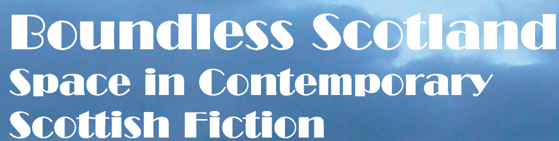

Boundless Scotland
Space in Contemporary Scottish Fiction

edited by Monika Szuba

series
between.pomiędzy

WYDAWNICTWO UNIWERSYTETU GDAŃSKIEGO

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Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego
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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 9

Carla Sassi (University of Verona, Italy)
Foreword 11

Alan Riach (University of Glasgow, Scotland)
Boundless Scotland: An Introduction 13

Local Spatialities

David Malcolm (University of Gdańsk, Poland)
Local Universes: Space in Robin Jenkins's
The Cone-Gatherers and James Kennaway's *Tunes of Glory* 19

Aniela Korzeniowska (University of Warsaw, Poland)
Boundless Scotland but Binding Spaces:
Mo said she was quirky by James Kelman 33

Caroline Jones (University of Salford, United Kingdom)
Mapping Edinburgh 45

Liminal Spaces. Passable Boundaries

Pilar Sánchez Calle (University of Jaén, Spain)
Female Identities and Personal Space in *Blood*
by Janice Galloway 61

Jane Stedman (University of Manchester, United Kingdom)
"An annexe of nowhere": Overspill Identity
in Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989) 77

SPACES OF THE SELF

Dominika Lewandowska-Rodak (Independent Scholar)
The Self and the City in Modern Scottish Fiction.
A Study of James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*,
Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*
and Iain Banks's *The Bridge* 93

Jessica Aliaga Lavrijsen
(Centro Universitario de la Defensa Zaragoza, Spain)
Landscapes of the Mind: Spaces for the Dialogical Self
in *The Other McCoy* 111

BETWEEN MODES

Halszka Leleń (University of Warmia and Mazury, Poland)
Semiotics of Archipelago
in George Mackay Brown's Narratives 137

Robin M.J. MacKenzie (University of St Andrews, Scotland)
"A Swithering of Modes": Realist and Non-Realist Space
in the Fiction of Christopher Whyte 155

FUTURE SPACES

Karol Jaroszewski (University of Gdańsk, Poland)
The Outer and the Inner: Space in the Works
of Contemporary Scottish Science Fiction Writers 177

Katarzyna Pisarska (Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, Poland)
Liminal Spatialities: Visions of Scotland
in Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go* 189

Contributors 213

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My warmest thanks to Alan Riach for memorable trips around Alloway and Scottish literature.

Finally, I would like to thank the contributors for agreeing to submit their work and waiting patiently while the book was being completed.

Monika Szuba

Carla Sassi
University of Verona, Italy

Foreword

Landscape has been one of the privileged symbols whereby the Scottish nation has imagined itself and has been imagined in literature and the visual arts since at least the eighteenth century. It is through the powerful figurations of Scotland as the archetypal land of romance disseminated by James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* and further developed and popularised by Sir Walter Scott's novels that Scotland has been identified, and has come to identify itself, with the romantic imagination of its 'nordic', uncontaminated wilderness. However, as anyone engaging with Scottish studies today will be fully aware of, a bitter conflict underlies the captivating images of Highland natural scenery that the tourism industry has further iconised and crystallised, and that still linger in our imagination. The correlative objective of the appealing emptiness, the eerie absence of human life that characterise such landscape-images is in fact the violent political and economic subordination of this region and its cultural silencing by the British state between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, culminating in the Highland Clearances. Again, Scottish studies specialists will be familiar with the almost systematic (indeed iconoclastic) deconstruction of such images by Scottish writers in the twentieth century. Lewis Grassic Gibbon, Hugh MacDiarmid, Edwin Muir, Sorley MacLean, George Mackay Brown, to mention just a few canonical writers, by engaging militantly in a re-vision of their own country, opened up new creative patterns of geo-symbolic interpretation.

It is of course beyond the scope of this short foreword to chart the complex, controversial and fascinating history of landscape represen-

tation in Scotland. But it is worthwhile to point out here that there are indeed few European countries where landscape has played such a key role and continues to exert such a huge influence over ideas of nationhood — ideas which are more commonly, at least in the 'old World', bounded by historical and cultural contexts. It is in fact mainly the postcolonial imagination, with its contested relation to Eurocentric discourses of history and tradition that has taught us to reassert spatiality as a factor that bears the same impact over human activities as temporality. And even though Scotland cannot be classified light-heartedly as 'postcolonial', its complex and often subordinated relationship to the 'centre' of the British state has undoubtedly created patterns of response and resistance akin to those of colonies or post-colonies. Turning to landscape as a source of identity is one such pattern. This implies a transcending of the (political) boundaries that enclose a 'territory' (a state- and history-defined space) and a movement towards an emotional, affective focus on a visible portion of land, defined by the community that inhabits/views it. At least potentially, then, this is a more radical form of identity than history, as the issue here is one of emplacement rather than empowerment, of immanence in particular places rather than of transcendence, one that implies an idea of belonging to rather than possession of.

Contemporary Scottish literature has further developed, in different directions — ecocritical, utopian/distopian, post-modern, glocal, post-national — this concern with space and place, turning it into a kaleidoscope of critical possibilities, the width and depth of which are effectively mapped by the present volume. Ideas, issues and problems are today, more than ever before, shared and represented simultaneously across the world, across cultures and languages, circulated and refracted through digital media, social networks and filmic representations. Globalisation has not erased, however, contrary to expectations, local specificities — at worst it has enhanced their entrenchedness, at best it has made them open up to a new sense of planetary consciousness, based on respect for 'biodiversity', on partial transformations and mutual becomings. The latter option is that foregrounded in the title of this timely collection of essays. 'Boundless Scotland' is not a contradiction in terms — it is about a reality. Scottish literature, local *and* global, is *world* literature — an important voice, among equally important voices.

Alan Riach
University of Glasgow, Scotland

Boundless Scotland: An Introduction

"Space", said Captain Kirk, "the final frontier". But Edwin Morgan aptly reminds us: "it isn't really, it's time" (Morgan, *Midnight* 396). There is no modern writer more intergalactic in his imagination than Morgan, but as always, everywhere, there inevitably are confinements, borders, boundaries, limits, roads taken and not taken, within the pressures time creates, and these are needful, because such things supply co-ordinate points, they help create relationships, and therefore, make it possible for people to navigate, to find a way through, beyond, even out, and into the boundless. The astronauts in Morgan's poem, "A Home in Space", cut themselves away from the mother ship, the earth base, and move out "in an impeccable trajectory", a "band of tranquil defiers" not wanting to plant a home with roots but to keep "a voyaging generation voyaging" and make space itself their home, and understand, and act upon the knowledge that inhabitation delivers: "space that needs time and time that needs life" (Morgan, "Home" 388).

That series of consequent necessities is crucial, and central in the arts, and especially in fiction. It is there in the opening sentences of Charles Olson's brilliant study of Herman Melville, *Call Me Ishmael*: "I take SPACE to be the central fact to man born in America, from Folsom cave to now. I spell it large because it comes large here. Large, and without mercy" (15). Melville, in Moby-Dick, circumnavigates the oceans of the world, and Olson, in his opening sentence there, in a slight, gestural phrase, indicates and takes us through all humanly appreciable time, "from Folsom cave to now". So, through space and time, the need for life determines that we make our human stories,

in history and fiction, through all the arts of the novelist and storyteller, and the essays in this book open ways of understanding this in the particular terms of reference of modern fiction, in Scotland.

The very word, Scotland, requires a particular spatial sense: a nation, with borders, but debatable ones, a landmass with thousands of islands, an archipelago of identities, part of a larger political state in the history of the British Empire, a describable location of contested hierarchies of position and power. A country with no single unifying language but a plurality of them, and great writing pre-eminently in Gaelic, Scots and English, over centuries.

Such contested spaces as our writers deal with address themes and issues common to all great fiction anywhere, of course: matters of locality, gender, selfhood, language, the country and the city, the world as it imposes, the mind as it constructs. Yet many have a specifically Scottish character, intrinsically so, that might be unimaginable in any other place. The impositions of war, the legacy of militarism and the urgency of pacificism, have intense bearing in the work of Robin Jenkins and James Kennaway; the constraint and potential of women in the patriarchy are in continual tension in that of Janice Galloway; the limits of individual perception and social understanding, and of any possible action for change, are constantly pressed against and tested in that of James Kelman; the fructifying interconnections of realism and fantasy are key narrative fuel in that of Alasdair Gray, Iain Banks, Christopher Whyte and Matthew Fitt. These are the needed co-ordinate points that inform the essays gathered in this book, usefully collected in groups described, but not defined, by their designations. Each is mapped onto specific areas and places in the comprehensive space called Scotland. *Tunes of Glory* is locked into Stirling; *The Bridge*, however abstract it sometimes seems, is that over the Forth, to, or from, North Queensferry; Kelman's blind Samson in *How Late It Was, How Late*, inhabits Glasgow as surely as Mackay Brown's fiction inhabits Orkney.

The variousness of place is remarkable, but you can cross into different spaces quite quickly. Space is not large in Scotland in the same way as it is in America, in Olson's phrase, but it is multiple, layered, multidimensional, intimate, intricate and deep. And you can move across different spaces with emphatically singular character, from one to another, speedily.

Ayrshire is very different from Dumfriesshire, different again from Galloway, different again from the Borders in the east. Stornoway is a long way from Aberdeen, Glasgow as different from Edinburgh as you can imagine. Sometimes space in Scotland is indeed large, open, breathing unrealised potential; sometimes it can feel enclosed, entrapped, oppressive, a maze with maybe no exit at all. On islands and in coastal places it is tidal, in the country it is seasonal, in the cities it is concurrently realised and occupied in multitudes of ways. From prehistoric time till now, it is multiform, even, perhaps, through and beyond time, infinite. Boundless, in what it opens to, is open to, and defined only by its own articulation. The essays in this book begin the exploration of its capacities, carefully discriminating between priorities of attention.

The collection begins with "Local spatialities": David Malcolm of the University of Gdańsk and Aniela Korzeniowska of the University of Warsaw, both bring their critical sensibilities to bear from their places of residence in Poland, each with experience of living in Scotland, and this bifocality helps sharpen and open their analyses of Jenkins, Kennaway and Kelman, as they are keenly attentive to what experiences are commonly shared, and which are singular to the localities of the authors they are talking about. Caroline Jones of the University of Salford, in "Mapping Edinburgh", takes the most iconic of Scottish cities and overlays it, or rather, raises from it, its layers of literary meanings and histories of writerly articulation. These essays are all to do with what Fiona Stafford has called "local attachments", an understanding that truth needs to be earthed in reality, as art needs locality, to take off from: "the vital significance of local attachment for art arises from truth's need for strong foundations" (21).

Specific tensions are palpable, and different, when the priority of focus is "Liminal spaces. Passable Boundaries": Pilar Sánchez Calle of the University of Jaén, Spain, discusses the creation of distinctively female identity in the contexts of personal space in Janice Galloway's collection of short fiction, *Blood*, and Jane Stedman of University of Manchester, continues the enquiry into Galloway's work in her study of "overspill identity" in the novel *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*.

In "Spaces of the self", Dominika Lewandowska, of the University of Warsaw, considers the individual in the city, in James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* and Iain Banks's

The Bridge, while Jessica Aliaga Lavrijsen of the Centro Universitario de la Defensa Zaragoza, Spain, looks at Brian McCabe's remarkable short novel, *The Other McCoy.*

"Between modes" gives us Robin M.J. MacKenzie of the University of St Andrews, discussing the fiction of Christopher Whyte, and Halszka Leleń of the University of Warmia and Mazury, Poland, considering archipelagic spaces in George Mackay Brown's writing.

Finally, looking forward to what is truly the last frontier, we have "Future spaces": Karol Jaroszewski of the University of Gdańsk, looks at various works of contemporary Scottish science fiction writers and Katarzyna Pisarska of the Marie Curie-Skłodowska University, focuses on "Visions of Scotland in Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go*", the title of this essay itself suggesting that however unfamiliar the future will be – and in this novel, it is very unfamiliar indeed – there is, nevertheless, an assurance that in it or under it or through it, something we can still persist in naming "Scotland" will be there. And, whether in physical presence or imagination, or preferably, both, that, of course, is the space we inhabit.

The essays collected here, under the careful editorship of Dr Monika Szuba of the University of Gdańsk, help us to inhabit it more fully, richly, and with deeper understanding and sympathy.

The international range of the contributors, the varieties of expertise displayed in their studies, the diversity of authors and works they consider, emphatically confirm the rightness of Monika Szuba's chosen title for the collection: Scotland, boundless indeed.

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LOCAL SPATIALITIES

David Malcolm
University of Gdańsk, Poland

Local Universes: Space in Robin Jenkins's *The Cone-Gatherers* and James Kennaway's *Tunes of Glory*

1. Space and meaning in narratives

Space and the subcategory of place are important analytic tools in the interpretation of any narrative text.[1] Neither may have enjoyed the same theoretical and particular attention that narrator, time, or intertextual reference have (Brosch 123; Sławiński 9; Abbott 165), but there is a well-established theoretical tradition of seeing space (sometimes closely linked to time) as a key feature of any fictional text, a feature that is meaning-filled and that, read intelligently, reveals important possibilities of interpretation. For Roman Ingarden, for example, space is an important element of the stratum of represented objects in the literary text, along with time, persons, and events (217–54). Indeed, space is one of the "represented objectivities" that allows Ingarden to advance his theory that those represented objectivities in literature are distinguished from those in

[1] Space and place are not the same though they are usually closely related. London, Buenos Aires, and Warsaw are places. Space is topographically configured, and can often be understood in terms of oppositions: high/low; city/country; inside/outside, and so on. But the oppositional nature of topography need not always be the case in a particular text (everything can happen in the depths, for example), although the opposite of that setting is always implied. Space is the master category, however, and place is a subcategory of it.

non-textual realities by being marked by "spots of indeterminacy" (*Unbestimmtheitsstellen*) (246). M.M. Bakhtin in his essay "Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel: Notes toward a Historical Poetics" (1937) argues strongly for the importance of spatial configuration within a text. Indeed, although the chronotope is a category combining space and time, it is notable that Bakhtin's examples are often more spatial than temporal (the road, the parlour, the provincial town) (17–20). Similarly, in *The Structure of the Artistic Text* (1971), Yuri M. Lotman presents space as a key element, along with, *inter alia*, frame, plot, persona/character, and viewpoint in the "Composition of Verbal Art" (217–41). In an essay from 1978, "Przestrzeń w literaturze: Elementarne rozróżnienia i wstępne oczywistości" (Space in Literature: Elementary Distinctions and Obvious Introductory Points), the Polish scholar Janusz Sławiński also argues strongly for the meaning-filled nature of space in the literary work. For example, space shapes action (the road, the exotic voyage); the story begins (as Lotman also insists) with the traversing of a border (20). Spatial elements in a text, for example, remoteness, barriers, or enclosures, are also a source of supplementary meanings – connotational and symbolic extensions of events, indicating desire, estrangement, confinement (21). More recently, the essays contained in *Raum und Bewegung in der Literatur: Die Literaturwissenschaften und der Spatial Turn*, edited by Wolfgang Hallett and Birgit Neumann (2009), make a very strong case for the analytic and interpretative usefulness of a spatial focus in the study of a wide range of literary texts. As the editors write: "Die Raumdarstellung bildet eine der grundlegenden Komponenten der fiktionalen Wirklichkeitserschließung. Raum ist in literarischen Texten nicht nur Ort der Handlung, sondern stets auch kultureller Bedeutungsträger" ("The presentation of space constitutes one of the basic components of the disclosure of fictional reality. In literary texts, space is not only a site of action, but also always a bearer of cultural meaning", 11).

The following essay considers space in two Scottish novels of the mid-1950s: Robin Jenkins's *The Cone-Gatherers* (1955) and James Kennaway's *Tunes of Glory* (1956). Although in terms of story material and setting – Jenkins's novel is set among labourers and gentry on a country estate in the west of Scotland sometime around 1942–1943; Kennaway's takes place among soldiers in a military barracks

in a garrison town in the east of Scotland sometime in the late 1940s – the novels show similarities in their deployment of space and in the semantic functions of their spatial configurations. In both cases, the novels make their Scottishness evident. Further, space is an important organizational feature of both texts. The (spatially) local and the small and constrained are continually given a wider, indeed a universal, significance. In both novels Scotland is itself, but it is also the universe.

2. *The Cone-Gatherers* – "It increased his amusement that so small a place as Ardmore should represent so universal a humanity" (*Cone-Gatherers* 185)

2.1. *The Cone-Gathers* is clearly a Scottish novel, and is thus spatially located. As L.B. Mittlemann notes, Scotland is the recurrent subject of Jenkins's fiction as a whole (439–40). In the case of *The Cone-Gatherers*, the setting is marked as Scotland in the names of places – Lendrick, Ardmore – and of characters – Neil, Calum, Lady Runcie-Campbell. The doctor who treats Roderick implies a specifically Scottish criticism of Lady Runcie-Campbell's educational aspirations for her son (180). Scottish people do not send their children to boarding schools. The soldiers who enter the bar in Lendrick are clearly designated as English, as opposed to the rest of the Scottish clientele (133). Many characters speak Scottish English, producing distinctive Scots lexis such as "scunnersome" and "sleekit" (25), "glaikit" (90), "ken" (102), "snash" (103), and "mind" (153). Indeed, the narrator, too, occasionally uses Scots vocabulary: for example, "thrawn" (15), "gallusness" (87), "tholing" (110), and "peching" (210, 216).

Within the already restricted Scottish setting, the spatial setting is relatively confined and local – the Ardmore estate and the small nearby town of Lendrick. It is configured spatially in three ways: an opposition of high and low; a set of horizontal spatial oppositions (and identities); and a frequent filling of space with existential and moral meanings.

Motifs of high and low recur throughout the novel. Substantial parts of *The Cone-Gatherers* take place at some considerable distance from the ground. Height is associated with safety and transcen-

dence. The novel starts with Neil and Calum up a tree "a hundred feet from the earth" (7). Indeed, the brothers are reluctant to descend, even when night falls (8). "I could sit up here all night", says Calum (9). Although Neil and Calum are excluded from the great house and live in a cramped and squalid hut (18), Calum declares that they have "lots of space in the trees . . . and on the hills" (10). It is notable that in the trees Calum, the more spiritual and unworldly of the two, is the more competent brother; on the ground Neil takes precedence (12). The brothers' seemingly heroic abilities to climb to great heights, "into the very crests of the trees" (18), provoke the admiration of Roderick, Lady Runcie-Campbell's son, and even that of her less impressionable daughter Sheila (19). Neil feels relatively safe from Duror's malice when he is at the top of a ninety-foot larch (68), while Calum is most happy high in a tree, at one with what he experiences as a benign nature and with his brother (69). However, height increasingly becomes a place of danger in the novel. As the dreadful storm approaches in chapter 11, the brothers observe it from "the tip of a tall larch", which is washed in "a river of radiance pouring straight down into the orange mass of the tree" (151). From this point in the text, the safety of height is qualified, for the coming storm terrifies Calum (151). It is further qualified as Neil seeks to undermine Calum's belief that he is close to his mother in the sky, and that he has even seen her there (153). Roderick tries to force his mother to accept the cone-gatherers by himself climbing high in a tree and putting himself in danger (203). The murdered Calum hangs from a tree (222).

For all that the original security and transcendence of height become attenuated in the course of the novel, the moral distinction between height and lowness is marked and maintained throughout. Duror, the agent of evil, is dizzied and terrified when he attempts to climb up to the brothers, to "the eyrie where they fancied themselves safe" (74–75). Below is a place of danger and evil. Calum thinks of the "ground of snares and stumbles [. . .] far below" a tree in which he is happy (69). Duror sees his own corruption in terms of a contrast between high and low: "[. . .] he suddenly saw himself standing up to the neck in black filth, like a stags" wallowing pool deep in the wood. High above the trees shone in the sun, and everywhere birds sang; but this filth, as he watched, crept up [. . .] and so annihilated

him" (55). His movement towards evil is formulated in terms of a descent from high to low. He stands beside a giant cedar of Lebanon, "the vastest tree in the wood", and considers the hated cone-gatherers who have intruded into his domain.

> But at that high point on the path, beside this gigantic tree whose branches reached as high as the stars, and beyond into the darker haunted night of the Bible remembered from childhood, the light of the cone-gatherers' hut could be seen. [. . .] He knew it would be more sensible and more worthy of himself to turn and go home: here there could only be further degradation and shame, with possible disaster; but in him was a force more powerful than common sense or pride. He could not name it, but it dragged him irresistibly down towards that hut. (20)

Earlier, he has imagined himself "on the floor of a fantastic sea", looking up to see the cone-gatherers fall through the branches of the trees (17).

Besides the opposition of high and low, there is a series of important horizontal spatial oppositions in *The Cone-Gatherers*. At the beginning of the novel, Neil looks across the intervening trees to the Runcie-Campbell "mansion", thus establishing one of the text's central tensions, between the rich and powerful and the humble and marginalized (7). This opposition is repeated once the brothers return to their hut in the wood. "Yonder's a house with fifty rooms", remarks Neil, gesturing towards the Runcie-Campbell mansion (10). Neil feels the division again later when he sees the big-house chimneys (68). The narrator draws attention to this spatial opposition later. There can be no "kinship", no shared past between Lady Runcie-Campbell and the workmen, "just as now there was none, she in her many-roomed mansion perplexed by duty, they in a sunny hollow in her wood, throwing scraps of bread to her birds" (171). The separation of brothers and great lady is marked at the novel's end by the ground, elaborately presented, that Graham and Lady Runcie-Campbell herself must traverse to reach them (208–21).

Horizontal spatial oppositions are apparent elsewhere in the text. As Duror sits in his comfortable but desolate home, he imagines himself in the brothers' hut (29). This surprising transposition recurs later (32, 36). Duror is frequently presented watching others

from concealment, observing others in one place from another hidden place. This is how the reader first encounters him (17), and the motif is repeated. Behind a screen of holly, he observes the inhabitants of the big house at play on the lawn (42). Roderick, himself hidden, sees Duror ("the lurker") watching the brothers' hut from among the branches of a cypress. What follows is a grim interplay of oppositions – gamekeeper/boy/cone-gatherers' hut – broken only by Duror's vanishing into the woods (147–50). Horizontal opposition is not always so malign, however. The kindly Mr Tulloch, too, observes the brothers from a concealed position (165–66).

It is a striking feature of *The Cone-Gatherers* that these horizontal spatial oppositions at times become identities, and the stark juxtaposition of characters and spaces is modified. Thus, Duror is actually identified with and to a degree identifies himself with the hated brothers. To murder them would be a "hideous but liberating fratricide", he feels (22). The gamekeeper is in such despair at home that he finds himself envying the brothers and even Calum's deformity (36). His wife's voice recalls to Duror that of the hunchback Calum (31). The gamekeeper seeks by ill deeds to bind himself and Calum and the wholesome Mrs Morton "in common defilement" (51). He sees Calum as the embodiment of his own (Duror's) long deformation of character (92), and he feels a disturbing closeness to his antithesis (99). Ironically, Dr Matheson calls Calum Duror's hunchback (125). Other identities that transcend space are that between Lady Runcie-Campbell and an executed murderer (183), and Tulloch, with his peculiar physiognomy, and the marginalized, other and othered, brothers (185). Later in the novel, Mrs Morton momentarily looks like Duror (201), while Lady Runcie-Campbell's grip, for all their differences, recalls the gamekeeper's (217).

Space in *The Cone-Gatherers* is frequently an expression of existential and moral complexities. Indeed, the story material depends on spatial transgressions: the brothers come to Ardmore to pollute Duror's wood (18), and a central crisis in the text is occasioned by the cone-gatherers' seeking shelter in the summer house which they have been forbidden to enter (Chapter 11). The moral and existential resonances of space are particularly apparent in the case of Duror. His conflicts, his choices, and his imaginings are embodied spatially. The reader learns that "there were many places [in the wood] where

he had been able to fortify his sanity and hope" (18). These are no longer available because of the brothers' intrusion. As I noted above, Duror's commitment to evil is marked by a descent towards the brothers' hut (20). The possibility of his choosing the good is also expressed spatially. For a moment, he thinks that he could abandon his dark scheme and enter a relationship with Mrs Morton – "he saw another way, clear, like a sunlit ride in a thick wood" (53). His immersion in evil, as has been seen earlier, is imagined as a drowning in the black mud of a stag wallow, while the sun shines in the surrounding trees and "everywhere birds sang" (55). Duror's rage is expressed spatially. Metaphorically, he grows enormous and looms like a falling tree (118). His despair, too, is captured in topography. After the hideous conclusion to the deer-drive, he returns home.

> The sun had been shining and the birds singing. Only a few paces across the white shingle was his gate. There were still some flowers on the fuchsia bushes. Suddenly the whole scene had dropped darkness, in the midst of which the birds had continued to sing, but without purpose, desolately. He could not move; he was as powerless as the elm beside him; and for those two or three minutes he had felt its sap, poisoned, flowing out of him into the dark earth. (119)

When Duror, for a moment, thinks that Dr Matheson has understood his secret rage and evil, this suspicion is also formulated in spatial terms: "It seemed as unlikely as if a man should walk into a vast leaf-strewn wood and point to the spot where, years ago, a body had been buried" (122). Roderick's experiences also are expressed spatially. As he heads for the cone-gatherers' hut, he experiences a magically transfigured wood. "The wood was enchanted, full of terrifying presences", although these are far from all malign, until the boy encounters Duror and experiences the agonizing tension of the wait outside the hut (145–50). The characters move through meaning-filled landscapes that body forth their feelings and consciousness.

2.2. Thus space is given considerable semantic weight in *The Cone-Gatherers*. But it is given even greater resonance by a process whereby the local is persistently generalized and elevated. An abstract lexis

is constantly applied to what are local, trivial, and particular actions far distant from the terrible war that is raging in Europe and North Africa (33, 103, 197). Calum imagines himself a hunting owl and thus "he suffered in the ineluctable predicament of necessary pain and death" (9). "This was the terrifying mystery", he reflects (9). Duror reflects that the by the brothers' arrival "the wood was invaded and defiled" and that they "were to be allowed to pollute every tree in the wood" (18). The word "pollution" is repeated in the course of the text (149, 199). The gamekeeper's scheme to disgrace the cone-gatherers is "a conscious surrender to evil" (39), and his bad action offers him "his only possible consolation and release" (61). The process of generalization continues throughout the novel. The community learns to put up with conscientious objectors: "It seemed therefore that hatred could not last but must give way to tolerance. In spite of people the circle of trust widened" (112–13). Duror considers himself at the end of "the plank of despair" (131), and towards the end of the text he sees Graham coming towards him "across the wilderness of decay" (215). Many more examples might be adduced; the result is a constant universalization of setting and action.

This is compounded by the religious lexis that is regularly used to designate the apparently secular throughout *The Cone-Gatherers*. Examples are very frequent: for example, "purgatory" (17), "sacrifice" (20), "faithful blood" (39), "contrition" (41), "benison" (43), "torment", "agony", and "crucifixion" (99), "absolving sunshine" (137), "redeemed" (147), "mercy" (169), and "blessing" (188). Duror and Dr Matheson discuss faith and the existence of the divine (123, 127); Lady Runcie-Campbell is much vexed by the conflicting demands of her social rank and her Christian beliefs (137–41); Calum's death is a crucifixion in all but name (222–23). Everything that happens in the wood in Ardmore is rendered *sub specie aeternitatis*. Indeed, the reader is made aware that the conflicts and developments of the action in *The Cone-Gatherers* plays out a tension between belief in a divine order and a sense of the brute hopelessness of a corrupt world.[2] In a variety of ways, Mrs Lochie (34, 182), Lady Runcie-Campbell (114–15, 142), Calum (153), despite their intermittent questionings (for example, Lady Runcie-Campbell [196–97]), line up on one side;

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[2] See also in this matter: Baker 91–92 and Norquay 270–71, 274–75.

usually Neil (153–54), Dr Matheson (127), and Duror (effectively *passim*) line up on the other.

Ardmore may be distant from the world's great conflict, but the grand issues of the universe play out there, and not just in the presence of conscientious objectors or the service and death of its citizens beyond its borders.

3. *Tunes of Glory* – "There is a high wall that surrounds Campbell Barracks. . . ". (*Tunes of Glory* 7)

Like *The Cone-Gatherers*, *Tunes of Glory* is set in Scotland, among Scots, and within a Scottish institution (or at least a Scotto-British one, that is, the British Army). The main locale is the Campbell Barracks and the small Scottish provincial town that surrounds it. The battalion is part of a Scottish regiment and the soldiers wear kilts and tartan trews (8). Jock Sinclair (a Scottish name *par excellence*, indeed, in Jock, generically so) establishes his Scots linguistic credentials from the first. In his opening utterances, his standard English is peppered with "laddies" and "ayes" (10).

Like the Scotland of *The Cone-Gatherers*, the overarching and local setting of *Tunes of Glory* is configured spatially in a distinctive manner. Indeed, like *The Cone-Gatherers*, this novel is organized in terms of space rather than time (with one important exception – its relation to the past). Thus, dating is imprecise, "a year or two ago" (7), although there are indications that the events must take place in the early 1950s (the anti-communist campaign in the USA, television, and "disturbances" in Malaya, Kenya, and Korea) (110). But even here dating is inconclusive, and if Jock took command of the battalion one "night in the desert" (175) some five years previously (172), then the time setting must be rather the late 1940s.[3]

Space in *Tines of Glory* is shaped through motifs of walls and confinement, and through an opposition of smallness and a wider world. The novel begins with a wall: "There is a high wall that surrounds the Campbell Barracks", declares the narrator (7). "No civilian

[3] The reference to Suez (7) cannot, I think, be to the invasion of 1956, but rather just part of old soldiers' reminiscences of a British Army posting.

rightly knows what happens behind that grey wall", he continues (7). Once Colonel Barrow arrives, the surrounding county gentry desire to "peep over the sixteen-foot wall" to see what is happening in the barracks (55). A clear distinction is made between the two sides of the wall (56). The barrier is outside too, for when Barrow and Cairns leave the regimental cocktail party, Barrow drives into a "wall" of mist (68). Later the narrator says of the barracks that its "high wall closed out the real world like a frame surrounding an etching" (99). "For the most part", the reader learns, "the officers lived body and soul within the limits of the high wall" (109). Scott worries that "some day someone will put his nose over the barrack wall and really see what goes on" (112). Indeed, the reader is put in the position of a privileged spectator to otherwise hidden secrets ("There have been too many damned secrets and whispers", says Sinclair [189]). The regimental cocktail party is the only public incursion into the closed world of the military (57–66). The motif of the wall recurs in Jock's breakdown while announcing the plan for Barrow's funeral: "There might have been a soundproof screen between him and the others", notes the narrator (187).

Norquay notes the sense of "claustrophobia" induced by the confined setting in *Tunes of Glory* (263), and certainly the smallness of the depicted world of the text is marked. The barracks may be constrained, but so is its surroundings. "Now the town was small, but the country was smaller", remarks the narrator (55). When Jock is in Mr McLean's house, the reader is given a clear sense that he is somehow too big for it. "If the furniture was displaced by six inches in any direction, there was no thoroughfare from the window to the fire or to the door" (100). Jock has to take care that "the borders of his coat should not sweep away any ashtray or ornaments" (100). When he leaves, he does so "pushing his way through the furniture" (106). The smallness and fragility of Mary's dressing room in the theatre strike Jock. He "felt that if he shoved with shoulder then the side of the room might collapse with a rumble into the alley below" (141). At the novel's end, Jock seeks refuge in a smaller space: "Oh, my babies, take me home!" he cries (200). Barrow feels the barracks is a prison "from which there was no escape" (138), although he does drive away from it after the party (67) and finally evades its circumference by killing himself outside those walls (167). That constrained walled world ends up destroying Barrow and Jock both.

Although the town, the county, and the barracks may be "the end of the world", as Mary says (75), there is a wider space outside them, one that is intermittently but integrally imbricated with them. Barrow has come to the small world from outside. He sees it as "a foreign country" (133), and Jock insists that Barrow left the battalion and Scotland long ago for a wider world (191). The new Colonel's lack of a Scottish accent is noted (41, 43, 57, 67). He comes from beyond the confines of town and barracks. Mary, too, comes from elsewhere, from Ireland (74), and has tried to make a career in London, but has settled for provincial limits (151), although her flat is surprisingly decorated "for the North" (74). Even the small town has a memory, the narrator suggests, and echoes of its bitter Jacobite past can resurface (90). With Jock, too, the constrained ambit of most of the novel opens out onto something larger. The reader is made aware of his and the battalion's past in Italy, France, Germany, and Palestine (14). El Alamein is part of the world beyond the present confinement (52). On two occasions the narrator also allows Jock's experience to transcend cramped circumstances. As Jock restlessly walks through the snowy small town, the narrator remarks:

> And although there was nothing heroic about Jock's face, the figure standing there in the long greatcoat had a splendour. The same figure had moved from platoon to platoon when the snow was falling on a flatter, duller land: in every war, back and back, in every siege and trou: the anonymous commander in the long coat moving through the night, alone. He is the guard. (91)

Also, after Barrow's death, Jock reads one of his daughter's children's books and finds comfort in it and its tale of a skylark that flies free of the earth (176). Finally, Jock's plan for Barrow's funeral is an attempt to bring an expansive and magniloquent grandeur to the confined and tawdry (179–200).

The one way in which time is important in *Tunes of Glory* lies in its connection with the greater world beyond the barracks. For part of the wider world noted above – Italy, France, Germany, Palestine, and El Alamein – belongs to "the old days" (89). Jock returns at times to the "days of my glory" (104, 118). He has faded and declined since "the days before the peace" (118, 179). Few of those around

him remember how he was before the "victory and the years that followed" (182). The funeral that he plans is really a memorial to "the whole bloody glory" that has passed (192).

> "All the tunes of glory", he suddenly cried. "We'll have them all, to remember the more clearly. We'll have all the tunes of glory!" (197)

At this point he speaks agitatedly "as if he knew that it was his last speech in court, and when that was ended, all was ended" (198). When he breaks down finally, the narrator comments: "It was the end of what had started in a desert" (199) – that is, Jock's command, authority, glamour, and splendour. The confined and local setting permits reflection on the grand theme of transience. The cold that the novel so often mentions as part of the setting (for example, *inter alia*, 7, 30, 68, 99, 166) is not just a matter of temperature; it is the coldness of death and the void. The small world is not so small after all.[4]

4. Conclusion

Space and spatial setting play very important roles in *The Cone-Gatherers* and *Tunes of Glory*. The configuration of space is morally and existentially loaded. The local and the restricted, even the parochial, open out onto the grand and the universal. Scotland is not small at all, but a place where important things happen. How general such a fictional strategy (embodying the universal in the decidedly local) is in recent Scottish literature is a subject for further research.[5]

[4] Norquay writes of the novel's "superficial parochialism" (262–63). The complex presentation of male-female relationships in *Tunes of Glory* (as Mary points out, part of Jock's glamour is erotic and homoerotic at that [151]) is a further example of the broadening of the novel's purview.

[5] It is certainly a strategy employed by some notable writers from outside Scotland. I have written about this aspect of the work of John McGahern and of Graham Swift (see, for example: Malcolm 2007, 20–25; Malcolm 2003, 24–50).

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Boundless Scotland but Binding Spaces: *Mo said she was quirky* by James Kelman

In one of my most recent articles (2013) I argued rather strongly against referring to Scotland's literature and culture as minor, treating as my starting point Hugh MacDiarmid's significant poem from 1943 "Scotland small? Our multiform, our infinite Scotland *small*?" In it he questions the widespread opinion concerning Scotland having "[n]othing but heather", in no uncertain terms promoting the view that although it may be a geographically small country, we have to actually look at how "multiform" and "infinite" it really is (MacDiarmid 230). In the same manner, we can speak about it being "boundless", with its many famous writers, inventors, discoverers, and travellers who have had, over the centuries, contributed so much to so many aspects of life both within and outwith Scotland, and to the development of the world in general.[1]

Although emphasis will be placed in the following discussion on binding spaces as illustrated by James Kelman's most recent novel *Mo said she was quirky* (2012), we can also apply the adjective "boundless" in the sense that throughout his writing career, this author in particular has touched upon issues that have no bounds, that can be found everywhere in the world, with no changes in sight in the

[1] See, for example, how American historian Arthur Herman perceives Scotland and the Scots in his work entitled *How the Scots Invented the Modern World* (2001). The subtitle to this publication is extremely telling: *The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World & Everything in It*.

foreseeable future. This applies whether we are talking about the predicament Sammy Samuels is confronted with in *How late it was, how late* (1994) when finding himself suddenly blind, in conflict with the law, and experiencing total helplessness when up against numerous government agencies, or when Kelman shows, on the basis of Jeremiah Brown's reminiscences, that it is in the famous "land of the free" (2004) that care is what you have primarily to take. The same can be said of the racist thread running through *Mo said she was quirky* that touches upon the life of mixed race relationships, immigration, and trying to survive in an alien world (2012). Through his working-class Glaswegian characters and their lives with no happy ends in sight, Kelman indicates all too clearly that they are not only characteristic of Scotland, but are also part of a much wider world.[2]

At the same time, however, the restrictions experienced by Kelman's characters, mainly due to their lack of opportunities, dead-end jobs, shortage of money, or simply the hopelessness of their day-to-day lives, point to their many binding qualities, especially in reference to place and space, the latter referring also to the unique mental space of a given individual. Helen, the "she" in the title *Mo said she was quirky* and Kelman's first main female character to date, experiences many of the same restrictions as his male characters in all his previous works. She leaves Glasgow to escape from her former husband, or her "ex" as she invariably calls him, the boundaries of a space that she inhabited for the first twenty-seven years of her life, to the boundaries of London and to a different type of restricted space, despite the hopes for a better future. Sharing a bed-sit with Mo, her Pakistani partner, and her six-year-old daughter Sophie, she feels desperate due, among others, to a lack of living space:

> Just so little space she needed space, space space space. And to make space she had to separate out the pile of clothes she had washed yesterday or the day before, whenever she had done it, the ironing and non-ironing pile, and put the next wash on and be ironing the ironing pile of Sophie's [. . .] (58)

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[2] It has to be mentioned here that his work *Translated Accounts. A Novel* (2001) digresses from Scotland and Glasgow completely, although it does not depart from touching upon yet one more important issue of our contemporary world, that of dictatorships and totalitarian regimes.

or when we learn how Mo had solved the problem of bedroom space for Sophie:

> It was lovely how he had transformed the cupboard. It was a bedroom; it really was – perhaps not a proper one but
>
> But it was a proper one! Helen knew that now. She hadn't at first, unlike Sophie who had believed from the beginning. That wonderful story about the doll who lived in a cupboard: so it *was* a bedroom. (20, original emphasis)

Helen's ever-present desperation is accompanied by worry and anxiety that permeates her life, and the whole novel, illustrated in everything connected with those who are nearest and dearest to her, or in connection with those she never wants to see again, like her ex. Anxiety is the predominant feature of her very existence, whether it concerns the shelves built high above her daughter's bed and laden with "heavy stuff [. . .] old computers and bits and pieces, cables and connections, leads and other stuff, all fankled together. [. . .] Even the walls themselves: what if they fell down, because of all the shelves and all the heavy objects piled on top of them?" (14–15), or because Mo has not yet come back home after taking her daughter to school in the morning:

> Only she worried, if he was gone the whole morning, depending on if he visited, where he visited. [. . .] Although he should have texted. Why didnt he? Because if she was in bed. Except she was checking on him, he would think that, and she wasnt. Anyway her phone, she needed a top-up. But it was nothing to do with trust. She only worried. (104–05)

Her mind is never at rest. Even when both Mo and Sophie are at home with her. This only seems to lead to more confinement and more anxiety:

> Helen returned to the ironing, rearranged the clothing. Mo followed her, wanting to talk but she wasnt wanting to listen, not just now, not when she was trying to work in this confined space. She held the iron and edged past him. Sophie was even worse, she stood far too close. It was how accidents happened. What if it was like boiling water in

> a pot, or if the kettle tipped over? Even the gasrings on top of the cooker were a hazard the way they had gaps. (151)

Helen is hemmed in by her anxieties, by being the constant worrier, this trait of character not differing overmuch from Kelman's male characters of the past, who all seem to be overwhelmed by one anxiety or another due to the boundaries and circumstances they find themselves in. At the same time, as Carole Jones points out, "they are far more complex, uncertain and vulnerable than [the] stereotype allows. His protagonists are typically empowered men who react by retreating into themselves; Kelman's male narratives are about self-doubt, stasis and paralysis [. . .] his anxious portraits of males in crisis present them not as aggressors but as victims" (111–12).[3] The descriptive phrase "anxious portrait" can of course be also applied to Helen although this is not due to "self-doubt, stasis and paralysis", but to her very nature exacerbated by her divorce, present living conditions, working nights as a dealer in a casino and not having enough time for her daughter and Mo, as well as suffering from a never-ending shortage of money. We could say we are confronted with yet one more example of Kelman's hopeless cases due to a complex entanglement of circumstances brought about by inadequate conditions for the more disadvantaged in British society. Helen's "anxious portrait", however, is a confinement that is more palpable, it is constantly there, drawn by means of Kelman's chosen narrative form that takes us not only into her physical living space, but into her own unique mental space.

