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CULTURAL IDENTITY IN CONTEMPORARY  
SCOTTISH AND IRISH WRITING

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## Abstract

This thesis looks at examples of contemporary Scottish and Irish writing using postcolonialism as a theoretical framework through which to illuminate their shared literary arguments, strategies and preoccupations. Through close readings, the comparative cultural critique of these two neighbouring nations addresses their marginal position in relation to a dominant English culture and their analogous position to other small, marginalised nations. This approach questions the tendency of postcolonial theory to subsume non-English cultural formations within the body of English Literature, rather than looking at countries with colonial histories within Europe. The thesis goes on to challenge the dominance of the novel in postcolonial critique by offering readings of other cultural modes as effective and influential forms of resistance.

The six chapters address issues around language, identity, and gender in close comparative readings of drama, novels, short fiction and film. Chapter One offers an introduction to key issues, debates and themes. Chapter Two considers the dynamic of history and representation in plays by Lochhead, Friel and McGuinness, raising issues of authority and identity which are then developed in terms of voice and violence in novels by Kelman and Doyle. Issues of marginalisation within postcolonial culture and the basis of a radical hybridity are explored in Chapter Four, drawing in particular on the continuing use of gendered metaphors of oppression and repression. Chapter Five argues that short fiction can provide an exemplary site of postcolonial resistance. Finally, Chapter Six engages with recent cinema which highlights the similarities and disjunctions between the cultural products of the two nations, as well as confirming the strengths and weaknesses of postcolonial theory in Scottish and Irish contexts.

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## Critical Preface

Why read Scottish and Irish writing together? It might seem strange that two cultures in which writers have made considerable efforts to assert their distinctiveness, particularly from England and English literature, can be illuminated through comparative readings. However, the purpose of this thesis is not merely to draw attention to the similarities and differences between Irish and Scottish writing, but rather to explore alternate forms of reading that acknowledge their shared literary arguments, strategies and preoccupations. The historical dominance of England and the English language in both countries has produced a form of cultural identity which can be defined by its relationship to England as the metropolitan centre. English literature has come to be associated with Literature proper, a 'norm' from which both Irish and Scottish writing deviate. In particular the use of Hiberno-English (to use Tom Paulin's phrase) and Scots, not simply as dialogue, but as a medium for conveying description, narrative and abstract thought, tends to mark a piece of writing as of regional or local, rather than of universal interest, and thus not eligible for the category of 'Literature' at all.

In order to understand how the values of Englishness and English literature have come to be seen as 'universal' we require an analysis of 'British' history and in particular the history of British imperialism in the last century. The concept of Empire is crucial to any reading of Scottish and Irish cultures, despite the many differences between their experiences of colonial and British rule. Empire not only plays a major role in the construction of Anglo-British and Hiberno-British identity, it also provides the context

for an ongoing history of interconnection between Scotland and Ireland through plantation, immigration and emigration. Finally, in a literary context, the implicit comparisons between the Irish Literary Revival spearheaded by Yeats, and the Scottish Literary Revival led by MacDiarmid, should be made more explicit in order to recognise how this has coloured the interpretation of the development of both literatures ever since. This is particularly significant when reading contemporary Scottish writing, currently being marketed as the fashionable successor to Irish writing. Thus *Cosmopolitan* magazine was able to shape Irish/Scottish literary relations as a dialogue in which the writer Duncan McLean is described as ‘Scotland’s answer to Roddy Doyle’.<sup>1</sup> The competitive framework in which the cultural products of Scotland and Ireland are marketed does little to counter the idea of English Literature as the locus of literary value, yet it does present the possibility of reading Scottish and Irish writing against and across one another and thus of overcoming the stagnant and largely predictable readings which result from the binary oppositions Scotland-England and England-Ireland.

Cultural identity is an important feature in any writing that is self-consciously ‘national’, and so readily identifiable as Scottish or Welsh for example. However, the term cultural identity is not limited to nationality or nationalism, but can be seen as the sum of a number of identities that operate in a specific culture. Cultural identity in this sense has significance in relation to communities as well as individuals; it enables the consideration of racism, sexism and sectarianism not simply as the products of personal prejudice, but as effects of social and political structures.

The examination of cultural identity through images and texts requires a theoretical framework suited to the close readings of individual representations as well as one sensitive to the wider political and social contexts in which such material is produced. The current approach that lends itself most readily to these demands and which can also provide a framework of comparison between Scottish and Irish writing is postcolonial theory. The last decade has seen the rapid growth and acceptance of postcolonial theory in the academy, but this has been accompanied by continued debate, both among postcolonial practitioners and those committed to different theoretical standpoints, about the nature and scope of the term 'postcolonial'. Irish writing has generally been accepted into the body of postcolonial writing, largely through the work of theorists such as David Lloyd and Luke Gibbons, as well through polemical projects such as *Field Day*. However, whilst many non-Irish thinkers are happy to consider Ireland as 'postcolonial' the response from within Ireland itself has been mixed. In particular, writers and academics from Northern Ireland have suggested that the postcolonial label assumes a homogenised Ireland which makes no distinction between the Republic and the North. In addition, critics like Edna Longley argue that postcolonial readings are often reductively nationalist and fail to respect or acknowledge Protestant and Unionist values and experiences.

Although Scotland has received little attention from postcolonial critics, a few readings of Scottish history and Scottish writing in a colonial context have been offered, most notably by Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, Robert Crawford and Tom Leonard. In the main however, postcolonial readings have been resisted or overlooked in

Scotland. The challenge which postcolonialism presents to existing critical frameworks is matched by the reluctance of critics to read Scottish and Irish writing against and alongside one another. Whereas a strong urge to bring together cultural analyses of Scotland and Ireland has been shown in projects such as the Irish-Scottish Academic Initiative, the debate surrounding the New British History, and through suggestions in the work of Robert Crawford, Marilyn Reizbaum and Seamus Deane, an equally forceful rejection of this approach has surfaced in the work of Fintan O'Toole, Bob Purdie and Colin McArthur. The reasons for this divergence of opinion are not only explicable in terms of the politics of the Republic, Northern Ireland and Scotland, but are caught up in questions of canons, cultures and critical perspectives.

I have chosen to undertake a detailed comparative engagement with writers from both cultures in order to explore the ways in which their current concerns intersect and challenge one another. In order to do this I have chosen largely new authors whose writing is not easily accommodated into established perspectives, nor circumscribed by a large body of critical work. This has allowed me to juxtapose groups of texts from the two nations, and use them to comment on the possible disjunction between postcolonial theory and contemporary writing. One of the areas in which this has proved most valuable is in questioning the generic dominance of the novel in postcolonial critique. Claims for the novel as the privileged carrier of national identity in the theoretical work of Spivak, Said, and Bhabha, as well as in the critical applications of Gerry Smyth and Gustav Klaus, have replaced asseverations of earlier national forms, such as poetry and drama. Whereas the national literary movements at the beginning of the twentieth century

favoured strong theatrical and poetic traditions which evoked a lost oral culture and a public staging of identity, contemporary critics prefer the novel as a genre suggestive of a canon-forming, authoritative literary tradition. However, the pre-eminence of the novel does not necessarily reflect the material conditions of postcolonial nations, in which independent presses and journals may favour the more compact forms of poetry and the short story, and so those shorter forms arguably offer the most effective means of anti-colonial resistance.

This thesis will explore the ways in which the key concerns of postcolonial theory, as well as its broad comparative perspective, can offer challenging readings of contemporary Scottish and Irish writing. Chapter One is an introductory overview in which I consider the history of critical approaches to Scottish and Irish cultural identity, and the manner in which these tend to confirm or resist one another. In particular, I explore how the relationship between Scotland and England might be usefully be described as 'colonial', and how Scotland's complex relationship with Empire might inflect that between England and Ireland. I then look at the ways in which postcolonial theory has been applied to Irish and Scottish cultural output and the questions this raises within postcolonialism as a discipline.

In Chapter Two I undertake a comparative analysis of two plays, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987), by Liz Lochhead, and *Making History* (1985), by Brian Friel, in order to look at the role of history in shaping a contemporary cultural identity. I go on to consider a third play, Frank McGuinness's *Mutabilitie* (1997), whose

treatment of the intersection between history and culture provides a valuable insight into the questions of representation and identity raised by Friel and Lochhead. The juxtaposition of these three texts shows the dominance of gendered metaphors of conquest and capitulation in colonial discourse and reveals the extent to which postcolonial fictions may reinvolve these concepts. As Sabina Sharkey has suggested, it can be shown that the aesthetic success of some postcolonial writing rests on the construction of woman as a symbolic sign which denies women a material place in favour of a symbolically central one.<sup>2</sup>

Chapter Three examines the work of two Booker prize winners, Roddy Doyle and James Kelman, writers whose work has met with equal amounts of polemic and praise. Both Kelman and Doyle privilege ‘voice’ in their writing and this chapter will look at the role of voice in creating and confirming national identity. The discussion of voice also leads to a deliberation upon the implications of the use of English in the context of a non-English culture. I consider how the transparency of an English narrative voice may disguise the racial and class biases of critical agendas and how writers from marginal nations, using a dominant form (the novel), tackle and contest this.

Margins contain their own centres, and Chapter Four aims to balance the metropolitan attraction of Dublin and Glasgow in the work of Kelman and Doyle. Drawing on Irvine Welsh’s *Marabou Stork Nightmares* as a bridging text, this chapter looks at novels which choose to relocate and challenge the nation from the Scottish Highlands and Northern Ireland, and to contest the essentialising subject positions

encouraged by the defensive apparatuses of both imperialism and nationalism. The novels by Colin Bateman, Robert McLiam Wilson and Alan Warner are explicitly engaged in a process of hybridisation. The use of the concept of 'hybridity' again raises questions about the relationship between postcolonial literature and postcolonial theory, particularly in terms of sexual metaphors of reconciliation and conflict, engendering and endangering.

Chapter Five returns to the questions of genre and gender, and posits the short story as an exemplary site of postcolonial resistance. As a form which is often called upon to represent the nation, the short story offers a means to draw together the imbalance of scale between nation and location. The demands of local specificity and national significance are intriguingly met in the short stories of John McGahern, Neil Jordan, Bernard MacLaverty and Janice Galloway. Furthermore, the provisional and fragmented nature of short fiction is used by writers like Janice Galloway and Mary Morrissy to challenge the gendered basis of authority. McGahern, Morrissy and Galloway share the rejection of a singular and unitary identity, yet their choice of alternatives can be seen to mark the different contemporary political status of their respective nations. Nevertheless, all three writers appeal to metaphors of longing and belonging to elaborate the fraught relationship between individual and national identity.

Finally, Chapter Six looks at two sets of films, *Trainspotting* and *The Commitments*, and *Michael Collins* and *Braveheart*, which have had a considerable impact on debates surrounding cultural identity in both Scotland and Ireland. Film is a popular and influential medium whose significance is too often dismissed for reasons of

an evident yet necessary commercialism and the disciplinary divisions of academic study. Not only do these films intervene in current cultural and political debates, but they clearly reinvigorate anti-colonial practice. The steady swing of opinion in Scotland towards devolution and independence, for example, has been described as ‘the *Braveheart* factor’ in recognition of the mobilising force of the film and a concomitant public affirmation of its importance as a cultural event. Where *Braveheart* and *Michael Collins* consider the mythology of national origins and heroes, *Trainspotting* and *The Commitments* consider the postcolonial dilemma, opening up new ways of representing Scotland and Ireland to a world audience. Read together, these four films present a thorough critique of national identity as an independent and stable form of self-knowledge, suggesting that issues of class and gender inflect both the production and reception of representations of nation.

The emphasis throughout is on paired and group readings of authors and texts and forms, so that a sense of dialogue and difference, of shared concerns and local distinctions, is drawn out. The approach is thus comparative in the broadest sense, combining close readings of individual examples with careful framings in terms of history and politics. While the use of postcolonial theory is directed towards the interrelation of Scottish and Irish culture, it is not applied or imposed uncritically. Thus readings of these two cultures explore a valuable opportunity to question the key terms and assumptions on which postcolonialism rests.

<sup>1</sup> See book jacket of Duncan McLean’s *Blackden* (London: Minerva, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> See Sabina Sharkey, ‘Frontier Issues: Irish Women’s Texts and Contexts’, *Women: A Cultural Review* Vol. 2 No. 4 (Autumn, 1993), pp. 129-130.

## Chapter One

### **Postcolonial Nations: History, Culture, Identity.**

Nothing is more monotonous or despairing than the search for essence which defines a nation. <sup>1</sup>

So wrote Seamus Deane in 1979, and his comment reflects a problem that the Scots as well as the Irish have long struggled with. Attempts to articulate a sense of Scotland and Ireland in recent times have been tinged with this sense of weariness, as well as a wariness towards 'essence' which Deane elsewhere calls 'that hungry Hegelian ghost'.<sup>2</sup> The arguments that have been deployed by both nationalists and unionists in respect of Scottish and Irish identities draw on a long history of debate surrounding the distinctiveness of each country; a debate which has inevitably been complicated by their continued, yet changing relationships with England. This presents a twofold challenge to critics who wish to make use of, or interrogate the idea of the nation. Firstly, whether the quest for objective, quantifiable measures of 'nation-ness' is either valid or useful, and secondly, how to negotiate a concept of identity which is continually articulated in opposition to another, equally slippery notion of 'Englishness'. For a number of critics, the process is doomed to failure, and the nation will always be subject to purely imaginary assumptions. The sociologist David McCrone, for example, has observed that 'Scotland seems particularly prone to mythical ideas about itself' and

in an Irish context, Andrew Murphy comments, 'we cannot take for granted the term 'Ireland' has an unproblematically stable and enduring meaning'.<sup>3</sup> There is an underlying suspicion in all such academic enquiries that it is not simply the essence of the individual nation that is ghostly, but also the concept of the nation itself. However, despite the negative overtones of such pronouncements, it is clear that the question of nation is central to the concerns of history, culture and identity which currently occupy both Irish and Scottish critics. According to Colin Graham, 're-thinking, re-positioning and revising nationalism' is the major preoccupation of contemporary Irish cultural studies, and one of the challenges this raises is the need for an awareness of 'concepts of nation as both formative and restrictive in Irish culture ... [which would] mark postcolonialism as a radical way forward in Irish cultural theory'.<sup>4</sup>

By far the most influential study of the nation in recent years is Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983), which attempts to address the confusion that surrounds the nature of a nation and the widespread and unquestioned acceptance of a concept which continually defies delineation. Anderson comments, 'Nation, nationality, nationalism - all have proved notoriously difficult to define, let alone to analyse'. There have, however, been a number attempts to do so, notably by Ernest Gellner, George Boyce, J. Breuilly and A.D. Smith.<sup>5</sup> In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Political Science at Queen's University, Belfast, Cornelius O'Leary makes an admirably schematic attempt to provide concise interpretations of each of the three terms. According to O'Leary, 'A nation is a sizeable voluntary community', which differs from a state 'which is a community endowed with political power and legal jurisdiction', although the two may overlap.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the basis of this

'voluntary community' is nationality which can be seen to be 'Common territory and culture, ... that is the capacity of the people concerned to communicate with each other on the basis of common history and traditions' (p.4). Finally, 'Nationalism as an ideology postulates that ... every nation should have the right to self-determination - the right to constitute a state' (p.5). O'Leary's concept of the 'voluntary community' occupies similar ground to that of Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' and both terms highlight the underlying fragility of the nation, as well as the sense of commitment which nationality frequently inspires. A.D. Smith has also described the nation in related terms, as a 'shared community of mythic values', however, for Smith, the use of such myths is positive (in contrast to David McCrone's assessment) and supplies 'a universal need for immortality through the memory of posterity'.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps the most useful aspect of all these definitions is the extent to which they draw on the integration of culture, politics and identity as constitutive of national consciousness, and how, (explicitly in the case of O'Leary), they presume that 'nation' is always open to question and contestation.

However, where these definitions tend to break down is in dealing with the individual nation. Whereas O'Leary finds his analysis fits examples of some European nations, the development of nationalism in others (such as Scotland and Wales) cannot be explained in the same terms. Similarly, Ernest Gellner's arguments for the nation-state as a product of industrialism with no necessary links to previous ethnic formations are notoriously unsatisfactory when applied to Scotland. Indeed, when requested to provide a reason for the surge of nationalism seen in Scotland in the 1960s onwards, the only ones he could offer were 'Scots oil and tartanry', reasons which he readily conceded were extremely weak.<sup>8</sup> What none of these theorists seem

willing to address is the influence of negative identification on national consciousness and national movements, in particular the importance of a dominant English nation in close proximity to both Scotland and Ireland. The purpose of national boundaries is to simultaneously define an internal 'self' and external 'others', this opposition is not an unfortunate outcome of nationalism, but, as Anthony Cohen suggests, the underlying desire which is articulated in the concept of nation. This is not to say that the oppositions between self and other, or co-national and foreigner are wholly definitive of national identity. Rather, I suggest the prevalence of such oppositions demands an analysis of nation which goes beyond a single example. It is in this respect that I propose the reading of Scottish and Irish cultural products together as providing the opportunity for such discussion to recognise the importance of such oppositions without recreating them in the framework of analysis (that is, by reading Irish literature against English literature, for example).

However significant the differences between Ireland and Scotland - their histories, cultures and senses of identity - they share the experience of marginality in relation to the English metropolitan centre. England has assumed cultural and political dominance over both countries for such a long time that the extent to which they are defined in relation to England appears transparent. As Beveridge and Turnbull comment on the relationship between Scotland and England in the eighteenth century:

the process had begun whereby stages in the trajectory of English history would come to define for the succeeding centuries a typology of Progress, would become the waymarkers of the long march to civilisation and modernity.<sup>9</sup>

As 'English history' melts into 'History', the implicit comparisons made between Ireland and England and Scotland and England become increasingly invisible, so much so that Gerry Smyth's statement that 'the principle of colonisation has structured relations between the two islands since the twelfth century, and not only for the Irish and English [but also for the Anglo-Irish]', is a point which does not seem to be losing force or controversy by its repetition.<sup>10</sup> While the evident comparisons drawn between British and 'Third World' development have proved fertile ground for the analysis of colonial relations in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, parallel allusions have been markedly overlooked in terms of England's earliest colonies. Indeed, the complex history of England's involvement with its near neighbours (including France, Wales, Scotland and Ireland) has produced a number of conflicting views on the timescale and nature of England's colonial involvement in Ireland. D.B.Quinn has proposed Ireland as a 'unique example of a territory which was colonised in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in a feudal setting and was recolonised in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in a post-feudal setting.'<sup>11</sup> Taking a similar view, Nicholas Canny has commented on the relationship of early modern Ireland to an 'Atlantic World' which was subject to 'a progressively more colonialist' policy of English expansion from the Elizabethan period onwards.<sup>12</sup> Both these positions have been subject to a fierce critique which suggests that the common histories of the 'Atlantic archipelago', (a phrase first coined by J.G.A. Pocock) were underpinned by considerations of proximity and familiarity, issues which are in no way relevant to the colonial relationship between England and the 'New World'.<sup>13</sup> In a recent essay, Andrew Murphy provides an incisive summary of the 'challenges to the colonial paradigm' as represented by Canny and Quinn.<sup>14</sup> While emphasising the longstanding

nature of the relationship between England and Ireland, Murphy himself seems to favour the critical events of the sixteenth century as the qualifying moment in Anglo-Irish relations:

It is in the Protestant Scots plantation of [Ulster] and the consequent Catholic uprising in 1641 that the roots of the current crisis in Northern Ireland are to be found, lending the early-modern period a special significance in the general history of Ireland (p.21).

Cairns and Richards suggest a similar starting point in their study, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* (1988), which 'begins in the sixteenth century at a crucial moment for English State and cultural formation'.<sup>15</sup> However, although *Writing Ireland* focuses mainly on the cultural history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, its authors are careful to extend the colonial relationship both backwards into the twelfth century, and indeed outwards, by recognising the construction of 'English' identity as central to an understanding of the cultural struggle between England and Ireland throughout their relationship. Unlike Murphy, whose critique displays a typical British/English confusion (for example, he suggests that Britain and Ireland are 'physically close', but the distance from Scotland to Ulster is 'considerably shorter' (p.23)), Cairns and Richards are careful in their descriptions of 'English' culture which is differentiated from the late eighteenth century formulations of 'Britishness'.

One of the most important aspects of the project undertaken by Cairns and Richards in *Writing Ireland* is the recuperation of 'a textually informed historical analysis', which draws attention to the textual basis of models of cultural identity in currency in an Irish context.<sup>16</sup> The main objective of the book is to 'trace the ways in which colonialist and anti-colonialist discourses interpenetrated each other during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Ireland.'<sup>17</sup> In particular, their integration of social and cultural history provides a searching critique of the influence and development of Matthew Arnold's Celticism. According to Cairns and Richards Arnold's arguments, founded on those of Ernest Renan, (whose 'Poesie des Races Celtiques' was published six years before Arnold's own collection, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*), 'drew upon contemporary philology, ethnology and anthropology, to establish language as a racial identifier and the prime determinant of culture' (p.44). The links made in the writings of Arnold between language and race can be read as part of a broader project in the nineteenth century which attempted to establish a series of hierarchies between nations based on the 'objective' criteria of language classification. While Renan's position as a Celt led him to 'advance the notion of complementarity of the races: Teutons as energetic, brutal warriors, Celts as producers of civility and culture' (p.45), Arnold maintained that 'the true strength of the English lay in the blend of Teuton and Celt' and that the positive Celtic qualities of spirituality and artistic sentiment were not enough to deliver them from the position of an inferior race. Arnold's arguments rest on the proposition that there are distinct racial types, Saxon (or Teuton) and Celt, which have fused in the creation of an English race which is already hybrid. However, the hybridity which characterises the English is not the same mutually influential and beneficial complementarity of Renan's vision, but a new homogeneous state in which difference is forcefully eliminated. Thus Arnold argued that 'the language of the

Welsh and Irish was the "badge of a beaten race" which should be suppressed in the interests of a greater English-speaking whole (p.47). As Marjorie Howes demonstrates, Arnold's manipulation of Renan's complementarity, together with his own hierarchy of linguistic-racial theory, enabled him:

to use an argument about racial and cultural separatism in the service of an argument for political integration. As he put it in 1887, the Irish could be 'a nation poetically only, not politically.'<sup>18</sup>

Arnold's writing can be read as an alternative imperialist strategy to political and military domination, offering a description of the colonial relationship which could be represented as 'highly complimentary' to the Irish at the same time as affirming their 'natural' and continuing subordination (*Writing Ireland*, p.48).

One of the most remarkable aspects of Arnold's theories of Celticism is the extent to which early Irish nationalism took on its underlying assumptions, extolling the virtues of the Celts as a people 'spiritual beyond the ways of men' and accepting the concept of language as a racially differentiating principle.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Arnold's arguments borrowed from Renan a construction of femininity, which was mapped onto racial characteristics in order to produce a supportive matrix of hierarchical discourses. Just as Renan concluded that 'the Celtic race ... is an essentially feminine race', so Arnold determined that 'the sensibility of the Celtic nature, its nervous exaltation, have something feminine in them, and the Celt is thus particularly disposed to feel the spell of feminine idiosyncrasy'.<sup>20</sup> Not surprisingly, 'feminine idiosyncrasy'

and 'nervous exaltation' are deemed not to be the qualities appropriate to political management, or indicative of the capacity for self-government. Yet the positive attributes of femininity are called into play by this model as both 'accommodatory gesture', and to confirm the fundamental basis of imperial relations. Marjorie Howes sums this up:

A happy patriarchal marriage between the feminine and attractive, but inferior Celt and the masculine superior Saxon whose domination was natural and inevitable but whose own existence would be enriched by a feminine influence, provided a compelling figure for the kind of imperial relation Arnold imagined.<sup>21</sup>

The equation of femininity with racial inferiority and political dependence is a persistent feature of colonial discourse and one which also had extensive influence over the conception and strategies of resistance to it. Cairns and Richards note that the acceptance of the Arnoldian definition of Celtic character, in terms of 'femininity, emotionalism, material and political incapacity' by Anglo-Irish intellectuals can be seen to indicate a certain similarity with the imperial project, based upon the desire to reinstate the Ascendancy (*Writing Ireland*, p.50). Thus the adoption of a gendered metaphor of racial hierarchy can be read as implicating some forms of nationalism in the justification of imperial domination.

While nineteenth century ideas of 'Irishness' were increasingly defined against parallel notions of 'Englishness', of which the Anglo-Irish became a representative

subset, gendered concepts of racial identity and character continued to be mobilised by nationalist writers and intellectuals. The image of the land of Ireland as woman, whether as the young and beautiful Roisin Dubh or the old and suffering Cathleen ni Houlihan of Yeats's play, has been hugely influential both in creating an iconography of Irishness which is strongly marked by traditional gender roles, and in producing a narrative of Irish liberation in which women are denied agency. As Wanda Balzano observes, 'the female population of Ireland has increasingly merged with the passive projection of Irishness; purely ornamental, a rhetorical element rather than an existing reality. National Sybil or fictional queen'.<sup>22</sup> Whilst Arnold himself was less interested in the Celtic character of Scotland than in the Irish and Welsh varieties, his work was taken up with enthusiasm by late nineteenth century commentators on Scotland. Gerard Carruthers suggests Arnold is the 'seminal figure in the modern literary and cultural definition of Scotland', and that his attempts to create a sense of British cultural identity produced numerous responses from Scotland.<sup>23</sup> The most influential of these is G. Gregory Smith's enduring notion of 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', the 'Jekyll and Hyde' quality thought to be peculiar to Scottish writing. Arnold's 'feminine idiosyncrasy' was taken to be a definitive characteristic of 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', capturing both the creative and unpredictable elements of the term. Furthermore, the feminisation of the Scottish landscape from the eighteenth century onwards provides clear parallels to the association of Ireland and women in both nationalist and imperialist thought. In both cases, resistance to English hegemony was often articulated in terms of defence of a vulnerable female, or alternatively in the assertion of a particularly aggressive masculinity, in order to counter claims of effeminacy and weakness.

The sociologist David McCrone has argued that 'Scotland' as a framework for analysis can be recognised in three manifestations: by its geographic territory, politically, and finally ideologically.<sup>24</sup> The Kingdom of Scotland was established in the early Middle Ages by the coming together of four linguistic groups comprising a number of ethnicities. The threat of Viking invasion in the ninth century had created a Christian alliance between these groups which culminated in the War of Independence against England in the fourteenth century: the geographical boundaries which determine Scotland today date back to 1482.<sup>25</sup> Politically, Scotland was an autonomous country, which then underwent a series of unions with England (particularly the Union of Crowns in 1603 and the Union of Parliaments in 1707) but has recently seen increasing pressure for a restoration of political control. In 1885 the office of Secretary of State for Scotland was created, with a Scottish Office established in London, which later moved to Edinburgh and reached its present form in 1939.<sup>26</sup> This is soon to change, however, with the establishment of a devolved Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh, in September, 1999.<sup>27</sup> Ideologically, Scotland has always drawn on a number of cultural traditions and expressions, which have to some extent contained the great chase for a Scottish essence. Theorists of nationalism like Ernest Gellner have tended to see the nation as a psychological support or function of industrialism, a social construct related to socio-economic development. Along more culturally specific lines, Angus Calder finds the existence of Scotland as a nation to be 'territorial and legal', crucially sustained by the imaginative identification of its people: 'The Scottish "nation" exists insofar as many Scots believe it exists'.<sup>28</sup>

These three categories for defining Scotland however, tend to obscure the difficulty which all such definitions seek to address, which is the separation of Scottish and British identities. For David McCrone the search for a sense of Scottish distinctiveness in the UK is one which risks focussing on the trivial at the expense of those broader factors which contribute to our social identity (perhaps this is precisely why Deane finds the search monotonous, blind to forces outside the nation, doomed to repeat itself) and is asking 'an inappropriate question'.<sup>29</sup> McCrone traces the roots of this question to the eighteenth century Enlightenment notion of sovereignty, 'embodied in the culture of a nation waiting to be brought to its political realization'.<sup>30</sup> This leads to an essentialist notion that there is a 'national' culture waiting to be discovered. According to McCrone, this quest for a unified national culture is 'inevitably retrospective and romantic ... and helps to explain Scottish history's obsession with what has ended'.<sup>31</sup> The problem with McCrone's approach is that whilst concerned to indicate that global trends have a major influence on Scottish socio-economic formations, he neglects what Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull call the 'distinctness' and John Foster calls the 'content' of Scottish culture, not least in the negotiation of British and Scottish identity.

The question which McCrone traces to the eighteenth century is one which was framed in order to create a sense of 'British' rather than Scottish culture. The project of the Scottish Enlightenment was thus geared to some extent to the wresting of the term 'British' from English hegemony in order to found a new identity for both Scots and English (and Welsh) which was released from earlier connotations of a specifically 'English' empire or English claims to military and

moral superiority. Whether or not they were successful is something else again. Robert Crawford's book, *Devolving English Literature*, bravely tackles the policies of self-consciously 'British' thinkers in Scotland, such as Adam Smith and Hugh Blair. These men believed that the only way for Scotland to advance in step with England was through the adoption of certain English standards (particularly modes of speech), whilst at the same time 'upholding an ideal of Britishness in which Scotland would be able to play her full part'.<sup>32</sup> Crawford's analysis reveals a conflict inherent in 'British' identity that did not subside with the Union of parliaments.<sup>33</sup> The tendency to conflate 'England' and 'Britain' has been a source of irritation to Scotland and Wales for centuries. At different times, thinkers from these countries have attempted to define a sense of Britishness in order to combat the elision of the distinction between England and Britain, as well as to resist England's quasi-legal claim to superiority. In 1521, the Scottish academic theologian John Mair published his *Historia Maioris Britanniae tam Angliae quam Scotiae* in Paris: a scathing critique of both the medieval view of Britain and Scottish political culture. Mair's *History* urges the benefits of a union of equals which would explicitly recognise Scotland's claim to autonomy in the creation of a new British Kingdom (supported by a 'more balanced and truly British History') and which would overcome the long-felt animosity between England and Scotland.<sup>34</sup> Whilst Mair argues for a new inclusive British identity, the basis of this is a feeling of pride in being Scottish: the purpose of union then was not to incorporate Scotland into England/Britain but to clear the ground in order to mobilise a larger identity, Britishness. The 'improvers' of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would later argue for a British identity in which language would be rid of 'Scotticisms'. Anglicisation was seen as the means to maintaining

Scottish achievement. Similarly, a movement in the content of educational courses towards those subjects which had a greater importance in England was seen as the only way to 'get on', particularly after the introduction of examinations for entry into the Indian civil service. Thus the Anglicisation of Scotland can be seen as part of a wider project to eliminate regional antipathies and anomalies in the interests of empire. Britishness, therefore, has not necessarily been in conflict with either Scottishness or imperialism, although there have always been those who directly opposed or who felt alien to a British identity.

Scotland has thus sustained Unionist politics alongside a continued sense of Scottish nationalism. Although a number of the academics whose work I consider in this thesis tend to identify the main force in Scottish thought, from 1707 to well into the twentieth century, as unionist, a brief comparison of their arguments reveal that those instances of nationalist resistance that they do cite span the whole period in question. Christopher Harvie for example, mentions the late 1700s and early 1800s as years of 'semi-independence' with a strong popular and political Scottish culture, whilst Tom Nairn refers to mid nineteenth century pressure for greater political control in Scotland with the Scottish Rights association of the 1850s, and T. C. Smout acknowledges the creation of the Scottish Secretary in 1885 as due to increasing demands for Scottish autonomy.<sup>35</sup> John Foster cites the period from the late nineteenth century until World War One as a time when Scots showed increasing interest in self-determination, whilst McCrone, Kendrick and others find the years since the end of World War Two to be the most significant in terms of nationalist awareness.<sup>36</sup>

Alongside these views runs a deep-seated belief that political and cultural nationalism in Scotland have long since taken different paths, a perspective surprisingly backed up by Beveridge and Turnbull, who see the neglect of Scottish Literature and History in Scotland's own educational establishments as resulting in a 'cultural-intellectual base ... too narrow for the nationalist challenge'.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, David McCrone claims: 'unlike many forms of nationalism, the cultural content of the Scottish variety is relatively weak'.<sup>38</sup> In contrast to this Angus Calder sees Scottish political nationalism as contained 'within a broader bubbling stream of cultural self-assertion', and Charles Haws states that the 'major proponents of nationalism have been cultural, literary and modern ... not political'.<sup>39</sup> How is this divergence to be explained? Perhaps by looking outside Scotland to that 'impossible, absent standard' which is England, as well as to the unspoken (in this context) model of a politically and culturally aligned nationalism, Ireland.

One theory which provides a framework for comparing the Scottish and Irish experiences is that of internal colonialism. Internal colonialism postulates the existence in developed societies of several distinct populations - the core and one or more peripheries. In the core group all political and economic power is concentrated, while the peripheral groups 'are relatively starved of resources and treated as if they were colonies'.<sup>40</sup> The usefulness of this model is that it avoids the politics of 'beginnings' (twelfth century, sixteenth century, industrialisation and so on) which dog the theories of nation and national consciousness presented by historians. However, there is a tendency in such models to ignore cultural production, and as O'Leary warns us 'the growth of nationalism cannot be reduced simply to economic variables'.<sup>41</sup> The term 'internal colonialism' was first applied to the British Isles by

Michael Hechter in his study, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966*, in 1975 and the 1970s saw a growing interest in Scotland in core-periphery theories.<sup>42</sup> This approach prompted valuable cross-cultural comparison as well as providing a further means to investigate the dynamics of Scottish/British identity in both a cultural and political context. Core-periphery theories were used in a number of disciplines in order to explain 'the Scottish condition'. Robert Crawford, for example, uses this framework when discussing centre-margin relations in English literature. The relation of periphery to metropolitan centre has also come to be a major strand in postcolonial thought, not least because it enables a comparison of colonial cultures drawing on their common experience of imperialism (somewhat along the lines of Abdul JanMohamed and David Lloyd's search for a theory of 'minority discourse').<sup>43</sup> Core-periphery theories tend to examine the ways in which systems of relationships and ideas compound in the creation of a central source of value (economic, aesthetic, social and so on), which can then be used to explain uneven development or specialisation. The rise of core-periphery studies in Scotland belatedly prompted what could be called a post-colonial critique of Scottish culture: Beveridge and Turnbull's *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*, which draws on Fanon's theory of 'inferiorism' in order to explain the 'surprising acquiescence of Scottish intellectuals' to English cultural and political domination.<sup>44</sup> Whilst core-periphery theory had already sparked debate in areas such as economics and geography, Beveridge and Turnbull's radical critique of Scottish historiography along similar lines has prompted an interesting series of responses in a number of disciplines. For many academics, to consider Scotland as existing in a colonial relationship to England is highly inappropriate, because of its economic development and industrialisation. Thinkers as diverse as Tom Nairn, John Foster and T.C. Smout

have characterised Scottish entry into union with England as a result of the capitalist-imperialist motives of Scotland (particularly in contrast to Ireland), rather than due to English expansionism: 'Scotland was ushered by England into the rich men's club, and was able to reap the rewards of its industry as an imperial partner', or again 'the key significance of the new British identity in Scotland was precisely the exercise of economic and political power over other nations. Its dominant trend was intrinsically imperialist'.<sup>45</sup> Nairn at least is careful at this point to qualify imperial Scotland as 'below the Highland line'. O'Leary suggests that the 1707 Act of Union was undertaken by Scotland in order to 'safeguard some essential Scottish institutions' and was not regarded as 'an act of subjugation, but rather of partnership'.<sup>46</sup> However, O'Leary's opinion on this point is clearly derived from the work of Tom Nairn, and suffers from a similar tendency to divide Scotland between Highland and Lowland purely in order to dismiss the rebellions of 1715 and 1745 as 'not representative of the majority population of Scotland' (p. 12). What both men seem to ignore when making such points is that the Act of Union was brought about by the couple of hundred men who held franchise in Scotland at that time, clearly also not representative of the majority population in any modern democratic sense. Other academics, whilst acknowledging Scotland's active participation in empire, as cannon fodder, colonists and administrators, are keen to look at the effects on Scotland itself of the relationship with imperialism. The historian John MacKenzie, for example, sees Empire as the arena in which 'Scotland asserted her distinctiveness in relation to England' and rejects the notion that Scots were merely 'collaborators' or 'victims', arguing that the large number of Scots who emigrated to the Commonwealth did so under pressure from English domination at home; they made use of their British identity literally as a passport into new societies where they could assert their names, their money, their

accent and 'an independent social ethic'.<sup>47</sup> Beveridge and Turnbull are similarly interested in the dynamic between Scotland and Empire, although their focus is on the 'home' that the emigrating Scots left behind.

The stated aim of *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* is 'to analyse cultural oppression in the Scottish context' (p.1). The term 'cultural oppression' is important because it connects with the question posed earlier - the disagreement between academics as to the forces of political and cultural nationalism in Scotland. Whilst Beveridge and Turnbull's explicit object of inquiry is the culture of Scotland, their critique of Scottish historiography is inherently political, and their concern is to oppose 'the intellectual discourses which underwrite Scotland's subordination' (p.113). Their book is in effect an explanation of the apparent disjunction between cultural and political nationalism.

Drawing on Fanon's observation that imperialism seeks to assert its authority through 'the work of devaluing pre-colonial history', Beveridge and Turnbull examine the way in which histories of Scotland (economic, cultural and political) have consistently inscribed a complete dissociation between pre-and post-Enlightenment Scotland, turning on the (almost) miraculous transformative powers of the Union.<sup>48</sup> They argue that early histories of Scotland were based mostly on the accounts of English travellers and that later Scottish histories also drew on these sources, such that they were subject to the subtle and gradual process of 'inferiorisation': the loss of self-belief and the adoption of 'metropolitan' (that is, English) values which were then used to pass judgement on Scottish culture. These histories silently compare Scottish landscape, lifestyle and language

to an English 'norm' and find them wanting; going on to draw a series of judgements marked by the 'constant use of metaphors of darkness and light'.<sup>49</sup> Beveridge and Turnbull find that even more sophisticated historians, such as T.C. Smout and R.H. Campbell, accept the notion of a discontinuous Scottish history, where a 'backward' and 'superstitious' country is brought to sudden enlightenment, 'turning on and prompted by the union'.<sup>50</sup> They concentrate particularly on histories of rural society where the Scots are characterised (in terms familiar to colonial discourse) as lazy, dirty and stupid, condemned for displaying an agricultural tradition distinct from that which produced the patterns of tightly nucleated villages in the English countryside. Beveridge and Turnbull argue that in contrast to a rapid transformation of rural society *after* the union, farming techniques and thus the rural landscape were undergoing gradual evolution throughout the seventeenth century. They are keen to explore how this presentation of pre-union history contributed to the creation of the stereotypes of Scottish character which persist to the present day, at the same time as alienating a Scottish reader from that past in order to identify more strongly with a British identity - to accept the English 'gift of progress'. In this respect, Beveridge and Turnbull argue that histories of rural society are one instance of a wider historiographical perspective which projects a certain way of knowing the world, a form of knowledge which justifies assimilation and colonialism. This is a discourse to be resisted: 'if Scotland is to survive as a distinct culture it is essential that it generates other historical codes ... historiography often functioned to devalorise or ignore just those historical aspects which might be expected to confirm the particularity of our history' (p.48).

Although Beveridge and Turnbull are at pains to uncover a history of Scottish particularity, they are well aware that their own version of Scottish history often confirms the processes of Anglicisation and assimilation, particularly in those areas seen to have remained specifically Scottish: the kirk, the law and education. They relate the gradual erosion of civil institutions both to the demands of a British identity, which tended to equate progress with a convergence with England, and to the deliberate expansion of Anglo-British government. At times they appear to be seeking a sense of Scottishness untainted by English influence, at others they are more prepared to accept a changing sense of Scottishness, able to draw on the stereotypes created by colonial discourse and to move beyond them. The latter approach recalls that of Robert Crawford, whose analysis wholeheartedly embraces a fluid notion of identity as well as the ability to recognise English tradition as non-unitary and equally subject to change. Although Crawford is interested in the distinctiveness of Scotland he is careful to heed Gayatri Spivak's warning that there is no pure point of return, 'outside the narrative of imperialism'<sup>51</sup>, a changing Scotland intermixed with a changing England. For Crawford then, Scottish identity is not an essence to be recovered, but a continuing process: 'Scotland and Scottish culture, like all nations and cultures, require continual acts of re-imagining which alter and develop their natures'.<sup>52</sup> Crawford's rejection of any notion of a fixed or static culture is a valuable antidote to those arguments that see contemporary Scottish nationalism as divorced from a similar cultural movement. *Devolving English Literature* deliberately reinstates the comparison between Scotland and Ireland (without being about Ireland) in order to explain how nationalism, like unionism, is subject to myths of progress.<sup>53</sup> The analyses of Beveridge and Turnbull and Crawford draw on Fanon's

elaboration of the three phases of cultural evolution undergone by a postcolonial nation, a critique which provides one of the most influential aspects of Fanon's work. According to the schema which Fanon suggests in *The Wretched of the Earth*, in the first phase, 'the native intellectual gives proof that he has assimilated the culture of the occupying power' (p.178). The second phase marks a rejection of colonial values and a return to a 'traditional culture', and finally in the third phase, which Fanon characterises as 'the fighting phase', the native intellectual becomes 'an awakener of the people' (p.179). Both Crawford and Declan Kiberd have noted how nationalism can acquire 'a strain of militaristic white triumphalism', a tendency which results from a failure to re-integrate the past with the present; to look beyond political and geographical borders towards cultural empathy, or to acknowledge hybridity and the continuing effects of a relationship with an imperial power.<sup>54</sup> David Lloyd sees this as a feature in 'stages' of nationalism, which may correspond to Fanon's phases of national consciousness. Whereas in earlier stages nationalism is liberatory and progressive, in a later stage it may become 'obsessed with an exclusive concept of racial identity and its formal identity with imperial identity'.<sup>55</sup> Commenting on Scotland, Michael Gardiner observes that national culture forms part of a process, namely the struggle against oppression, and echoing Lloyd, warns that it is vital to maintain its ongoing development:

otherwise a revival of the past will trap post-colonial nations in a second phase which regressively tries to continue a cultural progression as if colonialism had never had a cultural effect. This is a form of subjection which neocolonialism encourages in

separating the cultural from the economic and political - an analogue might be the attribution of Scottish difference to a kind of primordial pride.<sup>56</sup>

The comments of Lloyd and Gardiner directly address the differences between unself-critical nationalism and postcolonialism. The former, having difficulty in imagining beyond the moment of nation, is thus permanently condemned to the second stage or phase of identification. However, reading Lloyd's comments in the light of Gardiner's statement it becomes clear that the conflation of racial and imperial identity is central to Scotland's complex and contradictory relationship with Empire. Furthermore, this tension underlies the work of historians and sociologists like Nairn and Smout, who see Scotland's imperial identity in the late nineteenth century as both the 'era of greatness' (a second enlightenment perhaps) and the moment which prompts a new-found Scottish national movement. Postcolonialism's quarrel with the second stage of nationalism is instructive here. As Bart Moore-Gilbert suggests in a critique of Simon During, the reintroduction of the concepts of 'contradiction and struggle' derive from 'the interrogation by figures like Said, Spivak and Bhabha of the "myths of origins" around which the many varieties of cultural nationalism organise themselves'.<sup>57</sup> The underlying character of the relationship between Scotland and England is, I would suggest, one of 'contradiction and struggle'. In particular, a struggle which revolves around 'myths of origins' which range from a 'primordial' Scotland as pictured in *Braveheart*, to the eighteenth century miracle of the Enlightenment and nineteenth century images of Scotland, or more specifically Glasgow, as the Second City of Empire and First City of Squalor at one and the same time. Nor is Scotland alone in its conflicting and ambiguous relationship with the

English metropolitan and imperial centre. As Seamus Deane comments, Irish literature 'derives from a culture which is neither wholly national nor colonial but a hybrid of both'.<sup>58</sup> It is no coincidence that it was in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first years of the twentieth century that both Ireland and Scotland began to articulate more forcefully the contradiction of 'living politically as one thing, while culturally knowing [themselves] to be another'.<sup>59</sup>

Ireland is the missing referent in many discussions of Scottish cultural nationalism; its absence both obscures the possibility of many nationalisms, different in content and ideology, as well as the value of a shared and communicable experience. Moreover, this is a two-way process. Declan Kiberd's recent volume *Inventing Ireland* has a number of valuable points to make about the differences between political and cultural nationalisms and the choices they entail; he also presents extremely productive readings of Irish texts which draw on analogies with the experience of other colonies and the work of postcolonial critics like Fanon and Said. However, he has little interest in Scotland or the explicit links between Yeats's Literary Revival and MacDiarmid's Scottish Renaissance,<sup>60</sup> similarly his focus on an oppositional relationship between England and Ireland often repeats the slippage between England and Britain. Indeed, whilst he is willing to recognise "'England" as an invention too' there is an underlying sense that 'Britain' is a fact.<sup>61</sup> This unwillingness to deconstruct Britain seems to be more than an oversight and is perhaps related to an unwillingness to include the cultural products of Northern Ireland in the main body of his argument, a move which would destroy the uncomplicated 'Ireland'-however invented - to which he refers throughout. If this sounds harsh, it is worth noting that of the three extended discussions which refer specifically to Northern

Ireland, two are relegated to the 'Interchapters', pieces of three or four pages printed in swift italics which function rather like background commentary or brief interludes before the main feature.

Kiberd's insights into the relationship between nationalism and history do on the other hand have some useful consequences for Scotland. In chapter 16, Kiberd poses the difficult question 'how to build a future on the past without returning to it?'.<sup>62</sup> In attempting to answer this he addresses David McCrone's statement, mentioned earlier, on the inevitability of a search for a unified national culture as retrospective. Kiberd presents Irish nationalists in the late nineteenth century as having had a choice between a nationalism which returned to a pre-colonial Gaelic identity or one which reconstructed a national identity from first principles. In Kiberd's analysis politicians opted for the former, whilst writers and artists tended towards the latter, and for Ascendancy writers like Yeats and for critics of Catholic nationalism like Joyce, it was vital to go respectively behind and beyond the dominant form of national resistance to English rule, namely Catholicism. The difficulty with the first construction is that it is subject to the 'common nationalist view of tradition as something which has come to a conclusion', and this according to Kiberd explains the long period of 'stasis and stagnation' that followed the creation of the Free State as the people were lulled by the political leaders until they were in Fanon's words 'drunk on remembrance'.<sup>63</sup> So whilst politics sought an 'essential' Ireland which sentimentalized Irish rural life, artists asserted an Ireland of many minds, urban and rural, but crucially 'subject to constant negotiations'.<sup>64</sup> In Scotland however, the 'essential' nation was followed less by the politicians than by the cultural commentators who wished to debunk it. At this point the discourse known as 'tartantry' assumes central importance in nationalist debates.

The appropriation of Highland motifs by Lowland Scotland has long been the subject of vigorous discussion in Scottish cultural studies. The origins of some of these motifs and their later use have caused some contention, particularly the wearing of tartan. Kilts and tartan, as David McCrone points out, were 'appropriated by the British army in its colonial wars - quite literally stealing the enemy's clothes'.<sup>65</sup> Perhaps this is one reason why they have caused so much disagreement in the context of a specifically Scottish identity. However, most commentators agree that the appropriation of and identification with Highland culture was due to the substantial erosion of a distinct economic, social and cultural identity in the late nineteenth century. Consensus breaks down however when it comes to an explanation as to why tartan continues to be such a strong symbol of Scotland and what its significance is for cultural identity today.

