Imagining Scotland

National Self-Depiction in Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song*, Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* and Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*

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1. How does Scotland imagine itself?

How does Scotland imagine itself? This question forms the guideline for this study. This question may appear rather simple, yet proves rather complex. Scotland's history is defined by a rupture: It was in 1603 that Scotland became part of the United Kingdom through the Union of Crowns. This union was cemented by the Union of Parliaments 1707. Does that mean that Scotland has imagined itself as part of Great Britain? If so, why has it always stressed its distinct cultural heritage, its linguistic diversity? Cairns Craig explains this as a reaction to a central problem Scotland had to face: It lay on the periphery of a core culture. There appeared to be the need to stress its diversity in order to avoid integration – and the failure to do so resulted in an uneasy balance between Scotland and England and lead to a certain Scottish condition he examined in *Out of History*.[1]

If Scotland saw itself as a nation, then it is noteworthy that the country missed out on the nationalism that most other European countries experienced throughout the 18th and 19th century. Christopher Harvie claims that Nationalism was only "a marginal component of a Scottish politics which was fundamentally religious".[2] In the same work on page 39, Harvie goes on to say that outbreaks of nationalism in the 19th century can be seen as a countermovement when assimilation had gathered too much momentum. Scotland had

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[1] Cairns Craig. *Out of History. Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture.* Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996.

[2] Christopher Harvie. *Scotland and Nationalism. Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1977*. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1977, p. 28.

become a region; and yet this was not quite true because "an identification with Scotland was being assiduously cultivated as a means of evading the unpopularity which attached to the British at the zenith of their imperialism".[3]

Divided loyalties became a strong feature of Scottish history. The Jacobite Risings of 1715 and 1745 were first proofs of separatism. The 19th century, on the other hand, boosted unionism: "There were few rewards in being anti-imperialist in a community which benefited so much by imperialism";[4] "the industrial revolution […] seemed to create a common history for England and Scotland".[5]

The World Wars and the economic decline of the 1970s and 1980s offered reasons for attacking the Union, and the nationalists never hesitated to do so. Scotland was more than ever divided between those who saw Unionism as the solution and those who felt that the connection to the South bled the country to death.[6] The election of its first parliament in 1999 after almost 300 years turned Scotland into something like a federal state within Great Britain, which only stresses Scotland's difficult status between independence and assimilation.

This brief outline shows that Scotland has been through certain re-adjustments of its identity, has re-created itself and has never fully discarded the concept of being different. The question to be answered in the present study will be that of how this re-creation, this self-imagination has found entry into literature. With the examination of four novels by Scottish authors – Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley*, Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song*, Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* and Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* – I claim that Scotland has always been an imagined nation and that in imagining itself it has relied on the

[3] Harvie. *Scotland on Nationalism*, p. 40.

[4] Harvie. *Scotland and Nationalism*, p. 41.

[5] Harvie. *Scotland and Nationalism*, p. 73.

[6] Harvie. *Scotland and Nationalism*, pp. 42ff.

concept of the historical novel – which, in its English form, owes its creation to a Scottish author: Sir Walter Scott.

Just like any social entity, Scotland needed a device through the help of which it could see and construct itself. The historical novel was, I claim, this device because of its evocative power and the possibility it possessed to obtain the status of almost an alternative historiography – and because it is an ideal medium for the perpetuation of myth. These points shall be discussed below.

2. Imagi-Nation: Literature and Self-Depiction

Collective identity necessarily is always fictional. There is no "given" identity other than a personal identity which in turn is a creation of the mind. Collective identities are, however, necessary for any social group in order to survive. As social beings, humans interact and form allegiances. The creation of a collective self, of a social entity works through definitions; the basic concept is that of "otherness": we are that which the others are not. In order to achieve this consciousness of "being what the others are not", a group has to decide on what makes them different from the "other". This definition will be based on language, past events, shared geographical space or common physical appearance. Once decided upon, the group then finds a way to reiterate this story of what makes them what they are; in short: the create a narration of themselves. Identity is, thus, fictional; it is the result of a group's invention, of its idea of what it stands for. As shall be shown in the following chapters, in the creation of this cultural identity, literature plays an important role, because it preserves the elements of cultural identity in a written form. It creates a source for the social entity's cultural memory (a term which will be discussed below). Literature can be said to form the base for any cultural identity, not only because it preserves a culture's artistic achievements and serves as a source for its language, but also because it gives proof of the culture's historic tradition and its influence by and on other cultures. As shall be shown, it was the spread of print and the spread of the novel which contributed to the rise of the nations and the nation states in the 19th century.

2.1. The Printed Word, Community and Identity

In *Imagined Communities,*[7] Benedict Anderson points out the relationship between the rise of Nationalism and the onset of print capitalism (Anderson, pp. 24 ff.). The term "print capitalism" will be adopted from Anderson for the present study. It defines print circulation on a large scale as vital to the process of "enlightening" a wider audience. The factors that contributed to the rise of the novel are quite clearly pointed out in Ian Watt's study *The Rise of the Novel.*[8]

Doubtless, there were other forms of literature that dealt with "national"[9] heroes such as Blind Harry's *Wallace*-epic. The appeal and audience of poem and narrative prose, however, differed. The epic poem might have existed much longer, but by its nature it was either recited or circulated among a very restricted and sometimes even illiterate audience. With the print market established, there surely was a larger distribution even of printed poems. Yet the novel was the genre to be distributed and sold in a time when the reading public increased. Print production of any form (newspapers included) spread because it became a profitable business, uninhibited by religious prejudice, since the rise of Protestantism in Europe allowed a free enterprise hitherto unimaginable (cf. Anderson, pp. 37ff.).

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[7] Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities*. Revised edition, London, New York: Verson, [13]2003.

[8] Ian Watt. *The Rise of the Novel. Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957.

[9] The term "national", however, has to be used with some caution in this context. In medieval times the notion of nation was a rather different one, if it existed as such at all.

The novel arrived for Anderson at a crucial time. This accounts for its success and for the possibility of conveying ideas to a reading public. According to Anderson, the idea of a nation as such could only be built by arousing the awareness among a people that they actually lived in a certain geographic space in which they shared a common experience. This creation of identity relied on a certain decline of values – religion among its most important – which shaped the view of the world. The break-up of old structures produced – geographically – a fractured map (for example the former Holy Roman Empire ended up as a patchwork of little duchies, principalities and kingdoms) and a fractured mind-set on which new entities could be constructed. For Anderson, the decline of religion as the sole guiding structure produced an "empty time" in which man had to find a way to a meaningful end – just like characters in a novel.

> The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogenous, empty time [which is what the novel usually presents; the "social organism" can be anything] is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history (Anderson , p. 26).

The novel is in this sense a microcosm. If societies and the people therein are looking for guidance, the novel displays this errand towards a meaningful end between its first and last page, giving an otherwise meaningless existence a firm structure. Also, it is the novel that creates this microcosm and the meaninglessness that can be ordered to become meaningful.[10] It is no wonder, then, that Anderson

[10] This is an important aspect; it is up to the author to decide about the contents; this shall be taken up below.

pays special attention to the concept of omniscient narration (cf. Anderson, p. 32, although Anderson here refers to early "national" novels). The idea of guidance, of making the reader aware that the novel speaks of experience that the reader(s) know(s), is important. The authorial reference "our hero" points to the concept of a shared audience. Anderson admits that this term is a trope especially in the 19th-century novel, yet the authorial reference attempts to include an otherwise unconnected group in an experience guided towards a certain end.

This group – the audience – is led to esteem itself as an entity without its elements having to know each other personally (which would be impossible anyway). Connecting the elements solely by the feeling that there are others who share a certain experience is sufficient to shape a group connected by a group experience: that of reading about the same subject which in turn addresses the same shared emotions. Fiction in general contributes for Anderson to the belief of a community in anonymity (p. 36). This "common anonymous body", in Anderson's terminology, is the nation, or the nation to be. What the novel, or in fact any product of print capitalism, promoted in addition, was the idea of a common language and the dominance of certain vernaculars (an important precondition for forming the political nation out of a simple "imagined" nation, a nation of common sentiment; cf. Anderson, pp. 40 ff.). So it not only connected an anonymous mass of people, it also strengthened its idea of being different and "unique".

2.2. Narratives

If this building of a nation solely by arousing the feeling amongst a social group that it is connected is a somewhat semi-unselfconscious act, the choice of the fiction's content is a conscious one – one the author determines. With the awareness of a certain reading public established, fiction could attempt to shape this common consciousness. In case of the historical circumstances of the novels considered in the present study, it has to be noted that all of them were written while the British nation was a fact. Fiction did not have to build a nation, but could attempt to shape a national awareness that already existed. It could rely on a common readership living within a geographically defined political entity. More importantly, this readership lived in a society produced by political decisions – and its components were still quite heterogeneous. Shaping the consciousness thus must be an aim of any sociologically interested author, be it for the purpose of uniting or maintaining the idea of heterogeneity. This awareness that the elements that now made up Great Britain were, after the Union of Parliaments, politically unified, but formerly possessed individual characteristics – however "defined" they might have been – was there: "The Scots" spoke of "the English" who ruled "the Irish".

Great Britain was a political decision and a narrative act. The stories of Scotland and England were connected by definition, which is nothing but telling that something is to be something else. But the achievement of unification could be reversed if required. If a Scottish author considered himself first as a Scot and only second as a Briton, why not use the same means others used when they made him part of a British consciousness to create a Scottish consciousness? Why not excerpt the Scottish experience from the British and shape it in a certain way? This is what Irish literature did when it created an Irish

experience based on Irish society and politics. With the Scots, however, the split experience of their own culture led to a different outcome. While Ireland fell into two factions – unionist and republican – the Scottish never outspokenly came to this point until the formation of the SNP. Even then, after being embedded in the British experience for two centuries, the Scottish experience was too complex to be summed up in a simple "yes" or "no" as concerns political consequences (it was not until the devolution in 1999 when this question became political, and even then total independence was only supported by a minor faction).

Yet the shaping of experience, the creation of a national imagination in Scotland, worked along the lines Anderson describes. And it did so with the help of the novel among other media.

2.2.1. Narrating History: Hayden White

These narrative acts which the novel can achieve are very similar to those used by historiographers. Hayden White stresses this similarity in his work *Metahistory.*[11] Historiography, for White, is a "verbal structure in the form of narrative prose discourse" (p. ix). It is thus a narration that is personal in its concept: "historical writing is determined by a deliberate choice of narration on the side of the historiographer; there is no 'realistic' way of presenting history nor is there a 'scientific' way" (p. xii).

What White claims here is that both historians and novelists create narratives; historians are not "documenters" who reiterate

[11] Hayden White. *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe.* Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973, John Hopkins Paperback Edition 1975.

"facts", simply because they choose a certain style of writing and distinctly choose a way of arranging their material.[12]

> It is sometimes said that the aim of the historian is to explain the past by "finding", "identifying", or "uncovering" the "stories" that lie buried in chronicles; and that the difference between "history" and "fiction" resides in the fact that the historian "finds" his stories, whereas the fiction writer "invents" his. This conception of the historian's task, however, obscures the extent to which "invention" also plays a part in the historian's operations (p. 6).

White's theory and analysis stresses the points made above: History is narrated and there can be (and, as White proves, have been) various histories. This is possible because every generation of historiographers has their own view on development and every historiographer has his own approach towards the subject; yet they all write "histories", White claims, because "unlike literary fictions, such as the novel, historical works are made up of events that exist outside the consciousness of the writer" (p. 6). This remark, however, contradicts White's claim that historiographers make use of invention; furthermore, he neglects the possibilities of the historical novel, which is made up of events that exist outside the consciousness of the writer. Without going into a discussion of the problem of factuality and of perception, it can be said that White clearly brings fiction and historiography closer to each other while attempting to draw a line between the two.

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[12] White even defines certain tropes and genres used in historiography; cf. pp. 7ff.

Leaving the problematic relationship of fiction and historiography aside, White stresses that history is as much a creation as the novel. Both narrate. Historiography narrates events, and this narrative makes sense of an otherwise only temporally arranged succession of documentations (such as chronicles). This "making sense" happens through the use of words; in the case of historiography, then, words create meaning for a sociological organism (such as a nation); thus, narratives create the self-image of this organism.

Taking this point a step further, we could see history as an agreed-upon way of narrating a nation. If this accepted "view on the world" influences a national imagination (and it does; the whole school of German historians known as the Prussian Historiography ("kleindeutsch-borussische Geschichtsschreibung") – from Droysen to Ranke up to Treitschke – modelled historical events in such a fashion as to show Prussia as the leading part in unifying Germany and in the formation of the Kaiserreich), we could say that the novel can be seen as one of many other existing ways of narrating self-imagination, because, as White stresses, of its similarity to historiography; this is especially true for the historical novel, since here the connection is even stronger. Yet any novel telling the story of a certain sociological organism can thus be seen as evoking a distinct image for this organism, no matter if this image is accepted by the reading public or not.

2.2.2. Making Myths: Roland Barthes

In *Mythen des Alltags*,[13] Roland Barthes states that myth is a form of language (p. 7), and that myth is also a form of meaning (p. 85), a statement selected out of history: "der Mythos ist eine von der Geschichte ausgewählte Aussage" (p. 86). In Barthes' theory, myth is a semiological system footing on Saussure's theory of signifier and signified, in which the sign – the unifier of signifier and signified – is granted with a meaning in addition to its original meaning (cf. pp. 93 ff.). The result is a double system in which one sign incorporates a complex meaning. Barthes names two levels: the linguistic system, where a first-level signifier corresponds to a first-level signified through the implementation of the sign, and the mythical system; here, the sign becomes the second-level signifier of a second-level signified. The sign is either the ending point of the linguistic system, which Barthes calls "purpose" ("Sinn") or it is the starting point for the mythical system, which Barthes calls "form" ("Form"). The second-level signified is called "term" ("Begriff"). The second-level sign is called "meaning" ("Bedeutung") in Barthes' terminology: "Das Wort ["Bedeutung"] ist hier umso mehr berechtigt, als der Mythos effektiv eine zwiefache Funktion hat: er bezeichnet und zeigt an, er gibt zu verstehen und schreibt vor." (p. 96). Myth, for Barthes, denotes and hints at something, it shows and prescribes.

"Purpose" becomes "form", because the end point of the linguistic system, the sign, denotes something on a linguistic level, but on the mythical level, the sign becomes an empty "form" which can be filled by connecting it to the "term"; and the "term" can extend itself through a large expansion of the "form": "Im Mythos dagegen kann

[13] Roland Barthes. *Mythen des Alltags*. Trans. Helmut Scheffel, ed. Günter Busch. 1964; original title: *Mythologies*.

der Begriff sich durch eine große Ausdehnung von Bedeutenden ausbreiten" (p. 100).

For Barthes, myth is a metalanguage (p. 93); the "meaning", according to Barthes, results out of circling between "purpose" and "form", between object language ("Objektsprache", p. 104) and metalanguage ("Metasprache"). Myth, then, is a statement which is determined by its intention: "Wir wissen nun, dass der Mythos eine viel stärker durch ihre Absichten […] als durch ihre Buchstaben […] bestimmte Aussage ist." (p. 105).

Barthes's rather complex semiological model aims at reading and deciphering myth in every-day circumstances. The benefit of this way of explaining myth is that it allows a wide range of cultural creations to be seen as carrying a wider meaning, which has been implemented into these cultural creations with a certain purpose, since myth is always motivated to some extend: "Die mythische Bedeutung ist […] niemals willkürlich, sie ist immer zu Teilen motiviert" (p. 108). The term "cultural creations" is here used to incorporate all man-made objects and acts, since Barthes deciphers in almost all of them some kind of myth; hence, Barthes calls these "mythical statements" ("mythische Aussage", p. 92). These "mythical statements" can be language, photography, rites, paintings and objects among other things (p. 92). All these can be ways of stating a myth; they all express some motivated meaning.

Myth, then, is a transformation. To show this on a very basic level, we could take a look at the German football fans during the 2006 World Cup, where the concept of "nation" acquired a new meaning – value-free and not burdened with historical implementations – and the German flag – a symbol of the nation, yet used almost exclusively for ceremonial purposes in the past – was seen on almost every car when a German match was scheduled and filled the streets after every victory. Another example is that of the

bagpipe-player in a kilt: The image is, on its base level, nothing but a man playing an instrument in a certain dress; yet it evokes the concept of "Scotland".

2.2.2.1. The Transformation of Reality

Another vital step for the present study is the crucial connection Barthes sees between history and myth, even if socialist influences cannot be denied: The Bourgeoisie, Barthes claims, transforms reality into images of the world it inhabits, and thus transforms history into "nature", into something of universal, almost god-given value (cf. p. 129). And this is done through the use of myth: "Die Welt liefert dem Mythos ein historisch Reales, das durch die Art und Weise definiert wird, auf die es die Menschen hervorgebracht oder benutzt haben. Der Mythos gibt ein *natürliches* Bild dieses Realen wieder." (p. 130). Myth transforms history into images that appear to be "natural" (as opposed to "historical"). And it is the loss of the historical aspect of things which defines myth (p. 130) – again, just like to idea of "nation" and of its flag-symbol in the example of the German football-fans was cleared of any historical connotations.

Barthes' concept of myth appears to be somewhat narrowing, putting myth close to symbol; yet at the same time, it allows a wide range of objects to be read as myths – and thus to see myth as inherent in almost all aspects of culture. This is a vital point for the present study.

2.2.3. Narrating Culture: Cultural Memory

In his 1997 study *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*,[14] Jan Assmann develops the concept of "cultural memory". However complex and far-fetched for the present thesis Assmann's study appears to be, it contains some ideas that should be noted at this point. Assmann claims that cultures develop certain identities due to external circumstances. Once developed, identity is able to withstand ruptures in the culture's development. The whole idea of "past", according to Assmann, is a cultural phenomenon, since the past arises solely by remembering it. This act of remembrance is a self-conscious one: A culture decides upon the specific past it wants to remember and thus influences the individuals' concepts of what their culture stands for. Assmann also claims that the cultural memory is able to incorporate identity that history excludes; cultural memory thus can be a counter-historic force. The base for any cultural identity is often some form of myth.[15] Cultural identity is spread through a consciously applied sign-system; identities, Assmann claims, are actively produced and spread. The climax of the production of identity is reached when it enables any culture to stress its "other-ness". In order to maintain identity, canons of texts are compiled.

Leaving Assmann's terminology and specific field of study – early high cultures of the East – aside, the whole concept of cultural memory contains a vital aspect: Social organisms "create" their past onto which and out of which they build their self-imagination.

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[14] Jan Assmann. *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen.* München: C.H. Beck, 1997.

[15] Assmann shows no sign of adopting Barthes' concept of myth and appears to see myth a simply a form of narrative.

2.3. Imagi-Nation: A Provisional Appraisal

Based on the concepts of both White and Barthes and the conclusions drawn from their studies so far, I state that the novel can contribute to the process of imagining a nation. The novel and historiography, White claims, are closely related; the difference he makes between both remains debatable. Also, he admits that both historiographer and novelist make use of invention. Thus, the novel can influence the self-imagination of a social organism. This self-imagination, in Barthes' theory, then, is nothing but myth, a transformation, where a linguistic system is transposed into an image. I claim that in all the novels considered in this thesis, the authors have performed this transformation when speaking of Scotland. The novels create myths.

Limitation

Considering the points made above, then, leads to the question if there is such a thing as "national" literature at all – or a Scottish literature. The answer is yes; nations are facts. Imagination might have provided the base for their creation, but the imagined nation attains a "taken-for-granted" status. At its latest, this happens when an imagined nation becomes a politically defined entity.

But what about Scotland? For some time, it has been stuck in an imagined state after the Union of Parliaments. And even today, with its character of a "federal state" after the devolution of power in 1999, it remains a part of Great Britain. There have been several attempts to define Scottishness in literature and culture, the most important of which shall be discussed below.

3. The Search for Scottish Writing: What makes Literature Scottish?

The issue whether there is such a thing as a specific Scottish literature seems beyond question. Numerous works have traced the development of Scottish writing from its beginning to the present time. Yet the question of what makes Scottish literature, and especially the Scottish novel, a distinct genre is important for the present study. The following chapters shall give an overview of Scottish literary history and the studies on Scottish literature, and on the discussion why we should consider literature – and ultimately culture – Scottish.

3.1. Overview Scottish Literature

It makes no sense to talk about Scottish literature and to examine four novels without considering the literary writing in Scotland in general. Therefore, the following pages will give a brief historic overview.

3.1.1. The Middle Ages

It is interesting to find that the earliest documents of Scottish literature are song fragments dealing with the Wars of Independence. According to most critics, John Barbour's *The Bruce* (?1320-95, acc.

to Maurice Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature)*[16] is "the first substantial work both attributable to a known poet and written in Scots", as Lindsay writes on page 12. "…in *The Bruce*, Barbour provides Scots poetry with a firm and enduring formation" (p. 18). A companion piece certainly is Blind Harry's (c. 1450-1491 acc. to Lindsay) *The Actis and Deedis of the Illustre and Vaillyeand Campioun Schir William Wallace, Knicht of Ellerslie*, which Lindsay holds to have a historic dimension in that it is probably the only source of William Wallace's life (cf. p. 20). The figure of Wallace still has a strong influence on Scottish imagination, and has gained world-wide fame through Mel Gibson's movie *Braveheart.* Harry's poem was first printed in 1508, having survived in a single copy made in 1488 (p. 22).

Talking of "national" literature in both cases, as scholars widely have done, may be beside the point, since the idea of "nation" is a modern concept originating in the 19th century. Above all, Barbour and Bruce have provided a historical background around which later ideas of a Scottish heritage could be built.

Yet the Scottish-English conflicts were not the only topics for authors of the time. In *The Literature of Scotland*,[17] Roderick Watson names authors like Robert Henryson (?1425-1505?). Watson says of the author of *The Testament of Cresseid* – "an extraordinary sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*" (p. 38) – that "many would place his poetic achievement as second only to Chaucer" (p. 38). As the "most significant literary figure of the late fifteenth and early sixteenth

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[16] Maurice Lindsay. *History of Scottish Literature*. First paperback (revised) edition, London: Robert Hale, 1992.

[17] Roderick Watson. *The Literature of Scotland*. Macmillian History of Literature. Houndmills, Basingstroke, Hampshire: Macmillan, 1984.

century" (p.54), Watson defines William Dunbar (1460?-1520?, acc. to Watson), "a poet whose technical skill is second to none" (p. 54).

The first known prose texts in Scots stem from Sir Gilbert Hay (1400?-1499?) and are translations form French or Latin originals. The only other prose-writer in the 15th century is John of Ireland, who wrote *The Meroure of Wysdome*, a prose-piece in Scots meant for the edification of the young James IV.

3.1.2. The 16th Century

According to Watson, 16th century Scotland saw both the Renaissance and the Reformation affecting the country's culture and thus its literary production. In fact, in historical and religious terms the century proved to be influential. In 1561 Mary Queen of Scots came to Scotland from France and found that Protestantism had influenced Scottish politics up to the point that in 1560 the Protestants had set up the first Reformation parliament in Scotland. John Knox had returned to Scotland from his European exile, where he was "inspired with Calvinism's doctrinaire vision of a fighting faith" (Watson, p. 73). The benefits of Calvinism were that the new "kirk" contributed to a high degree of literacy among the common people, since it saw the Bible as the literal expression of the will of God, so that the education of the people was almost a must. Schools and colleges were set up.

> This practical concern with the status and welfare of the common man, both spiritual and temporal, was radical and humane, yet, as so often happens, the revolutionary ideal contained the seeds of authoritarianism (p. 74).

Among the outstanding authors of the period were Gavin Douglas (1475?-1522), whose greatest achievement was the translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, about which Watson says that "its commitment to the classical world and its concern to speak to a broader audience belongs to the new age" (p. 75) and Sir David Lindsay (1490-1555). His *Ane Pleasant Satyre of Thrie Estaits* (first printed in 1602) is the only surviving dramatic text of the century, although according to Watson there must have been other plays (p. 89).

Besides poetry and drama, the Reformation and the spread of printing contributed to a rise of prose writing. Authors became aware of "the public power of their mother tongue" (p. 90). With James VI's move to England to take over the English crown after Queen Elisabeth I's death in 1603, it was English literature which came to influence Scottish thought; according to Watson, the circulation of religious treatises and pamphlets in Scotland sharpened the Scots' sense of their individuality, while the reading and teaching of the Bible in its English – and not yet Scots – translation shaped Scottish culture (cf. p. 90). Prose authors of the century include Robert Lindsay of Pitscottie (1532-90?), George Buchanan (1506-82) and of course John Knox (1505-72) "whose vision helped to set the pattern for intellectual, social and religious life in Scotland, an iron mould which endured virtually until modern times" (p. 96).

Religious strive was to influence the following century. "These disputatious years devoured the intellectual and creative energies of two generations to the exclusion of almost everything else. (…) there are no Scots writers to equal Donne, Marvell, Milton and Bunyan" (p.114). It was the century of the Civil War, the Covenanters, the beginning of the Jacobite cause and the failed Darien Scheme in 1698, a Scottish trading company in Central America, which left Scotland indebted. All of this had effects on Scottish culture: "Many Scots intellectuals were turning to London, to English and even Latin for

their models, and gradually Scots was becoming regarded as the vernacular speech of country people" (p. 118).

3.1.3. The 17th Century

The 17th century saw, however, the discovery of the Scottish ballads which were to become collected and edited in the two following centuries.

> By the seventeenth century the professional minstrel class was disappearing and ballads had become the property of singers among the common people. At the same time these ballads were beginning to appear more frequently in print and manuscript (p.132).

Among the outstanding authors of the century, Sir Thomas Urquhart of Cromarty (1611-60) should be mentioned, although Watson states that "it is difficult not to suspect that the author was a little mad" (p. 151). His greatest achievement is probably the translation of the first two books of Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* in 1653.

3.1.4. The 18th Century

The 18th century Scotland came to see the last land battle fought on British soil, Culloden (1745), where the Jacobite army was

defeated. It was the second Jacobite rising, the first having failed in 1715. After Culloden, the Highland culture was brutally destroyed and subdued. Scotland had then been part of the United Kingdom for almost 40 years after the Union of Parliaments 1707.

The second half of the century, however, saw both England and Scotland moving towards a common future which was propelled by a growing economy, the benefits of which could even be felt in the Highlands. In the 1740s the Scottish Enlightenment reached its "golden age", fuelled by a high degree of learning which was the secular result of the Reformation. It was also a golden age for Scottish literature, even if the uneasy balance which could still be felt both in politics and society had effects on literature as well.

> In the 1780s Burns's vernacular muse was ecstatically received by the Edinburgh literati – the very people who had made a success of a little guide-book called *Scotticisms*, intended 'to put young writers and speakers on their guard against some of those Scotch idioms', much less broad Scots words, for 'the necessity of avoiding them is obvious'. So it is that there are two contrasting strains in eighteenth-century Scottish letters. The period opened with a marked revival of interest in ballads, songs and the poetry of the makers, and closed with the vernacular genius of Fergusson and Burns. In the mid century, however, the Scottish Enlightenment had also achieved a European scope and a thoroughly Augustan critical stance which led to the major literary periodicals of the 1800s. This extraordinary melting-pot produced Edinburgh as the 'Athens of the North' and it is fitting that the very fabric of the city itself should symbolise the contradictions and the creative vigour of the age, bubbling with the vulgar satirical energy of the

> 'Doric' and cooled again with hopes for an 'Athenian' clarity and control (p. 165).

Literary figures of the day include Allan Ramsay (1685-1758), who published *The Tea Table Miscellany* in 1724, a collection of songs which became an immediate commercial success. His best known work is probably *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725), which "perfectly encapsulates (…) the divided loyalties of his (Ramsay's) countrymen" (p. 175). Among the Scottish authors of the Enlightenment, we find David Hume (1711-76) and Adam Smith (1723-90) as the most outstanding figures and others like Thomas Reid (1710-96). As mentioned above, it was Robert Fergusson (1750-74) and Robert Burns (1759-96) who brought Scots back on the literary agenda. In Fergusson's case, it was the publication of "The Daft Days" in 1772 that started his fame as a poet writing in Scots. His series of poems published in the *Weekly Magazine* until his death "offered a vision of Edinburgh street-life that had not been matched since Allan Ramsay or Dunbar" (p. 215).

Fergusson had influence on Burns to some extent, especially by the comic tone and ironic vision of his poems. In 1786 the Kilmarnock edition of his poems had appeared, which raised Burns instantly to fame in the literary circles of Edinburgh, which saw him as a prodigy, as "gifted offspring of Rousseau's savage and the Gentle Shepherd" (p. 221). The Kilmarnock edition and the 1787 Edinburgh edition "revitalised the Scots language as a medium for verse […] but at the same time its success virtually 'type-cast' poetry in Scots until modern times" (p. 221). Burns's influence on Scottish poetry cannot be overestimated:

> For the next hundred years and more 'poetry in Scots' meant 'poetry like Burns's, and as late as the 1920s Hugh MacDiarmid could curse the influence of a writer whose brilliance set the mould for so many inferior imitations (p. 222).

3.1.5. The 19th Century

The nineteenth century was a period of economic growth for Scotland. The country had become a well-established part of the United Kingdom, and its economic centres profited as much from the Empire as England. There were downsides, however, mostly due to changing land policies. The enclosures, which began around the 1770s (p. 237), forced many Scots to emigrate, mostly to Canada and America, while others were resettled. The Clearances left traces especially in the Highland population's memory (p. 238). In the South-West, on the other hand, the flourishing textile industry started off the Industrial Revolution and nourished several other industries (p. 239). Also, heavy industry and ship-building along the Clyde became a vital economic factor. "For twenty years after 1850 nearly three-quarters of all the iron vessels launched in Britain came form Clydeside" (p. 240).

Yet the Industrial Revolution's influence created social issues which demanded solutions. There was a dramatic rise in Glasgow's population by the mid-century (p. 239), leading to high child mortality and disease. Watson sees the overcrowding of the Glasgow tenements as the source of a special sense of community and as origin of both Catholic and Protestant prejudice and "a healthy scepticism about the British establishment" (p. 240). The "Disruption" in the Kirk in 1843 produced a second Presbyterian movement, The Free Kirk, which saw itself as representing the true values of the belief (p. 241). As Watson

correctly states, it was the Protestant work ethic which may have proved helpful to the Scots – "both loved and hated for their ambition, hardiness and ingenuity" (p. 240).

In literature, Watson detects a sense of longing for the rustic and sentimental in 19th century Scotland, which co-occurred with an English interest in Scottish history and countryside. On the political side, the Irish strife for Home Rule had effects on Scotland, leading to an "all-party Home Rule Association" to "promote political independence". "Their case did not have the urgency or the violence of the Irish movement, but it contained a separatist and a nationalist feeling which has played a part in Scottish politics ever since" (p. 242).

> The medium of the age in Scotland was undoubtedly prose, and the spread of literacy, of circulation libraries and the book-buying habit created an enormous appetite for books and periodicals of all sorts. Writers came to depend on the periodical scene to make their living, and, of course, many novels appeared in the serial form. Edinburgh became a most influential publishing-centre, largely due to Archibald Constable and William Blackwood, whose presses, along with the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine*, made them household names throughout the kingdom. The phenomenal popularity of Scott's fiction was intimately bound up with Constable's firm and it exactly matches the expansion of what was coming to be known as 'the reading public' – a new critical conception and a new market (p. 243).

The dominant literary figure of the century was Sir Walter Scott (1771-1832). Starting as an author of poems, it was Scott who would influence Scottish imagination for the coming decades – and even beyond. "It was his interest in ballads and Romantically 'medieval' adventure-poems which led him to prose fiction and the virtual invention of the 'historical novel'" (p. 247). A "milestone in the Scottish literary world's rediscovery of its own past" (p. 249) is *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, published in three volumes between 1802 and 1803, and *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* became an immediate success in 1805 (pp. 249f). His interest in Highland Scotland manifests itself first in *The Lady of the Lake* (1810), and Scott's description of the Highlanders "took lowland Britain and Europe by storm" (p. 251). The rising star of Lord Byron put an end to Scott's ambitions in poetry and he embarked on writing *Waverley*, which was published in 1814 and was to sell "four editions in as many months and sold 40000 over again when the complete 'Waverley Novels' edition appeared with notes in 1829" (p. 258). Scott's influence is notable in Scottish writing up to the present and it was Edwin Muir who would show the problematic aspects of Scott's influence on Scottish literature in *Scott and Scotland. The Predicament of the Scottish author*. Watson's statement that Scott was "divided as always between a United Kingdom and the call of an 'auld sang'" (p. 268) may be correct as far a his writing is concerned, yet to see Scott's spirit as belonging "to the Edinburgh of the late eighteenth century" (p. 268) neglects the lasting influence Scott has had on Scottish imagination.

