TRADITION AND REBELLION:

THE POETRY OF JOHN DAVIDSON

BY

HAZEL HYND

In fulfilment of the degree of PhD
Department of Scottish Literature
Faculty of Arts, University of Glasgow, August 2001

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

ABSTRACT

John Davidson (1857-1909): Tradition and Rebellion

The thesis is in four chapters with an introduction and conclusion. It deals principally with the poetry of John Davidson though, where appropriate, there is discussion of his plays, novels and short-stories.

Chapter 1 deals with Davidson's formative influences and stresses the importance of his background in forming some of the most fundamental and enduring concerns within his writing. Particular focus is given to outlining the influence of factors such as Knoxian Calvinism, the Scottish social environment and landscape, and issues of rebellion and dissociation expressed through recurrent themes of familial tension and division.

Chapter 2 aims to illustrate that Davidson's displaced status is a key factor in producing the innovative modernist propensity and style of his work. Issues of identity and displacement are examined as factors which motivated Davidson's experiments with the form and subject-matter of his poetry and influenced his use of multiplicity of voice, dramatic persona, irony, dualism and contradiction. Davidson's subsequent influence upon the writing and thought of Hugh MacDiarmid is also examined in this section.

Chapter 3 examines Davidson's attempts to engage with and manipulate concepts of Scottish and British identity; and his preoccupation with themes of war, empire and the nature of the heroic nation.

Chapter 4 examines the relationship of Davidson's ideas to Scottish thought. Davidson is contextualised in this respect through the use of comparison with writers such as James Thomson and Robert Buchanan, and more particularly to Thomas Carlyle. This chapter also deals with features of irony and dualism and with Davidson's use of language in relation to the subject of identity and the nature and function of the writer.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT 2
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS 7
INTRODUCTION REASSESSING DAVIDSON 8
CHAPTER 1 FORMATIVE INFLUENCES 19
Davidson and the Dissociative Sensibility 19
Patriarchal Authority, Filial Piety and the Divided Family 41
Conceptual Oppositions within Knoxian Calvinism 58
CHAPTER 2 THE DISPLACED SCOT AS PROTO-MODERNIST 74
Multiplicity of Voice and Perspective 74
Dissociation and the Proto-Modernist Sensibility 89
The Authority of Influence: John Davidson and Hugh MacDiarmid 112
CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY 132
The Issue of 'Scottish Identity' 132
Exploring Concepts of Scottish Identity 141
War, Empire and the Nature of the Heroic Nation 161
CHAPTER 4 DAVIDSON'S IDEAS IN RELATION TO SCOTTISH THOUGHT 187
Davidson and the Secular Prophets 187
The Authority of Influence: John Davidson and Thomas Carlyle 191
Irony and Dualism 208
Davidson and Language 225
CONCLUSION JOHN DAVIDSON: PRISONER AND PIONEER 246
BIBLIOGRAPHY 250

Dedicated to my mother and father

Acknowledgements

My first debt of thanks is to Professor Douglas Gifford for his guidance in the preparation of this thesis. My special thanks to Gerry Carruthers, Carol Collins, Sarah Dunnigan and Alan Riach for their advice and guidance.

My thanks to Judith Harriman and Jean Anderson for their technical guidance and assistance.

I would also like to thank Robert A.H. Smith, Curator, Modern Political Papers of the British Library; Colin Harris and Judith Priestman of the Department of Special Collections and Western Manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, Oxford and Peter Asplin, Curator of Special Collections at Glasgow University Library. Additional thanks to Strathclyde University Library, the Mitchell Library of Glasgow and The National Library of Edinburgh for having provided me with essential material in support of my research.

Thanks also to Amanda J. MacLeod, Hanne Tange and Inga Águstsdottir for their support.

Declaration

This thesis represents my own unassisted work, and no part of it has been submitted previously for any academic qualification. The views expressed are my own and not those of the University of Glasgow.

Hazel Hynd

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

The following forms of reference are used throughout.

BL	*Baptist Lake* (London: Ward and Downey, 1894)
C	'Characteristics', *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by H.D. Traill, Centenary Edition, 30 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-99), vol. 28
DA	*Diabolus Amans* (Glasgow: Wilson and McCormick 1885)
GMPN	*The Great Men and a Practical Novelist* (London: Ward and Downey, 1891)
MAOC	*Miss Armstrong and Other Circumstances* (London: Methuen and Co., 1896)
MH	*In A Music-Hall and Other Poems* (London: Ward and Downey, 1981)
OHHW	*On Heroes and Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Centenary Edition, vol. 5
PP	*Past and Present*, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Centenary Edition, vol. 10
R	*Reminiscences*, vol. 1, ed. by James Anthony Froude (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1881)
S	*Smith: A Tragic Farce* in *Plays by John Davidson* (London: Matthews and Lane, 1894)
SP	*Sentences and Paragraphs* (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1893)
SR	*Sartor Resartus*, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by H.D. Traill, Centenary Edition, vol. 1
ST	'Signs of the Times', *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Centenary Edition, vol. 27
THN	David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (London: Penguin, 1986)
TJD	*The Testament of John Davidson* (London: Grant Richards, 1908)
TM	*The Triumph of Mammon* (London: Grant Richards, 1907)
WR	'Wotton Reinfred', in *The Last Words of Thomas Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1892), pp. 1-148

INTRODUCTION
REASSESSING DAVIDSON

This thesis is intended to constitute a long overdue reassessment of Davidson's writing within a Scottish literary context. In so doing the aim is to complement rather than replace existing studies which neglect this area. Davidson has traditionally been viewed either as a minor English writer or, at best, as a marginal figure within Scottish literature. In comparison with contemporaries such as R.L. Stevenson and James Barrie, Davidson remains the lesser known figure. Apart from short essays by Tom Hubbard, R.M. Wenley, Andrew Turnbull and Hugh MacDiarmid, none of the major studies of Davidson (including book-length works) deal in any depth with his relationship to Scottish literature or culture. In the majority of critical accounts Davidson has been readily compared with a variety of writers and thinkers ranging from Nietzsche[1], Ibsen and Swinburne to Eliot and Woolf[2], and to a range of literary movements from the fin de siecle and decadence of the 1890s[3] to the development of modernism and post-modernism[4]. What the reader will not find is an extended analysis of Davidson within a Scottish literary context or detailed comparison with other Scottish writers.

Critics have failed to appreciate the extent to which many of Davidson's ideas have their origins in his formative experience or the enduring influence of that experience upon him. Most commentators and critics ignore or forget the fact that Davidson was born in Scotland and did not leave until he was thirty-two years of age;[5] he therefore spent roughly two-thirds of his life in Scotland. Davidson was brought up directly under the influence of the Scottish religious and educational system. He was educated at Edinburgh university, he worked in laboratories as an analyst's assistant and was privy to the practical rational tradition of Scottish thought and industry; he also had an extended and intimate knowledge of Scottish education through his various teaching jobs. Davidson wrote for the *Glasgow Herald* and his early works, such as the play *Bruce* (1886), and poetry such as 'John Baliol', 'Thomas the Rhymer', 'The Rev. E. Kirk B.D.', 'The Rev. Habakkuk McGruther of Cape Wrath in 1879' and 'Ayrshire Jock' are strongly and explicitly influenced by the events of Scottish history or features of Scottish culture. Early plays were inspired by earlier Scottish writers; *An Unhistorical Pastoral* was influenced by his reading of Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* and *A Romantic Farce* by Hogg's *Mary Montgomery*.

The following statement by John Sloan, Davidson's most recent biographer, reflects the inability of critics to categorise Davidson:

> John Davidson has always been a difficult poet to place. Is he Scottish or English? A poet of the Decadence or of the counter-Decadence? Is he a minor lyricist of the 1890s, or does the ambitious poetry of his later years place him among the major poets? Are his scientific theories the enemy of poetry?[6]

Lack of background material has encouraged partial and ambiguous assessments. This was exacerbated by an injunction in Davidson's will, drawn up in August 1908, prohibiting biographical publications; this was not removed until 1961. John Sloan has done much to address the scarcity of biographical information, providing a much needed biography detailing the writer's life and work, *John Davidson, First of the Moderns* (1995), the title drawing upon the early modernist appeal in Davidson's work but still paying no attention to its Scottish context and roots. However, as yet, no account has given specific consideration to Davidson as a Scottish writer, or to his complex, ambivalent relationship with Scottish literature and culture.

The tendency to view Davidson as an enigmatic figure is the product of criticism which is vague or limited in knowledge of Scottish literature and culture. Critics such as J.B.Townsend, John A. Lester jnr. and Caroll V. Peterson acknowledge but seriously underestimate the influence of Knoxian Calvinism upon the Scottish literary consciousness. They fail to realise that Davidson's assertion of the significance of the great man transposes the religious principle of the divinely elect into a secular context. Similarly, his emphasis upon individual resolve is akin to Carlyle's development of the Presbyterian work ethic; while the prophetic voice of his testaments and tragedies has a kinship with that of Thomas Carlyle and James Thomson in seeking to replace the lost security and affirmation of the Calvinist tradition with the resolved and assertive voice of the secular and surrogate prophet.

Lack of understanding concerning Davidson's background and influences frequently leads to misreadings of his work and ideas. David S. Thatcher, for example, states that '...beginning as a poet of strong socialist tendencies, who could write the compassionate and much-praised 'Thirty Bob a Week,' he developed into a writer of plays and 'testaments' which espouse a belief in the virtues of unmitigated egoism.'[7] This is not only a misreading of 'Thirty Bob a Week' but also a failure to recognise the fact that Davidson inherited and retained a set of contradictory values. His Carlylean evocation of the great man was fused with an antipathy toward affectation, in both social and literary

spheres; he combined a sense of Burnsian social realism and egalitarianism with a contempt for the masses; the hero and the underdog are both central to his poetry and constitute features which suggest a profound, albeit problematic and continuing relationship with his native context. His social poetry of the outcast and the underdog, his emphasis upon realism and his corresponding distaste for affectation, relate to a distinctly Scottish egalitarian sensibility in poetry which extends from Burns to MacDiarmid. His experiments with idiomatic verse and dialect and reluctance to conform to the conventions of standard English can be seen as deriving from a rich Scots tradition of vernacular poetry.

Apart from vagueness and over generalisation there is also a tendency for critics to opt out of engaging with anything outwith the safest and most well-established comparisons. For example, critics past and present[8] have placed an exclusive emphasis upon Frederich Nietzsche as the primary influence upon Davidson's philosophical thought. Despite critical opinion to the contrary, his ideas were not initially or exclusively taken from Nietzsche (the first translations of Nietzsche did not appear in Britain until 1896)[9], as he himself took the trouble to refute in a letter[10] and a newspaper article,[11] but formed much earlier from the influence of Carlyle. It is not the comparison with Nietzsche which is in itself at fault but rather its exclusivity which is the main concern. For example, John A. Lester jr. shows a marked critical reluctance to engage with a wider comparative framework despite conceding its existence:

> The phenomena of influence will never present itself in a pure state, one mind singly and clearly influencing another as it were *in vacuo*. Thomas Carlyle was a shaping force in Davidson's thought long before Nietzsche, and the influence was deeper and more lasting [...]. But the impact of Nietzsche is more distinct and more measurable[12]

Lester proceeds to compare Davidson with Nietzsche and never mentions Carlyle again. Comparisons between Nietzsche and Davidson have been made repeatedly and in isolation; though valid this becomes misleading because it obscures other influences. Studies such as the unpublished PhD thesis of Eric Northey (1976), articles by D.S. Thatcher and John A. Lester and Caroll V. Peterson's book *John Davidson* (1972) emphasise, too exclusively, the influence of Nietzschean philosophy upon Davidson's thought. A stimulating comparison can become dangerous when it is taken to be exclusive. In fact, Davidson was influenced by a range of Scottish writers from his early reading of Alan Ramsay, James Hogg, Thomas Carlyle and Alexander Smith.

One reason for critics having evaded comparisons with Carlyle may be that Carlyle himself has for too long been viewed outwith a Scottish frame of reference. Ralph Jessop's *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* (1997) is the only booklength study which attempts to address and rectify this imbalance in critical thinking:

> Carlyle's interest in Goethe and many other German writers is unquestionably established. Studies of the German dimension of his work are undeniably valuable. But the Germanized Carlyle has all but entirely over-shadowed his Scottish philosophical roots as though the thought, the 'Voice and the Work of a Nation of hardy endeavouring considering men' had no existence and had not been unfolded anew through Carlyle.[13]

Jessop moves away from the misleading picture which an emphasis upon Carlyle's interest in German writers when taken in isolation provides, to establish a much more intricate and complex appreciation of the nature of influence upon Carlyle's thought. The influence of the Scottish philosophical tradition predisposed Carlyle to an interest in German thought and this, in turn, led the Germanized Carlyle to influence other Scottish thinkers such as James Hutchison Stirling and Edward Caird.[14] The influence of David Hume, Thomas Reid and Sir William Hamilton when added to the well-established German sources of influence produce a fuller and more accurate understanding of Carlyle. Tracing the potential influence of others such as Edward Irving or literary figures such as Hugh Blair, Sir Walter Scott, John Wilson, James Hogg and John Galt would not only provide a greater understanding of Carlyle but establish his neglected status and influence as a Scottish writer and thinker.

If Carlyle has been the victim of narrow critical interpretations it is hardly surprising that, in turn, Carlyle's influence upon Davidson has been ignored or that any influence of the Scottish philosophical tradition upon Davidson's thinking entirely omitted. Yet within Davidson's work many lines of Scottish philosophical discourse are apparent. Davidson emphasised the value of instinct and sensuality, in part rebelling against the restraints of religious belief but also drawing upon an established component of Scottish thought. Reid and the Scottish School of Common Sense, though opposed to sensualism (indeed Davidson also satirises the sensualism of the fin de siecle and decadence), emphasise an immediate contact with reality and the value of instinct and intuitive understanding. Reidian philosophy, emerging as a response to Hume, is also critical in nature and prefigures the discursive and critical propensity which is deeply embedded in Davidson's writing. Davidson's distrust of language and of metaphysics and his concern with the problem of repesentationalism need to be considered in relation to Reid and Carlyle. The

influence of Hume, the general bias of Reidian thought and the Scottish philosophical tradition may have helped to shape Davidson's views, including his interpretation of Nietzsche about whom he was undoubtedly interested. Without such acknowledgement the Germanized or Anglicised Davidson will forever remain a partial, two-dimensional figure.

Some reasons for this negligence or insensitivity toward the importance of Davidson's cultural and intellectual background and its influence upon his work can be found in two studies to which this thesis is indebted: Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992) and Cairns Craig's *Out of History* (1996). Davidson exemplifies the kind of critical discrimination which they identify. Part of the problem lies in the entrenched perspectives which label Scottish writing as parochial. Hitherto, the provincial writer has been associated with idealism and retrospective nostalgia. Certain modes and genres have contributed to such negative definitions of provincialism. These include the Kailyard novel with its static, compliant parish; the Celtic Twilight with its self-indulgent, elegaic poetry; Historical Romance fiction with its characteristic escapism, and the Burns myth with its simplified romanticism. Crawford's analysis provides a radical re-definition of the 'provincial' or 'parochial' writer. The provincial writer can work at the heart of modernism, redefining the provincial as dynamic, outward-looking and innovatory, with diverse and eclectic interests. This type of provincial writer counteracts tradition with new literary possibilities. This is well illustrated by the disparity between the writer Davidson actually was and the negative ways in which he sometimes felt he was perceived. The stinging complaint of W.B. Yeats that he was 'provincial and but half articulate',[15] betraying Yeats' own self-defensiveness as an outsider in London, contrasts sharply with Davidson's experimental work and his skill in using modern subject-matter. Modern criticism is less scathing but continues to preserve the assumption that 'provincial' constitutes a localised and traditional sensibility. For all that John Sloan recognises Davidson as a modern, he continues to perceive him as provincial, for example, he remarks that: 'Given the identification of Modernism as international and cosmopolitan, John Davidson would seem an unlikely candidate for the role of 'first of the moderns'.'[16] In fact the perceived tension between the regional writer and writing of international relevance and outlook lies more often in the realm of critical perceptions than in reality. The desire to re-contextualise Davidson within a Scottish literary framework stems, not from a narrowly nationalistic focus, but to demonstrate that Davidson merits consideration as part of an enduring aspect of Scottish writing which is modern, diverse, experimental, eclectic and outward-looking.

A further problem is that Scottish writers are subject to the cultural absorption induced by the canonical status of 'English literature'. Craig has observed that writers who leave their native context are viewed as though they had 'somehow stripped themselves of their pasts as soon as they arrived in the metropolis.'[17] Contrary to popular belief Davidson did recognise and locate himself within a disenfranchised community of expatriate Scots. In London he was acquainted with J.M. Barrie, Robert Buchanan and William Sharp ('Fiona Macleod') who, like himself, corresponded with John Nichol.[18] He retained an enduring interest in R.L. Stevenson and formed a strong attachment to the work of James Thomson with whom he felt an affinity, not only in philosophical and literary terms, but in his struggle to achieve publication and recognition. In a letter to Bertram Dobell, a second-hand bookseller who knew Thomson and who made a present of Thomson's books to Davidson, the younger poet shows a keen interest and appreciation of his countryman:

> Dear Mr Dobell, I told you that I had read Thomson's 'Life'*, and then I asked you 'if you had known Thomson' [...] it is true that I have read his life, and the 'Memoir' to 'A voice from the Nile', the story of his difficulties in finding a publisher and his success at last being perfectly clear in my mind [...]. The gift of Thomson's books from you makes me feel as if in some measure they had come from himself; and your appreciation of my own attempts which I valued much before are now priceless to me.[19] (*Henry Salt, *The Life of James Thomson*, London, 1889)

In particular Thomson and Buchanan, the religous heretics, whose poetry reflects the condition of the spiritual outcast and dispossessed individual, have close affinities with Davidson. Expatriate Scots, of whom Davidson is a case in point, did not effect a chameleon-like alteration of sensibility when they went elsewhere. Instead, they remained Scots who were aware of their displaced literary community.

If writers such as Alexander Smith, William Alexander, James Young Geddes, James Thomson and John Davidson are given the status they deserve then a more complex and diverse profile of 19th century Scottish literature will emerge. If those who stayed at home, such as James Young Geddes and Alexander Smith, are 'rediscovered' and those who left, like R.L. Stevenson, George MacDonald, Thomson and Davidson are found never to have departed, in terms of their literary and thematic preoccupations, then orthodoxies regarding Scotland's literary past need to be revised.

Davidson is often seen as a reactionary, rebelling against Romanticism, Aestheticism and Decadence, Kailyard and Escapist traditions, but he continued to engage with an enduring Scottish context which he did not find negative, a context which included Scott, Carlyle,

Smith, Stevenson and Thomson. As John Sloan notes 'it was Scott and Carlyle who were to be decisive in shaping his literary manner. From Scott, he formed a lifelong attachment to the ballad form, in which oral tradition and the sophistications of metropolitan culture meet, as they were again to do in Modernism.' Sloan also cites Robert Crawford's argument that the eclectic, anthropological tendencies in Scott and Carlyle are 'proto-Modernist' in character,[20] and this seems especially relevant in the context of Davidson's indebtedness to both writers. Further, noting the influence of Alexander Smith, J.B. Townsend suggests that:

> Before Davidson, Smith wrote of trains and telegraph wires in *A Life Drama*, where they symbolise middle-class faith in material progress, and in *City Poems* (1857) where they are celebrated for their own sake. Glasgow's foundries, black river, and stone walls inspired Smith's songs as the sooty bricks of Fleet Street and the oily Thames later inspired Davidson's. The impressionistic essays comprising description of country scenes, local legends and allusion, and fresh, ironical observations found in Smith's *Dreamthorp* (1863) and *A Summer in Skye* (1865) prompted the younger Scot's *Sentences and Paragraphs* and *A Random Itinerary*.[21]

Smith was also linked with the Spasmodics, who asserted the poet's right to creative autonomy and to despise the conventions that bind other men; an imperative which Davidson took to heart.

The title of the thesis 'tradition and rebellion' draws attention to the problematic nature of cultural and literary influences. On the one hand, much of Davidson's work is influenced by Scottish themes and issues, but at the same time he reacted against the popularisation of Scottish literature and culture. For example, he was cynical regarding the corruption of Burns into a cult of rural sentimentality and nostalgia, the artificial use of *Braid Scots* and the burlesque music-hall associations surrounding Scottish culture. He felt a similar ambivalence toward external literary influences. His friendship with Professor John Nichol of Glasgow University and, through his circle, his brief association with the poet Swinburne, encouraged him to draw upon the English pastoral tradition. Davidson felt both stimulated and restricted by native and external influences alike, and in consequence he sought to preserve his independence by formulating his own style and selecting his own subject-matter. The result is an eclectic, experimental writer who deals with conventionally 'unpoetic' themes; who draws upon a wide variety of literary influences and has affinities with a range of writers from Alexander Smith, James Thomson and Thomas Carlyle to Robert Browning, Walt Whitman, Henrik Ibsen and Arthur Hugh Clough; who fills his prose and his plays with complex philosophical issues or with subversive irony and

destabilising humour; all in a manner which subordinates convention to the autonomy of the writer. Davidson's cultural dislocation effectively constituted a defining factor in shaping his literary objectives. His poetry and prose is characterised by its use of irony, multiple voices and divergent perspectives, strategies used to free himself from any established style or perspective and he defined himself as the itinerant, the peripheral observer or commentator and man apart, yet these assertions stem from native cultural influences which remained to affect the profile of his writing.

In 1917 a young American academic, Hayim Fineman, published a study of Davidson which was reviewed by Virginia Woolf for the *Times Literary Supplement.*[22] The book drew Woolf's attention to Davidson's social and urban poetry and, in turn, Woolf's article was the first to draw attention to Davidson as an early modernist writer. Subsequently, T.S. Eliot and Hugh MacDiarmid also praised Davidson's urban poetry, citing his use of dramatic idiom, social realism and contemporary relevance as among the main qualities of his verse. MacDiarmid was particularly interested in Davidson's success in incorporating issues of science and modernity into the realm of poetry. Eliot was attracted to Davidson's ability to convey character and thereby articulate the growing alienation of the individual within modern society. As with many artists who question the values of their time, recognition of Davidson was deferred to the next generation. It required writers such as Virginia Woolf, T.S. Eliot and Hugh MacDiarmid, to be more receptive to Davidson's ideas and influence. Thereafter, he continued to fascinate critics on both sides of the Atlantic. Yet Davidson remains something of an enigma because the forces which shaped his character and his ideas have largely remained obscure or misunderstood.

In this thesis Davidson will be examined as an early modernist precisely because of his provincial status. Eclecticism, irony, narrative flux, instability, self-reflexivity, multiplicity of voice and perspective, point to a form of literary experimentation that is born out of a crisis of identity, a sense of alienation, and is complicated by an awareness of dualism found in the tension of being both Scottish and North British. The provincial writer, familiar with displacement and alienation, critical of received ideas, iconoclastic and experimental in method and actively engaging with a plural, diverse and contradictory literary framework, anticipates the concerns associated with modernist and post-modernist writing.

This thesis will argue that Davidson's identity as a Scot constitutes the defining and motivating force behind his ideas and his writing. By analysing the issue of cultural

identity and clarifying the Scottish influences which affected Davidson's work and ideas it is suggested that a clearer understanding of the dilemmas which he faced as a writer may be found, in addition to an appreciation of his huge achievement. Critics, such as Lester, Northey and Townsend, tend to adhere to established and isolated patterns of influence which create a false impression of simplicity.

This thesis begins by addressing Davidson's intensely personal experience of the intellectual and institutional fabric of nineteenth century Scotland and outlines the framework which fostered his most enduring preoccupations. Formative influences, particularly the Scottish education system, the changing fabric of society, Scottish Calvinism and the Presbyterian ethos of conformity and propriety will be examined in relation to the tensions and challenges facing Scottish literature and culture during the period with which his writing engages. Features of his writing which have often been misunderstood by critics will also be clarified such as the symbolic value of patriarchal tensions within Davidson's poetry.

Subsequently, it will be argued that Davidson's cultural background and the tensions he experienced as a result, constitute the motivating force behind his experimental, early Modernist approach and that this has strong affinities with other Scots writers of the period. It will be shown that there is a group of writers including James Thomson, James Young Geddes, Robert Buchanan, R.L. Stevenson and Davidson himself who constitute a dynamic literary movement. Often viewed negatively for their dissociative response to native cultural traditions, these writers in fact use their inherited influences to produce literature which can be classified as Modernist and even Post-Modernist in style and outlook. Thereafter, Davidson's complex, often deliberately contradictory sense of national identity, his ambivalence toward British literature and Victorian imperialism and the status of the writer, particularly that of the expatriate writer, will be addressed. His use of irony, multiplicity of voice, his evocation of alienation and his overt ambivalence concerning identity in both personal and national terms will be compared with earlier 18th century Scottish writers and with an emergent modernist sensibility.

Finally, his development of a materialist philosophy stemming from his antipathy toward Scottish religiosity but articulated in the style of a secular prophet, unable to dissociate himself entirely from the framework of native influence, will be examined. A Scottish dimension will again be offered qualifying much used comparisons with Nietzsche and

acknowledging other less known but important influences such as Davidson's affinities with Carlyle and Thomson.

A central technique of this thesis, used to restore Davidson to a Scottish literary context and to demonstrate his relevance within that context, is to explore his work in comparative terms, drawing upon similarities with other earlier, contemporary, and later writers. This extends from Boswell, Smollett and Burns to the 19th century context of Thomas Carlyle, Robert Louis Stevenson, James Barrie, Robert Buchanan, James Thomson and James Young Geddes. A focus of comparative analysis is provided by issues such as imperialism, social concerns, philosophical influences and formal considerations. In addition two comparative 'case studies' are offered, the first an illustration of Davidson's influence upon Hugh MacDiarmid and the second an illustration of Thomas Carlyle's influence upon Davidson. These are intended to provide some indication of the value of recontextualising Davidson within a Scottish literary and conceptual framework. Overall, Davidson will be presented as a complex and often misunderstood writer, whose genuine quality and depth are made manifest when subjected to the type of revisionary analysis which has been outlined above.

---

1 See D.S. Thatcher's chapter entitled 'John Davidson' in *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1970); John A. Lester jr., 'Friedrich Nietzsche and John Davidson: A Study in Influence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 18 (1957), pp.411-29.

2 See John Sloan's introduction in his bibliography of Davidson, entitled *John Davidson: First of the Moderns* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) or Hayim Fineman's *John Davidson: A Study of the Relation of his Ideas to his Poetry* (London: Folcroft Library Editions, 1978).

3 Holbrook Jackson, *The 1890s: A Review of Art and Ideas* (London: The Harvester Press, 1976) deals with Davidson's significance to the *fin-de-siecle* and decadence influences of the period.

4 See Mary O'Connor's *John Davidson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987).

5 Davidson was born in Barrhead, Renfrewshire, the son of an Evangelican Union minister. The family moved to Greenock before Davidson's first birthday. John Sloan's biography, *John Davidson, First of the Moderns* is the only biography currently available, and provides extensive background information on the writer.

6 John Sloan, *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. ix.

7 Thatcher, p. 53.

8 See Thatcher, Chapter 3; Lester Jr., 'A Study in Influence', pp. 53-92; Eric Northey, 'The Poetry of John Davidson (1857-1900) in its Social, Political and Philosophical Contexts' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1976).

9 The first English translation of Nietzsche's work appeared in 1896 in 2 volumes. These were *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *The Case of Wagner* (which also included

Nietzsche contra Wagner, *Twilight of the Idols* and *The Antichrist*).

10 Letter to Grant Richards (publisher of Davidson's works from 1901) dated 7 July 1902, National Library, MS 3356 fol. 34.

11 John Davidson, 'A Poetic Disciple of Nietzsche', *Daily Chronicle*, 23 May, 1902, p. 3.

12 Lester jr., 'A Study in Influence', pp. 411-12.

13 Ralph Jessop, *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* (London: Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 197. The reference within this quotation is from *An Inquiry into the Human Mind: On the Principles of Common Sense, Works of Thomas Reid*, I, ii, 99RB.

14 Jessop, p. 198.

15 W.B.Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1956), p. 316.

16 Sloan, *John Davidson First of the Moderns*, p. ix.

17 Cairns Craig, *Out of History* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 19.

18 Letter to William Symington McCormick, June 1890, notes Davidson's acquaintance with Buchanan and Sharpe, Glasgow University Library, MS Gen. 548/3/1 fol.40.

19 Letter to Bertram Dobell, 25 November, 1890, Bodleian Library, MS Dobell c. 8, fol. 193.

20 Sloan, *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson*, p. xi.

21 J.B. Townsend, *John Davidson: Poet of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), p. 109.

22 Virginia Woolf, *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 August, 1917, p. 390.

CHAPTER 1 FORMATIVE INFLUENCES

Davidson and the Dissociative Sensibility

Davidson, in both his poetry and prose, expressed his disaffection with the cultural and institutional orthodoxy of nineteenth century Scotland. He reacted against traditional assumptions by depicting what Douglas Gifford has defined as processes of cultural degeneration and dissociation[1]. At the same time as Barrie, Crockett and MacLaren were creating the archetype of the local, picturesque, paternal Scottish community, Davidson was preoccupied with portraying its antithesis. This section will identify the cultural and institutional forces which Davidson rejected and the diagnostic and dissociative writing which this rejection produced.

Davidson's critical perspective is shared with others who questioned the traditionalists in Scottish religion, education and philosophy. A context of radical thought extended from David Hume's devastating scepticism to the critical nature of Reid's philosophy. Robert Chambers book *The Vestiges of Creation* (1844), influenced by the geological researches of fellow Scot, Charles Lyell, constituted a direct challenge to the Book of Genesis and provoked Hugh Miller's response, *In the Footprints of the Creator* (1849), in which Miller attempted to reconcile advancing knowledge with traditional belief. Davidson was aware of such questioning from an early age. He read Carlyle in his youth and was aware of his critical questioning. He was also aware of the theological controversy surrounding the Robertson Smith case which raged in Scotland from 1876 to 1880 and he ultimately became influenced by James Thomson's materialism.

Davidson's perception of Scotland was that of an environment governed by powerful but negative forces. His upbringing as a minister's son and his subsequent experience as a schoolteacher did not give him a favourable opinion of the two institutions which had historically governed and defined the national character. Furthermore, the changing economic and industrial profile of Scotland led him to view commerce as an additional force curbing individual autonomy. His upbringing in Greenock exposed him to a range of tensions which Andrew Turnbull has described as the conflict between 'the ugliness of Greenock [...] and the beauty of its setting the Firth of Clyde [...] between extreme wealth and extreme poverty [...] between enthusiasm, belief, opposed to methodical exactitude and a sceptical outlook'.[2] It is within this contentious context that Davidson came to reject both the Evangelicalism of his father and what he perceived as the latent parochialism of

the Scottish mindset, with its restrictive sense of social conformity and respectability. He came to view Scotland, not only as a place of contradiction and contrast, but specifically as a place of austerity, stasis, evasive retrospection and as an environment which disabled the individual's creative and imaginative capacity. This resulted from the dogma and rhetoric of its institutions and the cultural perspectives which they engendered.

Davidson provides a negative view of the Scottish environment and of the paternal influence of its ministers and schoolmasters. An account of the poet's formative influences is given in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' (1894). The poem is explicitly constructed from tensions, signalled by the title with its unlikely fusion of 'blank verse' and 'ballad'. The poem depicts a landscape which possesses both rural beauty and the harsh utility of industry and economics. From this framework other tensions emerge such as the conflict between natural impulse and social repression; sensuality and respectability; between vying personalities and beliefs; rationalism and faith; good and evil; the antipathy between parent and child; rebellion and conformity. Davidson uses these contrasts to express the conflict between the individual will and institutional dogma.

The poem opens with an indictment of the unhealthy fixity and stagnation which the speaker attributes directly to the Scottish landscape:

> His father's house looked out across a firth
> Broad-bosomed like a mere, beside a town
> Far in the North, where Time could take his ease,
> and Change hold holiday; where Old and New
> Weltered upon the border of the world. (1-5)[3]

This verse is employed as a repeated refrain within the poem, forming an indictment of an environment which is stagnant and repressive. It is a landscape that is in bondage to its past. Such condemnation is reiterated in a letter to Algernon Swinburne whom Davidson met once through his acquaintance with John Nichol, Professor of English Literature at Glasgow University. The twenty-one year old Davidson refers to 'the Philistinism in which I have been brought up, and which is both the nitrogen and the oxygen of the murky atmosphere of Greenock.'[4]

Davidson's evocation of Greenock is very similar to the way in which a contemporary poet, James Young Geddes, depicts his native Dundee in 'The Spectre Clock of Alyth' (1886):

> Surveying fair and fertile lands,

'Neath the shadowing hills the Old Church stands-
Calmly, holily, looking down
On the quiet streets of the country town-
With a far away look which seems to say,
'I belong to the things of yesterday' (1-6)[5]

In both poems the retrospective view is equated with religious values as it is the 'Old Church' which has 'a far away look' while, in Davidson's poem, the 'father's house' which 'looked out across a firth' is the minister's manse. Both places are looking backward, they are both static, but the tone in Davidson's poem has a more critical edge. 'Weltered' evokes a stronger sense of stagnation than the tranquil vision produced by Geddes. The sleepy atmosphere in Geddes's poem becomes stifling in Davidson's depiction of an anachronistic Scotland.

Within this context of degeneration, the first contradiction to be confronted by Davidson is the conflict which emerges between pastoral and urban landscapes:

The villages that sleep the winter through,
And, wakening with the spring, keep festival
All summer and all autumn: this grey town
That pipes the morning up before the lark
With shrieking steam, and from a hundred stalks
Lacquers the sooty sky; where hammers clang
On iron hulls, and cranes in harbours creak (21-27)[6]

Eric Northey explains that, 'the town of Greenock was, and is, in utter contrast to its setting; a contrast to which Davidson returned again and again in his poetry'.[7] The nineteenth century had brought dramatic reconstruction to the Scottish economy with a progressive shift into industry and manufacturing with consequent physical, social and psychological pressures as a result of the new commercially driven environment. Nature and the man-made world, not only of science and technology, but of rules and inhibitions, became a lasting source of contention in Davidson's thought.

Davidson, like Carlyle, resented the stultifying nature of an increasingly mechanical society in which systems eclipse ideas and produce mechanical responses within education, religion and work. The natural man, who can respond to his instinct and thereby transgress the repression of creed, custom, and societal expectation, is used by Davidson to overcome social regulation. The isolated figure in a rural setting, the reporter, the visionary, the poet or the hero, is a reflection of Davidson's personal standpoint in relation to society. Eric Northey points out that 'Davidson's apprehension of the natural world was always intense and the first appreciation of it obviously came from a boyhood spent

roaming the countryside around Greenock itself'.[8] Davidson's assertions concerning the natural man and the imagination are similar to Carlyle's emphasis upon wonder as the true source of knowledge. Both men shared an essentially poetic language and philosophy relating to a sense of the spiritual that is not confined by the narrow rigour of scientific system or religious dogma.

The wayfarer observing the natural and social landscape is, however, always at a point of contention. He is an eternal outcast, witnessing the forces of social restraint and social industry that invade and clash with nature's own complex status. The landscape in the poem 'The World's Failure' (1904) returns to the same tension of opposites which is central to 'A Ballad in Blank Verse':

> Somewhere delighted larks, forestalling day,
> Ascend and garland heaven with flower and fruit,
> Enwreathe and overrun the shining air,
> When darkness crumbles from the firmament,
> With fresco, fantasy and arabesque
> Of splendid sound; but here the iron heavens
> Ring to the factory-whistle, here the dawn
> All overgrown and quenched in creeping smoke,
> Decays unseen. Here each promoter's face,
> Employer's, owner's, broker's, merchant's, mean
> As any eunuch's and as evil, tells
> How souls unsexed by business come to love
> Elaborate torture and the sullen joy
> Of coining men and women into wealth. (6-19)[9]

Oppressive forces, whether in terms of industry, economics, ideology or theology, are viewed repeatedly as disempowering. In this case the men of financial might are 'souls unsexed by business'. Time and again in Davidson's work, nature and sensuality are seen to embody vital forces that transgress the repressive, emasculated and unnatural social world. Davidson presents the organic world as being infringed by mechanistic forces that not only destroy the beauty of the physical world but limit human thought. He asserted that 'no mind is so much given over to delusions as the logical one' (SP, 20). By 'logic' Davidson refers to what Carlyle viewed as mechanistic thought: 'Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand. They have lost faith in individual endeavour, and in natural force, of any kind [...]. Their whole efforts, attachments, opinions, turn on mechanism, and are of a mechanical character' (ST, 63). Davidson's ideas are part of a wider reaction to technology and industry that extends from Carlyle to Dickens, and is reflected in Scottish writers such as Alexander Smith and James Young

Geddes. The new, emergent type of man was summed up by Charles Dickens in his novel *Hard Times* (1854):

> THOMAS GRADGRIND, sir. A man of realities. A man of fact and calculations. A man who proceeds upon the principle that two and two are four, and nothing over, and who is not to be talked into allowing anything over. Thomas Gradgrind, sir - peremptorily Thomas - Thomas Gradgrind. With a rule and a pair of scales, and the multiplication table always in his pocket, sir, ready to weigh and measure any parcel of human nature, and tell you exactly what it comes to.[10]

Dickens juxtaposes mechanistic and stultified adult thought with the imagination of childhood and depicts the latter as being destroyed by the former.

Davidson found the contrast between mechanistic and creative thought through his experience of Scottish education. He was educated at Highlander's Academy in Greenock where he became a pupil teacher. Thereafter he enrolled at Edinburgh University to study Latin and Greek. Others, whom Davidson would meet in London, were also studying there at the time. They included the drama critic William Archer and Arthur Conan Doyle, although J.M. Barrie did not arrive until the following year. One classmate, Ewan Maclean, remembered meeting Davidson at a house that Robert Louis Stevenson also frequented in the 1870s.[11] Yet Davidson became detached from social company and stopped attending classes. He filled his free time in isolated visits to Arthur's Seat, the descriptions of which feature in his poem 'Lammas' (1896). He may have disliked the classes. John Sloan notes that his tutors Professor John Stuart Blackie and William Young Sellar were unhappy about some aspects of the junior classes: 'Blackie felt that the classes were too large and that the teaching remained a school-drill'.[12] In 'Lammas', a poem which vacillates between earlier and later memories, Davidson gives an account of his rebellion against his father's religious faith and the acquisition of his own anti-intellectual, materialist philosophy in which personal experience and struggle constitute real knowledge in opposition to received ideas. Davidson's year at Edinburgh established a pattern of non-conformity which conflicted with his decision to become a full-time teacher. Davidson typifies a tradition of the alienated misfit not only among his own generation and earlier writers but also of modern Scots such as Tom Leonard, James Kelman and Alasdair Gray who react against academic authority with the same degree of restlessness which Davidson shows toward institutional authority, both religious and academic, of his own period. He seems to have been temperamentally unsuited to a profession which he always represented negatively in his work. For instance, in the play *Smith: A Tragic Farce*, (1888), Jones recalls Hallowes' hostility toward the 'mental boot-blacking' and 'shameful

pedagogy'[13] that he believes teaching entails. Hallowes attacks the didactic nature of the Scottish education system, describing this type of teaching as 'Shameful!' and 'a devil's compact!'. He believes that he has become debased by a profession which has turned him into 'a grindstone, edging souls/meant most for flying'.[14]

Davidson resented the intellectual restraints of the teaching system, particularly learning by rote and the fear instilled by strict discipline. He had numerous but brief teaching jobs. In 1878, aged 21, he gave up his job at Alexander's 'Charity' or Endowed School after only a year. During that time he had become acquainted with John Nichol, Professor of English literature at Glasgow University. Through Nichol he was introduced into a literary circle which included Alexander Smith, Sindey Dobell and Algernon Swinburne, whom Davidson met at Nichol's home. Davidson wrote to Swinburne twice, firstly on 28th March 1878 requesting help in getting some of his work published and then despondently on 10 May 1878 after receiving no reply. In the first letter Davidson writes:

> I have left my hellish drudgery in Alexander's Charity and applied myself to the rubbing up of some short pieces and the writing of a number of sonnets which were ready to flow. These with the concurrence to Professor Nichol I send to you with a plain and outspoken request that if you think them worthy you will endeavour to find them a publisher.[15]

Unsuccessful in these early literary ventures he reluctantly returned to teaching. Eventually he took a position at Morrison's Academy in Crieff which lasted three years. These years intensified his conflict with authority. The rector of Morrison's Academy, George Strathairn, was a strict disciplinarian who fostered high academic standards through rigorous supervision and an emphasis upon stolid respectability. Strathairn supervised his masters as well as his pupils, encouraging them to rent the housing and attend the church he recommended. Davidson married at a time Strathairn did not think appropriate for a new, lowly paid teacher, he also refused to attend church and would not have his first child baptised. Davidson clashed with Strathairn over the issue of corporal punishment, a form of discipline which Davidson firmly opposed. John Sloan explains that Davidson felt Strathairn's methods to be 'tyrannous',[16] while at the same time Davidson was viewed, in turn, as 'an assertive opinionated rebel against authority'.[17] Davidson eventually resigned due to arguments over examinations in which he took a progressive, child-centred approach in contrast to Strathairn's emphasis upon rigorous examination.

In Davidson's short-story, 'The Schoolboy's Tragedy' (1891), a child's capacity for creativity and imagination are destroyed by rote learning and unsympathetic treatment

from his schoolmaster. The story is a satirical undercutting of the patriarchal figure of the village dominie. The story is a first-person narrative told by the schoolboy Jamie Cameron and permeated at intervals with a more mature commentary. The latter informs us that Mr Haggle, the schoolmaster, had 'neither sympathy nor insight' (GMPN, 28) and that:

> It was before the days of school boards; so he had managed to flog his way from the lowest to the highest post in the only government school in Kilurn - not the Perthshire Kilurn, but the Ayrshire one, on the eastern shore of the Firth of Clyde. Mr Haggle hated children and his punishments were cruel: he hurt their minds as well as their bodies. (GMPN, 28)

The schoolmaster had 'a voice common among elder Scotch ministers' (GMPN, 29), equating him with the overbearing, patriarchal Calvinist, a dominant archetype within Davidson's work. Jamie Cameron incites the wrath of Mr Haggle for being caught passing a love letter to another pupil. The schoolmaster accuses him of 'corrupting her young imagination and making it as foul as your own'(GMPN, 31). The destruction of the imagination by repressive authority is a central preoccupation of the narrative, as floggings, learning by rote, intimidation and outright violence swathed in hypocrisy are presented in scathing terms.

Jamie initially escapes his flogging by running away and a chase ensues with the boy hotly pursued by the schoolmaster through the village on market day. The narrative both evokes the setting of the Kailyard yet undermines its complicity with arcane values:

> The hum of bargain-making had ceased along the street; windows went up, and old women and young leaned out with muttered imprecations on the schoolmaster, and more loudly expressed encouragement and sympathy for the runnaway; and yet not one of these dames would have given me shelter had I sought it of them. They, too, believed that Mr Haggle was right, and that I was wrong, and would have confessed to weakness in sympathising with me. It is very strange! How old the world is! - and people have not yet learned to trust their hearts (GMPN, 34).

Jamie delays his punishment. Within its imminent shadow he and Jenny dream of being far away and visiting 'the Pyramids and Pompey's Pillar' (GMPN, 49). Eventually, however, Jamie's day of punishment arrives. Mr Haggle combines his floggings with the reading of the lesson, creating a mixture of violence and religion, in which he is blind to any inconsistency:

> Mr Haggle that morning sang two double verses of a metrical psalm, read a long passage from one of the gospels, and delighted himself with a brief but eloquent exposition of the text: 'Suffer little children to come unto Me and

> forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of heaven'. He then prayed at considerable length, referring to the painful duties which sometimes fell to the lot of a teacher, and begging to be saved from the sinfulness that spared the rod and spoiled the child (GMPN, 51).

This is a satire based upon the traditional role of the schoolmaster being allied to the church as set out by Knox in the following statement concerning the appointment of schoolmasters:

> Seeing that God hath determined that his Churche heir in earth, shall be tawght not be angellis but by men; and seeing that men are born ignorant of all godlynes; and seeing also, now God ceassith to illuminat men miraculuslie [...] off necessitie it is that your Honouris be most cairfull for the virtuous educatioun, and godlie upbringing of the youth of this Realme.[18]

This repressive authority destroys the imagination and engenders obedience through hopeless resignation:

> 'Hold out,' said the master, and I extended my right hand. I wondered for a moment, as my misery closed in on me, if I would ever see the Pyramids and Pompey's Pillar now (GMPN, 52).

Anticipating the anti-Kailyard fiction of Hay and Brown, Davidson is preoccupied with the damage inflicted upon the imagination within a repressive, parochial environment. The repressed imagination becomes an enduring social indictment within Davidson's work. In his novel *The Great Men*, a character called Mr Pourie declares that 'All men are either philistines or poets. Children are all poets. Schools and universities are factories for the conversion of poets into philistines. Business aids the process. The world is philistine, and begins as soon as a child is born to whip and bully it into philistinism' (GMPN, 18).

Davidson felt that the imagination was the enemy of dogma and indoctrination. Carlyle praised the 'feeling of wonder' and 'the necessity and high worth of universal wonder', while he warned against man's mind becoming 'an Arithmetical Mill' (SR, 53). Davidson's emphasis upon the imagination is aligned to his support of instinct and independence. His defence of the youthful imagination differs, therefore, from the treatment of damaged youth and the imagination that are presented in novels such as Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy* (1896), Munro's *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899), Hay's *Gillespie* (1914) or Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901). For Davidson, the imagination is not excessive or distorted by self-projection and idealisation; rather, it preserves individuality against repressive sources of authority.

It is Jamie Cameron's spirit and individuality, expressed through his imagination, which are undermined by the rigid discipline and pedantic teaching methods of Mr Haggle. For Jamie Cameron, the headmaster becomes a predatory figure. 'The class was then dismissed for five minutes, but I was not allowed to go. During the interval Mr Haggle eyed me like a cat watching a mouse' (GMPN, 58). This fictional account of repressive Scottish schooling echoes a passage in Carlyle's memoirs concerning Edward Irving's youth. Carlyle refers to 'Old Adam Hope' who was Irving's schoolmaster and who had also taught Carlyle on occasion. Carlyle describes an incident which took place in Hope's classroom which support the veracity of Davidson's fictional depiction:

> I remember my father once describing to us a call he had made on Hope during the mid-day hour of interval, whom he found reading or writing something [...] with three or four bits of boys sitting prisoners [...] all perfectly miserable, each with a rim of black worked out round his eye-sockets (the effect of salt tears wiped by knuckles rather dirty). Adam, though not cat-like of temper or intention, had a kind of cat-pleasure in surveying and playing with these captive mice (R, 78).

Davidson's schoolmaster is part of a parochial-Protestant tradition, opposed to individualism and the imagination; insensitive and acutely defensive of the authority it wields. Through Mr Haggle, Davidson exposes the futility of learning by rote and the contradictions between his pious sermon and the violence he zealously employs. Davidson offers a negative depiction of the traditional Scottish schoolmaster in opposition to the nurturing paternalism of the Kailyard dominie or the positive portrait of Scottish education which is defined by George Davie. Davie reminds us that Scots such as John Millar, Adam Smith and Thomas Reid were as opposed to mechanistic thought as Carlyle and Davidson. Thomas Reid's school of thought was particularly hostile to the alienating effects of over-specialisation, believing that scientific and technical expertise could degenerate into a lifeless routine if allowed to develop in a departmentalised way at the expense of instinctive *a priori* common sense. Yet the myth of the dominie and the educational significance of the Scottish philosphy of common sense does not appear in Davidson's experience though he shares both the critical nature of Reid's philosophy and the devastating scepticism of Hume.

For Davidson the imaginative mind is independent and healthy, but he goes further than many Victorian writers, with the exception of Stevenson, in his assertions of instinct and sensuality in opposition to unnatural, repressive social morality. His reflections on his formative life written in the early to mid 1890s (a few years before translations of Nietzsche became available) reveal a sensibility that would be predisposed to Nietzsche's

ideas. Davidson anticipates Nietzsche's concepts of 'slave morality' and the emphasis on the will of the exceptional individual. The son of an Evangelical Union minister and the son of a Lutheran pastor had much in common.

The tension between the creative mind and institutional dogma is reflected in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' using the contrast images of the domestic scene of conflict between father and son in the parlour of the manse, and the imagined sensuality of a pagan landscape which is created in the young man's mind. By drawing upon such imagery the poem vividly depicts the pressure of a set of fixed attitudes upon a son who longs for creative freedom:

> He glanced about the dreary parlour, clenched
> His teeth, and once again his blood, fulfilled
> Of brine, of sunset, and his dreams, exhaled
> A vision. While his parents clutched their hearts,
> Expecting his conversion instantly (96-100)

The young man's mind drifts from the scene of domestic confrontation with his minister-father to a rich, sensual, pagan landscape: 'Aphrodite with a golden cry/That echoed round the world and shook the stars,/Caught him and thawed him in her warm embrace' (115-117). The struggle between warmth, sensuality, creative freedom and parental-institutional repression are presented as irreconcilable extremes.

Davidson not only rebels against religious conformity but against the stoic sense of duty that endured among sceptics like George Eliot. This sense of social obligation is described by David Daiches as 'a late Victorian mood of stoicism, of heroic endurance for its own sake'.[19] Davidson, in anticipation of Nietzsche, believed that heroism could never be defined in such terms, rather, it was the prerogative of the rebellious son, the natural man, and the imaginative, independent 'immoral' mind, freed from social inhibition and censure.

Religious tensions were an endemic part of Davidson's upbringing. Most obviously, the variety of churches in Greenock emphasised the diversity of affiliations. Many secessions had taken place in the course of Scottish church history, creating a patch-work of dissent: the product of rational interpretation combined with ardent faith. As R.M. Wenley points out:

> Fate bred Davidson in the atmosphere of a fourteenth sect, the Evangelical Union [...]. This exclusive folk, despite a certain winsome ingenuousness, never prospered greatly, hence the narrow circumstances of Davidson's childhood and youth.[20]

Religion itself, therefore, provided ample exemplification of contending perspectives, exacerbated by the political and social affiliations that accompanied different groups. The religious sphere also further complicated the secular and social sphere by offering traditional points of contention between morality and inhibition, discipline and the imagination, individual freedom and social conformity.

Calvinist theology and institutional religiosity created division at both a practical and a psychological level. The poem 'The Rev. E. Kirk, B.D.' exploits the tensions between appearance and reality inherent in Calvinist thought and uses them to criticise religious hypocrisy. [21] The Calvinist dualism between self and community is exploited to the full, exposing gross self-interest and materialism. The poem is also an attack upon provincialism and the mythology of the Kailyard idyll; the pastoral scene which this ironic monologue presents is thoroughly degenerate. The poem has strong affinities with Burnsian satire and use of ironic persona; it also shares the contempt for hypocrisy exposed in 'Holy Willie's Prayer'. Davidson shares with Burns and Geddes a contempt for the kind of hypocrisy that masks degeneracy and which creates, in turn, stasis and atrophy.

In 'The Rev. E. Kirk, B.D.', Davidson develops a landscape in keeping with a Kailyard local and picturesque vision into which, through the minister's monologue of idle complacency, he injects a pervasive air of corruption and distortion. The manse represents a prosperous sleepy idyll that is both stagnant and corrupt. Details are given of the 'Rough-cast manse/With fruit on every gable' (3-4), of the 'cosy sound' of the poultry (7), the minister with little to do 'Save sit and sip my toddy' (18), and the material security of his 'Five hundred pounds stipend' (16). The contrast between country and town becomes a justaposition of rural security and the unpleasant reality of the city. The minister admits that:

> The world is here some ages late,
> And stagnant as a marish:
> I thank my stars it is my fate
> To have a country parish; (25-28)

This verse is similar to the refrain of 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', in that it presents the Kailyard ideal as something contrived, artificial and unhealthy in the implicit rejection of reality and change which exists therein.

In keeping with anti-Kailyard fiction, the poem depicts the parochial idyll as a site of avarice and self-interest. The minister, who is named 'Kirk' and whose values embody the

material wealth and security of his manse, with its 'Rambling tower of Babel' (2) looming between the minister and the sky, 'Like other earthly prizes' (12), admits that he has no desire to lose these rural comforts:

> For wearing done with constant use
> For me has no inducement,
> And city charges play the deuce
> With all a man's amusement (29-32)

The Reverend Kirk prefers, instead, to pursue his salmon fishing and fraternise with the local women, 'A barmaid or a ballet-pet' (47); he plans to exploit this life-style until he should take a bride at thirty-five and settle down with a son to succeed him at fourscore.

The poem ironically reveals a throughly self-seeking, hypocritical materialist but, at the same time, captures, in a derisory way, the appeal of Kailyard security, in terms of economic comfort and an unthreatening environment. This environment is, however, artificial and exploitable. The minister has little concern for the community and his duties are reduced to what constitutes a respectable minimum; 'I visit sick folk if they please-/Or anything in reason' (23-24). Davidson seeks to undermine the escapist, distortive ruralism that used the Scottish community as a source of nostalgia and continuity in the face of rapid economic and industrial change. He suggests that this kind of idealistic distortion is dangerous and unhealthy, and the poem displays an antipathy to the Victorian, middle-class hypocrisy which underpins it.

The poem is intensely critical of both religious hypocrisy and the charade of the rural idyll. God and Mammon unite under the veil of Christian orthodoxy and respectability to underpin a context of social degeneration. The sentiments ironically expressed are much in keeping with the anti-Kailyard criticism of the novelist George Douglas Brown (1869-1902). In his novel *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), associations of rural sentimentality are undermined by a powerfully dark and satiric depiction of the Scottish community. Brown negates the popular sentimental tradition by exposing greed, hypocrisy and aggressive individualism:

> The Scot as pundits will tell you, is an individualist. His religion alone is enough to make him so [...] self-dependence was never more luridly expressed. History, climate, social conditions, and the national beverage have all combined (the pundits go on) to make the Scot an individualist, fighting for his own hand. The better for him if it be so; from that he gets the grit that tells.[22]

Davidson's satirical monologue similarly turns the Scottish pastoral landscape into an insidious, degenerate environment. He presents the individual initiative fostered by the Presbyterian consciousness and the social influence of the Church in gross and scathing terms.

It should be noted that Davidson's view of the rural community is a narrow and pessimistic one. Douglas Gifford has highlighted the dangers of generalisation in the overuse of the term 'Kailyard', suggesting that 'Within the blanket area of typical usage of the general term lie too many differing, if related types'.[23] Davidson's perspective is, however, significant in being part of a literary trend moving from sentimental, mythic, regenerative or affirmative writing to dissociative strategies such as the depiction of degeneration or the use of parody. It is these dissociative strategies which the remainder of this section will attempt to illustrate.

Frequently he employs a strategy that is distinctive in Scottish literature: the use of humour and fantasy for the presentation of subversive criticism. In a short story entitled 'The Salvation of Nature', Davidson's characters, Sir Wenyeve Westaway and Professor Penpergwyn, embark upon a project to save nature by purchasing Scotland and demolishing all traces of society and modernity:

> When the land has thus been returned to the bosom of Nature, it will remain there unmolested for a year or two. At the end of this nursing-time, Scotland, having been in a manner born again, will be called by its new name 'The World's Pleasance'. (GMPN, 139)

This bizarre regenerative endeavour, a satire partly directed against Victorian entrepreneurialism and invention, is also an attack on the Old World that Scotland represents:

> The promoters of this company congratulate themselves, and the peoples of every continent, on the salvation of a fragment of the Old World from the jaws of Civilisation [...]. Make Scotland the World's Pleasance, and I venture to predict that the benefits springing from such a recreation-ground to Art and Morality will be so immense, that the world will bless, as long as the earth endures, the legislators who licensed the creation of a second Eden. (GMPN, 140-1)

Scotland, the 'Old World' is to be re-born, its law and order, values and character reclaimed by a redemptive Nature, with its rejuvenated Edinburgh:

> It is covered with young heather and broom and bracken, and only here and there a dwarfed alien plant appears. The billows of purple and green and gold toss about in what was the New Town, and, swirling across the valley, roll up the High Street to throw splashes of colour here and there in the Castle esplanade. (GMPN, 147)

This Victorian folly does, however, actually become the second Eden, though more by accident than planning, when the world is destroyed by famine and only one man and woman are left on the Isle of Arran. It is within such imaginative, fantastic extremes that Davidson is able to indulge his own rebellious nature in respect of the purifying and renewing of Scotland.

This type of parodic fiction is structured upon a framework of satiric comparison, blending the exotic with the familiar, realism with fantasy, English with Scottish manners and mores. This process enables comment to be made on the status of Scotland and it is part of a wider genre that is typified by the writing of W.E. Aytoun (1813-1865). Aytoun blended short story comedy with social criticism in work such as 'How we got up the Glenmutchkin Railway and How we got out of it' (1853). Gifford explains that this story 'works through a yoking together of roguish British-orientated sophistication with comic grotesque extravaganza in traditional Scottish vein'.[24] This is the same technique which Davidson uses to create a critical but vital and lively type of fiction.

Parody is a technique which Davidson turns to in order to undermine traditional archetypes of identity. In *Perfervid: The Career of Ninian Jamieson* (1890), he creates an anti-heroic protagonist who embodies the degeneracy of the mythic and heroic type found in the earlier fiction of Scott, Galt and Stevenson. Gifford suggests that in the character of Ninian Jamieson 'we have the development and culmination of a tradition of deliberate mockery of the attempt to create a Scottish heroic mythology'.[25] Ninian believes that he is a direct descendant of the royal Stuart line and legitimate claimant to the British throne. Comedy is used to distance the text from what has implicitly become a stock tradition. The young hero who attempts to unify a divided nation in the novels of Scott is reduced in Davidson's fiction to a ludicrous, unstable figure:

> "You will now understand," continued the Provost, assuming a lordlier tone, "the nature of my interest in Scotch history. It was an exceedingly opportune event in my life, the discovery at the age of eighteen of my rank and title: for, as the result of my novel reading, I was the prey of a morbid ambition. I burned with a desire to distinguish myself in some heroic but unheard-of way"[26]

It is Ninian's novel reading that has produced his 'morbid ambition' and turned him into a ridiculous figure who has become divorced from reality. Ninian is a victim of the Scottish literature which he has read avidly and in a very literal way:

> Then I began to read Carlyle, and I have had no rest since the day I opened *Heroes and Hero-worship*. I feel in myself the power to govern Britain as it has never been governed.[27]

Ninian is a confused, day-dreaming hero, living in a medieval fantasy and trying to create a mythic Scotland that equates with his reading. Davidson is, therefore, creating an extreme comic version of the insipid hero-dreamer who emerged within Scottish writing during the course of the nineteenth century. Douglas Gifford has argued that 'The focus on a sort of inverted national hero [...] descends through the period 1814-1914 to the point where unheroic parodic symbolism (consciously or unconsciously presented) dominates national culture'.[28]

The hero as dreamer tends to be associated with youth or confused adolescence, as seen in Scott's young heroes or in novels such as *Gillian*, *Sentimental Tommy*, *Gillespie* or *The House with the Green Shutters*. The young and vulnerable protagonists of these novels can evoke a certain sympathy which Davidson avoids by extending his reductive parody into mature figures who are not simply vulnerable or naive but patently insane. In *A Practical Novelist* (1891), Robert Chartres, who has been missing and believed to be dead, returns to his family at the conclusion of the novel. He arrives playing bagpipes and dressed in tartan. He enters the house as a bedraggled, ageing, comic shadow of the traditional hero. In so doing he reduces the closure and reconciliation at the conclusion of the narrative to one of comic irony:

> His kilt was of the Stuart tartan. His black jacket had been garnished with brass buttons; but of them only a few hung here and there, withered and mouldy; and numerous little tufts of thread on pocket-lids and cuffs and breast showed whence their companions had been shed. His sporran was half-denuded of hair. His hose were holed, and the uppers were parting company with the soles of his shoes. A black feather adorned in a very broken-backed manner his Glengarry bonnet. (GMPN, 276)

For some time prior to this entrance, Clacher, an equally half-mad but harmless local character, has been trying desperately, despite his confused state, to communicate to everyone the fate of Robert Chartres:

> 'I'm mad, but I'm no jist a fule, an' naebody daur harm me. Ach!' he hissed grinding his teeth and shaking his wild hair, enraged at himself for failing to do it 'Englified'. (GMPN, 271)

In this parody of identity and manners Clacher's efforts to convey his message in an 'Englified' way is an effort to achieve a sense of serious formality in a world of comic confusion. Eventually Clacher is able to produce a letter which he has been carrying, written by Robert Chartres to his brother William, which reads:

> I am still in the land of the living. I have been in a state of abject poverty for years. I will not trouble you with the particulars of my wretched career. I have burnt up my stomach with drink. Insanity has addled my brain. I am a beggar, and go about the country - I am ashamed to say it for your sake - playing the bagpipes. In my mad fits I have repeatedly tried to commit suicide. At present I am quite sane; the only difficulty I have is to reconcile my being Robert Chatres with the fact that I am also Bonnie Prince Charlie [...]. It would be better to kill myself; but I am too great a coward when I am sane. (GMPN, 281-2)

In this parody the hero is aware of his own degeneracy. Not only has he been a wanderer, separated from family and community, but he is also becoming dissociated from himself. The Scottish hero is falling apart and knows it, nonetheless he clings on to his existence even though it has become comic and degrading.

Davidson makes further use of humour to undermine the myth of the Scottish hero in a short story entitled 'When I was Hugh Smith'. The story is narrated by the character Cosmo Mortimer. He explains that when he had a ordinary name, Hugh Smith, and consequently an ordinary occupation as the editor of the Dunshalt Chronicle in Fife, the owner of the newspaper placed the following advertisment:

> 'Wanted, to reside in Scotland, A GREAT MAN. Applicants *must* be great men and Scotchmen. None else need apply. The advertiser has no doubt that the first need of Scotland at present is a great Scotchman, living and working within its boundaries. He hopes the above advertisment gives expression to the desire of every Scotchman. Indeed, he is of opinion that if the hearts of most nations could be sounded to their depths the patriotic desire for a great countryman would be found at the bottom strong and true. Is it not the cry of the world 'Who will show us any good?'. It cannot be over-emphatically impressed upon intending applicants that they must be great men. Creed, learning, morals, age, appearance, position in society, wealth are of no moment; greatness only is of the moment in the poet, man of letters, painter, preacher, silent worker, or whoso may apply. The engagement will be for life. The salary will be very large, as it is expected that every Scotch man and woman will contribute, as God may prosper them, to the support of their great man. Application to be made to William Dunshalt of Dunshalt, Fifeshire'. (GMPN, 15-16)

Davidson undermines the need for the hero-myth which has become so great in this instance that only blatant advertising will suffice. There is one applicant for the position of 'Great Man for Scotland', a Mr Pourie, also known as Thomson, Jacobs or Howitt, who happens to be a petty thief and makes away with a collection of Mr Dunshalt's coins and medals. Like Ninian Jamieson and Robert Chartres, these men are all social misfits who parody the concept of the Scottish hero. These depictions of the unbalanced and ridiculous hero lead ultimately to a total separation from reality. This is illustrated in Davidson's short story 'The Pilgrimage of Strongsoul' which deals with two children who consciously endeavour to replicate the adventures of *Pilgrim's Progress*. Referring to this story Douglas Gifford suggests that 'any glimpse of heroism and symbolic leadership is reduced and parodied, to the point that Davidson's wandering pilgrim-child, Strongsoul, and Barrie's elf in Peter Pan, become logical heirs to this dismembered kingdom, where the co-ordinates of reality give way to those of consciously chosen never-never land'.[29] Gifford concludes that 'Davidson consciously and ironically plays with what he sees as outmoded conceptions of Scottish destiny and significance'.[30] Davidson is not only addressing the question of Scottish identity but is also directly engaging with what he perceives as, the unbalanced or negative ways of depicting identity which have been constructed by Scottish fiction. He is engaging with the notion of the Scottish hero as a distinct literary type.

Davidson's implicit accusations of degeneracy become explicit in the poem 'Ayrshire Jock' (MH, 45), (1891). This poem deals with the predicament of the Scottish writer who inherits the problem of Scottish identity and the way in which that identity is projected within a literary tradition. The poem's direct critical engagement with Scottish culture and literature has been obscured by Anglocentric critical perspectives. Eric Northey focuses upon the poem's presentation of urban-rural tensions and economic pressures. He fails entirely to appreciate the speaker's loss of identity and problematic relationship to his cultural past. Northey suggests that the poetic speaker, John Auld, is debilitated by his loss of contact with the rural community and goes on to assert:

> But beside this being a personal realization, Auld recognises that rural England (or rural Britain) as a way of life, the 'Old England' of Alfred Austin, has gone forever.[31]

The poem is, in fact, about Scotland. It is a powerful piece of dissociative writing which uses contrasts to underpin the problems of a Scottish national identity and literary

tradition. Northey seems oblivious to the central concerns of the poem and the forces of tension, hostility and confusion through which they are conveyed.

Tensions are created in the contrast between town and country, past and present, nightmare vision and banal reality, literature and economics, and between contrasting literary traditions - "Shelley and his great successors' (86) contrasting with 'tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle' (74). There is also the problem of differentiating between the burlesque Ayrshire Jock and the man John Auld. His late night, mildly alcoholic musings add to the sense of disorientation as his mind flits between the sparse surroundings of his urban garret and a rural cliche of 'A rough-cast cottage, creamy white' (37) and 'Ploughboys...Inspired by Robert Burns' (67-8). Whisky itself is a stereotype of national identity. John Auld suggests with a note of bitterness that 'Whisky and Burns made me a poet' (64). There is also more than a tinge of self-mockery when he recedes into his full burlesque persona and with contrived humour drinks to his own assumed identity 'Drink to yourself, old Ayrshire Jock' (52). He also makes a toast to the national drink: 'Here's my respects t'ye Scottish whisky!' (56). There is something self-deprecating in the way in which personal pain and isolation is channelled into burlesque parody. The stereotype is like his whisky, both confuse his sense of identity but they also serve to eschew the pain of confronting it. This evasion of self and nation by indulging purely in the popular trappings of identity exist, not merely on a personal level, but on a national scale:

> Ploughboys their honest work forsake,
> Inspired by Robert Burns. They swill
> Whisky like him, and rhyme; but still
> Success attends on imitation
> Of faults alone: to drink a gill
> easier than to stir a nation. (67-72)

To 'drink a gill' or to act a part, that creates distortion as effectively as drinking does, is 'easier than to stir a nation'. It is this distortion that offends Auld and yet he also, in his displaced state, is not immune to self-parody.

The struggling writer is neither at home within his native literary tradition, nor within the hostile commercial environment of the city. The poem draws upon negative associations of the rural Scot who is out of his depth in the cold, commercial sophistication of the city. The monologue begins with a misleading sense of assertiveness: 'I, John Auld, in my garret here, / In Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow write' (1-2). The introductory 'I' suggests confidence, an affirmative assertion of person and place. What is in fact revealed is the poet's struggle, compromise, loss of identity and growing awareness of literature as a trade.