Tom Nairn's *Break-up of Britain* included a damning indictment of what he called 'this vast tartan monster', 'the prodigious array of *Kitsch* symbols ... which have for so long resolutely defended the name of Scotland'.<sup>66</sup> According to Nairn a breakdown of high culture in Scotland has led to 'mindless' popular culture of Kailyard and 'tartanry' which has taken on the role of a national tradition and identity. This monster is both fossilised and rampant - fixated on the past, it can neither develop nor adjust to a changing Scotland, yet it seems to swallow everything in its path - and Nairn's vision is of a culture drowning in a sea of vulgar knick-knacks. As David McCrone rightly points out, Nairn's analysis has marked out the arena for subsequent debate. *The Break-up of Britain* prompted a flurry of interest by the Scottish intelligentsia in the deconstruction of 'Scotch

Myths'. A key event was the now infamous 'Scotch Myths' exhibition at the 1981 Edinburgh Festival, which was followed by 'Scotch Reels' a film and discussion around the media representations of Scotland displayed in the exhibition, and a collection of essays edited by Colin McArthur, *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television*.<sup>67</sup> The aim of these intellectual dissections of popular culture was to expose and deconstruct these myths of Scottish identity in order that 'more politically progressive representations [can be] constructed, circulated and discussed' (p.25). McArthur and Nairn seem to believe that these representations have monopolised Scots perceptions of themselves such that they are unable to form any alternative ideas of 'Scotland' or 'Scottishness'; tartanry is thus presented as 'a form of false consciousness'. In their vital critique of this perspective, Beveridge and Turnbull point to the failure to analyse the reception of tartan discourse, instead, they suggest 'perhaps there are other myths about Scotland which are more influential and more debilitating'.<sup>68</sup> The trouble is that in demonising tartanry, Nairn and McArthur tend towards the very same reductionism which they are attempting to expose, thus 'Scottish popular culture can be exhaustively described in terms of drink, football, tartanry and religion (understood as mindless religiosity)'.<sup>69</sup> The mobilising power of cultural products which contain these referents, yet go beyond them, is evident in contemporary popular culture; I am thinking here of the enormous success of *Braveheart*, and even the television series *Hamish MacBeth*. However, Beveridge and Turnbull are in turn criticised by David McCrone and Cairns Craig for their unspoken assumption that Scottish national culture is out there, waiting to be discovered and to yield clear-cut identities. Craig points to the essentialising use of Tartanry/Kailyard even if viewed negatively and the subsequent reduction of

culture 'to a series of tragic failures',<sup>70</sup> whilst McCrone warns against the re-adoption of gendered identities 'which relegated women to walk-on parts, and to their role as keepers of the moral and family values of the nation'.<sup>71</sup>

A key tenet adopted by postcolonialism is to see 'history' as a loaded term, and thus to challenge the representation of history in colonial discourse. In different ways, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* and *Writing Ireland* can both be seen to take up this challenge. Moreover, each study reveals the extent to which theory as well as history is a problematic concept, by examining how one form of 'nation' as explored by geographers, economists, politicians, literary critics and historians, is valued above others. While these two books can be seen to mark the beginning of debates surrounding the postcolonial status of Scotland and Ireland respectively, in many ways the application of postcolonial theory in these contexts was already subject to strong resistance. David McCrone has written that Scotland needs to be defended against the 'excesses of analytical Third Worldism',<sup>72</sup> while literary critics such as Peter Zenzinger dismiss the terms of the debate as 'dated ... not based on fact, but on nostalgia'.<sup>73</sup> Similarly, in conversation with colleagues working both within and outwith Scotland, I have been told that I am 'jumping on a bandwagon', or worse still, 'subjecting a vibrant and independent literature to spray-on postcolonialism'.<sup>74</sup> Even the critic Alan Freeman, who wants to read the novels of Irvine Welsh as marked by a deep ambivalence, 'formed by the self-perceptions of both coloniser and colonised', is unhappy about any comparison between Scotland and 'the barbaric "other"', as he calls it.<sup>75</sup> Such resistance to 'Third Worldism' - which is after all an economic rather than a geographic term - smacks of chauvinism of the worst kind.

The situation is no less contentious in the context of Irish Studies, although here at least there has been enough work done to merit some form of valuable debate, work that links up with an established tradition of anti-imperialism and nationalist discourse. Thus specifically postcolonial critics such as Edward Said and Vincent Cheng have attempted to read Yeats and Joyce respectively within a postcolonial framework.<sup>76</sup> Others have brought postcolonial theories to bear on different aspects of Irish culture, for example David Lloyd's *Anomalous States*, Cairns and Richards' *Writing Ireland*, Luke Gibbons' *Transformations in Irish Culture* and, more recently, Declan Kiberd's *Inventing Ireland*. However, even without a large body of work to focus the argument, there is a surprising amount of opposition to the idea that the terms 'postcolonial' and 'Ireland' might occupy the same space. In both Ireland and Scotland the arguments against the pertinence of postcolonialism often appear to be based on racial lines. Lori Rogers describes this reasoning as one suggesting that 'as there is no racial difference between the Irish and British, there could not have been any of the truly colonial discrimination against the Irish which other, non-white races encountered'.<sup>77</sup> However, the work of critics such as Luke Gibbons suggests that the Irish were subject to a racialised discourse, in which they were presented as 'white chimpanzees' (in the words of Charles Kingsley), which strongly prefigures (and echoes) that of black Africans from the seventeenth century onwards, as well as attesting to a pattern of stereotyping which bore repeated analogies to native Americans.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, as Lynda Boose argues, this is a debate which reflects a problem of periodisation and a failure on the part of modern critics to engage with the racial, national and colonial configuration of the early modern period. Situating racial difference within cultural and religious categories, Boose explicitly draws on the example of early modern Ireland:

If 'race' originates as a category that hierarchically privileges a ruling status and makes the Other(s) inferior, then for the English the group that was first to be shunted into this discursive derogation and thereafter invoked as almost a paradigm of inferiority was not the black 'race' - but the Irish 'race'.<sup>79</sup>

The mobilisation of race in arguments against postcolonialism might be seen as a necessary corrective to 'a simplistic equation of the plight of the native Irish with that of the black population of the southern states of the USA, or in other British colonies', yet it also serves to further a particularly prevalent form of racism which is founded upon denial.<sup>80</sup> Lori Rogers' study of work of McGahern and Jordan draws attention to this strategy which erases race as a category by negating its significance:

So, because of the general fear of reducing Ireland to a 'third world', non-white status, literature which treats Irish experience in the twentieth-century as post-colonial is given short shrift in an extremely effective way: it is simply not interpreted as such.<sup>81</sup>

In many ways the rejection of postcolonial theory in the context of England's first, white colonies can be seen to echo the debates surrounding the mobilisation of *négritude* in early anti-colonial movements, and Fanon's concerns that the ideological basis of *négritude* has a political correlative in the policy of Apartheid practised in

South Africa.<sup>82</sup> The fear of engaging with postcolonial analyses marks the triumph of insularity, and, somewhat ironically, confirms the shared marginal status of Irish, Scottish and other postcolonial literatures. Michael Gardiner notes that although the dialogue between African nations was enabled by *négritude*, ultimately the movement was absorbed as a self-contained chapter in French literary history, 'in the same way as Scottish or Irish literatures are often absorbed into British anthologies, reclaimed on an ethnic level as a type of subsidiary otherness'.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, we should attend to the warning of Henry Louis Gates, Jr., that the desire to exclude identification, to delimit in terms of racial criteria may be too high a price to pay for specificity:

When we attempt to appropriate, by inversion, 'race' as a term for an essence - as did the *négritude* movement, for example ('We feel, therefore we are,' as Léopold Senghor has argued of the African) - we yield too much: the basis of a shared humanity.<sup>84</sup>

Perhaps the most vociferous rejection of postcolonialism in an Irish context comes from historians who object to the defining axis of colonialism for a number of reasons, most usually because postcolonial theory is antithetical to Western 'History', or simply because they find the terms of colonial discourse 'vague and unspecific'.<sup>85</sup> Even more familiar is the attack on postcolonialism as antithetical to historical specificity (this is a charge most frequently levelled at Bhabha), taken up even by those academics who wish to recuperate other aspects of postcolonial theory. So Andrew Murphy observes:

The work of ... insisting on the colonialist nature of the Anglo-Irish relationship and in the forging of the links between Ireland's experience and that of other colonial territories has been necessary, important and fruitful. But the danger of viewing Anglo-Irish history exclusively within a global colonialist frame is that it may lead to the loss of any adequate sense of the historical particularities of the Irish situation.<sup>86</sup>

Postcolonial theorists are supposedly notorious for their eclectic use of theories borrowed from a range of subject areas. One thinks here of Bhabha's use of psychoanalysis or Spivak's use of both feminism and deconstruction, for example. In a particularly patronising essay, Russell Jacoby asks 'as they move out from traditional literature into political economy, sociology, history and anthropology, do the postcolonial theorists master those fields or just poke about?'.<sup>87</sup> Such criticism is just as likely to stem from territorial jealousy as it is from genuine concern, but is instructive in that it points to the vested interests of academic enquiry in all fields. Robert Young and Mrinalini Sinha have talked about an 'irreconcilable disciplinary gulf' between imperial historiography and colonial discourse analysis. Sinha suggests that 'both parties to this debate are impoverished by their steadfast refusal to engage with the other's vocabulary', which does not stop them taking pot shots at each other.<sup>88</sup> Too often, caricatures of unreflective imperial history are used to prop up arguments for the *necessity* of postcolonial critique, whilst the critique itself is attacked for rendering colonialism as a 'singular and ahistorical abstraction' despite the numerous, conflicting perspectives on both colonialism and postcolonialism which are apparent in its

internal debates.<sup>89</sup> Vocabulary is no less a site of controversy, and one which exaggerates the apparent split between what one might call postcolonial criticism and postcolonial theory. To some critics the complexity of the language of 'Western high theory' signals a re-centring of metropolitan values and the relegation of other forms of postcolonial criticism to an 'inferior' category of analysis.<sup>90</sup> This suggests that the implied split between cultural and political resistance is not simply a characteristic of the Scottish experience, but a more general concern within postcolonialism, and one which has prompted a call for a re-evaluation of the purpose and practice of cultural critique. As Ketu Katrak suggests, 'we need [to write] in a language lucid enough to inspire people to struggle and to achieve social change'.<sup>91</sup> Postcolonialism is a field whose frontiers and future remain hotly contested. By bringing together diverse discourses of power and knowledge, from politics and literature, from India to Ireland, postcolonialism threatens to overrun the careful divisions and specialisations which mark the space of academic practice. The study of postcolonialism has expanded with extraordinary rapidity in the last ten years, raising doubts as to its ability to remain critically incisive as it moves between continents, epochs and disciplines. In 'Travelling Theory', Edward Said warns of the danger of becoming overly inclusive: 'once an idea gains currency because it is clearly effective and powerful there is every likelihood that during its peregrinations it will be reduced, codified and institutionalised'.<sup>92</sup> Does postcolonialism contain within itself then a colonial impulse, which is compounded by what Anne McClintock calls its 'ubiquitous academic marketability'?<sup>93</sup>

There is a strong feeling that postcolonial theory should be put in its place, a place which is not here, but 'over there' and most definitely 'other'. But the place of postcolonialism as it is conceived by those anxious to contain its rapid expansion is defined temporally, either by historical periodisation, or as a passing fashion, and geographically as non-European and non-Western. Theory is a specialised market and competition is tough; even in the most utopian future there won't be room for everyone. Hence the growth of a movement within the field itself which aims to stress the temporal and spatial limitations of the postcolonial subject and to root both in disciplinary history; closing down the future of postcolonial criticism by fencing off its territory. These arguments can be seen to centre around the troublesome prefix 'post', which signals both temporal closure and critical progression, producing what Ella Shohat calls the 'ambiguous spatio-temporality' of the term 'postcolonial'.<sup>94</sup> Said's comments in 'Travelling Theory' can be read as a warning of the danger of becoming a style rather than a strategy. Similarly, Aijaz Ahmad expresses concern that the moment of colonialism has become trans-historical, so that 'everyone gets the privilege ... at one time or another, of being coloniser, colonised and postcolonial'.<sup>95</sup> Ahmad takes the position that the term 'postcolonial' has lost its analytic power by being applied too widely and inappropriately: 'postcolonial is simply a polite way of saying not-white, not-Europe, or perhaps not-Europe-but-inside-Europe' (p.9). Indeed many critics see the apparent widespread embrace of the postcolonial paradigm as an attempt by the Western academy to conceal its own contribution to colonial power structures, or even as part of the creation of a moral hierarchy in literary studies.

Ahmad finds an unlikely ally in the work of bell hooks who is worried by the idea that postcolonialism might merely be a euphemism for 'race', so that as well as

reinscribing questions of race or ethnicity, postcolonialism might actually neutralise contentious issues and terms by glossing over differences.<sup>96</sup> However, both critics also acknowledge that the entry of postcolonial theory into the academy provides the opportunity to reinstate race, class and gender as central issues in the understanding of cultural production. Whilst this might seem old hat to some, its reverse logic remains radical in the context of the deeply conservative Western academy which has steadily moved away from political activism (even political positioning) in an explicit sense. The necessary assumption of postcolonialism on the other hand is that cultural analysis is a form of political engagement which can and should be directed towards the correction of the material imbalance of power between so-called First and Third World countries.

Ahmad and hooks are joined by writers like Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe in calls to reconsider exactly how the conservatism of the academy contributes to economic and cultural oppression around the globe. Achebe has attacked the privileging of literature in Western culture as an abstraction, rather than as social practice, as well as the resulting hierarchical division of art forms. The distinctions between 'high' and 'popular' arts have a profound impact on Western critical readings of (in this case) African literature, which is judged as an immature copy of European practice without any reflection on its social function. As is clear in the discussion of tartanry and kailyard, this is an issue that has substantial significance in a Scottish context as well, suggesting that postcolonial production and critique must be wary of re-creating the values of the metropolitan centre in their objects of study. Similarly, the presence of precisely this kind of conflict in Irish and Scottish culture is indicative

of the extent to which they are already involved in a postcolonial struggle for definition. As Michael Gardiner comments on Scotland:

Because *postcolonial theory* points to reading strategies which foreground questions of race and nation, questions of race and nation are already foregrounded in situations where they have been unclearly and indecisively split between notional centres, Scotland is already implicated in postcolonial theory; postcolonial debates are already going on in academic debates over Scottish nationalism.<sup>97</sup>

The use of postcolonial critique as 'reading strategies' rather than 'as prescriptive stances' forwarded by Gardiner, and to some extent confirmed by Edward Said's proposal for 'contrapuntal reading' would also offer room for analyses which were antithetical to nationalism. Some literary critics in the North of Ireland object to a theory which treats 'Ireland' as unproblematically single and unified in its experience and outlook. This is a criticism voiced most eloquently by Edna Longley, but finds surprising resonance in the words of Dermot Bolger, a writer from the Republic, struggling against 'the notion that the North [is] central to all Irish writing':

Certainly I have never felt myself to be either a post-colonial writer or engaged in anything as marginal as Anglo-Irish literature (summed up, perhaps a tad excessively, by Joseph O'Connor as 'anybody who owned a castle and scribbled'), and I doubt if any

of the young Southern writers included here [in *The Picador Book of Contemporary Irish Fiction*] would feel otherwise.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, although 'the extreme demand for identification with the nation that nationalism imposes upon the Irish writer' identified by David Lloyd is subject to substantial resistance on the part of younger writers, this does not necessarily preclude the usefulness of postcolonial theory in tackling exactly those issues.<sup>99</sup> Gerry Smyth notes that 'this does not mean that writers who are unhappy with critical approaches which identify their work within a literary tradition wish to abandon all notions of Irishness', and his examples are precisely those of Joseph O'Connor and Dermot Bolger, who are happy to be seen as both 'contemporary' and 'Irish'.<sup>100</sup> Bart Moore-Gilbert has called for a re-conceptualisation of postcolonialism that would address the wider implications of globalisation at the same time as offering a renewed perspective on the question of Scotland and Ireland:

the literatures of Scotland, Ireland and Wales need to be reconsidered as proto-national literatures which, in the recent period as much as in the eighteenth century, are often deliberately articulating their difference from (especially metropolitan) English norms. The issue of "internal colonialism" at an economic and political level has been on the agenda, in Britain at least, since the 1970s. It is now time for a much more rigorous investigation of this issue at the cultural level.<sup>101</sup>

There has been a move in recent years towards a reconsideration of the cultural products of Scotland and Ireland in a comparative context, alongside a growing interest in Scottish and Irish relations that promises to side-step the Anglocentricism of Anglo-Irish and Anglo-Scottish perspectives. Notably, this impulse has been most actively pursued in areas traditionally ignored by academic study, in particular those of writing by women and popular culture. An instructive example of this is Marilyn Reizbaum's essay, 'Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing', which points to a shared colonial experience underlying the feminist approaches of Irish filmmaker Pat Murphy and Scottish playwright Liz Lochhead:

The feminist call in Scotland and Ireland for the reformulation of the canon of Scottish and Irish works parallels the challenge to the mainstream Anglo-Irish establishment presented by Scotland, Ireland, and other countries or cultures like them - former colonies who retain a marginalized standing in relation to the former colonizer.<sup>102</sup>

Reizbaum sees the pairing of Scotland and Ireland as an opportunity to establish 'a dialogue between culture and gender' (p.172), and thus to overcome the 'double exclusion' (p.186) of Scottish and Irish women's writing from the literary mainstream. This dialogue has been taken up by Patricia Horton, whose recent work on intertextual connections between Scottish and Irish women's poetry also seeks to locate Robert Crawford's comment on the 'strong shared preoccupations' between Scottish and Northern Irish writing in a politically sensitive context.<sup>103</sup> Reizbaum's arguments in favour of a cross-cultural approach touch on one of the key factors I have been

discussing in this chapter - the integration of culture and politics in postcolonial discourse:

I feel I can talk about Scotland and Ireland together in this context, without homogenizing them and thereby further marginalizing them (all Celts are alike), because they have comparable 'colonial' histories with respect to England (unlike Wales) and because their status as minority cultures, which has more or less continued in psychic and/or political ways, has had a similar impact not only on the dissemination of their respective literatures but on the nature and means of the writing. (p.169).

The effects of cultural and political marginalization on the dissemination of Irish and Scottish literature is taken up in more detail in chapter five, whilst the complex role played by gender in the formulation of postcolonial identity is discussed throughout the thesis, but most specifically in chapters two and four. Attempts to segregate political and cultural activity in the interests of the 'United Kingdom' not only reveal shared concerns of gender in Scotland and Ireland, but also of class. The persistent division between high and low culture which operates in Scottish and Irish Studies serves to emphasise a division of labour between postcolonial critics and revisionists. Some critics, such as Luke Gibbons and Andrew O'Hagan work in Cultural Studies, including film, music and television, while others, such as Edna Longley and Douglas Gifford are engaged in more canonical literary work.

Frequently, the desire to ‘demythologize’ nationalism is accompanied by an obfuscation of class, the re-figuring of which in terms of subalternity, minority and ‘popular’ are all central to the postcolonial project. The consideration of films such as *Braveheart* and *The Commitments* in chapter six is an attempt to illuminate and overturn this division, as is the consideration of ‘popular’ writers such as Colin Bateman and Irvine Welsh alongside more established authors, such as James Kelman and Brian Friel. While critics like Crawford and Deane have suggested that comparisons between Scottish and Irish cultural activity should be pursued and others, like Reizbaum, have actually done so, more detailed readings of the two cultures which pay attention to the dynamics of class, gender and race being reinscribed through postcolonialism are necessary. My own work is a provisional move in this direction, literally juxtaposing cultural products from each country to produce readings that reflect a common concern with history, culture and identity.

- <sup>1</sup> 'Postscript', *The Crane Bag*, Vol. 3, no.2 (1979), in Mark Hederman and Richard Kearney (eds.), *The Crane Bag Book of Irish Studies* (Dublin: Blackwater Press, 1982), p. 512.
- <sup>2</sup> Seamus Deane, 'Heroic Styles: the tradition of an idea' in *Ireland's Field Day* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p.58
- <sup>3</sup> See Introduction to David McCrone, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw (eds.), *The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p.3. Andrew Murphy, 'Ireland and Ant/e/i-colonial Theory', forthcoming in *Irish Studies Review*, Vol. 7 No. 2 (Summer, 1999).
- <sup>4</sup> Colin Graham, 'Post-Nationalism/Post-Colonialism: Reading Irish Culture' in *Irish Studies Review* no.8 (Autumn, 1994), pp. 35 and 37.
- <sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983), p.3. See also E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* (London: Routledge, 1982), John Breuilly, *Nationalism and the State* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), and A.D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).
- <sup>6</sup> Cornelius O'Leary, *Celtic Nationalism* (Belfast: Queen's University of Belfast, 1982), p.4.
- <sup>7</sup> A.D. Smith, quoted by John Foster 'Nationality, Social Change and Class' in David McCrone, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw (eds.), *The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p.37.
- <sup>8</sup> Ernest Gellner, in a review of Tom Nairn's *The Break-Up of Britain*, *Political Quarterly*, Vol.49, No.1 (January, 1978), p.110.
- <sup>9</sup> Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989), p.49.
- <sup>10</sup> Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), pp.2-3.
- <sup>11</sup> D.B. Quinn, 'Ireland and Sixteenth Century European Expansion', *Historical Studies*, No. 1 (1958), p.20.

<sup>12</sup> See Nicholas P. Canny, 'The Ideology of English Colonization: From Ireland to America', *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol 30 (1973), pp.575-98, and *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560-1800* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988).

<sup>13</sup> Pocock called for a non-Anglocentric approach to the subject in 'British History: Plea for a New Subject', *Journal of Modern History* vol. 47 (1975), p.606.

<sup>14</sup> Andrew Murphy, 'Reviewing the Paradigm: A new look at early-modern Ireland', *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 31 Nos. 3-4 (1996), pp.13 - 40.

<sup>15</sup> David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.1

<sup>16</sup> See David Cairns and Shaun Richards, 'Righting Willy', *Textual Practice*, Vol 4. No. 1 (1990), p.104. This is a response to a review of *Writing Ireland* by Willy Maley in a previous issue.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.

<sup>18</sup> Marjorie Howes, *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class and Irishness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1996), p.21.

<sup>19</sup> Quotation from a Gaelic League pamphlet of 1899, cited by Chris Morash, 'Celticism: Between Race and Culture', *The Irish Review* No. 20 (1997), p.35.

<sup>20</sup> Ernest Renan, *The Poetry of Celtic Races and Other Studies*, William G. Hutchison (trans. and ed.) (London: Walter Scott, 1896), p.8, and Matthew Arnold, *The Complete Prose Works vol III*, R. H. Super (ed.) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1962), p.347.

<sup>21</sup> Marjorie Howes, *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class and Irishness*, p.22.

<sup>22</sup> Wanda Balzano, 'Irishness- Feminist and Post-Colonial' in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.) *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p.93.

<sup>23</sup> Gerrard Carruthers, 'The Construction of the Scottish Critical Tradition', unpublished essay, quoted with kind permission of the author.

<sup>24</sup> See 'Introduction' in David McCrone, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw (eds.), *The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change*, pp.4-5.

<sup>25</sup> See Angus Calder, *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994), chapters 1 and 4; also John Foster 'Nationality, Social Change and Class: Transformations of National Identity in Scotland', pp.44-46.

<sup>26</sup> See J. Bryden, 'Core-periphery problems: the Scottish case' in D. Seers, B. Schaffer, and M.L. Kiljunen (eds.), *Underdeveloped Europe: Studies in Core-periphery Relations* (Sussex: Harvester, 1979), p.71, fn. 2.

<sup>27</sup> O'Leary makes the interesting observation that the first proposals for devolution in Scotland, put to a referendum in 1979 were 'almost identical to Gladstone's scheme for Ireland in 1886', *Celtic Nationalism*, p.15.

<sup>28</sup> See Angus Calder, *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic*, p. 52, E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, and Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*.

<sup>29</sup> David McCrone, 'Representing Scotland: Culture and Nationalism' in David McCrone, Stephen Kendrick and Pat Straw (eds.), *The Making of Scotland: Nation, Culture and Social Change*, p.169.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p.170.

<sup>32</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.15.

<sup>33</sup> A modern study, quoted by McCrone in *Understanding Scotland*, shows that seventy percent of Scots give priority to being Scottish rather than British, whilst a further nineteen percent give equal weight to both identities. Whilst this doesn't necessarily register a change in attitude between the eighteenth and twentieth centuries, it does show that British identity is relatively weak (the survey also looked at Wales, where forty-eight percent gave priority to being Welsh, and twenty-seven percent gave equal weight to both), except in Northern Ireland, where it serves as a political and cultural identity in opposition to that offered by Irishness.

<sup>34</sup> Roger A. Mason, 'The Scottish Reformation and the Origins of Anglo-British Imperialism' in Roger A. Mason (ed.), *Scots and Britons: Scottish Political Thought and the Union of 1603* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.167.

<sup>35</sup> Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1994* (London: Routledge, 1994) - second edition, (p.55); Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1983), Chapter Two.

<sup>36</sup> See McCrone, 'Representing Scotland: Culture and Nationalism'.

<sup>37</sup> Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals*, p.4.

<sup>38</sup> See David McCrone, 'Representing Scotland: Culture and Nationalism', p.161.

<sup>39</sup> Angus Calder, *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic*, p.9, and Charles Haws 'The Dilemma of Scottish Nationalism in Historical Perspective' in Horst W. Drescher and Hermann Volkel (eds.), *Scottish Studies: Nationalism in Literature* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1989), p.23.

<sup>40</sup> Cornelius O'Leary, *Celtic Nationalism*, pp.16-17. The term "internal colonialism" was coined by Pablo Gonzalez-Casanova in 'International Colonialism and National Development', *Studies in Comparative International Development*, Vol. 1, No.4 (1965), pp.27-37, although Cairns and Richards credit Lenin with the concept in his *Development of Capitalism in Russia (Writing Ireland, glossary)*.

<sup>41</sup> Cornelius O'Leary, *Celtic Nationalism*, p.17.

<sup>42</sup> See Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development, 1536-1966* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1975).

<sup>43</sup> See 'Introduction' in Abdul R. JanMohamed and David Lloyd (eds.), *The Nature and Context of Minority Discourse* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

<sup>44</sup> Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals*, p.112. See also Frantz Fanon, 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' in *The Wretched of the Earth* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1990).

<sup>45</sup> Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain*, p.56 and John Foster 'Nationality, Social Change and Class: Transformations of National Identity in Scotland', p.47.

<sup>46</sup> O'Leary, *Celtic Nationalism*, p.11.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Angus Calder, *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic*, p.35. It is interesting to note that MacKenzie is one of Said's most important critics. See his book, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995).

<sup>48</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.169.

<sup>49</sup> Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals*, p.7.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p.21.

<sup>51</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *The Postcolonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.199.

<sup>52</sup> *Devolving English Literature*, p.15.

<sup>53</sup> Crawford discusses Heaney and Paulin in his final chapter, although in his introduction he draws a closer comparison with Ireland in relation to his overall project: 'There may be parallels between the Scottish writing considered in the present book and the Irish writers discussed so ably in Seamus Deane's *A Short History of Irish Literature*' (p.7).

<sup>54</sup> Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.259.

<sup>55</sup> David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), p.x.

<sup>56</sup> Michael Gardiner, 'Democracy and Scottish Postcoloniality' in *Scotlands* Vol. 3 No. 2 (1996), p.29.

<sup>57</sup> Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Postcolonialism: between nationalitarianism and globalisation? A response to Simon During' *Postcolonial Studies*, Vol.1, No 1, (1998), p.55.

<sup>58</sup> Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature 1880-1980* (London: Faber and Faber, 1985), p.11.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p.12.

<sup>60</sup> Sometimes these relationships are too close, for example when MacDiarmid appeals to his predecessors in the Irish literary movement to allow him room to seek his own country:

Wheesht, wheesht, Joyce, and let me hear

Nae Anna Livvy's lilt,

But Wauchope, Esk, and Ewes again,

Each wi'its ain rhythms till't.

From 'Water Music', *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p.153.

<sup>61</sup> *Inventing Ireland*, p.279.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.p.292.

- <sup>63</sup> Ibid. p.294, and Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p.135.
- <sup>64</sup> *Inventing Ireland*, p.298.
- <sup>65</sup> McCrone, 'Representing Scotland: Culture and Nationalism', p.165
- <sup>66</sup> *The Break-up of Britain* , p.162.
- <sup>67</sup> Colin McArthur (ed.), *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television* (London: BFI Publishing, 1982).
- <sup>68</sup> *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals*, p.14.
- <sup>69</sup> Ibid. p.12.
- <sup>70</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Visitors from the Stars: Scottish film culture' in *Cencrastus*, No.11, (1983), p.9.
- <sup>71</sup> David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.190.
- <sup>72</sup> 'Representing Scotland: Culture and Nationalism', p.71.
- <sup>73</sup> Peter Zenzinger, 'Nationalism in Twentieth Century Scottish Literary Criticism' in Horst W Drescher and Herman Volkel (eds.) *Scottish Studies: Nationalism in Literature*, pp.150-1.
- <sup>74</sup> Comments following a paper at the Stories of Ireland conference, Queen's University, Belfast, July 2nd, 1997.
- <sup>75</sup> Alan Freeman, 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*' in Susanne Hagemann (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), p.252, and 'Ourselves as Others', *Edinburgh Review* No.95 (1996), p.141.
- <sup>76</sup> It should be noted that there is no Scottish critic of the stature of Seamus Deane, David Lloyd or Terry Eagleton (although the historian, Chris Harvie, might suggest otherwise) and no critic of the prominence of Edward Said has written on, say, Burns or Scott, although Angus Calder, Cairns Craig and Robert Crawford are clearly contenders.
- <sup>77</sup> Lori Rogers, *Feminine Nation: Performance, Gender and Resistance in the Works of John McGahern and Neil Jordan* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1997), p.5.
- <sup>78</sup> See Luke Gibbons, 'Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History' in Robert Young (ed.), *Neocolonialism*, *Oxford Literary Review* Vol. 13 Nos. 1-2 (1991), pp.95-117.

- <sup>79</sup> Lynda E. Boose, "'The Getting of a Lawful Race': Racial Discourse in Early Modern England and the Unrepresentable Black Woman', in Margo Hendricks and Patricia Parker (eds.), *Race, Women and Writing in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), p.36.
- <sup>80</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History', p. 97.
- <sup>81</sup> Lori Rogers, *Feminine Nation: Performance, Gender and Resistance in the Works of John McGahern and Neil Jordan*, p.6.
- <sup>82</sup> See *The Wretched of the Earth*, especially, 'Concerning Violence' and 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness'.
- <sup>83</sup> Michael Gardiner, 'Democracy and Scottish Postcoloniality', p.27.
- <sup>84</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'Writing "Race" and the Difference It Makes' in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed.), *'Race', Writing, and Difference* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1986), p.13. To relate this to Deane's comments on essentialism and Spivak's notion of 'strategic essentialism' see Shaun Richards 'Progressive Regression in Contemporary Irish Culture'.
- <sup>85</sup> Roy Foster, 'We are all Revisionists Now', *Irish Review* No. 1 (1986), p.4.
- <sup>86</sup> Andrew Murphy, 'Reviewing the Paradigm: A new look at early-modern Ireland', *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 31 Nos. 3-4 (1996), p. 17.
- <sup>87</sup> Russell Jacoby, 'Marginal Returns: The Trouble with Post-colonial Theory', *Lingua Franca*, (September-October, 1995), p.32.
- <sup>88</sup> Mrinalini Sinha, 'Historia Nervosa or Who's afraid of Colonial-Discourse Analysis?' in *Journal of Victorian Culture* Vol. 2 No. 1 (Spring, 1997), p.117.
- <sup>89</sup> Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-colonialism"' in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1994), p.293.
- <sup>90</sup> See Stephen Slemon and Helen Tiffin, *After Europe* (Mundelestrup: Dangeroo Press, 1989), and Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory* (London: Verso, 1992).
- <sup>91</sup> Ketu Katrak, 'Decolonizing Culture: Towards a Theory for Postcolonial Women's Texts', *Modern Fiction Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (Spring, 1989), p.158.
- <sup>92</sup> Edward Said, 'Travelling Theory' in *The World, the Text and the Critic* (London: Faber and Faber, 1983), p.239.

- <sup>93</sup> Anne McClintock, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-colonialism"', p.293.
- <sup>94</sup> Ella Shohat, 'Notes on the Postcolonial', in *Social Text*, Nos. 31/32, (1992), p.101.
- <sup>95</sup> Aijaz Ahmad, 'The Politics of Literary Postcoloniality', *Race and Class* Vol. 36 No. 3 (1995), pp.8-9.
- <sup>96</sup> See for example hooks' discussion of the appropriation of black history as a metaphor for white women's oppression in *Ain't I a Woman* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), Chapter Four.
- <sup>97</sup> Michael Gardiner, 'Democracy and Scottish Postcoloniality', p.39.
- <sup>98</sup> Dermot Bolger, introduction to *The Picador Book of Contemporary Irish Fiction* (London: Picador, 1994), p.xiii.
- <sup>99</sup> David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), p.88.
- <sup>100</sup> Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), pp.17-18.
- <sup>101</sup> Bart Moore-Gilbert, 'Postcolonialism: between nationalitarianism and globalisation? A response to Simon During', p.63.
- <sup>102</sup> Marilyn Reizbaum, 'Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing' in Karen R. Lawrence (ed.), *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth Century "British" Literary Canons* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p.166.
- <sup>103</sup> See Robert Crawford *Devolving English Literature*, p.286, and Patricia Horton, "'Bagpipe Music": Some Intersections in Scottish and Irish Writing', *Scotlands* Vol. 4 No. 2, pp.67-80.

## Chapter Two

### Making Herstory: The Drama of the Nation

every cultural narrative ... is in some sense a reinterpretation of its own history; an attempt to retell the story of the past as it relates to the present (Richard Kearney).<sup>1</sup>

the general mode for the postcolonial is citation, reinscription, re-routing the historical (Gayatri Spivak).<sup>2</sup>

In this chapter I shall draw on Gayatri Spivak's definition of postcolonial writing in order to explore the ways in which contemporary drama approaches its cultural location through the restaging of defining moments in the nation's history. Work by a number of important Scottish and Irish playwrights, Liz Lochhead, Brian Friel, and Frank McGuinness, uses the recurrent presentation and representation of particular historical figures in popular culture in order to critique notions of tradition as well as ideas of progress. These dramatists address ways of disrupting received ideas of nation and identity in order to overturn cultural clichés and stereotypes. Yet their plays also seek to assert the integrity of their respective theatres, recognising the importance of wider cultural influences without surrendering a distinctive and explicitly 'local' singularity.

There are two contradictory forces at work here: one which seeks to replace or affirm an historical tradition and another which explores the cross-fertilisation of

cultures and the shifting, overlapping identities which this produces. Nevertheless, these forces are often to be found in the same work, drawing attention to the performative basis of representation and identity. It is important to note that it is frequently the vocabulary, as much as the content of postcolonial criticism and of Scottish and Irish drama, which provides insight into this complex relationship. Postcolonialism approaches many of its key concepts through performative terms. The strongest source of performance related terms stems from the idea of the nation as a narrative drama. The space of the nation, one of its fundamental areas of legitimisation, is conceived through action and demonstration. Similarly, the nation requires cultural characteristics that can be displayed and then used to define its particular political role.

The narrative of nation and its relation to other national formations and cultures has frequently been presented in gendered terms. This is true both in terms of symbols - Ireland is commonly figured as Cathleen ni Houlihan, an old woman who walks 'like a queen' in Yeats' play - and of characters - Scottishness has often been associated with an aggressive and violent masculinity. This can be related to colonial discourse, which relies heavily on gendered metaphors of conquest and submission, and to colonialism, which is generally presented in terms of encounters between men. As Ashis Nandy has shown, imperial discourse works towards a reshaping of norms of sexuality in a colonial people by emphasising an aggressive masculinity in contrast to passive femininity.<sup>3</sup> At the same time imperialism extends the sexual metaphors to match those of dominance and subservience within the colonial relationship, creating a 'masculine' coloniser ruling over the 'feminine' colonised. This then shapes an apparently 'natural' framework in which hierarchies of race and gender can be seen to

operate. As Robert Young notes, the definition of racial difference through gender ‘has the effect of reaffirming the increasingly contested inequality of gender relations by assimilating them to the larger scheme of race, and what was known as “the natural history of man”’.<sup>4</sup> Or as Spivak puts it: ‘the discourse of man is in the metaphor of woman’.<sup>5</sup> Thus the role of women presents a threefold challenge to nationalism, colonialism and drama.

With the cautions of Young and Spivak in mind, I want to first look at the ways in which Friel and Lochhead 're-route' the historical in their plays, *Making History* and *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, and then go on to introduce a third play, *Mutabilitie*, by Frank McGuinness. *Mutabilitie* draws upon the same historical period as the other two works, and shares many of their preoccupations. McGuinness's play can be seen to combine and extend the treatment of those issues of textuality and performance which are raised in Friel and Lochhead. Close comparative readings of these three plays highlight how writers use gender identities to call into question inscriptions of the nation, colonial experience and normative definitions of culture, history and identity.

The relationship between nation and drama has always been one of testing and negotiation. The nation is brought into being through the acknowledgement of acting, speaking subjects, and their re-enactment in theatre is crucial to the self-recognition of nationhood. Thus drama provides a creative space in which to stage the nation: a place to imaginatively construct both its essence (in terms of identity and cohesion) and its teleology - the direction of the national narrative. Christopher Murray argues that

drama serves as a mirror, which reflects the form and development of the nation and in doing so fulfils a dual function of representation and critique.

In the Irish historical experience drama (the creation of texts for performance) and theatre (the formation of the means of production and conditions of reception of drama) were both instrumental in defining and sustaining national consciousness.<sup>6</sup>

This passage can be instructively compared to Tom Maguire's argument that 'the development and use of any Scottish drama ... became a declaration of post-colonial aspirations' and that the maintenance of such ongoing creativity requires a 'rise in consciousness' as well as 'a conducive material reality'.<sup>7</sup> The primary problem faced by Scottish dramatists, according to Maguire, is one of economic independence from the cultural values of the English metropolitan centre. It would seem that such cultural and financial autonomy could only be approached through directly political means. Yet Maguire, along with Angus Calder, Cairns Craig and other Scottish intellectuals, suggests that the renewed focus on the arts as an arena in which to claim Scottish cultural integrity and identity has led to a process of 'cultural substitution', whereby the arts take on the burden of representation in the face of political failure.<sup>8</sup> Less pessimistically, Randall Stevenson compares the position of Scottish drama in the 1970s with that of Ireland in the early twentieth century: 'given Scotland's politics in recent decades, its drama has been likelier to critique extant structures of power, than to confirm them, ending up closer as a result to the model of Yeats than of Shakespeare'.<sup>9</sup> He goes on to suggest that 'theatre ... functions as a context in which society can examine its sense of self' (p.17), a perspective which concurs with that of

Murray when he says 'Drama helps society find its bearings; it both ritualises and interrogates national identity'.<sup>10</sup> This is supported further by the words of the Scottish Trades Union Congress's Art Officer, Christine Hamilton, who emphasises the political potency of cultural assertion: 'we use culture as promotion, and as resistance'.<sup>11</sup>

In an essay that draws some fruitful comparisons between the different approaches to historical material taken by Friel and McGuinness, Ulrich Schneider observes:

The theatre has retained its original function as a forum where important topical issues are debated. In Ireland political and historical questions still rank highly among them. Writing and staging history remain important contributions to the making of history.<sup>12</sup>

Schneider's comment, stressing the extent to which contemporary theatre's engagement with history passes beyond a reflection of a cultural debate and becomes an intervention in that debate, is equally applicable to Scottish theatre. This confirms the stage as an arena in both Scottish and Irish public life where the currency of the nation can be placed in historical and cultural terms, providing not only a space within which the nation can be represented, but also one in which to imagine its future. The sense of shape and direction which theatre offers the national narrative is invaluable in contesting an idea of cultural identity that is fixed upon an outdated and fossilised tradition. Liz Lochhead's play challenges a certain defeatist view of history as a closed

system with no openings, by offering the national past as a contemporary concern, and furthermore one which is open to question and criticism. First staged by Communicado in 1987, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* displays all those features of 'theatrical flexibility' which Maguire aligns with a 'post-colonial creative energy' (p.92). Indeed much of Maguire's analysis revolves around the direction and achievements of particular theatre companies, (a similar direction to that taken in a number of the essays in *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies*), notably the ground-breaking work of 7:84 (Scotland), and Communicado. 7:84's production of John McGrath's play, *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil* in 1973 might be seen as the founding of a distinctly anti-colonial theatre in Scotland. Indeed, many of the dramatic techniques which McGrath makes use of in this play had a strong influence on the development of Communicado, both companies drawing directly on innovative creative strategies to unsettle the cultural and political status quo. Of comparable importance and outlook, although entirely different in approach, was the formation of Field Day, the company responsible for the première of *Making History* in 1985.

The Field Day Theatre Company was founded in 1980 in Derry by Brian Friel and the actor, Stephen Rea, and soon established a board of directors made up of leading academics and artists. These included Seamus Deane, Tom Paulin and Seamus Heaney, all of whom originated from the North, although they were not necessarily based there. Originally operating as a cross-border touring company, Field Day broadened its interests to include the publication of a series of pamphlets which set out to explore the Irish experiences of language, literature and culture in the context of imperialism and globalisation, or as Eamonn Hughes puts it 'to re-examine

the various pieties of Irish cultural life'.<sup>13</sup> According to Stephen Rea, one of the purposes of the touring company was to bring theatre to people who would not normally have access to it, and to engender change by encouraging people to 'choose the history that is enabling to you rather than one that holds you back'.<sup>14</sup> From the outset then, Field Day was concerned with issues of history, translation and transformation. However, for some commentators the tensions between drama, theatre and polemic have obscured the company's founding purpose and constitute an 'unhealthy intersection' of art and politics in which 'imaginative possibility' is blocked by 'political fixity'.<sup>15</sup> As Martine Pelletier observes, the founding of Field Day 'was soon to turn into a controversial politico-intellectual adventure, putting history and literature at the top of their agenda'.<sup>16</sup> Field Day and its commentators were caught between the demands of asserting an alternative history in the sense of tradition (which eventually crystallised in the form of the anthology) and the attempt to articulate a radical heterogeneity of identity and experience by theatrical means. These different activities were, of course, conceived as mutually supportive, the pamphlets providing intellectual or theoretical 'evidence' for the rationale of the plays. However, the differences between the two media clearly pointed to non-compatible agendas. As Murray comments: 'All Field Day plays insist that the problem of identity is best understood theatrically, involving audiences in the process of redefinition'.<sup>17</sup> Yet the plays themselves can also be seen to demonstrate an awareness of this tension, for example Friel's *The Communication Cord*, which can be read as a response to those who took *Translations* as an elegy for a lost past. In the same vein, yet through substantially different means, *Making History* attempts to tackle the performative basis of identity in the context of words rather than actions.

*Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* and *Making History*, both written in the last decade, deal with Anglo-Scottish and Anglo-Irish concerns by looking at two often sentimentalised and scandalous losers in history, Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and Mary Queen of Scots, reframing them in non-romantic terms. Brian Friel's *Making History* deals with the life of O'Neill from before the battle of Kinsale to the end of his life, exiled in Rome, drunken and near destitute. It emphasises his private life, his marriage to Mabel Bagenal (one of the New English and sister to the Queen's Marshall), as well as O'Neill's difficult relationship with his political advisor, Archbishop Peter Lombard, who intends to write a heroic biography of O'Neill. Liz Lochhead's play is set in an almost identical period and focuses on the relationship between Mary Queen of Scots and Elizabeth I of England, and their respective nations. It also considers Mary's relations with her subjects, particularly the Reformer, John Knox, and the Earl of Bothwell, with whom she eventually runs away. The play is structured in short episodes, loosely framed and held together by La Corbie, a narrator in the figure of a crow, and is mostly written in Scots. It is deliberately non-naturalistic: actors playing the queens also take roles as each others' maids, and as street urchins. In the closing scene, they become modern day children, enacting the playground rhyme, 'Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off', in a final re-presentation of the action of the play.

By returning to stories of four hundred years ago both Lochhead and Friel demonstrate a continuing engagement with history as a means of addressing contemporary concerns. Both writers consider the role of women in the creation and inscription of history, relating this to the numerous cultural myths which impinge upon us today, yet with distinct techniques and results. One feature of post-colonial theory

is a desire to read the intersection of culture and history as 'unfinished business', and Friel and Lochhead's use of a culturally inscribed yet shifting temporality strongly sites them as post-colonial writers. Ironically, Friel's approach to history has frequently led to comparisons with the projects of revisionist historians such as Roy Foster, yet the attitudes of those literary critics most frequently aligned with revisionism would suggest otherwise.<sup>18</sup> The central disagreement appears to be whether Friel explicitly uses the historical as a context in which to discuss the contemporary moment, or whether he has something to say about history as such. As Frank McGuinness observes in a recent interview, this distinction may be a result of conflicting loyalties within Friel's work:

Jacqueline Hurlley: Going back to Friel, I understand you wouldn't agree with Edna Longley who says that she sees his work as ahistorical in spite of, as she says, the historical trappings.

Frank McGuinness: I think she's got a very valid point there actually. ... I think what is wonderful about his work is that he makes this marvellous attempt to fly free from time but his own integrity holds him back there.... There's a remarkable continuity about Friel's work for a man who does try to defy time and for a man who does, I think, have a strong attraction to the historical.<sup>19</sup>

McGuinness's comments seem to echo those of Stephen Dedalus in *The Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, when he articulates the tyranny of traditional discourses of Ireland: 'You talk to me of nationality, language and religion. I shall try to fly by those nets'.<sup>20</sup> Stephens objects to the 'debt' of history, and a sense of obligation to the martyrs of Irish nationalism, but as his friend Davin suggests these sentiments are prompted by a kind of pride. What McGuinness articulates in relation to Friel conveys the same desire to escape those fixities that seek to contain fiction, together with the sense of responsibility that demands the playwright challenge and interrogate their dominance.

Homi Bhabha has written prolifically on the problematic use of temporality in modernism and modernity, and has gone on to link this difficulty to the narrative of the nation. Bhabha's analysis focuses on the ambivalence of the nation as 'a transitional social reality' which is cast in narrative teleology as a cultural constant, demonstrated by 'concrete, visible links' to a national past. The 'now' of the narrative of the nation continually makes incursive raids on the origins of its self-justification in an ongoing presentation and re-presentation of its legitimacy and identity. In Bhabha's words:

The present of the people's history ... destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past, which is often represented in the reified forms of realism and the stereotype.<sup>21</sup>

Both Friel and Lochhead are to some extent involved in the destruction of those 'constant principles'. Lochhead's play uses a combination of Brechtian techniques and

music hall aesthetics, such as the doubling or trebling of roles and the use of song, in order to relate the national and the personal, without attempting to assign a singular historical consciousness to either. Friel, on the other hand, uses language to link concepts such as 'truth' and 'fidelity' at personal and national levels. His play does more than simply question them as criteria; it explores how the vocabulary of private consciousness intersects with that of political determination. Each then goes some way towards expressing a continuity of significance between sixteenth and twentieth century nations, without stating a too literal or causal relation between the two moments.<sup>22</sup>

Friel chooses to prioritise fiction over history (a position he elaborates in the programme notes to *Making History*<sup>23</sup>), by drawing directly from fictional recreations in popular history, specifically Sean O'Faolain's *The Great O'Neill*.<sup>24</sup> Indeed he is deliberately historically 'inaccurate', in order to focus on the text of history as an anachronistic and mobile medium of knowledge, a method of cultural transmission. This is not to say that the content itself is unimportant. 'History' is not a neutral and transparent ether, just as it is not an objective and absolute representation of 'truth'. But the making of history as action and the making of history as text are comparable because Friel clearly shows that representing history is also an act, a series of choices, and that all these actions are inaccessible to us except as text. Indeed, following Derrida's famous phrase, 'there is no[thing] outside [the] text', Friel argues that the *reception* of history is what should exercise us, as a reading of the texts which form and inform our lives. Christopher Murray suggests that *Making History* engages with Paul Ricoeur's *History and Truth* and the latter's discussion of the subjective – objective dialectic. According to Ricoeur: 'we expect history to have a certain

objectivity which is proper to it', yet history remains history only to the extent that 'the meaning of it remains confused and entangled'.<sup>25</sup> Friel's play charts the entanglement of history and fiction and the demands made upon both in the name of the nation.

Whilst Friel uses language to emphasise the textuality of experience, Lochhead stresses the performative in order to highlight interpretation as active intervention. From the very beginning of the play, La Corbie, the 'ambiguous' narrator, draws attention to the subjectivity of her nation and her narrative:

La Corbie: Country: Scotland. Whit like is it?

It's a peatbog, it's a daurk forest.

It's a cauldron o' lye, a saltpan or a coal mine.

If you're gey lucky it's a bricht bere meadow or a park o' kye.

Or mibbe ... it's a field o' stanes...

It depends. It depends ... Ah dinnae ken whit like *your*

Scotland is. Here's mines. (p.11).

