A Way of Life: Guilt and Recovery in Scottish Women's Writing

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Abstract:

This thesis will investigate the explorations of personal guilt in contemporary Scottish women's writing, by selecting four Scottish female writers attempts to achieve recovery through their literary examinations of their distinct experiences of guilt. It will consider the influence and intersection of Scottish nationalism and culture within the curation of female guilt, and examine how the writers in discussion attempt reclaim their experiences of guilt in deeply personal narratives within a Scottish cultural-national context. More specifically, this thesis will investigate how issues of maternity, domesticity, belonging, and identity inform the range of guilt experienced and how these issues can be explored to offer recovery from guilt, as depicted in the chosen literature.

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Introduction:

Contemporary Scottish women's writing in the post-war and post-devolutionary periods is home to concerns unique to the female experience in Scotland. Scottish literature is an enticing area to explore this discrepancy thanks to the small yet fierce nature of both the nation and the writing born from it. Up until the late nineteenth century the most famous voices of Scottish Literature were almost exclusively male. Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, Robert Louis Stevenson, Arthur Conan Doyle, and Hugh MacDiarmid are never far from overarching literary discussions and English Literature courses across the globe. Entering the twentieth century, one will celebrate Grassic Gibbon and his mighty *Scots Quair*, to then move further along and find the likes of Edwin Morgan and his popular urban sonnets. Outliers in the field like Catherine Carswell, Willa Muir, and Nan Shepherd are celebrated now, but in their time and up until recently were seen as too controversial, nuisances, or simply afterthoughts in the critical discourse regarding Scottish literary advancement and achievement. Glenda Norquay notes that while writers like Carswell and Muir may have 'searched for new ways to articulate female desire, they also forged ways of writing that challenged - and were often misunderstood, therefore ignored by - the societies in which they worked,' going on to recognise that despite critical ignorance towards these women, they still 'wrote, and wrote on their own terms' (2012: 6). This disregard, however, has been diminishing in recent decades as something of a surge in both the recognition and popularity of Scottish women writers has taken place. Names such as Janice Galloway, A.L. Kennedy, Ali Smith, Jackie Kay, and Denise Mina now sit comfortably among the likes of Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Ian Rankin, and Irvine Welsh. Scottish women have become commonplace in any discussions of good and rightly celebrated Scottish writing. Similarly, women's histories have been afforded better and more sincere consideration since the mid-nineties. Today, organisations such as Women's History Scotland and the Centre for Gender History at Glasgow University are important and impactful bodies which ensure women's history in Scotland does not go unheard or unremembered (Barclay et al 2013: 83). Still, the cultural field - which encompasses the literary one - was for too long dominated by men both as writers and critics and scholars of those writers. Gray, Kelman, Rankin, Welsh, Banks, Brookmyre and more have enjoyed a breadth of success and notoriety throughout their careers and Scottish literary criticism has been long dominated by political and national concerns aided by the likes of Cairns Craig and Robert Crawford with texts such as Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (1992), challenging the Anglo-centricity of English

Literature as discipline in a Scottish nationalist framework. These masculine biases and overtly nationalist concerns have resultantly paved the way for a particular critical oversight regarding women's role in national literature that has become a deep fracture. However, critics have been attempting to heal this fracture in preceding decades. As Carol Craig observed, 'much of what was written on Scotland by Scots […] was written by and for men' (2003: 28). Craig goes on to note that little was ever said 'about childhood or family relationships, nothing about maternity, almost nothing on sexual relationships or sexuality', meaning both women and their issues are 'mentioned as an afterthought' (28). However, post-devolutionary criticism has largely moved on from this malaise and gives adequate coverage to writers across both gender lines and temporal chronologies, tackling a much broader scope of subject matter outside of nationalist or masculinist concerns and Craig's limited view of Scots literary historical production. In both domestic and international terms, Scottish women's literary criticism flourishes and helps redefine how Scottish female literary production has historically been perceived and positioned. For example, Juliet Shields *Scottish Women's Writing in the Long Nineteenth Century* (2021) deftly revisits the position of women writing in Scotland's nineteenth century, where the roaring success of Walter Scott's *Waverley* novels had taken the 'feminized and degraded genre of romance' into a firmly masculine realm (3). Shields also recognises how the idea of the New Woman in literature was often envisaged as 'a cigarette-smoking, bicycle-riding, freethinking adulterer,' but was used by Scots women writers to embolden their depictions of wives and mothers in bleak landscapes and fraught economic circumstances (2021: 95). In contrast to Carol Craig's reliance on an outmoded Scottish relationship with nationalism, Berthold Schoene suggests in his introduction to *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature* that post-devolutionary Scottish literature and literary criticism has moved past a nationalism concerned with the state of the nation and being in 'opposition to all things English,' and arrived at a place where nationalism can instead be considered alongside wider 'debates on contemporary "identity", such as class, sexuality and gender, globalisation […] as well as questions of ethnicity, race and postnational culturalism' (2007: 2). Schoene goes on to offer a reprieve from Craig's narrow view of nationalism in Scottish culture and criticism in saying that Scottish culture as a whole in the post-devolutionary period is able to 'reconceive of itself in broader terms, with reference to other cultures, [finding] itself embedded within a multicultural, international context' (9-10). Employing this specifically to rebut Craig, what has changed in this contemporary state of affairs to expand literary critical discussions of 'childhood or family relationships, […] maternity, […] sexual relationships or sexuality,' -

the traditionally feminised 'afterthoughts' in Scottish culture and criticism? (Craig 2003: 28). Writing specifically on Janice Galloway's works, Carole Jones suggests that contemporary female writers 'take up Scotland's persistently masculinist conception of nationhood,' in an effort to reconcile opposing forces of gender and national identity (2007: 210). Galloway specifically brings dead men into her works to experiment with this. Michael in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* is an obvious example, but even her own father's death in *This is Not About Me* coincides with an opening up of her exploration of her girlhood and maternal and domestic relationships as she and her mother move into his house, finding space to become the next versions of themselves and simultaneously bond in domesticity and all its near-sacred routines. Jones' suggests that through these dead men, Galloway 'autopsies the old order [as] part of her strategy for moving beyond it' (2007: 211).

While strides have evidently been made through awareness, expansion of opportunity, and belief in what can be offered in the Scottish cultural-literary context, this longstanding disregard for female realities and narratives in Scotland that Craig points to can still in the contemporary moment produce a discontent among the female population that very regularly manifests as guilt and self-doubt. As Kristen Stirling observes in the introduction to her text *Bella Caledonia: Women, Nation, Text*, when 'gender and nation collide, whether this involves the representation of the nation as gendered, or the concomitant role of women as citizens, complications appear' (2008: 11). When nationalism is such a decidedly masculine notion, as is again suggested by Craig when she discusses the specifically 'nationalist and inherently masculinist crisis over national self-determination' in Scotland (2003: 144) - female concerns are stored away and de-prioritised. While this is useful to an extent, Craig runs the risk of condemning any feminine interactions with nationalism as invalid or self-defeating. Turning to more recent criticism on this subject is therefore essential. For example, Glenda Norquay in 2012 renews this notion as it pertains to Scottish women's literature, suggesting that 'tension' surrounding an image of home gives rise to 'richness' in women's writing (1). This seems to speak to the revitalising qualities of considering nationalism in refreshed contemporary debates that Schoene discusses in 2007. Historically, when nationalist concerns are so deeply entwined with masculine concerns, the desire to communicate and express female concerns typically makes the average woman feel like a bad citizen, and at times a guilty one. However, in the contemporary moment, the renewed relationship of Scottish women writers and critics with nationalism seems to offer a reprieve from these malignant concerns, as will be argued for with reference to all primary texts throughout. Of course, any guilt-ridden mentality is not only experienced among the female

population, but across gender lines. Yet still it bears most heavily on women, whose existence is oft characterised by selflessness, domestic labour, and a preoccupation with the wellbeing of others - traditionally the men and the children - before oneself. Thus, the recovery from this guilt will be considered as it is experienced by the women writers in discussion. A combination of nationalist concerns and protestant preoccupations among other things has all but ensured that the 'Scots are overly concerned with what other people think of them,' (Craig 2003: 117). Expanding on this idea, it is evident in the Scottish women's literature in discussion that this concern and its resulting curation of guilt affects women in more malignant ways than men. Janice Galloway, in an introduction to the journal *Meantime*, has effectively summarised this nuanced form of guilt inflicted upon the contemporary Scottish female:

> There is coping with that guilt of taking time off the concerns of national politics to get concerned with the sexual sort: that creeping fear it's somehow self-indulgent to be more concerned for one's womanness instead of one's Scottishness, one's working-class heritage, whatever. Guilt here comes strong from the notion we're not backing up our menfolk and their "real" concerns. Female concerns, like meat on mother's plate, are extras after the men and weans have been served (1991: 5-6)

The demands of the modern age do not leave much time or space for 'extras'. Female concerns, as Galloway explicitly illustrates in this pre-devolutionary example, are too often discarded altogether in the chaos of everyday life as it exists for women, with responsibilities outside of herself and her own desires and needs. This specific type of struggle and guilt will be examined, aided by the work of Galloway herself, in chapter two, section I.

As Benedict Anderson has famously argued, the nation is an 'imagined political community […] imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members […] yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' ([1983] 2006: 6). Of course, Scotland is undeniably wee, contributing around 5.5-million heads to the over 67-million strong UK population. Somewhat alarmingly, in the last four decades of the twentieth century over a million Scots emigrated down south and overseas, hardly easing any concerns regarding the scale and prowess of the nation (Craig 2003: 1). Yet even in this relatively small country its nationalist anxieties are unignorable, with the most recent referendum in 2014 on the issue of Scotland's becoming an independent nation and separating from the UK splitting the country down the middle in rigid categories

of NO or YES. For Scottish women, this near-perpetual state of nationalist crisis manifests guilt in ways directly linked to what Marylin Reizbaum calls the '"double exclusion"[1] suffered by women writing in marginalised cultures, where the struggle to assert a nationalist identity obscures or doubly marginalizes the assertion of gender…' (1992: 165). As it is such a complex issue, nationalism in Scotland and its impact on Scottish female writers will be discussed in depth in chapter one.

Add to this the historically contingent protestant and Calvinist beliefs lingering in Scottish society, and women become even further demoted down the list of things Scotland as a nation considers important to prioritise. An awareness of this has evidently been present since the early twentieth century, with Scottish writer Willa Muir condemning suffocating protestant values by suggesting in 1936 that "respectability" had become 'widespread Scottish disease' (Craig 2003: 154). There is a commonly held opinion in Scottish cultural criticism - which Carol Craig ascribes - to that Calvinism's strong presbyterian beliefs in man's innate depravity and utter dependency on a higher guiding power linger in the culture and the national psyche, turning the Scots into a 'guilt-ridden, joyless people' (2003: 19). Standing firm in her argument, Craig further suggests that 'this Calvinist legacy has predisposed [Scots] to the need for recovery,' a desire for 'collective salvation' that is somehow deemed unattainable, with potential methods never being conceived of on an individual level and therefore rendered unattainable on a collective one (167). Furthermore, many other religions - most notably Catholicism - afford followers the opportunity to expunge themselves of guilt through confession and prayer. Yet within Protestantism such sacraments and practices do not exist. For Protestants and atheists in Scotland, 'there is no obvious outlet, [so the guilt] seeps into literature' (Craig 2003: 50). More recently, Sarah Dunnigan has written about the unique ways that religion has historically both 'accommodated and excluded women socially and politically,' particularly as it has divided women in different Scots communities since the sixteenth century when Scotland experienced unprecedented religious shifting (2012: 13). This divisiveness and exclusionary function of religion in many ways has failed to dissipate, and in Scottish literature these cultural-religious issues are often plain to see. Galloway, for example, keenly draws to life characters who exhibit a clear sense of 'protestant guilt' such as Joy Stone in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (McKerrow 2002: 7). Clearly, being of the protestant mindset that one has no

[1] Or what Kirsten Stirling calls 'Multiple Oppressions' (2008: 78), or Joy Hendry calls the 'double knot in the peeny' (1987: 36).

control over one's fate and no independent sense of right and wrong is characteristically damaging, as Joy suffers extreme guilt after the death of her married lover, which manifests itself in domestic anxieties, substance abuse, and mental illness in the form of depression, anxiety and life-threatening eating disorders. However, religion is a fraught subject within Scotland and the Scottish national discourse, and in the ensuing thesis it will not provide any real focus for several reasons. Sectarianism is a serious subject as it is a major component of Scottish life[2], and it has been discussed rather tentatively Scottish cultural criticism as it pertains to literature. Additionally, as noted by Breitenbach, Brown & Myers, there is a distinct lack of Scottish feminist studies which examine the effect of the Calvinist-Protestantism that is often 'invoked as an explanation for male chauvinism, misogyny and sexual repression resulting in a greater oppression of women in Scotland,' as well as explanation for the oppression of non-white, not-protestant, and non-unionist Scots (1998: 61). Resultantly, given the roots of both Scottish cultural and feminist studies that will be drawn from and the fact that religious discrimination does not necessarily affect women more than it affects other marginalised groups, this thesis is not the most fruitful place to add to this commentary. Nevertheless, religion continues to complicate the dissection of the function of gender in a Scottish national culture - and its resultant literature - that is defined by masculine, national, and protestant ideals. Understanding gender is therefore a nuanced and tricky thing when adequate consideration is given to the overwhelming nationalist preoccupation of Scottish literature and criticism that has proven itself to be the dominant strain.

