scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital” (33 – emphasis original).

parallels between the spatiality of landscape and memory. Scotland's physical landscape is promoted as remote, yet procurable. The marketing of Scotland's geographical space translates into the concretization and commodification of memory. According to McCrone, Morris, and Kiely, Scottish "[g]uidebooks and travel memoirs focused on three themes: the wild grandeur of the landscape, remoteness and peace, coupled with a dash of romantic history" (59). For tourists, the space of Scotland is presented as an untamed landscape, perpetuating the myth that it has yet to be claimed and owned.

The illusory nature of the Highlands, however, is not just limited to depictions in travel literature; T. M. Devine maintains that "[t]o the rest of the world . . . Scotland seems a Highland country. The 'land of the mountain and the flood' adorns countless tourist posters and those familiar and distinctive symbols of Scottish identity, the kilt, the tartan and the bagpipes, are all of Highland origin" (*Nation* 231). Outwith the Highland space, these "familiar and distinctive symbols of Scottish identity" aid false and restrictive depictions of the past. Similarly, Paul Basu argues that in the popular imagination, Scotland is identified with the physical landscape of the Highland region, colonized into a "paradigmatic land of romance. With its misty isles and heather-covered mountains, its castle ruins and ancient customs, Scotland has become a territory of desire: modernity's other, a dream of nature" (*Homecomings* 91). As a territory—a space—of desire, Scotland retains its position as the location of the familiar. Scotland is origin; Scotland is *home*.

The deliberate formation and exportation of Scotland as the singular space of the familiar has been dispersed throughout the British empire. This has been accomplished through the sentimental longing, the nostalgic memory, of Scottish

emigrants. Disregarding regional differences of Highland and Lowland traditions, Scottish emigrants sought to perpetuate the myth of the homeland. Marjory Harper maintains that when abroad, both Highlanders and Lowlanders endeavoured to preserve and to capitalize on their culture. She explains that “the emblems themselves were often identical, for both highlanders and lowlanders made equal use of the formal mechanisms of church, school and Scottish association, and the informal mechanisms of correspondence, family, community and agency networks to demonstrate their ethnic identity and stimulate secondary emigration” (6).

MacKenzie furthers this argument, suggesting that Highland and Lowland traits were combined:

it was to be partly the romantic signs and symbols of a re-invented Highland culture which were to become the key elements of the interaction of home and Empire in the reconciliation of Scottish ethnic nationalism with its global stage. . . . Such a cunningly contrived amalgam of Highland and Lowland elements, neatly represented in the Burns societies and Highland games, Caledonian and St Andrews organisations that sprang up around the Empire, in colonies of settlement, India and dependent territories, helped to satisfy what was already clearly perceived as the basic geographic, ethnic and cultural problem in a Scottish nationalist identity. (“Empire and National Identities” 221)<sup>60</sup>

The adaptability of this deliberately and “cunningly contrived amalgam,” the

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<sup>60</sup> MacKenzie’s discussion, here, centres on an analysis of the Scottish Exhibition of National History, Art and Industry. He writes:

The reconstructions of the Auld Toun and the Highland Clachan set out to reconcile Lowland and Gaelic culture, while suggesting their joint role in the creation of the Scottish spirit that had produced modern technology and industry. Historical pageants featured the traditional heroes of the Scottish past. It is perhaps not surprising that the exhibition attracted pilgrimages of Scottish Americans and parties of New Zealanders as well as Scots from other colonies. (“Empire and National Identities” 227)

MacKenzie’s interesting observations, however, could easily be attributed to the *Homecoming Scotland 2009* campaign. A spectacle, similar to the one MacKenzie describes, occurred in July 2009 at the Clan Gathering. Scots, descendants of Scots emigrants, and those without any apparent connection paraded the Royal Mile from Holyrood Park to Edinburgh Castle holding banners declaring their allegiance, wearing kilts to profess their heritage, and marching to bagpipe music.

sentimentalization of Scotland's traditions and the commodification of its landscape, has ensured the sustainability of Scottish traits, but it has also restricted the spectrum of memory. As Tom Nairn execrates: "Cramped, stagnant, backward-looking, parochial – all these and others are the epithets traditionally and rightly ascribed to modern Scottishness. But deformed as they are, these constitute none the less a strong, institutionally guaranteed identity" (*Break-Up* 131). Nostalgia – the longing for familiar surroundings – has become crystallized into a set of particular images and historical narratives for economic purposes.

I have traced the impact of nostalgia in the Scottish tourist industry and demonstrated how the use of space as a commodity highlights concerns of the use of cultural and national memory. I will now turn to examine an event that was specifically designed to strengthen ties with the Scottish diasporic population. A recent and flagrant example of the commodification of the past through the use of sentimentalized nostalgia is the recent twelve-month campaign of the Scottish government, *Homecoming Scotland 2009*. An excerpt from the *Homecoming* website read as follows:

Scotland is a land of five million people. A proud people, passionate about their country and her rich, noble heritage. For every single Scot in their native land, there are thought to be at least five more overseas who can claim Scottish ancestry – that's many, many millions spread throughout the globe.

For them, for you, Scotland is home. And, of course, there's no place like it. A trip to Scotland – a trip back home – is surely the best way to feel connected to this ancient land. A way to feel part of something greater than the here and now. A way to truly belong.

Tracing your family history is a journey of discovery that leads you to explore the lives and times of ancestors who lived hundreds of years ago – and perhaps even thousands of miles away – in circumstances which are all but unimaginable today.

Retracing the footsteps of your ancestors will not only bring the past to life, it will also make your home coming the most dynamic and exciting experience of your life.

2009 will be a special year with many special events focussing on

Scottish ancestry, traditions and culture. Make your own ancestral journey to Scotland and come home to your heritage and your roots during 2009! (Scottish Government “Ancestry”)

The advertisement clearly figures Scotland as the “best” site for ideal personal achievement. Individuals can gain a unique personal experience, an increased sense of self-worth, an opportunity for emotional satisfaction derived from new insight and knowledge, a rare connection to the past, and, finally, an assurance of belonging in the present. Readers are guaranteed satisfaction if – and *only* if – they “[m]ake [their] own ancestral journey to Scotland and come home” (Scottish Government “Ancestry”). The physical return to the geographical space of Scotland is directly associated not only with discovery of the past, but also with fulfilment in the present. The emphasis placed upon longing for the past and achieving understanding implies that by entering the geographical space of Scotland, each and every desirable goal listed is attainable. In Scotland, a person can be at home in one’s self, one’s past, and one’s present.<sup>61</sup>

As the *Homecoming Scotland 2009* advertisement implies nostalgic memory – as the longing for the familiar location of home – was deliberately used by the Scottish Government to establish and to maintain relationships with the Scottish diaspora. The distortion of memory, however, leads to a sentimentalization of the past and a restriction of identity. Appadurai suggests that the cultural reproduction of

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<sup>61</sup> Not only could *Homecoming 2009* attendees participate in events such as the Clan Gathering, they could even purchase a gold, silver, or bronze passport to the events, binding the notion of nationalism even more securely to the commodification of memory. In addition to the construction of Scottish identity centred on landscape and the romance of the Highlands, it is also firmly attached to objects. The Royal Mile in Edinburgh abounds with objects of Scottish history: figurines of William Wallace, Robbie Burns, Walter Scott, and the Loch Ness Monster, as well as kilts, all varieties of tartan textiles, and clan plaques are sold to the tune of bagpipes blasting from the corner of High Street and George IV Bridge.



the past has changed because ethnic groups are “no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous” (*Modernity at Large* 48). He argues that “deterritorialization creates new markets . . . which thrive on the need of the relocated population for contact with its homeland. But the homeland is partly invented, existing only in the imagination of the deterritorialized groups” (49). The diasporic communities, as a whole, experience and express a shared need for the past. The economic rewards of the tourist industry entice Scotland to capitalize and to commodify an otherwise stagnant identity. The use of nostalgia enables the partial invention of the homeland and provides opportunity for economic exploitation: the commodification of memory.

A year following *Homecoming Scotland 2009*, its promoters now strive to quantify the economic success of marketing such stereotyped and limited aspects of the Scottish past. On the webpage entitled “The Homecoming Effect,” four main objectives are outlined: To deliver additional tourism visits and revenue for Scotland; [t]o engage and mobilise the Scottish Diaspora; [t]o promote pride in Scots at home and abroad; and [t]o celebrate Scotland’s outstanding contributions to the world (Scottish Government “Homecoming Effect”). The campaign promoters openly acknowledge that Scotland’s past has been used “to engage and mobilise the Scottish Diaspora” (Scottish Government “Homecoming Effect”). The purpose of this diasporic mobilisation is not explicit. Boyarin, however, has an astute observation that may be applied to the Scottish context. He suggests that “we can trace out relations between memory and ‘materialism’ in the crudest sense, that of profit, or what we might call an economics of memory. . . . In a more straightforward way, of course, a commodified version of ‘memory’ is commonly deployed to promote new

technologies of tourist travel” (Boyarin 12-13).

As the reverberations of *Homecoming Scotland 2009* echo, the measure of success is clearly based upon the economic profits of diasporic tourism. The nation directly capitalises on its past and utilizes nostalgic memory to ensure that within the psychic spaces of its diaspora, it remains the idealized, romanticized home. As Appadurai states, “[t]he past is now not a land to return to in a simple politics of memory. It has become a synchronic warehouse of cultural scenarios, a kind of temporal central casting, to which recourse can be taken as appropriate” (*Modernity at Large* 30-31). Although crass consumerism may reduce entire epochs of history into a warehouse filled with plastic figurines and key chains, I am interested in how this commodification of memory is demonstrated in the more enduring emblems of this contentious issue – the written emblems of literature. In what ways will Scottish identity be affected if the commodified narratives of the past lose their value? What elements of the past will the Scottish nation choose to retain if the stories and memories become devalued (and value-less)? For if, as Hewison states, “[m]useums, like history – or as we should have it, histories – are acts of the imagination. Heritage is a fantasy, the commodification of our past and present means that in the enterprise culture, we surely do know the price of everything, and the value of nothing at all” (177). It is the consequence of this commodified nostalgic memory that is problematic. According to McCrone, Morris, and Kiely, “[h]eritage then has to be reduced to consumable commodities, to bite-size products, even if they turn out to be mountain ranges” (141). The pricing of the past, when promoted, emphasized, and consumed through the space of history and landscape in tourism, has vast implications for the culture of Scotland.

The Scottish cultural scenarios such as the images of romance, landscape, and tartan are scattered throughout diasporic representations of the former national “home.” Narrative is a mode through which cultural and national memory has been transposed from Scotland to Canada and yet, simultaneously, has ensured the connection with the homeland. In diasporic literature, Scotland, as the original, familiar spatial “home,” perpetually remains the idealized place of desire. The criticism that Scottish literature is sentimentalized, romanticized, parochial, and stagnant, one could argue, is simply reasserted and underscored in Scottish-Canadian literature: too often, these authors return to the image of Scotland as an untamed land, steeped in its Highland ways. However, as I will discuss in the next chapter, Scottish-Canadian fiction is not categorised so easily. Although Scottish-Canadian writing occasionally relies on clichéd depictions of the past, the literature also utilizes nostalgia to demonstrate the complexity of memory.

The four patterns of nostalgia I identified in Neil Gunn’s *Highland River* are also evident in diasporic fiction. In Scottish-Canadian literature, nostalgia is the longing for familiar surroundings in geographical and psychic space; it is the renegotiation of the past with the present; it is the defamiliarization of the familiar; and it is the idealization of the familiar. Using these diverse forms of nostalgia, Scottish-Canadian diasporic fiction offers insights into the renegotiation of national identity, the displacement of spatiality, and the appropriation of the past. Thus, as the literature discussed in the next chapter will reveal, although the space of memory often bulges with falsified and sentimentalized depictions of the past, the evocation of nostalgia may also be used to facilitate diverse perceptions of the past and to integrate the understanding of that past into the present.