La Corbie also adapts and uses recognisable ballads and poems which re-tell the story of Mary in between scenes, drawing attention to the artificiality of drama and the layers of representation which make up any cultural recognition of Mary Queen of Scots.<sup>26</sup> La Corbie's involvement with the action of various scenes, offering props, possible interpretations, asides and accompanying songs, demonstrates the impossibility of representing history without taking part in that narrative, and to a

certain extent compromising it. This negotiation of past and present is a constant performance that the use of drama can only heighten, and for Lochhead it serves to accentuate her own intervention in the process. Likewise, Friel draws attention to his method in *Making History* by creating numerous parallels between his work and that of the character of Peter Lombard. In the first scene of the play, Lombard, in a discussion on the current political situation, reveals his thesis: 'If we are to understand the Irish situation fully we must go back more than four hundred years' (p.12). Similarly Friel returns from 1988 to 1591, to a point of both temporal and spatial moment, of which he says: 'that was a very significant time for Ulster, that was when the first broad primary colours were splashed on the canvas. And what happened then is still exercising us'.<sup>27</sup> Whilst this might seem to suggest the validity of a single starting point, the artistic metaphor reminds us once more of the processes of representation. Friel rehearses the different types of history in a sort of history of historiography, from romantic biography to critical commentary, from rumours to government reports, yet ultimately his project is self-referential, as can be seen from Lombard's reasoning in the final stages of the play.

Towards the end of *Making History*, Lombard argues that Mabel's story 'at some future time and in a mode we can't imagine now ... will be told fully and sympathetically ... it will be a domestic story' (p.69), and indeed this is the story that Friel tells in his presentation of O'Neill as a very 'private' man. Yet this play, as has been well documented, was written on the suggestion of another historian, Sean O'Faolain, from his semi-fictional biography of O'Neill. The circularity of this representational history emphasises not only the struggle of history to recover its subject, but the fictionality of any definitive starting point. In this struggle, Friel

focuses attention on Mabel and her absence from the histories of Ireland as contributing to a certain narrowness of national perspective as well as to a longstanding imbalance of power between the sexes. However, like O'Faolain's book, Friel's play, though in a sense domestic (in that the action takes place at home, rather than, say, in battle), is still O'Neill's story and not Mabel's. But this is something I will return to a little later.

In *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, Lochhead returns to an almost identical period, and addresses the cyclical nature of history, by a deliberately anachronistic use of props and costume, timescale and framing devices (for example, Knox wears a bowler hat and carries an umbrella, Riccio uses a typewriter, and in the particular stage production which this writer saw in 1992, Queen Elizabeth bore an uncanny resemblance to Margaret Thatcher, heightened by a trademark Thatcher handbag). 'History' is also posed as a problem for Mary and Elizabeth, on both a personal and a national level. In Scene Two an array of ambassadors and suitors seeking to make a match with the two queens prompt a series of juxtapositions between Elizabeth and Mary, a sort of balancing act in which all things are never quite equal. It is also a preliminary examination of the interconnections among the sexual, political and religious attitudes of renaissance and contemporary Scotland. The beginning of the Reformation in the mid-sixteenth century is a particularly pertinent time for drama, because it was during this period that the Kirk began to push for a suppression of theatre, identifying secular and dramatic entertainment in particular with Satan and idolatry. These religious perspectives fed into sexual and political ones, such that the Reformation is seen to have exerted a resounding influence across the centuries in Scotland.<sup>28</sup> Whether this is still true is uncertain. Lochhead's play would

suggest that it is not so much the religious concerns of this era that should concern us, but how the values of that religion persist in an apparently secular society.

Despite their status as queens, neither Mary nor Elizabeth is able to make a personal, individual choice of husband. They are tied by numerous, conflicting allegiances, and a 'history', which also binds them together. Struggling between national and personal narratives, Mary dreams of transcending gender identities in order to find an elusive conclusion:

Mary: Indeed I wish that Elizabeth was a man and I would willingly marry her! And wouldn't that make an end of all debates! (p.15).

Yet, as the later scenes show, Mary's fantasy is futile and there is no 'end of all debates', only a constant circulation of language. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* is full of gossip, whispers, rehearsed speech and play-acting. In a scene which plays on a constant switching between roles (Mary becomes Marian, Elizabeth's maid, where earlier Elizabeth was Mary's maid, Bessie) Elizabeth prompts Marian into rehearsing the public comparisons between the queens: 'Is she fairer than me? What do they say?' Whilst this parody of a public conversation is one form of gossip, 'what they say' goes beyond formal question and answer, as Marian points out:

Then madam, I beg you to marry the Earl of Leicester, for there is such scandal, a babble getting louder and louder all the time.  
(p.18).

At issue is control over who says what. As Elizabeth, and more obviously Hugh O'Neill demonstrate, the political ability to regulate and manipulate narrative is crucial. O'Neill uses Mabel's sister Mary to feed misleading information to 'our Henry' the Queen's Marshal, playing on the stereotypes which Mary constructs and accepts: 'I'm loyal today - disloyal tomorrow - you know how capricious we Gaels are' (p.26). Later on, in the throes of a guerrilla war, he relies on the reports brought to him by Harry and O'Donnell, looking for names, numbers and places, but dismissing 'what everybody at home is saying'. Lochhead's Elizabeth is similarly adept at the deployment of narrative in order to exercise control over a situation. For instance when she makes use of shadow advisors in order to create an acceptable narrative to deal with the inconvenient residence of Mary in the Tower, Elizabeth declares:

I am the Virgin Queen! I love my cousin Queen Mary ... And  
my so-called 'wise advisors' would have to trick me before I  
would consent to sign a warrant for her death.

Would have to trick me. Trick me. Trick me! (p.63).

The stage directions clearly indicate that the repeated phrase 'trick me' becomes a command, indicating not only Elizabeth's political strategy, but the multiplicity of any statement, and the element of the performative that influences its interpretation. Elizabeth uses male advisors to ventriloquate her desires, maintaining her control by disguising orders as aspects of feminine naiveté. She effectively re-writes history as it takes place.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, Elizabeth's language deliberately stresses her 'feminine' qualities: she is 'the Virgin Queen' and by implication innocent (particularly of

political subterfuge); similarly her 'love' for her cousin is emphasised as evidence of her sympathetic and affectionate nature. Crucially, Elizabeth's success lies in the ability to construct a 'character' which is at once socially 'representative' and politically unique.

Unlike Elizabeth, but like O'Neill, Mary's difficulty lies in bridging the gaps between herself and her nation; in finding a language in which to reconcile the opposing forces of her various subjects, as well as her own desires. Through the course of the play she becomes more confident in her own readings of the narratives she is presented with, and, discarding any belief in the possibility of a single truth which could "mak sense o' it a'" (p.17), she attempts to represent both herself and her people. This can be compared to O'Neill's dual charge of 'holding together a harassed people' and 'opening them up towards changing evaluations and beliefs' (p.40), a task which he finds 'almost self-cancelling'. This throws up questions of hybridity and cross-cultivation in both writers, and presents a challenge to post-colonial theory, which seeks to find value in such dialogic relations as images of possibility rather than reflections of a neutralising impasse. In both cases, the difficulty once again is to reconcile the demands of a tradition, which tends towards static figures of representation, with those of a society-in-change which point to multiplicity and heterogeneity.

Gayatri Spivak suggests that the aim of post-colonial theory should be to move towards the ambiguity of representation, the roles of proxy and portrait that have different repercussions yet involve an overlapping aesthetic or imaginative displacement. In Spivak's view:

radical practice should attend to this double session of representations rather than re-introduce the individual subject through totalizing concepts of power and desire.<sup>30</sup>

In *Making History*, Peter Lombard argues that the historian's narrative is 'determined by the needs and demands and the expectations of different people and different eras' (p.16) and so his duty is to the present moment: 'now is the time for a hero' (p.67). As Elmer Andrews points out, Friel clearly pulls our sympathy towards the drunken and destitute O'Neill begging for 'truth' rather than the confident detachment of Lombard.<sup>31</sup> Friel makes O'Neill painfully aware of his process of translation into national hero and O'Neill's opposition to this 'florid lie' shows (in Christopher Murray's words) 'how ideology appropriates the individual as a figurehead' - or in Mary's case a figure without a head!<sup>32</sup> The irony here is that the individual is sacrificed to the myth of the individual - history is made 'human' in the form of a single life story, yet in order to encompass the national story within that, those particularly human aspects of love, friendship and bereavement are pushed out. Contemporary audiences are thus invited to recognise the difference of the historical figure, to insert themselves into the text of history and so distinguish the same words, sounding different, as their part of the circular process of the representation of the nation.

In *Mutabilitie*, Frank McGuinness chooses to re-examine the most famous figure from English cultural history, William Shakespeare. He does this in the context of the relationship between the English poet, Edmund Spenser, (who, at least in terms of his career as a settler and civil servant in Ireland, could be cast alongside Mary and

O'Neill as a notorious failure) and his Irish servants. *Mutabilitie* is set a few years later than the opening of Friel's play, roughly in 1598 when Spenser's castle at Kilcolman, Co. Cork was burned down, although since Shakespeare is not known to have visited Ireland and McGuinness specifies no date, this is as much a fictional moment as an historical one. As in *Making History*, the dark shadow of Elizabeth I falls across the text, without her ever having to appear onstage as a character. She is Spenser's muse, his 'Faerie Queen', and William's 'ambition'. Somewhat confusingly (although in a move which could be compared to Lochhead's role-swapping technique), Spenser's wife is also called Elizabeth, a name which as the File, an Irish bard, ominously points out, 'rhymes with death'.<sup>33</sup> Within the play, cultural practice, and drama in particular, are seen as central to the understanding of socio-political development. Each of the three groups around which the play develops all draw their identity to some extent from the arts: the Spenser family through the frustrated poet; the English captives who are travelling players; and the Irish bard, the File, who is 'instructed in poetry ... magic... law and languages' (p.7), and whose prophecy forms the basis of the plot.

The figure of Shakespeare is seen to be one who embraces both cultures. As an Englishman, he is welcomed into Spenser's castle, and seen to be 'a civilized man'. However, as a Catholic, the Irish receive him as the fulfilment of the File's prophesy, which is spoken early on in the play:

And a man shall come from a river,  
He shall gleam like a spear, like a fish,  
He shall kill and he shall feed us,  
He shall lie and he shall heed us,  
He shall give us the gift of tongues

He shall do nor say nothing rash  
But shall sing the song of all songs,  
And a man shall come from a river.  
Bard meaning poet,  
River meaning aibhne. (Act I, sc. ii)

William is not only dragged from the river, he affirms his Catholicism by describing his mother throwing daisies into the river Avon on 'Our Lady's Day' (p.54). The File explains to William that he is 'A bard of Avon. A poet from the river' (p.55) and that he has come to them 'to be saved for Ireland, for England' (p.57). McGuinness uses the Irish title of bard to destabilise Shakespeare's association with the dominant English centre, and recalls Spenser's description of 'Bardes' from *A View of the State of Ireland*, a text which reappears at many crucial points in the play:

There are poets who labour in their writings to better the manners of men. Irish bards are of another mind. The most licentious, bold and lawless men, the most dangerous and most desperate, these are the men they set up and glorify in all parts of disobedience and rebellious disposition, these they praise to the people, and make an example for the young to follow. In all this their Bards lead the way, indulging their direst fantasies.<sup>34</sup>

Yet William is an unwilling rebel - 'I don't praise disobedience and spread discontent' - who has come not to save the Irish, but to apply to Spenser to 'get a job in the civil service' (p.50). Rather like Hugh O'Neill's rejection of Lombard's projected 'hero',

McGuinness's Shakespeare is wary of being 'burned to ashes' in the 'brilliant, everlasting fire' of his own creation (p.51). Ironically, it is the failure of William's 'fire' to match the expectations of the Irish that leads to the burning of Kilcolman and by the end of the play it becomes clear that the William's fear of 'the all-consuming theatre' is, to some extent, supported by the text. Indeed, *Mutabilitie* enacts within itself one aspect of this sense of 'consumption', by its inter-textual allusions to Spenser's *View and The Faerie Queene*, and Shakespeare's sonnets, as well as *The Tempest*, *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*, and finally by the central 'play-within-a-play', the Fall of Troy, which McGuinness has described as 'a homage to Yeats'.<sup>35</sup> The title, 'Mutabilitie' refers to Spenser's much praised 'Mutabilitie Cantos', which appear in book seven of *The Faerie Queene*. It suggests the idea of transformation, both cultural - in the sense that McGuinness relocates Shakespeare and Spenser within an Irish cultural agenda - and political - by invoking the possibility of change in the relationship between Ireland and England.

William brings the Irish the art of theatre, which the File describes as 'God's gift to a Catholic who must speak in the language of a Protestant' (p.59). The importance of theatre as a place where one thing can be another is presented not only as a focus for mediation between the Irish and the English, as the File says to William, 'through you there will be peace between these nations' (p.58), but also an arena where such bland oppositions must be broken down. Here, McGuinness's theatre not only offers a place to re-invent the Irish-English dynamic, but also the male-female one and even that between the living and the dead:

**Annas** In this theatre they can be kings or queens or men and women.

**File** These man are allowed to become women?

**Annas** They call it playing a woman. They can be in love or hate each other, kiss and kill each other, and not love, nor die -

**File** They can rise from the dead in this theatre?

**Annas** It is a most extraordinary place. They can do and say and go anywhere in it. (pp.25-6).

The File's interest in the possibilities of raising the dead can be related to her acknowledgement of the importance of theatre as a liminal zone between the exercise of Protestant power and Catholic recusancy. In a review of *Mutabilitie*, Willy Maley offers an instructive reference to the work of the new historicist, Stephen Greenblatt: 'Those who have read Stephen Greenblatt's essay on *King Lear* will be intrigued by what McGuinness does with the idea of theatre as a place where Protestant hegemony could be questioned and challenged.'<sup>36</sup> Greenblatt's essay begins by referring to a traditionally acknowledged source-text for *King Lear*, Samuel Harsnett's *A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures*, published in London in 1603, and discusses Harsnett's denial of the presence of the demonic in the subjects of exorcism, which he attributes instead to the exorcists themselves.<sup>37</sup> Greenblatt suggests that Harsnett's strategy is part of an intense struggle in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth-centuries to define the sacred, fraught with questions such as: 'What is sacred? Who defines and polices its boundaries? How can society distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate claims to sacred authority?' (p.166). *Mutabilitie* contains a number of examples of just such a struggle, not only that between Protestant English

and Catholic Irish, but also between Catholic English and Protestant Colonial English, and finally between art and religion within each sect. Among the Irish there is a muted conflict between the File's prophesy and Donal's cry of blasphemy, just as Spenser's prayer to 'our divine sovereign Elizabeth of England', figurehead of the Protestant cause, is complicated by the description of the virgin Mary which he transfers to Elizabeth: 'Most gracious virgin, lady most pure, lady immaculate, tower of ivory, pearl of Christ' (p.23).

Greenblatt sites this struggle specifically in the realm of theatre, questioning the extent to which Shakespeare's *King Lear* corroborates Harsnett's arguments. Theatre is central to the issue of sacred authority because Harsnett uses a theatrical analysis to expose the fraudulent basis of exorcism: 'exorcisms are stage plays fashioned by cunning clerical dramatists and performed by actors skilled in improvisation' (p.169). Greenblatt argues that the repetition of this strategy within theatre empties it of meaning, leaving a deeper uncertainty rather than the affirmation of an 'authentic' Protestant claim to authority. Furthermore, the retreat of Protestant religious institutions from this very arena of theatricality (which was now indelibly marked as 'Popish devilry') left a vacuum that was rapidly occupied by Shakespeare's theatre (p.182). This observation is central to McGuinness's mobilisation of Shakespeare, who literally assumes the role of both religious exorcist and possessed subject in a simultaneous appropriation of Catholic ritual and Protestant authority at the play's climax in act three.

*Mutabilitie* is neither myth nor parable. Its outward appearance derives from the Shakespearean five act play. Inwardly it is

subverting that genre's rules and regulations, setting out to dismantle its narrative, especially in the absolute fracturing and voices and stories at the end of Act 3. It is to this chaos that the action of the play leads to and from.<sup>38</sup>

There are two plays-within-a play in Act Three. The first is directed by William, who 'possesses' both the English and the Irish and, Prospero-like, raises a storm of voices in which the Irish enact the 'Fall of Troy' intercut by Spenser's recitation of the notorious description of the Munster famine from the *View*. William's spell seeks to transfer power to the theatre, but in doing so undoes the univocal authority so necessary to the maintenance and exercise of that power - what McGuinness calls 'the absolute fracturing of voices and stories':

Come, ye spirits, come. I call the poets of this house to speak as  
I declare. I call on them to serve my soul as I am their superior.  
File, gain the gift. Edmund, by my voice are you possessed.  
Servant of the queen receive my spite, be my servant. (p.74).

Andrew Hadfield has questioned whether 'transplanting Shakespeare to Ireland is a subversive gesture', asking: 'Isn't the effect to reinforce the myth of Shakespeare's universal genius?'.<sup>39</sup> The answer to this lies with Greenblatt's interpretation of theatre as a place whose exposure of 'spectacular imposture' evacuates the secure meaning invested in the display of power. Greenblatt concludes that 'Shakespeare's theatre empties out the centre that it represents' (p.184), and McGuinness's play takes this idea a step further by 'emptying out' Shakespeare. *Mutabilitie's* appropriation of

Shakespeare does not recuperate the myth of universal genius but asserts the local as the basis of creativity and political autonomy. As File recognises when she leaves William to return to his proper place - 'the loved soil of England': 'You are yourself what you imagined, as I am what I imagined. That is your gift to me' (p.93).

The stage offers the imaginative possibility of change without the decisive consummation of action, which is represented in the play by the burning of Kilcolman and, perhaps more brutally, by the double murders of Queen Maeve and Sweney, the mad Irish chieftain, as well as Ben and Richard, William's fellow actors. File's 'song of mutabilitie', 'pays homage to the principles of change, and change controls this earth and all its workings' (p.43). But her discussion with Elizabeth demonstrates that it is through a shift of imagination rather than the bloody exercise of power that a transformation is made possible. These 'late wars of Munster', (a phrase taken from *The View* which is repeated, almost as a chorus throughout the play)<sup>40</sup> have significantly altered the fortunes of the Irish chieftains and their followers, but have left untouched the antipathy between Irish and English:

**File** I too have suffered change in these late wars of Munster -

**Elizabeth** Damn these late wars of Munster -

**File** Indeed, for these same wars do contradict my argument.

The English won, the Irish lost. There is no change to that pattern. But having won us, come to love us. Change your hate to love. (p.43)

In direct contrast to File's attitude is that of the priest, Donal, who is perhaps the most bloodthirsty and unforgiving character in the play. Unlike Queen Maeve, whose bitterness is manifest in her attitudes towards both the English hostages and her Irish servants, but highlighted by the strength of her attachment to the mad Sweney, Donal does not even have love to redeem him. He represents 'the reactionary force of the Catholic Church' here, scared of a theatre which might replace his own role within society, and desperately frightened of more change.<sup>41</sup> At the end of the play, Niall, Annas, Hugh and the File recognise themselves as a new generation, whereas Donal's plea to 'drink the warrior blood of your dead' (p.97) suggests a regressive step into the past and a desperate attachment to a failed tradition. Before this, the murders of Ben and Richard reverse the colonial relationship, making them the victims of a brutal drama. The second play-within-a-play in the third act aligns Donal, Annas and Niall in a theatre of violence. The three act out a trial of accusation and judgement, supported by the typically theatrical props of 'strange robes' and 'flashing light and wild music' (p.80). The relationship between church and theatre is not an innocent one, and *Mutabilitie* specifically condemns the repetition of the Catholic enactment of blood sacrifice. Like Cathleen ni Houlihan, Queen Maeve seeks to sacrifice her sons in the bloody and vengeful redemption of Ireland. Yet the new generation is offered the possibility of overcoming the Old Testament logic of 'an eye for an eye' by the New Testament principle of repentance. Strangely, the outcome of this is something which might be called a proto-diaspora, for the remaining Irish are condemned to renounce their kingdom and 'walk as beggars through the earth' in penitence for the deaths of Maeve and Sweney, (p.96). This might seem a rather unsatisfactory conclusion to the play were it not for the final scene in which the Irish come across one of Spenser's children who has been abandoned, assumed to have been killed in the fire.<sup>42</sup> The child

presents two choices, one of revenge and the other of reconciliation. Donal immediately petitions for the former, but Hugh, in an act which at once assimilates and appropriates, chooses to break the cycle of culpability and force:

**Niall** An English child.

**Donal** A hostage.

**Hugh** We have a child. He is to be fostered as our own. Reared as our own. Nurtured like our own, and natured like his own, as decreed by our laws, our customs, our religion. (pp.100-101).

Adoption, or fostering, is one of the ways in which the need for change can be reconciled with that of continuity and coherence. Much as Friel's Hugh struggles in 'holding together a harassed people' and 'opening them up towards changing evaluations and beliefs' (p.40), McGuinness's Hugh attempts to invest in the child whose adoption does not erase his 'nature', but opens a relationship between colonised and coloniser which is structured in mutual intelligibility rather than antagonism.

The importance of fostering and patronage in the Irish-English relationship has been explored by Patricia Fumerton in a challenging essay which brings Mauss's anthropological explanation of gift exchange (based upon Malinowski's fieldwork in Papua New Guinea) to bear upon the Elizabethan practice of child exchange, or 'placing-out'.<sup>43</sup> Fosterage, observes Fumerton, 'was an even more dominant feature of Irish than of English culture' (p.254), and one which was regulated in precise detail by Brehon Law. In addition to this, fostering established a relationship of mutual

obligation between families, the social and political implications of which were profoundly important. The dangerous strength of such alliances threatened the basis of English influence in Irish affairs, which represented itself in terms of an absolute split between English 'civilization' and Irish 'barbarity':

The precise threat to English self-image was one of absorption or inclusion. Rather than the English drawing the Irish into their centripetal cultural circle, the reverse occurred: the Irish absorbed English settlers into their cultural round. Fosterage, complains Spenser (and just about every other English observer), reinforced this process of assimilation (p.256).

Indeed Hugh's adoption of the English child would appear to continue this pattern, yet with the removal of the Spensers from Cork, it cannot be seen to assimilate the English family in the way Fumerton suggests. She goes on to discuss the importance of Hugh O'Neill, who was placed with the Sidney family from 1559 to 1566, as 'the gift child' who demonstrated the absolute rupture between the two different systems of child exchange.<sup>44</sup> O'Neill's rebellion is described as 'undutifull' by Spenser in the *View*, and for the Elizabethans it was a betrayal of the spirit of gift exchange answerable only by war.<sup>45</sup> A different perspective on this is offered by Friel when O'Neill remembers Sir Henry Sidney and Lady Mary whom he 'loved very much'. O'Neill's thoughts stray to the memory of his last night when a 'slightly drunk' Sir Henry refers to him as 'Fox O'Neill' - tame when chained but once loose ready to turn wild again:

And then he laughed. And everybody joined in. And then a hundred people were laughing at me ...

I left the next morning before the household was awake. And ever since - up until this morning - ever since, that trivial little hurt, that single failure in years of courtesy has pulsed relentlessly in a corner of my heart. Until now. (p.35).

The reason Friel's O'Neill is now allowed to lay to rest this 'trivial little hurt' is the promise of a Spanish fleet with which to visit war upon England. The return of war in *Making History* is seen to answer, even fulfil, Sir Henry's statement. O'Neill re-invests Sidney's words with a different accent, so that 'wild' no longer connotes 'barbaric' in contrast to the 'civilization' of the English court. Rather, O'Neill's wildness is one that is borne out of a combination of his Irish nature and his English nurture. Indeed, Mabel argues that it is this combination which gives O'Neill his power: 'that's why the Queen doesn't know how to deal with you - you're the antithesis of what she expects a Gaelic chieftain to be. That's your strength.' (p.38).

In contrast, the child which McGuinness's Hugh chooses to foster rather than hold hostage offers a way of re-opening the circle of child exchange without recourse to the submerged threat of war. The difficulty in both cases is whether the individual (both Spenser child and O'Neill child) can represent the nation. O'Neill concludes his reverie in the negative - 'but all that is of no interest to anybody but myself' (*MH* p.35) - suggesting that Sidney's comment about 'the Irish' cannot help revealing what Spivak called the 'double session' of proxy and portrait.<sup>46</sup> In contrast to O'Neill, Spenser's child remains nameless, and has already perhaps resigned his or her

subjectivity in the interests of the symbolic. This child is a replacement for the offspring of Hugh and the File who died in the winter of the famine and thus represents more than the future of the Anglo-Irish relationship. In this respect the act of fostering overcomes what Elizabeth Butler Cullingford calls 'the heterosexual reconciliation scenario' in which the potential for a radical hybridity is undercut by the hierarchy of the male-female relationship.<sup>47</sup> Undoing the biological connection and replacing it with one of symbolism, and specifically generosity, McGuinness successfully avoids invoking the mutually reinforcing discourses of patriarchy and imperialism.

In *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, the complicity between proxy and portrait is addressed in terms of visual depiction and political representation. In the scene in which Riccio is murdered, a group of mummings manipulate Mary into playing the role of King Herod by placing a cardboard crown on her head and forcing her to read Herod's lines (p.54). Mary resists both the narrative and role, refusing to stand for the murderers in sanctioning Riccio's death by rejecting the assigned theatrical role. However, she is ultimately forced to read and thus take her part in the murder. In a comparable manner, Friel's concern with the processes of 'making history' inevitably threatens his own dramatic presentation of them. Lombard is a sort of proxy playwright, and his inevitable selection of content makes both his project and that of Friel seem almost heartless. Lombard is well-aware of the fictionality of history in its inscription, but like John Knox his use of narrative is part of a religious crusade in the name of 'the one true faith' and is ultimately an act of delimitation. For Friel however, we are all continually receiving and re-creating our

own texts and the narrative of history does not imply closure (as Hugh O'Neill suspects in the play) but an 'open embrace' of all other narratives and thus is subject to translation and transformation, as well as assimilation and appropriation.

Lochhead too goes beyond a simple investigation of the historical representations of figurehead or country. Drawing parallels and comparisons between Mary and Elizabeth, their maids, even street kids, Lochhead pulls our attention to the imprisoning cultural inscriptions of gender. By closing the play with the children's rhyme and their cruel teasing of Marie/Mary's religion and sexuality, Lochhead further demonstrates the complicity of history in a narrative of ongoing prejudice. In one of the few critical articles on Lochhead's play, Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie link the textuality of appropriating representation directly to gender:

Through a persistent metatextuality - a representational emphasis on representation itself - Lochhead's plays increase audience awareness of, and focus audience attention on, the ways in which meaning, including what women may 'mean' is textually produced and controlled.<sup>48</sup>

In *Making History*, Lombard can only see Mabel as woman, which means definable exclusively in her relationship to a man; she is one of O'Neill's four wives:

And all those ladies you chose as your wives - splendid and beautiful and loyal though they undoubtedly were - well, they didn't contribute significantly to - what was it Mabel herself

used to call it? - to the overall thing - wasn't that it? I mean they didn't re-route the course of history, did they? (p.68).

Lombard's assertion that 'they didn't reroute the course of history' (p.68) is ironic in that it his own action that prevents Mabel from representing, from re-inscribing certain blinkered histories of nationalism and colonialism.<sup>49</sup> In an interesting symmetry, the historian Hiram Morgan, who attacks the presentation of Lombard as historian in Friel's play, also dismisses the significance of O'Neill's wives. While Lombard denies their political or historical relevance, deeming them suitable simply for a private 'love story', Morgan denies Mabel any private significance, or agency at all, describing her marriage as 'a matter of power politics, not love'.<sup>50</sup>

This resonance between historians, fictional or otherwise, raises a troubling question, which is: does Friel's use of Mabel as symbol of both marginalisation and reconciliation end up by marginalising her all the more and so conclude with a dubious reconciliation of sexuality and submission? Christopher Murray notes a recurrent motif in Friel's plays, that of the idealised woman as a structural symbol, or as a muse to a central male character, and so reads Mabel as 'the fleeting possibility of unrealized harmony'.<sup>51</sup> 'Fleeting' and 'unrealized' are certainly descriptive of the character of Mabel in the play. She is on stage for less than a fifth of the action. Her death and the birth of a child occur offstage even before the beginning of Act Two - once she has fulfilled her role as a symbol of marginalisation, adaptation and hybridity she is conveniently killed off. Barry Sloan argues that Mabel's presence 'is felt at every turn', and that 'our awareness of her even when she is not visible' provides the crux of Friel's examination of the difficulties inherent in the idea of 'history' and who makes it. In this

vein, the partiality and incompleteness of history is explored, according to Sloan, 'through the interaction of the intimate "private" history of O'Neill's relationship with Mabel (Which Friel so movingly creates) and the "public" history of the politician, soldier and chieftain'.<sup>52</sup> Yet is this not perhaps to fall into the same trap as Lombard? To continually place Mabel as a symbol of O'Neill's private life, rather than as an active participant in her own? The difficulty is that Mabel comes to stand for so many other things that she becomes literally invisible and thus Friel and his critics recreate the process by which she is made peripheral in the first place.

In a discussion of another of McGuinness's plays, *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me* (1992), Elizabeth Butler Cullingford suggests that modern Irish drama has constructed a tradition of writing in which the relationship between an Irish woman and an English male is repeatedly used 'to neutralize a hostile political situation'. The colonial allegory is gendered, Butler suggests, not simply in terms of male-female desire, but surprisingly 'is inscribed on an all-male continuum ranging from the homosocial to the homoerotic.' (p.160). The reversal of the English male and Irish female in contemporary film and drama (Butler refers to Jordan's film *The Crying Game*) emphasises rather than undermines the hegemony of the cross-national triangle formula, stressing 'the continuum between homoerotic desire and the homosocial bonds that subtend conventional erotic triangles' (p.172). The cross-national relationship between Mabel and O'Neill is certainly recognisable here as a dramatic strategy which is a symbolic, if failed, attempt to reconcile political conflict in heterosexual desire. It is less clear how this could be triangulated since there is no single male character to whom the interests of homosocial bonding would apply. In contrast, *Mutabilitie* offers an explicit investigation of homoeroticism in a

transformation of the triangle in which the female File offers the Irish man, Hugh, to the English William as his lover.

In *Someone Who'll Watch Over Me*, a homophobic Irishman and a gay lecturer in English literature are held hostage in a Lebanese cell. Exploring this reversal of the gendered colonial paradigm, McGuinness defies conventional readings of nation and sexuality. Eventually the two men began to resolve this conflict without abandoning their respective identities, but by shifting the basis of their performance from one of conquest to one of courage and creativity. Cullingford suggests that 'McGuinness's use of a gay character to recuperate the father, the English literary canon, and the idea of Englishness, is an imaginative act of striking courage and generosity' (p.184). In *Mutabilitie*, McGuinness goes even further by recuperating *the* father of the English literary canon as a gay character. Far from serving to obliterate women here, the representation of homoerotic bonding between an English and an Irish male can be seen as part of a broader strategy of resistance to the inequalities of colonial power. Hugh and the File are not divided by this relationship. Rather, William's intervention, File's 'gift' of Hugh and Hugh's call to File to 'plead for [his] life' suggest a circularity of power. This circle opens the continuum of the homosocial and homoerotic to include the female and the heterosexual without reintroducing the hierarchy of political power. This circle of 'gifts' echoes that of Fumerton's child exchange and indeed culminates in the adoption of the English child whose gender remains deliberately unspecified.

In Lochhead's play the temptation for Mary and Elizabeth to simply become vehicles of ideas or processes they represent is precluded by continuous role-

swapping, cross-cutting and mimicry which results in a fragmentation of the individual characters. In this play, the dramatisation of the public/private conflict complicates ideas of identity and representation without compromising the central characters by choosing between them. Mary and Elizabeth suffer a comparable loss of autonomy through attitudes towards their gender, yet their overlapping identities suggest the impossibility of tying down 'the overall thing' in a single narrative. Furthermore, the emphasis on performativity in this work seeks to highlight the failure of any single and authoritative form of expression. It is the combination of accent, posture, dress and demeanour that indicates both the difference of Mary and Elizabeth and their similarity. Lochhead's approach seeks to interrogate the basis of resistance as well as that of authority by revealing the shared tactics and assumptions. In doing so, she constructs a play whose emphasis on the liminal and provisional successfully overcomes any attempts to map the discourse of cultural difference against that of gender. However, the critical principle of mutability which this embraces seems at times to be fundamentally at odds with the continued re-assertion of difference upon which the political and dramatic tension of the play is founded.

Fintan O'Toole has described Friel as 'a writer who doubts even the possibility of writing'<sup>53</sup> and this stems perhaps from an ongoing struggle with language, which is likewise reflected in Lochhead's use of Scots. The characters of Mary and O'Neill share an important characteristic, namely the ability to speak with more than one voice - Scots and French, Ulster-Irish and English - a crossing between the different languages which reveals the limitations and restrictions of singular representations. Rather than adopt unproblematically the Scottish-English conventions involved in the

mobilisation of Scots as a dramatic medium, Lochhead uses Mary's French accent to mark a more subtle form of diversity. As Lindsay Paterson notes, 'some of the most vigorous Scots in the play comes from John Knox whose religious fanaticism aligns him ... with the Protestant Elizabeth. Who then speaks for Scotland?'<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Hugh O'Neill's appeal for the 'whole thing' is unrealistic, but, like McGuinness's use of Shakespeare it marks an attempt to intervene, to cut across a monolithic discourse and thus to leave it open to cultural translation. This is what Homi Bhabha calls the moment of cultural difference:

Cultural difference marks the establishment of new forms of meaning and strategies of identification, through processes of negotiation where no discursive authority can be established without revealing the difference of itself.<sup>55</sup>

*Making History, Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* and *Mutabilitie* all demonstrate an active intervention into cultural myths and the transmission of certain forms of knowledge. They offer a continuous dialogue between past and present in which every presentation is a re-creation, a 're-routing of history', and is thus subject to demands of both proxy and portrait. However, in reading these plays together, it becomes clear that 're-routing the historical' is a spatial business as well as a temporal one. It is only by opening up the unspoken comparisons between Scottish and Irish experience that the 'difference' of Bhabha's cultural difference can be recognised, prompting a reconsideration of the ambiguities and contradictions in the three-way relationship between Ireland, Scotland and England.

- <sup>1</sup> Richard Kearney, *Transitions: Narratives in Modern Irish Culture* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1988), p.10.
- <sup>2</sup> Gayatri Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.217.
- <sup>3</sup> Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy Within: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983). See also the discussion of Renan and Arnold in David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), chapter 3.
- <sup>4</sup> Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.60.
- <sup>5</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Displacement and the Discourse of Woman' in Mark Krupnick (ed.) *Displacement: Derrida and After* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1983), p.169.
- <sup>6</sup> Christopher Murray, *Twentieth Century Irish Drama: Mirror up to Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.3.
- <sup>7</sup> Tom Maguire, 'When the Cutting Edge Cuts Both Ways: Contemporary Scottish Drama' in *Modern Drama* Vol.38 No.1 (spring 1995) p.89, p.94.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. p.90. See also Cairns Craig, Introduction to *The History of Scottish Literature Vol. 4: Twentieth Century* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987) and Angus Calder, *Revolving Culture: Notes from the Scottish Republic* (London: I. B. Taurus, 1994), especially chapter one.
- <sup>9</sup> Randall Stevenson, 'Introduction: Charting Scottish Theatre' in Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds.), *Scottish Theatre since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p.6. This reading assumes that Shakespeare confirms rather than questions structures of power.
- <sup>10</sup> Christopher Murray, *Mirror up to Nation*, p.9.
- <sup>11</sup> Talk given to the AGM of the Scottish Labour History Society, quoted in Tom Maguire, 'Contemporary Scottish Drama', p.91.
- <sup>12</sup> Ulrich Schneider, 'Staging History in Contemporary Anglo-Irish Drama: Brian Friel and Frank McGuinness' in Geert Lernout (ed.) *The Crows Behind the Plough: History and Violence in Anglo-Irish Poetry and Drama* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi Press, 1991), p. 97.
- <sup>13</sup> Eamonn Hughes, 'To Define Your Dissent: the Plays and Polemics of the Field Day Theatre Company' in *Theatre Research International* Vol. 15 No. 1 (Spring, 1990), p.67. The culmination of

Field Day's publishing activities has been the three volumes of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* edited by Seamus Deane and published in 1993. The *Anthology* came in for substantial criticism on its publication when it emerged that Irish women barely figured in it at all. For some time, a fourth 'women's' volume has been promised to answer this, but it has still not materialised some five years later.

<sup>14</sup> From Worth 1993, p.76, quoted in Murray, *Mirror up to Nation*, p.209. See also W. B. Worthen, 'Homeless Words: Field Day and the Politics of Translation' in *Modern Drama* Vol.38 No.1 (Spring 1995), pp.22-41.

<sup>15</sup> See Edna Longley, *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1986), p.199. These comments echo those of Conor Cruise O'Brien, from whom the phrase 'unhealthy intersection' is taken.

<sup>16</sup> Martine Pelletier, 'Telling Stories and Making History: Brian Friel and Field Day' in *Irish University Review: A Journal of Irish Studies* vol. 24 no. 2 (Fall-Winter, 1994) p. 191.

<sup>17</sup> *Mirror up to Nation*, p.222.

<sup>18</sup> See Martine Pelletier, 'Telling Stories and Making History: Brian Friel and Field Day' and Eberhard Bort, 'Staging the Troubles: Civil Conflict and Drama in Northern Ireland', *Journal for the Study of British Cultures*, 2.2, (1995), pp.141-60. Chris Murray also credits Friel with using 'the latest revisionist historical methodology' ahead of Roy Foster, in 'Brian Friel's *Making History* and the Problem of Historical Accuracy' in Geert Lernout, (ed.), *The Crows Behind the Plough History and Violence in Anglo-Irish Poetry and Drama*, p.69.

<sup>19</sup> 'Frank McGuinness interviewed by Jacqueline Hurtley' in Jacqueline Hurtley, Rosa Gonzalez, Ines Praga and Esther Aliaga, *Ireland in Writing: Interviews with Writers and Academics* (Amsterdam: Rodopi B.V., 1998), p.56.

<sup>20</sup> James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* in *The Essential James Joyce* (London: Harper Collins, 1991), p.386.

<sup>21</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.303.

<sup>22</sup> Surprisingly, neither writer chooses to make any connection between events in Scotland and events in Ireland.

<sup>23</sup> See Christopher Murray, 'Brian Friel's *Making History* and the Problem of Historical Accuracy' and Sean Connolly, 'Translating History: Brian Friel and the Irish Past' in Alan Peacock (ed.), *The Achievement of Brian Friel* (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smyth, 1993).

<sup>24</sup> Sean O'Faolain, *The Great O'Neill*, (London: Longman, Green and Co., 1942).

<sup>25</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *History and Truth*, trans. with an Introduction by Charles A. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p.22, p.76, quoted in Murray, 'Brian Friel's *Making History* and the Problem of Historical Accuracy', pp.64-65.

<sup>26</sup> Mary Queen of Scots has recently been 'downgraded' in Scottish cultural history. Linlithgow Palace, for example, has chosen to no longer promote itself as her birthplace, but to concentrate on more 'popular' figures from Scotland's past. Elizabeth I, however, is currently undergoing a cultural revival, in England at least, featuring in two films in 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Brian Friel interviewed by D.E.S. Maxwell in *Images*, cited by Richard Pine in *Brian Friel and Ireland's Drama* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.109.

<sup>28</sup> See Femi Folorunso, 'Scottish Drama and the Popular Tradition' in *Scottish Theatre since the Seventies* pp.176-185. See also the interview with John McGrath in the same volume, where he suggests that despite the censorship of the Reformation era, popular entertainment in the Highlands has persisted in different forms, such as the ceilidh.

<sup>29</sup> Note however that Elizabeth's self-representation as Virgin Queen relies on a certain dialogic construction which then casts Mary as the 'hoor'.

<sup>30</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.) *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1994), p.74.

<sup>31</sup> Elmer Andrews, *The Art of Brian Friel* (London and New York: MacMillan/St. Martins, 1995), p.207.

<sup>32</sup> Christopher Murray, 'Brian Friel's *Making History* and the Problem of Historical Accuracy', p.68.

<sup>33</sup> Frank McGuinness, *Mutabilitie* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), p.80.

<sup>34</sup> *Mutabilitie*, Act III, sc. I, p.46. Compare this to Iraeneus's comments in Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley (eds.) *Edmund Spenser, A View of the State of Ireland (1633): from the first printed edition* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), p.76.

<sup>35</sup> Private correspondence with Frank McGuinness (18<sup>th</sup> June, 1998). There are too many quotations and allusions within *Mutabilitie* to list exhaustively. Some of the most important are: *The View*, pp.4,

10, 12, 45-48, 78, 79; *Faerie Queene*, pp.5, 6, 41, 64, 'Sonnet 18', pp.19, 23-24, 'Sonnet 87', pp.72-3, *The Tempest*, pp.3, 21, 74, 79; and *Henry IV and V*, pp.51, 63, 69. Other Shakespeare plays are hinted at, usually through a single line, notably *A Winter's Tale*, *Hamlet*, *Twelfth Night* and *King Lear*.

<sup>36</sup> Willy Maley, 'Mutabilitie', *Spenser Newsletter*, 29, 1 (1998), p.10.

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, 'Shakespeare and the Exorcists' in Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman (eds.) *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* (London and New York: Methuen, 1985), pp.163-187.

<sup>38</sup> Private correspondence with Frank McGuinness (18<sup>th</sup> June, 1998).

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Hadfield, 'Mutabilitie', *Irish Studies Review*, 6, 2 (1998), p.222.

<sup>40</sup> See *The View*, p.101-102.

<sup>41</sup> Private correspondence with Frank McGuinness, (18<sup>th</sup> June, 1998).

<sup>42</sup> This refers to the death of one of Spenser's children in the flames of the burning castle of his Kilcolman estate.

<sup>43</sup> Patricia Fumerton, 'Exchanging Gifts: The Elizabethan Currency of Children and Poetry', *ELH* No. 53 (1986), pp.241-278.

<sup>44</sup> Hiram Morgan questions the received idea that the Sidneys fostered O'Neill in London, suggesting instead that he was brought up in Sidney's house in the Pale. See 'Making History: A Criticism and a Manifesto', *Text and Context* (Autumn, 1990), p.62.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p.257 and *A View*, pp.110-111.

<sup>46</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p.74.

<sup>47</sup> Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, 'Gender, Sexuality and Englishness in Modern Irish Drama and Film', *ACIS Journal* Vol 1 No. 1 (Fall, 1997) p.164.

<sup>48</sup> Jan McDonald and Jennifer Harvie, 'Putting New Twists to Old Stories: Feminism and Lochhead's Drama' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (eds.) Robert Crawford and Anne Varty, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p.135.

<sup>49</sup> Compare this to Spivak's description of the post-colonial as 're-routing the historical' in *Outside in the Teaching Machine* (London: Routledge, 1993), p.217.

<sup>50</sup> Hiram Morgan, *Tyrone's Rebellion* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1993), p.226.

<sup>51</sup> Christopher Murray, 'Brian Friel's *Making History* and the Problem of Historical Accuracy', pp.74-5.

<sup>52</sup> Barry Sloan, "'The Overall Thing': Brian Friel's *Making History*" in *Irish Studies Review*, No. 8, (Autumn, 1994), p.12, 14. This argument is echoed briefly in Martine Pelletier's essay, 'Telling Stories and Making History: Brian Friel and Field Day'.

<sup>53</sup> Fintan O'Toole, 'Marking Time: From *Making History* to *Dancing at Lughnasa*', in Alan Peacock (ed.), *The Achievement of Brian Friel* (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smyth, 1993), p.205.

<sup>54</sup> Lindsay Paterson, 'Language and Identity on the Stage', in Randall Stevenson and Gavin Wallace (eds.), *Scottish Theatre Since the Seventies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 78.

<sup>55</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p.313.

## Chapter Three

### Voice, Violence and Validity: Controlling Narrative in the Novel

No one is beyond the language s/he uses. <sup>1</sup>

A genre is not, of course, a novel, any more than an equine species is a horse. A genre is ... an invitation to the actual writing of a work. <sup>2</sup>

This chapter will look at two writers, James Kelman and Roddy Doyle, in order to consider the importance of 'voice' in forging a positive sense of cultural identity. Both writers rely heavily on speech and accent in their work. Kelman's pioneering use of Scots as the narrative and descriptive vehicle in the novel as opposed to an isolated marker of character or dialogue questions the hegemony of the English language, and the universal values which it appears to embody. Furthermore his use of Glasgow working-class speech can be seen as a counter to Scottish cultural stereotypes which focus on the rural middle-class and retrospectively on the Highlands. Roddy Doyle also draws on urban accents to refocus the representation of Irish speech away from the cliché of the 'blarney', and indeed resists the hierarchy of dialogue and narrative by allowing the speech of his characters to stand almost alone.

The difficulty in finding a voice or language in which to articulate is one shared by writers and their subjects. Kelman and Doyle both attempt to relate political and social powerlessness to cultural self-assertion. The issues of violence and masculinity which were discussed in Chapter Two can be seen to be as relevant to

writing which directly addresses contemporary culture as they are to historical representations. Perhaps more importantly it becomes clear that discourses of colonialism and patriarchy may reinforce each other within writing that is otherwise read as anti-authoritarian or subversive.

In the previous chapter I looked at three different plays in which issues of national and cultural identity were central to both form and plot. All three plays can easily be read as part of a dramatic tradition of political involvement, where the act of staging can be seen to be a public intervention in a particular socio-political debate. Poetry has in some ways shared in this tradition, most obviously through the influence of street ballads prior to the expansion of modern communications technology, but also through its fundamental status as speech and declamation. In contrast, prose writing has tended to favour non-fictional and polemical forms when dealing directly with political issues. However, since the early twentieth century, the novel has become the dominant form of literature written in English. As Claudio Guillén suggests, the novel is inadequately described as ‘a genre’, not only because it encompasses so many other recognisable sub-genres, such as romance, thriller, confessional, but also because any given novel cannot be seen to be an example of the genre nor a sum of its various components.<sup>3</sup> The demands and expectations of a romantic novel, for example, create a certain rigidity of structure and content, yet the demands of other aspects of the same novel, adventure perhaps, may run counter to this, presenting opportunities for adaptation and innovation. It is perhaps this unique combination of fixity and fluidity of form that has led to its critical and literary dominance. Furthermore, as Timothy Brennan has suggested, this formal tension neatly mirrors the context in which the novel gained prominence:

It was the novel that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles.<sup>4</sup>

Gerry Smyth has recently argued that the novel should be considered as the optimum carrier of contemporary national identity since it can be seen to be 'one of the material conditions of possibility for the emergence of the idea of the nation'.<sup>5</sup> Following Benedict Anderson's famous description of the nation as 'an imagined political community', whose rise coincides with that of the novel as a particular form of cultural practice, Smyth concludes that the novel provides a creative space in which the preoccupations of the imagined nation are flagged, rehearsed and contested. Although apparently accepting an analysis of nationalism which can look no further back than the eighteenth century, Smyth does point out that Anderson's approach may raise some questions when applied to the contemporary novel, in that the Irish social and technological apparatuses for the distribution of literature operate in 'radically different ways' to those in societies in the early stages of capitalism which form the basis of Anderson's analysis (p.19). It is not only in an Irish context that this suggestion raises difficulties. Whilst Scottish national aspirations can clearly be seen to be mapped out in the twentieth century novel, in the work of Lewis Grassie Gibbon or George Douglas Brown, for example, the idea of the Scottish nation is equally apparent in much earlier poetry and drama. Even following Smyth's chronology, there is no reason to suggest that the novels of Walter Scott present a more persuasive model of a national voice than, say the poetry of Burns, simply because prose is

currently more widely read than poetry. Indeed Scott, although drawing on specifically Scottish material, has been so consistently absorbed into the history of the English novel, that his example might well suggest the reverse argument, that is that the novel is potentially the least effective carrier of national identity.<sup>6</sup>

In both Scotland and Ireland, the novel has had stiff competition from other cultural formations in the contest for most suitable ‘narrator’ of the nation. The Second Celtic Revival looked to drama and poetry in particular as offering forms (and structures) appropriate to the articulation of the nation.<sup>7</sup> Both Scottish and Irish writers felt a need to speak for the nation and to be heard both at home and abroad. Yeats, for example, wished to write ‘in a syntax that is for ear alone’ and in his manifesto for an Irish national theatre, written together with Lady Gregory and Edward Martyn, declared: ‘We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory’.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, a substantial part of MacDiarmid’s cultural project was to shape a literature whose creative use of voice and vernacular would allow a dynamic interaction between speech and writing:

Are my poems spoken in the factories and fields?