This thesis, then, will move beyond the political and national within literature to encompass the acutely personal. This is not to say that the personal and the national are separate entities. In fact, the personal is very much at stake within national constructs and nationalism, particularly for Scottish women for whom guilt is alternately a weapon used against them to belittle and disempower within a historically patriarchal national culture, or an assumed and automatic state of being and feeling. It is in part this abuse within the realm of the emotional that the Scottish writers in this thesis describe, challenge, and dismantle in their work. When women writers in Scotland have gone on record to consistently outline the ways in which they have to deprioritise themselves and their needs in service of men,

[2] Most certainly within its densely populated Central Belt which encompasses Scotland's capital city of Edinburgh and largest city of Glasgow, where sectarianism is intrinsically linked to and propelled by footballing rivalries and divisive boundaries between Catholic and Protestant areas - a fracture which dissipates by degrees as you move further north or south.

children, and country in their everyday life, it cannot be ignored that the guilt these same women choose to examine in their cultural offerings is in some way linked to this masculinised Scottish nationalism. It is then also true that contemporary developments in culture and criticism have allowed the Scottish relationship with nationalism to develop and refocus, and become a space where potential recovery and discovery can take place. Where typically masculine ideals are centred around issues of work, economy and historical change, women's core concerns aside from these issues have often been seen as distractions from broader nationalist or modern objectives. Resultantly, women have often been made to feel guilty in any attempt to bridge a conversation regarding such concerns and issues. Janice Galloway again powerfully demonstrates the realities of this claim and argues its merit:

> The need to keep women feeling guilty goes deep, obviously. The fear of losing the unfair system that operates in male favour likewise. It is still something for women [to] consciously resist. As is the guilt it hopes to produce (1991: 7)

This example is a necessary inclusion in this particular discussion of Scottish women's guilt as it is displayed in their contemporary writing, allowing for a more rounded sense of how it may be informed by their national circumstances and how, retrospectively, these circumstances have evolved. While everyone of all sexes and genders within the national landscape is included in any discussion of national politics, When so much cultural-national consideration is given to the abstract issue of 'Scottishness' and how to approach voicing concerns related to the issue, women's concerns and issues consistently cannot find a safe and appropriate place to be shared and worked through. Historically, they go forgotten or ignored. Galloway's pre-devolutionary acknowledgement that there is not only a 'need' but a 'hope' to produce guilt among Scots women is alarming, yet also throws into greater contrast the almost defiant and certainly powerful position Scots women writers hold within the national culture today. As in all patriarchal societies, the Scottish order of things has long benefitted when women do not question the systems that silence, worry, and disadvantage them. Relevant to this discussion is the issue of Scottish independence within the nationalist narrative. The more staunch proponents of Scottish independence have historically associated the obtaining of independence with an improvement in Scottish social, economic, and political issues, based in some fact and relating to how much money Scots send to Westminster each year and how little political say Scots have in political elections. Less definable are claims made that Scottish independence could and would aid issues of 'Scottish

confidence' more broadly (Craig 2003: 31). This sweeping hypothesising could be applied to this examination of Scottish female guilt. Yet when social, economic, political, and confidence-related problems uniquely trouble Scotland's female population, the aforementioned Scottish preoccupation with nationalism must be considered as a roadblock on the pathway to meaningful solutions. This is evident as Scottish female writers seem to step outside of Scottish borders more readily in their fiction such as Ali Smith and A.L. Kennedy, or focus less on issues of Scottishness and nationalist masculinity that Scottish male writers. Janice Galloway has stated an awareness of the fear of seeming 'self-indulgent' and suggests that this overarching sense of national guilt, spurred by eschewing the national concerns for the personal, comes from 'the strong notion we're not backing up our menfolk,' which implies that Scots women feel equally that they are not backing up the nation (Galloway 1991: 5). In the ensuing thesis, the ways in which the chosen texts frankly explore and attempt to recover from guilt will be examined. To do this, an identification of aspects of domestic, maternal, and identity guilt within the writing of Janice Galloway, Jackie Kay, Deborah Orr, and Leila Aboulela[3] will be carried out in order to better understand the specific causes and functions of this guilt. This thesis argues that in their uncompromising portrayals of guilt, these writers allow their works to possess clear redemptive qualities through the exploration of that guilt. Recovery comes through writing, processing, and reclamation of the guilt they have endured in nuanced ways in each text. The redemptive qualities of forgiveness, healing, and self-reflection are stereotypically feminine ones, with women across cultures and in these texts considered to be bearers of both personal and collective guilt - be that within the family, community, or nation itself. The primary texts in discussion challenge such stereotypes primarily in their nuanced exhibitions of guilt as something which is not tethered to one person in one specific way. Instead, their guilt is connected to multiple players and moments with varying degrees of affect depending on the experiencer and the environment. Their revisiting and examination of guilt in search of forgiveness and freedom therefore allows recovery to take place. In Galloway's memoir *This is Not About Me* (2008), she recounts her life from conception until her pre-teen years encompassing her difficult and tenuous relationship with her mother, her sister, her community, and herself. Guilt for Galloway arises in the maternal relationship, its domestic reality, and how her apparent

[3] Leila Aboulela - though Sudanese by birth - has Scottish citizenship and raises her family here. She often writes on her sense of Scottish identity in works of both fiction and nonfiction, such as her contribution to Tom Devine and Paddy Logue's *Being Scottish: Personal Reflections on Scottish Identity Today* (2002). For this reason she is included without caveat in the group of Scottish women writers in discussion, and any reference made henceforth is with this note in mind.

disjointedness with her community, family, and peers informs and often worsens this guilt. Deborah Orr's memoir *Motherwell* (2020) intimately shares her life story as the daughter of an English mother and working-class Scottish father, her upbringing in a post-industrial central Scottish town, and her fractured and guilt-ridden maternal relationship from her perspective as a grown woman who has recently experienced the loss of that mother. Jackie Kay's autobiographical debut poetry collection *The Adoption Papers* (1991) and acclaimed memoir *Red Dust Road* (2010) both uniquely examine the type of guilt Kay has endured throughout her life, arising from her struggle to assert a sense of belonging in her nuanced position as an adopted black Scottish woman and lesbian. The formal structure of her *Adoption Paper*s literally communicates the struggle of displacement and the jarring components of her heritage in its poeticism and typographical choices, contrasted by the more seamless and almost novelistic approach taken in writing her memoir of nearly a decade later. In Kay's work, the questions that arise relate to how identity is formed when biological bonds are displaced, and when an already complex search for belonging is further complicated by sexuality and race. Leila Aboulela's work of autofiction *The Translator* (1999) also explicitly takes on the complex issue of belonging through the lens of religion, nationality, and love in the narrative of Sammar, a Sudanese widow working at Aberdeen university. These texts offer a unique opportunity for analysis given their forms, from those categorizable as memoirs - such is the case with Galloway's, Kay's and Orr's texts - or works of autobiografiction - as is the case with Kay's poetry and Aboulela's novel. The difference between memoir and autobiografiction lies in the extent of fictionalisation. Aboulela takes her personal history of emigrating from Sudan to Scotland, where she first lectured at Aberdeen College before undertaking a research position at the University, and transposing these experiences onto Sammar, who differs from Aboulela in her status as widow, her familial situation, and slight alterations in her career. On the other hand, Galloway, Kay and Orr do not conceal their objective to memorialise their experiences and deliver a non-fictionalised first-person recounting of their lives. They do not generally change people's real names or divert from factual timelines and consistently engage in self-reflection, setting their texts firmly in the category of memoir. Galloway's text, while adhering more to the fundamental aspects of memoir writing, certainly toes a line between both forms as she notably changes her mother and sisters real names in her text. This subtle but significant change is one element of this style of writing which contributes to a sense these works are being used to achieve emotional healing and recovery from guilt, as will be discussed in

chapter two, section I. Indeed, there are no greater alterations or fictionalisations - general biases and flaws of human memory aside.

This collection of personally informed and emotionally honest Scottish women's writing will provide a more complex framework for the ensuing discussion, especially when arguing for the redemptive capabilities of literature tackling such a complex and pernicious emotion as guilt. The argument suggesting that recovery is a crucial aim of all the texts in discussion is made even more convincing when recognising that every writer uses their diverse lived experiences as women in Scotland to construct their texts and their vivid explorations of guilt. This thesis fundamentally argues that the novels in discussion share a common objective: to explore guilt with an end goal of articulating or locating opportunities for personal - and perhaps even collective - recovery from guilt. Yet the circumstances in each novel contain a unique mix of maternal, domestic, sexual, and racial elements that each produce a different set of problems and solutions. All of these elements will thus be explored in this thesis to identify their broader implications for contemporary Scottish women's writing and its readers. Of course, any achievement of recovery and expiation relies on the chosen writers laying bare their past grievances and struggles to overcome the guilt they have taken on from these experiences. Be it Galloway and Orr delving into the maternal complications they experienced as daughters from their contemporary perspectives as adult women, or Kay examining the complicated guilt she feels as an adopted, mixed race individual through explorations of her adoptive and biological connections and relationships, recovery comes predominantly through engagement with the causational factors of that initial guilt followed by taking ownership of that guilt, which often comes from examining ones past and present self. It is important to acknowledge that the contemporary nature of these texts allows the writers in discussion to intimately take on guilt in such a confident vein, with the landscape of Scottish literature becoming much more fertile for women in the post-war and post-devolutionary eras. Indeed, all chosen texts exhibit a distinct confidence in their confrontation of guilt. Douglas Gifford's commentary on the subject is well worth including here:

> The achievement of contemporary women writers of fiction has arguably been the most substantial of all achievements in Scottish women's writing. It is outstanding in its new confidence in handling a wide range of genres […] and its willingness to explore the challenges and problems facing women in their personal development, in

> their relationships with other women, men, families, society, and - increasingly - in relation to history and nationality (1997: 579)

Though a caveat must be issued in using a male Scottish critics words from a pre-devolutionary framework to understand the status of contemporary women writers and their perceived confidence, this excerpt is nonetheless an interesting point of consideration. Gifford's focus on both the emergence of confidence and broadening of scope in post-1945 Scottish women's writing reflects a number of contextual issues which will also be explored in the ensuing thesis. As male-domination in Scottish society waned after the mass closure of industry in the mid-twentieth century, women's jobs - as well educational and social roles - existed on a more even playing field and Scottish women have since been able to push the boundaries of what their voices and skills can achieve. This is not to say Scottish female writers who pre-date the literary expansion of the twentieth century did not produce subversive and challenging texts, but that the motivation to write to 'extend' one's personal sense of liberation in a restrictive society became much stronger in the mid-twentieth century and the decades that followed, since this liberation was actually tangible (Gifford 1997: 584). Strides made within Scottish publishing in the last three decades of the twentieth century can be considered as evidence of tangible institutional change which afforded Scottish women more freedom within Scottish cultural life. Canongate, Floris Books and Luath Press are Scottish publishing houses all founded in Edinburgh in 1973, 1976 and 1981 respectively, with Waverley Books emerging similarly in Glasgow in 1997. Bringing the bureaucratic side of writing in-house, so to speak, allowed Scottish writers a greater degree of agency than in decades prior, where writers south of the border had their monopoly on the attention of publishers big and small. Alasdair Gray's careerlong relationship with Canongate is a fine example of this mutually beneficial dynamic that Scottish publishers have continuously allowed Scottish writers to curate.

Crucially, modern Scottish women tend to find hope and strength in their writing more consistently than their predecessors, from Catherine Carswell and Nan Shephard to Dorothy Haynes and Hannah Aitken, whose novels convey a tone of bleakness and restriction more than optimism or opportunity. Of course, this is not a blanket statement and outliers certainly exist, Muriel Spark being an obvious example of a writer unrestrained by conventionally bleak subject matter, unafraid to push the boundaries and contribute to what Juliet Shields calls an 'increasingly diverse body of post-war literature by Scotswomen' (2021: 180). However, a tonal shift noticeably took place in the last quarter of the century, with texts such

as Ali Smith's *Free Love* (1995) reflecting the changing attitudes of new Scottish women's writing with a strong inclination to utilise the past for healing and identity formation moving forwards. Another collection of stories from the same decade, Janice Galloway's *Blood* (1991), takes hyper-realism and dismantles it with formal experimentations now synonymous with Galloway herself. Galloway's writing - while hardly the antithesis of what would be considered bleak in both subject matter and tone - defies the restrictions imposed on her predecessors, turning dark subject matter and twisted storytelling into something altogether more defiant. As Douglas Gifford suggests, Galloway's bleakness is embedded within 'wider and more therapeutic overall narratives and transformations' than the Scottish women's fiction on offer pre-1945 (1997: 596). The stories in *Blood* analyse the effects of the male-dominated society upon mostly young women with urgency and intimacy in the tone of the entire collection. It is a crucial contribution from a female writer, sharply examining the world as it exists for women in experimental vignettes of the everyday that, as will be discussed further in chapter two, are essential to an understanding of the developments within modern Scottish women's writing.

Chapter 1: Nationalism, Gender, and Literature

It is not possible to move further without providing direct and adequate context of the complex and endlessly shifting relationship between nationalism, gender, and literature in Scotland. Kirsten Stirling argues that nationalism tends to perpetuate the 'myth which implies or states explicitly that gender oppression follows directly from nationalist oppression' (2008: 79). This myth is damaging primarily as it absolves Scotland's culture and its people - individually and *en masse* - of any sense of responsibility or guilt pertaining to women's struggles and disadvantages. This myth further denies women the chance to invite their peers into the collective effort to improve cultural, societal, economic, public, and private life for women, as there is a dominant belief that something must be done about the state of the nation before something can be done about the state of women's experiences. As discussed in the introduction, the post-devolutionary period certainly sees an alleviation of this intensity and a welcome hopefulness within the Scottish cultural psyche, allowing women's fiction to flourish. Indeed, all texts in discussion bar Kay's *Adoption Papers* of 1991 come after the advent of Scottish Devolution in 1997. Pre-devolutionary Scottish literary criticism certainly tends to whittle women's stories and experiences down, compartmentalising them through deference to a nationalist agenda and leaving discussions of meaningful female experience strikingly absent in a general overview of Scottish literary criticism. For example, Carol Craig has berated Scots critic Cairns Craig for his equating the experiences of Janice Galloway's protagonist Joy in 1989's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* with 'the nationalist and inherently masculinist crisis over national self-determination, [erasing] the gender-specificity of Joy's experiences' and thereby actively contributing to the very 'marginalisation and oppression' that Galloway challenges through Joy's battles with self-confidence and self-worth (2003: 144). Indeed, for much of the text Joy exists within the 'trapped position [that] sensitive women' endure within both Scotland and its literature (Gifford 1997: 586). Therefore, it can be argued that analysing a character who struggles acutely with mental ill-health and extreme grief in this nationalist fashion is lazy at best. With a family tree featuring several women who have died by suicide and a clear struggle with mental illness herself, Joy requires more appropriate care than the Scottish critical canon at the time was able to offer her. Mary McGlynn offers a refreshing critical alternative, suggesting that Galloway's concerns lie in analysing 'the constraints of a woman living within a society that is sexist, colonised, and, as a result, masculinely nationalist,' while never letting the issue of nationalism subsume the female individual (2008: 223). Instead, nationalism remains an

'oblique' feature across Galloway's pre- and post-devolutionary works, with 'notions of nation and Scottishness' residing alongside or secondary to other 'traditional notions' of femininity, family, and home in her confrontational prose (223). Resultantly, this gives characters like Joy vital breathing space. When considering productive criticism such as McGlynn's it becomes clear that Carol Craig herself is not an antidote to the very issues she lambasts, and while her critical approach to assessing Scottish cultural guilt is both intriguing and of use in this thesis, Craig's work alone does not afford much space for a nuanced approach to defining a post-devolutionary Scottish cultural-national character. At times Craig's criticism can make deterministic swipes, particularly in asserting that each individual Scot is guilty - partly in their being plagued simultaneously by nosiness and invasions of privacy due to the nation being inherently 'logical [with a] highly developed critical faculty' and thereby, she claims, judgemental (2003: 70).

While there are definite links between the constructions of both nationality and gender, they are distinct concepts requiring distinct forms of analysis and debate. As Christopher Whyte has suggested - yet ultimately failed to do himself - those who work in the fields of both gender and nationalist studies must 'learn from each other' and compliment the others work without slipping into copying that work (1995: xiii). Yet Whyte fundamentally fails to take on his own advice, going on to use the structures, terminologies, and methodologies of both fields interchangeably within his critique and thus precisely illustrating the tricky nature of executing such a separation within the Scottish critical framework. For Carol Craig, this is an example of the ways in which nationalism can exacerbate a 'self-defeating' characteristic of Scottish culture and the Scottish psyche (2003: ix). Craig goes on to acknowledge that nationalists in general 'tend to argue that any problems with Scottish confidence, the Scottish Parliament, or anything Scottish for that matter, could be changed overnight if Scotland won independence,' a sentiment referred to in the introduction of this thesis (31). While this attitude may be changing - especially in post-devolutionary culture - this statement largely remains valid. The divisive independence referendum of 2014 and the continual debate that has lingered is surely evidence of this. What is deeply ironic about the entire issue of Scottish nationalism and independence is women's indispensable role in Scotland's success as a nation in the first place. For decades Scottish women breathed life into industrial communities all over the nation. Take for example Dundee and Ayrshire, where women played a fundamental role as skilled members of the thriving jute and cotton industries. However, these crucial branches of industry are consistently overlooked in favour of more male-dominated aspects of Scotland's industrial history - namely shipbuilding, mining, and

steelworks. But while the textile industries were comfortably dominated by women, they were not excluded from 'heavier' industry either, accounting at a point for some twelve percent of the overall mining workforce in Scotland (Whatley 1997: 74). In any case, industry could not have succeeded in Scotland were it not for mothers, wives, and daughters maintaining the men at home who typically made up the labour pool. This is to say that Scotland as a nation with a viable economy and energised population does not and could never exist without women's significant contributions. In Scotland, then, women writers offer a vital alternative perspective to their male counterparts in discussing the effects that nationalism enacts amongst the nation as a community - particularly when that nation and its communities are now decidedly both post-industrial and post-devolution. Mary McGlynn describes this offering concisely when writing on Janice Galloway's fiction:

> Revivification [of the nation] often seems to be the goal of the tourist board and movies such as *Braveheart* or *Rob Roy*, while James Kelman, Alasdair Gray, and Iain Banks seem more interested in a creation of a new nation that will challenge the very terms of national identity. Galloway's own response moves beyond these, challenging the gender roles, origins, and family dynamics that have underpinned any number of nationalist movements (2008: 223).

