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Displaced Masculinity:

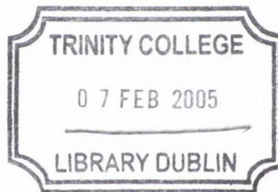
Men, Women and Gender Disorientation in Contemporary Scottish Fiction

Carole Jones

PhD

Trinity College Dublin

2004



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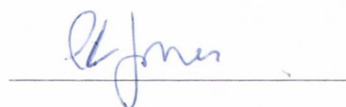

Carole Jones

Summary

The subject of this thesis is the representation of gender in Scottish fiction since 1980. In writing of this period the stereotype of the Scottish 'hardman' gives way to portraits of uncertain and ineffectual male characters. The context of the thesis is the putative decline in patriarchal authority in society and a consequent destabilisation of gender which changes both women's and men's relationship with masculinity. This thesis is shaped, however, by a view of literature as not only a record of gender displacement and dislocation but as a space in which the effects of such displacement can be teased out and possible alternatives be explored. Consequently, the thesis deals with a range of writers, both male and female, positioned differently in terms of their treatment of gender, and of literary form, but all fundamentally concerned with issues of masculinity and with representation that goes beyond the confines of literary realism.

The thesis examines the novels of five Scottish writers. Chapter one looks at the displacement of masculinity in James Kelman's work. His male characters are feminized, but also disempowered; those few characters in Kelman who might be said to exercise agency are masculinized women. Janice Galloway, the subject of the next chapter, explores relationships between femininity and discredited patriarchal ideals, often through the trope of male death. Her conforming women attempt to escape repressive gender identity through new relations with the body, creativity and other women. In Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* (1998) a successfully "passing" cross-dressing jazz musician, undermines the naturalised relationship of masculinity with the male body. These three chapters chronicle a decline in the status of the male body and its naturalised relationship with masculinity. Chapter four, however, shows how A. L. Kennedy's work

reverses this pattern. Kennedy takes seriously a masculinised desire for transcendence even if she constantly shows the frustration of that desire by an insistant materiality. In her work, therefore, traditional relations exist in tension with imagined alternatives. Finally, Alan Warner's efforts to escape masculinity altogether are assessed in the last chapter which looks at two of his 'cross-written' narratives, *Morvern Callar* (1995) and *The Sopranos* (1998), which attempt to evade the constrictions of traditional gender identity and relations.

In its focus on the instability of gender, this study deals with texts that aim to place the anxieties generated by this uncertainty within an everyday context, to represent the ordinary, not the sensational. All the writers here have described, at some time, their desire to represent in their fiction those people marginalised in literature, and, to this end, they aim to undermine their readers' expectations. They discourage content-based reading for events and plot, and they experiment with form and the effect of non-conventional modes of representation, allowing alternative models of the self to emerge. These models are not always conclusively imagined, and the narratives are not often brought to a satisfying conclusion. Instead they propose, in their refusal of a static and familiar form, that a transition in gender is an ongoing process of emergence rather than a movement between discrete, progressive stages, and that subjective stability is a fiction dependent on the instability of language and representation.

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Material from Chapter 3 will be published in a forthcoming article, '"An Imaginary Black Family" – Jazz, Diaspora and the Construction of Scottish Blackness in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*', in *Symbiosis* (2004).

Part of Chapter 5 is published in an article, 'Alan Warner: The "Becoming Woman" of Contemporary Scottish Fiction?', in *Scottish Studies Review*, 5.2 (Autumn, 2004).

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Abbreviations

The primary texts are denoted by the following abbreviations:

BH James Kelman, *The Busconductor Hines* (Edinburgh: Orion, 1992)

AD James Kelman, *A Disaffection* (London: Picador, 1990)

HL James Kelman, *How Late it Was, How Late* (London: Vintage,1998)

TKB Janice Galloway, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (London: Minerva, 1997)

FP Janice Galloway, *Foreign Parts* (London: Vintage, 1995)

C Janice Galloway, *Clara* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002)

T Jackie Kay, *Trumpet* (London: Picador, 1998)

OB A. L. Kennedy, *On Bullfighting* (London: Yellow Jersey Press, 2000)

LPD A. L. Kennedy, *Looking for the Possible Dance* (London: Vintage, 1996)

SIG A. L. Kennedy, *So I Am Glad* (London: Vintage, 2000)

EYN A. L. Kennedy, *Everything You Need* (London: Vintage, 2000)

MC Alan Warner, *Morvern Callar* (London: Vintage, 1996)

S Alan Warner, *The Sopranos* (London: Vintage, 1999)

MSN Irvine Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (London: Vintage, 1996)

CR Louise Welsh, *The Cutting Room* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2003)

Introduction: Dissonant Selves and the Literature of Gender Crisis

The subject of this thesis is the representation of gender in Scottish fiction since 1980. Its historical context is a contemporary decline in male authority in a period when gender relations are in a state of transition. Feminism has done much to undermine the dominance of hegemonic masculinity, but also significant, particularly in the Scottish situation, are the changes in industrial production and work patterns in western countries in the last twenty five years. Traditional gender identities no longer adequately circumscribe or convincingly divide the experience of men and women in everyday life, and this is illustrated by the literature studied here. This thesis is shaped, however, by a view of literature as not only a record of gender disorientation but as a space in which the effects of such displacement can be teased out and possible alternatives be explored. Consequently, the thesis deals with a range of writers, both male and female, positioned differently in terms of their treatment of gender, and of literary form, but all fundamentally concerned with issues of masculinity and with representation that goes beyond the confines of literary realism.

In literature, masculinity has only recently become a serious object of study, and as a subject area has developed more slowly than in other aspects of men's studies in sociology, cultural studies, and philosophy. For the last 20 to 30 years proponents of men's studies, such as Victor J. Seidler in the U.K. and Michael S. Kimmel in the U. S., have taken up the challenge of feminism to deconstruct the naturalised norm of masculinity and make men visible as a gender.[1] In literary studies, occasional earlier

works, such as Leslie Fiedler's *Love and Death in the American Novel* (1960) and Peter Schwenger's *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature* (1984), have now been augmented by a more sustained output of books such as Ben Knights's *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (1999) and Berthold Schoene-Harwood's *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (2000).[2] This thesis aims to engage with and consolidate the current study of masculinity in literature by focusing on the Scottish context and the extraordinary rich Scottish literary scene of the last twenty years. It builds on the slow beginnings in this area, found in articles like Jeremy Idle's 'McIlvanney, Masculinity and Scottish Literature' (1993), and S. J. Boyd's '"A Man's a Man": Reflections on Scottish Masculinity' (1994), and, more recently, the greater theoretical engagement and rigorous readings of Scottish novels found in Schoene-Harwood's book.[3]

Using feminist critical perspectives as well as the body of work broadly categorised as men's studies, this thesis aims to explore how a gender approach can illuminate recent Scottish fiction, and this involves engaging broadly with contemporary literary theory. Martin McQuillan writes in his introduction to the collection of essays *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race and Deconstruction* (2002),

> It remains one of the curiosities of English Studies that while most of the canonical texts of English literature and all of the period specializations which make up the discipline have been thoroughly worked over by 'literary theory', contemporary writing (the writing contemporaneous with theory) remains more or less the preserve of the humanist criticism expelled from other areas.[4]

Though this is certainly an exaggerated analysis, it is the case that Scottish fiction is a field where humanist reading strategies continue to underpin a significant proportion of recent work.[5] This study is broadly poststructuralist in its denial of an essence-based

model of the self, but it draws on a variety of theoretical approaches. So, for example, I consider James Kelman's engagement with existentialism, and Judith Butler's theory of performative identity in connection with Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* (1998) about a cross-dressed woman. If the sociological context of the novels studied – and the thesis itself – is that of post-industrialism and the rise of feminism, an intellectual context is the crisis in contemporary philosophy around the humanist subject.

In this moment of flux, it has become common to refer to the fragmentation of gendered identities. Such fragmentation is illustrated by the popularity of 'masculinities' as a more accurate analytical term to describe the lives of men and to acknowledge the diversity among them.[6] Even in terms of hegemony, various models can coexist, as Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne point out: 'Rarely, if ever, will there be only one hegemonic masculinity operating in any cultural setting.'[7] However, in Scottish literature it is significant that this uncertain historical moment continues to be predominantly fixated on heterosexual white men, and not on a plurality of masculine identities, produced by race or sexuality for instance.[8] Therefore, as this study registers the struggle to maintain the power of masculinity in the face of the declining authority of men, it considers traditional hegemonic, or privileged, masculinity as a singular entity, and so is in accord with Berthold Schoene-Harwood when he writes that his own book,

> contests the widespread assumption that a vibrant plurality of masculinities, in the sociopolitical sense of the word, is already in existence [...] Accordingly *Writing Men* insists on speaking of patriarchal masculinity in the singular in order to highlight the insidious impact its inherent conceptual contradictions and inconsistencies continue to exert on the individuation and self-formation of both men and their others.[9]

The texts studied here present that patriarchal masculinity experiencing a process of dislocation, becoming disconnected from its traditional discursive moorings and separated from its historic social location. This situation produces dissonant selves, both male and female, who are seeking stability and security in an uncertain world, and do not know at this moment where this search will take them. This study both deconstructs these dissonant selves and assesses the possibility these texts create of their reconstruction.

*

The study began as contemplation of what I perceived as a paradox concerning James Kelman's writing, and specifically his male protagonists. There is a contradiction between the representation of these men in his fiction and their reception in the wider public arena of the media, particularly in the debates around his winning of the Booker Prize for fiction in 1994 with his novel *How Late It Was, How Late*. In the media, the stereotypical 'hard man' characteristics of Kelman's men, such as their swear-word laden discourse and Glasgow accents, tend to be dwelled upon. These characters are often reduced in the public debate to drunken, brutal and brutalised individuals, the experience of which was infamously compared by Simon Jenkins in *The Times*, in reference to *How Late*, to 'an encounter with an ambassador of that city [Glasgow]' who 'subjected me to a three hour ordeal [...] ending by demanding money with menaces'.[10] Kelman's central figures are, however, immeasurably more complex than such cameo portraits allow. Full of uncertainty, vulnerability, and sometimes even at risk from inglorious humiliation or death, they are, in fact, decidedly unstereotypical hard men. Unusually, they are not rescued from their emasculation by acts of heroism or domination, and therefore

represent an ambivalent engagement with masculinity that questions traditional ideas of male identity.[11]

This disjunction between what might loosely be called critical reception and my own comprehension of Kelman's fictional representations prompted me to further investigate the conception of gender in and around contemporary Scottish literature. As in the social sphere, gender in fiction is undergoing a process of disorientation. Bestselling writers like Nick Hornby and Tony Parsons engage with male insecurities and changing roles, while texts focusing on previously marginal sexual identities, like Sarah Waters's lesbian novel *Tipping the Velvet* (1998), are moving into the mainstream and popularising images of non-heteronormative desire. Representations of masculinity and femininity as other than stable and unified point to an increasing dissonance between traditional gender ideals and the experience of social reality. In the Scottish case, as apparent in a significant portion of the fiction being produced in Scotland, the details of this disorientation are engaging in their complexity, not least in the concern with masculinity as uncertain and unsure of itself in the changing social and ideological landscape.

In a significant essay, Christopher Whyte argues that this uncertainty is exemplified by the ambiguity surrounding one bastion of masculinity, the tough 'hard man' or 'dysfunctional urban male who plays such a significant part in recent Scottish fiction'. This is a 'gender icon' that can be traced back to 'at least the interwar period, if not much further', a recent infamous example of this figure being the psychotically violent character of Frank Begbie who appears in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) and several of his subsequent novels.[12] Though the hard man is not usually celebrated for his subversive gender interest, Whyte makes some suggestive comments regarding this icon.