## Chapter Five

### Longing for Home: Nostalgia in Scottish-Canadian Literature

In the previous chapter, I explored the concept of nostalgia and argued that nostalgia is an inherently complex form of memory. Nostalgia, as a representation of the past, has multiple and diverse forms. Nostalgia involves both the “acute longing for familiar surroundings” and the “[s]entimental longing for or regretful memory of a period of the past” (“Nostalgia”). A brief study of Neil Gunn’s *Highland River* revealed that nostalgia, as the longing for the familiar, extends into both geographical and psychic spaces. While it is often used to sentimentalize and romanticize the past, nostalgia can also bring insight into how the familiar – as home – is represented in memory. Using concepts of the spatial, I demonstrated the ways in which nostalgia for the national home is manifested. The spatial structures of memory, however, permit national narratives to extend beyond the borders of Scotland. I considered the relationship between Scotland and its diaspora as a demonstration of how through psychic space memory can escape national boundaries. The diasporic longing for home is often encouraged and perpetuated through the Scottish tourist industry. As Paul Basu asserts, “there are not only many Scotlands, there are also many *Scottlands* – each imagined, objectified and reproduced within the multifarious habitus of a diaspora dispersed not only across geographic space, but also across ‘social space’”

(*Homecomings* 86).<sup>62</sup>

In this chapter, I turn to an investigation of these concepts in the particular social space of Scottish-Canadian literature and ask: when memory is transposed into a new geographical territory, how is nostalgia portrayed? Scotland participated and encouraged the propagation of “Britishness” in the colonies. In some cases, the claim to Scotland’s unique identity was lost because generations of colonials were educated to think of the British empire as a whole, not as a composite of distinct parts. In literature of post-colonials, the distinction between Scottish and British identity is often blurred. Ironically, Scottish-Canadian literature frequently depicts Britain as a homeland that, from a distance, appears whole. Adding to this misconception, the identity of Scottish-Canadian immigrants and their descendants has been constructed with interlinking loyalties to Scotland, Great Britain, and the empire. Multi-layered depictions of national identity co-exist in diasporic literature; nevertheless, there is a particular emphasis on Scottish identity. In my second chapter, I observed the ways in which some Scottish fiction, such as Walter Scott’s work, idealizes key aspects of Scottish history in an attempt to construct a cohesive, linear depiction of that history. Similarly, the literature of Scottish emigrants to Canada and their Scottish-Canadian descendents too often reveals the desire to retain key elements of “Scottishness.” This emphasis is strongly evident in the use of nostalgia in Scottish-Canadian fiction. The sentimental nationalism of Scottish

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<sup>62</sup> Colin McArthur argues that there is a “Scottish Discursive Unconscious” that unifies all representations of Scotland; however, he fails to ground his assumptions in an adequate or specific framework. Although McArthur strives to classify the multiple and convoluted presentation of Scottish traits outwith the nation, his terminology points to an interesting aspect of Scottish culture. See also Leith Davis’s “A New Perspective on the Scottish Diaspora,” where she critiques McArthur’s universalisation of “Scottishness.”

emigrants in Canada has retained unyielding popularity long after the disintegration of the British empire; however, the memory of these emigrants has been reduced to a limited, restricted construction of Scottish identity. Scotland as the ultimate, unique home has been carefully established, maintained, and intensified in narratives of the Scottish-Canadian diaspora.

## Surveying Nostalgia in Scottish-Canadian Fiction

A survey of Scottish-Canadian fiction reveals that sentimentalized nostalgia is prevalent. Scotland is often the site of the ideal home; “Scottishness” is often an easily identifiable characteristic. Whether through images of familiar surroundings or of familiar traits, simplistic depictions of Scotland are frequently evident. An early textual example that relies on nostalgia is John Richardson’s *Wacousta* (1832). In the novel, a British soldier Baron Reginald Morton falls in love with a Highlander woman, whom he meets while on a training assignment in Scotland. They have a furiously romantic affair, set in the secluded Highland mountains. It is assumed that the readership knows details about the Highlands, such as an understanding of Highland dress, and the wild, rustic scenery is seen to instil the soldiers with bravery (Richardson 480).<sup>63</sup> The soldier and his lover, however, are separated. When he finally returns, he discovers she has married his former best friend. He renounces all

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<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, in *Wacousta*, Richardson uses landscape to create identifiable political distinctions. While Scotland is a distinct part of Great Britain, when the narrative focuses on North America, British becomes synonymous with English, for example, see Chapter 1. The topography of Scotland is central to Chapters 8-11, where images of Highland scenery, seclusion, and romance abound. Furthermore, in North America, the landscape is used to separate British politics from that of the French and American.

affection for his fellow soldier and vows revenge. The narrative of *Wacousta* is an example not only of the integration of Scottish and English characteristics into a cohesive British identity, but also of the ways in which memory exceeds the boundaries of geographical space. Seeking revenge, Morton tracks the soldier to British North America, adopts a First Nations persona, and as “Wacousta” eventually murders the soldier and his children. This novel, however, is not alone in presenting stagnant images of Scotland.

John Mackie’s *The Man Who Forgot; a Strange Experience* (1901) and *The Heart of the Prairie* (1901) continued the tradition of stereotyping and sentimentalizing Scotland as the ultimate location of “familiar surroundings” into the twentieth-century. Michael Fry explains that Scottish-Canadian literature emphasizes not only stereotypical traits, but also exaggerates the importance of familiar and unfamiliar landscape. Fry remarks that early Scottish-Canadian literature was

quite a rich genre. If the mother country was old and the daughter Dominion young, their culture still showed something in common. In order to set it off against a stronger neighbouring one, writers in both searched for characteristic themes and forms, which they often chose to express through a native persona. While Scots of Scotland tended to dwell on the persona’s pawky character and language, with the typical virtues they articulated, Scots of Canada stressed rather the landscape where the persona moved, even exaggerating its wild, eerie desolation; though this motif might strike foreigners more by its emptiness and poverty, its lack of historical or legendary reference. The whole trend, reliant on models rather than observation, anyway threatened to disjoin life and image of life, to muffle individual voices and to weaken contact with more universally acceptable literary standards. So self-conscious patriotism may have helped to produce deficient literature. (*Scottish Empire* 465)

Evidence of patriotic fervour can be found in texts such as Anna Buchan’s *Penny Plain* (1920) and Fred Bodsworth’s *The Strange One* (1959). These novels relegate Scottish characters to the roles of caricatures, who are able to speak Gaelic, have

stereotypically Scottish physical traits of red hair, and retain a slight Scots lilt in their language.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, Hugh MacLennan caricatures Scottish immigrants and their descendants in *Each Man's Son* (1951), while in his novel *The Precipice* (1949), the male characters retain their Scots appearance. In this novel, the author ensures that Scots Presbyterianism haunts the background through images of religious and sexual guilt.<sup>65</sup> Scots are frequently caricatured: they have a “Scotch kind of queerness,” wear long underwear year-round, think fondly of folk tunes, and are named “authentic” Scots names such as John Knox, Bruce Fraser, and Jane Cameron (MacLennan *Precipice* 117). Scottish references, whether to language, religion, physical traits, clothing choice, or names, abound in early twentieth-century Scottish-Canadian literature.

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<sup>64</sup> See *Penny Plain* (1920) by Anna Buchan (O. Douglas), where the Jardine family lives in Priorsford. The characters include David, a student at Oxford; Jean, four years David's elder; and Jock, aged fourteen. Specifically Scottish characters include Gervase Taunton, who is “known to a large circle of acquaintances as ‘the Mhor,’ which, as Jean would have explained to you, is Gaelic for ‘the great one.’ Thus had greatness been thrust upon him” (Buchan *Penny* 3); and Mrs M'Cosh from Glasgow. Both Taunton and Mrs M'Cosh speak with a slight Scots inflection.

See also *The Strange One* where physical traits are seen as evidence of a linear history:

[t]he Vikings, although it was a thousand years ago they settled the Hebrides, had left their mark on Rory Macdonald. His hair was fair and he kept it in a short, bristly crew-cut that needed only a minimum grooming. His eyebrows were bushy and blond, so blond that already they were appearing almost white against the deepening tan of his face. But there the marks of his Nordic ancestry ended, and his eyes were gray, not the deep sea-blue of Viking tradition. (Bodsworth 14)

<sup>65</sup> See Hugh MacLennan's *The Precipice*, where the characters include an American Stephen Lassiter and Scots-Canadians Bruce Fraser and Lucy Cameron. Bruce is in love with Lucy. However, Lucy falls in love with newly divorced Stephen and runs away to New York City to marry him. Even after Stephen has an affair and becomes an alcoholic, Lucy still loves him. Seeking peace from the disintegration of her marriage, Lucy returns temporarily to her hometown of Grenville in Canada with her two children. After six months, she returns to Stephen.



Robin Cohen contends that due to the collapse of the empire, “[t]he automatic and unthinking affinity between the British diasporic communities and ‘home’ is now largely gone” and that it has “fragmented the unquestioned loyalty, and dissolved the essence, of the British imperial diaspora” (77, 80). The trend of using clichéd Scottish references, however, has not diminished. Contrary to Cohen’s belief that diasporic ties were diminished following the demise of the empire, the tradition of stagnant depictions of Scotland and its emigrants continued to be perpetuated long after the mid-twentieth century. John Kenneth Galbraith’s memoir, *The Scotch* (1964), describe Scottish-Canadians as passionate about Burns, the Highlands, and Presbyterianism. Margaret Laurence’s fiction appends Scottish names and traits onto her characters, such as Hagar Shipley in *The Stone Angel* (1964) and Morag Gunn in *The Diviners* (1974). The stereotypes continued, culminating in the contemporary texts such as Thomas Wharton’s *Icefields* (1997), Audrey Callahan Thomas’ *Isobel Gunn: A Novel* (1999), and Alice Munro’s fictionalized autobiography *The View from Castle Rock: Stories* (2006). Although, as Cohen suggests, the unquestioned loyalty and “essence” of the British imperial diaspora may have dissolved politically, the nostalgic stereotypes of Scotland continue to be prevalent and potent in literature.

Nostalgia in Scottish-Canadian literature, however, is not only used for sentimental purposes. As I identified in Chapter Four, nostalgia has multiple functions. I now turn to an extended analysis of four Scottish-Canadian novels that exhibit the specific and distinct functions of nostalgia in the diasporic context. Sara Jeanette Duncan’s *The Imperialist* (1901) offers nostalgia as the longing for familiar surroundings to probe the multifaceted depiction of nationalism in the British empire. John Buchan’s *Sick Heart River* (1941) utilizes the spatiality of geography and

memory to demonstrate the constructive integration of the past with the present. In Eric McCormack's *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1997), nostalgia shades into the uncanny when the familiar is defamiliarized. Finally, Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief* (1999) figures the sentimentalization of nostalgia and demonstrates the appropriation of memory.

### Escaping Home: Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist*

The early twentieth-century Canadian novel *The Imperialist* (1904) illustrates the ways in which memory encourages the escape of national identity from the confines of geographical space. Sara Jeanette Duncan's writing reveals how national identity is blurred, specifically within the multi-layered and shifting concepts of nation within the British empire.<sup>66</sup> Throughout the narrative, nostalgia, the longing for familiar surroundings, is used to demonstrate the diverse and expanding national affiliations. When transported between Great Britain, Scotland, and the imperial colony of Canada, national identity is no longer associated with a particular geographical space. Relocation to a new geographical space both foreshadows and facilitates the inevitable change that will occur within the space of memory.

As the title, *The Imperialist*, suggests, the concept of the British empire is a central feature in the text. The discussion of the empire's spatial constructs provides an opportunity to address not only the complexities of nostalgia, the "acute longing

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<sup>66</sup> Sara Jeanette Duncan was a Canadian, born in Brantford, Ontario in 1861; however, her family was from Scotland. In 1891, she married and spent the remainder of her life in both India and England. Interestingly, Duncan's personal background demonstrates the same shifting national affiliations within the British empire that she writes into her fiction. See Claude Bissell's "Introduction" to *The Imperialist* for an insightful discussion of Duncan's life.

for familiar surroundings,” but also the renegotiation of memory and identity in a new territory. The plot centres on two families, the Murchisons and the Milburns, who live in the small Canadian town of Elgin and traces their participation in the religious and political community. The characters represent the three geographical areas of the empire that are discussed in the text: England, Scotland, Canada; however, the national identity of the characters becomes blended.

In the novel, specificity of geographical location in Britain is inconsequential. Whether from England or Scotland, the immigrants’ home region is scarcely acknowledged. Although from distinct areas, there is little description of the characters’ origins or background. Instead, the characters’ cultural distinctions are only exemplified by inflections of speech. Indeed, the experience and cultural idiosyncrasies of “immigrants of all degrees” are universalized (Duncan *Imperialist* 216). The observation is:

They [immigrants] come in couples and in companies from those little imperial islands, bringing the crusted qualities of the old blood bottled there so long, and sink with grateful absorption into the wide bountiful stretches of the further countries. They have much to take, but they give themselves; and so it comes about that the Empire is summed up in the race, and the flag flies for its ideals. (216)

Upon arriving on Canadian shores, distinctive features are soon broadened to encompass not only “those little imperial islands” of Britain, but also to include “immigrants of all degrees” (216).

It is only when visitors arrive in Canada that particular regional characteristics are noted. Two visiting Scotswomen are carelessly aligned with fiction. They are dismissively described as “something . . . out of a novel by Mr. Crockett, and made you long to go to Scotland, where presumably everyone was

like” them (216).<sup>67</sup> The Scottish guests are caricatured into familiar elements of Kailyard fiction: when abroad, their specific national traits are considered unimportant.

The concept of home as nation is complex within *The Imperialist* because of the diverse allegiances within the empire. Britain features prominently in the novel as both a place of origin and a model for comparison with Canada, yet as citizens migrate, the specificity of the national home becomes blurred. Political discussions have

a wider drift, embracing nothing less than the Empire, pausing nowhere short of the flag. The imperial idea was very much at the moment in the public mind; it hung heavily, like a banner, in every newspaper, it was filtering through the slow British consciousness, solidifying as it travelled. In the end it might be expected to arrive at a shape in which the British consciousness must either assimilate it or cast it forth. (120)

Although the British consciousness may consider the assimilation or rejection of the empire, the interpersonal and transgenerational transferral of memory insures the relationship of Canada and Britain is seen as familial; hence, it cannot simply be dismissed. Like the parent-child role, as the Canadian colony grows to maturity and separates from its imperial parent, the relationship must continually be renegotiated.<sup>68</sup> The relocation to new geographical space is the catalyst that stimulates renegotiation of space in memory.

