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Tracing Masculinities
in
Twentieth-Century Scottish Men's Fiction

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Abstract

Tracing Masculinities in Twentieth-Century Scottish Men's Fiction takes account of the representation of masculinities in a selected group of novels by twentieth-century Scottish male authors. Rather than attempt a chronological survey of fictions during this period, the argument proceeds by analysing groups of texts which are axiomatic in specific ways: the Glasgow realist novels of the 1930s and post-1970s, from the works of James Barke and George Blake to those of William McIlvanney and James Kelman, which offer particular perspectives on relationships between men of different class identifications; fictions reliant upon existentialism, which intersect with the masculinist values of the Glasgow tradition in the figure of Kelman, but are also produced by Alexander Trocchi and Irvine Welsh; and novels which employ the technique of 'cross-writing', or literary transvestism, from the Renaissance fictions of Lewis Grassie Gibbon to the postmodern works of Alan Warner and Christopher Whyte. In a critical field which has always been concerned with a tradition of largely male-produced texts privileging the actions of male characters, but has neglected fully to consider the production and reception of those texts in terms of their specific articulations of gender positions, this thesis employs theories of masculinities developed in the study of American and English literatures since the 1980s in order to provide new perspectives on Scottish novels. It also draws upon the materialist theory of Louis Althusser for a model of ideological identification, as well as utilising several psychoanalytic and deconstructive approaches to gender formation in Western culture, epitomised by the work of Judith Butler and Kaja Silverman. The various perspectives on masculine gender and sexual identities thus assembled are primarily directed towards considering the novels under discussion as 'men's texts' - texts not only by or about men, but often directed towards men as readers too. In this way my analysis attempts to specify, delineate and critique male responses to male authors and characters, where traditional Scottish literary criticism has generally assumed these positions to be universal. In this sense it owes much to the development of feminist approaches to Scottish texts and to literature in general; however, rather than explicitly consider how women might respond to such writing, it offers views on how men seem to be invited by texts to read them in certain ways, through which a sense of gender privilege can be both maintained and subverted.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract -----	2
Preface	
I: Background, Theories and Strategies	
i: general overview -----	6
ii: the ‘ideal’ reader -----	9
iii: materialism and psychoanalysis -----	12
iv: the ‘dominant fiction’ and the phallus -----	15
v: the double logic of the phallus: the ‘I-Box’ -----	20
vi: overview of chapters -----	24
II: Acknowledgements -----	30
III: Declaration -----	30
Chapter One: Glasgow Fiction and Modes of Masculine Identification	
I: Introduction: Gender and Class -----	31
II: Ideology in <i>The Shipbuilders</i> and <i>Major Operation</i>	
i: the ‘internal distantation’ model -----	35
ii: the ‘classic realist’ model -----	43
III: Masculinism, Identification and Desire	
i: materialism and psychoanalysis -----	58
ii: masculinist identification and the representation of women -----	60
iii: male homosocial desire -----	71
iv: reading/trading -----	90
v: putting the ‘ma’ in ‘man’ -----	95
Chapter Two: The Glasgow Tradition since the 1970s: Pathos, Monologism and Existentialism	
I: Introduction -----	98
II: Strange Fruit: Masculinity and Pathos in McIlvanney’s <i>The Big Man</i> -----	104

III: James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines*

i: voice and value: monologue and monologism -----	119
ii: existentialism and criticism -----	127
iii: existentialism and masculinism -----	136
iv: wilting, or 'the poor wee boy syndrome' -----	143

Chapter Three: Masculinities in Exile: Existentialism and Abjection

I: Introduction -----	155
II: Trocchi, <i>Young Adam</i> and the Absurd Man -----	157
III: Abjected Masculinities: <i>Cain's Book</i> and <i>Trainspotting</i>	
i: just say no? junk, masculinity and the abject -----	170
ii: perverted language: perverted gender? -----	176
IV: Postscript: Supine Monologues -----	195

Chapter Four: Strategies of Cross-Writing I: Theory and Practice

I: Introduction -----	199
II: Crossing Culture	
i: performative dressing, performative writing -----	201
ii: some paradigms of cross-writing -----	205
III: <i>A Scots Quair</i>	
i: introduction -----	212
ii: realism versus symbolism -----	214
iii: metaphor and metonym -----	222
iv: the maternal metaphor -----	227
v: Chris Guthrie's hybridity -----	234

Chapter Five: Strategies of Cross-Writing II: Contemporary Scottish Practices

I: Introduction -----	242
II: <i>Morvern Callar</i> and <i>These Demented Lands</i>	
i: masquerade and masculinity -----	243
ii: the absurd woman -----	247
iii: mas(c)(k)ulinity -----	251

III: Christopher Whyte's *The Warlock of Strathearn*

i: overview -----	254
ii: 'uncanny' masculinities -----	258
iii: the testicular masculine or the supernatural phallus? -----	263
iv: 'all was as it should be'? -----	267

Conclusion -----	273
------------------	-----

Appendix: Robert Morris' <i>I-Box (open)</i> [1962] -----	276
---	-----

Bibliography

I: Primary Texts

i: glasgow fiction and related material -----	277
ii: men's dramas of the 1970s -----	278
iii: existentialism, addiction and abjection -----	278
iv: cross-writing -----	280
v: other primary texts -----	280

II: Secondary Texts

i: studies of gender and sexuality -----	281
ii: general criticism, theory and philosophy -----	286

Preface

I: Background, Theories and Strategies

i: general overview: approach and theoretical background

To trace masculinities in twentieth-century Scottish men's fiction, despite the apparent tautology of this formulation, is to attempt to give voice to what has previously remained silent in nationalist, materialist and even feminist approaches to the subject. It is also to acknowledge and participate in the recent explosion of men's studies, which, taking its impetus from feminism and queer theory, has undertaken the theorisation of masculinities in American and English literatures since the 1980s. In terms of Scottish literary studies, however, only in the past few years has the examination of representations of masculinity gained any impetus. The main project of this thesis is to reverse the critical orthodoxy by which male-produced Scottish texts are assumed to provide insight into human, national or class issues, but do not tell us anything about specifically masculine subjects, their relation to power and their difference amongst and within themselves. Its focus, then, is not merely twentieth century Scottish novels, but novels which can further be categorised as *men's texts* - that is to say, novels not only by men, or even about men, but to a large extent *for* men too.¹ What I hope to do with this rather broad definition is to reverse the criteria by which we have 'texts' on the one hand and 'women's texts' on the other, in order that the universalising impetus of androcentrism within traditional criticism be made visible and readable. As Peter Middleton writes,

Masculine bias in many existing concepts of subjectivity and power is an obstacle to [...] gender reflection. Men have after all written plenty about their subjectivity and power, but they have constantly universalised it at the same time, and assumed that the rationality of their approach was the sum total of rationality. Universality and rationalism were built into these concepts to avoid [...] disturbing self-examination by men. (Middleton 1992: 3)

¹ This bears echoes of David Rosen's project in *The Changing Fictions of Masculinity* to examine 'exemplary "male" texts, texts by and about men, the particular men of my focus' (1993: xvi). Rosen's focus is as deliberately limited as mine. While he is concerned with 'the English male heterosexual of fiction in a tightly limited time-culture span' (xv), my interest in the 'ideal' male reader of Scottish men's fiction, explored in more detail below, is similarly restrictive.

Although there are important works on men and masculinities from both straight and gay perspectives which date back to the 1960s, several American and English texts from the 1980s can be considered as axiomatic in the development of a challenge to the traditional assumption of universality in masculine subject-positions.² Perhaps the most oft-cited of these is *Men in Feminism* (Jardine and Smith 1987), a collection of papers which address the (still unresolved) problem of men's participation in, or appropriation of, feminist critical strategies. Prior to this, however, and in a more firmly literary context, Peter Schwenger's *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1984) constituted a pioneering examination of specifically masculine styles of writing. Although never describing himself as a 'man in feminism', Schwenger's analysis of the gender (and class) politics of men's texts from the perspective of a male critic effectively pre-empts many of the concerns of the current debate, and this thesis along with it. A year later, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985) contributed an incisive and theoretically sophisticated discussion to the subject. Her analysis of structures of male bonding in literary texts, uncovering the latent homoeroticism of such structures (a prime example of queer reading), is particularly crucial for this thesis in the development of my arguments in Chapter One. Meanwhile, in sociological terms, also important have been the attempts of R. W. Connell (1987), Michael Kimmel (1987) and Harry Brod (1987) to delineate approaches to gender in which the 'making of masculinities', to borrow Brod's title, becomes as valid an area of study as the construction of femininities, thereby mounting a fundamental challenge to the notion that maleness is a natural, pre-cultural given.³ All of these texts have helped pave the way for the publication of a number of important studies during the 1990s, written from a variety of theoretical perspectives and impinging upon a plethora of subjects, but all attentive to the need to provoke 'disturbing self-examination by men' and in that way relevant to the project of this

² Contrary to the general identification of the beginnings of men's studies with the 1980s, Peter F. Murphy argues that Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* [1960] actually constitutes the first explicit examination of representations of masculinity in a literary context, informing 'much critical thinking about men's roles in fiction' (Murphy 1994: 2). Fiedler's text is taken up in my discussion in Chapter One, III.iii below. Murphy's overview of the development of men's studies, incorporating literary criticism, history, sociology, psychology and queer theories, can be viewed as a more detailed alternative to the narrative I am sketching out here (Murphy 1994: 1-6).

³ While Connell did not publish a specific study of masculinities until 1995 (*Masculinities*), his *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics* (1987) can be considered, in its attempt to outline a 'systematic social theory of gender' (ix-x) in which masculinities can be explicitly examined, a companion piece to Kimmel's and Brod's editions.

thesis.⁴

As I have noted, however, the theorisation of masculinities in a Scottish context has been slower to develop. While two essays on the representation of masculinity in the fiction of William McIlvanney (Peter Humm and Paul Stigant 1989, and Jeremy Idle 1993) probably constitute the first individual attempts to engage with the critical challenge posed in America and England during the 1980s, it is not until the publication of *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, edited by Christopher Whyte (1995b), that such a challenge is faced on any scale. Whyte's volume includes, alongside feminist and queer readings of texts, essays which interrogate specifically the representation of straight masculinities in twentieth-century Scottish writing,⁵ a project which he developed further with the publication of the essay 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction' in 1998. More recently, Ben Knights' *Writing Masculinities* (1999) includes an analysis of James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines*, also addressed in Chapter Two of this thesis, while Berthold Schoene-Harwood's *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (2000) has chapters on Iain Banks, Alasdair Gray and Irvine Welsh which continue with Whyte's project.⁶ Although all of these contributions are invaluable, no substantial, dedicated application of theories of masculinity to Scottish texts is as yet available. As well as responding to the development of the debate outwith Scotland, then, this thesis hopes to go some way towards supplanting the void within.

Before outlining in more detail the manner in which this thesis intends to proceed, the two theorists who have most informed my study deserve some introduction. First of all, Judith Butler, in her pioneering deconstruction of categories of gender and sexuality in *Gender Trouble* (1990) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993), has been crucial to many of my arguments. Although Butler's ostensible field is the subject of feminism and its relationship to lesbian identities, her approach, informed in part by Michel Foucault's

⁴ Apart from Rosen's, Middleton's and Murphy's texts, cited above, and the work of Kaja Silverman and Judith Butler, to be addressed below, Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland 1990, Joseph Boone and Michael Cadden 1990, Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman 1994, and Thais Morgan 1994, all constitute vital contributions to the analysis of the place of masculinity within representations of sexual difference, and bear directly or indirectly on the project of this thesis.

⁵ For example, Whyte's own 'Fishy Masculinities: Neil Gunn's *The Silver Darlings*' (49-68) and Berthold Schoene's 'Angry Young Masculinity and the Rhetoric of Homophobia and Misogyny in the Scottish Novels of Alan Sharp' (85-106).

⁶ Also relevant here is Gerry Hassan's article on his experience of a Glasgow men's group, 'Bravehearts and Romantic Heroes: Reflections on Scottish Men and Masculinities Today' (1996).

1970s work on sexuality as an effect of discourse (Foucault 1990), offers the opportunity to theorists of masculinity to consider maleness as a fundamentally transformable, 'performative' position. By dismantling both the paternal and the heterosexual frames of reference in psychoanalytic accounts of the formation of gendered subjects, Butler shows that the straight male standard against which other genders and sexualities are rendered 'other' cannot itself be considered originary or beyond discourse. This is of capital importance to any approach to representations of gender, this thesis included, which not only attempts to make masculinity visible to itself, but seeks to privilege strategies of signification in which traditional, hegemonic modes of male subjectivity can be subverted and transformed.

Secondly, Kaja Silverman's *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992a) has become, like Butler's theories, an important source for analyses of masculinity in general and this study in particular. Silverman's examination of the relationship between masculinity and lack, traditionally a characteristic condition of femininity in psychoanalytic accounts of gender, is a productive strategy in the consideration of masculine subject-positions which stray from the norm. Her specific contribution to this thesis, however, has been her attempt to integrate materialist theories of ideology and identification with descriptions of gender formation. As shall be explored in more detail below, Silverman's concept of the 'dominant fiction', a hegemonic ideological 'reality' through which societies view themselves and which has at its basis an image of unimpaired male empowerment, is crucial to my argument. The novels I discuss are considered, in the final analysis, in the degree to which they reproduce or challenge this dominant fiction in their reception by male readers. In general terms, Silverman's inclusion of such categories as class and nationality in her analysis of gender, balancing throughout the influence of both social and psychic factors on the making of masculinities, is of paramount importance to my project.

ii: the 'ideal' reader

In the chapters which follow, I will continually come back to the concept of an 'ideal' heterosexual Scottish male reader whose interpretative collusion is required to consolidate the masculine bias - or 'masculinism' - most of the novels I discuss employ.⁷ If this seems a reductive tactic, especially in the light of the non-heterosexist

⁷ The term 'masculinism' will be explored in more detail below.

representations of one of the texts to be discussed in the final chapter, it is no more so than the very sexual/textual politics of the majority of Scottish men's writings which require this singular kind of reader in the first place.⁸ In any case, the heterosexual orientation of most of these men's texts intersects with the very identificatory axis I am attempting to articulate in relation to my own straight male identity. This impinges upon one of the most important aspects of any gender theory attempting to account for the production of masculinities: the difficulty of finding, as Joseph Boone has described it, the 'me' in 'men', the specific and personal masculine subjectivity within the universalising, and, for any thinking touched by feminism, rather negative category of maleness (Boone 1990: 12). If this thesis never gets to announcing precisely what that 'me' might be, it definitely proceeds according to where that 'me' *isn't* found in the representation of men, men supposedly just like me, with whom I share power and privilege, but in whom I cannot see myself reflected unproblematically. As Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland ask, 'What does it mean not to belong to that which it is assumed one belongs to?' (1990: 8). Refusing or contesting the position of assumed privilege I designate by 'ideal' reader, even while recognising the benefits it confers upon me should I choose to identify with it, forms the basis of my interpretative approach throughout this thesis.⁹

The impetus for such a reductive categorisation also stems from the apparent immutability of traditionally empowered straight male identity:

As a distinct social grouping of their own, heterosexual men especially have so far failed to emancipate themselves from the grip of traditional masculine ideals or imperatives. There is no straight male counterdiscourse that would compare with those of the gay and feminist liberation movements which originally emerged from a communal alliance across and beyond the restrictive boundaries of race, class and nation.

(Schoene-Harwood 2000: xi)

⁸ I am not attempting to claim that women cannot read or enjoy these texts, for clearly they do. The reasons why they do, however, are not within my remit to investigate; in any case, such an investigation would constitute yet another masculinist attempt to speak for women readers while ignoring the possibilities of a specifically male response.

⁹ Rosen is working along similar lines when he suggests that in 'read[ing] as a man [...] the man I construct is both oppositional and antagonistic. Feeling different from from [...] [the] protagonists in the works I read, I view their masculinities as different from mine. As the inheritor of their masculinities, I resist their defining me. Yet I appreciate the benefits of that inheritance, its enabling power' (1993: xvi).

In attempting to delineate the kind of ideal straight male reader most of these texts ostensibly address themselves to, then, I hope to begin a process of masculine articulation which uncovers the identificatory mechanisms which interpellate or produce such a reader, and in so doing attempt to circumvent the captivating impetus of masculinist discourses. In this way my own ostensible alliance with hegemonic masculinity, heterosexual- and male-identified as I am, becomes open to question and re-articulation.

Much of this also impinges on questions of economic privilege. The 'ideal' male reader is not only assumed to be heterosexual, but also middle class, or more exactly, middle class-identified. Certain kinds of educated or 'respectable' working-class male positions are also assumed to be encompassed by the appellation 'ideal'. This may do yet more violence to the conception of a plurality of possible masculine subject-positions, both traditional and subversive, yet it is in the unpacking of this monolithic reading-position that this thesis attempts to move towards a more transformatory reading of categories of maleness. If heterosexual masculinity generally has traditionally been reluctant to articulate its own gender specificity, bourgeois heterosexual masculinity, both economically and sexually dominant, has had even less reason to question its own assumed universality. Chapters One and Two, which focalise West Scottish novels by George Blake, James Barke, William McIlvanney and James Kelman, attempt to trace the contradictory logic whereby a middle-class straight male reader is appealed to in texts in which the representation of such an identity is highly problematic, subject to denigration or even erased altogether.

This points to a radical instability in the construction of hegemonic Scottish masculinities. Schoene-Harwood elaborates on the problem thus:

Within the imperial framework of English-Scottish relations, the Scottish male is already feminised as a disempowered native (br)other. His condition is one of subordinate marginalisation which, while sensitising him to the plights of the systematically oppressed, makes it all the more important for him to dissociate himself from the female in order not to compromise his masculinity even further. The result is a psychic split expressing itself in precarious and highly

conflictual assertions of the integrity of a self continuously embattled and destabilised by its own irrepressible alterity.

(2000: 105-6)

This is fine as far as it goes, but Schoene-Harwood does not account for the complexities of class identification in Scottish masculinities. As Chapters One and Two demonstrate, it is often the *empowered*, middle-class representations of manhood which find themselves feminised in a reverse discourse which privileges both the masculinity and Scottishness of working-class male subjects. Nevertheless, these texts seem to continue to address themselves to such an ambiguously privileged figure, objectifying the proletarian male character even as they elevate him to an empowered position. The insistence in Chapters One and Two not only on the heterosexuality and masculinity of this ideal reader, but also on his bourgeois, nationalist and to an extent religious sympathies, paves the way for an interrogation of the identificatory mechanisms which both consolidate and undermine such a figure's empowerment. It is the peculiar conjunction of privilege and lack inhering in such Scottish male subjects - in which I ostensibly include myself - which draws attention to the contradictory logic of male enfranchisement in these texts, and thus offers a way of deconstructing the myths of masculine empowerment and autonomy.

iii: materialism and psychoanalysis: an integrated approach to gender

The texts I have chosen to analyse are not intended to encompass a complete survey of twentieth-century men's fiction, but have instead been selected on the basis of the particular strategies they employ. Neither will I be utilising any metanarrative, any grand or unified theoretical design, on which to base my interpretations. Often, analytical devices will be dropped once their limits have been reached, to allow for a more fluid and shifting account of the masculinities I am attempting to trace throughout these texts. However, the theoretical materials utilised in Chapter One, which attempt to describe the identificatory mechanisms I have referred to above, will remain of importance throughout the thesis as the relationships between various texts and the ideal male reader is explored. Indeed, the movement in Chapter One between a materialist account of the Glasgow novels of James Barke and George Blake and a more gender-orientated approach focalises the manner in which a hybridity of Marxist and psychoanalytic discourses is necessary in uncovering the processes of identificatory reading.

That my reading of Blake's *The Shipbuilders* [1935] and Barke's *Major Operation* [1936] in Chapter One introduces the problem of masculinism via a somewhat tangential route also focalises a critical difference between the manner in which I am approaching these texts and the ways they have previously been read. The most significant element of these particular novels has heretofore been regarded as their class commentary, the central characteristic of the group of early twentieth-century Glasgow texts to which they belong, with the major critical concern being whether or not they fulfil the criteria of genuine 'Scottish working-class novels', as Jack Mitchell wrote in 1974 (cited in Burgess 1998: 112). The first part of my analysis in Chapter One attempts to deal with the class issues raised in these novels by recourse to Althusserian theories of ideology and of ideology in the realist text, even if only to show that such an analysis can only partially account for these novels, and that a gender-based reading is required to investigate their strategies more fully. The movement in this chapter thus attempts to represent the paradigmatic shift in Scottish literary criticism by which materialist (and nationalist) readings have become more gender orientated (as, for example, in the work of Manfred Malzahn and Christopher Whyte, whose essays on these novels will be referred to throughout), ending with a more comprehensive analysis of the structures of gender and sexuality in these texts (and especially as these impinge upon the representation of masculinities) than has been attempted before.

The theoretical basis of my materialist reading here is, as I have noted, the Althusserian theory of ideology. According to Althusser, ideological discourse is omnipresent throughout the social formation; Althusser himself admits speaking 'within' it as he tries to formulate a scientific discourse which steps outside of it (1971: 162). In this way ideology enjoys a certain invisibility, as the imaginary relationship to the mode of production which ideology represents is how its subjects believe themselves to 'really' be: the subject interpellated (or 'hailed') by ideology recognises what s/he naturally, freely, is (161, 169; see also Belsey 1980: 61). However, this subject-position is a misrecognition, an imaginary representation of the individual's relationship with their 'real conditions of existence' (Althusser 1971: 153) - i.e. with the relations of production which form the economic base of capitalist social formation. To believe oneself free in such a system, and to accept that freedom as real, is to be interpellated by the ideologies which uphold bourgeois dominance and thus reproduce the relations of

production, and which are realised through the Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs) of politics, religion, media, education, culture and so forth (136-7; 141-3). However, the ideologies as expressed through the ISAs can represent an individual's relationship with the economic base in contradictory ways. Ideological contradictions are exposed between ideologies in the ISAs, which are unified under a single dominant ideology - i.e. bourgeois ideology - but which are diverse in their various 'multiple, distinct and "relatively autonomous"' forms (141). The unity of the dominant ideology is also disturbed by its necessary inclusion and subordination of the ideologies of the dominated group in society, although it remains a point of debate whether these counter-discourses are subsumed within the dominant ideology, or if they enjoy a similar 'relative autonomy' to the ISAs (see Silverman 1992a: 25-7). These contradictions subvert ideology's claim to reality, allowing it to be recognised as ideology - as having a limited, partial grasp on truth.

Chapter One will develop this theory in relation to materialist conceptions of the literary text, and most specifically the realist text, in order to come to terms with the identificatory mechanisms at the heart of these 1930s Glasgow novels. Althusser's model of interpellation, or ideological identification, is also shown to be dependent upon psychoanalytic accounts of sexual identity, thus linking the class- and gender-based sections of this chapter. The importance of the manner in which ideology manifests itself in literature, for this thesis, is the way in which the realist narrative voice attempts to interpellate the reader, or foster an identification between the reader and itself. In the mechanism of ideology, as Althusser describes it, a double mirror-trick occurs. Individuals are not merely interpellated as subjects by ideology, but rather by an 'Absolute Subject' occupying the centre of ideology:

[T]he Absolute Subject interpellates around it the infinity of individuals into subjects in a double mirror-connexion such that it *subjects* the subjects to the Subject, while giving them in the Subject in which each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) the *guarantee* that this really concerns them and Him [...] (1971: 168)

Althusser's reference here is religious - 'God [...] defines himself as the Subject *par excellence*' (167) - but the theory can be adopted for other ideologies too. What is most significant, however, is the way in which this model resembles the imaginary basis of

the ego as described by Jacques Lacan. As Kaja Silverman maintains, the subject of ideology is essentially the subject as Lacanian psychoanalysis conceives it; the interpellative mechanism of ideological identification described by Althusser catoptrically relates to Lacan's account of the formation of the ego at the mirror stage (1992a: 16-28). Althusser's use of the term 'imaginary' also derives from Lacan; ideology and fantasy, being imaginary constructions lived as 'real' by the subject, are social and psychic components of the same mechanism.

In Lacan's theory, the mirror stage is the crucial point in pre-linguistic early life when the child first recognises its own image in the mirror, previously perceived as a *corps morcelé* or 'fragmented body' but now viewed as a more complete, more controlled version of itself (Lacan 1977a: 4). As Laura Mulvey writes, 'Recognition is [...] overlaid with misrecognition: the image recognised is conceived as the reflected body of the self, but its misrecognition as superior projects the body outside itself as an ideal ego, the alienated subject which, re-introjected as an ego ideal, prepares the way for identification with others in the future' (1989: 17). Imaginary identification, recognition and misrecognition in a mirror are also the component mechanisms of Althusser's theory of ideology. Yet for Althusser, the real which ideology masks is the economic base; for Lacan, the imaginary conceals the Symbolic order, governed by the phallic signifier and the Name-of-the-Father.¹⁰ Theoretical space can be created for considering these mechanisms together, thus attempting to account for class (along with nationality, religion, ethnicity), gender and sexuality together in the identificatory processes which constitute masculine identities.

iv: the 'dominant fiction' and the phallus

Kaja Silverman's work in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* seeks to rescue Althusser's theory from its restriction of all ideology within or beneath the umbrella of dominant, bourgeois ideology. Making the claim, after Ernesto Laclau and Jacques Rancière, for a conception of a broader societal subject, which more easily accommodates constructions of nationality, ethnicity and gender than Althusser's narrow class definition (1992a: 29), Silverman adopts Rancière's idea of a 'dominant fiction',¹¹ a reserve of hegemonic

¹⁰ In order to distinguish Lacan's concept of the Symbolic from literary definitions of symbolism, I retain Lacan's capitalisation of the term throughout the thesis. In the case of the 'imaginary', however, which Lacan also capitalises, I have opted to utilise the lower case only, as there is no need to differentiate it from the literary, Romantic signification of 'imaginary', which I do not adopt.

¹¹ Rancière comes up with the concept of the dominant fiction [*fiction dominante*] in an interview with

ideological discourses in which a society recognises itself as if in a collective mirror (30). She then exploits the theoretical slippage between the concepts of ideology and fantasy in an attempt to show how this dominant fiction negotiates between the psychic and the social, between the Lacanian Symbolic order and its gender differentiating law on the one hand, and the economic base on the other.

For Silverman, as for Judith Butler, the construction of heterosexual male and female identities hinges upon both prohibitive law (the incest taboo, along with, for Butler, the taboo against homosexuality) and the law of language. The prohibition of incest takes its specific form in our society in exogamic kinship relations structured around the exchange of women between families of patrilineal descent. This law is equated by Lacan with the Name-of-the-Father, the prohibitive node in the Oedipal triangle, a representation Silverman reads as historically variable (37). Less mutable, however, is the law of language which dictates universal castration for its subjects. Entry into language coincides with the birth of the unconscious, for the subject who speaks is separated from his words by the very act of speaking, divided between the *I* who speaks (the subject of enunciation) and the *I* who is spoken of (the subject of the statement, or *énoncé*) (Lacan 1979: 139). What is lost with language, therefore, is self-present meaning, the totality of imaginary identification enjoyed at the mirror-stage: for Lacan, 'it is not only man who speaks, but that in man and through man [the passion of the signifier] speaks' (1977c: 284).

The primary signifier in the Lacanian Symbolic, however, is the phallus, the sign of what is lost with Symbolic castration. The phallus, Lacan claims, is 'not a phantasy [...], an object, [nor] even less the organ, penis or clitoris, that it symbolises' (285). In this respect, the phallus is an ostensibly neutral term, a figure for power generally, and signifies the castration of biologically gendered men and women both (see Gallop 1985: 133-40). However, the phallus symbolises the penis for men more readily, in Lacan's theory, than it represents the clitoris for women. If the penis stands as a poor, inadequate substitute for the phallus, women's lack of this organ signifies a position which can only be subservient. Yet even for men the phallus 'can play its role only

Cahiers du Cinéma on French leftist film [1976], translated in Rancière 1977 (see bibliography for full details). He defines it as 'the privileged mode of representation by which the image of the social consensus is offered to the members of a social formation and within which they are asked to identify themselves' (28).

when veiled'; it 'inaugurates' its own raising to the status of an originary signifier 'by its disappearance' (Lacan 1977c: 288). As a primary signifier of power the phallus is necessarily invisible: like the concept of God, all subjects are constituted by it at the same moment as it excludes them.¹² But if the phallus is not the penis, what exactly is it that disappears? Lacan's formulation also makes sense when rendered as 'the phallus can play its role only when the penis is veiled'. The penis is a phallic substitute, but an imperfect one, subject to detumescence and therefore not in itself a very powerful organ. This would account for the host of phallic symbols: ties, sports cars, skyscrapers - even idealised male bodies, as Chapter One shall explore - which cloak the precariousness of masculine empowerment by producing exaggerated versions of the relatively insignificant organ the phallus most conveniently designates. The phallus here seems essentially double: it is at once an invisible, primary signifier and a host of visible representations - from the penis itself to symbols, metaphors and emblems for it - which can both confirm and question its primacy.

There is evidently a degree of slippage between penis and phallus in Lacan's theory. In the psychic events of early life which lead up to entry into the Symbolic order, the child first believes its mother to possess the phallus: the phallic mother is the locus of power in the young child's world. But the discovery of the mother's castration forms a test of desire which is decisive 'not in the sense that the subject learns by it whether or not he has a real phallus, but in the sense that he learns that the mother does not have it' (1977c: 289). This is the source of the castration complex: 'Here is signed the conjunction of desire, in that the phallic signifier is its mark, with the threat or nostalgia of lacking it' (ibid.). Again, the slippage between the penis - the 'real phallus' - and the Symbolic phallus confuses the apparent neutrality of the signifier and posits the penis as its originary signified. Judith Butler's work on 'The Lesbian Phallus' in *Bodies that Matter* hones in on this contradiction, showing how the mirror stage (the birth of the imaginary) and its consequences are inseparable from the constitution of genital (and binary) sexual difference, of male plenitude and female lack. The ego is a bodily *imago*, but the construction of this phantasm is dependent upon certain 'token' bodily organs - i.e. the male genitalia - which stand in a synecdochal relation to the imaginary totality of the body, and give the narcissistic moment of the mirror stage a particularly masculine construction (Butler 1993: 76-7). This analysis troubles the distinction between

¹² See Serge Leclaire's comparison of the concepts of God and phallus in an interview with Hélène Klibbe

imaginary and Symbolic, between a real body-part perceived as the foundation for the bodily totality and its raising to the status of a pure signifier. The phallus then becomes radically reappropriable, a ‘transferable or plastic property’ (62): body-parts other than the penis, along with prosthetic substitutes, can equally well represent it.

For Lacan, however, gender identity is dominated by the phallus. Being male or female is for him a profound illusion turning around a “‘to be’” and “‘to have’” and brought about ‘by the intervention of a “‘to seem’” (1977c: 289): neither men nor women possess the phallus, but men, in possessing a real penis, ‘seem’ to ‘have’ it, women do not, and thus men can disavow the lack Symbolic castration entails. In ‘being’ the phallus, women are signified as the object of the paternal law the Symbolic represents, the necessary lack which guarantees the illusion of ‘having’ men enjoy.¹³ If Lacan finds this situation comedic, pointing up the necessary failure of any such enterprise, the importance of the real penis in the schema, the slippage between the imaginary and the Symbolic even within Lacan’s theory, seems crucial in naturalising the illusory foundations of gender identity.

In this respect, Silverman finds it necessary to differentiate between the law of kinship and the law of language: in the latter, the phallus is necessarily lost, yet in the former, the position of the Name-of-the-Father is empowered, exempting masculinity from castration. The ‘dominant fiction’, then, in Silverman’s definition,

effects an imaginary resolution of this contradiction [i.e. a resolution which hinges upon ideological belief and misrecognition] by radically reconceiving what it means to be castrated [...] [It] calls upon the male subject to see himself, and the female subject to recognize and desire him, only through the mediation of images of an unimpaired masculinity. It urges both the male and the female subject, that is, to deny all knowledge of male castration by believing in the commensurability of penis and phallus, of actual and symbolic father (1992a: 42).

Thus Silverman’s concept of the dominant fiction has as its central image the unity of

(Leclaire 1979: 46; cited in Silverman 1992a: 43).

¹³ This discussion relies upon Butler’s interpretation of ‘having’ and ‘being’ the phallus in *Gender Trouble* (1990: 45-7).

penis and phallus, of specific masculinity and universal power, primarily framed within the terms of the ideology of the family, through reference to which the 'collectivities of community, town and nation' - crucial elements in Rancière's original definition¹⁴ - 'have all traditionally defined themselves' (ibid.). This becomes important in my attempt to relate structures of gender differentiation to contradictory ideological constructions of class and nationality. Insofar as the dominant fiction is determined by, and negotiates between, both economic and psychic factors - capitalist as well as Oedipal and Symbolic structures - contesting it, refusing or being unable to identify with the images it produces, contributes to a radical materialist *and* gender reading strategy which disturbs and transforms the determinate certainty of both the relations of production and the Symbolic Order. But since the penis-equated phallus is the dominant fiction's 'most vulnerable and yet most critical site', in that it 'radically reconceives what it means to be castrated' (50) by employing imaginary discourse to sustain its hegemony (even in the theory of the Symbolic itself), it is there, at the imagination of a ritually established yet utterly precarious male empowerment, that any truly transformative analysis will take place.

In this thesis, the phrase 'dominant fiction' as applied by Silverman will be substituted where appropriate by 'masculinism' and 'phallogocentrism', in order to emphasise the penis/phallus equation over other ideological elements. But insofar as the phallus does not simply signify the penis, but symbolises power and meaning generally - as Lacan claims, the phallus 'is the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire' (1977c: 287) - I will also be using the term 'phallogocentrism', as employed by Jacques Derrida, Luce Irigaray, Butler and others, to signify the manner in which masculine privilege is annexed to the construction of the logos. The logos signifies the word, specifically the Word of God, but generally also any abstracted ideal of absolute truth. In this way the Absolute Subject of ideology and the invisible signifying power of the phallus/logos, both god-like positions, become open to theoretical comparison.

Judith Butler's concept of 'the heterosexual matrix',¹⁵ through which gendered bodies are most readily intelligible, is also indispensable in analysing the heterosexual

¹⁴ See Rancière 1977: 28.

¹⁵ Butler's term is assembled from Monique Wittig's concept of 'heterosexual contract' and Adrienne Rich's notion of 'compulsory heterosexuality' (1990: 151 n. 6).

perspective through which these masculinist strategies operate. Butler is crucial in drawing attention to the performative nature of that straight male identity - the identity, in fact, in which I most readily, if problematically, find myself - which proclaims itself as originary and thereby masks its own construction (1990: 16-7 ff.). Butler's work, informed by Michel Foucault's interrogations of power structures, provides a more flexible, plural way of considering the gender-differentiating law - in its *generative* as well as its prohibitive function - than Silverman's or Althusser's, but I wish to retain the materialist dimension to my analysis because it more easily allows for a discussion of class and other identities in relation to gender and sexuality, as well as providing an established model of literature as a privileged site of interpellation and identification. If these two paths seem incommensurable - Foucault being presently more fashionable than the outmoded Althusser¹⁶ - I justify negotiating between them on a tactical basis. Schematically anyway, the progression from Althusser to Silverman to Butler and Foucault analogically represents the paradigmatic shift in Scottish literary studies I have already described, from primarily class- and nation-based readings of men's fictions, through analyses where gender considerations play a greater part, to the consideration of 'men's texts' with the full implications for the representation of gender and power which that concept entails.

v: the double logic of the phallus: the 'I-Box'

Throughout the thesis, I attempt to analyse the production of the dominant fiction in relation to the contradictory theory of the phallus as offered by Lacan. The fact is that the phallus is essentially plural - at once an entirely veiled, purely signifying symbol of power, and a host of representations which cannot be separated from, indeed are constitutive of (in the slippage between imaginary and Symbolic), the very signifier to which they are supposedly enthralled. That is to say, the veiled phallus is in fact a phallic representation; the veiling of the phallus precipitates displacement, metaphor and emblem for the masculinity it apparently governs but, in Lacanian terms, is not governed by. This thesis explores the double logic of the phallus as it manifests itself in both authoritative Absolute Subject positions - the pronounless omniscient realist narrator or the 'I' of first-person discourse, for example - and in subordinate subjectivities, the 'he'

¹⁶ As Silverman writes, '[T]he word 'ideology' may seem to exude the stale aroma of a theoretical anachronism' (1992a: 15). Her reappropriation of the concept, within a consideration of the psychic basis of gender identity, seeks to rescue it for a radical interrogation of the cultural imagining of heterosexual masculinity.

of the working-class male protagonist who represents the phallus but is not himself in a position of invisible authority. The dominant fiction attempts to negotiate between these positions in order to offer the ideal male reader points of identification which both confirm his detached authority and represent more visible, more 'obviously' masculine figures in which to (mis)recognise himself.

The 'I' pronoun is highly contestable, not only because it signifies the split between speaker and utterance, writer and graphic mark, but also due to its universalising strategy, of which the Cartesian *cogito* is one example. The argument that 'I' masks a specifically masculine subjectivity (a familiar strategy of masculinity's claims to universality) can be expounded in relation to a performance by the American artist Robert Morris, *I-Box* [1962].¹⁷ This piece also offers an articulation of the plural logic of the phallus as I conceive it.

In this work an image of the naked artist, standing upright and erect but with his penis dangling limply between his legs, hides behind an 'I'-shaped door. To open the door of the 'I' is to enact the splitting of the subject in language; the open 'I' is in fact two 'I's, one solid (the door) and one hollow (the doorway). To unpack the 'I' by opening the door is to confront the void on which it is founded: Symbolic castration. Yet not only is the void shaped by the 'I' itself - one cannot think one without the other - but it is supplanted by a rarely revealed anatomically male body, that of the artist himself. Further, this body is specifically white. As Richard Dyer notes,

The white man has been the centre of attention for many years of Western culture, but there is a problem about the display of his body, which gives another inflection to the general paradox [...] of whiteness and visibility. A naked body is a vulnerable body [...] The exposed white male body is liable to pose the legitimacy of white male power: why should people who look like that - so unimpressive, so like others - have so much power? (1997: 146)

Both in its articulation of maleness and whiteness, then, *I-Box* troubles the distinction between the Symbolic (the universalising, masking impetus of the 'I') and the imaginary (the white male body as (unconvincing) phallic representative).

In this way, the veiling of the phallus by the 'I' of the authoritative English-speaking masculine subject, in other words the detached and invisible figure of the artist, is represented (veiling-as-representation) by a door which opens (unveils) to reveal a particular masculine morphology at its heart. It becomes very difficult at this stage to think the phallus apart from its various articulations, either as a linguistic or bodily mark. Since the phallus is a phantasm, there is nothing behind the veil but another veil, never revealing the originary signifier. Indeed, 'veiling' gives way here to Butler's conception of performativity as the basis of gender identity, and it becomes possible to think of different performances of the phallus and of masculinity. In each case the phallus is differently constructed, with ideological power relations shifting between different historical and cultural contexts. Here, Morris' work troubles the 'I' of artistic authority - of mastery, autonomy and universality - precisely because the identificatory processes which interpellate this subject are produced within the imaginary discourses of race and gender. Thus the body of the artist, traditionally occluded from the artistic object, is exposed. The phallic 'I' then encloses an image of the male subject himself, his central constitutive organ dangling in a mimetic and synecdochal relation both to the rest of the body and to the 'I'-frame surrounding it, and thereby articulates the masculine specificity (English-speaking, male, white - in fact, the artist 'Robert Morris', known to the specialised persons attending the exhibition) masked by the universalising masculinist ideology.

This 'I', then, is readable as the Roman numeral for the number one, but to counter Luce Irigaray's insistence on the oneness - 'of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ' - privileged by the phallogocentric economy (Irigaray 1985: 26),¹⁸ it also splits into 'II' (the doorway and the door itself). Indeed, here I am always playing with a more-than-one: the artistic subject 'I', the void on which is founded the image of the artist, the objectification of the bodily representation, its penis - and the smile playing across the face of the artist, for this turns upon a joke. In this it is absolutely clear that the penis dangling slightly off-centre between Morris' legs is both at the centre of the phallic 'I' and yet utterly inadequate to it. Indeed, nothing could be less imposing, less authoritarian than this pathetic body-part; it droops rather than stands as a synecdoche

¹⁷ A still from Morris' piece, taken from Amelia Jones 1994: 556, is reproduced in the Appendix (p. 276). For Jones discussion of the work, see Jones 1994: 555-7.

¹⁸ See also the discussion of 'monologism' in Chapter Two, section III below.

for the bodily totality. So Morris grins, at attention but performatively flouting the convention which demands a straight face from privates on parade.

As Morris' work shows, the phallic law produces images which, as well as exaggerating or confirming masculinist power, can also mock or parody it, make the phallus double but transformed, as in a trick mirror in a house of illusions. Whether the phallus produces compensatory or transformative images in its imaginary representation, this thesis seeks always to unpack the 'I-Box' of its specific manifestations in the texts discussed. Here, however, I am aware that visual and textual representations of masculinity do not exactly cohere. As Roland Barthes notes in 'The Rhetoric of the Image', photographic representation differs from linguistic signification in that it is *analogical*:

[T]he relation between thing signified and image signifying in analogical representation is not 'arbitrary' (as it is in language), it is not necessary to dose the relay with a third term in the guise of the psychic image of the object. What defines [this] is precisely that the relationship between signified and signifier is quasi-tautological; no doubt the photograph involves a certain arrangement of the scene (framing, flattening, reducing) but this transition is not a *transformation* (in the way that a coding can be); we have here a loss of the equivalence characteristic of true sign systems and a statement of quasi-identity. (1977: 35-6)

Doubtless this early, structuralist Barthes ('The Rhetoric of the Image' was first published in 1964) could be taken to task for his dismissal of the framing, reduction and flattening of the photographic image. Yet Barthes is offering a theory of the image as both linguistics and 'general opinion' conceive it, and one which holds good in my attempt to negotiate between the visual and the textual: 'the image is representation' (32). In these terms visual arts, photography and the cinema offer a *vraisemblance* which written discourse cannot approximate.

On the other hand, the techniques of literary realism and naturalism - which most of the texts under discussion in this thesis employ - seek precisely to achieve such a *vraisemblance* and offer themselves as quasi-analogical representations. In this way,

theories of the image and of film, especially Laura Mulvey's Freudian interpretation of the spectatorial relationship between male viewer and male protagonist in narrative cinema,¹⁹ become applicable to literature and particularly crucial to the discussion of the effects of realism in this thesis. Yet the difference between written and visual imagery opens even the realist novel up to the possibility of a non-representative reading. In this way, while I will be to some extent dependent upon film theory and in particular the concept of the male gaze in scopophilic identifications, the written texts under discussion are also open to interrogation by discourses which emphasise the very fictivity of identity itself, which question those identificatory processes that transform fictivity into 'reality', and thereby investigate a plane of masculinist articulation threatened by the affirmative treachery of a language which can suspend any referent. It is this very possibility of language, its refusal to adhere to any fast referential anchor, and thus its threat to *vraisemblance*, which provides the transformative impetus literature (or deconstructive readings of it) can readily exploit.

vi: overview of chapters

In Chapter One, unpacking the 'I-Box' or unveiling the phallus involves revealing the masculinism of the assumed universal and omniscient narrative authorities in Barke's and Blake's novels. I explore the ways in which these phallic Subject-positions both attempt to interpellate a certain kind of male reader and establish a further homosocial bonding relationship, at least potentially erotic, between that reader and a more physical and specific type of working-class masculinity who stands as a redeeming, dominant fictional type of phallic representation. The dominant fiction is shown here to operate through specific discourses of class and nationhood distinctive to the texts discussed. The particular inflections of the representation of the proletarian subject are explored, examining the degree of eroticising objectification the male body is subject to even within a phallogocentric representational economy in which women are the ostensible objects of power. In this way, through readings of Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex, René Girard's discussion of the triangulation of desire, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's critical tracing of the ambiguities and disavowals of male homosociality, the slippages between patterns of identification, rivalry and desire are shown to be particularly telling for the male subject. The positions of 'having' and 'being' the phallus are demonstrated to circulate as much between men as they do within

¹⁹ See Chapter One, section III.ii below.

conventional heterosexual pairings in the Glasgow novels.

Chapter Two attempts to address the reiteration of such strategies in the post-1970s West Scottish novel, while tracing the extent to which the working-class male hero is now represented as increasingly isolated, cut off from the industrial context which once gave him meaning. In William McIlvanney's *The Big Man* [1985], the working-class subject differs from the impregnable or stoic working-class identities idealised by the earlier texts in that his pathetic tendencies are foregrounded. The manner in which this places the hero of *The Big Man* close to types of feminine identity is carefully policed by the text, which finally attempts to preserve his traditional masculine autonomy by recourse to humanising strategies. In McIlvanney, the bourgeois, third-person narrative voice relied upon in the earlier Glasgow novels is shown to persist, determining precisely the way in which the proletarian male subject is to be read. Yet this voice fails to offer the kind of veiled reading-position its ideal reader necessarily requires, because in the context of the particular discourses of class and nationality prevalent in Scotland since the 1970s, the ambiguity, in national and gender terms, of a bourgeois, Standard English-identified narrator is all too visible. James Kelman's novels, and in particular *The Busconductor Hines* [1984], attempt to do away with the value-systems inherent in third-person narration and thereby represent the working-class male subject as an authentic individual voice. Yet the manner in which Kelman's existential strategies collude with masculinist (and bourgeois) value-systems is shown to undo this project, not least in the way in which pathos once more seems to be the true domain of the proletarian male figure. Both these texts attempt to offer an account of the West-Scottish hard-man figure which critiques his economic objectification, but in so doing they also appeal, consciously or not, to an economically empowered male reader for a sympathetic, and restorative, act of interpretation. In the case of *Hines*, the very act of excluding such a reader from representation, along with erasing the signifiers of his privilege from the narrative voice, facilitates the consolidation of his detached and invisible phallogocentric authority as he participates in bestowing a redeeming sense of humanity on the dehumanised subjects of the fictions. Thus Chapter Two attempts to trace the contradictory signifiers of masculinity, femininity and humanity at work both in the allocation of pathos and in the adoption of existential intertexts and strategies. This enables a further deconstruction of the promise of the dominant fiction, already precariously mobilised in the textual representation of profoundly lacking masculinities.

Chapter Three continues the critique of existential masculinism in its analysis of the texts of Alexander Trocchi and Irvine Welsh. The relationship between Trocchi's first novel *Young Adam* [1954] and Albert Camus' theory of the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus* [1942] exposes a gendered schism in Camus' thought, which at once attempts to preserve masculine autonomy while opening up the male subject to forces of feminine irrationality and undecidability. This places the privileged male narrator-figure of existential monologism,²⁰ and with him the processes of identificatory reading, under considerable strain. As the chapter moves on to consider two novels of heroin addiction, Trocchi's *Cain's Book* [1961] and Welsh's *Trainspotting* [1993], Julia Kristeva's concept of the abject is utilised to describe the particularly precarious subjectivity the addicted male outsider-figure occupies. However, the extent to which such abjected, exiled masculinities seriously undermine and transform the dominant fiction, a possibility concomitant with the texts' shift away from classic realist form, is curbed by the retention of misogynist and heterosexist points of readerly identification. In this way, while on the one hand the texts of Trocchi and Welsh appear to revise the assurances of masculinist power, on the other they remain firmly within its terms. In the case of Welsh in particular, Scottish working-class masculinity becomes visible at its most pathological and abjected, continuing the process by which the idealised and heroic masculinities of the earlier Glasgow novels become more open to lack and failure in the hands of McIlvanney or Kelman. The fictional analysis of the working-class hard man thereby proceeds towards announcing that figure's own brutal self-termination, locked within the terms of a phallogocentric logic which both empowers and subordinates him. Just as the 'straight' (i.e. sober) male reader finds himself in a hesitant or negative relationship to the drug heroin, so he pauses uncomfortably in front of an image of masculinity in a relationship with heroin (or with similar modes of abjectivity) which threatens the very assurances of normative male identity. Yet Welsh's texts also utilise a narrative hierarchisation which is entirely familiar to such a reader, and which seeks to keep the abjected hard man in his proper place even while it proclaims his violent alterity. In this way, despite being presented with a hopelessly degraded and underprivileged image of himself, the ideal male reader is still the one most obviously being talked to and affirmed by Welsh's novels. Chapter Three closes with a postscript on Welsh's second novel, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* [1997], and Alasdair Gray's 1982

Janine [1984], two texts which provide a particular insight into abjectivity in their use of the trope of 'supine' masculinities. Gray's novel also links forward to Chapter Four in its presentation of a male character who eventually embraces his own innate femininity.

In Chapters One, Two and Three the representational strategies of the novels under discussion attempt to defend their masculine subjects, however unsuccessfully or contradictorily, from the taint of femininity or homoeroticism. Chapters Four and Five depart from this pattern in focalising men's texts in which the personas of women are adopted. The theoretical possibilities of this strategy of literary transvestism, or 'cross-writing', are discussed in detail in section II of Chapter Four, where various psychoanalytic and deconstructive approaches to the topic are considered. I attempt to offer an account of cross-writing which emphasises the performativity of masculine subjectivities. Rather than being a tactic which simply reaffirms male identity as originary and controlling - as Thais Morgan writes, it is often assumed 'that men always reaffirm their masculinity [...] when they write the feminine' (1994: 3) - writing in the guise of the feminine 'other' can produce subject-positions which are hybrid and transformatory, offering an unfamiliar image to the ideal male reader and thereby disturbing the assurances of dominant fictional identificatory reading. Section III applies this theoretical position to Lewis Grassie Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* [1933-5] in an attempt to deconstruct the two main interpretative approaches - the masculinist, symbolic reading and the feminist, realist analysis - with which it has previously been rendered intelligible. Both these approaches, I argue, have failed to confront the gender hybridity of its central female protagonist, Chris Guthrie. Utilising French feminist conceptions of the maternal metaphor, I attempt to show how Chris Guthrie is represented as a woman within a traditional phallogocentric economy while at the same time embodying contradictory signifiers of masculinity and femininity which critique any essentialised view of her gender status.

Chapter Five continues with the cross-writing theme in analysing three contemporary Scottish men's texts, Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* [1995] and *These Demented Lands* [1997], and Christopher Whyte's magical realist novel *The Warlock of Strathearn*

²⁰ The term 'monologism', adapted from its Bakhtinian context by Donald Wesling, is discussed in detail in Chapter Two, section III.

[1997].²¹ While Warner's eponymous heroine often appears to be a mere mask for a veiled phallic narrative authority, his first novel in particular exploits, like Trocchi's *Young Adam*, an intertextual relationship with Camus' theory of the absurd which deconstructs its apparent masculinism and produces an ambiguously gendered absurd figure. *These Demented Lands*, meanwhile, represents a male protagonist, an ambiguous stand-in for the author, who appears alongside Morvern in a similarly undecidable, performative light. Ultimately, however, the transformative possibilities of straight masculinity are best represented in *The Warlock of Strathearn*. Its heterosexual male hero can be regarded throughout as an uncanny figure in both spiritual and sexual terms, a reading bolstered by his connection to a gay male figure in the narrative frame. The 'straight' warlock, then, is already represented as a cross-written, performative kind of masculinity, before undergoing a further crossing in which he transforms himself into a female, lesbian persona. Whyte's novel, in its mobilisation of contradictory masculine, feminine and sexual signifiers in the presentation of one apparently single figure, and in its refusal of a heterosexist frame of reference, finally offers itself as a Scottish men's text which affirms plural possibilities for transforming the ideal straight male position.

My inclusion of a novel in the final chapter which can be (however reductively) categorised as a gay text could be taken as a token attempt to append an 'alternative' account of masculine identity to the thesis, and thus an insidious repetition of the marginalisation of gay male subjectivities.²² Indeed, it could be questioned why other Scottish gay texts were not included in my analysis; Whyte's debut novel *Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin* [1995], for example, along with Joseph Mills' *Towards the End* [1989], are examples of Glasgow novels which run counter to the straight male tradition I focus on in Chapters One and Two. This is certainly a crucial avenue for exploration in the continuing process of tracing masculinities in Scottish men's fiction. However, my focus here is the 'ideal' (straight) Scottish male reader - a designation in which I ostensibly include myself - most obviously required by the masculinist strategies of the dominant trend in Scottish men's writing. As I argue above, this is the position which has remained most silent about itself and is therefore in most need of unpacking. To attempt to offer a definitive account of male identities

²¹ My analysis of this text was written without any reference to, or intervention from, its author, who is also my supervisor.

²² Schoene-Harwood makes a similar point about his choice of texts in *Writing Men* (2000: xiv).

sexually 'other' to that would be to run the risk of acting out yet another instance of masculinist appropriation. That Whyte's novel offers the most radical rearticulation of straight masculinity of any text in this thesis does point up the value of discursive positions constituted as 'other' by heterosexist masculinism, but does not occlude straight male-authored Scottish texts from adopting similarly effective deconstructive strategies.

Preface (cont.)

II: Acknowledgements

The completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the unstinting support, advice and encouragement of my supervisor, Dr Christopher Whyte. For financial assistance I acknowledge the SAAS but most especially my parents, Bob and Marieanne McMillan, without whom I would have been forced to go part-time and would have taken even longer to finish. Their emotional support has also been crucial. Other indispensable emotional and practical support has also come from Laura Molloy and Sorchia Dallas, whom I hope have not suffered too much in offering to 'be' the phallus for me as I have struggled with the ambiguous task of mastering my subject.

III: Declaration

Chapter Three was partly developed from a paper published as 'Junked Exiles, Exiled Junk: Irvine Welsh and Alexander Trocchi' in Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (eds) *Space and Place: The Geographies of Literature* (Liverpool: John Moores University Press 1997), 239-56.

Chapter One

Glasgow Fiction and Modes of Masculine Identification

I: Introduction: Gender and Class

In the first instance, *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* can be analysed together according to the manner in which they fulfil the criteria of ‘men’s texts’ I outlined in the introduction: that is, not only are they novels written *by* men and *about* men, but they both privilege the category of heterosexual masculinity as it manifests itself in both male-male and male-female relationships in the narratives, and in that sense offer themselves to (heterosexual) men as readers. In fact, both novels centre on pairs of male protagonists whose parallel and intertwining lives form the main dynamic in the texts, with their individual relations with women occupying the margins of the narratives. It will also be seen that the narrative voices employed by both texts are particularly masculinist, despite being ostensibly detached, neutral and omniscient, and that this narrative stance organises the power structure within which the masculinities in the novel become intelligible, and within which the male reader is required to recognise himself in order that the texts make some coherent sense. This narrative authoritarianism can be viewed as proper to the mode of realism both texts employ, albeit in different ways, and this chapter will take account of the gender factors inherent in that form.

However, both these novels also participate in the imagining of a specific geographical, cultural and temporal milieu: the Glasgow of the inter-war industrial and economic Depression. Both were published within this period itself, *The Shipbuilders* in 1935 and *Major Operation* in 1936, and each offers a representation of Glasgow’s economic and cultural relationship with Scotland, Britain and the British imperial project at this traumatic time, with particular emphasis on relations between economic groups. It is significant for this analysis that neither novel has made it into the canon of twentieth century Scottish literature, in publishing terms at least; while *The Shipbuilders* has recently been republished (1993), *Major Operation* has remained practically unknown and unread, perhaps better remembered as a play published in 1943, and reissued only once as a novel, by Collins, in 1955. While it may be tempting to postulate the non-

canonicity of these novels as a function of their qualitative poorness, this would not only do them a great disservice (both are accomplished, conscious literary works, and *Major Operation* at least is stridently ambitious), but would overlook the fact of their non-conformity with the traditions and philosophies of the Scottish cultural Renaissance. That is to say, as far as twentieth-century Scottish literature is concerned, the rise of a worthwhile urban, specifically Glasgow-situated realism belongs to the 1970s, to writers such as James Kelman and beyond;¹ prior to this, and most importantly prior to the post-WWII period which signalled the final decline of the Renaissance as an identifiable movement, significant Scottish writers were concerned with the rural, and constructions of Scottish identity centred around it. As Christopher Whyte comments,

Removal to the city induces a kind of amnesia, and however recently transplanted, the characters in a Glasgow novel rarely have a sense of coming from somewhere. The trauma of industrialisation causes a hiatus in memory.

The Scotland [*sic*] Renaissance Movement, at least in its initial phase, is overwhelmingly preoccupied with rural Scotland. When it does turn aggressively to industrial life, as in Gibbon's *Grey Granite* (1934), the conclusion brings a return to the land. (1990: 318-9)

Manfred Malzahn, contrastingly, has sought to locate both novels within the context of the Renaissance (1990: 202); as my analysis will go on to show, there is some justification for this given the extent to which *The Shipbuilders*, at least, addresses itself to the problem of national identity. However, it is clear that such a view has not been widely shared, and the category of 'Glasgow novel' seems a more useful, if provisional, genre identification.² Both *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* appeared in a period when several other novels concerning themselves with Glasgow, and most specifically working- or under-class Glasgow, surfaced for the first time, including earlier instances like Patrick MacGill's *Children of the Dead End* [1914] and *The Rat-Pit* [1915], as well

¹ For praise of the innovation of Kelman in relation to urban, working-class fiction, see eg. Craig 1993: 99 and Klaus 1989: 40. My analysis of Kelman in Chapter Two, section III below, however, attempts to challenge such critical views.

² In anticipation of the gender-based section of this chapter, such a genre identification must be qualified as particularly masculinist. While not all of the examples I cite are written by men, it must be acknowledged that alternative kinds of Glasgow novel were being produced by women in the early twentieth century. Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door* [1920] and the *Camomile* [1922], for example,

as the more contemporary *Hunger March* by Dot Allan [1934] and the most famous example, Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* [1935]. The clustered publications of the latter of these texts, including the novels being analysed here, around the period 1934-36, is certainly interesting, but probably more significant are the various demands for novels treating ordinary Glasgow life realistically or naturalistically, 'after the manner of Zola', which date back to the early part of the century (cited in Burgess 1998: 107). Whyte associates the Glasgow novel with a type of naturalistic realism 'traditionally associated with brutal and seamier themes [...] appropriate to a middle-class author's perception of working-class life' (1990: 319). Both Barke's and Blake's novels are consistent to some extent with this view, justifying an analysis which examines the contingencies and contradictions between the realist form the narratives take and the ideological standpoints from which they are narrated. In this sense, both texts call for a class interpretation as well as, or along with, a gender one. However, in terms of a concern with national identity and its location, these novels may have more common ground with the literature of the Renaissance than critics have been prepared to give them, and along with middle-/working-class identities, constructions of Scottish/English and urban/rural positions will be regarded as crucial in their discursive strategies. If, in the final analysis, these novels are to be regarded as failures in the clumsy and contradictory manner in which they neglect to satisfactorily resolve the varying materials from which they are composed within the realist form, this failing can be viewed as an ideal starting-point for uncovering the masculinist identificatory mechanisms at the heart of the ideological projects they seem most obviously to be trying to achieve.

Before going on to consider the question of masculinism and related structures, therefore, I wish to begin my analysis with a primarily materialist, class-based interpretation of these texts. This will enable me to discuss further the concept of ideological discourse as it appears within the realist forms employed by Barke and Blake, while opening out contradictions in the novels which can be explored further in a gender-based reading. In so doing I will largely by-pass the question of gender, indeed postponing several aspects of analysis to a point where such issues can be tackled more successfully. By this I mean to postulate that an exploration of forms of identificatory reading in relation to discourses of class and nation in the novels is essential in

understanding similar structures in the masculinist strategies they employ. This enables the development of a theory of masculinities which bridges the gap between materialist and gender interpretations of discourse, negotiating between social and psychic factors in the production of the texts (by which I mean as much in their reading as in their creation). I am not suggesting that the materialist analysis reveals the primary 'truth' of these novels, but rather that it uncovers structures of male bonding which underpin the contradictions the class-based ideologies are subject to. This, as I have suggested in the Preface, enacts the shift in the history of Scottish critical interpretation whereby urban fiction begins to be regarded as offering significant perspectives on gender as well as relations of class.

Perhaps the most glaring failure of both of these novels is the manner in which they so overtly declare the particular class-based ideologies to which each attempts to adhere. In order to explore this further, however, I need to come to terms with the way in which Althusser's theory of ideology, as outlined in the Preface, relates to literature. If literature is part of the cultural Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), how does it participate in the reproduction of the economic base? In which ways do realist fictions, and most specifically Barke's and Blake's novels, participate in the construction of an illusory ideological 'reality'? And, first of all, how can we recognise ideology in literature if it is inserted in an Apparatus which seeks to maintain its own invisibility and thus attempts to guarantee its success?

Chapter One (cont.)

II: Ideology in *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*

i: the 'internal distantation' model

Althusser has suggested that some forms of art, which seem best represented by the realist novel, allow us to 'see' (but not 'know') the ideology from which they are produced precisely because their authors stick so intently to their political points of view that they produce an 'internal distantation' in its ideological form (1971: 204).³ Novelists like Balzac, Tolstoy and Solzhenitsyn, for Althusser, are committed to representing 'the "lived" experience of individuals' - i.e. representing ideology masquerading as life - but because of their absolute belief in their particular political perspectives, manifested in the narrative voices of their texts, such a commitment to realism produces a critical distance in the ideology which allows the reader to 'see' it as ideology (206). To put this another way, contradictions between any particular ideological project expressing itself in the narrative voice, and the realist desire to record and describe experience across the ideological spectrum, allows ideology in the narrative to be seen for what it is, a relative and provisional mechanism of identification.

This model can be applied to both *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* in that each is committed to the realist project of representing the "lived" experience of individuals' - which is not to say that the novels reflect 'real' experience, but that they transcribe ideological representations of the real - across society. In what makes this pair of novels unique amongst other works of Glasgow fiction of the period, each attempts to integrate contrasting reactions to the historical crisis of the inter-war slump by pairing two central characters from opposite ends of the social spectrum, i.e. representatives of both capital and labour, in close relationships: in *The Shipbuilders*, Leslie Pagan, the owner of Pagan's shipyard, and Danny Shields, a riveter initially employed at Pagan's; and in Barke's novel, George Anderson, a coal merchant, and Jock MacKelvie, a 'red-leader' by trade (the job involves wire-brushing and painting boats in dock), and a revolutionary figurehead of the unemployed (another kind of red-leader). In this way the central male pairings in the novels take on an inter-class form, and the texts' examination of

masculinity takes place within particular representations of the class system. In each of these novels, the claim to realism resides in their attempt to describe the fact of the Depression, which is mobilised as a crisis upon which are predicated the fates of the respective characters. In *The Shipbuilders*, the closure of Pagan's shipyard becomes the basis of the break-up of the economic relationship between Leslie Pagan and Danny Shields; in *Major Operation*, the recession claims the business, privilege and status of George Anderson, and provides the scene of the ascendancy of Jock MacKelvie as a workers' leader.

However, each novel also expresses a contrasting political point of view. *The Shipbuilders* begins with Pagan and Shields strongly bonded together: both served in the same unit in WWI, Pagan as officer and Danny as batman, and now Pagan is Danny's employer. But the harsh realities of the Depression severely test their relationship, with the closure of the shipyard at the beginning of the novel requiring that Pagan and Shields be split. The former, however, resists the separation:

And must he, too, say that fatal goodnight - Danny Shields, who had been his batman from the beginning of the war to its end and was his friend, bound to him by ties innumerable and strong? They had shared danger, degradation, and folly. Above the relationships of master and man, officer and private, they had lived together every emergency of the masculine world; Danny Shields ever with the desperate humour of the Western Scot on his lips, the grin of inexhaustible mischief on his face, and courage and steadfastness in his simple heart - a man. (Blake 1993: 10)

This passage, in positing an absolute bond between the two men 'above the relationships of master and man', will be taken up again in the next section in a closer analysis of its implications for gender. But simultaneous with the declaration and valorisation of male bonding here is the representation of the political ideology of the novel as a whole. Troubling the text's identification as a 'proletarian novel',⁴ the ideology of *The Shipbuilders* reveals itself as essentially bourgeois-liberal by positing a single, mutually beneficial purpose for both classes. This expresses the point of view of the liberal

³ For the difference between 'seeing' and 'knowing' ideology, i.e. the difference between perceiving its presence and understanding it conceptually, see 205.

⁴ See Burgess 1998: 107-13, and Malzahn 1990: 193-4.

political economist, the James Mill of *Elements of Political Economy* [1826], which conceives of an original bond of reciprocal harmony between bourgeois and proletariat, according to which the profits of capitalism ‘may be regarded as the genuine effect of labour and capital in co-operation’ (Mill 1966: 253). Pagan and Shields symbolise this co-operation in cementing a bond which attempts to survive an economic and social situation that threatens and eventually breaks it. If the bond represents the political ideology of the novel, the commitment to tell the bond-breaking story of the Depression proper to the realist form creates an internal distance in it, suspending interpellative identification and enabling the reader to ‘see’ it as ideology.

Thus Malzahn comments that ‘Progress upsets the essentially static value systems of Leslie Pagan as of Danny Shields’, and that Blake, ‘in spite of his attempt at realism, at getting close to the reality of both, does [not] in the end [...] really manage to come to terms with his subject at all’ (1990: 201). In this, ‘getting close to the reality of both’ interferes with the ideological project of positing the unity of both, and introduces a critical distance into that ideology, allowing us to see it as such a ‘static value system’ in contrast with the period of intense class conflict it attempts to represent. Thus, when Leslie Pagan postpones his last goodbye and joins Shields for a drink with his now-redundant workmates, he realises that his friendship with the workers ‘would have troubled his father, who [...] saw industry as a stern battlefield, with Capital and Labour as implacable and natural enemies’ (Blake 1993: 8). Pagan’s loyalty to Danny, in a sense, contradicts the real interests of his class. So too *vice versa*: when Danny accepts Pagan’s partisan offer of continuing work at the closing yard, some of his younger colleagues take ‘the trouble to make him feel ashamed and angry’ over their perception of his betrayal (57). As the novel progresses, Danny is more and more let down by Pagan, and in the end cannot accept his offer of work in England. These descriptions, ‘getting close to the reality of both’, seem to expose the tentative, partial nature of the narrative ideology and undermine the entirely idealistic manner in which the novel imagines the Depression. Pagan, travelling on the now completed *Estramadura*, the last ship his yard is to produce, renegotiates a confrontation with the decay of Clydeside through sentiment and nostalgia, as the text articulates its own version of a Renaissance conception of the golden age:

It was a tragedy beyond economics. It was not that so many thousands of homes lacked bread and butter. It was that a

tradition, a skill, a glory, a passion, was visible in decay and all the acquired and inherited loveliness of artistry rotting along the banks of the stream. (118)

It is the nostalgic investment in traditions, skills, glories and passions of this type that reaffirms the co-operative bond between capital and labour, which in the case of the Clydeside shipyards was essential to the building of the British Empire (Unger 1981: 26-7), while also conjuring the crisis which threatens the bond 'beyond economics'. If this reveals the ultimate illusion of Mill's bourgeois-liberal ideology, it does so because the narrative must repeatedly show what its ideology cannot assimilate: a tragedy *of* economics, of empty order-books and unemployment, placing capital and labour at increasing loggerheads and, indeed, finally separating Pagan and Shields. Nevertheless, in passages like this, the narrative persists in attempting to imagine otherwise.