He describes the hard man as a feminised figure, not least through his frequent status as a victim and loser that 'makes him the focus of a surprising but persistent pathos'.[13] He calls his 'hypermasculinity' a performance, marked by its hysterical defence in the public arena. Performance, with its overtones of masquerade and inauthenticity, and particularly hysteria, are traditionally feminine attributes, and as such they compromise the resolute and absolute masculinity the hard man appears to project.

Whyte's paradox, the feminised hard man, is suggestive of Kelman's ambiguous protagonists. It is not, however, only in the work of male writers that masculinity is a concern. A significant feature of Janice Galloway's work is the difficulty her female protagonists have, in the absence of men, in defining their own subjectivity. In A. L. Kennedy's work, meanwhile, we see a sustained attempt at recuperation, an attempt to rebuild female/male relationships, especially that of daughters and fathers. Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* gives us a male impersonator who is perhaps the most successful 'man' of all the novels considered here. The object of this study, then, is the relationship of both men and women with masculinity. It investigates why masculinity is central to a general disorientation of gender in this writing, and specifically how and why the contemporary Scottish context brings into relief a male identity that is unstable and paradoxical.

The period since 1980 has come to be characterised as one of 'male crisis', and the term has informed everything from scholarly studies to tabloid headlines concerning boys doing badly at school and the feminisation of employment.[14] The 'crisis in masculinity' has become a frame for understanding the ailments of modern western societies. John Beynon describes it as originating in 'a loss of masculine rights' as a result of both the changes in male employment and the feminist critique, but it is perhaps more accurate to

describe the crisis as a loss of masculine privilege in which traditional male authority and identities associated with the concomitant lifestyles are now becoming redundant.[15]

Notions of a crisis in masculinity have, however, also been challenged. As John MacInnes points out, 'Although men's privilege is under unprecedented material and ideological challenge, the briefest historical survey will show that masculinity has always been in one crisis or another.'[16] Masculinity, that is to say, has always been contestable and the idea of a crisis should not be made to bear over-determined social significance. In addition, as R. W. Connell warns:

> The concept of crisis tendencies needs to be distinguished from the colloquial sense in which people speak of a 'crisis of masculinity'. As a theoretical term 'crisis' presupposes a coherent system of some kind, which is destroyed or restored by the outcome of the crisis. Masculinity [...] is not a system in that sense. It is, rather, a configuration of practice *within* a system of gender relations. We cannot logically speak of the crisis of a configuration; rather we might speak of its disruption or its transformation. We can, however, logically speak of the crisis of a gender order as a whole, and of its tendencies towards crisis.[17]

Talk of a crisis of masculinity has, in fact, become shorthand to describe this crisis of the gender order, another sign, perhaps, of the universal status that men and masculinity have acquired through the ages.

In the introduction to a collection of essays titled *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-war and Contemporary British Literature* (2003), Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene point out that the contributors 'prefer to speak of masculinity as a gender "in transition" rather than a gender "in crisis"':

> To speak of 'masculinity in crisis' hints at a somewhat elegiac pose of regret, suggesting that to attempt a remedial reconstruction of masculinity as we know it might be a stance much more preferable to expectantly accepting its impending demise [...] contemporary manhood is caught up

> in awkward transition between an old order, on the wane yet still unrelentingly influential, and the perplexing freedom and indeterminacy of a new order, palpably there but tragically insubstantial and beyond practical grasp.[18]

It is a cogent observation that the present period is one of transition, of a state of betweeness. But 'transition' is an anodyne term that does not fully do justice to the representation, in contemporary Scottish fiction, of the experience of individuals, both men and women, in the present changing circumstances. In these texts, the gap between the discredited old order and the as yet not fully achieved new one produces a profound sense of dislocation, and this often surfaces, if not in 'elegiac regret', then in nostalgia for the certainties and stabilities of traditional gender relations and identities. It is not possible to ignore the trauma of that transition as protagonists in these novels experience isolation, loneliness and psychic fragmentation that threaten to overwhelm them. The general mood is of alienation rather than integration, and loss and repression continue to be founding features of the sense of self represented here.

These narratives engage with the changing relations of individuals with the old order, its pending demise, the success or failure of attempts at reinstating or replacing it, and its deliberate sabotage. In representing the trauma of this uncertain moment, these texts suggest the need for a process of mourning, a ritual to facilitate transition to a new order, in the manner advocated by Rosi Braidotti when she writes:

> We need rituals of burial and mourning for the dead, including and especially the ritual of burial of the Woman that was. We do need to say farewell to that second sex, that eternal feminine which stuck to our skins like toxic material, burning into our bonemarrow, eating away at our substance. We need to take collectively the time for the mourning of the old socio-symbolic contract.[19]

In addition, this study asserts that we also need to acknowledge the burial of 'the Man that was', the patriarchal ideal, and that these novels articulate a need for mourning this discredited hegemonic model of masculinity while seeking to escape its influence.

Gender transition is particularly significant in the Scottish context. Scottish national identity is traditionally masculine, and, commentators have claimed, fixated on a certain kind of masculinity. Alan Bold is moved to call the Scottish male 'an evolutionary oddity concerned always to prove his masculinity and anxious to avoid any suggestion of femininity', a reference to a perceived national concern with 'MacChismo', a Scottish inflection of the latino concern with 'machismo' or exaggeratedly assertive manliness.[20] S. J. Boyd formalises such an analysis when he writes that 'the history of Scotland, in life and letters, is the history of a thorough-going patriarchy'.[21] And certainly the literary lineage of such domineering masculinity can be traced back at least as far as the bawdier side of national poet Robert Burns. This prompts Bold to write, 'Burns's phallicism makes him the most outstanding representative of the masculine nature in Scottish poetry. He is the archetypal Scottish sexist.'[22] Robert Crawford supports this view in his essay 'Robert Fergusson's Robert Burns' in which he highlights the importance of Burns's connection with the masculine world of fraternities, or men's clubs, where maleness and masculinity were celebrated. Crawford argues that this should make us review his many celebrations of fraternity in his poems and songs. 'In our own century, when issues of gender and democracy have been closely linked, we should be wary about simply translating Burns's "brothers" into the more universal "people" so as to include females as well as males.' Crawford goes on to give a reading of 'Tam o'Shanter', which he calls a 'teasing triumph of masculinity'.[23]

All this might suggest that in the last twenty years there has existed a tendency towards an admission of the oppressive nature of Scottish masculinism by Scottish men, or at least Scottish literary critics. But as Boyd's article and Bold's short book *The Sensual Scot* (1982) show, even explicit accusations of sexism can seem not altogether serious, ultimately serving to restate Scottish masculinity in an unreconstructed status and stasis.[24] Barbara Littlewood points out the national investment in historical men and male identities: 'The heroes and villains of our popular histories, with the exception of Mary, are invariably male, and alternatives only replace kings, lairds and politicians with the equally male dominated roster of the Red Clyde heroes [the manual workers of Glasgow's shipyards].'[25] The issue of class highlighted here is significant when defining appropriately heroic Scottish masculinity. Esther Breitenbach writes, 'Working-class images may not be the only ones in recent Scottish history, but these images and narratives have assumed considerable significance in the attempt to create a Scottish identity in the twentieth century.'[26] Working-class men often signify what is conceived of as a more authentic masculinity; they embody strength, stamina, the capacity for hard manual work and loyalty to fellow workers. In patriarchal terms this man is also the breadwinner and head of the family, a position of integrity and authority.

In addition, working-class men have often been projected as more authentically Scottish. Whyte, in his article on the hard man, observes that since the 1970s 'there has been what one might call a "hegemonic shift", so much so that the city of Glasgow, and the West of Scotland more generally, are accused of exerting an unfair dominance, where representations of "Scottishness" and Scotland are concerned'.[27] As this is the region traditionally associated with heavy industry, he conceives of a 'representational pact'

between the middle-class readers of literary fiction and the writers of such representations:

> One may posit a demand on the part of the Scottish middle class for fictional representations from which it is itself excluded; a demand, in other words, for textual invisibility. This would connect with the widespread perception of the Scottish middle classes as 'denationalised', as less Scottish in terms of speech and social practice than the lower classes. The task of embodying and transmitting Scottishness is, as it were, devolved to the unemployed, the socially underprivileged, in both actual and representational contexts.[28]

Generally perceived as complicit in maintaining the union with England and the British state, the middle class's compromised integrity is resolved in an endorsement of working-class masculinity that offsets the weakness, inferiorism and, therefore, effeminacy with which it is tinged. Representations of working-class men, even as unemployed or socially underprivileged, are able to focus on physical strength and honesty, and promote these as characteristics of a traditional and valorised Scottish masculinity. This is the case in William McIlvanney's novel *The Big Man* (1985) where an unemployed miner takes part in an illegal bare-knuckle fight for money. Dan Scoular struggles with the moral dilemma that promotes violence as a way out of poverty. Although his decision to take part in the contest estranges him from his wife, he is finally exonerated in an honourable victory, both in the fight and over the criminal organisers.

'MacChismo' is, however, a feature of both high and low Scottish cultural practices, exemplified for Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay by writers like Hugh MacDiarmid who, during the Scottish literary renaissance of the early twentieth century, cultivated an aggressive intellectual image: '[They] saw two directions in which they could go. The eighteenth-century polymath offered one attractive role model, the urban hardman the

other, although they are not mutually exclusive.'[29] Over the last two decades a critique of the masculine nature of Scottish national identity has arisen from concerns about the relationship of women and nationalism generally. For example, Esther Breitenbach writes, 'Certainly we can say that so limited is our knowledge of the role of women in Scottish history, that they do not appear to have influenced the creation of a notion of "national identity", and that this is necessarily constructed in a masculine image.'[30] The maintenance of that image is itself not without problems.

One difficulty is the perceived duality of Scottish identity, in that, for example, Scots are both Scottish and British, and can be highlanders or lowlanders. The Scottish identity resists unity in many ways, fuelling a general sense of Scottish dualism that continues to be referred to in terms of a conjunction of opposite forces, an innate 'Caledonian antisyzygy', a term which denotes a split or schizoid Scottish psyche.[31] This is illustrated in literary texts like James Hogg's *The Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). And even R. D. Laing's renowned 'anti-psychiatry' book, *The Divided Self* (1960), contemplating a social basis for mental illness, serves to promote, merely through his own Scottishness, a view of the Scottish psyche as subject to a schizophrenic neuroticism or pathology.