This forward-thinking approach to analysing contemporary Scottish women's writing seems far more appropriate and useful than deterministic offerings shown by Whyte, Cairns Craig, and even Carol Craig to an extent. The suggestion of a thematic move beyond family and gender is interesting, as these themes are indeed prevalent in all the texts in discussion. It can most certainly be argued that these themes are distinctly approached and executed to serve larger purposes, with each respective writer modernising and re-purposing their function. For example, Galloway illustrates the ways in which her fraught maternal relationship finds some positive relief in domestic everyday routines where the female traditionally dominates. Similarly, Deborah Orr uses deep reflection on her maternal relationship to explore her failings both as a daughter and even with her own family in order to achieve self-acceptance and understanding. Jackie Kay fundamentally grapples with family dynamics at an extreme and even more complicated level as she traverses borders and racial differences, and both Kay and Aboulela provide a nuanced and affecting take on the question of origins and belonging. Monica Germaná provides a useful approach to considering contemporary

Scottish women's writing - which includes the above selected primary texts - as they exists within a nationalist context where both personal and cultural belonging is precarious:

> [Contemporary Scottish women's] novels all engage with problematic notions of belonging, through interrogation of the boundaries separating private/public spaces, but also of centre/margins dichotomies, proposing models of identity which deviate from stable readings of home(lands) and roots. Thematically they register an empathetic - and at times self-conscious - shift to gendered writing, bringing the feminine self, women's desire and peripheral status into the [nationalistically preoccupied] foreground (2012: 153).

However, the notions of femininity, womanhood, family, and gender are historically at odds with nationalism in somewhat of a paradox. As Anne McClintock argues, 'all nations depend on powerful constructions of gender,' with no nation truly giving all genders 'the same access to the rights and resources of the nation-state' (1993: 61). Gender power, to borrow McClintock's terminology, is indeed under-researched in nationalist theory (62). Delving deeper, we may look to the intrinsic links to femininity necessary in any construction of a nation: the family, the home, and domestic life. Somewhere along the way nationalism seems to have lost its respect for the fundamental element of family, but this has not always been the case. McClintock acknowledges that historically, the nuclear family set up has allowed for a microscopic unfolding of nationalist ideals, turning '*violent, historical change'* into '*natural, organic time*' (64, authors emphasis). The family, governed by a father who was both partnered with and in charge of the mother as well as the children, was a seemingly naturally occurring phenomena used to provide justification for the more unnatural urges of national imperialism. In any case there is ultimately no one definition or sense of what a nation is or ought to be, and how gender and family dynamics ought to appear within it. Different genders, classes, ethnicities, and generations do not identify with or experience the myriad constructions of nationality in the same way; nationalisms are invented, performed, and reproduced in ways that do not strictly follow a universal blueprint. Similarly, when family dynamics and gender roles are precariously bound to national identity, the modern methods taken in addressing these themes by all writers in discussion allows their texts to offer multiple channels for developing understanding within a cultural-national critical context.

As a nation, Scotland has long had a distinct lack of 'female icons' (Breitenbach et al 1998: 45). Carol Craig explains in *The Scots Crisis of Confidence* that the only famous or remotely iconic Scottish women she had to admire in her childhood were few and far between. She mentions Mary Queen of Scots, beheaded after being implicated in a plot to assassinate the English queen; Moira Anderson, the eleven year old girl who vanished from North Lanarkshire on her way to the shops in a snowstorm; or the main female characters from the classic Scots comic strip *The Broons*: household-running mother of eight Maw Broon; Daphne, the daughter characterised by her unattractiveness and inability to lose weight; and Maggie, the prettier sister who becomes both a model and weather-girl - two classic objects of the male gaze (2003: 160). These famous Scots women are obviously problematic in being the only real examples of fame or popularity that young Scots women had to admire and aspire to within Scottish culture in the twentieth century. Moreover, this distinct absence of admirable female figures within the Scottish cultural-national context illuminates a large-scale absence of female literary icons within a patriarchal literary system. As Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar famously ask of the '[patriarchal] definitions of literary authority' in their landmark work of American feminism, *Madwomen in the Attic*: 'If the vexed and vexing polarities of angel and monster, sweet dumb Snow White and fierce mad Queen, are major images literary tradition offers women, how does such imagery influence the ways in which women attempt the pen?' ([1979] 2001: 1927). This is a provoking question indeed. In this particular context, it prompts further questioning: How can Scottish women writers envision themselves as both individuals and authors - which implicates their vision for potential works - when the images they have of both themselves and female characters are disenfranchised, largely powerless, defined by rage, ineffectuality, the ability to bear children, or by mental illness? In other words, how can these women envision anything when the images they have to use as reference points are born from a literary tradition historically dominated and designed by men? The female writer is thus condemned to 'experience her gender as a painful obstacle, or even a debilitating inadequacy,' which contributes to genuine 'loneliness' and 'feelings of alienation' from a historically male-dominated literary context (1930). In the Scottish context, this excludes the female writer from the chance to affect any real degree of cultural and national influence and change. This perfect storm of patriarchally engineered anxious struggle means the female writer inevitably embarks on a wholly different type of 'self-creation' than her male peers, and that 'women writers participate in quite a different literary subculture from that inhabited by male writers [which has] its own distinctive literary traditions [and] a distinctive history' (1930). In

Scotland, this separation is distinct and profound, and can be readily examined within women's writing concerned with guilt, tethered to domesticity, maternity, belonging, and race.

Chapter Two: Guilt in the Domestic Realm and Maternal Relationship

Section I: Janice Galloway

In some way or another, much of Scottish women's writing in the contemporary period is deeply interlinked with domesticity. There is a profound connection with women's history in the domestic space as it has been historically categorised as feminine. In Scotland, this means a connection to all the women who stood at the scullery sink before you, scrubbing potatoes for the men to get home from a gruelling day's labour down the pits or the shipyards. In a similar way, women's writing is traditionally seen as a literature of connectedness and tradition among women. As Maria DiBattista and Deborah Epstein Nord have noted, women writers for centuries and increasingly since the *fin de siècle* have recognised the distinct and coherent body of female writing with 'characteristic themes, preoccupations, and tropes' (2017: 17). They point to Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* and Mary Ellman's *Thinking About Women* as examples of the many critical works written by women postulating an awareness of the 'lineage, authority, and historical endurance' of women's writing, as well as the challenges still to be addressed and overcome (17). This is a cogent idea within modern Scottish women's writing, particularly given the aforementioned conditions of a nation concerned with nationalism in politics, social life, culture, and literature that female Scots writers are working within. As Carol Craig suggests in the introduction to *The Scots Crisis of Confidence*, Scotland seems to place 'too much emphasis on the nation, the community, the collective, and not enough on the individual' (2003: ix). Of course, a concern for one's community and nation is not an inherently bad thing as this statement taken alone could suggest. A healthy level of concern for one's community members can foster responsibility, understanding, companionship, and safety through a mutual desire to protect one another's common interests. But within the context of a Scottish culture overly vexed with nationalism, this concern for the community has consistently blurred the line between consideration and obsession. Instead of instilling a healthy sense of responsibility towards ones imagined nation and its people, it creates a distinct lack of personal belief within the individual that in turn negatively impacts the national whole. This lack of consideration for the self creates what Craig calls a lack of 'self-confidence' (2003: 2) and, as is argued for and identified within this thesis, guilt.

For various reasons which will be discussed throughout the ensuing chapters, guilt affects women more than men. Guilt in this context is not intended to refer to feelings of guiltiness

and wrongdoing tethered to actions - a genuine knowing that one has acted badly and feels accordingly[4]. Instead, it points to an acutely Scottish guilt, curated within a culture that grinds down upon the female psyche in distinct ways, helped in part through the long-perpetuated belief that the everyday and its negatively perceived mundanity is the realm of the female. It is a lack of self-confidence which curates a feminine domestic guilt, one which has recurred as a trope of women's writing for centuries. Indeed, domesticity can be identified as a major theme in women's writing from eighteenth century women's gothic writing to female modernists playing with the form and function of domesticity in their work, to acclaimed twenty-first century fiction. For example, Edith Warton's subversive ghost story *The Lady Maid's Bell*, in which Victorian ideals of feminine domesticity are cast in an eerie and gothic light; Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, an inward-looking and time-travelling novel detailing a single day in the life of its female protagonist; or Sayaka Murata's *Convenience Store Woman* that follows a short period in the highly repetitive life of its thirty-six-year old protagonist who has worked the same job in the same Tokyo minimart for over a decade. Evidently, the concept of everyday life has long held ties with women's writing and relationship with domesticity. In her seminal essay 'The Invention of Everyday Life' from her book *Doing Time: Feminist Theory and Postmodern Culture*, Rita Felski provides a useful theoretical basis and potential for deeper understanding in her discussion of the female relationship with the everyday. Felski acknowledges that historically, for philosophers such as György Lukács and Martin Heidegger, the concept of the everyday has been synonymous with 'an aesthetically impoverished existence' (2000: 72), oft defined in negative terms as the 'realm of monotony' which ought to be 'transcended' in order to propel forward both on the level of the individual and of modern society (80). Problematically wrapped up in this is the notion that the everyday is a quintessentially feminine realm. It is perceived as being entirely separate from the 'exceptional moment; the battle, the catastrophe' and other monumentous occurrences which have historically belonged to men (80). The everyday is so tightly enmeshed with femininity that sociologist Henri Lefebvre goes as far as to suggest that women are both the 'quintessential representatives and victims of the quotidian' (80). This is to suggest that the everyday's mundanity is devoid of opportunity and tragic in circumstance, with women simultaneously perpetuating mundane everydayness through their inherently repetitive domestic routines and suffering as a result. Naturally, feminist studies have largely

[4] This is largely the reason why the term 'recovery' has been chosen for use in the title and throughout this thesis over 'redemption' which connotes being saved from sin or wrongdoing, or 'expiation' which more closely describes making amends and/or reparations for ones wrongdoings to alleviate guilt.

repudiated the concept of the everyday as it pertains to women, viewing it as something to be rejected and overcome as part of the larger feminist project of liberation from patriarchal systems and categorisations. However, as Felski notes, there is value to be found in an awareness and appreciation of the 'taken-for-granted, routine qualities' of the everyday that provide its definition (80). It is of no doubt that repetition is an essential aspect of being alive, letting us work through our days in partial automation in a world where time seems increasingly scarce and the volume of choice of consumable material, information, career paths, social activity, art, culture, and so on is increasingly overwhelming. The temporality of the everyday is repetition, as it pertains to our everyday habits and behaviours. These repeated actions make us who we are by cementing our personalities and core relationships. Identities are born from our habits as repetition creates recognisable and unique behavioural characteristics that signify us as individuals. Women are more closely linked with ideas of repetition and cycles within society than men, as female biological realities are often pointed to as a form of evidence of the innate cyclical and temporally looping female characteristics in such a discussion. This is a position that has remained stubbornly unchanged for centuries. In Scotland it is no different, with Kirsten Stirling noting that the female body is 'associated with the land itself, both aesthetically and in metaphors of fertility' within a historical literary tradition which believes in a 'gendered vision' of Scotland (2008: 15-16). The menstrual cycle and women's fertility thus becomes a strained example of 'human subordination to natural time' (Felski 2000: 82), effectively excluding women from the aspirational and masculine project of modernity which prioritises advancement and progress in a post-industrial capitalist nation. In Lefebvrian thinking it is the standard position to 'equate repetition with domination and [opposingly] innovation with agency and resistance,' effectively perpetuating the idea that newness and spontaneity hold some innate, masculinised 'superior value' that tradition - founded in repetition and tied to women - lacks (84). However, believing that the mundane everyday is in some way lacking is naïve, and it seems Scottish women have long understood this. Juliet Shields recognises the nineteenth century Scotswomen's interest in the 'romance of everyday life,' becoming 'quiet advocates for the importance of the trivial, the nonserious, and [even] the frivolous' (2021: 182). It seems that Scottish women writers have always known that despite the dominant culturally masculine beliefs regarding the stagnancy of the everyday, the seemingly insignificant actions carried out on a repetitive everyday basis are of vital importance. Curating lives and homes, they provide loving contexts for the necessities of living. For example, the biological need to eat becomes the ritual of the family kitchen and dining table, and the human need for

socialisation and togetherness is of paramount concern to the female guardians of the everyday. Within literature this invites an awareness of these behavioural cycles which does not typically occur in our actual day-to-day reality. Literature thus possesses a 'sensitivity to the microscopic detail [which] marks its difference from casual inattentiveness that defines the everyday experience of life,' and makes sacred, strange, and infinitely interesting, these banal daily routines (Randall: 2016, 598).