Marx, with reference to Mill, described the ideal unity in co-operation of bourgeois-liberal discourse as 'the original state of paradise' (Marx and Engels 1978: 98). Of course, the Marxist reading of society emphasises the exact opposite of this paradisaical situation, that is, the original antagonism of bourgeoisie and proletariat, and this undoubtedly forms the political position of James Barke's *Major Operation*. This position echoes the more defensively capitalist point of view Leslie Pagan ascribes to his father in *The Shipbuilders*, noted above. As Marx and Engels claim in *The Communist Manifesto*, 'Society as a whole is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other' (1978: 474). While *The Shipbuilders* begins with its capitalist and worker still essentially bonded together, *Major Operation* opens with George Anderson and Jock MacKelvie as strangers, divided by the antagonistic class nature of society.

Major Operation closes, however, at the funeral of George Anderson, with Jock MacKelvie reciting these words from the *Manifesto*:

'In times when the class struggle nears the decisive hour, the process of dissolution going on within the ruling class [...] assumes such a violent, glaring character that a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands.' (Barke 1955: 491; Marx and Engels 1978: 481)

MacKelvie's citation theoretically accounts for what has taken place in the course of the novel. Due to the recession, Anderson's coal business has gone into bankruptcy with no hope of recovery, but by a happy accident he finds himself in the same hospital ward as MacKelvie, who recognises that such a diminished bourgeois figure might be ripe, to continue the words of the *Manifesto*, for going 'over to the proletariat' and 'comprehending theoretically the historical movement as a whole' (Marx and Engels 1978: 481):

A Second City business man who had lost heavily through the depression. Obviously one of the well-intentioned business men, quick to offer the assurance of a willingness to see all sides of a question. MacKelvie reasoned that if he were badly hit by the depression he might be ready to listen to reason. (Barke 1955: 291-2)

Thus MacKelvie attempts to educate the luckless Anderson, abandoned by his class (234) and therefore capable of coming round to the point of view of the proletariat. In the hospital, Anderson encounters this class of men for the first time - 'he had never known the mind and habit of the working class [...] He had always instinctively recognised the gulf that lay between [them]' (193) - but soon begins to see that the proletariat 'were in every way superior to his class' (316). Despite coming round to MacKelvie's viewpoint to the extent of being able to regard his estranged wife and her lover, the playwright Fred Rowatt, as 'class enemies' (392), Anderson suffers great doubts in the period following his recovery from the surgery, and drifts away from MacKelvie and the movement as soon as he achieves a relative degree of comfort. Finally, however, he gives his life for the movement, being trampled by a horse in attempting to fulfil an 'overwhelming desire to protect MacKelvie' on the occasion of a march (489-90). The novel closes by postulating Fred Rowatt as a possible future proletarian-identified agitator, and thus keeps alive the possibility of the historic mission of the workers bearing fruit or, rather, giving birth, in tune with the novel's symbolic schema. The 'major operation' of the title is one performed not only on Anderson's body by the surgeons, and on his mind by MacKelvie, but is also scheduled for the Second City itself which, it turns out, is a 'monstrous hermaphrodite [...] in labour' (229). The city is to give birth to 'the stirring of new life and new hope [...] seething and discontent' which lies beneath its surface (230).

If this is the novel's political point of view, then I am faced with an immediate problem: how can it be revealed as ideological when ideology functions precisely to mask these antagonistic class relations, and when Marxism proclaims such views as scientifically founded and thus outside ideology? In a polyphonic method, the novel transcribes a range of ideological positions, cataloguing 'the "lived" experience of individuals'. In the same ward as MacKelvie and Anderson are a number of working-class types, apparently there to foreground Anderson's middle-class status. However, none of these are identified with revolutionary proletarian positions: MacGonachan, the guilty Catholic, Gloag, the bitter old man, MacGeechan, the 'patriarch of the Scottish peasantry', MacMaster, the hard-man figure, the inexperienced Black Watch mother's boy, and Duff, the alcoholic thief (167-73), all take their places within subordinate ideology as willing subjects, some resisting to various degrees but all assenting to the inevitability or rightness of their place in the social order. Thus Duff, joining Anderson and MacKelvie in a debate over religion versus materialism, sides with MacKelvie's Marxist stance but articulates his position through a sectarian Protestant ideology: 'I often wondered where the Nazis got their inspiration but I might have known they could get it nowhere else than from the papes' (309). Duff's 'philosophy' - 'let it lay: why worry: you'll get what's coming to you and you'll get it in the neck' (328) - is an excellent example of Calvinist ideological discourse, wherein 'you' are required to recognise yourself as living within a predetermined universe, free to give up responsibility and willingly, passively submit. Against this, however, MacKelvie's arguments appear more detached, philosophical, theoretical. Unfazed by any argument, he dispatches historical materialism like a talking book. Despite having him admit that he's had to "simplify [his] case so that it almost became too naïve to be adequate" (310), the novel privileges MacKelvie's point of view over all other, blinkered versions of the truth:

There was much in the world that worried and annoyed MacKelvie. But there was nothing he did not understand. Rather there was nothing he reckoned that could not be understood. There was no mystery about his universe. His world was the everyday world of reality. He could recognise no other world. (141-2)

Paradoxically, however, this is the point at which the scientific-materialist intentions of

the novel begin to founder. Much of the obviousness with which the novel's discourse and symbolism can be recognised as ideology and not science can be said to be down to the historical distance from which a reader in the 1990s approaches the text, equipped with knowledge of the failure of any revolutionary project in Clydeside or, for that matter Britain, over the course of the century. But it is also because significant types of language in the novel are ideological rather than theoretical. Their success hinges upon the degree to which individuals are interpellated by them as subjects recognising the unarguable truth of their propositions. The descriptive symbolism of the Second City in labour is a case in point,⁵ along with the discourse of the protest marches which take place at crucial points in the narrative. Attending his first march as a member of the South Partick Unemployed Movement, George Anderson finds he cannot alter his essentially middle-class 'manners, address and speech' (396), and thus feels 'ashamed and self-conscious that he could not bring himself to shout a slogan' (401). To shout a slogan - in this case, 'Down with the means test' - is to repeat ideological discourse, proclaiming oneself as a subject against the state yet within the terms of its social policy, while submitting to a greater collective cause, that of the victims of the legislation, the proletariat. That Anderson cannot voice that ideology signifies his uncertain interpellation by it, but when he finally does commit, in the moment of his death, he picks up a 'red flag emblazoned with a yellow hammer and sickle' - the emblem of the cause - and holds it as he pushes MacKelvie from beneath a police horse, indeed knocking the policeman over with the flagpole (489). Where Anderson cannot speak, he waves a flag, a gesture which can only be ideological.

Ideology, in this sense, is a battleground for both classes: Althusser, citing the example of Lenin's 'anguished concern to revolutionise the educational Ideological State Apparatus', claims that '*no class can hold State power over a long period without at the same time exercising its hegemony over and in the State Ideological Apparatuses*' (1971: 139). That is to say, to seize power, the revolutionary proletariat must control ideology. In keeping with this, as I have noted, Althusser perceives his own Marxist

⁵ Althusser comments thus on the Marxist base-superstructure model: 'The greatest disadvantage of this representation of the structure of every society by the spatial metaphor of an edifice, is obviously the fact that it is metaphorical: i.e. it remains *descriptive*' (1971: 130). Insofar as Althusser goes on to distinguish this descriptive 'theory' from a potential theory (without inverted commas, therefore true theory) which moves beyond the metaphor (132-3), and in light of his later comments describing his own position as necessarily ideological and not yet properly theoretical, it seems the metaphorical language of the Marxist model must too be deemed ideological. What are metaphor and symbol, in a materialist analysis, if not

discourse on ideology as in itself ideological, within ideology while attempting to move outside it. Indeed, Althusser considered that Marxist ideology could only become scientific - become 'Theory' - by a process of rigorous dialectical thought, producing ideology as an object of knowledge.⁶ The Marxist theorists Etienne Balibar and Pierre Macherey, whose work is to be discussed further in the next section, also acknowledge that we live in a period when 'Marxism becomes the ideology of the working class' (1981: 80-1), that is to say, in a period when Marxist thought is constituted as a subordinate although resistant discourse within the dominant ideology, precisely as an effect of the latter's intrinsic contradictions. Marxism is ideological in that its representation of the 'real conditions of existence' articulates class antagonism in an imaginary fashion; as Althusser writes, 'working-class protest against exploitation expresse[s] itself *within the very structure of the dominant bourgeois ideology*, within its *system*, and in large part with its representations and terms of reference' (Althusser 1990: 26; cited in Silverman 1992a: 26).

This has important ramifications for my reading of *Major Operation*. If the novel allows us to 'see' its Marxist stance as ideology, this is not merely through an internal distantation in the ideology caused by a commitment to realism, to representing the "lived" experience of individuals', but because that ideology is already a contradictory part of the dominant ideology. The teleological Marxist belief in the inevitability of a revolutionary outcome is expressed in a mixture of ideological languages, symbolic, realist and polemical, uneasily contained within the bourgeois form of the novel. But this is to move far beyond Althusser's 'internal distantation' model, for which ideology in the realist novel presupposes a single - and hegemonic bourgeois - political point of view. This approach may be adequate for *The Shipbuilders*, but it neglects to take account of the contradictions the political perspective of *Major Operation* encompasses. Althusser's conception of the realist novel is a simple one, with the relationship between texts and the mechanisms of ideology remaining obscure: how can more complex examples be approached? Althusser's model also suffers for its value-judgement, for those works which create internal distantation in their ideologies are privileged - as 'real' or 'authentic' art - over others which more successfully mask their ideological

rhetoical devices, heavily inscribed within literary-philosophical ideology, for persuading the reader to assent to a truth?

⁶ See his 'On the Materialist Dialectic' (1969: 161-218).

determination.⁷ Does *The Shipbuilders*, in the obvious display of its political point of view as ideology, then enjoy the status of 'authentic' art? My reading stopped at the breaking of the Pagan-Shields bond, but the novel doesn't stop there, and Althusser's model fails to account for the specific type of resolution the text formulates and which renders it a deal more conservative than my reading has thus far allowed. What, then, of literary art as a more successful carrier of ideology within the ISAs? How is ideological interpellation effected through these novels? A more complex and comprehensive model is required to answer these questions.

ii: the classic realist model

According to Pierre Macherey in *A Theory of Literary Production* [1966], originally published in France four years prior to Althusser's work on ideology and also pre-dating Macherey's post-Althusserian work with Etienne Balibar, the basic material from which literature is constructed is not reality but illusion, 'the vehicle and source of everyday ideology' (Macherey 1978: 62-4). This non-literary discourse is then worked on by the writer to make it an 'illusion *interrupted, realised, completely transformed*' (ibid.). Fiction makes the indeterminate determinate, voicing ideology in a distinctive manner which is the vehicle for the success of its dominant ideological function (as it gives rise to a specialised literary interpretation which proclaims the truth of the work), as well as the point at which this project founders (in the ideological contradictions, gaps or silences no literary work can ever completely transform).

One of the crucial ways in which realist fiction interrupts and transforms everyday, illusory ideological reality is the manner in which it produces an 'enigma' or 'delay' around which the narrative turns and which it attempts to resolve or overcome. Such delays are like obstacles or walls, on confrontation with which the hero, and the reader, appear to have a choice:

The reader following the same path [as the hero] meets the same test save that he has only to turn the page to find the problem resolved. Inevitably the wall either will or will not be climbed over: and the solution proposed will have the force of a law [...] This is why reading is an adventure in

⁷ See Althusser 1971: 203-4, and Terry Eagleton's criticism of this position in *Criticism and Ideology*

which we experience the inevitable as a surprise, and vice versa. (43)

In each of the novels discussed here, the effect of resolution proper to such realism turns upon the obstacles the Depression puts in the way of the central pairings in the novel: thus in *The Shipbuilders*, the enigma can be phrased as ‘Will Shields’ and Pagan’s bond survive this crisis?’ And in *Major Operation*, ‘Will George Anderson accept the dissolution of his class and go over to the proletariat?’ That the narrative ‘wall’ here can be interpreted as a historically specific Glasgow environment in or against which the characters either thrive, die or move on, leads to the categorisation of these texts as naturalist rather than strictly realist; however, the realist structure of enigma-resolution as described by Macherey remains intact. What drives these texts onwards is the promise of a revelation of the fates of their characters, and the disclosure of these - the final wall erected between Shields and Pagan, and the wall-jumping martyrdom of George Anderson - ends the novels. Further, the types of language in the novel, as examined above, transcribe both recognisably ‘real’ ideological positions across society and particularly rhetorical, literary, and aesthetic realisations of the ideologies from which they are composed (*The Shipbuilders*’ reimagining of the Clyde’s imperial heyday as a period of artistic glory; *Major Operation*’s symbolic and polemical schema). Thus both novels can be analysed, at least in a provisional sense, as ‘classic realist’.⁸

In Macherey and Balibar’s post-Althusserian analysis of literature, ‘On Literature as an Ideological Form’, this classic realist formula negotiates between the untransformed and contradictory ideological material from which a text is composed and the literary resolution of such contradictions within the text’s form. Thus the classic realist novel proceeds towards closure and resolution by finding fictional solutions to real, non-literary ideological contradictions in the text. The ‘raw material’ of literature, as in Macherey’s earlier work, consists of ‘the ideological contradictions which are *not* specifically literary but political, religious etc.; in the last analysis, contradictory ideological realisations of determinate positions within the class struggle’. Hence, the

(1978: 83-4).

⁸ The phrase ‘classic realism’ is not used by Macherey or Balibar, although later critical appropriations of their work (eg. Belsey 1980) have adopted this term. It comes in part from Roland Barthes, who designated ‘any readerly text’ as ‘classic’ (1975: 4). The classic text exists in opposition to the ‘writerly’ (*scriptible*) text, and corresponds to Barthes idea of the ‘work’, that which is *read* for a single meaning, guaranteed by the intention of the author, and made to seem natural by a pre-determined process of interpretation (see ‘From Work to Text’, Barthes 1977: 155-64). ‘Classic realism’ therefore designates

effect of the literary text is to 'provoke other ideological discourses which can sometimes be recognised as literary ones but which are usually merely aesthetic, moral, political, religious discourses in which the dominant ideology is realised' (Balibar and Macherey 1981: 95-6). These discourses, the 'transformed' discourse of *A Theory of Literary Production*, form a specialised, compromised literary language, produced 'at the level of linguistic conflicts, historically determined in the bourgeois epoch by the development of a "common" language and of an educational system which imposes it on all, whether cultured or not' (89). Literary language, as well as producing fictive, aesthetic effects, is comprised of 'expressions which always diverge in one or more salient details from those used in practice outside the literary discourse', that is 'compromise formations' which contain 'an essential place [...] for the reproduction of "simple" language, "ordinary" language' (92) and enable a text's projection of the 'real', the "'lived" experience of individuals'. Thus, through fictive, aesthetic and realist effects are non-fictive ideological contradictions resolved, and the novel reproduces dominant bourgeois ideology in its determination in the ISA of the schooling system.

To summarise Balibar and Macherey's analysis, literature has a 'threefold determination: "linguistic", "pedagogic" and "fictive"' (84). In the first instance, literature is formed in a common national language, which is 'bound to the political form of "bourgeois democracy" and is the historical outcome of particular class struggles' (ibid.). Secondly, literary language is reproduced and taught within the schooling system, which is 'the means of forcing submission to the dominant ideology - individual submission, but also [...] the submission of the very ideology of the dominated classes' (85). And finally, the fictive, aesthetic, realist and other effects produced by literature seek to ensure the resolution of ideological contradictions in a transformative way, especially when interpreted in the specialised manner inculcated in the schooling system.

Obviously, approaching texts outside this schooling system and its linguistic and interpretative values renders unsure any dominant ideological project, and here we must acknowledge that neither *The Shipbuilders* nor *Major Operation* are canonical curricular texts in Scottish secondary schools. However, each participates in an educationally sanctioned process of linguistic hierarchisation which works to both reinforce and

undermine their respective ideological projects. As I will show, the question of the ideology of a national language, single enough in a French context (although perhaps not so in the French colonies), becomes multiple in a Scottish text and annexes different class positions to different national identities.

None of this can be fully understood, however, outside one of the 'reality-effect' components of Balibar and Macherey's theory, which seems to organise and structure the transformation of ideological discourse in literature: the mechanism of identification. I have already outlined the theory of interpellation and its double-mirror structure, in which the subject sees himself reflected in relation to an abstract, Absolute Subject-position, in the Preface. What Balibar and Macherey have shown is that the Absolute Subject of ideology is related to the various voices of realist texts in that the reader is required to recognise, or identify with, one or more of these voices, as if they were real and living subjects:

According to the fundamental mechanism of the whole of bourgeois ideology, to produce subjects ('persons' and 'characters') *one must oppose them to objects*, i.e. to *things*, by placing them *in* and *against* a world of 'real' things, outside but always *in relation* to it. The realistic effect is the basis of this interpellation which makes characters or merely discourse 'live' and which makes readers take up an attitude towards imaginary struggles as they would towards real ones, although undangerously. They flourish here, the subjects [...]: the Author and his Readers, but also the Author and his Characters, and the Reader and his Characters via the mediator, the Author - the Author identified with his Characters, or 'on the contrary' with one of their Judges, and likewise for the Reader. And from there, the Author, the Reader, the Characters opposite their universal abstract subjects: God, History, the People, Art. (93)

Thus, for this reality-effect to function, the reader must identify with one or more subjects in the text, an interpellation organised around subjection to abstract Absolute Subject positions. The Absolute Subject of God is a useful starting point with regard to

the authoritative narrative position in the text. Identification with such an authority means subjection to an absolutely knowledgeable, omniscient Subject-position in which, as Althusser claims, 'each subject can contemplate its own image (present and future) [and is given] the *guarantee* that this really concerns them and Him' (1971: 168). In this way, no 'good' identification can be made in a work of realist fiction without it simultaneously being an affirmation of the freedom, power and knowledge of the reading subject in identification with the narrative authority, doubly reflected in the word of God or Truth.

The Shipbuilders

I can now analyse how this identificatory reality-effect attempts to negotiate between contradictory ideological material and its fictive resolution, and in so doing colludes with dominant ideological linguistic hierarchisation. We have seen how, in the face of the Depression, *The Shipbuilders* sticks to its ideological program and persists in valorising the bond between Pagan and Shields 'above the relationships of master and man, officer and private'. However, it is also clear that it is the ending of the master-man relationship at the shipyard which threatens the end of the relationship proper, and that this hierarchy must be repeatedly reinstated for the bond to survive. Under the guise of affirming an essential, reciprocal harmony between the two men, the novel continually reproduces an asymmetry in their relationship, in which Pagan's position is the authoritative one: first when Danny is re-employed at the yard as some final work is carried out; then at Pagan's home, where Danny is taken on as a gardener and odd-job man; and finally when the two take their separate paths at the novel's close, and the mechanism appears to fail.

This hierarchy is nowhere more comprehensively articulated than in the narrative voice, which is markedly aligned with the bourgeois member of the pair, Leslie Pagan. In fact, Pagan can be regarded as the ideal subject with which the reader can identify, because this interpellation channels identification with a narrative authority centred around the Absolute Subject, if not of God, then of 'Truth' more generally. This expands Balibar and Macherey's definition of literary identification to that of an interpellative chain: the reader, in identifying with Pagan, forges a further identification with the omniscient narrator, who in turn is linked to the author, George Blake, and in abstract to the

Absolute Subject of Truth. Indeed, the passage quoted above expressing the bondage of Pagan and Shields by ‘ties innumerable and strong’ is articulated from Pagan’s point of view in the form of free indirect discourse and implicitly backed by the narrative voice. From the beginning of the novel, where the focalised figure is Leslie Pagan, through the oscillations and alternations of its parallel narratives, it is clear that Pagan’s voice and knowledge is of a piece with that of the omniscient narrator, while Shields’ is objectified and held distant. Time and again the narrative authority, in its lexically expansive, carefully constructed Standard English (opposed to Shields’ spoken Scots), tells us things about Danny he could not tell himself, confined as he is to a mode of expression always spelling limitation. In this way the novel participates in an ideological process which asserts the privileges of a ‘national language’ - in this case, Standard English - and in so doing protects the dominance of one particular set of class values. Visiting a sick friend, we are told that ‘[Danny] found a curious contentment in being alone with Joe, perhaps because - *though this he could not know* - it restored to him the sense of purpose’ (Blake 1993: 92, my emphasis). This, along with phrases such as ‘more adroitly than he knew’ (95) and ‘unconsciously eager’ (100), to isolate only a small section of the novel, contrasts sharply with Pagan’s awareness of world and self, where subconscious resentments (here regarding his wife) can surface as the compulsion to take control:

[H]e quite suddenly realised the futility of that [evasive] sort of talk. All his subconscious resentment of the web she could weave about him, all his directness of drive, rose to brush aside the velleities and half-meanings and get to the root of his trouble. (110)

In this way, the unifying political project of the narrative voice in *The Shipbuilders* is both articulated through and undermined by the linguistic hierarchisation built into its very structure, guaranteeing the privilege and power of the bourgeois, English-speaking figure even as it valorises a liberal social unity which exists beyond privilege. But this Pagan-Shields relationship is doomed to fail, and its failure manifests itself in Danny, the unprivileged, objectified member of the pair, choosing to remain in Glasgow to ‘stick to [his] own trade’ (262), however bleak the prospects, and refusing the promise of manual employment with Pagan in England. Thus Pagan, previously the ideal, authoritative subject reflected within the narrative Subject, leaves the scene of the novel

and can no longer channel the identificatory reading the narrative ideology requires. In this way, curiously, the novel seems to refuse a fictive effect of resolution which would reproduce dominant bourgeois-liberal ideology.

It must also be recognised, however, that the proletarian figure is afforded a great deal of sympathy and respect in his objectification. Within the terms of the novel's ideology, Danny is an ideal working-class subject, confronting his misfortunes with stoicism, reserve and respect for authority. When imprisoned for one of his occasional outbursts of violence, the police intervene to reduce his sentence, reciprocating Danny's obedient submission to the law by being 'right decent chaps to him' (210); immediately following his release, Danny and his son become firewood merchants, collecting sticks and selling them around Glasgow's more affluent neighbourhoods. A Rangers-supporting Protestant and obedient proletarian, Danny is the ideal type of the Scottish working-class in this particular, culturally specific manifestation of the dominant ideology. If the narrative voice effectively relegates Danny's Scots language, it also - and this will be explored in greater detail in the next section - produces and privileges his Scottishness in contrast with Pagan's ties with England and eventual displacement there. In this way, working-/middle-class subjectivities map onto Scottish-/English-identified positions: capital is located in England, labour in Scotland; and Danny's decision to 'stick to [his] trade' is an affirmation at once of his class and his national identity (as well as his position in the family ideology, which shall be explored later).

Thus the novel's discourse on nationalities - which includes anti-Semitism (30-1, 74) along with its anti-English stance - colludes with its portrayal of the passing of the 'glory' of the Clyde and its idealisation of working-class life to firmly imbed its resolution in a particularly bourgeois Scottish Renaissance ideology of golden age sentimentalism and xenophobic nationalism, the combination of its fictive, aesthetic and other ideological effects, and the manner in which it transforms the irreconcilable conflicts of its bourgeois-liberal ideology in its narrative closure. Dispelling the empowered, English-identified Pagan from the scene, the text invites the reader to identify with the now more firmly detached, omniscient narrative authority which has told the story of their bond, and participate in the confirmation of Danny Shields as an ideal subordinate subject within ideology.

The specific contradiction of this ideological ensemble is that while the text privileges Scottishness, it denigrates the Scots language; and while it makes a hero of a working-class figure, it does so firmly within the middle-class gaze. In this way, the novel participates, with many other twentieth-century Scottish novels, in what Christopher Whyte calls a “representational pact”:

In so far as the fiction writer can be seen as responding to a demand from his or her audience, as writing what they are likely or willing to read, one may posit a demand on the part of the Scottish middle class for fictional representations from which it is itself excluded; a demand, in other words, for textual invisibility. This would connect with the widespread perception of the Scottish middle classes as ‘denationalised’, as less Scottish in terms of speech and social practice than the lower classes. The task of embodying and transmitting Scottishness is, as it were, devolved to the unemployed, the socially underprivileged, in both actual and representational contexts (1998: 275).

Whyte cites *No Mean City* as his primary example. In that text, the omniscient, documentary, judgemental narrative voice is firmly bourgeois, yet none of the characters are. Indeed, at the points of the novel where gang warfare ensues, the text’s only middle-class representatives – the police and the press – are always late to the scene, allowing the narrative voice to claim the most authoritative position from which to describe the action (McArthur and Long 1994: 50, 154, 158, 198). In thus positing itself as a more effective police force than the actual police, *No Mean City*’s narrator, invisibly and deftly, documents and investigates ‘real’ working-class experience, and cordons it off in order that its audience may more safely spectate.

The Shipbuilders idealises such experience where *No Mean City* continually degrades it, but the mechanism of this representational pact remains the same. The novel thereby requires a version of the ‘ideal’ male reader I posit in the Preface: a middle-class-identified, Scottish nationalist reader, whose linguistic loyalties contradict their political ones – in other words, whose commitment to English as the language of authority conflicts with a Scottish identification – and who can be reassured to find themselves simultaneously in support of, and at a safe distance from, the representation of Scottish

national identity. This position is provided by an invisible narrative authority which has banished the nationally ambiguous Pagan from his privileged position and invites such a reader to more successfully identify with it. That this reader, in a contemporary context anyway, may seem improbable, is borne out by the text's poor critical reception in recent years - including Blake's own apology for his 'insufficient knowledge of working-class life' and 'adoption of a middle-class attitude to the theme of industrial conflict and despair' (cited in Burgess 1998: 155-7). Thus the novel displays, even in resolution, an unstable reproduction of dominant ideology, undermined by contradictory linguistic, nationalist and class positions. That the novel has its admirers also, and continues to remain in print, is not accounted for by this reading. As I have already suggested, this is because the text hinges upon further, gender-related discursive strategies to resolve its conflicts. In these terms, what exactly does it mean to identify with the narrative authority in confirming Shields as an ideal subordinate subject within dominant ideology? Does the reader-narrator identification, a reduction of the reader-Pagan-narrator chain, also replace the Pagan-Shields bond with one between Shields and the reader? Is there a way of differentiating between these kinds of relation, empowering and objectifying as they are? All these issues will be addressed in section III.

Major Operation

Previously, it was shown how *Major Operation*'s Marxist perspective could be viewed as ideological, and that its counter-hegemonic discourse may be contained within dominant ideological form was suggested. Balibar and Macherey's theory has given me more scope for articulating this position. The transcriptions of ideological 'life' in the novel, bourgeois and proletarian, along with its symbolic, polemical and emblematic uses of language, can be viewed as so many effects of reality and fiction articulated in a literary language and form which ultimately serve to reinforce bourgeois ideology. Thus even while it attempts to subvert middle-class hegemony, the novel largely employs a form which supports it. At the points at which this contradiction becomes most overwhelming, the text exceeds or breaks up the conventional realist form and engages with types of language not proper to it - narrative experimentation and scientific materialism, for example - and thus appears to succeed as a kind of revolutionary vehicle only where it fails as a novel. However, this involves giving up the special type of quasi-real ideological identification and belief the form of the realist novel produces.

Major Operation repeatedly situates itself against other forms of art it views as illusory. In the opening chapter, 'Sunset Over the Second City', the narrative clearly directs the reader to interpret the scene in an ironic, anti-imperialist manner: 'The sun set over the Second City. The Second City of the Empire on which the sun never sets' (Barke 1955: 13).⁹ Meanwhile, a 'young novelist' hopes that such a sunset, if placed in one of his books, 'would have a sedative, restful and reassuring effect on the Old Ladies of the Lending Libraries' (13-4). Such conformist types of art are further satirised when the novel describes an evening at the cinema: the ideology of Hollywood is that 'love makes the world go round', and provided 'all is made well by ending well there is no real limit to the risks that can be taken in the interval' (93). In a later passage, the dramatist Fred Rowatt claims:

'Reality: That's what we must get away from: reality is what makes life unbearable: reality is hell. All the great writers have understood this. That is why they have created in their art - however much they may have resorted to a superficial illusion of reality - a world of pure imagination. That is the reason why people read books and go to the theatre and the cinema - to escape from reality.' (153)

In Jock MacKelvie, the novel produces a character whose attitude to the real starkly contradicts that of Rowatt: as we have seen, MacKelvie is the man whose world is 'the everyday world of reality'. This 'reality' represents real conditions of existence, precisely the reality ideology provides a mask for, a scientifically apprehended reality free from masks. The novel, then, claims to counter precisely the definition of art as 'a superficial illusion of reality'. But this is where the realist intentions of the novel break down. As Christopher Whyte points out, 'The book is schematic, didactic, doctrinaire' (1990: 327); its narrative continually reiterates, in description and dialogue, the rightness and inevitability of the teleological Marxist project, and does so often in a discourse outside the compromise formation literary language employs. Thus, when MacKelvie attempts to explain 'the everyday world of reality' to Anderson in the hospital, their conversations take on an unreal, unconvincing quality. As Whyte describes it, 'Jock MacKelvie's views coincide so neatly with that of the author's that the text loses any resonance when he is expounding them', with the result that 'the discussions in the ward

⁹ Glasgow is referred to as the 'Second City' throughout *Major Operation*, both emphasising and satirising

remind one curiously of a Platonic dialogue' (327-8). In this context, Jock MacKelvie is impossibly idealised: a man of unbelievable materialist integrity whose red education, recounted something in the manner of a *Rocky* film (Barke 1955: 130-2), provides a heroic yet uncertain figure for the reader to identify with.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the contradiction between MacKelvie's proletarian identity and the language his materialist 'Platonic dialogues' are articulated in. If on the one hand the novel breaks with conventional realist discourse to put forward its Marxist perspective, on the other it remains within the form in its practice of linguistic hierarchisation. MacKelvie's superior intelligence can only express itself in the inferior George Anderson's middle-class English; as Malzahn notes, even when 'the point of view is apparently Jock's, [...] the language does not follow the leap over the class boundary' (1990: 199). Thus the novel participates in reproducing a national (English-British) literary, cultured language, a discourse which is the effect of class (and national) struggles the text elsewhere attempts to foreground rather than mask. The thoughts and words of Anderson, meanwhile, often take place in the same language, and despite being represented as a subordinate figure to MacKelvie, much if not most of the novel is given over to him. Certainly greater space is allocated to Anderson's internal deliberations than MacKelvie's, owing to the fact that the narrative hinges upon whether or not he will change positions, directing the reader towards an identification with this bourgeois figure. Indeed, following Anderson's death, it is the thoughts of the middle-class Rowatt which close the novel, moved by his former friend's sacrifice and fascinated with the figure and cause he gives his life for. This highlights a specific contradiction within Marxist discourse and within the novel itself: the recruitment of sympathetic bourgeois subjects for the cause requires that the cause be directed in part to the bourgeoisie. The discourse of the cause is already in part ideologically *for* the bourgeoisie, articulated in a literary English they are more familiar with. And thus that discourse, according to Althusser and noted earlier, 'expresse[s] itself *within the very structure of the dominant bourgeois ideology*, within its *system*, and in large part with its representations and terms of reference' (1990: 26; cited in Silverman 1992a: 26). The ideal reader of the novel, in this respect, is just such a sympathetic bourgeois subject, ripe like Anderson for 'going over to the proletariat', paradoxically interpellated by a proletarian-identified narrative authority reinforcing bourgeois linguistic hierarchies and

privileging the experiences of a bourgeois figure. Here the partnership of the narrative voice with Jock MacKelvie provides a reflection of the text's ideal abstract Subject position - that of the Proletariat, the cause - but through the ideological contradictions of that cause and its representation in the novel, a split image is thrown out, and the bourgeois face of the narrative Subject seems to enforce the primary identification.

This split narrative position requires further explication. In *The Shipbuilders*, as we have seen, narrative sympathy is (at least at first) firmly aligned with the bourgeois Leslie Pagan, with Danny's shortcomings and distance from the authoritative voice of the novel continually emphasised. In *Major Operation*, the narrative voice is always quick to point out the weaknesses and blind-spots in the middle-class George Anderson's point of view, compared with the utterly objective, unmysterious universe of MacKelvie. Recovering from his operation, Anderson imagines he might pull through, take on a clerking job somewhere and restore some order and simplicity into his life, a dream the narrative can only mock:

The silver lining became suffused with the rosiness of a new dawn. The dawn spread over a new world. In this new world Anderson was [...] a new and better man [...] He would be able to take life as he had always wanted to take it [...] A life of simple tastes and quiet pleasures. A surprisingly old-fashioned world this new world that dawned over the mind of George Anderson.

The dream-dawn cooled, refreshed and healed his fevered, overtaxed brain. (Barke 1955: 280-1)

Here the narrative's repetition, exaggeration and undercutting of Anderson's dream bears an echo of James Joyce's ironic treatment of, among other things, Leopold Bloom's belief in love in *Ulysses* (1992: 433). Indeed, many aspects of the narrative voice are Joycean or more generally modernistic in their experimentation, which makes the kind of simple, hierarchising voice of *The Shipbuilders* harder to locate in *Major Operation*. However, these experiments also locate the novel's discourse in, if not conventional realism, then other, high-modernist literary forms which reinforce the text's interpellation of the educated middle-class reader even as the novel undermines middle-class superiority.

At another point in the text, the narrative voice explicitly, playfully and contradictorily announces both its partiality and universality:

Don't think this is the complete low-down on the whole rotten situation here at hand. I'm only trying to find my feet in the flux of time: paddle my own canoe in the stream of consciousness: make ends meet: solve the jigsaw: earn an honest livelihood ... Oh, you want to know what it's all about? [...] Who am I? I'm the voice that breathed o'er Eden: I'm the Fly in the Ointment: [...] I'm Alpha of the Plough and Omega of the Furrow: I'm the Eternal Feminine and Mr. Public: I'm Quantity changing into Quality: I'm the Negation of Negations ... (Barke 1955: 123-4)

The narrator certainly 'paddles [his] canoe in the stream of consciousness', juxtaposing narrative, working- and middle-class voices with playful irony, or settling on bourgeois interior monologue for satirical purposes (eg. 120-3 and 373-81). Further, the narrative attempts to apprehend a whole process taking place within the city, and attempts to look beyond individual points of view (a polyphonic practice set up in the opening chapter, 'Sunset Over the Second City' (13-5), and continued throughout). In this sense, the Absolute Subject of materialist authority takes the place of the divine voice. God is omniscient because He created the world, but this voice is omniscient because, like MacKelvie, it comprehends the whole social process. However, again, it always returns to the partial rather than the complete low-down, focalising the problems of Anderson, detailing his decisions and indecisions and thus appearing more like a conventional realist narrator inviting identification with its bourgeois hero. That the text is only interested in Anderson insofar as he loses his inferior bourgeois status, however, indicates the extent to which it, like *The Shipbuilders*, participates in a middle-class representational pact.

A further component of the text's participation in the dominant ideological form of realism can be seen in the fictive effects of resolution it employs. In *The Shipbuilders* the overwhelming contradiction of the Pagan-Shields bond is resolved by ejecting Pagan from the text and confirming Danny as subject within an idealising bourgeois-nationalist discourse. *Major Operation* also utilises nationalism, this time in a materialist mode, blaming capitalism for the erosion of Gaelic culture and deriding the Scottish middle-

classes as 'denationalised provincials' (81). Most significantly, however, it imagines the unlikely success of MacKelvie's attempts to change Anderson's class identification and political position in religious terms. The language of Anderson's singular worker's education repeatedly uses the words 'convert' or 'conversion' (348, 354), indicating a different kind of discourse to what might be expected from any scientific, non-ideological Marxism. If MacKelvie represents something of a prophet-figure here - Whyte notes that he sounds at times 'more like a Protestant divine than a working-class, self-educated slum-dweller' (1990: 328) - and the narrator a preacher, Anderson's sacrifice at the novel's close, dying so that MacKelvie and the cause might live, elevates him beyond the role of simple convert announced by his 'Declaration of Faith' (Barke 1955: 363) to the status of a martyr. Indeed, the text's rejection of illusory art may be read as particularly Protestant in this context. In this way the novel's Marxism finds itself represented as a faith which demands absolute belief rather than a scientific, objective analysis from which a revolutionary outcome can be predicted, and becomes what Antonio Gramsci describes as an 'ideological "aroma" of Marxism' - a determinist and fatalist polemic which requires 'an act of faith' and which 'appears as a substitute for the predestination, providence, etc., of the confessional religions' (1972: 69). The text's religious 'aroma' of Marxism fits more adequately within the realist form than does any more strictly theoretical materialism, and moves the novel towards a language more familiar to its ideal bourgeois reader.

Yet the split authority in the novel unsettles the identificatory mechanism at the heart of the realist form. After all, in which Absolute Subject is the reader required to recognise him or herself - God, the Bourgeoisie or the Proletariat? As I have noted in relation to *The Shipbuilders*, the ideal reading subject of *Major Operation* occupies a somewhat unlikely and precarious position. Perhaps nothing more can be expected from a Marxist text attempting to assume a bourgeois form. The novel does, however, illuminate important questions regarding the partiality of ideological discourse and the nature of its identificatory mechanism. While the interpellative process centred around the Absolute Subject of ideology works to guarantee belief in the rightness of novelistic solutions, individual readers who do not (or cannot) find themselves reflected in the mechanism - who do not identify finally with the authority of the narrator and thus of the Absolute Subject - can resist interpellation by the text, and indeed see the contradictions and the ideology for what they are. This possibility of a non-identificatory analysis becomes

stronger when texts are read outside the schooling system. But what emerges from this is that a text's ideology may not only allow itself to be seen in the gap between narrative authority and realist form, or the gap between non-literary ideological discourse and its literary resolution, but as the product of a reading which refuses to believe in the first place, and which resists the central identificatory mechanism because it so obviously cannot provide an adequate perspective on the whole story. This is not the reading-position of one 'outside' ideology, but rather 'between' ideologies, caught up in their contradictory processes and unable to settle within an adequate subject-position.

As with *The Shipbuilders*, then, the ideological programme of *Major Operation* is exposed as obviously illusory and fundamentally contradictory. However, as I suggested for Blake's text, perhaps *Major Operation* enjoys more success than this materialist analysis allows. In *The Shipbuilders*, Pagan's gradual exclusion from the text breaks his bond with Shields yet invites the reader to take his place in the chain. In *Major Operation*, the 'proletarianising' of Anderson by MacKelvie is sacrificially completed at the novel's close, with the possibility of Rowatt as a suitable new convert. Thus in both texts inter- and intra-class male bonding is crucial to their outcome. This chapter, thus far, has attempted to account for the intra-class identification between reader and bourgeois narrative authority, although without considering the gender implications of this interpellation. Meanwhile, the specific mechanisms of inter-class bonding - i.e. that between the middle-class reader and Danny Shields in *The Shipbuilders*, and the reader and Jock MacKelvie in *Major Operation* - have been more difficult to account for. I have relied upon a largely materialist reading of these two novels in order to demonstrate the ideological devices of narrative realism both employ. A fuller consideration of the male pairings of these novels will enable an analysis of the structures of gender identification in narrative realism of this kind.

Chapter One (cont.)

III: Masculinism, Identification and Desire

i: materialism and psychoanalysis

In the previous section, part of my materialist reading of *The Shipbuilders* focused on the passage in which the Pagan-Shields bond is described for the first time. I give it here again:

And must he, too, say that fatal goodnight - Danny Shields, who had been his batman from the beginning of the war to its end and was his friend, bound to him by ties innumerable and strong? They had shared danger, degradation, and folly. Above the relationships of master and man, officer and private, they had lived together every emergency of the masculine world; Danny Shields ever with the desperate humour of the Western Scot on his lips, the grin of inexhaustible mischief on his face, and courage and steadfastness in his simple heart - a man. (Blake 1993: 10)

Before, I read 'above the relationships of master and man, officer and private' as an expression of the masking function of Mill's ideology, veiling class contradictions behind an imaginary co-operative unity. At the time, however, I indicated that this passage could only be fully accounted for in a gender reading, for obvious reasons. The concern here, along with bourgeois-liberal sentiment, is with 'the masculine world', something Pagan and Shields have lived through together and which places their relationship above hierarchy. As in the class reading, however, hierarchisation persists: it is not Pagan's masculine attributes which are described (his is the point of view of the passage), but Danny's. His masculinity is said to reside in his cultural specificity - 'the desperate humour of the Western Scot on his lips' - i.e. in his geographical and national identity. It is also manifest in his body, real and symbolic: as well as his lips, the grin on his face and his 'simple heart' all add up to what he is: 'a man'.

What are the implications of this in relation to my materialist analysis? The first thing would be to signal Althusser's unwillingness to tackle the subject of gender. However,

his posthumously published autobiography, *The Future Lasts a Long Time*, altogether a different kind of work to his theoretical texts, offers an interesting starting-point. There, Althusser's reluctance to deal with family ideology in his theory - in 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus' Althusser identifies the education system as the 'number-one' ideological apparatus of the bourgeoisie (1971: 145) - is countered by a splenetic description of the family as 'that most *frightful, appalling, and horrifying of all the ideological State apparatuses*, in a nation where the state exists' (1994: 104). In an earlier chapter, Althusser records the overwhelming sexual conflict of his early years, the point at which his mother shows him the stains on his sheets resultant from his first wet dream. His mother tells him he has become what Danny Shields ostensibly is - "Now you are a man, my son!" (51) - yet the young Althusser feels that his bodily privacy has been violated, even raped, and that he has been castrated, denying him his proper manhood. This passage indicates, therefore, a further, crucial attribute of what it is to be 'a man' - 'having' the phallus, a possession which is not merely the genital penis but a symbolic sense of manhood which can be threatened or even taken away. Having or not having the phallus, then, is dependent upon male-female relations, 'having it' being secured with the aid of compliant, passive femininity. Thus being 'a man' more properly asserts itself within the framework of heterosexuality, here primarily in the familial mother-son relationship (the original and taboo Oedipal male heterosexual orientation). The fact that it can be achieved or taken away emphasises its status as construct, as that which is not naturally given.

I have already rehearsed, in the Preface, the latent intertextuality of Althusser's theory of ideology with Lacanian psychoanalysis, of which this autobiographical passage is a telling indication. I wish to begin this section with some consideration of a feminist, psychoanalytic model of the mechanisms of identification in a different form of realist art: namely Laura Mulvey's famous essay 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' (1975). While this text largely by-passes the question of the social, its model of narcissistic identification and active scopophilia in the viewing of narrative cinema offers a way of recasting my ideological reading of *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* in terms of gender, as well as presenting an obstacle which can only be surmounted with reference to other theory.

ii: masculinist identification and the representation of women

Laura Mulvey's readings of cinema attempt to undo 'the straight, socially established interpretation of sexual difference which controls images, erotic ways of looking and spectacle' (1989: 14), an interpretation based upon the phallogentric structure of gender relations. For Mulvey,

The paradox of phallogentrism in all its manifestations is that it depends on the image of the castrated woman to give order and meaning to its world. An idea of woman stands as lynchpin to the system: it is her lack that produces the phallus as symbolic presence, it is her desire to make good the lack that the phallus signifies. (ibid.)

Mulvey draws upon Freud's definition of 'scopophilia' - the drive to look, the pleasure in looking - as the characteristic phallogentric mechanism at work in the viewing of narrative cinema. Active scopophilia is 'the erotic basis for pleasure in looking at another person as object' (17). Narcissistic scopophilia is centred around the need to identify and recognise others as alike to the self. Cinema, the scene of an unparalleled reproduction of the human image, is a privileged site for the manifestation of these drives.

For the heterosexual male cinema spectator, then, active and narcissistic scopophilia - functions of the sexual instincts and of ego libido respectively - manifest themselves in the drive to look at women in film as objects, channeled through an identification with the male hero, the 'bearer of the look' (19). As this central figure controls events, advancing the narrative as well as bearing 'the active power of the erotic look', identification with him 'gives a satisfying sense of omnipotence' (20). In other words, the male hero does the looking for the male spectator, identified with him: he himself is not to be looked 'at', but 'through', constituting women as erotic objects in the spectacle.

This model has limited scope, confined to the analysis of conventional narrative cinema including a typical male hero and female love interest, and dependent upon the heterosexual masculinity of the spectator. In relation to my ideological treatment of *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*, however, the general matrix of Mulvey's theory can be adapted without much adjustment. While straightforward transferences of film

theory to the field of literature are problematic, it can be seen how Balibar and Macherey's theory of narrative interpellation maps onto Mulvey's definition of narcissistic scopophilia. Both describe a founding identification in the realist text which guides and even determines the novel's meaning for the reader/viewer. To look through the eyes of the hero in a traditional Western movie is to be interpellated by the directorial subject, just as an identification with Lesley Pagan in Blake's novel constitutes a recognition of an empowered self in the narrative authority, both positions doubly reflected in the word of God or Truth. This analogy traverses the intertext between materialist and psychoanalytic theories of identification, and postulates a crucial consonance: any 'good' reading of *The Shipbuilders* - or *Major Operation* - involves, simultaneously, subjection both to class and nationalist ideologies, *and* to structures of phallogentricity which privilege male experience and knowledge. In other words, the Absolute Subject within which the reader is required to recognise himself in assenting to the truth of these texts is not merely the Bourgeoisie, the Proletariat, or God, but also the phallus itself - that signifier which, it seems to me, attempts to organise and sublimate the entirely contradictory ideological discourses from which these texts are otherwise composed.

To analyse this further, I will take a look at the representation of women in these texts, focusing primarily on the manner in which gender positions differ or coincide with other ideological interpellations, in collusion with any identifiable dominant fiction - that which, as I outline in the Preface, seeks to equate penis with phallus, naturalising the link between specific masculinity and the power it assumes as its right. For these novels not only describe femininities gone wrong, but produce their unwomanly women in tandem with national and class representations which bolster their men's sense of power and privilege.

Altogether, Blanche Pagan, Agnes Shields and Mabel Anderson, the wives of Lesley and Danny in *The Shipbuilders* and George in *Major Operation* respectively, are cast as cold, unloving creatures from whom the men feel distant and with whom they are dissatisfied - up to the point, in the Shields and Anderson families, where the relationships actually break up. Blanche Pagan is initially described as a fundamental outsider to the world of the Clyde shipyards, at once a woman and an Englishwoman, and an upper-class Englishwoman at that. She is cast as a threat, indeed a castrating

threat, both to the shipbuilding tradition and the patronymic 'Pagan', the Name-of-the-Father, at once:

How could this Blanche, this Englishwoman he had taken for a wife, understand what the old man [Pagan's father] said of the traditions of the Clyde and the Scots artisan? And he knew that she cared little. He knew that the end of Pagan's, or the end of his connection with Pagan's, would naturally and inevitably delight her. Farewell to dirty Clydeside, to drab, unpolished Glasgow! (Blake 1993: 4)

Here Blanche's femininity is not the only pressing issue: in fact, it is a femininity which belongs, as far as Leslie is concerned, to the past. He is 'more afraid of her power over him than exasperated by the intrusion of the feminine into his man's life. He loved her. He remembered the girl she had once been' (ibid.). What is apparent is that Blanche (literally a blank, a personification of lack) represents a castrating threat which takes its power from a distanced English upper-class position against which Pagan, in spite of his bourgeois status, is always at odds. If in his relations with Danny he is always reiterated as the master over the man, with his wife, and more specifically with his wife in England - the place to which she demands, and succeeds in demanding, they retire to following the closure of the yard - Pagan feels a nostalgia for a Scottishness always annexed to an identification with working-class Danny Shields. Against the perceived frivolity and cutting insincerity of the England where 'Blanche was living afresh among her own people', Leslie thinks

of his boyhood and of his mother's house on New Year's Day, the cake and wine set out for the sincere ritual of friendship. He thought of plain people, without any bookish culture, without any metropolitan confidence, with only their high traditions of craftsmanship in wood and metals, moving from house to house for the warmth of the Ne'erday dram and the greater comfort of the confession of the common humanity it symbolised. He thought of Danny Shields and his kind, and suddenly felt himself a stranger among his wife's people, positive hostility against them in his mind.

[...H]e had suffered himself to be doped by the ease and grace of the English life, and [...] was betraying the decent

men who stood, idle, about the street corners in the rain.

(105)

While Pagan's sense of self and masculinity is here located in a particularly non-metropolitan Glasgow of domestic welcome, plainness, craftsmanship, humanity and specifically working-class manliness – a manliness in fact which he does not and cannot embody, and which seems to be the basis of his peculiar bond with Danny Shields (of which more later) - Blanche's world is one where qualities of femininity and masculinity are mobilised according to a sense of bluestocking superficiality, lethargy and leisure on the one hand and a sense of empowered indifference on the other, each posited as masquerade. Upon returning from a hunt a couple of pages later, the removal of Blanche's riding clothes becomes a de-masking, a revealing of her true femininity: Pagan helps 'her soft and still girlish body to emerge from its pseudo-masculine husk, the sense of their mutual trust return[ing] to warm his heart' (107). What emerges against Pagan's 'positive hostility' is precisely a sense of Englishness which oscillates between negative masculine and feminine attributes: insofar as Pagan is bourgeois, his Scottishness is under threat from its inevitable association with English power, privilege and status, reinforced by his marriage. Insofar as he is a man, his disavowal of that association conjoins with the rejection of an 'ease and grace' annexed to softness and frivolity, excesses of femininity.

This goes some way towards accounting for what is at stake in the 'representational pact' in which bourgeois identities are deemed insufficiently Scottish in texts of this kind, suggesting that an insufficiency of masculinity may further motivate this middle-class disappearing act. American research in the 1970s showed that "Male working-class forms seem to symbolise masculinity ... for men of other social classes as well" (cited in Schwenger 1984: 9); in a literary context at least, this phenomenon seems to persist in these inter-war Glasgow texts too. Pagan's distance from the honest assurances of a life such as Danny Shields' constitutes a threat to his gender status as well as his sense of Scottishness. Identification with Shields, however, rescues both because exemplary nationality and masculinity converge in the proletarian male subject. Thus, to adapt Whyte's arguments,¹⁰ the task of transmitting Scottishness is devolved to socially underprivileged men, who can at once vehicularly articulate linguistic and cultural national differences and convey a redeeming sense of normative masculinity.

¹⁰ See section II.ii above.

This latter aspect will be discussed in more detail in section III.iii below.

If Mabel, the wife of the hapless George Anderson in *Major Operation*, is not associated with any specific English power, her affair with the playwright Fred Rowatt - one of the text's 'denationalised provincials' - connects her to London, the scene of a metropolitan-national theatrical hegemony. Her connection with English-identified drama has other resonances too, for, like Blanche, she is primarily a woman of masks: 'beautiful, [...] intelligent for her class, [...] meltingly charming, wistfully pathetic: in short, she was an actress' (Barke 1955: 35). The text continually underlines and undermines such feminine masquerade; indeed, its political opposition to illusory ideological art, as described in the previous section, finds its most potent realisation in the rejection of Mabel's illusory feminine wiles. But, also like Blanche, Mabel can be decidedly *unwomanly*, even *unmaternal*, with 'no deep affection for the child of her womb', Beatrice (*ibid.*).¹¹ For George, such behaviour results in his own effective castration. Being denied sexual intercourse for a period of some years, he despairs of Mabel's hardness: 'Why was it there was no softness, no yielding in her? Why was it he couldn't be strong and masterful with her, make her desire to come to him: to find pleasure and satisfaction with him?' (83). In other words, Mabel's refusal to 'be' the phallus, to reflect and make whole George's phallic authority in sexual submission, threatens the maintenance of her husband's illusion of 'having' it.

What is crucial for this analysis is the manner in which these relations of 'being' and 'having' are connected by these novels to relations of class and national power and privilege. If Blanche's manliness is a function of her moneyed, English status, so Mabel's castrating threat to George is bound up with precisely how much she costs. She is not only a phony, but an expensive phony, whose 'waving, shampooing, singeing, electrical and chiropody treatment' - which Anderson's secretary Sophie believes 'no woman could possibly require' - results in a debt for the coal merchant which seems to outweigh the sums owed for legitimate business reasons (195-6). Mabel's affair with Rowatt, then, is predicated upon his being able to pay for her. She is effectively a high-class call-girl whose sexual attentions Anderson was never really able to afford, but for which he kept paying out anyway, even if for no return:

That's what had won Mabel over: money. Rowatt was rotten

¹¹ Blanche similarly raises her son by remote control, through the attentions of an English nanny.

with money. And Mabel had been kept short these last few years. God! as if [Anderson] had been personally responsible for the coal trade going down: as if he hadn't tried to give Mabel every penny he could spare - and a good few he couldn't. (277)

This brings me to offer the beginnings of an important conclusion. If, in the materialist analysis given in the section above, the crucial factor in each of these texts was considered to be the fact of the Depression, mobilising a crisis in the relations of production to which each novel responds with different and contradictory ideological representations and resolutions, I can now state that at least as important as this, interlocking and reciprocal with it, is a crisis in relations of gender, a crisis of masculine and feminine: a crisis of heterosexuality. If the Depression represents a historical castration by which the livelihoods of bourgeois and proletariat are threatened alike (if to varying degrees), then within these novels this is unthinkable outside of a threat to the very privilege and status of masculinity itself. This is not merely to say that inter-war Clydeside was a heavily masculinised industrial area.¹² It is to put forward the idea that the very representation of this historical trauma involves as much relations of gender as of production, to the extent that women appear to be blamed for the crisis as much as impersonal economic factors are, if not more so. This, I venture, is the product of an asymmetrical gender-differentiating law more deeply entrenched in representation than any thinking of class difference, to the extent that class (and national) differences are expressed finally in terms of gender.

To relate this more cogently to the theory of identificatory readings advanced above, these texts offer to the straight male reader an image of masculinity succeeding in disavowing its lack by recourse to negative representations of womanhood. The profound ideological contradictions uncovered by my materialist analysis, then, gain coherence by recourse to masculinist strategies by which men can again be made potent, sexually and economically powerful. If each text takes a different political approach to the crisis of the Depression, the solutions offered to this impasse are essentially the

¹² As David Unger points out, the construction of a 'labour aristocracy' on Clydeside in the early years of the twentieth century gave an advantage to adult male skilled workers (1981: 85); in those trades 'with the highest wage scales [including shipbuilding], grown-up men usually predominated [...] [and] also achieved the most complete degree of unionization' (86; see also Table 2. 95).

same, dependent upon the identification by the reader of a masculinity in common with that of the privileged characters in the narratives. And in each case, this restoration of phallus to penis takes place most successfully within the domain of working-class male identity.

These discursive strategies, then, are also at play in the representation of Danny Shields and Jock MacKelvie in their respective novels. In the latter case, Jock's marriage to Jean is as idealised as is his status as working-class divine. Jean, the narrative tells us, was instrumental in transforming Jock's 'instinctive rebellion into socialist aspirations' (Barke 1955: 73), yet her main role in the worker's movement is reduced to providing a stable home for her agitator husband, a task she accomplishes with some ease in spite of obvious financial restrictions (382-3). Danny Shields, meanwhile, takes a more circuitous route to domestic bliss, as he endures a break-up with his wife, Agnes, before being restored as a husband-figure with another family. Even more unmaternal than Blanche Pagan, Agnes' hardness is manifested time and again in her refusal to play the role of support to her husband and caring mother to her children. But just as Blanche's unfeminine attributes are annexed to her class status, so Agnes refuses her domestic duties in favour of nights out with her sister and brother-in-law, Lizzie and Jim, a couple whose upward mobility, enabled by investment in a dog-track, is signified by their residence in Glasgow's southside, meals out at the Commodore - a place where 'cohort[s] of lower middle-class Glasgow folk rejoic[e] in the release into metropolitanism provided by the Jewish management' (Blake 1993: 74) - and visits to a club, the Trocadero. Here, Leslie Pagan's association of Glasgow life with non-metropolitanism and plain humanity is transgressed forcibly by the narrator. Not only are Jim's pretensions towards upper-class status vulgarised by the itself vulgar representation of his Glasgow accent, manifested in the comedy of his pronunciation of 'horse doover' (76), but the false façade of this new Glasgow is figured as the product of a foreign, Jewish invasion, further forging the novel's participation in a defensive nationalist politic.

As Danny accompanies his wife and her *nouveau-riche* friends out on this evening - strategically placed in the narrative to follow his visit to Ibrox for the Old Firm game, which I shall analyse below - his unease becomes more and more manifest:

Extreme discomfort seized him. Those naked backs

communicated a perfectly sincere sensation of horrified disapproval. Something in him revolted at the display of wealth and at the affectation of accent and deportment he heard and saw all about him. He despised what he would have called the softness of it all. Above everything, he had the feeling of being an interloper on this territory proper to the toffs.

In this state of self-consciousness he was rawly aware of the folly of Agnes in her cups. Now she was talking wildly and loudly and he knew of the woman who shared his bed that both defiance and pretentiousness, over and above the drink, were moving her to make this sorry exhibition of herself. Her face had gone red, her eyes were hazed. She had torn off her hat, and her fair hair was miserably disordered. Now and again she laughed, so loudly and incalculably, that people all over the room turned to look at her.

It was as the result of one of these explosions that Danny caught sight of Blanche Pagan. (81-2)

While Agnes too is clearly meant to be read as 'an interloper on this territory proper to the toffs', punished for the crime of crossing class boundaries with a bout of sickness, the appearance of Blanche reinforces the idea that Agnes is similarly an intruder on masculine ground. The 'softness' Danny perceives in this scene, analogous to the 'ease and grace' to which Leslie Pagan opposes himself in England, operates in tandem with the manner in which Agnes attempts to usurp a masculine position, and wears, like Blanche, a 'pseudo-masculine husk'. In her loudness, she aspires to command discursive space; in removing her hat, she observes a male code of dress. These actions are undermined, however, by the wildness of her talk and the disorder of her hair. With her flushed face and glazed eyes, Agnes occupies a hysterical territory exposed to the gazes of those who, like Blanche, by virtue of a naturalised class privilege, can more easily accommodate these gender contradictions. Within the ideologies of gender, class and national hegemony from which the text is composed, the only place for Agnes is banishment. She eventually leaves Danny to take up residence in the southside with Lizzie and Jim, with the strong suggestion of an affair with the Englishman Alf (another component of her 'blanching').

Danny, meanwhile, in accordance with the limits marked out for him by the narrative authority, seeks to repair the degradations his masculinity has suffered, at the hands of both the Depression and Agnes, in relation to a femininity more properly acting as a support, a 'being' of the phallus. This he manages in a movement wherein he substitutes himself for the absent space left by his dying friend Joe Stirling, a substitution which eventually finds its resolution in Danny's taking up with Jess, Joe's widow and Danny's companion during his periods of struggle with Agnes. Joe is initially described as

one of the finest things in Danny's life since, like Leslie Pagan, he was of that period in which Danny had lived most richly. And Christ! it was hard to think that after passing quite unscathed through the battles and rigours of Gallipoli, Sinai and Palestine, Joe had been caught at last by the German gas in March, 1918, and was now this rotting invalid, dying on an Army pension. (28)

Joe Stirling offers to Danny a subject position which, like that of Leslie Pagan, helps consolidate his masculinity in a relationship of military camaraderie but which, unlike Pagan's, does not differ from Danny's in terms of class hierarchy. Thus, following the horrendous transgressions and invasions of alien territory which constitute his night out with Agnes, Jim and Lizzie, time spent at Joe's bedside restores to Danny 'the sense of purpose':

The sordid vicissitudes of the day and of the night before lost all their urgency and receded into distant memory to lose reality and meaning. He did not brood at all on the crisis that seemed to have arisen between himself and Agnes. Indeed, in the sweetness of fireside reflection his mind went back to the days of the war and to pictures of camp and trench in three continents and to the good comradeship of Joe, now apparently asleep at his elbow. (92)

Joe's comatose state here allows Danny to live out his imaginary war without debate. Elsewhere in the novel, wartime reminiscence with a stranger met in a pub ends, like a similar argument about football later on, in a drunken brawl over points of historical accuracy. But here Joe's illness inscribes on his body the mark of a great lack: he is 'helpless in the grip of disease, degraded in his helplessness' (100). This lack, the text

suggests, is one which Danny finds *himself* in relation to. Significantly, where with healthy, awake male members of his own class Danny usually ends up fighting, here he is holding, supporting, comforting – signifiers of a more feminine or maternal ideological subjectivity. Here again the text oscillates between feminine and masculine positions for one apparently coherent gendered figure. For Danny also fulfils more properly his male role when his friend's death helps him find a substitute for Agnes. Joe and Danny's bond is cemented in the exchange of Jess, a woman who more properly fulfils the role of doting wife than Agnes could:

They [he and Jess] had tea together - and only when she was preparing it did he realise that Agnes had not offered, nor had he asked her, to do as much for him. It was frightening that he should feel more at home in the stricken house than in his own, but there it was. He glowed in the ease and comfort of Jess's simplicity. It was fine to give her a hand with the dishes afterward, and fine to have her trust reposed in him when she ran across the road to Mrs. Macpherson's for an hour with the girls. (99)

Thus, when Joe finally 'wilt[s] and die[s]' - an implication of detumescence corresponding with the castration this man has suffered at the hands of the war machine - Danny begins a relationship within which he can restore his own masculine plenitude, itself degraded and scarred by both his unemployment and the gender- and class-crossing antics of his wife. Several ostensibly innocent visits to the cinema with Jess - one of which is discovered by Agnes and seems to accelerate her departure - pave the way for an affair marked by mutual suffering, the need for sympathy, but above all Jess's essential 'decency'. Within the moral boundaries of this courtship Danny can finally supplant Joe's place at the heart of Jess' husbandless household, his authoritative place metonymically signified by 'a big chair ready for him before the fire' which he occupies 'like a king returned from exile to his proper domain' (238). This substitutive movement demonstrates the variability of the Name-of-the-Father, as described by Silverman, where the concept figures for any number of possible masculine subjects (1992a: 41). But where Leslie Pagan disavows his own, particularly bourgeois lack in an idealised identification with Shields, working-class Scotland and manhood itself, Danny must renegotiate his position within the terms of his class, his trade, and the reconstruction of the family unit.

With regard to the construction of urban/rural positions in the Glasgow novel, it is of interest here to note the manner in which Jess' 'stricken house' is situated within a 'veritable hamlet in the heart of Glasgow', in line with the non-metropolitanism posited by Pagan as the natural environment for Danny Shields and his kind:

It was [...] a nook in which primitive and unexpected avocations were busily pursued. It smelt of the country, of base-feeding, coarse-mannered animals. Its buildings were white-washed. It seemed to defy the city that had grown about it, a hardy relic [...] (Blake 1993: 26-7)

This underlines the manner in which this text locates its idealised working-class representatives in an equally idealised haven of rustic, rural simplicity. Despite being a Glasgow novel, Glasgow as an industrial city is negated in the articulation of *The Shipbuilders'* Renaissance ideology. In this way it is entirely in keeping with Whyte's generic model for Glasgow fiction, in which heterosexual relations appear doomed by the nightmares of metropolitan living (1990: 319).¹³ Only by constructing a rural space within the city can the novel endorse the relationship of Danny and Jess.

What becomes clear in *The Shipbuilders* is that male lack is disavowed not only in relation to more suitable, subordinate types of femininity, within the paradoxical location of a ruralised Glasgow, but also, and perhaps primarily, in structures of masculine substitution and bonding (here between Danny and Joe, and elsewhere between Lesley and Danny). These mobilise masculine and feminine signifiers which are contradictory, but through which a sense of manliness, concomitant with a sense of class and of national identity, is bolstered and made whole. The ideological reading of *The Shipbuilders*, however, failed to adequately account for the nature of the Pagan-Shields bond - and consequently the reader-Shields relation, with Pagan removed from the picture - describing Danny's subordinate (albeit idealised) status in economic terms only. If by the close of the novel, as I have remarked, Danny Shields is confirmed as an object for the middle-class gaze, and if this gaze, in its representation of women, is firmly masculinist, is Shields thus the imaginary object of active scopophilia? In other words, does Shields occupy a female position of lack in the text, a male figure to be looked at rather than through, eroticised, desired?

¹³ See also the discussion of the Glasgow novel in section I above.

Such a suggestion is too simplistic to give total credence to, but it is tactically crucial in the tracing of masculinities in this text. It draws attention to the difference between an empowering, narcissistic type of identificatory bond (the reader-Pagan-narrator chain) and an objectifying, distancing, at least potentially erotic relation between ostensibly straight male figures (Pagan-Shields, the reader-Shields), simultaneously signalling the extent to which these intertwine. It also raises further questions concerning the kind of maternal aspect belonging to the bond between Danny and Joe. To suggest the possible feminisation or objectification of male characters in the text's bonding strategies indicates that the limits of Mulvey's theory have been reached, and calls for an analysis in which phallogocentrism is seen to depend not only upon images of castrated women, but castrated men - objectified, feminised, specularised men - as well.

iii: male homosocial desire

Interestingly, Mulvey draws attention to such a dynamic in the so-called 'buddy movie', 'in which the active homosexual eroticism of the central male figures can carry the story without [the] distraction [of the erotic contemplation of the female object]' (1989: 19). It may be useful to postulate *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*, at least provisionally, as 'buddy novels'. In Molly Haskell's study of the representation of women in the cinema, *From Reverence to Rape*, a parallel is drawn between the buddy movie and a similar dynamic at work in American fiction, as uncovered by Leslie Fiedler in *Love and Death in the American Novel* (Haskell 1987: 23). Manfred Malzahn has already drawn attention to the intertext between the fictional themes Fiedler highlights and the strategies of these Glasgow novels (1990: 195); it is worth exploring this further.