In the streets o’ the toon?

Gin they’re no’, then I’m failin’ to dae

What I ocht to ha’ dune.<sup>9</sup>

Problematising his claims for the national significance of the novel, Smyth also suggests that in Ireland the novel was traditionally seen as particularly ‘British’, as well as being a fictional form which reflected the material interests of the leisured

classes. It could be argued that tendencies for drama, verse and shorter fiction, and against the novel have a continued influence on both Irish and Scottish cultural debates. Indeed, it may be that critical approaches to the novel have tended to emphasise its 'Englishness' (rather than its Britishness), particularly in the elaboration of a hierarchy of voices where 'authority' is the preserve of the standard-English narrator. In his essay 'The Idea of National Literature', Paul Gilbert argues that English Literature depends upon a form of aristocratic nationalism, in contrast to the necessarily popular nationalism of decolonising and postcolonial countries. Focussing on the work of Elizabeth Bowen as a limit case of a 'national' writer, Gilbert finds 'a non-patronising attitude' to the speech of ordinary people as one of the criteria for inclusion into a national canon, with the notable exception of English Literature: 'the speech of *ordinary* people in England is precisely not *national* speech, as it is in Ireland: national speech itself is reserved to the English upper classes.'<sup>10</sup> Taking this further, it would seem that the structure of a novel in which there is a narrator who uses standard written English inevitably invokes a specifically English cultural context, regardless of the novel's stated subject or theme.

Ian Watt's *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) is widely regarded as the most influential critical survey of the form up to the late eighteenth century, and Raymond Williams's *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (1970), takes up the story from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Both these critics tend to use the terms 'the English novel' and 'the novel in English' interchangeably; as Michael McKeon observes in his substantial study, *The Origins of the English Novel 1600 – 1740*: 'Watt tacitly defines "the novel" as "the English Novel"'.<sup>11</sup> In an interesting departure from his main discussion, Raymond Williams addresses the 'Englishness' of his

analysis: 'coming myself from a border area I'm always uneasy about these national names. I have to look both ways, over both shoulders at once'.<sup>12</sup> Since this is clearly impossible, he contents himself with the suggestion that twentieth century English Literature has been challenged 'by the major imaginative work ... of other conscious nationalities' (p.122), and that his own argument is rooted in 'a very specific Englishness' to be found in the nineteenth century novel.<sup>13</sup> The examples of other 'conscious nationalities' which Williams gives are 'Scots, Irish, Welsh and American' and he draws freely on Irish and American novels in particular. Indeed, the climax of his discussion of representations of urban experience is found, of course, in Joyce's *Ulysses*, 'the great novel of the modern city' (p.156). However, whilst Williams's study confirms the critical obsession with a rampantly inclusive 'English novel' it also reveals that the Irish perception of 'the novel' as particularly English can be to some extent supported by recourse to the texts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which have dominated academic study.

Within postcolonial studies there is some disagreement as to whether the novel – at least in its classic realist form - can ever present an effective challenge to colonialism. For some critics, to question the relationship between voice and power using the tools of realism is in some respects a self-cancelling task. Surprisingly, this controversy rests on an underlying agreement that 'beneath postcolonial literature lies the might of the novel form'.<sup>14</sup> This is not to say that postcolonial critics read the novel in identical ways, rather that there is a general consensus that the novel is the most culturally significant genre, both in colonial practice and anti-colonial resistance.<sup>15</sup> Spivak, for example, talks of the 'reach of the European novel' which appears to offer an expansive context of interpretation at the same time as mimicking

the 'reach' of imperialism, anticipating and containing (in the sense of limiting) resistance and opposition.<sup>16</sup> Spivak is discussing here Jean Rhys's novel *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a self-conscious reply to a canonical text which is widely regarded as exemplary of the 'postcolonial'.<sup>17</sup> Spivak's discussion suggests that Rhys's reversal of perspective in the narrative, from Jane Eyre to Bertha Mason, although feminist, remains caught up in the narrative of imperialism. Spivak closes the essay indecisively, with the call for more work to clarify the relationship between the text and 'imperial governance'. The difficulty that Spivak faces in this essay is both textual and practical. Textually, Rhys's novel acts as a supplement which, although in many ways subversive, effectively expands *Jane Eyre*, confirming the latter's centrality in the canon of English Literature, rather than answering it. However, this is not to deny that as a contribution to the critique of imperialism the novel may make a valuable addition to the politics of reading.

A possible answer to Spivak's call for further investigation might be found in Firdous Azim's *The Colonial Rise of the Novel*. Like Spivak, Azim is concerned to bring to bear both a feminist and postcolonial perspective on the novel form; unlike Spivak, Azim goes back to 'novel criticism' in order to explain how colonial and postcolonial novels might relate to the mechanisms of colonial government. Adopting the model presented by Watt (although with significant reservations) she links the rise of the novel with capitalist practices, the increasing influence of the middle class in the eighteenth century, and a cultural shift towards individualism. However, her main concern is the teaching of English novels, and her focus is on the language of the novel as a tool of imperialism:

A politics of language was deployed to stratify people according to language usage, and systems of education and government constructed to ratify and maintain this.<sup>18</sup>

Azim's argument is useful because it offers a means to reuniting colonial and postcolonial novels within the same framework. Her suggestion is that the preoccupations of literary criticism are themselves linked to colonial discourse and practice, and that in the light of post-structuralism and postmodernism, the novel offers a new critical agenda:

Early emphasis on realism in novel criticism ... makes the same presuppositions as the eighteenth century linguistic project [language as a perfect system of representation issuing from the coherent and unified subject] ... Realism puts subject and object of representation into dichotomous positions, and sees 'reality' as something *external* to the narrating subject. (p.20)

Although Azim goes on to argue that this dichotomy was used to maintain the authority invested in the narrative voice, she suggests it also opens the novel up to a crisis of inside/outside relations in which power can be seen to be located at the margins rather than in the centre. It is this ambiguity, further challenged by the new directions of literary theory in the second half of this century, which offers the potential to mobilise both colonial texts and the novel in its postcolonial form, as anti-imperial cultural practices.

Any writing that prioritises voice will interrogate the borders of the text, since it draws attention to reading as a mimetic act (that is the recreation of voice), challenging the closure of both a fictional world and world-view. Postcolonial voices are thus able to refuse the representational discourse of the dominant formation through a variety of anti-mimetic techniques. Nevertheless, a challenge to the typical effects of the realist novel such as linearity, coherence and closure by those which more closely represent the reality of the colonial subject, such as displacement, hybridity and ambivalence does not necessarily lead to a rejection of realism. James Kelman might be read in this way, that is as offering an alternative form of representation - in speech - particularly by avoiding the metanarrative location, in the name of a reclamation of the 'real'. This form of realism can perhaps best be described as 'local' since value now resides in the specific details, rather than any universal claims of the text as a whole. In an interview with Kirsty McNeill, Kelman elaborates on this strategy:

KM: You've stated that you are trying to obliterate the narrator, to get rid of the narrative voice.

JK: Not every narrative voice, just the standard third party one, the one that most people don't think of as a 'voice' at all. [...] Getting rid of that third party narrative voice is getting rid of a whole value system. [...] Let's just go for the factual reality here. Any colouring that's going on to try and get rid of. Whether it's from a feminist point, a heterosexual male point, a middle-class point, any point at all. Get rid of it. So

that nobody else is going to be oppressed or colonised by it ... getting rid of the narrative voice is trying to get down to that level of pure objectivity. This is *the* reality here, within this culture.<sup>19</sup>

The third person narrator 'that most people don't think of as a voice at all' is that which Gilbert defined as implicitly belonging to the English upper class. Whereas Gilbert suggests that this voice needs to be modified in order to take on the perspective of 'ordinary people', Kelman states that once recognised as 'a voice', this narrative method must be abandoned altogether if the writer is to escape the structures of colonialism and oppression. Whilst Kelman's efforts to reach a 'level of pure objectivity' may be questionable, his narrative technique has proved very successful, not only in his own work but also for a younger generation of Scottish writers. Perhaps too successful, for the recent vogue in Scottish literature (particularly with the London publishing houses) tellingly echoes the earlier fashion for Irish writers, and the techniques which Kelman uses to undermine the hidden authority of the narrative may become a new orthodoxy. Both Scottish and Irish writers may be experiencing a popularity which is due in part to a public appetite for authenticity and credibility in the face of a postmodern culture of scepticism and parody. Thus a writer's affiliation to a non-dominant nation is read as a sign of privileged access to the 'real', which is flagged by symbols which indicate immediacy, currency and 'youth', and a dissent which Kelman sees as 'good art' could become consent.<sup>20</sup> In the conclusion to his book on the Irish novel, Gerry Smyth suggests that 'it may be that "The New Irish Fiction" is little more than an invention by a loose affiliation of London publishers, creating a critical category (and a market) where before there was only a set of vague

impressions' (p.175). Similarly, the boom in the market for Scottish fiction depends upon individual books creating an *impression* of 'Kelmanism', that is the 'authentic' recreation of local speech and some attempt at creating proximity between reader and narrative. When a subversive narrative strategy becomes a marketable commodity can it still be said to resist the authority it originally contested?

The controversy stirred up when James Kelman's novel *How Late it Was, How Late* won the 1994 Booker Prize brought together Beveridge and Turnbull's arguments about the general operation of 'inferiorism' in Scottish culture and the deliberation surrounding the existence of Scottish literature. The debate revealed some surprising assumptions about what constitutes 'literature' (and how such definitions could be manipulated so as to include earlier writers without too close an examination of their work) as well as what kind of work could be seen as being most representative of Scotland.<sup>21</sup> The direct object of attack, however, was Kelman's language, or more specifically his use of swear words ('fuck' was picked out for particular condemnation). Kelman's simultaneous welcome into and (r)ejection from the English literary establishment triggered a considerable crisis of confidence in Scotland. Quiet ignorance was replaced by vocal outrage as Kelman was denounced for his lack of tact. For some people, including numerous journalists, the former Lord Provost of Glasgow, and a number of non-sympathetic critics, Kelman's novel was *not* about Glasgow and *not* about Scotland.<sup>22</sup> What was surprising was that these critics set out not only to refute Kelman's presentation of urban Glasgow, but they apparently sought to reassert the symbolic position of Highland culture within Scottish cultural representation. Thus 'real' Scottish literature would have no need for

‘the language of plumbers and taxi-drivers’ since the imaginative space of Scotland existed in an archaic rural idyll, rather than anarchic urban dystopia.<sup>23</sup> It became clear that Kelman’s (and by extension any writer’s) responsibility was not to a domestic audience, but to the market of tourism. ‘No mean city’ is a valuable selling point as long as it remains securely contained within the limits of genre fiction. Few of Kelman’s detractors attack *Taggart* for being unrepresentative. Instead, its visual conventions and thriller motifs lend it the glamour of other cosmopolitan cities – like those featured in popular American shows such as *Miami Vice* or *LA Law*.

Ironically, Kelman seems to have anticipated this response in the novel itself, (had any of these people bothered to read it). *How Late it Was, How Late* opens with a petty criminal, Sammy Samuels, waking up somewhere in the centre of Glasgow after a two-day drinking binge:

He shook his head and glanced up the way: people – there was people there; eyes looking. These eyes looking. Terrible brightness and he had to shield his own cause of it, like they were godly figures and the light coming from them was godly or something [...] Maybe they were tourists, they might have been tourists; strangers to the city for some big fucking business event. And here they were courtesy of the town council promotions office, being guided round by some beautiful female publicity officer [...] seeing him here, but obliged no to hide things; to take them everywhere in the line of duty, these gentleman foreigners, so they could see it all [...] So fair enough, ye play yer part and give them a smile...

where what ye are, that it's part of another type of whole, that they know well cause they've been telt about it by the promotional events' organisers. So municipal solidarity man know what I'm saying, the bold Sammy gets to his feet. (p.2)

The 'municipal solidarity' to which Sammy refers is in short supply in the rest of the book, particularly in his dealings with the 'sodjers' and 'authorities'. When Sammy loses his sight after a police beating, the 'eyes looking' and 'godly figures' assume a further significance. This is not simply a physical description of being looked down upon, but also 'part of another type of whole' – that of the control of the vision, of what is seen.<sup>24</sup> Once Sammy is blind he becomes increasingly paranoid about being watched, and acutely aware of other people's interpretations of his appearance. His most immediate problem is to get home from the police station and his 'ideal' solution is a stick – 'A stick would show people the situation' (p.38). The intricate set of allusions to sight and vision throughout the novel emphasise how closely controlled the images of our own culture are. Kelman's crime was to refuse one view of 'municipal solidarity' by voicing another.

Kelman's language is that of the novel's main speaker, Sammy Samuels, at times dense and impenetrable, at others almost lyrical. Sammy speaks and thinks in different registers and different contexts; the words 'fuck' and 'fucking' and their repetition sometimes signal Sammy's mental and verbal frustration - since a large part of the book deals with his attempts to 'get the story straight' - more often they create an ostinato effect, driving the tempo of his patter.

Fuck off, he couldnay drive man that was how he didnay have a fucking licence: he couldnay fucking drive. He had never fucking learnt. He telt Helen that. He telt her. So what? It was comical anyway. Ye think about it. If there's something to laugh about then laugh. It's no just he didnay have his licence, he couldnay get his fucking licence, cause he couldnay fucking drive. (p.138)

The repetition of 'fucking' at the same points in the passage (that is before 'licence' and 'drive') signal the centrality of these statements to the main point of the story. At the same time they elongate the important sentences so that they balance rhythmically and conclusively. Perhaps the best way to illustrate this is by reading the passage without the word 'fucking' – the prose becomes stilted, the repetition dull rather than emphatic. The function of the words 'fuck' and 'fucking' also become clear when Sammy alters his speech at an interview at the Benefits Office. Having already been warned that his language is open to misinterpretation, Sammy substitutes 'fucking' with the word 'bloody' - widely seen as a mild swear word – a word he otherwise rarely uses:

I know it wasnay the polis's fault they're only doing their bloody job, how did they know what would happen they didnay, they didnay know, I'm no blaming them, no in that way, it wasnay bloody intentional I mean I admit that christ (p.107).

Cairns Craig has suggested that Kelman's dissolution of the distinction between the language of narration and the language of dialogue may counteract the subject's alienation from the dominant ideology:

The liberation of the narrative voice from the constraints of written English is an act of linguistic solidarity, since it thrusts that narrative into the same world which its characters inhabit. The text, therefore, constructs a linguistic unity which resists the fragmentation and isolation that the novels chart as the experience of their characters.<sup>25</sup>

Whilst the idea of 'linguistic solidarity' is an attractive one, particularly as it seems to align textual strategy with political action, the leap from 'solidarity' to 'unity' is troubling. Craig goes on to describe this unity as 'a communality that transcends the absolute isolation of the individual human being...' (p.104). Perhaps Craig is too taken with Kelman's use of interior monologue to pay attention to the multiplicity of competing voices evident in all the novels, or even to take Kelman mildly to task for a somewhat sentimental approach to 'the individual'. The 'unity' that Craig praises can be seen as a kind of reductionism similar to that of the publishers who seek Kelmanesque characteristics in the work of all contemporary Scottish writers. Alan Freeman has pointed out that Kelman's 'characters and narrator speak the hybrid mix of social and geographical registers of which real speech consists'.<sup>26</sup> The language of *How Late it Was, How Late* circles around Sammy's head; sometimes he is thinking, sometimes he is speaking aloud, sometimes he is talking to bureaucrats, once or twice he is chatting to acquaintances in the pub, each time the language shifts slightly. Sammy talks to himself, out loud, in his head, often while talking to other people. Yet

even within these self-referential speeches, it is not always clear who is telling the story:

Ah fuck it man stories, stories, life's full of stories, they're there to help ye out, when ye're in trouble, deep shit, they come to the rescue, and one thing ye learn in life is stories, Sammy's head was fucking full of them ... (p.52)

In this passage, the shift from a generalised second person - 'ye' - which characterises Sammy's speech, to an unqualified third person - in the phrase 'Sammy's head was' - suggests a movement away from Sammy to a secondary external voice, one which is able to comment on Sammy's mental state, and to a certain extent, control what we learn from the 'stories'. One reason why Freeman chooses to separate characters and narrator in his comment above may be that despite Kelman's attempts to 'get rid of the third party narrative voice' there are those moments of disjunction in the text where it is hard not to see signs of authorial direction. Kelman and Sammy do not speak with the same voice, although they share two important characteristics, namely gender and location. What might be described as the 'core' narrative is both male and Glaswegian.

In contrast, Roddy Doyle's novel, *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, which stems from a well-publicised television series, *Family* (1994), adopts a first person female voice. It is explicitly 'written' by Paula, partly as an attempt to piece together the events of her life (much of which is obscured by drink and pain) and partly to prove to herself that she is 'not stupid'. In this novel, dialogue and narrative are finely

balanced so as to maintain the impression of an intelligent but uneducated woman telling her own story, without the pretensions to omniscience that third person descriptions often suggest. Nevertheless, as in Kelman's novel, the predominant narrative accent is open both to conflicting voices within the text, and, occasionally, to the articulation of an authoritative perspective. Donald Wesling's challenge to Bakhtin's definition of the novel as 'the supreme dialogic speech genre' provides a possible framework in which to reconcile this tension between an apparently univocal text and the multiple voices contained within it.<sup>27</sup> Wesling suggests that Bakhtin's formulation should be revised 'in the light of recent Scottish uses of a positive monologism' (p.82). Concentrating on a number of recent Scottish novels written in the first person, Wesling's definition of 'monologism' draws on the 'hectoring or disquisitory intent' which accompanies the dominant voice of these narratives (p.81). Wesling identifies five main features of monologic fiction: a 'capricious and contradictory', single narrator, usually unreliable, whose moment of crisis or nightmare, is the tale; 'heteroglossia in profusion', as remembered and reported speech within the narrator's consciousness; 'violent conflict of inner and outer speech'; 'satire of the limits of the narrator's monologism', and finally a partial identity between narrator and nation, (p.91). All these traits might be used to describe Paula's narrative, which constantly comments on its own limitations, particularly on Paula's inability to control or contain competing narratives. Both Sammy and Paula represent voices that have been smothered, suppressed and marginalised, and the frame of a monologic novel reflects this experience. However, the majority of Wesling's examples represent a male voice, which although subordinated by class and nation, is recognised as an appropriate narrator of 'the story'. Sammy's difficulties, for example, stem from the desire of 'the sodjers' to 'fill in the blanks' of their story

with his, and the novel's dramatic tension lies in the partial revelations which appear in the interstices between the official narrative and Sammy's own. However, as a female narrator, before such tension can operate as satire, Paula has first to assert her authority to speak at all.

In *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* Doyle chooses to focus on the domestic environment and an individual woman in a novel which appears to have no national significance. However, one of the most important points that the book makes is that family relationships are not created and contained by the home. Rather, public structures of identity and behaviour shape both national and domestic politics. The novel does not follow a linear narrative and indeed opens with a Garda bringing Paula news of Charlo's death. This allows Doyle the flexibility to show both the everyday abuse that characterises her relationship with her husband and also to show how she struggles to break free of the guilt and fear which his beatings instil in her. Towards the end of the book, Paula says 'He loved me and he beat me. I loved him and I took it. It's as simple as that, and as stupid and as complicated. I keep on thinking and I'll never come to a tidy ending.' (p.192). Doyle has been quoted as saying that he is pleased that he avoided 'the little sociological pitfalls' by refusing Charlo a reason why he beats Paula in the first place.<sup>28</sup> The fact that there is no single motivation nor simple equation (say between unemployment and violence) that can give Paula an answer to the questions she asks herself does not mean that her situation can only be explained in terms of individual psychology. As the complex structure of the novel suggests, it is clear that the culture of gender relations characterised by violence and aggression provides a context both for Charlo's violence and for Paula's acceptance of it.

Paula describes her schooldays as a constant battle between the sexes where survival depended upon being able 'to act rough and think dirty' (p.35). Her teachers variously ignore the kids, throw things at them or sexually molest them and are, as Paula puts it, 'one stupid cunt after another all day long' (p.26). In the classroom she learns how to use her sexuality as a weapon, but it is at home that she realises that sexual relations inform her whole life and that the power is not usually hers:

My brother, Roger called me a slut when I wouldn't let him feel me...

- Come on, he said.

Jesus, I don't know how many times I heard those words over the next few years. Come on. It never stopped. Come on. You were a slut if you let fellas put their tongues in your mouth and you were a tight bitch if you didn't – but you could also be a slut if you didn't. One or the other, or sometimes both. There was no escape; that was you.

Before I was a proper teenager, before I knew anything about sex, before I'd even left primary school – I was a slut. My daddy said it, fellas said it, other girls said it, men in vans and lorries said it. My mammy called me in off the street.

- You're getting too old, she said. – You'll get a name. (p.47).

It is evident from this passage that Paula recognises that verbal abuse and physical violence are related through a system of gender relations in which sexuality is used to control and isolate women. Throughout the novel, Paula is literally denied a public voice through her husband's brutality. She sits at home and drinks, sends the kids to

the shops and wears plastic sunglasses in order not to show the injuries that mark the violence of her marriage. Charlo controls the narratives that represent her experience, both in private and public. After the first beating, she gains consciousness and is greeted by the words 'you fell'; Charlo always accompanies her to the hospital in order to speak on her behalf. The doctors, her friends and parents are unable to recognise what is really happening to her, preferring instead to accept the repeated explanation that she 'walked into a door'.

Kelman's language has been described as 'coarse', 'foul-mouthed' and 'aggressive', but it has rarely been considered in a gendered context. Although it is generally accepted that Kelman's work deals with 'a man's world', discussions which focus on the narrative voice or the use of interior monologue tend to focus on this as an individual voice, rather than as a specifically male one. A rare example of a critic recognising this point is Peter Lewis, who notes that 'Kelman's fictional world is predominantly, even obsessively, masculine: women exist mainly on its fringes and rarely feature in the consciousness of his characters, even as sex objects.'<sup>29</sup> The absence of women even in the imagination of Kelman's narrators presents a challenge to the extent to which Kelman's alignment of narrative and dialogue can be seen as an act of 'linguistic solidarity'. Kelman's novels should be read in the context of a Scottish literary tradition which, whilst rejecting the overt sentimentality of Kailyard prose and the politics of Tartanry on the one hand, has sought to retain a pastoral identity tied to the scenery of the Highlands on the other. Whilst Kelman's work has given a much needed voice to Scottish urban experience, the continued effect of the location of this voice in the West Coast of Scotland has tended to confirm a secondary stereotype of Glaswegian machismo (frequently attached to the label 'Clydesideism').

In an essay entitled 'The Importance of Glasgow in my Work' Kelman draws attention to the prevalence of this kind of cardboard cut-out as one of the reasons for his own focus on narrative technique:

How do you recognise a Glaswegian in English Literature? He – bearing in mind that in English literature you don't get female Glaswegians, not even the women – he's the cut-out figure who wields a razor blade, gets moroculous drunk and never has a single solitary 'thought' in his entire life. He beats his wife and beats his kids and beats his next door neighbour.<sup>30</sup>

Kelman's focus is on 'thought' here, and his objection to the cut-out Glaswegian is that, denied access to the narrative voice, he has no possibility of a spiritual or intellectual function in the text. Given the overwhelmingly negative tone of this quotation you might expect Kelman's own fiction to be everything that the cut-out from English literature is not. Indeed, Kelman's main characters never beat their wives or children, they favour a code of honour in which the use of weapons is shameful, and tend to avoid their next door neighbours altogether. They do get drunk though, and Sammy's alcoholism casts a shadow across every page of *How Late it Was, How Late*. But what about the women? Glaswegian women in Kelman's fiction, although always 'female', can hardly be said to enjoy a spiritual and intellectual consciousness. Like the characters in English literature to which he objects so strenuously, Kelman's women are only allowed the minimum of reported speech. In *The Busconductor Hines* for example, Sandra, whose capacity for juggling job, child

and cooking is a source of wonder and amazement, communicates with brief yet pertinent questions in contrast to Hines's rambling verbosity. Whilst Hines's struggles with questions of identity, sincerity and social mobility, Sandra silently gets on with it. Similarly, in *How Late it Was, How Late* the mysteriously absent Helen is 'good at silence' (p.139), giving Sammy all the more time to tell his story without making his point:

Funny how ye tell people a story to make a point and ye fail, ye fail, a total disaster. Not only do ye no make yer point it winds up the exact fucking opposite man, the exact fucking opposite.  
(p.17)

Helen's voice is not only silenced by the novel, but her thoughts are denied the distinctiveness and individuality which are guarded so carefully for Sammy: 'she didnay think the same as her man she thought like the guy that was fucking repping him, know what I'm saying, that was the crack, she thought the same way as Sammy's rep but no like Sammy, like him, himself' (p.321).

Unlike Kelman, Doyle invokes a fictional location that is readily linked to a physical area of a named city, Dublin. 'Barrytown' is heavily drawn from the Kilbarrack estate on the north edge of Dublin, yet the fictionalisation of Barrytown allows Doyle to incorporate local specificity whilst stressing the crushing impersonality of mass housing schemes and the characteristics they share wherever they are built. Barrytown could be anytown, but it is also very specifically Dublin – the characters take the DART into the city centre or to work in the middle-class areas

on the South side, they visit pubs on O'Connell Street and read all about it in *The Northside News* and *Hot Press*. The mixture of fictional and physical name-checking serves to emphasise the extent to which Doyle is attempting to articulate a post-industrial urban experience in the context of a literary tradition that is overwhelmingly rural. The dominant strand of nationalism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries depended on an appeal to a 'traditional' or 'organic' Irish culture which was to be found in its purest form among rural and farming communities in the West of Ireland. The Second Celtic Revival confirmed this in literature with an anthropological urge to record and to celebrate the speech of the inhabitants of the West Coast and Aran Islands before it was terminally eroded by the encroachment of English.<sup>31</sup> The appeal to the West apparently united a whole set of moral values and political agendas in its evocation of an Ireland untouched by anglicisation. As David Lloyd has observed, it is the equation of modernisation with anglicisation which characterises nationalist thought from the late sixteenth century and which was explicitly stated by the Young Ireland movement in the 1840s, which provides the main reason why the West was chosen above other areas as the repository of national culture.<sup>32</sup> As Lloyd makes clear, the debate about cultural authenticity was conducted almost exclusively in the context of literature. Doyle's assertion of an Irish urban voice has prompted questions surrounding not only the relation of nation to literature, but also about the class-based presumptions of the dominant rural narratives.

In 1993, the year before Kelman's Booker controversy, Roddy Doyle's fourth novel *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha* won the literary prize. Unlike his first three novels in which dialogue is rarely supported by narrative commentary or distinguishing punctuation (such as speech marks), *Paddy Clarke* is a sustained attempt at a first

person narrative, written from the perspective of a ten year old boy. Whereas Doyle's earlier novels (collectively known as the Barrytown Trilogy) were hugely popular works, praised for their energy and comedy, *Paddy Clarke* was regarded as a 'serious' work of 'literary' value, hence its 1993 Booker award. Doyle's earlier novels do not lack literary merit. Indeed, for all its brevity it could be said that *The Commitments* is a far tighter, better paced and more ably constructed novel than *Paddy Clarke*, but not only were its themes deemed unsuitable for literature, its language was too. Doyle's language (in his novels at least) provoked far less controversy than that of James Kelman, yet it could be said that he faced a very similar kind of resistance to his work. Whilst commended for his use of 'Dublinese' and a form of comic realism 'driven by a dialogue of the streets and estates', it seems that the presence of so much speech meant that critics felt able to dismiss such writing as 'not-literature'.<sup>33</sup>

The dominance of Dublin working-class voices in the Barrytown Trilogy presents a challenge to a version of Irish literature that elevates a distanced, lyrical third person narrative above all other forms. The immediacy of Doyle's dialogue could also be read as contesting the small town nostalgia that is so prevalent in Irish novels of the 60s, and 70s. However, whilst critics such as Fintan O'Toole had come to see the limitations of Irish pastoral they were unwilling to relinquish narrative authority to Northside Dubliners.<sup>34</sup> Indeed Doyle's companions in the group of writers who sought to highlight the poverty stricken, violent and drug-ridden estates of Dublin's Northside in the late 1980s tend to maintain a high literary style in the main narrative.<sup>35</sup> Like Kelman's, Doyle's use of language represents a technical and political class challenge to the institution of literature. The Irish novel, taking its cue from the nineteenth century Anglo-Irish novel has developed an Irish literary voice,

which, although distinct from Standard English, continues to operate what Azim calls 'a politics of language deployed to stratify people according to language usage'.<sup>36</sup> A recent companion to Irish Literature, for example, describes Doyle's style as 'drawing freely on contemporary, often scatological, Hiberno-English', and a brief cross-check with the entry under 'Hiberno-English' reveals that this is not exactly laudable: 'in prose fiction Hiberno-English is generally used only when reporting the speech of peasants', and that 'in written form' it is doomed to be 'incomplete and only partially authentic'.<sup>37</sup>

In her study of the language of Irish Literature, Loreto Todd identifies two main traditions of Irish English: Planter English and Hiberno-English. She goes on to divide Planter English into Ulster Scots and Anglo-Irish, characterising each by their proximity to Scottish or English pronunciation, idiom and vocabulary. In contrast, Hiberno-English is 'employed mainly by uneducated speakers' who 'approximate to the Ulster Scots or Anglo-Irish norms of the area, but certain features of Gaelic are preserved'.<sup>38</sup> Todd's use of the term 'uneducated' avoids invoking a class-based discussion of language, but appears disingenuous when referring to the language of literature since the majority of writers can be described as educated (whether through formal systems of education or by virtue of auto-didacticism). Like the writer of the entry in the *Companion to Irish Literature*, Todd is concerned with authenticity, particularly in the reproduction of phonetic variation, and perhaps surprisingly she offers 'the Scots model' as a partial solution, at least in the case of Ulster Scots speakers:

Writers wishing to depict AI [Anglo-Irish] or HE [Hiberno-English] face an even greater problem in that the standard orthography is not capable of representing unambiguously the 28 consonants normally found in Ulster speech or of indicating the different distribution of vowels. (p.52)

Todd's argument relies to a large extent on the separation of different linguistic communities in a way that echoes Azim's point about language stratification. Her contention that 'it is perfectly possible, and quite normal, to live a full and varied life in Northern Ireland without having any real contact with people from the other community' (p.17), can be seen to justify the division of Irish Englishes according to 'education' and 'the language spoken by their ancestors' (p.29).

Doyle's efforts to foreground a Dublin working-class voice frequently invite comparison with the plays of Sean O'Casey. Whilst such a comparison may appear complimentary (O'Casey has a secure literary status) it tends to undermine the technical achievements of Doyle's own work. In a recent interview Doyle draws attention to this when discussing how Irish critics are prepared to accept novels which draw upon similar techniques as long as they come from a completely different culture:

Sean O'Casey wrote plays, so inevitably people pick up my novels with all their dialogue and think, 'Oh, thinly disguised plays', which is just ignorance really. They're not aware of the difference in writing a novel and a play, that somehow because a novel has a lot of dialogue

it's not really a novel. I've read one reviewer condemning my work for having too much dialogue, a couple of weeks later reviewing... [Manuel Puig's *The Eternal Curse and the Reader of These Pages*] but no criticism whatsoever from the same reviewer that the entire thing is dialogue ... because it's Latin American and further away from home, it's acceptable.<sup>39</sup>

It is clear from this anecdote that it is not the dialogue as such which presents the problem, but where it comes from. Similarly the writer of the companion entry who nervously describes Doyle's written speech as 'scatological Hiberno-English' seems concerned to apply as elevated a language as possible to Doyle's writing in order to render it more literary. The use of 'scatological' echoes the comments on Kelman by an unknown letter writer in the Times: 'Sir, When footballers swear at referees they are sent from the field for using "foul language", but when playwrights and novelists do much the same thing, this is usually referred to as "using expletives"'.<sup>40</sup> The pompous description of Doyle's style is steeped in class snobbery, furthermore it attempts to police the borders of speech and writing – Doyle is yellow carded for breaking the rules.

Both Kelman and Doyle are seeking to create alternative forms of realism in their use of voice. Kelman's style fuses the spoken and the written in his integration of the language of dialogue and the language of narration in order to reinsert Scottish working class experience into the body of English Literature. In doing so, he stresses 'the routine horror', the oppression of everyday tasks and the drudgery and claustrophobia which mark the experience of people without economic security. Thus

Kelman's prose tends to work through painstaking and repetitive descriptions of the smallest actions, such as making a cup of tea, rolling a cigarette, or walking down stairs. Part of Kelman's project can be seen to be an attempt to recreate these sensations (of poverty, alienation, frustration and so on) as part of the reading process, thus making more 'real' a type of experience which is ignored in the majority of fiction. In contrast, Doyle's realism can be located in his method of 'letting the characters speak for themselves' and the resulting dislocation and even confusion that apparently unmediated voices create. In *The Commitments* in particular, where eleven-way conversations between the band members are reported with little indication as to who is saying what, it is the clamour of voices rather than the representation of Dublin speech on its own which qualifies the writing as 'realist'. Where Kelman opts for density and details, slowing down the minutiae of a culture routinely accelerated in genre fiction, Doyle prefers gaps, suggestions and speed, ditching the conventions of descriptive narrative and the implications of ease and leisure that go with them.

A recent discussion of Kelman's style by John Corbett might suggest that the distinction between Kelman and Doyle is not necessarily as absolute as it may first appear. Corbett characterises Kelman's 'preferred style' as 'neutral third person narrator or reflector' and his linguistic analysis aligns Kelman and Doyle more closely by refusing to accept the former's narrative approach as interior monologue.<sup>41</sup> Like Alan Freeman, he chooses to separate narrator and character whilst drawing attention to their textual fusion:

The lack of punctuation is significant because it denies the reader a signal that the narrative voice is changing from that of the dominant narrator to that of the characters. This adds to the fluidity of perspectives. (p.150).

This is precisely the method Doyle employs, particularly in his early novels, to create a more immediate impression of dialogue without the intervention of speech marks or qualifying phrases. In *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, Doyle makes use of the uncertainty of Paula's memories, her constant recourse to other people's interpretations and opinions to clarify her own voice, in order to indicate an interwoven narrative voice. In the process of asserting her own voice Paula recreates the discourses of the state, the family, even the media, thus what Wesling would call the novel's 'monologism' is directed against the homogenising narrative of Irish nationalism. Paula's desire to reconcile her experience with the idealised role of Irish womanhood can be read as a form of revisionism - even her sister accuses her of 're-writing history' (p.83).

One of the challenges of an Irish or Scottish national literature is not simply to give space to those voices which have been marginalised, but also to make heard the voices which have been subsumed into the greater body of English Literature. Thus there are many problems attached to using a form which has traditionally been seen as transparent, even objective, but which at the same time structurally embodies a system of power relations which privileges one cultural formation over others. The growing importance of voice in the novel might be seen as one strategy for drawing attention to the traditional imbalance between narrative and dialogue and going some way

towards creating a text which is both democratic and representative. In the work of Kelman and Doyle this democratic move is represented in the foregrounding of urban working-class speech in a narrative which reflects the dominant population-bases of both Scotland and Ireland. In a discussion of this process in Scottish literature, the critic Gustav Klaus suggests that:

This focus on the working class and the concomitant attack on middle class values, singular as it may appear in the 1980s in an all-British context, is by no means a Scottish peculiarity, but widespread in what goes under the name of 'New Literatures in English', resulting as it does from the association of the native ruling élite with the colonisers. Significantly, these writers [Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard and James Kelman] come from Glasgow and not genteel Edinburgh.<sup>42</sup>

Although Klaus's comments clearly identify the operation of class in a colonial context, it is interesting that he then chooses to complicate this by associating Edinburgh with the assimilationist tendencies of the 'ruling élite'. Klaus's arguments clearly re-centre the definitive location of national identity in Glasgow, thus failing to overcome the core-periphery distinction he has set up in the discussion of 'British' literature. Perhaps even more notable in Klaus's argument is his extraordinary attempt to overcome the emphasis on masculinity and the divisive basis of this form of working-class fiction: 'Despite the concentration of these works on male figures [we find] an interrogation of gender roles and patriarchy' (p.40). As is evident in both *The Busconductor Hines* and *How Late it Was, How Late*, such interrogation is severely

restricted by the absence of a female voice with a narrative authority which parallels that of the male. In both novels women are either seen as complicit with a repressive state, (for example the woman in the DSS who assesses Sammy's claim), or are secondary to the dominant male voice, effectively silenced by their partner's verbosity (this is true of both Helen and Sandra). As Sammy observes, 'It was funny how everybody had their own voices, everybody in the world, everybody that had ever been.' (p.207). Even more 'funny' perhaps is the extent to which the obsessions of literary criticism are able to marginalise women's voices, even as they champion those of the local and working-class in their challenge to the dominant formation of English Literature.

In Doyle's novels, the family is no longer the inviolate space of freedom and solidarity around which the Irish State based its 1937 constitution. *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* displays the family as the breaking point of gendered representations of Irish identity. Doyle forces the issues which society visits upon women back into the public arena of literature. Yet he also refuses to see women as simply victims by recognising that the culture of violent sexual confrontation calls forth (in Robert Young's words) an answering violence from women as well. Paula describes herself as 'a great fighter' and on the first page she hits her twelve year old daughter, Nicola. She is constantly troubled by how she treats her children, but unlike Charlo she is prepared to 'shoulder the responsibility', to write her violence. This challenges an idealised version of both male and female Irish identity and raises questions about the extent to which institutional power relies on the structures of patriarchy. In undoing the foundational stability of the family unit, Doyle raises questions about the nature of the Irish State and the politics of class and gender that

operate in its name. However, it is the threat of sexual abuse which provides the pivotal action of the plot, and violence which resolves it. Paula finally manages to rid herself of Charlo when she catches him 'looking' at Nicola:

I threw him out! I'll never forget that – the excitement and terror. It felt so good. It took years off me. God, it was terrifying, though – after I'd done it, after I'd walloped him. I didn't think. I couldn't have done it if I had. But when I saw him looking at Nicola, when I saw his eyes. I don't know what happened to me – the Bionic Woman – he was gone. It was so easy. Just bang – gone. (p.213)

Of course it was not easy, and as the rest of the narrative demonstrates this decisive moment is born out of seventeen years of misery and violence. Nevertheless, it is significant that it is not a physical battering which produces this moment. Paula loses a baby when Charlo punches her in the stomach when she is pregnant; whilst this loss forms an important thread running through the novel, it does not have the textual significance of the threat of sexual abuse. Paula's mixed feelings about Charlo's departure reflect her awareness that this turning point represents both a personal triumph and a social failure. Doyle's constant themes of fantasies and family are brought together in Paula's decision to sacrifice Charlo's future in favour of that of her children. This is not to say that Doyle suggests that she has made the wrong choice, but simply, as in *Paddy Clarke*, that such choices are not without their price. In many ways the scope of Paula's narrative reflects the consequences of this decision. As she attempts to cope with her alcoholism on a day to day basis, she is barely able to look beyond the children's bedtime, let alone to contemplate her future or rekindle the

hopes and desires of her youth. Similarly, although the novel is Paula's story, and at a fictional level is written by her, the presence of Charlo dominates the narrative. Indeed, it could be said that he is the novel's central character.

*The Woman Who Walked Into Doors* disrupts the national allegory in which Mother Ireland is threatened by a colonial violator by situating the abuser within the home. As Paula says 'They were all in on it' (p.49). This challenges an idealised version of both male and female Irish identity and raises questions about the extent to which institutional power (whether nationalist or imperialist) relies on the structures of patriarchy. However, I have some serious reservations about the ways in which Doyle's critique operates, primarily because Paula's narrative remains tied to the domestic arena (she only appears to leave the house to go and clean other people's homes), whereas Charlo's character is allowed to roam across the text and through the streets of Dublin. Finally, her narrative conclusion depends upon the death of Charlo who is shot by the Garda in a disastrous kidnapping. In other words the resolution of the novel is not made possible through Paula's actions but through a counter but correlative male violence – by the police, the instruments of the state.

Edward Said has suggested a technique of 'contrapuntal reading' to illuminate how immensely important the novel was in the formation of 'imperial attitudes, references and experiences'.<sup>43</sup> Said's analysis of the nineteenth century English novel as a 'knowable community', which serves to reinforce and advance attitudes and perceptions about England and the rest of the world, echoes that of Williams and Anderson, yet his theory of reading can also be seen to address the questions raised by Smyth and Azim as well as Spivak's tension between the aesthetic and the practical.

Said emphasises the need to rejoin experience and culture by reading texts backwards and forwards between the peripheries and the metropolitan centre, thus reaffirming 'the historical experience of imperialism as a matter first of interdependent histories, overlapping domains, second of something requiring intellectual and political choices'.<sup>44</sup> The strength of Said's suggestion lies in his assertion that texts 'are not bounded by their formal historic beginnings and endings' (p.78) and as such contemporary readings (and by implication, writing) have the ability to subvert and challenge the power relations which structure the bourgeois novel.

While this provides grounds for positive intervention in both imperial and literary history, what does it offer the contemporary novelist in Scotland or Ireland? Applying Said's suggestions to *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, for example, would promote a reading in which Paula's act of writing could be set against the resolution of plot, such that the apparent bias towards an 'active' masculinity is overshadowed by the identification of narrative authority with a female voice. Paula's story continues whereas that of Charlo is brought to a violent end. Said's theory of counterpoint also suggests a continuous dialogue (that is a two-sided discussion) between core and periphery. Yet if we add to this his call for a recognition of geographic interdependence and cross-disciplinary analysis, it appears that a two sided discussion (whether West/rest, white/non-white, centre/margin) is inadequate and indeed will privilege those representative strategies which favour the initial division. One possible option is to exploit the ambivalence cited by Azim above, that is to claim the margin as a position of openness and creativity - what Spivak calls 'the place for critical moment' - rather than as a new centre.<sup>45</sup> The critic bell hooks has

explained this choice as one that is made possible by the oppositional politics of colonialism yet which presents the opportunity to overcome such divisive strategies:

I am located in the margin. I make a definite distinction between that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance – as location of radical openness and possibility. This site of resistance is continually formed in that segregated culture of opposition that is our critical response to domination. We come to this space through suffering and pain, through struggle. We know struggle to be that which gives pleasures, delights, and fulfils desire. We are transformed individually, collectively, as we make radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which gives us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world.<sup>46</sup>

The ‘radical creative space’ that hooks offers might be said to be one where voices from different formations can speak to each other without recourse to the dominant centre. In the case of Scottish and Irish writers this might suggest a writing strategy in which identity is affirmed through shared concerns and experiences, yet differentiated by the particular contexts in which they operate. This again suggests the importance of ‘voice’ to the contemporary Irish and Scottish novel, not simply a repositioning of one voice over another but an openness to a variety of voices whose polyphony might be said to represent a ‘knowable community’.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>1</sup> James Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural & Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), p.22.

<sup>2</sup> Claudio Guillén, *Literature as System* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1971), p.72.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 69-74.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Brennan, 'The National Longing for Form' in Homi Bhabha, (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.49, cited by Dorothy McMillan, 'Constructed out of bewilderment: stories of Scotland', in Ian A. Bell (ed.), *Peripheral Visions: Images of Nationhood in Contemporary British Fiction* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), p.81.

<sup>5</sup> Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p. 19.

<sup>6</sup> Scott's ambiguous position in both Scottish and English literature is discussed at length in Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). Scott criticism also provides frequent examples of the elision of the terms English and British. Williams, for example, happily introduces his book *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, with this statement: 'the English novel had its major achievements; it had Defoe and Fielding, Richardson and Jane Austen, and Walter Scott' (p.9). Perhaps more surprisingly, postcolonial critics are also inclined to subsume Scotland into a Britain-which-is-England, for example, Doris Sommer in Bhabha's influential book, *Nation and Narration*: 'Scott's middle of the road modernity [and] his celebration of past events ... were possible for Scott, of course, only because England had already achieved its "progressive" bourgeois formation' ('Irresistible Romance: The Foundational Fictions of Latin America', p.83).

<sup>7</sup> For more on this, as well as a convincing argument that even in contemporary Ireland 'the nation is staged rather than told', see Christopher Murray, *Twentieth Century Irish Drama: Mirror up to Nation* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997). Murray says 'in the Irish historical experience drama (the creation of texts for performance) and theatre (the formation of the means of production and conditions of reception of drama) were both instrumental in defining and sustaining national consciousness'(p.3).

<sup>8</sup> Yeats, *et al* (1897) quoted by Lady Gregory 'Our Irish Theatre' in J. P. Harrington (ed.) *Modern Irish Drama* (New York: Norton, 1991), p.378.

- <sup>9</sup> From 'Second Hymn to Lenin', Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve), *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p.152.
- <sup>10</sup> Paul Gilbert, 'The Idea of National Literature' in John Horton and Andrea T. Baumeister (eds.), *Literature and the Political Imagination* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p.205.
- <sup>11</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), p.2.
- <sup>12</sup> Raymond Williams, *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence* (London: Hogarth Press, 1984), p.121.
- <sup>13</sup> This approach bears a strong resemblance to that of T. S. Eliot in his essay 'Was There a Scottish Literature' in which he argues that Scottish and Irish literature provide 'shreds of force' which invigorate English Literature, concluding that 'the basis for one literature is one language', *The Atheneum* (August 1919).
- <sup>14</sup> Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, 'What is Post (-) colonialism', in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.) *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1994), p.281.
- <sup>15</sup> See for example Homi Bhabha's emphasis on the novel as a master narrative of the modern state in 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha' in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.), *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference*, (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p.218.
- <sup>16</sup> Gayatri Spivak, 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism' in Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley (eds.), *Postcolonial Criticism* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), p.163.
- <sup>17</sup> *Wide Sargasso Sea* presents many literary strategies which are common to postcolonial writing, including the re-writing of an imperial narrative from a colonial perspective (a more recent example might be J. M. Coetzee's *Foe* (Middlesex: Penguin, 1986) which addresses both Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*). However, before celebrating the postcoloniality of the novel too readily, as Firdous Azim has pointed out, it is important to acknowledge the dominant status of Rhys's heroine as a white Creole slave owner.
- <sup>18</sup> Firdous Azim, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.19.
- <sup>19</sup> Kirsty McNeill, 'Interview with James Kelman', in *Chapman 57* (Summer, 1989), pp. 4-5.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p.3.

<sup>21</sup> Thus Burns is described as 'vigorous' or 'earthy' when his subject matter is sexual (rather than romantic), see for example Ian Ousby (ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (London: Guild Publishing, 1989).

<sup>22</sup> See for example Michael Kelly (former Lord Provost of Glasgow) in *The Scotsman* (14<sup>th</sup> October, 1994), Simon Jenkins in *The Times* (15<sup>th</sup> October, 1994), Allan Massie in *The Scotsman* (17<sup>th</sup> October, 1994), Andrew Noble in *The Daily Telegraph* (13<sup>th</sup> October, 1994) and the letters pages in *The Times* and *The Scotsman* from 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1994 to 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1994. For a more positive response to Kelman's Booker win see James Wood, 'In defence of Kelman', *The Guardian* (25<sup>th</sup> October, 1994) and Neal Ascherson, 'Will Kelman's London cheers pave the way for Glasgow sneers?', *The Independent on Sunday* (16<sup>th</sup> October, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Dr Michael Kelly, letter to *The Scotsman* (14<sup>th</sup> October, 1994).

<sup>24</sup> This passage is also interesting with regard to Kelman's well-known objections to Glasgow's 'City of Culture' programme as a short-sighted, unrepresentative project which valued art for its tourist appeal. See for example the foreword to *Some Recent Attacks* and 'Art and Subsidy, and the Continuing Politics of Culture City' in the same collection.

<sup>25</sup> Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman' in Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (eds.), *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp.103-104.

<sup>26</sup> Alan Freeman 'Realism Fucking Realism' in *Cencrastus*, No. 57 (Summer, 1997), p.6.

<sup>27</sup> Donald Wesling, 'Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation', *Scotlands* 4, 2 (1997), pp.81-98.