Moving forward, such an extensive description of the feminine relationship with the everyday as it has been conceptualised in recent decades is vital to consider within the following analysis of domestic guilt within Scottish women's writing. Indeed, domesticity has historically been a focus of such writing. Ainsley McIntosh recognises that writers such as Mary Brunton and Susan Ferrier were crucial in the 'development of Scottish domestic fiction during the early nineteenth century' (2012: 53). McIntosh goes on to discuss the ways in which this category allowed for complex recognition of 'female community and utility', as is offered in the Highland housewifery of Brunton's 1831 text *Discipline*. Brunton's text also voices some nationalist concerns in its comparison of these Highland values with the 'negative construction of femininity and sensual indolence' that her protagonist finds in London, for example (58). Recognising these foundations is undoubtedly useful in understanding domestic fictions function within a wider Scottish cultural and literary context. Domesticity also provokes guilt within the Scottish cultural-national framework, as both home and family life are 'perceived as remote from institutions of state' and mainstream national culture as a whole (Ewan 2019: 94). As Elizabeth Ewan suggests, the family home in Scotland since the nineteenth century has therefore become 'increasingly gendered as female, discursively reconfigured as a private haven, away from the [male world of work]' (97). From this, an understanding of the ways maternal relationships function within the everyday can be developed. Maternal relationships are almost always bound up within discussions of the domestic sphere and the connections are complex, as Janice Galloway explores blatantly in her memoirs. Writing on maternal relationships is loaded with difficulty for the female writers in discussion in that they are often writing from their revised positions as adult women and mothers themselves. It is indeed common in contemporary Scottish women's writing to focus on interactions between women and other women, bridging the gap between a pre-1945 emphasis on communities to a more modern focus on the self which traditionally has been monopolised by men. It is important to acknowledge that within the selected texts, the mother-daughter relationships are often charged with guilt on both sides, but in the

following discussion it is the guilt experienced predominantly by the daughter which will be of interest as this is the perspective of the writer in all cases. Janice Galloway's *This is Not About Me* is written as a memoir of her childhood spent predominantly with her mother and her older sister in Saltcoats on the west coast of Scotland. It is full of markers of the guilt possessed within the maternal relationship, primarily through the text's portrait of an early childhood which is tainted by an awareness of her unwantedness. Her mother, Janet - whose name is changed to Beth in the text - had a cryptic pregnancy, and Janice's birth deeply rocked her sense of self and disrupted her plans as she entered middle age. Without having to utter the words, Beth lets Janice know she was not planned for nor was she wanted when she arrived unannounced, by merely wishing she'd 'just bloody known' she was pregnant (Galloway: 2008, 19). This fundamental fracture in their relationship is the basis for the framing of Janice as the one who has stolen something from her mother, taken away a chance at putting herself first after raising one daughter into adulthood already. This curates a distinct guilt born out of no decisive act on Janice's part, yet it is a guilt from which she is not granted reprieve in the maternal relationship henceforth: 'In future years she'd say the same thing and say it a lot, and I got used to it, after a fashion. I could see her point of view' (2008: 64). Galloway benignly remarking that she can 'see her [mother's] point of view' is a clear example of the distinct lack of self-worth that this provocation of guilt for her simply existing curates within a young Janice. Of particular interest is this framing of guilt as delivered unto the innocent child, a decidedly bizarre and unloving maternal act. An authorial stoicism becomes necessary in order to convey the profound effect this guilt has had on Galloway's former self, as feelings of worthlessness in the maternal relationship are nakedly presented to the reader. Galloway surely understands the unacceptability of making a child feel this way - like all the authors in discussion she is now a mother herself - but to outwardly berate her mother in the body of the text would be to remove several degrees of impact that are delivered in her retelling of this particular aspect of her youth. In taking on a stoic, observational, and frank tone in discussing such emotionally damaging and hurtful personal moments, Galloway loads these moments with as much shock and absurdity as they surely carried in real life. Additionally, as an educated adult and successful writer, Galloway has the capabilities to escape from this guilt and recognise it's unfoundedness through revisiting it her work. She evocatively allows her former self's emotions to be voiced and recognised plainly, letting their full effect be shown to the reader. This is a technique she will continue to employ throughout her memoir. While no one is at fault for her birth - not her mother, who had a symptomless pregnancy, nor young Janice, who had the least agency of all in her

conception and birth - blame must be placed upon someone by Beth who believes she has been fundamentally wronged by this twist of fate. Janice's father is to blame for a whole screed of Beth's other misfortunes and pains, as will be alluded to throughout the text. Beth simply cannot place any more blame on him when another glaringly obvious culprit is so readily available and unable to defend themselves. A term offered by Victoria Best to describe young Janice's status in this regard is 'nuisance', which concisely conveys the specific degree and type of disdain she evokes in her mother (2015: ii). While Beth is not overtly cruel, abusive, nor does she in any way abandon Janice, she is not afraid to remind her daughter that she is an unwanted inconvenience.

Indeed, Janice goes on to have issues connecting with others following the one fundamental disconnection she endures in her maternal relationship. Her unstable family life curates a deep distrust of other people in general, in its lack of feeling 'solid' or 'safe' (49). She struggles to connect with both adults and children, instilling a belief that people across all ages are fundamentally difficult, untrustworthy, and averse to her presence. Her maternal aunt Kitty at one point refers to her niece in sub-human terms, permitting that 'it' can play with her own daughter (30). This sentiment is repeated at all stages of Janice's youth and development and the term 'it' begins to take on new colloquial meanings as Janice presents and aptitude for creative endeavours like singing: 'Aunt Kitty said I thought I was *It*. She said it regretfully […] but she did it every time I sang' (178). Cora frequently dehumanises Janice too, whether that be making a fool of 'it' for her bookishness or her physical appearance: 'you think it would try' (211). This language used throughout Galloway's youth resultantly stokes both guilt and a strong sense of worthlessness where praise and encouragement should instead be felt. Naturally, from a disconnection with her peers and other potentially protective adult figures, she latches on to her mother harder. While her mother is not loving or patient with her aspects of their closeness are displayed as loving and sweet, particularly when young Janice fondly admires her mother in her most unassuming moments. For example, she feels connection and belonging as she shadows her mother in everyday routines:

> I belonged in the social rooms of bars with my uncles playing accordions while my mother sang. I belonged in the skirts of her coat at the butcher's, the telly rental's shop, the Co and the Doctors where she seemed to need to go all the time. I belonged with her and felt keenly out of place anywhere else (2008: 31)

Attempts at separation from Beth, such as enrolling her daughter in playgroups, leave young Janice confused and unhappy, 'milling about trying to get used to the idea your mother had disappeared' instead of socialising with peers (31). While Galloway as a child was unable to understand that her desire to be attached to her mother at all times was not reciprocated, as an adult she knows that her mother 'could not have bargained for' incessant babysitting at such a point in her life. Any romantic aspect of the child's doting is indeed thrown into painfully sharp contrast in moments of frustration from her mother, such as when Beth explicitly tells her 'I wish I'd never had you' (63). This spoils young Janice's maternal experiences with profound confusion and longing for reciprocation. While she experiences an immense sense of closeness being with her mother, it is marred by guilt - provoked by Beth in her cutting remarks, and ultimately stemming from how much Galloway as a child relies on that closeness and how it negatively impedes on her mother's freedom. She relishes in a sense of connection with Beth, becoming buoyant and excited with it, only to be reminded of her innate unwantedness and re-assume her guilt-ridden state. As a child, Galloway admits, it 'would not have occurred to me she wanted things any other way,' coming to terms with the alternative type of guilt she experiences in the present moment upon reflection of how much her mother sacrificed for her (58). Recovery is therefore offered in her newfound understanding of the effort her mother gave their relationship at times when she was a child, and this secondary guilt and sadness comes in a more complex moment of recognition and understanding now as a mother and adult herself.

Despite her developing understanding of her mother's sacrifices, Galloway still feels it pertinent to examine other similar moments curating guilt and unwantedness in her youth. When she struggles joining primary school and must be sent home several times for becoming hysterical, her mother reacts with anger and embarrassment rather than compassion: 'For years, she did not tire of telling me she was mortified' (114). The natural anxieties of a child departing the home to start primary school are not condoned by her mother, beginning a pattern of evoking guilt through admonishment of her daughter's emotions that her mother will continue for years to come. Additionally, Beth pits young Janice against her sister in this context and laments to a teacher that her 'other daughter wasn't like this' but 'this one […] this one's different' (114). Again, the choices made by adults in their language alienate and negatively impact young Janice, affording her elder sister Cora the title of daughter and denying Janice even a suitable pronoun. However, Beth contrasts this behaviour in moments where she relies on her youngest daughter as a confidant in swift vignettes of a less detached and one-sided mother-daughter dynamic. She bemoans to

Janice that Cora - whose name was also changed in text from Nora - with her foul mouth and bold personality, is a nuisance in more sinister ways than Janice could ever be: 'She'll be found up a close with her stockings around her neck one of these days, my mother said. Too bloody cheeky by half' (83).

While Galloway recalls how her father Eddie stoked feelings of guilt through his bursts of rage and foul moods, implicitly teaching her to always assume she had done something wrong, she illustrates her ability to shut out the paternal guilt through a departure from the home. Her first job in a local shop grants her reprieve from the eggshell-strewn floors and the 'crackle and charge' of her father's house (218). The wider community gives her a sense of purpose as the young woman who sells them their cigarettes, affectionally nicknaming young Janice 'Miss Fags' (38). When her mother and father separate, there is a moment of relief when she and Beth end up in a tiny and 'wonderful little rat-cage' of a flat (59). For Galloway, the flat becomes a familiar and dependable site where she and Beth live in relative harmony as mother and daughter, despite the occasional claustrophobic comments from her mother: 'It was not a secret. She said so plainly. *I wish I didny have you trailing my heels all the time*. But she did, she did' (59, authors emphasis). Even when the haven is disrupted by the arrival of Cora, who leaves her husband and son in favour of a life mooching from her mother and an endless string of boyfriends, Galloway still has agency and confidence within what has become her domain. She thinks, 'this was where I belonged: indoors, the washing machine chuntering, the necks of dishrags wrung in whispers and chamois cloth squealing,' (2008: 198). Guilt does not belong in the domestic space and Janice finds calmness through the reliability of domestic chores, with Galloway as author suggesting that this is one part of the innate maternal connection that could not easily be damaged by a sense of guilt or unwantedness. This curates distinct sense of purpose and clarity for Galloway as now she can connect with her younger self in fondly remembering the domestic chores that comprised so much of her sense of security and maternal connection. Cleaning and tidying are of the utmost importance for her and her mother in their space, made explicit in her statement that 'first was cleaning. First, last, always and for ever: the continual round against dirt, disease and decay' (59). This is redolent of what Carol Craig writes on female domesticity in the context of Scottish self-confidence: 'Having a clean, tidy house was very important in the respectability stakes. […] the nature of Scottish tenement housing and the elevation of others in everyday life meant that being "respectable" had even more importance' (2003: 155). Through housework, then, the maternal bond is reinforced and nurtured. Using Rita Felski's

theory can help to illuminate how a young Galloway and her mother could both excel in the domestic chores in harmony, by demonstrating how everyday life 'can be a place of female subordination as well as an arena where women can show competence in the exercise of domestic skills' (2000: 88). As Helen Clark and Elizabeth Carnegie write of the Scottish woman's role in carrying out everyday housework in their book *She Was Aye Workin'*:

> [Women's] life was hell, it was a constant daily grind against dirt and disease. While it is true that people worked very, very hard to keep themselves and their property clean, it was nevertheless a constant struggle […] Six in the morning, we used to have to get up before we went to school to do our chores. It was typical, though, the boys didn't do anything (2003: 108-110)

This excerpt makes clear that the responsibility to undertake domestic chores has been a feminine job for centuries in Scottish society, with Galloway's upbringing being no exception to this fundamental order of things. Yet there is an irony in Galloway's enjoyment of chores and household undertakings. When her mother was going into labour with her, in denial and despair at what was happening, she half-convinced herself her waters breaking was the washing machine leaking (Galloway 2008: 17). A slight relief of birth guilt can thus be derived from the specific nature of Janice's childhood affection for the washing machine, as she keeps it and the chores connected to it under control and in order. The washing machine seems to hold a specific significance for Scots women in the domestic space *en masse* as Clark and Carnegie note, with it being considered 'one of the most important developments of the twentieth century as far as benefit to women is concerned,' seeming to suggest that proficiency in housework is a remedy for an overarching feminine guilt regarding domesticity and the appearance of the home (2003: 113). The domestic, too, provides a disconnect from her father which resultantly drives her further into the maternal domain. A nasty, violent drunk - who's violent outbursts and propensity for breakages is socially palmed off as 'clumsiness' - would lead to the inevitable accumulation of 'scuffs on the skirting or a dunt on the door' (Galloway 2008: 40). Silence meant peace and domestic balance and Janice learns that if she and her mother can leave him undisturbed and unannoyed then their domestic environment can stand a chance. Indeed, her mother insists that it was 'the things that did it. [Objects] exploded around him […] My father was simply accident prone' (40). But inanimate objects cannot bear guilt, and in painting Eddie as accident prone and clumsy,

Janice's mother unwittingly implies the guilt belongs to both herself and Janice as female representatives of the everyday, domestic realm.

When Janet, Janice and Cora move back into the original family home after Eddie's death, the necessity of domesticity only solidifies itself in Janice's mind. Forced to share a bed and small room with her mother since Cora has commandeered the larger bedroom, the intricacies of the domestic home space become even more valuable. The significance of having a private indoor toilet or multiple kitchen cabinets increases dramatically as they provide Janice with spaces she can at once care for and connect to herself within as she grows up and relies increasingly on solitude and dealing with the ongoing guilt she experiences. This is illustrative of a genuine associated value she attaches to having what appears to be a stable home environment, even if the reality cannot always be tidied up and kept in order like the kitchen cupboards. The washing machine, once connected to the moment of Beth's waters breaking and Janice's birth, is their own and thus joins the near-sacred catalogue of things which belong to them and them alone; 'an oven, hooks for kitchen knives, a counter, a drainer, a cupboard for cups' (128). There is a sense of balance and belonging offered by the house that Janice lacked before, a site to nourish her innate quietness: 'Over weeks, the house found a place for everything, and we put everything in it […] My forte was the quiet stuff,' coming 'into [her] own' through organising and sorting a life into neat, dusted rows and piles of stuff (130). Moreover, she is able to elicit much sought after praise in doing so: 'I could make my mother's face light with pride when I whipped out a duster and offered to polish the brasses' (135). Therefore, her quiet execution of domestic tasks not only offers Janice enjoyment and routine, but more significantly offers a recovery from the guilt she suffers at knowing she is a nuisance to her mother and can seemingly do far more wrong than right. The mending of clothes is another element of domestic life which unifies Janice and her mother: 'Careful darning, button-replacement, hook and eye realigning and threading of ropes of stray broken beads were one of the very few things we did as a mother-daughter pair' (131). However, this unity is once again disrupted by guilt. Her mother is described as being unquestionably 'stylish,' with a keen eye for curating outfits and keeping her clothes looking elegant and expensive. In contrast, Janice is decidedly awkward and unstylish, with her mother making no effort to conceal her disdain at Janice's failure to inherit this skill:

> You're as much like me as an alien from outer space, she said. If someone came from Barnardo's and asked for me back, she wouldn't argue. You're not a McBride, she said, looking almost pleased; that's for sure (131-2)

Her mother's apparent pleasure at Janice's unlikeliness to her invokes yet again a sense of guilt tied to the accident of Janice's birth and genetics. Galloway writes that she 'was Galloway down to the bone […] my failure in elegance stakes not in dispute. What puzzled me was my mother's pinning her dress sense to her name,' (132). The significance placed on the maiden name further alienates Janice, who bears her father's surname. This invokes a solemnity and guiltiness as a child, and keen sense that her lack of elegance is perceived by her mother as simply not 'making an effort' therefore critically confounds her sense of guilt and erodes her sense of self-confidence as a young woman (133). But in adulthood Galloway clearly challenges this guilt, being 'puzzled' by Beth's bizarre choice to distance herself from Janice via an emphasis on surnames when the maternal bond far exceeds something so surface level. By developing an ability to openly question the way in which her mother incites guilt within her, Galloway crucially unlocks some of the tools necessary to find recovery from guilt both as writer and as woman.