In the context of his general discussion of American fiction's reticence regarding the representation of sex, Fiedler draws attention to a number of texts which privilege male-male relationships over male-female ones, making the claim that '[t]here is finally no heterosexual solution which the American psyche finds completely satisfactory' (1970: 315). In Melville, Poe, Twain, Faulkner, Hemingway and Bellow, male pairings are cemented through a rejection of, or escape from, women - mothers and lovers alike - and more often than not take on a cross-class or inter-racial form. While the Glasgow novels

under discussion here do not enforce escape from women entirely, they certainly imagine their male pairings as at their strongest when marital relations are at their sourest, breaking them up when heterosexual partnerships are restored or newly entered into. And while no inter-racial elements exist - unless I am to count the 'Englishing' and 'Scottishing' of bourgeois and proletarian figures respectively - the rigid sense of class difference in the Scottish novels provides a parallel structural hierarchy in their male pairings. Yet what is at stake in these bondings, especially in terms of gender and sexuality?

Fiedler signposted the immanence of this phenomenon in American fiction with the term 'homoerotic fable', a nomenclature he subsequently attempted to qualify, in the second edition, with this footnote:

'Homoerotic' is a word of which I was never fond, and which I like even less now. But I wanted it to be quite clear that I was not attributing sodomy to certain literary characters or their authors, and so I avoided when I could the more disturbing word 'homosexual'. All my care has done little good, however, since what I have to say on this score has been at once the best remembered and most grossly misunderstood section of my book. (325)

Fiedler's disavowal of a sexual component to these male relationships is ironised by his own analysis, which places Herman Melville - a writer who utilises 'explicit and embarrassing erotic images' and enacts 'a gross parody of marriage' between Ishmael and Queequeg in *Moby Dick* (345, 347) - on a fabular continuum with more obviously heterosexual authors like Hemingway or Bellow. This troubles the postulation of 'the tie between male and male as [...] the very symbol of innocence itself' (326). Indeed, Fiedler even highlights 'an almost hysterical note to our insistence that the love of male and male [...] is not homosexuality in any crude meaning of the word, but a passionless passion' (342), as if to say the mask of denial is wont to slip even as it is held to the face. For, ultimately, 'we can never shake off the nagging awareness that there is at the sentimental centre of our novels [...] nothing but the love of males!' (342-3).

Given Fiedler's reticence about the terms 'homoerotic' and 'homosexual', he could have benefited from Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of 'male homosocial desire', although

the sexual component at the heart of this mechanism might have troubled him further. Sedgwick provides a theoretical definition of male bonding which enables me more properly to assess its relationship to the identificatory mechanisms of realist fiction. The term is assembled in order to map out a space where relations between men can be theorised as potentially erotic relations:

‘Homosocial’ is a word occasionally used in history and the social sciences, where it describes social bonds between persons of the same sex; it is a neologism, obviously formed by analogy with ‘homosexual’, and just as obviously meant to be distinguished from ‘homosexual’. In fact, it is applied to such activities as ‘male bonding’, which may, as in our society, be characterised by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality. To draw the ‘homosocial’ back into the orbit of ‘desire’, of the potentially erotic, then, is to hypothesize the potential unbrokenness of a continuum between homosocial and homosexual - a continuum whose visibility, for men, in our society, is radically disrupted [...] [T]he unbrokenness of this continuum is not a *genetic* one - I do not mean to discuss genital homosexual desire as ‘at the root of’ other forms of male homosociality - but rather a strategy for making generalisations about, and marking historical differences in, the *structure* of men’s relations with other men. (Sedgwick 1985: 1-2)

Those laws thought proper to the institution, or rather continual reiteration, of gender difference based upon compulsory heterosexuality, are finally about relations between men, with woman as the object of exchange in these relations - for example, the relations between men of different families, of different patronymics, in exogamic kinship structures centred around the incest taboo. Yet built into this very process - and, if I am to follow Judith Butler’s hypothesis, prior and fundamental to its success - is the taboo against homosexuality.¹⁴ What Sedgwick argues, with reference to Ancient Greek forms of patriarchy, is that a masculinist power-structure need not structurally require homophobia. The possibility exists, in a system which still brutally oppresses women, of an unbroken continuum ‘between “men loving men” and “men promoting the

¹⁴ Butler’s theory is discussed below.

interests of men” (4), a continuum which can more easily be discerned in a contemporary feminist setting, where ‘the diacritical opposition between the “homosocial” and the “homosexual” seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for men’ (2).

To proceed on the bare bones of such a hypothesis, right now, would not be without its ethical fallout. While on the one hand it seems plausible, if generalistic, to insist in the contemporary Western feminist scene on an unbroken line between women loving other women and promoting their political and economic interests, it seems dangerous to posit a continuity between gay male love and processes of masculine association which are repressive of women. It seems to me that that would be to promote, on the other side of the feminisation of gay men, a construction of gay male sexuality as doubly masculine, in a repressive, misogynist sense. In this context, the term ‘masculinism’ is loaded with negative connotations feminist discourse happily escapes. Yet to eroticise power relations between men is also to expose and resignify the disavowal of homosexuality upon which orthodox heterosexual masculinities are constructed, in a manner which troubles the obvious assurances of consolidated male power. If Leslie Fiedler struggles to erase the trace of homoeroticism from the male pairings he analyses, I will attempt to make that trace more readable in the Scottish texts under discussion here. As an ostensibly straight male reading novels written by ostensibly straight male authors about ostensibly straight male characters, the introduction of erotogenicity into the play of identifications within which such novels are normatively read is to foreground the production-as-concealment, the performativity of this straight masculinity so ostensibly singular and normative. Rather than insist upon the *continuity* between the homosocial and the homosexual, however, I would prefer to adopt the term *contiguity*. Relationships of contiguity between homosocial and homosexual structures stress the points of contact between the two without privileging either term with a formative status.

What this allows is the postulation of desire at the level of identification, a possibility already produced by psychoanalysis, where identificatory processes are always in some way caught up in the choice of a (taboo) love-object. If, in ‘positive’ Oedipal resolution, a male child is finally required to identify with the paternal law and take up the choice of a love object based upon the originary, but prohibited, model of his desire for his

mother, this, according to Freud in *The Ego and the Id*, is the result of a series of conflicting identifications, rivalries and desires in which he also 'behaves like a girl and displays an affectionate feminine attitude towards his father' (1961a: 33). In this way Freud admits to a greater complexity of forces at play in Oedipal relations than the simple opposition of 'positive' and 'negative' outcomes suggests. Elsewhere, in 'The Dissolution of the Oedipus Complex', Freud also points to the potential incompleteness of Oedipal repression: 'if the ego has in fact not achieved much more than a *repression* [as opposed to a destruction or abolition] of the complex, the latter persists in an unconscious state in the id and will later manifest its pathogenic effect' (1961c: 177). But Judith Butler has highlighted how the male child's 'feminine attitude', essentially a maternal identification, is not characterised as homosexual in Freud's texts; for him, primary bisexuality is comprised of two *heterosexual* dispositions, male and female, within a single subject, so that 'only opposites attract' (Butler 1990: 61). For Butler, these dispositions are not originary; rather they are produced by a cultural law in which the taboo against homosexuality precedes the heterosexual incest prohibition: 'the taboo against homosexuality in effect creates the heterosexual "dispositions" by which the Oedipal conflict becomes possible' (64). This prohibition precedes any heterosexualising male-male identification as well as the 'feminised attitude' Freud describes; without it, a boy desiring his father could not be conceived of as behaving 'like a girl'. In other words, desire is always-already part of any male-male identification, and therefore must be rigorously policed, both within the family and elsewhere in culture - even in the theory of the Oedipal mechanism itself - to ensure that the homosocial bond does not slip into homosexuality.

While Fiedler's evasions and slippages in *Love and Death in the American Novel* constitute one such policing strategy, ultimately suggesting more than it censors, another critic whose work impinges more directly on Sedgwick's theory, René Girard, deals with the eroticism of homosociality in a less defensive manner. In his *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, Girard traces the immanence of the erotic triangle in the novels of Cervantes, Stendhal, Flaubert, Dostoevsky and Proust. When a third term is present in the desire of a given subject for a given object, in the form of a mediator or rival, that desire finds an obstacle and amplifies itself around it. This mediator both inspires and obstructs desire. In the case of the post-Romantic writings of such as Dostoevsky, 'external mediation', in which the mediator is openly revered and imitated by the

desiring subject, gives way to 'internal mediation', in which the mediator becomes a resented yet closely held rival. But as Sedgwick notes, 'within the male-centered novelistic tradition of European high culture, the triangles Girard traces are most often those in which two males are rivals for a female; it is the bond between males that he most assiduously uncovers' (1985: 21). Dostoevsky's novella *The Eternal Husband* describes one such internally mediated triangle: Pavel Pavlovitch Trusotsky is the desiring subject, Alexey Ivanovitch Veltchaninov his rival, yet the object of both their desires, Trusotsky's wife Natalya Vassilyevna, is dead. Pavel Pavlovitch's pursuit of Veltchaninov, then, takes on far more importance than his originary, heterosexual desire for his wife. Thus, for Girard,

Confronted with Pavel Pavlovitch we can have no more doubts about the priority of the Other in desire [...] The hero is always trying to convince us that his relationship to the object of his desire is independent of the rival. Here we clearly see that the hero is deceiving us [...] The behaviour of Pavel Pavlovitch seems strange to us but it is completely consistent with the logic of triangular desire. Pavel Pavlovitch can only desire through the mediation of Veltchaninov, *in* Veltchaninov as the mystics would say. (Girard 1976: 46-7)

That Trusotsky's attachment to his rival is articulated against the background of a failed heterosexual relationship seems to underline the homoeroticism of their bond. Nevertheless, Girard is quick to dismiss any interpretation of him as a 'latent homosexual': 'whether it is latent or not [homosexuality] does not explain the structure of desire' (47). This, however, accords with Kosofsky Sedgwick's strategy of dissociating genital homosexuality from the roots of male homosociality.¹⁵ Whether or not Trusotsky's homosexuality is originary, his narrative marks a process which shows 'the beginning[s] of an erotic deviation towards the fascinating rival' (Girard 1976: 47). Despite the rivalries and resentments of internal mediation, the path of desire is deflected from its normative heterosexual orientation to inhere in a male-male pairing which is both identificatory and oppositional.

¹⁵ Sedgwick praises Girard on this account: '[I]t is one of the strengths of his formulation not to depend on how homosexuality was perceived or experienced [...] at any given historical moment' (1985: 22).

I now wish to examine the manner in which the theory of male homosociality impinges upon the types of ideological identification I have already highlighted in *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*: namely between the privileged male characters in the texts, inter- and intra-class, and also between the reader and the narrative authority. This examination will also incorporate aspects of the theory of the phallic signifier, contradictorily and doubly determined as it is, in order to trace the different kinds of masculine subjects these texts produce. It must be noted that while Girard's theory of triangular desire is relevant to *The Shipbuilders*, it becomes more useful in describing the interplay of forces between the central characters in *Major Operation*. It represents, in the end, only one of the potential structures which facilitate homosociality, and homoeroticism along with it.¹⁶

In relation to the homosocial desire which binds Pagan and Shields in *The Shipbuilders*, the effect of the hostile and unwomanly feminine positions the text produces operates differently in each case. Leslie Pagan's 'positive hostility' towards the English world of his wife reinforces his sense of Scottishness and manhood, and prompts him to re-establish his links with Danny Shields, the working-class representative of that nationality and masculinity. As I have shown, the bourgeois-liberal economic co-operation between Pagan and Shields in *The Shipbuilders* is repeatedly disturbed by signs of a hierarchisation which the text finds impossible to mask. Also, as I noted at the beginning of this section in relation to the passage which first describes Pagan's and Shields' bond, the pair are also separated in other terms: by the difference between, on the one hand, Pagan's detached, authoritative and *incorporeal* masculine identity, and Danny's physical presence on the other. This opposition, which can be characterised as a kind of mind/body dualism, functions as an instance of bourgeois-proletarian difference peculiarly inflected by gender. Insofar as Pagan is a property owner, and the novel privileges this status, he is identified with the detached, authoritative and incorporeal narrative voice, the reflection of the Word, that position which mediates between the Absolute Subject positions of God and phallus, and which assumes universality and thus invisibility. As Homi Bhabha writes, "'He", that ubiquitous male member, is the masculinist signature writ large - the pronoun of the invisible man [...]

¹⁶ Sedgwick also notes that Girard's transhistorical structuralism tends to efface 'categories [gender, sexuality, class etc.] that in fact preside over the distribution of power in every known society' (1985: 22). Consequently she attempts to inscribe asymmetry within the ostensible symmetries of triangular desire (22-7).

the object of humanity personified' (1995: 57). Such an equation of maleness with the God-position, of the phallus with the logos, is familiar to any student of feminism, but what it cannot account for is a specific and physical masculinity such as Danny Shields'.

What I am drawing attention to in *The Shipbuilders* is the manner in which authoritative masculinity shifts between a personified 'he' (Pagan) and an authority without a pronoun, a universalist narrative position, in both of which the 'male member', although implicit, is excluded from direct representation. When Pagan's sense of nation and manhood is under threat, he identifies with an unquestionable 'male member', the working-class, physically realised Danny Shields. What inevitably emerges in this crisis of the novel, then, is precisely the valorisation of a bond - an ideological identification - between men which masks - veils, or represents - a relation of domination and subordination characteristic of class relations, asymmetrically differentiating masculinities according to both material privilege and lack, and abstract universality and specific physicality.¹⁷ Yet this asymmetry, in a contingent fashion, is also constitutive of normative heterosexuality. Paradoxically, therefore, the one physically specific 'man' in this relationship occupies the subordinate position typified by conventional representations of femininity, corporeality as against invisible intellect. Indeed, the substitution of Danny's manhood for such a feminine position is explicitly encountered in the jeers of his less fortunate ex-workmates:

Many of his old mates, jesting in the face of calamity, had found it possible to invent rough artisan's pleasantries [...] There were others, however, especially among the younger men, who took the trouble to make him feel ashamed and angry.

'Here's the boss's fancy man!' they would cry at his approach, and laugh sardonically.

'G'on, ye lousy wee sucker!' one man said angrily as they collided in a dark alleyway of the *Estramadura*. (Blake 1993: 57)

Any further suggestion of a sexual component - and this suggestion above is never

¹⁷ The production of the working-class male figure as overtly more physical, more sexual, than his middle-class counterpart, runs contrary to Foucault's description of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie's valorisation of the middle-class body over a profoundly invisible working-class one (1990: 126-7). A description of the historical shifts in power and representation by which this reversal may have taken place, however, does not lie within the domain of this thesis.

sanctioned by the narrative - in the Pagan-Shields bond is, of course, not forthcoming, unless I am to read between the lines of certain (presumably) innocent passages such as this:

Not for the first time there had arisen between him and
 Danny Shields an issue touching the fundamentals. Queer
 how it worked between two men ostensibly so ill-assorted!
 (195)

While it would be too much of an imposition, if not a childish submission to the comedy of innuendo, to read this language of rising and touching of fundamentals as an admission of genital homosexuality - and even this resists the temptation of an anachronistic gloss on 'queer' along with an investigation into the etymology of 'fundamentals' (*fundus*, the bottom part, the base of an organ) - the potential eroticisation of Pagan and Shields' homosocial bonding, the implication of desire, is already present. If 'fundamentals' are to be read, as apparently intended, as an abstraction, this only indicates the level of disavowal at work in the identificatory mechanisms to which I am required to submit. That is to say, as a straight male reader I am required to be interpellated by the abstract fundamentality of masculinity, the invisible subject 'supposed to know' who constitutes the authority of the text.¹⁸ This identification, as I have shown, is predicated upon certain derogatory representations of femininity, but is also a function which differentiates between men ('two men ostensibly so ill assorted!') even as it posits their bonding.

The novel continually attempts to remake and reaffirm the bond between these men in the face of the crisis represented by the closing down of the shipyard, where the original unity of bourgeois and proletariat becomes impossible to maintain on its own terms. The bond between Pagan and Shields then finds itself reiterated, on a specifically homosocial basis, as an even more prior unity fostered by a shared experience of war - a war which, in the case of Joe, scars and degrades masculinity, makes it helpless and ideologically feminine, but here enriches and empowers it. Here again I refer to the passage cited at the start of section III, also crucial to the materialist analysis of section II of this chapter. If the antagonistic hierarchy at the heart of the bourgeois-proletariat relationship is flattened only partially by any dominant ideology, here the asymmetrical order explicit in military relations is further superseded - 'Above the relationships of

master and man' - by a rhetoric of unity within the terms of 'the masculine world'. The dominant fiction produced here thus negotiates between economic and gender-differentiating structures. But as with Pagan and Shields' class relationship, asymmetry reappears; and this, to state the case again, is always-already articulated as an imbalance between a covert and an overt sense of manhood. The unity of Pagan and Shields must always be represented according to the double logic of the phallus, which produces Pagan as the master, complicit with the detached voice of the narration, and Shields as the man, belonging to a type ('the Western Scot'), enjoying a physical existence ('the grin [...] on his face'), and reduced to a set of attributes (courageous, steadfast, simple). The master-man bond then maps onto the phallic binary - the troubled difference between the phallus and its imaginary realisation, signifier and signified, universal symbol and veiling-as-representation - which also corresponds to the gender-differentiating dualism of mind/body.

All this relates to the conventions of classic realism. Prior to any renegotiation of male homosociality according to the plot of the novel, the position of the detached, apparently omniscient third-person narrator operates according to a logic which privileges knowing along the lines of class, as I have discussed previously. It is now also clear that this hierarchisation works through and by the phallic dichotomy, opening out the 'I-Box' of this culturally and historically specific representation of masculinity.¹⁹ Both Pagan and Shields enjoy different modes of masculine epiphany according to this logic. In the case of the former, this takes place when he takes his son (the quiet, passive John, markedly similar to Shields' son Billy) on a trip over the Clyde valley in an aeroplane. Here, access to an advanced technology enabling a panoramic perspective symbolises both Pagan's class privilege and his concomitant ability to share the universality of the narrative position:

[T]hough it seemed as if the stagnation of the Clyde were being paraded by arrangement before his eyes, Leslie no longer felt the oppression of that consciousness upon him. The splendid frieze of the Cowal hills, the winter sunshine on them, held him with delight. There ahead were all the islands [...] and he exulted, a man escaping from an ominous shadow

¹⁸ The 'subject who is supposed to know' is how Lacan describes the ideal position of the analyst successfully initiating transference (1979: 230-2).

¹⁹ For a discussion of the 'I-Box', see the Preface.

behind, in the easy rush of the plane through the sunshot air, in the creaming line of seawater round the horns of a remote and sandy bay, and in the rapture of John in the seat before him, his grave eyes on the swinging petrol gauges. (50-1)

Here, of course, the mode of universality attained by Pagan speaks through the mask of a fictive effect. Instead of the grim fact of the depression, the novel describes a romanticised landscape and the exultation a man finds in passing on the specialised knowledge of his (now redundant) engineering profession onto his son. This is part and parcel of the golden-age sentimentalism - the 'passion' of Clydeside - the text mobilises to veil the very economics of the crisis.

Meanwhile, the poverty this ideology passes over so easily provides the context, on the other side of the economic laws, for passions of a different kind. Here, the ISA of Sport (to retain Althusser's schema) provides the site for Danny Shields' epiphanic moment. From the instant the narrative introduces Shields in his own right, we find him, reassured by Pagan's promise of continued employment, engaging in the pleasures of the football pools. The narrative objectifies the ensuing pub debate about teams and players as the manifestation of 'a passion', an 'angry partisanship that is the industrial substitute for the satisfactions of clan warfare' (19), a yet further recourse to an archaic kind of mask. When Danny gets to go and see his beloved Glasgow Rangers compete against Celtic in the infamous rivalry of an Old Firm game, the winning goal is described thus:

It was a movement completed almost as soon as it had begun and Danny did not really understand it until he read his evening paper on the way home. But it was a goal, a goal for Rangers, and he went mad for a space.

With those about him he screamed his triumph, waving his cap wildly above his head, taunting most foully those who might be in favour of a team so thoroughly humiliated as the Celtic.

From this orgasm he recovered at length.

'Christ!' he panted. 'That was a bobbydazzler.'

'Good old Alan!' screeched the young man behind.

'Ye've got the suckers bitched!' (70)

Amidst all this primitive screaming and screeching, the victorious goal is symbolised

explicitly as a male orgasm, an end-pleasure produced in what approaches the raping of a Celtic side described in terms of a degraded femininity (“‘Ye’ve got the suckers bitched’”), exactly counterpointing the degradation of Danny by his ex-workmates (Danny as a “‘lousy wee sucker’”). This reiterates again the primary physicality of Shields’ - and more generally Glasgow proletarian Protestant - masculinity, and places on the side of phallic specificity - and specularity - this passion which, in the experience of Leslie Pagan and the narrative authority, is always located elsewhere, in an incorporeal universality. Yet the objectified, distanced way Danny is produced here - especially in the fragmented structure of the exposition, breaking off Danny’s explosion as a thrill of the moment - is exposed and undermined precisely by the partiality of the novel’s discourse on passion, the fundamentally non-continuous way in which an experience of passion is allocated differently to different class representations. This, then, also emerges as a third kind of passion, the passion of the bodiless for the embodied, the desire to make good the disappearance phallic authority produces by bonding with - identifying with, desiring - a more physically complete representation of masculinity.

I do not intend to suggest that eroticism is present in the Pagan-Shields bond simply because it mimics a heterosexual binary code (mind/body, intellect/corporeality). Danny Shields’ feminisation as a physical object is ambiguous, primarily because he represents ‘being a man’ more readily than Pagan. If Pagan can be said to have been castrated by the Depression, cut off from the Name-of-the-Father represented by his family’s participation in the Clydeside shipbuilding tradition, this is concomitant with his feminisation by the English world of his wife. While this world guarantees him money and power, as I have shown it also threatens his sense of masculinity and Scottishness, which is resurrected through an identification with Shields. Pagan wishes Shields to join him in England; in fact, he dreams of ‘bringing out of doomed Clydeside a colony of good men, workers all, to till the land and live in happy productiveness’, a dream necessary to his own construction as a ‘man with vigour and vision’ (i.e. a man who ‘has’ the phallus) (247). But this appears doomed, both by the voice of Blanche, which interrupts his musings with a ‘girlish’ call (ibid.), and Shields’ decision to remain in Glasgow. Shields’ loyalty to his nation and his trade, on the one hand, points up Pagan’s lack as a Scot and a property-owner; on the other, Danny’s physicality exposes Pagan’s physical absence: he who is supposed to know, he who owns, and who has the

phallus in that sense, lacks both a shipyard and a body with the power to represent phallic superiority. The disempowered, castrated Shields, then, paradoxically 'has' the phallus in a different way. This calls for some revision of the dialectic of 'having' and 'being' the phallus which dictates heterosexual gender identities in Lacan's theory. Insofar as the phallus is the ideal signifier of power, privilege and status, Pagan 'has' it and Shields, in his willing submission as a worker, is the lacking body whose acquiescence - whose 'being' the phallus - bolsters Pagan's authority. Yet Pagan has 'lost' it, and with this castration cannot remain master over the man. Thus, insofar as the phallus also signifies a physical ideal, Shields manifestly 'has' it while Pagan, if not so much in possession of a lacking, castrated body, simply lacks a body, and fights to retain Shields as his physical surrogate. Pagan then helps produce Shields' masculine plenitude by virtue of his own distance from it, his own ideological feminisation. The meanings of 'having' and 'being' the phallus circulate through this male pairing in a manner which implicates desire on two different levels, psychic and economic, producing Shields as a contradictorily determined specular yet empowered male subject, at once an undeniable phallic representative and a feminised figure, a "lousy wee sucker". Identification and desire are inevitably intertwined, setting off a play between narcissistic and objectifying modes of looking.

This structure, albeit with different (and triangular) dynamics, is also in place in *Major Operation*. Where Leslie Pagan is gradually erased from *The Shipbuilders*, the moment of George Anderson's bankruptcy is simultaneous with the 'collapse of his own private economy' (Barke 1955: 387) - that is, the discovery of his body, previously denied a sexual life by Mabel, able to dodge participation in the War (157) and prone to disappear behind the financial, intellectual and discursive strategies of business management. It is a lacking body, then, which is produced at this juncture, a physicality ruptured by illness, bed-bound, passive, made to undergo the scalpel. Castrated both sexually and economically, Anderson's pathetic struggle for bodily life and health is continually undermined by what the text repeatedly describes as his devitalisation. Even when he takes up with his former secretary, Sophie Grant, he realises, 'to his horror, that he was physically impotent', and that his operation had 'completely devitalised him' (436-7).

All this is contrasted with the narrative of Jock MacKelvie's body, a 'splendid frame' (45) which endures the pains of illness and operation with greater resistance than

Anderson's. Here, like Shields, MacKelvie is more an object to be looked at and admired, a specular figure, than a disembodied narrative function through which the very act of spectating is channelled. At the point at which MacKelvie's body is described, the narrative emphasises the intelligence of his eyes, reinforcing his status as an observer and a thinker; however, in the context of the dockyard environment in this scene, it is MacKelvie the worker, the doer, the physical man, who is most visible: 'MacKelvie took a brush along with his men. He was no hat; at best he might be described as a leading hand. A leading hand has always to work with the tools' (ibid.). Here again masculinity is represented by a working-class figure, 'no hat', in a manifestly physical guise. If particular details of MacKelvie's body are occluded - remembering, with Lacan, that the phallus 'can play its role only when veiled' - its metaphorical 'frame' serves to represent its rigidity, its sturdiness, its hardness (we are also told he has an 'iron constitution'). If MacKelvie is a hard man, this cannot be divorced from the context of his working life. As Willy Maley claims, 'the "hard man" and "hard work" are inextricably bound up with one another. [...] Manual labour and notions of "hardness" go hand in hand' (1994: 95).²⁰ Thus it becomes problematic to view the (muted) display of MacKelvie's body as a feminising representation. Counter to Lacan's claim that the close link between masquerade and femininity makes 'virile display [...] itself seem feminine' (1977c: 291),²¹ MacKelvie's phallic display is strictly contained within the working arena and the values of useful, healthy labour circulating through it. This is not to say that MacKelvie's body is not the object of erotic spectacle. Like the hypermasculine bodies of American comic superheroes, analysed by Peter Middleton in *The Inward Gaze*, MacKelvie represents both an ideal figure 'of what the male reader would like to be' - i.e. a point of identification - and 'above all, a [body] to be looked at', a site of objectification (Middleton 1992: 32). MacKelvie is also objectified by relations of production. His hardness is of great use to his employers, his superintendent believing him to be 'the only man who gave the Yellow Funnel line fair measure' (45). But elsewhere in the novel, as I shall discuss, this hardness is integral to MacKelvie's leading participation in a highly masculinised worker's movement. These contexts redeem MacKelvie from a more ambiguous hard-man status where male lack

²⁰ Notions of the 'hard man', along with Maley's essay, are discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

²¹ See Marjorie Garber's discussion of this statement in *Vested Interests* (1992: 355 ff). That the phallic, built-up white male body can also bear the representation of imperialist strategies is considered by Richard Dyer in *White* (1997: 145-83). Although Dyer neglects to investigate the potential eroticism of these bodies, it seems the femininity of such virile display is kept in check by the strong-man's representation of an ethnically superior 'spirit'.

stands in a more critical relationship to the performance of toughness. In *No Mean City*, Johnnie Stark's hardness is repeatedly threatened and scarred by other pretenders to the throne of Razor King, foregrounding his bodily pregnability. If his 'razors stand in for the penis', as Christopher Whyte writes, 'the tragedy [...] resides in their detachability' (1998: 276); without them, Johnnie's unarmoured, phallus-less body becomes further exposed to lack - indeed seems incapable of virile sexual performance (277). Jock MacKelvie's idealised representation, as worker and worker's leader, permits no such vulnerability.

Far from being impotent, then, MacKelvie is sexually active and attractive, and enjoys a series of flirtations with the nurses at the hospital despite remaining faithful to Jean. Indeed, MacKelvie and Jean's marriage draws attention to a further component in this idealisation of proletarian heterosexuality. Not only is the working class the only site in which true love can take place, as in *The Shipbuilders*, here successful marriage becomes the bedrock for a powerful, revolutionary proletarian masculinity. Anderson realises:

It was all very well to be resolute and strong. It was all very well to do without human company - especially the company of a woman. But how many did without this company? MacKelvie and his wife: there was very deep attachment between them. Almost without exception all the great revolutionaries had been and were married men. Lenin, Stalin ... What had the bachelor done in history? (Barke 1955: 415)

Anderson's bachelor status, then, is another element of his devitalisation, a process which must be reversed before he may truly convert to the cause. In other words, he must become a specific, physical and powerful man. When he remarks to Sister MacLean that he's in '*no-man's land*' (414), then, this is no empty comment on his transitional class status, but a figure for his struggle to reach over to the trenches of his true gender-comrades, his journey towards man's-land. For a man's land is precisely what the revolutionary proletarian struggle is cast as, with its phallic symbolism of the 'million-fingered proletarian fist bunching, tensing' (477) and its pugilist rhetoric: as MacKelvie warns Anderson, 'You're going to get some hard blows: learn to give them back. You're in a fight now and you're going to go under damn quick unless you learn to face up to the issues that confront you' (388). It is clear that MacKelvie's splendid

frame, as in the hospital, has him better equipped for the battle. And insofar as MacKelvie represents the worker's struggle for Anderson and for the novel, the dynamic between the two men, one markedly feminine and the other super-masculine, takes on a peculiarly erotic colouring.

Again, then, the bonding structure between Anderson and MacKelvie enacts a dynamic, echoic of a heterosexual structure, between the disembodied and the embodied, or more precisely between a devitalised sense of bourgeois masculine physicality on the one hand, and the privileged, whole and hard corporeality of the revolutionary proletarian on the other. However, this points up the extent to which any echo of a heterosexual relation is merely an echo of an echo, or, as Butler might have it, a copy of a copy (1990: 31); to say that the bond between Anderson and MacKelvie or Pagan and Shields resembles heterosexual gender difference is not to gift heterosexuality with an originary status. In fact, the bond between Anderson and MacKelvie differs from that of Pagan and Shields. Anderson's bodily devitalisation feminises him to a greater degree than Pagan ever is, and where Shields becomes the "lousy wee sucker", MacKelvie's perfect phallic frame, although of great use to capitalist power, admits no such slur. Thus MacKelvie, who really occupies the position both of detached proletarian authority (like the narrator, his world is 'the everyday world of reality') *and* phallic representative in the text - he both 'has' and 'is' the phallus, is both subject and object of the novel's hybrid narrative authority - here takes a dominant position in relation both to Anderson's lacking body and his wavering commitment to, and understanding of, the cause. The erotic dynamic between the men differs from that of Pagan and Shields as the 'master and man' dialectic is overturned. (I have indicated, however, that Pagan and Shields' relationship is also subject to reversal on a physical level, with Shields' corporeality figuring as an ideal Pagan lacks.)

Once more, then, *Major Operation's* discourse on economics gives way to a discourse on masculinity. Even within the terms of its religious resolution, the text articulates a process whereby Anderson's conversion figures as a transformation from 'no man' to 'man', and eroticises precisely the gap between the two: Anderson's becoming, his final class identification, is also the basis of his desire. Here is where Girard's triangles come into focus. Anderson desires to submit himself to the cause, but that desire is created in him by MacKelvie, who becomes its mediator. This mediation is ostensibly external:

MacKelvie as the possessor of the materialist truth is a figure to be admired and imitated by Anderson. Yet there is undoubtedly also an internal, eroticising dynamic between the pair. MacKelvie not only represents the cause, he *is* the cause, its intellectual and physical embodiment. Thus to imitate him is also to desire him. Why else would Jean MacKelvie appear to feel so hostile towards the idea of Anderson coming to stay (Barke 1955: 368)? Why else would the narrative describe this hostility as ‘sexual antipathy’ (383)? Indeed, Jean’s rivalry with Anderson mobilises a second triangle which interlocks with the first. Here MacKelvie is not the mediator but the object of desire. Jean’s desire precedes Anderson’s - she is the ostensible ‘subject’ of the triangle - but Anderson’s own prominently displayed lack initially offers little to contest this privilege. For her, he is ‘an object of pity’. In fact, Jean becomes conscious of her body precisely insofar as she feels Anderson to be ‘so unsexed he was almost neutral’, making her ‘conscious of her own vitality because Anderson was so ill and devitalised’ (ibid.). Here a curious mixture of masculine and feminine signifiers comes into play. Jean is made aware of her femininity by Anderson, becomes ‘self-conscious of her breasts, her hips and the rich curving sweep of her thighs’, almost as if Anderson represents a female rival, or at least a pathetic imitation of one. At the same time, Jean’s awareness of ‘her sexual potency’, along with her ‘vitality’ (an attribute usually accorded [or not] to the men in the novel), connotes a more masculinised kind of desire (ibid.). On the one hand, then, the strange kind of rivalry which oscillates between Anderson and Jean seems predicated upon which of them can be the most potent, the most vital in aiding Jock in the revolutionary struggle. On the other, Anderson’s and Jean’s ‘sexual antipathy’ also seems to revolve around which of them can be the most desirable - can most effectively ‘be’ the phallus - for Jock. Thus when Anderson feels he has been ‘excommunicated’ by Jean following a period in which he has fallen away from the movement, and in which MacKelvie has become incarcerated (488), the reference is not only religious, but also a figure for the cutting off of a sexual rival. Both unwomanly and unmanly, Anderson nevertheless represents a threat.

Anderson’s final sacrifice indicates that Jean’s sense of rivalry is not without justification. Here Anderson proves once and for all that in the terms of the novel it takes a real man to protect MacKelvie. For once, MacKelvie is the prostrate and passive male figure, finally floored by a police baton in the midst of a demonstration. Anderson, unable to lift him, finds on the ground next to him

a red flag emblazoned with a yellow hammer and sickle. He picked it up. He found himself standing in front of MacKelvie's body holding the pole in front of him.

Anderson felt himself possessed of terrific strength, felt there was nothing he could not defy. Only one thing mattered to him - MacKelvie must not be trampled to death by the horses.

[...] For the moment every ounce of his energy was tensed, gathered into the immediate, overwhelming desire to protect MacKelvie. Not for a moment did he consider his own danger. (489)

As I remarked in section II.ii, Anderson's grabbing of the flagpole symbolises his final ideological identification with the worker's cause. This, presumably, is the source of the strength he finds himself possessed of, the extraordinary tensing he experiences towards the fulfilment of his homosocial desire. Yet in the terms of the erotic component of that desire, the passage also makes for interesting reading. The coincidence of phallic and revolutionary imagery here reiterates strategies deployed elsewhere in the novel. The gripping of a pole facilitates a physical and emotional masculine empowerment which carries Anderson through to the crisis. Yet Anderson is finally toppled, his chest penetrated by a police-horse's hoof - by a representative, in other words, of the repressive state apparatus designed to protect the interests of his former class. Through the intervention of this third element Anderson becomes a proletarian martyr, but also finally submits his body to MacKelvie, an act of passive homo-eroticism which preserves one lover in the destruction of the other. In this way Anderson's gender transformation, his passage from 'no-man' to 'man', eclipses itself and leaves him permanently prostrate. His 'overwhelming desire to protect MacKelvie' now finds its fullest significance: MacKelvie's phallic authority, intellectual and physical, the masculinist worker's cause he represents and with these the dominant fiction, are all preserved by Anderson's terminal castration.

The final chapter of the novel, taken over by MacKelvie's graveside oration for Anderson, attempts to underline this resolution. Anderson, a less problematic character for the novel dead than he is alive, is eulogised by MacKelvie in a manner which confirms at once MacKelvie's intellectual eloquence, his materialist integrity and,

finally, his physical fortitude, as he squares 'his great shoulders and raise[s] his bandaged head' (495). Jean MacKelvie is absent, pointing up the fact that Anderson has triumphed over her in the dynamics of their particular triangle: simultaneously potent and feminine as Jean is, she is not capable, within the terms of the novel's masculinism, of performing the radical oscillation between phallic empowerment and heroic submission which Anderson accomplishes in the penultimate chapter. The homosocial component of their triangle has a fuller significance for the novel than the heterosexual one. This is further emphasised by the narrative's closing focalisation of events through the eyes of Fred Rowatt. Rowatt and Anderson, of course, were the rivals for Mabel's affections (another triangle), but now Rowatt seems to feel more allegiance to his dead friend than to his living lover. Indeed, in terms of the text's attempts to interpellate a bourgeois male reader, Rowatt, in the conclusion of the novel, comes to take over the role Anderson previously enjoyed. Consequently the mighty MacKelvie, otherwise the undisputed subject 'supposed to know' in the novel, becomes once more its primary object as well:

[Rowatt] watched MacKelvie's bandaged head till it was a blurred spot at the head of the back column of marchers. There was something about MacKelvie that held and fascinated him. In a queer way he felt proud that George Anderson had given his life for such a man: for the movement such a man represented. (495)

Thus *Major Operation* structures its entire resolution around a play of male homosociality, of bonding and desire, not only through degraded feminine and empowered masculine subject-positions, but also in the circulation of 'having' and 'being' the phallus within the interlocking triangles of male and female identifications, rivalries and desires. In fact, the shifting dynamics of empowerment and lack, of masculine and feminine subject positions between and within each node of the triangles, attest to the asymmetry proper to such a set of historically and ideologically mobilised structures.²² But while the phallus is thereby shown to be radically performative and reappropriable, severed from any necessary connection with male heterosexual privilege, the novel's climax attempts to reaffirm the dominant fiction even as it displays its least masculine figure being obliterated. If the narrative voice is far from offering a

²² See n. 16 above.

scientific-materialist account of the Depression, then, it also fails in its attempt to imagine its events from a supra-gender point of view. The ‘unity of opposites’ this narrative authority aspires to embody, its fusion of ‘the Eternal Feminine and Mr. Public’ (124), reveals itself as the unity of the dominant fiction, the consolidation of masculine privilege, albeit via a circuitous route whereby male relations of power are eroticised, the middle-class male body is shown to be passive and penetrable and the working-class male body becomes a site both of identification and desire. If the reader’s interpellation by this authority is made uneasy by its contradictory class, religious and nationalist discourses, the masculinism at the heart of its identificatory structure attempts to over-ride such difficulties and make the meaning of the text coherent. Yet in so doing it gives a problematic account of male homosociality, and makes normative masculine identity strange by incorporating the feminine and the homoerotic into its very representation.

iv: reading / trading

Both *Major Operation* and *The Shipbuilders*, then, require or produce not only a middle-class reader with contradictory linguistic, nationalist and political sympathies, but a male reader who can consolidate the illusion of ‘having’ the phallus via recourse to a narcissistic identification with an apparently universalist narrative position which provides a bond with a more specific, physical kind of masculinity normally denied to the empowered heterosexual masculine subject. In this, the play of desire of the disembodied for the embodied manifests itself precisely in the identificatory relation between reader and working-class hero, masked as an identification with a political cause, an archaic nationalist ideology, or religious rhetoric. This bonding then traverses the many contradictory ideologies which surround it, even while utilising them to veil its own eroticism. It also, therefore, in terms of the double logic of the phallus central to this thesis, articulates the veiling which precipitates representation, displacement, metaphor for the phallus: in this case, in the representation of the working-class male body.

This, finally, allows me to account for the reader-Shields bond in *The Shipbuilders*, enabled by the removal of Pagan from the narrative scene and its identificatory chain. What becomes clear as the narrative progresses towards closure is that Pagan’s grip on

the homosocial bond necessary to maintain his sense of self, manhood and nationality is slowly loosening. Not only is he increasingly drawn towards the English world of his wife, who finally persuades him to set up home in a Hampshire manor, but he further and further disappears from the story, taking up less and less narrative space. In other words, in taking up with Blanche, Pagan is quite literally ‘blanched’, whited out of the novel. This effacement also seems predicated upon his giving up any claims to the strong masculine specificity he so admires in Danny; as Pagan’s shipyard closes, as he gives in to the English world of his wife, so the invisibility I have remarked as proper to phallic authority threatens to engulf him completely. As he shifts away, Danny finds his wages not ready for him as he expects; the bond between master and man has begun to be violated, and will be broken irreparably by the giving up of the Kelvinside home at which Danny is employed. Read along these lines, Pagan’s final attempt to re-establish the bond by offering Danny a job in Hampshire is doomed to fail.

Yet this failure gives way to ostensible success: the narrative authority, doing away with Leslie Pagan as too slippery a masculinity with which to identify, too feminised to be truly authoritative, finds in Shields an adequate subjectivity for a more direct consolidation of the dominant fiction which functions as this text’s hidden ideological agenda. In other words, the novel re-establishes the homosocial bond at its heart by substituting its own authorial narrative position, which presumes to be detached, knowing and invisibly omniscient, for that of a Leslie Pagan who cannot, within the terms of the novel’s verisimilitude, survive as a power in a Glasgow of economic collapse, and cannot, within the terms of the novel’s nationalist masculinism, make realistic claims either to a universally authoritative perspective or to the specific positions of Scot and man. Instead, Danny Shields *can* survive, as a willing object rather than subject of power (i.e. subject *to* power), given life by the crises from which he cannot run away, effectively *employed* - in other words, allowed to ply his trade in exchange for the allocation of cultural and national value - by a narrative authority in need of a concrete identification for its reader. The reader, thereby - ideally straight and male as well as bourgeois, Protestant and nationalist - finds in the novel an authoritative position sufficiently absolute and invisible to reinforce a sense of omnipotence, yet at the same time, and crucial in producing that sense of mastery, also bonds - incorporating identification and desire - with a limited yet ideal type of proletarian masculinity. In so doing the reader-narrator alliance harnesses and controls the physicality of this working-

class object in order to balance out the physical disappearance inherent in the phallic Subject, yet also, at the same moment, brings into play a subversive kind of desire.

Thus Danny, en route to the 'proper domain' from which he has been exiled, endures trial after trial, initially with the help of Pagan but increasingly without it. Living out the roles assigned to him by the novel's class ideology, he finds himself on the one hand getting into trouble through a drunken attack on Jim and Lizzie's southside home - where Agnes has retreated with the Englishman Alf - and then, on the other, surviving the short prison-sentence given to him with a stoic remorse clearly appreciated by the police. Then, finding Pagan departed and his job at the house gone with him, and refusing state assistance, he invents himself, with a spirit of enterprise Margaret Thatcher would have found worthy of a place within her non-society of the Eighties, taking a job selling firewood to the upper-middle-class households of Park Circus, before an attack by a rival entrepreneur sends him to hospital and into the caring hands of an ex-Army doctor. As these oscillations of fortune propel Danny towards his closure, Leslie Pagan's dreams of 'bringing out of doomed Clydeside a colony of good men, workers all' (Blake 1993: 247), his final attempt to re-establish identification with Danny Shields and his kind, are foiled. For Danny's final ascendancy to the empty chair by Jess' fire which signifies his throne, his domestic (and particularly rural) patriarchal kingship, taking his place once more as the Name-of-the-Father, points up what this novel seems essentially to be about: the failure of a homosocial bond, the break-up of a love-affair between men whose ill-assortedness finally undermines and exposes the ideological cover behind (or 'above') which it is supposed to flourish, and the replacement of that bond with a new one which can more successfully bear its structural contradictions.

The novel's close, therefore, against the backdrop of a regimental reunion party in which 'men truculent, men lachrymose, men surly, men friendly, men indecent, men jolly and men witty' (260) participate in a drunken frenzy, a riot 'of primitive emotions', finds both Pagan and Shields strangely detached. Overt masculine camaraderie, posited not as an ideal but as a possible 'last foolish illusion', undermined totally by the incongruity of the novel's bourgeois-liberal position, foregrounds the momentous decision Shields, sober and in isolation, must make. But his decision to 'stick to [his] trade' appears not as a spontaneous, unlooked-for move, in the light of this analysis: rather, it comes as an

inevitable response to the plural plays of power this novel has continually reiterated. Shields' 'trade' strikes me as a reference not so much to the riveting which he ostensibly desires to return to, but to his subjection, his employment, as a type of Scottish proletarian masculinity, ideal and object, for the invisible, veiled, phallic narrative authority so necessarily requiring a bond. Where trade fails elsewhere in the novel, as I have shown, Jess is traded for Agnes in an exchange in which Danny also comes to take the place of Joe. The final trade, however, is between the reader and Pagan, substituting himself in an identification with the narrative authority which consolidates the invisibility of masculine privilege by forging a further, desiring and objectifying, relation with the text's working-class hero. The representational pact in which the middle-class - and in particular the middle-class man - seems to disappear, then, is underpinned by a process of male bonding between the reader and Danny Shields, attempting to make whole the entirely problematic schisms of gender, sexual, class and national ideologies from which the text is produced, but undermining them further with the introduction of the sexual into this social drama. The ultimate revolutionary strategy of this novel, in other words, is to construct an identification between the reader and Shields whose erotic component both completes and makes problematic this culturally, nationally and historically specific representation of the dominant fiction. Danny Shields thus becomes a type of idealised Scottish urban Protestant proletarian masculinity, read in the light of a phallic law which requires stability in its performative representative and which will continually deny and produce the transformative moment ('the true touching of fundamentals') as it seeks to keep this model of manhood in its proper place.

Although *Major Operation* resolves itself less successfully, and according to a different political ideology, the manner in which George Anderson is feminised and finally sacrificed to the ideal of Marxism and masculinity embodied by Jock MacKelvie points to a similar kind of trading. The middle-class male reader, potential 'convert' to the cause, witnesses the destruction of his own representative in the text. This points up the degree to which male homosocial desire, in these texts at least, is predicated not only upon the exchange of women, but on the exchange of men, and in particular middle-class men, whose lack in relation to nationality and masculinity only permits them to carry forth the healing project of the dominant fiction via their own destruction, erasure or substitution. The reader, ideally middle-class and male though he is, can better engage in this process because the very signifiers of his masculine insecurity can be

withheld, remain veiled, in a restorative yet desiring identification with a working-class male figure channelled through a universalising narrative voice. That is to say, even in a novel articulating a working-class position, the bourgeois face of the narrative Subject, determined by the text's participation in a dominant bourgeois novelistic form, conjoins with the text's phallogocentrism to interpellate the reader in an objectifying relationship to its worker's hero, even as that figure also represents an authoritative subject position, a site for narcissistic identification.

The desire inherent in male homosociality is not the only factor which undermines the restorative projects of these novels, however. I have commented how strategies of male bonding tend to cut through the ideological contradictions of which these novels are composed, organising them or using them to mask homoerotic effects. As I shall go on to discuss further in the next chapter, the ideal male reader's ability to disappear behind the masking function of the narrative voice is never entirely assured, especially in texts where the partiality - in other words, the visibility - of that voice is constantly on display. In *The Shipbuilders*, Pagan's ejection from the text is a necessary one, but it leaves a narrative position with which Pagan has been identified throughout, and which therefore continues to carry many of the class and national signifiers which made Pagan's status ambiguous from the start. The narrative voices in both *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* articulate, in literary Standard English, bourgeois perspectives which, to contemporary readers familiar with the textual strategies of such as James Kelman, do not guarantee an invisible and authoritative reading-position. In the case of Blake's novel, as I comment in section II.ii above, the ideal reader is required to be English-identified in linguistic terms and nationalist politically; for the reader of *Major Operation*, meanwhile, conjoined with these factors are more explicit contradictions between working- and middle-class positions. While the masculinist bias underpinning the narrative voices of both novels can remain veiled, inviting the privileged straight male reader to mask his own gender specificity in the taking up of a universalist position, the class and national values also inherent in them tend to interfere with this tactic in reminding that reader of the contradictions of his identity. In the next chapter I will trace the manner in which Kelman has attempted to erase such values from his narrative technique, although in so doing preserving an unrepentant masculinism. Kelman's texts, unlike those of William McIlvanney which more directly replicate the discursive hierarchies of the early Glasgow novels, create the illusion of a one-on-one

bond between middle-class reader and working-class character by erasing the traces of class privilege from the narrative voice. This, as I shall discuss, more easily allows the privileged male reader to veil his own privilege - and in that way maintain it all the better.

v: putting the 'ma' in 'man'

Finally, a case can be made for these novels which further challenges the kind of dominant fictional restoration they attempt to achieve. Each represents several transformative types of masculinity even within a phallogocentric economy which seeks to privilege traditional, unitary masculine identities. Here the texts move towards a more Butlerian conception of the gender-differentiating law, a law which is generative as well as prohibitive (Butler 1990: 65, 76-7) and fails to contain the oscillation of masculine and feminine signifiers even within coherently gendered characters.

I have already remarked upon the manner in which the contradictory masculinist, economic and aesthetic discourses of these novels produce characters in a kind of gender conflict: the unmaternal mothers Blanche Pagan, Agnes Shields and Mabel Anderson; Leslie Pagan's ambiguous empowerment, feminised by English association, lacking a body; George Anderson's lacking body, devitalised and passive; and Jock MacKelvie's spectacular body, desirable to Jean and Anderson alike. As subject both of and to power, as a site both of masculine identification and desire, Danny Shields is similarly placed, but perhaps one of his most strikingly ambiguous roles is adopted in his attitude towards Joe,²³ when he cradles the sick man in his arms. In fact, Shields is represented as more maternal, more domesticated and more caring than any female character in the novel apart from Jess, the ideal mother-figure with whom he finally takes up. Agnes' unwomanly attitude, which finds her banished to Glasgow's southside with her *nouveau-riche* friends, is certainly a product of the text's masculinism, but this is a masculinism which must also produce Danny, in a compensatory gesture, as a more perfect woman. With Agnes departed, Danny becomes a supermum:

[... I]t became a delight to be more orderly than even Agnes had been. When Billy had gone, he would wash and dust and polish in the strictness of ritual the Army had imposed upon

²³ See the close of section III.ii above.

him. It greatly entertained him to go shopping, and he came to take seriously the business of chaffering with tradesman and of comparing prices. He recovered the joys of cookery, proudly producing delight out of the short commons on which they had to live. He became expert in the economy of coal, even on the darning of stockings and socks and underwear. One whole afternoon he spent on a patch on the seat of Billy's trousers and found it a job well worth a man's interest and pride. (Blake 1993: 216)

Here, Danny's maternal domesticity is continually referred back to the masculine world - the Army, male pride - against which it is ostensibly at odds. Yet there is something which escapes this reduction, and even as Danny's wifeliness is annexed to a sense of his working-class heroism, his great resilience and adaptability, the text also represents this as a truly transformative moment. If I am not to read *The Shipbuilders* as a purely conservative reification of masculine privilege, I must look to the curious by-products of those textual-ideological contradictions which deny the Shields' son Billy a mother, and which force Danny - happily, in his great adaptability - to a domestic role, clearly putting a 'ma', however provisionally, in 'man'. These same forces, reactionary and misogynist, also produce Billy as the quiet, bookish, even feminine son - 'a frail, pure thing' (216) - for whom Danny must care. In other words, even as the text enacts structures of male bonding which are repressive of women and supportive of masculine privilege, even as these structures attempt to disavow or deflect the eroticism undoubtedly at their heart, these masculinist strategies also produce, in contradiction with the law but firmly within its reaches, masculinities otherwise: frail sons and caring fathers.

Danny Shields is not the only figure in these two novels who is produced at once as ideal man and ideal mother. In relation to the paternal figure of Blanche, Leslie Pagan too emerges as something of a surrogate mother for his son John, who, like Billy, is weak, girlish, made prone to illness by his father's indulgences (51-2). *Major Operation* also has its dynamic of failed mother and caring father with the Andersons, whose daughter Beatrice - another weak, passive child - is loved more completely by George than by Mabel (Barke 1955: 35). It also provides a scene similar to Danny Shields' cradling of Joe in Duff's vigil over the last living moments of Thomson (261-5).

However fleeting these transformations, however provisional in the larger process of making good the promise of normative male power, their production is one of the most striking aspects of these texts, and one of the points at which their masculinist strategies become the least coherent and assured.

Chapter Two

The Glasgow Tradition since the 1970s: Pathos, Monologism and Existentialism

I: Introduction

At the close of section III.iv of the previous chapter, I suggested that the contradictions between identifications with literary English, nationalist and Marxist positions make problematic the interpellation of the ideal male reader by texts such as *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*. This position has been informed by the literary climate prevalent in Scotland since the 1970s, in which many male writers have sought ways of banishing not only middle-class figures from their texts, but middle-class modes of narration along with them. This chapter aims to chart this shift with reference first of all to William McIlvanney, an author who (despite situating most of his fictions outside Glasgow) remains heavily reliant on the forms and themes inherited from the Glasgow tradition. I then discuss James Kelman, the writer at the centre of the attempt to purge the realist narrative voice of its traditionally bourgeois inflections. Despite Kelman's formal innovations, the extent to which his texts still participate in masculinist strategies will be examined, particularly in his engagement with 'monologic' and existential forms.¹ An emphasis on the isolation and the pathos of the working-class male hero in McIlvanney and Kelman will be central to the analysis, particularly in the attempt to trace the relationship of this figure to the ideal male reader.

Some kind of change in the representation of masculinities is to be expected from the post-1970s Glasgow novel. Yet in many ways the discourses at the heart of men's cultural productions in the '70s - namely, those of class and nationalist politics - resemble those integral to the 1930s texts. Willy Maley, in an essay on the concept of Scottish cultural devolution, has argued that

one of the main elements of Scottish culture in the 1970s was not a shift from revolution to devolution but a productive conjunction of class and nation. The collapse of Upper Clyde Shipbuilders in 1971, read alongside the rising fortunes of the

¹ I will offer a definition of these terms in section III.

Scottish National Party [...], might lend credence to the view that the patriot was displacing the proletariat [...] But the miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974 [...] gave notice that the 1970s was going to be a battle-ground as far as industrial relations were concerned. And Scotland was electing communist councillors on a scale that suggested that Red Clydeside was more than a myth and that class politics were alive and kicking north of the border. (1994: 81)

Reflecting this, many dramatic productions of the 1970s tended to resuscitate the history of Scottish socialism. Bill Bryden's *Willie Rough* [1972], for example, is the story of a Greenock shipyard worker who becomes involved in Union politics during the period 1914-6, the heyday of the Red Clydeside leader John MacLean.² Elsewhere, Hector MacMillan's *The Rising*, a Dundee Rep production from 1973, reached back to the weavers' insurrections of the 1820s, a period later dramatised by James Kelman in his 1990 play *Hardie and Baird: The Last Days*. MacMillan's other significant work, 1973's *The Sash*, articulated its socialist vision in a more contemporary setting, addressing the problem of religious division in the West of Scotland. Whether looking forward or back, however, and despite the explosion of feminist discourses in the West in the '60s and '70s, it is clear that many of these men's dramas articulate themselves through masculinist ideologies. For whether privileging the perspective of the working-class hero Willie Rough or the bigoted Bill MacWilliam of *The Sash* - in other words, whether for valorisation or satire - such plays represent their male protagonists firmly at the centre of the action.

The strategy of representing crucial periods in working-class history in some of the dramas of the 1970s may have been an attempt to counter the de-politicising effects of industrial decline. If the historical crisis which motivates the ideological tensions in such novels as *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* is the Depression, here the post-industrial dislocation of the '70s and '80s, in which 'displacement [and] fragmentariness [...] are likely to be the new conditions of experience for [...] working class people', takes its place.³ Yet not all of the new dramas of the '70s referred back to periods in which communal action seemed a more urgent possibility. Tom McGrath and Jimmy

² 7:84 and John McGrath also evoked MacLean in 1974's *The Game's a Bogey* and 1975's *Little Red Hen*.

³ Ken Worpole, cited in Klaus 1989: 39.

Boyle's *The Hard Man* [1977], for example, represents a working-class male figure in a particularly isolated, angry and oppositional light.

The Hard Man deals with the first part of the life of Jimmy Boyle, the Glasgow gangster sentenced to life imprisonment for murder who emerged into freedom as a critically acclaimed writer. Violent and uncompromising, it explores the roots of crime in a poverty-stricken city and offers an indictment of the bourgeois values of the criminal justice system. In Act Two it serves up the image of John Byrne, Boyle's representative in the play, imprisoned in a cage - literally, the solitary confinement 'cages' at Peterhead prison - just like the animal society views him as. The representation of working-class life as a kind of prison sentence is also integral to (the artist and playwright) John Byrne's *The Slab Boys* [1978]. But in *The Slab Boys* imprisonment is a metaphor rather than a reality, and consequently a much lighter experience. The extra punch carried by *The Hard Man* emerges most strongly in those passages in which Boyle/Byrne directly addresses his audience:

There is so much that none of you can understand about me and the world I come from and there doesn't seem to be any way of telling it that will finally get you to see the bitterness and indifference I inherited from whatever the system was the series of historical priorities that created the world into which I was born [...]

There were the haves and the have-nots. I was one of the have-nots. There were the have-nots that worked and the have-nots that thieved, then there were the rest of you - living away out there somewhere in your posh districts in aw your ease and refinement - what a situation!

It made me laugh to see you teaching your religions and holding your democratic elections - and it made me sick with disgust. That was why I enjoyed the sight of blood because, without knowing it, it was your blood I was after. (McGrath and Boyle 1977: 33)

Here a working-class character is directly critical of 'you', in other words his middle-class audience. It seems that groups like John McGrath's 7:84 were unique in

attempting to bring their socially conscious dramas to working people themselves.⁴ Elsewhere, in the repertory theatres of the capital and the major cities and towns, one cannot help assuming that the middle classes still made up (and continue to make up) the bulk of the theatre-going population. What is fascinating is that this audience applauded works like *The Hard Man* in the '70s, works in which the middle classes are confronted and even abused. Contrastingly, when *The Hard Man* was performed in front of a largely working-class audience at Glasgow's Pavillion theatre, the response to passages such as the one cited above was confused and angry (Cameron 1997: 7-8). The play was about somebody from a 'have-not' background, but was directed firmly at an audience of the 'haves'.

In this way, the pact by which the Scottish bourgeoisie seek representations from which they themselves are absent appears to become particularly refined in the theatrical productions of the 1970s, even to the point at which the proletarian hero can call for the blood of his accusers without provoking them into leaving their seats.⁵ While the 'animal' is shouting back, he is still safely caged up; he articulates the privileged audience's collusion with forces of social exclusion, yet remains effectively objectified within the traditional binary between spectator and spectated, a structure in which that audience can take up a position of detachment and pretend that someone else is being shouted at. Dramatic works may more easily facilitate such a pact because they are not dependent upon third-person narrative voice, that device which in the tradition of the realist novel in Scotland has most often assumed a bourgeois, Standard English-identified character. In terms of the novel, the particular consonance of class and nationalist discourses in the 1970s renders such a voice even more problematic than before; the contradictions of the linguistic and national positions of the bourgeois reader are all too visible in it, leaving gaps in the masking of privilege proper to any interpellation by an authoritative and universalising Subject-position. This will become apparent in my reading of William McIlvanney in section II. In the analysis of James Kelman in section III of this chapter, I will show how the deconstruction of this voice constitutes a benefit to the privileged reader, who can adopt a position of greater distance and invisibility than that offered by more traditional Glasgow novels.

⁴ For example, *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* [1973], a play about the historical and contemporary capitalist exploitation of the Highlands, was toured around the village halls of the north and the Hebrides in 1973-4. See John McGrath's essay 'The Year of the Cheviot' (McGrath 1981: v-xxix).

⁵ For a discussion of Whyte's concept of the 'representational pact', see sections II.ii and III.ii of Chapter One above.

While the works of McIlvanney and Kelman seem formally and ideologically distant, both preserve the masculinism also at the centre of the earlier Glasgow texts. Regardless of narrative form, both authors focalise working-class male characters in a manner which underscores the phallogocentrism of the representational pact by which middle-class identities are erased from view. In the gender ideology of the Glasgow tradition, middle-class masculinities are feminised, and thereby degraded, by virtue of their association with English power and privilege; working-class men, meanwhile, are the bearers of ideal national and gender status. This is also clearly prevalent in the men's dramas of the 1970s. In the case of *The Hard Man*, it is not only the bourgeoisie who are largely absent from representation, but women as well; for the privileged male spectator, the play sets up a homosocial bond, however fraught or oppositionary, with a proletarian figure who has always been, and continues to be, an embodiment of masculine physicality, an ideal (if abject) phallic representative. In spite of the impact of feminist politics, plays like *The Hard Man* continue to valorise the articulation of (heterosexual) masculine subjectivities in a world in which women remain entirely at the margins. The novelistic productions of McIlvanney and Kelman, as I will show, do not in any way subvert this tradition.

What Maley has argued with reference to the men's texts of the '70s, however, is that the stereotype of the 'hard man' begins to be deconstructed. Rejecting John Caughie's idea that the myth of the hard man depends upon an effort to 'recover the lost dignity of labour', Maley claims that

this type of analysis is guilty of blaming the victim, or treating the symptom without thinking about the cause. It is also ahistorical, in so far as the 'hard man' and 'hard work' are inextricably bound up with one another. There were razor gangs and so-called hard men on the streets of Glasgow when heavy industry was in its heyday. Manual labour and notions of 'hardness' go hand in hand. It is not a question of recovering the lost dignity of labour but of analysing the effects of the objectification of labour. (Maley 1994: 95-6)

This is undoubtedly the position of *The Hard Man*: Byrne/Boyle views his 'bitterness and indifference' as a product of 'the system [...] that created the world into which [he]

was born'. Yet the 'system' means capitalist relations of production, not the phallogocentric discourse of gender differentiation which intersects with it. The world is composed of 'haves' and 'have-nots' on economic terms, but the asymmetry of those who 'have' the phallus and those who 'have-not' must be equally crucial in the production of what is not only a class but a gender stereotype. If McIlvanney and Kelman's texts participate in 'analysing the effects of the objectification of labour', the extent to which they persist in objectifying women - and rely upon masculinist modes of identificatory reading which also objectify men - must also be taken into consideration.

Chapter Two (cont.)

II: Strange Fruit: Masculinity and Pathos in McIlvanney's *The Big Man*

William McIlvanney's adherence to the linguistic hierarchism employed by the earlier Glasgow novels is highly visible in his works; bourgeois readers, while not represented in the text itself, enjoy a linguistic and cultural identification with the Standard English narrative voice which the central working-class characters do not. As Cairns Craig comments in relation to *Docherty* [1975],

in such narrative patterns [...] the Scottish novelist dramatises the dilemma in which the narrative voice of the novel addresses a fundamentally English-reading (and usually English-speaking) audience across the heads of characters who are given voice only to the extent that they are encased in and, in the end, mutilated and silenced by, an alien linguistic environment. (1999: 77)

To recall my Althusserian schema from Chapter One, the Absolute Subject reflected by the narrative voice in McIlvanney's texts has a bourgeois face, even if apparently identified with the working-class characters under its ideological jurisdiction. To give one example, here is the passage from *Docherty* in which the miner Tam attempts to warn his son Conn away from following in his footsteps:

‘When Ah wis your age, ah had ideas, son. Things Ah could see that Ah wid like tae dae. But the pits took care o’ that. Ah’m jist a miner noo [...] An’ Ah canny see beyond the seam that Ah’m tryin’ tae howk.’

Tam spread his arms and shook his head, as if offering the image of himself to Conn as irrefutable proof of the failure he couldn't find words to convey. Paradoxically, what Conn saw were the forearms bulging from the rolled up sleeves, the hands that looked as tough as stone. The whole person emitted an aura of impunity as cautionary as an electric fence. Sitting there, self-deprecating man and hero-worshipping boy, they made an irony of each other, Tam

imparting to his son a conviction he had no words to counteract, Conn interpreting his father's silence against itself. (McIlvanney 1987: 161)

This passage echoes identical strategies to those at work in the novels discussed in the previous chapter. The narrative voice here not only speaks a kind of language its characters cannot, it finds words precisely where those characters cannot find any, and detects ironies they are blind to. Moreover, even as it delimits the perspective of this Tam Docherty, who attempts to admit in his own way his essential failings, the narrative, along with Conn, produces a reading of him which privileges his status as an ideal phallic representative, his bulging forearms and tough hands combining in a image of the working-class male body as hard as it is heroic. The true irony of the passage lies not in Conn's misinterpretation of his father, but in the irony of this irony: that this is how the novel presents Tam in the first place, as an at once limited, inarticulate, undisciplined yet ideal type of Scottish working-class masculinity. In other words, the Absolute Subject of the narrative voice reveals itself as both bourgeois and phallic.

If this places McIlvanney firmly within the Glasgow tradition, it must be remarked that he is not strictly speaking a Glasgow novelist. *The Big Man* [1985], the narrative of an unemployed Ayrshire man who participates in a bare-knuckle boxing match organised by Glasgow gangsters, and the novel with which this discussion is primarily concerned, is a case in point. But the representation of Glasgow in that text is of particular interest here. *The Shipbuilders*, and to an extent *Major Operation*, are Glasgow novels in spite of the fact that they denigrate Glasgow life and privilege rural living as a more ideal kind of existence.⁶ In that sense, the fact that *The Big Man* distances itself from Glasgow does not disqualify it from participating in strategies typical of the tradition. In it, Glasgow is identified as a 'real' place, 'rough but honest', yet a place which fosters a kind of brutality different from the kind of homely violence offered by Thornbank, the village from which Dan Scoular comes. Cities like Glasgow, the narrator states,

perfected individual violence in a way that country places didn't. It wasn't just that the competition was greater. It was also because anonymity released violence, not just the anonymity of the victim [...] but the anonymity of the

⁶ See Chapter One, sections I and III.ii above.

perpetrator, the loss of inhibiting roots, of the importance of others' awareness of you and how they might react.
(McIlvanney 1985: 122)

Thus in Glasgow brutality is divorced from roots; the chances are you will not know your assailant or victim, and thus there is no sense of any 'shared morality, however hypocritically or imperfectly shared, [which] might put bindings on [Dan's] arms when the chances came' (122-3). If the texts of the 1930s participate in the privileging of rural over urban living, associating city-dwelling with a crisis in gender as well as community, *The Big Man* reiterates this representational strategy in looking at Glasgow from the outside, and situating itself in an idealised (if poverty-stricken) rural space where, as I shall discuss, community, family and 'humanity' - that ideological identification which masks gender and class contradictions in the community and family - seem to flourish.