The century's other authors include names such as John Gibson Lockhart (1794-1854), who wrote Scott's biography, James Hogg (1770-1835), John Galt (1779-1839) or Margaret Oliphant (1828-1897). Watson also includes Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) in his list, claiming that "his roots were deeply Scottish" (p. 283). Among the important novels of the time are Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and*

Confessions of a Justified Sinner (1824) and Robert Louis Stevenson's (1850-1894) *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, published in 1886.

3.1.6. Towards the Present: Kailyard and Scottish Renaissance

Towards the end of the century, it is increasingly difficult to draw the line between Scottish and English literature. This is possibly due to the formation of a "British" audience and to the problems of defining literature by the authors' place of birth or place of work. Stevenson, for example, produced one of the greatest Victorian novels by writing *Jekyll and Hyde*, yet the underlying historical model – the case of Deacon Brody – is Scottish, just as the doubling of characters, the split experience which critics came to see as distinctive for modern Scottish literature is exemplified in *Jekyll and Hyde*. The same difficulties exist for Arthur Conan Doyle (1859-1930), who was born in Edinburgh but wrote in England.

Yet there is a specific form of literature at the end of the nineteenth century which can be identified quite clearly as Scottish: The Kailyard. "Scottish fiction ended the century with a vision of itself which was parochial, sentimental and almost entirely given over to nostalgia" (pp. 313f). Authors include according to Watson's list the young J.M. Barrie (1860-1937), especially his novels *Auld Licht Idylls* (1888) and *A Window in Thrums* (1889), and the Revd John Watson (Ian Maclaren, 1850-1907) who wrote two successful Kailyard novels, *Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush* (1894) and *The Days of Auld Lang Syne* (1895) and S.R. Crockett (1860-1914).

Probably the strongest comment on the Kailyard was George Douglas Brown's (1869-1902) *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), "a milestone in Scottish letters because it used the Kailyard's own ingredients to blight the bonnie briar bush itself" (p. 336).

It is Browne who leads over to the beginning of the revival of specifically Scottish literature known as Scottish Renaissance. The central figure here is Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve, 1892-1978); yet there are various others and it is hard to find similarities between those protagonists grouped together under the emblem of "Scottish Renaissance". Also, there is the problem of the temporal classification of the era. Watson, for example, calls the whole of twentieth century Scottish literary output "The Scottish Renaissance", admitting that there are various stages in the revival (pp. 325ff). Boundaries are hard to set. Yet critics generally agree that the Scottish Renaissance was driven by authors like MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir (1887-1959), Neil Munro (1864-1930), John MacDougall Hay (1881-1919) or Lewis Grassic Gibbon (1901-35) and lasted roughly up until "the latter half of the eighties" (Lindsay, p. 443). The unifying fact is probably the attempt to find a distinctly Scottish approach to Scottish topics. In this sense, the Renaissance may be said to continue up to the present.

MacDiarmid started the literary movement with the publishing of the periodicals *Northern Numbers* (1920), *Scottish Chapbook* (1922), *Scottish Nation* (1923) and the *Northern Review* (1924). His choice to use Scots or to re-create it for his poems made them almost instantly famous. Gregory Smith's theory of a "Caledonian Antisyzygy" – of a combination of opposites which for him made up the Scots; more shall be said on the concept below – provided MacDiarmid with a theory. For him, "Scots should be equally capable of contributing to the modernist movement" (p. 351). His masterpiece without doubt is *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926). "MacDiarmid's work is charged with lyrical, linguistic, intellectual or

polemical energy", Watson writes on p. 367 to distinguish him from Edwin Muir, who "adopts an English verse of calm and neutral tone to meditate on time and the timeless by way of classical allusions or images drawn from the realms of childhood, mythology or dreams". In 1935, Muir wrote *Scott and Scotland*, his influential essay in which he re-assets the relationship of Scottish authors towards their subject and language and which was mentioned already above:

> He diagnoses something like Eliot's 'dissociation of sensibility' in which the Scots had long been divided between Lallans and English without a 'homogenous language' to convey thought as well as feeling. He admired MacDiarmid as an exception to this rule, but his general opinion was that Scots writers should settle for English (p. 370).

Lewis Grassic Gibbon (James Leslie Mitchell) wrote the three novels which make up *A Scots Quair* between 1932 and 1934. Gibbon was a "Diffusionist", believing that civilisation had destroyed a "golden age" of mankind. Also he believed in a very modernist way that ages spiralled and did not only move calendrically through time. These two influences combined with his memories of being brought up in a rural Scotland that was drastically changed through the impact of World War I influenced his work to a great extend. His insights and beliefs can be found in various essays in *Scottish Scene* (1934), published with MacDiarmid.

The Scottish Renaissance produced other vital works of literature by authors like Eric Linklater (1899-1974) or Neil M. Gunn (1891-1973). Gunn brought a certain Gaelic influence to non-Gaelic Scottish literature on which the present overview focuses. Watson

sates that "his best work has a clarity of style and focus which relates to the Gaelic delight in the actuality of things, and then points to universals beyond them" (p. 394). Gunn's awareness of the Gaelic comes as a bit of a surprise since he himself was not a native Gaelic speaker.

Other authors which are more or less connected to the resurrection of Scottish themes far beyond any notion of Kailyard in the first half of the 20th century are the Englishman Compton Mackenzie (1883-1974), whose novels *The Monarch of the Glen* (1941) and *Whisky Galore* (1947) are part of a "light-hearted series of Highland farces" (p. 375) and Tom Macdonald ('Fionn MacColla', 1906-1975).

Contemporary authors include Ian Crichton Smith (born 1928), Allan Massie (born 1938), James Kelman (born 1946) and Alasdair Gray (born 1934), the latter three of which have "dominated the fictional scene throughout the eighties" (Lindsay, p. 449), and also Robin Jenkins (born 1912) and William McIlvaney (born 1936). Perhaps the author among the contemporaries who received greatest interest, mostly because of his first novel, *Trainspotting*, is Irvine Welsh (born 1958).

3.2. The Shadow of Scott-land and the Search for Scottish Horizons

Because Scottish literature moved amongst a social and political background which was never clearly defined, it has always been a matter of dispute. The general questions to be answered were: What makes literature Scottish? Where is the difference between English and Scottish writing? It is especially the latter question which still poses a problem to the academic discussion. Out of all the collections of essays produced since 1999, when the Scottish Parliament started, there is hardly any which does not attempt to confront the question of how Scottish literature contributes to an English/British literature and if Scottish literature should be seen as a distinct genre.

3.2.1. Scott and Scotland

It is no wonder that the problems encountered when dealing with Scottish writing were first debated during the Scottish Renaissance, when Scottish authors attempted to define in which setting they were writing and which demands they would have on their subject. What they had to defend themselves against was the historical hangover that Scottish writing still suffered from. As was shown above, in late 19th century Scotland the Kailyard novels prospered, which had the effect that Scottish writing became connected with clichés. The historical novels of Scott still loomed as predecessors to any novelist in Scotland, and Robert Burns' poetry still had the aura of being unsurpassable.

In this atmosphere of uncertainty, especially in the 1930s, came Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland*.[18] Because Muir's study still contains points which are vital for the understanding of the dilemma in Scottish writing, it shall be discussed here in detail.

His study of Scott, Muir writes, led him to "consider the position of the writer in Scotland generally, a position which is both unhappy and unique" (p. 9). Confronted with what Muir calls "curious emptiness" (p. 11) in Scott's writing when contrasted with Scott's "wealth of imagination" (p. 11), Muir concludes that Scott "spent most of his days in a hiatus, in a country, that is to say, which was neither a nation nor a province" (p. 11). As a consequence, Muir states that Scott "set himself to carry on a tradition which was not a tradition" (p. 12).

Here, Muir concludes that the tradition had died together with the decline of Scots as an official language, and that this process started with the Reformation (p. 24). Ever after, the Scots according to Muir where divided selves, caught between the "official" English and the "native" Scots, which were used for very different purposes and to very different effect. Muir even claims that Robert Burns used Scots for sentiment, but English for reason, the proof for which Muir discerned in "Tam o' Shanter" (p. 29). When Scots as a standard language disappeared with the Reformation, a "high culture of feelings as well as of the mind" vanished (p. 61).

> What took its place was either irresponsible feeling side by side with acrid intellect, or else that reciprocally destructive confrontation of both for which Gregory Smith found the name of "Caledonian Antisyzygy": a recognition that they

[18] Edwin Muir. *Scott and Scotland. The Predicament of the Scottish Writer.* London: George Routledge and Sons, 1936.

> are irreconcilable and that Scottish life is split in two beyond remedy. […] If Scottish poetry is doomed forever to express this Antisyzygy, then it contains no principle of progress (pp. 61-62).

Muir rejects Gregory Smith's concept of the Antisyzygy, which for Smith is not a failure, but a defining element:

> The literature [of Scotland] is the literature of a small country [...] it runs a shorter course than others [...] In this shortness and cohesion the most favourable conditions seem to be offered for the making of a general estimate. But, on the other hand, we find at closer scanning that the cohesion, at least in formal expression and in choice of material, is only apparent, that the literature is remarkably varied, and that it becomes, under the stress of foreign influence and native division and reaction, almost a zigzag of contradictions. The antithesis need not, however, disconcert us. Perhaps in the very combination of opposites – what either of the two Thomases, of Norwich and Cromarty, might have been willing to call 'the Caledonian antisyzygy' – we have a reflection of the contrasts which the Scot shows at every turn, in his political and ecclesiastical history, in his polemical restlessness, in his adaptability, which is another way of saying that he has made allowance for new conditions, in his practical judgement, which is the admission that two sides of the matter have been considered. If therefore Scottish history and life are, as an old northern writer said of something else, "varied with a clean contrair spirit," we need not be

> surprised to find that in his literature the Scot presents two aspects which appear contradictory. Oxymoron was ever the bravest figure, and we must not forget that disorderly order is order after all.[19]

For Muir, the Caledonian Antisyzygy is the expression almost of a deteriorated mental state of Scotland, since reason and sentiment no longer live together in harmony under the roof of Scots as the unifying language:

> Its decisive importance [that of Scots as a universal language] is that it was a language [rather than a dialect], a uniting and overarching principle; and that Scotland never had one since (p. 77).

Muir's answer to this problem is a return to the Scottish Ballads (pp. 111-112), because for him they possessed a unity which was never found in any other era.

Muir later directs his theories towards Scott's writing. Even he, Muir claims, set his novels in the past in order to find a unity in Scotland which he was unable to see in his lifetime (p. 140). Scott thus lived between past and present, because to Muir Scott must have felt that he lived in a sort of vacuum (p. 143) – and because Scott filled the vacuum in his mind and in the minds of his countrymen: "A people who lose their nationality create a legend to take its place", Muir states on pp. 160-161. "Instead of a real framework he had to fall

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[19] G. Gregory Smith. *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*. London: Macmillan, 1919, pp. 3-5.

back on legend, and so his novels consist […] of flesh and blood and pasteboard" (p. 173). And Muir sees that Scott relied on Scots for effect, but used English for structure (p. 174).

Muir was enough of a realist to see the limitations in the call for language as marker of a national literature, yet he claims correctly that "when we insist on using dialect for restricted literary purposes we are being true not to the idea of Scotland but to provincialism, which is one of the things that have helped to destroy Scotland" (p. 178). His claim is that the choice of language must be a distinct choice; there cannot be a mixture of, say, Scots and English, if Scotland wants to assert itself as a nation able to produce a national literature. Yet for Muir there can be no doubt that Scotland needs a new belief in itself:

> It is of living importance to Scotland that it should maintain and be able to assert its identity; it cannot do so unless it feels itself a unity; and it cannot feel itself a unity on a plane which has no right to human respect unless is can create autonomous literature. Otherwise it must remain in essence a barbarous country (p. 182).[20]

It should be clear that Muir's call for "unity" calls for a unity of language, which for him would ultimately be English; yet it might have come as a surprise for Muir that the unity he called for was achieved by a decision for Scots – even if it was a re-created, "synthetic Scots" – as the idiom for Scottish writing by the most prominent figure of the Scottish Renaissance: Hugh MacDiarmid. Without going into details, since poetry is not the subject matter of

[20] Muir's points shall be taken up again at the end of this study.

this study, it was his re-creation of Scots which made his poems strikingly distinct from British authors, and it was his themes which together with his use of language clearly marked his work as Scottish. His most famous poem "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" will give proof of this and does not need to be quoted here.

3.2.2. New and Old Traditionalists: Craig, Wittig, Ferguson and Craig revisited

Up to the present, there have been various attempts to define Scottish literature. Most of these, however, denied answering the question why authors and their works should be classified as Scottish – other than by simply pointing to the biographical background of the authors. The dilemma of Scottish writing – why it should be considered as Scottish – and its uneasy relationship towards English literature and culture has remained part of the academic discussion until today. The most prominent research on this problem has been done by Cairns Craig, yet there have been others.

From a Scottish point of view, Craig sees a general contrast between the English and Scottish way of narration. Throughout his *Out of History,* Craig focuses on the terms of "core culture" and "periphery". His line of argument starts from the view that Scotland "cowered in the consciousness of its own inadequacy" (Craig, *Out of History*, p. 11), simply because Scotland was incorporated into the historical narrative of Great Britain, which is dominated by a core culture – England. Since this core incorporated all that was useful to it and was esteemed, the periphery – Scotland – came to see itself as backward. Its literary products were seen in contrast to those of England.

Since by definition England was the core, Scotland's achievements could only be of lower value. For Craig, the reaction of Scottish culture to see itself as inferior and to be seen as such only is a consequence of false comparisons. Scottish literature actually dealt with changing circumstances differently than other cultures; the so-called failure is turned into a virtue in Craig's argument. The collision of narratives which the unification of English and Scottish cultures brought along and which worked well for the then core culture posed problems to the Scottish side: If it attempted to create a progressive narrative it would have to fail since progress appeared not to lead Scotland anywhere – because its progress would still be seen as standing in the shadow of the core's. If it denied history, it would still be affected by its inevitable intrusion.

Because historical circumstances affected Scotland differently, because it could not join progressive history in the way England did, it was in a somewhat self-inflicted dilemma and expressed it in a certain way that is unique for Scotland. Scottish literature could thus be called "reactionary" in that it reacts to changing circumstances and re-enacts its dilemma of not being seen as a central, a core culture, and yet being unsure of what it really stands for. For Craig, from the 1960s onwards Scottish literature found itself more at ease with this situation, voicing its status in its own vernacular (as in *Trainspotting*) and finding its form in the broken structure that *Lanark* gives, which will be dealt with below.

Cairns Craig's argument, however, does not lead to the impression that Scotland suffers from a Nationalist hangover in that it has left out a certain stage of political and sociological self-definition which it now tries to compensate. In fact it is not until the 20th century that Scotland possessed a political voice claiming independence. And it took until 1999 for Scotland to regain its own parliament. In this sense the argument of being left behind by modern developments holds. Yet it is this comparative approach Craig denies. He poses that

Scotland's development was and is different. But it is a consequence rather than a deficiency, a characteristic rather than a failure in his view. Craig speaks of Scotland moving from a Marxist definition of a myth – an idea that has to be overcome in order to progress – to a Nietzschean idea: that there is either the "hell of History" that awaits those who try to escape myth or that myth is the only way to escape a hellish history. While in the past Scottish narratives attempted to attach themselves to progressive history, Scotland now has come to terms with its own "myth", its differing condition.[21] This transition happened for Craig in Scotland's search for identity (cf. Craig, *Out of History*, pp. 219 ff.). It is not a hangover Scottish culture gives proof of; for Craig reality consists of pluralism and simultaneity.

> The paradox here is that the desire to establish Scottish – or any other – national identity is the desire to maintain simultaneous narratives and therefore the value of differences, but it mimics in microcosm the desire to abolish difference by linking everyone within a particular space into a single trajectory of narrative and a single totality […] We have to see our cultural space precisely as the intersection of many narratives: an acceptance of simultaneity (Craig, *Out of History*, p. 223).

Having established his idea of intersecting narratives, Craig somewhat falls into the traditionalist trap: Scottish literature is Scottish because it stands in a Scottish tradition. This is the bottom

[21] Note that "myth" here is used as the contrary to history, the latter being progressive narration, the first being a "historyless" condition; in this aspect, he agrees with Barthes' concept of myth.

line of his argument in *The Modern Scottish Novel.*[22] His benefit, however, is that he tries to define this specific context which in his view must be considered as Scottish. However, with his traditionalist approach, Craig follows a line of argument which easily leads to tautologies. This problem of falling into the habit of claiming Scottish literature and culture to be Scottish without defining this Scottishness is wide-spread in the discussion.

Kurt Witttig's *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*[23] attempted to trace "Scottishness" in Scotland's writing and art in general, yet failed to provide a clear answer to the question. Wittig's work discusses Scottish literature from its early beginnings and shows a continuous development, yet never defines what he sees as a Scottish tradition besides the fact that there has always been Scottish writing. Wittig sees a Scottish tradition manifesting itself even in the Baronial Style of manor houses, yet he cannot explain why and how this came about, other than that it is distinctly Scottish – at least in his terms.

Craig, in contrast, tries to define the elements that create a specific context in which authors produced literature which can be defined as "Scottish" because the mixture of the influences upon the authors was such as was not found anywhere else. His approach, thus, includes the search for origins, examines the specific discourse which produced works of literature that was distinct and could thus be labelled as Scottish.

Also, Craig stresses the connection between the development of the novel and that of the nation (Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, pp. 9ff.) and is thus able to account for the way in which Scottish literature depicts development in a – eventually – distinctly un-

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[22] Cairns Craig. *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

[23] Kurt Wittig. *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1958.

English way. Following closely in the line of Benedict Anderson's argument, Craig writes that "The [national] imagination is the medium through which the nation's past is valued, and through which the nation's values are collected, recollected into the future" (p. 10).

> […] it is in the day-to-day world of the novel that they [nations] show how those founding origins survive, by resistance and adaptation, to allow the national community to continue to know itself and to recognise its own identity despite the transformations of history. […] The condition of living in history, in the expectation or the angst of knowing that the future will be necessarily different form 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 to the future can be clarified without loss of continuity with a founding past. In *Waverley* [and other novels] […] the founding myths of an ethnie are formed and shaped so that successive generations of a particular ethnie can recognise themselves as the fulfilment of their predecessors (p. 11).

Moreover, Craig discusses the problem whether a Scottish tradition ever truly existed due to the fragmentary character of Scottish society and due to the hemming influence of Calvinism (cf. pp. 14ff.). This pessimistic outlook is countered with reference to Alasdair MacIntyre argument in *After Virtue: a Study in Moral Theory* on pp. 23ff. Craig takes up the notion that tradition is the inescapable context of thought, and that narrative is the fundamental organising principle of human experience. So tradition is, as is shown on p. 23, a historically extended and socially embodied argument, the carrier of

which can be the novel. "Novels are symbolic enactments of debates about the *telos* which justifies life as part of a social, a national narrative" (p. 24). Following this approach on tradition, Craig comes to the conclusion that Scottish Enlightenment, Calvinism and the endurance of Scots Law formed and shaped a specific Scottish context.

A vital point in understanding this argument is that tradition is a dynamic process, a dialogue embedding all thought of a certain society; it cannot be nullified or supplanted. Also, it is important to see that Craig thinks of nation as unconnected to the ideas of nation state or totality.[24] It is a certain tradition that forms a nation and it is the tradition that is produced by a certain nation. "The nation is a space in which those influences [i.e. modes of life or discourse] are put into display with the inheritance which is specific to that particular place" (p. 31). In this sense, there can be, for Craig, a Scottish literature, a Scottish novel that is characterised by its context; and authors then converted the context into their works.

> Through such works as theirs [the major Scottish authors] Scotland went on imagining itself as a nation and went on constituting itself as a national imagination in defiance of its attempted or apparent incorporation into a unitary British culture (p. 37).

Craig then goes on to explain the context (pp. 37ff). Among the most important are for him Calvinism, constant fear and repressive circumstances resulting in the exaggerated selves of protagonists. It is

[24] Craig's "nation" thus can be seen as a special form of the "social organism" that I spoke of so far.

the "mutual dependence of the fearful and the fearless" (p. 52) that the modern novels pose as the "recurring moral problem" (p. 52). This strain of thought is in Craig's view a characteristic for the modern Scottish novel, stretching as far as to Welsh's *Trainspotting* (p. 55). Also, this contrast between fearful and fearless for Craig denies any possibility of a progressive history; this is a point that has been seen as a failure by critics. For Craig, it is a central condition that produced Scottish literature (p. 57). And the way in which this "moral problem" is encountered is a reaction to the time of the novels' production and the authors' approach.[25]

Craig also addresses the language problem by stating that "Scots is not at home in the novel; English is not at home in Scotland" (p. 78). The dialectic of the use of Scots versus the use of English in the novel further defines an area of conflict typical for the Scottish novel. Yet the further the Scottish novel developed, the more at ease it appears to be with this dialectic: If Craig sees that George Douglas Brown had the intention to bury Scots (p. 79), Nan Shepherd's *The Quarry Wood* sees English and Scots as two ends of a continuum and not as exclusive (p. 83-84.). Taking up John Macmurray's notion of "heterocentricity", Craig claims that the self is only constructed in its interaction with others (pp. 89ff.). Thus, identity only works through the other. And the concept of thought which gives priority to the communion is, for Craig, decidedly Scottish (p. 91). This quest for the recovery of heterocentricity is an element of Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*, enacted in *Sunset Song*'s narrative technique (more will be said to this novel below). The dialectic of dialect versus non-dialect stretches as far as to *Trainspotting* and shows that "the dialect novel is one of the foundations of the philosophical orientation of Scottish fiction" (p. 98).

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[25] Craig uses George Douglas Brown, Lewis Grassic Gibbon or Neil Gunn as examples on pp. 57ff.

With a further transposition of the idea of heterocentricity, Craig comes to the conclusion that identity is not singular (p. 112).

> Too often in studies of Scottish culture the apparent lack of unity of the self is taken to be the symptom of a failed identity, of a self-contradictory and self-destructive identity, rather than that the healthy self is always a dialectic operating within and between 'opposing' elements of the self and other (p. 113).

Another important characteristic in the Scottish novel for Craig is the significance given to the landscape (cf. pp. 150ff.). Admitting that the idea is taken over from the 18th century, Craig sees that

> Against the temporality of its false and failed histories, the Scottish novel asserts the significance of the geography of the region; against the destructive powers of progress it sets a knowledge more ancient than civilisation, one which is inscribed in and maintained by the particular qualities of its landscape (p. 150).

Summing up this point, for Craig there is a distinct Scottish literature defined by is tradition; this tradition is a product of its inheritance and at the same time, it is a producer of nationality; however, this nationality is not bound to ideas of nation state.[26]

[26] In this, Craig follows the ideas of Ernest Renan, as is made clear on p. 236.

Tradition is shaped by a set of dialectics, and the way in which these were addressed added further characteristics to the Scottish novel. This is driven by a self-conscious view which Scottish literature had on itself, especially that of its inability – however real it might be – to join progressive history. The Scottish novel responded in a distinct way to the demands put upon it.

If Cairns Craig clearly dominates the debate – although his argument slightly changed between his *Out of History* and his *The Modern Scottish Novel* – his achievements in the long-term discussion of what makes Scottish literature Scottish and how or whether or not it should be contrasted with English writing is slightly marred: Craig eventually seems to fall back on the same tautology that Wittig fell for, that Scottish writing is Scottish because it is created in a Scottish context; however detailed and precise Craig set out to show that history and society developed differently in Scotland than in the rest of what later would become Great Britain, he later seems to take Scottishness as a given fact and one which was somehow there all the time.

In being unable to escape falling for tautologies, Craig is not alone in modern academic writing, however. William Ferguson's *The Identity of the Scottish Nation*[27] ends along the same lines. In his vast and detailed study, Ferguson examines Scottish history and culture, its influence and impact, yet leaves the reader unsatisfied. On p. 315, he quotes Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Foreigner at Home":

> The fact remains: in spite of blood and language, the Lowlander feels himself the sentimental countryman of the Highlander. When they meet abroad they fall upon each

[27] William Ferguson. *The Identity of the Scottish Nation.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

> other's neck in spirit; even at home there is a clannish intimacy in their talk. But from his compatriot in the south the Lowlander stand consciously apart.

This quote from Stevenson describes rather than explains the nature of the Scots and of their relationship towards the English. Yet when Ferguson quotes these lines towards the end of his study, he appears to be at loss; he is unable to define Scottishness finally and ultimately other than having to rely on the tautology: That Scots are different from others and that they know that Scottishness exists between them. The problem of tautologies haunts all attempts to define Scottish literature of Scottish contexts. Craig is probably closest, yet still falls into the same trap as others have done.

Taking up Muir's point might present reasons for the still unsatisfying results of the attempts to write a Scottish literary history: If Scotland had lost its tradition with the Reformation, and had not re-attained a state in which it was stable and sure of itself, how could anyone define Scottish literature definitely without adding question marks? The academic debate that Craig and others have started might prove fruitful now that Scotland has a distinct political framework once again. It may also be that the question marks become the defining elements of Scottish culture and literature. Scottish literature deserves a new history now, under the light of self-governance. Seen from the present historical point, it may possibly be easier to draw conclusions form Scottish literature's past and from the academic discussion in the times when Scotland was still too self-conscious to state outspokenly what it wanted to be.

3.3. Scotland the Myth

Taking all the points made above into account, I claim that Scotland is an imagined country, or even an imagined nation. Imagined, since it has developed ideas of what it could be, yet these ideas have always been vague. Its self-depiction is unstable, reactionary to historical circumstance. It also is focussed backwards, defining itself from a certain point of time in the past towards some kind of future. The future is hardly ever a positive aspect; it is never an utopian view that is constructed. At its best, Scottish imagination tends to be conservatory: it holds on to a certain vision of its own past which it tries to perpetuate. This is done in order to defend itself from a vaguely defined outside world. This fear of the outside stems from an uncertainty about Scottish identity. Imagining Scotland, then, is the necessary base of the self-assuredness which Scotland still holds today – because it has believed in its state as a country or nation ever since it politically ceased to exist. Scotland has never stopped imagining itself– yet the images it developed varied.

All these points form the base of the present study, and should be seen in reference to Scotland's literary output, exemplified on the works discussed on the following pages. I will show that Scottish literary imagination, in its attempt to create or to preserve "Scotland", came up with certain images or icons, incorporating an idea of what this special "Scotland" stands for. Images, as was shown above, are closely linked to Barthes' idea of myth; myth is easy to perpetuate. Thus, Scottish literary imagination is nothing but the creation of the Scottish myth in the shape of the historical novel.

4. The Novels analysed

It certainly is unusual to make four novels the subject of a study on Scottish identity if 179 years lie between their years of publications. Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* first appeared in 1814 and Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* was first published in 1993. However, all four novels cover what should be considered important periods of Scottish history – both literary and political. The way the authors have captured these decisive moments in their works makes them ideal for the purpose of my study.

There are several reasons which make *Waverley* the best possible starting point for the investigation of Scottish identity. The first is, of course, that it is widely considered the first historical novel in English. Also, there can be no doubt about Sir Walter Scott's lasting influence on Scottish writing and on his importance to English literature in general – up to the present, as was outlined before. The choice fell on the novel out of all possible Scottish novels Scott wrote, because of its "all-Scottish" theme: The fight for independence, the insurrection of the Jacobites against English "usurpation", which ended in total defeat for the insurgents and, following the battle of Culloden, the destruction of the clan system and the decline of Highland culture. The Rebellion of 1745 and its tragic end mark a complete change in Scottish history. Scott published his novel soon enough after the Rising to ensure that the event was almost within living memory. Jan Assmann, speaking of various types of memory, claims that after a period of 80 years, a certain temporal space will slowly be forgotten, while after a period of 40 years, the wish to fix this temporal space will grow (Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis*, p. 50). He calls this "communicative memory", the sort of memory which can be exchanged in direct contact with eye-witnesses. To

transform this communicative memory into cultural memory – and thus, to make it a base for identity – there must be a further step: the "maintenance of unsimultaneity" (p. 24) of the kind which Assmann claims as the ideological foundation of the state of Israel: "Maintain and remember" (p. 30). To reach this point, history must be transformed into myth, and memory must be spatially located (pp. 52-59).

However different Assmann's theory of myth may be to that of Barthes, the transformation of history into myth is an aspect which almost all theorists starting from Nietzsche agree upon when it comes to the creation of identity. And this is what Scott has done in *Waverley*: He transforms history into romance and then into symbols – and implicitly does what Barthes explains in his semantic model of myth. Moreover, Scott fixes the myth he creates in *Waverley* into the geographical space of Highland Scotland and makes this setting part of the myth. Thus, Scott creates something which fits the basic definitions of Assmann's concept of cultural memory.

Adding to all of this is the dominance of the figure of Sir Walter Scott in literary canons of English literature; here, it is Assmann's theory of canon and the tradition of identity which was mentioned before and which may help to see why Scott is an inevitable choice as a starting point for my study.

Almost the same reasons apply to the choice of *Sunset Song*. First published as a novel in 1932, its temporal setting is within the stretches of communicative memory. World War I was just 14 years away, its effects were still obvious. Again, Lewis Grassic Gibbon aims at maintaining unsimultaneity, perhaps more strongly than Scott has done: Gibbon plays with the possibility of spiral ages. On various points of the novel, the characters feel connected to the past, even to pre-historic times. Most strongly, it is Chris Guthrie who feels this connective element which works through spatial fixations. Here, as

Scott had done in *Waverley*, Gibbon attempted to fix a memory to a place, a setting, transforming a story into some sort of myth. This is possible because Gibbon chose a distinct historical event – World War I – which affects his protagonist. Just like Scott has done, Gibbon turns history – if not romance – into his story of Chris, of the village of Kinraddie, of the Howe of the Mearns, of Scotland: it is a transformational process once again.

At first, the choice for *Sunset Song* was guided by its temporal setting, its theme – loss, longing and the hardship of life in rural Scotland at the turn of Modernity – its language and its creation during the period of the Scottish Renaissance. All of these reasons would be enough of a justification for including the book into a study on Scotland – however, maybe not for a study on Scottish identity. Yet all of the novels deal with change – with an outside force transforming a society which is settled in Scotland. *Sunset Song* fits this aspect. Its prevalence in Scottish literary canons, its popularity and appeal to readers even today made it appear even more relevant to my study.

It can be said that *Sunset Song* is part of a trilogy, and that it may be unjustified to exclude all other novels from Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*. Yet when *Sunset Song* appeared, it came to most readers as a single novel. There were no signs of it being part of a series of books. This is still true today; *Sunset Song* does not necessarily call for a sequel. To include *Grey Granite* and *Cloud Howe* in this study would give Gibbon a far too large part of the discussion and would necessarily lead to the inclusion of his socialist background, which features more prominently in the latter books of the *Quair* – I would even claim that his political attitudes hardly feature in *Sunset Song* at all. Having read most of Gibbon's essays on Scotland and his attitudes towards his native country, *Sunset Song* appeared the ideal novel to discuss in terms of Scottish identity. Gibbon had some very clear ideas of what his Scotland was, even if these were founded in theories

which for the reader today appear strangely obscure and typically Modernist.

Because Gibbon re-created his idea of Scotland and included his rendering of Scottish life and language, because it was written in a time when this Scotland had ceased to exist due to historical change, because it was written in a literary era which strained to find the Scottishness in Scottish writing, I decided to include it into the discussion.