Where Janice fails to assimilate well into school initially, she is able to impress her mother with her academic prowess while simultaneously fulfilling her own love of reading and learning. As Florence S. Boos writes in her analysis of Janet Hamilton and her memoirist poetry of the nineteenth century, 'many working-class [Scots] autobiographers have expressed their yearning for education as a source of inner and outer fulfilment,' (2012: 65). A young Galloway excels in English and Art especially, but it is clear that Physical Education does not align with her dominatingly shy nature. She frets about 'the possibility of failure, getting it horribly, hideously wrong,' and compares her teachers insistence that she try harder akin to if they insisted that she 'lay an egg' (141). This sense of feeling alien and out of place by now is young Janice's default state, briefly alleviated by her aptitude for learning yet still betraying her confidence and growth in the academic domain she is beginning to conquer. Surprisingly, a similar form of guilt elicited by Janice's mother is eked out by her P.E. teacher who tells Janice 'I'm surprised at you. […] You've let me down' (141). Janice reacts to this with what appears to be more overt emotional distress and damage than she does in moments when such a guilt is brought on in her private life, where it is more subtly, malignantly delivered. However, it is soon revealed that this extreme experience of guilt is informed by her worries about her mother's perception of her:

> Guilt curled in me like smoke, replayed the phrase again, again. You've let me down. It wasn't her I'd let down at all. Not really. It was mum. I pictured my mother, crestfallen […]. I imagined word leaking out from school and covering the whole of North Ayrshire, people pointing at me as I walked home, head down, scarlet with shame - There goes the girl who let her mother down (142)

The snowball of guilt she feels originates at the maternal level and gushes outwards into the larger family domain and the community as a microcosm of the nation itself. Not only does this moment primarily illustrate the lengths and depths of the maternal guilt which plagues Janice, but it also shows Galloway's recognition of a Scottish female guilt that is closely linked to what other people think of you and your actions and place in the world. This moment is thus redolent of Carol Craig's recognition of the heavy-handed criticism and nosiness that exists within Scottish culture as something which 'gives other people power over you' in its cementing of guilt (2003: 116). As is mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, Craig's argument that a unique 'combination of the Scots' strong preference for extraversion, the importance of community and the experience of Presbyterianism, particularly its reliance on prying as a form of […] of public punishment, means that the Scots are overly concerned with what other people think of them' is thus deeply identifiable within Galloway's expression of guilt within her writing, which derives from this preoccupation and fear of other people's judgement (117). Galloway neatly offers the logic behind her deeply maternalised and feminised experience of this guilt in the close of this section:

> Cora's job was to be out in the world getting qualifications; my mother's was housework and cooking and everything else. My only job was to be good. It was my part in the family story, the role I'd been given. […] Our heads were above water and full of things we did not say […] To keep the whole [familial] show on the road, I'd have to lie (2008: 142)

Young Janice therefore solidifies her own guilt by condemning herself to the guilt-ridden enterprise of shameful, personal secret-keeping. Her belief that her struggle to perform in P.E. will be viewed as such a severe failure that she chooses to embark on the tumultuous and personally corrosive path of secrecy is profound, communicating without question the extent of her suffering from guilt and her desperate, childish attempts at redeeming herself at the

maternal surface level. In writing this logic Galloway unearths its absurdity and her former self's overexaggerating of the severity of her worry, but in doing so further demonstrates the extend of guilt and unease she was used to living with. Moreover, Galloway's recognition here demonstrates the juxtaposition of pre- and post-devolutionary Scottish cultural attitudes and - in writing in the post-devolution age - the nuance and depth offered to the Scottish female in the latter set of cultural circumstances.

When her mother gets a new job as a dinner server in a rival primary school, Janice is hurt and immediately jealous of the 'children who didn't tell [her mother] lies' and who 'would not be clingy, anxious, or withdrawn' getting offered her own mother's care and attention that she herself has had to work overtime for a fraction of (144). Janice feels 'suddenly lonely,' another symbol of her perception of maternal unwantedness that she has experienced fiercely in her private, domestic life, and now her educational one (145). Even though Janice acknowledges that domestic life and school, 'like rival pit bulls, were best kept in separate cages,' maternal yearning trumps reason, school, and shelter, and she cannot help but be hurt by her mother's newfound responsibility to her peers (188). Furthering this notion of her home being an unwelcome site for educational activities, Galloway confesses that she would 'no more have read in the living room than bent over and touched my toes naked' suggests her family are not inclined to respect her literary leanings that will become increasingly vital to her. The juxtaposition of her acknowledgment of this and her writing it as an accomplished author decades after is another moment of recovery from the guilt she experienced for being a bookish and studious child by nature. Indeed, it is an area where her mother must concede that her daughter excels by having Janice write her letters - when Cora was elsewhere for fear of berating - insisting that it was Janice's handwriting she was after when they both knew it was the words that were the issue. The emotional weight of this collaboration is expressed by Galloway:

> Writing letters gave me a use. It hurt no one. It was one bridge between home and school I could cross no trouble, arrive without harm or fear of it on either side. I could do this. It was fine (192)

The letter writing offers young Janice a type of true recovery from her guilt in its guaranteed success, yet this is nevertheless indicative of the severity of her maternal and familial guilt in the first place. Galloway's longstanding ability to write well has the adverse effect of making her sister and her mother feel smaller and less intelligent, which they then take out on her. To

be offered not only reprieve from this dynamic, but a sense of worth, is mammoth in its relief. Yet the emotional and psychological damage of the guilt Janice has endured is evidently only going to be recovered from in adulthood and through writing as expulsion and reclamation. Young Janice reassures herself with refrains of ‘I could do this’ and ‘it was fine’. This recovery-meets-learning to cope with guilt is presented as perhaps the best and only option by Galloway as she reflects on her childhood. Her curation of a text dealing so openly with guilt equips the reader with the knowledge that a full reclamation and recovery while immersed in guilt is not possible, yet a sense of experience through Galloway’s writing simultaneously informs the reader that the very act of writing this guilt from a temporal distance may be the key to that recovery.

Section II: Deborah Orr

Deborah Orr's *Motherwell* is her fierce memoir tackling similar themes to Galloways *This is Not About Me*. Given the objective - to tell the story of her upbringing, paying specific attention to 'the mother who raised her and the town that shaped her' (2020: back cover) - Orr manages to produce a text that is simultaneously heart-wrenching and humorous, doing justice to the polyphonic and rich community she was born into and the mother responsible for it. Orr recognises the power held by the landscape of her hometown, once a giant of industry housing 'steelworks the size of Monaco', ravaged by post-industrial decline and mass job-losses (2020: 1). On the first page she stresses the 'wonder' of the 'High industrial Gothic' Ravenscraig strip mill that sat in the 'heart of our town', a vital organ in a thriving central-belt community, that is 'all gone now' (1). Identity is closely woven into the post-industrial decimation of *Motherwell* and other Scottish towns like it, with both 'personal [and] group identity […] shattered' by the loss of belonging to 'something much, much bigger than themselves' (2). Orr then connects this feeling of post-industrial purposelessness within the community to her mother, an English woman called Winifred - known as Win - who lived in Motherwell 'because that's where my dad came from' and who 'found life in Lanarkshire challenging' after an upbringing in rural Essex, England (2). Even the name of the town itself is of intrigue to Orr when discussing her mother's migration, somewhat gravely observing that Win hadn't 'mothered well at all' (2).

The text begins after the death of her mother when she and her brother are working their way through belongings in the family home on Clyde Terrace. Orr uses this as a gateway into the past, delving into her childhood spent in one of several wooden pre-fabricated houses colloquially known as 'The Timbers' in which her family dynamic was fairly conventional (5). Orr confesses that her father John 'could do no wrong in her eyes,' whereas her mother 'could, did and does irritate me [even] from beyond the grave' (11). Revealing this propensity to feel irritation and annoyance towards her mother so early in the text outlines the dynamic of the maternal relationship, positioning a young Deborah as textbook Daddy's Girl. However, Deborah recognises that for most of her life she believed that having a paternal relationship defined by some 'fabulous father-daughter thing' was prevented by her mother 'who came between us' (22). This belief fostered a long-lasting resentment that had remained unchanged until 'quite recently [when] both parents were dead,' and Deborah realises her father was not a faultless angel, sometimes even going 'further than [Win] ever had' in outmoded and philistinish attitudes (22). Moreover, she acknowledges that, given their

extreme resemblance in both looks and personality, 'finding fault with my dad was like finding fault with myself,' admitting that 'we all have a tendency to feel the most empathy with people who remind us of ourselves' (30-31). In this re-assessment of her grudge-bearing towards Win and idolisation of John through her writing, Deborah's guilt first stems from a resignation to the knowledge that nothing can be done to make reparations toward her mother in the present day.

The maternal relationship continues to reveal itself as fractured and strained, with small hints and vignettes of moments of disconnect, disappointment, anger, and sadness passed out as the text progresses. When Deborah clears out her mother's much-beloved bureau in the present day, she finds a small envelope with her name written on it. It contains a lock of her baby hair, the flap of the envelope 'soft and cloth-like' from her mother's frequent opening and closing. Deborah imagines her mother holding her lock of hair and wondering 'what had become of her baby' (17). She recognises in this moment that her brother did not fall astray the way she had and that her mother did not 'lose David like she lost me' (17). This regretful acknowledgment is the first real pang of guilt delivered in the text, provoking deep solemnity in light of the irrevocability of Win's passing. However, it is not all sadness and regret in remembering her mother. Orr writes that Win was fundamentally 'amazing […] accomplished, resourceful, vivacious, terrifyingly well organised and copiously talented as an artist and a craftswoman' (34). Portraying her mother in this way and recognising her tenacity links Deborah's innate qualities and strengths as an accomplished journalist and writer to her mother. In an article featured in *The Guardian,* Orr writes that people often tell her she is "intimidating", the common moniker given to women who are strong and 'vivacious' as her mother was before her (2017). She 'regrets' not giving her mother 'what she needed' in the form of justified praise in this regard, provoking a sense of guilt derived from knowing she consistently denied her mother the pleasure of a compliment (34). An understanding of the specific type of guilt that this provokes within Deborah can be developed by considering Carol Craig's claim that being undervalued is a key factor in an overarching and corrosive Scottish crisis of confidence:

> It is very difficult for people to feel confident if they do not feel valued. And it has been very hard in Scotland for women - more than half the population - to feel valued for being themselves (2003: 156)

This guilt brought on through a lifetime of subconsciously undervaluing her mother and purposely withholding praise heightens in the section where Deborah recalls her early twenties and asking her mother if she can frame some of her sketches to hang in her London flat. When Win angrily admits she threw her own sketches away, Deborah is perplexed and feels deeply regretful. Closed and cold, her mother snaps that 'they were just old nonsense, taking up space' (2020: 36). The sense that Deborah has done too little too late to affirm her mother's value and talent is palpable and miserable both in the past and present moment as Orr recalls this event. Her mother's drawings are described as being mostly of glamourous war-time women, done on scraps of sugar or greaseproof paper, or old cardboard. This confirms Win's own disbelief in her skill, undervaluing it from the beginning by only using scraps and cheap materials that were unfit for purpose. Therefore, Deborah's failure to tell her mother how much her drawings meant to her not only leads to regret when Deborah eventually asks to be handed down the sketches, but illuminates an embarrassment and guilt held by Win herself for indulging in artistic endeavours that she believed, however superficially, to be 'nonsense'. This prompts Orr to recognise that her mother had probably denied herself the pleasure of creating and showcasing her art due to some 'unwelcome cognisance that her life had been limited by her sex and her class, and her talents were never given room to develop'. This speculation is supported by the subjects of her sketches, the beautiful women as 'idealised images of idealised images' (36). This is further supported by the fact that Win endures the 'double exclusion' of being an English woman living in Scotland, raising Scottish children and married to a Scottish man, immersed wholly in an increasingly post-industrial - and therefore declining - central Scottish town and community (Reizbaum 1992: 165). Carol Craig's recognition of a distinctly Scottish lack of self-confidence supports this portrait of Win, as she demonstrates the 'lack of ambition, feelings of worthlessness and general lack of self-confidence [which] act as barriers [and] prevent people from taking up opportunities which often do exist' (2003: 5). It is not Win's birth nationality, but instead her adopted Scottish one and resultant place of residence that Deborah suggests has hindered her. Additionally, what Craig includes in her *Scots Crisis of Confidence* regarding the portrayal of women in Scottish men's fiction is of interest when examining Orr's literary presentation of her English mother:

> Women are routinely portrayed in an unflattering light in the highly influential Scottish working-class novels penned by men like William McIlvanney or James Kelman. The women characters in these novels often have aspirations for a better

> house or more money, and these writers regularly depict them as the carriers of alien middle-class (and therefore English) values (2003: 158)

The vilification of aspirations and desires seen as English or middle-class has long been present in Scottish men's fiction by the writers mentioned by Craig and their peers, though Orr is using less contemporary literary examples here in her highly contemporary text. Orr's decision to explore freely the relationship with domesticity her English mother developed can thus be understood in part as a reaction and rebellion against such a misogynistic pre-devolutionary tradition within Scottish literature, criticism, and culture as a whole. Similarly to Galloway, this allows Orr to delve into and begin to recover from her feminised maternal guilt rather than be stifled by it. Further to this, this commonality illuminates the limitations of criticism too strong-handed in its assertions regarding national character, culture and literature.

Another similar fracture in the maternal relationship occurs when Deborah asks Win if she can have her own childhood dolls for her flat, to which her mother refuses and states that they are 'mine now' (71). Deborah is resentful, yet this seemingly selfish act from Win displays a deeper truth about what she considers valuable. Deborah's childhood dolls are a symbol of a time when she was dependent on her mother, when their relationship was far more straightforward. The same value-system which allowed her to throw away her own sketches prevents her from consigning Deborah's dolls to her. However, Win's other creative talents were not hidden but passed on to Deborah deliberately, suggesting the shame fostered by her sketches came in part from a belief that it had no wider purpose. Instead of drawing, Deborah was taught 'how to knit, how to sew [and] cut a dress pattern, put in a zip, how to darn, how to make jam [and] pastry, how to perm hair' (38). Similarly to Galloway in *This is Not About Me*, there is a not insignificant level of recovery offered here in the maternal bond being strengthened by the sharing of 'household skills' (38). These more tactful tasks do not possess the same sense of guilt for Win as her less practical abilities. Almost eerily however, this relative domestic harmony offered by the sewing kit is disrupted for Deborah much in the same way as it is for Galloway. A task fundamentally concerned with appearances is marred by a maternal berating of the daughters own physical appearance. Like Beth is quick to let Janice know that she is fundamentally inelegant, Win quips matter-of-factly that Deborah looks 'plain and ugly' when asking for an opinion of one of her own outfits and does not receive the praise she expected (148). The reflection on such overtly cruel comments allows Deborah to heal from the pain they surely caused, seeing them in retrospect as unthinking and

unmeant, coming from a place of her own mothers insecurity and lack of self-worth rather than a genuine opinion of her daughter despite their seeming nastiness. This adds heft to Craig's suggestion that a Scottish lack of self-confidence can cause individuals to act 'in an arrogant or bullying fashion,' pulling others down in attempt to alleviate one's own self-loathing (2003: 8).