<sup>28</sup> See Interview with Liam Fay in *Hot Press* Vol. 20 No. 6 (April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1996), p.18.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Lewis, 'Recovering the Past. Uncovering the Present', *Stand Magazine* Vol. 29, No. 2 (Spring, 1988), pp. 41- 42.

<sup>30</sup> James Kelman, 'The Importance of Glasgow in my Work' in *Some Recent Attacks*, p.82.

<sup>31</sup> Clearly the most obvious example of this is J.M. Synge and his plays such as *The Playboy of the Western World* and *Riders to the Sea*. Synge explicitly contrasted 'the modern literature of towns ... dealing with the reality of life in joyless and pallid words' to his own work as a 'collaboration ... with

the folk imagination' of the 'country people of Ireland'. (Preface to *The Playboy of the Western World*, January 21, 1907).

<sup>32</sup> See David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1993), especially 'Adulteration and the Nation', pp.88-124. See also Neil Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Chapter Three.

<sup>33</sup> See Shaun Richards, 'Northside Realism and the Twilight's Last Gleaming' in *Irish Studies Review* no. 2 (Winter, 1992), p.19 and Neil Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce*, pp.10-11.

<sup>34</sup> Fintan O'Toole, 'Island of Saints and Silicon: Literature and Social Change in Contemporary Ireland', in M Keneally (ed.) *Cultural Contexts and Literary Idioms* (Gerrard's Cross: Colin Smythe, 1988), pp.11-35

<sup>35</sup> See Ferdia MacAnna's manifesto for these 'New Dubliners' in 'The Dublin Renaissance', *The Irish Review*, 10 (Spring, 1991), pp.14-30. This group of writers variously includes Sebastian Barry, Dermot Bolger, Anne Enright, Joseph O'Connor and Paula Meehan. For a discussion of the contrast in style between Doyle and the rest see Neil Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce*, pp.122 – 130, and Joseph O'Connor, 'Barrytown International: The World of Roddy Doyle' in *The Secret World of the Irish Male* (London: Minerva, 1995).

<sup>36</sup> Firdous Azim, *The Colonial Rise of the Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p.19.

<sup>37</sup> Robert Welch (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: OUP, 1996), p. 154 and pp.245-6.

<sup>38</sup> Loreto Todd, *The Language of Irish Literature* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p.36.

<sup>39</sup> Interview with Gerry Smyth in, *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p.110.

<sup>40</sup> Letter to *The Times*, 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1994 quoted in Graeme MacDonald, 'Writing Claustrophobia: Zola and Kelman' in *Bulletin of the Emile Zola Society* 13 (1996), fn, p.19.

<sup>41</sup> John Corbett, *Language and Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p.148.

<sup>42</sup> H. Gustav Klaus, '1984 Glasgow. Alasdair Gray, Tom Leonard and James Kelman' in *Etudes Ecosaisies 2* (Grenoble: Université Stendhal, 1993), p.31.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.xii.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.* p.313.

<sup>45</sup> In Sarah Harasym (ed), *Gayatri Spivak, The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.157.

<sup>46</sup> bell hooks, *Yearning, Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 1991), p.153.

<sup>47</sup> As Raymond Williams also notes: 'The problem of the knowable community, that is to say, is not only a matter of physical expansion and complication. It is also and primarily a problem of viewpoint and of consciousness.' *The English Novel from Dickens to Lawrence*, p.26.

## Chapter Four

### Composite Culture: Locating Identity in the Novel

Kelman, Doyle and Welsh all present a challenge to traditional representations of Scottish and Irish cultures, yet they tend to then re-centre discourse in the Central Belt and Dublin. Berthold Schoene, following Tom Nairn, argues that Scotland is split between a highly anglicised Lowland and Gaelic Highland identity: 'Scotland itself is informed by deeply ingrained postcolonial tensions that are often played down in order not to unsettle the sense of a wholesome national unity'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly a critical discourse operates within Irish studies which, seeking to establish a culturally united island, includes (usually without comment) the North, but which then excludes the specificity of texts which are concerned with an explicitly Northern Irish identity. Edna Longley's provocative call to 'include the North' is part of a larger project which seeks to reintroduce the Ulster Protestant experience into the Irish one - that is to refuse the division British/Irish along neat sectarian lines without abandoning the cultural effects of religious affiliation.<sup>2</sup> Northern based writers who are concerned with a politics of place whilst refusing a comfortable identification with the Republic can be seen to contest the essentialising subject positions encouraged by the defensive apparatuses of both imperialism and nationalism.

Novels which develop these different perspectives do not necessarily form an obvious group, and they share many features with the books discussed in the previous chapter. Colin Bateman's *Cycle of Violence* bears only a passing resemblance to Wilson's *Ripley Bogle*, and appears to have even less in common with Warner's

*Morvern Callar*. Yet all of these novels can be seen to twist culturally specific genres as part of a process of self-identification. In doing so they each draw attention to the expectations of the reader when presented with familiar markers of nation and narrative. Overcoming the binary opposition of centre-margin, these texts assert multiple margins which are criss-crossed by meeting points rather than centres. Thus the opposition North/South cannot be seen as pure or originary, but will always be traversed by further conflicting positions, such as Catholic/Protestant, female/male, or Urban/Rural. Reading these works together, deliberate shifts in the location of identity can be seen to be part of a process of hybridisation.

Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* provides a bridging text between these different sets of works. Whilst Edinburgh's political centrality is largely unchallenged within Scotland, socially it has been seen as a city with no working-class, or with an invisible one that does not determine the character of the city. The rest of Scotland tends to view Edinburgh as a genteel and thoroughly anglicised satellite of London. In a literary context this has been supported by the aggressive work of Glaswegian writers - confirming the West Coast as a privileged site of resistance.<sup>3</sup> This is due in part to a combination of social and cultural factors such as the concentration of heavy industry on the Clyde in the early twentieth century, and following this the phenomenon of 'Red Clydeside', so called because of the power of the shipyard and engineering unions and their emphatic socialist stance.<sup>4</sup> In the later twentieth century, following the decline of empire and particularly the heavy industries which it supported, Scotland experienced high unemployment and a particularly severe recession. During the Thatcher regime (1979-1990), Scotland was used as a testing ground for particularly controversial policies such as the Poll Tax

and water privatisation. There was widespread opposition to these policies, but this was at its most vocal (and violent) on the West Coast. In contrast, Edinburgh, home of the International Festival and Fringe, has been seen as a focus of high culture normally associated with the upper middle classes. It is not surprising therefore that the cultural products of the East and West tend to reflect the social circumstances of the region. In many ways, Beveridge and Turnbull's critique of 'inferiorism' is pertinent here. The supposedly English values of Scotland's capital are at odds with the oppositional identities most frequently associated with the West and the Highlands and Islands.

Welsh's work offers more than an Edinburgh version of a Glaswegian dirty realism; specifically, Welsh refuses some of the more positive aspects of, say, Kelman's writing, in favour of a multi-layered discourse in which victim/oppressor positions are no longer easily identifiable. Rather than simply asserting the working-class credentials of Edinburgh as a city, the structure of Welsh's novels, and *Marabou Stork Nightmares* in particular, disrupts received narratives of Scottish culture in which class can be mapped against regional identity. Similarly, the movements of the novel's central character, Roy Strang, demonstrate the importance of relative and fixed positions in respect of cultural identity. Roy's position is primarily modified by his location – Muirhouse, Johannesburg, Manchester – yet each in turn draw on the fixed notions of class, nation and gender which Welsh invokes. In his discussion of contemporary Scottish fiction Donald Wesling cites *Marabou Stork Nightmares* as an example of a 'monologic' novel, and identifies a number of features which could also apply to Irish novels such as Robert McLiam Wilson's *Ripley Bogle*.<sup>5</sup> The Belfast-Cambridge-London axis of the latter can be seen to reject the oppositions London-

Dublin and Dublin-Belfast in favour of a more general British-Irish context. Ripley Bogle is caught between the destructive discourses of his Catholic Republican upbringing in West Belfast and the fragmented and superficial relationships that characterise his exile in England. Wilson's novel appears to reject Irishness as 'something promoted by Americans and professors of English Literature' (p.190) yet offers no valid alternative other than a deep-seated ambivalence towards any set of symbols which might link individuals in some form of 'knowable community'. *Ripley Bogle* is 'monologic in framing speech acts, which superintend all else' in much the same way as *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, and the unreliability of both narrators is presented as a product of their conflicting identities.<sup>6</sup>

*Marabou Stork Nightmares* is Roy's story, told from the depths of a coma after a suicide attempt, following his participation in a gang rape. The narrative switches between flashbacks of a traumatic childhood in Edinburgh, memories of an awkward eighteen-month residence in South Africa, recollections of more recent life as a violent Hibernian football casual, a brief attempt to separate himself from his past in Manchester, and semi-conscious descriptions of the comings and goings of his hospital room. Tying all this together is the surreal and imaginary quest to kill the Marabou Stork, a flesh eating bird which terrorises flamingoes in an African safari park. The book is structured around episodes which are identified by their tone and often by changes in typography. Frequently, Roy's 'Boys Own' adventure is interrupted by 'real-life' invasions of his comatose body - the arguments of what he calls his 'genetic disaster' of a family when they come to visit, or bed baths given by Nurse Patricia Devine - which are then assimilated into his fantasy. Similarly the story of the hunt for the Marabou Stork synthesises the diverse aspects of Roy's

experiences which are recounted in the (apparently) realist sections. The tensions between the different narratives dramatise Roy's struggle to keep control of his life and his story, to strike a balance between the elements of alibi and confession. Roy makes it clear from the start that the marabou stork forms part of both an escapist dream and 'the personification of all this badness'; the fantasy provides a space to 'work it all out', and one where there is 'no comeback'. Unfortunately for Roy it is all coming back, not helped by what he calls the 'psychic gatecrashers breaking in on [his] private party'.<sup>7</sup>

Roy's life is characterised by violence - family beatings, child abuse, sexual abuse, swedging (football hooliganism), rape and revenge. Whilst there is no omniscient narrator to draw attention to the links between the cruelty Roy suffers in childhood and the cruelty he inflicts as a young man, the novel's chronology suggests their interrelatedness, reinforced through the dense texture of references between the different episodes, and the unifying thread of the hunt for the stork.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the driving force of Ripley Bogle's narrative is aimed at undermining any such predictable connections and tends to refute the search for a unifying figure outside of Bogle himself. Yet Bogle's life is similarly shaped by the violence which stalks Welsh's narrative. Bogle's childhood is marked by a series of beatings by parents, teachers and contemporaries, which he describes as the 'soft, imperceptible end of child cruelty' (p.14). The Troubles also make an early appearance to add to the context of bloody incidents, sudden deaths and general antagonism in which he grows up:

I spent a great deal of my childhood seeing things that I shouldn't have seen and making the acquaintance of uncomfortable notions that certainly could have waited a decade or so for their entrance. Murder, violence, blood, guts and sundry other features of Irish political life tend to telescope one's development a little as you can imagine. (p.32)

Despite a number of graphic descriptions of fights, shootings and other acts of violence, Bogle's cynicism serves to undercut the significance of these events in relation to his adult self - at times he even expresses thankfulness at being given 'the material' (p.32, p.190). The presentation of the experience of political and military atrocities as 'profitable', 'material' and 'strong stuff' act as a double satire on both loyalist and nationalist myths. By characterising this experience as 'material' (by implication for a book – this book), Wilson draws attention to the expectations of the literary establishment in Britain which is attracted to the violence of Irish subject matter, yet tends to value Irish writers for their ability to transcend the conflict through the privileged realm of art. The idea of profit and benefit brought about through struggle and hardship reflects on the Protestant work ethic and its complementary discourse of 'character-building'.

It has been said by many worthy folk that the more leprous and deadly the childhood environment has been then much the greater will be the genius in adulthood. I believe myself to be the perfect illustration of this theory. I was surrounded by a

melee of bombs, guns and Irishmen from an early age and have turned out so very well in spite of it all. (p.43)

The irony is, of course, that Bogle is narrating this story as he wanders through London, homeless, penniless, unhealthy and resolutely unimproved by his experiences. However, Wilson's novel is not without its own attempt at psycho-social analysis, and like *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, *Ripley Bogle* uses fantasy to suggest events and emotions to which the narrator does not consciously wish to lay claim.

Two of the most important realist chapters in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* are 'The Scheme' and 'Huckled in the City of Gold', where parallels between different kinds of violence are most clearly drawn, and the relativity of Roy's subject position most strongly evoked. 'The Scheme' details life in Muirhouse, a peripheral housing estate in Edinburgh, which Roy describes as 'a concentration camp for the poor' (p.22). Roy's tone is matter of fact throughout, from descriptions of children's games to 'a bad batterin fae my Dad' (p.23). The dispassionate manner in which Roy alludes to this beating as well as a vicious attack by his father's dog (which he is forced to conceal) appears to underline the 'normality' of this kind of incident in his everyday life. Later in the book it becomes clear that the events and activities in the scheme which Roy chooses to share with us all have particular significance. For example, at the age of nine, Roy is 'charged by the polis for playing football in the street' (p.21). Whilst this seems to make a point about the criminalisation of the poor from an early age, later in the novel the idea of football as a symbol of resistance to authority and social consensus is developed through descriptions of his involvement with the Hibs

casuals. There are also strong connections made between boredom, exclusion, frustration and violence:

There was always fights with stanes in the scheme. The first thing I learned tae dae was tae fling a stane. That was what you did as a kid in Muirhoose, you flung stanes; flung them at radges, at windaes, at buses. It was something to do. (p.25)

The 'City of Gold' chapters describe the Strang family's attempt to escape the poverty and violence of their life in Edinburgh. They imagine South Africa to be 'a sort of paradise', with jobs, wealth, sunshine and respect - all of the things that are not on offer in Muirhouse. Indeed, Johannesburg is presented rather like the ideal destination for a package holiday, specifically designed to fulfil the fantasies of the Scottish working-class. However, it soon becomes clear that the package includes those elements of violence, repression, frustration and fear which they attempt to leave behind. Roy's father is jailed for attacking a taxi driver and his mother acts as an unpaid cook for Uncle Gordon, who sexually abuses his nephew. The real difference between Johannesburg and Muirhouse is marked by the black Africans, such as Uncle Gordon's housemaid Valerie, who occupy the lowest subject position in a hierarchy of race and class, a bottom rung that was previously taken up by the Strangs. Welsh takes this opportunity to allow Roy to draw a strong comparison:

Edinburgh to me represented serfdom. I realised that it was exactly the same situation as Johannesburg; the only

difference was that the Kaffirs were white and called  
schemies or draftpaks. Back in Edinburgh we would be  
Kaffirs; condemned to live out our lives in townships  
like Muirhouse or So-Wester-Hailes-To. (p.80)

Welsh claims a solidarity with Black South Africans through the naming of townships/newtowns. The pun on SOWETO and Wester Hailes develops the central point - that the 'only difference' is linguistic: 'the Kaffirs where white and called schemies or draftpaks'. To some extent this passage demonstrates the ambiguity which surrounds the colonial status of Scotland and the role of Scots in the administration of the British Empire. By glossing over the question of race and suggesting an analogy of status - only the names are changed - Welsh's declaration encompasses both fear and desire. Furthermore, the tone of this revelation can be likened to the extract from Roy's South African schoolbook which is included in the novel as if it were an exact reproduction of the page:

The White man originally came to South Africa as a soldier, farmer, trader, missionary and general pioneer, and owing to his superior education and his long background of civilisation he was able to provide the necessary leadership, expertise, technical skill and finance among races who were for the most part little removed from barbarism.

South Africa is the only country in the world where a dominant community has followed a definite policy of maintaining the purity of its race in the midst of overwhelming numbers of non-European inhabitants – in most not

still administered as colonies or protectorates either the non-whites have been exterminated or there has been some form of assimilation, resulting in a more or less coloured population. Indeed far from the extermination of the non-whites, the advent of the European in South Africa has meant that whole native communities have been saved from exterminating each other. It is not generally realised that scarcely a century ago Chaka, chief of the Zulus, destroyed 300 tribes and wiped out thousands upon thousands of his fellows.

Gradually, however, the remnants of the tribes which survived the internecine wars were able to settle down to a peaceful, rural way of life under the protection and with the assistance of the white man. In the traditional homelands, which cover an extent about as large as England and Wales together, nearly one-half of the Bantu live and lead a simple pastoral life as their ancestors did through the centuries before them – happy, picturesque people living the most carefree existence imaginable. (p.81)

This passage affirms an absolute separation of races and a call to purity, as well as warnings about the potential barbarity of the ‘non-Europeans’, but also hints at a form of nostalgic desire - the Afrikaners’ past is represented by the present of the Bantu’s ‘simple pastoral life’. The schoolbook is not meant to be subtle and Welsh’s use of typographic distinction here is a deliberate method of separation; this text is to be read as unmediated and manipulative propaganda.

Wilson is much less direct in his comments about the relative status of black and white colonial subjects, and extremely wary of any attempts to make

straightforward distinctions between ‘straight’ narrative, personal history and propaganda. Nevertheless, the effect of Bogle’s denouement is drastically reduced if Wilson has not convinced the reader to accept at least a contingent truth from the narrative that he presents. Rather than stress the relativity of ‘truth’ in textual form, Wilson chooses to do so emotionally, by isolating his central character through a general misanthropy. Bogle’s brief acts of solidarity with other human beings occur in heavy irony, such as the passage where he sympathises with Britain’s inability to manage its withdrawal from empire:

The British got it wrong. They grew all philanthropic and noble.  
They were the only imperial power ever to try giving their  
empire back. That was their mistake. We wogs, us wogs, we  
didn’t like that. Not at all. (p.111)

It’s difficult to locate the voice in this passage. The use of the imperialistic, highly derogatory ‘wogs’, together with the pronoun ‘we’ would suggest a form of ironic mimicry: the speaker appropriates the imperial term and re-deploys it against the authority from which it originated. Yet the tone of the rest of the passage, which casts imperial Britain in the role of a benign but mistaken paternal figure, undercuts the contestatory force of the term ‘wogs’. Finally, the philanthropy of the British echoes the ‘protection and assistance of the white man’ in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*.

Earlier in the novel, Bogle indicates that his narrative is directed towards a British audience – ‘the Maze to you Brits’ (p.42) – which would tend to support his identification with ‘Indians and Pakistanis’ in their relation to the imperial power.

However, in a later scene in London where Bogle observes a group of black men being verbally abused by ‘a little bunch of white youths’ the narrative voice moves towards an all-inclusive and ‘English’ us: ‘I can’t see the sense in bigotry against blacks. I mean they are English after all. [...] They are just like us, only black. At least they’re not Welsh! They’re just black.’ (p.254). This appears to satirise a weak liberalism which seeks to contain cultural difference in the name of universalism. As Homi Bhabha observes, racism is prevalent even in societies where multiculturalism is encouraged ‘because the universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests.’<sup>9</sup> Unable to compromise between different versions of cultural identity, ‘Ripley Irish British Bogle’s’ confused allegiances can only offer a form of universal self-hatred – ‘The world did me wrong by making me an Irishman’ (p.325). As Gerry Smyth comments: ‘cultural hybridity, rather than offering Bogle a positive and enabling set of options, actually robs him of any power other than that of indicting both sides’.<sup>10</sup>

In both novels fantasy operates as a check on the apparent transparency of realist narrative. Welsh’s parody of an imperial adventure story questions the validity of the social realist sections by disrupting the linear pattern of cause and effect with an alternative, yet quasi-official version. In this way, two discourses that produce and are produced by colonialism are read against one another, revealing the inconsistencies and ambiguity which marks the experience of colonial subjects. In *Ripley Bogle* the tension between conflicting narratives is less pronounced because of the explicit references to literary texts and Wilson’s use of Beckett and Joyce as prominent stylistic models. Indeed, Wilson has been strongly criticised for his use of a derivative style which is prone to ‘narrative gimmicks’, particularly in the most

explicitly fantastic section which owes much to Joyce's 'Nighttown' episode in *Ulysses*.<sup>11</sup> Yet to dismiss Wilson's style as parasitical in this way is to ignore the text's engagement with literature as a fundamental force in the creation of Irish identity, and to overlook the pervasive influence of Joyce for (two) generations of Irish writers. By drawing on the most significant Irish texts of the twentieth century, Wilson argues against the distance that his ironic stance creates in the rest of the novel. Collapsing narrative style with content he confirms Spivak's assertion that any critique of the imperial structure must always already be implicated in it. Ripley's stance as ironic observer is undermined then by his reference to other previously 'observational' narratives. This is most significant in his use of Beckett's play style captions (see, for example, the opening of the novel) which situate both reader and narrator as the audience of a drama over which they have no control. Bogle's exile in Cambridge and London cannot release him from the colonial dynamic, just as his decision to opt out of conventional social structures in favour of an urban nomadic existence does not end his involvement with society. The specific allusions to two famous literary exiles, Beckett and Joyce, also serve to illustrate Seamus Deane's critique of the fetishising of artistic exiles (in particular Joyce) as the only appropriate response to the pressures of colonialism.<sup>12</sup> The lack of conflict between 'official' and 'literary' narratives in *Ripley Bogle* effectively demonstrates how easily the peripheral becomes central. Wilson's novel affirms the inter-dependence of administrative and literary spheres, highlighting the potential failure of radical narratives that have been absorbed into the dominant discourse.

The surreal sequence which takes place in Martin Malone's pub is an amalgamation of elements from Joyce's *Ulysses* (the Nighttown and Cyclops

episodes), Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and a reworking of a number of Shakespearian ghosts.<sup>13</sup> In particular, the ghost of Ripley's friend Maurice echoes the appearance of the dead Banquo in *Macbeth*, although Maurice's speech also makes ironic reference to the murder of Hamlet's father.<sup>14</sup> Working through Joyce's engagement with Shakespeare, *Ripley Bogle* dramatises the hybridisation of English and Irish literary traditions. The observation that Joyce's work has been absorbed into the canon of English literature is nothing new. Indeed readings of Joyce of the last fifty years have tended to overplay his 'internationalism' in order to avoid any conflict between the presence of a resisting Irish identity within the core of English literary tradition (and its own semi-articulated claims to universalism).<sup>15</sup> Wilson does not re-claim Joyce's text as a narrative of Irish liberation. Rather, his juxtaposition of Shakespeare and Joyce seeks to reverse the authority of their production. In this sense then, *Ulysses* produces *Hamlet* (and *Macbeth*), and the traditional colonial 'model' of literature is overturned. In a discussion of the 'third space' which emerges from the oppositional discourses that structure colonialism and anti-colonial struggle, Homi Bhabha explains how authority can be displaced by the distinction between genesis and chronology:

hybridity puts together the traces of other meanings or discourses. It does not give them the authority of being prior in the sense of being original: they are prior only in the sense of being anterior.<sup>16</sup>

In *Ripley Bogle* then the battle between cultures is displaced into the realm of textual interrogation and the originality of both Shakespeare and Joyce is challenged by the

inability of these texts to command a totalising authority. The amalgam of Joycean ghosts with Shakespearean ones demonstrates the haunting of literary realms by the literary tradition that precedes it. The hybridised text makes use of the cultural effects of narrative at the same time as it plays out the limitations of an anti-imperialist stance which relies wholly on this kind of textual subversion (a cruder version of which Welsh uses in his schoolbook extract). In this way it might be said to answer Helen Tiffin's call to 'evolve textual strategies which continually "consume" their own "biases" at the same time as they expose and erode those of the dominant discourse'.<sup>17</sup> Whilst such a strategy might admirably dramatise the difficulties faced by a discursive resistance to imperialism, its open confrontation with the demands of other 'biases' such as class and gender reveals some serious weaknesses in the postcolonial text.

Welsh's attempts to connect Black African experience with that of the Scottish working class are not undone by their clumsiness or inappropriateness, but by the intervention of a discourse of sexual difference. The presentation of Uncle Gordon, for example, is used to calibrate the reader's response to both the extract from the schoolbook and Roy's reflection on the comparative social contexts of Muirhouse and Soweto. Gordon is the embodiment of colonial discourse. Depicted as 'an un-reconstructed pro-apartheid white supremacist' (p.62), he is eventually blown up by an ANC car bomb. He represents both the deprivation of the Scottish housing scheme and the greed of the colonial authority. However, where the Strangs are seen somewhat sympathetically, Uncle Gordon is placed beyond the moral pale. Like Begbie in *Trainspotting*, he serves the structural function of the unforgiveable, allowing the other transgressors to receive, if not sympathy, then at least some

measure of understanding. Gordon's jeep explodes when he is on a camping trip with Roy, an occasion which he has previously used as an opportunity to sexually abuse his nephew. Gordon's murder leaves Roy unmoved: 'as far as I was concerned Gordon was a sneaky, big-headed poofy auld cunt and it was good riddance' (p.86). The reader is left in no doubt as to the merits of Gordon's abrupt exit either. His racist and fascist beliefs are stressed in order to justify the 'terrorist' attack, but it is his role as a child molester which confirms the underlying proposition that 'he deserved it'. Later in the novel Roy's increasingly unreliable narrative returns to the subject of his relationship with Gordon, suggesting that his uncle went as far as raping him. Gordon's bloody demise is forgotten however, because in the context of resistance to Apartheid it is read as an act of closure, and in Roy's world of disclosure, ends are only of interest insofar as they serve means.

Although Welsh is deliberately linking different kinds of violence, he is also suggesting that some kinds of violence are justified by previous, more blameworthy acts of force. It is a question of source and degree, but also ultimately of kind. The difficulty for Roy throughout *Marabou Stork Nightmares* is that violence presents both the problem and the solution. The quest for the Marabou Stork is a quest to end violence through violence. 'If I kill the Stork, I'll kill all the badness in me', says Roy early on in the book, yet in the closing pages of the novel it becomes clear that Roy himself is the stork - 'Captain Beaky they used to call me in school' - and that individual acts of revenge or retribution do not break the cycle of violence, but merely prolong it. Roy is unable to break out of this loop which shapes and explains his personal acts of brutality, yet he must still take responsibility for those acts, something which he is apparently unable to do until his victim, Kirsty, holds him

violently to account. There is no peaceful way out. Even his relatively passive suicide attempt is a failure. Roy is only able to choose what Derrida calls 'the lesser violence within an economy of violence'.<sup>18</sup> Within such an economy, violence is accorded moral value primarily through its context, and this is where Welsh's novel becomes most problematic.

Colin Bateman's *Cycle of Violence* shares with Welsh's novel a concern with the interrelation of different types of violence. It also draws on sexual violence as the focus for a moral standard by which all other forms of violence are to be judged. Bateman shares with Welsh and Wilson strategies of evasion, ambiguity and misrecognition designed to lead the reader into a moral judgement of the central character, only to be disoriented by a late denouement which appears to alter the context of judgement completely. The book's central relationship is that of Miller, a sceptical Protestant journalist, with a disturbed Catholic girl, Marie. Despite the shades of love-across-the-barricades romance, Bateman's main point seems to revolve around the sham basis of political violence and the influence it has on individual lives. The novel opens with the death and funeral of Miller's father. It is the first in a series of deaths and burials that punctuate the narrative. The death signals a loss of connectedness - a link to his dead mother and absent brother which emphasises both the unrelatedness of different violent episodes as well as their underlying proximity. The 'Cycle of Violence' of the title refers to Miller's mountain bike, which he uses to get around Belfast whilst reporting on 'activities in the city centre, mostly courts and killings' (p.10). This is more than a passing pun: the cycles of violence on which he reports are linked to the bike not only through the figure of Miller himself, but also

through their pattern which is predictably systematic and their progression which is so cruelly random:

It had been another rough week in the city. A bomb had exploded in a crowded department store in Royal Avenue, killing thirteen people. Six men had been shot dead in a bookmaker's office in revenge for the bomb. And in revenge for the killings in the bookmaker's office two off-duty policemen enjoying a quiet drink had been shot dead in a country pub. Everyone expected the next piece of action would involve a young IRA terrorist being shot dead on the way to a possible hit, but no gun to be found near his body. It worked in cycles like that. (p.10)

The underlying plot of *Cycle of Violence* undermines any notion of political conspiracy (by any party), pokes fun at the incompetence of the paramilitaries, and exposes the pervasive brutality of communities who accept their presence. Nevertheless, the plot mechanisms of the thriller genre demand a chain of causality supported by some form of mystery or psychological tension, and it is through the traditional chain of clues and coincidences that Bateman leads us to a vision of the cycle of violence which relates terrorism to child abuse. Individual acts are only accidentally related to one another, but it is the culture of violence which makes sense of this accidental relationship and allows the pivotal crime of the novel (which is the sexual assault of a thirteen year old girl) to act as a foundation to the rotation of suicides, murders and paramilitary executions which follow.

Bateman's novel closes with the death of its central character, and by implication a continuation of the violence in which he has participated. This refusal of a comfortable return to order against the conventions of genre, together with numerous features which exemplify counter-discourse, present *Cycle of Violence* as a postcolonial novel.<sup>19</sup> In particular, Bateman explores the possibilities of hybridity in the figure of the inter-sectarian relationship between Miller and Marie in the context of a highly segregated society. The town of Crossmaheart in which the majority of the novel is set encapsulates all the sterile oppositions of the border. Crossmaheart appears to have an almost ludicrously even balance of Catholic and Protestant inhabitants who maintain separate establishments in which to drink and worship, and who display their identity in terms of a violent and vocal antagonism. However, more sinister than the absolute separation of the two communities in Crossmaheart is their covert intermingling. Unlikely alliances provide a threat to the standard representation of the Northern Ireland conflict as sectarian war by suggesting other, persistent structures of oppression, including colonialism, capitalism and patriarchy. Miller himself is also in a sense silently hybrid - as the truth-seeking investigative journalist, he is both the 'Angel of Progress', and also the 'Angel of Death', instrumental in the demise of at least three men.<sup>20</sup> His own death could be read as the closure of one set of incidents, but since it is in no way related to the deaths which he has caused (including the suicide of Marie), it provides a shocking and ambivalent conclusion to the novel, rather than the moral satisfaction of the last page of a traditional thriller.

Miller's character bears some similarity to Clint Eastwood's man-with-no-name featured in a number of Spaghetti Westerns of the 1970s (Miller himself makes

an ironic comparison with the Lone Ranger).<sup>21</sup> Like the man-with-no-name, he has no connections with the town, few possessions, and treads the same thin line between good and evil as he uncovers and avenges a dark secret. Miller is figured as predominantly 'good', largely because he is 'a notoriously easy faller-in-love' (p.84) and partly through his attempts to expose the men who apparently sexually assaulted Marie. Miller is the replacement for the missing reporter, Jamie Milburn, who was also Marie's boyfriend and who, like Miller, was investigating Marie's past. Thus Miller is positively associated with 'good' and 'justice' through his connections with victims, despite the comparative brutality of his actions. Frantz Fanon has said, 'at the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force'.<sup>22</sup> Like the man-with-no-name, Miller's actions purge Crossmaheart of its most obvious 'baddies', yet, just as in the Westerns, the moral distinction between 'good' and 'evil' characters is expressed through sexual violence rather than body-count. Indeed, sexual violence, as a limit case, justifies revenge and points to an underlying complicity between protective violence and that which is purely vindictive. The most important difference between Miller and the others is that he does not assault or abuse Marie; his masculinity is confirmed by his involvement in the deaths of her abusers without being sullied by the suggestion of sexual force. However, Marie kills herself after having intercourse with Miller because it is, in her words, 'Absolute Perfection' (p.243). It is possible to read a connection between this narrative and the nation-as-woman trope and the metaphors of rape and robbery most frequently associated with it.<sup>23</sup> In this version the sorrowing Marie is rescued from the ravages of both Protestant and Catholic men by an avenging male who makes her whole again through his virility. However, the deaths of both Miller and Marie suggest that this vision is untenable, and dependent upon the cinematic representation of a violent masculinity which is both glamorous and

containable. Equally, the relationship between Marie and Miller appears to present a gestural hybridity - one whose brevity indicates its sterility. Whilst the moment of hybridity is celebrated, no opportunity for resistance or development is offered through the possibility of an ongoing process.

Bateman's first novel, *Divorcing Jack*, was strongly criticised for presenting armed struggle in Northern Ireland in terms comparable to that of a gangland war – a culture where violence is a 'matter of business' rather than ideology.<sup>24</sup> However, it seems that what is more generally under attack in Bateman's work is the use of a genre which could be termed the 'comic thriller'. Undoubtedly, a large part of Bateman's agenda consists in undermining what might be called a colonial analysis. In particular, the failure of the figure of unity (the abortive relationship between Miller and Marie) could be read as a rejection of the possibility of a successfully united Ireland. Indeed his treatment of the difficulties of Crossmaheart in general suggests no role for British imperialism (aside perhaps from some naive benevolence on the part of the unspecified 'authorities').<sup>25</sup> Ironically, however, Bateman's method of debunking the colonial paradigm is deemed inappropriate in a Northern Irish context. Whilst humour is acceptable, even encouraged in the context of other postcolonial formations (particularly those in South America) it is distinctly unwelcome closer to home.<sup>26</sup> The incongruities of the comic thriller suggest a form of critical parody which Henry Louis Gates Jr. has called 'critical signification' or 'formal signifying'.<sup>27</sup> Drawing on the Afro-American mythic figure of the Signifying Monkey, Gates develops a metaphor for black literary history in which structures of intertextual revision are created by the repeated use of parody, pastiche, chiasmus and perhaps most importantly by the manipulation of the space between two linguistic domains.

*Cycle of Violence* can be read as a 'double' novel which plays on just such a space: the humour operates largely at a narrative level, whilst the thriller plot draws on the same narrative to elucidate its progress. The incongruity of each element within the formal framework of the other exposes the rhetorical strategies by which both operate. Loosely then, Bateman can be seen to employ a potentially 'postcolonial' technique in order to critique an overly simplistic 'colonial' representation of Northern Irish experience. However, the comic tone of the novel specifically detracts from those aspects of the Thriller which tend towards escapist fantasy. The critical parody of the 'Troubles Thriller' focuses the reader's attention on the ways in which popular media representations of the conflict present violence which takes place within Ireland as exciting 'thrill-fodder'.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, Bateman's narrative technique refuses the self-importance of the thriller genre by the continuous reversals and abrupt changes of direction brought about by the comic impulse.

The problem with this type of critical parody is the danger of descending into farce. At this point the delicate balance between form and content collapses and the subtlety of 'signifying' is lost in the general mêlée. Both *Cycle of Violence* and *Ripley Bogle* suffer from this at their weakest points, which in both novels tend to coincide with the romantic involvement of the central characters. Once again, sexual difference (and indeed sexual relationships) disrupts the framework that supports the narrative direction. The three main literary versions of Irishness which are staged in *Ripley Bogle* are, firstly, the 'love-across the barricades' type which I mentioned earlier, secondly, the accidental shooting tragedy, and finally the growing-up-in exile romance.<sup>29</sup> All three of these narratives revolve around Bogle's relationship with women: the Protestant Deirdre for whom he gives up his home and

family, the little girl next door who is mistakenly shot by a British soldier, and lastly Laura, the English Rose, who rejects her loutish upperclass boyfriend in favour of Ripley's Irish wit. Wilson parodies these different narrative strands by using the voice of Bogle to anticipate and ironise the possible outcomes, finally revealing his swaggering posturing as a complete lie. His unhappy love affair with Deirdre, which as his mother points out 'only ever worked in screenplays and pop songs' (p.103), is concluded when he attempts a home abortion with a paintbrush. Bogle is also beaten up by the boyfriend of the beautiful Laura, who barely even notices, let alone falls in love with him. These false stories of hybridity and reconciliation are used to explode the consoling fictions of national identity which they mimic. Yet, by representing these figures exclusively in terms of heterosexual relationships, Wilson continues to treat women as symbols in a meta-narrative of identity rather than agents and subjects in their own right. Sabina Sharkey has suggested that the construction of woman as a symbolic sign in both imperial and nationalist discourses denies women a material place in favour of a symbolically central one, and Wilson's novel would seem to confirm this.<sup>30</sup> *Ripley Bogle* plays out the narratives of nation in which women are the symbols of power and hybridity yet are unable to make use of them.

Unfortunately, the relationship between Laura and Bogle is overplayed to the extent that it is difficult to care whether Bogle is lying about it or not. Rather like the character of Sandra in *The Busconductor Hines*, Laura is untouchable and untouched by the text: beyond criticism and infinitely mysterious, her 'disarray only increased her allure' (p.263). Wilson's attempts to play with the pretensions of textual subversion come utterly unstuck here as Laura (although possibly herself an incarnation of Petrarch's ideal beauty of the same name) can only provide a foil to Bogle's linguistic

virtuosity. She cannot participate in the comic narrative, nor is she given the opportunity to comment upon the various official discourses of nation and identity which this seeks to undermine. By contrast, Marie is allowed to voice opinions - although they usually remain in the realm of intuition. For example when she attempts to explain the attitude to Catholics in pubs from the 'other side', by saying 'Religious rivalry ... We wouldn't be made to feel comfortable' (p.59). Marie provides the central link in the chain of events that Miller discloses and provokes. Not only does she provide the connection to the missing reporter, Jamie Milburn, but she is also bound by the sexual assault to the representatives of the three R's – religion, republicanism and revisionism – and their deaths. However, the centrality of Marie is also a form of displacement. It turns out that the assault, which provides the premise for the main plot, was not carried out on Marie, but on her sister. Indeed, the assault that prompts Marie's mental instability is in fact an attack by her father, which resulted in a miscarriage. Whilst this lends irony to the plot, it also seems to confirm the suspicion that Marie is yet another general victim rather than a significant actor in the novel's central dilemma. Her role is that of the 'love interest', despite her wit and intelligence. Indeed, I would argue that although Bateman's novel dramatically revises the woman-as-nation trope, as in *Ripley Bogle*, the symbolic significance of women continues to marginalise their textual consequence and individual agency.

A revealing point of difference between *Cycle of Violence* and *Ripley Bogle* is the limited geographical scope of the former. Whereas Bogle's emigration and perambulation provide a spatial British-Irish context to questions of individual and community identity, Bateman's characters never leave Ireland, never refer to Britain, and rarely acknowledge a world outside Belfast and County Armagh. On the other

hand, it is significant that the only change of location (after Miller's exile to Crossmaheart in Chapter Two) is a single chapter which takes place in Dublin. Perhaps surprisingly, Dublin is not presented in opposition to Belfast, nor as a threat to the political integrity of the North. In contrast, Miller and Marie see Dublin as a place in which to escape the inherent tension of Crossmaheart: 'the mixture of tourist trap and easy drinking bohemia made it a relaxing place to be' (p.190). Bateman's approach to Dublin demonstrates an openness to discuss rather than simply reject the Republic as part of the context of Northern Irish experience. However, his careful and absolute distinction between North and South reflects the cultural inheritance of Northern Irish unionists. Dublin is a holiday destination, not simply a change of scene, and whilst a clear distinction is made between 'foreigners' (the German tourists at the hotel) and English speakers, there is no claim to national brotherhood between North and South. The lack of any reference to Britain in *Cycle of Violence* is notable because it seeks to contain the conflict within the political and geographical boundaries of Northern Ireland. Bateman's novel tends to promote a specifically 'Northern Irish' identity in contrast to a British or Irish one.

However, there is no question of a cultural solution in *Cycle of Violence*. The criticism that Bateman's vision is one of an endemic and unchangeable violence is partly a result of his concerted and thorough critique of community tolerance of political violence as a form of social justice. Although characters such as Miller and William Craig, the policeman who helps him investigate Jamie's death, are presented sympathetically, they are also clearly seen to be complicit with the brutality to which they are officially opposed. Although utilising a completely different style and technique, Bateman address many of the same concerns as Robert McLiam Wilson. In

particular, both authors are looking for space for a non-religious cultural identity in Northern Ireland and, like Wilson, Bateman's brand of general damnation tends to blur the edges of traditional identities. Nevertheless, as Donald Wesling points out, this negative tactic may be used in order to deliberately prevent outside critique - by emphasising the bad points of a society one can curb the power of external criticism.<sup>31</sup> It could be argued that this itself is a form of inferiorism - a cultural cringe. In an article entitled 'What do Protestants want?' Edna Longley suggests that the continued perception of a lack of Ulster Protestant culture (Longley notes that the artistic achievements of people such as Colin Middleton and Basil Blackshaw are regularly credited to Ireland) effectively translates the insecurities of Unionism into a powerful symbol of Republicanism:

Protestant silence on cultural matters not only lets inert cultural nationalism get away with it, but also allows disquieting forms of triumphalism to flourish. A Catholic woman said to my son: 'Of course, Ulster Protestants have no culture'<sup>32</sup>.

By focussing on Protestant culture as entirely negative, Bateman's novel tends to affirm both Wesling's suspicion about attitudes towards external criticism as well as the insecurity which Longley traces in her community. When Miller first visits the Catholic pub, Riley's, he experiences the singing of traditional songs as 'entertaining, but alien':

His own culture, Protestant culture, had no traditional music at all, unless you counted big fat men beating tunelessly on

Lambeg drums on the twelfth. The way it worked here everybody got up and did a turn, from the soulful semi-pro to the raggedy-voiced old drunk, but they never asked Miller. They passed over him like a bastard in the Free Presbyterians. (p.72)

The emphasis of this passage is on the inclusivity of the cultural group and the pointed (yet casual) exclusion of the dissenting individual. This could be compared with Longley's representation of Ulster Protestant attitudes towards the consequences of a united Ireland in which they are offered an undefined 'generosity' in return for political and cultural silence.<sup>33</sup> This sense of exclusion is further underlined when Miller visits the corresponding Protestant establishment. Having claimed that there is no traditional Protestant music, a loyalist 'singsong' reminds him that rather than lacking a musical culture he has chosen to reject it:

The heritage of his youth he had not delved into for years, the rabble-rousing tunes he had disdained for so long now crowded back into his memory and he found himself singing disjointedly along with the rest of them. (pp.118-119).

This passage draws attention to the relationship between individual choice and community dynamics. Although as an individual Miller has chosen to abandon the overtly bigoted cultural practices of his upbringing (notably in favour of a more global sense of culture which includes Italian food, American movies and French literature) in order to participate in the group he must re-engage with them. *Cycle of Violence* effectively confirms the thesis of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, which is that attempts

to separate culture and politics (following Conor Cruise O'Brien's famous comparison to church and state)<sup>34</sup> can only result in overwhelming conflict between public and private identities. As Desmond Bell suggests:

Sectarianism continues to be treated, within the policy discourses of the state, as a structure of personal prejudice and not as a result of an unresolved, post-colonial situation. As such the problem is adjudged to be best addressed by a carefully managed dosage of personal enlightenment delivered by the educational apparatus.<sup>35</sup>

It is worth noting here that sectarianism is not a problem confined to Ireland, but one which is apparent in Scotland every Saturday when football supporters demonstrate their team loyalty through symbols of both Catholicism and Protestantism. Nor is sectarian discrimination confined to football: employment, housing, even local government are all affected by discriminative religious affiliation.<sup>36</sup> Yet, despite the large numbers of Scottish Catholics, as well as minority groups of Muslims and Jews, the 'Scottish condition' is frequently explained in terms of a general overreaching Calvinism. In elaborating his thesis of a defensive Scottish monologism, Wesling also returns to the justification of 'residual Calvinism':

Here Scots present the most negative possible image of Scotland to the others and to themselves, and in that way, very Calvinist, they prevent the others, like the present writer, from showing it

back toward Scotland to explain or accuse. Here, residual Calvinism, national historical trauma, and modernist literary methods meet to define a chronotope. (p.91).

In terms of Wesling's analysis, all monologic Scottish novels can be explained by the legacy of Calvinism, whether their authors and central characters are Protestant or not. The sweeping generalisations made in the name of Calvinism recall Longley's concern that 'media (and literary) versions of Ulster Protestants tend to collapse their credal and cultural differences into Free Presbyterianism or a stereotypical "Calvinism"'.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, it might be that the recourse to an all-embracing Calvinism is one of those myths about Scotland which Beveridge and Turnbull see as 'more influential and debilitating' than the discourses of tartanry and kailyard.<sup>38</sup> Any attack on the narrative of Calvinist inheritance could itself be seen as a form of cultural cringe – an attempt to stifle a narrative which Scots use to understand themselves. However, the point of drawing attention to the general overuse of this critique is not to reduce it to a caricature, but to suggest the possibility of other, conflicting influences.

As the focus for the location of Scottish identity, the Highlands and Islands have probably suffered most from the conclusions drawn from the Calvinist legacy. Just as urban Lowland writers have had to work to resist a geographic bias towards the Highlands, so those in the North have had to overcome a chronological one which presents rural life as a living version of a Scottish national past. Rural communities have long figured in popular representation as crystallised in a pre-union past. The Kailyard tradition, which flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, is frequently reworked to present the image of a close-knit community in which problems can be seen to be worked through and solved (this is most evident in popular television series such as *Hamish Macbeth* and the adaptation of *Dr Finlay's Casebook*).<sup>39</sup> However, this image bears little relation to modern rural life, and it is worth noting here that those who draw attention to the less positive experience of Scottish rural living are not necessarily undertaking an exercise in Calvinist self-critique. Yet such representations are generally not welcomed, either by nationalists or unionists; the former often wish to maintain an ideal focus for Scottish independence, while the latter cannot admit to the failure of the status quo.

Alan Warner's novel, *Morvern Caller*, could be read as a mirror of Doyle's *The Woman Who Walked into Doors*. The male author's use of a first person female narrator reflects some technical similarities and difficulties. Yet Warner's setting in semi-rural Oban provides an interesting insight into the apparent values clustered around the terms 'metropolis' and 'periphery'. Whilst Paula is tied to a small area of Dublin, moving only between suburbs, Morvern raves across the continent. Paula's confinement is largely class-based and economic, although as her conversations with her mother make clear it is also a result of a traditional interpretation of gender roles in which married women are expected to stay in the home with their children. In contrast, Morvern's mobility is a direct result of contemporary phenomena, such as cheap foreign flights, automated money transfers and her boyfriend's computer. Like Paula, Morvern does not escape the latent and manifest violence of the society in which she lives. Her boyfriend's messy suicide unleashes an emotional form of butchery from Morvern: she chops him into pieces and parcels him up like butcher's meat. This is in order to bury him in the romantic location of the Scottish imagination

- the beautiful bens of the Highlands. Warner makes use of the shocking contrast between the mountain scenery and Morvern's gruesome mission:

I rounded the great bank of Beinn Mheadhonach, pushing down on my tanned legs. The sun was hot on my hair as His chopped-off head bumped away against my back. (p.88)

Wesling briefly refers to Warner's novel as another example of the monologic trend in Scottish fiction, and in passing notes that Morvern appropriates her dead boyfriend's novel. Yet Wesling fails to see this appropriation as anything other than proof of Morvern's intelligence, or more importantly fails to see this as an obvious form of textual mimicry. The case of the stolen text plays an interesting joke upon the reader, for the novel itself is, in one way, an appropriation, or borrowing. When Warner is praised for his use of a genuinely Northern voice in Scottish fiction (a reviewer in *The Herald* praises Warners ability 'to catch ... the enduring cadences of Gaelic in west coast English'), the irony of his use of a female voice should not be lost.<sup>40</sup> As readers we are told nothing of the dead boyfriend's text, and Morvern hardly bothers to read it before passing it off as her own - the identity of 'Him' is placed under almost total erasure. The irony is not that this silences the male voice, but rather the suggestion that the female, Morvern, cannot speak for herself. Within the text, her words exist mostly in the private space of inner speech. Morvern describes herself as 'taciturn', a word she has learnt from her boyfriend (p.36) and 'Nut' is her most frequent enunciation. Beyond this the novel is written by Warner, who speaks for Morvern - a female narrator framed by a male consciousness.

This is not the first time that a male writer has employed a female voice, nor is there any reason why writers should not use the voice of any gender they choose. However, Warner has been quoted as calling his novel ‘a reaction to a lot of urban-based male work that’s still around’, which begs the question: what makes a work ‘female’? The appropriation of the text is not an insignificant part of the plot, particularly since Morvern’s visit to London to meet her (his) publishers marks the turning point of the novel. The pretensions and self-importance of the London literary scene are supposedly satirised during this visit, although it is unclear who comes off the worst. The London elite appear to be arrogant but well-meaning. As Morvern notes, they answer their own questions, then argue about it: ‘they didn’t tell stories they just discussed’ (p.164). Yet speaking is not part of the ‘scene’ and the main point of contact between London and Oban is a universal language of drink and drugs.