The poet's reminiscences take the form of nightmare visions which offer no comfort. The 'rough-cast cottage' has an emblematic significance, symbolising the cliche of the parochial Scot, the popular mythologising of Burns as the rural bard, and the general sentimentalising of Scottish writing. There is nothing sentimental about this vision for John Auld and he firmly dissociates himself from it: 'There I was born [...] I'll turn my back;/I would not see my boyhood days' (41-2). John Auld repudiates the popular image of the parochial bard and Scotland's role in serving up the security of rural nostalgia to an insecure urban and industrial world. He reveals instead the struggling individual who has been impeded both professionally and personally because of the commercial success and ideological influence of that image.

John Auld is a displaced person who finds little consolation in his memories. His extrovert salutes to Scotch whisky punctuate his identity problem, and in his state of mild inebriation he exhibits his vulnerability and isolation, as he recalls and rejects the past which haunts him. It is a literary and cultural past made more ambivalent and decadent by the forces of myth and popular appeal. In a poem created by contradiction and contention, it is not surprising that Davidson uses some of the best techniques within Scottish writing to address the worst faults and popular abuses of that tradition. Such techniques include the use of dramatic monologue to provide a penetrative exposition of character, formal innovation, imaginative presentation and a readiness to engage with issues of identity in a way that affords both psychological insight and an acute satiric comment, drawing on a tradition which goes back beyond Burns's 'Holy Willie's Prayer'.

The poem is a sensitive and yet powerful engagement with the problem of Scottish identity and the displacement suffered by the individual who must negotiate his way through cultural and economic pressures. Davidson's poem has affinities with Hugh MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926). Both writers use alcohol to address a wider and more complex sense of cultural disorientation; and both engage with cliche and stereotype in relation to the popular trappings of cultural identity. Like Ayrshire Jock, MacDiarmid's Drunk Man engages 'Wi' what's still deemed Scots and the folk expect'[32] (26), working his way through the gamut of popular associations.

John Auld is pessimistic toward 'mongrel Scotch' (75) and those who emulate a corrupted tradition, pronouncing that 'These rhymsters end in scavenging' (81). He displays a deep-seated disgust towards his past 'My boyhood! Ugh!' (108). In refusing to accept his past it appears that this estranged, marginalised individual will never feel part of any

environment. Economic pressure reduces his choices to playing the part of the gauche provincial or subsisting as a hack writer. In this sense the country and the city offer different pressures but both cause the individual to struggle, not only to survive financially, but to maintain a sense of self-worth.

An example of his self-consciousness is revealed in his re-setting of *An Unhistorical Pastoral* (1889). In a foreword to the play Davidson acknowledged that his plot was derived from Allan Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd* (1725). Townsend explains that 'The themes of natural love and democratic freedom which he imagined Ramsay's work to contain strongly attracted him'.[33] Nonetheless, Davidson was at great pains to change the setting of his play from Ramsay's native context. The reason for this, Townsend suggests, is that:

> With the perversity of an unreconstructed Scot Davidson wished above all things to avoid being taken for a provincial. He scorned in literature the use of homely Scottish subject matter and dialect.[34]

This is an illustration of the ambivalence and complexity of cultural influences. By using Ramsay as a source, but removing the Scottish context of that source, Davidson is both drawing upon and denying the Scottish literary tradition at one and the same time. Similarly, in 'Ayrshire Jock' Davidson rejects the use of an increasingly corrupted Scottish dialect which has deteriorated into 'Tagged echoes' (74) and 'mongrel Scotch' (75) (MH, 45), yet he continued to experiment with different forms of vernacular speech in both his poetry and prose. This propensity toward characterisation and realism in language is grounded in a Scottish tradition of employing vernacular speech for the purposes of dramatic realism.

In Davidson's poetry of contrast and contension and in his irony and parody, the narrative or poetic voice remains consistently critical. It has an assertive, oppositional presence in relation to the negative or complex forces with which it deals and identifies. Aside from criticism, however, there is little identification with the Scottish environment present in his work. Although Davidson has a strong affinity with the natural world his landscapes tend to underpin his detached itinerant status, rather than creating a sense of belonging. The landscapes in poetry such as 'Kinnoull Hill' and 'Winter in Strathearn', have an airy, desolate quality. They are both disembodied scenes in which references to circling birds, rocks and cold winds evoke a spiritless, suspended atmosphere. The poetic voice, in both poems is, once again, that of the constrained observer. In the poem, 'Kinnoull Hill', the

'we' referred to are set apart, almost hiding from a cold, austere landscape: 'We sat on the verge of the steep / In a coign where the east wind failed' (1-2), (MH, 93).

Once again, it is a landscape of contrasts where the unhewn rock and the smoke and grime of human industry co-exist:

> And eastward the cliff rose higher,
> And westward it sloped to the town,
> That smoked like a smouldering fire
> Built close about spire after spire;
> And the smoke was pale-blue and brown. (6-10)

The poetic voice seems to be both sheltering from the natural landscape and detached from the human one; it has no distinctive or assertive presence. There is, therefore, no native Scottish voice in this poem, only a detached, observing, passive voice, dwarfed by its context.

The same disembodied quality is present in 'Winter in Strathearn' (MH, 17). The theme of winter is common in Scottish poetry; the frozen, airy atmosphere, evoking a kind of atrophy, reflected in descriptions such as, 'the steep Blue-rocks stood, stark and gray' (13) or, 'the powdery snow-white snow' (17). In addition, there is very little story development or dynamic in either of these poems, conversely, in 'Winter in Strathearn', routine is as meticulous as it is insignificant. The poem opens with the line, 'She crumbled the brown bread, she crumbled the white' (1); toward the end of the stanza this line is repeated with the additional intimation of a fixed regime:

> She crumbled the brown bread, she crumbled the white,
> She fed them morning, noon and night. (18-19)

This may, therefore, reflect a Kailyard winter of picturesque minutiae, set in a static, frozen Scotland. It is a context in which the poetic voice is akin to the circling birds, airy and displaced, snatching and absorbing scenes from the landscape but without definition or permanence. Though Davidson's Scottish landscapes often possess a haunting beauty they also reflect an increasing sense of detachment and self-absorption. Nature increasingly has an affinity with the detached individual, isolated from the values and pressures around him.

The Scottish environment presented Davidson with a context of confusion, where contending forces were found to dominate in a repressive way. It is also a context in which the rural idyll was not idyllic but often corrupt, fostering hypocrisy and self-interest,

as the products of its own anomalous status rooted in Calvinism and provincialism. The technical and economic change which constituted a force of general upheaval in the Victorian period co-existed with old values and traditional prejudice peculiar to the Scottish environment. Each in turn fostered demands that conflicted with nature and the instinctive will of the individual. In Davidson's Scottish landscapes he finds it difficult to achieve a sustainable voice. The result is to veer between criticism and detachment. This instability mirrors the depictions of dualism and contradiction which dominate Davidson's vision of Scotland, representing the physical and social manifestations, or consequences, of a deep-rooted and traditional conceptual framework.

References to the past are always problematic. John Auld in the poem 'Ayrshire Jock' (MH, 45) renounces his past. He may not fear the 'rustling gloom' (19) nor 'graveyards dreary' (22) but, by contrast, his past has become a nightmare vision which haunts him. He drinks his whisky as an escape from the practical realities and material hardship of the present and the complex problems of personal and national identity, which define his cultural and literary background. This antipathy is a recurrent one. Ninian in the eclogue 'Lammas' explains, 'I am not well: I am haunted' (85); he refers to 'the glutted past' (271) and complains of 'The flashing scenes that haunt my memory' (275).[35] Conversely, the Dedication to *The Testament of John Davidson*, celebrates 'an end of the strangling past' and a 'new beginning' wherein 'the material forces of mind and imagination can now re-establish the world as if nothing had ever been thought or imagined before'.[36]

In 'Lammas' Ninian gives an account of his formative influences, which echoes strongly the domestic scenes from 'A Ballad in Blank Verse':

> It was engraven deeply on my mind
> In daily lessons from my infancy
> Until I left my father's house, that not
> Ability and knowledge, beauty and strength
> But goodness only can avail (218-24)

Ninian searches for God like Robert Buchanan's speaker in 'The City of Dream', but both find only displacement and alienation. Ninian affirms that, 'I would have God's own voice or none/At last I ceased to hope and found content/In roaming through the land' (244-6).

As with the prodigal son in 'The Wastrel', Ninian also seeks refuge in London, but remains tormented by his past. John Sloan observes that, 'Underlying the diverse voices of the Eclogues is his [Davidson's] sense of separation from his father's faith. In contrast to a father who believed every word he spoke he found himself driven by irony and self-

division'.[37] Ultimately, Ninian takes up a philosophy of individual struggle and courage in place of his father's faith:

> If only nineteen hundred years ago
> A gospel of the pride of life had rung
> Our doleful era in; if the device
> In nature's choice of beauty and of strength
> Had then been shown to man . . .
> Weeded humanity at once, and made
> A race of heroes in a golden age! (341-9)

In outlining Davidson's dissociative sensibility toward Scottish culture and literature one form of dissociative strategy merits particular attention, that is, the way in which the portrayal of familial division is used symbolically to represent wider cultural tensions. This has been misinterpreted by Davidson's Anglocentric critics and will therefore be addressed in the following section.

Patriarchal Authority, Filial Piety and the Divided Family

Scenes of familial tension are a recurrent symbolic feature within Scottish literature. A catalogue of oppressive fathers and weak or fervently devout mothers, have repeatedly thwarted the liberty and aptitude of their progeny, thus producing the embittered sons of Scottish fiction who rail against their problematic inheritance. Within this context the repressive nature of institutional or cultural authority is symbolised by familial tensions which overshadow the desires and aspirations of youth. The portrayal of familial and personal experience has been used to both absorb and express wider cultural tensions. The minister-father figures in Davidson's 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', 'A Woman and her Son', and 'The Wastrel', are examples of this symbolism; they represent the institutional authority and intellectual control of the Church, within the personal and emotional intimacy of a parent. Douglas Gifford sees the symbolic use of familial division as part of a 'fiction of dissociation', which he defines in the following terms:

> What identifies this...fiction of dissociation of self, family and society, and of authorial stance, is the notion of dualism. Dualism is [...] an international preoccupation of literature. But the extent to which it obsesses writer and subject matter of the serious Scottish fiction of our period is far more intense and ubiquitous than anywhere else barring the related American Puritan tradition. What this Scottish dualism presents is a commentary on what is seen as a divided and unhealthy society. Through recurrent patterns of relationship such as father versus son, brother versus brother, or variants, a recurrent and

> shared symbolism states overwhelmingly the same theme; that in lowland Scotland, aridity of repressive orthodoxy, religious and behavioural, tied to an exaggerated work ethic and distorted notions of social respectability, have stifled and repressed vital creative processes of imaginative and emotional expression, to the point where it too often has become, individually and collectively, self-indulgent, morbid and unbalanced.[38]

Critics have failed to recognise the symbolic use of familial division in Davidson's writing. John Sloan, for instance, gives a very literal assessment, noting that 'He [Davidson] began to quarrel openly with his father [...] the aftermaths [...] were scenes of tearful recrimination and depressing estrangement between himself and his parents. He felt particularly bitter towards his mother who gave him no support and seemed to live only in his father's shadow'.[39] Sloan then contradicts himself by asserting that 'The powerful autobiographical ballads [...] are heightened and dramatised [...] Alexander Davidson was not the crude Calvinist of the poems. Nor was John as wayward as the rebellious son'.[40] Eric Northey appears to appreciate that Davidson's familial scenes are more dramatic than literal, suggesting that 'We should not [...] take the pictures that are drawn in the poems as accurate portraits of the Davidson family, or of their relationships with each other [...] these poetic portrayals were extreme, dramatic personalities, based merely on the possibilities his parents possessed'.[41] Unaware of the full significance of these symbolic portraits, Northey returns to biographical evidence citing a reference Davidson made, concerning his father, in an interview in the *Candid Friend,* for June 1, 1909:

> My father was an admirable preacher and public speaker. He had a powerful persuasive voice: people would come to his church simply to hear him pronounce the benediction. But he was much more than a splendid speaker: he had great physical strength, a sanguine temperament, a most tender heart, and a mind of large capacity: in counsel he was wise, authoritative, and gladly accepted by his brethren as well as by those he was set over. He believed every word he spoke: he was the only Christian I ever knew: I think of him as the last of the Christians.[42]

Northey suggests that this account, 'displays a certain tenderness',[43] and, like Sloan, finds only contradiction between fiction and biographical fact.

Yet this intimate portrait advances certain general qualities: physical strength, authority, strength of purpose, conviction, and the gift of public speaking. These abilities, which Davidson valued and continued to value are, however, set against the final sentence of his account: 'I think of him as the last of the Christians.' This has the same associations of anachronism as the refrain in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', 'For this was in the North, where

Time stands still/And change holds holiday' (139-40). It is evident, therefore, that paternal characteristics symbolise wider ideological implications. Sloan and Northey exhibit no appreciation of the type of Scottish dissociative writing which Gifford describes and consequently interpret Davidson's references only on an immediate, personal level. They fail to recognise that Davidson is working in distinctive Scottish mode through his dramatic and symbolic expositions of familial violence and hostility, wherein traditional and emergent ideological and social forces are represented within personal relationships.

John Sloan does recognise that 'Filial piety was one of the great crisis themes of Victorian poetry [...] Davidson's quarrel with Christianity may have seemed intensely personal to him [...] but it was part of a generational crisis'.[44] This stress upon the Victorian crisis of faith, though valid, ignores a protracted Scottish tradition, in which writers have rebelled against what they perceived as the inadequacy of a repressive and patriarchal culture. In terms of attitudes and influences Davidson was reacting to a very distinctive native cultural framework.

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, literature depicts dualism and division as a recurrent part of the Scottish experience. Davidson, like Hogg, in his novel, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), portrays the Scottish environment as one in which all forces co-exist in ambiguity with equal and opposite perspectives. Davidson and Hogg use familial division to reflect the wider divisive nature of Scottish culture and its effects upon the individual.

In Hogg's novel both family and nation are fragmented. The laird is estranged from his wife; Robert Wringhim has two fathers, who represent the polarities of religious and secular division; fraternal hatred exposes ideological faction and these antithetical facets are complicated by divisive narrative accounts. The polarities within Hogg's depiction of the divided family are used to encapsulate divisions at a national level between Royalist and Covenanter, Episcopalian and Presbyterian, Tory and Whig, Court and Country parties, rationalism and the supernatural. Robert Wringhim may be a bigot, a fanatic or simply a madman, but he is also a symptom of his cultural background. Davidson also sees religious adherence as extreme and outmoded. For him it is part of the Old North of Habakkuk McGruther and he believes that 'we must have a new world in order that the utmost may once more achieve itself in literature'.[45] This is a world which must be removed from what he describes as the 'old conception', which he defines as 'the world

suspended by a hair from the floor of Heaven above a flaming Hell'.[46] It is a world removed from the conceptual oppositions of religon.

Davidson's fraught depictions of rebellious youth respond to the divisive environment which produced them.

Knoxian Calvinism is patriarchal in nature, emphasising duty and obedience to the divine father. The polarities of filial duty and waywardness are made clear in the words of Edward Irving: 'We return not our Father's love [...] skulking from his presence - sliding back from his approaches - speaking of him without any emotion or with scorn'.[47] Irving exhorts the prodigal to 'refuse him no longer your filial reverence and obedience'.[48]

Calvinism encourages personal initiative via individual interpretation and perception, and yet it also requires faith and conformity. Davidson's rebellious sons are unable to sustain this duality, giving way to the inevitable negation of the former by the latter. The minister-father of 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' attributes the death of his wife to the inconstancy and disobedience of his son: 'You killed your mother, you are killing me:/Is it not sin enough, poor foolish boy?' (137-8). The response to this accusation comes from the separate and disenchanted poetic refrain:

> For this was in the North, where Time stands still
> And Change holds holiday, where Old and New
> Welter upon the border of the world,
> And savage faith works woe. (139-42)

The poetic refrain is a broadly-based indictment of Lowland Scotland as a whole, presented as an anachronistic, almost mythical place, detached, set apart and out of step with the rest of the world, a place where retrospection and stagnation dominate. Davidson is not alone in equating a patriarchal, Calvinist and parochial Scotland with a certain deadlock of oppositional forces that ensures creative atrophy and entrenchment. In the work of Robert Louis Stevenson, as with the earlier work of Hogg, these tensions produced distinct, obsessional themes: rebellious or displaced adolescent characters, divided families and characters weighted with retrospective symbolism dominate his Scottish fiction. Douglas Gifford has charted the powerful use of symbolism in the fiction of this period, symbolism which is generated 'out of the prevailing confusion and regret regarding the loss of national identity inherited from the eighteenth century and immeasurably deepened as a result of the failure of Scottish institutions like the Church,

the universities and the overall education system to speak coherently for a Scottish or British set of traditions and values'.[49]

Stevenson, like Davidson, dramatises extremes through father-son tensions. Stevenson's Adam Weir, the hanging judge in *Weir of Hermiston* or Nicholson, the staunch dissenter in 'The Misadventures of John Nicholson' manifest the discipline, gravity and authority that personifies the influence of Scotland's remaining bastions of institutional authority. They adhere to the practical and intellectual forces of a Calvinist consciousness repressive towards emotion, imagination and sensitivity. These powerful figures imbue repressive institutional and cultural forces with a distinctive patriarchal identity. This personification of authority is evident in Stevenson's ironic narrative descriptions:

> His father - that iron gentleman - had long ago enthroned himself on the heights of the Disruption Principles. What these are [...] no array of terms would render thinkable to the merely English intelligence; but to the Scot they often prove unctuously nourishing, and Mr Nicholson found in them the milk of lions. ('The Misadventures of John Nicholson').[50]

Similarly, in a description of Adam Weir, the same sense of pervasive cultural values, in this case the Calvinist work ethic, is again fused with an overbearing patriarchal influence:

> The atmosphere of his father's sterling industry was the best of Archie's education. Assuredly it did not attract him; assuredly it rather rebutted and depressed. Yet it was still present [...] an arid ideal, a tasteless stimulant in the boy's life. (*Weir of Hermiston*).[51]

Against these ingrained forces Archie Weir and John Nicholson inherit the narrow choice between submission and the subordination of the individual will, or rebellion and consequent disinheritance. In both cases there is an implication of emasculation; young Nicholson especially becomes a pathetic figure, reconciled by habit to being dominated by others. Stevenson demonstrates greater ambivalence in his fiction than Davidson. In contrast to Davidson's fierce rejection of patriarchal values Stevenson oscillates between rejection and submission. In 'The Misadventures of John Nicholson' he produces an ironic portrayal of the Calvinist father and the compliant son. In Calvinism the individual must understand himself, he must comprehend and engage with his own fate. Like Davidson, therefore, these accounts confront the cultural and institutional nature of authority through an exposition of the individual's experience of love, frustration and guilt. It is interesting that in the course of the century the critical impetus intensifies: Carlyle reacts to patriarchal authority with a sense of duty rather than rejection, Stevenson oscillates

between rebellion and compliance, while Davidson both demonstrates and advocates the complete rejection of inherited values.

The defiant youths in Davidson's writing accept and even assert their profligate status. The minister's son in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' declares 'No creed for me! I am a man apart'(426).[52] In *The Triumph of Mammon* (1907) King Christian refers to his eldest son as a 'rude and rebel boy'.[53] Davidson, like Stevenson and before them Burns, relished a subversive identity that was at odds with Scottish bourgeois attitudes concerning community, respectability and conformity. Referring to Stevenson, David Daiches has suggested that:

> Stevenson's quarrel with his father, whom he loved but whose basic views he could not bring himself to accept, was partly a quarrel about Christian theology and partly a quarrel about the way to evaluate human behavior...When he haunted the 'howffs' of Lothian Road and Leith Walk, associating with prostitutes and social outcasts, he was deliberately thumbing his nose at Edinburgh gentility.[54]

Similarly, Burns, assuming the persona of the pre-Romantic rebel flouted the Presbyterian code of prudence and self-discipline.

For Davidson, being a reprobate held an ambivalent mixture of freedom and residual hurt. The title of 'The Wastrel' (1903), for instance, suggests the dominant 'respectable' perspective, condemning the son who has become a disgrace and a disappointment. The sense of the man apart who is neither valued, nor given fair recognition was to endure in Davidson's writing. Davidson's poetry of isolation embodies not only the intellectual freedom of the visionary, but the emotional defensiveness of the hurt youth and the rejected outcast.

The rejection of the father extends into the work of subsequent writers such as George Douglas Brown, John MacDougall Hay and Lewis Grassic Gibbon. It is useful to remember that men such as Gibbon and MacDiarmid were Victorians by birth and inherited the concerns of that period.

This sense of being constrained or creatively overshadowed, has affinities with Harold Bloom's assertions in *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973). Bloom considered the way in which 'strong' poets are obliged to define themselves in relation to their literary predecessors, or father-figures. For Scottish writers, inherited restraint and the source of patriarchal authority is found in Calvinism. Knoxian Calvinism emphasises the individual

imperative to read and analyse scripture, but is critical, or directly opposed to the independence of the creative mind. Bloom wrote, in an essay entitled 'Poetic Origins and Final Phases', that 'A poet [...] is not so much a man speaking to men as a man rebelling against being spoken to'.[55] It is being spoken to, or in a Scottish context, quite literally being preached to, that Davidson cannot bear, either personally or creatively. The result is that, to make use of Bloom's view, the poet 'seeks to burn through every context that the precursors created or themselves accepted'.[56] R.M. Wenley, writing in 1924, and considering this rebellious imperative as it affected Davidson, asserted that:

> the post-war youth conspicuously - find it impossible to recapture the outlook of their fathers; they cannot comprehend their grandfathers in the least. Now Davidson grew up among the grandfathers (1860-80); his career was beset by perplexity and night frustrate [sic], because he lived among the fathers when they were no longer sure of themselves (1885-1909).[57]

The Scottish 'anxiety of influence' is a product of the dualities in Calvinism - the tensions between reason and faith, initiative and obedience; the individual's obligation to analyse his own soul and the fusion of conformist and rebellious elements within it. As Susan Manning explains:

> the puritan's mind tended to bifurcate treacherously, to reveal the inherent tensions of will and spirit. He became two selves - an observer and an actor, a saint and a sinner, regenerate and reprobate - two selves utterly opposed and yet [...] perhaps indistinguishable.[58]

Manning's description is evocative of the dualities explored in Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Hyde (the smaller, younger, more vigorous man) is a repressed force emerging to undermine and supersede the patriarch of respectability that has hitherto governed and concealed the inner turmoil of the divided self. The ease of transition from one to the other is similarly seen in *The Master of Ballantrae* where the roles of good and bad brother are are easily reversed and the demarcations blurred. Stevenson maintains this precarious dualism whereas Davidson develops the Hyde figure, engaging with the nature of the role and function of the outcast, prodigal, rebel and iconoclast.

The literate culture of the grandfathers, defensive and austere yet also questioning and assertive, produced factions and self-criticism in later Scottish writing. Scottish fiction often reveals this angst by showing the psychological destruction of the younger generation by an older one. Realist novels, such as *Gillespie* and *The House with the Green Shutters*, present damaged offspring and the filial mind as diseased by the

imagination rather than empowered by it. Davidson's rebellious sons are therefore seeking to assert themselves against an already vulnerable tradition. This polemic is expressed clearly in Davidson's 'Dedication to the Generation Knocking at the Door':

> BREAK - break it open; let the knocker rust:
> Consider no 'shalt not,' and no man's 'must':
> And, being entered, promptly take the lead;
> Setting aside tradition, custom, creed. . . .
> Declare your hardiest thoughts, your proudest dream:
> Await no summons; laugh at all rebuff;
> High hearts in youth are destiny enough . . .
> And none but you can tell what part you play,
> Nor can you tell until you make assay,
> For this alone, this always will succeed,
> The miracle and magic of the deed. (*The Theatrocrat*)[59]

There is a rebellious dynamic extending from Hogg, Ferrier, Oliphant, Stevenson, Davidson and Carswell to Findlater and Gibbon.

Within a landscape of both conflict and stasis it is unsurprising to find a dichotomy existing between the assertive, fixed, self-preserving nature of patriarchal authority and the divisive clash of individual needs, because it has its roots in the dualistic nature of Knoxian Calvinism and the Scottish character:

> The one, [one half] dominated by intellect rather than feeling [...]. The other, almost fiercely averse from formalism, subordinated the institution to the individual [...]. Hence a paradox [...]. The individual, while keeping within the bold periphery of Calvinism, learned to deem himself the vehicle of a 'higher law' - a conscience embodied in his person as it were.[60]

The father-figure, therefore, partially heroic, but ultimately stifling; and the community, forcing tensions to conflate in a curious suspension, are potent images of this complex conceptual framework in practice.

Oppressive or problematic father-figures and divided communities repeatedly engage with these tensions. Davidson's treatment of this theme has many parallels such as *Weir of Hermiston*, *The House with the Green Shutters* and *Gillespie*. In this type of fiction, as with 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', the Oedipal extremes of a life and death struggle must result either in the demise of the parent or the intellectual suffocation of the son. This struggle is an enactment, in human terms, of the ethos of Calvinism as a theology of antithesis and apocalypse. The 'anxiety of influence', to use Bloom's term, has, within a

Scottish literary context, a powerful symbolic function in representing the struggle between old and new, past and present, tradition and innovation. Bloom writes that: 'My concern is only with strong poets, major figures, with the persistence to wrestle with their strong precursors, even to the death.'[61]

In Brown's novel, *The House with the Green Shutters*, the parochial Scottish environment is not only suffocating but sinister and the young John Gourlay is dominated by a father who is, in turn, twisted by pride and defiance in reaction to the opinion of the malicious 'bodies' of Barbie'.[62] Parental restraint within this context is defensive, struggling to maintain authority in a static but poisonous environment. Parricide, therefore, means the symbolic destruction of the values of the parent. It is an emotional and intellectual struggle that can only be resolved in absolute and uncompromising terms such as the finality of death:

> 'By God, I'll kill ye,' screamed John, springing to his feet, with the poker in his hand. The hammer went whizzing past his ear. Mrs Gourlay screamed and tried to rise from her chair, her eyes goggling in terror. As Gourlay leapt, John brought the huge poker with a crash on the descending brow. The fiercest joy of his life was the dirl that went up his arm, as the steel thrilled to its own hard impact on the bone. Gourlay thudded on the fender, his brow crashing on the rim.[63]

Brown's black and parodic portrayal of the lad o'pairts carries the same pessimism as Davidson's presentation of rebellious youth, haunted by a past from which they are both enervated by conflict and dispirited by repression and rejection.

Stevenson's dramatisation of the conflict between Adam and Archie Weir similarly depicts the human casualties of conceptual absolutes. When Archie's mother dies, father and son are left in a deadlock that is foreshadowed by death. In *Weir of Hermiston*, the horror (which is left in potential, as the novel is unfinshed) is that the father will have to pass the sentence of death upon his own son; while, in Davidson's account, in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', the son's assertion of independence must inevitably destroy his father. Nonetheless Davidson places blame, not upon the son, but upon the theology that is ingrained into both the Scottish people and the Scottish environment itself.

Like Stevenson and Brown, Davidson portrays the father-figure of the poem as a victim as well as a persecutor, confined within the intellectual and emotional parameters of his background. The father-figure of 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' is presented as a closed-minded, entrenched figure and there is a sadness created from the sense of unfulfilled

potential which remains dormant and repressed within him, stifled by the nature of his faith:

> His father, woman-hearted, great of soul,
> Wilful and proud, save for one little shrine
> That held a pinch-beck cross, had closed and barred
> The many mansions of his intellect. (48-52)

The father's individual potential is imprisoned by his conviction; the capacity to be 'wilful', 'proud' and 'great of soul', qualities which Davidson was to preserve and assert as heroic in his later writing, appear to be negated, or even emasculated, by a type of faith that comes to dominate and restrict the individual's capacity for self-assertion. Davidson's observations in this respect are, once again, similar to those of other Scottish writers. Thomas Carlyle also, and with different emphasis, acknowledged the absolute imprint of religious teaching upon his father's character, 'Without religion he would have been nothing [...]. Religion was the pole-star for my father [...] it made him and kept him', (R, 20) though his respect for his father was greater and longer lasting than that displayed by Davidson.

The intensity of Davidson's reactions to these forces, and their enduring influence upon his thought, stem from the distinct nature of his experience, in terms of the fusion between the personal and the ideological and the way in which such influences could be symbolised by first-hand depictions of love, loyalty, confrontation and guilt. The tensions forced upon the individual by the anomalies of duty and independence, belief and unbelief, were not abstract problems, but pervasive cultural ones, rooted within the 'discourse' of relationships, environment and everyday experience. Autobiographical poems such as 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', 'A Woman and Her Son' and 'The Wastrel', are all constructed around intense polarities and divisions. Belief is set against unbelief; emotion against rational scepticism; sensuality against inhibition; the imagination against strict dogma and, above all, parent against child. The wayward son, the prodigal and the rebellious, embittered young man, are the offspring of a contentious and fraught environment; one in which Davidson can only find a critical, rebellious voice. Davidson's 'A Woman and her Son' represents opposing values between a devout mother and her atheistic son; it is a feud taken to the point of death. Similarly, Stevenson in *The Master of Ballantrae* depicts the rational and romantic oppositions of the Scottish psyche as equally contentious and unstable with resolution, once again, found only in death.

The 'anxiety of influence' encountered in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', is returned to in 'The Wastrel', a poem in which the son has become a failure and an outcast in the eyes of his community. He is publicly denigrated from the pulpit by his minister-father. Unlike the Biblical prodigal this son cannot return and adopt his father's views so he is judged and condemned by those closest to him rather than forgiven. Hence the poem reveals a sense of an irredeemable schism in which entrenched values offer no opportunity for compromise or reconciliation. Failing to replicate his father's standards only intensifies his compulsion to remove himself from the hostile and condemning attitudes which endure within his home environment. The poem ends with exasperation and rejection together with a strange yearning:

> Oho, for London Town again, where folk in peace can die,
> and the thunder-and-lightening devil of a train that takes me there!
> (30-31)[64]

There is a bitter, ironic contrast between the stifling nature and values of the small community and the alienation of dying alone and unknown in London. Hopelessly estranged prodigal sons are a recurrent theme in Davidson's work: Baptist Lake (in the novel of the same name) is an illegitimate son who is hated by his surrogate father; Smith, in the play *Smith: A Tragic Farce* commits suicide rather than be denied his choice of bride by his authoritarian father, while Mammon is the prodigal who returns home to kill his father. Far from endorsing inherited ideas, Davidson believed that the prerogative of youth was to be radically innovative.

The static, parochial Scottish environment is frequently contrasted with the modern, competitive London world. In the short-story, 'Alison Hepburn's Exploit', the nineteen year old Miss Hepburn runs away to London armed with a transcript of her work entitled 'A Godless Universe and other Poems'. She dreams of a life outwith the banal circumstances of her parents' stationery shop and presbyterian attitudes: 'To be a rebel, to do and say daring things - that was her ambition' (MAOC, 79). Alison Hepburn's ambition, frustration and naivety are revealed with a compassionate irony, and her feelings toward her parents and their beliefs have marked affinities to Davidson's own experience. It is revealed that 'Her father was a solemn, rigid Scotch Puritan, sincerely devout, she knew, upright, and of some dignity of character; but on that account all the more unworthy to be her father' (MAOC, 82). The narrative voice provides an understanding diagnosis concerning the nature of Miss Hepburn's frustration:

> Alison Hepburn was rabid with Theophobia, a disease of young minds not uncommon in countries where religious bigotry prevails. She was flying from what was to her a hateful idea of God, represented by strict parents, and by a wretched Sabbath of three long services. She was flying from John Knox. (MAOC, 91).

Unlike 'The Wastrel', however, Miss Hepburn is forced to return to her Edinburgh home and to the conventions of marriage, church and family. She realises that she is out of her depth in London; she is neither talented, nor beautiful, nor wealthy; she is forced to realize her limitations. The contrast between Scotland and London, therefore, is often one of the banal, small-scale and mediocre, contrasted with the potentially glamorous but invariably harsh and competitive nature of the metropolis. Both offer a form of threat: restraint and suffocation on the one hand and struggle for survival on the other.

The rebellious youth is both a potent and a painful figure in Davidson's work. The father in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' exclaims that:

> There came a devil in
> Wearing the likeness of my boy, and said
> He was predestined for a reprobate. (304-6)

Throughout his life Davidson retained much of the rebel, the angry young man and the outsider in his character, as he wrestled within a context of tremendous isolation, to formulate an alternative philosophy to that which he had renounced in his formative years. John Sloan makes the comment that 'Davidson responded to the breakdown of religious belief in early manhood with a defensive faith in the exceptional man and in intense subjectivity as the new basis of truth. It may have been his way of re-establishing his identity and consolidating his personality'.[65] Davidson tried to evade this ultimate relapse into subjectivity. He remained, for an extensive period, very much a displaced, protean Scot, endeavouring to manufacture his own sense of identity, while preserving his autonomy at the same time. His defensive independence gave him recourse to a strategy of self-determined eclecticism and experimentation.

The young and impressionable Davidson was influenced by Professor John Nichol of Glasgow University and his circle of friends who included Morris, Gissing and Swinburne. Eric Northey suggests that 'there can be no underestimating the importance of the older, shrewder, and more influential mentor that Davidson was lucky enough to find in Nichol'.[66] In addition, for a time Davidson admired Swinburne with an almost adolescent naivety, as Northey explains: 'Davidson unusually acknowledged discipleship of Swinburne from the very beginning and as early as 1878 he had written to the poet [...]

saying that he was "ready to lay my neck beneath your feet and call you king"'.[67] Indeed Davidson, for a time, rejected the 'Tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle', in favour of 'Shelley and his great successors',[68] just as James Boswell adopted Johnson and Carlyle adopted Goethe as surrogate hero-patriarchs in place of the repressive, or no longer tenable, patriarchal, institutional and cultural authority offered within their native context. It is significant that the entire first volume of Carlyle's *Reminiscences* is devoted to only two men, his father, whom he elevates to a heroic status, and the charismatic preacher Edward Irving; such influences demanded a formidable substitute.

Davidson had no affiliation with archetypes of authority, such as the schoolmaster Mr Haggle (see 'A Schoolboy's Tragedy', Section I). He invariably takes the side of youth and, therefore of change, within every context. For Davidson, the development of the imagination is central to the development of autonomy and independence. He repeatedly derides the patriarchal forces which inhibit the development of the imagination in the young. In *Smith: A Tragic Farce*,[69] the character Smith makes the assertion, 'Obey your nature, not authority'.[70] Later, in the same play, Jones recalls Hallowes's similar derision of the 'shameful pedagogy'[71] of restricting young minds:

> In noisome fog of the dead letter - I, Who dare aspire to be a child for ever. Intolerance in religion never dreamt Such fell machinery of Acts and Codes As we now use for nipping thought in bud, And turning children out like nine-pins, each As doleful and as wooden. Never more Shall I put hand to such inhuman work![72]

Such examples of intimidation and restraint are widespread. Kenneth Simpson, referring to James Boswell, points out that, 'Possibly the earliest antecedent of Boswell's personality problems was his relationship to his father [...] Boswell joins Scott, Stevenson, and, one suspects, Burns, in that band of Scottish writers whose personalities and writing have been influenced by the nature of the father-son relationship. There is much to suggest that in the Boswell family Stevenson found part of his inspiration for *Weir of Hermiston.* Certainly the effect of his father on Boswell was deep-rooted and enduring'.[73]

It is this negative impetus that motivated these writers in their search for an alternative father-figure who could offer a different set of values. William Dowling suggests that 'behind Boswell's portrayal of Paoli and his two portrayals of Johnson there lies a single conception of the heroic character',[74] while Simpson, again referring to Boswell, also suggests the same compulsive need for a tenable, inspiring alternative: 'In place of the actual father with his devotion to system, here was the perfect substitute father [...]. For

the parasite of identity the relationship with Johnson was to have a profound effect [...] Boswell felt he had finally assumed an English identity'[75] (131). Boswell extricated himself from the influence of his father - the source of his inherited identity - and explored thereafter alternative substitute father-heroes to compensate. Davidson also disappointed parental expectation, but the correlation between parental authority and belief required not only that he assimilate an alternative role for himself, but that he must also formulate an alternative value system. As Hubbard affirms, 'Davidson needed to find new values on a scale comparable to those he had rejected'.[76]

Davidson's creative and intellectual independence was obtained not by complete dissociation but by attempting to equal these inherited values, thus he could never attain the indifference required to be truly independent, detached and impartial. Maurice Lindsay has suggested that:

> Davidson's religious doubtings were at first basically of the kind that troubled Arthur Hugh Clough, and to some extent Matthew Arnold. But Davidson, brought up in a Scottish evangelical household, felt intense bitterness whenever he remembered his upbringing [...]. No one who has not experienced at first hand the oppressive narrowness and arrogant stupidity of the extreme sects in the Scottish Church can have any real idea how Davidson must have suffered from his father's religious castigations.[77]

Negative, hostile indictments of paternal figures cannot, therefore, be extricated from the cultural frame of reference with which they engage.

Davidson's poems and stories are an expression of sympathy for youthful ambitions and desires which are thwarted by parental, societal or institutional restraint. Both 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' (1894) and 'The Wastrel' (1903) show that the prodigal son is not forgiven, but judged in such unremitting terms that he must leave his home either under the burden of enforced guilt or with a jarring note of exasperation. He must conform, or reject his native context completely. These poems affirm a mutual rejection and incompatibility, irretrievable breakdown and consequent isolation.

Both 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' and 'A Woman and her Son' (1897) depict scenes of strenuous emotional and psychological conflict. The ballad of 'A Woman and her Son' is striking for its absence of sentiment; mother and son are engaged in a battle of wills, the son does not arrive to comfort his mother but to argue with her at the point of death:

'Still hard, my son?'
'Hard as the nether millstone.'

'But I hope
To soften you,' she said, 'before I die.'
'And I to see you harden with a hiss
As life goes out in the cold bath of death'. (37-42)[78]

In 'The Wastrel' the portrait of paternal authority is one of hypocrisy and oppression; and it is this authority which, in 'A Woman and her Son', reduces and stultifies the characters of both mother and son. The hurt, embittered son, whose 'pent wrath burnt on', asserts that:

We had no room, no sport; nothing but fear
Of our evangelist, whose little purse
Open to all save us; who squandered smiles
On wily proselytes, and gloomed at home. (94-97)

The domestic, personal sphere has been sacrificed to the public, cultural one: the latter obtrudes upon the former, crushing and distorting the individual personalities involved, so that mother and son become, as zealous Christian and affirmed atheist alike, 'bigots - fateful souls that plague/The gentle world'. Davidson suffered a breakdown after his mother's death in 1896 and both poems portray a fraught expulsion of parental authority. As Mary O'Connor notes, 'It may be significant that his two major poems about the relationship between a son and his parents were written respectively after his father's death and his mother's'.[79] Beyond personal association, Davidson is attacking a cultural mindset.

These poems convey a deep-seated suspicion of loyalty to any creed. As such they have strong affinities with the sense of familial estrangement experienced by James Thomson. Thomson's invalid father turned to religious extremism to compensate for his debilitated state, while, as Maurice Lindsay points out, the death of his devout mother, 'no doubt played a part in making him determinedly wear inside-out the Calvinistic mental coat he had been supplied with in extreme youth'.[80] Like Davidson, Thomson provides an impression of his childhood and, in particular, of his parents, which reveals similar ideological influences, and engenders the same alienation as that depicted by Davidson:

> She was more serious, and pious too, following Irving from the Kirk when he was driven out. I remember well Irving's portrait under yellow gauze, and some books of his on the interpretation of prophecy, which I used to read for the imagery. The paralysis at first unhinged father's mind, and he had some fits of violence; more generally his temper was strange, disagreeable, not to be depended upon[...]. Before I went to the school he used to take me to chapels where the members of the congregation ejaculated groaning responses to the minister's prayer, and to small meetings in a private room where the members detailed their spiritual experiences for the week. Good, bad, or indifferent, those were not the things with which he had anything to do in his days of soundness.[81]

Like Davidson, Thomson's narrative of familial life also ends with an image of himself as the reprobate son; he employs Biblical references to posit himself in negative, oppositional terms to those values personified by his family: 'Speaking generally, you know far more of my family than I do, who have been Ishmael in the desert from my childhood.'[82]

Davidson, Thomson, Stevenson and even Carlyle, were all to some extent exiles; detached from the beliefs and traditions that distinguished community and family; and seeking literary inspiration outwith a fragmented Scottish context. This meant that the familiar intimacy of their native context would always be prohibitive to them, due to their fundamental unease with the ideological values which underpinned it.

The symbolic blurring of boundaries between personal and cultural experience is retained by Davidson and remains evident in his later poetry. In *The Testament of John Davidson*, the hero destroys the archaic father deities as a means of expelling them from his consciousness. Equally, in *The Triumph of Mammon* (1907), Prince Christian, denounced, re-named Mammon, and sent away by his father for his rebellious denunciation of all that his father values, returns as the prodigal who asserts that he is, 'A man apart, no antitype [sic] am I'[83], just as the youth in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', similarly claims, 'I am a man apart' (426). The most intense confrontation takes place between Mammon and his father, King Christian, in which the son eventually kills the father who had intended to castrate him. The dramatisation elevates father-son tensions to a universal and mythic status: a contest between received dogma and self-realisation.

Sexual and intellectual rebellion produced by patriarchal-religious repression is also a repeated theme: evident in the images of Aphrodite and the pagan landscape to which the youth's mind escapes in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse'; in the sexual repression that is confounded in 'The Ballad of a Nun' and in the parricide committed by Mammon. Inhibition, castration and impotence are recurrent topics which sit uneasily with perceived notions of duty and obedience. As Hubbard explains, 'For Davidson it was bad enough that Christianity undervalued the free play of the intellect: much worse was its atrophy of the sensuality and creativity of the instincts'.[84] Guilt, hurt and repression produced an obsessional reworking of formative influences in an endeavour to formulate an alternative philosophy which sufficed on a personal, creative and emotional level. This compulsive need underlies much of Davidson's artistic and philosophical interest and the often

disturbing intensity with which it is imbued mirrors the framework of traditional absolutes with which he engaged.

The nature of the creative struggle within a Scottish context, that of a masculine tradition, personified in strong men, such as, fathers, ministers and schoolmasters and demanding, in return, an equal and correspondent assertion of strength and vitalism, produces a masculine language of defiance; an assertion of autonomy, or the individual will, based upon great men, or heroes. Both Davidson and Carlyle adopt this frame of reference - it is part of a reaction to and a replication of, their formative experiences. Carlyle described his father in distinctly elevated and heroic terms:

> His honoured head was grey; indeed he must have been about forty when I was born. It was a noble head; very large, the upper part of it strikingly like that of the poet Goethe: the mouth again bearing marks of unrefinement, shut indeed and significant, yet loosely compressed [...] betokening depth, passionateness, force; all in an element not of languor, yet of toil and patient perennial endurance. A face full of meaning and earnestness, a man of strength, and a man of toil. (R, 27)

Unable to accept his father's beliefs, Carlyle adopted those of Goethe and in identifying a physical resemblance between the two, it is as though he were trying to synthesise the emotional bonds of his youth with his intellectual choices in adulthood, superimposing one image upon the other to create a cohesion which does not really exist.

Carlyle's portrait of paternal nobility and heroism is also intensified by a sense of fear and awe:

> We had all to complain that we durst not freely love him. His heart seemed as if walled in; he had not the free means to unbosom himself [...]. It seemed as if an atmosphere of fear repelled us from him [...]. I was ever more or less awed and chilled before him. (R, 21)

Distance and authority characterise patriarchal Protestantism. The rebellious son must also, therefore, as a mutual and opposite force, assimilate strength from isolation and courage in his own self-awareness. If Davidson's later work is frequently characterised by its isolation, intensity, iconoclasm, evocation of the will to power, lack of sympathy and frank evocation of suffering and struggle; then these facets of his work must be regarded as both intellectual and emotional responses to the conceptual framework of his formative experience. His heroes and outcasts both mirror and subvert patriarchal authority; just as his fascination with dualism, irony and contradiction, emerged from the perpetual tensions encountered in parochialism and Knoxian Calvinism.

The patriarchal figures considered within this analysis are complex and ambivalent figures. The minister-father in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' has a potential for strength of character that is curbed by a 'pinch-beck cross', just as James Thomson equates his father's revived religiosity with his physically and mentally debilitated state. Carlyle's affection for his father is conveyed in heroic terms, although he could not share his values; just as Davidson's description of his own father is one of a man who commanded respect, yet remained part of a parochial past of which he could not remain part. The isolated man, struggling both within himself and against the world, embedded in and at odds with his inherited landscape and environment, deriving independence from his capacity for self-assessment, is both a hero and anti-hero of Scottish literature. In symbolic terms, it is both the problem of the father and the legacy of the son. It is to the Scottish context, therefore, that we should look, in the first instance, for the impetus behind Davidson's later assertions concerning heroism and the individual will, and for the essence of irony and duality that pervades his ultimate vision of the universe.

The aim of this section has been to respond to a lack of awareness within Anglo-centric criticism concerning Davidson's symbolic use of familial tensions and its significance within a Scottish literary frame of reference. Throughout reference has been made to Knoxian Calvinism, the following section is therefore intended to supplement the brief and often vague acknowledgement made by critics concerning the formative influence of Knoxian Calvinism upon Davidson's writing and ideas.

Conceptual Oppositions within Knoxian Calvinism

Davidson's depictions of Scottish society draw upon themes of contradiction and contention. Issues of conflict, persecution and rebellion dominate familial depictions and recurrent emphasis is given to themes of paradox, struggle, self-analysis and individualism. Themes of opposition and contradiction are concepts which dominate both Davidson's early experience and his mature philosophy. The aim of this chapter is to identify Scottish Protestantism as the initial conceptual framework which gave life to concerns surrounding duality and contention and which constituted the most problematic and enduring influence within Davidson's formative experience. It is also intended to define what is meant by the conceptual tensions within Scottish Protestantism in order to clarify its governing significance within this analysis.

Scottish Protestantism is based upon Calvinism, a theology rooted in polarity and opposition. According to Manning it is a doctrine of crisis, grounded upon absolutes of salvation and damnation with: 'The World of Light and the World of Darkness locked in eternal and issueless conflict'.[85]

Calvinism has, therefore, an apocalyptic framework derived from extremes. Davidson links this extremism to negative attributes of the Scottish character in his poem, 'The Rev. Habakkuk McGruther of Cape Wrath, in 1879'. The poem reflects the hell fire Calvinism upon which Scotland is perceived by Davidson to thrive. What emerges is a virulent diatribe, opening with the exaltation: 'God save old Scotland! Such a cry/Comes raving north from Edinburgh'.[86] Irony is used to reveal a kind of zeal which draws its intensity from the fear of damnation; 'Ye surely know that Scotland's fate/Controls the whole wise world's well-being;/And well ye know her godly state/Depends on faith in sin's hell-feeing' (9-12). The poem is a satirical depiction of Scotland as a regressive place, ignoring values of tolerance and moderation for an overriding emphasis upon damnation, which is relished with an almost insane intensity:

> From Scotland rape her dear damnation?
> Take from her hell, then take as well
> From space the law of gravitation. (14-16)

The sense of the entrenched nature of institutional values predominates in Davidson's depiction. Scotland is portrayed as anachronistic, obsessive and unsympathetic. It is this type of dogmatic environment that suppressed Alan Ramsay's theatres and provoked a tradition of satiric revolt extending from Burns to Muir. Literature which depicts both Knoxian Calvinism as an iron-fisted ideology and its casualties as warped, hypocritical or obsessive personalities, such as Burns' Holy Willie and Hogg's Robert Wringhim, are common.

There is a historical context behind Davidson's criticism. The poem was written in response to the Robertson Smith case of 1878-81. William Robertson Smith, professor of oriental languages and Old Testament exegesis at the Free Church College in Aberdeen was attacked by church authorities for a series of articles on Biblical topics which applied methods of 'Higher Criticism' to scripture. This, in essence, meant a liberal rather than literal interpretation of the Bible. As Turnbull explains:

> To a church which still, in large part, regarded the Bible as literally, the 'Word of God', such an approach could only appear heretical [...] the modernity of Smith's position was evidently regarded as a danger to the internal peace of the

> church and finally, in 1881, without trial, he was deprived of his post. Davidson's poem, written after the first phase of the case, satirises the almost hysterical reaction of the conservative Highland clergy to what they regarded as an attack on the very roots of their religion.[87]

The disposal of the heresy case, held on Thursday, May 27, 1880, seems to have been an emotive affair. The minutes of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland record that the conduct of the audience was reprimanded by the Moderator who 'put it to the House and especially to the audience, that the idea of hissing in a court of the Church of Christ ought altogether to be put out of the question'. (170) When Smith was called in to hear the decision of the Assembly 'the whole audience again rose to their feet, and raised a ringing cheer, which all the attempts of the Moderator, Principal Rainy, and the clerks were unable to suppress. The ladies seemed the most incorrigible, for they kept waving their handkerchiefs, even after the cheering had begun to subside'. (244-245) Smith was found 'blameworthy in the unguarded and incomplete statements' of the articles which he had written and it was trusted that in the future he would 'carefully guard against all approach to the same line and the same tone of statement' (245). Smith replied, 'I feel that, in the providence of God, this is a very weighty lesson to one placed, as I am, in the position of a teacher, and I hope that by His grace I shall not fail to learn by it'. (245).[88] Ten days later a new article by Robertson Smith entitled 'Hebrew Language and Literature' appeared in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica.* This resulted in a far less tolerant verdict from the Assembly who believed that Smith had abused his responsibilities as a theological professor and he was consequently removed from his chair.

The intensity of public curiosity surrounding the Robertson Smith case is indicative of contemporary interest in doctrinal issues and the figureheads behind them. An essay, entitled 'Calvin and Calvinism' in *The London Quarterly Review* of July 1893, ostensibly reviewing Dr Philip Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, admits that the aim of the article is 'not so much to review a book as to study a man'.[89] The reviewer focuses upon Calvin's interpretative method, asserting that:

> He anticipated modern exegesis in some of its most admirable features. He refused to allow *apriori* views of inspiration, or prophecy, or dogmatism of any kind to foist upon the words of the sacred text a meaning which was not really in them.[90]

However the essay implies that we should accept Calvin's interpretation rather than follow his example: 'he, more perhaps than any other exegete, has made himself a transparent window, through which the pure light of the Divine word may shine.'[91] Such a perspective

assists in understanding the controversy surrounding Smith. Active engagement with the word is emphasised but also contradicted as the reader must submit to Calvin's established doctrine, an acceptance which ensures the maintenance of Church unity and authority. For Davidson such views and, particularly the Robertson Smith case, represented the repressiveness of dogma and the restraining power of the Church which could punish the individual in this life, as it did with Smith, and inhibit freedom of thought with threats of damnation in the hereafter.

Depictions of a religion of apocalyptic extremes are particularly common in Scottish literature. In Galt's novel *The Entail* (1822), the Reverend Kilfuddy warns Claude Walkinshaw against his materialism and greed by recourse to a hell and damnation gospel:

> 'It would be weel for you, if your precious soul would stand on end, and no only on end, but humlet to the dust, and that ye would retire into a corner, and scrape the leprosy of sic festering sins wi' a potsherd o' the gospel, till ye had cleansed your-self for a repentance unto life'.[92]

Galt's narrator makes it clear that such intensity is in fact the standard substance of religious admonition:

> These ghostly animadversions may, perhaps, sound harsh to the polite ears of latter days, but denunciation was, at that time, an instrument of reasoning much more effectual than persuasion, and the spiritual guides of the people, in warning them of the danger of evil courses, made no scruple, on any occasion, to strengthen their admonitions with the liveliest imagery that religion and enthusiasm supplied.[93]

Robert Louis Stevenson's descriptions of clergymen also reflect the same extreme and manic proportions as Davidson suggests:

> The Reverend Murdoch Soulis was long minister of the moorland parish of Blaweary [...]. A severe, bleak-faced old man, dreadful to his hearers [...]. He had a sermon on 1st Peter, v. and 8th, 'The devil as a roaring lion', [...] and he was accustomed to surpass himself upon that text both by the appalling nature of the matter and the terror of his bearing in the pulpit. ('Thrawn Janet')[94]

Stevenson's characters even take up, in their physical appearance, the extremes of the ideology they preach. Peden the Prophet is described in terms that evoke awe and fear:

> He was wild's a peat-hag, fearsome to look at, fearsome to hear, his face like the day of judgement. The voice of him was like a solan's and dinnle'd in folks' lugs, and the words of him like coals of fire. ('The Tale of Tod Lapraik')[95]

Davidson's hostility toward these influences is, therefore, not unusual. He articulates a sense of frustration toward the oppressive nature of dogma and an intellectual climate devoid of moderation and the ability to compromise. In so doing he is reacting to the system of absolutes upon which Calvinism is based.

Calvinism, in addition to being a religion of apocalyptic extremes, was also a theology which placed enormous stress upon the individual in terms that were also equally oppositional. Calvinism was, in the first instance, a doctrine which could be termed 'pseudo-rationalist', pressing the individual toward self-analysis and personal interpretation of belief but without permitting him to transgress into a rational, analytical mode of questioning and evaluation. As such it demands that the individual assess and posit himself within the framework of opposition created by his belief in the extremes of salvation and damnation. It establishes, therefore, a tension between thought and feeling. The individual is forced to be self-analytical but in a highly emotive rather than rational sense. Hence he must endeavour to subordinate his fears, desires and instincts to the function of his own judgement, based in turn upon conviction rather than pure reason. He must constantly work within a framework of duality, confronting oppositions of good and evil, and by extension, self-discipline and instinct, morality and immorality, respectability and non-respectability.

Within this framework strange dichotomies occur which point to the unhealthy nature of any society grounded upon such precepts. The pillars of the Scottish community are often presented by Scottish writers as those who are the most dogmatic in outward appearance, hard-hearted, hypocritical and calculating of individuals. Such figures include Ramsay's 'John Cowper', Burns's Holy Willie, and Davidson's 'Rev. E. Kirk', to the 'bodies' of Brown's community of Barbie, or, alternatively, those who are the most repressed, such as Barrie's Reverend Adam Yestreen.

Some of the classic depictions of conflict and duality can be seen in Stevenson's work ranging from short stories such as 'Thrawn Janet', to the novella *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and novels like *The Master of Ballantrae.* Such fiction exemplifies a rich tradition in Scottish literature which shows symbolically the divide between the rational and the imaginative within Scottish culture. Davidson believed that the repressive Scottish community was essentially at odds with the creative imagination, and like Carlyle, he placed enormous emphasis upon the mind's creative and innovative potential.

Mary P. Ramsay summarises Calvinism's restraints on the artistic mind as follows: 'These three adjectives, protestant, realistic, moral, sum up admirably Calvin's ideas regarding art.'[96]. She explains that:

> He [Calvin] has no desire to suppress art, but the art he desires to see developed must recognise certain laws...In art as in other spheres of action the responsiblity is thrown on the individual for a right and moral conducting of his activities.[97]

This framework was too narrow for Davidson. He shared Stevenson's antipathy toward what he perceived as the repressive forces of respectability. Davidson's 'Ballad of a Nun' (1894) and 'A Ballad of Tannhäuser' (1897) are poems which invert conventional Victorian moral codes by presenting sexuality as natural and healthy in opposition to the inhibitive dogma expounded by institutional religion. Calvin emphasises that art must be legitimate:

> But since sculpture and painting are gifts of God, I wish for a pure legitimate use of both; lest those things, which the Lord hath conferred on us for his glory and our benefit, be not only corrupted by preposterous abuse, but even perverted to our ruin.[98]

Davidson presents conventional religious moral codes as repressive and unnatural in being directly opposed to the laws of nature. Davidson's formative experience of Calvinism caused him to reject all belief systems, asserting instead that, 'men should no longer degrade themselves under such appellations as Christian, Mohammedan, Agnostic, Monist, etc...the simplest man should consider himself too great to be called after any name'.[99] This contrast is extended in more general terms in poetry such as 'Thoreau' (1891) in which Davidson depicts the natural man as asserting his instinct over social conformity.

The tension between human nature and social censure is also evident in Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde.* Stevenson shares in the same rebellious impetus by illustrating a liberation from morality facilitated by science. Nonetheless, the images of extreme polarity that Stevenson draws upon show a familiarity with the Presbyterian and Calvinist code. David Daiches argues that, 'The theme of the co-existence of opposites never ceased to haunt Stevenson'[100] and that, '[he] equated respectability with hypocrisy and, by extension, for a period at least he equated vice with honesty'.[101] His fiction penetrates the dualism and paradox of Scottish morality by dramatising oppositional forces at war within one consciousness. The respectable and the degenerate contend within the individual, and

it appears that the latter has been repressed behind the respectable mature persona for so long that it emerges as a smaller, younger alter-ego finally liberated by scientific means.

The tensions between freedom and inhibition, instinctive action and social conformity, the respectable and non-respectable, the creative and the dogmatic mind, are the principal dualisms which frustrate Davidson. He equates these oppositions with an older, traditional frame of reference and their influence affects his historic evaluation of literature. He praises Wordsworth because, 'he sought a way out of Christendom, and hoped to find an abiding-place for his imagination in the mind of man. In the mind of man, however, there was nothing to be found but the old spiritual world and the old morality'.[102] Davidson believed that he was part of a new generation which must transcend the conceptual oppositions which had hitherto restrained even the most accomplished writers who had to work within the traditional framework of Christian orthodoxy.

The Calvinist framework demanded that life become, of necessity, a dramatic narrative of self-examination whereby the individual must work out his own salvation, not simply in terms of deeds or action, but at a deeper psychological level. R.M. Wenley also refers to Davidson as 'The connoisseur of self'[103] and suggests that 'the Scot's inherent capacity for searching his own soul had too much to feed upon'.[104] Davidson's antipathy toward this framework intensifies with age, becoming a governing precept within his philosophical radicalism. In 'The Dedication' to *The Testament of John Davidson*, he declares:

> I break the world out of the imaginary chrysalis or cocoon of Other World in which it has slumbered so long; and man beholds himself, not now as that fabulous monster, half-god, half-devil, of the Christian era, but as Man.[105]

He came to believe that all literature had hitherto been governed by the dual conceptual framework of matter and spirit and, by extension, the oppositional moral absolutes of heaven and hell. These fixed conceptual parameters had led, in Davidson's negative view, to a uniform sensibility within literature, causing it to remain virtually static, in ideological terms, despite the progress of time:

> There is no change in the substance of English poetry from Chaucer's time to mine: it subsists hitherto in two worlds, a material world and a spiritual world, the latter allowing and disallowing the former; Chaucer remains as modern as Burns, Tennyson as antique as Spenser.[106]

Davidson became increasingly fascinated by the creative and intellectual possibilities of an amoral, material universe. His enthusiasm was fired by the prospect of a world free from

the restraints engendered by sin, guilt, and judgement, a world realised entirely within the immediate physical universe with which mankind could engage directly and thereby be empowered as active, dynamic beings. Ultimately, to conceive of the universe as pure matter provided a source of freedom. He saw it as enabling the individual to begin again and create his own identity, untrammelled by the traditions, expectations, and assumptions of the past. Davidson wrote that 'everyone must make for himself his own philosophy, religion, literature.'[107]

He believed that religious faith was the product of the human imagination, but it was an imagination narrowed down and compelled to function within a restricted framework. He sought, therefore, 'a new habitation for the imagination of men' that was free from 'the dual world of matter and spirit'.[108] The stasis of what has been termed respectable provincialism, and the polarities of Knoxian Calvinism, therefore, exercise an enormous and enduring influence over Davidson's thought, an influence against which he was to struggle all his life.

The unreasonable demands of Calvinism, in splitting thought and dogma, from natural impulse and sympathetic feeling, are also addressed by James Young Geddes (1850-1913). As a Scottish writer and contemporary of Davidson, Geddes lived and worked in Dundee and Alyth, where he maintained a life-long commitment to self-education, as well as a sincere interest in democracy and social improvement. His poems merit recognition in terms of their acute perception and social commentary and his engagement with the Presbyterian religious experience provides a useful comparison with Davidson. In a poem entitled 'Calvin' (1879), Geddes mounts an attack on the subordination of feeling to dogma. The poem opens with an indictment and critique of the excesses of Calvinism; 'He loved not men, what could he teach of God?',[109] and proceeds to posit the rhetorical question 'Can intellect supply/The lack of sympathy? Our yearning cry/Is heart not brain. Where shall we comfort find?/ In system builders? in a giant mind/That could compress within a compact creed/ God and the universe?' (5-10). Obviously, like Davidson, Geddes is referring to the type of society that is generated from the distortion and repression of feeling, but the poem also suggests that the Scottish psyche is inhibited by division, oppression, dualism and conflict.

Calvinism suggests that the shadow of Original Sin restrains the consciousness within a corrupt state of being. Because of this corruption the nature of perception becomes inevitably distorted and problematic. Nonetheless, the imperative remains with the

individual to ascertain the nature and state of his own soul. The attainment of wisdom is however, inherently divisive:

> True and substantial wisdom principally consists of two parts, the knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. But while these two branches of knowledge are so intimately connected, which of them precedes and produces the other, is not easy to discover.[110]

Calvinism has, therefore, a conceptual structure which engenders its own tensions and contradictions. It encourages individualism by its stress upon individual initiative, yet it also requires an awareness of duty and obedience. Similarly, Calvinism places emphasis upon the written word, the result of which was to create a highly literate, articulate culture with an ability to question and to discern, yet bound to a framework of discipline which distrusted reason and the speculative intellect. On the one hand, the intentions of God are mediated by individual understanding and in this respect personal interpretation is necessary in the pursuit of faith. This can offer justification and order but, on the other hand, individual reason must always remain subordinate to the mystery of faith and the individual imagination must be curtailed. John Knox makes the following assertion which simultaneously encourages and limits the enquiring mind:

> it is lawful for every man to speak or inquire, as God shall move his heart and the text minister occasion, so it be without pertinacity or disdain, as one that rather seeketh to profit than to contend And if so be any contention rise, then such as one appointed Moderators either satisfy the party, or else, if he seem to cavil, exhort him to keep silence, referring to the judgement thereof to the Ministers and Elders, to be determined in their assembly before-mentioned.[111]

Calvinism is patriarchal in nature encouraging individual thought while also imposing a rigid framework upon it Discipline is frequently referred to in Calvin's *Institutes*, subordinating inclination to obedience:

> discipline is like a bridle to restrain and tame those who rage against the doctrine of Christ; or like a spur to arouse those of little inclination; and also sometimes like a father's rod to chastise mildly and with the gentleness of Christ's Spirit those who have more seriously lapsed.[112]

To the extreme Calvinist, personal interpretation fosters subjectivity and subsequent schism. On a national level this is reflected in a Church which displays a history of repeated secessions, the divisive outcome of a forced pseudo-rational interpretation that is put to the service of strenuous, dogmatic faith. A poem such as 'The Second Advent', by James Young Geddes, depicts the hopeless social and intellectual division which

institutional religiosity generates. He refers to the Biblical possibility of a 'new heaven and a new earth' to satirise the present state of enduring conflict:

> If lions nestled not as yet with lambs,
> Menageries of incongruities,
> And happy families were observable;
> Antagonistic sects were seen to lie
> Together down and suckle rival broods. (10-14)[113]

The poem uses the biblical vision of potential unity to highlight the problem of continual division within Scottish religion. Calvinism stimulates interpretation of scripture and therefore encourages contending perspectives to emerge. Yet within that very act of interpretation there remains a rigid, bigoted authority. As a result each individual and each group become self-interested and self-absorbed. Convinced only by the veracity of their own interpretation, it is with an inflated sense of superiority that Geddes's creations ask:

> Have we not, as it were, phylacteried
> The prophecies, that all that run might read:
> Revealed the revelations- dark to most,
> But phosphorescent when examined by us? (55-58)[114]

On a personal level, the individual is left to weigh the disparity between his own reasoning and faith, thereby engendering inner conflict. Calvinism simultaneously encourages interpretation while also placing limits upon the pursuit of knowledge as truth. It is a dynamic faith that requires active engagement to further individual understanding, and yet places boundaries upon the extent or scope of that understanding. Such paradoxes engender both self-doubt and self-assertion, obedience and initiative. Within this context Manning provides a neat summation of the parodoxes within Calvinism and their influence upon the individual:

> The conceptual structure of polarities determines both the nature of Calvin's doctrine and the psychological state it induces in the believer [...]. Division becomes the structuring principle of life. Man and nature are divided because the Fall has distorted man's vision so that he can no longer see God directly in His works; Nature now becomes to him a series of inscrutable signs to be 'interpreted' for their possible significance. Man and man are divided one from another by the absoluteness of the distinction between elect and reprobate. Man is, finally, divided from and within himself; he becomes a battle ground of warring faculties: the intellect against the will, the head against the heart, reason against faith[115].

These oppositions are worth bearing in mind when considering Davidson's emphasis upon intuition, feeling, imagination and the individual will as part of his antithetical response to the discipline of orthodoxy.

Calvinism is not, therefore, a passive faith. As a theology of contention it demands active struggle on the part of the individual: intellectually, psychologically and emotionally. It requires the individual to study both scripture and himself. In addition to this, however, it is not only a doctrine of struggle and initiative, but also of rebellion. Initially, man rebelled against the will of God. He became, therefore, the reprobate son, yearning for God, but resentful of the demands placed upon him; he was thus disinherited, insecure, exiled and at odds with the world around him. Calvinism embodies the tensions within the Scottish psyche between doctrinal discipline and the individual imagination. Man may pursue knowledge, but his own fallen state makes this a dangerous process, susceptible to the snares of greater sin. Davidson consistently casts his reprobate offspring in these terms. Their desire to be creative and independent renders them outcasts. Fired by the active individualistic and rational impetus which Calvinism engenders they go too far, transgressing the boundaries of intellectual and spiritual obedience.

The introspective, interpretative dynamic of Calvinism renders all experience emblematic as it is taken up and made meaningful to the subjective consciousness.

> The puritan spiritual autobiography tells the story of the soul's progression from the first stirrings of grace in the unregenerate mind through stirrings, doubts and backslidings to eventual assurance.[116]

Davidson's dramatic depictions of youthful rebellion and estrangement appear to engage with, in order to invert, this process. His symbolic presentation of contentious landscapes and divided families do not present spiritual growth within the Scottish consciousness but, rather, its profound state of discord, both within itself, and in relation to others. In the parody of Calvinism, Davidson's work is a depiction of absolutes; an apocalyptic vision of relentless opposition.

The psychological framework of Calvinism, its duality, introspective emphasis, and interpretative imperative, have had an enormous impact upon Scottish literature and its reflections of this experience. At one level, it offers a great deal of richness in terms of symbolism and psychological complexity, but at another level it offers conflict and isolation. The word (scripture) and the world become signs and symbols that must be confronted, questioned and analysed. Hence, it offers up the study of community and identity. It initiates the study of man's relationship to society and to others, and of his own self-perception. R.M Wenley suggests that Scottish Protestantism drew upon many sources and hence produced disparate qualities:

> It could be intellectual, mystic, pious with a Puritan flavour, humanistic. The intellectual, humane and mystic influences coloured the imagination of our poet thinker.[117]

Scottish Protestantism inherited Calvinism's suspicion of creative, independent thought and the imagination, yet it implicitly fostered them, just as it also fostered individualism and conformity. What emerges, therefore, is a pattern of ambivalence, a kind of stasis emerging from the mutual negation of opposites. In his work concerning Scotland, Davidson replicates these patterns of opposition and negation in order to illustrate the human casualties of such polarity.