The novel is an account of twenty-four hours in the life of Helen, the beginning and end actually taking place outside the boundaries of her dwelling space. On her way home from work, sharing a taxi with two of her workmates, she

> noticed the two men through the side passenger window. A pair of homeless guys. One was tall and skinny, the other smaller, heavier built and walking with a limp, quite a bad limp. They approached the traffic lights and were going to cross the road in front of her taxi, right in front of its nose. The lights were red but set to change. Surely the

[3] Reference is made here by Jones to Simon Jenkin's article "An Expletive of a Winner", *The Times,* 15 October 1994.

> men knew that? The tall man was having to walk slowly to stay abreast of the other, almost having to stop. He was full bearded and wearing a woollen cap. Although he was taking small steps Helen could imagine him striding out, his stride would be long and it would be hard keeping up with him. There was something else about him, to do with his shape and the way he walked, just something. [. . .]
>
> Brian, it was Brian, her brother Brian. (1–3)

Brian becomes the ever-present meandering theme throughout the time we are part of Helen's mental space, her reminiscences of the past, her recollections of and reflections on her brother, her parents and their individual relationships with one another. We learn why he moved away from Glasgow, leaving a difficult yet sheltered space for a different type of space offered by the unknown: Liverpool or maybe now London. In his very absence, Brian actually becomes a very strong presence, a presence governing Helen's thoughts throughout the time we spend with her. Together we experience her overpowering urge to find out whether this man is really her brother, and if so, how she could bring him back into her family, help him, give him a home, even in her cramped circumstances. She feels desperate in her wish to find him but these feelings remain unspoken. Despite her closeness to Mo, she never tells him about what happened, or anybody else for that matter:

> [. . .] better [tell] him about Brian, Brian was who she
>
> She should have told him. She meant to, she thought she was going to; she started off to, to tell him.
>
> She didnt need Mo's opinion. Because there was nothing else, only to find him, she had to find him, she knew she did. Brothers are brothers, that would have been Mo. You have to find him. If it is him, it is him: he is your brother. (118)

Is it indeed her long-lost brother she thinks she recognized in the tall down-and-out who practically walked into the moving taxi? Or does she just want him to be her brother? Maybe he is only a figment of her imagination? We never find out, although in the concluding paragraph of the novel she catches up with the two homeless guys again, only to be knocked down by the tall skinny one as a reaction to her clapping "her hand on his shoulder, as though grabbing him.

[. . .] Then she was lying on her side seeing to the sky. The tall skinny one was bending over her but it was all just shadows and spots, and she stayed lying there, and when her eyes were open properly the two of them had vanished" (229). Questions remain unanswered, problems unresolved.

We are confronted with "a day in the life of [. . .]" which corresponds to what Laurence Nicoll observed in his essay: "Kelman and the Existentialists", where "[a]ttention to ordinary common incidents that comprise the diurnal reality of ordinary common people entails a literature with no extravagant plots, no grand progressive narratives where the poor orphan discovers that she is in fact a heiress" (122). It is a literature "built from, around and within small, applauseless, individual lives" (122). In reference to the existential, Nicoll continues to note that "[t]he novel becomes existential when its themes become problems of and in a life: problems for some *one* in some *place.* Hence for the existentialist, literature always has to be situated" (122–23, original emphasis).

Nicoll wrote the above in 2010 in reference to Kelman's fiction to date but the same can be said about his most recent work which is also clearly a "novel of situation", the some *one* being for the first time, though, a female character and the *place* London. Narrowing this *place* down, we can say that we are primarily confronted with the *binding space* of her bed-sit. Even when we are introduced to Helen's past life and other characters in the novel it is through a form of narration that has been one of the most characteristic features of Kelman's writing. In reference only to the two earlier novels mentioned above, it is evident both in the narrative mode of Sammy Samuels from *How late it was, how late* and Jeremiah Brown in *You have to be careful in the land of the free.* As Nicoll observes when writing about the latter, "[e]verything comes to us through Jeremiah who functions as the focaliser and this enables the kind of unmentioned attention to the internal that is normally absent from a Kelman text" (127).

The same much earlier observation was made by Cairns Craig in his 1994 seminal essay "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman", which was devoted to the writer's narrative technique, including his Glasgow voice, here a distinctive geographic pronunciation. However, there is a big difference between the Glaswegian, including its four-let-

ter words voiced by Sammy Samuels and Helen's,[4] where the issue of accent is sometimes mentioned but is not clearly evident in the novel's narrative voice. We do not have the phonetic transcription of the Glaswegian of the previous novels, which is in accordance here with Kelman's presentation of Helen, but it can still be observed in the rhythm of the sentences, in her reflective third-person narrative voice. Her awareness of difference as reflected through voice is also a significant presence in the work. An example is her reference to Sophie being Scottish in a London school:

> And girls could be horrible too. If it was bullying especially, if they had to fight. And worse with the Glasgow accent. London children would just look at her and think she was funny, they would laugh at her and think she was funny, they would laugh at her and perhaps might fight her. You could imagine it, because she was a stranger and with the different voice. (22)

Or when Helen reverts back later in the day in her thoughts to Sophie and her new London school where her teacher's comment had been that she "lacks enthusiasm" (94). Helen explains to herself, and to us:

> This was a new school and a new environment, completely new. Sophie was the only Scottish child in the class. Did it ever occur to them to wonder about that? She was on her own. It was significant for a girl, so so significant, and disappointing about Sophie's teacher because Helen liked her; she was a down-to-earth woman with a nice London accent; not snobby at all. (95)

It is worth quoting yet one more example in reference to one's speech patterns and how they impact acceptance or rejection in a new environment, enclosing one in a certain space and in no other. The

[4] In recalling the Glaswegian male characters, for the first time the four-letter expletive, or rather so-called taboo words, attacked so much by critics in the past, appears only in one highly dramatic situation. This is at the end of the novel when Helen reacts very strongly to being propositioned to by some leering men in a passing car: "The car jerked ahead now and halted. Helen paused then stepped up to the car door and grabbed at it shouting: Fuck off will you! Just fuck off!" (226).

following refers to Helen's own experiences when she first started to work in a London casino:

> It was said about Helen too, people thought she was quiet, even *reserved.* Reserved! [. . .] Helen had never been quiet. It was only England if she was. People didnt understand her at first but eventually they did because she spoke slowly and changed how she said things. (95, original emphasis)

In Helen's interior monologue here we have the awareness both of geographical space, i.e. Scotland and London, and the Glasgow accent in contrast to that of London, which "is not snobby at all", pointing towards the all-too-frequent associations we tend to have with accents and language varieties in general. They signify belonging to a certain place, community and social class, they are part of our identities, whether national, regional or social, being also very much part of our cultural heritage. At the same time, though, they pigeon-hole us, binding us to a certain space in the minds of others, even when our present physical space is somewhere totally different. Helen's awareness of how individuals speak, including their accents, point not only to the positive aspect of belonging, but also to certain boundaries that go against the notion of boundlessness that is so often desired. It reflects the positive and the negative of boundaries and restrictions.

In all the above quoted examples, we can see that although Kelman has digressed here from his customary presentation of the Glasgow voice illustrated by his choice of phonetic transcription, we still have his use of free indirect discourse which "not only allows modulation between different perspectives (third-person narrator, first-person thought) but also allows modulation across different linguistic registers" (Craig 103). In liberating the narrative voice from the constraints of standard written English, Kelman "thrusts the narrative into the same world its characters inhabit" (103) and by not applying grammatical markers for speech, Craig goes on to notice that "the text moves indiscernibly from spoken, to thought, to narrated language" (102). An interesting illustration of this is the following example from the discussed novel:

> Mum can we not play the jigsaw?
> No but you can play it yourself my girl because I'm starting the dinner.
> Can Mo not do it?
> No, he's going to work soon.
> He's doing the computer.
> Yes but he's soon going.
> Sophie sighed. Helen watched her. It was the sigh. Children sighing. Of course Helen herself was a champion sigher, and it irritated people.
> Never mind. (161)

Yet one more example of Kelman's narrative mode, also interestingly highlighted by Cairns Craig in the same article, is how "the third-person narrative voice that relates facts in the world [. . .] merges into the reflective third-person voice that interprets characters' states of mind" (103). For illustration, let us look at the following, where of special interest is our main character's state of mind:

> The outside door lay wide open, Sophie had her coat zipped and Mo was helping her pull up that heavy heavy backpack. Why did they have them so heavy? It weighed like a ton and must have slowed her down walking, six years of age for God sake she didn't need all that, surely. (98)

The third-person narrative voice describing a certain scene merges into the reflective third-person voice through the repetition of the adjective "heavy" and questioning why such young children should be laden down with backpacks of this size. This in turn leads to Helen's state of anxiety concerning her six-year-old daughter and what she has to carry to school. Here, like throughout the novel, we are transported into Helen's mental space, which is that of the constant worrier. Anxiety never leaves her, binding her. The constraints are ever-present.

This is also seen in Kelman's use of repetition, evident in three of the above quoted excerpts: "Just so little space she needed space, space space space", "[i]t was significant for a girl, so so significant" or "that heavy heavy backpack", accompanied by the lack of commas that are one of the indispensable requirements of Standard English. They en-

hance Helen's state of mind expressed through the interior monologue adopted, and at the same time correspond with Kelman's view, expressed in an interview for *Guardian* soon after the publication of *Mo said she was quirky.* He wanted "to make the work clean – the fewer apostrophes and uses of punctuation the better". He rejects the whole convention of punctuation devices as signposts for the reader because he feels that otherwise he would not be able to operate.[5]

The more traumatic the situation, the more evident the above mentioned adopted devices, the following also being reminiscent of Kelman's 2001 novel *Translated Accounts. A Novel.* Leading up to Helen's desperate attempt to find the person she thinks is her long-lost brother in the early hours of the morning when she should not have been out alone in certain districts of London, we learn that "[s]he was not cold. She didnt feel cold, she wasnt, except shivering, if she did, if she was. She *was* cold" (220, original emphasis). On her thoughts being expressed through the third-person narrative voice moving into the third-person reflective voice, including repetitions, the suspense continues to build up:

> But Helen was not going along it. These places were creepy, very, very.
> Okay she was brave but not foolish.
> She *was* brave.
> But she was. (221–22, original emphasis)

Last but not least, it is necessary to include in this discussion the reported speech as evidenced in the title: *Mo said she was quirky* and the fact that this trait of character is referred to only once in the whole novel, also interestingly appearing within inverted commas. It also appears when Helen is working her nightshift at the casino, near the close of our twenty-four hours with her. It concerns her reflections as to what she and other people thought funny, her sense of humour in particular:

> Mainly it was silly things. Quirky things. Others didnt see the fun, so then if she had to explain it didnt seem funny at all. [. . .] Mo said she had a weird sense of humour. [. . .] Mo said she was 'quirky.' Okay if

[5] In an interview conducted by Decca Aitkenhead for *The Guardian*, Sunday, 29th July, 2012.

> she was. So that was another one, if she was "quirky", she didnt care. (198–99)

It has to be said that in his most recent piece of published fiction James Kelman has shown not only the quirkiness of the human mind, but also the boundaries that mind can impose on individual human beings, influenced very often by the vast array of binding physical spaces they find themselves in. Concentrating on these mental and physical constraints and confinements through the above means of his somewhat complex but powerful characteristic mode of narration, Kelman has given us a fascinating insight into how the bindings of *place* and *space* limit the possibilities of so much that could be boundless.

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Mapping Edinburgh

Like map makers, the authors have their own agendas behind what they choose to display, to bring to the attention of the reader, and what they wish to be ignored, unnoticed, or hidden. Many physical maps of Edinburgh exist: those given away free to show tourists the main attractions; those informing residents of bus routes; maps featuring shops; maps featuring walking tours of the city; and ordinance survey maps, among others. But, like some but not all modern cities, Edinburgh is mapped through its literature as well. At least five hundred novels have been set in Edinburgh (Lownie vii), many of which map out the city through their prose, creating an idea of the layout and content in the minds of those readers unfamiliar with Edinburgh, and reinforcing or refuting ideas of Edinburgh in the minds of those who know the city. Of these many authors, three in particular have become synonymous with late twentieth and early twenty-first century Edinburgh: Ian Rankin with his Inspector Rebus novels (1987–2013), Irvine Welsh with *Trainspotting* (1993) *and Porno* (2002), and Alexander McCall Smith and the 44 Scotland Street series (2005–2013). These authors are among the best-known Edinburgh writers of late twentieth/early twenty-first century (brought together as demonstrations of contemporary Edinburgh by Michael Fry in his history of the city [2009] and the OneCityTrust in their short story collection *One City* [2006] among others), yet their representations of the city on the page differ considerably: despite this, all three have been lauded for their accurate representations (Lanchester, 2000; Kelloway, 2005; Chadwick, 1993). Perhaps indicative of this is the fact that all of the works were written

in real time; the characters and places age appropriately during and between books, and this is a definite attempt from all three authors to capture a particular moment in Edinburgh on the page, charting changes in the physical cityscape as well as political and social shifts.

Rankin began his Inspector Rebus series in 1987 while a post-graduate student at Edinburgh University. Originally from Fife, he fell in love with the city while a student and, a brief foray to France notwithstanding, has remained there ever since. His books regularly top the bestsellers lists and many have been televised in the UK. Despite Rebus's retirement in 2007, he has made an unexpected comeback in recent years, appearing in *Standing in Another Man's Grave* (2012) and *Saints of the Shadow Bible* (2013). Welsh is a native of Edinburgh, growing up in Muirhouse and Leith, where much of *Trainspotting* is set (Campbell 190). In 1996, the book was made into a critically acclaimed film of the same name, which brought Welsh's work to the attention of a wider audience. Since then, in addition to other works, he has written both a sequel to *Trainspotting*, *Porno,* and a prequel, *Skagboys* (2012). Born in Zimbabwe, McCall Smith came to Edinburgh to attend university and, like Rankin, remained in the city (Kellaway). His 44 Scotland St series began as a weekday serial in the *Scotsman* in an attempt to emulate the work of Dickens via Armistead Maupin's *Tales of the City* (1978). The series is ongoing and currently consists of nine books, the latest being *Bertie's Guide to Life and Mothers* (2013).

To demonstrate the relationship between these three writers and their relationship with Edinburgh, I created a map of Edinburgh city centre featuring just those places and streets explicitly referred to in the Inspector Rebus series (omitting the two books written after the original series ended in 2007), the Scotland Street novels (up to and including *Bertie Plays the Blues* [2011]), and *Trainspotting* and *Porno*, using a different colour for each author—blue for the Rebus novels, red for Scotland St, and green for *Trainspotting* and *Porno*. Doing this served several purposes, both the intentional and the unexpected. Initially, I had hoped that it would make it easier to see where the action of the books takes place. This proved to be true, and supported my theory that the "Scotland St" series is almost entirely set in the New Town while Inspector Rebus takes in most areas of the city centre. I was surprised to discover that Welsh's

novels, which I was expecting to be predominately set in Leith, actually encompass far more of the centre than I had anticipated. This was something which I had not noticed when reading the texts, so mapping them onto paper in this way highlights the extended geographical scope of Welsh's work. Another thing flagged up by the map were the areas of overlap: places that appear in two or more of the texts. Some of these I was aware of from merely reading the texts, but some were a surprise. Once these areas had been pinpointed, I was able to refer back to the texts to decipher the meaning of each place in the different novels, places such as Waverley Station as we shall see later. At times, there were similarities between the portrayal of streets, buildings, and other areas, but other places were written entirely differently. Rankin in particular prides himself on writing an accurate version of the city (Rankin, *Rebus's Scotland* 89) and the map confirms the accuracy of his references to the city. While I know Edinburgh reasonably well, there are often streets referred to in the books of which I had no prior knowledge, or that I thought I knew the location of but turned out to actually be located elsewhere, and by mapping these places I was able to create a clearer picture of where things take place and routes taken by characters, thus creating a more accurate picture. This was important when using literature to navigate the city and when exploring the concepts of fictive and non-fictive spaces.

Creating and using the maps was also problematic at times. I had no system for displaying the importance of locations on the maps: Rebus's workplace not being noted as any more important than a street he walks down once in seventeen novels, for example. Because the maps displayed a limited area, based initially on someone else's requirements, places of great importance were missed off such as Rebus's flat – one of the most vital locations throughout the series. Often, particularly in Welsh, locations are referred to by nicknames rather than official street or flat names. This made it difficult to map some places correctly. Other places have closed down, pubs have changed names, and places have disappeared completely since the books were published. Other places were invented in the first place. As a result, the maps cannot be said to be a definitive and completely accurate representation of the books but are as close as it was possible for me to reach. They are maps of a fictional Edinburgh,

but based on maps of an alleged "real" Edinburgh, created also from books based on and inspired by the real Edinburgh.

The difficulties of mapping the authors' creation onto an existing map, however loosely, demonstrates some of the problems inherent in claiming any version of the city as real. Reality appears to be impossible to capture on paper, in a novel, or on a map. Guide books to Edinburgh demonstrate the same problem. Taken at face value, some claim to provide an unbiased, general look at the realities of Edinburgh, yet by their nature they must overlook the other side. Dwelling on castles and bagpipes, they therefore ignore the world of housing schemes, junkies, and HIV. While Edinburgh does attract tourists in search of this seamier side, this is not something the tourist industry seems particularly keen to recognize.

Tourist maps tend not to cover Leith other than to point tourists towards the Royal Yacht Britannia, the Ocean Terminal shopping centre, and a source of fresh seafood. Peter Clanfield and Christian Lloyd feel that this characterises Leith "as a centre of royalism, gastronomy, and consumerism", thus obscuring "the port's deeper history" (100). They also note that photos advertising Britannia are usually taken *from* Leith, meaning that Leith does not feature on them (100). On one map an arrow pointing to Britannia completely obscures Leith Walk, thus negating the need to reference Leith at all, and another rebrands the area "Edinburgh Waterside". While some visitors' maps of Leith are allegedly available, these are harder to find; it is those obliterating Leith which are readily to hand in tourist information shops. An early work of Welsh's was "A Visitors' Guide to Edinburgh" (1993), a satirical pamphlet, mocking the guide book portrayal of the city, advising those in need where to acquire alcohol and prostitutes, and *Trainspotting* can be read as an extension of this work, developing the theme of an alternative Edinburgh hidden below the official version of the city.

For tourists looking for this other Edinburgh, there are a number of options. Colin Brown's successful RebusTours have run within the city centre for over a decade. Groups are taken to stare at the rundown Dumbiedykes while Brown reads relevant passages from the novels. Tim Bell, a lay chaplain, runs LeithWalks, a series of guided tours available on demand dedicated to the Edinburgh-based works of Welsh where he does not shy away from laying out the dark side of

Leith. Bell's tours were launched in 2004, perhaps not to the delight of the Edinburgh and Lothians Tourist Board, who were quoted in *The Scotsman* as saying: "Many visitors are interested in seeing something a bit different when they visit a destination and a *Trainspotting* tour probably fits that niche market quite well" (Mooney). There is a clear market for a guided discovery of the darker side of the city, as these tours and the numerous ghost tours available on the High Street demonstrate, with many tourists wishing to add these sights of crimes, horrors, and hauntings to their personal maps of Edinburgh, adding poverty and vice to the officially sanctioned version of Edinburgh offered by the tourist board and McCall Smith. As Lilian Furst puts it, "The fiction, through its symbolizing transfiguration of an actual antecedent, has spawned a mythology that fuses the referential with the textual" (115).

Writers dealing with these physical cities are engaged in the act of interpreting the cities for their readers, and this can rebound back as the city they are writing about reacts to this interpretation in various ways. A physical example of this in Edinburgh is the Scott monument, completed in 1844 and built in memory of Sir Walter Scott and his work, much of which is set in Edinburgh. Now the monument is one of the first things to be seen on exiting Waverley Station, a tourist attraction in its own right, and an object to be traversed around when walking the city. In addition to the walking tours dedicated to Rebus and *Trainspotting,* there are a variety of literary tours available in the city, taking tourists around the haunts of some of the many writers associated with Edinburgh and settings of some of many novels located there all of which have an impact on the town. By flagging up the deprivation of Leith and the housing schemes, it is possible that Welsh's work led to action being taken to improve matters: Granton's "varicose vein" flats, final home of *Trainspotting* character Tommy, are long demolished, and many of the schemes have been improved since the novel's publication. A Leith resident interviewed by Aida Edemariam and Kirsty Scott suggests that "drugs policy changed, partly as a result of the Aids crisis, partly [. . .] as a direct result of the success of *Trainspotting*". However, the idea of Edinburgh as the HIV capital of Europe is one that remains strong despite evidence that this is no longer the case, something that McCarthy and Welsby found during their 2003 study of eighty students

in which the majority believed that most cases of HIV in Edinburgh are caused by sharing needles; thirty-three of them said that either the book or film of *Trainspotting* had increased their estimation of the problem. As Furst puts it, the referent has the capacity "to project a new referent" (114).

In many ways, writers using a real location within their texts are performing a similar task to those creating maps. Like cartographers, they must choose what they wish to appear, and thus to credit with importance, and what they wish to omit, thus rendering these sections obsolete. Like map makers, the authors have their own agendas behind what they choose to display, to bring to the attention of the reader, and what they wish to be ignored, unnoticed, or hidden. By drawing attention to one part of Edinburgh, Welsh must omit another just as McCall Smith does. These Edinburghs created through the use of real places co-exist, albeit unhappily, yet the reader of just Welsh, or McCall Smith, would be forgiven for having the impression of only one or the other. Just as every "map is a lie"– as the British libraries head of maps Peter Barber puts it – "every map is subjective and always will be" (Church 25), so every written version of a city is also a lie.

In addition to these omissions, the literary version of a city becomes stylized rather than an accurate representation. Names become detached from actual places, as Michel de Certeau describes in one of his best known works *The Practice of Everyday Life,* a work which analyses "the ordinary processes of active appropriation" (Ahearne 2). De Certeau explores the idea that those inhabiting town and cities create their own versions of them, meaning cites are more than just that created by town planners and architects, and this can be extended to those writing cities. According to de Certeau, "words slowly lose, like worn coins, the value engraved on them, but their ability to signify outlives its first definition" (104). These Edinburghs are versions: part of the truth but not the whole, signifying a class, a system of existence, but not revealing all. The use of geographically correct locations helps create a sense of realism, but is misleading because of this. De Certeau says, "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (129), but the story is perfectly capable of cutting up too. There is a sense in all the books that the author is presenting us with the real city, yet all cannot reveal the real city; there

is no real city, only versions and at best each author can only give us what a map provides: a representation, a stylisation, of their version or experience of the city being presented.

From the beginning, Welsh and McCall Smith located their versions of Edinburgh within real landmarks, streets, pubs, clubs, and bus routes, something Rankin began in the sixth book of the Rebus series, building up a network of places coded as important on the map of Edinburgh being created on the page. The third book in the Scotland Street series – *Love over Scotland* (2006) – ends with a poem on the subject of mapping in which the personal maps we all carry within us are referenced, as though to reiterate the sense within the series of being in the "real" Edinburgh but filtered through the eyes of another. According to McCall Smith, the most precious maps "are the unpublished maps we make ourselves /Of our city, our place, our daily world, our life" (*Love Over Scotland* 357). This suggests that, to him, the series is a version of these unpublished maps with the fictional experiences of his characters mapped onto the genuine Edinburgh.

One way in which the city is mapped in the work of all three authors – something which helps a great deal when creating a map of their "Edinburghs"– is through the description of characters' journeys in great detail, where the streets they travel down are named in order: "they walked back up Spylaw Road and on towards Bruntsfield. They were just in time for a 23 bus as it came up the road from Holy Corner" (McCall Smith, *Espresso Tales* 59); "Ah stroll self-consciously doon Great Junction Street [. . .] Ah run into Mally at the Fit ay the Walk" (Welsh, *Trainspotting* 203); "Siobhan followed Rebus as he cut through Lorne Street and came out on Leith Walk" (Rankin, *The Falls* 105). From the books, it is possible for a reader to build up a reasonably accurate map of Edinburgh: there are relatively few areas of the city centre without some visit from one of the books (see Figure 1). Rankin says that James Joyce claimed that were Dublin to be destroyed, it could be recreated using *Ulysses* (1922) as a blue print (*Rebus's Scotland* 93). Rankin feels that the same cannot be said of his work, yet there are so many street names referred to that using a combination of the three authors it may well be possible. All the books, therefore, demonstrate the truth of Wendy Faris's claim: "urban texts can be seen as both maps and routes, as descriptions and

projects, portraits of streets and guides within them" (38). Rebus's internal map is a mesh of crime scenes, which he plots over a real map on his dentist's ceiling, where he observes: "there's Calton Hill, where Davey Soutar ended up. There's St Leonards [. . .] and Great London Road. Hyde's Club was just down there [. . .] There's Stenhouse, where Willie and Dixie lived. You could see Saughton Jail quite clearly. And Warrender School where McNally blew his head off. He had a sense of the way the streets interconnected, and with them the lives of the people who lived and died there" (Rankin, *Let it Bleed* 125). Welsh's map of Edinburgh lurches from pub to dealer to pub, pausing only to go cold turkey in Leith bedsits, or, of course, train spot at the defunct Leith Central Station. "Scotland Street" map also includes pubs, though these pubs serve an array of single malt and real ales to solicitors in shirts and ties and have carpets that your shoes do not stick to. Delicatessens, Steiner schools, and antique shops also have their place on the Scotland Street map, and the streets and crescents of the New Town are named one by one as characters traverse them – leaving the New Town on the map in Appendix A almost entirely red, red indicating a place named in "Scotland Street".

Despite this insistence in mapping out journeys, both Rankin and McCall Smith have fictionalised their characters' actual homes; Scotland Street does not in reality extend as far as number 44, and 16 Arden Street, Rebus's second floor flat, is actually a ground floor flat featuring a blue plaque, which does not appear in the novels. Both seem to pin their characters to exact locations while simultaneously making these positions fictitious; Welsh does the opposite: he refers to areas rather than pinpointing exactly where things take place or people live. Streets are mentioned but never flat numbers. In this way, a sense of place is created, but it is a different sensation than that of knowing exactly where each event happens provided by the other two authors. By often leaving vagueness as to where he is referring, Welsh leaves more to the imagination of the reader. Like Rankin, Welsh uses local slang to refer to certain areas – the Banana Flats (officially Cables Wynd House) or the Bowtow, a nickname for Newhaven – and both authors invent their own slang for things and places throughout their novels (Rankin's "biscuit tin" interview rooms [*Black & Blue* 3] and Welsh's Labdick for the Lothian and Borders Police force [*Trainspotting* 7]), but Rankin tends to explain

this in a way that Welsh does not. In *Black and Blue,* Rebus is working at Craigmillar Police station, nicknamed Fort Apache, the Bronx (3). Where Welsh would give the reader just the nickname, Rankin carefully explains where it is and how the nickname has come about. By doing this, Rankin gives the reader a map while Welsh leaves them to find their own bearings.

Perhaps because of Welsh's reluctance to specifically locate his characters, I initially had the impression that they rarely left Leith and the nearby housing schemes – occasional benefit scam trips to London notwithstanding. However, the map I produced of the characters' movements shows that in fact, in terms of the centre of Edinburgh, the only areas never visited are the New Town, Stockbridge, Marchmont (although in *Porno* Nikki and Dianne's flat is somewhere in Marchmont on an undisclosed road), and Morningside: all notoriously middle-class places (see Figure 1). These forays into central Edinburgh are almost entirely pub, drug, or crime related and for the most part centre around the Old Town and Grassmarket – the scenes of slum clearances to the schemes during the 1920s, perhaps indicative of a return to the ancestral seat. Where other, more traditional landmarks are mentioned it is generally to flag up the character's outsider status; for example, Spud's forays to the Edinburgh rooms in the Central Library where he is reminded of his deprived childhood before being given a sense of belonging which is cruelly snatched away when the manuscript he has lovingly researched is rejected (*Porno* 144*)* or his participation in a rape behind the building site of the new parliament (*Porno* 279–84). Although the series spans six novels as opposed to Welsh's two, the inhabitants of Scotland Street venture out of their set locations far less often (aside from trips to Australia, Italy, and the Malacca Straits). Where they do leave the New Town, it is generally on shopping trips to Princes Street, visits to the various art galleries, or other cultural pursuits. Almost every street of the New Town is referred to at some point, but there is little reference to a city beyond this (See Figure 1). The housing schemes ringing the city are never mentioned, invisible to the reader and characters within, wiping the "Scotland Street" map clean of them and their inhabitants, something also attempted, more literally, by the original denizens of the New Town. Rankin's Inspector Rebus is one character who does have the freedom of the

whole city (see Appendix A), yet is prevented from enjoying it in his role as its protector. As a police officer, he can walk the streets and gain entry anywhere: a necessary but not necessarily wanted presence. While the other characters retain "insider" status as long as they remain inside their authorized domains, Rebus is a permanent outsider – the eternal "other".

While there are parts of Edinburgh omitted from the work of McCall Smith and Welsh in particular, there are also point of crossover – an example of which, Princes Street, was discussed earlier. Another example of this is Waverly station, a symbol of escape for all of the authors. The scene of murderer Stacey Webster's escape in Rankin's *The Naming of the Dead* (2006), the station also offers *wunderkind* character Bertie time away from his overbearing mother in *Espresso Tales* (2005), and it is from via Waverley that he runs away from home in *Bertie Plays the Blues* (2011). In *Trainspotting,* it symbolizes a different kind of escape when the drug addicted Swanny uses his amputated leg (due to developing gangrene following heroin use) as a ploy, pretending to be an ex-soldier while begging outside the station in order to buy more heroin (318–21). The station can also be an entrance into the city, something highlighted in *Trainspotting* when anti-hero Renton comments: "But when ye come back oot ay Waverley Station eftir bein away fir a bit, ye think: Hi, this isnae bad" (228). The station, therefore, symbolizes escape but also return, particularly for the mainly non-driving, pedestrian characters of *Trainspotting* and "Scotland Street".

Princes Street, a well-known Edinburgh shopping street and beginning of the New Town, has very different meanings in each series. For characters such as *Trainspotting's* Spud it provides a shoplifting opportunity (72), but justification for this is provided later by Renton, who recollects "walkin along Princes Street wi Spud, we both hate walkin along that hideous street, deadened by tourists and shoppers, the twin curses ay modern capitalism" (228). While Princes Street is overrun by shoppers according to Renton, for at least one "Scotland Street" character, it is the Leith inhabitants who predominate "their" end of the street: "'I saw him at the East End of Princes St', said Dr Fairbairn. 'You see a lot of neds [. . .] I mean young men hanging about, I mean congregating, down there'" (*Espresso Tales* 74). Other than this, Princess Street serves as a shopping destinations and the

gateway to staid department store Jenners and the exclusive Edinburgh New Club for characters from “Scotland Street” (*Espresso Tales* 45, 47; *Love over Scotland* 47), although Princess Street shoppers are compared unfavourably to George Street shoppers, “who did not push and shove as shoppers did on Princes Street” (*Love over Scotland* 345). For Rebus, as usual, Princes Street is a crime scene. In *Knots & Crosses,* it is the last known location of a young girl who has disappeared, later found to be murdered (125). *Hide and Seek* (1991) features Princes Street fleetingly as the area where two men follow a young woman following the murder of her boyfriend (61). It is in *The Black Book* (1993), however, that Princes Street takes on a more central role as the past location of the Central Hotel (now a burger bar). Torched five years before the start of the novel, the plot centres around Rebus’s attempts to find out what really happened at the hotel that night, meaning Princess Street becomes an important location for the book, albeit still as a crime scene.

All the books are heavily dependent on Edinburgh, using the city as more than a location – Rankin’s reviews frequently describe the city as a character in his work. More than just a back-drop, Edinburgh’s geography is mapped by all three writers with very different results. While Welsh and McCall Smith’s Edinburghs seem like different cities, Rankin brings them together, layering his version with characters and geography not out of place in either of the other two series. While Welsh and McCall Smith reveal maps of Edinburgh experienced by certain types of people, Rankin produces an Edinburgh that is more than simple dichotomies of rich and poor, old and new, giving the city a rich texture. He complicates where Welsh and McCall Smith simplify. Rankin’s Edinburgh is a complex, changing entity, at times breathtakingly beautiful, at others cold and cruel; McCall Smith’s Edinburgh, however, is playful, light, humorous and gentle: safe.

The idea that Rankin’s view of the city is a broader one that that of the other two writers is supported by the map (Figure 1). The blue lines which symbolise places referenced in the ‘Rebus’ series are far more prevalent than the red for ‘Scotland Street’ or the green for *Trainspotting* and *Porno*. There seems to be a direct correlation between a narrower area of the map indicating a narrower version of the city and a broader area demonstrating a broader view. Of course,

the maps only cover the very centre of Edinburgh, and doing the same thing over a larger area may give a different result, particularly since Rankin's invented housing schemes would be unable to be mapped, but for the city centre, this certainly appears to be the case.

By taking a broader approach, the Rebus books provide more of an overview of the city, where *Trainspotting* and "Scotland Street" look at one particular area and group of people in more detail. None of the versions of Edinburgh that are produced as a result can claim to be more "real" than the others: all are a fictional version; however, while McCall Smith's Edinburgh might seem the most realistic to those of a similar standing to his characters and people who grew up in 1980s Leith may feel that *Trainspotting* is the closer of the three to their reality, it is Rankin's Edinburgh which maps the most of the city, in terms of geography, class, history, and experience. The Edinburgh which Rebus inhabits covers more ground and acknowledges that the city is more than middle-class museum visitors and working-class junkies. What ultimately makes the "Rebus" series the more realistic of the three is simply that the Edinburgh presented on the page has room for the other versions to comfortably sit within it. The housing schemes Rebus visits are not dissimilar to those described by Welsh, and the Rankin's New Town and its inhabitants could reasonably contain the cast of "Scotland Street", whereas there is no place in *Trainspotting* or "Scotland Street" for the other. The "real" bricks and mortar Edinburgh is in a state of constant flux, as are all cities, yet certain points in certain places have been captured in the work of all three authors: however, where McCall Smith and Welsh provide a glimpse, Rankin gives the reader a window. Overall, the map in appendix A demonstrates that individually, each writer provides some of Edinburgh, but it is only through a combination of all three that a recognisable picture occurs.

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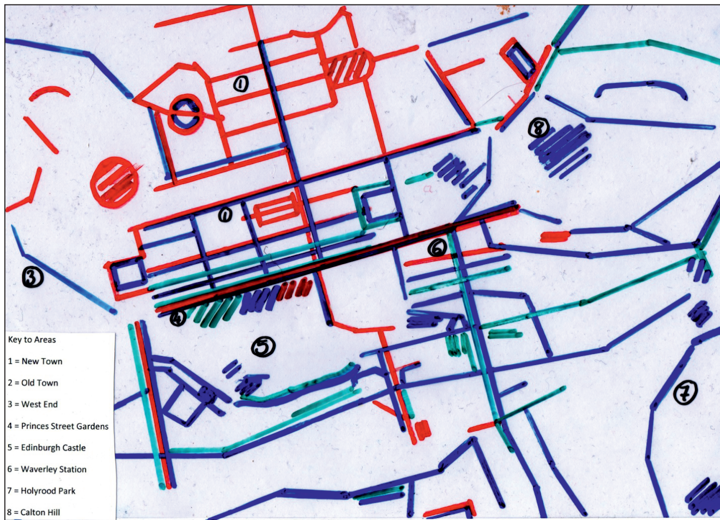

Figure 1. Map of Edinburgh city centre according to the Inspector Rebus novels of Ian Rankin, Alexander McCall Smith's "Scotland Street" series, and *Trainspotting* and *Porno* by Irvine Welsh

LIMINAL SPACES.
PASSABLE BOUNDARIES

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Female Identities and Personal Space in *Blood* by Janice Galloway

Janice Galloway writes in an urban, modern, and heterogeneous Scotland. Her works do not participate in the national original myth traditionally associated with a romantic Scottish nation. Galloway challenges the gender roles, origins and family dynamics that constitute the basis of many nationalist movements (McGlynn 223). There is no defense of a specific Scottish space and no particular association between Scottishness and female identity in Galloway's collection of short stories *Blood* (1991). In order to analyse the issue of female identities and personal space in *Blood*, I have used Doreen B. Massey's and Kerstin W. Shands's books on space and place and their connections with gender. In her book *Space, Place, and Gender* (1999), Massey emphasizes the multiplicity of meanings and connotations of these words, for example, space may evoke the realm of the dead or the chaos of simultaneity and multiplicity, whereas place can recall an image of one's place in the world or the reputed and disputed meanings of "a place called home". Massey does not understand space as something static but in terms of social relations and is particularly interested in the connection of space and place with the construction of gender relationships. She questions the idea of place as bounded or as a site of fixed and unproblematic authenticity, and views place as a particular moment in those networks of social relations and understandings that build space. Consequently, the identities of place are always unfixed, contested and multiple, and places are open and porous. Also, Massey finds many parallels between the current debate about personal identity and the identity of place. She

states that just as personal identities are argued to be multiple, shifting, and contradictory, so are the identities of place (Massey 1–7).