Away from these naturalised psychological conceptions, a negative Scottish duality can also be traced in history. Alan Bold asserts that 'the Scot, according to the historical evidence, was a loser', from the defeat at Flodden in 1513 to the defeat of the clans at Culloden in 1746, incorporating the Union with England along the way.[32] In this vein, extreme nationalism sees a genuine Scottishness as diluted by the Union, of Crowns in 1603, and Parliaments in 1707. The result was a dual identity as both Scottish and

British, but this only brought the status of a junior partner in a British state that was dominated by the English. As Tom Nairn describes it, underneath that political unity 'persisted the underlying structure of the dismembered nation [...] and the mentality of division or incompletion which has always accompanied it'. He refers to the 'shame' engendered by this situation, which, in these terms, is akin to being colonised.[33] And like other colonised peoples, the Scot is therefore emasculated, as asserted in Renton's infamous tirade in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1994): 'We are colonised by wankers. We can't even pick a decent, vibrant, healthy culture to be colonised by. No. We're ruled by effete arseholes. What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low [...] Ah hate the Scots.'[34] Ultimately, however, this view only highlights a further feature of Scotland's purported antisyzygy; as part of the British state it was also party to British empire building, and therefore both a colonised and colonising entity.[35]

Berthold Schoene-Harwood for one is critical of the (over)use of the term antisyzygy. For him it creates a 'stereotyping, detrimentally restrictive mode of representation in great need of [...] deconstructive dismantlement'.[36] Cairns Craig also sees the 'divided self' as simplistically negative, but assertively defends its significance:

> To explore and to celebrate the multiplicities of the self is to recognise the fact that the self is never self-contained – that the 'divided self' is not to be contrasted with the 'undivided self' but with the 'self-in-relation': the 'divided self' is precisely the product of the failure of the dialectic of 'self and other' rather than the outcome of the self's failure to maintain its autonomy and singularity. The inner otherness of Scottish culture – Highland and Lowland, Calvinist and Catholic – thus becomes the very model of the complexity of the self rather than examples of its failure.[37]

This 'complexity of the self' is an important touchstone in this study's search for a model of identity that can escape the dominance of masculinism. The over-concern with

negative duality and doubleness that contrived to preoccupy Scottish studies inhibits still the conceptualisation of a multiply valenced Scottish identity that is not just one thing or another, but has many possibilities concerning the racial, ethnic, religious and sexual locations people can occupy. In the past the negative connotations of a dual and divided Scottish identity have contributed to a collective 'inferiorism' for some commentators.[38] And for others, this underlies the masculinised image of Scottish nationality. Alexandra Howson, for example, has cautioned that this particular discourse 'operates on a metaphorical level to carry notions of instability and inadequacy of a kind frequently attributed to women'.[39] If Scottish inferiorism is characterised as a kind of feminine weakness, then feminist and other analysts suggest that a strongly masculine personal and national identity has been appropriated to offset this feminisation. In Alan Bold's words, the Scot 'has raised hard masculinity to a theological and domestic principle'.[40]

*

In the 1980s a global recession decimated whole industries and transformed working practices, severely affecting the authority of these hard men. As the staples of Scottish industry, shipbuilding, coalmining and steel-making, 'virtually crumbled with astonishing swiftness', Scotland suffered high unemployment and its social consequences. In just two years, between 1979 and 1981, Scottish manufacturing lost around one fifth of all jobs and had one of the worst unemployment rates in western Europe.[41] For some analysts the Scottish economy was over-dependent on these traditional methods of production and the collapse had 'the inevitability of a Greek tragedy'.[42] Certainly for the communities dependent on these industries the situation seemed little less than a social catastrophe. A dramatic transition occurred throughout western countries as traditional

'heavy' manufacturing was replaced by electronics and service industries requiring a more flexible workforce and different skills. Unemployment transformed communities and sealed a loss of male status as breadwinner and head of the family. And this crisis was not confined to the working class, but reflected in middle management employment too, both sharing 'a deep sense of uncertainty and instability'.[43] As Arthur Brittan argues:

> For most men in capitalist societies, their careers, professions, trades, their skilled and unskilled jobs are the prime focus of identity. Without work they are rootless and disjointed [...] What is at stake here is not simply a diminishing of self-respect, but the realization that they are not in a position to demand 'respect' from women. Their authority in the home no longer has the legitimation of 'provider'.[44]

The decline in male authority inevitably had repercussions for a Scottish national identity invested in a masculinised self-image.

The recessions of the 1980s were presided over by the Conservative party led by Margaret Thatcher which achieved dominance in central government during this period. In Scotland, the economic downturn also followed the political depression of the immediate aftermath of the 1979 referendum on Scottish and Welsh devolution which failed to produce a decisive vote for a level of Scottish independence. The country was undeniably divided on the issue, but the palpable disappointment for nationalists was melancholically expressed by William McIlvanney in his poem 'After: March 1979 – The Cowardly Lion' which compared Scotland to a lion that, after being offered freedom, 'turned to its cage and slunk away/And lives still among the stinking straw today'.[45] Conservative party candidates and policies were increasingly rejected in Scotland, but the dominance of the party in the British parliament at Westminster meant that they

maintained the power to implement deeply unpopular policies in Scotland. For instance, the government introduced the controversial 'Poll Tax' in Scotland in 1989, a year before the rest of the United Kingdom. This disparity meant that increasingly Scots felt their voices were not represented in the institutional British political structures, and so turned to cultural forms for expression of political opposition.

The period after 1980 produced, perhaps a little unpredictably, a 'new vitality' in many aspects of Scottish culture, notably what has been described as a new renaissance in Scottish literature. The increasing significance of the arts at this time is not lost on commentators, eliciting comparisons with the 'Quiet Revolution' in Quebec where, in the 1960s, 'an increase in cultural activity which helped to heal some of the breaches in the community [...] enabled a more unified movement towards self-determination among the Quebecois'.[46] According to T. M. Devine a similar situation transpired in Scotland in the 1980s. Literature became both a chronicle of and a site of resistance to bullying rule from Westminster, contributing perhaps to the creation of an eventual decisive turn of opinion that produced a majority in favour of devolution in the referendum of 1997, followed by the reinstatement of a Scottish Parliament in 1999.

Much of this literature of the early 1980s articulated a protest against male redundancy amid the disappearance of traditional working patterns, ultimately resisting male unemployment. Noted publications of the period like Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), William McIlvanney's *The Big Man* (1985), Agnes Owens's *Gentlemen of the West* (1984), and even Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* (1981) to a certain extent, are exclusively from a male point of view and write with sympathy in defence of working men, and particularly of Glasgow and the western industrialised region. This reflected

the focus of popular grassroots labour and trade union activism, illustrated by the epic national miners' strike of 1984-5. However, by the time the economic situation improved in Scotland in the 1990s with the cultivation of a 'silicon glen', there was a significant 'feminisation' of work and the workforce:

> Foreign firms pressed home the advantage of cheap labour by recruiting mainly women and operating effective non-union policies [...] Accelerating technological change, deskilling and assembly-line techniques substantially increased the employment of women in a range of activities. They now form the majority of the paid labour force in Scotland, although large numbers are in part-time jobs and average wages are around seventy per cent of the male rate. With the increase in single-parent families and the huge haemorrhage of men from the older industries [...] women often became the main earners in many households.[47]

Paralleling this social change, women-centered Scottish fiction also achieved greater prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in one instance with the publication of Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989). For Alison Smith, Galloway is the first Scottish female novelist 'to take advantage in her fiction of the pioneering styles of Kelman and Gray'.[48] A. L. Kennedy also began writing in this period, publishing her first book, the short story collection *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains*, in 1990.

The increased representation and changing status of women that has accompanied diminishing male authority, in Scotland as elsewhere, raises questions as to whether this signals a victory for feminism. Some commentators argue that greater gender equality could also be a consequence of the intensified drive for profit and the 'universalising logics of modern state structures and market relations'.[49] That is, the market, with uncharacteristic fairness, creates a greater commitment to equality in its determination to exploit everyone equally.[50] Such 'exploitation' is evident not only in the new more efficient production methods that increase women's access to a wider variety of

employment, and therefore increased earning power, but also in the escalating commodification of male identity in traditionally feminine areas like fashion, hygiene and general lifestyle, highlighting male consumption as a profitable concern. The homogenising of male and female life experience may be lucrative for capitalism, but it also suggests that we are 'living through the final period, or at least the beginning of the final period, of belief in masculinity as a gender identity specific to men which accounts for their privileged command of power, resources and status'.[51] The undermining of the naturalised relationship between masculinity and the male body is possibly in sight.

In her essay 'The Decline of Patriarchy', Barbara Ehrenreich questions the liberatory potential for women of such a scenario. She argues that patriarchy, which she defines as the 'intimate power of men over women', may be in decline, but this does not mean the end of masculinism or the domination of masculinity.

> The end of patriarchy is not the same as women's liberation – far from it [...] Patriarchy, like feudalism, implies a relationship of mutual obligation. It may be hypocritical, this sense of mutual obligation, but in patriarchy it meant protectiveness on the part of men. And that element of protection and being cared for – which can be seen as either comforting or infantilizing – is now gone. At least, I would say, the word 'patriarchy', with its implications of intimate domination and protection, no longer describes the situation of growing numbers of women in the world [...] Domination, for them, takes a form which is impersonal, corporate, and bureaucratic. In fact, within the multinational corporation, your boss may even be female.[52]

Ehrenreich goes on to observe that 'one consequence in the United States has been what we could call the "masculinization of women"', and she cites as evidence the growing number of women arming themselves, and the increasing support among women for female violence against abusive men, as in the Lorena Bobbitt case.[53]

This issue of the masculinisation of women is fundamental to the concerns of this thesis, most obviously in Jackie Kay's protagonist, but also in Kennedy, Warner and particularly in Kelman. Where Kelman's men are weak and uncertain, his women, though marginal in the texts, are decisive, determined, and often breadwinners in their own right, reflecting the feminisation of production described above. This suggests a transfer of masculine power to women that simply overturns traditional power relations and does not escape them. So this transition of gender relations, though acceding a break in the naturalised relation between men and masculinity, consequently succeeds in preserving the founding masculinism by ascribing it to women. The possibility of escaping this dilemma is the subject of the fiction studied here in texts which engage with our fundamental sense of self and its traditionally masculinised nature.

The status of an idealised masculinity as the norm for humanity becomes particularly significant in the early modern era. Victor J. Seidler points out that a strong foundation of this tradition concerns men's relationship with reason, the divine quality endorsed by modern philosophy as 'the only source of valid knowledge'. In *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality* (1989), Seidler asserts that 'we have inherited a historical identification of masculinity with reason and morality'.[54] Along these lines Genevieve Lloyd in *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (1984) argues that 'our ideas of Reason have historically incorporated an exclusion of the feminine', and goes on, 'From the beginnings of philosophical thought, femaleness was symbolically associated with what Reason supposedly left behind.'[55] Susan Bordo, however, questions the totalizing sweep of this view and proposes instead that 'knowledge *became* "masculinized" at a certain point in our intellectual history', the

seventeenth century rationalist project. Bordo argues that 'the "Cartesian masculinization of thought" [...] is one intellectual "moment" of an acute historical flight from the feminine' that 'motivated the birth of Cartesian ideals' and the 'objectivist modes of rationality which have dominated the Western intellectual tradition with a distinctively male cognitive style'.[56]

Such a style is reflected in the binary organisation of thought and knowledge discernable as far back as the Pythagorean table of opposites from the sixth century BC. Starting from the basic principle of form versus formlessness, the table lists other 'couples' including light/dark, good/bad, straight/curved, limit/unlimited, and of course male/female.[57] The principles of identity and non-contradiction are fundamental here, and every form is either one thing or the other, with nothing in between. Crucially, each part of the binary carries value and one component is superior to the other; male is valued more than female, as are the other initial components in their couplets. The sex difference becomes, however, the primary one, the 'operator' of the scheme where all other positive values are characterised as masculine, and negative values as correspondingly feminine.

