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# **Culture and Identity in Scottish Children's Fiction**

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**Ph D Thesis  
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June 2009**

## Summary

British Children's Literature has a long and distinguished history. In fact it could be argued that in the late seventeenth and increasingly in the eighteenth century, Britain took the lead in developing a new kind of literature especially designed for children. The Puritans were the first to recognise the potential for material specifically targeted at children as a means of reforming the personal piety of all individuals, including children. As a result, educational, instructional and religious books for children began to appear followed later by books retelling myths, legends and oral tales and later again books intended to entertain and engage children at all stages of their development. Included as part of British Children's Literature was the work of Scottish authors. Indeed writers such as Sir Walter Scott, George MacDonald and J.M Barrie produced works that have since become Children's Literature classics and they themselves had significant influence on diverse children's authors including writers such as Lewis Carroll and C.S.Lewis. Though the work of Scottish authors was included in British Children's Literature, it was not recognised specifically for its distinctively Scottish elements. In fact, increasingly from the nineteenth century, it began to be labelled as 'English' Children's Literature even though it meant 'British'.

Scotland had been a separate nation until the Act of Union in 1707. After that, even as a 'stateless nation', Scotland retained its own education system, its own legal system and its own national church. Scottish Literature continued to flourish during this period making use of English and Scots language, as well as Gaelic, to produce an illustrious and influential literature of world renown. As Roderick Watson has observed, "the main 'state' left to a 'stateless nation' may well be its state of mind, and in that territory it is literature that maps the land." (Watson, 1995: xxxi) Since devolution in 1997, Scotland's literature sector has undergone an unprecedented period of rapid, sustained and dramatic expansion, a process paralleled by the growing profile of Scottish writers internationally. During the same period Scottish Children's Literature and Scottish children's writers have not received the same attention, though their progress has been just as significant. In the year 2000 the Modern Language Association of America recognised Scottish Literature as a national literature, and presumably Scottish Children's Literature is included as part of that, but it was not specifically highlighted. Even up until 2006, Scottish Children's Literature was not generally included or even mentioned in Scottish Literature anthologies or histories of Scottish Literature.

When in January 2006 the Scottish Executive unveiled *Scotland's Culture*, its new cultural policy, it gave Scottish Literature a prominent place. At the same time this document also acknowledged the importance of education in giving access to and highlighting Scotland's literary heritage. It became all the more important then to recognise the existence of a corpus of work that is recognisable as Scottish Children's Literature existing separately from but complementary to English Children's literature and which could be used in schools by teachers and read by children in order to explore and interrogate their own cultural history and identity.

This thesis seeks to investigate whether a distinctive Scottish Children's Literature exists and, if so, to identify those aspects that make it distinctive. Further, if Scottish Children's Literature exists, how does it become a repository for the formation of culture, identity and nationhood and how does this impact on young Scottish readers? In order to carry out this investigation the study adopts an integrated, humanistic and multi-dimensional approach towards Scottish Children's fiction. It draws selectively and discursively on theories of reading, reader response and close reading skills for heuristic purposes; that is, on methods that further the overall hermeneutical task of enlarging understanding of the phenomenon, though no particular theoretical approach to analysis has been privileged over another. It draws on a range of overarching theoretical perspectives that work effectively in illuminating the characteristics of particular texts with and for readers. As such, the study does not pretend to provide a specific theoretical basis for the reading of Scottish Children's Fiction. The approach adopted requires an immersion in the narratives, making unfamiliar texts familiar in order to do the work of projecting a distinctive Scottish perspective. Given that this study is among the first of its kind, it provides a base-line for others to apply specific theoretical filters to Scottish Children's Literature for further study.

Using what cultural typology and the semiotics of culture would recognise as a retrospective approach, this study intends to identify children's texts that are recognisably Scottish and which may be considered to form a corpus of work which can be celebrated as a central part of Scottish Children's Literature.

WATSON, R. (1995) *The Poetry of Scotland*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts for the financial support that enabled me to undertake this thesis. I am also grateful to the Deans of the Faculty of Education, Dr Hirek Kwiatkowski and Professor James Conroy for their unreserved support, and the case of Dr Kwiatkowski, for his contribution as ‘critical friend’ for parts of this thesis.

I would also like to record my thanks to my supervisors Professor Bob Davis and Professor Alan Riach, and Professor Douglas Gifford who was co-supervisor for the early part of the thesis. This thesis could not have been produced without their critical insights, sensitivity, and even, when necessary, their ‘cajoling’. In particular I would wish to record special thanks to Professor Bob Davis whose conscientious approach to supervision also recognised my own Faculty responsibilities for the entire period of the thesis.

My colleagues in the Department of Curriculum Studies and in particular, the Language and Literature section, both past and present, have been sympathetic and supportive throughout this process: Dr Evelyn Arizpe, Bob Byiars, Geraldine Copeland, Moya Cove, Hazel Crichton, Carol Cumming, Dr Beth Dickson, Julie McAdam, Professor James McGonigal, Willie McGuire, Therese McKee, Gerard McKernan, Andrew Philp, Brian Templeton and Katharn Turner. I should also record thanks to administrative staff in both the Curriculum Studies office and the School Experience office who have at different times offered both practical and theoretical technical support. I also record my thanks to Graeme Pate and Stephen Boyle for ICT support, sometimes in extremis.

A number of other colleagues both in and external to the Faculty of Education also deserve thanks. In particular I would like to record my thanks to Honor Hania, Faculty Librarian for help with proof reading, literature searches and who, with humour and secure personal knowledge of children’s books, gave sage advice and excellent suggestions. Honor gives new meaning to the term ‘positive encouragement’. I am not sure I would have finished this without her ‘iron hand in the velvet glove’ approach. Brian Templeton and Harry Blee as Heads of the Department of Curriculum Studies have offered practical and academic support when needed. Dr Frank O’Hagan also acted as catalyst and some-time cheerleader when the task seemed impossible. If he had not kept asking about how the thesis was progressing, it might never have been completed.

Particular thanks go to the ‘Orba Girls’ who allowed me to go on holiday with them and who did not complain when I disappeared off to work and was completely anti-social. Also, thanks should be recorded to Alan, who even though he may not know it, allowed me to use his computer when my own ‘died’ and allowed me to face my supervisor with at least some of the work I had promised.

I would also like to thank authors Theresa Breslin, Catherine Forde and Matthew Fitt for answering questions about the author’s point of view and for encouraging me to pursue the cause of Scottish Children’s Literature and for thinking it important.

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to my family including Aunt Mary, Pat, Charles, Cathy, Laura and Colin McCambridge, and all the Farrells for the encouraging remarks. I thank Pat McCambridge especially for his meticulous and helpful proof reading.

Finally, this thesis would not have been possible without the love and support of my mum and brother Gerard and his partner Lynne. They have always been there with tea and sympathy when necessary and practical help and sometimes pointed comments — also when necessary. I am so grateful. Finally, I miss my dad, who was here for the start of this project and who would have got such a kick out of the finished product. I wish you had been here for the end, this is for you Dad.

Sections of this thesis have appeared in different versions in a number of publications. Part of Chapter 3 of the thesis appeared in *The Lost Boys and Girls of Scottish Children’s Fiction*, p198-207, BROWN, I. MANNING, S. & PITTOCK, M. (Eds.) (2006) *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature Modern Transformations: New Identities (from 1918)*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

and

Treasured Islands: the literary uses of the island setting in some Scottish Children’s Books, p118-126 in THOMPSON, M. S. & KEENAN, C. (Eds.) (2006) *Treasure Islands Studies in Children’s Literature*, Dublin, Four Courts Press.

Part of Chapter 4 concerning the Jacobite novels appeared in ‘To see ourselves as others see us’: the imaging of children in a selection of Scottish children’s historical fiction. In *The Journal of Children’s Literature Studies* 4 (2): pp 37-53

## Introduction

We live in ideas. Through images we seek to comprehend our world. And through images we sometimes seek to subjugate and dominate others. But picture-making, imagining, can also be a process of celebration, even liberation. New images can chase out the old. *Imaginary Homelands* (Salman Rushdie)

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether a ‘distinctive’ Scottish Children’s Literature exists and, if so, to attempt to identify those aspects that make it distinctive. Further, if Scottish Children’s Literature exists, questions must be asked about how it becomes a repository for the formation of culture, identity and nationhood, and whether such literature can have an impact on young readers from Scotland and beyond.

The impetus for the study was both personal and professional. As an undergraduate student I initially read for a literature degree. The material that was covered in that degree was, in the main, English literature. Later, as an English teacher in schools, most of the texts used for study with pupils were English and only latterly, post-1991, was there a greater emphasis on the use of Scottish material in Scottish schools. This is not to say that efforts to address this anomaly had not occurred before. As far back as 1976 an important report entitled *Scottish Literature in the Secondary School* (HMSO, 1976) outlined the case for greater use of Scottish Literature throughout the secondary school and also provided helpful lists of Scottish texts that could be used. This was followed in 1981 by the publication of *Scottish English: The language children bring to school* (SCCC, 1981), which substantially revised the previous position on the use of Scots language in schools. Nonetheless, at the time I began teaching in the early 1980s, there was still strong resistance to the use of Scots language and a focus on Scottish texts within schools. Chief among the objections was the idea that the use of Scots was somehow ‘less correct’ than the use of Standard Scottish English, and this notion came from both teachers and parents. As far as the use of Scottish Literature was concerned, a general view seemed to emerge indicating there was concern that there was an insufficient quantity of high quality Scottish Literature available for use in schools. Douglas Gifford has recorded this as one of the singular failings of Scottish Education (Gifford, 2005), indicating that unless Scottish Literature was taught in schools and universities, Scottish teachers would inevitably be ill

equipped to direct the attention of children towards quality literature from their own culture.

My own next professional move was to Initial Teacher Education where, among other duties, I was responsible for the preparation of English teachers for secondary schools and also for the development of Language skills and competence in the study and teaching of literature for students preparing to be primary teachers. The programmes for the latter included support for the development of reading, writing, listening and talking. Essential to both areas was a sound knowledge of and commitment to the curriculum initiatives being developed and used in Scottish education. Aware of my own woeful ignorance of Scottish Literature, I embarked on a Masters degree in Scottish Literature. A feature of this degree was a focus on what were called Classroom Applications, where students were encouraged to develop programmes of work in Scottish Literature which could be used in schools. However, when I indicated that for my final dissertation I would like to focus on Scottish Children's Literature, that was actively discouraged with the result that I focused on a programme of work for the 'Higher Still Higher English', the main post-16 examination in English in Scottish schools. Most recently when I wished to embark on doctoral studies, my chosen title *Culture and Identity in Scottish Children's Fiction* was soundly debated before I was given permission to proceed. Even then, concern was expressed that there may be insufficient quality material to provide the depth required for the study.

My reason for being so single-minded about the focus on Scottish Children's Literature was because I had detected its apparent absence from the canon in British literature. The crystallisation of the canon of English Literature occurred around the 1960s, the same period as what is regarded as the second "Golden Age" of Children's Literature in Britain. At this time England was firmly at the centre of the United Kingdom and this contributed to the marginalisation of Scottish Literature generally. (Sassi, 2005) Excluded from anthologies of English Literature, Scottish Literature was never able to capture the full attention of the critics who, starting from the 1980s, increasingly directed their attention to de-centring the canon along several axes, including ethnicity, gender and class. Scotland was left out of this process, ironically, because its status lacked a definition. And if that was true for Scottish Literature for *adults* how much more was it true for children? Then in 1990s, at a conference of the Association for Scottish Literary Studies, I heard the Carnegie Medal winning Scottish children's author, Theresa Breslin, speak about her own reading history. She commented that in the books she read she "never saw herself" and I shared that experience. Shortly thereafter, I read *Children's Literature and National*

*Identity* (Meek, 2001). In this book, edited and introduced by Margaret Meek, who has lived in England for over fifty years but who originally hails from Fife, Meek discusses the importance of cultural perspectives in the books children read and the importance of literature in how children learn about themselves, the world they live in and their place within that world. She also notes that during her own education, “Scottishness was emphasised in the school curriculum especially in history: a warring oligarchy, the Reformation, the malevolence of the English, the Auld Alliance with France and the encircling Protestantism which confirmed [her] own national allegiance.” (ibid, viii) Scottish Literature must have been included in the curriculum and she does cite the ballads, the poetry of Robert Burns and novels by Scott and Stevenson. The main body of the book then focuses on different key areas with articles including: “The Fading of French Nationality”; “Voices of the World”; “Ireland and its Children’s Literature”; “The Englishness of English Children’s Books” (written by Meek herself) and “The Europeaness of Picture Books”. But Scottish Children’s Books are conspicuous by their absence. Only in Morag Styles’ chapter “Voices of the World” (p. 61- 71) on children’s poetry, is there any extended discussion of the fact that the United Kingdom is in fact made up of four distinct nations. There is no discussion of Scottish identity or Scottish Children’s Literature. These two experiences happening so close together galvanised me into undertaking the study.

What also appealed about this topic was both my own inter-disciplinary background and the inter-disciplinary nature of Children’s Literature. Some of the difficulty related to definitions of Children’s Literature has come about because, as a discipline, it seems to sit uncomfortably within both literature and education. Perhaps, it could even be argued, it should be more properly located within the subject area of Cultural Studies. Notwithstanding this, Children’s Literature features prominently within the field of Education and many teachers are preoccupied by what children and young people read, if they read, where and when they read and, importantly, *how* they read. By this I mean both the diverse forms that reading material increasingly takes and also whether or not children and young people read discriminatingly. Do they, for instance, always accept the author’s stances or premises? Are they able to critique what they read? Do they recognise what is portrayed, particularly in children’s fiction, as being realistic and ‘like their lives’ or at least similar to other books in similar genres? Do they have access to material in their home language?

The theme of Children's Literature and nationhood may be interpreted as concerning more than simply the content of books or the ideas and purposes of writers or the interplay between them; it may go beyond the different ways in which readers of different nationalities will understand a different work. It can give rise to the question, "What is the nationality of this book?" And books, like people, can have dual nationality. Questions concerning place — rural and urban— gender, class, ethnicity, social justice, freedom of the individual — national and personal — responsibilities and values can all be addressed in contemporary children's fiction. They can all be examined using the universalising, anonymous context, or they can be focused through a particular society, place or nation. Political structures inevitably impinge when it comes to ideas and feelings of nationality, but, equally important is the nature of society and culture. Contemporary Scotland has a very distinctive society and culture and this is elucidated in its literature for both adults and children.

Most often we define national literature with ourselves as the point of departure, dividing culture into 'own' and 'other'. For modern Scots though, this can be problematic since the literature of Britain is also their 'own'. The Union of Scotland and England in 1707 generated a painful gap between the internal understanding of national identity and its external perception and in various ways and with varying levels of intensity, this contest has been played out in British society over the succeeding centuries. Particular difficulty has arisen in literary discussions at both academic and popular levels when the literature from Scotland is labelled 'English' rather than 'British'. By the nineteenth century it had become normal for Europeans to refer to English or, perhaps British, writers or inhabitants when referring to the whole archipelago of the British Isles. Scottishness was gradually adjusted to assume the profile of England's 'alter ego' — a new identity altogether, to the construction of which British writers contributed. Correcting the mistake of calling 'Britain' 'England', or vice versa, is not actually a matter of patriotism or pride, but rather a putting right of a factual mistake. A society culturally aware of itself as a discrete body *and* with discrete civic structures — institutions like law, the Church and education — can be called a nation. Scotland remained a nation even after the Act of Union in 1707, with its own very distinctive literature. Scottish Literature of this period also included material to which children would have had access, but until very recently the only Scottish Children's Literature texts that have been discussed in the academy are those that have migrated into the British canon, and thus into the canons of adult English literature. My object in undertaking this study of Scottish Children's fiction had professional implications as well as personal ones. If I could clearly identify a corpus of Children's Literature that was

uniquely Scottish then this could and should feature in programmes which prepare teachers for Scottish schools.

Children's Literature itself only began to be recognised as a separate area of literary production following 1660, when Puritan authors realised how effective it could be in furthering their campaign to reform the personal piety of all individuals, adults and children alike. Since then, much innovative and searching criticism of Children's Literature has accumulated. Many different approaches to the interpretation of this literature have emerged— author, publisher and reader studies; positioning of children's books in historical contexts or within discourses of gender and ethnicity; assessments of the distinctive character of Children's Literature at the level of reader-response or within conflicting definitions of childhood itself. This present study is not intended to be a survey of all of these current methodologies. Nor is it especially concerned with problematising the concept of Scottish Children's Literature for its own sake. No particular theoretical approach to analysis has been privileged to the exclusion of others. As Matthew Grenby has recorded,

There is a fundamental argument that a book written for children should be treated no differently than a book written for adults. Both can make equally serious artistic statements and both have a place in particular literary traditions. And both can be analysed *without theorising* [my italics] about how the intended audience, rather than the text itself, determines meaning. (Grenby, 2008: 8)

The greatest initial challenge in the current critical and cultural climate is to give Scottish children's books the kind of careful, nuanced and disinterested critical attention that for many years has been reserved for only for Scottish Literature for adults, and this is the approach that has been pursued throughout this investigation. Although cognisant of trends in contemporary literary theory that have a bearing on the currently very fashionable questions of identity, the research method adopts a more integrated, humanistic, multi-dimensional approach towards the exploration of Scottish Children's fiction. This is very much in keeping with the habits I acquired as a classroom teacher in schools and which I use currently as a tutor engaged in the formation of new teachers. In this capacity, I inevitably draw on a range of overarching theoretical perspectives that work effectively in illuminating the characteristics of particular texts with and for students. As such, the study does not pretend to provide a specific theoretical basis for the reading of Scottish Children's Fiction.

The fundamental task of this thesis is a similar kind of 'boot-strapping' endeavour, with the objective of building up an account of Scottish Children's Literature from first

principles. In taking this task forward, I did not want to be constrained by prevailing critical orthodoxies but rather sought the freedom to engage with the chosen texts in a manner which opened them out for more general examination and consideration — first as quality texts in themselves, and then as quality Scottish texts, without being restricted by particular theoretical assumptions. Consequently, the approach that has been taken requires an immersion in the narratives themselves, making what are largely unfamiliar texts familiar in order to do the work of projecting and examining the distinctively Scottish experience mediated by them. As it proceeds, this approach draws selectively and discursively on theoretical insights, ways of reading and close reading skills for essentially heuristic purposes—in other words, on methods that further the central hermeneutical task of enlarging understanding of the phenomenon. Leaving the way clear for others to apply specific theoretical filters to Scottish Children’s Literature in future studies.

The source material on which the study focuses can take little for granted in terms of a shared critical patrimony, even though the texts themselves certainly do not exist in a literary vacuum. Authors often make the point defensively that literature is not removed from real life and, increasingly now, Scottish authors deliberately encourage Scottish readers to see themselves in the text. Often children’s books generally seem to invite readings that focus on historical context or that expose theoretical problems to scrutiny; this is also true of Scottish children’s books. However, it should be noted that Scottish Children’s Literature does not represent a monolithic worldview, though it is possible to argue in very broad terms that it does present common and shared social perspectives revealed in subtle ways. A particular text might be read as an ongoing exchange amongst ideologies and discourses, and one effect of that might be that a notion such as ‘Scottishness’ is produced for readerly inspection within this process of exchange. The text is therefore constantly in the process of *becoming* distinctly Scottish. Recognition of this highlighted for me the need to address the huge *educative* task encompassed within this thesis, in terms of familiarisation and validation of a corpus of texts with which most readers would have few reference points. In the approach adopted within the study, readers will as a result find methodological echoes of the work of Roni Natov (Natov, 2002) and Matthew Grenby (Grenby, 2008)—critics sharing with this thesis the responsibility of rehabilitating areas of neglected literary and cultural interest.

Beside the fundamentally arbitrary nature of the ideas of nationhood is the notion that literature plays a leading role in their construction. A literary text can weave fact, fiction, legend and history together in effective and persuasive ways. Despite a movement away

from the idea of nationhood currently in cultural studies and other disciplines, it is my contention that the idea of a nation is still crucially relevant in today's world and is deeply ingrained in Western culture and imagination. Thus it is better to retain and rethink the idea than to deny it altogether, and in considering the concept of Scottish Children's Literature, it seems entirely reasonable to explore perceptions of *Scottish* nationality and identity as a matter of course. The paradigm of post-Union Scottish culture is dominated by notions of fluidity and plurality and it is precisely this difficulty in pigeon-holing Scottish Children's Literature that makes its study so challenging. A recurrent problem in the study of national children's literatures is that scholars in the respective fields commonly know little about the cognate literatures of other nations and communities. This limitation applies to this writer as much as anyone, but as both a reader and a teacher, I have engaged with Children's Literature in English from a number of different nations including England, Canada, Australia and the United States resulting in, it is hoped, a more informed perspective on the subject matter.

There are two ways of using the 'national' adjective that precedes culture: the first indicates a belonging backed up with citizenship and rights; the second describes an imagined essence. Nations are forced into becoming 'essence' if they have no concrete body, no rights. Between the Act of Union in 1707 until devolution, the Scots were in the latter position in terms of a *Scottishness*. The poet and author Christopher Whyte has maintained that "in the absence of elected political authority, the task of representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers." (Whyte, 1998: 284) In other words it was predominantly in its literature that Scotland's imagined essence made its presence felt in this period. The re-making of Scotland since devolution has involved consultation and discussion especially about national culture and has been remarkably *unethnic*. That in itself is worthy of comment. If nations like Scotland become more democratic and inclusive than the corporatist states from which they dissociate, then there is a point to supporting national culture. In Scotland's case there is good reason to suggest that an emerging Scottish nation *will* be more democratic and inclusive. The process of devolution has, however, raised questions about nationhood, power and identity which will not go away easily. It is therefore all the more important that the discussion opened out here should be relevant to and eventually include Scottish children and young people through reflection upon the crucial medium of their own distinctive national Children's Literature. This study seeks to provide evidence for them and for their adult mentors that Scottish Children's Literature does exist and that it offers a unique forum for recognition and discussion of culture and identity in which all can participate.

## Chapter 1: What is Children's Literature?

*You must write for children the same way you write for adults, only better.*  
Maxim Gorky

Chapter One focuses on definitions of Children's Literature and acknowledges the unstable nature of these definitions. It highlights the contested nature of almost all of the words of the title of the study: Scottish, Children and even Literature itself. This chapter provides contrasting definitions of children's literature over a period of time and provides a stipulative definition of Children's Literature which will be used throughout the study. Additionally, the origins of Scottish Children's Literature are outlined within the development of the genre itself. The purposes of Children's Literature are also considered, as well as the concept of social critical literacy and the notion of 'constructing readers' by positioning them in particular ways. Finally, a general overview of Children's Literature in the twenty-first century is presented suggesting that Children's Literature has become the site of innovative approaches both in terms of creating new genres within it, and in Children's Literature theory and criticism, where some of the most interesting and exciting research is being done.

### The Development of Children's Literature

The development of Children's Literature follows a similar pattern all round the world. In the early stages of printed literature few, or no, books specifically produced for children are generated. Gradually, books for educational purposes or courtesy books begin to appear, then, what are sometimes termed 'text' books. Children, as they learn to read, also take on adult books that appeal to them—a process helped by the fact that early printed material in any society is likely to draw on traditional stories that appeal to every age group. (Quoted in Ray, 2004) Religion is also a very important factor in the development of printed literature and, often, the earliest books specifically for children tend to be simplified versions of religious books or publications designed to support religious or moral instruction. Poetry, ballads and nursery rhymes also appear in the early stages of development of Children's Literature. Gradually, stories specifically written for children begin to appear and eventually they become more varied and soon special interest material begins to emerge. In European countries this process has taken about five hundred years to get to this stage. (Nikolajeva, 1996)

The development of Children's Literature is centrally linked to social, educational and, above all, economic factors. In Britain, Children's Literature really began to flourish in the nineteenth century when the population was growing, educational opportunities were increasing and technological advances made both paper and printing more readily available, and the influence of Locke and Rousseau and the Romantics fed through to children's books. The move towards universal education and the increase in size of the middle class helped create a reading public and a viable market for children's books. The advent of literary magazines proved a cheap and effective way of getting reading materials into the hands of children. By the end of the nineteenth century full colour picture books were becoming available at competitive prices. But the real flowering of Children's Literature in Britain occurred in the twentieth century.

Children's Literature was perhaps the most adversely affected of all literatures by the World Wars; although less by World War I than by the Russian Revolution and the advent of dictatorships in Spain and Germany. It was further affected by World War II, which brought paper restrictions, bombed publishing houses and the absence of key personnel. Thus the advances made in the early part of the twentieth century were curtailed almost completely. But the process of change has been going on since the end of World War II. Since the 1960s there has been a huge increase in Children's Literature in Britain, with writers from the constituent countries whose common language is English moving easily across national boundaries. However, the literature they produced was always identified as 'English' Children's Literature, albeit with an international dimension – like Children's Literature throughout the world.

In the early part of the twentieth century, Children's Literature was still marginalised, undervalued and, generally excluded from mainstream literature. The rise of Children's Literature, like texts by women and other minority groups, "owes a great debt to postmodernism and its tendency to eliminate barriers, level hierarchies and give equal voice to all."(Beckett, 1997) Since 1970 Children's Literature has been growing steadily as a significant field of scholarship, and in 1979 the first British research conference on Children's Literature was held. Children's Literature theory and criticism may have been marked in the early days by conservative critical approaches but, more recently, some of the most interesting and innovative literary research is being done in the field of Children's Literature theory.

Now freed from many of the traditional restrictions, rigid moral codes and taboos of the past, Children's Literature offers a wide range of topics including philosophical, political, socio-cultural and economic issues. As a result, Children's Literature, always difficult to define, seems now to elicit even less consensus about what constitutes a text for children. What we do know is that Children's Literature does appear to continue to place special demands on authors writing for children, despite the apparent—and growing—blurring of boundaries between adult and Children's Literature. In the 1970s, it could be argued that Children's Literature authors assumed the role of children's advocates and spoke largely for children as they let them speak up in their fiction. Children's Literature modelled behaviour that was to be emulated, thus perhaps justifying its overtly didactic function so often cited in standard definitions. In contrast, contemporary children's books are less likely to want to patronise or colonise readers by speaking up for them or even guiding them. Authors now seem to prefer to be facilitators, and behind the often problematised authorial position, lies the deeply democratic idea of empowerment and power sharing. However, at the same time in *Ideology and the Children's Book* (Hollindale, 1992) Hollindale suggests that we must go beyond the visible surface features of texts that children read in order to discover *how* they read it. He insists that, "we take into account the individual writer's unexamined assumptions." When we do, we discover that, "ideology is an inevitable, untameable and largely uncontrollable factor in the transaction between books and children." Thus we are bound to accept that all Children's Literature is *still*, inescapably, didactic. All of this means that the definition of what we mean by Children's Literature continues to shift and a single 'fixed' definition remains elusive; and perhaps that is as it should be. As long ago as 1964 Margery Fisher noted that, "We need to constantly revise and re-state the standards of this supremely important branch of literature."

### The Problem of Definition

As with all academic study however, any treatise requires a definition of the key terms and the Children's Literature Academy has been more pre-occupied than most with this aspect of their discipline. Almost without exception any general Children's Literature text will begin by trying to define what *it* is. But Children's Literature means different things to different people in varying contexts. The two words of the term itself are not without their own, separate, difficulties: definitions of the terms literature and children could occupy full chapters in themselves. Reconfiguration of the term as 'texts for children' as Peter Hunt does in the introduction to *Children's Literature: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies Vol. 1* (Hunt, 2006: 6) demonstrates the challenge beautifully: texts can

mean virtually any form of communication (or even multi-dimensional experience), virtually everything that involves the entertainment, exploitation or enculturation of children. These texts may be for author, publisher, children themselves or even those who *give* books to children. When it comes to the term *children* or *child*, a child is an infinitely varied concept from family to family, society to society, country to country and time to time. The concept of the child is an ever-present problem for Children's Literature and Children's Literature criticism. But defining the subject matter is as important as defining the limits of the discipline.

Definitions can be either pragmatic and organisational, designed to exclude materials that would make the subject unmanageable, or based on features attributed to texts or to readers. Distinctions based on form, content or quality often lead to discussions of affect and cultural practice, including contested practice. Other distinctions based on analyses of language, look to the implied reader, the mode of address or a tone/content combination such as that presented in Hollindale's concept of Childness. In *Signs of Childness in Children's Books*, Hollindale defines Childness as

A composite made up of beliefs, values, experiences, memories, expectations, approved and disapproved behaviours, observations, hopes and fears which connect and interact with each other to form ideal and empirical answers to the question, 'What is a child?' (Hollindale, 2001 (1997))

Childness, he argued, is an essential property and defining quality of Children's Literature. Emer O'Sullivan on the other hand identifies two defining characteristics that distinguish Children's Literature:

It is a body of literature that belongs simultaneously to two systems, the literary and the pedagogical... Communication in Children's Literature is asymmetrical. At every stage we find adults acting for children. (O'Sullivan, 2005)

Children's Literature (the study) and Children's Literature (texts) are complex and challenging and the best of them always have been. Even in contemporary contexts it can often still be assumed that literature for children must be simple and direct, dealing with uncomplicated subject matter, usually with limited vocabulary. Yet there is evidence to suggest that this view was being challenged from the very early days in the study of the subject. In 1844, Elizabeth Rigby responded to those who denigrated books for children by observing that,

The whole mistake hinges on the slight but important distinction between *childish* books and *children's* books. The first are very easy – the second are much the

reverse – the first require no mind at all – the second a mind of no common class.(Rigby, 1844)

Children are inexperienced but not necessarily innocent. They begin as inexperienced readers who must learn how to read, how stories and books work, how to interpret what they read and how what they read impacts on them and their lives or offers an insight to lives and experiences they may never otherwise have. Books can be an introduction to the life that lies ahead of children. If no hint of the hard world comes into these books, or if they do not deal with subject matter that is relevant and challenging, then how can children be expected to become fully engaged and discerning readers? This is a theme close to the heart of Michael Rosen, the current Children's Laureate, as he demonstrates in an article discussing what an active Children's Literature can contribute to our culture.

Children's Literature within Literature is a pathetic shadow of its real self. Literature within academe can hardly bear to recognise that everything rests on the edifice of initiated and charged child readers. Even when literary theorists discovered intertextuality, that process of writing that draws on all literature before it and around it, they nearly always manage to leave out the primary source of writers' and readers' intertextual repertoires, their childhood reading. As adults our notions of narrative, of openings, denouements, goodies and baddies, red herrings, first person narrators, third person narrators who get inside people's brains and then come out again, identification and projection, all these ways of reading are laid down when reading Children's Literature. Yet, incredibly, when people talk about adult books, this period in reader formation is kept out of the picture. This is an integral part of the politics of Children's Literature. It serves to help serious literature define what it isn't. It isn't childish. And children aren't grown up.(Rosen, 1995)

Another powerful voice in the Children's Literature academy, Margaret Meek had already asked in the ninth annual Woodfield Lecture in 1986 why children's stories are treated as merely simpler versions of adult literature, when in fact they are the groundwork for them, their 'primary kinds and structures.' The sense of writing for *inexperienced* readers—adults as well as children one might argue—has influenced both the techniques of fiction writing and critical attitudes to imaginative writing in general. It is one of the things which lies behind the didacticism so often ascribed to Children's Literature even still. But not all definitions of Children's Literature include the necessity that texts should be didactic. Currently it has not yet proved possible to find one single definition of Children's Literature that is accepted by the majority of critics and academics. The definitions have evolved over the years: some have common elements, but the ability to arrive at a static classification of Children's Literature remains an aspiration.

## Overlapping and Contrasting Definitions

In 1932 F. Harvey Darton, one of Britain's foremost early Children's Literature scholars, defined children's books as:

Printed works produced ostensibly to give children spontaneous pleasure, and not primarily to teach them, nor solely to make them good, nor to keep them profitably quiet. (Darton, 1932)

This definition restricts itself only to the texts themselves and does not make any attempt to define Darton's understanding of the term children. The definition makes no reference to any age restrictions nor does it refer to limitations on the type of language to be used or the subject matter directly. On the other hand, this definition does address the predominantly didactic nature of children's books which features so prominently in early versions of definitions. Darton's hugely influential book *Children's Books in England: Five Centuries of Social Life* is now in its third edition, substantially revised and re-edited in 1999 by Brian Alderson, and this definition remains, unaltered – as a monument to the values of the time in which it was created.

Darton's book was published after the first so-called 'Golden Age' of Children's Literature was over. Forty years later, in the second 'Golden Age', acknowledged to last from about 1950 to the 1970s, Marcus Crouch in *The Nesbit Tradition*, admitted that he had come to the conclusion that there were no books specifically for children. In his view they were,

a concept invented for commercial reasons and kept alive by human instinct for classification and categorisation. (Crouch, 1972)

Once again the definition is of children's books rather than the concept of Children's Literature, as it is now understood. Crouch argued that writers wrote the books they wanted to write irrespective of whether they intended them to be read by children or adults. Similarly, he noted that sometimes books would appeal to children, sometimes to adults and sometimes to both. The many books that were originally intended for adults, now commonly thought of as works for children, include *The Prince and the Pauper* (Twain, 1882) and the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1884). The opposite, of course, has also been known to occur, where works of fiction originally written or marketed for children are given recognition as adult books: *The Amber Spyglass* (Pullman, 2000), and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* (Haddon, 2003), for example, both won Whitbread Awards, which are typically awarded to novels for adults. Often no consensus is reached whether a given work is best categorized as adult or Children's

Literature, and many books are multiply marketed in adult, children's, and young adult editions—the most obvious example of this being J.K. Rowling's phenomenally successful series of Harry Potter books—which now are published simultaneously in child and adult versions. (The principal difference seems only to be the nature of the cover, rather than the content or vocabulary being significantly altered.) Many contemporary authors of children's books remain uncomfortable with the concept of 'cross-over' texts.

In the 1960s, in the midst of a major renaissance in Children's Literature, some critics chose to posit a very challenging perspective of Children's Literature and, it has to be said, this view persists within certain academic circles. James Steele Smith provides an obvious example of the perspective:

We can still get involved in the mistaken view that Children's Literature involves the same criteria of literary excellence as adult literature does. (Smith, 1967)

The implication here is clearly that Children's Literature is in some way inferior to adult literature and therefore, as a consequence, any criticism must be inferior too. This typifies the view alluded to earlier, that because the designated audience for Children's Literature is children, then the texts themselves must be simple and reductive, completely accessible and thus not worthy of detailed criticism or academic study. Thankfully that view is in the minority and currently, as Children's Literature finally seems to have established its place in the academy, much as Women's Literature did from the 1960s onward, there is clearer recognition of the complexity of the literature and the discipline itself.

Far from current definitions of Children's Literature being reduced to simple statements that it is literature written specifically for a child audience, the definitions have become more elaborate, taking more cognisance of the complexities of the study. In 1976, Rebecca Lukens argued that:

Literature for children differs from literature for adults in degree, not in kind...and writing for children should be judged by the same standard of writing for adults...To fail to apply the same critical standard to Children's Literature is to say in effect that Children's Literature is inferior to adult literature. (Scott, 1976)

The most effective current definitions reflect this point of view, and do not fall into the additional trap of defining Children's Literature solely by its use – the intention for it to educate as an end in itself is now usually omitted. While at the beginning of the twentieth century Children's Literature might have been characterised as being a totally separate and

marginalised entity in the polysystem of literature, confined within its own regime and guided by its own laws, the unparalleled professionalisation and literarisation that has emerged between the 1960s and the 1990s, as well as the concomitant and unprecedented growth in status of Children's Literature, has resulted in more detailed and resilient definitions of the discipline. Peter Hunt has this to say about children's books:

Children's books have been largely under the notice of intellectual gurus, they are (apparently) blissfully free of the 'oughts': what we ought to think and say about them. More than that, to many readers, children's books are a matter of private delight, which means, perhaps, that they are real literature – if 'literature' consists of texts that engage, change and provoke intense responses in readers. (Hunt, 2005)

By the start of the new millennium, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer, two Canadian scholars were defining Children's Literature as:

A body of texts defined by its intended audience. What it is and how adults think about it are intertwined with society's ideas about children – about who they are and how and what they need to read. (Nodelman, 2003)

This definition does not include much that is new, but it does give prominence to the one unique element of Children's Literature, that of being defined by its audience. It is important to note, however, that this definition is normative insofar as this means that Children's Literature is predicated on society's ideas of children, childhood and children's interests and concerns. This of course is in complete contrast to the motivation ascribed to authors for the adult market, for whom there seems to be little limitation on subject matter, language or presentational style, and no limitation on the intended readership. More recently again, Peter Hunt, one of Britain's most distinguished Children's Literature scholars offered this definition:

Children's Literature consists of texts that consciously or unconsciously address particular constructions of the child, or metaphorical equivalents in terms of character or situation, the commonality being that such texts display an awareness of children's disempowered status – whether controlling, questioning or overturning it. Adults are as engaged in this discourse as children, engaging dialogically with it – reading it/writing it – just as children engage with many adult discourses. But it is how these texts are read and used that will determine their success as Children's Literature. (Hunt, 2005)

This leads to consideration of an element that seems inextricable from any contemporary definition of Children's Literature, the *purpose* of Children's Literature, a subject to which this study will return repeatedly.

Children's Literature is still, largely, written for children by adults and this implies that there will be some form of 'control' applied. This in turn suggests that moral decisions will

be involved in the writing and/or selection of the texts. The books will not be used to entertain or modify the adult reader's views, but may well contribute to forming the views of the child reader. Thus the kinds of reading that texts for children are given by adults often involves the acquisition of both culture and language: this is of particular significance for the Scottish Children's fiction that will form the bulk of this study. Children's books still tend to be used to a large degree for practical purposes such as socialisation and, most importantly, education. Hence, contemporary definitions will still contain some reference to that 'hard to lose' element of didacticism. The relationship of Children's Literature to education will be one of the major concerns of this study.

Given that the discipline is still so fraught with ambiguities, not least the fact that it caters for a whole spectrum of readers ranging from pre-readers to young adults while often cutting across various established forms, it is hardly surprising that definitions of the term remain so transitory; and this is without consideration of the so-called 'death' of childhood. Children's Literature will continue to place special demands on authors who write for children and young adults, but this literature will continue to evolve. As it does so, its definitions must also continue to evolve unless a general definition, so loose as to have little meaning, becomes the accepted form. For the purposes of this thesis, and taking due account of the range of definitions alluded to above, a stipulative, working definition of Children's Literature will be adopted. To that end *my* definition of Children's Literature, which will be used throughout this study, considers Children's Literature to be:

A body of literature, intended for child or young adult audiences, which, either deliberately or inadvertently, addresses or depicts the concerns, interests or experiences of its intended audience. The subject matter should engage, entertain, enthuse, change, challenge, inform or provoke responses from its readers. Texts should be of literary merit and their primary purpose should be for enjoyment but may also provide relevant pedagogic opportunities for readers.

### Origins of Scottish Children's Literature

As noted earlier, the process of developing what is now recognised as Children's Literature in Europe has taken about five hundred years. However, as with all such entities, *Europe* is made up a large number of constituent elements, not all of whose Children's Literatures developed at the same time and not all of whose Children's Literatures have achieved equal recognition. Even within Great Britain the Children's Literatures of the constituent nations of Scotland, Wales and Ireland have tended to be overshadowed by England. Darton's work *Children's Books in England* includes coverage of the work of *some* Scottish authors, Stevenson, MacDonald, Barrie and Crockett for example, but their work and national

identities are subsumed under the canopy of the English. The work of Scottish authors for children has historically, been in the vanguard of the development of Children's Literature in Britain, yet is rarely mentioned and hardly ever acknowledged in mainstream studies of the subject. Julia Briggs in her chapter in *Children's Literature: an illustrated History* (Hunt, 1995) does concede that the

large Scottish contribution to writing for children from the 1860s might suggest that the concept of childhood north of the border was in key respects significantly different. (Briggs, 1995)

There is however little evidence of, or discussion about, the nature of that 'large Scottish contribution.' Even in two of the most recent encyclopaedias of children's literature, *The International Companion Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature* (Hunt, 2004) and *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature* (Zipes, 2006) the entries for Scottish Children's Literature are minimal. There are 3 pages of information written by Lynsey Fraser in the former and entries on 18 Scottish writers and illustrators in the latter, a list which does *not* include J. M. Barrie. Matthew Grenby notes as recently as 2005 that:

Although a substantial amount of critical analysis has now been carried out into particular Scottish children's books, for instance, no full scale bibliography for children published in Scotland, or about Scottish subjects exists. (Grenby, 2005)

He comments that the Scottish tradition of Children's Literature has been until recently, "silently subsumed" in what is commonly labelled English Children's Literature. In this expression the terms 'British' and 'English' are conflated tellingly. The distinctive cultures grafted on to English culture, often with unhealed scars, are almost completely eliminated as cultural sources or influences. Perhaps the essential differences between Scottish and British Children's Literature have not been articulated because of the lack of specific archival work on Scottish texts. Until recently, Scottish, Welsh and Irish Children's Literature have earned references as, "timeless and de-historicised fonts of Celtic myth, legend and oral tradition." (Scutter, 1997) The Irish have tackled the issue head on over the last 10-15 years and have identified a thriving and distinctive canon as well as an internationally renowned academy of scholars in the area. Scottish Children's Literature, I would argue, is also much more than myth, legend or oral tradition both traditionally and historically and, more interestingly, continues to be so at the present time.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, at the time of the most rapid spread of literacy in Britain, Scottish printers were taking the lead in identifying and developing new literary markets. Blackie, Nelson, Collins and Chambers were all family firms established in early

decades of the century when there was a growing body of working and lower-middle-class readers as well as expanding juvenile and educational markets. (Smail, 2006) Early experiences of these publishers encouraged sympathy with the educational aspirations of ordinary people; they were shaped by a religious and social ethos more democratic than that of England. All, except the Chambers brothers, were linked with radical Presbyterianism and after 1843 supported the break-away Free Church; all regarded their activities as publishers as, broadly speaking, educational and part of a wider commitment to social improvement. Most of these firms were involved in anti-slavery and temperance causes or initiatives like the improvement of working-class housing in Edinburgh. This gives the lie to the persistent notion that nineteenth century Scots evangelicals were social and political reactionaries, intent on resisting progressive ideas and developments. All of these publishing houses recognised what is now called the ‘knowledge economy’ that was beginning to develop. They did not, though, restrict themselves to publishing only the work of Scottish authors, nor were their publications restricted only to the juvenile market. A fuller discussion of the term Scottishness will be undertaken in the next chapter.

Scotland has its own distinctive literary history and traditions as well as a particularly strong oral tradition of ballads, songs and story telling based on myths, legends, key events—such as battles—religious stories and versions of biblical stories. The Scots emphasis, from the time of John Knox in the sixteenth century, on education, and particularly literacy education for the purpose of reading the Bible, means that it is only to be expected that there would be a strong literary tradition of writing for children. Initially of course, the material produced certainly mirrored the development of Children’s Literature outlined earlier in this chapter. Books containing stories from the Bible, publications designed to support religious and moral instruction, primers, educational or courtesy books, all give way to textbooks and eventually to material specifically written for children. Robert Henrysson wrote his *Morall Fabillis*, a group of tales based on the traditions of Aesop and Renard, in Scots in the fifteenth century. Despite the fact that the Aesop fables were among the most obvious printed matter that could be adapted for children, Henrysson’s version cannot easily be dubbed Children’s Literature. Despite their humour, their pre-occupation with religious and philosophical questions does not make them immediately accessible to children. Probably some of the earliest Scottish texts, other than chapbooks, specifically written for child audiences were the four series of *Tales of a Grandfather* by Sir Walter Scott and published in 1828, 1829, 1830 and 1996 (the latter was left unfinished and unpublished at the time of the author’s death and was only published relatively recently by the University of Iowa.) These texts were published

eighty-five years after *A Little Pretty Pocket Book* (Newbery, 1744), commonly regarded as one of the first children's books as modern audiences would recognise them. Unlike this miscellany of tales and puzzles, Scott's stories were intended to be a narrative history of Scotland. Scott was partly inspired by John Wilson Crocker's *Stories Selected from the History of England for Children* which had been published in 1822, and partly by having a specific audience for the book in mind, that of his six-year old grandson John Hugh Lockhart, known as Hugh Littlejohn. A more detailed analysis of these books will appear later in the study.

Scott had very particular views about the expectations of a child audience. He firmly believed that young readers did not like being 'written down' to their level and that they preferred a challenge to their understanding and curiosity. He hoped to cater for both juvenile and popular audiences and thus to, "find a way between what a child can comprehend and what shall not yet be absolutely uninteresting to a grown reader." (Journal, 8 July 1827) As a consequence, these tales make a significant contribution to the debate about, and practice of, writing for children. More particularly, Sir Walter Scott's strong views about appropriate content and register for writing for children and his concern about the potential impact of the available books on young readers, led him to make an important remark to another Edinburgh-born author, Catherine Sinclair. In the preface to *Holiday House* (Sinclair, 1839) Sinclair records Sir Walter Scott's vision of children at the time and his concern that:

in the rising generation there would be no poets, wits or orators, because all play of the imagination is now carefully discouraged, and books written for young persons are generally a mere dry record of facts, unenlivened by any appeal to the heart, or any excitement to the fancy. (xiv)

It may be useful to consider this remark in the light of Scott's own deliberations about whether or not to let 'romantic fiction rest' and to turn to composing, "histories for boys and girls which may be useful as fictions for Children of a larger growth which can at best be only idle folks' entertainment." (Journal, 411-412, 7 January 1828) One can only assume he did not intend his own histories would be 'dry records of facts'.

From an historical point of view, the book Catherine Sinclair wrote having been influenced by those remarks, *Holiday House*, is one of the most important books in the history of Children's Literature, written, as it was, with the specific intention of changing the quality and kind of reading supplied for young people. Recognised as a foundational text in general accounts of Children's Literature, few scholars record its equally important

status as a Scottish text. A fuller discussion of this text with a focus on this perspective appears later in this study.

### The Purposes of Children's Literature

From the point of publication of *Holiday House* Children's Literature becomes less didactic in focus and begins the slow change towards entertainment, engagement and enjoyment. Even in contemporary contexts though it can be challenging for authors with a particular purpose in mind, to avoid using their texts as vehicles solely for educational purposes. For example, one of the most effective texts tackling gender stereotyping for children in recent times, *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tyler* (Kemp, 1977) does not achieve the desired effect by using long and earnest lectures on equality issues but rather confronts the readers' expectations about the central protagonist Tyke. This character is an imaginative, athletic, risk-taker whose behaviour, and the teachers' responses to it, leads the reader to assume and expect that these are the actions of a male character. In an extremely satisfying twist at the end of the book, the reader discovers that Tyke is female. This strategy directs readers towards certain expectations and then encourages them to reflect on their reactions. In doing so, the reader is *allowed* to question the inferences they make when reading and thus to review the schema they instantiate when reading novels. The current emphasis on constructivist principles within education has removed from childhood the taint of developmental and moral inadequacy, since it affirms children's ability to construct knowledge. The best children's authors build on these principles and, no doubt, hope that the stories they tell will have an educational, transformational effect: they must, however, also stand as good stories in their own right.

Many children's and young adult authors, write about controversial subjects, for example drugs, homelessness, nuclear war, divorce, bereavement, sustainable development, child abuse—to name only a few topics tackled in recent years. They may have points to make about these subjects; they may want to raise their young readers' awareness of the issues; they may want to develop concerned, involved and 'savvy' young citizens, but the *purpose* of this Children's Literature should not be exclusively educational or didactic. In that respect Children's Literature has moved on from its original and earliest purposes. One of the things an active Children's Literature can do is to help voice the emergent, and show us glimpses of what it is possible for human beings to do when they are not dominated by ideas of fate and the unchangeability or the incomprehensibility of society,

technology or the human condition in general. It is a marvellous institution if for no other reason than that by taking children's desires and abilities seriously, it tends to defy dominant notions of children's supposedly innate feebleness and vulnerability. Children's Literature is part of the discourse about children's thinking and psychology. If child psychology is widened to include notions of changing culture, then it can be seen that Children's Literature has the potential to play some part in the changing psychology of children.

Another potential purpose for Children's Literature, educationally, is the way that text can be used to help children and young people to 'construct' reality. Central to this argument is the concept of social critical literacy. A social critical theory of literacy is based on the view that literacy is constructed from social practice. That is, all social practices (such as discussing, justifying, listening, playing, reading, speaking, thinking, viewing or writing) involve literate activities of some kind. Through these literate practices we construct and reconstruct our ideas about the world. Because literate practices lead to the shaping of ideology and attitudes, the development of critical literacy skills is considered an essential component of social critical theory.

Critically literate people understand how texts work, who benefits from their construction, and who controls access to them. Because of this they have the power to make informed decisions about how they will use text, and what authority they will accord it. Critically literate people will therefore have the power to transform their social futures. A social critical view of literacy also acknowledges that, because society is continually changing, literacy and the way it is enacted in social situations will continue to change.

In an educational environment then, this means that meaning may be constructed *for* the child reader rather than *by* the child reader. Teachers may shape a text: the text may be *authorized* rather than *authored*. Texts can shape readers, sometimes without them realizing it, just as readers can also shape a text. Potentially, every text presents particular ideologies—a fact that has huge implications for the selection and use of Scottish texts either exclusively or inclusively along with British and world texts. The context in which the text has been formulated is crucial to the readers' construction of it. Whether a text is encountered at home, with a parent, with a reading mentor, with a teacher, in school, in a library, by an individual, electronically or aurally becomes a

matter of real importance. Every text presents, implicitly, particular views of literacy and literature; and there are many possible meanings in a text, some of which may be dominant. Texts can construct or marginalize individuals or groups by positioning them in particular ways. Similarly, texts can empower or silence particular individuals or groups. These latter points are of specific interest for Scottish Children's Literature within the context of British and global Children's Literature. Such issues point to the fact that there are a number of literacies and literatures potentially available in any classroom which may either co-exist and support one another or cease to operate or fail to get off the ground because of the dominance of a particular view

### Children's Literature in the Twenty-First Century

Current publication data indicate that there have been more, and better, books written for children in the last thirty years than in the previous four hundred. The range covers every genre and in a multiplicity of formats. There are specialist books for particular age groups and material, for instance in the Young Adult market, which work in the liminal spaces of transition between childhood reading and adult reading. There are books intended for sharing with adults; books that deal with special interest topics; books aimed at particular ethnic groups; and books written in and translated into many home languages. There are picture books and chapter books and non-fiction books and textbooks; e-books; bath books and 'scratch and sniff' books. The quality of these books both in terms of production values and in terms of their subject matter and the quality of the writing is probably at the highest level in the history of Children's Literature and it shows no signs of abating.

Children's Literature is genuinely global now, is vibrant, using multiple voices, perspectives and languages. It reflects the changing experiences of childhood as well as society's changing perception of children. It reflects the Children's Rights movement and, with the strongly emerging Global Citizenship agenda, it acknowledges the growing empowerment of children and young people and their right to self-determination. At the same time it can also reflect the less than privileged experiences of children in war torn and poverty-stricken areas of the world. Ironically though, the children who live in these afflicted areas rarely have access to any Children's Literature.

Children's Literature is now more complex, ambiguous, noncommittal, colourful and diversified than ever before. It continues to place special demands on authors writing for

children but this does not necessarily prevent the literature from evolving. Texts for children continue to show how the societies that produce them both see the child and how they wish the child to be seen. This provides valuable evidence for socio-cultural studies, and there can be a symbiotic relationship between the child in the book and the child outside the book. Real children read books, and discussions, both by authors and readers, influence the portrayal and interpretation of characters. Recent theoretical moves from focusing on the interpretation of specific texts to an interest in the construction of texts in the broadest sense of the word, have resulted in words like history, identity and reality being put in the plural or in quotation marks to reflect the writers' awareness of the impossibility of them having stable meanings. Some critics welcome this development; others do not.

Children's Literature already has contributed to the social and aesthetic transformation of culture by, for example, encouraging readers to approach ideas, issues, and objects from new and different perspectives so as to pave the way for change. For this reason Children's Literature matters beyond the pedagogical and historical explanations with which we are all so familiar. Children's Literature is certainly implicated in cultural integration as Jack Zipes so ably demonstrates using fairy tales as exemplars. (Zipes, 1991) But while childhood is certainly a time for learning and negotiating a place in society, it is also about developing potential suited to a future in which societies could be different in some very significant ways. Writing for children has been put into the service of those who are trying to disseminate new world views, values and social models.

Up till now, however, Children's Literature has predominantly provided a curious and paradoxical cultural space which is simultaneously highly regulated and overlooked, orthodox and radical, didactic and subversive. It is a space ostensibly for children, where they can encounter ideas, images and vocabularies that help them think and ask questions about the world. But it also provides a space for authors, illustrators and publishers to experiment with multiple voices, formats and media; where conventions can be played with and the thinking about societies and cultural norms can be contested. Writing for young people has a future orientation, and as a result, the storylines have a freshness and urgency about them that corresponds to the fact that the target audience may be encountering such ideas and experiences for the first time. Many children's books encourage their readers to question why things happen the way they do and to challenge the fact that they cannot change.

The boundaries around Children's Literature are not rigid or even agreed. Nevertheless, they seem to exist. There has been, until recent times, an unwritten code of practice that seemed to demand that children's books should contain no sex, no swearing, little colloquial, idiomatic or dialect use; above all they must be grammatically correct. But Children's Literature has the potential to offer new points of view and new visions of what constitutes a story and what 'makes' a book. Jill Dusi Berre alleges in *Alice to the Lighthouse: Children's Books and Radical Experiments in Art* (1987) that it already has in the way children's books have challenged authority, released subversive energies and refused to condescend and preach to its readers. She also argues that some of the most radical ideas about what the future will be like are located in books for children. Children's Literature can offer alternative visions of living particularly operating at the level of plot and content. Additionally though, children's books have the potential to present and inspire stylistic innovation, new narrative forms and a fresh exploration of the book as a medium. Children's Literature of the twenty first century can encourage young readers to think optimistically about the future and to consider the pioneering roles they could play in improving society for all.

Contemporary Children's Literature is not just capable of preserving and rejuvenating outdated or exhausted genres, but of creating new genres and kinds of writing. In fact, although there is a general presumption that Children's Literature usually lags behind and imitates what happens in adult literature and is somehow of the second order of creativity, that presumption is unfounded. A case in point is the genre of magic(al) realism as a literary form which emerged from Latin America in the 1960s, typified by *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (Marquez, 1967). In fact, children's writers were producing what can now be recognised as magic(al) realist texts long before this. E. Nesbit's 'magic' books of the early part of the twentieth century are early examples. In a similar way, children's books have the potential to lead the way in terms of the forms of texts and ways of reading them. Computers are beginning to impact on what is written for young people and the formats in which they will encounter them. Sadly though, there is currently a gap between technological innovation, how users are generating and responding to text online, and developments in narrative fiction. Publishers, authors and teachers seem to be demonstrating an innate conservatism with respect to the potential of electronic texts. Whether this is because of a genuine concern about the efficacy of such media or because of a lack of technical knowledge on their parts it is perhaps too soon to say, and there are too few texts to consider. Alternatively, this may be to do with the long held perceptions about the child reader that have been shaped by pedagogical and developmental concerns.

These might suggest that there is a limit to how much change there can be in Children's Literature stylistically because, as new readers, children have to learn to deal with textual conventions before they can interact creatively with texts. It could also be argued that children are still developing cognitively and emotionally and so need texts that are reassuring and build confidence rather than texts which de-stabilise and unsettle them. Up until the 1980s at least it was the widely held view that because Children's Literature was so bound up with language acquisition it had to be grammatically correct and use 'correct' language no matter how inappropriate it might be for the character or the situation.