The question of the conceptualizations of place is linked to the issue of dualisms where gender connotations are evident. The universal is, in current western ways of thinking, coded masculine and the feminine is associated to the local because women apparently lead more local lives than men (Massey 9). The public space has been traditionally associated with and occupied by men, whereas women have been relegated to the private sphere. Also, the concept of the private possesses different connotations for men and women. For men, the private is synonymous with a time of privacy, retirement, and personal growth. However, for many women, the private equals the domestic, which is the opposite of privacy, retirement and personal growth (Pérez Fernández 80, my translation). The domestic neither leads to the public sphere, nor provides the benefits of privacy (Murillo 38, my translation).

In her book *Embracing Space* (1999), Kerstin W. Shands states that space is one of the most fundamental but elusive categories human beings deal with, together with time. However, we seem to take physical space or perceptual space for granted most of the time. Space seems to exist independently of humans, as a kind of framework into which we place things, whether literally or figuratively, and it is often perceived as more abstract than place. Place is linked to the concrete and local, to safety and protection, while space is related to freedom and independence, to action and the future. Also, conceptualizations of place and space are related to the body and its orientation, which is a requisite for our physical and mental survival (Shands 36–38).

According to Shands, men and women experience space on material and metaphorical levels in different ways. Their use of space with their bodies also differs. The size of an individual's personal space varies, with men traditionally requesting more space than women. Spatial segregation usually equals lower status for women. In our society women control less space than men do, they also control less desirable spaces and their personal spaces are smaller than men's and more frequently invaded. Men tend to expand physically, while women shrink in order to take up less space (Shands 42–44).

Women's fiction has used spatial images to represent women's bodies and described houses or rooms as frequent physical locations for women. This would exemplify the specific spatial domains women have mainly occupied. In many works by women, women's transgressions of their allotted spaces proves to be dangerous or even mortal (Shands 44).

Shands also pays attention to women's conflictive relationships with bodily boundaries and their implication in illnesses such as anorexia and bulimia, which concern the boundaries of the body and woman as space. Many women in Western societies have the feeling they are too big and push themselves to lose weight beyond impossible limits. To be physically huge or to take up immense amounts of space in discursive or psychological ways constitutes for women in patriarchal societies, an enormity and a monstrosity (Shands 53).

Disorders such as agoraphobia and claustrophobia indicate a similar and problematic relation between a woman and her surrounding environment. Both disorders are linked to the boundaries of the house and the sexualized body, both of which are symbolically associated with women. If place is understood as the limits or boundaries that define or mark the known and space as the boundaryless expanse of the unknowable, claustrophobia can be understood as a fear of place and a love of space, and agoraphobia as a need for the apparent security of place and a dread of space. In both disorders, there is an underlying, thwarted desire for control or power (Shands 54).

Shands states that the opposite end of the previous spatial and mental spectrum of the experience of space is the feeling of boundarylessness. Here place becomes space and the boundaries of place are dissolved. The concept of boundarylessness is linked to the yearning for transgression and mobility so common in women's literature (Shands 55).

The spatial boundaries affecting or determining women's lives are thus both material and metaphorical, involving the specific confinement of women in domestic space and conditions that oppress. For Shands, the psychological boundaries are seen as internalisations of societal structures: women have erected boundaries within themselves (63).

My aim in the present essay is to analyse the conflicting female subjectivities portrayed by Galloway in a selection of short stories

from her short story collection *Blood*. Galloway uses different narrative techniques and images to represent her characters' impulses and drives in their search for a place in the world, for a home, and for a centre; in their escape from the confining borders of an oppressive physical or psychological place, or in their fear of marginality and exclusion. Scotland as a territory, a nation or a physical location lacks a particular role in *Blood*. According to Josiane Paccaud-Huguet, in the fictional world of these stories, the desolation of interior or exterior landscapes is much more significant than the experience of contemporary life in Scotland (6).

The dominant narrative modes are the third-person narration with internal focalization into and from a girl's mind as well as the retrospective first person narration. Galloway shocks the reader by defamiliarizing the narration with techniques such as a foregrounded use of thematisation in the opening sentences of the story, the exploitation of the polysemy and resonances of the most insignificant words, the use of capital letters that unexpectedly occupy the textual space, and the circularity in form, which proves the absence of a conclusive meaning in the stories. By omitting the inverted commas in the dialogues, Galloway tries to eliminate the markers of hierarchy and control in the representation of discourse and to create the illusion of voices quoted from the life (Paccaud-Huguet 22–26).

In the title story, "Blood", Galloway uses a variety of images and ideas of blood to suggest the moods of a schoolgirl during the day she visits a dentist to have a tooth pulled, and her period starts. The girl is overwhelmed by guilt and shame and her feminine body is a subject of both fear and embarrassment to her under her unsuccessful attempts to make it look clean. On her way to school after having her tooth pulled out, messages about what girls are not supposed to do reach the girl's ears, "Bleed for a while like I say. Don't worry though. Redheads always bleed worse than other folk. Haha. Sandra'll get you something: stop you making a mess of yourself'" (3), "Besides, girls didn't spit in the street" (4). The girl wants to feel at home, which for her means to be in a peaceful environment and to feel physically clean and fresh. She chooses the longest path to her school in order to avoid certain streets with "shouting men" (4). She does not consider coming back to her own home because "everything would have to be explained in triplicate when the mother

got in and she never believed you anyway" (5), suggesting a difficult relationship with her mother. The previous quotations hint at the truth of gender difference: girls must avoid making a mess of themselves, which implies a control of their bodily fluids both in private and public domains. Men occupy public space by spitting and shouting at women, a form of behaviour which intimidates the protagonist of "Blood" and limits her freedom. The girl is in a difficult position because the apparently safe haven of her home is full of her mother's insistent requests for explanations, an attitude which also transgresses her intimacy. Both spaces, the private and the public ones, are invaded by shouting men and shouting women.

Once at her school, the girl looks for the privacy of the toilets but the offensive drawings of split melons and obscene words written on the doors ("GIRLS ARE A BUNCH OF CUNTS" 5) make her utterly uncomfortable. The unnamed protagonist then heads towards the music room longing for its emptiness and whiteness and decides playing the piano will soothe her physical and psychological restlessness. The girl wishes to start this centrifugal movement away from the oppressive centre of her self which is her female identity and body. She dreams of becoming music because music allows her to be boundaryless and to escape from the prison of her body, "But if she could just concentrate, forget her body and let the notes come, it wouldn't matter. You could get past things that way, pretend they weren't there. She leaned towards the keyboard, trying to be something else: a piece of music" (8). This wish will prove vain when blood coming from her mouth stains the white piano keys and the clean tile floor of the music room. Even the cello student who was in the music room with her leaves the place quickly after the protagonist breaks one of the feminine rules she had heard earlier that day: girls don't make a mess of themselves and girls do not spit in public.

The protagonist experiences the agoraphobic feelings depicted by Shands (54) because she is afraid of public spaces such as the streets and the school. Also, the girl's wish to be a piece of music reveals the claustrophobic sensations her own body awakens in her.

The story "Love in a Changing Environment" depicts the evolution of a relationship through the close look of the narrator to the apartment they occupy. The title itself, the "changing environment" suggests the importance of place in the story. A couple rents

a flat above a bakery and their lives seem to be tuned to the bakery's sounds and smells, "Crumpets, and fruit scones, the crackling echo of cellophane, the sulphur stink of egg mayonnaise led us through lunchtime [. . .]" (17), "Our teatime table wafted with coffee kisses over cold potato scones" (17). Even their sexual encounters take place under the rhythms of the bakery, "Making love happened most often in the mornings, our bodies joining in a warm cloud of new-baked viennas and granary cobs from the shop beneath, the window hazy with hot chocolate croissants and our twin breaths" (18), "[. . .] his semen usually parted company with me by the time they were shaping Danish pastries" (18). The day the narrator saw the sign announcing that the bakery was selling up, something broke between her and her lover, "An iced finger ran the length of my spine, but I pushed it away" (18). Familiar objects which used to be a promise of hope become enemies, such as the African violet, "[. . .] he took things out on the African violet's stubborn refusal to bloom, denying it water" (19).

The new business is a butchery whose stenches of gristle and turning fat and of dead tissue congested with blood foresee the decay of the relationship between the narrator and her lover. The timing of their existences becomes linked to the thuds, hacks and cracking of bones coming from the butchery. They fear the smell of putrefaction on the other's skin and give up touching and sex. They become obsessed with cleanliness and fight for the soap when they are having a shower. Eventually, the narrator leaves the apartment when the butchery owners unload a bone grinder.

As usual in Galloway's fiction, emotions and feelings are evoked through the presence of objects and the physical description of the domestic environment. A feeling of plenitude and hope stick to the lovers like the smell and taste of cakes from the bakery. Later on, they cannot get rid of the smell of dead tissue and of the horrifying noises of drills and saws cracking the dead animals' bones in the butchery. This stench leaks into their lives and produces a feeling of nausea they cannot overcome. The apartment becomes a claustrophobic place that poisons the couple's relationship. The "changing environment" of the title, the real world with its objects, smells and sounds defeats the emotional one, so evanescent and imaginary.

In the short stories "Frostbite" and "Fearless" the protagonists are girls, who have to deal with hostile male types. In "Frostbite", the

female narrator-focaliser describes in a free indirect style her encounter with a wounded man in a solitary bus stop after her violin practice. The cold weather, and the isolation of the bus stop where she is waiting for the bus lead the girl to question her dedication to music. She evokes the pains and pleasures of this activity and blames her slight disappointment only on herself:

> Her own fault, of course, expecting too much as usual. They said as much beforehand, over and over: it's not a job though, music willny keep you. [. . .] Still, she went, and she found they were right and they were not right. [. . .] But on nights like this, after compulsory practice that was all promise and no joy, cold and tired and waiting for a hypothetical bus, it was heavy and hard to bear. (21)

The beauty of the spire of the University building where she practices makes her feel relieved and compensates for her restlessness.

The presence of an old man who is in a bad physical condition, disoriented and smelling of alcohol will force the girl to confront her inner fears with the dangers of the external world. She tries to help him catch the next bus and listens to his explanations and complaints. The man says he has been hit by a bad woman and, although he thanks the girl for her help, his final words to her show his resentment towards women, "Aye. Keep away from bastart women, thats what yi do. Filth. Dirty whooers and filth the lot a them, the whole bloody lot. Get away fi me bitchahell – and he lunged a fist" (28).

At the end of the story, the old man gets on the bus while the girl remains in the bus stop. All the external elements are the same: the isolation of the bus stop, the University spire, the snow. However, she is now filled with anger and rage at the man's behaviour and at his misogynous words. The girl does not want to wait anymore and decides to take a more active attitude, which reflects her new internal strength, "Shaking, she snatched up the fiddle case and glared at the hill. To hell with this waiting. There were other ways, other things to do. Take the underground; walk, dammit. Walk" (28).

The young protagonist of "Fearless" is not afraid of Fearless, a man who "just appeared suddenly, shouting threats up the main streets" at people who had to avert their eyes. One day Fearless chooses the narrator's mother as his victim, but the girl turns to look

back at him in anger and kicks him, exposing him for the bully he is. This girl belongs to a new generation of women who are not intimidated by misogyny. She feels strong enough to oppose the violence of misogynous representation of women, those "loud, jaggy words which came out of the black hole of his mouth" (114). Like the girl in "Frostbite", the narrator in this story, after her encounter with Fearless, is not afraid to occupy the place in the world she feels it belongs to women too:

> My mother is dead, and so, surely, is Fearless. But I still hear something like him; the chink and drag from the close-mouth in the dark, coming across open, derelict spaces at night, blustering at bus-stops where I have to wait alone. With every other woman, though we're still slow to admit it, I hear it, still trying to lay down the rules. [. . .] The outrage is still strong, and I kick like a mule. (115)

Both girls overcome their agoraphobic feelings of being attacked by irrational men in public spaces and are able to kick at the otherness congealed in the male-oriented representations of life and language (Paccaud-Huguet 8).

Some stories like "it was", "Into the Roots" and "Breaking Through" explore their protagonists' fascination with death and their wish to cross the limits of reality, to visit the other side, to step into the underworld. "it was" describes a girl's imaginary encounter with a dead relative while she walks on a grass verge near some buildings at the edge of a small town or village. The initial descriptions suggest lines, borders, limits, "it was toward evening", "Two-storey council terraces [. . .] flaking like late-in-the day eye-liner, lined the opposite side of the road", "a straggling T-junction split the erratic paths of children and women following the ground home" (32), "her verge neighboured the dull macadam of the road to the edge of her vision" (33). The line of bare skin of her knees between her long socks and skirt is touched by the cool blades of grass. The girl's trip to the underworld starts when a scent from beneath her feet reaches her nose and her eyes perceive something shiny under a drainpipe. She starts digging and finds the body of her Uncle George. Uncle George gets up, smiles and asks her to go for a cup of tea. The girl feels moved with pity and nostalgia for the past and the story ends with both of

them walking to his house to have a tea. The representation of this space beyond the limits of reality may be connected to the girl's attempt to give name and shape to death and loss. The syntagm "it was" of the title evokes the girl's attempt to fill it with meaning, and at the same time, both words can be the most insignificant ones (Paccaud-Huguet 24).

Alice, the protagonist of "Into the Roots" has always been fighting against excessive hair. When the story opens, she is out in a rainy weather, walking along a road. She then evokes some important moments in her life, all of them linked to something being done to her hair: the first cut, her hair been dressed for the school dance, the first time she dyed her hair, the moment she had a short haircut after she broke up with a man who liked it long. Near the end of the story Alice decides to stop in the middle of the road and lose sight of the people walking ahead of her, "Immediately, she stopped walking, stopped trying to make up lost ground and stood still in the middle of the road. Relief rubbed into her shoulders, at the base of her neck, warming affection for the disappearing figures ahead. Let them go" (62). She finds a broken tree on the side of the road and decides to put her hand inside one of the holes in its trunk, which is surprisingly full of hair, "Choking back her fear, Alice thrust out and plunged two clawed fingers into the hole. It was full of hair" (63). The tree works as a symbolic alter ego of the protagonist. It resembles Alice in her present condition: Alice's eyes are "moist" (62), and "The tree glistened in the rain" (63), "Blood rushed to her lips as she smiled" (62), and the tree is "Rich red and shrouded in grey" (63). The trunk is full of "Mushrooming fungus" (63) which evokes Alice's image after her first haircut, "A long neck, very white from lack of sun, had grown up in the dark like a silent mushroom" (59). Alice shows a conflictive relationship with her body and her fear, shared by many women, of occupying too much space (Shands 53). She wishes to leave the real world and to cross to an imaginary one where she can recover the parts of herself that have been mutilated, symbolized in her lost hair. However, that place where she can feel whole again is a mere fantasy.

"Breaking through" also reflects the protagonist's wish for the touch of death. Janet, a six-year old girl, lives with her mother next to the cemetery wall and to another house occupied by an old wom-

an, Bessie, and her cat, Blackie. Janet visits them regularly and feels attracted by the cat, which she caresses when the old woman is not looking. But this physical contact with the cat does not satisfy Janet completely:

> [. . .] if Bessie was not there, she [Janet] stroked his warm white underneath as he stretched on the grass. This never eased the wanting though, it was never enough. What Janet wanted was more than that. As though she wanted to feel the essence of the fur, absorb it through the skin till it was wrapped about the bone and part of herself. The want was sore. And the want was always most in Bessie's front room with Blackie on the rug looking into the fire. (66)

One day Blackie falls into the fireplace and burns before the girl's eyes. Janet looks at the fire, its heat and colours, fascinated by "a mound of coals" (66), by "golden-hearted arrows of flame" (67), by Blackie's eyes, "full as green moons" (67). She does not rescue the cat because "She had been taught to respect his privacy too well" (67). The next day Janet visits Bessie's house again, at that liminal time between night and day, "It was the dull twilight time of night or day and the fire was new-built" (68). She hears Bessie calling her in a voice that seems to come not from the real world and they walk together to the fireplace where the old woman throws herself into the flames. The story ends with Janet lifting the poker to help her die.

This story portrays the protagonist's fascination with the world beyond the real one, the place beyond the cemetery. Janet's inner wish to move beyond reality can only be satisfied through her relationship with Blackie and with Bessie. The fantasy of Blackie's and Bessie's deaths by fire eases Janet's wanting, functioning as a projection space for her own fascination with death (Paccaud-Huguet 10).

The stories "Scenes from the Life No. 26: The Community and the Senior Citizen", and "*later he would open his eyes in a strange place, wondering where she*" deal with suicide as a way to escape a senseless existence. In the first one, an old woman visited by a Health Visitor later takes control of her life by deciding to end it. Galloway uses an external focaliser to narrate this story, whose perceptions are sometimes uncertain, "We may assume a wedding photograph" (47), "It is difficult to discern where paper stops and flesh begins [. . .]" (56). The

narrator also behaves as a voyeur, "The coursing of the water exaggerates deafeningly: we feel the cold scent of steel and the pulsing at her temples – reaching to know what is wrong. Some of us go further" (52), sympathises with the old woman's situation, or mentions her physical decay in a cruel way, "*a jumble of bones weeping on a bedspread: vomiting*. But this is revolting. Our empathy snaps back" (53).

The narrator gives us a detailed account of the objects, the smells, the colours and the light of the old woman's house, as if he/she was writing the stage directions in a play with two actresses, the old woman and the health visitor. Paradoxically, the only moment the old woman becomes and active subject and stops being a character in someone else's play is when she makes up her mind to put an end to her life. From the narrative point of view, the previous playscript conversation between the character OLD WOMAN and the character HEALTH VISITOR becomes a narration where the old woman becomes MRS MAULE, "the set of body, calm manner and miraculously closed mouth shows eagerness, excitement. It seems inappropriate now to cast her as the OLD WOMAN – we must search for another name. Was it…yes – it is MRS MAULE. This is MRS MAULE setting her home to rights" (55). Mrs Maule fails to be the protagonist of her real life and her real space and, eventually, her only way to escape an empty and hopeless existence is through suicide.

In the story "*later he would open his eyes in a strange place, wondering where she*", an old couple choose to put an end to their lives by dashing their car against a wall fencing a derelict space where a steelworks used to be. A book by Arthur Koestler, a Hungarian-British writer who committed suicide together with his wife, seems to be the inspiration for them. The old man fantasizes about touching the cracks between the bricks on his way to encounter death, "Just bricks. Maybe they would plaster it over to make it look better later on, put one of those murals on it. A mural of the steelworks. His hands felt dry, coated with dust, feeling for the absent plaster" (104). The desolation of the landscapes in this story, "the derelict space getting smaller" (105), "the wasteland by the steelworks wall" (106) reflects the couple's inner desolation and their impulse to disappear through the cracks of the brick wall that lead to the other side.

The story "Plastering the Cracks" is narrated by a young woman who decides to have the cracks on the walls of her apartment plas-

tered. It starts as a realist fictional account of the process of hiring the workers to the do the job and supervising it, but it ends up as a fantasy of occupation of her house by the workers. Instead of repairing the cracks on the walls, the narrator describes the men's strange behaviour in her apartment. They do not seem to be working as they were supposed to and the protagonist perceives unexpected changes in the different rooms: "It was light and dark at the same time and the walls were moving. They were sliding and changing colour in huge suppurating spots. In the middle of the textured ceiling there was a glittering ball of mirror chips, rotating and sparking out light that turned on the wall in formless, spreading blobs" (97). The narrator feels her vital space is being invaded, "It was time I pulled myself together and started moving around my own home as though it was my own home. They would walk all over me if I didn't" (99). After some days, she fires them. Once they leave, she prefers to keep the lights off to move around the house, "I found I could see pretty well without putting the light on. I preferred it that way" (102). The shock comes when she opens the blinds and checks the walls. The men have done their job properly and one of them has left her a note with the word "CHANGE" (102). The empty house with the cracks on the wall functions as a metaphor of the narrator's troubled self, whose smooth surface is an illusion. The narrator has ignored the options to heal herself and has considered them as a menace to her intimacy, she has even preferred to continue "without putting the light on" (102). But the real world imposes on the imaginary one. The moment she sees that the repairs in her apartment have been correct, she starts to admit she should change her attitude towards life.

"Nightdriving" is divided into three fragments told by a female narrator. The three sections reveal the woman's wish to come home, although that home remains elusive and conflictive. Driving takes place along a dark and empty landscape, full of lines, edges and borders, where nobody answers to the narrator's cries, "And I was frightened. I opened the door shouting I'M COMING TOO, I'M COMING WITH YOU but the wind blotted up in my mouth and I knew there would be no answer. There would be no answer because I couldn't be heard" (124). Galloway seems to point out the condition of being in permanent transit as the key feature of postmodern identities. The narrator keeps on driving on roads that do not lead home, "The city

road is a narrow stretch with hills that rise on either side, steep like the sides of a coffin: a lining of grass like green silk and the lid open to the sky but it is a coffin all the same" (127). Instead of facing the fact that home may be an illusion, a distant image the woman driver perceives but cannot reach, she chooses to drive and drive along those roads that lead nowhere but are a boundaryless space.

The last story, "A Week with Uncle Felix", is told from the point of view of a young girl who goes to spend a week with her dead father's brother. Senga, the protagonist, is an orphan who experiences loss as she is initiated into the knowledge of death and the discovery of sexuality, both of which entail the awareness of absence and sexual difference. She hopes to learn more about his father, whose death and personality remain hidden for her, but instead she has to face the misunderstandings and resentment in family relationships. His Uncle's house is a male-dominated space where the only woman, her Aunt Grace, is someone Senga cannot identify with, on the contrary, she feels oppressed by the domesticity of her Aunt's existence. Senga is dominated by feelings of guilt for not acting properly and is afraid of making a mess, "Maybe she had done something wrong and should apologise" (149), "Her own fault for saying anything in the first place" (149), "Her own fault: she shouldn't have been opening the window in the first place" (163), "It was her own fault" (171), "She knew she had disappointed him" (175). These quotations from the story reveal Senga's obsession to do the right thing and her fear of transgressing the codes that rule family and social relationships. Senga is worried about having said something inconvenient to her cousin because maybe she should have spoken only when asked. Her opening of the window is wrong and she is bitten by a wasp. Confusion and disappointment dominate Senga's conversations with her Uncle Felix, exposing her difficulties to establish emotional links with him.

The pornographic magazines in her Uncle's room, where women show huge breasts and painted nails increase her anxieties about sexuality and her own body. In her visit to the local museum, Senga sees a bridle with a flat iron spike for the horse's mouth, with a joke on the card next to it, "For wives who scolded or told lies" (153). These female models seem to asphyxiate Senga who turns to her dead Aunt June's garden looking for freedom and fresh air, "Outside, wet leaves splayed flat between drips of condensation. Fresh. They made you

want to reach out, reach your whole self in amongst them with your eyes shut, touching till your clothes stuck to the skin" (162). In this identification with Aunt June's space, we see Senga's attraction for the space dead people occupy. Her father and June have been liberated from the pains of daily life and the anxieties of sexuality Senga is experiencing. To her eyes, they occupy a free zone, a boundaryless space. However, Senga's fantasies about them cannot fill her internal gap provoked by absence, silence and sexual difference. After opening the window over Aunt June's garden, the frame cracks and she is stung by a wasp from the plum trees. Senga feels punished for her curiosity about her Uncle's magazines, her Aunt's garden and her father (Paccaud-Huguet 13).

Senga wants to know about her father and finds no answers. Her confrontation with female sexuality as seen by men leaves her confused and anxious. The story's circular structure reinforces the lack of a conclusive answer to these issues (Paccaud-Huguet 26).

The girls and women who populate most of the stories in *Blood* reveal desolated interior and exterior landscapes. These female characters often speak from liminal spaces such as a school with no gate, a grass verge, a house next to a cemetery, a solitary bus stop, an apartment full of cracks or a car moving along a tangle of roads. The private and public spaces depicted in the stories are full of cracks, holes and gaps that promise a boundaryless space to those women or girls who enter them. However, this space beyond reality becomes, in fact, a simulacrum of freedom from the conflicts of female identity and the emptiness of existence. The fascination for these cracks, holes and gaps is powerful but dangerous because those who enter them find death or personal stasis. Only those characters who do not indulge themselves in the wastelands of existence are able to look back in anger and to run the risks of building a solid female identity. Then they will be prepared to fight the necessary battles to occupy the private and public spaces they long for.

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"An annexe of nowhere": Overspill Identity in Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989)

The Trick is to Keep Breathing is a novel preoccupied with borders and boundaries. From city limits to the contours of the body and from the margins of the printed page to the physical and conceptual limits of the Scottish nation, Galloway's text relentlessly interrogates spatial demarcations, examining how boundaries are constituted, enforced and challenged. In this essay, I will argue that Galloway negotiates the dynamics of boundedness by occupying "spaces of overspill"; zones that both depend upon and trouble stable borders.

The term "overspill" is taken directly from the novel. In the text it refers directly to a particular post-war town planning policy, and this aspect of the novel will be the point of departure for my analysis. However, I want to suggest that overspill might be a useful metaphor for thinking about the novel's conceptualisation of space more broadly, in order to elucidate the inherent, and inherently fraught, ambivalence of spatial and conceptual categories such as the nation. The term overspill implies excess and permeability but also acknowledges the strong attachment to, even the necessity of, spatial demarcations. Overspill displays the untenability of rigid boundaries, and yet does not constitute a complete breakdown of these boundaries.

The notion of overspill that I am seeking to elucidate owes something to Homi Bhabha's influential formulation in *The Location of Culture*, stressing that "we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the *inbetween* space

– that carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (56). There is a between-ness implicit in the word overspill; that which occupies the space of overspill is in transition, dislocated from its previous mooring and not quite transmuted into something wholly separate from its previous co-ordinates. Overspill is a space of contestation and negotiation, a space of flux.

Bhabha's work is also a reference point used by Aileen Christianson in her article "Gender and Nation: Debatable Lands and Passable Boundaries", which explores the difficulties and strategies by which Scottish women writers have navigated their place within the nation. She posits that:

> In twentieth-century writing [. . .] imaginative travel is necessary to where gender interacts with nation so that nation cannot be narrated as exclusively male or, indeed, exclusively female. Any exploration must be tentative, flexible, non-linear as the only certainty carried by "debatable lands" is that of uncertainty, of border crossings, dispute, contiguity and interaction, equivalent, perhaps, to Bhabha's "inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*". (80)

Christianson's use of Bhabha is instructive because she insists upon the possibility of antagonism and insecurity in this hybrid space even as she stresses its progressive potential. I will follow this example in my treatment of overspill. I want to stress that this is not a straightforward space of emancipation by paying attention to the difficulties inherent in occupying such a location, productive as it might be. In relation to this, I will also attend to the limits of what can be achieved from this "between" space. It seems to me that 'overspill' is a more useful concept that "hybridity" in Galloway's case precisely because the negative connotations of the town planning lexicon from which it is taken reveal its continued investment in boundaries, borders and limitations. This prevents the term from being utilised as a straightforward celebration of hybrid possibility and limits the text by emphasising what remains impossible. In an earlier version of her article, Christianson praises Galloway's writing because it "allow[s] for a thinking across boundaries, making them passable boundaries" (133). While this characterisation is helpful, it is also important to stress that though boundaries are revealed to be passable, they are not

always passed. As much as Galloway's novel opens conceptual possibilities, for the protagonist of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing,* these possibilities are only realised in a very partial way.

The text charts the experience of Joy Stone, a drama teacher struggling to keep going from one day to the next ("lasting", as it is referred to throughout the text) and suffering from mental illness and anorexia in the aftermath of her lover's death (narrated in the novel through a series of italicised flashbacks). Much of the text is set in the home Joy used to share with her lover, a council house in the Bourtreehill housing estate. To understand the connotations and significance of this setting, we must first situate it in the context of Glasgow's transformation during and after the industrial revolution. This transformation is what meant that overspill policy was necessary, because of the rapid population increase (or even "population explosion" (26) to use Moira Burgess' term) in Glasgow from the middle of the nineteenth century. Andrew Gibb observes that, "in just over seven decades, between the census of 1941 and the outbreak of the First World War, Glasgow quadrupled its population" (115). The housing available in the city was woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the swollen populace, leading to overcrowding of existing dwellings and concomitant problems of public sanitation and health. Until the end of the Second World War, attempts were made to combat these problems through a programme of slum clearance and the construction of housing schemes in Glasgow. However, this did not succeed in reducing overcrowding to acceptable levels, and the city was still left with, as Gibb asserts, "horrifyingly high inner city densities" (159). At this point, planning policy shifted away from construction within city limits to focus on directed migration, housing Glasgow's overspill in expanded existing towns and specially designated New Towns. This overspill policy had a dramatic effect on Glasgow's population, and it dropped from 1,065,017 in 1961 to just 740,536 in 1987 (Gibb 160). The housing estate in the novel has a real-life corollary of the same name; Bourtreehill is located outside Irvine, a North Ayrshire town designated in 1965–6 as the fifth and final New Town to be developed as part of the overspill strategy.

The terminology of town planning strategy bleeds into the novel. We see it here in Joy's profoundly negative introduction to her local area:

> On the map, it's called Bourtreehill, after the elder tree, the bourtree, Judas tree; protection against witches. The people who live here call it Boot Hill. Boot Hill is a new estate well outside the town it claims to be part of. There was a rumour when they started building that it was meant for undesirables: difficult tenants from other places, shunters, overspill from Glasgow. That's why it's so far away from everything. Like most rumours, it's partly true. (13)

Picking up on the use of town planning vocabulary, Mary McGlynn identifies a "dehumanization present in the term overspill" (144); a dehumanisation that could equally be applied to the frequently disastrous consequences of Glasgow's post-war town planning.

One of the biggest problems with overspill policy was the sheer distance of some of the overspill sites from the city itself. This is certainly the case with Boot Hill, as Irvine is situated a significant distance from Glasgow (approximately 22 miles as the crow flies); the estate is nearer to the Ayrshire coast than to the city. Nonetheless, there is a strong suggestion in the text that Joy does commute to the city for her work as a drama teacher. Given that she does not have a car, her journeys are lengthy and difficult. To get home, she must first endure a car share with colleagues that is weighted with social awkwardness, and when their journeys are over and they drive away in comfortable companionship, Joy remarks that it still "takes two buses to get to where I have to go" (13). The use of the imperative here is significant; it creates a sense of foreboding and menace about Joy's eventual destination. Joy "has to go" to Boot Hill. There is no warmth or enthusiasm in her description of her home environs. Rather, she is compelled to go there seemingly against her volition; Boot Hill is imposed upon her. This compulsion nods to the history of peripheral housing estates like Bourtreehill. Though they were frequently conceived with the best of intentions, these conurbations were often experienced by those who were relocated as a kind of enforced exile that ruptured the sense of community fostered by older kinds of housing (inadequate though they were in many other ways). The description of the estate in the novel elucidates some of the reasons for Joy's antipathy to her surroundings:

> Boot Hill is full of tiny, twisty roads, wild currant bushes to represent the great outdoors, pubs with plastic beer glasses and kids. The twisty

> roads are meant to make drivers slow down so they get the chance to see and stop in time. This is a dual misfunction. Hardly anyone has a car. If one does appear on the horizon the kids use the bends to play chicken, deliberately lying low and leaping out at the last minute for fun. The roads end up more conducive to child death than if they had been straight. What they do achieve is to make the buses go slow. Buses are infrequent so the shelters are covered in graffiti and kids hanging from the roofs. Nobody waits in these shelters even when it's raining. It rains a lot. The buses take a long time. When I was small I always wanted a red front door. This front door is bottle green. The key never surrenders first time. I have to rummage through my bag and every pocket while I stand at the door as though I'm begging to be mugged. (13–14)

Joy's description demonstrates the gulf between town planning intention and the lived experience of residents of housing estates. This extract demonstrates the way that abstract problems, such as a high concentration of children (common in peripheral housing estates), limited amenities and a lack of public transport provision creates an atmosphere of fear and hostility for the residents of Bourtreehill. The attempts which have been made to mitigate these problems ring hollow: the placement of wild currant bushes is at best incongruous and at worst disingenuous; their representational impulse is clear enough, but the evocation of the pastoral falls flat, revealing its emptiness and irrelevance to this suburban landscape. However, Joy is not uncharitable towards the town planners responsible for the estate. She acknowledges the benevolent logic behind Boot Hill's "tiny, twisty roads", but here again the gulf between conceptual thinking and the reality produces a "dual misfunction". Those responsible for the design of Boot Hill are clearly out of touch with the socio-economic group for whom they are designing. Their underestimation of car ownership renders the roads dangerous, and encumbers the already inadequate public transport service, further peripheralising an estate that is already a good distance from "the town it claims to be part of". The failure of the housing estate to live up to the desires and aspirations of its residents is encapsulated in Joy's description of her front door; she had always wanted red. The one she has is green.

Mary Mcglynn utilises this description of Boot Hill to link the estate to a broader economic context. She suggests:

> [. . .] that *Trick* depicts a space that is at once general and specific – that a few of its elements suggest a general urban feel (most of the novel takes place in dystopic suburban spaces), but that, more importantly, it evokes not so much a specific city as a specific *sort* of city. Boot Hill *could* be on the outskirts of Bradford or in Swansea, because it constitutes a particular set of responses that various British councils and housing authorities tried to make to specific economic and social conditions. Beyond this economic context, there are elements of the text that are regionally specific as well, outlining a notion of Scottishness consciously at odds with stereotype yet perceptively different from other British identities, adding another layer to the creation of the loco-specific. (140–41)

Both aspects of McGlynn's formulation are helpful; it is important to observe the de-individuation and non-specificity of the housing estate, and the way that this interacts with the specifically located aspects of the text. However, McGlynn's assertion that Boot Hill "*could* be on the outskirts of Bradford or in Snowdon" under-acknowledges the importance of local specificity in the novel. I would argue that the estate could not even be a housing scheme on the outskirts of a different Scottish city, let alone Bradford or Swansea. The specific "Greater Glasgow" location of the housing estate in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* has specific implications when thinking about the novel's location within the contemporary Scottish canon. The reason for my insistence upon Glasgow's importance is linked to McGlynn's assertion that the novel produces a "notion of Scottishness consciously at odds with stereotype". To understand the stereotype Galloway is working against, it is necessary to understand the conflicted and shifting relationship of Glasgow to Scottish identity more broadly.

Glasgow has a particularly fraught relationship to Scottish national, and literary, identity. Historically, the city has been viewed as insufficiently Scottish; its urbanity, coupled with a high emigrant population and the city's importance within the British Empire meant that Glasgow had traditionally been relegated behind the rural highlands as a location of authentic Scottishness. In his scathing description of the city in *A Scottish Journey*, Edwin Muir finds Glasgow deficient in national authenticity because it was divorced from an organic relationship to the Scottish culture and history by Industrialism. He asserts that:

> One may say that it is not Scotland at all, or not Scotland in particular, since it is merely one of the expressions of Industrialism, and Industrialism operates by laws which do not recognise nationality. To say that is to say that Scotland is in the same position as most other European countries, except those which are still mainly agricultural. One part of its life is traditional and closely bound to the soil, another part is modern and has no immediate bond with the soil. (102–03)

Willy Maley suggests a more complex web of marginalisation operating to de-Scotticise the city, arguing that Glasgow is:

> [. . .] a city which, because of its history of heavy industry, tobacco lords, and Irish immigration, is often seem as 'unrepresentative' of Scotland, a city without a country, or one whose country is outwith its nation, a city 'north of the border' whose roots lie in an expansionist state whose putative centre lies far to the south. (60)

Viewed like this, Glasgow is doubly peripheralised; subordinated firstly to Scotland's more powerful southern neighbour, and again within its own national boundaries. In this context we can understand Joy's assertion, from which the title of this chapter is taken, that Bourtreehill is "an annexe of nowhere" (37). However, despite the reference to Glasgow as "nowhere" we might argue that because the novel is narrated from inside Boot Hill, in Galloway's text Glasgow is comparatively elevated; a core space when viewed from the peripheralised estate.

Glasgow's "core" position in the novel parallels the city's rise to prominence within the literary sphere. With the advent of the Scottish cultural revival between the referenda, Glasgow has shifted to a dominant position in Scotland's cultural landscape. With the success of male writers such as James Kelman, Alasdair Gray and Tom Leonard during the devolutionary period, Clydeside became firmly emplotted as a nexus of contemporary Scottish culture. The vision of Glasgow depicted in their work has attracted much media attention, which is partly responsible for the "perception that all Glasgow novels are about men, the hard inhabitants of this notoriously macho city" (Burgess 288). This perception of Glasgow writing (which has in recent years occasionally been presented as synonymous with

Scottish writing) has become something of a critical orthodoxy, one that marginalises experiences that do not fit the mould.

Galloway's work is often grouped with these writers; in *The Modern Scottish Novel* Cairns Craig explicitly links Galloway's textual innovation to the work of Alasdair Gray (196). This link is valid and important. However, it is equally important to insist upon the distance of Galloway's text from these writers, and to do so in geographical terms; *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* is not quite a Glasgow novel. The majority of the text is set *inside* Bourtreehill, and the narrative only infrequently looks out to Glasgow proper. The housing estate location, not the city to which it is nominally connected, is the focus of the novel. *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* is unflinching in its depiction of this troubled and troubling space of overspill, insisting simultaneously upon its abjection and the validity of its inclusion into broader Scottish cultural narratives. Galloway articulates the excess, the overspill that has been shunted away from the normative "core" spaces, both those demarcated by literal city limits and those circumscribed by limited cultural construction of Glasgow that feeds on the success of the city's iconic male novelists.

Now that we have established that Glasgow has an important function within the novel, we must attend to McGlynn's first point, that Boot Hill also functions as a "specific *sort* of city". Thinking of the housing estate as a recognisable spatial category aligns them with Marc Augé's theorisation of the non-places of supermodernity. These 'non-places' include supermarkets, airport lounges and motorways. Augé defines these non-places as "spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces" (94). Augé's contention is that such non-places are the defining feature of a particular moment in the development of homogenising late capitalism; that "non-places are the real measure of our time" (79).

The housing estate is another example of Augé's synthetic, anonymous "non-places". Augé describes the housing estate as somewhere that "people do not live together and which is never situated at the centre of anything (big estates characterize the so-called peripheral zones or outskirts)" (107–08). Housing estates, in this formulation, are definitionally peripheral, atomising, rootless and devoid of community. This accords with Alison Ravetz's description of housing

estates. In her study, she describes such locations as "planted environments, [with] few legacies of past evolutionary processes" (180). This anonymising commonality is also echoed in Joy's description of her experience in Bourtreehill, where "[n]obody knows anybody [. . .] We keep ourselves to ourselves for various reasons" (26). Non-places, according to Augé, sever the links between individuals and dislocate them from their collective past. These profoundly isolating spaces are "in conflict with identity, relationship and history. They are the spaces of circulation, communication and consumption, where solitudes coexist without creating any social bond or even a social emotion" ("Paris" 178). Gibb's analysis of the psychological impact of housing estates suggests that this a-sociality has profound and concrete effects on the health of their occupants. He argues that in such estates, "isolation leads to social withdrawal and confinement and ultimately ill-health, in young and old" (171). Joy's housing situation certainly seems to be complicit in the decline of her mental health. As Edwin Morgan has asserted, Boot Hill appears to have been "perfectly designed to be of least help to someone trying not to go mad" (91).