This idealised hierarchy is present in the drama of the *cogito*, Descartes's Enlightenment model of the self or subject based on an essential rationality. Bordo writes, 'In an important sense the separate self, conscious of itself and of its own distinctness from a world "outside" it, is born in the Cartesian era.'[58] This self, a model that continues to inform our self-image, is a thinker, self-sufficient and isolated, and founded through the principles of rational argument – 'I am thinking therefore I am' – creating a dualist schema established on a distinction between 'thinking substance' and

'raw matter', mind and body. In this hierarchical model, reason, cut off from feeling, becomes valorised as a masculine attribute, a status that must be protected and maintained. This masculinised rational subject constructs the boundaries of itself by excluding, and defining itself in opposition to, the 'others' of reason: madness, the senses, dreams, the passions, and, importantly, the body, which become associated with the other gender, other races, other sexualities, now seen as inferior to the rational norm.[59] Seidler writes regretfully of the consequences of this exclusionary process being a 'loss of quality in the lived experience of men'. Through this 'subjectification' men develop an instrumental relationship with language, feeling and ultimately to the self, the result of 'an identity built through negation'.[60]

Michael S. Kimmel describes this male identity in practical terms:

> We come to know what it means to be a man in our culture by setting our definitions in opposition to a set of 'others' – racial minorities, sexual minorities, and, above all, women [...] We equate manhood with being strong, successful, capable, reliable, in control. The very definitions of manhood we have developed maintain the power that some men have over other men and that men have over women.[61]

This describes a 'hegemonic masculinity', a term popularised by Connell but employed widely to designate a norm or ideal state of manhood. This is not a fixed character type, but a changing, adaptable model that 'embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women'. The model 'establishes its hegemony partly by its claim to embody the power of reason',[62] and because of this it is naturalised and invisible:

> Because society has taken as its self-conception since the Enlightenment a version of itself as a 'rational society', and because reason is taken to be the exclusive property of men, this means that

> the mechanisms of the development of masculinity are in crucial ways the mechanisms of the development of the broader culture. This makes masculinity as power invisible, for the rule of men is simply taken as an expression of reason and 'normality'.[63]

The hegemonic masculine self is therefore the norm in comparison with which other identities are found lacking and inferior. Kimmel describes the basic parameters of this hegemonic position, and within this white, middle-class and heterosexual paradigm further standards govern physical prowess, sexual potency, intimacy, employment, and all other aspects of men's lives. But as Connell points out, as with any other norm 'the number of men rigorously practising the hegemonic pattern in its entirety may be quite small'.[64] Most men fail to achieve the ideal in totality, creating a situation where the threat of failure necessitates constant policing and therefore constant (re)construction of the boundaries of masculinity.

Masculinity here is not a natural essence but a social position or relation that does not precede its expression. As such it is intrinsically dependent on the states or qualities it defines itself against; for example, it needs women to be weak, queer men to be perverse, and black men to be feminised or irrationally over-aggressive in order to maintain its own status of heteronormative authority. The escalation of the discrediting and denaturalisation of this authority in the contemporary period has prompted a disorientation in gender relations, an uncertainty giving rise to the discourse of masculinity in crisis. The decline in male authority intersects with a wider crisis of political, philosophical and moral legitimacy. As Rosi Braidotti observed in 1991, 'The contemporary theoretical climate [...] is dominated by the discourse of the "crisis", meaning the questioning of "subjectivity" and "rationality".'[65] Assertions of the 'death of rationality' and the 'death of the subject' have often accompanied the 'man-made'

catastrophes of the twentieth century, such as the Holocaust and the Bomb. In short, humankind's ongoing aptitude for self-destruction has brought into question the notion, derived from Kant, that reason 'guarantees our capacity for morality'.[66] In view of its relation with reason, the masculinised self is at the centre of this crisis of legitimacy; the Cartesian model of a totalitarian knowing subject has 'become as much a contested object as the Enlightenment project of the historical progress of humanity through the adequate use of reason'.[67]

Foucault calls this crisis the 'insurrection of subjugated knowledges'.[68] These 'others', embodied in the feminist and civil rights and gay rights movements and other organised struggles for equality and justice, demand representation. The universal and singular Cartesian subject is fragmenting as women, homosexuals and non-white people claim equality with the dominant men. In the confrontation with its others, that asserted universal and singular hegemonic male identity must come to terms with its dependence on them, with the presence of those others within itself. The novels examined in this study engage with that moment of fragmentation and consider the confusion and resistance to this transition from singular to multiple gender identities. In the Scottish context, though women and working-class men are now common as both subjects and authors of fiction, representations of other minorities (that is, minority in relation to power) such as ethnic and gay and lesbian individuals, are still uncommon. In effect, it continues to be the case that the heart of the crisis being acted out here lies in the attempt to maintain the unity and singularity of masculinity in the face of female empowerment.

Significantly, many characters in these novels are motivated by fear, of intimacy, of personal dissolution or cracking up, of change. This is fear of what Marjorie Garber calls

'category crisis', where traditional systems of organising reality are in danger of becoming redundant. What has previously been contained within the parameters of the abnormal (the 'bad' and the 'mad') is now escaping that label and achieving mainstream presence and visibility. In her landmark study of transvestism, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1993), Garber writes:

> [There is] a failure of definitional distinction, a borderline that becomes permeable, that permits of border crossings from one (apparently distinct) category to another. The binarism male/female [...] is itself put in question or under erasure in transvestism [...] [This is] not just a category crisis of male and female, *but the crisis of category itself.*[69]

Evidence of such a crisis is more apparent as the decline of the authority of hegemonic masculinity accelerates. This evidence is found not only in the spectacular terms of transvestism, but also in the mundane lives that preoccupy the writers taken up in this study. They question how to get beyond crisis and facilitate that transition in gender identity that will transform how we think about our fundamental selves.

One challenge these writers face is how to represent category crisis or the instability and breakdown in categories of identity, and imagine a state beyond the dominant binary understanding. Ian A. Bell observes that, 'Scottish novelists since the early 1980s have concentrated on individual moments of crisis, alienation and fragmentation, moments dramatising the loss and discovery of self, as they are articulated through the lives of some of those conventionally excluded from the story of Scotland.'[70] They focus on those individuals existing on the margins of their communities. In fact, all the writers considered in this study, as we shall see, have articulated their desire to represent in their work some of those who have not, until recently, generally been seen or heard in their own right in the literary tradition: the working (or non-working) class, the non-white,

deprived men and women, the unstable. Representing in fiction those marginalised from the centre of power and, in addition, alienated from the mainstream of their communities, is itself a means of disrupting binary relations.

William McIlvanney, an immensely popular and successful writer in Scotland and beyond, makes his subject the working-class life of the urban centres of the west of Scotland. In *Docherty* (1975), a novel set in a mining community in the early twentieth century, McIlvanney asserts the subjecthood of his working men, over and above the dehumanising pressures of the industrial environment. Consequently, people who are often objectified and unvoiced in fiction are here made central, challenging the authority of a self-consciously aware middle-class self-hood that dominates mainstream writing. The problem discerned by critics of this work is that the subject McIlvanney privileges is almost exclusively a male one. Jeremy Idle, for one, is moved to declare that 'his perpetual mourning for the passing of the good hard men has gone on too long'.[71] In effect, McIlvanney installs men in a privileged position, repeating the dominant power relations which reinforce the authority and agency of masculinity. His work is nostalgic for the hegemonic ideals of manhood as personified in working-class men.

In *Docherty*, McIlvanney's use of a realist mode of representation, particularly the omniscient third person narrative voice, aggravates the contradictions of the text. As Craig points out, the characters in *Docherty* are embedded in a narration 'extravagantly erudite and literary [...] designed to elevate the characters [...] by insisting on the complexity and integrity of their *feelings*'.[72] But it also objectifies them within this standard English literary discourse, the language of the elite, the authority of which overrides their own Scottish voices which are confined to the dialogue. This example of

'classic realism', so labelled by renowned critiques of the 1970s and 80s, 'guarantees the position of subject exactly outside any articulation – the whole text works on the concealing of the dominant discourse as articulation'. And dominant here is the narrative discourse which allegedly 'simply allows reality to appear and denies its own status as articulation'.[73]

In the discursive hierarchy of *Docherty*, the standard English narration has access to truth through its universal knowledge, and so has greater status than the confined Glaswegian accent of the dialogue in which the characters directly express themselves. Even if *Docherty*'s characters' thoughts and feelings can be represented in erudite prose, they cannot so represent these thoughts themselves, but must have them articulated on their behalf by the narrative voice. In assigning authority in this way, the text on one level perpetuates the class difference it is attempting to discredit. It also, then, preserves the authority of the rational subject as origin of a discoverable truth or meaning. As Catherine Belsey sees it, classic realism 'proposes a model in which author and reader are subjects who are the source of shared meanings, the origin of which is mysteriously extra-discursive. It thus does the work of ideology in suppressing the relationship between language and subjectivity.'[74] However, the fact that it does produce an apparent truth and static meaning makes this realist mode one that is often associated with oppositional discourses, such as working-class writing and feminist fiction, as they attempt to establish their own truth in the face of the dominant one.[75] In doing so they succeed in resisting the dominant hierarchy but, as we have seen, they also risk the outcome of echoing or simply inverting the existing power relations.

The novels studied here all resist the hierarchy of discourses that define and confine power relations in more mainstream, classically realist narratives, mixing and proliferating discourses and defying traditional representation. Such strategies prompt classification of some contemporary Scottish fiction as enthusiastically 'postmodern', especially since the publication of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* in 1981, a life in four, not necessarily in order, books.[76] But the characteristic playfulness of one strand of postmodern literature, that associated with, say, Angela Carter or Salman Rushdie, is often lacking in Scottish equivalents. The fragmented and interrupted narratives that characterise several of these novels reflect an uncertain and disjointed sense of self, a disconcerting descent into destructive chaos rather than a celebratory liberation from the confines of the repressive traditional stereotypes. Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* exemplifies these strategies: the text fragments and the narrator appears to lose control of her narration in this representation of the breakdown of a woman whose world and sense of self fall apart after the death of her lover. As this text shows, fragmentation and category crisis do not necessarily lead to individual freedom, but are more likely in these circumstances to be a painful, traumatic experience.

A different anti-cogito stance is found in existentialism which has also exercised 'a significant – if generalised – attraction to modern Scottish writers', James Kelman and William McIlvanney being perhaps the most vocal on this issue. Craig suggests that this may 'testify to the parallels between existentialism and Calvinism' in that they both emphasise human choice: Calvinism '[denies] its significance in a world of predestination', while existentialism insists on 'the predetermined patterns of life of those who refuse the challenge of authentic choice'.[77] Fundamentally, however, the

existentialist tradition is a critique of the traditional Cartesian subject, denying the isolation of that model and insisting that the self is constituted in its relations with others. Sartre explains, 'When we say "I think" we are attaining to ourselves in the presence of the other, and we are just as certain of the other as we are of ourselves. Thus the man who discovers himself directly in the *cogito* also discovers all the others, and discovers them as the condition of his own existence.'[78] It is this situation that Craig perhaps finds echoed in Kelman's fiction when he says of his protagonists that 'they are the site in which the community's voices happen'.[79] This responsiveness to others is a fundamental aspect of subjectivity where, as Sartre puts it, 'Every one of us must choose himself; but by that we also mean that in choosing for himself he chooses for all men.'[80]

The emphasis on choice derives from the founding existential premise that existence precedes essence, which effectively banishes any notion of human nature or essence from the subject. 'Man is nothing else but that which he makes of himself' says Sartre, which in the extreme lays the responsibility for the outcome of a life solely at the feet of the individual and the choices they make, irrespective of circumstances.[81] This appears a familiar retreat to the individual, but Sartre's is a particularly negative vision, echoed in Kelman's more paranoid moments. Often summarized in Sartre's infamous assertion that 'hell is other people', his conception sees the self as only completed by the other, but in effect, becoming an object for the other.