Upon revisiting these events in adulthood, Orr begins to explore the various layers that make up the lack of self-confidence exhibited both by her mother and by her community at large. In a lament about the 'collective narcissism' that plagued her hometown and its neighbours within the wider North Lanarkshire community, Orr notices that '[d]ifference was criticism, criticism was unwelcome, so difference was unwelcome' (43-44). It becomes clear that in the post-industrial Scottish context, a lack of willingness to expand and explore one's own talents and potential is stoked by the possibility of ridicule. This ridicule comes not from isolated individuals but the community as one collective consciousness. As Orr makes clear, going against the grain is fraught with the potential to be ostracised and judged harshly. Orr relates her mother's challenge of 'assimilation' into Motherwell, then, to complex and dominant communal feelings of 'uncharitab[ility]' and 'insecur[ity]' prevalent within Motherwell as her mother's adoptive community (44). Geography seems important to her mother, too, in that she consistently tells Deborah that England is 'much more sophisticated' than Scotland could hope to be (48). Win's apparent regret at leaving her motherland for Motherwell is framed as factual, as though suggesting England's status as a superior country with superior opportunities to Scotland was a universally held truth, not an opinion. For Deborah, whose upbringing and hometown in many ways defines her, a subtle guilt resultantly infuses the maternal relationship given their unbridgeable national differences - the invasive English mother and the native Scottish daughter. David McCrone, aided by the 2003 Scottish Social attitudes survey, observes that seventy percent of Scots would 'consider a non-white person living in Scotland to be Scottish if they spoke with a Scottish accent and claimed to be Scottish', while only forty-four percent would consider an English-born person living in Scotland in the same manner (2005: 73-74)[5]. Thus, out of these musings and assessments, Orr embarks on a multi-layered journey of understanding the odds stacked against her mother, as both a stay-at-home mother and English émigré in mid twentieth

[5] This study coming decades after Orr's childhood can of course only provide a limited degree of socio-historical context, but a general sense of the Scottish cultural opinion of our southern neighbours can surely be derived from these findings.

century Motherwell. This inspires understanding and sympathy within the maternal relationship, allowing Deborah to better comprehend what she has previously viewed as her mother's lack of ambition and failure to become something more than just a mother, which in turn negatively impacted her as daughter. This in turn offers further recovery from maternal guilt in its generation of understanding the complexities of Win's situation. This recovery is therefore actively sought out in these insightful textual moments, with Orr reflecting on her harshness towards Win and the writing itself becoming a catalyst for genuine emotional searching and healing.

Notably, maternal guilt also plagues Deborah's English relatives. A shockwave of guilt rolls through her maternal side when it is revealed that Harry and Annie, her maternal grandparents, had a child out of wedlock. The 'Big Family Secret' has cultivated deep 'shame' particularly within Annie and her sons, who never shared this information with their own wives. This fundamentally maternal guilt of a higher magnitude than Deborah has experienced with her own mother prompts her to consider both the universality of maternal guilt, and how unnecessarily shameful and divisive it can be. She ardently laments that her grandmother should 'never have had to feel [shame]…Families. Families are so strange' (50). There is a moment of clarity here when Deborah reflects on how her grandmother has been victimised for something Orr herself would not be in the modern world. Similar developments in awareness of maternal victimhood can be found within the works of other Scottish female writers, providing useful contextual background to Orr's particular sentiment. For instance, Naomi Mitchison in *The Cleansing of the Knife* cries 'Alba our mother, what have we done to thee?' and Willa Muir has famously called Scotland a 'puir auld mither'. These sentiments, as Kirsten Stirling observes, present the mother figure - used in these instances as personification of the nation - as a 'victim' (2008: 67).

It is shortly afterwards that Orr begins her full-blown crusade against narcissism. Using the concept to understand both herself and her parents better, she admits that her own 'fascination with narcissism is an unhealthy obsession, destructive in itself,' (57). This is redolent of an issue that Janice Galloway is also aware of, that 'all writers have narcissism in them, memoirists more than most' (57). As Galloway has said on the subject of memoir writing, 'You're not writing people; you're writing versions of people that fit into a story version of something universal as well as something idiosyncratic' (2008). To take real life events and persons and commit them to memoir them requires an inherent level of narcissism to allow you to believe you have enough knowledge and power to make consequential decisions and necessary authorial corrections. To even memorialise one's life is narcissistic

in and of itself. Orr goes on to observe that narcissism is a characteristic of authors and artists as well as fascist dictators and some of the 'biggest, baddest shits who have ever walked the earth,' men who have mongered war and devastation upon humanity (2020: 57). Orr's recognition of her own narcissism thus demonstrates a maturity and self-reflection offered by the act of writing which offers recovery from guilt and recovery from damaging emotions and personal behaviours. Speaking of her parents own childhood, Orr acknowledges that Win and John's being young children during World War II meant they were hence 'young adults [in the post-war years] when the social idea was to wipe away the female liberations that the war brought and guilt-trip women into getting back into the kitchen' (57). With 'Edwardian values [as] the formative socio-political cause of [her] parents' late childhood and early adulthood,' Orr understands her role in the post-war project as firstborn daughter. The 'guilt' of postponing maternity during the war effort can thus be understood as a motivating factor for Win to have children and choose a life at home as opposed to one as an active participant in the working world, in the decades that succeeded the war's end. This insightful moment further extends Deborah's growing understanding of and compassion towards her mother's life choices, personality, and way of parenting.

Undoubtedly, renewal and reclamation of one's understanding of the past is a core element of the two memoirs in discussion. Both Galloway and Orr learn fundamental truths of their maternal relationships through the act of committing them to the page. There is practically no way for this to occur without manifesting new forms of guilt, as the now adult daughters come to understand the reasons their mothers acted in ways they once found damaging, saddening, and at times unbearable. However, it also provides a necessary foundation for recovery from such their previously felt and newly formed guilt, such as when Galloway expresses her innate aptitude for writing that she has experienced since childhood, discussed in Section I. Similarly, Orr describes her own discovery of the allure of writing at school and how it made her feel as though she had a real sense of purpose and discovery as a child: 'I loved to draw, but I wanted to learn to write. Learning to write seemed more important than learning to read' (86). Her mother does not relate to her daughters fervent eagerness to write: 'I was hurt that she didn't get what I meant, that I had the *gist* of that writing was,' (86, authors emphasis). Yet Deborah veers out of childhood and into a more nuanced retelling of her life with her mother. Where she was once annoyed and hurt, she comes to realise that Win's 'main trouble was her pathological inability to understand at all that I was a separate entity from her' - an inability that Galloway's mother clearly did not share (142). The clear redemptive qualities that writing and curating a narrative offers for these Scottish writers is

palpable in textual moments like these. Orr concludes her memoir with words encapsulating this sense of recovery as an active process, one which must be worked towards over time and with care:

> When I think of Motherwell now, I think of the marshland, the river, the meadows, the hills, the fields, the gardens, the trees, the soft beauty of the valley. This Motherwell survives, and it helped me to survive. And eventually to take charge, to take complete control, of my own family, in my own words' (294)

The knowledge that recovery must be done on one's own terms under their 'control' is crystal clear for Orr as memoirist, daughter, and individual. Crucially, reclaiming her family story and how it has shaped her must be done in her own words. Both Orr and Galloway's desire to write their maternally focussed memoirs therefore develops narratives of real significance in any discussion of maternal and domestic guilt - in its origins, its lived experience and its myriad adverse effects - and how writers ought to go about seeking recovery from this specific, deeply complex, and affecting emotion.

Chapter Three: Guilt in the Search for Belonging and Identity

Section I: Jackie Kay

As Breitenbach, Brown and Myers put forth, female Scottish writers have been nothing short of ferocious in their 'resistance' of the racist structures of power that dominate in Western nations and, crucially, within Western feminism (1998: 61). In a nation and culture which has a difficult relationship with confronting its own racist history, developing both an understanding and true acceptance of the multiplicity of ethnicities and nationalities that exist within Scotland has been 'a strangely challenging endeavour' (Slaven 2018: 50). For example, it is easy to assert that Scotland may only have one longstanding 'other' in the English. However, one need only turn to the discrimination that Irish migrants in Scotland have endured for centuries, suffering 'political and economic exclusion […] on the basis of race' (Slaven 2018: 51). Slaven goes on to discuss how the predominant Scots 'other' had indeed been the English up until the late 18th century:

> The Scottish embrace of Protestantism, political union, imperialism, British state formation and then British national identity (albeit with a Scottish nationality within it) had profound implications for not only Irish immigrants but for […] the story Scotland tells itself in the context of resurgent nationalism (51)

A more honest collective perspective regarding racism, prejudice, and the Scottish nationalist psyche should undoubtedly be strived for. Edward Said has cogently summarised the rewards offered by the collective effort required to expand ones attempts to understand perceived 'others':

> It is more rewarding - and more difficult - to think concretely and sympathetically […] about others than only about 'us'. But this also means not trying to rule others, not trying to reclassify them, or put them in hierarchies [and] not constantly reiterating how 'our' culture or country is number one (or not number one, for that matter) (1994: 408).

Said's acknowledgement of that unique embarrassment of feeling that your own culture and nation are inferior or 'not number one' compared to that of the 'other' is particularly relevant

to the Scottish cultural-national context, supported by work from the likes Jim Slaven as discussed above. As previously discussed, the insecurity and lack of confidence felt within Scotland can create at once a harmful defence mechanism and curation of a hard-shelled and bullyish machismo, plus a deep suspicion of or unwillingness to accept that which feels foreign or unknowable. Consider this alongside the fact that Scotland's racist attitudes towards perceived others - the Irish, for example - 'cannot be disentangled from Scotland's view of its own race and Scotland's role in developing racialism' (Slaven 2018: 51). As a result, there is a double necessity to think 'concretely and sympathetically' about the 'other' in the Scottish context; not on inaccurate terms of a big, bad national 'other' in the English, but at home and within the infinite 'others' that call Scotland home. Developing this point is necessary in applying its core message to the sort of guilt tethered to belonging that can be located within the primary literature in focus. Cogent with Marylin Reizbaum's concept of a Scottish female "double exclusion", Miasol Eguíbar Holgado describes the ways in which this same concept applies to black Scottish citizens:

> Blacks in Scotland, like other minorities, have to face invisibility within a discourse of national identity that is fundamentally white (and male); on the other hand, given Scotland's own position outside the British canon, they encounter a second level of exclusion from the imagination of a collective British identity (2018: 170).

This expresses the complex 'invisibility' suffered by black and other minority ethnic writers within the Scottish canon, which has long been fraught with nationalist anxiety over its collective position relevant to an established English literature. On a more personal development to Said's argument - a necessary undertaking in the ensuing textual analysis - Anne McClintock has suggested that 'foreigners "adopt" countries that are not their native homes and are "naturalised" into the national family' (1993: 63). There is a dominant national opinion held across most of the globe and most certainly in the West that those born in other lands are visitors or partial citizens, but not entirely and undisputedly members of that nation state. This has the covert effect of penetrating the existence of the immigrant or the first-generation citizen with a higher level of effort and struggle than their national peers. If one is not a "natural" citizen, then one must take extreme care to blend their differentiating characteristics down to a level of imperceptibility. However, there is that confusing element of the national 'family' and one's resultant adoptee status as a migrant or non-native citizen. In contemporary Scotland, curating a sense of belonging is still a task inhibited by

discrimination. As Nasar Meer observes, when asked to respond to the statement "*I have experienced discrimination in Scotland in the last 5 years*", a total of 45% of those living in Scotland with Black African Caribbean heritage agreed (2018: 107). Strikingly, Meer also observes that 60% of respondents who experienced discrimination did not report it to the relevant authority while simultaneously finding that '82% of the entire sample [insisted] they would encourage a friend or family to make a formal complaint if they thought they had experienced discrimination,' be it in the workplace or doctor's office, on public transport or in education (110). Acknowledging one's alternative heritages and roots of belonging, then, can easily become a guilt-ridden and self-defeating exercise in a western nation such as Scotland, where accepting and illuminating ones otherness - and the discrimination that may arise from it - is marred with prejudice, danger, fear, and an observable lack of self-confidence and self-worth.

This form of guilt is expertly communicated by Jackie Kay. Born in Edinburgh to an unmarried Scottish mother and Nigerian father, she was adopted by Helen and John Kay, a pair of passionate socialists from the Glasgow suburb Bishopbriggs. From the outset of her career, Kay has dealt openly with themes of race, identity, belonging, gender, and sexuality. Eguíbar Holgado asserts that Kay's writing routinely 'explores genealogy and origins' while her narrativized personal experiences of 'trauma and tenseness [are] tempered by an overall humorous tone' (2018: 171). Her debut publication *The Adoption Papers* (1991) tackles all the above in a multi-voiced and autobiographical collection of emotive and personally informed poetry. Alternately writing from the perspectives of the daughter, birth mother, and adoptive mother with distinct typographical differences, Kay uses her own lived experience as daughter to inform the voices of her mothers. In the very first stanza given in the book from the adoptive mother's perspective, Kay describes the adoption process in mid-twentieth century Scotland as 'scandalous' and a 'secret failure' in the enterprise of motherhood, even calling the adopted daughter an 'alien' (1991: 10). Using this shame-filled and othering terminology clearly indicates a prevalent mood which will remain throughout her text, and examines the experience of guilt within women who are not Kay herself. Kay addresses the embedded racism of the Scottish adoption process as a bureaucratic enterprise: 'Just as we are going out the door / I said oh you know we don't mind the colour. / Just like that, the waiting was over' (14). Presented as something mundane and simple, the adoptive mother's willingness to adopt a non-white child erases months of wait time and enables her to become a parent practically overnight. As the final remarks of a stanza full of descriptions of the rejection and agonising delays adoptive parents must go through, this closing statement

poignantly speaks to the overwhelming percentage of Scottish citizens who hold damaging racial biases and embody the exact fear of the 'other' that Said defines. To accept a non-white child means to skip the 'five-year waiting list' or the finicky necessities of adoption agencies, such as the desire for new parents to be avid 'church-goers' (Kay 1991: 15). Portrayals and considerations of otherness, however, are not limited to race alone. When an adoption agent comes to visit the adoptive parent's home, they hide all their socialist paraphernalia to appear 'ordinary', leaving only a bust of Scots poet Robert Burns and mainstream literature by Shelley on display (15). Helen feels guilty that she and John have expressed their left-wing beliefs so freely in their home, subtly expressing an awareness of the overtly rigid and more right-wing attitude of the adoption agency. Despite Helen's efforts, the visitor still notes the 'interesting' and 'different' quality of the home, further suggesting the open-mindedness of the adoptive parents is one not shared by most of their national peers nor the nation's bureaucratic systems. The bureaucratic representative's small gesture of commonality - confessing that she is 'all for peace [herself]' - is therefore a profound reminder that these systems and their hard-line beliefs are not wholly emblematic of the beliefs of the average Scottish citizen not Scottish culture as a whole (15). In this moment, Kay redeems her adoptive mother of her guilt and anxiety and offers a joyful alternative to the potentially ruinous judgement of the adoption agent.

As Giles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have suggested in *Toward a Minor Literature*, the use of the nationally dominant language by a national minority writer allows that language to become 'deterritorialised' and thus 'appropriate for strange and minor uses'[6] ([1975] 2001: 1451). They argue that the way Franz Kafka used German to write despite being a Jewish, Czech-speaking Austrian, or the way in which Black writers use English in the context of American Literature, curates minor literatures. Within minor literature 'everything is political,' unlike in major literature where 'the social milieu [serves] as a mere environment or a background' (1451). The 'cramped spaces' of minor literature thus force 'individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics':

> The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it. In this way, the family

[6] Specifically, they use this distinction to explain the function of language as employed by Franz Kafka, the Jewish Austrian writer who lived in Prague and spoke Czech but wrote by and large in German ([1975] 2001: 1451).

> triangle connects to all the other triangles - commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical - that determine its values (1452).

Minor literature then, is a suitable categorisation by which to place a non-white Scottish author. In her use of both Scots and specifically Glaswegian dialect, Kay takes on a voice overwhelmingly associated with the white male. In adopting such a voice, she claims an identity she has had to fight for as a non-white adopted Scot, discussed at length in this chapter moving forward. In *Red Dust Road* (2010), Kay nods to other writers who could be classified as writers of a minor literature - Franz Fanon, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and Ralph Ellison specifically - as individuals who 'electrified' her: 'reading [them] changed the mirror I held up to myself. […] All of those writers changed my racial awareness; reading them changed my life' (40-41). It is in *Red Dust Road*, too, that Kay develops her literary engagement with pre-explored themes of belonging. As Petra Tournay-Theodotou explains:

> Kay's memoir offers an exploration of what it means to grow up as an adopted bi-racial child in a white environment in Scotland in the 1960s and 1970s and portrays her endeavour of trying to come to terms with her dual heritage through tracing her birth parents (2014: 15).