Augé contrasts non-places with what he terms "anthropological place",, which is characterised by its investment in "identity [. . .] relations and [. . .] history" (52). Augé elaborates his definition of this anthropological, or "storied" space:

"'Anthropological place' is formed by individual identities, through complicities of language, local references, the un-formulated rules of living know-how; non-place creates the shared identity of passengers, customers or Sunday drivers" (101). We might extrapolate from this definition that nationally specific Scottish space would fall within the category of "anthropological space". As McGlynn observes, throughout the description of Boot Hill, there are certain "regionally specific" markers. These suggest that, despite its synthetic, non-place affinities, the estate is also operating as a variety specifically Scottish anthropological space. The name "Bourtreehill", and the folk etymology offered by Joy evokes Celtic connotations (though these are troubled or refused by the estate's residents' choice of appellation), the word "shunters" in this context is a specifically Scottish lexical choice and, of course, the overt naming of Glasgow ties Boot Hill to a specific Scottish city. Such details are in tension

with the homogenising non-specific tendencies of Augé's non-places. This demonstrates the continued power and inescapability of anthropological place, with its implications of historical and national specificity. Scottishness intrudes upon and spills over into the synthetic non-place of the estate.

Significantly, neither the anthropological aspects of the estate, or its non-place construction, appear to be contributing positively to its residents' lives. Rather, Scottishness and supermodernity act in concert to the detriment of Joy's health and wellbeing. Galloway's novel implicates the anthropological specificity of Scottish identity within the homogenising drive of late capitalism. In the face of the alienation of the housing estate *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* resists the temptation to retreat into older narratives of Scottishness, and Scottish anthropological space, as redemptive. Indeed, Joy demonstrates an awareness of the inherent problems with inherited understandings of what constitutes "Scottish character". In a footnote, she pithily observes:

> *Love/Emotion = embarrassment: Scots equation. Exceptions are when roaring drunk or watching football. Men do rather better out of this loophole. (82)

Here, with characteristic concision and dark humour, Joy perceptively identifies and ridicules the stereotypes upon which categories of gender and national character are constructed. However, the implicit authority of the footnote form lends an air of academic authority to the "Scots equation" that undercuts this ridicule and acknowledges the entrenchment and enduring power of such demarcations.

Through the inclusion of details like this in the depiction of the overspill estate of Boot Hill, Galloway implicates particularly Scottish issues (such as the gender stereotypes at work in the footnote above), which pertain to the domain of "anthropological place" with the trans-national proliferation of "non-places", and all the attendant concerns they bring. The two kinds of space interact and impinge upon each other, neither managing to completely supersede the other. This accords with Augé's characterisation of the relation between the two categories:

> Place and non-place are rather like opposed polarities: the first is never completely erased, the second never totally completed; they are like palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten. (79)

I contend that the overspill setting of Galloway's novel crystallises this palimpsestic scramble; it is a profoundly de-stabilising location that renders the novel unsettling and ambivalent. Even the narrative's close retains important ambiguity. The novel ends with Joy deciding to move away from the rented house in Bourtreehill, back to a cottage that she owns (despite the fact that it is infested with dry rot). Mary McGlynn lauds this as an affirmative, positive step, asserting that "her decision to move back within the realm of reliable public transport and to fight the dry rot speaks to her renewed willingness to engage with society" (150). This reading is compelling, and resonates with Christianson's notion of "passable boundaries". However, despite the emancipatory potential of Joy's future plans, it is vital to recognise that the positivity of these decisions is undercut in the final scene, which sees the protagonist precisely where she started: drink in hand in the living room of her house in the overspill space of Boot Hill, trying to last through the night. Certainly, there has been some conceptual progress, but this progress is limited and grounded by the material reality of Joy's situation at the end of the novel; the next chapter of her life is left unwritten. This points to the continued force exerted by established boundaries, and the tremendous effort required to transgress them.

This interplay of possibility and limitation is inherent in the concept of overspill, emphasising the persistent discord and ambivalence that runs through the text. Thought of in this way, overspill is helpful to elucidate the idea of Scotland that is being explored in Galloway's text; the novel is both inescapably connected to narratives of nation and deeply sceptical of them. *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* recognises that Scottishness has the capacity to be both restrictive and expansive. The novel acknowledges the continued power, attraction and importance of definitional and geographical boundaries whilst utilising subversive strategies to gesture hopefully towards a more nuanced, positional and expansive configuration of Scottish identity that is yet to be realised.

The Trick is to Keep Breathing does not simply occupy the spaces of overspill through its setting, but also enacts this overspill through its experimental form. The use of formal experimentation has a specific national heritage; indeed it is often identified as one of the hallmarks of devolutionary Scottish literature. Indeed, it is this feature of Galloway's writing that most strongly associates her with earlier writers such as Alasdair Gray. Liam McIlvanney has asserted that the devolutionary political situation rendered Scottish novelists particularly sensitive to "the politics of form" (186). I suggest that, while it is important to situate Galloway's typographical innovations in a specifically Scottish context, we can also read the experimental form of *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* as a way of making visible and inescapable its location in the contested spaces of overspill.

Galloway's text abounds with marginalia; ambiguous fragments repeat elliptically without ever explicitly signalling their relationship to the main body of narrative that they both surround and invade. It is this dual motion of surrounding and invading that aligns Galloway's marginalia with the overspill impulse that I am seeking to elucidate. The truncated words form fractured almost-sentences that are at once separate from and intrinsic to the narrative of the text.

Pages 174–75 of the novel are littered with such marginalia. We might assemble the fragments across the two pages to read "sometimes presentiments that stop before it's too late but often we ignore the warnings so when the worst happens we can only blame ourselves"; a relatively coherent sentence that appears to correlate with and comment on the rape that is occurring in the main narrative. However, to enforce this coherence on the marginalia ignores the repetition within it and fills in the blanks where words are left unfinished. This act of reading imposes a clarity that is pointedly lacking in the text itself. Additionally, smaller parts of this assembled sentence appear at other points in the novel, which makes the reading of it as a direct comment on this particular moment even more problematic. When Cairns Craig reads an earlier incidence of the fragment "presentim" that we also find on this page, he stresses its ambiguity, asking "Is it 'present time', 'present him', 'represent him', compressed and truncated? Or is it 'present I'm' without grammatical and typographical markers?" (194). Ambivalence is inherent in

this typographical overspill; *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* both sustains and resists multiple acts of interpretation.

The overspill areas of prevailing categories, the dynamics of exclusion and inclusion, contestation and affirmation, are at the heart of Galloway's writing. She persistently probes the structures and conventions that are employed to valorise certain social groups, people and places at the expense of others. In a 1999 interview, she asserted her commitment to troubling the core-periphery model that consigns female experience to the margins:

> Simply for a woman to write as a woman, to be as honest about it as possible, is a statement; not falling into conventions and assuming guy stuff is 'real' stuff and we're a frill, a fuck or a boring bit that does housework and raises your kids around the edge. That stuff is not round the edge! It's the fucking middle of everything. Deliberately pointing up that otherness, where what passes for normal has no bearing on you or ignores you – that fascinates me. (March 87)

By occupying the spaces of overspill, Galloway's writing refuses to adhere to the narrative conventions that tacitly endorse and facilitate this perspective, and in so doing draws attention to the construction and limits of normative categories such as gender and nation. The spatial imaginary of Galloway's work offers new ways of thinking and navigating the boundaries and restrictions that demarcate the occupation of space, both materially and conceptually. Spaces of overspill, precisely because of their ambivalence and instability, demand the reconceptualisation of the bounded categories that necessarily produce them. Galloway's novel occupies this mobile and shifting territory; her writing acts as a palimpsest, participating in a constant, vital and ongoing re-negotiation of identity categories. The nation produced in this space must, necessarily, be unstable. It is this instability that produces generative possibilities. Though these are by no means necessarily realised – sometimes old boundaries must win the day – the space of overspill insists that every identity category, however rigid it may seem, is susceptible to the re-writings that are yet to come.

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SPACES OF THE SELF

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The Self and the City in Modern Scottish Fiction. A Study of James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*, Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* and Iain Banks's *The Bridge*

An industrial set without people is an empty shell.
A street is not a street without people…
it is as dead as mutton.
It had to be a combination of the two
– the mills and the people.
L.S. Lowry[1]

Above all, these are personal accounts:
as such, they are more valuable and meaningful, in my opinion,
than the impersonality and generalisation of sociology:
solipsistically, in face of something as huge and important as this,
all you can rely on is the personal,
all you are ultimately left with is the subjective.
B.S. Johnson, *The Evacuees*

In the history of Scottish literature, the late twentieth century was a period of a markedly heightened interest in the question of the nation's identity. Obviously, most if not all literary ventures revolve around explorations of this kind, be they focused on the personal, national or cultural dimensions of one's selfhood, and yet in the two

[1] Qtd. in Sadling and Leber 17.

decades preceding the devolution of Scotland, it seemed to become a particularly pressing concern for Scottish authors. Perhaps it was that with the awakened hopes for political autonomy, they were suddenly faced with a new responsibility; no longer simply writing about their reality, they were now writing *it*, portraying but also shaping the identity of their country.

This renewed insistence[2] on investigating the question of Scottishness converged with the emergence of some of the nation's most important urban narratives. This is no coincidence, since the city is the locus and epitome of modernity, functioning as the centre of history, politics, culture and art. Designed and created by people, cities may be viewed as the ultimate arena of human self-expression, our reflections that also allow us to reflect on ourselves. They are not neutral spaces where we simply reside, but living organisms dynamically interacting with their inhabitants, who are themselves an intrinsic part of these territories. As much as a physical, geographical location, the city is also a form of experience, a collage of events and stories. Consequently, cities are shaped by their people, but at the same time people are shaped by their cities, and somewhere within the realm of this interaction seems to lie the crux of modern existence.

This reciprocal relevance of the urban to the self and of the self to the urban is recognised and thoroughly explored by late-twentieth-century Scottish writers. Alasdair Gray's 1981 *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*, universally considered the book marking the beginning of the New Scottish Renaissance, renegotiated the question of the Scots' identity as well as offering an unprecedented reinvention of the Glasgow novel.[3] Other authors followed suit, taking up the issue of Scottishness by examining the country's cities, depicting them not as settings, but as complex entities dynamically interacting with the protagonists.

This article, therefore, seeks to investigate this convergence of the self and the city in Scottish pre-devolution fiction, hoping to

[2] This was the second such revival, following the Scottish Renaissance of the first half of the twentieth century.

[3] Obviously, urban writing was by no means a new occurrence on the Scottish literary scene; Gray's narrative, however, approached the subject from a completely different perspective.

provide some insight into the mechanisms and effects of this mutual relationship. The analysis focuses on three novels of the 1980s and 1990s, namely Gray's above-mentioned *Lanark*, Iain Banks's *The Bridge* (1986) and James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994). Concentrating primarily on the ways in which each author negotiates the self/space connection, the examination concludes with a brief overview of what these conjunctions reveal about the two parties involved. Significantly, in their respective narratives all three writers opt for a solitary protagonist somehow removed from the crowd. This is a deliberate move, allowing, on the one hand, to reveal the complexities of the individual self and avoid reductive generalisation, and, on the other, to emphasise the ultimate subjectivity of the urban experience – for every city is as manifold as its inhabitants. And yet, it is claimed, even though each author employs a different strategy and portrays a very different character, the three texts arrive at highly similar conclusions, offering jointly an intricate but consistent diagnosis of late-twentieth-century Scotland.

1. Imagining the City – Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*

In *Lanark*, considered the *magnum opus* within the writer's oeuvre and modern Scottish literature at large, Alasdair Gray tells the story of Duncan Thaw, a young artist born and raised in Glasgow, and his *alter ego* Lanark, who appears following Thaw's apparent suicide and arrives in the dark, hellish city of Unthank. Although the plot centres on Thaw/Lanark and his struggle for a meaningful life, it does feature another, equally crucial main character, namely the protagonist's city. In fact, the *Bildungsroman* aspect of the novel extends to both the man and the urban landscape; just as Lanark is Thaw, Unthank is Glasgow, the individual and the city evolving and subsequently morphing into their alternative, fantastic versions. Whilst this relationship – Lanark being Thaw (and, in fact, Gray himself[4])

[4] This autobiographical dimension has been broadly discussed by Gray himself. It is also explicitly denoted at the beginning of the novel, where prior to assuming the name of Lanark, the amnesiac character tries to remember his identity and all that comes back to him is a short word beginning with "Th" or "Gr" (Gray 20).

and Unthank being Glasgow – is by all means central to the narrative, it may be argued that there is another crucial connection lying at its core, and that is the link between the protagonist and his urban space. What *Lanark* seems to be primarily concerned with are the ways in which the artistic self reinvents the city, at the same time being created and shaped by it.

Gray's literary intention is clearly indicated in the oft-quoted passage expounding the novel's thesis. In response to his friend's musings as to why Glasgow's magnificence goes unnoticed, Duncan Thaw proclaims that it is "because nobody imagines living [there]" (Gray 243). He then goes on to explain that all great cities are made familiar by numerous artistic renditions of their landscapes, the lack of which makes imaginative existence impossible, and concludes: "What is Glasgow to most of us? A house, the place we work, a football park or golf course, some pubs and connecting streets. That's all. No, I'm wrong, there's also the cinema and library. […] Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music hall and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves" (Gray 243). The author's aim is, therefore, to salvage his city by recreating it imaginatively in writing and, indeed, visually – as one cannot forget the extensive artwork that constitutes an integral part of the book. And, as Thaw's comment demonstrates, salvaging the city means salvaging himself together with all inhabitants of Glasgow, inherently bound to their territory and consequently condemned to lead unimaginative lives.

The whole novel is built upon and revolves around this innate link between one's selfhood and one's city, which Gray shows to be a continuous, multifaceted and dynamic relationship. Tracing his hero's development from early childhood, the writer explores the formative effect that wartime Glasgow had on his identity as an artist and as a man, concurrently manifesting how an individual perspective always determines the shape of the urban landscape. We thus see the city change with the protagonist; Thaw's childhood vision, limiting Glasgow's geography to "a tenement block, a school and a stretch of canal", transforms into the adolescent's "gloomy huge labyrinth he would take years to find a way through" (Gray 146). In both cases, the emphasis falls on how the urban space features in Duncan's life – as a place where he lives and learns and which he then needs to dis-

cover and decipher. This reciprocal impact is also made apparent in Gray's numerous depictions of his protagonist's pedestrian journeys, as they always affect and simultaneously reflect his emotional state. As a result, walking becomes an experience, an event in itself. In one such instance the somewhat liberated imagination of Thaw, now an art student, expressly translates into his perception of Glasgow:

> Yet while he looked on people with the cold interest usually felt for things, the world of things began to cause surprising emotions. A haulage vehicle carrying a huge piece of bright yellow machinery swelled his heart with tenderness and stiffened his penis with lust. A section of tenement, the surface a dirty yellow plaster with oval holes through which brickwork showed, gave the eerie conviction he was beholding a kind of flesh. Walls and pavements, especially if they were slightly decayed, made him feel he was walking beside or over a body. His feet did not hit the ground less firmly, but something in him winced as they did so. (Gray 228)

Described in sensual, anthropomorphic terms governed by Thaw's frustrated desires, the space at the same time amplifies these emotions. The protagonist's self and the street converge, his imaginative vision a product of them both.

Another fragment testifying to the significance of walking in the city describes Thaw's evening perambulation, which gradually turns into something else altogether:

> His confidence grew with the darkness. His face took on a resolute, slightly wolfish look, his feet hit the pavement firmly, he strode past couples embracing in close mouths feeling isolated by a stern purpose which put him outside merely human satisfactions. This purpose was hardly one he could have explained (after all he was just walking, not walking to anywhere), but sometimes he thought he was searching for the key. (Gray 169)

The city thus becomes a potential source of meaning, the place that could provide Duncan with a universal yet precise answer to all of his woes. Having previously looked for it in science and philosophy books, he comes to the conclusion that it is rather to be discovered "on a night walk through the streets, printed on a scrap of paper,

blown out of the rubble of a bombed factory, or whispered in a dark street by someone leaning suddenly out of a window" (Gray 170). Such an idea of "the key" implies a profound and intimate connection between Gray's protagonist and the urban landscape that he inhabits, a notion further reinforced at the beginning of Book Three, where Lanark looks out of the window and all he sees is his own face and bedroom reflected in the glass (Gray 15).[5] This concept of the window as a mirror indicates that the protagonist sees himself in the city, that his act of looking at the city equals introspective self-reflection. Ultimately then, the identities of Thaw/Lanark and the cityscape become intermingled; one may claim, for instance, that while Lanark's dragonhide, a strange skin disease caused and aggravated by negative emotions, mirrors Thaw's eczema, it also mirrors the diseased state of Unthank, a city corrupted by callous indifference.

Just as the boundary between the protagonist and the urban space is erased, so – in a move largely dictated by Thaw/Lanark's artistic inclinations – is another line blurred, namely the one between reality and imagination. This convergence culminates in the form of Unthank (and, perhaps, Provan[6]), which although fantastic, remains as well the real Glasgow. The re-imagined landscape is defined by the protagonist's artistic vision, but it is still the same territory that made and then broke Thaw, all its transitions echoing the actual historical changes that took place from the late 1950s, through the 1960s, and up to the 1970s (Burgess 253, 255). Gray himself stresses Unthank's rootedness in actuality by pronouncing it at one point "familiar" (419). Obviously, this observation refers primarily to Lanark's familiarity with the landscape from his previous life, but it may too be viewed as an authorial comment on the fundamental link between real Glasgow and its imagined version. In this way, Gray endows his home territory with a mythical dimension proper to "great" cities, existing not only physically, but also culturally and artistically. As Edwin Morgan explains: "He was perhaps the first person to see that

[5] A parallel scene occurs when Lanark is on the train to Unthank (Gray 16), and during his stay in Provan (Gray 506).

[6] Since upon his arrival in Provan Lanark recognises its lanscape, it may be – and indeed has been (see: Burgess 255–256) – argued that the city is actually yet another version of Glasgow.

Glasgow could be, well 'mythologised' is perhaps the wrong word – but something like mythologised. It had to be a real presence, it was a real place, but at the same time it had to be given a resonating, a reverberating kind of existence that you would expect a big place to have, and he was able to do that" (qtd. in Burgess 254). In *Lanark*, the city is certainly granted that dual presence, its actual space proving to have an infinitely imaginative potential.

Finally, given that both Gray and his protagonist are painters, it no surprise that the key to their shared vision of the urban is to be found in art. It would seem that the best analogy for the writer's literary quest to truly embrace Glasgow is young Thaw's endeavour to paint the Blackhill locks in their entirety: "He invented a perspective showing the locks from below when looked at from left to right and from above when seen from right to left; […] Working from maps, photographs, sketches and memory his favourite views had nearly all been combined into one […]" (Gray 279). This artistic principle brings to mind the oeuvre of L.S. Lowry, and while it has been noted that *Lanark*'s illustrations share an affinity with the English painter's works (King 100), the claim should also be extended to include the novel's textual content. The fact that many of Lowry's paintings are in fact imaginative composites of different landscapes rather than faithful panoramas can certainly be related to Gray's narrative portrayal of his city. However, there is also another artistic point of reference that comes to mind, and that is Cubism. The avant-garde movement's technique of showing the subject from a multitude of viewpoints, both spatial and temporal, does appear to correspond to the way in which Thaw and Gray strive to truly grasp their urban space. As a character encountered by Lanark in Provan puts it, "true profundity blends all possible views, bright as well as dark" (Gray 477), and true profundity is precisely what this novel aims to achieve. Through the eyes of his protagonist, Gray creates a vision of Glasgow that is concurrently universal and unique, paving the way for further reinventions of the city.

2. The Estranged Familiar – James Kelman's *How Late It Was, How Late*

In Sigmund Freud's famous essay *The Uncanny* (1919), among the many discussed instances of the *Unheimlich* is a personal anecdote in which the unsettling psychological effect is the result of the self's interaction with the urban territory. Freud describes the disturbing experience of strolling through an Italian town and, despite taking various routes, repeatedly arriving at its red light district, as if he was being pulled in that particular direction (144). In *How Late It Was, How Late*, James Kelman too offers a perspective on the ways in which the urban space may become a source of profound psychological unease. Here it is the city itself that becomes the estranged familiar. Where Freud kept finding himself in the same place, Kelman's Sammy Samuels, a working-class Glaswegian suddenly and unexpectedly deprived of his eyesight, finds himself in a different place altogether, a situation evocatively illustrated by the following passage: "He hit a space, tapped into it; he got to the wall and patacaked; it was a corner, he went round it and the wall was still there where it should have been a window, the chemist show window" (Kelman 129). This appears to be symbolic of Sammy's whole new relationship with his city. That city is still Glasgow, still familiar, but made strange, challenging the protagonist and forcing him to revise his assumptions and expectations.

In this way, Kelman powerfully rewrites the concept of the urban space as an experience. Normally, the city is primarily and predominantly explored through sight. Sammy's loss of that principal sense opens the doors to alternative forms of perception and thus to a fresh and deeper understanding of Glasgow and its mechanisms. What the author seems to do is undermine "seeing" as a synonym for "understanding". Rather tellingly, when prior to losing his eyesight Sammy wakes up in the street, he sees "people – there was people there; eyes looking. These eyes looking. Terrible brightness and he had to shield his own cause of it, like they were godly figures and the light coming from them was godly or something but it must just have been the sun high behind them shining down ower their shoulders" (Kelman 2). Aside from it being a satirical comment on the

glorified status of visitors to Glasgow, this scene could also be read as an indication that Sammy's eyes are playing tricks on him, distorting his perception of reality. Blindness, in turn, brings "the auld concentration, nay visual interferences" (Kelman 159). In the novel, true understanding does not come from seeing, but from hearing, smelling and touching the city. And so a new landscape of Glasgow is revealed, one that lacks the sense of wholeness and coherence provided by vision, replacing it with the chaotic fragmentariness of the material supplied by the other senses, a fragmentariness that testifies to the true nature of this space. This altered experience of the city brings to mind the work of Michel de Certeau, a twentieth-century French scholar drawing from and combining several fields of study including philosophy, psychoanalysis and the social sciences, to explore the problem of modern urban life. Sammy's new perspective epitomises de Certeau's argument that "escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface […]" (93). In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau's most influential text, the totalising view from above is contrasted with the "blind" practices of the pedestrians – the ones who truly experience and engage with the urban space (93); while this blindness is metaphorical, Sammy's real lack of eyesight certainly proves de Certeau's point.

The city and Sammy are therefore transformed together, impacting each other throughout the process. Blindness signifies a dramatic shift, both in the protagonist himself and his relationship with his urban territory. What the loss of eyesight gives him is an actually welcome change from "the usual" (Kelman 6),[7] a directionless, lethargic existence that the city appears to promote, turning its inhabitants into "wee ants, beetles" (Kelman 205). Blindness shakes Sammy out of this inertia, as evidenced, for example, by the fact that it keeps him away from pubs, identified as places where people spend (or waste) their time waiting and hoping (Kelman 213). Moreover,

[7] As Sammy emphatically puts it himself, "his life had changed, it had changed. The sooner he accepted that the better. But he wanted his life to change anyway I mean it was fucking rubbish" (Kelman 133).

it at least partly restores his memory,[8] suppressed by his previous urban life. The awakening thus involves facing facts and thinking about things that Sammy does not want to think about (Kelman 155). And while the thoughts that the protagonist wishes to repress relate primarily to personal matters, Kelman is clearly equally interested in the usually omitted facts about Glasgow. Throughout the text, Sammy insists that he generally seeks to avoid dealing with the system in all its guises. His predicament, however, entails facing the reality of the Kafkaesque bureaucracy that is part of so many people's daily existence. The surreal account of Sammy's quest to simply get re-registered due to his disability makes for a scathing denunciation of Glasgow's health and social security authorities.

However, perhaps the most crucial revelation here is that in a sense the protagonist does not really know Glasgow, but rather operates within in mechanically, unreflectingly. This becomes evident when he attempts to find the way home after being released from the police station: "But how many crossings to the main road? How many wee streets before the big one! It was laughable, no knowing. There were all these things ye think ye've committed to memory but have ye! have ye fuck" (Kelman 36). Consequently, he needs to learn and map out the city anew. His engagement with the urban space soon makes it apparent that Kelman conceives the Glaswegian landscape as an active, dynamic participant. The sense of a mutual interaction is connoted by descriptions of Sammy's attempts to literally feel his way through the suddenly defamiliarised geography. The concept used at numerous points in the text is that of a pata-cake game – which is a game for two. And while Kelman's portrayal focuses on Sammy playing, it certainly seems that the city, too, engages in the process. This notion is further reinforced by the street "taking" and "leading" the protagonist (Kelman 48), allowing him to keep going, "get that wee rhythm going ye're into yer stride and there's fuck all gony do ye if ye just keep going, no too big a stride, but enough, just enough, to keep going and ye get yerself into something or other yer head just gets full of it it just gets full of it, full of

[8] Whilst the question of the time lost just prior to the narrative's beginning remains largely unanswered, Sammy suddenly finds himself thinking about, "the early days", his parents, ex-wife and son (Kelman 89–90).

that and nothing but the truth man that's how it goes […]" (Kelman 50). Sammy is shown here to be under the street's influence, a notion confirmed and taken even further with another passage, where walking is depicted to induce a drugged-like state (Kelman 38). All these elements may be associated with the Situationist conception of the urban space. Obviously, Sammy's frantic negotiation of the Glaswegian landscape bears little relation to the relaxed perambulations, or drifts, advocated and practiced by the Situationists; hovever, Kelman's exploration of the urban environment's impact on an individual's psyche does correspond to the way in which Guy Debord – the founder, leader and principal theorist of the Situationist International, whose work played an important part in the Paris protests of the 1968 – conceived the notion of psychogeography, defining it as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, whether consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals" (23). Such an interpretation of urban spatiality further confirms that the city accompanies Sammy on his journey of (self-)discovery. The streets do carry him – and often, as already demonstrated, in unexpected directions.

Ultimately, what Kelman does is make Sammy Samuels a guide whose unseeing eyes show the readers the other side of the European City of Culture. In accordance with de Certeau's definition of the walker as the real practitioner of the city (93), the protagonist offers his unique, personal experience of Glasgow. This territory may be quite bleak, rather limited, and nothing like what one would see on any official guided tour, but it is without a doubt a living, breathing place.

3. The Urban Landscape of the Self – Iain Banks's *The Bridge*

Unlike the two previously discussed texts, Iain Banks's novel offers no direct reinvention of Glasgow, nor of any other city for that matter, and yet it is closely linked with Gray's literary debut. Indeed, Banks openly proclaims his narrative to be indebted to *Lanark*, without which, the author insists, "*The Bridge* would [not] be the way it is at all […]" (qtd. in Burgess 259). However, while there are

definite parallels between the two stories – the most prominent being the fact that both intertwine depictions of real and fantastic urban spaces observed from the point of view of a single individual – the imagined spaces themselves are fundamentally dissimilar, and for two main reasons. The first one is that the two protagonists are very different people, which corroborates what has already been postulated, namely that a personal perspective always shapes the viewed landscape. Gray's Thaw is a frustrated artist endowed with a dramatic vision, and his Glaswegian hell is conceived accordingly; Lennox, Banks's protagonist who falls into a coma following a car crash and finds himself on the titular bridge, is a successful engineer, his technological inclinations clearly and literally reflected in the construction of this new space. The second reason lies in the ontological difference between Unthank and the bridge. As previously mentioned, the latter does not constitute a representation of any city. Rather, it superimposes a fictive metropolitan landscape onto the Fort Railway Bridge. It is thus purely a product of the protagonist's comatose mind,[9] but as such functions as the sum of his urban experiences. Herein lies the writer's conceit – the bridge is a spatial manifestation of the individual psyche, which is in turn a psychological representation of the processes defining Scotland of the second half of the twentieth century.[10]

Given this framework, the key to understanding the realm of the bridge lies in understanding its architect and creator. As Thaw in *Lanark*, Lennox is reborn in this new place, becoming John Orr, an amnesiac with no memories of his previous life. The insight into the structure and workings of the bridge is provided in chapters which are intertwined with the Orr narrative and detail Lennox's real story. From them we find out that he comes from a working class Glaswegian family, but has moved to Edinburgh to study and work; there he ends up climbing the social ladder and achieving great financial

[9] Thom Nairn suggests that the novel it is "quite literally 'a stream of consciousness'" (131).

[10] It has to be added here that the narrative is in fact far more intricate in that it incorporates several landscapes, some of them non-urban, as well as other figures representing different aspects of the protagonist's psyche. The bridge and its inhabitant, however, seem to be the core of Bank's argument regarding the state of the nation, and are thus central to the present analysis.

success. The geographical move therefore stands for several shifts, also mirrored in the protagonist's educational choices. Whilst in Glasgow, he excelled in history, which may symbolise a recognition of his roots. Once in Edinburgh, he went on to study geology, retaining the link with his previous existence, but then changed to engineering, a fact accounting for the shape of the bridge as well as symbolic of a broader change within Scottish society. Actually, Lennox's whole transition from "the industrial heartland which was already failing" to the "ghost capital", "a new and wonderful place" (Banks 101, 103), appears to function as Banks's commentary on the state of Scotland in the period from the 1960s to the 1980s and the direction that the country was taking, moving away from industrialism and towards capitalist urbanism.

This sense of the protagonist's, and Scotland's, in-betweenness is made literal with the form of the bridge, a space of transit. Interestingly and symptomatically, although it is supposed to constitute a link between the Kingdom and the City, it seems unconnected with either, the lands at its two ends remaining "enigmatic, placeless" (Banks 47). Instead, it is a feat of impressive yet soulless technology, lacking cultural or historical markings, lacking, in short, identity. The library, the only repository of the past, goes missing and is subsequently destroyed, suggesting the rejection of history. As such, Banks's vision of the bridge as Scotland's urban landscape seems to border on the territory explored by Marc Augé, a contemporary French anthropologist most famous for his investigations of what he terms "supermodernity", and author of the concept of "non-places", that is locations devoid of geographical or cultural specificity. Augé explains: "If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place. The hypothesis advanced here is that supermodernity produces non-places, meaning spaces which are not themselves anthropological places and which, unlike in Baudelairean modernity, do not integrate the earlier places […]" (63). The bridge does come close to this category, making it a grim prediction for the evolving Scottish identity.

Although deficient in terms of identity, this landscape is certainly imbued with a great deal of symbolism. It constitutes a physical rep-

resentation of "a literally stratified culture" (March 94), internalised by the protagonist who has been through its various layers. Its decks stand for class divisions and social inequality, and while for Orr the journey begins at the very privileged top, it soon turns out that his road to self-discovery leads downwards and eventually out of the bridge. His sudden demotion in social and spatial terms – John's status changes with him being moved seven levels below the rail deck, to a completely different world "where workers, ordinary people live" (Banks 134) – testifies to what Lennox appears to have forgotten in real life, namely that this whole upward mobility is rather illusive and uncertain. Thus, the bridge simultaneously represents and deconstructs the protagonist's assumptions. Whilst Orr may feel like a wronged victim of some top-down imposed system, Banks is careful to emphasise his complicity, a fact pointedly illustrated by his post-demotion exchange with a doorman at the bar he used to frequent; the doorman does not recognise Orr in his worker's uniform, but Orr himself exhibits equal ignorance, being just as unable to tell him apart from other men occupying the same position (Banks 141). In this way, the landscape of the bridge encompasses all of the protagonist's often contradictory impulses and convictions, its paradoxical structure reflecting the paradoxes of Scottish identity.

In the end, then, just as the bridge itself, the correlation between this imagined urban space and the protagonist proves extremely intricate and multilayered. Like the two previously discussed novels, Bank's narrative offers no straightforward answers or solutions, but it does make some very important observations about modern Scottish reality. Gray and Kelman portray the city from the perspective of the self. Banks proves that the self itself may be portrayed as an urban landscape.

4. The Scottish City and Mental Life

With such variety between the three novels one might easily assume that each text's examination of the Scottish self, the Scottish city and their mutual relationship would render highly disparate results. This, however, is precisely where their significance lies: while remaining faithful to the uniqueness of their protagonists and stories,

all three narratives serve as a point of departure for a much broader discussion, one that encompasses the whole nation. Transcending the purely singular, subjective dimension, they show the city as a space that is both personal and universal, a simultaneously real and imagined territory indivisible from the lives of its inhabitants.

In their respective ways, all three writers pinpoint analogous problematic areas of modern Scotland's urban geographies, each profoundly affecting the urban self. Arguably, the most fundamental of those, and one that actually troubles most late-twentieth-century observers of Western civilisation at large, is the dehumanisation and homogenisation of cities and their mechanisms. Kelman focuses primarily on the workings of state apparatuses, Gray and Banks depict the same bureaucratic nightmare, and then couple it with the insistence on technological and financial advancement over the well-being of the inhabitants. Together, all these elements make up a vision that echoes Georg Simmel's 1903 essay "The Metropolis and Mental Life". In his seminal enquiry into the correlation between the self and the urban, Simmel argues that the metropolitan space is ruled by the money economy, which leads to a reduction of qualitative values to quantitative ones. He writes: "To the extent that money, with its colourlessness and its indifferent quality, can become a common denominator of all values, it becomes a frightful leveller – it hollows out the core of things, their peculiarities, their specific values and their uniqueness and incomparability in a way which is beyond repair" (Simmel 106). This has a profound effect on the city's inhabitants whose selves turn as hollow as their landscape. In Simmel's words, "in buildings and in educational institutions, in the wonders and comforts of space-conquering technique, in the formations of social life and in the concrete institutions of the State is to be found such a tremendous richness of crystallizing, de-personalized cultural accomplishments that the personality can, so to speak, scarcely maintain itself in the face of it" (110). Such a perspective certainly matches the three writers' diagnosis of Scottish cities as places where individuals become cogs in the urban machine and, thrown into their respective roles, can hardly preserve their unique identities. This is obviously a global phenomenon, but in Scotland's case it carries an additional weight. After all, in the years leading up to the country's devolution, the national identity that was exposed to

homogenising urban processes was one that was only about to truly assert itself.

Perhaps it is this threat to the evolving Scottishness that the novelists imply by introducing the concept of the city as a space out of time,[11] and thus lacking any sense of history – past, present or future. It also explains why each protagonist suffers from a form of amnesia and struggles to have his memory restored, an indication of an urgent need to rediscover what it means to be Scottish. The three authors seem to concede the dominance of urbanism as the Scots' way of life; Lanark cannot escape Unthank despite his efforts, and while Sammy and John Orr ultimately decide to leave, it is for another city. The real point, however, is not about escaping at all; the point is that the inhabitants must recognise the historical and cultural significance of their urban territories and attempt to redeem them – and thus themselves.

In the end, the people are the key, both the positive and the negative one. Gray, Kelman and Banks all devote a great deal of attention to the profound social fragmentation and the striking lack of communication between the different strata of Scottish society. But, as their novels show, like the problem, the solution too lies with the Scots themselves. Thus, while often highly critical in their tone, at their very core all three narratives are ultimately celebrations of the Scottish spirit seeking to stand its ground.

Conclusion

This is by no means an exhaustive investigation of the ever-complex relationship between the self and the city, and of the ways in which this relationship inscribes itself into the question of modern Scottish identity. Hopefully, however, it can be viewed as a tentative introduction to this important phenomenon, signalling some of its major aspects. At this point, the only definite conclusion to be drawn is

[11] Arguably, in *How Late It Was, How Late*, the notion – restricted to Sammy's sense of temporal confusion – is explored on a much smaller scale compared to Gray's and Bank's visions of fantastic urban landscapes where time as we know it no longer exists. Nevertheless, in all three cases the idea is still decidedly there.

that there is no way of discussing the city without the urban self and the urban self without the city, as the two are inherently and inseparably intertwined. And that in the case of Scottish literature of the late twentieth century this conjunction produces some very compelling results.

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Landscapes of the Mind: Spaces for the Dialogical Self in *The Other McCoy*

> "Our sense of place is so strong it's difficult to tell if we inhabit the landscape or if it inhabits us"
> (MacDougall 1)

1. Introduction: Imagining a Scottish place

The sense of place is said to be one of the distinguishing hallmarks of Scottish writing. Attached to a certain notion of belonging, there are descriptions of all kinds of Scottish places, from idealised landscapes of the Highlands to gloomy images of the post-industrial urban areas, which would reflect a communal identity – that, according to Carl MacDougall, "has been the springboard into our sense of ourselves and our identity as a nation" (6). It is true that literature has given shape to an imagined Scottish identity, in the sense that it has contributed to the construction of an illusion that comprises many different elements and suppresses many others.

However, the connection between nation, identity and literature is a "relatively recent historical construction" (Corse 7). In Europe, it originated in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the idea of the unique character of a nation (*Volksgeist* for the German Ro-

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mantics) defended. In contrast, in Scotland, nationalism arose much later. This *Volkgeist* would encounter its realisation through national art, giving rise to *national literatures*, in which the language and the landscape bear the people's character, or rather, serve to establish a common cultural identity. Thus, the narratives of the nation "provide a set of stories, images, landscapes, scenarios, historical events, national symbols and rituals which [. . .] represent the shared experience [. . .] which give meaning to the nation" (Hall 293). And these representations of shared experience will not only justify the nation's unique essence, but will also be something that the people can identify with.

If there are no representations of Scottish places, Scotland cannot be imagined. Allow me to exemplify this strong statement with Duncan Thaw's lament on the fact that "nobody imagines living here", in Glasgow (Gray 243). As Lanark's alter-ego, Thaw elaborates: "think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them is a stranger because he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively" (Gray 243).

Nevertheless, the situation has changed in the last decades, after Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* was published in 1981, and there have been published plenty of novels set in the city of Glasgow. In an article titled "No Real City", Brian McCabe writes on the representations of Glasgow in fiction. In this article, also published in 1981, when what has been called the Second Scottish Renaissance[2] was only beginning, McCabe claimed that: "in recent years Glasgow had begun to exist imaginatively" ("No" 10). It must be noted that, even though both *Lanark* and McCabe's article were published in the same year, Gray started to write *Lanark* in 1954 – and he finished the first book

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[2] In the nineteen eighties, the literary production in Scotland saw such an important revitalisation that some critics have spoken of the coming of a "Second Scottish Renaissance". Among the many authors included in this movement are: Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Tom Leonard, Janice Galloway, Irvine Welsh, Alan Warner, A.L. Kennedy, Jackie Jay, Ali Smith, Iain Banks, Ian Rankin, Dylis Rose, Andrew Greig, Ron Butlin, Liz Lochhead, Brian McCabe, etc. (Aliaga, *Redefinition* 37–62). For more on the Second Scottish Renaissance, see "Chapter One: Contemporary Scottish Literature: Socio-historical Context" (Aliaga, *Redefinition* 17–62).

in 1963–, but had many difficulties in getting it published. He continued to write the remaining three books of the novel, which was finished in 1976, five years before it was published. Hence, this justification of the divergence about the quantity of representations of Glasgow in fiction, as held by Gray's character Thaw and by McCabe, shows that, indeed, there were very few Scottish places appearing in fiction published before the nineteen eighties, and that this trend definitely changed in the following years.