The Big Man also participates in such strategies in the extent to which it isolates the perspective of a single working-class male figure. While there is a marked departure from the structure of inter-class male pairings which *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* employ, the erasure and sacrifice, respectively, of Leslie Pagan and George Anderson in these texts appears to make way for McIlvanney's later focalisation of a single male protagonist, albeit still within a third-person narrative form. These earlier novels seem to mark a particular point of failure from which the representation of bourgeois masculinities in Scottish urban men's texts is considered more and more troublesome and even impossible. In *The Big Man*, Dan Scoular is the phallic representative the ideal male reader of the early Glasgow texts requires, to identify with and to objectify, in a homosocial bond in which an articulation of the dominant fiction takes place. A bare-knuckle boxer embodying the strong physicality absent in universalising positions of masculinist authority, Scoular appears at first glance as another manifestation of the hard man. Yet Willy Maley has argued that McIlvanney is typical of other male writers of the '70s and beyond in his attempt to deconstruct the hard-man myth: 'The toughness, the political nous, the humour in the face of poverty, the violence - all of these Scottish characteristics appear in McIlvanney's work, but the stereotypes are transformed and the roots of the violence and the desperate comedy are exposed' (1994: 95). Other critics concur. For Peter Humm and Paul Stigant, with reference to the crime novels *Laidlaw* [1977] and *The Papers of Tony Veitch* [1983],

McIlvanney uses 'masculine narratives to question the cultural codes and practices through which masculinity has been constructed in fiction and history' (Humm and Stigant 1989: 86). Jeremy Idle, meanwhile, takes up a more ambivalent position:

There is a credit and a debit side to McIlvanney on masculinity. On the former side, he shows capacities rich up to a point for questioning introspection into certain kinds of maleness [...] On the latter, what has to be called into question includes his marginalisation of women, his exaggerated respect for physical prowess, his bar-room boasts of Scottish male egalitarianism, and his unwillingness to explore ways round the genres of elegaic defeat. His perpetual mourning for the passing of the good hard men has gone on too long. (1993: 57)

In this section, I will attempt to weigh up precisely how far *The Big Man* falls on the 'credit' or 'debit' side of McIlvanney's representations of gender in general and masculinity in particular.

For Maley, as I have noted, the deconstruction of the hard man myth lies in 'analysing the effects of the objectification of labour'. *The Big Man*'s description of Graithnock, the 'big town' of which the 'big man' Dan Scoular's home village Thornbank is a satellite, emphasises the role industry has played in the town's collective masculine psychology:

[Work] was what [Graithnock] knew how to do. It was the achievement it threw back in the face of its own bleakness. It liked its pleasures, and some of them were rough, but the joy of them was that they had been earned [...] The man who had embarrassed himself in drink the night before would turn up next morning where the job was and work like a gang of piece-work navvies.

When there was nowhere for him to turn up, what could he do? (McIlvanney 1985: 16)

Dan Scoular, like many of his contemporaries in Graithnock, similarly has nowhere to turn up in the morning. His is an experience of dislocation: formerly employed as a miner, he finds work at Sullem Voe in between periods of unemployment, before

returning to Thornbank for the sake of his family, despite the absence of work (14). This dedication to wife and children and the home locality in which they live provides a line of resistance to the breakdown that the loss of the guarantee of labour produces; in this way the novel articulates an ostensibly nostalgic response to its primary 'reality-effect', post-industrial fragmentation.⁷

Thus Scoular's commitment to home provides a link, for the community at least, to a more secure kind of past. The people around him 'looked to him to confirm that things were more or less all right' (21). For them, his nickname of 'the big man' simultaneously conjures forth a sense of physical size, of ontological impregnability - a hardness of being - and of magnanimity:

Though he was six-feet-one, the implications [of Dan's nickname] were more than physical. They meant stature in a less definable sense. They had to do with his being, they suspected, in some way more inviolate than themselves, more autonomously himself. They had to do, perhaps most importantly, with the generosity and ease with which they felt he inhabited what was special about himself [...] (20)

But, the narrator tells us, 'the image the people of Thornbank had of him was false' (ibid). In highly directive prose typical of McIlvanney's narrative style, the novel offers an insider's view of Scoular's mythologised 'big man' status and invites the reader to assent to the alternative, 'true' image it will uncover. In this way it also suggests that the assurances of the past are long gone, and that masculine roles must adapt with the times.

The questioning of Dan's public image in the novel indicates the extent to which the economic crisis threatening Dan's community also endangers the stability of the dominant fiction. To divorce man from useful and rewarding employment - especially in the absence of any socialist course of action, the context of the empowerment of Jock MacKelvie in *Major Operation* - is also to sever penis from phallus, to dissociate specific masculine subjects from the Symbolic signifier they presume to own. In this way, Dan Scoular emerges in stark contrast to the idealised MacKelvie: where the red-leader's 'splendid frame', corporeal and intellectual, is seemingly impregnable, attractively virile and resilient to injury, Scoular's body and self signify lack even when

⁷ 'Reality-effects' are part of Balibar and Macherey's theory of literature as an ideological form, discussed

he appears at his strongest. His wife, Betty, 'had never quite become immune to the attractiveness of his vulnerability. She had never known a man who was so obviously without effective defences' (33). His training for the fight, meanwhile, produces a body which must find its own limits before it can become hard enough to win: as Tommy Brogan advises him, "'If ye beat yerself, ye'll beat the other man'" (108). This results in the contradictory image of Dan's body 'fusing stomach muscles and arms that quivered uncontrollably' (ibid.). On the day of the fight, one character sees him as 'bewildered and white and taut [...] His body looked [...] as tender as a piece of fruit peeled for consumption' (163). Alternately fused and quivering, taut and tender, hard and soft - masculine and feminine - the body of the Big Man is a site where phallicism seems continually undermined by lack.

In an essay on the phallic woman, Catherine Waldby makes a connection between the economy of genital gender difference and the traditional representation of bodily boundaries. 'The male body', she argues,

is understood as phallic and impenetrable, as a war-body simultaneously armed and armoured, equipped for victory. The female body is its opposite, permeable and receptive, able to absorb all this violence. In other words, boundary difference is displaced outwards from (imaginary) genital difference. (Waldby 1995: 269)

Yet here, Dan Scoular's fruit-like body emerges as a hybrid of these two positions. It is hard yet penetrable, armed yet vulnerable, capable of performing and absorbing violence at the same time. This points to a contradiction in the genital - that is to say, phallic - difference which governs gender identities in this particular dominant fictional representation. Dan Scoular's contrasting (heterosexual) masculine and feminine dispositions are integral to the deconstruction of the hard man myth the text appears to attempt, yet prove problematic, as I will show, for the novel's ultimate adherence to the traditional laws of gender differentiation.

That McIlvanney's Big Man lives within and between the contraries of hard and soft becomes the foundation for his rejection of the male myth others see him as embodying. Like Danny Shields in *The Shipbuilders*, Scoular discovers his wife has been seeing

another man; unlike Shields, he does not then attempt to kick their door down and take his revenge. Dan's informant, Wullie Mairshall, expects him to take violent retribution: 'Wullie believed in working-class machismo, physical hardness as a kind of moral law' (McIlvanney 1985: 103). Instead Dan 'shuck[s] the code he had thought was his. [becomes] not the master of that rough ethic's baying principles but their prey'. This leads him to feel 'unmanned' (146); further, that he doubts his right to take the moral high-ground with Betty produces a 'dismantling of his own machismo' (149). He reclaims his manhood, and with it a moral position, in the moment of the bare-knuckle fight by mustering his own physical hardness against that of the 'rough ethic' itself. His fight with Cutty Dawson becomes a battle with

all those working-class hardmen who had formed the pantheon of his youth, men who in thinking they defied the injustice of their lives had been acquiescing in it because they compounded the injustice by unloading their weakness onto somebody else, making him carry it. Dan's past self was among them. So was his father on the back green. Like an argument Dan was still involved in, his father's voice came from somewhere: 'Whit is it you believe in, boay?' As he stumbled about the field, being flayed of his arrogance, he was looking for an answer. (176)

Scoular finds the answer, in a sense, despite his eventual victory. He wins the fight yet betrays his gangster sponsor, Matt Mason, stealing extra money from him to give to the hospitalised, physically and financially destitute Dawson. In his rejection of the underworld, its death-dealing coincident with a vulgar aspiration towards suburban bourgeois values (218-20), Scoular returns - despite the death-threat hanging over him - to the family and village life the novel valorises as a more human, more meaningful locus. In so doing, as the narrative voice directs us to conclude, he comes to terms with what he finds in himself - in beating the other man, he feels 'the unadmitted pathos' of those, like his father, who have embodied the hard-man status (202), and finds a way to avoid beating up himself. In this way Dan renounces his machismo and reaches an understanding of his own pathetic humanity:

Immorality lay in the refusal to share in the weakness of everyone, in the preparedness to pretend, for a day or a year

or a lifetime, that you were different. It was self-deceit to pretend otherwise. You had to choose not to be victorious and to refuse to be defeated by anything smaller than death. That absolute humility implied a comparative arrogance. Matt Mason fell within the range of that arrogance. Dan Scoular was pathetic but he knew it. Matt Mason was pathetic but didn't know it. Dan revelled in his pathos. It was his strength. (254-5)

Christopher Whyte has noted the extent to which pathos inheres in the representation of the hard man, the 'dysfunctional urban male', in Scottish texts:

[The hard man's] status as victim and loser makes him the focus of a surprising but persistent pathos, a pathos which oddly 'feminises' a figure who wants to be so resolutely and absolutely masculine. (1998: 274)

Pathos as a literary device associated with femininity has a substantial and pervasive history. Two Shakespearean passages, the speech of Gertrude on the death of Ophelia in *Hamlet* and the death of Desdemona in *Othello*, still serve as exemplary instances of pathos in current dictionaries of critical terminology (see eg. Cuddon 1992: 693). Pathos is also, famously, present in much Victorian English writing, where the demise of Dickens' Little Nell competes with numerous other child-deaths for readerly sympathy. That pathos in this period is normally focused on children as well as women, and that sentimental literature generally is devalued in contrast to masculine literary values, is a critical commonplace. Yet as Miriam Bailin claims in a recent paper, minute differences of status in the class discourses of Victorian England are also crucial to pathos (1999: 1015-6).

The task of allocating pathos in Victorian literature belongs to the middle classes, Bailin argues, permitting the extension of humanity 'to disenfranchised groups', yet doing so 'only insofar as the presentation of the sufferer and of his or her feelings [accord] with established cultural notions of propriety' (1019-20). This sense of propriety serves to police pathos in suppressing any slippage from pity into less noble emotions like rivalry or hatred. Bailin isolates texts concerned with male pairings, rivals who renounce their dispute with their better-off counterparts and embrace destitution and defeat, and are

thus accepted across social boundaries in the cause of a shared humanity. Bailin reads in these texts, Alfred Lord Tennyson's long narrative poem *Enoch Arden* [1864] and Charles Dickens' novel *A Tale of Two Cities* [1859], a 'sentimental version of the triangulation of desire' (1023), René Girard's structural theory important to the discussion of homosociality in the previous chapter. Pathos becomes the mark of the defeated, homeless rival, the figure who gives up wife, home and fortune to another man. Renouncing revenge, the downwardly mobile figure dies in destitution but is rescued for humanity by sympathetic identification on the part of the reader, providing a beatific reading of defeat.

This allows some refinement of the theory of identification I outlined in the previous chapter. Could pathos have a greater part to play in the structures of male bonding of texts such as *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*? In the case of the former, pathos can be seen at work in stages, at the points of Danny Shields' greatest failures, when he loses his job or his wife. Yet it is not so much sympathy as a sense of masculine camaraderie, a cross-class yet differentiating loyalty, which motivates Leslie Pagan's attempts to re-employ Shields following the close of the yard. As I argued in the previous chapter, it is Shields' great resilience, his adaptability, which makes of him a heroic working-class object; pathos, with its feminising implications, is passed over as a stage on the way to greater strength. Pathos is certainly present in Joe Stirling's death-bed scene, but Shields' sympathy for Joe is only part of the process by which he comes to take the place of his lacking, dying friend. However limited, the presentation of pathos in this novel accords with Bailin's class analysis: it is permissible to feel sorry for Danny only as he proves his worth, only as he fulfils his role as an ideal and obedient working-class type. Yet his decision to stick to his own trade at the close is an action which seeks respect rather than pity.

In *Major Operation* pathos more properly belongs to the bourgeois George Anderson than to any working-class figure, a strategy clearly related to the kind of masculine sentimentalism described by Bailin. Anderson's downward mobility, with his pitiful, physically and intellectually lacking manhood time and again feminised in relation to the manly standard provided by Jock MacKelvie, invokes a certain compassion in the (bourgeois male) reader. In this sense, identification with Anderson becomes sympathetic as well as narcissistic, although his long delay in committing himself to the

worker's cause curbs this effect somewhat. However, Anderson does not die in destitution but at his apotheosis, the moment of his (religious, materialist and masculinist) redemption, albeit shot through with a sense of homoerotic submission. If this falls short of being truly pathetic in the Victorian sense of the term, it is certain that a degree of sympathy is integral to the identificatory mechanisms of the text, alternately narcissistic, objectifying and eroticising as they are. This sympathetic component, criss-crossed by complexities of class and status, possibly enables a more successful disavowal of the homoeroticism of these male pairings than I have allowed in the previous chapter.

It seems equally plausible to me, however, that an erotic component exists within the mechanisms of sympathetic identification between men - between male characters, and between male readers and male characters. As Bailin discusses, the practice of policing the emotions generated by pathos was integral to Victorian sentimentalism. 'The correspondence of feeling between the object of sentimentality and the sympathetic subject [...] is [...] achieved through a struggle to suppress or transvaluate supervening obstacles to sympathetic identification (anger, hatred and resentment, for instance) whose traces can still be felt in the outpouring of emotion that is meant to signal their absence' (1022). When both subject and object of such a sentimental communion are male, isn't it equally likely that the eroticism of pathos would prove a similarly obstructive yet component part of sympathetic identification?

To pity another, especially when articulated across class difference, marks off the pathetic figure as an object. The humanisation of this object attempts to confer upon it the status of subject, yet this process remains necessarily incomplete. To sympathise is not to empathise and thus cannot be a solely narcissistic activity; the pitiable, lacking male body to be consoled (Joe Stirling's war-wounded near-corpses in *The Shipbuilders*, for example) is feminine or child-like in this respect (enabling Danny Shields to adopt a feminine, mothering role as he cradles Joe in his arms). If eroticism sits uneasily within this pathetic dynamic, it must be acknowledged that its structure, when operating between men, requires one who 'has' the phallus, economically and Symbolically, and one who has quite obviously lost it, thereby bolstering the former's sense of power and privilege. These are the two traditional heterosexual positions in my analysis. That Bailin's discussion of Victorian pathos focalises male homosociality and cites Girard's

triangulation of desire would tend to underscore my argument here. Rivalry between the members of a male pair is renounced, keeping intact the homosocial bond, yet at the expense of the feminisation of one figure. Within pathos between men, the positions of 'having' and 'being' the phallus oscillate as suggestively as they do within the theory of male homosocial desire. The two seem to converge at this juncture of my analysis.

It is clear that McIlvanney's *The Big Man* lingers on pathos to a much greater degree than do the earlier Glasgow texts. Here pathos becomes the true mark of the working-class hero. Yet it is something, initially anyway, avowedly feminine. After the fight, when Dan sees Cutty Dawson's grieving family, a wife and two daughters doomed to cope without their patriarch's fighting (and earning) ability, he recognises them as descendants of his mother:

Not only did they have to deal with the daily problems of living. They had to impart to it its true feeling as well, dignify it with their tears. By the passion of their pain they were offering some human measurement of what had happened to Cutty. (McIlvanney 1985: 202)

Here Dan articulates a maternal identification which shifts the terms of his gender status from a negative to a more positively realised sense of femininity. Yet in the space of three sentences this feminine role becomes a human role, a tactic which enables Dan's later acceptance of his pathetic status. To admit pathos is to be human. 'It was as if true human responses to the mysteries of our experience became women's work and it was men's to predetermine themselves into an immutable stance'. Thus 'the distinction between the two [male and female] roles was false. They shared the same condition. The same fragility had to be admitted' (ibid.).

If the 'distinction between the two roles' is false in terms of pathos, on other grounds McIlvanney naturalises traditional gender difference in this novel. However pathetic, it is the task of the male figures to be heroic, to enjoy the right 'of their own vision' (247), and the task of the women to support and cope the best they can. Nothing signifies Dan's return home and his new understanding with Betty more succinctly than her acceptance of his need to escape to the pub - a dangerous move in the light of his betrayal of Matt Mason - at the close of the novel, leaving her at home to tend the children and look after the house (246). Men and women may share the same fragility,

but men are men and women are women nevertheless. Thus when Dan recognises his pathos as his strength, the founding-stone of his humanity, at the close of the novel, he is safely ensconced in the pub, far from any female influence (254-5). Ultimately, the text stops short of any truly radical revisioning of this male figure by disavowing, in the name of a common humanity, any unduly persistent feminine aspect to his character. The questioning of the dominant fiction which takes place throughout the novel, the dismantling of machismo, is circumvented to once more establish maleness as a privileged position.

Pathos, then, works in contradictory ways in a text like *The Big Man*, at once used to critique masculinist stereotypes and to rescue, under the mask of a humanist ideology, the traditional working-class male place in family and community. This process accords with Bailin's analysis of the extension of the franchise of humanity in Victorian literature. Precisely insofar as a figure like Dan Scoular is recognisably resistant to the effects of the objectification of labour and post-industrial fragmentation, insofar as he recovers a sense of the limits of his place in the world, then his pathetic status is human, and can be accepted as such by a middle-class audience. Dan's refusal of Matt Mason's patronage, as I have remarked, amounts to a rejection of an illegally achieved bourgeois lifestyle, as well as marking a return to the safety of family and village. There Dan remains within the limits of the laws of the land as well as the laws of capital, and further, within the laws of gender differentiation and privilege. Here the ideology of humanism, repairing the tear between penis and phallus, facilitates a disavowal of the femininity of pathos. However, true to the contradictions of such a masking discourse, the images of Dan's bruised, self-defeating, lacking yet heroic body, as well as of his feminine, sensitive character, refuse to be entirely obliterated. Within the very terms of the dominant fiction, then, and counter to its project, the gendered distinction between 'having' and 'being' the phallus is problematised. In the process, the object of pathos, for the male reader, becomes a potential object of desire, a desire which resides uncertainly in the space between same and other, homosexual and heterosexual.

If pathos can be articulated as such a homosocial transaction between a male reader and a male character, however, in *The Big Man* it takes something of a circuitous route. Dan's conclusions concerning the noble pathos of his identity, his gender and his class are voiced inwardly, mediated by the narrator; at the same moment as the reader is

presented with Dan as a pathetic object, Dan is shown to recognise this status in himself. In the texts Miriam Bailin discusses, it is not up to the pathetic object to recognise his or her own pathos; rather, it is something conferred upon them by the sympathetic recognition of a privileged onlooker, an act which has been described as 'ethical voyeurism' in another context (Dunn 1996: 343). In *The Big Man* Dan becomes his own sentimental observer: 'Dan Scoular was pathetic but he knew it' (McIlvanney 1985: 255). This appears to be an attempt by the text to circumnavigate the traditional binarism of observer/observed in sentimental writing, thereby distancing Dan from a merely passive role in any sympathetic reading. Commenting on the hero of *Docherty*, McIlvanney has stated that 'he may have fragmented, he may have eroded a bit, but the central decency remains, and it is that living on in that hard decency in the full awareness of the defeat of his dreams and his ideals, that for me constitutes the heroism' (Murray 1996: 140). In his self-awareness Dan Scoular is similarly heroic in defeat, and thus *The Big Man* also privileges its protagonist's 'hard decency' - a masculinised decency which, again, defends him from too close an association with feminising pathos. However, Dan's act of knowing cannot be articulated in his own voice. It seems, therefore, that even at the moment of Dan's heroic self-recognition, a third party is required through which to mediate the allocation of pathetic humanity. Dialogue with others is refused - ensconced in his local pub, Dan sits alone at the bar - yet a differentiating channel of communication is left open between the reader and his working-class hero. In this way the ethical ruse by which pathos is declared as the natural territory of all - 'Immorality lay in the refusal to share in the weakness of everyone' (254) - is problematised by the highly partial manner in which the narrative voice - and the privileged male reader along with it - can assent to such declarations without necessarily submitting to them. Ironically, this reader can refuse to share 'in the weakness of everyone' - in fact, can disavow his own weakness - in a narcissistic identification with a decidedly non-pathetic, directive narrative voice which channels a further, sympathetic identification with a pathetic male figure whose self-recognition is dictated to him. Yet the very partiality of this voice poses crucial problems for the identificatory reading.

While offering a dismantling of machismo, *The Big Man* garbs its central character in the mantle of masculine autonomy and self-presence - indeed, in 'humanity' itself - in a disavowal of the feminising effects of its own critique. The humanising impetus of

pathos, along with Dan's ostensible adoption of the position of sentimental observer, deflects from the acknowledgement of feminine possibilities, a masculinist strategy which attempts to veil the phallus - in other words, to mask the specifically masculine - in the valorisation of a universalising and invisible narrative Subject. On that level, the dominant fiction succeeds. But it fails on two other counts. Firstly, the phallic representative produced in relation to this Subject is throughout rendered ambiguous, hybrid, at once hard and soft. In his hardness he embodies the physicality absent from the ideal reading-position, representing a consummate manliness which the reader both identifies with and desires. At the same time, and despite the humanist ideology which operates in the allocation of pathos, the very structure of sympathetic identification, working through a bourgeois and authoritative narrative voice, also requires that Dan Scoular 'be' the phallus - in other words, occupy a subordinate and feminine position - in order that the privilege of the sympathetic observer be maintained for the reader. This produces objectifying effects - both masculine and feminine - on the body of the Big Man which eroticise the reader-Scoular bond, rendering unstable any dominant fictional restoration articulated through it. Secondly and relatedly, the highly directive, Standard English and bourgeois narrative voice through which any sympathetic (or narcissistic) transaction takes place constitutes an uneasy reminder to the ideal reader of his ambiguous national status, his relation to English-identified power and concomitantly - in terms of the gender ideology of the Glasgow tradition - his feminisation. The veiled phallus appears as a highly partial and questionable articulation of power, obstructing the ideal male reader's ability to disappear behind it, mask the signifiers of his own gender ambiguity and assume a position of detached authority.

In other words, even if *The Big Man* goes some way towards 'analysing the effects of the objectification of labour' and correspondingly attempts to debunk the mythology of the hard man, in so doing, and even as it privileges Dan Scoular with the status of a recognisable human subject, it also produces objectifying effects which eroticise and undermine its attempt to make good the signifier of power the ideal male reader assumes as his right. Simultaneously, the demarcation of Dan's linguistic, cultural and class difference succeeds in 'masculinising' him in relation to a reading position which, identified with a bourgeois narrative Subject, is itself precariously poised in gender terms. What might produce a less contradictory articulation of the dominant fiction in a text like *The Big Man* would be a narrative Subject which retained a masculine bias

while erasing the Standard English, bourgeois-identified voice from itself altogether. Paradoxical as this may seem, such an erasure would render the ideal male reader more likely to acquiesce in the identificatory reading. He would be interpellated by a narrative Subject which more properly assumes the veiled invisibility the authoritative English voice cannot, while producing in the narrative an ideal phallic representative to bond with. The objectifying and eroticising effects of such a bond would, of course, remain, but at the same time the illusion of a one-on-one, unmediated homosocial identification between reader and character would be enabled. It is precisely such an erasure, and such an illusion, which James Kelman has attempted to construct in his fictions, and which I shall discuss in section III.

Chapter Two (cont.)

III: James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines*

i: voice and value: monologue and monologism

In a formal sense, James Kelman has done much to challenge the realist conventions through which *The Big Man*, along with the Glasgow novels of the 1930s, are produced. He has expressed his views on the value-system inherent in authoritative, Standard English third-person narrative on a number of occasions,⁸ but in the following passage articulates his position more specifically in relation to Glasgow novels - or at least novels featuring Glaswegians:

How do you recognise a Glaswegian in English literature?
 He - bearing in mind that in English literature you don't get female Glaswegians, not even the women - he's the cut-out figure who wields a razor blade, gets moroculous drunk and never had a single solitary 'thought' in his entire life. He beats his wife and beats his kids and beats his next door neighbour. And another striking thing: everybody from a Glaswegian or working-class background [...] – none of them knew how to talk! [...] Every time they opened their mouth out came a stream of gobbledygook. Beautiful! their language a cross between semaphore and morse code; apostrophes here and apostrophes there; a strange hotchpotch of bad phonetics and horrendous spelling – unlike the nice stalwart upperclass English hero (occasionally Scottish but with no linguistic variation) whose words on the page were always absolutely splendidly proper and pure and pristinely accurate, whether in dialogue or without. And what grammar! Colons and semi-colons! Straight out of their mouths! An incredible mastery of language. Most interesting of all, for myself as a writer, the narrative belonged to them and them alone. They owned it [...] We all

⁸ See eg. McNeill 1989: 4-5 and McLean 1985: 65-6.

stumbled along in a series of behaviouristic activity; automatons, cardboard cut-outs, folk who could be scrutinised, whose existence could be verified in a sociological or anthropological context. In other words, in the society that is English Literature, some 80 to 85 percent of the population simply did not exist as human beings. (Kelman 1992: 82)

By 'English literature' Kelman appears to mean 'English language literature'; otherwise, the Scottish novels which fit his description so closely would lie outwith the context of his comments. Rather than any English text, this passage calls to mind the discursive hierarchies present in the *The Shipbuilders*, *Major Operation*, *No Mean City* and, more recently, and in spite of their non-Glaswegian identification, McIlvanney's novels. In one paragraph, therefore, Kelman dismisses the entire legacy of Glasgow and related fiction, and goes on to describe how he found literary models elsewhere, in American and European writing (83). But two striking elements remain unresolved. For one, this 'Glaswegian in English literature' is inevitably male, a point Kelman questions but does not attempt to interrogate further. That 'you don't get female Glaswegians' in 'English literature' relies upon an exclusion of women's novels from the discussion - Catherine Carswell's *Open the Door*, for example - thus privileging the men's tradition in Glasgow writing even while subjecting it to critique.⁹ Secondly, the passage equates literary representation with being allowed to 'exist' as a 'human being'. If, on the one hand, Kelman is opening up a counter-discourse against the dominant ideological form of classic realism, he is, on the other, also subscribing to one of its principle articles: that 'character' equals 'person', confirmed as real in a successful identificatory reading. This is further reinforced in Kelman's affirmation of fiction as the manifestation of voice, where a character's words should sound like they come '[s]traight out of their [mouth]' - ideology being primarily that which is spoken on the street, raw and apparently spontaneous discourse. Even if this is an important tactic in Kelman's valorisation of working-class subjects, he never questions the processes by which human existence in fiction becomes 'real', or just how neutral or value-less the 'voice' of any 'real' subject can be.

⁹ While I may be accused of the same thing in Chapter One of this thesis, my limitation of the discussion to 'men's texts' only is clearly signalled (section I, n. 2); I do not claim to apprehend any generalised conception of 'literature', English or Scottish.

For Kelman, the attempt to do away with value-judgement in his work resides in the deconstruction of the third-person, authoritative narrative voice - that which reflects, in an Althusserian analysis, the Absolute Subject positions of God, Truth, the Bourgeoisie, and in this thesis, the Phallus. As he commented to Kirsty McNeill, 'Getting rid of that standard third party narrative voice is getting rid of a whole value system' (McNeill 1989: 4). Yet even from a reading of the passage above, it is clear that his belief in the authenticity of voice ties him to an ideology of the novel which accords with the values of bourgeois realism, in which characters are offered to the reading subject as quasi-real 'persons' to identify with.¹⁰ Moreover, masculinism is still central to Kelman's work; the phallus, dictating his definition of 'literature' as men's writing only, remains a primary signifier. I will address in more detail these blind-spots in Kelman's apprehension of the Glasgow tradition, and his own work in relation to it, in due course. For now, it is important to trace more exactly Kelman's experiments with narrative voice.

The technique employed in Kelman's first novel, *The Busconductor Hines* [1984], does utilise a third-person voice, but a very particular one, and allows a certain fluidity of perspective between it and the internal world of Hines himself. The first and final chapters of the novel retain this externalised viewpoint only. It is highly pared down; it focalises, in indecorous yet syntactically inventive prose, the most mundane of actions.¹¹ In Chapter Two of *Hines*, however, the perspective begins to shift, a practice which gains in frequency and intensity throughout Chapters Three and Four. There the third-person narration blends into free indirect discourse and interior monologue, allowing a glimpse into Hines's reactions to the forces affecting him and his family.¹² In this way, despite the fact that the 'I' form is rarely employed in the novel, moving instead between 'he', 'ye' and 'you', there is little or no distance between narrator and narrated. Kelman has summarised the technique thus:

It's very possible [...] that Hines could be writing that novel.

¹⁰ See the discussion of Balibar and Macherey's analysis of literature as ideology in Chapter One, section II.ii above.

¹¹ See eg. the opening scene in which Hines' wife Sandra fills a baby-bath with a soup-pot of boiling water (Kelman 1985: 9-10), or the description of Hines and Paul in the swimming baths at the beginning of Chapter Five (225). Such a purely external voice was to be used alone in Kelman's next novel, *A Chancer* [1985].

¹² For the first example of this, see Chapter Two, page 55, in which the description of 'a girl maybe as old as Sandra but probably younger a couple of years' indicates the intrusion of a speculative, personal voice into the narrative. Further down the same page, the phrase 'Fuck sake', which only seems intelligible in terms of internal monologue, appears between two sentences of external description.

I mean that it is technically possible within the framework of the narrative. Nothing that happens happens outwith the perception of Hines, for instance [...] So Hines could have written every single thing. In a way. [...] A lot of people refer to themselves in the third person. I could describe it as a first-person novel written in the third person. (McLean 1985: 65)

The type of immediacy this allows dispenses with the judging God-voice of classic third-person narrative while retaining an externalised, albeit stripped, perspective. This flattening of discursive hierarchy, further enabled by a refusal to differentiate between narrator and narrated either in linguistic terms or through inverted commas, undermines the kind of ideological subjection to an authoritative bourgeois Absolute Subject-position discussed in the previous chapter, while producing an effect of concrete material reality integral to the realist project in which Kelman is engaged. Further, far from representing any panoramic or polyphonic view of Glasgow, as attempted in *Major Operation*, Kelman's texts hone in on a single perspective to the exclusion of any other. This flattening, perhaps, is understood better as a paring down, a reduction of dialogue to monologue, to the solo voice of the existential subject. The vast majority of Kelman's works employ either this technique or a more traditional first-person voice.

It is important to place this technique within the general context of post-1970s Scottish fiction. Going somewhat against Maley's positive vision of a process of Scottish cultural devolution in this period, a recent article by Donald Wesling postulates that an embittered reaction to the failed attempt for political devolution in 1979 resulted in the adoption of 'monologic' strategies by several Scottish writers. Wesling's terms are taken from Bakhtin - he refers to the space-time nexus in which the referendum took place as a 'chronotope' (Wesling 1997: 82)¹³ - yet his use of the term 'monologism' differs somewhat from Bakhtin's definition. Bakhtin tends to deride monologism as one of 'the forces that serve to unify and centralise the verbal-ideological world' (Bakhtin 1981: 270); it is a term developed from the stylistic apprehension of poetic texts and other kinds of official, state discourse, and therefore inadequate to any discussion of novelistic forms. Far from offering any single stylistic or ideological point of view, the

¹³ The 'chronotope' is one of Bakhtin's terms from *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981: 84-258), and designates a space-time category Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson have described as a 'congealed event' (cited in Wesling 1997: 95 n. 2).

novel, for Bakhtin,

can be defined as a diversity of social speech types [...] and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized [...] Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). These distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization - this is the basic distinguishing feature of the stylistics of the novel. (262-3)

Wesling, however, attempts to defend 'a clever, oppositional form of monologism in the novel' (1997: 87). His analysis is confused; he appears to equate 'monologue' with 'monologism', restricting first-person narrative voice to a single intention and interpretation where Bakhtin would view such a form as 'merely [a] fundamental compositional unit[y] with whose help heteroglossia can enter the novel'. Indeed, Wesling appears to undo his own definition when he concedes, with reference to Alasdair Gray's 1982 *Janine* and Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, that 'monologism encloses dialogism' (90).¹⁴ Kelman, too, in working 'between voices', operates within 'a dialogic-monologic hybrid' (93). Yet the term, as Wesling employs it, despite these qualifications, remains of some use to this thesis. For him monologism encompasses a certain 'bloodymindedness', moments of crisis or nightmare for the narrating protagonist, violent conflicts of 'inner and outer speech' and satires of self and society (91-2). And, as Wesling acknowledges at the end of his paper but does not pursue further, such monologism also tends to enclose masculinism (94). In a footnote, Wesling cites a letter he received from a reader of a draft of his essay, Ian Duncan, who comments, "Despite the presence of (in particular) [Janice] Galloway, the strong examples you cite are all male writers who use the mode specifically to stage their masculinity, as the arena for much of the aggression and violence - it doesn't seem coincidental that so much of the extreme content of these works involves sexual

¹⁴ Both of these novels will be discussed in Chapter Three, section IV.

violence”” (98, n. 2). While *The Busconductor Hines* does not include sexual violence, its employment of a perspective in which ‘nothing [...] happens outwith the perception of Hines’, in intersection with masculinist values, forms the basis for my adoption of the term ‘monologism’.

In strictly Bakhtinian terms, of course, Kelman’s novel is far from monologic. As Cairns Craig notes, the modulation between ‘he’, ‘ye’, ‘you’ and ‘I’ in Kelman’s texts gives voice to a ‘heterocentric’ narrative subject. The term ‘heterocentricity’ is taken from the philosopher John Macmurray and designates the ‘other’ as the ‘centre of value’ for the self:

The Self is neither a monadic thinker nor a pragmatic economic unit: the self is constructed in, through and by its relationship to others: the failure of the central tradition of modern Western thought is the result of not recognising the extent to which the Self is neither a self-enclosed unity nor a structure determined by external forces. (Craig 1999: 90)

In this way, in Kelman’s narrators ‘the “self as other” has been internalised as an other self, other selves, the other voices which Hines encounters in *The Busconductor Hines*’ (102). Here is one example:

The door closed. The door had been closing. And its bang. He pressed a forefinger against a nostril of his nose and blew through the other. There is a gas fire such that 3 sections exist, each containing 24 toty rectangles behind which lurk several 100 pointed particles of an unknown nature but that they glow whitely when at hot heat; this gas-fire can be leaking mysteriously. The occasional whiff 1st thing in the morning. It is the gas. The inhalation of such fumes doth annihilate the white corpuscles of one’s bloodstream. Hence the cause of death. In you come night after night and slump into your chair - a chair you have been positioning as close to the feedpipe as is surreptitiously possible - and so on till the loss of the white fills your being with total red onto black. Get yourself insured and that’s you the bona fide articles for the etceteras, the wife and 38 weans being provided for. All

you need is a short note: Dear Sandra, As I've often told you in the past, most people either know they've got to die and wont believe it or believe they've got to die and know they wont, but what I want to say is this [...] (Kelman 1985: 73-4)

In this passage, a third-person observing voice ('The door closed', 'He pressed a forefinger') shifts into a free indirect style which first employs the Standard English second-person generic 'one', then its colloquial Scots form 'you', before finally being rendered as 'I' in the suicide note Hines imagines writing to his wife. While this offers a variety of points of view, all can be substituted by the 'I' form only. To do so, however, would be to do violence to the plurality of Hines' voices, formations which shift in the adoption of various linguistic styles: the use of 'he' is linked to the adoption of a pseudo-objective narrating voice which can only speak with certainty of what Hines is concretely doing; 'one' governs a parody of archaic scholarly speech; 'you' oversees a more homely, colloquial discourse; and 'I' becomes the subject of an ironic epistle which disintegrates before that which Hines 'want[s] to say' can be said. Far from being monologic, then, Hines' monologue disperses itself across a variety of discursive positions and linguistic registers, bearing witness to the heterocentricity of his subjectivity.

Nevertheless, such 'internal' heterocentricity does not stretch to allow Hines any meaningful dialogue with the other subjects around him. The very indirect manner in which 'I' is articulated via 'he' or 'you' also reflects an avoidance of direct speech on the part of Hines himself; in dialogue, he often steps out of conversation or responds to it with mickey-taking or other diversionary tactics (eg. 36-7). Yet it is in his refusal of such intercourse that the counter-ideological potential of his discourse becomes most apparent. Ideology, the 'whitewash' that prevents reality from being observed properly in the novel (105), is represented in the various discourses which dominate the garage from which Hines works: talk of humorous or ridiculous incidents involving drivers and conductors, or of the garage football team, or, more reductively, talk about that talk. Hines always attempts to step back from this:

In the garage the talk is endless. To discuss the talk of the garage is pointless. Such discussions do occur among the uniformed employees and are integral to the thing itself. Without such discussions the talk of the garage might even be

becoming absent. Hines has endeavoured to reject both the talk and the discussions of the talk while aware even of the absurdity of doing even that. Presently he remains silent. (87)

Where in *Major Operation* dialogue, along with a crippling dose of illness and poverty, suffices to convert George Anderson to the proletarian cause, Hines' attempts to resist 'the language of the unalive' (ibid.) provide the point at which the text refuses Marxist discourse and attempts to challenge working-class, subordinate ideologies from a position of interiority. This takes on a particular force during the events of Chapter Four, where Hines' bad record forces him into confrontation with the garage authorities. Here the kind of 'talk' is that of trade union discourse, as Sammy, the shop steward, attempts to put Hines' case to the administration while mustering the workers for a strike. In other words, it is a talk which hinges upon social, collective action – but once more Hines resists: 'There is no point in speech. How come they speak. What do they speak for. It is beyond belief' (203). Pertinently, these thoughts are voiced inwardly. In avoiding this potentially transformatory, social discourse, Hines returns to the inside and negates any possibility of change. He resigns from his job before any industrial action can take place.

While ostensibly counter-ideological, then, Hines' resistance to dialogue participates in an ideology of individualism which ultimately resists collective action and potential social transformation. In this way, the 'others' through whom the heterocentric self is properly constituted remain precisely other; negating their speech, Hines valorises the constitution of his self as a monadic, autonomous entity. Yet in keeping with the phallogocentric bias of Kelman's texts, it is Hines' wife, Sandra, who remains most fundamentally other to him. The example of 'internal' heterocentricity I cited above closely follows a passage in which the third-person narration shifts to Hines' interior consciousness for the first time. Here, Hines' resistance to a story Sandra brings home from work - another citation from the ideology of the workplace - produces a schism in the text, his inner voice taking over from Sandra's narrative and parodying it:

[...] o God. Sandra laughed. Jean had sent [the cleaner] out for cream doughnuts, for herself and me and Mrs. Monaghan ...

And Sandra continued with this tale about the cleaner coming back from the baker with the 4 cakes and going on

about this the cakes, her coming back with the cakes and not the cream doughnuts it was, she was continuing on about this, the Cleaner Being Sent For The Cream Doughnuts And Not The Cakes [...] (72-3)

Sandra's subjection to the deadening discourses of her own workplace suffices to turn Hines away from dialogue once more. Yet Sandra seems to be the one person Hines has most difficulty talking to - 'You never tell me anything', she complains (30) - to the extent that he often lies to her (eg. 146-8). As I shall explore further in section III.iii below, Sandra is forever the 'other' to Hines' self, the cold, unmaternal and upwardly mobile wife familiar to any reader of the Glasgow tradition, against whom the working-class male protagonist must establish his autonomy.

If *The Busconductor Hines* resists monologism on a stylistic level, ideologically, while Hines' 'internal' heterocentricity permits resistance to types of subordinate discourse, it produces him as a highly monadic subject whose relationship to femininity in particular conforms to the traditional gender binarism of subject/other. In this way, Kelman's text offers a deconstruction of certain elements of bourgeois narrative form while remaining in thrall to the phallic signifier which works always, like bourgeois individualism, to privilege the masculine 'one' over the other(s). Allowing me to revise Wesling's own revision of Bakhtin, *The Busconductor Hines* participates in a monologism of gender difference. The way in which this intersects with existential strategies I shall explore in more detail in the following section.

ii: existentialism and criticism

If Rab Hines' parodic and evasive manner of looking and speaking always attempts to take account of ideological limitations, it also proves ineffectual at surpassing them. As he comments to Sandra, 'one is occasionally required to consider the future' (43), but this statement is made ironically in the voice of 'one' who might have some choice in the matter - and Hines, seemingly, has none. Of his ambition to be admitted to the school for busdrivers, he realises it is but 'a childish dream, a romantic fancy, one which has long ceased to exist in the land of real items - Real Items sir. Fuck off' (102). In a similar manner, his hopes of emigrating to Australia have ceased to be a Real Item. In fact hopes of any kind are mocked and reduced, in a Joycean moment also echoic of

Major Operation, when he ponders the word ‘hope’: ‘Hope. Here I am, hoping. I am hoping. Hope hope hope, little bunnies, hope hope hope’ (208). The connection between ‘hope’ and the childish dream-world of ‘little bunnies’ is made with the Glaswegian pronunciation of the word ‘hop’ as ‘hope’ - an example of how Kelman’s textual experiments are often realised finally in relation to voice and accent. But this is also where Hines’ monologue intersects with existentialism, sealing him off from any possibility of transforming his social situation. It is ironic in this context that he opposes the introduction of ‘one-man buses’ (34-5) – in a sense he is himself a one-man bus, driving out his existence a solitary figure.

For H. Gustav Klaus, Kelman’s work ‘is nourished by philosophical and literary ideas that can no more be traced back to the tradition of the “Glasgow novel” than to a lineage of “socialist fiction”’. Kelman’s intertextual engagement with French existentialism and American Beat writing traces a politically troubling line between the alienation of capital and the alienation of existence:

It is not just an isolatable misery, an economically grounded and swiftly located grievance alone, which infects Kelman’s characters, but a more general malaise, an almost total condition of alienation. Hence the profound indecision, the sense of futility, the knowing, superior air but basic inactivity of people like Hines [...] (Klaus 1989: 46-7)

I would like to offer some provisional definitions of existentialism as I am employing it as a literary and philosophical term. In the latter sense, Jean-Paul Sartre’s definition hinges upon the supposition that ‘existence comes before essence - or, if you will, that we must begin from the subjective’ (1989: 26). This is the primary way I understand the concept. Sartrean discourse, in a Cartesian yet atheistic vein, focalises the primary, isolated, shifting and transformatory nature of subjectivity, and privileges anguish as the necessary condition of choice. Albert Camus’ critique of existentialism and theory of the absurd man, put forward in *The Myth of Sisyphus* [1942], emphasises that existential choice can only take place in the present moment, offering ‘indifference to the future’ and eschewing man’s ‘nostalgia for unity’ (1975: 23, 59). But the fact that Sartre and Camus were artists as well as thinkers crystallises the slippage between existential philosophy and literature. With this in mind, I will also be employing the concept in terms of its literary traditions and devices. Existential novels are often in a realist mode,

at times engaging with the detective genre in their depiction of murders, investigations and trials (famously, Camus' *The Outsider* [1942] and, less so, Alexander Trocchi's *Young Adam* [1954], both discussed in the following chapter). But crucially, they are most often male first-person narrations, as with Trocchi's novels, participating in a kind of confessional tradition (Camus' *The Fall* [1956], Trocchi's *Cain's Book* [1961] and Dostoevsky's *Notes From Underground* [1864]). These central male protagonists are more often than not outsiders, criminals, largely cold, silent and indifferent in the hands of Camus and Trocchi, or alternatively, in the novels of Sartre, Samuel Beckett, Knut Hansum, Jean Genet or Louis-Ferdinand Céline, desperate, anguished and abject.¹⁵ As is suggested by the date of some of these texts, existential literary traditions stretch back before the mid-twentieth-century experiments of Camus and Sartre, as do existential philosophies. Moreover, fiction of this kind also spills over into the work of the Beats and subsequent American writers. The concept, like any other, is a mobile one, and its effects must be explored in different contexts and historical specificities. But what seems clear to me is that existential discourse, in various forms, has played a major role in the development of post-war Scottish men's writing, from Trocchi right up to the work of Kelman, Tom Leonard, Irvine Welsh and others like Alan Warner (whom I shall discuss in the final chapter). As such a dominant discourse in a period where elsewhere in Europe it has grown unfashionable, the intertext between existentialism and Scottish writing is yet to be fully analysed.¹⁶ Wesling's focalisation of first-person narrative in recent Scottish fiction is a useful starting-point, yet it does not explore the intimate connection between existentialism and gender monologism.

To discuss Kelman in terms of the existential tradition tends to render his project of valorising the authentic working-class 'voice' questionable. I have already indicated the extent to which his adoption of monologue participates in the ideology of bourgeois individualism. Further, to what extent can existential discourse be considered to privilege reality, or to counter ideology, when it exists in a novelistic tradition which has become part of a specific literary and critical value system? For some critics, the identification of Kelman's existential allusions has become an analytical end in itself. Cairns Craig, for example, comments that

¹⁵ See eg. Sartre's *Nausea* [1938], Knut Hansum's *Hunger* [1890], Beckett's trilogy *Molloy*, *Malone Dies* and *The Unnamable* [1950-2], Jean Genet's *Thief's Journal* [1949] and Louis Ferdinand Céline's *Journey to the End of Night* [1932].

¹⁶ Craig draws attention to it, with reference to Kelman, Trocchi, McIlvanney, Alan Massie, Alan Sharp, Ian Rankin and Muriel Spark (1999: 106-10).

Kelman's characters are Sisyphus figures, rolling a cigarette rather than a rock, as they wait for Godot. They may inhabit a real Glasgow, but it is Glasgow which exists to put them on trial, and in that trial it is transformed into a Kafkaesque distortion by which Drumchapel becomes 'the district of D'. (1993: 106)

The keyword here seems to be 'distortion'. When other critics have attempted to describe his work in such terms, Kelman has reacted angrily. One reviewer glowingly praised *How Late It Was, How Late* [1994] in terms of its presentation of Sammy Samuels' 'paranoid's dystopia'. Kelman seized upon the definition of 'dystopia' as 'an imaginary place of misery', and reacted thus:

The trouble with a lot of the critics is that they have no experience of the world as much of the population experiences it. Okay, Sammy is unable to get himself diagnosed as blind; but the reality in the DSS is much worse than that. Thinking that this is some sort of fantasy is a perfect example of what Noam Chomsky calls 'intellectual myopia'. (Lockerbie 1994: 4)

Here Kelman sets his claim firmly on the real and disavows the illusory qualities of novelistic discourse. Kelman's definition of realism, in fact, has often involved interpreting his fictional influences against the conventional grain. Franz Kafka provides one example. Jorge Louis Borges has said that Kafka's work

can be defined as a [...] series of parables on the theme of the moral relationship of the individual with his God and with his God's incomprehensible universe. For all their contemporary setting, his stories are less close to what is called modern literature than they are to the Book of Job. They presuppose a religious conscience, specifically a Jewish conscience; formal imitation of Kafka in another context would be unintelligible. (1990: 5)

Yet Kelman does formally imitate Kafka, in an atheistic, realist context, and the influence has been intelligible enough to critics.¹⁷ Kelman has drawn attention to the fact that Kafka was employed in worker's insurance, and that this experience, rather than

¹⁷ See eg. Spufford 1987: 23.

any religious one, informed his portrayal of struggle against impersonal, unyielding bureaucracy. For Kelman, Kafka

is probably the greatest realist in literary art of the twentieth century. His work is a continual struggle with the daily facts of existence for ordinary people. Kafka's stories concern the deprivation suffered by ordinary people, ordinary people whose daily existence is so horrific other ordinary people will simply not admit it as fact, as something real, as something verifiable if they want to go and take a look. (Kelman 1986: 120)

Once more, fiction is deemed to grant privileged access to the undeniably real. Realism is the detailing of the 'daily facts of existence' rather than any imaginative reconstruction and modification of everyday life. In this way Kelman denies the fictive effects, the literary or writerly qualities of the novelist's work.

It is important to resist any easy dismissal of this strategy, especially in a political context. I have to ask myself to what extent the comparing of Kelman to figures such as Kafka is a process of validation by which middle-class reviewers and critics claim him as one of their own, as a master, say, of the paranoid's dystopia - a process by which Kelman's dissent is reintegrated with dominant ideology.¹⁸ I have to respect the other direction, too – the direction in which Kelman reclaims these writers for himself, for the culture he wants to articulate, reading the 'paranoid's dystopia' as reality itself. For Kelman, the 'Kafkaesque distortion' Craig reads in Hines is real. But this critical balancing act can only be carried so far. Craig has opened up an intertext not only between Kelman and Kafka, but also between Kelman and Albert Camus: the figure of Sisyphus to whom Craig compares Kelman's characters is the mythological forebear of Camus' absurd man (Camus 1975: 107-11). This points up the extent to which the uses of existentialism in *Hines* do problematise the text's relationship with reality and consequently with ideology. The alienating drive of existential discourse in the novel, how it removes Hines from the social world and the possibility of transforming it, above and beyond the workings of the alienation of capitalism, leads us into the novel's more

¹⁸ Moira Burgess notes that the influence of Kafka and Beckett began to be detected by reviewers following the publication of *Greyhound for Breakfast* [1987], Kelman's first collection with a "big" London-based publisher' (1998: 276). Her implication is that Kelman required the validation of such a publisher (actually Secker and Warburg) in order to be taken seriously as a European writer by the English critical establishment.

literary and symbolic qualities and away from the problems of class, authenticity and voice.

Craig goes further, describing Hines as

a modern Charon whose passengers do not cross to the other side, but simply cross and recross the empty and meaningless spaces of the city. The Busconductor is the time-keeper of the world's journeys, but he himself journeys nowhere, travelling out only to come back, travelling forwards only to reach a terminus which is no conclusion. The Busconductor is an emblem of modernity [...] Kelman's presentation of the Busconductor is conducted in a realism so intense that it becomes its own opposite, an allegory of the modern condition [...] (1993: 109)

Craig's Kelman has moved quite far away from realism as the detailing of 'the daily facts of existence for ordinary people'. Instead we are dealing with a hyper-realism which negates itself and becomes transformed into allegory. The Busconductor himself becomes less of an authentically realised subject than a type, an everyman figure. He is thus, paradoxically, recognised as human;¹⁹ by an act of interpretation Hines is elevated beyond his lowly class status to become allegorically intelligible to the middle-class male critic (a designation in which, of course, I am also implicated). This seems part and parcel of the very set of values encountered when engaging with existential writing. It also bears echoes of the humanising process in the allocation of pathos, a point which I will take up in section III.iv.

Kelman's opposition to bourgeois third-person narrative form, then, is problematised by the coherence between existentialism and bourgeois, humanist and literary values. The possibility that Hines is an allegorical figure – in Craig's words, 'a modern Charon' – is a kind of evaluation not proper to Kelman's attempts to write from the inside of his culture: it is something imposed from outwith. Yet, at the same time, it is also invited by the text. Kelman has claimed in interview that 'Hines is a general, he isn't specific'

¹⁹ Craig's analogy is slightly re-written by the time he places it in *The Modern Scottish Novel* (1999: 103-4); there, 'an allegory of the modern condition' becomes 'an emblem of humanity's existential condition' (104). The slippage between the universalising terms 'modern' and 'human' in an account of a specifically masculine fictional subject is particularly telling for this thesis.

(McNeill 1989: 7). In *How Late It Was, How Late*, Kelman has also attempted to represent a general rather than a specific experience. The novel draws upon Kelman's experiences seeking compensation for workers poisoned by asbestos, but Sammy Samuels' debilitating condition is blindness rather than industrial illness (Lockerbie 1994: 4). While it seems a long step from this to claiming either Hines or Samuels as kinds of everyman figure, Kelman does allow for the possibility. But readings like Craig's, in their attempt to validate Kelman's work by providing it with a mythical, universalising impetus, implicitly deny the fact that a member of the proletariat with such a speculative and philosophically rigorous turn of mind might exist. As Kelman has commented, the novel is intended to 'introduc[e] a person to a critic [...] Working class intellectuals are simply a fact; that's the way things are' (McNeill 1989: 6-7).

Yet here arises another problem. In his insistence on the authenticity of Hines as a 'person', Kelman is bordering on territory close to the classic realist formula which privileges characters as (mis)recognisable individual subjects. Here we are dealing with a writer who is asking his readers to accept his characters as possible existences, as negations of a generalised mindset, value-system or ideology,²⁰ and yet whose representation of such possibilities employs techniques developed from the bourgeois realist form. Kelman does, in one give-away phrase, announce the artificiality, the trickery of what he is doing: in his interview with Duncan McLean, he says of the narrative voice in *Hines*: '[I]t's an illusion, aye [...] Like all good illusions or tricks, it's hard to do, you know. It's not easy' (McLean 1985: 66). In this case the representation of reality is always caught up in the imaginary, in illusion - in other words in ideology, albeit an ostensibly counter-hegemonic, existential literary ideology. That this ends up reinforcing traditional concepts of what literary art should be (quasi-real and highly crafted, as well as universalising, allegorical, and allusive) does not necessarily go against Kelman's hopes of 'introducing a person to a critic', but goes some way towards explaining the often laudatory manner (although never unanimously so) in which he has been treated by the London literary establishment. The added appeal of a novel like *A Disaffection* [1989], then, is accounted for by its representation of a teacher-figure whose artistic and literary allusions are more directly represented than in *Hines* (McNeill 1989: 1-2). Thus a middle-class 'person' is introduced to a middle-class critic.

²⁰ For Kelman's discussion of negative apprehension and the subjunctive mood, see 'Artists and Value' in *Some Recent Attacks* (1992: 6); and for Hines' negative reality, 1985: 202-3.

If Kelman's engagement with existential practices fails to erase the bourgeois face of his narrative Subject absolutely, it also tends towards reinforcing the masculinism of his approach. The act of 'introducing a person to a critic' amounts, in the contexts of existentialism, Scottish literary criticism and indeed this very thesis, to introducing one man to another, to initiating a homosocial bond. Peter Middleton has noted the ways in which the works of high modernism have become signifiers of academic male bonding:

What does the real man read? What do men graduate to from comics and popular culture (if they do)? The real man would read the literary equivalent of the surrealist landscape, that is to say men's modernist classics, for these help define the well-read man. Contemporary novels, art films and theory may give more pleasure, but few English-speaking male intellectuals would have no passing acquaintance with any of the men modernist writers: James Joyce, William Faulkner, D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, William Carlos Williams, Samuel Beckett or Ernest Hemingway. Such texts continue to help form masculine cultures in Britain, America and countries with close historical ties, in much the same way as comics, motorbikes, football and popularised science do. (1992: 52)

In a similar way, the identification by critics of Kelman's existential intertexts (Beckett, Kafka, Camus) has reclaimed his work not only for the context of academic discussion, but for a peculiarly male reserve of that context. Criticism of his work becomes an exchange between men - not only between the 'person' of Hines and the critics, or between the critics and Kelman, but between the critics (such as Craig) and the entire legacy of existential men's writing. This legacy, like the post-1970s tradition of Scottish urban realism which Kelman has helped to advance, also forms a culture 'where men can define, confirm and develop their subjectivity, and find a field of concerns where they can sustain relationships with other men' (ibid.).

The specificities of this critic-person relationship will be addressed in more detail in section III.iv, but for now it seems appropriate to signal the way in which the possibility of such male bonding for the middle-class, academic reader of *Hines* may function as an

escape-route from feelings of gender inadequacy - and concomitantly of homosocial desire. Ben Knights, an English critic, has been quick to acknowledge this issue:

[The problem] has to do with a sense of embarrassment, of trespass even, a sense of incompatibility of voice: as though I as a teacher or writer had no right to speak about Kelman's text, as though the otherness of its subject matter presented an impenetrable barrier to negotiation, the text speaking out of an experience so absolute that those outside [...] have no right to speak of it [...] [M]y own disquiet may itself rest upon [...] a deep-seated belief that maleness is more authentic, more straightforwardly instantiated in some sections of society than others. (1999: 180-1)

Such a 'deep-seated belief' is familiar to us from my arguments in Chapter One. What Knights does not consider is that a recognition of the existential tradition Kelman engages with may free male critics from this dilemma, offering them instead a field of references and associations recognisable to them in their capacity as intellectuals (albeit intellectuals identified with a profoundly masculinist group of texts and contexts). That the dilemma nevertheless remains is, of course, implicit throughout my reading of Kelman and of all the Glasgow texts in this thesis. For in creating an uneasiness in the ideal reader, the distance between the disembodied critic and the profoundly physical working-class male character simultaneously generates an erotic potential which transforms and critiques the process by which working-class masculinities are objectified. As Knights continues, Kelman's novels

are demonstrably about masculinity and being a man, and at the same time themselves likely to be the focus of fantasies and projections about masculinity on the part of some of their readers, a desire to establish an authenticating connection with the world of the dole queue, the solidarity of hard drinking, chain smoking, gambling, heterosexual males. (182)

My contention is that such 'an authenticating connection' contains within it an erotic component which renders unstable the apparent impenetrability of authenticity itself. It follows from this that the identification by male critics of Kelman's existential intertexts can be read as an attempt to disavow such a component, thereby elevating his characters

to a level on which they can be regarded as intellectual (i.e. disembodied and universalised) equals.

What is certain is that unlike Knights, most male critics have been content, with Kelman, to assume rather than question the masculinity of 'authentic' or even allegorical Glaswegian subjects in fiction. Both Wesling and Maley have indicated the manner in which existential or 'monologic' forms of writing are linked to masculinism; neither, however, expands on the suggestion. Wesling's essay, aside from the footnoted comment from Ian Duncan I cite in the section above, settles for the trite hope that one day Scottish fiction will begin 'to lose some of its monologic, bloodyminded, masculinist habits' (1997: 94). Maley offers the beginnings of a critique of Kelman from this position: in an essay on the use of swearing in *How Late It Was, How Late* he suggests that Kelman's participation in discourses of existential individualism is dictated by a 'chauvinist, ethnocentric and masculine Western ideology' (1996: 111). In the next section, I will attempt more fully to unveil the phallic authority at work in Kelman's texts, and in particular in *The Busconductor Hines*.

iii: existentialism and masculinism

In terms of narrative form, the manner in which *The Busconductor Hines* embraces masculinist discourse is manifest right from the beginning. Here the traditional asymmetry of male/female comes into play in its fullest phallogocentric implications. The opening scene of the novel, then, aside from its subtle effects of immediacy and dramatisation of the everyday, offers the spectacle of Sandra bathing. Not only that, but Hines, who comments on her reluctance to remove her bra, is watching her bathing, a familiar scene of gender-differentiating voyeurism (Kelman 1985: 10). This would not be worthy of comment were it not for the fact that Sandra's character never really develops from this objectified, largely silent beginning. Kelman has said that his works always involve a 'case of artistic selection in [...] that [...] you've got to know when to begin and when to stop. When to allow the camera to begin and when to cut the camera off. That will assume the artistic mind or perception behind it. But that's all' (McNeill 1989: 9). Yet here there is a value-laden conscious process of artistic selection going on, manifesting itself precisely in the narrative privileging of a heterosexual masculine perspective which produces women not only as an erotic spectacle, in literary terms

anyway, but, as I will show, also participates in the representational strategies of gender, class and national differentiation seen to be at work in *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*.

Such formal masculinism, of course, is entirely consistent with existential philosophy. The extent to which the Sartrean binary of subject/Other maps onto the asymmetry of male/female is openly demonstrated by Sartre's opposition to femininity, implicitly identified with the slime of the 'in-itself' or raw existence. For Sartre,

The obscenity of the feminine sex is that of everything which 'gapes open'. It is an appeal to being as all holes are. In herself woman appeals to a strange flesh which is to transform her into a fullness of being by penetration and dissolution. Conversely woman senses her condition as an appeal precisely because she is 'in the form of a hole' [...] Beyond any doubt her sex is [...] a voracious mouth which devours the penis - a fact which can easily lead to the idea of castration. The amorous act is the castration of the man, but this is above all because sex is a hole. (1969: 613-4)²¹

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, a reading from which introduces Judith Butler's deconstruction of the categories of sex and gender in *Gender Trouble*, offers an early attempt to critique such an embattled masculinist position:

For Beauvoir, the 'subject' within the existential analytic of misogyny is already masculine, conflated with the universal, differentiating itself from a feminine Other outside the universalising norms of personhood, hopelessly 'particular', embodied, condemned to immanence. (Butler 1990: 11)

The existential tendency towards male monologue enacts the privileging of the one over the other(s), the enshrining of masculine subjectivity and autonomy. The number one is, for Luce Irigaray, the masculine digit, 'the one of form, of the individual, of the (male) sexual organ, of the proper name, of the proper meaning' (1985: 26) - in other words, the signifier of the sex which claims to be a sex, that claims to be one sex, that claims to have 'one'. Kelman's employment of monologism privileges masculinism in precisely this way: women are forever the Others in orbit around the one, embodied yet

²¹ See also Reynolds and Press 1995: 85-6.

incomprehensible, worth viewing but not worth talking to.

Hines' inability to talk to Sandra is partly an extension of his refusal of dialogue in general terms. Yet while reluctantly entered into, the relationship between Hines and his male colleagues seems more easily sustained than that which he enjoys with his wife. In the novel's most overt male-bonding scene, in the pensioner's club in Chapter One, Hines and his off-duty workmates engage in a kind of drunken pack-mentality when one of their number, Barry, is prevented from going off to the betting-shop (Kelman 1985: 12). Hines and another conductor physically remove him to the pensioner's club, where their rude interruption of a game of dominoes initiates a carnivalesque overturning of order. Once thrown out of the club, however, camaraderie gives way to abuse as an argument between McCulloch and Colin Brown, a driver and conductor, develops into a fight. While at one point Hines appears to parody the inevitable outcome of the dispute, holding out his fists and crying 'Who wants handers?' (16), when Colin Brown is laid out by a headbutt from McCulloch he can only call him 'a silly bastard', appearing entirely unconcerned with his condition (17). In this way, even while marking his difference from the rest of his colleagues, Hines assents to what has taken place - and in so doing assents to a Glaswegian working-class masculinist code of violence familiar to any reader of the Glasgow novel, and indeed familiar to Kelman in his attack on the genre ('He beats his wife and beats his kids and beats the next door neighbour').

The code of hardness, however, manifests itself more prominently in the style of the novel than in the actions of its protagonist. Just as the novel conflates concreteness with subjectivity - Hines identifies the 'auld brickwork and concrete, the debris' of his environment with the mental clutter which obfuscates reality for him (81) - it also, as I have noted, attempts a concrete style in its descriptive passages. Developing a technique proper to the representation of immediate existential reality, the focus of the third-person voice on the everyday foregrounds the discontinuities and repetitions of existential time as it records the fragmentary moments of the merest sequence of actions. Here, Hines has some difficulty sleeping:

He remained still. Then his left leg was moving towards Sandra. When it touched he brought it back. And then he slid out of bed altogether, he had an erection, he went to the lavatory. On his return he noted the time on the alarm clock.

Across at the sink he gulped water straight from the tap, he
went back to bed afterwards. (54)

It is tempting to describe this as a kind of ‘hard’ style, a Hemingwayesque reduction of discourse to its barest essentials, unsullied by metaphor or unnecessary adjectives. In other words, it is a highly masculine kind of form. Peter Schwenger, in his analysis of male styles of writing in *Phallic Critiques*, traces the influence of Hemingway’s style on the subsequent macho tradition in American fiction. While distrusting ‘all attempts to assign a gender to language’, Schwenger notes the way in which unduly decorous prose can feminise male writing otherwise characterised by reserve: ‘a man who uses words like lovely or sweet runs the risk of lowering his masculinity quotient’ (Schwenger 1984: 19, 20). Kelman’s concretised descriptive style, stripped of any such adjectives, seems as opposed to feminine values as it is to bourgeois ones. In fact, when he comments to Kirsty McNeill on his opposition to such terms as “beautiful”, or “pretty”, or “handsome”, or “ugly”, his concomitant hostility towards anything like ‘a heterosexual male point [of view]’ is rendered questionable rather than supported (McNeill 1989: 4).

A similar point can be made about the use of swearing in *Hines*. Kelman’s political concerns regarding so-called ‘bad’ language are well known. When Duncan McLean commented that he thought there was a ‘realistic amount of swearing’ in *The Busconductor Hines*, Kelman rejected the term ‘swearing’ as value-ridden, insisting that swear-words are ‘part of the language, and [...] have to be treated in the same way that the study of language treats other words’ (McLean 1985: 70-1). For Kelman, as for Tom Leonard, there is no such thing as bad language, only language. Some critics resist this argument in their defence of a more proper, curse-free standard of literary discourse. One reviewer of *How Late It Was, How Late* even took the time to count the number of ‘fucks’ in the novel – over four thousand, in fact (Burgess 1998: 275-6). But this is to ignore the differences enacted in repetition. As Willy Maley comments, ‘It’s a question not just of frequency, or inclination, but of ability, range and intensity’:

In Kelman’s writing, ‘fuck’ functions as a transcendental signifier. For fuck’s sake is for God’s sake. He uses eff in mysterious ways. ‘Fuck’ covers a multitude of syntax, doing service as a modifier, intensifier, adjective, noun and verb. The use of what linguists call ‘fucking-insertion’ is exemplary [...]

Kelfuckingman, know what I'm talking about?