Including Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, first published in 1993, in a study with the aim of examinig self-depiction in Scottish writing may not be easy to understand. Welsh wrote about a subculture, about those left behind by 1980s yuppie life style and affected by the economic decline, and chose as a setting the then declining north of Great Britain: Scotland. There are various ways in which the novel could be analysed: It can be seen as a social novel, or as a working-class novel. It is, however, a distinctly Scottish novel. And this is not just because of the protagonist Mark Renton's famous quote: "Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. […] Ah hate the Scots" (Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*, p. 78).[28] However, there is a lot of what *Trainspotting* has to say distilled in this quote: The novel makes a statement on a country which feels to be ruled by others, which is unable to live by itself and yet it cannot even "pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by" (p. 78). The concept of a colonisation of Scotland by the English gives hints at the way Scotland in portrayed – and serves as a first explanation why Scotland "takes drugs in psychic defence", as one of the novel's chapters says.

[28] The edition used in this study: Irvine Welsh. *Trainspotting*. London: Vintage, 1999.

In *Trainspotting. A Reader's Guide,*[29] Robert A. Morace claims Welsh started writing the novel in order to makes sense of the onset of HIV in Edinburgh and the rise of drug dependency (p. 10). Yet Welsh did more: he painted a brilliant picture of social decline in an environment that is at the same time frightening, darkly ironic and strangely reminiscent of an intact community whose shadows still lurk in the corners of the decaying council houses. It is justified if Morace states that Welsh's novels have "expanded the contemporary writer's, especially the contemporary Scottish writer's role, influence and audience and brought about one of the most dramatic changes in 'British' literary history" (p. 18).

Placing Welsh into a line of development along with Sir Walter Scott may appear odd, yet both share more than is obvious at a first glance: Both brought Scottish novels to a large audience; the movie *Trainspotting* was a large success not only throughout the English speaking world. With this, it put Scottish topics – and dialect – on the agenda of newspapers, reviewers and critics who formerly had not paid such interest to Scotland and its literary output. Both use language as distinct markers of a cultural setting and both reach into the not too distant past to draw conclusions. Yet where Scott's vision was an optimistic one, Welsh's is utterly dystopian. Still, judged by the effect both authors had, it is more than justified to include them in the same study.

Along with Welsh, Alasdair Gray is probably the Scottish author who noted the effect of the economic and political decline of Great Britain and especially Scotland most drastically in his 1981 novel *Lanark*. Yet where Welsh chose to concentrate on portraying what he saw happening around him, Gray chose to convert the historical, social and political development of his native Scotland

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[29] Robert A. Morace. *Trainspotting. A Reader's Guide*. Continuum Contemporaries, London, New York: 2001.

since World War II in a very sophisticated artistic vision. The failed referendum on Scottish devolution of 1979 had probably affected both Welsh and Gray, yet Gray started to search ways to represent Scotland rather than depict it – and the representation as exercised in *Lanark* must to this point be seen as the ultimate answer to the Scottish question.

Gray's story of two lives lived by the same character encompasses a period of time that is half historic – World War II and the post-war years – and half fantasy – the Unthank and later, Greater Unthank where Lanark struggles to find his way. Yet the fantasy settings are loaded with symbols for the world which Gray must have experienced during the time of writing *Lanark* – the political instability, the economic decline, the growing powers of an economy which is on the brink of globalisation.

Gray's choice is to present utter confusion which will be clarified the moment the novel is read from beginning to end by the reader. The images he evokes are strangely bewildering and strangely familiar at the same time. He encompasses probably everything which can ever be said about Scotland, yet avoids clear answers because the changes that occurred since World War II deny straight answers. Postmodernity has no room for black-and-white-solutions, not because reality is more than monochrome, but because black and white themselves are under question. And Gray does best what Assmann describes: he maintains unsimultaneity. In fact, *Lanark* only works because its protagonist is a product of his own past which he slowly learns to remember, and can make sense out of his situation because he remembers his past.

Trainspotting was published after *Lanark*, yet both share their temporal background. The fact that Gray's novel marks the last novel of my discussion is due to its complexity. To have included Gray in the list of books is only a logical consequence: My study attempts to

examine images which were created for Scotland; a novel written in a symbolist mode, as *Lanark* no doubt is, must then be the ultimate task for the study.

The question remains: How meaningful can a study be if it concentrates on just four novels out of hundreds of Scottish novels which would come to mind? The answer: It will be just as meaningful as a study of, say, 20 novels. Every single one will have its own image, depending on the idea of Scotland which the single author had in mind when he or she wrote about the country. The study of Scott, Gibbon, Welsh and Gray, however, focuses on four novels by authors who have received wide-spread interest and acclaim. The effects of a novel like *Waverley* or like *Trainspotting* and their critical reviews are out of the question; the image of Scotland which they convey has yet not been discussed and compared in such a way as will be done on the following pages. And the comparison of images can prove the point I made earlier: That the creation of all images for Scotland found in the novels follows the concept of the historical novel.

4.1. *Waverley*, the Picture in the Hall

The first novel to be analysed is, I claim, a model for Scottish self-imagination, because it constructs an image in which Scotland up to the present can recognise itself. The novel achieves this, since first of all, it is the prototype of the historical novel, which places a fictional character amidst a decisive historical environment and thus refashions history. And secondly, *Waverley*[30] the novel and Waverley the protagonist both actually paint the picture of Scotland, the picture which at the end of the novel is hung in the hall of a Scottish manor house; more importantly, this picture is painted by an Englishman and hung in a house that has been restored through the help of another Englishman. It is this picture that embodies the whole of the novel; *Waverley* is the picture in the hall.

4.1.1. The Content

Scott's *Waverley* focuses on young Edward Waverley, an Englishman, who grows up under the protection of his uncle. After a youth spent on the premises of the latter's manor house, Waverley is sent to the army, a place he feels unfit for. His time in service is only an interlude, while he unknowingly approaches the adventure of his life. Since his uncle has given him a letter of recommendation to a friend in Scotland, Baron Cosmo Comyne Bradwardine, Waverley uses the welcome opportunity to get leave from his regiment and visits the Baron.

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[30] The edition used in this study is Sir Walter Scott. *Waverley*. London: Penguin, 1985.

While staying with him, Waverley learns of the society in Scotland, and uses the opportunity to experience the life of a Highland clan, the territory of which borders on the Baron's estate. While he stays with the clan of MacIvor and becomes friends with the clan chief, Fergus, Waverley becomes involved in the beginnings of the Jacobite Rising of 1745 due to some misunderstandings.

Waverley takes part in the first military successes of the Jacobite army, yet soon finds himself in a position he feels unfit for. He becomes torn between his old – English – and new – Scottish – allegiance, and by chance is cut off from the rebel army in time before the Jacobite cause finally fails. Back in safety, Edward manages to obtain a letter of pardon for his Scottish friends, yet only manages to save the Baron and his family. Fergus is tried and executed; his sister Flora retreats to the Continent. The rebellion has failed; its prominent leaders are either dead or exiled. Happiness is finally found when Waverley marries the Baron's daughter, Rose, and restores the Bradwardine family back to their former position.

4.1.2. Arranging the Painting

Just like an actual painting, the picture *Waverley* develops painting consists of elements in a meaningful arrangement on an formerly empty canvas. I will show the elements and their arrangement and also prove that the empty canvas is that of both Waverley the protagonist and the reader.

There are two central aspects in the novel. The first to be examined is the "Postscript, which should have been a Preface" (pp. 492 ff.). This chapter is a justification. The narrator explains on pp. 492-493 that it was his attempt to paint a "truthful" portrait of manners and customs of a society vanishing or already lost. It is on the same

page that we find the direction into which the reader should have been guided throughout the novel.

> But the change, though steadily and rapidly progressive, has, nevertheless, been gradual; and like those who drift down the stream of a deep and smooth river, we are not aware of the progress we have made, until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have been drifted (p. 492).

Two terms are central here: "progress" and "gradual change"; progress, the narrator claims, has been achieved through a smooth, gradual movement. A transition is made from the Scotland of the Jacobite Rising of 1745 – or in fact, of the "historical" Scotland in general – towards the "modern" Scotland which is an integral and peaceful part of Great Britain. The past has a certain value – antiquarian to some extend, but vital for self-estimation, as I will stress later on – but the real achievement is the present and the possible future. The narrator stresses that one's place in history cannot be estimated if we lose sight of the past; without the knowledge of the past there cannot be a future. And this future will be an improvement.[31] In the "Postscript" we find that *Waverley*'s historising

[31] The feeling of a certain optimism in the narrator's opinion of historical progress cannot be denied here; he is a child of his time, a product of the enlightenment's view on history which strongly believed in a progress from one stage of society to the next, which will in turn be a move towards improvement. If we examine this picture of gliding down a stream towards progress, we are reminded of Friedrich von Schiller's lectures on history, especially the first lecture given at Jena, 1789, whose optimism equals that of Scott here. (The full

attempts to create a new narrative by combining two existing strains of narration. It turns two independent histories into one narrative, transforming Scotland into romance, England into the carrier of history, and ultimately Great Britain, the United Kingdom, into the common future narrative.

4.1.3. The Painting

This last point becomes clear in "Chapter seventy-first" (pp. 482ff.), when Waverley hangs a painting of his story (and of history) into the hall of the newly restored Scottish manor house of his friend, Baron Bradwardine. It is the second of the two central aspects I mentioned and the key to the novel's symbolism:

> It was a large and spirited painting, representing Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley in their Highland dress; the scene a wild, rocky, and mountainous pass, down which the clan were descending in the background. It was taken from a spirited sketch, drawn while they were in Edinburgh by a young man of high genius, and had been painted on a full-length scale by an eminent London artist. Raeburn himself (whose Highland Chiefs do all but walk out of the canvas) could not have done more justice to the subject; and the ardent, fiery, and impetuous character of the unfortunate

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version of this lecture is Friedrich von Schiller. *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte? Nachdruck der Erstausgabe der Jenaer akademischen Antrittsrede Schillers aus dem Jahre 1789*. Jenaer Reden und Schriften. Neue Folge 1982, 2. Jena: Jenaer Universitätsverlag, 1982).

> Chief of Glennaquoich was finely contrasted with the contemplative, fanciful, and enthusiastic expression of his happier friend. Beside the painting hung the arms which Waverley had borne in the unfortunate civil war. The whole piece was beheld with admiration, and deeper feelings.

The contrast made here between Fergus Mac-Ivor and Waverley is striking: the first is "ardent, fiery, and impetuous" and also "unfortunate", while the latter is "finely contrasted" by being "contemplative, fanciful, and enthusiastic" and ultimately the "happier" character. As I will show, both characters are the representatives of both Scotland and the newly built Great Britain respectively, so that in the painting they are combined in such a way as to re-unite them, but at the same time the direction is clear: the clan is seen as "descending in the background". Whereas painted Highland Chiefs do "all but walk out of the canvas", Waverley has managed to escape the painting; in fact, he has created it.

4.1.4. The Emptiness of Edward Waverley

How, then, does this creation work? Throughout the novel, a certain dialectic between the romantic and the historical is exercised, between outdated and progressive values embodied by the warring parties of Scotland and England. The Englishman Edward Waverley travels to Scotland on the brink of the Jacobite Rising of 1745; being an "empty" character, he functions like a mirror for the reader. On the empty canvas of Waverley, both the protagonist and the novel, the painting is developed.

The character "Edward Waverley" lacks much of what we are used to of a protagonist. We are not given a lot of background about him. Already his uncertain age is significant. The facts we have about his childhood and adolescence are few; he is brought up by an elderly tutor, who gives him only a weak guidance. He lacks a father, but has a friendly figure in his uncle; he spends his time daydreaming. He does not seem to have a face, or at least it is never described by the narrator; he has no "soul" either and thus lacks realism. These points were criticised from a very early point of the novel's reception.[32] A minor character like Bradwardine seems to have more distinct features than Edward, who is "blown about with every wind of doctrine" (p.

[32] The fact that he has no "soul" is supposed to mean that we do not find descriptions in his inner life. Critics have always attacked Scott for this and for the missing realism of his characters. Some of these remarks are collected in James T. Hillhouse. *The Waverley Novels and Their Critics* (New York: Octagon Books Inc., 1968 (repr.)), for example on page 219. Perhaps realism was not the aim of the narration; Cairns Craig argues in *Out of History* on p. 65 that realism could not fulfil the demands of the time. In his view, this is the reason why romance took its place (cf. pp. 42ff of the same book).

353), as Fergus describes it. Edward seems like a white sheet of paper that fills with everything he sees, hears and experiences. The perception the reader is faced with is that of Waverley's dream-like vision. The omniscient narrative perspective leads both the protagonist and the reader to discover a world anew. Looking at the moment when Edward Waverley first comes to Scotland in "Chapter seventh: A Horse-Quarter in Scotland" or the first glimpses he gets of the manor house of Tully-Veolan in "Chapter eighth: A Scottish Manor-House Sixty Years Since", we realize that Waverley is the looking glass through which we perceive his reality, yet a blurred one, a romance in the making:

> The solitude and repose of the whole scene seemed almost romantic; And Waverley, who had given his horse to his servant on entering the first gate, walked slowly down the avenue, enjoying the grateful and cooling shade (p. 77).

This is obvious also a few pages later on in the same chapter:

> Tired of the din which he created, and the unprofitable responses which it excited, Waverley began to think that he had reached the castle of Orgoglio, as entered by the victorious Prince Arthur […]. Filled almost with the expectation of beholding some 'old, old man, with beard as white as snow', whom he might question concerning this deserted mansion, our hero turned to a little oaken wicket-door, well clenched with iron nails, which opened in the court-yard wall at its angle with the house (p. 80).

This romance is destroyed and re-built several times throughout the novel, until the mirror through which this world-view is perceived finally changes focus.

Waverley has no ideals based on reality, demonstrated in his political decisions that always depend on his sentiment. The narrator blames this fault on his education, but this lack of straightforward reason, which should have been shaped through guidance, is the story's main device. Waverley is unable to make decisions based on reason; he forever depends on reason entering his mind through outside forces or guides. What we find throughout the story is the argument of reason versus sentiment, the former entering from the outside, the latter created and creative within Waverley.[33]

The characters around him constantly create new influences; these are eventually different shades of Scotland or England, and they form Waverley. In the end it will be the English influence that gains the upper hand, but the others are still there, most notably in the Scottish sentiment that arises from Waverley's experiences and memories. Yet Waverley's final choice is not a patriotic one; he is not a patriot, otherwise he would never have become a member of a pro-Scottish movement.[34] In general, he is not a character with strong

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[33] It seems almost like the argument of the *Caledonian Antisyzygy* has found a new shape here: Waverley is guided by emotions, and reason only slowly gains the better half of his character. Both forces never work at the same time; like the literature that Gregory Smith found changing sides unexpectedly, Waverley is torn between one and the other.

[34] Jacobitism is, arguably, a movement or sentiment that affected all of Britain. It possesses, however, a distinctly Scottish focus, since the Stuarts were Scottish monarchs until the Union of Crowns. They had their strongest support among the Scottish gentry; it was in Scotland where the insurrections of 1715 and 1745 had their strongest effects.

convictions. If he were, his fate would be similar to that of Fergus or Colonel Gardiner, whose believes seal their doom: The Jacobite leader Fergus is executed as a traitor and Colonel Gardiner, Edward Waverley's superior in the army, is killed while fighting the Jacobites. Waverley represents the middle path, between reason and sentiment, drawn to the latter, but forced to give way to the former. Interestingly, in the seclusion of England he realizes that the romantic part of his life will be over:

> […] and it was in many a winter walk by the shores of Ullswater, that he acquired a more complete mastery of a spirit tamed by adversity than his former experience had

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There were, as in the Waverley family in the novel, English Jacobites, and there existed a large anti-Stuart feeling within Scottish society. The memories of the reign of Charles I. and James III. deeply affected the belief in the Stuarts both in Scotland and England, and finally lead to the resignation of James. Still, the idea of usurpation of the house of Hanover found followers, especially in Scotland, which in addition had to suffer from religious struggles in the aftermath of the Reformation, so that here the Stuarts offered a model for a return to a safer, more peaceful and legitimate reign. In general, it was the continuation of the Civil War, the struggle between old and new ideas and a conflicting view of history that emerged in these insurrections, and which established roots among the society that prevailed in Scotland – an anachronistic one in the eyes of England. It merged with ideas of traditional loyalty that dominated the minds of Lowland and Highland gentry. For the historic backgrounds, refer to John Duncan Mackie. *A History of Scotland*. Penguin Books, third, revised edition, 1969, pp. 264-278, and for the cultural implications of Jacobitism see David Daiches (ed.). *A Companion to Scottish Culture*. London: Arnold, 1981, pp. 188-190.

> given him: and that he felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced (p. 415).[35]

Back in safety at last, he is strong in his actions, when the outside influences of Scotland have given way to the homogenous, cultured and "civilized" English surroundings. Moreover, once this English influence is established, he makes people happy back in Scotland by restoring them to safety, both personal and financial. He symbolises or foreshadows a union of happiness and bilateral peace, with an awareness of the past and a sense of its beauty and of its dangers.

Edward Waverley is a character who is hard to grasp, not even "from the skin inwards".[36] But showing him as a human being is not the main purpose of the novel. He is, like us, a reader of information, one who takes up what is offered and is left to construct his own picture of the situation. He is not guided by reason, but influenced by sentiment. The picture he is creating in his head – and in the reader's mind -, the message he and we come to read, is pre-modified: There is only one distinct way of seeing the world, of solving the conflict between two opposing views.

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[35] Note that we find here a distinction between "romance" and "history", the former being Waverley's Scottish experiences, the latter his English future. This will be taken up again in the summary of this chapter.

[36] This term is one which is used a lot by critics for Scott's characters since Carlyle's times; cf. Hillhouse. *The Waverley Novels and their Critics*, p. 216.

4.1.5. Time, Distance and Reality

The pre-modification of seeing the painting in a single possible way starts already on a very abstract level. In the novel, time, distance and reality are woven into an intricate relation. Edward Waverley travels into unknown terrain. He travels to the far north of Great Britain, and at the same time he even seems to travel back in time; the further north he gets, the more archaic the circumstances seem to get. The most striking evidence for this are the three families presented in the novel: Waverley, Bradwardine and MacIvor.

The house of Waverley is esteemed and secure, in contrast to the house of Bradwardine, occupying the space between Lowland and Highland, a border position between a more "cultivated" society, old-fashioned already in contrast to the English, and an even more anachronistic one which lies behind it in the Highlands. Like the Waverleys, the Bradwardines are Tories, members of the Episcopal Church, and the baron still holds on to his Jacobitism that he even fought for in 1715. His position is threatened, both by forces within his own country, among them his Highland neighbours to whom he has to pay financial tribute in order to maintain his estates and his security, as well as those members of society who are not pro-Jacobites, and by the government, which takes away his possessions after he becomes active in the new insurrection of 1745. In the end he is charged with high treason, so that even his life is in danger. The traditions he is proud of and his wealth are destroyed in the course of the occupation by government forces, and can only be restored through Waverley's help.

The MacIvors are the most removed of the families. They live in what appears to be a castle, set in barren and wild scenery, and hold on to ancient traditions which Waverley had believed so far to be part

of the past. They have a completely different religion – Roman Catholicism – and are ardent Jacobites. The remoteness is thus temporal as much as spatial.

Only through the happy union of Waverley's marriage with Rose will the house of Bradwardine live on. The house of MacIvor, due to its refusal to embrace a possible alternative to extinction, is destroyed and disbanded. The strain of history represented by the MacIvors is mutilated like the body of its chief.[37]

At the same time, Edward Waverley seems to travel outside of reality. Travelling "backwards in time" leads him to lose sight of the historical facts as presented in the novel. When these finally break into his dream-like experience, Waverley can escape luckily. In the clash of what is presented as the old world – Scotland – and the new and progressive world – England – Waverley is safe. Fate, it seems, takes the decision that he, the character who cannot decide on his true allegiance, is unable to take. The incident when this becomes most strongly pronounced is found in "Chapter fifty-ninth: A Skirmish": In the clash between two opposing narratives, the representatives of the old world are cut off and held captive by the new. The captives will die a "lingering and cruel death" (p. 476). While Fergus, unable to be changed due to his strong convictions,[38] is doomed, Waverley, lacking conviction, can be re-integrated.

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[37] It is clear, though not made explicit other than in the explanatory notes at the end of the used edition (they were also part of the original edition), that Fergus is hung, disembowelled and beheaded according to the English law concerning High Treason that was taken over after the Union of Parliaments in 1707, and in the text he and Flora stress the fact that Fergus' head will be put on a stake and publicly exposed; cf. pp. 469, 474.

[38] Talbot expresses this quite plainly in his remark on the chief:

4.1.6. Character-istics

The contrast of old versus new is stressed by the configuration and constellation of the novel's characters. Waverley is set against two strong characters, one Scottish and one English. Both exercise a strong influence on the protagonist, yet it will be the English virtues that will gain the upper hand in Waverley. Interestingly, Scott's novel is filled with rich details of Scottish appearance, manners and language, and these are attributed mostly to the multitude of minor characters. This, I claim, is a device to create a certain picture of the historic Scotland the novel wants to perpetuate; also, the anachronism created by

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> 'Justice,' he said, '[…] could not have selected a fitter victim. He came to the field with the fullest light upon the nature of his attempt. He had studied and understood the subject. His father's fate could not intimidate him; the lenity of the laws which had restored him to his father's property and rights could not melt him. That he was brave, generous, and possessed many good qualities, only rendered his crime the less excusable; that he was an enthusiast in a wrong cause only made him more fit to be its martyr. […] He threw for life or death, a coronet or a coffin; and he cannot now be permitted, with justice to the country, to draw stakes because the dice have gone against him.' (p. 463)

Progressive history does not allow two truths to exist simultaneously. One has to vanish for the sake of the other. This point confirms Cairns Craig's statements made in *Out of History.*

contrasting it to a very settled, however not very vivid, picture of England is meant to bias the view both of Waverley and, ultimately, the reader, in favour of the English side.

Considering the major Scottish characters, the most important of them is Fergus MacIvor, an influential and highly symbolic figure. Not only does his character influence Waverley, but his fate signifies the loss of a distinct tradition. In him, both a pre-Reformatory belief – he is a Roman-Catholic; cf. p. 211 – and a pre-civil-war loyalty – he strongly believes in the Stuart succession; cf. pp. 158-159 – are combined to make him a representative of a dying culture. Fergus is a Highland chieftain, though already with variations: he is brought up at the exiled court of the Stuarts in France (p. 156) and considers some of the habits of his subjects out-dated.[39] However, he is aware of his role, his power and his responsibility for his followers.

As in Fergus, we find a very distinct Scottish highlight, if more difficult, within the compositon of the book in the person of Bradwardine. The baron represents the anglicised Scottish landowner or *laird*. Like Fergus, Bradwardine embodies tradition and national pride. Bradwardine switches between Standard English and Lowland Scots quite regularly, depending on the circumstances and his addressee. This seems to be an indication of the baron's position, geographically and socially, between England and Scotland, between Anglicisation and Scottishness. As his Scots outweighs his English once he becomes an active member of the Jacobite army, language

[39] Cf. p. 164 and more striking p. 171: "'My dear Flora, before I return to the *barbarous ritual* of our forefathers'" [my italics]. He also explicitly states: "'I assure you, Baron, though I can live like a Highlander when needs must, I remember my Paris education'" (p. 305).

here appears as an indicator for his loyalty.[40] Bradwardine is a representative of his caste in Scotland, a border character. In him, both reason and sentiment have their place, just like past and present have their place on his estate, as is symbolised by its reconstruction and redecoration at the end of the novel. It is he who literally takes Waverley across the border, who introduces him to a new world.

The contrasts to these major Scottish characters are both Colonel Talbot, an English soldier held captive by the Jacobites, who later becomes friends with Edward Waverley, and Colonel Gardiner. Talbot is Fergus' counterpart in the constellation. Just like the Highland Chief, Talbot has a strong resentment against everything that is not part of his ideology; both represent military and political forces, yet both work towards opposite ends. Just as Fergus' influence changes Waverley's perception of his own situation, Talbot re-unites Waverley with his English alliances. With the introduction of Talbot in the novel, the protagonist's admiration for Fergus slowly vanishes. Talbot's appearance also coincides with the climax of the rebel army's success; it is after having made friends with Talbot that Waverley finds the rebellion' luck to be vanishing.[41]

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[40] A striking example for the increasing use of Scots is on pp. 343 in phrases such as: "'I can taek mickle fra a man to whom I have unhappily rendered sic a misfortune as that.'" Or as in the following scene: "'I doubt na, lads,' he proceeded, 'but your education has been sae seen to, that ye understand the true nature of the feudal tenure?'" More on language shall be said below.

[41] The battle at Preston is the greatest achievement of the Jacobites; their march southward is halted, and after the return to Scotland they are pursued by the English forces, until finally the insurrection is squashed at Culloden. The text mentions no positive details after the first victorious battle; Waverley and Fergus almost come to blows; the English and Scottish farmers seem hostile or disinterested, and the

Just like Bradwardine, Colonel Gardiner pushes Waverley "over the border"; he serves as the counterpart to the Baron in this respect. It is also Gardiner's task to re-awake reason and virtue, also a feeling of duty, in the protagonist. When Waverley is preparing for battle at Preston, he sees Colonel Gardiner (p. 334), and this encounter, though one-sided, shows him the unnatural situation he has manoeuvred himself into for the first time. He feels that he is not where he should be, but feels that turning back is impossible (pp. 333-334). When he later has to see his former superior die as a consequence of the attack of the army Waverley now belongs to, it inspires the change of attitude within the protagonist.[42] Waverley finds his place in history again; he is confronted with the death of an Englishman, and he finds a living example of the sort of character he himself should represent when he becomes friends with Talbot. Virtue, it seems, can be found on both sides of the battlefield. Yet reason, in the sense of knowing that the cause is justified, can only be found on the English side. This is what Waverley comes to learn.

As was mentioned before, it is through the use of the minor characters that the novel illustrates both the historical and the socio-cultural setting; the minor characters provide "local colouring" and highlight the contrasts the novel makes between the English and the

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leaders of the army begin to quarrel until the retreat is ordered, which Fergus, now reunited with Waverley, sees as the end of the campaign, as he stresses on p. 404.

[42] Cf. p. 341. While seeing Gardiner die, Waverley, already in a state of confusion after realising that he should be among the troops he is now fighting against, is reported by the narrator as memorising the incident possibly for life on the same page: "The look with which he [Gardiner] regarded Waverley in his dying moments did not strike him so deeply at this crisis of hurry and confusion, as when it recurred to his imagination at the distance of some time."

Scottish. Evan Dhu Maccombich, for example, represents the true clansman who follows his chief regardless of his own fate. This is obvious in the following scene:

> 'I was just ganging to say, my Lord,' said Evan, in what he meant to be in an insinuating manner, 'that if your excellent honour, and the honourable Court, would let Vich Ian Vohr go free just this once, and let him gae back to France, and not to trouble King George's government again, that ony [for "any"] o' the very best of his clan will be willing to be justified in his stead; and if you'll let me gae down to Glennaquoich, I'll fetch them up to ye mesell, to head or hang, and you may begin wi' me the very first man.'
>
> Notwithstanding the solemnity of the occasion, a sort of laugh was heard in the court at the extraordinary nature of the proposal. The Judge checked this indecency, and Evan, looking sternly around, when the murmur abated, 'If the Saxon gentlemen are laughing,' he said, 'because a poor man, such as me, thinks my life, or the life of six of my degree, is worth that of Vich Ian Vohr, it's like enough they may be very right; but if they laugh because they think I would not keep my word, and come back to redeem him, I can tell them they ken neither the heart of a Hielandman, nor the honour of a gentleman.'
>
> There was no further inclination to laugh among the audience, and a dead silence ensued (pp. 465-466).

For Waverley and the reader, Evan is the messenger of a different society (pp. 131-132), or even of different world. His descent into the Lowlands to seek the baron is the intrusion of a different

influence; it is also an infiltration. Both protagonist and novel are from this point on enchanted by the Highland society the novel depicts.

> […] the door suddenly opened, and, ushered by Saunders Saunderson, a Highlander, fully armed and equipped, entered the apartment. Had it not been that Saunders acted the part of master of ceremonies to this martial apparition, without appearing to deviate from his usual composure, and that neither Mr Bradwardine nor Rose exhibited any emotion, Edward would certainly have thought the intrusion hostile. As it was, he started at the sight of what he had not yet happened to see, a mountaineer in his full national costume. The individual Gael was a stout, dark, young man, of low stature, the ample folds of whose plaid added to the appearance of strength which this person exhibited. The short kilt, or petticoat, showed his sinewy and clean-made limps; the goat-skin purse, flanked by the usual defences, a dirk and a steel-wrought pistol, hung before him; his bonnet had a short feather, which indicated his claim to be treated as a Duinhé-wassel, or sort of gentleman; a broadsword dangled by his side, a target hung upon his shoulder, and a long Spanish fowling-piece occupied one of his hands (p. 131).

The rich details of the appearance of a character form part of the "visual" depiction of the "historic" Scotland *Waverley* preserves. These impressions are mostly colourful and harmless, and form a complete contrast to the "sociological" depictions of *Waverley*'s Scots; the impressions here are mostly dark and bewildering. Callum Beg, Fergus' personal attendant, for example:

> Callum unbuttoned his coat, raised his left arm, and with an emphatic nod, pointed to the hilt of a small dirk, snugly deposited under it, in the lining of his jacket. Waverley thought he had understood his meaning; he gazed in his face, and discovered in Callum's very handsome, though embrowned features, just the degree of roguish malice with which a lad of the same age in England would have brought forward a plan for robbing an orchard.
> 'Good God, Callum, would you take the man's life?'
> 'Indeed,' answered the young desperado (p. 230).

With the same joy with which an English boy would steal an apple, a Scot would take a life. It is a stark contrast the novel makes here, and it is not the only one. The Highland robber Bean Lean is the embodiment of clichés: He represents the intriguing, cattle-stealing and blackmailing *cateran*[43] who might have occupied public imagination of Highlanders at the time.[44] However, it should be noted that his behaviour is not regarded as extraordinary by *Waverley*'s Highlanders; for them, it is part of their way of life. This is evident in Evan's description of Bean Lean, in which he also talks of the fate of Bean Lean's forefathers; cf. p. 148:

> 'No – he that steals a cow from a poor widow or a stirk from a cotter is a thief; he that lifts a drove from a Sassenach laird is a gentlemen-drover. And, besides, to take

[43] A *cateran* is a Highland robber; cf. p. 124.

[44] The fact that Waverley has heard of these incidents might suffice as a proof; cf. p. 129. However, Scott's introduction of such a character as Bean Leann only strengthens the contrast between the different cultures presented in the novel.

> a tree from the forest, a salmon from the river, a deer from the hill, or a cow from a Lowland strath, is what no Highlander need ever think shame upon.'

Also, through the use of minor characters, the novel insinuates that Scotland – or at least, *Waverley*'s Highland Scotland – is an anachronistic country. Superstition characterises most of the Highlanders in the novel.[45] This believe sets them apart from the English characters and also from the novel's audience, who lived in post-Enlightenment Britain.

Already at Tully-Veolan Waverley learns that the baron has been present at a witch trial.[46] Macwheeble, the baron's *bailie*, later on gives what he thinks to be a justification for the existence of witches:[47]

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[45] The idea of superstition being used for the creation of a traditional, remote society is mentioned in Jürgen Klein and Ingrid Schwarz. *Romankonzeption, Menschenbild und Geschichte in Sir Walter Scott's Waverley* in: Horst W. Drescher und Joachim Schwend. *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985, pp. 55-56.

[46] Cf. p. 114. The story is told by Rose Bradwardine, the Baron's daughter; note it is set "once upon a time", and thus features a fairytale-introduction, whereas it cannot be too far in the past, since we later learn that the person accused back then is still alive.

[47] Note that Macwheeble speaks broad Scots, and that he shows some learning in his explanations; this might give proof to the statement that Scott lets his minor Scottish characters speak Scots to express some ideas – even complicated ones – in the people's voice. In addition, he gives further evidence to the fact that the Scots had a considerable amount of learning, and this in turn, contrasted with a belief in

> '[…] it will be past sunset afore I get back frae the Captain's, and at these unsony hours the glen has a bad name – there's something no that canny about auld Janet Gellatley. The Laird he'll no believe thae things, but he was aye ower rash and venturesome – and feared neither man nor deevil – and sae's seen o't. But right sure am I Sir George Mackenyie says, that no divine can doubt there are witches, since the Bible says thou shalt not suffer them to live; and that no lawyer in Scotland can doubt it, since it is punishable with death by our law. So there's baith law and gospel for it. And his honour winna believe the Leviticus, he might aye believe the Statute-book; but he may tak his ain way o't – it's a' ane to Duncan Macwheeble' (pp. 457-458).