It tells the detailed story of her attempts to trace and map her origins, travelling to Nigeria to meet her birth father where he has built a life with his other children and family. As Tournay-Theodotou argues, the text directly addresses 'questions of geographical, racial, personal and cultural identity,' thus finding itself 'inevitably concerned with the notions of home and belonging' (2014: 15). A synthesis of her dual-heritage is thus attempted by Kay in a more deliberate and developed way than in *The Adoption Papers* of nearly two decades before. The text opens in a semi-comical manner when she meets her born-again Christian Father, Jonathan, in a hotel in Nigeria's capital city of Abuja. He begins their meeting stating that he will pray for her and she consequently becomes 'alarmed', confessing to the reader that 'extreme religion scares the hell out of me' (2010: 3). The Scottish problem of sectarianism is closely linked to the behemoth that is Scottish football culture and significantly worse in Glasgow and the central belt, where Kay was raised. Thus, her father's extreme approach to religion clearly discomforts Kay due to her Scottish upbringing. In a chanting recital of bible verse and calling to God via incantation and dance, he proclaims that her talent as a writer

will soar if she chooses to 'receive Christ' as 'God protects the talented' which only alienates and alarms her further (4). A more complex discomfort towards religion itself, specifically evangelicalism arises here, which alienates Kay further from Jonathan. The total culture shock of their first encounter initially delays Kay's experience of guilt, but it inevitably arrives before the sermon is over. In a moment of absurd clarity as he dances barefoot around her hotel room singing what 'sounds like a mixture of African chanting and hymns,' she looks at his feet and recognises her 'own toes' (5). This moment seems to slow down the frantic pacing of the scene in its poignancy regarding Kay's quest for belonging and a discovery of her biological parentage. While profound in her recognition of a genetic marker of similarity, it is made strange and difficult in that she learns this fact while experiencing a larger and more alienating realisation that she and Jonathan are divided by more than she could have imagined: religious and cultural differences. While Jonathan is open and welcoming at the surface, he soon implies clearly that he sees her as 'impure' and 'illegitimate':

> I am sitting here, evidence of his sinful past, but I am the sinner, the live embodiment of his sin. He's moved on now, he's a clean man, a man of glory and God, but I'm […] dirty and unsaved, the living proof of sin (6).

Guilt is given the chance to overwhelm Kay as daughter figure here, but a decisive resistance to his branding instead occurs in her writing. By recognising and processing his opinion of her in her own words, she comes to understand her father's view of her as the living memento of what he considers his greatest sin as facetious and hypocritic. Though resisted, there is still an emotional impact which is heightened in her newfound understanding of Jonathan's extreme religious beliefs, as she realises he would not express such a sentiment without truly comprehending the weight it holds. There is of course a deeply sexist undertone to this paternal dynamic in his own decision to absolve himself from wrongdoing and her inherent ownership of this wrongdoing as the offspring. Comparatively, when Galloway is a child and her own mother blames her for her own conception and birth, she is rendered helpless and guilt ridden, taught to feel wholly responsible for the inconvenience of her existence. Kay is able to resist such helplessness and debilitating guilt thanks to her age, education, and her very own writing and critique of her father's words. Recovery has come with adulthood and the luck of encountering such a paternal moment with the knowledge and power to overcome its damaging intent. Guilt is evoked, but it is fiercely resisted before it can seed.

When she glances at her watch to find that her father has been praying for over an hour, she dryly notes that 'the man can talk. We have that in common too' (7). The overtly humorous tone which frames this encounter establishes commonality and provides a route for their mutual recovery from guilt through laughter, self-admonishment, and absurdity. Indeed, employing humour to counteract discomfort, pain, guilt, or awkwardness is an overtly Scottish thing to do. Petra Tournay-Theodotou offers a concise and effective analysis of this moment: 'Humour here serves Kay as a redemptive force and a distancing device to expel the pain and the horror of being regarded as the "live embodiment of his sin" (6) and his subsequent refusal to have any further contact with her' (2014: 15). Carol Craig's recognition of a certain Scottish tendency to 'overcompensate' for feelings of guilt, discomfort, and shame can also reinforce this analysis. Craig asserts that this overcompensation comes from a distinct lack of self-confidence which is remedied all too often by 'succumb[ing] to a victim mentality [or] acting in an arrogant or bullying fashion' (2003: 8). Kay in the moment inhabits the former, biting her tongue and letting herself be berated and treated like a child by her overbearing, judgemental father. In a sense, Jonathan's behaviour, determined by Christian and Nigerian cultural influences, seem to mirror 'the harsh realities of life in modern Scotland […] the prejudice [and] the pettiness,' curiously juxtaposing Jackie's Scottish cultural heritage with her patrilineal Nigerian one (Craig 2003: 9). Yet Kay does not adhere to Craig's categorisations as she commits the event to text. She does not allow sheepishness once again to silence her, while simultaneously refusing to adopt arrogance or bullyish tactics to show her resilience. As Owen Campbell has written of the Scottish cultural psyche, 'failure is not the killer; we are used to that. It's the hope that gets you every time' (2002: 51). Kay, then, experiences a doubly damaging realisation that the hopefulness she felt when imagining this first meeting was misguided. Her excursion to her fatherland has not provided her with the belonging she sought, and her commitment to this search on a personal level has distanced her a little bit more from her Scottish heritage. What salvages her is her recovery through writing and its capabilities to challenge the power dynamics and inequalities involved in the encounter.

At the close of this introductory chapter, the guilt her father places on her for embodying his sin is immortalised in a cutting remark: 'Once I used to go clubbing and such, and drink wine and meet women and now I am a preacher. You are my before, this is my after. You are my sin, and now I lead this life' (10). The distinction that he makes that Jackie is his 'before' cements a guilt-ridden yearning for belonging and acceptance that Kay engages with across her writing. He then decides for them both that Jackie must remain a secret from his

legitimate children unless she presents herself to them as 'born again' and his 'before' (10). This unreasonable demand is at once hurtful and nonsensical, especially when asked of a modern and successful grown woman. Kay's committing of this request to narrative then publishing it in an acclaimed autobiography is a dramatic recognition of the absurdity of his attitude and a decisive exhibition of personal recovery from guilt. Jonathan closes off any scope for retaliation by stating that 'for the time being it is best to keep quiet about this' (10). In his denying her any level of agency in the decision to keep her a secret, the unwritten question almost leaps from Kay's page: best for who? Certainly not for the daughter seeking a true sense of belonging in a foreign place she is connected to by blood but cannot call home. Kay also challenges the misogynistic callousness of her seventy-three-year-old biological father, who has a forty-year-old wife - the same age as she is. He inappropriately exclaims that God has 'provided somebody for [his] sex drive,' seeing no irony in his condemning Jackie's sinfulness through existence, yet openly stating his sexual motivations for marrying a woman over thirty years his junior (11). She writes, 'how lovely it must be to believe in such a God, to hide your past in God's name, not to feel a second's guilt', further cementing the sense that she is able to avoid bearing this guilt her father has deftly displaced onto her for his own absolution as a rounded adult, accomplished writer, and relative stranger to him (11).

Despite the potential for severance of the paternal relationship that this first encounter holds, Kay cannot abandon her father nor his homeland as he has - now more than once - abandoned her:

> Africa itself could only ever be imagined in the way that I imagined my father, with bright picture-book colours and bold outlines. Part of me came from Africa, part of me was foreign to myself, strange to myself since I had never been to the dark continent and could only really have it burning away, hot and dusty, in my mind (38)

Africa holds hopefulness and - crucially after her bizarre and unfulfilling meeting with Jonathan - potential for recovery from guilt for Kay in her search for a meaningful sense of belonging. Once again in Africa she is given the opportunity to meet her paternal siblings, and giddily begins to feel 'some sense of optimism starting to float alongside' her that had been submerged by her father (264). The opportunity to curate familial belonging therefore arises alongside a recovery from the guilt and disappointment which opened the text and

Kay's experience of her father's homeland. This allows Africa to become a genuine place for her to explore her roots and establish a positive identity. It is a therefore a potential site of true personal affirmation that, despite her genuine feelings of Scottishness, cannot be wholly offered in Scotland thanks to the racism she has experienced throughout her life from the moment of her adoption discussed earlier through her time at school and university. Being 'foreign' to herself has been the roadblock in curating a true sense of belonging within Scotland and a perpetuating factor in the guilt born out of feeling 'othered' in one's own country. As Kay writes, in a country like Scotland it is not the distant and unseen 'foreigner' in another land, but the 'foreigner within that is interesting' (2010: 38). This further denies any real sense of identity and belonging in Scotland through exoticisation, and fosters a guilt through an inability to locate such belonging within the land that is - in nearly every way - truly home:

> Every time somebody in your own country asks you where you are from: every time you indignantly reply, "I'm from here," you are subconsciously caught up in asking that question again and again of yourself, particularly when you are a child. Children have an intense need to belong (2010: 38-39).

The emphasis on this absence of belonging experienced since childhood profoundly informs Kay's writing, feelings of guilt, and the severity of the otherness she has at times been made to feel in the Scottish national community. She recalls being in school when Africa would be briefly mentioned 'just as a whole mass as if it was one country' and her classmates would turn to 'stare and pull faces,' othering her as representative of an entire continent she could not have known any better than her white Scottish peers (39). It is poignant that decades later she still feels it pertinent to write that in Scotland and the West at large, 'we still live in a rather racist primitive society' (40). In her authorial recognition of this racism and inequality, Kay exhibits a reflection that is clearly designed to achieve recovery from guilt that has continually denied her a sense of belonging.

However, her search for belonging in *Red Dust Road* is in no way limited to Nigeria, Africa, or her paternal lineage. It is also a reconnecting and reorientation with her adoptive parents and her Glaswegian roots. Petra Tournay-Theodotou calls this a 'double voyage of discovery,' where explorations of places new and old are informed by a 'search for biological [and] cultural roots' (2014: 19). Indeed, Kay intersperses her trip to Abuja with memories of the childhood she spent in 1960's Glasgow. Kay's adoptive mother imagines what her real

parents are like, and these imaginings are juxtaposed with real-life encounters Kay has as both an adult in Abuja with her father and in Scotland with her birth mother. She recognises the efforts of her adoptive parents - her mother in particular - in teaching her never to feel 'rejected,' and instead, to understand herself as someone who was 'chosen' (2010: 44). Kay is not afraid to display the abundance of belonging that was felt within the dynamic of her immediate family and her life with Helen and John. Even still, her adoption was the star feature of 'the two first big real stories [she] heard' from the imagination of her mother and herself as Helen allowed Jackie to freely explore and ask about her origin story throughout her life (44). She understood their imaginings as being 'far away, stories of cultures so totally, so utterly different from kitsch Scottish culture, Burns suppers and haggis, shortbread and square sausage, Irn Bru, and kilts' (45). This reflection as an adult implicitly suggests Kay feels less connected to 'kitsch Scottish culture' through her attempts to engage with the 'far away' cultures of Nigeria. This implies a guiltiness stemming from perceived abandoning of the Scottish culture of her upbringing, the country she calls home, and the people she considers her true parents, in her unignorable desire to learn about her African lineage. Resultantly, as Tournay-Theodotou suggests, this illuminates the difficulty non-native citizens must grapple with in their exploration of their myriad heritages and the 'struggle to reconcile dual cultural allegiances,' exacerbated when one culture exists as a privileged northern and post-colonial nation and the other in the disenfranchised global south (2014: 18). Kay expresses a more personal frustration at her own private pain as an adoptee despite having a life full of love, adoration, and at times a sense of real belonging:

> You think adoption is a story which has an end. But the point is that it has no end. It keeps changing its ending. […] I am lucky, I am blessed. And yet still, sometimes, in my dark hours, there is this feeling that I am alone (2010: 46).

Embedded in these feelings of loneliness is guilt via Kay's understanding that 'alone' is precisely something she is not. Since the latter twentieth century, feelings of guilt and shame have been understood as one of seven lifelong, core issues adoptees face (Silverstein and Kaplan, 1982). Silverstein and Kaplan suggest that guilt and shame arise from the adopted individual's belief that they inherently deserved a rejection from their birth parents, even if their adoptive parents have been overtly loving, accepting and grateful for their existence. This guilt and shame, however, is not one dimensional, nor is it localised to the adopted individual. Birth parents and adoptive parents both experience guilt and shame, either from

an unwanted pregnancy or circumstances outwith their control prompting the necessity to offer their child up for adoption - or latterly the inability to have biological children of their own. Guilt oscillates in the family tree of the adopted child, with them as the centric figure in the whole complex situation. In *The Adoption Papers*, it is thus clear that Kay sympathises with the guilt her mothers had to endure in her infancy, writing from her birth mothers perspective: 'Maybe the words lie / across my forehead / headline in thin ink / MOTHER GIVES BABY AWAY' (1991: 17). It is Kay's position as an adult that allows her to fully comprehend the guilt her birth mother in particular harboured, and in experiencing these defining moments as a writer, she both explores and unpacks this guilt for herself. Comparatively in *Red Dust Road*, as Kay's memoir of her search for belonging as an adoptee, she instead explores the multifaceted nature of her own personal adoptive guilt, formed and experienced in multiple ways through an absence of and desire for a true sense of belonging. Kay grapples with her existence as one of two 'types' of adoptee, belonging to the category of ones who 'want to trace, who are curious about their origins,' as opposed to being blissfully uninterested in the digging (2010: 46). In this acknowledgement of an unstoppable desire within herself - one which is perhaps not universal but certainly commonplace among adopted children - is a profound acknowledgement of the pain she self-inflicts through her own dissatisfaction with not knowing. Indeed, this guilt is one she expresses throughout her life, writing in 1991:

> I have my parents who are not of the same tree / and you keep trying to make it matter, / […] yet I confess my own contradiction / I want to know my blood (29)

Layered on is the guilt at leaving the search 'too late', adding to her overall pain. This once again connects her to the adoptee community, as so often the adoptees who do choose to 'walk back up the road to their past in search of themselves' often do not embark on such a journey until later in life (47). This reinforces the argument that temporal distance and reflection are necessary in any genuine recovery from guilt. Indeed, this pain is ultimately survived by taking the opportunity to meet her paternal siblings. In a deeply emotional first meeting in Lagos with her brother, she describes 'drinking in his face' which has is the same shape as hers: 'I feel a strange almost ecstatic sensation of recognition. It is nearly primitive. I could happily sniff his ears and lick his forehead. It has completely ambushed me. I wasn't expecting it at all' (272). In a moment of comparison, the expectation she has built up all her life to know her birth parents and garner a sense of belonging and shared identity is delivered

to her in an unexpected wave of joy and love as she meets her brother. The ‘strange’ and nearly ‘primitive’ feelings she describes convey the real sense of belonging and family connection she feels and how genuine her lack of this feeling before surely must have been. This illuminates the capabilities her narrative offers her to find recovery from the guilt she has endured in her search for belonging, with Kay finally finding that belonging and actively recovering from her guilt in the close of her memoir.