JamesbastardingKelman. (1996: 105-6)

Yet if 'fuck' is a transcendental signifier, like most others it is men who have privileged access to it. In *Hines*, Sandra's speech is not only more standardised than Hines', but she actually objects to his swearing (Kelman 1985: 23). Indeed, none of Kelman's female characters, few as they are, ever seem to swear as much as the men. Swearing here becomes a mark of masculinity, a macho use of language to which women are prevented equal access. Schwenger concurs:

Obscene speech, first, will be most alarming to many parents. While the use of obscenity by young girls is viewed with strong disapproval, an attitude of 'boys will be boys' (whatever that means) may excuse the male child who adopts obscene expressions. In some cases, a boy may be viewed as 'cute' in his babyish attempts to wield the talismans of male power. For obscene words are talismans. Such is the attitude of Henry Miller, who uses these words not just as 'technical devices' but as 'magical terms'. To him, 'the uses of obscenity offer an equivalent to the uses of the miraculous in the Masters'. At this time, it seems unlikely that a woman would be making such an assertion, which, from a man, seems more convincing because we detect in it a familiar boyish glee. (1984: 22-3)

Swearing, boyish and earthy as it is, is also a marker of 'unrespectable' working-class culture; 'bad' language 'is merely another of the "working-class forms" which so widely symbolise virility' (24). For the unprurient middle-class-identified reader, Hines' foul mouth marks out his alterity in an excitingly taboo way, representing a freedom of expression culturally infringed upon by bourgeois ideas of decorum. More specifically, for male readers belonging to this category, identification with such language also bolsters a depleted sense of gender identity.

Alison Houston, reacting badly to Patrick Doyle's use of the word 'arse' in *A Disaffection* (Kelman 1990a: 146), occupies a similar linguistic space to that of Sandra in *Hines*. While she tolerates Doyle's other swear-words, she uses none of them herself, apart from the occasional, and less forceful, 'God'. In this way, in the specific

ideological ensemble which makes up Kelman's work, the 'other' space which women occupy is also consistently identified as bourgeois. Alison and Sandra, like Agnes Shields, Blanche Pagan and Mabel Anderson in the earlier Glasgow novels, are middle class, or at least upwardly mobile. In *Hines*, Sandra's parents' hopes for their daughter betray their class identification. Hines recalls their dismay in learning of Sandra's 'curious infatuation with a lowly member of the transport experience' (Kelman 1985: 95). Sandra's family come from Knightswood, an area of Glasgow Hines definitely identifies as prosperous, re-naming it 'High Amenity Zone K' (119) in contrast to his own native 'District of D'. But Sandra's ambitions, manifested in her desire for the family to buy their own flat in a better area (57-8), seem to match those of her parents. This produces some conflict in the marriage, Hines' absolutist proletarian consciousness finding the idea of home-owning, as well as of career 'ladderclimbing' (34), inimical. Indeed, Sandra's secretarial, prospect-orientated job comes under constant attack from Hines, significantly in terms of his wife's relationship with her boss:

Her boss' name is Buchanan. Imagine a cunt called Buchanan. Here you have a cunt by the name of Buchanan who is the boss and who has always regarded one's wife in a favourable light, as someone he would always reinstate, her work having been exemplary since she first started working for the cunt directly upon leaving Secretarial College. An employee of ideal proportions. Never a day's illness but that such an illness is of a bona fide variety. A credit to all and sundry, eh, excuse me madam you by any chance being employed by the Heads of the Monarchic State. Give us an aye or give us a naw. (89)

Hines' defensive, vitriolic attitude towards the middle classes is by no means restricted to Sandra. Her sister's boyfriend, up visiting one new year, is verbally abused because he attempts to play with Hines' and Sandra's young son Paul, the size of his salary (along with factors like his Home Counties accent) rendering him entirely unsuitable for that privilege in Hines' eyes (129). But what seems important in the passage above is the manner in which Sandra's collusion with the dominant class, even with 'the Monarchic State', is objected to by Hines in terms of sexual jealousy, imagining the capitalist Buchanan as a preying lecher on a girl 'of ideal proportions' all too ready to climb the corporate ladder. This marks a parallel not only with *The Shipbuilders'*

portrayal of Agnes Shields, whose social aspirations are realised in adultery, but with Mabel Anderson in *Major Operation*, whose blood-sucking femininity finds its natural place only alongside a wealthy and willing patriarch. In any case, Kelman, engaging (consciously or not) with the men's tradition in Glasgow fiction, persistently identifies womanliness with negative - and Anglo-identified - bourgeois aspirations, once more figuring gender at the heart of a representation of class.

Where Sandra is more positively represented, she is merely the bed-mate from whom Hines is torn by the call of the early shift. The denial of pleasure with her is equated with the denial of breakfast:

Too late now to make any breakfast, not even time for a coffee, and coffee would have been delicious. What like would a coffee have been. Delicious. And Sandra; snuggling into her; what like would this snuggling into her have been like. There you have a body warm and soft; the woman you love and are sleeping with and want to sleep with, to continue this sleeping with; she's lying beside you not conscious.

(112)

On the other side of the representation of Sandra as an agent of the 'Monarchic State', she is precisely the passive object from whom Hines is disconnected by the very workings of that system. His estrangement from her is something in which she is both cause and effect: capitalism profits by womanly collusion, but at the same time severs man from woman at the domestic level. Sandra's status as a breadwinner, which threatens Hines' sense of patriarchal masculinity, is disavowed as she becomes the unconscious object to which, through his own attempts at breadwinning, he is denied access. Whether demonised or idealised, Sandra is the other term in a heterosexual partnership torn apart both by the alienations of capitalism and by her husband's self-alienating masculinist position.

In this way, Kelman seems to owe more to previous representations of Glasgow than he would care to admit. The difference is that instead of attempting to resolve its gender and class contradictions through Marxist, religious or familial discourse, *The Busconductor Hines* reimagines its materials in relation to existentialism, a dominant fictional representation which privileges the power and autonomy of the masculine

subject. Thus Hines' negative attitude towards Sandra is represented as part of his ethic of silence or evasion - she is the figure he seems to avoid talking to the most (30), the one to whom 'It seemed as though there was nothing to say' (82). In this manner the ideologies of masculinism and existentialism collude; where in the earlier Glasgow novels, unfaithful partners predicate acts of homosocial bonding, here Sandra's wavering class fidelity contributes to the production of Hines as an isolated and self-present outsider-figure. In other words, though the novel elsewhere opposes colonial hierarchies, here it valorises the construction of Hines' pure interiority as an act of subjective imperialism.²² If Hines is not presented to the middle-class male gaze in quite the same eroticised way as Danny Shields or Jock MacKelvie are, as a concrete existential subject he provides the point at which a similar identificatory reading, introducing the 'person' to the 'critic', might take place. Where Hines' internal heterocentricity closes him off from any meaningful dialogue with other characters, here he is placed in a particular relationship with an other 'outside' the text. Yet as the next section explores, this relationship organises itself around a feminisation of the central character which tends to undermine his hard and autonomous status.

iv: wilting, or 'the poor wee boy syndrome'

If Hines comes to self-presence through silence and interiority, where does this leave his masculinity? The sex which claims to be one is also the sex which speaks; the existential subject is the one who uses words to act on existence, to differentiate and thus to control the slime (in this way, for Sartre, words, in the hands of the committed prose writer, are 'loaded pistols' (1950: 14)).²³ Yet, in contrast to the hard, macho style which characterises the descriptive voice in Hines, along with the protagonist's mickey-taking and swearing, elsewhere his frequent and often prolonged escapes into interiority mark him out as occupying different territory. Peter Schwenger has pointed out a central contradiction in the idea of linguistic reserve as a manly prerogative:

Plainly Hemingway's style is in one sense an extension of the masculine values he depicts: the restraint of emotion, the stiff

²² The term 'subjective imperialism' is taken from Jeffrey T. Nealon's article "'Junk" and the Other: Burroughs and Levinas on Drugs' (1995: para. 3-4). It describes a state of 'pure, interior subjectivity' (para. 4) which Nealon reads as the goal of heroin addiction as William Burroughs describes it. It will be taken up further in the discussion of Trocchi and Welsh in Chapter Three.

²³ Sartre contrasts the work of the poet with that of the prose writer: for the former, meaning is deferred in the construction of a poetic unity; but for the latter, 'The word is a certain particular moment of action' (11).

upper lip, the macho hermeticism. At the same time, that style preserves in each story a truth that one is made to feel can never be fully known. That quality of truth has already been denominated feminine, eluding as it does any masculine control. Masculine reserve thus modulates imperceptibly into feminine unknowableness. (1984: 50)

This points to a gendered schism within the very concept of the existential, or more properly absurd, subject, which I shall explore in more detail in the next chapter. In Kelman's novel, when Hines refuses speech, he not only infringes upon 'feminine unknowableness' but enters a zone of language which can also be assigned a feminine character in its distance from logical, masterly discourse. I cite here more fully the passage discussed above, in which Sandra's anecdote concerning the cleaner at her work being sent out for doughnuts prompts a shift to interior monologue as Hines reflects angrily on the injustice of the situation:

[...] o God. Sandra laughed. Jean had sent [the cleaner] out for cream doughnuts, for herself and me and Mrs. Monaghan ...

And Sandra continued with this tale about the cleaner coming back from the baker with the 4 cakes and going on about this the cakes, her coming back with the cakes and not the cream doughnuts it was, she was continuing on about this, the Cleaner Being Sent For The Cream Doughnuts And Not The Cakes while Mr the erstwhile fucking Buchanan was off down in London on a Brief Business Trip very strictly speaking in all probability not playing about at all, no, just being forced into it of course, he would much rather be staying at home in the nice Suburbs having by no means any notion of gallivanting about the place, yes, I thing about auld Bufuckingchanan, he's the salt of the bastarn Earth. I dont know what it is about you Sandra I really dont I mean ... He shook his head. (Kelman 1985: 72-3)

In this passage the rules of grammar are broken down, repetitions, elisions and slippages in thought predominate, while on return to dialogue - 'I dont know what it is with you Sandra' - the expansiveness of interiority is restrained once more by manly reserve.

This paradoxically noisy silence seems feminine not only in contrast to the more concrete style of Hines' externalised narrative voice, and not only because of its echoes of an *écriture féminine*,²⁴ but also because it renders Hines entirely passive and apart from the possibility of acting on the world.²⁵

This passage, in fact, conforms to Erich Auerbach's description of the modernist mimesis of interiority:

These are the characteristic and distinctively new features of the technique: a chance occasion releasing processes of consciousness; a natural and even [...] a naturalistic rendering of those processes in their peculiar freedom, which is neither restrained by a purpose nor directed by a specific subject of thought; [and an] elaboration of the contrast between 'exterior' and 'interior' time. The three have in common what they reveal of the author's attitude: he submits, much more than was done in earlier realistic works, to the random contingency of external phenomena; and [...] he does not proceed rationalistically, nor with a view to bringing a continuity of exterior events to a planned conclusion. (1953: 538)

Auerbach, despite his use of a masculine pronoun, is here adopting Virginia Woolf (and in particular the Woolf of *To the Lighthouse* [1927]) as his model. There are other obvious male authors who have used such techniques, and with whom Kelman would probably claim more affinity, but the example of Woolf strikes me as particularly apt at this juncture. Just as Kelman attempts to give his working-class protagonists a complex interior life on a par with their bourgeois fictional counterparts, so Woolf tried to do the same for women. In the work of both, however, the technique has the counter-effect of

²⁴ Any application of Hélène Cixous' concept of *écriture féminine* to men's texts must be negotiated carefully, bearing in mind that 'woman must write woman. And man, man [...] it's up to him to say where his masculinity and femininity are at: this will concern us once men have opened their eyes and seen themselves clearly' (Cixous 1997: 348). While Kelman has yet to clearly state 'exactly where his masculinity and femininity are at', his interiorised fictional spaces do enact a kind of writing which, in its disregard for linear logic or lucid reason, 'surpass[es] the discourse of the phallogocentric system' and 'take[s] place in areas other than those subordinated to philosophico-theoretical domination' (353). See also Schoene-Harwood's postulation of an *écriture masculine* in *Writing Men* (2000: 102).

²⁵ Further bolstering the connection between Hines' interior life and feminine space, Ben Knights claims that 'the abundant creativity of his mind-style verges on hysteria. Indeed, the notion of hysteria - associated as it traditionally is with women - is highly relevant' (1999: 190). Knights goes on to explore this idea in a discussion of Hines as a passive victim (190-4).

rendering their characters helpless. It can be claimed that twentieth-century women's fiction, if such a thing can be so reductively named, has progressed from such experiments to allow its narrators and characters a great deal more involvement in, and control over, their fictive worlds. In Kelman's men's texts, paradoxically, feminising interiorisation remains an integral tactic.

In one guise, then, Hines is a hard man figure, confrontational and highly politicised, his environment represented in a 'hard' style befitting his concrete maleness. In another, outside of social discourse, Hines' passive, feminine side is focalised. This 'inward gaze', as Peter Middleton has described it, is unusual in men's texts: 'Men have written plenty about themselves as men; little of it consciously' (1992: 2). When men do attempt to reveal the intimacies of their inner lives, the suspicion remains that

'Obscure reveries' may be masculine fantasies on the royal road not to high art or even the unconscious, but simply to male sovereignty. Is the inward gaze no more than masculine self-aggrandisement, in which masculine subjectivity fantasises hypermasculine exploits, inflates itself into sublimity, turns women into witches, and appropriates femininity for men's art? (9)

Some of these accusations may hold true for Kelman's work. Yet it is clear that many of Hines' self-examinations emphasise not 'masculine self-aggrandisement' but its reverse, masculine self-deformation. His gaze tends to turn inwards at moments of schism with Sandra: his first extended interior monologue occurs, as I have noted above, during a disagreement with her. At the close of Chapter Two, when Sandra is late home from work, his pathos comes into sharp focus: without her 'the outlook is entirely bleak'; with her, it is 'of a bleakness he can handle' (Kelman 1985: 97). Thus Hines becomes pathetic, and, like *The Big Man*'s Dan Scoular, chooses to dwell on his pathos: 'Ah christ; poor auld Hines. He really is a poor soul' (98); 'Maybe he is just pathetic. Pathetic and a little ridiculous' (144). The next time Sandra leaves he is reduced to tears (163), bringing him to a fuller comprehension of his own deficiencies. The fact that Sandra has left the day before wages-day, and has even left him some cash, reminds him that he 'is such an imbecile he cannot be trusted to survive unless he has a full week's wages in the pocket' (164). Always 'fucking promising', the sum total of his promises is that 'Robert Hines has accomplished nought' (165). Sandra returns, but the memory

of her disappearances weighs on Hines, particularly in the aftermath of his resignation from the garage. Here the 'poor soul' that is Hines represents himself, as McIlvanney does for Dan Scoular, by the image of a lacking male body, in this case broken or sagging:

[...] one is waiting, one is standing, waiting, considering a variety of items. Then for some reason the chest is struggling to heave. The shoulders have become as though wilted, as though a spring has finally collapsed, having one aware of the weight of one's head. (218)

Foregrounded by his uncertainty regarding his wifely prop, Hines' lacking male body becomes an ambiguous spectacle in the text, engaging the sympathy (and perhaps also the desire) of a middle-class male reader identifying with his suffering. Such a reader might also find himself in this passage:

In a picture they saw on television a wee while ago there was this amazing bit where the husband was standing, a dejected figure, out on a balcony; the door opens silently and in comes his wife, dressed in her going-to-bed clothes: Darling ... come to bed. What a load of shite that was; that was really a load of fucking shite. (219)

If the dominant fictional act of reparation the television film attempts is seen through by Hines, the temptation to identify him with the 'dejected' figure of the husband remains strong. As such, he rejects the image of the perfect wife, yet at other points in the text seems to view this ideal figure as his right: Sandra is the woman who denies him the fantasy of '[c]oming home off a late backshift, the kitchen really warm, and Sandra there with some grub in the pot, and sometimes even a bottle of fucking beer, that beautiful innocence for christ sake' (96). As the 'dejected' husband he appears to reach out to his male reader to invite a sympathetic interpretative act, install a homosocial bond, which might restore him to a more recognisably male form.

In fact, Kelman's male figures are more often than not dejected or wilted - or, in the phallic terms of this discussion, detumescent. The pathetic status of *A Disaffection's* Patrick Doyle is imagined precisely in this way. Taking a bath at his parents' house, his 'penis floats on the sudsy surface of the water', but attempts to harden it through erotic

fantasy appear to trouble more than excite him:

Dear dear, the pity of it: Patrick has never really actually ever, been, the way that the female and male are with each other, lying side by side in broad daylight during entire stretches of time such as days, days, whole days, body to body, just kissing and lying, lying there. (Kelman 1990a: 108-9)

In the end, ‘masturbation could never be a possibility here in the home of one’s parents’ (109); even onanism is denied to Patrick through a crushing sense of sexual repression. Yet the text lingers in these spaces, even inviting an analysis on the significances of Patrick’s initial: ‘Poor old Patrick. P for Pat. P rhymes with pee. And p for pipe so fuck off. And p for prick of course and what about p for ptarmigan’ (ibid.). Despite the mockery at the close of this series, the connection made between Patrick’s under-used ‘prick’ and the two plumber’s pipes he paints up and blows through for relaxation is suggestive. Yet nothing appeals more in this word-game than the series ‘Poor’ and ‘Pat’, which both suggest the addition of ‘Pathetic’. In fact, early in the novel, the first passage describing the poverty of his sex-life uses precisely this term: ‘It was all very fucking pathetic. A situation full of pathos’ (7-8).

Here it must be noted that Doyle’s and Hines’ pathos is, like Dan Scoular’s in *The Big Man*, a self-diagnosed condition. But where Scoular’s analysis of pathetic humanity can only be mediated through a third-person narrative voice, Kelman’s texts allow his characters a more direct recognition of their pitiable status. In this way they are more fully disengaged from the hierarchising dyad of observer/observed proper to Victorian sentimentality, allowing them to look at themselves in a conscious manner. Hines’ characterisation of himself as a ‘poor soul’ comes with a layer of irony not to be found in the nineteenth-century examples. The use of this phrase, in fact, belongs with all the other uses of commonplace, ideological discourse in the text; a mocking citation rather than an honest admission, it is not to be taken at face value. Yet in the context of Hines’ apparent inability to transform his situation, and his peculiar desperation at the absence of his wife, these subtleties appear to be lost. Hines, along with most of Kelman’s other male characters, may be *aware* he is pathetic, and may invest this awareness with a hint of distancing irony, yet to the reader this is what he most manifestly *is*. In this way the reader supplants -or more correctly re-creates - the place of the sympathetic observer in

the text, reads through the self-diagnosis and authoritatively confirms it.

For the privileged male figure I have been positing as the ideal reader of Scottish men's texts in this thesis, Hines needs to be this way. His pathos enables an identification which preserves a hierarchy on class terms while permitting the reader to benevolently recognise this 'other' as human, as 'like' them. The absence of a traditional narrator figure, of a bourgeois subject through which to channel identification, facilitates rather than obstructs this process, for it allows the reader to disappear more fully behind his authoritative mask. As I have noted, the lingering presence of the traditional third-person authoritative narrator in texts like McIlvanney's *The Big Man* is an anomaly long since redundant, the vestige of a middle-class representative whose troubling, nationally ambiguous presence interferes with a more open communion between reader and character. That Hines' reflections on his pathos seem unmediated, offered to none other than the reader, is enabled by the illusion of a one-on-one bond between 'critic' and 'person' which continues to carry the masculinist bias of previous representations while appearing to flatten any class hierarchy. In this way, the invisibility proper to maintaining phallic privilege on the part of the ideal male reader can be better guaranteed than in texts where the signifiers of bourgeois, Standard English-identified privilege are more predominant.

As I suggested in section II above, pathos is not only a feminising device, but, between men, sits more comfortably with a downwardly mobile bourgeois male figure than a working-class one. In *Major Operation* George Anderson, the fallen capitalist, is a strong focus for pathos; Jock MacKelvie, and even *The Shipbuilders'* Danny Shields, are both too resolute to be pitied. Yet in the work of McIlvanney and Kelman, pathos becomes the domain of the working-class male figure, and in *Hines* this process is not counterbalanced, as it is by McIlvanney, by any representation of a physically idealised masculinity. Where Dan Scoular is both strong and weak, hard and vulnerable, Rab Hines is mostly only weak. He displays his phallic qualities in description and dialogue, but internally - which is to say, shared only with the reader - he puts on show his distracted, wilted self, both intellectually and physically. That Hines' body emerges here as beaten and suffering ostensibly contradicts any dominant fictional project, but at the same time becomes visible to a middle-class male reader invited to respond to his pathos, and who now stands alone, detached and veiled, as the sole arbiter of the status

of this 'subject'. This homosocial bond, inducted as it is in the context of a failing heterosexual relationship, inevitably generates an eroticising effect. Hines' sagging body may be far removed from the phallic ideal of such as Jock MacKelvie's, yet it is passive, it requires support, it needs imaginary arms to hold it up. It needs to be mothered; yet this appeal, in my reading, is made between grown men. It must be remarked that such homoeroticism is latent rather than patent, yet in the very act of 'introducing a person to a critic', when both these terms are male, when class difference exists between them and when heterosexuality is represented as a failure, I cannot resist its presence.

The sympathetic reading of *Hines*, then, equates with the sympathetic reading of *The Big Man* in that the pitied male object is (mis)recognised as human according to middle-class and realist values. Indeed, this coincides with the existential reading. As I have remarked, Cairns Craig's elevation of Hines to an allegorical status contradictorily renders him more 'human' than any more traditionally realist representation could. Both of these readings attempt to disavow Hines' feminisation, his marked lack, his display of inadequacies - even while they strategically depend upon such characteristics. In this way the text offers itself for a dominant fictional resolution, restoring penis to phallus, placing masculinity back in touch with the universal humanity it has always assumed. Yet the resistance to such a reading in this discussion points to a different, more critical take on the dominant fiction. Just as Dan Scoular's lacking, fruit-like body returns to haunt the phallogocentrism of *The Big Man*, so Hines' own marginality, his embodied, vulnerable specificity, questions the integrity of the text's own marginalising masculinist ideology. The masculinism of *The Busconductor Hines* can be read as generative as well as misogynist: in the act of offering such a degraded figure for identification it runs the risk not only of eroticising the reader-character bond but also, in the refusal of such a restorative tactic, of enshrining the representation of Hines' sagged and wilting self. In this way the novel offers an indictment not only of capitalism, of the 'effects of the objectification of labour', but of the very masculinism its character embodies. Against the novel's project of establishing the validity of Hines' existence, privileging him as a subject, he is always-already inscribed with the feminising marks of defeat. Such lingering feminisation provides for a more transformative reading of the text than has so far been allowed, echoing my closing analysis of *The Shipbuilders* in Chapter One.

Capitalism may be to blame for Hines' sagging self, but it is also complicit with a shift in the laws of gender differentiation: Sandra's status as working mother and potential breadwinner for the whole family overturns the traditional sexual division of labour. In response to this the novel participates in a maternalisation of Hines, finding the 'ma' in his manhood in a similar manner to the domestication of Danny Shields in *The Shipbuilders*. Where the text makes a cold and distant object of Sandra, Hines is forced to take over her motherly role, telling Paul to 'just call me mummy from now on' (Kelman 1985: 67). In this category Hines finds himself at home in the kitchen, preparing a pot of mince and tatties (69-70), or at the nursery taking Sandra's turn at supervision. In the latter instance, however, as with *The Shipbuilders*' assurances as to the propriety of domestic work for Shields,²⁶ the text defends Hines from too complete an adoption of this feminine role as his hat and bag become props for the engagement of the nursery's boys in play (42). And in the kitchen, Hines' cooking is accompanied by a blow-by-blow account of recipe and method to Paul, as if justifying this womanly activity by recourse to pedagogy. In this way Hines is forced to compensate for Sandra's abdication of motherhood, yet in so doing he attempts to inscribe his paternal signifier in this womanly arena. Overall, the text represents Hines' mummy-status as yet another burden on his already wilted shoulders, bolstering his identification as an ideal and universal type of suffering existential masculinity. 'Your mummy now, your mummy. Things are very black really' (104).

On the other hand, the representation of the domesticated male has become integral to Kelman's work. In his latest short story collection, *The Good Times* [1998], alongside narratives set in the familiar surroundings of the workplace, the pub or the dole queue are placed descriptions of men coming to terms with their domestic environments. In 'Yeh, these stages', the first-person male protagonist's attempts to recover from a failed relationship amount to a new resolve to get on with the housework:

My partner had been gone for a while now and even going to bed was nothing to look forward to. The sheets and the pillow disgusted me, the oily bit where my head lay. I wasn't washing properly, not one solitary shower in at least ten days. Falling apart! I saw myself in the typical male role, helpless without a woman, the poor wee boy syndrome. Yet this

²⁶ See Chapter One, section III.v.

wasnae me. (Kelman 1998: 69)

It is tempting to suggest that this 'poor wee boy syndrome' is something most of Kelman's male characters suffer from.²⁷ In fact, the speaker in 'Yeh, these stages' only motivates himself out of his housewifely apathy when he reasons that his partner might return. Yet the story makes a celebration out of domestic chores; just as in *Hines*, where Rab equates the rubble of demolished bad housing with his cluttered mind, here tidying up becomes an act of joyous self-cleansing.

In 'Comic Cuts', from the same collection, a group of four men sit late into the night discussing rock music while they wait for a pot of soup to boil. The soup here figures as an obvious Godot metaphor - it never arrives - but the domesticisation of this existential analogy only underscores the extent to which Kelman's philosophical concerns have become rooted, despite the masculinism of his project, in everyday home life. Women are entirely absent from the scene except as referred to by the characters, where they take on the qualities of mystery, of unintelligibility. 'Who knows with women', one character comments (144); but the implication is that the misunderstanding is one-way only:

[...] the woman, she knows ye've got to be going, sooner or later, you as male I'm talking about ... the woman, she knows ye have to be going soon ... you, that ye urnay a permanent fixture ... You as males, us, we urnay a permanent fixture, we're never ... (143)

Yet Colin, the narrator, further on into the night, troubles the terms of their masculinist intercourse. Rory, the one cynic in the conversation, attempts to question Colin's long-standing companionship with Vik:

So what like is it sleeping with a man? said Rory.

Ye asking me uniquely?

What else?

Well, okay, I take it ye must know it's sexual, that it would be the same thing with your brother, for him as well as me, that that would be sexual.

²⁷ Knights concurs: 'One of the striking things about the Hines narrative (which I am here endowing with representative status) is that it reproduces in the reader a sense of being in the presence of another version of the spoiled male adult child. In classes I have found that women readers have felt this particularly strongly - to the point of almost parental fury with Hines for his helplessness' (1999: 192).

I've only got a sister.

And that that would be sexual too.

What, what would?

Sleeping with your sister.

What?

It would be sexual.

Naw it wouldnay.

Well it should be, naybody should shy away from
experience. (166-7)

Here Rory's negative attitude to a taboo sexuality is playfully questioned by Colin. Unique amongst Kelman's characters, Colin posits an erotic component to homosociality. In other words, this interchange offers a glimpse of the very erotogenicity, implied and denied, which exists between the ideal male reader and the speakers in Kelman's male monologues.

If this amounts to a rare questioning of masculinism within Kelman's *oeuvre*, it seems apparent that, despite being produced from a defensively masculinist position, much of Kelman's work offers a critique of dominant fictional values. In his repetitious representation of the 'poor wee boy syndrome', Kelman's pathetic phalluses, dejected by heterosexual failure and ripe for an act of readerly homosocial restitution, nevertheless submit to structures of lack and domesticity which trouble the phallogocentric project their texts embark upon. Between the alienations of capitalism and existentialism, Kelman's negative, misogynist realities generate male figures otherwise, balanced precariously between subjectivity and alterity, self-presence and lack, identification and desire. What remains troubling is the manner in which Kelman's middle-class male audience are still to find themselves represented in his work other than as cut-out authority figures, contributing to the literary identification of working-class male life with authenticity itself, a process ongoing in the Glasgow novel since the nationalist and Marxist works of Blake and Barke in the nineteen-thirties. This absence certainly facilitates the homosocial identification between middle-class male reader and working-class protagonist, with all the ambiguities of misrecognition, embodiment, sympathy and desire which that identification brings to the interpretative dynamic, thus simultaneously ensuring and undermining the dominant fictional project of the text. Yet it brings me no closer to apprehending any directly affirmative, transformatory representation of

masculinities in twentieth-century Scottish men's writing.

Chapter Three

Masculinities in Exile: Existentialism and Abjection

I: Introduction

The discussion of existentialism in section III of the previous chapter paves the way for a consideration of Alexander Trocchi, the one Scottish male writer of the twentieth century whose engagement with existential masculinism precedes the work of Kelman. An exploratory reading of Trocchi's *Young Adam* [1954] in section II below offers a gender critique of the existential male subject in terms of Albert Camus' philosophy of the absurd. Trocchi privileges the perspective of a first-person male outsider-figure, yet the analysis will highlight the manner in which the autonomy of this figure is threatened by an engagement with an essentially passive or 'feminine' relation to the world. *Young Adam*'s anti-hero will thus be posited as a type of masculinity in exile, a figure in a precarious relationship not only with his home country and its ideologies but also with his sense of self.

In section III of the chapter, this kind of exiled masculinity will be considered more explicitly as 'abject', a term adopted from Julia Kristeva's *Powers of Horror*. Trocchi's second novel *Cain's Book* [1961] and Irvine Welsh's more recent *Trainspotting* [1993] will be analysed as fictional treatments of the abject as represented by heroin and heroin addiction. The portrayal of the male junkie in these texts will be shown to question the traditional association of masculinity with humanity and universality. The attempt to describe the heroin experience is also seen to challenge conventional realist form, with both novels privileging indirect and fragmented modes of telling. However, these texts also valorise a particular state of inviolable autonomy for the addicted male figure, a tactic which brings them closer to the strategies of more traditional masculinist representations. While questioning ideological and even morphological boundaries, then, both novels will be shown to defend the integrity of authoritative heterosexual masculinity against too dangerous a liason with the abject. In this way the extent to which the representation of pathological modes of being in Scottish men's texts has radically transformed the dominant fiction is questioned. A note on the supine

masculinities of Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* [1995] and Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine* [1984] in section IV both provides a postscript to this discussion and leads in to the examination of cross-writing in Chapter Four.

Chapter Three (cont.)

II: Trocchi, *Young Adam* and the Absurd Man

While James Kelman has never acknowledged Alexander Trocchi, Scotland's 'principal homegrown "Beat" writer' (Calder 1985: 32), as one of his literary models, it is clear that Trocchi's work represents the earliest and most visible conjunction of existentialism and masculinism in the history of Scottish men's writing.¹ His two best-known novels, *Young Adam* and *Cain's Book*, take the representation of the male outsider-figure as a study in exile: exile from home, from family, from the class system, from society in general and, especially in the case of the later text's portrayal of heroin addiction, from consciousness itself. This masculinity in exile, then - which I posit here as a mode of abjectivity, a term which shall be discussed in more detail in the next section - becomes both an exercise in upholding, and an interrogation of, those dominant fictional values which seek to naturalise male privilege. In the case of *Young Adam*, the novel's intertextual relationship with Albert Camus' novel *The Outsider*, and his theory of the absurd in *The Myth of Sisyphus* [both 1942], questions the limits of male existential power, disturbing the illusion of masculine self-presence, knowledge and control. In this way, despite being a highly misogynistic text, *Young Adam* undermines its first-person narrator's sense of phallic, scopophilic omniscience even as the novel is structured to interrogate commonsense values of morality and justice from this very point of view.

From early in the novel, the consonance between existentialism and gender monologism is made explicit. As an outsider-figure, the narrator Joe marks his alterity most specifically in his relations with the women in the novel, who are invariably described with the controlling devices of metaphor and simile. The first such woman, the corpse Joe and his boss Leslie discover floating near the barge on which they work, is like

some beautiful white water-fungus, a strange shining thing
come up from the depths, and her limbs and her flesh had the
ripeness and the maturity of a large mushroom. But it was
the hair more than anything, it stranded away from the head

like long grasses. Only it was alive, and because the body was slow, heavy, torpid, it had become a forest of antennae, caressing, feeding on the water, intricately. (Trocchi 1996: 4)

Joe continues to describe the corpse - which we later discover is the body of his ex-girlfriend, Cathie, a fact Joe carefully conceals in Part One - in terms of fish, animal and vegetable matter. As he shifts his attention to Leslie's wife Ella, the terms remain the same: he watches 'the pink flesh of her ankles growing over the rim at the back of her shoes', and further describes her 'heavy white calves' as moving 'like glow-worms in the dark' (7-8). Later, as Joe's desire for Ella intensifies, he outlines her thus:

I couldn't keep my eyes off her neck, which was the yellow colour necks sometimes are, and I couldn't help associating that with the change in colour of a stalk of grass of which the blade is green and dry relatively and then lower down, where the grass enters the earth, the stalk has a sweet milky appearance. It is smooth yellow-white, like ivory, only it has the smear of life, of what breeds. And if you compare a woman to a stalk of grass then her neck is the point at which she enters the earth, at which the sun strikes only intermittently, and below her neck thrusts downwards, kinetic, towards the earth's centre, like the moist white shoots and roots of plants. (22-3)

This strategy calls to mind Laura Mulvey's discussion of scopophilia in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', discussed in section III.ii of Chapter One above. Narcissistic identification with Joe, on the part of the male reader, provides a definite sense of omniscience. Meanwhile, looking through Joe at the female characters in the text reduces them to part-objects: whether alive (Ella) or dead (Cathie), women in *Young Adam* are never represented as anything more than a sub-human yet strangely eroticised spectacle. For Joe, the position he attains by such means is nothing short of godly, even when he feels Ella is ignoring him:

It meant, after all, that she was aware of me, and from that I derived a powerful sense, a vindication of my own existence.
To exercise power without exerting it, to be detached and

¹ Trocchi is the earliest writer mentioned by Craig in his tracing of existential strategies in the Scottish

powerful, to be there, silent and indestructible as gods, that is
to be a god and why there are gods. (38)

Thus as Joe maintains his male gaze on these women and on the life of the barge around him, the reader gets to see very little of him; his body, true to the veiling proper to the maintenance of godly phallic power, remains obscured from view, 'silent and indestructible'. In this way Part One of the novel offers an unapologetically masculinist example of existential first-person narrative.

In Part Two, however, the extent to which Joe's masculine sense of control and self-assurance is an illusion emerges. The corpse Joe and Leslie discover in the beginning is revealed to be that of Cathie, Joe's ex-girlfriend. Joe admits he was present as she fell into the river, claiming she stumbled, but that he did nothing to rescue her. As he directs the reader to go 'back to the beginning, the one I chose' (78), we realise the manner in which he has been pulling the wool over our eyes, carefully revealing details of the corpse he could not have known had it been a stranger to him. This, it turns out, is a tactic of appeal. 'I killed Cathie', he says; 'There's no point in denying it since no one would believe me' (77). That is to say, Leslie would not believe him, Ella would not believe him, and the police and the social justice system would certainly not believe him. But by giving the details of the accident at the beginning of Part Two, and directing the reader to reconsider the evidence of Part One, allowing them access to knowledge no others are party to, Joe makes of the reader an ally. In Part One, Leslie seems to want to own the corpse they have discovered. Joe comments, 'It might have been anybody' (12), but he knows it wasn't any body, it was Cathie's. He then suggests 'she might've been pregnant' (14) - this is what Cathie told him, as revealed in Part Two. Throughout Part One he refers to Cathie as his ex-girlfriend, as somebody separate from the body found floating in the river; however, he does say she 'was in the past, buried there deeply and finally' (38). Only the second-time reader - or at least a highly suspicious, detective-type reader - can pick up on the full significance of this statement. Later, in a pub, a barman asks if the girl had been young:

Leslie said that it was difficult to say, but that she couldn't have
been more than thirty. He asked me what I thought.

I said: 'She was twenty-seven.'

'Was she cut up like?' the man in the bowler asked, screwing

up his eyes.

‘Not a mark’, Leslie said, untruthfully, for the buttocks had been rather badly scratched. (45)

Joe’s apparently casual revelation of the brutal truth on these occasions serves to point up the extent to which Leslie and the others are mistaken about the corpse. Indeed, commonsense assumptions about the event are constantly challenged in the text, most obviously the assumption that it had to have been a murder in the first place. Joe’s fundamental knowingness in Part One, on a second reading, stands in stark contrast to those ignorant expressions of the general public which are always shown to be wrong - especially Leslie’s smug ‘they always catch them in the end’ (53). In keeping with his godly status, Joe demonstrates his superiority at every turn. Discrediting the judgement of other male characters, he in turn judges them, marking them off as limited masculine subjects with no ability to transcend the legal and moral ideologies which interpellate them.

The man they do catch in the end, Daniel Goon, innocent whether murder can be proved or not, is similarly judged by Joe:

As a representative of the industrious working classes he was in a sense my enemy. I dislike people who make a virtue of work. And in a way he was a part, if an uncritical one, of the society which might condemn him in a sense which I was not. (90)

Yet Joe follows the arrest and trial of Goon with increasingly anxious interest throughout Parts Two and Three of the novel. He has the power to save him from the gallows right up to the close of the narrative, but, fearful of his own safety, withholds his knowledge from all but the reader. In the second half of the novel, then, the detached assurance Joe displays in Part One is steadily undermined. While the direction to re-read the first section with the new information he supplies in Part Two tends to foreground Joe’s privileged position as a bearer of knowledge in the text, it also betrays his initial disinterestedness as a mask. In actuality, he reveals at the beginning of Part Two, the discovery of the corpse represented a serious threat to his freedom:

I felt at the time that it was ludicrous, so incredible that if Leslie had not happened to come up on deck at the time I should most certainly have refused to accept such an

improbable event and tried to thrust her away again with the boat-hook. (78)

This frank admission gives the lie to the cool-handed manner in which he relates his discovery of the corpse in Part One. Joe's comparison of the body with a water-fungus, his complaint about not getting an egg for breakfast (5), and his visual entrapment and seduction of Ella all now appear as diversionary tactics, designed to prop up his own self-proclaimed godliness and to foster a readerly identification appropriate to that.

Camus' *The Outsider* is the one novel in the existential tradition which bears the closest relationship with *Young Adam*. Told in a first-person, present-tense narrative, it is the story of one Meursault, a French Algerian who murders an Arab on a beach. He offers no motive for his crime other than that the blinding sun made him do it. But when he comes to be tried, the prosecution build their case not on any direct evidence, but around the fact that Meursault had shown no apparent emotional reaction to the death of his mother, after whose funeral he goes off, meets a girl and sleeps with her. This act, entirely unconnected to the actual killing, is enough to convince the jury that Meursault is a criminal type and he is sentenced to death. He faces his punishment with stoicism, feeling himself 'laid open for the first time to the benign indifference of the world', his final wish being 'that there should be a crowd of spectators at [his] execution and that they should greet [him] with cries of hatred' (Camus 1982: 117).

If Meursault's criminality is invented by a public moral ideology in *The Outsider*, a similar force is at work in *Young Adam* with the police and the public's assurance that Cathie must have been murdered simply because she was scantily dressed when recovered from the river. Joe and Cathie did have sex, but Joe claims she subsequently stumbled backwards into the Clyde as he attempted to extricate himself from her. For him, 'the assumption that because a man has sexual intercourse with a woman in somewhat unseemly circumstances, because later the woman's body is found floating in one of our navigable rivers - the assumption that the man did her in afterwards seems to me to be entirely without justification' (Trocchi 1996: 78). However, Joe realises that 'an unintelligent society perennially bent on moral purification' (90) will find its justification within its own ideology - thus Daniel Goon is fitted to the role of murderer society has fictitiously created. Goon, like Meursault, is sentenced to death.

Yet Joe wonders if, in his fatal hesitation as she fell backwards into the Clyde, he is indeed Cathie's murderer. Even if he isn't, it certainly looks that way. Consequently, and with a certain meticulousness, he disposes of any evidence which might point to him. Whether or not this indicates his guilt, Joe can be accused, like Meursault, of a lack of conventional emotional response to the death of a loved one. But this lack of response, in the case of Meursault anyway, is philosophically grounded. It hinges upon a theory of temporal and emotional discontinuity which becomes a stylistic principle in itself in Camus' text. Meursault's feelings for Marie, the girl he sleeps with following his mother's funeral, are broken up over separate sentences: 'When she laughed, I fancied her again. A minute later she asked me if I loved her. I told her that it didn't mean anything but that I didn't think so. She looked sad. But as we were getting lunch ready, and for no apparent reason, she laughed again, so I kissed her' (Camus 1982: 38). As Sartre comments, Meursault 'has no desire to know these noble, continuous, completely identical feelings. For him, neither love nor individual love exists. All that counts is the present and the concrete' (1955: 31).

In this way Camus' style becomes an expression of a philosophy. *The Myth of Sisyphus* can be regarded as a philosophical exposition of the fiction he created in *The Outsider*. Our universe, Camus maintains, is 'absurd' because we are forever caught between two things: the desire to comprehend and make order out of the world, demonstrating that 'nostalgia for unity, that appetite for the absolute [which] illustrates the essential impulse of the human drama' (Camus 1975: 23) and the perception of 'the world itself, whose single meaning I do not understand, [as] a vast irrational' (31). The absurd is produced in the cleavage between these two opposing forces:

[T]he feeling of absurdity does not spring from the mere scrutiny of a fact or impression but [...] bursts from the comparison between a bare fact and a certain reality, between an action and the world that transcends it. The absurd is essentially a divorce. It lies in neither of the elements compared; it is born of their confrontation. (33)

The normal response to such absurdity is to attempt to make a leap of faith, often religious. We can regard God as creator and guardian of all that is unknowable, and thus give up responsibility to belief (36). But the correct reaction to the absurd universe is, for Camus, to become absurd oneself:

For [the absurd mind] the world is neither so rational nor so irrational. It is unreasonable and only that [...] The theme of the irrational, as conceived by the existentialists, is reason becoming confused and escaping by negating itself. The absurd is lucid reason noting its own limits. (49)

Thus the absurd man, confronted with the unknowable, simply gives himself up to it. When Meursault is awaiting his execution, a priest attempts to make him repent, but he refuses, thereby opening himself up to the 'benign indifference of the world'. In these terms the absurd man, according to *The Myth of Sisyphus*, lives without hope: 'Nothing else for the moment but indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything that is given [...] Knowing whether or not one can live *without appeal* is all that interests me'. Therefore there can be no good or bad values in life. 'What counts is not the best but the most living' (59).

Camus' exemplary absurd hero is Sisyphus, to whom Cairns Craig compared Kelman's Rab Hines.² Yet if the comparison stands, Hines is far removed from Camus' conception of the mythological figure. Insofar as Hines is Sisyphus, he suffers; degraded by meaningless, repetitive employment, he wilts and sags under the weight of his metaphorical rock. For Camus, however, Sisyphus is an absurd hero 'as much through his passions as through his torture. His scorn of the gods, his hatred of death, and his passion for life won him that unspeakable penalty in which the whole being is exerted towards accomplishing nothing' (108). Thus Camus focalises the space of time in which Sisyphus, having pushed his rock once more down the hill, begins his descent to recover it:

That hour like a breathing-space which returns as surely as his suffering, that is the hour of consciousness. At each of those movements when he leaves the heights and gradually sinks towards the lair of the gods, he is superior to his fate. He is stronger than his rock. (109)

Hines, clearly, is weaker than his rock. This is why his novel portrays his pathos more persistently than his heroism, his temptation towards suicide more clearly than his lust for life.³ But just as Craig's comparison allegorises Hines, makes of him a standard of

² See Chapter Two, section III.ii above.

³ Throughout *The Busconductor Hines* are scattered vague hints concerning Rab's attempts to procure a gun from an old school friend, Frank. While nothing explicit is offered by way of an explanation, and no

manly suffering, and so introduces - partly invited, partly imposed - a set of values both literary and masculinist into Kelman's attempt to '[get] rid of any value system' (McNeill 1989: 4), so the theory of the absurd similarly articulates its rejection of 'good and bad values' within a classical context which valorises certain standards of manly endeavour and forbearance. For to be truly absurd is to indulge a fantasy of subjective imperialism, of appropriation without reserve, 'using up everything that is given' to fortify the battlements of masculine self-presence and empowerment.

While it is clear that *Young Adam* is also concerned with the absurd, it explores the concept in a more complicated way. At the beginning of Part Two, as I have discussed, Joe reveals that the body which he and Leslie pulled from the Clyde at the start of the novel belonged to Cathie, his ex-girlfriend. This had come as a shock to him precisely insofar as it was entirely unpredictable and unknowable: 'I felt vaguely that the whole incident had taken place out of time, that there had been a break in continuity, that what happened was not part of my history. It was pervaded with the unreality of fiction, dream' (Trocchi 1996: 87). In this way he is in keeping with Camus' schema when he describes the situation as an 'absurd complex' (84) in which he has involuntarily become involved. But does Joe himself become absurd? At the opening of the novel, he certainly seems that way. Indeed, here, Narcissus at his shaving-mirror, he embraces the discontinuity which later in the novel becomes such a pressing problem for him:

I don't ask whether I am the 'I' who looked or the image which was seen, the man who acted or the man who thought about the act. For I know now that it is the structure of language itself that is treacherous [...]

No problem. Somewhere from beyond the dark edge of the universe a hyena's laugh. (3-4)

Yet everything in this opening passage betrays that it is a conclusion only just reached by the narrator, after he has endured the trial of Goon and survived the concomitant threat of discovery and punishment. The 'hyena's laugh' seems to indicate an uneasiness about this absurdist position just as the qualifying 'now' reveals his clear-sightedness as hard-won. For in the main body of the narrative, Joe enjoys no such detached appreciation of the inherent disconnectedness of phenomena. Contrastingly, in

gun is eventually acquired, the first mention of it is annexed to a passage in which Hines considers death 'as the probable second step' from a feeling of falseness or of being 'unalive' (Kelman 1985: 99-100; see also 126, 146, 169, 233-4).

fact, his knowledge of the continuities required of murder investigations makes him acutely aware of the various connections to be made from the evidence he has left around the scene of Cathie's death. Thus he panics as he realises how bad things look for him, and attempts to hide all possible clues. The Joe of Part One, apparently indifferent to the discovery of the corpse, gives way to the Joe of Parts Two and Three, a figure desperately concerned with eschewing the present moment in an attempt to explain and to obliterate the traces of himself and his now obliterated lover.

In fact, the absurd, as the conflict between the knowable and the unknowable, dictates the manner in which this novel is narrated. All through Part One, Joe seems in control of his situation; in Part Two, however, he is absolutely abandoned to the 'absurd complex' in which he has become involved. Yet instead of indifferently accepting such a fate, he finds himself struggling to escape from it. In fact, even as he wills his own exile, he is increasingly (and anxiously) drawn towards the mysterious process which may either indict or exonerate him. In these terms *Young Adam* is very much a novel about knowingness and its limits, and concomitantly of the limits of absurdity. It invites a second reading, where precisely what Joe knows and reveals can come under closer scrutiny. Further, in directing the reader to go 'back to the beginning' (78), Joe exposes his manipulation of time. The absurd man is supposed to exist purely in the present, but merely by doubling his narrative back on itself, revealing in Part Two what he had concealed in Part One, Joe refuses the present moment. This is hardly the stuff of a neutral or indifferent position. And it also stands in sharp contrast to the linear narrative form of *The Outsider*, a technique essential in attempting to convey existence as a succession of present moments. In folding back on the present, Joe invites the reader to make a leap of faith. Outsider though he is, Joe occupies an 'inside' position with regard to the facts of Cathie's death, and, unlike Meursault, refuses silence in favour of revelation.

Thus Joe appears entirely uneasy with the 'absurd complex' to which he has become prey. Even his attempt to cover up any incriminating evidence betrays an unwillingness to succumb to the absurd and constitutes an attempt to move beyond it. In this way, Parts Two and Three of the novel interrogate the other side of absurdity, the unknowable or irrational, and describe Joe's specific relationship with it. His continuing employment on the barge and involvement with Ella contribute to him becoming

detached from the endeavour to rescue his self from the crisis that threatens it. Thus he suffers from a 'strange feeling of having lost [his] identity': 'I had become part of a situation which seemed to protect me against another, less enviable one [...] but the more I became involved in the small world of the barge, the more I felt myself robbed of my identity' (104). The alternative, however, is more crushing; later, he reflects, 'the absurdity which threatened me was the end of all possibility, and often when I was alone I experienced a terrible certainty that it would strike and that when it did I should be free neither to accept nor reject it. There was nothing unfinal about death. No sane man could accept it' (116).

The difference between Joe and Meursault here is that the latter does accept his death, pure and final as it is. Meursault doesn't seem to want to reach out to anyone while Joe does, to the reader, and even to the judge at Goon's trial, albeit with an ineffectual anonymous letter. This betrays absurd indifference as a quality not entirely natural to Joe's subjectivity. Indeed, in the narrative of his confrontation with the absurd in the second part of the novel, Joe's loss of control foregrounds the extent to which he has a capacity for feeling, even for love, and certainly for continuity. He makes it clear that with the death of Cathie he has lost a happiness only just regained; when he takes her hand, just prior to her death, 'it was as though we had never separated. The gesture brought back a hundred memories' (29). This is the continuity which love requires. In this light, perhaps Joe's succession of lovers, from Cathie to Ella to Ella's sister Gwendoline and finally to his landlady in part three of the novel, are all failed attempts to re-establish those feelings and that continuity. In fact, he becomes involved in a play of Derridaean supplementarity: each lover is taken successively, supplanting the last, so that he begins his relationship with Ella the day after Cathie's death, and takes up with Gwendoline, Ella's sister, once Ella has begun to encroach on his freedom. None of them can fully satisfy him; each is the sign of something lost, yet in the impossible attempt to offset that loss a certain illusory continuity is constructed.⁴

Certainly, on a non-sexual level, Joe's constant need to record and inventorise things seems to manifest a desire to cheat the gratuitously discontinuous. At Goon's trial, he

⁴ For Derrida, 'The sign is always the supplement of the thing itself' (1976: 145). In other words, the 'thing itself', the originary object of desire (in Joe's case Cathie), is always placed just out of reach by the movement of supplementarity, which, in attempting to supplant or replace the loss of that object, cannot ever fully recapture it.

begins to realise

how utterly dependent on things I had become, even if only to catalogue them, saying over and over again, the door, the seat, the boots, the mirror, the thing to wash in; if I had had a big ledger I could have drawn up an inventory of things, neatly arranging the columns of the names of the microscopic objects, which, with the courtroom about me, formed so large a part of my experience. Then I might have progressed to microscopic objects. With a ledger and a pencil I could have kept going indefinitely [...] I would not have been at a loss for things to catalogue. (141)

In this respect Joe is most like the biblical forebear who gives his name to the novel. Confronted with the unintelligibility of the world, he names things to know and to possess them. In this way, his fundamental 'nostalgia for unity' interferes with any truly indifferent absurd response, and does so for most of the narrative. Throughout Parts One and Two, Joe seems obsessed with recording external noises as a means of measuring time - the lick of water against the barge (55), the sound of a dog barking in the distance (47, 49), or the ticking of a clock (95). All this points up the extent to which Joe seems entirely uneasy with the role of absurd man and moves us towards a reading of the novel which emphasises not only its critique of social values, but its interrogation of a dominant fictional philosophical position.

In fact, Joe's 'nostalgia for unity' amounts to little more, in the end, than a nostalgia for the unity of the autonomous existential male subject. What appears to panic him the most, in fact, is that side of the absurd which focalises a 'feminine' attitude to the world: passivity, indifference and irrationality. Joe's manifest lack of control over events in Parts Two and Three of the novel is articulated most forcefully in relation to his role in his affair with Ella, which becomes increasingly a womanly one. Where in Part One he exerts control over Ella by objectifying her through his voyeuristic gaze, in Part Two Ella turns the tables. 'Ella watched me but said nothing. She was withdrawn in a different way now, and it was I who was being looked at. That made me uncomfortable' (99). Joe becoming subject to Ella's gaze, more and more conscious of her 'looking at [him], analysing, speculating' (107), mirrors Ella's new control over their relationship following Leslie's departure; she assumes they will be married. Yet it also symbolises

Joe's uneasy transformation from self-assured and self-determining masculine monad to an uncertain and indeterminate object of power, which is precisely, in the terms of gender binarism, a feminine position.

That Joe seeks to escape rather than embrace this transformation points up the extent to which he fails to be truly absurd. Yet it also interrogates the very concept of the absurd itself. Firstly, it demands a reconsideration of Meursault's precise relationship to the absurd in *The Outsider*, because it points up the impossibility of being absolutely indifferent. Aren't novels always offered as an appeal to a reader? How can the absurd truly exist in novelistic form? Perhaps Meursault, in wishing to be greeted with cries of hatred at his execution, is himself in fear of the absurd - after all, to be hated is only the other side of being loved, and is far from an indifferent or neutral position. Secondly, *Young Adam* suggests a gendered reading of the two absurd poles of 'nostalgia for unity' and 'benign indifference', a reading not immediately apparent in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Joe reacts to the femininity of the absurd with panic, thus clinging desperately to a nostalgia for masculine unity, yet at the same time seems unable simply to get up and walk away from the situation in which he has become entangled. In an uneasy manner, he appears to relish sailing close to the wind: as well as dropping dangerous clues to Leslie, as I have noted, he also seems compelled to attend Goon's trial, even renting a room in a street near Goon's home (134). His very exposure to the terms of his own potential destruction, then, opens Joe up to his own fundamental alterity, and provides for the deconstruction of a philosophical position which seems, in the hands of Camus, irremediably masculinist. This gender critique of existentialism will be taken up again in my final chapter, where the eponymous heroine of Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* will be considered as a type of absurd woman, 'cross-written' from a male to a female perspective - just as *Young Adam*'s Joe takes an involuntary leap across gender boundaries as his lover drops into the river.

The manner in which Joe's masculinist position becomes subject to such a feminising subversion bears echoes of the way in which Kelman's Rab Hines seems irrevocably stranded between self-present autonomy and interiorising passivity. Yet in *Young Adam*, more clearly divorced from the legacy of Glasgow fiction than is *The Busconductor Hines*, pathos is refused. The complex in which Joe becomes involved does not make him pitiable, but rather places him in a confrontation with the abject -

that dangerous space where subjectivity does not merely wilt and fail, thus making a fetish of failing, but is threatened absolutely and cannot merely be rescued by a sympathetic interpretative act.⁵ This poses problems for the kinds of homosocial identification and dominant fictional restoration I have discussed in relation to the other novels. Insofar as Joe occupies a concrete subject-position in the novel, like *The Shipbuilders'* Leslie Pagan he enjoys a godly superiority; however, rather than channelling any identification with less privileged male characters in the text via homosocial bonding, he disparages them. He offers himself as the phallic authority of the novel, but does not annex himself to any kind of lacking phallic representative through whom a male reader might successfully negotiate and disavow his own vulnerability. Yet insofar as the novel undermines this godly position in its confrontation with the absurd, Joe emerges as a subject in crisis, a similarly difficult locus for a privileged male reader to identify himself with.

In this way Joe is not merely a subject in exile from any given locus or societal imperative, but appears in a critical relation with his own self. The most obvious definition of exile, the geographical one, is continually embraced by Joe: 'To sail away on a ship like that, away. Montevideo, Macao, anywhere. What the hell am I doing here? The pale North' (6). Involuntarily, in terms of the 'absurd complex' to which he has become victim, he is also 'an alien, an exile, society already crystallising against [him], and only [his] own desperate word for what had happened' (82). But the extent to which he is thus alienated, as I have shown, coincides with being cut off from his own assumed position of masculine existential autonomy and freedom. *Young Adam* thus begins an exploration of masculinity in exile - by a process of radical divorce or disintegration rather than wilting, pathetic under-achievement - from its own hegemonic gender authority.⁶ The full significance of this abjected state will be explored with reference to *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting* in the next section. For in those texts the mechanisms of identificatory reading appear to be troubled by a precarious hesitation and disgust which accompanies the intersection of masculinity with its other(s).

⁵ See section III.i and ii below for a full discussion of this term.

⁶ At the close of *Young Adam* Joe comments that 'the disintegration was already taking place' (152), which tends to bolster any reading of the opening passage, discussed above, as a set of conclusions only just reached by the narrator.

Chapter Three (cont.)

III: Abjected Masculinities: *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting*

i: just say no? junk, masculinity and the abject

The depiction of heroin addiction in Trocchi's *Cain's Book*, the narrative of another outsider-figure, Necchi, ensconced on a scow on New York's Hudson river, provides an obvious intertextual link with Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, which charts the lives and deaths of a group of junkies in the Edinburgh of the 1980s. Yet this link also offers a space within which to consider more fully the concept of masculinity in exile. Attempting to read exile as an ambivalent kind of displacement which affects gender as well as geographical space, I will adapt Julia Kristeva's theory of the abject and its sublimation to assess the extent to which these texts could be said to put certain apparently isolated, closed-off spaces - first of all, the 'just say no' of the most politically dominant rhetoric on drugs, and concomitantly, the negatively realised autonomy of the existential masculine subject - in question. I will thus sketch out the ways in which these texts resist such a rhetoric, thereby marking the inscribed addicted subject - and along with him, the reader - as exiles of a most precarious kind.

Irvine Welsh's declared attitudes to Alexander Trocchi are ambiguous. On the one hand he holds *Young Adam* in high regard, and fêtes Trocchi for his famous argument with Hugh MacDiarmid, a figure Welsh regards as 'a symbol of all that's horrific and hideous about Scotland and Scottish culture' (Campbell and Niel 1997: 17). Welsh, then, celebrates Trocchi for his internationalism, something he and the so-called 'new generation' of Scottish writers share. However, Welsh was disappointed with *Cain's Book*:

I thought it was just a sub-Burroughs junkie type thing; it didn't appeal much. It was just an existential, middle-class figure mythologising drugs and the junkie experience. *Trainspotting* was a reaction against that, against the Burroughs-Trocchi dark, Bohemian figure who was a big drug-taker. What I was saying is that [...] now, it's different; it's a chemical society, it's a mass experience. It's as likely to be a working-class person in a

network of friends - a community - that's involved in any drugs scene, rather than this existential rebel. (17-8)

Welsh's claim that drug-taking is now more of a mass experience than it was in Trocchi's day is probably a valid one. It is unclear, however, whether *Trainspotting* represents anything which could be termed a 'community'. The 'network of friends' in the novel can hardly be described as living in any easy camaraderie; indeed Renton, the novel's main narrator, abandons them all at the close, takes their money and goes off to his exile in Amsterdam. Rather than articulate a structure of homosocial bonding, then, the novel marks out the limits of male friendship and traces a process of betrayal. As Mother Superior, the heroin dealer, is recalled as saying in the first chapter: 'Nae friends in this game. Jist associates' (Welsh 1993: 6). Renton comments slightly later, 'the real junky [...] doesnae gie a fuck aboot anybody else' (7). This is epitomised in the attitude of Sick Boy: 'It's me, me, fucking ME, Simon David Williamson, NUMERO UNO, versus the world, and it's a one-sided swedge' (30). Perhaps Spud, the novel's only vaguely endearing male character, represents a different attitude, but he stands out as the exception rather than the rule.

Trocchi's *Cain's Book* also takes up this position. For its narrator, Necchi, taking heroin involves a sealing off of the self. Under heroin, he comments, 'the perceiving turns inward, the eyelids droop, the blood is aware of itself [...]; it is that the organism has a sense of being intact and unbrittle, and, above all, inviolable' (Trocchi 1966: 3). Further, no sense of community can proceed from this singularly subjective experience; Necchi notes that only a 'loose, hysterical, traitorous [and] unstable' confederacy can exist among heroin addicts (56). This points up a greater similarity between *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting* than Welsh has been prepared to admit. For both writers, to take heroin is to put oneself in exile from community. In the rigidly masculine worlds of both of these texts, this entails placing the structures of male homosocial bonding under considerable strain.

Heroin addiction, then, appears to mark out a male subject's alterity in a fundamental way. In the first instance, this is because taking illicit drugs in general is viewed, contrary to the rhetoric which governs the validation of alcohol, as an activity which displaces one from truth. In our culture, drink is generally held to be a harmless toxin, one which allows the subject to free him- or herself from the restrictions of sobriety and

somehow become more themselves. *In vino veritas*. But illicit drugs represent a different scenario. As Derrida comments,

[the drug addict] cuts himself off from the world, in exile from reality, far from social reality and the real life of the city or community; [...] he escapes into a world of simulacrum and fiction. He is reproached for his taste for something like hallucinations [...] We do not object to the drug user's pleasure per se, but to a pleasure taken in an experience without truth. (1995: 236)

If to take drugs is to remove oneself from truth, the case against heroin is a particularly damning one. When faced with heroin, as Jeffrey Nealon argues, we are faced with something foreign to humanity:

Junk is an 'evil' to human culture - to thinking and action - because it is quite literally inhuman, that which carries the other of *anthropos*: 'junk' brings the denial of logos, the sapping of the will, the introduction of impossibility, and the ruining of community. (1995: para. 31)

The languages of postmodernity, however, claim that such alterity is proper to culture and to identity. As Nealon points out, prior to the explosion of feminist, postcolonial, queer and animal rights theories, women, persons of colour, homosexuals and animals were also categorised as such an 'other to *anthropos*' (para. 38). In the particular case of traditional masculine identifications, what is other to humanity is first of all at odds with what it is to be a man. When I say 'no' to drugs, and especially smack, I am saying 'yes' to a whole set of values: self-determination, consciousness and community - all of which pertain to that universalising humanist identification persistently used as a mask for the specifically embodied masculine subject. Saying 'no' to drugs, then, appears to imply saying 'yes' to a particular kind of manhood.

Indeed, just saying 'no' to drugs, in the moral universe of *Trainspotting*, ostensibly embraces that stable identity proper to hegemonic masculinity and its truth. *Trainspotting*'s Franco Begbie, another hard-man figure, read by Renton's parents as an 'archetypal model of manhood Ecosse' (Welsh 1993: 198), takes up an evangelical anti-heroin position throughout the novel. Following Spud's conviction for shoplifting, Begbie counters Spud's mother's accusations of complicity by thrashing 'at his own

chest with his fist', before screaming in her face 'AH WIS THE FACKIN CUNT TRYIN TAE GIT UM OAF IT!' (170). Such a gesture marks the subjective-imperialist gesture the rhetoric of prohibition involves - choosing life, the hard and indivisible 'I' of masculine responsibility and truth, not drugs, the exile of that 'I'. 'Exile' here can mean devastation or destruction; to put a country, property or person in exile is to lay waste to it or ruin it. In the heterogeneous and often ephemeral languages of drug culture, 'wasted' and related terms ('fucked', for example, in the sense of broken or damaged) are often used generically to describe the feelings of the intoxicated subject. To take drugs, both from the point of view of certain users and prohibitionists, is to put a whole, healthy self in exile - and in so doing threatening the stability of the dominant fiction.

From another point of view, a subject may become an exile as a matter of survival, forced away by a hostile regime. Saying 'yes' to drugs, in this light, can be read as a means of protecting the self. As Derrida points out,

[The] protection of the social bond [...] is almost always presented as the protection of a 'natural' normality of the body, of the social body and the body of the individual member. In the name of this [...] body we declare and wage the war on drugs [...] But [...] from the other side of the problem, so to speak (for you see how this opposition remains problematic), 'products' otherwise considered as dangerous or unnatural are often considered apt for the liberation of the same 'ideal' or 'perfect body' from social oppression, suppression and repression [...] (1995: 244)

In this way Necchi's attempts to become 'inviolable' in *Cain's Book* can be read as an effort at self-preservation. His valorisation of the 'inviolable' drugged self tends towards embracing the ideology of the libertarian, valuing private and autonomous experience over societal coercion.⁷ Such a stance is echoed in *Trainspotting* by Mark Renton: 'On the issue of drugs, we wir classical liberals, vehemently opposed to state intervention in any form' (Welsh 1993: 53). Thus Renton, on heroin, also experiences a sense of inviolability. To take heroin is to become 'immortal' (90), but a private immortality closed off from others: 'Rehabilitation means the surrender ay the self' (181). The defence of the self can never entirely be divorced from a will to power; when

a crisis like the death of Lesley's baby, wee Dawn, demands emotional reaction. Renton's only response is to cook up:

-Back oot ma fuckin light boys, ah snap, gesturing the cunts away wi backward sweeps ay ma hand. Ah know ah'm playing at being The Man, n part ay us hates masel, because it's horrible when some cunt does it to you. Naebody, though, could ivir be in this position and then deny the proposition thit absolute power corrupts. (56)

Renton's exclusionary hand-gestures here anticipate and echo the subjective imperialism of Begbie thrashing his chest with his fist later on. Both characters, one a junkie, the other vehemently opposed to junk, are playing at being 'The Man'. In this way, the 'yes' and the 'no' to smack seem inextricably bound up together. Any kind of opposition always ends up affirming the opposing stance. As Nealon points out, 'The constant reminder to "just say no" [...] is always haunted by a trace of the yes' (1995: para. 1).

Choosing life against drugs, from Renton's perspective, seems not so attractive. This is the passage famously adapted for the opening scene in the film version of *Trainspotting*:

Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life. (Welsh 1996: 187)

But instead, Renton chooses smack. Chooses paying drug dealers; chooses sitting on a couch watching Jean-Claude Van Damme videos, injecting junk into his veins. Chooses rotting away, pissing and shitting himself in a bookie's toilets, a total embarrassment to the doting, smothering parents who produced him. The two options, as long as they are contained within such a binary logic, are not options at all, but two sides of the same coin. And in the terms of this thesis, these two positions seem to represent two kinds of hegemonic masculinity at odds with each other: the socially responsible against the existentially autonomous; masculinity at 'home' versus masculinity in exile.

⁷ Trocchi makes clear his interpellation by this in an essay, 'The Junkie: Menace or Scapegoat', written to

Just as *Young Adam*'s Joe could not be completely absurd and indifferent, then, here the male junkie cannot adopt anything but a relative position, oscillating wildly between inside and outside. Heroin in these texts takes the addict into a kind of in-between space, an existence which always violates certain boundaries or borderlines. Even the act of injecting heroin breaks the blood-air barrier, the borderline of skin between the inside and outside of the body. To become 'inviolable' one must violate, take into the body a substance that is foreign to it, even contaminated or poisonous. Another boundary which comes under strain is that which divides private and public life. To obtain heroin and ensure autonomy the junkie must venture out and participate in an unofficial economy which mirrors that of the official one. As Cairns Craig notes, the 'community of dependency' in *Trainspotting* 'is the mirror image of the society of isolated, atomistic individuals of modern capitalism' (1999: 97).⁸ This underground economy is in fact a greater 'free market' than its overground double, as it is not subject to regulation, checks or balances. There is no junkie's charter within this economy. In this way Necchi and Renton, despite their attempts to seal themselves off, are always boomeranged back into a social world over which they have no control.