In the Highlands, Waverley encounters the idea of clairvoyants. The first remark he hears on this topic comes from a Highlander among Bean Lean's followers:

> He went on regretting to Evan Dhu the death of an aged man, Donnacha an Amrigh, or Duncan with the Cap, 'a gifted seer', who foretold, through the second sight, visitors of every description who haunted their dwelling, whether as friends or foes (p. 142).

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superstition, creates an interesting and bewildering clash of attitudes, which stress once again the different society in Scotland.

The next incidence when the reader finds a seer among the Highlanders is when Waverley sees his former commander, Colonel Gardiner, approach:

> Edward felt as if he was about to see a parricide committed in his presence; for the venerable grey hair and striking countenance of the veteran recalled the almost paternal respect with which his officers universally regarded him. But ere he could say 'Hold!' an aged Highlander, who lay beside Callum Beg, stopped his arm. 'Spare your shot,' said the seer, 'his hour is not yet come. But let him beware to-morrow. – I see his winding-sheet high upon his breast.'
> Callum, flint of other considerations, was penetrable to superstition. He turned pale at the words of the *Taishatr,*[48] and recovered his piece (p. 334).

This superstition even extends to Fergus, whose foreign education should normally safeguard him from believing in things as irrational as ghosts. Yet the influence of tradition is strong, even in him. On the march back from England, he tells Waverley that he thinks he will be either dead or a captive soon:

> 'Upon which authority can you found so melancholy a prediction?' asked Waverley.
> 'On one which never failed a person of my house. I have,' he said lowering his voice, 'I have seen the Bodach Glas.'
> 'Bodach Glas?'

[48] The word means "seer", as the narrator explains on p. 142.

> 'Yes: have you been so long at Glennaquoich, and never heard of the Grey Spectre? though indeed there is a certain reluctance among us to mention him.'
> '[…] his spirit has crossed the Vich Ian Vohr of the day when any great disaster was impending, but especially before approaching death. My father saw him twice; once before he was made prisoner at Sheriffmuir; another time, on the morning of the day on which he died.' [49]

When Waverley encounters Fergus for the last time in prison, Fergus tells him that he has seen the ghost again:

> 'And now,' said Fergus, 'while we are upon the subject of clanship – what think you now of the prediction of the Bodach Glas?' – Then, before Edward could answer, 'I saw him again last night – he stood in the slip of moonshine which fell from that high and narrow window towards my bed' (p. 473).

It seems obvious that Fergus strongly believes in the apparition, and that Waverley sees it as a reaction to a stressful

[49] Cf. p. 406. Edward reacts like a man of reason would in such an instance: "Edward had little doubt that this phantom was the operation of an exhausted frame and depressed spirits, working on the belief common to all Highlanders" (p. 408).

situation; however, he is aware by now that the Highlanders believe in the supernatural.[50]

By making its Highlanders believe in superstition, the novel clearly removes the Highland culture from the world Waverley – and the reader – knows. Again, this is not only done to contrast it, but also to preserve it.

This decision to set Scotland apart from the English culture Waverley knows is made also when it comes to politics. Again, the minor characters are the carriers of this information. The laird of Balmawhapple is Waverley's first chance to see contradicting Scottish politics at work. While having a drink in the local pub in Tully-Veolan, Balmawhapple and the baron have a heated argument over politics, in the course of which Waverley is insulted (pp. 97-99).

In "Chapter Thirtieth" (pp. 234 ff.), the novel presents a miniature Scotland with all its political and religious unrest. In the village of Cairnvreckan, where Waverley must stop because of a lost horseshoe, Waverley witnesses a quarrel between the blacksmith and his wife; she is pro-Jacobite, and he is a Presbyterian, and both argue about her singing Jacobite songs. She accuses the village of being Whigs, and claims their days to be over, now that the insurrection is underway. The argument becomes heated, and during its course, Waverley is suspected of being a Jacobite, and finally attacked by the smith, whom Waverley shoots at. He is finally rescued from being lynched by the village mob through the help of the Presbyterian clergyman Mr Morton.[51] The scene is a model for the world Waverley

[50] In one scene, Waverley is treated by a Highland herbalist after a hunting accident; this man uses spells and other magical techniques to speed up the recovery; cf. pp. 190-191.

[51] The relevant pages are 234 ff.

enters: unsettled and dangerous.[52] This world stands in contrast to what Waverley experiences in England: Here, he is helped to escape the English soldiers by a farmer and his family (cf. pp. 411-412), although they know that he is a Jacobite. Moreover, in Scotland not even the basic family relations are presented as intact, as the argument between the smith and his wife show.

The symbolism of the minor Scottish characters Scott employs in the novel is strongest in Davie Gallately, the "court jester" of Bradwardine. When Waverley comes to the deserted and destroyed Tully-Veolan, the first person he encounters is Davie. He survives the destruction of the house, and with him the songs of old which he has sung throughout the novel. A character without history becomes the carrier of tradition; he prefigures Waverley's (and *Waverley*'s) recreation of Scotland.

What all minor Scottish characters do, other than illustrate Scott's canvas of Scotland "sixty years since", is allow him to "talk" Scots,[53] thus enabling him to give even more local colour to his narration, and to convey complicated ideas as plainly as possible in the language of the people. The use of Scots also further removes Scott's Scotland temporally, geographically and culturally. Furthermore, he uses language to show allegiances. Evan, for example, speaks a flowery, but clearly Standard English during the first encounter. In the course of the story, he speaks more and more Scots. At the court trial he is obviously at loss for words, having to

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[52] It also prefigures how the protagonist is caught between warring factions in the course of the novel.

[53] "The Scots dialogue is the highlight of Walter Scott's style. […] It is not used as a vulgar tongue: in the author's youth it was a cultivated language" (Kurt Wittig. *The Scottish Tradition in Literature*, p. 230).

speak a language other than that which he uses for thinking.[54] The same model of language denoting allegiance is found in Bradwardine, as was said before.

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[54] The narrator stresses this confusing situation in his remark on p. 465; but the contrast to what the reader heard Evan say on p. 132 is striking. If we consider the opening sentence Evan speaks here:

> 'Fergus MacIvor Vich Ian Vohr […] greets you well, Baron of Bradwardine and Tully-Veolan, and is sorry that there has been a thick cloud interposed between you and him, which has kept you from seeing and considering the friendship and alliances that have been between your houses and forebears of old; and he prays you that the cloud may pass away, and that things may be as they have been heretofore between the clan Ivor and the house of Bradwardine, when there was an egg between then for a flint, and a knife for the sword.'

We can see that this is very different from the Scots pledge at the trial. Indeed, some scholars would consider this probably as Gaelic-English (Wittig in *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* tries to trace Gaelic elements in the English written by native speakers of Gaelic; cf. Wittig, pp. 185ff.), a transposition of the flow and imagery of the Gaelic language, Evan's native tongue, into English. In any case, the distinct diction poses Evan into a different cultural background than that which both Waverley and the Baron inhabit. It has to remain open why the narrator uses to different styles of speech for Evan. The most satisfying explanation is the hastiness with which Scott is said to have produced his works (in Hillhouse. *The Waverley Novels and their*

4.1.7. Conclusion

The present examination of Scott's novel has shown that *Waverley* develops a distinct image of Scotland: that of the painting in the hall. Scott has used his protagonist as an empty canvas on which he develops the Scotland he wanted to commemorate. He filled the mind of Edward Waverley and the pages of *Waverley* with highlights, contrasts, colourful descriptions and distinct settings which he arranged in such an order as to influence Edward's mind. Since this protagonist is designed in order to work as a reflecting character for the reader, the development of setting and plot create impressions as much for Waverley as for the reader. If Waverley is "blown about with every wind of doctrine", then the reader necessarily is so, too.

Scott even enacts Edward's struggle for the right allegiance in a way that we as readers must see his decision as correct. There is no obstacle within Waverley which would provoke contradiction to that which the novel offers us. Since Waverley has no proper self in a realist way of definition, we are guided solely by the influence of his surrounding. Scott added to this the historical fact of both the British Union and the defeat of the Jacobites and clearly attributes past and present to the losing and winning side respectively. He does so throughout his novel, attaching values alongside with descriptions to both the English and the Scottish characters, even to buildings and landscapes. He guides not only Waverley to see where his future lies; he guides the readers in the same direction, too.

Also, Scott set his novel within the time-space of "communicative memory", to borrow Assmann's terminology: "'tis 60 years since", the novel explicitly claims. Stressing the fact that the

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Critics we can find many passages which refer to critical remarks of this sort; cf. Hillhouse, pp. 214ff.).

events presented (or, at least, parts of them) date back just barely long enough to be considered as part of the past but still close enough to have witnesses from the time alive, Scott ensures that historic facts can be safely blended with invented ones. Thus, Scott can turn history into romance and romance into history without much harm. He can create a painting of the Scotland he had in mind, much in the same way as any artist would. Scott created the painting in the hall.

Waverley's painting, then, serves the same purpose as the painting which is the novel: It puts Scotland back on an empty canvas. It does, however, not restore the country; it re-creates an ideal which is "beheld with admiration, and deeper feelings" (p. 489). It commemorates Scotland inside a historical building re-erected by an Englishman for his Scottish friend whose daughter he has just married: In an almost obtrusive way, the novel praises the Union between England and Scotland which, at the time of the novel's creation, was an established fact, made of "flesh and blood and pasteboard", as Muir complained in his *Scott and Scotland.* But Waverley's painting in the hall, however detailed and lively it may appear, is a construct, a fake, a deliberate manipulation of facts. Yet the image it presents of Scotland – that of Highland bravery, customs, language and dress – has proved to be a lasting one.

4.2. *Sunset Song*: The Standing Stone

Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel *Sunset Song*[55] develops quite a different and rather abstract image of Scotland. The novel casts memory into stone. It erects a monument, and this monument comes in the shape of a standing stone. Standing stones, as shall be shown, form the centre of the novel. Life, history, the seasons and the ages circle around them, while they remain unaffected by change. This, I claim, is what Gibbon ascribed to his native Scotland, and he did so by creating the standing stone of *Sunset Song*. It is true that the novel is part of the trilogy *A Scots Quair*, as I have mentioned before, and that political motivation behind the novels became clearer the further Gibbon told the story of Chris Guthrie. Yet I claim that *Sunset Song* can be discussed separately as a text; it is not a text about politics, but about Scotland; it is probably the Scotland Gibbon has known in his youth, as various critics claim. More likely, however, it is the Scotland of the author's vision, influenced by his learning and his experience. In any case, *Sunset Song* develops a definite vision, and it explicitly defines a symbol for this vision.

[55] Lewis Grassic Gibbon. *Sunset Song*. Edited with an Introduction by Tom Crawford. Canongate Classics 12. Edinburgh: Canongate, [10]1999.

4.2.1. The Content

Gibbon's novel focuses on a young woman, Chris Guthrie, whom the reader sees settling with her family in the North-East of Scotland at the beginning of the twentieth century. The first years there, on Blawearie in the village of Kinraddie, are characterized by the harshness of the rural life. Allowed to receive further education, Chris sees herself divided between the love for the land she inhabits, the life her family leads and the life of learning, which might enable her to escape from her peasant background. John Guthrie and his wife Jean, who stand for the contrasting influences acting on Chris, become alienated from each other, and the family starts to suffer from John's violence. The situation reaches a climax when Jean kills her infant twins and commits suicide.

Since John suffers a stroke and Chris's brother Will flees from his father's terror and emigrates, Chris has to care not only for the farm but also for her half-paralysed father. When John dies, Chris is relieved and finally sees the chance to take up her education again. Being the only heir, she plans to sell the farm and all of her father's belongings. In a moment of calm, however, she realises that she cannot leave the land she loves and decides to decline her relatives' offer to leave for Aberdeen. Chris takes up the lease for the farm.

By chance she meets Ewan Tavendale, one of the workers on another farm in the village, and the both of them fall in love. She decides to marry Ewan, and they settle at Blawearie. The early years of their marriage are characterized by harmony, and the birth of their son, young Ewan, completes their happiness. By now news of the outbreak of the First World War reach Kinraddie. Feeling the pressure mount on him after some neighbours enlist in the army, Ewan changes, torn between his love for Chris and a feeling of duty, which

he finally gives in to and leaves for the army. Life in the army quickly changes Ewan, and when he comes home on his final leave before going to war, Chris finds her husband brutalised. Her feelings change from love to hate.

The time following this unhappy turn in Chris's life is marked by her dedication to farm life. We find her working constantly, and the bitterness of the weeks and months is only interrupted by a short affair with Long Rob of the Mill, one of her closest friends. Yet even he finally leaves Kinraddie for the War.

After scarce news of her husband, Chris receives a telegram telling her that Ewan is dead. From Chae Strachan, like Rob a close friend of Chris's, she finally learns that Ewan was shot as a deserter. Just like the characters inhabiting Kinraddie are killed or vanish, the village itself is altered through the effects of the War. Chris, feeling the change, decides to marry the new minister, Robert Colquohoun, and will leave Blawearie for good.

4.2.2. The "Song": Structure equals Content

4.2.2.1. The Musical Quality

With regard to the symbolism of Gibbon's novel, there are severals things to consider. The first is the title itself. The compound "Sunset Song" combines two vital aspects, both hinting at the idea the novel develops of Scotland. "Sunset" not only denotes dusk, i.e. the end of the day; it also expresses the hope of a new beginning. It marks repetition. A song, then, is something immaterial and usually universal in its appeal; it is both form and content in one thing and possesses a highly evocative quality. A song is also a shared personal experience, since it usually describes the experience of a very limited group or even an individual; listening to a song or even singing along makes the personal experience a shared one. Also, a song only exists in the mind. A song is immaterial; its harmonies can only be experienced with the mind. Thus, a song works just like a shared memory.

Sunset Song plays with the possibility of evoking notions of Scotland through sensations, most of which are sounds.[56] The cry of the peewit, which features strongly in *Sunset Song*, especially in descriptions of the landscape, is such a sound. Others are actual songs;

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[56] Reading through Gibbon, *The Land* (in: Lewis Grassic Gibbon. *The Speak of the Mearns.* with selected short stories and essays. Introduced by Ian Campbell and Jeremy Idle. Edinburgh: Polygon, 1994, pp. 151-162), is like being given the key to some important aspects of *Sunset Song*. Here we find Gibbon talking about how things evoke emotions inside him, sights, sounds, scents etc.

Chris, listening to a song at one stage of the novel, feels that songs are the product of the country, which speaks to her:

> […] it came on Chris how strange was the sadness of Scotland's singing, made for the sadness of the land and sky in dark autumn evenings, the crying of men and women of the land who had seen their lives and loves sink away in the years, things wept for beside the sheep-buchts, remembered at night and in twilight. The gladness and kindness had passed, lived and forgotten, it was Scotland of the rain and the crying sea that made the songs (pp. 165-166).[57]

Scotland makes the songs – this realisation is more than an epiphany Chris is having here. It is the confirmation that *Sunset Song* plays with musical possibilities, attempts to be a song which Scotland produced.

Long Rob of the Mill, one of Chris's friends, is also often found singing old melodies. His singing even comes as a consolation to Chris in times of despair. John Guthrie, having suffered a stroke, is paralysed and possibly on the brink of madness. One night, he begs Chris to have sex with him, which she declines. The first thing she hears in the morning after this incident is Rob's favourite song, "The Ladies of Spain" (p. 109). When Rob returns from prison where he was sent since he rejected being drafted into the army, the first sign of his recovery is this song. It is the return of a tradition of which Kinraddie seems to have been deprived:

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[57] Interestingly, the sadness described here is a pre-figuration of the sadness of Chris's story.

> […] Chris and old Brigson heard the singing as they sat in the kitchen below, *Ladies of Spain* and *There was a Young Farmer* and *A' the Blue Bonnets over the Border.* Hardly anybody left in Kinraddie sang these songs, it was full of other tunes from the bothy windows now, *Tipperary* and squawling English things, like the squeak of a rat that is bedded in syrup, the *Long, Long Trail* and the like. It was queer and eerie, listening to Rob, like listening to an echo from far in the years at the mouth of a long lost glen (p. 231).

Rob is almost a small-scale model of the message of *Sunset Song*; he conveys memories in the form of music. But this is true for the novel as a whole: *Sunset Song* employs music, not so much in technical terms of reproducing or transposing music into a written, prose form, but intrinsically in the story itself as a means of evoking memories and as a way to perpetuate these.

We "hear" the music, the songs; we read "The Song", as the main section of the novel is called; and it is through a third-person narration, with Chris Guthrie as the protagonist hearing these songs, performing the transformation of the musical into the written form and conveying the emotions and memories the songs evoke to the reader, that we are confronted with the songs – and "The Song" itself. It is Chris Guthrie who translates the song into "The Song". She is the stable element in the bodiless tune of *Sunset Song*.

4.2.2.2. Repetition

The musical quality of the novel leads to the second aspect to keep in mind: Circularity. Jut like in most popular forms of music, the novel has a circular structure, where a turn leads back to start. *Sunset Song* relies on an enclosed system of repetition, where change never affects the essence of what Lewis Grassic Gibbon wanted to preserve: the vague concept he inscribed to the term "the land", a term he used not only in *Sunset Song*, but also in other writings. He embodied this concept in *Sunset Song's* protagonist, Chris Guthrie, who in some ways becomes a standing stone herself – the stable element mentioned above. Gibbon's way of narration, with a multiplicity of narrative voices and with a certain idiom (both shall be examined below), creates a universal appeal, while at the same time he commemorates a specific sociological organism which to him presents the essence of "the land", of a Scotland he wanted to preserve.

This circularity becomes obvious already by the structural set-up of the novel. Gibbon divides his book into several sections; it features a "Prelude" and an "Epilude", which frame "The Song". Framing the novel by two chapters with names adopted and adapted from music does two things: First, it stresses the musical quality mentioned above. Second, it includes Chris's story into another story, that of the village of Kinraddie, of the Howe of the Mearns and ultimately that of Scotland. As shall be shown later, this way of incorporating a story into a certain history is also stressed by a different narrative voice. The impression is that of an oral tradition; the story of Chris is passed on by telling it. It also makes the novel appear as a piece of history of the land. The "Prelude" sums up the events from medieval times to the Guthries' arrival within just 24 pages, the "Epilude" features Kinraddie's and Chris's fate after the war in just 16 pages, while "The Song" spans eight years on 217 pages.

We find a decisive moment of history presented through the story of Chris incorporated within a larger temporal frame; this may not appear as special, but if we consider that the "Prelude" and the "Epilude" are both called "The Unfurrowed Field", we find that after reading *Sunset Song* we are told once again that we have come back to where we started by making a full circle; the events presented have not changed history: the have become history.

Adding to this are the names of the chapters forming "The Song": all of the chapters present stages of development. "The Song" is divided into "Ploughing", "Drilling", "Seed-Time" and "Harvest". "Ploughing", making way for the new crop, shows the Guthries moving and settling. "Drilling", preparing for sowing new life, tells of the dramatic changes. Chris's mother commits suicide, the father and his remaining children grow estranged, Chris's brother Will finally leaves. "Seed-Time" completes the change: John Guthrie dies, Chris marries Ewan and "roots" into the country. "Harvest" is the time when you "reap what you sow"; *Sunset Song* makes this chapter the climax. The War enters Kinraddie, Chris gives life to her son Ewan, the villagers leave for the War and never return. "Harvest" is not purely the time to enjoy that which you have worked for here; it is also the time of the scythe.

"The Song", then, is organised like the rhythm of the farming year, the seasons of which correspond to the seasons in Chris's life. *Sunset Song* sets out on an empty field and returns to it following the agricultural rhythm. And this rhythm is eternal and repetitive; winter will always be followed by spring, seed-time will always be followed by harvest. Through this structure, *Sunset Song* claims that whatever happens, the rhythm of life is repetitive and eternal; stories become history. We always find ourselves back on the unfurrowed field.

Going back to start is also the principle guiding the chapters themselves. Each of the chapters opens with Chris Guthrie reflecting

on her life while she is standing beside the standing stones above Blawaerie loch. Chris is the reflecting character, and her memories of the months passed are told within the chapters. Her memories revolve around her at this location, and thus the story itself circulates around the standing stones. The stones thus serve as physical centres of the narration. They become places of memory, while at the same time they are memorial sites by nature. When in the "Epilude" the names of the dead are shown to be engraved into the tallest of the stones, this only stresses this point: The standing stones are points of fixation in the novel.

4.2.2.3. Voices

Narratively, this act of creating memory is done through the use of a distinct idiom which many critics have correctly identified as unique. *Sunset Song* is a multi-vocal novel, a tune which is in itself already shared and, by its inclusion of the reader, passed on.

Gibbon chose to write in English, but he used a distinct rhythm and flow that he adopted from his native Scots. The number of Scots words, however, remains relatively small, so that those unacquainted with it would still be able to understand the novel. In his book *Leslie Mitchell*,[58] Ian Munro states that

> Gibbon managed to preserve the rhythm and vitality of native expression without disturbing the natural flow of the narrative. He moulded and shaped the English language to

[58] Ian Munro. *Leslie Mitchell*. Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1966.

> serve his purpose, but avoided excessive use of dialect while still retaining those Scots words which have a fine vigour and no exact equivalents in English. A sensitive ear enabled him to suggest atmosphere by cadence and phrasing, as well as by vernacular variations (Munro. *Leslie Mitchell*, p. 78).

Interestingly, Gibbon commented on his use of language himself. However, he wrote this remark as a reviewer; the essay "Literary Lights" was originally published under his real name, Leslie Mitchell, and he refers to Lewis Grassic Gibbon when he writes:[59]

> The technique […] is to mould the English language into the rhythms and cadences of Scots spoken speech, and to inject into the English vocabulary such minimum number of words from Braid Scots as that remodelling requires".[60]

At the very beginning of *Sunset Song*, Gibbon explicitly states that his choice of idiom has one reason: He deems the Scots he devises as extinct.

> If the great Dutch language disappeared from literary usage and a Dutchman wrote in German a story of the Lekside

[59] This should not come as a surprise; Gibbon consequently made a distinction between his two selves, which seemed to take on forms of schizophrenia at times; cf. Ian Munro. *Leslie Mitchell,* p. 103.

[60] Gibbon. *The Speak of the Mearns*, p. 137.

> peasants, one may hazard he would ask and receive a certain latitude and forbearance in his usage of German. He might import into his pages some score or so untranslatable words or idioms – untranslatable except in their context and setting; he might mould in some fashion his German to the rhythms and cadence of the kindred speech that his peasants speak. Beyond that, in fairness to his hosts, he hardly could go: to seek effect by a spray of apostrophes would be both impertinence and mis-translation.
>
> The courtesy that the hypothetical Dutchman might receive from German a Scot may invoke from the great English tongue ["A Note", given in my edition of the book without page number].

His use of language, thus, is a means of commemoration. Yet the idiom's strong oral quality, which he stresses in the above section as well, coincides with the musical quality mentioned before: Oral tradition is a shared one, just like listening to music can be a shared experience, as was said before. Repeating oral tradition in written form is both a way of preserving orality and through repeating it through the mind of Chris he once more makes her the translator, the stable element.

Also, the choice of idiom clearly is a way to claim authenticity. Gibbon wanted the get as close to his native dialect as possible without losing too much of his audience. In addition, with this idiom he could express the characters' thoughts and views in "their own words", thus creating a closeness of experience which otherwise would not be possible; if the author wanted to show the world of the Scottish peasant, letting him or her speak as naturally as possible appears best apt.

Gibbon obviously was aware of writing in another language from that in which he was thinking. He knew the dilemma that was part of Scottish writing ever since Scots declined to a dialect, a problem that was much discussed in the period of his writing.[61] By his decision to bridge the gap between the two languages he possibly managed to solve the problem.

Apart from the idiom, *Sunset Song* features two narrative techniques which contribute to the overall effect of the novel. Both "Prelude" and "Epilude" share a common narrative perspective. It is an omniscient narrator, whose idiom is similar to that of "The Song", yet the tone possesses a quality between "folk-lore factuality" and gossip. This narrative perspective could be termed "village voice", since the narrator appears to be part of the village, yet is never personified:

> So by the winter of nineteen eleven there were no more than nine bit places left the Kinraddie estate, the Mains the biggest of them, it had been the Castle home farm in the long past times. An Irish creature, Erbert Ellison was the name, ran the place for the trustees, he said, but if you might believe all the stories you heard he ran a hantle more silver into his own pouch than he ran into theirs. Well might you expect it, for he'd been no more than a Dublin waiter, they said. That had been in the time before Lord Kinraddie, the daft one, had gone clean skite. He had been in Dublin, Lord Kinraddie, on some drunken ploy, and Ellison had brought his whisky for him and some said he had halved his bed with him. But folk would say anything (p. 5).

[61] See Muir's *Scott and Scotland*, which was discussed already.

Another example is found a few pages later:

> Right outside Peesie's Knapp, across the turnpike, the land climbed red and clay and a rough stone road went wandering up to the biggings of Blawearie. *Out of the World and into Blawearie* they said in Kinraddie, and faith! it was coarse land and lonely up there on the brae, fifty-sixty acres of it, forbye the moor that went on with the brae high above Blawearie, up to a great flat hill-top where lay a bit loch that nested snipe by the hundred; and some said there was no bottom to it, the loch, and Long Rob of the Mill said that made it like the depths of a parson's depravity. That was an ill thing to say about any minister, though Rob said it was an ill thing to say about any loch, but there the spleiter of water was, a woesome dark stretch fringed rank with rushes and knife-grass; and the screeching of the snipe fair deafened you if you stood there of an evening. And few enough did that for nearby the bit loch was a circle of stones from olden times (p. 12).

This "village voice" creates a closeness of experience, and also it embeds "The Song" into history, especially into oral history because of its idiom.

The most interesting narrative perspective, however, is found throughout "The Song"; while its common narrative perspective is that of the omniscient narration, we find a certain form of second-person narration. It features a direct "you"-address, yet the addressee is as unclear as its speaker. A brilliant example can be found on p. 32.[62]

[62] The same quote will be analysed later for a different reason.

> You hated the land and the coarse speak of the folk and learning was brave and fine one day; and the next you'd waken with the pewits crying across the hills, deep and deep, crying in the heart of you and the smell of the earth in your face, almost you'd cry for that, the beauty of it and the sweetness of the Scottish land and skies.

If Chris reflects on her life, this "self-reflecting you" narration creates a higher consciousness within Chris; she somehow envisions herself and her life and comments on it. Yet at the same time, this narrative perspective directly addresses the reader. It is less an invitation, but more an appeal at certain emotions and memories. "The impersonal but familiar 'you' encloses Chris, the community and the reader in an easy assumption of shared experience", Watson writes in *The Literature of Scotland* (p. 387). This strange narrative perspective connects the world of experience of the characters to that of the reader. It is a dialog both with Chris's and the reader's memory; the reader is included to share an experience, assuming that he has been faced with the same experience in his life.

"His [Gibbon's] aim was to keep a single unity of expression in which narrative, description, thought, and dialogue were one – each a part of the 'folk-mind'", Munro states in *Leslie Mitchell* (p. 79). This "folk-mind" is what the narrative technique throughout *Sunset Song* sets out to create, and it centres in Chris, whose self-reflection not only forms the structural set-up of "The Song", but also transposes it on a level such as to enable the reader to be addressed directly – by the use of the personal pronoun "you" as much as by appealing at universal memories and specific Scottish ones.

This way of narration strengthens the authenticity of the novel. The events presented appear to be taken from real life. Yet the

commemorative purpose that I claim to be the novel's intension is the main reason why Gibbon employed these narrative techniques.

4.2.3. The Conflict

Sunset Song is defined by various conflicts. First, there is the conflict within the Gutrie family which we learn of already in "Ploughing". John Guthrie, Chris's father, is a violent character whom both his children and his wife fear. He beats and threatens his son Will because he used the name Jehova for the family's horse simply because he likes the sound of the name:

> But he should not have stricken Will as he did, he fell below the feet of the horse and Bess turned her head, dripping corn, and looked down at Will, with his face bloody, and then swished her tail and stood still. And then John Guthrie dragged his son aside and paid no more heed to him, but went on grooming. Chris had cried and hidden her face but now she looked again, Will was sitting up slowly, the blood on his face, and John Guthrie speaking to him, not looking at him, grooming Bess.
> *And mind, my mannie, if I ever hear you again take your Maker's name in vain, if I ever hear you use that word again, I'll libb you. Mind that. Libb you like a lamb (p. 30).*

When Jean Guthrie kills her infant twins and commits suicide, it is as much an escape from her husband as it is an act of despair: afraid of being unable to support a family of six and having to bear a

violent husband, Jean withdraws herself ultimately. It is the same act of withdrawal that Will chooses, yet his decision to emigrate is of course not fatal; the outcome, however, is the same: he escapes the conflict, a thing Chris is unable to do. The ultimate conflict, however, is the entrance of World War I into the removed community of Kinraddie and its inhabitants.

Yet in all of the novel's conflicts, Chris Guthrie remains the stable centre. She is neither broken by the conflicts within her family nor by the struggle within herself nor by the effects the War has on her life and that of her friends.

Chris enters the story at the age of fifteen. We get introduced to her as a girl interested in books and learning. Her mother Jean, however, who loves Chris dearly, sees that all her learning is inferior to other things. She says:

> *Oh, Chris, my lass, there are better things than your books or studies or loving or bedding, there's the countryside your own, you its, in the days when you're neither bairn nor woman* [italics are also in the original].

Chris does not seem to heed these words; a few pages later, we see her holding a book of Latin grammar (p. 30), and on page 31 we find the reason for her studies:

> For she'd met with books, she went into them to a magic land far from Echt [where the family has lived before they moved to Kinraddie], out and away south. And at school they wrote she was the clever one and John Guthrie said she might have all the education she needed if she stuck to her

> lessons. In time she might come out as a teacher then, and do him credit, that was fine of father the Guthrie whispered in her, but the Murdoch [her mother's maiden name] laughed with a blithe, sweet face. But more and more she turned from that laughter, resolute, loving to hear of the things in the histories and geographies.

Yet it is here already that we find the first signs of the conflict inside her: Chris's mother Jean represents a simple, natural approach to life, while her father wants Chris to escape rural life through learning, a view Jean does not share:

> Mother looked up at that, friendly-like, not feared of him at all, she was never feared. *Take care her head doesn't soften with lessons and dirt, learning in books it was that sent the wee red daftie at Cuddiestoun clean skite, they say* (p. 47).

The outcome of these conflicting influences is that Chris grows unsure of what she wants to believe in. When she talks to Will one night, he tells her of how much he hates his father:

> And Chris would cover her ears and then listen, turning this cheek to the pillow and that, she hated also and she didn't hate, father, the land, the life of the land – oh, if she only knew (p. 31)!

The two sides within Chris working towards different ends are made explicit on page 32:

> So that was Chris and her reading and schooling, two Chrisses there were that fought for her heart and tormented her. You hated the land and the coarse speak of the folk and learning was brave and fine one day; and the next you'd waken with the peewits crying across the hills, deep and deep, crying in the heart of you and the smell of the earth in your face, almost you'd cry for that, the beauty of it and the sweetness of the Scottish land and skies. You saw their faces in the firelight, father's and mother's and the neighbours', before the lamps lit up, tired and kind, faces dear and close to you, you wanted the words they'd known and used, forgotten in the far-off youngness of their lives, Scots words to tell to your heart how they wrung it and held it, the toils of their days and unendingly their fight. And the next minute that passed from you, you were English, back to the English words so sharp and true – for a while, for a while, till they slid so smooth from your throat you knew they could never say anything that was worth the saying at all.

There are several instances in which Chris struggles with herself about which road she should take. For example on p. 44, where Chris thinks about the one side of her liking school and the other being eager to return every night to the farm life:

> So that was college place at Duncairn, two Chrisses went there each morning, and on was right douce and studious and the other sat back and laughed a canny laugh at the antics of the teacher and minded Blawearie brae and the champ of horses and the smell of dung and her father's brown, grained hands till she was sick to be home again.