In addition to these influences, the self-analytical propensities engendered by Calvinism foster, not only the penetrative psychological insights repeatedly depicted within Scottish literature, but also an acute sense of isolation. The individual may engage with both landscape and community, but his self-awareness is a reminder of the irrevocable demarcations which exist between inner and outer, self and other. This awareness is further intensified by what has been termed a provincial status. Manning argues that this sense of provincialism is embedded in Scottish history and is a form of defensiveness in relation to an increasing sense of marginalisation:

> Scottish Presbyterians were forced further and further into opposition and isolation by what they saw as the apostasy of their English Puritan allies during the Civil War. With the political provincialism which followed the Union of the Crowns in 1603, the Scottish reformed church became increasingly identified with defensive nationalism [...] as it became less outward looking, the characteristic puritan point of view swung from action to passivity: its hallmark became observation and resistance to the actions of the distant, oppressing centre.[118]

Davidson portrays Scotland in this way, as the Old North which, like the individual, is divided within itself and alienated from the rest of the world. He appears to be referring to a sense of narrowness and restraint that he equates specifically with Protestant morality, defensiveness and discipline.

This section has outlined not only a theological tradition but a conceptual framework. It is a framework with which Davidson engages and often replicates, if parodically, in order to project such tensions into landscapes and human relationships, and thereby to expose their effects in a critical and reactionary way.

1 Douglas Gifford ed., *The History of Scottish Literature*, III (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp.240-3.
2 Andrew Turnbull, *The Poems of John Davidson*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973), I, p.xix.
3 Turnbull, II, p. 293.

4 British Library, MS Ashley A560, fols. 22r-23v.
5 James Young Geddes, *The New Jerusalem and Other Verses* (Dundee: James P. Matthew, 1879).
6 Turnbull, II, p.293.
7 Eric Northey, 'The Poetry of John Davidson (1857-1900) in its Social, Political and Philosophical Contexts', (unpublished doctoral thesis, Newcastle-on-Tyne, 1976), p. 21.
8 ibid., p.21.
9 Turnbull, I, p. 154.
10 Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (1854) (repr. London: Penguin, 1988), p.48.
11 Sloan, *John Davidson First of the Moderns*, p. 16.
12 ibid., p.17.
13 John Davidson, *Smith: A Tragic Farce* in *Plays by John Davidson* (London: Matthews and Lane, 1894), p. 223.
14 *Smith*, p. 224.
15 British Library, Ashley A560 fols. 22r-23v.
16 Sloan, *First of the Moderns*, p. 40.
17 ibid., p. 41.
18 John Knox, 'The Necessitie of Schollis', *The Buke of Discipline*, *The History of the Reformation in Scotland*, ed. David Laing (Edinburgh, 1846) II p. 209.
19 David Daiches, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), p.11.
20 R.M. Wenley, *Poems by John Davidson* (New York: Boni and Liveright Inc., 1924), p.x.
21 John Davidson, *In A Music-Hall and other Poems* (London: Ward & Downey, 1891), p.98.
22 George Douglas Brown, *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901) (repr. London: Penguin, 1985), p.64.
23 *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, p.232.
24 ibid., p.239.
25 ibid., p.241.
26 John Davidson, *Perfervid: The Career of Ninian Jamieson* (London: Ward & Downey, 1890), p.44.
27 *Perfervid*, p.48.
28 *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, p.242.
29 ibid., p.241.
30 ibid., p.242.
31 Northey, p.75.
32 *Hugh MacDiarmid, Selected Poems* ed. by Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (London: Penguin, 1994), p.24.
33 Townsend, p. 65.
34 ibid., p. 66.
35 Turnbull, I, p. 242.
36 John Davidson, 'Dedication', *The Testament of John Davidson* (London: Grant Richards, 1908), p. 31.
37 John Sloan, *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson* (Oxford: Clarendon

Press, 1995), p.xv.

38 *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, p. 244.

39 *First of the Moderns*, p. 10.

40 ibid., p. 11.

41 Northey, p. 26.

42 R. D. MacLeod, *Poems and Ballads by John Davidson* (London: The Unicorn Press, 1959), p.14.

43 Northey, p.27.

44 *First of the Moderns*, p.11

45 John Davidson, *The Triumph of Mammon* (London: Grant Richards, 1907), p.165.

46 ibid., p.155.

47 Washington Wilks, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography* (London, 1854), pp.57-8.

48 ibid., p.59.

49 *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, p. 217.

50 Kenneth Gelder, *Stevenson's Short Stories and Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh, University Press, 1989), p.142.

51 R.L. Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*, ed. by Claire Harman (1896) (repr. London: J.M. Dent, 1992), p.219.

52 Turnbull, II, p. 302.

53 *The Triumph of Mammon*, p. 56.

54 David Daiches, *Literature and Gentility in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982), p. 78.

55 Harold Bloom, 'Poetic Origins and Final Phases', in David Lodge (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory* (London: Longman, 1988), p.247.

56 'Poetic Origins and Final Phases', p.246.

57 Wenley, p. ix.

58 Susan Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 21.

59 Prefactory dedication from *The Theatrocrat* (London: Grant Richards, 1905), p.v.

60 Wenley, p.ix.

61 Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.5.

62 George Douglas Brown, p.59.

63 ibid., p. 226.

64 Turnbull, I, p. 153.

65 *First of the Moderns*, p.18.

66 Eric Northey, p.33.

67 ibid., p.180, extract from letter dated 10 May, 1878, The Ashley Library Catalogue (London, 1922), [n.p.].

68 'Ayrshire Jock', lines 85-86, *In a Music-Hall and Other Poems*, p.45.

69 *Plays by John Davidson* (London: Matthews and Lane, 1894).

70 *Smith: A Tragic* Farce in *Plays*, Act II, p.235.

71 ibid., Act I, p.223.

72 ibid., Act I, p.224.

73 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p.123.

74 William C. Dowling, 'The Boswellian Hero', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, ed. by Ross Roy, 10 (S. Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1972), p.80.

75 Simpson, p.131.

76 Tom Hubbard, 'John Davidson: A Lad Apairt', *Chapman* 40, 8, no. 3 (Spring 1985), 34-8, (p.37).

77 Maurice Lindsay, *John Davidson, A Selection of His Poems* (London: Hutchinson

& Co.,1961), p.41.

78 John Davidson, *New Ballads* (London: John Lane, 1897), p.25.

79 Mary O'Connor, *John Davidson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), p.112.

80 Maurice Lindsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London: Robert Hale & Co., 1977), p.301.

81 J.E. Meeker, *The Life and Poetry of James Thomson (B.V.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917), p.11.

82 Meeker, p.12.

83 *The Triumph of Mammon*, p.19.

84 Hubbard, p.36.

85 Manning, p.6.

86 *In A Music-Hall*, p.28.

87 Turnbull, II, p. 480.

88 Case of Professor Smith, Thursday, May 27, 1880, *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland*, ed. by Rev. John Thomson (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., 1880).

89 'Calvin and Calvinism', [anon.] *The London Quarterly Review*, (July, 1893) pp. 207. Source: Wellesley Index, IV, p. 421.

90 *The London Quarterly Review*, p. 217.

91 ibid., p. 217.

92 John Galt, *The Entail* (1882) (repr. London: Oxford University Press, 1970), p.37.

93 ibid., p.37.

94 *Stevenson's Scottish Stories*, p.71

95 ibid., p.197

96 Mary P. Ramsay, *Calvin and Art* (Edinburgh and London: The Moray Press, 1938), p. 13.

97 ibid., p. 25.

98 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, I, I. XI.xii (London: Walker, 1813), p. 119.

99 John Davidson, *Fleet Street and Other Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1909), preface.

100 Daiches, p.77.

101 ibid., p.78.

102 *The Triumph of Mammon*, p.155.

103 Wenley, p. xxiv.

104 ibid., p.xxii.

105 *The Testament of John Davidson*, p.31.

106 *The Triumph of Mammon*, pp.162-3.

107 *The Theatrocrat*, p. 47.

108 *The Triumph of Mammon*, p.167.

109 Geddes, *The New Jerusalem and Other Verses*.

110 Calvin, Book 1, Chapter I.

111 John Knox, 'An Order for Interpretation of the Scriptures and Answering of Doubts', *The Book of Common Order* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1901), p. 19.

112 John Calvin, IV.xii.i, rpted. in Hugh T. Kerr ed. *Calvin's Institutes A New Compend* (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989) p. 152.

113 James Young Geddes, *The Spectre Clock of Alyth* (Alyth: Thomas McMurray, 1886).

114 *The Spectre Clock of Alyth*, p.141.

115 Manning, p.7.

116 ibid., p. 13.

117 Wenley, p.xiv.
118 Manning, p.20.

CHAPTER 2 THE DISPLACED SCOT AS PROTO-MODERNIST

Multiplicity of Voice and Perspective

Dissociation is not a resolution in itself; it begs the question 'what next?', a question that is implicit in Davidson's desire to experiment and innovate. Criticism of literary tradition, religion, morality and social propriety served as a dissociative, liberating technique, setting the poet apart in the role of observer, critic and innovator. Features such as his representation of the artist as alienated from the established order, his challenge to the norms and pieties of orthodox thought and his use of new and challenging subject matter are in keeping with twentieth century literary developments. Cultural pressures enabled Davidson to anticipate the features of Modernism; without dissociation there would not have been such experimentation, yet critics have failed to recognise this impetus behind Davidson's proto-modernism; his need to define his style and purpose as a writer has therefore been denied its Scottish dimension.

Davidson's engagement with unconventional, 'unpoetic' themes, responding to the challenges and tensions of his age and the technical originality with which they are conveyed, place him in literary affiliation with the objectives of Arthur Hugh Clough in England, James Young Geddes in Scotland and the American Walt Whitman. In his examination of science, industry, urbanisation, loss of faith and alienation, Davidson creates landscapes and perspectives which depict or articulate the psychology of the alienated individual. Such poetry has been recognised by writers ranging from Eliot, MacDiarmid and Woolf, to later critics such as Turnbull, Townsend and Sloan, as constituting Davidson's most outstanding achievement. His modernity at first appears to owe little to a Scottish context commonly associated with Kailyard sentimentality and the cult of Burns. Yet the restless experimentalism and resourcefulness behind Davidson's literary choices stem from the complex nature of the nineteenth century Scottish literary context and the historical circumstances through which it developed. Historically, Scottish writers have adapted to working within a context of linguistic and stylistic diversity. The vocabulary, syntax and style of standard English verse and the cultural associations and assumptions behind them, have co-existed with surviving linguistic and technical features of native verse forms and the vernacular tradition. This context has been variously evaluated as positively diverse or negatively divisive.

Davidson makes it clear in the poem 'Ayrshire Jock' that the nineteenth century Scottish writer has inherited a problematic sense of national and literary identity. A legacy, complicated by the popular mass market appeal of 'Scottishness' and by tensions between Scottish and British literature. Davidson's use of persona, characterisation, multiplicity of voice, contradiction, irony and duality to present and maintain conflicting perspectives, feature prominently in his attempts to find and negotiate his own style, in relation to the tensions induced by inherited literary traditions and established conventions. Bakhtin is useful here because of his emphasis upon the social nature of literary discourse and Davidson plays out social and ideological tensions in his art. Bakhtin however distinguishes between the novel and poetry by suggesting that:

> In the majority of poetic genres, the unity of the language system and the unity [and uniqueness] of the poetry's individuality as reflected in his language and speech [...]. The novel [...] not only does not require these conditions but [...] even makes of the internal stratification of language,of its social heteroglossia and the variety of individual voices in it, the prerequisite for authentic novelistic prose.[1]

Yet Davidson's poetry and prose alike, reveal a heteroglot, multi-voiced, multi-styled discursiveness. The unity which Bakhtin assumes to be characteristic of poetic genres is absent, because the medium of poetry is inherently divisive for the Scottish writer, as he faces choices between the vernacular or standard English and Scots or English verse forms. The dramatic monologues of 'In A Music-Hall' and 'Thirty Bob A Week' use cockney dialect which has no relationship to the poet's 'authentic' voice. What they do possess is an enduring sense of the subversive quality of reductive idiom; they are full of oral energy and folk irreverence in the face of Anglocentric, monological aspirations. Davidson, evading the dominant, homogeneous, monocentric associations surrounding standard English, uses an alternative dialect to create the same subversive effects which were already familiar to him through Ramsay, Fergusson, Burns and Hogg; indeed the same energy and excess that is found in MacDiarmid, Goodsir Smith and Alasdair Gray. Polyglossia, within a context of linguistic, social, political and national tensions related to the influence of English culture, has an enduring presence within Scottish literature made manifest in writing of a dialogical and polyphonic nature.

Davidson's development of characterisation and the projection of voice and persona is an ambivalent technique, on the one hand drawing upon the realism and expressive efficacy of an oral, vernacular tradition while, on the other hand, used to conceal or compensate for the absence of an assertive unified perspective. In the latter respect this technique has

affinities with Kenneth Simpson's analysis of eighteenth century Scottish literature. Simpson in *The Protean Scot* (1988), refers to what he describes as 'the chameleon nature of eighteenth-century Scottish writers',[2] suggesting that, in the period following the Union of 1707, writers experienced a crisis of national identity which resulted in the adoption of personae and the projection of multiple self-images. This 'chameleon nature', he suggests, offers 'one of the prototypes of modern alienation'.[3]

Certainly, Simpson's argument must be balanced with an acknowledgement that Scottish writers have drawn on a highly oral culture of diverse voices, and the diversity and richness of this culture affords pluralism, which defies theories concerning the supposed homogeneity of language and, consequently, cultural identity. Simpson is writing in the aftermath of Edwin Muir who equated diversity with fragmentation: 'The prerequisite of an autonomous literature is a homogenous language'[4]; without this, according to Muir, 'Scotland continued to produce writers, but they wrote in a confusion of tongues.'[5] Polyphony, according to Muir, produced a deep division within Scottish consciousness between the detached intellectual discourse associated with Standard English and the expressive, emotive capacity associated with Scots. Readings of Bakhtin have confirmed the central role of 'politics' within criticism such as that identified by Robert Crawford as the dominance of certain Anglocentric views, which impose hierarchies and label writers with terms such as 'parochial' and 'peripheral'. Muir's ideal of a homogeneous language and correspondingly unified identity which Scottish writers have failed to sustain, is a hierarchical view which negatively undermines the rich polyphony, multiplicity of voice and perspective presented by Scottish writers in the post-Union era and beyond.

In contrast to Muir, R.D.S. Jack argues for the development of a productively heterogeneous cultural environment and views Muir's division of intellect and emotion as returning to a 'static and polarised model'[6] which maintains rigid conceptual divisions between Scots and English. He argues instead for the existence of a pluralist context which would facilitate artistic free licence and expressive efficacy.

While Jack's perspective may be satisfactory for certain periods and poets (he uses the example of Robert Ayton (1569-1638)), his argument is not always valid for many Scottish poets whose dialogical and subversive voice is a sustained and predominant feature in post-Union Scottish writing. This point is significant, for there is a fine line between the multiplicity which facilitates artistic liberty and that which engenders fragmentation. Jack's suggestion of a polyphonic trend is a legitimising view which

ignores a hierarchy of voices, some of which are dispossessed or excluded. Rhetoric can degenerate from expressive efficacy into ventriloquism, as is evident in Davidson's dramatic monologues and in R.L. Stevenson, who assimilates almost too many influences within his eclectic and cosmopolitan sensibility; sustaining divergent literary interests in his Scottish and South Seas fiction, ranging between adventure story, horror and psychological study.

The composite literary culture in the post-Union climate of the 18th century, meant that Scottish writers faced the prospect of working both within an older, rural, vernacular tradition, with its sense of community and continuity, and the imported rules of form and decorum prescribed by the *literati*. They had choices between traditional verse forms and the pressure of polite taste; between English and Scots; classical formality and colloquial vigour. A resilient native tradition survived in tandem with imported trends but could not unify the diverse, even divisive, literary community which existed during the Scottish Enlightenment. Though Burns and Fergusson display equal proficiency with traditional Scottish verse forms (such as the Standard Habbie, the Christis Kirk or the Burns stanza) as with the pastoral eclogue or elegy and extend their own traditions considerably, there remained nonetheless, questions of cultural loyalties within every artistic decision. The writer had to negotiate his own status and function in relation to these divisions. Burns suffered from the containment of the antithetical roles of 'heaven-taught ploughman' and Enlightenment man. Such paradox created both positive and negative effects. Frequently, cultural tensions produced resourceful hybrid poetry which synthesised high culture with folk elements, and Augustan conventions with the precision, range, flexibility and wit afforded by native traditions. Such deliberate artistic free licence asserted the overriding autonomy of the writer and his prerogative to engage with an eclectic, volatile kind of artistic equity.

The division between a polyphonic tendency which is creative and one which dissolves into a dialogical and subversive voice blurs increasingly. Davidson appears to veer between using the monologue form to create the realistic, satiric characterisations, akin to his predecessors Fergusson and Burns, to that of a more alienated and divisive plurality. Certain features of Scottish poetry continued to attract him such as the expressive efficacy of the dramatic monologue which facilitated ironic self-revelation, the reductive idioms of vernacular speech, a mockery of pomposity, and a down-to-earth sensibility, particularly in his engagement with the perspective of the social underdog. Though the dramatic monologues of 'In a Music-Hall' and 'Thirty-Bob a Week' use Cockney rather than Scots

dialect, the technique indicates a sense of dissatisfaction with standard English, as well as an enduring attraction to the familiarity and realism of colloquial verse. Many poems use irony and humour to produce powerfully perceptive critical comment. In his Scottish poems, Davidson employs some of these stylistic features for dissociative or critical purposes. Poems such as 'Ayrshire Jock' and 'The Rev. Kirk B.D.' make use of ironic self-revelation and social observation in a manner akin to Burns's 'Holy Willie's Prayer'. 'The Rev. Habakkuk McGruther of Cape Wrath', draws upon similar antecedents for its reductive satire. These poems utilise Scottish techniques to criticise the negative features of Scottish society. Davidson, like Burns, frequently exploits the dramatic monologue because of its capacity for psychological insight, expressive realism, ironic self-revelation and satiric commentary. In his discussion of 'Ayrshire Jock', John Sloan observes that 'The stress on the harshness of reality; the combination of high and low in the serio-comic vernacular address: these are derived from the traditions of Scottish dramatic utterance. English poetry also has its dramatic monologue [...] but the acting-out of the feelings of others in their more spontaneous, living speech occurs more often in Scottish poetry.'[7]

In 'The Testament of Sir Simon Simplex Concerning Automobilism', which makes a pun on upward social mobility, Davidson creates a satirical, dramatic monologue which draws upon the virtues of eighteenth century Scots satire. The speaker, Sir Simon, uses the transition from rail to car to support his antipathy toward socialism. He asserts that 'Railways are democratic, vulgar, laic; / And who can doubt Democracy's archaic?' (13-14). He complains of the egalitarian nature of the train by which 'people with inferior aims to mine / Partake the rapid transit of the line' (123-124) and remarks:

> Conceive it: - Universal Brotherhood,
> With everybody feeble, kind and good!
> I, even I, Sir Simon Simplex, know
> The world would end to-day if that were so. (141-144)

Sir Simon believes that the motor car has stopped the decadence of Socialism, undercutting mass transport systems and reaffirming the status of the individual. The tone of the humour changes towards the end of the poem, becoming sharper and more satiric, as Sir Simon's simplistic notions of class reveal his unmitigated bigotry:

> Political equality's as vain
> As personal: for instance, I would place
> The franchise on a principle of race,
> And give the Saxon's forward reach a felt
> Prepotence o'er the backward-glancing Celt;
> And if his chauffeur counts as one, why then

Sir Simon Simplex should be reckoned ten.
I call Democracy archaic, just
As manhood suffrage is atavic lust. (196-204)

The monologue undermines Sir Simon's belief in the status of the gentleman with the reductive satire through which it is presented. This has much in common with the satiric humour found in Burns's 'Address of Beelzebub', and the poem draws on a tradition of democratically inspired vernacular Scots poetry.

Davidson has an ambivalent relationship with the democratic tradition in Scottish literature. His social sympathies run in tandem with a Carlylean respect for the great man, indeed he goes further than Carlyle in his belief in imperial destiny, yet there exists an unresolved paradox in his poetry, which fluctuates from an elitist disdain for the mob to a genuine sympathy for individual suffering due to destitution, unemployment, social rejection and economic hardship. The hero and the underdog are equally significant in Davidson's split sensibility. Within this ambivalence, the democratic and reductive traditions of Scottish literature remained sufficiently influential to heighten the insight of Davidson's realist social poetry and to form his initial fascination with such subject-matter.

Despite this traditional use of the monologue, Davidson's poetry largely reveals a multiplicity of voice which suggested rootlessness rather than infinite variety. The poem 'Ayrshire Jock' reflects his belief that the strength of Scots verse and the sense of literary community which Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns had utilised was gone. John Sloan notes that 'Davidson's own attitude to Burns was complex. He shared Burns's scorn for hypocrisy and superstition [...] but he generally deplored Burnsian imitation and the artificial use of 'Braid Scots'.'[8] Walt Whitman, in the essay 'November Boughs', favourably assessed Burns, remarking that 'He poetises work-a-day agricultural labour and life [...] and treats fresh, often coarse, natural occurrences, loves, persons, not like many new and some old poets in a genteel style of gilt and china, or at second or third removes, but in their own born atmosphere, laughter, sweat, unction.'[9] Yet this realism which Whitman and Davidson both strove for, and which is present in Burns, was for Davidson obscured by the Burns myth. As a result Davidson felt divorced from this possible source of a realist tradition in Scottish poetry. Like Muir and MacDiarmid, he felt that the genuine skill of the writer was forever diminished by the crude, simplistic popularisation of the vernacular tradition. In 'Ayrshire Jock' Davidson makes it clear that the Scots poet

faces a stark choice between emulating 'Tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle' or the style of 'Shelley and his great successors'.

The early influence of Swinburne and John Nichol introduced Davidson to English Romantic poetry relayed through an Anglicised education system. Yet he felt pressurised by the establishment and his poem 'The Runnable Stag' is a parody of the English Romantic rural tradition, which Nichol encouraged him to develop. Stylistically it echoes Anglicised literary features but thematically it affirms his sense of subordination, oppression and alienation from this framework. The stag, like Davidson, is victimised and hunted down by English tradition and the animal chooses to drown rather than be caught by his pursuers. Instead of allowing himself to be assimilated, Davidson reacted by engaging with the poetry of the underdog and the exile, which affirmed his non-belonging. His technical and stylistic choices form part of a dissociative strategy in which he remained, as always, the man apart trying to grapple with a new cosmopolitan modernist consciousness.

The multiple voices of 'In A Music Hall'; the fusion of private individual and burlesque character in 'Ayrshire Jock'; the ironically revealing, hypocritical voice of the 'Rev. E. Kirk B.D.'; the superficial persona created in 'A Male Coquette'; the cockney voice of 'Thirty-Bob a Week'; the silent suffering of the vagrant in 'A Loafer'; the discursive *Fleet Street Eclogues* and Tete-a-Tetes', which dramatise the opinions of both real and fictional characters; the searching, painfully self-analysing voices of the *Testaments*; are all illustrative of a multitude of different 'identities' and perspectives, similar to the multiplicity of voice which Kenneth Simpson identifies in the work of eighteenth-century writers like Smollett, Boswell and Burns.

Davidson's experiments with characterisation and persona are particularly evident in the collection *In A Music Hall and Other Poems* (1891). The title poem consists of a prologue, six dramatic monologues and an epilogue. The genre of the music-hall act facilitates Davidson's experiments with multiplicity of voice and character. The poem opens with a struggling Glaswegian poet, akin to the protagonist in 'Ayrshire Jock', who has resorted to working as a junior clerk in order to secure a living. He, like the characters he introduces, has adopted a role in order to survive. In fact he must sustain three separate identities as a poet, a clerk, and a music-hall chairman and thus establishes the theme of identity as being fluid and ambiguous, providing a context for the introduction of a succession of acts each of whom have an ambivalent identity.

In her comments upon Davidson's representations of alienation within the modern urban environment, Mary O'Connor suggests that the characters of *In a Music-Hall*, 'are all in their own way paralyzed'.[10] The most problematic are the extrovert characters, Tom Jenks and Julian Aragon, whose monologues are little more than public performances. They have lost all sense of a private self and are left with only a public facade. Tom Jenks introduces himself exclusively in terms of his outward appearance and stage accessories, 'A fur-collared coat and a stick and a ring,/And a chimney-pot hat to the side - that's me!' (II. 1-2) (MH, 4). He has learned to compensate for his poor singing by the art of presentation and gesture, 'So I practised my entrance - a kind of half-moon,/With a flourishing stride and a bow to a T' (II. 17-18). Tom Jenks is a singer without a voice and a man without an identity who relies upon accessories and outward presentation to define himself.

Julian Aragon is a chameleon-like personality. As a contortionist he can adopt many forms but has no stable, definite self. Julian explains that 'My gestures, not my words, say what I mean' (VI. 7) as he manipulates his body to convey a malaise of insubstantial forms:

> I twist, contort, distort, and range and rustle;
> I constrain every limb and every muscle.
> I'm limber, I'm Antaean
> I chant the devil's paean,
> I fill the stage in rich infernal bustle. (VI. 11-15)

Julian admits that 'My nature's a perennial somersault' (VI. 21). He has no fixed opinion because he has no established sense of self from which to formulate judgements: 'whose the fault?/If I don't know good from evil?' (VI. 22-3),. Like Tom Jenks, Julian is a kind of non-person, surviving within a charade of multiplicity and transience.

Next comes Selene Eden a seductive dancer, deliberately creating an air of mystery as part of her seductive prowess: 'My dearest lovers know me not;/I hide my life and soul from sight . . . My mystery is my mail of might' (V. 1-4). Sustaining public interest depends upon maintaining her 'conquering mystery' (40) hence her identity must be forever obscured: to be oneself is to become ordinary and unattractive.

This idea of being larger-than-life, a consciously manipulated public projection of oneself, is particularly evident in the monologues of Stanley Trafford and Lily Dale. Trafford

introduces himself in the third person: 'He held himself as great; he made/His genius his own protege' (IV. 3-4). Lily Dale is equally aware of her public image, moulding herself to the demands of her audience by artfully enhancing her appearance:

> Thin lips? Oh, you bet! and deep lines.
> So I powder and paint as you see;
> And that's belladonna that shines
> Where a dingier light ought to be. (III. 5-8)

Lily, like Stanley, aims to please others and directs all of her efforts to producing a desirable image instead of a genuine one. 'I always contrive to bring out/The meaning that tickles you, sir' (16). Both performers conceal their unhappiness behind their public image and 'create' themselves to fit the desires or expectations of others. In the final act, Mary-Jane McPherson, has more in common with the poet-clerk-chairman, in that she too has adapted from one role to another as a governess turned singer due to financial hardship.

Although these characters share the same problem, all having lost their identity, it is only the context and structural form of the poem that brings them together. Despite their collective plight there is no companionship or solidarity to mediate their displacement, as O'Connor notes, 'These characters are not a community. There is no conscious interaction between them, and isolation becomes a theme of the poem as a whole'.[11] Although these characters are survivors, adapting to meet the demands of their circumstances, the sense of pain and disorientation that prevailed in 'Ayrshire Jock' continues to dominate.

Another poem in which identity is not only vague but also deliberately deceitful is 'The Male Coquette'. Here the speaker is a manipulative and shallow character. He confesses that his heart 'Tis hollow as a drum!' (4), and that 'My tongue drops honey like a hive' (9). In keeping with the characters from 'In A Music-Hall' he tends to describe himself in terms of outward detail:

> Look at the diamonds on my breast,
> My golden chain and locket,
> My many suits, all of the best –
> And never mind my pocket. (13-16)

He asserts that 'I play; I flash my diamond ring; / Falsetto is my voice' (19-20). Material circumstances have conditioned the male coquette just as they trap the performers from 'In A Music-Hall'. Here however, the ethos of survival is particularly alarming as it has

produced an unprincipled, amoral character whose identity is constituted by his manipulative prowess.

Davidson's poems present a multiplicity of social voices ranging from the satiric portrayal of the middle-class minister in 'The Rev. E. Kirk B.D.' to the working-class voices of the London clerk in 'Thirty-Bob a Week' and the abused labourer's wife in 'To the Street Piano'. In this poem Davidson is seeking to develop a polyphonic or dialogic form and a subversive relativity in the array of perspectives which are dramatised. 'Thirty Bob a Week' articulates not only the perspective of the underdog but does so in words, vocabulary and syntax which are opposed to authoritative standard English:, using vocabulary such as 'blooming', 'ain't', 'p'r'aps', 'bally' in place of formal speech. This has its origins in the immediacy of oral dialogue, with which Davidson would be familiar from his experience of the Scottish literary tradition. Everything authoritative and rigid in terms of a linguistic and social hierarchy is undermined.

Davidson's use of multiple character, voice and persona is not merely symptomatic of displacement, rather, he uses his polyphonic poetry and discourses to create a subversive relativity akin to Bakhtin's discussion of 'Carnival'. Davidson subverts and inverts hierarchies, creates a deliberate openness and instability as opposites are inverted, fact and fantasy become indistinguishable, extreme oppositional views coexist and are simultaneously celebrated and undermined. His writing rejoices in the wildness of uncontrollable forces and the festivity of misrule. He had a fascination with the ambiguities created by irony, using it as a means to evade or undermine what he saw as the inevitable bigotry inherent in any single belief, ideology, theory or system. Davidson was able to sustain opposing points of view through his dramatic monologues and prose dialogues. This meant that he could avoid identification with one side or the other. Davidson's use of irony and opposition is symptomatic of his split sensibility and for a time irony served as a strategy of defiance. In a prefatory note to *The Testament of a Vivisector* (1901), Davidson addressed his Testaments to 'those who are willing to place all ideas in the crucible'.[12] He also asserted that 'Irony is not a creed. The makers of creeds have always miscalled, denied some part of the world. [whereas] Irony affirms and delights in the whole'.[13] Irony became a technique used to preserve his independence of mind. Later, he would announce his materialism with all the vigour and single-mindedness of the most ardent Calvinist, but initially, he became a polymath who picked up whatever ideas appealed to him.

In the collection entitled *The Last Ballad and Other Poems*, (1899), a number of views concerning war are presented. Davidson juxtaposes the patriotic, jingoistic ethos of 'Coming', with 'The Hymn of Abdul Hamid', which is spoken in the voice of Hamid, and presents his conviction that he is fulfilling the law of God against the Europeans; while the viewpoint of the ordinary soldier contrasts with these dominant 'voices' in 'War Song'. Davidson's *Fleet Street Eclogues* also form a kind of discourse between characters to offer contrasting perspectives. The discursive structure of these poems enables the dramatic rendering of argument, doubt and contention.

It seems therapeutic for Davidson to engage with extremes of subjectivity within the 'safety' of reductive humour. This dualism is apparent in earlier Scottish writers. Kenneth Simpson refers to the split personality of Scott, 'orthodox Augustan and lover of the medieval world of ballads; loyal Unionist and sentimental Jacobite'.[14] Similarly, Thomas Crawford, referring to Burns, observes that:

> The self-dramatisations of the epistles express a mind in motion, giving itself over at different times to conflicting principles and feelings; they mirror that mind as it grappled with a complex world. In order to body it forth, Burns had to be, in himself, and not simply in play, both Calvinist and anti-Calvinist, both fornicator and champion of chastity, both Jacobite and Jacobin, both local and national, both British and European, both anarchist and sober calculator, both philistine and anti-philistine.[15]

Diversity is the central feature of Davidson's *Fleet Street Eclogues* (1893) and 'Tete-a-Tete' discourses which were written for *The Speaker*. Each character in *Fleet Street Eclogues* has a different perspective; added to these contrasting perspectives are the tensions that exist between urban and rural environments, past and present, degeneration and progress, aspiration and the restricting nature of everyday life. The voices remain discursive and inconclusive facilitating Davidson's desire to maintain contrasts and oppositions. O'Connor notes Davidson's need to maintain multiplicty of perspective until the eventual transition to a definitive materialist view:

> Ultimately, Davidson's goal is to hold all contraries, including both worlds of the city and the country, in an ironic balance [...]. This inclusiveness is achieved in the first cycle of *Fleet Street Eclogues*, but by 1905, when the second series is begun, Davidson's views have changed. The single voice of scientific materialism dominates any dialogue that is started. The eclogue form undergoes radical changes to suit that purpose.[16]

In the first cycle the journalist's world is a discordant one, where no single voice or vision can predominate and each eclogue forms a debate on a particular topic. Menzies and Brian

are the pessimists, complaining about modern, urban life; Basil is the Romantic, yearning for the beauty of nature; Sandy is the optimist and activist; and Percy acts as the wise, stoical patriarch of the group. In 'New Year's Day' a discussion between Basil, Sandy and Brian centres around journalism. Brian is the pessimist who proclaims that journalism is a trade 'Unworthy of heroes or men' (1) and complains that 'In drivel our virtue is spent' (6). His cynicism and disillusionment are contrasted with Basil's nostalgia and idealism. These two perspectives are sharply juxtaposed; Basil speaks of 'the moonlight blossoms of May' (44) and 'Sunbeams and snowdrops' (66) while Brian refers to 'this pestilent reeking stye' (68). Brian is then rebuked by the pragmatic and resilient Sandy who warns, 'Now, journalist, perpend. / You soil your bread and butter' (103-4). Language and syntax aid the discordant effect created by these contrasting views; inverted word order such as 'star-daisied', 'Unprayed no prayer' and the clash of unusual, archaic and slang words such as 'guttersnipes'and 'berserkir', bring together the contrasts between the ballad and the modern world. These extremes are interlaced with the moderate opinions of Sandy but even his moderate fortitude is expressed in curious mirroring phrases and inversions. He asserts that journalism is as noble a profession as the individual makes it: 'Only to souls of hacks / Are phrases hackneyed.-' and he asserts that 'Though chivalry be ended, / There are champions in the field'. It is a highly polyphonic poem with opposing views voiced in clashing tones, registers and phrases.

Similarly, in 'St. Valentine's Eve' the contrasting language and imagery is employed in a dialogue between Percy and Menzies to underpin their differing perspectives. The means of expression creates a dissonant, polyphonic effect. Menzies is young and dissatisfied with life while Percy, the elder of the two speakers, has developed a form of stoic materialism which he conveys in an elaborate, archaic form of speech:

> Dread words - 'tis Ercles' vein - and fit to teach
> The mandrake's self new ecstasies of woe,
> Have passed my lips in blame of God and man.
> Now surely nothing can
> Constrain my soul serene to riot so. (11-15)

He has developed a philosophy which holds all extremes and contraries together asserting that 'The groaning of the universe in pain / Were as an undersong in Love's refrain' (193-194). His serenity is derived from an acceptance of the dualistic equilibrium that prevails over human existence. He is dismissed by Menzies who uses modern language, 'But you are old; the tide of life is low; / No wind can raise a tempest in a cup' (16-17). There is

no resolution however from their opposing positions, Percy and Menzies debate the paradox of good and evil as necessarily complementary forces, but neither Percy's serenity nor Menzies's pessimism dominates within the discourse, instead opposition and contrast are sustained throughout.

This series of *Fleet Street Eclogues* creates a contrapuntal, dissonant array of voices and a carnivalesque relativity of perspective. Davidson appears to be, on the one hand, bereft of cohesion, and on the other, delighting in polyphony. Multiplicity of voice, character and perspective undermine the possibility of cohesion and stability. Identity and status are the subject of debate. A world of contrasts between love and hate, good and evil, create a void in which identity is subject to perpetual flux and the individual is eternally displaced. This context of instability and tension is also paradoxically liberating. Maintaining contradiction and opposition allowed Davidson to escape the rigid concepts of right and wrong. Diversity frees him from the singularity of Presbyterian restraint, and facilitates an indulgence in the impulsive, imaginative and fantastic, through the framework of poetry and fiction.

The multiplicity of voice and perspective which the eclogues reflect is repeated in Davidson's 'Tete-a-Tete' discourses. They form a series of conversations between real and imaginary characters, which Davidson originally wrote for *The Speaker* in the 1880s and 90s, and which articulate a variety of opinions in a range of diverse voices. These conversations are often self-referential and ironic. Dialogues had been fashionable for some time with writers such as Hugh Miller; Davidson finds them particularly useful because, like the eclogues, the 'Tete-a-Tete' discourses enable Davidson to experiment with voice and persona, allowing him to engage with issues of subjectivity and characterisation, while evading any resolution. Often the subject of conversation is literature itself. Davidson creates conversations between James Boswell and Dr. Johnson concerning poetry; Froude and Carlyle discuss developments in literature; while his fictional characters Cosmo Mortimer and Ninian Jamieson argue about poetry and women writers. These dialogues often enable Davidson to put forward his own views in unusual or unexpected ways. Davidson highlights the merits of James Thomson's naturalism and his own theory concerning Pre-Shakespearianism in the authoritative persona of Thomas Carlyle. Similarly, he uses the assumed voice of Dr Johnson to discuss the merits of imagination and rhythm in poetry.

Nonetheless, remaining true to his own framework of contradiction, serious interests are undercut by humour, and characterisation is also balanced by a self-referential awareness of the nature of these dialogues as fictional constructs. In the 'Tete-a-Tete' between James Boswell and Dr. Johnson, Boswell upbraids Johnson for making reference to things which are outwith his time:

> J.B. Two anachronisms, sir! You live long before the Encyclopaedia Britannica and Thomas Hood.
> Dr.J. They are nothing, sir, to the anachronisms I expect to commit in the course of this conversation.[17]

In these dialogues Davidson delights in the ability to merge serious and comic, fact and fiction, reductive irony and impractical zeal.

Tom Hubbard in his essay 'Irony and Enthusiasm: The Fiction of John Davidson' (1984) claims that Davidson's fiction is divided between 'the ironic and the enthusiastic, the Hamlet and the Quixote'.[18] Davidson's fiction is full of eccentric theorists such as Ninian Jamieson, with his experiments in diamond making and his claim to the Stuart succession, Earl Lavender and his gospel of evolution, Maxwell Lee who tries to orchestrate real people and events into a fictional narrative, Miss Armstrong and her theory of cause and effect and Cosmo Mortimer with his theory of names. Through comic reduction Davidson can expound the most extreme and single-minded beliefs and yet remain detached. His fiction enables him to indulge in subjectivity and ridicule it at the same time. Hubbard has suggested that there is something in the ambition of these characters that makes them 'not just attractive, but exhilarating'.[19]

Davidson combines a detached narrative with characters who live out their theories with absolute conviction. These single-minded characters are invariably undermined by their more cynical companions. This sustains a balance between extreme comic enthusiasm and reductive irony. Earl Lavender's egotism, for example, is undermined by his companion Lord Brumm; in *Perfervid* Ninian Jamieson's grandiose schemes are undermined by his companion Cosmo Mortimer. Each is sceptical of the other's enthusiasm. The impulsive, volatile nature of Davidson's characters is therefore combined with an ever-present and reductive common-sense. It is from this tension that the novel's humour is derived. Tom Hubbard suggests that tensions between the sceptic and the enthusiast are repeatedly dramatised in Davidson's fiction. This dialectic between the rational and the quixotic

serves to undermine all assurances and assumptions. In Davidson's fiction there is a continual dialectic between idealism and cynicism, enthusiasm and reductive irony, the ordinary and the extravagant or heroic, mundane stability and the impulsively quixotic. These tensions are accompanied by the use of irony and parody acting as subversive forces to undermine the fixed limitations of convention. Everything becomes transient and open to flux; everything can be adopted or discarded, projected or undermined. Everything is unstable and can be altered by scepticism and idealism alike. Bakhtin took issue with formal and ideological abstractions and emphasised 'living discourse',[20] Davidson presents all discourse, all values and beliefs as the product of interactive processes, thereby undermining absolutes.

Tom Hubbard has used Davidson's fiction as an illustration of the divided consciousness in Scottish literature, arguing that:

> We cannot explore Scottish literature (or its criticism) without confronting [...] the problems of the divided consciousness. We soon learn of the conflict between the hard head and the perfervid heart; we are bound to consider whether the struggle leads ultimately to chaos or synthesis.[21]

The antithesis between romantic and pragmatic has similarities to the division perceived by Muir who wrote that, 'the Scottish consciousness is divided [...] Scotsmen feel in one language and think in another [...] their emotions turn to the Scottish tongue [...] and their minds to a standard English which for them is almost bare of associations'.[22] Muir's theory of dissociation of sensibility is complemented by a recent study of binary dualisms in Beveridge and Turnbull's *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture*,[23] which returns to the antithesis between 'romantic' Scotland and 'pragmatic' England. The boundaries between realism and fiction, reality and the fantastic, the assumed and essential nature of character are all undermined by Davidson's narratives. In these narratives we are not offered depth of psychological realism but the energy and vivacity of character projection: the enthusiasm and quixotic possibilities afforded by fiction. Characterisation, comic reduction and the fusion of extremes are, therefore, strategies of evasion, obscuring identity in a melange of energy, humour and paradox. Davidson's protagonists exhibit a kinship with the 'Holy Fool' tradition, linking him to other texts such as Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy*, Monroe's *Gilian the Dreamer* and to later works such as Robin Jenkins's *Fergus Lamont*.

In Davidson's fiction there is a continual dialectic between idealism and cynicism, enthusiasm and reductive irony, the ordinary and the extravagant or heroic, mundane stability and the impulsively quixotic. These tensions are accompanied by the use of irony

and parody in order to undermine the fixed limitations of convention. Character and text are used in an overt and self-referential way. Davidson highlights aspects of himself through characters such as Cosmo Mortimer, Maxwell Lee and Ninian Jamieson. Within these tensions, identity becomes transient and open to flux and it can be adopted or discarded, projected or undermined. In both Davidson's poetry and fiction, identity is an unstable condition which can be altered by scepticism and idealism alike.

Davidson's use of contradiction and opposition was a strategy too volatile and unstable to endure; such tensions could not be held in equilibrium indefinitely. Multiplicity gave way to unqualified enthusiasm as Davidson substituted materialism for Knoxian Calvinism. Davidson's need to define himself made the sense of purpose that 'enthusiasm' could afford increasingly attractive. Though Davidson's multiplicity and irony evades any fixed perspective, there remained an awareness of displacement and a corresponding need for definition. For a time Davidson's writing provided a paradigm within which to explore and project the tensions and extremes of his own personality. It afforded him the opportunity to explore and undermine extremes of perspective, while retaining a framework in which oppositional forces could remain in suspension.

Dissociation and the Proto-Modernist Sensibility

A shared cultural background led writers such as Geddes, Davidson, Stevenson, and Thomson to form an early modernist style and perspective. Their sense of displacement predisposed them to the perspective of the critical social outsider and rebel; and to adopt an eclectic, experimental focus which characterises much Modernist writing. They display a deliberate and radical break with traditional values and assumptions; a constant questioning of traditional thought, traditional literary themes and subjects, and an experimentation with form and style. In their preoccupations with form they display a self-reflexivity which frequently engenders discontinuity, incoherence, eclecticism and consequent instability. They anticipate the avant garde in modernism, seeking, in Ezra Pound's phrase to 'make it new' by violating accepted conventions; creating new forms and styles; introducing neglected or forbidden subject-matter and representing themselves as 'alienated' from the established order.

Alan Sandison in his book *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (1996) suggests that 'if any single thing distinguishes Stevenson's writing it is his intense artistic self-consciousness. It manifests itself in a number of ways but principally, perhaps,

in an abiding concern with matters of form and metafictional structures.'[24] He also notes that 'Artistic self-consciousness is for Stevenson the *sine qua non* of the contemporary writer; and it is the yardstick by which he measures the performance of others.'[25] Sandison also points out that 'When I described Stevenson as questing among forms I did not, of course, mean that his was a quest for a particular form. To the contrary, Stevenson delights in the polyphonic coexistence - even within one text - of a number of forms, articulating themselves in a number of 'voices'.[26] Davidson's experiments with poetic form mirror, both technically and psychologically, the same rebelliousness and search for an independent literary identity as that of Stevenson. Their work exhibits a polyphonic, open-ended restlessness.

Davidson, Stevenson and Thomson engage with neglected, unusual or forbidden subject matter; they see the writer as alienated from the established order and in consequence assert their own autonomy. They share an external perspective in their ability to create a world and to stand outside it. In Davidson's case irony is used repeatedly to create an attitude of detachment and non-commitment. They also undermine the complacencies of the conventional order, share an emphasis upon change, discontinuity or the need to make new and challenge the norms and pieties of dominant cultural orthodoxy. Alan Sandison describes this as the 'The Modernist emphasis on change, on discontinuity, on the need to 'make it new' [which] involves a more than usually decisive rupture with the past.'[27] These writers acutely recognise the predicament of dislocation. This produces the reactionary, ironic, divergent and experimental modes of writing with which they engage. A forward looking dynamic emerges through discontinuity, which confronts the nature of displacement and the challenges and tensions of a new, emergent social and artistic context.

Davidson sought a medium that would encompass the range of his artistic and expressive needs. He stated that 'Poetry is immoral'[28] and that his verse that would be 'a statement of the world as it is',[29] seeking realism in art. Davidson, like Whitman and Geddes, and in keeping with the post-Darwinian naturalism emerging in the 1870s from those such as Emile Zola, wanted to write poetry for a new range of experience, attempting to find a form of poetics that could render the modern industrial, scientific, technological and secular experience, and its effect upon the individual consciousness. Holbrook Jackson comments that Davidson was 'concerned about something new in art, something elastic enough to contain a big expression of modernity'[30] and that 'Poetry for him was [...] no scholarly accomplishment, no mere decoration or bauble, but the very instrument of

thought and imagination, emotion and passion'.[31] In Davidson's desire for a form of poetics that would not flinch from the gamut of human experience, he followed Whitman in subject-matter ranging from the urban masses to the individual consciousness and from science to sexuality.

Davidson desired to incorporate conventionally non-aesthetic or taboo subjects into his art. His 'new poetry' aimed to transgress the Calvinist conceptual framework of good and evil. There is no area in which Davidson contravened the boundaries of morality more than in the 'Ballad of a Nun' (1894). In this extraordinary direct and explicit poem, which could be viewed as blasphemous in its use of the figure of the Virgin Mary, Davidson sets out to establish a critique of the religious repression of sexuality and an affirmation of sex as a natural and healthy imperative. The nun who is the central figure of the poem, leaves her duties at the convent in order to enjoy a sexual encounter in the nearby city. It is the Virgin Mary who takes over her duties in her absence and blesses her for pursuing a natural and instinctive course of action, as opposed, in Davidson's view, to the unnatural inhibition and guilt normally engendered by religion. Here Davidson shares the same thematic imperatives as Whitman, who writes that 'Difficult as it will be, it has become, in my opinion, imperative to achieve a shifted attitude from superior men and women towards the thought and fact of sexuality, as an element in character, personality, the emotions, and a theme of literature.'[32]

Holbrook Jackson comments that:

> Davidson's self-imposed mission was to thunder news of a new dawn. He repudiated the past [...] and, whilst insisting upon the importance of the present, he heralded the new day to come with an ardour equalled only by the Futurists of Milan, who followed him, and are his nearest intellectual kin.[33]

Jackson also asserts that 'In the *fin de siecle* search for reality few possessed his diligence, fewer his intellectual courage.'[34]

Though Davidson and Thomson are less optimistic than Whitman and Geddes, who equate change with progress, they all emphasise the necessity for a new mode of expression. Whitman wrote that:

> the Old World has had the poems of myths, fictions, feudalism, conquest, caste, dynastic wars, and splendid exceptional characters and affairs, which have been great; but the New World needs the poems of realities and science and of the democratic average and basic equality which shall be greater.[35]

Davidson and Thomson are pessimistic regarding social change and engage directly with the darker side of human nature and society. Their experience of the London of the 1890s produced a stark but compelling materialist philosophy. Davidson comes mid-way between Thomson and Geddes; unlike Thomson his cityscapes are modern rather than classical and his social realism is powerful and direct. Yet he is not a social reformer like Geddes; rather it is the philosophical questions concerning man's increasing alienation in a hostile urban, industrial world devoid of divine aid which interest him and, in this respect, his urban images have affinities with Thomson's city of the mind. While Thomson uses the city as an evocation of spiritual collapse and Geddes is positive about the new challenges of economic and technical innovation; Davidson has a powerful materialist vision. This aspect of Victorian Scottish literature has been unduly neglected. Too often the term 'provincial' is used as a label associated with minor literature of narrow focus. In this respect it is useful to remember Robert Crawford's point that 'it seems undeniable that it was the un-English provincials and their traditions which contributed most to the crucially provincial phenomenon we now know as Modernism.'[36] Crawford emphasises the anthropological and eclectic focus of Modernist writing and asserts that 'This way of looking at Modernism reinforces the sense in which it is vitally 'provincial', and highlights its links with the tradition of Scottish eclecticism.'[37] There is a literary line from Davidson to MacDiarmid, running parallel to that of Walt Whitman and Ezra Pound, which, in urging an experimental, eclectic and international poetry of science and of facts, defines 'provincialism' in a radically antithetical way to that of its usual associations with literature of the 1840-1900 period. Whitman asserted that 'the true use for the imaginative faculty of modern times is to give ultimate vivification to facts, to science, and to common lives'.[38] In the work of Geddes, Davidson and Thomson it is this type of 'provincialism' which is to be found and their contribution to early British modernism should not be underestimated.

David Perkins in his study entitled *A History of Modern Poetry: from the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode* (1976) notes the significance of the 1890s in terms of early modernism, albeit from a largely Anglo-centric perspective. He asserts that 'England [...] had a strong, rebellious avant-garde poetry in the 1890s'.[39] Perkins explains that:

> the theories and poems of the London avant-garde commanded the attention of American literary undergraduates, such as Pound, Stevens, and Eliot. And the high modernist mode, when it developed in the 1910s and 1920s, was in some respects a revival of the premises and intentions that had also shaped the avant-garde poetry of England in the eighties and nineties [...]. Modernist poets shared with the earlier avant-garde of London a similar perception of their

> historical place and literary mission: both groups were eager to reject the nineteenth century mentality and the habits of verse associated with it. And particular tendencies such as Imagism, realism (including the urban and sordid), Symbolism, formalism, and the praise of impersonal craftmanship were all anticipated in the 1890s.[40]

This literary community was also, however, a cosmopolitan one. It included Scots like Davidson and Thomson, indeed it always had. From the time of Boswell and Smollett or the earlier James Thomson, London had been a province of expatriate Scots. It was to Thomson and Davidson that T.S. Eliot acknowledged a particular debt of influence and Davidson also attracted the attention of Virginia Woolf. In terms of formal experimentation, the widening of subject matter, employment of colloquial speech and emphasis on realism, Davidson was part of the literary vanguard of his age.

Above all, Davidson sought a form of poetry that could engage with the nature of the self in such a mass society. Perkins notes that 'With Davidson we come to the life-affirmers. They flaunted zesty attitudes in self-conscious repudiation of the aesthetic-decadent sensibility, which to them seemed effete'.[41] Scottish writers of the 19th century had a distinctive capacity for anticipating modernist themes of alienation and for presenting these themes in new and experimental ways. In his preface to James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* Edwin Morgan comments:

> If Thomson's reputation has been uncertain, it is tempting to relate this to his being an uprooted Scot living in other places [...]. Similar uncertainties have attended the reputations of Carlyle and Stevenson, of John Davidson, of Robert Buchanan and David Gray [...] but taken from the point of view of the writers themselves, the question is how easy or difficult it was for a Scottish poet brought up in or migrating to England at that period to write persuasively in English, considering the fact that his antecedents in Scotland were Fergusson, Burns and Hogg. And if it was difficult, were there nevertheless compensating advantages? The whole change of environment from Scotland to (say) London - the complex of physical, cultural and linguistic changes - may also have forced, under pressure of various kinds, new ways of looking at things, a new awareness of things that an outsider suddenly sees and points out. T.S. Eliot's published tribute to both Thomson and Davidson - perhaps as an incomer himself he was more receptive - was that they had a particular kind of modernity, a sort of prophetic adumbration, deeply incorporating urban experience into poetry, which he did not find in their English contemporaries. The two Scottish poets were alienated, whether psychologically or geographically or both [...] Eliot saw them as figures symbolic of the exile and alienation of the early-modern artist.[42]

W.N. Herbert agrees with much of Morgan's argument, noting that 'Davidson uses the Scot in London as the archetype of the placeless man, uprooted from his native city but stifled in his adopted one.'[43] Herbert further notes that 'There are two methods Davidson

employs to declare his apartness from the London scene; one is his choice of genres and the manner in which he treats them, the other is his choice of language.'[44]

Davidson's displaced status is reflected in his dissatisfaction with conventional genres and verse forms. In 1922 Howard Mumford Jones described him as a rebel 'who strove all his life against the limits of Form [which] snapped like wood in his hands.'[45] Similarly, Mary O'Connor comments that 'Davidson's struggle with form was a fitful search for poetry that could somehow speak of the experience of the modern world [...]. His poems are some of the first attempts at making the modern world possible for art.'[46] In reference to Davidson's use of poetic conventions John Sloan offers a very affirmative appraisal, suggesting that 'Davidson emerges not simply as a late-Victorian rebel, but as 'the first of the moderns' who [...] forged out a new idiom and subject-matter for twentieth century English verse.'[47] English here signifies Davidson's influence on poetry in English and indeed Scots, as MacDiarmid's work has marked affinities with Davidson's experiments with language and dramatic idiom. Davidson's displaced status led to a continual experimentation that was symptomatic of his need to formulate his own style and identity as a writer. He experimented extensively with poetic forms such as the ballad, lyric, rondeau, eclogue and dramatic monologue. Nowhere more than in his subversion of genre is Davidson's antipathy toward any prescribed framework more pronounced. Like his struggle to find a voice, through a continual interplay of discursive, multiple and divergent voices, his experiments with form are part of a desire to find his own status, outwith the dictates of Scots and English verse conventions. In this he sought a form of poetry that could truly be considered to constitute 'a statement of the world as it is'[48] - an objective which anticipates and influences MacDiarmid's self-role as the creator of a poetry of facts.

Davidson also confronted the issue as to whether the values of poetry and science are compatible, a question increasingly relevant to the role of poetry as a culturally and socially integrated medium. Davidson did not try to evolve a new poetic form to go with this new reality. Instead he used conventional verse in unconventional ways, choosing the eclogue and the ballad to deal with the subject-matter of the city, thus maintaining a tension of form and subject within his poetry. He apprehended the tension between the cognitive nature of science and the traditionally mythological, aesthetic nature of poetry and felt that they could be brought together by moving away from the traditional conceptual framework of literature which drew upon conventional Christian and classical associations. He aimed for an empirical poetry achieved through an eclectic and hybrid use of form. J.B. Townsend argues that 'Davidson undertook to define and defend the

eclectic principle of irony underlying all things including art. He called for a new 'realism' or 'Pre-Shakesperianism' that would reject nothing from its orbit'.[49] Davidson's 'Pre-Shakesperianism' extended beyond social realism to a moral and metaphysical realism, beyond concepts of destiny, providence and God to something akin to Thomson's Leopardian scepticism. Townsend also notes that 'Irony enabled him to enter the laboratory, the pressroom, the slums, among other forbidden chambers, and make poetry out of the materials of science and human misery. In the name of irony the raw facts of science and autobiographical experience were invested with romance, anonymity, and higher truth.'[50] Davidson's irony is also philosophical as well as literary and approximates to antisyzygy in the bringing together of dynamic contrasts. In the second stanza of 'The Crystal Palace' Davidson explores the problem of unifying poetry with the subject of mechanization. He focuses upon one exhibit, a flying machine, which is described according to the 'proper slang'. The machine 'gyrates' with 'arms A-kimbo'. It is akin to some skeleton from the primitive past as an 'Immense crustacean's gannoid skeleton'; it looks like 'The fossil of a giant myriapod!'.

In other poems such as 'The Wasp' and 'Snow' Davidson uses his poetry like a microscope to examine material phenomena in intrinsic detail. The intricate, analytical poem 'Snow' is remarkable for its success in reconciling poetic form with a subject of scientific fact. The complex structure, controlled metre and division of stanzas into five sections, reflect the structure and series of transformations which the snowflake undergoes. The facets, angles, colour and changing form of the snowflake are echoed in the patterning of the poem itself. Mary O'Connor observes that 'The tight control of the form mirrors the absolute control of the snowflake's essential form. With each new section - there are five - the poem undergoes a dissolution and reintegration of form, as the subject undergoes its own transformations.'[51] Here, is not only Davidson's new poetry of facts, later to be extended by MacDiarmid, but a characteristically ironic combination of scientific fact and perceptive sensitivity. The transient beauty of the snowflake is likened to the unique but equally temporal nature of each human being:

> Every flake with all its prongs and dints
> Burns ecstatic as a new-lit star:
> Men are not more diverse, finger-prints
> More dissimilar than snow-flakes are. (II. 25-28)

He observes that 'Worlds of men and snow endure, increase' (II.29) but that 'Individual men and crystals die' (II.32). The poem combines the observation of scientific fact and material form with the intricate use of poetic form, to create both a poetry of analytical

integrity and of perceptive sensitivity, concerning the human predicament of struggle and mortality. In his scientific and social poetry Davidson both compassionately and critically depicts man as increasingly disempowered in relation to his material environment. As O'Connor suggests, 'in his attempt to shift the locus of value and authority from man and his institutions to forces outside man, he looks forward to the post-moderns of our time'.[52]

Making a play on the term 'Pre-Raphaelite', Davidson coined the name 'Pre-Shakespearianism', reacting against what he perceived as the lack of realism in Victorian poetry. In a similarly critical vein MacDiarmid was later to talk about 'the golden age of Scottish poetry' before the 'English Ascendancy.'[53] Davidson's term deals with, but also extends beyond, social realism to include a moral and metaphysical materialism akin to James Thomson's. It constitutes Davidson's escape from Christendom and its value system based upon Providence, destiny and morality, to a secular appraisal and representation of human existence within literature. Perhaps returning to the democratic sensibility he received from his Scottish literary background, he stated that 'Poetry is not always an army on parade: sometimes it is an army coming back from the wars [...] shoeless, ragged, wounded, starved, but with victory on its brows; for poetry has been democratised.'[54] He also asserted that 'it is the mission of the poet to state the world afresh [...] academic questions of rhyme, rhythm, and diction have little more to do with poetry than epaulettes and pipe-clay have to do with strategy.'[55] Just as he criticised ploughboys 'Inspired by Robert Burns' who imitated 'faults alone'[56] he remained equally critical of the dominant influences in British literature. He criticised Tennyson and Browning for being 'Shakespearian' - their perspectives being limited by what he described as 'the prismatic cloud that Shakespeare hung out between poets and the world.'[57] Davidson is referring to any values or belief system which obscures the representation of stark material reality. Even the socialist William Morris is criticised because Davidson argues that "Mother and Son', his greatest poem [...] is not of a woman but a deserted Titaness in London streets' and he concludes therefore that 'there was a veil between him also and the world.'[58]

Davidson's use of the dramatic monologue is particularly effective in the rendering of psychological insight and dramatic realism. This skill culminates in the *In A Music-Hall* poems and in 'Thirty-Bob a Week'. Davidson's early experiments were also influenced by the Music-Hall but lack the fine psychological insight of his later work. Two poems, which appeared under the general title of 'To the Street Piano' (1894) mimic the songs 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' and 'After the Ball'. In the first poem the carefree girl of the song is reduced to coping with poverty and a drunken husband:

What a simpleton was I
to go and marry on the sly!
Now I work and never play:
Three pale children all the day
Fight and whine; and Dick, my man,
Is drunk as often as he can.
Ah! my head and bones are sore,
And my heart is hacked all o'er.

In the second poem, romantic disappointment is extended into pessimistic contemplation of the human condition in general. Mary O'Connor argues that:

> 'After the Ball' might have succeeded strictly as a parody of a music-hall song, but the burden of its pessimistic philosophy is too weighty for this particular music-hall tune. These two poems are of interest primarily as five-finger exercises in the genre and as illustrations of Davidson's tendency to transform radically whatever genre he employs.[59]

Though these early attempts do not always successfully exploit the deliberate incongruity between form and subject, they signpost a poetic manifesto which sets out to challenge preconceptions concerning the appropriate subject-matter for poetry. Davidson's use of tragic themes put in light-hearted metre also anticipates the work of Anton Chekhov who produced gently ironic, psychologically profound and sadly comic plays and short stories, which combine subtle comic observation with pathos. Chekhov was the first to use 'Ta-ra-ra-boom-de-ay' in his *Three Sisters* making a play on 'I'm sitting on a tomb today'. The same technique is also used by Bertolt Brecht whose libretti for the German composer Kurt Weill's operettas exploit the effects of similar antithetical combinations.

Davidson criticised poetry for acquiescing to a romantic, mythological aesthetic. In contrast, his Pre-Shakespearianism sought to equal in poetry the social realism of the newspaper. Influenced by Thomas Hood and James Thomson he wrote that:

> It was in the newspapers that Thomas Hood found the 'Song of the Shirt' [but] Poetry passed by on the other side. It could not endure the woman in unwomanly rags. It hid its head like the fabled ostrich.[60]

Where Carlyle offers his affirmative work ethic, Buchanan an Owenite social programme, and Geddes a vision of progress and active engagement with the modern world, Davidson aims only to 'state the world as it is'[61] as part of his Pre-Shakespearian realism and, as John Sloan notes, his 'model Pre-Shakespearian was James Thomson'.[62] It is in this vein that Davidson writes:

> But the woman in unwomanly rags, and all the insanity and iniquity of which she is the type, will now be sung. Poetry will concern itself with her and hers for some time to come. The offal of the world is being said in statistics, in prose fiction: it is besides going to be sung. James Thomson sang it and others are doing so.

His social realism is not socialism however. He aligns himself not to the practical reforms of Geddes and Buchanan but to the pessimism of Thomson:

> Will it be of any avail? We cannot tell. Nothing that can be done avails. Poor-laws, charity organisations, dexterously hold the wound open, or tenderly and hopelessly skin over the cancer. But there it is in the streets, the hospitals, the poor-houses, the prisons; it is a flood that surges about our feet, it rises breast-high. And it will be sung in all keys and voices. Poetry has other functions, other aims; but this also has become its province.[63]

The stoicism of Thomson and Davidson complements that of others such as Arnold, Tennyson and Eliot in facing the challenges of an emerging sceptical and secular age. David Daiches distinguishes between sceptics such as George Eliot who 'may have lost their belief in dogmatic religion, but...they never lost their faith in reason or in human nature'[64] and those who became disillusioned with Darwinism as a basis for belief in human progress and developed a starker view of secular, material truth.[65] Davidson determined to depict such realism and to use existing verse forms without reverence to convention. He urged Yeats and the members of the Rhymer's Club in the 1890s to have more 'blood and guts'[66] and his sentiments closely mirror Whitman's emphasis upon realism in poetry:

> Plenty of songs had been sung - beautiful, matchless songs - adjusted to other lands than these - another spirit and stage of evolution; but I would sing, and leave out or put in, quite solely with reference to America today. Modern science and democracy seem'd to be throwing out their challenge to poetry to put them in its statements in contradistinction to the songs and myths of the past.[67]

In both his poetry and prose Davidson reflects a desire for literature to focus upon this type of social realism. In an essay in *The Glasgow Herald* of 22 April 1893 entitled 'A Suburban Philosopher', Davidson's Random Itinerant recalls a conversation with the character of the title, whom he describes as a 'man evidently of some talent'. The Suburban Philosopher delivers the following observations concerning jerry-built houses:

> Take a house, a jerry-built house [...]. There is probably nothing uglier, nothing more distinctly the work of the devil [...]. It stands in a row in the midst of dozens of rows of the same pattern [...]. It is about the size of a wardrobe...In summer it is an oven; in winter a refrigerator. It has a garden of

> the dimensions of a large door-mat [...]. You hate the sight of it; you hate more the sight of the inhabitants. Bandy-legged children with hoarse voices; a pale slattern, pinched, round-shouldered, always either scolding or whining; a haggard clerk or shopman, when at home always smoking and going with a jug of beer. You hate it all; you will never look at it twice [...]. Surely here, if anywhere, you have what is hateful to God and to the enemies of God. Soft you now; there are children. Then there is, or there was, love [...]. In the midst of the fog and the filth, bad drains, typhoid, diphtheria, a bride and a groom came and brought all heaven with them. And when these bandy-legged children were born heaven looked in again and came to stay [...] and nothing will persuade me that the whole race of men is not benefited physically and mentally by the preservation of the feeblest human life, that the fittest will survive in growing proportion as the unfit are tended.[68]

A companion piece to this essay is Davidson's poem 'A Northern Suburb'. Though the poem lacks the emphasis upon social responsibility for the poor, which the essay suggests, the same sympathetic and perceptive understanding of the plight of the urban poor is clearly evoked:

> For here dwell those who must fulfil
> Dull tasks in uncongenial spheres,
> Who toil through dread of coming ill,
> And not with hope of happier years. (21-24)

The concluding stanza retains resigned fortitude, to be found in much of Davidson's social poetry:

> The lowly folk who scarcely dare
> Conceive themselves perhaps misplaced,
> Whose prize for unremitting care
> Is only not to be disgraced. (25-28)

Like James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, 'The Doom of a City' and 'Low Life', Davidson's poetry such as 'Thirty Bob a Week' and 'A Loafer' is more concerned with philosphical questions than the reality of urban squalor. Davidson uses the isolating, alienating effects of the city as a metaphor for the dissolution of meaning in a Godless world bereft of the sense of purpose and cohesion engendered by faith. In 'A Ballad of a Woman and her Son' (1897) Davidson gives a modernist slant to traditional ballad themes of passion, conflict, death and the supernatural. These elements are taken beyond the context of ghostly, fantasy drama and used to create a disturbingly emphatic denial of faith and individual purpose. Faith and doubt are set at odds in the conflict between a dying woman and her unbelieving son. Loss of conviction and certainty are combined with disparate and disjointed images which create a sense of meaninglessness and alienation:

He set his teeth on edge, and saw his mother die.
Outside a city-reveller's tipsy tread
Severed the silence with a jagged rent . . .
In the next house a child woke and cried;
Far off a clank and clash of shunting trains. (157-163)

The woman, suspended in death (reminiscent of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar*) returns to confirm human mortality and that there is no hereafter and nothing beyond the present struggle.

Thomson and Davidson use urban images to convey their philosophical materialism. Like Carlyle, they use the subject-matter of modernity to engage with wider philosophical questions. They juxtapose a humane appreciation of human suffering with a stark engagement with a reality which they see as unmitigated by spiritual belief, or even belief in social improvement. The predicament of Davidson's clerk in 'Thirty Bob a Week' is presented with enormous insight and dramatic efficacy but concludes with a stark affirmation of perpetual social injustice and an endless struggle for survival:

It's a naked child against a hungry wolf;
It's playing bowls upon a splitting wreck;
It's walking on a string across a gulf
With millstones fore-and-aft about your neck;
But the thing is daily done by many and many a one;
And we fall, face forward, fighting, on the deck.