One development that seems to discount this is the invention of MUDS (Multi-User Domains) where people meet in characters of their choosing and collaboratively create stories—a high-tech development of the teaching strategy of collaborative writing. Jane Murray, when considering the future of narrative in cyberspace, suggests that MUDs are the crucibles in which narrative forms are being combined to create new kinds of textualities. Since the roles of authors and readers are merged in this endeavour, the creative act is collective rather than individual and the resulting fictions have no reader or audience only participants. A second area of narrative innovation in electronic texts arises from opportunities for digression, embellishment and extension via hypertext links—what Dresang calls 'connectivity'. (Dresang, 1999) that directs readers to different episodes and encounters which build up information.

What the 'establishment' figures in Children's Literature must accept now is that young readers today acquire media literacies alongside conventional literacy, meaning that they come to texts of all kinds as transliterate readers in a way that many authors do not. This has profound implications for the development of Children's Literature for the future. Growing up involves children making choices and shaping an identity. Often, choosing one particular path – educational, cultural, social or analogue - can mean the closing down of other options. However children and young people, by and large, have most of their choices ahead of them and as a consequence, they represent potential. Fictions of childhood tend to emphasise this view because they are often narratives where the future is unknown and the self is in formation. Thus it is incumbent on authors and publishers of Children's Literature today to be sensitive to the changing landscape of children's fiction and to utilise all the weapons in the armoury in pursuit of the development of engaging, influential and transformative material that that has an impact on young readers and the formation of their identities as culturally aware citizens.

## **Chapter 2: Scottish Identity and Scottish Children's Literature: New Licht through Auld Windows**

As though explaining the idea of dancing  
Or the idea of some other thing  
Which everyone has known a little about  
Since they were children, which children learn themselves  
With no explaining, but which children like  
Sometimes to hear explanations of,  
I want to tell you something about our country,  
Or my idea of it...

*An Explanation of America*, Robert Pinsley

In this chapter the focus moves to matters of identity, Scottishness, nation and nationhood. Once again the contested nature of these terms is explored, as are a number of influential theories on Scottishness, Britishness and defining the 'Other'. Consideration is given to the notion of multiple identities. The current flexible view of Scottish citizenship is outlined and definitions are provided for Scottish Literature, national identity and Scottish texts. Exemplification is provided for the latter. The subaltern nature of Scottish Children's Literature is discussed. The shifting frames of culture are debated including ideas of hybridisation and plural versus cosmopolitan views of Scotland. Justification is given for the selection of genres and texts which make up the bulk of the study and indicates why the field needed to be limited.

### Continuity and Change in Scottish Identity

It has been ten years since 'Devolution' in Scotland, when the Parliament, dissolved in 1707 was re-convened in 1999 after a referendum in 1997. At the present time and in keeping with this study, it seems apposite to reflect on issues of Scottishness, identity and matters of culture. A number of significant developments have occurred in recent times: the opening of the new Scottish Parliament building in 2004 with all its concomitant fanfare and impetus; the increase in the Scottish population for the first time in a generation; the latest influx of asylum seekers being integrated into Scottish society contributing to Scotland's long-standing multicultural tradition and the publication, in 2006, of the draft document *Scotland's Culture* are among the most worthy of attention. As might be expected, there is a corresponding renewal of scholarly interest in questions of identity, especially in Scottish Literature. Within this framework it also seems

reasonable to use the opportunity afforded by the devolution settlement to situate Scottish Children's Literature within this larger debate, probably for the first time, and to reflect on its place in the Academy both in terms of its influence on Scotland's children and young people and as it is influenced by cultural developments and interpretations itself.

The Union of Parliaments of Scotland and England took place in 1707; the Union of the Crowns had taken place over a hundred years earlier in 1603. After 1707, Scotland was a stateless nation, but a nation none-the-less, with enduring emotional appeal. Despite the close economical, political and cultural partnership with England at that time, and the fears of some Scottish intellectuals that Scotland would simply become another region within the United Kingdom as assimilation intensified, there is evidence of a robust survival of a strong Scottish identity after the Union. Scottishness itself has meant different things at different periods and it means different things to those inside and outside Scotland: identity is subject to change and reinvention. Since the recall of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, there has been much speculation as to whether or not this change has resulted in a stronger sense of Scottish identity. There has been further debate as to whether the devolved parliament has resulted in a stronger sense of nationalism, but the outcome of the May 2007 election in Scotland, when the Scottish National Party ousted the Labour party to emerge holding the minority government power within the Parliament would seem to suggest this must be the case. Scottish Nationalists have taken this as a sign that the Scottish people wish Scotland to be an independent country and there are moves towards a referendum to test public opinion on the topic. (MacDonell, 2007) Within this debate, it is worth questioning whether contemporary Scots define themselves, more or less, against an English or a British culture or whether they place their identity more readily within a European context. Kiely, McCrone and Bechoffer's 2005 study, *Whither Britishness? English and Scottish people in Scotland* (Kiely, 2005) indicates that the sense of Scottish identity is the stronger with 77% of people choosing Scottish as their 'best' identity in 2001 as opposed to 56% in 1979 and only one in six identifying themselves as British in Scotland as opposed to one in five in England.

For most of the last three centuries, the majority of Scots were comfortable with a dual identity in which the sense of Scottish distinctiveness could complement and reinforce the broader emotional loyalty to Britishness, in the formation of which Scottish intellectuals had played a major role. (Crawford, 2007) This duality was at its most potent in the era of Empire. Surveys currently reveal, however, that the Scots rank being Scottish second only to being a mother or father, and ahead of issues of employment and class: cultural

nationalism still seems to be able to co-exist with political unionism, though that is changing and seems set to change further with a referendum on Scottish independence emerging as a real possibility in the near future. (MacDonell, 2007) Currently, post-devolution Scotland finds itself embedded within a multicultural, international context. It also has relatively flexible views of what constitutes a Scots person as detailed by its civic citizenship legislation, which values an individual's choice of residency as highly as their familial descent. (Schoene, 2007)

Elements of being Scottish traditionally include a multifaceted reputation for hospitality, irascibility, meanness, dry wit, strength of feeling, industry, socialist convictions, a keen desire for social equality and justice, a close kinship with the underdog, a capacity—even a willingness—to be different and an inability to express emotions. Many of these qualities are, of course, contradictory. The Scots are proud of their heritage, their landscape, traditions, language and music. Over the years there has been concern with a Scottishness defined by what it is *not*. With the re-opening of the Parliament and the fact that both the Scots language and Gaelic are now recognised by the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages and are covered by the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, reliance on this deficit model does seem to be changing.

Scottishness: inside, outside, them and us.

The terrain of nationalism, be it cultural or political, is a contested one that arouses strong feelings in both supporters and critics. It would be very easy to identify notions of Scottishness which seem to hold true in general, but this would be to fall into the trap of essentialism – a claim that has been made of Scottish culture in general in the past. Scottishness has to be shaped and re-defined in a way that is compatible with the modern world: this requires maturity and confidence as well as knowledge and should not be irreconcilable with the notion of tolerance and recognition of diversity. The kaleidoscope, invented in 1816 by Sir David Brewster – a native of Jedburgh, is a useful metaphor for Scottish identity itself. The elements that make up 'Scottishness' may remain the same but they re-form into different complex patterns over time. Increasingly, contemporary Scottishness involves complicated negotiations among the Scottish 'identities' that have proliferated since the 1970s and 1980s.

It has been asserted that identities are constructed through, not outside, difference i.e. it is only through the relation to 'the Other', the relation to what it is not, that the positive meaning of any term – and thus its identity – can be constructed. Scotland's 'otherness' is often considered to have developed out of the fact it is a small nation. Most commonly the Scots depict themselves as being 'other than the English'. Or, as Angus Calder notes, "the key to Scotland's story in the last third of the twentieth century was a swelling sense of difference from England." (Calder, 2002:xi) But, as a nation without a state, Scotland and its cultural presence worldwide provides an important site for the study of nationality for the Scots themselves and those who examine them.

Since the publication of his highly influential book, *The Break-Up of Britain* (Nairn, 1981a) Tom Nairn has become one of the most noted intellectual commentators on nationalism. His complex and clear-headed analysis of "the modern Janus" (ibid, p.349) provides a means of rebutting the argument that national difference is gradually being eroded under the homogenising tendencies of global capitalism. Rather, the process of globalisation in this sense has actually helped produce more, rather than fewer, nation-states in the world. This idea of nationalism as a necessary outcome of the process of modernity has also been endorsed by commentators more directly concerned with the sphere of culture. One of the most significant of these is Benedict Anderson.

In *Imagined Communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Anderson, 2006) Benedict Anderson argues that nations are 'imagined communities'; imagined not in the sense that they are make believe but by the way in which their members share a common language, culture, history, geography, religion, or, especially in modern nationalism, a common statehood or aspiration to it. He goes on to explain that national sentiment produces "affective bonds" which draw people together through their association with a particular culture, history or territory. This perhaps goes some way towards explaining the difference in definition of Scottishness from those who live beyond its borders. "Nations", he asserts, "depend on an unrelenting fiction of wholeness and unity, to maintain a 'Self' that is at once different from other nations and sovereign in its own identity." (p.13) The sovereignty of a culture depends on its having a place within a comprehensive tradition that is both local and international.

Linda Colley is also concerned with issues of wholeness in *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Colley, 2003), though her concern is with Britishness rather than Scottishness. She contends that the fact that Scottish, Welsh and Irish history is often taught and

interpreted separately and tends to concentrate only on what is distinctive about them, results in what she describes as a “distorted and shrunken history.” (p.xii) She also notes that

In recent years, much of this debate [about Britain’s future] has been couched in terms of real and imaginary cultural traditions and essences. Writings and speeches of varying quality on ‘Scottishness’, ‘Englishness’, ‘Welshness’ and ‘Britishness’ now abound, so much so that the impression is sometimes conveyed that these are purely domestic phenomena nurtured by and dependent upon internal circumstances only. Yet in reality national identity and identities within the island of Great Britain have always been influenced by events and forces beyond it, and this continues to be the case today. (p.xv)

Colley goes on to say that national, ethnic and community identity is conditional and relational and this is defined by social and territorial boundaries. In other words, we usually decide who we are by reference to who and what we are not. Importantly, Colley also recognises it is possible to hold multiple identities. It is possible, for example, for someone to see themselves as a citizen of Glasgow, a Lowlander, a Scot and a Briton.

Professor Cairns Craig who has published widely on Scottish and modernist literature, adopts a similar approach in that he resists the easy and rather defensive polarity of Scottish versus Anglo-centric/metropolitan culture. His approach moves from an essentially linear model of nation and national culture based on historical process (such as Nairn’s model) to a more multi-stranded conception in which spatial relations—the dialectic between inside and outside the bounded nation—come to have an importance alongside the temporal relationship between the present and the past. For Craig,

Culture is a place of dialogue, between self and other, between inner and outer, between past and present, between invented pasts and discovered pasts and value systems past and future. (Craig, 1996: p.117)

This also provides a sophisticated answer to what Joy Hendry termed ‘the Scottish predicament’ (Hendry, 1983)—an unfortunate over-emphasis in contemporary Scottish writing on national questions—in that while adhering to the nation as the primary unit of cultural identification and expression, Craig’s perspective explicitly rejects any restrictive or reactionary conception of national cultures as monolithic homogenous or sealed constructs. This allows him to proffer what may be considered a more appropriate and productive concept of a Scottish cultural tradition.

The nature of the national imagination, like a language, is an unending series of interactions between different strands of tradition, between influences from within and without, between the impact of new experiences and the reinterpretation of past experiences: the nation is a series of ongoing debates, founded in institutions and patterns of life, whose elements are continually changing but which constitute, by

the nature of the issues which they foreground, and by their reiteration of elements of the past, a dialogue which is unique to that particular place. (Craig, 1999: p.31)

The simultaneous endorsement of the nation as the primary site of cultural meaning and identification, alongside the assertion of difference and diversity as the defining features of national culture, provides an ideal framework within which the present study can examine Scottish Children's fiction.

In *Devolving English Literature* (Crawford, 2000) Robert Crawford noted that, "Scotland and Scottish culture, like all nations and cultures, require continual acts of re-imagining which alter and develop their nature." (p 14-15) An older scholar, John Macmurray (1891-1976) urged readers

not to conceive of – and hence ineluctably idealise – the nation as an act of the imagination, rather to experience it as the immediate, entirely tangible, concrete here and now, forever unpredictably evolving into the future, rather than monotonously replicating itself from the past. (Macmurray, 1969)

Taking this premise, Schoene argues that:

Scottish identity thus becomes performative, at once solid and 'in process' clearly intelligible and impossible to pinpoint, historically embodied and promisingly suspended in the grasp of the people's intentions. (Schoene, 2007: 12)

In other words, there seems to be less and less need to talk about Scottish identity because the Scots can be it and do it multiply in their daily lives. Mariadele Boccardi defines national identity as:

The result of the various interactions between the cultural, political, economic, legal and religious institutions of a country on one hand, and the people's sense of the nation's common purpose and trajectory on the other. ((Boccardi, 2007)

Scotland's literature has flourished since the earliest times and has formed an essential, recognisable and celebrated element of Scottish culture and identity among the literate classes since the formation of the medieval Scottish state. Since the Union in 1707 and the 'loss' of independence, much of Scotland's identity has been located, explored and debated in its literature both at home and internationally. In 1998, the academic, author and poet, Christopher Whyte commented that, "in the absence of an elected political authority, the task of representing the nation has repeatedly been devolved to its writers." (Whyte, 1998: 284) Like the earlier discussion of what elements comprise 'Scottishness' generally, there are similar recognisable and distinctive elements within Scotland's literature for adults, and, I would argue, within Scottish Literature for children. The Scottish novel in particular developed into a political force that has shaped the Scottish

people's self-image and national identity. (McIlvanney, 2002) Moreover, Scotland's literature comprises far more than just novels. It includes poetry, including the epic variety, plays, monologues, essays, short stories, monographs and polemics, to name a few elements.

In the year 2000, the Modern Languages Association of America accepted Scottish Literature as a national literature. However, far from it being a relatively recent phenomenon, Scottish Literature is a continuous and multi-channelled entity from its beginnings to the present moment, and should be regarded as an inclusive rather than an exclusive term. It is a 'national' literature, but not a 'narrow' one, reaching out from beyond the nation-state to a European and transatlantic, even a global, reception and sphere of influence. Until relatively recently however, the study of Scottish Literature has been conducted in a largely patriarchal context. The re-discovery of neglected work of women writers has had a significant effect on the literary community. In the last thirty years this has radically changed the way that Scottish Literature for adults has developed. The Scottish Tradition in Literature had been, till recently, both male generated and male fixated in ways that are not true of English writing. (Gifford and McMillan, 1997) Where Scottish women writers have been admitted to the canon of the academies, Susan Ferrier, Margaret Oliphant and Marion Angus for example, they have, till now, always been seen as minor artists; seen not merely as unequal to their male Scottish counterparts but as junior literary sisters of English women writers such as Jane Austen, George Eliott and the Brontes. (Showalter, 1977) The reconsideration of the contribution of women to the total achievement of writing in Scotland currently emerging seems particularly appropriate now, when so many writers, periods and topics are being identified as not being adequately assessed. Significantly though, Scottish Children's Literature, which has only recently begun to be more widely recognised as having its own distinctive traditions and markers, and much of which has also been written by women, has not experienced the same order of recovery as adult literature. To some extent writing for children has always been seen as the 'natural' domain and right of women, and perhaps these writers have not been deemed sufficiently worthy literary peers of male writers to earn extensive study. Alternatively, this lack of attention may centre more closely round the notion that Children's Literature lacks the literary merit of adult literature as discussed previously in this study.

It seems important at this juncture to begin to discuss the distinctive features of Scottish Literature. Rather than fall into the trap of defining it by what it is not, it is of greater

benefit to offer some positive features of the literature from Scotland. In one of the most recent histories of Scottish Literature, *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (2006) the following definition is offered of the features that distinguish Scottish from other—particularly Anglophone—literatures. (Ironically, if the accepted term English Literature were changed to literatures in English, Scottish Literature might be allowed to take its proper, and well-deserved place.)

It can be written by Scots, in Scotland or about it; it can be in English, Scots, Gaelic, Latin and other languages, and it specialises in hybrids: Scots-English in particular, but also Scots-Latin and Scots-Gaelic. Its writers, especially in recent years, work across genre boundaries to an exceptional degree. It has a strong bias towards certain aspects of experience: hidden or suppressed states being one; a powerful pragmatism being another. It has certain characteristic forms especially in poetry; it has certain characteristic concerns, including the famous divided self. Most particularly, it reflects genre in a manner distinctively its own. This manner has many expressions. They include the last Latin epic in these islands, the relationship to questions of native pastoral in eighteenth century debates, the demotic inflection of the elegy, the relationship of oral story to narrative construction and its impact on narrative style, together with many other features that characterise Scottish writing. (Brown, 2006)

Like all literatures of small nations or cultures sustaining themselves simultaneously within and against dominant cross-border literatures, Scottish Literature is politicised to a large extent. It finds spaces for survival, akin to Barrie's islands, refuges for fantasy in *Peter Pan*, but its politics are not what uniquely characterise it. The essential characteristics of Scottish Literature often open out the texts to wider interpretation rather than contracted, simplified or parochial readings. Those Scottish texts *adopted* into 'English' literature offer a particular insight into the literary understanding of Scottish Literature, just as those that English Literature omits demand an explanation of the criteria for their exclusion. A distinctive characteristic of Scots literature, for example, is consideration of the nature of the self: Scottish Literature deals mainly with character and incident. Ours is a literature of hindsight, of that which is not obvious. Scottish authors have a talent for imaginative discourse; realism arrived late north of the border. In recent years this has changed and the literature now contains material that celebrates everyday life and working class dignity, thus deliberately moving Scottish Literature from the rural setting it had occupied for more than 150 years. Scotland is still, nonetheless, a landscape of the mind in much the same way that Stevenson described Scottish writers as having a "Scots accent of the mind." Scottish authors habitually use locality as the basis for discovery and invention. Locality gives Scottish fiction an identity, a rhythm and a voice it would otherwise lack.

This identity conferral, however, is not univocal. Scottish Literature has excelled in unreliable narrators. First person narratives give their inventions an intimacy entirely suited to the undertone of irony they wish to explore. These writers rarely withhold information. They tell all, allowing the events to speak for themselves: R.L.Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1883) is the archetypal example, an adventure story with attitude wherein the underlying subtleties found in David Balfour's priggishness and Alan Breck Stewart's romantic spirit can be explored or renounced without detraction. The Scottish landscape can become the backdrop for adventure and the hero's strength and guile are pitted as much against the natural surroundings and his own will and character as any enemies or dangers he may face. Hard work and determination sit alongside a strong sense of place, and the certainty of not only knowing right from wrong, but also doing the right thing.

Scottish writers, time and again, use the voice as the means of situating the narrator's identity and location, in both place and time, and thus invite the reader into the world the writer is anxious to preserve, expose and explore. The first person narrator forms a firm and immediate pact with the reader by taking them in to the writer's confidence. It establishes the mood and tone of the story and narrows the focus by enticing the reader into seeing the action through the eyes of the character. It also establishes character, background, place, nationality and class. The voice and the first person narrator form a direct link with the Scots oral tradition. Craftiest of all are those writers who employ the intimacy of the first person narrator within a third person narrative, marrying both insight and detachment. Mollie Hunter, for example, makes use of this strategy in *A Pistol in Greenyards* (1965). This harrowing tale of the Highland Clearances is told by the central protagonist, Connal Ross, in the first person. He narrates it to a young Lowland doctor, whom he initially regards as an enemy. Dr Hamilton has begun to realise that the version of events leading to the Highlanders' decision to emigrate to America that he has been given is inaccurate. He asks Connal to tell him "the truth of it" and Connal responds thus:

'I cannot tell you,' I said roughly, 'for I could not speak of it without tears, and I am too much of a man grown now to cry like a girl.'

I turned away from him and looked seawards so that my face was hidden from him and after a minute I added quietly, 'Yet I could write it down—I *will* write it down to show everyone the truth of what happened, whenever I can get my hands on pen and paper. I can do it, I know, for I was a pupil of John Chisholm, our bard, and he trained me how to hold a story in my head so that I could pass it on to future generations.' (p. 13)

Encapsulated in this brief extract, and in the words of the first person narrator, lies the evidence of this insight and detachment. The story Connal is about to record is so emotionally loaded and painful because of his personal involvement, that he does not trust himself to tell it orally without being overcome. He also demonstrates his understanding of the permanence of a written story and in its written form there are important implications about the verisimilitude of the recorded events.

### Scots Literature and the Question of Language

The question of language has been and continues to be a central one in the reception of Scottish Literature both domestically and in international English speaking markets, and much of the debate surrounding the state of contemporary Scottish fiction inevitably raises questions of a linguistic nature. Language becomes an important factor in the construction of literary nationality as it is a vehicle of nationality in itself: vocabulary particular to a nation, expressions etc. A sense of national identity is largely created by our language and so a knowledge about the languages of Scotland is particularly important at a time of devolved power and a 'new' Scottish Parliament, if the nation is to develop and build on the proper appreciation of its cultural heritage. The issue of Scots language in education, and thus by extrapolation, in Scottish children's books, is a complex one. In any nation where one language is decreed as the official one, yet where more people speak another language, there is bound to be confusion and discord. In Scotland, the problem is compounded by the fact that Scots, unlike Gaelic, exists on a linguistic continuum along with Standard English. So, the question must be asked, 'What is Scots language?'

Scots language is a set of forms into which the Germanic language, known to modern philologists as Old English, has developed within urban and rural lowland Scotland, and regions such as Caithness, Orkney and Shetland. (McLeod and Smith, 2006) It is the language of a people with a distinctive and fascinating social history reflected in a folk culture of exceptional richness. Scots is not a dialect, for the simple reason it includes numerous different dialects; but it has also been asserted that neither is it a language in the full sense that English and French are languages: it does not, for example, have a standard system of spelling and grammar. As Max Weinrich famously recorded, "A language is a dialect with an army..." (Weinrich, 1945) While Scots is recognised by the European Charter for Lesser Used Languages, it is not officially recognised by the British government and there is not any important degree of use for non-literary, utilitarian writing. Scots is often defined negatively, as consisting only of pronunciations,

grammatical features and vocabulary items that are not found in standard literary English. Scots speakers typically retain pronunciations that have disappeared in England, and do use distinctive grammatical constructions and vocabulary. There are currently three varieties of 'language' used commonly in Scotland: Scots, Scottish Standard English (SSE) and English of the kinds spoken in England—Anglo-English. These are not discrete sets of categories but more often a continuum of usages. At present, the terms Scots and Scottish Standard English refer to polar extremes on that linguistic continuum rather than two distinct and mutually exclusive speech terms. Scottish English is historically a different entity than Scots. The majority of the contemporary population speak some kind of Scottish English but will write Standard English or a close approximation thereto.

Tradition assumes that literature as a whole, as well as each successful work within it, can be tested by the criterion of whether or not it forms an organic unity. Since this unity is revealed at the level of language, the fact that Burns and Scott write not only in Scots and English, but also by mixing Scots and English, necessarily means that their work, and the work of many Scottish children's authors, will fail the test of organic unity. There is also the added paradox that while the traditional Scots forms may be valued in the work of Burns and Scott, they can be denigrated in the speech of children. It is perhaps for this reason, more than any other, that publishers have wrestled with Scottish literature and its likely appeal furth of Scotland and that the linguistic dilemma for Scottish children's writers is more acute than in any other literary category. Language style can be an important marker of identity. Children learn to use language or languages in culturally shaped ways and through language are introduced to a particular tradition of oral and written literature and to particular sets of knowledge and values.

Attitudes to Scots language and culture have formed a barrier in the past and have led to a condition known as the 'Scottish Cringe' both inside and outside Scotland. In educational terms it is possible to trace attitudes towards the use of Scots language, and elements of the 'Scottish Cringe' from the early modern period in history. (Wilson, 2007) The earliest attempt to change the language spoken by the Scots can be traced back to 1695 when there was an attempt to set up English schools in the Highlands to, "root out the Gaelic language." (Acts of Parliament in Scotland, 1695) This strategy was not completely successful and Gaelic and Scots continued to be used. The Scots language progressed in Scotland between the years of 1314 and 1707 from a non-literary tongue, through the period of its greatest flowering and into its decline as a high-prestige language. From 1424 it was used as the language of parliament. By 1707 the erosion of Scots in all but intimate

and informal contexts seemed inevitable. The language came under its greatest threat in the eighteenth century because the sons of chiefs were not allowed to inherit from their fathers unless they could read, write and speak English. Yet English only became the standard language of Education after the Education Act of 1872. Thereafter the Scots become, essentially, a bi-lingual nation, using English for formal purposes and reserving the use of Scots for informal, family and leisure situations. The Scots language was thus reduced to a subaltern position, maintaining this even until after the Second World War. A report from His Majesty's Inspectors of schools in 1946 stated,

it is not the language of educated people anywhere, and could not be described as a suitable medium of education and culture. Schools should wage a planned and unrelenting campaign to remove Scots language from schools.(Quoted in Niven, 1998)

This attitude took some time to change, but change it did, as reflected in a document from the Scottish Education Department's Central Committee on English, published thirty years later in 1976 which stated that, " Scottish Literature should be an essential ingredient... throughout primary and secondary education." And again, the 1981 Scottish Consultative Council for the Curriculum (SCCC) Primary Language Arts document which stated that, "the child's Scottish voice with its idioms and dialect words must be worthy of respect." By 1991 and the publication of the English Language 5-14 document this had changed to,

Pupils should be allowed to use their mother tongue throughout the school. Given that language and identity are inextricably linked, it is often through literature in the Scots language that culture is transmitted. Scottish writing and writing about Scotland should permeate the curriculum.

This educational direction has been affirmed and consolidated in the latest curriculum development, *A Curriculum for Excellence: Purpose and Principles for the Curriculum 3-18* (2004), which advocates,

Provid(ing) a locus for valuing and building upon the languages that children bring to school. The Language and Literature of Scotland are valuable sources of learning about culture, identity and language

As might be expected, this change of attitude has been reflected and refracted by Scottish authors writing both for children and adults. Because of the powerfully didactic elements in Children's Literature of course, this change has the greatest impact on literature for children. Where previously an author may have struggled with the decision about the language to be used because of its potential effect on readers as either a barrier or gateway to understanding the story, they now have, effectively, *permission* to use the full range of language appropriate to the context of the stories. These language choices are not without consequences. Publishers may still decide that the language choice impedes

understanding, and thus either request linguistic changes or refuse to publish for an international audience. Authors also may choose to ignore these difficulties and, as some always have done, maintain the linguistic integrity of the text in terms of its setting in both place and time. It is the special history of the Scots language that has made Scottish writers so culturally alert to the co-existing differences, and disparities in power, between it and English, between what is said and how it is written; what is written and how we speak; and when and in what genre we do one and not the other.

### Scottish Identity, Education and the ‘placing’ of Children’s Literature

If the Scottish voice is quite clearly part of a sense of Scottishness, unique to Scotland and forming a bond between pupils, their home and their world, then the teaching of Scottish language and literature can contribute to a pupil’s sense of national identity. Studies of Children’s Literature have to begin with children learning their language and learning to play with it in the fashion of their culture. Thus, Scottish Literature must be included in the Scottish curriculum, *at all stages*, so that pupils are made aware of the richness and potential of the Scottish voice in literature and, in turn hopefully, they become interested in seeing it maintained. It is in the education system and the media that the complete rehabilitation of the Scots language must begin, and it is through language, that literature seeks to define the relationships between child and culture. Children learn to read their culture right from the start of their education, and discover quickly how reading overlaps with their lives. Acknowledging the centrality of literature to this development, it is necessary to provide a stipulative, working definition of Scottish Literature, one which will be used to underpin the text selection within this study:

A Scottish text, can best be described as a coherent and substantial body of writing, in many possible modes and genres, which deals centrally with issues of life and experience in Scotland, is set in Scotland, or which exhibits recognisably Scottish attitudes towards Scotland or the world at large. Such writing will engage the reader in the identification of and reflection on the wide range of cultural communities and individual experiences which constitute a distinctive national culture. While mainly produced by Scottish writers, texts need not be limited to Scottish authorship; the experience of non-Scots living and working in Scotland or commenting on Scottish life and culture from outside, when coherent and substantial, can justifiably be regarded as a valuable contribution to Scottish Literature. Additionally, Scottish born writers can write material that is not overtly Scottish in nature but if told in their own true and unique Scots voice then it should be considered a Scottish text.

Examples using this definition include: *Daughter of the Sea* (Doherty, 1996) non Scots author setting work in Scotland; *Fleshmarket* (Morgan, 2003) non-Scots author living in

Scotland; *The Medici Seal* (Breslin, 2006) Scottish author writing material that is not overtly Scottish; the *Harry Potter* books (Rowling, 1997-2007) a non-Scottish author but the values she embraces and the conflict in her world between good and bad, according to Douglas Gifford (2006), clearly follow fundamental Scottish novelistic themes; *The Garbage King* (Laird, 2003) exhibits Scottish attitudes to the world at large; *Cold Tom* (Prue, 2001) a non-Scottish author using an original Scottish text (“Tam Lin”) as source material. Nicola Morgan, a non-Scot living in Scotland, has supported such a conceptualisation arguing that trying to identify what a Scottish book *is* is only difficult if you confuse Scottish with ‘local’. This definition avoids that position. Other commentators worry that too wide a definition makes the argument about claiming a particular Scottish Children’s Literature harder to make.

When faced with such complexity, the easy solution is of course to deny the complications, to idealise and simplify. People who fear diversity argue that there must be common ground on which the nation can unite – some kind of marker of literary national identity, to brand us as a single community, a tangible commonweal. The approach adopted in this study resists such temptation and seeks to outline a meaningful construction of the nation that acknowledges both internal diversity and the complexity of international relations. Paul Willemen frames the question in a useful way, observing that, “the discourses of nationalism and those addressing or comprising national specificity are not identical.” (Willemen, 1994: p210) There is an important distinction to be made between national literature and literary images: where one comprises a *representation* of the nation, the other is perhaps more *representative* of the nation. While the former tends to stress ideas of national unity and continuity, providing, as it were, a distinct ‘brand’ that can be recognised globally, the latter offers diversity, difference, and the possibility of dialogue within the literary space of the nation. These key sites of tension—between exclusive and inclusive conceptions of national culture and between the national and international circulation of cultural products—are further indications of the essentially double-faced nature of nationalism. But they are also fundamental issues which must be addressed if any account of the national dimension of contemporary cultural production and consumption is to avoid the label of a regressive and essentialist nationalism or being defined by the vague contingency of post-national identity politics. These themes will be re-visited in Chapter 6, when there will be full consideration of Scottish Children’s Fiction in Post-Devolution Scotland and a more detailed examination of a contemporary (re)definition of Scottishness.

A central pre-occupation of Children's Literature is with the nature of selfhood and its relationship to place. Selfhood may be shown to depend on a character's recuperation of a lost culture. While Scottish Children's Literature cannot precisely be considered 'lost', it can certainly be described as subaltern.

The term subaltern was first used in 1934 by Antonio Gramsci and led to the foundation of Subaltern Studies in India in 1982. (Sardar and Van Loon, 2004) The term subaltern describes social groups that have been subjugated and excluded by the dominant power, in particular peasants and the lower working classes, but also women and other minority groups. The double marginalisation of writers who are both Scottish and who write for children, whose voices traditionally were not heard and who have been regarded as an unprestigious readership—and in the case of women, writers who are triply marginalised—means that Scottish Children's Literature can certainly be described as a subaltern literature. One of most prominent scholars in Subaltern Studies, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, makes clear the distinction that those who are subaltern are those whose voices are not heard, those who 'have been written out of the narrative'. She makes a further key point though when she argues that it is not the Establishment's role to give the subaltern a voice, but to clear the space to allow it to speak for itself. The subaltern, in the form of Scottish Children's Literature, a small part of two already marginalised genres — Children's Literature and Scottish Literature—can, and should, speak. The use of an heteroglossial Scots, or a demotically accented Scottish voice has proved to be particularly effective in repossessing the canon: James Kelman's work springs to mind in adult literature and perhaps Catherine MacPhail or Jamie Jauncey will serve as exemplars for children and young adults.

Young Scottish readers need to be aware of texts' absences; the ideas or assumptions it takes for granted and therefore does not explicitly assert. If the only literature that is available is that which is labelled English, rather even than British, then this becomes even more important. Consider the popular series books of the 1950s and 1960s: Elinor M Brent-Dyer's *Chalet School* series (Brent-Dyer, 1925-1970), Enid Blyton's prodigious oeuvre or any of the so-called 'classic' children's books such as *Swallows and Amazons* (Ransome, 1930) or *The Secret Garden* (Hodgson-Burnett, 1911). Readers would be hard pressed to identify any but token Scottish characters and any that do exist seem only to confirm the stereotypical depiction. The question must be asked whether any characters from minority groups in these books, such as the Scots, only achieve success by giving up their distinctiveness and adopting the values and lifestyles of the mainstream society, or

whether they manage to succeed while keeping sight of, and remaining true to their heritage? Do the Scottish characters solve their own problems and make their own decisions or are they helped by people from the mainstream? If the Scottish voice is absent or subordinate then there is no likelihood of change or influence with the 'other' and change is all one-sided: a form of colonisation.

Theoretical foundations for the study of Scottish Children's Literature are still under construction and Children's Literature, of any nationality, is rarely taught or acknowledged as a serious object of study at Scottish universities. Since there is only one specific department of Scottish Literature in British universities, at the University of Glasgow, it is perhaps understandable that the study of Scottish Children's Literature is not widespread. A supplementary reason for this could be the concern that there might be a dearth of distinctive Scottish Children's Literature of quality, which represents Scottish culture and depicts Scottish identity in a meaningful way for children; this is far from the truth. Scottish children's fiction offers a robust and confident corpus of work that presents creative, imaginative and culturally distinctive material, capable of commercial success and strong enough to conquer both national and global markets.

The emergence of Scottish literature written specifically for a child audience can be traced to the early nineteenth century, to Sir Walter Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather*, (Scott, 1828-1831) which offered an engaging introduction to Scottish history, and thence to the publication of *Holiday House* by Catherine Sinclair in 1839. At the same time as these books were being written and published, the nation states were assuming their modern form and cultivating particular kinds of literature as commensurate expressions of national cultures. The juvenile reading audience in Scotland grew in size and commercial importance from the mid-nineteenth century as religious suspicion of the effects of fiction on the young diminished. It grew further from the passing of the 1872 Education (Scotland) Act which, as well as establishing English as the language for education, also made school attendance compulsory for all children. In addition, the slow development of public libraries in Scotland after the Act of 1853, which permitted the raising of a rate to support them, was boosted by Carnegie money in the last decades of the century. The importance of the role public libraries played in creating an appetite for books and in shaping the tastes of young readers from decidedly non-literary backgrounds cannot be underestimated. (Milton, 2006)

It is in the stories written for and told to children that a culture confirms and reproduces itself. In order to understand the way a culture envisions itself we need look no further than the stories adults tell and re-tell their children. Literary reading begins where the reader is and goes on from there. Unless the reader finds him or herself in a book they will have a hard time finding anyone else. Children are in the process of learning to become members of the adult community they have been born into. To join that community they must learn its values—become the kind of people who can live within it by accepting and negotiating its particular visions of what kind of people they should be. To be shaped by one's culture is merely to be human, and Children's Literature is inevitably part of that which does the shaping. In turn, children's fiction, far from comprising a mere afterthought in Scotland's creative psyche, plays a fundamental role in the shaping of that collectively imagined space known as Scottish Literature and the culture it seeks to represent. If it is true that in some sense children become what they read about, then the narratives that children are exposed to can play an important part in making them who they believe themselves to be. In offering subject positions, fictional texts for children work to construct their readers' subjectivity. They do this by encouraging real readers to become implied readers, to identify with specific characters and points of view through which a text is focalised. Readers can therefore be manipulated; inexperienced readers perhaps more than most. Knowing how to read against a text therefore can become a significant skill. That makes it all the more important in terms of the existence of Scottish culture, that there should be an identifiable Scottish national Children's Literature in which Scottish children are represented and where readers can both recognise and question the images, points of view, experiences and characters presented.

### Education Re-visited: Identity and the Shifting Frames of Culture

If the children's books from Scotland reveal significant elements of the national character, or illustrate the ways that Scottish Children's Literature constructs recognisable views of reality for their home audience, then these distinctions will only become apparent if the books are explored against books of different national literatures, examining the way in which they take up similar themes, evaluate similar characters or use the same narrative styles. What distinguishes one culture from another is the unique way of structuring common elements or experiences. The values presented in children's books are bound to have an effect on children. They can effectively amount to a hidden curriculum, offering a view of the world that children may absorb without even realising it. There are implications then for Scottish Children's Literature if the child protagonists are clearly

distinctive, atypical because of their racial identity and the racial assumptions of their authors. Some texts may incline towards essentialism, assuming that there is something identifiable as a Scottish character shared by all members of the group. Other texts that accurately reflect national and ethnic differences rooted in cultural expression, tend to reveal the ongoing process of what cultural theorists call hybridisation. (Nodelman, 2003) This is the process by which the values and attitudes of minority groups and members of the dominant group are influenced and changed by their dealings with one another. It is perhaps for this reason more than any other that the case for Scottish Children's Literature must be argued, and also that its hitherto absence, or at the very least, low profile, must be deplored.

Post-devolution Scotland finds itself embedded within a multicultural, international context. The talk is now of "One Scotland: Many Cultures", that is, of national identity as a series of encounters and negotiations within the political fact of the state. Post-devolution, the hope is for a Scotland less defensive and less anxious, as well as one more open to multiple ways of knowing, being and living. If that is the case then the question must be asked, are we advocating a plural Scotland, which implies respect for inherited boundaries and where individuals are located within one or another of a series of ethno-racial groups to be protected and preserved, or a cosmopolitan Scotland which promotes multiple identities, emphasises the dynamic and changing nature of many groups and is responsive to the potential for the creation of new cultural combinations? How can our literature, especially our Children's Literature, contribute to the debate?

Pluralism sees cosmopolitanism as a threat to identity, while cosmopolitanism sees in pluralism a provincial unwillingness to engage in the complex dilemmas and opportunities presented by contemporary life. (Hollinger, 1995)

Literature's particular dynamic, its centrality to literacy and education, its underpinning of democracy, as well as the special symbiosis between readership and citizenship, make it particularly well suited to the opportunities for engaging with and exploring this argument and exemplifying it. Indeed, Carnegie Medal winner, Theresa Breslin, provides a current text relevant to this thesis in her 2005 novel *Divided City* which takes as its central context the ongoing sectarian divide between Catholic and Protestant communities played out in the rivalries of their respective football teams, Glasgow Celtic and Glasgow Rangers, and their supporters. Additionally, Breslin draws interesting parallels in her sub-plot which concerns the experience of a young Muslim asylum seeker, who having escaped persecution and torture in his own country, then has to endure racial attack and ignorance in the country which has offered him asylum. This is only one contemporary Scottish

children's book that tackles current issues of identity, education and change. Scotland's future manifests itself promisingly in the vibrant hybridity of some contemporary children's fiction, produced predominantly by women writers experimenting with a feminist re-positioning of society and culture outwith patriarchy's myopic co-ordinates of power. What Scottish Children's Literature currently seems to be offering is a repositioning of the boundaries of difference by dismantling, among other things, gender binarisms and other oppressive structures such as race and class. Children's Literature, almost more than any other, generates those interactive in-between spaces out of which Homi Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (Bhabha, 1994) says new selves can emerge and nations can be fruitfully reconfigured.

Scotland's evident sense of national cohesion is a successful idea rather than a genetic actuality. Scottish identity has always been constructed through processes of intercultural exchange arising from the interchange of diverse cultures, through diaspora and immigration and the integration of immigrant communities into an essentially civic and cultural—and by no means ethnic—conception of Scottishness. Thus hybridisation of 'native' and immigrant cultures constantly redefines and renews the nature of Scottishness. Identity is itself hybrid; accordingly there is a range of ways of being Scottish and of depicting that in literature. Scotland is often and rightly described, not only in modern times, but throughout its history, as multicultural. The current view of national identity in Scotland seems to be hospitable, in the broadest sense, to that cultural difference—to the difference even of the nation itself. The thrust towards a Scottish cosmopolitanism seems to be emerging as the chosen way forward in literature, culture and society. In the developing diversity of modern Scotland citizens from other countries new to Scotland are likely to make their own contribution to its literature in the future.

### Limiting the Field

Broad theoretical perspectives now give way to more detailed study of Scottish Children's fiction, as a central part of the corpus of Scottish Children's Literature. The research undertaken for this study clearly established that, rather than there being a dearth of Scottish Children's fiction that conforms to the definition of a Scottish text given earlier, there is a vast quantity of material that could have been included. However, a study like this could never encompass the full range of Scottish Children's fiction in existence, only a carefully selected number of representative texts could be chosen. It was important that the

nominated materials were first identified as quality texts and then as quality Scottish texts. Since this is effectively a ‘base-line’ study, evidence had to be provided of a history of Scottish Children’s Literature, so material had to be included from the nineteenth century onwards. A number of case-studies were developed to illustrate particular themes or literary tropes often found in both Scottish and Scottish Children’s Literature, for example, the focus on islands. Historical fiction has long been considered one of Scottish Literature’s most distinctive and critically acclaimed genres. The number of historical fiction texts to be found in Scottish Children’s Literature seemed to confirm that this was also the case here. Additionally, changing views of Scottish identity can be tracked through historical fiction, so a focus on this genre was included. A strong case has been made for the distinctiveness of Scottish fantasy literature and almost every major Scottish writer has been drawn to the genre at some time. The best known Scottish Children’s text, *Peter Pan* (1911) is a fantasy, and I wished to explore whether Scottish Children’s fantasy fiction was equally typical, so a section of the study was devoted to that genre. Finally, I had a strong sense that the Scottish Children’s fiction published since the Scottish parliament was re-constituted was proliferating and changing and therefore was worthy of study. A section examining contemporary Scottish Children’s fiction in post-devolution Scotland, but which also traced contemporary development of some of the earlier themes—*islands, historical and fantasy fiction*—was included. Each chapter contains self-contained discussion but also conveys a sense of continuity. This could be considered a post modern strategy and in that it broadly reflects the children’s books discussed. This selection illustrates that Scottish Children’s Literature exists and that it has an extensive range, but it only scratches the surface of the array of material that exists for further critical study.

The first group of fiction texts provide a broad overview of the range of material within Scottish Children’s Literature and presents some of the commonly recognised features of national identity within Scottish Children’s fiction.

### Chapter 3: Identity, Education and the Evolution of Scottish Children's Literature

Far in the Past I peer, and see  
 A Child upon the Nursery floor,  
 A Child with books upon his knee,  
 Who asks like Oliver for more!  
 The number of his years is IV,  
 And yet in letters hath he skill,  
 How deep he dives in Fairy-lore!  
 The Books I loved, I love them still!

*The Ballade of the Bookworm* (Andrew Lang)

This chapter introduces a number of primary Scottish Children's fiction texts as a means of providing a brief historical and thematic overview of the range of Scottish Children's fiction. It begins by examining *Holiday House* from the Scottish perspective and in terms of its transformative role in the purpose of Children's Literature towards enjoyment rather than didacticism. It examines Children's Literature and education and broadly sketches in the development of Scottish Children's fiction in terms of significant authors and in the scope of their subject matter. It identifies key genres within Scottish Children's fiction and flags them up for later close scrutiny. Finally, it uses the island trope to examine Scottish Culture and the legacy of place in a series of novels with island settings.

#### The 'Golden Age' of Children's Literature

There have been, to date, two acknowledged 'Golden Ages' in Children's Literature in the English-speaking world: the first from about 1860 till 1914 and the second from the mid-1950s till the 1970s. Scots who were writing for children in the first 'golden age' include R.L. Stevenson, George MacDonald, Andrew Lang, J.M. Barrie, S.R. Crockett, John Buchan, Kenneth Grahame, R.M. Ballantyne and Ian MacLaren. Naomi Mitchison, Eric Linklater, Mollie Hunter and Joan Lingard are only a few of the Scots writing for children from the 1950s on. With the publication of *Holiday House* (1839) Edinburgh author Catherine Sinclair brought about the first of the major changes characteristic of Victorian Children's Literature. The children in her book were naughty, noisy, disobedient and adventurous: and they *played*. They were indulged by adults in a way that had not previously been seen and were entertained by imaginative and original fairy tales told by

their uncle within the text, which helped to pave the way for the explosion in the fantasy genre for children that was to come. The importance of this book in the history of Children's Literature cannot be underestimated. It was written with the intention of changing the quality and kind of reading supplied for young people and presented central protagonists who displayed distinctively Scottish characteristics in a recognisably Scottish context.

### Holiday House

Sinclair, along with another author of Scottish origin, R.M. Ballantyne, played an important part in the mid-nineteenth-century general emancipation of British children's writing from religious and moral didacticism. The critic J.H. Millar, not usually given to generous judgements, includes *Holiday House* in his 1903 volume, *A Literary History of Scotland*. (Millar, 1903) He describes it as, "one of the very best children's books ever written" (p 619) despite the fact that Sinclair was still, in his view, a little inclined to moralise and preach. Similarly, F.J. Harvey Darton describes it as, "the best original children's book written up to that time"—its publication was in 1839. *Holiday House*, despite the author's lingering tendency to prompt children about what to think, say, look and feel – something she had previously claimed to dislike – uses imagination, humour and story telling skills and almost succeeds entirely in sublimating its overall didactic purpose. More recently it has been described as "an almost revolutionary novel" (Carpenter, 1984) "the first modern children's novel" (Wall, 1991) and "a landmark text" (Hunt, 2001). *Holiday House*, as a consequence, is frequently identified as a turning point in Children's Literature and as a bridge between earlier, more obvious, didactic literature and the more liberated work of authors like Lewis Carroll and others. However, most of these descriptions are based on the first half of the book and particularly the chapters *The Grand Feast*, *The Terrible Fire* and *Uncle David's Nonsensical Story* rather than the very traditional death-scene ending which is foreshadowed throughout the second half of the book. More interestingly for the purposes of this study, the novel's Scottish setting and context and its place within the Scottish literary tradition is rarely mentioned or acknowledged in any literary criticism.

The novel itself is a loose narrative woven round a number of incidents described in varying detail, held together by the central protagonists and their family and setting. Since there is evidence to suggest that the author 'tried out' her stories in response to the perennial demand of young family members to, "tell me a story", the structure is not

unexpected. The tales were expanded and refined through various re-tellings to the point that they are of optimum length and sufficient variety of idiom and interest to engage the full attention of an audience with an age range between toddlers and teens. The presence of a live audience compelled Sinclair to portray an accurate and unsentimental picture of how children thought, felt and spoke at that time. She has a sharp ear for the way that children talk to each other, and to adults, as well as the way adults talk to children, as illustrated in the extract from an account of Harry and Laura and their friends' expedition to Arthur's Seat with Mr Harwood.

"We must certainly drink the water at St Anthony's Well," observed Laura; "because whatever anyone wishes for when he tastes it, is sure to happen immediately."

"Then I shall wish that some person may give me a new doll," said Mary Forrester. "My old one is only fit for being a lady's maid to a fine new doll."

"I am in ninety-nine minds what to wish for," exclaimed Harry; "we must take care not to be like the foolish old woman in the fairy tale, who only got a yard of black pudding."

"I shall ask for a piebald pony, with a whip, a saddle, and for a week's holidays,—and a new watch,—and a spade,—and a box of French plums,—and to be first at the top of Arthur's Seat,—and—and —"

"Stop, Peter! Stop! You can only have one wish at St Anthony's Well," interrupted Mr Harwood. "If you ask more, you lose all." (p 51)

The central protagonists, Laura and Harry Graham, are the two youngest children of the family and are based on Sinclair herself and her brother Archie. They are attractive little tearaways: 'real' children depicted as possessing humour and carelessness in equal measures, whose curiosity and willingness to stretch their given boundaries gets them into a number of scrapes, and this is the strength of the book. To contemporary audiences these children show what is now considered to be a natural need to experiment, to question adult authority and, they invariably take the 'naughty' side of any question. They are intent on testing the boundaries given them and are committed to finding out why things are allowed or forbidden. Notwithstanding, the children are truthful, never greedy or cruel and are unfailingly considerate of one another, if nobody else. A key distinction that is made in the novel is between *naughtiness* and *wickedness*; the first being tolerated and the second abhorred. The children's older brother Frank, by comparison, is particularly virtuous and is described as being "too old for nursery discipline now" and is to be sent away to school for a further year before going to sea.

*Holiday House* stands near the beginning of an important line of children's writing, that of the 'domestic adventure'. In its time, this was one of the first books that portrayed children and family situations naturalistically and for this reason it emerges as one of the

strongest and most influential books of the period. Similarly, Catherine Sinclair also stands at the beginning of a long tradition in children's writing, which creates space for the (sometimes hazardous) juvenile exploration of the world by removing the parental presence.

The children are left under the supervision of their indulgent grandmother and uncle, their widowed father having gone travelling in Europe on doctor's orders following his acute grief and distress after the death of his wife. To counterbalance their tendency to "spoil[ed] them with indulgence," Sir Edward leaves one Mrs Crabtree as their immediate carer, though he does acknowledge that, "she is a little severe perhaps." However he thinks that, "her harshness will be the best remedy for [their] extreme indulgence." (11) Mrs Crabtree's approach to discipline might be regarded as more of an 'old-style' disciplinarian whose method of child-rearing is summed up in the epigraph to Chapter Two:

She gave them some tea without any bread  
She whipp'd them all soundly, and sent them to bed. (19)

In this case, Mrs Crabtree wields a particularly Scottish instrument of torture, the tawse. This was a leather strap, split into separate strands and used, up until the 1980s, in Scottish schools for corporal punishment. Readers might assume that, being subjected to this approach, the children would be afforded even less freedom with their governess than they might be granted were their parents around. But Sinclair shows how ineffectual and even counterproductive such measures are. Scolded incessantly by their nurse, the children continue to be "heedless, frolicsome beings", with Laura being equally as bad as her brother Harry. Their Uncle David's strategy of reproaching them, more in sorrow than anger, proves a much more effective influence on their moral and emotional development than Mrs Crabtree's efforts to, "make them good children, though she were to flay them alive first." (29) Harry and Laura have been described as, "inveterate recidivists" (Rudd, 2004) and show that Mrs Crabtree's methods, including beatings, are so ineffectual that she is finally dismissed.

For all that, the children seem generally fond of their nurse and bear her little animosity, "all the terrors of Mrs Crabtree, and her cat-o'-nine-tails, were generally forgotten soon after she left the room." (18) Mrs Crabtree, despite her apparently dyspeptic disposition — she chastises others in the house also, Betty the maid and Jack the footboy—is also presented as a deliberate figure of fun. Her dialogue is littered with malapropisms, "...the very *statutes* in the streets – would come running along...them great *pyramuses* in Egypt

will turn upside down...”(134) She represents an older style of discipline, a different conception of the child and has a different vision of how children should be brought up. Additionally, it is she who seems to present the most stereotypical picture of the Scots, although with limited use of Scots language. She most clearly represents the “society for the suppression of amusement” that Sinclair deplors in her “Preface” (ix). Mrs Crabtree objects to the waste of candles when the family go out to celebrate a British victory in battle, “Can’t people be happy in the dark?” (135) she asks. Scots thriftiness, so often ridiculed in comedy, appears here quite subtly along with that famous ‘dourness’ and resistance to pleasure or enjoyment.

### Children’s Literature and Education

In *Holiday House*, Mrs Crabtree personifies, perhaps more clearly than any of the other characters, one view of the education of children prevalent at the time: that of ‘spare the rod and spoil the child’. Simultaneously, there was also a view about ‘knowledge-transfer’, as Sinclair expresses it, “every effort is used to stuff the memory, like a cricket-ball, with well-known facts and ready-made opinions.” (Preface vi) Mrs Crabtree is suspicious of that concept also, especially as far as Laura is concerned. When she is finally asked to leave she witheringly describes Laura as, “perfectly deaved wi’ edication” (184) after her instruction from her new teacher. The children’s uncle David seems to share her concerns to some extent. When he launches into his fairy story, he reflects nostalgically about the past when, “toys were not then made to teach mathematics, nor story-books to give instruction in chemistry and navigation”. (120) The similarity of this sentiment with the arguments about the function or purpose of Children’s Literature is too close to be missed.

In *Holiday House* Catherine Sinclair seems to use her Christian Evangelical beliefs—she was a member of the Scottish Episcopalian church—to support an educational philosophy based on allowing children the space in which to grow, experiment and make mistakes. In allowing the children’s upbringing to be managed by their indulgent grandmother and child-like uncle, in place of a dead mother and absent father, the children are allowed to grow and mature in their own time, in supportive surroundings. The children, “start rapidly advancing in education” (184) *after* their strict nurse Mrs Crabtree’s departure. Their guardians’ subscription to an approach based on, “family affection, built on the

strong foundation of religion and morality” (167) seems to mirror Sinclair’s own instincts that an open, free and, generally egalitarian environment, within a loving Christian home was better than any rigid and overly doctrinal system. This view was closely aligned to the views of educationalists Johann Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) who also stressed that learning should be allowed to develop naturally within a supportive environment. This vision of childhood in Scotland may seem to contradict that previously depicted most often, anecdotally, of a rather joyless, inflexible, inhibited and overly dutiful experience. As with all stereotypical representations, the truth does not lie in the extremes.

Presbyterianism, the ‘national’ religion of Scotland, placed great emphasis on education – principally for the study of the Bible and scripture—but also expected that faith should be exhibited in action as well as in words. The virtues of generosity, hospitality and a commitment to social reform were expected of all Scottish citizens, along with proclaiming the gospel. Harry and Laura, as well as their brother Frank, a veritable paragon of virtue, portray this essential Scots characteristic instinctively and without fanfare. Harry and Frank pursue a young thief, a pickpocket of about Harry’s age, and successfully retrieve their Uncle David’s purse. Afterwards, it is Harry who causes the adults to review their judgement of the thief, when he reminds them of the poverty and lack of privilege, as well as the lack of moral guidance or support so often experienced by children in the poorest parts of society at that time. The matter is dealt with in the dialogue rather than featuring as a set piece of moralising within the text.

It can be argued that Sinclair was unable to sustain the focus on enjoyment throughout the whole of *Holiday House*: its final chapters resort to a heart-wrenching account of Frank’s death and the inevitable impact that this has on the younger children both in terms of managing grief but also in terms of their maturity and character formation. However, it stands out from other children’s books of the time because of the originality of the approach and the long-term effect was a substantial change in the purpose of Children’s Literature.

#### Developments in Scottish Children’s Literature

The magazine *Good Words for the Young* was founded in 1868 and was edited for many years by George MacDonald. *At the back of the North Wind* (1871) was first published here and the pressure to fill its pages produced MacDonald’s best work for children. *The*

*Princess and the Goblin*, *The Light Princess* and *The Princess and the Curdie* were all serialised here, along with other, more realistic, fictions including Stevenson's *Treasure Island* (Stevenson, 1883). Totally liberated from any didactic purpose, *Treasure Island* rode roughshod over what had previously been the rules for children's writing. In this adventure tale, Long John Silver is a much less obvious villain, displaying some heroic qualities. The boundaries between good and bad, black and white became blurred, yet the text is written with great sensitivity to the narrative needs of his young audience. Andrew Lang edited a highly influential series of fairy and folk tales, beginning with *The Blue Fairy Book* (Lang, 1889b). He followed this in 1890 with an original fairytale of some humour and distinction, *Prince Prigio* (Lang, 1889a). These books furnished readers with a wealth of classic fairytales and reintroduced many traditional stories. The first performance of J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* was in 1904 and it first appeared in book form in 1911, and, although it may be argued that the quality of the book is not comparable to the play, it has become one of Children's Literature's 'classic' texts. Another 'classic' text is *The Wind in the Willows* by Edinburgh-born Kenneth Grahame, (Grahame, 1908). Writers like Grahame, MacDonald and Barrie who left Scotland reflect an, at times, borderline sense of Scottish identity in terms that open up much larger questions about the unstable and liminal nature of identity itself. The large and distinguished Scottish contribution to writing for children might suggest that the concept of childhood in Scotland was significantly different from elsewhere, or perhaps it was that the Scots placed books and reading high on the educational agenda.