Transposed to a wider scale we find what Douglas Young says in *Beyond the Sunset*[63] on p. 87:

> For the Scottish reader this conflict within Chris has a special significance, for in it we see something of a national dilemma, the Scotsman's search for identity, his confusion as to whether he should stand by his traditional values and way of life or forget his Scottishness in the interest of moving ahead in the modern, sophisticated world.

This conflict of loyalties is not solved until John Guthrie's death. Although Chris dreamt of escaping the land, she realizes that this will not be possible:

> She walked weeping then, stricken and frightened because of that knowledge that had come on her, she could never leave it, this life of toiling days and the needs of beasts and the smoke of wood fires and the air that stung your throat so acrid, Autumn and Spring, she was bound and held as

[63] Douglas Young. *Beyond the Sunset. A Study of James Leslie Mitchell (Lewis Grassic Gibbon).* Aberdeen: Impulse Books. 1973.

> though they had prisoned her here. And her fine bit plannings! – they'd just been the dream of a child over toys it lacked, toys that would never content it when it heard the smore of a storm or the cry of sheep on the moors or smelt the pringling smell of a new-ploughed park under the drive of a coulter. She could no more teach than fly, night and day she'd want to be back, for all the fine clothes and gear she might get and hold, the books and the light and learning (pp. 119-120).

Chris realizes that she is bound to the land and that she has to follow an inner urge which she cannot deny. Interestingly, as is described in the passage above, what makes her realize that she cannot leave the countryside are sensations: smells and sounds call to her inner self. It is not a decision made by logic, but an intuitive choice. This is then finally sealed by her marriage to Ewan and the birth of their son.

What little influence of John Guthrie had on Chris, it is his pride and self-assurance that help her to live life the way she wants to. This is obvious in her reflections on visiting Dunnottar Castle:

> There the Covenanting folk had screamed and died while the gentry dined and danced in their lithe, warm halls, Chris stared at the places, sick and angry and sad for those folk she could never help now, the hatred of rulers and gentry a flame in her heart, John Guthrie's hate. Her folk and his they had been, those whose names stand graved in tragedy […] (p. 125).

Yet overall, it is her mother's natural approach to life that dominates within Chris. She is free from all inhibitions, most notably of the Kirk's influence which throughout the novel appears to be almost suffocating. Chris believes that the Scots have never been religious:

> And she said I don't believe they were ever religious, the Scots folk, Will – not really religious like the Irish or French or all the rest in the history books. They've never BELIEVED. It's just been a place to collect and argue, the kirk, and criticise God (p. 217).

The best of both influences – John's pride combined with Jean's liberty (which goes so far as to kill herself in spite of everything John stands for) – enable Chris to survive all the hardships she is faced with.

It is however true that Chris appears to change throughout *Sunset Song*; When she finds herself pregnant, she realises that a part of her is now gone:

> And Chris Guthrie crept out from the place below the beech trees where Chris Tavendale lay and went wandering off into the waiting quiet of the afternoon, Chris Tavendale heard her go, and she came back to Blawearie never again (p. 176).

She even tells her future husband Robert that he can have "*maybe the second Chris, maybe the third, but Ewan has the first*

forever!" (p. 253). Yet these changes never affect the character of Chris itself; changes are necessary and inevitable, but they never reach the essence. It is Chris's belief that

> nothing endured at all, nothing but the land she passed across, tossed and turned and perpetually changed below the hands of the crofter folk since the oldest of them had set the Standing Stones by the loch of Blawearie (p. 119-120).

Strikingly, both concepts of the stones and the land are combined here: The land, even if it is worked by the hands of the crofters, does not change; and obviously, the standing stones have not changed either. Therefore, it is no wonder that Chris seeks out the stones at crucial moments in her life: Here she feels grounded, aware that life has always revolved around them, that nothing, however hard and unbearable it may appear, can endure.

It is with this assurance that she can withstand the ultimate conflict: The War. It not only alters history, it also alters life and society of Kinraddie; in fact, it is the War through which history intrudes into *Sunset Song*. This force is exemplified by the fate of the characters closest to Chris: Chae Strachan, Long Rob of the Mill, and Ewan Tavendale. For the effect of *Sunset Song*, it is necessary that Rob and Chae die; Rob has to give in to the pressure of history, his place in the community has become unnecessary, and the suspicions that he is pro-German deprive him of his customers (p. 230). Chae has to vanish also, since the altered circumstances leave no room for him; he has seen the land he knew changing and vanishing. He is dislocated, disconnected from his past. He is the messenger of change, of history, which has uprooted him along with Rob. Both their deaths are the logical consequence of the process of change. Ewan's death is

also necessary in order to make the shift within Chris and within *Sunset Song* most pronounced.

The War's destructive influence is also visible by the fate of the whole of Kinraddie's characters: In the "Epilude" we learn how the War altered their lives. "A great deal of the success of the book comes from the fact that her life [Chris's] is set against a background which is fully realized", Douglas F. Young writes on p. 16 of *Lewis Grassic Gibbon's Sunset Song*.[64] This is an important point to note. However, much of the effect of the novel comes from the fact that Chris's life is set against a background which is dying.

Chae, a Socialist and a very liberal character, is the first to enlist for the War. He becomes the messenger of change since through him we learn about Ewan's death and on Chae's return from the front, we see how the War has altered Kinraddie through his discoveries:

> And he asked her hadn't she got eyes in her head, the fool, not telling him before that the wood was cut? It would lay the whole Knapp open to the north-east now, and was fair the end of a living here. And Mistress Strachan answered up that she wasn't a fool, and that they'd be no worse that the other folk, would they? Chae shouted *What, others?* and went out to look (p. 202).

The landscape changes, Kinraddie changes. For the following pages, we find Chea walking through the village, seeing how it moves with the times, how the Kinraddie of his memory is vanishing.

[64] Douglas F. Young. *Lewis Grassic Gibbon's Sunset Song*. Scotnotes Number 1. Association for Scottish Literary Studies. Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 1986.

Interestingly, Chae is the one that bursts the news of the outbreak of the war to Kinraddie and to Blawearie:

> One night, the mid-days of August as they sat at meat, the door burst open and in strode Chae Strachan, a paper in his hand, and was fell excited, Chris listened and didn't, a war was on, Britain was to war with Germany (p. 186).

It is also Chae who reconciles Chris with Ewan, since he tells her how and why her husband was executed:

> So out he had gone for that, remembering Chris, wanting to reach her, knowing as he tramped mile on mile that he never would. But he'd made her that promise that he'd never fail her, long syne he had made it (p. 238).

Long Rob of the Mill is the embodiment of the past. His obsession with horses (p. 19), especially work horses, shows him holding on to methods of farming that will hardly outlive the war. Rob recalls memories for the characters throughout the novel by singing old songs. After Rob is dead, it is his singing that is missed; the songs he used to sing are not heard anymore. The memories he maintained have made way for new ones: "You heard feint the meikle of those old songs now, they were daft and old-fashioned, there were fine new ones in their places, right from America" (p. 246), we are told in the "Epilude".

Ewan Tavendale, Chris's husband, marks both her rooting in into the country and her uprooting. Ewan is a simple farm worker and

yet decides to join the War without any need. This decision disconnects him from his native ground – he is sent to France – as much as it disconnects him from his family and his past. Yet he realises his mistake; too late, as it turns out: He walks away from the trenches, is caught and executed as a traitor. Yet he tells Chae of his decision:

> And then Ewan said, sudden-like, it clean took Chae by surprise, Mind the smell of dung in the parks on an April morning, Chae? And the peewits over the rigs? Bonny they're flying this night in Kinraddie, and Chris sleeping there, and all the Howe happed in mist (pp. 238-239).

In this narration of Chae's report on how and why Ewan was killed, we find that Ewan realises that there is a contradiction between that which he is doing and that which he is supposed to be doing: He should have stayed home and not have joined the army. He should have stuck to what he knows and what he loves. It is a realisation which comes too late, yet Ewan here realises that he has joined something he cannot escape alive: He has entered history, but rather would prefer to remain in the past. Leaving history, however, leads to his death. History, it seems, is inevitable. And the impact of history is such that it exterminates an "old Scotland" Kinraddie wants to give witness of. This is explicitly said by the new minister in his speech at the end of the "Epilude":

> *And who knows at the last what memories of it [the land] were with them, the springs and the winters of this land and all the sounds and scents of it that had once been theirs,*

> *deep, and a passion of their blood and spirit, those four who died in France? With them we may say there died a thing older than themselves, these were the Last of the Peasants, the last of the Old Scots folk. A new generation comes up that will know them not, except as a memory in a song* [italics in the original] (p. 256).

The last of the "Old Scots folk" will be remembered only in a song – this of course is what *Sunset Song* wants to prove. Yet it does more: It is Chris alone who can withstand the force which alters Kinraddie at ever accelerating speed by absorbing the change. Of this, her re-unification with dead Ewan in "Harvest" is the epitome:

> And then something made her raise her eyes, she stood awful and rigid, fronting him, coming up the path through the broom. Laired with glaur was his uniform, his face was white and the great whole sagged and opened, sagged and opened, red-glazed and black, at every upwards step he took. Up through the broom: she saw the grass wave with no press below his feet, her lad, the light in his eyes that aye she could bring.
>
> The snipe stilled their calling, a cloud came over the sun. He was close to her now and she held out her hands to him, blind with tears and bright her eyes, the bright weather in their faces, her voice shaping a question that she heard him answer in the rustle of the loch-side rushes as closer his soundless feet carried him to her lips and hands.
>
> *Oh lassie, I've come home!* He said, and went into the heart that was his forever (p. 241).

4.2.4. Conclusion

On the opening page of "Harvest", Chris stands at the stones after having been re-united with Ewan, of which we learn in the passage above. "She closed her eyes and put her hand against the greatest of the Standing Stones" (p. 181). The middle stone, we learn on the closing pages of the "Epilude" (pp. 254-255.) will carry the names of the dead villagers.

This is the key to the symbolism of *Sunset Song*: The stones carry the names of the dead into the future, they have absorbed the change while remaining unchanged in their essence; and the same is true for Chris. She takes in the change and encloses the memory. Chris's story, just like that of Kinraddie, becomes past, but a past that is remembered. This past, the past of Chris, Kinraddie, Scotland, becomes a "lamp quiet-lighted and kind in your heart" (p. 258), an eternal memory, which marks an end and a beginning, just like the "unfurrowed field" marks both the beginning and end of *Sunset Song*, of a tune at dusk which will necessarily be followed by a dawn.

The village inscribes the names of the dead and thus the past into the stones. Chris carries the memories with her. And so does the novel, too. *Sunset Song* becomes in itself the standing stone for a Scotland, a Scotland the author wants to perpetuate because it is lost. This is what the novel reminds us of at all times, most strikingly in the "Epilude", where we find that Kinraddie as we have come to see it, is breaking apart due to the intrusion of history as represented by the War.

In this Scotland, change happens, but it circles around a centre which is able to absorb all of it without changing itself. This centre is Chris Guthrie, and Chris Guthrie is the embodiment of the essence of the Scotland Gibbon tries to reach at. He sets a landmark for Scotland,

and he does so by creating the standing stone of Chris Guthrie within the landscape of Kinraddie, creating, as he does, through a subtle technical arrangement, a distinct and yet universal appeal, a story embedded into history and becoming history itself; yet all the while the standing stone of *Sunset Song* remains untouched. "We are not aware of the progress we have made, until we fix our eye on the now distant point from which we have been drifted", the narrator tells us in the "Postscript, which should have been a preface" of Scott's *Waverley*. Gibbon's *Sunset Song* is such a point of fixation, yet it is not created in order to remind us of progress in a positive sense; it is a fixation recalling the place of origin.

Chris Guthrie was described as "Chris Caledonia" in Kurt Wittig's *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (p. 331) and as being "the voice of the Scottish earth" in Munro's *Leslie Mitchell* (p. 91). Both statements carry some truth. Yet it is not Chris and her Scottish aspects that Gibbon is after; he is searching for a Scotland that he could embed into Chris and into *Sunset Song*. The standing stone image he found for this Scotland is perfect: it is "native", massive and solid. It can be altered. But it cannot be removed without great difficulty – or without leaving a great gap behind.

4.3. *Trainspotting* – The Empty Hull

Irvine Welsh's novel *Trainspotting* develops a bleak, yet also darkly ironic image of Scotland. The empty hull of Leith's abandoned Central Station has been correctly pointed out to be an image for the loss of a distinct tradition by Cairns Craig in *The Modern Scottish Novel* (p. 97). Yet Craig only focuses on the loss of a linguistic identity which the building symbolises. I claim that the image of the empty hull is the central image *Trainspotting* for Scotland in general: It is a structure without content, a shell embodying nothing of any value. Leith train station, a building out of use without any connection to the outside world is, just like *Trainspotting*, a place of desolation where drunkards "bevvy and crash" (cf. *Trainspotting*, p. 309). The novel's characters are the drunkards, and Leith train station is Scotland: A shadow of its former self, a structure whose only purpose is to give a frame to the void inside of it.

The dialectics of an obvious structure on the one hand and an apparent lack of meaning on the other form the guideline to the understanding of *Trainspotting*. I claim that Welsh's image is created by this contrast.

4.3.1. The Content

In terms of content, *Trainspotting* is a rough, ramshackle and obviously incoherent novel. The stories are only loosely connected, and in fact some of them appeared before the official publication of the novel as such (Morace, p. 10). They would make sense as isolated short stories, yet it is their connection and the general view they present in combination that makes *Trainspotting* such a rewarding subject for this study. A brief outline of the story underlying the novel must therefore suffice for the moment; the following discussion will go into details of the contents, since they are part of understanding the image *Trainspotting* develops.

Welsh's novel focuses on the drug-fuelled, addiction- and sickness-ridden life of a circle of characters around Mark Renton, an Edinburgh youth, whose rejection of middle-class life and values is as much a deliberate choice as it is a reaction to the society he inhabits – split between the winners and the losers of the economic change. Mark and his friends belong to the lower class, which economic depression has left stranded on the outskirts not only of the city but also of opportunity.

Welsh presents a variety of stories connected by their characters. We learn about Mark's family, his brother Billy, who in contrast to Mark is settled and married, about Billy's death as a soldier in the Northern Ireland conflict, and about Mark's friends for whom petty crime, violence, sex and various addictions are the sole contents of their lives. We experience happiness, encounter death in various forms, learn of defeats, of threat, acts of friendship, domestic violence, racial prejudice and moments of peace – all in abrupt series, mostly uncommented, often simultaneously cruel and darkly comic.

At various stages, Mark realises that the life he leads will only lead to untimely death or to prison, yet various attempts to come clean fail. It is while being away in London for work that we find Mark changed, yet back in Scotland, he falls back to old habits once he is with his friends. By chance, the group comes across a large amount of heroin, which they sell to drug dealers, and Mark recognises his once-in-a-lifetime chance to start a new life abroad by betraying his friends.

4.3.2. Structure: The Web of Experience

In his discussion of the novel, Robert A. Morace states that

> To talk about *Trainspotting*'s structure or, more precisely, to complain of its formal deficiencies, may be beside the point in so far as the structure here may be irrelevant, as outdated in the postmodern world as metanarratives, the absence of which is the defining characteristics of what Jean-Francis [sic] Lyotard calls the "postmodern condition" (pp. 40-41).

Morace's statement of Welsh's *Trainspotting* is true to some extent. Yet it needs closer inspection. I claim that the novel provides a metanarrative, which works through denial. The novel provides a structure, only to disappoint any notion of meaning which the reader could get from this structure.

At first sight, *Trainspotting* is a collection of stories, rather than one coherent text; the 43 stories are contained in seven chapters. All of the stories could stand by themselves and could thus be

considered to be short stories. Reading the novel, we find that there are, however, connections in-between the individual stories, and that the links are established by the introduction of several major characters, and the existence of one protagonist, Mark Renton.

What Morace acknowledges correctly is that there appears to be neither a clear temporal succession, nor any stringent plot in *Trainspotting*; the failure, he thus claims, corresponds to a typically postmodern lack of metanarratives, a lack of a story which enables us to tell the story; he thus points to the lack of guidelines – in the novel as much as in actual life. And since he correctly reads *Trainspotting* as a postmodern novel, he sees its "ramshackle" arrangement as an analogue to a postmodern world which is impossible to represent in a traditional way. What Morace misses, however, is that the guideline in the novels does exist; we are given a structure along which we can read and understand *Trainspotting*; what is bewildering, however, is that this structure-as-guideline is constantly undermined.

4.3.2.1. Conscious Disappointments – The Irony of *Trainspotting*

The structure is established by dividing the novel into seven chapters, called "Kicking", "Relapsing", "Kicking Again", "Blowing It", "Exile", "Home" and "Exit". They suggest some form of development. However, there is no obvious reason why any of the stories they contain are summarized under any of these headlines. The contents clearly deny any change in the protagonists' lives and do not consistently match the "theme" any of the chapters' names suggest.

If Morace claims that complaining about structural deficiencies in *Trainspotting* (as critics have done from the beginning of the

novel's reception; cf. Morace, pp. 38 ff.) may be beside the point, he is right, yet he fails to see that the novel is a mockery on any notion of progress because it deceives the reader to think that it has no structure. The point is that the structure remains void of meaning. This, I claim, is the key to understanding the novel's statement made on Scotland. Welsh's renunciation of a structural guideline in a traditional sense, which would mean that the structure gives meaning, only exposes the underlying void within the culture he depicts, while at the same time it stresses the uselessness of the formal actions undertaken by all of his characters, which I will show. The ironic tone of the novel only highlights this play on structure versus content; if irony is "a subtle humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance" (*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*), then *Trainspotting* is even structurally an ironic novel.

4.3.2.2. Knotting the Web: How *Trainspotting* works

For the narrative of the novel, the apparent lack of structure, or the undermining of the apparent structure, poses a crucial problem: That of creating a plot which turns an otherwise useless enumeration of stories into a novel. Welsh's technical solution is to tell one story at a time, in which temporal and causal connections can safely be established. Yet for connecting the stories with each other, he chose to create what I will call a "web of experience", rather than a plot. This web of experience, on the one hand, does not call for any temporal or causal connection; on the other hand, through constructing this web of experience, an intrinsic structural level can be established which once

again can be undermined in order to expose the underlying void, another failure of connection.

The focal point or centre of the web of experience is the shared experience of desolation. *Trainspotting* is set on the fringe of society, a world well off the mainstream. Unemployment is endemic. Neither of the characters appears to have a regular job, all are living on small-scale crime or on state benefits. Drug abuse is endemic. Death surrounds all characters, mostly HIV-related, which again has its origin in the wide-spread IV-drug abuse. Violence dictates power structures.

To connect these shared experiences, *Trainspotting* narratively relies on linking first person-narrations, where the individual characters present aspects of their lives in internal monologues. Robert A. Morace comments on this:

> The fact that *Trainspotting* is mainly narrated in the first person and in the form of interior monologues of characters who are immersed in their subcultures contributes to the novel's paradoxical effect: its feeling at once fragmented, even "ramshackle", yet oddly coherent and of a piece. […] Concerned with consequences rather than with causes, with depicting rather than either castigating or approving, with a measure of sympathetic understanding for characters presented from within rather than from on high, *Trainspotting* chooses to allow its characters to speak for themselves in their own voices without apology and

> without much hope of being heard by the judges, counsellors, employment officers paid to listen.[65]

Confronted with the setting, rather than being presented the setting, the reader has a share of the individual experience of the individual character. We become witness to drug abuse, to violence and sex in an uncommented, crudely direct way. Thus, we learn about the views the characters have on the common desolation that surrounds them. We also learn about the characters' way of living with this desolation: Mark's choice is drug abuse; he escapes the setting through the regular use of heroin. Spud's answer is the use of speed. Sick Boy turns to cocaine after giving up heroine. Frank Begbie drinks himself into alternate states, in which he can rid himself of his frustration by starting fights.

Figuratively, these first-person narratives work like the threads from the centre of the web – the desolate circumstances – to their ends, the characters' views and reactions.

Linking these threads with each other is done by two structural features of *Trainspotting*: the employment of alternate narrative perspectives and the constellation of the characters.

If the interior monologues create a closeness of experience, the omniscient perspective that we find for example in "There Is A Light That Never Goes Out" (pp. 262 ff.), or the third-person-perspective in "Growing Up In Public" (pp. 32 ff.) give the stories a distance, the view "from on high" that Morace mentions and which unites singular experiences to a common experience: Apart from living their own lives, characters are included in the lives and experiences of others.

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[65] Morace, p. 45.

This is strengthened by featuring characters from one story in another, regardless of the narrative perspective chosen to tell the story. The characters featured most prominently in *Trainspotting* are Mark Renton, Spud, Sick Boy and Frank Begbie, yet there are various others. However, this inner circle of characters clearly dominates the configurations in the stories. We find their lives connected to some extent and mostly through their social interactions and shared habits. These habits, which shall be discussed below, and the intermingling of the characters' lives connect the apparent loose arrangement of stories within *Trainspotting*.

The web of experience is a work-in-progress. Only while reading the novel, the reader sees how the threads are connected. The best example for this is probably "Bad Blood" (pp. 239 ff.). The protagonist here, Davie Mitchell, turns out to be the same Davie we encountered in "Traditional Sunday Breakfast" on p. 93. On p. 241 we learn that Davie knows Mark Renton and his friend Tommy; and in "Winter in West Granton" on p. 317, we hear again of Davie when Mark visits Tommy.

Just like the shifts of narrative perspectives, these constellations of characters connect the individual threads and finally form the web of experience.

Trainspotting, in its very urban, fractured narrative style, can do without traditional plot or structure. As was mentioned before, it relies on the denial of the first and the undermining of the latter. The novel's technique is a means to present a world different from middle-class experience in an uncommented, realistic and sometimes shocking directness.

Alongside the denial of a traditional plot, there is the refusal to show a clear temporal succession of events. Nowhere in *Trainspotting* do we find aspects on which we could discern either the temporal setting of the novel as such or a clear temporal connection between the

stories within the novel.[66] "The Elusive Mr Hunt", for example, appears to be set out of time, and could be placed anywhere in the stories' succession. Yet this pointlessness of arrangement serves that which Morace calls an "endless present" (Morace, p. 49) which both characters and readers experience. This is an important point to make. We know that Welsh wrote about the Edinburgh subcultures of the 1980s, when IV drug abuse lead to an outbreak of HIV, when economic depression hit the lower classes, and to know this is important for fully understanding the novel. Yet making a clear temporal connection between the chapters and sections would lead to an impression of progress, a point *Trainspotting* is not making. Characters experience life and death, loss and gain, but nothing seems to affect the circumstances they live in very much. It is a desolate situation where time seems to pass the characters by. Changes happen, but are never initiated – apart from Mark's final decision to leave. This point shall be taken up below.

4.3.2.3. Bad Language

The marker of the connection within *Trainspotting*'s web of experience is the specific idiom. It serves as a unifier and also helps to disconnect the novel's Scotland from average middle-class experience. The opening lines already set the tone for the entire novel:

> The sweat wis lashing oafay Sick Boy; he wis trembling. Ah wis jist sitting thair, focusing oan the telly, trying no tae notice the cunt. He was bringing me doon. Ah tried tae keep ma attention oan the Jean-Claude Van Damme video (p. 3).

[66] Morace tries to pin down the temporal setting; cf. Morace, pp. 46 ff.

Welsh's use of language not only marks the text immediately as Scottish; it is also a distinct social marker. Morace comments on this:

> […] dialect in the novel is a hybrid linguistic form that marginalizes the standard English on which it depends. […] The use of dialect to marginalize standard English is underscored in two ways in Welsh's novel. One involves what the novel excludes: the glossary that a friend advised and Welsh refused to add. […] The other way this marginalization is underscored involves what the novel includes: the narrating of four of its forty three unnumbered sections in standard English (Morace, p. 27).

If the structural set-up of the novel creates a web of experience which shows a life in stark contrast to middle-class experience, the linguistics of *Trainspotting* help to mark this subculture. By its idiom, the web of experience clearly shows that it represents a marginalized subculture, which, by the usage of its idiom, constantly marginalizes the standard English world – and thus the outside world in general. Simultaneously, it creates a group identity: The sharing of a dialect which is decidedly non-standard creates unity. More than any other feature of the text, its language unifies and separates at the same time: English – or the middle-class and its standards in general – is marginalized as much as the dialect marginalizes its speakers. The groups which are created through this act of separation are antagonists, because their mutual intelligibility is reduced to a minimum – and this mirrors the contrary outlooks on life which both sides have.

> Welsh's linguistic assertion of Scottish identity is in fact an assertion more particularly of a Scottish subcultural identity within a mise-en-abime of identity politics: youth within working class Leith within cultured Edinburgh within Scotland within Britain centered in London and based in the English language (Morace, pp. 27-28).

The characters' marginalization is further stressed by an impressive rudeness of expression, with the omnipresent "fuck" in all grammatical forms, or the use of "cunt" when characters speak of others.

In order to differentiate the individuals, Welsh endowed his characters with certain linguistic markers which re-occur in their first-person-narrations. Spud's constant "likesay" or "ken" are such markers, just like Sick Boy's reference to himself in the third person; even his use of "sh" instead of "s" in his imaginary conversations with Sean Connery is a marker, and not only of Sick Boy, but one of Scotland's most famous actors and thus a comment on clichés.

As was quoted in the beginning of the present chapter, Cairns Craig's claims that *Trainspotting's* language points to the loss of a tradition, a certain Scottish identity. However, if we agree that the language spoken in *Trainspotting* is a hybrid dialect – a construct of standard English mixed with some Scottish words, displayed in an orthography meant to capture the spoken vernacular – and thus an artificial language, and that the standard English is marginalized in the text, language here creates identity, rather than reminding of a lost identity. The direct representation of the characters' lives in "their own words", or in a hybrid language meant to be such, at the same time creates a closeness of experience as it connects the characters; the reader has to feel that all characters see the world through a similar pattern, since the reader is confronted with the same set of linguistics.

4.3.3. Failed Communities

If the web of experience is, structurally, the connecting device, then the act of bonding is the socially unifying means within the text. We are confronted with a subculture in which characters bind themselves to certain values, are bound together by a certain way of life. This bonding is never truly unifying, however. While *Trainspotting* suggests the existence of communities between characters, these communities fail to provide stability. They are just another form of addiction. This "social addiction" to communities or habits which unite the characters, yet at the same time alienate them even more from the outside world, can be seen if we look at *Trainspotting*'s central characters.

4.3.3.1. Mark Renton

Mark Renton's heroin addiction, for example, appears to unite him with other users, yet heroin abuse only forms a community of isolated individuals pretending to be social:

> Johnny hands Sick Boy his works.
> – Ye git a shot, but only if ye use this gear. Wir playin trust games the day, he smiled, but he wisnae jokin.
> Sick Boy shakes his heid. – Ah dinnae share needles or syringes. Ah've goat ma ain works here.
> – Now that's no very social. Rents? Ramie? Ali? Whit d'ye think ay that? Ur you tryin tae insinuate that the White Swan, the Mother Superior, has blood infected by the

> human immuno-deficiency virus? Ma finer feelins ur hurt. Aw ah kin say is, nae sharin, nae shootin. He gies an exaggerated smile, exposing a row ay bad teeth (p. 9).

Mark observes how the dealer, Johnny Swan, plays games with Sick Boy, who is on bad withdrawal. It is only after having bought the drug and having used it that the situation calms down: "Sick Boy hugged Swanny tightly, then eased off, keeping his arms aroond him. They were relaxed; like lovers in a post-coital embrace" (p. 10). Mark realises this superficial bonding a page later:

> Ah'm tempted to quote Johnny n say that we wir aw acquaintaces now. It sounds good in ma heid: 'We are all acquaintances now.' It seems tae go beyond our personal junk circumstaces; a brilliant metaphor for our times. Ah resist the temptation.

Mark also fails to establish relationships for most parts of the novel. "The First Shag in Ages" (pp. 130 ff.) turns out to be a disaster as the girl is under age. "Bang to Rites" (pp. 209 ff.) gives a strange and bewildering impression of Mark, as he has sex with his brother's wife, Sharon, at her husband's funeral. Neither of these sexual encounters has any deeper meaning, except as an assurance that personal relationships are still possible, if only for a short while. We find that Mark starts seeing a girl called Kelly, but she realises that Mark cannot connect to others:

> Mark can be affectionate, but he doesnae seem tae really need people. Ah lived with him for six months, and ah still don't think ah realy know him. Sometimes ah feel that ah was looking for too much, and that there's a lot less tae him than meets the eye (p. 302).

Mark's view on life and society is summed up in his discussion of Kierkegaard in court (pp. 165-166). The philosopher's view justifies Mark's negation of society, a fact which makes choice possible. And it is this choice, uninhibited by society's views, that Mark expresses in his therapy session on pp. 187-188, summed up by the explanation: "Well, ah choose no tae choose life. If the cunts cannae handla that, it's thair fuckin problem."

4.3.3.2. Sick Boy

Sick Boy consumes not only drugs, but also people. The chapter "In Overdrive" (pp. 27-31) characterises his attitude: his main interest is "tae get off wi a woman an her purse" (p. 31). Also, we learn of his imagined dialogues with Sean Connery, to whom he feels connected since both worked as milk delivery boys (p. 29). Sick Boy quits using heroin after the death of Dawn, Lesly's baby (cf. p. 54), yet he keeps using other drugs. He only appears in a few stories from then on, and he is mostly alone or a minor character in the stories. Yet when he returns, he always appears as different from the rest:

> There is no chance of either Spud, Renton ar Begbie making up a foursome. They [two girls Sick Boy had

> picked up] are both going back with Sick Boy, and Sick Boy alone. He is merely gracing them with his presence. […]
> – My ladies are returning. Ah'll leave you gentlemen to your sordid little activities. Sick Boy shakes his head disdainfully, then scans the bar with a haughty, superior expression on his face. – The working classes at play, he derisively snorts. Spud and Renton wince (pp. 130-131).

Later, in "Deid Dugs", Sick Boy returns, and presents an ugly image of himself, as we see him killing a dog (pp. 148 ff.), which he first shoots at to make it attack its owner, so that in killing the animal he presents himself as some sort of hero. Mark argues with Sick Boy on page 174, when he tries to sell a girl to a friend, another ugly image of him:

> Ah couldnae belive ma ears. Sick Boy wisnae jokin. He wis gaun tae try set up Planet Ay The Apes wi wee Maria Anderson, this junky he'd been fucking on and oaf for a few months. The cunt wanted to pimp her oot.

After Mark tries to talk to Sick Boy, he replies:

> Git oot ma face. Tell us it wisnae you thit turned Tommy ontae Seeker n that crowd. His eyes wir crystal clear and treacherous, untained by conscience or compassion (p. 174).

It is not only striking how Sick Boy leads his life, but also how he is distanced from his former friends after he has stopped using heroin. In *Trainspotting*, there is no real interest in others; all that characters need of others is their company and their participation in shared activities.

4.3.3.3. Frank Begbie

The epitome of this is Frank Begbie. Despite his obvious need for company, Begbie never truly unites with anybody. His aggression is directed towards all that is different, and sometimes even towards his friends, who seem to fear rather than trust him:

> The problem wi Begbie wis… Well, thirs that many problems wi Begbie. One ay the things thit concerned us maist wis the fact that ye couldnae really relax in his company, especially if he'd hud a bevvy. Ah always felt thit a slight shift in the cunt's perception ay ye wid be suffiecient tae change yir status fae great mate intae persecuted victim. The trick wis tae indulge the radge withoot being seen tae be too much ay an obviously crawling sap (p. 75).