Unlike the self-conscious displays of Ripley Bogle and Roy Strang, Morvern has little interest in self-analysis. Nor does she ever express guilt over the treatment of her dead boyfriend or anyone else. It seems that the only time she stops to consider her own state of mind is when she decides to leave her best friend in the Youth Med resort and travel up the coast on her own. It is after this, in a London club with the two publishers, that she voices her first reflections on her life:

When Susan asked Tom to stop yapping so she could hear what I was talking it was: All I know is over there in that resort, with a couple of thousand pounds, happiness was as easy as your first breath in the morning, that Susan heard me say. (p.164).

Morvern's travels throw into contrast the treacherous and incestuous nature of the small port community. On her return from her holiday, Morvern discovers that her fosterdad, Red Hanna, and her best friend Lanna are having an affair. Earlier, Morvern and Lanna fight when she discovers that Lanna slept with her boyfriend. Back in the Mantrap (the port's seedy nightclub) Red Hanna describes how Hiphorean, Panatine and Mockit have to be restrained from attacking the stripper. Naming is an important issue in *Morvern Callar* because the use of nicknames and proper names signal both inter-community relationships and the attitude of the community as a whole towards the wider world. Commenting on the use of naming in *Trainspotting*, Alan Freeman notes: 'As well as simply being part of normal speech, swearing, like nick-names, serves to emphasise form over content, and the relational nature of subject-status, undermining the concept of selfhood as a fixed element in social exchange'.<sup>41</sup> In *Morvern Callar* the concept of selfhood is not so much seen to be commutable as simply undermined by the use of nicknames. Monikers such as 'Red Hanna' and 'Creeping Jesus' emphasise the fixity of the community's attitudes towards the individual, focusing on a single social role which they occupy. Yet such nicknames are powerful in their ability to centre language locally, to make the most of their own marginality. Just as Bateman is careful to differentiate the speech of Dubliners from those of the North, Warner frequently comments on the need to translate between Central Belt and Highland speech, making clear that differences in expression and vocabulary are related to the structural and social distance between them.

There is some irony in the fact that Morvern feels overwhelmingly trapped by the port, a place which after all should be the focus for travel and opportunity. During

her driving test, the examiner encourages her to keep going: 'A driving tester was never meant to say this to you so you just realised that I was going to get my licence and drive out of this port forever' (p.78). The desire to escape echoes that of both Roy Strang and Ripley Bogle, yet surprisingly the laconic Morvern possesses twice the drive of either of the male characters. Her mission is to dance, and lie on the beach till her money runs out and she appears to be successful in this (p.169). However, the final section sees her return to the Highlands, pregnant with 'the child of the raves' (p.229). Unlike Roy who returns home 'a glaze-eyed basket case, back into the strangely comforting chaos of family' (p.246), Morvern returns home alone with a clear head, to write and to speak for herself.

*Morvern Callar* shatters the image of the idyll of a rural community, revealing the destructive nature of those units of 'community' and the dubious basis of the identification made between family and Nation. Warner can be compared to both Welsh and Wilson in their dismemberment of the myths of happy nuclear families and a happy united nation. None of these novelists are interested in presenting a secure family unit (although the desire of Roy Strang's family to stay together despite their appalling treatment of one another presents an interesting case) and all are concerned to investigate the relationship between personal development and group identity. The difficulty for both sets of writers is the negotiation of the stereotypes of national and cultural identities which saturate the literary discourses of Scotland and Ireland. Postcolonial theory offers models of hybridity and mimicry which are clearly made use of in these texts although not always with absolute success. The novels of Wilson, Welsh and Bateman clearly demonstrate a process of hybridisation in their efforts to de-centre both nationalist and postcolonial discourse, yet all fail to produce

a convincing figure of hybridity which can encompass issues of class, religion and gender as well as nationhood. Luke Gibbons warns against 'the risks inherent in uncritical adulations of hybridity as an empowering strategy for diasporic or post-colonial identity', and goes on to quote Eila Shohat and Robert Stam: 'As a descriptive catch-all term "hybridity" fails to discriminate between diverse modalities of hybridity: colonial imposition, obligatory assimilation, political co-option, cultural mimicry and so forth'.<sup>42</sup>

Since the 1970s, postcolonial theory has worked to expose the oppositional structures underlying the tropes of national identity which most frequently draw on the figure of heterosexual relations, favouring instead a concept of hybridity which offers a framework both for resistance and change. Robert Young, in his book *Colonial Desire*, has presented a powerful critique of the term hybridity which suggests that 'in reinvoking this concept, we are utilising the vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right' (p.10). Young's attack on the racialised history of this term is qualified by his praise for Bhabha's transformation of Bakhtin's theory of linguistic hybridisation as a process that 'reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority' (p.22). In defence of his work, Young has suggested that *Colonial Desire* was less concerned with the use of the term 'hybridity' in contemporary cultural theory than with the nineteenth and twentieth-century scientific context of racial theory. If *Colonial Desire* is read in this way, there is clearly room for a model of hybridity as a political contestatory force, so long as it operates in the knowledge of its place in the racialised ideology of the past. There is however a point in Young's critique which recognises that the currency of 'hybridity' as a privileged mode indirectly depends upon the original violence of the sexual metaphor:

Whichever model of hybridity may be employed, however, hybridity as a cultural description will always carry with it an implicit politics of heterosexuality [...] anxiety about hybridity reflected the desire to keep races separate, which meant that attention was immediately focussed on the mixed race offspring that resulted from inter-racial sexual intercourse ... On the face of it therefore, hybridity must always be a resolutely heterosexual category.<sup>43</sup>

Reading hybridity in the novels of Bateman, Wilson, Warner and Welsh, it becomes clear that the underlying heterosexual metaphor is vulnerable to literal translation. Whilst Bhabha's formation of cultural translation as a mode of resistance (since it denies the claim to totalisation of the master narrative) provides a productive way of reading alterity in *colonial* texts, the use of such paradigms in *postcolonial* novels raises some difficulties.

<sup>1</sup> See Berthold Schoene, 'The (AI)Location of Culture: Scottish Postcoloniality and the Twentieth Century Highland Novel' in Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (eds.), *Space and Place: The Geographies of Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool John Moore's University Press, 1997), p.360.

<sup>2</sup> Edna Longley, 'Including the North', *Text and Context -- Irish Studies Special Issue*, No. 3 (Autumn, 1988), pp. 17-24.

<sup>3</sup> See for example comments on Welsh's work in the press and more general comments on the relative literary styles of Glasgow and Edinburgh: 'Gritty urban prose is Glasgow's business, after all. The hypnotic vernacular, those brief, swaggering sentences and mnemonic obscenities, is unknown in Edinburgh.' (*The Scotsman*, 17<sup>th</sup> February, 1996, p.13)

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), pp.424-428.

<sup>5</sup> Donald Wesling, 'Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation', *Scotlands* 4, 2 (1997), pp.81-98.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.* p.90.

<sup>7</sup> *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, by Irvine Welsh, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.17.

<sup>8</sup> It could also be said that Welsh draws on literary precedents here, such as George Douglas Brown's *The House With Green Shutters* in which the behaviour of John Gourlay is paralleled by that of his son, whose character is explicitly shaped by the brutal treatment of his father. Perhaps more significantly though, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* echoes the double narrative of Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, in the conflict between a progressive history of cause and effect and a deeper cyclical history of evasion and obscurity.

<sup>9</sup> Homi Bhabha, 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha' in Jonathan Rutherford (ed.) *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1990), p.208.

<sup>10</sup> See Gerry Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation: Studies in the New Irish Fiction* (London: Pluto Press, 1997), p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> See Rüdiger Imhof, 'How it is on the Fringes of Irish Fiction', *Irish University Review*, 22 (1992), pp.151-161, especially 163-167.

<sup>12</sup> Seamus Deane, 'Heroic Styles: The tradition of an idea' in *Ireland's Field Day* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

<sup>13</sup> A discussion of Shakespeare and ghosts is of course ongoing throughout *Ulysses*. In particular, the ghost of Hamlet's father provides a literary motif which links the complex relationships between Bloom and his dead son, Stephen and his dead mother, and the quasi paternal-filial relationship between Bloom and Stephen. In 'Nighttown', the prostitute Zoe recalls the line 'Hamlet I am thy father's spirit' with 'Hamlet I am thy father's gimlet!' (*Ulysses*, p.457). A similar parody occurs in *Ripley Bogle* after the appearance of the ghost of Ripley's alcoholic father when a Whisky Bottle cries 'Ripley, I am thy father's spirit!' (p.173).

<sup>14</sup> Compare Maurice's speech - 'what a falling off was there! They, in the porches of mine ear did pour a leprous distilment in the form of three lead composition cartridges...' (p.172) – with that of Hamlet's father's ghost, *Hamlet*, Act I sc. V, 46-64.

<sup>15</sup> For an overview and challenge to this argument in Joycean studies, see Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1995).

<sup>16</sup> Homi Bhabha, 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', p.211.

<sup>17</sup> 'Post-colonial Literatures and Counter-Discourse' in Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (eds.) *The Postcolonial Studies Reader* (London: Routledge, 1995), p.96. Also quoted in Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, p.24.

<sup>18</sup> Jacques Derrida, 'Violence and Metaphysics: An Essay on the Thought of Emmanuel Levinas', in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Routledge, 1978), p.313, n.21.

<sup>19</sup> See for example Dennis Walder: 'The growing sense of the world as a network of patterns of migration ... has produced a growing body of writing emphasising "hybridity" as the characteristic feature of post-colonial histories, cultures and literatures', *Post-colonial Literatures in English: History, Language, Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p.80.

<sup>20</sup> Indeed his last victim recognises him as 'the angel of death ... although a lot more sensitive' (*Cycle of Violence*, p.172, p.175).

<sup>21</sup> For a general analysis of the relationship between Western films and the ideology of the West in Irish culture see Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press/ Field Day, 1996), especially pp.25-28.

<sup>22</sup> Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London: Penguin, 1990), p.74.

<sup>23</sup> See Wanda Balzano, 'Irishness - Feminist and Post-Colonial', in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.), *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p.92.

<sup>24</sup> See Gerry Smyth's summary of *Divorcing Jack* in *The Novel and the Nation*, pp.123-126. Also, Michael Bywater's ill-judged review in *The Spectator* (11<sup>th</sup> March, 1995), p.35.

<sup>25</sup> Compare the allusion to British philanthropy in *Ripley Bogle* with the description of Crossmaheart in *Cycle of Violence*: 'Once a quaint picture postcard village, it had been swamped in a couple of years by the dregs of the city, guinea pigs in a scheme to alleviate the urban decay and religious mayhem of Belfast by shifting it to an idyllic existence in the country, with its own industries, its modern leisure facilities and enlightened infrastructure. [...] They had hoped Crossmaheart would reflect all of life's rich tapestry, and perhaps for one bright shining moment it had; but then someone had stolen it. The factories soon fell prey to the gangs and the symbols of war, and the onset of recession finally closed them down' (p.26).

<sup>26</sup> Examples of the acceptability of comedy in other postcolonial contexts might be Woody Allen's film, *Bananas*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, and Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*.

<sup>27</sup> Henry Louis Gates, Jr., 'The blackness of blackness: a critique of the sign and the Signifying Monkey' in Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (ed), *Black Literature and Literary Theory* (London: Methuen, 1984), p.294.

<sup>28</sup> There are many examples of 'Troubles Thriller', including those written by Ronan Bennett and Gerry O'Malley. Not all are graphically violent or militaristic. Some, like Susanna Mitchell's *The Colour of His Hair*, rely on the constant threat of violence to provide suspense, rather than revelling in vivid description.

<sup>29</sup> See Smyth, *The Novel and the Nation*, especially chapter 5, for a reading of two of these three types of narrative as forming a 'hybrid fiction' which de-politicises the situation in the North by separating it from a British-Irish historical context through an over-emphasis on individual psychology.

<sup>30</sup> See Sabina Sharkey, 'Frontier Issues: Irish Women's Texts and Contexts' in *Women: A Cultural Review* Vol. 2 No. 4 (Autumn, 1993), pp. 129-130.

<sup>31</sup> Donald Wesling, 'Scottish Narrative since 1979: Monologism and the Contradictions of a Stateless Nation', pp.90-91.

<sup>32</sup> Edna Longley, 'What do Protestants Want?', *Irish Review*, Vol. 20 (1997), p.117.

<sup>33</sup> Longley quotes Garret FitzGerald on the historical disillusionment of Southern Protestant experience as a vivid warning to Northern Protestants in the approach to solutions offered by the Republic.

<sup>34</sup> See Edna Longley, who quotes Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'poetry and politics, like church and state, should be separated' in *Poetry in the Wars* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe Books, 1986), p.185.

<sup>35</sup> Desmond Bell, 'Cultural Studies in Ireland and the Postmodernist Debate' in *Irish Journal of Sociology* 1, (1991), p.87.

<sup>36</sup> Edna Longley's 'What do Protestants want?' refers to a speech by Alex Salmond, leader of the SNP, in which he talks of the need to 'lay the ghost of the sectarian past' in the wake of the Monklands affair, which revealed entrenched sectarian policies in local government. She criticises the incapacity of Ulster politicians to achieve a similar form of self-criticism, yet fails to explain how Salmond's call addresses any of the problems raised by the Monklands investigation.

<sup>37</sup> 'What do Protestants Want?', p.111. As James Hogg demonstrates in *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, Calvinism, as well as Protestantism, has always had its own divisions. For a discussion of this, as well as a sharp critique of those who want to read Hogg as an anti-religious writer, see Cairns Craig, *Out of History* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp.73-77.

<sup>38</sup> *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*, p.14

<sup>39</sup> See Christopher Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics 1707-1994* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.98-102.

<sup>40</sup> Lorn MacIntyre, 'Death Explodes the Rural Myth', *The Herald – Weekender* (18<sup>th</sup> February, 1995), p.4. Booker judge Jason Cowley also comments 'Warner ... spoke naturally in the voice of a druggy, morally dislocated girl from Oban', 'Fictional Failure', *Prospect*, (December, 1997), p29.

<sup>41</sup> Alan Freeman, 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*' in Susanne Hagemann (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), p.255.

<sup>42</sup> *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p.42. Quoted in Luke Gibbons, *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press/ Field Day, 1996), p.177.

<sup>43</sup> Young, *Colonial Desire*, p.25-26. Whilst same-sex relations were also seen as threatening to the colonial formation they were generally seen in terms of gender transgression: 'the homosexual is

assumed to be a transgendered “pretend” woman and the lesbian to be an unsexed “pretend” man’. See Eibhear Walshe, ‘Sexing the Shamrock’, *Critical Survey* Vol. 8, No. 2 (1996), pp.159-167.

## Chapter Five

### Between Two Shores: Placing Short Fiction

"Nation" suggests a particular scale, however elusive its definition, to an extent that "location" or "locality" do not'. (Marjorie Howes)

'Territory and possessions are at stake, geography and power. Everything about human history is rooted in the earth'. (Edward Said)

As I suggested in a previous chapter, the novel is recognised as the form most central to postcolonial critique. This is stated explicitly in the work of Spivak and Bhabha and is echoed by Said who claims that by the 1840s 'the English novel had achieved eminence as *the* aesthetic form'.<sup>1</sup> Short story theorists have suggested that literary critics often assume that fiction *is* the novel. Charles May, for example, laments the attitudes of fellow critics who see the novel as 'more "complex" than the short story and therefore more deserving of critical attention'.<sup>2</sup> May chastises literary historians in particular for continuing to identify fiction with the novel at the same time as noting the wide variety of narrative forms that preceded it. In general, the short story has long been seen as peripheral to the novel; a satellite genre that gives authors a preliminary platform to publish their ideas and test out their style.<sup>3</sup> Joyce provides a strong precedent for this pattern of apprenticeship, and *Dubliners* is often treated as a gentle introduction to the 'serious' work, *Ulysses*. However, short fiction frequently stands in for larger

works as representative of a national literature in anthologies and collections. Scotland and Ireland both have longstanding traditions of short story writing, and Ireland has produced two of the most ubiquitous short story theorists and writers, Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor. Nevertheless, as bemoaned by critics like Mays, the short story is rarely considered to be 'serious' or intricate enough for sustained critical reading. Can short fiction provide an adequate vision of cultural identity in a national literature, or do the assumptions that it is usually apprentice work, or somehow less weighty than the novel restrict its content? There are striking parallels between the judgements passed on Scottish and Irish literature as local and parochial and that passed on short fiction as limited and lightweight. Space is the defining feature of both short fiction and 'marginal' literature. Not simply the space occupied on the page, but the space to which it is addressed. This chapter will consider the issues of space and place in a number of contemporary Scottish and Irish short stories, drawing on Marjorie Howes's caution to pay attention to the disjunction between 'location' and 'Nation'. I will go on to discuss issues of environment, homelessness, belonging and diaspora in the work of Janice Galloway, John McGahern, and Mary Morrissy.

The apparent wholeness of the short story, its completeness, is what gives it both its satisfaction and lays bare its partiality, even contingency. Short fiction denies the possibility of totality by emphasising its own brief inclusiveness - an effect that Tom Paulin describes as 'the formal pleasure ... of specks of time'.<sup>4</sup> As such, the short story can never be definitive, nor fully representative. Moreover, the arrangement of a succession of short pieces (either as a collection by a single author or as anthology) stresses the episodic and incomplete nature of the form. Even Joyce, whose short

stories have received far greater attention than most, foresaw the necessity of a collection, a series of small attempts, rather than leaving a single story, perhaps 'The Dead', to stand alone. The demands of space and length affect the typical themes of the modern story: alienation, isolation, and the search for identity and integration. This is Frank O'Connor's contention in his study of the short story, *The Lonely Voice*. For O'Connor, the modern short story deals with 'outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society', the result of a necessary 'turning away from the public' towards a renewed concern for subjectivity.<sup>5</sup> This in turn renders the short story particularly suited to the experience of postcolonial Ireland, or as O'Connor puts it: 'I believe that the Irish short story is a distinct art form'.<sup>6</sup> Rarely viewing the world from more than a single perspective, the short story offers us 'the lonely voice'. It is this quality which leads Declan Kiberd to describe the short story as 'the quintessential Irish genre ... the form which renders the lives of the marginal and isolated'.<sup>7</sup> Although O'Connor does not formulate it in these terms it could be said that short fiction enacts the frustration of the colonial relationship - the denial of access to community. This estrangement can be seen as a form of exile and displacement peculiarly fit to address the conditions of diaspora and emigration that afflict postcolonial countries.

In one of McGahern's most ambivalent stories, 'Wheels', a narrator returns home from Dublin to his family in rural Ireland.<sup>8</sup> The story begins with the train journey, in which the narrator finds himself sharing a carriage with two other Irishmen, one a priest, the other a labourer working in London.<sup>9</sup> Each of the three men represents a different perspective on Ireland, locked in an obscure and uneasy competition. The polite questions of the priest and his swift escape from the blasphemy and bluntness of the labourer are met by the silence of the narrator, who

contemplates his 'relax-sirs slacks (Hackney, London)' (p.14). The London which provides such luxuries for the narrator offers the labourer twenty-eight years as 'the teaboy' and 'Sunday morning in the Archway Tavern, in the door of the Public Bar, facing the Gents' (p.15). The priest's unwillingness to engage with the Irishman who has left is matched by the narrator's refusal to reform the family group, and so allow his father's much-wished for 'escape' to the city. The father's pain and resentment - 'I had to wait till near the end of my days for a right kick in the teeth' (p.18) - only increases his son's detachment. This disengagement is coloured by the narrator's own disappointment in what life in the city might bring, not liberation but apathy - 'piped music in the office' - and the sense of 'life as a journey to nowhere' (p.16).

The image of the wheel rotates through the story, carrying the narrative with it, so that the 'ritual wheel', on which 'by luck of a death and a second marriage' the son will not be broken, becomes instead a symbol for his own existence: 'repetition of a life in the shape of a story which has as much reason to go on as stop' (p.22). Finally, we discover that the wheel represents the narrator's desire for unity, and its repetition is the culmination of his disappointment:

all the vivid sections of the wheel we watched so slowly turn,  
impatient for the rich whole that never came but that all the  
preparations promised. (p.22)

The 'rich whole' which has been promised so carefully is also the Irish nation, fought for by the father's generation, and which forms the son's unwanted legacy. The encroachment of a fragmented culture upon that promise leaves it loveless and

without direction, a wheel that turns to no purpose. However, this is only partially presented by McGahern in the story. Ironically, the image of the wheel offers a formal symmetry, which gives the story neatness and closure, yet, at the level of plot almost nothing is resolved. The bitterness between father and son is 'easier', but remains in 'the lies that give us room' (p.20). At the heart of the story is 'the hollowness' of the narrator, an alienation so extreme that no attempt is made to 'soothe the conscience' of the reader by addressing it. The nature of national disappointment is thus both symbolised and obscured by individual isolation.<sup>10</sup>

The difficulty in McGahern's story lies in tracing the connections made between the story of the individual and that of the nation. Although McGahern offers the material that might enable us to do this, such as the father's comments about the closing of the barracks and the general loss of faith, he does not choose to make explicit ties or comparisons. Similarly, McGahern's emphasis on the distance between this rural community and Dublin seems intended to explode any straightforward mapping of family relationships onto national ones, and to prevent the placing of the nation in one geographical area. Bhabha has defined the nation as 'an obscure and ubiquitous form of living the *locality* of culture' - (DissemiNation, p. 292). And it is this definition that prompts Marjorie Howes to ask of Bhabha the question of scale: "'Nation" suggests a particular scale, however elusive its definition, to an extent that "location" or "locality" do not'.<sup>11</sup> Howes' essay considers the difficulties faced by critics when considering whether Joyce's work addresses Dublin or Ireland. In other words, is the locality of the culture described by Joyce adequate to the demands of scale made by the nation? Such demands of scale and size are central to the identity of a contested nation, because they form part of the grounds of its claim to autonomy.

Alasdair Gray, for example, uses the flags of other small independent nations on the cover of his polemical book, *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* in order to draw comparisons with countries of similar populations and size.<sup>12</sup> Colonialism seeks to contain nationalism through naming. Thus the governing of colonial territories as administrative 'areas' and 'regions' is used as an instrument of suppression and control. Colonies become countries only in order to emphasise the largesse of Empire. It is the reaction of the colonised against charges of regionalism, in effect smallness of vision and scope, that prompts MacDiarmid's poetic outrage: 'Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland *small?*'<sup>13</sup> Yet even when a consensus about territorial control has been reached, the location of the nation remains a contested issue. The difficulty for nationalism is to assert a claim to the particular without assuming the connotations of the parochial. For MacDiarmid, it is the variety of Scotland that supports the scale of its aspirations. The 'reified forms of realism and the stereotype' which Bhabha sees as the product of nationalism's urge to assert the particular is what MacDiarmid seeks to overcome here.<sup>14</sup> It could be said that the conclusion of 'Scotland Small?' asserts the 'incompleteness' of any description of Scotland's topography as evidence of its claim to nationhood. That is, Scotland cannot be contained by its geography, but must continuously exceed its own self-representation.

In many ways this conflict between specificity and scale underpins the issues of hybridity, marginality and language which I discussed in the previous chapters. It is the necessary task of postcolonial writing (rather than nationalism) to assert multiple centres rather than to simply invert colonial hierarchies. In a review of recent Irish fiction, Eamonn Hughes describes how the traditional colonial divisions between nationalist and unionist, Catholic and Protestant, Irish and British, 'tend to obscure

other, potentially more interesting, though largely still unexpressed, divisions such as that between Belfast and Derry'.<sup>15</sup> Hughes goes on to express a critical fear that novels such as Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark* and Robert McLiam Wilson's *Eureka Street*, are being 'mistakenly praised' for the illumination they cast on the North, whereas their central concerns are Derry and Belfast respectively. This is not say that neither novel is able to comment on other aspects of national and international politics. Rather, Hughes' review demonstrates that the relationship between national and local has no fixed accent and that the anxiety of representation is marked by criticism as much as by fiction. Those critics such as Berthold Schoene and Tom Nairn who wish to emphasise the division between Highlands and Lowlands over that between Scotland and England or Scotland and Britain are giving voice to a similar concern. For Joycean critics, the difficulty of aligning Dublin with Ireland is exacerbated by the evident anti-pastoral impulse of his work. Seen as a reaction to nationalist rhetoric that emphasised the purity and integrity of the rural West, it is hard to read either *Dubliners* or *Ulysses* as 'national' texts. At the same time, it is clear that Joyce's assertion of an alternative Ireland *located* in Dublin suggests an underlying discourse of nation. Marjorie Howes sees this crisis as part of Joyce's (postcolonial) technique: 'Joyce wrestled with the problem of narrating the nation by investigating the related-to-but-distinctness that characterized the relation between his Dublin and his Ireland' (p.4). For Howes, this tension of scale, the 'related-to-but-distinctness' of location and nation is central not only to Joyce's work, but also to a more general postcolonial critique. 'These two impulses - to attend with increasing care to the disjunction between Joyce's Dublin and his Ireland, and to conflate them with increasing force - are proper to the postcolonial project's ambivalence about the nation' (p.9). These contradictory impulses are, I would argue, particularly pertinent to

the elucidation of cultural identity in short fiction. The fragmented particularity of short stories parallels the disjunction between local and national, just as their apparent completeness seeks to conflate this relationship.

For earlier cultural theorists, the essence of nation is the enduring connection between place and people. It is a commonplace of early modern writing to link a particular place - its topography, climate and even soil - as contributing to the physical and cultural distinctions between peoples. Luke Gibbons has described how 'apologists for colonialism in the new world insisted on portraying America as virgin territory, as if its inhabitants were simply hewn out of the rock formations which dominated the landscape'.<sup>16</sup> The culturally loaded descriptions of native peoples as 'primitive' or 'children of the forest', contributed to colonial discourse which sought to justify colonial activity and open up a space between coloniser and colonised in terms of civility and 'progress'. Too close a relationship with nature was taken as a sign of a lack of development - civilized peoples being removed from nature by clothing, machinery and perhaps most significantly, the written word<sup>17</sup> - and thus colonial discourse tends to emphasise the relationship between land and people. The danger of such commentary, however, is that it gives a temporal as well as spatial status to native inhabitants. To emphasise such links with the local environment is to infer a longstanding relationship (and therefore prior claim of right) with the contested territory. This is perhaps why Hume goes to extreme lengths to deny the '*physical* causes, I mean those qualities of air and climate' of national characteristics in favour of asserting '*moral* causes ... all circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons', in his infamous essay 'On National Character'.<sup>18</sup> The '*moral* causes' which Hume cites range from government to habit to history to economics, all

of which are mediated through the benchmark morality of the English who, 'of any people in the universe, have the least of a national character' (p. 119). The effect of this statement is not only to assert a moral standard whose specificity is absent (and therefore unattainable by the colonised), but also to confirm the inherent diversity of the English, and thus their potential to adapt to the climate of any lands which they might reach in the building of Empire. Hume's project deliberately avoids referring to the contested 'physical', that is land, in favour of the sensual - 'air and clime' - the effects of which are immediately cast in moral terms as prompting a disposition towards licentiousness and alcoholism (p. 123).

In Hume's essay, the nation is a social construct, manifest in the language, government and manners of the people. Yet, as Edward Said observes 'Underlying social space are territories, lands, geographical domains, the actual geographical underpinnings of the imperial, and also the cultural conquest'.<sup>19</sup> For Hume, the cultural conquest is uppermost, perhaps the motivation behind the imperial one, and most specifically is directed towards Scotland:

We may often remark a wonderful mixture of manners and characters in the same nation, speaking the same language, and subject to the same government: and in this particular the ENGLISH are the most remarkable of any people that perhaps ever were in the world. Nor is this to be ascribed to the mutability and uncertainty of their climate, or to any other *physical* causes, since all these causes take place in the

neighbouring country of SCOTLAND, without having the same effect. (p.119).

It is Hume's anxiety about Scotland that surfaces in this passage. One coloured by his peculiar status as an early Unionist. Hume's position was rooted in the belief that English approval was essential to Scotland's prosperity and that the best way to achieve this was through assimilation - the adoption of English-oriented norms of dress, language and behaviour.<sup>20</sup>

In 1928, the possibility of place influencing national character is still exercising Robert E. Park, who rejects the biological and environmental arguments of Montesquieu and Arthur de Gobineau in favour of Frederick Teggart's 'catastrophic theory of civilization, a theory that goes back to Hume in England'.<sup>21</sup> That Park is inspired and amazed by a theory of cultural difference which considers difference as a result of 'contrast effects', rather than 'a product of similar conditions and forces' (p.346), is significant. Surprisingly, Park's arguments bear superficial similarity to those of Robert Crawford who uses the Enlightenment anglicisation of Scotland, as demonstrated in the lectures of Hume, Smith and Blair, as an argument for the Scottish invention of English Literature:

For centuries the margins have been challenging, interrogating, and even structuring the supposed 'centre', the development of the subject 'English Literature' has constantly involved and reinforced an oppressive homage to centralism.<sup>22</sup>

According to Park:

It is in the mind of the marginal man that the moral turmoil which new cultural contacts occasion, manifests itself in the most obvious forms. It is in the mind of the marginal man - where changes and fusions of culture are going on - that we can best study the processes of civilization and of progress.<sup>23</sup>

Although Crawford might not concur as to the objects of study, he certainly agrees with Park in the location of cultural creativity at the margins. Park's emphasis on migration also serves to undermine the notion of a racially static and homogenous nation. 'Every nation', he says, 'turns out to have been a more or less successful melting-pot' (p.346). Both Park and Crawford are interested in the importance of border crossings in the making of a provisional sense of cultural identity, one that is conceived in terms of tradition, but is constantly challenged by the demands of 'changes and fusions of culture'.

The possibilities of reclaiming a relationship with a particular area of land are central to postcolonial thought. The principle of direct control over land by that territory's inhabitants necessarily emphasises the connection between land and people. In postcolonial, as opposed to colonial, literature, attempts to reassert this relationship can be linked to the experience of migration, diaspora and dispossession. No longer an argument for organic nationhood perhaps, but a creative effort to establish a connection which has been lost through colonial imposition. This is a question addressed by Breda Gray in her studies of Irish women living in London

and Luton.<sup>24</sup> Gray identifies the appeals of her research subjects to the 'place of nation' as 'representing a struggle for an "authentic" postcolonial identity' (p.2). The connections between land, self and Irishness were evident in the responses, as well as a clear anxiety that distance from the land of Ireland (residence in England) would dilute their identity:

All of the women were from the southern state and many of the women defined the place of the 'nation' in relation to that state. Their connection with national place was articulated via metaphors of rootedness in Irish soil and visual relationships to a specifically 'Irish' landscape. (p.8)

Whereas Hume and Park emphasise the primacy of social influence - contact between communities - on the formation of identity, Gray's informants seek to establish a relationship of mutual influence between people and place. Gray concludes that the trope of 'landscape' is used to invest meaning in personal and national identity and to overcome the sense of displacement and exclusion experienced by Irish women living in England. Although this is an overtly positive identification with place, which has no counterpart in Hume, there is an understated anxiety in all these accounts that place has the power to *alter* identity. Such anxiety in colonial thought is linked to the fear of 'going native', and in anti-colonial thought to the threat of a double exclusion from 'belonging' to either group.

A story by Janice Galloway, 'Love in a changing environment', from her first collection, *Blood*, addresses the relationship of people and place which

combines the arguments of Hume with the anxiety of the Irish women questioned by Gray.<sup>25</sup> In this story a couple move into a flat above a baker's shop and find their life dictated by the smell of warm yeast and "the sweet fat reek of doughnuts" (p.17). Their relationship mirrors the patterns of the commodities sold downstairs, so that when the bakery is turned into a butchers the warmth of lovemaking is replaced by violent suspicion - distrust accompanied by the "the cracking of bone, the drill and the saw" (p. 19). Finally the arrival of a bone grinder proves too much and the narrator leaves both flat and lover. It is possible to read this story in two ways. Firstly, as a tale of individual emotional dependency, and secondly as symbolic of a national identity crisis which is shaped by the dominance of the English polity. To accept the second reading it is necessary to bear in mind Howes's points about the representativeness of place in Joyce's short stories. Where Joyce is explicit about his setting, Galloway is candid and evasive. However, the lack of naming does not indicate a desire on Galloway's part to invoke some universally applicable place. On the contrary, Galloway's decision to avoid one form of 'localising' can be read as an attempt to overcome the assumptions which cluster around the metropolitan text written in English (one thinks here of Hume's assertion of English national character as absence). Anything that is not marked as 'local' is susceptible to appropriation by the English metropolitan centre. In contrast, those moments in Galloway's fiction when she identifies place through naming occur in all but one case when her characters are in London, displaced, exiled or just visiting.

In 'Love in a changing environment', the rhythm of the baker's shop is both external and intrinsic to the lovers' relationship. The opening sentence, 'The

bakery was how we found it' (p.17), is easily missed, yet crucial in this respect because it shows that while the lives of the lovers are pervaded by their immediate environment, that environment remains impervious to them.<sup>26</sup> Although the bakery closes down, it is not as a direct result of any action by the couple upstairs, indeed they seem to be among its most loyal customers. The couple take their cues from their environment. Having only 'one room and no clock' they are totally dependent upon the different products baked throughout the day: 'hours shifted on white toasters and morning rye to mid-morning eccles cakes and iced chelsea rounds' (p.17). This dependency extends to their diet and lovemaking, so that when the bakery sells up they are reduced to 'toastless beans and cheddar at teatime' or baked potato carry-outs which become a source of guilt and acrimony - 'he quibbled with my choice of fillings'. The bakery is more than a background to their lives, it is a living context which plays an active role in shaping them, pervading and defining even their thoughts, so that 'the surrounding air was everything and sweet' (p.18).

The rather obvious connections between sense and sensuality, similar to those suggested by Hume, become far more interesting when Galloway links them with phrases such as 'the animal vapour of cream meringues' (p.17) or 'the flaccid thud of something thick splaying out against wood' (p.19). It is precisely these kind of compressed images that have invited comparisons of Galloway's work to poetry.<sup>27</sup> Bread as a symbol of love and indulgence and butcher's meat as one of violence and separation is compounded by the invasiveness of the ambience. This is not simply an imaginative use of standard literary devices (such as transferred epithets or anthropomorphism). Rather, it is a linguistic exploration of the

interlocking patterns of experience and the reactive basis of everyday life. The humour in this story depends upon those clichés of romantic narrative - 'all-consuming passion', 'tell-tale signs of an affair' - which have become so familiar through popular romance novels, film and TV soaps, but whose location in a fresh context produces images of heightened irony. Thus the lipstick-on-the-collar motif of unfaithfulness becomes an illicit encounter with baking: 'Sometimes he went out without saying where he was going, coming home with crumbs on his lapel' (p.19). Similarly, the narrator reacts to the bakery's closure and its ominous implications for the relationship with pulp fiction sentiment: 'an iced finger ran the length of my spine but I pushed it away' (p.18).

The allusions to a vocabulary of melodrama in 'Love in a changing environment' are not simply humorous, but point the reader to the weakness of the narrator and the relationship, as well as to the fiction of self-containment that the dramatic influence of their immediate environment suggests. The significant presence of a shaping global culture of television and media, which governs the language and behaviour of the couple is deliberately passed over. That this is unmentioned, yet evidently influential is a mark of its ideological significance, and the characteristic of the apparently transparent 'universality' used to mask the interests of cultural imperialism and transnational capital. Although the pair look for growth, just as they tenderly water their African violet in the hope that 'there would be flowers' (p.18), they lack the self-definition which would allow them to achieve such a blossoming. Instead they rely on the self-raising flour of the shop downstairs and the received language of romance. Their own experiences and emotions are displaced and comprehensively replaced by their environment. Even

the narrator's quasi-moral at the end of the story can be seen as a maxim of self-denial (again a reaction, rather than radical change or active intervention), the banal content of which works directly against its tone. Like the new flat which smells 'only of damp', the narrator's attitude is suspiciously wet: 'Thinner and wiser, I eat no meat and avoid cakes. The very sight of them makes me sick' (p.19). There is no suggestion here that the narrator has rejected the influence of physical context in favour of a more independent sense of self-definition. The closing sentence remains firmly within the same defensive frame of reference, which both characterised and condemned the relationship earlier in the story.

Although 'Love in a changing environment' is not set explicitly in Scotland, we can compare the struggle between the discourses of place and identity to the colonial relationship of Scotland and England. Scotland as a country is at once a part of Britain and a separate entity; the glibness, which frequently subsumes Scotland within a homogenous Britain or even an all-encompassing England, has as its counterpart a reactive, defensive and negative assertion of its identity as non-English or anti-English. Like the lovers, it has no original input into the dynamic of self-definition. Scottish difference emerges as denial, rather than affirmation: something half-baked or raw that is subject to the changing milieu, and yet trapped in a fixed discursive space. Indeed 'Love in a changing environment' could be said to enact a certain division between those supposedly timeless and most marketable aspects of Scotland: the sweetness of shortbread versus the butchery of *Braveheart*. The traps laid by national stereotypes are not empowering here, nor do they offer the possibility of a renewed relationship with place. Yet the story still suggests that alternative

notions of identity are necessary to experience 'belonging'. Although relocated in a new flat, the narrator of Galloway's story is evidently 'lost', nameless and placeless. Like the narrator of McGahern's 'Wheels', he or she is unable to articulate a sense of self that has a spatial or temporal relationship to community.

Life in a changing environment is the topic of much of Galloway's work. Ideas about the importance of place and its relation to identity are constantly developed and revisited, from the 'Scenes from a Life' stories and 'Plastering the Cracks' in *Blood* to stories like 'a night in' and 'tourists from the south arrive in the independent state' in *Where you find it*.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, much of John McGahern's work is about frustrated change - a static and obdurate environment, which refuses to adapt. A recurring figure in McGahern's stories is the newly-arrived foreigner (frequently American) who offers the spectre of transformation only to capitulate to the environment, or to be exposed as the projection of an escapist fantasy. This is particularly true of the Americans who appear in each of McGahern's collections of stories: Mrs Grey in 'Christmas', Kate O'Mara in 'Doorways' and Mary Kelleher in 'Bank Holiday'. Each of these women offer a new perspective, but one which is ultimately inaccessible to the stories' narrators, and indeed, to the reader. Typically, as women, their 'foreignness' is at once desirable and inscrutable. The hint of nationality lifts the story from the limitations of the isolated individual and offers a vision of a frustrated and conservative country. Both Galloway and McGahern recognise this insularity as the product of a protracted colonial relationship, for as a recent reader on postcolonial criticism notes, 'assimilation, integration and collaboration prolong the colonial experience'.<sup>29</sup> For McGahern, the postcolonial state is a 'broken promise', which

chose the security of tradition over the uncertainty of change. In Galloway's work, a postcolonial creativity frets in the structures of an outdated state. Moreover, like the half-built house in 'a night in', the absolute discursive opposition of inside and outside, colonial and postcolonial, conceals the incomplete nature of the project.

Galloway's story 'a night in' shares with 'Love in a changing environment' a concern with the mutual relationship between people and place. The place in question is a half-finished house on a building site where a couple, Stevie, and an unnamed narrator, come looking for shelter on a stormy night. Like the bakery, the unfinished house has a living presence, but also a more subtle relationship with its inhabitants. It is full of the discarded objects of the workmen who are building it, 'an empty beercan, cigarette cartons, rags of newspaper' (p.39), shadows of animals and insects and the couple themselves, huddled inside a single coat. In this case the relationship between the structure of what will be a house and all the life that has passed through it becomes reciprocal: the 'skeleton of the building' is an open, living entity which whines 'like someone asleep, wrestling with dreams' (p. 40) and of which they become a part. For the narrator this recognition is a privilege: 'we were seeing something intimate, something the people whose home this would become would never see or even think about' (p.40). She goes on to describe the various transient visitors - cats, birds, people, insects - as 'pitted into the unplastered brick', a material part, if secret and secreted, of this home-to-be. The structure of the building provides shelter, but is itself made up of spaces and absences, 'holes in every wall', the footprints of departed workmen and the aspirations of future residents. The space-which-will-be-a-house constitutes a blueprint for a continuous community in which the final

inhabitants' awareness of the traces of other, earlier occupants is less important than their material connection.

The spaces of the house are invitations both to movement and rest. They draw the reader's attention to the indeterminacy of the distinctions between inside and outside; the windows are not yet 'shut up with glass' but are holes which let in light, rain and thunder. The floors are not in place and the narrator's eye is drawn by the flame of a match upwards to the 'vertiginous height of the scaffolding' (p.40). These descriptions, together with the coming and going of workmen and animals, prevent the story from settling too comfortably into place. At the same time the focus of the story moves from outside the house, into a room, to one of its corners and finally to Stevie's open coat. This movement inwards is encapsulated in one particular moment where a flash of lightning gives the narrator 'a single snapshot of this place that would be a room, Stevie in one of its corners, waiting for me' (p.41). The invitation, both of Stevie's open coat and the house itself is one of togetherness, rather than isolation. Yet the sense of community is undermined by its transience; the continuity hinted at earlier in the story becomes more ambivalent as we consider the scene as a 'snapshot', an instant. The couple are presumably homeless, and their displacement contrasts sharply with the strong direction of the story's narrative. The dreamlike quality of the couple's visit emphasises this ambivalence towards the stopgap sense of belonging; they are not at rest, but 'waiting for thunder' (p.41). This raises questions surrounding physical and metaphorical homelessness and their relation to the sense of longing and belonging explicit in any idea of national identity.

McGahern takes up the figure of homelessness in the opening of his story 'Doorways'. Two men, nicknamed Barnaby and Bartleby, stand in the doorways of Abbey Street, 'all day and every day', taking a 'calm and level interest in everything that goes on outside their doorway'.<sup>30</sup> In terms of the rest of the story, the doorway is a threshold, the means to enter in or to move out, to join the club, the party, or the relationship and equally to leave them. Yet for Barnaby and Bartleby, although the doorway allows them the position from which to 'look outside', it is a false opposition. Rather like the window-spaces in the house of 'a night in', the doorway's confusion between inside and outside is not always suggestive of integration. For the homeless men in Abbey Street, the doorway is definitive, a mark of their exclusion. Antoinette Quinn calls the men 'visual analogies of the volume's title, *Getting Through*'.<sup>31</sup> The kind of 'getting through' experienced by Barnaby and Bartleby is not penetration or communication, but simply survival. Later in the story, the narrator visits an old friend, Jimmy, in Sligo who asks after 'the gents of Abbey Street', who 'highlight what we're all at' (p.165). Similarly, the narrator identifies with the 'style' of Barnaby and Bartleby, rather than the farm to which the rich artist, Nora, takes him in a vague attempt at seduction. Somewhat ironically, just as in 'a night in', the homeless figures offer the elements of continuity and integrity necessary to identity and community. Both narrator and Jimmy see the homeless figures as more honest versions of themselves, people who carry an explicit relation to their surroundings, poised on the threshold, 'waiting in doorways' (p.174). The significance and scope of this title image is perhaps used to greater effect in Roddy Doyle's *The Woman Who Walked Into Doors*, but McGahern manages to successfully capture the double sense of possibility and limitation, the attraction and repulsion leading to the

unspoken word behind all these things, that is 'exile'. The sense of confusion which this doubleness captures is bound up with the numerous factors which affect migration and emigration from colonised countries. Whereas exile suggests forcible exclusion, migration suggests an economic imperative, and emigration captures both, including perhaps the desire to escape. The tensions between the different connotations of these words have significant implications for postcolonial writing that wishes to draw on the migrant metaphor in defining a radical and creative notion of cultural identity.

Unusually for a McGahern story written in the first person, there is a significant detachment between the voice of the narrator and that of the 'author', which emphasises this tension. The narrator mistakenly sees Barnaby and Bartleby as empowered by some sort of choice, which he has been too scared or lethargic to make: 'Often I want to ask them why they have picked on this way to get through life, but outside the certainty of not being answered I soon see it as an idle question and turn away' (p.159). The narrator turns away because he is unwilling to recognise an interior form of exile, or indeed to examine his assumptions about agency and choice in the context of a colonial legacy. The only displacement to which he assents is the holiday in Sligo, where even the Irish-American Kate is 'other' - erotically incomprehensible. Whereas her family are 'rotten with nostalgia about Ireland', the Irish she encounters find it impossible to imagine a relationship with America at all. Suspended in their doorways, the characters of McGahern's story long for an exit, but seem only to experience endless entrances.

The imagined relationship between people and place is disturbed by the spectre of exile and emigration. Displacement not only destroys the principle of continuity that is one of the founding tenets of nationhood, but also produces a confusion of loyalty and desire. The building site worker in 'Wheels' only returns to Ireland to bury his dead brother, while in 'Faith Hope and Charity', the expense of returning the body of a son killed whilst working in England may compel the father to travel to London for work the following summer.<sup>32</sup> Those who have been forced to emigrate in search of work maintain a bizarre relationship with a nation for whom they are both a burden and a boon. The anxiety of this relationship is explored in different ways by Bernard MacLaverty's story 'Between Two Shores' and Neil Jordan's 'Last Rites'. In Jordan's story, the body of the young builder's labourer bears the marks of difference, 'a Dublin childhood, bread and margarine, cramped and carbonated air. The feet with the miniature half-moon scar would have told eloquently of a summer spent on Laytown Strand'.<sup>33</sup> His suicide is seen as 'the lessons of an acquisitive metropolis ... the lessons not learnt' (p.10). Yet, 'last in a line of negro, Scottish and Irish navvies' he seems to have no relation even to the migrant community amongst whom he lives. Listening to the 'odd mixture of reticence and resentment in the Irish voices' he is isolated even from this shared experience. The separation of the shower cubicles emphasises the separation of the men, 'each a foreign country'. Indeed for the young man, the shower is 'a world', the only one which he can 'hold in balance' (p.13). Nicola Bradbury has commented on an Irish short story tradition which exploits the capacity to move 'from the personal to the national, and the emotional to the political, if not overtly, then by implication'.<sup>34</sup> In 'Last Rites' this movement is so extraordinary as to seem as if it were reversed, from the national politics which

result in the precarious living of migrant workers to the suicide of an individual who slits his wrists to escape 'the boredom which is a condition of life itself' (p.12). By shrinking the world into a shower cubicle, Jordan overcomes the difficulties of expanding the local and individual to meet the demands of the nation.

The central character in 'Between Two Shores' is also a migrant labourer, and he too contemplates suicide, 'to scatter himself on the sea' and thus bridge the gap between England and Ireland.<sup>35</sup> Caught between the demands of two cultures, his return to Ireland prompts feelings of both dread and desire. In London, the man has had an affair with a New Zealand nurse from whom he has caught a sexually transmitted disease. His guilt about his infidelity is compounded by a sense of betrayal to his country. The relationship has overcome the loneliness and even inferiority the man felt on first leaving home: 'In the beginning London had been a terrible place' (p.48), but 'his nurse had come to his rescue' (p.54). In her study of Irish women migrants, Gray cites Catherine Nash, who observes that early twentieth century nationalism saw emigration as 'traitorship to the nation'.<sup>36</sup> The nurse offers the migrant worker a shared childhood experience (that of growing up on a farm) which is not an Irish one, and suggests that 'his values belong to someone else' (p.55). Furthermore, his sense of identity and belonging is compromised by the relationship, which has left him unable to return to Ireland 'whole'. Questioning the suggestion that his values are not his own, he assures himself 'he knew what was right and what was wrong', and then is immediately faced with the mark of his adultery, a sore on his 'slack flesh' (p.51). The contamination of his flesh is prefigured in his attitude towards adultery, which

invokes the organic metaphors of sexuality and identity: 'each time his seed left him he thought the loss permanent and irrevocable' (p.50). The 'seed' is lost because it is sown in alien territory, and thus suggests a failure to cultivate the land, the abiding symbol of the nation.

David Lloyd has advanced a reading of *Ulysses*, and in particular 'Cyclops' which casts 'adulteration as the constitutive anxiety of nationalism'.<sup>37</sup> He goes on to suggest that Joyce adopts 'adulteration as a stylistic principle':

Accordingly, where the principal organizing metaphor of Irish nationalism is that of a proper paternity, of restoring the lineage of the fathers in order to repossess the motherland, Joyce's procedures are dictated by adulteration. (p.105)

Although MacLaverty does not follow Joyce's stylistic lead, his story clearly draws on this anxiety as it relates to the 'authenticity' and integrity of identity. In 'Between Two Shores', the relationship of the protagonist with England is adulterous and ultimately diseased: 'sometimes in England his Irishness made him feel like a leper' (p.54). The comparison between the exiled worker and the outcast leper may be slight, but hints at the underlying fear of contamination and impurity, which is associated with the emigrant's particular form of assimilation. Furthermore, the issue of 'wholeness', the state to which the nation aspires (particularly in the case of contemporary Irish nationalism), is played out in the metaphor of the leper, just as it is assuaged by the apparent completeness of the story. There is no need to leap from individual to nation here, because the

discourse of nationalism embedded in the story has already rejected the protagonist as non-representative, excluded from the people-nation as impure and inauthentic.