Perhaps, what allowed for the resulting presence of Scottish places in literature was the renewed self-confidence brought about by the publication of *Lanark*. "In the nineteen eighties, the literary production in Scotland saw such an important revitalisation that some critics have spoken of the coming of a 'Second Scottish Renaissance'" (Aliaga, "Other" 11). Moreover, Gray was baptised by *The Guardian* as "the Founding Father of the Scottish renaissance"[3] (*Guardian Web*). Critics such as Douglas Gifford, Sarah Dunnigan, and Alan MacGillivray have also stated that "[s]omewhere in the 80s a new mood, a new perspective, entered into the work of novelists, poets and dramatists" (Gifford, Dunnigan and MacGillivray 732). This popularisation and success of Scottish literature brought about a richer and more notable presence of Scottish settings, especially some of them.

Since the nineteen eighties many stories have been set in the city of Glasgow, but very few have Edinburgh as their setting. In fact, if we glance through Roderick Watson's *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century*, Edinburgh only appears mentioned once: when describing Ian Rankin's work, it is said: "[w]ith settings in Edinburgh rather than in Glasgow" (Watson 175). In contrast, the city of Glasgow has received much more attention, both by writers and critics. Let us take a look at how Edinburgh has been imagined by a Scottish author who has written several poems, short stories and a novel, *The Other McCoy* (1990).

Brian McCabe's novel tells the story of Patrick McCoy, an unemployed comedian who goes all over the city of Edinburgh in order to sell spyholes. Readers can wander with him through the streets

[3] However, Gray himself was quite skeptical about such labelling (Aliaga, "Other" 11).

and pubs or real Edinburgh, as all the street names, as well as all the other places, are a representation of real places in Edinburgh. In fact, the descriptions are so accurate that the Spanish edition of the novel (*El otro McCoy*, 2012) shows a detailed map of Edinburgh that includes all the places that the protagonist traverses, as well as some photographs of those places.

In *The Other McCoy*, Patrick's wanderings through Edinburgh are overtly associated with those of Stephen Dedalus and Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses* in a reviewer's comment reproduced on the back cover of the 1991 edition of the novel: "Brian McCabe has constructed a remarkably pacy little odyssey around the city of Edinburgh, delivered with great gusto, wit and invention". Like Joyce with Dublin, McCabe is often rather ironic and comic in his depictions of urban Scotland, presenting Edinburgh as a teeming and chaotic city, swarmed by people of all types, including tourists, with McCoy in the role of one of these tourists in an endless city tour.

2. Imagining Edinburgh: Brian McCabe's *The Other McCoy*

Brian McCabe was born in 1951 in Easthouses, a small town in a coal mining area near Edinburgh. He grew up as the youngest of four children, in Bonnyrigg, Bonnybridge, King's Lynn, Norfolk and later in Falkirk, where he started writing poetry while attending High school. It was not until he decided to study Philosophy and English Literature at Edinburgh University that he moved to the capital city, where he continues to live now (Aliaga, "*Other*" 33). Thus McCabe has a very personal knowledge of those small mining-areas communities as well as of the city Edinburgh, which can be sensed in his accurate descriptions and his ambivalent relation towards both spaces, as we shall see in the analysis below.

The Other McCoy tells the story of Patrick McCoy, who wakes up on Hogmanay with a bad hangover in his meagre shed. He gets up unable to remember clearly what he did the night before at a friend's party. In this state of mind he cannot help but think about his present condition, his past and his future. His landlord wants to evict him from the terrible shed where he has to live, so Pat gets up and

tries to make some money by selling spyholes door to door. During his wandering through the streets of Edinburgh, McCoy meets many strangers and some of his friends too (Aliaga, "*Other*" 221–22).

The plot, which shows the simplicity of time and space of a long short story, develops on a single day: Hogmanay; and in a single place: the city of Edinburgh. The author himself explained to me that he chose deliberately a concrete and reduced space and time for his only novel, "trying to keep things tight, economical and manageable" (McCabe, Personal correspondence 2005). One of the main elements contributing to the unity of effect in *The Other McCoy* is, then, the rising suspense. This effect, which traps the reader, is achieved in by means of an economic and condensed narration, full of symbols, ellipses, and the telling of two parallel story-lines which alternate with each other, conveying a surplus of meaning in their contrasts and similitude, retrospections and anticipations, and the duality (or multiplicity, as we shall see later) of narrative voices. In Bakhtinian terms – or rather post-Baktinian – *The Other McCoy* would follow the structure of a dialogical (tragic)comical chronotope (Bemong and Borghart 8).

Hence, the apparent simplicity of time and space in *The Other McCoy* is only superficial. In contrast with the fabula time-span, which covers only one day, we find a very complex ordering of events at the story level. The story is full of internal analepses or retrospections, which are introduced through the reflections of the focalisers. The reader is constantly brought out of what can be described as the story's present – Hogmanay – back to some moment in the past of the actors concerned (Aliaga, "*Other*" 226). Characteristically, these analepses reflect the focalisers' experience; after all, it is McCoy, as focaliser and as main character, who does not remember what had exactly happened the day before since he has a tremendous hangover, and so has to construct his story by means of hints and fragmentary recollections: "Isolated moments of it [the party] began to surface in his memory, like bits of a home-made video" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 28). Thus, the novel's words, like a videotape that seems to be both familiar and strange, with forward and backwards leaps, accurately reflect McCoy's process of remembering as well as his personal odyssey. Space would be his only certainty, as he cannot

remember his most recent past, or know his most immediate future, space is his only guide in his quest for meaning.

As stated above, the plot of the novel is described on its back cover as a "remarkably pacy little odyssey around the city of Edinburgh", and in a sense it is true that McCoy has an un-epic journey in his hometown, the Athens of the North. Movement, or wandering, seems to allow McCoy to think, to reintegrate the scattered parts of himself, as he talks to himself and to the strangers and friends that he finds on the streets of Edinburgh.

It must be said that Patrick McCoy is a comedian who specialises in impersonating other people and speaking with different voices. He not only does this on stage, during his door-to-door trip, constantly impersonating other people, but he also speaks through their voices and slips under their skins, while he tries to find out who he really is and who the other people are (Aliaga, "*Other*" 223). This aspect of McCoy's personality brings to mind Peter Ackroyd's "monopolylinguist", music-hall comedian who can speak in different voices and change roles rapidly in the same play (Onega, "Reescrituras" 460). Like Ackroyd's monopolynguist, McCoy does not actually imitate other people, rather he feels as if he really were transformed into whomever he is impersonating; as if he were the other(s).

McCoy cannot help transforming himself into anybody and, in this sense, we could say that his consciousness as well as his unconscious are multiple. Interestingly, he is well aware of his imitating abilities and strategies, although he may not know how to control them; thus, he feels different voices struggling inside him: "If only the wild laughter inside would go away. It was out of some dark place inside him. Out of control. Out of order" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 11). When McCoy impersonates other people, we find other(s) – "minor" characters – providing the reader with second-degree focalisations, through McCoy's flow-of-consciousness. Moreover, his own focalisation or mind set is also changed by this dialogue that he establishes with the reality outside. Usually, it is something actual, the view of a landscape or the contact with a stranger, that allows him to enter this dialogue, as if the sights and smells and sounds of the city of Edinburgh carried other times and other places with them.

Most of the time the action of the novel takes place in the streets of Edinburgh, since McCoy earns a living by selling spyholes. Many

real street in Edinburgh are mentioned and described in McCoy's wanderings: The Royal Mile, Gilmore Place, Dundee Street, Tarvit Street, Princes Street, Tollcross, Haymarket, Bread Street, Dublin Street, Leith Walk, Dundas Street, Cowgate, Union Street, London Street, Hanover Street, High Street; as well as other recognisable places such as Dean Bridge, Portobello, Union Canal, Leith Docks, the Castle, Arthur's Seat, Waverly Station, Lady Stairs House, St Giles, and the pub Tron, next to St Giles. Both Scottish readers as well as foreign readers who have visited Edinburgh recognise these places, described or rather represented if not with many details, then at least with great authenticity.

In his wanderings through the streets of Edinburgh, the narrator shows McCoy the environment of typical Scottish characters. Patrick's actions are, then, set against the background of a social environment portraying the protagonist's community, the common people of his city. This notion of community is very much present in the novel, and constitutes an important element in McCoy's search for self-identity, as we shall see. In this sense, McCoy's wanderings through the streets of Edinburgh to sell spyholes may be read as an attempt to communicate with other people, driven by the desire to feel happy (Aliaga, "*Other*" 230). Echoing this, the action is presented in real pubs, cafés, and streets of Edinburgh where McCoy feels the comfort of the crowd, the "sweating swarm of humanity" (McCabe, *The Other McCoy* 161).

In the next section I will talk about the self and how the environment may influence our set of mind – our mental landscape – and open us up to a dialogue with others.

3. Spaces of the dialogical self: An approach to Scottish literature

For the purposes of the analysis of the relationship between space and identity in *The Other McCoy*, I will focus on the dialogical relationships that the main characters in the novel establish with themselves and with others in a definite space. Since the concept of the *dialogical self* might need some explanation first, a brief theoretical introduction will be offered in this section.

The cultural and ideological revolutions taking place at the turn of the twentieth century would completely change the understandings of the self. Among the most influential modernist thinkers who contributed to this dialogical turn, we find intellectuals such as William James, the author of the monumental *Principles of Psychology* (1890); George Herbert Mead, one of the founders of social psychology; Ludwig Wittgenstein, who developed the concept of *Sprachenspiel* or linguistic context; Lev Vygotsky, whose theories attempted to explain the origins of the mind and its properties as derived from "intermental" social processes; and the Bakhtin group, which included Mikhail Bakhtin, Valentin Volosinov, L.V. Pumpyansky, M.V. Yudina, B.M. Zubakin, M.I. Kagan, Pavel Medvedev and I.I. Sollertisnky (Aliaga, *Redefinition* 116).

Bakhtin believed that consciousness follows the model of dialogue and, thus, that it requires an interlocutor, the presence of another: "Becoming conscious of myself, I attempt to see myself through the eyes of another person, of another representative of my social class or group" (Todorov 30). This dialogue between self and other through which thought and identity are structured, involves the pre-existence of differences. Besides, self and other are further divided by the fact that self-perception is dependent upon the other's perception, and by the fact that both perceptions will differ. As meaning-making and communicative animals, we use language to bridge that perceptive gap. It seems logical, then, that language should have become a central philosophical issue.

Dialogism focuses on the conversational quality of human nature, and understands language as "communication in action" (Sampson 97). Bakhtin and other members of the Russian Formalist school – Medev, Voloshinov, etc. – emphasised the socio-historical, extra-linguistic aspects of texts (Onega, "Intertextuality" 4). According to them, any utterance is "the product of the interaction of the interlocutors, and broadly speaking, the product of the whole complex social situation in which it had occurred" (Voloshinov 128). Consequently, context – understood as the human situation to which a person is responding and reacting at a given moment – became a central interest. Julia Kristeva later refocused Bakhtin's approach to language and literature, and proposed "a theory of meaning which must necessarily be a theory of the speaking subject" (Moi 27). This

speaking subject is inscribed in the body, in history, in space and in a given social code.

Naturally, we must be cautious when applying theories related to postcolonialism to Scottish literature, even when analysing the ideological and political implications of e.g. space, as the Scottish case is very different to that of the former British colonies. However, some of the theorisations on space that are used in postcolonial theory can be very useful when analysing a novel, Scottish or not. And, as Cairns Craig – who has strongly criticised the use of Bakhtin's and Bhabha's notions of "hybridity" in the study of Scottish literature – has stated: "the nation is and always was a dialogic entity, constituted by the ongoing argument [. . .] of its internal differences" (Craig, "Scotland" 284). Therefore, one can still make use of some postcolonial[4] theory and terminology, without uncritically appropriating them, when trying to analyse the ideological and political meaning of space in Scottish literature, if the existing differences between British colonies and Scotland are taken into account.

For instance, some of Bakhtin's theorisations have been very useful in the analysis of Scottish works. His concept of the literary *chronotope*, for example, although maybe too vague and open – since Bakhtin never offers a definitive definition of the concept (Bemong and Borhart 5), has shown "how literature can help us to appreciate the fact that [. . .] transformations of time concepts and spatial representations reflect radical changes in cultural attitudes and lived experience" (Bemong, et al. iii). And not only that, human beings, as well as fictional characters, are immersed in the interconnectedness of temporal and spatial relationships. Therefore, for a deep understanding of identity, of human perception, emotion and memory, we need to scrutinize both time and space and how we (dialogically) relate to both. In this case, I will use the concept of the dialogical self to analyse how space and identity are linked in *The Other McCoy*.

In short, at the intersection between the psychology of the self in the tradition of William James and the dialogical school in the tradition of Bakhtin, the dialogical self theory proposes to conceive

[4] Stefanie Preuss comments how the liberal use of the term colony with respect to Scotland in Scottish discourse demonstrates that "a precise definition for postcolonialism is required" (Preuss 65).

self and culture as a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can be established (Hermans, "Dialogical" 1). The dialogical self, as proposed by Hubert Hermans (and by David Hume before), refers to the mind's ability to imagine the different positions of participants in an internal dialogue, in close connection with external dialogue. "The dialogical self implies that the self is constructed through a multiplicity of self-positions [. . .] which can entertain dialogical relationships with each other" (Aliaga, *Redefinition* 115).

As Hermans has put it, the Dialogical Self Theory

> embraced the idea that the presence of the other is more than an external condition that facilitates or obstructs inborn potentials. In its manifestation of the other-in-the-self (my imagined father, mother, colleague, opponent, or cultural group which has some personal meaning for me) it is rather an essential defining factor of the self as extended to its environment. In this environment there are always actual others, individuals and groups, who bring in new elements in the self and correct, revise, and broaden it beyond existing structures. In this quality the other-in-the-self functions as a fertile soil for *tensions* in the self and, at the same time, forms a basis of its further development. (Hermans, *Between* 31, original emphasis)

The space comprised by the dialogical relationship between internal positions of the self and its external positions – the "other-in-the-self" – is itself some kind or third or creative position where changes in consciousness and in identity occur. Therefore, I will focus on these states or third places, where the dialogue among the different positions that the self adopts takes place, as if those positions were landscapes of the mind, that is, spaces that are modified by and which modify our identity as well as our environment.

4. The Landscapes of the Mind of Patrick McCoy

The dialogical self is very much present in the work of Brian McCabe, as many of his characters look for an identity while developing different roles and impersonating various forms of being. The internal dialogue that accompanies our being, as beautifully expressed in McCabe's poem "Inner Man", reflects the fact that individuals

can perform different roles even to themselves. The poem, included in the collection *One Atom to Another,* argues that the dialogue of thought – ". . . while I talk / he listens – less to the words/than to the endless narration/ of rain on my roof" – presupposes, at least, two participants – "O I could say I'm his shadow, / say 'double', say *doppelganger*,/recount all the names I've coined/in the hope that he'd answer" (McCabe, "Inner Man" 47). This internal dialogue does not imply a doubling or a splitting, but rather a unity, a "One":

> Actually,
>
> I shouldn't have mentioned him
> But a moment ago
> I picked up a river-worn stone
> I've kept in a drawer for years.
>
> And I did not know what it was.
> I recognised him then,
> in the moment of that cool weight
> in my palm, and in the notion
>
> of a clean contour the water
> had smoothed to a conclusion:
> a stone like any other and yet—
> one. One.
>
> (McCabe, "Inner Man" 48).

Hence, this internal dialogue present in both McCabe's narrative and poetry, allows us to see the character's internal dialogues as part of his or her (dialogical) self, and, thus, as different aspects of the same mind, different landscapes of the mind.

In this section I will analyse how certain places in the novel create a dialogical space where the self – Patrick McCoy's self – can negotiate different identities. Before that, allow me to briefly explain the existing dialogical relationship between McCoy's thoughts and his environment. As we shall see, some places, such as the Steamies, the streets of Edinburgh's Old Town and New Town and some old pubs, trigger in him certain memories, which awaken some inner voices or others-in-the-self. These places serve to activate some dialogical

processes in the novel's voices and to define McCoy's landscapes of the mind and to put him in relation to a broader context where he can negotiate his identities.

The space where McCoy is in puts him in contact with other voices, with his other-in-the-selves. The self, understood following Hermans's definition of the dialogical self, is a dynamic multiplicity of voiced positions[5] in an extended dialogue landscape of mind that includes actual others in the social world and imagined others that are intertwined with them. Self, on this conception, is both multivoiced and dialogical (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka 31). Indeed, McCoy is a multivoiced and dialogical character, as he is almost a ventriloquist, since the other voices, the social voices, always inhabit him. Usually, these dialogical movements are activated by something that he sees or feels, and thus these internal dialogues are determined by space. As we shall see, on many occasions certain places allow for the unfolding of a certain (mental) space where he and other voices can establish a dialogue.

There is a point in the novel when McCoy is looking through the window at the snowflakes: "He looked at the window. [. . .] He could see the snowflakes". (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 27) And then we get a direct report of someone else's thoughts, as we discover later in the same paragraph, which have to do also with snowflakes:

> And as I watched I realised that every one of us is like that wee snowflake, whirled and spun in the senseless hurly-burly of the modern world as we know it today, and we all get dizzy. [. . .] And every one of us is watched. Even here in Scotland, or maybe we should say, *especially* here in Scotland. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 27)

Then the narration suddenly jumps to somebody else's thoughts:

> Only the other day, I was walking through the snow, alongside a very famous golf course in St Andrews, when my eight-year-old granddaughter said to me, "Grand-dad, where does the wind come from?" Well, as you can probably see for yourselves, I'm no meteorologist. So I licked my finger and held it up to see which direction the wind was

[5] Position is understood here as "the place where a voice is located in an imaginal [dialogical] space" (Dimaggio, Hermans and Lysaker 380).

> coming form, the way people do, and I said to her: Leuchars. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 27–8)

The reader realises that this cannot be McCoy's own voice, since he has no grand-daughter – he is in his thirties and he is not even a father yet.

The stimulus that brings about the shift from external to internal narration is an observable reality: the snowflakes. The stimulus that brings about the association of ideas with the situation in Scotland, where everybody is been watched, and the conversation between the grand-father and the grand-daughter is much subtler; the reader cannot exactly know why the focaliser has been transformed or possessed, this is left to the reader's free interpretation. Since the novel's focalisation is constantly a character-bound one, and since the grand-father is not a character in it, one may interpret that it is not that the focalisation has really shifted but that the focaliser's mind has shifted because McCoy remembers an episode triggered off by the external stimulus of the snowflakes, and reproduces a dialogue he witnessed between a grandfather and his granddaughter. These snowflakes that have set his train of associations recall William James' definition of stream of consciousness "as a snowflake crystal caught in the warm hand" and his development of "substantive" and "transitive" states of mind (James).

The meditative contemplation of snowflakes induces in McCoy a state close to an epiphanic revelation – "I realised" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 27) – that transmogrifies into a state of possession: "He tried to follow the path of one of them, but it made him dizzy to watch it, as he himself was falling . . ." (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 27). Through his gaze, McCoy becomes dialogically "possessed" by another consciousness, that of the old man. McCoy, in his solitude, would then be looking for a sense of belonging, where individual identity dissolves.

Other places that are still alive in his memory, such as The Steamies, can bring him to other times. The Steamies are no longer a real place in present-day Edinburgh, as they were dismantled in the nineteen eighties. Until the invention and popularisation of washing and drying machines, the washing and drying of clothes was a problem for those living in Scottish tenements, as many of

them did have neither clean running water supply nor a drying green. Therefore, at the end of the nineteenth century, publish wash houses – know in Scotland as *steamies* – started to become common in both Edinburgh and Glasgow. The Steamies were managed by the council, thus publicly run and communal, and until the decade of the nineteen sixties there were still at least ten steamies running in Edinburgh. However, this is something from the past. Because of this, when The Steamies are mentioned in the novel, they are usually associated to his father and McCoy's childhood days, when his father was still alive and kicking:

> As he [McCoy] drifted back into sleep, he thought of his father coming home on a Saturday night in condition of drunken grandeur: arms outstretched as if to embrace the whole household so he staggers with a swagger through the dim closing-time streets of The Steamies, singing a romantic or political song, or one that is a bit of them both. [. . .] The boy McCoy runs to meet him at the door, opens it, over the threshold then steps John McCoy. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 23–24)

This dreamlike memory actually takes him back to that place and that time:

> *Again* he [McCoy] runs out into the sunlit street of The Steamies, sees those flat-roofed houses with the communal verandahs and the metal windows, feels the rutted concrete of the road through the worn soles of his gymshoes and hears the shuddering engine of the taxi-cab come take his Ma and Da to Dublin. *Again* he feels afraid of it, for in The Steamies in the mid-fifties, a taxi has some of the same omninous magic of the Black Maria and the hearse. *Now* his mouth being wiped with the licked corner of a handkerchief, there is the bright red taste of his mother's lipstick, and everyone is shouting good luck and waving as the taxi draws from the kerb. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 25–26, emphasis added)

This past in The Steamies, in the nineteen fifties, when McCoy was a little boy, become a *now* in the narration and he can experience this remembered space as if it were real. And in a sense it becomes real again by means of the direct emotion that the memory triggers in him.

But The Steamies are not only a reminder of an innocent childhood, they are also a reminder of his own state, of the progress and

the welfare that Edinburgh may achieve or may not, from the nineteen fifties to the nineteen nineties. McCoy's widowed mother lives now in Bonnyrigg, a small town near Edinburgh, but he never has time for a visit. And McCoy lives in a terrible shed – never "intended for human habitation" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 9) – with little to eat: "The rats were still throwing wild parties every night and eating anything they would find, even the soap. Sometimes that was all there was to eat in the place" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 8). His terrible place depresses him and he wonders if his life will keep going downhill: "The place was terrible. Over the last few years he had been renting one place after another, each more temporary and basic than the last, ending with this one. But maybe it wasn't the end. Maybe the next step would be over the threshold of the hostel for the homeless" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 8). A few pages later he is evicted from the shed and he becomes in fact "homeless", although only for a few hours.

Actually, The Steamies serve McCoy to compare himself, and his generation, to his parents, and their generation, when they were only a few years older than himself: McCoy has less stability, if any, less future – no place to stay, no job, no food, and, luckily, no children – than his parents had, and that is no good sign for a community. What is more, McCoy's situation makes his future harder, as it even makes his relationship with his girlfriend Yvonne more difficult: money "had become an issue between them – the fact that she earned it and he didn't. He could imagine how the money-tension might develop if they lived together" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 9).

Thus through space McCoy establishes an intergenerational dialogue or comparison with his father. McCoy, who did not have to go to work in the mines and who had the opportunity to study, does not seem to be making the most of his life in Edinburgh. The industrial revolution, which created the small mining communities where both McCabe and McCoy spent their childhood, seems to have led the Scottish citizens not to brighter society but to an equally tough one.

Edinburgh is a dark hole during the premiership of Margaret Thatcher – from 1979 to 1990, the year *The Other McCoy* was published. The despair of many Scots can be read in McCoy's descriptions of the city and its inhabitants. Besides, some conversations with stranger that he meets when selling door to door serve him to make some social comment on Thatcherism in Scotland. In this

sarcastic explanation we can read a strong critique of Thatcherite policy and the paranoia concerning security that rose to a climax in the nineteen eighties:

> The government? Don't worry about the government, George, this idea comes to me direct from Number Ten. Our lady at the helm is concerned about the mutinous lack of enthusiasm among her kilted brothers and sisters. She told me frankly that she would have sent in the army but now they're already away somewhere else and won't be back for a while. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 106)

McCoy has to sell spyholes to earn some money and, because of this, he meets many people who live in different parts of Edinburgh, from New Town to Old Town or even Portobello. McCoy cannot help making some comments on the social situation of Scotland when he sees other people's living conditions – his economic situation is not very flamboyant either. Some people cannot even afford spyholes in their doors: "None of the doors had spyholes, but none looked as if they could afford to have them" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 44). He ironically proposes to create a police-State, one in which everything is controlled, or, more specifically, one in which the privileged are "defended" from the poor:

> close-circuit television, armed guards, electronic moats, the works. [. . .] The haves must be protected from the have-nots and we will make sure they pay for the privilege. As for the riff-raff, we'll launch a scheme to eradicate homelessness: compulsory housing, George. The government will buy it. We will build the best-designed prison in the history of mankind, and we will call it Scotland. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 106)

By being ironic on this situation, the character is criticising certain political strategies. One imagines the consequences of McCoy's mock-scheme to eradicate homelessness – compulsory housing – as almost as bad as the ones that the Labour government proposed after the Second World War in order to improve the Scottish housing situation: The Wheatley's Housing Act of 1924. This Act led to too good and too expensive housings, so it offered the Scots no real solutions (Mitchison 404). Hence, McCoy is always linked to the com-

munity he belongs to. But this belonging is not naïve or artificial, rather than contrary.

McCoy is quite self-conscious in his descriptions of the city of Edinburgh. Sometimes it seems that we are watching a representation of Edinburgh, instead of experiencing the real Edinburgh, but this is part of a postmodern playfulness, as real Edinburgh might not exist at all, at least as something authentic and real. It must be noted that the whole novel is very self-conscious about authenticity and imitation, as the title itself shows.[6]

As McCoy gets on a bus to Leith, he imagines himself sitting in one of those city tours where a bus driver gives explanations to tourists in an almost excessive vernacular Scot:

> Ahint the Castle, oan a braw bricht moonlight nicht like the nicht, ye can make oot the Scottish Tourist Bureau's latest hologram shroodedin gloomy mist special effects tae gie youz ignorant foreigners the idea it's gey auld. (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 104)

Stereotypes become destroyed when they are excessive and ludicrous. Then, they reveal themselves as great constructs, as a "hologram" put there for tourists and natives to enjoy what the narrator ironically defines as "the Scottish experience", feeling "authentically" Scottish. *The Other McCoy* presents, thus, a comic and exaggerated Edinburgh, in contrast with other portrayals of it in modern fiction as, for example, Irving Welsh's acid *Trainspotting* (1993), which offers a rather pessimistic vision of Scotland:

> Iggy Pop looks right at me as he sings the line: "America takes drugs in psychic defence"; only he changes "America" for "Scatlin", and defines us mair accurately in a single sentence that all the others have ever done [. . .] (Welsh 75)

[6] As Brian McCabe himself explained to me: My title *The Other McCoy* is a play on a popular phrase or saying *viz.* "the real McCoy". When we want to say that something is authentic, the real thing, the original, we say that it is "the real McCoy". There is quite a lot of play with this in the novel, with people asking McCoy if he is the "real" one, etc. and in his mind at one point I seem to remember that he answers: "No, the other one, the other McCoy" (Aliaga, *Other McCoy* 236).

In Welsh's novel, Edinburgh is presented as a damned hole where nothing good can grow, and where Scots can only hide in order to defend themselves. By contrast, in McCabe's novel, Edinburgh is portrayed (tragic)comically and offers, in its good humour, some hope to their fictional inhabitants.

As McCoy imagines the bus-conductor telling the tourists: "upstairs o the bus, stoap yer complainin – It's no meant tae hae a roof! Cauld? Of course it's cauld, that's pert and percel o the hale shebang, the Scottish Experinece ye ken!" (McCabe, *Other McCoy 103*); if you want to feel "authentically Scottish", wear a mini-kilt and use "the heather-mist cologne an the wisky spritzzers" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 103). McCoy, thus, transforms himself metaphorically into a tourist in an invented Scotland, since he presents in a grotesque and sarcastic manner the exaggerated – and by no means authentic – myth of Scotland. Even Edinburgh's most famous places have been constructed to attract tourists; they are no longer "real": even Edinburgh's historical castle "was lit up like a postcard of itself" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 103).

McCoy's parodic vision of the stereotypical Scotland undermines the nationalistic disclosure. Scotland is invented, just as any other imagining of the nation is. For, as Craig has pointed out, national imagination is "an imagining of the nation as both fundamental context of individual life and as the real subject of history" (*Modern* 9). In other words, it is a symbolic system constructed to provide people with a certain stable unity. Accordingly, the space depicted in the novel gives it a realistic and provincial tone, but the narrator makes fun of the stereotyping of Scotland and Scottishness of Edinburgh. As Gavin Wallace pointed out, by re-mythologising the symbolic contemporary Scotland, McCabe "succeeds in showing that it is Scotland itself, perhaps, and not its hapless, hopeless anti-hero, which is the true impostor and impersonator" (Wallace 227).

There are nevertheless places where McCoy seems to feel at ease, and those are usually the pubs of Edinburgh. As one of the characters in the novel, Grogan, comments, the most important thing is where they "want to be at the bells", and after much walking, they all decide to start the new year at The Tron, a real pub in Edinburgh, next to St Giles. Pubs are the places where McCoy feels integrated among the other customers. As I mentioned above, community is

very important for him, but more as an experience than as a setting. It is something that the protagonist has to relate to, to mingle with, and pubs seem the perfect places. Moreover, pubs are associated also to drinking in the community. What Douglas Gifford has said of Linklater's Magnus – "Certainly Magnus is brought down to earth, but after a drunken debauch he is still allowed his equivalent of MacDiarmid's Drunk Man's epiphany" (Gifford xi)[7] – could be applied to McCabe's McCoy. Drunkenness is a special state of mind – a liminal or threshold state – which seems to involve a ritual purgatory act.

In McCabe's novel, this cathartic drinking takes place at Hogmanay and this fact suggests that it has a ritual and spiritual value. As Mircea Eliade explained, almost everywhere, the collective expulsion of daemons brought about by excessive drinking coincides, or did coincide, with the feasts at New Year's Eve (Eliade 56). The primordial chaos, or cosmic soup, is thus brought back in order to make the new creation of the world possible. This regenerative reconstruction amounts to a rebirth. In *The Other McCoy*, this symbolism is made explicit as McCoy, who is thought to be dead, reappears on Hogmanay among his friends and renewed (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 56). Similarly, the whole community seems to awaken during the feasting, or rather to prepare for their ritual death and rebirth.

The circular structure of the novel reinforces the notion of mythical time as eternal return and of primordial time as the moment of creation, and brings about, the repetition of the cosmogony (Eliade 56–57). The circularity of the structure is beautifully expressed at the end of the novel, when the characters begin the New Year together "circled around each other" (McCabe, *Other McCoy* 191). As the novel reaches its end, McCoy's conception of the world as an inescapable stage, and his awareness of having a dark facet of the self, other(s) with-in, change and he starts integrating all his selves, the other McCoy(s). Only in relation to others – the strangers he has met on the streets and his friends, as well as the others-in-the-self – does he feel at ease.

Especially important for McCoy is Yvonne, his girlfriend. The novel presents a dual – or a doubled – character-bound focalisation.

[7] Another example would be Hugh MacDiarmid's popular poem, "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle".

The two main focalisers are Patrick McCoy and Yvonne, who alternate focalisations almost mechanically. These two perspectives do not really mingle but rather complement each other, as each chapter is almost entirely focalised through one of them (Aliaga, "*Other*" 237). Both focalisations seem to be complementary, although McCoy's perspective predominates over that of Yvonne, since twenty-two chapters – including the first and the last – are focalised through him, whereas the female perspective is used only in seven chapters. There is, however, no essentialist difference between both focalisations with respect to gender. Thus, *The Other McCoy* integrates the feminine and masculine perspectives without making them antagonists (Aliaga, "*Other*" 237). Both their roles are important in the complementation of perspectives and in their dialectical relation.

Similarly, McCoy establishes a dialogical relationship to the other members of the community, both dead – as is the case of his father – and alive, which in turn serve him to make up his mind about certain issues. The very structure of the focalisation in the novel reproduces, then, an anti-essentialist conception of the self, in relation to other(s), since the subject is no longer a fixed and stable entity, but is rather conceived as made up of multiple facets which, in relation to the other, conform, construct, the individual.

And, as we have seen, the places that appear in the novel activate some dialogical movements in McCoy's mind, and determine his internal to a large extend. What is more, those places that allow for the unfolding of a certain space where he and other voices can establish a dialogical relationship, are also the solution to his problem, as he can create new space out of them, an imagined space where things can change, to the better.

5. Conclusion

As we have seen, the sense of place determines our sense of ourselves and our identity. However, this does not mean that identity is homogeneous and stable; on the contrary, it is multiple, dialogical and always changing. In *The Other McCoy,* space allows for the unfolding of a mental landscape where McCoy and other voices can establish both an internal and an external dialogue.

On the one hand, the city of Edinburgh serves McCoy to create this internal space where he can engage a dialogical process with the different voices in him, with the others-in-the-self. Edinburgh's unconnected places, when triggering a memory, which serves him to establish a dialogical relation with other selves, with the others-in-the-self, allow him to positively integrate the different facets of his self after his journey.

And on the other, McCoy's focalisation or mind set is changed by the relationship or dialogue that he establishes with the reality outside – with the voices of the strangers that he encounters while selling spyholes – which in turn provides readers with second-degree focalisations. Readers also enter this dialogical relationship to perception and thought, and by walking with McCoy along the many places in Edinburgh, we have also access to a dialogical space, where the places tell us different stories that we try to integrate into McCoy's wandering and into the representation of the city of Edinburgh. By doing so, Brian McCabe offers us an imaginary Edinburgh with many shades and nuances, full of contrast and tensions, and alive with many voices. The dialogical process that readers experience when reading McCoy's wanderings shows us that the landscapes of the mind create dialogical spaces that are constantly being reformulated. Be careful, because you might not recognise this imaginary Edinburgh when you visit it again.

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BETWEEN MODES

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Semiotics of Archipelago in George Mackay Brown's Narratives

In the multiple writings of the Orkney poet, short story author, novelist and essayist George Mackay Brown (1921–1996), one can recognise a uniquely semiotic attitude to narrating stories through peripheral space and time orchestrated through the principle of multiple re-evocation. This is present on many levels of his texts. Whenever Brown shapes the spatial aspect his of his storytelling, and there is thespatial aspect necessitated by the narrative element omnipresent in most of his writings, including his poems (Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* 84), he is noticeably a local bard of a particular archipelago space. This is nothing surprising in the context of his biography as he was a domestic man and regional writer in the proper sense of the word. His literary imagination is determined by the Orkneys, the geographically, culturally and historically distinct islands to the north of Scotland which have only been part of the Scottish world since the fifteenth century. He did not only stay there most of his life in the physical way, rarely venturing out of the homeland, but also in terms of his fiction. Except for a few years of his education at Newbattle Abbey College and at the University of Edinburgh, he himself was as local in spatial terms as anything he wrote. And yet he is also a writer of a universal format, although his common recognition is perhaps yet to come.

The critical perception of Brown almost two decades after his death bears the stamp of his spatial choices. As a local writer, he has already gained some acclaim, considering the veneration he is given in Orkney. Outside of this dimension, he has been repeatedly treated

as the voice of distinct, secluded, parochial communities of islanders on the borders of Scotland and on the fringes of Europe. Clearly, such categorisation results in underestimating his scale as an author on the British and European literary arena. He is frequently overlooked in the scholarly works not focused strictly on Scottish literature, the plight suffered by a larger body of distinguished Scottish authors. He is, for example, not included in Malcolm Bradbury's *The Modern British Novel* (1993) although his novels reveal an outstanding degree of innovative, experimental narrative techniques.[1] Brown is also rather narrowly covered in the comprehensive *History of Scottish Literature* (1992) by Maurice Lindsay, although the scholar notices his ability to exceed the local spatial settings by wider symbolism and implication (409). The latter observation shows that despite the critical focus on the remote and limited aspect of his storytelling, induced by the mimetic and historic shaping of his spatial frames, he is, however, also recognised for the fact that his writing attains universal significance. The hallmark of the author's appreciation is the voice of Seamus Heaney. The Nobel Prize winner noticed the grand artistic merit in Brown poetry, indicating the features present in all his writing: "George Mackay Brown has added uniquely and steadfastly to the riches of poetry in English: his sense of the world and his way with words are powerfully at one with each other" (qtd. in Brown, *Collected Poems* ii).

The critical problem that arises is how Brown accomplishes the universal focus that can be named as mythopoeic reflection on the condition of man despite the surface attention to particular locations. A further point of inquiry is whether his shaping of the narrative space actually helps to achieve this effect. The consideration of his space of archipelago islands benefits from adopting the idea, first suggested within Yuri Lotman's semiotic theory of culture, that the modelling of the spatial aspect is one of the means of understanding reality. Shaping of the spatio-temporal relations in narrative texts can thus be treated as the means of creating the axiological and symbolic orientation of the literary language to ordering of the described

[1] See, for example, what Simon W. Hall observes about realization of postmodern techniquein *Magnus* 148. Compare Bold's examination of episodic narrative in *George Mackay Brown* 95–96.

reality (cf. Głowiński 252). Brown's narrative texts use the spatial pattern of archipelago islands as the principal *semantic gesture*, or the unifying rule organising the dynamic literary aspect on many interlocking layers of his fiction and poetry (see Mercks' discussion of Mukarovski's concept). His short stories and novels, but also his narrative poems, are most noticeably organised on the principle of archipelago patterns that emerge from juxtaposition, fragmentation and sequencing.

Both in his poems and fiction, his literary Orkney is the dual space of change and stasis. This binary condition is frequently textually attributed to the writing act. The process is thematised for example in the poem "Hamnavoe" where the lyrical ego reveals himself to be the quasi-author figure who engages in memories and uses the poem to record some abstracted fleeting local day of his father's work. The routine of the postman that consists in crossing borders serves to show the space that is already gone and revived only through the poetic medium.

The depiction of any moment may serve to demonstrate the abstracted presence of timeless motifs, reinforced by cognitive focus on observing the pattern. Motifs like producing, gathering and creation of something, in the combined figurative imagery of crofter-fisherman-writer-artist are combined with motifs of (re)settlement, return, reclamation (compare also Hagemann 13). What can describe the pattern of space is the cognitive frame of (re)discovery or (re)establishment of the archetypal island-Eden-Promised Land facets. Alternatively, foregrounding the distance of the fictional reality from one of these topoi permeates the shaping of the plot patterns.

This omnipresence of the principle of recurrence on all the levels of any literary text by Brown can be viewed as realization of the semantic pattern of archipelago. The technique of spatial description emphasises the static, repetitive pattern but also foregrounds the dynamic elements in the way reminiscent of the frequently described rhythm of sea movements, the ebb and flow cycle. An ordinary space of a field or some landmark is often revealed to hide traces of some other spaces rooted in distinct historic-mythical times. Many of his poems, short stories and novels are about the seemingly insignificant routines of some ordinary local people that take place in some limited and inconspicuous spatial conditions of the Orkney islands,

made dramatic by the harshness of the weather or some lords' feud. The commonplace is, however, overcome by the principle of collating several suchlike fragments or insights. The uniform pan-historical way of fragmentary oversight of the local, temporally defined spatial dimension makes the semantic scope of the texts work in a dual way: limited to the particular but also boundless and timeless. The insertion of a foreign space, discontinuous in temporal terms, can be functionalised to the same end. The narrative shift to the space of the twentieth-century Nazi concentration camp in *Magnus*is unmotivated from the point of view of plot development. It rather works on the compositional level as the mirror to or extension of St Magnus's martyrdom and sacrifice. The principle of spatial aggregation (realised through collated temporal insights that make the space resound with mirror images and topoi) is fundamental to this effect of transcending the individual and implying the universal.