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<sup>67</sup> The immediate association between the Scots and the literature of S. R. Crockett emphasizes the pervasive influence not only of his fiction, but also of stereotypical views of Scots throughout the British empire.

<sup>68</sup> Jonathan Boyarin argues that there are similarities between the nation and the body. He suggests that like a body, the nation grows from infancy to maturity; the nation functions in a hierarchical manner; and, like a child develops towards its parents, the nation inspires loyalty (25).

The nostalgic memory of the immigrant becomes unsettled. Initially, it is disrupted in its affiliation to Great Britain and the empire. Later, it becomes attached to the immediate location of home in Canada. For some immigrants, they believe Britain will remain the ideal location of the familiar. The role of the Canadian colony is only to strengthen the homeland: it is important that “the mother country indeed prove the loyalty and devotion of her colonial sons” (193). It is “the spectacle of Canadians . . . rallying about the common flag, eager to attest their affection for it with their life-blood” that reinforces Britain as the ultimate location of home; if only, “to demonstrate that they, too, were worthy to add deeds to British traditions and victories to the British cause” (193).

As the immigrants and their diasporic descendants renegotiate their connection to Britain, the longing for familiar surroundings shifts. For the descendants of the immigrants, however, allegiance to Britain is not immediately due. The familiar, home, is displaced and relocated within the new territory. In the novel, the characters seek the development of memory that reflects the new reality: the space of the familiar is now Canada. However, physical and temporal distance from the former British national home results in the defamiliarization of the past. Furthermore, renegotiation of the space of memory results in the formation of new memory and identity. Canadians are uncertain about their role in the empire and where their loyalty lies. First generation Scottish-Canadian Lorne Murchison and the other citizens of Canada insist:

‘The imperial idea is far-sighted. England has outlived her own body. Apart from her heart and her history, England is an area where certain trades are carried on – still carried on. In the scrolls of the future it is already written that the centre of the Empire must shift – and where, if not to Canada?’ (229).

Here, England is seen as the defining location of the British empire, but it is neither England nor Scotland that inspires their devotion. The geography of home – the familiar – is shifting.

As a descendant of the diaspora, Lorne recognises that the older generation instils nostalgia for the national familiar within the youth. His observations, however, foreshadow the inevitability of change. He poses the rhetorical question: “Doesn’t there come a time in the history of most families, . . . when the old folks look to the sons and daughters to keep them in touch with the times? Why shouldn’t a vigorous policy of Empire be conceived by its younger nations – who have the ultimate resources to carry it out?” (122). Although the progression of history decrees that bodies, homes, and even nations will become old and will give way to the new, the adaptability of nostalgia encourages a dialogue between past and present identity. Upon his return journey from his visit to the mother country England, Lorne is elated to return home to Ontario. Like the other ship passengers, he feels that the return to Canada promises relief from the oppressive structures of Great Britain. He remarks, “home-comers from Greater Britain have never been cut off, still feel their uneasy share in all that is, and draw a long breath of relief as they turn again to their life in the lands where they found wider scope and different opportunities, and that new quality in the blood which made them different men” (125-126). The emphasis that imperial citizens are “home-comers” to Great Britain highlights the unique relationship between the colonies and Britain. It also reveals the blending of geographical and political distinctions that construct diasporic identity. Although nostalgia desires the continuance of the empire and precludes the possibility of

political dissolution, nostalgia also permits a shift in identifying with newly familiar geographical space. Home, in the empire, is now Canada.

Lorne acknowledges the inheritance of familiar, the memory of home, as it is repositioned in a new location. He explains that “[t]he heart of it was there, the enduring heart of the new country already old in acquiescence. It was the deep root of the race in all the land, twisted and unlovely, but holding the promise of all” (73-74). In the homeland of Canada, Lorne expresses deep emotion:

The familiar picture stirred a joy in him in tune with his private happiness; its undernote came to him with a pang as keen. The sense of kinship surged in his heart; these were his people, this his lot as well as theirs. . . . At that moment his country came subjectively into his possession; great and helpless it came into his inheritance as it comes into the inheritance of every man who can take it, by deed of imagination and energy and love. He held this microcosm of it, as one might say, in his hand and looked at it ardently; then he took his way across the road. (74)

To Lorne, the longing for familiar surroundings is now connected to the new location of Canada, the new capstone on the multiple layers of his identity. The kinship that he feels with his fellow British citizens reconfigures the primary identity of home in the text. Nostalgia bridges the past with the present, but becomes the necessary ingredient for the creation of identity in diasporic peoples. The longing for familiar surroundings, when attached to the concept of “home” in both locations, encourages a newly blended understanding of identity. While the empire, the Mother Country, is crucial to memory, it is in the new nation that the successful negotiation of nostalgic memory can occur. In this new space of memory, the immigrants and their descendants can embrace a multiple and diverse identity. This Canadian home – the extension of the familiar British empire – is to be shared, inherited, claimed, and possessed.

## Traversing Nostalgia: John Buchan's *Sick Heart River*

As has been discussed above, there is an extensive tendency of both cultural and literary forms to rely on the common use of nostalgia as “[s]entimental longing *for* or regretful memory of a period of the past, esp[ecially] one in an individual’s own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past” (“Nostalgia”). The emphasis placed upon this aspect of nostalgia prompts the question if the possibility of representation of nostalgia in another, more positive form, can occur. As I argued in Chapter Four, turning attention to nostalgia as an “acute longing for familiar surroundings” allows for a new understanding of its role in memory. The dialogue between one’s memory and the present simultaneously forms an individual’s identity and changes the memories of that individual’s past. Nostalgia is a space of memory where the “longing for familiar surroundings” embraces reflection and engagement with the past and carries longing into the present.

To explore nostalgia’s function as a conduit between the past and the present, I turn to John Buchan’s *Sick Heart River* (1941). *Sick Heart River* tells the story of Leithen, a Scottish politician who is based in London. At the commencement of the novel, Leithen discovers he is dying from the effects of gas he inhaled while in combat during the First World War. He retires from his life as a politician, but wishes to be active until he dies. Leithen accepts a commission to find French-Canadian Francis Galliard, who has disappeared from his home in New York. With the help of Johnny Frizel, Leithen tracks Galliard and Johnny’s brother Lew Frizel. The first location on their trail is Galliard’s childhood home in Quebec. Unable to



find Galliard, Leithen proceeds to track him to Sick Heart River in Northern Canada, a river that, so it is claimed, will heal the soul. Although initially his motivations for finding Sick Heart River differ, each man gradually manifests a desire for the existential peace promised. The resolution of the spiritual quest, however, is delayed: the river canyon is beautiful, but desolate. The men manage to escape the fertile desert and Leithen spends his dying days preventing the extinction of the melancholic First Nations Hare tribe. This poetic novel contains many of the key features of nostalgia, such as the sentimentalization of the past in British identity and the longing for familiar surroundings.<sup>69</sup> However, the novel does not permit the protagonist to retreat into a sentimental, idealistic haze as he travels further from Scotland: The novel offers nostalgia as a way to revive the past for use in the present.

As British, Leithen identifies himself as “an Englishman” who is “a stranger in Canada, though I have visited it once before” (Buchan 105).<sup>70</sup> Although the British empire is considered to be “all organically connected,” national concerns, however, become irrelevant when one is dealing with personal memory (89). The further he retreats from Britain, Leithen’s attachments become increasingly personalised. Although the world is about to embark on a war, for Leithen, he “simply was not concerned about other things” and “[h]ere in Canada he did not care a jot about the present or future of a great British Dominion” (112). Transposed from Britain to Canada, Leithen’s deliberate dissociation of his Scottish identity and his previous encounter with the Canadian landscape serves to defamiliarize his past.

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<sup>69</sup> The Canadian landscape repeatedly reminds Leithen of Scottish locations (see Buchan 144, 185, 233).

<sup>70</sup> Leithen, although Scottish, is also referred to as an Englishman (see Buchan 135, 203, 240, 307).

As he prepares for death, Leithen realizes he wants “peace to make his soul” (61). Recalling “a haven of pastoral peace in a shaggy land” in northern Quebec, Leithen yearns to return to the place he had travelled to in his youth and “had never forgotten” (60). The offer to rescue Galliard provides the opportunity for Leithen to return to this space of peace. Nearing the Quebec location, Leithen experiences a strange, dual sense of familiarity: not only is he “[s]uddenly . . . haunted by a recollection, a shadow at the back of his mind. The outline of the hills [is] familiar,” from the travels of his youth, but he is also reminded of “a town in the English Black Country” (96). The location is made familiar not only through comparison with recognised locations, but also through deliberate retrieval of memory. Leithen’s ability to negotiate his longing for familiar surroundings with his desire to accept his present situation is enhanced at Clairefontaine, the fountain of clarity, where “his memory [is] clearer” and becomes “even sharper” (99).

As he pursues Galliard’s trail, Leithen’s present encounter with the North melds with his experience of the past: the Arctic delta and “peaty soil” remind him of a Hebridean cape (119). Dawn shades the landscape in a uniquely personal aura where, despite “[h]ow often he had stood like this on a lake shore—in Scotland, in Norway, in Canada long ago—and watched the world heave itself out of night into dawn! Like this—but how unlike!” (113). Leithen’s observation of the Arctic dawn, though rooted in Canada, allows him to long for the familiarity of Scottish soil. His nostalgia is rooted in geographical space, but is expressed through memory. Although each experience is singular, it permits the individual to draw parallels between a wider, universal event and the individual encounter with a moment.

Sick Heart River is a lush, fertile valley that does not sustain any “living thing” and the apparent fertility coupled with the sterility of life is “uncanny” (221). Rather than the Promised Land, “flowing with milk and honey, and angels to pass the time of day,” the valley is a “great hole in the earth . . . a grave, a place to die in, but not to live in” (221). The men long for familiar surroundings and invest in the myth of Sick Heart River as the location and space that will appease their longing. However, it is not the location that will satiate their desire; rather, it is the direct engagement between their present geographical surroundings and their psychic memory that allows an acceptance of release from their obsession. The longing for familiar surroundings must be directly and personally engaged with to prevent memory from becoming stagnant and stifled.

Just as Leithen must travel into the Canadian wilderness to find Sick Heart River and to understand the potency of its myth, so he must traverse the depths of his memory to come to terms with himself. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard suggests:

Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space subject to the measures and estimates of the surveyor. It has been lived in, not in its positivity, but with all the partiality of the imagination. Particularly, it nearly always exercises an attraction. For it concentrates being within limits that protect. In the realm of images, the play between the exterior and intimacy is not a balanced one. (xxxii)

The lived in space of the imagination, I would argue, is clearly connected with the space of memory – the storehouse of externally lived and internally garnered experience. Leithen meticulously surveys the past. His “mind ran up and down the panorama of his life” and “[h]is memory could range over the past and dwell lovingly and thankfully on its modest pleasures. A little while ago such memories, if he could have revived them, would have been a torment” (Buchan 235). Because he

has negotiated the familiar and unfamiliar in both geographical and psychic spaces, he can “spend hours contentedly in reconstructing them [the scenes of memory] and tasting their flavour” (235). His memory is a picture, “so dear and homelike that he found himself continually returning to it. It was like a fire at which he could warm himself” (238). Like the landscape, memory must be travelled *into* and encountered. Memory cannot just remain an ideal or myth; however, just as Leithen had to discover Sick Heart River and not rely on the mythic tales of its existence, the past must be negotiated and integrated with the present.