Mark calls him "General Franco" (p. 77), which hints at Begbie's dominant role in company. "The Glass" (pp. 75 ff.) characterises Begbie best, as it does his friends' attitude towards him. Mark says he hates "cunts like that. Cunts like Begbie. Cunts that are intae baseball-batting every fucker that's different" (p. 78). Obviously,

everybody sees that Frank Begbie is bad company, and that his existence relies on his surroundings:

> A whole Begbie mythology hud been created by oor lies tae each other n oorsels. Like us, Begbie believed that bullshit. We played a big part in making him what he was.
>
> Myth: Begbie has a great sense ay humour.
>
> Reality: Begbie's sense ay humour is solely activated at the misfortunes, setbacks and weaknesses ay others, usually his friends.
>
> Myth: Begbie is a 'hard man'.
>
> Reality: Ah would not personally rate Begbie that highly in a square-go, withoot his assortment ay stanley knives, basebaw bats, knuckledusters, beer glesses, sharpened knitting needles, etc. Masel n maist cunts are too shite scared tae test this theory, but the impression remains. […]
>
> Myth: Begbie's mates like him.
>
> Reality: They fear him.
>
> Myth: Begbie would never waste any ay his mates.
>
> Reality: His mates are generally too cagey tae test oot this proposition, and oan the odd occasion they have done so, huv succeeded in disproving it.
>
> Myth: Begbie backs up his mates.
>
> Reality: Begbie smashes fuck oot ay innocent wee daft cunts whae accidently spill your pint or bump intae ye. Psychopaths who terrorise Begbie's mates usually dae so wi impunity, as they tend to be closer mates ay Begbie's than the punters he hings aboot wi. He kens thum aw through approved school, prison n the casuals' networks, the freemasonaries that bams share (pp. 82-83).

Begbie's aggression is directed even to his girlfriend, June, even while she is pregnant:

> Then the fuckin boot gits up n starts screamin it us, saying thit ah cannae jist fuckin go like that. Ah punches it in the fuckin mooth, n boot it in the fuckin fanny, n the cunt faws tae the flair, moaning away. It's her fuckin fault, ah've telt the cunt thit that's what happens when any cunt talks tae us like that. That's the fuckin rules ay the game, take it or fuckin leave it.
> – THE BAIRN! THE BAIRN!… she screams.
> Ah jist goes: – THE BAIRN! THE BAIRN! Back at her, likes.
> – Shut yir fuckin mooth aboot the fuckin bairn! She's jist lyin thair, screamin like some fuckin tube.
> It's probably no even ma fuckin bairn anywey (p. 110).

As becomes obvious on page 284, Begbie's friends realise that he is a character they cannot understand, yet do not dare argue with:

> – Barin woke, she [June] sais tae Franco, likesay she's explainin. Franco looks at her like he wants tae kill them baith.
> – Fuck sakes. C'moan Spud, the fucking bedroom. Cannae even git a ay fuckin peace in yir ain fuckin hoose! He gestures tae the door, like.
> – What's aw this? June asks.
> – Dinnae fuckin ask. Jist you fuckin see tae yir fuckin bairn! Begbie snaps. The wey he sais it, it's likesay, it's no

> his bairn an aw, ken? Ah suppose in a wey he's right, likesay; Franco's no what ye'd really sortay call the parental type, ken… eh, what sortay type is Franco?

Spud tries to find excuses for Begbie's behaviour, yet never manages. There is only one instance in the novel when another character understands Begbie's behaviour. When Mark and Begbie walk home, they pass the abandoned Leith Central Station, soon to be demolished, and now home to drunks, one of whom turns out to be Begbie's father.

> – What yis up tae lads? Trainspottin, eh? He sais, laughing uncontrollably at his ain fuckin wit.
> – Aye. That's right, Begbie sais. Then under his breath: – Fuckin auld cunt.
> – Ah well, ah'll leave yis tae it. Keep up the trainspottin mind! He staggered oaf, his rasping, drunkard's cackles filling the desolate barn. Ah noticed that Begbie seemed strangely subdued and uncomfortable. He wis turned away fae us.
> It wis only then ah realised thit the auld wino wis Begbie's faither.
> We were silent on our journey toward's Begbie's until we came upon a guy in Duke Street. Begbie hit him in the face, and he fell. The gadge briefly looked up before trying to pull himself intae a foetal position. Aw Begbie said wis 'wide cunt' as he put the boot intae the prostrate body a couple ay times. The expression the guy had when he looked up at Begbie was mair one ay resignation than fear. The boy understood everything (p. 309).

Begbie exercises his aggressions on others to rid himself of the frustration he feels towards the situation he is in. That the boy beaten up "understood everything" only proves that Begbie is not a singularity; he is rather a symptom of a general problem. The problem, however, is that he is unavoidable, and disconnection from him is impossible. "Begbie is like junk, a habit" (p. 83), Mark admits.

4.3.3.4. Spud

The only character who seeks true company and yet stays most individualised in *Trainspotting* is Spud. One of the closest friends to Mark, Spud is good-natured and truly needs others. Also, Spud finds apologies for most other characters' behaviour, as is obvious in his statements on Begbie, as above, or on page 120, when he says:

> Did ah say anything derogatory against ma man Franco? Well, likesay… he's no bad punter. Pure jungle cat, ken, but even jungle cats sit doon n huv a wee purr tae themselves now and again, likesay, usually after they've likes, devoured somebody.

Spud is also very sensitive. When Mark talks about killing a squirrel, Spud is upset:

> – Yous wir gaunnae kill that squirrel.
> – S only a fuckin squirrel, Spud. Thir vermin… he sais. He pits his airm roond ma shoodirs.

> – It's mibbe nae mair vermin thin you ar me, likesay… whae's tae say what's vermin… they posh wifies think people like us ur vermin, likesay, does that make it right thit they should kill us, ah goes (p. 160).

Spud is the loser-type among his friends. His "softness", his clumsiness and his simplicity are inappropriate for the setting. Several instances show him being left behind: In "Courting Disaster", Spud is sent to prison for the same crime for which Mark only gets sentenced to a fine and to commit himself to psychological treatment. The magistrate calls Spud a "habitual thief", while Mark is "a different matter". After a disastrous attempt to sleep with Laura McEwan in "There is a Light That Never Goes Out" (p. 270), Spud ends up in hospital, while Sick Boy "stands in" for Spud. Mark realises that Spud is unfit for the life he has to lead:

> Spud had never hurt anybody, with the exception perhaps of a bit of mental distress caused by his tendency to liberate the contents of people's pockets, purses and homes. People got too het up about things, though. They invested too much emotion in objects. Spud could not be held responsible for society's materialism and commodity fetishism. Nothing had gone right for Spud. The world shat on him (p. 343).

4.3.4. Addictions revisited

What *Trainspotting* shows, then, is that all of its characters, however isolated they may be by their individual characteristics, try to connect to each other. This connection, this process of bonding, works through certain sets of rules which all characters abide by; thus, they can interact, form groups and defend themselves against external threats. *Trainspotting* shows subcultures on the fringe of society, subcultures which pretend to provide stability, yet in reality fail to do so. Once again, the novel deludes the reader – and, its characters – to think that a structure – this time, an intrinsic structure set within the world of *Trainspotting* – can truly connect lives, can give meaning to an otherwise meaningless life. This obvious need for interaction becomes, in the novel, a further addiction which all characters share: the addiction to the Scotland which Welsh portrays.

An addiction is characterised by the "recurring compulsion by an individual to engage in some specific activity, despite harmful consequences to the individual's health, mental state or social life".[67] In these terms, the life of Mark Renton and his friends – and thus the Scotland of *Trainspotting* – can be seen as a drug: As was said before, the common bottom line for all characters is shared disillusion and frustration. The lack of a positive outlook on life is essential for all other forms of interaction: without hope of being included into middle-class society, *Trainspotting's* characters decide to create their own world. The shared frustration is expressed best by Mark Renton:

> Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We were colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant,

[67] www.wikipedia.com

> healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fucking low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that ever was shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots (p. 78).

The fact that all of the characters use drugs can be explained as the easiest way to escape this frustration, a frustration caused by living under the "drug" of Scotland; also, the shared abuse is an easy way to connect. However, even Mark realises that this is not liberating; he "resists the temptation", as was quoted above.

If Mark sees that the dealer Johnny Swan found "a brilliant metaphor for our times", then he clearly points to the lack of acquaintance other than that formed by a shared habit, here the habit of heroin consumption – or, the shared habit of indulging in the condition of *Trainspotting*'s Scotland. Mark sees that the acquaintance only exists because they all live under the same circumstances; and these circumstances force them together. Each character shares a double addiction, one being his personal problems with either alcohol or drugs such as heroin or speed, the other being the addiction to the social circumstances they all seem to despise but cannot escape from.

Mark is the only character who feels that "our personal junk circumstances" are isolating and are just another illusion of true community which has been lost long ago. Yet the craving for it remains. Just like drug abuse, this craving is something all characters share. They realise that even their friendships are addiction which they cannot get rid of. Mark describes Frank Begbie as being into "baseball-batting every fucker that's different" (p. 78) and yet decides to stick with him – just as all the others – because Begbie is "just like junk, a habit" (p. 83).

This social addiction, the addiction to Scotland, is a reaction to an outside threat which *Trainspotting*'s characters see. The need to interact, to form social groups and to defend oneself against "every fucker that's different" if need be is a proof for this, a symptom Cairns Craig describes in *Out of History* (p. 13) when he says that it is the pressure of the outside world that holds Scotland together.

This pressure is counteracted by the formation of subcultures, all of which cling to a set of rules. Breaching these undefined codes of conduct within the subcultures of *Trainspotting* will ultimately lead to expulsion. This is exemplified in "Grieving and Mourning in Port Sunshine" (pp. 95 ff.).

> They [Billy, Mark's brother and his friends, who regularly play cards] were mates, though, and it was generally assumed that they would never do the dirty on each other. However, logic as well as loyalty underpinned this assumption. They all had ties in the area, and could never leave it for good, and not for just the £2,000 in the kitty. Leaving the area was what it would mean if one ripped off the rest. They told themselves this over and over again (p. 98).

The general assumption that they would "never do the dirty on each other" fails; Jackie, assumed to have an affair with one of the card player's wives and accused of preparing to run off with the money, is punished and expelled.

> Jackie's screams reverberated around the stairwell, as they booted and dragged him from landing to landing. He vainly

> tried to protect himself and, through his fear and pain, hoped that there would be enough left of him to move out of Leith, when the ordeal was over (pp.104-105).

If the breaching of the codes of conduct leads to expulsion, then the adherence to a certain group must be essential; yet group membership offers no guarantee of protection, since most of the groups we find in the novel display the same hostility towards "the other", which Begbie displays. Football supporters beat up supporters of the other teams even after they have won the match (as in "Victory on New Year's Day", pp. 41 ff.), right-wing thugs go for Spud and Dode (pp. 119 ff.). Even bourgeois values offer no security: Billy, Marks brother, is married, about to have a child, yet he is killed while on patrol as a soldier in Northern Ireland.

Connecting with others, then, is an act of felt protection against diffuse forces from the outside which threaten the individual. It is, however, never a helpful protection that we are presented with; it is always an act of withdrawal from the world. Tommy, while he is at an Iggy Pop concert, has a speed-fuelled experience:

> Iggy Pop looks right at me as he sings the line: 'America takes drugs in psychic defence'; only that he changes 'America' for 'Scatlin'[obviously a transposition of Iggy Pop's American accent and possibly a pun on "scat" for "shit"; my remark], and defines us more accurately in a single sentence than all the others have ever done (p. 75).

Scotland takes drugs in order to strike back at an undefined enemy. It is an act of "psychic defence", not physical defence, an act

of inner rebellion when any attempt of outspoken rebellion has obviously failed. At the same time, it is clear from the characters' multiple addictions that it is not the individuals any more who determine their lives; it is the "compulsion to engage in some specific activity, despite harmful consequences", the addiction, which drives them on.

4.3.5. Exit

All ways out which *Trainspotting* offers are dead-end streets. There is no sign anywhere in the novel of how to survive in the long run. The escape routes given from the addiction to Scotland are drink, violence, crime or drugs – or any combination of the four. All are near fatal and all offer only short-term relief. The final exit which *Trainspotting* presents is death; it is the omnipresent threat to all of the novel's characters and at the same time the only force strong enough to dissolve the bonds between Scotland and the characters.

It is thus not surprising that Mark Renton's decision to refuse middle-class values means "not tae choose life" – and thus to choose death. In "Searching for the Inner Man" (p. 188), he shows that his decision opens a new way to escape:

> Society invents a spurious convoluted logic tae absorb and change people whae's behaviour is outside its mainstream. Suppose that ah ken aw the pros and cons, know that ah'm gaunnae huv a short life, am ay sound minded etcetera, etcetera, but still want to use smack? They won't let ye dae it. They won't let ye dae it, because it's seen as a sign ay thir ain failure. The fact that ye jist simply choose tae reject

> whit they huv tae offer. Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life.
>
> Well, ah choose not tae choose life. If the cunts cannae handle that, it's thair fuckin problem (pp. 187-188).

At first, of course, this confession of believing ultimately in death as the only solution serves as an explanation why Mark takes drugs. Yet it paves the way for his ultimate escape: Mark decides to betray his friends, knowing that this will force him to ultimately leave the country and never to return. He rejects the rules and decides to virtually die in order to escape Scotland the drug.

> Ironically, it was Begbie who was the key. Ripping off your mates was the highest offence in his book, and he would demand the severest penalty. Renton had used Begbie, used him to burn his boats completely and utterly. It was Begbie who ensured he could never return. He had done what he wanted to do. He could never go back to Leith, to Edinburgh, even to Scotland, ever again. There, he could not be anything other than he was. Now, free from all, for good, he could be what he wanted to be (p. 344).

The key to understanding why Mark sees no future in Scotland is embedded in the image which Welsh has formed for Scotland: the empty hull.

> We go fir a pish in the auld Central Station at the Fit ay the Walk, now a barren, desolate hangar, which is soon to be demolished and replaced by a supermarket and swimming centre. Somehow, that makes us sad, even though ah wis eywis too young tae mind ay trains ever being there.
> - Some size ay a station this wis. Git a train tae anywhair fae here, at one time, or so they sais, ah sais, watching ma steaming pish splash oantae the cauld stane.
> - If it still hud fucking trains, ah'd be oan one oot ay this fuckin dive, Begbie said. It wis uncharacteristic for him to talk aboot Leith in that way. He tended to romanticise the place.
> An auld drunkard, whom Begbie had been looking at, lurched up tae us, wine boatel in his hand. Loads of them used the place tae bevvy and crash in (p. 309).

Leith clearly has no connection to the outside, in clear technical terms as well as metaphorically. Mark is sad to know that although he cannot remember the times when trains were leading to and from Leith, even the memory of a connection to the outside world will soon be destroyed with the demolition of the station building. Even Begbie agrees that he would leave if there only was a way.

4.3.6. Conclusion

Having a train station without trains is the ultimate statement *Trainspotting* makes: its world is disconnected from any outside reality. It is a world cut off from even the chance to escape. Mark's metaphorical death is the only way to survive; he is leaving the empty hull of Leith Central station, of Edinburgh, even of Scotland.

It is a strong image *Trainspotting* creates for Scotland. However intricate its social networks may be, however complex the connections of the individuals' lives may appear, they are nothing but structures covering a void. Even the linguistic unifier within the text is nothing but a structure, a shell in which the characters live: It has no depth, no meaning. In this structure, this hull, none of them can "be what they want to be", as Mark hopes for his future, because the hull is deprived of meaning; it stretches over a desolate ground where drunkards "bevvy and crash" in. In fact, Mark and his friends and acquaintances are the drunkards which live in an empty hull which is Leith, Edinburgh or Scotland. They use the place to bevvy and crash in; or to take drugs, have sex, commit crimes, drink, fight and die in. *Trainspotting* erects all of the structures I named above only to bring this point home to the reader. And Cairns Craig is right in the comment quoted at the beginning of this part of the present study: Welsh does remind the reader of a Scottish identity – and, in contrast to Craig, of more than just a linguistic identity – by using the symbol of the empty train station. But this identity is lost and gone. There is no hope. Scotland in *Trainspotting* is the empty hull.

4.4. *Lanark* – the Hilltop

Alasdair Gray's 1981 novel *Lanark* develops the most complex image of Scotland; hence, it was placed at the end of the present analysis, although it was published before Welsh's *Trainspotting*. Yet Lanark, in its present reading, encompasses so many different aspects and unifies them in such a special way that making it the climax of all the different images discussed here is the logical consequence, especially since the image *Lanark* creates is itself a high point: It is the hilltop featured so prominently throughout the novel. This image re-appears throughout *Lanark* in the shape of Glasgow's Necropolis in various reincarnations, as the hilltop of Ben Rua which Duncan Thaw climbs as a child and in Lanark's trip to the hilltop with his son Sandy.

Lanark unites views, combines perspectives just like actual, physical hilltops do. The novel calls for a unification of past, present and possible future visions. And just as Lanark the character finds his peace only after having suffered the consequences of living in various, isolated stages of his life in confusing circumstances, *Lanark* the novel comes to rest once all strains of its various narratives are combined.

4.4.1. The Content

It is almost impossible to sum up the contents of Gray's novel without going into the discussion of its structure. Gray portrays a life in four books, as the title suggests. Yet the novel focuses on two lives lived in four books in three cities and one underworld. The reader is introduced to the protagonist, Lanark, who has arrived in a strange city and obviously suffers from amnesia. Through various strange

incidents he comes to realize that he is a kind of rebirth of Duncan Thaw, a Glasgow youth, who throughout his life was looking for a meaning, an ultimate solution, which he assumes to come close to through his work as an artist. On the brink of madness, he kills a girl and commits suicide. Lanark slowly realises that he is the outcome of his past life, yet cannot make sense out of his situation. He lives in Unthank, a city reminiscent of Glasgow, and is surrounded by various people, none of whom he can fully trust. Like Thaw, he searches for a solution, a way to escape, which he finally manages to do, only to wake up in a kind of underworld, the "Institute", which appears as a nightmarish version of the consumer-capitalist world where people are virtually wasted in order to fuel the system. Having managed to escape from this hell-like experience, Lanark's way leads him to yet another version of Unthank, Greater Unthank.

All through the book, the reader and the protagonist try to make sense of what they are confronted with, yet never achieve a full understanding. This is where the analysis necessarily has to start.

4.4.2. The Composition

Lanark, says the cover, is supposed to be "A Life in Four Books". This is where the trouble starts. We find four books, but they are placed in the wrong order. "Book Three" is followed by a "Prologue", and then we are in the first book, which is interrupted by an "Interlude", which precedes "Book Two", which in turn is followed by "Book Four". This last chapter is interrupted by the "Epilogue" before we reach the end of the novel.

If we attempt to put the books in the correct order, we find that we are given two life stories with two different protagonists, and we see that the first narrative, dealing with Duncan Thaw, is followed by

a narrative which features Lanark as the main character. The link between them is not obvious. The order as given in the novel creates this link by making Lanark a newcomer to a strange city, suffering from amnesia. In Book One, through the help of an oracle, he is able to trace his past only to find that he is the outcome of Thaw's suicide. The book only makes sense if it is read this way, as the numerical order of the single chapters indicates. We are guided through a split experience of a common "soul" manifesting itself in different bodies in differing worlds.[68] The prologue and the epilogue only make sense in the places we find them. The "Life in Four Books" becomes the journey through different periods of existence, guided by a fractured structure, and the titles of the parts of this frame fail to give us any hints at their actual meaning.[69]

This bewildering feeling of not dealing with a coherent, progressing narration is further stressed by annotations that are uncommon in a novel. The footnotes and indices we find in the epilogue only highlight a distraction from a continuous flow of narration that we feel right from the beginning. The fact that some of the indices refer to chapters that are not part of the book we possess only adds to this feeling.[70] This lacking *telos* in the narration is a first

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[68] Nastler, the author-character Lanark meets in the "Epilogue", comments on this: "'I want Lanark to be read in one order but eventually thought of in another'" (p. 483).

[69] It is interesting to think of Saussure's "signifier" and "signified" being applied here in the true arbitrary mode. Also, it is striking to see that Gray, just like Welsh, denies the reader a trustworthy guide-line for understanding the novel. In analogy to what I said about Welsh, I claim that Gray's aim is to prove that straight-forward narratives do not suffice to depict the postmodern circumstances.

[70] Cf. p. 496: the reference in the column on the left side of the page lists Quintilianus Marcus Fabricius as a source for chapter 45, and

hint towards the message of the book, and will have to be considered in the summary of this chapter.

4.4.3. Triangulation

How can the reader, in the given apparent disorder, make sense of the novel? How can the pieces be arranged into an image? We face a series of problems, all having to do with perspective. It is not just the problem of finding the text's meaning. It is first of all the question of where we stand. Whom or what can the reader trust? Things are not what they appear to be[71] and yet they are.[72] For example: Lanark suffers from a disease, and this disease is open to different interpretations, and still this disease is as real as any other experience

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Donald Goodbrand Saunders as source for chapter 46, and yet the book ends with chapter 44.

[71] From these remarks it should be clear that the present reading will only be one picture made of the pieces; it should not attempt to present the ultimate solution to the difficult and manifold interpretations. For my purpose, I arranged the pieces in a certain order; any reversal is possible. The dilemma of perception and reality in the novel hinted at above is also mentioned in Stephen Bernstein's discussion of *Lanark* in *Alasdair Gray*. Cranbury, London, Port Credit: Associated University Presses, 1999, pp. 35ff.

[72] "In *Lanark* a thing is what it is; but it may also be other things. This variation on a famous philosophical rule applies to characters and apparently complete stories, too" (Isobel Murray and Bob Tait. *Ten Modern Scottish Novels*, Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984, p. 229).

within the fictional world of the novel.[73] We are obviously left to find some way out of this problem of perception and perspective; this is exactly what Lanark attempts to do, and just like him, any exit easily leads the reader into another confusing state.[74]

The origin of the problem is that neither Thaw nor Lanark can perceive their situation clearly, since both are locked inside it; the only possible way to see where they are is when they succeed in physically mapping their environs. Both can do so when they stand on a hill and look down.[75] In the Thaw-narrative, Duncan climbs Ben Rua,[76] and on

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[73] The dragonhide disease is first mentioned on p. 21: "I asked what the hard patch was. He said, 'We call it dragonhide, a name more picturesque than scientific, perhaps, but the science of these things is in its infancy. You can dress now.'" Later we learn that Rima suffers from this disease as well (p. 36), and that Lanark's patch grows so that it finally covers the whole arm (p. 39). In the institute, Lanark finds out that this disease will cover the entire body and finally lead to a self-combustion of the patient (pp. 65-68). Thus, dragonhide has to be viewed as part of the reality that surrounds Lanark. Yet if we view the disease from a metaphorical level, it seems to signify the repression of emotions which results in the patient receiving an "armour", which he soon is unable to leave. The explanation is given by Ozenfant on p. 68, and although he uses a metaphor to illustrate the effects of the disease, he shows it to be part of reality.

[74] Lanark's first escape leads him into the institute, the second into the intercalendrical zone, the third back to Unthank, the next to Provan, and then back to Unthank again; and the main reason why he came into these "subworlds" is because Thaw committed suicide to create a way out.

[75] This idea follows Bernstein's approach in Bernstein. *Alasdair Gray*, pp. 49-50.

[76] Cf. pp. 141-143.

the hills of Glasgow he realises that the city looks different when he is outside it:

> "I should be able to see the art school, it's on top of a hill behind Sauchiehall Street – Glasgow seems all built on hills. Why don't we notice them when we're in it?"
> "Because none of the main roads touch them. The main roads run east and west and the hills are all between" (p. 217).

Another instance is on page 243, yet here we find a moment of clarity added to the mere physical change of perception:

> They crossed the shallow arch of a wooden bridge and climbed past some warehouses to the top of a threadbare green hill. They stood under an electric pylon and looked across the city centre. The wind which stirred the skirts of their coats was shifting mounds of grey cloud eastward along the valley. Travelling patches of sunlight went from ridge to ridge, making a hump of tenements gleam against the dark towers of the city chambers, silhouetting the cupolas of the Royal infirmary against the tomb-glittering spine of the Necropolis. "Glasgow is a magnificent city," said McAlpin. "Why do we hardly ever notice that?"
> "Because nobody imagines living here," said Thaw. McAlpin lit a cigarette and said, "If you want to explain that I'll certainly listen."
> "Then think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because

> he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. What is Glasgow to most of us? A house, the place we work, a football park or golf course, some pubs and connecting streets. That's all. No, I'm wrong, there's also the cinema and the library. And when our imagination needs exercise we use these to visit London, Paris, Rome under the Caesars, the American West at the turn of the century, anywhere but here and now. Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves."

Like Thaw, Lanark needs "hilltops", physical or metaphorical ones, to see more clearly. One of these is the graveyard-hill of Unthank, which is a version of the Necropolis of the actual Glasgow.[77] The hill in his vision of himself and Alexander, a reflection of Thaw climbing Ben Rua, and also Lanark's flight to Provan, are both positions above the world the protagonist occupies. Lanark can get a clear view of the place he lives in, and even manages to recall his previous life as Thaw on climbing the hill with Sandy. The vision in chapter 41 is interesting with regard to the clarity that Lanark achieves:[78]

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[77] At least Lanark knows where he is when he returns from the intercalendrical zone p. 397, and at the end Lanark watches the events from this hill and thinks to know, from his interview with Nastler, what will happen next (pp. 556-558).

[78] Cairns Craig sees this clarity as the ultimate solution of the problem of perspective, because for him, it blends all possible points of views

Eventually Lanark followed and overtook him on a ridge where heather and coarse brown grass gave place to a carpet of turf. The land here dipped into a hollow then rose to the steep cone of the summit. Alexander said, "You see that white thing on top?"

"Yes."

"It's a triangle point."

"A triangulation point."

"That's right. A triangule point. Come on."

[…]

Lanark walked up the path at an easy pace. The air was fresh and the sun warm. He thought how good it was to have a holiday. The only sound was the *Wheep! Wheep!* of a distant moorbird, the only cloud a faint white smudge in the blueness over the hilltop. In the hollow on his left he sometimes saw Alexander scrambling over a ridge and though tolerantly, 'Silly of him, but he'll learn from experience.' He was wondering sadly about Alexander's life with Rima when the path became a ladder of sandy toeholes kicked in the steepening turf. From here the summit seemed a great green dome, and staring up at it, Lanark saw an amazing sight. Up the left-hand curve, silhouetting against the sky, a small human figure was quickly climbing. Lanark sighed with pleasure, halted and looked away into the blue. He said, "Thank you!" and for a moment glimpsed the ghost of a man scribbling in a bed littered with papers. Lanark smiled and said, "No, old Nastler, it isn't you I

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together and thus liberates Thaw-Lanark; cf. Cairns Craig. "Going Down to Hell is Easy. Lanark, Realism and the Limits of Imagination", pp. 106f. in: Robert Crawford and Tom Nairn (eds.). *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991, pp. 90-107.

> thank, but the cause of the ground which grew us all. I have never given you much thought, Mr. Cause, for you don't repay that kind of effort, and on the whole I have found your world bearable rather than good. But in spite of me and the sensible path, Sandy is reaching the summit all by himself in the sunlight; he is up there enjoying the whole great globe that you gave him, so I love you now. I don't care what absurdity, failure, death I am moving toward. Even when your world has lapsed into black nothing, it will have made sense because Sandy once enjoyed it in the sunlight" (pp. 514-515).

That he is accused of suffering from a Gulliver-complex when he arrives in Provan only shows that viewpoints can vary; the view from above will blur details, but the sum of the details alone will not create a complete picture either:

> "Provan strikes me as the most splendidly situated –"
> "Are you a delegate?"
> "Yes."
> "So you've just arrived by air."
> "Yes."
> "Then don't talk to me about Provan. You're in the early stages of a Gulliver complex."
> Lanark said coldly, "I don't understand you."
> "The first recorded aerial survey happened when Lemuel Gulliver, a plain, reasonable man, was allowed to stand on his feet beside the capital of Lilliput. He saw well-cultivated farms surrounding the homes, streets, and public buildings of a very busy little people. He was struck by the

> obvious ingenuity and enterprise of the rulers, the officials and the workmen. It took him two or three months to discover their stupidity, greed, corruption, envy, cruelty."
> "You pessimists always fall into the disillusion trap," said the cheerful man cheerfully. "From the distance a thing looks bright. From another it looks dark. You think you've found the truth when you've replaced the cheerful view by the opposite, but true profundity blends all possible views, bright as well as dark" (p. 477).

"True profundity blends all possible views": This is exactly what *Lanark* attempts to do. Just as Thaw-Lanark is able to see clearly when he finds himself in an exposed position, we can attempt to achieve an overview if we make use of a technique we find mentioned at least three times in the book: the geometric device of triangulation.[79]

It is interesting that the unattributed lines closing the novel state that the maps are out of date:

> I STARTED MAKING MAPS WHEN I WAS SMALL
> SHOWING PLACE, RESOURCES, WHERE THE ENEMY
> AND WHERE LOVE LAY. I DID NOT KNOW
> TIME ADDS TO LAND. EVENTS DRIFT CONTINUALLY DOWN,

[79] Triangulation is mentioned for the first time when Thaw climbs Ben Rua on p. 143, when he paints the mural and dreams of a conversation with God inside the picture on p. 338; note that here the ten commandments are called "the triangulation tables of the law", thus making a connection between law – that which gives society its directions – and geography – that which tells us where we are.

EFFACING LANDMARKS, RAISING THE LEVEL, LIKE SNOW.
I HAVE GROWN UP. MY MAPS ARE OUT OF DATE.
THE LAND LIES OVER ME NOW.
I CANNOT MOVE. IT IS TIME TO GO (p. 560).[80]

Maps alone cannot suffice for either protagonist. Place, as mentioned above, can only be seen by combining overviews and details. It is also remarkable that another essential fact is named on this last page of the novel: "Time adds to land". Thaw exists in a definite time frame, defined by the events during World War II. In Unthank, time has become impossible to measure, but Lanark feels he has to find out about his past in order to make an approach to the present. If we agree that time adds to land, and see "land" as consisting of geography, society, and politics, then we can follow the advice made by Nastler, the fictitious author-character whom we encounter in the "Epilogue": we could try to form a trinity of fixations which would enable us to find a way to interpret the novel. Nastler hints at such a trinity involving himself, Lanark and the reader (cf. p. 495). This seems most appropriate. If we examine Lanark's life, we will form a connection of past (Thaw) and present (Lanark); if we allow the fictional author to guide us, we will have the details of the two worlds. It is then up to us to create a picture out of the puzzle, and this makes us part of a three-dimensional sphere. We must thus triangulate our way through the shifting ground of *Lanark*, and for the present study the three fixations will be "personal", "geographical" and "temporal" elements.[81] The first involves the protagonists in their

[80] Formatting is done according to the original.

[81] It should be noted that there are many more possible fixations, and that some intersect; for example sociological elements belong to personal and to geographical spheres. A society consists of people

setting; the second examines the setting itself. The third will attempt to create a complete picture by setting the time frame of the novel against the time frame of the world in which the novel was created.

4.4.3.1. The Personal Fixation

Taking a look at the two lives that form the "Life in Four Books", we are able to form a first point that leads us towards an understanding of the novel – and of the image it creates. Thaw/Lanark share similarities and are subject to their environs. These characters are only possible because of their setting. The worlds of *Lanark* and the Scottish focus underlying the book will be part of the next chapter, but we must first understand the most prominent narrative element – the two life stories – in order to set them against a background.

At the beginning of Book Three, at the start of the novel, we encounter Lanark, who is obviously lost in a situation he does not understand. He is surrounded by people who seem to know him, but he obviously has no idea who they are. The clique around Sludden introduces him to the life in the city that Lanark himself has had no share in up to this moment. The first hints about Lanark's past are found in the "Manuscript"-chapter, when we find him writing about his arrival in Unthank (pp. 16-23). At the party, where he is accompanied by Rima, one of Sludden's friends, Lanark has a

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(thus sociology forms part of the personal fixation), and it develops differently in different countries (thus sociological elements like religion etc. will form part of the geographic fixation). However, these intersections are the defining points of a culture; their realisation is the purpose of the study, and thus the problem of lax divisions is not hindering, but fruitful.

sensation about a possible past that he has not been able to recover so far: he sees a girl whom he believes to have killed (p. 28). This by itself is interesting, since he realises that there must have been a life preceding his present existence, yet he is denied any meaningful insight into this phenomenon. It is not until Lanark gets into the institute that he gains more insight into his actual past; the oracle he calls tells him about Duncan Thaw, a boy growing up in the Glasgow before, during and after the Second World War.[82] Thaw is seen as a boy, and later an adolescent, who is unable to find a way of life that is suitable for him. School, and later art school, offer no real alternative. He seems to lack ambition, love, and a clear idea of what he is able to achieve. Thaw is only sure that he wants to be an artist who manages, through his art, to get to the core of existence. Even as a boy he searches for the "key", the meaning of life,[83] but throughout his life he will never find it. The mural he is painting proves this; the details he tries to fit into the picture increase as the picture grows. This search

[82] The oracle's story starts on p. 104 and covers book one and two.