Section II: Leila Aboulela

In a similar fashion to Jackie Kay, Leila Aboulela examines manifestations of guilt triggered by a lack of a sense of belonging across her body of work. In her acclaimed 1999 semi-autographical novel *The Translator*, Sudanese widow Sammar accepts a job at Aberdeen university as an Arabic translator. Interestingly, the guilt tied to belonging in Aboulela's case is more keenly related to issues of religion and sexuality than is seen in Kay's comparable works discussed previously, where the guilt exhibited is more closely linked to a desire to belong in a familial and inevitably national sense. A deep cultural struggle ensues within Sammar in her attempts to acclimatise to the grey, hard city she finds herself situated in after leaving her home city of Khartoum in Sudan. Guilt predominantly encroaches on Sammar's narrative due to the incompatibility of her Muslim faith in her new home, exacerbated by romantic feelings towards her boss within the university, Rae. One of Sammar's companions and Rae's secretary, Yasmin, offers an example of the stark difference between herself as a first-generation citizen of the U.K. with Pakistani parents and Sammar as an English-speaking migrant. Sammar notices that Yasmin has 'a habit of making general statements starting with "we", where "we" meant the whole of the Third World and its people,' in a general narrative comprised of comparing Westerners to Non-Westerners with blanket statements and bigoted beliefs (1999: 11). Presented early on in the text, this dynamic between two Eastern women living in Scotland confuses Sammar and alienates her from her colleagues and peers on all sides - both the 'cheerful, coffee scented [Scottish] ladies' and Yasmin alike (11). Sammar does not relate to Yasmin's sweeping distinctions, but does not feel familiar or integrated enough with her white Scots colleagues. Further, Yasmin has no real experience of the 'Third World' having grown up in the U.K., effectively using her racial heritage as a green light to make sweeping and incorrect statements about Eastern nations. This overwhelms Sammar who, as a result. begins to feel like 'a helpless immigrant who didn't know any English' - even in the academic site where she is fairly comfortable and certainly qualified (13). The guilt this provokes is creeping and malignant, eroding her sense of confidence in both Scotland and Aberdeen University where her language skills are an indispensable tool for assimilation and success within an otherwise wholly foreign environment. Aboulela fully immerses Sammar in this guilt, and the form of her novel being more overtly fictional than all other texts in discussion allows for a more embedded examination of guilt. Aboulela is also aware of Sammar's existence within a national culture that is more extraverted than introverted, and she retreats away from language into silence

spurred by moments of extreme guilt and anxiety. This perpetuates her feelings of guilt and lack of belonging further. Relatedly, Carol Craig proposes that Scottish extraversion is manifested through the speech act. In all of the Scottish women's literature in discussion, 'vernacular speech' is conveyed in the written form with speech-based narrative styles - most notably Galloway's texts and Kay's poetic works, which entirely omit speech marks and meld speech and unspoken narrative voice into one (2003: 44). Therefore, Sammar's difficulty with her own speech in Scotland contributes to her sense of guiltiness stemming from an inability to assimilate into such a fundamental aspect of Scottish life. She has thus rendered herself fundamentally outside of the 'active, energetic' side of Scottish culture that the spoken word offers, excluded from the thing that is so valued in the Scottish cultural-national context (Craig 2003: 52). Moreover, Aboulela draws experience from her own life to inform Sammar's complex relationship to language. As Brenda Cooper has acknowledged, 'although [Aboulela's] first language is Arabic, the language of her education, of reading and writing, is English' (2006: 324). The function of this is that postcolonial female writers who have been educated in European languages and settings 'find themselves speaking with European words steeped in imperialist and masculine tropes, metaphors and meaning' (324). Cooper goes on to employ Jacques Lacan's definition of woman as "she who is outside language", which echoes redolently within the pages of Aboulela's text, and indeed the work of Jackie Kay and other Scots women writers like Aminatta Forna and Hannah Lavery, who both produce work thematically exploring guilt and belonging.

Interestingly, Aboulela allows the feelings of guilt and shame tethered to speech and language to leech into other characters in the text. Rae, in his rumination over his mutual feelings of attraction to Sammar, is saddened by the knowledge that their separate mother tongues substantially separate them as people: '[He] knew she was heavy with other loyalties, full to the brim with distant places, voices in a language that was not his own' (1999: 29). Strikingly, Rae's tentativeness towards Sammar and his ability to recognise the sensitive hold linguistic differences has upon her is indicative of a much more respectful and rounded world view that is certainly predominant in Scotland when compared to other Western countries. Sammar seems to recognise this within him, confiding to Yasmin that Rae is '"sort of different […] like people from back home"' (21). When Yasmin retorts and calls Rae an Orientalist, Sammar is saddened and crucially does not agree: 'Sammar did not like the word Orientalist. Orientalists were bad people who distorted the image of the Arabs and Islam' (21). 'Distorting' the Image of Eastern cultures in his academic position is not something Sammar believes to be true, and again Yasmin's misinformed sentiments expressed in harsh

and divisive language do not align with what Sammar believes to be correct. Indeed, Rae displays a tentativeness not aligned with a traditionally exploitative Orientalist mode of thinking. He consistently attempts to ease Sammar's discomfort in exhibiting understanding sentiments about third-world or non-Western nations that are more aligned with her worldview, both in professional and personal moments (34). It can therefore be argued that Aboulela offers Rae's character as a form of recovery from guilt for Sammar, one she critically struggles to access due to the unique guilt Rae simultaneously induces within her. Specifically, on this point, desire is also an extreme source of guilt in Sammar's narrative. Discussing cultural differences with Yasmin and Rae, the issue of virginity and chastity arises in the context of Eastern nations and cultures. Where they acknowledge that the importance of virginity is respected '"in the context of its own place, its own part of the world,"' the '"typical imperialist thinking"' of the U.K. and other Western nations means that an unconditional respect for such 'foreign' cultural conditions is not yet possible (19). The 'culture-shock' that nearly paralyses Sammar in subsequent moments with Rae - when she feels a wave of attraction towards him, or becomes acutely aware that they are alone together - solidifies her guiltiness at the prospect of romance and intimacy, heighted by her continuing state of grieving for her husband and her out of place-ness in Scotland (24). Despite this guilt that tortures her experience of falling for Rae, Aboulela hints that recovery may overcome after all in Sammar's rumination on Yasmin's use of the word 'Orientalist': 'Maybe modern Orientalists were different' (21). Indeed, Aboulela often considers the relationship of the male Orientalist to her non-Western female characters, such as in her short story *The Museum*. Sudanese student Shadia finds herself in friendship and eventually conflict with Bryan, a Scottish student who invites her to a museum exhibition about Africa. Here, Shadia finds that 'nothing was of her, nothing belonged to her life at home, what she missed. Here was Europe's vision, the clichés about Africa: cold and old' (2018: 177). As Brendan Smyth has noted, 'while Bryan appears to be open to having his Orientalist misconceptions challenged, Shadia feels unable to do so,' leaving the already disadvantaged non-Westerner alienated in the colonial cultural-national context (2007: 171)

Sammar's guilt and dis-ease in Scotland does not alleviate with the linear progression of the text, a way in which Aboulela navigates the unpredictability of both grief and displacement through her writing:

> She said that colours made her sad. Yellow as she knew it and green as she knew it were not here, not bright, not vivid as they should be. She had stacked the differences; the weather, the culture, modernity, the language, the silence of the muezzin, then found that the colours of the mud, sky, and leaves, were different too (1999: 43)

This discomfort through difference that she finds in Scotland is contrasted here by a flashback to a visit back to Africa after living in the U.K., where 'home was a vague place, a jumble of what her mother said,' and things were not as familiar as they had once seemed (44). This is redolent of Jackie Kay's negotiation of the balance of belonging; how seeking a sense of place and stability in one home country can inadvertently disrupt your sense of belonging within another, creating a specific dualism of alienation and loneliness. Sammar's experience of Aberdeen and its unfamiliar cityscape, transport systems, buildings, and people both 'silences her and crushes her identity, diminishes her being' (Cooper 2006: 326). The language of her new country continues to trouble Sammar and further disrupts her sense of belonging. In a section where Sammar is soon due to return to Sudan, she and Rae symbolically have a telephone call which is constantly interrupted by others crowding Sammar wishing to use the payphone. She wishes she 'could be settled with a telephone in a kitchen that was her own,' expressing again the pain of not having a defined place of belonging in one's adopted nation (102). Language continues to dissipate for Sammar as her departure creeps closer. At work, translation becomes an impossible task:

> Windows in red and blue flew towards her. They got bigger and clearer as they came closer to the surface of the computer screen then passed away. She had stopped changing Arabic into English, stopped typing; and the words had flickered and disappeared into the blackness from where the flying windows now came (108)

Sammar's adept language skills have been temporarily lost in a guilt and anxiety ridden turmoil over what the future holds for herself and Rae. Brenda Cooper has observed that Sammar's ability to translate and engage with language again relies on Aboulela 'providing her with a language in which material, daily realities, her body and words, and especially the word of Allah, combine' (2006: 329). This in turn allows Sammar to transform from 'the old, tired vision of woman as instinct, as body, as pre-language, as non-rational' to a more fitting post-colonial position as a female character equipped with language skills which '[enable her] to speak' truthfully and naturally (329). Sammar's inability to write her translations is

therefore supportive of the argument that writing is a recovery from guilt, and is indeed something she must overcome in order to heal.

The negotiation of Khartoum and Aberdeen within herself is thus written with a real sense of pain and is crystallised in moments of cultural difference, such as when Sammar fasts over the Christmas period and imagines Rae enjoying Christmastime with 'turkeys, families sitting on settees' (Aboulela 1999: 30): 'They lived in worlds divided by simple facts - religion, country of origin, race - data that fills forms' (33). The issue of religion goes on to become a central concern for Rae's trajectory and the text overall. His expressing an unwillingness to convert to Islam when he and Sammar begin to discuss what the future may hold has a profound effect on Sammar and, crucially, relates to the previously discussed breakdowns of language and communication. Sammar tries to comprehend how Rae's Scottish upbringing, informed by Calvinism's 'dour and oppressive brand of Christianity', has dramatically altered his world view and made it so fundamentally different to her own:

> An upbringing so different from hers. Things he was told. He must not be sullen, he must not be so cheeky, he must not be contradictory. He must not complain of boredom, only bores get bored. The value of pretending that all was well when it wasn't (99)

She struggles to understand how the things a Calvinistic upbringing condemns as 'bad' are really so, and when Rae cannot give her an explanation Sammar is left with a sense that an unbridgeable cultural-religious distance exists between them. Religion thus plays a fundamental role in the journey to try and bridge this divide. Sammar's innate guilt felt from her deeply held Islamic beliefs and Rae's initial resistance to them is alleviated when Rae finally decides to convert, seemingly of his own volition and not as a means to simply become involved with Sammar. This not only lets Sammar begin to retrace her faith as it exists within the Scottish context by embracing it with someone who is thoroughly culturally Scottish, but it also revives her relationship to language as it exists in her world allowing for new channels of communication with Rae that previously were not possible. Recovery is therefore most readily available for Sammar via her faith. Problematic though it may be that a Sammar's recovery from guilt is also bound up within a white male who holds seniority over her, Aboulela seems to use Rae still as a mechanism to allow Sammar to locate a form of English language and Scottish culture 'into which to translate more than one culture, language and knowledge base,' examining what Brenda Cooper identifies as the non-native's

near-permanent state of ‘bewilderment in the face of the dominant culture, for all the migrant’s education and schooling in the European language,’ (2006: 324). It is therefore the ability to overcome differences of both faith and culture that Sammar achieves with Rae, through what are presented as genuine feelings of love and respect, that a deeper understanding of Scottish and English language-based traditions can be gained and a recovery from guilt can be offered. What could be considered a more traditional gender power dynamic is also subverted in Sammar’s insistence that Rae convert to Islam, rather than Rae suggesting she give up her faith or simply accept his decision to remain non-Muslim. Sammar realises that she ‘had never, not once, prayed that he would become a Muslim for his own sake, for his own good. It had always been for herself, her need to get married again, not be alone’ (Aboulela 1999: 171). This is striking, as it deconstructs any argument or perception that Sammar’s insistence that Rae convert to Islam comes from faith and devotion alone. Her acknowledgement of her own selfishness indicates that she has arrived at a place of confidence and self-acceptance, no longer bound by guilt and shame.

Conclusion:

Despite the varied and nuanced approaches taken in detailing the origins of guilt and portraying the experiences of such guilt in a multi-layered Scottish context, what *This is Not About Me*, *Motherwell*, *The Adoption Papers* and *Red Dust Road*, and *The Translator* all commonly offer is an example of how recovery from guilt can be achieved by the Scottish female writer through writing itself. As has been discussed at length, guilt in the Scottish cultural-national context is broadly but fundamentally connected to issues surrounding national identity and nationalist politics. However, all writers in discussion offer a refreshed perspective on the pervasiveness of guilt within Scottish culture by developing narratives which both unpack and explicitly elucidate for the reader the ways in which guilt uniquely affects and bears down upon women. This coincides with a post-devolutionary critical shift which has seen women writers take centre stage and nationalism be utilised to aid discussions of gender, identity, belonging, race, and so on. Crucially, all of these female authors set the majority of their narratives within Scotland, with any departures from the nation occurring in tandem with the Scottish narratives and commenting on the cultural dynamics of Scotland placed aside these other locations, from England to Khartoum to Abuja. As many Scottish critics such as Carol Craig have discovered, trying to adequately cover gender in Scottish cultural contexts is 'frustrating' (2003: xiv), but in the post-devolutionary contemporary period this frustration seems to have faded into apprehensive curiosity or fierce defiance - at times a combination of both. Still, Craig's recognition of a Scottish overemphasis on respectability and judgement is useful as it has to an extent fostered guilt and anxiety amongst Scots women as those in charge of the home, the bairns, the men's dinners. Nationalism has long overshadowed issues of belonging, identity, and race and resultantly breeds guilt here too. This is prevalent in equal measure in Beth and Win, women of a different Scotland and Scots culture who pass its flaws on to Janice and Deborah in even more damaging forms, since it has been directly supplanted from mother to daughter. It is evident in Jackie and Helen Kay, who grapple with Kay's mixed heritage and struggle for belonging, and too in Sammar, who experiences this corrosive blow as an already lonely and grieving newcomer. The breadth of Scottish cultural-national factors which have long kept women in a place of guilt are undoubtedly brought into the personal by contemporary Scottish female writers, as exhibited by all texts in discussion. From Galloway and Orr's damaged relationships with their mothers to Kay and Aboulela's difficulties in establishing foundations of belonging and identity in Scotland as non-white citizens, these experiences of

personal guilt are not isolated from the national condition yet can be dealt with through writing deeply personal narratives within it. All four writers come to ultimately embrace their explorations of personal guilt by actively challenging it through writing and language, aided by the renewed contemporary Scottish cultural-literary environment cultivated by post-devolution attitude shifts and the women themselves, though never losing sight of the ultimately personal purpose. As Deborah Orr asks in *Motherwell*, 'Is memoir therapy? Or is it vengeance?' (2020: 124). She seems to answer her own question, even venturing as far as to forgive her mother for the guilt and pain she caused her: 'The baddie is patriarchy. The baddie is narcissism. The baddie is trauma. The baddie is human fear, passed down in its doleful paralysis from generation to generation […] And who could have known? That a row [with your mother] could stay with a person forever?' (285). What Orr recognises here is that the pain and guilt others caused in the past is perhaps not as malignant or unkind as it once seemed, and that forgiveness is a redemptive tool one must always embrace. This forgiveness and recovery can evidently be gained in the act of writing - something that these Scottish women have defiantly chosen for themselves.

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