Returning to theories of space and the discussion of tourism, I propose that we can find the positive aspects of nostalgia. Tourism analyst David Crouch suggests that “[p]ractice offers a model of a more active process than consumption” (7). Similarly, Leithen’s practice – his active engagement with the spheres of his memory – allows him to absorb the experiences of his life. He is not only a spectator to the present, but is able to engage in it fully, for “[t]o reduce the spectator to a merely passive role omits an understanding of practice” (7). The topographical images spur Leithen’s memory and “[h]is mind swooped back on it and for a little was immersed in memories” and “all the time the visualising part of Leithen’s mind was many thousands of miles away in space and years back in time” (Buchan 301, 302). He actively explores the past where “[t]he intense pure light brought a flood of pictures all linked with moments of exultant physical vigour. Also with friendships. . . . In each picture he [feels] the blood strong in his veins and a young power in his muscles. This was the man he once had been. Once!” (302). Leithen’s ability to encounter the familiarity of the past and renegotiate his longing into the present reinforces the topographical spaces of memory. As Basu explains,

[t]his spatialisation of memory – knowing *where* one has come from – is, of course, intrinsic to a more fundamental metaphorical logic through which we communicate abstractions, but in a context in which the past is perceived quite literally as a country that has become foreign, the possibility of physically visiting the past invests the practice of roots tourism with a powerfully symbolic aura. It will be abundantly evident from the above oft-repeated comments that these journeys to the past are also journeys to self-understanding and self-knowledge, and, thus, in a fusion of the metaphorical, the metaphysical and the mundane, the sites of memory, which are their destinations, become hugely significant. . . . Through such affective processes the sites of memory become ‘sources of identity’: originary places from which the identity of the self is perceived to derive, and to which the self, thirsting for identity, may resort for sustenance. (*Homecomings* 158)

Leithen, however, is a tourist of his own mind only. His memories hold value simply because they are his – not because of any external commodification. Rather than valuing pre-constructed “sites of memory,” Leithen accepts the intrinsic worth of his experience: “Most men had their lives taken from them. It was his privilege to *give* his, to offer it freely and joyfully in one last effort of manhood” (Buchan 305 – emphasis original). In “Knowledge by Doing: Home and Identity in a Bodily Perspective,” Niels Nielsen emphasizes that

the identity of such a body is more a question of ‘who’ than ‘what’, because identity is elaborated through actions, involvements and experiences much more than being the outer expression of changeless essence and rigid immutability. . . . It is not until you move and perceive in such historical places that they become a part of your own history. Only then do they become a part of your overall or national historical home, while on the other hand, they are not real historical places until perceived and appropriated by living and moving people. (279-280)

Likewise, it is in the concrete, bodily involvement of Leithen in geographic and psychic space that he is able to renegotiate his identity. Through dialogue between the nostalgia for his past and recognition of his present surroundings, Leithen successfully establishes the value not only of his memory, but also of his identity.

As I have demonstrated in *Sick Heart River*, the use of nostalgic memory as the longing for familiar surroundings has positive possibilities. The active

exploration of memory can inspire a renegotiation of the past into the present. The past need not be crystallized and immobile; rather, it can be revived and carried into the present for “identity is always an incomplete process. . . . This is why identity is always incomplete, always subsumes a lack, perhaps is more readily understood as a process rather than an outcome” (Keith and Pile “The Place of Politics” 28). The development of identity includes searching for the familiar and is always an incomplete process; however, as I investigate in Eric McCormack’s novel, if the process is aborted the familiar may become unfamiliar.

### Defamiliarizing the Familiar: Eric McCormack’s *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*

In this chapter, I have been addressing the concepts and definitions of nostalgia – the “acute longing for familiar surroundings.” I have contended that the longing for the familiar may be linked to the depiction of home. The familiar as home is often located within a particular geographical space, such as the nation; however, the defining characteristics of the familiar have been blurred when transported through diasporic narratives into the former colonies of Great Britain, particularly of Canada. Despite these variations in the image of Britain, the national identity and depiction of Scotland has been deliberately constructed and has maintained a consistent influence in Scottish diasporic narratives. The construction of Scotland as the lost home – the familiar surroundings that are longed for – points to a lack within the diasporic population that is often refigured in literature to extend into the mapping of psychic space. The need to retain elements of the familiar is

closely intertwined with development of an individual's identity; however, the identity of diasporic peoples is in constant negotiation between situatedness in both a temporal and geographical past and interaction with a present location. I now turn to an examination of what happens when the identifiable features of the familiar are blurred. What is the result when the longing for the familiar is inverted? I will investigate what happens when nostalgia shades into the uncanny – the *unheimlich*, the unfamiliar.

Eric McCormack's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* (1997) not only straddles the connections between Scotland and Canada, but also engages directly with the identity of the emigrant who seeks for the familiar in an unfamiliar location. Although the novel's title announces its Scottish connection and pays allegiance to the religious reformer John Knox, the novel has little to do with religion.<sup>71</sup> Narrated in the first person, the novel traces the life history of Andrew Halfnight. As a child, the protagonist reads the sermon title and has a gross misunderstanding of its meaning. For decades, the words "the Monstrous Regiment of Women" haunt his dreams as he imagines the various implications of the phrase. Born in a small Scottish mining village, Stroven, Andrew experiences an extraordinary sequence of tragedies. Shortly after his and his twin sister's birth, Andrew's father accidentally drops the baby girl. The infant immediately dies of a fractured skull. Distraught, his father commits suicide. When he is ten years old,

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<sup>71</sup> In 1558, John Knox published a sermon *The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*. His sermon was written in response to the rule of Mary, Queen of Scots. Despite McCormack's reference to a Protestant text, the novel does not focus on religious belief. Indeed, neither does it focus on the particularly Scottish religious concepts of Calvinism, despite the incorporation of Andrew's predestined fate. McCormack, instead, focuses on the protagonist's interaction with and reaction to women.

Andrew's mother dies from cancer and he is forced to move to an island to live with his aunt and uncle.<sup>72</sup> Not long after his arrival, Andrew's aunt murders her husband. Left without any living relatives, Andrew alternates between living alone or with friends. Amongst other adventures, he survives a hurricane and lives in various parts of the world; experiences depression and alcoholism; and has a series of unsatisfactory sexual liaisons. Eventually – following his emigration to Canada – Andrew comes to accept his disrupted childhood and familial history.

The narrative is told in a strict chronological format like that of an autobiography. Aspects of the Gothic and fantasy, however, hover around the novel's core. In *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Rosemary Jackson argues that fantasy

is a literature of desire, which seeks that which is experienced as absence and loss.

In expressing desire, fantasy can operate in two ways (according to the different meanings of 'express'): it *can tell* of, manifest or show desire (expression in the sense of portrayal, representation, manifestation, linguistic utterance, mention, description), or it can *expel* desire, when this desire is a disturbing element which threatens cultural order and continuity (expression in the sense of pressing out, squeezing, expulsion, getting rid of something by force). (3-4 – emphasis original)

Likewise, Andrew's tale not only expresses desire, but also seeks to expel it. Andrew Halfnight is plagued by the gaps in his family history and his personal memory, which he wishes to uncover and remember. His desire to understand the gaps in his past can be linked to his name – Halfnight. Andrew is “halved” because of his separation from his twin sister upon her death and he is also “in the dark” about his familial past. The events of his childhood, he remarks, are

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<sup>72</sup> McCormack integrates quite diverse intertextual references throughout his writing. The novel contains echoes of Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966), Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981), as well as references to Robert Burton and John Milton.



like an old black-and-white movie. Not that I really remember them. I heard about them only once, much later, and in a very general way. But I suppose the mind can't bear gaps, and my mind has filled in the details. Now, it's hard for me to tell the difference between the things I was eventually told and those I invented; they're all like memories of my own. (McCormack 19)

Andrew's desire to understand his past becomes inextricably linked to the concept and image of home. Because, due to circumstances beyond his control, Andrew continually moves between places, his nostalgia and his longing for the narratives and geographical locations of his origins accrue potent force.

Andrew's life is transitory and he moves between familiar and unfamiliar locations – each time with a sense of dis-ease. Following his mother's death, Andrew moves from Scotland on the island of Great Britain to the fictional island of St Jude to live with his aunt and uncle. This island is “remote” and a mere replication of his original home (82). The land has a “sour smell” (81) and the town buildings are not “exactly what they seemed” (83). Although the buildings remind Andrew of his hometown, Stroven, symptoms of disease and decay pervade their exteriors. Andrew's adoptive parents – his Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Norman – become unsatisfactory and unsettling parental substitutes. When his aunt brings him clothes, Andrew admits “[t]hat made me feel more at home. Sometimes, I'd see a look on her face that puzzled me. Her green eyes would turn to ice, and her lips would twist the way my mother's did, but in a more bitter way” (88). Andrew's nostalgia, his longing to see familiar elements in his unfamiliar surroundings, indicates his desire to feel at home; however, he feels displaced and confused. He seeks to expel his desire, but is unsuccessful.

Years later, Andrew moves to Canada to live with his mother's former friend, Dr. Giffen. Although Andrew has been displaced repeatedly, he feels “immediately

at ease in Ontario. It was like a photographic negative held up to the light: I could see, though not always plainly, familiar outlines. Many of the places had Scottish names and the people tended to mind their own business” (172). Despite Andrew’s attempt to be rid of his longing, Canada awakens Andrew’s nostalgia. Although he feels at home in Canada, Andrew still retains the need to establish links with what was familiar in Scotland. Andrew’s desire for the familiar remains: Canada becomes the “home away from home”: the unfamiliar familiar. The blurring of the distinction between the familiar and the unfamiliar indicates a shift that is occurring in Andrew’s identity.

Freud’s classic explication of the *unheimlich* in his 1919 text is the precedent for discussion of this unsettling feeling – the uncanny – and its connection with psychoanalysis. Freud surmises that “the uncanny is that class of the frightening which leads back to what is known of old and long familiar” (“Uncanny” 220). Freud writes an extended list of examples of the uncanny. This list includes items such as fateful repetition or inescapable circumstances as well as death and dead bodies, realized in ghosts or the return of the dead. He concludes that “an uncanny experience occurs either when infantile complexes which have been repressed are once more revived by some impression, or when primitive beliefs which have been surmounted seem once more to be confirmed” (249). In addition, Nicholas Royle argues that

the uncanny is not simply an experience of strangeness or alienation. More specifically, it is a peculiar commingling of the familiar and unfamiliar. It can take the form of something familiar unexpectedly arising in a strange and unfamiliar context, or of something strange and unfamiliar unexpectedly arising in a familiar context. It can consist in a sense of homeliness uprooted, the revelation of something unhomely at the heart of hearth and home. (*Uncanny* 1)

It is the “commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar” in two elements of the novel on which I will focus: the first is Andrew’s recurrent dream and the second is Andrew’s re-birth.

Andrew’s dream incorporates images and stories from his past, adhering to Royle’s suggestion that “[t]he uncanny is about ‘everything that ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light’; but it is also, at the same time, about what is elusive, cryptic, still to come (back)” (*Uncanny* 51). In the dream, Andrew believes himself to be “back in the high moorland country,” although he is not sure of the exact area (McCormack 74). Andrew recognises the location as Scottish and familiar, yet is certain that he is not “anywhere near Stroven,” his hometown (74). His inability to define the exact location within the dream points to the inversion of the familiar: the familiar surroundings of a previous home have become frightening and uncanny.

In his dream, he peers over a rock into a hollow and watches a parade of black-cloaked women. A banner held aloft proclaims the procession as “THE MONSTROUS REGIMENT OF WOMEN” (75 – emphasis original). Andrew identifies one as his mother and calls to her, but it is only “the blue face of a lizard, with fringed lizard eyes” that, without recognition, return his gaze (75). Andrew’s dream sequence is repetitive and yet each time he dreams, he experiences additional feelings of unfamiliarity and horror: “The familiar faces—even my mother, even Aunt Lizzie—were now so deformed, they paralysed me with horror. I woke up, sweating” (139). Andrew’s sense of comfort in the familiar is disrupted in the uncanny nature of his dreams.

The second example of the “commingling of the familiar and the unfamiliar” – of nostalgia and the uncanny – is Andrew’s re-birth. As I described above, when he is in Canada, Andrew is surprised at the familiarity of the landscape and remarks that it is “[a]ll so familiar, I couldn’t help thinking. It’s all so familiar” (227). Andrew’s nostalgic memories of Scottish geography envision a mirror image in the Canadian landscape. It is here, in this familiar yet unfamiliar setting, that past and present merge. In Doctor Giffen’s house, Andrew discovers a “familiar” photograph of his parents (172). The Doctor tells Andrew, it is a photograph of

‘a hotel in Invertay: you were conceived there. It was a little skiing resort in the north. As a matter of fact, there’s a town not far from here with the same name. We should drive there some time and see what it’s like. Your mother said that was one of the happiest periods of her life.’ (172)

Shortly after seeing the photograph, Andrew drives north to celebrate his birthday. After traversing the countryside for hours, he eventually stops at a motel, The Highlander (228). Entering his room, Andrew finds an unnamed woman, “standing by the bed, naked and smiling; and something about her made me feel I should know her. For some reason, the sight of her filled me with such sadness I could have wept” (228). Andrew removes an old plaid coat, “a coat with a musty, familiar smell,” and undresses himself (228).

Freud suggests that for neurotic men female genitalia evoke a feeling of uncanniness. He writes,

[t]his *unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning. There is a joking saying that ‘Love is home-sickness’; and whenever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming: ‘this place is familiar to me, I’ve been here before’, we may interpret the place as being his mother’s genitals or her body. In this case too, then, the *unheimlich* is what was once *heimisch*, familiar. (“Uncanny” 245 – emphasis original)

In the narrative, Andrew is reunited with “this *unheimlich* place” – the entrance to his former “home.” The surrealistic description of Andrew’s sexual intercourse with the nameless woman reverses the process of his birth. As she coos motherly terms of endearment, calling Andrew “my sweet” and “my dearest,” she begins to insert first his feet and then, limb by limb, his entire body into her womb (McCormack 230, 231). Although she cries with pain, Andrew feels none. He explains that “[a]ll of my flesh had taken on a purplish hue; my whole body was engorged, it longed to slide into her” (231). “I could have believed a rope was attached to me,” Andrew describes, “I was being pulled inside so inexorably, an ecstatic spelunker in this smooth, timeless tunnel” (231). As Andrew re-enters the womb, he no longer maintains the ability to speak and casts himself “off from all words....” (232). Andrew’s return to the womb results in the return to a pre-linguistic, infantile state.