[83] The chapter "The Key" tells of Thaw's search. The basic idea of this key is made explicit on p. 169:

> The key was small and precise, yet in its use completely general and completely particular. Once found it would solve every problem: asthma, homework, shyness before Kate Caldwell, fear of atomic war; the key would make everything painful, useless and wrong become pleasant, harmonious and good.

It is noteworthy as well that the Thaw-narrative starts with the chapter "The War Begins", which refers to the actual War and to Thaw's struggle.

for bigger dimensions to incorporate every possible detail is found earlier, when Thaw attempts to paint canal locks:[84]

> He invented a perspective showing the locks from below when looked at from left to right and from above when seen from right to left; he painted them as they would appear to a giant lying on his side, with eyes more than a hundred feet apart and tilted at an angle of 45 degrees (p. 279).

Thaw also fails to establish any kind of relationship with a girl. Marjory is the greatest disappointment for him. When she finally rejects him, his physical and psychological condition deteriorates (pp. 291 ff.). In a final attack of insanity he seems to kill a girl,[85] after which he leaves the city and commits suicide by drowning himself somewhere in the Highlands of Scotland. Thus the Lanark narrative can be seen as a continuation of Thaw's life, a kind of reincarnation in a similar, but distorted world. Yet this view is challenged in the text: Rima, who is present during the narration of the oracle, has seen a different story, and she says that Lanark has been asleep during this:

> Rima said, "What are you talking about?"
> "The oracle's account of my life before Unthank. He's just finished with it."

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[84] Craig, in his essay "Going down to Hell is Easy" on p. 92, sees the picture as a model for the novel in general.

[85] The vagueness of expression here refers to the fact that this murder is told by the oracle in words describing Thaw's state of mental illness; his perception is obviously distorted, and so the actual murder-scene remains vague.

> Rima said firmly, "In the first place the oracle was a woman, not a man. In the second place her story was about me. You were so bored that you fell asleep and obviously dreamed something else" (p. 357).

Obviously we cannot trust the Thaw narrative completely.[86] Still, it is the only source of a history of Lanark, and we have to be satisfied with it. Interestingly, the narration of the oracle does not influence Lanark to a great extent. It is only later in the text that Lanark can integrate parts of the oracle into his present existence.[87] He has been read his story, and only with time does he seem to see this history as part of his existence.

Taking up the notion of Thaw being the "history" of Lanark, we should take a closer look at the implications of this. Duncan Thaw is a working-class boy who grows up in the years of World War II. His parents want to offer him the best possible education and want to see him succeed in life.[88] With regard to his deteriorating mental and physical state,[89] Lanark experiences more freedom from both of his parents, and this increases further after Mrs Thaw's death. The lack of success in life results in Lanark being completely without any notion of who he is. Sludden "does nothing, with fantastic ability" (p. 6), but Lanark does nothing and does not know what he wants to do. This

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[86] We find here the problem of perspective that forms the guideline of the present study exemplified in a different way.

[87] It is not until his flight to Provan that Lanark remembers his past, if only in fragments; cf. p. 470, or the passage mentioned in the "Climax" chapter when Lanark has the vision of him and Alexander.

[88] It is especially Mrs. Thaw who wants her son to go on to higher education; cf. p. 147.

[89] Thaw suffers from severe attacks of asthma.

reflects Thaw's position of doing something – art – yet without clear aims. Lanark cannot find either his memories or his place in the world of Unthank or the institute; he is completely unaware of his position in the "Greater Unthank" he returns to after leaving the institute. This is true for Thaw as well. He can never achieve a notion of the world he lives in. His ideas circle around his visions of the truth, and his despair to find love in a world that denies him access to a different way of life leaves him outside of it.

Thaw and Lanark suffer from the same problem: both are lost in a world – or worlds – they are unable to understand since they lack a deeper, elementary understanding of themselves; and yet this deeper understanding, this epiphany, is something everybody else seems to possess intuitively. None of Thaw's friends suffers from this problem; not even Rima, in the Lanark-narrative, questions her position. She even accuses Lanark of doing the wrong things at the wrong time (pp. 456-458), yet Lanark is unable to see why he is behaving incorrectly. The worlds are too fragmented for Thaw-Lanark, and even the artistic mind of Thaw can only convert circumstances and ideas into fragments that are never complete.[90]

To sum up these observations, Thaw and Lanark share the same problem: they lack essential qualities that would make their lives complete. They live in different worlds, and yet these worlds are not completely different. This might be clearer if we take a more detailed look at them.

[90] This inability to finish shows perfectly in the mural; he exceeds the given time limit, and he cannot finish the pictures even after he is free to work on them for as long as he likes. Cf. pp. 334ff.

4.4.3.2. The Geographical Fixation

What, then, are these worlds that Thaw-Lanark experiences? The question is easy to answer in the Thaw-narrative: it is Glasgow, and Scotland in general, that serves as a background for his life. This setting poses some problems, and also implies some specific historical contexts, and some are mentioned in the text. The Second World War drives the Thaw family out of the repeatedly bombed city into the Highlands, a place where Thaw's health suffers, but a place where he is for a brief moment able to be free. When he climbs Ben Rua alone, he liberates himself not only from his father's influence, but also from the pressing historical circumstances.[91] Yet he encounters the representative of a force that seems to rule over even this exposed situation: a minister of the Presbyterian Church:

> Thaw pressed his chest against the granite, stood on tiptoe and, reaching up, brought his fingertips within an inch of the top. "Hell, hell, hell, hell, hell," he muttered sadly, gazing at the dark rock where it cut against a white smudge of cloud. A face suddenly stuck over this edge and looked down at him. It was a small, round, wrinkled almost sexless face, and the shock of it nearly made Thaw lose balance. It took him a moment to recognize Mr. McPhedron, the minister from the village. The minister said, "Are you stuck?" (p. 142)

[91] This scene, and later its mirror in Lanark's vision, carries a special meaning in the Scottish context of the novel, since the Highlands have always been used as a setting for the sublime. This idea will be taken up in the summary of this chapter.

This minister revisits Thaw during a later stay in the country, on a day when his asthma is worst, only to discuss matters of elementary importance for him: history, evolution and religion.[92] Religion appears to be omnipresent and threatening. We find the problem of not being able to escape religion symbolised in the statue of John Knox that reigns over the Necropolis of Glasgow.[93] This

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[92] Cf. pp. 181ff. The minister holds traditional opinions, whereas Thaw is about to prepare a lecture on his personal view of history.

[93] Cf. Thaw's final vision of Glasgow when he is about to kill the girl:

> The city beyond them was growing into the sky. First towers of the municipal building ascended, and beyond them the hump of Rotten Row, with all the tenement windows lit, and then the squat cathedral spire with tower and nave and a nearby cluster of Royal infirmary domes and beyond those, like the last section of a telescope, the tomb-rotten pile of the Necropolis slid up with the John Knox column overtopping the rest. The book in the hand of the stone man struck across the throbbing planet and a blue shadow sped from the book to Thaw's heart, chilling it (p. 348).

The overpowering presence of the statue of John Knox at the top of the Necropolis is interesting as well. Nastler refers to it on page 497 as "'[…] symbol of the tyranny of the mind, symbol of that protracted male erection that can yield to death but not to tenderness […].'" The implications that this statue has in its location – the dominance of religion over life and the state – can be found in Bernstein, *Alasdair Gray*, pp. 43f.

graveyard is another symbol for the past being present[94] in a city that has been the "second city of Empire" in British history. Religion and history are markers on which we can recognize the setting and the problems connected to it.

The sociological implications of Thaw belonging to the working-class and yet aspiring to leave this restricted world, presented by his childhood friend Coulter,[95] places the narration again into a distinct British, or even Scottish context. In his essay "Going Down to Hell is Easy" Cairns Craig states on pages 96-97:

> On the one arm, on one side of the line, is the career of Duncan Thaw, born into a family struggling to attain decency in the tenements of Glasgow, a family determined to ensure that its children escape from the threatening presence of the slums into a world of opportunity, of expanded material and intellectual horizons. Thaw's struggle, the uphill struggle, is a struggle against the beneficent but materialistic expectations of his family (expectations bred out of their own awareness of deprivation); it is a struggle which is continued in his effort to be allowed to pursue his own imaginative vision art against the confining and cramping scholasticism of the art

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[94] Bernstein says about the prominence of the Necropolis in *Lanark*: "It is a hill that conveys an overpowering sense of *pastness*, […] but also the presence of the present"; cf. Bernstein. *Alasdair Gray*, p. 40.

[95] Coulter leaves school and takes up a position in a workshop to enable him to go on to technical college; cf. pp. 215-216. It is not true to say that Coulter stays in his working-class environment, but at least through him Thaw has a comparison to the life that he is able to lead.

> school, whose main aim is to train him so that he can find work.

If Thaw's story had been set in a different environment than that of a declining industrial city, in a social group for which art is only valuable if one can earn a living by it,[96] the despair of Thaw would not be as convincing.

Things are much more difficult if we consider Lanark. Unthank is a nightmare vision of a city, and we are at first unable to judge where this city is located. Geography is not to be discussed, as Lanark soon learns: "After considering I asked if he could tell me the name of the city. He said, 'Mr. Lanark I am a clerk, not a geographer'" (p. 22).

The general idea the reader gets is that this city is a post-industrial one, suffering from depression and migration: "The city did not seem a thriving place. Groups of adolescents or old men stood in occasional close mouths, but many closes were empty and unlit. The only shops not boarded up were small stores selling newspapers, sweets, cigarettes and contraceptives" (p. 19). Another instance shows a conversation between two businessmen who want to make money out of the depressive situation of the city:

> "Dodd is on our side. After all, the Corporation has nothing to do but light the streets and keep the trams running, and these services don't pay for themselves. They have to be

[96] Thaw explains on p. 211: "'People in Scotland have a queer idea of arts. They think you can be an artist in your spare time, though nobody expects you to be a spare-time dustman, engineer, lawyer or brain surgeon.'"

> subsidized by the sale of municipal property, so Dodd is selling and I'm buying" (p. 38).

There are signs, however, that this city is the nightmare-equivalent of Glasgow. The Necropolis, featuring prominently in Thaw's experience of the world, recurs here in Unthank: "The lamps in the street behind showed a dim hillside laid out as a cemetery. Black gravestones stood on the snowy paleness and he climbed between them, amazed that the ground of this place had once swallowed men in a natural way" (p. 46). Later, when Lanark re-enters Unthank after his leaving the institute, he encounters this graveyard as well:

> After many minutes they emerged into a narrow, dark, stone-built chamber with marble plaques on three walls and large wrought-iron gates in the fourth. These swung easily outward, and they stepped onto a gravel path beneath a huge black sky. Lanark saw he was on a hilltop among the obelisks of a familiar cemetery (p. 397).

The situation of the graveyard-hill beside a cathedral (cf. p. 398) clearly links it to Glasgow's cathedral district beside the Necropolis.

Yet the situation is distorted, and the view of the city in greater detail is not granted. Lanark leaves Unthank, interestingly on top of the mirror-Necropolis, only to enter the institute, another place we have difficulty locating.

At first we might consider it a hospital, but we soon learn that it is a whole complex of corridors and wards and other buildings located under a mountain:

> "Where is the institute?"
> "We occupy a system of galleries under a mountain with several peaks and several cities on top. I believe you come from one of these cities."
> "Under a mountain?" (p. 58)

The institute serves more purposes than healing people, as in Lanark's case, and after his recovery, the protagonist is given the position of a doctor (p. 59). Lanark learns that the institute lives on the people of Unthank, and this is to be understood as literally "living on": the people suffering from the diseases we see in Unthank are either used to fuel the institute or to feed its patients and staff.[97] The institute's position under the "real" worlds outside is interesting and gives it a notion of secrecy; the fact that is has been shut off from the outside world since the last World War gives the narration a time reference (p. 51). Interestingly, as Lanark learns, movement in the institute's corridors is only allowed in one direction. Otherwise the "current" would be disturbed (p. 63). Movement is fastest in this current if one bends forward (p. 76). When Lanark tries to move against the flow, he disturbs the whole system:

> At last he found a little tunnel with pulses of warmth and brightness flowing out and he forced his way against the

[97] Lanark learns about this on p. 69, and on p. 89 through the catalyst's remarks.

> current. This was almost impossible until he lay on the floor and drove forward by shoving with hands and feet against the narrow walls. After several minutes of struggling he advanced about three yards. […] Before and behind the tunnel had gone a dim orange which suddenly went completely black. It was cold, and the noise had stopped, though there was a distant twittering and occasional voices called forlornly:
> "Dloc ma I ho."
> "Sthgil! Teah dna sthgil!"
> "Redloc ylnellus worg I won."
> […]
> In the door's bright circle he saw three white-faced men staring at him, two in overalls and one a doctor.
> They shouted, "You were going against the current!"
> Lanark said, "There was no other way through."
> "But you've blacked out the staff clubs! You've jammed the suction delvers!" (pp. 92-93)

By going against the current, time moves backwards, as the voices Lanark hears show; they make sense when read backwards, and this means if he had moved in the right direction, with the current, he would have heard them correctly. The institute only allows one direction of movement to exist. Either you move "with the flow", or the system collapses.

Orientation in time or space is further hindered by the impossibility of seeing the outside. Lanark finds that his ward has a screen that allows him to see images of cities and landscapes, but he is told that these might be real images or images of past and future conditions (p. 60). Not even the doctors seem to know where they are:

"How deep down are we?"

"I don't know. I'm a doctor, not a geologist." (p. 58)[98]

It is of some importance to see that the institute is connected, physically and structurally, to the council, another vast conglomerate of corridors in which the rulers of the outside world seem to have their place of residence[99]. On the way out of this strange combination of scientific and governmental organisations, Lanark learns about the leader of both institutions. This leader has the title of Lord Monboddo, which is a – however corrupted – historical reference.[100] *Lanark* declares that Lord Monboddo, due to his involvement in the council

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[98] This is another incidence where Lanark is given an answer that shows that officials are pleased to know only pieces of the reality they occupy; they leave the rest to other specialists. Lanark, on the contrary, is always keen on making sense of circumstances; he tries to establish a unity, which he never achieves. This hints at some theories of postmodernism: the fractured experience of the world where unity seems impossible. Lyotard has used this thesis in his essay *La Condition postmoderne.* (*Das Postmoderne Wissen. Ein Bericht*. Theatro Machinarum. Heft 3/4. Jahrgang 1. Bremen: Impuls und Association, 1982, pp. 73ff).

[99] Lanark finds that there is a direct connection between institute and council on pp. 363ff.

[100] According to www.wikipedia.com, James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (born 25th October 1714, died 26th May 1799) was a Scottsh judge, scholar of language evolution and philosopher. Monboddo was among those scholars who were working on early concepts of evolution. In the "Epilogue" in the list of plagiarisms on p. 494, we find an explanation why he and his title were chosen for a dynasty of rulers presiding over government and the "official body of learning" (p. 494).

and the institute, was made head of both when the two institutions were combined (p. 366-367). Here, we find that before Lord Monboddo, the institute and the council were both led respectively by historical kings, philosophers and scientists. By creating a – fictional – tradition and a title for the leader of the institute, a title that is passed on, a super-historical status of this structure is created. Lanark finds himself at the core of the system, a technocratic-scientific administration that governs the world(s) and feeds on the outcome of their policies.

Leaving the council, Lanark and Rima find themselves in an "intercalendrical zone", a place where orientation seems wholly impossible.[101] Not even the road leading through it seems reliable; one side leads uphill, the other downhill, and the only possible way to travel on it is through a combination of the paths while holding each other's hands.[102]

After escaping this zone, Lanark and Rima enter Unthank again. However, both find that this city has changed. The gloom resulting from the lack of daylight is still there, yet the whole appearance of the city is different. This new Unthank is yet another

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[101] Cf. chapter 33.

[102] Cf. p. 378. Note also on the same page: "The new way of walking was a strain on the linking arm but worked very well." In a more metaphorical way, Rima and Lanark combine two different ways of travelling through time. The road proves to actually move through time, as we learn on p. 378, when Lanark loses his way and finds an image of Rima, whom he had lost and found some time ago, sitting on the same spot where he had found her. The actual Rima beside him tells him: "'Stop living in the past'" (p. 378). Progress is only possible if various routes – even such which lead in opposite directions, as is the case here: one leads uphill, the other downhill – are combined, though this may be a "strain on the linking arm".

nightmarish vision of Glasgow. The entry into it leads the protagonist from the graveyard to the cathedral, the new centre of power, where the city administration has its residence. This combination of religious outside and quasi-governmental inside or purpose reminds the reader of the power the Kirk has had over Scotland in the last centuries;[103] however, there is no sign of a rule of the church over this new Unthank. On the contrary, it seems as if government control is a combination of the power of the council and the "creature", a term denominating the combination of various industries, as Lanark learns (pp. 409-411), against which the administration of Unthank is about to protest. Unthank has become a city where the majority of people are poor, and where poor relief consists of killing hope slowly:

> "I need a lot of money," said Lanark. "If I can't get work I'll have to beg from the security people."
> "The name's changed," said Jack. "They're called social stability now. And they don't give money, they give three-in-one."
> "What's that?"
> "A special kind of bread. It nourishes and tranquillizes and stops you feeling cold, which is useful if you're homeless. But I don't think you should eat any."
> "Why?"
> "A little does no harm, but after a while it damages the intelligence. Of course the unemployment problem would be a catastrophe without it." (p. 432)

[103] Reference here is made to the quotation by Christopher Harvie that the Kirk supplied Scotland with "surrogate politics" (Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism*, p. 206), a quotation cited already in the previous chapters.

This idea is strengthened when Lanark is offered a position in the social stability office and learns how to deal with people who look for help (pp. 438-439). Lanark's new position is to frustrate any inquiries. On the other hand, there seems to exist a caste of wealthier people, as the various advertisements on the streets indicate (cf. pp. 432-434).

Greater Unthank appears to be almost a caricature of the post-industrial world. The producing class – called the "makers" – is small, and the other classes produce "'nothing but wealth. They don't produce food, fuel, shelter or helpful ideas; their work is just a way of tightening their grip on folk who do'" (p. 409).

The city as Lanark finds it is under threat: the council obviously plans to swallow Unthank, and the signs that this is imminent are ubiquitous.[104] Apart from the previously mentioned indicators that Unthank is Glasgow, we can see here another hint at the place: on a very abstract level, Glasgow suffers from the same problems as Unthank. It was once an industrial city and saw a transformation, where the outside appearance is changed, yet the threat of being "swallowed", of becoming completely unimportant, remains. Transposed even further, it could be any city, or Scotland in general at the time of the novel's creation, that was under threat of being "swallowed", extinct in its identity, by the connection to the centre of power, here the council-institute with the help of the "creature", in reality by the connection to the then centralised

[104] On coming to Unthank, Lanark and Rima find that the motorway exit is blocked by a traffic jam (p. 392) resulting from an accident; when the city administration clears the blockade by flushing the goods into the sewage system, the decomposition proves harmful for the city, as Sludden points out in his speech on pp. 448ff.

government in England with the help of – again centralised – industries and policies.[105]

The city of Provan, then, proves to be another riddle for us. From above, Lanark can see familiar landscapes that remind him of his past-life as Thaw (pp. 470-471). Seen in this way, it could be Glasgow once again, yet it could also be any other city; the view without the details does not suffice. Provan seems to possess qualities lacking in Unthank: it has sunshine and green spots and appears rather inviting. Yet when Lanark mentions these qualities he is accused of a narrow view.[106] The features we see of Provan do not suffice to place it into a distinct country.

Considering the problem from the point of view that *Lanark* is a Scottish novel, about Glasgow, as critics agree, Provan could be the only vision of Glasgow that is not nightmarish in its appearance. Yet this appearance is intriguing, as Lanark soon realises when he is arrested and held in prison until the assembly is over. The assembly itself gives some hints at the setting, at least the temporal one, and will be considered in the next section.

Summing up these considerations, we seem to find ourselves in cities which almost all have similar features. They are visions of the same place under different conditions. All share similarities with

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[105] Obviously, one could draw a connection to the Act of Scotland Referendum of 1979, which was cancelled in spite of a majority in favour of the act. Gray experienced a new impetus for Lanark after this referendum, having suffered from writer's block for some time: "particularly as Gray explicitly stated that the traumas of 1979 had knocked away a writer's block that had afflicted him for years" (Christopher Harvie. "Alasdair Gray and the Condition of Scotland Question" in: Crawford and Nairn. *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, p. 76 ff.; here: p. 77).

[106] See discussion of the "Gulliver-complex" above.

Glasgow, and at one stage of the book we are even sure that we are in this city. It is remarkable that the scenes that offer some form of liberation are set in the Highlands.[107] Here both Lanark and Thaw have their greatest moments. This highlights an assumption that we are dealing with a book on Scotland, together with all the other hints in the book, such as the role and number of priests, of names[108] and places. It is also a reference to the picture of Scotland developed in literature, where the grandeur of the Scottish landscape, especially that of the Highlands, has always served as a sign of difference, of a place where the rules of the historical are not valid. Scott has done so, as I tried to show in the first part of the present study. Gibbon transposed this to the Northwest, yet still far from the industrial centres of the Southern regions.

Still, there are signs that the book has a wider appeal as well. It is understandable and accessible even for those unacquainted with the special conditions of Scotland. Yet it has a specifically Scottish focus, and this will be even clearer in the discussion of the temporal setting of the novel. *Lanark* could not work if it was set in a country where history was always seen to work progressively, one not located on the periphery of a greater power.

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[107] The chapter "The Body in the Kit Bag" of Craig's *Out of History* (pp. 31-63) stresses the fact that the Highlands or the far North of Scotland have tended to be a place where history is suspended; Bernstein refers to this on page 44 of *Alasdair Gray*. If the Lowlands are the place of assimilation, of industry and progress, the Highlands are the place for the sublime, where myth and reality are indistinguishable

[108] Although names are not considered explicitly in this paper, it is obvious that some of Thaw's friends carry names from Scottish history, like Macbeth or Kenneth McAlpin.

4.4.3.3. The Temporal Fixation

"Time adds to land": Society is understandable only when set against a time frame. This last fixation proves to be the hardest one, at least in the Lanark narrative. We can be quite sure of time in the story of Thaw, where we are given World War II a point to fix dates. Since we know roughly that Thaw is in his twenties when he commits suicide, we can guess that the narrated time here covers the 1930s up to the 1950s. We do not know when Lanark comes to Unthank, however. He is older than Thaw, but this is not a sufficient reference since time in Lanark's life has ceased to exist. Unthank has given up measuring time in the usual way, and the attempt Lanark makes to measure time seems inappropriate, since sunlight is only seen for short periods, and Lanark himself admits that he must have missed some days by sleeping.[109] The institute measures time in a new way, by dividing the day into 25 hours, thus creating a decimal clock.[110] But as Lanark learns when returning to Unthank, the institute is separated from the rest of the world(s) by intercalendrical zones, so that the decimal time does not offer any reference to the outside. The Unthank citizens have started to measure time by heartbeats, which is unreliable as well (p. 408). In the time of the crisis, however, the city administration returns to the old system of measuring time and re-starts the clocks to co-ordinate actions (pp. 451-453; on the same

[109] The reader's first encounter with Lanark is on the balcony of the Elite café where he is looking for daylight, as he admits on p. 4. On p. 5 he says he counted thirty days since coming to Unthank, with the concession that he might have missed a few.

[110] We realise this already at the first description we get of the institute: "The clock was over the middle arch, its circumference divided into twenty-five hours" (p. 50).

pages we also find that the council has promised to send the decimal clocks, but has up to then failed to do so).

This seems important if transposed to a different level: threatened by the outside, time is re-instituted. Sludden says on page 453: "'Eternity, for Greater Unthank, is drawing to an end. *Time* is about to begin.'" History enters the world once again.

Time alone does not help to overcome the nightmare from which Lanark never awakes. He has established his past by learning that he was Thaw in the first half of the twentieth century. In the new Unthank, he lives again in a fixed time frame, which could be the continuation of the time of the institute, yet this time is immeasurable. The gaps in-between are the problem. Again it is the other characters who are not affected by this problem, and it is striking that the people in power are able to give an account of history, whereas Lanark is only able to recover glimpses of it. If we consider Ozenfant-Monboddo's speech at the closing of the assembly in Provan, we are given a powerful account of history. This narration mirrors a progress-oriented, capitalist view. The topic of the speech is found on page 476: "'Then, Now and Tomorrow.' Six millennia of achievement will be outlined by the Chairman of the Assembly". The actual speech is on pp. 537-546. Some parts of it are important and should be quoted here; with this speech, we are at the point where we can clearly draw conclusions to the reality the novel refers to, and can thus draw conclusions to the image it creates.

Ozenfant starts with the prehistoric times, and claims that

> "Our tiny tribal democracies have spread all over this world, yet we influence it less than our near relative the squirrel […]. We have been living here for half a million

> years, yet history, with its noisy collisions and divisions of code and property, has not yet started" (p. 538).

He blames the lack of progress on a lack of surplus:

> "What is lacking from this prehistoric nature-park where sapient men have lived so long with such little effect? Surplus is lacking: that surplus of food, time and energy, that surplus of *men* we call wealth" (p. 539).

A few centuries later he sees the development of modernity. Modern men are "not skilful in growing and making things, but managing those who do" (p. 540). The age of wars is over; yet these wars had a positive effect. Conquerors "liquidated unprofitable states which *needed* a destroyer to release their assets" (p. 542). Modern societies still work with the same means of subjection that they employed in the past, yet in Ozenfant's view this is done in disguise, so that "'slavery is replaced by debt and money becomes a promise to pay printed by government'" (p. 543). In the present, economies rule the world, and it is the governments' failure that conflicts still prevail:

> "…by the twentieth century, wealth has engrossed the whole globe, which now revolves in a tightening net of thought and transport woven around it by trade and science. The world is enclosed in a single living city, but its brain centres, the governments, do not notice this. Two world wars are fought in thirty years, wars the more bitter because they are between different parts of the same system. It

> would wrong the slaughtered millions to say these wars did no good. Old machines, old ideas were replaced at unusual speed. Science, business and government quickly became richer than ever before. We must thank the dead for that" (p. 543).

His closing words are a future plan for the new world:

> "Our man surplus has never been so vast. If this human wealth is not governed it will collapse – in places it is already collapsing – into poverty, anarchy, disaster. Let me say at once that I do not fear war between any governments represented here today, nor do I fear revolutions. […] What we must unite to prevent are half-baked revolts which might give desperadoes access to those doomsday machines and bottled plagues which stable governments are creating, not to use, but to prevent themselves from being bullied by equals." (p. 545)[111]

It is the kind of history that has its root in the Enlightenment and sees mankind going through certain necessary stages, a view that has prevailed in Western societies until it was challenged by philosophers and historians after the World Wars. Ozenfant's view adds to it the importance of capitalism, and thus justifies exploitation; it justifies even depreciating views on other societies who have not achieved a status that complies with that of the historian's society. It is almost the same view of history that Scott has propagated in

[111] Typographical conventions of the original are reproduced in this quotation.

Waverley; yet Scott had no ideas of capitalism in its modern, Western sense. And just like Scott has to believe in progress to make sense of his world, Ozenfant has to tell his story to justify the system he is representing. The sceptical view on progress, civilisation and history that Gibbon presented in his work is given up here. Where Gibbon saw progress as a threat, Ozenfant sees it as a gift, as the ultimate aim of mankind, or at least of that part of mankind that has achieved the status from which Ozenfant tells his history. This point of view, and the whole idea of the assembly, is one favoured by our modern Western capitalism. The assembly appears to be a caricature of a gathering of modern democracies, just like Ozenfant's speech is a caricature of a speech given at such a gathering, if we leave out the cynicisms. The whole idea of the worlds – interestingly called "regions" here, which brings to mind ideas of a "Europe of Regions" – meeting to discuss topics like: "The Erse delegate and sociophilosophist Odin MacTok analyzes the disastrous impact of literacy on the undereducated" (p. 475), or "Hanseatic delegate Moo Dackin explains why healthy norms must be persevered by destroying other healthy norms" (p. 476) is a satire in the face of globalisation. Ozenfant's – admittedly exaggerated – view is the articulation of the ideological foundation of globalisation.[112]

Lanark has to oppose this view, although he realises that the model he is presented with is correct in its own sense. Yet his own lives have seen too many differing views that needed combination, and so he sees that his own truths are the details that the overview blots out. If Lanark suffered from a Gulliver-complex on his flight to Provan, so Ozenfant suffers from the same defect in his flight over

[112] Isobel Murray and Bob Tait comment on this speech: "Monboddo's […] account of history […] is the most grimly persuasive picture in the book, reflecting as it does the workings of that entire hellish universe" (Murray and Tait. *Ten Modern Scottish Novels*, p. 237).

human fate. It is only understandable that the Black Bloc backs Lanark's interruption (pp. 547-548). They are not part of progress in the same way as the Third World of the actual present is not part of it, and in the same way Lanark sees himself, and the world he is supposed to represent, as excluded from it.

Lanark has to agree to the speech on the other hand, and this is understandable as it shows him how the world(s) he cannot understand are governed. All he has experienced so far was a cyclic repetition of events, be it Rima loving or leaving him time and again, he himself succeeding of failing, or being reborn into new environments more than once. Here he finds the progression that he missed unawares, but he still remains part of the audience, and does not become a participant. A strong comment on the different models of progress and repetition with regards to Scotland is found in Cairns Craig's essay "Going Down to Hell is Easy". On p. 98 we find a remark on Lanark's and Rima's failure to progress on their way out of the institute, but it can be applied here as well: "It is the condition of modern Scotland, living off the neuroses and achievements of its past".

Thus Lanark must be pleased to see that there are other ways to view the world, he must be relieved to see that there are ways to break this cyclic pattern, and yet he has to oppose, since progress, for him, has always shown itself to be just another repetition. Thaw-Lanark progresses through the worlds of the book, but finds that they are always hells, nightmares, which in their essence, as shown, repeat each other. Ozenfant's speech shows that there is an ideology guiding societies in the present; yet behind all progress there remains the idea of repeatedly exploiting others in order to progress, so that progress in itself becomes an illusion. Again it is Cairns Craig who comments on this: "In his afterlife as Lanark, Thaw desperately tries to achieve a reconnection with history as a progressive narrative but discovers at every turn that such narratives are simple illusion" (Craig, *Out of History*, p. 35).

If we step out of the time-frame of the novel now and look at Scotland and the Western world over the last seventy years, and keep the focus on Scotland, or Glasgow, we see the development of a former industrial area – partly, considering Scotland, fully, considering Glasgow – and its decline due to a failure to adjust to changing conditions. This failure is due to geographic situation and due to a political system that neglects some areas in favour of others. Social conditions deteriorate, areas are cut off from progress – and history, and this means they are forgotten by time.

Looking at the novel from this "higher" point of view, we are given a mirror, but one that is fractured and distorting and yet true to nature; we have to judge when which of the options is applicable. Thaw shows us a past. Lanark gives us views of both present and future, though these are combined. In the last chapter, the Black Bloc expresses a fear that could be shared by a lot of people in today's global market: "'Everybody knows three or four big boys run the whole show'" (p. 547). This can be seen as a reference to today's global markets. Lanark's experience, after all, is not so much different from ours.

The novel exemplifies this on more aspects: cities are "swallowed"; after the removal of industries, whole areas become desolate. People suffer from diseases caused by living in bad environmental and social conditions, and turn for help to the system that has caused the diseases in the first place.[113] Reality shares some features of Unthank, whose citizens suffer from diseases that can be cured in the institute, and if these patients prove not useful or too ill, they are used to fuel the system. Exploitation lives on the exploited,

[113] Craig supports this view "Going Down to Hell is Easy" on pp. 97-98.

who are forced to exploit others themselves in order not to be processed.[114]

4.4.4. Conclusion: Multiple Vision

This progressive, capitalist view we find here is, however, only one of the many different views present in *Lanark*. Explicitly, the existence of more than just one vision – and finally, the need to combine visions – is foregrounded when Thaw stands in the kitchen of the Drummonds' and sees the top of Ben Lomond in the distance, realising that someone with a telescope could see him standing at this kitchen window just then.