As far back as the sixteenth century John Knox had envisaged a school in every parish, and by the beginning of the nineteenth century most of the Scottish lowlands had made the transition to written culture, though this was not the case for Highland communities. Schooling was made compulsory for Scottish children aged between 5 and 13 in 1872 and the 1918 Education (Scotland) Act raised the school leaving age to 15, restricted employment for schoolchildren and brought Catholic schools into the state sector. Standards of literacy might have been expected to be high, but the concept of children reading for pleasure was not widespread at the time. Education extended literacy down the social scale and cheaper publishing costs expanded the market and improved the quality of popular reading material. (Milton, 2006) Publishing for children reflected economic and demographic growth as well as a society more responsive and sensitive to children's needs. Children began to be allowed to choose books and their choices included, among others, adventure stories, school stories, fantasy and fairy tales, family and historical stories. Explicit moral lessons in children's fiction were rapidly becoming outmoded and

the insistent moralising of Victorian fiction for children had, by the end of the nineteenth century, become a standing joke and an obvious target for parody.

It might then be supposed that the period immediately following the Great War was a time of growth for Children's Literature. However, this was not the case. The 1920s was a backward looking time with a lack of interest in children's books, particularly in Scotland. Very few Scottish children's novels survive from that period and those that do usually did not start off as children's books. *The Thirty-Nine Steps* (Buchan, 1915) was originally published for adults, but fulfils all the generic features of the children's adventure story, a structure that can be seen to have existed in earlier examples such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *Kidnapped* (1886): the blending of the probable with the extraordinary, the excitement of danger and the unexpected; the 'normal' hero from an ordinary background; the extraordinary event that sends the hero off on a quest usually with a faithful companion; the building of suspense to a great climax; the survival of the hero, usually with a reward and the achievement of greater wisdom, knowledge or maturity. This patriotic espionage tale is set immediately before the First World War and features the hero Richard Hannay finding a murdered man in his London flat. Pursued by the police and foreign spies, he flees to Scotland to work out the significance of the victim's notebook and of the mysterious 'thirty-nine steps'. The heroes and villains are clear enough without being stereotypical and the complex plot is carefully organised with a sensitive feeling for place.

This clear structure reassures younger readers while still offering linguistic and structural challenges. The format has inspired other writers over the generations, for example, *Murdo's War* (Temperley, 1988), an adventure story set in Caithness in 1943. With his father serving in the war, Murdo helps his family by working with Hector, a sometime fisherman and smuggler. They undertake a job supposedly moving vital new engine parts, but Murdo discovers they are guns and grenades destined for a covert German invasion of Britain. The boy escapes, intent on passing the vital information to the police or army. There follows a deadly hunt across some of Scotland's harshest terrain, from Strathy Point to Helmsdale in the depth of winter. The long pursuit is clearly reminiscent of the chases across the moors in *Kidnapped* and *The Thirty-Nine Steps*.

In *Huntingtower* (Buchan, 1922) Buchan introduced an unlikely hero in the recently retired grocer Dickson McCunn, ably assisted by the Gorbals Die-Hards, led by the resourceful Dougal. They are a group of adolescents, too poor to join the official Boy

Scouts of the time. The boys seek adventure and find it in the remote coastal village of Dalquharter where, along with McCunn, they attempt to rescue from captivity and the dark forces of Bolshevism, a Russian princess, her companion and her treasure. For the modern child reader, the narrative is a little dated, but the plot is well organised and exciting and the themes of heroism, co-operation and loyalty remain relevant. There is convincing use of Scots language (Buchan, of course, wrote fine poetry in Scots) and the setting in time and place is expertly created. There seems, too, to be a privileging of middle- and upper-class values, while the Gorbals Die-Hards aspire to the qualities displayed by the 'official' Boy Scouts.

A distinctive feature of Scottish Children's fiction makes an appearance here and that is Scottish children's unusual awareness of and reaction to politics. The Die-Hards march to such songs as, 'Class-conscious are we, and class-conscious will be, Till our fit's on the neck of the Boorjoyzee,' (Buchan, 1922: 199) learned by one of their members at a Socialist Sunday school. While not perhaps, completely understanding the meaning of what they are singing and clearly on the side of law and order, the fact that one of their number attends a Socialist Sunday school, is illustrative of an aspect of Scottish Children's Literature that appears again and again especially in the post-World War II fiction of authors like Naomi Mitchison, Mollie Hunter, Theresa Breslin, Catherine Forde and Julie Bertagna. In Scottish children's books, the young people are expected to be aware of politics; they are expected to be aware of world events and they are expected to want to work for the good of the community and not just for individual gain. Children's fiction expresses with particular clarity society's sense of itself, its structures and the justification and contestation of its structures. Juvenile fiction's didactic nature, even when unintentional, can delineate or illustrate for children their place in society, even as it encourages them to question it. The depiction of such role models in Scotland's fiction may be subtly influencing its young people about the characteristics encouraged by Scottish society.

With school playing such a central role in children's lives it is hardly surprising that it should have inspired a specific literary genre for children. Public school settings have dominated this genre, yet only a small proportion, certainly well fewer than 5%, of the population attended them during the period under discussion. Scottish writers, with the exception of Dorita Fairlie Bruce, who wrote a series of school stories with Scottish settings, have never supported the genre particularly strongly. The most famous of her books are the nine 'Dimsie' books published between 1921 and 1942, of which only two

have Scottish settings. The stories follow Dimsie (Daphne Isabel Maitland) from a 10-year-old Junior to popular head girl. These books are famous for the ‘Anti-Soppists’, a group of six girls acting for the good of the school. The six ‘Springdale’ books (Bruce, 1925-1939) are the most obviously Scottish school stories, set in the little seaside resort of ‘Redchurch’, undoubtedly modelled on the west coast town of Largs. Springdale, though, is a more typically English public school with six ‘houses’ and a complex prefect system. Bruce’s school stories are more concentrated on the intrinsic themes offered by the boarding school as a small society of girls than those of other writers. Her plots are skilfully built around the relationships between girls of the same or different ages: friendships, rivalries and conflicts. Teachers and lessons play relatively small parts. ‘Outside’ adventures and mysteries are well integrated in the central plots and were often inspired by her interest in history, local legend and archaeology. Unlike some of her English counterparts, Bruce’s books have never been re-published in paperback editions and 1980s editions of the ‘Dimsie’ stories were very heavily updated, removing the books from their original period. This may account for their apparent loss of popularity.

The appeal of the ‘boarding-school story’ seemed to be in decline till the advent of the phenomenally successful *Harry Potter* books. J. K. Rowling, their author, can be considered Scots by virtue of her having moved to reside in Edinburgh in 1994, where, in order to escape a cold flat and to save money, she wrote in cafés. (Baise, 2001) The Scottish Arts Council supported her in completing her first published book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* which was rejected by nine publishers before being picked up by Bloomsbury, and the rest is history. By the publication in 2005 of the penultimate book in the series, *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince*, Rowling’s sales topped the £300 million mark. As of January 2008 the sales of the final book, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* are in excess of £20 million.

The decision to set the *Harry Potter* books in a boarding school setting removes him to a world with its own rules, standards and logic, even beyond that of his world of magic. He attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, most probably located somewhere in Scotland—the Hogwarts Express leaves from King’s Cross station and travels northwards for hours. There the main characters, Harry and his friends, Ron Weasley and Hermione Granger, interact mainly with their peers and without parental intervention. Harry emerges from a Cinderella existence with his aunt and uncle Dursley and bullying cousin Dudley, where he has been kept completely in the dark about his history and heritage, to begin training as a wizard. He learns quickly, after arriving at Hogwarts, that

he has a central role in the ongoing battle with Voldemort, or ‘He Who Must Not Be Named’.

The books blend classic fairytale elements and mischievous humour. The fictional school provides an enclosed world, where the chivalric code of honour, loyalty and fairness always triumph, but only after severe trial and bringing new knowledge and worldly wisdom to the heroes. The books are witty, ironic and self-referential. They have been dubbed the first ‘post-modern school stories’, but still maintain the wholesomeness and appeal of their predecessors.

Critical opinion is, however, divided. For some, Rowling’s work is acknowledged as inventive, humorous, ironically self-aware of the conventions it employs, plot-driven and suspenseful. For others, the books are slight, old-fashioned and derivative. They certainly share many elements of children’s classics and can seem formulaic. (Peacock, 2002) The villain Voldemort may have ‘gone to the dark side’—and the links with the *Star Wars* films are obvious from time to time—but he might not be considered a great villain in the way that Long John Silver is. Silver is doubly frightening precisely because he is charming and not obviously evil: Voldemort is bad through and through, with no redeeming qualities and, somehow, less frightening as a result.

The *Harry Potter* books are not ‘issues’ books; there are no drugs, alcohol or sexual activity. Rowling herself has called them ‘an antidote to all the grim books’. Unlike magic realism, which ultimately never allows readers to exercise their capacity to believe the unbelievable against the evidence of reality, Rowling writes realistic magicalism, which preserves the discontinuity between fantasy and reality. She pays homage to the magical leaps of the imagination. In that sense she offers a link to fantasy writing, another area of strength in Scottish children’s fiction, and one of its greatest post-war publishing triumphs. It was perhaps an immediate consequence of the implications of nuclear weapons, the growth of the media and the decline in British power among other things, that led after World War II to an increase in children’s books that could be described as escapist or that depended on allegory. For Scottish children’s fiction, like its adult counterpart, the fantasy genre has always been a distinctive and vibrant area. The re-shaping of older tales of myth and legend became commonplace, and the re-tellings often challenge or subvert previously dominant values and attitudes, a theme that will be explored in depth later in this thesis.

Scottish children's fiction has covered the full gamut of fantasy 'types', from allegorical fantasy to witchcraft and sorcery. Texts include the re-working of ballads such as "Tam Lynn" and "Thomas the Rhymer" in Naomi Mitchison's *The Big House* (1950) and Diana Wynne Jones' *Fire and Hemlock* (1985). The device of shape-shifting is used to great effect in *The Bodach* (1970) and *A Stranger Came Ashore* (1975) by Mollie Hunter, as well as in Susan Cooper's *The Boggart* (1993) and *The Boggart and the Monster* (1998) and in several of J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter books. These shape-shifters find their modern visual equivalent in contemporary cinema in such more or less contemporaneous films as *Terminator* (1984) and *Total Recall* (1990), but in Mollie Hunter's work for example, the parallel reality is the Celtic 'otherworld', peopled by creatures that are either natural, but thought to have supernatural powers such as the seal, or those whose form and substance is only apparent, who have no physical existence in our world, such as the kelpie. Hunter re-plays Celtic legends in the world of modern Scotland, and this may suggest that perspectives in magic and the supernatural are needed to articulate an unfamiliar modern world.

Such themes have had a lasting presence in Scottish Children's Literature. Eric Linklater's Carnegie Award winning *The Wind on the Moon* (Linklater, 1944) exemplifies an earlier, wartime, magic adventure fantasy where ordinary people gain special powers. Dinah and Dorinda Palfrey delight in being naughty and their talent for trouble increases when they discover they have magical powers. The girls' adventures include turning into kangaroos and freeing captive animals; they culminate in rescuing their father, who is being held captive in a faraway castle dungeon in an enemy country. Given its publication date, it can be assumed that the parallels of escaping the terrors of war, the display of high spirits, grit and determination and the ability to overcome evil in the form of an enemy, were deliberately woven into the narrative and that children of the time would recognise its significance. In this century, two novels *The Chaos Clock* (Arbuthnott, 2003) and *The Chaos Quest* (Arbuthnott, 2004) illustrate a contemporary working of time fantasies. These books, of the modern *fin-de-siecle* period, are set in the new Museum of Scotland in Edinburgh where time is becoming unstuck and the past is breaking loose. The child protagonists have to assist in the war between the Lords of Chaos and the Guardians of Time, centred round the Millennium Clock supposedly exhibited in the museum since the New Year. Typical of more recent fantasy, children are presented with a dystopian world, rather than Linklater's wartime disruption, where they are called to save the world when adults cannot. A more extended consideration of some of these texts features in the section on Fantasy in Scottish Children's Literature.

In Susan Price's *The Sterkarm Handshake* (1998), winner of the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize, and *The Sterkarm Kiss* (2003), the boundaries of fantasy and science fiction become blurred. Set in the Borders, the central idea is that a twenty-first century company has developed a Time Tube that can take them back to a resource-rich time ripe for twenty-first century plunder of unpolluted resources. The natives are regarded as amusing savages while the sixteenth century characters regard the 'Elves', who bring them magic in the form of 'Aspirin' and watches, as mischievous beings who are worthy of being tricked. These books for young adult readers sketch a Borders landscape that is harsh and unfamiliar where reiving, strategic marriages and death are the norm. The twenty-first century is depicted as unscrupulous, immoral and grasping and willing to rape the sixteenth century for resources that present society has failed to protect. These books offer a critique of the way we live now and engage with such issues as the needs of the individual against the needs of the community as well as considering the advantages and disadvantages of technology.

Contrasting with the fantasy genre, there has been huge growth in realistic fiction for children post-1945. Realistic fiction deals with the problems children face at a time of physical, psychological, intellectual and emotional maturation. Scots writers excel in this area as shown in these novels, among others: *A Sound of Chariots* (Hunter, 1973); the 'Kevin and Sadie' novels of the 1970s (Lingard, 1970-1976); *Fat Boy Swim* (Forde, 2003), *Skarrs* (Forde, 2004) and *The Drowning Pond* (Forde, 2005); Theresa Breslin's *Simon's Challenge* (1988), *Whispers in the Graveyard* (1994, Carnegie Medal Winner), *Saskia's Journey* (2004) and *Divided City* (2005); Julie Bertagna's *The Spark Gap* (1996) and *Soundtrack* (1999), and Catherine MacPhail's *Run, Zan, Run* and *Roxy's Baby* (2005). These books deal with issues from bullying to sectarianism, body image to ecological disaster. Their settings range from the completely urban to the rural Highlands and all points in between, and include passionate political statements and compassionate descriptions of contemporary Scottish children's lives. They offer a blend of contemporary realism and deeply rooted myth and legend while displaying an awareness of generational differences as well as a keen sense of history. Language shifts between Standard Scots English and colloquial, dialectal slang. An honest and, hopefully, accurate picture of a truly diverse Scotland, recognisable to young Scots readers, is beginning to emerge. In common with their adult counterparts, many of these novels use the device of music as a means of organising and contextualising events. The music covers a wide range, from Hoagy Carmichael to James MacMillan's *The Confession of Isabel Gowdie*

(1990), and serves as an additional commentary on the cultural lives and experiences of the protagonists.

One of the increasing numbers of writers from elsewhere who have made their home in Scotland is Anne Fine, Children's Laureate 2001-2003. Among other things, her career before becoming a writer includes teaching English at a girls' secondary school and in an Edinburgh jail. An author of both children's and adult's fiction, she is best known for her insightful depiction of contemporary family life. Fine blends realism and humour to address serious themes in works considered both funny and thought provoking. In her books, she considers issues such as the effects of divorce and ageing as well as the importance of tolerance and respect in relationships. Several of her books also include philosophical discussions and subplots centring on topics such as famine relief, stereotyping and the nature of truth. One of her books, with the most obvious connection to Scotland, is Carnegie Medal winner *Goggle-Eyes* (1989). A comic tale told in flashback, it is the story of how Kitty learns to accept her divorced mother's boyfriend Gerald, whom she dubs 'Goggle-Eyes' because of the way he stares at her mother's legs. Kitty uses her experience to console her classmate Helen who is experiencing a similar situation. The gentle anti-nuclear subplot never overshadows the theme of acceptance in relationships. Some of the funniest moments in the book describe in detail the particularly British form of anarchy engaged in by polite opponents of nuclear weapons who are escorted by an even more polite police force to isolated, rural, nuclear facilities for a demonstration. It takes Gerald's ('Goggle-Eyes) sharply sceptical commentary to highlight the ridiculousness of the situation:

'Why go to out of the way holes where only sheep can see you? It's crazy' he scolds. I didn't answer that one. I've often thought myself that the sheep in the West of Scotland must be the most politically informed sheep in the world.

The stance adopted, the reductive idiom and preoccupation with social responsibility and values demonstrated in much of Fine's work fit well into previously existing Scottish themes and values.

Scotland also has a long tradition of illustrated children's books, everything from the comics published by D.C.Thomson, including the world's longest running comic, *The Dandy*, first published in December 1937, to prize-winning children's picture-books from writer/illustrators such as Debbi Gliori, Julia Donaldson and Mairi Hedderwick. The Dundee firm of D.C. Thomson rose to become the main competitors of the much larger London based Amalgamated Press with their 'Big Five' boys' weekly story papers: *The Adventure* (1921), *The Rover* and *The Wizard* (1922), *The Skipper* (1930) and *The*

*Hotspur* (1933). These papers included comic strips as fillers, but originally included only illustrations for the titles and key scenes in adventure stories. The first comic was *The Rover Midget Comic* given away free in *The Rover* in 1933. The 'Big Five' changed to comic form much later.

In 1935, managing editor R. D. Low informed comic artist Dudley Watkins that he planned to introduce two new comic strips, *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*. Watkins told his wife that he thought the job 'would probably last a few weeks'. In March 1936, *The Sunday Post* launched a comic supplement entitled *The Fun Section* including *The Broons* and *Oor Wullie*; they continue to this day. *Oor Wullie* follows the adventures and misadventures of a small boy of 8 or 9 years, with spiky blonde hair and black dungarees. He gets into trouble with his teachers and the local bobby, plays truant with his gang, breaks windows (*usually* by accident), fights the local bullies, torments 'softies' and 'swots', eats huge quantities of sweets and food and studiously avoids the romantic attentions of the local girls. Every episode begins and ends with Wullie sitting on his trademark upturned metal bucket. He is a young Lord of Misrule who embodies values of irreverence, friendship and fairness. *The Broons* is a domestic comedy-cum-soap-opera about a large argumentative but close-knit family, Maw, Paw and their eight offspring ranging from adults in their twenties down to the Bairn, a toddler. The family, including Granpaw, live in an upstairs tenement flat at No.10 Glebe Street in an unspecified Scottish city. Each member of the family has distinctive character traits and the strip presents a warm-hearted, and even surreal, picture of Scottish urban life—a 'comic kailyard'. Both strips are written in broad Scots and were instant hits.

The success of the strips encouraged D. C. Thomson to launch a weekly comic to be sold throughout the whole of Britain, not just Scotland. On the 4<sup>th</sup> December 1937, *The Dandy* was published including 'Our Gang', 'Smarty Gandpa' and 'Desperate Dan'. The last named was one of Watkins's most famous characters, a rough, tough, bad-tempered cowboy, strong enough to carry his horse on his back. He soon mellowed into an amiable, if not too bright, character, gifted with super-human strength and invulnerability. Barrel-chested and lantern-jawed, he was so tough he had to use a blow torch to shave and his favourite meal consists of cow pie—basically an entire cow in a giant pie dish, tail hanging over the edge, horns protruding through the pastry crust. *The Dandy*'s immediate success prompted Thomson to release *The Beano Comic* (1938), whose characters included 'Lord Snooty and his Pals', and *The Magic Comic* (1939). The outbreak of the war later that year brought restrictions on paper supplies that meant fortnightly publication

for *The Beano* and *The Dandy* and quiet expiry for *The Magic*. Both these comics continue to flourish in the twenty-first century along with their *Sunday Post* cousins and Oor Wullie is as much an icon in modern Scotland as his more recent counterpart Harry Potter.

In a similar way Mairi Hedderwick's creation, *Katie Morag* has captured the affection of children in and furth of Scotland. The first in the series, *Katie Morag Delivers the Mail*, was published in 1984 and was immediately seized upon as an excellent example of non-sexist children's fiction, mainly because of the dungaree-wearing, tractor-fixing Grannie Island. (Katie Morag's other grannie is known as Grannie Mainland and is a much more conventional, feminine character.) The stories are set on the fictional island of Struay, loosely based on the real island of Coll, and the author-illustrator's attention to detail in both text and illustration has reputedly resulted in travel agents being asked by anxious travellers how to get to Struay. These clever picture books tackle relevant contemporary issues such as the impact on island life and the environment of new building development, as in *Katie Morag and the New Pier* (1994), in an accessible way for young readers. Without direct comment, the books allow children to consider an island way of life and the differences in experience and values between mainland and island, urban and rural. Hedderwick is also extremely skilled at capturing and conveying incidents which are common experiences for children in any community or family group while still remaining true to the recognisable experiences rooted in Scottish culture.

### Scottish Culture and the Legacy of Place

Consideration of the *Katie Morag* books is of more than just historical interest. Books can take us back to our roots and, importantly, raise the issue of the significance of place. Authors have a particular approach to place: place turns out to be everywhere and nowhere. Place, involving history and geography, is something that someone else may own but to which we belong. And with place comes a voice, a badge of identity as distinctive as a fingerprint. It is place, the characteristic of belonging that comes from communal identity, that has been the springboard of the Scots' sense of self and their identity as a nation. When there is a tradition of stories, songs, poems and pipe tunes that identify with a place, it gives a very distinctive sense of the place's importance.

Discussion of place in Scottish Children's Literature might legitimately refer to a whole range of landscapes, topography or settings—any of which fits with key elements of the

Scottish identity. However, one distinctive kind of location which we see illustrated in the *Katie Morag* books is that of the island setting. There are many examples of Scottish children's books which use the island trope. It serves as a particularly effective motif, offering an evocative image of the nation as an island. Issues pertinent to Scottish identity were regularly rehearsed in the imaginative space of Scottish Children's Literature of the Victorian era using island settings. For example, *Coral Island* (Ballantyne, 1885) and *Treasure Island* (Stevenson, 1883) both engage explicitly with aspects of colonialism, suggesting that Scottish children's fiction, rather than remaining detached from mainstream culture, has consistently supplied an imaginative repository for its desires and fears. Gillian Beer has described islands as,

the perfect form of [national] cultural imagining... Defensive, secure, compacted, even paradisaical – a safe place too from which to set out on predations and from which to launch the building of an empire. (Beer, 1990)

What then can islands, as a setting within Scottish Children's Literature, teach the rest of Scotland about the local and particular? Using some novels with an island setting as a case study, how is the paradox of Scottish identity refracted through the imaging of islands?

Scotland as a nation is surrounded on three sides by water. It has 790 islands, of which 130 are inhabited currently. This perhaps explains why Scottish fiction, both for adults and children, makes use of the island setting on a fairly regular basis. Islands, real and imagined, allow writers to explore aspects of community and otherness; aspects of location, belonging and liminality as well as the concept of identity and its close association with place. Islands can be isolated places. Time can seem to stand still or progress never makes a start. There can be exploration of place and displacement, time and its slippage, the disorientation of assumptions about what is and, with that, what it is to be Scottish. Taking advantage of the timeless aspect of islands, authors can explore societies 'frozen in time' or even use the device of 'time-slip' to allow the central characters to vicariously experience past lives in comparison with their own. Islands can become the repositories of history and culture and identity. They can also be microcosms of the wider global community. The impact of globalisation can be explored through the consequences of 'progress' on one small island.

One of the ways that Scottish Literature is characterised is its divided nature—the so-called 'Caledonian Antisysygy', Gregory Smith's 1919 (Smith, 1919) exotic phrase for an internally conflicted national character is a well documented phenomenon. The divide between highland and lowland; rural and urban; hard-headedness and sentimentality,

present and past, mainland and island has been rehearsed in countless arenas, along with the added challenge of divisions in language. Authors using the island as a setting include Ian Crichton Smith in *On the Island* (1979), Margaret Elphinstone in *Islanders* (1994), J.M. Barrie in *Mary Rose* (1920) and of course R.L. Stevenson in *The Merry Men* (1882) and *The Beach at Falesa* (1892) as well as *Treasure Island*. Island settings allow the author to illustrate divisions in miniature. Additionally, authors can use the island device metaphorically. In Barrie's *Mary Rose* it is the island that captures the girl.

Thus the island story for children fits easily into that framework but offers, additionally, a setting that allows young protagonists real and symbolic boundaries through which they can learn about society and their place within it. Islands in particular can present tensions between the traditional and the modern, often illustrated in the relationships between old and young characters. The landmass, totally surrounded by water can represent a place of safety, protected from outside influences, or alternatively, a place of imprisonment. The child characters can be allowed to grow and develop, rehearsing adult roles or be held back, locked into the traditional and narrow expectations. The narratives can also be told from the perspective of the indigenous peoples of the islands and how they react to the 'oatlines' or outsiders or from the perspective of the incomer with all the challenges that may entail. For children though, the island setting is perhaps most often associated with adventure and treasure.

One of the most famous of all island books from Scotland is *Treasure Island* (1883) by Robert Louis Stevenson. Not overtly Scottish in setting, it can be said to have set the standard in children's fiction for the treasure quest novel and the novel of discovery and self-discovery. Alan Riach suggests that this novel can be regarded in much the same terms as Jacqueline Rose argues in *The Case of Peter Pan or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (Rose, 1994). Rose declares that when considering children's fiction, "there is in one sense, no body of literature which rests so openly on the acknowledgement of difference, a rupture almost, between the writer and the addressee." Riach suggests that this sense of difference or rupture is particularly relevant to *Treasure Island* and that the text is, "a paradigm of 'children's fiction' even more revealing than *Peter Pan*." (Riach, 1996) In some ways the text itself is an island intended only for children and the adults are 'separated' from it by a period of time or a passage through time. It could, of course, be argued that readers of whatever age may return to a text and an imaginary 'space' in which the imagination moves back and forth between fantasy and reason. The children

may be regarded as the indigenous population of such texts and the adults as the incomers, visiting and enjoying the text but not remaining there.

In Tom Pow's *Scabbit Isle* (2003) a very different view is presented. Here the island is equally metaphorical but in this case it is an isolated compound in the centre of fifteenth century Dumfries where plague victims are banished to survive their quarantine or die in an attempt to protect the remaining population. The narrator, young Sam Burns, tells of a haunting episode that rescues his family from the consequences of a tragic accident. His family's lives have recently been blighted by the death of his twin sister Alice. His father had been reduced to apathy while his mother has surrendered to a frantic whirl of community activities. Sam and his younger brother have also been deeply affected. Sensitised by the loss of his sister, Sam encounters across the centuries, the wraith of another tragic girl, Janet. The pregnant daughter of a fifteenth century Provost of the town, she is angrily cast off by her father and languishes among the victims of Scabbit Isle. The narrative shifts and shades, travelling between the past and the present, until Sam's growing courage and love lay Janet's soul to rest in a consummation involving the gift of a precious handkerchief that had belonged to his sister Alice. With the release of Alice the whole family finds a redeeming purpose and vitality.

The isolation of individual family members is mirrored by the actual banishment of Janet to her fate on Scabbit Isle. The compound, not bounded by sea, but equally isolated, is patrolled by impoverished, low-status guards and is intended to contain its inhabitants for the good of the rest of the community. This is a key signifier in the island literature for children in Scotland, implying that identifiable communities exist and that they work as a single entity for the benefit of others and for the island. The figure is more problematic in this case because the isolation is imposed, apparently for the good of the community. In reality, Janet goes to Scabbit Isle because she *may* be infected with plague and this allows her father and lover an 'acceptable' solution to her destroyed reputation and her father's ambition and standing in the community. Ironically, if Janet is not yet infected with the plague it is unlikely that she will remain so. For her, Scabbit Isle does not offer the security of encirclement, but rather the isolation of imprisonment and the inevitability of her own and her child's death. The journey between past and present allows Sam and Janet to encounter the 'other' in the sense of the temporally 'displaced' person, but their ability to connect with each other brings Sam closure in the loss of his twin and Janet peace through Sam's gesture of reconciliation. The 'island', bounded by the town and

time, encroaches on the present, blurring the narrative as well as the spatial and temporal borders.

The elements of the supernatural and the dependence on myths and legends are also part of the island landscape in Scottish children's fiction. In Berlie Doherty's *Daughter of the Sea* (Doherty, 1996), described as a 'folk novel' by its author, the setting is a remote island—probably Papa Stour in the Shetlands—where the men and women perform ancient, domestic tasks of farming and fishing and are at the mercy of the elements and the powerful creatures of the sea. What the author has tried to capture in this novel is the sense of timelessness of folklore and magic. The novel is set vaguely at the time of the Scottish Clearances, when Scottish landowners of the nineteenth century cleared huge numbers of tenant farmers and crofters from the Highlands, allegedly because of overpopulation, and made way for more profitable enterprises like sheep farming. The people and the customs depicted reflect this.

The fisherman Munroe Jaffrey, caught in the skerries off the island in the midst of a storm, spies a child in the water and brings her home to his wife. Jannet is determined to keep her longed-for baby. But as Gioga grows up and a mysterious stranger dressed in a "cloak of oceans" arrives to claim her, Jannet's fierce love unleashes a tragic and terrifying chain of events. After the death of a seal, the furious power of the sea traps the little fishing community on their remote island, cut off from all human contact. Their only hope of salvation lies in the truth of the old legends and Gioga's longing to return to her own real home.

The mythological origin of Orkney's Selkie Folk is unclear. The name itself is simply the Orcadian word for seal. The distribution of the myths—from Shetland, through Orkney and down the west coast of Scotland into Ireland seems to clearly point to a Celtic provenance, with some evidence of Norse influence. The seals are the natural inhabitants of the sea and bask on the rocks on the edge of the near islands. They offer a tempting target for the island seal hunters. The selkies adopt human form on land when separated from their discarded skins and can be trapped there, or when wounded, present as humans to the horror of the hunters. Equally, humans can be lured into the sea and trapped there by the seal folk. The selkies appear as mysterious protagonists in children's tales and many contemporary Scottish children's novels re-work the myths in current contexts. The encounters between the humans and the selkies take place at the island's edge where, symbolically, the known meets the unknown. The young have a strong feeling for the primitive and fundamental things of life. It could be argued that this is why myths and

legends, certainly not meant for children in the first place, have largely been taken over by them. The selkie tales are characterised by certain tragedy and cruelty as well as romance, and the island setting provides a turbulent and stark landscape which lends power to the legend.

Modern Children's Literature, especially since the 1960s, and chiefly in its realistic genre, has been quick to reflect all manner of social change. It contributes to the development of children's understanding of belonging (being one of us) and differentiation (being other). The constantly shifting socio-cultural landscape has contributed to the blurring of traditional distinctions between, for example, the urban and the rural, the island or the mainland. Children's Literature offers a way of presenting identity simplified and distilled, mediated by the needs and expectations of its audience, and the island trope is particularly effective in this aspect.

The island motif is not confined to texts for older children, but finds its way into picture books for young readers also. Picture books have emerged as a way of communicating most effectively with young children, inviting them into secondary worlds. Mairi Hedderwick's *Katie Morag* stories, mentioned earlier, are picture books that use an island setting. Katie Morag lives on the fictitious island of Struay with her parents, Mr and Mrs McColl, her siblings and one grandmother, known as Granny Island. Her other grandmother, Granny Mainland, lives in a flat in the city, thus setting up an almost permanent blurring of the distinctions between urban and rural, island and mainland by introducing a character who moves easily and regularly across those boundaries.

In *Katie Morag and the New Pier* (Hedderwick, 1993), readers are invited to consider the impact of progress on the island when a new pier is to be built allowing the boat to dock on Struay. This has undoubted consequences for the island and the islanders. The advantages include more efficient, and possibly cheaper delivery of all provisions, increased tourism because of greater ease of access and the fact that exporting and importing goods, including livestock, will be much less problematic. But not all of the changes are regarded as beneficial by the islanders and some of them have reservations. The encroachment of progress may be at the expense of tranquillity, tradition and a unique way of life. 'Granny Island' is among the most vociferous protesters. "The old ways will be forgotten", she says. "The place will get too busy, there will be no more jaunts in the ferryboat to the big boat in the bay. What will the ferryman do for a living?" At a personal level she is also singularly unimpressed that "Granny Mainland' will be able to visit more often.

Katie Morag's parents decide to use the opportunity to extend their shop/post office and plan to open a 'bistro' in the spring. The term 'bistro' is a deliberate linguistic selection. There will be a tea shop with the traditional home baking, perhaps more associated with rural communities, but bistro dining sounds much more sophisticated and cosmopolitan — much more like contemporary mainland Scotland. This is typical of the changing landscape in parts of Scotland, combining the rural and urban, northern tradition and southern technological innovation and commercialism. Before the pier is finished disaster strikes and the workmen's huts, their living quarters, are washed away in a violent storm. Granny Island and the ferryman, the two people most affected by the construction of the pier, and the most vocal in opposition, come to the rescue in the ferryboat and the workmen complete the pier, sharing the islanders homes in a metaphor of the integration of the new and old.

This book, more than some of the others in Hedderwick's series, focuses on the relationships between the old and the young, the settled and the visionary, the resistant and the receptive. Granny Island fears the changes that are happening in her life. The illustrations, also done by Hedderwick, are central to the unfolding of the impact of progress on the island. In contrast to Granny Island's reservations, the illustrations are full of optimism in their details and lightness of colour. One of the outstanding features of this book is the vivid island life conveyed by the minutiae of information in the pictures. The uses of the landscape, the use of tartan, Shetland jumpers and midge repellent are all recognisably Scottish. The percentage of the pages taken up by illustrations of the sea give a strong sensation of space and distance as well as marking the central role of the sea in island life. The front page sets the scene with a lightness of brush strokes, gray/green hues and a gentle perspective, conveying the atmosphere of a sleepy fishing village. Centre stage are Katie Morag, Granny Island and her dog, all looking rather glum. As Katie Morag puts a reassuring hand on her grandmother's knee, it is clear that it will be the child who plays the comforting role in the story.

The new pier is Granny's worry, and the tensions between the old and the new are portrayed visually throughout the book. None are more clearly illustrated than in the opening depicting the village store, where the central page divides the grandmother and granddaughter. Katie Morag on the left page, hands together, looks on expectantly and receptively, as the islanders discuss their future, while Granny Island, on the right page, looks sceptical with her arms folded in resignation. Her body language conveys isolation

and self-protection within the crowd. The rest of the busy islanders seem oblivious to this central vignette. The careful attention to detail in the illustration contrasts the old and the new with a subtlety and sensitivity that is typical of this book.

At the point the new pier is threatened, Hedderwick again uses a double page spread to the full and allows the waves to swish and swirl across the pages. The tempestuous blues and greens practically envelop the small red ferryboat steered by Granny Island, who has realised that she can be part of the change. Finally, darkness, serenity and resolution descend on the sleeping island. The most obvious and subtle depiction of the integration of the old and the new can be seen by contrasting the double page spreads at the beginning and the end of the book. The opening pages show the island calm and quiet in the daytime, with the mainland and the boat in the distance. By the end of the story the pier is in place, and the twilight of the night takes on a somewhat optimistic hue using the warmth of a yellow moon over the pier and one or two of the houses, suggesting harmony between the old and the new. The shop and post office have been extended to incorporate the bistro in a concrete image of the marrying of the insular and traditional with the global and modern.

The image presented by these island stories is a positive one where change and progress is good and relatively easily managed and the people respect the environment, recognising their responsibilities as well as the advantages of progress. Julie Bertagna's novels *Exodus* (2002) and *Zenith* (2007) offer very different and more challenging images aimed at the young adult market. Set in the future, at the transition between 2099 and 2100, Bertagna uses islands as metaphors for human and ecological vulnerability and the novels are contexts for exploratory speculation about life in the future in Scotland.

At the dawn of the twenty-second century, the polar ice caps are melting and the world is drowning. Most of Scotland is under water and Glasgow is reduced to its drumlins – Gilmorehill, Dowanhill, Glasgow Cathedral and its necropolis – which are now islets crouching beneath the pillars of a spiralling man-made city/island in the sky where the survivors of global warming live in luxury and ignorance.

The narrative opens on a small Orkney-like island, Wing, that is steadily getting smaller as the sea levels rise. Fifteen-year-old Mara Bell uses a cyberwizz, an electronic 'weave' to find out about sky cities where she believes her people will find sanctuary. The islanders resist Mara's proposal, preferring to remain with the familiar and clinging to the belief that the ecological disaster of global warming must have run its course and that conditions will improve. However, after further storms leave only the church and the

highest hill farms intact, the islanders realise they have no choice but to leave the island and journey into the unknown. These futuristic realisations of island journeys of the Clearances show parallels with venturing into the unknown in Canada and Australia in the nineteenth centuries, and exemplify beautifully Gillian Beer's point about, "setting out on predations" cited earlier. When the time comes for the islanders to leave Wing the elders choose not to go. To an extent this is for practical reasons—space and provisions on the boats are limited—but mostly this is a conscious decision that they will find it difficult to make the transition to the new life they might find in the sky cities. Tain, the island 'elder' is fully conscious that the environmental disaster has been brought about by his generation's greed and failure to heed nature and history's warnings. In the confusion caused by Tain's and the other seniors' decision to remain on Wing, Mara becomes separated from her family as the sea pulls the boats from the island. The journey is emotionally and physically demanding with the islanders having to cope with stormy seas, sickness, uncertainty and no clear route to navigate.

Eventually, they find the sky city of New Mungo and discover it surrounded by a wall that repels outsiders. Thousands of boats are anchored at the edge of the island in the sky with few supplies, little fresh water and in contaminated and stormy seas. Mara discovers her family failed to survive when the boat they were in, skippered by a young and inexperienced captain, capsized in stormy seas only days after leaving Wing. Driven by desperation Mara manages to sneak inside the wall and makes friends with the wild urchins who live in the crypt of the ruined Glasgow Cathedral and the Treenesters who make their homes in the trees on the few remaining islands of Glasgow. They adopt her as their saviour, recognising her as the 'Face in the Stone' that appears all over the surviving buildings in the city. The Treenesters tell Mara the legend of Thenew, the pregnant daughter of an ancient king, who was wrongfully cast out of her island homeland in a ramshackle raft. The wind wafted her to a safe harbour on a new land and there she gave birth to a son, Mungo, who grew up to found the city of Glasgow. Hers is the face in the stone that Mara so resembles. Mara is galvanised by the Treenesters' stories as well as her encounters with books in the remains of Glasgow University Library. She becomes determined to save her new community by travelling to another island, Greenland. Mara discovers that, in the past, Greenland's interior was sunk beneath colossal ice sheets which, when they melted, would allow Greenland to, "bob up like a cork" revealing her highlands for the first time since the Ice Age and offering people other possibilities for survival. To get there Mara must gain access to the city of New Mungo, secure a fleet of ships, release her enslaved friends and navigate a route to the island of salvation. These

eco-fables present a strong and complex female character, a backbone of ancient legend, alongside a cyberpunk adventure.

Central to this modern working of the island story is the importance of the names of the characters. Mara's name means bitterness, but through her journey, Candleriggs, one of the other key characters, re-defines Mara's name as meaning strong, long, hope. 'Longhope' was the name of Mara's farm hamlet on the island of Wing. Her mother's name was Rosemary – for remembrance, but also meaning clear-headedness. Mara is also given some thyme and carries that along with her rosemary from her island home. She sets forth to New Mungo with sprigs of both of these for a clear head and courage. Her father's name is Coll, the name of another Scottish island, and other Wing inhabitants are called Gail and Rowan. The Treenesters are named for submerged parts of Glasgow and every evening they stand and shout their names and point to where it used to be in the drowned city: names like Candleriggs, Firhill, Ibrox, Partick, Cowcaddens, Parkhead and Possil. Mara names the cathedral urchins after the lost islands from the ocean beyond the wall: Yell, Jura, Barra, Harris, Unst, and Lewis. For Mara this brings about the realisation that until she, "gave away the legacy of their names" she never truly believed that the islands were lost to the world. A pivotal character from New Mungo, the 'father' of the sky cities, is named Caledon, after a real street in Glasgow. But perhaps the reader is meant to see the foreshortened version of Caledonia and interpret him as a representation of Scotland's culpability and blindness towards ecological issues and the inward-looking selfishness that fails to take account of true community and community responsibility.

Striking in *Exodus* are the parallels Bertagna draws between the island community of Wing and the Treenesters. When the islanders failed to find salvation close at hand when the sea started to rise, they gave up wondering what lay in the world beyond the island and turned inward. The Treenesters, in the cellars of Glasgow Cathedral, cannot conceive of the existence of an island in the world beyond the wall. When their explorers are taken by the 'sky people' or fail to return, they too turn inward. The theme of the inexorable march of progress and the experiences of the indigenous peoples displaced from their homes is given a contemporary and provocative treatment in *Exodus*. The island as a place of safety or retreat is challenged, and the central characters are called upon to launch themselves into the potentially treacherous sea, without maps or guidance, in order to survive.

The literary trope of the island can be clearly traced in Scottish Children's Literature of the past. However, it continues to develop and mature in contemporary children's fiction

presenting new and challenging ideas and images of the recognisable features. These novels interrogate insularity, show islands as metaphors for the culture of living nations that grow and change rather than remaining fixed and let them act as metonyms for nations surrounded by ideas of globalisation, holding on to tradition and identity and offering young readers contained environments in which to explore these central concepts for contemporary life.

Having briefly explored aspects of Scottish culture through these island novels, let us now turn our attention more directly to issues of identity in Scottish Children's fiction.

If we acknowledge that identity is a shifting concept, then it is important to recognise, explore and interrogate examples of Scottish cultural identity elucidated in Scottish Children's Literature of the past. And where better to begin to do this than with the historical novel: a genre which Peter Hollindale regarded as one of the jewels in Scotland's literary crown.

## Chapter 4: Scottish Identity and the Legacy of History

Forget your literature?—forget your soul  
 If you want to see your country hale and whole  
 Turn back the pages of fourteen hundred years.

*Retrieving and Renewing* Edwin Morgan

Chapter 4 of the study examines the historically changing Scottish identity through an exploration of the Scottish narrative tradition and particularly through a thematic approach to the narration of childhood, history, nation and identity in Scottish Children's Literature, by providing an in-depth examination of some Scottish Children's historical fiction. It locates this genre among the most distinctive and distinguished in Scottish Literature for adults, and argues that a similar case can be made for Scottish Children's Literature. It considers the idea that Scotland may be viewed as an historicised country. The distinction between historical fiction and historic fiction is clarified and matters of accuracy are debated. The origins of Scottish Children's historical fiction are traced and two case studies are used to provide a careful nuanced reading of some Scottish historical fiction for children. The first case study features a number of novels which use the Jacobite Rebellions as their context. The second case study examines a number of historical novels by one Scottish author who has made historical fiction a speciality: Mollie Hunter.

### 'The Structure of Feeling'

In his book *The Long Revolution* (1961) Raymond Williams coined the term 'structure of feeling'. He describes this as "the distinct sense of a particular and native style" of any given culture, nation or historical period. "The particular living result of all the elements in the general organisation—of a community—which any formal description would be too crude to express." As Williams goes on to explain,

One generation may train its successor, with reasonable success, in the social character or the general cultural pattern, but the new generation will have its own structure of feeling.... The new generation responds in its own way to the unique world it is inheriting, taking up many continuities.... and reproducing many aspects of the organisation...yet feeling its whole life its certain ways differently, and shaping its creative response into a new structure of feeling. (65)

It might be assumed that a facet of the unique world inherited by Scottish children would encompass knowledge of seminal aspects of Scottish history. This assumption is of particular importance to those authors who choose to write historical fiction in Scottish

Children's Literature. However, authors can no longer depend on their audience's knowledge of their own country's history, or even of its most famous historical references and battles. For example, in a survey carried out in 1999 in Scottish schools, pupils conveyed little sense that they felt Scottish history really mattered, whilst their ignorance of events, people and circumstances in Scotland's past was profound. 37% of pupils who responded to the survey thought that Scotland had become part of the United Kingdom because the English forces had conquered it: 28% thought it was the result of a referendum and only 24% opted for the correct answer that the Scots parliament voted for the union with England in 1707 (Woods, 1999). If this is the case for the 'home audience' how much more difficult must it be for historical fiction writers to engage a non-Scottish audience? So questions must be asked about the continued widespread appeal of the historical novel.

In the early part of her career, one of the most prolific Scottish authors of historical fiction, Mollie Hunter, was much exercised by the challenge of choosing Scottish history as a book subject for audiences who were largely unaware of the facts. In *The Last Lord of Redhouse Castle* (Hunter, 1975c) she recalls that her publisher had cried that, "nobody, but *nobody* had heard of the Highland Clearances" and how she had, "turned a deaf ear. [She] brushed aside their objections to the bloody—but true —incident in which a posse of constables batoned a group of unresisting women and children almost to death." (p 133) In doing this she followed her instinct that, "History is people" (p136) and described this as, "the basis of everything [she had] learned about the historical novel." She went on to say,

History is ordinary people shaped and shaken by the winds of their time, as we in our time are shaped and shaken by the wind of current events. And so, to write about the people of any time, one must know them so well that it would be possible to go back and live undetected among them.

Rather than writing from the outside looking in, then, one will write from the inside looking out. Then also, as when a raised window permits interior and exterior to merge in the air and sunlight flowing into a room, the past will merge with the present. The feeling of past and present will be shared. There will be engagement between readers and characters, irrespective of superficial differences in dress, speech and habit; and in identifying with these characters, the reader will find his own identity.

A sense of identity. This is the key phrase in considering the desired impact of a historical novel..... Surely, I argued, achieving one's own sense of identity is the first step towards total identification with one's environment and one's kind.

(Hunter, 1975c)

In this, Hunter was articulating ideas that had been expressed by others before her. One of the recognisable features of Scottish identity or Scottishness seems to be its very obsession with, and perhaps even misunderstanding of, the Scottish past.

Not all writers and critics of historical fiction for children agree with Hunter's authorial stance, and there is a body of opinion that suggests a dispassionate, third person, factually-based narrative account offers the most legitimate approach for young readers. Althea Reed has termed this approach 'historical fiction' and she defines this as stories which do not include historical characters interacting with fictional protagonists, but whose purpose is "to bring history to life." (Reed, 1994) To add to the debate, in the mid-twentieth century the historical novel as a genre for children seemed to lose its appeal and relevance for young audiences. However, it never completely disappeared and since the 1990s, historical fiction once again seems to be riding the crest of popularity, so much so that publishers are promoting not only historical novels but also entire series of historical fiction. Previously the children's author Leon Garfield had observed that historical fiction was regarded as

being something of an embarrassment, like an elderly relative, to be tolerated out of a sense of duty and reluctantly supported in a condition of genteel poverty. (Garfield, 1988)

This premise never seems to have obtained in Scottish literature, a factor recognised by the critic Peter Hollindale, who commented that, "the historical novel is one of Scotland's established forms and glories." (Hollindale, 1977) This can be evidenced by auditing the literary canon of Scottish Literature for both adults and children from times past and on into the contemporary context. As well as the work of Sir Walter Scott, long considered to be the 'father' of the European historical novel, Scottish Children's historical fiction includes work from well established contemporary authors such as Theresa Breslin, whose recent historical works cover the life and times of Leonardo Da Vinci in *The Medici Seal* (2006), Nostradamus in *The Nostradamus Prophecy* (2008) and World War I in *Remembrance* (2002), and Elizabeth Laird in *Crusade* (2007) and *Secrets of the Fearless* (2006). Acclaimed Scottish proponents of the art of historical fiction for children include Mollie Hunter, Allan Campbell McLean, Naomi Mitchison and even Robert Louis Stevenson himself. They are joined by a significant number of accomplished new historical writers such as Nicola Morgan with contributions such as *Fleshmarket*, a novel set in the Edinburgh of Burke and Hare, and her most recent historical novel, *The Highwayman's Curse* (2007). Frances Mary Hendry's novel *Chains* (2000) about Scotland's involvement with the slave trade, which preceded James Robertson's better-

known award-winning novel for adults *Joseph Knight* (2003), also comes in to this category.

A survey of Scottish children's historical fiction published from the mid nineteenth century to the present day, whose fictional settings—from the Dark Ages to World War II—were and are used by authors whose own historical understanding is shaped by the prevailing sensibilities of their own time. Some of these novels comprise those that have been termed 'historic fiction': that is, fiction which includes real historical figures who interact with the protagonists created by the authors and whose purpose and character is to 'reveal history and the true character of historic figures' (Reed, 1994). Publications also include 'historical fiction', alluded to earlier, which does *not* include historic characters but whose purpose is to bring history to life. Central in all of these texts for children and young adults is the image of children affected by the political and social climate of their time setting, and the complex relationships between the actual conditions of life as lived by the individuals and the historical events and characters which affected them.

The tradition in Scotland of historical fiction for children really can be laid at the door of Sir Walter Scott. In 1827 Scott conceived the idea of writing a history of Scotland that would match J.W. Croker's popular *Stories from the History of England for Children* published a decade earlier. His approach would be significantly different though as he explained in a letter to his friend and printer James Ballantyne:

I will do something greatly better than Croker. It is a mistake to suppose you should be childish because you write to children. The language should be simple and being simple may be as energetic as if you were addressing a senate... I should wish it to be a work written for children but [at] which if a man look he should be induced to read. I am not even sure that children do not like and are improved by something that is not so immediately comprehended but finds exercise for their thoughts. To interest them is the point. (Scott, 1827)

Scott thought of himself as creating the *Tales of a Grandfather* for his much loved, sickly six-year-old grandson John Hugh Lockhart ("Hugh Littlejohn, Esq"). In November of 1827 the work in three volumes, terminating respectively with Bannockburn, Flodden and the Union of the Crowns, was finished. It was published in December and was immediately so successful that in January 1828 Scott was called upon to furnish additional matter to bring the first two volumes up to the length of the third for a revised edition. The second series appeared in November 1828 and carried the story more amply to the Union of 1707. A third series, marketed in December 1829, terminated in even more detail with the events of 1745. At the beginning of 1828 Scott had even thought about giving up the writing of fiction and

devoting himself entirely to the writing of history for children. He records this in his journal:

Nay—I will hash History with anybody, be he who he will. I do not know but it would be wise to let romantic composition rest and turn my mind to the History of England, France and Ireland to be *da capo rota'd* as well as that of Scotland. They would laugh at me as an author for Mr Newberry's shop in Paul's Church Yard. I should care little for that. *Virginibus puerisque*. I would as soon compose histories for boys and girls which may be useful, as fictions for Children of a larger growth which can at best be only idle folk's entertainment. (Scott, 1828)

These tales are important because they were specifically developed for a young readership and because they exemplify a powerful narrative vision informing the presentation of material largely derived from written historical sources. Scott had to experiment before he found what he thought to be the most appropriate intellectual and stylistic level in writing for children. In doing so his work has been compared with the work of the Reverend Alex Stewart whose *Stories from the History of Scotland* was published some five months before the first series of *Tales of a Grandfather*. Interestingly a review in *The New Monthly Magazine* in June 1828 seems to highlight some of the issues of difference between *historic* fiction and *historical* fiction referred to earlier in this chapter, as articulated by Althea Reed. The reviewer also compares Scott's work rather unfavourably with the Reverend Stewart's:

Mr S makes his personages unfold their own characters in their own language, as far as chronicles and tradition allows him; and he has thus given an air at once dramatic and real to his portraits, which must be very attractive to juvenile readers, and in this Sir Walter Scott has followed him. However amusing Sir Walter's longer tales may be to readers of a more advanced age, we think Mr Stewart's better calculated, from their conciseness, to amuse younger students, who are uninfluenced by the magic of a name. (anon, 1828)

Scott's adaptation of his sources involves the application of several techniques, any or all of which might be present in a single passage. There is a general tendency to summarize, both on a large scale (the *Tales* are a fraction of the length of the sources) and in recounting individual episodes. Any extended interpretative passages in the *Tales*, and in particular any of the numerous character analyses, will almost certainly be Scott's, and these passages usually include telltale indicators such as, "It is probable that," "You will recall that," or "We must recollect that".

*The Tales of a Grandfather* established a basic pattern of anecdotal narrative linked and 'pointed' by philosophical comment and generalising overviews. From a wealth of available material, Scott selects stories that will be interesting in their own right, and also

representative. His selection of material was geared towards the striking and interesting. He records in his journal his desire for “facts I will find fancy for myself”. Scott’s *Tales* for the most part tell stories with apparent objectivity. They are very much the history of nobility and battles. The ‘lower orders’ are referred to only occasionally, with a general recognition of their suffering, or a fearful awareness of their potential for making mischief. In this he seems in direct contrast with his own work in historical fiction for adults. There, Scott was probably the first major writer to set the fictional stories of his protagonists within a dynamically rendered, empirically precise historical fabric. In his historical novels for adults he established a dialect of voice and place that has run through Scottish Literature ever since. The associated instabilities of identity and a certainty of place are bound up with character. However, as time moved on there was a shift in taste on what was thought of as the ‘high’ literary tradition, so that Scott’s work came to be seen as lacking in the literary artistry and psychological depth appropriate to an adult readership and was increasingly devolved to a juvenile audience – for which, among other things they offered an engaging introduction to Scottish history.

The central protagonists in the historical fiction of the post-Scott tradition are, in the main, ordinary, unexceptional individuals, who find themselves caught up in the major historical events, usually without choosing to become involved. Recent historical fiction has taken the process further. It has often focused on the experience of groups historically excluded from the political nation as defined in the Scott tradition: women and children.

Linda Hutchison argues that, “both history and fiction are discourses.... Both constitute systems of signification by which we make sense of the past.” (quoted in Wittig, 1958) Fred Inglis calls culture, “ an assemblage of stories we tell ourselves” (Inglis, 1993: 206) and thus argues that our historically changing identity is formed from experience and the ‘narrative tradition’ of which we are part. It is from this identity that we interpret the world. Through historical fiction we can also explore the important elements in the construction of identity at a particular time. Mollie Hunter takes this notion very much to heart. She comments:

There is also the problem of conveying to young readers one’s feelings for the value of one’s native culture. And for that, the only solution to be found is also highly typical of writing from Scotland—that of characterisations powerful enough to be channels for these values. To create conflicts between these characters and others strong enough to be their antithesis is to ensure that a theme will emerge; and just as surely as night follows day, it is through that theme that those values will be demonstrated. (Hunter, 1992c)

“An assemblage of stories we tell ourselves.”

If national identity consists, among other things, of political, regional and historical elements, then the historical novel might be considered to be uniquely placed to influence developing aspects of identity in young readers. One of the authors considered in this section, Stevenson, provided a ringing confirmation of the centrality of the past in *Weir of Hermiston* (1896):

For that is the mark of the Scot of all classes; that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkable to Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forbears, good or bad; and there burns with him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation. (p 198)

As has already been stated, this section of the present study examines the historically changing Scottish identity through an exploration of the Scottish narrative tradition and particularly through a thematic approach to the narration of childhood, history, nation and identity in Scottish Children’s Literature. There is a specific focus on the images of Scottish children presented in a range of historical fiction texts, all relating to the early modern period in Scottish history: specifically the years between 1715 and 1752. This period encompasses the first and second Jacobite rebellions and the social and economic ‘fallout’ from them, and the texts portray child characters interacting with, and affected by, significant historical events. The recurring themes of the child as survivor, confidante, catalyst, innovator, victim and role model are explored in relation to the key historical events in which children are involved. The exploration highlights particular texts in which a more rounded and recognisable image of the Scottish child, that is neither marginal nor stereotypical, is presented. There is also an examination of continuity and change in the portrayal of Scottish children, driven by the complex processes of cultural development, conflict and reproduction of specific images of Scottish childhood.