In his study *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis* (1918), Freud presents the case of Sergei Pankeiev, who had received psychoanalytic treatment. As a child, Pankeiev or the “Wolf Man” had suffered from a neurotic disorder. During the treatment, Freud analyzes a series of the Wolf Man’s dreams and concludes that his disorder is largely due to a fantasy for reunion and rebirth. Freud explains that the meaning of the womb-fantasy is “is frequently derived . . . from an attachment to the father” (*Infantile* 101). He writes:

There is a wish to be inside the mother’s womb in order to replace her during intercourse—in order to take her place in regard to the father. The phantasy of re-birth, on the other hand, is in all probability regularly a softened (a euphemism, one might say) for the phantasy of incestuous intercourse with the mother. . . . There is a wish to be back in a situation in which one was in the mother’s genitals; and in this connection the man is identifying himself with his own penis and is using it to represent himself. Thus the two phantasies are revealed as each other’s counterparts: they give expression, according as the subject’s attitude is feminine or masculine, to his wish for sexual intercourse with his father or with his mother. We cannot dismiss the

possibility that in the complaint made by our present patient and in the necessary condition laid down for his recovery the two phantasies, that is to say the two incestuous wishes, were united. (101-102)

Like the Wolf Man, Andrew expresses a longing to understand his past and to be held within familiar surroundings. Unable to accept the loss of his parents, Andrew longs to regain a connection with them. Attached to the memory of his father, Andrew yearns to better understand his father's suicide. Andrew also desires to be "back" with his mother – to be reunited with the familiar home of the womb.

Terry Castle suggests that "[h]ome itself has become uncanny, a realm of *apophrades* [the dead]. To be 'at home' is to be possessed by memory, to dwell with the spirits of the dead" (123). In this sexual fantasy, Andrew is "at home": Andrew is both possessed by memory and dwelling with the spirit of his dead mother. In their work on the immigrant experience, psychoanalysts Grinberg and Grinberg suggest that

[i]n primitive fantasies, death is conceived as reunion with one's ancestors. The metaphor expresses human concern over where one goes to spend the last of one's life and represents the desire to return to the land of one's ancestors, as an unconscious fantasy of returning to the womb. To die far away from home "in a foreign land" is considered a double death because it makes the fantasized return impossible. (161)

Here, the orgasmic "little death" reunites Andrew with his mother and returns him to the womb – his original home. It is in the reproduction of the maternal relationship that Andrew, at long last, is able to integrate the unfamiliar with the familiar. The events have replicated the circumstances of his original conception in a Scottish hotel named The Highlander. These events, however, have occurred in a foreign land; thereby, indicating his double death. Indeed, Andrew's nostalgic, fantasized return to "home" is impossible. Andrew, instead, is re-birthed in his new Canadian home. When he awakens from the fantasy or dream, Andrew finds himself in a hospital, "in

a place called Invertay, the same name as the place where my parents conceived me” (McCormack 236). While previously unable to explain his origins, Andrew realizes that “[m]y mind, which had been split in two by that gap in my memory, was joined together again” (262). Having symbolically returned to the home of his memory, Andrew emerges at home in the present. It is Canada, the New World, which becomes the site of redemption and renewal for Andrew’s disrupted narrative of origin. Andrew’s nostalgia – his longing for familiar surroundings – is for a past to which he cannot return. It is only when he encounters the uncanny nature, the inherent unfamiliarity, of his new motherland that his nostalgia can be understood and possessed in both psychic and geographic space.

Eric McCormack’s *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* metaphorically reveals the interplay between nostalgia and the uncanny. The exploration of the familiar as it is made unfamiliar has a useful place in diasporic narratives. Nostalgia is often criticized as a sentimentalized, stagnant form of memory. However, because nostalgia embodies desire – the longing for familiar surroundings – it facilitates the reinterpretation of memories of the past and, thereby, not only encourages the re-visitation of memory, but also facilitates the successful integration of the past into the present.

### **Appropriating the Past: Alistair MacLeod’s *No Great Mischief***

As I examined in Chapter Four, nostalgia has been used in Scotland to establish emotional and economic connections with the Scottish diaspora. An examination of the tourist industry and *Homecoming 2009* revealed that the

commodification of space uses sentimentalized nostalgia to assign an economic value on representations of the past. A particular narrative example of history as a consumable commodity is Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief* (1999). The novel follows the story of a family, *clan Chalum Ruaidh*, which emigrates from Scotland in 1779, during the Highland Clearances, and settles in Cape Breton, Canada.<sup>73</sup>

Although the links between Scotland and Canada are numerous in the novel, I am most interested in the ways in which MacLeod constructs nostalgia not only as a space of the familiar, but also as an overly idealized topography of the past. I argue that the characters graft the diverse memories of others onto their identity, thus providing an example of the implications and motivations of the appropriation of the past. *No Great Mischief* depicts two forms of nostalgia: it is not only a longing for the familiar surroundings of home, but also a sentimentalizing of memory. Returning to an analysis of the response to loss, I examine the characters' reactions to the loss of the familiar in both family and nation. The characters' refuse to accept the changes they have experienced; instead, they deliberately appropriate narratives of memory, which indicates their inability to mourn. As familial and national pasts are idealized and objectified, the characters are confined within a state of melancholia and are unable to mourn their loss.

In *No Great Mischief*, key physical traits distinguish family members of the *clan Chalum Ruaidh* and the idealization of the past becomes hinged on genetics, which "seem to have been passed on and, in some cases, almost to have been intensified" (MacLeod 26). *Calum Ruadh*, the patriarchal immigrant, "was supposed

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<sup>73</sup> See James Hunter's *Scottish Exodus: Travels among a Worldwide Clan*, specifically pp. 14-18, where Hunter briefly analyzes *No Great Mischief* and describes his visit to the author.



to be big and of course *ruadh*, red,” a descendant remarks. ““He probably looked like the rest of us”” (9). No visual representations of the patriarch exist; instead, legend describes his physical characteristics as the explanatory narrative that links his descendants into one family. As Alexander MacDonald, the narrator, explains, “[s]ometimes it seems we know a lot about him, and at other times very little,” yet the twentieth-century Canadian descendants not only retain physical traits of “colouring” with black or red hair, but also psychic traces of the past (17, 26). Memories are passed down through oral narratives and retain an emotional resonance in the descendants. Because of the lack of “evidence,” the family elaborates facts and invents stories to trace their history and, thus, to legitimize their existence. When Alexander visits his older brother Calum in downtown Toronto, the men recount the sentimental tales of familial immigration. Describing the details of *clann Chalum Ruaidh*, Alexander admits that “[t]hese seem the facts” – even the facts are subject to vague interpretation (17 – emphasis added).

As children, Alexander and his siblings were orphaned. Their parents, keepers of an island lighthouse, attempted to cross an ice floe from the mainland to the island, but were drowned. Because Alexander and his twin sister, Catriona, were only three years old, they scarcely remember their parents. The death of Alexander’s parents creates a literal gap in the familial lineage; however, the children’s legitimacy is ensured. Not only were the parents cousins, each descended from *Calum Ruadh*, but the children are raised by their *clan Chalum Ruaidh* grandparents. Although Alexander and his sister acquire an understanding of their lineage from the narratives that their grandparents and brothers share, the memories are not their own. Alexander only recalls “[s]ome things. I’m not sure how many of the memories are

real and how many I've sort of made up from other people's stories" (12). While Alexander's vague admission that he "sort of made up" the past reveals the fissures in his personal memory, it is also indicative of the *clann Chalum Ruaidh*'s obsession with creating an enduring family history.

While consistent and perpetual, the references to biological similarities in the family, evident by the colour of hair, reinforce the myth of original genetic purity, the repetition of key phrases such as "[b]lood is thicker than water" reminds the characters of their "pure," linear – and, therefore, direct and legitimate – connection with both Scotland and Canada (241). As the descendents attempt to stitch their familial narrative, the implication is that

‘if you read everything and put the pieces all together the real truth would emerge. It would be, somehow, like carpentry. Everything would fit together just so, and you would see in the end something like ‘a perfect building called the past.’ (215-216)

The "perfect building," however, escapes completion. The familial stories about the *clan Chalum Ruaidh* expose the image of loss: the longing for familiar surroundings. The space within the family past, the yearning for extinct familial bonds, is filled with sentimental devotion that exceeds the basic bonds of siblings and parents. Above any other commitment, family loyalty is expected and they are repeatedly reminded of platitudes such as "[y]et still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland" and "[m]y hope is constant in thee, Clan Donald" (187). The idealization of the family relationships, however, betrays their appropriation of memory.

The *clan Chalum Ruaidh*'s obsession with filling the spaces of the past exceeds genetic manifestations: the *clan Chalum Ruaidh* claims to have a direct familial connection with key moments in Scottish history, such as the Highland Clearances, Battle of Bannockburn, Battle of Killiecrankie, and the Massacre of Glencoe.

Centuries after these events, the grandfathers frequently tell stories of the MacDonalds' constancy and bravery that coincides with the historical events (82-83). One grandfather imaginatively describes the warriors "“coming home across the wildness of Rannoch Moor in the splendour of the autumn sun. . . . [C]oming with their horses and their banners and their plaids tossed arrogantly over their shoulders. . . . Singing the choruses of their rousing songs, while the sun gleams off the shining of their weapons and the black and the redness of their hair”" (83-84). The sentimental description not only situates the *clann Chalum Ruaidh*'s forefathers in the geographical and historical space of Scotland, the "wildness of Rannoch Moor," but also employs clichéd images of the Highlander, images of the plaid and hair colour. In addition to connecting the family to key moments of Scottish history, the grandfathers also emphasize the participation of the MacDonald clan in key moments of Canadian history. The MacDonald's participation in the battle on the Plains of Abraham in Quebec is seen as "winning Canada for *us*" (101 – emphasis original). Thus, the speculative participation of the ancestors in the Scottish and Canadian historical events, apparently, establishes the family's right to ownership of memory and national space.

Karl Jirgens argues that MacLeod's postmodern text succeeds in being both historical and political. Jirgens reads the circularity of the novel as an attempt to use memory to maintain consistency of personal and family identity, but he argues that the desire to return home cannot be achieved because immigration is a permanent displacement (94). Similarly, David Williams discusses the implications on familial and national contexts that the oral transfer of memory has within the novel. He argues that the text is concerned with the integration of groups. According to

Williams, the negotiations MacLeod promotes are key to understanding language and the role of the individual within a larger framework. Both Jirgens and Williams observe the novel's use of "associative," rather than linear memory (Jirgens 85; Williams "Clan" 63). Noting the problematic layering of the narrative, Jirgens writes, the "tale is built upon the recollections of others" and this "plurality of voices or memories within Alexander's recollection establishes often-conflicting perspectives" (86). Jirgens argues that "[e]ach recalled telling or re-telling of a death by one of several characters, illuminates the life that was lost and the life that remains. Each repeated episode rekindles the family history, a lighthouse illuminating the past, present and future of the *clann Chalum Ruaidh*" (89). Linking his discussion of memory and history with the concept of 'home,' Jirgens maintains that "'Home' is not merely a physical place, but a state of mind, a condition. . . . The cycle of departure and return can never be completed. This is an immigrant tale of permanent displacement. Closure is ontologically impossible because displacement is permanent" (94). Jirgens and Williams emphasize the importance of memory and the concept of nostalgia in *No Great Mischief*; however, they fail to address the problematic use of the past in the novel. The characters repeatedly appropriate narratives of the past that are not their own. The elaboration of connections between their own family and particular Scottish historical events underscores the failure to recognise the historical and cultural de-politicization and anachronism of their actions.

The problematic approach to nostalgia, the longing for familiar surroundings and the longing for a memory that is not one's own, is manifested not only in the familial idealization of lineage and history, but also in their fixation on

the origin of home. The fluidity with which the narrative shifts between the family's contemporary Canadian experiences and the past events that occurred in Scotland exposes a fixation on the theme of exile. Ignoring the historical complexities of the Highland Clearances, *No Great Mischief* focuses only on the story of exile.

Claiming the label "exiled" Scots – even several generations after immigration – permits the characters to eternally search for the familiar location of home and retain a longing for a past that was not their own. For *clann Chalum Ruaidh* descendants, Cape Breton is only a substitute for the Scottish homeland.

In *Patterns of Isolation in English Canadian Fiction*, John Moss maintains that the themes of exile and isolation are prominent in Canadian fiction. According to Moss, "[t]he *mythos* of such a nation as Canada whose original population came from abroad, usually under duress of either force or circumstance, has taken its present shape through countless stories of exile, stories in which the dualism of isolation remains explicit" (11). Diasporic narratives, such as *No Great Mischief*, often emphasize not just the theme of exile from the homeland, but also of isolation. Scottish emigrants, no longer physically located in their Scottish homeland, had not yet adapted to their new Canadian country.<sup>74</sup> Geographically separated from Scotland, the emigrant's exile from familiar surroundings became a central and repeated narrative.