> [The other] turns me into an object for his gaze, jeopardising my very being as a subject [...] However [...] others, in fact, are necessary. It is only by way of their view of me that I can know who I am, only from them that I can get an external view of myself.
>
> This dependence on others' view of me is a further source of conflict. Somehow I must both control the other, and at the same time preserve my independence.[82]

This is a world where, as with the Cartesian model, submission and domination are 'the only possible attitudes human beings can have towards each other'.[83]

Consequently, withdrawal from relations may signal a desire to escape the ordeal of objectification. But the novels analysed here illustrate the problem, impossibility even, of existence without relations, and the contradiction and potential psychosis that threatens the stability of the isolated individual. Many of these protagonists are alienated from the social centre and live a solipsistic existence where every minute action and interaction is reported at the expense of a coherent greater significance. Such close attention to individual lives often succeeds in registering what is absent, and the significant absence here is the community in which the individuals are embedded. The relationships around the protagonists are negative ones which succeed in producing anguish, abandonment and despair, the foregrounded concerns of existentialism. This is especially true of Kelman's work and his technique of representing absences by what he terms 'negative apprehension', which he explains by reference to Franz Kafka, who in his fiction, 'refers to a space which he then fills with a crowd of things that either don't exist, or maybe don't exist, [...] with absences'.[84] In Kelman and Galloway this absence, the lack of effective intersubjective relations and communication, causes a breakdown and fragmentation that threatens the coherence of subjectivity itself.

The threat here also comes from the lack of an alternative conception of the self and the difficulty already noted of positively representing identity outside of its binary formation. One possibility is to display a movement from one bounded identity to another, from one side of the binary to the other.[85] This state is illustrated by Jackie Kay's protagonist Joss Moody in *Trumpet*. He successfully passes as a man for most of

his life, and so he represents the existence of two states, male and female, in one place; but the text, and our imaginations, flicker between his male shape and his female one, resting on one or the other. This illustrates how impossible we find it to think outside our binary models and language. It appears that we only perceive and understand stability, emotionally investing in the security this brings, making it difficult to effectively represent movement and fluidity. We have a need, then, for narratives that reconstitute the fragmented subject into functional human beings. In the face of category crisis, Stuart Hall calls identity a 'necessary fiction'.[86] It is the possibility of imagining new self-fictions in contemporary Scottish writing that this study investigates.

The writers I have chosen to focus on all engage with the uncertainty of the historical moment, when traditional ways of understanding reality are breaking down. The novels studied here are therefore formally experimental, more concerned with how reality is apprehended than with the movement of a plot. They do not represent the progress of temporal change because change here is not a movement towards greater authenticity as it is in a classically realist text. Repetition, whether in actions, events or in statements and language formation, indicates a sense of stasis, an existential circularity that traps the protagonists in a limiting social reality. In this these texts resonate with Judith Butler's concept of identity as a performance, as a necessary repetition dictated by hegemonic discourses, not by the self or nature of the individual. The necessity to repeat creates the opportunity for subversive repetitions that distort or undermine dominant relations.[87] These fictional texts inhabit moments of excruciating insecurity when the possibility for subversion arises, or, more exactly, when individuals who are not necessarily equipped for subversion find themselves in such situations. These are the moments between the

continuing influence of traditional identity formations and the possibility of new ones. The lack of closure that these novels have in common emphasises the lack of consensus on those new possibilities, and they remain open to Lea and Schoene's gender transition, if only in highlighting the trauma and the impossibility of the status quo.

Gender is a pervasive concern in many Scottish narratives of this period. For example, Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory* (1984) employs a gothic structure to explore the constructed nature of gender. The protagonist Frank asserts a psychotic masculinity but finds he is a 'male impersonator', tricked by his father into a male identity by means of a castration myth and male hormones. Here the 'macabre celebration of violence, horror and death is not an end in itself but aims to unmask the fraudulence of the old order and, ultimately, to demolish the Law of the Father'.[88] Another novel, Duncan McLean's *Bunker Man* (1995), focuses on the pathological masculinity of its janitor protagonist Rob whose social and sexual insecurity leads to extreme paranoia, sexual violence and murder. Also the great variety of crime fiction on the Scottish scene has produced several memorable men-in-crisis, existential anti-heroes like McIlvanney's Laidlaw and Ian Rankin's Rebus. For the most part, these are all sensationalist narratives involving violence and murder, serial killers and psychopaths, but they do illustrate various contemporary cultural anxieties, especially uncertainty and insecurity around gender.

This study, however, focuses on texts that aim to place these anxieties within an everyday context, to represent the ordinary, not the sensational. All the writers here have described, at some time, their desire to represent in their fiction those people marginalised in literature, and, to this end, they aim to undermine their readers'

expectations. They discourage content-based reading for events and plot, and they experiment with form and the effect of non-conventional modes of representation. In this the narratives often risk alienating readers in their fragmentation and repetition, but they also allow alternative models of the self to emerge. I put gender at the centre of all interrogations of the subject here, and, specifically, my questioning concerns how successful these texts are in transforming or simply renegotiating men's and women's relationship with masculinity.

*

This study began as contemplation of an apparent contradiction concerning the reception of James Kelman's protagonists, and they are a good place to start looking at contradiction and transformation in gender. The decline in the authority of patriarchy is apparent in Kelman's men, who are in crisis and often on the edge of breakdown. They cannot relate to or live up to the traditional stereotypes of manhood, but cannot get beyond them either. Kelman's existential vision traps his men in a meaningless world of relations based on dominance. Essential gender traits and naturalised male authority are undermined here, and the decline in men's power is contrasted with the relative increase in the authority and social standing of women. This is a potential gender reversal which threatens to overturn the power relations of the premises of the rational subject, but not escape them.

The exploration of Janice Galloway's work in chapter two is based on the observation of the absence of men, physically and/or emotionally. There is, in fact, a concern with male death in all her novels. Galloway explores the effect of this absence on how women view themselves and how it changes the model of the self we live with. In order to fully

undermine any essentialist notions, she employs postmodern strategies of representing fracturing and fragmenting identity, but this ultimately makes way for a prioritisation of relations between individuals. Galloway rejects solitude and recognises the importance of others, in both negative and positive ways, but her feminist approach eventually excludes men. This is not a prescriptive move but more an admission of not being able to relate to men in the present context. It is, however, another reversal of power relations, highlighting as it does the use of traditionally 'feminine' modes for escaping the crisis of the subject.

Chapter three looks at Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* and its direct engagement with the category crisis of gender. Taking non-essential identity to an extreme, transvestite Joss Moody questions the authority of naturalised categories, especially gender ones. Set in the period after Joss's death, when his secret is exposed, the novel questions how practically successful this breakdown of categories is in terms of socially undermining gender roles. Kay's creation of a 'performative' subject here, is usefully illuminated by the work of Judith Butler which I will look at more closely in this chapter. But Kay's central figure is also a subject formed by a community which emphasises again the importance of relations, how we are seen by others. The novel questions how these abstract concerns translate into social change, which is here more difficult than it may initially seem.

The fourth chapter considers the work of A. L. Kennedy, some of which appears to represent a backlash against the loss of masculine power and a subsequent reinstallation of male dominance. This possibility is strengthened by the more traditional appearance of her novels, which, unlike the others, employ inverted commas and regular chapter

divisions. Violence is a frequent controlling factor, whether wielded by men or women, against others or the self. This often signals an attempt by men to impose their authority, but with decreasing levels of success as the work proceeds from novel to novel, and as women realise their potential. Kennedy's work suggests a retreat from pre-formulated 'ideas' and 'approaches', and is an attempt to represent individuals in the face of the bleak necessity of identity in an untheorised world with no *a priori* conditions. This makes her the writer here most concerned with issues of faith and metaphysics in a society only beginning to attempt, *en masse*, to cope with the absence of God and the concomitant supreme human subject.

The final chapter considers Alan Warner's attempts in his writing to escape masculinity altogether. He echoes Galloway in his concern with male death, and he focuses on female protagonists in his first three novels. But there is a certain masculinisation of his women offset by a reiteration of traditional female identity which sets up conditions of sameness and difference, reinforcing the traditional view of the self. If anything, these texts highlight the difficulty of escape from that dominant model. Warner's flirtation with differing world views, from existentialism to poststructuralism, is itself a testing of the freedom and liberty of the contemporary individual, but ultimately signals a lack of commitment to any foundation that claims to be able to escape the traditional stereotypes of identity.

I conclude the study with a brief look at two novels that highlight differing approaches to this period of gender transition. Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) and Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room* (2002) both consider male violence against women. In *Marabou Stork Nightmares* male remorse for this violence

does not counter the destruction of femininity in this novel. *The Cutting Room*, however, attempts to illustrate the acknowledgment of male responsibility that is necessary to make a significant transformation in gender relations possible. This novel centres on a truly marginal male figure, the homosexual Rilke, restricting access to traditional narratives of masculinity and questioning their responsibility for patriarchal excesses and a model of the self founded on control and domination. Therefore, the study ends with a glance at more mainstream 'genre' fiction and the consequences of its engagement with violent masculine resistance to change.

Overall contemporary Scottish writing suggests that the troubling of gender, and particularly masculinity, leads to a conception of identity as not natural, stable and neatly bounded. There is no consensus here on how to replace lost security, but it would appear that a coherent self-image is still necessary if individuals are to be able to function in the world. This study investigates the process of imagining new identities and selves in contemporary Scottish fiction, the necessary 're-membering' of the self in the wake of its gender crisis.

Chapter 1: James Kelman – Masculine Models and Limitations

James Kelman is renowned as a writer who represents the disempowered working-class men of Scottish urban society in their own terms. Alongside Alasdair Gray he is most often credited with 'kick-starting what is seen as a Scottish literary renaissance' in the 1980s.[1] Though an inspirational influence on a younger generation of Scottish writers from Irvine Welsh to A. L. Kennedy, in other quarters Kelman was not always a lauded figure, being 'the target of an orchestrated letter-writing campaign in Scottish newspapers and denounced by civic leaders for presenting an unsavoury picture of Scottish life'.[2] His Glaswegian working-class protagonists provoke such reactions with their anti-establishment attitudes and the frequent expletives that punctuate their language. Kelman's work is also perceived as part of what is known as 'Clydesidism', 'the valorisation of the Scottish male industrial worker [...] the hard fighting, hard drinking, hard swearing, hard man'.[3] Though some fighting, drinking and a great deal of swearing do occur in Kelman's writing, it is noticeable that there is very little traditional heavy labour. Much of his fiction is concerned with a 'non-working class', the burgeoning group of unemployed and casually employed labour subject to the insecurities and vagaries of the changing industrial landscape of the 1980s.

Kelman's fiction is considered by some to be nostalgic for a disappearing working-class tradition and culture, at the expense of dealing with recent changes in the social context. Andrew O'Hagan wrote in 1994:

> Kelman-man is a working man from the days when the working classes could find work. Though his characters might also be out of work, and often hate what they do, the 'out of work'

> culture is clearly something quite different from what people leaving school now in Glasgow's housing schemes could recognise. Kelman brings to his writing priorities from another time, a time when working-class people worried about trade unions and overtime, demarcation and the futility of the work that they did [...] The experience of people who never expect to work again, of people, indeed, who leave school never having known what it's like to expect a job – these are people for whom Kelman's workerist lament might seem idealistic and alien even in the modes of its regret.[4]

In fact Kelman's writing chronicles the transition from the one social mode to the other. Like the people he writes about, his fiction is caught between the working class of the past and the dispossession of O'Hagan's present, between hope and hopelessness. Consequently, Kelman himself is both revered and reviled in equal measure. Though he deals with the disappointment of traditional aims and ideals of working-class politics, such as the frustration of concepts of natural justice and progress, his vision is not a sentimental one. It is half-way to the point of admitting, as Irvine Welsh does in his writing, that these values are no longer relevant, and never were in any permanent or universally applicable way. But in charting this loss of faith Kelman does not represent the broad drama of industrial decline. Instead he takes a long look at the individual male psyche under the pressure of rapid and relentless social change, and considers individual failings as well as social ones.