Scotland is the land of castles and conflict, of mountain and flood, of tartans and *Brigadoon* and of funny men throwing cabers (the latter not till 1790). Ironically all these features make Scotland a more *historicised* country. Insofar as they make its identity more accessible, they make it more comprehensible and defensible, both to the local market and to the wider world. In a study undertaken by the Scottish Executive (now Scottish Government—the devolved Scottish equivalent of the British Government), researchers found that, overall, Scotland had

a very positive and distinctive image. However, awareness and knowledge of Scotland [was] usually related to images and icons rooted in the past. (Office of Chief Researcher, 2004)

International opinion expressed in the same research, confirms that Scotland is seen as an interesting country with an identifiable people and authentic traditions, but it is not necessarily regarded as a ‘place to do business’ in global terms. The question might then be asked, whether there is a similarly outdated image evident in Scottish Children’s Literature, and whether the plethora of historical fiction for children produced by Scottish authors or set in Scotland extends or compounds the problem. Mollie Hunter, as already stated, a leading exponent of the historical novel for children, has described this tradition as offering, “a view of Scotland as some kind of ‘Brigadoon’ seen through a tartan mist” (Clyde, 1979). Alternatively, the question could be asked whether the mixture of fiction set in the past, but written by contemporary authors for contemporary audiences, offers the twenty-first century child reader a more rounded and realistic image of Scottish children and a more accurate depiction of their relationships with the past.

The purpose of historical fiction for children has been debated: whether the author’s purpose is to teach history or tell a story. Either way, and particularly for children, the verisimilitude of historical contexts matter.

Events must be more closely winnowed and sifted; character more clearly delineated, but without condescension or over-simplification. The [young reader] must be moved quickly into the consciousness of another time and her imagination stirred to it.(Egoff, 1975)

Accuracy is particularly important in historical fiction now, when the study of history in schools has changed so radically. Being true to the past however, means being true to a time when moral and social sensibilities were different from today’s; to sanitize the past is to do it an injustice and is condescending to the present.

In view of such challenging contemporary attitudes to history, it is of interest why so many authors select the same historical context and setting for their novels. There are two very obvious examples in Scottish children’s historical fiction: novels set in the time of or dealing with Mary, Queen of Scots (1542-1587) or at the time of or dealing with the Jacobite rebellions—particularly the second rebellion in 1745 and the career of Bonnie Prince Charlie (1720-1788). The texts selected for the following discussion concern the latter.

## The Jacobite Rebellions as a context for Children's Historical Fiction

The Jacobite events have become a set of symbols of much that is picturesque and tragic in Scottish history. The period in question is a romantic and well known one with Bonnie Prince Charlie emerging as an iconic figure. It is also, without doubt, one of the most profound traumas in the collective Scottish memory. Much of Scotland's internationally known folk music finds its melancholy subject matter in that period. The Union of the Crowns had taken place after Queen Elizabeth I's death in 1603, when James VI of Scotland and I of England, Mary Queen of Scots' son, assumed the throne. The Union of Parliaments took place, at least nominally, in 1707. Between the two dates, the ruling Stuart dynasty experienced a series of convulsions culminating in its expulsion from the British throne, its exile to France and a prolonged period of attempted restoration, continuing well into the post-Union era. The defeat of Prince Charles Edward Stuart at Culloden and his subsequent exile to France in 1746, signalled the end of the attempts to restore the Stuart dynasty to the throne.

It is fascinating to see the events of the 1745 Rebellion re-told through the eyes of various novelists with their own changing views of history, and to consider the impact of these historical events on the lives of their young protagonists. This includes everything from a young Scots lad being rewarded for clever and courageous service to an English Special Investigations Officer of the Customs Service in Mollie Hunter's *The Lothian Run*, to children being forced to flee their homes, some with families and some alone, to seek safety in places as far from Scotland as America as Robbie does in Michael Morpurgo's *The Last Wolf*.

It is possible to trace the representation of childhood in Scotland through some of these fictional settings. Of still greater significance, it is currently very difficult to trace the representation of childhood in Scotland in anything *other* than the fiction for this period. There are a number of possible reasons for this. One of these is the fact that, prior to the 1740s there is very little or no depiction of childhood as being specifically 'different' to adulthood in a Scottish context, except perhaps as cited in diaries, letters or visual artefacts, and there has not yet been consistent, robust study of these. Another reason is that it was not until the 1850s that children were legally recognised as distinctive by modern society as children in the courts, and the events depicted in these novels take place one hundred years or so earlier.

Some of the children's novels which take the Jacobite Rebellions as their backdrop include *Kidnapped* (Stevenson, 1886b), *The Story of Ransald* (Gifford, 1968), *An Edinburgh Reel* (McGregor, 1968), *The Lothian Run* (Hunter, 1971a), *Quest for Kelpie* (Hendry, 1986), *Over the Sea to Skye* (White, 1997), *The '45 Rising: The Diary of Euphemia Grant, Scotland 1745-1746* (Hendry, 2001) and *The Last Wolf* (Morpurgo, 2002). They cover a wide time span in terms of publication dates, but all are set in Scotland some time between 1715 and 1752. Hence, all these novels offer a view of childhood that was certainly not current at the time of the depicted events and, as we shall see, this may tell us more about the view of childhood at the time of publication of the novels than at the time of their setting. The implications of this are significant for fiction writers. They have complete freedom to *imagine* the kind of Scottish childhood that may have existed before records began, but they are also subject to the difficulties of not necessarily being able to present an authentic and accurate account of Scottish childhood either, since the recovery of accounts of childhood are extraordinarily difficult to find. Thus they are free to let their imaginations roam, basing their portrayal on general knowledge of childhood in the past, but risk also being subject to accusations of depicting child protagonists, anachronistically, or out of step with their settings. It is striking when reviewing these texts, how regularly coincident themes emerge. Authors of novels with this particular historical setting frequently require the contemporary reader to focus on issues of language, gender and the resolution of moral dilemmas in ways which have a remarkably modern feel to them.

In Scotland, the period of childhood in the pre-modern era, as elsewhere in the world, was much shorter than in modern times. Education was not yet universal, though John Knox's idea of the 1560s, of a school in every parish, was well on its way to being fulfilled—if only for boys. The childhood experienced at that time in the subsistence, agrarian society of the Highlands would also have been substantially different from that experienced in the more industrial lowlands, which in turn would be more like that experienced by their English children living in similarly proto-industrial settings. Not even the language would have been uniform. Within Scotland, Gaelic, Scots and English would have been used. English did not become the standard language of education in Scotland until the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872. The recognisable historical image of the Scottish child, red-haired, tartan-clad, poor and perhaps aggressive was only true of some children for some of the time. Indeed the Disarming Act of 1746, passed following the defeat of the Jacobites at Culloden (the last battle fought in mainland Britain) *outlawed* the wearing of Highland dress (tartan) and forbade Highlanders having weapons or bagpipes (regarded as

instruments of war because Highlanders never went into battle without a piper) unless they were serving in the Highland regiments in the regular army, which swiftly became an established means of channelling renowned Highland aggression into imperially productive military endeavour.(Woosnam-Savage, 1995) The notion of childhood as a distinct condition and not an ‘apprenticeship’ for adulthood, only began to emerge systematically *after* the period in which the novels under discussion are set. Scottish children’s historical fiction presents images of children and childhood that *purport* to reflect or illuminate real events. However, perhaps the accuracy and coherence of the image of childhood presented in these texts needs to be questioned.

Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Kidnapped*, first published in serial form in the children’s magazine *Young Folks* between May and July 1886, was the last novel he published before he left Scotland for good. *Kidnapped* is both an historical novel, and a psychological novel probing, or perhaps essentialising, the differences between Lowland and Highland mentality and sensibility. From its beautifully simple opening, describing in the first person the young hero’s departure from his father’s house for the last time, through its cumulative series of adventures involving young David Balfour with the Highlander Alan Breck and so to the history of the Highlands just after the defeat of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, the story moves with assurance and perfectly controlled changes of tone. The tragic atmosphere of the mid-eighteenth century Highlands is expressed, but this tragedy never enters fully into the fabric of the novel, being subordinated to the line of adventure: the changing fortunes of the hero and his relationship with his fellow fugitive. The moral problem of the novel is real and, as always in Stevenson, far from simple. The problem of the innocent man tried in his enemy’s court and the linked problem of the duty of the innocently involved bystander in such a situation is searchingly presented. So also is the combination of stuffiness, courage and charm in the character of Alan Breck.

None of this interferes with the rapid flow of the narrative. The confident handling of the first person narrative, a marker of Scots storytelling, enables the author clearly to identify his hero and to show his temptations and weaknesses without the reader losing admiration for him. The narrative does not fall into the trap of being over-protective of either young people or heritage. Sometimes the formula of boy heroes surrounded by adults, observing rather than taking an active role, can become didactic. In Stevenson’s writing there is little chance of that and David’s reflections raise the events depicted to moral significance. Stevenson’s fiction, up to the publication of *Catriona*—the sequel to *Kidnapped*—in

1893, includes no strongly developed female personae. Thus *Kidnapped*, despite its appeal for adults as a ‘romance’, was written primarily as a boys’ adventure tale, with consequently strongly gendered focus.

The 16-year-old hero David Balfour, “Mr. Betwixt and Between”, is at the upper end of the child spectrum, as are many of the child protagonists in the featured texts. In modern publishing parlance they might be described as ‘young adults’ (children aged between 11 and 16), but certainly, within our modern literary understanding, they are still children. The adolescent characters in the featured novels are often rendered powerless, not only by their youth, but also by gender, race or class; they are frequently victimised by greed, hatred or persecution. Nevertheless they often manage to triumph in the face of overwhelming odds.

When David Balfour begins his adventures, his principles are those of a good kirk-going, Whig and Lowland Scot, with strong ideas about loyalty to King George, the sin of deserting the Royalist Army and the inherent wrong of card-playing. Alan Breck challenges much of his value system. Throughout the novel David comes to understand the complexity and breadth of the moral life, and his engagement with Alan is what effectively allows him to solve his dilemma. This is typified in the quarrel between Alan and David after their departure from Cluny Macpherson’s ‘cage’. Both initially avoid the subject of Alan’s unsuccessful card game using money lent him by David. As David’s health deteriorates as a result of the extreme travelling conditions, they quarrel seriously. Breck’s continuous taunts have the effect of spurring David on, beyond the limits of his strength. In his weakened condition David challenges Alan to a duel, but Breck will not be provoked and recognizes that the outcome of such a fight would be “fair murder”. This action brings David to his senses:

At this the last of my anger oozed all out of me; and I found myself only sick, and sorry, and blank, and wondering at myself. I would have given the world to take back what I had said; but a word once spoken, who can recapture it? I minded me of all Alan’s kindness and courage in the past, how he had helped me and cheered and borne with me in our evil days; and then recalled my own insults, and saw that I had lost for ever that doughty friend. (*Kidnapped*: 164)

Good historical fiction *should* give readers a sense of different and contrasting value systems and an appreciation of diverse cultures. Part of this story of childhood reflects the process of maturation as well as the loss of certainty and the understanding that life does not always allow people clear-cut solutions or courses of action, especially in circumstances of immense social and political upheaval.

When a writer chooses a first person narrator, the issue of language becomes even more critical. In historical novels, a narrator whose voice relies too heavily on outdated language, however historically correct, is sure to lose the reader. On the other hand it has been argued that a narrator's vocabulary, like the dialogue for all characters in historical fiction, should be restricted to language in use at the time of the story (Brown, 1998). For writers depicting Scottish children there is the added dilemma that, at the time in question, there were three languages in common use in Scotland: Gaelic, Scots and English. Stevenson wanted to make his novel decidedly Scots in style. James Henderson, editor of *Young Folks* at the time, warned him against too much broad Scots for a young audience, but Stevenson felt that Scots language was vital to his book. *Kidnapped* stands almost alone at that point as a children's story that makes serious use of Scots. Other contemporary Scottish children's writers of the time are much more circumspect: George MacDonald, William Black and S.R.Crockett are examples. But for Stevenson and other Scottish writers after him, it was unreasonable to portray Scottish characters without reflecting their language use accurately. The language used by David's uncle, Ebenezer, offers a good example of how language can both situate and the exemplify characters:

‘Davie, my man,’ said he, ‘ye’ve come to the right bit when ye came to your Uncle Ebenezer. I’ve a great notion of the family, and I mean to do the right thing by you; but while I’m taking a bit to think to mysel’ of what’s the best thing to put you to – whether the law, or the meenistry, or maybe the army, whilk is what boys are fondest of – I wouldnae like the Balfours to be humbled before a when Hieland Campbells, and I’ll ask you to keep your tongue within your teeth. Nae letters; nae messages; no kind of word to onybody; or else – there’s my door.’

(Kidnapped, p. 22)

The linguistic dilemma has been tackled in various ways in this group of novels concerned with Jacobite Scotland: from the use of modern Standard English throughout *Over the Sea to Sky* or *The Story of Ranald*, to a mix of Standard English with Scots only being used in the dialogue in Frances Mary Hendry's novels *Quest for a Kelpie* and *The '45 Rising*, to Mollie Hunter's preferred technique of rearranging the words to give the rhythm of the Scots tongue without the use of dialect in *The Lothian Run*. In Scotland it has long been widely accepted that Scottish literature exists in a variety of languages, and not just in the three most often used—Scots, Gaelic and English. For example, in the introduction to the *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (Brown, 2006) the authors argue that in considering the Scottish Literature of the medieval period, the linguistic net must be widened to include material written in Norse and Welsh. Interestingly, however, the varied linguistic techniques used in the examples of historical children's fiction cited here

appear to have had little impact on the impression, often gained by readers, of the Scottish child as one with a thick, unintelligible brogue or accent. Ironically, the more prevalent the use of Standard English by Scottish authors for reasons of widespread clarity, the more they leave themselves open to charges of *lack* of distinctiveness in Scottish Children's Literature.

Publishers too seem on the horns of a dilemma. Full use of Scots would render the books unsellable and unintelligible in the wider market, perhaps even to most modern Scottish children. A similar argument has been raised with translated Children's Literature: there is an obvious need to translate one home language to another but doing so raises questions about whether the essential message of the text is altered in some way by this process. Similarly authors must make the decision whether or not to use what has been coined 'gadzookery' in historical fiction, and must consider whether the use of the modern idiom throughout radically alters the central psychology of the story. Geoffrey Trease, perhaps the first 'modern' writer of children's historical fiction, simply used modern, naturalistic and accessible dialogue but avoided using out of period slang. In the same way, in Scottish fiction, there has to be a decision by authors and publishers regarding the use of Scots language 'markers' throughout. If the use of Scots language were to disappear completely from the texts this practice would contribute significantly to the further marginalisation of the Scots language and reduce its regard outside and within Scotland itself, as well as, perhaps, leaving the authenticity of the novels themselves open to question. There is a parallel, though not so vociferous, argument in Scottish adult fiction where there has long been debate regarding the language used in Scottish texts. This has not prevented someone like James Kelman for example, from achieving global success despite the use of dialect and even profanity (Gifford, 2006). Perhaps the fact that children's books are still seen as having a didactic purpose, even subliminally, means that the obsession with 'correct' language subsumes the concept of 'appropriate' language in Scottish children's fiction, and contributes to this blurred image of the contemporary Scottish child.

A common focus on language, gender and moral dilemmas emerges almost unavoidably for the authors of the featured Jacobite novels for children. So it is worth reviewing the main protagonists in the remainder of the named texts in terms of gender, political perspective or allegiance and language, to determine if a common, consistent image of the Scottish child can be identified. It is equally possible to trace how that image changes according to the construction of childhood current at the time of publication or in terms of

prevailing historical research. Revisionist evaluations of historical accounts are also bound to impact on fictional narratives: revisionist history is, after all, still history, subject to normal standards of demonstrable historical evidence and sound reasoning.

*The Story of Ranald*, *The Lothian Run* and *The Last Wolf* all have male protagonists ranging in age from 9 to 15. *Quest for a Kelpie*, *An Edinburgh Reel*, *Over the Sea to Skye* and *The '45* all have female protagonists ranging in age from 10 to 16. These latter texts were all published within the last 40 years and reflect the modern need to depict central female characters who play a key role in the lives of their communities as well as maintaining some autonomy over their own lives. Typically these novels portray intelligent, feisty heroines who know their own minds, disobey their male relatives with impunity, follow their hearts and become completely embroiled in the adventures of the Jacobite Rebellion and their male relatives' fortunes. These novels frequently end with the girls becoming the principal means of resolving the central tension or conflict depicted in the stories, through judicious use of common sense, intelligence, feminine wiles and intuition.

It might well be argued that such girls genuinely existed in the eighteenth century in Scotland, but it is highly unlikely that they would have been given such cultural latitude. It would be more authentic, and perhaps more credible, if their actions and beliefs reflected the values, attitudes, and behaviours of the period in which the novels are set rather than those of the current period. If however, the contemporary historical novel seeks to convey to modern readers the lives of ordinary people living in extraordinary times, it follows that the lives of women and girls must start to figure more prominently in the fiction than they do in historical accounts, especially for a contemporary, global readership with a different attitude to the agency of women. In the featured texts the girls are often separated from their families—Jeannie Main in *Quest for a Queen* by going into service; Christine Murray in *An Edinburgh Reel* by her mother's death and her father's capture in the '45; Phemie Grant to separate her from the soldiers of the Redcoat Army for her own protection in *The '45*. The girls re-establish new lives in their new contexts, maintain friendships forbidden to them, conceal secrets and endure the unwanted effects of war, meeting challenges that would be unimaginable in modern times. To some extent the image of Scottish girlhood presented in these novels is most vulnerable to the criticism of transporting modern children to an historical setting, with the attendant *smoothing* of some of the more distinctive aspects of Scottish identity.

This issue is most obviously exemplified in Kirsty White's *Over the Sea To Skye*. In this text, aimed at younger readers, the story opens with young Robby MacDonnell, "bored and frustrated" and wishing, "he was old enough to go with the men and fight for Bonnie Prince Charlie." (p 5) He comes upon a plaid, a rusty claymore and a couple of abandoned shields in the empty dungeon of his home. He and his younger brother Neil repair to a meadow and 'play' at being Prince Charlie fighting a Sassenach. Their sister Maggie, the central character, comes upon them and, initially, is amused by the sight of their play. This soon changes when she realizes they are recreating recent battles. The play deteriorates into a scuffle with the 'weapons' being abandoned and a previously 'dead' Prince Charlie resurrects himself to 'kill' the Sassenach. When called upon to judge whether such an action is right, Maggie stops their play saying, "Nothing's right about war Neil. No good comes from killing people." (p 15) This is a very contemporary, moral and 'politically correct' viewpoint. In reality the children would have been much more intimately caught up in the survival of the family, with most of the men away fighting and would be highly unlikely to indulge in the kind of imaginative play described in this text. They may well have shared this contemporary view about the morality of war, but it is almost certain it would not have been expressed in quite this way.

After the defeat at Culloden the English army surround Maggie's home in the search for Prince Charlie. Incredibly, Maggie is allowed to go out riding, and, in a further outrageous coincidence, she happens upon the Prince and some companions evading the Redcoats and attempting to get to Skye. Through a series of deceptions Maggie leads the Prince along a route that allows him to get to Skye and gives him her clothes in an effort to disguise him, after which she presumably 'hands him off' to Flora MacDonald and returns to her home in possession of his breeches and an abject apology to the Scots people from the Prince:

The Prince took Maggie's hand. "Please," he said, "tell your people I'm sorry."  
Maggie thought of the men who'd lost their lives, and those who'd been injured.  
The prince's apology was no help to them, but they would not want him to die as well. (p 55-56)

The attention to politically progressive ideas and the clear didactic intention of this book offers an image of Scottish childhood that is clearly 21<sup>st</sup> century and represents the way a modern Scottish child *might* have reacted had they found themselves in the same situation. The description of the boys at play alone undermines the accuracy of the image of childhood portrayed, contrasting as it does with the lived experience of real children in this period. Additionally, the very contemporary comic-style illustrations used in the text add to the mixed messages being presented. In particular, the sub-plot of a group of

elderly men who appear to support King George and thus manage to allay the Redcoats' suspicions and create a diversion to allow Maggie to act as a 'courier' and assist the Prince's escape, is principally narrated through the illustrations. The men are portrayed comically and appear as an eighteenth century version of the World War II Home Guard exemplified in the BBC television series *Dad's Army* (1968-1977). It is hard to accept high comedy in a situation where there is little likelihood of humour. However, the target audience of this book is the younger reader, and modern authors will be conscious of the sensitivities of their primary audience as well as those of parents and teachers selecting the text. Children of the past were, however, not just contemporary children in odd clothing. They were people who saw the world differently; approached human relationships differently; people for whom war and work and play had meanings lost to a post-industrialized world. To wash these differences out of historical fiction is not only a denial of historical truth but also a failure of the imagination and understanding that should be as important to authors of the present as it is to the past.

In two of the key texts, the central characters are disillusioned Jacobite supporters: *Over the Sea to Sky* and *An Edinburgh Reel*; while in the others, *The '45* and *Quest for a Queen* the characters are loyalists who almost inadvertently get caught up in the Rebellion. What this does for the modern reader is proclaim the historical truth that the Jacobite cause was not fully supported by all Scots, as well as the fact that there were many English Jacobites and Scottish Whigs. Scottish identity is portrayed, realistically, as a complex concept and one where lines of loyalty and judgement can become blurred based on the contexts and circumstances in which the characters find themselves. The children in these texts are forced to make difficult choices about beliefs, judgements and actions sometimes, just in order to survive.

In *The Story of Ranald*, *The Last Wolf* and *The Lothian Run*, the protagonists are boys. Ranald and Robbie are Jacobite supporters while Sandy Maxwell (*The Lothian Run*) is a Whig. *The Story of Ranald* (Gifford) is based on a true account written by a 9-year-old boy, re-told by a woman author in the 1960s. She admits his brief story is rather confused and that she has altered and simplified it considerably, but she does reproduce in the book the actual letters received by Ranald from his Jacobite father when he was held captive prior to his execution in London. The family had to flee their home, travel over great distances trying to save their cattle and as many belongings as they could because of the draconian measures taken against the Jacobites and their supporters after Culloden. Similarly in the completely fictional account *The Last Wolf*, the central character, Robbie,

is left completely on his own after his foster father is killed at Culloden and he flees Scotland to America in an attempt to avoid the punishment of the Redcoats. Unlike some of the other protagonists, Robbie is not able to resolve the dilemma of having to survive in Scotland as the supporter of a defeated cause: his family structure has been completely destroyed and his home no longer exists. Like many other Scots of the past, the necessity for re-location becomes a moment of opportunity for him and offers the reader a scenario that situates such characters as recognisable figures in the Scots diaspora.

*The Lothian Run* is perhaps the most interesting of this group of Jacobite novels in its depiction of protagonist Sandy Maxwell. The novel is concerned with darkness and disguise, and with questions of honour, as well as being about smuggling and political intrigue. An apprentice to a lawyer, Sandy, like his employer, is a Loyalist and he eagerly participates in attempting to thwart a Jacobite coup. This novel, more than any of the others, is most like a modern adventure/suspense novel. Sandy becomes a kind of junior 'James Bond' working undercover with the smugglers. In terms of typifying the image of the Scottish child, he courts adventure, keeps secrets, acts as a catalyst for the central events of the story and really enjoys the elements of danger and lawlessness that he encounters. It could be argued that here again we have a modern child transported into an historical setting.

What is perhaps missing in this novel though, is a sufficiently detailed exposition of the Jacobite and Hanoverian politics to give contemporary readers the necessary sense of urgency and sympathetic identification with characters who have suffered an enormous wrong. Like *Kidnapped*, this tale is about a young boy's search for identity and his place in the world, but the choice of smuggling as a subject matter and as a career makes for some questionable moral decisions for Sandy. Like so many Scots literary characters Sandy is faced with a choice. Early in the novel he says that he wants to, "be free to choose for myself what I want to do" (15). He faces two alternative futures. Should he remain uneducated, working on boats and smuggling for a living as his childhood acquaintances do? Or does he want to become knowledgeable and accomplished in many fields – languages, medicine, ciphers, navigation, riding, and many more – as one has to be to become a Customs Officer like Deryck Gilmour, an extreme version of the 'lad o' pairs' dilemma. By becoming directly responsible for the capture of the smugglers, even though they are childhood acquaintances, Sandy makes a conscious choice. Hunter here appears to advocate a kind of situational ethics: she believes in certain standards and values, enunciated in her essay *Talent is Not Enough*. (Hunter, 1976) She believes that the

world to be faced by an adolescent is more complex than could be imagined in the early years of childhood and that right and wrong and good and evil are no longer absolutes. The child characters of Mollie Hunter's fiction might be cunning, ambitious or proud, but if they have compassion, if they can make caring contact with another, that, Hunter asserts, is "all that ultimately matters". (Hunter, 1975c) Love, courage and compassion are her only absolutes. The Scottish child characters in Hunter's books are far from the stereotypical, tartan-clad, two-dimensional characters that sometimes seem to exist in the public psyche. Mollie Hunter has asked a question that is of central importance to the whole argument concerning the place of historical fiction:

How can one understand the present without a sense of the past on which it is based? How could I address my historical novels to those already lost in all the twists and guilts and deformations of the adult world? (Hunter, 1975c)

Hunter offers the modern child reader a recognisable image of children interacting with the huge events of Scotland's past.

The purpose of this section of the argument is to explore aspects of identity through the image of Scottish children presented in historical novels all dealing with a common historical event. In considering the image of Scottish children in historical fiction the strongest image held by readers may have been narrow and often limited to the stereotypical: tartan-clad, linguistically challenged and aggressive, and some Scottish authors have been as guilty of perpetuating that image as anyone else. (Dr Sheila Douglas articulates many of these linguistic and societal concerns in an article posted on the Scots Language website.) (Douglas, 1994) Exploration of the selected novels in this section illustrates both the consistency and the distinctiveness of Scottish children when compared to those of other nationalities. The central protagonists in all of the novels are characterized first and foremost as *children*, and only thereafter as specifically *Scottish* children and, as such, what is important is the authentic child's voice and actions depicted by various authors. The best of the novels combine precise historical detail with credible characters and actions, and succeed in making the reader care about the outcome of the story. Additionally, the novels present Scottish children as vivid, distinctive characters who display some recognizably Scottish traits but who are not restricted or incomplete as a result. They provide an additional and significant perspective on key events in British history in a manner that should be more valued than it currently seems to be. The events of Scottish history are critical for both Scotland and the United Kingdom, and it is essential that the historical novels available to young readers reflect the full spectrum of British history in a way that allows all of them to see, hear and recognize themselves and their

heritage in the stories. Some of the texts discussed also help to identify the more challenging aspects of managing historical fiction and the constant struggle between the need to present historical events in an accurate manner that remains true to the facts and still allows young readers to access complex and distant events. Joan Aitken has claimed that,

History can give us and our children a sense of context; it can show us where we belong in the pattern, what came before and how everything connects.” (Aitken, 1996)

One author who epitomises this view for Scottish children and who assumes the responsibilities of such an approach, is Mollie Hunter. The final section of this chapter will offer a case study of some of the historical fiction from this award-winning author and will attempt to discern how her work offers young Scottish readers a sense of context and a recognisable Scottish identity.

### A Place in the Pattern

For a time, Mollie Hunter was considered Scotland’s most distinguished writer for children and young adults. She is the author of powerful and memorable novels which profile Scotland in both historical and contemporary times. Credited with expanding the scope of both the historical and the fantasy novel in challenging works considered both universally appealing and essentially Scottish, she is often praised for her skill as a literary stylist and storyteller, for her ability to evoke place and atmosphere, and for her intimate knowledge of Scottish history, legend and culture. Along with her work in other genres, Hunter’s historical fiction is often acknowledged for the brilliance of her writing as well as for the credibility of her characterisations. Like her illustrious predecessor, Sir Walter Scott, Mollie Hunter uses the voices of the common people in her stories and, also like Scott, she lets the characters reveal themselves. She enters into them and re-enacts their experiences, a technique learned from the storytellers of the oral tradition. Writers of adult fiction like Scott and others who followed his example such as Stevenson, Gunn, Grassie-Gibbon and even Irvine Welsh, Mollie Hunter endows the landscape of Scotland with a life of its own, to the extent that it often seems one of the protagonists in her children’s novels. Notwithstanding the fact that her stories are rooted almost exclusively in Scottish soil and history, the range of her fiction is wide reaching in its sweep and universality. In his article, *World Enough and Time: the Work of Mollie Hunter* (Hollindale, 1977), Peter

Hollindale describes her as a national rather than a regional writer whose “Scottishness ... is uncompromising but not limiting”. He goes on to say she can

combine an imagination which is charged by the historic energy of a precise locale with a humane moral intelligence that seeks always to be accessible and understood.

He comments that this, despite being an “impertinent generalisation” is typically Scots.

Here the whole strength of Scots literary tradition is on her side, and without inferring direct ‘influences’, it is not hard to see how it has aided her. ... [The historical novel] is not free of technical problems: each writer must confront and resolve these anew. Mollie Hunter acknowledges her awareness of this in her revealing essay *The Last Lord of Redhouse Castle* (Hunter, 1975c) where she discusses the problems of writing historical novels for children, “the first being the one peculiar to Scottish writers in this field—how to set the scene in a country whose history is unknown to non-Scottish children.” But it does enable her to use the form with all the confidence and flexibility of a writer who knows that her national tradition fosters and respects it. (Hollindale, 1977)

Hunter has consciously examined her practice as a writer and her motivation as both a Scottish and a children’s writer and has published and been interviewed on these issues extensively. As well as her concern with the lack of knowledge about Scottish history, Hunter has considered various approaches to key elements including: the use of Scots language; conveying the period and setting of her stories clearly and simply without contrivance; the unmoderated use of primary texts; her personal respect for learning, which she often attributes to her protagonists; and her active social conscience which frequently puts her on the side of the poor and deprived in her novels.

Fiction has the advantage over ‘traditional’ history of allowing writers to focus on the part played by *ordinary* people in shaping events through their membership of groups representing historically significant causes, interests or principles. The fictional characters who participate in ‘historic’ events usually fail to understand fully what they are taking part in, a noteworthy feature when the central protagonists are children. Naturally such groups are also made up of individuals with differing degrees of conviction, different reasons for supporting a cause and different ways of understanding it, as was illustrated in the Jacobite texts discussed earlier. Civil strife forces ordinary, unengaged people to take sides, and by placing unexceptional individuals in exceptional circumstances elicits from them heroic responses which, in other circumstances, they would not have thought themselves capable. Self-discovery is, paradoxically, a consequence of social engagement, and the idea of the heroic is democratised. Mollie Hunter has written passionately on this topic in an essay entitled *A Need for Heroes* (Hunter, 1992a) in which she challenges the

assumptions of the heroic ‘man of courage’, where the idea that ‘might is right’ seems to elevate the use of force, and the adversarial situations often offered to children as encompassing the heroic ideal. Here, she records

Simply because there is no difference between the tactics used by the opposing sides, there is also a blurring of the demarcation line in the very situation the theme ostensibly tries to project—the struggle between good and evil. Even more important, the same blurring process divorces the struggle from its true battleground—the human psyche. (P 60)

In her concern with this topic, Mollie Hunter is following in the footsteps of countless other Scottish authors including James Hogg, in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and Stevenson in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886), intrigued by doubling, duplicity, deception and the influence of good and evil as it affects the actions or personality of characters. In her historical novels Hunter uses characterisation as the principle means of exploring conflict, from which emerges her personal concept of a hero. Like Scott, Mollie Hunter sets the fictional stories of her protagonists within an energetically portrayed, demonstrably rigorous historical framework. The best historical tales thrive because they retain the capacity to change, to generate new meanings and resurrect old ones. They are sites which, through their representations, offer the promise of re-connection to the past. Hunter represents the past as something that has a direct impact on the daily life of the current generation but the historical novel also affords her the capacity to weave a critique of historical attitudes into stories for modern audiences. Hunter acknowledges that the *Scots* historical novel has a, “hard edge of reality” that gives it relevance and immediacy and attributes the Celtic passion for genealogy and the small size of the country as among the reasons why the Scots live very closely to their past.

Hunter’s historical fiction can be roughly divided into three categories: first those that could be termed ‘romances’ such as, *Hi Johnny* (1963), *The Spanish Letters* (Hunter, 1964b) and *The Lothian Run* (1970). These novels have serious themes and do not romanticise history, but their basic emphasis is on developing stirring adventure stories. The second category comprises novels that have a much sharper historical focus and involve a more searching investigation of human motivation and behaviour in crisis. These are: *A Pistol in Greenyards* (1965), *The Ghosts of Glencoe* (1966) and *The Thirteenth Member* (1971). The third and last category is occupied by only a single title, *The Stronghold* (1974) also the Carnegie Medal winner in the same year. This novel has themes in common with Hunter’s more ‘serious’ historical fiction of the previous category, developing further some of her central preoccupations. But this novel has a new

historical dimension and theme. Its setting in a primitive Orcadian community in Roman times is far more remote and far less documented than any other book attempted by the author, and places a different demand on her historical imagination. The catalyst for this novel was Mollie Hunter's speculation about the origins of 'brochs', those extraordinary stone structures which are the 'strongholds' of the title. It is the novels with the sharper historical focus on which I wish to concentrate, primarily because these are the novels that most clearly establish that Mollie Hunter is an important Scots writer in the tradition of Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Walter Scott. Like these writers, Hunter is at home in both light and dark and she moves easily between them, "from the microcosm of history to the microcosm of the soul; from the soul of the country to the individual." (Greenaway, 1998)

The novels considered in this case study each involve, in Mollie Hunter's own words, "a much deeper exploration into the themes of courage and conscience". The historical novels, more than any other genre, satisfy the practical side of her nature, the side that loves structure and theatre, but they are not without their challenges. The lack of historical context for general readers has already been mentioned, and Hunter acknowledges that she struggled with this aspect, particularly in her early books. In some ways, this is simply an exacerbated form of a technical problem that faces any writer in the structuring of a book—that of orienting the readers towards the story's location in place and time. Most commonly this is done early in a text by planting markers towards those features, markers that readers will instantly recognise. Such a simple solution is not always available to the Scottish writer, so they must often be ingenious in finding ways to provide that essential orientation. Sometimes, as in the case of *You Never Knew Her as I Did* (1981) (also called *Escape from Loch Leven* 1987), a complex historical context must be articulated via a complicated first few chapters; at other times she depends on the strength of the subject matter of the lives of the low-born caught up in the historical moment—the Glencoe Massacre (*The Ghosts of Glencoe*, 1966); the Highland Clearances (*A Pistol in Greenyards*, 1965) or the witch hunts (*The Thirteenth Member*, 1971) to engage the reader. In these novels, the protagonists have to find the love and courage to make difficult decisions. Sometimes this comes from interaction with family or others around them but, often, this strength comes from the inner resources of the character themselves. The focus is on these young people caught in forces larger than themselves, and struggling to locate the truth amid the deception around them while courageously obeying their consciences.

Additionally, Hunter is concerned to reproduce the *flavour* of spoken Scots language without raising a barrier to understanding, while still conveying the impression of speech forms common to times past. She has been extremely direct in her attitude to language choice saying that, “if a writer peppers the text with words in a language unknown to the reader, this is a form of snobbery.” (Hunter, 1976) The problem is that even though books set in Scotland are written in English, the colloquial speech in Scotland differs considerably from the English used elsewhere. While this is unproblematic in terms of narrative, it can cause difficulty in dialogue. The stumbling block is that the use of words, effectively those of a foreign language, inevitably will interrupt the flow of the narrative for the reader. However, it can equally be argued that readers of Scottish material are entitled to dialogue that appears to be typically Scottish. Hunter describes her own approach thus:

The text has to be so manipulated as to impart to it no more than the *flavour* of Scottish speech at the same time as those readers are given the impression that this truly is the way that a Scot would speak in any given circumstance. (Hunter, 1992c)

In typical Scots fashion, authors can make a virtue out of this necessity in that dialogue of this kind can often enhance the meaning of a text and rather than obscuring it, can enrich it. The Scottish author has the unique privilege of having three languages on which to draw—Scots, Scots English and Gaelic. Thousands of words from the Scots language have much wider connotations than their nearest English equivalent. Gaelic speakers tend to speak English in literal translation from the very different syntax of their own language, so that all the cadences of their first language are retained in their English speech. So if these languages are used, the Scottish writer must find ways of explaining the unfamiliar words. In the main, this can only be done by the use of reflected meaning either in the dialogue or in the enveloping narrative. The result of this for Mollie Hunter is that because of her decision to write dialogue in “clear plain English, which is in itself timeless” and her proclivity for emphasising the modern readers’ likeness to, rather than difference from, the stories of the past, she has sometimes been faulted for the *lack* of historical ‘flavour’ in her books. Hunter attributes this most frequently to misreading by critics and often indicates that what they have identified as lack of specificity has been the result of deliberate choices on her part. Her sensitivity to language also includes a realisation of the rhetorical capacity of language to deceive and obscure and thus it has an intrinsic role in many of her historical novels which have deception as one of their central themes.

Mollie Hunter has said that a sense of conflict is the common element in all her fiction: in the historical fiction there is always some conflict of ideas in terms of the action of the story, with the young people often having to make up their minds where they stand on an issue or what action they have to take to resolve the conflict. But these novels are also diverse in both subject and narrative tone. Her historical novels rest on a few very simple, very profound values: courage, loyalty, initiative, truth, creative intelligence and love. But their superstructure depends on quite different terms of reference—the realities of political intrigue and struggles for power; expediency; ruthless service to a cause; ambition and opportunism; equivocation and duplicity. Hunter's interest in the psyche and all manner of doubling lends her work to psychoanalytical analysis and also links her unequivocally with Scots literary traditions and the much debated Caledonian Antisysgy, outlined earlier in Chapter 2 of this study.

### *A Pistol In Greenyards*

It seems to have been inevitable that Mollie Hunter would become a writer of historical fiction. She had to leave school at the age of 14 after the death of her father, but took with her an abiding love of the language, history and culture of Scotland, largely as a result of the stories told to her by her mother. She subsequently set out to educate herself by undertaking reading in the National Library of Scotland. She read Scottish history, studied anthropology, folklore, comparative religion and psychology. In so doing she inculcated the habit of research, especially into original sources. Thus she learned to interpret facts for herself rather than have them mediated through academic texts or by teachers. This trust of facts gives her writing depth and complexity. The novels she writes concern pivotal historical moments for Scotland, but told from the point of view of those caught up in events rather than the central characters. Most often she uses a first person narrator, a common Scots literary device, which allows her to both describe and comment on events and to reflect, to some extent, what it must have felt like for the characters. Her decision to write her third historical novel *A Pistol in Greenyards* emerged really from proximity and place. The event central to this novel took place during the Highland Clearances of the nineteenth century, a more recent event than her previous historical novels. (The Clearances refers to the time when thousands of crofters were 'cleared' from their rented crofts to make way for sheep farming, and were not voluntary.) Also, Hunter was living, at the time she wrote it, in the area where events had taken place. In her research she had found a story about a young boy who had pulled a pistol on a Sheriff Officer who was attempting to serve writs of evacuation in a glen called Greenyards in 1855. The action

that had caught her attention appeared briefly in history as the only evidence of doomed resistance to that particular clearance. Hunter recalls that:

This boy haunted me. Looking at Ardgay Hill, from whence he and the other children of the glen had kept watch for the arrival of the Sheriff's forces, I found the thought of those other children haunting me. I read letters and diaries of the period. I talked to old people with intimate experience of crofting life and got from them old tales of childhood memories.(Hunter, 1975c)

She was already acutely aware of the Highlanders' passionate attachment to the land and was now encountering the acute despair attached to the knowledge these people had that they had been driven from their land and would never return. She also wanted to convey the sense of kinship they felt along with their respect for learning and their innate courtesy. As well this, Hunter was trying to transmit a sense of the courage that must have been required in that small act of resistance. She ignored objections that the event was too obscure and bloody to be turned into a book for children. She used a first person narrator, the 15 year old boy Connal Ross, because she felt that children were an integral part of the story. This allowed her to tell the story swiftly, in a bitter, angry fashion but still allowed the poetic voice to emerge from the boy's narrative. By creating a character of depth, Hunter was able to show all the linking strands of his emotions and by doing so was able, also, to show the emotions of his people. Connal's choices are grim ones—to resist being 'cleared' in the face of certain defeat or to give in to imprisonment or possibly execution. The doubling and deceit he encounters during the course of the action is of a higher order. The story recounts the short, doomed, resistance of the tenant farmers of Greenyards against their eviction from their crofts at the behest of the landowners, and of young Connal Ross's fight against a vicious legal system that has his mother in its clutches and is closing in on him. The crofters, aware of past events and previous evictions, take a stand against their evictors, incited, at least in part, by the tacksman—the tenant in chief—Alexander Munro's double dealing. Munro, who holds the subleases on the land, claims the advertisement for the sale of the land appeared in the paper without his knowledge and he swears that he has not authorised any writs against the people of Greenyards. A servant in Munro's household warns the crofters Munro's promises are false and so the whole town, including the children, watch for those who might try to force them off their land. Connal's grandfather, Donald Ban, emotionally puts into words the previous experience of evictions and the consequences for both the people and the land.

'It is more than our homes they would take from us,' he cried.

'It is the heritage to which we have been born and which has been ours for generation upon generation, so that now it is only in the high, pure, air of the mountains that our spirits can breathe! Out of sight of them we would sicken and die with longing for the feel of heather under our feet, for the sight of bracken

glinting in the sun, and for the sound of rivers rushing down between the stones! We old people would sicken and die, and even you young people would never cease to feel the ache of longing in your hearts, for the tall mountains and the green valleys between them are as much home to the Highlander as the roof over his head. (p 34-35)

While they watch, the villagers are persuaded by the minister of the need to muster public support for the villagers, as he is convinced—rightly—that the extent and cruelty of the evictions are largely unknown to the public. The children act as lookouts on Ardgay Hill and plan, in the first instance, that the Sheriff’s Officer will be met by women who will block the road and prevent his advance for as long as possible by means of argument and persuasion. The villagers are aware that there must be no violence so as not to give troops the idea that they have resisted eviction. The villagers’ unease is justified when Alexander Munro is intercepted on his way to his law-agent. On the minister’s urging, they ask for written confirmation that Munro will not be party to them being evicted from Greenyards. This he agrees to do and provides the following:

‘I, Alexander Munro of Braelangwell, do hereby solemnly state and assure the tenants of the farms of Greenyards that, as God is my Maker, I will not sign any writs of eviction that may be issued against them. Given under my hand, this 2<sup>nd</sup> day of March of the year eighteen hundred and fifty-four.’ (p 48)

The paper is given to Connal’s mother, as proof should a Sheriff’s Officer challenge them and the villagers are satisfied. Connal however, is uneasy and has reservations about the wording of the assurance they have been given.

Two weeks later a Sheriff’s Officer, William MacPherson, and a Constable as witness, appear with the purpose of serving writs on the community at Greenyards. During the altercation, Connal prevents McCaig from killing his mother by pulling a pistol on him. The villagers tear up the warrants brought by the Sheriff’s Officer and victory seems assured. However, Lachlan Chisholm, a villager studying medicine in Glasgow, has a greater awareness of the consequences of Connal’s action, realising that impending war with Russia is likely to have the effect of relegating events in the Highlands to minor news and thus it is unlikely that popular opinion will be affected by their plight. In the days following, the villagers adopt a siege mentality and nine days later a troop of forty, including a Sheriff, Munro’s law agent, Stewart and a Procurator Fiscal approach the village. Once again the way is blocked by women and old men, passively resisting the Sheriff and his troop. Sheriff Taylor then reads the Riot Act, in English, which of course would not be understood by the women. Once again the villagers brandish their assurance from the tacksman but this time it is completely ignored and the Sheriff gives the command to, “Knock them down!” What follows is a brutal baton attack on unarmed women, children and old men which results in death, serious injury and imprisonment.

The resistance to the serving of the writ is ultimately proved futile and Munro demonstrates the slippery nature of language when used to disguise truth. He did not lie when he gave his sworn oath that he would not sign writs against the villagers because he had *already* signed such an order. Connal is forced to hide from the authorities for six months; his mother is arrested. The crofters who have the funds can opt to leave for America. Connal and his sister Katrine are unable to do so until the outcome of their mother's trial is known and besides, Connal himself is wanted for attempted murder of an officer of the queen's forces, despite the fact that the officer drew first. This is a capital charge. The publicity gained for the story falters against the power of the Crimean War story and the involvement of the Scottish regiments: where they made any impact at all the events were considered exaggerated. Connal and his sister are helped by a lawyer, Mr Cameron, who manages to get the charges against their mother reduced. He achieves this by bringing counter-charges against the Sheriff for the murder of Ellen McGregor Ross, whom he had commanded to be knocked down. Unfortunately, to accomplish this Cameron has to use the same device of duplicitous language so maligned by the villagers when used by Munro. For Cameron to be successful he has to bend the truth more than a little to get the prosecution to bargain for a lesser charge. He also misleads the Sheriff about Connal and his presence in court. He manages this "without telling a single lie." (p 127) Cameron's reasons for getting involved with the case at all have to do with him being unwilling to stand aside any longer in the face of the twisted form of law so often experienced by the Highlanders.

All the time I have practised law I have had a trail of miserable people pass through this office begging me to protect them from the moneyed land-grabbers of the south. But there *is* no justice for the poor Highlander whose only title to his land is a moral one. The law of property recognises only title deeds written on paper. It pays no heed to those granted by tradition and written in the blood of sacrifice, and I hate that law, Miss Ross. My blood is as Highland as yours and I hate the law that does such things to my people. That is why I am willing to take risks to help you. (p 122)

A central tenet of this novel revolves round issues of law versus issues of justice. Connal's experience of the law is that it is warped and dishonest. The charges against Anne and Peter Ross are reduced, but they are still sentenced far more severely than a charge of breach of the peace warrants. Furthermore, unfortunately, regardless of his disguise, McCaig recognises Connal at the trial and there follows a desperate pursuit as Connal and Katrine make their way to the ship for America before McCaig can arrest Connal and prevent his escape.

Mollie Hunter uses a particular narrative device to open the novel. Connal encounters Dr Andrew Hamilton shortly after having been successful in boarding a ship named the 'Good Chance' bound for America. Connal immediately judges Dr Hamilton, a Lowlander, an enemy because of his accent and political allegiance. His judgement is not altogether at fault, in that Dr Hamilton has all the Lowlander's misconceptions and prejudices about the Highlands. He refers to his Highland patients as "savages" and chides them for foolishly resisting the law and the "march of Progress" (Hunter, 1965) The narrative device used in the novel consists of Connal's first-person account of exactly how savagely 'the law' has been carried out and how the Highlanders responded with dignity, courage and honour. However, the plot also concerns how Dr Hamilton emerges as a sensitive and sensible man who admits his own errors and misconceptions and earns Connal's respect.

The narrative technique used to recount the deceit of the law is a double one. Connal gives a first person account of the events on board ship *after* they have been expelled from their homes and are bound for America framing his account of the incident itself. The double voice effectively underlines the seriousness of the situation. This tragic story is both prepared for and reinforced by a narrative structure that can show the results of the action in the changes in Connal himself, from an exuberant, plucky boy to an embittered, hunted young man. Hunter uses the device of adding to the horror by giving the reader prior knowledge of the outcome of the events at the start of the novel. Connal explains why he has been induced to record events in writing,

For all those who do not know and do not care that our race is being destroyed, our people scattered and our language lost so that a few men can become rich off the back of sheep. (p 181)

Connal is prominently given the role of storyteller, a role frequently used by Hunter in all genres. Here the role of the story told by Connal acts as a conscious and deliberate means of remembering, and in this the author might be implying that history itself is an artefact of the people to be kept, remembered and handed on. The pistol of the title is also an artefact or symbol, representing something to be remembered. It was handed down to Connal and was used by his great-great-grandfather at the Battle of Culloden. Ultimately though, the pistol is taken from Connal and what he is left with is the story. Betty Greenaway records that,

The true Scottish legacy is not the battles celebrated in song and story, but the spirit of the Scottish people as mythologised and handed down in songs and stories themselves. (Greenaway, 1998)

The Highland Clearances have been the subject of some revision in recent years, but it remains an episode that seems ruthless, callous and coldly pecuniary, to modern readers even as it did to the crofters at the time. (Richards, 2007) In Mollie Hunter's telling of this tale she reveals without hysteria or over-dramatisation the full horror of these evictions, common during this period. She depicts clearly the powerlessness of the people and presents a situation where the young central character is forced to act when his family and way of life is threatened, no matter the consequences. By allowing Connal to tell the story in his own words she is able to elucidate the depth of his family loyalty, the love he and others have for their country and way of life and their loathing of injustice and duplicity in both word and action; all of which have been depicted in literature as Scottish traits.

### *The Ghosts of Glencoe*

Mollie Hunter's choice for her next historical novel—the massacre of the Macdonald clan at Glencoe, again completely based on fact, offers a parallel to *Kidnapped*. This is an exceptionally well-documented event, but not until that time, in novel form for a young readership. In selecting this as a topic for a novel Hunter was more than aware of the technical problems it presented. Not only was the historical background far more complicated than for her previous novel and populated by even more complex characters, the material dealt with the planned killing of all of the inhabitants of a Highland glen. How, wondered Hunter, could that possibly be written for children? “And yet, I remembered, it was the very challenge of such difficulties which had drawn me to write it!”(Hunter, 1975c) The novel that emerged presents a brutal piece of history that is convincing as a novel without distorting the facts.

This is the story of the massacre of the Macdonald clan by a government regiment of soldiers, predominantly made up of Campbells—sworn enemies of the Macdonalds—who had been billeted with them in Glencoe prior to the massacre. MacIain, Chief of the Glencoe Macdonalds had been one of the Chiefs who mustered their clan on behalf of the deposed king James II against King William III. The role of the soldiers since then was to keep the peace in the Highlands and prevent the defeated clans from rising again. To that end, the Government demanded an oath of allegiance; to be sworn on penalty of life and land from the clan Chiefs, with a deadline date of the first of January 1692. MacIain arrived at Fort William on the 29<sup>th</sup> December 1691 to make the oath, not realising that it had to be sworn before a civil authority. He is then sent to the nearest Sheriff's Officer at Inverary to make the oath, but there is a blizzard and the time limit expires, despite

Colonel Hill providing him with a safe-conduct and a letter explaining his intentions were good. This provides the excuse for the massacre among some of those in charge. (The massacre was carried out, allegedly, in the King's name.)

The regiment pretended that a shortage of supplies makes it necessary for them to be billeted with the Macdonalds, when in reality the plan was for them to ambush their hosts, supposedly to frighten the clan Chiefs, but also in revenge for long-past injury. What made this such a vicious and cold-blooded act was the fact that the soldiers who were to carry out the massacre had shared the Highlander's hospitality for almost two weeks before they carried out the attack, and had begun to establish relationships with them as well as directly assuring them there was no sinister intent. Like *Pistols in the Greenyard*, the tragedy of this event is rooted in the same issues of appearance and reality, deceit and disguise, but here in much greater depth and complexity.

Hunter was aware that for this to work she needed a device that would allow her to mediate the events for a young audience. To this end she once again used the device of a first person narrator that had been so successful in *Pistols in the Greenyard*. This time her research led her to a story about a sixteen-year-old Ensign of the regiment involved, told by survivors of the massacre and their descendants. Basing events in the traditions of the day, Mollie Hunter was able to place the character Robert Stewart as a stranger on the scene and thus, through his eyes, to explain it to the reader. This character was known to be at the scene of the action, but Hunter is able to imagine thoughts, motivation and characterisation such that he assumes a central role in the story.

The very fact of his youth assumed the realism that contrasted with the decadent brilliance of his company's commanding officer, [Glenlyon] and thus made it possible to draw the complex portrait required for that man. Stewart's personal involvement with the victims of the massacre became the reader's involvement, replacing shock at the manner of death with pity and concern for the fact of it. (Hunter, 1975c)

The author believed that the dilemma facing Ensign Stewart, of killing people with whom he had become friends, stealthily and in cold blood, was no different than it would be for modern audiences in this or any other country. Should he obey the law, and orders from his superiors, or follow his conscience? Hunter maintains that it was this agony of conscience that became the theme of the book and thus transformed it into a children's book. Having the narrator be one of the regiment billeted with the Macdonalds allows Hunter to emphasise the enormity of the crime of first "eating their salt" and then murdering their unsuspecting and defenceless hosts.

The entire historical event rests on disguise, and it is this fact that Betty Greenaway describes as “elevating the event into the first rank of crimes among the Scots’ and the world’s imagination.” (Greenaway, 1998: 69) As in *A Pistol in Greenyards*, everything turns on the wording of an order. King William had been maliciously and wrongly advised that MacIain was openly rebellious against him, since the oath he had signed had never reached the King. The Earl of Breadalbane, an official adviser to the Government on Highland affairs, set out to convince the King that Glencoe was a hotbed of unrest that threatened the peace of the Highlands and the King believed him. When the information that the oath of allegiance appeared not to have been taken in time was added to this, the King gave an order to root out this nest of apparent robbers and traitors and it was this that seemed to give the Secretary of State, Stair, the authority for the action. The written word again proved slippery and deceptive.

Clothing too becomes symbolic of the shifting nature of reality and perception. Robert Stewart, a good and ambitious soldier, is proud to wear his red coat. He discards it for traditional Highland garb to participate in a hunting party with the Macdonalds. During this hunt he is questioned about the intentions of the regiment. Stewart mistakes the purpose behind the questions as a ploy to obtain intelligence and leaves the hunt abruptly, changing back into his uniform and feeling immediately at home again. Later, during the massacre, he again sheds his red coat, this time burying it in the snow and he disguises himself in a discarded plaid so that he is not seen as a deserter by the regiment or as an enemy by the Macdonalds. The switching of clothes can be seen as a metaphor for the switching loyalty experienced by Stewart. It is no accident that it is when the Ensign is wearing tartan that MacIain’s sons question him about the regiment’s intentions. Symbolically at that point he is a clan member. The different clothing presents as an outward sign of his changing identity, as loyal soldier and conflicted Scot.

In selecting this episode as a plot for a novel, Mollie Hunter is being true to her commitment to Scottish history and culture, but in a manageable way for children. She clearly believes that such incidents are central to the understanding of the home audience and influential on their understanding and interpretation of the present. Hunter is keen to engage the reader’s attention and sympathy but not in either a sentimental or overly distressing way. This episode is crucial to the Scots past and thus a key part of the heritage and culture of young Scottish readers. As such, and as a Scottish writer, Mollie Hunter feels it incumbent on her to pass on knowledge and passion for Scots history and culture

to children. In this book, as in most others, she manages this by combining the distinctive Scottish elements with universal themes in a way that allows celebration of difference and likeness at the same time.