In the way typical of Brown's use of archipelago motifs, and their mirror polyfunctional identity, the seven fishermen that come to the island of Hellya in *Greenvoe* in the *Nachgeschichte* so as to perform their ritual, climb the cliff as if intruders but also new settlers, the plot formula frequently repeated in Brown's narratives. This pattern appears in "The Man on the Shore" where it is repeated across the ages. The reconquering of the lost space and waiting for its regeneration is the final stage that looks like the beginning of a new cycle. The inefficient but persevering team is led by the monk Brendan, his name alluding to the half-legendary material described in the Old Celtic tales of seafaring belonging to the genre of *immram*. The spatial dimension is thus identified as the realm of combined Christian-pagan myth (see discussion of the legend of St Brendan in the light of *immram* texts in Mackley 55–58). The same spatial pattern of transgression also features in a strikingly similar form in the opening burial scene of "Hawkfall" which is the scene of coming to the isolated island-like space of the burial site. This is cognitively associated with ceremony of taking possession of a new household as the place is called "the House of the Dead" (Brown, "Hawkfall" 9).

Being a truly regional writer, Brown is focused on the local character, showing the challenges and limitations of his/her daily existence in the space of toil and domesticity shaped within quasi-documentary tradition. Speaking endlessly in the noticeably re-

petitive manner of the little, local places of distinct types named by topographical references he makes these space vibrant through their inhabitants. The texts are peopled by minor characters, shown as heroic or unheroic in their spatial movements, who struggle to retain their hardly-gained position on the little scale of Orkney island life.

The spatio-temporal locations are thus not just the quasi-documentary background. They evidently work as the means of testing character value and the way of "evocation and defence" of their community traditions, lifting them "to a deeper level of mytho-poeticism" (Gifford, "Scottish Literature" 839). The time and space which Brown devises constitute "the essentials of traditional community life" and the way of mapping of the "model for life in general" (Korzeniowska 233). This shows the crucial role of spatial relations as semantic units in his writing. Brown focuses his fiction and poetry on the mechanism of island community life through the spatial – daily and seasonal – routines of characters at rising and falling stages of community existence, from the moments of formation and thriving to failure and regeneration. The focus is on spatially determined and delimitated illustrations of endless aspects of human plight, where life is some sort of spatial struggle resulting in achievement alternating with remission. The characters are always tied to space by their action. There are the field-tending crofters, fishermen riding the waves and getting their nets ready, the settlers who come and make new homes, the children who explore the landscape or keep an observant attitude to the space around, the assiduous housewives and haggard fathers who cross the space to sustain their families, the spatially removed artists or writers.

Brown describes the rhythms of the agricultural year, with prominence given to activities such as ploughing or harvesting, in the manner typical for regional writers, such as Thomas Hardy. He seeks to present the larger philosophical view of individual existence through the pretext of topographic and timeless shaping of space. The description of harvest time or some other common activity is frequently endowed with symbolic senses derived from the harsh ritual of life encoded in the agricultural cycle, rather in the way of Hardy's representations of cycles of country life. This is evident in the passage describing corn reaping in "A Calendar of Love" which transfigures the common farmer's actions into the image of "some

ritual of birth and death" (24). However, Brown's use of space is much less focused on its schematic aesthetic literary aspect achieved through profuse accumulation of artistic devices that correspond to the plethora of descriptive detail (compare discussion of the ways of transcending mimetic use of detail in Hardy's Wessex novels in Leleń). Brown relies on the controlled and sparse use of expanded figurative language on the spatial level to reinforce the autothematic focus on storytelling.

In the short story entitled "The Twentieth of August" from *The Masked Fisherman and Other Stories*, the focus is on the brief fragmentary insights into ten occurrences of the date mentioned in the title. The huge time span of observations is ten centuries from 1183 to 2083. In the first fragment the time is identified as the day of the "feast of St Bernard" which hints at the contemplative life and the method of *lectio divina* through the evocation of the historic character. This establishes the intended reading method across the fragments seeking for universalised insights while the focus of each individual section seems to be organised as the vignette of life.

The first fragment is set in the twelfth century and it starts in a very visual, scene-oriented way characteristic for drama or film: "[t]here they stood, six or seven men, under the red shadow. They had set down burdens at their feet. The man beside the candle said, 'Let the first offering be brought'" (Brown, "Twentieth" 95). What the seven successive men offer at the Mass held in a cave are common produce of the land brought for the monastery: a basket of cod, a basket of peat, a jar of ground oats, a pot of honey, a bundle of hay, a jar of fish oil and a sheepskin – these being all the produce of the land, some of which reappear in the insights into the ten successive ages. The subsequent centenary scenes of the fragmented short story show the changing but also in some way timeless routines of life on the border of land and sea, as well as the threshold of the social classes, with minor changes of focus in the insights into the routines and offerings of the stratified society. The fragment situated in the twelfth century also sets the convention of individualised insights through the momentarily introduced points of view of men and women marked by their passing appearance on the scene: the man named as old Thorf, the old man cutting peat, the absent-minded boy and others. The formal experiments with subjective, place-dependant perspec-

tive shown through the kaleidoscopic technique of shifting focus are the major compositional principle in this short story based on the poetics of a fragment. These incomplete insights are all the same evocative of particular, individual and subjective experiences that contribute to the larger view by repetition. The semantics of brief insight is counterbalanced by insistence on the governing temporal pattern. The flashlight poetics, in the quotation below indicated syntactically by extensive use of parenthetical intrusion, introduces the dominance of the individual point of view of the character, here the peat-offering man, whose experience is obliterated by the discontinuity of narration:

> A small thick man–his basket too he carried on his shoulder. (Ah, the loneliness of the hill, it was different from the loneliness of this place. And the midsummer peat-cutting sun, it was different from the one candle that struggled in a small draught. The laird's man was not so awesome as this priest.) He thumped the basket of black peat on the stone.
>
> The priest bowed. (Brown, "Twentieth" 95)

Brown's poetics of intrusion is reminiscent of the modernist technique of stream of consciousness ordered by the point of view of the implied author, often self-referentially evoked as storytellers figure as characters in some of the fragments. The situational context for writing this short story is fictionally revealed in the penultimate insight into the twentieth century as the personal author fancies to imagine the same day over the centuries so as to fit his present into a larger pattern and imagine the future of the socio-cultural process. The genre of the report alluded to in the description of his writing equipment counterbalances the prophetic nature of insight into past and future of one process (the ancient genre of prophecy being evoked on the lexical level as well). The technique of genre syncretism appears in the self-referential suggestion of "prose poems". The metaphor of weaving the tapestry out of the natural intangible material of gossamer permeates the imagery:

> To forget the hardness of the stone seat, I took pen to the reporter's notebook I sometimes carry, and in the blank dwam or seance out of which some writers summon images and rhythms, I imagined nine

> centuries of this day (August the 20th), in the 83rd year of the nine centuries; and the little episodes tumbled over themselves to get written, to be shuttled on to the loom of the imagination. (I leave history to the hard stone-breakers and stone dressers and stone-setters who know how to build houses.) Those 'prose poems' are but blown scents and gossamer strands; they may give a passing pleasure. What shall Rackwick, or Orkney, or the world be in August 2083? [. . .] Friends climbed up from Mucklehoose and Noust in the late afternoon with plastic containers of dark home-brewed ale. (Brown, "Twentieth" 106–07)

The manifold literary organisation of this short story can be pointed to on many levels although it is partly obscured by allusions to non-literary genres. The style reflects the features of historical journalism, literary short story, poetry and local oral tale among others, while the direct negative allusion is to historical texts, which are perceived as distinct. The allusion to the hybrid literary form is demonstrated in the orchestration of the Old English poetic device of alliteration with interplay of voiceless fricative consonants "h" and "s" that override the phonetic pattern of the parenthetical reference to historic writing and stone-masonry in the penultimate quotation. They produce the onomatopoeic representation of the sound of carving stones, enhanced by the voiced plosives [b] and [d] that foreground the actions of breaking, dressing and building. At the same time, the principle of mirror imagery of archipelago type occurs in the reference to the topos of "episodes [that] tumbled over themselves" metaphorically represented as elements "shuttled on to the loom of the imagination", further exemplified by the image of community sharing of home-type produce, the common element in previous vignettes of life.

Another variation to the spatial manner of plot organisation can be that some event is viewed from several places and shown through organised sequential insights, with the perspective on the event modified by the space and action of the subsequent focalisers, as in the short story "The White Horse Inn". The spatial aspect of Brown's locations is very much defined by their temporal aspect and/or point of view related to space and time in this method of archipelago-like juxtaposition of snippets of action. David Hewitt points out that Brown "uses the distancing of history to simplify and to essentialise [. . .] to vivify the present" (192). Consequently, the almost uniform

focus on Orkney locations in his writings (short stories, poems and novel as well as in his semi-literary journalism) only apparently leads to the peripheral quality of his writing. The juxtaposition emerging from the temporal sequencing of the local quasi-documentary space redefines the human condition of the depicted characters into universal representation. This is a very conscious strategy which encompasses the choice of the addressee of his texts, as expressed in his a programme-defining poem published under the title "Prologue" in his first collection *The Storm and Other Poems* (1952). On the one hand, he always sings for his homeland "[f]or the islands I sing", on the other hand he sings for the larger audience "[f]or Scotland I sing" (Brown, *Collected Poems* 1).

The fictional Orkney Islands are shown by Brown both as the common, everyday quasi-documentary space and the archetypal space, the new land of the legends, fairy-tales and myths. This is the archipelago land, thus markedly subdivided, to which there is an endless inflow of various groups of strangers, settlers and returning descendants of the former communities, the Picts and Vikings, the competing tribes, the passing sailors and shipwrecks, immigrants and local emigrants coming back. Such motifs get orchestrated through the compositional method of reliance on fragment juxtaposition. In some texts he traces the process of archetypal colonisation and spatio-cultural confrontation to the roots. The meta-fictional intrusions are sometimes used to acknowledge the limitations of the quasi-omniscient narrators. Such autothematic reflections represent the text as artistic myth-like speculation. An example of such generically-syncretic orientation can be found in the semi-literary text entitled *An Orkney Tapestry,* which is focused on providing insights into the motley spatio-cultural context of Orkney life.

The island space is first introduced through the imagery of the sea surrounding the archipelago. This outer space is personified as a kind of sage figure wielding the attributes of oral storytelling: "[t]he sea remembers, like an ancient harp". The process of defining space is also the process of redefining it through other arts – the weltering elements are defined by their affinity to dance choreography "immensity of sky, the dance of sun, cloud, sea-mist, thunder, rain: the endless ballet of the weather" (Brown, *Orkney Tapestry* 16). Only then, after this artistic personification of space, is the sequence of

Orkney settlements presented in reverse order. The artistic shaping of the text is defined as working within the quasi-historic and quasi-anthropological focus. The claim of going back to the dark ages is belied by the increasing descriptive focus on light, which works in opposition to the initial statement of darkness. This darkness assumes the significance as the metaphor for artistic perception. The narrator comments on the cognitive darkness surrounding the spatial aspect of the earliest invasion: "[t]he first Orkney peoples can only be seen darkly, a few figures on a moorland against the sky, between twilight and night. They are beyond the reach of legend even. Archaeologists describe a Mediterranean folk who committed themselves to the sea [. . .] they sailed north into the widening light" (Brown, *Orkney Tapestry* 17).

Brown employs here the literary way to create a new artistic myth which shifts the cognitive centre of the fictional world. The Mediterranean people of this narration sail from the centre of the ancient world into its limits to seek for new opportunities "[i]t seemed a likely place, secure from whatever dynastic tyranny or famine or plague or population pressure they had fled from" (17–18). The imagery is clearly that of Edenic land or mythical land of plenty, which is guarded by obstacles on the way.

In subsequent narration, as in Brown's other texts, the Orkneys are shown as the centre of the world for the local inhabitants, with the space of the margin defined by anything coming from outside of the islands. The people are shaped by this space and are responsive to it – through their spatial routines of season-framed labour, ritual and leisure.

Douglas Gifford finds Brown unique and original in this focus on islands when he states "he saw his islands as a microcosm of the human race" ("Scottish Literature since 1945" 839). Further on, the scholar comments on the use of "symbolic pattern of landscape and spiritual darkness and light" (841). Such is the way of presentation of the three fishermen's houses in *Greenvoe*, redefined by scriptural quotation, which is the prolegomenous way of presentation of the topos of blighted island typified through individual spaces of domesticity. The stories of individual effort and failure represented through sequencing of dilapidated spaces throughout the novel reinforce the topos of community invasion by the blighting force of modernity.

This hostility to progress is more widespread in Brown's writing and is represented as a kind of "false mythology" (Gifford, "Decline and Revival" 721). In *Greenvoe*, people are presented against the background of their households as dark silhouettes or voices and this interplay of the motif of invading darkness and sound is crucial throughout the text to the very end. The motifs of ruin are orchestrated and interwoven with motifs of receding colours, oncoming shadow, being on the edge of space, broken continuity, encroaching forces, motifs of building and demolishing barriers, fighting men from indigenous and foreign groups, violence of spatial hiding. All this imagery is shown against the safety of the harvest image. The spatial motifs suggestive of community ups and downs are organised into the description of landscape, which is the background to ritual.

> All the colours had drained from the north. They sat in a web of shadow.
>
> 'Yes', said the old man, 'this is the place all right.'
>
> On the very edge of the cliff was the ruin of a building, a low irregular broken circle of wall; only a few stones showed through the encroaching turf. The recent fence-builders had by-passed this broch. Over the centuries, parts of the cliff had fallen away and carried some of the masonry with it, for only and arc of the original keep was left. From this place the early people of Hellya had defended themselves from sea-borne enemies and from the shadowy aboriginals who dwelt in the interior bogs, those who slipped out with noose and knife after sunset. Round there they had sown Hellya's first grain and reaped its first harvest; this was where they had made their music and laws and myths. This navel had attached many generations of Hellyamen to the nourishing earth. (Brown, *Greenvoe* 247)

In the passage, which follows the above quotation, there is description of the final Harvest ceremony. The spatially-indicative words "Rain. Share. Yoke. Sun" are translated as "Resurrection", the sense of which ranges from spatial to the spiritual movement up (248–49). Likewise in the above extended quotation, the concurring images of spatially expressed community power and weakness serve to sum up the plot through landscape elements and endow them with senses beyond their immediate importance so as to encompass the total history of the island as timeless community space and a place of

layered, coming and going human cultures. The final finding of the spiritual word through spatial intrusion means ultimate regeneration and renewal of the world.

Importantly, the cognitive aspect of storytelling is shifted to the peripheral character. Most of Brown's characters are defined by their removal from the social centre even on the small scale of island life. There is the whole gallery of unsuccessful fishermen or crofters, downgraded children, out-of-the-way monks, removed lords, petty drinkers, rambling tinkers, small entrepreneurs, unsuccessful artists, and the like, who are given some cognitive and spatial role of spreading the news, grasping the essence of the moment, helping or failing to change the barriers. The little vignettes of life are developed against the fictional Orkney landscape purged of detail and variety as much at the level of descriptive element as at the level of thrifty but semantically loaded language (Bold, *George Mackay Brown* 50) derived from the oral tradition of Norse sagas, legends and ballads (see Liro for discussion of Norse influences on Brown's fiction, compare Murray 547). However, Brown expands the saga tradition by foregrounding the scenes of domesticity on top of the dramatic moments of community building (Palson and Edwards 11, 15).

The fictional landscape is archetypal in the way of selection, but also by means of foregrounding of its natural features. There are the plentiful and fertile but also toil-demanding spaces of stony land, beaten by harsh weather, devoid of trees and surrounded by the stormy seas. There are spaces of ritual function like ancient shrines or burial sites and historic churches, as in "Hawkfall" from the collection *Hawkfall and Other Stories*. The way to contrast these settings is to juxtapose the burial with the wedding. There are spaces of awaiting the bounty like empty wintry piers and poor crofter's houses. There are spaces of remission like lonely lords' halls and monasteries. Solitary characters are shown roaming empty beaches, cliffs and meadows in the post-Romantic fashion. A combination of these spatial motifs is employed as in the title story of the collection "A Calendar of Love". In all sorts of combinations, the texts explore the deserted village or town streets, abandoned community places, temperance-stricken bars and closed-down smithies, not to mention the omnipresent remnants of previous civilisations like the ruins of Neolithic settlements. All this evokes the Romantic nostalgia for the

unspoilt past, which can also be traced further back to the convention of Old English elegies. The mood of elegiac observance of the past is spatially linked to portrayals of harsh aspects of the seasons.

His narrations are small-scale vistas of a sequence of particular situations, frequently disjunctive in the principle of spatial or temporal hiatus of passing moments or ages. And thus, despite their focus on the particular, they are aimed at a kind of all-encompassing view, endlessly engaging in narrative insights into moments of some celebration or ritual. Looking back across time to see the sources of such moments is governed by the principle of collating archipelago of images, or seeking for some iconic situations. This technique often works to reduce the sense of the locality into the fairy-tale simplicity of spatial framework, as in "A Winter Legend" from *Andrina and Other Stories* about a swan-princess redeemed from the confinement of a tower by the falling snowflakes. Her life is reflected in the ways of the sea: "[t]he swan-princess rose, hovered, tried to follow the two torn waves. But all those innumerable strands and drops were mingled inextricably with the ocean; for other intertwinings, other deaths and renewals" (Brown, "Winter Legend" 26). Despite the generic difference between the fairy-tale and the seafaring yarn, this is the very same use of the topos of the sea as is to be found in the fishermen stories, as in "Micheal Surfax, Whaler", the short story that precedes it in the collection.

The archetypal effect of such shaping of the literary space is also predetermined by the projected technique of reading the Orkney fishermen-crofter characters through the intertext of the Old and New Testament narrations, also permeated with the imagery of little particular locations and community spaces of fishing, farming and communal domesticity (cf. Brown's acknowledgement of his debt, *For the Islands I Sing*, 53–54; this can be viewed as a case of Müller's concept of interfigurality of re-used figures 107–09). There are likewise frequent descriptions in Brown's storytelling of the activities of farming and fishing, topographically grasped in their mundane aspect of conquering space, which work not just as activities but as axiologically oriented semiotic signs that gain symbolic importance. Korzeniowska observes that Brown Catholicism shaped "his symbolic view of the world, and [. . .] his attitude towards life and eternity" (233). In this technique of amplifying the semantic layer

of the texts, an important role was evidently played by his religious choices. However, bearing in mind the earlier occurrence of certain symbolic motifs (compare "Introduction" in Bevan and Murray, xii), it is also possible that his literary and artistic sensitivity could have inspired him to search for the underlying patterns of European culture that ultimately led him into his conversion (this is what Brown acknowledges himself in his autobiography, *For the Islands I Sing* 53). When he turned forty, he embraced Roman Catholicism in an act of long-sought choice but also as a conscious and rebellious act in opposition to his community (Hall 158). Apart from the obvious borrowings of symbolic topoi of the fisherman–farmer from the Gospels, the Biblical stories might also be treated as the intertext to Brown's narrations in terms of the system of values and attitude to the topic of failure.

The archipelago aspect of Brown's writing has something to do with his generic fascinations which he transforms though his strictly modernist and even post-modernist literary sensitivity. On the one hand, anything he writes bears the stamp of the traditional oral storytelling genres of the early settlers of the island. On the other hand, he uses the contemporary topoi which are somehow woven into the traditional conventions such as folktale, legend, epic, saga, myth, ballad, hagiography, and elegy. In this motley application of genres, the cultural influences of the Celtic, Norse and Old English origin coexist and are modified by Brown's approach to space. All these literary forms deal with abstracted, archetypal space that serves to define the axiological aspects of character movement across space. Crossing borders is vital. The generic topics of adventure, confrontation, fight, love, reconciliation and rescue get reshaped into community-formation moments. This is to be found for example in "The Man on the Shore" where the three-thousand-year time span shows little change to the pattern effected by subsequent ages and millennia, with the basic human figures linked to the same spaces and retaining their landscape-defined identity, such as the figure of the shore-rambling man with the otter, who is represented as the hostile Other, only to be identified as the saviour figure.

The way Brown treats his locations is in fact very modern as there is a lot of philosophical focus on the cyclic process of wasteland or wilderness reclamation by civilizing of island settings which does

not necessarily mean progress, while it happens on top of the traces of bygone communities (compare discussion in of his critical attitude to progress in Miller, "Scottish Short Stories" 294). Brown's attitude to space can be perceived as identifiable with the mainstream of Scottish inter-war Renaissance (see Lindsay 409) but also distinct from it, by force of avoiding clear-cut symbolic formulas (compare Gifford, "Scottish Literature since 1945" 840). There is unity between Brown's stories and poems in their "essentially modernist, even primitivist [. . .] spirit" evoked by working within the spatial imagery of "a contemporary wasteland" imbued with "eternal mythic patterns" and revived rituals that amplify meaning (cf. Miller, "George Mackay Brown" 472).

The fact that the spatial concepts of the margin and crossing borders dominate in his writing make Brown quite contemporary, and thus central, as well. The same is true of the poetics of transfiguring the semantic layer through accumulation of interfigural patterns, generic influences and cultural allusions organised into the pattern of tradition realised as waves of continuity followed by discontinuity and disjunction. These are strictly post-modern topoi in accord with the contemporary literary focus on the Other. There is always foregrounded the dual centralised and de-centralised aspect of the community of the peripheries visible in the lives of Brown's protagonists. The difference is that Brown is ultimately focused on unifying his narration of cultural identity through his shaping of archipelago space as a uniform semantic gesture. He thus foregrounds the fact that periphery is, after all, a cognitive spatio-social concept relative to point of view (such a perspective on Brown through relative understanding of the peripheral in his short fiction is hinted at in the context of British and Irish short story techniques in Malcolm 131).

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"A Swithering of Modes": Realist and Non-Realist Space in the Fiction of Christopher Whyte

> What David Craig called a "swithering of modes" and others have named "antisyzygy" or "dissociation of sensibility" has consistently appeared as a modal feature of Scottish fiction. The mixtures have been numerous: grotesque humour and pastoral sentiment; broad satire and severe piety; history competing with legend and romance; romance repeatedly undercut with irony; austere realism jostling with fantasy; tragedy and farce. (Hart 406)

> *Lanark* combines Hart's "fidelity to local truth" in two of its four books [. . .] while the other two books implement through fantasy and science fiction the representation of "national types and whole cultural epochs. [. . .]" In its conjunction of these different generic possibilities, *Lanark* joyfully exploits Hart's "swithering of modes" as an answer to the "dissociation of sensibility" from which its hero suffers. (Craig 267)

"A swithering of modes": from Craig to Hart to Craig, this phrase haunts the critical literature on the Scottish novel and offers a suggestive starting point for a discussion of contemporary Scottish fiction. Cairns Craig, in the most recent contribution to the debate, argues that contemporary Scottish reality can no longer be adequately represented or explored by the novel of social realism that was the dominant mode in Scottish fiction (especially urban fiction) for long stretches of the twentieth century. Instead the novelist who wants to do justice to the complexity of the Scottish condition must follow

in the footsteps of Muriel Spark and Alasdair Gray in subverting the conventions of this realist mode. Gray's *Lanark* is, in the view of Craig and most other critics, the work which marks this change in aesthetic/ formal orientation but he goes on to mention several younger novelists who have explored and exploited the new mode, or hesitation between modes: Janice Galloway, Iain Banks, A.L. Kennedy, Alan Warner. He also mentions in passing the writer I propose to discuss here: Christopher Whyte, poet, translator, critic and author of four novels: *Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin* (1995), *The Warlock of Strathearn* (1997), *The Gay Decameron* (1998) and *The Cloud Machinery* (2000).

Whyte is well-known as a Gaelic poet, and as editor of the seminal collection of critical essays, *Gendering the Nation*, which could fairly claim to be the first major work to apply queer theory to modern Scottish literature. His fiction, however, has perhaps not had the critical attention it merits. We find glancing references to his work in the major surveys of contemporary Scottish literature by Gifford et al. (952, 976), Watson (276) and Crawford (690); Carla Sassi has written some perceptive pages on *The Warlock of Strathearn* in her study *Why Scottish Literature Matters* (162–63); Kirsty Macdonald has written a comparative piece on "Gothic masculinities" in the fiction of Whyte and Iain Banks. But the major contribution to date is Fiona Wilson's excellent survey, "Radical Hospitality: Christopher Whyte and Cosmopolitanism", to which I will frequently refer in this article.

My focus is somewhat narrower than Wilson's. I will be concentrating on the representation of place and space in Whyte's first two novels, *Euphemia MacFarrigle* and *The Warlock of Strathearn*, both of which are set largely in Scotland. In particular I want to examine the way realist and non-realist elements coexist and interpenetrate in their fictional worlds, in what one might (paraphrasing Hart and Craig) describe as a spatial or diegetic "swithering of modes" which nevertheless retains some anchorage in Scottish social or historical reality. This generates a complex interplay of meanings, both sociological-historical and symbolic, which have a considerable bearing on major themes in Whyte's fiction, such as desire, identity and the relationship between self and other(s).

It hardly needs saying that place and space are theoretically loaded concepts: the relationship between them has been theorised in varying, and not always obviously compatible, ways, ranging from Michel de Certeau's conceptualisation of space as place activated or acted upon – "un lieu pratiqué" (173) – to more conventional distinctions between space as global, generic and abstract and place as local, particular and (often) named, or (to adopt John Agnew's elegant formulation) between "a geometric conception" and "a phenomenological understanding" of spatiality (317). I will generally follow the conventional distinctions in this article, though the conceptual relationship between place and space will concern me less than the mapping of specific spatial constellations in the novels in question. One theoretical point of reference which will feature quite prominently is Bakhtin's oft-discussed concept of the chronotope, which he defines as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature" (84). The chronotope, in Bakhtin's words, "has an intrinsic generic significance" and indeed "defines genre and generic distinctions" (85); it can thus offer us an invaluable conceptual link between questions of mode and the representation of space and place in Whyte's fiction.

Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin

Although *Euphemia MacFarrigle and the Laughing Virgin* is very much a Glasgow novel, with most of the action taking place within the city limits, it could hardly be described as a typical example of the genre as it has emerged from the mid-twentieth century onwards. Fiona Wilson argues that the book can be read as "a systematic undoing of many of the foundational tropes associated with the genre of the Glasgow novel, most importantly the trope of the unyielding city and its corollary: the isolate, impenetrable body of the 'hard man'"(195). Here Wilson is very much following in the critical footsteps of Whyte himself, who in 1990 published an article entitled "Imagining the City", devoted to the Glasgow novel of the thirties and forties, in which he sketches out a "tentative identikit of the genre":

> The classic mode of Glasgow fiction is realism. [. . .] Realism is traditionally associated with brutal and seamier themes, and is appropriate to a middle-class authorhe genre": the of working-class life. The seeming transparency of realist technique soothes a feeling of impotence, in the face of material which could make a preoccupation with stylistic factors appear indecent. Realism extends to sexuality. [. . .] On a symbolic level this indicates a polarisation of the male and female principles (as cultural constructs) of which the icon of the "hard man" is another symptom. [. . .] Realism as a mode hinders transcendence
>
> [. . .] and cannot treat the making or operation of art within the novel itself. (319)

This could almost be read as an anti-manifesto, a blueprint for all the things Whyte does not want to do in his own Glasgow novel. *Euphemia MacFarrigle* is predominantly concerned with middle-class life; it is certainly attentive to style, if not unduly "preoccupied with stylistic factors"; one could argue that its thematic *raison domina* is to challenge and subvert traditional gender/ sexual polarities, primarily but by no means exclusively in its exploration of gay sexuality; and it contains powerful elements of transcendence, not all of which manifest themselves in aesthetic form.

Whyte's reaction against the traditional mode of "Glasgow realism" is already quite perceptible in the spatial organisation of the novel's fictional world. Geographically and socially, the Glasgow of *Euphemia MacFarrigle* is a clearly delimited space, encompassing the City Centre and the West End but by no means exclusively in its exploration of gay sexuality;tional world. Geographically and socists and the like – with only a few outlying areas (spatially and sociologically) making an appearance. These include Govan, where the three upwardly mobile Donaldson brothers come from, and Bishopbriggs, where the protagonist, Daniel, lives with his family in middle-class affluence; the most significant of them, however, is Springburn, where the miracle of the laughing (statue of the) Virgin occurs that gives the novel its title.[1] Springburn is the only working-class area described in any detail in the novel:

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[1] Interestingly, Springburn is the setting for a notable example of the Glasgow novel of social realism that Whyte is reacting against, J.F. Hendry's *Fernie Brae* (1947).

> The camera panned away from the two men and down in the direction of the crowd. The crew had taken up position on the grassless, treeless sloping ground between the parish house and the church. Along the ridge of the hill above them stretched unbroken, joyless phalanxes of council tenements. Many of them had shattered or boarded windows. Fragmentary obscenities were sprayed on the lower walls. (104)

The West End circus where the archbishop and down in the direction of the crowd. The crew had taken up ut the contrast (architectural, aesthetic, social, economic) could hardly be starker:

> The archbishop's palace occupies three floors and the basement of an austere yet august tenement in one of Glasgow's prime real estate locations. [. . .]
>
> In the city's heyday, the coaches of industrial magnates and distinguished professionals would circle the hilltop, with its neatly groomed park at the centre, then pause in front of one of the splendid residences to collect a young lady bound for her French lessons. [. . .]
>
> Today the circus is a lugubrious haunt of insurance offices, architects' studios and cultural institutes, with only lively cacophonies from the student residences at its western end to break the uninterrupted silence of its decadence. (10–11)

The action of the novel, then, takes place largely within the area stretching from the eastern fringes of the City Centre (George Square, where Daniel has his tryst; Saltmarket, where private detective Mick McFall has his rather down-at-heel office) to the University district (the Orange Sun Café in Kelvinbridge, Euphemia's mysterious flat in Otago Street). As in the work of so many writers and theorists, from Balzac and Baudelaire to Simmel and Sennett, the city is characterised as a space of encounters: the relatively concentrated urban environment of streets and squares, pubs and cafés, flats and offices offers frequent opportunities for chance meetings, and equally fortuitous failures to meet.[2] A conspicuous (and con-

[2] As Franco Moretti observes in his essay "Homo palpitans: Balzac and Urban Personality", "[t]he city dweller's life is dominated by a nightmare – a trifling one, to be sure – unknown to other human beings: the terror of 'missing something', and specifically of missing it because of 'getting there too late'" (119).

spicuously comic) instance of the former is young accountant Fraser Donaldson's sexual encounter with the priapic Jesuit, Felipe Gutierrez, after dark by the River Kelvin; another example, though not in comic mode, would be Daniel's tryst (mentioned above) with the building worker on a tenement landing not far from George Square. Perhaps the most spectacular missed encounter, or indeed series of missed encounters, occurs during the frantic search for pregnant (former) nun Juliette's missing baby through the streets of Maryhill – an episode drawing on the sort of comic topoi (confusions of identity, failures in communication, physical comedy akin to farce, as when the reluctant keeper of the baby, TV presenter Alan Donaldson, faints on-screen from shock) we find in works across the full range of the literary spectrum, from Shakespeare and Molière to the *Carry On* films.

Unsurprisingly, given the thematic dominant of the novel, most of these encounters (or failed encounters) are charged with desire: as Wilson remarks, "desire […] flows through the characters just as the River Kelvin does beneath the streets of the West End, no more hostile to the characters than the river is to the human world above" (195). The Kelvin can indeed be read as a powerful signifier of desire in the novel, both metonymically, in the various trysts that take place on its banks, and metaphorically, through the image of a persistent, subterranean flow ultimately reminiscent of Freud's hydraulic model of the libido. But if the city frequently appears as a theatre of desire in *Euphemia*, it can also be, for certain characters at certain moments, a place where desire is blocked or frustrated. Significantly, two of the main characters in the book – in fact, the two who experience the most thorough-going sexual and emotional transformation – choose or are compelled to leave the city at a critical point in their development: the first thing the erstwhile Mother Genevieve does after leaving the convent (and the order) is to travel to Largs for her tryst with Cyril Braithwaite; following the suicide of his friend and lover Gerald, the young protagonist Daniel is sent to live with his great-aunt in Falkirk, occasioning a period of reflection and recuperation during which he begins to understand and accept his desires and lay the foundations for a fulfilling relationship with another man; the idyllic final scene in the novel takes place in the Argyll village of Tighnabruaich, looking over the Kyles of Bute,

where Daniel, now happily partnered with Tom, feels the first real stirrings of his poetic vocation (as foreseen, of course, by the prescient Euphemia). Thus, in an unexpected reversal of stereotypes, a move away from the temporarily constricting, if not perhaps intrinsically repressive, atmosphere of the city forms a necessary stage in the freeing up of hitherto unrealised potential or frustrated desire.

Whyte's Glasgow, as I have sketched it out in the preceding paragraphs – a space of chance meetings and missed encounters – is reminiscent in some ways of the urban environment of modernity evoked by Baudelaire in a poem like "À une passante". But this ignores a crucial element in the novel's structure: the dimension of the fantastic, the constant presence (and pressure) of supernatural influences, in the form of Euphemia's interventions in the apparently random sequence of events. The city, in all the complexity of its interactions, is a space surveyed, and to some degree regulated, by a panoptical angelic vision. As we see from the taxi that serendipitously turns up to whisk Daniel away after Gerald's funeral, Euphemia plays a decisive role in orchestrating the apparently fortuitous encounters and missed encounters, thus introducing an element of design into (or imposing it upon) what appear from the merely human perspective of the characters involved to be the random events of the narrative. This is in large part a comic device, as we have seen in the baby-chase episode: Euphemia frequently acts as *angelus ex machina* (as it were), not exactly a supernatural puppeteer who has complete control over the actions of the humans but certainly a figure with gifts of foresight and an ability to bend the sequence of events towards the denouement devoutly to be wished.

The most notable instance of Euphemia's prophetic powers occurs in a flashback at the end of the second chapter, when the retired drag queen, Alfred Coutts, recounts a nocturnal walk he and Euphemia took through the city, during which she foretold in vivid detail the transformations the city was about to undergo: the demolition of the Gorbals, the construction of multi-lane carriageways over the river, even the celebrations of the City of Culture. "She prophesied. She foresaw it all. She told me everything that was going to happen in this city and a thing or two that hasn't happened yet" (81). Most of the time, however, Euphemia's supernatural powers manifest themselves in more interventionist (and more purely comic) ways: we see

this in the carnivalesque plot strand charting the Rabelaisian journey undertaken by Euphemia's miniaturised emissaries – "a benevolent investigatory group of microscopic aliens", in Wilson's vivid phrase (195) – through the labyrinthine internal passages of Brenda's body, on a mission to revivify the Mother Superior's neglected (though not entirely atrophied) sexual organs and erogenous zones. There may indeed be a specific Rabelaisian intertext here, as this narrative sequence recalls the famous episode in *Gargantua* when a band of pilgrims are inadvertently swallowed by the eponymous giant and are tossed around in the colossal caverns of the giant's maw, causing him a momentary stab of pain when one of their staffs prods a sensitive spot in his carious tooth (143–46). But more generally (or generically) carnivalesque motifs are to be found throughout the text: the mortifying outbursts of flatulence that affect the Archbishop at the most inopportune moments – for instance, when he is giving a TV interview – or the indecorous guffaws of the laughing virgin, which occur by a strange (non-)coincidence at exactly the times when Mother Genevieve finds herself assailed by erotic daydreams.

The contrasts of scale seen in the shrunken emissaries' internal journey are a recurring trope in Whyte's fiction, re-appearing towards the end of the text in a passage, much more ambiguous in tone, describing Euphemia's reversion to her authentic (angelic) mode of being. In this strangely haunting transformation scene, closer to the marvellous than the comic, the angels portrayed on the numerous postcards in Euphemia's collection come to life, flapping their wings and growing in magnitude:

> As each one fell, the angels on it struggled to free themselves and took form in the air of the room. The movement of their wings ruffled the remaining cards, shaking them down more quickly. The angels grew alarmingly in size as they emerged. They might have been hurtling towards Cissie from the bottom of a deep, dark cone, or magnified by a zoom lens whose focus span round with unbelievable rapidity. (206)

This episode occurs in Euphemia's top-floor tenement flat at 98 Otago Street, which is without doubt the most uncanny and unsettlingly non-realist space in the text. Its spatial lay-out seems strangely elusive and difficult to represent coherently; its intermediate position

between earth and heaven(s) is repeatedly stressed, with both Cissie and Daniel noticing the panoramic views from the large bay window and Alfred Coutts comparing the sitting room with the triple windows to "the cockpit of an aeroplane" (79); most uncannily of all, the mysterious flat disappears and reappears apparently at random, strangely reminiscent (in this if nothing else) of Brigadoon, as Fiona Wilson wittily remarks. She continues, in more serious mode: "98 Otago Street is liminal and negotiable. For some, such as the detective Mick McFall, this liminality marks it as a place of danger; for others, the same qualities identify it as a place of refuge and possibility" (195).

Euphemia's flat in Otago Street is a crucial site in the novel's chronotope: at once geographically pinpointed (in realist space) and ontologically unstable (shifting between existence and non-existence), it contains and condenses the tension in the novel between realism and fantasy, the sociological and the symbolic. Indeed, it could be described as the principal locus of the "swithering of modes" we mentioned at the start of this essay. As we have seen, Whyte's particular form of swithering takes predominantly (though by no means exclusively) comic-satiric form in *Euphemia MacFarrigle*, drawing on a variety of often carnivalesque motifs in its distortions of the conventionally real. It also allows him to compose a text that works both as a novel of manners, probing the mores and values of a particular place at a particular historical moment, and as a fable exploring the vicissitudes of desire and the obstacles (institutional and emotional) which conspire to frustrate and block it.

The Warlock of Strathearn

If *Euphemia MacFarrigle* is predominantly a comic novel – Wilson describes it as a "satire in the classical and Bakhtinian sense" (195) – Whyte's second novel, *The Warlock of Strathearn*, can be situated within the broad tradition of the romance exemplified by the great nineteenth-century novelists such as Scott, Hogg and Stevenson. Scott gives a succinct definition in his "Essay on Romance" of 1824:

> We would be rather inclined to describe a *Romance* as nced be rather inclined to describe a of the romance exempwhich turns upon marvellous and uncommon incidents"; thus being opposed to the kindred term *Novel* [. . .] which we would rather define as "a fictitious narrative, differing from the Romance, because the events are accommodated to the ordinary train of human events, and the modern state of society". (129)

The shift from comic to romance mode brings a series of formal differences in its wake. *Euphemia* is a third-person narrative (except for one short section in first-person), featuring a large cast of characters; the plot could be described as polycentric, with no single character or relationship between characters dominating. *The Warlock*, on the other hand, consists of the eponymous warlock's autobiographical first-person narrative, framed by a much shorter foreword and afterword (both likewise in the first person, though by different narrators, neither of whom is the warlock): the focus is therefore firmly on the warlock himself, who either participates in, witnesses or is told about all the events that occur. These formal and modal divergences inevitably affect the representation of time and space in the novels: *Euphemia* is a contemporary urban novel, the action of which unfolds in a relatively restricted geographical space and over a fairly short time-span; *The Warlock* is a historical romance with a predominantly rural setting and the events recounted occur over the warlock's seventy-odd year lifetime, though with considerable variations in narrative rhythm.