In his fiction, Kelman regrets the loss of traditional working-class values, such as solidarity, loyalty and the supreme importance of family and community, but he is under no illusion of their ongoing significance. In his close analysis of the decline of masculine authority he focuses on the deterioration of these values, but, interestingly, he does not write about the traditional Clydeside 'hard man'. Instead his work engages with the decline of patriarchy that during the 1980s caused the social currency of the hard man role model to diminish. The aftermath of the degeneration

and breakdown of Scottish industry provides Kelman with a context of a particularly transitory period when new certainties are needed but nowhere to be found. As social reality is not experienced as discrete and easily defined eras but as a constant process of change, in this writing Kelman's world exists alongside O'Hagan's drug-ravaged post-industrial landscape, not in place of it.

While keeping his distance from traditional Clydesidism, Kelman is still keen to proclaim his affiliation with Glasgow; 'James Kelman lives and will probably die in Glasgow' is his introduction to his readers in some of his sixteen published books. He was born there in 1946 into a working-class family, and has written, 'I wanted to write as one of my own people, I wanted to write and remain a member of my own community.'[5] But to write from his own experience was not, he found, an easy mission. English literature to him was class-bound, where the narrative belonged to the elite and the working class were 'automatons, cardboard cut-outs' 'In the society that is English Literature' Kelman argues, 'some 80 to 85 percent of the population simply did not exist as ordinary human beings.'[6] As he cites inspiration from American (as well as European) writing, we can assume here he is talking broadly of a British English literature.

Kelman's aim in his writing is therefore to claim a state of humanity, or subjecthood, for the working class, of Glasgow and elsewhere. He has succeeded in this, producing difficult narratives that challenge traditional and reductive strategies of representation, and creating a distinctive, complex interiority in his characters. Liz Lochhead argues, 'He has put on a page people who have never been on a page before', and Janice Galloway concurs, 'At last they can be seen to have complexity and layer upon layer of complexity.'[7] But the quality of these represented lives, and the state of the human condition Kelman presents, has also been questioned.

Roderick Watson airs a common doubt when he writes, 'I am worried by the awful fixity of Kelman's characters, and while I admire their capacity to survive, or even embrace their condition, they seem to me to be trapped.'[8] Entrapment is indeed a common theme in Kelman's writing which seeks to illustrate how the pressure exerted by an adverse environment upon individuals acts against their attempts to be fully human. This constitutes an irresolvable tension, one that, as we shall see, revolves around the issue of masculinity.

This chapter examines three of Kelman's novels, each of which is focused on a central male consciousness. These narratives are variations on the theme of working-class male life, but common to all is a state of alienation. Robert Hines of *The Busconductor Hines* (1984) is a young married man with a small son. His wife Sandra works part-time in an office which helps to secure the family's precarious financial situation. Hines himself is lucky to have a job in the bleak Glasgow of the early 1980s, but he is in severe danger of losing it, not just through the imposition of one-man operated buses, but also through his own despair at the lack of meaning, money and humour his job affords him. He both fears and embraces as a way of life the insecurity of his position.

In *A Disaffection* (1989) Patrick Doyle is a working-class school teacher, a role Hines could have taken up if he too had gone to university. Patrick is distanced from his family and community by his education, being now a reluctant member of the educational establishment and the middle class. His educated, liberal views arouse derision and misunderstanding in his family, and his dissatisfaction perplexes his unemployed acquaintances. Patrick's severe sense of alienation is heightened by his yearning for an impossible liaison with Alison, a fellow teacher and a married

woman. His life is a state of inbetween and outsider status that he fails to resolve or accommodate himself to.

In *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) the central male is Sammy Samuels, who, having become involved in crime at an early age, has alternated between this and inevitable prison terms, and the temporary work of the building trade. Older than Hines or Patrick, he appears not to have any community or close family relations, his girlfriend Helen having left him, and his teenage son being a distant figure. In the opening of the novel, Sammy's taunting of the police results in a severe beating after which he loses his sight. He spends the rest of the narrative coping with his blindness, a condition which severs even more completely his connection with the world. While Sammy is certainly the most extreme in his alienation, all these men experience a sense of crisis in their lives beyond which they are unable to move.

All three novels share a prose style that privileges the interior life of the protagonists, a technique that suggests 'a first person novel written in the third person' as Kelman describes it.[9] In addition, there is also a common lack of plot and an absence of progression from beginning to middle and end, as the narratives focus on the minute details of everyday life and consciousness. Finally, all three novels give the impression of a common Kelmanesque world, through their Glaswegian location and the use of local speech. This last feature, an important aspect of Kelman's process of writing from his own experience and community, is also a notorious one, as illustrated by the controversy that dominated the awarding of the Booker Prize for fiction in 1994 to *How Late It Was, How Late* (see Introduction). However, Kelman's use of language serves to situate his men geographically and socially.

In his attempt to make his men subjects in their own right, there is an impulse in Kelman's work towards autonomy for his characters. The narratives focus on these

individuals and chart their attempts to be self-sufficient and independent, making coherent decisions from a rational understanding. As Willy Maley has written about Sammy's self-determination in *How Late*, 'This is possessive individualism, bourgeois individualism, taken to its extreme.'[10] But Kelman also wishes to show how these men are trapped by their environment, extra as they are to the requirements of late capitalism (even Patrick is being moved to another school, a transfer he cannot remember applying for), how little room they have for making informed decisions, and how they are oppressed by their meaningless lives. This situation constitutes a contradiction that defines the existential dilemma at the heart of Kelman's work and the lives of his men: how to assert selfhood in the face of the dehumanising pressure of social conditions. If these disempowered individuals blame the environment for their stasis they are denying their own agency and subjecthood; if they blame themselves they are exonerating and excusing the injustice and inequality of the social circumstances. This irresolvable tension characterises Kelman's work.

Such contradiction is at the heart of Kelman's creativity. He is acutely aware of the power of representation and the significance of the limitations and distortions of more conventionally structured fiction. As pointed out above, he describes English literature as making 'automatons and cardboard cut-outs' of those individuals other than the privileged, excluding them from the place in the narrative where 'thought and spiritual life exists'.[11] His intention is to create, therefore, a more accurate realism that more exactly represents his constituency, what he has called 'a level of pure objectivity' or 'facticity, or something like that'.[12] He also conceives of art being 'an aid to the purification of society', and expresses the need to establish a technique that leaves 'a particular, something concrete', something 'so straight black and white that no-one can deny it as *fact*'.[13] Such formulations suggest that the essence of reality

can be reflected in fiction, that there is such a thing as 'pure objectivity'. This is, of course, the premise of the bourgeois 'classic realism' that Kelman attacks for its partiality. When he says in an interview that 'to me, the very existence of a novel like *The Busconductor Hines* is like introducing a person to a critic', the conflation of representation with reality would seem to be complete.[14]

In his fiction Kelman works towards achieving this facticity. His aim is 'to obliterate the narrator, get rid of the artist, so all that's left is the story'.[15] And further:

> Getting rid of that standard third party narrative voice is getting rid of a whole value system. You have to start examining every term. The example I would use is the term 'beautiful', or 'pretty', or 'handsome', or 'ugly'. There is no possibility of using such a term in my work, not in the standard narrative, it's not a possibility. I can't even say 'fat' or 'thin' because to do that would be to assume a whole value system [...] Any colouring that's going on to try and get rid of. Whether it's from a feminist point, a heterosexual male point, a middle-class point, any point at all. Get rid of it. So that nobody else is going to be oppressed or colonised by it.[16]

Again the notion of essence is foregrounded, that language can somehow be 'pared down', stripped of its ornament and oppressive value judgements, so that only facts are communicated. The question is whether such a 'value-less' prose is possible, whether language can ever be as neutral as Kelman suggests. Though he appears to concede the point that language constructs reality in his association of 'colour' with 'value', he also clings to the view that at a certain level language conveys only facts and is therefore simply a direct reflection of reality. Similarly, the above quotation asserts that there is a neutral location or starting point from which to write, 'so that nobody is going to be oppressed'. But Kelman's locating of himself as a working-class writer, a position he constructs in his writing, creates its own values and its own exclusions, if not for Kelman, then for the reader. Any language will be filtered through the 'value system' of the reader who brings her/his own location and

experience to the act of reading. A neutral language necessitates a neutral reader, that is, one who is a blank slate, free of their own personal interpretations and influences.

In renouncing 'oppression and colonisation' Kelman characterises his writing as a discourse of freedom, but his attitude and method reverberate with a controlling impulse suggesting a desire to contain meaning and guide interpretation. It also suggests an attempt to offset what are stereotypically perceived as the feminine connotations of ornamentation that might disguise truth and create uncertainty. And in accordance with other cultural stereotypes of quiet action men and talkative passive women ('nothing is so unnatural as a talkative man or a quiet woman' runs a Scottish proverb), 'a man must not, then, cast doubt on his virility by being too articulate'.[17]

Conversely, in this strategy Kelman is also denying himself the opposite conclusion, that articulacy is also a sign of control and mastery. This claim for control is, however, more related to a bourgeois concern with wit or irony as a competitive tool amongst men, and as Marina Warner argues, 'Cunning intelligence has been superseded by force as the well-spring of male authority.'[18] From this perspective Kelman's antipathy towards articulate fluency and 'colour' can be read as a further rejection of effeminate bourgeois cultural forms, and it is therefore an affirmation of the correlation of his working-class men with a more masculine prose and, ultimately, a more authentic masculinity.

This argument may also provide a rationale for Kelman's liberal use of expletives, or 'bad' language, in his writing. For him swearing is just part of language: 'You see, when you use the term "swearing" it's a value; I don't accept that it is swearing at all you see.'[19] His swearing is an anti-establishment strategy designed to undermine hierarchies in discourse and language use.

> The very idea of 'bad language' is of course linked to a particular elitist theory of art. This theory of art, as Kelman has pointed out a hundred times, constructs a hierarchy of discourses

and values some ways of speaking above others. Kelman's use of Scots is tightly meshed with his use of swearing, and this allows his detractors to fasten upon the latter when their chief objection is to the former.[20]

But as well as suggesting a more authentically Scots working-class voice, such use of 'bad' language is also a masculine trait, as Peter Schwenger proposes when he cites research showing that women use less slang and obscenities than men. He also points out the greater tolerance of bad language in boys than girls: 'In some cases, a boy may be viewed as "cute" in his babyish attempts to wield the talismans of male power. For obscene words *are* talismans.'[21] The case can be made, then, that Kelman's prose, and his attitude to writing, is in some ways fundamentally masculinist.