Similarly, in another dramatic monologue entitled 'A Loafer' Davidson evokes the quiet despair of a vagrant resigned to his own impending death. This ignored and outcast figure awaits the 'ghostly shout' and 'phantom voice' of death beckoning to him. He seems himself a phantom figure, haunting the city:

I move from eastern wretchedness
Through Fleet Street and the Strand;
And as the pleasant people press
I touch them softly by the hand,
Perhaps to know that still I go
Alive about a living land. (13-18)

Like the clerk in 'Thirty Bob a Week' the Loafer has a peculiar dignity and resigned fortitude:

I know no handicraft, no art,
but I have conquered fate;
For I have chosen the better part,
And neither hope, nor fear, nor hate
With my placid breath on pain and death,

My certain alms, alone I wait. (31-36)

The hopelessness and resignation of the Loafer's fate has disturbing echoes of Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*:

They leave all hope behind who enter there:
Once certitude while sane they cannot leave,
One anodyne for torture and despair;
The certitude of Death, which no reprieve
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,
But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render
That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave. (I: 78-84)

Davidson's cynicism is related to his rejection of religious faith. In *Baptist Lake* the Scotsman John Inglis, in a style akin to Nietzsche, inverts Christian dogma and comments ironically that 'I believe that the Kingdom of Heaven is here now on earth [...]. The wealthy, and those that become wealthy, are the elect in spite of themselves; and the poor are in hell, and you'll never get them out'.[69] Davidson's social views, in keeping with his ironic perspective, are divided between concern and pessimism, compassion and pragmatism.

The poem 'Holiday at Hampton Court' opens with the stylised diction and pastoral imagery associated with English Romantic poetry. Davidson makes deliberate use of cliches of pastoral imagery, employing phrases such as 'pearly cloud', 'turquoise sky' and 'the diamond lamp of day'. He combines this with an expression of time which is dignified and regal, in keeping with the rich formal imagery: 'time on high / A moment halts upon his way / Bidding noon again good-bye.' The personification of time is stately and courteous, in harmony with the equally stately and jewel-like presentation of the morning sky. This entire setting, pace and tone, with its use of conventional diction and idealized imagery, is established only to be sharply and abruptly undercut by the following stanza which contains slang, idiomatic vocabulary used to describe a motley, working-class group of cheap day sightseers whose undignified, irreverent progress through the palace grounds suggests an aimless, philistine discord:

Gaffers, gammers, huzzies, louts,
Couples, gangs, and families
Sprawling, shake, with Babel-shouts
Bluff King Hal's funereal trees;
And eddying groups of stare-abouts
Quiz the sandstone Hercules.

This discordant portrait is similar to the poem 'Oor Location' (1885) by Coatbridge poet Janet Hamilton:

> A hunner funnels bleezin', reekin',
> Coal an' ironstane, charrin', smeekin';
> Navvies, miners, keepers, fillers,
> Puddlers, rollers, iron millers;
> Reestit, reekit, raggit laddies,
> Firemen, enginemen, an' Paddies;
> Boatmen, banksmen, rough and rattlin'

The affinities suggest that Davidson was aware of how contemporary Scottish poets, such as Janet Hamilton and William Thom, were working in a Scottish tradition modernising the city descriptions of Fergusson to develop a modern urban poetry.

The succeeding stanzas of Davidson's poem continue to fuse these two extremes of stock and stylised imagery: 'Indifferent exiles', 'Making love in cockney style' remain oblivious to the 'emerald shadows' of the woodland, while 'Dusty legions swarm and rave, / With laughter, shriek, inane debate', and 'Organs hammer tune on tune' until the crowds depart and peaceful bird-song again prevails toward the close of the day: 'Larks triumphant over all / Herald twilight coming soon'. The turbulence caused by the antics of the crowd is contained within the ordered hours of day and framed by dawn and dusk and the poetic formality with which they are presented. Poetic form and diction pretend to maintain a traditional subject-matter but the result is allowed to become discordant. Established poetic language and conventions jar with the realities of modern life as the stately dignity of Hampton Court is overpowered by the philistinism of its visitors. High art and poetry have become anachronistic and Davidson shows them as unable to contain the modern experience.

John Sloan notes that Davidson's avant garde approach to his poetry prompted a reserved and confused response from his contemporaries:

> When *Fleet Street and Other Poems* appeared in 1909, the reviewers were generally bewildered by their strange cacophonies and juxtapositions and felt that Davidson had strayed further into the chopped-up prose and scientific jargon - 'Davidsonese' - which they believed had swallowed up his lyric gift. Appreciation of Davidson's merits and originality as a poet, and his anticipation of the direction that twentieth-century poetry was to take had to wait.[70]

In this volume of poetry, the detached ironic voice and observations of Davidson's displaced Itinerant predominates. Mary O'Connor observes that:

> Davidson's search for dramatic 'personation' and appropriate voices in his poetry had led him through different experiments, on the one hand with prosaic, realistic figures such as the music-hall artiste, the clerk and the journalist, and on the other with legendary figures such as Lancelot, Tannhauser, or 'John Davidson'. But the voice of the observer and the chronicler of the age appears finally as Davidson's most personal yet most dramatic voice [...]. The volume [*Fleet Street and Other Poems*] as a whole is characterised by the observer who walks out into the world of contemporary fragmentation [...] to witness it, react to it, and chronicle it.[71]

His excursions detail an eclectic variety of scenes reflected in the small details of 'A Wasp', 'Snow' and 'Two Dogs', to the conditions of modern life in 'Railway Stations' and 'Rail and Road', to the stresses and contradictions of modernity found in 'The Crystal Palace'. In these poems Davidson moves from actuality to abstraction, using realism as a context for his materialist vision. He remained, as always, influenced by topical issues in newspapers and current affairs and exploited and developed upon the discursive style of the pastoral eclogue to draw these issues into his poetry. However, in these novel eclogues, shepherds in a pastoral setting are replaced by Fleet Street journalists debating a range of contemporary issues such as politics, economics, nationalism, war, imperialism, urbanisation and related issues of degeneration and progress, and the status and function of man in an increasingly competitive, challenging environment. In this way the traditional eclogue is removed from its pastoral context to become a modern genre, capable of examining contemporary urban life by creating an ironic interplay of voices. Each journalist expresses a different point-of-view so that a contrast is established between optimist and pessimist; progressive and traditionalist; conservative and activist; romantic and cynic.

Dramatic contrasts in perspective emerge in the juxtaposition of urban and rural; real and ideal; an idyllic past and a hostile present. The poem 'St. George's Day' (1896)[72] illustrates the kind of impact created by these contrasts. One journalist remarks 'I hear the lark and linnet sing; / I hear the whitethroat's alto ring', to which the other responds, 'I hear the idle workman sigh; / I hear the hungry children cry' (1-4). Anticipating the absence of certainty and absolute values characteristic of modernist writing, these eclogues also reveal a deep sense of ambivalence. As with Davidson's poetry of war and empire, even when such discourses end on an affirmative or patriotic note, the preceding debate endures as an unsettling qualification to any forced or contrived idealism. John Sloan comments that:

> Like Scott and Carlyle, Davidson was a gatherer of odd facts, a literary anthropologist and *bricoleur*, preferring to go for inspiration to dictionaries and encyclopaedias than to the work of other poets [...]. The spirit of the

> Eclogues is antiquarian: traditional saint's days, folk legends, and country customs are assembled in an effort to achieve a new unity and meaningfulness in a world where such traditions are only a memory.[73]

Sloan goes on to suggest that his anticipation of modernism related to the loss of the religious faith which had been part of his Scottish upbringing:

> But arguably, it was the intensity of Davidson's Scottish Presbyterian upbringing and his quarrel with it that favourably positioned him to become a distinctively modern voice in the London of the 1890s [...]. Underlying the diverse voices of the Eclogues is his sense of separation from his father's faith. In contrast to a father who 'believed every word he spoke', he found himself driven by irony and self-division.[74]

Davidson's poetic depictions of cityscapes convey his ability to combine bleak and banal images with an intensity of light and colour that produce literary equivalents of the impressionist sketch. He was interested in the impact of visual images and was particularly impressed by the vibrancy of Turner's paintings, commenting that the artist 'painted with torches instead of pencils' and that his paintings 'were dipped out of wells of coloured fire, [and] prismatic light.'[75] Davidson's poetic depictions of cityscapes often convey this 'Turneresque' quality. Poems such as 'London' and 'The Thames Embankment' illustrate Davidson's ability to produce powerful descriptive images. In 'The Thames Embankment' (1909)[76] the transient qualities and cosmetic effects of colour and light are combined with dingy, mundane images: 'The sagging sky / Had colour in it - blots of faintest bronze, / The stains of daybreak. Westward slabs of light / From vapour disentangled, sparsely glazed / the panelled firmament; but vapour held / The morning captive in the smoky east' (3-8). Davidson creates strong images of visual objects through his innovative use of metaphor and contrasting imagery to evoke realistic rather than sentimental scenes. He juxtaposes conventionally incompatible words or images, such as 'bronze stains', and 'slabs of light'.

Davidson's urban images anticipate the techniques and objectives of the Imagist poets like Ezra Pound who sought precision and realism from poetic descriptions in reaction against mannered, sentimental verse. Like the Imagists, Davidson abandoned conventional rhythms and subjects and experimented with common speech and hard, clear, concentrated images. In 1917 Virginia Woolf praised the evocative urban images which Davidson created noting particularly poems such as 'Fleet Street', 'The Crystal Palace', 'London Bridge', and 'Liverpool Street Station'. Woolf wrote that:

> To our mind these are the best of his poems. They are original without being prophetic, they show his curious power of describing the quality of matter, and they are full of observation and sympathy with the sufferings of man.[77]

In the poem 'London', man is no longer independent but part of the lifeblood of the city itself. The loss of personal identity is captured in the collective, organic imagery employed:

> The parks, the squares, the thoroughfares,
> The million-peopled lanes and alleys,
> And even-muttering prisoned storm,
> The heart of London beating warm. (15-18)

Alternatively, in 'Liverpool Street Station', from the poem 'Railway Stations', Davidson depicts the tension between man and the modern urban environment. The poem opens with the tension between natural elements and man-made constructions. The descriptions of the natural and man-made elements are closely intertwined as the latter impinges upon the former. The sunlight falls 'Through crystal roofs' (1), and 'balanced well' (3) upon the iron rafters of the station, while 'dappled light the platforms strewed / With yellow foliage of the dawn' (7-8). Davidson similarly depicts the increasing absorption of the individual into the system and structure of this imposed environment:

> From early morn they hang about
> the bookstall, the refreshment-room;
> They pause and think, as if in doubt
> Which train to go by; now assume
> A jaunty air, and now in gloom
> They take the platform for a stage
> And pace it, meditating doom -
> Their own, the world's; in baffled rage
> Condemning still the imperceptive age. (28-36)

Davidson creates a contrast between the pent-up tensions of 'baffled rage' and 'meditating doom' with the restraint and conformity of outward action, revealed in controlled and contained gestures such as 'pause' and 'assume a jaunty air'. Man and his environment are set increasingly at odds. Like the wasp against the window pane of a train, in Davidson's poem 'The Wasp' from the same volume, the passenger in the carriage and those on the platform are forced into a particular environment and into an imposed schedule not of their own devising.

In 'Liverpool Street Station' the Itinerant makes his way across the country, giving details of Epping Forest and Highbeach Holt. These rural descriptions are sharply contrasted with his arrival in the city:

He reached the city. Then and there
A potent urban spell subdued
The forest's, for the sorcerer
Of sorcerers is multitude. (226-229)

The city is a chaotic place where 'eddying tumults surge and melt, / Like clouds beneath remorseless light / [...] While tides of transit at the height / In reval modes of passage vie, / And wheel and hoof and automobile ply' (237-243). Davidson's city becomes increasingly hostile, drawing on images partly derived from Thomson's disturbing echoes of spiritual alienation. If he differs from Thomson in giving his city a greater energy and discordance he does not join James Young Geddes in giving it energy and hope. In Davidson's city the Itinerant hears 'Barbaric shouts and shrieks [...] Like cries of wrath or cries of ruth' (244-245). Like Thomson there is a sense of activity without purpose:

Master and man, and age and youth
In purposeless, intense, uncouth
Commotion seemed for ever lost,
Save those that wooed in saddest sooth
A hope forlorn, in all things crossed,
And yet resolved to live at any cost. (247-252)

The city is a place of suffering, of self-interest and survival. It seems to de-humanize its inhabitants: 'Their eyes on fire, their wrinkles changed / To shadowed sculpture in the brute' (271-2), they are 'Like giant marionettes, as mute, / As quick and as mechanical', gutter-merchants and traders 'each and all / Unhuman seemed, austere, asexual' (275-9). He describes 'faces drawn and starved' (280) in their fight to survive within 'A huckstering world' (287). Here work is 'thraldom' (300) and men live with 'palsied souls and numb Affections!' (326-7) and the poem ends with the indictment that 'Only the miracle, mankind, / Can face this hell of the unfit' (339-40). In this way Davidson's poem moves from social observation of trains and refreshment-stalls to reveal the intensity of human struggle in a harsh and alienating world. Although Davidson engages with the realities of the urban world his materialism is influenced by Thomson and anticipates Eliot.

In 'London Bridge', the companion piece to 'Liverpool Street Station', ironic comment upon human exploitation is made in relation to the urban environment:

The innocent adventurer seeking truth
Imaginative, if it may be, plays
His vision, penetrant as chemic rays,
Upon the delta wide of platforms, whence
Discharges into London's sea, immense

And turbulent, a brimming human flood,
A river inexhaustible of blood
That turns the wheels, and by a secret, old
As labour, changes heart-beats into gold. (44-52)

Like Carlyle in *Signs of the Times* he is critical of the de-humanisation of the city. Davidson is concerned about the pace and productivity of modern society; changing humanity into labour. Here Davidson's Scottish realist and democratic sensibility prevail, the urban portraits created by him contrasting with an earlier tradition of the first James Thomson or Alexander Pope, who produce a celebratory vision of prosperity and harmony, akin to a classical golden age of natural and imperial order. Of the earlier Thomson, Andrew Noble notes that 'Although there are undercurrents of anxiety in him, his most characteristic tone is that of belief in social progress. It is, however, a tone which to varying degrees reflects more aspiration than achieved fact. There is an unreal, enamelled glaze over the surface of the 'Britannia' of which he is so proud. Something suspect, too, in the harmony between property and labour which he asserts has been realized'.[78] Davidson's portrait is more embittered and less patriotic:

Clearly a brimming tide of mind as well
As blood, whose ebb and flow is buy and sell,
Engulfed by London's storm and stress of trade
Before it reached the civic sea, and made
Oblivious, knowing nought terrestrial
Except that time is money, and money all. (63-68)

Davidson's city is a place of fragmentation and alienation where individual purpose is replaced by economic objectives.

Thus, despite being alienated from the formal and technical traditions used by the vernacular poets, his poetry can display a Burnsian quality. In his poem 'The Wasp' Davidson takes and develops an attitude to his subject that is similar to that employed by Burns in 'To A Mouse'. In Davidson's poem the reader is encouraged to empathise with an insect which normally evokes antipathy. Davidson's poetic speaker, the Random Itinerant, recalls a train journey in which a wasp flew into his compartment. The trapped insect, confined within the compartment, shares the predicament of the speaker. The wasp's heated reactions contrast with the impervious alien environment. The window pane with its banal 'Smoking' sign contrasts with the 'wonderful / Impervious transparency' of the wasp. The insect in her 'palpitating moment' is juxtaposed with the 'frosted glass' which imprisons her. The shocked reactions of the wasp are akin to Burns's 'cowrin, tim'rous beastie' who also displays signs of fear in its fluttering breast and is similarly used as a

means of contrasting an organic, sentient creature with a hostile and unfeeling force. Davidson's speaker describes the wasp's reactions as she 'flirted petulant wings, and fiercely sang' and contrasts her fragility with her resilient determination as she persists 'Undismayed, / With diligence incomparable' to seek an exit. The speaker displays an understanding of the wasp's frustration and indignation. The world is 'her birthright, there! / So visible, and so beyond her reach!'. Davidson, like Burns, demonstrates sensitivity towards his subject, developing an appreciation of the insect's fragility, fear and tenacity and using it as a metaphor for the predicament of the individual in an increasingly hostile, oppressive world. Davidson's trapped wasp and Burns' dispossessed mouse symbolise human displacement.

The poem 'Fleet Street' emphasises this fragmentation. The poem opens with what Mary O'Connor describes as 'an impressionistic fragment of a scene'[79] with 'wisps' and 'rags' of cloud and a 'withered' sky. He describes the street in its individual sections or pieces 'parallel', 'at either end', 'above', 'below' to which is added the contradictory regularity and flux of city life with its 'interfluent' night and day, 'tides' of trade and the activity of business which 'pours' in. Mary O'Connor notes that 'The street is presented as a catalogue of objects, fragments bumping up against each other: 'woodwork, metalwork, / Brickwork, electric apparatus, drains / And printing-presses, conduits, pavement, road'...The list or catalogue of objects reinforces the separateness, the multiplicity, the fragmented nature of the world.'[80] Davidson extends this to the chemical and material elements of the street. Earth, the planets and the moon themselves become 'suburbs of the sun' but whereas Saturn's suns are 'still-born', earth is active in ways which anticipate MacDiarmid's 'Bonnie Broukit Bairn', drowning the stately dignity of the older planets. In MacDiarmid's poem earth's tears are more powerful and meaningful than the superficial gossip of the older planets. Davidson's street is empowered and yet disempowered, a place of constant activity and yet incoherent and fragmented. Mary O'Connor also notes that 'The poem itself is made up of fragments of language (impressionistic, prosaic, and scientific), and of form (realism, fantasy, and debate), while the longing for unity embraces them all in some imperialist fantasy.'[81]

Davidson's 'The Song of Fleet Street' also opens with the same fragmentary, composite perspective:

Closes and courts and lanes
    Devious, clustered thick,
The thoroughfare, mains and drains,

People and mortar and brick,
Wood, metal, machinery, brains,
Pen and composing-stick. (1-6)

Everything, including parts of the body, are itemised. It is a place 'Where souls are split and intellects spent'. The street itself consists of 'Seven hundred paces of narrow way' and is praised as a notable 'bit' of the earth.

Davidson's evocation of a world of meaningless objects and aimless people reaches its ironic epitome in 'The Crystal Palace'. In a letter dated 8 April 1906 to author and cartoonist Max Beerbohm, whom Davidson befriended in the 1890s, the poet invited Beerbohm to attend 'the adventure of the Crystal Palace' which he describes as 'this building without comeliness or colour, without life, without growth, without decay' and he refers to the visiting crowds as 'the gigantic featureless thing called mob, wandering aimlessly in masses and eddies'.[82] In another letter to Beerbohm, dated 16th April 1906[83], Davidson remarks that:

> A theatrical audience is a mob, so is a church audience, or a concert audience: each of these is a mob; but it has a mind, it is occupied with something, has a special purpose in assembling. But the crowd in the Crystal Palace on a bank holiday is not a mob; it is a Mob, aimless, featureless, enormous, like a great Boyg.* (*Boyg: a troll with neither shape nor form in Ibsen's *Peer Gynt*).

Again the tension in Davidson is evident, between a tradition of Scots egalitarian writing and an elitism which draws upon the concept of an elect. Referring to Carlyle, Marshall Walker has commented that 'Calvinism's grimly discriminatory doctrine of the Elect is transformed into Carlyle's hero-worship'.[84] Similarly Davidson veers between sympathy and contempt for the urban populace.

The Crystal Palace was designed and established as a symbol of British imperial achievement, intended to combine traditional British achievements with new industrial power. It was designed to represent the zenith of traditional and new Britain. In his poem, Davidson combines a critical attitude towards mob behaviour and the vacuous complacency of the imperial mindset (Victorian temple of commercialism, / Our very own eight wonder of the world'), with a compassion for the crowd and its debased predicament. Like Carlyle, Davidson begins to fear society as it turns into a kind of organic machine where time and labour are subject to the dictates of the economy, and mental activity is itself reduced to a unit absorbed by organised work and organised leisure alike. It is the same fear which is echoed in Dickens' *Hard Times* and George Gissing's *New Grub Street.* Meaningless activity and meaningless objects are predominant concerns within 'The

Crystal Palace'. Mary O'Connor has noted that the poem begins 'off centre'[85] with one exhibit and the palace itself is not mentioned until the sixteenth line. The exhibit, a flying machine, is referred to derogatively as a 'Contraption' and the adjectives used have an abrasive, grating quality: 'gyrates', 'A-kimbo', 'rotary'. O'Connor observes that 'The Crystal Palace' becomes:

> a poem about language, how to name and to talk about this new fragmented experience. The object is appropriately named with its 'proper slang', its own, its rightful name: debased language for a debased world. The word 'contraption' points to the object's function [...] that is, a gimmick [...]. With its 'arms / A-kimbo' and 'baskets slung / From every elbow' it becomes an animate thing broken into pieces[86]

The machine is described as a 'portentous toy' and a 'most / Magnific, rotary engine, meant / For penitence and prayer combined' to be worshipped within this 'Victorian temple of commercialism' Religion has been replaced by the idolatry of commercialism and puerile recreation and it is upon the vanity and superficiality of these forces that the supposed superiority of British imperialism is based. Mary O'Connor notes that 'Juxtaposed with the language of machinery and of deceit is the language of prayer [...] The juxtaposition of the two leaves us with a sense of the meaningless activity of used people, who are victims and dupes of commercialism'.[87] The public, like the crowds depicted in 'Holiday at Hampton Court' are aimless:

> thus, passive, all,
> Like savages bewitched, submit at last
> To be the dupes of pleasure, sadly gay -
> Victims, and not companions of delight. (74-77)

Later, in the poem, the Itinerant again describes the crowd in terms that evoke both pity and derision, exclaiming 'Without a quarrel, unturbently: O, / A peaceable, a tame, a timorous crowd! / And yet relentless [...] And so alone, in couples, families, groups, / Consuming and consumed - for as they munch / Their victuals all their vitals ennui gnaws' (119-125) and he goes on to assert 'For this is Mob, unhappy locust-swarm, / Instinctive, apathetic, ravenous'. (132-3) Like Thomson, Davidson evokes a Dantesque atmosphere from this emergent urban environment:

> Beyond a doubt a most unhappy crowd!
> Some scores of thousands searching up and down ...
> captives in a labyrinth, or herds
> Imprisoned in a vast arena; here
> A moment clustered; there entangled; now
> In reaches sped and now in whirlpools spun

With noises like the wind and like the sea,
But silent vocally: they hate to speak:
Crowd; Mob; a blur of faces featureless,
Of forms inane; a stranded shoal of folk. (134-145)

In this depiction of life and modernity there is an over-arching sadness, while a sense of the trivial and inane is combined with a feeling of captivity and futility:

The light is artificial now; the place
Phantasmal like a beach in hell where souls
Are ground together by an unseen sea.
A dense throng in the central transept, wedged
So tightly they can neither clap nor stamp,
Shouting applause at something, goad themselves
In sheer despair to think it rather fine. (282-288)

People are reduced to 'Deluded myriads' (299) walking aimlessly 'so silent and so sad' (301). Mary O'Connor, like John Sloan, pays tribute to this poem and the others which comprise *Fleet Street and Other Poems,* in concluding that Davidson was indeed ahead of his time:

> Despite complaints of other critics that he had chosen ugly subjects and the sounds of cacophony, he is able to combine here a personal voice, a subject matter, and appropriate metre to convey sincerely and passionately his relationship with the phenomenal and contemporary world of bricks, of crowds, of commerce and technology.[88]

Davidson, following consciously in the footsteps of Thomas Carlyle, James Thomson, Robert Buchanan and James Young Geddes consistently produces not only social observation, but a spiritual commentary. The city and the individual voices among its populace become the context for Davidson's exploration of personal identity and alienation, materialism and human struggle, in a world without God. It is not in the studied self-absorption or philosophical questioning (significant though it is) and intensity of Davidson's *Testaments* that a new and dynamic poetry is found. The *Testaments* are over-burdened with Davidson's obsessive concerns: his preoccupation with Knoxian-Calvinism and the need to find an alternative philosophy; the bleakest consequences of material suffering as examined in *The Testament of a Vivisector*; his preoccupation with identity and the need to formulate an affirmative, 'prophetic' voice. It is not in theories and abstractions that Davidson finds his relevance to his age and beyond, but in the realism and immediacy of his social observation, in which he extends the function of poetry, making it into a dynamic, relevant and flexible medium. He asserts the authority of the author to shape his poetry, in terms of form and content, to suit his needs rather than be subject to

the dictates of fashion and convention. Through social realism Davidson's philosophy engages directly with the immediacy of human experience and human need; it is astute, pertinent, vital and perceptive. Hence Davidson moves beyond the moribund angst that follows cultural dissociation and joins Thomson, Stevenson, and Geddes as a generation of Scots proto-modernist writers, whose experience of alienation and loss of identity, equipped them to anticipate and engage with a new, emergent consciousness in literature.

The Authority of Influence: John Davidson and Hugh MacDiarmid

Making comparisons between John Davidson and Hugh MacDiarmid not only highlights affinities between two Scottish writers; it also provides an illustration of Anglocentric critical prejudice and neglect. While MacDiarmid is acknowledged as a writer of both national and international standing, the dominant critical tendency is still to view Davidson as an Anglo-Scot, detached from the Scottish literary scene. This section accuses prevailing mainstream critical attitudes of inhibiting an adequate understanding of Davidson's work by failing to examine Davidson in comparison with other Scottish writers, using MacDiarmid as a case in point.

The kind of prejudice to which I am referring, has been analysed extensively in Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* and Cairns Craig's *Out of History*, both making the point that provincial writers have been given an unmerited peripheral status. Crawford has created a new definition of 'provincialism' meaning an experimental, eclectic and international poetry of facts. This kind of provincial is radically different from the usual associations with literature of the 1840-1900 period. Crawford asserted that 'Lauded by MacDiarmid and Eliot, Davidson's work as an urban, provincial and encyclopaedic writer has yet to be considered fully in the context of Modernism'.[89] Furthermore, critical apathy in relation to Davidson and MacDiarmid creates its own myths, in particular, critics are too accepting of MacDiarmid's high-handed statements about the lack of nourishment to himself from earlier Scottish literary sources and this has discouraged the kind of connections which are made in this section.

Maurice Lindsay, writing in 1961, accurately blamed partial and unrepresentative selections of Davidson's poetry for making him appear 'as an inferior conventional minor Victorian with inexplicable flashes of genius,' adding that 'the forward-looking aspects of his gifts and the influence he exerted over other writers as diverse as T.S. Eliot and Hugh MacDiarmid was completely overlooked'.[90] John Baglow is an example of such critical

negligence, writing over-cautiously that Davidson was 'a poet whom MacDiarmid admired greatly and who *may* have influenced him'.[91] While W.N. Herbert comments rather cynically that: 'MacDiarmid's debt to John Davidson is not so much difficult to define as well-concealed. Apart from references in the poetry and some early banner-waving when his own reputation was not yet established, Davidson is confined to a footnote in *Lucky Poet'*.[92]

It is true that it took Maurice Lindsay to invite MacDiarmid to explain his debt to Davidson at length, nevertheless the acknowledgement was sincere and emphatic, indeed MacDiarmid's poem constitutes a very special kind of testament. By comparison Eliot's interest in James Thomson was equally significant but far less ackowledged than MacDiarmid's indebtedness to Davidson. Publicly and professionally MacDiarmid never sought to hide his debt of influence to Davidson. In his essay published in Lindsay's selection of Davidson's poetry (1961) he stated unreservedly that:

> Mr Maurice Lindsay and others have commented on the fact that I have been greatly influenced by John Davidson in my poetic development. That is true and I have gladly admitted it, and in this connection said in a broadcast talk on the occasion of Davidson's centenary that Davidson is 'the only Scottish poet to whom I owe anything at all, or to whom I would be pleased to admit any debt.'[93]

MacDiarmid singles Davidson out, in contrast to a generally negative dismissal of Scotland's literary past:

> He [Davidson] is certainly the one who interests me most between the great Makars [...] and one or two of my own contemporaries, save for Fergusson and Burns, some Gaelic poets [...] and two Latin ones [...] With these exceptions, there is scarcely any Scottish poet in these three or four centuries of any technical or intellectual interest whatever. Davidson stood out head and shoulders above all the Scottish poets of his own time. He alone had anything to say that is, or should be, of interest to any adult mind.[94]

Critics too readily accept such dismissiveness while ignoring MacDiarmid's tendency to obscure more problematic similarities. MacDiarmid both acknowledges Davidson's significance and undermines it at the same time, noting that:

> he [Davidson] was unable to realise the far greater suitability of Scots for the expression of his ideas than English could ever afford. Social protest, espousal of the cause of the underdog, anti-religion, materialism, Rabelaisian wit, invective - all these find a place much more easily and prominently in the Scottish than in the English tradition. All these are salient features of Davidson's work. In short, like Byron, he was a Scottish, not an English, poet,

> although he used an alien language, and had apparently no knowledge of the independent Scottish tradition.[95]

The final sentence obscures the struggle which both men had in order to come to terms with language and cultural identity. As W.N. Herbert observes:

> Far from having no concept of Scots literature and therefore aligning himself with the English tradition for want of something better, Davidson from the start entered into a dialogue with English literature, in which he was cast as the outsider. It is the similarity of this role to his own which MacDiarmid sought to pass over without mention. Both writers needed something to react against in order to establish their own voice.[96]

Clearly, MacDiarmid found this particular affinity difficult as it emphasised the problems which faced both writers in relation to their shared struggle with identity, as it is posited within the nature and use of language. Certainly, MacDiarmid understood Davidson's isolated status and valued him for his 'restless learning' and evasion of 'water-tight compartments'.[97]

Much of MacDiarmid's experimentation stemmed from his criticism of Scotland's past and the need to formulate a new literary agenda. He believed that the strength of Scots verse and the sense of literary community which Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns had utilised was gone. Davidson felt the same, his attitude to Burns was similarly complex. He admired Burns's contempt for hypocrisy and affectation, which matched his own, little recognised, down to earth humanity, but he vehemently disliked Burnsian imitation and the contrived use of 'Braid Scots'. If Davidson's 'Ayrshire Jock' is compared with the references made by MacDiarmid's Drunk Man to Burns and the whole popular mythology of Scottish literature in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle,* an identical perspective can be seen. There can be little doubt that the sensibility of MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man* has striking affinities with Davidson's earlier character in their shared cultural diagnosis. In the earlier poem Davidson writes:

> Just as the penny dreadfuls make
> The 'prentice rob his master's till,
> Ploughboys their honest work forsake,
> Inspired by Robert Burns. They swill
> Whisky like him, and rhyme; but still
> Success attends on imitation
> Of faults alone: to drink a gill
> Is easier than to stir a nation.

while MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man*, following his predecessor 'Ayrshire Jock' states that:

A' they've to say was aften said afore
A lad was born in Kyle to blaw aboot.
What unco fate mak's him the dumpin'-grun'
For a' the sloppy rubbish they jaw oot?

In the dramatic monologue 'Ayrshire Jock' the speaker, John Auld, makes reference to his burlesque alter-ego of the title and turns away from poor imitators of Burns who 'drink, and write their senseless rhymes, / Tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle'. In this dramatic monologue Davidson makes it clear that the Scottish writer faces a fairly stark choice between emulating 'Tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle' or 'Shelley and his great successors'. It is in reaction against the dictates of both, that Davidson attempts to re-locate himself in cultural and aesthetic terms. The early influence of Swinburne and John Nichol, and an Anglicised education system introduced Davidson to English Romantic poetry. Yet he felt pressurised by the English literary establishment, and instead of allowing himself to be assimilated he reacted by engaging with a poetry of the underdog and the exile, which affirmed his non-belonging. 'Ayrshire Jock' is a statement of identity crisis for the Scottish writer caught between the restraints of English literature and those of a simplified, commercially popular Scottish literary tradition. In his technical and stylistic choices Davidson remains the man apart, alienated from both inherited and adopted conventions and trying to grapple with a new cosmopolitan modernist consciousness.

His dissociation from his Scottish background was ambivalent rather than absolute. The reductive idioms of vernacular poetry, the use of irony and humour to produce powerfully perceptive critical comment and the expressive efficacy of the dramatic monologue continued to attract him. In his discussion of 'Ayrshire Jock', John Sloan observes that 'The stress on the harshness of reality; the combination of high and low in the serio-comic vernacular address: these are derived from the traditions of Scottish dramatic utterance. English poetry also has its dramatic monologue [...] but the acting-out of the feelings of others in their more spontaneous, living speech occurs more often in Scottish poetry'.[98] What Davidson shares with MacDiarmid is the task of consciously formulating his own status, purpose and identity as a writer. For Davidson this meant a recourse to hybrid styles, eclectic and experimental poetry, a poetry of diverse and often divergent voices and a fascination with language. Davidson's poetry resonates with displaced voices as can be seen in monologues such as 'In A Music-Hall', 'Thirty-Bob a Week', 'Ayrshire Jock' or 'The Testament of Sir Simon Simplex Concerning Automobilism'. MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man* who articulates the displaced, transient and protean facets of 'Scottishness' is akin to

Davidson's poetry of multiple voices and persona, his eclecticism, diversity and irony which offers many views but prohibits an absolute or firm perspective. Both men felt the need to consciously formulate their status and identity as writers in relation to a problematic cultural past.

Perhaps it is this shared predicament which enabled MacDiarmid to write with an almost personal sense of loss for the writer he never met, but for whom he retained a strong emotive and intellectual attachment:

> I did not know him personally, but I remember as if it were yesterday how the news of his suicide by walking into the sea off Penzance in 1909, when I was a lad of seventeen, affected me. I felt as if the bottom had fallen out of my world.[99]

The event led MacDiarmid to write the poem entitled 'Of John Davidson', published in *Scots Unbound and Other Poems* in 1932. In this poem MacDiarmid presents Davidson's death as being of enormous significance in both personal and national terms:

> I remember one death in my boyhood
> That next to my father's and darker endures;
> Not Queen Victoria's, but Davidson, yours,
> And something in me has always stood
> Since then looking down the sandslope
> On your small black shape by the edge of the sea,
> A bullet-hole through a great scene's beauty,
> God through the wrong end of a telescope.

MacDiarmid captures the restlessness and paradox of the man which was integral to his character. In his essay on Davidson, MacDiarmid noted that:

> The majority of distinguished Scots have always conformed to the character the world long before ascribed to the Scot in the epithets '*fier comme un Ecossais*' and '*piper in naso*', and also to the even earlier conclusions that the Scots were men of curious and restless learning, versatile, with little or no use for 'water-tight compartments', and likely to be found bestraddling several disciplines at once, Davidson was of this type.[100]

MacDiarmid's poem is significantly unlike Davidson's epitaph to Stevenson (*Robert Louis Stevenson*, 1894) which reflects his own desire for ultimate peace. The dead poet finds his resting place at the very heart of a benign, respectful landscape:

Softly the stars shall shower
Their dewy brilliancies;
And many a Southern flower
Shall climb his grave to kiss.

Far down the murmuring river
Shall join the murmuring surge;
The haunted winds for ever
Shall chant his mountain-dirge.

Stevenson is portrayed as being respected and cherished within this landscape. There is an overriding sense of peace which is absent in MacDiarmid's poem about Davidson. MacDiarmid in describing Davidson as 'God through the wrong end of a telescope' reflects the displaced Davidson: a great writer seen at a great distance, lonely and isolated, the outsider, the Random Itinerant (the persona Davidson adopted for his journal articles), continually walking, restless and alone, hero and underdog combined; proud, taciturn and yet vulnerable. It is also a tribute to a man MacDiarmid perceives as a great writer reduced by common perceptions.

Yet in terms of Davidson's influence upon MacDiarmid the description 'God through the wrong end of a telescope' is intriguing and difficult to interpret. The phrase seems to be a materialist inversion of man's traditional place within a divinely constructed universe, reflecting the altered notions of the significance of both God and mankind in an age of scepticism. MacDiarmid also struggled with this concept; Marshall Walker describes MaDiarmid's poetry as 'sending out from the unforgiving disappointment of his atheism playful or intensely searching feelers to the space where God was.'[101] Certainly, both men sought to create a materialist vision in their poetry. *On a Raised Beach* is a powerful materialist statement which faces the most challenging issues concerning human existence and attains a benevolent and life affirming vision. Davidson also stressed the value of human struggle and initiative in poetry such as *The Testament of John Davidson*, though his vision is harsher and bleaker than MacDiarmid's. The materialism of both men was based upon a scientific conception of the material world and a consequent awareness of man's place within the interrelated processes of the universe. The inversion in MacDiarmid's poem could, therefore, suggest this secular vision of man, while tinged with a poignant awareness of the dangers inherent in Davidson's extreme assertion of the individual will, as seen in his *Testaments* and poems such as 'The Man Forbid', 'The Hero', 'The Outcast' and 'The Pioneer', which left him profoundly isolated and at odds with an impersonal cosmos. A clear sense emerges in MacDiarmid's poem of both men

grappling with the same issues and concerns. Both develop toward a philosophical, experimental verse, producing long poems with a wide linguistic range, from colloquial speech to technical and esoteric jargon in which concepts and ideas predominate. Indeed MacDiarmid valued Davidson predominantly as a poet of ideas.

MacDiarmid saw Davidson as one of the first modern poets to use a specific scientific and materialist orientation as the basis of his aesthetic theory. In many of the poems from *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep* MacDiarmid becomes, like Davidson, a heroic figure grappling with the entire universe by himself. In Davidson's work critics have assumed that this perspective is that of the Nietzschean superman, though this thesis contends that it originated form Davidson's interpretation of the Carlylean hero. The perspectives of both men are typically grand, befitting their self-appointed status in which both writer and poetry assume heroic proportions. Their materialism was fueled by an interest in science. MacDiarmid took up Davidson's desire for a 'poetry of facts' and that poetry should be 'a statement of the world as it is'. It is in the voice of the hero and the secular prophet that they articulate this conception.

In MacDiarmid's early lyric poems such as 'The Watergaw', 'The Eemis Stane' and 'Empty Vessel', surface simplicity and hidden complexity are combined in a distinctively powerful and evocative way; and this is extended in poems such as 'The Fool' and the 'Sea-Serpent' which resemble the undermining of traditional belief systems in Davidson's *Testaments*. His science-orientated perspective in 'Poetry and Science' has affinities with Davidson's 'Snow' and 'The Crystal Palace' in testing the capacity of poetry to express a modern, technical and scientific vocabulary. Indeed, language fascinated both poets. MacDiarmid's desire to extend the expressive power of language in a poem such as 'Gairmscoile' indicates the capacity to stretch the formal, linguistic and thematic boundaries of poetry in ways reminiscent of Davidson's work. Davidson desired to convey the nature of modern experience evocatively and realistically. In 'The Crystal Palace' he begins by naming things and offering a self-conscious manipulation of language in trying to attain an adequate means of expression:

> Contraption, - that's the bizarre, proper slang,
> Eclectic word, for this portentuous toy,
> The flying -machine, that gyrates stiffly, arms
> A-kimbo, so to say, and baskets slung
> From every elbow, skating in the air. (lines 1-5)

The emphasis upon the representational adequacy of words: 'proper slang', 'eclectic word', 'so to say', shows that Davidson's concern is to question the ability of language to convey the modern experience.

MacDiarmid's 'Poetry and Science' establishes an agenda for poetry which Davidson had previously anticipated and articulated in the poem 'Snow'. MacDiarmid writes:

> He will understand why the biochemist
> Can speculate on the possibility
> Of the synthesis of life without feeling
> That thereby he is shallow or blasphemous.
> He will understand that, on the contrary,
> He finds all the more
> Because he seeks for the endless
> - 'Even our deepest emotions
> May be conditioned by traces
> Of a derivate of phenanthrene!'

The emphasis upon the intricacy of science being no less aesthetic or spiritually uplifting is echoed and surpassed in Davidson's 'Snow':

> Every flake with all its prongs and dints
> Burns ecstatic as a new-lit star:
> Men are not more diverse, finger-prints
> More dissimilar than snow-flakes are.
>
> Worlds of men and snow endure, increase,
> Woven of power and passion to defy
> Time and Travail: only races cease,
> Individual men and crystals die.

Both writers also recognised that language is closely related to the issue of identity. In Scots such as Carlyle, Davidson and MacDiarmid there exists an acute self-consciousness concerning the relationship between language and identity, which extends beyond the cultural, to a philosophical appreciation of the representational weaknesses and potential of language. Davidson had from the outset been uneasy with 'mongrel Scotch' and 'Tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle' but he frequently reverted to vernacular speech in order to achieve the realism he desired. This is illustrated by his depiction of a Cockney clerk in the poem 'Thirty Bob a Week' (1894). In this poem, as T.S. Eliot noted, Davidson had 'freed himself completely from the poetic diction of English verse of his time,' resulting in what Eliot described as 'the complete fitness of content and idiom'.[102] Davidson's experiments with idiomatic speech suggest a degree of dissatisfaction with the style and

values associated with standard English and a continual searching on his part to find an adequate voice.

Davidson's experiments with language were highly eclectic as J.B.Townsend observes:

> Davidson's diction, like his metrics, is richly varied [...] Elizabethanisms and other archaic expressions, Scottish vernacular, cockney slang, and coinages occur side by side.[103]

He refers to the first series of *Fleet Street Eclogues* (1893) as an example, picking out a profusion of words such as 'drumlie, 'hipped', 'perpend', 'ope', 'dup', 'snell', and 'stilly' as well as anachronisms such as 'berserker' and 'stareabouts'.[104]

Davidson believed that poetic language had become stale and inaccurate, stating 'Only to the souls of hacks / Are phrases hackneyed'.[105] Davidson's techniques show that MacDiarmid's linguistic experiments were not part of a radical break with the past but rather part of an ongoing process of experimentation. Andrew Turnbull refers to Davidson's use of language and its associative effects, suggesting that:

> a mixture of old and new elements is discernible in the poet's language and imagery [...] a tendency towards artificiality, exoticism, and quirkiness [...] Davidson's verse abounds in applied, artificial language [...]. Words like 'scrolled', 'embossed', 'lacquered', and 'diapered' constantly reappear [...]. The macabre, *outré* imagery which the poets of the *fin de siecle* borrowed from Baudelaire and the Symbolists in their bizarre search for beauty in the unclean and unsavoury, an 'impressionist' fascination for the effects of light [...] a liking for synaesthetic effects, all are well represented in Davidson's work.[106]

Davidson experimented ceaselessly with language, terminology and poetic form; matching metrical patterns to subject as in 'Song of a Train' and 'A Runnable Stag'; experimenting with idiom in his dramatic monologues, and with scientific and urban vocabulary. He was absorbed with the universal experience of man and the extent to which literature could effectively express this. Similarly, MacDiarmid sought to express universal experience within poetry, taking language far beyond conventional forms and associations to do so. MacDiarmid's *In Memoriam James Joyce* is perhaps his most detailed exploration of this concern, not only addressing the problem of existence but the means by which the poet must come to grips with it through the medium of language. He and Davidson searched for a language which both captured and transcended man's experience of the world in all its complexity and diversity.

As a legacy from Carlyle and Davidson, MacDiarmid inherited a preoccupation with the role of language as the poet's outlet for self-projection and expression. This stems not only from the choices facing Scottish writers between Scots and standard English, but also through questions regarding the expressive capacity of langauge to convey experience. Carlyle in *Signs of the Times* and Davidson in his play *Smith: A Tragic Farce* (which MacDiarmid had read) anticipate modernist concerns by expressing their fears that the modern world with its specialisation and systematisation would produce rote learning and mechanistic thinking. Carlyle's distinct style of prose-poetry and Davidson's continual experiments with language are attempts to maintain creative and expressive language. MacDiarmid and Davidson saw the poet as a man drawing from the breadth of his experience and conveying it with integrity and authority. Influenced by Carlyle and Davidson, MacDiarmid saw writing as the task of the heroic man. Strongly apparent, in both men, is the notion of the poet's struggle to obtain the ultimate fluency and accuracy of expression which distinguishes the great writer from the masses.

In Memoriam James Joyce considers every possible way of examining words. In the opening MacDiarmid refers to Davidson and his views on language from his play *Smith*:

> Davidson, too, with his angry cry
> 'Our language is too worn, too much abused,
> Jaded and overspurred, wind-broken, lame, -
> The hackneyed roadster every bagman mounts';

Language had to have expressive efficacy; moreover it was the medium through which the writer constructed and projected his own identity and purpose.

MacDiarmid viewed Davidson as a pioneer in his employment of contemporary themes and saw him as a worthwhile influence for the writers of his own generation. Davidson could be used as a model and an antidote to popular rural and sentimental associations of Scottish literature. He wrote that:

> What Davidson, alone of Scottish poets, did was to enlarge the subject matter of poetry, assimilate and utilise a great deal of new scientific and other contemporary material, pioneer in poetic drama and other forms, and recognise thus early the exhaustion of English [...] and, above all, to write urban poetry (a development Scots like Alexander Smith and Thomas Hood had heralded, but which subsequent Scots poets failed to carry on [...]) [...] most of our versifiers continued to write nostalgic, pseudo-pastoral rubbish about an Arcadian life which had no relation to the facts at all. For the matter of that, they are still doing so.[107]

Davidson wrote about class prejudice, social injustice, industrial change, urbanisation, poverty and the loss of personal identity, in a rapidly changing and hostile modern environment. He, like Geddes and Thomson, anticipated a problem essential to modernism: the attempt to create an aesthetic adequate to science-generated change. He sought a language and style suitable to address the modern world and a poetics capable of expressing the mind of the individual surrounded by a mechanised, materialist society and a universe devoid of a benevolent God. Davidson called for realism. His poetry rejected nothing from its frame of reference. It enabled him to explore the laboratory, the slums and the city streets and to create his poetry out of the raw facts of science and human misery. He explored the subject of mechanisation and the breakdown of meaning in a hostile and alien world, for example in 'A Woman and her Son' the dying woman indoors contrasts with the ongoing and oblivious sounds of urban life outside. In his scientific and social poetry he both compassionately and critically depicts man as disempowered in relation to his material environment; in 'A Loafer', 'Holiday at Hampton Court' and 'The Crystal Palace' people become increasingly alienated from their surroundings. While in other poems, such as 'Snow' and 'The Wasp' he uses poetry like a microscope to examine material phenomena in intrinsic detail. His long poems, prose essays and *Testaments* reflect his materialism and emphasis upon man's endurance in a Godless universe. They have much in common with the reflective mood of MacDiarmid's 'On a Raised Beach' or with the poem 'Poetry and Science'; while social poetry such as 'Thirty Bob a Week', 'A Loafer' and 'In a Music-Hall' reflect social concerns comparable with MacDiarmid's 'The Seamless Garment' or 'In the Children's Hospital'.

Both poets combine an emphasis upon the great man with a genuine compassion for the social underdog. Davidson's 'Thirty Bob A Week', 'A Loafer' and 'Sir Simon Simplex on Automobilism' indicate an often neglected compassionate sensibility within Davidson's writing. Davidson produced poetry which articulated the perspective of the common man. Too pessimistic to advocate social change and with a materialism which emphasised individual resolve, rather than social reform, he nonetheless retained an empathy for the social underdog. His social and democratic sympathies run in tandem with a Carlylean respect for the great man, just as MacDiarmid simultaneously attempts to engage with, while setting himself apart from, the working man in 'The Seamless Garment'. There exists a tension in Davidson's poetry which fluctuates from an elitist disdain for the mob, as seen in 'Holiday at Hampton Court', to a genuine sympathy for individual suffering and degradation due to destitution, unemployment, social rejection and economic hardship and

to an early modern awareness of alienation, as seen most powerfully in 'The Crystal Palace:

> Beyond a doubt a most unhappy crowd!
> Some scores of thousands searching up and down
> [...] captives in a labyrinth, or herds
> Imprisoned in a vast arena; here
> A moment clustered; there entangled; now
> In reaches sped and now in whirlpools spun
> With noises like the wind and like the sea,
> But silent vocally; they hate to speak:
> Crowd; Mob; a blur of faces featureless,
> Of forms inane; a stranded shoal of folk. (134-145)

The hero and the underdog are equally significant in Davidson's split sensibility. Within this ambivalence the democratic and reductive traditions of Scottish literature remained sufficiently influential to heighten the insight of Davidson's social poetry and to form his initial fascination with such subject-matter. Indeed Davidson does more than MacDiarmid to address the realities of modern life. Poetry such as 'Railway Stations', 'The Thames Embankment' and 'London' capture the essence of city life:

> The parks, the squares, the thorough fares,
> The million-peopled lanes and alleys,
> And even-muttering prisoned storm,
> The heart of London beating warm.
> (from 'London', 15-18)

Beyond the realities of modern life, Davidson and MacDiarmid sought to deal with the rise of science and the decline of faith, in their poetry. They believed that poetry could articulate the modern secular experience conveyed in poetry such as Davidson's *The Man Forbid* or MacDiarmid's 'The Eemis Stane' and 'On a Raised Beach'. These poems articulate the scepticism and metaphysical questioning of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. In them, it is the individual's experience and understanding of the world, unmediated by divine agency, which predominates. Both men set out to be literary pioneers in the vanguard of a new poetry which would articulate the new practical and thematic challenges which faced the writer.

Their self-consciousness in defining their status as writers has not aided their popularity. Davidson was often considered taciturn and difficult by his peers. MacDiarmid has been considered egotistical and self-interested in his literary pursuits. In his essay for Lindsay's book MacDiarmid applauds the heroic scale of Davidson's ambition: 'Davidson's work

was a valuable corrective to two of the greatest curses that have affected, and still affect, modern Scottish literature - namely, the superfluity of minor versifiers and absence of poetic ambition, and associated with that, the horrible humility of mediocrity'.[108] MacDiarmid cites *A Rosary* (1903) in which Davidson presents the poet as a powerful and prophetic figure:

> A poet is always a man of inordinate ambition and of inordinate vanity. In his heart he says, 'I want my poetry to be remembered when Homer and Dante and Shakespeare are forgotten.

The assertion has strong echoes of Carlyle, who stated that 'In the true Literary Man there is [...] acknowledged or not by the world, a sacredness: he is the light of the world; the world's Priest' (OHHW, 157). MacDiarmid liked Davidson's integrity, his high standards and his ambition. He concludes his essay by affirming that 'This is his great significance. It is time that it was fully realised'.[109]

MacDiarmid's self-publicisation, his self-appointed status as cultural prophet is not solely egotism. Firstly, it counteracted mediocrity and acquiescence. Secondly, he was near enough to Davidson's generation to be influenced by Scotland's earlier self-appointed prophetic voices: Carlyle, Davidson, James Thomson, Robert Buchanan. Thirdly, influenced by Carlyle's 'On Heroes and Hero-Worship', perceiving the writer as the displaced hero or great man, was a natural reaction against the marginalised status of the Scottish writer. Commenting upon the reaction of both Davidson and MacDiarmid against a culturally peripheral status, W.N. Herbert notes that:

> MacDiarmid and Davidson admired similar qualities and sought to embody them, either in themselves [...] or in others [...] admiration of the intolerant outsider and their fondness for paradox, almost certainly a result of the peripheral positions in English letters they respectively occupied, led them not only to more or less muted declarations of their own genius, but also to quasi-ironic demonstrations of it in their later works.[110]

Poetry by Davidson such as 'The Hero', 'The Man Forbid', 'The Pioneer' and 'The Outcast' are concerned with the status of the individual who refuses to conform to the opinion of the majority. MacDiarmid's sentiments are similar. In 'On A Raised Beach' he states 'It will be ever increasingly necessary to find / In the interests of all mankind / Men capable of rejecting all that other men / Think'[111] He continues, in the same poem, by stating that 'Great work cannot be combined with surrender to the crowd' (261) and makes the assertion that 'all thinkers and writers find / The indifference of the masses of mankind'

(302-3). In 'Art and the Unknown' he similarly states, with echoes of Davidsonian alienation, that 'The greatest art at any given time is that which is comprehensible to the fewest persons of competence and integrity'.[112] MacDiarmid's emphasis upon the great man rests uneasily with his socialism, just as Davidson's emphasis on the gifted individual appears to contradict his sympathy for the poverty and social injustice which he witnessed. The apparent egotism of both men lies partly in the tradition of the literary prophet established by those such as Carlyle and Thomson. It is also a compensation for what they perceived as a less than confident literary inheritance.

These writers are also perceived as 'difficult' because they celebrate irony and contradiction and retain protean and eclectic elements within their work. MacDiarmid expresses a desire for 'diversity in unity' which is very like Davidson's concept of irony:

> The vision of a perfect language is [...] one which expresses
> the complex vision of everything in one,
> Suffering all impressions, all experience, all doctrines
> To pass through and taking what seems valuable from each
> No matter in however many directions
> These essences seem to lead. ('On a Raised Beach', 88-9, CP, 823)

In a dialogue entitled 'Metaphysics and Poetry' between MacDiarmid and Walter Perrie, the latter asks 'What role does contradiction play in your thought? it is often said that you present frequent contradictions' to which MacDiarmid responds:

> Like Whitman I would say ' I contradict myself? Very well, I contradict myself'. The variety and enormity of the world and the infinite possibilities of the human mind are such that contradictions are inevitable for anyone that has a certain depth of intellectual perception.[113]

Davidson was attracted to irony as an antidote to dogma. Irony and dualism offered an escape from conceptual absolutes, it was liberating and subversive but it also left a legacy of perpetual contradiction that brought with it flux and instability. It embodied the limitations of human comprehension and the problem of identity. Davidson wrote that:

> Irony is the enigma within the enigma, the open secret, the only answer vouchsafed the eternal riddle [...]. My concern is [...] with the universe as I can grasp it. Irony is not a creed. The makers of creeds have always miscalled, denied some part of the world. Irony affirms and delights in the whole [...]. I perceive the universe as a golden bough of Irony, flowering with suns and systems.[114]

Carlyle says much the same thing:

> Our being is made up of Light and Darkness, the Light resting on the Darkness and balancing it; everywhere there is Dualism, Equipoise; a perpetual contradiction dwells in us. (C, 27)

MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man*, echoing Davidson's iconoclastic style, rejects monocentric systems and theories, by asserting: 'I'll hae' nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur / Extremes meet - it's the only way I ken / To dodge the curst conceit o bein' richt / That damns the vast majority o' men'.[115] Davidson stated that 'I love Irony [...]. Poetry itself [...] represents the Irony which is the soul of things'.[116] Davidson and MacDiarmid delighted in the protean and contradictory nature of the universe and of human experience. Roderick Watson comments that the fixed image of the stones in 'On A Raised Beach' is unusual, observing that 'much of the earlier poetry was given over to his mercurial delight in [...] flux and mobility [...] while his later work returned to...an epic search for "the whole inheritance of human knowledge" [...] in a "fury of incontrovertible detail"'.[117]

MacDiarmid attempts to create a synthesis within his poetry, creating a cohesion between disparate and eclectic elements. In the early lyric poetry such as 'The Bonnie Broukit Bairn', 'The Watergaw' and 'The Eemis Stane' unusual and unrelated images are used to create powerful parallels. Natural flux and movement, shifting impressions of a fixed image, changing facets of water and light, as in 'Cencrastus' and 'The Eemis Stane', are features used to undermine fixity. Davidson similarly draws upon profound shifts in imagery and from contrasts to illustrate his ironic philosophy. His *Fleet Street Eclogues* are constructed as dialogues, each character has an opposing view: optimist and pessimist; idealist and pragmatist. They debate the tensions which exist between urban and rural environments, past and present, degeneration and progress, aspiration and the restrictions of everyday life. These poems reflect the need to maintain multiplicity of perspective, to hold all contraries together in an ironic balance or inclusiveness. Like MacDiarmid's 'On A Raised Beach' the theme of contrast is developed by reference to a continual dialectical process, 'The battle between opposing ideas' (129). MacDiarmid observes that 'all the ideas / That madden men now must lose their potency in a few years / And be replaced by others - even as all the religions, / all the material sacrifices and moral restraints, / That in twenty thousand years have brought us no nearer to God'.[118] MacDiarmid contrasts the vicissitudes of human thought with the fixity of the stones in order, like Davidson, to expose the limitations of theory and dogma.

Both writers extended their interest beyond a cultural and social framework to a universal and metaphysical one. MacDiarmid inherited an absorption with the nature of God in a godless universe which faced Davidson's generation. James Thomson, Robert Buchanan, Thomas Carlyle and Davidson could neither tolerate orthodox religion nor ignore it. They became secular prophets preaching doubt with all the vigour, style, and dedication of the most ardent believer. They had to find an alternative of equal magnitude: a new philosophy, a new way of looking at the world. Davidson wished to create a poetry of facts which would reflect the material universe as he saw it. *The Testament of John Davidson*, an epic, blank verse monologue, presents his materialist philosophy in heroic style, engaging with cosmic imagery and themes concerning the nature and function of the individual in relation to the nature of the universe as a whole. In his poem 'Poetry and Science' (1943), MacDiarmid similarly states 'I seek a poetry of facts' which will 'Replace a stupefied sense of wonder / With something more wonderful / Because natural and understandable. / Nature is wonderful / When it is at least partly understood'.[119] Roderick Watson observes that 'MacDiarmid's profoundly atheistic stance is to wrestle with the absurdity of personal identity, human culture and idealism, in the face of indifference, the mystery, and even the glory of brute matter'.[120] It is clear that both men faced the same agenda in attempting to renegotiate the status and function of the individual within a godless universe. Poems such as MacDiarmid's 'The Innumerable Christ' (1925) and Davidson's 'The Testament of John Davidson' (1908) emphasise the centrality of this imperative for both writers. The iconoclastic implications of their materialist perspectives establish a vision of human struggle and intellectual integrity. MacDiarmid states that 'the function of all art is the extension of human consciousness'[121] and Davidson affirms that man is ultimately matter become conscious. This sentiment is confirmed in 'On a Raised Beach': 'These stones with their resolve that Creation shall not be / Injured by iconoclasts and quacks'.[122]

Finally then, in their shared concerns - their poetry of ideas; science and modernity; irony and contradiction; realism; emphasis upon language and heroic ambition - many similarities emerge which merit more extensive exploration. Moreover, behind them remains the initial assertion, that what we learn of any writer is largely governed by the preconceptions we apply to our analysis and that Scottish writers have often fallen victim to the limitations of the critics who study them. Certainly, MacDiarmid wanted to be associated with Davidson and he sought to be credited for having drawn attention to Davidson's merits and neglected status, he asserted:

> I have always been a minority man. Andrew Lang, reviewing Davidson's *Fleet Street Eclogues*, said: 'Sometimes, after a 'torrent of applause' you hear one lonely belated pair of hands clapping. Such a demonstration is this of mine.' But in several cases, Davidson's, Charles Doughty's, Francis Adams's, I have been one of the 'few but fit' whose isolated hand-clapping has preceded, and still precedes, any torrent of applause.[123]

MacDiarmid's credit may be self-appointed, but in this particular instance, it is justified and deserved. The lack of critical initiative to respond to MacDiarmid's assertion has been an injustice to both men.

---

1 Mikhail Bakhtin, 'Discourse in the Novel', *The Dialogic Imagination* (Austin: Texas University Press, 1996), p.264.
2 Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p. ix.
3 ibid., p. ix.
4 Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1982), p. 6.
5 Muir, p. 6.
6 ibid., p. xiv.
7 John Sloan, *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. xii.
8 ibid., p. xii.
9 Walt Whitman, 'November Boughs', in *Walt Whitman Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. by Justin Kaplan (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 1156-1157.
10 Mary O'Connor, *John Davidson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), p. 56.
11 ibid., p. 62.
12 John Davidson, *The Testament of a Vivisector* (London: Grant Richards, 1901), prefatory note.
13 John Davidson, 'Thoughts On Irony', *The Man Forbid and Other Essays* ed. Edward J. O'Brian (Boston: The Ball Publishing Co., 1910), p. 135.
14 Simpson, p. 250.
15 ibid., p. 186.
16 O'Connor, p. 75.
17 John Davidson, 'Tete-a-Tete. James Boswell. Dr. Johnson', *The Man Forbid and Other Essays*, p. 157.
18 Tom Hubbard, 'Irony and Enthusiasm: The Fiction of John Davidson', *Scottish Literary Journal* (December, 1984), XI, no. 2 (71-82), p. 79.
19 ibid., p. 73.
20 Bakhtin, p. 259.
21 Hubbard, 'Irony and Enthusiasm: The Fiction of John Davidson', p. 71.
22 Muir, p. 8
23 Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1989).
24 Alan Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 4.
25 ibid., p. 5.
26 ibid., p. 6.

27 ibid., p. 13.
28 *The Theatrocrat* (London: Grant Richards, 1905), p. 1.
29 Eric Northey, p. 289.
30 Holbrook Jackson, *The Eighteen Nineties* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1976), p. 182.
31 ibid., p. 188.
32 Whitman, 'A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads', p. 669.
33 Jackson, p. 188.
34 ibid., p. 189.
35 ibid., p. 664.
36 Robert Crawford, p. 217.
37 ibid., p. 244.
38 Whitman, p.659.
39 David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 3-4.
40 Perkins, p. 4.
41 ibid., p. 12.
42 Edwin Morgan, Preface to *The City of Dreadful Night* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993), pp. 8-9.
Morgan's reference to Eliot is from Lindsay's selection of Davidson's poetry, see preface. Eliot wrote that 'I feel a peculiar reverence, and acknowledge a debt, towards poets whose work impressed me deeply in my formative years...two were Scots: the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, and the author of "Thirty Bob a Week"'.
43 Herbert, p. 47.
44 ibid., p. 45.
45 Howard Mumford Jones, 'A Minor Prometheus', *Freeman*, New York: 6, (1922), 153.
46 O'Connor, p. 134.
47 Sloan, *First of the Moderns*, p. x.
48 Northey, p. 289.
49 J.B. Townsend, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 254-255.
50 ibid., p. 257.
51 O'Connor, pp. 133-134.
52 ibid., p. 134.
53 Hugh MacDiarmid 'English Ascendancy in British Literature', *Selected Prose*, ed. by Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992), pp. 62-3.
54 *A Rosary* (London, 1903), p. 35.
55 *The Man Forbid and Other Essays*, p. 71.
56 'Ayrshire Jock', stanza 9.
57 *A Rosary* p. 37.
58 *A Rosary*, p. 38.
59 O'Connor, p. 63.
60 *A Rosary*, p. 37.
61 Northey, p. 289.
62 Sloan, *John Davidson Selected Poems and Prose*, p. xix.
63 ibid., pp. 157-8.
64 David Daiches, *Late Victorian Attitudes*, p. 14.
65 ibid., p. 13.
66 W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1956), p.317.
67 Whitman, p. 658.
68 John Davidson, 'A Suburban Philosopher', *Glasgow Herald* 22 April, 1893, p. 9.
69 *Baptist Lake* (London: Ward and Downey, 1894), p. 102.

70 Sloan, *John Davidson Selected Poems and Prose*, p. xxiii.
71 O'Connor, p.123.
72 *A Second Series of Fleet Street Eclogues* (London: John Lane, 1896), p. 75.
73 Sloan, *John Davidson Selected Poems and Prose*, p. xiv.
74 ibid., pp. xiv-xv.
75 *The Triumph of Mammon*, p. 158.
76 John Davidson, *Fleet Street and Other Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1909).
77 Virginia Woolf, 'John Davidson', *Times Literary Supplement*, 16 August 1917, p. 390.
78 Andrew Noble, 'Urbane Silence' in *Perspectives of the Scottish City*, ed. by George Gordon (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985), p. 65.
79 O'Connor, p. 124.
80 ibid., p. 124.
81 ibid., p. 126.
82 Sloan, *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson*, p. 197.
83 Sloan, *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson*, p. 198.
84 Marshal Walker, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), p. 172.
85 O'Connor, p. 128.
86 ibid., p. 128.
87 ibid., pp. 128-129.
88 ibid., p. 131.
89 Crawford, p. 244.
90 Maurice Lindsay, (ed.), *John Davidson: A Selection of his Poems*, with preface by T.S. Eliot and an essay by Hugh MacDiarmid (London: Hutcheson & Co., 1961), pp. 45-46.
91 John Baglow, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Poetry of Self* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p. 47; my italics.
92 W.N. Herbert, 'Continuity in the Poetry and Prose of Hugh MacDiarmid' (D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford, 1990), pp. 41-2.
93 Lindsay, p. 47.
94 ibid., p. 47.
95 ibid., pp. 51-52.
96 Herbert, p. 43.
97 Lindsay, p. 49.
98 ibid., p. 49.
99 ibid., p. 47.
100 ibid., p.48.
101 Walker, p. 279.
102 T.S. Eliot, preface in Lindsay's selection of Davidson's poems.
103 Townsend, pp. 222-3.
104 Townsend, pp. 222-3.
105 From 'New Year's Day', *Fleet Street Eclogues*.
106 Andrew Turnbull, I, p. xxiii.
107 Lindsay, pp. 50-51.
108 Lindsay, p. 52.
109 Lindsay, p. 54.
110 Herbert, p. 51.
111 'On a Raised Beach', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Poems*, edited by Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (London: Penguin, 1992) p. 184.
112 'Art and the Unknown', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Prose*, p. 41.
113 'Metaphysics and Poetry', *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Prose*, p. 276.
114 'Thoughts on Irony', in O'Brian, pp. 133-136.

115 *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Poems,* p. 6.
116 'Poetry and the Something Behind Phenomena', *The Speaker*, 25 March 1899, p. 346.
117 Roderick Watson, 'Landscapes of Mind and Word: MacDiarmid's Journey to the Raised Beach and Beyond' in *Hugh MacDiarmid Man and Poet*, ed. by Nancy Gish (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp.231-251 (p. 232).
118 *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Poems*, p. 181.
119 'Poetry and Science', in *Selected Poems*, p. 228.
120 *Hugh MacDiarmid: Man and Poet*, p. 231.
121 *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Prose*, p. 39.
122 *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Poems*, p. 178, lines 31-2.
123 Lindsay, p. 48.

CHAPTER 3 CONCEPTS OF NATIONAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Issue of 'Scottish Identity'

In the previous section issues of identity and displacement were considered as an integral component of Davidson's experience as a Scottish writer. The objective was not only to illustrate Davidson's affinities with established features of a distinctive Scottish tradition and, therefore, his central place within that tradition, but also to argue that an appreciation of this context is essential to attaining an accurate understanding of the writer. A governing objective of this analysis is to indicate that Davidson's status and significance as a Scottish writer has been obscured, and subsequently undermined, by an excess of Anglo-centric criticism. Peterson's perception of Davidson as a rebel and innovator in the style of Blake; O'Connor's praise of his proto-modernist qualities, in terms of both formal experimentation and the rendering of alienation and self-doubt in the changing modern context; the numerous assumptions concerning the primarily Nietzschean character of his heroes, visionaries and outcasts; all these collective interpretations have de-contextualised Davidson from the inherited cultural framework which remains the fundamental impetus for the emergence of these features within his writing.