In *No Great Mischief*, the depiction of the familiar as home escapes the limitations of physical space and time. While genetic traits and historical myths are

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<sup>74</sup> See Janet Wilson's useful discussion in "Constructing the Metropolitan Homeland: The Literatures of the White Settler Societies of New Zealand and Australia," where she examines New Zealand and Australian settlers. Her analysis of the diasporic experience, I would suggest, can help to elucidate the Scottish-Canadian settler experience.

used to legitimize the family's connection to Scotland, the geographical space of Scotland becomes the idealized object that is perpetually mourned. The story of Glencoe is “[s]carcely a trace any more . . . except the river and the mountains and the stones and their memories” (MacLeod 89). The memories, however, can be accessed directly when one visits the landscape. As an adult, Catriona travels to Scotland and encounters an older woman, who immediately recognises her:

‘You are from here,’ said the woman.  
 ‘No,’ said my [Alexander’s] sister, ‘I’m from Canada.’  
 ‘That may be,’ said the woman. ‘But you are really from here. You have just been away for a while.’ (147)

The sister has never visited Scotland, yet she feels embraced with a sense of familiarity, as though “somehow that I have known you all my life and that you should know everything about me. I will tell you later” – she is “home now” (153). Paul Basu suggests that “[t]hrough such expressions of ‘genealogical rhetoric’, agency for this profound identification with Scotland is diverted from the rational ‘mind’ of the self and directed to the more obscure emotions and substances of the ‘body’. Intuited as a kind of genetic memory, it is thus the soul or blood of the self that is perceived to recognise home” (*Homecomings* 91). Catriona, upon meeting the older woman, began to speak Gaelic. Later, when she recalls the experience, Catriona’s explanation points to an intuited genetic and emotional response: “I don’t even remember what I said, the actual words or the phrases. It was just like it poured out of me, like some subterranean river that had been running deep within me and suddenly burst forth” (MacLeod 150). The sentimental account of her experience positions her as a “roots tourist.” According to Kevin Meethan,

[t]he act of travel itself became the means by which a sense of self could be reassessed. To roots tourists, however, the very specificity of the places visited, is a very important element . . . . [F]amily history and its insistence on

fidelity to and accuracy of, the material trace of the archive memory that legitimizes kinship, is located at a particular point, or points, of origin. (147)

Ironically, although Catriona believes memory is “beyond language,” her ability to manipulate the spatiality of place and language permits her to have direct communication with the “authentic” homeland (MacLeod 178). Coles and Timothy argue that when descendants travel to the homeland, “authenticity may become a purely relative notion, conditioned by factors in the new country and limited contact with the original homeland through intervening years. Conditions do not remain stagnant in the homeland, so it is common for hyphenated peoples to have travel experiences in the motherland that are very different from their expectations” (293). Although the conditions of the homeland have changed in time, the crux of Alex’s sister’s experience is that the familial genetic traits, original language, and geographical space have remained unchanged. These depictions, however, are problematic.

One could argue that in a strange inversion, Catriona becomes a colonizer of the Scottish space. John Moss contends that “[w]hen the territory is known, its strangeness subdued, then a period of colonial exile sets in” (13). According to Moss,

[t]he colonial mentality comes of being born in exile, of accepting foreign experience as more valid, more relevant than one’s own. It is the condition of an established society having been transported, in fragments, to a newly settled or newly civilized location, and rebuilt according to the specifications of an idealized past. (13)

Moss sees isolation as a “condition” of immigrants: once diasporic generations are settled into their new national space, its unfamiliarity is tamed. Instead, the immediate past becomes the unfamiliar and foreign territory. In an attempt to possess the past, the immigrant strives to maintain connections with an idealized and mythic homeland. During her visit to Scotland, Catriona assumes the shared memories of the

*clann Chalum Ruaidh* to be a foreign experience and, therefore, as more valid than her own. Catriona claims a space of memory that is not her own. Her act of colonization thus perpetuates an idealization of the past.

The novel fails to recognise the historical, cultural, and political implications of these apparent connections. The equation of an individual's contemporary experience with another's experience in the past is in danger of becoming idealized, romanticized, and normalized. Catriona's behaviour mirrors what Susan Stewart has usefully described in her discussion of the role of experience as a commodity.

Stewart argues:

Within the development of culture under an exchange economy, the search for the authentic experience and, correlatively, the search for the authentic object become critical. As experience is increasingly mediated and abstracted, the lived relation of the body to the phenomenological world is replaced by a nostalgic myth of contact and presence. "Authentic" experience becomes both elusive and allusive as it is placed beyond the horizon of present lived experience, the beyond in which the antique, the pastoral, the exotic, and other fictive domains are articulated. In this process of distancing, the memory of the body is replaced by the memory of the object, a memory standing outside the self and thus presenting both a surplus and lack of significance. (*Longing* 133)

As Catriona's narrative illustrates, another's past may become an inappropriate object of memory. In the search for elusive "authentic" experience, the sentimentalization and commodification of Scottish culture and its past becomes a mere substitute for lived experience and personal memory: it becomes a false object that simply stalls the mourning process. The appropriation of the object not only creates an inauthentic identity, but also refuses to allow the identity to be complete. Unable to be complete, Catriona instead experiences pathological melancholia.

In *No Great Mischief*, nostalgia extends beyond the "longing for familiar surroundings" and accrues abundant "[s]entimental longing *for* or regretful memory



of a period of the past, esp[ecially] one in an individual's own lifetime; (also) sentimental imagining or evocation of a period of the past" ("Nostalgia"). The sentimental evocation of the past extends far beyond the lifetime of the characters. Nostalgia for an idealized past that is *not* the characters' own accrues monumental significance. Because the memory is idealized, the object stalls the characters' ability to mourn loss. The refusal to mourn the loss of familiar surroundings – the loss of home – highlights that "[t]he danger is that these objects, necessary at first to reaffirm one's sense of identity, will take over all the physical/psychic space and prevent the immigrant from incorporating the new and accepting the past as past" (Grinberg and Grinberg 133). It is not just the first generation immigrants of the *clann Chalum Ruaidh* who refused to accept the loss of home and the past: the identity of the entire *clann Chalum Ruaidh* descendants is based upon narratives of the past. The idealization of genetic traits, ancestral history, and the immigration experience results not only in melancholia for the loss of familiar surroundings, but also in the sentimentalization and appropriation of the commodity of memory. As Grinberg and Grinberg describe, the emigrant mourning process can be delayed "for so long that it passes to the second generation. The family of original emigrants keeps up the appearance of being more or less balanced, but the unacknowledged mourning works as a weight, and a member of the following generation necessarily takes that weight on his shoulders" (168). As the descendants of the *clann Chalum Ruaidh* diaspora assume the weight of mourning, the personal and geographical shifts of the previous generation and "[d]isturbances of temporal integration are manifested as memories in which present events are confused with past occurrences" (133). Unable to negotiate the temporal inconsistencies within the psychic space of

memory, the *clann Chalum Ruaidh* is unable to integrate the past within the present. The *clann Chalum Ruaidh* refuses to accept the loss of the familial past; instead, they embrace the familiarity of perpetual melancholia.

In this chapter, I have examined nostalgia as it is depicted in Scottish-Canadian diasporic fiction. The “acute longing for familiar surroundings,” nostalgia straddles concepts of the familiar in both geographic and psychic space. When transferred through diasporic narratives, nostalgia, as the familiar home, exceeds the boundaries of national space. In literature, the negative effects of nostalgia are often portrayed: nostalgia may shade into the realm of the uncanny, where the familiar becomes unfamiliar; it may sentimentalize and romanticize the past. In *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, nostalgia is displaced and the uncanny erupted into psychic space. In *No Great Mischief*, the use of nostalgia reveals a sentimental, appropriated view of the past that inhibits the mourning of loss. Indeed, were the discussion of nostalgia to have only focused on those novels, nostalgia would remain relegated as a stagnant form of memory.

It is, however, in the additional spheres of nostalgia where one can find positive possibilities for this otherwise deficient type of memory. As I have shown, the use of nostalgia in Scottish-Canadian literature is diverse. This diasporic literature demonstrates that the space of the familiar, the image of home, can be found in the integration of both stasis and mobility (Basu *Homecomings* 8). Nostalgia, in *The Imperialist*, indicates the shifts of national identity as it adapts to new surroundings; in *Sick Heart River*, nostalgia encourages the traversal of psychic space to bring acceptance and integration of the past into the present. As the manifestations of nostalgia reveal, it is through the active negotiation of the psychic

topography of the past that one can renegotiate the longing for familiar surroundings into the present. According to Bachelard, “[t]he poetic image is not subject to an inner thrust. It is not an echo of the past. On the contrary: through the brilliance of an image, the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away” (xii). Through renewed interest in the trajectory of the past – not through linear models of history, but through the fissures and non-linear forms of memory – nostalgia can resound the echo of the past and can encourage the renegotiation of identity.

## Conclusion

In this thesis, I have traced memory as a representation of the past in late twentieth and twenty-first century Scottish fiction. Through an extended enquiry into the apparently paradoxical positions of memory and history, I have argued that modern Scottish fiction embraces a different approach. Scottish writing refuses to privilege either memory or history as it conveys the past. Memory and history do not exist in a binary opposition; instead, Scottish literature offers both as useful representations of the past. In the fiction I have selected, memory is used to interrogate history. Although it operates in interior psychic space, memory inescapably marks three distinct spheres: the individual, the family, and the nation. Through plot and character, this literature has revealed the vivid patterns and interplay between the past and the present that occurs within these spheres. Regardless of geographical setting, whether in Scotland, on an island nearby, or across the world in Canada, the narratives have portrayed the diversity and adaptability of memory in psychic space.

The structure of my thesis and selection of novels has demonstrated memory's disruption of a chronologically linear trajectory and has exposed its perpetually evolving nature. In Chapter One, I considered the transferral of personal and communal memory in George Mackay Brown's *Greenvoe*. I referred to Nora's analysis of memory as inclusive of individual and collective experience and Benjamin's discussion of the communicability of lived experience and its disintegration in modernity as I explored the diverse ways of transmitting memory in *Greenvoe*. I integrated analysis of the nationalistic folk and political debates that

were circulating in mid-twentieth-century Scotland to examine three ways in which memory is transferred in *Greenvoe* and to demonstrate that the novel also shows a striking concern with the transmission of memory. Mrs McKee's refusal to share her past to her son indicates her inability to accept loss, while Skarf's adaptation of a communal history into personal memory reveals the complexities that arise in the communication of the past. Lastly, I considered the Ancient Mystery of the Horsemen. I argued that the use of ritual revealed the deliberate and conscious transmission of memory between generations.

Following the investigation of memory's transferral, I turned to an examination of sensory memory. In Chapter Two, I investigated Emma Tennant's *Wild Nights* and Elspeth Barker's *O Caledonia*. I argued that these novels employed the Gothic trope of shifting boundaries to represent the adaptability of memory. Using Freud's and Klein's theories of object-relations and Abraham and Torok's theory of mourning, I examined the function of loss in *Wild Nights*. I suggested that the shifting structures in the novel gesture towards anxiety about family relationships. The inability to accept the loss of the elder brother is revealed in Aunt Zita's incorporation of his ghostly figure. Shifting from an examination of loss within the personal and familial context, I moved to a study of incorporation in *O Caledonia*. I examined Walter Scott's attempt to impose a linear structure to the Scottish past and Cairns Craig's and Tom Nairn's later unsettled discussions about the fractured national history of Scotland. I argued that the narrative memory of Janet disrupts and defies fixed temporal structures. Janet's inability to vocalize her past is revealed in the refusal to mourn and the incorporation of oral sensory experience.

Although the novel itself reveals problematic forms of memory, it embraces a non-linear approach to Janet's past.

Alice Thompson's *Pharos*, I argued in Chapter Three, reveals the ways in which unconscious memory is transferred between generations. Using Abraham's concept of the transgenerational phantom, I examined the ways in which Lucia is the embodiment of the unacknowledged connection between the island and slavery. I situated this within island narratives of Scottish literature and undisclosed aspects of Scottish history, particularly the scarcely acknowledged Scottish role in the British slave trade. The character of Lucia reveals that secrets of the past, until acknowledged, are carried forward and remain to haunt future generations.

Transitioning from the consideration of strictly personal and familial contexts, Chapter Four investigated the presentation and use of national memory in Scotland. Exploring the definitions of nostalgia, I argued that it is a diverse form of memory and traced nostalgia's diverse functions in Neil Gunn's *Highland River*. Nostalgia is not only a sentimental representation of the past; it also encourages the renegotiation of familiar surroundings in psychic and national space. Nostalgia's connection to the spatial and the familiar, however, is usefully considered in the Scottish diaspora. Identifying the use of landscape in tourism as exemplifying the commodification of memory, I maintained that this is indicative of the connection that Scotland, as the familiar home, seeks to preserve and to perpetuate within its diaspora.