> From grey rooftops on the left rose the mock Gothic spire of the university, then the Kilpatrick hills, patched with woodlands and with the clear distant top of Ben Lomond behind the eastward slope. Thaw thought it queer that a man on that summit, surrounded by the highlands and overlooking deep lochs, might see with a telescope this kitchen window, a speck of light in a low haze to the south. (p.275)

In "Going Down to Hell is easy", Cairns Craig comments:

[114] Sludden is the model for the successful partaker in this process: He is the only one not suffering from one of the diseases, he has affairs with girls easily, and in the "Greater Unthank" we see him as new provost.

> *Lanark* is haunted by the possibility of a different way of seeing the universe. […] The double perspective, of the view from the kitchen window, and the view from the mountain top, from within the trudge of history and from the perspective that is outside of it, is the foundation of the generic doubling of the novel. Neither perspective will suffice by itself – only the dialectical interaction of the two will allow us to live with the unendurable weight of a history that we still have to believe may go somewhere (Craig, "Going Down to Hell is easy", p. 103-104).

In *Alasdair Gray*, Stephen Bernstein also claims that this duality of vision is one key to understanding *Lanark* (cf. p. 39). Another is the political circumstances during the creation of the novel. If the cancelled Referendum of 1979 really had an effect on the book, then the split of the protagonist into two existences, one safely set in the past, the other in circumstances that nobody can perceive clearly, is understandable. Cairns Craig comments on this in "Going Down to Hell is Easy" on p. 92:

> With its [*Lanark*'s] protagonist split between the lives of two entirely separate characters it took the burden of self-division of the Scottish tradition; with part of the novel in an urban realist mode and part in a fantasy style, it directly faced the division of the Scottish novel into two opposing stands; and its political concerns addressed the issues of Scottish government and society in a context when the political debate seemed to have foundered.

This helps to understand why Gray might have chosen to design the novel the way he did; yet for the purpose of defining the image he created for Scotland, the political aspect can be neglected.

If we need a double vision to understand the novel, and if both reader and protagonist need hilltops to be able to triangulate their way through the "Life in four Books", then the hilltop becomes the central image Lanark develops. Without the hilltop, there is no way to map environs, neither for Thaw/Lanark nor for the reader. Without the hilltop, there can be no double vision; the hilltop is the point of reference, for Thaw, standing in the kitchen, as much as for the reader, standing on the yet undefined hilltop, looking down at the fragments of the life in four books he is faced with. "It must be clear that it is our [the artists' and writers'] business not to supply reality but to invent illusions to the conceivable which cannot be presented," Francois Lyotard writes on p. 46 of his essay "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?".[115] This is exactly what Gray does with the invention of the hilltop.

From the hilltop, after reading the novel, we are given a past, a present and various possible futures of the life of Thaw/Lanark, of a double protagonist, which are grounded in a definite Scottish past. The hilltop enables the reader to combine views; it is a necessary act in order to make sense of *Lanark*. This is what the novel tries to achieve. This is why the hilltop is its central image, the image it creates for Scotland.

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[115] Francois Lyotard. "Answering the Question: What is Postmodernism?" in: Thomas Docherty (ed.). *Postmodernism: A Reader*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, pp. 38-46.

5. Gallery of Images

The analysis has shown that the four works considered create four very different images for Scotland. Scott has safely condensed his native country in a picture, a painting, while Gibbon erected a monument for his mother country. Welsh, confronted with decay and depression, chose the empty hull, while Gray widened the scope to create the hilltop.

However different these images may appear at first glance, they share certain features: All are attempts to conserve some image of a past Scotland. They all are retrospectives, focussing on a not too far remote past – the longest, in fact, being Scott, who stresses that "'tis sixty years since" the Jacobite Rising which is the story of *Waverley*. All images – in their completion – show Scotland as being isolated, set apart from an outside world, cut off from progress or in danger of being destroyed by progress – hence the conservational appeal of the images created.

Would it then be correct to say that Cairns Craig's thesis in *Out of History* is true, that Scotland "has cowered in the consciousness of its own inadequacy" (p. 11)? Is it true, then, if he claims that "it is the pressure of the outside world that holds us together" (p. 13)? To some extent, Craig is right. Yet, as he later explains and even justifies in *The Modern Scottish Novel*, this fact, this apparent failure, could itself be the defining feature of Scottish culture and Scottish literature.

I have claimed that all of the images – however conservative and retrospective they may appear – are the results of a clear decision that their Scottish authors made: the decision to create myths which could form the base of a Scottish imagination. The following points will prove this.

5.1. Crossing the Borders: Narratives, History and Myth revisited

Craig claims in *The Modern Scottish Novel* that novels allow the members of social organisms to recognise themselves as part of the organism and to see their own identity despite the changing historical circumstances (p. 11). His claim that novels are "symbolic enactments of debates about the *telos* which justifies life as part of a social, a national narrative" (p. 24) is especially helpful here. There are several other points made in the introduction to the present study which are important to keep in mind and shall be recalled here:

Assmann states that the past in the form in which we imagine it is a creation, a cultural phenomenon. Hayden White makes it clear that there is a close connection between the novel and historiography since the authors of both use imagination to tell their story: history is a narrative, one possible way of narrating the past, which has a strong influence on the self-image of a social organism. Novels, as Anderson holds, give a firm structure to an otherwise meaningless existence of the microcosm depicted and at the same time connect a "common anonymous body" solely by letting its members share the experience of a common reading matter; this shared experience can influence the process of imagining a nation.

Taking a look at the examinations of the novels, it is striking to see that in order to reach their effect, to create the image I have identified, the novels rely on the same basic concept: that of the historical novel.

5.1.1. The Historical Novel: Basic Definitions

Interestingly, the first English historical novel came from Scotland: Scott's *Waverley* is widely considered as the pioneer in this genre. However, at this point a look into the general set-up of the historical novel as a distinct literary genre will help to understand my point that all four novels examined can and must be considered as historical.

In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*[116], Chris Baldick defines the historical novel as

> a novel in which the action takes place during a specific historical period well before the time of writing (often one or two generations before, sometimes several centuries), and in which some attempt is made to depict accurately the customs and mentality of the period. The central character – real or imagined – is usually subject to divided loyalties within a larger historic conflict of which readers know the outcome. The pioneers of this genre were Walter Scott and James Fenimore Cooper; Scott's historical novels, starting with Waverley (1814), set the pattern for hundreds of others […] While the historical novel attempts a serious study of the relationship between personal fortunes and social conflicts, the popular form known as the historical or 'costume' romance tends to employ the period setting only

[116] Chris Baldick. *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms.* Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

> as a decorative background to the leading characters (pp. 99-100).

Baldick's is a very basic definition, yet there are several things which are helpful for understanding the concept of the historical novel. First, the temporal setting of a historical novel is, according to Baldick, "one or two generations before". Second, a historical novel aims at accuracy. Third, the protagonist is torn between opposing loyalties within a larger historic conflict known to the reader.

While keeping these aspects in mind, it is useful to consider yet another defining feature of the historical novel: The active presence of a concept of history as a shaping force. In *The English Historical Novel*[117], Avrom Fleishman states:

> What makes a historical novel historical is the active presence of a concept of history as a shaping force – acting not only upon the characters in the novel but on the author and reader outside it. In the course of the reading, we find that the protagonists of such novels confront not only the forces of history in their own time, but its impact on life in any time. The universal conception of the individual's career as fate becomes symbolized not by the gods but by history. In several of its greatest examples, the historical novel attains the status of a modern epic in its view of the tragic limits and comic possibilities of man's historical life (p. 15).

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[117] Avrom Fleishman. *The English Historical Novel.* Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins Press, 1971.

In Fleishman's concept, history takes the place of the gods of the epic; history is turned into the creator of human fate whose influence is felt by both protagonist and reader. The danger with the definition of the historical novel that Fleishman provides is obvious: Where, if we follow his thoughts, is the border between a novel and a historical novel? Can any novel then be termed "historical"?

On p. 15, in footnote 9, Fleishman gives the answer: The notion that any novel can be called historical, since it will necessarily be set in historical time and social reality, might have the effect of making the term "historical novel" useless, he claims. Yet, he explains, not all time is historical and not all social life is relevant to historical understanding. Novels may refer to a past without thinking of it as a historical era, and they may portray social situations without historical significance.

The conclusion, then, must be: If they do, they must be historical novels.

Combined with what I mentioned before considering Baldick, I will show why and how the four novels of the preset study can be considered as historical.

5.1.2. History and the four Novels

To discuss why *Waverley* can be qualified as a historical novel may, of course, appear to be futile. I mentioned before that the view that Scott's novel is the first English historical novel is widely accepted. Baldick thus correctly states that Scott pioneered the genre with his 1814 novel. Fleishman is more careful, stating that "whether or not it is true that Scott invented the historical novel as a literary form, he must have thought what he was doing was new" (Fleishman, p. 23).

Yet it is helpful to see exactly what makes *Waverley* fit into the definitions quoted above. Edward Waverley, as I have shown, is an empty character whose mind is infiltrated with both an English and a Scottish loyalty. The larger historical conflict which Baldick speaks of is that of the Jacobite Rising of 1745 or the Scottish struggle for independence. The active presence of history as shaping force which Fleishman mentions is easily found in Scott's novel: History in *Waverley* is the wave which washes Edward Waverley into Scotland, into the Highlands, into the struggles of the Jacobite Rising and it is the historical event of the Battle of Preston which disconnects Waverley from his Highland friends and allows him to resurge among his English friends.

Sunset Song matches most of the defining elements as well. Chris Guthrie possesses the divided loyalty which Baldick mentions: She is torn between her love for the country and its culture on the one hand; on the other hand, she wants to leave and become a teacher. These divided loyalties are presented by her parents' influence on her. Furthermore, there is the conflict of loyalties in the onset of World War I: Neither Chae nor Long Rob nor Evan show enthusiasm for the War, yet gradually give in to the pressure to enlist in the army. In

Evan, as I have shown, the conflict of loyalties finally turns him into a deserter.

This conflict as presented by the War is nothing but the conflict between modernity versus tradition, the same conflict which Chris has to fight before she decides to stay in the countryside and live the traditional life of the farming community of Kinraddie, rather than joining modern life in a city as a teacher. When thus the War enters the village and accelerates the change within the community, Chris is already settled in her decision of which side she wants to belong to. However, neither of her friends or loved ones have so far been forced to make a similar decision; they are thus absorbed in the process of change because they are unable to choose sides.

Moreover, the War as historical event must be seen not only as the historical background which Baldick claims any historical novel to possess, but must also be seen as the active, shaping force which Fleishman names, since it destroys the enclave of Kinraddie and alters Scotland just as much as it alters the rest of Europe – if not the World – and thus affects not only the protagonist, but has effects on the reader as well.

Things might appear harder when we look at *Trainspotting*, However, at closer inspection we will find almost all defining features.

In Mark Renton, we have a protagonist with divided loyalties: He is a drug addict, and as such cannot be a stable character. His addiction to his drugs, his friends and his subculture – in short: his addiction to Scotland – is a choice he himself made when he decided "not tae choose life". His rejection of middle-class values, his disgust for the average is possible only because there is the "other", the consumer-capitalist world which he and his friends have no share in – or, chose not to choose. We find Mark Renton after he has made his choice between loyalties: Just like his brother, Mark could have

chosen to "choose life" and become part of middle-class life style; we even find that Mark has some degree of learning and has been on a regular job once. Yet for some reason, he has opted for another alternative. However, this choice is not final: Mark fights his drug addiction, manages to become clean and starts a normal life, only to betray his friends in order to leave his addiction to Scotland behind. Mark struggles between loyalties, between his loyalty to himself – "not tae choose life" – and his friends and his wish to escape and start anew.

The larger historical conflict which forms part of the elements of the historical novel is the economic decline of Britain and Scotland the 1970s and 1980s. History becomes an active, shaping force because of its withdrawal. Time seems to have passed Leith by; just like its train station shows, Leith is cut off from any part of progress, of escape routes. All that is left to do for those on the platforms is to spot trains, watch from a distance without any chance to actively take part. The gods – to borrow Fleishman's picture – have decided to leave Leith dying. To speed this, they have sent a terminal disease to the growing scene of drug addicts in Scotland's capital; and this scene exists because the country is falling into a depression – both economical and psychological: History alters and changes actively the lives of Mark and his friends; history is present because of its absence, because it also chose "not to choose life" for Scotland.

In *Lanark*, the division of loyalties couldn't be more obvious. With a character split into two, living two different lives in a city which is reincarnated more than once, the rupture is multiple. The larger historical conflict is multiple as well. It is as much World War II and its consequences, which Duncan Thaw experiences, as it is the threat of Scotland being betrayed by Great Britain after the failure of the Referendum of 1979. It is the onset of globalisation, World War II and the reflections of a dark future which shape *Lanark*. History is the one unfathomable force which actively shapes Thaw/Lanark's lives;

both are prey to history's changing moods, its changing faces and its changing leaders. Gray's symbolism contains enough realist elements or reflections of real events, images or settings to justify my statement.

All four protagonists, then, react to change; all do so differently, yet in Fleishman's terms, they react not only to a certain impact of history but to its influence on life in general. The individual career, as Fleishman says, is turned into fate by the forces of history. This is true for all four protagonists. Their progress through life seems to be their fate, rather than their distinct choice. Even in Mark Renton's case, his choice to escape is only possible because fate has provided him with the opportunity.

All of the experiences which we are presented with are unique, yet at the same time they mirror possible reactions to historical change. This is possible because the experiences are connected to historical time, historical events, of which the reader knows the outcome – even if the outcome is utter confusion, as in *Lanark*. And all historical time used in the novels is removed just far enough to be considered as part of the past, and yet close enough to be remembered.

In Waverley's case, he incorporates the changes he has witnessed in order to live in a happy union – both politically and personal, since he marries Rose Bradwardine, the daughter of a Scottish laird. Chris Guthrie also unites past and present within her, symbolised most strongly perhaps by incorporating her dead husband on the spot where history has an obvious marker: the standing stones. Mark Renton reacts by fleeing from his country and friends. And Thaw commits suicide because he is unable to incorporate. He disintegrates, so to speak, only to be incorporated into Lanark, whose death in the end is ultimate: "'After the next death nothing personal will remain of you'", Lanark is told on p. 559. Everything is subject to change, Lanark seems to say; we had best come to terms with this.

5.1.3. The Need for a Plot: The Return of Historicism

If we agree that all of the novels considered here in this present study fit into the concept of the historical novel, we must ask whether the authors have deliberately fallen back on this literary genre in order to be able to create an image for Scotland or not. I claim that it was their choice to do so.

In order to make sense of a historical situation there is no other way than to personalise history and thus find a plot for it. If Scottish authors wanted to write about Scotland, then what they had to do was to rely on the possibilities of the historical novel – with their fellow Scot Scott as their role model. Sad but true: The problematic relationship between Scott and Scotland that Edwin Muir detected – and wanted to solve – appears to be highly influential still. In *Scott and Scotland*, Muir complains that

> one has the impression already that Scott can find a real image of Scotland only in the past, and knows that the nation which should have formed both his theme and living environment as a writer is irremediably melting away around him (Muir, p. 140).

All other authors considered here have still fallen back on this concept, it seems. Yet this is not necessarily a fault: It may well be the way to deal with a Scotland-in-limbo, an answer to the question of how to depict a nation that was waiting to be one – a way to imagine a community.

In fact, the concept of the historical novel is ideal for narrating a nation because it relies on the idea that history moves towards a distinct goal. The historical novel is a product of the 19th century, which was the age of history, the age when the optimistic Enlightenment view of mankind moving towards a better future met with the academic fervour of the natural sciences. History became a matter of intellectual discourse and history was seen as a way to tell the story of the nation states which were about to be created in the course of the 19th century.

It is Hayden White's *Metahistory* which observes that all historical writing, especially in the 19th century, made use of invention in order to tell a story. As I have pointed out in the introductory sections, this is where novel and historical writing meet. If, then, historical writing in the age of historicism aimed at telling the story of a nation and thus paved the way for the creation of a nation state, why should the historical novel not have been used to work towards a similar end? And if – as Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History*[118] and the critical debate which it aroused gives proof of – the concept of development towards a better future survives in the historical debate of the present, why should not the historical novel survive as a means

[118] Francis Fukuyama. *The End of History and the last Man*. London: Hamilton, 1992; German: *Das Ende der Geschichte. Wo stehen wir?* München: Kindler, 1992. Fukuyama's point, however, is already outdated; he claimed that Western democracies, most prominently of course, the USA, have shown that they have reached the ultimate stage of development. Sadly, 9/11 must have come as a shock to Fukuyama and his fellow thinkers since it showed that development is a continual process which cannot reach a final stage. Fukuyama later admitted that Islamic countries work along different lines of development.

to create an image for the nation, a means to ponder on the possibility of what the nation stands for?

Historicism, the academic strain of 19th century historical thinking, was for a long time a disregarded way of depicting history, mostly because it lead to the creation of nation states and to that kind of radical – and racist – nationalism which culminated in the World Wars. German historicism carries a special significance here, since it opened up fields of debate which could be used for the development of Nazi ideologies – that of the delayed German nation for example, or that of the role of race and predestination.

However, it appears that especially in a globalised world the need for the plot in historical thinking reoccurs. Historical writing focuses more and more on a general view, rather than on the examination of singular events; for example, the story of 9/11 cannot be explained in terms of an analysis of a singular terrorist attack but necessarily has to be seen as the culmination of Al Qaida's attempts at weakening the US and the West in general; and this must be seen as a consequence of the Western policies in the Near East and so forth. In short: Historical events tend to be explained by ways of telling them from a certain point of view, by giving them a plot.

The need for such a plot is evident in times when changes are imminent or when there are too many stories to consider at the same time. And these are exactly the circumstances where a historical novel derives its justification from: The historical setting is vast and hardly comprehensible, there are various options for the protagonists who make their way through the setting, thereby giving history face and meaning, in short: a plot.

5.1.4. Epics for the Modern World

Taking the notion that societies need plots for granted, we have to agree that this plot is usually supplied by historiography, by the meaningful arrangement of historical details in order to make sense of the past, the present and the possible future. The difference between fiction and historiography is, then, that the latter refers to facts outside the writer's imagination, as Hayden White claims. But what if the writers of a novel does so, too? This is the point where history and the historical novel meet; and this is also why Fleishman can claim that the historical novel can become an epic for the modern world: because it refers to a past, makes sense of the events which lead to the present and points towards a possible future. The plot might be different and the facts partly invented in a historical novel; the direction can, however, be the same: The plot shows a route between opposing loyalties towards a meaningful end.

The historical novel, Baldick claims, aims at being a serious study of personal choice and social circumstance; yet at its core, it remains a literary product. Its closeness to being a quasi-historiography or alternate history is both a chance and an inherent danger. The chance is that of being able to incorporate ideas of a social organism and of transporting these to a wide audience; the danger is that of being seen as "true", as exemplified by Scott.

5.1.5. The Dangers of a Scott-Land – and the Chance for the Historical Novel

The perfect example of a quasi-historiographical effect of the historical novel is Scott. In him, the dangers of free literary creation and the arrangement of historical facts on the one hand and the chances inherent in this process on the other become obvious. Scott not only turned history into romance and romance into history. He turned Scotland into Scott-land. It was as early as September 1871 that Leslie Stephen complained in the *Cornhill Magazine* that

> Scott invented the modern Highlander. It is to him more […] than to anyone else that we owe the strange perversion of facts which induces a good Lowland Scot to fancy himself more nearly allied to the semi-barbarous wearers of the tartan than to his English blood-relations.[119]

In *The Historical Novel from Scott to Sabattini*[120], Harold Orel claims that Scott declared that in his historical novels he was interested in characters and passions, and that he wrote romances about human beings caught within a web of historical circumstances that they did not well understand (p. 7). Orel also claims, however, that Scott repeatedly declared that he had done all the necessary research but admitted that he had arranged details freely (p. 8).

[119] Reprinted in John O. Hayden. *Walter Scott. The Critical Heritage*. London and New York: Routledge, 1995 (repr.), p. 452.

[120] Harold Orel. *The Historical Novel from Scott to Sabattini*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995.

Following Orel's thoughts would mean that Scott was victim to his reception. Without going too much into the discussion whether Scott deliberately created the Scottish past he himself would have favoured, the effect Scott's writings had shows the possibilities of the historical novel. If Orel states that Scott set the tone for historical novels for his generation and possibly beyond (p. 7), he may be right. Scott's interest of human fate if set in relation to the impact of historical forces is still the mode for creating historical plots, because the creation of a protagonist within a "realistic" historical circumstance enables the author not only to tell the protagonist's story, but beyond that tell the story of the social setting he is entangled in. By doing this, the protagonist's fate can become the emblem of society's fate – the image of what the society stands for, by which it can be remembered or can imagine itself.

The effect on a larger scale is the incorporation of aspects of this image into popular culture. Scott has succeeded in evoking the idea of the kilt and tartans instantly when speaking of Scotland. This was possible because he employed certain specially selected historical elements and connected them to the society he wrote about. The reception of his work enables these images to prevail and spread far beyond the reaches of literature.

A similar effect, yet on a far smaller scale, is obvious in Welsh's *Trainspotting*. His use of language was so unique that in the movie version it was adapted; it instantly can be recognized as Scottish and thus creates the setting. Welsh's dialect "affects the reader in multiple ways as it articulates, represents and even embodies its characters' lives" (Morace, p. 25): It becomes connected not only to Welsh's work, but to Edinburgh and to Scotland.

Scott's example alone is enough to prove that the historical novel has an enormous potential which became obvious right form its start: that of influencing its audience's historical imagination.

Historical novels not only work as a narrative-as-explanation of the present state and possible future; they also serve as narrative-as-evocation. They create a sign-system, in which one sign is granted with a second-layer meaning: The painting is not only a painted piece of canvas, the standing stone is not only a piece of rock; the empty hull not only a building and the hilltop not just a landmark: As I have shown above, these images are filled with a new meaning.

5.1.6. New Meanings in old Shapes: The Creation of Myths

Reconsidering what I explained in connection with Barthes, I hold that myth is a form of language, a sign-system in which a sign is filled with meaning other than its linguistic meaning. If, as I claim, all novels considered convey a certain idea of Scotland by the introduction of a certain sign or image,[121] then the novels all actively create myths; they are mythical statements in Barthes' terminology since they express a motivated meaning.

Barthes, on p. 147 of *Mythologies*, claims that

> Mythen sind nichts anderes als das unaufhörliche Ersuchen, die unbeugsame und hinterlistige Forderung, die verlangt, dass alle Menschen sich in einem ewigen – und doch datierten – Bild erkennen, das man eines Tages von ihnen gemacht hat, als ob es für immer sein müsste.

[121] Images, I have explained, are nothing but one possible shape the sign can come in.

Myth, thus, attempts to make everyone see themselves in an eternal – and still dated – image which has been created of them; and myth claims that this image is meant to be eternal. Adding that Barthes holds that the bourgeoisie transforms reality into images of the world it inhabits, which means that myth-making is an active process of conversion, we could say that this is exactly what the images I claim the novels to contain do: They create an image for Scotland in order for the readers to see and recognise as Scotland; the temporality of the image they are presented with does not matter. The myth is – virtually – read, if not deciphered, but it is kept alive.

Thus, it is justified to speak of Scotland as an imagined community; from the novels analysed, we can see that through myth, the imagined community attempts to perpetuate itself. The instability, the external threat which is a common feature of all the novels examined here appears to make a perpetuation of the idea of Scotland as a unity of some form, as a sociological entity, necessary. This may stem from the political insecurity Scotland has suffered ever since the Union of Parliaments; also, all the novels considered were written and published before the first Scottish Parliament elections in 1999 when the road towards some form of political self-government was anything but certain. Scotland was an idea; it was not a fixed entity.

5.2. Elevated Vision: *Lanark*, Images and the Wish for Eternity

There is a central passage in *Lanark* which was cited already: Looking down on Glasgow from a hill, Thaw explains to his friend Kenneth McAlpin that Glasgow is a magnificent city, yet no one notices this because "nobody imagines living here" (p. 243). The cities which people realise are those which have been used as an object of art, who have been turned into man-made objects, artefacts or images. Florence, Paris, London, New York, Thaw claims, are known because anybody has "already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films" (p. 243). And his conclusion is that if a city hasn't been used by an artist,

> not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. […] Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves (*Lanark*, p. 243).

Of course Thaw talks about Glasgow. And his is a call for a "good novel" about this city (which is supposed to be the novel he is himself part of). And his claim is in keeping with what I said about *Lanark*: It makes the hilltop the image for Scotland because it is from here that we see more than the singularities and can imagine the place. But Thaw's call for a place where the inhabitants can live imaginatively is also a call for an image of a place. Thaw realises that places are connected with images, just like Florence, Paris, London or New York instantly evoke ideas of these places because everybody has imagined what they will be like. Also, Thaw realises that it is the

task of the artist to create these images. His failure as an artist is the tragic consequence of his realisation: he attempts to create the complete image by including every possible detail within a single painting. But by failing, Lanark – both protagonist and novel – are born.

Mirroring and recalling images and pointing to the need for an overview, to the need for a hilltop, *Lanark* in all of its complication stresses the need for an image of a place so that its inhabitants can live there imaginatively – and this makes the novel the ultimate statement for Scotland as an imagined community. All other novels examined in the present study have attempted to do the same.

If Scott wanted to hang his Scotland as a painting into the hall of a Scottish manor house that was rebuilt by an Englishman who just married a Scottish girl, he clearly shows a possible way to imagine Scotland. His is a clearly incorporating image, defined by the need to see Scotland as a part of a bigger whole – that of Great Britain. If Gibbon set the standing stone for Scotland into the Mearns of the Howe, he wanted to perpetuate Scotland in much the same way. Welsh created an image of loss, perpetuating not the possibly healthy past of the country but its ugly decay. Still, he created a source for imagination; he invented a place where the inhabitants could live imaginatively.

If all the novels, then, work along the same lines, it is again *Lanark* which goes one step further. Since it incorporates aspects of the past, the present and the possible future, it unites single images because it is self-assuredly aware of the double vision. The hilltop that I claim the novel to develop is the most abstract of all the images; whereas all other images can be recalled as physical objects – a painting, a monolith, the shell of a train station – imagining a hilltop as an elevated landscape structure would not suffice, since this is the view onto the hilltop alone, not from the hilltop, looking down. This

would only be the view from the kitchen window towards Ben Lomond, unaware of the possibility that the kitchen light could be seen from Ben Lomond as well.

Lanark as the hilltop incorporates all possible images because it calls for a unification of views, because it is aware of the double vision. It alludes to the reality which it cannot depict, just like Thaw cannot depict Creation in his mural – and fails to find a way to allude to it convincingly. *Lanark* points out that an image – and thus, any form of identity – must be aware of the plurality it wants to cover and unify.

In this, it is the perfect example for that which Barthes claims myth to attempt: the perpetuation of a dated image. *Lanark*'s image is ever incorporative since it accepts the plurality of vision. And because the image can remain unchanged in spite of all incorporation, it corresponds to Barthes' claim that the image is eternal.

Eternity, however, is the general aspiration of all images found in the present study – thus, they fit into Barthes' considerations on myth. All succeed to make Scotland as a place imaginable – and to such an extend that the highland culture Scott incorporated (and invented) in his image of Scotland still is part of today's imagination of Scotland, that *Trainspotting*'s language instantly evokes notions of a Scottish accent just as much as *Sunset Song*'s language does, even if language in both cases is rendered from the audible, is nothing but a creation, part of the image, part of the act of imagining Scotland.

5.3. Letters to Scotland

Imagining Scotland has been vital for Scotland as a failed nation. In fact, the failure of the nation is the source of its creativity.

This last point may not be obvious and needs some consideration. The discussion of Scottish literature and thus, on a second level, about Scottish identity, came into existence with the Scottish Renaissance. Edwin Muir's *Scott and Scotland* set the tone for any further debate on Scotland's literary output – and its national outlook. Muir's point is that Scotland's authors will always be caught in the dilemma of living and writing in what he saw as "neither a nation nor a province" (Muir, *Scott and Scotland*, p. 11). As was mentioned before, Muir saw the Scottish tradition as extinct, with the Scots living with divided selves. The result necessarily would be a feeling of deficiency. He also claims that even Scott could only find unity in Scotland when he set his novels in the past (p. 140) and that Scott already felt the impossibility of bridging the gap between the Scotland of his imagination and that of real life.

The debate which began with Muir's statements stretches into the present. It is the most notably Muir's argument that Scotland is impossible to imagine itself as long as it does not see itself as a unity which has lived on and is base of most discussions of Scottish culture, literature and national identity.

Muir's statement poses a crucial problem: If Scotland cannot see itself since it exists in a sort of vacuum, being "neither a nation nor a province", how can it achieve an image of itself if not by a political act which turns it to some entity? And if this has – for almost 300 years – not been the case, how should it ever succeed?

Muir's point is certainly worth discussing, yet to focus on the failure of Scottish imagination would be wrong. The failures might

have been the inevitable consequence of the situation Muir describes; yet failures pave the path towards a successful image. I claim that had there not been attempts to create images for a "Scotland-in-limbo", there would not have been enough of a "national feeling" left to struggle for a salvation out of this limbo-state.

The failure to form unity has made creative effort vital for the survival of self-imagination. Solutions are found by trial and error: If the one concept by which all Scots could imagine themselves has not been found, the ideas of Scotland developed on the way would help to create new ones. Again, this is why *Lanark* has so far been the best image of Scotland: it combines views, images and possible ways towards coherence – and others which lead to some form of hell. *Lanark* also is the most extreme of the aesthetic experiments undertaken to form unity.

Yet it is not the only one: In the novels discussed in this study, already *Sunset Song* has made use of a specific way to create its image of Scotland, as I have shown. *Trainspotting* has used yet another way to present its view of the country. While it is correct to state that these aesthetic representations are results of modernity's or postmodernity's effects on literature, they are also deliberate choices by which the authors saw their image of Scotland transported the best. Even *Waverley*'s straightforward plot, which is typical of a 19th century novel, showing a linear development form point A to point B, has been used by Scott to show the country's development along the same line. Also, he has endowed his contrasting settings with enough details to mark them as part of the past or part of the future respectively. Thus, the aesthetics of the novels discussed are part of the creative effort to find a way to incorporate the split experience of Scotland. Ever since *Waverley*, it became clearer that this could not be achieved by using a linear development. In *Sunset Song*, it was a circular mode which Gibbon saw apt for his novel, while *Trainspotting* uses the

splinter image; ultimately, *Lanark* uses total disorder and hands the task of making sense over to the reader.

The failed nation lead to split experiences of Scotland: This point is the key to understanding why Scottish authors have struggled to make their country imaginable. The Scottish experience was never unified. Scotland was either the nation betrayed, or a vital element of the construct Britain; it was the periphery, which relied on the emblems of the pipe and the kilt in order to have some distinction; it was defining itself by the antagonism of Scottish and English. There has not been a historical development which transposed the different strains of narratives into a common line of development because the Union of Crowns and the Union of Parliaments both were political acts which were unable to incorporate all parts of both former states. Scotland appears to have woken from the dream of being a nation, only to realise that it has missed the point when it actually was one – and consequently sought to re-create this point. The re-creation took place under circumstances which did not allow any political consequences from the dream. Other than any nation which had its share of its own nation-state in the 19th century, Scotland's fate was to be part of another nation's nation-state. This failure gave rise to an imagination of how it could have been, had the historical consequences been otherwise; it also gave rise to images of how Scotland could come to terms with the historical development. And it gave rise to the feeling of deficiency which Muir detected and which Craig castigates in *Out of History*.

The point, however, is that this situation which Scots must have felt as unsatisfying was fruitful to, if not vital for, their imagination. Like someone separated from his lover, the fulfilment is found in images, recollections and dreams. Any love letter will give proof of this.

If that letter's addressee is Scotland – both, the idea of the country and its inhabitants who may or may not dream of the nation, but necessarily will have some idea of the sociological entity they inhabit – then Scott, Gibbon, Welsh and Gray have written letters to Scotland, letters filled with images of Scotland.

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