Such attitudes extend into literary criticism which retains a Scottish perspective. Even Hugh MacDiarmid, who stated that Davidson was 'the only Scottish poet to whom I owe anything at all, or to whom I would be pleased to admit any debt', and who asserted that Davidson 'Stood out head and shoulders above all the Scottish poets of his own time',[1] still tended nonetheless to decontextualise the writer. MacDiarmid expresses regret that Davidson failed to engage with the issue of Scottish identity, commenting that 'the pity was that, like most educated Scots of his time (and still) he was never put at school in possession of more than a few discrete fragments of his proper national heritage [...]. Nor did he express much in the way of Scottish nationalist sentiment'.[2] This suggests that Davidson failed to engage with the Scottish literary context of his age. This section will contend that Davidson did explore issues of Scottish identity and that his developing attitudes were symptomatic of the complex nature of Scottish literature at this period. The aim is to extend the theme of identity by examining the wider national and political framework, and the way in which identity is constructed and projected through, and in relation to, concepts such as 'Britishness', 'nationalism' and 'imperialism'. A principal objective remains that of recognising and assessing Davidson's significance within a

protracted tradition of Scottish writers who have attempted to negotiate with and refine these terms to more adequately accommodate their own problematic status. This tradition includes not only integrative attempts to promote a more tolerant and comprehensive 'British' sensibility, firmly established during the course of the eighteenth century, in the work of Thomson, Boswell and Smollett[3], but also a marked and apparently paradoxical tendency not only to engage with, but to become the foremost literary exponents of a predominantly Anglo-British sensibility.

Scott's concern for the primacy of Union, Carlyle's racialism and imperialism, and Buchan's British patriotism, reveal the prevalence of concentric forces. The split between inherited Scottish cultural loyalties and the modern pragmatic concerns of the post-Union environment (which has been described in terms of a split between feeling and intellect) created enormous pressure, among male writers in particular, who could, and felt the obligation to engage in the British public arena, and who sought to be the representatives of a British national literature. In Scotland, cultural displacement created a sense of 'inferiorization'. These writers felt acutely the need to find, or formulate, their status on a wider scale. From the 1830s onwards that status seemed increasingly unattainable within a Scottish context. No cohesive, forward looking literary framework emerged. As a result the engagement with a surrogate Anglo-British identity achieved heightened importance in the face of an expanding urban, industrial and imperial Britain. Paul H. Scott defines the significance of this period, arguing that:

> The late 1830s mark one of the most obvious and drastic turning points in the literary history of Scotland. Before lay a long period of high achievement: Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns, the Gaelic poets of the eighteenth century, the philosophers and historians of the Enlightenment, Scott, Galt, and Hogg. Afterwards there was a loss of cohesion and self-confidence, a decline which lasted about 50 years.[4]

The critical tendency which evaluates Davidson's extreme racial and imperial pronouncements in isolation, has produced an emphasis upon his personal irrationality and eccentricity. It is a conclusion which ignores the complex nature of Scottish literature at this time. Eric Northey defends much of Davidson's interest in war and empire, suggesting that he sustained a detached perspective until the gradual onset of an irrational extremism that led toward mental breakdown. Despite this largely sympathetic appraisal, Northey concedes that 'Davidson's racial views in the later works seem full of a quirky ethnocentrism, which must have been difficult to take seriously at any time'.[5] Writing with less restraint John Herdman states that:

> Many of his ideas are, frankly, repulsive: imperialist, racialist, anti-democratic. Endowed with a strong and subtle intellect and considerable psychological penetration, Davidson drove many of the commonplaces of late Victorian and Edwardian thought and attitude to their logical, unpalatable, but usually unexpressed conclusions - and then endorsed them.[6]

Herdman adds, in reference to Davidson's essay 'On Poetry' (1906)[7], that 'Perhaps Davidson's blank verse failed because he regarded it less as a poetic medium than as a function of the Imperial theme'.[8]

Tom Hubbard has also been largely dismissive of Davidson's later views, asserting that:

> Regrettably, there was one 'inauthentic' trend which he followed: as a counter decadent and deracinated Scot, he was happy to be a loudmouth for English imperialism. His effusions in this vein are as bad as anything perpetrated by Austin or Newbolt. In the context of his total output these things are mercifully few but they have to be taken into account. Like every writer who attempts 'big' themes, Davidson was guilty of lapses into the three bad B's: bombast, bathos and banality.[9]

Similarly, J.B. Townsend refers to Davidson's 'complacent Anglophilia, vociferous imperialism, and mawkish hero worship', adding that his 'dangerous idealism and humourless naiveté today seem little short of appalling'.[10] Townsend does attempt to offer some mediating reasons for Davidson's views, referring to the influence of 'contagious patriotism', and to Davidson's embittered nature which sought solace from 'grandiose visions'.[11] Townsend argues that 'Little by little his monomania metastasized until he saw in this widespread nationalism a popular endorsement of his personal ambitions'.[12] Finally, Townsend, in a similar vein to Northey's emphasis upon Davidson's mental breakdown, points to what he describes as 'the child's world of his final poetry' in which 'myth and vision are inseparable from fact'.[13]

These interpretations are misleading. By over-emphasising personal eccentricity they undermine Davidson's relationship to Scottish literature. The nineteenth century Scottish writer is a chameleon figure, displaced, mobile, harbouring both pride and resentment toward an ambivalent cultural background, as well as a conflicting sense of admiration and inferiority toward the prevailing status of Anglo-British literature. While Davidson was certainly extreme, he was neither unique nor atypical. Scottish literature is notable for its exiles and émigrés who revise and deconstruct their status in search of a cohesive identity amidst divisive forces. Andrew Noble highlights a pattern of behaviour among expatriate Scottish writers which places Davidson within a wider and more complex trend than has been adequately acknowledged in relation to making an accurate appraisal of Davidson's

views. Noble points to a pattern of behaviour that stems directly from the problems surrounding identity on a national scale:

> National denial was not infrequently accompanied not only by a mercenary selling of pens not swords but by a hyper-patriotism for Great Britain. James Thomson wrote 'Rule Britannia'. Smollett worked himself into a xenophobic, roast-beef anti-European lather [...] the ethnically challenged became near hysterical in their adoption of a new mother country. This Scottish writerly line of British imperial preference runs with various levels of intensity, from the mid-eighteenth century through Scott, Carlyle, Ruskin, John Davidson, and John Buchan. Such Scots, not William Blake, were the prophets of actual empire.[14]

It is essential to consider Davidson within this collective context, as an extreme exemplification of a wider pattern of behaviour produced by powerful and cumulative external influences. These influences are rooted in the Scottish experience. Factors such as, the enduring cultural and ideological effects of political union; the correlation between economic advance within Britain and indigenous cultural retardation; the largely non-reactionary character of Scottish literary Romanticism; the latent conservatism within Kailyard fiction; the degeneracy of Scottish nationalism into popular symbols and associations; the success which popular images of Scotland attained at an international level, 'potent enough both to refashion Scotland in the eyes of the world, and to wrap the country in a shiny romantic package from which she was never wholly to escape';[15] the sense of increasing redundancy among post-Enlightenment writers due to the dearth of possibilities offered by a largely passive and anachronistic national consciousness. These are some of the external forces which give reason to argue against an unqualified critical emphasis upon personal eccentricity and instability. These factors caused Scottish writers to become the exponents of 'Britishness' in order to escape the problematic framework that inadequately shaped notions of Scottish identity.

Mary Jane Scott, in an essay concerning James Thomson (1700-48) and the Anglo-Scots writers of the eighteenth century, comments that even when Scots writers were acting as the most conscientious exponents of Anglo-Britishness they remained distinctly and paradoxically Scottish:

> They could loudly proclaim their 'British' patriotism in poetry and song [...]. But they could not will themselves to be other than Scottish, even if they wanted to [...]. For Scottishness is a stubborn thing. It is not simply a matter of language or locale. It takes more than a Scottish birth-certificate, or a vocabulary sprinkled with Scotticisms, to make a Scottish poet. It is all those intangible influences - religious, historical, educational, aesthetic,

> geographical, linguistic, literary, and broadly cultural - which work together to determine national and individual character.[16]

The significance of Scott's observation extends beyond the Anglo-Scots of the eighteenth century to those who inherited the same predicament of having to negotiate both practically and psychologically with their anomalous post-Union, Scottish-British status. This is frequently manifested in writing which maintains a dialogical, subversive ambivalence.

Davidson's troubled search for a personal voice, which culminated in his need for a singular, affirmative sensibility, preaching with vigour his own gospel of philosophical materialism conjoined with assertive individualism, is mirrored by his need for public affirmation through the attainment of a defined literary function and status at a national level. The public cultural consciousness in Scotland failed to mature into the kind of confident, heroic British national sensibility that Davidson desired. Literature displayed a form of rebellion through ambivalence which, to an extent, undermined the contented, Romantic veneer which Andrew Hook identifies. Certainly, Romanticism in Scotland was never revolutionary, at least in an overt sense. It never threatened the climate of post-Union stability cultivated by the Enlightenment:

> The Scottish writers succeeded in looking backward and forward simultaneously; their romanticism was attractive and appealing, but it was never unqualified. Above all their romanticism was never revolutionary. As a result, their writings were safe, offering no kind of threat to established society and its conventional forms. Such lack of threat perhaps explains both the success and the limitations of Scottish literary romanticism.[17]

Deploying this argument further, I suggest that Scottish Romanticism, at least before Scott, offered no form of ideological challenge to the changing political and economic climate of the Lowlands, indeed it did not engage with it. Its ethos and imagery depended upon wild Highland grandeur, Celtic myth, a heroic past, or alternatively upon the detached security and nostalgia of rural simplicity and continuity. This was in marked contrast to a direct English and Anglo-Scottish ideological engagement with the ethos of industry and empire. Thomson's 'Rule Britannia' set the tone for the growth of a collective modern integrated national ideology that had no counterpart in Scotland. Scottish identity retained a retrospective sensibility. Scotland's most popular exports, Romanticism and Kailyard fiction, largely affirmed conservative orthodoxy. The Kailyard tradition successfully combined a sense of being separate while remaining complicit with the values of an external, establishment orthodoxy. The minister, the dominie, the lad

o'pairts or the war hero conform to the value systems of the conservative 'British' outside world. Douglas Gifford explains the inherent paradox within this kind of fiction:

> This kind of fiction works by asserting the remote virtues of the Scottish community untouched by complex political questions, or socio-economic subtleties, or satanic mills and industrialisation, or sexual debates. Its function is thus apparently one of reassurance that such blighting modern problems have not spoiled all of the Western world, yet in sense it asserts at the same time the primacy of centralised political and military power in Victorian Britain. Adam Menzies had won Waterloo, in his way; just as in McLaren's *Young Barbarians* the most mischievous boy, Speug the rough horsedealer's son, was inevitably destined to win the V.C., holding a pass in Africa against hordes of howling Masai. Thus, these villages, Muirtown and Thrums and Drumsylie and the rest, are simultaneously never-never land and part of Victoria's vision of the simple strengths of imperialist Britain. The modesty of canvas and authorial presentation belies a complacently chauvinistic assumption that in Andrew Wylie, Adam Menzies and their ilk, the Scots hold the key to fundamental moral rightness[18]

Tom Nairn highlights a similar latent conservatism within Scottish Romanticism: 'The new romantic consciousness of the past was in itself, irresistible. Scotland played a large part in generating and diffusing it for the rest of Europe. What mattered in Scotland itself, however, was to render this awareness *politically* null'.[19] Nairn argues that, as a result, Scotland failed to establish 'what one might call a developed or mature cultural romanticism: it is indeed the lack of this that constitutes the rootlessness or 'void' which cultural and literary historians so deplore'.[20] Scots practicality, Presbyterian fatalism and suspicion toward romantic individualism inhibited the formation of a radical sensibility. In consequence a context of assertive political nationalism never evolved sufficiently to harness the country's thwarted creative potential. Scottish identity became largely passive and oversimplified into Kitsch symbols and caricatural associations, that whittled down the dynamic of cultural nationalism into vitrified knickknacks and icons.

Certainly, Nairn's view must be qualified in light of William Donaldson's identification of a radical, realist literary tradition which prospered, despite being overshadowed by these dominant trends. Donaldson and Tom Leonard identify regional writing published by the popular press and periodicals and directed toward a local audience. This type of literature succeeds in maintaining its realism and integrity; appearing to function outwith a framework of dominant and stereotypical associations.

It is in response to this framework that Davidson can be viewed as part of a concerted exodus of literary talent from its native sphere. A distinctive type of expatriate Scot emerged, taking up the role of moral prophet, metaphysical thinker and social

commentator. David Craig notes the significance of this trend in which Davidson was part:

> During the 19th century the country was emptied of the *majority* of its notable literary talents. Of the leading British 'sages' of the time an astonishingly high proportion were of Scottish extraction - the Mills, Macaulay, Carlyle, Ruskin, Gladstone.[21]

Taking up Craig's observation, Nairn comments that 'Unemployable in their own country, these and many later émigrés quite naturally found themselves a function in the development of English literature'.[22] Sir Walter Scott noted in his Journal in 1829 that 'London licks the butter off our bread, by opening a better market for ambition...poor Scotland could hardly keep a man worth having'.[23] If Scots were repelled and frustrated by the complexities and restraints which they encountered within the Scottish context they were conversely attracted to the ideology of national self-confidence, assertion and unity associated with the growth of Anglo-British nationalism and imperialism. Nairn suggests that Anglo-British culture offered 'an organic or 'rooted' national-romantic culture, in which literature [...] has consistently played a major role'.[24] Paul H. Scott also comments that:

> if provincialism threatened before the 1830s, it became infinitely more destructive afterwards when the drift to the south became a flood. As a symbolic date for the change, we might take 1834 when Carlyle decided that Scotland could not hold him.[25]

Davidson's need for an affirmative, purposeful orientation attracted him to London's more 'rooted' cultural context: placing himself within the stability of the 'core' culture as opposed to the marginalised 'periphery'. By extricating himself from feelings of redundancy and restraint, while retaining an intense desire for status and definition, he exemplifies the creative energy of the dispossessed.

This restless energy was channelled into an exploration of the concepts and associations surrounding cultural and national particularity in a way that corresponds to his restive devising of self-images in an attempt to seek and define a tenable identity. Within this context Davidson is distinctive for his interest in an assertive and politically dynamic literature. He turns increasingly to the persona of the visionary or poet-prophet, substituting religiosity for an equally intense secular philosophy.

Davidson's literary work and role as artist developed in this defined and assertive cultural framework. Like Carlyle, his status and identity were fashioned from his integral role in

constructing and articulating a new vision of society. Consequently, he was attracted by the affirmative sense of identity offered by Anglo-British hegemony and imperial expansionism. Robert Crawford has claimed that 'British' literature was predominantly a Scottish invention: 'as regards the development of a literature that was in any meaningful sense British, the English showed little or no interest [...] 'Britain' was usually seen as a synonym for England'.[26] In contrast, Crawford argues that from the eighteenth century 'Scottish literature involved a continuing examination of, and response to, the strains and possibilities of Britishness [...] It is this Britishness which, more than anything else, distinguishes Scottish from English literature in the eighteenth century.'[27] Like Scott, Davidson associated Britishness with stability, but this source of a defined identity has a more fully realised dynamic potential in Davidson's perspective. Unlike Scott he had no desire to engage with a seductive but impotent past, rather, he came increasingly to favour Anglo-centric nationalism, finding that it complemented his own construction of the heroic individual. In Davidson's philosophy of assertive individualism the head inevitably subsumes the heart in an evocation of the pragmatic, amoral, and affirmative will to power. There is an irony here in that Scots from James Thomson in the eighteenth century to Davidson in the nineteenth were central to the making of British national and personal identity.

Poetry became increasingly defined as a means by which to be assertive and unorthodox. In a manner akin to Bahktin he uses subversive voices to undermine order and uniformity. Davidson stresses the need to be unorthodox, using the term 'immoral' recurrently, as a synonym, a remnant of his hostility toward the Presbyterian sense of community, conformity and tradition. He celebrates heroic poetry as the product of the heroic individual and the heroic nation. Each represents a negation of the restraining influence of tradition and conventional morality:

> Poetry is immoral [...] I wish to transmute this depreciated word, to make it so eminent that men shall desire to be called immoralists. To be immoralists is to be different [...] Nothing in life is interesting except that differentiation which is immorality: the world would be a putrid stagnation without it, and greatness and glory impossible. Morality would never have founded the British Empire in India; it was English piracy that wrested from Iberia the control of the Spanish Main and the kingdom of the sea. War is empowered immorality: poetry is a warfare.[28]

Within the harshness of Davidson's perspective there is an element of posturing (his projection of the sensibility of the heroic man), in turn heightened by his materialism, which encompasses the good and bad of man and nature with dispassionate acceptance.

This results in a kind of negative resignation or pragmatism and a corresponding appreciation of strength:

> To understand all is to fight and slay. War, upon whatever excuse it is waged, is always the effect of a sudden insight into the true nature of the world and man. Life is something which should never have been; and so, in fiery moments of intelligence we kill each other.[29]

Davidson posited himself as the advocate of political strength and assertive individualism. His attraction to a literary and philosophical vitalism of his own devising, and his increasing single-mindedness, marked a new turn in his life-long attempt to deal with the problem of identity, bringing to an end years of experimentation with multiple and contrasting perspectives and the eternal deadlock of paradox, contradiction and restless instability. The degree of flux and displacement that is evident within Davidson's work; the Calvinist background that led him to think in terms of 'difference' and liberating 'immorality' as opposed to 'putrid stagnation'; the emotional and psychological struggle that was akin to 'warfare'; the sense of rejection and marginalisation that caused him defensively to project a heroic or elevated compensatory sense of identity into concepts of 'greatness' and 'glory'; these factors may not excuse Davidson's later views but they are essential to a more perceptive understanding of him. They suggest that, as with other issues within his writing, such as father-and-son tensions, religiosity and cultural dislocation, Davidson is, once again, an extreme example of a wider trend.

The aim of this chapter will be to illustrate Davidson's significance within this trend and to point out the changes that took place within his thought that led ultimately to the extreme chauvinist sensibility that has been so much criticised. Section I will examine Davidson's initial attempts to engage with the nature of Scottish identity; firstly, by drawing on historical sources as in the play *Bruce* and in poetry such as 'John Baliol at Strathcathro' and 'Thomas the Rhymer', and , secondly, by examining Davidson's apprehension of an integrated Britain through the way in which he presents Scottish characters outwith their native context. This section will also examine Davidson's hostility toward stock associations and *kitsch* symbols of nationalism, arguing that popular nationalism offered nothing of the heroic dignity and self-assurance which Davidson sought. Finally, Section II will examine Davidson's attitude to war, empire and the Anglo-British sensibility of the nineteenth century. In this section it will be argued that Davidson found in his own very personal definition of British imperialism a sense of assertion and affirmation that met with his need to establish an increasingly fixed identity and stable perspective.

Exploring Concepts of Scottish Identity

The ideological stability which Davidson extracted from assertive militarism and Anglo-British patriotism was not immediate. He turned initially to Scottish history in order to seek the heroic and affirmative qualities which attracted him. This engagement was distinctive in that it was not the well-established wistful Romanticism of a lost or imagined past that interested him. Rather, it was a genuinely politicised literature which he sought. In dealing with the past he turns to a dialectic between conflicting bids for authority and consequent versions of identity. In both *Bruce: A Chronicle Play* (1884), and the poem, 'John Baliol at Strathcathro' (1891), the conflict between Scots and English authority and, therefore, identity, is played out in terms of an unreconcilable antithesis from which one identity attempts ultimately to prevail in the defining of a nation state.

In Act III of *Bruce*, the ill-fated Wallace speaks of his own vision of racial equality rather than cultural absorption:

> Why! Know you not that is the period,
> The ultimate effect I battled for,
> That you, free English, and that we, free Scots,
> May one day be free Britons. And we shall;
> For Scotland never will be tributary:
> We are your equals, not to be enslaved;
> We are your kin, your brothers, to be loved. (III.I)[30]

Suspicion of losing the nature and substance of one's national identity is the perspective taken by both Wallace and Bruce in Davidson's play. In his turn, Bruce stresses the importance of maintaining continuity of identity in the face of external opposition:

> All south of us the Romans, Saxons, Danes,
> And Normans, conquering in turn, o'erthrow
> From change to change; but we are what we were
> Before Aeneas come to Italy,
> Free Scots; and though this great Plantagenet
> Seems now triumphant, we will break his power. (IV.II. p. 183)

In response to this speech one of the king's soldiers provides a note of dissension, suggesting that perhaps having one's identity subsumed to a greater unity may offer a more favourable resolution than perpetual war:

> *2nd soldier.* But might it not have been a benefit
> If Rome had conquered Scotland too, and made
> Between the Orkneys and the Channel Isles

One nation?

Bruce responds by acknowledging the practical reasoning behind such an ostensible recipe for peace and prosperity, but then reminds his men that, in the harsh reality of politics, this would lead only to subservience - unity would necessitate the subordination of identity to that of another nation:

> *Bruce.* A subtle question, soldier;
> But profitless, requiring fate unwound.
> It might be well were all the world at peace,
> One commonwealth, or governed by one king;
> It might be paradise; but on earth
> You will not find a race so provident
> As to be slaves to benefit their heirs. (IV.II. p. 183)

Cultural absorption and the consequent dissolution of identity is the threat which underpins Scotland's relationship with England. Bruce again refers to this erosion of national consciousness, in more evocative terms, when he puts the question, 'What good knight was it, like a water-drop/Lost shape and being in an English sea?' (V.I).[31] The imagery used, the juxtaposition of a water-drop with an ocean, conveys the significance of identity being absorbed by a greater force. Noting this reference, Kenneth Millard makes the point that:

> The image of the water-drop becoming subsumed by a neighbouring flood, losing its 'shape and being', is at once personal and political; it is conscious of national characteristics and expresses the dangers of cultural adulteration [...] the play is an exploration of a sense of national identity.[32]

Against the forces of absorption, Bruce represents a contrasting ethos, shown in his ability to be self-assertive and independent. Throughout the play Bruce is depicted as a man of action, relying upon his instinct, 'I'm not a man/Much given to meditate. When pending thoughts/Hurtle each other in the intellect' (II.I. p. 146). Like Davidson's later representations of the heroic natural will, to be found in poems such as 'The Hero', 'Thoreau' and 'The Pioneer' (see Section II), Bruce shuns external opinion and is uninhibited by the moral dilemmas which restrain other men. In Bruce, Davidson attempts to evoke an affirmative vision of assertive identity. The language and imagery of the play underpin the vigour of the characters and action. Scotland is described, from the outset of the play, as 'the rude North' (I.I.1) and the Scots as 'These fiery children of the North' (V.III.5).[33] There is an element of praise within these critical descriptions. The Scots are,

according to King Edward, 'Obdurate, set, incorrigibly wroth - A band whose blood is of the liquid flame' (I.I.4-5).[34] Edward also refers to 'that same beacon of rebellious light/Built up by every burning Scottish heart' (I.I.12-13). Kenneth Millard suggests that:

> The poet [Davidson] is clearly attracted to an image of heroic defiance, of character in action, and of those who attend the demands of their nature rather than social convention. He portrays integrity and honour as predominantly but not exclusively Scottish qualities. Such characterization is accompanied by the depiction of a Scottish landscape and climate, its uncultivated and inhospitable beauty clearly distinguishable from the restrained gentility of Georgian rural scenes, and from decorative Pre-Raphaelite floral tapestries. Davidson also experiments with the Scottish language ('cushats', 'sonsy', 'capercailzie') as if testing his native tongue as a suitable vehicle for his artistic personality.[35]

Landscape, imagery and the personality of Bruce work together to create a spirit of defiance and assertion. The Scottish king asserts, 'take root; grow strong;/The earth is Scottish. For our country stand/Like bastioned, frowning rocks that beard the sea,/And triumph everlastlngly'. (V.IV. p.208). Bruce claims that 'I am the heart of Scotland' and it is this type of emphatic spirit with which Davidson can identify.

Davidson is far from unique in his concern for the heroic man. Carlyle, Robert Browning, Charles Kingsley, Ruskin, Henley, and Kipling explore similar ideas. What is clear however is that, for Davidson, the heroic man provides an answer to the problem of identity at a national level, as well as a personal one. Carroll V. Peterson provides a description of the 'Davidsonian hero', which points to an emerging synthesis between personal and national identity:

> The hero typically affirms life; he despises the ennui and decadence of the late nineteenth century [...] he replaces ennui with hard work and zealous living. He asserts his own character; indeed, self-assertiveness is almost a duty. He has a very high notion of his own worth, and he believes that he can control his environment. Being so strongly egotistic, he depends on his intuitions and emotions; and [...] he distrusts cold intellect. He prefers action to thought. Like a true Carlylean hero, he sees his duty and does it. The hero's attitudes toward his fellow men are an extension of his feelings about himself. Because he is impatient with decadent society, he would remake it to bring it into line with his own vigorous assertiveness. And in the same way that he admires personal strength, he venerates national strength; therefore, the hero approves of empire building and offensive war. Might comes to mean right. In achieving his personal ends, the hero defies or ignores public opinion, moral codes, even laws, and he would have the nation do the same thing.[36]

In this early play a positive vision of Scottish identity is promoted, one that is defiant, stubborn and assertive. The play ends on the field of Bannockburn at a point of climax

and victory. It is the only time Davidson presents an unreservedly heroic vision of the endeavour for Scottish independence. Peterson compares Davidson's presentation of Bruce with the attributes of the Carlylean hero:

> Davidson glorifies Robert Bruce [...]. The epitome of Scotch rebelliousness [...] the whole play *Bruce* testifies to its hero's practical genius in changing circumstances [...]. Undoubtedly there is a Carlylean influence on Davidson's concept of the heroic character. Bruce is a very good example of the Carlylean hero [...] Bruce is a doer, an activist, a practical man...In trusting himself, he carries out the duty which is imposed upon him by the Scottish people. Like a true Carlylean hero, Bruce is the product of his time, but he also transcends the spirit of his time and brings about great and momentous change [...] Bruce remains an outstanding example of the sort of Davidson hero that ultimately is transfigured into a superman in the later works.[37]

Carlyle describes the 'Great Man' as a 'living light-fountain, which is good and pleasant to be near. The light which enlightens, which has enlightened the darkness of the world; and this not as a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural luminary [...] a flowing light-fountain [...] of native original insight, of manhood and heroic nobleness' (OHHW, 2). Davidson's Bruce has the instinct and natural spontaneity of the Carlylean hero. The fighting spirit of the Scots, although disparaged by Edward and the English forces, is also presented in such terms.

Millard has suggested that the play is 'in many respects a celebration of Scottish individuality, of separateness from England'.[38] Hereafter, there is a shift reflecting increasing cynicism in Davidson's relationship to his Scottish literary context. From this point, Davidson fails to retrieve or sustain an evocation of heroism in relation to Scotland and instead begins to equate Scottish identity with a sense of confusion, pretension, misguided endeavour, disillusionment and ultimately, with tragedy. In the poem 'John Baliol at Strathcathro' (MH, 107-14) the dialectic is created by the contrasting figures of John Baliol and Edward. Head and heart are divided in the contrast between Baliol's integrity and Edward's Machiavellian pragmatism. From the outset of the poem Baliol's identity seems ominously fragile.

Baliol is defined in terms of apparent or superficial authority, entering with great ceremony 'as of victory' (1). He is vested 'like a king', and crowned in a manner 'almost looking like a king' (3), but the countenance of his 'shamed and sullen' ministers betrays more accurately the true nature of his status. Baliol's authority rests upon half-truths and unfulfilled possibilities, 'as of', 'like' rather than the clear, practical world of political reality. He is a puppet-king presiding over a state at a political half-way point, neither

affirmatively Scots nor British. The charade of Baliol's pageant is affirmed by the undermining effects of juxtaposing words and imagery, "What pageantry is this?' King Edward cried/'Rather what mockery?' said Annandale' (8-9).

Baliol appears to be enchanted with the trappings of monarchical power. He is enmeshed in symbols but has no true perception of political reality. This is underpinned by the way in which Edward retains presiding authority over the whole affair. Baliol's stately procession and his ceremonial renunciation of the symbols of monarchy (crown, robes, sceptre, sword and seal) are all the time monitored by Edward who mocks and controls the entire affair: 'An historic King! What say you, lords,/Shall he speak on, or go out sighing now?' (47). A contrast is, in this way, established between the sincere but naive aspirations of Baliol and the haughty, calculating pragmatism of Edward. Baliol's potential to outweigh Edward in decency is cut-short by the latter's orchestrating presence: 'But Edward cried: 'No more!/You come, Lord Baliol, to resign the crown,/The kingdom, your ill-government has wrecked'[(58-60). To this Baliol replies: 'The rocks I struck upon were English rocks/Alluring with false beacons' (61-2). Edward and Baliol personify the division between reason and sentiment. Davidson acknowledges both Edward's recondite skill while retaining sympathy for Baliol's dreams though they are clearly presented as untenable.

The poem evokes a mood of transience, displaying an apprehension of illusion and disillusionment: 'royal spirit', 'attendant sprite', 'glimmer', are words that possess an ephemeral quality. The symbolic value of the crown shares in this transience. It degenerates into 'the tarnished and inglorious crown' (29), 'A thorny torment' (31) and merely a 'splendid gem' (88). The crown is a bewitching, deceitful instrument, and Baliol confesses; 'I coveted thy gold-knit jewel-walls,/And for a day delighted me in thee/When thou becam'st the palace of my brain' (90-2). Baliol describes the beguiling nature of its gem stones 'Shining like faces in their golden collars!/Look at them, lords! they gleam like very suns' (98-9)'. He suggests that 'In them too there's a syren witchery/Of singing, gentle sighing, snaring scent' (105-6). In wearing the crown Baliol felt it to be like 'A blank immuring jail' (114) imprisoning his head, while 'Its velvet tire like sackcloth flayed my brows' (115). This dualism, configuring beauty with cruelty, culminates with Baliol's description of the crown's jewelled cross and its effect upon him: 'And on its cross my soul was crucified' (116).

In this grim juxtaposition the dispassionate, amoral nature of Davidson's materialism emerges. It is the strong who prevail. Immediately after Baliol has spoken of his crucified soul he offers the crown to Edward who takes up the nefarious object without hesitancy or sentiment: 'And on its cross my soul was crucified./Here, take the crown'. King Edward took it up/And put it on, saying: 'I will wear it too' (116-8). King Edward personifies what Davidson will later develop into a fuller examination of the will to power which is inherent in the essence of matter. The difference between Edward and Baliol is again underpinned in Baliol's handing over of the ceremonial sword. For a moment Baliol engages with the idea of stabbing Edward but it is once again a hollow gesture. Baliol confesses that 'I am no doer' (125) and resigns the sword, 'I lay it at your feet, not in your heart' (128). Edward's response is oblivious to Baliol's capacity for sentiment: 'King Edward girt him with the sword, and said:/ "Thou art as sure a madman as a fool".' (129-30).

Throughout this poem Baliol, and by extension, Scotland, are presented in terms of delusion and weakness. Baliol has occupied an anomalous position and he has no true identity or status, merely an emotive vision with no underlying authority behind it. Nonetheless, his dignity and decency jar against Edward's desire to humiliate him, which extends beyond the bounds of political necessity. Baliol observes that submission only 'Rouses ire in heartless dignities' (173). The theme of the fleeting, transient nature of Baliol's aspirations are summed up at the conclusion of the poem when Baliol admits that: 'I gave up all, and having nothing, lo,/The nothing that I had is stolen so!' (175-6).

Everything which has signified the assertion of Scottish identity is a delusion. Even Annandale, who has sought to gain Edward's favour, finds that he too has been deceived:

> 'My liege, I think you promised me a crown;'
> And got for answer, loud and mockingly,
> 'Good Earl, think you that we have naught to do
> But conquer crowns, and hand them o'er to you?' (179-182)

Annandale is probably Bruce, who held the titles of both Earl of Carrick and Lord of Annandale. There is a dramatic contrast between his presentation here and that of Davidson's play *Bruce*. In this instance he is a more ambivalent and far less heroic figure. Like Baliol, he too is the victim of delusion. Bruce possessed large estates in England and had, as a result, a vested interest in assisting Edward with some of his campaigns. Despite his divided loyalties, he persistently maintained his claim to the Scottish throne and when

his more politic efforts to secure this claim were thwarted, he ultimately turned against Edward in a direct bid for the kingship of Scotland. In Davidson's poem Annandale's scheming is defeated by Edward's ruthless statecraft which transgresses all loyalties and allegiances. Both Baliol and Annandale fail to match Edward's absolute pragmatism. The poem is constructed around the theme of disillusionment, with Scotland as the victim of her own deluded state.

In both *Bruce* and 'John Baliol at Strathcathro', Davidson can be seen to be reworking the fabric of Scottish history, examining and dramatising the nature of national identity, and searching for a point of creative association. A comparison of the two works, however, reveals a negative movement from the depiction of an affirmative and heroic Scotland, toward that of a nation founded upon hollow aspirations and increasing ambivalence concerning the nature of its own identity. This negative perspective, which fails to retrieve any vision of cohesive, assertive identity, is similarly reflected in the aura of pessimism evoked in Davidson's ballad poem 'Thomas the Rhymer' (1891). The poem is based on the death of King Alexander III in 1284 and Scotland's turbulent history thereafter. It constitutes a foreboding vision of disunity and fragmentation.

Davidson draws upon traditional and historical themes used by other writers such as Scott and Hogg. The choice of form is significant both because of the dramatic, atmospheric qualities which the ballad form often traditionally exploited, and because the employment of such a traditional type of Scots verse gives the tragic theme heightened significance in relation to the fate of Scottish identity. Davidson exploits conventional ballad topics such as witchcraft, returning dead, important historical characters, an ominous landscape, and a tragic ending in order to forecast the demise of an ill-fated Scotland. As with 'John Baliol at Strathcathro' the poem begins with false apprehensions and an illusory sense of stability. The scornful earl who encounters Thomas mocks the wizard's warnings of impending disaster, 'And this' said then the scornful earl,/'This is your stormiest day!/The clouds that drift across the lift/Are soft and silver grey.' (7-10).

Thomas is described as the 'weary wizard', tired of being doubted. Awaiting confirmation of Scotland's fate, he asks the earl about the rumour of a spectral presence which was said to have blighted the king's wedding feast. The earl confirms and relates the vision:

'An odour, chill, sepulchral, spread,
And lo, a skeleton!
A creaking stack of bones as black
As peat! It seemed to con

Each face with yawning eyeless holes,
And in a breath 'twas gone' (43-48)

Thomas rejoices, not in the ominous meaning of the vision, but in its confirmation of his warnings, 'He laughed a woeful laugh,/'A sign!' he cried. 'Say not I lied'' (50-51). Thomas then affirms that 'Our land must quaff/'The bitterest potion nations drink;/This token is the last' (54-55). In support of his forecast the wizard lists a catalogue of other signs of evil portent which he has witnessed, namely 'floods' (67), 'Earthquakes' (69), 'strange fire from heaven' (73), all of which are in contrast to a landscape of apparent peace. Thomas concludes that, 'I rede these signs to mean a storm;/That storm shall break today' (79-80). A herald arrives to confirm the wizard's forebodings. The herald announces that the king of Scots is dead and confirms the fate of the Scottish nation, ''In truth are we stormstead!' (90). In this poem Davidson affirms that Scotland's identity is in turmoil. National identity, as with his own exploration of personal identity, is fated to be 'stormstead'.

Davidson was aware of the contemporary situation within Scottish literature and the sense of ambivalence and redundancy which affected those who had aspired to be arbiters of national literature and culture. He was also aware of the trend toward exile and dissociation. By 1890 Davidson's view of Scottish identity had become largely pessimistic and this is often conveyed through parody. In his dissociative novel *Perfervid* (1890), Ninian Jamieson, Davidson's parody of the hero in Scottish regenerative fiction, laments the absence of Scotland's exiles and émigrés:

> 'I would be content to be king of Scotland and leave the rest of Europe to the House of Brunswick. But it would require to be repeopled. They say there are more Scotchmen in London than there are in Edinburgh. I would bring all these prodigals back, and from the colonies, and America'.[39]

Ninian's vision of a rejuvenated Scotland receives the approbation of the admiring Marjory Morton:

> 'It is shameful', she burst out, 'how Scotchmen forsake their country! I am almost a socialist in most things, but I would preserve nationalities. My ambition comes far short of yours, still it is high-flown enough. I would like to see Edinburgh once more the home of the Scotch nobility; to see it a literary centre rivalling London and Paris. And it could be done so easily. If the Duke of Weimar with his small income could gather together Goethe, Schiller, and the wit and wisdom of Germany, surely a Scotch nobleman could gather about

> him in Edinburgh all the eminent Scotchmen. That would make us a nation once more.[40]

Ninian Jamieson is an eccentric hero, whose excesses, parody and ironically undermine the unifying and progressive objectives of regenerative fiction. Davidson indulges in dramatising Ninian's enthusiasm for a dynamic nationalism, but restrains this impulse within a narrative framework of irony and cynicism. Ninian is no pragmatist, having a slender grasp of reality at the best of times, and even this is easily brushed aside by the fervour of his egotism and imagination, in keeping with the novel's title *Perfervid.* In this respect he resembles the central protagonists of Barrie's *Sentimental Tommy* (1896) and Munroe's *Gilian the Dreamer* (1899). Ninian represents the imaginative indulgence of Scottish romanticism with no corresponding practical bearing upon political and cultural realities. Nonetheless, a note of authorial irony is registered in Ninian's use of the word 'prodigals' (a term with which Davidson frequently identifies himself), and in Marjory's judgmental references to 'shameful' Scots who 'forsake' their country. The implication of betrayal is, however, tempered by an awareness of Scotland's political and cultural weakness. It is the failure to evolve a productive political and cultural centre that has caused the exodus. Despite this assertive and ambiguous diagnosis, however, Ninian's personal schemes and fantasies offer little remedy. This reflects the uncertainty and ambiguity of Davidson's ideas concerning Scotland at this time.

Davidson viewed Scotland as intensely disempowering. In the aforementioned extract he alludes to a cultural vacuum and to the absence of a truly vigorous and creative national consciousness. Ninian and Marjory infer the need actively to create such an awareness in a way that is allied to political power and independence. Ninian's dream of cultural regeneration may be hopelessly ambitious and self-centred, but they are not altogether misguided. Politics and culture work in tandem to produce an assertive national identity. Davidson also demonstrated his resolve not to be pacified by the sentimental symbols and remnants of an impotent culture, in his distaste for the Burns cult expressed in the poem 'Ayrshire Jock'. He is hostile toward the semiotics of a stereotypical and caricatured nationalism. His reaction has similarities to Edwin Muir's references to Scott and Burns as 'sham bards of a sham nation' in the poem 'Scotland 1941'.[41] An extension of this observation is made in Muir's *Scottish Journey* (1935), in which he asserts that the Burns myth is 'based on a firm foundation of sanctified illusion and romantic wish fulfilment'.[42] Tom Nairn defines such tendencies as symptomatic of cultural neurosis:

> The popular consciousness of separate identity, uncultivated by 'national' experience or culture in the usual sense, has become curiously fixed or fossilized on the level of the *image d'Epinal* and Auld Lang Syne, of the Scott Monument, Andy Stewart and the *Sunday Post* - to the point of forming a huge, virtually self-contained universe of Kitsch.[43]

Nairn also makes the point that this diluted, de-politicised nationalism may incite condemnation and ridicule but its tenacity cannot be underestimated:

> I have mentioned the tartan monster. Most intellectuals - and nationalists chief amongst them - have flinched away from him, dismissing the beast over-easily as mere proof of the debased condition of a nation without a State of its own. It is far more important, surely, to study this insanely sturdy sub-culture. Tartanry will not wither away, if only because it possesses the force of its own vulgarity - immunity from doubt and higher culture.[44]

Davidson is aware of the tenacious and restraining power of such associations. This is reflected in his own tendency to depict Scots characters in heightened, stereotypical terms as cultural misfits. His sense of unease concerning the absence of a mature nationalist sensibility is manifested in self-conscious humour and self-reflexive ridicule. In 'Ayrshire Jock' the confused, self-tormenting and drunken Scottish poet is used to articulate feelings of frustration, self-depreciation, and acute cultural dislocation. Similarly, in Davidson's novel *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender* (1895) it is the stock figure of a kilted, bag-pipe playing Scotsman who becomes the source of an outrageous but also, once again, self-reflexive, deprecating humour. The Scotsman, practising his bagpipes in the middle of Epping Forest, provokes an escaped orang-outang to attack him. In the ensuing scuffle the two are mistaken for the hypothetical 'Missing Link' of evolutionary theory, of which Earl Lavender is a fanatical proponent. The 'Missing Link' is described as a 'bi-formed beast',[45] partially evolved but unable to fully shed its primitive origins. The spectacle is manifested in the form of a bizarre tartan monster:

> Some compound monster it seemed - a double jinn or deeve sweetening its solitude with music [...]. The sitting half of this divided entity was dressed in chestnut-coloured skins - a strange choice considering the time of year; wore on its head a Scotch bonnet and feather, and played upon a bagpipe. Its face, surrounded by russet hair was of a horrible bluish-grey hue, and as it blew upon its chanter, its distended cheeks, protruding with the jaw far beyond the line of the brow, gave the creature such an expression of brutality and stupidity combined, that Lord Brumm [...] could not restrain a sickly smile. This extraordinary monster, oblivious of the presence of human beings, continued intent upon its music, although, except for a fixed idea of the necessity of blowing, it seemed to have but little skill on the bagpipes.[46]

Following in a long-standing tradition of Scottish writing, Davidson indulges in extremes of the bizarre and the grotesque. He combines satire and exuberant lunacy while exploiting common associations of 'Scottishness' for powerful reductive effect. The human half of this monster is, in fact, the Scotsman Rorison. Disillusioned with the prospect of an unpromising literary career he dresses himself in full Rob Roy tartan with the intention of becoming a latter-day wandering, bag-pipe playing minstrel - a comic figure embodying combined associations of cultural immaturity and displacement, as well as the stock associations of national stereotyping. It is not surprising, therefore, that he is mistaken for a primitive, mythical creature. Images of the bizarre and the grotesque are equated by Davidson as being representative of something deeply ailing within the Scottish psyche. His criticisms anticipate MacDiarmid's Drunk Man who attacks 'Heifetz in tartan, and Sir Harry Lauder!' (29-30) and who, in reference to Burns, admits that 'The whisky that aince moved your lyre's become/A laxative for a' loquacity' (63-4)[47]. Tom Hubbard has suggested that:

> There is evidence here and there in his work that he was acutely aware of the sheer grotesquery of popular Scottish culture - and of English, for that matter. Davidson, who had the dubious privilege of knowing Sir Harry Lauder, would have been much taken by Barbara and Murray Grigor's 'Scotch Myths' exhibition of tartan and kailyard excesses. His response to these objects would have been markedly ambivalent. An Edinburgh childhood gave Stevenson a sense of 'infinite attraction and horror coupled'; like so many writers before and since, Davidson appears to have felt that such a paradox was endemic to Scotland.[48]

Davidson's sensitivity toward the problems and paradoxes associated with a national sensibility are also conveyed in Rorison's earlier diatribe addressed to Earl Lavender and his literary peers in the Guild of Prosemen. Rorison's description of the Scots nation and character is ambivalent, ranging in extremes from being apologetic or defensive to perversely assertive, and placing emphasis on a Lowland Scottish nationalism:

> He [the Scot] never forgets Bannockburn; and remembers Holmidon Hill, Flodden Field, Pinkie Cleugh, and the many defeats of the Scots sustained at the hands of the English as even more marvellous proofs of the greatness of his race than the few victories they obtained over their old hereditary enemies. That a mere handful of people in a narrow strip of land, penned up between the Highlanders on the north and the English Borderers on the south, should have retained a separate existence after so many overwhelming disasters, each sufficient in itself to have brought into lasting subjection a much more extensive and more populous territory, is probably as remarkable a testimony to the fitness of the Scot as he himself thinks it is. In his conceit he regards himself as superior to all other Europeans, the representative, wherever he goes, of the only unconquered country between the Atlantic and the Ural

> mountains. He knows now that he is a northern Englishman and is proud of it; but he is prouder of the strange history which has specialised him as the hardiest and intensest member of the great family whose heritage is the seas and the continents.[49]

Rorison's description is curious and contradictory. Obstinacy and eccentricity are conveyed with pride. Acknowledgement of military failure is combined with a resilient kind of hubris. An attitude of separateness is also mixed with an affirmation of union and cohesion. The Scot regards himself as 'unconquered' and retains a 'strange history which has specialised him'. Nonetheless, he is also 'a northern Englishman' and a member of 'the great family' of a united Britain. It is difficult to distinguish how much is conscious satire on Davidson's part and how much is a reflection of genuine confusion within the Scottish psyche.

This preoccupation with Scottish-English negotiations of 'Britishness' is a concern which Davidson shares with a succession of post-Union Scottish writers. Those such as Thomson, Smollett, Boswell, Carlyle and perhaps even Scott, were integrators, attempting to construct tenable and favourable narratives of 'Britishness'. Their narratives attempt to mediate the negative effects of what Michael Hechter calls 'internal colonialism'. Hechter suggests that 'Nation-building in its earliest stages might better be thought of as empire-building'.[50] Hechter suggests that a concentric imperative produces an insistence upon the superiority of the core culture at the expense of the periphery:

> One of the defining characteristics of the colonial situation is that it must involve the interaction of at least two cultures - that of the conquering metropolitan elite (cosmopolitan culture) and of the indigenes (native culture) - and that the former is promulgated by the colonial authorities as being vastly superior [...]. One of the consequences of this denigration of indigenous culture is to undermine the native's will to resist the colonial regime. If he is defined as barbarian, perhaps he should try to reform himself by becoming more cosmopolitan. Failure to win high position within the colonial structure tends to be blamed on personal inadequacy, rather than the shortcomings of the system itself. The native's internalization of the colonialist's view of him makes the realization of social control less problematic.[51]

Scottish writers, searching for their role on the national literary stage were confronted with this pressure and had to negotiate with concepts of 'Britishness' in response.

It is in relation to such an objective that Robert Crawford asserts that:

> Throughout the eighteenth century [...] in response to...cultural and political pressures [...] Scottish literature involved a continuing examination of, and

> response to, the strains and possibilities of Britishness. Insightfully, awkwardly, entrepreneurially, Scottish writing entered its British phase.[52]

Crawford pinpoints the emergence of this trend toward integration with writers such as James Thomson who established a sense of Britishness which was amenable to the absorption of Scottish identity. Crawford claims that 'Thomson asserts a Britishness which is not (as it is in Pope) the equivalent of Englishness. It is here that Thomson is most clearly, problematically, and often covertly, Scottish'.[53] This need to modify assumptions of Britishness is similarly noted by John Lucas:

> Thomson's vision is not, strictly speaking, of England, but of a larger space [...] 1745 is yet to come, but the Act of Union requires Thomson...to pay lip service to a blest Britain and, as Pope had done, to identify liberty as its peculiar attribute. This identification will be made on future occasions, but by then it will be even more problematic. It was problematic even in 1730 [...] The process and cost of the denials implicit in Thomson's 'Anglicising' poetry are illustrative of that cultural schizophrenia which has been well discussed by David Craig and others.[54]

Lucas accuses Thomson of being a central agent in the formation of a monolithic culture for England, arguing that 'Thomson is one of the makers of this culture...a culture of conformity'.[55] Crawford places a more positive emphasis upon this process of amelioration, suggesting that the modification of 'Britishness' is inspired from residual loyalties toward Scottish national identity:

> Given the ease with which 'Britain' and 'Britannia' could come to mean simply 'England', and the temptation for the Scottish writer to submerge his national identity under a purely Anglocentric notion of Britishness, what is particularly noteworthy in Thomson's work is the way in which he several times points to Scotland not merely for the sake of adding alternative landscape descriptions [...] but in order to remind readers that Scotland too is part of Britain and should be seen as such. It is this which gives Thomson's work a distinctive British accent, produced as a result of his Scottish cultural loyalties.[56]

The purpose of referring to these evaluations of a much earlier writer than Davidson is to emphasise the long standing nature of the difficulties encountered in relation to negotiating the nature of 'British' identity, and to show the beginnings of a type of reaction to which Davidson has clear similarities. What is significant in relation to Thomson is that the process of defining 'Britishness' could lead to the same kind of imperialism and even xenophobia as Davidson was himself later to display. Lucas, again referring to Thomson, identifies the path toward an extreme British military and naval patriotism:

> Liberty is the goddess of Britannia. That much was a commonplace by the time Thomson spoke of England as the 'Land of Heroes' where liberty walked 'unconfined' [...] the view of liberty so enthusiastically endorsed by Thomson becomes inextricably entwined with a developing form of patriotism from which xenophobia is never far removed [...] 'Bold, firm and graceful are thy generous youth', Thomson writes in *Summer*, 'By hardship sinew'd, and by danger fir'd,/Scattering the nations where they go.'[57]

Later in *Summer* Thomson writes of Britain:

> ISLAND of bliss! amid the subject seas,
> That thunder round thy rocky coasts, set up,
> At once the wonder, terror, and delight,
> Of distant nations; whose remotest shore
> Can soon be shaken by thy naval arm.[58]

Thomson's vision of a united Britain blends patriotism, politics, and commercialism, in dealing with the modern economic and social context of a post-Union, expansionist Britain. This engagement becomes of increasing concern for subsequent writers.

Benedict Anderson has suggested that the advent and success of the novel provided a genre for exploring and imagining solutions to national relations, and for creating a vision of regions as part of the 'imagined community' of a nation. The novel form enabled writers such as Smollett and subsequently Scott, to define and justify British culture. Anderson has argued that the novel is a form of national imagining which provides 'the technical means for 're-presenting' the kind of imagined community that is the nation'.[59] The novel form enabled Smollett and, in corresponding non-fiction narratives, Boswell, to continue the attempt to ascertain a definition of Britishness which would diminish the Anglo-centric prejudice which they expose and satirise in their narratives.

Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* provides a detailed analysis of both writers' attempts to do this. His analysis is useful in identifying and describing recurrent traits in the work of Scottish writers from the Union down to Davidson. In novels such as *Humphrey Clinker* (1771) and *Roderick Random* (1748) prejudice is explored and then undermined by the 'progressive' development of the narrative toward greater insight and understanding. Smollett's narratives reveal the extent to which ignorance and prejudice govern attitudes. Crawford suggests that the implicit emphasis behind his portrayal of prejudice is the need for re-education and the movement toward a more comprehensive and tolerant definition of 'Britishness'. It remains, nevertheless, like Thomson, a pro-Unionist and primarily Anglo-centric definition. The respective endings of *Roderick*

Random (1748) and *Humphrey Clinker* may redefine 'Britishness' so that it becomes more inclusive, but it also, consequently, makes 'Britishness' more strongly affirmed. Though defensive of regional identity these novels inevitably subordinate what ultimately becomes a peripheral or secondary identity to the cultural absorption that is 'Britishness'.

Comparing Smollett's fictional paradigm of Britain with the national negotiations reflected in the writing of James Boswell, Robert Crawford writes:

> Demanding comparison with both *Humphrey Clinker* and *Waverley*, Boswell's arranging and recording of Johnson's journey juxtaposes the quintessential John Bull figure not only with the alluring simplicities of the Gaelic-speaking Hebrides, but also with the manners and people of the aspiring commercial Scottish Lowlands of the Enlightenment. Extremes of Britain meet [...] Boswell maintains an emphasis on Johnson's otherness [...] Boswell's 'us' subtly appropriates Johnson [...] it is constantly splitting into the 'I' of the Scottish observer and the 'he' of the observed Englishman.[60]

Boswell's indeterminate status contrasts sharply with the assured cultural imperialism displayed by Johnson. Boswell's descriptions of Johnson reflect the latter's stolid and emphatic sense of identity, 'He was indeed, if I may be allowed the phrase, at bottom much of a John Bull; much of a blunt 'true born Englishman.'' In contrast Boswell describes himself in terms which reflect his displaced status, 'I am, I flatter myself, completely a citizen of the world. In my travels [...] I never felt myself from home'.[61] His 'citizen of the world' assertion becomes a strategy for the Scottish writer to redefine his displacement in positive terms. Boswell's narratives, like those of Smollett, aim to diminish prejudice and re-define Britishness. Boswell, in reference to Johnson, states triumphantly, 'To Scotland however he ventured; and he returned from it in great humour, with his prejudices much lessened'.[62]

Negotiation with ideas of post-Union Britain is extended in the nineteenth century by Sir Walter Scott, who employs the novel form to construct a union of equals and to create a new mythology of Scotland. Benedict Anderson has suggested that in the novel form 'we see the 'national imagination' at work in the movement of a solitary hero through a sociological landscape of a fixity that fuses the world inside the novel with the world outside.'[63] Scott's narratives continue the attempt to reconcile difference and produce a vision of a now commercially prosperous and politically mature, cohesive Britain. In *Rob Roy*, Francis Osbaldistone undertakes a journey which takes him from London to Northumberland and then from Glasgow to the Highlands. It is a journey of contrasts and comparisons, making juxtapositions between the modern commercial world and a violent

but declining feudal society; between political union and compelling but misguided romantic idealism; and between maturity and youthful naiveté.

Francis Osbaldistone and Edward Waverley are the outsiders whose respective journeys overcome cultural tensions and ultimately trace a path of reconciliation and unity for modern Britain. Scott's narratives affirm the necessity of a cohesive, prosperous society, akin to Thomson's celebratory praise of Britannia, but with the added emphasis of economic and social prosperity resting upon a union of two equal nations. His bored young heroes tire of the practical, commercial world which they inhabit and of the common-sense ethos imposed by parental authority. Their lack of experience feeds the propensity toward idealism and fantasy. In their rebellion they undergo a learning process which ultimately approves the prosperous post-Union world which they have inhabited from the first.

Scott's narratives remain ambivalent. His apparent indulgence in the romantic archetypes of Scottish history are combined with ironic and reductive realism. The fictional paradigm that Scott constructs reveals tensions between assertion and reduction that anticipate Davidson's own irony and dualism. The formula he uses, and his repeated attraction to it, point to a deep-seated need to define, engage with, and perpetually negotiate with a vision of British identity. The restlessness of that repetition and negotiation suggests a lack of resolution and enduring dissatisfaction despite the logic of Union.

The purpose of outlining this line of anxiety and negotiation extending from the Anglo-Scots of the eighteenth century to Scott in the nineteenth century is to highlight a tradition of difficulty in relation to the construction of a British identity and the writer's function within that context. Davidson's ambivalence toward Scottish literature, and his progressive disillusionment and consequent sense of displacement, led him into the same tradition and into similar and extended patterns of negotiation. Davidson's novel *Baptist Lake* (1894) deals with Scottish characters living in London and engages with similar comparative strategies to those encountered in the narratives of Smollett, Boswell and Scott. The Inglis family are presented as exiles from Glasgow. John Inglis and his son Islay dislike both the severity of Scots Calvinism and the censure and snobbery of provincialism. Yet they find that while London offers a release from inherited cultural restraints, it replaces them with new dangers and fraudulent ideals. Tom Hubbard suggests that in the character of John Inglis we find someone who 'escaped from Scots provincialism only to find that there was no satisfactory alternative in London cosmopolitanism'.[64]

The first meeting of the novel's main characters, Baptist Lake and Islay Inglis, is constructed around the exposition of preconceived notions concerning national character:

> 'London is the city of adventure, and of adventurers. But, tell me what is your name?' 'What's yours?' said the boy, quickly. 'You *are* Scotch, then. I thought so from your accent. You have almost mastered it though; and I hope you have mastered 'shall' and 'will'. The interrogative reply I suppose no Scotchman ever mastered. My name is Baptist Lake'. 'And you are English; I can tell by your impudence - your conceit - your presumption', said the boy hotly. 'My dear - But you must tell me your name. We shall never talk pleasantly until you tell me your name. What is your name, please?' 'Islay Inglis', said the boy sullenly. 'Islay Inglis. I don't quite like the sound; [...]. But, my dear Islay, you are an Englishman. 'Inglis' is just English. Your ancestor was an Englishman who settled in Scotland.' '[...]That 'Inglis' is 'English' is a fact that interests me for the first time. You must be a very remarkable person, Islay, combining in yourself the most remarkable qualities of two great races.' 'There is no distinction,' said Islay Inglis; 'the Scotch are just northern English, and the best of the breed.' 'Charming,' said Baptist, 'charming'. (BL, 65-6)

There is a defensiveness as well as raillery in such conversations. Islay, like Rorison, combines national pride with a simultaneous negation of that national identity. Islay states that there is 'no distinction' between Scots and English identity, but at the same time adds that, what he defines as the 'northern English' remain 'the best of the breed'. Cultural absorption is, in this way, both accepted and yet qualified in defensive terms. This ambivalence is emphasised by Davidson's emphasis on Scots who are English and English who are Scots.

The same tensions are depicted in another meeting of characters. Islay Inglis and the tobacconist, Paul Salerne, this time recounted by Islay himself:

> 'You'll be from the north?' 'Did you recognise my accent?' I asked. 'No,' he said; 'I knew ye for a Scotchman. I can tell them at a glance, high and low of them. There's something about a Scotchman, or a Scotch laddie, if he's a lad at all, ye can never mistake. I canna' give it a name.' 'Why, you're Scotch yourself!' I said. 'In a way,' he replied. 'I lived in it for a matter of fifteen years. But I'm a Belminster man; all the Salernes come from Belminster.' (BL, 81)

Once again Islay is made to feel aware of his 'difference' or 'otherness', which is treated in vague but prevailing terms. This 'difference' extends beyond accent, indeed Salerne speaks with a Scots accent himself, but it remains unmistakable, according to the tobacconist. As a result Islay is not permitted to forget his status as an outsider. He is part of cosmopolitan London, but London itself remains defined in primarily Anglo-centric terms. With this in

mind it is difficult to perceive Davidson's view as expressed through Baptist Lake's later exaltation of London with anything but scepticism:

> 'Have you ever thought of London, Islay? tried to conceive it, to define it, to put it into an epigram [...]. The luxury and the squalor that crowd at opposite poles, but are yet everywhere intermixed, cannot be crushed into an epigram. London, an epitome of the three kingdoms, with more Scotch people than Edinburgh, more Irish than Dublin; an epitome of the world'. (BL, 86)

Davidson reveals the flux regarding concepts of Scottish and British identity and ridicules rigid concepts. He parodies the separateness of countries and suggests the interwoven reality behind absolute associations. Baptist Lake describes an ideal kind of diversity in unity. This vision is undermined by the prejudicial perspectives that are exposed within the narrative. Baptist's cosmopolitan sensibility still maintains a frame of reference that is pointedly Anglo-centric when he upbraids Islay for his inability to recount a narrative concisely:

> 'You mustn't be so garrulous in your narratives. It is the fault of the very young and the very old, and a special fault of Scotch people, I think. They are more reticent than the English, and yet they talk more - as a result of their reticence. They go into details, endeavouring always to escape the main point, which in the end they jump, as you did just now'. (BL, 85)

Such attitudes breed a barbed defensiveness in return. Islay's father enjoys the company of Baptist Lake because he is

> pleased to find a man, and an Englishman too, who could catch his humour at once: most Englishmen, in Mr Inglis's opinion, know that the suggestion of a surgical operation for the introduction of a joke was made first of all by a Scotchman in the interests of a Southron; and that there is reciprocity in the international denial of the power to appreciate humour. (BL, 103)

The ideal of a cosmopolitan London appeals to Davidson, as it does to John and Islay Inglis. Yet this ideal is undermined by the repeated exposition of prejudice and illusion. Both London and Scotland continue to offer alternative forms of prejudice. Davidson uses characters to exemplify wider ideological attitudes, and to compare and contrast these attitudes within different dialogues. Islay's father celebrates London for the freedom it offers in contrast to a Scots, Calvinist sensibility:

> Baptist changed the subject. 'Then you really like London?' he said. 'Like it! I should think so - Saturdays and Sundays. Sunday in London is a special joy to a Scotchman, you know. The gay crowds, the music in the park, and the open public-houses. I have been in Paris and Brussels, and I can understand

> that to a Londoner who knows the Continental Sunday, a London Sunday is no treat; but to me, with the gloomy Glasgow Sunday clogging my blood, it is like a plunge into the ocean, and all the more wonderful because it is not foreign [...] Scotch am I, and with Scotch ways in my blood, and yet I am not ashamed of having forsaken the Broomielaw. The crowds and the music in the park please me of a Sunday. I have no desire to enter a Presbyterian church; a look at the dome of St. Paul's is all I need.' (BL, 133-4)

John Inglis finds London a place of liberation from the behavioural codes and restraints imposed by Scots Calvinism. London is presented as a place of subversion and corruption and he relishes its lack of restraint:

> 'I sometimes wish I had been one of the damned, like Islay there. There's hope for you, Islay; you're one of the damned. You mean to insist on having adventures, don't you?' 'I do, said Islay. 'I should think there are worse things than being damned.' 'Bravo boy!' said his father. 'I should think there are. And there's first of all being saved. That's much worse...As God's in his heaven I would sooner burn in fire for all eternity than be afraid to whistle on Sundays, and have to sit down to a meal of slops in the afternoon after listening to two sermons from a man I could double up with half a word if he would only come out of his pulpit.' (BL, 103-4)

His views are contrasted with the traditional, orthodox views of Salerne's Scottish housekeeper, Mrs Macalister, who fears for the souls of London's inhabitants:

> 'Don't you like Sunday in London, then?' asked Islay, who shared his father's sympathy with the English Sabbath-breakers. 'Me like it! It's jist awfu',' said Mrs Macalister. 'Soadum an' Gamorrey! Soadum an' Gamorrey! I've been here the feck o' a year; but I'll ne'er agree wi't. There's a maist awfu' jidgment comin'.' (BL, 155)

Mrs Macalister genuinely fears that London may be destroyed by hell fire and remains in the city only out of loyalty to Salerne's household. As a result she lives in fear each Sunday:

> 'I tell ye, the first Sunday I was here I hid mysel' under the blankets half the day, like my auntie when the thun'er cam'. I'll ha'e nae peace o'mind noo' till twal' o'clock strikes an' it's the morn.' (BL, 157)

Mrs Macalister's background, beliefs and attitude are contrasted with those of Florrie, the barmaid employed by Mrs Tiplady. Their spirited discourse is strongly reminiscent of a traditional flyting. Davidson is able to capture the clashing tones of Cockney and Scots accents, as well as the attitudes and assumptions that lie behind the two women's antipathy toward each other:

> 'Ow bootiful!' exclaimed Florrie. 'You talk like a duchess and a harch-bishop all in one, you do'. 'If some people,' retorted Mrs Macalister, 'would think maur of their own speaking and less of others', they might learun in caurse of tyme that aitch belongs to some words and not to others.' [...] 'Haitches!' exclaimed Florrie, still red with anger. 'I'll make you a present of all the haitches I drop.' 'Thank you', said Mrs Macalister; 'but they wouldn't buy all those you misplyce'. 'Ere, w'en yer goin' to open school?' asked Florrie [...] 'Speakin' with the use of haitches an' the globes taught 'ere by the first class Scotch school-marm, sixpence a' hour, no extries for spankin'. Ho! I say, you should go on the slangs, you should - the champion female nuffer as never dropped a haitch. You'd look lovely in them dried cork-screws, a kissin' of yer 'and, an' kickin' up yer 'eels in short flounces an' tartan tights.' [...]. Mrs Macalister took no notice of the invitation. 'Tartan tights,' she muttered; 'tartan tights.' then suddenly stretching out her hand with a quivering forefinger extended, she shook it at Florrie, and discharged a volley of Scotch in a frenzied tone, eyes glowering, body shaking, her whole being bent on the perdition of her opponent. (BL, 163-5)

What follows is a rattling diatribe in Scots from Mrs Macalister. Davidson uses accent to convey character and identity. Like Islay, Mrs Macalister feels that her identity has been challenged and her spirited reply is charged with defensive pride:

> 'When that ill-scrapit tongue o'yours is danglin' oot o' the cracklin' o' yer rizzert mou' like a coalie dug's, an' you an' Mrs. Tippleddy's sittin' on yer hunkers, groanin' for a drap watter, an' auld Niekie Ben pullin' awa' at the brimstane-tap, wi' nae 'mild or bitter' aboot it, but jist 'here, doon wi't,' pint efter pint, scaudin' het, it'll come intae yer mind when ye're se'rt wi' a spaecial drap that rives yer boesum an' gars yer 'een reel like a sicht o' green cheese, 'This is for lauchin' at a daecent Scotch bodie that only keepit a tabaccy-shop an' me a barmaid!' Tartan tichts! Ye'll hae tartan tichts wi' a vengeance'. (BL, 165)

Davidson's use of language shares similarities with Galt and Smollett and is effective in emphasising difference. The London that Davidson depicts in *Baptist Lake* has the panoramic diversity which Baptist himself exalts but, significantly, it remains neither tolerant nor cohesive. London and Baptist Lake offer an image of sophistication which is both attractive but also prejudicial and dangerous. Baptist's promises of adventure are dangerous. His contrived introduction of John Inglis to the widow Mrs Meldrum threatens to shatter the Inglis family and Mrs Inglis soon wishes that she were back in the comparative moral safety of Sauchiehall Street. Islay and Salerne also seek adventure and are implicated in smuggling as a result. The publican, Mrs Tiplady, is siphoning off portions of Baptist's allowance from his father. She also attempts to ruin her prospective daughter-in-law:

> Mrs Tiplady's passionate attachment to Salerne was equalled in intensity by her hatred of his daughter [...]. A vision of Rose at night on a London pavement,

> rouged and powdered, loitering about a lamp-post in the rain, solaced her vicious hate. (BL, 185-6)

Baptist is also exposed as a fraud who rehearses his witticisms in advance. London is not, therefore, an Arcadia. It is a place of deceit and prejudice. It is Davidson's Scots characters who ultimately expose the conceit of their southern peers. John Inglis saves his marriage and exposes the insincerity of Baptist's dinner-table wit. Baptist is defeated and irritated by Inglis's unexpected perspicacity:

> His humour was not much improved by the sardonic gleam in Inglis's eyes as they parted. This Scotchman, whom he had wanted to make a butt of, had seen him silenced; and had also, although Baptist's conceit did not dream of that, found him out a mere farceur, very pleasant, but on a level with a hired entertainer, committing his pieces and his quotations to memory, and making one programme last throughout the week. (BL, 285-6)

Ironically, it is Baptist who turns out to be dispossessed, finding that he is in fact the son of a French lieutenant and not of Sir Henry Lake. In contrast the Inglis's remain a united family, no longer the naive targets of cultural criticisms of supposed English gentlemen like Baptist.

Davidson's Scottish characters are the victims of prejudice. They escape inherited Scottish prejudices only to encounter new, English versions, forcing them to remain outsiders within a British context. They take pride in their own alienation by affirming their awareness of difference. Davidson increasingly finds a sense of personal identity, not in the complexity and minutia of social intercourse, with its retention of prejudice, assumption and stereotype, but in a wider ideology of assertive strength. It is a compromise found in the tension between the heroic and lonely individual and the heroic nation, in which power and initiative define cohesion in terms of national supremacy.