This kind of in-between exile, as it straddles and destroys boundaries and borderlines, can be described as 'abject'. The abject is precisely in-between; it is that realm of ambiguity which exists between the categories of subject and object. Julia Kristeva, in her book *Powers of Horror*, claims that the abject is that which disturbs

identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite [...] Abjection [...] is immoral, sinister, scheming, and shady: a terror that disassembles, a hatred that smiles, a passion that uses the body for barter instead of inflaming it, a debtor who sells you up, a friend who stabs you. (1982: 4)

This describes very accurately the kind of male relationships which exist in both *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting*. Mark Renton is precisely the 'friend who stabs you', as he betrays even the luckless Spud at the close of the book. It would be interesting to

warn England against the dangers of an absolutist stance on heroin (1991: 210-5; 211).

⁸ Avital Ronell also comments that drugs 'double for the values with which they are at odds, thus haunting and reproducing the capital market' (1993: 51). Relatedly, Claire Squires has noted the way in which the drug deal at the close of *Trainspotting* is comparable to 'the processes by which *Trainspotting* came to be published and marketed' (1999: 51).

compare the film's treatment of this episode with that of the novel; at the end of the film, Renton leaves Spud his share of the profits, an act of benevolence out of character with his portrayal in the novel. In both versions, however, Renton becomes an exile, moving to Amsterdam. But in a sense, as a heroin addict he has always been a kind of exile, forced to wander and stray. In *Cain's Book*, Necchi talks of how 'There was never a wandering Jew who wandered further than a junkie, without hope. Always moving' (Trocchi 1996: 56). Renton, in the grip of heroin intoxication and suffering one of his 'junk dilemmas', finds it very difficult to move, but knows through experience, and fear, that he'll '*need tae move soon*' (Welsh 1993: 177). Kristeva describes such a figure as a '*deject*', who '*strays* instead of getting his bearings, desiring, belonging, or refusing [...] He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding' (1982: 8).

Such abjected masculinities seem far removed from the ideal types represented in the early Glasgow novels, as well as from their pathos-ridden descendants in the work of McIlvanney and Kelman. The junkie-deject cannot be pathetic because he is always beyond rescue; disturbing the limits of normative masculinity, he seals himself off from the empowerment of the homosocial bond. That this in fact is merely another way of 'playing at being The Man', pretending to move outside the law while simply confirming it, I will attempt to address in due course. For now, the manner in which the portrayal of such figures intersects with literary form must be examined. From the polyphonic mode of the early Glasgow novels to the monologues of Kelman, narrative techniques appear to collude with masculinism in providing a structure within which the straight middle-class male reader can establish a certain ideologically restorative relationship with fictional subjects. When these subjects seem more prone to self-deformation than self-formation, more apt to wander than to remain at home, the forms of classic realism and concrete, linear existential monologue are placed under some strain. Both *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting* respond to this by adapting their modes of telling to the ambiguous, dissembling abjectivity with which they are both ostensibly concerned.

ii: perverted language: perverted gender?

The writer fascinated by the abject, Kristeva claims, 'imagines its logic, projects himself into it, introjects it, and as a consequence perverts language - style and content' (1982:

16). Through this perversion, which Kristeva terms a sublimation, the subject is 'removed to a secondary universe, set off from the one where "I" am - delight and loss' (11). This draws upon a conception of writing as something which, far from offering a plausible pseudo-reality, as do classic realism and the concrete style of Kelman, disrupts logic, reason and truth. In fact, such a writing is, according to Derrida, inseparable from the rhetoric of drugs. His reading of Plato's *Phaedrus* traces the contradictions of the signifier *pharmakon*, a drug which both nourishes and poisons. Writing is presented to the king, the central authority, 'as a beneficial *pharmakon* because, as Theuth claims, it enables us to repeat, and thus remember' (Derrida 1995: 234). The king rejects this, however, by claiming that writing is bad repetition because it can only ever *represent*, rather than *present*, the real:

The *pharmakon* 'writing' does not serve the good, authentic memory [...] It has more affinity with forgetting, the simulacrum, and *bad* repetition than it does with anamnesis and truth [...] It is thus in the name of authentic, living memory, and in the name of truth, that power accuses this bad drug, writing, of being a drug that leads not only to forgetting, but also to irresponsibility. Writing is irresponsibility itself, the orphanage of a wandering and playful sign. (ibid.)

The drugged, exiled stray of *Cain's Book*, Necchi, never seems far away from such a conception of writing. The opening pages of the novel find him wary that the noise of his typewriter, that technological supplement (amongst others) which enables the repetition of marks that is writing, may draw some workmen (uniformed and curious, thus symbolic members of the police) towards the discovery of his needle and eye-dropper, that technological supplement which enables the repetition of fixing that is heroin addiction (Trocchi 1966: 7). The conflation of the two marks out in a singular way writing as a bad, illicit *pharmakon* with the power to corrupt and displace even as it attempts to fix and name. Thus, against the sense of inviolable autonomy which governs the junk experience elsewhere in the novel, taking the drug lends itself to a kind of perverted invention: 'Just a small fix', Necchi feels, 'would recreate the strewn ramparts of Jericho' (10).

Throughout the novel, echoing some of Trocchi's editorials for the journal *Merlin*,⁹ Necchi advocates and embraces a kind of writing which would seek to recreate such 'strewn ramparts' against the centuries-old 'Aristotelian impulse to classify' (35). Just as that other classic novel of addiction, *Naked Lunch* [1959], claimed not to 'presume to impose "story" "plot" "continuity"' (Burroughs 1993: 174), *Cain's Book* is strewn with references to its own referential straying:

There is no story to tell [...] In all this, there is no it, and there is no startling fact or sensational event to which the mass of detail in which I find myself from day to day wallowing can be related [...] No beginning, no middle and no end. (Trocchi 1966: 113)

In this way the text, in the manner of much postmodern fiction, attempts to renounce masterly narrative in favour of fragmented part-stories, bits of autobiography and polemic, quotation and literary criticism. Like heroin itself, its manner of writing is situated against rigid reason or truth, making irrelevance primary ('what's not beside the point is false' (178)). The play of the signifier holds sway over any intended signified, moving close to Roland Barthes' definition of the verb 'to write' as intransitive, shying away from its object to reflect back on itself in a movement without proper closure (Barthes 1972: 134-45). Like Beckett's *Unnamable* - 'A desirable goal, no. To go on [...] and get on has been my only care' (1979: 294) - *Cain's Book* never declares itself written, but rather talks of a 'making of significance' (Trocchi 1966: 35), a 'complicated process of knitting' (45) or a 'kind of inventorizing' which always remains incomplete (179). The novel's close against closure - 'nothing is ending, and certainly not this' (192) - doubles for heroin addiction, and indeed the abject which heroin represents, in being incapable of fixing itself finally, forever recreating its own strewn ramparts. In this manner Necchi the junkie/writer lives against the dominant rhetoric on drugs, as well as against dominant modes of realism. Here, the marks on his arms, caused by continual intravenous injection, make of him a kind of text, displaying the signs of his sedition:

Since the Man looks for marks I am trying to keep them dispersed, to keep them as impermanent as possible. Some junkies use a woman's cosmetic to mask their marks; it is simpler to stick to one vein until it collapses. They do so and

⁹ See eg. Trocchi 1952-3: 55-6, and 1953-5: 229.

make up their arms, just where the elbow bends, like a woman makes up her face. (63)

As with the interiorised passages in *The Busconductor Hines*, it is very tempting to draw parallels between this kind of writing and French feminist notions of an *écriture féminine*.¹⁰ The make-up applied to the junkie's arms in the above citation appears to crystallise this comparison: in order to escape the judgement of the masculinist law ('the Man'), the addict adopts a particularly feminine ruse of cosmetic concealment. Indeed, as I have already mentioned, junk and the junkie, as 'other to *anthropos*', are not far removed from certain constructions of femininity. The comparison crystallises in the traditional representation of femininity as profoundly disengaged from the world of meaningful action: as Avital Ronell shows in her reading of *Madame Bovary*, Emma Bovary is close to the junkie in that she substitutes a world of fictions for active living - she becomes addicted, in a sense, to lending libraries (1993: 100-3). As with *Young Adam*, is Trocchi again subjecting his hypermasculine anti-hero to a feminising critique?

Unfortunately, any attempt to assign a feminine gender to the language of *Cain's Book* becomes undone as the novel masculinises its own techniques, and with that, underscores the unrepentant masculinism of its narrator. Any potential Kristevan sublimation - which proceeds towards a fluidity free of categorization where man might open out to endless possibility - collapses by failing to apply enough transformatory face-paint to the junkie/text in question. *Cain's Book's* strayings are continually held in check by the 'it' to which everything can be related - that subjective-imperialist identity almost irretrievably interpellated by a certain masculinist-existentialist ideology. In this Necchi fails to perceive the abject in all its deconstructive implications. The ideal of the inviolable and autonomous subject continually shuts its eyes to the other and its possibilities. For Necchi, ultimately, 'After all the cant, *I* am the ground of all existence. God said it. Say it after him' (Trocchi 1966: 174). In this way, like Malone in Beckett's *Malone Dies* he finds it 'more and more difficult to get outside [his] own skull' (169). Yet he also appears to have misread Beckett, failing to see that attending the representation of the outsider comes an incontrovertible obligation to the other. Thus where Necchi connects his writing to the inward turn of perception he experiences under heroin, writing deep into his own ignorance (54), looking into himself endlessly (53) and

¹⁰ See Chapter Two, section II.ii, n. 24 above.

leaving himself with a purely subjective identity (169), the characters straying through Beckett's trilogy are repeatedly reminded of the impossibility of such a closing off: *I* is always haunted by *they* or *them*. So while the unnamable knows he must renounce his knowledge in the face of his existence as a sign - 'all I've said, said I've done, said I've been, it's they who said it, I've said nothing, I haven't stirred, they don't understand' (Beckett 1979: 347) - Necchi affirms his document is still of his doing, his work:

[T]his document is an *act of remembrance*, a selected fiction;
and I am the agent also of what is unremembered, rejected;
thus I must pause, overlook, focus on my effective posture.
My curiosity was a making of significance. (Trocchi 1966:
35)

Insofar as Necchi thus imposes himself on what would be an otherwise deconstructive 'making of significance', his profoundly masculinist world view tends to organise what on the surface appears to be an illogical and disparate narration. Indeed, Necchi's first attempt to question the very bearers of the repressive truth who 'just say no' to him and his kind takes the form of an angry verbal attack on his ex-wife, Moira. Moira 'had smoked pot for some years but her attitude towards heroin was rigid' (13). When Necchi goes to visit her in New York, she announces her lack of interest in the plight of the addict: "It's none of my business [...] I've got no sympathy for them". Necchi responds:

'*You* say that. Sometimes I think of all those ignorant cops, all those ignorant judges, all those ignorant bastard people committing bloody murder like they blow their noses! They think it's so fucking easy they can stamp it out like syphokles, whatever it is, jewry, heroin-addiction, like some kind of streptococcus, and getting high like un-American rabies, Jesus, to a healthy paranoid like me who likes four walls and police-locks on all doors [...]'

'It's none of my business!' Moira screamed.

'Whose business is it? What are you going to do? Leave it to the experts? [...] They're always talking about a lack of scientific evidence, about its being unsafe to make it public! They're scared the public will find out it ain't that fucking

horse after all!’

‘*They’re* scared! Who’s *they*?’

‘You! Dammit to hell, Moira! You!’ (13-4)

Here Moira is identified with the police, the judicial system and the scientific community, all of whom, to Necchi, are either ignorant of or are deliberately misrepresenting the ‘real’ truth about heroin. In this way they represent that repressive ‘truth’ of human and community values - associated by Necchi with anti-Semitism and McCarthyist hysteria - against which the addict is judged to be a pariah. By identifying Moira with such a position, Necchi is able to characterise the war on drugs as a failed marriage, with the female partner occupying a defensively moralistic position.

This calls to mind Nietzsche’s texts, where ‘woman’ and ‘truth’ are associated in a number of different ways. Derrida, attempting to formalise Nietzsche’s heterogeneous statements on the problem, offers three essential propositions: in the first, woman is taken ‘as a figure or potentate of falsehood’; but in the second

the woman is censured, debased and despised [...] as the figure or potentate of truth. In the guise of the christian, philosophical being she either identifies with truth, or else she continues to play with it at a distance as if it were a fetish, manipulating it, even as she refuses to believe in it, to her own advantage. (Derrida 1979: 97)

Only in the third proposition, where ‘woman is recognised [...] as an affirmative power, a dissimulatress, an artist, a dionysiac’ (ibid.), is the reactive phallogocentrism of the first two concepts overthrown. Yet here Trocchi remains within the terms of the antifeminist trace in Nietzsche’s writing. Woman is both falsehood and truth at once: in the name of an outlawed truth or a dangerous falsehood, the addict-artist situates himself against her.

Moira does not come off much better in a later passage which describes a couple of Necchi’s homosexual experiences, one in the New York of the narrative present, the other (unsuccessful) in the Glasgow of a past New Year’s Eve. On the earlier occasion, seeking out a workman he feels an attraction for, Necchi enters a pub’s toilets. Here he finds not the man but a depiction of a woman’s torso, crudely etched into the wood of the toilet door. The narrative then cuts away to describe him returning home to Moira,

then his wife, depicted as demanding, frivolous and ultimately 'stupid, a stupid bitch' (Trocchi 1966: 39), willing Necchi to notice her new ear-rings, bought to mark the beginning of the new year. He ignores her, still preoccupied with his workman, and thus causes a domestic squabble resulting in Moira kicking over a table, smashing a whisky bottle, tottering 'like a skittle, and then, bursting into tears', running out of the room (40). Necchi's mind then returns 'to the lavatory' in order to complete that part of the story. Finding the carved female body bereft of a representation for her vagina, he had etched one into the wood himself:

I had examined the oakleaf and with my penknife I hewed it down to its proper size. It was no bigger than a pea when I had finished, a minute isocles triangle with a rough bottom edge to it. I was pleased with the result. Leaning forward then on the handle of my knife, I caused the small blade to sink deeply into the wood at a low centre in the triangle. The knife came away with a small tug. The score, because of the camber of the blade, was most life-like; wedge-shaped, deep.
(ibid.)

After further digressing to talk of reproach from Moira's brother, the novel breaks to a new chapter. Following some more diversionary comment on the necessity of self-conscious fiction, Necchi begins to reflect on his first (hetero)sexual experiences, recording the loss of his virginity to an Edinburgh prostitute, the first woman to bare the 'pretty pink fangs' of her vagina to him (49). He thus completes the context for the representation of his successful homosexual encounter in the New York of the present:

It was not the first time that I had had sexual experience with a man, but it was the first time it was not in one way or another abortive, it was the first time I had encountered a man who knew how to take what was given without a trace either of embarrassment or of that shrill crustacean humour dedicated homosexuals sometimes adopt, and my body afterwards was heavy with the kind of satisfaction I have often envied women. (50)

Just as Necchi has, blade in hand, carved out a vaginal image on the Glasgow toilet wall as a product of his own authoritative heterosexual experience - leaving the 'real' woman Moira to her tantrums and crying fits (indeed, Moira 'at her most abject' (38)) - here a

homosexual experience tells him all he needs to know about what it is to have such a vagina, thus fulfilling a 'sly female lust to be impregnated' (35). If this appears to challenge the imaginary impenetrability of the male body, it does so in terms of a masculinist rhetoric which leaves the reader in no real doubt as to Necchi's gender status. Just as he has possessed women in the past, here he possesses a secret knowledge of them, yet entirely in the absence of a female presence. Talking of how there are 'no common memories' between him and his lover, Necchi celebrates the fact that they share their 'male sex only, [their] humanity, and [their] lust' (50), underscoring his relief at the absence of effeminacy in his partner (standing in stark contrast to the exaggerated hysteria of Moira in the Glasgow memory). His 'complicated process of knitting' has thus produced a textual garment in which he, male, human - *it* - has stitched himself at the centre by qualifying his homosexual curiosity in highly misogynist terms. Inevitably, this leaves a dropped stitch in the fabric, for his call for a 'character in the book large enough to doubt the validity of the book itself' - a means of no longer taking 'the old objective forms for granted' (45) - is mocked by the passages following it. For in this apparently disconnected sequence of text, it is precisely the 'old, objective forms' of gender relations which are, in spite of the description of illicit desire, finally reaffirmed.

When Necchi's writing does seem to move away from such confrontational subjective imperialism - when it best imitates the precariousness of the junk structure *Cain's Book* sketches out, but most often ignores, to valorize the inviolable exteriority which is the greatest promise of this abject - loss, not delight, is the primary experience. The straying of the abjected exile Necchi is largely internalized, and as such often solipsistic; the reality that '*ex nihil nihil fit*' (18) is faced with a certain despair. Although he has 'always found it difficult to laugh alone' (44), alone he generally remains, convinced of the importance of his writing but reading there most often death:

The grey table in front of me strewn with papers, inventories
from the past, from Paris, from London, from Barcelona,
notes neatly typed, notes deleted, affirmations, denials,
sudden terrifying contradictions, a mass of evidence that I
had been in abeyance, far out, unable to act, for a long time.

(88)

Yet these 'sudden terrifying contradictions', in terms of the gender politics of the novel,

are precisely what Necchi does not face up to. The theory of Necchi's writing is too often lost to the practice - a rigid didacticism dictated by a totalitarian belief in the primacy of his masculine being, and the corresponding legacy of the existential tradition. While Trocchi refrained from directly encouraging others to become heroin addicts,¹¹ he would still have me swallow his character's textual prescriptions without question. Against the disintegrations which constantly threaten to undermine his project, he would have me just say yes - yes to a symbolic system which continues to privilege the absolute, detached exteriority of the male outsider-figure. Once more, the privileged male reader is the one most directly being addressed, bringing him perilously close to a vision of himself at an extreme of ambiguity, yet at the same time allowing him to (mis)recognise (and thus empower) himself in a phallic narrative Subject, intertextually engaged with the subjective-imperialist playground of existentialism.

At first glance, *Trainspotting* appears to enact a more radical sublimation of the abject with which it is concerned. Similarly eschewing traditional structures of beginning, middle and end, the novel goes further than *Cain's Book* by refusing to settle on any one narrative point of view. Its polyphonic form, encompassing female as well as male voices, and its loose, episodic structure, intersects with its treatment of heroin as a highly heterogeneous substance. In *Trainspotting*, 'junk' never simply names the poisonous opiate which has a determinable effect on the constitution of the subject who takes it. Difference and dispersal are proper to its meaning, and Welsh, unlike Trocchi, always exploits this to the full. The oblivion apparently at the heart of the junk experience - at once staving off meaninglessness and becoming, in effect, meaningless - is metaphorically connected with other areas of life, engaging thus with what Will Self sees as 'a generalised nihilism that infests twenty-somethings at the moment' (1995: 8). *Trainspotting's* title, which connects not with smack but with the wisecrack of a drunk as Renton and Begbie stand urinating at Leith's long-abandoned railway station - 'What yis up tae lads? Trainspottin, eh?' (Welsh 1993: 309) - neatly encapsulates this condition. The old drunk, it transpires, is Begbie's father. Begbie responds to the situation in his usual manner, by assaulting the first stranger they come across, but it is a strangely subdued gesture, shrouded in silence and resignation. The loss of the father, of authority and meaning, in this masculinist environment, can only pave the way for violence at its most futile and abject. Embodying this, Begbie rules by fear, and indeed

¹¹ Tom McGrath recounts how Trocchi 'never offered me the drug or encouraged me to take it [...]

becomes 'like junk, a habit' (83).

Here, the signified smack is itself made to signify - a move which counters Trocchi's largely conservative reading of the drug, echoed by Will Self in the comment, 'Heroin is not a hallucinogenic drug, it provokes no vision either with its high, or its low' (1995: 9). Welsh's text holds little with this. *Trainspotting* marks the proximity of heroin's highs and lows, by virtue of their displacement from 'truth', to fiction and hallucination. In this, it turns the hegemonic rhetoric on drugs, which seek to lump all substances in with each other, back on itself.¹² 'House Arrest', in which Renton is forced into cold turkey by being locked in his room by his parents, cuts up fragments of discourse from present and past, mixing in comments from his father about HIV with the remarks of a television gameshow host, before culminating with the chilling image of the cot-death-baby Dawn crawling along the ceiling and complaining bitterly of the life Rents and his criminally irresponsible junkie ilk have denied her. Within this hallucinatory, polyphonic context, when a similar observation to Self's appears, it can only share the fate of those other attempts to fix the junk experience elsewhere in the novel - inconclusion and suspension. So, when Rents tells Tommy, 'Smack's [...] the only really honest drug. It doesnae alter yir consciousness. It just gies ye a hit and a sense ay well-being', he leaves himself open to a powerful undercut:

-Shite, Tommy sais. Then: -Pure shite. He's probably right n aw. If he asked us the question last week, ah'd huv probably said something completely different. If he asks us the morn, it wid be something else again. (Welsh 1993: 90)

In *Trainspotting*, junk is always 'something else again'; and, more often than not, 'shite' of one sort or another. This becomes apparent first in a toilet - a bookie's toilet, a highly ambivalent private/public space - in the chapter 'The First Day of the Edinburgh Festival'. Here Mark Renton is in the throes of a particularly severe post-junk incontinence:

Ah whip oaf ma keks and sit oan the cold wet porcelain shunky. Ah empty ma guts, feeling as if everything, bowel,

[except] by example' (1985: 45).

¹² 'No doubt we should have to make some distinction between so-called hallucinogens and other drugs, but this distinction is wiped out in the rhetoric of fantasy that is at the root of the interdiction: drugs, it is said, make one lose any true sense of reality' (Derrida 1995: 236).

stomach, intestines, spleen, liver, kidneys, heart, lungs and
fucking brains are aw falling through my arsehole intae the
bowl. (25)

Excrement 'is not a quality in itself', as Kristeva writes (with reference to the work of Mary Douglas), 'but it applies only to what relates to a *boundary* and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin' (1982: 69). We eject it from our bodies that we might live, then flush it away, detesting its lingering smell and stains. Here, it returns: Rents, coming off shit, another name for heroin, shits apocalyptically. And thus is he reduced, body and mind, to nothing more than shit. As shit, he is bombarded by flies - another manifestation of the abject - managing however to grab hold of 'a huge, filthy bluebottle, a big, furry currant ay a bastard', kill it, and use it as ink:

Ah smear it against the wall opposite; tracing out an 'H' then an 'I' then a 'B' with my index finger, using its guts, tissue and blood as ink. Ah start oan the 'S' but ma supply goes thin. Nae problem. Ah borrow fae the 'H', which has a thick surplus, and complete the 'S'. Ah sit back as far as ah can, withoot sliding intae the shit-pit below ays, and admire ma handiwork. The vile bluebottle, which caused me a great deal of distress, has been transformed intae a work of art which gives me much pleasure to look at. (Welsh 1993: 25-6)

In this way the abject is sublimated: perceived, caught hold of and transformed. It is taken onto another level, art, but a degraded level; the message pertains not to high culture, but to football, reclaimed from that culture, back on the toilet wall. This sublimation, in order to complete itself, has borrowed from the 'H' - yet another name for heroin - 'which has a thick surplus'. The abject heroin is thus opened out from its experience of closing off, is revealed in its supplementarity, and is sublimated - allowing Rents, if only momentarily, to hover above the shit-pit below him.

Only momentarily, because Rents has also excreted the other shit - the opium suppositories - and must dive back into the abject, gagging, to reclaim them. The film version of *Trainspotting*, for once abandoning its attempts to linearise the novel, here depicts Rents disappearing down the toilet bowl and into the parallel universe of a blue lagoon, beautifully clean and clear, shot through with sunlight, to find his lost treasure at

its bottom. For this delving into the shit is a sublimatory moment, a striking metaphor for what Welsh is up to: taking the shit from the shit, reclaiming it, inserting it back up the anus, making it other, and striding shakily, smellily, back into the sunlight of an irretrievably displaced Edinburgh Festival.

In this manner, Welsh emerges not so much as a gritty or dirty realist, but rather as someone who takes the grit, the dirt, the junk, the shit, piss, spew, blood, saliva, sperm ('muck') - all these bodily fluids and wastes, and cultural detritus - human waste, and wasted humans - and recycles them, materializes their hollow worthlessness, within a distinctive linguistic and metaphoric economy. He does not give us the truth or reality of dirt, but writes it, makes it signify; not dirty realism, but *écriture merde*. As any single meaning of junk is exiled to let in other, manifold significances - the poisons of poverty, the mess of sex, the wastes disavowed by, but inherent in, clean living - no one, and no place, is safe. Thus the respectable working-class family at their traditional Sunday breakfast are greeted by 'a pungent shower of skittery shite, thin alcohol sick, and vile pish', as one character's attempts to close off the stinking legacy of a night on the tiles within a bundle of bedclothes proves futile (94). And the only response is to laugh, even as I imagine my own family at breakfast and shudder at the force of the metaphor; the distance which I would like to place between myself and junk has been elided by a circumlocutory, transformational return. The repulsed fascination which marks my relation to junk and the junkie is carried over, just as it was back in the bookie's toilet, into hysterical, implicated laughter, punctuated with groans and other noises indicating illness and nausea.

Thus *Trainspotting* appears to enact the exile of this ultimate exiled space. As the novel makes the abject junk other and heterogeneous, brings it in from the outside, or turns the inside out to display its contamination, the rhetoric of exclusion is read intertextually with that which privileges the ambivalent and open-ended. Welsh's text then joins other voices, chaotic and pragmatist, which hope to throw the order of exile back at the tyrannical judgement which so permeates this 'just say no', evidenced so insidiously in the language of the 'Scotland Against Drugs' campaign. The novel then celebrates a carnivalesque, topsy-turvy world, in which shit-sliding carries a political as well as a merely grotesque meaning. If the characters in *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting* are those who say 'yes' to heroin, I would guess that the majority of people who read them,

including myself, are largely those who say 'no' to it, even if we say 'yes' to other kinds of drug. Even if the chemical generation Welsh claims to be a part of forms the immediate audience for a text like *Trainspotting*, what has to be taken into account is that heroin remains a taboo even to users of other drugs. This is why the reaction to this abject junk in its promise of loss, displacement and violation involves a kind of shocked, yet fascinated, horror. For the fact that the drug is everywhere *written* - in pop songs, on film, in the recent trend for very thin, pale, addict-like fashion models and, most pertinently, in the very popular fictions of Welsh himself - signals that there is an audience which is summoned to its representation even as it is revulsed, bound to that from which it would like to place in exile. There is a fascination in our horror. Whatever its motivation, the written, represented drug exerts the attraction of a limit which can be experienced vicariously even as it leaves us blank. These junk texts then suspend their readers in a precarious hesitation before the abject. We who would say 'no' to heroin if it was offered us in the street say 'yes' to it when offered in a novel or a film. In a similar way, the straight male reader who would refuse the friendship of a junkie is carried towards an uncertain association with him - an association which, if tested to its deconstructive limits, would complicate any simple identificatory affirmation of normative manhood. When faced with abjected masculinity, the ideal reading subject views a distorted, transformatory image of himself, and the restorative mechanisms of identificatory reading become suspended. Yet where exactly does *Trainspotting* leave the status of its masculine subjects, and the process of readerly identification with them? Does the novel's radically transformative approach to heroin translate to a similarly deconstructive revision of the dominant fiction?

The extent to which the abjected masculinities of *Trainspotting* can be said to disturb the 'identity, system [and] order' of phallogocentric gender relations is highly uncertain. In the first instance, the status of the male addict appears to challenge in an explicit way the traditional morphological boundaries of heterosexual masculinity. When seen at all, to recall the passage cited in Chapter Two, section II above, the male body is regarded 'phallic and impenetrable' in contrast to the 'permeable and receptive' qualities of feminine morphology (Waldby 1995: 269). In participating in self-violation in order to become inviolable, however, the male addict's body becomes visible insofar as it becomes penetrable. *Trainspotting's* most central female junkie, Alison, draws an analogy between the injection of heroin and being penetrated by a penis, but with the

former giving the greatest pleasure: 'That beats any meat injection', she gasps, following shooting up, 'that beats any fuckin cock in the world' (Welsh 1993: 9). In fact, the pleasures of smack are persistently identified with the pleasure of the orgasm in the novel, but in an intensified way: as Renton comments, 'Ali was right. Take yir best orgasm, multiply the feeling by twenty, and yir still fuckin miles off the pace. Ma dry, cracking bones are soothed and liquefied by by ma beautiful heroine's tender caresses' (11). Yet Renton's attempts to imagine his drug-taking in heterosexual terms are somewhat challenged by Ali's comparison, for to be so 'soothed and liquefied' his own flesh must become open and permeable.

Not only that, but for the male junkie the penis itself becomes a site rather than an agent of penetration. Renton records at one stage in the novel how 'fuckin grotesque' it is 'tryin tae find an inlet. Yesterday ah hud tae shoot intae ma cock, where the most prominent vein in ma body is. Ah dinnae want tae get intae that habit. As difficult as it is tae conceive ay it at the moment, ah may yet find other uses for the organ, besides pishing' (86). Renton does rediscover his penis as a sexual organ, but only during one of his straight periods (130-52). Furthermore, Renton's anus, that bodily hole most vociferously guarded in the heterosexist imagination of the phallic morphological ideal, similarly becomes a point of entry as well as of exit in the opium suppositories episode. In confrontation with the abject in the form of heroin, the male body becomes transformable material, bringing it close to the 'permeable and receptive' qualities associated with femininity.

If heroin addiction in *Trainspotting* appears to facilitate the re-drawing of masculine morphological boundaries, the novel elsewhere stops short of any truly radical revisioning of heterosexual masculinity. *Trainspotting*, like *Cain's Book*, depicts a homosexual encounter, but again in a particularly defensive way. Renton flirts with challenging his own normative sexual identity, asking himself how he can know he's straight when he has never had a homosexual experience, yet assuring himself he could never take the passive, feminine role: '[A]h'd huv tae be in the drivin seat. Ah couldnae handle some cunt's knob up *my* arse' (233). Apparently particular as to what he allows himself to be penetrated by, Renton's episode with the Italian immigrant Giovanni while on holiday in London confirms his essentially straight identity. While he considers he might 'end up whappin it up the wee cunt's choc-box yit' (235), the possibility his own

‘choc-box’ might be similarly violated is not to be considered. As Christopher Whyte comments, this section of the novel offers some disappointingly conservative conclusions concerning the intersection of national, gender and sexual identity:

Flirtations with homosexuality serve to reaffirm Renton’s ‘normality’, which has the power to ‘feminise’ the sexual object irrespective of gender. His phallus makes little distinction between ‘choc-box’ and ‘cunt’. What happens on holiday is under a special dispensation and, in this case, ‘holiday’ can be glossed as ‘outside Scotland’. Homosexuality is carefully situated beyond the boundaries of Renton (and Welsh’s) nationality [...] An ethnically pure Scottish male, one should conclude, could never be in any real sense homosexual. (1998: 281)

In this way, *Trainspotting* appears to participate in similar ideological strategies to earlier texts like *The Shipbuilders*, constructing a consonance between normative masculinity and nationality. Despite the manner in which the novel degrades Scotland in particular and nationality in general,¹³ it valorises Scottishness in its representation of figures who have come to be the sole bearers of Scottish national identity: straight working-class men. While the novel elsewhere stresses the alterity of these figures, their exile from dominant ideological life and their self-degradation, they remain at the centre of a text as traditionally Scottish as the values they ostensibly reject.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the representation of women in the novel. Only two chapters, ‘Feeling Free’ and ‘Eating Out’, employ a female first-person narration (both told by Renton’s girlfriend, Kelly), while third-person perspectives on female life occupy only another couple of chapters (‘Growing Up in Public’ and ‘The Elusive Mr Hunt’). The problem is not merely the paucity of such episodes but the manner in which they appear to idealise women, offering a positive version of the rhetoric by which womanliness is identified with moral truth. In ‘Feeling Free’, for example, Kelly and Alison join forces with a pair of lesbian New Zealander backpackers in responding to

¹³ There are three major attacks on Scottishness in *Trainspotting*. In the first, Renton characterises the Scots as the ‘most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation’ (Welsh 1993: 78). Later, he continues in the same vein in describing Leith as a ‘place ay dispossessed white trash in a trash country fill ay dispossessed white trash’ (190). Finally, Renton broadens his target somewhat by registering his hatred for Scotland, Britain and nationalities in general: ‘Ah’ve never felt a fuckin thing aboot countries, other than total disgust. They should abolish the fuckin lot ay them’ (228).

the sexist jibes of a gang of workmen. As they celebrate their victory with an impromptu party, Kelly reaches the following conclusions:

Ah've never felt so close tae other women before, and I really did wish I was gay. Sometimes I think all men are good for is the odd shag. Other than that, they can be a real fuckin pain. Mibbe that's crazy, but it's true when you think about it. Our problem is, we don't think about it that often and jist accept the bullshit these pricks dish oot tae us. (Welsh 1993: 276)

Thus *Trainspotting*, a novel largely concerned with charting rather than challenging 'the bullshit these pricks dish oot' to women, articulates its contribution to feminism. Mark Renton, who inadvertently stumbles into the party for a short time, is derided for his gender status but takes it in good humour. Yet the novel attempts no radical interrogation of gender relations outside of this. Where it questions the simple yes/no rhetoric of drugs, it enshrines binary heterosexual gender difference, even as it presents it in a negative form. Thus Renton's conclusion that men 'are pathetic cunts' (141) is simply confirmed by the female characters in the novel, whose ethical superiority reinforces the judgement without offering any substantial critique of it.

Elsewhere in *Trainspotting*, however, Renton reverses this rhetoric by himself occupying an ethically superior position in relation to the other male characters in the novel, and especially to Franco Begbie. In the figure of Begbie, that 'archetypal model of manhood *Ecosse*', becomes visible yet another manifestation of the traditionally West-Scottish hard-man figure, cut out of *No Mean City* and pasted forty miles East in Edinburgh. Set adrift in a world of post-industrial fragmentation, and therefore divorced from the redeeming contexts of hard work or socialist aspiration which saved Danny Shields or Jock MacKelvie from the abject, Begbie represents the hard man at his most pathological and embattled, yet also, as I have shown, displays a moralistic identification with the 'just say no' of the rhetoric on drugs. A thief and a wife-beater, he nevertheless perpetuates an image of himself as a defender of community and human values. Like the Scottishness he so stereotypically represents, then, Begbie is derided throughout the novel, yet this does not seem to preclude him from occupying a major part of the narrative space.

The proximity of Begbie to *No Mean City*'s Johnnie Stark marks his representation as the object of a peculiarly bourgeois and distancing narrative authority. The voice of Mark Renton keeps Begbie, along with other characters in the novel, in their place by adopting a narrative point of view which veers occasionally into Standard English and asserts its superior education and morality at every turn.¹⁴ At one point in the narrative, Renton is tried for shoplifting a volume of Kierkegaard from Waterstones bookshop. Claiming he stole it to read rather than to sell, Renton is asked by a sceptical judge to tell the court about the philosopher. He responds:

I'm interested in his concepts of subjectivity and truth, and particularly his ideas concerning choice; the notion that genuine choice is made out of doubt and uncertainty, and without recourse to the experience and advice of others. It could be argued, with some justification, that it's primarily a bourgeois, existential philosophy and would therefore seek to undermine collective societal wisdom. However, it's also a liberating philosophy [...] (165-7)

So Renton continues, much in the manner of an undergraduate student writing a philosophy essay. He thereby hoodwinks the judge into giving him a light fine - while Spud, his co-defendant, is given a term in prison - but at the same time indicates to the privileged male reader (via yet another existential intertext) that he can talk and think like them, and might provide a suitable point of narcissistic identification through which the other male characters in the novel might be judged and regulated. By this time, he has already given us the definitive word on Begbie:

Myth: Begbie has a great sense ay humour.

Reality: Begbie's sense ay humour is solely activated at the misfortunes, setbacks and weaknesses ay others, usually his friends.

Myth: Begbie is a 'hard man'.

Reality: Ah would not personally rate Begbie that highly in a square-go, withoot his assortment ay stanley knives, basebaw bats, knuckledusters, beer glesses, sharpened knitting needles, etc.

¹⁴ See eg. the chapter 'Searching for the Inner Man' (181-8), which emphasises Renton's intellectual superiority to the drugs workers who attempt to treat him.

Myth: Begbie's mates like him.

Reality: They fear him. (82-3)

This attempts something of an anatomy of machismo. The hard man vigorously defends his masculinity against the weakness of the other. Meanwhile, his own corporeal hardness is so precariously guarded that he protects it with a host of supplementary phallus-like weapons; and he engenders homosocial bonds with other men by virtue of his status (they fear him, but perhaps also, a point Renton doesn't consider, they feel the need of protection by him, confident he can play at being the Man when they cannot). If this is an attempt to expose the 'reality' of a mythological figure, it falls far short of Willy Maley's wish to see the hard man treated as an effect of the objectification of labour (1994: 95-6). Rather, it gives us the hard man as an effect of fiction, with a typically bourgeois, directive narrative voice keeping him in his place. In this way Begbie remains an excitingly dangerous representation of Scottish masculinity without threatening the privileged male reader's sense of disembodied authority.

On the other hand, the manner in which Renton offers a particularly bourgeois identification to the ideal male reader indicates the extent to which the text, as in the works of McIlvanney, has failed to erase the signifiers of privilege from its narrative voice, thus placing its interpellative strategy in jeopardy. In the film's interpretation of the text, Renton is portrayed in an even more middle-class light: his language is further standardised than in the novel, and his closing act of benevolence towards Spud, leaving him a share of the money he steals, is a scriptwriter's interpolation. This may present a problem to the male reader familiar with the Glasgow tradition, as the privileged narrator-figure, erased so successfully in the novels of Kelman, once more raises his head and foregrounds the contradictory class and national discourses which make identification with him a troublesome process. Yet insofar as the text defends Renton from too close a contact with the abject, it preserves his homosocial bond with a male reader who elsewhere in the novel finds the image of his self and body degraded and transformed. In this way the male reader, finding at some points of the narrative an ambiguously repulsive, addicted and abjected version of himself, placing any identificatory reading under considerable strain, is elsewhere presented with an entirely familiar narrative authority, reflected within an easily recognisable and empowering phallic narrative Subject. In the end, and even despite the ambiguous gender, class and national status of this Subject, *Trainspotting*, like Trocchi's *Cain's Book*, invites a

restorative and masculinist readerly identification, thereby stopping short of any truly polyphonic and transformative interrogation of the dominant fiction.

Chapter Three (cont.)

IV: Postscript: Supine Monologues

If *Trainspotting*, as the privileging of Mark Renton's point of view suggests, can be considered as a kind of monologue, Welsh's second novel, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* [1995], more explicitly engages with the first-person tradition. There is not the space to offer a full consideration of this text here, but a number of provisional points can be made. *Marabou Stork Nightmares* is a novel also concerned with the abject, but in place of heroin it focalises violence. Its narrator, Roy Strang, in some ways a version of Begbie without the moral rectitude, is a football casual, a rapist and a failed suicide. Attempting to come to terms with his underprivileged, abusive upbringing and his crimes, Strang drifts in and out of consciousness on a hospital bed, alternating the facts of his life with a fantasy narrative of big game hunting in Africa. The novel thereby offers an account of masculine self-degradation intertwined with a parodical treatment of both political and subjective imperialism.

The working-class male figure so persistently identified with Scottish cultural identity in urban men's writing is here represented in all his abjected horror, his senseless violence and his fear and hatred of the feminine. Offering an all-too simple account of the manner in which his environment has determined him (Welsh 1995: 19-30; 61-117; 133-58), Strang fails to offer to the reader any kind of narcissistic or sympathetic identificatory bond, but concomitantly forecloses the possibility of any more performative or subversive interrogation of his gender identity. Strang has been both economically and culturally castrated, prompting him to ever more desperate appropriations of power, but in the closed world of the novel this can only result in his own physical castration, enacted at the end by Kirsty, the woman he raped, herself reduced to merely repeating the violence she has suffered back on its perpetrator. As Schoene-Harwood claims,

By denying Kirsty her womanly difference, Welsh denies himself the opportunity to conceive of an alternative, feminine response to violence, a woman's way out of the clockwork orange that is patriarchy [...] Universalising the

insidious dynamics of patriarchal power as some kind of irremediable, generic by-product of human nature, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* concludes with a total eradication of sexual difference. Woman is deprived of her potentially subversive heterogeneity and becomes a completely predictable mirror image of man (2000: 156).

In this way *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, like *Trainspotting*, works against the possibilities of its own techniques. It flirts with a feminine 'subversive heterogeneity' in its fantasy sequences, undermining Strang's conscious attempts at phallic mastery by immersing him in an African scene of highly eroticised male bonding (Welsh 1995: 55-6; 84; 120-2). In these sequences too the novel parodies the language of Boy's Own adventures, thereby mocking traditional narratives of masculine growth. Yet in other respects Strang's developmental trajectory merely inverts the terms of hegemonic masculine becoming. The imaginary pursuit of the Marabou stork becomes a Symbolic confrontation with phallic authority, the specific, disadvantaged masculine subject pitted against his empowered and impossible ideal. These two terms, in the end, can only (and quite literally) cancel each other out.

A similar example of male monologue can be found in Alasdair Gray's 1982 *Janine* [1984]. This novel focalises its central male protagonist's interpellation by a phallogocentric system which, while economically and sexually privileging him, also subjects him to degrading entrapment as he finds it increasingly impossible to establish a normative emotional attitude either to himself or the women in his life. Like *Marabou Stork Nightmares'* Roy Strang, *Janine's* Jock McLeish represents an isolated and pathological mode of manly being, reduced by his attempts at self-empowerment to a supine position - 'Sweatwet, slightly bruised, pegged out starfishwise on this bed in Peebles or Selkirk' (Gray 1985: 131) - and to a suicide attempt. This, as Christopher Whyte points out, is a recurring image in post-1970s men's texts:

[W]hat the 'hard man', in literary terms at any rate, bequeathed was a self-doubting masculinity, one which perceived itself as flawed, as lacking affirmation or validation [...] Perhaps that is why the figure of the reclining male, a hero who is incapacitated in some way and may even

be hospitalised, recurs so frequently. Jock McLeish in Gray's 1982 *Janine* presents himself to us in a double bed in a hotel [...] The hero of Iain Banks's *The Bridge* (1986) is in a coma, in intensive care until the very close of the novel. Roy Strang [...] is also comatose, resisting the persistent efforts of carers to bring him back to consciousness [...] [His] condition is a refuge as much as it is a predicament. (1998: 279-80)

Whyte continues, pointing out that such reclining positions are 'stereotypically [...] "feminine"' ones, producing male characters who are 'incapable of adopting an upright, "erect" pose' (280). In this way, then, these texts imagine the systemic pressure of phallogocentrism as ultimately negatory: the phallic illusion of assertive autonomy, so easily achieved by such working-class heroes as Danny Shields or Jock MacKelvie, is an impossible ideal, the attempted attainment of which will only crush masculinity beyond recognition, or at least send it running to a safe haven of interiorisation. The aspiration to 'have' the phallus, whether it is represented by physical strength (Strang) or economic and sexual advancement (McLeish), can only result in final castration (literally, in the case of Strang) as the promise of mastery reveals itself as a dangerous chimera.

Whether this monologic stalemate is the result of a crisis in national identity ('the chronotope of failed devolution' as Donald Wesling would have it (1997: 82)), of economic deprivation, of feminist pressure on the traditional categories of masculinity or of a combination of these effects, the masculine self-deformation of these novels appears to announce itself as an inevitable *telos*. The exploration of abjected masculinities in the work of Trocchi and Welsh simultaneously enshrines and questions the autonomy and mastery of the male subject, but appears to offer no other way out of the closed circuit of phallogocentricity than to invert it, expose its degradation while remaining within its dictates. If, on the one hand, these texts offer the male reader points of identification entirely familiar to him - the educated, self-present narrator-figure, or the titillatingly objectified hard man - on the other, the promise of dominant fictional restoration these figures traditionally allow has been brought to an impasse. From the idealised hard men of the early Glasgow novels, through the pathetic monads of McIlvanney and Kelman and up to the wandering dejects of Trocchi and Welsh, Scottish men's writing seems to offer the conclusion that the isolation of the disempowered masculine subject can lead nowhere else but to its own brutal termination. While this would appear to throw a cog

in the wheels of the structures of identificatory reading, breaking up any potentially restorative homosocial bond between he who 'has' the phallus and he who embodies it, no more subversive or performative alternative is offered in its place.

Gray's 1982 *Janine*, however, appears to suggest a different option, as Jock McLeish finds a way out of his embattled masculine reserve, his violent misogyny and his entrapment within the patriarchal structures of work and relationships. The proximity of McLeish's subjectivity to a traditionally feminine one is played with by his narrative, as the same words which describe his being 'pegged out starfishwise' are also applied to the sexually passive positions of his female fantasy figures Superb and Momma (Gray 1985: 55, 125). McLeish's favourite imaginary woman, Janine, emerges at the end of the text as a site of identification rather than objectification, demonstrating that what is 'other' to masculinity is always-already inside and performable as a subversive alternative to a masculinism which elsewhere announces itself as a closed and rigid system. This text deserves further exploration here but there is not the space; I will take it up again briefly at the beginning of the next chapter as it offers a way in to the question of cross-writing. There, I aim to investigate the manner in which the originary and autonomous status masculinities assume in Scottish men's writing - along with their concomitant degradation - may be transformed by male writers' attempts to write in the guise of women.

Chapter Four

Strategies of Cross-writing I: Theory and Practice

I: Introduction

One of the most serious problems for the representation of masculinities in the men's texts I have discussed in the previous chapters is their hostility to, or outright exclusion of, feminine modes of perception or being. This does not only pertain to the denigration of female subject positions in the novels (as in *The Shipbuilders*, *Major Operation*, *The Busconductor Hines* or Trocchi's works), for in some texts (*The Big Man* and *Trainspotting*) such positions are idealised. Rather, the manner in which masculinity is imagined as an autonomous self-sufficiency which can only be threatened by an appeal to what is other to it works to close manly identity off from any possibility of transformation. In *Trainspotting* and *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, for example, the tragedy of masculinity resides, even for the addicted subject, in its inability to become receptive, its refusal to soften its hardened boundaries and thereby undermine its subjective-imperialist inviolability.

As I commented at the close of the previous chapter, Alasdair Gray's 1982 *Janine* is one novel which breaks this paradigm by bringing its abjected male narrator to an acknowledgement of his own femininity. Janine, a female fantasy figure whom Jock McLeish subjects to a startling array of sado-sexual ploys of entrapment, is recognised by the end of the novel as an ally, in fact his 'silly soul' (Gray 1985: 341), as he comes to terms with the manner in which he himself has been subjugated and entrapped by phallogocentrism. As Schoene-Harwood writes,

[...] the ending of Gray's novel clearly features Jock as a newly born man, an unpredictable *sujet en procès*, determined in future to resist the joint impact of patriarchal conditioning and unwholesome masculine conformity. Also, rather than being yet again conjured as an object of exploitative desire, Janine's femininity is now invoked as an irresistible emancipatory principle of counter-discursive

guidance and inspiration. (2000: 143)

Schoene-Harwood's reading of 1982 *Janine* suggests that Jock's appeal to his own innate alterity radically reconceives his gender identity from within, acknowledging that the femininity traditionally disavowed by the straight male subject has always-already been one of its constituent parts. The novel thereby offers a conception of straight male identity as re-negotiable, transformatory and above all performative: Jock imagines his new self as standing on a railway platform with 'the poise of an acrobat about to step on to a high wire, of an actor about to take the stage in a wholly new play' (Gray 1985: 341).

This chapter and the next will examine the extent to which such a revision of masculinity becomes possible for male writers who put themselves in the place of their ostensible others and attempt to write as women. It will explore the concept of 'cross-writing' as a type of literary transvestism¹ in order to assess whether or not such strategies merely appropriate women's voices without addressing the normative masculinity which authorises the crossing. In section II, in a consideration of various psychoanalytic and theoretical approaches to the problem, I will suggest, taking up Marjorie Garber's position in *Vested Interests*, that it becomes more productive to look *at* rather than *through* the cross-written persona (1992: 9).

This theoretical position becomes the basis of my reading of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* [1932-4] in section III. I attempt to trace the phallogocentrism inherent in both realist and symbolist interpretations of its central female character, Chris Guthrie. Guthrie's gender status is exposed as a hybrid of masculine and feminine, a contradictory formation which complicates the mechanism of identificatory reading and disrupts the two traditional approaches to the text - the feminist, realist reading and the symbolic, masculinist one. In this way Gibbon's text offers a practice of cross-writing which complicates any theory of literary transvestism as masculinist appropriation, paving the way for a similarly open-ended approach to the more contemporary texts to be discussed in Chapter Five.

¹ The term 'cross-writing' was originally suggested to me by Dr Christopher Whyte. It takes its metaphorical cue from the act of cross-dressing, and ostensibly denotes the act of creating a narrative persona the opposite of an author's own gender identification.

Chapter Four (cont.)

II: Crossing Culture

i: performative dressing, performative writing

Cross-dressing or transvestism, as I shall discuss, is considered by orthodox critical and psychological practice to be a heterosexual male practice only or predominantly. At its most limited, this definition reaffirms the gender boundaries apparently transgressed (one crosses over from one fixed place to the other), reinstating the hegemony and oppositionality of sexual difference, and therefore phallogocentrism itself, at the point where it seems to be breached. In a more open view, cross-dressing is seen to be no single or monolithic cultural practice, with many studies emphasising the diversity of acts of crossing in varying contexts. Indeed, other kinds of passing like gay drag or the more terminal transformations of transsexuality are to be thought as part of a set of contiguities of crossing whose limits are never entirely fixed.

What is clear is that transvestism, gay drag and transsexuality are privileged cultural practices in the analysis of gender and sexuality, providing ideal material for the theory of gender identity as performative rather than essential. In setting out to undermine the normative categories of sex, Judith Butler has articulated a mode of understanding gender identities as the effect rather than the basis of the laws of gender differentiation and regulation (1990: 24-5). If such identities belong firmly to culture rather than nature - indeed, Butler suggests that one's 'natural', anatomical sex is as determined by the law as is gender identity (6-7) - the practice of crossing constitutes an intervention in which the malleability of these positions is foregrounded, destabilising the naturalisation of sexual difference. While cross-dressing as a heterosexual male practice exposes sartorial gender difference as unstable and reversible, gay drag parodies and subverts masculinist and heterosexist constructions both of heterosexual women and gay men:

Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. If this is true, it seems, there is no original or primary gender that drag imitates, but *gender is a kind of imitation for which*

there is no original; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself [...] [I]n its efforts to naturalise itself as the original, heterosexuality must be understood as a compulsive and compulsory repetition that can only produce the *effect* of its own originality; in other words, compulsory heterosexual identities, those ontologically consolidated phantasms of 'man' and 'woman', are theatrically produced effects that posture as grounds, origins, the normative measure of the real. (Butler 1991: 21)

At the extreme end of the contiguity of practices represented by transvestism and gay drag, transsexuality produces the body as a site of transformation and places in question any naturalised relationship between the original biological gendering of a subject's body and the gender identification(s), lived as 'the normative measure of the real', made by the subject him- or herself. In this way, all these possible positions interrogate and exaggerate Lacan's postulation of 'to seem' at the heart of 'having' or 'being' the phallus (Lacan 1977c: 289).² As Marjorie Garber persuasively suggests in *Vested Interests*, 'there can be no culture without the transvestite' (1992: 354): 'the transvestite [...] represent[s] a third space, a space of representation, even within a psychic economy in which all positions are fantasies' (356). In this context, 'gay drag artist' or 'transsexual' could equally well be substituted for 'transvestite' in Garber's statement.

Of course, the concepts of cross-dressing and cross-writing are not exactly parallel, and I do not intend the metaphor to become strictly governed by its vehicle. The acts of dressing and writing, while both signifying practices, are different. Indeed, the fact that the theory of gender performativity has settled mainly on the study of theatre, film and performance art - all of which privilege the movements of the human body and its costume - suggests that written discourse, the textual body over the body proper, brings with it an ambivalence open to interpretations perhaps ultimately less decidable than that of sartorial or surgical transgressions of gender. Writing as a gendered space has been, and continues to be, contested from all sides of the critical debate, from the postulation of the pen-as-phallus to the equally controversial insistence on the text as a feminine space of possibility.

² See also the discussion of the positions of 'having' and 'being' the phallus in the Preface.

What the bringing together of sartorial and textual gender transformations in the term ‘cross-writing’ allows, then, is precisely the exploration of a theory of gender and sexual performativity in terms of practices or acts of writing. Such an exploration gains credence from the very fact of performativity in language itself, and benefits from an engagement with the debate over speech-act theory in the mid-to-late 1970s, in which the work of John Austin and his follower Richard Searle became subject to critique from Jacques Derrida. A performative utterance is distinguished from a constative statement of fact in its failure to refer: as Shoshana Felman describes, performatives are ‘expressions whose function is not to inform or describe, but to carry out a “performance”, to accomplish an act through the very process of their enunciation’ (1983: 15). Felman cites Austin’s typical examples of performative utterances, including the ritual of saying ‘I do’ in a wedding ceremony, or more generally the act of promising (‘I promise’, ‘I swear’), in which ‘I am not describing my act but accomplishing it; by speaking, by pronouncing these words, I produce the event that they designate’ (16). What characterises the performative, therefore, is a structure of self-referentiality in which the truth or falsity of a statement becomes secondary to its success or failure. Felman analyses Molière’s *Don Juan* in terms of its rhetoric of promises and seduction in which commitment becomes open to failure or betrayal.

Jacques Derrida’s critique of Austin in ‘Signature Event Context’, vigorously attacked by Richard Searle and subsequently defended by Derrida in ‘Limited Inc a b c...’,³ provides an important deconstructive perspective on the theory of linguistic performativity. Derrida takes Austin to task for the reliance of his theory on a model of language as communication, a model which limits the debate to the idea of the spoken utterance only. By insisting upon the written character of language, Derrida shows how the absence of both the speaker and addressee in discourse destabilises the communicative model:

The absence of the sender, of the receiver [*destinateur*], from the mark that he abandons, and which cuts itself off from him and continues to produce effects independently of his presence and of the present actuality of his intentions [*vouloir-dire*], indeed even after his death, his absence [...]

³ Both these essays have been collected together in the volume *Limited Inc* (Derrida 1988).

belongs to the structure of all writing[.] (1988: 5)

In this manner the presence, and thus the original context, of any given utterance is put into question: 'a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context, that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of its inscription. This breaking force is [...] the very structure of the written text' (9). Written discourse generally can be interpreted as offering resistance to the very idea of the constative statement, privileging performativity in the iterability of the written mark (that is to say, its repetition and transformation in different contexts) and in the possibility of failure with regard to intention.

In this way the idea of a simple opposition between constative and performative utterances in written discourse becomes troubled, and opens out a space for regarding the production of textual positions and identities as a production of effects whose meaning depends less on the intentions of the author than on the different interpretative contexts within which readings occur. In terms of gender and sexuality, such a theoretical position allows for a suspension of the relationship between an 'original' authorial gender or sexuality and the textual representation of gender and sexual positions.

Here it becomes possible to think of writing as a kind of cross-dressing where the dresser is not necessarily visible behind the costume. After all, in relation to practices of cross-dressing, language is a disassembling space where the transformation of gender can be made with relative ease. To put it crudely, in a fraction of the time it might take me to assemble a suitable costume, make-up and wig, I can simply write 'I am a woman'. As I shall explore more fully in the next section, it might also be said I have less to lose in this action. Against the risk of exposure, I can disappear behind my words, or place myself at a remove from them through the mechanisms of authorial distance or narrative irony. This is not to say, however, that authorial identity can ever be fully erased in cross-writing. The difficulty for analysis here is not only to resist reference to an authorial gender position, the 'original' which governs and limits the textual transgression, but finally to inscribe that position within the process of cross-writing itself, not as a cause but as an effect within a transformatory performance of effects.

In spite of the perceived difference between actual and literary performances of gender

transformation, the slippage in this analysis between the idea of a human body capable of subverting expected gender identifications through performances of dressing, acting or surgery, and the notion of a textual body with similar symbolic or metaphorical abilities, is a conflation I wish to leave marked and open. In a way, this is a deliberate challenge to the conception of a gap between the world we live in and the world we represent, the reality prior to language and the language we use to figure that reality. But as I have already shown in relation to the concept of performativity, the corporeal and the linguistic realms can both signify in a manner which subverts the promise of authenticity or truth. Or, to approach the problem from a different direction, there is a materiality of the written sign as well as a materiality of bodies and clothing. As Butler claims,

the materiality of bodies is [not] simply and only a linguistic effect which is reducible to a set of signifiers. Such a distinction overlooks the materiality of the signifier itself. Such an account also fails to understand materiality as that which is bound up with signification from the start [...] To posit a materiality outside of language is still to posit that materiality, and the materiality so posited will retain that positing as its constitutive condition. (1993: 30)

In other words, language is no more an incorporeal reality than bodies or fashions themselves are simple mute surfaces or fabrics. Further, the manner in which an 'authentic' or 'original' gendered body comes to be is dependent upon a signifiatory system which can simultaneously subvert the promise of authenticity or originality. This is the paradoxical space which a truly transformative cross-writing exploits.

ii: some paradigms of cross-writing

Many of the difficulties regarding the interpretation of cross-written texts remain unresolved in Madeleine Kahn's study of the eighteenth-century English novel, *Narrative Transvestism*. In Kahn's introduction, she draws upon definitions of transvestism as outlined by Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. In fact, the term 'transvestite' was originally coined by the German physician Magnus Hirschfeld in his 1910 study *Die Transvestiten: Eine Untersuchung über den Erotischen Verkleidungstrieb* (the subtitle translates as 'An Investigation into the Erotic Impulse of

Disguise'). Havelock Ellis acclaimed Hirschfeld's work for 'plac[ing] the subject at once on a solid basis, for Hirschfeld clearly distinguished the anomaly from homosexuality and all other recognized groups of sexual aberration, and for the first time conceived of it as a simple and not compound perversion' (1937: 11-2). At the same time, Ellis felt that the notion of cross-dressing explicit in the term transvestism, along with Hirschfeld's corresponding idea of erotic disguise, 'fail[ed] to cover the whole of the ground [...] since the subject of this anomaly, far from seeking disguise by adopting the garments of the opposite sex, feels on the contrary that he has been emancipated from disguise and is at last really himself' (12). Ellis preferred the term 'Eonism', after the Frenchman the Chevalier d'Eon (1728-1810), a diplomat for Louis XV who towards the end of his career adopted feminine dress to the extent that he was 'regarded by all as really a woman' (2). What is at stake for Ellis is an aesthetic rather than a libidinal practice: he is as interested in the imitation of feminine mannerisms as he is in dress codes. As Madeleine Kahn describes, Ellis considered the 'true symptom' of Eonism to be 'the presence of a female aesthetic sense in a male body' (1991: 15).

Although Freud, as Kahn continues, was more inclined towards a libidinal than an aesthetic interpretation, he makes his most significant comments about transvestism in an aesthetic context, in his book on Leonardo da Vinci. He reads the Mona Lisa as a self-portrait, insofar as da Vinci identified with the phallic mother and sought to reproduce that ambivalent figure in the painting.⁴ The ambiguity of the Mona Lisa's smile provides the focal point for this reading in its paradoxical combination of maternal tenderness and seductive ruthlessness - a double smile which Leonardo reproduced in several later paintings (Freud 1957: 108-18). He thus produces (and reproduces) a representation of 'the wishes of the boy, infatuated with his mother, as fulfilled in this blissful union of the male and female nature' (118). Whatever the accuracy of this analysis (and this I shall debate shortly), there is a strong suggestion from more recent critics that the Mona Lisa did in fact develop either from a self-portrait or a male model, which would go some way towards explaining the ambivalent gender-status of the image (Kahn 1991: 24-6).

⁴ Freud's concept of the phallic mother stems from his theory of the pre-genital phallic phase in the sexual development of little boys. The child discovers the absence of a penis in the genital zone of a sister or playmate, and feels they have been castrated as some kind of punishment. However, 'the child believes that it is only unworthy female persons that have lost their genitals [...] Women whom he respects, like his mother, retain a penis for a long time' (1961b: 144-5; see also 1957: 96).

Such ambivalence, or in other words hybridity, tends to be glossed over by Kahn as she emphasizes the temporary structure of transvestism, a practice she rigorously differentiates from other kinds of crossing:

[T]he thing that most strikingly differentiates transvestism from the many things with which it has often been confused (transsexualism, homosexual drag, etc.) is its compulsively cyclical nature. The transvestite wants only temporarily to feel like a woman. His cross-dressing serves to emphasize for him his essential manhood and his difference from women. (26)

In mobilizing such a definition in a literary direction, Kahn comes up with the term ‘narrative transvestism’, pointing out that ‘many of what we continue to cite as the first canonical novels (*Moll Flanders*, *Roxana*, *Pamela*, *Clarissa* [...]) were written by men in the person of women’ (2). Here we are dealing with a ‘process whereby a male author gains access to a culturally defined female voice and sensibility but runs no risk of being trapped in the devalued female realm’ (6). This analysis is limited in its preservation of a distinct, gendered subject-other binary at its core, drawing a parallel between the ‘real’ man crossing to his temporary female disguise and the ‘real’ male author/editor passing as his female narrator. From this perspective, only the female position adopted by the cross-writer can be regarded as a masquerade; the masculine position remains originary, essential and resistant to performance. Narrative transvestism here offers no more than a gender detour which always returns to reinstate the privilege of the authorial, heterosexual male subject.

Kahn’s highly narrow definition is up for debate even within the terms of the psychoanalytic authorities she calls upon for support. Havelock Ellis’s discussion of the Chevalier d’Eon in no way refers to a cyclical pattern of reaffirming straight male identity. It appears that the Chevalier ‘had no known sexual relationships either with women or men’ (Ellis 1937: 2); moreover, it seems that his feminine identity solidified towards the end of his life, long after his diplomatic role may have required him to adopt some kind of masquerade. ‘[He] is’, Ellis assures us, ‘fulfilling a deep demand of his own nature’ (3). In other words, the Chevalier appeared to regard his own masculinity as a masquerade; as a woman he felt ‘emancipated from disguise and at last really himself’ (12).

Further, Hirschfeld's study in *Die Transvestiten* paved the way for his later identification of a variety of transvestite types which stand in a puzzling relationship to Kahn's narrow definition. Here we can delight in 'The Heterosexual variety', 'The Bisexual variety', 'The Homosexual variety', 'The Narcissistic variety' and 'The Asexual variety' (*Jahrbuch für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen*, 1923; cited in Ellis 1937: 13). Moreover, Kahn's definitional restriction of transvestism to signify a male practice only - 'there is no such thing as a female transvestite' (1991: 2) - is not applied by Ellis, who happily devotes several pages to the discussion of Elsa B, 'a female Eonist' (1937: 18-23).

Freud's commentary on da Vinci also leaves much to be desired both as a legitimate analysis within itself and as a justifiable source for Kahn's conception of transvestism. Freud derived his theory of da Vinci's infatuation with the phallic mother from a childhood memory da Vinci recorded in his notebooks, in which a vulture swooped down to the infant's cot and repeatedly struck the child's mouth with its tail (Freud 1957: 82). The tail, claims Freud, is a substitutive symbol for the penis; the dream-memory thus represents an act of fellatio, itself 'a reminiscence of sucking - or being suckled - at his mother's breast' (87). This interpretation is bolstered by introducing into the analysis the Egyptian hieroglyph for 'mother', a representation of a vulture, along with evidence that the Egyptians regarded vultures as of the female sex only (88-90). However, it appears Freud's reading depends upon a mistranslation of da Vinci's text: as Irma Richter originally pointed out, the bird in the memory is not the mother-symbolising vulture, but actually a '*nibio*', modern Italian '*nibbio*', or kite (61 and n. 1).

Even laying this glaring error to one side, Freud's analysis proceeds in a manner which contradicts Kahn's general conception of transvestism. The phantasy of the phallic mother Leonardo's unconscious entertained was, for Freud, proof of his homosexuality. In Freud's account of the normative sexual development of boys, the presence of a strong father is necessary to deflect the child's assumption of power and authority in the mother, and thus ensure an identification with the father and the subsequent choice of a female sexual object. Leonardo, according to Freud's researches, lacks such a father until he is at least three years old (91), and therefore, contrary to the positive Oedipal resolution, 'puts himself in [his mother's] place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love. In

this way he has become a homosexual' (100). Whatever the questionability of this theory, the point is that Freud read da Vinci's paintings of ambiguous women as an artistic sublimation of his emotional homosexuality (Freud could uncover no evidence of any physical relations with men, although while an apprentice da Vinci was accused, if not convicted, of 'forbidden homosexual practices' (71-2)). Kahn, on the other hand, while claiming Freud as theoretical support for her conception of transvestism, refutes the suggestion that the practice involves anyone other than straight men.

Despite the apparent reductive violence Madeleine Kahn has done to the term 'transvestite', I will be keeping her definition in reserve throughout my analysis for a number of reasons. Firstly, insofar as it refers specifically to a group of eighteenth-century English male novelists who wrote as women in a certain formally structured manner, Kahn's model of narrative transvestism holds good. Secondly, however, this 'holding good' can be seen as symptomatic of a typically heterosexist and phallogocentric view of gender relations and of literature which it is partly my task to challenge. A function of the empowerment of men in society is the valorisation of a male-produced literature which plays out the establishment of masculine privilege, a process Kahn's work both critiques and enshrines. Transvestism in this context is a firmly phallogocentric activity, a repetitive performance of the laws of gender differentiation devoid of any parody or subversion. However, any kind of cross-writing which resists reduction to this paradigm effectively reorganises its terms and challenges its universality. For example, Kahn's insistence on the heterosexual origins and aims of transvestite practices can be juxtaposed with Marjorie Garber's comment that gay activists 'regard some TV-TS groups as homophobic' (1992: 4). In other words, rather than being an inherently heterosexual male practice, transvestism in this case is only heterosexual insofar as it is defended as such - insofar as it actively excludes that which threatens the 'normality' of its practitioners.