Building upon my study of nostalgia in the previous chapter, Chapter Five conducted a close examination of the diverse functions of nostalgia in Scottish-Canadian diasporic fiction. Sara Jeanette Duncan's *The Imperialist* demonstrated the

complex national identities in Scottish-Canadian immigrants and their descendants as they negotiate ties to the familiar home of Scotland, Great Britain, and Canada. John Buchan's *Sick Heart River* exemplified the ways in which nostalgia can be used to traverse the familiar in psychic space and to integrate the past into the present. The third novel, Eric McCormack's *First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, revealed how nostalgia can be repositioned as the uncanny. Displaced in psychic and geographic space, memory can be defamiliarized as new surroundings are negotiated. Finally, I considered the appropriation of an idealized past in Alistair MacLeod's *No Great Mischief*. The refusal to accept loss not only results in sentimentalized nostalgia, but also in a state of melancholia. Unable to integrate the past into the present, the characters idealize and objectify their familial and national past.

Throughout my research, I have found that the study of literature overlaps with memory studies and psychoanalysis. These fields recognise the importance of the individual's past and identify ways in which this past is understood and communicated. The interiority of the psyche is integral to the depiction of memory; similarly, how we examine the mind can be indicative of how the past is represented. As an internal structure of the mind, memory's spatial representation also elucidates its diverse functions. Memory is encased within the individual mind; however, memory can exceed the boundaries of the individual's psychic topography. It can also be consciously and deliberately communicated and shared with others. The transmission of memory affects not only the individual who shares it, but also the person with whom it is shared. As it is communicated, memory transmits experience

and wisdom of the past. It is this knowledge that has a direct influence on both familial and national communities.

Problematic memory, a narrative or experience of the past that is *not* shared or acknowledged, has complex and diverse affects. The refusal to mourn loss or the sentimentalization of the past may cause disruptions in the psyche of the individual. Alternatively, unacknowledged aspects of the past may be unavoidably and unconsciously communicated, causing disruptions in the familial context. Both problematic and positive forms of memory may also be positioned in terms of nation. Memory can escape the borders of geographical space. Housed within the home of psychic space, memory can be transported into any location and can escape the geographically identifiable markers of nation. As can be seen in the Scottish diaspora, the shifting space of national home has elicited yet further changes in the topography of memory. Just as the space of landscape is traversed, memory must be travelled *into* and encountered. Memory not only encourages a reinterpretation of the past, but also facilitates its integration into the present. The exploration of memory in modern Scottish fiction therefore enhances understanding not only of an individual's past, but also of familial and national history.



## Appendix

### Interview with Alice Thompson

Linda Tym: Do you think that there is any overarching, archetypal connection between people through their dreams or their unconscious?

Alice Thompson: Not in a reductive way, but I just find dreams really interesting. I just think what is unconscious is really what drives us in many ways and that makes life very mysterious. I love the way Freud uses myth and story to illustrate individual cases. I think people [are] connected definitely by hidden desires and wants and needs, which are very primitive. How much of that is to do with kind of the animal in us and how much is to do with our imagination – it is difficult really to separate them. I think one grows out of the other. I think the imagination is the human version of animal drives. It's the sense we make of our drives, our baser instincts. Well, that's a very Freudian thing to say, but it's the symbolic version of animal instinct. The unconscious. In that sense, it does connect us all – we're human, we're all human. There are probably recurring patterns, which come from the dynamics between relationships, between families, parents, children, that connect us all.

L: Did you work on Freud with your PhD thesis?

A: A tiny bit, I mean it's all so long time ago! But Freud, Lacan, I touched on them. I read a bit of them, but I think as a writer one is invariably drawn to Freud because of his love of story and symbolism. That's something I'm particularly interested in – symbolism – I love the idea of imagery making meaning resonant; rather, than explaining everything in a linear way. I like the way meaning can be three dimensional with a symbol. Freud was interested in that – and dreams do that. They turn meaning on its head in a way. Instead of explaining meaning, they open it up.

L: Very much so. That is why I'm curious about memory – is that it's non-linear. There are gaps and jumps in it. It's not a straight narrative that we're told. Often memory

changes the event and then you wonder, what was the authentic event? How was it changed?

A: I think memory is – like dreaming – it's very subjective. You have the events and then you have the interpretation of the events at the time. Let alone retrospectively! You have these layers of interpretation. It's well known, really, when you have witnesses in trials, how fallible their memories are. How uncertain they are – and they seem certain. Memory is imprinted on you. It doesn't seem uncertain, which again is quite a challenge if you're a detective.

L: In a previous interview, it was mentioned how many of your works seem to have a detective thread. Is this the first time you're deliberately writing a detective story and what was your motivation?

A: Absolutely. And it's quite strange. Love of detective writing. And I kind of like – I love – in a way each of my books are in a way a kind of homage to a genre, in a way. *The Falconer* was a homage really to Daphne du Maurier and that whole romantic 1930s women's writing; kind of trying to form a kind of re-vision of it. Kind of playing with that dark, Satanic hero and actually rewriting him. And *Pharos* was my attempt at a ghost story. I'm not sure about *Pandora's Box*. It's sort of science-fiction, weird. But this was my homage really, the one I'm working on at the moment – it's called *The Existential Detective* – it's a homage to the detective genre. I love Raymond Chandler and Agatha Christie. In my early teens I devoured them all – Erle Stanley Gardner. It's this idea of deciphering codes and the idea of what we were saying about memory – trying to ascertain a truth. Whether there's a singular truth or a variable truth, many truths, variety of truths. In fact, I have a little section in the book about the similarity between being a detective and being a writer. That – how I write is very much, it's quite instinctive, it's quite unconscious. The first draft I won't analyze it at all, I just write it. In a way, the writing of the book, the redrafting of it, is my way of uncovering what the story is. I don't come to the book with a well worked-out plot.

- L: Does a detective novel need to have that completed whole at the end?
- A: No. If you take someone like Paul Auster – an American writer. He has a recurring motive of detectives and oracle nights. Very transparent writing. Very dreamlike. Loves dreams and stories within stories and his detective stories tend to be quite open-ended. Interestingly, the kind of stories like Raymond Chandler, like Agatha Christie, they do – on the whole – tell you what’s happened in the end. That pleasure you get at the end, like a crossword puzzle, of filling in all the blanks, is quite attractive to me. There’s two things kind of vying in me about it. Two conflicting feelings about it.
- L: I can see how it is difficult because while you do want to fill in the blanks for the reader, there’s a bit of pleasure for the reader to come up with possible conclusions.
- A: Yes! I think that’s something my writing is plagued by – is people finding it difficult. I don’t know quite why they find it difficult, perhaps because it’s a bit different. I try to make the meaning implicit in the book – to me it all seems pretty self-evident in the end – if you read the book properly. If you just read every word. But some people don’t. They’ll skim read and they’ll miss things. And they’re not books that can bear that kind of reading. They need to be read quite accurately, so. I like things to be ambiguous and mysterious, but it’s also not wanting to be unpublishable.
- L: There’s often a difference between the popular genre that’s accessible to the wide audience versus the very academic kind of novel that we may be studying. Do you deliberately try to blur those boundaries?
- A: That’s a really brilliant question, because each time with my next book, I think – “right, I’m going to make this popular.” And each time, I just end up writing the book I had to write. I think with this book, because it’s a homage to the detective genre, it dictates certain rules. It’s not really to do with being popular, it’s just to do with my homage to the genre. I was talking to Susan Sellers, who is Professor of English at St. Andrews. She’s lovely! If you ever get the chance, she’s a great

person. A sweetheart. And I told her I was writing a detective novel and she immediately assumed that I was writing for the public, as it were – and I said, actually no, I'm not. I'm writing the best detective story that I can write. As a challenge for me. So, there is a bit of conflict because I would like my books to sell quite well, but not at the expense of compromise. I can't really do it. I have to do what the book suggests, really.

L: Has it helped that you were acknowledged early in your career and won the James Tait Black Prize?

A: Ya, I mean, it was fantastic! It's lovely to have that. I really appreciate it and I'll always be grateful. I know from the outside it may seem like something to live up to. But because each book to me has always been such a challenge in itself, I've never really seen it like that at all. I've never really seen it as something that is a burden, at all. Though from the outside it might seem like that. It's something that happened for that book and then I write the next one. Because each book is really quite different and it's a fantastic honour. But I never write thinking, "I've won the James Tait Black." Never, never. I wish I did! It might make it a little more enjoyable.

L: You were also awarded the Creative Arts from Scotland. Has being awarded two Scottish awards shaped yourself as a writer or what you write about?

A: No. What shapes me much more is that I was born in Scotland, I've lived here most of my life now. It's my experience of Scotland personally, rather than winning Scottish prizes. It's important to me to be acknowledged in that way, but I wouldn't say that's what shaped my interest in Scotland.

L: Your last two novels have dealt with Scotland – the first two were set away. Do you find yourself coming back to the location of Scotland as a place to situate your texts? Is it deliberate or is it just simply how the story fits? Or does the geographical location dictate how your story develops?

- A: Ya, I would say it has a huge impact on the story. Often I will start with an atmosphere or a sense of place. The book I'm working on at the moment is set in Portobello and I just love that idea of a faded, seaside resort. It all came from that feeling of decay and that faded grandeur and beauty. With *The Falconer*, it was very much set in the Highlands – the beauty of the animal and plant world of Scotland. And *Pharos* was very much influenced by my stay in Shetland and that incredible seascape. So, I'm very, very influenced by place. Of course you have *Justine*, which is influenced by London. *Pandora's Box* was influenced by my stay in America – Las Vegas and the desert.
- L: Do you identify yourself consciously or self-reflexively as a Scottish author or as a female author? Do they intertwine at all?
- A: That is so difficult. No. I'd have to say no to both. I think it's more just, it sounds a bit generalized, but just my perception of the world. I mean obviously my Scottishness and the fact that I am a female is hugely, hugely influential on what I write and how I perceive the world, but that's within the broader perception. So, all the books I've read are a huge influence on me. I would say they're a greater influence on my reading and my imagination, than my gender or nationality.
- L: *Pharos* was a Gothic text – a ghost story – and now you're writing a detective novel. Both genres have an established history in Scottish literature – for example, James Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* or Ian Rankin's work. Do you feel the need to assert yourself according to that tradition?
- A: They're certainly on my back! Yes, I do. Well, it's funny to say it, because I was thinking about Ian Rankin, how – in fact, I was talking to my husband about this with, with how Alexander McCall Smith as well – how they have made Scotland. How they've internationalized Scotland in a way that ten years ago, if you'd set a book in Edinburgh, you'd be seen as parochial. Now, Ian Rankin and people like that, because of their huge success and their talent, it's easier in a way, to set a book in Portobello. So that's at the back of my mind, a bit. I'm a very different writer from

those two writers. I'm always with my writing, trying to chip away at an individual path that will always separate me from other writers. I always want to be distinct. So it wouldn't just be the Scottish heritage or the Scottish books I've read or the American or the English, it's more that wanting a distinctive voice that's vying with all these other voices – all these other books. So, the Scottish writing is just part of a larger whole. But they inspire me. They're definitely at the back of my mind. Especially people like Robert Louis Stevenson. There's a dark, there's a dark side, I think. You were talking about the Gothic – there's a dark side to Scottish writing which I love, and which I do feel part of.

L: You mentioned how, maybe ten years ago, parochial would have been the concept of Scotland. Your last two novels have been set in a rural Scottish context and now you're moving to the urban environment. Do you consciously react against the Kailyard tradition in Scottish writing as a nostalgic, sentimentalized, idealized past? Is there an inherent connection between Scottish writing and the notion of the idealized history of it?

A: That is interesting. I am quite interested in dismantling myth. Like with *Justine*, the myth of the feminine. In *The Falconer*, I was trying to look at how nature can be idealized. The great thing about novel writing is that you can incorporate all these contradictory ideas in one text. So you have this wonderful tension, these wonderful pulls, between myths and sentimentality and the dismantling of that. In *The Falconer* there's a homage to the landscape of Scotland, which could be seen in that tradition of Walter Scott – slightly sentimental writing. But there's also the subverting of it and that can be contained within one book. I'm definitely aware of that romantic notion of Scotland and in a way, subscribe to it, bizarrely. Because it's just so beautiful – Scotland. But also looking at the complexity of it and the history of Scotland and what lies behind the landscape. In both *Pharos* and *The Falconer*, I also look at what has made that landscape; whether war haunts the landscape of *The Falconer*. Slavery haunts *Pharos*. A country is not just made up of its rocks and its trees. While you can acknowledge their beauty, I think one also has to see the historical context of the landscape as well.

L: Do you consciously work history into your novels?

A: An earlier question was about landscape and place and as soon as I have that place – that sense of place really starts a novel off for me, I’ll immediately be looking at what makes up that place. So I think the history comes out of the landscape. With Glen Artney, where *The Falconer* is based, I found out that Kipling had come there to mourn the death of his elder son and so immediately, the World Wars started to resonate in that place. It’s an interesting idea also, I suppose, this idea of escaping history and the idea that you come to the landscape is a place of escape, but actually you carry that history with you and the beauty is transcendent. But there’s also a side to the landscape that is marked, no matter how isolated you are. I suppose Scotland attracts me to write about it, because there are these apparently romantic isolated spots in Scotland that seem beyond anything to do with man, but actually, wherever man is we take our histories. And I like that attempt to escape, but also that impossibility of escape from our humanity really, and all that goes with it. Like we were talking earlier about Freud and our psychological make-up, as well as our historical make-up. Our historical footprint.