The spatio-temporal coordinates of *The Warlock* show distinct affinities with structures we frequently find in the *Bildungsroman*. The warlock grows up in the countryside around Strathearn in Perthshire; his *Lehrjahre* (to borrow Goethe's term) are played out within the geographical region that the first frame narrator, Archibald MacCaspin, will later study in the course of his toponymical researches: "an area which extends from Blair Atholl, in the valley of the River Garry, in the north, to Braco, with its renowned Roman remains, in the south, and from Killin, at the western end of Loch Tay, to the royal burgh of Abernethy, on the very extremities of Fife" (8). But as the warlock reaches adulthood, the decor shifts progressively away from the Strathearn countryside of his childhood explorations, first

to the small town of Auchterarder, thence to Edinburgh and ultimately to continental Europe. This period of the warlock's life could, if we pursue the Goethean parallel, be described as his *Wanderjahre*, though many of the journeys themselves are very rapidly passed over, indeed are often elided, in a way more reminiscent of a later and more subversive novel of education, Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale*, with its famously laconic account of the protagonist Frédéric Moreau's presumably lengthy travels.[3] The crucial events of the warlock's itinerant years take place in Bohemia; his subsequent wanderings, happening over a period of twenty-odd years, are dealt with in one extended sentence:

> My months at the court of Mantua, and the theatrical spectacles I laid on for the Duke there; my intrigues in Venice, and the invaluable services I was able to render to the Doge; my years as an antiquarian in Vienna, as an astrologer in Cracow, as a painter of ivory miniatures at the court of Madrid, or as a Latin master at the academy of Liège; my love for the wife of a rich merchant in Lucerne, and my travels as a circus owner down the valley of the Rhine and across the north German plain [. . .] Suffice it to say that I was well over forty when I returned to the valley of my birth and settled here. (241)

The extreme condensation of the action narrated and the acceleration of plot time could perhaps be described as a form of "backgrounding", ensuring that the focus of the warlock's narrative remains firmly fixed on events in Strathearn.

There are good reasons for seeing the region around Strathearn as the spatial centre of the narrative: foreword and afterword are largely set there; the warlock is born and raised in the area and returns to settle, and eventually die, close to the place of his birth. But several of the places the warlock visits in the course of his travels do provide a symbolic counterpoint to his Perthshire birth region. The first example – really the only occasion in the first half of the book when the warlock leaves Strathearn – occurs when his wet nurse Marion

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[3] The passage occurs in the penultimate chapter of the novel: "Il voyagea. Il connut la mélancolie des paquebots, les froids réveils sous la tente, l'étourdissement des paysages et des ruines, l'amertume des sympathies interrompues" (491).

attempts (unsuccessfully) to escape with him over the Highland line, into the lands where her kinsfolk dwell. The travellers end up deviating from their route and travelling west into Campbell country, with unpleasant consequences for all concerned (warlock, Marion, and the gaolers who are foolish enough to wound the boy). This abortive attempt at flight carries obvious symbolic significance: the Highlands represent a different culture or civilisation, opposed to (or at least relatively untouched by) the repressive Presbyterianism of the Covenanting lowlands – a culture which, it is suggested, would be much more tolerant and accepting of the supernatural gifts the warlock possesses:

> Yet another possibility is that she [Marion] had abandoned all hope of concealing my identity and powers. Not until more than a decade later did I become aware how intense the vigilance of church and state had grown where witches and warlocks were concerned. [. . .] The Gaelic people were subject to neither the benefits nor the surveillance of regular clergy. (36–37)

The second (and much more significant) geographical axis of the novel opposes Strathearn and Edinburgh, countryside and (capital) city, with all the accompanying connotations one might expect and a few others that are more specific to *The Warlock*. Three major episodes in warlock's narrative take place in Edinburgh: it is the place where the warlock's vindictive and tyrannical grandmother, Alison, has her adulterous liaison with the advocate, Mr Brailsford; it also provides the setting for the last, idyllic days the warlock (now in female form) passes with his/ her beloved Lisbet, before the latter is arrested, tortured and hanged as a witch; finally, it is to Edinburgh that the warlock escapes after Lisbet's death and where he subsequently meets the alchemist Borenius, who restores him to his original male form and takes him to Bohemia as his research assistant.

Within the warlock's diegetic world, then, the capital city appears first as a space of sexual freedom, both for the warlock and his fanatical but (it is implied) far from sexually repressed grandmother. These largely positive connotations are, however, counterbalanced by a level of material poverty and misery that is not to be found in the rural economy of Strathearn and by the presence of more ex-

treme forms of brutality, as in the executions that take place regularly in the Grassmarket. More important for the dynamics of the action is Edinburgh's role as a place of transition (in both literal-spatial and more existential senses): initially it is somewhere the warlock goes to hide and escape the risk of persecution but it soon becomes a staging post on the way to elsewhere – elsewhere being the continent, and in particular Prague, a city that occupies an important place in the symbolic structure of the novel, serving as a point of comparison and contrast to the Scottish capital. Prague is in the first instance characterised by a grandeur and sophistication that makes Edinburgh look provincial: "Its narrow streets and fine squares lined with noble palaces and merchant's houses, and its Way of the Kings leading over the river across a bridge rich in statues, then steeply uphill to the castle, reminiscent in a grander tone of Edinburgh, had an air of nestling gentleness that belied their troubled history. There was no hunger here" (206). More tellingly, it displays a degree of religious freedom and cultural hybridity that could not be further removed from Presbyterian regimen of seventeenth-century Scotland:

> [The people of Bohemia] insisted on consuming their godhead's dismembered body in the form of both bread and wine. Their fellow Christians saw this as notoriously heterodox. One church in particular [. . .] personified that mystery and strangeness to me. Its tapering towers were decorated with globes on the end of long, thin spindles, as if distant, rotating worlds had descended from the sky to rest there from their movements for a while. They could have been the model for a different universe. (208)

The vibrant and cosmopolitan intellectual culture of the city appears most strikingly in the Jewish quarter the warlock visits with his mentor Borenius:

> I loved that part of Prague. Business was done differently, and not only business. Borenius had lively arguments with the men he sought out. They produced books with mathematical tables and symbolic engravings. [. . .] Not all were written in our characters. The names of the great Arab sages peppered the conversation. Sometimes both speakers would pause and gaze in wonderment, for they had touched

> a question neither could reply to, or opened vistas they knew to be still unexplored by human intelligence. (208–09)

Prague, then, is a cultural melting pot, a crucible of intellectual innovation.[4] But once Borenius and the warlock are ensconced in their patron's remote castle in the Bohemian countryside – the echoes of Kafka are hard to miss – the warlock's overwhelming experience is one of alienation:

> The most difficult element in this new life was its isolation. If I felt cut off from the world at Culteuchar, that was because of the malevolence of one or two individuals. [. . .]
>
> Here everything was strange: the faces, the language, the countryside, even the weather. While both our workshop and the rooms where we slept were well-heated, the cold outside reached an intensity I had never before experienced. (211–12)

The dystopian element is underscored when bloodthirsty signs of Alison even the weather. While both our workshop and the rooms where we slept were well-heated, the cold outside rgs with their eyes gouged out – as a prelude to the climactic confrontation between good and evil, white and black magic, that ends with the warlock's triumph:

> It is hard for me to explain how my grandmother disintegrated. What happened did not resemble the destruction of a creature of flesh and blood. Rather it was as if a haystack or a huge pile of autumn leaves had been set upon by a whirlwind. She had looked unassailable enough before. Now she was pulled apart in an instant, dispersed to the four corners of the earth. Not a trace of her remained. Atom was sundered from atom, ready to be reconstituted in less horrid forms. (239–40)

The various locations described in *The Warlock* form a network of contrasting meanings, arranged in a series of oppositions (Strathearn-Edinburgh, Edinburgh-Prague, Strathearn-Bohemia). In

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[4] Wilson makes a similar observation about Prague: "the warlock thrills to the city's cosmopolitan air, relishing its fantastical architecture, as well as the mix of mysticism and scientific enquiry he encounters in the Jewish ghetto" (198).

contrast to *Euphemia MacFarrigle*, where the supernatural tends to manifest itself in a few almost magnetically charged locations (especially Euphemia's ontologically indeterminate flat), most places and spaces in *The Warlock* are accessible to, and permeable by, numinous and occult forces: Strathearn and environs, Edinburgh, Bohemia are all sites of supernatural events and interventions, by the warlock or other characters (Lisbet and her coven, Borenius, but especially the demonic Alison). We are perhaps closer to a chronotope of the marvellous in this text, the projection of a fictional world where (at least in certain areas of existence) the laws of physics as we know them do not obtain. This contrasts with *Euphemia*, where for much of the time the diegetic world appears to obey the laws of everyday reality. But even in *The Warlock* a backdrop of realism is never entirely absent: the warlock is careful to pre-empt the reader's possible objections as to the veracity, if not the verisimilitude, of the phenomena he describes, and "fidelity to local truth" (to cite Hart's phrase) is a conspicuous feature of the descriptions of the Strathearn landscape, as in this evocation of the spirit-frequented woods beside the Water of May: "A rich variety of trees grows there: willows and alders nearer the stream, then oak, hawthorn and ash as you mount the higher slopes. [. . .] I had the usual animals as my companions: voles, rats and an otter or two next to the May, in the distance the faint outline of a deer, hooded crows and a buzzard overhead" (69–70). In a passage like this, it is perhaps the heightening of descriptive realism that creates a sense of the uncanny or numinous, rather than a tear in the fabric of that realism.

The Gay Decameron and *The Cloud Machinery*

The main focus of this article is on Whyte's first two novels, in which modal shifts between realist and non-realist space occur within the bounds of a predominantly Scottish fictional world. The treatment of time and space in the later novels, *The Gay Decameron* (1998) and *The Cloud Machinery* (2000), would likewise repay closer examination; neither, however, combines the "swithering of modes" mentioned above with the representation of a specifically Scottish geography or topography.

The Gay Decameron offers rich material for an analysis of the chronotope, or even polychronotope, to borrow a term used by Lucie Armitt in her study of contemporary women's fiction and the fantastic (35–43). Loosely based (as the title would suggest) on Boccaccio's original, the novel traces the stories of ten gay men gathered for a dinner party at the Edinburgh flat belonging to two of the company. While the main geographical axis is the archetypally Scottish one of Edinburgh and Glasgow, the spatial range of the action is wide, encompassing not only London and Ireland but also Luxembourg, Tuscany and (especially) Barcelona, original home of one of the men and place of residence of another for many years. (Indeed, Barcelona, in its tolerant cosmopolitanism, occupies a symbolic space not dissimilar to that of Prague in *The Warlock*) Interestingly, one of the characters, Mark, introduces the idea of "sexual geography" as a way of mapping the trajectories of their lives: "Well, look around this table! What would it be like if there were lines like that connecting everyone who has had sex together?" (239). There is an element of flippancy and provocation in this, of course, as in many of Mark's statements. But like the Catalan artistic technique of *trencadís* (a kind of mosaic assembled from pottery fragments) mentioned later in the text (289), Mark's idea of plotting the sexual geography that links the characters offers a very suggestive formal point of entry to the novel itself. Whether that narrative geography is entirely reliable, however, is perhaps open to question, as Wilson argues: "Though storytelling offers one means of drawing up such a map, it is a practice not entirely without risks. In *The Gay Decameron*, fiction has a distinctly ambiguous valence" (198).

In spite of its engagement with spatial mappings and displacements, however, *The Gay Decameron* does not display the shifting between realist and non-realist modes that characterises Whyte's first two novels. There is certainly an element of the marvellous in the text, introduced by the Oriental tales that one of the characters reads while the others are eating, drinking and conversing round the dinner table. But this does not represent an irruption of the inexplicable into the fictional world of the novel: the element of fantasy is contained within the realist universe of the novel, certainly providing a counterpoint to the first-level action but not disrupting the laws of the fictional universe.

The Cloud Machinery, in contrast, is permeated by the fantastic: indeed, it is not always easy to tease apart a realist from a non-realist dimension in the diegetic world of the text, set as it is in an eighteenth-century Venice of masks and masquerades, between carnival and the Court of Darkness where the villains perpetrate their diabolical ploys and plots. Unlike Whyte's other novels, though, the action of *The Cloud Machinery* unfolds entirely furth of Scotland – almost exclusively in Venice, in fact, with only a couple of flashbacks to events occurring in Naples and Salzburg. One could of course argue, as Wilson does, that Whyte is indirectly exploring facets of Scotland, Scottish identity and the Scottish condition, whether the work is ostensibly taking place in Scotland or not: "Though Whyte is resistant to the idea that Scottish writers should be burdened with the responsibility of imagining the nation, it could be said that his four novels to date […] do exactly that" (194–95). We could perhaps draw a parallel, *mutatis mutandis*, with the visual device of anamorphosis made famous by Holbein in his painting *The Ambassadors*, whereby places, figures and objects appear very differently if observed from an oblique viewpoint. (In Holbein's painting, what looks to be nothing more than an indeterminate smear when viewed straight on reveals itself as a skull when viewed from the side.) Thus in *The Cloud Machinery* Venice and its buildings, inhabitants and objects might well take on a Caledonian colouring or configuration when looked at symbolically slantwise (as it were). But this kind of reading would require some serious semiotic effort on the part of the reader; the fidelity to local (Scottish) detail, sociological, ecological or toponymic, that we found in the first two novels is of necessity absent from *The Cloud Machinery*.

Concluding remarks

Both *Euphemia MacFarrigle* and *The Warlock of Strathearn* display the "swithering of modes" – between realism and what we might variously call the fantastic, the marvellous, the supernatural, the surreal – that, as Cairns Craig argues, characterises some of the most vibrant and probing fictional explorations of contemporary Scottish reality. This slippage between modes, however, manifests itself dif-

ferently in the two texts: generically and chronotopically, *Euphemia MacFarrigle* falls under the broad category of the comic-satiric (with strong carnivalesque elements), whereas *The Warlock* follows the pattern and conventions of the romance, both in Northrop Frye's sense and in the less technical acceptation of the term to describe that powerful current in nineteenth-century Scottish fiction that includes much of the work of Scott, Hogg and Stevenson. Franco Moretti, in his brilliant study of the European *Bildungsroman*, draws a distinction (based on the work of Yuri Lotman) between fictions of classification, which derive their sense from their ending, and fictions of transformation, which communicate meaning by their narrative dynamic, the way the action unfolds, without privileging the moment of closure (*Way of the World* 7). We could perhaps see *Euphemia MacFarrigle* as closer to the first model and *The Warlock* more akin to the second.

The realist elements in the diegetic worlds of the two novels – the social geography of Glasgow in *Euphemia*, the topography and toponymy of rural Perthshire in *The Warlock* – are reasonably easy to identify and decode; the fantastic or marvellous dimension, on the other hand, allows for a broader range of interpretative possibilities. The most promising hermeneutic approach might be to foreground those central concerns that pervade Whyte's writing, whether fiction, poetry or criticism: desire, identity, relations between subject and object. Within this framework, Euphemia could be read as an Angel of Teleology, intervening to steer characters who are sexually or emotionally blocked or frustrated towards a point where they are free to give expression to their desire – to (in Nietzschean terms) become what they are. The warlock symbolises another facet of desire: its fluidity and shape-shifting energies, its power to transform the self, to generate a succession of avatars. The Hindu term seems particularly apposite when we consider the warlock's foretelling of his own death at the end of his narrative (247–48), a passage that lends added support to Carla Sassi's contention that the warlock's manifold transformations "pose the ultimate challenge to the idea of morphological normativity at the heart of western civilization" (162). It is certainly hard to dispute that, by freeing the imagination from the constraints of "realist" causality and blurring and breaching the habitual bounds of subject and object, Whyte's "swithering of

modes" allows him to explore the modulations and metamorphoses of subjectivity and celebrate the free play of desire, untrammelled by the forces of repression which seek to immobilise it, whether in twentieth-century Catholic Glasgow or Presbyterian Perthshire in the sixteen hundreds.

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FUTURE SPACES

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The Outer and the Inner: Space in the Works of Contemporary Scottish Science Fiction Writers

The British Boom, a fairly recent development in science fiction, began in the 1990s, incorporating post-cyberpunk and post-human SF, as well as paying homage to Golden Age SF, in the choice of subgenre and themes. It is the second such revolution within the genre to come from Britain, the former being the New Wave movement, which took place between the 1960s and 1970s. Both movements single out British SF as innovative and ambitious, "marked by high literary merit" (Booker 11). Notable figures among the new British movement are Scotsmen Iain M. Banks, Charles Stross and Ken Macleod, whose works have won high critical acclaim and have been discussed in a number of academic publications.

Given that both the New Wave and the British Boom have flourished in Britain and that both movements have set out to reinvigorate and restore SF as a legitimate literary genre, worthy of serious critical assessment, I would like to study the possible effects that the New Wave might have had on the latter development, based on novels by Banks, Stross and Macleod, focusing on the theme of outer/inner space in these works.

To begin with, we should go back to the roots of the first serious conflict within the SF community, namely the New Wave movement. One of the reasons the movement came to being was the dwindling position of SF as a genre in the twilight of its Golden Age – Zgorzelski places this period between 1939 and 1950. In his work on the history

of SF, entitled *Age of Wonders*, David Hartwell states that "A sense of wonder, awe at the vastness of space and time, is at the root of the excitement of science fiction" (42). At the time of its greatest popularity, between the 1930s and the 1950s, SF was a literature of great visions, escapist utopias and the belief in the power of science and technology to solve problems for the human race, problems of both our making and those that may arise in some near or distant future. The emphasis was on the mind and rationality, on MEN of science (the capitalizing is no accident), who should be given power over the rest of the society, to guide it during disasters and wars; who would be effective and always right. Isaac Asimov's *Nightfall* (1941), Tom Godwin's *The Cold Equations* (1954), Robert Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* (1959) or Larry Niven's *Inconstant Moon* (1971), stories and novels of how science could be effective as a means of salvation, of how important it is to know your place in the hierarchy, of how vital it is to retain sanity in the face of tragedy and catastrophe, to preserve life as we know it. And outer-space, with its limitless possibilities, awe-inspiring and fascinating was usually there, at the centre or in the background, a sign that humanity should, or even must persevere in its struggle for knowledge and expansion, frequent associations with westerns, as in Godwin's story, making outer-space the new frontier.

At the end of the nineteen fifties the popularity of SF began to decrease. In *Age of Wonders* Hartwell describes how the launching of the first satellite and later the first manned space-flight caused people to turn away from SF, as if it had lost its credibility as the bearer of human dreams of space-conquest: "The truth is that in a single instant the fact of space travel turned most of the classic space travel stories of science into fantasies" (Hartwell 76). "Fantasies" in this case is an abusive term since, as Hartwell points out, to many SF writers, especially those cooperating with John W. Campbell, considered the leading voice of SF throughout its Golden Age, the merits of the genre lay to a large degree in the writers' ability to predict future developments with a certain accuracy. When actual space programs were launched "all the classics and standard works were no longer improbable but possible: They were dead wrong" (Hartwell 77). J.G. Ballard, in his essay "Which Way to inner Space?" (1962) goes further in the criticism of contemporary SF, expressing an opinion

that the majority of space fiction is "incredibly juvenile" and that SF stories were becoming increasingly unoriginal and unimaginative. He believes that "[. . .] science fiction should turn its back on space, on interstellar travel, extraterrestrial life forms, galactic wars and the overlap of these ideas that spreads across the margins of nine-tenths of magazine s-f" (197). In the same essay, and in another one entitled "Time, Memory and Inner Space" (1963) Ballard introduces the concept of *Inner Space*, which he saw as a possible alternative for the cliché themes recurrent throughout SF: "The biggest developments of the immediate future will take place not on the Moon or Mars, but on Earth, and it is *inner space*, not outer, that needs to be explored. The only truly alien planet is Earth" (Ballard 197). Ballard believes biological sciences should take the place of physical sciences in SF, that "[a]ccuracy, that last refuge of the unimaginative" (197) is completely unnecessary, that SF should elaborate on "meta-biological and meta-chemical concepts, private time systems, synthetic psychologies and space times" (198). Inner Space requires, according to Ballard, a system of "private symbols and vocabularies" (200) and constitutes "the internal landscape of today that is a transmuted image of the past. [. . .] It is particularly rich in visual symbols, and I feel that this type of speculative fantasy plays a role very similar to that of surrealism in the graphic arts" (200). This way of defining inner space, along with other suggestions regarding style, subject matter and literary level, soon became trademarks of the New Wave movement in science fiction.

The New Wave, roughly a decade in SF history between the 1960s and 1970s, originated in Britain and was initiated by Michael Moorcock, editor of the influential *New Worlds* magazine. New Wavers included Moorcock himself, J.G. Ballard, Brian Aldiss and a group of American writers such as Harry Harrison, Harlan Ellison or Norman Spinrad, who could not get their works published in the USA. Apart from the concept of inner space, heavily influenced by the works of Freud, Jung and R.D. Laing, and especially present in Ballard's first three catastrophic novels – *The Drowned World, The Drought, The Crystal World* – or in Moorcock's *The Deep Fix* and *The Black Corridor*, New Wavers often incorporated the theme of entropy in their works. Entropy means the heat death of the universe, an assumption that the universe will be reduced to a state unable to

maintain energy consuming processes, i.e. life. The use of this theme by Pamela Zoline in her famous short story *The Heat Death of the Universe* (1967) as a form of scientific explanation for the advancing breakdown of an American housewife is perhaps the best example of the new treatment of space and space-oriented science by this new type of SF. Space was no longer a problem solver's arena or an escapist's utopia. It was no longer the scene of galactic battles, written "in the context of cold-war thinking" (Moorcock 289) and from the point of view of an "authoritarian militarist" (289). What is more, the traditional subgenre, the space-opera, was marginalised, even parodied (Booker 43), thus marking a full assault on space fiction and space related themes.

Since the 1970s there have been several other shifts in SF, such as the cyberpunk movement, focused mainly on "near-future developments in technologies of computers, telecommunications, and virtual reality" (Booker 323) with an added interest in genetic engineering – possibly the New Wave legacy. There was also the post-human science fiction movement, associated with Bruce Sterling's "Shaper and Mechanist" stories (Booker 328), where human development, biological or mechanical, created a human race far exceeding that which we know. The influences, trends and conflicts within the SF community can now be observed in the recent British Boom, a second great revolution in the genre to originate in Britain, spearheaded among others by several Scottish writers: Iain M. Banks, Charles Stross and Ken Macleod.

The works of Banks, Stross and Macleod are usually discussed in relation to later developments in SF, i.e. post-human and post-cyberpunk SF (Booker 118), though it is interesting to look upon their works from the perspective of the New Wave legacy, and how much of it remains in the British Boom movement, with respect to outer/inner space. If we consider Banks's *Consider Phlebas* (1987), Stross's *Saturn's Children* (2008) and Macleod's *The Stone Canal* (1996) the first thing that becomes clear is the revival of the subgenre so ridiculed and discarded by the New Wave – the space opera. It is perhaps the first genre that comes to mind when we think of space fiction, which Ballard sought to replace in his early New Wave manifestos. Banks's novel is the first of his Culture novels, the Culture being "a vast (and vastly advanced) intergalactic federation gov-

erned by hyper-intelligent artificial intelligences known as Minds" (Booker 49). The Culture is in fact a utopia, with the Minds being its "efficient and benevolent rulers" (Booker 49). Wealth and resources are in abundance and humanity lives according to its own will, for there are no laws, no restrictions imposed upon it. People govern themselves through social conventions, which are followed to avoid ostracism. All are equally wealthy and there is no division based on privileges. In short it is an anarchist/socialist utopia and this is the first sign of difference between the Culture and the societies presented in older SF works, where there had to be strong leaders, where there was always a paternal figure ready to take responsibility for the rest of mankind (Moorcock 284). What is of even greater importance, there are cracks in this perfect image of a "post-scarcity" society (Booker 83). There is the ever-present sense of boredom, a certain blasé attitude towards risk-taking, characteristic of the Culture folk. A sense of purpose is achieved through interventions into the lives of other civilisations, attempts at improving them to the level the Culture has attained. This need for a sense of purpose, "the only desire the Culture could not satisfy from within itself" (Banks 451) brings about conflict, and in *Consider Phlebas* it leads to a terrible war, which claims billions of lives. Losing or abstaining from war against the Idiran civilisation – governed by religious laws and instigating a form of Jihad to expand its influence throughout the cosmos, would mean that the Culture truly has no purpose, and this sacrifice that many other civilizations destroyed in the conflict have to make, is a monument to the Culture's pride. Yet, though the Culture's reasons for fighting the Idiran expansion seem to result from vanity, the alternative, i.e. Idiran conquest, would result in a militarist-religious dictatorship for many species throughout the galaxy. The choice is of a lesser evil – hardly a utopia, all things considered.

The Culture's attitude to war is reflected in the manner in which it is waged. In order to maintain its utopian character the Culture uses methods that stand at odds with the foundations on which it is built. This is especially true of its military intelligence, the Special Circumstances:

> Special Circumstances had always been the Contact section's moral espionage weapon, the very cutting edge of the Culture's interfering

> diplomatic policy, the elite of the elite, in a society which abhorred elitism. Even before the war, its standing and its image within the culture had been ambiguous. It was glamorous but dangerous, possessed of an aura of roguish sexiness – there was no other word for it – which implied predation, seduction, even violation. [. . .] No other part of the Culture more exactly represented what the society as a whole stood for. [. . .] Yet no other part embodied less of the society's day-to-day character. [. . .] And with war, SC's position within the Culture changed, for the worse. It became the repository for the guilt the people of the Culture experienced because they had agreed to go to war in the first place: despised as a necessary evil, reviled as an unpleasant moral compromise, dismissed as something people preferred not to think about. (Banks 30)

The originality of Banks's utopia and his contribution to this genre is especially visible in this fragment. In Thomas More's *Utopia* (1551) and Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis* (1629) one of the key components was the presentation of a perfect state and society (Zgorzelski 50). Any confrontation, according to Andrzej Zgorzelski, was a confrontation of two realities and their subsequent evaluation (Zgorzelski 80). Twentieth century dystopian fiction, such as Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1932) or George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) are focused on presenting totalitarian states, with the point of view of the character or narrator acting as the equivalent of what in earlier utopias was the presentation of the perfect state (Zgorzelski 80). In *Consider Phlebas* there is a confrontation between two worlds, i.e. the world of the Culture and the world of the Idirans, but there is also a conflict within the Culture itself. Contrary to twentieth century utopias/dystopias this latter, inner conflict is an open one, not limited to the character or narrator's point of view, and cannot be resolved in any other way than through grudging acceptance. Citizens of the Culture are forced to accept that the means and methods which they reject in everyday life need to be employed to ascertain their survival. Banks's novel is a spoilt, marred utopia, with a perfect society maintained by imperfect means.

The utopian image of the Culture is tackled not only by its citizens, but also by its enemies, who are given a lot of space in Banks's narrative to voice their views. Horza, the main protagonist in *Consider Phlebas* is an Idiran agent, who often delves on the negative aspects of

being ruled by a civilization run by machines, where the natural cycle is superseded by artificial alterations: "I don't care how self-righteous the Culture feels, or how many people the Idirans kill. They're on the side of life; smelly, fallible and short-sighted, God knows, but *real* life. You're ruled by your machines. You're a revolutionary dead end" (Banks 29). Thus space is no clear utopian haven for escapists in Banks's novel, its relativism making easy choices impossible.

Utopian overtones can be found in Macleod's *The Stone Canal,* with the inhabitants of New Mars living in an anarchist utopia of sorts, having left a post-world war three-Earth, many of them resurrected from tissue samples and stored minds. When New Mars, the new world, is first reached by the resurrected the event can initially be seen as the birth of a possible utopian state:

> The virtual conference was held in an impressive virtual venue, loosely based on Tienanmen Square; Reid, appearing on a large screen at the front, in the position of the Chairman. Thousands of three-dimensional renderings of people – prisoners and succubi – stood in the square, talking freely amongst themselves for the first time. Some of them must have been in the solitude of their onboard minds for years; others present were prisoners who'd not died and been uploaded, but had served their time in their own bodies [. . .] "We've done it!" he said. "We've reached a new world, under a new sun. We did it by our own efforts, of our own free will. [. . .] You've all earned your freedom. I never promised you this, but I give it to you now. A new world, a clean state. You're all free, and together we'll live in freedom". (Macleod 298)

This manifesto, a founding act in the creation of a new state is bitterly commented upon by the main protagonist, Jon Wilde, present at the scene: "I myself was unmoved, partly because I wasn't a prisoner, and partly because I could see that Reid had little choice in the matter. If there were to be slaves here, they would have to be machines" (Macleod 299). This comment is prophetic, for along with the development of this new colony to its anarchic state there come divisions, particularly between the human citizens and the robots that serve them. The latter are given a great amount of capabilities and intelligence, with very limited freedom to make use of them. To make matters worse, some robots are given actual human memories, though without recollection of ever being humans. This situa-

tion causes a group of people – the Abolitionists – to rebel and fight for the rights of robots who want to be free citizens. However, this freedom is limited, as a robot can only "register an autonomy claim" (Macleod 36) and hope for a fair trial, while at constant risk of being repossessed. The new haven in outer space spawns a new rebellion, and it is obvious that space in this story does not provide distance for escape. Even though out of the solar system, the people of New Mars find themselves tangled in conflicts belonging to the old world. Finally, the political system of New Mars can be seen as a wasted opportunity for creating the perfect state and society: "Politics – none. It's an anarchy, remember? But it's an anarchy by *default*. There's no state because nobody can be bothered to set one up. Too much hassle, man. Keep your nose clean, don't stick your neck out, it's always been this way and nothing will ever change" (Macleod 68).

Space in the works of Banks, Stross and Macleod seems to provide an area for problem solving, an idea going against the principles of the New Wave. The visions presented in all the novels, particularly by Stross and Macleod, are very detailed and technical, with technology evolving and attaining the ability to overcome shortages in resources, to recreate the once lost habitat of Earth. The instance of technology, artificial intelligence in particular, undergoing rapid advancement without human aid is called singularity, a notion first introduced by Vernor Vinge. In *The Stone Canal* we find a post-singularity universe "in which advanced artificial intelligences evolve at spectacular speeds, then develop a variety of high-tech capabilities (including interstellar travel), after which they seemingly wink out of existence" (Booker 47). Technology evolves on its own, leaving humanity with only a fraction of knowledge necessary to use it. In Stross's *Saturn's Children* technology evolves rapidly, but there is no longer any humanity left to benefit from this advance. The comfortable lives, which people enjoyed thanks to the service of the machines impaired their alertness and they became extinct without realising it. All they left was a sense of social hierarchy, which a wealthy robot minority – the Aristos, use to gain ownership of the poor majority – Arbeiters. The outer space in the novel reflects the empty space left by humans – the Creators. Both novels touch upon issues of abandonment and social inequality, which make the problem-solving issue, an important theme in old-school Campbel-

lian SF, appear somewhat marginalised. The motif of singularity – the never-ending evolution and development of technology is also at odds with the New Wave motif of entropy. In *The Stone Canal* the machines keep changing and evolving, and this evolution is reflected by changes in the socialist/anarchist/republican states on Earth. There is no end to humanity and its development: “No heat death, no Big Crunch awaits us. These dooms (it now is said) for all their shining mathematical elaborations, were but reflections of a society facing its limits. There is no end” (Macleod 322). Banks’s vision of the Culture also does not involve any signs of entropy, unless we count boredom as such. However, boredom is something that only some human citizens of the Culture experience, and the Minds have no such problems. Similarly, the final scene in Stross’s *Saturn’s Children*, when the main protagonist, Freya, gets ready to start a new life outside the solar system, is definitely not a sign of entropy.

The issue of inner space, its private metaphors and its internal landscapes, all appear at some points in all three novels. Macleod’s vision of the New Martian Ship City which is shaped like an Echinoderm, an organism whose first appearance is dated to the Lower Cambrian period is an excellent metaphor for the eternal evolution offered by singularity, one that fits perfectly in with Ballard’s concept of personal metaphors (in *Time, Memory and Inner Space* Ballard writes that for him the crocodile was such a metaphor – a link between the prehistoric past and today’s present). The VR (virtual reality) machines provide the characters with the internal landscapes that Ballard always chose to externalise, as in his stories set in Vermillion Sands. The help that Jon Wilde receives from the succubus Meg, and their later merging within one mechanical body, is reminiscent of the Jungian motif of the Anima, a figure whose presence and encounter is vital for one’s process of individuation, i.e. “the development of consciousness from an ego-centred identity, that of the conscious personality, to the realization of the inner centre, the unconscious nucleus of identity, the latent totality of the psyche” (Stephenson 5) – also recurrent in Ballard’s stories and novels. Stross reinforces the singularity motif with such metaphors as the city of Cinnabar on Mercury, constantly moving on its rails to avoid the burning Sun, which could imply avoiding the heat death. But as Cinnabar looms ever closer to the protagonist, who is tied

to the tracks, it becomes a city out of control, and can be read as an antithesis to David Harvey's theory of the Right to the City. When Freya finds herself trapped and enslaved by an Aristo who in reality is her older sister, and her rival in a love affair, in a castle of ice on one of Jupiter's moons, the entire scene brings to mind *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen, with Freya forced against her will to obey her sister. Banks's *Consider Phlebas*, as the title suggests, is an allusion to T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*. In "Poetic Licence – Iain M. Banks' *Consider Phlebas* and T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*", Gary S. Wilkinson expresses the view that the spiritual revival hinted at in the poem, following a period of decadence, finds its opposition in the novel. The spiritual Idirans fail, Horza, their ally, is killed and the lost Mind, which it was his mission to locate, is retrieved by the victorious Culture agent, representing the anti-spiritual decadent society. Religion also appears as a death-trap on the island of the Eaters, where Horza is stranded after his shuttle sinks in the waters of the Vavatch Orbital. The Eaters are a religious community, ruled and terrorized by the prophet Fwi-Song, a grotesquely obese figure who makes them eat inedible remains of fish and plants. He poisons them both literally, with their forced diet, and with his absurd quasi-religious ramblings. Those who disobey are partially devoured and then murdered, crushed and suffocated under the prophets weight. This comment on religion as the poisonous, deadly burden, crushing down on the sick bodies of believers is the ultimate opposition towards the poem evoked in the title.

The recurrence of certain themes and influences present in the works of Scottish writers belonging to the recent British development in SF suggests that the New Wave can still be a source of influence for writers in the genre. Despite the revival of the old space-opera subgenre which began appearing in the 1930s, the return to technological accuracy, high tech and the classic theme of problem solving, all going back to the times of Golden Age SF, there are traces in the treatment of space suggesting that the New Wave legacy has not been forgotten. First of all, space is no longer an escapist's sanctuary, a utopia where the choices are simple and obvious. Macleod's utopia is temporary and undergoes evolutions, and Banks's Culture carries with it risks, resulting from the too-perfect state if affairs. All three writers provide images and metaphors corresponding with the theoretical

assumptions of inner space, expressed by Ballard in his early New Wave manifestos. The motif of singularity and post-singularity is an interesting development, especially as it contrasts with the theme of entropy, one of the New Wave trademarks. This is essentially a positive development, showing that the genre is still evolving and that the repertoire of motifs and subject matter is broadening.

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Liminal Spatialities: Visions of Scotland in Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go*

In the paper entitled "Genres in Scottish Writing: Science Fiction", presented at the ASLS Annual Conference on 14 May 2000, Alan MacGillivray argues for the need to make the production of speculative fiction in Scotland an institutional concern. One of the key points in this undertaking is the insistence on the choice of language which would contest the hegemony of English in science fiction writing:

> Gaelic, Scots and English can be the natural and acceptable choice for any writer in any kind of writing. In science fiction, we should not be limited solely to English as our possible means of expression. There has been some science fiction written in Gaelic for young readers; equally it can be the chosen language for more adult SF. Scots also, in any of its varieties, is as suitable a form as any other; some years ago, I wrote a science fiction story in Medieval Scots, but I wouldn't hold that up as a model, only as an indication that the most unexpected things are possible in this flexible genre. (MacGillivray)

Interestingly, in the very same year a novel was published which seems to have originated from a similar preoccupation: to use Scots, a tongue commonly spoken in Scotland but marginal in the Anglophone world, as a medium of literature, and contest the popular belief that Scots is the language of the past by making it a major language of the future. Matthew Fitt's *But n Ben A-Go-Go* (2000) is a linguistic experiment in the science fiction genre to "boldly go where Scots has gone before" (Robertson 141) which has gained recognition of the literary and critical circles applauding its inventiveness, "energetic

audacity", and "linguistic vigour"[1]. However, *But n Ben* is also a grim post-apocalyptic cyberpunk (or, rather, postcyberpunk [see Christie 100–01]) fantasy set at the end of the twenty-first century in a world consumed by the waters of melted polar glaciers, a cataclysm which came to be known as God's Flood. The surviving population dwells in the parts of mountainous regions which rise above sea level (e.g. Uralgrad or the Karakoram City) or inhabits island cities, gigantic floating structures chained to the seabed and exposed to the destructive power of tropical cyclones and hurricanes. The Scotland of 2090 rests on twenty-nine such platforms called Parishes, which take their names from various Scottish cities from before the Flood and together form a maritime canton of Port. Two hundred kilometres to the north lie the Drylands, the archipelago created by the peaks and mountain ranges of the former Highlands, now both a holiday refuge of the Port worthies and the rampart of the rebels who defy the canton's authority.

As opposed to other critical works, which tend to focus on the novel's linguistic features and the estrangement of Scots within the SF genre, or explore the ways in which Fitt extrapolates Scottishness into the future (see e.g. Corbett 117–32, and Harrison 153–69), this essay focuses on the vision of Scotland as a liminal space, which is symbolically represented in its suspension between land and sea. My understanding of the liminal space relies on the concept of liminality propounded by the anthropologist Victor Turner in *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (1967) and developed in *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (1969). Turner's studies of liminality as well as the concept itself are indebted to Arnold van Gennep's work on the phenomenon of tribal initiation rites (*The Rites of Passage* [1909]), which "accompany every change of place, state, social position and age" (qtd. in *Forest of Symbols* 94). In connection with van Gennep's theory, Turner traces the trajectory of ritualistic transition, which invariably consists of three stages: 1) separation, in which individuals or groups become symbolically detached from "an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a 'state'), or from both"; 2) margin (*limen*), in which the subject of the ritual re-

[1] See the excerpts of reviews on the inside covers of *But n Ben A-Go-Go* (2005).

mains in a transitional period, his previous social/cultural status lost and the new one not yet formed or defined; and 3) reaggregation (or reincorporation), which marks a period of regained social or cultural stability through the restitution of the subject to the social structure with newly defined status, rights and responsibilities" (*Ritual Process* 94). The liminal phase which extends between separation and reaggregation is characterized by fluidity and ambiguity, the "transitional-beings" or "liminal *personae*" being stripped of recognizable attributes and eluding all categories: "[T]hey are neither one thing nor another; or maybe both; or neither here nor there; or may even be nowhere (in terms of any recognized cultural topography), and are at the very least 'betwixt and between' all the recognized fixed points in space-time of cultural classification" (*Forest of Symbols* 97). For Turner, liminality, while inter-structural and thus representing a periodical breakdown of established rules, modes, and orders, is possessed of positive aspects, because in its unstructuredness and fluidity it may also be productive, regenerative, and transformative (99).