### *The Stronghold*

With *The Stronghold* (1974) Hunter both moved away from, and remained true to, her previous historical novels. The core of this novel does not concern a well-known, well-documented national historical event. The central premise of this novel concerns the imagined origins of the stone structures known as ‘brochs’. The story recreates, with insight and power, the society that built these constructions and explores the marvellous excitement of original acts of imagination: those moments when history is altered by a single, creative mind. It was while Mollie Hunter was actually standing inside one of these massive stone structures that she began to wonder about their origin. Brochs are only found in Scotland, in Caithness and the Northern Isles, the Hebrides and Sutherland. No one is completely sure of their original purpose, but over five hundred of them have survived till modern times and all of them are located on or near arable land, near the sea. All brochs conform to a uniform design, and that design is unique. (Figs 1-4) It has no precedent or parallel anywhere in the world so Mollie Hunter speculated that it, “must have been an idea before it was a fact; an idea springing from one single brilliant mind.” (Hunter, 1974) *The Stronghold* is Hunter’s version of the story of what *might* have happened in the creation of the brochs, and in weaving this she has imagined the story of the person whose mind first conceived of the idea of building such a stronghold. In common with her other historical novels, this one deals with conflicting loyalties and explores questions of belief and heresy. It paints a picture of the realities of power and the plight of the weak in this primitive society and it does so by isolating the young characters, Coll, Niall, Fand, Clodha and Bran, and placing them in situations where their courage and wits are tested to the extreme. She infiltrates issues of superstition and belief and the force of loyalty and love when placed in opposition to betrayal and ambition for power. The distinctive element about this book though, is the fact that its setting, a primitive Orcadian community in Roman times, living a tribal existence under the religious domination of the Druids, is far more remote and much less documented than any of her previous material. Consequently, she has much greater freedom to imaginatively recreate a context for the action and to interpret its significance. And this is the novel’s particular achievement—its utterly plausible and moving account of slow, meticulous, and brilliant innovation. In writing this novel Mollie Hunter depicts a central

protagonist in Coll, the imagined inventor of the broch, who embodies the creative process she herself identifies in writing. She says in *Talent is not Enough* (Hunter, 1976) of writing an historical novel:

As in every inventive process, it takes a moment of inspirational clarity to relate theory to fact; and in structuring a book of this kind it may call for wild leaps of the imagination to take the scattered clues that history provides and build them into the needed complexity of richly coloured plot and sub-plot. (p 45-46)

Hunter's own identification with the hero, Coll, an *actual* builder who takes "wild leaps of the imagination" in conceiving the broch, makes him in some senses a representative of the artist and thus the novel *The Stronghold* could be regarded as an allegory of the artistic process.

*The Stronghold* is the story of a Coll, the crippled foster-son of Orcadian clan chief, Nectan, who creates the unique, hollow-walled brochs to defend his people against the slave-hunting Romans attacking from the sea. Coll's mental powers out-strip his physical power. Unwittingly, he finds himself positioned between opposing forces: the mystical, magical and intuitive Druids, represented by their Chief Priest Domnall, and the physical, logical and reasoning warrior tribesmen, represented by his foster-father Nectan. Domnall believes that the only way to preserve tribal honour is to stand and fight the Roman raiders, while Nectan believes that cunning is the better part of valour and that the tribe should survive by running and hiding from the invaders. Coll's idea of the brochs, which he had previously been unable to get anyone to take seriously, offers a compromise allowing the tribe to survive inside the impenetrable walls while still preserving their honour by affording them a place to attack the invaders. Additionally, and in a parallel sub-plot, Coll also finds himself positioned between his younger brother Bran, taken away by the Druids in infancy and separated from his remaining family, and Taran, returning to his tribe after years away as a Roman captive. Both these characters come ashore in small, fragile boats—a factor that is also symbolic. Bran is called "a child of more than human parentage" (p 41), having been set adrift in his boat by a mother struggling against and ultimately killed by Roman raiders, but protected and preserved from storms by Lir, the god of the sea. Bran, who has been largely brought up by Domnall the Druid, and Coll establish a telepathic link so that Bran can help Coll should the need arise. In fact it is Bran who gives Coll the idea of how to save Fand, Nectan's younger daughter whom Coll loves, from being sacrificed to the gods—even though it brings about his own death. Taran also comes from the sea. Recently escaped from the Romans, he is described as having a "twisted sort of smile" (p17). He is clever like Coll, but in recognising this,

Taran challenges Coll saying, “There is no room in this tribe for two men with clever tongues, Coll” (p 35) and he threatens an *accident*, one that will cut out Coll’s tongue so that his words will be unintelligible and non-one will understand him. This is a particularly cruel punishment in a story where so much hangs on the importance of words. Taran, unlike Coll—who seems a far more acquiescent character—is greedy for power and unscrupulous enough to achieve it by any possible means.

The personal struggle between Coll and Taran has a psychological dimension but, more importantly, it mirrors the larger historical struggle between the strong, strategically organised Roman invaders and the native tribes with their Druidical faith and belief in the Otherworld, “a world of eternal sunshine and unending music, of laughter and brave deeds and love and feasting...” (p 106). The native tribes are presented as being superior because they have loyalty and bravery and above all courage. Coll must show that same courage when he risks losing his hope of access to the Otherworld for “the cold darkness of endless death” (p137) if he defies the Druids and rescues his love, Fand, the chosen sacrifice. This, despite the fact that his position as a foster son means he can never aspire to marriage with Fand. In keeping with the devices used by Hunter in her other historical novels, and within the broader traditions of Scottish Literature, Coll manages the rescue not with physical force but with cleverness and with slippery language. Only a virgin can be sacrificed to the Gods so Coll insinuates, timing the information carefully, that Fand is not. He says, “I have spoiled the sacrifice” (p171), as he has in fact, but not by despoiling Fand as he implies. The ambiguities of the words themselves succeed in spoiling the sacrifice.

Like Hunter’s other works, a significant element of the success of this novel has to do with deceit, doubling, duplicity and disguise. Language plays a key role in this, not only through the example discussed above. When Coll spoils the sacrifice, Domnall aims a knife at him and Bran steps in front of his brother saving Coll’s life. Coll realises that an earlier conversation he had with Bran had been misleading, and when Bran said “I have not had time—not nearly enough time” he and Bran had been speaking at cross-purposes with Coll believing his brother could foresee Coll’s death and not his own. Similarly, after the Romans unsuccessfully attack the stronghold, Taran calls a Latin curse after them—or so he leads them to believe. In fact Domnall realises that Taran’s Latin words, “Ave! Ave...Amicus Romanae sum! Amicus Romanae sum...” (p 186) are actually betraying the tribesmen by telling the Romans to circle around them and attack from the landward side after the people have left the safety of the stronghold. This deceit is met in turn with

further deception when the men of the tribe disguise themselves as women to make the Romans believe that all has returned to normal and the people of the Boar believe themselves safe. When the Romans do as Taran told them and attack, they are trapped—through the cleverness of the design of the broch and the exceptionally narrow single entrance point—inside the stronghold and are killed. Finally, when the Druid priest Domnall is asked directly if he identified Fand as the sacrifice because he believed the gods had specifically required it, or whether he had done so in order to defeat Nectan, he replies, “ I live close with the gods, but even I cannot always know their will.” As Coll hears this response he realises that “Domnall’s words could be taken to mean anything anyone wanted them to mean.” (p 256)

In the same way that there are two sides to the human psyche and words have more than one meaning, Betty Greenaway has argued that there are two strongholds in this novel. First there is the literal stronghold Coll builds that provides the visual proof of the resolution of the disputes between the Romans and the local tribes, and also the symbolic stronghold that Coll has to build for himself. His will, independence, integrity and courage must be made strong and thus he himself becomes the resolution to the microcosmic struggles. “The stronghold is the resolution to both the interior and exterior battles.” (Greenaway, 1998: 83) Coll believes that the stronghold, his dream, has been realised and has sufficient faith in his construction that he believes that future generations looking at these structures will *hear* the voices of the past, “a sign of those who had lived long ago”. For, as the novel concludes, “The dream would last. Those who came after would be aware of what had once been...” (p 205). All of Hunter’s motifs, the ambiguity of words, disguise, doubling, magic, courage and love, come together in this novel alongside a knowledge of, and respect for, the historical monuments of Scotland and the desire to bring such achievements to the attention of modern young Scots readers.

### *The Thirteenth Member*

The final novel I wish to consider is *The Thirteenth Member* (1971) and it could be adjudged a ‘cross-over’ novel between the historical and fantasy genres. The subject matter in this novel is witchcraft and witch-hunts, which continued in Scotland far beyond the rest of Britain; the last prosecution in Scotland was in 1727. Mollie Hunter’s work, includes contemporary fiction for children and young adults, historical fiction and fantasy. Many critics regard her work in the fantasy genre as her strongest and most influential. *The Thirteenth Member*, with its roots in recorded historical events and with the subject

matter relating to the supernatural, again a major pre-occupation of Scottish Literature in general, acts as a bridging text between these two major genres in the Scottish corpus. Moreover, it is one of the strongest and most unified of all Hunter's works in that it works well at both the realistic and symbolic levels, while still managing to incorporate themes of witchcraft, the supernatural, political intrigue, dishonesty, entrapment and love. Stories of the supernatural in Scotland are not, as in England or America, a kind of deviant writing for major authors. They are serious and central events in writers' work, as, for example, in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* (1886) or *Thrawn Janet* (1881). In Scottish writing, the supernatural is not necessarily something that only intrudes on the world in response to evil or ill-advised summoning of the spirits: it is ubiquitous and close at hand, only thinly veiled from human awareness. As well as witchcraft, *The Thirteenth Member* is also powerfully concerned with bigotry and with the social significance of superstition. The lines between good and evil are seriously blurred in this novel since the account of the witchcraft must both depict the depravity of those who believe in it *and* the brutality of the witch hunters. The result is a gripping, if rather grim, tale. At all times though, Hunter is

concerned with the moral responsibility of the writer to keep the special limitation and needs of the child reader in mind without doing violence to historical truth. (Hollindale, 1977)

Sixteen-year-old Adam Lawrie is an orphaned, bonded servant in Master Seton's stable yard near Prestonpans in the east of Scotland, the year is 1590. He spots a young girl, Gilly Duncan, heading across the moorlands on Lammas Eve—to meet the Devil—a clawed figure riding a fiery blue horse.

The horse was aflame; the horse was the source of light! Head, chest, and flanks all glowed an icy blue, and on hooves like four great balls of blue light it paced forward, carrying a thing as ghastly as itself.

It was neither man nor beast, this thing astride the fiery horse, for its shape was that of a man but its face was a beast's face. The eyes were glowing points of red, the mouth a slit with fangs projecting at either end, the nose was bulged and hooked like an eagle's beak. Two tall horns sprouted from its head, flaring at their tips into an outward curve. The reins the thing clasped to its chest were gripped in great paws that ended in long cruel-curving talons, and rising from its shoulders were long dragon wings of leathery black. (Hunter, 1971b)

Adam is drawn in to a complex situation with Gilly, who has been "vowed to the Devil" by her mother at the age of eleven, and the alchemist Gideon Grahame's desperate attempt to prove to the witch covens bent on hexing the King James VI and I's life that, "The Devil is the Father of Lies" (p127). Gilly—the thirteenth member of the coven—is being 'controlled' by the alchemist's twin brother Richard and the Earl of Bothwell, the King's enemy. Gilly and Adam join forces with the alchemist to defeat the witches' scheme to

kill the King, though this ultimately leads to Gilly being committed to ‘examination’ and torture. As with a great deal of Hunter’s writing, the personalities and motivations of the characters—both fictional and historical—ring true, with the relationship between King James and the Earl of Bothell, his cousin, being particularly well drawn. The historical background is so skilfully depicted that it camouflages careful research into sixteenth-century Scotland as well as into witchcraft and the King’s well-documented curiosity in the subject. The matter-of-fact acceptance of the evil of witchcraft and the horrors of torture neither minimises it nor focuses on prurient detail, but presents an unvarnished, credible, picture of the harshness of the period.

Adam Lawrie is a fairly typical Hunter protagonist. He is of humble birth, orphaned—or more particularly, fatherless—but with native intelligence, wit and spirit despite his lack of formal education. Again, this should be recognised as a stock character in Scottish Literature. Adam has to see through the mask of deception to uncover the plot against the king, as well as learning to recognise his own feelings and reach an understanding that compassion is not a weakness as he had always been lead to believe. Adam, because of the difficult circumstances of his own life, has had to develop a shell so that he is at first contemptuous of Gilly’s unwillingness to fight for herself. As he begins to understand that Gilly is caught no matter what course of action she chooses—threatened with death either if she betrays the witches or if the plot to kill the king succeeds—he feels trapped by his compassionate feelings because that means he is making himself vulnerable in a way he never has before. This creates an obvious ‘doubling’ for Adam in the decision whether to help or to withdraw. But Mollie Hunter offers even clearer examples of doubles in this text.

In depicting identical twin brothers, one an alchemist who studies ‘true’ philosophy in pursuit of knowledge, the other devoted to the dark arts and the pursuit of power, Hunter presents separate characters epitomising good and evil rather than having both portrayed in a single character as in the case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde. When Adam approaches Gideon as the one person likely to believe his preposterous story about the Devil and who might consider helping him, the alchemist immediately realises that the ‘Devil’ leading Gilly’s coven’s meetings is his ‘other half’, Richard.

Thirty years I have lived in his shadow, knowing him still a part of me, feeling him here inside my breast like my own heart beating. He dogs my every step like another self, so that sometimes I wonder if he *is* myself; an embodiment of all the evil of which I am capable—the dark side of my soul, maybe, that dare not face God? .... He is my enemy. He built his life at the expense of destroying mine. Yet

still I love my brother, my enemy, for we are still two halves of one whole, and nothing can alter that. (p 99)

Initially Adam and Gilly cannot believe that the ‘Devil’ could possibly be a man and regard Gideon as their Saviour. But in the end, as they struggle towards maturity, they come to realise that such evil is possible and that it is abroad in the world, and they encounter it in ‘human’ form in the persons of another double, King James VI of Scotland and his cousin the Earl of Bothwell—the man who was plotting his death.

By the end of the novel, when the details of the plot are finally in the open, Adam is able to physically compare the two men. The King is pale and flabby, his unexpected shrewdness masked by a slovenly exterior, compared with Bothwell, tanned and fit. Where James is shrewd and cautious and seems almost fearful at times, Bothwell is arrogant, volatile and angry. There is hatred on both sides. But the King at least shows

a kind of admiring love a younger brother feels for an older one; perhaps even something of the desperate desire a plain and lonely man may feel for the love of a handsome and popular friend.

In this more than any other of her books, Mollie Hunter utilises doubles. From the point where the rescuer and the villain can have the same face in the twin characters of Gideon and Richard, to the town worthies who are just as likely to be murdering witches as fervent witch-hunters, to the traitor who looks like a king and the King who looks like a simpleton. The central characters of Gilly and Adam are certainly never sure of what is true and what is not. In a sick parody of Christian ritual, even the witches at the Sabbat celebration in North Berwick take different names from those they are known by in their everyday lives. (See Fig. 5) And Hunter does not overlook the role of language either. Language in this situation must be used carefully and chosen wisely. She allows Adam and Gilly to realise this and to use language to serve their needs, demonstrating that they must lose innocence and acquire cunning if they are to survive in a hostile world. When Adam testifies before the king, he swears on the Bible to tell the truth, but resolves that,

he would speak the truth, he promised himself; or at least such parts of it as could safely be spoken... Surely God would forgive him telling such a harmless little lie in order to save Gilly’s life. (p 126)

Likewise when Gilly is questioned by the king about whether the Devil she saw was the Earl of Bothwell, she responds by saying, truthfully but evasively, “I have never seen the Earl of Bothwell.” This is a clear example of the situational ethics that Hunter seems to advocate for her young protagonists. Adam further seems at ease suggesting to the King

that the impetus for his actions was to save Gilly but also had the intention of saving the King's life, even though his loyalty was personal rather than political. Hunter gives the King a reaction that might be said to be quintessentially Scottish:

You hear that, Thirlstane? That is the voice of the common people of Scotland speaking. And you, who think too much of policy and not enough of people, would do well to heed it, and to remember that my title is not King of Scotland, but King of Scots. For these same common people have always loved their Stuart Kings.  
(137)

And later to Adam

“Then you must remember what I have said”, the King told him gently, “for it is the King and the people together who make our little nation, and so what you have done for me you have done also for all your brother Scots. (138)

This sense of community and collegiality is widespread in the work of Mollie Hunter and is presented to young readers as central and common in the values of the adolescent protagonists in most of Hunter's novels and of the Scots in general.

Writing for children has a variety of purposes. Historically, one of its central intentions has been to educate. In the early days of Children's Literature this happened in earnest, humourless, overtly didactic texts, often incorporating religious tracts. These gave way to overly sentimentalised stories where children often died because they were 'too good for the world'. As Children's Literature has become more sophisticated it has evolved, into a *bildungsroman*, a novel of the development of a young protagonist from inexperience to maturity. Increasingly though, writing for children may have as its intention, the desire to foster in the young reader a positive apperception of some of the socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by audience and author. These values include a sense of what is worthwhile in the culture's past; or rather, what contemporary society regards as the culture's centrally important traditions. Good historical fiction then can be seen then as having a key role to play in such intentions. Writers like Scott, Stevenson and Hunter help young Scottish readers to understand themselves as Scots. Through their work, young readers are invited to grasp imaginatively the nature and value of the mixed heritage that shaped them. In Hunter's work, everything she says or writes shows her belief in the omnipresence of the spirit world. This belief leads naturally to her depiction of the dual nature of the world, suggested in her works in all genres by an almost obsessive interest in changelings, shape-shifting, doubling, duplicity and deception, and so clearly delineated in *The Thirteenth Member*. This book, though part of her historical fiction, creates a supernatural atmosphere for which Hunter had an already proven track record in her fantasy writing. It is for her fantasies that critics save their highest praise. Technically and

thematically, Mollie Hunter's fantasy fiction is supported by a long and distinguished national tradition as well as Scotland's profound respect for the craft of storytelling. If fantasy is understood as fiction involving the supernatural, there is hardly a major Scottish writer from the medieval age to the present who has not been drawn to write it. Manlove contends that this fantasy tradition has been one of Scotland's best-kept secrets in adult literature. It is perhaps the *only* known aspect of Scottish Literature in children's fiction. For this reason alone it is worth examining.

## Chapter 5: Scottish Children's Literature, Identity and Fantasy

Diamond...had not been out so late before in all his life, and things looked so strange about him!—just as if he had got into Fairyland, of which he knew quite as much as anybody; for his mother had no money to buy books to set him wrong on the subject. *At the Back of the North Wind* George MacDonald

Chapter 5 examines the contribution that Scottish Children's fiction has made to the fantasy genre in Children's Literature. The distinctive qualities of fantasy in Scottish adult fiction are outlined and a case is made for similar characteristics within Scottish fantasy fiction for children. A definition of Scottish fantasy literature is presented and the distinctive nature of Scottish fairies is discussed. The relationship of Scottish fantasy literature and the prevailing religion of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries is considered briefly. Significant Scottish Children's fantasy authors are identified before, once more, using a case study approach to explore the literature. On this occasion the case study refers to novelistic re-tellings of the ballad "Tam Lin" or "Thomas the Rhymer". Six novels are examined, three by Scottish authors and three by non-Scottish authors, to assess the extent to which distinctive Scottish fantasy characteristics can be traced through Children's Literature from the present to the past.

### Fantasy Literature for Children

Fantasy Literature for children has been considered, "the richest and most varied of all the genres," (Egoff, 1981:82) and "the most wrenching, depth-provoking kind of fiction available to our children." (Yolen, 1976:186) Yet this positive view has not always been dominant. Early Children's Literature, as we have seen, was characteristically concerned with moral instruction, education or courtesy. While there may have been a long-standing oral tradition of folk-tales told to children, particularly in Scotland, these did not appear in written form until the nineteenth century. The upsurge of fantasy literature for children, or as it was known in the nineteenth century, fairy-tale, can be traced to the development of Children's Literature as we would now recognise it and matches, broadly, the first 'Golden Age' of Children's Literature which began in the 1860s.

Prior to that time the roots of modern fantasy could be found in the long history of myth, legend, folk and wonder-tales, religious narrative and narratives of the occult. Primitive fantasy was effortlessly absorbed into literature and drama from the oral tradition from the fourteenth through to the seventeenth centuries. For example, Caxton's *Reynard the Fox* (1481) was among the earliest printed books. Not till the nineteenth century, though, when fantasy stories of various kinds such as Perrault's fairy tales (1803) and Grimm's *German Popular Stories* (translated in 1823) were channelled towards children, was there a large-scale transition towards fantasy literature. Even then it was predominantly regarded as a subversive reaction to the utilitarian attitude of mind that had prevailed until that time (Zipes, 1991). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Children's Literature, the age of pragmatism, a battle had ensued between the fantastic and the forces of evangelistic practicality. Children's Literature became contested ground in the battle between the wish to instruct and the desire to amuse children. (Manlove, 2003)

By 1837 there is evidence of the first 'made-up' fairy tales intended to entertain children. Initially these appear somewhat furtively, hidden in larger works. For example in Catherine Sinclair's 1838 work *Holiday House* which contains "Uncle David's Nonsensical Story about Giants and Fairies" depicting the fate of the idle boy No-book. This idle and greedy young man is visited one day by two fairies: fairy Do-nothing, gorgeously dressed with a flaming head-dress and a diamond bouquet, and fairy Teach-all, simply dressed with flowers in her hair and a pile of books in her hand. No-book is invited to spend time at their palaces but each offers a very different experience. With Teach-all he would be taught to "find pleasure in every exertion" (p122) while with Do-nothing should he "take the trouble of wishing for anything, it is yours, without even turning an eye round to look where it comes from." (p 122). As might be expected No-book chooses the easy life offered by Do-nothing and spends his days in eating and indolence. He catches the eye of the giant Snap-em-up, so tall he "was obliged to climb up a ladder to comb his own hair," (p123) who has a predilection for a side-dish of "little boys, as fat as possible, fried in crumbs of bread, with plenty of pepper and salt." (p 123) No-book is carried off and hung up by his hair from a hook in the giant's larder, with his mouth stuffed with suet, gazing at the joyous frolics of all fairy Teach-all's charges on a nearby bank. The delay before succumbing to his fate causes No-book to reflect on both his choices and his previous life-style. Meantime, the giant, in an effort to improve his portion size, goes looking for other boys in fairy Teach-all's care. She, however, is vigilant in watching her charges and she assaults the giant, who has already been attacked to good effect by fifty active little boys, with a carving knife and stabs him in the heart. Fairy

Teach-all inherits the giant's property and liberates No-book from his hook in the larder and he becomes the "most diligent, active and happy boy in the fairy Teach-all's garden." As a story its purpose is, in fact, didactic within the book. Uncle David is moved to tell Harry and Laura about the perils of idleness and uses this story as a device. As Colin Manlove has noted,

There is a certain ambiguity in the pictures of the two fairies, the naughty one an alluring grande dame, and the other a watery plain Jane with bundles of books: morally the point may be that it is only from the outside that sloth seems alluring and virtue insipid, but imaginatively the former wins hands down. (Manlove, 2003:19)

Catherine Sinclair sets up an interesting dichotomy here where the didactic reading of this text seems in direct competition to the fantastic reading. If her intention was primarily to warn young readers, like Laura and Harry, against laziness, then perhaps fairy Do-nothing and the life she offers should have been painted in a less imaginative and appealing manner. From about 1860, Sinclair's approach becomes more common and children are more consistently made *actors* in children's fantasy: imagination, not morality, takes a dominant role. At this juncture it seems pertinent to explore definitions of the term fantasy and to examine the concept of a distinctive Scottish fantasy literature. It is also worth considering whether there are similar recognisable generic features in Scottish fantasy literature for children which assumes from this period, a viable life of its own.

As with so many literary terms, there is a plethora of definitions of fantasy. Broadly, Fantasy Literature is a term used to describe books in which magic causes wonderful and impossible events to occur. *The Continuum Encyclopaedia of Children's Literature* defines fantasy as:

a special case of fiction that breaks one or more of the rules that govern 'real' life as we ordinarily define it and so invents an altered reality that must be true to rules of its own.

But as fantasy is not a genre entirely dedicated to children—though it has at times been criticised as having a juvenile quality—it is important to examine definitions of fantasy within adult fiction. Colin Manlove, an eminent scholar in the field, has defined fantasy literature at various times, refining his definition each time. In 1975 he defined it as:

A literary genre in which non-rational or 'magical' phenomena play a significant part. The events of a fantasy do not necessarily obey the rules of nature. Fantasy is a fiction evoking wonder and containing a substantial and irreducible element of the supernatural with which mortal characters in the story or the readers become on, at least partially, familiar terms. (Manlove cited in Gamble and Yates, 2002)

By 1999 this has been refined to, “ a fiction involving the supernatural or impossible,” where supernatural implies some form of magic or supernatural being from an angel to a fairy; and impossible means something we think cannot be. Other descriptions of fantasy literature define it as:

a literature of paradox. It is the discovery of the real within the unreal, the credible within the incredible, the believable within the unbelievable... The creators of fantasy may use the most fantastic, weird, bizarre images and happenings, but their basic concern is with the wholesomeness of the human soul, or to use a more contemporary term, the integrity of the self.... The tenet of the fantasist is ‘there is another kind of real, one that is truer to the human spirit, demanding a pilgrim’s progress to find it. (Egoff, 1981:80)

For a study principally concerned with issues of identity, this latter definition is compelling, since the idea of ‘integrity of the self’ seems so aligned to concepts of identity, and the Scots identity in particular.

Fantasy has been described variously as imaginative, fanciful, visionary, strange, otherworldly, supernatural, mysterious, frightening, magical, inexplicable, wondrous and, paradoxically, realistic. Different fantasists have their own vision of the unique nature of fantasy. For example, Mollie Hunter explains that her vision of fantasy comes from her memories of childhood.

As a writer.... I find the form of Children’s Literature that best exemplifies both the fascinated terror [of childhood memory] and the yearning [for a sudden glimpse of something strange and wonderful] is what—for the lack of a more exact name—we call fantasy.(Hunter, 1975b:557)

The two elements of fantastic literature given the greatest weight by critics and fantasists alike are the presence of magic and of the impossible or inexplicable. Jane Mobley has also observed that within a fantasy narrative no attempt is made to explain the origin of the magic, it simply exists. (Nadelman Lynn, 2005:xviii)

Colin Manlove has dedicated a substantial part of his academic life to the study of fantasy literature and he has written extensively on the topic. He more than anyone else, has been instrumental in generating the idea that *Scottish* fantasy literature is distinctive, compared particularly to English and American fantasy literature. It is my contention that this distinctive quality can also be traced through Scottish fantasy literature *for children*. Two Scottish authors, George MacDonald and Andrew Lang have made significant contributions to fantasy literature for both adults and children. In the case of MacDonald, his contribution was principally to the structure of fantasy literature, while Andrew Lang’s principal interests lay in the anthropological study of fantasy literature.

## Scottish Fantasy Literature

Since it is possible to argue that most major Scots writers have, at one time or another, written material that can easily be identified as fantasy—‘fiction involving the supernatural’, there is a question as to why it is such a well kept ‘secret’ generally. In part this may be because the adult Scots literary tradition has always tended to value social realism above other genres. Nevertheless, Scotland has a rich heritage of folk-tales handed down orally in both the Scots and Gaelic tradition. Furthermore, the oral tradition was preserved for a longer time in Scotland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom. (Muir, 1965) The Scots have long been fascinated with the supernatural, seen partly in the popularity of the fairy-tale which tells of a world inhabited by fairies, kelpies, shape-shifters, devils and witches. But the Scottish imagination seems entranced by a certain wildness that leads writers to ‘elrich fantasyis’ as Gavin Douglas calls them, (Douglas, 1874) revelling in the grotesque and unreasonable that casts aside all restrictions. Nor are the fairy-folk of Scottish tales the saccharine, anodyne creatures of Disney movies. Like their counterparts in Celtic folklore, the fairy people or ‘Good Neighbours’ as they are sometimes known in Scotland, can be beautiful and terrible, helpful or hurtful, creative or destructive, but above all soulless, unable to love. Folk and fairy-tales had very little influence on *written* Scots literature until the development of the collector’s interest in the folk and vernacular heritage. Up until *Tam O’Shanter* (1791) there is not one significant Scottish work that tells the tale of the supernatural. Up till that point fantasy seems limited to the use of the fantastic imagination more than of identifiably supernatural elements. From this point on though, things change.

Scots fantasy, unlike its English counterpart, is often set in *this* world, and hence is classified as ‘low fantasy’. Interestingly, ‘high’ culture does not seem to have been as penetrated by the folk tradition so it might be expected that ‘high’ fantasy would be equally impervious to the folk tradition. In most Scots fantasy then, the supernatural appears as an interruption, and the fantastic world from which it emanates, is very close to ours—with boundaries that can be traversed at any time. Corresponding with this mixing of worlds, personal identity is often without boundary in Scots fantasy. The focus of Scottish fantasy is most often an isolated individual, or an outsider—someone marked by oddity—and the implications of that individual’s actions are unlikely to have any significant effect on worlds or societies. Consider the spurned Robert Wringhim looking on at George Colwan and his companions in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Hogg, 1824), or Anodos in George MacDonald’s *Phantastes*

(MacDonald, 1858), who is denied all relationships; even Stevenson's Dr Jekyll becomes increasingly isolated from his friends until he dies, alone, locked in his study (Stevenson, 1886a). Scots fantasy, therefore, usually lacks the epic dimensions of other national fantasy literatures. Nonetheless, Scottish fantasy is inevitably symbolist literature in a way that England's is not, and distinctively, the use of doubles and dream structures is pervasive within the Scottish oeuvre. There is frequent imagery of absolute contrasts, especially of light and dark, shown also in contrasting characters: doppelgangers and alter egos abound. Within Scottish fantasy there is often a sense of things converging. There are very few quests or journeys and there is always the sense of being pulled backwards or downwards towards one's roots. Manlove says that, "from wherever he is, the Scottish fantasist seems to journey back to his native land," a somewhat ironic twist for a nation whose citizens have a reputation as explorers. Additionally in Scottish fantasy, whatever advances the central protagonists have made during the course of the tale are often taken from them in the end, reducing them to the bedrock—like the land itself—and often reflected in the bareness of the imagery in some Scots fantasies. This, in stark contrast to English fantasy where the focus is on gain and a happy ending. As Tolkein put it:

The consolation of fairy stories, the joy of the happy ending: or more correctly of the good catastrophe, the sudden joyous 'turn' (for there is no true end to any fairy-tale): this joy, which is one of the things which fairy stories can produce supremely well, is not essentially 'escapist' nor 'fugitive'. In its fairy-tale—or otherworld—setting, it is a sudden and miraculous grace: never to be counted on to recur. (Tolkein, 1966)

The land itself is the prime source of spiritual renewal in Scottish fantasy. The importance of the land and the use of the landscape itself, sometimes almost taking on a character of its own, is a key feature of Scottish fantasy. (Landscape as a centrally important factor in Scottish literature generally and in Scottish Children's Literature in particular, has already been considered in Chapter 3: Scottish Culture and the Legacy of Place.) Writers for adult audiences such as James Hogg, George MacDonald, Margaret Oliphant, Andrew Lang, Fiona MacLeod, David Lyndsay, Neil Gunn, George Mackay Brown, Alasdair Gray and Margaret Elphinstone all anchor their stories in a landscape that is recognisably Scottish. It should be noted, though, that not all Scottish writers have this relationship with the land but all, directly or indirectly, are fed by a sense of it. Stevenson's *Virginibus Puerisque* phrase, 'a Scots accent of the mind' referred to earlier in this thesis, seems especially apposite here, and he himself can be seen as the pre-eminent personification of its meaning. Stevenson had a *global* Scottishness. He wrote with a world vision and a deep insight into the human soul. But he could not have written quite the way he did had he not been a Scot. He wrote about *the world* with his strong Scots accent of the mind.

In a similar vein then, it could be predicted that localism is a part of much of Scots fantasy. It is present in every character of the Scots traditional tale, which occurs in one clan region, where everybody is known to everybody else, and where kings live next door to their subjects. And this introduces another distinctive element: there is an egalitarian quality in Scottish fantasy. There are few kings and queens, no hierarchies; Scottish fantasy admits the lower classes in a way that few other national fantasies do. Additionally, the central protagonists do not, on the whole, develop more importance than they originally had. Partly this is because their actions affect no one but themselves. In this, Scottish fantasy is reminiscent of folk tales where there is also a remarkable mixture of the high and low born. In this context the unique text, *The Secret Common-Wealth of Elves, Fauns and Fairies* (Kirk, 1691) offers a particular, informed—and Scottish – perspective on fantasy literature and the existence of fairies. This work is expository, not narrative, presuming to be a serious and studied argument for the existence of fairies, and much of what Kirk details has either informed or is concordant with many of the features of Scottish fantasy literature described here.

Robert Kirk, a minister in Balquhider and Aberfoyle, wrote his treatise from notebooks he habitually kept, finishing it in 1691. The manuscript was not published until 1815, and even then it was an incomplete version. Kirk believed that the world of the spirits populated every nook and cranny of the universe and that fairies were only one of several orders of spirits who inhabited the world; in fact they were really only one of many species awaiting scientific analysis. In researching his topic, intended to impress friends and acquaintances in the Royal Society, Kirk went about his investigation in a very similar manner to modern folklorists using material from oral informants and based on local traditions. Indeed, Kirk was the first writer in either English or Scots to use the term *fairytale*. That a minister and man of God both believed in, and studied, fairies might seem bizarre to modern audiences, and indeed may also seem to contravene the religious beliefs of the period. Yet, ironically, Kirk's treatise was written in defence of the providential view of the universe. He argued, from a metaphysical standpoint, for the existence of fairies and maintained that fairy belief was not inconsistent with Christianity, also contending that to disbelieve in fairies was to doubt the very existence of God. Fairies were, in Kirk's view, part of God's creation and thus subject to His command.

Kirk argued that fairies were a distinct species, possessing intelligence, endowed with supernatural powers and, having light, changeable bodies, best seen in twilight: fairies

were liminal creatures. Fairyland, he thought, existed in the ‘other’ space, which he believed was located underground and usually in separate fairy hills. Fairies frequently moved among folk and were not usually seen by humans unless they had ‘second sight’. He believed it was possible for humans to cross the boundary demarcating our world from the Otherworld, though this happened most often accidentally or involuntarily. The fairies Kirk described were dangerous, capable of inflicting terrible harm, even death, upon people and livestock, and every precaution had to be taken to keep them at bay—or at least, placated. (Henderson and Cowan, 2001) He recorded that a fairy might appear as a double-man, or ‘doppelganger’, also sometimes known as a ‘reflex-man’ or ‘co-walker’; a kind of mirror image or wraith. This image, from what we already know of Scottish Literature, is not unique to fairy literature and thus allows fairy and fantasy literature to be easily located in the Scottish Literature canon. The desire to belong comes across time after time in narrative of fairy belief. Beings are lost without family or friends and the relative security of community, a matter of considerable concern in kin-based Scotland whether a member of a Lowland family or a Highland clan. However, in some cases, separation could lead to increased status or power through alleged communication with the Otherworld and sometimes resulted in the acquisition of second sight, prophecy or healing. Kirk described fairies as of similar size to humans and wearing native Scots garb. Of their voice and language he remarked, “they speak but litle, and that by way of whistling, clear, not rough” and “answer in the language of the place, yet sometimes these subterraneans speak more distinctly than at other times.” (Kirk, 1691:55) He also reported that fairies had no weapons made of iron, though they did have finely honed darts which were flung with great force. Kirk’s belief in fairies was so thorough that he envisaged, eventually, an open correspondence between humans and these “nimble and agil clans”. From all of this it should be noted that the ‘facts’ unearthed by Robert Kirk about fairies are fully concordant with the generic features of Scottish fantasy literature and indeed their legacy can be directly traced all the way through to contemporary Scottish children’s fantasy literature.

Having considered briefly minister Robert Kirk’s work, it seems pertinent also to consider the relationship of Scottish fantasy literature with the prevailing religion of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Generally, the Reformation and the growth of Calvinism are often regarded as something detrimental to development in the arts. Calvinism frequently disapproved of art as fanciful and adopted an iconoclastic attitude towards it. But Scotland has never been frightened to criticise Calvinism, especially in literature—a phenomenon unparalleled in any other part of Britain. The Scottish Reformation took its toll on

Scotland's folk culture but, contrary to modern perception, it did not eradicate it completely. (Maxwell-Stuart, 2004) There were inevitably clashes between systems of belief: Calvinist theology was suspicious of the pagan, the Catholic and popular piety but was able to reach an accommodation with folk belief. Ironically, many of the folk beliefs were transformed so that they were utilised and defended as essential to Christian orthodoxy. The radical Calvinist version of the Reformation was set strongly against paganism, showed hostility to the fantastic and aversion to residual popular folk belief. This manifested itself in sustained attacks on witchcraft and all forms of pagan survivalism. Thus the Calvinists invested in Protestant education as the means by which these practices and beliefs would be uprooted. Their faith resided in Christianity and moralised reading or literacy rather than the oral tradition. The religious impetus, both Protestant and counter-Reformation Catholic, to re-model the world, subjected the fairies to a process of demonisation, with frightening consequences for the people who resisted these reinterpretations and steadfastly held on to their beliefs. Such was the climate of suppression and persecution that it is often difficult to understand how fairy belief survived, largely undamaged, if somewhat refurbished and expurgated, into the modern era.

Nevertheless, returning to the generic features of Scottish fantasy literature, it should be noted that most frequently, Scottish fantasy is inward looking: concerned to discover something hidden within, requiring inward search. Questioning and inward analysis is very common and there is a recurrent interest in the questioning of self which, in turn, is linked to the potential of identity to disintegrate; this inward journey has echoes of Calvinist introspection. Sometimes the 'self' or identity is destroyed in the course of the fantasy, but possibly a new one emerges or is created: consider for example Robert Wringhim in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (Hogg, 1824) or Dr Jekyll in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (Stevenson, 1886a). In that process there is a pattern of levelling down in Scottish fantasy and intrusive identities are worn away, often linked with the removal of pride and the reduction of intellectual arrogance. This reductive, backwards process is frequently paralleled in the habit in Scottish fantasy of reversing things, turning them down, for example, names such as Mitichison's 'Erif Der' or MacDonald's mirror regions. In contrast with the Scottish reduction or stripping back in fantasy, English fantasy seems more concerned with accretion. Scots fantasies are often quite short, operating within fairly small or compressed ambit, both in terms of localism and linguistic conciseness. Description tends to be succinct and characterisation

compressed. Finally, and distinctively, Scottish fantasy frequently emphasises the power of women and the worth of feminine values. As Manlove notes:

These three features—the stress on the unconscious, on uncertain identity and on femininity—draw together some of the characteristics of Scottish fantasy. They seem to be not only defining features of Scottish as opposed to other fantasy, but literary expressions of one side of the Scottish character itself—the inwardness and love of mystery and dream that are often ignored, the uncertainty and passion that are so often denied. These features of Scottish fantasy come together in a current of longing. Most striking, more perhaps than any other national fantasy, this is a fantasy of desire. Think of Teufelsdröckh's painful sense of the wonder of life, the longings of MacDonald's heroes, the desire of Stevenson's Jekyll for forbidden pleasures, of Lang's Randal for treasure and glamour, of MacLeod's heroes for a savage joy, of Barrie's Peter Pan for everlasting childhood, Lyndsay's Maskull for Muspel, Mitchison and Buchan for a lost past, Gunn for a failing Highland utopia, Brown's Magnus for a heavenly garment, Elphinstone for a sweet, elusive freedom and Gray for the mere sense of being able to breathe freely beneath a sky not mortgaged to the social system. In their fantasy the Scots seem continually to express a lost wholeness, a sense of the threatened or dispossessed self, an acute sense of a distant paradise that beckons, and mocks, and frustrates, and which sometimes, when not looked at, is momentarily there. And so for them their own country, Scotland, is not fully there, a presence beneath a distant hill, a desire that runs like blood through every frail imagination of the place. (Manlove, 1994:247)

With such a strong and distinctive tradition in adult Scottish fantasy literature, it seems only reasonable to assume that some of these characteristics will be evident, either deliberately or coincidentally, in Scottish children's fantasy literature, particularly because of the pre-eminent place of authors such as George MacDonald, Andrew Lang and J.M. Barrie in both fantasy and Children's Literature. Without difficulty, it is possible to find multiple examples of Scottish children's fantasy novels which exemplify the distinctive characteristics of Scottish fantasy literature exactly and also modify them in such a way as to make them particular to Children's Literature.

### Scottish Children's Fantasy Literature

In George MacDonald we have the writer who could be said to be the founder of much modern fantasy. In the strange new worlds he created, his extraordinary range of symbolism and his emphasis on the imagination, he demonstrated the reach and power of fantasy, and released the spring for many subsequent writers. The key to his achievement was the unique place he gave in his work to the power of the unconscious mind—the forces he saw in the dark and unknown portions of our being. In this he is emphatically a writer of Scottish fantasy. His work was always concerned with the development of the individual, one of Manlove's markers of Scottish fantasy. His children's fantasies constituted a revolution in Victorian juvenile fantasy and made him one of the principal

contributors to the major counter-tradition of the Victorian period. MacDonald's fantasies demonstrate an interest in dreams, and landscapes and settings which are often suggestive of the unconscious mind.

Similarly, Andrew Lang and J.M. Barrie also wrote within the vogue for Children's Literature around the turn of the twentieth century. These authors demonstrated contrasting attitudes to childhood: Lang, an adult looking back at childhood; Barrie, a child who does not look forward to being an adult. For both, childhood is bound up with magic and fantasy and with features more recognisably Scottish: alienation, uncertainty of the self and the unconscious. All of the following novels by these authors demonstrate clearly the characteristics of Scottish fantasy literature that have been drawn from Scottish fantasy literature for adults. *At the Back of the North Wind* (MacDonald, 1871), *The Princess and Curdie* (MacDonald, 1882), *The Princess and the Goblin* (MacDonald, 1872), *The Gold of Fairnilee* (Lang, 1888), *Prince Prigio* (Lang, 1889a), *Prince Ricardo of Pantouflia* (Lang, 1893), *Peter Pan* (Barrie, 1911).

George MacDonald's fantasies for children all have clear plots and narrative directions: nevertheless, his fairyland turns conventions upside down to satirize them. For example *The Light Princess* (1867) is cursed, not with sleep, but with a lightness of mind that makes her incapable of seriousness, even in the face of tragedy. He uses a recurring grandmother figure to represent God or the Holy Spirit, another Scottish fantasy feature, and his stories always contain some focus on death. Unlike most female characters in Victorian Children's Literature, MacDonald's girls have strong personalities and exhibit qualities of bravery and practicality usually assigned to male characters. *At the Back of the North Wind* brings to life MacDonald's belief in the corresponding and interpenetrating worlds of the natural and supernatural, the characteristic of Scottish fantasy literature which is set in or close to our world and where the boundaries can be traversed at any time. Although it is a long story with a plot sometimes considered too complicated for most children, it has become a classic, chronicling the central character Diamond's passage through illness to death. The main impulse of the story is to show how Diamond affects those around him, including the anonymous narrator, who meets Diamond at the end of his life and is told his story. The religious message of the book is the necessity of charity, *caritas*, the love of fellow human beings. Critics such as Marion Lochhead (Lochhead, 1977) find MacDonald's treatment of death as a comforting friend most interesting, as well as the way he depicts Diamond's ordinary life in conjunction with his dream world encounters, another Scots fantasy feature.

Possibly MacDonald's best known works are the 'Curdie' books, in which the reader is always in the same world as the central characters. This world has a castle, mines, and a walled city across a barren wilderness, a humble hero who has a princess to rescue or a country to save, a helpful old woman and a group of wicked fairies. This world bears an analogous or mythic, rather than a direct, relationship to ours. It is a secondary world with a *new* nature, or a country with its own rules and operations without reference to this world: and it is one of the first significant ones in modern fantasy. *The Princess and the Goblin* is the story of Princess Irene and her friend the poor boy Curdie, a miner's son. The goblins under the earth want to kidnap the Princess and force her to marry the son of the goblin king, Harelip, so that they can rule both the earth and the underworld. Curdie saves her and earns the king's blessing. In the sequel, *The Princess and Curdie*, Curdie once again saves the kingdom and this time also the hand of the Princess. In these books Curdie is helped by a strange old lady Irene has got to know in the attics of her home. At one point she helps Irene save Curdie and although at first she seems an old lady with a spinning wheel and a quaint belief, she is Irene's great-great-grandmother: she later appears as a grand and beautiful woman surrounded by mystic doves, a moon-like light and a fire of burning roses. In *The Princess and Curdie* we find the old lady has become an habitué of the mines known to the locals as Old Mother Wotherwop.

The old lady—feminine – is the centre of one of the books and Curdie—masculine—is the centre of the other. The old lady is more concerned with *being* rather than doing, but at one point after Irene has got dirty helping Curdie in the mines, the old lady puts her in a silver bath that seems to have no bottom and almost simultaneously Curdie, in the mines, has finally plumbed the goblin's mining intentions, and sees that they are digging towards the king's house. Thus the action side and the contemplative side of the story interweave with each other. The symbolism of the books' setting can hardly be missed. The goblins who live in the mine beneath—constantly *undermining* the castle, the humans who live on the surface and the mystic lady who lives in the attic represent three levels of mind: the subconscious, the conscious and the superconscious or the id, the ego and the superego. Alternatively these could also be given a religious reading as Hell, Earth and Heaven. In these features we have the Scots predilection for things being pulled under or downward and for fairyland being subterranean. Similarly the egalitarian nature of Scots fantasy comes across. Curdie, a miner's son, is companion to a Princess and subsequently marries her, and despite toiling for her father is also responsible for her father's rescue. However, Irene and Curdie do marry and later rule the kingdom but they die childless and the people

of Gwyntystorm return to their evil ways and the city is destroyed. One reading of this might suggest that the restoration of the world is insecure and only transformation of the spirit may remain, and perhaps find more lasting habituation outside mortality. Alternatively this could also be read as demonstrating another of Manlove's identifying features of Scots fantasy, that the things that have been achieved are taken from the protagonists at the end of a Scots fantasy.

Similarly in Barrie's *Peter Pan*, the Darling children have the power of flight taken from them at the end of the story and Peter loses Wendy, the mother figure. The centre of *Peter Pan* is Neverland, an island in a dream sea where the boundaries are elusive. The lost boys live with Peter in a cave under the trees. Once again there is a central theme of death and death overcome, as with Peter himself: "to die will be an awfully big adventure." (Barrie, 1911:122)

Scottish fantasy, as we now know, often deals with inward search. Questioning and introspective analysis is very common and, to this end, *Peter Pan* could be said to constitute a search into the true nature of childhood. Additionally, instability of identity has been identified as a specifically Scottish literary feature but, strangely, while Peter may be a particularly *flexible* character, he is sure of his identity. Rather, it is Hook who seems insecure in his identity and therein lies much of his reason for hating Peter. Peter Pan is not just a character: his essence is expressed through the very form and transitions of the story. For instance, the text itself is elusive, the story first appearing as a short story, then as a play and only latterly appearing as a novel and even then the author declares that the story can be altered. The novel form is notable for its wry, wistful narrator; a grownup, who stands at a remove from Peter, yet who seems in total sympathy with him. Thus the story is told simultaneously from both an adult's and a child's perspective. For Barrie, make-believe is the key element and it is reality that is never stable, so like Peter himself identity is flexible. *Peter Pan* illustrates these key features of Scottish fantasy—the use of the supernatural and the exploration of the imagination: it looks beyond nature, as we understand it. It teaches us about possible worlds and how reality has as many shapes as perceptive minds can generate.

Andrew Lang's fantasies initially tended towards realism. *The Gold of Fairnilee* (1888) tells of a boy, Lord Randal Ker of Fairnilee, stolen into fairyland by its 'glamour' who, by magic, one day comes to see that magic is a fraud, with all the fairies sad, old or wounded and their feasts dried leaves and pulses and the land itself a wasteland. He is rescued back

to the real world by his friend, Jeanie, and the disillusioned Lord Randal thereafter settles to the good management of his estate. Lang's earlier tale *The Princess Nobody* (1884) tells a similar but more light-hearted story of disenchantment. However by 1889, quite the opposite stance emerged and in *Prince Prigio* (1889) and *Prince Ricardo of Pantouflia* (1893) the setting is a magical realm where the marvellous and the fairy reign supreme. The emphasis is on lightness, comedy and wit. For instance, it is Prince Prigio's problem that he is made too clever by half by one of his godmothers, which causes the over-educated Prigio to scorn belief in fairies or magic; a central issue of the book. Lang also produced twelve Fairy Book collections for children from 1889 onwards, though his interest in fairy tales was primarily that of an early cultural anthropologist. *The Gold of Fairnilee* derives much of its power from its setting in Lang's childhood home of Selkirk, and from its foundation in Scottish legend and folktale. As a consequence, this story conforms to all the distinctively Scottish elements of fantasy literature. This is one of the texts which will be considered in greater detail in a later section of the discussion.

A significant number of writers of Scottish children's fantasy literature incorporate fairies, kelpies, shape shifters, devils and witches centrally in their writing. Be it Susan Cooper's *The Boggart* (Cooper, 1993) and *The Boggart and the Monster* (Cooper, 1997) or Frances Mary Hendry's *Quest for a Kelpie* (Hendry, 1986) Alison Fell's *The Grey Dancer* (Fell, 1981) with its shape-shifters or Tom Pow's *Scabbit Isle* (Pow, 2003) where the alternative, local, world is so close it intrudes on the real world or Susan Price's *The Stearkarm Handshake* (Price, 1998) and *The Stearkarm Kiss* (Price, 2003) where the protagonists can enter, at will, a Scotland of earlier times via a tunnel, all of these texts exhibit distinctively Scottish characteristics whether their authors are Scottish-born or no. Mollie Hunter, in both *The Haunted Mountain* (Hunter, 1972) and *The Wicked One* (Hunter, 1977) blends a whole world of Scottish folklore and legend into psychological dramas of man's struggles with the 'Other World'. The primitive or primeval side of the self can be presented even in the most farcical kind of epic fantasy such as Hunter's *The Wicked One*. Similarly Hunter presents isolated individuals or outsiders in novels like *A Stranger Came Ashore*. (Hunter, 1975a) This text also utilises the Scottish myths of the Selkies, or singing seals.

Almost more than any other Scottish children's writer to date, Mollie Hunter's work elucidates the Scottish fantasy writer's creative characteristics. In addition to those works already mentioned, Mollie Hunter also offers us kelpies in *The Kelpie's Pearls* (Hunter, 1964a), mermaids in *The Mermaid Summer* (Hunter, 1988); a grollican, an invented beast

based on the conventions of Celtic folklore, in *The Wicked One*; doppelgangers in *The Ferlie* (Hunter, 1968); and in *The Bodach*, (Hunter, 1970) Gaelic for ‘old man’, the bodach calls up his co-walker – an echo or copy of himself, a projection, to distract the dam builders while the stones in the Stone Circle ‘walk’ beyond the flooded areas to a place of safety, thus simultaneously preserving the Stone Circle’s magic and Scotland’s heritage.

*The Big House* (Mitchison, 1950) is a children’s fantasy novel from one of Scotland’s most distinguished writers and includes changelings, brownies and a swan maiden. Peter Dickinson’s Edinburgh fantasy *The Lion Tamer’s Daughter* (Dickinson, 1999) has at the centre of the story Mel and Melanie, two girls who are mirror images of each other and the central thrust of the tale concerns whether these are twins separated at birth or whether there is something more sinister afoot. In fact they turn out to be a single person, split in two thanks to the machinations of a malevolent magician. Even Terry Pratchett’s Disc World novels *The Wee Free Men* (Pratchett, 2003), *A Hatful of Sky* (Pratchett, 2004) and *Wintersmith* (Pratchett, 2006) demonstrate the possibilities of pastiche that can simultaneously both highlight and subvert the distinctive Scottish fantasy elements. The Wee Free men of the title of the first book are actually the Nac Mac Feegles, also known as ‘pictsies’ or the Little Men or “Person or Persons Unknown, Believed to be Armed.” Other than being only six inches tall, these characters hark back to the fairies of Scottish folklore that were known to be dangerous and mischievous. The Nac Mac Feegles tend to occupy ancient burial mounds—Scottish tradition—and they avoid “bigjobs” (humans) if at all possible. They can move across dimensions using what they call the “crawstep” and seem to spend their time drinking, fighting and stealing, alone or in various combinations. Despite their seemingly criminal tendencies, they do possess a sense of honour. They see no sport in fighting the weak. They may take one cow from a man with a herd of fifty, but will not steal an old woman’s only pig or an old man’s only pair of false teeth. Among the warriors of each clan is a gonnagle or war-poet, whose job is to create terrible poetry that is recited in battles to demoralise the enemy. A well-trained gonnagle can even make the enemy’s ears explode. This post-modern type of fantasy relies on the reader recognising and understanding the intertextual references made by the author. In the *gonnagle* readers are clearly meant to recognise the Scottish poet William McGonagal, sometimes considered Scotland’s worst poet, while the Wee Free Men can be linked to the ballad, *The Wee Wee Man* or to the congregation of the Free Church of Scotland sometimes referred to as the ‘The Wee Frees’. “Nac Mac Feegle wha hae” is a parody of the Robert Burns line, “Scots wha hae” which was allegedly the opening line of Robert the Bruce’s

address to his men at the Battle of Bannockburn in 1314 (though this is unlikely). And for the modern reader, “They can tak’ oor lives but they cannae tak’ oor troosers” is a parody of Mel Gibson’s famous cry in the film *Braveheart*, “They can take our lives, but they’ll never take our freedom.”

Writers of Scottish children’s fantasy appear to have resolved the paradoxes of fantasy. People like Mollie Hunter move sure-footedly through time and space and mingle myth and reality with ease and flair. These are craftsmen and stylists using daring new types of narrative form, especially in the use of elliptical conversation and cinematic images.

### The Ballads in Scottish Children’s Fantasy

Traditional music and song, especially the Border Ballads, dance and folk tales are one of Scotland’s gifts to the world. Ballads were, and continue to be, a viable source of national identity. The magic that enters the ballads on Scottish soil is not purely a matter of the supernatural. It is the language itself that has an unparalleled magic that may lie in the balance between what is said and what is not said. The ballads are at the heart of Scottish identity and hold all its essential elements. Their language and their music are a rich clear expression of national character and conceit. Fantasy in the shape of folk and fairy tale is the oldest and the first literary genre in Scotland, as in almost any society. (Manlove, 2003) Such stories would originally have been told orally. Two of these fairy tales appear in the fifteenth century Border ballads of “Tam Lin” and “Thomas the Rhymer”, and seem unique to Scotland, not least because of their debt to native fairy lore. As the folklorist Katherine Briggs observes, “Tam Lin” brings together a remarkable number of motifs associated with fairy lore, particularly Scottish fairy lore, making it “perhaps the most important supernatural ballad.” (Briggs, 1977: 449) In both of the above named ballads, a mortal is made thrall to the Queen of the Fairies, and forced to live in her country. Both describe men made subject to women, thus elucidating the strong feminist element in many Scottish (though not Gaelic) fairy tales. The American academic Francis J. Child’s seminal text *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads* (Child, 1857) records nine versions of the ballad “Tam Lin”. Some of the versions start with ‘fair Janet’, others with Margaret, defying her father’s wishes and ignoring his warnings against Tam as a womaniser, going to Carterhaugh where she allows herself to be seduced by Tam, and she becomes pregnant. Rebuked by her family, she returns to Tam to ask him to marry her, but he informs her the Fairy Queen is holding him prisoner, while at the same time managing to instruct her as to how she can set him free. She must stand at Miles Cross on Samhain or

Halloween night, when the fairy folk ride from beneath their fairy hill and pick him out, on his white horse, as he passes her. She is warned that his re-capture will not be as simple as it seems at first and that the Fairy Queen will turn him into a number of shapes in her arms with the intention of making her drop him. However, if she holds on to him she will have won through and he will be released from Fairy Land, and thus be free to marry her. The whole story is of feminine dominance, because Tam is the slave of the Fairy Queen and is unable to escape on his own.

The second ballad, "Thomas the Rhymer" describes how the poet Thomas became enthralled to the Fairy Queen for seven years after kissing her. He presents as an even more passive male because, after his initial reckless act, he is led about as the Queen's helpless slave. Both these ballads conform to Scots fantasy's emphasis on the matriarchal structures, of which the fairies, long confined to their subterranean mounds, seem to be among the last representatives.