Kelman's masculinism, as I describe it, is undermined, however, by his insistence that his writing is a process of negation. In explaining such a method he refers to Kafka, describing how the Czech writer 'fills the page with absences', an extremely political and subversive strategy by which, again, 'entire value systems can no longer be taken for granted, they become problematic, they are open to question'. He describes the process of art as 'working your way through every absence you can think of' to be left with something concrete, that is, as approaching your subject 'negatively'. 'Who is that woman! She isn't my wife. She isn't my fiancée. And she isn't my girlfriend. Nor my sister [...] She isn't big and she isn't wee. But she isn't really medium sized either', and so his illustration goes on in a jocular fashion in his essay 'Art and Value'.[22] By such a method a writer can avoid the value judgements attached to positive definition and therefore refuse to locate his subject in the social hierarchy. Of course, this process of negation in its refusal of singular definitions cannot help but undermine the controlling impulse described above by creating an aura of uncertainty that characterises Kelman's writing.

This 'negative' style is itself a contradiction of Kelman's aspirations of achieving something 'concrete'. But male control is particularly undermined in his narratives by the insecurities of the contemporary male life Kelman writes about. In 1980s Glasgow, traditional male roles were rendered uncertain by the decline of heavy industry. Masculinity itself is in question in such circumstances, and Kelman does not avoid his own interrogation of what it means to be a man. For him, men's dependence on traditional roles leaves them in crisis when those roles and their status wane, to the point that their very sense of self is at risk of collapsing. This is the point of Kelman's intervention: he does not represent men in control, but most definitely out of control. Regarding this, his strategy of eliminating the third party narrative voice is particularly significant. In its stead the text moves between the pronouns 'I', 'you' and 'he', in effect undermining the stability of any perspective, particularly the 'I'. From one paragraph or even one sentence to the next, Kelman's men move from subject of the text to object, then back to subject, in a constantly changing perspective. They are fragmenting and losing control before the eyes of the reader, unable to maintain a unified self or perspective on the world. They themselves suggest that the masculinised model of the centered, dominating subject is no longer effective. The protagonist in Kelman's short story 'A Situation' even concedes: 'as a masculine model my limitations were there, they had to be. Masculine models and limitations masculine models and limitations. These facets we are born with – faculties I mean – man. Man is born with definite limitations.'[23]

Paralleling the men's decline in Kelman's novels is the ascendancy of the younger women who are working outside the home, often when their husbands are not, and controlling family life. Later I will consider the position of these women, their increased authority and potential as breadwinners, as a masculinised one. In

contrast the men have nowhere to go and there is no compensation for the loss of male authority in Kelman's work. In fact, men occupy a feminised position of passivity and dependence. This is a reversal of traditional gender positions, but the question is whether this situation goes beyond the limitations of masculinised models to imagine different and more positive gender relations and social relations generally.

I: The Inward Flight of Masculinity

Kelman's work considers the effects of industrial collapse on masculinity. Most significantly, traditional and stereotypical working-class labour does not feature in Kelman's fiction, and unemployment is a constant threat. As a consequence, the kind of community brought into being and sustained by the heavy industries is absent, dispersed and atomised, a state signalled by Kelman's men being marginalised, or at least alienated and feeling not quite 'at home' in their locale. Hines is of course a busconductor, a job that involves repetition rather than production. He is a 'modern Charon whose passengers do not cross to the other side, but simply cross and recross the empty and meaningless spaces of the city'.[24] The existential isolation of the transport worker is about to be amplified by the imposition of one-man buses, and as Hines cannot drive he is in imminent danger of losing his job. The job satisfaction is, in any case, non-existent as more often than not Hines attracts the abuse of the travelling public, taking the blame for the failures of the transport system.

Patrick Doyle experiences similar alienation. Even though he has crossed the 'class line' to become a teacher, a 'good job', for him there is only conflict with his colleagues. And he is also the target of public criticism of the education system, for 'the mollycoddling of today's schoolweans in comparison to those sterling youngsters of yesteryear' (*AD* 112). Both Hines and Doyle are denied the meaning and the heroic physical toil of industrial labour, and they are often perceived as failures and

deprived of the respect of the community. These jobs are like a prison sentence to be endured. For Sammy of *How Late* imprisonment has been a reality of his life of crime, but even he is deserted by his former colleagues, the most isolated of all Kelman's protagonists. The disappointment of these men at their own ineffectuality is itself a palpable constriction on their lives, reinforcing their lack of control and lack of masculine status.

In these novels, the family is a place of conflict too, and mirrors the disintegration of the community. Hines, for instance, finds that the traditional barrier for men between domestic life and public life or job is more and more eroded by his increased family responsibilities due to Sandra's work and rising employment prospects. This causes tension between them as his own prospects decline. The family is also a site of conflict between the generations in Kelman's writing, usually signalled by the schism between father and son. In both *The Busconductor Hines* and *A Disaffection* a visit to the parental home is characterised by discomfort, argument and the confronting of generational differences. Mothers stand as intermediaries, impotent in a weary disappointment that only produces feelings of guilt:

> Your maw's right, said Mr Doyle. The same with bringing back the belt, you've got to be different there too.
>
> Tch da.
>
> Nay tch da about it – you've aye been against the belt. But at least the weans'll show some damn respect. And you canni deny it.
>
> Aye I can.
>
> What? Naw you canni. You canni deny it.
>
> Of course I can, I can deny anything I like and I'm denying that [...]
>
> Mrs Doyle sniffed slightly: Yous'll end up arguing. (*AD* 113)

The transmission of manly attributes from father to son has broken down in these scenes, a process that is symbolic of the breakdown of the community. Patrick 'loves

his da, he really does. It's just that fucking hopeless reactionariness. How do ye pierce it? It's a fucking tortoiseshell' (*AD* 119). That masculine hardness has become a confinement and barrier that the younger man finds impossible to breach. Patrick is without such a shell, but as yet is finding it difficult to cope with his increased vulnerability. This is a potent difference between the men and poignantly symbolic of the transitions taking place.

Families only achieve peace through a nostalgic remembrance of the past. During Hines's visit to his mother a tense moment is dissipated by a particular memory of his grandfather: 'He chuckled. Heh! mind how granpa used to hide behind the door and fling his bunnet at us! [...] She had no option but to laugh in the most genuine of manners [...] she added, An awful sense of humour he had – a real Highlander' (*BH* 136-7). The sense of nostalgia for a past era is heightened by the characterisation of the grandfather as a 'Highlander'. For Doyle too his visit ends in 'just watching television and yapping about old things from the past' (*AD* 121). These moments, in their reference to something irrecoverable, provide only fleeting and transient comfort and identification.

Estranged relations and isolated individuals are testimony to a disappearing community, an absence in these men's lives. Related to this is an increased uncertainty in their sense of self as traditional roles give way to anonymous wage earning and little else. These narratives painfully demonstrate not the dependence of action on identity, but of identity on action as in the existential assertion that existence precedes being or essence. They give the lie to individual choice and ability; you are what you do, and what you do is limited to the ever restricting parameters of what is available. For Hines it is almost as though the job is doing him, not Hines doing the job. He is always wearing his uniform, and therefore is always related to as a

busman; he is a function of the job. Similarly with Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection*, part of his problem is 'that he actually looks like a teacher and he dresses like a teacher and he even speaks like a fucking teacher as well' (*AD* 331). And even as a teacher his agenda is dictated to him, not by him.

The available roles limit choices and produce feelings of individual disempowerment and even entrapment. A curtailed freedom is certainly suggested in the world of the busconductor, with its authoritarian hierarchy, surveillance by inspectors, bookings, fines, strictly imposed routine and last name relations. But it is not only jobs that are subjected to such controls. A pervading atmosphere of regulation and scrutiny is illustrated by the opening of *How Late* where Sammy wakes up on the street after a night of drinking to find a group of businessmen tourists being shown around the city, 'courtesy of the town council promotions office' (*HL* 2). But they soon transform into the familiar figures of policemen, 'sodjers, fucking bastards, ye could smell it; even without the uniforms' (*HL* 3). The police force here is a sinister order of surveillance and entrapment, disguised (businessmen and policemen in social communion as guardians of a particular order), ubiquitous, and threatening, leaving us with the impression of a community characterised by paranoia, alienation and dissimulation.

There is a containment of choice, action and agency in the world of Kelman's novels. The traditional social roles and jobs are, of course, just as limiting for the individual, but they are founded on notions of progress and post-war illusions of security and permanence, and a gender hierarchy that at least provides men with a status and authority they are reluctant to lose. With the current insecurity, the loss of this certainty reveals the alienating organisation of social relations in which people are like objects, dispensable and replaceable in the perpetuation of an exploitative system.

In the face of these social pressures of objectification there is in Kelman's work a flight inwards to the interior life of the individual.

Regarding such a strategy, Peter Middleton for one has considered the difficulty of an inward gaze for men, asserting 'masculinity has a vested interest in blocking unheroic, masculine self-analysis', a process which necessitates reflection on subjectivity and therefore on the nature and particularity of masculinity itself. Middleton asserts:

> [Men] lack a language for such reflection. Masculine bias in many existing concepts of subjectivity and power is an obstacle to such gender reflection. Men after all have written plenty about their subjectivity and power, but they have constantly universalized it at the same time and assumed that the rationality of their approach was the sum total of rationality. Universality and rationalism were built into these concepts to avoid such disturbing self-examination by men.[25]

In the face of these obstacles Kelman's literary strategies aspire to establish and examine the complex subjecthood of his men, specifically freeing them from the entrapment of the traditional hierarchies of fiction. These novels are written from the perspective of the men themselves, foregrounding their interior lives. But this does not mean that Kelman's men possess what Middleton calls 'self-clarity', a self-awareness that he finds in the work of male writers of the high modernist period, for example. 'The women writers [such as Dorothy Richardson and Virginia Woolf] are much more flexible in their representation of self-consciousness. For the men there is a kind of all or nothing quality, either complete rational clarity or dark unconscious groping.'[26] In Kelman's novels inward reflection is not 'darkly unconscious', but self-clarity is complicated by the lack of a stable point of view; his stated intention, however, is to use this strategy in order to undermine the 'standard third party', usually the standard English, narrative. The third person narrative voice merges into a

reflective third person voice and direct interior monologue: 'He prepared a pot of tea, sat down on his chair, hands in his trouser pockets and his shoulders hunched. He was beginning to feel very tired indeed. That coupled with the cold he was probably better off going to bed. Fuck the tea' (*AD* 5). This free-flow of perspectives, devoid of any quotation marks, allows the Glasgwegian accent to permeate the whole text, not just the speech of the characters. There is what Cairns Craig describes as 'a linguistic equality between speech and narration'.[27]

Kelman calls this, in reference to *Hines*, a 'first person narrative written in the third person'. But why not, then, simply use the 'I' voice? One reason is his commitment to realism, but an existential realism. From a viewpoint that understands existence to precede being in the Sartrean sense, the self is not isolated and self-sufficient but in relation with others. The relations, not the self, are the source of action and meaning. In order to create a sense of this dialectical relation an external perspective of the character is called for as well as an internal one, and the third person pronoun produces this effect. The speed of the narrative changes, between the 'I' and the 'he', between the subjective and objective viewpoints, creates an alternating perspective of the character of himself, reflecting his own relationship with the world as both subject and object, controller and controlled. The antagonism of the social relations in which these men are embedded is shown to play a vital part in their make up and their existential dilemmas. And at the same time their sense of self is strong enough to resist these pressures and retain a level of independence. There is in fact a kind of dialogue occurring in the text, but it is an indefinable one (as regards who is talking to whom, if anyone). As Kelman himself says in reference to *Hines*:

> I can't really describe it as an interior monologue, nor is it a dialogue, because either the character could be schizophrenic, or else the narrative voice could be schizophrenic, or else the

narrator ... [*sic*] contained in the narrative voice is a dialogue between narrator and central character. And that isn't happening either.[28]

The 'dialogue' that is Kelman's prose captures a mode of existence and consciousness that is not entirely possible with the use of only the 'I' voice. In this way too the reader's sympathy is kept at bay, and s/he is not able to simply and sentimentally identify with these often pathetic characters. A more critical distance is maintained through which to analyse the circumstances represented.