Against Kahn's theory of narrative transvestism as an assertion of heterosexual male privilege, another conception of cross-writing - or rather, a conception of writing as inevitably a process of crossing - emphasizes precisely the giving up of privilege in order to become-other, to take flight from the imposition of order. For Gilles Deleuze,

Writing is a question of becoming, always incomplete,
always in the midst of being formed, and goes beyond the

matter of any lived or livable experience [...] Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing, one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or -vegetable, to the point of becoming-imperceptible [...] Becoming does not move in the opposite direction, and one does not become Man, insofar as man presents himself as a dominant form of expression that claims to impose itself on all matter, whereas woman, animal or molecule always has a component of flight that escapes its own formalisation. The shame of being a man - is there any better reason to write? (1997: 225)

Here it is perhaps better to think of cross-writing as narrative transsexualism rather than transvestism, as a process of leaving masculinity behind in a fundamental transformation. However, Deleuze conflates masculinity with the humanist, universalized subject of authority 'Man'; once again it is the position of 'Man', as that 'dominant form of expression that claims to impose itself on all matter', which proves resistant to performance: 'one does not become Man'. Deleuze's theory also relies upon a conflation of woman, animal and molecule susceptible to the same kind of critique directed at conceptions of an *écriture féminine*.⁵ If 'Man' is to be read here as fundamentally untransformable, the postulation of an essentially feminine textuality characterised by alogical processes also proper to non-human forms is similarly troubling.

Both Kahn's and Deleuze's theories appear to repeat the mistake Garber warns against at the beginning of *Vested Interests*:

[T]he tendency on the part of many critics has been to look *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser, to turn away from a close encounter with the transvestite, and to want instead to subsume that figure within one of the two traditional genders. To elide and erase - or to *appropriate* the transvestite for particular political and critical aims. (1992: 9)

To adopt this distinction, I aim to look *at* rather than *through* the cross-writer. This opens up, to return to an earlier citation, what Garber refers to as 'a third space, a space of representation' within the economy of gender differentiation. This third space is

perhaps best illustrated by a third account of cross-writing. Severo Sarduy here offers a theory of writing as transvestism itself, as a radically ambivalent textual body:

Transvestism [...] is probably the best metaphor for what writing really is: [...] not a woman *under whose outward appearance* a man must be hiding, a cosmetic mask which, when it falls, will reveal a beard, a rough hard face, but *the very fact of transvestism itself* [...] the coexistence, in a single body, of masculine and feminine signifiers: the tension, the repulsion, the antagonism which is created between them [...]

Painted eyebrows and beard; that mask would enmask its being a mask. (cited in Garber 1992: 150)

Sarduy's insistence upon the irreducibility, in authorial terms, of the transvestite text is crucial to my discussion here. The idea that a (feminine) literary mask may be removed in order to reveal the maleness of the authorial position below is rejected in favour of a conception of a hybrid textual body, a 'coexistence [...] of masculine and feminine signifiers'. In this, Sarduy's transvestite text presents something of a challenge to Kahn's psychoanalytic transvestism, especially in the former's postulation of gender representation as a signifiatory rather than a referential process. Further, in response to Deleuze's model of writing as becoming, Sarduy's theory allows for the play of masculine signifiers on the performative surface of the text, rather than assigning them an (again referential) role as the untransformable source-material of transvestism. It must be said, however, that Sarduy speaks only of a male face behind the cosmetic mask, which, even if it is not to be revealed, signifies a masculinist bias to the theory of the transvestite text - thus striking an affinity with the thinking of Kahn and Deleuze. Once more it is my task not to write out such a bias, but to keep it in reserve in order to challenge it with literary acts which refuse to conform.

⁵ See for example Stanton 1986; Jones 1997: 374, 376-8; 'Variations on Common Themes' in Marks and Courtivron 1981: 212-30; and also the Kristevan reading of *A Scots Quair* given below.

Chapter Four (cont.)

III: *A Scots Quair*

i: introduction

Thus far it has proved difficult to restrict the concept of cross-writing to its governing metaphor of transvestism. It seems that in dealing with such a realm of masquerade and performance, and in attempting to relate or translate acts of crossing from one group of cultural practices to another, concrete identifications become treacherous and the linguistic signs we have inherited to talk about these processes are somewhat destabilised. As well as organising itself around a slippage between real and textual bodies, as I have commented in the first section, my analysis also witnesses a certain conflation of transvestism and transsexualism. Even as Madeleine Kahn settles on the term 'transvestite' and polices the boundaries between it and transsexualism, she relies upon definitions from Ellis and Freud which privilege a certain permanence of cross-gender-identification not afforded by any simple, temporary act of dressing up. Garber's 'third space' and Sarduy's transvestite text also further stretch this distinction in their insistence on the irreducibility of the hybridity of representations of crossing.

Within the context of literature and literary fiction, these semantic slippages, miniature crossings within the theory of crossing, constitute not so much an affront to Kahn's interpretation of real-world transvestism as a subversion of it, a chance to play out and transform the rules of crossing within a signifying space where the impossible becomes believable. As Garber contends, transvestism isn't just 'a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself' (1992: 17). The problem in reading many male-authored cross-written texts, however, is that they too easily succumb to the orthodox, masculinist paradigm of transvestism. All the Scottish novels I have chosen to analyse below are concerned with the crossing from male to female, and can all to greater or lesser degrees be interpreted as finally reasserting masculine privilege in terms of the structural limits phallogocentricity places on their transgressions. All of them, however, also exploit an unassimilable performative reserve; even within a conservative framework, the very act of crossing opens out, to paraphrase one of Garber's comments cited earlier, a space of representation which exposes the phantasmic nature of gender

identifications generally and masculinities specifically. Whether through a text's own deconstructive strategies or through some critical surgery of my own, or a combination of both, that representational space and its phantasms can be uncovered to produce readings as much transformative as about transformation itself.

This, it seems to me, is particularly crucial in the twentieth-century male-authored Scottish literary context which is my primary concern. As the first chapter of this thesis investigates, the Glasgow novels of the nineteen-thirties sought to defend their masculine subjects from the taint of femininity and homosexuality, even if the paradoxical and double nature of the phallogocentric order ensured that masculinities are hierarchised and feminised, even eroticised, according to the play of power. As I pointed out in section I of that chapter, the strategies of these urban authors were to a significant degree determined by the bias towards representations of rural living in the works of the major Scottish writers of the period. While, according to the ideologies of the Scottish Renaissance movement, the land is viewed as a locus of Celtic origins, of a coherent national identity, and, concomitantly, of idealised relations between men and women, Glasgow represents a dislocation from all three: it is a product of Empire rather than nation; it hosts a dangerous mix of national and religious identities; and it oversees the breakdown of normative heterosexual relations.⁶ The blame for this last failure, as my analysis in Chapter One shows, is laid squarely at the feet of women, who from *The Shipbuilders* on - even to the work of James Kelman - are represented as cold, unmaternal and, treacherously, upwardly mobile. Women in more orthodox Renaissance fictions, and especially in Lewis Grassie Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* [1933-5], are the bearers of national identity rather than traitors to it. *A Scots Quair*'s central character Chris Guthrie's symbolic alignment with the land - which mobilises traditionally feminine signifiers of fertility and passivity - is pushed to its limits in the third novel of the trilogy, *Grey Granite*, which moves her and her son to an urban locale, yet is finally restored as the text closes on a return to the countryside.

The following analysis of *A Scots Quair* attempts to trace this privileging of the feminine and the rural while positing the trilogy as a cross-written text. The three novels show a sensitivity towards feminist concerns which many critics have found hard to square with the fact of the author's maleness. An analysis of the trilogy's gender

politics will not only provide an important starting-point for the theory of cross-writing within a Scottish context, but also demonstrate the extent to which Gibbon's critics have failed to face up to the full implications, transformative and conservative, foregrounded by his cross-writing. Too much critical energy has been wasted, it seems, upon explicating the trilogy's rich symbolism, and its meaning for nationalism, or, on the other hand, defending it as a solely realist - and feminist - work of fiction. My analysis will attempt to uncover the extent to which both of these approaches are implicated with a phallogocentric view of the novels, before offering a third approach which emphasises the subversive potential of Chris's gender hybridity.

ii: realism versus symbolism

Much of the critical investigation into *A Scots Quair* has revolved around the issue of realism and its opposition with symbolism. Traditional commentators on the novels have been quick to pick up on the latter element, isolating the apparent identifications made between Chris Guthrie, the land, and Scotland itself.⁷ While this is a view which has proved pervasive,⁸ there have been other voices, most notably that of Isobel Murray and Bob Tait in *Ten Modern Scottish Novels*:

Over-emphasis on the symbolic or allegorical understanding of the trilogy is a [...] serious barrier erected by criticism between reader and book. It seems to us increasingly baneful, doing real harm to the experience of reading the book. This is inevitable: realism and allegory are essentially at cross purposes. The more Chris is seen as 'Scotland herself' or 'the land', the blander and more two-dimensional she becomes [...]

So the insistence on allegory blurs the realistic impact of the trilogy: patterns of this sort imposed on it (often, alas, in schools) mutilate the reading experience. (1984: 12)

In one sense Murray and Tait are right to question the absolute symbolic interpretation

⁶ For further discussion of these features of the Glasgow novel in contrast to the values of the Renaissance, see Whyte 1990: 317-9.

⁷ See eg. Wittig 1958: 330-33.

⁸ See eg. Campbell 1974: 45-57. For Campbell, Gibbon's insistence upon Chris Guthrie's separateness from the world of the Mearns around her makes her 'able to carry her symbolic interpretation, to be seen as a cipher rather than a real person, fully involved in the fictional world' (50).

of the text: as they point out, this view is tenuously grounded in decontextualised quotations from characters other than Chris (12-3). However, their insistence on the realist reading is equally questionable. What is at stake in opposing the realist interpretation to the allegorical one for Murray and Tait is precisely the removal of a barrier, something which 'does real harm', even 'mutilate[s] the reading experience'. This draws upon a tradition of regarding the realist novel as a transparency, a form which provides a window on the world - in this case the world of the Mearns and of Chris Guthrie. This kind of interpretation relies upon an unbroken continuum between reader, author, text and world. Yet it is not only the symbolic interpretation which obstructs this transparency, but also the very fact of cross-writing itself, as it interrupts or even derails the chain of identifications which make an 'unmutilated' reading experience possible.

This is more readily explored with reference to the materialist theories of realist literature which were explored in section II of Chapter One. Interpellation by ideology means that individuals "willingly" adopt the subject-positions necessary to their participation in the social formation. In capitalism they "freely" exchange their labour-power for wages, and they "voluntarily" purchase the commodities produced' (Belsey 1980: 61). The contradictions between ideologies which expose their discontinuous, incomplete nature seem to be particularly visible to women. In Belsey's example,

women as a group in our society are both produced and inhibited by contradictory discourses [...] [T]hey participate both in the liberal humanist discourse of freedom, self-determination and rationality and at the same time in the specifically feminine discourse offered by society of submission, relative inadequacy and irrational intuition. The attempt to locate a single and coherent subject-position within these contradictory discourses [...] can create intolerable pressures. (65-6)

In Etienne Balibar's and Pierre Macherey's exploration of realist literature as an ideological form, the question of whether male and female readers are differently interpellated by male and female subject-positions in realist texts is not explicitly addressed. What Balibar and Macherey are not manifestly interested in are the mechanisms of gender identification, yet their analysis throws up one curious example.

In discussing the manner in which literature enables the identification of one subject with another, they cite Baudelaire's '*Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère*' as an example of an author forging identification with a reader by naming (or, in Althusserian terms, interpellating) him as a subject (1981: 93). The masculinist terms of this address, in which the male poet hails the reader as a brother, serves as an exemplary instance of the manner in which men's texts facilitate bonds between men only or primarily: not only *by* or *about* men, such writing is fundamentally *for* men too. However, the other example Balibar and Macherey quote to represent another option within the identification-effects of the literary text, this time the link between author and character, is Flaubert's famous '*Madame Bovary, c'est moi*' (92). Where Baudelaire's interpellatory line invokes a sense of masculine camaraderie as the point of (mis)recognition between poet and reader, Flaubert disrupts any such continuity by staging his identification across the boundaries of gender. It seems to me that such a cross-writing stalls or interrupts the mechanism of literature as an ideological form insofar as a reading from either of the two traditional gender positions would not find itself reflected unproblematically in the literary text. A female reader may identify with Emma Bovary but stall when confronted with the possibility that this is in fact an identification determined, and perhaps ironically so, by Gustave Flaubert; on the other hand, a male reader may find himself reflected in Flaubert's God-like role as author, but not in the more restricted feminine circumstances of the central character. In each case the ideologies of gender and literary identification are in conflict with one another, and the resulting contradictions break up the identificatory process and allow us to see these mechanisms as ideology and not reality.

In the case of *A Scots Quair*, the contradiction between Lewis Grassie Gibbon's masculine identity and Chris Guthrie's feminine one has always confused the traditional realist interpretation insofar as this presupposes a continuity between the gender-positions of author, character and reader. In his introduction to *Sunset Song*, the first novel of the trilogy and the one concerned with Chris Guthrie's development from childhood to sexual maturity, Tom Crawford claims that 'many of the original readers [of *Sunset Song*] wondered whether "Lewis Grassie Gibbon" might be the *nom-de-plume* of a woman author' (1995a: viii). Unfortunately, Crawford's source for this statement comes from a 'piece of oral history' related by W. R. Aitken (xii, n. 2), and is therefore unverifiable. However, the assumption of Gibbon's femininity is not restricted

to this uncertain archive. In 1939, Helen B. Cruickshank commented upon 'a certain feminine trait in [Gibbon's] psychology' (cited in Dixon 1990: 291), and more recently, Deirdre Burton has made the following comments:

Reading Lewis Grassie Gibbon's famous trilogy in the early 1980s, I found I was having to remind myself continually that I was not reading a work by a modern female writer, who wrote from women's cultural experience, and with a strong political commitment to specifically feminist perspectives on major socialist issues. The aspects of the text that triggered this reaction [...] ranged from the relatively slight and incidental (such as young Chris's reaction to reading *What Katy Did at School* - a remarkably insightful recognition of what that book, and others like it, have meant in the acculturation processes of many female readers), to the substantial and pervasive (such as the contradictory interrelations between the discourses of religion and sexuality throughout the three novels). (1984: 35)

The contradiction in Burton's reading of Gibbon stems not only from the fact that Chris Guthrie is a realistically represented woman - the crux of the argument as far as Murray and Tait are concerned - but also that the trilogy can be interpreted as having a specifically feminist agenda. In this she cites 'features such as supportive friendships between women [...]; the overt acknowledgment of the dependence of marriage on economic relations; [and] dialogues between married couples which make strange the gender differences in their social relations with other people' (36). Even more fundamental is 'the recurrent representation of Chris's awareness of her own split subjectivity and contradictory social and psychological positions' (ibid.).

It seems to me, however, that Chris Guthrie's 'split subjectivity' extends beyond the text's voicing of her various subject-positions to embody the faultline breaking up any continuity of readerly identification along the lines of gender. In their postulation of Chris as an authentically realised female character, Murray and Tait manifestly ignore the fact of Gibbon's masculinity in relation to his central character: despite qualifying their privileging of the trilogy's realist tendencies with an admission that any reader must accept 'some very non-realistic [narrative] conventions', they argue that

fundamentally 'Chris's character convinces as [a] real, true to life, individual' (1984: 19). Similarly, Deirdre Burton's more progressive recognition of the text's exposure of constructions of femininity within patriarchal culture insists finally that insofar as the trilogy 'foregrounds the female point of view [...] [it] contributes to an understanding of history beyond the limitations of patriarchy' (1984: 46). Thus Gibbon himself is somehow 'beyond the limitations of patriarchy', but in a manner which cannot be proved except by ignoring him; the most Burton can manage is the claim that 'Gibbon demonstrates himself to be remarkably sensitive to, and aware of, emergent feminist dilemmas and practices, in a way that many contemporary men and women were not' (36). Rather than address the process of crossing from a male position to a female one, this kind of comment only serves to underscore the universality traditionally assumed to be the province of the male author.

On the other hand, it can also be argued that a purely symbolic reading of *A Scots Quair* does similarly reductive violence to the contradictions inherent in the crossing from 'Lewis Grassie Gibbon' to 'Chris Guthrie'. Here, the mechanism which forges an intimacy between the feminist reader and Chris is circumlocuted only to establish a similarly ideologically closed identification between a masculinist reader and the author himself. As Ian Campbell believes, '[Chris's] feelings [...] are often her author's, and in the elaboration of this point lies interesting material for a fuller understanding of *A Scots Quair*' (1974: 46). If the realist or feminist reading has trouble dealing with Gibbon's masculinity, the symbolic reading, as it seeks a grand pattern or allegorical system in which Chris is 'a cipher rather than a real person' (50), identifies Gibbon as the author-god figure - a masculinist interpretation privileging the presence and mastery of the male creator over his textual material.

In this way, neither the symbolic nor the realist readings of *A Scots Quair* regard it as a cross-written text. Murray, Tait and Burton may be seen to be looking *at* rather than *through* the cross-written persona, but the possibility of Chris Guthrie's hybridity is disavowed to affirm her authentic femininity, untainted by masculinist control. Meanwhile, Campbell's symbolic reading tends to look through Chris to establish the primacy of the author over the masterful patterning of his text. I do not wish to challenge this conception by conducting an investigation into Lewis Grassie Gibbon's, or more properly James Leslie Mitchell's, psychobiography - to prove, in the manner of

Freud on Leonardo da Vinci, that Helen B. Cruickshank's identification of 'a certain feminine trait in [Gibbon's] psychology' is crucial to his work - but rather to read the body and character of Chris Guthrie in the text, to recall Sarduy, as 'the coexistence [...] of masculine and feminine signifiers' (cited in Garber 1992: 150), as the expression of a negotiation between male author and female character, or more accurately between a phallogocentric narrative authority and the feminine masquerade upon which it is dependent. While this analysis reveals, perhaps unsurprisingly, that the text is far from 'beyond [...] patriarchy', it does so in a manner which implicates both the trilogy's symbolic masculinism and its realist feminism with the logic of gender essentialism. This, however, is fundamentally disturbed by the postulation of a hybrid gender identity at the trilogy's core. Here it becomes possible to explore Susanne Hagemann's contention that *A Scots Quair* 'can be interpreted both as a patriarchal and as a feminist text' (1997: 320)⁹ by insisting upon the cross-written simultaneity of these two positions.

In any case, the narrative form of *A Scots Quair* presents grave difficulties for any interpretation which would seek a direct correlation between the persona of the author and the central character of Chris Guthrie. Here there is no first-person narrative, and therefore no 'I' which could be seen to reflect, ironically or otherwise, the subject-position of the author. As has been discussed extensively by the trilogy's critics, *A Scots Quair* is a text which makes use of a multiplicity of voices - from the folk voice which provides the history of Kinraddie in the prelude to *Sunset Song*, through the judgemental community voice which comes to the fore in *Cloud Howe*, right down to the individual voices and opinions which pepper the text and are often superseded, one by the other, in a series of rapid transitions of focalisation. This is made possible by the free indirect style of the narrative, a naturalistic method which allows several distinct kinds of voice to speak themselves within a general third-person framework.

However, the most idiosyncratic aspect of Gibbon's use of this narrative form is the deployment of the second-person 'you' throughout the text.¹⁰ Gibbon exploits the

⁹ Unfortunately, the generalistic nature of Hagemann's essay prevents her from expanding on this position.

¹⁰ Along with Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines*, a more recent example of the use of the 'you' form in a Scottish context is Ron Butlin's 1987 novel *The Sound of My Voice*. Manifestly ignoring Gibbon's deployment of the second person narrative, Randall Stevenson's introduction to the corrected 1994 edition of the text claims the form 'is anything but domestically Scots', and cites a list of French and American avant-garde authors as Butlin's precursors (Stevenson 1994: 7).

ambiguity of 'you' in Scots speech, a pronoun which occupies both of the grammatical positions often divided by the uses of 'you' and 'one' in Standard English. Thus, as Graham Trengrove has commented, this 'you' is sometimes mobilised as an 'expression of generic person': 'The origins of the locution may lie in a desire to [...] emphasise [...] common ground between the parties to the conversation' (1975: 47-8). Most often, however, 'you' is deployed in relation to Chris, and becomes a major feature in the text's privileging of Chris's point of view. In this context 'you' ceases to express a generic person, becomes 'clearly self-referring and may appear to be self-addressing' (51). Here is one example, from *Cloud Howe*:

Chris caught Miss McAskill's eye when he'd gone, it said,
plain as plain, *A very spoilt child*. And you supposed that it
really was true, the truth as she'd see it, who never had a
child, who didn't know the things that bound you to Ewan, as
though his birth-cord still bound you together, he tugged at
your body, your heart, at your womb, in some moments of
pity it was sheer, sick pain that tore at you as you comforted
him. But THAT you could never explain to a woman who'd
never had a bairn [...] (Gibbon 1995b: 103)

Here 'you' certainly refers to Chris Guthrie, but it also appears to reach out to forge an identification with the reader as well, especially a reader who has either given birth or is in sympathy with the process of giving birth and the bond between mother and child. Trengrove allows for this possibility, discussing the manner in which the trilogy's self-referring 'you' may intersect with the expression of a generic person 'to suggest that Chris's thoughts have a universality' (1975: 53):

[I]t may be that the pronoun is to be read as an implicit
indicator of the role intended for the reader [...] To construct
a context in which an interpretation of *you* as generic makes
sense, the reader is obliged to cast himself as a sympathetic
and well-informed friend who may well share the emotions
which distinguish Chris from her Kinraddie audience. (54)

In this way 'you' differentiates itself sharply from 'she' in the passage I cite, occluding the childless Miss McAskill from the identificatory reading. The technique creates an intimacy, or a continuity of identification, between the reader and Chris - in terms of the realist interpretation of the trilogy, an identification between a female or feminist reader,

‘a sympathetic and well-informed friend’, and a female central character. My choice of passage here foregrounds the manner in which such an identification is made on gendered terms - it would take a certain identificatory leap for a male reader to align himself with this maternal image of Chris (which is not to say, however, that such an alignment would come naturally to a female reader). At the same time, however, ‘you’ also creates an intimacy between Chris and the narrative voice itself - that is to say, the normally disembodied invisibility of the free indirect narrative invokes a feeling of sympathetic recognition by addressing the central figure as if in a conversation. In this manner, as well as creating the illusion of Chris Guthrie’s own voice, the method also suggests that the narrator is informing Chris of her own feelings: Ewan tugs at ‘your body, your heart, at your womb’: this is how *you* are, this is what it is to be a mother. While revealing nothing of itself, then, the narrative voice here nevertheless implies an ‘I’ lurking behind the ‘you’ in a manner which opens up the question of Chris’s split subjectivity beyond her ‘own’ recognition of the English, Scottish and other types of Chris Guthrie on display. Or, to put it another way, Chris Guthrie’s subjectivity is established via an interpellatory mechanism which hails her, and the reader, as ‘you’, but within the reflection of an implied authorial ‘I’ (or Absolute Subject) which has generously provided the framework within which these mutual identifications are intelligible. Thus ‘you’ really recognise yourself in Chris Guthrie, but the efficacy of this identification also depends upon a recognition of ‘yourself’ within a structuring logic in which the quasi-reality of your identification must coexist alongside and negotiate with another, more abstracted Subject-position. The opposition between authorial Subject and narrative subject in gender terms - this implied ‘I’, like Miss McAskill and the male reader, cannot have given birth - tends to undermine the potential continuity of the trilogy’s ‘you’, breaking up the mechanism by which any traditionally male- or female-identified reader might recognise themselves unproblematically in the text.

In this and other aspects of the trilogy it is impossible to separate the realist and the symbolic interpretations absolutely. Even as the first novel, *Sunset Song*, presents Chris Guthrie developing as a recognisable, believable female character, it does so within a symbolic framework which annexes her growth at every stage to the seasonal cycle of the farming year, as represented in the chapter titles: ‘Ploughing’, ‘Drilling’, ‘Seed-Time’ and ‘Harvest’. Even setting aside other characters’ interpretations of Chris as

Scotland itself, these structural impositions serve to indicate that it is impossible to isolate the central character from the symbolic apparatus within which she is intelligible. Indeed, the structuring of Chris's development in this way reflects not so much an identifiable authorial position, but rather the manifestation of a phallogocentric Symbolic order which always-already produces 'woman' as an emblem - of otherness, of lack, of nature, of corporeality, of sexuality - situated against the privileged masculine binary opposites (dis)embodied by the author - sameness, presence, culture, intellect, universality. Rather than working to mutilate the reading experience, a double perspective of the 'real' and the 'symbolic' is a necessary product of Chris's representation. This in turn calls for a double reading, a cross-reading, in which the ideological discourses of masculinist narrative dominance and feminist independence contradict and expose one another even as the former seeks to impose structural limitations on the latter.

iii: metaphor and metonym

The manner in which *A Scots Quair* articulates oppositions between male and female identities is achieved in the first instance by marking differences between male and female bodies, and correspondingly of sexual desires. This does not proceed, however, simply by noting the anatomical distinction between the sexes; rather, the text, in line with the phallogocentric mode of gender differentiation, sees fit to endow only female identities with any kind of corporeality, while all the time veiling the male body by subsuming it under a different function. In this manner only the female body represents difference, the difference of lack in relation to an idealised masculinity which cannot reveal itself without exposing its own frailties.

This process begins in *Sunset Song* with the recurring device of figuring male sexual desire as beastliness. From the moment the image of the mythological gryphon - a 'great wolf-beast' which supposedly terrorised the community of Kinraddie in times past - is summoned in the Prelude to the novel (Gibbon 1995a: 1), many different kinds of animals are called upon to represent various characters, male and female, throughout the text. In one way this is an aspect of the rural life and language Gibbon is attempting to represent: not only are animals a central and vital part of Kinraddie existence, but the discourses of animals and animal ownership, as part of the everyday *parole*, are applied

equally to men as to beasts. Thus people are repeatedly referred to as 'creatures', and men especially as 'beasts' or 'brutes': Munro, one of the first male characters to be focalised, is described as 'like a lamb with water on the brain' with reference to his clumsy gait; then, with the words 'you never saw an uglier brute, poor stock' (13-4). This kind of language ceases to be merely realistic, however, when it is developed into a system which attempts to account for male (hetero)sexuality throughout the text. Long Rob of the Mill is referred to in no neutral or innocent way as a 'coarse brute' (21); Rob's boar, a 'meikle, pretty brute of a beast' (18), much in demand to service the local sows, serves in this description to stand in for Rob himself, whose own appearance is not directly mentioned. If this comparison is ironic in terms of the community's attitude towards Rob - 'He'd whistle *Ladies of Spain* and [...] *The lass that made the bed to me*, but devil the lass he'd ever taken to his bed' (19) - it gains meaning when later in the novel he has a moment of passionate sex amongst the haystacks with Chris.

The association of beastliness with male heterosexual desire is most strong in the novel in the description of Chris's father, John Guthrie. Guthrie's voracious sexual appetite, only nominally repressed by his fervent religious belief, is constantly on display to the young Chris, who hears him 'cry in agony at night as he went with her [mother]' (28). Later, following the death of her mother, Chris will have to repel Guthrie's sexual advances herself. The sadistic element in Guthrie's desires extends to severe beatings of Chris's older brother, Will, while the equation between sexual activity, sadism and bestiality is made complete in the description of the birth of the twins in the Guthrie household:

Then Will came down the stair, he couldn't sleep because of mother, they sat together and Will said the old man was a fair beast and mother shouldn't be having a baby, she was far too old for that. And Chris stared at him with horrified imaginings in her mind, she hadn't known better then, the English bit of her went sick, she whispered *What has father got to do with it?* And Will stared back at her, shamed-faced, *Don't you know? What's a bull to do with a calf, you fool?*

But then they heard an awful scream that made them leap to their feet, it was as though mother were being torn and torn in the teeth of beasts and could thole it no longer; and then a

little screech like a young pig made followed that scream and
they tried not to hear more of the sounds above them [...] (34)

This representation of heterosexual masculinity as a cruel, predatory instinct is concretised in the text via the most predominant beast-simile of all, that of the cat. Images of cats come to signify male sexual desire in *Sunset Song* first of all in the account of the sexual adventures of the 'daftie Andy', a mentally disabled young man who escapes the care of the Munros to run amok in the countryside. Initially described by Long Rob as a horse which would 'do that kind of thing in the early Spring, leap dykes and ditches and every mortal thing it would if it heard a douce little mare go by' (48), Andy more properly becomes a cat when he stalks Maggie Jean Gordon in the woods: 'she looked up at him, pushing him away, his mad, awful head, he began to purr like a great, wild cat, awful it must have been to see him and hear him' (50). Maggie Jean evades Andy's attentions, but his next target is Chris, who has to run 'fleet as a bird' (51) to escape him. Here, tellingly, Chris plays the part of the prey to Andy's cat: male desire is an active, predatory force from which unwilling women must flee. John Guthrie is also categorised in this way: after the death of Jean Guthrie, the text compares the nocturnal movements of Chris's incest-driven father to 'a great cat padding [...], a beast that sniffed and planned and smelled at the night' (72). Later, Ewan Tavendale becomes another 'wild cat, strong and quick' (87) who, in his pursuit of Chris, proves a superior hunter to the daftie Andy; when he steals a kiss from her, she likens it to 'being chased and bitten by a beast, but worse and with something else in it, as though half she'd liked the beast and the biting' (90-91). In this way the representation of a successful courtship between men and women - Ewan and Chris eventually marry - is couched in terms of a willing submission to attack. At a later point, when a changed Ewan comes home from the war on leave, it is not so much the 'beast-like mauling' of their sexual reunion which disturbs Chris than the 'horror of his eyes upon her' (225).

What is at stake here is not that male characters only are described in terms of animals, for women also are characterised in this way - although a case could be made for the gendered nature of these associations, from the description of the sow-like Mistress Gordon (20) to the doctor's description of the pregnant Chris's body as 'natural and comely as a cow or a rose' (182). Rather, in *Sunset Song* in any case, beast-similes become the only reference point for the description of male bodies and desires - that is to

say, images of beasts effectively stand in for or substitute any masculine corporeality. On the other hand, the female body, particularly as it is discovered by the growing and developing Chris, is described literally throughout the text. As the Guthrie family initially arrive at Blawearie in the January of Chris's fifteenth year, she feels 'colder and colder at every turn, her body numb and unhappy, knees and thighs and stomach and breast, her breasts ached and ached so that she nearly wept' (38); the feelings of her body here effectively represent her feelings of self, 'numb and unhappy'. Later, this ache in Chris's breasts returns as a manifestation of sexual excitement, brought on when a casual labourer resident in Blawearie's barn offers to deflower her. Following this episode, Chris examines herself for the first time in her mother's old long mirror, and in her image recognises the bodily reference points which will define her time and again in subsequent self-reflective moments: high cheekbones, clear dark eyes, long red hair, satin skin, and a dimple beneath her left breast (70-1). What is achieved here is a pattern whose logic persists throughout the trilogy: while female bodies, or more specifically certain female body-parts, come to represent a particularly feminine identity, male bodies are hidden away, cloaked within a system which employs a metaphorical function to name itself.

This is not a logic specific to Gibbon, but rather belongs to a phallogocentric mode of thinking which privileges the female body as a site of sexual difference because it displays a lack which the cloaked male body can disavow, and thus produce the image of its own empowerment. Not only that, but the very means of veiling, through the workings of metaphor, can be regarded as a particularly masculinist method of producing a certain fullness of meaning. For Jacques Lacan - or at least for certain of his readers - metaphoricity has this masculine character while metonymy, the contiguous relationship of part to whole, suggests femininity. In 'The Agency of the Letter in the Unconscious', Lacan posits metaphor as that which substitutes signifier for signifier and thus produces 'the poetic spark', occurring 'at the precise point at which sense emerges from non-sense' (1977b: 158). In this way, metaphor produces a sufficient presence of meaning; metonymy, meanwhile, embodies a more elliptical relationship between signifier and signifier, installing a 'lack-of-being in the object relation' (164). In metonymy, in other words, meaning is kept in waiting as the final term in a series which is never quite complete. Metaphor demonstrates mastery, metonymy lack. As such, as Jane Gallop has noted, certain of Lacan's readers have viewed him as privileging the

former over the latter.¹¹

As Gallop also points out, there is a consonance between Lacan's approach to metaphor and metonymy and that of Roman Jakobson, who links metaphor to symbolist poetry and metonymy to both poetic and novelistic forms of realism (Gallop 1985: 125-6; Jakobson 1987: 111). For both thinkers these associations appear to articulate sexual difference:

In both Jakobson and Lacan, a shadow of femininity haunts the juncture of metonymy and realism. It is not that either of them defines realism or metonymy as feminine (that would be a metaphoric, symbolic gesture), but that by contiguity, by metonymy, a certain femininity is suggested. (Gallop 1985: 126)¹²

In this context, it might be borne in mind that the symbolic (and masculinist) reading of *A Scots Quair*, as discussed earlier, privileges metaphoricity, while the realist (and in this case feminist) interpretation focuses on the metonymic relations between aspects of Chris's character. In terms of *Sunset Song*, the deployment of beast-similes as a substitute for male heterosexual desire refuses any representation of male bodies or body-parts in order to produce that desire as a full, self-present meaning. To recall Lacan's phrase once more, the phallus 'can play its role only when veiled'. On the other hand, Chris's sexual identity is associative between different parts of her body, parts which never quite make up a whole and thus display her 'castration', her lack, in relation to phallic, predatory masculinity.¹³

What is apparent here is that masculine desire is being metaphorically figured in a manner which denigrates rather than elevates it. This is certainly a function of the text's

¹¹ Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in particular, according to Gallop, view Lacan as valorising metaphor (1985: 123, 127); Gallop herself, meanwhile, prefers to stress metaphor's reliance upon metonymy in Lacan's text. Luce Irigaray offers a defence of feminine metonymy, in the face of phallogocentric science's 'historical "inattention" to fluids', in *This Sex Which Is Not One* (1985: 106-18; 107).

¹² Of course, Chapters One and Two of this thesis have explicitly associated realism with the assertion and consolidation of masculinist narrative authority. It should be borne in mind that the gendering of any formal concept shifts according to different geographical, historical and literary contexts.

¹³ As Gallop points out, however, Lacan's concept of the veiled phallus is also open to a metonymic interpretation, which links it to Freud's idea of a maternal phallus: 'Lacan's notion of the phallus [...] is [of] a latent phallus, a metonymic, maternal, feminine phallus' (1985: 131). In this way, 'metonymy is more truly phallic than metaphor' (130). The contradiction between the metaphoric and metonymic phallus indicates the extent to which each figure is dependent on the other, a circumstance I will come to address in my reading of Chris Guthrie's body in the next section.

privileging of the female point of view: the predator is marked from the perspective of the prey, and in giving this prey a voice the brutality of male heterosexual desire is constructed. Within phallogocentricity, however, it remains to be seen how radically different a debasement of this sort is from an elevation or celebration. After all, merely to oppose masculine metaphoricity against feminine metonymy is to remain within a binary system. What becomes apparent in *Cloud Howe* is that such oppositionality is overdetermined and ambiguous. There, another metaphor for articulating masculine being gives rise to a counter-metaphor for femininity, specifically a symbol for the maternal function. As the following two sections will discuss, the postulation of metaphor as phallic in opposition to lacking metonymy becomes confused in the trilogy's mapping of both maternal and phallic signifiers on the metonymic contiguity of Chris Guthrie's body.

iv: the maternal metaphor

In *Cloud Howe*, maternity opposes what is presented as unworkable masculine idealism. Here male identity figures not as beastliness, but with the introduction of Chris's second husband, the minister Robert Colquhoun, as blind faith. Colquhoun's sermon on the text from *Exodus* 14:21 provides the terms for this representation:

A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night - they had hung in the sky since the coming of men, set there by God for the standards of men, clouds and the shining standards of rain, the hosts of heaven for our standard by night.... A trumpet had cried and unsealed our ears: would it need the lightning to unseal our eyes? (Gibbon 1995b: 94)

This ideology (in the sense of dominant mode of thought, rather than the specific Althusserian interpretation I have been giving this term throughout) is opposed by Chris throughout *Cloud Howe*, specifically in relation to a valorisation of the 'Howe' over which the pillars of cloud and fire hang. Following clouds, in Chris's view, is certainly a masculine pursuit:

[M]en had followed these pillars of cloud like lost men [...] they followed and fought and toiled in the wake of each whirling pillar that rose from the heights, clouds by day to darken men's minds - loyalty and fealty, patriotism, love, the

mumbling chants of the dead old gods that once were worshipped in the circles of stones, christianity, socialism, nationalism - all - Clouds that swept through the Howe of the world, with men that took them for gods [...] (142)

Meanwhile, the 'Howe of the world' - the geographical location of the Howe (or hollow, valley) of the Mearns extended into a universal symbolic principle - is associated by Chris with a feminine function, reproduction, and correspondingly with reality itself:

And it seemed to Chris it was [...] all tales that she harkened to then [...] the dark, strange movements of awareness alone, when it came on women what thing they carried, darkling, coming to life within them, new life to replenish the earth again, to come to being in the windy Howe where the cloud-ships sailed to the unseen south [...]

[...] Cloud Howe of the winds and the rain and the sun! All the earth that, Chris thought at that moment, it made little difference one way or the other where you slept or ate or had made your bed, in all the howes of the little earth, a vexing puzzle to the howes were men, passing and passing as the clouds themselves passed: but the REAL was below, unstirred and untouched, surely, if that were not also a dream.

(171-2)

As Tom Crawford comments, 'The Howe, the vast vale of the Mearns, is hollow, feminine. But the clouds transform themselves to pillars, symbols of maleness on a Freudian reading' (1995b: xii). Further, the Howe is posited as a reality which exists prior to the pillars of cloud and fire, something 'below, unstirred and untouched', an unsullied nature to the pillars' culture. In this way the text moves away from the figuring of female identity as the contiguous relationship between bodily parts to articulate it through a maternal metaphor. The realist reading of the trilogy (and of Chris) finds itself confronted by a symbol.

At this point it becomes possible to tie *A Scots Quair*'s feminine symbolism to French feminism's - and in particular Julia Kristeva's - conceptions of maternity. The focus on pre-linguistic, pre-Oedipal drives, articulated consistently by Kristeva, Irigaray and

Cixous (although they differ radically in other respects),¹⁴ privileges a realm of rhythm and displacement, of instability and polyvalence, which exists prior to the institution of language and thus precedes the establishment of the paternal and phallic law. This is often associated with maternity: the maternal function embodies relations which, by virtue of their non-representability, trouble the stability of the paternally instituted Symbolic order by introducing rupture and radical alterity as the (de)structuring principle of that order. For Kristeva, modernist poetics, in their break-up of the stability of the linguistic sign and their emphasis on discontinuous rhythm, polyvocality and the impossibility of naming the unnameable, draw upon this maternal, precultural reserve and thus actively subvert the certain, gender-differentiating and asymmetrical identifications of Symbolic thought.

Kristeva's theory of the *chora* becomes important here. In her *Revolution in Poetic Language*, she draws upon Plato's *Timaeus* to define the concept of *chora* as 'a nonexpressive totality formed by the drives and their stases in a motility that is as full of movement as it is regulated' (1984: 25). The *chora* is a 'nourishing and maternal' reserve from which any deity is absent, an articulation of semiotic rupture and rhythm which stops short of representation (26). If the *chora* is subject to a regulating process, this process is non-Symbolic, and fundamentally prior to the birth of the knowing subject into language. Crucially for Kristeva, the mother's body becomes the 'ordering principle of the semiotic *chora*' (28).

It seems to me not too great a theoretical leap to connect the idea of the Howe as articulated in *Cloud Howe* to this notion of the *chora* and of pre-cultural drives. Like Kristeva, Gibbon, or Gibbon through Chris, posits the Howe as that which exists before, or more accurately 'below', the phallocentric structuring of the world. Like the *chora* the Howe is maternal, signifying the 'dark, strange movements of awareness alone, when it came on women what thing they carried, darkling, coming to life within them, new life to replenish the earth again, to come to being in the windy Howe' (Gibbon 1995b: 171). The *chora* can also be traced back to *Sunset Song*, where Chris's regular visits to the standing stones and loch at Blawearie signify a retreat to an archaic reality, a place untouched by modern human interference, agriculture or development - indeed, a

¹⁴ 'Refuting the oedipal version of maternity and girlhood, Cixous, Irigaray and Kristeva focus instead on the pre-oedipal, that shadowy sphere [...] which Freud discovered through his female disciples' (Stanton 1986: 164-5).

place feared by the text's primary figure of masculinist authority, John Guthrie (Gibbon 1995a: 41). The loch, according to some, has 'no bottom to it' (12), and becomes at one point a distorting mirror, 'brown with detritus', which shows to Chris 'nothing of herself but a tremulous amorphousness in the shadow of the rushes' before clearing to provide a sharper picture (107). Here the text represents the loch as an unfathomable repository for the unconstructed bodily image, the undelineated figure prior to recognition and identification. As is well known by critical readers of the text, the loch and standing stones become Chris's retreat, 'the only place where ever she could come and stand back a little from the clamour of the days' (108); as such the scene becomes a structuring device in the novel, opening and closing each chapter as Chris analeptically reflects on what has passed before. But it is also a site for the experience of some strange, unnameable feelings, a 'something' which 'move[s] and uncoil[s]' within Chris (107). Later, in *Cloud Howe*, this idea is reiterated as the 'Thing' which comes to Chris, drawing near then retreating, at the point of the birth of her second, ill-fated child (Gibbon 1995b: 153), then later still as the 'something beyond that endured, some thing she had never yet garbed in a name' (158). In this analysis, the idea of the *chora* becomes a useful conceptual link between the scene of the loch and the standing stones, the idea of the Howe and the maternal function.

Of course, Kristeva's theories have been much criticised for their essentialising logic, and the manner in which their apparently subversive content is contained within a phallogocentric system in which the feminine, and the maternal with it, can never persist in a meaningful way - at least not on their own terms. To insist upon the maternal as metaphor, as Domna Stanton argues, is to 'be caught up in the structures of phallogopresence' (1986: 161), to rely upon an essentially religious construct to articulate feminine difference and thereby merely to re-affirm the logic of the same. This is also the context in which symbolic associations of Chris with the land, or Scotland itself, become essential to critics in their casting of the feminine as a universal notion of non-transformatory passivity. The metaphor becomes a sign of the mastery of the male author himself. For all that Chris is intelligible as a 'real' person, this intelligibility is governed by a system which appropriates metaphors of femininity and maternity to speak its artistry while not allowing femininity or maternity to speak themselves. To recall the discussion of the function of the 'you' form above, Chris's valorisation of her own maternity seems dictated to her from an abstracted Subject-

position she cannot claim as her own.

Indeed, this corresponds closely to Kristeva's own theories of the maternal function and its representation. As Stanton points out, '[In] the Kristevan theory of art [...] the mother remains, as the phallotext defines her, a passive instinctual force that does not speak, but is spoken by the male' (167). And as Kristeva herself articulates in *Desire in Language*, the unrepresentable memory of the mother is recoverable for women only through giving birth themselves, while for men 'by virtue of a particular, discursive practice called "art"' (1980: 240). Further:

At the intersection of sign and rhythm, of representation and light, of the symbolic and the semiotic, the artist speaks from a place where she is not, where she knows not. He delineates what, in her, is a body rejoicing. The very existence of aesthetic practice makes clear that the Mother as subject is a delusion, just as the negation of the so-called poetic dimension of language leads one to believe in the existence of the Mother, and consequently, of transcendence. (242)

Thus the mother only comes to be through art, and male-produced art at that; she cannot produce herself as a subject. Kristeva goes on to consider several portraits of the Madonna with child by Giovanni Bellini. In this context, the whole history of the mother as subject is the history of the male artist's representation of the mother, a representation in which, just as in Western art's depictions of women generally, the body of the male artist himself is occluded. This kind of representation isn't really a crossing at all - the male artist sends his female masquerade into the world without himself being there, having appropriated the image of femininity without actually becoming it. In terms of *A Scots Quair*, the symbolic power of Chris as a woman and mother, even as her femininity and maternity are realistically expressed, is appropriated in a grand metaphor of creativity behind which the male artist disappears - while simultaneously affirming his paternal rights within a phallogocentric order which determines precisely what function maternity is to have.

In this, however, Chris herself is never entirely displaced. Unlike the method of subsuming male identity and desire under the metaphors of beastliness or idealism, the representation of the *chora* resists metaphoricity (at least in part) by becoming part of

the representation of Chris's body. Crucially for this reading, *Cloud Howe* literalises the symbolic femininity of the Howe in and on Chris's body both as her (real) reproductive capacity and as part of her body-shape. Following the death of her and Robert's new-born baby, Chris talks of her body feeling 'flat, ground down and flat, with an empty ache' (Gibbon 1995b: 153) - an ache later described as 'the ghostly ache of her empty womb' (159). Yet she regenerates herself in terms of the Howe, and the Howe's fertility: '[T]he Howe, the green of the hedges trilled low in its blow, you could feel in your body the stir of the blood as the sap stirred in the hedge, you supposed' (164-165) - an echo of *Sunset Song*, where Chris pregnant with Ewan feels 'as though the sap that swelled in branch and twig were one with the blood that swelled the new life below her navel' (Gibbon 1995a: 186). Finally, contemplation of the Howe gives way to a rediscovery of the body and of a fertile womanliness:

She stopped in her work and looked down at herself, at her breast, where the brown of her skin went white at the edge of the thin brown dress she wore, white rose the hollow between her breasts, except where it was blue-veined with blood; funny to think that twice in her life a baby had grown to life in her body and herself changed so to await that growth, and still she looked like a quean, she thought [...] (Gibbon 1995b: 187)

This 'hollow between [Chris's] breasts' seems to be a physical literalisation of the symbolic Howe, and correspondingly an uncensorious substitute-hollow for the internalised female sexual and reproductive organs themselves. It is also possible to draw into this chain of signification the dimple below Chris's left breast, referred to time and again in the trilogy, as another physical manifestation of lack, a mini-howe which stands for the greater possibility of the 'Howe of the World'. It seems to me that reading in this way uncovers a process whereby the specifically feminine symbolism of the trilogy - the allegory whereby Chris is equated with the land, or becomes Scotland herself - is at least partly removed from the realm of metaphoric signification to be literalised as set of metonymic reality-effects denoting the limits of Chris's body. In this way the feminine symbolism of *Cloud Howe* presents itself as the very reality or facticity of Chris's body and sexual identity: the maternal becomes metonymy.

What is apparent here is that the metonymic and metaphoric functions are working in

tandem to produce Chris at once on the realistic and the symbolic levels - indeed, attempting to reduce Chris's symbolic identity to the surface of her body while retaining all the time the metaphoric possibility as a sign of the mastery of the male author himself. In a way, however, the representation of the maternal metaphor on Chris's body enacts a process of literalisation which betrays the non-originary status of the feminine-as-maternal. Adopting the voice of Foucault, Judith Butler offers this deconstruction of the Kristevan semiotic:

Whereas Kristeva posits a maternal body prior to discourse that exerts its own causal force in the structure of drives, Foucault would doubtless argue that the discursive production of the maternal body as prediscursive is a tactic in the self-amplification and concealment of those specific power relations by which the trope of the maternal body is produced. In these terms, the maternal body would no longer be understood as the hidden ground of all signification, the tacit cause of all culture. It would be understood, rather, as an effect or consequence of a system of sexuality in which the female body is required to assume maternity as the essence of its self and the law of its desire. (1990: 92)

Thus the metonymic literalisation of the maternal function on the surface of Chris's body emerges as an effect of the masculinist appropriation of the maternal metaphor itself: rather than indicate her essential femininity, Chris's hollowed and dimpled morphology reveals itself as a construct. In this, the metonymic does not simply subvert the metaphoric - the two are, once more, part of a binary logic of sexual difference - but it makes visible the essentialising force by which the text's phallogocentrism produces the pre-cultural originality of the maternal body (and with it, the pre-history of the Celtic peoples of the Mearns, themselves posited as 'the hidden ground of all signification' in the trilogy). Further, metonymy provides for a set of possibilities which, as Stanton points out, 'promotes a shift from the principle, indeed obsessive, preoccupation with the "difference from" man [...] to "differences within" (a) woman, and "among" women [...] [A] reconception of the maternal as a metonymy can help generate indefinite explorations of other desirable known and unknown female functions' (1986: 175). What is interesting for this thesis is not so much the celebration of "differences within" or "among" women' that metonymy allows, but that the potential erasure of 'the

“difference from” man’ may engender a textual scene in which man’s difference from himself - that which man always attempts to deflect onto women - might become representable.

v: Chris Guthrie’s hybridity

The process by which the trilogy articulates man’s difference has to be understood in relation to *Cloud Howe*’s and *Grey Granite*’s continuation of the strategy of masking or refusing to represent the male body. In the former novel, it is not that Gibbon conceals Robert Colquhoun’s body entirely, but that its representation always stops short at some point, usually the neck or shoulders, and refuses to travel any further downwards. When in *Cloud Howe* Chris regards her second husband on their first morning together, she peers

in his face in the light that came, his hair lay fair on the pillow’s fringe, fair almost to whiteness, his skin ivory-white, she saw his brows set dark in a dream, and the mouth came set in a straight line below, she liked his mouth and his chin as well, and his ears [...] -oh! more than that, you liked all of him well [...] (Gibbon 1995b: 9)

- yet ‘all of him’ is precisely what we never get to see. If Robert follows the masculinist idealism of the pillars of cloud, the only physical representation of him required - again in complicity with phallogocentric logic, this time in privileging the upper-body parts which represent the masculine mind over and against feminine corporeality - is the head and shoulders, rather in the manner of the bust figures of great leaders or thinkers. Later in the text, Chris once more contemplates her body-image in the glass - the place between her breasts, her face, mouth and teeth, hair, knees and shoulders, and finally that ever-recurring dimple - before imagining Robert only as a ‘shoulder’s nook’ and a chin (80). In fact, the only way in which the rest of Robert’s body can become visible is through lack, inflicted as a direct result of chasing one of the pillars of cloud he so prizes. Wishing to have a child by Robert, Chris seeks intercourse with him, beginning with kisses before moving her arm ‘round his bared shoulders quick ... and suddenly you were lying as rigid as death’ (85). The reason for this drawing back is the rediscovery of Robert’s wartime shrapnel scar, an injury which will later bring about his end. The trace of this wound becomes a reference point for the imagining of the male body, a body

negatively defined in relation to the phallus: violated, lacking, impotent:

[...] [S]he'd put that dream by, the dream of a bairn fathered by Robert - not now, maybe never, but she could not to-night, not with the memory of that scar that was torn across the shoulder of this living body beside her, the scar that a fragment of shrapnel had torn - but a little lower it would have torn this body, grunting, into a mesh of blood, with broken bones and with spouting blood, an animal mouthing in mindless torment. And she'd set herself to conceive a child - for the next War that came, to be torn like that, made blood and pulp as they'd made of Ewan [...] (85)

This image prefigures the representation of young Ewan Tavendale, son of the father of 'blood and pulp' whom Robert's scar reminds Chris of, in the trilogy's final novel, *Grey Granite*. Here for the first time we do contemplate a male body, Ewan's, but not unambiguously (a point to which I will return) and only as a precursory moment to the debasement of that body by the police, when Ewan is arrested for his part in a strike at the metalworks at which he is employed. Here Ewan's political beliefs - the last of the 'pillars of cloud' in the trilogy - privilege his battered body as a point of identification with the other oppressed peoples of the world:

[...H]e lay still with a strange mist boiling, blinding his eyes, not Ewan Tavendale at all any more but lost and be-bloodied in a hundred broken and tortured bodies all over the world, in Scotland, in England, in the torture-dens of the Nazis in Germany, in the torment-pits of the Polish Ukraine, a livid, twisted thing in the prisons where they tortured the Nanking communists, a Negro boy in a Alabama cell while they thrust the razors into his flesh, castrating with a lingering cruelty and care. He was one with them all [...] (Gibbon 1995c: 137)

Here the violent refiguring of the male body becomes a signifier of dissociation between collective systems of authoritarian, oppressive power and the individual male subject assumed to share that authority. In other words, the representation of physical torture inflicted on men by other men questions the stability of the dominant fiction. Yet this representation remains within the same dominant fictional logic which concealed the

male body in the first place: the point of emancipation, in this context, is to return masculinity to the disembodied power which is its birthright. Thus Ewan, even while being beaten, seeks 'that real self that had transcended himself', that which had 'sheathed its being in ice and watched with a kind of icy indifference as they did shameful things to his body' (136). It is precisely this 'icy indifference' which seems most appropriate to attribute to Gibbon, or at least to the authorial function in the text, disappearing behind Ewan's scarred body just as it disappeared behind Chris's female one, retaining in the process the sign of authority in *A Scots Quair* and the ideal of the paternal artist-creator.

However, the moment prior to this in which Ewan's body is displayed provides a more ambiguous point of readerly identification. In the boarding house in Duncairn in which Chris and Ewan both reside, she goes to awaken him one morning only to find him 'not in bed, up, naked, a long, nice naked leg and that narrow waist that you envied in men, lovely folk men' (36). On one level this expresses Chris's incestuous desire for Ewan, a wish which surfaces here and there in the final novel of the trilogy. On another, however, it represents jealousy, a desire to be same rather than other, revealing the extent to which Chris's ideals of feminine beauty are based on phallic attributes: the 'long leg and narrow waist' Chris, on her own self-inspection shortly following this encounter, finds in her own 'long white lines of thigh and waist and knee, not very much need to envy men' (37). It thereby appears that there is a certain consonance in cultural ideals of masculine and feminine beauty; or, to put it more theoretically, that masculine morphological traits cohere on Chris's body as part of the metonymic relations which define her gender and sexual identity.

In fact, even as the phallogocentric order which governs the text seems to occlude any corporeal representation of masculinity in its production of what amounts to an essential femininity, the trilogy throughout has also produced Chris as something of a phallic woman. If, as I have noted, the representation in the text of the maternal *chora* and Chris's association with it assigns femininity to a non-transformatory, pre-cultural space determined by masculinist logic through its appropriation of the maternal metaphor, this is all set in opposition to phallicism and paternalism in a manner in which the male prerogative, the chasing of the 'pillars of cloud', is never finally valorised. Yet in Chris's opposition to all this, and in her final rejection of men, 'eager to be naked, alone

and unfriended, facing the last realities with a cool clear wonder, an unhasting desire' (189), she takes up something of a masculine stance. Deriding the phallicism of the 'pillars of cloud', Chris Guthrie enacts the fantasy that it is she, in the end, who really 'has' the phallus.

The manner in which Chris's desire for such masculine empowerment is articulated by the text, however, appears to be caught up in an ambiguous process of passing which combines signifiers of masculinity and femininity. Time and again the text presents us with a perspective on Chris which foregrounds her hybridity, or at least points in a conscious, ironic manner to the act of crossing from a male author to a central female character. The first of these instances occurs in the 'Ploughing' chapter of *Sunset Song*, where the young Chris helps her mother with the household washing by stripping to her undergarments and trampling the blankets in the tub:

So next time mother was indoors she took off her skirt and then her petticoat and mother coming out with another blanket cried *God, you've stripped!* and gave Chris a slap in the knickers, friendly-like, and said *You'd make a fine lad, Chris quean*, and smiled the blithe way she had and went on with the washing. (Gibbon 1995a: 59-60)

Jean Guthrie's comments are not explicated in any way at this point, and indeed can be seen to be undermined as her husband enters the scene and cries, '*Get out of that at once, you shameful limmer, and get on your clothes!*' (60). However, this is not the only instance. In the following chapter, when a fire at a neighbouring farm requires the Guthries to give up their beds and run to help, John Guthrie instructs Will, Chris's elder brother, to dress and follow him, but orders Chris to remain at home. Ignoring him, she attempts to scramble into her corsets, drawing Will to complain, '*Leave the damn things where they are, you're fine, you should never have been born a quean*' - to which Chris replies, '*I wish I hadn't*' (88).

This comic description of Chris Guthrie struggling to grapple with the multi-layered apparel of feminine undergarments suggests itself at this point as a conscious joke on the male author's own struggle to represent female identity in a realistic fashion. However, this performative reading can be countered by a feminist interpretation of Chris Guthrie's resistance to women's roles; rather than stay at home as ordered, Chris wishes

to actively help at the scene of the fire and thus claim the phallus for herself - the underwear merely gets in the way of assuming a properly effective active position. This interpretation is supported when Chris later asserts her right to control the financial management of the farm following the death of her father (121). In this context, when Chris wishes 'If only she'd been a boy' further on in the text, rather than express her irreducible indeterminacy this statement is connected with a longing to have 'ploughed up parks and seen to their draining, lived and lived, gone up to the hills a shepherd and never had to scunner herself with the making of beds or the scouring of pots' (141). In other words, what is signified is a wish to 'have' the phallus only insofar as it allows her to escape the restrictions of the domestic sphere, a plea for gender equality rather than a radical questioning of the boundaries of traditional sexual difference.

In spite of such a feminist reading, the image of a boyish Chris Guthrie grappling uneasily with her underwear as a figure for the author's own consciously marked act of crossing is a persistent one, and is reiterated time and again in the trilogy's subtextual play with combinations of masculine and feminine signifiers. Here, the concept of a 'marked transvestite' becomes relevant to my analysis. Marjorie Garber, citing the eighties pop-star Boy George as an example, defines the marked transvestite as 'a cross-dresser whose clothing seems deliberately or obviously at variance with his anatomical gender assignment' (1992: 354).¹⁵ In the context of *A Scots Quair*, it is not only a question of the contradiction between clothing and anatomy which makes up Chris Guthrie's marked transvestism, but a morphological hybridity - suggesting more accurately, perhaps, a marked transsexualism - which manifests itself in the text's repeated focalisation of her body, recurring in her several physical self-inspections in front of a mirror.

All along, the trilogy's mirror-moments are posited as stages in the awakening and maturation of Chris's sexual identity. Just prior to her wedding with (the elder) Ewan Tavendale in *Sunset Song*, one such inspection emphasises 'the long, smooth lines that lay from waist to thigh, thigh to knee' as Chris ponders on the idea that 'never again would she be herself, have this body that was hers and her own' (Gibbon 1995a: 147). Yet the extent to which this body is actually 'hers and her own' has already been

¹⁵ On a tangential note, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick also views Boy George as axiomatic in the deconstruction of gender boundaries in her essay "'Gosh, Boy George, You Must Be Awfully Secure In Your Masculinity!'" (1995).

questioned in this scene as we are told that Chris felt as though she ‘looked at some other than herself, a statue like that of the folk of olden time that they set in the picture galleries’ (ibid.). Not only does this statement tie in with the Lacanian theory of the mirror-stage - the self-sufficient bodily ego reflected in the mirror is radically other to the subject who perceives and is constituted by it - but it also suggests the phallogocentric construction of Chris’s bodily morphology: femininity, here as in the history of art, is that which is rendered by men as the embodiment of sexuality. So in one move Chris-in-the-mirror is the production both of feminine self-reflection and of the fixing of the female body in the male gaze - the gaze both of the author and, possibly, the male reader too. Indeed, as Chris herself comments in *Cloud Howe*, she would think herself ‘fair enough still [...] if she were a man’ (Gibbon 1995b: 81).

The text does not stop here, however, for in this cross-writing the other is produced as something more than a mere object in which the masculine traits of the artist or the viewer are absent. The ‘long, smooth lines that lay from waist to thigh, thigh to knee’, as I have discussed above, represent a phallic attribute Chris comes to envy in her son in *Grey Granite* before recognising it as part of her own morphology. The male gaze, the authorial ‘I’ lurking behind and dictating to the ‘you’ of the trilogy, appears to catch fleeting glimpses of *itself* as it ponders Chris in the mirror. To the extent that Chris’s ‘you’ is partly masculine, she not only thinks herself fair as a woman but is recognised by herself and others as displaying physically masculine characteristics. In *Cloud Howe*, Chris is described from the perspective of her maid, Else Queen, as being ‘bonny in a dour, queer way, with her hair dark-red and so coiled, and the eyes so clear, and the mouth like a man’s, but shaped to a better shape than a man’s’ (19). Later, in another mirror-moment, Chris focalises her tallness, a quality which in certain contexts can be interpreted as a desirable part of feminine beauty but is more often regarded as a masculine signifier (80). In the same paragraph, she complains of her hair being ‘worse than a mane, a blanket, she’d cut it one day, if Robert would let her’. Further on still, Else’s suitor Alec Hogg comments that ‘Mrs Colquhoun looked more of a boy than a grown-up woman who had a fine son’, to which Else replies, ‘*She both looks them, and makes them, my lad*, whatever she meant by that, if she knew’ (168). This last comment seems to be another conscious, albeit cryptic, admission of Chris Guthrie’s hybridity, joining with those other masculine signifiers - a man’s mouth, long legs, tallness, the ‘mane’ which identifies a male lion, and even the possibility of that mane-like hair being

cropped like a man's - in complicating any straightforward identification of her ontological status. Even her name, shortened from Christine and thereby rendered ambiguous, contributes to the complications.

From whichever side the problem is faced, what is produced is a profoundly ambivalent textual-corporeal space for the mapping of the central character's gender identity. At once Chris is the object of feminine self-inspection and self-reflection, a woman-produced-woman. She is also the erotic object of the male gaze, the gaze of the author considering the beauty of his creation, as she stands in front of the mirror, as if from behind her eyes; and also here the erotic object as produced in the desire of the heterosexual male reader. Yet most crucially she is also the object of a masculine self-inspection - a display and recognition of masculine characteristics on a hybrid figure. Just as Chris's associations with the feminine *chora* and the Howe are literalised in and on her body as physical manifestations of lack and of the maternal function, Chris's phallicism, the independence which dictates her opposition to the phallogocentric subjection of women, materialises here in the form of a rather manly feminine morphology. The metonymic literalisation of the maternal metaphor is accompanied by a metonymic literalisation of the metaphorically displaced male body, generating man's difference within the representation of woman as a set of attributes rather than the invisible and originary standard against which woman differs. The metaphoric veiling of the phallus gives way to an articulation of its contiguous latency: it is a bit-part rather than *the* part in a performance which appropriates it for the most unlikely of uses.¹⁶

Even as the trilogy never really moves 'beyond the limitations of patriarchy', to recall Deirdre Burton's phrase, its fundamental crossing produces, in the margins of the text, a hybrid identity which performatively exposes and parodies the very act of a male author attempting to produce a female representative both within and against the structures of phallogocentricity. This transsexual figure makes it impossible to disavow the contradiction inherent in any reading which seeks to identify with Chris as an authentically realised character or early feminist icon. Simultaneously, the purely symbolic interpretation - in which the privileged male reader might seek a dominant fictional restoration of power - is deferred by the text's refiguring both of maternal and phallic symbolism in and on Chris's body. Her hybrid identity announces its own cross-

¹⁶ See n. 13 above.

written status, displaying a set of effects irreducible to either an originary masculinity or femininity, thereby radically rupturing each of the traditional identificatory interpretations. Finally, in *A Scots Quair*, it becomes possible to resist any reductive reading and look *at*, rather than *through*, the cross-written persona.

Chapter Five

Strategies of Crosswriting II: Contemporary Scottish Practices

I: Introduction

This chapter continues with the application of theories of cross-writing to Scottish male-authored texts, but this time isolates more recent examples. The discussion of Chris Guthrie's hybridity in section III of the previous chapter becomes a model for the interrogation of the central female figure of two of Alan Warner's cross-written novels, *Morvern Callar* [1995] and *These Demented Lands* [1997]. Ostensibly refusing to offer a transformative view of masculine positions, Warner's adoption of a central female narrator appears to be a tactic which preserves a phallogocentric narrative Subject. However, like Trocchi's *Young Adam*, *Morvern Callar* is shown to interrogate Camus' *The Myth of Sisyphus*, in this case in its representation of an ambiguously gendered 'absurd woman' as a narrating protagonist. Further, *These Demented Lands* appears to offer a stand-in for Warner himself who subverts and parodies the typically privileged status of the straight male author. Finally, another way of examining cross-writing as a radical complication of coherent male heterosexual subjectivity is provided in a consideration of Christopher Whyte's *The Warlock of Strathearn* [1997]. Representing a straight male protagonist as the effect of a crossing from a gay male perspective, *The Warlock* makes explicit the performativity of normative masculine identities. My thesis thereby ends with an articulation of masculinity which does not merely assume power, willingly subordinate itself to it or buckle, pathetic or abjected, before it.

Chapter Five (cont.)

II: *Morvern Callar* and *These Demented Lands*

i: masquerade and masculinity

Alan Warner's *Morvern Callar* and *These Demented Lands* mark in some ways a return to the rural locus favoured by Grassie Gibbon and the other writers of the Renaissance, and subsequently devalued in the post-1970s privileging of urban Scottish fiction. In others, however, they refuse the Renaissance ideologies of gender and nation, instead drawing upon the class-based perspectives of urban writing. Further, they engage with the existential tradition favoured by later writers like Trocchi and Kelman in structuring themselves around a first-person focalisation of immediate reality, yet in so doing place the masculinism of existential thought under question as they isolate the perspective of a young female narrator. Ultimately, however, and especially in the case of *These Demented Lands*, strict realism is eschewed in favour of a pastiche of religious allegory (including an unlikely nativity), science fiction, and quest, millennial and disaster narratives. Such an eschewal, complicating the 'natural' or 'unmutilated' identificatory reading, appears to collude with the strategy of cross-writing itself in providing for the representation of gender positions which depart from the normative.