War, Empire and the Nature of the Heroic Nation

Davidson's personal experience of isolation and displacement led him to value the strength of the isolated individual set against an indifferent, philistine world. He constructed a belief in self-assertion and fortitude which became the underlying ethos behind his philosophical materialism. In his novel *Baptist Lake* he provides a description of the central character which juxtaposes the exceptional individual with the indistinguishable majority:

> Like an oblong whirlpool the market streamed and spun in its narrow strait [...]'Ah!' he thought [...]'it is like quicksilver in a narrow porcelain trough; every atom moving, shuddering, and yet the whole at rest.' Slowly he moved down from the front of the inn into the crowd. Perfectly dressed, with his gold-headed cane and graceful walk, he was much looked at. His height...and the impressive style of the man, overawed those among the younger generation [...]. Way was made for him [...] at least one sweet-stuff stall was upset by the sudden heaving back of a wave of the crowd to let him pass. The tall man enjoyed himself heartily. He seemed to be but little a connoisseur in admiration; it was all exhilarating: beer that frothed in pewter pots, or champagne quivering in glasses like film, were equally agreeable, one would have said, to his thirst for admiration, his desire to be liked, to be adored. (BL, 21-2)

The mundane and the exceptional are contrasted here. Nonetheless, Baptist has only the facade of the exceptional man. He requires recognition and needs 'to be liked, to be adored'.

Unlike Geddes and Carlyle or later writers, such as MacDiarmid and Edwin Muir, Davidson is less concerned with society than with the individual within society. Society is the construct with which the individual must negotiate, but greatness, either on a personal or national level, lies with the exceptional individual as it does with the exceptional nation. This kind of isolationism is born out of displacement. Like Muir and MacDiarmid he is deeply preoccupied with the negotiations between the personal and the cosmic significance of man in a godless universe, and with the correlation between national and international, the particular and the universal. Edwin Muir recognised its attraction and acknowledged its cathartic influence:

> I, a poor clerk in a beer-bottling factory, adopted the creed of aristocracy, and, happy until now to be an Orkney man somewhat lost in Glasgow, I began to regard myself as a 'good European' [...]. I had no ability and no wish to criticize Nietzsche's ideas, since they gave me exactly what I wanted: a last desperate foothold on my dying dream of the future. My heart swelled when I read, 'Become what thou art, and 'Man is something that must be surpassed,' and 'what does not kill me strengthens me'.[65]

The same defensive, resilient aspects of Nietzschean philosophy appealed to Davidson. There is a broadening out from the undistinguished individual, 'a poor clerk', within a remote context, to the strong man engaging with a wider framework. What differentiates Muir from Davidson however is the ability of the former to recognise the way in which this engagement served a deep-seated emotional need:

> Actually, although I did not know it, my Nietzscheanism was what psychologists call a 'compensation'. I could not face my life as it was, and so I took refuge in the fantasy of the superman.[66]

It is the enduring nature of Davidson's own displacement that complicates and governs his views of society and national identity. His views are both an attempt to deal with the problem of identity and displacement, and to ascertain man's function within a godless universe, purged of moral restraint and divine retribution. The same defensive values of assertive independence, struggle, and heroism which he used to retrieve a sense of self and purpose are, in turn, employed to construct a view of nationhood.

The patriarchal strength that he encountered in the father-figures of ministers and schoolmasters both repelled and attracted him. He rejected the imperative to conform, but sought to retain a sense of the heroic and affirmative. He also sought a framework, or ideological stability, to replace the loss of cultural identity through his dissociative response to his native background. In his play *Bruce* the Scottish king is a heroic, assertive and attractive figure. Yet such an image of national vigour is not sustained, rather, it is increasingly replaced by figures of delusion, such as Baliol and Baptist Lake, or by figures of humour and derision, such as Ayrshire Jock, Rorison or Mrs Macalister. This inability to maintain a heroic ideal alienated Davidson from engaging further with the possibility of a Scottish nationhood.

In the course of his development Davidson moves from attempting to diagnose the problematic nature of Scottish culture, through the depiction of paradox, displacement and delusion (as illustrated in Section I of this chapter) toward an increasing engagement with the nature of a specifically 'British' identity. This engagement is ostensibly Anglo-centric, but it will be argued here that it becomes increasingly theoretical in nature, culminating in an ideological abstraction of the values of self-determination and the assertive will. Failing to find these values within a Scottish context, Davidson adopts a surrogate context. He takes the concept of the isolated hero and extends it to the nature of the heroic nation. Struggle and self-affirmation then become associated with imperialism and Anglo-British supremacy. J.B. Townsend comments that England's destiny 'was simply an extension of that of the superior individual who knows and fulfills himself'.[67] Townsend also adds that 'it is not the thought of empire or its fruits that appeal to Davidson so much as the empire builder, the individual who by taking his destiny into his own hands determines that of his myriad inferiors'.[68] British nationhood thus becomes an extension of the defensive heroism he uses to combat his own experience of isolation and displacement.

His recourse to detachment and national denial are, once again, far from atypical. The historian William Ferguson notes that Carlyle and David Livingstone are similarly representative of a trend towards cultural dissociation through the appropriation of an Anglo-centric frame of reference:

> Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) [...] while retaining a strong personal affection for Scotland, in his works identified himself with England and things English. The same attitude can be discerned in that quintessential Scot, David Livingstone (1813-72), for whom Britain was an unknown concept: it was to create Christian English colonies that he thrust into the Dark Continent. These two great men, like many of their lesser countrymen, suffered from an element of cultural schizophrenia.[69]

Writing in a similar vein Alan MacGillivray also points to a repeated propensity, in the nineteenth-century, toward cultural schizophrenia resulting from the rejection of endemic influences and the consequent amelioration of an alternative national sensibility that appears, in contrast, to offer greater stability, cohesion and authority:

> An attitude born of more than a hundred years of Union; the idea that, although you may have been born in Scotland and have Scots speech and feelings, when you have put on an English uniform or have undertaken English imperial business, you have in fact become an Englishman...the assimilation is complete, and you may commit the ultimate treason of making stereotypical gibes at your own countrymen.[70]

In relating this trend MacGillivray identifies what he describes as:

> An attitude which is probably central to the understanding of Scotland's 'literature of Empire', the desire to identify with the imperial English drive - the Scotsman hugging the Englishman, not to draw out the life but to add to it and to be assimilated into it.[71]

Davidson's eventual xenophobia was neither primarily social nor political. His imperial British patriotism is not jingoism but rather an antidote to displacement and is of a primarily philosophical nature. His imperial assertions became increasingly part of his philosophical materialism, an apprehension of man and nature that freed him from the conceptual restraints of religion, propriety and cultural fragmentation. The heroic nation overcomes regional diversity by absorption – subordinating peripheral differences to the dominant identity of the core culture. His view of national strength is amoral; accepting harshness, unfairness and struggle as an inherent part of life. The heroic nation shares the tenacity of the heroic individual.

In attempting to engage with the nature of national identity Davidson found it increasingly difficult to reconcile tensions between the marginalised nation or individual and the dominant culture. The negative contrarities engendered by assumption and association, popular stereotype and tradition, denied the legitimacy of an empowering concept of Scottish national identity. Within the social frame of reference Davidson's sympathy remained with the embittered outsider who exists within a paradox: both craving and disparaging the world's good opinion. His materialism necessitated an acceptance and understanding of man's material nature and circumstances within an amoral universe. Man is matter become self-conscious. It is this self-awareness that engenders the supremacy of an instinctive, assertive self-will. Similarly, and by extension, Scottish national identity, problematic as it is at a regional and particular level, becomes disengaged from that context and reappropriated into a wider and increasingly abstract conception of the heroic nation which displays the same assertive will-to-power.

In Davidson's poetry of empire and war open contradictions and perspectives are dramatised and explored. Suffering and inequality are registered as an intrinsic component of life and development. Davidson is not dismissive of these qualities; but, while consistently identifying with the pain of individual experience, that pain is subordinated to the endurance and determination of the will. It is the capacity of the heroic individual, and the heroic nation alike, to subordinate feeling to the fortitude and governing cohesion of the assertive will. In defining both self and nation in these terms, Davidson also posits literature and the function of the writer within the same frame of reference. The writer becomes the spokesperson for a new era in the progress of the material world. He is the literary prophet-philosopher who constructs and articulates a vision for his society. Davidson wrote that the poet is 'always great, always an imperial person [...] his will is always to live, his will is always set on power, his empire remains'. He also defines self-realization as the 'imperial passion to be'.[72] Davidson equates what he believes to be the supremacy of English blank verse with the superiority of the English nation:

> Angle, Saxon, Jute, Dane, Norseman, and the Norman wrestling together for mastery, and producing in the struggle the blended breed of men we know: so tried and welded, so tempered and damascened, this English race, having thrown off the fetters of a worn-out creed, having obtained the kingdom of the sea and begun to lay hands, as by right, on the new world, burst out into blank verse without premeditation, and the earth thrilled to its centre with delight that Matter had found a voice at last.[73]

The heroic individual is a creation that compensates for the sense of inferiority imposed by over-simplified stereotypes and the experience of cultural dislocation and displacement.

Similarly, the heroic nation is a concept born out of a desire to overcome the problematic post-Union experience of national fragmentation and cultural marginalisation. In essence it can be seen as an extreme overcompensation for a framework of negative inherited circumstances.

What Davidson finds within an Ango-British context, and fails to find within a Scottish one, is a sense of engagement with the recurrent themes that dominate his thought. Davidson regarded Scotland as backward looking and negatively 'parochial', the land 'where Time could take his ease/And Change hold holiday'.[74] For Davidson, Scotland represented clichéd nostalgia, retrospection and the minutia of life - he shares the dark, sardonic vision of George Douglas Brown and John MacDougall Hay of a moribund, claustrophobic society. What Davidson sought was an alternative modern vision on the grand scale. He wished to escape the personal and the particular, examining human affairs in reference to a wider cosmic vision. In *The Last Ballad and Other Poems* (1899); *The Testament of an Empire Builder* (1902); and *The Testament of a Prime Minister* (1904) he engages with these issues, seen in his themes of struggle and power; pain and endurance; absolutes of emotion and human experience. The human predicament is dealt with in reference to an international and universal context; political issues such as imperial expansion and war provide a context in which to examine essential elements of human behaviour.

Dealing with political and contemporary issues afforded Davidson an opportunity to extend his standing as a modern writer beyond a regional level. Nonetheless, in negotiating with the ethos of Anglo-British supremacy Davidson's writing betrays signs of enduring ambivalence. He has recourse to dualism and opposition, and to multiplicity of voice and perspective, as is apparent in his attempts to deal with identity on a personal basis. In this respect there is evidence to suggest that Davidson remains, in a complex and covert way, unreconciled to the views which he consciously contrived to adopt in an effort to secure a defined, affirmative sensibility. Davidson's materialist universe is a bleak one built upon strength and endurance. Ultimately he achieves the triumph of disillusioned thought over feeling, but that feeling creates a restless sub-text within his writing.

Andrew Turnbull has suggested that Davidson's writing exposes 'a mind which accepts the validity of all experience'.[75] Davidson himself, in the preface to *The Testament of a Vivisector*, expressed a desire to address 'those who are willing to place all ideas in the crucible',[76] underpinning his need to negate all inherited preconceptions and begin again.

He accepted the coexistence of good and evil, and of the entirety of opposition and contradiction within human and universal experience as part of his vision of a godless and amoral universe. His thinking, estranged from inherited beliefs and traditions, remained in consequence striving and eclectic.

Davidson's war poetry reveals a restlessness and multiplicity of perspective which paradoxically co-exists with his ultimate confirmation of popular imperialist sentiment. The 'voices' and views articulated in these instances reveal considerable inconsistency and overt dramatisation. In the poem 'Coming' (1899), jingoistic sentiment is expressed by a poetic voice which affirms England's supremacy and the corresponding dependency of other nations upon her affirmative action:

> Shall Europe cry 'God Speed!'
> To some less famous land?
> Nay; who shall take the lead,
> If England holds her hand? (9-12)[77]

In this poem the suffering of war is ignored, the only 'Anguished voices' are those that call for England's aid. The poem's elevated rhetoric, consisting of stock assertions such as 'The sword is in our hand;/Our step is on the sea' (21-22), creates an ambivalence and can be read either as the projection of the prevalent jingoistic perspective or as a genuine celebration of England's supremacy.

The same can be said of the poem 'Song for the Twenty-Fourth of May' (1909). Here the patriotic voice is a plural one, asserting 'We sing the English of it thus...We bid the world beware'.[78] The style and tone are that of a song, evoking the bombastic rhetoric of music-hall enthusiasm. Each verse, in keeping with the extrovert spirit of the stage, ends with a rallying chorus:

> Our boasted Ocean Empire, sirs, we boast
> of it again,
> Our Monarch, and our Rulers, and our
> Women, and our Men! (I)

Each verse ends with the same bravado and bluster, concluding with an unashamed, assertive self-praise, 'Our boasted Ocean Sovereignty, again and yet again!' (III). The emphasis upon such emphatic self-admiration can be read either as an extreme projection of jingoism, or as a genuine evocation of political Darwinism. Either way the tone is that

of the music-hall and the speaker is conscious of the overt show of bravado being made, so that a similar use of characterisation is employed as that of the characters presented in *In A Music-Hall.*

The poem's lack of realism contrasts sharply with 'Battle', the poem which immediately follows 'Coming' in Davidson's 1899 edition. 'Battle' highlights the malaise of war: 'The web your speeches spun/Tears and blood shall streak' (4-5).[79] The war of words gives way to the disarray of physical combat:

> When the red-lipped cannon speak,
> The war of words is done,
> The slaughter has begun. (17-19)

'Coming' and 'Battle' provide opposing perspectives contrasting the former's patriotic, idealistic view of war with the latter's disillusioned realism concerning the true nature of conflict. The first evokes a glamour and dynamism which the second negates with a wry, critical appeal to realism. Such contradictions reveal instability within Davidson's evaluations of British identity and purpose. As with his exposition of personal identity Davidson's war poetry, when examined collectively, suggests that no perspective is absolute.

In 'The Hymn to Abdul Hamid' the poetic voice and perspective is that of the enemy, who, mirroring the patriotic jingoism of the British, believes that he also acts in terms of the manifest destiny of his country and according to the will of his God:

> 'Abdul the Bless'd! You must
> Pursue the Prophet's path!
> Up! slake the eager lust
> Of God's avenging wrath! (5-8)[80]

The speaker vilifies the Christian God and praises what he views as the true Muslim deity who acts on behalf of Islam, 'The Dog has lost his bone -/The Christian Dog! Even so!/Allah is God alone!'.[81] The poem underpins Davidson's continuing engagement with relativity and reveals a will-to-power ethos, leaving creeds to fight it out as the way of the materialist world.

The use of voice and persona undermining the absence of cohesion in Davidson's work recurs in 'War Song'. Here the poetic voice is that of the ordinary, disillusioned soldier who offers a view of evolutionary supremacy in embittered terms:

IN anguish we uplift
A new unhallowed song:
The race is to the swift;
The battle to the strong. (1-4)[82]

The soldier is reminiscent of the clerk in 'Thirty Bob a Week' who falls face forward fighting; both possess the same 'heroic' fatalism:

Of old it was ordained
That we, in packs like curs,
Some thirty million trained
And licensed murderers. (5-8)

In the mid-portion of the poem the speaker quotes the dominant ideology of the rulers who justify the necessity of war by arguing that 'relentless strife/Remains...the holiest law of life' (18-20) and that 'By war's great sacrifice/the world redeems itself' (23-24). The elevated rhetoric used, expressing the art, nobility and glory of war create a sharp internal contrast with the soldier's own view of a degenerate mankind who become paradoxically debased through the supremacy of military strength: 'We spell-bound armies then,/Huge brutes in dumb distress,/Machines compact of men...' (45-48). A reductive contrast is also made between the serenity of nature and the disordered state of humanity:

In many a mountain-pass,
Or meadow green and fresh,
Mass shall encounter mass
Of shuddering human flesh. (58-61)

Unlike the dominant ideological views expressed in 'Coming' and 'The Hymn to Abdul Hamid', here there is no divine sanction or ennobling destiny, rather, 'war is not of God' (70), it is a brutal power struggle; 'Our new unhallowed song:/The race is to the swift,/The battle to the strong' (72-74).

'War-Song' articulates the embittered, war-weary perspective of the common soldier. In contrast, 'A Ballad of a Coward' (1899) traces, from a third-person viewpoint, the equivocation of a deserter. The poem is set within a medieval context, contrasting expectations of knight-errantry and valour with the fear and hesitancy of one individual. The coward makes excuses to avoid fighting. He dismisses the 'artificial fight' (34) of the tournament and shuns battle seeking solace in the care of his wife. Yet war is an

unremitting pressure. His wife's comfort only shames him, 'Not long his vanity withstood/Her gentleness' (21-2). Although in the face of battle he again makes an excuse of his family; 'My wife! my son! For their dear sakes,'/He thought, 'I save my self by flight ' (53-4) - war still outmanouevres him. Returning home he finds that the carnage of war has preceeded him: 'Alas the foe/Had been before with sword and fire!/His loved ones in their blood lay low:/their dwelling was their funeral pyre' (57-60).

Still the coward persists in inward debate, declining the prospect of suicide by arguing that 'And should I take my life, the deed/Would disarray the universe' (91-2). Seeking a haven in nature he becomes the displaced wanderer hoping to obscure himself in nature:

> He wandered vaguely for a while;
> Then thought at last to hide his shame
> And self-contempt far in an isle
> Among the outer deeps. (97-100)

Yet even here the noise and turbulence of war reaches him:

> but came
> Even there, upon a seaboard dim,
> Where like the slowly ebbing tide
> That weltered on the ocean's rim
> With sanguine hues of sunset dyed,
> The war still lingered. (100-106)

The unrelenting face of war oppresses his cowardice and he reconciles himself to an heroic fate, casting himself into the midst of the conflict and achieving a valorous death. The poem is an apparent celebration of the coward-turned-hero, but it is nonetheless a pressured transition indicating that even the coward is part of the 'unhallowed' plan.

Other poems create ambivalence by presenting a range of voices. Both 'St. Georges Day' (1896) and 'The Twenty-Fourth of May' (1906) are characterised by multiple, discursive voices. The debate in each case concerns the legitimacy of empire. In 'The Twenty-Fourth of May' Brian provides the perspective of the sceptic who opens the poem in a despondent tone questioning 'Must this be Empire-Day?' (1) and is admonished by the patriotic voice of Basil, 'Shame, traitor, shame! Amend/So treasonous a sigh' (5-6). Brian complains that, 'I hate the name, the thing! [...] So stiff is empire's price,/The penalty of power' (10; 20-21). Despite the objections of Ninian, Lionel and Basil he explains that:

Imperial thoughts for me
Decolour and unscent
The violet and the rose;
For empire is the womb
Of teeming wars and woes,
The enemy of chance
That keeps the world in hope,
And the murderer and the tomb
Of art and all romance. (55-63)

Basil contradicts this view by emphasising the nobility of England's role in preserving liberty:

But England's Ocean-state
Enthroned upon the sea,
The armed and equal mate
Of power and liberty,
Has this for doom and fate -
To set the people free. (86-91)

Vivian also uses England's patriarchal role as a source of justification; 'Wherever England comes/The lowliest has his chance' (100-1); and Lionel stresses the nobility of England's function; 'Our English story sums/The meaning of Romance' (102-3). The poem ends with a positive chorus from Ninian, Vivian, Lionel and Basil in turn, but Brian's voice does not enter the discourse again and his silence leaves an air of equivocation.

In 'St. George's Day' Basil is, once again, the voice of the patriot while Menzies is that of the sceptic. The poem opens with a sharp contrast between pastoral and urban imagery and correspondingly between idealism and realism:

Herbert
I hear the lark and linnet sing;
I hear the white-throat's alto ring.

Menzies
I hear the idle workmen sigh;
I hear the hungry children cry. (1-4)

The jarring of perspectives continues as Basil admonishes Menzies for his lack of patriotic spirit:

Basil
This is St. George's Day.

Menzies
St. George? A wretched thief I vow.
Herbert
Nay, Menzies, you should rather say,
St. George for Merry England, now!

Sandy
That surely is a phantom cry,
Hollow and vain for many years. (77-83)

The respective Scots and English derivations of the speakers' names are significant for the viewpoint they each expound. Basil urges Menzies to look beyond immediate social problems to England's 'splendid past' (90), or with optimism toward the future. Basil asserts, 'I want to sing/Of England and of Englishmen/Who made our country what it is' (97-99), he claims. The debate then focuses upon the nature of Englishness as Menzies argues that 'There is no England now, I fear' (102). His reasoning being that the purity of the English race has been diluted over generations:

Menzies
Cockney and Celt and Scot are here,
And Democrats and 'ans' and 'ists'
In clubs and cliques and divers lists;
But now we have no Englishmen. (104-107)

Basil emphatically denies this, 'By bog and mount and fen,/No Saxon, Norman, Scot or Celt/I find, but only Englishmen' (109-111). He then undermines his own assertion by adding the qualification that, in any case, 'thought and speech are more than blood' (113).

Basil, Percy and Herbert proceed to evoke quintessential images and associations of Englishness: 'Robin Hood'; 'sons of yeomen'; 'Hal and Ned' and 'Cromwell's Ironsides'. To these suggestions Sandy, Brian and Basil then add equally traditional Scottish associations:

Sandy
Oh, now I see Fate's means and ends!
The Bruce and Wallace knight I ken,
Who saved old Scotland from its friends,
Were mighty northern Englishmen.

Brian
And Parnell, who so greatly fought
Against a wanton useless yoke,
With Fate inevitably wrought
That Irish should be English folk.

Basil
By bogland, highland, down and fen,
All Englishmen, all Englishmen. (144-153)

This echoes a pattern of ambivalence in Davidson's work combining unity and difference. Like Rorison in *Earl Lavender,* the Celt brings his sense of difference to bear upon the ideal of cultural cohesion. Menzies offers no negation or acceptance of these assertions, again creating an equivocal silence within the poem. Instead he changes theme and proceeds to criticise the British Empire claiming that 'In Arctic and Pacific seas/We lounge and loaf: and either pole/We reach with sprawling colonies-/Unwieldy limbs that lack a soul' (158-161). Basil retorts with an assertion of heroism, claiming that other races 'reverence the heroic roll/Of Englishmen who sang and fought:/They have a soul, a mighty soul,/The soul of English speech and thought' (164-167). Even independent America is subjected by Basil to the same racial absorption as Scotland and Ireland 'For Yankee blood is English Blood' (175). Percy, Basil, Brian and Sandy evoke harmonious pastoral images of a prosperous, peaceful landscape, akin to Thomson's earlier evocations of an harmonious Albion. Basil concludes that, 'England is in her Spring; She only begins to be...we are the people wherever we go -/Kings by sea and land!' (186-7; 192-3).

Menzies remains cynical commenting 'Whence comes this patriotic craze?/Spare us at least the hackneyed bray/About the famous English flag' (228-30). Ultimately, however, he is won over by Basil's suggestion that England remains the world's forlorn hope. Menzies responds to this assertion positively: 'That makes my heart leap up! Hurrah!/We are the world's forlorn hope!' (240-1). Despite the social problems, racial tensions and imperial dilemmas which he sees he can retain this mitigating assertion:

Menzies
But though we wander far astray
And yet in gloomy darkness grope,
Fearless we face the blackest day,
For we are the world's forlorn hope. (256-259)

The poem concludes with the unanimous assertion of Englishness as a homogeneous, cohesive and dynamic force:

> All
> By bogland, highland, down and fen,
> All Englishmen, all Englishmen!
> Who with their latest breath shall sing
> Of England and the English Spring! (264-7)

This unanimity is nonetheless rendered less convincing by the equivocation which preceded it and by the justifications offered by Sandy, Brian and Basil which consist more of bombast and patriotic bravado than solid reasoning.

There is little doubt that the dominant voice is that of Basil and that the resolution is an overtly Anglo-centric one. In this Davidson remains the observer of the debate, just as he is the observer in *The Crystal Palace.* Similarly, poetry such as the Boer war poem 'A New Song of Empire' and 'Merry England' explicitly articulate a belief in England's supremacy and imperial destiny as being part of a predestined 'evolutionary' progress. The emphatic framework of Calvinism and its belief in predestination is here transposed into military and economic strength and a belief in the nation's manifest destiny. Nonetheless, Davidson's poetry of war and empire tends to articulate this confidence through a thematic or poetic structure of contention and contradiction, revealing enduring tensions within the writer's psyche.

In 'Merry England' (1906) the sentiment is clearly patriotic but it is once again constructed in an ambivalent way. The first stanza opens with popular associations of Englishness. Celebrating 'Merry England where fancy dwells' (2) and listing a series of traditional images: 'morris bells'; 'Tourneys for love' 'battles for hate'; 'Torches, garlands, exultant bells'; 'Challenging trumpets and festal bells'; this assortment of images, together with repeated references to England's 'fancy' undermines notions of any integral or substantial identity. The second stanza continues this instability by its employment of dualism and opposition:

> A bell for death and a bell for birth
> Jubilant fifths and sombre thirds:
> Pessimist? Optimist? - death and birth!
> Englishmen only on English earth! (15-18)

The exclusivity of the assertion 'Englishmen only on English earth' is undermined by the paradoxes that preceed it.

The third stanza asserts that 'England's fancy shall live again' (23). This is an ambivalent assertion with overtones of whimsical imagination, whim or fabrication. The poem's complexity enables sweeping patriotic assertions to be made whilst accompanied by the taint of a kind of unconscious reticence or ambivalence. Statements such as 'Gird the earth with an English belt' (47) are undermined by allusions to the insubstantiality of ideology ('And wonder with every whispering mind/To dip our dreams in the dew again' (54-5)). Transience accompanies the assertive, single-minded voice of the patriot:

> Sea-King's realm, our Ocean-state,
> Woven upon the world's wide loom;
> Dyed and tried in high debate,
> And ever renewed on the world's wide loom,
> With weaving fleets in a world-wide loom -
> Shall garnish fancy in every land. (58-62; 64)

The poem is overtly patriotic, yet it retains ambivalent images which suggest some degree of instability within Davidson's adopted sense of national identity.

Davidson's use of ambiguity suggests an appreciation both of the attractions of national strength and an awareness of negative facets underpinning military supremacy. In the fantasy short-story 'Eagle's Shadow' (1891) a young clerk, Ebenezer Eglesham, living in the year 1890, is informed of Britain's fate by a small boy from the year 8020 who appears from the shadow on the wall and reads him some extracts from his history book. The boy narrates the following:

> our predecessors in this globe had for thousands of years habitually settled the most trifling disputes by what they called *War* [...] According to its success in War was a people great. Now the English were the greatest warriors, and consequently the greatest and most enlightened people, in the world for many hundreds of years. (GMPN, 113)

The narrative draws upon contemporary tensions concerning social and political Darwinism, territorial expansion and national individualism, highlighting the tenuous nature of world affairs and the complexity of Britain's position. The child informs Ebenezer of a time when Britain lost political supremacy and faced the hostility of her colonies:

> There seems to have been a time when Britain lost its supremacy [...] Britain, a small over-populated island, was no longer able to cope single-handed with any of the powerful peoples of Europe [...]. The English had amassed much more than their share of the world's wealth...the nations of Europe formed an alliance for the overthrow of the British Empire. They combined their fleets, and sent two millions of men to invade the hated island. (GMPN, 114-5)

London becomes the centre of war, the population swelling with the influx of foreign armies, until rescued by the United States. England returns to peace and prosperity in a manner described in stock and satiric terms:

> she was once again 'Merry England' -In many places Maypoles had been erected, and dancing and light-hearted festivity were going on in the open air, as in the time of their great poet Shakespeare. (GMPN, 123)

Merry England, however, becomes atrophied in the dawn of an new ice-age:

> Without any warning, while the mirth was at its height, a long, hollow whisper was borne inward [...]. A stagnation in the air as if the earth had stood still followed, and then a wind began [...]. Gradually and then rapidly the cold increased; the heavens grew gray; and snow began to fall. The ribbons were frozen to the May-poles; the hobby-horse and the dragon's case, thrown aside by the horror-stricken Morris-dancers, made fantastic shapes under the snow; [...] such a winter as the country had never known, a winter that should last for ages. Britain was an iceberg. (GMPN, 123-4)

The explanation for this calamity is that a group of Nihilists had diverted the course of the Gulf-Stream in order to immobilise all that had been established and hence to attempt to induce a new golden age. In this ironic narrative Davidson exploits fears surrounding Britain's sovereignty and uses images of Englishness that are as atrophied and backward looking as the symbols and associations commonly related to Scottish cultural identity. Despite the patriotic and imperialist tenor of Davidson's work a sub-text of ambivalence remains. His use of hyperbole, multiple and contentious voices, manipulation of themes concerning division and tension, suggest a certain inadequacy concerning his overt Anglo-centric patriotism. Davidson's celebrations of empire are, therefore, repeatedly haunted by spectres of uncertainty.

His ability to accept both the value of national individualism and the darker aspects involved within it are examined in *The Testament of a Prime Minister* and *The Testament of an Empire Builder*. These long monologues in blank verse are distinctive for their resigned understanding of the brutality within the nature of human affairs. Typically both are dramatic projections of character, the empire builder possibly being a parody of Cecil Rhodes. Both are testaments of dying men reviewing the course of their lives.

With the imminence of death the Empire Builder is tormented by dreams and visions that embody his anxieties. He admits that 'Self-knowledge ends in self-contempt:/Man can be too familiar with himself' (2-3). He dreams of a parliament of beasts who discuss the supremacy of man and the nature of evolution. Aboma, the serpent, comments mockingly that man differs from animals in possessing a conscience:

> Aboma then: 'The quaint abortion, Man,
> Possesses conscience. Hearing, feeling, taste,
> Sight, scent are shared alike by him and us,
> But what this conscience is no beast can tell-
> Unless it be some special cowardice
> In honour held by Man's perverted heart.
> Certain it is that necessary deeds,
> The lustful propagation of His kind
> Or the happy slaughter of his enemies,
> This mouldering conscience turns to mortal sin.
> Even in His war on us sin palsied Him,
> Until He made His affable deity
> Appoint Him regent to subdue the earth,
> With perfect power over all fish, flesh, fowl,
> And over all the earth and everything
> That moves upon the earth. No mortal beast
> Can fathom the fatuity of Man!' (155-171)

Nature is cruel and respects the strong. The horse bemoans memory and conscience, both of which act as 'a scalpel to the pride of life -the chief/Utilitarian sin that Man commits' (213-215), while the Lion forecasts with sorrow the imminence of extinction for his species: 'the Lion rose and lifted up his voice: "Man overcomes!/No hope, no help for us, and no escape"' (273-275). He laments the subordination of his species; 'tame lions, caged and lashed, Attempting human tricks! [...] How long, sad earth!/And afterwards? - No lions anywhere' (295-97).

In a world where strength is a necessity traditional moral restraints become crippling as Aboma comments:

> Of that incontinence of Soul pursues
> With like defeat the victor-victim, Man.
> His Caesar, Christ, Mohammed, Tamerlane
> Are featureless to Him; because the Soul,
> Embarrassed by their memory, fearing yet
> Or impotent to cast them out, invests
> Their proper figure and significance
> With increments of fond Humanity. (333-340)

Such images and associations obscure and impede. Man must be factual, pragmatic and assertive. This is illustrated in the next major dream-vision of the poem in which the empire-builder envisages an introverted version of heaven and hell. Carroll Peterson explains that 'The traditional Christian ideas of these places are inverted: heaven is occupied by Davidsonian heroes; hell, by Christians' (89). Such inversion has affinities with James Young Geddes who, in poems such as 'The New Jerusalem' and the 'New Inferno', inverts associations of heaven and hell so that the former becomes a place of stasis and the latter a place of positive industry.

Heaven is the reward of the strong, those who have seized the initiative and pursued personal gain. It includes the powerful such as 'Kings, statesmen, emperors, proconsuls, popes' (506), but also 'those who died,/Contemned and poor, but straining to the last/For power and wealth' (506-511). The empire-builder states that:

> All these I saw at home in Heaven. All these!
> and all who challenged fate and staked their lives
> To win or lose the prize they coveted,
> Who took their stand upon the earth and drew
> Deep virtue from the centre, helped themselves,
> Desired the world and willed what Matter would. (435-540)

His vision of Hell is equally unconventional, like Geddes, he subverts the normal expectations and associations. It is a place filled with the weak and vulnerable, and by all those who were inhibited by traditional morality:

> Materials of Hell? The altruists;
> Agnostics; dreamers; idiots; cripples; dwarfs;
> All kinds of cowards who eluded fact;
> Dwellers in legend, burrowers in myth;
> The merciful, the meek and mild, the poor
> In spirit; Christians who in very deed
> Were Christians; pessimistic celibates;
> The feeble minds; the souls called beautiful. (658-665)

These oppositional visions are of a temporal heaven and hell, grounded in the material universe, as the empire-builder asserts, 'Do I believe in Heaven and Hell? I do;/We have them here; the world is nothing else' (686-687). In an inverted transposition of Protestant belief in predestination the empire-builder describes himself as 'being English, one of the elect/Above all folks' (702-703). He admits that his success 'made me- What! tenfold a

criminal?/No other name for Hastings, Clive and me!' (713-714). His hard-headed, unsentimental practicality makes no attempt to conceal the brutality of struggle and survival, but rather accepts it with heroic pragmatism:

> The English Hell
> For ever crowds upon the English Heaven.
> Secure your birthright; set the world at naught;
> Confront your fate; regard the naked deed;
> Enlarge your Hell; preserve it in repair;
> Only a splended Hell keeps Heaven fair. (720-725)

Eric Northey has argued that *The Testament of an Empire Builder* is an attempt to force people to come to terms with the more unpleasant parts of man's make-up, and...with the 'darker side of imperial expansion'.[83] The poem does not condemn this however, rather, it faces and accepts, without mitigation or apology, the harshess of human struggle and survival.

The *Testament of a Prime Minister* also opens with a sense of bleak finality, 'I go down/To dust and deep oblivion' (6-7). He explains that, 'here I lie/A broken man, who stood a year ago/The foremost of his time, the heart and brain/Of Britain and her Empire' (14-17). Like the empire-builder, the prime minister also believes that heaven and hell reside only within the temporal world:

> We know that here and now is Heaven-and-Hell;
> This is the Promised Land, the Golden Age,
> This, the Millennium, and the Aftertime,
> The fixed, eternal moment, sounding on. (258-260)

This philosophy, rooted in the immediacy of human struggle and attainment, leads to the individualism of empire and military might: 'One nation must be richer than the rest:/Let it be ours! it must, it will be ours/If we continue Matter's best belov'd' (281-283). This is Davidson's amoral and heroic universe. The prime minister fails, however, to attain the endurance required to accept the pain and harshness inherent in this. He is weakened by conscience: 'Right there it was my wandering heart o'erthrew/My argument, and flooded all my thought/An inundation of humanity/That drowned Material truth' (284-287). This spirit of magnanimity is undermined by those he encounters. He meets a group of vagrants who warn him that their plight was incurred 'By being grateful' (394). One of the group warns him that:

'gratitude, sheer gratitude
Destroys the courage, eats the soul out
[...] Be grateful if you must, but never tell;
Or else the world will use your gratitude
To starve you out; and slave or mendicant
Will be your doom.' (395-402)

Just as Davidson's heroism embraced the bitterness of displacement, embracing isolation and struggle, the unfairness of power, tenacity, competition and endurance are aspects of life to be expected and accepted. It is part of what one of Davidson's vagrants refers to as 'The naked nerves of Matter!'. He explains that 'Matter loves/Its aches and pains: it knows itself thereby' (415-417). Davidson makes no apology for power or individualism. There is no jingoism here but an acceptance of the material universe. The prime minister describes himself as 'conscious Matter' (1170). He concludes his testament by affirming 'I apprehend and master time and space,/For this self-consciousness is masterdom' (1193-1194).

Empire, like Davidsonian heroism, is part of the inevitable progress of matter. Davidson's 'Ode on the Coronation of Edward VII Of Britain and of Greater Britain King' deals not principally with Edward but the British race itself: 'We crown our King [...] we crown our race,/Accomplishing a thousand years of war' (1-3). The poem examines British history from the 'primeval aim' of matter through centuries of war to the rise of Imperial Britain. This ascendancy is part of the evolutionary and foreordained progress of matter. In *The Testament of a Prime Minister* new lands were 'Predestined to be ours' (p. 26) and Matter had its 'chosen people' (p.27). Here Britain's imperial destiny is an achievement which 'every pulse of Matter ached/To yield' (19-20). In a 'New Song of Empire' centuries of war also legitimise Britain's imperial pedigree; 'We venture furthest, dare the most,/The chosen valour of the earth' (49-50). Yet just as there remains an enduring sense of sorrow and disillusionment, which undermine the need for self and national affirmation in the Testaments, here too ambivalence remains. Both poems are songs and therefore projected voices, just as the Testaments of the Prime Minister and the Empire-Builder are studies in character.

This projection and ambivalence, a paradox caused by a fissure between the conscious propagation of certain values and a subordinate but persistent remnant of doubt surrounding these values, reaches its apex in Davidson's 'Dedication to the Peers Temporal'. This is a pretended letter to the House of Lords which is used as a preface to

The Testament of John Davidson (1908). This letter begins with the political and social state of Britain and concludes with a recapitulation of Davidson's materialist philosophy. The letter is striking for its apparent racial bias and anti-democratic sentiment. It advocates that minority and regional opinion be ignored: 'The demands of Women, the demands of the Irish, the demands of Labour! To me all that is heinous in the last degree' (TJD, 13). It condemns 'emasculating compromise' (TJD, 14) and asserts that 'England requires you to be English, as the Welsh are English, as the Scots are English [...] to live with England, and yet to decline the destiny of England, is to be unfortunate indeed' (TJD, 15).

The tone of this letter, its apparent irrationality and eccentricity encourages anticipation of ironic reduction, akin to Swift's 'Modest Proposal'. But this irony is never fully realised. Yet the suggestion of instability remains echoing his would-be heroes in novels such as *Perfervid* and *Earl Lavender.* The voice is theatrical and the identity unclear, it moves from first person assertions such as 'I address you'; 'I invite you'; 'I have to tell you'(TJD, 11) to the use of 'we' and 'our'. The voice jumps discordinantly: '*We* lose patience [...] *England wishes you*' (TJD, 15). Like the poetry the voice seems to be both self-reductive and serious. We are reminded that this is an 'interview' which has been 'imagined for you' (TJD, 28). Finally, this volatile voice extricates itself from belonging to England, or Britain, or Christendom, 'For my own part I have come out of it all, and have found another abode for my mind and imagination...in the universe itself' (TJD, 28). The narrative thus jumps from a racialist and imperialist sphere to the cosmic and universal progress of matter, 'There is only matter, which is the infinite, which is space, which is eternity; which we are' (TJD, 29).

Ultimately, Davidson replaces the dogmatism of his past with new affirmative structures in order to provide a sense of cohesion to his increasing sense of fragmentation, as the outcast and observer increasingly in terms of contingency, fracture and fragmentation. In 'Fleet Street' (1909) the world has become a panoply of disparate objects:

> Fleet Street was once a silence in the ether.
> The carbon, iron, copper, silicon,
> Zinc, aluminium vapours, metalloids,
> Constituents of the skeleton and shell
> Of Fleet Street - of the woodwork, metalwork,
> Brickwork, electric apparatus, drains
> And printing-presses, conduits, pavement, road. [84]

In this chaos even the bricks of Fleet Street take up the imperial cry in affirmation of 'the Mother of Nations, she/Whose ever vigilant, clairaudient ear/Is Fleet Street'.[85] Describing this poem, Mary O'Connor makes the following observations:

> It begins [...] with the raw material of the street: closes and lanes, drains, people and bricks, machinery, brains, pen. This catalogue of pieces [...] reduces all to unit value, units which are not integrated [...] By appealing to the myth of the Empire Davidson dispels the fear of meaningless objects, of dirt, of brains, and of drains. He appeals to some compensatory illusion that London is the centre of the world, that the Empire is important, that business is busy-ness, that the movement is tided in proportion and therefore exciting and important.[86]

Davidson's nationalism, like his heroism, is an attempt to impose structure and containment upon an ever increasing sense of fragmentation and alienation. In much of his work this attempt, in itself, produces dualism and tensions between the dominant perspective and subordinate anxieties. Paradox remains, therefore, and Davidson celebrated irony and opposition throughout his work. This endures despite the desire to manufacture a literature of confidence and self-affirmation.

Just as the hero figure is employed to salve the crisis of personal identity, nationalism too becomes ultimately heroic in Davidsonian terms. In 'On Poetry' he writes that:

> The earth is to the Universe as England is to the rest of the globe, small in itself and small in relation to its continent or system. But out of our nook-shotten isle comes the profoundest and most intelligent voice of Matter; English blank verse.[87]

The role of the writer is linked with that of the nation. Davidson consciously contrives a new cohesion out of his displaced status. Ultimately he affirms that:

> Poetry is the will to live and the will to power; poetry is empire. Poetry is life and force; and England, being most amply replenished with the will to live and the will to power, possesses in her blank verse the greatest poetry in the world.[88]

In this, Davidson anticipates Hugh MacDiarmid's evocation of the writer in the status of 'God-bearer' (*Narodbagonosets*);[89] and his emphasis upon the responsibility of the poet concerning the burden of national identity:

> A Scottish poet maun asume
> The burden o' his people's doom,
> And dee to brak' their livin tomb.[90]

National identity, literary identity are fused with Davidson's philsophical materialism. It is subjective and extreme but this in itself offers him a stability which had hitherto eluded him. The notion of poetry as the vehicle of power elevates the status and function of the displaced writer.

---

[1] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'John Davidson, Influences and Influence' in Maurice Lindsay, *John Davidson, A Selection of his Poems*, p. 47.

[2] ibid, pp. 51-2.

[3] See Robert Crawford, pp.45-110.

[4] Paul H. Scott, 'The Last Purely Scotch Age', *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, p. 13.

[5] Eric Northey, p.272.

[6] John Herdman, 'John Davidson in Full', ed.Duncan Glen, *AKROS*, 9, no. 25, (Aug. 1974), 79-84 (p. 82).

[7] 'On Poetry' is included in *Holiday and Other Poems* (London: E. Grant Richards, 1906).

[8] Herdman, p. 82.

[9] Tom Hubbard, 'John Davidson: A Lad Apairt', p.37.

[10] J.B. Townsend, *John Davidson Poet of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 276-7.

[11] ibid., p. 277.

[12] ibid., p. 277.

[13] ibid., p. 277.

[14] Andrew Noble, 'Between the Lines', *The Glasgow Herald*, 24 Feb., 1996, p. 21

[15] Andrew Hook, 'Scotland and Romanticism: The International Scene', in *The History of Scottish Literature*, II, ed. by Andrew Hook (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), p. 307.

[16] Mary Jane Scott, 'James Thomson and the Anglo-Scots', *The History of Scottish Literature*, II, p. 81.

[17] Hook, p. 311.

[18] Douglas Gifford, 'Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914', in *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, pp. 233-4.

[19] Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1981), p. 150.

[20] ibid., p.p. 113-4.

[21] David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830* (London: Chatton and Windus, 1961), p. 276.

[22] Nairn, p. 156.

[23] Walter Scott, *Journal*, 24 March, 1829, reprinted in Paul H. Scott, p. 13.

[24] Nairn, p. 157.

[25] Paul H. Scott, p. 14.

[26] Crawford, p. 45.

[27] ibid., p. 46.

[28] 'Wordsworth's Immorality and Mine', *The Theatrocrat* (London: Grant Richards, 1905), pp. 1-3.

[29] 'Caviare', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 30 May, 1903, p. 1. Reprinted in Carroll V. Peterson, *John Davidson* (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 109.

[30] *Plays by John Davidson* (London: Matthews and Lane, 1894), p. 168.

[31] *Plays*, p. 203.

[32] Kenneth Millard, *Edwardian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991), p. 132.

[33] *Plays*, p. 205.

[34] ibid., p. 127.

[35] Millard, p. 133.

[36] Peterson, p. 68.

[37] ibid., pp.21-2.

[38] Millard, p. 132.

[39] *Perfervid* (London: Ward and Downey, 1890), p. 98.

[40] *Perfervid*, p. 98.

[41] Edwin Muir, *The Narrow Place* (London: Faber, 1943), p. 15.

[42] Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* (1935) (repr. Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1979), p. 90.

[43] Nairn, p. 163.

[44] ibid., p. 165.

[45] John Davidson, *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender* (London: Ward and Downey, 1895), p. 193.

[46] ibid., p. 191.

[47] *Hugh MacDiarmid: Selected Poems*, ed. by Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 27-28.

[48] Tom Hubbard, 'John Davidson's Glasgow', *The Scottish Review*, no. 32, (Nov. 1983), 13-19 (p. 16).

[49] *Earl Lavender*, pp. 50-51.

[50] Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), p. 65.

[51] ibid., p. 73.

[52] Crawford, p. 46.

[53] Crawford, p. 47.

[54] John Lucas, *England and Englishness* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990), pp. 38-9.

[55] ibid., p. 39.

[56] Crawford, p. 51.

[57] Lucas, p. 41.

[58] From Thomson's *The Seasons* reprinted in John Lucas, ibid., pp. 41-2.

[59] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 30.

[60] Crawford, p. 79.

[61] James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides* (1786) (repr. London: Penguin, 1984), p. 166.

[62] Boswell, p. 166.

[63] Anderson, p. 35.

[64] 'John Davidson's Glasgow', p. 17.

[65] Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography* (London: Hogarth Press, 1954) p. 126.

[66] ibid., p. 127.

[67] Townsend, p. 274.

[68] ibid., p. 276.

[69] William Ferguson, *Scotland 1689 to the Present* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968), p. 317.

[70] Alan MacGillivray, 'Exile and Empire' in *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, p. 416.

[71] ibid., p. 416.

[72] John Davidson, 'On Poetry', p. 143

[73] ibid., pp. 139-40

[74] 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', stanza 1, lines 3-4

[75] Andrew Turnbull, *The Poetry of John Davidson*, I, p. xxii.

[76] Prefactory note to *The Testament of a Vivisector* (London: Grant Richards, 1901).

[77] *The Last Ballad and Other Poems* (London: John Lane, 1899), p. 93.

[78] *Fleet Street and Other Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1909), p. 147, stanza 1.

[79] *The Last Ballad and Other Poems*, p. 95.

[80] ibid., p. 97, stanza 2.

[81] ibid., p. 100, stanza 14.

[82] ibid., p. 101, stanza 1.

[83] Northey, p. 264.

[84] *Fleet Street and Other Poems*, p. 11.

[85] ibid., p. 20.

[86] Mary O'Connor, *John Davidson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), p. 126.

[87] 'On Poetry', p. 126.

[88] 'On Poetry', p. 149.

[89] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Goal of History' stanza 1 from *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* in *The Complete Poems of High MacDiarmid*, ed. by Michael Grieve and W.R. Aitken, 2 vols (London: Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, 1978), I, p. 134.

[90] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'The Great Wheel' from *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ibid., p. 165.

CHAPTER 4 DAVIDSON'S IDEAS IN RELATION TO SCOTTISH THOUGHT

Davidson and the Secular Prophets

Scotland produced some of the most prophetic voices of the nineteenth century: Thomas Carlyle, Hugh Miller, James Thomson, Robert Buchanan, John Davidson, and James Young Geddes. Each possessed the zeal and intensity of the Calvinist, modified or transposed into a secular context. Each endeavoured to formulate a new vision to equal or replace the social and spiritual inheritance which they had rejected. Their scepticism, combined with their loss of a defined religious framework, stimulated the speculative, searching philosophical propensity that informs their writing. They each attempt to formulate a new voice, status, belief system and identity. Each, in experiencing the cultural features of displacement and dissociation, assumed a peripheral status as observer and commentator. Outwith the boundaries of both religious orthodoxy and cultural conformity or complacency, they could engage in questioning all values and beliefs, and in formulating their own social and universal visions. These Scottish writers exist within an independent but complementary sceptical tradition to that of Alfred Tennyson, Robert Browning, Matthew Arnold and for Scots, most influentially, Arthur Hugh Clough.

Their views and conclusions are varied. Carlyle, Miller, Buchanan and Geddes developed a practical social policy, though only Geddes and Carlyle obtain a positive and dynamic vision of society. Miller sought to reconcile social reform and scientific advance with orthodox belief, while the others remained estranged and critical towards dogma. Carlyle articulated the difficulties of faith but retained the ability to progress from 'the Everlasting No' to 'the Everlasting Yea'. Geddes criticised the hypocrisy of institutional religion; while Buchanan remains a displaced figure, an Ishmael, desiring a benevolent God but unable to believe in one. Davidson and Thomson share a materialist view in which society becomes a metaphor for the struggles of the individual in a hostile world. In the thinking of these men, Scottish literature possesses a rich strain of metaphysical and speculative writing which makes a unique contribution to nineteenth century literary scepticism as a whole. Yet they have never been examined within a collective context; rarely is Carlyle even placed in a context with Scotland's other secular prophets, nor are the roots of their scepticism ever examined within a Scottish frame of reference.

Their work in fact extends the reactionary propensity within Scottish literature. Just as Ramsay's 'The Vision', Fergusson's 'The Ghaists', Burns's 'Tam O'Shanter' and 'Holy Willie's Prayer' challenge social and religious orthodoxies, so too the themes and subject matter of their nineteenth century successors are equally radical, searching and innovative. Carlyle, Miller, Buchanan, Thomson, Geddes and Davidson make the problems of their changing society into the substance of their work. There is an inherent paradox within this: a process of retreat and confrontation. Each is an observer, peripheral and isolated, but also a critic, actively engaging with social and theoretical questions. Davidson retreats into a poetry of multiple voices and persona, prose characters who are eccentrics, fanatics and dreamers, and his journalistic persona of the peripheral observer as The Random Itinerant, yet, at the same time, his writing continually questions the world around him and undermines its attitudes and conceits.

Davidson's rejection of the past is emphatic. In the poem 'To the New Men' he declares the need to 'Mould the world anew', not with abstract concepts, but within the framework of man's own ability and knowledge: 'Man - you must adore him: / Let the whole past go: / Think God's thought before Him.' He declares that the past must be destroyed and man must start again: 'Heat the furnace hot: / smelt the world-old thought / Into dross and dew; / Mould the earth anew' (23-26). Knowledge of the material world and thereby of the self as matter, are affirmed in opposition to doctrinal and moral restraints. In the *Testament of a Vivisector* (1901) the speaker challenges the pretensions of the Christian, Catholic, Evangelist and Agnostic alike. They are in no position to judge him: 'Not one of you with impulse or intent / To think my thought, how can you judge my life?' (15-16). Throughout Davidson's *Testaments* and tragedies he repeatedly asserts the potential of the individual will and man's ability to understand the material universe through the development of his own self-awareness. He asserts that:

> Man is the Universe alive and conscious, and with the capacity of entire self-consciousness. This capacity, undeveloped and misunderstood, is the source of all man's misery, the hotbed of the idea of Sin and the idea of God.[1]

Davidson shares Robert Buchanan's emphasis upon independent thought unimpeded by dogma, both writers blame theology for producing myth-binding formulae which inhibit man's ability to think and to reason. John A. Cassidy notes that:

> Most of the causes of human unhappiness can and must be removed, Buchanan believed; but they had to be removed by man himself [...]. As for the God-myth, it had been the chief obstacle to man's intellectual progress; it had been used through the ages [...] to keep man in slavery [...] And the same evil forces

had created the myth of Satan to frighten man away from the use of his reason.[2]

Even Carlyle, who stops well short of absolute doubt, moving to a kind of spiritual affirmation, redefines man's relationship to God. As Behnken notes, 'Revelation of divinity for the orthodox Calvinist came from above, on God's initiative...Carlyle began at the opposite end of the spectrum [...] with human experience. Man's searching, testing mind is what gives him knowledge [...] he seeks God, and by his own efforts discovers something that is credible to him. Carlyle's starting point was "'the experienced facts of things interpreted by the intelligence of man."'[3] Like Davidson and Buchanan, he too places emphasis on active human agency:

> Carlyle's influence on traditional theology included the removal or erosion of the sense of a divine personality, omnipotence, and eternity [...]. Instead of the Almighty being principal actor on the world's stage, Carlyle has put man there. Carlyle emphasizes the aggressive, active side of human nature.[4]

Yet the desire to reject the past and begin again leaves an enormous gulf. Davidson, like Thomson, is aware of the starkness of the unknown in a universe devoid of God. In a newspaper article of 1898, entitled 'The Cat-Call of the Sphinx', Davidson's Random Itinerant finds himself confronted with the 'what' and 'why' of the universe in a somewhat unusual discourse with a customer in a public house:

> 'Sir,' says the Other Customer, 'do you ever hear the Cat-call of the Sphinx?' 'No,' replies the Itinerant; 'I can't say I do.' 'You will hear it...the Cat-call of the Sphinx pierces my ear, and I forsake everything to have another try at the everlasting conundrum.' 'What do you mean by the Cat-call of the Sphinx?' queries the Itinerant [...] 'I mean,' says the Other Customer, 'the eternal riddle of the Sphinx [...]. The Sphinx is now a symbol, and her cat-call is the question, 'What is the universe?' to some; 'Why is the universe?' to others...It seems to me difficult to express more vehemently the terrible obsession which the questions 'What' and 'Why' have [...] than by just such a phrase as the cat-call of the Sphinx...it is sometimes as pertinacious and deafening as the siren of a liner in the fog or the shriek of a factory whistle. A time will come, sir...when you will hear that intolerable yell [...] then you will hide youself away in some public-house behind the downs and have visions as I have now. I see out there - look! [...] a city built of black marble, a range of huddled spires and towers, without door or window. From the topmost pinnacle to the lowest buttress, the whole is furred and coated with a nap of soot, a dead, dense black overlying the black marble. From between the stones a swart smoke coils in wreaths...and - listen - do you hear that? - the thundering noise of a million voices shouting in unison makes the city vibrate. What is the city?...It sounds like a bellowing of voices in agony, as of a thousand bulls of Phalaria.' 'Come away!' cries the Itinerant [...]. 'No,' replies the Other Customer. 'Here I stay till that cry becomes articulate. It is the answer to the Cat-call of the Sphinx.'[5]

In this essay Davidson combines the realism of Dickens' *Hard Times* with the metaphorical significance of Thomson's city. Davidson's black marble city is a place of the mind and seems likely to allude to Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*, which also 'Dissolveth like a dream of night away'.[6]

In Chapter XX of Thomson's poem the speaker is left to ponder the Sphinx in the great central square of the city. The angel and the warrior have fallen and only the riddle of the sphinx remains; 'the sphinx supreme: / I pondered long that cold majestic face / Whose vision seemed of infinite void space.'[7] Thomson's city is the embodiment of dead faith, dead hope and dead love, it is part of a random universe that has no spiritual location in a God-created plan, and his trinity or 'perpetual recurrence' is one of despair. It is a metaphor for the human predicament just as Davidson's urban images embody individual struggle in a godless universe.

Like Buchanan and Thomson, Davidson rejects all creeds. What remains is a materialism that is akin to Thomson's view of a godless material universe but mediated by the dynamic of man's own will. Ritchie Robertson explains that:

> Davidson stridently proclaimed a doctrine of materialistic monism. Its basis is the metaphysical monism of Schopenhauer [...] Davidson adopts from Schopenhauer the conception of a blind will animating the universe [...]. He calls this force Matter, and believes it to be the motive force behind evolution. For Schopenhauer the universe had neither purpose nor development; man's capacity for thought was of no significance [...]. For Davidson, however, human thought and self-awareness represent the goal of evolution.[8]

Davidson's monism is influenced by Schopenhauer, Haeckel, Goethe, Darwin, and Nietzsche. It originates, however, from the same rejection of Calvinism and emergent scepticism that influenced the other secular prophets of Scottish literature. For Thomson and Davidson the universe is a painful one. But while his *Testament of a Vivisector* confronts pain and ennui with the same intensity as Thomson, he does not share his sense of life as meaningless. Davidson retains a concept of vocation and adheres to Carlyle's doctrine of work, if not for social progress, at least as testament to the tenacity of the individual will. Davidson celebrated an extended sense of the Carlylean hero who relies upon integrity and instinct to comprehend and define his own status and existence. In this respect Davidson reflects what David Daiches refers to as 'a late Victorian mood of stoicism, of heroic endurance for its own sake'.[9] He explains that 'Even after Darwin and the higher criticism of the Bible had between them aroused all sorts of religious doubts, strenuousness remained an ideal for its own sake',[10] so that late nineteenth century

literature may be characterised by what he calls 'sceptical stoicism combined with sceptical activism'.[11]

Davidson's dissent from mainstream belief systems and the influence which this had on his views concerning literature and the role of the writer have been related to external philosophical influences, particularly Nietzsche, the following sections of this chapter will aim to outline his rather more neglected significance within a context of Scottish thought.

The Authority of Influence: John Davidson and Thomas Carlyle

John Davidson, like Carlyle before him, has been denied any association with, or contribution to, a Scottish philosophical and literary tradition. Indeed, it is difficult to make comparisons between them as Scottish writers and thinkers, because the attributed discipleship of Davidson to Nietzsche is surpassed only by assertions of Goethe's influence upon Carlyle.[12] In making comparisons between Davidson and Carlyle the intention is to emphasise the significance of their ideas within a context of Scottish thought and thereby to challenge the emphasis placed upon the influence of German philosophy which, being for so long accepted in isolation, has become misleading. In the case of Carlyle, apart from some brief references by Roderick Watson[13] and Ruth apRoberts[14] to formative influences, and articles by Ian Campbell[15] and Ralph Jessop,[16] only one booklength study, Ralph Jessop's *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* (1997) acts as a corrective to this critical trend while, as yet, no essay or booklength study has examined Davidson's relationship to Scottish thought. Some critics, such as Ritchie Robertson,[17] suggest Davidson's interest in a disparate and eclectic range of influences such as Feuerbach, Laplace, Tyndall, Schopenhauer, Haeckel, Hegel and Thoreau; J.B. Townsend also notes that Davidson's knowledge 'rivalled in comprehensiveness that of an eighteenth-century encyclopedist.'[18] Yet nowhere within the range of sources cited is there any mention of Scots such as Carlyle, Thomas Reid or Sir William Hamilton. Similar critical attitudes are evident regarding Carlyle, for example, Robert Crawford describes Carlyle as being at the 'summit of the Scottish eclectic tradition'[19] but Ralph Jessop is alone in noting major sources of influence in Scots such as Hume, Reid and the Scottish Common-Sense School.

In Davidson's case the majority of critics, such as Eric Northey, John A. Lester, David S. Thatcher and Carroll V. Peterson,[20] place exclusive emphasis upon the influence of Nietzsche. John A. Lester admits the partial nature of confining his analysis of Davidson's thought to a comparison with Nietzsche, but his acknowledgement only serves to

emphasise the dissatisfying limitations of his critical framework: 'Thomas Carlyle was a shaping force in Davidson's thought long before Nietzsche, and the influence was deeper and more lasting [...]. But the impact of Nietzsche is more distinct and more measurable'.[21] Lester seems reconciled to a very discriminatory methodology. Such an analysis will inevitably obscure the complex reality of influence, neglecting the formative impact which Carlyle had upon Davidson and indeed, which Carlyle may have had upon Nietzsche, as well as the influence of a Scottish philosophical tradition in its own right. Reid's analysis of perceptual experience was of crucial importance to Scottish thought but despite having followers, such as Dugald Stewart and William Hamilton, his views were overshadowed by others such as Kant and he has been given comparatively little recognition within the general course of European philosophy. It may be that the marginalisation which gives unmerited peripheral status to regional writers, as identified by Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* and Cairns Craig's *Out of History*, may have wider applications. Hume attained the status of European man of letters but he is the exception rather than the rule. Indeed, the dominance of Hume's association with Scottish philosophy is noted in *Wotton Reinfred.* Maurice regards Scottish philosophy as synonymous with Hume. Ralph Jessop notes that 'for Maurice the philosophy of Wotton and Bernard is not Scotch (or Humean) because it seems to advocate a form of dualism and anti-sensationalism that is more akin to Reid than Hume [...] their philosophy is certainly Scotch but not what Maurice, in this non-Scottish domain, regards as Scotch.' Maurice declares that 'David Hume is ruler of the world' (WR, 53) but, more perceptively, Jessop notes that 'Perhaps the world that David Hume is ruler of is England.'[22] Such prejudice has obscured the breadth of Scottish philosophy, establishing a context in which critics will automatically compare Carlyle and Davidson with 'dominant' European philosophers rather than native sources.

Davidson read Carlyle in his youth. John M. Sloan,[23] a young student for the ministry and a close friend of the Davidson family, provides a description of the young Davidson:

> I first met with John Davidson when he was in his teens and living at home in his father's manse in Greenock as an assistant teacher in the local Academy. We had walks and talks together [...] he was powerful in conversation beyond his years. He had read the whole of Carlyle, been in at the death of the 'Faerie Queene', and was familiar with all the master poets. Dogmatic in tone, he was a young rebel at home in revolt against the orthodox Scottish ban of that period against the theatre and reverently critical of his father's evangelical creed.[24]

Having read the whole of Carlyle in his teens Davidson's study of Carlyle was to continue throughout his life. J.B. Townsend notes that subsequently Davidson's interest in Carlyle was to form part of his many publishing projects:

> Very close to his heart also was a Grant Richards or Chelsea edition of the works of Thomas Carlyle in twelve volumes. The prospectus for this edition shows his thorough reading of Carlyle and, apart from differences in their views, a great admiration. [25]

A shared cultural background established similar interests and concerns. In this respect John M. Sloan's phrase 'reverently critical' is particularly apt, conveying the tensions between loyalty and rebellion which gave Davidson's formative experience an affinity with Carlyle. Ruth apRoberts explains the pressure of such tensions in reference to Carlyle:

> There are two kinds of ultimate horror for a Scottish Calvinist family: one is the seduction of a daughter, classically portrayed in Scott's *Heart of Midlothian*; the other is an offspring's loss of faith. And the classic case of the latter is Carlyle's. What makes it so is the extreme intensity of the family's fundamentalist faith, combined with the signal love and devotion reigning there and Carlyle's own high principles and searching intellect, what he called his love of truth.[26]

This precisely echoes Davidson's own experience and it has been grossly underestimated by critics. John A. Lester, for example, attributes Davidson's antipathy toward religion as primarily due to the influence of Nietzsche, an assertion which reveals an inadequate appreciation of Knoxian Calvinism and the Scottish Presbyterian conscience during the nineteenth century, which matched that of its Germanic Lutheran equivalent. In the dramatic monologue 'Cain' (1909) Davidson typically articulates the perspective of the outcast, separated from familial ties by belief. Cain asserts that 'I had a brother, Abel, whom I loved / As no man shall be loved by man again.' (64-5), but goes on to explain that:

> Our thoughts of God
> Alone divided us, as such thoughts will -
> Father from son, kindred from kindred, folk
> From folk, until the world or God shall cease. (74-77)

Davidson could share neither the religious beliefs of his minister father, the discipline and orthodox values of university life, or the ethos of regulation and intellectual conformity which he perceived within the teaching profession. This echoes Albert J. LaValley's comments concerning Carlyle:

> His [Carlyle's] failure to find himself in any of the traditional professions, his departure from his evangelical upbringing, his sense of being thrust from a rude country environment, stolid and stable, into the complex change and turmoil of Edinburgh and London - all these create a sense of being uprooted and apart that is never resolved in any final fashion.[27]

Davidson, like Carlyle, found the university environment of Edinburgh challenging and problematic; each reached a point of personal and religious crisis. Though Carlyle found, more resolution to this crisis in Edinburgh than Davidson, both moved from their native context to confront in London an increasingly secular, materially competitive and mechanistic society.

Davidson's dissociation from 'patriarchal' Scottish influences was less sentimental and consequently more absolute than Carlyle's, as can be seen in poems such as 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' and 'The Wastrel' but, in the case of Carlyle, LaValley has observed that the substitute father-figure functions as a temporary strategy in the reformulation of identity which begins after dissociation:

> Goethe probably became for Carlyle a father replacement, for as Carlyle outgrew the religion of his own father and found that he could not harmonise its teachings with the new science and philosophy of the Enlightenment, he needed a new source of authority. Gradually he would locate this source of authority in the self and nature, but Goethe provided a transition[28]

In Davidson's case the nature of influence is complicated by his repeated assertions of intellectual independence: 'Neo-Platonism, Neo-Hegelism! Hell! Let no man be another's disciple'.[29] Indeed, he refuted the influence of Nietzsche in an article for the Daily Chronicle in 1902:

> I should be glad if you would allow me to point out that I am not a disciple of Nietzsche. The gist of Nietzsche, so far as I know him, will be found in my play, *Smith: A Tragic Farce*, written in 1886 long before I had ever heard the name of Nietzsche.[30]

Shortly after, in a letter to the publisher Grant Richards, dated 7 July 1902, he stated that 'I am neither 'disciple' or 'prophet' of Nietzsche'.[31] Davidson's interest in Nietzsche came from their shared interest in Carlyle and a mutual reaction against Protestantism. Nietzsche, the son of a Lutheran pastor and Davidson, the son of an Evangelical Union minister, would both have been attracted to Carlyle for the same reasons, so that Davidson was indeed able to establish Nietzschean ideas from pre-Nietzschean sources. Yet critics have remained over simplistic in their interpretation of Davidson's protests. Eric Northey, still looking for simple, linear patterns of influence, is particularly dismissive of

Davidson's protests suggesting that 'the denial is disingenuous and quite unconvincing'.[32] An earlier critic, Hayim Fineman, rightly asserted that Davidson's 'formal Nietzschean thought merely intensified tendencies that already possessed him',[33] typically however, Fineman does not examine Davidson's formative thought in detail. Carlyle's recourse to German thought is also qualified by Charles Frederick Harrold when he states that:

> when Carlyle began the study of German writers, he already had a fundamental point of view, which he wished *confirmed* [...] he was 'influenced' less by actual ideas than by the spirit of German thinkers as they clothed old concepts in new forms.[34]

Once again Harrold, like Fineman and Lester in their respective studies of Davidson, does not expand upon this brief acknowledgement of formative influences.

Suggesting that Carlyle can be seen as influencing Nietzsche may help to explain why the majority of commentators have found Nietzsche useful in reading Davidson, as well as highlighting failings in critical understanding concerning both Nietzsche and Davidson's relationship to Carlyle. Ruth apRoberts does suggest that Nietzsche was influenced by his early reading of Carlyle:

> Nietzsche and Carlyle had the same German sources, but Nietzsche may owe more to Carlyle than he cares to admit. He takes the trouble to repudiate Carlyle with malicious emphasis. His Übermensch, superman, has little to do with Carlyle's heroes, but his metaphor-fiction theory appears to owe something to Carlyle.[35]

This analysis would go further than this however, asserting that Carlyle was a fundamental influence upon the ideas of Nietzsche and Davidson, formulating the concepts that would form the foundations of their own thinking. Carlyle questioned the absolutes of religious dogma which hindered his pursuit of 'truth'[36] before Nietzsche and Davidson; his modernist, experimental narrative style echoes the later presentation of their own ideas, and his creation of the hero figure fundamentally influenced their enduring preoccupations with the radical individual, at odds with majority opinion and the restraints of traditional belief systems. Carlyle's questioning of religious dogma is less extreme than Davidson's hard-headed materialism or Nietzsche's proudly blatant announcement of the death of God and the rise of the Übermensch, but it was Carlyle who first established this mode of thought by articulating the difficulties of faith and exposing the hypocrisy of religion. Similarly, Carlyle's assertions of the heroic man though less extreme, less a personification of materialism than those of his successors, nonetheless establishes the

instinctive, authoritative individual as Carlyle's conception, inherited by both Nietzsche and Davidson.