L: Many of your novels deal with this sense of loss – whether it’s through disappearance or through death. For example, in *Pharos*, the ghost of Lucia has lost her ship or her home. In *The Falconer*, Iris loses her sister Daphne. Are these characters interacting with a hidden or forgotten past that isn’t their own? Like in a detective novel, are they on a quest to find this past. Is there a purpose for refusing to resurrect the past? Or is it detrimental to others if it’s resurrected?

A: The drive of the narrative of my books is to do with this searching. And I suppose, the message – if there is any message – is that you have to do it. That it does seem almost inevitable, given the trajectory of the story, that there’ll be some kind of resolution or discovery. And if you don’t at least try and come to terms with this loss or find an answer to it, you have somehow – I want to use the word “failed,” actually. You’ve been irresponsible. *Pandora’s Box* is interesting. You know that

phrase “has curiosity killed the cat”? It’s the dangers inherent in that kind of drive for understanding. It’s responsibility. And I don’t take it lightly. It’s not like a mindless search, it’s – you have to take the consequences. Sorry, I hope that doesn’t sound too abstract.

L: Not at all. Do you feel a sense of responsibility as a writer in the construction of your stories and in how you shape the characters? Is there a moral that you try to convey?

A: That’s very interesting because I’m very wary of morals or messages. I’ve never seen that aspect of the books in terms of morality or that idea of finding out the truth. But ya, I would. I think that it comes down to this idea of self knowledge and there is a kind of morality to that.

L: Do literature and writing give the space to interrogate topics, such as history and memory and the past? Or other concerns like identity, gender constructs, that traditional history doesn’t allow? Does it give us space to interrogate these concepts without drawing definitive conclusions? In your writing, do you self-consciously explore these questions in a more complex way than other, perhaps more traditional, books?

A: It’s certainly what really interests me. It comes back to what we said earlier about the unconscious. I’m drawn to subjects to do with identity and memory completely unconsciously. They just keep coming up in my books. I sort of, not exactly push them down, but think “oh! what are you doing here again?!” – like Jack-in-the-Box. It just seems to be something that concerns me. Because again, this book I’m working on, it’s working very much to do with identity – with shifting identities. People pretend to be people who they are not and these are themes that I suppose I must find fascinating, but it tends to be on an unconscious level. They just keep recurring.



- L: We were talking about earlier about location and its important relationship with history. Have you deliberately chosen moments in those texts that are blights in Scottish history?
- A: That's interesting. I suppose, no. I wouldn't say deliberately. Again, it's how one writes. Very little of what my writing does is deliberate initially. It becomes very deliberate in later drafts, but the initial instinct to write about a subject tends to be quite instinctive. Perhaps I look for conflict. Though again, even more in an instinctive way because I know it's kind of a hoary old chestnut that writers should have conflict in writing. You've heard how in creative writing courses you have conflict. But I suppose it's not so much doing it in that way, but because it's interesting and it throws up a lot of challenges. It's complex. It's interesting, though, it's what touches you – what concerns you. Something as pernicious as the slave trade or as devastating as the World Wars haunts you. What you were talking about memory – it's obviously something in my memory, of what I've read about those events that I'm wanting to explore. I think that's probably what it is. Again, it's something that is troubling me and so comes out and suddenly becomes a motif or theme.
- L: Do you think that these are things that have been deliberately eliminated from discussions before?
- A: I think the history of the Scottish slave trade is something that's, really, not been talked about. And it's very interesting, Linda, in the reviews of the book, very few of them mentioned the theme of slavery. And that is just – to me – so weird. Because it was the whole theme of the book, and yet they didn't really talk about it. And ya, it's very interesting to me, what you say about *The Falconer* and Appeasement. That definitely was what *The Falconer* was about. It was looking at how Appeasement was demonized as pro-Hitler and not looking at the more idealistic attempts for peace. Again, that is part of the history that has been written for us. Understandably, in a way. If you justify there were millions of people who died, you can see why the

history has been so damning. But I definitely think that it's not really acceptable, I would say, to defend the Appeasers.

L: Do you in any way see, especially with *The Falconer*, it addressing contemporary issues?

A: Yes. In fact, I was looking very much at Iraq and the ease with which we went to war in Iraq. I was comparing it to what happened with the Appeasers and the desperate attempts to avert war. And really just contrasting the two attitudes to war. I would say actually that one war was more justified than the other. But just looking at the contrasting attitudes, which I think, is just shocking, what happened, really.

L: Has there been any – or was there a negative reaction to your discussion in the text?

A: Well, again, you know, not really mentioned in the reviews. No.

L: Do you find that the reviews focus on the easy or the stereotypical aspects – like the fantasy or a ghost story aspects or the nice, idyllic setting of a glen in Scotland?

A: I should say to preface this, that I've had some wonderful, perceptive reviews. What I think happens with my writing, is that because it's quite – exactly what you say – because it's quite fantastical, quite symbolic, people almost forget or people don't notice the historical. It ties in, actually, with what you're saying about memory and absence and it's like they're not seeing the history, you know? It's quite ironic really, when you think about it. Because there I am, trying to resurrect it and then they're doing it all over again to my books. I'd never thought of that.

L: A double repression.

A: Absolutely! But I think they get sidetracked because my books aren't full of explanation and conventional characterization. Reviewers kind of get hypnotized by that, whether they like it or not. They see me more as a fantasy writer, because my

novels aren't realistic. It's almost like history and realism have to be joined at the hip. And because I'm not a realistic writer; therefore, I can't be a historical writer.

L: Is there a very strong distinction between the two?

A: I wonder if unconsciously, when people come to my books, they feel they have to choose a reading. Perhaps it's unusual. It's funny, it's sort of a family joke, how the main themes of the book don't get mentioned.

L: Which is a tragedy. Do you think that, with location, was there a reason that you gave a particular map at the beginning of *Pharos*?

A: That was a homage to Robert Louis Stevenson and *Treasure Island*. It was a little thing I wanted to do.

L: In my chapter, I actually discuss island narratives a bit, more looking at *The Merry Men* by Stevenson and I've drawn a few comparisons between your work and it. Do you think the island is an idealized location for discussing problematic issues of history?

A: I seem to be very quite attracted to antisocial situations. I don't seem to have families in my books. I don't really have communities; they all seem to be a loner. I think an island is a wonderful way kind of illustrating that kind of sense existential isolation. I suppose it's a metaphorical version of my current state of mind. I suppose in *The Falconer* that's sort of the second island the glen is an island and isolated. Or how Portobello is stuck like a little island apart from Edinburgh.

L: Are these remote scenarios connected with the idea of Britain? Do you see a comingling of the concept of British identity versus Scottish identity?

- A: Well, the fact that Scotland is a small country surrounded by water and we're a sea-fairing nation, so in that sense I am aware of us being an island. And particularly Scottish.
- L: So is that distinction important then? between this wider British identity versus this Scottish identity?
- A: Yes, it's peculiar to Scotland. Scotland has a peculiar history and a peculiar landscape and that's why I'm interested in [it]. I don't even really think about England when I imagine my books. This is Scotland; this is the world. So I'm not even thinking of the rest of Britain or of us as distinct from England. I'm just thinking of us as how we are. I think it's a very interesting idea that our Calvinism and Presbyterian heritage has had an impact in Scotland. It makes us different. There's a certain kind of repression and interest in convention. It's a huge generalization to make, but I would say we do have distinct national characteristics which come from our religion. I'm a bit wary of it, but I can see why you have a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and a Justified Sinner. There are wonderful kind of interpretations of this, coming back to Freud's ego and id, symbolized by, you could argue, Calvinistic interpretation.
- L: Do you think that role of religion or Calvinism still plays a strong part of culture today?
- A: Less and less, I would say, with the younger generation. Coming back to your idea of memory and haunting, I would say it was around. The whole of culture has changed enormously since the technological revolutions of the past 10 or 20 years. It's transformed our culture and in many ways has made us very liberal. But then on the other side of the coin is this very strict political correctness. Some people would say you have a different kind of duality. Incredible liberalism – you have pornography very widely available and yet you also have certain words that are made taboo. In a way it's kind of hilarious it's such a dualistic culture.

- L: Do you think are there more restrictions placed on things like language than other sensory aspects?
- A: It seems that coarse language represents meaning, tension, and political force. You can't separate the words from the meaning, but yes, I would say so. It's interesting you say that because you can toss it with the visual and how in terms of the visual image we're faced with almost "anything goes." For example, what's happening with women and their obsession with their bodies and the aging process. It's a cultural hysteria about aging.
- L: Do you think it's a type of nostalgia for youth in a way this desire to keep the ideal eternal vitality? Is that idea somehow consciously intertwined with this obsession?
- A: Again, this is one of the themes of my book. It's something to do with loss in a way that as you get older, you realize you don't think about it. When you're young, there is a feeling of loss. I think that creates if not so much a nostalgia, but a feeling of "I'm not going to get that back. That time is gone." It's haunting. Of course you have that whole business of woman being defined by how they look as well and that's bound up with youth. It's quite complicated, but I think it's very sad.
- L: There's mourning for youth and for the past, rather than just accepting it. Are you familiar with incorporation versus introjection in psychoanalysis?
- A: No.
- L: It's a healthy form of mourning versus an unhealthy form. I can't help but think that perhaps this is just an unhealthy form of mourning where it almost blocks the development of identity.
- A: That's fascinating! Look at these poor women with all their plastic surgery and you think, "what are they blocking?" That's a big block! I had never seen it quite that way. I've always seen it much more to do with woman's sexuality and wanting to be

attractive. And that makes it more superficial, in a way. I think, definitely, a kind of denial of the aging process and attempting to stop it. [Laughter.]

L: Is your detective a male or a female?

A: It's a male. In an earlier draft I'd made him a woman. This kind of happens a lot in my books the gender will change. Now why'd I make him a man? I'm not quite sure. His daughter has gone missing when she was young. I suppose it also came back, again, this haunting thing of all the other detective stories. A love and affection for that kind of archetype; the sentimental kind of submission. Really, it's wanting to do that book for myself and loving that idea of the cowboy. That was one of the things that was really forcing me to write the book. It felt more authentic to have a male detective. I quite like to change with each book. I mean, *The Falconer* had a female heroine. Also it's easier to distance myself. I find it's more liberating to write from a male's perspective.

L: You have mentioned that it's very hard for men to write women well and that James is one of the few authors to be able to do that. Do you think is it easier for a woman to write male characters? Are they more successful?

A: I suppose because I'm always reading as a woman . . . . On the whole, yes. From my limited perspective and being a woman, the men seem a little more convincing, but that might just be because I'm not a man and don't really know what men really feel. Men just seem when they write women they do seem a bit beguiled by their sexuality in a way. Sometimes I think they find it difficult to see beyond it. Whereas women writing about men – they seem to be able to see beyond the masculinity more easily. There are always exceptions, incredible exceptions. Like James, for instance. That's the answer: it's not so much gender, but how you see the characters. That's more of a fair answer. To do with your ability to understand consciousness, rather than gender perhaps.

- L: Is there a difference in how your detective novel is structured? Have you emphasised the plot more than the character development?
- A: Well, plot is always a huge part of my work. I think people get confused by my writing. They think I actually love plot and it's always the driving force in my books. So there's not that much difference. I'd say there is a difference in this book in the sense that I've used less symbolism, less imagery. I suppose it's about what the genre wanted of me and it wanted a different kind of writing.
- L: In *The Falconer* you talk about how nature is used for ideological purposes; for example, with the German Fascists. Do you see the landscape of Scotland as a commodity that is up for sale in how the remoteness or wildness is marketed?
- A: Well my first reaction is that you can sell most things. That is how our world operates. You can brand things and certainly Scotland has quite successfully. No, I would say on an individual level umm it's not for sale.
- L: In my next chapter, I'll be looking at how memory is transferred outside of Scotland – diasporic memory. Particularly, I'm hoping to look at how the memory of place or location has been transferred; at how nostalgia as the “longing for familiar surroundings” is transported and how exactly it operates. I'm interested in how Scotland markets itself to the wider world because of its role in the empire. Although Scotland lost its role because of the empire's collapse it has maintained that connection between its Scottish descendents and home. And I don't know if you know about this Homecoming Scotland 2009 event?
- A: Yes.
- L: A classic example.
- A: Yes. I think the people who moved to Canada tie in with what you were saying about youth and nostalgia for youth – the incredible, incredible nostalgia. A mythology

from one's roots, even if they go back generations. Scotland has been really successful in employing those techniques; I would say that Scotland's landscape – well, you can't really argue with it can you? It's there and if you just have a picture of Scotland, those memories – those ancestral memories – automatically will come back. Scotland markets itself really by being so visually impressive.



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