Morvern Callar charts the progress of its eponymous heroine - a supermarket checkout girl - as she breaks free from her boyfriend, the West Highland port in which she lives, and the social and cultural restrictions placed upon her. Returning penniless and pregnant from a tour of Europe's raves and pleasure-spots three years on, the novel closes with Morvern refusing to head to the port, instead being pointed towards possible employment at a hotel on a nearby island. *These Demented Lands* takes up the story, and several details become clear: the island is the place of Morvern's fostermother's grave; the hotel towards which Morvern journeys, as the locals have warned, turns out to be run by a sadistic, manipulative devil-figure called John Brotherhood as a honeymoon resort; and it is 1999, paving the way for a millennial party at the novel's close, coinciding nicely with the birth of Morvern's baby girl, the 'child of the raves' (Warner 1995: 229). A second narrator, in the uncertain form of a bogus Aircrash Investigator, is introduced, along with the story of his determined efforts to reassemble the wreckage

and thus divine the truth of an aeroplane collision that killed two solo pilots several years previously. The mystery of the accident concerns the pilot of the plane Alpha Whisky, who managed to extract himself from the sea-engulfed wreckage and make it ashore, but instead of returning to the hotel climbed to the top of the nearest hill where he died of exposure.

The first novel opens with Morvern discovering the body of her lover at their shared flat. 'He' - capital 'H', as in the personal pronoun for God - has committed suicide. Morvern decides against going to the authorities, and with His money, later supplemented by an advance from His novel and His father's inheritance, Morvern embarks on her European travels. At its very outset, then, this novel stages in a quite obvious way the death - or more specifically the suicide - of the author, as if attempting to remove the main term from the paternal metaphor of literary creation. Indeed, before dismembering Him and burying His bodyparts across a hillside, Morvern conceals Him in the loft, on top of a huge model railway He had devoted much of his time to - in fact, a slavishly detailed representation of the village outside the port in which He grew up. As she smashes His body onto the model from above, it is as if a certain mode of representation - a male-authored, painstaking and ultimately nostalgic mimesis (Morvern describes the model in its 'always summerness') - is being shattered (Warner 1995: 51-4). Both novels are much obsessed with models: the 'model city' (135) of the first Spanish resort Morvern visits, which doubles for the port and its restrictions; the 'pale model of the virgin saint girl' (153-6) Morvern sees being ritually sacrificed elsewhere in Spain; and the reconstruction of the air crash which the bogus Investigator attempts in the second novel, mocked in parallel by the Hotel Chef's model aeroplane, itself shot down by a cattledrover's crossbow. Further, Morvern herself, in her constant attention to details of clothing and makeup, can be read as something of a model for Warner's own cultural ideas of women's fashion.

Thus, in the first novel in particular, femininity emerges as nothing more substantial than masquerade. The text resists any attempt to essentialise Morvern's gender identity as it returns repeatedly to the surface or appearance of things. Even as Morvern communes with the land as she camps out during her expedition to bury His various bodyparts, nothing could be further from Chris Guthrie's epiphanic identification with the earth in Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*: here a wash in the river is followed by a session of

toenail painting with a pedicure set she has received as a Christmas present from her best friend, Lanna (85-6). The earth itself is made complicit with Morvern's crime - 'All across the land bits of Him were buried' (91) - and is in turn appropriated for the purposes of a facepack, making ambivalent any reading which would seek resolution for Morvern with the primordial slime from which life began. Indeed, in the second novel, when Morvern buries her face in a bed of moss, connecting 'to our fetid origins in the damp, faded places', her peace is disturbed by a group of cattledrovers laughing at the sight of her backside sticking up in the air (Warner 1997: 23-4).

The figure of the mask also serves to frame Morvern's witnessing of a ritual sacrifice in Spain, in which a model of the Virgin is carried through the village, put out to sea on a raft then set alight. Just prior to this event, Morvern peels off another facepack, leaving 'a skin of [her] nose and cheeks shape, inside out', which she flushes down the toilet (Warner 1995: 152); afterwards, she encounters a group of young girls in masks, out swimming and trying to catch a glimpse of the face of the burned effigy (156). As the reader is invited to conflate Morvern both with this tragic ideal of femininity - at once venerated and annihilated by patriarchy - and the inquisitive girls attempting to locate its charred remains, symbolic of Morvern's own quest - these identifications are played out with the teasing suggestion that nothing, finally - or else something quite other - is to be found behind the various masks which constitute Morvern's womanliness.

That this 'something quite other' might prove to be the face of Warner himself is perhaps the most obvious interpretation the novel tempts the reader with, encouraging me to look *through*, rather than *at*, the cross-written persona. If I am compelled to read Warner as the authoritative male father of the text removing himself at the outset via the suicide of the boyfriend, this effect is countered by the manner in which Morvern is only capable of escaping the port by using His money, then apparently negated entirely at the point where she finally gets round to inspecting the suicide note He has left. His posthumous wish is that He's 'NOT LOST IN SILENCE' (82), and therefore He instructs Morvern to find a publisher for the novel He has left on a computer disc. Rather than read this text, Morvern simply prints it out after substituting her name for His; at the very moment she refuses any part in narrative discourse, she substitutes herself for the author-position in a manner far from transformative.

From this perspective, the death of the author seems to be staged simply for the sake of resurrection, for the reconfiguration of a male authority behind Morvern's every move. Is this silent authority behind Morvern telling me that, on the one hand, a performative identity can be achieved through crossing to a female persona, while on the other the masculine position remains substantive, essential, necessarily veiling itself in order to exert control all the better? After all, Morvern's boyfriend, through His suicide, seems merely to be re-staging the trope of supine masculinity through which texts such as Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and Gray's 1982 *Janine* articulate the postmodern crisis of traditional heterosexual masculinity.¹ Such a reading reduces Warner's crossing to the act of one of Kahn's narrative transvestites, where the figure of/for the author traverses the boundaries of sexual difference only as a means of better enjoying the privileges of hegemonic masculinity. In disappearing behind His capitalised pronoun, the presumed-dead boyfriend becomes empowered by what Homi Bhabha describes as 'the masculinist signature writ large - the pronoun of the invisible man [...] the object of humanity personified' (1995: 57).

In interview, Warner has stated that writing as a woman affords an element of subversion lost to a male voice:

[T]his is a male dominated world. By taking a woman's perspective, you instantly get a subversive, slanted view. Anyway, what do guys do? They get drunk, they fall over, they try to have sex - there's only so many permutations of that you can do. (Bruce 1997: 24)

It is as if to say, after the advent and the advances of feminism, and in the face of empowered feminist subjects, heterosexual masculinity has either decided to renounce its privileges, or has learned they are better maintained merely by announcing their renunciation. In Warner's most recent novel, *The Sopranos* [1998], the problem is expressed in a different way. In this third-person account of a girls' school choir's trip to Edinburgh, the narrator comments at one point on his protagonists:

They've youth; they'll walk it out like a favourite pair trainers. It's a poem this youth and why should they know it, as the five of them move up the empty corridors? We *should* get shoved aside cause they *have* it now, in glow of skin and

¹ See the discussion in Chapter Three, section IV above. Whyte draws attention to *Morvern Callar's*

liquid clarity of deep eye on coming June nights and cause it
will go ... After all what do we amount to but a load of worn-
 out old shoes? (Warner 1999: 25)

Despite expressing itself in terms of the dichotomy between youth and age, it is tempting to frame this passage within a rhetoric of gender too. A male voice, narrating and spectating on youthful feminine vibrancy, effectively announces its own redundancy. Meanwhile, however, it dictates the terms in which that vibrancy can be articulated - from a position of knowledge impossible to access from the perspective of the girls themselves. Shoving itself aside, the narrative voice still manages to declare its own primacy. Recalling the words of Gilles Deleuze I cited in section II.ii of the previous chapter, 'one does not become Man, insofar as man presents himself as a dominant form of expression that claims to impose itself on all matter' (1997: 225). Instead, Warner becomes woman - apparently dressing for success - at the same time appearing to erase the masculinist position entirely. Yet the feeling remains that this self-erasure amounts to a refusal to confront the potential performativity of straight masculinity, a failure to imagine permutations of masculine identity other than the predictable, traditional ones.

ii: the absurd woman

The above interpretation tends to be complicated, however, by the profound difficulties involved in determining Morvern Callar's gender status. Such categorical uncertainty is no better illustrated than through the text's casting of Morvern in the role of existential or absurd heroine, a strategy which links with my discussion of Camus and Trocchi in section II of Chapter Three. Douglas Gifford has claimed Warner's novel as 'the contemporary, rural and female version of Trocchi's *Young Adam*' (1995: 14); like Trocchi's text, *Morvern Callar* also has obvious affinities with Albert Camus' *The Outsider*. Formally, Callar's voice is sparse, betraying little or no internal emotion or thought. In dialogue she is largely silent - as a holiday rep informs her, her name means 'silence, to say nothing, maybe', in Spanish (Warner 1995: 125). She records events indifferently, even as she matter-of-factly sets about dismembering and packaging up His body for burial. And such events are represented as discontinuous impressions, as here, for example, in the opening of the novel:

He'd cut his throat with the knife. He'd near chopped off His hand with the meat cleaver. He couldn't object so I lit a Silk Cut. A sort of wave of something was going across me. There was fright but I'd daydreamed how I'd be.

He was bare and dead face-down on the scullery lino with blood round. The Christmas tree lights were on then off. You could change the speed those ones flashed at. Over and over you saw Him stretched out then the pitch dark with His computer screen still on.

I started the greeting on account of all the presents under our tree and Him dead. Useless little presents always make me sad. (1)

Like the flashing Christmas tree lights, Morvern's consciousness illuminates events only intermittently, refusing to construct a continuity between this moment and the next. She cries not primarily at the death of her boyfriend, but at the 'useless little presents' left under the tree. In this way, refusing to mourn a lost loved one, Morvern also connects thematically with the absurd heroes of *The Outsider* and *Young Adam*. The suicide of Morvern's boyfriend, like the deaths of the Arab or Cathie, is absurd in the sense that it is presented as something sudden, unpredictable and unknowable. Instead of reacting to it emotionally, which would involve drawing continuities between her past and present feelings for Him, Morvern reacts in the present moment only. Her appropriation of His money and subsequent sojourns abroad can also be viewed, in the words of *The Myth of Sisyphus*, as an attempt to get 'not the best but the most living' (Camus 1975: 59). She spends His money, therefore, without reserve. On her second trip to the resort, she doesn't sleep for days so she can know 'every minute of that happiness that [she] never even dared dream [she] had the right' (Warner 1995: 210). Truly absurd, Morvern acts upon an 'indifference to the future and a desire to use up everything that is given' (Camus 1975: 59).

The postulation of Morvern Callar as an absurd woman re-enacts the gender deconstruction of Camus' philosophy offered by my reading of *Young Adam* in Chapter Three. The absurd, in that analysis, identifies a position in-between the masculinist desire for reason and unity and the apprehension of an implicitly feminine world 'in which the impossibility of knowledge is established' (29). If absurdism offers a

complication of the phallogocentric bias of existential thought, the cross-writing of a woman into the position of the absurd protagonist suggests itself as an intervention with multiple effects.

As in *A Scots Quair*, where Chris Guthrie's opposition to phallogocentrism produces her as something of a phallic woman, Warner's novels enact a similar kind of confrontation. In *These Demented Lands*, rather than completely erase 'Man', phallic and narcissistic masculinity is represented in the form of the hotelier John Brotherhood. His very name an ironic comment on the traditional slippage between masculinity and humanity, Brotherhood bears echoes of Pontius Pilate, Prospero, Conrad's Kurtz and Angela Carter's Zero the Poet² in his embodiment of sadistic, subjective-imperialist manhood. Despite all his attempts, however, Brotherhood is finally unable to seduce or crush Morvern; indeed, Morvern ends up defeating him. At a drag party at the hotel (of which more later), Brotherhood decrees that only Bob Dylan records are to be played. Listening to the words of the song 'Isis', Morvern learns how she 'could make Brotherhood [her] victim' (Warner 1997: 131). The song, as the narrative typically fails to tell, is the story of a newly married husband who leaves his wife Isis to go on the road. He meets a man who persuades him to assist in a grave robbery, presuming there to be treasures buried with the body:

I broke into the tomb, but the casket was empty
 There was no jewels, no nothin', I felt I'd been had
 When I saw that my partner was just bein' friendly,
 When I took up his offer I must-a been mad.
 (Dylan 1994: 534)

Since the 'partner' has died by this stage, he can be excused for misleading the narrator. Morvern, however, has less friendly motives in letting it slip to Brotherhood that her fostermother's grave, adjacent to the hotel, contains a good deal of jewellery and money put there by her fosterfather, out of the reach of greedy relatives.³ He swallows the bait, only to discover the grave (randomly chosen by Morvern) to contain the body of the pilot of the wrecked plane Alpha Whisky, along with a more mysterious object the text refuses to shed any light on, but which is enough to prompt Brotherhood to flee out to sea (Warner 1997: 213-4). In deceiving him over the specific site of the grave, then, Morvern leads Brotherhood back to a confrontation with his most dangerous secret, the

² From *The Passion of New Eve* [1977].

nature of which the reader is left only to infer. (Is this the piece of an alien spacecraft alluded to throughout (47, 114)? If so, was there some extraterrestrial factor in the collision of the two planes? Was the pilot then *pursued* ashore and up the hill?) In her interpretation of the Dylan lyric, Morvern resists the role of Isis herself, the waiting and passive 'mystical child' (Dylan 1994: 534) to whom the gravedigger of the song finally returns, to create an actively duplicitous part for herself. Just as at the close of *Morvern Callar* it is revealed that Morvern is at last writing her own story (Warner 1995: 228), here it appears that she is engaging in fiction-making in a manner not simply dictated to her by masculinist authority.

If the refigured relations of sexual difference by which Morvern accedes to power in this musical interlude are related back to Camus, the implicitly dual gendering of the absurd position is once more uncovered. For if Morvern can be taken here for something of a phallic woman, a knowing, acting - indeed 'masculine' - subject, she only fulfils one half of Camus's absurdist criteria. The second part of the absurd equation - acceptance of the indifferent chaos of the world - emerges as a similarly vital component of Morvern's subjectivity. On the other side of Morvern's mastery, there exists a celebration of the unreasonable, a giving up to disorder or more properly discontinuity - a (non) position which can be appropriated in the construction of an *écriture féminine*. Indeed, the manner in which Morvern orchestrates Brotherhood's defeat - plucking the Dylan story from the air, rewriting it for her own purposes, and finally banishing her adversary with the help of a secret of which she betrays no knowledge - employs a circumlocutory logic in counterpoint to the aggressive desire for victory for which it is effected. Further, this victory is achieved while Morvern is giving birth; just as her strategy bears fruit, she bears a daughter, paralleling her creative revenge with her own procreation, banishing one malevolent body whilst bringing into being a new, more hopeful one. At the very instant of her apotheosis as a phallic woman, Morvern becomes the site of signification for a maternal body, removed from the scene of her victory and shrouding it in an evasive silence. Within this silence - designated, as I have remarked, by her very name - Morvern's body figures as an ambivalent sign for her opacity, her apparent lack of any readable motive. As she tells her father in the closing letter which describes these events, 'The things I've seen in the last years! Listened to my body and done what it told me' (Warner 1997: 183).

³ The details of this funeral are given in *Morvern Callar* (Warner 1995: 29-30).

Indeed, the letter which frames the close of the narrative acts out another of Morvern's revenges: bitter about her father's relationship with her former best friend, Lanna, Morvern informs him of her new baby only to tell him he will never get to see her. In the process, however, she narrates to him some of her experiences in Europe as well as the climactic events at the hotel. Once more, in the process of aggressively opposing one who 'has' the phallus - in itself a claim to a phallic position - Morvern takes a circumlocutory route: 'Forgive my elliptical style. I want you to die in the maximum possible confusion' (215).

In this way, the absurd wo/man, like Chris Guthrie, can be read as something of a hybrid, a continual negotiation between masculine and feminine signifiers. If, in physical terms - to judge from the reactions of male characters in the novels - Morvern is highly sexually attractive, she is also flat-chested (Warner 1995: 24), there are several references to her being particularly tall for a girl, and she is also described as 'boyish' by the Aircraft Investigator (Warner 1997: 110). A sharp comedy is generated in the second novel when, in response to remarks from Brotherhood about suitably provocative dress, Morvern rejoins, 'Don't *ever* tell me or any other girl how to dress' (70); of course, Warner has been taking great care over dressing and applying make-up to Morvern throughout. This ironic deployment of the clothing metaphor is extended into a drag party at the hotel, where we are afforded the unsettling pleasure of having our cross-written woman cross-dress as a man. As Warner effects his cross-writing, then, attention is being drawn to the process of construction - and its concomitant possibility of deconstruction. The superficial reading of Warner's novels which traces a process of becoming-woman in flight from a masculinist narrative Subject - a Subject which nevertheless retains its authority - has no room for this conception of a third space of sexual signification, in which both masculine and feminine elements are apparent in a different relation to that of asymmetrical binarism. Against this interpretation, what Warner's texts finally articulate is a locus in which becoming-*man* is as significant as becoming-woman.

iii: mas(c)(k)ulinity

These Demented Lands' postulation of masculine performativity is not limited to the

representation of phallicism in the psyche or on the body of its central female character. In the background of Morvern's dangerous confrontation with John Brotherhood, an uncertain and apparently non-sexual relationship develops with the novel's second narrator, the Aircrash Investigator. This character, the novel teasingly suggests, might be a more suitable stand-in for the author than both the dead boyfriend of the sequel's opening (whose inheritance has now been exhausted anyway) and Morvern herself. One of this character's many assumed names is 'Warmer' (Warner 1997: 16), and his search for the missing propellor of Alpha Whisky can be interpreted as a quest to make whole the suggestive initials 'A. W.' Indeed, the Aircraft Investigator's desire for the secret of the plane crash smacks of something of a parody of male creation, an inevitably doomed attempt to make order and narrative out of discontinuous wreckage.

That the Aircraft Investigator's meaning-making signifies as a performance rather than as a key to his masculine (or authorial) being is first suggested by the toy Fisher-Price typewriter he uses to compile his reports (16), before being confirmed in the Department of Transport letter which reveals his bogus status (112-4). The sense of parody continues when the Investigator, recovering the lost propellor of Alpha Whisky, has it lashed to his back by locals (178), before being sent back to the hotel. This unlikely Christ-figure, as he struggles home over the island, offers a familiar trope of male existential agony - another figuring of the objectification (and abjection) of masculine being which seems to be at the heart of many twentieth-century Scottish men's representational practices. Yet with his crucifix of metal and with a jellyfish replacing the traditional crown of thorns, the image, like many of the text's theological references, is up for debate and re-interpretation. The investigator is, in a sense, being crucified by his own folly, suffering in his failure to adequately secure the phallic signifier of explanation and truth and instead being secured to a symbol for it (the propellor is not only a phallus-like object, but is the final piece in the puzzle of Warmer's investigation). But he is a bogus investigator; his quest has been a performance, and in the same way his symbolic death-sentence is a performance too. His final journey does not lead to defeat and disappearance - unlike Brotherhood's, which leaves him swimming away from the island, his piece of wreckage lost to the sea (214) - but rather towards Morvern, whom he now knows is about to give birth, and for whose baby he sings on his suffering way (192). It is she whom he persuades, in the end, to let him share some of the responsibility of bringing up her new-born girl-messiah

(213, 214), and thereby moves from being an emblem of death-bound masculinity to occupy a strangely tentative position of fatherhood, becoming a performative patriarch without paternal rights.

In this closing conciliation, untainted by the hegemonic structure of appropriation, Warner's text achieves a precarious balance between the absurd woman, Morvern Callar, a highly singular and multiply effective transformative feminine persona, and a male figure who is himself something of a transformation and a performance rather than a veiled, phallic ventriloquist or a shamed, self-erasing man. As he and Morvern are getting changed for the drag party, the Aircrash Investigator tells her 'you want to show me you and I are the same, you've come to reveal the truth' (128). The revelation, which is never explicitly confirmed, does not concern whether or not Morvern possesses a real penis, but rather that she has painted toenails ('If you take off your shoes and socks, I'll be able to see you're the same as me' (141)). What is at stake is not anatomy but a cosmetic signifier, uniting these two hybrid narrating subjects in their simultaneous wearing of an *effect* of gender performance. In this way, a figure of/for the author intrudes in the narrative with his own oblique perspective, but in a contiguous rather than a commanding way - indeed, as a figure equivalent to Morvern in many respects, transforming in this double-performance the asymmetry of sexual difference. Ultimately, on the bodies of these two protagonists, *These Demented Lands* inscribes another version of Severo Sarduy's transvestite text by articulating 'the coexistence [...] of masculine and feminine signifiers'. Rather than cohere on a 'single body', however, as Sarduy's thesis advances (cited in Garber 1992: 150), the postulation of the hybridity of an ostensibly heterosexual pair further complicates the traditional sexual matrix for understanding unitary gender assignments. In this way offering a deconstruction of the dyad male/female, Warner's cross-writing finally challenges the preservation of originary male privilege in the adoption of feminine masquerade by positing a masculinity equally constituted by (rather than hiding behind) masks. In so doing, the text stalls any reading which would seek quasi-real, coherently gendered subjects to identify with.

Chapter Five (cont.)

III: Christopher Whyte's *The Warlock of Strathearn*

i: overview

The final novel I am to examine in this chapter, Christopher Whyte's *The Warlock of Strathearn*, acts out in a more explicit way the performativity of heterosexual masculinity than do Warner's texts. Also, *The Warlock* departs, further even than Warner's *These Demented Lands*, from the realist strategies employed in the dominant strand of Scottish men's novels I have been attempting to account for in the bulk of this thesis. A kind of postmodern pastiche of the historical and fantastical traditions of Scottish literature, Whyte's novel is the first-person narrative of an unnamed warlock who lives from the mid 17th- to the early 18th-century, first in his native Perthshire, then in Edinburgh and later Bohemia. The narrative is given a contemporary frame in which one Archibald MacCaspin, a retired schoolmaster, antiquarian and academic of placenames, comes into possession of the warlock's encrypted latin manuscript by an apparently accidental sequence of events. This text, despite appearing to be either a hoax or 'the fantasies of a sick, unbalanced mind' (Whyte 1997: 15), he proceeds to decode, translate and edit. As the Afterword to the novel recounts, MacCaspin dies shortly after completing this work, and the original manuscript is collected by the mysterious gentleman who gave it to him in the first place.

MacCaspin's dry, academic and rational outlook is not only troubled by events which seem to mirror those which take place in the life of the warlock - he is visited three times by a white hare, a portent of change and finally death for the warlock (197) - but his account (and that of his nephew in the Afterword) leaves clues which allow the reader to make further connections between the modern and the older story. The gentleman who collects the manuscript may well be a manifestation of the Shapeshifter, a spirit-friend of the warlock's capable of changing form (72), and who, it can be surmised, may have authorised the translation to pave the way for the rebirth of the warlock himself. MacCaspin's very home, a 'former manse' (12), appears to be the same residence the warlock builds following his return from his European travels (243). Meanwhile, the herb garden Mrs MacCaspin discovers in its grounds also seems to be a

remnant from that time (12, 14).

Finally, the story of Mrs MacCaspin and her nephew, a young gay student called Andrew Elliot who authors the Afterword, takes precedence in the narrative frame. Having brought the herb garden back to fruition, Mrs MacCaspin becomes a healer, not only curing Elliot of his asthma but assisting him in the awakening of his sexual identity and the procurement of his first boyfriend (250-1). Fascinated by the story his uncle has translated, Elliot finally travels the short distance from the MacCaspins' home to the rowan grove in which the warlock had claimed he would die, and from which he suggested he would one day be reborn (247-8). There Elliot witnesses a naked young man, crowned with a garland of rowan berries, emerging from lying in a stream and, 'as if he had not moved for many years, delicately at first, then with increasing sureness', striding off into the hills (256). Whether or not this figure is that of the warlock Elliot cannot ascertain, but it strikes him 'as the completion of a cycle' (ibid.). In any case, his very witnessing of the event appears to be evidence of the emergence of his own magical powers, which as 'the seventh child of a seventh child' should have been his birthright, but which were previously subdued by sickness (249).

In framing the warlock's story in this way, the novel at once plays consciously with its own fictivity - employing similar conventions of bogus historicity to that used by James Hogg in his *Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* [1824] - while at the same time, and also true to Hogg's game-playing, allowing for a credulous attitude to the unlikely events of which it tells. In this way it acts out a kind of intertextual play between postmodern practices and the ludic strategies of a singular earlier text, as well as resuscitating a fascination with the supernatural which enjoys a long history in Scottish literary production, but is entirely absent in the dominant realist strand of twentieth-century men's fiction.

Most significantly for this thesis, however, *The Warlock of Strathearn* also plays out several strategies of gender crossing. The most central and obvious of these is the main turning-point in the warlock's narrative, where, besotted by a witch, Lisbet, who refuses any advance of male desire, he transforms himself into a woman and begins the task of seducing her (153-6). In the context of the novel as a whole, this crossing, a kind of magical transsexual operation, resists any reductive attempt to look through the cross-

written persona at the originary heterosexual masculinity preceding it, because that originary identity has already appeared as something quite other and performative. The warlock is, in fact, already the effect of a cross-writing from an openly gay male author who inscribes his sexual identification in the text through the installation of Andrew Elliot in the frame of the story. The context for the warlock's ostensibly straight male narrative, therefore, is partly the story of a homosexual coming-out. This frame does not merely surround and close off the warlock's history, but by being simultaneously the story of a discovery of magical powers and of a connection between past and present, informs and interacts with it too.

As Marjorie Garber discusses at length in *Vested Interests*, the relationship between homosexual identities and cross-dressing or drag has a troubling history. She identifies a 'transvestophobia from within gay culture' (1992: 137) which resists the assumption that crossing is a primarily gay activity which ultimately reinforces the stereotypes of effeminate man or butch lesbian. Yet as Judith Butler testifies, being gay is a necessary kind of drag, a performative act which refuses to be reduced to an inversion of heterosexuality and thereby puts into question the relationship between a heterosexual 'original' and a gay 'copy':

The 'presence' of so-called heterosexual conventions within homosexual contexts as well as the proliferation of specifically gay discourses of sexual difference, as in the case of 'butch' and 'femme' as historical identities of sexual style, cannot be explained as chimerical representations of originary heterosexual identities. And neither can they be understood as the pernicious insistence of heterosexual constructs within gay sexuality and identity. The repetition of heterosexual constructs within sexual cultures both gay and straight may well be the inevitable site of the denaturalization and mobilization of gender categories. The replication of heterosexual constructs in non-heterosexual frames brings into relief the utterly constructed status of the so-called heterosexual original. Thus, gay is to straight *not* as copy is to original, but as copy is to copy. (Butler 1990: 31)

Gay drag, therefore, as Butler explores elsewhere, exposes and exaggerates the

performative nature of heterosexual identities:

Drag is not the putting on of a gender that belongs properly to some other group, i.e. an act of *expropriation* or *appropriation* that assumes that gender is the rightful property of sex, that 'masculine' belongs to 'male' and 'feminine' belongs to 'female'. There is no 'proper' gender, a gender appropriate to one sex rather than another, which is in some sense that sex's cultural property. Where that notion of the 'proper' operates, it is always and only *improperly* installed as the effect of a compulsory system. Drag constitutes the mundane way in which genders are appropriated, theatricalized, worn, and done; it implies that all gendering is a kind of impersonation and approximation. (1991: 21)⁴

The Warlock of Strathearn does not present itself as an explicit drag act; neither does Butler's description of heterosexual 'constructs' within non-heterosexual 'frames' pertain explicitly to the possibilities of novelistic discourse. However, the novel's representation of a heterosexual protagonist within a narrative frame describing a homosexual coming-out enacts a similar kind of dislocation as it troubles the readerly assumption of the warlock's initial identity as originary or natural. This is not to posit Andrew Elliot's - or by extension Christopher Whyte's - sexuality as itself a founding one, but draws attention to the process by which the interpellation of the straight male reader by any supposed-straight narrative Subject is disrupted by the presence of a gay voice at the novel's close. This voice undermines the coherence of gender and sexual identification properly required by a masculinist reading of the text. This reading, however, has already been disturbed by the text's profoundly unrealistic subject matter. For the novel's representation of a magical protagonist, a figure fundamentally 'other' to the normative male subject-positions of seventeenth-century Protestant Scotland, is already 'unnaturally' situated and indeed can open itself to transformation both in gender and sexual terms. As I shall explore below, the central narrator is analogically related to the gay figure in the frame in a manner which circumvents the possibility of any straight identificatory reading.

⁴ See also Chapter Four above, section II.i.

ii: 'uncanny' masculinities

The warlock's alterity, his distance from the dominant religious ideology of his culture, is given as one of the possible reasons why Marion, his nurse, attempts to remove him from the care of his grandparents while he is still at a young age (Whyte 1997: 36-7). Their flight into the highlands is short-lived, however, as they run into a party of Campbell soldiers and are captured. Bound by his wrists to the wall of the Campbells' dungeon, the warlock summons a group of rats to his aid who nibble through his cords (51). Attempting to escape, he is caught by the men who, in fear of his 'uncanny' - that is to say, unnatural or supernatural - powers (52), subject him to a horrific act of inscription: a red-hot dagger is drawn across his back, searing his skin in the shape of a crucifix (53). The warlock describes how his hostility towards the institutionalised religion of his culture began at this time:

I hoped that before long, like Jesus, I would be able to cure the blind and lift the lame on to their feet. But I felt not the slightest urge to assemble a band of cowed, inferior followers at my heels. And his boastful talk of his father's and his own importance irritated me beyond belief. His overweening pride brought its own nemesis. He aimed to be a source of power rather than its channel and his destruction was inevitable. With the passing of the years, I have come to view the entire history of his followers' church as a doomed and impotent attempt to take revenge for the foundering of their would-be saviour's dreams. Otherwise why did they make the image of his defeat their chief symbol? (55)

In Warner's *These Demented Lands*, the crucifix features in a parodic repetition of the trope of suffering, lacking masculinity. In that text, however, the figure of the Aircraft Investigator is still bound to his cross; here, alternatively, the cross features as a bodily mark, a metonymic part of the warlock's morphology, and therefore is unable to dominate his entire subjectivity. In this way, the warlock can take up a critical stance to the ideology it symbolises: rather than become a figure for *his* defeat, it is figure for the defeat of Christ, and concomitantly of the defeat of the warlock's enemies. In so doing, the warlock refuses to be bound to God, the name-of-the-father and the self-proclaimed guarantor of truth - in other words, to the ideological formation which negotiates

between the discourses of gender and Christianity, between the phallus and the logos.⁵ The Christian phallus-logos represented by the cross is thereby resisted, reduced from its orthodox status as a primary (and metaphoric) signifier to become only one metonymic possibility amongst others. In effect, this engenders a radical re-writing of the logic by which masculinity becomes visible only in its destruction.

That the warlock's refusal to bow to Christian dogma is also a refusal of the phallic law becomes more explicit in his relations with Vincent McAteer, a Presbyterian minister who forms an alliance with the warlock's malevolent grandmother, Alison, in opposing the warlock's heretical powers. McAteer himself is an exemplary figure of masculinist power: not only is he a church authority and a 'gifted classical scholar' (64), he creates something of a stir among the servant girls with his 'brilliant blue eyes and delicate lips, fine fingers, manicured nails and [...] masculine pose' (65). As McAteer reads to the family from the scriptures, however, the warlock is aware of a speech other than the phallogocentric discourse of Christianity. In listening to the language of the natural world his magical being is particularly attuned to, he manages to divert himself away from the lesson:

I had to divide my thoughts in two, for if he had been aware that I was listening to that very different, pagan harmony, he would have taken steps to divorce me from it. The skill with which I answered his questions, while my mind hovered above the courtyard with the voracity of a sparrowhawk, noting each sound and shade of colour, gave me a sense of triumph and achievement. As if my sharpness of intellect frustrated him, he gave vent to an exasperation which [...] expressed his determination, and his inability, to occupy the whole of my mind. He well knew it had corners, whole chambers he would never enter into, and that my vigilance

⁵ The slippage here between the concepts of God, the name-of-the-father and the phallus is a persistent one in the Lacanian theory of the Symbolic order. Kaja Silverman emphasises it in a passage in *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* where a citation from Serge Leclair makes explicit the interchangeability of the terms 'God' and 'phallus' (1992a: 42-3). The very term 'phallogocentrism', as I discuss in the Preface, links the concept of the phallus with the word of God in a definite way. Judith Butler has also indicated that the relationship between the Symbolic law and the subjects it produces 'recalls the tortured relationship between the God of the Old Testament and those humiliated servants who offer their obedience without reward', but not without stating the extent to which this 'makes the Lacanian narrative ideologically suspect' (1990: 56). Insofar as I am presenting the 'Christian phallus-logos' as an ideological formation, however, this does not affect my analysis.

and quickness of response ensured their preservation. (66)

McAteer's failure to reach into the 'corners [and] [...] chambers' of the warlock's mind and thus cement an identificatory bond with him points up the extent to which the warlock represents an 'other' kind of masculine subject, an 'uncanny' figure in gender as well as spiritual terms. In fact, the warlock enjoys a closer identification with female characters such as Marion, his nurse, the healer Janet Sillars and the Auchterarder brothel owner Mistress Murray than he does with this masculinist figure. Further, one of the primary magical beings with whom the warlock communes is the Lady of the Flowers, a figure the warlock identifies as his spiritual mother (76). These associations indicate the degree to which the warlock lives in a different relationship to the gender differentiating law which produces the male subject, he who 'has' the phallus, as the absolute figure of authority. The inaccessible 'corners [and] chambers' of the warlock's mind seem to suggest a kind of feminine reserve within his subjectivity which resists the penetrating gaze of phallic power.

That this 'feminine reserve' may be interpreted in a different way is also suggested by the text. The warlock's strategy of 'divid[ing] [his] thoughts in two' seems to enact another re-writing of Hogg's *Justified Sinner* in the form of a 'queering' of the theme of the double.⁶ When the warlock wishes to renounce his magic, he has to 'blot out an entire field of receptivity':

In the course of time [...] I learned to neutralize half of myself. I had the sensation of being doubled. There was another self constantly at my side, attached to me, perhaps, by the back of a hand, as the two-headed child had mirrored itself from the neck up and from the thigh down. (112)

That this doubling is linked to the warlock's need to 'pass for a normal adolescent' (ibid.) suggests a reading informed by the homosexual element in the narrative frame. The warlock's magical alterity is analagous to a gay male identity in that it must be hidden if it is not to draw censure from the bearers and protectors of normative subjectivity. A male body capable of magic, just like a male body capable of same-sex desire, is open to an alternative 'field of receptivity', but if that field is blotted out or

⁶ Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick has already indicated the extent to which the theme of the double in Hogg's text represents two homosocial bonds - between Robert Wringhim and Goerge Colwan in the first part of the novel, and Wringhim and his demonic other Gil-Martin in the second - strongly inflected by an erotic component (1985: 97-117).

cloaked it can easily pass for a body sanctioned as normal by dominant ideology. Thus, even within the part of the warlock's story which describes his heterosexual awakening, a subtext persists which hints at the analogical queerness of this figure - another manifestation of the uncanny or the unnatural - in relation to the rationalist dictates of his culture. As he comments later in the narrative, 'the story I am writing is formed as much by what I pass over in silence as by the things I tell' (204).

In fact, the novel also hints at a more literal interpretation of the analogy I have suggested above. Following Janet Sillars' public humiliation by McAteer (83-4), the warlock provides himself with a male valet, the 'illiterate stable lad' Hughoc (93). Hughoc's dog-like devotion to the warlock initially irritates him, but when Hughoc becomes a father and husband and abandons sleeping at the foot of the warlock's bed (114), an unexplored jealousy appears to creep into the relationship:

He was a laconic fellow who expressed love in actions, not in words. He never talked of what he felt for me or his family. His change of station introduced a new formality to our our relationship. He was henceforth a respectful and loyal manservant rather than a friend. Increasingly excluded from his life, I took to womanising with unprecedented dedication.
(116)

If the warlock's recourse to 'womanising' is precipitated by Hughoc's implicit rejection of him, his refusal to speculate on the issue is not shared by other characters in the book - or even by the slippages of his own narration. Resisting the temptation to join his friends in their enjoyment of the women at a local brothel, he prefers instead to sit with the proprietor, Mistress Murray. She wonders,

'Did yer granmither scunner ye wi wummankind? Is that the reason ye wullnae pree ma lasses? Is it releegion haulds ye back? Or dae ye maybe prefer lads? [...] Ah kent sic men in Lunnan - mensefu craiturs they were an a'!' (119)

The narrator's attempt to 'set her right' - whatever he means by that - is cut short by the appearance of one of his friends, 'his shirt unbuttoned and his face flush with excitement' (120). While elsewhere the warlock candidly describes his relations with women, passages like these underscore the final uncertainty of his sexuality.

The male-gendered magical figures with whom the warlock has contact also represent an alternative order of identity in which the phallic ideal of the hardened, impermeable male body is disturbed. The Shapeshifter, for example, as his name suggests, has the power to transform his appearance by the moment. While emanating 'a sensation of knotted strength', the Shapeshifter's body does not resemble a 'muscular human' one; instead it enjoys an impossibly flexible form which can 'mould and shift [...] at will' (72). Moreover, the status of Shapeshifter's genitalia is uncertain, and is not pre-judged by the warlock despite his pronominal identification of him as male: 'A tattered loincloth hid whatever sex he was endowed with' (72). The Trickster, meanwhile, is another shape-shifting being who specialises in inventing 'constantly new forms, poised between the animal and the human', a set of 'bewildering hybrids' which anger McAteer in their parody of 'God's work of creation' (77). Rather than view the Trickster's work as blasphemy, the warlock sees it as an extension of the 'repertory of living creatures' (ibid.); in view of the warlock's own uncanny identity and the female form he is later to take, the trickster indeed represents a cross-writer *par excellence*, a transvestite of the natural world who does not care to complete his transformations and thereby draws attention to the process of becoming.

With the help of these figures, the warlock himself becomes a transformatory being with a similarly ambiguous relationship to his anatomical gender identity. His experiences of transformation into birds, animals and insects leave his body 'with a provisory feel to it even during the years when it never shifted from the human' (113). This leads to a feeling that human sexual intercourse is essentially limited:

I could not forget the couplings of other creatures and the world of those, like fish, who fertilise eggs without ever touching the creature who laid them. What humans do is one of many possibilities. My sex surprised me. I felt alienated from it, however skilfully it moved within another body to achieve climax and release. (113)

Here the warlock emerges as an uncanny heterosexual male subject in whom the sign and guarantee of male privilege becomes dissociated from the body it normatively gives form and meaning to. As the warlock matures sexually - at a time in the novel when he has renounced his magic - he is even disturbed to learn from the first girl who performs oral sex on him that his sperm is 'not like other men's, being chill and sweet where

theirs was warm and salty' (112). Not only does he regard his penis as a mere bit-part in his sexual identity, but the organ itself is the conduit for a substance which further marks his uncanny nature, his difference from the generic category of man.

Judith Butler, as I have discussed in the Preface, creates a space for similar possibilities in her postulation of a 'lesbian phallus', a construction which puts in question the natural inevitability of bodies sanctioned by the gender-differentiating law:

precisely *because* it is an idealisation, one which no body can adequately approximate, the phallus is a transferable phantasm, and its naturalised link to masculine morphology can be called into question through an aggressive reterritorialisation. (1993: 86)

In refusing to accord his penis a primary significance in relation to his gender identity and thereby de-naturalising the link between an anatomically male morphology and the assumption of power, Whyte's nameless narrator emerges as a subjectivity in a different relation to the phallus than that dictated by any Lacanian Symbolic. In fact, the phallus itself, as an originary signifier of gender differentiation and desire, is held in suspension as other possibilities of power come into play. Yet if the concept of the phallus is thereby deconstructed, in which ways can the warlock's masculinity be described?

iii: the testicular masculine or the supernatural phallus?

It has recently been suggested that the privileging of the phallus in psychoanalytic theories of gender identity is a factitious move which fails to take stock of the whole of the male genitalia, and in particular the testes. According to Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, bringing the testes into any account of morphologically determined masculinities provides for possibilities which have hitherto been regarded as feminine in character. One of these, the 'testerical' mode, which Flannigan-Saint-Aubin draws from the fact that both *testes* and *contest* derive from the Latin *testis*, or witness (1994: 244),⁷ is 'characterised by testiness and all that being testy implies: petulant, fretful, insolent, temperamental, morose and so forth' (250). On the other hand, the 'testicular' mode is experienced by men when they are 'nurturing, incubating, containing and protecting. The testicular masculine is characterised by patience, stability, and endurance' (ibid.).

Both these positions are 'considered effeminate and [are] therefore usually considered undesirable in man. It is important, however, to resist reconceiving or theorizing the testicular/testerical as nonmasculine by subsuming it under the feminine' (ibid.).

Flannigan-Saint-Aubin's reconfiguration of the anatomical basis for male gender formation at first glance allows for possibilities which, like Butler's lesbian phallus, displace the phallus 'proper' from its dominant position and allow it to be viewed as a precisely 'improper' assumption of privilege. Further, it appears to provide for a description of Whyte's warlock which takes account of the reserves and doubles of his subjectivity, his close contact with nature and his healing vocation, without simply designating these qualities as feminine ones. The testicular warlock, in counterpoint to the phallic aggressivity of such as Vincent McAteer, is ultimately less concerned with the dogma of the self-proclaimed Christian source than he is with being a channel for powers he cannot claim as his own, but which he has been given the chance to nurture and develop in order to nurture and care for others. Flannigan-Saint-Aubin's theory allows this particularly maternal subject-position to be re-signified in masculine terms, making accessible 'a new conception of the body and of the world as filtered through the body' (251) and thereby reversing the masculinist logic which assigns corporeality to female positions only.

One of the stumbling blocks of this theory, however, lies in its failure to account for another, more masculinist representation of the testes in which they are regarded as a receptacle of bravery or strength. To 'have balls', in popular cultural terms, is to possess a reserve of courage which ultimately protects masculine identities from the taint of effeminacy or the feminine. This, no doubt, is a contradictory formation: in physical terms, the very site at which men are at their most vulnerable is viewed as a locus of power. But this is not the only problem with the conception of the testicular/testerical masculine. Throughout this thesis I have attempted to deconstruct the dominant fiction, to render questionable the link between penis and phallus - between specific masculinities and the assumption of privilege - as a natural and originary one. To install an alternative masculine corporeal signifier in an attempt to displace the phallus merely repeats the logic by which body-parts come to assume a constitutive role in the construction of gender identity. If the valorisation of femininity as an articulation of

⁷ Schoene-Harwood has made use of this theory in his readings of men's texts in *Writing Men* (2000: 86-7,

bodily difference is an essentialising one, as has been claimed of certain elements in French feminist theories, the reduction of masculine identity to male biology is similarly problematic. It reiterates the rhetoric, to recall once more the terms of Butler, by which 'masculine' belongs only to 'male' and 'feminine' only to 'female', anchoring these slippery signifiers to a binary account of gender identity. If Flannigan-Saint-Aubin is keen to avoid 'subsuming' the testicular/testerical 'under the feminine', this seems to me to be another instance of the phallogocentric strategy by which masculinities are defended from the taint of femininity, reinforcing male subjectivity as a particularly defensive and monolithic structure.

In terms of Butler's arguments, it would not be so easy (nor so useful) to postulate the 'lesbian testes' as it would the 'lesbian phallus'. The point of her theory is to unveil the phallus as a phantasm, an idealisation 'which no body can adequately approximate' and therefore a property open to resignification and reappropriation in the performance of identities other than heterosexual masculinity. Since the testes do not enjoy the status of a primary Symbolic signifier, they are not so easy to dissociate from the male body and are therefore more difficult to appropriate in a deconstruction of normative gender and sexual positions. While the idea of the warlock as testicular may be useful in descriptive terms, in the context of the novel as a whole it cannot account for his relation to supernatural power because that power is also open to access by women in the novel, from his grandmother Alison through Marion, Janet Sillars, Lisbet and her coven and right up to Mrs MacCaspin in the contemporary frame. Moreover, rather than exist as a solely nurturing force, in the hands of Lisbet and her coven the supernatural can be put to the use of satisfying 'a miserable litany of human jealousy and envy' (Whyte 1997: 146), a precisely phallic and aggressive abuse of privilege also put in practice by Alison. As has been shown throughout this thesis, masculine and feminine signifiers refuse to remain separate in any articulation of power structures, economic, national or sexual. Here, just as the warlock's healing vocation feminises him in relation to the normative standards of heterosexual masculinity, so does Lisbet's appropriation of magic signify a more oppositionary, masculinist position. The 'supernatural phallus', if such a term may be used, can be appropriated and put to use in ways which replicate the masculinist assumption of power as well as being open to more transformative, regenerative significations.

In any case, *The Warlock of Strathearn*'s representation of its central character stretches the phallogocentric discourse of gender differentiation to its limits. In its representation of an alternative heterosexual masculinity, it appears to require an alternative language, a discourse capable of moving beyond the limitations of the dominant fiction, in order to describe it. It is in this context that I tentatively postulate the 'supernatural phallus', analogous to Butler's 'lesbian phallus', in opposition to the Christian phallogocentric position occupied by such as Vincent McAteer. To 'have' this phallus is to be able to produce, amongst other things, a body capable of shape-shifting and re-signification in which no penis is present; it is therefore a phallus with no naturalised link to masculine morphology. It is an archaic emblem of the life-force which goes beyond the human body and its sexual markings to encompass all the possibilities of the natural and spiritual worlds. Rather than working to differentiate and make intelligible, it governs a domain of polymorphous formations which make strange the cultural privileging of human masculinity.

The danger here, however, is that casting the warlock's subjectivity as somehow existing 'beyond' phallogocentricity would be to fall into the trap of positing another originary (if fluid) mode of identity while remaining within a discursive system which always attempts to represent its normative subject-positions as originary or 'before' discourse. The supernatural order of things is part and parcel of the very culture which opposes and attempts to silence it.⁸ There can be no 'supernatural phallus' prior to or beyond phallogocentric Christianity because of the way in which the supernatural is always-already constituted as other to that ideology. McAteer, in his violent interrogation of the warlock following the discovery of his uncanny abilities, 'may well [feel] he [is] doing God's work', and certainly believes 'in witchcraft and a devil' (Whyte 1997: 98). While McAteer is misrepresenting the practices the Warlock is engaged in (ibid.), he is simply articulating the only way in which his discourse can conceive of them. Magical powers, therefore, cannot be understood outside of this Symbolic order, but in the case of the warlock (if not in that of Lisbet or Alison) operate in excess of its dictates, producing uncanny bodies - in both a spiritual and a sexual sense - which expose normative

⁸ Foucault's 'Rule of the tactical polyvalence of discourses' is relevant to this analysis: 'we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies' (1990: 100).

positions as themselves dependent on their deviant others. The Christian phallus-logos cannot be overcome or erased through the privileging of a prior and superior signifier of power, but, when articulated from the perspective of what is other to it, can be unveiled as an impossible phantasm of privilege and become resignified, like the cross seared on the warlock's back, as a mere metonymic mark among a plurality of differently marked positions.

Further, in recasting the 'other' position as a site not of castration or lack but of openness, plenitude and extended sensory perception, the novel not only reverses the binary canny/uncanny, but subjects it to a fundamental transformation. The phallogocentric law can, to adapt Butler, 'inadvertently mobilize possibilities of "subjects" that do not merely exceed the boundaries of cultural intelligibility, but effectively expand the boundaries of what is, in fact, culturally intelligible' (1990: 29). In this way, it seems more productive to emphasise the resignification of existing relations of power which the novel's supernatural narrative allows than accord supernatural power itself some kind of primary and founding status. *The Warlock of Strathearn*'s refusal of realist (or 'culturally intelligible') strategies in the end permits a realm of significations which subvert any attempt to appropriate, differentiate and delimit meaning according to the masculinist law of gender formation. In so doing, the novel offers 'unrealistic' - or again, uncanny - gender and sexual subject positions which render any kind of dominant fictional reading of the novel problematic. The privileged male reader of *The Warlock* seeking to reinforce his claim to 'have' the phallus in an identification with a traditionally masculinist narrative authority finds instead a variety of transformative positions which make visible the very precariousness of the link between penis and phallus, and thereby offer him a more plural and performative way of regarding his own ostensibly 'straight' - or canny - identity.

iv: 'all was as it should be'?

That the phallus has no fixed place at the heart of any gender or sexual signification in the novel is further dramatised by the warlock's transformation to a female, lesbian persona.⁹ The warlock effects this change following the death of his malevolent

⁹ It has to be remarked that 'lesbian' is not a term employed by the novel; its use would in any case be anachronistic within the main narrative. Hughoc, in attempting to warn his master of the witch, uses 'a coarse Scots word for her' which the warlock refuses to record, but which does indicate that Lisbet's

grandmother, whom he had already paralysed in an attempt to prevent her and McAteer's violent persecution of him (Whyte 1997: 105), and in that sense the transformation serves as a protection from further investigation. The main motive for the crossing, however, is to gain the heart of Lisbet, a witch in the eyes of the community (although the narrator glosses this term as 'a relatively new one [...] in its application to practices which had gone on in the country places for as long as we could remember' (132)). With Lisbet he falls deeply in love, but soon learns she will not return the favours of any man. When the warlock awakes as a woman, however, it seems a form of castration has taken place:

There was [...] the problem of my hearing. And not just my hearing: something had altered in all my perceptions. In changing sex, had I become normal at last? What did normality mean? How was I to know if the state I found myself in was one a majority of human beings are familiar with? (154)

In interpreting the warlock's crossing, it is tempting to suggest a phallogocentric bias in operation here. In losing his penis, has the warlock lost his magical privileges? Has the novel merely reverted to the discourse by which the female form is characterised by lack, divesting the warlock of his powers at the same time as he divests himself of his anatomical maleness?

In the terms of my analysis, the crossing the warlock enacts in order to circumvent this problem is a secondary one: as a straight man, the warlock is already a highly ambiguous, performative and transformatory being. Because of the alterity of the 'original' from which the 'copy' is produced, the text represents the warlock's new lesbian identity from a non-phallogocentric discursive position. That is to say, the novel can only refuse to cast lesbianism as a poor imitation of the 'real thing', an inevitably dissatisfying identity defined by its lack of the phallus, because the 'real thing' is already the effect of an imitation in which the relation between penis and phallus has been questioned.¹⁰ When this newly-born woman first awakes, therefore, her exploration of

sexuality lies outwith the scope of the canny (Whyte 1997: 137). However, I justify my use of the terms 'lesbian' and 'homosexual' in the context of the narrative frame; rather than attempt to be an accurate historical fiction, *The Warlock* is presented as a text with contemporary relevance, in particular relating to Andrew Elliot's coming-out.

¹⁰ For a discussion of lesbianism as a radical deconstruction of 'the real thing' of heterosexual desire, see Butler 1993: 85-7.

her body encounters at the groin not the absence of a penis, but that 'All was as it should be' (154). Rather than represent an abdication of sexual empowerment, the vagina is described by the warlock as 'the place where [s/he] would learn new pleasures hitherto denied [him/her]' (ibid.). While s/he becomes 'the first woman who took an active role in seducing Lisbet' (158), his/her eventual sexual experiences with her underscore the fact that these 'new pleasures' cannot be understood from the perspective of his previous sexuality:

She was all things to me: friend, companion, lover, sister, seductress and seduced. In her company I learned something I had never experienced when making love with a woman in masculine form - the joys of passivity. She was a fiery bedmate, born for conquest [...] Between the sheets, her longing for mastery took the form of a desire to procure her lover an excess of pleasure for which no effort on her part could be too great. (164)

The loss of the warlock's supernatural powers, therefore, must be understood in a different way. What the warlock-become-woman appears to focalise is that to adopt a feminine persona is fraught with difficulty, a degree of impersonation and approximation. In Alan Warner's novels, as I discuss above, the assumption of a female point of view is conducted in an attempt to gain access to a subversive identity lost to heterosexual men. What is at stake, in *Morvern Callar* anyway, seems to be a cross-writing in which the masculine 'original' is erased from the text, but in such a manner as to suggest Morvern is still determined by a phallogocentric narrative authority. While Morvern does emerge, like Chris Guthrie, as something of a hybrid figure, her guise is something Warner appropriates from the very beginning, thereby circumventing any account of the difficult process of becoming. In contrast, *The Warlock of Strathearn* attempts to describe this process and in so doing foregrounds the uneasy task of construction. Rather than view femininity as an effortlessly acquired identity, Whyte's text places the warlock *in-between* his old form and his new, and in so doing not only points towards the hybridity of the cross-written position, but focuses on the loss of privilege which would accompany the change in the historical context the novel describes.

In this way the warlock does not simply awake as a woman in any complete form. The 'curse' of femininity, the menstrual cycle, is something the warlock has failed to achieve in his transformation (166), indicating a hybridity of masculine and feminine elements at the biological level of his/her being. On a cultural, gestural and sartorial plane, the warlock also has much to achieve in the process of becoming-woman. S/he has to invent and adopt a new identity, that of a young widow from Glasgow who has moved to the seclusion of the countryside, and who must be 'swathed in black to such an extent that only [the] eyes would be visible to passers-by' (156). Still wont to stride along with his confident, manly gait, s/he takes a long time 'to accept the necessity of mincing along, [his/her] legs practically glued to one another, gathering [his/her] headscarf about [his/her] face and not daring to lift [his/her] eyes from the ground' (157). Even in writing his/her love-letters to Lisbet, the warlock adopts a 'suitably feminine style, complete with carefully pondered spelling mistakes' (159). Simply becoming-woman in morphological terms is not enough; the warlock must also imitate the culturally acceptable performances of femininity if he is to pass successfully in female form.

As I have suggested, the cultural limitations accompanying womanhood in the historical context of the novel are also accounted for. While the text makes clear that supernatural powers are not the sole domain of male figures, the warlock-become-woman's loss of his/her extra-sensory perception dramatises the loss of estate which inevitably accompanies such a transformation, as well as preventing him/her any easy re-assumption of a masculine form (as would be available in any traditional, temporary act of transvestism). If adopting the identity of a widow affords the warlock certain privileges and protections, his/her situation undergoes a radical change following the arrest of Lisbet and her coven at the hands of Vincent McAteer (174):

I had once been a warlock gifted with magical powers. Now
I was a woman with no past, connected to a notorious witch
after a fashion the authorities wished to clarify, and therefore
hunted high and low. (175)

Following Lisbet's execution, the warlock escapes to Edinburgh, where s/he undergoes further reversals of fortune. Reduced to performing household duties in exchange for her keep at a tavern, a 'slut who labour[s] with [...] prostitutes' (186), s/he appears condemned to poverty until a chance meeting with a street magician, Borenus, brings his/her story to a new crisis. Borenus recognises the male figure behind the

supernatural disguise, and offers to restore this identity to the warlock provided he enslave himself (and his recovered powers) to him for twenty-one years (198-9). The warlock-become-woman becomes-man again, his supernatural powers restored, yet only to become subjugated to a patriarchal magician-scientist whose search for the philosopher's stone takes him and his new servant off to isolation in distant Bohemia. Rather than simply be returned to his privileged state with the repossession of his new body, then, the warlock finds himself tied to a kind of marital contract in which he still occupies the feminised, disenfranchised position.

What is of final significance for this discussion, then, is the manner in which the warlock is constituted yet again, in his relationship with the alchemist Borenus, as an uncanny kind of masculinity. He has regained his male form, but this does not automatically reconstitute his freedom and autonomy. Once more, the novel refuses any simple act of dominant fictional restoration by rendering illusory the connection between penis and phallus, and underlining the fact that hierarchical relations of power pertain as much between men as they do within heterosexual pairings. The penultimate, Bohemian part of the warlock's narrative, in which he finally regains his supernatural autonomy in time for a final battle with the spirit-form of his grandmother, is of lesser concern to this analysis as the main crossing strategies of the text have by this time been played out. There are elements of interest here to a gender analysis: for example, the phallus-like 'impregnable' fortress (215) in which Borenus' attempts to know, possess and manipulate matter are carried out; the manner in which that fortress is rendered pregnable by the monstrous spirit-form of Alison Crawford, an ambiguously marked female figure; and the method of Alison's final defeat, the warlock calling upon his allies in the natural and spiritual world to disperse his grandmother to 'the four corners of the earth' (240). Further, the last part of the story, in which the warlock enacts his final revenge in holding the town of Auchterarder to ransom unless they hang Vincent McAteer and erect a monument to Lisbet (246-7), certainly constitutes another ludic engagement with Scottish literature and history: the representative of phallogocentric Christianity, so often the authoritative figure in Scottish narratives, is castrated, while a figure more traditionally regarded as only the victimised other of that authority is enshrined and celebrated.¹¹ There is not the space, unfortunately, to give adequate consideration to these factors here. Most importantly, what has emerged in this

discussion is a text - more than any other discussed in this thesis - in which the assurances and assumptions of a masculinist identificatory reading are dislocated, reversed and transformed, presenting the ideal male reader with an uncanny, performative and generative image of himself. This image neither occludes the feminine nor disavows homosexuality; in shifting between the canny and the uncanny, it finally exceeds the binary of phallicism/lack and thereby offers a way of escaping the strictures of masculinist privilege, without recourse to pathos, suffering or abjectivity.

¹¹ Whyte here is teasingly suggesting an alternative history to a real monument, just outside the village of Forteviot in Perthshire, which records the burning of a seventeenth-century witch.

Conclusion

The various theories I have adopted throughout this thesis have enabled me to engage with established paradigms for comprehending Scottish literary texts while moving the debate on to new ground. As I remark in the Preface, specific discourses of class and nationality have been integral to the analysis of texts, and in particular the Glasgow novel; the purpose in Chapter One is to acknowledge this but simultaneously to introduce categories of gender, and in particular of masculinity, into the interpretative framework. The simple designation of novels such as *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation* as 'men's texts' is crucial to this design, for it articulates a further and necessary dimension to works which have previously only been labelled as 'Scottish', 'working-class' or 'Glasgow' in character. At the same time, engaging with discourses of class and nationality facilitates the introduction of theories of identification, which in turn connect with psychoanalytic and deconstructive accounts of gender identity. The analysis of ideology as an identificatory discourse permits the introduction of categories of gender and sexual identity which exceed the term's Marxist context. This, in turn, allows me to examine the ways in which Scottish men's texts interpellate reading positions which are determined by relations of gender as well as of production.

The most obvious reading position required by the texts examined in the first three chapters is that of the ideal Scottish male reader - a heterosexual, middle-class and educated reader - whose interpretative collusion is necessary to the success of the masculinist strategies of the novels. That is to say, although the texts analysed in Chapters One to Three vary in their relationship to dominant class ideology - covering bourgeois, Marxist, working-class and existential points of view - they are all governed by a phallic narrative Subject in which this ideal reader finds himself reflected, bolstering his sense of detached and universal superiority. This ideal position, however, is always more or less denigrated by the texts: privileged male identities are feminised according to their relationship to English economic and linguistic power. From *The Shipbuilders* through to *Trainspotting*, it is clear that such a reader finds himself increasingly excluded from representation: the working-class male subject is enshrined as the exemplary bearer of gender and national identity. This has the double effect of restoring the ideal reader's depleted sense of masculinity through identification with

working-class characters on the one hand, while on the other eroticising the bond thus created through the differences between privilege and lack, disembodied intellect and corporeality. The dominant fictional strategies of these novels, then - the ways in which they attempt to naturalise the link between penis and phallus, specific masculinity and power - are never absolutely assured.

This articulates only a very general summary of the kind of identificatory reading that the novels covered in Chapters One to Three appear to rely upon. The various realist and existential strategies employed produce a variety of masculine subject-positions, from idealised bodies to pathetic and abject modes of being. The degree of success the dominant fiction enjoys in the novels varies according to the peculiarities of narrative form, historical context and ideological perspective; each text, while ostensibly conservative in gender terms, contains a transformative reserve which can be articulated in an attempt to undermine its masculinist project, whether in the representation of profoundly eroticised, lacking, anguished or abjected masculinities. Yet in the traditions of Glasgow men's fiction and existentialism, both of which are avowedly realist in formal terms, the consolidation of masculine empowerment remains a central feature.

As if to underline the instability of masculine and feminine signifiers in relation to literary form, however, the realist reading equates with a feminist position in Chapter Four's analysis of Grassie Gibbon's *A Scots Quair*. Yet this text's positioning *between* realism and symbolism, or between feminist and phallogocentric modes of narration, accounts for the representation of its central female character as hybrid in gender terms. Chapters Four and Five, in their general account of cross-writing, constitute an attempt to isolate Scottish men's texts in which gender positions seem less fixed and more open to possibilities of transformation. Moreover, they allow me more fully to investigate those gender theories which emphasise performativity and difference rather than ideological captation, enabling an analysis of the relationship between male authors and their textual surrogates as flexible and open to plural readings. Focalising novels which are less rooted in the Glasgow or existential traditions seems to uncover more interesting variants and performances of masculinity, from the transvestite figure of Chris Guthrie, through Alan Warner's absurd woman and ambiguous Aircrash Investigator, and up to Christopher Whyte's sexually (and physically) polyvalent Warlock. Destabilising the 'real' in formal terms appears to assist in undermining the naturalisation of masculine

identities as privileged and originary.

That the novels analysed in the final two chapters do not so obviously require the collusion of an ideal male reader does not render the term redundant. Rather, in pointing to radically performative masculinities which embrace feminine modes of perception or being, these texts offer perspectives from which the assumed privilege of the ideal reader can begin to be unpacked and deconstructed. Insofar as the masculinist position is the one in which I, willingly or not, most readily find myself, such a deconstruction takes on a particularly personal colouring in the attempt to carve out a critical point of view which refuses to veil its own specificity. Throughout the thesis, in delineating such a point of view I have sought to emphasise its transformative possibilities, its proximity to structures of femininity and homoeroticism and its performativity. Rather than attempt any masterly (i.e. phallogocentric) account of masculinities in the twentieth-century Scottish texts I have selected, my analysis has sought out self-reflexive strategies in which the the assurances of straight, middle-class male privilege are complicated and undone. And rather than bemoan the loss of power to which the category of masculinity has become subject in the last two or three decades, I have attempted to embrace a future in which such a position can recognise itself as provisional, mutable, responsible and responsive to difference - the difference of itself as well as of others.

This, I hope, will be a tactic taken up more and more in the development of Scottish literary criticism. This thesis is necessarily selective and reductive; much more work needs to be done in an area which has remained resistant to discourses now integral to the apprehension of other literatures. For too long masculine modes of reading and writing have assumed a universal status in Scottish studies, responding to differences of class and nationality but not to those of gender and sexuality. My hope for this thesis is that it will become part of a new ethic of interpretation in which privileged male readers take more account of their own position, in order that the burden of deconstructing the phallogocentric bias in the Scottish literary tradition is not left to feminist and queer critics alone.

Appendix

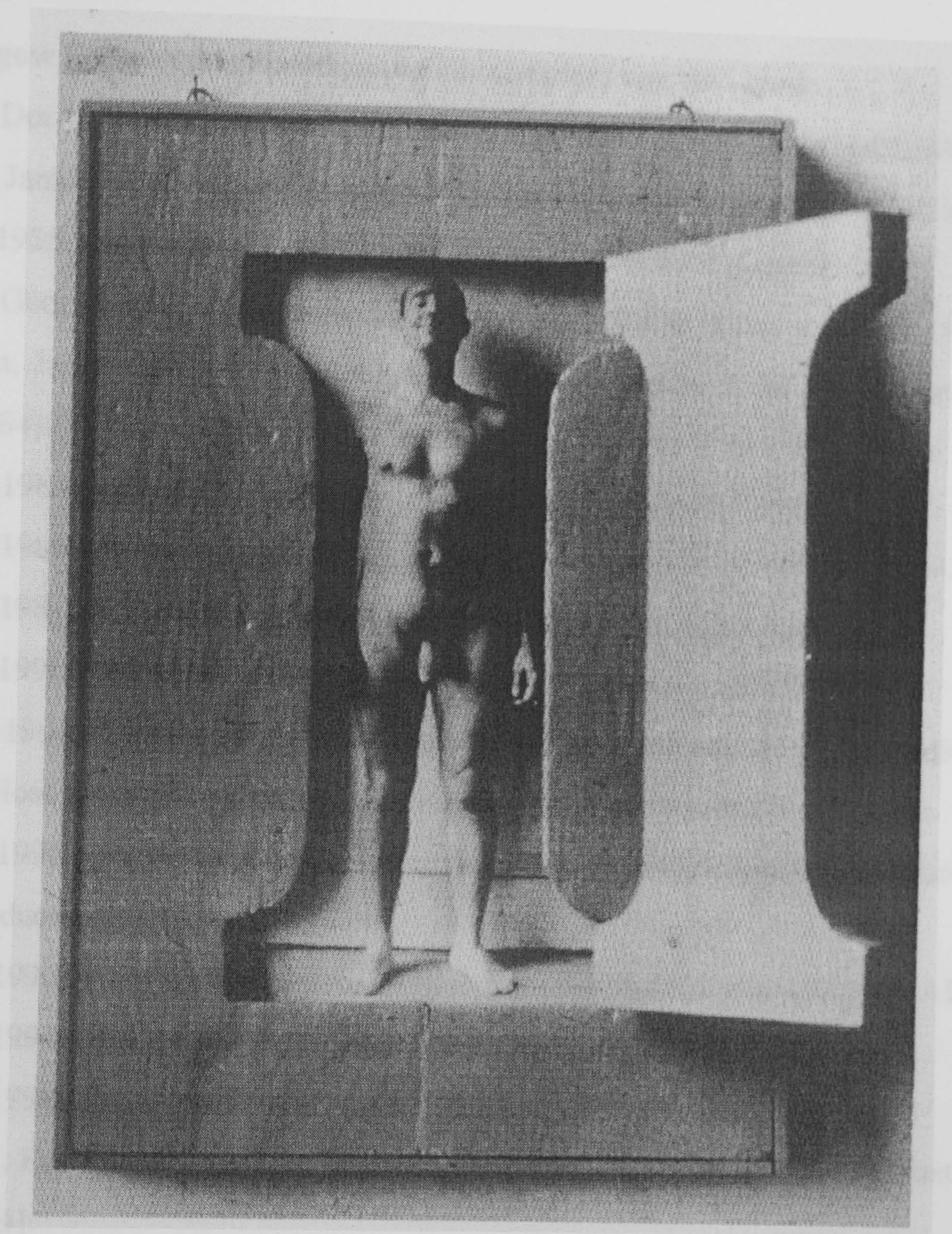
Robert Morris' *I-Box* (open) [1962]

Image reproduced from Jones 1994: 556. Photograph courtesy Leo Castelli Gallery and the artist © Robert Morris / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

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