The apprehension surrounding the loss of integrity is taken up by women writers in an entirely different direction. Both Janice Galloway and Mary Morrissy have written stories that connect this fear of metaphorical incompleteness with menstruation. In 'Blood' a young girl goes to the dentist to have a tooth removed and is given a sanitary pad to soak up the 'blood spilling from her tongue'. Back at school, she realises that she has begun to menstruate and will have to visit the nurse 'for two sanitary towels'. She chooses instead to use toilet paper and on her visit to the toilets encounters the enlightening graffiti, 'Girls are a bunch of cunts', which provokes feelings of confusion and physical repulsion. The threads of sexuality and deformity come together in the music practice room, when she opens her mouth to tell a male student that she is playing Mozart, only to frighten him away as the blood from the missing tooth spills on the floor. The complicated relationships between male power and the female body are played out in a fragmented text, which exposes as a form of social control the sense of shameful abnormality that is associated with menstruation. In the title story of Mary Morrissy's collection, *A Lazy Eye*, Bella Carmichael finds that her period has started unexpectedly on a train somewhere in Europe. Bella's trip has been 'dogged by small misfortunes and large disappointments'. Having hoped this voyage would be the moment that proved her 'singularity' she finds instead that 'independent travel [is], neither spontaneous nor anonymous'.<sup>38</sup> However, when the train attendants discover the bloody sheets Bella is banished from the train, abandoned 'somewhere in Belgium' (p.53). This is the moment for which Bella has been waiting

her whole life - 'the chance to be heroic', to suffer 'with tragic dignity' (p.42). Yet when this moment arrives she feels 'curiously deflated', punished for 'something unnatural', the inability to control her own body (p. 55, p. 54). The shocked and outraged response to Bella's menstrual blood matches that of the shy student who flees at the sight of the pianist's bloody mouth. Both women are seen to be 'contaminated' by their blood loss, to the extent that they must be excluded from all shared and communicable experience. The male ticket inspector meets Bella's explanations with 'agitation turning to anger' (p.52), while the male student in 'Blood' hastily shuts the door without reply. Each woman is looking for an opportunity to 'be something else', something 'clear, clean... and complete' ('Blood', p.8). However, both are prevented by doing so by the excess and loss which their bleeding signifies. For the girl in 'Blood', the 'unstoppable redness' leaves her unable to move or to talk, whilst Bella is literally rendered mute and immobilised by her ejection from the train in a country whose language she doesn't speak. Both Galloway and Morrissy seek to emphasise the dynamic between gender and cultural identity, as well as the implications of extended metaphors of wholeness and unity. Josiane Paccaud-Huguet sees the chief concern of 'Blood' to be 'the loss of one's wholeness, with the fear and violence of exclusion which it engenders in social and language codes', and this comment might equally apply to 'A Lazy Eye'.<sup>39</sup> In Morrissy's story gender is also associated with scale: the individual female is denied access to 'the large singular event', yet the weight of 'official retribution' is brought to bear on the sign of physical difference:

The sum of all these small humiliations, *these* were what had marked her out. There would be no large, singular event to

validate her existence. There would only be more of this -  
official retribution for bleeding in public. (p.55)

The scale of the nation is also explored by Galloway when she draws on Scotland as a more expansive context for the minutiae of people's lives on which she focuses. This appeal to the nation brings with it the whole question of Scotland's unresolved political status. 'Scottishness' is perhaps best represented by the gaps in the fictions of the 'United' Kingdom and those markers of Scotland - tartan, whisky, bagpipes, Irn Bru. The lack of fit between the social identity offered by such symbols and the individual experience explored in the stories is not particularly surprising. What is compelling is the way that Galloway uses this disparity to challenge a certain type of identity politics.<sup>40</sup> This kind of argument relies on what Lawrence Grossberg calls a 'synecdochal' model of identity: where the part (the individual) stands for the whole (the nation), and then goes on to expose the whole as unrepresentative and finally non-identical.<sup>41</sup> The casualty of this model is community, because its conclusion must inevitably be that the individuals in a group have different experiences or concerns and therefore the group is insignificant, incoherent or simply non-existent. To some extent this is a static model of identity, which fails to recognise the process of identification as a form of movement, a coming together. This is where the Scotland of Galloway's stories is most intriguing: more than a gap of recognition, this Scotland is continually re-presented through different viewpoints, registers and typographies. Similarly, in Morrissy's stories the nation can no longer be defined by shamrocks, nuns and potatoes, compromised as these symbols are by the infringements of consumer culture as suggested by the supermarkets, women's magazines, package

holidays and television advertising which pepper her fiction. Ireland's recent past is presented as a story which is every bit as mythical as that of Cuchulainn and Sweeney, and the present is a fiction inhabited with much less grace. The civil war photograph in 'Agony Aunt' is 'a mock-up', 'dressed for the camera' (p.195), and the ease and comfort of modern suburban living is not the maturity of the real world, it is 'only playing house' (p.82). The writings of both Morrissy and Galloway draw attention to the crystallising influence that the use of such symbols to represent cultural identity may have. Furthermore, each woman uses a mixture of narrative techniques to illuminate the nation as process, rather than goal, a sentiment which is certainly shared by McGahern, although with no stylistic parallel. Developing Spivak's notion of 'strategic essentialism', the stories of Morrissy and Galloway make use of a series of snapshots or montage of 'moments' to create the appearance of movement. In doing so it may be said that they enact Bhabha's 'locality of culture' in terms of a narrative tension between the nation and the individual.

Galloway in particular challenges the synecdochal model of identity by highlighting the imbalance of power in the act of representation, specifically by refusing male dominated prescriptions of Scottishness, which distort and confine the space of national identity. Marilyn Reizbaum, when speaking of another prominent female Scottish writer, Liz Lochhead, says:

What she sees in the reductive presentation of her culture by  
the British and even the Scottish media is the historical

interaction between the marginalization of culture and sexism.<sup>42</sup>

In 'Fearless', Galloway attacks 'the hard volatile maleness of the whole West Coast Legend' which feeds on its own image and protects itself with notions of loyalty and tradition. The eponymous male figure, whose targets are women and children, is tolerated and even defended through a certain 'respect' for that Legend:

some people seemed to admire this drunken wee tragedy as a local hero. They called him *a character*. [...] You felt that it would have been shameful, disloyal even, to admit you hated and feared it. So you kept quiet and turned your eyes away.<sup>43</sup>

Galloway suggests that the male refusal to acknowledge the damage that Fearless does to his chosen victims is related to 'the general problems of being a colonised nation'.<sup>44</sup> This is part of a comprehensive rejection of a single, unitary identity, which presents nationality and gender as conflicting demands. Against this separation of nation and gender, Galloway's constantly shifting narratorial voice expressly recognises the difference from itself by its conflicting perspectives, particularly when it rests with women and children.

In *Where you find it* Galloway largely abandons the cinematic technique in favour of a changing narrative voice, which moves easily between class, gender and sexual preference. This transition breaks down what Homi Bhabha calls the 'social totalities', which are produced by the tendency of narrative authority to

provoke 'a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic categories, like the people or "cultural difference" that continually overlap in the act of writing'.<sup>45</sup> Bhabha is talking specifically here of the 'ambivalence of the nation as narrative strategy' and, as I suggested earlier, Galloway's technique is directed towards the creation of an anti-essentialist notion of Scottishness that is open to the different experiences of age, class and gender, whilst at the same time recognising common commitments and shared concerns. This approach to 'Scottishness' can be compared to bell hooks' description of black identity as 'yearning', a delicate balance of longing and belonging.<sup>46</sup> In hooks' analysis of the significance of postmodern thought for contemporary black experience she characterises radical subjectivity as a search for 'fertile ground for the construction of empathy'. This desire for a sense of groundedness calls for 'ways to construct self and identity that are oppositional and liberatory ... without privileging some voices by denying voice to others'.<sup>47</sup> In Galloway's work, this conflict between the need for a meaningful sense of concepts such as Scottishness and community, without imposing a pre-existing narrative of 'authentic' experience, can be related to the issues of scale and location raised by Marjorie Howes, as well as the traditional suppression of women's voices in nationalist discourse. If cultural identity is seen as something which is necessarily contingent and local - a potential rather than a given - then the dominance of certain (particularly male) voices is open to question. There can be no objective view of Scotland, no absolute marker of Scottish identity, since these are all part of the ongoing encounter with Scottishness. Two particularly interesting stories in this respect are Galloway's 'the bridge' and McGahern's 'Parachutes', both of which draw on ideas of distance and desire.

In 'Parachutes' an abandoned lover wanders the streets and bars of Dublin, obsessively reconstructing the past whilst painfully trapped in the present affairs of his drunken friends.<sup>48</sup> The story begins with an unhappy ending and ends with the memory of happy beginnings. It is not a direct chronological reversal, however, since the narrator's thoughts follow the spiral rhythms of recall, moving in and out of contact with the surrounding environment and backwards and forwards in time across his memories.<sup>49</sup> The comings and goings of his various friends, in and out of bars and houses, compares with the lover's fluctuation between inner and outer space and time. The narrator is in 'a state so close to dreaming' (p.237) that the inner narrative seems to be only incidentally related to the blunt dialogue and disjunctive actions of the other characters. The narrative movement takes its cue from the double metaphor of the title: 'parachute' is the child's word for thistledown and the story moves in two ways, randomly like the drifting seedheads and inexorably downwards like a falling airman. It is a fall from heaven and yet in itself reflects the brief unsustainable flight of the love affair. The thistledown move at a 'dream-like pace' (p.237), a progression that reminds the narrator of a dance and the beginning of the affair. Of all the frail seeds that drift into the bar none will find a bed, but as Mulvey points out there are dumps everywhere:

For the hundred that fall on stone or pavement one will find its  
dump and grow up into a proud thistle and produce thousands of  
fresh new thistledowns. (p.238)

The 'search for fertile ground' suggested by hooks is met by the thistledown's potential to propagate even in the least auspicious places. Yet for Mulvey this potential is far from radical: 'Just old boring rural Ireland strikes again. Even its principal city has one foot in the manure heap' (p238). However, Mulvey's cynical perspective is clearly separated from that of the narrator, for whom the thistledown represent the recovery of connections, an opportunity to bridge the gap between individuals and communities which has been exposed by the failed affair.

The use of a failed or failing love affair is also used by Galloway in 'the bridge' to explore the complex relationships between art, nation and experience. 'the bridge' is about attempts to reach people, primarily Fiona's attempts to reach out to Charlie, but it is also about the role of art and whether it can or should connect people. In the story, Fiona is visiting Charlie in London. Both are painters from Scotland, but whilst for Charlie 'a place is just a place', Fiona is less sure that London provides an escape from the narrow-mindedness that Charlie despises in Scotland. The couple walk along the river towards a bridge where Fiona almost trips over a homeless man to whom she tries to give some money. As she looks for her purse she realises that she has met this man on an earlier occasion, when she handed him a few coppers and he gave her a sarcastic kiss in return. This time, Fiona has no change and hastily drops a twenty pound note in a box on which is written 'I NEED MONEY', before running to the bridge to catch up with Charlie. They stand on the bridge together and discuss '*being Scottish*' and the relationship between Life and Art. Fiona is looking for 'some kind of possibility opening up between them', but Charlie seems oblivious to her need for contact and refuses to

kiss her as they turn to go home. They leave the bridge where there is no longer any sign of the homeless man and return home in silence.

Early in the story Fiona stresses the importance of self-location, an awareness of context. She describes her sense of belonging to Glasgow, half flippantly, as 'the only place I know how to work the buses' (p.146), but also recognises it as a 'kind of ... relief'. Charlie, on the other hand, interprets this attitude as a refusal to move outside known experience: 'scared of the big bad world out there. Some folk are uncomfortable anywhere but in a rut' (p. 148). Whilst Fiona feels a certain desire to be 'sophisticated or cosmopolitan', she is anxious to break down such a value-laden opposition between the two cities: 'London isn't the Big World at all ... It's also as parochial as get out' (p.149). Fiona's conflicting emotions, that is, her suspicion of 'the establishment' and her commitment to the community ('being Scottish'), are mocked by Charlie as being those of an 'Unreconstructed Romantic' and this is backed up by her excuses for Charlie's behaviour - 'artistic volatility' (p.146) - and her recognition of her own desire for 'something as trivial as a compliment' (p.153). In contrast, Charlie rejects 'Scottish culture jesus christ' and is apparently disinterested in any sense of community: 'I don't think I want to belong to anything. Except art maybe' (p.148).

However, Galloway is careful not to give authority to either the 'art for art's sake' argument, or credence to the cult of the impoverished artist rising above experience. Charlie never asks Fiona about her work, yet still claims to know 'where women always fuck up' (p.153), by prioritising 'two kids and the glory of motherhood' over 'making a name for [themselves]', and he dismisses this as

'sentimentality'. Galloway deliberately maintains our sympathy for Fiona by exposing Charlie's vision of art and experience as equally romantic in its own way. Charlie claims to see too much - 'See, my trouble, Fiona, my trouble is I'm too observant. I *see* everything. If I didn't order some of it on canvas, I'd go round the bend' (p.151). Yet this image of the tortured artist is shattered when they leave the bridge and the man lying in the scrub has disappeared and 'Charlie didn't seem to notice' (p.154). Similarly, Charlie fails to see that Fiona actively participates in the Scottish culture which he so readily dismisses, both by 'working the buses' and by 'her own pictures' (p.148). Indeed, Charlie seems not to notice much at all: from Fiona's presence as he paints, to the man by the bridge. He sees little. The narrative exposes this blindness as a form of self-regard, which relies as much on a pre-existing stereotype as does Fiona's vision of Art and Life.

The narrator of 'Parachutes' is presented with a similar crisis in coming to terms with himself, no longer as part of a couple, nor yet of the group of writers which make up his friends. His relationship to his surroundings is marked by a vague detachment and a peculiar dependence, drawn in part from the realisation that he 'had been a fool' to think he could 'stand outside life' (p.229). The structure of the story exposes the arrogance of an intellectual perspective which presumes to have access to objective truth. Like Charlie, Mulvey dismisses his wife's sentimentality when she suggests that he should preserve a certain mystique about their relationship: 'That's precisely why it should be said. Because it's true. Why else should anything be said?' (p.230). Similarly, Mulvey's understanding of art is based on a sense of intellectual superiority and the ability to assert an almost omniscient viewpoint. He even claims the sky in the name of the veracity of art:

"It is not a blue sky, but it goes without saying that blue is what it would be called by everybody in this sloppy country. *Agate* is the exact word. There are many blues. That is an agate sky."

"How do you know it's agate?"

"A painter I used to knock around with taught me the different colours."

"It's a beautiful word," I said.

"It's the *right* word," he replied. (p.235)

The contrasting appeal of the word 'agate' - its beauty or correctness - appears to match the different attitudes of Charlie and Fiona. Mulvey's insistence on the correct word blinds him to the beauty of the word or sky, and again, like Charlie, this obsession is supported by a rejection of national community, Ireland is dismissed as a 'sloppy country'. Mulvey's attitude seems to be shaped in part by intellectual posturing, he speaks of the books he reviews in 'a tone of spirited mockery' (p.228) a tone which is carried over in his discussion of almost everything else. Yet for the narrator, the 'arid mocking words [are] unbearable. Nothing lived.' (p.228). The lifelessness of the narrator's surroundings is further suggested by his attempts to re-discover shared experience:

Across the street was a dishevelled lilac bush. They'd taught us to notice such things when young. They said it was the world. A lilac bush, railings, three milkbottles with silver caps, granite

steps ... I had to rise and walk to beat back a rush of anger. I'd  
have to learn the world all over again. (p.232)

However wary of the establishment and 'authorities' the narrator of 'Parachutes' may be, he is still searching for some meaningful connection with Dublin and other Dubliners, a connection which might grow and flourish, unlike the love affair. In contrast to his lover, who seems to belong to the warm and comfortable world of semi-detached suburbia, the narrator seems to belong nowhere, sleeping alone on a mattress in the Mulveys' furnitureless inner-city terrace. Like the thistledown which drifts along the Dublin streets, the narrator wanders through his memory, retracing the steps of the affair. The lost hope of the relationship is contrasted with the wasted potential of the thistledown, each a brief a moment of possibility as it moves with the air currents from dump to doorway. The narrator's story should identify him as part of the 'hundred' that land on stony ground rather than the single thistledown, but he is barely through the doorway of experience - to connect with the real world of milkbottle tops and lilac bushes he must first come to rest.

'Parachutes' is strongly reminiscent of Joyce in its references to books, and the related discussions of language and meaning. The emotional detachment of the narrative signals a return to introspection on the part of the central character, but towards the end of the story books begin to suggest themselves as a way of coming to grips with the gap between thought and lived experience. Mulvey's throwaway statement that 'that's what books are for', is the hint of a possible way of negotiating love and memory with the condition of being. The conversations

about language and texts are placed in the context of nation and history by the fleeting references to Dublin which recall the Easter Rising and Civil War. The narrator meets his lover in the GPO in O'Connell Street, scene of the 1916 rebellion, and the agate sky glows 'in a gentle fullness on the bullet-scarred stone of the College of Surgeons' (p.235). The historical matter of Ireland is raised and briefly exposed as somehow relevant to the intimate crisis of the Dublin lover, as if his own condition were a symptom of the failure of culture and history to re-group themselves in the creation of a new Irish dynamic. McGahern's hero struggles to connect, just as Irish national identity struggles to connect with a postcolonial future. Each is dislocated, unable to move on until they have learned to let go.

In many ways both the narrator of 'Parachutes' and Fiona in 'the bridge' are in a privileged position. Their displacement is only temporary, a shuffling of perspective rather than the absolute disjunction felt by the migrant workers in 'Between Two Shores' and 'Last Rites'. The discourse of cultural difference and the alienation of the isolated individual are undercut in both McGahern and Galloway's stories by a reminder of material difference. The homeless man whom Fiona encounters at the foot of the bridge is more significant in this respect than he at first seems. The man, like Barnaby and Bartleby, and the couple in 'a night in', is a concrete reminder of that disparity between life and art. The words on the cardboard box in front of him are more of a statement than an appeal: 'I NEED MONEY' is a way of telling it like it is without worrying about the aesthetics of the act itself. By reading the box, Fiona is no longer innocent. She has recognised that need, and as she reflected earlier: 'you didn't start things you couldn't finish,

create expectations and just fuck off' (p.141). In her previous encounter with this man we discover that we cannot know people by their circumstances, environment, or what Charlie calls their 'priorities'. The homeless man uses 'English public school vowels', has beautiful hands, 'soft and plump beneath the dirt', and 'a straight stare' (p.144). The man's attitude is not deferential, not reducible to that of a vagrant alcoholic or psychiatric patient, rather he is shown to be every bit as 'ordinary' as Charlie. However, in direct contrast to Charlie, the first time he approaches Fiona he kisses her - a sarcastic response to pennies she gives his open hand. The kiss is a bridge between the two, an acknowledgement of the man's need and existence. Charlie's failure both to kiss Fiona or to see this man at all undermines his position as the voice of Art. His viewpoint presumes the authority of art over experience, an authority that fails to examine its own presumptions.

Homelessness in Scotland is the 'Big Issue' as the title of the magazine suggests.<sup>50</sup> Every year around eighty thousand Scots become homeless and each night more than one thousand people sleep rough in Scotland. This is an issue that cuts across borders, with substantial numbers of Scottish and Irish people migrating to London, looking for work and sleeping rough.<sup>51</sup> The homeless as encountered in literature are all too often characterised as drunken or incoherent tramps with strong regional accents. Their presence in the metropolis demonstrates the huge gaps in income and expectations produced by modern post-industrial life. This is a problem in many countries across the world, but one which is all the more acute for cultures where there is a high experience of emigration: this is the double-squeeze of Scotland's relationship with empire. Yet

Galloway is well aware that individual identity cannot function as unproblematically representative of national identity. The man is English precisely because he cannot enact the lack of home on a wider scale. This puts the nationalist urge towards self-determination in perspective and at the same time re-emphasises the need for a stronger sense of communal responsibility, an imaginative space that can be called home in order to provide a physical one.

The antithesis of the homeless figure is the tourist, a privileged visitor, and a consumer of culture rather than its creator. Galloway parodies the juxtaposition of the imagined space of Scotland with the physical one in 'tourists from the south arrive in the independent state'. Here a jumble of Scottish signifiers provides a confusing experience of the nation for the 'tourists from the south'. Scotland is defamiliarised by vocabulary that links it with the so-called 'second world' of Eastern Europe or 'the Eastern Bloc'. Scottish-English relations are characterised as those of a north/south divide, which has been through a 'Cold War' but has now gone 'the way of the modern world ... forging proud independences' (p.159). The story is told from the point of view of the tourists themselves, brimming with expectations prompted by their only other experience of Scotland: 'tv documentaries, the odd series. *Taggart, Para Handy*' (p.160). Aside from the references to Eastern Europe these descriptions also draw on the narratives of empire - intrepid explorers dealing with difficult natives, together with a whole series of related ideas such as 'colonisation as civilization' and 'natives as children'. The tone of the story is one of great patience: 'odd that their countries being formally separate now should make them feel so much closer, so much more

tolerant' (p.159). The irony here is the suggestion that it is the 'Islanders' as opposed to the tourists who are 'tolerant', in that they largely ignore them.

The various clichés of Scottish culture are presented together to expose the expectations of the tourists. On the bus they take from the airport to the hotel for example:

The seats were pleasingly whole and covered with tartan flocking despite the strong tang of nicotine and spilled alcohol. Still everything seemed very clean. They were sure it was all very clean. (p.161).

Galloway draws attention to the difference between representation and experience here as a demonstration of the obvious problems of national identity. No representation can ever be fully comprehensive, because like the synecdochal model of identity it is a part standing for the whole. The tourists' dismay, 'fifteen floors high in the New Independence Hotel ... that things were not all they had hoped for' is not simply due to a lack of fit between the packaged culture ('THE BEAUTIES OF ROYAL DEESIDE') and the one they are presented with, but also that all those different markers of Scotland, (such as alcohol, tartan, nicotine, bagpipes and expletives) are found in the same place. The realisation that Black Watch shagpile maketh not a nation is not much of a revelation, but Galloway obliquely suggests that all representation, and specifically national representation, cannot simply be consumed - it demands a certain engagement. 'The Kelman novels they had brought for atmosphere would wait or be used, spines cracked

open, to place over weary faces to keep out the morning light' (p.163); whether they are read or not, the Kelman novels function as a barrier between the 'tourists' and 'the independent state'. Galloway less than subtly suggests that the fault lies with the tourists who value Kelman's writing for its 'atmosphere', rather than its content, and whose attitude is fundamentally patronising: 'they thought how understanding they had wanted to be. How generous. How tolerant. How kind.' (p.164).

This story is neither atmospheric, nor tolerant, nor kind. However it is more than a little generous when it comes to consider its own understanding in contrast with that of the tourists. It is one of Galloway's less satisfying stories, perhaps because it approaches its subject too directly. Like Fiona's attack on 'the establishment' in 'the bridge' it fails to recognise its own place in the critique; it becomes as reductive as those representations of Scotland which rely on a single set of symbols - be they those of *Para Handy* or of *Taggart*. A story by Morrissy that makes similar use of the tourist to emphasise the proliferation of cultural identity is 'A Marriage of Convenience'.<sup>52</sup> In this story the female tourist visits El Quistador and marries Pacheas, a waiter with whom she has an affair so that he may leave the country. She marries him out of guilt, having 'feasted on poverty, poverty obligingly wearing parakeet colours', and brings him home almost like a souvenir. Yet the final irony of the story is that her romantic image of him, complete with 'tubercular mother', 'black-shawled grandmother' and 'brother, the rebel priest' is utterly false. Pacheas could have left Quistador any time he wanted and his mother is 'hale and hearty and running a brothel in Estanza' (p.147). The story ends with an ominous suggestion that the woman's urge to commodify

national identity may be repaid with violence, rather than the benign tolerance of Galloway's *Islanders*. The strength of Morrissy's story lies in the shift of perspective from woman to waiter at the moment when each becomes an 'alien' in the other's territory. The weakness of 'tourists from the south' might be related to the fixity and disengagement of the narrative, although as part of a broader project which contrasts directly with the perspective of the 'the bridge' it is much more successful. There are many 'tourists' in Galloway's writing and this story shows the tourist-as-reader to be the flipside of the uneasy presentation of the reader-as-tourist, in 'The Community and the Senior Citizen', for example.<sup>53</sup> 'the bridge' counters the absolute separation implied in 'tourists from the south arrive in the newly independent state' and a consideration of both stories reveals both the impossibility of total separation and the ambiguities of union. The bridge itself is not a pleasant or even safe place to be. For Fiona and Charlie it indicates moving apart rather than coming together. It forces them both to consider where and how they look, and this clarifies the relationship between movement and perspective that Galloway explores in her other stories.

McGahern, Morrissy and Galloway all share the rejection of the singular and unitary identity, and McGahern in particular is keen to critique what he sees as ossified forms of tradition which seek to contain the individual within the markers of nation. Yet where the underlying tone of Galloway's stories is optimistic, seeking to highlight the positive challenge of community, McGahern's writing suggests a more permanent sense of exclusion and isolation. Likewise, although Morrissy's stories share an interest in perspective and gender with those of Galloway, their constant tone of disappointment and bitter loneliness align

them more closely with the work of McGahern. It is perhaps pertinent to reconsider the difference between the political statuses of Scotland and Ireland here, and the implications this might have for their respective writers. The aspiration voiced in Galloway's stories can be linked to the Scottish political agenda, which is gradually moving away from the British State towards a formation which would allow Scotland greater autonomy. The sense of disappointment and failure experienced by McGahern's narrators is directly connected in his stories to the 'broken promise' of the Irish Free State. Not only does postcolonial Ireland fail to match the expectations of change and freedom which nationalist rhetoric offered, but the continued anomaly of the North confronts the compensatory myths of the civil war and the accompanying sense of closure. As the narrator of 'Doorways' observes, Ireland is still 'waiting', with all the implications of inactivity and paralysis that the word suggests. Similarly, in Morrissy's stories the nation no longer has any clear direction, compromised as it is by the infringements of consumer culture it can no longer be said to be, following Bhabha's definition, 'living the *locality* of culture'.

Nevertheless, all three writers appeal to metaphors of rootedness and roominess to elaborate the fraught relationship between individual and national identity. As Bhabha again observes:

The recurrent metaphor of landscape as the inscape of national identity emphasises the quality of light, the question of social visibility, the power of the eye to naturalize the rhetoric of national affiliation and its forms of collective expression.<sup>54</sup>

The question of social visibility is raised in particular by McGahern and Galloway, who condemn the partial vision that afflicts nationalism in its postcolonial manifestation through the manipulation of the particularly local vision of the short story form. The continual trade-off between local and national is played out through stories of individual isolation which can only ever be fragmentary, partial and incomplete. The suggestion that the formal requirements of short story writing find a certain resonance in the writings of postcolonial countries might be confirmed in Nadine Gordimer's comments on African fiction:

No short story writer could write only what he pleased and continue to eat, in England. In my own country, South Africa, both the limited size of the publishing industry and the limited size and tastes of the reading public would make it impossible for any serious writer to live off local earnings. And yet - such is the resilience and obstinacy of short-story writers - almost all the interesting fiction written by local Africans (not *white* South Africans) has taken the form of short stories.<sup>55</sup>

The short story can be read as the exemplary site of postcolonial resistance. Not only do the structural and thematic implications of short fiction find a particular empathy with the concepts and concerns of postcolonial theory, but the genre presents itself as the most practical in terms of publishing opportunities. While there are limited options for writers in small or subordinate countries to work on and place novels for

publication, writer's collectives, magazines, journals and small presses offer possibilities for short fiction and prose. Such local interventions provide important outlets for dissent and debate - a space where new and established writers can come together to address the immediate concerns of a postcolonial culture. One example of a successful Scottish forum of this type is The Clocktower Press, founded by James Meek and Duncan McLean, which published a series of pamphlets featuring short fiction by young, often unpublished local writers. Early drafts of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (nominally a novel, yet constructed from a number of interrelated short stories), Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar*, and numerous short stories by McLean, Meek, Galloway and Gordon Legge first appeared as Clocktower pamphlets. Commenting on the balance between formal experiment and cultural dissent which characterised these publications, McLean notes that 'Clocktower has always been about seeking out the new, the exploratory, the unsafe'.<sup>56</sup> This statement has strong resonances with a proactive postcolonialism, one which refuses the nostalgia of a pre-colonial past, or the homogeneity of fixed national identity in favour of vigorous and flexible forms of cultural self-assertion.

- <sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.85.
- <sup>2</sup> Charles E. May, 'The Nature of Knowledge in Short Fiction' in Charles E. May (ed.), *The New Short Story Theories* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1994), pp.131-2.
- <sup>3</sup> Nadine Gordimer comments: 'It goes without saying that publishers nurture their short-story writers mainly in the hope that they will write novels sooner or later.' See 'The Flash of Fireflies' in May (ed.), *The New Short Story Theories*, p.266.
- <sup>4</sup> Tom Paulin, *Ireland and the English Crisis* (Newcastle: Bloodaxe, 1984), p.134.
- <sup>5</sup> Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp.18-19. For an interesting discussion of the relationships between the theory and practice of short story writing in both O'Connor and O'Faolain see Neil Corcoran, *After Yeats and Joyce: Reading Modern Irish Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 71-76.
- <sup>6</sup> 'Introduction', Frank O'Connor (ed.), *Modern Irish Short Stories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1957), p.ix.
- <sup>7</sup> Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.494. Having said this, the only short stories to which Kiberd pays detailed attention are those of Joyce, Bowen and Somerville and Ross, all of which constitute a very small part of what is otherwise a rather large book.
- <sup>8</sup> John McGahern, *Nightlines* (London: Faber and Faber, 1970).
- <sup>9</sup> The form of this story clearly echoes that of Sean O'Faolain's 'A Broken World' (1937), which takes place in a rail carriage occupied by a farmer, a detached narrator and a priest.
- <sup>10</sup> The incompleteness of this story is illustrated by a number of other stories featuring similar characters, and which culminate in McGahern's 1990 novel, *Amongst Women*.
- <sup>11</sup> Marjorie Howes, 'Joyce's Dublin, Joyce's Ireland: Narrating the Nation', p.3 of an unpublished text, cited with kind permission of the author.
- <sup>12</sup> Alasdair Gray, *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (Canongate: Edinburgh, 1992).
- <sup>13</sup> 'Scotland Small?' in Hugh MacDiarmid (C. M. Grieve), *Selected Poems* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994), p.230.
- <sup>14</sup> 'DissemiNation' in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.303.
- <sup>15</sup> Eamonn Hughes 'Belfastards and Derriers', *Irish Review*, 20 (1997), p.151.

<sup>16</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History' in Robert Young (ed.), *Neocolonialism, Oxford Literary Review* Vol. 13 No. 1-2 (1991), pp.100-101. Gibbons quotes Francis Parkman who describes native Americans as 'the child who will not be weaned from the breast of his rugged mother'.

<sup>17</sup> See Homi Bhabha, 'Signs Taken For Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817' in *Europe and Its Others Vol. 1* (Colchester: University of Essex, 1985), pp.89-106 for the function of 'the English Book' in colonial discourse.

<sup>18</sup> David Hume 'On National Character' in *Selected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p.113.

<sup>19</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p.93.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Crawford notes: 'To many it appeared that the way to advance as a Scot was to appear as English as possible, while at the same time upholding an ideal of Britishness in which Scotland would be able to play her full part', *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.24.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Ezra Park, 'Human Migration and the Marginal Man' in *Race and Culture* (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1950), p.345. I am assuming that no irony is intended in Park's comment on Hume 'in England'.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, p.7.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Ezra Park, 'Human Migration and the Marginal Man', p.356. Roy Foster has described Trollope, Randolph Churchill, Enoch Powell and Terry Eagleton as examples of 'the marginal man' using Ireland as 'an appropriate arena to exercise the conscience of their race'. See 'Marginal Men and Micks on the Make' in *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in English and Irish History* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1995), pp. 291-296 and p. 305.

<sup>24</sup> Breda Gray, 'Ambivalent belongings and contested authenticities - Gendered spatialities of Irishness' forthcoming in *Irish Studies Review* Vol. 7 No. 2 (Summer, 1999).

<sup>25</sup> Janice Galloway, *Blood* (London: Minerva, 1992).

<sup>26</sup> This sentence also pre-empts the title of Galloway's second collection, *Where you find it* thus linking it to a whole series of ambiguous experiences of love.

<sup>27</sup> In a review of *Where you find it*, Maggie Gee describes Galloway as 'a poet of uneasy intimacies in small spaces', 'From the Edge of the Everyday' *The Times Literary Supplement* (May 3rd, 1996), p.22.

- <sup>28</sup> Janice Galloway, *Where You Find It* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1996). All subsequent page references are to this edition.
- <sup>29</sup> Introduction to Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley (eds.), *Postcolonial Criticism* (Harlow: Longman, 1997), p.5.
- <sup>30</sup> 'Doorways' in John McGahern, *The Collected Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992), p.158-9, originally published in the collection *Getting Through* (1978).
- <sup>31</sup> Antoinette Quinn, 'Varieties of Disenchantment: Narrative Technique in John McGahern's Short Stories' in *Journal of the Short Story in English*, No.13 (Autumn, 1989), pp.77-89.
- <sup>32</sup> 'Faith, Hope and Charity', in *Getting Through* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978).
- <sup>33</sup> Neil Jordan, *Night in Tunisia* (London: Vintage, 1993), p.10.
- <sup>34</sup> Nicola Bradbury, 'High Ground' in Clare Hanson, (ed.) *Re-Reading the Short Story* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1989), p.86.
- <sup>35</sup> Bernard MacLaverty, *Secrets and Other Stories* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990), p.57.
- <sup>36</sup> Catherine Nash, "'Embodying the Nation" - The West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity', Barbara O'Connor and Michael Cronin (eds.), *Tourism in Ireland A Critical Analysis* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1993), p.96. Quoted in Gray, 'Ambivalent belongings and contested authenticities - Gendered spatialities of Irishness', p.14, n. 2.
- <sup>37</sup> David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Postcolonial Moment* (Dublin: Lilliput Press 1993), p.106.
- <sup>38</sup> 'A Lazy Eye' in Mary Morrissy, *A Lazy Eye* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), p.42, p.50.
- <sup>39</sup> 'Breaking through cracked mirrors: The short stories of Janice Galloway' in *Etudes écossaises no. 2 - Littérature écossaise: voix nouvelles* (Grenoble: Université Stendhal, 1993), p.5.
- <sup>40</sup> These ideas have of course been discussed at great length in Scotland. See particularly Tom Nairn's description of the "tartan monster" in *The Break-up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1983), Colin McArthur (ed.), *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television*, (London: BFI Publishing, 1982) and for a response to these, Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture: Inferiorism and the Intellectuals* (Polygon: Edinburgh, 1989).
- <sup>41</sup> Lawrence Grossberg, 'The space of culture, the power of space' in *The Post-Colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons*, Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.), (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.169-188.

- <sup>42</sup> Marilyn Reizbaum, 'Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing' in Karen R. Lawrence (ed.), *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth-Century 'British' Literary Canons* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p. 182.
- <sup>43</sup> 'Fearless', in *Blood*, p. 113.
- <sup>44</sup> Galloway refers to this in the context of literature in her introduction to *Meantime: Looking Forward to the Millennium*, Women 2000 (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), p. 6.
- <sup>45</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 6 and p. 292. See especially pp. 291-322.
- <sup>46</sup> See bell hooks: 'Postmodern Blackness' in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Postcolonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester, 1994), pp. 421-7.
- <sup>47</sup> *ibid.* p. 425.
- <sup>48</sup> 'Parachutes' in John McGahern, *The Collected Stories*, pp. 226-238, originally published in the collection *High Ground* (1985).
- <sup>49</sup> Nicola Bradbury notes that the circular patterns of recall are disrupted by the lovers' break-up, and reads the story as a crisis of cyclical interpretations of romance and history. See 'High Ground' in Clare Hanson, (ed.) *Re-Reading the Short Story*, pp. 92-3.
- <sup>50</sup> *The Big Issue* is the title of a magazine sold by homeless people in the UK (its counterpart in Ireland is called *The Big Issues*). The vendor receives 60% of the cover price of every copy sold.
- <sup>51</sup> Figures from Shelter report, *Housing for Good* (1995).
- <sup>52</sup> 'A Marriage of Convenience', in *A Lazy Eye*, pp. 135-149.
- <sup>53</sup> This use of 'camera-angle' might usefully be compared to Sean O'Faolain's analysis of short story writing as demanding a technique which obscures the 'movement of the mental camera' in *The Short Story* (Dublin: Mercier, 1948), p. 235.
- <sup>54</sup> Bhabha, 'DissemiNation', p. 296.
- <sup>55</sup> 'The Flash of Fireflies', p. 267.
- <sup>56</sup> See Duncan McLean, 'A Short History of the Clocktower Press' in Duncan McLean (ed.), *Ahead of Its Time: A Clocktower Press Anthology* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1997), p. xvi.

## Chapter Six

### Other Ways of Telling: Film

Contemporary cultural identity is not shaped solely or even largely through literature. Popular culture and the media continually generate, revise and reassert cultural identity in the public arena. The cultural capital of Scotland has been much vaunted of late, following hot on the heels of a renewed interest in all things Irish. As discussed in Chapter Three, there are many reasons why both Scottish and Irish culture might be experiencing a boom in popularity, particularly in Britain and America. Yet, however valuable such interest may be, it has repercussions in terms of a heightened antagonism between Scotland and Ireland, who compete for a similar share in the cultural market. This is particularly true in the case of the film industry, where tax incentives and government co-operation have built up Ireland's potential as a location and base for filming, often at Scotland's expense. The debate surrounding two recent films ostensibly set in Scotland, but largely filmed in Ireland, has at once stirred Irish-Scottish rivalry, and drawn attention to shared concerns and preoccupations. This chapter will consider how popular representations of nationalism and identity operate in two pairs of films made in the last decade. Inevitably, the discussion of these films draw on issues raised in earlier chapters. The first two films, *The Commitments* and *Trainspotting*, are both based on novels written by authors discussed previously, Roddy Doyle and Irvine Welsh, and my readings of the films will draw on their transformation from print to celluloid. The second pair of films, *Braveheart* and *Michael Collins*, can be read as 're-routing history' in a manner similar to that of the plays under discussion in Chapter Two. These plays and the two

films, *Braveheart* and *Michael Collins*, share the project of re-examining national figures and a related interest in the fictionalisation and currency of history. All four films raise questions surrounding the representation of contemporary cultural identity.

Film is a multilayered medium working with a potent combination of two modalities of expression: image and sound.<sup>1</sup>

The juxtaposition of image and sound in *Trainspotting* and *The Commitments* provides an important point of comparison between two apparently dissimilar films. Where *The Commitments* makes the most of the social realist potential of Doyle's novel, dwelling on shots of busy, dilapidated housing estates, burnt out cars and kids running wild, *Trainspotting* exploits the surreal quality of drugtaking, revelling in bold bright colours, grotesque exaggeration and largely avoiding any direct representation of poverty or deprivation. Yet what the films have in common is the presence of a soundtrack which continually threatens to usurp the authority of the moving image. If *The Commitments* functions as a modern day musical - the presence of the songs is justified by the narrative of a young band trying to make it in a big bad world - then *Trainspotting* is an extended pop video where the narrative links between song and story are minimal, but in which the action is driven by the tempo of the music. In both films the music is intrusive, demanding attention which would otherwise be given to the characters and their surroundings. The opening of *The Commitments*, for example, deliberately draws on a cacophony of musical styles, obscuring the dialogue and emphasising an established musical tradition. This is an important precedent for the rest of the film. *The Commitments* are a young Dublin

band formed by first time manager Jimmy Rabbitte to bring ‘American soul to working-class Dublin’. The film charts their struggle to realise a dream of stardom and the break up of the group on the eve of success, just as Jimmy has secured them a recording contract. Yet from the outset Alan Parker tries to suggest that music is not an outside, or ‘foreign’ force brought to bear upon their lives, but is already present as a pervasive and significant social phenomenon. The Commitments choice of one particular form of music is significant, as I will suggest later, yet equally important is the assertion that music is already integral to the passage of Dublin life.

The film opens at a market, where Jimmy Rabbitte is trying to sell t-shirts and video tapes, others are selling horses, trading clothes or household goods. There is also an old man playing traditional fiddle music, a boy singing social protest songs for money, and a young man playing an Everley Brothers cover on the guitar. The neck of the guitar links this scene to a wedding where a small band are playing early sixties numbers, such as ‘Twenty-Four Hours from Tulsa’ and where Deco, soon to be lead singer of The Commitments, offers a drunken rendition of a contemporary hit, The Proclaimers’ ‘Letter from America’. The film then cuts to a shot of Jimmy Rabbitte travelling on the DART, Dublin’s urban railway system, overlaid with ‘Destination Anywhere’ (a song which becomes a recurring motif), before returning with Jimmy to the wedding where the band are finishing a particularly excruciating version of ‘Needles and Pins’. Although soul music is to become the focus of the film, the first five minutes have already played out a musical history, which stretches from Ireland to Scotland to America, and from the present day back through the sixties to the early seventeenth century. Furthermore, the series of auditions which takes place in Jimmy’s house brings in an even wider variety of music, from acapella gospel to

washboard cajun and from uilean pipes to The Smiths. Yet the myriad of musical styles is not used to highlight incongruity here, but to suggest possibility. Jimmy and his band may be restricted in terms of education, employment, even potential partners (it is made clear, for example, that Imelda Quirke chooses her boyfriend because he has a job, rather than for his charisma), but in terms of music they have the power to exercise choice.

The question of choice is also raised in the opening scene of *Trainspotting*, where Iggy Pop's 'Lust for Life' is played over a scene in which Sick Boy, Spud and Renton run down Princes Street chased by a couple of store detectives. This is further overlaid with a speech by Renton:

Choose life. Choose a career. Choose a family. Choose a fucking big television. Choose washing machines, cars, compact disc players and electrical tin openers ... Choose sitting on that couch watching mind-numbing, spirit crushing game shows, stuffing fucking junk food into your mouth. Choose rotting away at the end of it all, pishing your last in a miserable home, nothing more than an embarrassment to the selfish, fucked-up brats that you spawned to replace yourselves. Choose your future. Choose life. But why would I want to do a thing like that? I chose not to choose life. I chose something else.<sup>2</sup>

Renton claims heroin as that 'something else'. Ironically, this powerful opening speech also proved to be the basis of a strong marketing strategy. The film was sold

as the alternative to the alternative, a sort of voyeuristic replacement for heroin itself - choose not to choose consumer heaven or junkie hell. Commenting on the novel, Alan Freeman observes that Renton, 'doesn't choose death either, just his social sub-culture' and argues that Renton's rejection of the balancing act between short term pleasure and long term comfort stems from a refusal 'extending all the way from nation and class identity to gender ... a lack of commitment to social systems'.<sup>3</sup> Yet Renton's refusal in the film is celebrated with a gleeful energy that works against the grain of the novel. Even the song 'Lust for Life' appears to contradict the message 'I chose not to choose life', arguing that heroin is indeed another way of life. Whereas the first half of the film seems to suggest that Renton has a variety of options open to him, and that his heroin habit is largely a matter of choice, the second half is much more pessimistic in outlook. The film's early scenes offer heroin as 'just another drug' in a long list of social fixations: smoking, alcohol, valium, gambling, or violence, which Renton describes as Begbie's 'own sensory addiction'; whereas the second half is dominated by the consumption and distribution of 'smack'.

Andrew O'Hagan praises *Trainspotting* for its energetic challenge to middle-class morality. In particular the infamous scene in which Renton dives into a filthy toilet bowl which becomes a deep blue lagoon in order to recover some opium suppositories; a scene that he suggests poses the question 'how much are you prepared to do for your chosen drug?'<sup>4</sup> Yet O'Hagan also expresses some reservations about the dynamics of music and message in the film. The early outburst against commodity culture is so thoroughly compromised by the glamorous and omnipresent soundtrack, that it no longer attacks the rationale of Renton and his mates, but the basis of the film itself:

It's disturbing from time to time, to see the lives of this troop of addicts and psychos blasted about in pop promo fashion. The speed of it sometimes serves to slide over the novel's darker edges.<sup>5</sup> (p.7)

Whereas the novel is filled with death - as Renton says 'If they gave out qualifications in bereavement, ah'd be a fuckin Ph.D. by now' (p.299) - the film barely touches on it.<sup>6</sup>

There are two moments of grief in the film, the sudden death of baby Dawn, to which Renton and his friends respond by shooting up, and the death of Tommy by toxoplasmosis. Although both scenes serve to re-emphasise the self-serving effects of heroin addiction, further undermining the pay-off which Renton and friends choose between the 'better than sex' drug and the havoc it wreaks on their lives, the filmmakers cannot resist the ironic potential offered by the soundtrack throughout. Tommy is mourned by a visit to the pub where Spud sings 'Two Little Boys', a song whose wistful elegy for friendship in the face of battle cannot be further distant from the reality of Tommy's existence. Far from a loyal friend, Renton is implicated in Tommy's demise. Not only does his theft of the video of Tommy and his girlfriend having sex lead to their break-up, Tommy's first hit (which is prompted by his depression following the failure of the relationship) is provided by Renton. Yet Tommy's request is framed by the assertion that they are no longer 'two little boys', but grown men: 'For God's sake Mark, I can handle it!' Tommy's words recall the

argument of Renton's opening speech, the cynicism with which responsibility and choice is approached there is repeated here. Blame is always deferred, and the phrases 'it's not fair', and 'its not ma fault' recur a number of times throughout the film. The dynamic of responsibility and choice also heightens the distinction inside/outside. Renton's group of friends is male (although there are three peripheral women) and their relationships are bound up in a discourse of class and gender which not only describes their social attitudes, but to an extent also dictates their behaviour. Danny Boyle has noted:

The boy's own thing is what the title is really about. It's this thing about lists in the film. Everybody talks in lists. They're always listing their achievements - it's a mentality, an attempt to try to get a fix on the world.<sup>7</sup>

The boy's own mentality is further emphasised in the set of symbols which the group use to define themselves as young male Scots, and with which they seek to exclude others. Most notably, Sick Boy's obsession with Sean Connery, which focuses on his sexual charisma, and the passing references to Scottish football. Both these subjects inspire a narrative of failure - or rather a sense that Scotland has already reached its peak. Sick Boy comments that even the career of the heroic Connery has passed its height: 'The Name of the Rose is merely a blip on an otherwise uninterrupted downward trajectory'. Similarly, Renton comments 'I haven't felt that good since Archie Gemmill scored against Holland in 1978' - even the achievements of Scottish football lie firmly in the past.

Discussing the infamous trio of Scotch Myths - tartanry, kailyard and Clydeside - John Caughie finds the recurring themes of loss and failure characteristic of Scottish film to be a particularly masculine construction:

Each of these discourses plays out an epic transformation rendered as a loss: a loss of pre-capitalist natural order; a loss of the pre-industrial natural and self-regulating community; and finally a loss of industry itself, and with it a loss of 'natural masculinity'. Each of the discourses also looked back to a specifically masculine yearning, calling on women to give body to the romance of nature, to the desire for a bewitchment which went beyond the prosaic rationality of a domesticated enlightenment, or to the need for confirmation in the uncertainties of post-industrial manhood.<sup>8</sup>

Although *Trainspotting* is ambivalent about the relationship between employment and male identity and disgusted rather than nostalgic about a history of 'tragic failure', it retains a gendered dynamic in which women have the power to bestow and remove male confidence. Renton's comment on Archie Gemmill's goal follows sex with Diane, the underage schoolgirl who picks him up in a nightclub. Diane's sexual aggression is matched by the sexual manipulation of Gail, who refuses to sleep with Spud for six weeks in order to control the relationship. Similarly, Tommy turns to heroin when he is rejected by Lizzie. In the film, in stark contrast to the novel, women enact a fantasy of power which the men are unable to possess. Even Begbie, the extreme version of a violent masculinity, is undone by sex - surprisingly his response

to an encounter with a transvestite is not violence, but shock and horror. The unravelling of identities which the transvestite presents leaves Begbie without an appropriately categorised response. Later, his customary violence is directed towards Renton, yet for this brief moment the certainty of his macho authority is called into question.