Both stories also deal with 'glamour', the enchantment that binds both body and spirit. It could be argued that Thomas the Rhymer *is* Tam Lin before Janet met him, though Thomas was supposed to be released after serving seven years, and Tam was either to be kept or given to the Devil as a 'teind' or tax. Colin Manlove contends that these ballads can be seen as two halves of a whole, the first showing the beginning of the enchantment and the other the ending. "Thomas the Rhymer" however portrays an actual state of being more obviously than "Tam Lin", which has more action and shows a *process* of becoming and continual change. If 'Thomas' is a journey to the unconscious, 'Tam' is the journey back to the conscious and choosing world, characterised by the mortal woman who would have Tam back for the fulfilment of the civil bond of marriage and for social and moral acceptability and responsibility. In this way the ballad fantasies anticipate an emphasis on the unconscious mind that recurs in many Scottish fantasies, while also embedding this in questions of real social and domestic relations.

Novelistic retelling of such traditional material became much more common in the twentieth century. This, arguably, is the twentieth century's unique contribution to the telling of traditional tales. Since the 1920s, the retelling of traditional tales has taken two forms: the traditional retelling, where the authors retell the story in their own words but do not develop it beyond the original, and the more creative retelling, in which a new story is built on the foundation of the old. Fairy tales and ballads have proved fertile ground for both approaches.

In books which engage with the fairy tradition in the latter way, authors take the plot or situation of the original story and use it as the basis of a new narrative that goes well beyond the limits of the original. For instance, the characters may have greater psychological depth and motivation. By imaginative accrual of detail and complexity, the characters are pinned to a specific time and place, either real or invented, ensuring that they are regarded as *individuals* rather than folk types, as signified particularly in Scottish fantasy. This phenomenon occurs in both juvenile and adult Scottish fantasy fiction. Late twentieth century retellers of folk tales broke the tales down and wove new patterns from the core motifs: stories were told from a different viewpoint, with different or more developed characterisation and plot and they often celebrated or portrayed different social themes and values from the originals. However, when compared to general literature, the literature produced for children contains a far greater proportion of these re-told stories. In part this is because some domains of retelling, especially folk and fairy tales, have long been considered more appropriate to child rather than adult culture. (Stephens and McCallum, 1998) This is not simply because these materials can seem ingenuous and more accessible to children, but rather because they serve important cultural functions. Under the guise of offering children access to strange and exciting worlds removed from everyday experiences, the retellings initiate children into aspects of a social heritage, transmitting many of the culture's central values and assumptions as well as a body of shared allusions and experiences. Through their depiction of incidents in which 'goodness' is rewarded and 'evil' deeds are punished, folk and fairytales—in their original as well as their re-told forms—function as pedagogical tools that illustrate cultural values, explore the status quo, and both define and challenge socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

The ballads of "Tam Lin" and "Thomas the Rhymer" are unusual in that they have been adapted or re-told so many times, particularly for young adults. As well as illustrated versions for younger children by Jane Yolen (1990) and Susan Cooper (1991), the ballad has been expanded to novel length by a number of writers. To date I have been able to identify twenty-eight tellings or retellings of these ballads specifically aimed at children and young adults. The question of why this material should exert such a strong appeal for modern children's writers, particularly those writing for young adults is an interesting one. Part of the answer may lie in the subject matter, involving as it does such seemingly contemporary issues as pregnancy outside marriage, abortion and intergenerational conflict, or, in the presence of a strong female protagonist, reversing the stereotype of

fairy-tale heroines being little more than decorative victims who require rescue. The strong female protagonist, as we have seen, is one of the key elements that makes Scottish fantasy distinctive. For this reason, these particular ballads and some of their retellings lend themselves to a case study to assess the extent to which distinctive Scottish fantasy characteristics can be traced through Children's Literature from the past to the present, and when the material is written by both native Scots writers and writers from other countries and traditions.

### "Tam Lin" and "Thomas the Rhymer": Retellings and Re-imaginings

As was noted earlier, novelistic retellings of each of these ballads are available in abundance. For the purposes of this case study I have chosen six of the many accessible texts to explore in detail, three by Scots authors, *The Gold of Fairnilee* (Lang, 1888), *The Big House* (Mitchison, 1950) and *The Haunted Mountain* (Hunter, 1972), and three texts by, respectively, a Canadian author *An Earthly Knight* (McNaughton, 2003) an American author *The Perilous Gard* (Pope, 1974) and an English author *Fire and Hemlock* (Wynne Jones, 1985). In most, but not all of these texts both the ballads of "Tam Lin" and "Thomas the Rhymer" form the basis of the stories. However, there are also instances where other Scottish ballads are incorporated. In *The Gold of Fairnilee* the ballad *Lord Randal* is also utilised, though it provides only the name for the central protagonist; in *An Earthly Knight* the other ballad that is interwoven is "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight", using Child's version E. In all cases however, the central incident of a male character being held in thrall to Fairy Land and rescued by a human from the 'real' world appears either directly or indirectly. All three Scottish versions are creative retellings that relocate the story to different times. In one case, *The Haunted Mountain*, the gender of the rescuer is changed and MacAllister, the man taken by the fairies, is rescued by his son Fergus, while in the case of *The Big House*, the "Tam Lin" element by itself forms only a section of the whole novel. In the case of the non-Scottish authors, *The Earthly Knight* is a relatively straight retelling of the "Tam Lin" story, interspersed with the second ballad, "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight". *The Perilous Gard* places the story in sixteenth century Derbyshire on the eve of Elizabeth the First's accession to the throne and Diana Wynne Jones's complex *Fire and Hemlock* is set in contemporary England.

When this oral ballad was generically transformed into the literary fairy tale, first in collections of folktales for children and later in picture-book versions for young audiences, key stylistic changes were initiated: a smoothing out of the narrative voice and

a more coherent plot; stronger characterization and a more defined setting (most dramatically developed in the illustrations that accompany the picture-book versions), and an idealization of Janet's reason for braving the wrath of the Fairy Queen and the trial of holding Tam Lin through a series of transformations. The overall narrative *pattern*, however—the sequencing of events—remained largely the same, as did the basic characterizations of both Janet and Tam Lin (who is a fairly undeveloped character in all versions, both ballad and literary fairy tale). The most significant change was the shift from cautionary tale to love story, an idealization of romantic love that is characteristic of the fairy tales that dominated twentieth-century Children's Literature and popular culture.

### *The Gold of Fairnilee*

Andrew Lang wrote five fairy tales of his own invention which were separate and distinct from his edited anthologies of traditional fairy tales for children. Of these, *The Gold of Fairnilee* was the second and was one of the texts specifically written for children. In an article about Shakespeare's Comedies for Harper's Magazine in 1892, Lang stated that, "The spirit of faery, is a Northern spirit" and it was this spirit that he invoked when he wrote *The Gold of Fairnilee*. In deserting all the previous literary traditions of Fairy Land, and going for his inspiration to the Border ballads and to the ancient folk beliefs and superstitions, Lang was not acting unreasonably or from any spirit of forced innovation, because the Scots fairies were products of the popular and literary creed of many centuries. Similarly this is the only work of Lang's to look back specifically to Scotland, deriving much of its power from its setting in the Selkirk region of his own childhood, and from its foundation in Scottish legend and balladry.

The plot is very simple and concerns young Randal Ker of Fairnilee, who after his father's death at the Battle of Flodden in 1513—which he foresees, thus establishing him early as a fey character—grows up at Fairnilee with his mother, his nurse Nancy and an adopted girl Jeanie, who was brought back accidentally from a reprisal reiving raid on an English holding. The nurse tells the children stories of fairies, kelpies and brounies and is a firm believer in fairies. She also tells them stories of treasure and hidden gold. It was widely believed that there were quantities of gold to be found almost anywhere on their land. For instance, they believe that the sheep have yellow teeth because of the quantity of gold that lies under the grass; Randal has even tried to find gold at the end of the rainbow. In the treasure-seeking stories, the people who actually find the gold are then distracted and the gold is spirited away. These distractions are thought to be provided by a fairy or one of the

‘good folk’, so called for fear of offending them. The stories of the gold are considered by the family to have some foundation because of two rhymes, well known to the inhabitants of Fairnilee:

‘Atween the wet ground and the dry  
The Gold of Fairnilee doth lie

and

Between the Camp o’ Rink  
And Tweed water clear  
Lie nine king’s ransomes  
For nine hundred year  
(Lang, 2007, on-line)

On the night of St John “ when the guid folk hae power”, Randal decides to visit a fairy wishing well on the hills beyond the Tweed. Jeanie, a little reluctantly, goes along with him but she becomes tired and gradually loses sight of him. Randal reaches the well about nightfall and after wishing to see the Fairy Queen, she spirits him away to Fairy Land. The search party who go after him find his whip beside the well and also a small silver cross he always wore, which allows them to surmise that the fairies, rather than the gypsies, have taken him. The family priest, Father Francis, in trying to reassure the family, states:

no spirit of the earth or air could have power over a Christian soul. But even he remembered that, once in every seven years, the fairy folk have to pay a dreadful tax, one of themselves, to the King of a terrible country of Darkness: and what if they had stolen Randal, to pay the tax with him! (Lang, 2007, on-line: Ch 5)

Jean, Lady Ker and Nancy, the old nurse, pass seven miserable years not knowing what has become of Randal. In the last year, there is a famine, and much of the family wealth is sold by Lady Ker to support her people. At the end of the seven years, Jean returns to the wishing well on Midsummer’s Eve and wishes for three things: that she might see Randal, that she might win him back from Fairy Land and to help the people in the famine. She looks into the well, sees Randal and is then drawn deeper into the wood where she plucks a rose she finds there. A dwarf materializes and accuses her of stealing the rose but after crossing herself three times, the dwarf turns into Randal and she has won him back. Randal then recounts his experiences in Fairy Land, explaining that he forgot his family briefly and was only able to remember them and find his way out after rubbing his eyes with liquid from a beautiful golden, diamond-encrusted, bottle he found. This had the effect of showing him the false and empty hollowness of the Fairy Queen and her realm.

The old nurse, hearing the story, steals the bottle, and by anointing her own eyes with the liquid, sees where the ancient treasure the Gold of Fairnilee, lies beneath the soil of the

Camp O'Rink, as the rhymes predicted. Jean and Randal surprise her during her quest and in so doing the bottle is dropped and the remaining liquid lost. Randal and Jean take note of where the treasure is to be found and dig it up and use the money to restore the fortunes of the family and the estate and support the community until the period of famine is over. The story ends happily with the marriage of Jean and Randal.

“Thomas the Rhymer” provides the inspiration for Lang’s Fairy Queen who kidnaps the hero, as well as for the strange scenery and the ‘middle road’ along which she leads him to the garden of the Fairies. It also supplies the imagery of eating the apple reminiscent of the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden. “Tam Lin” provides the theme of the girl who loves a man who has been captured by the fairies and who must endure transformations of her true love before she can win him back in his proper form. The traditional elements of the story are woven together with a more realistic and historical setting which provides some variation of theme.

The ruined house of Fairnilee was a real-life favourite haunt of the young Andrew Lang and his brothers: they frequently went there to ‘dig for treasure.’ In the fifteenth century the house actually belonged to the Ker family. The Tweed valley and all the land round about Fairnilee were among the parts of the Border country most beloved by Lang, and it is this sense of connection which gives *The Gold of Fairnilee* its sincerity and depth of feeling. The spirit and the manner of this tale differs significantly from his other fairy tales, showing wistfulness and a somewhat melancholy soul. The cold, clear magic of the north, as austere as the landscape in which it is set, is evident throughout the whole piece. But this spareness is rooted in simplicity and integrity. Lang’s style throughout *The Gold of Fairnilee* is romantic, a voice more frequently displayed in his poetry. Nevertheless, he is also able to utilise Scots dialect to good effect in the language of Simon Grieve—though an English translation is provided in the text.

\*“Sae we drave oor ain kye hame, my lady,” he said, “and aiblins some orra anes that was na oor ain. For-bye we raikit a’ the plenishing oot o’ the ha’ o’ Hardriding, and a bonny burden o’ tapestries, and plaids, and gear we hae, to show for our ride”

\*“We drove our own cattle home, and perhaps some other that were not ours. And we took all the goods out of the hall at Hardriding, and a pretty load of tapestries, and rugs, and other things we have to show for our ride.”

(Lang, 2007, on-line: Ch 3)

The use of Scots and the careful description of the landscape, including the burns in which Randal pretends to find gold pebbles in a way that foreshadows later events, provide the localism that is indicative of a Scots fantasy. In setting the events in a real location it also

conforms to the idea that the fairy world is close to reality and that its boundaries are easily traversed. Fairy Land is located underground as expected and the fairy characters demonstrate all the recognisably Scottish traits. Randal is rescued by a girl who shows determination, loyalty and faith in his return and the household is a largely feminised one with Jean, Lady Ker and Nancy, who between them are able to support and sustain the local community even if it is at considerable cost to their own personal comfort and possessions. In its brevity this tale also conforms to Scottish fantasy generic features. As Manlove observes:

Scots fantasies are often quite short, operating within fairly small or compressed compass, both in terms of localism and relative brevity. Description is terse and characterisation lives by the thumbnail. (Manlove, 1994)

*The Gold of Fairnilee* conforms to this template almost exactly in its subject matter, setting, structure and narrative, and serves as a useful first example in illustrating how Scottish children's fantasy is consistent with the characteristics of its adult counterparts.

### *The Big House*

Naomi Mitchison is one of Scotland's most celebrated authors. A prolific writer and diarist, she is best known for her adult fiction, but she also wrote a number of very successful children's books: one of these is *The Big House*. The critic Alexander Scott described it as a tragic-comedy which weaves together "the natural magic of childhood, the terrible charm of the supernatural, [and] the dark power of history" when he reviewed it at its initial publication. (Quoted in *Early in Orcadia, The Big House and Travel Light*.) (Burgess, 2004: 18) Set in the West Highlands, specifically the area of Carradale which Mitchison knew well, the magic and supernatural elements come from the folklore of the area. The result is a compelling atmosphere of everyday magic, and a world that seems to coruscate between myth and reality.

The book opens on Hallowe'en; the word Halloween is Scots in origin and is short for All Hallows Eve, and throughout the novel the Scottish spelling is used. The Celtic Festival of Samhain, or in Gaelic *Samhuinn* (meaning Hallowtide or season) was when the spirits of the dead were said to be set free for the day. The first of November was the first day of the Celtic new year and the transition between the old and new years was believed to set evil spirits free to visit people's houses. Hallowe'en, the night before Samhain, was when lanterns, in Gaelic *samhnag*, and Hallowfires were supposed to scare the souls who emerged at midnight from coming to your house. The novel situates events quite

precisely at the end of the blackout after World War II, a time of genuine transition for Scotland following the global conflict of a World War. It describes in some detail the Scottish practice of ‘guising’ at Hallowe’en. The Scottish National Dictionary defines a guiser as:

a mummer or masquerader, especially in modern times, one of a party of children who go out in disguise from door to door at various festivals—especially Halloween.

The children would usually have to perform a ‘party piece’ and the adults would have to guess the identity of the guiser under their ‘false-face’ after which the children would be rewarded with nuts, apples or sweets. This custom seems to stem from the Scots notion of the wandering dead emerging on this night, and the practice of leaving offerings of food and drink to masked and costumed revellers before lighting bonfires. Issues of disguise and hidden identity feature prominently in this retelling of the “Tam Lin” story, as well as in the original. However, Mitchison takes this particular opportunity to use the Scots traditions of Hallowe’en as the foundation for the exploration of identity.

The novel opens with Su, who lives in the Tigh Mor (Big House) in the village of Port-na-Sgadan, being bullied by the village children after she tries to join in the traditional Hallowe’en pastime of guising. Only Winkie, a fisherman’s son is friendly to her. Their friendship is awkward, and both children are aware that this, like the bullying, arises from bad feeling dating from previous generations. The playing of bagpipes interrupts their conversation. The piper, Donald Ferguson, is a stranger looking for help, so they take him to the Big House. He discloses to Winkie that he is being pursued by ‘Yon Ones’ (p16) and that he has been a prisoner in the Fairy Hill for ‘twice seventy years’, having agreed to play at a fairy wedding. As a reward the fairies have given him the gift of tongues. When he decided to return to his own world he discovered that seven years had passed. Despite this he managed to get word to his wife and told her that she could win him back at Hallowe’en:

but that the Fair People would change my shape on me, and she must hold me fast. So at Hallowe’en I came back to my own house, and sat down at my own table, and the cradle bairn was a big boy, and my wife was older. Yet she did as I bid and threw her arms around me. But they changed me into foul and frightsome shapes. And at last she was so frightened she let go of me, and I was back in the Hill and the chance was gone. (p. 27)

He returned to Fairy Land and the Fair People were again generous with their gifts. The next opportunity came after seventy years, but the piper was too afraid to go then for fear of what he would find. After another seventy years he thinks there will be a ‘clean slate’

and using the opportunity of Hallowe'en, he has managed to escape. However, the fairies cannot bear to let anyone get away from them so one of the princes comes after him.

Afterwards a green-cloaked young man, the Fairy Prince, who has come to take Donald back to the Hill, pursues the children and the piper into the house. Su and Winkie hide the piper and protect him with a Bible and an iron poker. At this the young man's smile fades and "his footprints instead of sparkling light, were singeing and smoking." He next targets Winkie:

the Prince stretched out his hand and suddenly, from each finger went flames. They kept shaping into twisted dragons and air fish and demon's horns, and they all jumped at Winkie and he yelped. (p 17)

Winkie manages to resist but the prince next, spitefully, steals Su's shadow. It can only be retrieved if Su and Winkie go in to the Fairy Hill. This incident is clearly reminiscent of Barrie's *Peter Pan* and the Fairy Hill can be read as the equivalent of Neverland in this tale. In Mitchison's story, the children are provided with an unexpected helper in their quest: the Brounie, the supernatural guardian of Su's family over the centuries, who, unknown to her has been in the Big House all along and has only now chosen to make himself known.

The children are magically transported back in time to the early nineteenth century to find that Su is still a child of the Big House but that Winkie is a downtrodden tenant's son. In this time the children are kept separate because of their social position but, with the brounie's help, they manage to meet and find the entrance to the Fairy Hill. The world they find there is all they could have imagined, but after they refuse both gifts and food and drink, which they have been warned against, the beauty vanishes because it was only an illusion. The King of the Fairies tries to tempt them to stay by offering what seem like unique opportunities but they continue to resist and then Winkie whistles a tune taught to him by the piper which has the effect of breaking the fairies' hold over them. Su's shadow is reinstated and they find themselves restored to their own time.

The Fairy Prince reappears, still in pursuit of his prisoner. To keep the piper in this world, Su has to endure the ordeal of holding on to him while he undergoes a series of magical transformations. He turns into a snake, a 'slater' (woodlouse) a wild deer, a bar of white-hot iron, but she holds tight and he is finally changed into a small baby. In that form he can stay in the present day and will be brought up in the Big House. This concludes the first half of the book. The second half takes place after several years and magic again

intervenes when the fairies steal the baby Donald's soul and turn him into a changeling, an unpleasant fairy child. The Brounie reappears and explains that the fairies have done this to revenge themselves on Su and she will have to go back into the past to rescue Donald's soul. Entertaining as the second half of the book is, and despite the fact it continues to utilise many of the specific Scottish fantasy generic features, for the purposes of this case study the focus must be on the "Tam Lin" retelling of the first half.

The supernatural beings in *The Big House* are straight from the Scottish tradition of fairies. They are not little fluttering creatures that live in flowers, but are the tall and handsome descendants of the gods, living underground. More often than not they are malevolent and show clear evidence of their soullessness. Certainly they are not to be trusted and after their beauty the most notable quality is their coldness. They have no kind feelings, no pity, and certainly no conscience.

The story of the piper is also a particularly common one in Scots fairy fantasies: a skilled musician is lured into the hill to play at a fairy wedding, only to emerge many years later, if at all. Other humans are abducted because the Fairy Queen is attracted to them. Su's ordeal of holding on to the piper through many transformations, as well as that of the piper's wife, is directly taken from the original "Tam Lin" ballad. Similarly, the world inside the hill initially appears beautiful and luxurious, but here as in many other cases, this proves to be an illusion. The fairy inhabitants use 'glamour' also to transform Su's everyday clothes into fairy attire but that proves equally transient. This element is also reminiscent of both the ballad "Thomas the Rhymer" and incidents in *The Gold of Fairnilee*. Other similarities with the previous text include the closeness of Fairy Land to the real world, the fragility of the boundary between the two worlds, and the ascendancy of the power of the female in rescuing the hero. In this case Su could not have been successful without Winkie, but his role is more or less that of the 'able assistant'.

In this particular retelling of the story, however, we have a number of generic Scottish fantasy elements not seen in *The Gold of Fairnilee*. The piper is rewarded with fairy gifts which he seems able to bring with him into the human world. The brounie is able to tell the children, for example, that the baby Donald will retain his skill as a piper in his new persona. On the other hand, Winkie, who in the second half of the story is a chieftain, has to give up his ascendant position to help Su to return to her own time, thus conforming to the idea that ascendancy in a Scottish fantasy is not always maintained. Here we also see the idea of working for the common good: the children are willing to take risks in order to

help the piper or to restore baby Donald's soul. Winkie is willing to accompany Su to get her shadow back and then to help her return to her own time because he is told it will require both of them, even though he will not gain from either episode, and in fact in the latter he will be significantly disadvantaged. The brounie, following Su's enquiry, is able to tell the children of the fates of the children they become in other times and this shows that these characters have been influenced by the actions they have taken. Here we have an example of Su effectively questioning her—double—identity in a way that is completely consistent with other Scots fantasies.

Another of the themes Mitchison intended in this novel, was the exploration of the idea of class; the idea of class division, and the distrust and even dislike that could be felt between people of different social positions. Naomi Mitchison had a lifelong dream of a world in which all men and women should be equal, where friendship and love should not be governed by social class. In *The Big House* she uses magic and time-travel to show Su and Winkie, the next generation, how artificial and unnecessary any division between them might be. "It would be a queer world," says Winkie at one point, "if the same ones were aye up or aye down. It isna that way that things go." (p.123) So in this version of the story we see elements of the egalitarian quality identified earlier as one of the markers of Scots fantasy.

### *The Haunted Mountain*

The third specifically Scottish retelling of these stories I wish to consider is Mollie Hunter's *The Haunted Mountain*. (1972) This book was awarded a Scottish Arts Council Literary Award, was a New York Times Outstanding Book of the Year and an American Library Association Notable Book (1972/3). Peter Hollindale considers, "Mollie Hunter's fantasies and above all *The Haunted Mountain*, are one of the outstanding and most original achievements of contemporary children's fiction." (Hollindale, 1977) The novel does not just retell an old story, but *re-imagines* the story of "Tam Lin", the young man stolen by the fairies and released after seven years of bondage by the power of human love. In constructing her framework, Mollie Hunter uses many other familiar incidents and motifs from the fairy world. Set against this world of shadows and illusions is the real world of a Scottish Highland farming community any time in the nineteenth century. *The Haunted Mountain* is also based on the legend of Ben MacDui, the haunted mountain of the Cairngorms. Legend has it that The Big Grey Man, Fear Liath Mhor or An Ferla of the Highlands in Gaelic, haunts Ben MacDui, the second highest peak in Scotland. This

manifests itself, according to popular belief, as a huge ape-like misty grey figure that has the power to send people into a blind panic, in an attempt, as some would have it, to push them over the steep cliffs of Lurcher's Crag. Most encounters are associated with feelings rather than actual physical sightings. In incorporating both of these elements, Hunter has produced one of the most distinctive of the retellings of this typically Scottish tale.

*The Haunted Mountain* involves one of Hunter's most common conflicts between "the beautiful and terrible ones of the hollow hills, the powerful and revengeful magicians of the Otherworld" (Hunter, 1992b:62) and a mere human being—and her more common theme—the power of human love against these dark forces. The creatures called the sidhe; pronounced *shee*, feature heavily in this story. The sidhe are a supernatural race of lordly and terrible creatures, inhabitants of the hollow hills and worshipers of dark gods with ancient magic at their command.

MacAllister, a young, proud and rash young farmer living in the shadow of Ben MacDui, disobeys the taboo that leaves a field of every farm unworked in case the sidhe want it. He further angers the sidhe by calling them by name rather than the placatory euphemism, 'the good people'. MacAllister is stubborn and ambitious, partly driven by his love for his Peigi-Ann, and partly by the deep feeling that it is up to him to make a stand for the land that is his life. He ploughs and sows the forbidden field and in so doing reaps a whirlwind of trouble. At first the sidhe are kept away by the precautions MacAllister takes using elemental counter-magic: the planting of rowan and elder and the nailing of coins in the troughs to 'silver' the water. Ignoring the warning from the 'Skeelie Woman', the wise woman/seer, MacAllister plants the field with barley, it grows green and then ripens and after cutting and threshing it he has enough grain to fill two bags with barley. Whereupon he is visited by an Urisk, half man, half goat, sent by the sidhe to commandeer the barley. MacAllister and his hound Colm manage to wrest the barley away from the Urisk. Rather than hand it over to the sidhe, MacAllister upends the grain and scatters it. The Urisk reminds him that the sidhe are shape shifters and can return in the form of birds and still get the grain. MacAllister outwits the sidhe again and works the grain into the land in the shape of a cross, thus even when the barley grows it will be protected. He also decides that if the contested field is going to bring such danger he will not use it, but neither will he let the sidhe have it. He builds a hedge of rowan and elder round the field, thus protecting it from the fairy folk. He refuses to tell people how he managed to prevent the sidhe from getting the barley and he also realises that this is a means of getting Peig-Ann back since she jilted him for fear of what the sidhe might do as reprisal. MacAllister is aware that her

curiosity will be aroused, and sure enough she sends for him.

His journey takes him some distance through a mountain pass, and during one trip in January, MacAllister finds himself trapped on the mountain in a snowstorm. Following a light, he finds a drover's bothy, already occupied by a finely dressed, merry company with ample supplies. Just as he is about to partake of the meal, MacAllister's suspicions are aroused by the fact there is no evidence of dirt or wetness on their clothes nor has he seen any their horses. He calls their bluff by speaking a blessing over the food and immediately the food looks very different and consists of poisonous toadstools and the juice of the deadly-nightshade berry. The sidhe had raised a storm in order to entrap him into eating their death feast. MacAllister here displays all his stubbornness still refusing to let the sidhe beat him:

Now, he thought, he knew the real difference between his own kind and the people of the sidhe, and so now he knew his real reason for refusing to give them the Goodman's Croft. The sidhe had power, beauty, wealth—everything that the heart could desire, but they had no souls, so they were still less than men.

He had nothing except his land—but it was working his own land, living by his own land, that gave him the right to call himself a man among men. And he would have no proper pride in himself again if he gave up at least part of that right to creatures who were less than men! (p 36)

In generating this incident, Hunter has raised the stakes in this story. It is no longer just a contest of wills, the stubborn desire on the part of one thrown man to have his own way, but a moral contest, one man's defiant cry against the powers of darkness.

The Sidhe's characteristic of never forgiving and forgetting means that even after he has married Peigi-Ann and when their son is five years old—MacAllister is captured and imprisoned by the sidhe for seven years, after which time he is to be sacrificed to their 'strange gods' replacing one of the sidhe themselves. Peigi-Ann is told this by the Skeelie Woman and resigns herself that there is nothing she can do to rescue her husband. However, as Fergus grows up he learns the truth about his father and determines to rescue him. Once more the Skeelie Woman provides both information and a method of rescuing MacAllister, but for a price. MacAllister, along with other captives, is used by the sidhe to quarry cairngorms, the yellow gemstones that are the treasure of the sidhe. The captives are guarded by An Ferla Mor—The Great Grey Man. His power is that he inspires blind and nameless panic in those who encounter him. His one vulnerability is that he is blind, though possessed of super-sensitive hearing as compensation. The Skeelie Woman directs Fergus to the place his father is being held and even the timing is right, it is Hallowe'en,

and gives him instructions:

The whole kingdom of the sidhe will be abroad in the first hour of darkness on Hallowe'en, and they will use all the force of their magic against you. But if you seize tight hold of MacAllister's hand, and keep your grip on it no matter what happens, he will be freed from the power of the sidhe and the golden chains will drop from him of their own accord. (p 83)

What she asks in return is a double handful of cairngorms as her fee.

Following the directions he has been given, Fergus and Colm—now an old dog— finds his father and prepares for the sidhe's onslaught. He holds his father's hand through transformations into a snake, a stick which bursts into flame, a Scottish wildcat, a hedgehog and finally a slimy toad. The golden chains drop away and his father is free. Collecting the cairngorms they proceed down the mountain but their way is barred by An Ferla Mor. Both Fergus and MacAllister are seized with terror but Colm, the hound, attacks the twenty-foot high stone man and is stabbed for his pains. MacAllister uses the golden chains that have held him captive, as well as the diversion of Colm's attack, and binds the Grey Man, finally stabbing him with the monster's own sword. They return home carrying Colm's body.

The Skeelie Woman's final advice indicates they will never be completely free of the sidhe unless they give the contested land a blood sacrifice. "Let the blood of An Cu Mor [the hound] be the sacrifice that breaks their power forever." (p.120) The story concludes with Peigi-Ann saying she will plant the field with herbs and healing flowers. The land flourishes over the years until one of the descendants emigrates to America and the land is left to go to ruin, except for Colm's Croft, where no weed ever grows. The mountain though, is said to be guarded by the ghost of the Grey Man who can still instil terror in those who climb the mountain.

In this retelling of the "Tam Lin"/"Thomas the Rhymer" ballads, MacAllister is rescued by his son rather than his wife. Hunter has enlarged and improvised around aspects of the original texts to make them compatible with her philosophies, one of which is the heroic part played by a young boy. Peigi-Ann, the wife and mother, can do nothing to stop her son setting out on this perilous journey—the journey itself being symbolic of the journey though life, as, Hunter comments, is traditional in Highland stories. (Hunter, 1992b: 63) In this, as in all Hunter's work, a child or adolescent has a crucial role to play in the action, and often the child has more wisdom than the adult characters. Most often, the child has

insights that are closed to the adults and along with this understanding comes the need for steadfast courage in facing dangers that the child alone knows to exist, or which they alone must undergo.

MacAllister is all that a hero of a novel should be, but his fatal flaw is *hubris*, the arrogance that he seems unable to shake off. His refusal to accept the fairy folk's demands leads to his terrible struggles with them. This reckless man is more childlike than his own son in his rash challenge to the malignant powers of magic, and he owes his final happiness to the reciprocal love of father and son. He depends on his love for his wife and the resolute, persistent and compassionate love he receives in return. Human victory is won in such battles by love, the redemptive emotion of mortals, which the timeless supernatural can neither see nor understand. The eventual resolution of the story shows how MacAllister gains his independence, but also portrays him acquiring humility. Here, once again, we have an example of one of the key characteristics of Scottish fantasy in the levelling down of a character so that the intrusive features of identity are worn away. There has been a moderation of pride and a reduction of intellectual arrogance, fully consistent with other Scottish fantasies.

The substance of Hunter's fantasies accords completely with the manner of their telling. The narrative comes essentially from a spoken voice of distinctive quality. It is matter-of-fact, crisp and almost dares the reader to find something implausible in its fantastic tales. It is confidential and intimate, while at the same time, spare and economical. Like Lang and Mitchison before her, Hunter's voice is almost bardic in its adroit and dignified simplicity. The music of Gaelic idiom and sentence form infuses the language in a unique manner. These diverse qualities merge, with extraordinary consistency and control, to express a wide span of moods and emotions within a taut, and concise, narrative structure. This is an impressive achievement, allowing the author to create the smooth and delicate transition from sorrow and wistfulness to acceptance and joy that occurs at the end of the story.

This retelling exhibits most of the distinctive Scots fantasy features in its one hundred and twenty five pages. It has the traditional folktale's blending of the quotidian and domestic with the amazing and inexplicable, and makes no attempt to explain the powers beyond human experience. The *sidhe*, in this version, exhibit an extreme version of the cruel and heartless qualities we have come to expect from Scottish fairy folk. Fairy Land exists close to the real world and both the fairy folk and the humans can cross its borders, both

wittingly and unwittingly. The picture presented of the Grey Man of Ben MacDui makes use of the idea of doubles and ghostly images and throughout the retelling the contrast between light and dark is inescapable. MacAllister's actions eventually lead to him questioning himself and the arrogant persona he sported at the beginning of the story is whittled down by the end of it. The one thing this version does not do is emphasise the power of women. In all other capacities and either knowingly—which I believe is likely—or unknowingly, Mollie Hunter's work is fully compliant with the generic features of Scottish fantasy.

### *An Earthly Knight*

*An Earthly Knight* is the first of the non-Scottish retellings of the "Tam Lin" story. Janet McNaughton, the author, is an award-winning author of several novels for young people. She has a PhD in folklore and a love of Scottish ballads, two of which—"Tam Lin" itself—and "Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight", were the inspiration for this novel. Dr McNaughton lives in St. John's, Newfoundland, one of the few places in North America where fairy beliefs are very much kept alive. Before beginning a detailed account and analysis of this text, it would be prudent to review the details of the lesser-known ballad which is incorporated in the novel.

"Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight", is also sometimes known as "The Gowans sae gay", "The Water o' Wearie's Well", "The Outlandish Knight" or "May Colvin" depending on which source is used. Child presents seven versions in *English and Scottish Ballads*, and judging from the first verse inscribed in the novel, the text used as source material is closest to Child version E. (See Appendix 3) The knight of the title woos Lady Isabel, promising to take her to the north lands and marry her. Before they leave he induces her to steal gold and money from her parents as well as horses. They ride to the seaside where he confesses to having killed six other girls and he intends to do the same to her. He then asks her to strip, both in order to ravish her and to save the gown and jewels she is wearing because they can be sold, and she requests that he turns his back on her while she complies. At this point she grabs him round the middle and throws him into the water and drowns him. She returns to the castle where she is seen by a parrot to whom she promises a golden cage if it does not report her to her father. This ballad undergoes fairly substantial re-imagining in this novel, and the plot is manipulated to conform to the narrative requirements of the re-told story.

The chronicle opens after the events of “Lady Isabel and the Elf Knight” and the reader only learns the full details of that story as the novel progresses. Isabel was duped by the attentions of Bleddri, a courtly knight who had grown up at the court of the Duke of Aquitaine. He had used his lands to fund his journey to the Crusades and thus was reduced to the status of a wandering knight. He may have targeted Isabel with his intentions but her father would never have permitted such an unfavourable match. On the other hand, neither did her father intervene to stop the relationship. A knight of such high breeding would have brought honour to his house. Isabel was induced to run away with him, taking her dowry and two of her father’s horses. He took her to the seaside and there confessed to having killed six other girls. Isabel distracted him from killing her immediately by suggesting she remove her gown to save it from being soiled and therefore able to be sold. When his back is turned she jabs one of the horses with her cloak pin, the horse’s reaction knocks Bleddri off his feet and Isabel then throws a cloak over him and rolls him into the sea. She returns to her father’s house after six days bringing her dowry and the horses back. Unlike the ballad, her perfidy is widely known within the household and the community. Also unlike the ballad, there is no mention made of her losing her virginity or even the suggestion that this might have been a possibility. Additionally, although Isabel is ultimately the cause of Bleddri’s death, the version of events given here implies that Isabel’s actions were a little less cold-blooded than in the ballad.

Because Isabel’s disgrace is known, her younger sister Jeanette has to assume the role of the lady of the house, particularly until Isabel’s fate is decided. It is likely that Isabel will have to become a nun, but until she has ‘confessed her sin’ she cannot go in to the order. In between Jeanette (Jenny) worrying about her sister’s fate with the church, her father’s struggle to regain the family’s honour and trying to find out where her own out-spoken, free spirit fits in to the male-dominated feudal society, she meets up with the mysterious Tam Lin. Her temper and curiosity have been aroused because her father, “forbid(s) you both to come or go by Carter Hall” (p.11) because Tam Lin, the previous owner, has been seen in the grounds. This property is to be used as part of Jenny’s *tocher* (dowry). Her father has heard strange stories regarding Tam Lin, and with his recent experiences with his elder daughter, he is reluctant to put either of his daughters at risk again. Jenny wheedles the story from Galiene, her nurse. Everyone at Carter Hall was killed, probably poisoned, except, “the bairn in his cradle” —Tam—and one stable boy who ran for help. The child went to live with his grandfather, the Earl of Roxburg(h). Later the boy Tam was out hunting and his horse returned without him. There are two versions of the story, one that he lost his memory in the accident and could not return until it came back and the

other, that he was taken by the “wee folk”.

As soon as Jenny realises that Tam wants Carter Hall, she wants it more than ever and her father’s injunction to stay away from the place acts much more as an incentive to go there. While searching for acorns for the friars to use for making ink, Jenny is found, up a tree, by Tam Lin. He offers to catch her to let her get down safely but she does not know who he is.

She expected he would finally introduce himself, but he did not. “Look at me,” he said instead. “Ask yourself if I am someone you can trust.” (p 77)

Her curiosity is piqued, but he tells her that if she wants to know who he is she must come to Carter Hall.

In the meantime, Jenny finds that she is being considered for possible betrothal to William de Warenne, the King’s brother. Jenny’s father sees this as a means of restoring the family’s standing. However, she returns to Carter Hall and discusses the details of her likely betrothal to William with Tam. He knows the court and the courtiers from his time with his grandfather and is aware that Jenny will be well regarded because she brings a dowry: William has debts. Jenny continues to find, tangential, reasons to visit Carter Hall before her second meeting with the royal court. This time Tam provides her with a beautiful gown, which also has the effect of making her the centre of attention. While walking in the market place though, a stall owner asks her, “ ‘And what are you doing here, my lady, dressed in cobwebs and old leaves?’” (p.210) She is hurriedly quietened and Jenny is told to disregard what she said, because as a guard tells her, Meg is a midwife who claims to have been taken to a lord’s hall, under a hill, to deliver a child. While there, she rinsed her eyes in water and:

She could see it was nothing more than old leaves and bits of moss, fairy glamour they call it. Since then, she claims she can see anything made by the fairies for what it is. I suppose she fancies your dress to be fairy glamour, being so finely made. (p 212)

This completely spoils the effect of the dress for Jenny and she believes that Tam’s intentions have been to cause her hurt and embarrassment. Added to this, Jenny is beginning to regard William as boastful and oversensitive. He is overheard telling her father he will marry her, but only if her dowry is increased. Jenny is aware that if she marries him she will be trapped in a marriage with a man who misinterprets everything she does *and* her father will be financially ruined.

When she returns home she first believes she does not want to see Tam Lin again because the ‘real’ Tam Lin is very different from the one she thought she knew. Nevertheless, she is drawn back to Carter’s Hall where Tam has prepared a meal for her to hear all about her visit with William’s family. She initially attacks him for what he did with the dress and Tam is forced to explain himself and his situation.

I can be in the land of men, but am no longer earthly myself. It seems as if I have one foot in both worlds, and I am torn apart by the distance I must stretch to stay that way. If I give up they must take me forever. (p 258)

Their differences resolved, Jenny takes the lead and gives herself to Tam, and inevitably she becomes pregnant.

On the same day her sister is supposed to make her ‘confession’ Jenny also uses her pregnancy to Tam as a means of escaping her betrothal to William. In this her brother Eudo, who carries tales of William’s rape of a servant girl and other nefarious practices, supports her. Galiene declares she always knew Jenny’s and Tam’s fates were linked, but she is unable to tell Jenny how she can rescue her lover. Tam is induced to tell Jenny what to do but he only does so after being told about the baby. The Fairy Queen, having discovered about Tam and Jenny’s love for each other, wishes to be rid of Tam but is unwilling to let him go, so is going to use Tam as the ‘tiend to Hell.’ Jenny is told that she must pull Tam from his horse at Miles Cross at midnight on Halloween, and she must hold him till the rest of the company pass without him. Jenny uses her weight to pull Tam from his horse whereupon he turns into an esk—a black newt—a snake, a bear, a wildcat, a red-hot rod of iron and finally a flaming coal. She throws this into a water-filled ditch and from this Tam emerges, naked but fully human. Jenny and Tam are married a year later, after the birth of their child and after Tam has restored Carter Hall to its former glory.

In many ways, this retelling remains very faithful to the original “Tam Lin” ballad. So much so, that at times some of the language is a more or less a direct ‘lift’ from the original text. The fairies do live underground; Tam has been abducted by them and is to be used as the “tiend to Hell”. Jenny has to hold on to Tam through various transformations, and although some of these are new variants on the original, she is able to do so. The text is also largely feminised in the manner of Scots fantasies and Tam is redeemed from Fairy Land by Jenny and her true love, which the fairies can never know. The use of the second ballad interpolated in the main narrative offers an interesting re-working of the original story. The central protagonists in both ballads are female and both bring about the resolution of their own fates by their own actions. However, in this version, both sisters’

actions are known widely in the community, and even though in this retelling Isabel remains untouched, her actions in running away with a man have the same results as they would have had she returned pregnant like her sister.

McNaughton also tackles the discussion about possible abortion, though the motivation she gives Jenny for opting to keep her child is much more modern than the original text and is more concerned with keeping a part of Tam alive than anything else. Although the ascendancy of the female is a generic feature of Scottish fantasies, the treatment in this retelling is far more to do with the need to present modern audiences with a different attitude to the agency of women, previously mentioned in Chapter 4, with justifiable heroines, who have a degree of autonomy and are not completely passive. The heroines in this version are much more contemporary young women placed in an historical setting, in a way that Mitchison, for example, resists. Interestingly though, this retelling makes excellent use of dream imagery, contrasts light and dark in very meaningful ways and also utilises the fragile barrier between Fairy Land and the real world. The use of ‘glamour’ is also consistent with “Thomas the Rhymer” and some of the other retellings previously considered. Furthermore, in her close attention to appearance within the novel, the author makes overtures towards the Scots preoccupation with doubles and thus with issues of identity.

In siting the story when she does, McNaughton is setting events prior to the known origins of the ballads. Or, more precisely, before the first *written* versions of the ballads: from textual references the story is set around 1160. She also plays with the sequence of events in the original ballad, presumably for the purpose of the narrative structure. Although she tries to use older language constructions and, has clearly researched the historical period, there are some inconsistencies—particularly in relation to religious belief and the fairies. McNaughton herself on her website, [www.janetmcnaughton.ca/EKinfo.html](http://www.janetmcnaughton.ca/EKinfo.html), refers predominantly to research about the Normans and the English and states that there are fewer references to the Norman influence on Scotland. There is quite a contemporary ‘feel’ to the piece and at times it seems more an extemporisation on life in a medieval Scottish hall in the detail given about food, medicine, music, fashion and manners. Even in the character of Tam Lin we are presented with a rather anachronistic young man who can tidy an abandoned manor and turn out a jolly fine meal for his beloved in a manner more suited to the twenty first century than the twelfth. Nevertheless, this retelling is still compliant with many of the generic features particular to Scottish fantasy.

*The Perilous Gard*

This text by American author and academic Dr Elizabeth Marie Pope, belongs to a slightly earlier period. It was first published in 1974 and it is a Newbery Honour book. Dr Pope's area of expertise was Elizabethan England and she only wrote two novels for young adults, one of which was *The Perilous Gard*. This retelling transports events to England in 1558. Kate Sutton, the central protagonist, and her sister Alicia are ladies in waiting to the Lady Elizabeth, herself exiled to Hatfield. Kate finds herself banished to a remote castle known as Perilous Gard by Queen Mary Tudor. This unfair punishment was brought about after her sister, Alicia, wrote to Queen Mary to complain about the conditions at Hatfield. The Queen does not believe Alicia is capable of such action and blames Kate instead. Her place of exile is a castle named Elvenwood Hall, also known as The Perilous Gard. Lady Elizabeth's tutor, Master Roger Ascham, reveals that a Gard signified a castle in the 'old days' and that the word perilous can mean it was a hard place to attack or

that the word 'perilous' was often given in the former age to such places as foolish and superstitious persons chose to believe were of a magical nature. (p.12)

There she finds that the daughter of Sir Geoffrey Heron, the master of the hall, has vanished under mysterious circumstances that implicate his brother, Christopher Heron. She also finds that the local villagers fear the fairy folk who live under the hill and think they may be kidnapping children. When she visits the so-called 'Holy Well', Christopher mistakenly believes she is about to fall in and 'rescues' her and it is from him she hears the full story of Cecily's disappearance. Christopher dropped a coin into the well and wished that someone else had the charge of Cecily, and it was then that she disappeared.

Soon after this incident, Kate rescues a drowning village child and receives a cross from the child's mother as protection from "The People of the Hill". She describes what she believes about the Fairy Folk:

Down in the caves under the Hill. Wonderful they are, the walls are all covered with gold, and the Fairy Folk with crowns on their heads, drinking out of magical cups and dancing to the music of harps and pipes; they do say that any mortal man who drinks from one of those cups will dance to the music for the rest of his days, and never find his way out of the Hill again. (p 79)

She also tells Kate that, contrary to her belief that fairies are "wee folk, no larger than puppets" that "when they're in their true shapes [they are] the size of men and women like ourselves." The village woman gives her a steel cross to keep her safe from the fairies

and makes Kate promise to wear it at all times.

Near the well, the minstrel Randal sings the ballad of "Tam Lin" and then describes Cecily whom he has seen when playing for the fairies. Christopher determines to get her back and offers himself as the tiend, or sacrifice, in the child's place, Kate tries to stop him but is unsuccessful. Cecily is recovered and Christopher taken, but with the connivance of Master John, the steward of Elvenwood Hall. He knows that other than Kate, all the other inhabitants of the Hall will not disclose his involvement with the fairies to Sir Geoffrey. Scheming with the Fairy Queen, Master John arranges for Kate's 'disappearance', allegedly having absconded with Christopher. In the underground fairy world Kate faces several challenges, including having to save herself and Christopher, who chose to put himself forward as King of the Land.

Kate refuses to take the white powder offered by the Fairy Queen as a means of making her captivity more bearable, and thus she is able to see that the food that is consumed is nothing but water and grain. In other words, by choosing not to make life easy for herself in captivity, she is able to see things as they really are. She earns the grudging respect from the Fairy Queen who offers her the chance to live with them but not as a servant, nor yet a magical person. Kate resists the spell she puts on her when the Queen realises her intention is to save Christopher. The cross she has been given is broken and its broken edge stabs the palm of her hand; Kate closes her hand and the pain allows her to resist the Queen's spell. The Fairy Queen herself refers to the ballad of "Tam Lin" and refers to a human woman who rescued Tam from the fairies before. Unfortunately Kate has only heard the ballad once before and it is only when Randal recites it again that she realizes what she has to do. Unlike any of the other retellings examined so far, the transformations that Christopher goes through and against which Kate must hold him, are not physical but mental and psychological transformations. The Guardian of the Well whispers in Christopher's ear that Kate's words, and possibly Kate herself, are illusions and that he has chosen this course of action. It is only when the Guardian of the Well compares him to a god that Kate's forthright nature breaks through and rouses Christopher from the spell:

"You don't look like any god to me, Christopher Heron! You look like a piece of gilded gingerbread, that's what you look like, one of those cakes they sell at the fair." (p 246)

Christopher's involuntary response, "Nobody but you would think of such a...." breaks through the fairies thrall, and thus he is freed. Christopher takes Cecily to London to live

with his sister Jenny (Jennifer). When he comes back, Queen Mary is dead and Queen Elizabeth makes good her promise to release Kate. Christopher proposes to Kate, and she accepts.

This retelling is very different from all the previous ones. While it does not set the events in a modern period it is still set outwith the original period of the ballads. Also in this retelling, all the characters in the story, except Kate it seems, know the ballad of "Tam Lin". There are elements of "Thomas the Rhymer" in the link of the seven years, the use of glamour, the fairy gifts and the role of the minstrel as both story teller and fairy entertainer. The setting may be Derbyshire, but other elements show specifically Scottish features. The fairy people dwell underground, they are the same size as human beings, there are strong elements of contrasting light and dark, the fairy world is close to the real world and its boundaries can be traversed easily. Within this tale though, the conceit is that there are many routes into fairy land, but these are hidden, except from those who have travelled them before or know they are there. There are a significant number of references to dreams and nightmares, and it is, once again, a very heavily feminised version, with Kate rescuing Christopher. However, there is a relationship between the Fairy Queen and Kate within this tale that does not appear in others.

There are also some unique features in this novel. Food becomes an important motif within the story; perhaps its practicality makes it an obvious instrument to use to bring Christopher back to reality. There is also a very intriguing discussion of religion and its relationship to the Fairy world. At one point Kate tries to argue that Christopher need not be sacrificed because Jesus Christ had already sacrificed himself for the world. The Fairy Queen is aware of this and deems it to have been too long ago for it to be of value. In fact, in trying to explain what God's sacrifice means to humans, Kate inadvertently leads the Queen to believe that in sacrificing Christopher they will also get the power of Christ.

"This is a great thing you have shown me," she said. "For it means that when we take his life tonight, we can take the Other Life also, to add its strength to our own; and that is even more than I thought we would get from him." (p 210)

Thus this story, as well as referencing "Tam Lin", also weaves in both Christianity and paganism. The Old Ones of the story are the cold heartless ones of the pagan religions and of Scots origin.

Parallels can also be drawn between the characters and plot structure of *The Perilous Gard* and Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813). Kate Sutton's sister, Alicia, behaves and talks very much like Lydia Bennett. On page 268, during a conversation with Kate, Alicia says, "Hadn't you heard? There was some old manor near Sir Geoffrey's house in Norfolk that he wanted, and he was buying it, so - oh, how silly of me! I forgot. We were keeping it a secret. He said I wasn't to tell you." Any reader of *Pride and Prejudice* will recognize the sentiment and tone of this statement from the scene where Lydia accidentally lets slip Mr. Darcy's involvement in her and Wickham's wedding. Additionally, Christopher Heron possesses the proud demeanour of Mr. Darcy, and, like Mr. Darcy, blames himself when harm comes to Cecily, his young niece (Cecily is comparable to Georgiana Darcy). Lastly, Kate seems very similar to Elizabeth Bennett. She is more intelligent than most other women, is her father's personal favourite, and has a clever and sometimes cutting tongue.

This retelling, more than any of the others examined so far, is an example of the creative retelling discussed in the ballad section earlier in this chapter. Pope has taken the plot of the original story and used it as the basis of a new narrative that goes well beyond the limits of the original. This retelling cannot be construed as a modern tale transplanted into a Tudor setting. Here we have the accrual of detail and complexity of character that sets this tale in a very specific time and place. The themes of love and loyalty, of stubbornness and determination are still obvious as are the defining structures of the original ballad. However, because the story is told from a different perspective, we are given a new pattern from the core motifs and thus different social themes and values emerge from the original. In this case, the benefits of a cool, logical intelligent mind, the need for almost forensic examination of legend and the importance of evidence as well as the humans' besetting sin of greed and the need to protect themselves from discovery. Perhaps because Scottish ballads form the central core of this tale, this retelling cannot help but display specifically Scottish fantasy attributes.

### *Fire and Hemlock*

The final text I wish to examine in this section is Diana Wynne Jones' *Fire and Hemlock*. This book was a Phoenix Award Honour book in 2005. Phoenix Awards are given to books published twenty years earlier that did not win any major prize at the time of publication.

This is a complex novel in which Polly Whittaker, a university student, unravels the

mystery surrounding her child-self and the enigmatic Thomas Lynn. It also describes the gradual discovery of the true relationship between orchestral musician, Thomas, and his ex-wife, Laurel Leroy. This hardly seems the usual material of a children's book: it also involves an unloving mother and a feckless father who variously betray Polly, and Polly herself, who grows up into sexual awareness in course of the story. Jones uses ballad quotations at the head of each chapter to give the reader clues about the nature of the tale, but Polly has to find out for herself that Thomas Lynn is the *Tam Lynn* and "Thomas the Rhymer" of the ballads who fell in love with the Fairy Queen and became trapped in Fairy Land until a mortal woman rescued him. Polly re-enacts the old story and wins her modern Tom, though at significant cost to herself, in what is now an inter-textual narrative.

Looking at a picture in her room at her grandmother's house before leaving for university, Polly is hit by a cascade of forgotten memories that begin from when she was eight and onwards. "Fire and Hemlock" is the name of a large colour photograph that hangs over Polly's bed that is instrumental in triggering her lost memories. As she thinks back to her "second set" of memories, she recalls at age eight, stumbling into a funeral in an old mansion, Hunsdon House, and being approached by a man named Thomas Lynn who takes her back outside and keeps her company.

Over the subsequent years Tom and Polly create an extraordinary relationship that endures many hardships. Tom sends her books and letters with stories in them, and he supports her through her parents' divorce and her mother's subsequent dysfunctional behaviour. Much of this novel is about Polly's decision to 'train' to be a hero and how she models her actions on the heroes she reads about. She confides this to Tom and together, the two come up with stories about a hero named Tan Coul and his assistant Hero, who are Mr. Lynn's and Polly's alter egos respectively. These stories all eventually come true, after a fashion. For instance, after discussing Tan Coul's horse, they encounter a horse disrupting traffic in a London street. During this period, Polly frequently encounters members of Tom's ex-wife's family who seem to be threatening her and trying to break off her relationship with Tom. Polly explains this to herself as though Tom's ex-wife - Laurel - still "owns" him in some way.

As she turns sixteen, Polly's relationship with Tom begins to change and she develops romantic feelings for him. When he apparently rejects her, she sets out to discover the dark secret of his relationship with the sinister Laurel which is somehow connected to all the supernatural events that happen to Tom and her. After she performs her voodoo-like

ceremony she is summoned to Hunsdon House where Laurel tells her Tom is dying of cancer and wants to be left alone by her. Mortified, Polly agrees to forget him.

Three years later, sitting in front of the picture she now realizes was a gift from Tom, Polly starts investigating these dual memories and finds out that all memory of Tom has been erased from her life and eradicated from the memories of anyone who should have known about him. She tries to solve the mystery of this man she knew and still loves. In this she is aided by reading the two ballads—Tam Lin and Thomas the Rhymer—which help her deduce that Tom has entered into a bargain with the so-called queen of the fairies—Laurel—and that the time has come when he must give his life to prolong hers. Using the information in the ballads as an instruction, she arrives at the ceremony over which Laurel is presiding, and manages to outwit her and secure Tom's life, and, depending on the interpretation of the strange happenings of the ending, his love.

The novel opens with the intrusion of magic, but Jones ratchets up the tension by holding the boundaries of magic permanently in doubt. Indeed she has said that her intention with this book was to see how long she could go before confirming the magic. (Jones, 1989) In this Jones is exploiting the traditional fragility of the barriers between Fairy land and the real world in a distinctively Scottish manner, and she uses the liminal quality equally intentionally to give the ordinary the air of the fantastic. The story rests on the ability of children, and specifically Polly, to blur the distinction between the rational and the logical, so that the narrative that the child 'writes' between them fuses the two worlds. A number of authors, Colin Manlove and Farah Mendlesohn among them, have highlighted that this novel makes the point that *all* experience is potentially 'literary' or 'textual'. Jones deliberately uses this notion, making texts manipulate the actions of the characters. In doing so she is using what John Clute has identified as a crucial part of all fantasy, "Recognition of a story grants the power to resist the directed narrative of someone else."(Clute and Grant, 1997: 804-805)

*Fire and Hemlock* makes use of "Tam Lin" and "Thomas the Rhymer" directly, but also uses information from fairy tales and from *The Golden Bough* (Frazer, 1890) as well as from myths legends and classic novels. Polly's reading, directed by Tom through the book parcels he sends, often coincides with the moral or literary issue that has come up between them. For example, *The Wizard of Oz* (Baum, 1900), *Five Children and It* (Nesbit, 1902), among others have things to say about the nature of courage, while *The Box of Delights* (Masefield, 1935), *The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* (Lewis, 1950) and *One Hundred*

*and One Dalmatians* (Smith, 1956) all contain discussions about the relation of the real world to the fantasy world. In one sense this is a didactic book, but here, teaching through story is inferential, not instructional. Thomas makes sure Polly reads the two most pertinent ballads so that she can recognize the *story* herself. All Polly's reading does teach her to think, but it also has the potential to trap her into *specific* ways of thinking. Only when Polly thinks independently is she able to shape the tales for herself, and thus becomes a new 'writer' of the ballad of "Tam Lin" and consequently defeating Laurel, taking control and saving Thomas.