In order to illustrate these connections this analysis will examine the most obvious associations which are most commonly made between Davidson and Nietzsche: their assumed status as iconoclasts, critical of the boundaries of traditional thought; their emphasis upon the great man or Übermensch and their adoption of the voice of the secular prophet. It will be shown that in these features Davidson's initial thinking clearly follows that of Carlyle, that Carlyle himself is responding to a framework of Scottish thought, and that the initial impetus for Nietzsche may also rest with Carlyle's independent, instinctive and heroic man and the need to establish a stable, authoritative voice, particularly that of the secular prophet.

Davidson and Carlyle shared a preoccupation with the alienated individual. Davidson, studying both Carlyle's literary style and thematic concerns, observes recurrent preoccupations. Comparing 'Wotton Reinfred' and *Sartor Resartus* closely he notes the existence of parallel passages indicative of enduring concerns. Davidson suggests that: 'The resemblances are so marked that one is forced to the conclusion that Carlyle had actually the manuscript of 'Wotton Reinfred' before him while writing certain chapters of 'Sartor"(SP, 92). The following are two examples which Davidson uses; the first, from *Sartor Resartus*:

> Withdrawn in proud humility within his own fastnesses; solitary from men, yet baited by night-spectres enough, he saw himself with a sad indignation, constrained to renounce the fairest hopes of existence.

The second from 'Wotton Reinfred':

> Thus in timid pride he withdrew within his own fastnesses, where, baited by a thousand dark spectres, he saw himself constrained to renounce in unspeakable sadness the fairest hopes of existence. (SP, 93-94)

Recurrent themes plague both Carlyle and Davidson. The above examples appear to resemble the plight of the Humean man. Ralph Jessop notes that 'the effects of adopting Hume's extreme scepticism as a system of belief (as Hume himself indicated) would be entirely destructive. Wotton's confusion, inner division, despair, uncertainty and resultant impotence tracks the moral and intellectual crisis which Hume's scepticism had described for him'.[37]

Carlyle is concerned with the effects of alienation both upon the individual and within society in general. LaValley writes that:

> He is one of the first to speak of alienation with the voice of alienation, and throughout his writings his voice renders us aware of his peculiar sense of isolation, of being different, of not fitting in with other people - or conversely, of the need to go it alone, to be unique, to accept the pressures and identity crises of forging one's own destiny.[38]

Both men cultivated their independent status. Eloise M. Behnken writes that: 'Carlyle labelled his own thinking 'speculative radicalism,' dissociating it from any sect or party and also from the practical, political radicals of his day.'[39] Davidson followed suit by dissociating himself from the conceptual frameworks established by others: 'men should no longer degrade themselves under such appellations as Christian, Mohammedan, Agnostic, Monist, etc...the simplest man should consider himself too great to be called after any name'.[40] Both men are critical of established ideas; intellectually they exemplify a pronounced tendency within Scottish philosophy and intellectual debate towards criticism. Reid is illustrative of this tendency as his philosophy emerges from a response to and critique of Hume; Carlyle's 'Wotton Reinfred' similarly responds critically to the framework of doubt and alienation established by Hume.

Both Davidson and Carlyle are particularly concerned to address the world with integrity rather than seek solace in traditional dogma. Carlyle stresses the pursuit of truth; Davidson, 'a poetry of facts', 'a statement of the world as it is',[41] both maintaining that truth is based upon direct human experience. Like Davidson, though not as extreme, Carlyle had dissociated himself from his inherited systems of belief and strove to defend the independent mind, as Behnken notes: 'Carlyle liked to think of himself as a man of integrity and independence who would not give allegiance to man-made creeds [...] which he identified with hypocrisy and sham.'[42] Carlyle, Davidson and Nietzsche shared an unease with the restraints of inherited thought. Indeed, Nietzsche makes a 'diagnosis' of Carlyle's intellectual standpoint which could equally be applied to both himself and Davidson:

> I have been reading the life of *Thomas Carlyle*[43][...] a man of strong words and attitudes, a rhetor from need, constantly lured by the craving for a strong faith and the feeling of his incapacity for it [...] The craving for a strong faith is no proof of a strong faith, but quite the contrary [...] Carlyle drugs something in himself with the fortissimo of his veneration of men of strong faith and with his rage against the less simple-minded: he requires noise. A constant passionate dishonesty against himself - that is his proprium; in this respect he is and remains interesting.[44]

Carlyle, Davidson and Nietzsche dissociated themselves from inherited belief systems while simultaneously endeavouring to formulate an alternative perspective of equal intensity.

Davidson sought to remove the restraints of custom, belief and tradition by emphasising the integrity of the man of instinct who is not inhibited by social rules. Carlyle also sought to escape habit and custom by emphasising feeling, instinct and the unconscious self. Carlyle equated energy and instinct with truth in opposition to the superficiality of tradition or the inhibitive system-building of the intellect. Carlyle's essay 'Characteristics' (1831) establishes an opposition between the values and restraints of conscious life compared to those of the unconscious:

> In our inward, as in our outward world, what is mechanical lies open to us: not what is dynamical and has vitality. Of our Thinking, we might say is but the upper surface that we shape into articulate thoughts; - underneath the region of argument and conscious discourse, lies [...] what vital force is in us; here if aught is to be created, and not merely manufactured and communicated, must the work go on. (C, 4-5)

His great man, as a man of action, also exemplifies the triumph of instinct over external regulation, he speaks of the great man 'not as a kindled lamp only, but rather as a natural luminary', a 'flowing light-fountain' who possesses 'native, original insight' (OHHW, 2). The emphasis upon the instinctive and intuitive man has a basis in Scottish thought. Scottish empiricism, beginning with Hume's theory of the analogical mind and subsequently Reid's reactionary non-mechanical theory of perception, established the debate as to the veracity of human cognisance. Hume had brought identity and perception to a crisis point of self-doubt and alienation. On the subject of personal identity Hume writes that:

> There are some philosophers, who imagine we are every moment intimately conscious of what we call our SELF; that we feel its existence and its continuance in existence; and are certain, beyond the evidence of a demonstration, both of its perfect identity and simplicity...Unluckily all these positive assertions are contrary to that very experience, which is pleaded for them, nor have we any idea of *self*. [45]

For Hume the mind was a machine processing the data from sense impressions, the veracity of which could never be assured: 'When I look abroad, I foresee on every side, dispute, contradiction, anger, calumny and detraction. When I turn my eye inward, I find nothing but doubt and ignorance',[46] but Reid and the Scottish school of common sense argued that our natural faculties by which we distinguish truth from error are not

fallacious. Reid was not a sensualist, indeed he was opposed to philosophical sensualism, but within the Scottish school there was nonetheless an emphasis on immediate contact with reality.

Critics of Reid and the Scottish School of common sense often misunderstood his emphasis on immediate contact with reality, viewing it as an over-reliance upon instinct. In 'Signs of the Times' Carlyle discusses mechanistic theories and criticises the Scottish School for their over-reliance upon instinct in their attempts to address Humean scepticism:

> The last class of our Scotch Metaphysicians had a dim notion that much of this was wrong; but they knew not how to right it. The school of Reid had also from the first taken a mechanical course, not seeing any other. The singular conclusions at which Hume, setting out from their admitted premises, was arriving, brought this school into being; they let loose Instinct, as an undiscriminating bandog, to guard them against these conclusions; - they tugged lustily at the logical chain by which Hume was so coldly towing them and the world into bottomless abysses of Atheism and Fatalism (ST, 64-5).

Despite this criticism, Carlyle goes on to appeal to principles of Common Sense in his reaction against the Mechanical Age and mechanistic philosophy. He asserts the importance of 'the free gift of Nature' (ST, 70) to man, his 'instinctive, unbounded force, which Nature herself lent him, and still continues to him' (ST, 69) as a defence against mechanistic theories of the mind. He argues that 'this faith in Mechanism' has eroded 'the power man has of knowing and believing', it has destroyed 'man's most intimate, primary sources of conviction' (ST, 74); he asserts that 'We are no longer instinctively driven to apprehend, and lay to heart, what is Good and Lovely' (ST, 74). Davidson appears to follow Carlyle's insistence that, 'to Poetry, to Eloquence, to depth of Insight [...] always the characteristic of right performance is a certain spontaneity, an unconsciousness' (C, 7). In Davidson's play *Smith: A Tragic Farce*, the influence of Alexander Smith and his connections with the Spasmodic school, which advocated heroic instinct and independence of mind, are coupled with Carlylean notions of the instinctive, intuitive mind. The central character asserts 'Obey your nature, not authority' (135) as a defence against the systems and hypotheses of society such as 'hydra-headed creeds' and sciences 'That deem the thing is known when it is named' (236). His friend Hallowes gives up his work as a teacher, dismissing his teaching as having constituted 'squalid years / Of mental boot-blacking' and 'shameful pedagogy' (223), "turning children out like nine-pins, each / As doleful and as wooden' (224). Similarly, Carlyle asserts that 'we have machines for Education: Lancastrian machines; Hamiltonian machines; monitors, maps and emblems...Then, we

have Religious machines, of all imaginable varieties' (ST, 61). In *Sartor Resartus* Teufelsdröckh's philosophy proposes that all human ideas and institutions have become merely structures and systems which we create and which stifle and impede our thinking: Teufelsdröckh 'undertakes to make manifest, in its thousandfold bearings, this grand Proposition, that Man's earthly interests "are all hooded and buttoned together, and held up, by Clothes".' (SR, 40).

John A. Lester jr.[47] typifies critical attitudes by attributing Davidson's esteem for the instinctive and unconscious over habit and custom as deriving from Nietzsche. Certainly, Nietzsche accords with the views of Reidian Common Sense:

> What the sense feels, what the spirit knows, never has its end in itself. But sense and spirit would persuade you that they are the end of all things: that is how vain they are. Instruments and toys are sense and spirit: behind them still lies the self.[48]

Chronologically, however, Davidson's first encounter with non-mechanistic accounts of perceptual experience and the idea of the great man as an instinctive or elemental force must have derived from his reading of Carlyle. It is likely that Davidson's play *Bruce* (1884) is based closely on his reading of the Carlylean hero. Bruce asserts that 'first thoughts are best...let no second, murmuring soft, seduce / Their clear and forthright meaning' (147).

In a letter to the publisher John Lane, thanking him for favourable reviews, Davidson states that 'It is nothing, it is great, and high even, in a certain measure and kind, as Cromwell - who was the greatest man that ever lived - would have said to know that one's work, such as it is, is not altogether despised'.[49] Davidson's concept of Cromwell is taken from Carlyle's *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches* (1845) *Lectures on Heroes* 1841):

> Poor Cromwell, - great Cromwell! The inarticulate Prophet; Prophet who could not speak. Rude, confused struggling to utter himself, with his savage depth, with his wild sincerity [...]. Consider him. An outer hull of chaotic confusion [...]. And yet such a clear determinate man's energy working in the heart of that. A kind of chaotic man. The ray as of pure starlight and fire, working in such an element of boundless hypochondria, unformed black of darkness! And yet withal this hypochondria, what is it but the very greatness of the man? [...]. It is the character of a prophetic man; a man with his whole soul seeing and struggling to see. (OHHW, 217-8)

As a writer, Davidson was interested in Carlyle's literary style as the means by which he conveyed his thematic concerns. In *Sentences and Paragraphs* (1893) Davidson observes

that 'The stiff academic writing in 'Wotton Reinfred,' excellent in its kind, is in extraordinary contrast with the style Carlyle was about to develop; but here and there are passages unsurpassed, even by Carlyle himself' (SP, 94-6). Davidson cites the description of a portrait of Cromwell in 'Wotton Reinfred'[50] as an example of such a passage, suggesting that 'Only he [Carlyle] who was to substitute a higher idea of Cromwell could have stated so powerfully the highest then existing' (SP, 96).

Davidson and Nietzsche looked to Carlyle's instinctive and heroic man as a basis from which to establish a secular hero, a view more dynamic than James Thomson's resigned materialism. Such a figure would repel the moral and intellectual constraints of dogma and find liberty in a material universe. Nietzsche's Zarathustra predicts the coming of such a man, 'I will teach men the meaning of their existence - the overman, the lightning out of the dark cloud of man'.[51] Similarly Davidson, in poems such as 'The Hero', 'The Outcast', and 'The Pioneer' (1899)[52] shuns the systems, creeds and traditions which impede independent thought and the pursuit of truth. In 'The Outcast' the speaker asserts 'Soul, be your own / Pleasance and mart, / A land unknown, / A state apart' (1-4) and concludes with the resolve 'With scorn, with love / Affront the world.' (37-40). There is a consistent appeal within these poems to dare to set oneself apart from conventional thinking. He writes that 'The world on the whole and in the mass is neither very strong-minded nor very hard-hearted, and it gradually modifies the ideas of its great men to its own likeness' (SP, 79), turning displacement and dissociation from inherited ideas into a heroic condition. Similarities can be found in Nietzsche, 'The relationship between a genius and his age is like that between strong and weak, or between old and young: the age is relatively always much younger, thinner, more immature, less assured, more childish.'[53] Yet it should be remembered, that it was Reid who first defended a positive view of human free will and that our understanding is based upon immediate conception or notion and conviction concerning our perceptual experience.

In 'The Hero', the speaker asserts that 'My thought sublimes / A common deed' and concludes with the affirmation that:

> Above the laws
> Against the light
> That overawes
> The world I fight
> And win, because
> I have the might. (19-24)

The last line has echoes of Carlyle's 'might is right', emphasising that strength comes from integrity and truth. Davidson, emphasising individual integrity in the face of majority opinion, also states that 'the great poet is always a man apart'.[54] The characters that Carlyle created were to have an enormous and enduring impact upon Davidson. They range from the displaced young men, such as Wotton Reinfred and the sceptic Henry Williams, to his portraits of Cromwell and Frederick the Great. Davidson, disillusioned with the ethos of supply and demand which affected even literary production, and an increasingly mechanised philistine world, saw the hero figure as one who could adapt and endure. Davidson's clerk in 'Thirty Bob a Week' (1894), who is reconciled to his fate and can stare reality in the face without the solace of any creed or system, touches upon the value of the will and endurance in a way that is heroic: 'My weakness and my strength without a doubt / Are mine alone for ever from the first: / It's just the very same with a difference in the name / As 'thy will be done.' You say it if you durst!' (81-84). For Carlyle also, order was no longer sustained by a personal, caring deity but by the active effort and heroic struggle of man, as Behnken explains:

> Carlyle puts the ultimate responsibility for history and human destiny squarely On men's shoulders, not on God's. Indeed, men, especially Heroes, are the principal actors on the world's stage, for they must govern the world and be responsible for it. The Almighty God of the Calvinistic tradition, the God of grace and mercy, has been replaced by an abstract, unfeeling, impersonal destiny in the face of which man is compelled to act heroically or to be snuffed out.[55]

Both men place emphasis upon human rather than divine agency. Mirroring Carlyle's man of action and instinct, Davidson writes that:

> The men whose lives I wish to know thoroughly are warriors, kings, Statesmen, financiers, explorers, because their work is their conduct; it is their behaviour in the world that counts.[56]

Carlyle stresses individual endeavour. Behnken states that 'Man is Promethean, or Faustian, in Carlyle's view'[57]. Carlyle's doctrine of labour and quest for the Hero emphasise that the will to take control and to overcome is paramount. Life is a struggle made harsher without the solace of dogma but we must respond to this challenge with courage, we must not be passive because we are what we do; action is the product of the vital force within us. Behnken asserts that 'the Promethean aspects of human nature appear again and again in Carlyle's writings for they are the primary qualities of human life.'[58] Correspondingly, Davidson in his *Testament of John Davidson*, creates a self-projection in the form of a Carlylean Prometheus, and in his emphasis upon heroic endurance, labour

and struggle he closely follows Carlyle's precedent. He asserts 'By my own will alone' (95), 'my own sovereign will', (97) 'thus are men supreme' (98) and that 'I show the world: - Men are the Universe /Aware at last, and must not live in fear' (102-103).

In Davidson's play *Diabolus Amans* his hero, Angelus, asserts:

> The soul of man, the Mansoul that we know,
> Suffers a siege and lifelong, which demands
> Protracted heroism, and the strength
> That beaten, baffled, crushed and left for dead,
> Always recovers and repairs the breach
> As fast as it is made, and from the walls
> Shouts 'no surrender!' to the foe beneath (DA, 101-2)

With this affirmation of human fortitude comes an evocation of something closely approximating to Carlyle's work ethic, as the hero of the same play affirms that, 'Even I / In my worst days, I thought not at the end, / What pleasure have I had, but, what work done!' (DA, 134). It is this ethos, formulated by Carlyle, which is crucial to a contextual appreciation of Davidson's work for, as J.B. Townsend notes:

> Those who would attribute to Nietzsche this celebration of the human will as it rises above suffering and defeat have only to turn, for earlier, readily available precedents, to much of Victorian literature and to the poet's own efforts, written at a time when the German's work was not yet known in England.[59]

Despite Carlyle, Davidson and Nietzsche's shared iconoclastic status there remains a converse need to establish the stability of perspective appropriate to the authoritative voice of the prophet, the need to create a new self and a new social and philosophical vision. The narrative style and thematic preoccupations of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* with its obvious biblical parallels and inversions and its need for affirmative resolve to be found in the Übermensch, suggests a secular replacement for the lost absolutes of religious dogma. The pseudo-Christlike, prophetic Zarathustra proclaims:

> Behold, I teach you the overman. The overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth, and do not believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes![60]

Carlyle, Davidson and Nietzsche each endeavoured to formulate a new vision to replace the social and spiritual inheritance which they perceived as repressive or untenable. These writers make the problems of their changing society into the substance of their work. It is

a process of retreat and confrontation. Each is an observer, peripheral and isolated, but also a critic, actively engaging with social and theoretical questions.

Carlyle gave up his early intention to become a clergyman because he could not accept traditional doctrines. He wrote a sarcastic jingle in response to the Rev. F.D. Maurice's pamphlet defending the Thirty-nine Articles:

> Thirty-Nine Articles,
> Ye wondrous little particles,
> Did God shape His universe really by you?
> In that case I swear it,
> And solemnly declare it,
> This logic of Maurice's is true.[61]

Davidson and Carlyle found the rigidity of dogma hard to bear and Carlyle's satiric verse has much of the ironic tone and style of Davidson's poem 'The Rev. Habakkuk McGruther of Cape Wrath':

> Ye surely know that Scotland's fate
> Controls the whole wide world's well-being;
> And well ye know her godly state
> Depends on faith in sin's hell-feeing. (9-12)

Davidson blamed theology for producing myth-binding formulae that inhibits man's ability to think and to reason, he thought that belief systems obstructed knowledge and sought an empirical poetry which would be 'a statement of the world as it is'.[62] Davidson, like Buchanan and Thomson, rejected all creeds and gave predominance to human agency and understanding. Though Carlyle stopped short of absolute doubt he redefined man's relationship to God by emphasising human understanding applied to man's experience rather than reliance upon divine revelation. Carlyle is similar to Davidson and Buchanan in that he too places emphasis on active human agency:

> Carlyle's influence on traditional theology included the removal or erosion of the sense of a divine personality, omnipotence, and eternity [...]. Instead of the Almighty being principal actor on the world's stage, Carlyle has put man there. Carlyle emphasizes the aggressive, active side of human nature.[63]

Davidson was attracted to Carlyle's emphasis upon individual endeavour and reliance upon integrity and instinct, rather than received ideas, as a means to comprehend the world and to define his place within it.

Carlyle's philosophy, sense of history, and preoccupation with the heroic individual is akin to the myth-making activity which takes place in Davidson's Testaments. The emphasis here is upon self-consolidation: establishing a perspective equal in intensity and conviction to those which it seeks to replace. John A. Lester jr. writes that Davidson 'was in a sense a man foredoomed to failure, driven by a compulsion to speak authoritatively, defiantly to his age, and at the same time haunted by uncertainty as to the nature of truth and reality.'[64] Catherine Kerrigan also notes that 'Davidson came to believe that in a time of social upheaval the poet's task was to point the way to new paths of thought and conduct, and accordingly he saw the role of the poet as that of the prophet.' The Calvinist upbringing shared by Carlyle and Davidson made them suspicious of poetry merely for aesthetic value, it required a meaningful function. Such poetry demanded sacrifice and effort, as Kerrigan notes of Davidson, 'In his role as the transformer of reality the poet had to be prepared to cut himself loose from the orthodoxies of life and steer a course of defiant self-reliance.'[65] Ultimately, Davidson extends Carlyle's emphasis upon individualism and self-reliance to the extreme of self-realisation.

Finally, to return to the authority of influence. Davidson cannot be adequately understood in isolated comparison with Nietzsche alone, just as Carlyle cannot be adequately appreciated within an exclusive context of German thought. In fact the debt of influence may be reversed as LaValley, writing in reference to Carlyle and Nietzsche, rightly points out:

> *Sartor* is actually far closer to Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* than to Wordsworth's *Prelude*. The sharp contrast between Carlyle's militant theism and Nietzsche's even more militant atheism should not blind us to deeper similarities [...]. Like Carlyle, Nietzsche is marked by rebellion - in his case a total rebellion against all society and, in particular, Christianity. The resulting isolation, like that of Teufelsdröckh, is thus one of the central themes of the book.[66]

Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Carlyle's Teufelsdröckh, and Davidson's Man Forbid are each marked by loss of faith, isolation and a role as prophet or visionary. They combine their disillusionment of society with a need to save it by offering an alternative vision for humanity. In Davidson's case there exists an enduring tension between contempt for society and a need to be acknowledged as the provider of a vision which would free man from inhibiting tradition. The greatness of their heroes is measured by their defiance of popularist sentiment. Davidson condemns society for its mediocrity. He knows that his great man must not be worn down by the small-minded, conformist majority: 'The world on the whole and in the mass is neither very strong-minded nor very hard-hearted, and it

gradually modifies the ideas of its great men to its own likeness'(SP, 97). He establishes himself as an iconoclast casting out the challenge to his readers to extend their thoughts beyond dogma and seek truth: 'I...invite the attention of free intelligences, and if it may be, of intelligences, which, although not free, are yet able to elude the vigilance of whatever creed, system or theory has them in charge.'[67]

All three writers seek a new self-consciousness and self definition; they seek purpose within the contradictions that define human existence and experience. Each engages with the possibilities of irony, and perpetual variations of self-projection and the particular roles of self-questor, preacher, prophet and outcast are common to each. LaValley notes that:

> Carlyle's conception of selfhood and his tone and voice throughout *Sartor* herald Nietzsche's, which finds its proper subject matter in this peculiar sort of self-celebration. Though Carlyle mutes this sense of selfhood, he will later explore it by analogues of the self in history,the heroes of the past, a method far less direct and dangerous for him.[68]

Each has a propensity to dogmatism. Despite their dissociation from traditional belief systems their need to replace the security of these systems leads them to replicate the tone, style and intensity of the prophet. Each perceives the universe as a source of energy and activity. Davidson's poetic vision replaces Christian and classical imagery with a universe where the blind force of matter predominates to produce power, light and energy with its own impervious and amoral beauty. In comparison with Carlyle, LaValley suggests that:

> The problem of self-criticism and self-consciousness as a burden to the aesthetic mentality is never faced in *Zarathustra*, and the book itself threatens to dissolve into the very chaos feared by Carlyle.[69]

Whereas in *Sartor* randomness and chaos is contained within its literary method so that aesthetic activity becomes a means of preserving order. While, for Davidson, it is the poet who translates the individual will into an aesthetic vision, redefining the self in relation to society and to the universal nature of experience.

Each writer examines features of multiplicity and irony relating to the problem of identity and self definition. Nietzsche is more negative and extreme than either Carlyle or Davidson who described Nietzsche as 'the Nihilist of philosophy' SP, 73), commenting additionally that:

> Nietzsche is the most unphilosophic mind that ever attempted philosophy. He is a great poet seeking a system, instead of taking things on trust. He starts

> from nothing, and ends in nothing. He proves and disproves, believes and disbelieves everything; and he is as uncertain of the Nihilism to which he always harks back as he is of witchcraft (SP, 82).

As prophets without a creed but in search of a vision such despair suited neither Carlyle nor Davidson. Davidson was more positive than Nietzsche, affirming that, 'It cannot be said too often that there is no greater illusion than disillusion' (SP, 83). At the same time, however, Davidson went further than Carlyle. LaValley explains that:

> Philosophically [...] Nietzsche issues with a more elaborate and fully worked out belief in contradiction as the source of life and energy, as the fount of art and selfhood, and in tragedy as the source of joy itself, in which all the antinomies of life are not cancelled out but accepted. Carlyle could not reach this position, even though it was implied by his aesthetic activity in writing *Sartor*, because he felt it necessary to replace God with nature and then redefine not the self, but nature, something outside the self, as God.[70]

Davidson found Nietzsche's Nihilism repellent while conversely he was irritated that Carlyle did not extend his ideas far enough. Davidson suggested that:

> One reason for the immense bulk of Carlyle's writings possibly lies here. His [Carlyle's] Scotch reticence prevented him from declaring the heart of his message, but he wanted to and kept on trying: he never wrote his 'Exodus from Houndsditch'. (SP, 88-91)

Davidson did write his 'Exodus from Houndsditch', a poem in which a religious fanatic, preaching damnation, is witness to a ghostly vision of the cruelty and bigotry caused by religion over the centuries. The vision also reveals that with the demise of dogma a new peace is possible: 'No Hellish sewer poisoning the air, / No parish Heaven obliterating space' (194-195). A new world emerges where the people live in peace:

> With love and hope we go;
> We neither fear nor hate;
> We know but what we know;
> We have become as Fate. (201-204)

The religious fanatic is horrified, not by the vision of suffering caused by religious zeal but by this new world: 'The preacher, ghastlier than the phantom, cried / 'Get thee behind me, Satan!'' (213-214). The poem is a blatant indictment of the narrow-mindedness engendered by religious belief. Davidson appended the following epigraph, from Carlyle's *Journal* for February 9, 1848:

> *Exodus from Houndsditch.* That alas! is impossible as yet, though it is the gist of all writings and wise books, I sometimes think – the goal to be wisely aimed

> at as the first of all for us. Out of Houndsditch, indeed! Ah, were we but out, and had our own along with us.[71]

Davidson believed he had freed himself from the restraining framework of inherited tradition. He blamed Carlyle's Scottish reticence for failing to reach an absolute negation of inherited religiosity and traditional morality which Davidson himself determined to attain. He believed that Carlyle had not rebelled enough, while Nietzsche had found only despair in his rebellion. Davidson sought a dynamic form of materialism which would liberate human thought from tradition and dogma and include therein an imperative for self-realisation.

Irony and Dualism

Themes of irony and dualism are to be found in the work of Scottish critics and writers such as Gregory Smith, Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, David Daiches and Kenneth Simpson. They have inspired terms such as 'Antisyzygy', 'dualism' and 'dissociation', and they have fostered such literary strategies as parody and irony. They are to be found in Scottish literature's recurrent meeting of extremes, clash of opposites, simultaneous union of real and ideal, banal and fantastic, beautiful and grotesque, good and evil. They constitute a tradition that is both rich and challenging yet complex and problematic. They are evident in the language and imagery of the ballad tradition and in the works of the medieval Scots writers; in the post-Union cultural tensions of the eighteenth century, and in the processes of dissociation and re-evaluation of the nineteenth century. They are also foremost in the self-conscious radicalism of the early 20th century.

Irony is at the heart of Davidson's work. It is useful however, to distinguish between what may be termed metaphysical irony, that is irony on a grand scale, and more conventional ideas of irony as a local literary strategy. While there are many local ironies in Davidson's work it is this grand concept of irony that marks the discrepancy between the randomness of the universe and individual interpretations of it. In essence local irony may be taken to be the disparity between what someone says and what is taken out of it, while irony on a grand scale works with the disparity between what someone interprets about the universe and what it actually is. In the latter the individual can never get to the truth, as such, this kind of irony is an awareness of one's own limitations. Davidson's strategy to overcome this predicament is to use thesis and antithesis, dualism and debate.

Davidson's use of irony and dualism is central to his philosophy and his views of literature. He was attracted to irony because it acted as an antidote to dogma by undermining conceptual absolutes but it also embodied the limitations of human comprehension: it is liberating, and therefore subversive, but also destabilising. Davidson wrote that:

> It [Irony] is centric, the adamantine axis of the universe. At its poles are the illusions we call matter and spirit, day and night, pleasure and pain, beauty and ugliness. By it our enterprises are whirled away from our most resolved intentions. Irony is the enigma within the enigma, the open secret, the only answer vouchsafed the eternal riddle [...] My concern is [...] with the universe as I can grasp it. Irony is not a creed. The makers of creeds have always miscalled, denied some part of the world. Irony affirms and delights in the whole [...] I perceive the universe as a golden bough of Irony, flowering with suns and systems.[72]

The reader should note the fine touch of local irony referring to Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (1900) with its mythical and anthropological significance. Frazer used the golden bough as a symbol for the endless religions that mankind had created. Davidson like Frazer and the Enlightenment philosophers was also part of this anthropological, antiquarian universalising process. He agreed with Frazer as the above quotation indicates but he was also going beyond Frazer to a greater scale still.

To stress wholeness in opposition to partiality and to confront the tensions that endure within that precarious unity is a foremost characteristic of Davidson's work and links him both to earlier and later writers. Once again, the Carlyle-Davidson-MacDiarmid pattern of influence is pronounced. In relation to issues of identity Carlyle, in marked similarity to Davidson, writes that:

> Our being is made up of Light and Darkness, the Light resting on the Darkness and balancing it; everywhere there is Dualism, Equipoise; a perpetual contradiction dwells in us: 'where shall I place myself to escape my own shadow?' (C, 27)

MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man*, in similar iconoclastic style, rejects monocentric systems and theories by asserting: 'I'll hae' nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur / Extremes meet - it's the only way I ken / To dodge the curst conceit o' bein' richt / That damns the vast majority o'men',[73] and later, his vision of the divided self, he observes that 'A man's a clean contrairy sicht / turned this way in-ootside, / And, fegs, I feel like Dr. Jekyll / Tak'n guid tent o' Mr. Hyde'.[74] Davidson himself stated that, 'I love Irony [...]. Poetry itself [...] represents the Irony which is the soul of things'.[75] Davidson's dualism did not originate

from Nietzsche's amoral universe; it is merely akin to it, although Davidson appreciated the familiarity of Nietzsche's theory to that of his own reasoning.

Davidson's cultural displacement fostered his eclecticism. He found many sources of interest ranging from Carlyle, Reid, Kant, Fichte, Coleridge, Schelling, Nietzsche, Ibsen, Emerson and Thoreau, the Spasmodic poets and Whitman. J.B. Townsend argues that Davidson's 'sponge-like eclecticism',[76] instead of undermining his originality, actually enhances his interest as a writer because he had a specific agenda in mind: 'Other nineteenth-century poets had been or were to be ironists - Blake, Byron, Clough, Swinburne, Meredith, Hardy and Yeats - but Davidson was the only one to take upon himself the task of formulating in verse a complete philosophical system with cosmic irony at its core',[77] and it is for this reason that Townsend concludes that Davidson's ideas were more 'advanced and international than those of most of his contemporaries'.[78] Indeed, Davidson anticipated modernists such as Eliot and Woolf, the Italian futurists, Dada's nihilism, the surrealists and 20th century romanticism.

Despite this disparate frame of reference, this section would argue that the basis for Davidson's irony and dualism is principally Scottish. Ambiguity and opposition are recurrent concerns within Scottish literature, undermining narrative continuity, stability of perspective and clarity of reasoning. Hogg's *Confessions,* Stevenson's use of conflicting accounts in *The Master of Ballantrae*, and Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus,* typify this subversive and challenging form. Similarly, multiplicity of voice and perspective and the complex textual fabric of Scottish poetry achieves the same evocation of contrast, dichotomy and instability. Catherine Kerrigan argues that:

> 'Whaur Extremes Meet' is an apt epitaph for MacDiarmid, for he thrived on the conflict of ideas and interpreted the uncertainty of conflict as an energy producing process. Accordingly, his poetry reveals a man who cared less about holding to a consistent view of things than one who was prepared to celebrate life's paradoxes.[79]

This suggests an ongoing tradition for, like Davidson, MacDiarmid repeatedly experiments with the use of contrasts and comparisons in his lyric poetry: the juxtaposition of a dying look and a rainbow in 'The Watergaw', death with continuing life in 'Farmer's Death'. Davidson's poetry, with his use of disparate voices and perspectives, his reliance upon irony and hyperbole, his use of disparate forms and verbal eclecticism, cast a shadow of ambiguity over even his most extreme conclusions concerning war, empire and the nature of both the heroic man and nation. Davidson's most affirmative statements are undermined

by the dialectical form which he uses to reach them. The contrasting voices of liberal reformer and autocrat, Christian and atheist, progressive and traditionalist, all establish his conclusions upon a quicksand of opposition and contention. He is both influenced by, and a major influence within, a tradition of Scottish eclecticism, literary irony, and philosophical dualism. Davidson's attempt to construct a philosophical system from the concept of irony reflected upon the style and structure of his writing; forms such as the eclogue and 'tête-à-tête' discourse were necessary in order to express several viewpoints simultaneously. In this respect Eric Northey notes that Davidson's poems in the mid-nineties 'show the acceptance of contradiction finally worked out in poetical practice'.[80] Davidson's 'ironic' universe had to sustain every perspective so that, in tone and perspective, contradiction and incongruity is sustained. In Davidson's work, as Turnbull notes, 'we find what seems to be social criticism jostling with the most blatantly elitist propaganda; seemingly sympathetic pictures of the underdog (as in 'A Northern Suburb') lie alongside poems, like 'The Aristocrat', which imply that strength is the only virtue; simple nature-poetry contrasts with the brash celebration of a steam-engine or city-life'. [81] Turnbull also makes the point that irony is reflected not only in the subject-matter of Davidson's poetry but also in his style:

> A very noticeable feature of his diction, the rapid juxtaposition of grave and comic, colloquial and artificial, prosaic and lyrical elements is, in part, intended as a linguistic embodiment of the poet's 'ironic' view of things and designed to communicate an impression of both multiplicity and inclusiveness. This is especially apparent in the eclogues [...] but is also a prominent feature of his later verse. The example of Carlyle again seems to lurk in the background, and, as in Carlyle's style, the effect of these incongruities of diction though frequently not ineffective, often seems merely mannered.[82]

Turnbull tends to underestimate the depth to which irony mediates the philosophical questions and problems of identity which govern the work of both Davidson and Carlyle. He does, however, acknowledge the evocative landscape of contradictions captured in 'A Ballad in Blank Verse' and he also appreciates the style through which Davidson communicates his ironic perspectives. He notes that:

> Davidson's use of form frequently mirrors his concept of 'irony'. This apparent above all in the eclogues, where the dialogue - a favourite technique of Davidson's in his prose as well as his verse - enables him to present a wide variety of different opinions and aspects of a subject, to conflict with or complement each other, and occasionally merge into a higher, more inclusive unity. The poet creates, in the talk of the individual journalists, each with clearly defined personality and opinions, a clash of character and idea [...] The form of the eclogues is an emblem of the contrasting, multitudinous variety that Davidson found in the world and in his own mind - we might, indeed,

> apply to these poems Davidson's own observation on the main characters in *The Theatrocrat*: that they 'are made essentially out of the good and evil in myself.'[83]

Davidson used irony to enable him to remain detached and empirical, it became a vehicle for emotional and intellectual free license. As every truth was undermined by its own contradiction, according to the doctrine of universal acceptance, the ironist could sustain indifference toward all conventions. Irony is comprehensive, it includes everything and rejects nothing, indeed, irony actually embraces the existence of conflict within the universe.

The doctrines of paradox, irony and immorality were products of the writer's struggle to come to terms with a divided personality and acted, in Townsend's phrase, as 'philosophical splints to mend a fracture largely psychological.'[84] Davidson's use and reliance upon irony has been the subject of critical debate. Eric Northey asserts that Davidson's irony constituted only a short phase in his career, superseded by the adoption of Nietzschean 'immoralism'.[85] Northey is also critical of writers such as Townsend and Peterson who, in his opinion, 'have constructed Davidson's whole world view from a concept he held for three months.'[86] Townsend suggests a progressive pattern in Davidson's exploitation of irony, beginning with early works which 'contracted to transform an essentially verbal and negative irony, reflecting personal disillusionment, revolt, and uncertainty, into a constructive synthetic philosophy' and progressing in the lyrics, novels and essays of the mid-nineties to a form of irony 'even more fundamental to his thought and the basis for an individual style'. Finally Townsend sees Davidson as developing irony into a 'principle of cosmic order and unity' which 'led him to an unqualified acceptance of scientific materialism', concluding that 'a principle, which began as a rationalization of personal conflict [...] petrified into a glamorous synonym for the bleak stasis and terror of a despiritualized universe'.[87] It is suggested here, in agreement with Townsend, that irony was not an intermediate phase of Davidson's thought but a feature that is evident throughout his work and emerges far earlier than Northey suggests.

The play *Diabolus Amans: A Dramatic Poem*, published anonymously in 1885, is significant because it demonstrates Davidson's early exploration of the possibilities of moral and universal irony. As Carroll V. Peterson notes, its nine scenes are 'unified by ideas, not by a single action'.[88] Townsend also notes that 'It contains the frankest expression of his thought up to this time and furnishes indisputable evidence that he hewed

out the general form of his later philosophic system much earlier and more independently than up to now has been believed'.[89] The play explores the dichotomy between good and evil, reconciled in human relations. It is reminiscent of Arthur Hugh Clough's long poem 'Dipsychus and the Spirit' in which a debate takes place between a man and the devil. Like Davidson, Clough explores themes of dualism and identity as the hero of his poem is tempted by an amoral voice, which may be external, or possibly a devilish inner voice. The dialogue between hero and spirit is used by Clough to create a sense of ambivalence concerning conventional moral absolutes: the divisions between right and wrong becoming increasingly ambivalent as the poem develops. Like Clough, Davidson moves from conventional moral opposition and antithesis, to present good and evil as complex and largely in need of re-evaluation in a world which is mutable, amoral, inclusive and protean.

The play begins with a hypothesis, 'What if the Devil were a man in love, / and loved a woman good as women be / [...] - what's the sequel, say?' (DA, 1). The question is then posed by the hero, a poet called Angelus, among friends at a wine party. Using the conventional framework of romance and nature, the poetic drama surrounds the love of Angelus who takes upon himself the role of the devil in love with the virtuous Donna. This is the experimental sub-text beneath the romance genre which tentatively explores philosophical dualism and attempts to formulate a perspective outwith the bounds of religious and moral orthodoxy. In response to Angelus's hypothesis a friend remarks, 'Away with it, your found antithesis, / your sharp division into good and bad'(DA, 10). This question is then repeated by Donna who asks, 'Could any be Diabolus and love, / Or loving could be Diabolus?' To which Angelus replies, 'He could not love and be Diabolus; / The more a being loves the less he sins; / and perfect love were perfect purity.' (DA, 57).

The play attempts to substitute opposition for unity by subverting the moral absolutes of Christian theology. Angelus refers to the church as a stifling place; it represents spiritual and intellectual confinement:

> Give me a world of sky, for nothing else
> Is wide enough to breathe in - not a church;
> The air that is bottled up from Sunday morn
> To Sunday night is of the nether pit,
> Diabolus, and God is out of doors;
> Yea, if there's any place where He is not,
> It is a temple with its breathed breath,
> Bad as a tavern or a theatre. (p.50)

Through Angelus and Donna, and the nature/romance context of the play Davidson attempts to escape the Christian psychology of moral opposition. A song from the play anticipates Davidson's later materialism:

> As our hearts beat together in mingled pulsation,
> And with waves ever widening beat through creation,
> Til the heavens are acquiver with harmonies choral,
> And Ether vibrates with the splendour auroral. (p.39)

Townsend suggests that 'The nature of his [Angelus's] divinity is protean, however, as Angelus runs the gamut from transcendentalism to naturalism, from evangelical Protestantism to scientific humanism.'[90] This early play exhibits an eclectic and protean restlessness, engaging with a range of mid-century concepts and ideas: scepticism, eroticism, romantic naturalism, evolutionary theory, pantheism, theism, idealism and agnosticism. Peterson suggests that:

> *Diabolus Amans* is the *Testament of John Davidson*, 1885 version [...] it is a statement of his belief and unbelief [...]. Davidson's state of mind in 1885 surely points forward to the fully materialistic synthesis of the last years of his life [...]. A combination of religious scepticism, empiricism, and belief in science may be leading the way; but Davidson clearly still clings to spiritual realities [...] love, immortality, and poetic ecstasy.[91]

Similarly Townsend comments that:

> *Diabolus Amans* is a potpourri of contemporary advanced thought, gathered by an impressionable and as yet unfocused sensibility. If this early play lacks form and centrality, it is because Davidson's own personality and thought are still inchoate [...] Angelus, like all of Davidson's heroes, is an idealized self-portrait. Through his protagonist's anguished quest, the author has traced his own rebellion against Calvinist and evangelical orthodoxy and his search for a substitute faith.[92]

In his search Davidson creates a play which provides a representation of mental and moral duality. The tensions within this exploration are manifested in the figure of the double. Having no anchor within a framework of oppositions, Angelus begins to behold visions of a 'spectral self.' Townsend suggests that these hallucinations reflect 'Davidson's own struggle to come to terms with a divided personality and foreshadow the doctrines of 'irony' and 'immorality''.[93] Townsend has noted that 'the psychological phenomenon of the

dual or multiple personality characterized many of the figures of the turn of the century [...]. Like literary fabrication and self-parody, narcissism, the multiple personality, and bisexuality are manifestations of a romantic irony which pervades the past century; they are symptoms of its quest for a solution to the conflicts which haunt it.'[94] Townsend's examples include the writing of Yeats, Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo), William Sharp as 'Fiona McLeod', and Oscar Wilde.

Yet the double has a distinctive role in Scottish literature. Hogg's use of the division between Robert Wringhim / George Colwan and Robert Wringhim / Gil Martin in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) is a classic example. The double is also a recurrent figure in Stevenson's work. John Herdman writes that 'Stevenson fell heir to the richest psychological insights of the imaginative exploration of mental and moral duality.'[95] Stevenson's short story 'Markheim' (1885), the play *Deacon Brodie* (1878), the novel *The Master of Ballantrae*, (1889) and, most obviously, the novella *Jekyll and Hyde*, (1886), all illustrate his enduring fascination with dualism. Moreover, such dualism is not merely fictional. The emphasis upon moral opposition and cultural and linguistic division have produced a series of writers who have adopted literary pseudonyms, notably 'Fiona MacLeod' (William Sharp); Hugh Fowlis (Neil Munro); Lewis Grassic Gibbon (Leslie Mitchell); James Bridie (O.H.Mavor); Fionn MacColla (Tom MacDonald); Ian MacLaren (John Watson); and Hugh MacDiarmid (Christopher Murray Grieve). It has been regularly speculated by critics that this adoption of a pseudonym (or in Hogg's case the fictitous role of Editor) is due to uncertainty regarding criticism and insecurity concerning their cultural position. In both *Diabolus Amans* and *Smith: A Tragic Farce* Davidson uses the fictional paradigm to explore and reflect his personal crisis of identity within a framework of literary irony and philosophical dualism.

Self-doubt and insecurity as to his moral status lead Angelus to contemplate his identity. He begins by addressing the self-duplication that lies within paternity: 'Lives there the man who fears not fatherhood, / To reproduce himself in son of his, / Perpetuating his besetting sin, / Creating generations yet unborn?' (DA, 16) From such speculation he imagines himself as the devil, and his searching spirit meeting with Helen of Troy. From this the first thought of a spectral self emerges: 'there arose betwixt the Night and me / The spectral self, and I survived the sight: [...] / as it is, I cannot see myself / for others, whose pursuits so poor and vain, [...] / Have sunk into my soul such scorn of men / That often I am half-inclined to fear, / 'I am the best man I have ever known'(DA, 16-17). Just as Hogg's Gil-Martin first appears to Robert Wringhim when he is inflated with pride due

to the confirmation of his elect status, here too it is after an assertion of ego that a vision of himself appears before Angelus:

> Horror of horrors! what art thou? - myself;
> O maddening apparition, how I hate thee;
> Would thou wert flesh and blood that I might
> slay thee! (DA, 17)

Later he must confess to Donna that he has had such visions of self:

> Listen! I have this - is it second sight?
> Power to project from me the spectral self -
> The most appalling wraith, the ghost of
> ghosts,
> It came to me but now at dead of night,
> Donna, I saw myself, that I,
> The self I do not love, and could not love,
> The self which I would slay if it were flesh. (DA, 35)

Angelus becomes tormented by his self projections which are symptomatic of the fragmentation created by forced moral absolutes. Townsend comments that:

> Pursued by remorse for his profligacy and feeling unworthy of the pure Donna, Angelus is soon troubled by visions of his 'spectral self', a variation on the *Doppelganger* or 'double' [...]. In the case of Angelus, who is Davidson, these visions are prompted by a vestigial Calvinistic conscience and an involuntary yearning of the body for its sloughed-off soul.[96]

Angelus complains that:

> My body has been paralysed by frost
> And winter, and my soul been doubly live;
> And now my soul hath sickened unto death,
> And this coarse clay, my body, never ailed;
> Methinks the twain might go their several
> ways
> Without a break in continuity
> Of this mysterious *Me*. Nay, more than this,
> I have dropped my body some five times or
> so,
> But I am I, the same I that I was,
> I have risen again; it is not hard
> To hold the resurrection from the dead. (DA, 62-3)

There is a parallel here with MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* as both protagonists wrestle with a spectral self. MacDiarmid's Drunk Man expresses the same sense of paralysis 'This horror that I writhe in is my soul' (318-20) and dualism 'My ain soul looks me in the face.' (335)

The action of Davidson's play shifts to France as Angelus continues to search for a resolution of his fragmented state. Angelus speaks of his identity as being protean and contradictory, perpetually evading the imposed singularity of belief systems: 'If I be Christian or Mohammedan / Or both, or Catholic or Protestant / Or neither, - these are points you cannot / clear' (DA, 67). He sees doctrinal orthodoxy as a force which bifurcates the soul of man by its tendency to judge and categorise and feels that he is also judged:

> My slack observance of your special rites,
> The service done to man in prayer and praise,
> Deeming me 'irreligious', 'sceptical',
> Joining two words that are not joined in
> Heaven. (p.67)

In Scene V, while eavesdropping upon an Evangelical service, in which the Pastor reproaches his congregation with the words, 'Thou art a sinner, knowest thou hast sinned, / And as a soul that sinneth thou must die' (DA, 74), Angelus responds with ambivalence:

> Sin, what is sin? - so artificial seems
> The line 'twixt vice and virtue, changing so
> With clime and century; shifting for state
> And subject, man and woman, you and me. (DA, 74)

Angelus finds no resolution to his divided state within either Protestant or Catholic dogma and in his struggle to find unity he affirms, '- I am a poet! and the soul of all' (DA, 79). Angelus is one step nearer to Davidson's affirmation of finding God within the self. As yet, however, he remains unable to accept an entirely relativistic state negotiated by an autonomous self. He therefore has yet another vision of self-division which he decides to attempt to resolve through good works:

> And lo! one night, my early self, the Past,
> Stood like an angel by the present Me;
> Linked and divided were we by a chain
> That coiled about my feet and sent its chill
> Through all my shuddering frame, a fearful
> coil
> Of actions forged and cast in triple steel.
> And when the phantom-self and phantom-
> chain
> Had vanished like a vision, saw I then
> That right was possible as wrong had been,
> That as I lost my heaven I might regain
> By doing good each day and all day long. (DA, 108)

The next Scene (Scene VIII) switches to a London hospital where Angelus listens to an account given by sister Sibyl of the suffering in the city (DA, 120-2). Angelus finds her life of stringency too limiting, since it does not unify but rather constrains the soul, and he asserts: 'you need to fill / Your soul when drained and dry at every fount, / At books and music and society, / and at the silence of the sky and stars' (DA, 127-8). The nun comments aside '- his own identity; / Lose it or merge it would he not for worlds, / Not though he lost the part to gain the whole' (DA, 130).

Abandoning dogma and good works, the play moves to the final scene in which Angelus returns to Donna. Having failed to find reconciliation for the opposition between his vice and her virtue within conventional morality the two are unified within the human compromise of their relationship. It is within this context alone that Angelus can liberate himself from the dichotomy of moral absolutes. It should be noted however that for all Angelus is the devil he doesn't seem particularly evil. The character is typically and deliberately ironic and reductive on Davidson's part as he never reveals any splendidly wicked deeds. Although the humour is often obscured by Davidson's inability to refrain from his own brand of secular preaching, Townsend notes that:

> The purpose of Davidson's startling morality play is not dramatic [...] but frankly doctrinal and didactic. It rejects by turn the doctrines of original sin and divine election [...]. In their place it offers the supreme sanction of natural impulse, individual experience and inner vision.[97]

Extending this point, Townsend also states that 'for Davidson's hero God does not exist outside of man [...] in whom alone exist the strength, purity and power of redemption commonly attributed to divinity'.[98] The oppositions of good and evil, matter and spirit, man and God, are ultimately reconciled by Davidson in the unifying relativism of human nature. Nonetheless this kind of drama protests and blusters and is on too grand a scale to actually be drama; Davidson's preaching is done at the expense of dramatic action.

Dualism and the divided self are themes which were at the forefront of Davidson's thought in the 1880s. His play, *Smith: A Tragic Farce*, written very shortly after *Diabolus Amans* in 1886, but not published until 1888, extends the preoccupations already established in the earlier work. The play's title, 'A Tragic Farce', like that of the poem 'A Ballad in Blank Verse', pinpoints a meeting of opposites or extremes. Davidson draws upon an extreme form of writing associated with the Spasmodic School as a medium in which to contain the ironic extremes of tragedy and farce. Davidson's principal character bears the name of the leading Spasmodic poet Alexander Smith (1830-1867), and the play itself is dedicated

to Smith's friend and an advisor of Davidson's, Professor John Nichol. Although Smith's reputation was somewhat impaired by his association with the Spasmodic poets, Davidson was attracted to his urban themes, impressionistic essays and ironic observations. Additionally, the Spasmodic poets' use of a heroic, intense and mannered style provided an ideal stylistic framework for Davidson's subversive irony. It was also sufficiently self-conscious and extreme to supply the degree of artistic liberty and free licence which he sought. Smith's influence was particularly enduring, ranging from the urgent, sensuous imagery of his early work which influenced both Davidson's urban and rural poetry, to his later interest in irony and dualism which led him to refine and develop a new sophistication from the earlier work of the Spasmodics. J.B. Townsend explains that:

> The epithet 'Spasmodic', which Carlyle had originally applied to Byron, was appropriately borrowed by Professor William Edmonstoune Aytoun of Edinburgh to designate this younger school of poets [...]. The Spasmodics, several of whom were born or lived in Scotland, had been discovered and 'puffed' by the Reverend George Gilfillan of Dundee [...]. Inspired by a passionate devotion to the revolutionary principles of 1848 and a hatred of Scottish materialism and religious intolerance, the Spasmodic school was in certain respects a regional movement. Although related to Byron, Moore and Campbell to the tradition of the romantic outlaw stemming from the Continent, it developed under peculiar conditions and, properly regarded, is a trunk line of the romantic movement. *Diabolus Amans* and *Smith* perpetuated a strain that had apparently died out [...] By combining it with other romantic strains, these plays give the Spasmodic tradition new vigour and amplitude, if little refinement.[99]

Jerome Hamilton Buckley lists the main features of the Spasmodic School as including 'the concept of the poet as a divinely inspired creature with an inalienable right to eccentricity, a right to despise the conventions that bound other men and to indulge a brooding genius in studied self-absorption'. He also describes them as yielding to 'ranting emotion' and 'titanic egotism'.[100]

Davidson used these features of Spasmodic verse drama as a vehicle for his irony, self-mockery and satiric exploration of extremes. These features recur again in figures such as Maxwell Lee, Earl Lavender and Ninian Jamieson, with their intensity of feeling and singularity of perspective, but *Smith* provides the earliest and most complete assimilation of the Spasmodic style for ironic purposes. The Spasmodic hero glorified the individual in all his subjectivity, spontaneity, irregularity of temper, rejection of moral and social orthodoxy, and his right to determine his own destiny. While Townsend should be praised for recognising Davidson's exploitation of the Spasmodic style, he nonetheless fails to fully appreciate Davidson's use of ironic humour, stating that, 'the playwright is fully

conscious of the absurdity of his plot, although this does not deter him from using claptrap as a vehicle for his most serious ideas'. He does however crucially note that 'the comedy in *Smith* is inseparable from its seriousness'[101] and this is an inherent part of the play's structural and stylistic dualism.

Comic farce, as the play's title indicates, is used as an ironic counterpoint to the serious themes of subversion which Davidson presents in a stylistically self-reflexive way. Davidson's plot is self-consciously condensed, boldly defined, flamboyant and extravagant. Parody and hyperbole are used to create a volatile, 'rebellious' text that pushes against the parameters of its own form and the expectations of both romantic and comic convention. The drama centres upon two characters, Smith, the impetuous, independent hero, and Hallowes, his sensitive poet-friend. The latter, having resigned from what he perceives as the pedantry of teaching, has found it impossible to attain recognition as a writer. At Smith's suggestion they leave London for Garth, described as a retreat 'in the North, a hamlet like a cave, / Nestling unknown in tawny Merlin's side'(S, 227). It is here that Smith falls in love with Magdalen, a young woman who is already betrothed. The ridiculously rapid pace of Davidson's plot sweeps both protagonists toward a conclusion in which their problems are resolved in suicide, an act committed by Hallowes from his despair of society, and by Smith in defiance of its restraints.

Part of the play's dualism lies not only in the counterpointing of tragedy with farce but also within the complementary opposition of its two central protagonists. Townsend has noted that:

> In the single figure of Angelus [*Diabolus Amans*] [...] Davidson had attempted often with confusing results to portray his own complex ambitions, doubts, and compulsions. In his next play [*Smith*] by simple parthenogenesis he portions out his personality between two characters, the poet Hallowes and the thinker Smith. This device bears earmarks [sic] of psychological conflict...Hallowes, the renegade schoolteacher and thwarted poet, represents [...] the hypersensitive, gentle, romantic young man yearning for approval from his fellows [...] Smith represents all that Davidson aspired to be [...]. He is a stalwart, intrepid, articulate rebel [...] he is a man of virile strength and resolute action.[102]

Townsend adds that Hallowes and Smith are a 'composite self-portrait of opposite but not mutually exclusive *personae* in which Davidson saw himself'.[103] As in *Diabolus Amans* the theme of the double emerges once again. Hallowes and Smith are a variation on the theme of the double within Scottish writing, they exist separately but function as divergent aspects of a single character, expressing the uncertainty and fragmentation that is recurrent

in post-Union Scottish writing. What Townsend fails to recognise is that this type of 'composite self-portrait' has a distinctively Scottish dimension.

In failing to recognise this tradition Townsend attempts to align Davidson to several traditions of irony, parody and multiplicity of voice and persona but entirely overlooks the Scottish dimension. He makes reference to Socratic irony which 'arouses a sense of insoluble conflict' and exploits 'constant self-parody'.[104] Socratic irony is a term coined originally by Friedrich Schlegel to describe a type of romantic relativism which is close to that of Davidson. Schlegel defines it as follows:

> Socratic Irony is a unique form of conscious dissimulation...In it is to be included all jest, all earnest, everything transparently open and everything deeply concealed [...]. It introduces and arouses a sense of insoluble conflict between the finite and the absolute, between the impossibility and yet the necessity of a complete communication between the two. It is the freest of all licenses for through it one is enabled to rise above himself.[105]

Townsend also refers to Romantic Irony as a literary strategy, 'seeking to deny all commitment and therefore all responsibility, and to enjoy complete licence.'[106] He refers to Irving Babbit's definition of the romantic ironist who 'pretends not to take himself or his ideals seriously and conceals himself behind a mask of self-parody.'[107]

Taking the mainstream critical approach Townsend attempts to fit Davidon's work into, or at least to align him with, more widely recognised and 'mainstream' literary traditions. He fails to recognise a distinctly Scottish literary tradition of parody, of use of multiple or dual personae, and irony, which should be recognised for having a significant status and style in its own right. The danger of Townsend's critical method is that it perpetuates the view of Scottish writers as a marginalised group drawing upon other larger literary movements, rather than reacting to their own cultural traditions in a resourceful way.

Moreover, the use of dual personae and irony in Smith capitalises upon the intensity and spontaneity of the Spasmodic tradition. Davidson counterpoints sincerity with humour, the self-inspired individual with a moribund society, the assertive and instinctual man with the sensitive and self-critical one, grand romantic themes of love, independence and death with reductive comic farce. Despite his inveterate habit of preaching he does sustain the comic and ironic elements. The result is that the play is deliberately protean: it is earnest yet self-deprecating, trivial and profound, it veers between freedom and restraint, north and south, city and country, sincerity and pretension. The themes of personal autonomy, the instinctual heroic man, professional failure, social restraint and the dignity and

defiance in suicide are utterly serious, yet Davidson evades complete commitment to any theme or conviction by the parodic style and delivery of his drama. His two heroes project dichotomies within his own frame of mind yet he stops short of defining their characters in detail, just as the suicides evade poignancy through their rushed presentation. The play is thus thoroughly dualistic, reducing everything, including its own style and content, to paradox. Davidson is determined to remain the eclectic ironist, able to evade conventions and expectations, to avoid commitment and allegiance, and to retain all things in an elastic framework of contradiction.

The first sentence establishes the tone and intent of the play as a whole. One of the characters, Brown, comments, 'Truth is an airy point between two cliffs / Of adamant opinion: safest he / Who foots it far from either beetling brink' (S, 219). This is a typical metaphysically ironic statement undermining the certainty of any truth. It illustrates that Davidson's views were formed much earlier than critical appraisal has acknowledged. There is little difference between the irony and dualism developed in *Smith* and Davidson's later use of discourses and multiple perspectives. In a discourse between a playwright and a critic, entitled 'Literature and Philosophy' Davidson both defines irony and provides an ironic presentation of it at the same time. Firstly, the relationship between literature and philosophy is itself defined as ironic:

> 'I have been,' said the Playwright, 'a student of Philosophy since I could read, and I shall be till I die [...]. Lately I have read little else, as it became imperative for me to search out the relation of Literature to Philosophy - that is to say, the relation of the Soul of Man to the Universe.' 'And have you found that relation?' 'I have found a relation that satisfies me in the meantime. It is clear that these two worlds, Literature and Philosophy, are related and divided by a profound antithesis, and yet exist within each other.'

The Playwright goes on to state that it is the nature of Literature to keep on absorbing all science. Yet this absorption is not cohesive but ironic, for the Playwright is forced to concede that 'I hold by literature, but the soul of man cannot live by Literature alone; wherefore I have recourse to the madness of Philosophy.' The tone of the Playwright, eccentric and self-contradictory, is a personification of Davidson's ironic perspective. In this discourse the Playwright concludes that:

> 'irony is perhaps the last word of philosophy, the nearest approach to truth.' 'What is truth?' 'Truth is the reconciliation of antagonisms. Irony integrates good and evil, the constituents of the universe. It is that Beyond-Good-and-Evil, which somebody clamoured for.'[108]

This latter perspective is remarkably consistent with Davidson's dramatisations of 1885 and 1886 in *Diabolus Amans* and *Smith* respectively. The dating of both works suggest that Davidson's thinking owes much to a specifically Scottish form of irony and dualism. Anglo-centric criticism has done much both to rob Davidson of his integrity and to obscure the enormous significance of Scottish literature in relation to irony and dualism. One of Davidson's early critics, Hayim Fineman, rightly asserted that Davidson's 'formal Nietzschean thought merely intensified tendencies that already possessed him.'[109] Sadly, however, Fineman does not give sufficient consideration to the Scottish dimension of Davidson's formative thought. Without acknowledgement of Davidson's cultural background critical attention has tended to appropriate his thought to the influence of more widely recognised sources.

Eric Northey is particularly damning. Noting Davidson's denial of Nietzsche's influence, he suggests that 'the denial is disingenuous and quite unconvincing'.[110] Northey unsurprisingly displays no understanding of Scottish traditions of irony and dualism. Similarly John A. Lester confines his examination of Davidson exclusively to a comparison with Nietzsche. This seems blatantly inaccurate as the first definite reference which Davidson makes to Nietzsche is in an article for *The Speaker*, dated 28 Nov., 1891,[111] and later revised for the Glasgow Herald in March 1893.[112] Both articles translate large sections of an earlier article by the French literary critic Theodor de Wyzewa, and Davidson does not display any great affinity or interest in the German philosopher at this point. Thereafter, Davidson does not return to an examination of Nietzsche until 1896. Davidson himself felt so misrepresented by critics who associated his work with Nietzsche's influence that he wrote a disclaimer in an article for the Daily Chronical of 23 May 1902:

> I should be glad if you would allow me to point out that I am not a disciple of Nietzsche. The gist of Nietzsche, so far as I know him, will be found in my play, *Smith: A Tragic Farce*, written in 1886 long before I had even heard the name of Nietzsche.[113]

The 'gist of Nietzsche' that is akin to Davidson's thought is outlined in the following description by D.W. Hamlyn:

> he [Nietzsche] urges men to take up certain attitudes to life [...] he speaks in glowing terms [...] of the emergence of the Ubermensch [...] who will transcend the guilt-laden inhibitions of ordinary men, in a joyous affirmation of life, yet in mastery of himself and his instinctive drives. This is a form of goodness which is [...] beyond good and evil in the ordinary sense. For in that ordinary sense good and evil are opposed to each other and presuppose each

> other..the Superman has to transcend ordinary beliefs and attitudes...he goes beyond ordinary socially determined attitudes [...]. A morality is [...] a set of rules or customs imposed by society, and as such it is antithetical to what is natural [...]. From this derive [...] repression and bad conscience [...]. It is, he believes, brought about by the institution of religion. Nietzsche's declaration that God is dead [...] emphasises his view of the role of religion in general, and of Christianity in particular, in reinforcing the slave morality [...]. The Superman is a free spirit for whom anything is possible.[114]

The characters of Angelus and Smith are indeed informed by such a perspective - but there are other affinities in Davidson's work. There are facets of Reidian common-Sense philosophy which Ralph Jessop has related to Carlyle's thought and which, Davidson, in turn, would certainly have absorbed. Jessop lists the following characteristics of Reidian Common-Sense philosophy:

> Scottish thought as articulated by Reidian common-sense philosophy suggests an array of characteristics: an underlying distrust of unwarranted individual authority; an egalitarian or anti-elitist perspective which supports the autonomy and power of the individual human intellect...crucial reliances upon fundamental intuitions and thus on immediate (unmediated) cognisance of reality at a basic level [...] a pragmatism and practicality which accepts limitation and shuns self-indulgent and ill-disciplined theorising [...] a progressive empiricism which nonetheless accepts that human cognitive powers are limited and condition what is known; a hard-headed, thoroughgoing, and at times aggressive critical argumentativenes which is relentlessly logical [...] playful and yet strategic uses of humour [...] an abhorrence of confusion and of constructions of human identity that describe human nature as fundamentally self-divided and deluded and which thereby weaken individual autonomy; [...] a nescient scepticism which holds that the highest wisdom is to know the vastness of human ignorance.[115]

There are differences between the Reidian/Carlylean perspective and Davidson's. As a materialist Davidson is cynical concerning the spiritual aspect of human awareness, but the Reidian emphasis upon the autonomy of the individual intellect, knowledge from experience, employment of argument, use of humour, scepticism have pronounced affinities with Davidson's thinking. Reidian philosophy also shares Davidson's distrust of systems, sects, theories and the prejudices of education, religion and philosophy which colour individual judgement:

> In his attempts to expunge prejudice Reid clearly identifies himself with the progressive drive of the Enlightenment to eradicate superstition and embrace scientific advancement. The prejudicing effect of a particular philosophical or religious system could be profound [...] Reid holds that systems, doctrines or theories can profoundly influence and may alter or corrupt the way we view the world, the ways in which we conduct ourselves, and even perhaps our ordinary perceptions and judgements.[116]

Jessop also notes that:

> Reid appears to think that the prejudicing effect of *'the systems or sects in which we have been trained, or which we have adopted'* can adulterate the native powers of even simple cognitions. Such 'prejudices' can also pervert the native power of judging in self-evident, fundamental propositions.[117]

Davidson's autonomous hero is as much Reidian or Carlylean as he is Nietzschean. Jessop suggests that Reid's Common-Sense philosophy is characteristically Scottish in terms of its emphasis upon the role of humour in argument, distrust of authority, emphasis on intuition and pragmatism, practicality, language and logic.[118] These features are also apparent in Davidson's work but they have been neglected due to an over-emphasis upon similarities with Nietzsche.

Davidson and Language

Issues of language are closely related to issues of identity. Accent, vocabulary, meaning and context are subtly and inextricably linked with associations relating to self-perception, both on a personal and a national scale. It is not surprising, therefore, that language has been a repeated source of experimentation within Scottish literature. In writers such as Carlyle, Davidson and MacDiarmid there exists an acute self-consciousness concerning the relationship between language and identity. In each case this awareness extends beyond the cultural to a philosophical appreciation of the representational weaknesses and potential of language.

Davidson was well aware of the function of language as the medium through which the writer could create and project a sense of identity and perspective. He was equally aware that the writer is also forced to negotiate with language and is even compromised by its limitations as an expressive medium. The rules of any language system impose a formal continuity upon the otherwise imprecise and disparate elements of human cognisance. Furthermore, language is complicated by the associations and attitudes which politicise and thereby problematise its representative function. Imposed values determine the status of different kinds of idiom establishing, for instance, the tensions between standard English and vernacular speech. The writer must endeavour to establish and project his identity (his literary voice or perspective) through, and in relation to language, but at the same time Davidson's formative experiences had made him acutely aware of the problematic relationship between language and identity. He had been uneasy with the 'mongrel Scotch' and the 'Tagged echoes of the lad of Kyle' which he criticised in the

monologue 'Ayrshire Jock', but felt equally restrained by the dictates of standard English. Indeed, Davidson frequently reverted to working class or vernacular speech in order to achieve realism and expressive efficacy. T.S. Eliot was fascinated by his depiction of a Cockney clerk in the poem 'Thirty Bob a Week' (1894). Eliot wrote that 'the personage that Davidson created in this poem has haunted me all my life' and that in it Davidson had 'freed himself completely from the poetic diction of English verse of his time,' resulting in what Eliot described as 'the complete fitness of content and idiom'.[119] Davidson's use of idiomatic speech suggest a degree of dissatisfaction with the style and values associated with standard English.