Sex also proves to be the undoing of *The Commitments*, and while the balance of characters in the film might suggest a less masculine perspective, Parker makes it clear from early on in the film that where the boys have character, the girls have looks. The Commitmentettes or - 'Committmentits' as Dean calls them - are not chosen for their singing ability, but are the happy result of Jimmy's interest in Imelda Quirke. The group's musical director, 'Joey the Lips', does not ask about their voices, (or 'influences', a question which is applied to all the male members of the band) but simply whether they will be 'wearing all black'. Similarly, their first appearance as part of the group is marked by a lingering shot of Imelda Quirke's leg as she checks her non-existent tights for ladders. Although Jimmy says early on that 'sex is soul', and 'soul is community', sexual jealousy, or more importantly the failure to arouse sexual interest proves the undoing of both these maxims. Significantly, the band does not break-up because of rivalry between the women, but between the men. Although *The Commitments* appears to locate Ireland's problems in a matrix of class and colonialism - in the unemployment office Jimmy remarks that Ireland is 'a Third World country' - it also appears to be an early endorsement of enterprise culture. Thus the failure of the band is not brought about by the potentially malevolent forces which are flagged throughout - the loan shark, the government, 'art school wankers' - but by the members of the band themselves.

Renton also confirms this sense of self-destruction in one of *Trainspotting*'s most quoted moments:

It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us.

Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation.

Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots.<sup>9</sup>

Renton's expression of self-loathing brings together the masculinist discourse of colonialism (the shame is that Scotland's conquerers are 'effete', thus further undermining the masculinity of Scots) as well as the ambivalence about apportioning blame. Postcolonial critics have shown how colonial history and imperialist discourse work to justify the process of colonialism as one of necessary force, and to represent the motives of the colonisers as innocent, even benevolent. As the saying goes, 'you have to be cruel to be kind'. Imperialism has consistently presented itself as inherently 'progressive', a civilizing force brought to bear upon backward and incompetent natives. Renton's rant is double-edged: while it rejects the representation of the coloniser as the generous provider of a civilized culture, it retains the image of

the colonised as weak and worthless: 'fuckin failures in a country ay failures', as he says.

Why is it that the national self-loathing passage is so popular with academics, film critics, journalists and other trainspotters? In a rather confused review of contemporary Scottish Cinema in *Film Comment*, Harlan Kennedy praises the scene for its subtlety and avoidance of 'signposting':

The non-sequitur isolation of this scene makes sure we understand that while Anglo-Scottish tensions might underlie *Trainspotting's* story, they lie *so* far under that like a seismic fault they aren't felt until they produce the occasional, seemingly irrational cataclysm.<sup>10</sup>

Whilst Kennedy characterises Scotland's political status as 'a sore scabbed over with seriocomic ritualism' (p.29), Andrew O'Hagan sees Renton's speech as a bold step beyond verbal innovation towards the 'virtually unsayable':

There aren't many Scottish writers - previous to this generation - who could write such a thing, no films have given voice to this before.<sup>11</sup>

Finally, in an American preview of the film, Anthony Lane wonders how it will play 'stateside', given that the much quoted scene is 'a joke ... a rebuke to the whole

tradition of Scottish pastoral, to the hills purple with heather', an assault on the tourist brochure images so beloved by the American public.

For Kennedy and Lane, the strength of this moment lies in its positioning - the single, brief scene in the countryside. Yet this is an invention of Boyle's film; in the book Renton's iconoclastic words are to be found in 'The Glass' section, set in a pub on Rose Street, which is about as central as you can get in Edinburgh. What is more, this is no great declamatory speech, but an interior monologue, an anxious and silent deliberation on Renton's relationship with his psychopathic 'pal', Begbie - O'Hagan's 'virtually unsayable' remains unspoken. Commenting on this transposition, Angus Calder observes that:

the reason [for the relocation] seems to be that the film's audiences south of Scotland will associate the country with Beautiful Highland Scenery. Removed from the complex pattern of interactions in Edinburgh ... Americans and Germans will be challenged to set their romantic conceptions of Scotland against the frustrating reality of modern urban life.<sup>12</sup>

So, for Calder this scene is designed for the benefit of an outside audience (presumably Scots themselves have no need to be challenged by 'the frustrating reality of modern urban life' since they are already living it), with Scotland functioning as an exotic 'other', an object of desire - the beautiful Highland scenery - distaste - the speech itself - and finally similarity - modern urban life. All four critics seem to take Renton's speech at face value, in a way that they wouldn't consider interpreting the

scene which takes place in ‘the dirtiest toilet in Scotland’ or Renton’s self-justifications for the resumption of his heroin habit. What all of these critics appear unable to say is that this scene is a rupture in terms of both the film and the book because it claims a direct relationship between individual consciousness and the political status of the nation; something which is overwhelmingly denied by the introspective and self-obsessed junkie narrative. Fanon’s concept of ‘inferiorism’ is important here because it recognises this relationship as a cultural rather than an ethnic one, (although, as Homi Bhabha has pointed out, Fanon’s elucidation of national culture sometimes appears to assume that such a culture is dependent upon some form of ethnic identification). This would suggest that any attempt to articulate the social consequences of the ambiguous colonial status of Scotland in literature will be subject to a similar form of self-censorship, to be condemned, either for being heavy-handedly prosaic or conversely for a lack of moral standpoint. In *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, Welsh attempts a more direct and less defeatist analysis of Scotland’s relationship with Empire. In particular, he seeks to understand and explain the cycles of violence which underpin a particular construction of masculinity in a colonised society. Yet even in this work, as discussed in Chapter Four, Welsh returns to a narrative of self-reproach which functions as a safeguard against external critique.

An episode in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* discussed earlier can provide a link between Renton’s ‘colonized by wankers’ speech and one of the most frequently discussed episodes in *The Commitments*.

Edinburgh to me represented serfdom. I realised that it was exactly the same situation as Johannesburg; the only difference

was that the Kaffirs were white and called schemies or draftpaks. Back in Edinburgh we would be Kaffirs; condemned to live out our lives in townships like Muirhouse or So-Wester-Hailes-To.<sup>13</sup>

Welsh's comparison between the Scottish working class and Black Africans can be seen to draw on a shared history of oppression. Yet where Welsh's characters find that such comparisons simply confirm their sense of failure, Doyle's work emphasises a sense of positive solidarity. Motivated by poverty, boredom and desperation, the individual band members 'commit' to the band as a possible way out, but Jimmy is a man who takes his mission seriously. His vision of the future of Dublin soul is one that has far reaching implications for traditional conceptions of class, nation and race:

- Say it once, say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud.

They looked at him...

They were stunned by what came next.

- The Irish are the blacks of Europe, lads.

They nearly gasped it was so true.

- An' Dubliners are the blacks of Ireland. The culchies have fuckin' everythin'. An' the northside Dubliners are the blacks o' Dublin. - Say it loud, I'm black an' I'm proud.<sup>14</sup>

When writing the screenplay for the film of *The Commitments*, Doyle substituted the word 'blacks' for the more politically sensitive 'niggers', which appears in the novel. However, even with this adjustment, the statement was greeted with a certain amount of shock when the film was released. For some commentators it was merely another joke, a laugh at the expense of the idealistic Jimmy Rabbitte and his cohort of naive and variously talented musicians. Others took it more seriously and either praised its attempt to link the condition of the urban Irish with that of Afro-Americans or took Doyle to task for daring to claim a parity between black oppression and white poverty. Both Welsh's and Doyle's statements contain a certain amount of relativity couched in simile, yet where Doyle's characters use this cultural comparison as a source of positive identification and creativity, Welsh's hero's revelation only serves to reinforce the self-hatred and defeatism already felt. Just as the 'colonized by wankers speech' in *Trainspotting* was greeted with confusion and denial, so the Irish/African American analogy in *The Commitments* has been met with mystified criticism. Commenting on the same passage in the novel, Andrew Murphy suggests that the force of the analogy lies in its 'comic incongruity', since 'the Irish may be "niggers" of a sort, but they are, for the most part at least, not black'.<sup>15</sup>

In the film a similar reaction is pre-empted by a question from one of the band members (notably, Dean the sax player, who eventually leaves the band to pursue an interest in jazz and other music which Jimmy describes as 'musical wanking'): 'Aren't we a little white for that sort of thing?' By the time Dean questions Jimmy's mission, the film is well under way and the choice of soul music has already been clearly signalled as a class-based decision. Outspan and Derek, the first band members who 'would be working-class if there was any work' are inspired by

Jimmy's vision of 'Dublin Soul'. Whilst the film drops the Dublin adjustments to the songs emphasised in the novel in favour of straight cover versions, it retains the references to 'Dublin Soul', the 'guerillas of soul' and 'soul is the rhythm of the factory'. Although Jimmy's use of the Irish/African American analogy may not be immediately self-evident, as suggested by the reactions of the band in film and novel alike, yet his elaboration of the politics of music and class slowly add to the force of the comparison, until they reach their anti-climax in the non-arrival of Wilson Pickett. Timothy Taylor suggests that Doyle's use of a black/Irish analogy has an extended history which can be demonstrated in the direct influence of the Irish Literary Revival on the Harlem Renaissance. Moreover, Taylor also identifies a contemporary link between African and Irish civil rights movements, particularly in Northern Ireland where wall murals have featured symbols which link the IRA and SWAPO.<sup>16</sup> However, he concludes that it is not a mutual history which confirms the comparison, but one of economic and social status: 'Jimmy's analogy with African-Americans still works because of class: soul is working class music, made and heard by the disenfranchised' (p.294). Yet, as is the case with *Trainspotting*, the success of the film's soundtrack, and its packaging in the context of the film continually threatens the connection between class and creativity. The dirt and deprivation of the Dublin housing estates become an aesthetic context, rather than a material one - as Jimmy demands on their publicity shoot: 'Give me urban decay'.

In an essay titled 'Celtic Soul Brothers', Lauren Onkey argues that Doyle's novel reminds us of the fact that 'racial difference complicates alliances based on shared oppression', and Onkey goes on to raise questions about postcolonial readings

which value examples of hybridity at the expense of recognising the process of appropriation.<sup>17</sup> The overwhelming impression of black soul music as a commodity which can be re-packaged and sold as 'Irish working-class music' is central to Doyle's novel. Whilst Onkey draws attention to the self-conscious nature of this project - Jimmy Rabbitte chooses soul because 'the market's huge' (p.8) - she claims that Doyle's specific choice of music deliberately ignores what she calls the 'racism of blue-eyed soul' (p.154). This is, she suggests, a backward and nostalgic look which is thus sentimental rather than liberatory in the connections it draws between African-American and Irish culture. Perhaps surprisingly Onkey further suggests that:

When it functions in a Northern Irish context the Irish and African-American connection can be less problematic. (p.154-5)

She goes on to use the example of Bernard MacLaverty's *Cal* to show how 'the climate of confusing and endless political violence' makes an alliance between African-Americans and people from Northern Ireland 'more credible and potentially productive' (p.157). As in Taylor's correlation between the IRA and SWAPO, Onkey sees political violence as a measure of identity - the comparison is seen to be appropriate rather than appropriating - from Celtic Soul Brothers to Blood Brothers.

In the 'I'm black and I'm proud' scene Alan Parker fleetingly draws the audience's attention to cultural packaging by displaying his own name, and a cardboard cut-out of himself prominently in the background. Indeed, as in *Trainspotting*, this scene has been transplanted, in this case from a pub to a video shop. Whilst this may seem a less dramatic change, it tends to highlight the range of

international influences which bear upon *The Commitments*, and signals a move away from anti-modern, rural representations of Ireland which figure in a number of other recent Irish films.<sup>18</sup> In *Trainspotting* the scene in the country only serves to emphasise the isolation of the characters, perhaps even of Scotland. In *The Commitments* on the other hand, the context of the video shop makes clear that cultural identity is influenced by its role in the chain of production and thus Jimmy Rabbitte's choice of a comparison with Black Americans is a deliberate and significant one.

However, despite the affirmative nature of Jimmy's connection with soul music, as well as his championing of the 'local' (Northside Dublin) above the national, the film retains the narrative of failure obsessively inscribed in nationalist culture. Wilson Pickett doesn't jam with them, the band splits up, and Imelda Quirke gives up singing in favour of marriage. While *The Commitments*' defeat is hardly the familiar triumphant but tragic failure which is celebrated in *Braveheart* and *Michael Collins*, the irony of wasted potential is stretched to the limit by the arrival of Pickett's limousine after everything has fallen apart and Jimmy is left in the rain, alone and thoroughly disillusioned. For Taylor this confirms a suspicion that 'a peculiar breed of Irish cynicism' is present in a film which could otherwise be seen as a mild musical comedy.

The second pair of films can be seen to take on Gayatri Spivak's notion of 're-routing history' in their reassessment of key figures in Scottish and Irish history. Both films met a very similar kind of criticism, namely charges of historical inaccuracy, sensationalism, anachronism, and xenophobia. Furthermore, the release of *Braveheart* in particular sparked a furious debate between Scottish and Irish intellectuals about

the comparative history of the two countries, their relationships to England, and the merits of their respective film industries. Irish critics condemned both the history and aesthetics of the film. Fintan O'Toole, for example, described *Braveheart* as 'historical hogwash', further challenging its integrity by drawing attention to the large amount of filming which took place in Ireland due to tax inducements and the availability of large numbers of extras taken from the ranks of the Irish army.<sup>19</sup> Likewise, Keith Hopper compares the polarised popular and critical reception of *Michael Collins* to 'Mel Gibson's "Scottish" epic' - placing 'Scottish' in scare quotes to further undermine any claim to national significance.<sup>20</sup> Having first set-up the comparison, Hopper then seeks to undo it by claiming Gibson's film as a 'cinematic commodity' in contrast to the artistic and 'political integrity' of Jordan's work. He demands that critics:

make a commonsense distinction between an international costume drama, which backgrounds history as decorative object; and a national historical drama which foregrounds history as ontological subject. (p.11)

The desire to separate cultural products along the all too familiar lines of low/high, popular/intellectual is accompanied by an equally familiar appeal to 'commonsense'. Even the terms which Hopper uses to distinguish the two films reflect his prejudices in this area. *Braveheart* is concerned with trivial appearances ('history as decorative object'), whilst *Michael Collins* gets to grips with complex, intellectual issues ('history as ontological subject'). My objections to this comparison, which gives with one hand and takes away with the other, are threefold. Firstly, the parallel divisions

between national and international, historic and historical, icon and intellect tend to conflate issues of race, class and history. The comments of both Hopper and O'Toole seem to privilege Ireland as the only genuine site of national or nationalist resistance. Secondly, Hopper's distinction would suggest that a mass audience is incapable of understanding the issues raised by historical drama, implying that *Michael Collins* was less successful commercially because it demanded a more critical and discerning audience. Finally, the projected intelligence of the audience is used to further justify the distinction between the two films on the grounds that *Michael Collins* is 'art', 'a national event', where *Braveheart* is a Hollywood vehicle. This argument draws attention to an analytical discourse that rejects mobilising forms of identity or even figures of nationhood which are used and developed by working class audiences.

The negation or rejection of popular cultural forms was a response shared by Scottish intellectuals, and not only in response to *Braveheart*. Colin McArthur's *Scotch Reels*, which grew from a full scale exhibition and film festival, aimed to expose and deconstruct the 'debilitating myths of Scottish identity' exemplified in the discourses of Tartanry, Kailyard and Clydeside. However, looking back on *Scotch Reels* eight years later, John Caughie, notes that the project

lacked a sense of the historical resonances which the myths still contained, and the quite ambivalent feelings which they could evoke: it was insensitive, that is, to implications for the experience of national identity of "incorrect" pleasures.<sup>21</sup>

However ‘incorrect’ the pleasures of *Braveheart* may be, and the film certainly displays moments of extreme misogyny and homophobia, the film appealed to both Scottish and Irish audiences through the heroism of the central character, and the call for a democratic national identity, which placed the interests of the nation before those of the ruling class.

The critical orthodoxy established by *Scotch Reels* and a parallel revisionist criticism in Ireland has proved so influential that it can now be reduced to ‘commonsense’. Colin McArthur’s position on *Braveheart* would seem to confirm O’Toole’s opinion. Roundly condemning the film for historical inaccuracy, moral simplicity and cultural insincerity, McArthur’s review tracks specific faults to the discourses of tartanry and ‘dark-Ageism’:

darkness; religiosity and/or mysticism; grinding poverty and filth; physical deformity; and above all, unspeakable cruelty. These are the dominant tropes of *Braveheart*, although its simple-mindedness also owes something to Errol Flynn’s star vehicle, *The Adventures of Robin Hood*.<sup>22</sup>

Like Hopper, McArthur wishes to diminish the cultural significance of *Braveheart* by relegating it to the category of costume drama, where plot and message are secondary to action and style. However, some Scottish critics were equally suspicious of *Michael Collins*, questioning Jordan’s compression of history whereby negotiation was abandoned in favour of military action. As the ‘minister for general mayhem’, Michael Collins was represented as a chaotic force in a repressive and deeply

conservative Republican movement. Furthermore, revisionists and unionists alike attacked Jordan for the scene in which a group of Belfast detectives are blown up by a car bomb, suggesting that the reference to contemporary IRA tactics drew a clear link between the Republican movement of 1916 and that of 1996, making the film ideologically complicit with the interests of the IRA.

What these criticisms fail to take on board is the extent to which both *Michael Collins* and *Braveheart* are created and received in the context of both film genre and national mythology. In a response to McArthur's review in *Sight and Sound*, Sheldon Hall attacks 'his insensitivity to the conventions of genre' and draws attention to the 'narrative tradition' which informs both the style and content of the film:

Linking Mel Gibson's excellent film to the 'regressive discourses' of Tartanry and Dark Ageism, he neglected to relate it to the equally pertinent - and less odious - discourses of historical romances and mythic epic ... no attempt was made to situate *Braveheart* within a narrative tradition which also encompasses *El Cid*, *Spartacus*, *Ivanhoe*, *Jesse James* and *William Tell*.<sup>23</sup>

The failure to recognise both *Michael Collins*' status as a Hollywood historical epic and the relationship of both films to others in this category is common to both Irish and Scottish critics. Nevertheless, Luke Gibbons has drawn attention to the 'shadow of *The Godfather*' on *Michael Collins*, and Neil Jordan's *Film Diary* clearly indicates other cinematic influences, such as *The Battle of Algiers*, Humphrey Bogart and Robert Mitchum.<sup>24</sup> Gibbons argues that Jordan's use of *The Godfather* as a model for

his film is designed to counter previous filmic interpretations of Irish Republicanism as an excuse for psychopathic criminals to dominate communities. By portraying Collins as a reasonable, yet flawed man, a gangster in the vein of Michael Corleone, 'Jordan's film has, in effect, lifted the crude, sinister associations off the stereotype of the "Godfather", thereby depriving revisionist demonology of one of its favourite tropes'.<sup>25</sup> Ruth Barton has argued that the film can be compared to the Hollywood epics of the 1950s and 60s, both in terms of its form (the historical epic) and its underlying nostalgia.<sup>26</sup> Barton identifies the key elements of the Hollywood historical features - lavish production values, extended running times, screen size and star iconography - all of which apply to *Michael Collins*. She goes on to suggest that the rationale of such films was to invite the audience to feel part of the production, in a manner wholly comparable to the experience of *Michael Collins*, when thousands of ordinary people answered Jordan's open call for extras. Barton also suggests that 'Collins is in fact as much a Western hero as a gangster, a lone rider with a fine country girl doomed never to marry him'.<sup>27</sup>

*Braveheart* too has been described as a 'highland western', especially in parallel with *Rob Roy*, a film which coincidentally also starred Liam Neeson.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps more obviously, *Braveheart* contains numerous references to *Spartacus* and the issues of friendship and betrayal which that film centralised. Other influences are also apparent, such as the colonial narrative of *Zulu*, the *Highlander* series, and of course, *Robin Hood*. Willy Maley suggests that the film's 'global popularity lay in its status as a slave narrative, an epic of the underdog, in the tradition of *Spartacus*. One of the things the film - and the mythopoetic history of Wallace - stands for is the struggle for liberty in the face of tyranny'.<sup>29</sup>

Surprisingly, the nostalgia of *Michael Collins* has been more heavily criticised than that of *Braveheart*. Perhaps the assumption is that no-one would want to live in thirteenth century Scotland. Yet one of the most interesting aspects of both films is the extent to which they register the process of mythmaking within the body of their respective narratives. Barton has suggested that the debate surrounding *Michael Collins* should prompt us to 'raise the question as to whether, in a revisionist era, classical forms (the Hollywood realist narrative) are any longer appropriate to an interpretation of history'.<sup>30</sup> I suspect Barton underestimates the extent to which the debates surrounding these films are prompted firstly by an anxiety surrounding the status of history in a postcolonial context, and secondly by the foregrounding of fictionality within the films themselves. During the Treaty debate, Cathal Brugha accuses Michael Collins of seeking notoriety through violence, of manipulating the media to establish a narrative in which Collins emerges as a mythic hero:

One person was selected by the press to put him in a position he never held. He was made a romantic figure, a mystical character which he certainly is not. The person I refer to is Michael Collins. (p.140)

Collins's transformation from post office clerk to political leader is mirrored in the film by Ireland's step from dominion to democracy. As the closing scenes of Collins's funeral demonstrate, more than anything anti-colonial resistance demanded some point of identification through which the Irish people could imagine and initiate change. The film also emphasises de Valera's awareness of the same issue with his

repeated references to an underlying process of identification: ‘That will be the Irish people. And me as the president of the Irish Republic’ (p.135). De Valera, the capable ‘hero’ of Ireland’s immediate postcolonial era, is the figure who is most deeply implicated in the mythologising process in the film. Jordan suggests that his concern for recognition in America and refusal to attend the Treaty negotiations in person are cynical manoeuvres to maintain power and influence. The focussing of Jordan’s film almost entirely on events in Ireland (with the notable exception of de Valera’s escape from Lincoln Jail) even implies that de Valera runs away to America rather than confront the ‘general mayhem’ at home.

The romantic reputation of Gibson’s Wallace is also raised within *Braveheart* as the vital connection between representation and power. When Edward Longshanks’s son dismisses Wallace as ‘a brigand’, his father first strikes him and then chastises him for failing to understand the interdependence of discourse and display, saying, ‘One day you will be a king. At least try to act like one’ (p.30). Wallace becomes a hero because he acts like one. It is not the details of the stories which matter, the film suggests, but the way in which they are presented. Thus the first information Isabella hears of Wallace is told to her by her maid as a love story:

Isabella: Cet Ecosais révolté, ce Wallace. Il se bat pour venger une femme? {This Scottish rebel, Wallace. He fights to avenge a woman?}

Nicolette: (taking Isabella's hand.) Ah j'oubliais. Un magistrat qui voulais le capturer découvrit qu'il avait un amour secret. Il

égorgea la fille afin de pousser Wallace à la révolte. Wallace se révolta. Ses ennemis reconnurent sa passion pour son amour perdu. Ils organisèrent de saisir Wallace en profanant les sépultures et de son père et de son frère, et ensuite en s'embusquant à la tombe de sa femme. Mais il s'en ai sorti en guerroyant l'arme au poing. Et cacha le cadavre de sa bien-aimée dans un endroit secret. Ça c'est l'amour non? {I nearly forgot. A magistrate wished to capture him and found he had a secret lover. So he cut the girl's throat to force Wallace to revolt. And Wallace did revolt. Knowing his passion for his lost love, they next plotted to take him by desecrating the graves of his father and brother, and setting an ambush at the grave of his love. But he got out of the trap fighting, weapon in hand. And carried her body to a secret place. Now that's love, no?}(pp. 32-33).

While the plot of the story essentially remains the same - Murrion is killed by the magistrate and Wallace attacks the garrison in revenge - the details are presented as romantic elaborations, excess information which is bound to the plot to confirm the perspective from which it is told. Even the structure of the sentences (in both French and the English subtitles et/and is used repeatedly) reflects the additional nature of the comments.

At the Battle of Stirling Bridge (sadly no bridge in sight), Wallace faces the paradox of his own mythical reputation. Without it, half the Scotsmen who have come

to fight would not be there - 'he is inspiring' says the Bruce - but in the flesh, he is unable to fulfill the proportions of an epic hero.

William: (shouting to them all) Sons of Scotland, I am William Wallace.

Young soldier: (to William) William Wallace is 7 feet tall.

William: (to the young soldier) Yes, I've heard. He kills men by the hundreds, and if he were here he'd consume the English with fireballs from his eyes and bolts of lightning from his arse.

(p.40)

This scene presents a joke within a joke, not only is it a comment on the impossibility of Wallace fitting the gigantic clothes of his reputation, but also on the stature of Gibson himself whose size became an issue in anticipation of the film's release - little Mel was not big enough to fill Wallace's shoes.<sup>31</sup> Gibson's Wallace responds by identifying himself not as a hero, but as 'a free man of Scotland', rather as de Valera continually stresses his connection to 'the people of Ireland', so Wallace uses the mobilizing power of 'Scotland' to support the sense of scale which underlies his leadership while at the same time evoking a concept of equality - they are all 'free men' - which detracts from the exaggerated claims of the myth. However, the film also seems to suggest that Wallace's use of his popular translation from commoner to icon is almost innocent. It is the Elder Bruce who manipulates the Scottish public, just as it is the Elder Bruce who fully understands the role of history. As he counsels his son:

You will embrace this rebellion. Support it from our lands in the north. I will gain English favour by condemning it, and ordering it opposed from our lands in the south You admire this man, this William Wallace. Uncompromising men are easy to admire. He has courage, so does a dog. But it is exactly the ability to compromise that makes a man noble. And understand this: Edward Longshanks is the most ruthless king ever to sit on the throne of England. And none of us, and nothing of Scotland will remain, unless we are as ruthless. (pp.31-32)

The presentation of de Valera in Jordan's film addresses the postcolonial nation's anxiety surrounding the immediate past, as well as revealing the dynamic between power and representation. As Gibbons notes:

A complicity between political violence and state formation gives rise to a key ambiguity in the popular cult of Michael Collins ... it is these disturbing reminders in the film that the foundations of the state may itself rest on terror which has drawn the wrath of those historians intent on airbrushing the violence out of Irish history.<sup>32</sup>

That Collins in the film is presented as the moderate man of peace and de Valera the obdurate Republican threatens the narrative of Irish nationalism which slides so quickly from colony to Republic. Not only is Collins seen to appropriate the trappings

of the British military, but de Valera himself is not even clear whether they are 'murderers' or not. The perspective of the film is partly that of Collins, and partly that of one of his closest allies. The opening shot of Joe O'Reilly and Kitty Kiernan establishes a frame around the narrative which directs the main body of the film's focalization. Not only does the frame suggest that the film will be sympathetic to Collins, but also that it is marked by an emotional investment which distances it from dispassionate and analytical forms of history. A similar device is used at the beginning of *Braveheart*, where the voice of Robert the Bruce introduces the narrative and places it in the liminal space between official history and personal reflection:

I shall tell you of William Wallace. Historians from England will say I am a liar, but history is written by those who have hanged heroes.<sup>33</sup>

This brief introduction establishes the narrative in opposition to history, history as a tool of repression and control. The Bruce does not offer the panoramic view that the opening shots of the Highland seem to encourage, but a highly focused one - this is not the story of Scotland, but 'of William Wallace'. The distinction made between hero and nation in each film is essential to an understanding of the relationship between narrative and form and the debate that this uncertain dynamic engenders. The structures of both films are dictated by the lives and deaths of their protagonists, the 'facts' around which the discourse is shaped. Eavan Boland has described this awareness of narrative frame as part of 'the most painful, important process' of representing a nation's history:

The relation between past and history - that awkward, charged, and sometimes mysterious distance - should be a crucial care of postcolonial studies. In that distance so much happens. Within that space, the ideas of shame and power and reinterpretation, which are at the heart of the postcolonial discourse, can be recovered as raw data.<sup>34</sup>

Ideas of shame, power and representation are indeed at the heart of both *Michael Collins* and *Braveheart*. Each film attempts to use the private relationships of individuals to elucidate the public display of national struggle. The bringing together of public and private is a common strategy of historical fiction, because it offers a form of resolution that is denied by the continual ever after. Even those films which attempt to overcome the problem by reaching forwards to the present moment are inevitably compromised by events which serve to realign the previous images, or worse still, quickly find themselves to be overtaken and outdated. Historical film is part of the process which Bhabha describes as ‘the present of the people's history’ which ‘destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a “true” national past.’<sup>35</sup> The conflation of public and private spheres serves to ease this sense of destruction by drawing on other apparently unchanging representations of nation and history. Thus, both *Braveheart* and *Michael Collins* draw on a specifically gendered iconography of the nation, which is linked to female purity and male power. In *Braveheart* this metaphor is articulated through Wallace’s love for Murron and his affair with Isabella of France. Murron presents young William with a thistle at the grave of his father, a gesture which is repeated in the love token which

she presents him at their wedding - a handkerchief embroidered with thistles.

Accepting the gift, Wallace symbolically 'marries' Scotland as he marries Murrin, a suggestion which is further confirmed when the rebellion is prompted by his attempts to save her honour (an attempted rape by English soldiers). When Wallace dies, in the name of Scottish freedom, his reward is a fantasy reunion with Murrin. The struggle between England and Scotland is also seen in terms of male virility and female fecundity - the correlative to the figures of male blood sacrifice to a female (virgin) deity. So, Prince Edward is homosexual and ineffective, and Princess Isabella hints to the dying king that she is pregnant with Wallace's child.

Even more familiar in narratives of Irish anti-colonialism, the figure of Ireland as woman needs less obvious signposting in Michael Collins. Yet Jordan complicates this trope by setting the love triangle of Collins, Boland and Kitty against the political loyalties of Collins, Boland and de Valera. In the escape from Lincoln Jail, de Valera is disguised as a prostitute in a fur coat and a large hat and his suggestion that 'there are certain things one shouldn't do for one's country' is greeted by a brief rendition of 'I'll take you home again Kathleen' by Collins (p.106). The song and hat both link de Valera to Kitty Kiernan, as well connecting them both to Cathleen ni Houlihan. Luke Gibbons suggests that 'the national allegory of woman as nation, the figuration of the body politic in terms of the female or maternal body ... allows public vices like conflict, violence, and injustice [to be] resolved through private virtues - the romantic interest, maternal devotion, and family values'.<sup>36</sup> This is a point that is anticipated in an essay by bell hooks on the issues of difference and identity in another of Jordan's films, *The Crying Game*:

At a time when critical theory and cultural criticism calls us to interrogate politics of location and issues of race, nationality and gender, these films usurp this crucial challenge with the message that desire, and not the realm of politics, is the location of reconciliation and redemption'.<sup>37</sup>

The connections between myth, politics and desire do work towards a recuperation of Collins's violent methods and his responsibility for partition through the Treaty. Yet the spectre of private betrayal is also answered in a public break of faith - so the kiss he gives Kitty at the station becomes the Judas-style salute with which de Valera sends him to London to negotiate with Lloyd George. Rather than resolving public conflict, the film's private relationships seem to suggest the uncertain outcome, or as Gibbons put it, to be 'witness to the unresolved legacy of Irish state formation in the present day Northern Ireland conflict'.<sup>38</sup>

The evidence of contemporary parallels in both *Michael Collins* and *Braveheart* is in no way surprising since both works are directed towards a contemporary audience and clearly aim to forge a connection between past and present. Furthermore, this is a two-way process, such that the audience draws on the representation of the past in order to reconcile and mobilize current formations of national and cultural identity. When Angus Calder comments that *Braveheart* seems 'eerily close to the throbbing heart of our current ethnic consciousness', there is little possibility of separating the response of the film to nation from the response of nation to film.<sup>39</sup> It is in this sense that *Braveheart* can be seen as a postcolonial film, 're-routing history', as suggested by Spivak, or engaged in 'mimicry', as suggested by

Bhabha, in ways which do not privilege an original or originary moment. Sadly, its flaws too can be seen to reflect contemporary attitudes. Thus the stereotypical and negative portrayal of gay men in the film reflects a widespread antagonism towards homosexuals, or as James Keller argues, 'the implicit message of the film reinforces the conservative agendas of the past decade and perpetuates the current trend to scapegoat homosexuals'.<sup>40</sup> Although Jordan's hints of homoerotic desire in the relationship between Collins and Boland might suggest a less homophobic perspective than that of *Braveheart*, the film's affirmation of heterosexual marriage in the juxtaposition of the images of Collins's death 'in the place where it all began', and those of Kitty trying on her wedding dress, suggest a concern to confirm Collins's male and masculine status.

Where *Michael Collins* and *Braveheart* confront the transitional stage between colony and nation, *Trainspotting* and *The Commitments* address the challenges of living in a postcolonial state. Together, the films present a thorough critique of national identity as an independent and stable form of self-knowledge, suggesting that issues of class and gender not only inflect the representation of nation, but also its response. The striking parallels between the films and their vociferous repudiation confirms the possibility that comparisons between Scotland and Ireland are seen as too dangerous to undertake publicly. These films speak to one another in a way which Irish and Scottish critics need to do, not simply in defence of national and academic territory, but in order to open their debate beyond the colonial dynamic.

- <sup>1</sup> Martin Montgomery *et al.* 'Narration in film and prose fiction' in *Ways of Reading* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.197.
- <sup>2</sup> A version of this speech appears in the novel, *Trainspotting*, by Irvine Welsh, (London: Minerva, 1994), pp.187-8. It draws on the phrase 'choose life', a marketing slogan which dates from the early 1980s.
- <sup>3</sup> Alan Freeman, 'Ghosts in Sunny Leith: Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*' in Susanne Hagemann (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 260.
- <sup>4</sup> In an interview which follows O'Hagan's article, the scriptwriter, John Hodge, comments on this scene: 'I wanted to show early in the film that this is not a realist, gritty drama ... for me this moment was symbolic', Geoffrey McNab interviews John Hodge, Andrew Macdonald and Danny Boyle, in *Sight and Sound* ns6 (February, 1996), pp. 8-11.
- <sup>5</sup> Andrew O'Hagan, '*Trainspotting* and Heartless Midlothian' in *Sight and Sound* ns6 (February, 1996), p.7.
- <sup>6</sup> In the novel one death follows another, as do a succession of funerals: Granty, Uncle Andy, wee Dawn, Billy, and Matty.
- <sup>7</sup> Geoffrey McNab interviews John Hodge, Andrew Macdonald and Danny Boyle, p. 11.
- <sup>8</sup> John Caughie, 'Representing Scotland: Some Questions for Scottish Cinema' in Eddie Dick (ed.), *From Limelight to Satellite: A Scottish Film Book* (Edinburgh: Scottish Film Council and British Film Institute, 1990), p.16.
- <sup>9</sup> *Trainspotting*, p.78.
- <sup>10</sup> Harlan Kennedy, 'Kiltspotting: Highland Reels' in *Film Comment*, Vol.32 (July/August, 1996), p.32.
- <sup>11</sup> O'Hagan, '*Trainspotting* and Heartless Midlothian', p.8.
- <sup>12</sup> Angus Calder, 'By the Waters of Leith I Sat Down and Wept: Reflections on Scottish Identity' in Harry Ritchie (ed.), *New Scottish Writing* (London: Bloomsbury, 1996; 1997), pp.218-9.
- <sup>13</sup> Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1995), p.80.
- <sup>14</sup> Roddy Doyle, *The Commitments* (New York: Vintage, 1989), p.9.
- <sup>15</sup> Andrew Murphy, 'Reviewing the Paradigm: A new look at early-modern Ireland', *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 31 Nos. 3-4 (1996), pp. 13-14. Although Murphy notes the presence of a small black community in

Ireland, the remainder of his analysis clearly suggests that white skin is a pre-requisite of any claim to Irishness.

<sup>16</sup> Timothy D. Taylor, 'Living in a Postcolonial World: Class and Soul in *The Commitments*', *Irish Studies Review* Vol. 6 No. 3 (December, 1998), p.292. It is unclear from Taylor's comments whether he wishes to distinguish between civil rights organisations and paramilitary groups (which might describe both the IRA and SWAPO), and his supporting evidence, which is that 'Nelson Mandela is a great hero of many left-wing Catholics' is somewhat circumstantial.

<sup>17</sup> Lauren Onkey, 'Celtic Soul Brothers' in *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 28 No. 3 (1993), p.147.

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, *The Field* (1990), *The Playboys* (1992), *Into the West* (1992), *The War of the Buttons* (1993) and *Circle of Friends* (1995).

<sup>19</sup> Fintan O'Toole, cited in Keith Hopper, 'Cat-Calls from the Cheap Seats: The Third Meaning of Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*' in *The Irish Review* No. 21 (1997), p.10.

<sup>20</sup> For the purposes of Academy Awards, the nationality of a film is decided by the location of the production company and the main source of funding. Thus, according to the Academy criteria, both *Braveheart* and *Michael Collins* are 'American' films.

<sup>21</sup> John Caughie, 'Representing Scotland: Some Questions for Scottish Cinema', pp.20-21.

<sup>22</sup> Colin McArthur, 'Braveheart – Review' in *Sight and Sound* ns5 (September, 1995), p.45.

<sup>23</sup> Sheldon Hall, *Sight and Sound* ns5 (October, 1995), p.72.

<sup>24</sup> See Luke Gibbons, 'Framing History: Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*' in *History Ireland* Vol. 5 No. 1 (Spring 1997), p. 50, and Neil Jordan, *Michael Collins: Film Diary and Screenplay* (London: Vintage, 1996), pp. 9, 30, 39.

<sup>25</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Framing History: Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*', p.51.

<sup>26</sup> Ruth Barton, 'From History to Heritage: some recent developments in Irish cinema' in *The Irish Review* no. 21 (1997), p.54.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p.55.

<sup>28</sup> Comment by Peter Broughan, producer of *Rob Roy*, at a paper given at the University of Glasgow, December, 1995.

<sup>29</sup> Willy Maley, 'Braveheart: Raising the Stakes of History' *The Irish Review* No. 22 (1998), p.72.

<sup>30</sup> Ruth Barton, 'From History to Heritage: some recent developments in Irish cinema', p. 41.

<sup>31</sup> See comments by Graeme Morton quoted in Maley, 'Braveheart: Raising the Stakes of History', p.71

<sup>32</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Framing History: Neil Jordan's *Michael Collins*', pp.50-51.

<sup>33</sup> Braveheart Script, taken from *Ultimate Braveheart Page*, at <http://www.aloha.net/~brvhrt/index.html>, p.1

<sup>34</sup> Eavan Boland, 'Daughters of Colony', *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 32, Nos. 2&3, (1997), p. 13

<sup>35</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation' in Homi Bhabha (ed.), *Nation and Narration* (London: Routledge, 1990), p.303.

<sup>36</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Engendering the State: Narrative, Allegory and *Michael Collins*' in *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 31 Nos. 3-4, (1996), p. 265.

<sup>37</sup> bell hooks - 'Seduction and Betrayal: *The Crying Game* meets *The Bodyguard*' in *Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 55.

<sup>38</sup> Luke Gibbons, 'Engendering the State: Narrative, Allegory and *Michael Collins*', p.264.

<sup>39</sup> Calder, 'By the Waters of Leith I Sat Down and Wept: Reflections on Scottish Identity', p.233.

<sup>40</sup> James Keller, 'Masculinity and Marginality in *Rob Roy* and *Braveheart*' in *Journal of Popular Film and Television* Vol. 24 (Winter, 1997), p. 151.

## Conclusion

Postcolonial studies are concerned with the aftermath of colony and its effects. Among other things they have concentrated on the writing that follows the shake-up and restatements that themselves follow colony. After all, such studies not only set out to engage oppression and its effects. They not only take as their natural subject the shadow-lands of language, shame, dispossession and repossession. They are not just units of information. They are also branches of hidden knowledge: They raise some of the most painful, important ways in which the social, cultural, imaginative human being is constructed and then reconstructed.<sup>1</sup>

Eavan Boland's comments on the task of postcolonial studies reflect the inherent tensions in applying this kind of analysis in an Irish-Scottish context. The charges of 'complicity' and coercion which have been used to exclude Scotland from the postcolonial experience can be seen to be part of those 'painful, important ways' in which we come to understand the interaction between historical, cultural and political formations.<sup>2</sup> However, as I hope to have demonstrated in my readings of contemporary writing, there is a sense in which the 'aftermath of colony' is itself a shadowland, a time and place which does not fully exist in the present political circumstances of Scotland and Ireland. The unresolved colonial status of both countries raises questions

for both postcolonial theory and Scottish and Irish Studies, which detailed readings of contemporary writing against and alongside one another may illuminate.

The juxtaposition of Irish and Scottish culture reveals the continuing appropriation of their material by a dominant English one. The desire to separate culture and politics in both countries obscures the extent to which the success of a national culture is used to compensate for economic and political subjection. Resistance is rewarded, in the case of the Booker Prizes conferred upon Kelman and Doyle, in order to promote containment, compartmentalisation and isolation, and further to refocus the gaze on the English centre. The wariness with which Scottish critics approach Ireland is matched by a pronounced defensiveness in dealing with Scotland exhibited by their Irish counterparts. Edna Longley has suggested that comparisons between Scotland and Northern Ireland may offer northern Protestants a form of non-English, British solidarity:

[Presbyterianism's] Scottish ethnic-cultural imprint also  
harbours more scope for affirming 'Ulster-British'  
distinctiveness than does the 'Anglo' strain in Ulster history,  
which sneakily yearns to hyphenate with 'Irish'.<sup>3</sup>

It is for this very reason that Irish nationalists tend to avoid addressing the obvious connections with their near neighbours. Fearful of a dangerous North British invasion, Irish Studies has favoured a form of insularity that champions a celebratory difference from Britain. More radical critics have argued for a broader perspective that examines 'larger global tendencies', although the assertion of an international context to Irish

studies usually avoids any outlook closer to home. David Lloyd, for example, has suggested that Irish Studies needs 'to learn from other locations and from non-western scholarship' in order to 'comprehend more deeply the differentiated processes of domination and the insistence of alternative structures of cultural practice'.<sup>4</sup> While Lloyd is right to draw attention to the large body of work carried out under the umbrella of postcolonial studies and the opportunities for analysing and illuminating Irish cultural experience which this presents, his failure to acknowledge Europe as an important reference represents a form of exclusion which preserves the foundational binary oppositions of colonial discourse.

The historian, Owen Dudley Edwards provides an instructive warning to attend to the double history, which marks the cultures of both Scotland and Ireland:

We must remember not only that we are part of a larger archipelago, but of a still larger continent, and of an even larger world ... Ulster - Northern Ireland variety - takes much of its identity from not being Irish and not being English. So, rather more silently does Scotland. But of course, in certain ways Ulster and Scotland are both Irish and English and we do some violence to history in making exceptions.<sup>5</sup>

Between globalisation and regionalism there is clearly room for cross-cultural comparisons. The limit cases of Scotland and Ireland open up the problematic British context for postcolonial studies, which has generally been too quick to collapse English and British cultural and political experience. Edwards's point suggests that in

attending to the negative construction of identity, we should be wary of recreating its exclusionist policies, whilst at the same time acknowledging comparative models of colonised and marginalised nations elsewhere.

It is precisely this kind of double strategy which Edward Said's theory of 'contrapuntal reading' would facilitate. Emphasising border crossings rather than national limits, Said's use of intertextuality as a model of critical practice draws on the creative tension between local specificity and shared histories of a questionable and contested relation to the English state. Although a number of critics have flagged the potential value of this model, often specifically in relation to the literatures of Scotland and Ireland, little close comparative work has been done. Notably, female critics account for the small amount of detailed cross-cultural readings that have been undertaken. Whilst a number of male critics, such as Seamus Deane, Bart Moore-Gilbert and Robert Crawford, have indicated that a comparison of Scottish and Irish writing this century would be of value to both cultures, it is critics such as Marilyn Reizbaum and Patricia Horton who have tackled the task.

The reason I draw attention to this split in terms of gender is to emphasise the extent to which my own work has revealed gender as a faultline in terms of postcolonialism and its application to contemporary writing. Alongside his call for a broader perspective in Irish Studies, David Lloyd proposes 'a combined critique of colonial and patriarchal domination which recognises, after Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, the implications of both nationalist and colonialist hegemony in the reconstitution of patriarchy' (p.91). This is a critique that is already underway, as was demonstrated by the large audience at the first annual Women on Ireland Network

Conference, held in June 1998, devoted to the subject.<sup>6</sup> The questions raised in this thesis regarding the potential failure of radical, contestatory concepts such as ‘hybridity’ and ‘cultural difference’ in the context of strongly gendered representations of national identity surfaced in discussions of contemporary performance art, 1950s film, early modern poetry and recent novels. However, these discussions tended to be bounded once more by the English-Irish dynamic, a situation in which one form of political nationalism dominates more open forms of cultural authority. Some critics, such as Elizabeth Butler Cullingford, have overcome the demands of an oppositional discourse in order to explore the subtleties of gendered representations of Irish relationships with England. Yet the evidence of very similar triangular formations to those Cullingford finds in contemporary Irish film and drama in Scottish work such as *Braveheart* clearly indicate what Reizbaum calls ‘the double exclusion’ of Scottish and Irish women.<sup>7</sup>

Some groups of texts in this thesis provided more fertile grounds for comparison than others. However, even in those cases where readings between cultures proved less satisfactory than those that looked within, their juxtaposition revealed the ways in which peripheries create their own centres in terms which are both delimiting and enabling. I am thinking particularly of the novels in Chapter Four. The local divisions that they suggest may be even more significant than national ones. Nevertheless, it is significant that this is most evident in detailed readings of novels, rather than other forms. The next step in this work would be to overcome some of the obstacles created by my use of generic distinctions. While I have indicated the ways in which films and novels can usefully be read against one another, I think the potential for reading poetry and short stories together has yet to be fully explored.

Those aspects of the short story that lend the form so readily to postcolonial resistance may also be found in the elision and allusiveness of poetry. A further outcome of this approach would be an increased attention to the material context of contemporary writing, as well as to its formal and discursive influences.

The need for a feminist critique of postcolonial approaches and writing is evident in these areas. What is perhaps less obvious is the way in which readings of cultural practices other than the novel can offer insights into the extent to which class, race and gender shape both the production and reception of these texts. The tendency for postcolonial theorists to privilege the novel form results in a hardening of periods, parameters and perspectives which undermines its ability to analyse the fluid and multiple forms of cultural practice. My point is that postcolonialism's future applicability must rely on its willingness to respond to the different forces of both resistance and appropriation. Stuart Hall has suggested that the tension between the chronological and epistemological dimensions of the term postcolonial is productive because it helps to clarify 'a notion of a shift or a transition conceptualised as the reconfiguration of a field, rather than as a movement of linear transcendence'.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the future of postcolonial theory can be seen as a 'contrapuntal reading' of itself, a tissue of local moments distributed across the texts of the academy as a whole?

- <sup>1</sup> Eavan Boland, 'Daughters of Colony', *Eire-Ireland* Vol. 32, Nos. 2&3, (1997), p.12.
- <sup>2</sup> See Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (eds.) *The Empire Writes Back* (London: Routledge, 1989), p.33.
- <sup>3</sup> Edna Longley, 'What Do Protestants Want?', *Irish Review*, No. 20 (1997), p.114.
- <sup>4</sup> David Lloyd, 'Cultural Theory and Ireland', *Bullán* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring, 1997), pp. 91-2.
- <sup>5</sup> Owen Dudley Edwards, 'Scotland, Ulster and You' in Ian S. Wood (ed.), *Scotland and Ulster* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1994), p.182.
- <sup>6</sup> *Women and Ireland: Social, Historical and Cultural Perspectives*, St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1998.
- <sup>7</sup> Marilyn Reizbaum, 'Canonical Double Cross: Scottish and Irish Women's Writing' in Karen R. Lawrence (ed.), *Decolonizing Tradition: New Views of Twentieth Century "British" Literary Canons* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), p.184.
- <sup>8</sup> Stuart Hall 'When Was the "Post-colonial"? Thinking at the Limit' in Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (eds.), *The Post-colonial Question: Common Skies, Divided Horizons* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.254.

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