In comparison with the other retellings discussed, this re-imagined version is in a class of its own. While remaining true to the original ballads and the Scottish fantasy influence in spirit in the broad sequencing of events, the use of the ballads themselves and the use of parallels and doubles, it also employs a disrupted linear narrative in a manner quite at odds with the other retellings. Polly has two sets of memories giving a dual time scale; but we also have the ordinary timescale of Polly's life juxtaposed with the immortality of the fairies. Thus *Fire and Hemlock* is told in what Mendlesohn describes as "a continuous feedback loop" (Mendlesohn, 2005: 159) such that each new element, as it is introduced, parallels, reflects or mirrors the story to that point. In this Jones is bringing into play the elliptical conversations and cinematic images discussed earlier in this chapter as being typical of the narrative form of Scottish fantasy. And there are other resonances: in refusing to name precisely what Laurel is, Jones's narrative is quite in keeping with the traditional propitiatory practice of referring to fairies by indirect epithets such as "the good neighbours"; also in the use of mirrors, a motif so well used by George MacDonald. Even the lack of character complexity, which is made up for by the dual nature of each character, could be said to be a generic Scottish fantasy feature.

To be a retelling a text must exist in relationship to some kind of source, the 'pre-text'. Only in a minority of cases is that source as fixable as a single work by an identifiable author—these texts are examples of that minority. Few retellings, and all of the works discussed here come in to this category, are simple replications, even when they appear to reproduce the story and point of view of the source text. In such cases the purpose is usually cultural reproduction, in the sense of transmitting desired knowledge about society and the self, modes of learning and forms of authority from one generation to the next. Retellings cannot replicate the significance of the original source and always impose their own pre-suppositions in the process of the retelling. Stephens and McCallum say:

Pre-texts are often already shaped by some kind of meta-narrative, and their status makes them a good site on which to impose meta-narratives expressing social values and attitudes prevailing in the time and place of the retelling. A meta-narrative is a global or totalizing cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience. (Stephens and McCallum, 1998)

The retelling of stories has the potential to be intellectually and culturally oppressive, but there are always possibilities for resistance, contestation and change. Retold stories also have the potential to disclose how old stories suppress the hidden, the untold and the unspoken. All of these retellings have this potential and some of them realize it. But in all cases, they maintain the elements that mark them as specifically Scottish fantasy stories.

## Chapter 6: Contemporary Scottish Children's Literature and Post-Devolution Scotland

Let our three voiced country  
Sing in a new world  
Joining the other rivers without dogma,  
But with friendliness all around her.  
Let her new river shine on a day  
That is fresh and glittering and contemporary:  
Let it be true to itself and its origins  
Inventive, original, philosophical,  
Its institutions mirror its beauty;  
Then without shame we can esteem ourselves.

*The Beginning of a New Song* Iain Crichton Smith

Chapter 6 returns to consideration of rival views of Scotland, but this time at the beginning of the twenty-first century, celebrating the nation's dynamic and multi-dimensional nature, and alluding to the fact that Scottish identity-making is moving towards synthesis rather than fragmentation. It is suggested that Scottish fiction has supplied the most successful exploration of changing Scottish identities in recent years. The view is also presented that the growing confidence of Scottish writers and of Scottish identity means that there is no longer the need to focus exclusively on Scottish subjects or settings. We are reminded how Scottish Children's fiction is both like and unlike Scottish adult fiction, and an overview of the Scottish Children's fiction published since Devolution is provided. The concept of Scottishness is deliberated further and a selection of texts, matching the themes of the earlier case studies, but published since Devolution are given close readings, culminating in the suggestion of the development of what are described as 'fusion' texts, representing a form of literary cosmopolitanism entirely consonant with the way Scottish society currently aspires to progress.

### The Post-Devolution Context for Scottish Children's Literature

Matthew Brown, in his chapter on Jackie Kay in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* (Schoene, 2007) contends that there are two rival views of Scotland at the beginning of the twenty-first century. One sees the nation as:

hopelessly schizophrenic, mired in its own bedevilled tartanry and forever salvaging the present through historic erasure, the other asserting it as a cosmopolitan postnation at ease with its contradictory legacies and able to tap its inherent multiplicities for a contemporary self image. (Brown, 2007: 218)

The first of these views derives from a fairly common twentieth century perspective, elucidated by Edwin Muir among others, and supported by Tom Nairn who famously called Scotland ‘the tartan monster’. (Nairn, 1981b: 165) The latter, more recent view, rejects the idea that Scottishness is thwarted by its own contradictions and discontinuities, celebrating instead the nation’s dynamic, multi-dimensional nature that uniquely accommodates a postmodern worldview and allows Scotland to stand as a “beacon for a new and non-threatening civic nationalism, which will be the basis of a new international order.”(Craig, 2002: 21) Accordingly for Craig, the 1997 referendum marked simply, “the political reflection of a Scotland that had already been constituted, a Scotland in union with itself rather than in union with England.” (Craig, 2002: 2) while Lindsay Paterson comments that Scotland can provide a template for other nations to develop a “non-threatening conception of nationalism” one that is tolerant of internal pluralism and which has positive benefits for its citizens, (Paterson, 1994: 180). In these suggestions we have an ambitious and, it could be argued, somewhat presumptuous agenda. However, for mixed race Scottish writers like Jackie Kay, it is post-devolution Scotland’s specific articulation of inclusive citizenship, and the reconstitution of the nation’s symbolic and social space *enabled* by this articulation, which informs much of her writing. In this she is not alone.

It has been posited that this process of re-imagining or re-visioning of Scotland began earlier than the 1997 referendum and in fact much of the energy for it stemmed from the unsuccessful 1979 referendum which, ironically, galvanised a younger generation of Scottish writers into reconsidering issues of identity and how this could and should be represented in their writing. The 1980s brought a new mood and perspective into the work of Scottish writers: a new stirring of Scottish awareness. From this point on, the underlying forces of insistent Scottish identity-making were moving in the direction of synthesis rather than fragmentation. This synthesis permitted multiple perspectives and a plurality of approaches through different genres and it recognised other people’s rights to perceive or imagine Scotland differently. Douglas Gifford emphasises this, citing Edwin Morgan:

In Edwin Morgan’s *Sonnets from Scotland* (1984) this awakening revealed itself as a rediscovered sense of limitless, imaginative possibilities of the *idea* of Scotland, or Scotlands, a matrix of myths, attitudes, possibilities and histories... In these myths, identity is not perceived as an almost magical creation of past communities and their dreams handed on through the collective unconscious, nurtured by a presiding Mother Scotland, but a web of rational and irrational meanings consciously constructed and acknowledged as such, delicately balancing the claims of Scottish and international cultures, and insisting gently on an ultimately more than rational basis for living relationships. (Gifford, 1996: 32)

1980s Scottish Literature was committed to exploring ways of using a recognisably Scottish perspective in viewing the world beyond Scotland. At the same time, it was also committed to re-asserting the validity of Scottish fictional and literary tradition as source material for contemporary creativity. For example, the traditional dualisms of Scottish fiction were now taken and used in parodic and intertextual referentiality. The perspectives of contemporary Scottish writers on landscape, history, legend, tradition and essential ideas of what contemporary Scotland *is* are fundamentally different from the writers of earlier times. Fiction in particular seemed to be attempting to find a more positive version of Scotland, increasingly working in new genres, mingling these in what Gifford calls, “a determined, contemporary eclecticism”, (Gifford, 2006) which simultaneously exploits older Scottish cultural and fictional traditions and breaks them.

As well as Edwin Morgan, figures such as Liz Lochhead and Alasdair Gray began to develop a new style within Scottish fiction broadly resonant with the international trends in magic realism. Gone were the notions of racial essentialism and traditional supernaturalism, and instead a fundamentally new vision emerged of *Scotlands* rather than Scotland—of possibilities and reshapings rather than inheritances, and yet with a residual love of landscape and history which insisted on being addressed on its own terms. At last Scottish literature began to break away from concern with creative ‘wholeness’ and ideals of integrated national identity, and began to accept that the Scots are not alone in living in a fragmented and ethnically hyphenated world, which is likely to become more rather than less subject to these influences.

Although many of these changes are well ventilated with respect to Scottish ‘adult’ literature and authors, growth and development was also taking place in the world of Scottish children’s literature—in fact, even more dynamically. It has already been established in Chapter 1 of this study that there have been more and better books published for children in the last thirty years than in the previous four hundred and there is, noticeably, a very strong Scottish presence among them. Particularly since the 1980s, there has been an explosion in the number of Scottish authors writing for children. I suspect there are a number of reasons for this, including the fact that there was increasing emphasis on including the work of Scottish authors as part of the school curriculum in preceding years, which meant that young writers emerging were more likely to have encountered Scottish literature either at school or at university. Scottish adult authors were beginning to make their mark again internationally and were significant literary prize-winners, thus turning the world gaze to Scotland once more. In the ‘fall-out’ from the unsuccessful

referendum in 1979, the whole issue of Scottishness and Scottish identity was being discussed in a variety of different fora and, perhaps most significant of all, there was a different attitude emerging towards the use of Scots language which encouraged some Scottish authors to risk writing in their ‘home’ voice for mass audiences and to seek publication for their work. Ironically though, the significant strides made in the children’s literature world failed to attract the same widespread attention as its adult counterpart, even though at times the developments in the Scottish children’s literature world preceded corresponding developments in the adult arena.

Scottish fiction, for both adults and children, has always been a highly successful and vital genre of Scottish literature, and has certainly been the most abundant and disputed of all the genres. With growing confidence in Scottish identity, Scottish fiction approached post-devolution Scotland, and incidentally the symbolic marker of the millennium, as a standard bearer for Scottish culture. Some commentators have even suggested that Scottish fiction has supplied the most successful explorations of changing Scottish identities in this vital period, and in a rich assortment of voices and genres. A burning question remains: is post-1997, post-devolution, Scottish *children’s* fiction perceived as being more or less Scottish than what came before?

### The ‘Scottishness’ of Contemporary Children’s Literature

The Scottish academic and cultural studies scholar, Angus Calder opined that:

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, attempts to construct a unitary, organic Scottish culture seem to have been left behind for good, as plurality has taken over.  
(Devine, 2002: 47)

That may be true, but for many, there are still some stark discrepancies between the perceived notions of Scottishness and the country’s twenty-first century’s cultural output: especially from the perspectives of Scots *living* in Scotland and those looking towards us from outside Scotland. However, those discrepancies are beginning to be addressed and Scottish Literature generally is now being interpreted as the expression of a fully modern nation.

The new inventiveness particularly revealed in novelistic writing relates dynamically to the changes taking place in Scottish society at large—not only in reacting to them, but influencing the context in which they take place. In the last decade, Scottish children’s fiction has developed a huge range of voices and narratives that represent a similar range

of both Scottish and international experience. As novels become more self-aware, they introduce a subtle commentary on problems of identity and development. The range of recent Scottish children's fiction includes experiments with new narrative strategies and linguistic inventiveness, for example —Matthew Fitt's and James Robertson's Scots translations of *The Twits* (Dahl, 1980b), *George's Marvellous Medicine* (Dahl, 1981b) and *The Fantastic Mr Fox* (Dahl, 1970a), *The Eejits* (Dahl, 1980a), *Geordie's Mingin Medicine* (Dahl, 1981a) and *The Sleekit Mr Tod* (Dahl, 1970b) and the hugely successful graphic novel version of *Kidnapped*, *Kidnappit* (Stevenson, 1886c). Contemporary Scottish children's fiction insists on the writer's right to reclaim and reshape language to speak for those previously neglected. No longer does the Scottish child have to be 'diglossic' and have one language for school and school literature and another language for home and only sparse literature available in the language of home. New visions of Scotland can be expressed in vibrant modern language that is, nonetheless, distinctively Scottish. Itchy Coo, for example, is a publishing company which produces books written in Scots language especially aimed at children and young people. The imprint was set up in 2002 and is jointly run by writers James Robertson, Matthew Fitt and Edinburgh-based Black and White Publishing. In six years, 27 different titles, including board books for 'very wee bairns' to a major anthology of 600 years of literature in Scots for upper secondary students have been produced. Among the titles are a CD of actors reading extracts from some of the books, a variety of genres including both drama and poetry, and, the first ever Scots language publication in Braille.

At the same time, though, the interest in contemporary Scottish children's literature is not based exclusively on linguistic issues but rather on broader, more pressing thematic concerns. It is a sign of the vitality of modern Scottish children's literature that it is more difficult than ever to restrict it to neat definitions, categories or traditions. Instead we have individual voices expressing themselves with originality and growing self-confidence. Writers are able to transform local experience into global experience but with the added advantage of the inimitable uniqueness of the Scottish voice. After all, when reading the literature of an 'other' culture, what the reader is seeking is the voices of the people who live there. Another, and some might argue, fundamental, change is that with the growing confidence of Scottish writers and of Scottish identity, there is no longer the need to write exclusively using specifically Scottish settings, Scottish concerns or using Scots language. Many, particularly young, writers seem to feel no need for direct involvement in (re)definitions of Scottishness. They are implicitly pushing the idea of Scottishness of identity, place and time, outward in terms of themes and settings—sometimes even entirely

beyond Scotland. Contemporary Scottish children's writers are writing about Africa and Bosnia, their historical fiction is set in Italy and Palestine and covers everything from the Medici to the Great War. Fantasy continues to be a strongly represented genre, but the fantasy is now assured enough to use inter-textuality both as a self-referencing tool and as a means of self-parody. Self-parody should be considered perfectly healthy in the context of a nation, confident and proud of its non-stereotypical national identity and within Scottish children's fantasy there is a rich world of irony, self-mockery, allusion and sophistication.

The Scottish children's writers working today are open to change and development; their ideas come from a diverse range of sources; they cross borders—literal and figurative – and re-shape previous assumptions. To that extent their material is typical of *all* contemporary Scottish fiction. It should be recorded though, that the tradition of caustic analysis of Scottish identity and community remains a feature especially in the work of writers like Catherine MacPhail and James Jauncey. Nor are all recent children's publications only historical or fantasy texts. Urban realism also features in Scottish children's literature. Modern fictions of Highland and Island and even national decline appear in, for example *Saskia's Journey* (Breslin, 2004) and *Soundtrack* (Bertagna, 1999). Regeneration all too often seems impossible in several of these texts, set against the context of ominous global and post-war changes in power relations, both societal and familial, and in social and national identity.

Unlike its adult counterpart, Scottish children's fiction has never really focused regularly on the negative representations of Scottish character. While it may mirror the fascination with doubles, common-sense, hard work and education, recent fiction in particular tends to be encouraging in mood and encompasses a remarkable range and variety. New writing manages the relationship between the urban and the rural in ways that do not require separation but rather can be mutually affirmative. Action is allowed to move without discrimination between the city and the country, privileging neither. Authors, where they use a Scottish setting, are exploiting a wider variety of locations including those that are rarely used, such as the outer islands or the extreme north and south of the country. Contemporary Scottish children's literature is dynamic and adventurous and distinguished by its willingness to see an inclusive rather than an exclusive variety of Scotlands.

Because Scottish children's fiction has never really let go of fantasy or supernatural literature, it has not had to 'recover' it, as has been the case within adult Scottish fiction.

However, the forms that such literature takes have grown and developed and can now manifest themselves as anything from the traditional—exploiting ideas of second sight and symbolic magic—to bringing old legends and myths to life or, indeed, on into weaving traditional supernatural tales into novels. Magic realism—where elements of the marvellous, mythic or dream-like are injected into an otherwise realistic story without breaking the narrative flow—continues to be in vogue internationally and the Scots have always been aficionados of the genre. Modern magic realist fantasy has been exploited by Scottish children's writers such that the bizarre and the impossible allow new perspectives on relevant issues—for example, race, gender and identity, as in Jackie Kay's *Strawgirl* (Kay, 2002) There are also examples of modern variants of Scottish Gothic in Debbi Gliori's comic, six-book series about the Strega-Borgias, *Pure Dead Magic*, (Gliori, 2001) *Pure Dead Wicked*, (Gliori, 2002) *Pure Dead Brilliant*, (Gliori, 2003) *Deep Water*, (Gliori, 2005b) *Deep Trouble* (Gliori, 2005a) and *Deep Fear* (Gliori, 2006). This series demonstrates a solid awareness of older Scottish Gothic novels as well as an ability to bring these completely up to date by including both cinematic and literary intertextual references in a style Gliori makes her own. The humour of these books is probably the single most attractive factor for young readers, along with the local setting that is always intriguing—with the idea that their ancestral pile, Strega Schloss, really might be located in Scotland and under attack from everything from the Mafia to changelings. Frank Roger's *Eyetooth* (Rodgers, 2003) series and Vivian French's *The Robe of Skulls* (French, 2007) offer similar comically macabre interpretations of the genre and widen the access to a younger readership.

Apocalyptic extrapolations set in a future Scotland where all public order has broken down appear from authors such as James Jauncey in *The Witness* (Jauncey, 2007), Julie Bertagna in *Exodus* (Bertagna, 2002) and *Zenith* (Bertagna, 2007) and Catherine Forde in *Tug O' War* (Forde, 2007b). In some cases, Bertagna in particular, concern about international environmental issues such as global warming provides the impetus for futuristic eco-novels set in the dystopian world of a submerged Glasgow, and contributes to the sub-set of Scottish children's fiction deeply critical of contemporary ideologies and world politics:

In the scorching hot summers of the '30s and '40s the oceans rose faster than anyone ever expected. All the predictions had been wrong. And all the political agreements that were supposed to prevent global warming had fallen through... Suddenly it was all too late. Great floods struck, all over the world... Governments began to collapse everywhere. Economies crashed and everything that held society together started to fall apart. (Bertagna, 2002: 195)

Bertagna's is a de-territorialised Scotland deprived of one of its most powerful, traditional and iconic imaginative resources—the landscape—blending into the pluralized, globalised cyberspace of the post-modern age. The 'virtual' domain of the 'cyberwhizz' allows the erosion of traditional divisions between the local and the global, creating a new zone of what Carla Sassi calls *glocal* space (Sassi, 2005: 114-115), where the language of narration represents the only evidence of a nation conceived in territorial, cultural and ethnic terms. The characters' names—Partick, Ibrox, Caledon—provide the 'lost' locations in Bertagna's work, and Mara's resemblance to the 'face in the stone' provides a context for the development and re-working of myth and legend inspired by the city's coat of arms and the story of Glasgow's foundations.

In other cases, the futuristic setting is used simply to provide a narrative context. For example, Catherine Forde in *Tug o' War* (Forde, 2007b) uses the setting of a futuristic Scotland disrupted by terrorist bombs to transpose a story originating in earlier times. The imaginative perspective afforded by a future setting is then applied to allow her to revisit a story from her own domestic past. By this device, Forde is able to put a contemporary twist on a narrative which explores issues of class, appearance, family, family loyalty and personal identity. In this disrupted setting, Molly and her brother John are evacuated to the country, and assigned to different families. Molly's experience is positive, landing with well-to-do Pernilla who has always wanted a child, while John is sent to live with an abusive farmer. In her isolated and pampered setting, Molly experiences indulged attention so that she becomes indifferent to her family's fate and unconcerned with the lack of contact from her brother. Only with John's disappearance and her mother's re-appearance does Molly re-assess her situation, her priorities and her identity and makes a conscious choice in favour of her birth family. Forde refracts her mother's World War II experience of evacuation through this modern re-framing, in order to make comment on the idea of 'belonging', and perhaps also to 'test' the strength of family bonds. Most children will, at some time, speculate about how their lives might have differed had they been born into another family, another country, another time. Evacuation actually affords both Molly and John exposure to this experience—though from opposite ends of the spectrum—and allows each of them to identify and reflect upon the importance of family and family structure as well as deliberately affirming their places within it.

The re-discovery, revaluation and re-shaping of older narrative strategies, themes and magical possibilities suggests that Scottish children's writers are also redefining their relationship to Scottish history and new and postmodern responses to the past are

beginning to appear. Revisionist recreations of traditional material from the Covenanters, in the form of the Wigtown Martyrs in *The Highwayman's Curse* (Morgan, 2007b), to Burke and Hare in *Fleshmarket*, (Morgan, 2003) and the tobacco trade in *Chains* (Hendry, 2000) reveal through deeply humane fiction some of Scotland's most painful past. In the case of *Chains*, Scotland's shameful and largely forgotten part in the slave trade in the eighteenth century is made prominent as part of the narrative. Contemporary Scottish historical children's fiction can also turn outwards as, for example, in the work of Elizabeth Laird in *The Secrets of the Fearless* (Laird, 2005), which starts out in Edinburgh but is principally concerned with the exploits of a young lad, press-ganged into the navy at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, and set mainly outside Scotland. In *Crusade* (Laird, 2007) where the author employs the setting of the Third Crusade in the twelfth century as a background, sharp, implied observations are made on the current uncomfortable relations between Islam and the West. Using the past as a means of tracing the conflict, the writer offers an account of how two young boys of different faiths come to a revised understanding of each other's culture, and presents contemporary readers of both cultures with a history that acknowledges a shared forgotten past of peaceful coexistence and cultural exchange.

Similarly, some of Theresa Breslin's most recent work for young adults includes a significant number of historical fiction texts. *Remembrance* (Breslin, 2002) is set in World War I, and to an extent this novel goes some way towards contextualising Scotland's contribution to this global conflict. Events are seen through the eyes of a group of teenagers from two families with different social backgrounds. Despite the differences, the horror and futility of the War engulfs them, their friends and the whole village community as well as the nation. Staying with the historical theme, Breslin has recently written about two key Renaissance figures in Leonardo Da Vinci in *The Medici Seal* (Breslin, 2006) and, in her latest book, Nostradamus, in *The Nostradamus Prophecy* (Breslin, 2008). Though central to the narratives, neither of these men are the principal protagonists and, as always, relatively humble characters, Matteo, a young boy fleeing from brigands and rescued from drowning by Da Vinci's retinue, and Melisande, the daughter of the King's minstrel, are the central protagonists. It is through the lead protagonists' contact with both these famous men that the reader learns about them and their time. Scottish authors make links between Scottish character and foreign setting through these central figures—even when the narrative is not directly Scottish. Breslin elaborates on this characteristic in a recent article for *Ibbylink*:

The enormous freedom about writing for young people is that I can write a modern urban drama (*Divided City*), or a book set in Medieval Italy (*The Medici Seal*), and as long as the story is satisfying my readers do not mind. Afterwards, people categorise suitability, e.g. *Divided City* is highlighted under terms of ‘boys, reading and citizenship.’

From an early age I was imbued with narrative and a love of language. For me Scotland is the source, not just the literal sense but in the lyrical meaning—the headwaters where the river rises, the spring bubbling underneath the earth. For words have more than a practical use: they carry freight, they resonate at the frequency of the human spirit. Their impact is emotional, a phrase can transmute energy in addition to meaning.

And that is both personal and yet universal. (Breslin, 2007)

These comments are of exceptional importance since they articulate a development Douglas Gifford has singled out with respect to contemporary adult Scottish writing: the disregard of traditional category, type and form. Breslin notes that it is *others* who categorise her work, and this comment could be read pejoratively. Gifford adjudges this disregard as a most intriguing development and a mark of the sheer diversity of production emerging from Scotland in the last decade. Writers of Scottish fiction, for both adults and children, are now engaging with many Scotlands, all of them malleable and negotiable, as well as working confidently outside Scotland altogether.

In this concise review of some of the Scottish children’s fiction from the last decade, is it possible to make a comment about it being more or less Scottish than before? I think probably that cannot be definitively stated. Certainly contemporary authors have shown themselves both aware, and capable, of using traditional material. While making it over in their own style and for their audiences, they remain true to the spirit and intention of the original. Equally, though, they have shown sufficient confidence in their own Scottish identities to feel it unnecessary to be thirled *only* to Scottish material. As Joy Hendry suggests, “There is less and less need to talk about [Scottish identity], because we can *be* it and ....*do* it. (Devine, 2002: 99) Some critics regard such sentiments as ‘neo-nationalist’, but I believe that for many Scottish children’s authors, their Scottish identity is so fundamental to them that they feel no *need* to make it explicit. Their work cannot help but be Scottish because it comes from them. Catherine Forde, for example, would not wish to see her books grouped under the heading of Scottish books in a bookshop. Like Breslin, she would prefer not to be trapped in old, or new, stereotypical definitions, simply in an attempt for Scotland to be recognised as having a distinct culture. (Forde, 2007a)

The *One Scotland* campaign—a major advertising campaign devised by the Scottish Executive in 2002 — was designed to raise awareness in Scotland of racist attitudes and

behaviour and also to celebrate the cultural diversity of Scotland in an era of high population mobility. In fact, following some of the arguments set out in this chapter, the very title of the campaign risks giving the wrong impression seeming to imply an assimilation to the falsely multi-cultural ‘One Scotland’ notion. Rather than flattening out the differences in a rather “Borg-like” manner, and assimilating national distinctiveness, what modern Scotland should be keen to embrace is the idea of plurality and the multiple Scotlands that can now be found wherever we look. And there is evidence that that is happening in areas of culture where politicians rarely foray.

Scotland’s more ‘flexible’ approach to what constitutes a Scots person has already been outlined in Chapter Two of this study: the idea that civic citizenship legislation, which values an individual’s choice of residency as highly as familial descent, seems unproblematic to the majority of Scots. There is already evidence of this in academic and media discussion, where a growing number of Anglo-Scots (and vice versa) are treated as a natural part of the country’s production. Nicola Morgan, herself an “English-Welsh hybrid” married to a Scot has lived in Scotland for more than half her life, and describes a Scottish author thus, “A Scottish author is simply one who either lives here or doesn’t but is Scottish by birth or blood.” (Morgan, 2007a) Morgan goes on to argue that trying to identify what a Scottish book *is* is only difficult if you confuse Scottish with ‘local’,

believing that they must taste strongly of haggis and heather, be set in Scotland, tackle Scottish issues, or feature Scottish characters. These things are often present but are not necessary.

Inevitably all authors bring their background, language, world-view and experience to their writing. So the experience of Scottishness and all it involves—politics, history, personality, landscape, weather, taste, smell—all meld into our books. But the flavour does not have to be strong, nor is it defining. Sometimes it is entirely undetectable. (Morgan, 2007a)

Morgan quite forcibly makes the same point as Breslin—that even if stories are spotlighting Scotland, they are first and foremost *stories*, and stand or fall on that alone. She makes the point that authors may set their stories in Scotland, or China, or Russia, but that does not necessarily make them *about* Scotland or China or Russia. She comments that while Catherine Forde’s characters speak with a “raw Scottish voice” they speak to all modern teenagers. Morgan also does concede that in having the Scottish literary heritage ‘available’ to them, she and others like her are able to join a rich tradition of story telling of which Scotland is, rightly, proud.

Another ‘Scot by residency’ is J.K. Rowling. Her hugely popular Harry Potter stories have grown very clearly out of the Scottish Arts Council’s literary support system to have an impact world wide. Her novels speak for an acceptance of diversity and compassion articulated through Harry’s own moral growth to maturity through self-doubt, impatience and arrogance. The wizarding world he inhabits also seems to be struggling for positive values in the face of snobbery, intolerance, authoritarianism, fascism and racism. The values Rowling embraces and the conflict in her world between good and bad clearly follow fundamental Scottish novelistic themes. (Gifford, 2006) Rowling creates a new social ambience in which values, recognisably rooted in Scottish culture, are tested and reasserted in accessible and relatively undemanding forms that have brought new readerships to the modern novel. Her subversion of the twentieth-century boarding-school children’s novel has restored that form into creative and commercial levels previously unthinkable; another example of Scottish fiction’s breaking of traditional boundaries. Rowling is a literary phenomenon—from Scotland, and in different ways her work exploits that fact.

Vibrant narrative flair breathes life and poignancy into the places and people of Scotland, most especially in young adult fiction—both classic and contemporary. The land is alive, the atmosphere tangible and both can make a significant impact on readers’ lives. Sara Grady, Children and Education Programme Director for the Edinburgh International Book Festival, and not herself a Scot, has said that,

Scotland will steal your heart when the chorus of outstanding voices writing today intricately renders it in all its multitude of facets..... The tradition of great literature for young people has thrived in Scotland for past generations, and I have every faith it will continue to do so for readers and writers to come. Indeed, the Scotland of stories is constantly changing and ceaselessly captivating. (Grady, 2007)

From all of this, as with so many issues in literature, there is indeed a strong case for arguing that current Scottish children’s literature is more Scottish than before—but then there is also evidence for insisting that this Scottishness has acquired an infinitely more cosmopolitan character than was possible in earlier generations.

Rather than leaving the discussion here and in order to bring this study to a conclusion, the diversity, momentum and dynamism of the current situation for Scottish Children’s Literature is perhaps best captured by revisiting some of the thematic and structural discussions undertaken above in Chapters 3 - 6. A means of achieving this would be a close analysis of some post-devolution texts, thus contextualising the arguments with

reference to some recent literary productions. Given that previous chapters have dealt with texts using island locations, historical texts and fantasy texts, I propose to examine some post-devolution exemplars in each of these genres. In choosing to focus on this group of texts, I should make it clear that these are by no means the only genres of Scottish Children's Literature being published currently. For example, there are multiple texts being published by Scottish authors which could be categorised as 'urban realism', but this genre has not featured prominently in the earlier part of the study and so will not be considered in depth at the present time.

### Post-devolution texts

The Braw website, a network of Scottish children's authors and illustrators, [www.scottishbooktrust.com/writers-and-publishers/writers-for-children](http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/writers-and-publishers/writers-for-children) has records of over twelve hundred publications for children and young adults since devolution in 1997 which can be categorised as Scottish. Accordingly, there is a wide selection of material from which to choose examples for this section. For reasons which will be elucidated as part of the discussion, I have selected the following novels for consideration: *Saving Finnegan* (Grindley, 2007) will be used to explore the island trope; *Remembrance* (Breslin, 2002) as an example of a recent historical novel and *The Wings of Ruksh* (Forbes, 2007) as an exemplar of recent developments in the Scottish children's fantasy novel.

An extended discussion of Scottish children's island fiction already featured as part of Chapter 3 of this study. There, a number of key points were made about the usefulness of the island trope in consideration of matters of both identity and nationhood. In particular the island trope was noted as being an exceptionally effective motif for considering the *nation* as an island. Using Gillian Beer's comments about islands providing "the perfect form of [national] cultural imaginings" (Beer, 1990) as a stimulus, I have selected *Saving Finnegan* (Grindley, 2007) as a text which uses an island setting and which has been published since devolution. Closer examination of the novel will highlight how it both elucidates essential aspects of the island trope and how it can be developed.

### *Saving Finnegan*

Sally Grindley is not a Scottish author by either birth or residence. *Saving Finnegan* (Grindley, 2007) is dedicated to the islanders of Coll but the author reports her inspiration for this novel was a newspaper report about a whale beached on a Scottish island and how the islanders dealt with it. This novel is her *imagined* version of how events might have

unfolded. (The incidences of whales being marooned on Scottish beaches is less unusual than might be thought. Just recently, 6<sup>th</sup> August 2008, a whale was stranded in the shallow waters off the coast of Inverness and subsequently died.)

Waking unusually early one morning, Holly, the central character, leaves her house to investigate a strange shape lying on the beach. To her amazement she finds a whale has been stranded there. Soon Holly is spearheading the efforts to save the whale. Unfortunately the whale is too ill and distressed to survive so Holly's efforts turn to a determination to keep the whale's carcass on the island. Things turn out to be less simple than she would like and the small island community is divided over what course of action to take. Holly finds herself engaged in a battle that throws up some unlikely friends and enemies. Grindley's recognisable style of theme-based narratives interweaves the important theme of death within the central development of the plot and examines how young people in particular learn to deal with it.

The title of this book is itself worthy of comment. Finnegan is the name Holly gives to the whale, initially as a means of establishing a form of 'ownership' over the whale since she was the first person to discover it. Secondly, naming the whale instantly personalises it and makes the community's involvement in its fate that much more immediate. Her choice of name proves, coincidentally, to be inspired since Holly's research reveals the beached animal to be a Fin whale. The Fin whale, Gaelic name 'Muc-an-scadain', is the second largest animal after the blue whale. The title of the novel is a clever one in that *Saving Finnegan* has many resonances with other phrases. 'Save the Whale' has been a slogan used in environmental advertising campaigns over the years and is the name of a wildlife organisation that focuses on educating the public about whales. The film *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) directed by Stephen Spielberg, was set during the D-Day invasion of Normandy in World War II. Its memorable opening sequence is of carnage on the beaches and the remainder of the film is about the hunt for the one remaining Ryan brother in an attempt to ensure his survival. Finally, in *Finnegan's Wake*, the comic Irish ballad made popular in the music halls in the 1850s—not to be confused with Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939), though it does provide Joyce with one of Book 1's central plot elements—an Irish hod-carrier falls to his death after an evening overindulging in drinking whiskey. At his wake a fight breaks out and whiskey is spilled on his corpse and he is miraculously revived. His comic resurrection becomes symbolic of the universal cycle of life. Equally the play on the word 'wake' could connote, as in Joyce, both a passing and a rising. In *Saving Finnegan* the whale dies (the passing) and the islanders' independence awakens, so

the symbolism could be considered consistent with the key texts it self-consciously references. These allusions to both history and popular culture may not be immediately obvious to young readers, but, particularly if this is a text used in schools, careful directed reading and encouragement of individual research could uncover these links and resonances.

The community of Colmer Island initially come together to try to keep the whale alive so that it can eventually return to the sea when the tide comes in. When the Local Councillor arrives to view the beast his immediate reaction is to contact the mainland for advice. This step causes the islanders to react:

‘Can’t trust us to deal with the problem ourselves, can he?’ grumbled Curley Lockett who, with his wife, provided a taxi service for the islanders. ‘Always has to check with the mainland.’

‘Aye, that’s right,’ grimaced Betty Lockett. ‘Like we’re a bunch of dimwits.’

‘I expect he just thinks he’s doing his job,’ Holly’s mother observed, always one to try and keep the peace.

‘Doing his job my foot,’ joined in Jean Westcott the landlady of the village pub. ‘Licking the boots of authority more like.’ (p 23)

This is the first instance of a recurring theme in this book concerning island autonomy, authority and responsibility and designates the islanders as rather ‘child-like’ in that they must like children, seek permission for the parent, or in this case the mainland. The islanders are thus in a subaltern position, and dependent for authority on their larger, though disconnected mainland neighbour.

Despite their best efforts the whale does die, leaving the islanders divided about how its remains should be disposed of. Opposing viewpoints are articulated by Ma Meldrew, a crotchety old lady, and Peter Marshall, the owner of the local hotel. Councillor Hodson’s intention to contact the mainland to arrange disposal of the carcass causes Peter Marshall to argue that the whale could be a useful tourist attraction. The Councillor counters this with concern about the health hazards it poses. But it is Ma Meldrew’s reaction that throws the opposing views into sharp relief:

Old Ma Meldrew suddenly sprang to life. ‘We don’t need any more tourists ploughing up our roads and leaving their litter all over the place.’

‘You couldn’t be more wrong, Margaret, if I may say so,’ argued Peter Marshall.

‘It’s the money those tourists spend that helps to give us some sort of independence.’

‘Poppycock,’ retorted Old Ma Meldrew. ‘It might keep you and your fancy hotel going, but it’s fishing and farming that pays for everything else.’

‘I’ve got to defend Peter here,’ Holly’s father jumped in. ‘We all benefit from the money tourists spend, especially now that our fishing is restricted. The more tourists the better, I say.’

‘Pah!’ spat Old Ma Meldrew. ‘Your arguments won’t wash with me. If I never saw another tourist on this island, I would stand on the top of those rocks and yell Hallelujah. And the sooner that whale’s got rid of the better, if you want my opinion.’ (p 65-66)

This argument, which develops to involve most of the island inhabitants over the following weeks, becomes increasingly tense, and delineates perfectly the friction between the settled and resistant on the island and other more receptive and visionary inhabitants. There are some quite striking parallels with *Katie Morag and the New Pier* (Hedderwick, 1993) discussed earlier in this study. There too some of the island inhabitants see the development of a new pier as heralding unwanted changes. The ferryman for instance sees it as a threat to his livelihood, and Grannie Island, is resistant to the idea of increased tourism and what she sees as a fundamental change to her way of life. In both these texts the island acts as a microcosm of wider society. There will always be people reluctant to change from the security of what is known and those who are willing to take risks in order to progress. However, this miniature argument also makes the point that the consequences of any decision have to be weighed carefully before action is taken.

The strength of *Saving Finnegan* lies in the fact that the author balances the arguments quite carefully so that, while there is always the sense that young readers will support the islanders and their quest to keep the whale, the eventual outcome is not a completely foregone conclusion. Nor is the argument only a two-sided one. Other islanders weigh in on the side of keeping the whale. The local Headmaster supports it because of the widespread interest and excitement it has caused for the island children and how they have engaged with it from both an environmental and educational perspective. The children also prove willing to compromise. Realising that the decaying flesh must be disposed of, they begin to consider keeping only the skeleton of the whale. They are also adamant about their continuing involvement in the decision-making process and this demonstrates both a growing maturity in the children and also a contemporary acknowledgement of the agency of children and their rights as citizens. I believe that Grindley in her concern with, for example, tourism, environmental awareness and the development of the characteristics of good citizenship among the young people of the island, is self-consciously re-working the island genre with specific reference to modern preoccupations

The islanders embark on a pro-active poster and publicity campaign and Holly starts and administers a petition that eventually results in a huge number of signatures. The islanders also believe that the Law will actually help them. They find out about something called

*Guidance for Dealing with Stranded Royal Fish.* Ironically, as a result of devolution, in July 1999, the responsibility for dealing with all ‘Royal Fish’ in Scotland was devolved to the Scottish Government. On behalf of the Crown, the Scottish Government Marine Directorate has first claim on all ‘Royal Fish’ found stranded dead on Scottish shores. In Scotland, the monarch's property right inheres in those whales too large to be pulled to land by a "wain pulled by six oxen"; in practice, this is interpreted as requiring the whales to be over 25 feet long. Authority to collect them on behalf of the monarch is given to the Scottish Government Marine Directorate. The islanders argue however, that:

‘We may be a small island, separated from the mainland, but we are governed by the mainland and have to accept its dictates, like it or not. In this case, we don’t like it and are prepared to fight our corner.’ Big Jim paused while the crowd cheered. ‘You can argue all you like that the whale belongs to the Crown. That may be correct, but so does this island belong to the Crown. All we are asking is that the whale be left on Crown property here, where it was found, by the sea, rather than in some concrete building in the middle of a city.’ (p 148)

Despite their vigorous campaign, the islanders are unsuccessful and the whale skeleton is destined for a heritage museum on the mainland. There, the stripped bones of the whale will be preserved in their ‘primitive’ form behind glass, able only to be visited and viewed but not ‘owned’ by the islanders. This reduces the whale to an artifact, and while any exhibit may reference the fact that the whale was beached on their island, the islanders’ involvement becomes peripheral. In cultural terms, consider the factual example of the Lewis Chessmen. These Viking chessmen, some incidentally, made of whale’s teeth, were found on the Hebridean Island of Lewis in 1831. (The Outer Hebrides were ruled by Norway in the twelfth century.) After briefly being exhibited on Lewis, the collection was sold and the majority of the pieces —82— are on display in the British Museum in London with a further 11 on display in the Royal Museum in Edinburgh. Following the SNP victory in the 2007 Scottish elections, a dispute erupted over the most appropriate place for the chessmen to be displayed, and there were calls for them to be returned to where they were found. The people of Lewis do not share the need to have the chessmen permanently returned to their island, though they have made it known that the opportunity to borrow and exhibit them in the local museum for a short period would be welcomed. However, they also indicate that, proportionally, there should be rather more chessmen in Edinburgh than London. In turn this issue is reminiscent of a very long running battle that has waged between the Greeks and the British concerning the ‘theft’ of the Elgin Marbles from the Parthenon.

All this may seem very far from a Scottish children’s island novel, and even remote from

issues of culture and identity. But these are escalating examples of a much wider cultural argument raised in a recently published book, *Who Owns Antiquity: Museums and the Battle over our Ancient Heritage*. (Cuno, 2008) Cuno, the curator of the Metropolitan Museum in Chicago, argues that all consequential culture becomes international, and all cultures should be shared with the world, not hoarded for reasons of skewed nationalism (or out of a desire for tourist revenues—a very pertinent issue in this novel) in places where the artifacts were made or found. Retentionist cultural property laws, are intent on keeping what they identify as national cultural property within the country for the nation, for the sake of affirming and strengthening claims on a national identity; a unique cultural identity identifiable by its forms and practices, coincident in reach with the extent of its *current* political boundaries and that confirms a particular kind of identity on the people of the nation. Cuno argues that it is in the nature of nation building to subject the past and the present to the rigours of ‘identity control’ and museums are used as a means of enforcing that control. What I find intriguing about these ideas in connection with the children’s text being discussed is, that it is the last-mentioned argument which seems to be being played out in microcosm in *Saving Finnegan*. I find it noteworthy that a children’s author should choose the island trope to rehearse some of these arguments.

In addition to her anxiety about the whale and its disposal, Holly also has to contend with personal issues. One of her favourite hens, Mrs. Frillyknickers, is killed by a fox and the family dog has to be put down because he has cancer. This causes Holly to reflect on death and ask, “Why does everything have to die? (p 134) For Holly, the fight to keep the whale carcass on the island has become symbolic of all the things she cannot control and she seems compelled to focus on keeping up the pressure.

‘But it’s so unfair,’ Holly cried. ‘Why won’t they listen to us?’ she could feel the sadness welling up inside her, sadness not just for the whale that had landed on their beach and died there, but for Trog who would never chase another crab across the sand, and even for Mrs. Frillyknickers whose skedaddling days were over. There was nothing left of any of them now, just memories that dimmed with every passing day. She had put all her hopes into saving Finnegan. It had given her something to hold on to, something tangible to fight for and, if they had won, his skeleton would have been a daily reminder not just of the most amazing few hours of her life, but of everything she cared for. (p237)

She is only pacified when she discovers that her father and some of the other islanders have a plan to thwart the removal of the whale carcass, though they refuse to share this with the children for fear that one of them lets something slip. Again, in an ironic twist, the adults of the island who have been till then so supportive of the children’s involvement in the campaign, keep them out at the very last minute. It could be argued that their protective

instincts have kicked in, but then could it not also be argued that the mainland is being protective of the island?

The islanders' plan is initially successful, resulting in the team tasked with moving the whale to the mainland having to leave with an incomplete skeleton: the jawbones are restored to them shortly afterwards. The islanders miss the whale whom they feel had become part of the island landscape, and thus in a strange way had 'belonged' to them. For many, it had become the symbol of their freedom to decide their own fate, and they lost it. The novel ends with the news that Holly's campaign may have had some effect after all and the island is to get a new entrance to the ferry landing, with a replica of the whale's jawbones featuring as an essential component. Holly's petition and the lengths that the islanders were willing to go to to keep the whale had impressed the relevant people. There is irony in the fact that the islanders are to receive a 'replica' skeleton, presumably made from some artificial material in place of the authentic bones. This "perfect reproduction" is to form part of the new entrance to the ferry landing and so readers are presented with an image of the entrance to the island rather like the entrance to a theme park, where the 'heritage' is manufactured rather than real.

This novel has things to say about the local and the particular, and uses the island setting as the means to do so. Scottish twenty-first century identity is refracted through the way islands are imagined in twenty-first century Scottish children's literature. The novel interrogates insularity and liminality, and the conclusion seems to be that no island is 'safe' from modernity. *Saving Finnegan* plays out aspects of community and otherness and asks questions about location and belonging. The novel uses real and symbolic boundaries of the island to allow the island inhabitants to consider society and their place in it. This is a novel about people—particularly Holly—finding their place and their identity within their own community and in the larger community of Britain. In using the beaching of a whale this book also raises environmental and global issues. Islands are metonyms for nations, surrounded by ideas of globalisation, holding on to tradition and identity, but sometimes these can seem reduced to limited facsimiles. Island stories provide an environment for young readers to explore and interrogate such concepts in a contemporary Scottish setting, and perhaps even to widen out their consideration of the issues with reference to more universal situations.

## *Remembrance*

I now wish to move on to considering a recent Scottish children's fiction historical text. In this genre there is an astonishing range of texts from which to choose. The historical novel, which in Scotland has never really fallen out of favour, seems to be in the middle of a particularly productive period. Alongside well established contemporary authors of the genre such as Theresa Breslin, Nicola Morgan and Elizabeth Laird, exciting new authors have emerged including people like K.M. Grant who has written a trilogy about the Crusades and a darkly comic novel called *How the Hangman Lost his Heart* (Grant, 2007) set in the early eighteenth century. Moreover, even the well-established authors have moved away from their overtly Scottish material to include the Crusades, the Napoleonic Wars and medieval Italy. However, I have chosen for a closer reading, Theresa Breslin's 2002 novel of the First World War *Remembrance*. Other than J.J. Bell's 1915 novel *Wee MacGreegor Enlists*, I have been unable to find any other Scottish children's novel of the First World War. Bell's novel is the story of Wee MacGreegor's services in a Scottish regiment and captures some of the early enthusiasm for the War. Breslin's is a very different novel. Told from a twenty-first century research perspective, and, largely, from a woman's perspective, it has particular relevance this year in the ninetieth anniversary of the end of the 'war to end all wars'. In a recent conversation, Breslin indicated that it was the absence of Scottish material referred to previously, and indeed the paucity of books for young people about World War I in *British* children's literature (I have only been able to trace six novels before Breslin's work was published), that motivated her to write it. Breslin believed that the new millennium was the right time for this book, and her purpose was to try to show the many, complex aspects of the experience of war, including its impact on those at home. Moreover, the first World War had particular consequences for Scotland in terms of the loss of life: Scotland lost four times as many soldiers per capita of population than any other part of the country. In terms of the impact on industrial society and social systems, Scotland was never the same after the end of the war.

*Remembrance* tells the story of the First World War, starting in 1915, through the eyes of a group of young people from two Scottish families from very different backgrounds. Francis and Charlotte Armstrong-Barnes live in the 'big house' in the village of Stratharden with their widowed mother. John Malcolm and Maggie Dundas are twins and along with their brother Alex are the children of the village shopkeeper. To date, the war has been relatively distant for the young people, but from this point on they are both

literally and metaphorically transported from the relatively secure world of youth to adulthood through their experiences of the war. John Malcolm, aged 17 and his 14-year-old brother Alex are swayed by patriotic propaganda and cannot wait to be able to enlist. Francis on the other hand, already a university graduate with pacifist leanings, struggles with his conscience while discerning from the newspapers the senselessness of combat. Charlotte, at age 15, is already volunteering as a nurse at the cottage hospital while Maggie helps her father in the village shop. Charlotte and John Malcolm have begun a tentative romance, while Maggie is showing all the early tendencies of being a rather precocious feminist, “Do you think it is fair and right that a woman is not treated equal to a man in this society today?” (p. 20) “... was she unconsciously following her mother’s behaviour in deferring intellectual activities and decisions to the males in the house?” (p 64) The first part of the book is told largely from Charlotte’s point of view and as well as showing her nursing progress, also reflects on the notion that what is and is not considered ‘respectable’, for young women particularly, is changing rapidly.

Maggie, against her father’s wishes, gets a job in a munitions factory, and in January of 1916 Charlotte moves from the cottage hospital to a military hospital in Edinburgh. John Malcolm enlists as soon as he turns eighteen in November 1915 and is killed on the 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916 on the Somme in his first engagement of the war. Almost every house in the village receives notification of a death of one of their boys at this time. After John Malcolm’s death, Francis feels morally obliged to enlist even though he disagrees with the war, and begins a correspondence with Maggie. It is through these letters and the earlier ones from John Malcolm that the author gives a detailed and realistic picture of trench warfare in France and Belgium and the conditions in factories and hospitals in Britain and France. No detail is too unpleasant to be included. Maggie’s inadvertent exposure to a book about war wounds results in her decision to leave the munitions factory and volunteer as a nurse with Charlotte. They both serve in the Scottish Women’s Hospital Group in Rienne in France, while Alex steals a birth certificate and enlists while underage: Francis is eventually invalided out of the army with battle fatigue. In a final twist, Alex makes it home at the end of the war relatively unscathed, after mistakenly being listed as killed in action. The novel ends with three of the five young people from the start of the book standing at the village war memorial as the names of the dead are read out: the names of their family and friends.

Breslin’s novel particularly takes the opportunity to make the case for solidarity across traditional boundaries. As Maggie recognises,

in times like this there was no difference in class or wealth or religion or race; that people cried, and wept, and broke with sorrow—in Britain and in France, in Belgium and Russia, and in Germany too. (Breslin, 2002: 289-290)

Global sectarianism and hostility have led to violent mass extermination regardless of class or creed. A major concern in *Remembrance* is the irrevocable loss of the world's innocence, not only symbolised by the death of countless young men, but portrayed through the experiences of characters barely out of childhood, who had to live their lives in a world gone mad. As one of the hospital porters observes when Charlotte reports for duty at the military hospital,

‘This damned war has taken our children’s innocence,’ he muttered as he returned to his post, and picked up a newspaper. ‘That one should be at home playing at nursing her dollies. She’s too young to see what she’s going to see in the wards.’ (ibid, 74)

Breslin stresses this again by giving these words to Francis at the end of the novel,

there is something quite terrible about the death of so many young people...By the end of the War, more than half the army was under nineteen years old. The old die and we are accustomed to that... But the death of youth denies us what might have come. Our present is obliterated and our future altered irrevocably. (ibid, 292)

*Remembrance* calls for global tolerance as an antidote to conflict and war, and there is never any doubt about Breslin's own position, unequivocally mediated through one of her central characters, “Personally I think it is those who try to justify this war who should be locked up in an insane asylum.” (ibid, 292)

This novel can work as a kind of cross-generational forum enabling a new generation to break the cycle of destruction by hearing and paying attention to the young, yet war-fatigued voices of their ancestors who either fought at the front or nursed those wounded and traumatised by war. Breslin's metaphor of lost youth is succinctly encapsulated in the novel's epigraph, taken from “Suicide in the Trenches” (Sassoon, 1918), depicting “the hell where youth and laughter go”; correspondingly, at the novel's close Sassoon's “Aftermath” asks her readers, “Have you forgotten yet... Look up, and swear by the green of the spring that you'll never forget.” (ibid, 304) For this author, to forget is to re-enact and thus become guilty of the same mindless madness of violence of the conflict itself.

In her original planning for the book, Theresa Breslin was aware that the subject was an overwhelming one to address, so she initially decided to focus on one character, a boy who ran away to join up while underage. It was during her preparatory research, which she undertakes as one might expect with a former librarian's skill and determination, that she

realised there was far more than one story to tell. There is a plethora of material to consult about World War I including film and sound archives. Breslin began with background material from those who took part in the war, the letters of women that nursed the soldiers as well as historical texts and poems. She then used military histories to deliberately pick key events and locations where she wanted to place the characters—Ypres, the first day of the battle of the Somme, Passchendaele, afterwards consulting war diaries for specific details. Breslin records that sometimes the strangest snippets of information provided the content for the storyline or for character development. She cites in particular a useful article in *The War Illustrated* which contained information about the wartime progress in medicine vis a vis the treatment of typhoid tetanus with new antiseptics. Information gleaned from this gave her the substance for a conversation between two of the main characters, Francis and Maggie, which then leads them to discuss the industrialization of war. [www.theresabreslin.co.uk/remembranceresearch.htm](http://www.theresabreslin.co.uk/remembranceresearch.htm)

Both the beauty and the difficulty of such a structured approach is that, while it allows the author to tackle many issues that contemporary audiences regard as important, especially with the benefit of hindsight, it can sometimes produce the effect of an educational text lightly wrapped in narrative form. This book, for instance, deals with the conflict between those who believed the war was necessary and those who believed that such colossal losses could not be justified; the optimism and naivety of the troops as they marched to war contrasted with the reality of the conflict and the carnage of the trenches and battlefields: the conflict between jingoism and pacifism. It also raises issues of the experience of those who stayed at home and how the war impacted on the lives of women and their sense of independence, as well as issues of equality of the sexes. It shows people questioning how they lived their lives, expressed themselves and interacted with other people. It depicts how World War I weakened the class system that had dominated British society till that time, because nobody was unaffected by its implications. Breslin uses the growing friendship and budding romance of Maggie, the daughter of the village shopkeeper, and Francis, the son of the leading family of the area, to illustrate this. Maggie's opinion of Francis radically alters over the course of the book from seeing him as a rather effete snob with little in common with her. As a result of her correspondence with him she finds that he challenges her, educates her and trusts her. He more than anyone makes her think and makes her see her potential.

She had bonded with a person who sought to understand her. Francis had made her see that horizons were for going beyond. She had learned from him, and unbelievably he from her. (Breslin, 2002: 238)

For this couple, the war and the way society has changed means that their relationship which previously would have been frowned upon has rather more chance of success.

Breslin also uses the war and its consequences to make comment on how the immediate prospect of battle affects issues of personal, family and national identity. On the morning that John Malcolm and his comrades are waiting for the signal to go into battle he is completely focused, he has lost the “sense of dislocation” he experienced when he first reached the trenches. The imminent prospect of action has the effect of fully focusing his mind.

This morning he was clearly fixed in time and space, with a deep sense of identity and purpose. He stood with the absolute firmness of spirit that comes with certitude of resolve, his heart singing with confidence. (ibid, 127)

It is all the more ironic that John Malcolm is killed during this engagement. At the end of the book Maggie, his sister, also reflects on what his loss will mean to any family she may have in the future:

‘I was thinking that if I have children,’ said Maggie, ‘they will never know John Malcolm as their uncle. My twin brother will become the one who died in the Great War. His personal identity has been taken from him. He will be their mother’s brother, the one who was killed at the Somme.’ (ibid, 294)

As a classroom teacher initially reading this book with intention of using it with pupils, it immediately presents as a ‘gift’ with lots of opportunities for cross-curricular links with history, geography, politics, literature, and even languages. Breslin’s masterly characterisation also means that it lends itself to close literary study. To that extent it could possibly be seen as deliberately being written with the intent of appealing to the school market. What saves it from this is the fact that the novel is harrowingly pertinent in dealing with grief, and this is described with poignant delicacy. Breslin also resists the temptation to turn an involving and moving story into a polemic: her beautiful prose gives the harrowing sights and sounds of war a human edge. Her central intention is simply to tell a good story.