Davidson's experiments with language are innovative and eclectic, as Townsend observes: 'Davidson's diction, like his metrics, is richly varied [...]. Elizabethanisms and other archaic expressions, Scottish vernacular, cockney slang, and coinages occur side by side'.[120] Davidson's techniques show that MacDiarmid's linguistic experiments were not part of a radical break with the past but rather part of an ongoing process of experimentation. Davidson, following Clough, Geddes and Whitman, established the desire to find new ways of expression. Turnbull refers to Davidson's use of language and its associative effects. He suggests that a:

> mixture of old and new elements is discernible in the poet's language and imagery [...] a tendency towards artificiality, exoticism, and quirkiness [...] Davidson's verse abounds in applied, artificial language [...]. Words like 'scrolled', 'embossed', 'lacquered', and 'diapered' constantly reappear [...]. The macabre, *outré* imagery which the poets of the *fin de siècle* borrowed from Baudelaire and the Symbolists in their bizarre search for beauty in the unclean and unsavoury, an 'impressionist' fascination for the effects of light [...] a liking for synaesthetic effects, all are well represented in Davidson's work.[121]

Davidson explored the capacity and limitations of language, engaging with its potential to convey everything from character and state of mind, to the capacity to offer philosophical and psychological insight with directness and realism. His background and education armed him with an enduring awareness of the social and political associations that problematise the choice and significance of language. His early association with Professor Nichol at Glasgow University, and with Swinburne, contrasted with the Burnsian heritage referred to in 'Ayrshire Jock'. His interest in philosophy reinforced his dissatisfaction with the disparity between sign and signified (the Lockean distinction between symbol or word and idea).[122] Davidson recognised, therefore, that identity as conveyed within language could easily be artificial and was inevitably partial and imperfect, as Locke had argued:

> To me it is strange that men should still suppose, because they can speak and write, that therefore they can say and think what they feel. It is not true: thought and feeling are themselves, and cannot be expressed: words are another thing - themselves also: even action is a poor proxy. Speech, written or oral, represents cerebration and emotion as little as the House of Commons represents Great Britain [...]. It is probable that the whole literature of the world is a lie.[123]

Davidson was acutely aware of the flawed correlation between the faculties of perception and communication. He was intrigued both by the search for the reality behind phenomena and by the inability to ascertain the nature of truth either of the substantive world or of the essential nature of others. In consequence he wrote that:

> All alike men breathe, eat and drink, procreate and die [...]. But while there is likeness there is absolute and universal unlikeness [...]. No two minds understand in the same way the simplest idea.[124]

In this, Davidson reflects upon the isolation of humanity due to the inability to either communicate or apprehend with sufficient accuracy to attain either fellowship or self-understanding. The writer stands at the heart of this dichotomy. His role is to convey concepts through language and to use language to give vivacity and import to his ideas. Davidson felt that this had never been attained throughout the history of literature. Indeed, he believed that literature offered an inheritance that acted more as an impediment than as an aid to creative writing:

> Literature is the greatest foe of literature. We have jungles to cut down, gag after gag to wrench from our mouths before we can see the vision that should be beheld, can speak the word that should be spoken. Systems are jungles. Languages are gags and bandages, which we must undo and transmute into meaning: our meaning. Every word we use is saturated with ages of meaning not ours; yet we must make ourselves so well understood that man, compelled to misunderstand us in self-defence, will maintain that it is allegory, that it is symbol, that we do not mean it. We must write greatly, we must be great.[125]

From the Scottish Enlightenment onwards, Hume, Reid, Carlyle and Davidson examined the representative function of language as it is negotiated through the faculties of comprehension and perception. Hume believed that human understanding relies upon imagination, arbitrary processes of association, and intensity of feeling, as guides to understanding. He concluded that we rely upon these factors in order to make sense of experiential knowledge. These interpretative processes render all understanding partial and uncertain. The mind is reduced to merely an associative, rather than a creative, mechanism. This mechanistic mind negates the validity of perception and identity. Hume

reduces identity to a linguistic construct, conceding that it is only within the figurative and structural designs of language that questions of personal identity can be sustained:

> all the nice and subtle questions concerning personal identity can never possibly be decided, and are to be regarded rather as grammatical than as philosophical difficulties [...]. All the disputes concerning the identity of connected objects are merely verbal, except so far as the relation of parts gives rise to some fiction or imaginary principle of union.[126]

Both Davidson and Carlyle are opposed to such a mechanised mind. They recognise the division between mind and body, concept and language, but they endeavour to find a more positive resolution than Hume. Referring to *Sartor Resartus*, Ralph Jessop highlights the Reidian Common-Sense dualism that underpins Carlyle's dissemination of language: 'thought and language are not one but two. And if thought is meaning, then the disjunction between language and thought also divides language and meaning, a disjunction exemplified in the text's frequent use of irony'.[127] The dualistic notion of *Sartor's* theory of language is illustrated by binary oppositions such as: thought/word; essence/name; imagination/metaphor; silence (thought)/speech; immaterial/material,[128] which are encapsulated in Carlyle's clothes metaphor. Teufelsdröckh's theory of language asserts that 'Language is the Flesh-Garment, the Body, of Thought.' (SR, 57) Carol Collins explains Carlyle's thinking: 'The disjuncture between the signified and the signifier is affected by the dualistic nature of thought and speech - thought is inward, eternal, unknowable and therefore cannot be fully, outwardly articulated. However, the link between thought and speech is the 'Imagination [which weaves] this Flesh-Garment.'[129] Imagination weaves the Flesh-Garment of thought by using metaphors: 'examine Language [...] what is it all but Metaphors'(SR, 57). Jessop notes that 'while thought is prior to word, thought and word are correlatives influencing one another'.[130] Nonetheless, Jessop qualifies this correlation, noting that Teufelsdröckh 'emphasises a high degree of closeness between thought and word, but Flesh-Garment/body as woven out of thought/imagination retains a duality of metaphor and imagination held in a unitariness of correlation with one another.'[131]

Davidson read *Sartor* and used Carlyle's 'clothes' metaphor in relation to ascertaining the ability of a writer:

> It may be said broadly that there are three kinds of poets...those who turn out garments, those who put some kind of body into the stuff they shape, and those who inform their work with a soul. As a rule it will be found that diction and passion, the garment and the body, are most delicately wrought, and [...] most loftily built, when the essence of the poetry is spiritual, when it has a soul.

> Few poets consciously endeavour to make only garments; but it is the misfortune of many that they are unable to carry their labours further. (SP, 120)

Davidson sought to remove the tension within mind/body dualism by creating a new context for both experience and the imagination, rooted in the material world:

> when we delight to find that thought and imagination, hitherto considered psychical in the sense of spiritual or immaterial, are as physical and material as digestion and secretion, we do not degrade thought and the imagination, we exalt the body and all its functions.[132]

Davidson favoured an empirical rather than a metaphysical poetry: 'Poetry is the product of originality, of a first-hand experience and observation of life'.[133] As Fineman explains:

> Poetry, according to the Davidson of the eighteen nineties, must have two chief characteristics: it must be genuine and must aim to express the heart of things. By the word genuine Davidson means something that springs directly from experience and observation of life [...] there can therefore be no 'art for art's sake'; for technique must express something, and this something must be the experience vital to the poet and not the abstract pleasure of mere expression.[134]

Davidson is continually suspicious that poetry may lapse into dogma. This leads him to search for an empirical language: a new kind of poetic expression. He stressed that he would forge a new kind of verse that would be 'a statement of the world as it is'.[135] Five years later in 1907 he similarly asserted that 'the statement of the present and the creation of the future are the very body and soul of poetry'.[136] For Davidson empiricism in art is a negation of any form of inherited conceptual restraint. He sets out to free literature from the influences of the past, blaming metaphysics, dogma, and theory for creating the mind-body dualism that dislocates concept from language. Ultimately his blank verse becomes an empirical poetry - his medium for 'stating the world as it is'. As Catherine Kerrigan notes:

> Davidson in his early poetry used traditional forms like the ballad and the eclogue, but only as a means of containing a language which was compounded of slang, Scotticisms and archaic words [...]. In his later work, however, Davidson was to seek a spare and direct language, one more suited to the exposition of his philosophical materialism [...] the poet's task was to point the way to new paths of thought and conduct, and accordingly he saw the role of the poet as that of the prophet.[137]

Reid, Carlyle and Davidson share a distrust of doctrines and theories. Reid, in response to Hume, disliked the way in which Hume constructed his theories out of metaphors which,

in Reid's view, produced weak analogies that distorted truth. Davidson's reasoning is similar to Reid, hence his repudiation of Wordsworth's metaphysics:

> Now, metaphysic is an aborted poetry. Poetry is concrete requiring the exercise of all the material powers of body, mind and soul, which co-operating, are imagination. I have used the words 'mind' and 'soul', because for what I wish to say there is as yet no language. I hold that men can think and imagine things for which there are no words: and that men must attend upon the expression of these things before all others: that these unsaid things are of more moment than all the literature and religion of the past: and that these things can in the first instance be said only by the poet, by one who makes words mean what he, that is, what Matter chooses.[138]

Davidson's suspicion of metaphysics is shared by Carlyle who states that:

> Metaphysics is the attempt of the mind to rise above the mind; to environ and shut in, or as we say, *comprehend* the mind. Hopeless struggle, for the wisest, as for the foolishest! What strength of sinew, or athletic skill, will enable the stoutest athlete to fold his own body in his arms, and, by lifting, lift up *himself*? (C, 27)

Hume's mechanistic model of perception creates a nihilistic scepticism concerning all things intellectual and physical[139] and his logic leads to a crisis of identity whereas *Sartor*, like Davidson, engages in 'breaking the language of the machine,'[140] as well as subverting theory and superstition.

Davidson appears slightly contradictory, distrusting the ambiguity of metaphor and the power of the imagination while, at the same time, being equally critical of the unimaginative, mechanistic mind. Reid is also critical of the imagination yet, in his very suspicion of metaphor he credits it with a power that may actually foster a recognition and interest in the imaginative faculty. Davidson argues that the thinker is dominated by his reason (Carlyle's mechanistic mind) whereas the poet is receptive to all his senses, gathering his observations and conveying them through language and the poetic imagination. For Davidson, philosophy degenerates into either system or dogma but poetry is the productive harmony of experience conjoined with the imagination. Carlyle stated that 'In the true Literary Man there is [...] acknowledged or not by the world, a sacredness: he is the light of the world; the world's Priest' (OHHW, 157). It is ironically in the tone of the secular prophet that Davidson asserts, 'I have no system; I have no dogma; it is new poetry I bring.'[141] Three years later, in 1908, he reiterated the same conviction; 'this that I say is not a new philosophy or a new religion: it is more than these; it is the beginning of a new poetry.'[142] The writer thus becomes the arbiter of revelation:

> There can be no metaphysical or philosophical poetry: a poet may employ metaphysic and philosophy as he may employ history and science, but all poetry is poetical. It is not a new metaphysic, a new philosophy or a new theology which I begin: metaphysic, theology and philosophy itself in its esoteric sense, are to me fallacies, as each insists on a dual world of matter and spirit. It is a new poetry I begin, a new cosmology, a new habitation for the imagination of man.[143]

Davidson seeks a creative habitation for the imagination of man within the framework of material experience. As a philosophical materialist he propounded his conviction that English blank verse was 'the profoundest and most intelligent voice of Matter [...] transcending mundane man' and that there could be no 'nobler utterance than this very blank verse.'[144] Davidson asserted that blank verse offered the possibility of 'the greatest poetry in the world.'[145] He equated this greatness with a potential for unadorned truth, claiming that 'Poetry is matter become vocal, a blind force without judgement.'[146]

The barriers to the expression of truth he locates both in the prejudice of society and in the limitations of language itself. Davidson, however, differentiates 'poetic' language from more systematic modes of expression. He equates the poet and poetry with a higher and more enlightened function:

> I am not a philosopher; philosophy is the evil conscience of the world, filtering out of power and beauty a sediment of system. I am a poet, poetry being the good conscience of the world, transmuting into power and beauty the utmost evil that can befall the individual and the race.[147]

Davidson draws on the poetic tradition extending from Milton to Wordsworth and to the full-blown Romantic theory which became central to Wordsworth and Coleridge. Sharing Carlyle's contempt for system and mechanisation, drawing upon a Wordsworthian emphasis upon the vital, instinctive and creative capacity of human nature:

> Few mortals, it is to be feared, are permanently blessed with that felicity of 'having no system': nevertheless, most of us, looking back on young years, may remember seasons of a [...] perfect freedom; the body had not yet become the prison-house of the soul [...] through eye and ear, and all avenues of sense, came clear unimpeded tidings from without...we stood as in the centre of Nature [...] our whole being was as yet One, the whole man like an incorporated Will. (C, 2)

Yet he is confronted by experiences which relate to the spiritual aspect of human experience and which evade accurate expression in language. In addition, there remains a proselytising aspect to this theory. It is perhaps Davidson's final and dual tragedy that he was unable to break away from his religious conditioning which demanded metaphysical

answers, and he put too great a demand on language which could not express what he wanted in anything more than a partial and inadequate way. For Davidson, it is the poet as secular prophet who defines and gives import to what should be expressed. Davidson remained resolute in regarding language as a medium which can either free or repress human thought:

> The mind, separating itself from the body and the soul, can transmute a figure of speech into a category; indeed; there is probably no figure of speech that could not be petrified into a metaphysic: metaphysics are the fossil remains of dead poetries. Also, the soul can separate itself from the body and the mind, and petrify a figure of speech into a theology: creeds are the fossil remains of dead religions. The body, the static and dynamic integer of which mind and soul are only exponents, is held in profound disesteem by both metaphysic and theology. The metaphysician says, 'The Universe is thought'; the theologian says, 'The Universe is soul' [...] all possible figures of speech, are therefore all liable in the hands of a pedant to be created into a dogma.[148]

Despite being aware of the problems inherent to all forms of perception and communication, Davidson equated man's status as matter become self-conscious with an ability to transcend received ideas and thereby attain truth. His sense of both persecution and detachment, drawn from the role of writer as observer and man apart, seeking to repel the influence of inherited thought in order to establish some greater truth, is a driving force within his work. In a dialogue entitled 'Sin' Davidson, in Carlylean and Nietzschean style, separates the great man from the unquestioning and compliant masses and reflects upon the 'immorality' of seeking truth in the eyes of the majority:

> 'What on earth is he?'
> 'A sinner, as I said.'
> 'Yes, but what is the exact nature of his sin, of
> his appeal to intelligence?'
> 'He states the world.'
> 'He states the world! As it is?'
> 'That is part of his aim'
> 'What intolerable malice! Why don't they kill
> him off hand?'
> 'Some have tried repeatedly, and will again.
> But he is not entirely without friends. Besides, he
> will take a lot of killing, that one.'[149]

The barriers to the expression of truth are located both in the prejudice of society and in the limitations of language itself. In the play *Smith: A Tragic Farce*, the central character is criticised by his associates for his natural and spontaneous style. Brown remarks that Smith is 'Pure innocence: the man's a baby', and Jones accords, 'Yes. Uncultured, too; he

lacks the college stamp'(S, 220). Brown goes on to praise the man who is totally constrained by language and possesses a thoroughly mechanistic mind:

> You've hit it, Jones: 'uncultured' is the word.
> Give me a man who knows what language means:
> No forging sudden bolts that gild the fact,
> A bright enough reality before:
> Who never says a thing a thousand ways,
> Nibbling with slippery sleight-of-tongue, till chance
> Expose the end to bite. Give me a man
> Whose mind is ready as a lawyers desk,
> Each pigeon-hole accountable for this,
> Each drawer contains that, and nothing else. (S, 220)

Jones joins in to commend the man 'Whose thinking's done; whose automatic mind / Strikes the same absolute response each time' (SS, 220), and Brown adds 'A man who knows the best of everything; / Consummate, bland; whom novelty annoys' (S, 221). In contrast to this 'ideal' he describes Smith as being 'a mere savage, barbarous as a Lapp' (S, 221). While Smith is acknowledged to be powerful and a potentially heroic figure, his intensity and spontaneity are viewed as impediments. Jones comments, 'Admit the power - potential as a troop; / But where's the captain?' and Brown responds, 'Ay, his brain's a mess / Of sodden sawdust; it ferments and fumes' (S, 221).

Smith's perspective is radically different. He laments that, 'Our language is too worn, too much abused, / Jaded and over-spurred, wind-broken, lame, - / The hackneyed roadster every bagman mounts' (S, 235). His poet-friend Hallowes has also left the teaching profession, tired of 'mental boot-blacking' (S, 223) and the 'noisome fog of the dead letter' (S, 224). Smith argues that language has become a system which is as stale and inaccurate as all the systems of human belief for which he has nothing but Davidsonian cynicism:

> The hydra-headed creeds; the sciences,
> That deem the thing is known when it is named;
> And literature, thought's palace-prison fair;
> Philosophy the grand inquisitor
> That racks ideas and is fooled with lies;
> Society, the mud wherein we stand
> Up to our eyes. (S, 236)

Smith, unlike his associates, is an intuitive rather than mechanistic thinker, claiming that one should 'Obey your nature, not authority' (S, 235). The distinction is the same as that expressed by Carlyle:

> the man of logic and the man of insight...are quite separable, - indeed for the most part, quite separate characters. In practical matters, for example, has it not been almost proverbial that the man of logic cannot prosper? This is he whom business people call Systematic and Theoriser and Word-monger; his *vital* intellectual force lies dormant or extinct, his whole force is mechanical, conscious: of such a one [...] when once confronted with the infinite complexities of the real world, his little compact theorem of the world will be found wanting [...]. So it is, so will it always be, with all System-makers and builders of logical card-castles. (C, 5-6)

In a similar vein Davidson asserts that 'LIBERTY of utterance, spontaneity, is the mark of the highest poetry. To be spontaneous is the whole art of poetry, and especially distinguishes it from the artifice of poetry.'[150] Davidson also praises the Elizabethan and Jacobean age as 'the great age of drama [and] the great period of poetry' because he believes that in this period 'every aid to free and full utterance was employed in the disdain of art'.[151] Davidson maintained an enduring preoccupation with the form and function of language in relation to the role of the writer and the nature of the imagination. He and Carlyle are distinctive in the manner in which they examine the implications of meaning as constituted within language, and for the manner in which they equate the structure and function of language with the role and status of the writer, in effect, with his personal identity.

Davidson's poetic depictions of landscapes emulate the effects of impressionist painting. Davidson was particularly impressed by the vibrancy of Turner's work, commenting that the artist 'painted with torches instead of pencils' and that his paintings 'were dipped out of wells of coloured fire, of prismatic light.'[152] These descriptions are reminiscent of Jessop's description of Teufelsdröckh's experiments in writing:

> Teufelsdröckh's writing is both a deliberate obfuscation or mystification and a last attempt to succeed at something in literature, in which he 'desperately dashes his sponge, full of all colours, against the canvas, to try whether it will paint Foam' (SR, 234). Foam-painting plashes together all and, as a emblem of Teufelsdröckh's method of 'large Intuition', confronts mechanical, 'common school logic', [...]. Enjoying this Turneresque foam-painting and learning how to perceive imaginatively in it patterns and some of the meanings signified by the 'mighty maze' that is *Sartor*, something of Teufelsdröckh's anti-mechanistic method will have been assimilated [...]. In *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle attempts

> time and again to speak the unspeakable, to make visible the invisible and body forth the disembodied through a rich ornament of language.[153]

For Carlyle, and for Davidson, the aim is to represent in language the imaginative, intuitive, essential, creative and spontaneous nature of human understanding.

Though he insisted that he had no system and no dogma to offer[154] there were some who detected all too forcibly the proselytising role of the secular prophet. Virginia Woolf made the following comments in reference to the *Testament of John Davidson*:

> He wishes to do no less than re-fashion our conception of the Universe [...]. Davidson is wholly in earnest; he sees and feels with remarkable force the vast conceptions which he is trying to express; and, above all, he is absolutely convinced of the paramount importance of his theme. And that, so we think, is his undoing [...] he is so burdened by all the facts which prove him right in his materialism that the poem breaks down beneath their weight; it becomes a lecture [...] delivered by an irate and fanatical professor [...]. Our quarrel is not with the words, which might very well take their place in poetry, or with the subject, which is magnificent, but with the proselytising spirit...and with the growing arrogance and acerbity of manner, as of one dinning the Gospel into the heads of an indifferent public [...]. Davidson [...] makes it plain that if you do not agree with him you are damned.[155]

This tendency of damning those who do not agree is always there in Davidson; his faults are established much earlier than people assume. The paradox within Davidson's rebellion against Scottish religiosity is that it led thereafter to the assumption of an identity as secular prophet, a mirroring pattern which is repeated in the tone, style and thematic preoccupations of writers such as Davidson, Carlyle, Thomson and Buchanan. As Townsend comments:

> The problem for this last of the vociferous Victorian protestants is a common one, to state heresies in a language haunted by orthodox meanings. In searching for a 'new language' with which to state a 'new poetry', he at times solved the problem resourcefully by giving to traditional myth a new interpretation or by creating a new myth out of the facts of science. Too often [...] he impatiently resorted to didactic assertion, clumsy allegory, and angry bombast.[156]

This tendency indicates a more complex pattern of thought than simply cultural dissociation followed by the appropriation of external influences in order to fill the vacuum. LaValley makes this complexity clear in relation to Carlyle:

> After the voice of authority in Goethe becomes Carlyle's own, the image of Goethe disappears, but the ideal of himself as a contemporary seer does not

> [...] Carlyle as seer can revert without qualm to the much more dogmatic Calvinist voice from which he felt culturally disinherited.[157]

Such patterns of influence suggest that Carlyle's Goethe and Davidson's Nietzsche do not provide alternatives in the purest sense but may even facilitate a continued preoccupation with inherited ideas. Woolf's review of Davidson concludes that 'His philosophy was no mood but a deep-seated conception which modified his views on language, on metre, on everything that had to do with his art.'[158]

Not only is the prophetic, Old Testament tone clearly apparent, but deeper residual influences also remain from Davidson's Scottish Evangelical background. Despite the neutral, amoral intent of his writing there remains a latent Calvinist dualism between good and evil that is manifested in his repeated references to guilt and inhibition. He suggests that blank verse is stark and truthful, in contrast to 'the exquisite adornment of rhyme [which] will continue to corrupt the ear'.[159] The language of truth is stark and authoritative, it embarrasses lesser mortals because of its open, nakedly honest aspect. Davidson, in this way, retains a Calvinist emphasis upon the veracity of the written word and a suspicion of unnecessary adornment. Yet, at the same time, his truth is rebellious, it both emulates and subverts the inherited association of the written word with truth. Such contradictions reveal the problems incurred in the attempt not only to formulate a new identity but to lose a received one. As a result Davidson continues to work unconsciously within a framework of received polarities:

> A sense of shame, indeed, struggles vainly towards a blush in the cheeks of the many-headed when it turns its galaxy of eyes on a page of blank verse; its subconscious feeling is of something indecorous, if not indecent. The feeling is just. Blank verse is nude poetry, barbarous and beautiful, or athletic and refined, but always naked and unashamed.[160]

Davidson's language is, in essence, akin to the nature of his great man or great poet, which Lester describes as 'something primitive, elemental, and barbaric'.[161] Carlyle and Davidson both perceive the man of instinct and action as above the compliant masses.

Carlyle's use of language influenced Davidson, especially Carlyle's ability to inspire, to suffuse words with an energy and significance affording them heightened reception in the mind of the reader. Echoes of Carlyle's advocacy of spontaneous, as opposed to mechanistic language, are found in Davidson's play *Smith* and in his search for a language free from inherited belief systems.

Carlyle's rich, complex and commanding language extends beyond conventional expectations concerning prose, especially non-fictional prose. His interest in Richter suggests a fascination for irony, humour and a revitalisation of language. LaValley suggests that:

> He [Carlyle] is not attracted so much by what Richter says as by how he says it [...]. He sees Richter's style as the perfect expression of the man...It is not so much the subject matter as the tone and manner that attract him [...] [it] conveys to Carlyle the sense of someone different, someone unique - and perhaps someone from the 'outside', like Scotland. The rugged quality of the style itself is regarded as a testimony to a certain freedom, a breakthrough of convention and formality, and a witness to the sources of self and nature, impeded by no false conventions and none of the glitter of a false and crumbling society. Freedom, naturalness, self-fulfilment are the chief virtues of this style [...].[162]

Carlyle describes Richter's style in enthusiastic terms: 'so fantastic, many-coloured, far-grasping, everywhere perplexed and extraordinary is his mode of writing'.[163] He suggests that 'he talked, as he wrote, in a style of his own, full of wild strength and charms, to which his natural Bayreuth accent often gave additional effect.'[164] Carlyle adds however that, like Davidson's Smith, Richter 'would be speedily disposed of; pronounced a mystic, a German dreamer, a rash and presumptuous innovator'.[165] In addition, a telling comment is made by Carlyle which may be, at least in part, self-reflexive of his own stylistic aims:

> There are few writers with whom deliberation and careful distrust of first impressions are more necessary than with Richter. He is a phenomenon from the very surface; he presents himself with a professed and determined singularity: his language itself is a stone of stumbling to the critic; to critics of the grammarian species, an unpardonable, often an insuperable, rock of offence.[166]

Carlyle and Davidson are disparaging toward the orthodoxy which causes language to become mechanistic and restraining. The writing of both men displays a stylistic self-consciousness, conveying an awareness of status that is in keeping with the authority of the writer as secular prophet, and a desire to attain expressive efficacy. Carlyle, Thomson and Davidson could easily have become clergymen but instead they rebelled. In their pursuit of freedom of thought, however, they retained much of the style, demeanour and authority of their resigned influences. Within their writing lies both a crisis of faith and of language, and as a result imagery, tone, and style attain heightened intensity and significance. By extension, MacDiarmid and the writers of the Scottish Renaissance inherited the same religious and cultural problems which challenged their Victorian predecessors. The styles

adopted by Davidson and Carlyle, and the linguistic and technical choices made by MacDiarmid are part of a protracted pattern of experimentation motivated essentially by similar forces. It would be inappropriate to consider MacDiarmid along with earlier influences on Davidson but the purpose of this argument is to locate him as a natural successor, illustrating a pattern of ideas and influence. With this in mind some similarities are drawn but for a fuller comparison of Davidson and MacDiarmid in relation to language see Chapter 2.

Davidson was absorbed with the universal experience of man and the extent to which literature could effectively express this. He inherited from Carlyle a preoccupation with the role of language as an outlet for self-projection and expression and in consequence saw the poet as a man drawing from his experience and conveying it in a natural and spontaneous way, unimpeded by tradition and convention. In this endeavour Davidson believed that writing was the task of the heroic man.

In his attempts to transgress formal conventions he emphasised integrity within language and the need for language to be representative of material reality. Kerrigan and Townsend have described Davidson's work as 'Poetic Esperanto'[167] due to his experiments with idiom and style which involved mixing and improvising words in order to evade their stale and conventional use. As Townsend suggests:

> Only a polyglot language, assembled from the individual poet's peculiar resources, could free him from shackling cliches and enable him to state the multitudinous variety and infinite complexity of the world as he experienced it.[168]

Davidson thus echoed or anticipated the similar strategies of Whitman, Pound, Eliot and Joyce in this respect.

Davidson displayed encyclopaedic and eclectic tendencies in his use of language, mixing a huge vocabulary with facts and ideas, lists, scientific terms, banal and exotic words. Such inclusiveness attempts to explore the relationship between sign and signifier, investigating the power of language to convey the phenomena of life and experience. For him, language became central, the primary source from which to attain expressive efficacy, integrity and identity and as such he looked to language as a source of truth and stability.

Davidson's work explores the relationship of the poet to language. He asserts that 'the Universe is matter' and that man is 'the Universe become conscious.'[169] This becoming conscious through language is, in effect, the attainment of identity through language. Nonetheless, both Carlyle and Davidson came to realise that language can only convey the essence of human experience and the metaphysical questions of identity in a partial and imperfect way. Later, and partly due to the influence of Davidson, MacDiarmid also attempted to use language as a medium from which to establish identity in personal, national and metaphysical terms. Yet MacDiarmid also became aware of the representational limitations of language and like Carlyle he responds with a retreat into silence and observation:

> Silence is the only way,
> Speech squares aye less wi' fact.
> Silence - like Chaos are the Word
> That gar'd the Play enact
> That sune to conscious thocht
> Maun seem a foolish dream.
> Nae Word has yet been said,
> Nae Licht's begun to gleam. (CP1, pp.218-9)

As Kerrigan notes, 'The only position a poet can take when faced with the discrepancy between his vision and the world of reality is to do what the Drunk Man did, that is, retreat into Silence.'[170] In reference to Carlyle, Carol Collins explains that:

> Carlyle and Swift exhibit concern at criticising vain talk while being driven to participate in it. Of course, the alternative is silence, a state which Carlyle perceives as ideal - 'speech is silvern, Silence is golden.' (Works 1: 174) [...]. 'The Nigger Question', replaces the final exclamation of the 'Discourse' with a Sternian dash. It literally trails off into silence.[171]

Davidson became the detached observer; the secular prophet on the periphery of society and in this he has much in common both with his contemporaries and with later writers. Retreat into silence and observation and the neutral position which these devices afford is one which later poets such as MacDiarmid and Edwin Morgan have also found.

Scots writers like Carlyle, Davidson and MacDiarmid consciously set out to find and formulate a new identity within language: an identity that includes both a personal and a universal consciousness as opposed to their inherited identity which has been culturally circumscribed. The Nietzschean imperative to 'Become what you are' is, for these writers, a culturally engendered predisposition rather than an adopted interest. Dissociation from inherited influences marks not the end but the beginning of a process of evaluation, sifting

through many literary strategies and philosophical hypotheses. The aim of this section has been to open out the debate regarding language in Scottish literature to issues other than vernacular and standard English and to show the genuine contributions of writers such as Davidson to the wider arena of literary theory and practice.

---

1 *The Theatrocrat* (London: Grant Richards, 1905) p.71.

2 John A. Cassidy, *Robert W. Buchanan* (New York: Twayne, 1973), p.98.

3 Behnken, *Thomas Carlyle: Calvinist without the Theology* (Columbia; London: University of Missouri Press , 1978), p.124.

4 ibid., p.128.

5 John Davidson, 'The Cat-call of the Sphinx', *The Star*, 17 February 1898, p.1.

6 James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880) (repr. Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993), Part I, line 8, p.29.

7 ibid., Chapter XX, pp. 46-48.

8 Ritchie Robertson, 'Science and Myth in John Davidson's Testaments', *Studies in Scottish Literature* 18 (1983), 85-109 (p.87).

9 David Daiches, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1969), p. 11.

10 Daiches, pp. 16-17.

11 ibid., p. 17.

12 Two influential studies which emphasise the influence of German thought are Rosemary Ashton's article 'Carlyle's Apprenticeship: His Early German Literary Criticism and his Relationship with Goethe (1822-1832)', *MLR*, 71 (1976) pp. 1-18 and Charles Frederick Harrold's book *Carlyle and German Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934).

13 Roderick Watson, 'Carlyle: The World as Text and the Text as Voice', *The History of Scottish Literature*, III, pp. 153-167.

14 Ruth apRoberts, *The Ancient Dialect* (California; London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 68.

15 See Ian Campbell, 'Carlyle's Religion: The Scottish Background', in *Carlyle and his Contemporaries: Essays in Honor of Charles Richard Sanders* ed. by John Clubbe (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1976), 3-20 and 'The Scottishness of Carlyle', *Carlyle Studies Annual*, Special Issue (1995), 73-82.

16 Ralph Jessop, 'Carlyle's "Wotton Reinfred": They Talked of Scottish Philsophy', *Carlyle Annual*, 12 (1991), 9-15.

17 Ritchie Robertson, 'Science and Myth in John Davidson's Testaments' in *Studies in Scottish Literature* (1983), xviii, 85-109.

18 J.B. Townsend, *John Davidson Poet of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p.429.

19 Robert Crawford, p.243.

20 Eric Northey, *The Poetry of John Davidson (1857-1909)*; John A. Lester jr., 'Friedrich Nietzsche and John Davidson: A Study in Influence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 18 (1957). pp. 411-29; David S. Thatcher, *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1970) and Caroll V. Peterson, *John Davidson* (New York: Twayne, 1972).

21 Lester, pp.411-12.

22 Jessop, p. 117.

23 John M. Sloan should not to be confused with John Sloan, Davidson's modern biographer. At the time of Sloan's visit Davidson had been working at Highlander's Academy in Greenock. He had been pupil-teacher there since the age of eight, leaving briefly to work at Walker's Sugar Co. (1871) and the Public Analyst's Office (1872) before returning to Highlander's Academy in 1873 at the age of sixteen as an assistant teacher and remaining for a further 3 years till 1876.

24 John M. Sloan, 'A Rebel in Poetry', *John O'London's Weekly*, 15, 26th September, 1926, p. 766.

25 Townsend, p. 430.

26 Ruth apRoberts, p. 59.

27 Albert J. LaValley, *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1968), pp.32-3.

28 LaValley, p. 8.

29 'Likeness and Unlikeness', *A Rosary* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), p.182.

30 John Davidson, 'A Poetic Disciple of Nietzsche', *Daily Chronicle*, 23 May, 1902, p.3.

31 MS 3356.34, National Library of Scotland.

32 Northey, p. 275.

33 Hayim Fineman, *John Davidson: A Study of the Relation of his Ideas to his Poetry* (Philadelphia: Folcroft Library Editions, 1978), p. 32.

34 Harrold, *Carlyle and German Thought*, (New Haven, 1934), p. vi.

35 Ruth apRoberts, p. 68.

36 Carlyle's sincerity concerning his pursuit of truth brought him into conflict with familial ties. Writing to his mother in Edinburgh in 1819 he states: 'tho' we may differ in some few unimportant particulars: yet I firmly trust that the same power who created us with imperfect faculties, will pardon the errors of every one (and none are without them) who seeks truth and righteousness, with a simple heart.' The 'unimportant particulars' to which Carlyle refers are dogma, while his defence of 'truth' is, even at this early stage, already at odds with his mother's religious devotion (Letters 1: 174). *The Collected Letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle,* 29 vols ed. by C.R.Sanders, Kenneth J. Fielding, et al. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1970-2001), I (1970).

37 Jessop, p. 115.

38 LaValley, p.8.

39 Behnken, pp.123-124.

40 Prefactory note to *Fleet Street and Other Poems* (London: Grant Richards, 1909).

41 John Davidson, *Academy*, 13 September 1902, rptd. Northey, p. 289.

42 Behnken, p.123.

43 Nietzsche wrote *Twlight of the Idols* in 1888 and is probably referring to James Anthony Froude's biography (*Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of his Life* and *Thomas Carlyle: A History of his Life in London*), which appeared in 4 vols., 1882-4.

44 *Twilight of the Idols* ed. and trans. by Walter Kaufmann in *The Portable Nietzsche* (London and New York: Penguin, 1982) p. 521.

45 David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, I 'Of the Understanding' (1739) (repr. London: Penguin, 1985), p. 299.

46 Hume, p. 312.

47 Lester, pp.423-4.

48 Thus Spoke Zarathustra in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 146.

49 Letter (undated) from Davidson to John Lane, MS 3356.26-27, National Library.

50 The description to which Davidson refers can be found in *The Last Words of Thomas Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), pp. 111-112.
51 Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 132.
52 All from John Davidson, *The Last Ballad and Other Poems* (London: John Lane, 1899).
53 Frederick Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 548.
54 John Davidson, 'On Poetry', included in *Holiday and Other Poems* (London: E. Grant Richards,1906), p. 143.
55 Behnken, p.6.
56 Epilogue, *The Triumph of Mammon* (London: Grant Richards, 1907), p. 163.
57 Behnken, p.128.
58 ibid., p.128.
59 Townsend, p. 121.
60 Frederick Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 125.
61 Behnken, p. 122.
62 John Davidson, *Academy*, 13 September, 1902, p. 272; rptd. in Northey, p. 289.
63 Behnken, p.128.
64 Lester, p.416.
65 Catherine Kerrigan, p.182.
66 LaValley, pp.107-8.
67 *The Testament of an Empire-Builder* (London: Grant Richards, 1902), pp.9-10.
68 LaValley, p.110.
69 ibid., p.113.
70 ibid., p.109.
71 Quoted in J.A Froude, *Thomas Carlyle: Life in London* (London, 1884), I, p. 423. 'Exodus from Houndsditch' by which he meant the peeling away of Judeo-Christian superstition, Houndsditch being a haunt of Jewish second-hand Clothes dealers.
72 John Davidson, 'Thoughts on Irony' in *The Man Forbid and Other Essays*, ed. Edward J. O'Brian (Boston: The Ball Publishing Co., 1910), pp.133-136.
73 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, I, p.87.
74 ibid., p.90.
75 John Davidson, 'Poetry and the Something Behind Phenomena', *The Speaker*, March 25 1899, p.346.
76 Townsend, p.114.
77 ibid., p.133.
78 ibid, p.254.
79 Kerrigan, p.1.
80 Northey, p.288.
81 Turnbull, I, intro., p.xxii.
82 ibid., I, p.xxii.
83 ibid., I, p.xxiii.
84 Townsend, p.115.
85 Northey, p.286.
86 Northey, p.287.

87 Townsend, p.134.

88 Peterson, p.22.

89 Townsend, p.97.

90 ibid., p.112.

91 Peterson, pp.26-27.

92 Townsend, p.123.

93 ibid., p.115.

94 Townsend, p.129.

95 John Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p.127.

96 Townsend, p.97.

97 ibid., p.99.

98 ibid., p.118.

99 ibid., pp.100-1.

100 Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952), p.42.

101 Townsend, p.125.

102 ibid., pp.127-128.

103 ibid., p.129.

104 ibid., p.132

105 Friedrich Schlegel quoted in Townsend, pp. 132-3.

106 Townsend, p.132.

107 ibid., p.132; Townsend is referring to Irving Babbitt book *Rousseau and Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), pp.262-3.

108 John Davidson, *A Rosary* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), p.88.

109 Fineman, p.32.

110 Northey, p.275.

111 John Davidson 'The New Sophist', *The Speaker*, 28 November, 1891, pp.641-2.

112 John Davidson, 'Frederick Nietzsche', *The Glasgow Herald*,18 March, 1893, p.4.

113 John Davidson, 'A Poetic Disciple of Nietzsche' *Daily Chronicle*, 23 May 1902, p.3.

114 D.W. Hamlyn, *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp.262-5.

115 Jessop, p.105.

116 ibid., p.59.

117 ibid., p.77.

118 ibid., p.78.

119 T.S. Eliot, preface in *John Davidson: A Selection of his Poems*, ed. by Maurice

Lindsay.

120 Townsend, pp.222-3.

121 Turnbull, I, p.xxiii.

122 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. by John W. Yolton (1690) (repr. London: Dent, 1976), p.207.

123 *A Rosary*, 'Force of Suggestion', pp.49-50.

124 *A Rosary,* 'Likeness and Unlikeness', p.182.

125 Epilogue, *Mammon and his Message* (London: Grant Richards, 1908), p.171.

126 Hume, p.310.

127 Jessop, p.160.

128 Jessop, p.161.

129 Carol Collins, 'Anti-Dogmatism and the "Metaphorical Quashee": Thomas Carlyle's "An Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question"', *Carlyle Studies* (1995), 23-40 (pp.33-4).

130 Jessop, p.165.

131 ibid., p.159.

132 Epilogue, *Mammon and his Message*, p.167.

133 'The Criticism of Poetry', *The Man Forbid and Other Essays* p.67.

134 Fineman, p.11.

135 *Academy* 13 Sept., 1902, rptd. in Northey, p.289.

136 Epilogue, *The Triumph of Mammon*, p.151.

137 Kerrigan, p.182.

138 'Wordsworth's Immorality and Mine' in *The Theatrocrat*, pp.11-12.

139 see Jessop, p.56.

140 ibid., p.165.

141 *The Theatrocrat*, p.27.

142 Epilogue, *Mammon and his Message*, p.148.

143 Epilogue, *The Triumph of Mammon*, pp.166-167.

144 John Davidson, 'On Poetry', *Holiday and Other Poems* (London: E. Grant Richards, 1906) p.142.

145 ibid., p.149.

146 ibid., p. 137.

147 Epilogue, *Mammon and his Message*, p.148.

148 'Wordsworth's Immortality and Mine' from *The Theatrocrat*, pp.11-12.

149 'Sin', *A Rosary*, p.119.

150 'The Art of Poetry' in *The Man Forbid and Other Essays*, p.125.

151 ibid., p.128.

152 Epilogue, *The Triumph of Mammon*, p.158.

153 Jessop, p.158.

154 John Davidson stated that 'I have no system; I have no dogma; it is new poetry I bring'in *The Theatrocrat*, p.27.

155 Virginia Woolf, *Times Literary Supplement*, August 16, 1917, p.390.

156 Townsend, p.123.

157 LaValley, p.33.

158 Woolf, p.390.

159 'On Poetry', p.149.

160 ibid., p.151.

161 Lester, p.423.

162 LaValley, pp.33-34.

163 'Jean Paul Friedrich Richter' *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* I, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by H.D. Traill, Centenary Edition, 30 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-9), 26, p. 5.

164 ibid., p.7.

165 ibid., p.11.

166 ibid., pp.11-12.

167 Kerrigan, p. 181 and Townsend, p. 223.

168 Townsend, p.223.

169 Epilogue, *Mammon and his Message*, p.169.

170 Kerrigan, pp151-2.

171 Collins, p.36.

CONCLUSION
JOHN DAVIDSON: PRISONER AND PIONEER

This study has aimed to re-contextualise John Davidson within a Scottish literary frame of reference. The reason for this stems not from a narrowly nationalistic focus, but rather the opposite, that is, the need to demonstrate that Davidson merits consideration as part of a movement within Scottish writing which is, by its very nature modern, diverse, experimental, eclectic and outward looking. The objective has been to show that such a propensity is due, in significant measure, to the nature, endemic characteristics, and influence of Scottish literature and culture. The thesis has aimed to clarifiy this context and thereby to illustrate the significance of Scottish literature and culture to Davidson's thought and writing and, by extension, to show Davidson's relevance to Scottish literature and thereby achieve recognition and an overall reassessment of an outstanding achievement. In so doing it has addressed discrepancies in critical thinking. With the exception of all too brief commentaries from a few critics, most famously Hugh MacDiarmid, and thereafter, Maurice Lindsay, Andrew Turnbull and Tom Hubbard, Davidson has been valued outwith his formative cultural context.

In general, Davidson has been compared with a variety of writers and thinkers ranging from Nietzsche, Ibsen, and Swinburne to later writers such as Eliot and Woolf; he has also been contextualised in relation to movements such as the *fin de siècle* and decadence and associated with a variety of literary trends from modernism and post-modernist, to futurist and imagist writers. There has been little extended comparison with Scottish writers and writing. This is ironic, given that the similarities which Davidson shares with many other Scots, ranging from Carlyle to MacDiarmid, are not only of interest in themselves but explain the motivating factors in his engagement with a wide range of literary interests.

Every lengthy study has tended to view Davidson as being largely divorced from the concerns of his cultural and literary background. Indeed, this is a common perspective applied to expatriate writers, implying that geographical distance determines intellectual schism. The result has been a very narrow critical focus which, though not erroneous in itself, is guilty of the sin of omission and, consequently, of limiting our understanding of the scope and depth of Davidson's work, as well as obscuring some of the key motivating factors behind it.

Critics may be forgiven for adopting such a perspective. Davidson dissociated himself from Scottish literature, tired as he was with the tartanry and Kailyard images of Scotland and sought his fortune in London. He seems therefore to have disengaged himself from the problems and issues within Scottish writing. This would, however, be a superficial reading. In fact Davidson struggled all his life as a displaced Scot, unhappy with Kailyard and tartanry on one hand, but not at all prepared to be absorbed into the tradition of English pastoral poetry on the other, despite encouragement to do so from those such as Swinburne and John Nichol in his early years. As a result his cultural background both restrained and motivated him: dissociation became the catalyst for much of his work, driving him to a rebellious and experimental approach to literature and writing in a bid for personal and professional autonomy. Though he viewed the past as a source of intellectual imprisonment it was also ironically the force which made him into a literary pioneer.

The objective of this thesis has been to focus upon patterns and trends within Scottish writing and ideas which suggest an active, integrated literary 'community' and tradition of which Davidson was part, albeit in the broadest sense. Interconnections, influences and similarities (in terms of the issues, preoccupations, objectives and literary style shared by writers) are frequently complex and subtle but they are also significant and often intriguing. Viewing expatriate writers in isolation oversimplifies their frame of reference when, in fact, they are subject to a network of challenging but also stimulating influences. The Scottish component of that framework need not see writers as restricted to a narrow, marginal status or cause them to be viewed within a limited context. Such a perspective has become outmoded. Robert Crawford's redefinition of the term 'provincial'[1] to classifiy a group of primarily Scottish and American writers who are only partially understood from an Anglo-centric perspective but who are collectively characterised by an innovative, eclectic, experimental, modernist and cosmopolitan sensibility is replacing the idea of the insular, backward looking provincial writer. This term not only negates the more popular and negative associations of the word 'provincial', synonymous with a backward looking or static, regional sensibility, but enables us to view writers such as Davidson within both a national and international context without any necessarily marked sense of contradiction.

Viewing writers in isolation, or viewing dissociation in overly simplistic, absolute terms, prevents useful and insightful patterns of influence from being understood, or hinders the full panorama of nineteenth-century Scottish literature from being adequately appreciated. Stevenson, for example has been regarded as an early modernist writer with works such as Alan Sandison's *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism*[2] helping to

emphasise his self-consious, experimental proto-modernist objectives. Davidson has also for some time been recognised as an early-modernist. Nonetheless, the influences which were common to both men and stimulated the same degree of experimentation and innovation within their work is little recognised. Wider comparisons and trends have gone unnoticed so that the shared early modernist sensibility among Scots such as R.L. Stevenson, James Thomson, James Young Geddes and Davidson, and the cultural roots of such 'modernism', are largely overlooked. Similarly, the influences of Scottish literature, Knoxian Calvinism and social values are underestimated in their enduring influence on the writer.

In response to these established assumptions Chapter 1 of this thesis set out to clarify some of the main and enduring cultural influences which affected Davidson and the nature of his work. Chapter 2 aimed to emphasise Davidson's place within a wide context of Scottish writing which anticipates the style and objectives of modernism. Chapter 3 examined the wider national context of Davidson's work, his use of literary form and topical themes to negotiate a sense of British identity as well as his personal status as a writer. While Chapter 4 examined Davidson's philosophical ideas within a Scottish context. Just as Carlyle has been considered for decades as a disciple of Goethe and German thought, Davidson's ideas have similarly been attributed to the influence of Nietzche. The German comparisons should not be negated in either case but they become very partial when exclusive emphasis is placed upon them. Chapter 4 emphasised the influence of Carlyle upon Davidson and places both writers within a context of Scottish thought. The thesis is indebted to revisionary work, such as Ralph Jessop's *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* which has provided an alternative contextual framework to the mainstream of Carlyle studies over the past decades. Jessop's book and other works, such as Marshall Walker's general study *Scottish Literature Since 1707,* in which he briefly but usefully compares Carlyle with Davidson, James Thomson and George MacDonald, hopefully marks an emerging trend toward new comparisons and fresh perspectives which show the continued relevance of expatriate writers to the issues and themes within their country of origin. I have also been indebted to Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992) and Cairns Craig's *Out of History* (1996) for their identification of certain key asumptions and attitudes which have influenced dominant critical perspectives.

Most importantly, it is hoped that in examining Davidson within a Scottish literary context he has emerged not only as a complex and problematic writer but as a highly original, innovative, diverse and experimental poet, dramatist, novelist and journalist. In attempting

to dissociate himself from his formative influences Davidson was tireless in his search for a 'new poetry' and a new way of viewing the world in literature. Though unsuccessful in severing the influences from his past, these influences motivated him to produce some of his most innovative and challenging work. Sadly Davidson, like James Thomson before him, failed to realise that he had broken new ground in literature. The negative forces which had shaped and motivated him - his cultural displacement, antipathy toward Calvinism, separation from a cohesive literary and cultural tradition - brought the writer to his most radical and decisive achievement, but they also broke the man in the process. This was the saddest irony of all in a man characterised by his ironic, modernist sensibility. His legacy is worthy of fuller and more comprehensive recognition. It is hoped that this thesis will complement existing works on Davidson, contributing to a wider understanding of his work and achievement.

---

1 Crawford, *Devolving English Literature.*

2 Sandison, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism.*

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Explanatory note: for ease of reference, the bibliography is divided into two principle sections: primary and secondary sources. Within the former section there are further divisions between manuscript and printed material; and between genres e.g. poetry, plays, novels and articles. Secondary sources are divided between works specifically concerning Davidson and more general texts.

I
Primary

(i) Manuscripts

National Library:

MS3217 200-2
MS 3650.207-10
MS 3356
MS 4483

British Library:

MS Ashley, fols 20-12
MS Ashley B665, fols. 134-135
MS Ashley, B 571, fols. 136-137
MS Ashley, B 561, fols. 132-133b
MS Ashley, B572, fols. 138-139b
MS Ashley, B555, fols. 123-131b
MS Ashley, B574, fols. 141-142
MS Ashley, B573, fol. 140
MS Ashley, A 560, fols 22-25
MS Add. 73263, fols., 1-28v. and fols. 118-121
MS Add. 45292, fols 84-118
MS Eg. 3247, fol. 13
RP 5421 (ix)
RP 1740 (ii)

Bodleian Library:

MS Walpole d. 17, fols. 80-106
MS Eng. misc. d. 176, fol. 239
Walpole c. 146
MS Dep. Bridges 108, fols. 103-108
MS Dobell, c.8, fols. 191-193

Glasgow University Library Special Collections:

MS Gen. 548/3/1 fols. 1-156

(ii) Printed Texts

Poetry

Diabolus Amans: A Dramatic Poem (Glasgow: Wilson & McCormick, 1885)
In a Music Hall and Other Poems (London: Ward & Downey, 1891)
Fleet Street Eclogues (London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1893)
Ballads and Songs (London: John Lane, 1894)
Fleet Street Eclogues, Second Series (London: John Lane, 1896)
New Ballads (London: John Lane, 1897)
The Last Ballad and Other Poems (London: John Lane, 1899)
The Testament of a Vivisector (London: Grant Richards, 1901)
The Testament of a Man Forbid (London: Grant Richards, 1901)
The Testament of an Empire Builder (London: Grant Richards, 1902)
The Testament of a Prime Minister (London: Grant Richards, 1904)
Holiday and Other Poems (London: E. Grant Richards, 1906)
The Testament of John Davidson (London: Grant Richards, 1908)
Fleet Street, and Other Poems (London: Grant Richards, 1909)

Fiction

Perfervid: The Career of Ninian Jamieson (London: Ward and Downey, 1890)
The Great Men and a Practical Novelist (London: Ward and Downey, 1891)
Baptist Lake (London: Ward and Downey, 1894)
A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender (London: Ward and Downey, 1895)
Miss Armstrong's and Other Circumstances (London: Methuen and Co., 1896)

Plays

Plays by John Davidson (London: Matthews and Lane; Chicago: Stone and Kimball, 1894)
Self's the Man: A Tragi-Comedy (London: Grant Richards, 1901)
God and Mammon: A Trilogy - 1: The Triumph of Mammon (London: Grant Richards, 1907)
God and Mamon: A Trilogy - 2: Mammon and his Message (London: Grant Richards, 1908)
The Theatrocrat: A Tragic Play of Church and Stage (London: Grant Richards, 1905)

Miscellaneous Prose

A Rosary (London: Grant Richards, 1903)
Sentences and Paragraphs (London: Lawrence & Bullen, 1893)
A Random Itinerary (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane; Boston: Copeland & Day, 1894)

Articles

'A Poetic Disciple of Nietzsche', *Daily Chronicle*, 23 May, 1902, p.3
'Absinthe', *The Glasgow Herald*, 4 March, 1893, p.9
'A Suburban Philosopher', *The Glasgow Herald*, 22 April, 1893, p.9
'The Isle of Dogs to Sydenham', *The Glasgow Herald*, 22 July, 1893, p.4
'The Hop-Pickers of Kent', *The Glasgow Herald*, 16 September, 1893, p.7
'Automatic Augury and the Crystal Palace', *The Glasgow Herald*, 18 March, 1905, p.9
'The Thames Embankment', *The Glasgow Herald*, 1 December, 1906, p. 9
'Urban Snow', *The Glasgow Herald*, 5 January, 1907, p.7
'A Rejected Leader', *The Glasgow Herald*, 4 April, 1907, p. 10
'A Railway Journey', *The Glasgow Herald*, 27 April, 1907, p. 9
'The Atom', *The Glasgow Herald*, 16 May, 1908, p. 9
'Would We Live Our Lives Again', *The Speaker*, 28 Feb, 1891, pp. 247-8
'Poetry and the Something Behind Phenomena', *The Speaker*, March 25, 1899, p. 346
'The Cat-Call of the Sphinx', *The Star*, 17 February, 1898, p. 1

Selections

Lindsay, Maurice (ed. and intro.), *John Davidson, A Selection of his Poems* [inc. preface by T.S. Eliot and an essay by Hugh MacDiarmid], (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1961)
MacLeod, R.D., (ed. and intro.), *Poems and Ballads by John Davidson* (London: The Unicorn Press, 1959)
O'Brian, Edward J., (ed. and intro.), *The Man Forbid and Other Essays* (Boston: The Ball Publishing Co., 1910)
Sloan, John, (ed. and intro.) *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)
Turnbull, Andrew R.D. (ed. and intro.), *The Poems of John Davidson*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1973)
Wenley, R.M., (ed. and intro.), *Poems by John Davidson* (New York: Boni and Liveright Inc., 1924)

II
Secondary

Book-Length Studies on Davidson

Fineman, Hayim, *John Davidson: A Study of the Relation of his Ideas to his Poetry* (1916; Folcroft Library Editions, 1978)

MacLeod, R.D., *John Davidson: A Study in Personality* (Glasgow: W. & R. Holmes Ltd., 1957)

Northey, Eric, *The Poetry of John Davidson (1857-1909) in its Social, Political and Philosophical Contexts*, unpublished PhD., Newcastle University, (1976), publication no. 27-283, ref. AB33500

O'Connor, Mary, *John Davidson* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987)

Peterson, Carroll V., *John Davidson* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1972)

Sloan, John, *John Davidson, First of the Moderns: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995)

Thouless, Priscilla, *Modern Poetic Drama*, see chapter vi 'John Davidson' and chapter vii 'Davidson's Later Dramas' (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1934)

Thatcher, David S., *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914* see chapter III 'John Davidson' (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1970)

Townsend, J.B., *John Davidson: Poet of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961)

Articles on Davidson

Herbert, W.N., *Continuity in the Poetry and Prose of Hugh MacDiarmid*, see chapter 1, part 1: the influence of Davidson on MacDiarmid, unpublished D.Phil. Thesis, Oxford (1990), pp. 41-53

Herdman, John, 'John Davidson in Full', *Akros*, vol. 9, no.25, August 1974, pp. 79-84

Hubbard, Tom, 'Irony and Enthusiasm: The Fiction of John Davidson', *Scottish Literary Journal*, vol. 11, no. 2 (December, 1984), pp. 71-82

--, 'John Davidson: A Lad Apairt', *Chapman* 40, vol. 8, no. 3 (Spring, 1985), pp. 34-8

--, 'John Davidson's Glasgow', *The Scottish Review*, no. 32 (Nov. 1983), pp. 13-19

Jones, Howard Mumford, 'A Minor Prometheus', *Freeman*, New York: 6 (1922), p. 153

Lester, John A. jr., 'Friedrich Nietzsche and John Davidson: A Study in Influence', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 18 (1957), pp. 411-29

--, 'Prose-Poetry Transmutation in the Poetry of John Davidson', *Modern Philology*, vol. 56 (1958), pp. 38-44

Lindsay, Maurice, 'John Davidson - The Man Forbid', *Saltire Review*, vol. 4, no. 11, (Summer 1957), pp. 54-61

Millard, Kenneth, 'John Davidson: Scottish versus English', chapter 6 in *Edwardian Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991)

Robertson, Ritchie, 'Science and Myth in John Davidson's Testaments', *Studies in Scottish Literature* 18 (1983), pp. 85-109

Sloan, John M., 'A Rebel in Poetry', *John O'London's Weekly*, 15, 26 Sept., 1926

Thatcher, David S., 'John Davidson', chapter 3 in *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1970), pp. 53-92

Turner, Paul, 'John Davidson: The Novels of a Poet', *The Cambridge Journal*, vol. 5, (October 1951-September 1952), pp. 499-504

Padraig, Colum, 'The Poet of Armageddon John Davidson', *The New Republic* (13), 12 January, 1918, pp. 310-12

Sloan, J.M., 'A Rebel in Poetry' *John O'London's Weekly*, 25 September, 1926, p. 766
Woolf, Virginia, 'John Davidson', *The Times Literary Supplement*, 16 August, 1917, p. 390

General Secondary Material

Alford, Norman, *The Rhymers' Club: Poets of the Tragic Generation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994)
Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983)
ApRoberts, Ruth, *The Ancient Dialect, Thomas Carlyle and Comparative Religion* (California and London: University of California Press, 1988)
Aytoun, W.E. *Stories and Verse*, edited by W.L. Renwick (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1964)
Baglow, John, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Poetry of Self* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987)
Bakhtin, M.M., *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed., by Michael Holquist, trans. By Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981)
Barrie, J.M. *Sentimental Tommy* (1896; London: Cassell and Co., 3rd ed., 1924)
Behnken, Eloise M., *Thomas Carlyle: Calvinist without the Theology* (Columbia; London: University Of Missouri Press, 1978)
Bloom, Harold, *The Anxiety of Influence*, 2nd edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997)
Bold, Valentina, 'James Young Geddes (1850-1913) A Revaluation', *Scottish Literary Journal* 19, no. 1 (May. 1992), pp. 18-27
Boswell, James, *The Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides* (1786; London: Penguin, 1984)
Brown, George Douglas, *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901; London: Penguin, 1985)
Buckley, Jerome Hamilton, *The Victorian Temper* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1952)
Byron, Kenneth Hugh, *The Pessimism of James Thomson (B.V.) in Relation to his Times* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1926)
Calder, Jenni, *Stevenson and Victorian Fiction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1981)
Calvin, John, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 1, ed. and trans. by John Allen (London: Walker, 1813)
--, *Calvin's Institutes*., ed., Hugh T Kerr, (Westminster: John Knox Press, 1989)
Campbell, Ian, ''Carlyle's Religion: The Scottish Background', in *Carlyle and his Contemporaries: Essays in Honour of Charles Richard Sanders*, ed. by John Clubbe (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1976), pp. 3-20
--,'The Scottishness of Thomas Carlyle', *Carlyle Studies Annual*, Special Issue (1995), pp. 73-82
Carlyle, Thomas, *Reminiscences*, vol. I, edited by James Anthony Froude (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1881)
-----, 'Wotton Reinfred', in *The Last Words of Thomas Carlyle* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892), pp. 1-148
-----, *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. by H.D. Traill, Centenary Edition, 30 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-99)
Cassidy, John A., *Robert W. Buchanan* (NewYork: Twayne Inc., 1973)
Cheyne, A.C., *The Transforming of the Kirk. Victorian Scotland's Religious Revolution* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1983)
Clubbe, John (ed.), *Carlyle and his Contemporaries* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1976)
Collins, Carol 'Anti-Dogmatism and the 'Metaphorical Quashee': Thomas Carlyle's 'An Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question'' *Carlyle Studies*, 1995, pp. 23-40.

Copeland, Sir Reginald, *Welsh and Scottish Nationalism: A Study* (London: Collins, 1954)
Craig, Cairns, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996)
Craig, David, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680-1830* (London: Chatton and Windus, 1961)
Crawford, Robert, *Devolving English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992)
Daiches, David, *Some Late Victorian Attitudes* (London: Andre Deutsch Ltd., 1969)
--, *Literature and Gentility in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1982)
--, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964)
--, *Carlyle: The Paradox Reconsidered* (Edinburgh: MacDonald Ltd, 1981)
Davie, George, *The Democratic Intellect* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1961)
Dickens, Charles, *Hard Times*, (1854; London: Penguin, 1988)
Donaldson, William, *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1986)
Dowling, William, C., 'The Boswellian Hero', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, vol. 10, no. 824, University of South Caroline Press, ed. G. Ross Roy (1972), pp. 79-93
Eagleton, Terry, *Exiles and Emigres: Studies in Modern Literature* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970)
Ferguson, William, *Scotland: 1689 to the Present* (vol. iv of the 'Edinburgh History of Scotland') (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1968)
Galt, John, *The Entail*, (1882; London: Oxford University Press, 1970)
Geddes, James Young, *The New Jerusalem and Other Verses* (Dundee: James P. Matthew, 1879)
-----, *The Spectre Clock of Alyth and Other Selections* (Alyth: Thomas McMurray, 1886)
-----, *In the Valhalla, and other Poems* (Dundee: John Leng, 1891)
Gelder, Kenneth (ed.and intro.), *Stevenson's Short Stories and Essays* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989)
Gibbon, Lewis Grassic, *Sunset Song* (1932; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993)
Gifford, Douglas (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature* vol. 3: Nineteenth Century (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988)
Gissing, George, *New Grub Street* (1891; London: Penguin, 1985)
Gordon, George (ed.), *Perspectives of the Scottish City* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985)
Greenberger, Evelyn Barish, *Arthur Hugh Clough: The Growth of a Poet's Mind* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970)
Hamlyn, D.W., *A History of Western Philosophy* (London: Penguin, 1987)
Harrold, Charles Frederick, *Carlyle and German Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934)
Hart, Francis Russell, *The Scottish Novel: A Critical Survey* (London: J. Murray, 1978)
Hay, John MacDougall, *Gillespie* (1914; Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1993)
Hechter, Michael, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975)
Helmling, Stephen, *The Esoteric Comedies of Carlyle, Newman and Yeats* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)
Herbert W.N., *Continuity in the Poetry and Prose of Hugh MacDiarmid*, D.Phil., Oxford, 1990, ref. M796476
Herdman, John, *The Double in Nineteenth Century Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990)
Hobsbawn, Eric and Ranger, Terence (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983)
Hogg, James, *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824; Oxford: World's Classics Series, Oxford University Press, 1990)

Holbrook, Jackson, *The 1890s: a review of art and ideas* (1913; London: The Harvester Press, 1976)
Hook, Andrew (ed.) *The History of Scottish Literature* vol. 2: Eighteenth Century (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987)
Hulme, T.E., *Speculations. Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1924)
Hume, David, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739; London: Penguin, 1985)
Jack, R.D.S. and Rozendaal, P.A.T. (eds.), *The Mercat Anthology* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1997)
Jessop, Ralph, *Carlyle and Scottish Thought* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1997)
--, 'Carlyle's "Wotton Reinfred": They Talked of Scottish Philosophy', *Carlyle Annual*, 12 (1991), pp. 9-15
Kaplan, Justin (ed.), *Walt Whitman Complete Poetry and Collected Prose* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Library of America Studies, 1982)
Kaufmann, Walter, ed. and trans. *The Portable Nietzsche* (1954; London: Peguin, 1976)
Kerrigan, Catherine, *Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1983)
Knight, G. Wilson, *'The Golden Labyrinth' A Study of British Drama* (London: Phoenix House Ltd., 1962)
Knox, John, *The Book of the Common Order of the Church of Scotland*, with intro. and notes by G.W. Sprott (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood and Sons, 1901)
--, *The Works of John Knox* ed. by Laing, David, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Wodrow Society, 1846)
La Valley, Albert J., *Carlyle and the Idea of the Modern* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968)
Le Quesne, A.L., et.al., *Victorian Thinkers: Carlyle, Ruskin, Arnold, Morris* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993)
Leonard, Tom, *Radical Renfrew* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990)
Lindsay, Maurice, *Scotland: An Anthology* (London: Robert Hale & Co., 1974)
--, *History of Scottish Literature* (London: Robert Hale & Co., 1977)
Lucas, John, *England and Englishness: Ideas of Nationhood in English Poetry 1688-1900* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1990)
Lodge, David (ed.), *Modern Criticism and Theory* (London: Longman, 1988)
The London Quarterly Review, 2nd Series (July 1893), 'Calvin and Calvinism', pp. 205 -228, source: Wellesley Index, vol. 4, p. 421
MacDiarmid, Hugh, *Complete Poems*, 2 vols., ed. by Michael Grieve and W.R.Aitken (London: Martin Brian & O'Keeffe, 1978)
--, *Selected Prose*, ed. by Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992)
--, *Selected Poems*, ed. by Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (London: Penguin, 1994)
Manning, Susan, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
McCue, Jim (ed.), *Arthur Hugh Clough Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1991)
McHale, Brian, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London and New York: Routledge, 1987)
Meeker, J.E., *The Life and Poetry of James Thomson (B.V.)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1917)
Menzies, Gordon (ed.), *The Scottish Nation* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972)
Morris, Pam (ed.), *The Bakhtin Reader* (London: Arnold, 1994)
Muir, Edwin, *Scottish Journey*, (1935; Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing Ltd., 1979)
Munro, Neil, *Gilian The Dreamer* (1899; Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, Inverary edition, 1935)
Nairn, Tom, *The Break-up of Britain* (London: Verso, 1981)
Noble, Andrew, 'Between the Lines', *The Glasgow Herald*, 24 Feb. (1996), p. 21

Perkins, David, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976)

Phillipson, N.T., *'Nationalism and Ideology' in Government and Nationalism in Scotland* ed. by James N. Woolfe (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1969)

Pittock, Murray G.H., *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart Myth and the Scottish Identity, 1638 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1991)

Ramsay, M.P., *Calvin and Art* (Edinburgh and London: The Moray Press, 1938)

Sandison, Alan, *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Appearance of Modernism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996)

Scott, Alexander, "The Thistle and the Drunk Man' William Soutar and Hugh MacDiarmid' *Saltire Review*, vol. 5, no. 14 Spring 1958, pp. 48-50

Scott, N.J.W., *James Thomson: Anglo-Scot* (Athens, Georgia, 1988)

Scott, P.H., and Davis, A.C., eds. *The Age of MacDiarmid* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 1992)

Selden, Raman and Widdowson, Peter, *Contemporary Literary Theory*, 3rd edition (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993)

Simpson, Kenneth, *The Protean Scot*, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988)

Stanford, Derek (ed. and intro.) *Three Poets of the Rhymers' Club - Ernest Dowson, Lionel Johnson and John Davidson* (Cheshire: Carcanet Press, 1974)

Stevenson, R.L., *The Master of Ballantrae and Weir of Hermiston*, ed. by Claire Harman (London: J.M. Dent, 1992)

-----, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886; New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1991)

Strachan, Gordon, *The Pentecostal Theology of Edward Irving* (London: Penguin, 1971)

Ramsay, M.P., *Calvin and Art. Considered in relation to Scotland* (Edinburgh and London: The Moray Press, 1938)

Riach, Alan and Grieve, Michael, eds. *Hugh MacDiarmid Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1992)

Riach, Alan (ed.), *Hugh MacDiarmid Selected Prose* (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1992)

Thatcher, D.S., *Nietzsche in England 1890-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970)

Thomson, James, *The City of Dreadful Night* (1880; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993)

Thomson, Rev. John, (ed.), *Proceedings and Debates of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, held at Edinburgh, May 1880 (Edinburgh: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., 1880)

Traill, H.D. (ed.), *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, Centenary Edition, 30 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1896-99)

Vanden Bossche, Chris R., *Carlyle and the Search for Authority* (Ohio State University Press, 1991)

Walker, Marshall, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London and New York: Longman, 1996)

Watson, Roderick, *The Literature of Scotland*, (London: Macmillan, 1984)

Wilks, Washington, *Edward Irving: An Ecclesiastical and Literary Biography* (London, 1854)

Wittig, Kurt, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958)

Yeats, W.B., *Autobiographies* (London: MacMillan and Co. Ltd., 1956).