Thus, liminality, in the simplest terms, can be understood as a state of suspension, being simultaneously each and neither, everywhere and nowhere, at a stage when the old is lost or forsaken and the new still to be attained. Liminality bridges and conflates binary categories such as life/death, human/animal, organic/technological, natural/supernatural, etc., always remaining a phenomenon of the margin. Connected with dissolution and deconstruction on the one hand, liminality is also possessed of the potential to produce and revitalize, offering alternatives to old rules and familiar patterns. Accordingly, my purpose is to analyse the geographical and social topographies as well as innerscapes of *But n Ben A-Go-Go* for instances of liminal spaces which foreground the interstitial condition of future humanity. Considering the forthcoming publication of the novel's sequel, *Kaledonika*, in which the waterworld, and, by implication, Scotland itself, is slowly transforming into a new order (see Williamson and Wilson 191),[2] the aforementioned condition can be

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[2] The sequel to *But n Ben* is announced in the introduction to Fitt's short story "Criggie", an extract from *Kaledonika* which is included in the science fiction anthology *Nova Scotia* (2005). We learn from the story, set in 2105, i.e. fifteen years after the events of *But n Ben*, that the sea level has dropped

considered transitional and unstable. Straying from predominant analyses and appraisals of Fitt's (post)cyberpunk Scotland which typically understate his negative vision of the future,[3] I intend to explore the dystopian quality of Fitt's extrapolation which is played out spatially in a series of liminal zones and experiences.

1. Liminal cityscapes

In the opening sections of *But n Ben A-Go-Go*, the protagonist Paolo Broon visits the Rigo Imbeki Medical Center, the place of isolation for the victims of the deadly virus *Sange de Verde*, to see his wife, Nadia, who lies unconscious in Kist 624. Sitting at a table in one of the elevator bars, he takes a look from above at the city of Port:

> Port, the maist northerly settlement in a triangle o maritime cantons wi Europoort in the sooth an Berlinhaven in the east, had tholed God's Flood – an the subsequent decade o wud tropical storms as the world's climate bubbled an fizzed – athoot muckle loss. Port's citites, officialy cried Parishes, had jowed an sweeled successfully hauf a century on the roch North Atlantic, thirled firmly at the sea flair wi seeven-hunner-metre-lang alloy cables tae the drooned burgh o Greenock. This winter wis riftin fou o anniversaries. Paolo glowered absently at his hame city, the metal walkweys an gless skyscarters hotterin in the het sun. The sea soomed calm an still atween the muckle metallic Parish hulks, signallin its undauntit presence wi chitterin flashes o blue. (11)

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by one hundred metres, changing not only the face of the earth but also economic relations (Fitt 197).

[3] One exception in this respect is Thomas Christie, who observes that the "catastrophic environmental conditions" depicted in Fitt's novel contribute to "an unremittingly grim and dystopian future vision" (99), one which excludes the possibility of hope and regeneration (104–05, 108). Berthold Schoene, by the same token, notices, in spite of Fitt's own policy statement in the introduction to the novel, the sinister nature of future Scotland and the ambiguous role of Scots in the novel's universe: "What Fitt's dystopia presents us with is a radical hegemonisation of Scottishness driven by the worst imaginable kind of economic globalisation, not only prone to homogenising languages and cultures, but addressing them only in terms of their market value" (88). As such, Scots becomes an element which foregrounds Scotland's liminal dystopia.

As can be inferred from Paolo's musings, the city of Port is liminally suspended between land and sea, each of its twenty-seven Parishes being housed on a gigantic metal platform chained to the seabed below. The canton is thus comprised of shaky, floating rafts whose population oscillates between survival and demise, being constantly exposed to the whimsical agency of the Atlantic. While beneficial on the one hand, as it has given a new lease of life to the shipbuilding industry and maritime transport, Port's existence in the world engulfed by oceanic waters is continually threatened by violent storms and tropical cyclones, running the risk of complete obliteration (10).[4] The dissolution of pre-apocalyptic order, underscored by the fragmentation of Scotland's territory, is thus accompanied by innovation and potentiality. The life in the canton fluctuates between security and danger, profit and loss, nature and culture, the liminality of its cityscapes being best encapsulated in the name "island cities" and their unstable location on the surface of the sea, which glimmers ominously in cracks and interstices of the human creations.

The liminality of Port is also visible in its synecdochic nature, as it is used in the novel to denote Scotland, even though the Parishes correspond only to some parts of the country in its pre-apocalyptic form. Port is and is *not* Scotland (at least the Scotland as we know it, defamiliarised by the futuristic narrative), despite some distinctive markers of Scottishness, the most powerful of which being the Scots language, consistently used in the dialogues and narration. The population of the Parishes is not ethnically homogenous, a difference which manifests itself on the physiological level. The albinos, or light-skinned inhabitants who constitute sixty per cent of the population, have to avoid exposure to high temperatures and sunlight for fear of serious health complications. The remaining forty per cent are the melanos, whose darker skin allows them to endure the relentless solar radiation and the tropical heat of the post-apocalyptic climate better. Commonly known as the Angusese, Port's core population consists of born Scots and, possibly, other native inhabitants of the former British Isles (the English, Welsh, and

[4] This happens, for example, in the case of Selkirk Parish, which is torn from its anchorage by Elvis, one of the strongest cyclones in Port's history, and swallowed by the ocean (91).

Irish). It also seems to include representatives of other ethnic groups who survived God's Flood as rightful citizens of its island cities, like Aga Dunblane, a lawyer of Libyan descent who helps Paolo in his search for Nadia's lover who infected her with *Sange de Verde*. Interestingly, the novel makes no mention of the rest of Britain, which seems to have disappeared from the world's map, and the English language that is still in use is called American. In this light, the remaining parts of Scotland may also function as a synecdoche of the whole British Isles, a somewhat triumphant vision for nationalists but full of irony, too, as it projects Scotland's political, territorial, and economic hegemony into a world where individual and collective existence is rendered completely unpredictable (cf. Schoene 88–89).

Within the heterogeneous social organism of Port, one can also find smaller enclaves of liminality, namely the districts of the refugees called *favelas*, which stand in contrast with the spaces inhabited by the ethnically diverse yet structurally unified Angusese population. The Danes and Norwegians on Montrose Parish, the Flemish on Stranraer Parish, and the Moravians on Dumbarton Parish are immigrant diasporas who survived the annihilation of their respective island cities by hurricanes. Allowed to settle in Port, they have never been admitted into its social structure on equal terms with its native inhabitants, their incorporation being prevented by various exclusion and discrimination practices.[5] On his mission from Clart Central, Paolo, a cyber-janitor (*cyberjanny*) in pursuit of a truant Danish worker, passes through the alleys full of hungry children and emaciated women, which brings into focus the general impoverishment of the refugees and the Angusese's ruthless neglect of their plight. Unlike the streets outside the Scandinavian quarter, which is separated from the rest of the Parish by the thoroughfare of Lauder Boulevard, cutting the city "physically an socially in hauf" (41), the streets in Favela Copenhagen lack air-conditioning, as it is considered a waste of state money. The quarter's inexpensive Kenyan Des-

[5] According to Ruth Levitas, as paraphrased by Patricia Hynes "[l]iminality acts as a conceptual bridge between the socially excluded and those undergoing forced migration because both demonstrate similar characteristics of living beyond a normal existence and being considered to be 'outside' mainstream society in some way" (31).

ert UV reflectors, scorched brown by the sun, offer a "sair contrast tae the Angusese's wallie white adobe villas across the Lauder Expresswey" (43). Similarly, the Danes and Norwegians power their indoor air-conditioners with oil, not with uranium as do the Anguseses, and because the home-made devices are gas guzzlers, and fuel is "as dear as gowd or watter", the Scandinavians steal oil from the more privileged citizens or the rich of the Parish, adding crime to their marginalization (56). Even the public institutions in the district suffer the consequences of prejudice against the newcomers: schools have to rely on TV teachers, hospitals are deprived of water for days, and the Port Authority refuses to build more cancer clinics in the *favela* even though the Scandinavians with their pale northern complexion are particularly affected by solar radiation (56). All the above observations recall Turner's claims about the liminal *personae*, who are "physically visible" but "structurally invisible", and "they are very commonly excluded, partially or completely, from the realm of culturally defined states and statuses" (*Forest of Symbols* 98; cf. Hynes 30–31). Borrowing Turner's metaphor, the refugees in Port are "essentially unstructured" being at the same time "destructured" and "prestructured" (98) – deprived, spatially and socially, of their former organization and not yet incorporated into the new one. The immigrants, therefore, belong nowhere; they represent the condition of in-betweenness and marginality, having lost their homes and never really found new ones, which is especially visible in the case of the Moravians, who are literally homeless.

Despite their new unbalanced status, the Scandinavians, as noticed by Paolo, try to adapt to the new situation and pursue ordinary living patterns, keeping their shoddy settlement tidy, like the Danes whom Paolo sees clearing drainpipes or beating the insidious Port dust out of the red and white flags in the streets. However, he also notices their intimidation and a lack of trust at the sight of his cyberjanny uniform.[6] "The refugee mistrusts and is mistrusted", claim Daniel and Knudsen (qtd. in Hynes 31), which corresponds to Turner's observations concerning transitional beings as "particularly polluting" and suspicious because escaping any cultural or struc-

[6] Hynes argues that mistrust is an essential factor of the refugee's situation of liminality (31–33).

tural categorization (*Forest of Symbols* 97). The Scandinavians look incongruous in comparison with the other Port inhabitants, they are much bigger than the average citizen and always carry guns (41).[7] They are considered uncontrollable and dangerous, like Lars Fergusson, whom Paolo pursues in the *favela* and whose brain is constantly screened by the computers at Clart Central for signs of violence or homicidal inclination – "whenever Lars wisnae feelin like himself" (41). The Port tries to control the unstructured element within its structure by submitting refugees like Lars to programmes of compulsory work (he cleans toilets at the Montrose Hilton[8]) and oppressive cyber-monitoring, of which they are unable to buy themselves out due to their destitution (41). The monstrous liminal children of the defective system, the Scandinavians remain on its margins as something repulsive and repressed.

2. Liminal innerscapes

According to Turner, liminality is connected with ritualized activities which punctuate "the movement of a man through his lifetime, from a fixed placental placement within his mother's womb to his death and ultimate fixed point of his tombstone and final containment in his grave as a dead organism" (*Forest of Symbols* 94). However, in Fitt's post-apocalyptic world a person's spatial progression from womb to the grave undergoes a significant revision. Rather, as Susan Merrill Squier phrases it, "the term 'liminal' denotes the biological and social state of transition from a world in which human beings had a characteristic and predictable life course to a world in which neither the beginning of life, not its flow, nor even its end

[7] Interestingly, the Scandinavians are not allowed to come near aircraft, being only permitted to use fishing boats (62). This regulation may be connected with the Port Authority's mistrust of the Scandics, who have a reputation of being violent and dangerous. An equally probable explanation is that the restrictions on the Scandics' mobility result from purely discriminatory practices.

[8] All the truant immigrants whom Paolo has to bring back to work seem to do some menial jobs related to cleaning after the Angusese rich, "tae sine oot commissars' bidets or advocates' hot tubs" (58).

has a foreseeable future" (26). Everybody in Port carries within them a latent HIV-like virus called Mowdy,[9] whose development into an aggressive form, *Sange de Verde* (in short, Senga), can only be prevented by the regular administration of Mowdy pills (MDZ 7) and refraining from intimate contact. Thus, the bodies of Port inhabitants mirror the liminality of Port's dystopian space, as they continually hover at the boundary between health and illness, and each and every person is perceived as potentially infectious. Even at its dormant stage, Mowdy causes migraines which weaken its hosts, impeding their performance and acting as a constant reminder of their intermediate condition. Those who have fallen ill with Senga are transferred to yet another level of biological liminality, as they are suspended between life and death while the disease eats away their organs, bones, and muscles, leaving ruin in its wake. The natural development of Senga results in a hundred-percent mortality rate; however, the virus is "loyal" to its host and remains bound to him/her as long as the body continues to live. Therefore, the sick are artificially kept alive in Omega Kists – hermetically closed capsules at the Rigo Imbeki Center on Montrose Parish – in order to keep the virus contained and prevent it from looking for a new human target:

> The authorities couldna bury a body infectit by *Sangue de Verde*; Senga aye managed tae slidder back up throu the syle an lowp on somebody else. They couldna burn it either. Fire lowsed Senga ontae the wund. Kists o ilka kind had been designed tae haud Senga wi her deid victims but nae human-kent material could contain the metamorphosin virus. Satsuma, the Japanese Funeral Corporation, offered tae yird a *Sangue de Verde* loved yin in space or sen them doon tae the earth's core but ainlie faimlies wi megasiller had sic options; awbody else had ainlie yin. (42)

In consequence, the kisted are not only denied passage into death, they are also deprived of the rituals of burial and mourning, which accompany the crossing of the last threshold, and allow their family and friends to achieve a sense of closure. In this way, those who re-

[9] Christine Robinson notes that the name of the virus is a shortened form of the word *mowdie-wart*, i.e. a mole, and it accordingly burrows its way through the victims' bodies (13, 22).

main outside partake of the liminality of the kisted, like Paolo, who has regularly visited Nadia's Kist for the last five years. The Senga victims are not allowed to die but cannot really live either – they are banished from conscious life, hybrids of organic matter and medical technology (fed through IVs and purged through colostomy tubes [4]), their suspension between life and death being metaphorically represented by the chiaroscuro of the Kist galleries, neither completely dark nor well-lit (5).

The liminality experienced by the kisted is conveyed in the chapters narrated by Nadia MacIntyre, Paolo's unfortunate wife, who cheated on him with his own father, Desmond "Diamond" Broon, a famous cyber-thief now doing his time at Inverdisney Timeshare Penitentiary in the Drylands. Already in the first chapter the narrator allows us access to Nadia's inner space, the land conquered and appropriated by Senga, with its distinctive *chronotopos*, whose constant darkness is graphically represented by black pages with white print (as opposed to the conventional layout of the other chapters), which foregrounds Nadia's separation from the outside world (Robinson 16). Accordingly, as opposed to the other chapters, whose third-person narration is focalized by Paolo, the female Ceilidh officer Vermont, or Diamond Broon, Nadia's four chapters are the only first-person sections in the novel, stressing the passage between the outer and inner worlds, between the "s/he" and "I" of the central consciousness. As such, the four chapters in black highlight the liminality of Nadia's condition, interrupting the linearity of the plot propelled by the vicissitudes and conflicts between the other characters, and functioning as points at which the flow of the events is halted in compliance with Nadia's immobility. In contrast to the narrative coherence of the other sections, Nadia's stream-of-consciousness narration is internally fragmented and chaotic, reflecting the disturbance of the body and mind (cf. Robinson 16–17). The hazy images of her former life as a lawyer, her relations with the other employees, the memories of her trysts with Diamond Broon in ski-resorts and expensive hotels all around the world, and the memories of her own kisting and Paolo's face stained with tears behind the smoked-glass pane of her Kist alternate with the sensations produced by the virus ravaging her body in the present.

Once "a grade-A guid bone hing-oot", Nadia describes the world in which she has found herself as "bordelmammy Senga's immune-bauchle seraglio" where she is "strauchlin throu [her] sentence" (140). Bringing the connotations of imprisonment, the world of her illness is a "soonless enless spiral" (140) out of which there is no escape, not even into death. At the same time, the brothel imagery underscores the illicit and impure nature of her sexual contact with Diamond, which caused Nadia's illness and sentenced her to indefinite immune-deficiency isolation in the Kist. Paradoxically, her infection is at one point equated by Nadia with impregnation, her role of a host to the voracious virus being described in terms of feeding a baby: "The puir breekless sowel is hungry. Hing'll be stervin. Growin lassie needs tae eat. I never got tae be onybody's mither but even I ken that. Ma wee Senga needs her denner" (68). Like that of a baby, who must be fed at regular hours/intervals, Senga's feeding time, at least according to Nadia's delirious mind, occurs every seventeen hours. Just as the Kist is like a womb which houses Nadia's body, sustaining it through the pipes and drips of the life-support system (the technological equivalents of the placenta and umbilical cord), the woman's insides support the growth of Senga, the only (un)natural progeny that she and Diamond can produce. Unlike real pregnancy, in Nadia's case there will be no delivery, no resolution; she must remain suspended in the liminal relationship with the devouring offspring, with the pain inflicted regularly on her devastated body in place of the real baby's kicks and the labour pains heralding his or her long-awaited birth.[10]

[10] It is a world in which she is deprived of volition and agency, her motionless body being managed from outside by "[t]hem in the External" (140), i.e. the medical staff. Meanwhile, Nadia remains caught in "[a]n inverted nicht", a day-sleep, her Kist, one of the thousands of Kists at the Rigo Imbeki being like an "individual doocot in the great corbie's hoose" (140). Paradoxically, on the inside of the smoke-glass pane of the Kist the things previously unnoticed or taken for granted in the outside world appear with striking immediacy. It is only in the liminal phase, which is characterised by heightened awareness, that Nadia realises the value of Paolo's love, his loyalty, strength, and kind-heartedness. Whereas previously he was "juist the laddie on the ither side o the bed", her "schoolbairn husband", now it seems that she was always the immature one, throwing away a good man for the self-delusional affair with his wicked father (141).

According to Turner, liminality is connected with the "moment in and out of time" (*Ritual Process* 96). By the same token, Nadia, kisted for five years in the objective time of Port, in subjective terms, inhabits a timeless, fluid, and ambiguous continuum in which a sense of linearity is substituted by that of cyclicity, the latter, however, being erroneous and chaotic. According to Turner, liminality is also located "in and out of secular social structure", blending "lowliness and sacredness", "homogeneity and comradeship" (96). Those who enter the liminal phase are subject to its levelling power: since it exists in-between the structuration points, "in and out of time", the liminal situation involves equality and the temporary dissolution of all ranks and power-relationships which normally characterize social structures. "The liminal group", notes Turner, "is a community or comity of comrades and not a structure of hierarchically arrayed positions" (*Forest of Symbols* 100). Out of the notion of comradeship in the initiation rites arises Turner's idea of *communitas*, based on a primordial social bond between people, which "emerges recognizably in the liminal period [. . .] as an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus,* community, or even communion of equal individuals" (*Ritual Process* 96). Turner sums up: "[C]ommunitas emerges where social structure is not" (126). In the liminal condition of the kisted, there seems to exist a peculiar *communitas*, too, which marks a utopian state of perverse equality in the middle of the class-based dystopia of Port. Irrespective of their age, social position, and economic status, they all end up in dark rows of similar white cells in the Medical Center, be it a female lawyer (Nadia) or "the hummle Kirkcaldy Parish electrician" and "Port's premier loun" (38), Rigo Imbeki.

The Omega detainees, a term which reflects their arrested condition, deferment on the one hand and confinement on the other (no wonder the Kists are informally called Cages), represent the society's sense of the unpure, threatening its psychological integrity. When lieutenant Vermont, who is sent to arrest Diamond Broon, now an escaped convict, visits Nadia's Kist at the Rigo Imbeki, she addresses the issue as follows:

> The Port invested weel-hertedly in the Rigo Imbeki Medical Center, drookin it in siller an heidhuntin the wale o specialists fae the world-

> wide medical establishment. But in the secret neuks o folks' minds, Imbeki wis where they keepit the boogeyman; it wis a soonless zoo o the undeid wi Senga, its star animal, aye rattlin the bars o the onPort populace's skeerie imagination. (125)

Senga, therefore, becomes a demon haunting the popular imaginary, an agent of liminality bestriding the boundary between the natural and the super-/un-natural, changing the possessed people into spectral beings who are doomed to forever linger at the threshold of the afterworld like wraiths, "still an uncanny" (8) (Nadia herself calls Senga "[t]his heidless ghost" [68]). This quality is noted by Vermont, who watches Nadia through the glass pane, seeing her deathly stillness but also the life-like colours of her skin: "Senga, thocht Vermont, made ghaists o the livin, giein burth at the same time tae bonnie corporeal bogles" (130). At one point, the massive structure of the Rigo Imbeki is compared to a ziggurat rising up in the heart of Old Montrose (41), which highlights its intermediary position between the spaces of the sacred (heaven) and the profane (earth), between the earthly and the afterlife, and reinforces the detainees' position of in-betweenness. At the same time, Vermont's comparison of the Center to a zoo points to the fact that the victims of Senga, the merciless predator, oscillate between human and inhuman, as they are degraded to the role of living meat, something of which the Port inhabitants are both aware and from which they shrink in fear.[11] Pondering over the virus burrowing her insides, Nadia confesses in one of her nondelirious moments: "Wisnae intressit earlier. Didna watch ony o the Medical Center picturs. Didna see whit it looked like. It wid help me nou, tae hae a face. A haunle tae her jug. Micht pit a cauld haun tae the broo o ma bleezin imagination" (68), which pertinently conveys the population's repression of the biological enemy at the gates to the point of rendering it invisible.

[11] This status is strikingly conveyed in one of Nadia's monologues, when she talks about the "beast" of Senga, awakened and crawling under her skin and between her bones in search of food: "Mibbe there's some kidney. Dae ye no fancy a shivery bite? There's intestine. An stomach. There a guid helpin there. An, coorse, the rake o nutritious bacteria gaithered roon ma hert. Ayewis a treat" (68).

3. Liminal technologies

One of the most important liminal spaces presented in the novel is cyberspace, called VINE (as if in acknowledgement of its sprawling and uncontrollable topography), which, by its very nature, embodies the liminal quality of being everywhere and nowhere. Those who access virtual reality experience a mental separation from RealTime space; their consciousness enters the body of an avatar while their real body remains outside, immobile and vulnerable. The ritual of going into VINE is made possible due to an experience needle, the substance injected into the vein taking the person over the threshold, a phase called Ingang, which may produce the feelings of confusion, suffocation, and pain (see Diamond's sensations 28–29). Strangely enough, certain activities of everyday life can only be performed in cyberspace, like sex, which, on account of viral infection, takes place between the participants' avatars "in the safe Senga-free environs o a virtual bed" (18). Virtual space, therefore, offers a life-like substitute of the real thing (sex) just as it offers a visit to the digital lookalikes of such long-lost real places as Prague, Venice, Florence, or New York, in the holiday program Travel Zones, deposited in the virtual garbage dump, Cowp. In this way, the liminal dimension of cyberspace allows a person to return to the antediluvian past and not only see "[e]very earth toun, city an bonnie view o ony significance or merit" (50–51) of the old world but also experience the taste of what life on earth used to look like.

As the rules here are different from those of its RealTime counterpart, cyberspace becomes a zone of unusual creativity (e.g. the Travel Zones) but also moral and social tension, as it is often used by *cyberpauchlers* like Diamond Broon to make personal fortunes by mining data vaults and stealing from the world's virtual economies. It is a zone of trials where one can win or lose everything in RealTime (just as any injury to the avatar's body will transfer to the user's physical body [37]) if the Ceilidh catches a cyber-thief red-handed. A stunt in the liminal cyber-zone, like the mythical hero's deeds in the initiation phase, ideally lead to an elevation of the pauchler's status on several levels, from economic wealth to social recognition, glory, and esteem.

Interestingly, VINE is possessed of its own liminal subspace, the already mentioned Cowp, containing the society's virtual refuse

which comes from but does not belong in the RealTime world. "Unraivelled technologies. Non-degradable military saftware. Blootered adventure-capital projects broukit, buried an left there tae beal on the wrang side o reality" (33), observes Diamond Broon. Cowp is also a den of virtual pirates and rebel tourists, contestants of the superstructure of Port. It is therefore the space of society's abjects, technological and social/political misfits, bred by Port but rejected and rejecting in return. Last but not least, it is a no man's land where neither the rules of the RealTime world or those of VINE apply. No wonder Diamond, despite his knowledge of cyberspace and unmatched hubris, never ventured into Cowp, as it offered him nothing, "juist fear, a skelped ja an mibbe an early kist" (33). Yet another liminal subspace is the bar Bonnie Lemon's, "a hauf-wey hoose atween the RealTime world an the virtual reality o VINE" (80). For Paolo, denied deep access to VINE on account of his cyber-criminal record, the borderland of Bonnie Lemon's offers a chance to meet Sark, his father's former partner in data-mining, who passes to him Diamond's message that the latter infected Nadia with Senga.

One of the most striking characteristics of Port is its heightened medialisation, in which TV screens, CCTV cameras, and all forms of sensors and detectors of the citizens' identity, installed on streets and public transport, serve the purpose of constant surveillance of the society by the Ceilidh, the police of the future. Even human bodies become media, as everyone has a VINE screen fitted at birth on a forearm which allows access to virtual space and instant communication between the users. In this way, the inhabitants of Port become hybrids of man and machine, their liminality speaking of inventiveness but also the need of the population's control on the part of the state structure.

4. The liminal hero and the spaces of the quest

It has been noted that the plot of *But n Ben A-Go-Go* is structured around the motif of the quest, a mythical formula which sets its protagonist (the hero) on a road of trials in search of something lost or needed, which will ultimately save his beloved, his community, or the world (see Robinson 26–27). Significantly, too, the quest formula (or the hero journey), which was illuminatingly described by

Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (1949), follows the three stages of the rites of passage distinguished by Arnold van Gennep, i.e. separation – initiation – return/reaggregation, which, in turn, served as a model for Victor Turner in his study of liminality. Accordingly, Paolo's quest for a sample of his father's DNA which can neutralize the virus in Nadia's body and thus free his wife from her suspension between life and death, makes Paolo revisit the liminal topography of the Drylands, in which he confronts the ghosts of the past, both Port's and his own, on the way to regeneration.

In order to enter the liminal *chronotopos* of his quest, Paolo must undergo separation from the fixed social structure, which implies freedom from its norms on the one hand and an undefined status on the other. Having received Diamond's message, Paolo reacts as follows: "He wis throu wi Clart Central, Port, the Ceilidh an awbody. And no lang nou, awbody wid be throu wi him" (65), which communicates his response to what Joseph Campbell terms the "call to adventure" (53) but also his detachment – spatial, social, institutional, and legal – from the superstructure of Port. Paolo's passage into liminality is spatially represented in his swim across the threshold of the Irish Skagerrak, the two-hundred-kilometre-long stretch of sea, infested by mantis shrimp, sharks, and poisonous dundonese men-of-war, which separates the floating urban settlement of Port and the Drylands. The Skagerrak, therefore, is a dangerous boundary, which, apart from the physical effort it requires from a swimmer, is made additionally harrowing to cross because the seabed has recently been stirred by the cyclone Elvis, filling the water with silt and shells, which seriously impedes visibility. On a different level, the Skagerrak marks a threshold between the present and the past, first, because it takes Paolo, now a grown-up man, to the space of his childhood spent in the shadow of Diamond Broon and his villa on mount Schiehallion, and second, because its waters glittering among the rising peaks cover the "straths an glens an human settlements [. . .] drooned an dissolvin in the warm saut sea" (121). Especially disturbing for Paolo in this respect is his swim through Gleann na Marbh, "the Glen o the Deid", the five miles of rough sea which in 2040 drowned the valley and consumed thousands of human lives (145). In the light of this fact, Paolo's swim turns into a symbolical passage along the boundary between the living and the dead.

In the Drylands (former Highlands) one can still find stretches of land from before God's Flood – the fjord-like formations which are the peaks of mountains tall enough to rise above sea level. This archipelago is an alien space, which Paolo finds difficult to navigate: "He wisna a Drylander. The closes an boulevards o Port wis his hamesite. He could mak his road aroon Elgin an Ayr Parishes durin a pouer cut on the bleckest nicht but he had nae intimacy wi the hills in front o him" (121). The peaks seem otherworldly, as "eerie" as tents in Apache villages he saw on TV (121), and, unlike the engineered biosphere of Port with its street air-conditioning and anti-UV shields spread over the Parishes, the Drylands offer no shelter from the sun's burning rays. Moreover, the region fluctuates politically between the system of Port, represented by the dachas of the city's worthies, upper-class lawyers, plastic surgeons, and millionaires, and its opposite in the form of rebel tourists, a remnant of Ziemann's rebellion, which was crushed ruthlessly by Ceilidh fifteen years before at the Battle of Orchy (123).

The Drylands, therefore, constitute a zone in which the narrative of Port's post-apocalyptic present folds back on itself as to abut on Scotland's pre-apocalyptic, pre-modern past. One cannot escape the comparison of Ziemann's rebellion to the Jacobite Rising of 1745, which was crushed by the English; only in Fitt's novel the victors are Scots in the guise of quasi-totalitarian police forces bent on consolidating the system which eventually endorses all kinds of inequality. The historical loop through which the oppressed become the oppressors is playfully underscored by the TV footage watched by Vermont in one of the shelters during the storm and showing His Royal Highness Eduardo Stuart (90), which carries obvious connotations with Charles Edward Stewart, i.e. Bonnie Prince Charlie. Ironically, Paolo sets out for the Drylands in a kilt, the attire of the Highland clansmen, which in the novel becomes the uniform of Amphibian Fusiliers, a choice marine formation of Scotland. A similar temporal superimposition takes place in the case of the past which predates written records and forms the stock of myth and legend. It finds its physical representation in the novel in the figure of the kelpie, originally a water spirit from Celtic mythology appearing as a white horse, which is reworked in the future as a fierce biotechnological hybrid of lion and wolf, engineered in the Ceilidh laboratories and

released in the Drylands on the surviving rebel army after their defeat at Orchy (135). The kelpie functions as a tool of the Dryland disarmament, conflating myth, history, and modern technology in its liminal body, which transcends the boundary of two predatory species.

Broon's Dryland mansion, But n Ben A-Go-Go, is the symbol of its owner megalomania as much as his role as a liminal figure. By reason of his marginal status – at once a millionaire and a cyberthief – which defies the clearly-defined rules of the superstructure and subverts the socially accepted binary axiology, Diamond was snubbed by the respectable upper class of Port. To spite this priggish community, he bought a house on Schiehallion overlooking their quiet villas on the Gorms and maliciously disturbed their peace by having an ongoing party for twenty years (164). There, as Paolo notes, he engaged in multifaceted dissipation among his "entourage o sycophantic guffies that follaed him aboot slaverin owre his every word" (148). Diamond subverted the mythic and the sacred through mock rituals which were supposed to sanctify the space of But n Ben and consolidate his position of a supreme being. This happened, for example, in the case of the six Pictish stones recovered by a commissioned team of scotlandologists from the sea bed and reset on Schiehallion, which acted as a threshold between the outside world and the higher reality of Diamond's abode. Everybody who visited his mansion had to sit first for an hour in silence and "fey the world's clart fae oot their sowels" (148) before being allowed to enter But n Ben. However, the ancient obelisks did not impress Diamond's son, who knew that this cheap metaphysics was, like everything in Diamond's life, "a pauchle". It allowed him to watch the meditating acolytes and decide which of "A-Go-Go maunabees" from Port he wanted to seduce and send away those who might stand between him and his prey (149). Thus, But n Ben is where Diamond, a born manipulator who respects no rules, makes his way into the beds of the young attractive participants of his raves, who are lured into the zone of liminality by Diamond's fortune, panache, and rakish reputation of a superpauchler. In this light, his alleged comment at the sight of the recovered stones that he has "bocht Time" (148), acquires an additional meaning. Paying millions for the artefacts from ancient past, he got a tool which helps him perpetuate his own exis-

tence by parasitizing the youth and beauty of his guests and satiating his sexual appetites at the cost of their lives (190) (cf. Robinson 11). Being a carrier of the deadly virus which topples his unsuspected lovers' into the throes of Senga and the suspension between life and death while he himself remains untouched, Diamond is the agent of liminality, a cannibalistic deity, presiding over the permanent End-of-the-World party, with himself as the master of the revels.

For Paolo, But n Ben provides a locale in which the initiation stage of his quest finds its culmination, as he enters its inverted time to confront the liminal demon of a father. The mise-en-scène he encounters is exactly as it was ten years earlier, as if "awthin had been stapped mid-pairty an the dauncers an drinkers ghaisted awa" (167). Along with Paolo's entry into the house, its silence is broken and the party is resumed: Diamond and his cronies, who have escaped from Inverdisney, switch on loud bass music, start the outdoor facilities, and activate the fireworks show, the reversal of time being metaphorically represented by Diamond's private rollercoaster, which starts to go round (172). Amidst the renewed End of the World party, Vermont and Paolo find Diamond's body lying on a couch while its owner has gone into VINE. In order to bring his father back and take his DNA sample, Paolo must go into cyberspace himself, which also means going back in time, as Diamond replays for him the crucial moments from the past. He is made to witness his own birth in on-Parish Bairn Clinic, visit Diamond's bothy in a Goanese jungle from where his father embarked on his virtual thievery, watch Nadia getting ready for her trysts with Diamond in the Alps, and, finally, look at her immobile body in Kist 624. In the end, his father shows him a bonsai rose, an expensive artificial flower he always gave his young lovers, the image of which appeared on Nadia's thought screen at the Rigo Imbeki. Only now does Paolo realize it was not a mockery on her part but a warning and a pointer to the man who passed the virus to her (181–90).

Just as he took his lovers' youth to "buy Time" for himself, now Diamond intends to very literally take the youth from his own son through Direct Organ Transfer, to stop the deadly Senga, which is finally attacking his organism. It turns out that Diamond's affair with Nadia and her deliberate infection were calculated decisions on his part because they were supposed to bring Paolo to him so that he

could use his son's genetically suitable body for his own rejuvenation. Thus, But n Ben is a place where natural chronology of human life, according to which parents must die but they continue to live in the bodies of their children, is disrupted. Instead, it gives rise to a horrifying ritual of scapegoating, in which the death of the son and his physical incorporation into the father's body are meant to give the parent another lease of life and thus restore his rule for the next several decades. "Happy Days is here again", sings Diamond Broon showing to Paolo the "[p]ics from the past" (182) when they are both in VINE, and his rendition of the American classic underscores Diamond's intention to reverse and replay time to his own happy days.

Eventually, Diamond dies at the hands of his former partner and frustrated lover, Sark, who is in reality a top-ranking Ceilidh officer and Vermont's superior called Craw. However, the object of Paolo's quest, Diamond's DNA sample, helps to restore the natural law. Brought to the Rigo Imbeki, it is used to neutralize Nadia's virus and thus put an end to her liminal condition. In this post-apocalyptic fairy tale, in which innocent blood maliciously drawn by a revolving spindle, the dormancy of a castle surrounded by the walls of briar rose, and an intervention of a brave prince find their futuristic equivalents in unsafe sex, sealed medical capsules, bonsai roses manufactured in Japan, and sacrifice of a cheated husband, the resolution necessarily strays from the wish-fulfilment dynamic, as the Sleeping Beauty is allowed to die instead of being awakened to life. The story of Nadia's liminal suspension between life and death is reflected by the narrative's progression between the first and last word, "moarnan" and "nicht", which are frequently used as metaphors of two major thresholds in human life, i.e. birth and death, but which are liminally tangled in the cycle of death and regeneration.

5. Conclusion

In the introduction to the volume *Beyond the Threshold: Explorations of Liminality in Literature* (2007), Hein Viljoen and C.N. Van der Merwe argue:

> Literary texts are in themselves liminal spaces. Seen in this way, literature is not an esoteric business for the few, but indeed an integral part of life – one of the rituals with which we make and give meaning to the world around us; a ritual that carries readers away to liminal space in which they can, vicariously, undergo transformations that can change their life's perspective and might even cause a new kind of communitas to develop. (23–24)

In the light of the above observations, the "moarnan" and "nicht" of *But n Ben* symbolically represent the hinge points of the reader's own liminal trajectory, as they respectively mark his/her separation from and reaggregation to the laws of the extradiegetic world after the period of initiation in the liminal space of a literary work. Liminality understood in this way is especially foregrounded in science fiction, which variously strains and estranges the familiar laws of the phenomenological world.[12] As has already been noted, liminality is not only connected with transition but also with transformation, having the potential to contest and reconfigure commonly accepted models and structures (see Turner, *Forest of Symbols* 99). By the same token, defiant of the established patterns of thought and relationships, and imagining possible future scenarios, the science fiction genre constitutes a crucible of creativity and innovation: projecting different ontologies, it interrogates current problems/issues/reality and offers alternatives to the familiar orders (political, social, biological, ethical) in its "what-if" speculations (cf. Harrison 166).

Exploring the nature of *communitas*, Turner sees its manifestation in the products of human imagination:

> Liminality, marginality, and structural inferiority are conditions in which are frequently generated myths, symbols, rituals, philosophical systems, and works of art. These cultural forms provide men with a set of templates or models which are, at one level, periodical reclassifications of reality and man's relationship to society, nature, and culture. But they are more than classifications, since they incite men to action as well as to thought. Each of these productions has a multivocal character, having many meanings, and each is capable of moving people at many psychobiological levels simultaneously. (*Ritual Process* 128–29)

[12] On the use of estrangement in science fiction see Suvin 7–10.

Matthew Fitt's liminal Scotland oscillates between being and non-being, materialized within the world of his literary creation and simultaneously non-existent due to its quality of an imaginative construct. It operates "in and out of time", the late twenty-first century, which has not yet come to be, rendered through a language at once recognizable and unusual in fiction. It is through the Scots language, sparkling with energy and originality which brightens up the otherwise dystopian vision, that Fitt creates the space of *communitas* between the characters of Port's fiercely stratified society, but also, in more abstract terms, potentially with his readers, on whose behalf, as he explains, he has "committ[ed] to paper words which we have known how to say since childhood" (x) (cf. Schoene 87). Corbett observes:

> Fitt's hero traverses a hybridized landscape that is post-modern in its literary affiliations as much as its geographical features. If Scots as a literary medium is to survive then it must be as something other than the unique expression of the psychology of one people. Fitt's vision of the future offers Scots as a transforming and transformative element in an ongoing cultural fusion. (126)

The marginalized language of the present United Kingdom turns into a major tongue of the post-apocalyptic future, at once an elitist and egalitarian system of communication in his extrapolated Scotland, elevated to the position of a major player in the geo-politics of the waterworld. A hybrid of tradition and foreign influences, transformative and productive medium conscious of its roots and yet opened to the world beyond its insular cradle, the seemingly old and yet completely new Scots of *But n Ben A-Go-Go* contests the linguistic standards of the Anglophone world and works as a manifesto of national identity. Like the floating Parishes of Port, the Scots of the future is anchored in the ancient Scottish topography and yet possessed of a buoyancy to rise beyond its native territory and escape the stigma of parochialism (cf. Corbett 121, 124–25; and Harrison 158–59). It is "but n ben", in and out, at home and abroad, everywhere. And yet, ironically, the world it depicts, while not altogether devoid of the possibility of justice and redemption, as instanced in Paolo Broon's heroic quest, is a dystopian geography – and a dysto-

pian society – in which the future of humanity is inflected by age-old scenarios of cataclysms and nightmares of state oppression, and where the dynamics of belonging and marginality is informed by the perennial fear of the Other.

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