Historical novels include factual events as well as fictional ones, and there is no single opinion about how the elements of history and literature should be combined. In Breslin’s case she invents a ‘psyche’ for her characters and this is where the fiction begins. In this respect *Remembrance* does appear to emerge from a rather ‘older’ literary tradition associated with the Great War—that of the ‘master narrative’—in which characters move from innocence through suffering to trauma and remembrance. Breslin does not, for

example, adopt a postmodern approach, which would suggest that to re-write or represent the past in fiction and history is, in both cases, to open it up to the present, to prevent it from being “conclusive and teleological.” (Hutcheon, 1996) Material that is dubbed ‘historiographical metafiction’ revolves around actual historical events, as this book does, but it is much more critical of the ‘given’ and so far ‘accepted’ historical facts and questions their validity as the only truth and the only explanation of even seemingly ‘settled’ historical episodes such as World War I. *Remembrance* does not imply that there is any other way that World War I could be perceived or interpreted. Though the story does concern multiple characters, using a third person narrative style precludes representing multiple points of view. *Remembrance* is, of course, one of only a handful of novels centrally concerning World War I for children and young people, but as such it exists as part of a wider, influential corpus of war fiction. Further, it also fits in to a particular tradition of writing about World War I—the ‘lost innocence’ tradition. By contrast, in recent adult literature—for example in Pat Barker’s *Regeneration* trilogy, (1990-1995) or in Sebastian Faulks’ *Birdsong* (1993)—the ‘lost innocence’ topos has been seriously interrogated. The attitudes and feelings about the Great War articulated in Breslin’s book portray only one possible imaginative treatment of the war, albeit the most commonly known one. There were those who believed at the time, that this war was completely necessary and whose commitment to that belief was never shaken even in the face of the growing atrocity. Others, H.G.Wells, for example, had little doubt even from the very early stages that the war would be a long drawn out affair and most definitely not ‘over by Christmas’. And for some participants, the comradeship they experienced in conditions of extremity, also afforded them the relative freedom to explore issues of class, identity, sexuality, gender and race beyond the repressive gaze of early twentieth century society—areas which Pat Barker explores but which Breslin does not even mention. The imagery of 1914 innocence, in particular, has been questioned in recent fictional renderings of the Great War experience, as the complexity and conflictedness of Edwardian Britain, and its late imperial culture, have been seriously reassessed and integrated into a literary framework that requires a more subtle reading than has previously been undertaken.

There are, of course, several possible explanations for the stance taken by Breslin, chief among which is the nature of her intended audience. I am confident that Breslin would not assume a very detailed level of knowledge or understanding of World War I from her readership. To that end it could be argued that she was right to focus on conventions of ‘historical fiction’ as defined in Chapter 4; fiction that does not include real historical figures interacting with the protagonists, but which never-the-less tries to ‘bring history to

life'. For that reason perhaps, the 'broad brush' approach adopted by Breslin which does *not* interrogate the 'lost innocence topos', may be considered appropriate. Equally, because of the likely age of the readership, Breslin may have considered it inappropriate to introduce relatively contentious issues such as sexuality into her narrative—through that in itself is hugely ironic given that the central issue of the novel is global warfare. In adopting the approach she does, Theresa Breslin certainly does not seem keen to encourage her readers to read 'against' the text, or against the prevailing 'literary' view of the Great War most powerfully associated with the canon of Great War poetry. Perhaps that is a response that teachers could and should encourage, if for no other reason than to ensure that the undoubted achievements of *Remembrance* are set in the context of a specific genre of war literature.

World War I was a major contributor to the changing profile of Scotland, though that change occurred over a time period that included the Great War and extended beyond it. Once the workshop of the Empire and an important source of manpower for the colonies, after the war Scotland became something of a backwater and some of the progress that had been made, particularly in terms of progress towards devolution, was halted. Emigration from Scotland increased hugely as morale slumped in the face of economic stagnation and decline. The country had paid a disproportionately high price in terms of casualties, as a result of the larger number of volunteers and the use of the Scottish battalions as shock troops in the fighting on the Western Front and Gallipoli. (Royle, 2006) I believe it is vitally important that young readers have access to such information and, for young Scottish readers to be made aware of their own history. It is through discussion and critique of novels narrating the truth of historical events that pleasure accrues and young readers become critically conscious of how the world beckons their attention. A text such as *Remembrance* furnishes opportunities to broaden thinking and provides young adult readers with contexts in which to explore complex answers to questions about their own experience and that of the wider world. In particular, this novel affords young Scottish readers the chance to acknowledge the contribution of the Scots to the war effort and the high price that was paid.

It has been alleged that young adults' literary skills are not keeping pace with the social demands of living in an information age. By asking young adults to read with us as we "read the word and the world" (Macedo & Freire, 1987), they both enter and add to these conversations. It is in the literature that they read and in their responses and subsequent discussions that young readers have the potential to investigate themselves and their

connection to the world and this is why books such as Theresa Breslin's have such far-reaching implications.

### *The Wings of Ruksh*

The final book I wish to consider is *The Wings of Ruksh* (Forbes, 2007). Its author, Anne Forbes, was born in Edinburgh and divides her time between Scotland and Kuwait. This is her second novel and the second in a series which began with *Dragonfire* (Forbes, 2006) and the latest of which is *The Underground City* (Forbes, 2008). Like the novels in the previously discussed categories, there were many possible choices of fantasy novel that could have been included. My reason for selecting this text is that I believe it to be a particularly fine example of the self-assured intertextuality already mentioned in this chapter. Its ability to parody previous Scottish fantasy fiction demonstrates clearly the ironic, self-mocking allusion and sophistication that is increasingly a feature of Scottish children's fantasy fiction, and as such it could be considered a fully 'postmodern' fantasy novel.

The first novel in the series introduces the MacLean family, Clara and Neil and their father John, who all know about the mysterious fairy people the MacArthurs who live under Arthur's seat in Edinburgh. This novel tells how the MacLeans become involved with the MacArthurs —fairies who can shape-shift, Arthur the dragon and a group of magicians including, Lord Rothlan, who initially seems a villain but turns out not to be, Prince Kalman who really is a villain, and Amgarad a magnificent eagle who serves Lord Rothlan. The story involves the dragon being restored to Nessie his 'lady-love' in Loch Ness and an enchantment being broken so that Lord Rothlan's fortunes are restored. The book concludes with one unsolved mystery: the Sultan's Crown has been spirited away by Prince Kalman and he has also disappeared. This first book introduces many of the traditional Scottish fantasy elements including the fairies living under ground and the fact that they can shape-shift. There are kelpies and goblins, and the magical worlds can be traversed relatively easily both ways by humans and magical people. However, the interesting aspect that emerges in this writer's work is the way she combines Scottish traditional elements with Middle Eastern magical tradition and incorporates elements like a powerful Ottoman Sultan of Turkey and magic carpets. The second book, *The Wings of Ruksh* takes up the unfinished element of the story concerning the Sultan's Crown and further develops the links with Middle Eastern magic.

The children, their father and Sir James Erskine, a central character from the first book, are spirited away to the court of Sulaiman the Red, the Sultan of Turkey, through magic mirrors in an Edinburgh restaurant called 'The Sultan's Crown'. Thus begins the adventures in the second book of this magical series. The Sultan is seeking to retrieve his crown, out of which Prince Kalman's father, Prince Casimir, cheated him. He believes the MacArthurs and Lord Rothlan to have been involved in this and has chosen this time to both find his missing crown and seek revenge. Once he is made to understand who the real thief was, the quest to find and restore the crown begins. This necessitates the use of magic mirrors, which can be used to transport people to different places and times, as well as the use of the Sultan's magical winged horses from Ruksh. A parallel plot concerns Prince Kalman, who escaped with the Sultan's crown at the end of the first book, using the power of the crown to set himself up as a direct ancestor of Bonnie Prince Charlie. Prince Kalman is relying on Scotland's devolved status to install himself as a high-ranking nobleman of Scotland, perhaps even King. He has set himself up as Member of Scottish Parliament (MSP) Ned Stuart, and as part of his plan he has put a spell on the Scots people so that everything has been 'branded' as Scottish. Tartan is everywhere, Scottish menus abound, and there are kilts and bagpipes as a matter of course. Additionally, to divert attention from his machinations towards power, he has also set up a spurious fishing dispute between the Scots and the French. Needless to say all is resolved satisfactorily in the book, but only after time travelling adventures and encounters with Snow Witches, Scotch Mist and Arthur the dragon.

With this novel, Anne Forbes has demonstrated an uncanny eye for popular cultural references and has moulded them into a clever parody of Scottish fantasy fiction. Right from the beginning this is clear from the chapter titles. Out of forty chapters at least fourteen titles are either well-known phrases or sayings or make literary references to other texts. For example, Chapter 4 "The French Connection" referring to the 1971 film about drug smuggling; Chapter 7 "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall" which is the phrase used in the fairytale Snow White; Chapter 9 is entitled "Turkish Delight" which has multiple references, the link with the land of Turkey, the sweet called Turkish Delight and of course in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950), Edmund is tempted by the White Witch, Jadis, with Turkish delight. Other chapter titles include "The Famous Grouse", "The Road to Appin", "The Black Tower" and "Through the Looking Glass". This device is used with such consistency it must have been deliberate on the author's part. However, her choices make it clear that the device is not solely used for humorous purposes. Each of these intertextual references has clear resonance with the section of the

narrative it introduces. The mirror references, both in the chapter titles and their key importance to the plot, are very much in line with generic features of Scottish fantasy.

It has already been recorded in Chapter 5 of this study that George MacDonald was particularly fond of using mirror imagery in his fantasies. The mirrors in this story also prove to be an important plot device in that characters can be physically transported by them, for example from Edinburgh to Turkey, from Ardray to Edinburgh and so on. They are also used to allow the group pursuing the Sultan's Crown to travel back to seventeenth century Scotland to prevent being caught by Prince Kalman in their quest to enter his residence, the Black Tower, to remove the crown. Some of the features these mirrors exhibit have been used in recent film and television productions and also in fantasy fiction. In order to function, the magic mirrors must be used in pairs, and these pairings must be carefully calibrated, using the wrought-iron decorations in their frames, to ensure that the people using them arrive where they are supposed. This is similar to the Stargate used in both the film *Stargate* (1994) and the television series *SG-1* (1997-2007). The stargate has seven points of reference that must be aligned on the gate's outer rings which opens a wormhole allowing interstellar travel between Earth and different galaxies. Should the points of reference be altered on one of the rings the crew can be stranded. The mirrors in *The Wings of Ruksh* can also be used to deliberately trap characters between two mirrors. A similar device is used in the 1978 *Superman* film when the enemies of Krypton, General Zod and friends, are imprisoned in a mirror-like prism that traps their 'bodily essence'. In Robert Jordan's fantasy fiction series, *The Wheel of Time* (1990 - ) the characters with magical abilities, both male and female, can 'travel' using gateways which open in one place and re-open in another, much in the way the mirrors are described in this book. Travelling via mirrors is also reminiscent of the method used to bring Polly to Hunsdon House through the picture in *Fire and Hemlock*.

The author also deliberately makes use of both film imagery and filmic devices. For example, the very first chapter of the book opens with three men in a boat, clearly referencing the novel of the same title, fishing. The opening paragraph makes reference to films.

'Funny mist this,' Duncan Campbell muttered, shipping his oars and trying to peer through the thick whiteness that lay heavily over the waters of the loch. 'Eerie!' he added, shivering slightly. 'A bit like old horror films. Thank goodness this is Loch Leven and not Loch Ness, eh!' (Forbes, 2007: 9)

Later the author also makes use of the filmic device of ‘freeze-framing’ the action. A delegation from the Scottish Fishermen’s Federation approach the French Consulate in Edinburgh in an effort to protest the fishing dispute that has arisen between Scotland and France. Despite the consulate being protected by the police, the delegation is able to enter, and, after first ceremonially burning the French flag on the cobblestones outside the consulate, the crowd break through to the Consul’s office with clubs and baseball bats. As they surge towards him

suddenly, as though someone had pressed the pause button on a film clip, they froze in a strange, quivering tableau in front of him, cudgels raised to strike. (ibid, 140)

This very deliberate policy, I believe, is clearly meant to locate this fantasy within both the ‘historical’ Scottish fantasy genre in some of its subject matter and the fairy and magical characters it utilises, while at the same time situating it within the medium of film with which many young readers will be familiar. The author also uses very strong visual imagery, which lends itself to the cinematic medium.

In terms of other typically Scottish fantasy elements, this novel is fully compliant. The use of doubles is explicated in the character of Prince Kalman who re-emerges in this novel in the persona of Ned Stuart, a Member of the Scottish Parliament, (MSP). He is a young and charismatic MSP who has had a meteoric rise, and is described as having long hair and being prone to wearing fancy brocade waistcoats. He has also been singled out as a potential First Minister in the Scottish Parliament. In this persona he pursues the notion that he is a direct descendant of Prince Charles Edward Stuart, otherwise known as Bonnie Prince Charlie. He also passes off the Sultan’s Crown as the “ancient crown of the Scots” (p 34) to the French Consul whose help he is seeking in authenticating his claim. The Sultan’s Crown has been instrumental in allowing Stuart/Kalman to arrive at this point and he further uses it to put a spell on the people of Scotland such that all the stereotypical Scottish kitsch imagery becomes absolutely essential to them. The train from Scotland arrives at King’s Cross station bedecked in tartan both inside and out. The menu on the train is a Scottish menu and contains the following items

‘Principally haggis, mashed turnips and potatoes followed by shortbread, something called ‘Black Bun’ and...a drink called Irn Bru.’

‘Iron Brew! What the devil’s Iron Brew?’

‘I asked that myself when I was in Edinburgh last week and they told me it was made from girders. No sir,’ Martin gulped at the expression on Tatler’s face.

‘Seriously! That’s what they said!’ (p 53)

Here the author is also showing her awareness of the hugely successful advertising campaign run by the Barrs Company who make the soft drink Irn Bru and sell it with the

tag line “Your *other* national drink. Made in Scotland—from girders.” Later, Tatler, a senior English civil servant who has travelled on the train raises the issue with Edinburgh’s Chief Constable describing what he has found in Edinburgh on his arrival,

‘Thistles, flags, tartan streamers, banners of all the different clans—they’re here, there and everywhere. Bagpipes on every street corner! For goodness sake, Archie, *Hollywood* couldn’t do it any better! It’s not natural! It’s ...it’s like *Braveheart* out there! And the people! Kilts all over the place! I ask you!’ (p 53)

This is an inspired piece of writing, capitalizing on both the raised awareness of Scottish identity since the Parliament has been reconvened and also referencing a very well known part of Scotland’s past when Sir Walter Scott masterminded the visit to Scotland of King George IV. At that time Scott effectively hi-jacked the Highland traditions and virtually invented the image of the Scots that has endured ever since. In providing this exaggerated picture the writer is ironically highlighting some of the worst expectations about Scotland after devolution and perhaps also commenting, by making the Scots themselves immune to the absurdity of it, that we can at times fail to see how we can caricature ourselves. Of course this is a plot device allowing Stuart/Kalman to capitalize on the overt Scottish nationalism he has fabricated using the Sultan’s Crown as a means of ensuring the people’s support in declaring him Scottish royalty. Essentially his plan seems to be to incite another Jacobite Rebellion.

The Sultan allows the children to be included in the group seeking to regain the crown because, as he says

‘The children have no magic in their bodies for the crown to react to, but if I implant the words of the spell in them, I will virtually be speaking through them and my words will be powerful enough to break the spell that ties the crown to the prince.’ (Forbes, 2007: 77)

Thus both children are allowed to go on the time-travelling adventure albeit accompanied by their father, John MacLean (and fans might recognize a teasing allusion to the name of the Bruce Willis character in the *Die Hard* series of films) Lord Rothlan, Lady Ellan and various of the MacArthurs for protection. In this the children’s role seems rather like that of the Hobbits’ in both *The Hobbit* (Tolkein, 1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkein, 1954-55), though the hobbits are somewhat reluctant participants in their quests. Unlike Bilbo and Frodo, the children are keen to be involved in the adventure, even showing excited anticipation. It is because, like the hobbits, they will not be considered sufficiently dangerous that the Sultan believes they will be able to catch Prince Kalman off guard. There are other clear references to *The Lord of the Rings*. For example the Sultan ensures their protection by giving every rider a magic cloak to protect them from hexes and the

extremes of weather. The similarity to the eleven cloaks given to the ‘Fellowship of the Ring’ by the Lady Galadriel is made even clearer later,

All the riders were dressed in long hooded cloaks made of a strange, grayish material that gave them a sinister, fearful appearance. Indeed, Rothlan had told Sir James earlier that the Sultan’s magic cloak would not only protect them from hexes but, among other things, would also keep out rain and the most vicious cold. More importantly, by changing colour according to the background scenery, the cloaks would render them virtually invisible as they traveled. (ibid, 104)

There are other elements that Tolkein readers will recognise: the crystals that members of the group use to communicate with each other over distances, or to observe what is happening in distant locations have strong similarities with the ‘palantiri’ stones used by Sauron and Saruman in *The Lord of the Rings*. Other fantasy writers have also used crystals as an important magical device, for example in Alan Garner’s *The Weirdstone of Brisingamen*. (1960). Inevitably, also, since Arthur the dragon is such a key character, it was always likely that readers who know Tolkein’s work well will make comparisons with the dragon Smaug in *The Hobbit*.

Now wide awake, he [Arthur] slithered his ungainly way down a huge pile of treasure, scattering gold and jewels as he went, and sped through the tunnels that led to the Great Hall at a speed that left Archie clinging to his neck for dear life. (ibid, 47)

This has particular resonance if readers are familiar with the illustrated version of *The Hobbit* published in 1997 and illustrated by Alan Lee. The front cover of this edition could equally have been used as an illustration of Arthur. (See Figure 6.5)

This fantasy conforms to other aspects previously identified as generically Scottish. The Sultan’s Crown is actually recovered by Clara, demonstrating once more evidence of female agency in Scottish fantasy fiction. Although both children accompany the questers and both are given access to the magic words which will release the spell, in the end it is Clara who utters them. Additionally, when one of Prince Kalman’s spies, the crow Kitor, overhears Clara saying goodbye to her mother and saying “We’ll be back soon with the crown.” (p 105) he misinterprets that believing that Clara specifically will be responsible for its retrieval. He reports this to Prince Kalman and thus makes Clara an explicit target. As the company get closer to Prince Kalman’s tower at Ardray they are attacked by Snow Witches whose sole purpose is to separate Clara from the rest and ultimately to kill her: they are unsuccessful. In another scene reminiscent of *The Lord of the Rings*, Clara and Kitor, who has switched his allegiance and been terribly injured for this, are rescued by Lord Rothlan’s eagle Amgarad. The Snow Witches themselves can also be linked, among others, to Queen Jadis in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It is she who condemns

Narnia always to winter but never Christmas, and she who provides Edmund with warm clothing when she meets him and tempts him with Turkish Delight. Similarly, the Snow Witches may recall the Snow Queen in the fairy tale of the same name. The Snow Queen travels through the world with the snow and her palace and gardens are in permafrost. The weather conditions that prevail when the Snow Witches fly are very similar. It should also be noted at this point that Clara is not the lone female in the company. One of the most powerful magicians is Lady Ellan, the MacArthur's daughter and she is a member of the company. She and Clara are often together and it is from her that Clara gleans much of her information and to whom she looks for advice and support. Lady Ellan, as we know from the first book when she was captured by Lord Rothlan, is a lady of spirit.

‘Lady Ellan can look after herself,’ she stated roundly, ‘and if you ask me, she’ll boss that Lord Rothlan around until he’ll be glad to let her go!’...

‘Always an argumentative lassie, my daughter!’ (Forbes, 2006: 164-165)

Although strong female characters are much more likely generally in contemporary children's fantasy fiction, Forbes is remaining true to this distinctively Scottish element from earlier times.

A feature of this writer's work is her deliberately mocking self-referencing. At one point near the start of the story, the children have been bemoaning the fact that their life has become dull of late and they are keen for another adventure. Their trip to The Sultan's Palace restaurant provides them with that. Forbes heightens the readers' anticipation by having characters comment on the magical atmosphere, “There's magic abroad tonight, Neil! Can't you feel the change in the atmosphere?” (p 22) Later Clara also notices this especially when they finally find the restaurant, which seems to have been almost going out of its way not to be found—a similar device is used by J.K. Rowling when she locates the headquarters of the Order of the Phoenix in London. When Clara enters the alley she recognises it as “magic place” (p 23). Just in case readers have not yet recognised this build up in tension and excitement Forbes herself says,

Gripped by a strange exhilaration, they felt as though they had stepped suddenly from the ordinary world into the pages of an exotic adventure story. (p 24)

Not only does this act almost like a Brechtian device where the author directly addresses the audience, it is also a particularly good example of the fragile barriers between the real world and the world of magic. The implication here seems to be that characters can move between or be pulled between worlds with a single step.

In a similar ‘knowing’ vein, Forbes uses the fishing dispute between the French and Scottish fleets as both a distraction in the plot from Ned Stuart/Prince Kalman's bid for

royalty and as a particularly self-mocking piece of humour. While the children and their companions are off travelling through Scotland in the seventeenth century, Sir James—an MSP—the Chief Constable of Edinburgh and Mr Tatler, the senior civil servant from London, have to try to come up with both an explanation for and a solution to the dispute. Sir James has had to disclose the existence of both the MacArthurs and Arthur to these gentlemen. Since the MacArthurs also have access to a crystal, they are able to make use of it in finding a solution to the dispute. In fact it is the MacArthur who comes up with a suggestion. Arthur the dragon is to fly out to the French fleet and cast a spell:

As Arthur flew over the fishing fleet, Archie loosened the saddlebags so that a constant stream of glittering magic dust floated through the air and landed in and around the trawlers and although some of the fishermen, scanning the surrounding blackness fearfully, seemed to sense the presence of something unusual, there was no sudden outcry to indicate that he had been spotted. (p 188)

The officers on board the ship do catch sight of what looks like a dragon but nothing shows up on the radar and they are reluctant to report the sighting since they will be laughed at. The effect of this is that the French fleet are surrounded by a heavy, thick, white, mist that “defies all the laws of meteorology” (p 197). As a result, the ships cannot find their way out of it and are sailing around in circles. To add insult to injury, the British fleet is in port. The French Defence Minister desperately calls for an analysis of the mysterious fog but the aircraft sent to take the samples can neither find the fog nor the fleet! Effectively the spell that Arthur has cast covers the French boats with ‘Scotch Mist’. The humour of this for those ‘in the know’ is of course that the term ‘Scotch Mist’ refers to something that does not exist. The whole episode is a beautiful play on words, where the mist refers to actual weather conditions, but is also used here to refer to something hard to find, or something which does not exist, something imagined.

There are other aspects of this novel worthy of comment. The first concerns the use of Middle Eastern magic. Scotland’s connection with Turkey is explained by the fact that in times past, Scottish fairy people and magicians went to Turkey because of the superior quality of their magic carpets. Over the years strong and friendly relationships were forged until the incident of deception regarding the Sultan’s Crown. Forbes’ own experience of dividing her time between Edinburgh and Kuwait, has obviously suggested to her that by combining the magic from these two peoples she can produce a distinctive form of fantasy. The magic carpets appear in all three of the books in the series so far. Again, the reader is struck by the similarity in the uses of the carpets, and even in the method of summoning them, which resembles the magic carpets in Disney’s 1992 film *Aladdin*. New elements introduced in this book include, of course, the Sultan’s magnificent black winged horses

from his stables at Ruksh. (Ruksh does actually exist, though it is in the Yemen rather than Turkey.) Initially the children are unaware of the horses' extraordinary powers, believing only that they are exceptionally beautiful, steady and speedy. It is only when they have to make a seemingly impossible crossing of a body of water that they find out, rather like *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (Fleming, 1964), that at a given command the horses can sprout wings and fly. The connotations linked to these winged beasts include Pegasus, the winged horse of the Gods and also thestrals, the spooky, dragon-like winged horses of Hogwarts, which can only be seen by those who have witnessed death. Like the magic carpets, these horses have the power of speech. The ability to speak is a feature of many of the animals in this fantasy series and, while this may be a relatively common feature in modern fantasy literature, it is not a particularly common element of earlier Scottish fantasy literature.

Issues of language are also of importance within this novel. By and large in this text the language used is Standard English, with Scots only being used as part of the dialogue. On the other hand much of the book's humour resides in recognising Scots phrases and sayings used deliberately as either plot devices, as in the case of Scotch Mist, or to make intertextual references to modern culture, as in the chapter heading "The Famous Grouse". At the same time the author also acknowledges Middle Eastern traditions by utilising Turkish sounding words of command to the horses and also for the magic words given by the Sultan to release the crown. Interspersed with all of this is the use of modern colloquial phrases such as when Amgarad the rather lofty eagle is described as "black affronted" (p 71) at the suggestion that he change shape into a parrot or a canary. The author herself uses some colloquialisms in the narrative section when she describes Kitor reflecting that "here he was, in the flipping seventeenth century." (p 115) She also allows one of the MacArthurs, Archie, to use modern colloquialisms in his speech, "MacArthur," he said helplessly, "you do my head in, sometimes. You really do." (p 130) These elements are all important because this author is remaining true to some parts of Scots language while at the same time incorporating elements of speech that contemporary young readers would both be familiar with and would use. What I find particularly interesting is the fact that none of this *jars* with the reader and I believe Forbes has been relatively successful in giving the Scots language its place while at the same time recognising that modern children's own language will have elements of contemporary culture as one of its features.

The impact of this novel should not be underestimated. Anne Forbes, by having home locations in both Edinburgh and Kuwait, epitomises modern global citizenship. In combining the Celtic, folkloric tradition with Middle Eastern magic traditions, I believe

that Forbes has created what might be described as a ‘post’ or even an ‘anti-Orientalist’ text. Perhaps a more positive way to identify this is to suggest that the novel is a ‘fusion’ rather than a ‘hybrid’ text. A ‘hybrid’ text would be formed by combining two elements; a ‘fusion’ text is one where two or more things are ‘blended’ together to form a single entity. In other words, rather than both elements being identifiable in the new, a ‘fusion’ text would be a completely new form consistent with the increasingly polyglot character of contemporary Scottish society and its manifold engagements with a globalised world. Indeed, in this novel I think we may tentatively discern stirrings of the next ‘age’ in Scottish Children’s Literature, with the development of an optimistic new notion of ‘belonging’ transcending the cultural fatalism of the so-called ‘clash of civilisations’ hypothesis and building positively on the politics of difference. If this reading is correct then *The Wings of Ruksh* may represent a form of literary cosmopolitanism that is entirely consonant with the way Scottish society currently aspires to progress, and which proffers the right set of circumstances for authors to develop new forms of syncretistic myth-making and storytelling across and between communities.

I believe all of the novels highlighted in this chapter demonstrate a number of seminal points with respect to contemporary Scottish children’s literature. All of these novels are fine books in themselves; a measure of this is the fact that a number of them have been nominated for awards. Secondly, all of these books display distinctively Scottish elements, aspects of which remain true to historical Scottish Literature generic features, while at the same time these works have contemporary and progressive elements and reflect and epitomise modern Scotland since devolution. As representatives of the hundreds of Scottish children’s books published since the parliament reconvened in 1999, I believe these books provide compelling evidence of a thriving, distinctive and progressive Scottish children’s literature, poised to go from strength to strength, and a world class cadre of writers who are magnificent ambassadors for Scotland and its literature.

## Conclusion

Forget, or don't forget, the past. Trumpets and robes are fine,  
but in the present and the future you will need something more.

*For the Opening of the Scottish Parliament, 9 October 2004*  
Edwin Morgan

This study set out to make the case for the existence of a 'distinctive Scottish Children's Literature' and to examine how such literature becomes a repository for the formation of culture, identity and nationhood, impacting upon young readers from Scotland and beyond. Writers for children are always aware of the formative potential of children's reading matter, and for that reason, most take their responsibilities very seriously. Scottish authors share that commitment. The timing of this study seemed particularly apposite given Scotland's relatively recently devolved status, and at a time when Scotland's culture is being reconsidered, reassessed and repositioned within Scottish life. At the same time, in educational terms, this is a time of significant change and much of that change, inevitably, is bound up with cultural issues. Scottish politicians have finally acknowledged overtly the role that schools and education generally have to play in encouraging cultural engagement.

The development of "A Curriculum for Excellence" over the coming months and years will add greater weight to the place of culture as a context for learning across the whole curriculum. "A Curriculum for Excellence" aims to provide a curricular framework within which cultural engagement and creativity will have an important role to play in learning and teaching, enabling young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens, able to participate in political, economic, social and cultural life.... Scotland's literary heritage receives worldwide acclaim, but more should be done to ensure that our young people are able to enjoy it. (ScottishExecutive, 2004)

Literature is only one component of Scotland's culture, but it is an immensely significant one. There was never any doubt about the robust existence of Scottish Literature *for adults*. The question nevertheless, had to be asked from the beginning of this investigation if the same could be said for Scottish Children's Literature—especially if schools were to be required to play such a prominent part in engaging young people with their home culture. Was there, for example, a sufficient volume of 'quality' Scottish literature for children which could be used with confidence in our schools and that children could buy or borrow and read for themselves as part of a larger educational renewal?

Through the close discussion of the texts central to this study, I believe that there is an unassailable case for the existence of a distinctive corpus of Scottish Children's Literature.

This material, first and foremost, displays sound literary quality in itself and is not published, read or recognised simply because of its ‘Scottishness’. Some of the literature that has been discussed here already occupies a secure place in the canon of world Children’s Literature, and as such is part of a continuum of British literature for children. However, the fiction examined throughout this work is also identifiably Scottish because of the language or the stance it adopts, and as such it inevitably includes the representation and exploration of nationality, a theme unavoidably conveyed in almost all children’s books of all periods and places: every author writes from a background, a set of assumptions and attitudes, which are proper to, and interacting with, the culture of their own nation, tribe, state or community.

If, then, we acknowledge that Scottish Children’s Literature does exist, independently of, and complementary to, English/British literature, what are the fundamental judgements that can be made about it in reflecting, shaping, interpreting and intervening in Scottish identity? Nations and societies are in a perpetual process of change—as are children—and books can provide imaginative resources from which perceptions of what is typical in society can be constructed. At the opposite end of the spectrum from extreme jingoism lies the enveloping, but intangible, mood of localised atmosphere, an aspect that is a feature in almost all Scottish Literature whether for children or adults. In Scottish children’s books, young readers can recognise a familiar landscape, hear familiar voices and language; they encounter themselves *as* themselves and not as the voice of the marginal or repressed ‘other’ in English Children’s Literature. The concerns that Scots authors such as Andrew O’Hagan and Theresa Breslin have recorded, that much of the literature they read when they were children did not reflect the experiences of the communities in which they lived, have been remedied in more recent Scottish children’s fiction. Notwithstanding these concerns, it is possible to record that the value of the local, the familial and the domestic has never been underestimated within Scottish Literature and, indeed, these elements have often formed key preoccupations for Scottish writers. In books for children these concepts are frequently central to the story, even more than in adult literature. In the close attention that has been given to the Scottish children’s texts that have formed the lion’s share of this investigation, a more nuanced reading has allowed the subtleties of the material to be discerned. In other words, if the texts are read with a view to locating them within Scottish Literature and culture, there is sufficient evidence in language, setting, characterisation, point of view, subject matter and even in the way they reflect genre in a distinctive manner, to say that these are Scottish texts.

It is important to stress, of course, that Scottish Children's Literature does not merely hold up a mirror to Scottish society. It is more complex than that. Scottish Children's Literature has an important role to play in both the formation and the mediation of Scottish identity: it shapes, highlights, questions and reimagines it. The material that has been examined and discussed has had something to say about the *instability* of identity. It throws up questions about the status of Scottish identity today, what it has been and what it might be in the future. It also has had comment to make about what is enduring in Scottish identity. Moreover, what is notable about these texts—perhaps even surprising, given the widespread influence of certain characteristic polarities in standard accounts of this argument—is that they are not generally adversarial about their Scottishness. Rather, the word that comes to mind is convivial. There is a clear sense of Scottish Children's Literature being different, but also evidence of its attentiveness to the 'other'. It is open to the idea of multiple identities both within and furth of Scotland. In keeping with this general disposition, Scottish Children's Literature does not appear on the whole to have been drawn to the depiction of the Scots as victims or as a helpless, subjugated people. Despite the temptation, it is a literature that has resisted simplified notions of colonialism in favour of a much more dynamic, intelligent and even humorous engagement with larger linguistic, artistic and political forces.

In this same creative spirit, Scottish Children's Literature is full of examples of novels, explicated both within and beyond this study, where identity is actively *negotiated* within the text and where identity is constantly being altered by its interactions with external and internal influences. Sometimes this alteration comes about because of events of significant local or national impact, as, for example in crises such as the Highland Clearances, where the crofters of the Highlands were forced to change where they lived and how they made their living, and in some cases to migrate even from their home country. On other occasions the realignment of identity happens as a result of shifts in the inner psychology of character: growing maturity or greater understanding and insight on the part of the central protagonists in a narrative. For this reason, the issue of identity and the search for identity each seem quite naturally located in books for children and young adults, when they too are likely to be preoccupied with understanding their own growing and changing identity and in establishing their own place within family, school, community and national society. What emerges in Scotland, is a fiction that *allows* the terms of identity to be constantly re-negotiated and which demonstrates a canny understanding of the ways in which identity can be accommodated or re-positioned within the ongoing processes of individual self-fashioning and shared socialisation. It is also a fiction that, as a rule, avoids

simple binary oppositions as a narrative device. Scots and English characters or Highlanders and Lowlanders may feature in the narrative — these are convenient tools for shorthand description — but their lives and destinies are then impacted by the variegated personalities they encounter in the texts. For these more inflected characters, the conventional binaries of national belonging must also contend with issues of gender or class or regional affiliation. National identity in Scottish Children's Literature emerges in consequence as a far more plastic concept than might have been expected at the start of this investigation, sceptical of any sort of cultural or political reductionism.

Undoubtedly, efforts to intervene in culture by the means of imaginative literature can and should result in cultural forms supportive of an authentic and congenial dialogue between the multiple possibilities of identity, whilst remaining resistant to the frequently hegemonic or monologic structures of political power. This is true whether such structures manifest themselves in conventionally nationalist or colonialist hierarchies. Thus any attempt to hypostatise Scottishness at a particular moment in time is destined to be imperfect, partial, and already outdated. Scotland—and for that matter, children—are in a constant state of becoming, a transitional state but one which is consistently moving forward into future possibility. This judgement is concordant with the views of Stuart Hall who has insisted that

Cultural identity... is a matter of becoming as well as being. It belongs to the future as much to the past. It is not something that already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything that is historical, they undergo constant transformation. (Hall, 1993: 394)

Scotland as a nation is therefore in a rather odd, if not unique, position. Scotland was historically an independent nation, then for a prolonged period a 'stateless' nation. It has now emerged in modern times as a hybrid: a devolved nation within the larger polity of Great Britain. Through all of these incarnations, Scotland's literature has flourished, and certainly since the nineteenth century, Scottish Children's Literature has flourished alongside its adult counterpart. Within cultural typology and the semiotics of culture, national Children's Literature can be defined either prospectively or retrospectively. The prospective approach is favoured when a nation discovers that it lacks a national Children's Literature of its own and sets about creating it. This is only possible when Children's Literatures have already been established in other countries. The retrospective approach—the most common one—comes about when historians of literature judge, on the basis of certain criteria, that particular texts from the past can be considered to belong to

the Children's Literature of a given nation. The retrospective approach implies determining which texts in the history of literature are 'our own' and which are not. The criteria that govern these choices can hardly be confined to themes or subjects, nor are they necessarily ideological, moral or ethical values, styles and so on because these change too rapidly. Among the points of departure instead, we find ethnic, linguistic and cultural criteria emerging as the enduring elements round which a 'canon' can be built. Of course, that is not to imply a canon frozen, like a fly in amber. Rather, it indicates a 'baseline' for a national Children's Literature, one open to the ongoing effects of linguistic diversity, change and growth. It is through a coherent, historically rooted experience of language and tradition that remains hospitable to organic change that readers can come to identify with a specific culture and call it their own.

This study has pursued for the most part the retrospective approach and as such has had little difficulty in identifying texts from the past that can be considered Scottish Children's Literature. But as previously noted, once the retrospective method has done its work, the canon of Scottish Children's Literature is not 'closed'. It will inevitably be open to innovation brought about by natural cultural development, processes which are, necessarily, powerfully reflected in the national literature. Even then the dual nature of Scottish Literature is likely to rear its head. For the texts in question are both Scottish *and* British—and therein lies part of the continuing challenge for Scotland's Children's Literature. Within education, until relatively recently, the emphasis on, and preponderance of, non-Scottish material proved to be a serious obstacle to the recognition and development of a separate Scottish Children's Literature. Identity clearly plays a part in responding to texts—but, again, until recently, institutionally Scottish Literature was not actively promoted for this purpose. Education as a consequence failed in its crucial role as disseminator of Scottish history and culture, failing to tell us of our history and our achievements (or, indeed, even confronting us with our failings). Scottish universities, until comparatively recently, virtually ignored Scottish Literature, leaving generations of teachers ill-equipped to introduce children to the local and national writers in whom they might see themselves and their society validated by, or refracted through, a tradition. Where education does not educate, knowledge is lost, just as we have lost knowledge and respect for so many writers who tried to present us with versions of ourselves, both reassuring and unsettling. Schools and universities have for too long left Scottish writing out of the picture. Thankfully, the conditions to remedy this deficiency seem especially auspicious at the present time.

The reading of Scottish Children's Literature advanced in this thesis has resulted in a highly problematised version of national identity, and in that respect its findings mirror recent influential accounts of the work of adult Scottish authors from Sir Walter Scott to Lewis Grassie Gibbon, John Galt to Hugh MacDiarmid—all of whom also render the idea of [national] identity *problematic* and plural, shaping in their work what seems to be an alternative model of nationalism. Scottish national identity within Children's Literature is also depicted as elastic or contingent. But that need not necessarily be considered a negative judgement. For many contemporary Scottish children's writers it presents itself rather as an opportunity, authorising them to explore and imagine the realities of 21<sup>st</sup> century Scottish identity in new and unprecedented forms. Simultaneously in education, opportunities are now unfolding for both the examination and creation of a renewed understanding of Scottish identity, especially with regard to the function of national citizenship in a globalised and interdependent world. All interventions in the lives of children—whether by parents, teachers or authors—afford the chance to interrogate and enlarge Scottish identity. And this is not simply a postmodern phenomenon. As this thesis has demonstrated, the depiction and interrogation of identity is a feature of Scottish Children's Literature as old as the genre itself, thereby furthering the productive relationship of the literature to current educational imperatives.

A great paradox of our time is the fact that, notwithstanding the technical progress and the enormous growth in communication, Children's Literature in various countries, including Scotland, is becoming more reflectively national. The Russian scholar Maria Nikolajeva has stated that there is a tendency in every country to overestimate its native literature and give it more room in historical surveys, reference books and university courses. (Nikolajeva, 1997: 7) In this regard Scotland seems, at least up to the present, to be an exception. Indeed, it was this very lacuna that intrigued me sufficiently to embark on this study in the first place. A nation is always working — even unconsciously — to reproduce itself in its literature. How then could Scottish Children's Literature be missing from the prestigious roll call of national Children's Literatures? Of course what this investigation contends is that it is *not* missing. Perhaps the more accurate explanation is that it has been mislabelled — or even more ironically — misidentified. What has proved to be the case is that the relationship of Scottish Children's Literature to Scottish identity is not the maintenance of simple and territorial cultural boundaries, but rather the opening of a gateway beyond which Scotland's children and young people are shown the imagining and re-imagining of both Scottish identity and the idea of Scotland itself.

A final question must then be asked about what the best strategy is to ensure that Scottish Children's Literature survives and flourishes in this vital role at the onset of a new century. Should it let itself be integrated into the transnational metropolitan English literature which has such a strong international reputation today? Or should its Scottishness be cherished, curated and used instrumentally in the promotion of particular values and attitudes associated with its country of origin? Alternatively, should Scottish Children's Literature keep striving at the unfinished task of securing its rights as a minority literature within Britain? Whichever option is preferred by critics, the omens are certainly encouraging for the confident confirmation and enhancement of a distinctive Scottish Children's Literature clearly located at the heart of the nation's cultural and educational institutions. Scotland is in the middle of one of its greatest periods of literary and cultural achievement. But in order to appreciate it we need to provide new directions, new curricula and re-enthused teaching at all levels of education. By this strategy we will give new generations the real kind of confidence to believe that their accents, their dialects, their varieties of English and their sheer imaginative sense of having their own fit place in Britain and in Europe are valid and unique. Children living in all parts of Scotland have the right to require their teachers to be able to tell them who their region's most able writers are, and to be allowed to explore, question and identify with those writers' views of their own country and society in their own reading.

Children's fiction, far from comprising a mere afterthought within Scotland's creative psyche, plays a fundamental role in the shaping of that collectively imagined space known as Scottish Literature and the culture and people that literature seeks to represent. Scottish Children's Literature has a distinguished history, a vibrant present and an inviting future—justly celebrated, at last, for its pivotal role in the ongoing development of the nation's educational and cultural identity.

List of Figures



Fig 1.3

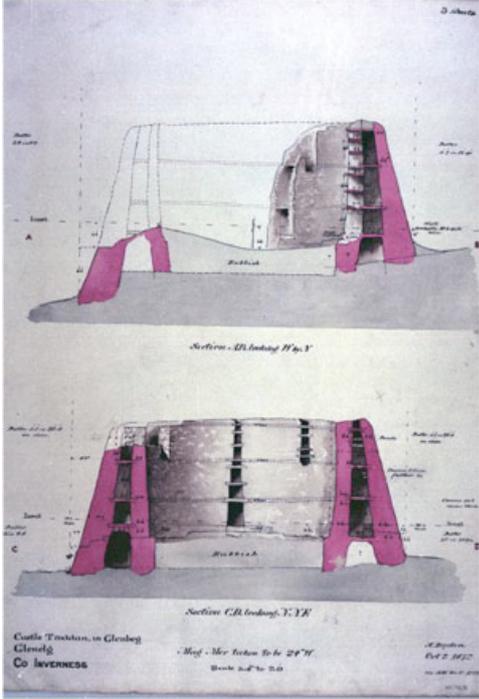


Fig 2.3



Fig 3.3



Fig 4.3



Fig 5.3

This is a woodcut from the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland*, about the North Berwick witch-hunts of 1590-1. The author was probably James Carmichael, minister of Haddington, who helped to interrogate the North Berwick witches and who advised King James on the writing of his book *Daemonologie*. The pamphlet was published in London in 1591, and contains virtually the only contemporary illustrations of Scottish witchcraft.

The woodcut illustrates various scenes relating to the pamphlet.

- a. *Centre and left:* a group of female witches listen to the Devil preaching a sermon in North Berwick church at Hallowe'en 1590, with John Fian, schoolmaster of Haddington, acting as their clerk. (These events constitute a central incident and Fian appears as a character in *The Thirteenth Member*.)
- b. *Top left:* a ship is sunk by witchcraft. The witches were accused of raising the storms that troubled the voyage of James's bride, Anne of Denmark, to Scotland, though in fact none of her ships were sunk. The pamphlet describes the sinking of a ferryboat in the Forth, and elsewhere in the trials some of the witches were accused of having sunk a ship, the *Grace of God*, at North Berwick.
- c. *Top right:* witches stirring a cauldron—a stock image rather than a scene directly from the pamphlet.

*Right and bottom right:* a pedlar who discovers witches in Tranent is magically transported to a merchant's wine-cellar in Bordeaux. This story is told in the preface to the pamphlet only to be described as 'most false', but this did not discourage the illustration. The best edition of the pamphlet *Newes from Scotland* is in Lawrence Normand and Gareth Roberts (eds.), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Scotland: James's Demonology and the North Berwick Witches* (2000) (Goodare et al., archived January 2003[accessed 15/4/2008])

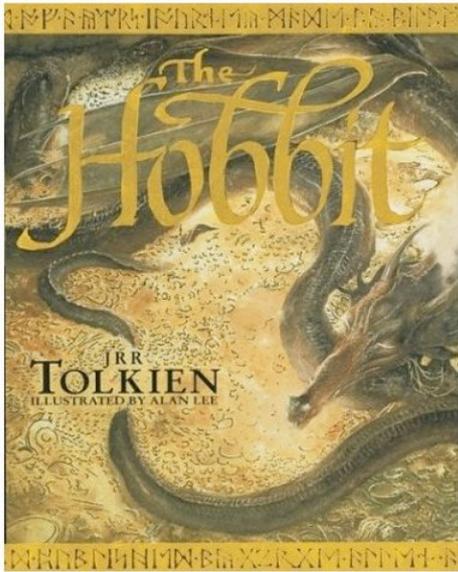


Fig1.5

## Appendix 1

### Tam Lin

O I forbid you, maidens a',  
 That wear gowd on your hair,  
 To come or gae by Carterhaugh,  
 For young Tam Lin is there.

There's nane that gaes by Carterhaugh  
 But they leave him a wad,  
 Either their rings, or green mantles,  
 Or else their maidenhead.

Janet has kilted her green kirtle  
 A little aboon her knee,  
 And she has broded her yellow hair  
 A little aboon her bree,  
 And she's awa to Carterhaugh  
 As fast as she can hie.

When she came to carterhaugh  
 Tam Lin was at the well,  
 And there she fand his steed standing,  
 But away was himsel.

She had na pu'd a double rose,  
 A rose but only twa,  
 Till upon then started young Tam Lin,  
 Says, Lady, thou's pu nae mae.

Why pu's thou the rose, Janet,  
 And why breaks thou the wand?  
 Or why comes thou to Carterhaugh  
 Withoutten my command?

"Carterhaugh, it is my own,  
 My daddy gave it me,  
 I'll come and gang by Carterhaugh,  
 And ask nae leave at thee."

Janet has kilted her green kirtle  
 A little aboon her knee,  
 And she has broded her yellow hair  
 A little aboon her bree,  
 And she is to her father's ha  
 As fast as she can hie.

Four and twenty ladies fair  
 Were playing at the ba,  
 And out then came the fair Janet,  
 The flower among them a'.

Four and twenty ladies fair  
 Were playing at the chess,  
 And out then came the fair Janet,  
 As green as onie glass.

Out then spake an auld grey knight,  
 Lay oer the castle wa,  
 And says, Alas, fair Janet, for thee,  
 But we'll be blamed a'.

"Haud your tongue, ye auld fac'd knight,  
 Some ill death may ye die!  
 Father my bairn on whom I will,  
 I'll father none on thee."

Out then spak her father dear,  
 And he spak meek and mild,  
 And ever alas, sweet Janet," he says,  
 "I think thou gaest wi child."

"If that I gae wi child, father,  
 Mysel maun bear the blame,  
 There's neer a laird about your ha,  
 Shall get the bairn's name.

"If my love were an earthly knight,  
 As he's an elfin grey,  
 I wad na gie my ain true-love  
 For nae lord that ye hae.

"The steed that my true love rides on  
 Is lighter than the wind,  
 Wi siller he is shod before,  
 Wi burning gowd behind."

Janet has kilted her green kirtle  
 A little aboon her knee,  
 And she has broded her yellow hair  
 A little aboon her bree,  
 And she's awa to Carterhaugh  
 As fast as she can hie.

When she came to Carterhaugh,

Tam Lin was at the well,  
 And there she fand his steed standing,  
 But away was himsel.

She had na pu'd a double rose,  
 A rose but only twa,  
 Till up then started young Tam Lin,  
 Says, Lady, thou pu's nae mae.

"Why pu's thou the rose, Janet,  
 Amang the groves sae green,  
 And a' to kill the bonny babe  
 That we gat us between?"

"O tell me, tell me, Tam Lin," she says,  
 "For's sake that died on tree,  
 If eer ye was in holy chapel,  
 Or christendom did see?"

"Roxbrugh he was my grandfather,  
 Took me with him to bide  
 And ance it fell upon a day  
 That wae did me betide.

"And ance it fell upon a day  
 A cauld day and a snell,  
 When we were frae the hunting come,  
 That frae my horse I fell,  
 The Queen o' Fairies she caught me,  
 In yon green hill do dwell.

"And pleasant is the fairy land,  
 But, an eerie tale to tell,  
 Ay at the end of seven years,  
 We pay a tiend to hell,  
 I am sae fair and fu o flesh,  
 I'm feard it be mysel.

"But the night is Halloween, lady,  
 The morn is Hallowday,  
 Then win me, win me, an ye will,  
 For weel I wat ye may.

"Just at the mirk and midnight hour  
 The fairy folk will ride,  
 And they that wad their true-love win,  
 At Miles Cross they maun bide."

"But how shall I thee ken, Tam Lin,  
 Or how my true-love know,  
 Amang sa mony unco knights,

The like I never saw?"

"O first let pass the black, lady,  
And syne let pass the brown,  
But quickly run to the milk-white steed,  
Pu ye his rider down.

"For I'll ride on the milk-white steed,  
And ay nearest the town,  
Because I was an earthly knight  
They gie me that renown.

"My right hand will be gloved, lady,  
My left hand will be bare,  
Cockt up shall my bonnet be,  
And kaimed down shall my hair,  
And thae's the takens I gie thee,  
Nae doubt I will be there.

"They'll turn me in your arms, lady,  
Into an esk and adder,  
But hold me fast, and fear me not,  
I am your bairn's father.

"They'll turn me to a bear sae grim,  
And then a lion bold,  
But hold me fast, and fear me not,  
And ye shall love your child.

"Again they'll turn me in your arms  
To a red het gand of airn,  
But hold me fast, and fear me not,  
I'll do you nae harm.

"And last they'll turn me in your arms  
Into the burning glead,  
Then throw me into well water,  
O throw me in with speed.

"And then I'll be your ain true-love,  
I'll turn a naked knight,  
Then cover me wi your green mantle,  
And hide me out o sight."

Gloomy, gloomy was the night,  
And eerie was the way,  
As fair Jenny in her green mantle  
To Miles Cross she did gae.

At the mirk and midnight hour  
She heard the bridles sing,  
She was as glad at that  
As any earthly thing.

First she let the black pass by,  
 And syne she let the brown,  
 But quickly she ran to the milk-white steed,  
 And pu'd the rider down.

Sae weel she minded what he did say,  
 And young Tam Lin did win,  
 Syne covered him wi her green mantle,  
 As blythe's a bird in spring

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,  
 Out of a bush o broom,  
 "Them that has gotten young Tam Lin  
 Has gotten a stately-groom."

Out then spak the Queen o Fairies,  
 And an angry woman was she,  
 "Shame betide her ill-far'd face,  
 And an ill death may she die,  
 For she's taen awa the bonniest knight  
 In a' my companie.

"But had I kend, Tam Lin," said she,  
 "What now this night I see,  
 I wad hae taen out thy twa grey een,  
 And put in twa een o tree."

Child ballad #39A *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 1882-1898* by Francis James Child

## Appendix 2

### Thomas the Rhymer

also known as "True Thomas"

True Thomas lay on Huntlie Bank,  
 A ferlie he spied wi' his eye,  
 And there he saw a lady bright,  
 Come riding down by Eildon Tree.

Her shirt was o the grass-green silk,  
 Her mantle o the velvet fine,  
 At ilka tett of her horse's mane  
 Hang fifty siller bells and nine.

True Thomas, he pulld aff his cap,  
 And louted low down to his knee  
 "All hail, thou mighty Queen of Heaven!  
 For thy peer on earth I never did see."

"O no, O no, Thomas," she said,  
 "That name does not belang to me;  
 I am but the queen of fair Elfland,  
 That am hither come to visit thee."

"Harp and carp, Thomas," she said,  
 "Harp and carp along wi' me,  
 And if ye dare to kiss my lips,  
 Sure of your bodie I will be."

"Betide me weal, betide me woe,  
 That weird shall never daunt me;  
 "Syne he has kissed her rosy lips,  
 All underneath the Eildon Tree.

"Now, ye maun go wi me," she said,  
 "True Thomas, ye maun go wi me,  
 And ye maun serve me seven years,  
 Thro weal or woe, as may chance to be."

She mounted on her milk-white steed,  
 She's taen True Thomas up behind,  
 And aye whenever her bridle rung,  
 The steed flew swifter than the wind.

O they rade on, and farther on--  
 The steed gaed swifter than the wind--  
 Untill they reached a desart wide,  
 And living land was left behind.

"Light down, light down, now, True Thomas,  
 And lean your head upon my knee;  
 Abide and rest a little space,  
 And I will shew you ferlies three."

"O see ye not that narrow road,  
 So thick beset with thorns and briers?  
 That is the path of righteousness,  
 Tho after it but few enquires.

"And see not ye that braid braid road,  
 That lies across that lily leven?  
 That is the path to wickedness,  
 Tho some call it the road to heaven.

"And see not ye that bonny road,  
 That winds about the fernie brae?  
 That is the road to fair Elfland,  
 Where thou and I this night maun gae.

"But, Thomas, ye maun hold your tongue,  
 Whatever ye may hear or see,  
 For, if you speak word in Elflyn land,  
 Ye'll neer get back to your ain countrie."

O they rade on, and farther on,  
 And they waded thro rivers aboon the knee,  
 And they saw neither sun nor moon,  
 But they heard the roaring of the sea.

It was mirk mirk night, and there was nae stern light,  
 And they waded thro red blude to the knee;  
 For a' the blude that's shed on earth  
 Rins thro the springs o that countrie.

Syne they came on to a garden green,  
 And she pu'd an apple frae the tree:  
 "Take this for thy wages, True Thomas,  
 It will give the tongue that can never lie."

"My tongue is mine ain," True Thomas said;  
"A gudely gift ye was gie to me!  
I neither dought to buy nor sell,  
At fair or tryst where I may be.

"I dought neither speak to prince or peer,  
Nor ask of grace from fair ladye:"  
"Now hold thy peace," the lady said,  
"For as I say, so must it be."

He has gotten a coat of the even cloth,  
And a pair of shoes of velvet green,  
And till seven years were gane and past  
True Thomas on earth was never seen.

Child ballad #37C *The English and Scottish Popular Ballads, 1882-1898* by Francis James Child

## Appendix 3

### 'The Outlandish Knight'

1 An outlandish knight came from the north lands,  
 And he came a-wooing to me;  
 He told me he'd take me unto the north lands,  
 And there he would marry me.

2 'Come fetch me some of your father's gold,  
 And some of your mother's fee,  
 And two of the best nags out of the stable,  
 Where they stand thirty and three.

3 She fetched him some of her father's gold,  
 And some of her mother's fee,  
 And two of the best nags out of the stable,  
 Where they stood thirty and three.

4 She mounted on her milk-white steed,  
 He on the dapple grey;  
 They rode till they came unto the sea-side,  
 Three hours before it was day.

5 'Light off, light off thy milk-white steed,  
 And deliver it unto me;  
 Six pretty maids have I drowned here,  
 And thou the seventh shall be.

6 'Pull off, pull off thy silken gown,  
 And deliver it unto me;  
 Methinks it looks to rich and too gay  
 To rot in the salt sea.

7 'Pull off, pull off thy silken stays,  
 And deliver them unto me;  
 Methinks they are too fine and gay  
 To rot in the salt sea.

8 Pull off, pull off thy Holland smock,  
 And deliver it unto me;  
 Methings it looks to rich and gay  
 To rot in the salt sea.

9 'If I must pull off my Holland smock,  
 Pray turn thy back unto me;  
 For it is not fitting that such a ruffian  
 A naked woman should see.'

10 He turned his back towards her  
 And viewed the leaves so green;  
 She caught him round the middle so small,  
 And tumbled him into the stream.

11 He dropped high and he dropped low,  
 Until he came to the side;  
 'Catch hold of my hand, my pretty maiden,  
 And I will make you my bride.'

12 'Lie there, lie there, you false-hearted man,  
 Lie there instead of me;  
 Six pretty maids have you drowned here,  
 And the seventh has drowned thee.'

13 She mounted on her milk-white steed,  
 And led the dapple grey;  
 She rode till she came to her own father's hall,  
 Three hours before it was day.

14 The parrot being in the window so high,  
 Hearing the lady, did say,  
 'I'm afraid that some ruffian has led you astray,  
 That you have tarried so long away.'

15 'Don't prittle nor prattle, my pretty parrot,  
 Nor tell no tales of me;  
 Thy cage shall be made of the glittering gold,  
 Although it is made of a tree.'

16 The king being in the chamber so high,  
 And hearing the parrot did ay,  
 'What ails you, what ails you, my pretty parrot,  
 That you prattle so long before day?'

17 'It's no laughing matter,' the parrot did say,  
 'That so loudly I call unto thee,  
 For the cats have got into the window so high,  
 And I'm afraid they will have me.'

18 Well turned, well turned, my pretty parrot,  
 Well turned, well turned, for me;  
 Thy cage shall be made of the glittering gold,  
 And the door of the best ivory.'

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