For Craig, Kelman's dialogic style is a potential liberation, a signal of the complexity of the self. These texts represent 'an inner dialogue of competing voices and languages, a heterocentric space in which the self is defined not by its unity but by its multiplicity [...] The "self as other" has been internalised as an other self, other selves'. For Craig, Kelman's men 'are the site in which the community's voices happen, and in their happening constitute the "I" which it is the novel's business to narrate'.[29] Through such an interpretation it is possible to see Kelman's novels as undermining the singularity of the masculinised subject, as creating the possibility of imagining an escape from Cartesian isolation and establishing the importance of relations. However, this model of the self continues to be problematic as it is still only a partial description of both the self and the community. If this is not one man talking to himself (which in the popular imagination indicates 'madness') but an 'inner dialogue of competing voices' where 'the community's voices happen', then it is a dialogue between men only. Women play no part here, it is men talking amongst themselves, a community of men. After all, this continues to be a masculinised model of the self.

In addition, the internal heterogeneity of Kelman's men does not appear to affect their feelings of social isolation and alienation. On the face of things, this multiplicity is debilitating as the 'true complexity' of the self undermines the ability to

communicate, to function and to make decisions. The 'competing voices' create uncertainty, and not only in the fact that the men clearly contradict themselves. At times, for example, it is simply not clear whether characters are speaking or thinking, a situation referred to by Hines himself: 'Had he spoken aloud there! Christ sake, maybe he was no longer able to tell when he was speaking or thinking!' (*BH* 135). Such uncertainty often gives way to paranoia, a predicament which is developed in these three novels. Hines fantasises about surveillance ('We have this fantasy coming through on the line sir should we tape it and hold it against him or what' (*BH* 113)). Meanwhile Patrick's paranoid suspicions concern his joining 'the other side'; the fact that he has become surveyor rather than surveyed, one who curtails freedom in his job of fencing in the children 'at the behest of the government' (*AD* 25). But still for him the police seem to be at all the strategic places: outside school, 'appearing at the very thought of insurrection' (*AD* 336), in order to keep Patrick himself in line. For Sammy, of course, surveillance and entrapment is a reality and not just a paranoid fantasy when he is arrested in his own home.

There is an increasing loss of independence and a minimalising of room for action in these novels. The lack of an identifiable enemy (the 'other side', the 'surveyors') creates a threatening atmosphere of uncertainty, undermining strategies of resistance, for it is difficult to establish yourself in opposition to your enemy, real or imagined, when you are unable to define them. This is the situation of Kelman's men, embedded as they are in adverse circumstances, antagonistic towards everyone around them. It is a debilitating situation which leaves them feeling helpless and often distressed. At one point Sammy gives way to his frustration: 'He had fucking reached it now man the fucking dregs man the pits, the fucking black fucking

limboland, purgatory; that's what it was like, purgatory, where all ye can do is think' (*HL* 172). If the thinking subject is purgatory, there must be an alternative.

II: Refiguring Male Identity

Kelman redraws male identity in these novels. Pathetic, helpless and distressed, his protagonists' uncertainty puts their masculinity into question. This representation affronts traditional notions of maleness by insisting on the men's lack of control. Their uncertainty is produced by both the structure and language of the narratives, and particularly through Kelman's 'negative' style. In accordance with the existential critique of the essentialised subject and the notion of a 'human nature', Kelman's prose creates the sense of a void or groundlessness as the basis of the self and identity. The working through of absences fails to reveal something concrete, and the process destabilises the foundations of self-definition for his characters, especially regarding masculinity.

Kelman's men are suspended between certainties, trapped in contradiction. This is a structural feature of the novels which is most prominent in *How Late* where Sammy often contradicts himself, stating something then undermining that statement in the next sentence or paragraph:

> A true story that. According to the guy that telt it to Sammy. Mind you he once telt it to a woman and it annoyed her to fuck, she thought it was a load of bullshit, she thought he was trying to confuse her, some weird way of getting off with her, getting her mixed up between their story and his christ how fucking crazy can ye get; women [...]
> whatever. Mind you the woman was maybe right cause Sammy had added in a wee bit of his own when he telt it to her [...] So she was probably right, he probably was trying to get off with her. (*HL* 17)

Sammy's unreliability is signalled from the first page when he says his shoes have been stolen; on page 247 he admits 'Nay cunt stole his shoes'. Sometimes

communication itself contradicts its own intention. Sammy tells his girlfriend Helen of his criminal past in order to prove that he has changed and is ready to make a future with her. But she mistakes his confession for the boasting of a career criminal and a warning for the future.

> But telling it to Helen it sounded worse than stupit. As soon as he finished he knew something was wrong. Cause she just lay there, no moving a muscle [...] what she was thinking had fuck all to do with him, cause she hadnay understood, he hadnay got it across, whatever the fuck, he hadnay said it right. (*HL* 139)

The unreliability of the narrator is matched by the unreliability of language as one thing is intended and another is communicated. In this instance, the original intention is itself further contradicted by the details that seep out to the reader of Sammy's criminal activity during the few days prior to the opening of the novel. Meaning is unstable here, liable to change at any moment. Through such contradiction Kelman's men, if not inhabiting the gap between meanings, are constantly in motion between them, suspended and denied stability.

These contradictions create the effect of confining the texts to a limited space and a cyclical time. They shift the attention of the reader back to the initial premise in order to reconsider the situation, for instance in the case of Sammy's shoes. In these reversals the narrative repeatedly covers the same textual space. Time becomes problematical in this repetition because the cycle promotes stasis, but the material covered is always slightly changed, different. First of all, we believe Sammy's shoes were stolen; then after numerous other references to them, he admits that they were not. This is disorientating for the reader. Change is not a function of time, more a function of the instability of the space covered by the text in its toing and froing. This technique overlays versions of an event so that the result is a blurred, unresolved image, an apposite description of the novels themselves. In this way the uncertainty

of the here and now seems to be part of Kelman's 'facticity', the fact being there are only fictions. (Here I am reminded of his assertion elsewhere that 'stories cannot be true and they cannot be false: they are fictions [...] they just exist'.[30]) Even everyday events are grounded in uncertainty in these narratives.

This limiting of the textual space, the cyclical stasis, is heightened by the use of repetition which is a structural principle of the narratives. Repeated acts create a habitual mode of existence that is difficult if not impossible to escape. The constant rolling and smoking of cigarettes is one such minutely observed performance that is present in most of Kelman's fiction. Hines's busconducting job, Pat's car journeys and Sammy's interviews and repeated arrests reiterate this on a day-to-day level. Entrapment is emphasised in repeated themes and resolutions gone over again and again, words used repeatedly in spirals of inescapable patterns:

> Aw christ he was tired. How the hell could he no just drop off! just fucking drop off. It was his back, it was sore, he couldnay lie on his front cause of the bracelets and he couldnay get comfy he just couldnay get fucking comfy, know what I'm talking about fucking comfy, comfy fucking comfy he was fucking fuckt man he was fuckt, that's what he was, fuckt, fucking bastarn good night, good fucking night, if he could sleep, if he could just sleep; but how the fuck can ye sleep if ye cannay get comfy? It's a straight question. (*HL* 175)

This is a straight question to a convoluted existence. Not only are Kelman's men suspended in the uncertainty of contradiction, they are also contained and trapped in an existential moment from which there appears to be no progression as time has become irrelevant. They are not in control of their lives or their selves. Kelman's prose enacts for us the pressures of containment and stasis that work to curtail agency and make an object of an individual.

In relation to this objectification, an obsession with death threads through the novels, haunting these insecure men. Death is, of course, the ultimate object status,

and its language laces the texts as the men consider their status and their future. Hines sums up this morbid state of mind as he considers buying a gun: 'He is dependent. He is a thing that comes to life under certain conditions for if they do not obtain then he is to be being false i.e. unalive. He would be an unalive bastard, for whom death is the probable next step' (*BH* 100). Elsewhere Hines contemplates 'whether the language of death is the language of the unalive' (*BH* 87). If he, and Kelman's men generally, are false and 'unalive', then they are suspended between categories and beyond binary definition, not exactly alive in the fullest sense of the term, and not dead either, a stasis that denies them subjecthood.

Patrick Doyle has similar doubts about the validity and value of his own existence. 'How on earth could the kids ever trust any teacher who persisted in regarding himself as a dead man? A dead man? Where did that come from?' (*AD* 124) But later he reconsiders this judgement: 'How come he was not able to just be dead like everybody else. Everybody else was dead' (*AD* 216). This is an interesting switch because it points to both the self and others as sources of containment, as the place of death. Escape appears impossible. There is a struggle, however, against the containment of this death-in-life, even if this is expressed as a desire for actual death in the material world.

Patrick, like Hines, contemplates suicide: 'All he sought was death. Death: purely and simple: simply and pure' (*AD* 216). But he is frustrated in this desire, trapped and suspended in life. Though here he 'sought death', early on in the novel 'What he sought was the doing, the act' (*AD* 10). This desire to act is linked to the pipes he has found, pieces of electrician's piping he intends playing music on. By this ironic subversion of the traditional bagpipes, Patrick suggests that that icon of nostalgic tartanry may be replaced by a couple of functional workmen's tubes which

might better suit his needs. Indeed they initially inspire him to 'concentrate solely upon the things of genuine value, things of a genuine authenticity, of a genuine physicality' (*AD* 10). But later he finds that when he tries to play them his mind wanders and he cannot help noticing peripheral details like a threadbare patch on the carpet, 'it was almost a hole it was so thin' (*AD* 217). His mind returns to emptiness rather than the genuine physicality he sought earlier, an echo of his desire for oblivion expressed shortly before. So between a desire for 'doing' and a desire for death, or in Sartrean language, between becoming and death, the text has trapped him. Like Hines, Patrick is trapped in being, but 'wanting that becoming' (*BH* 98).

The uncertainty of this state is summed up by Hines: 'And yet the prevailing climate is not only unsound it is stabley so' (*BH* 98). These men are in between classes, communities, families, jobs, in possession of insecure homes and cars. Their lives are in suspension when 'in betweens no longer exist in any scheme of the world that Hines, that he might be said to be participating within, in any intentional sense' (*BH* 99). They inhabit a void, then, a non-existent place in the grand scheme of things, and without a secure foundation they are uncertain of everything that defines their identity, particularly their masculinity.

The discomforting character of this personal vacuum is in accordance with Kelman's perception of the potential horror of everyday life: 'All you've got to do is follow some people around and look at their existence for 24 hours, and it will be horror. It will just be horror.'[31] This description echoes an existential sensibility that conceives of an inherently meaningless or absurd world where there is 'impossibility of purposeful action' and 'paralysis of human aspiration'.[32] The Sartrean assertion of subjecthood roughly translates as follows:

> We can choose either to abandon ourselves to the prevailing state of affairs, passively conforming to the status quo and reducing ourselves to the status of a mere object among

objects. Or we can choose to transcend what is given by projecting ourselves authentically towards a new horizon of possibility. Either way, we are always choosing what we are, and are never able not to choose.[33]

That is, we are always choosing to be either subjects or objects, and action signifies subjecthood.

Freedom of choice leading to decisive action is a rare occurrence in Kelman's fiction. Not only does the post-industrial environment severely limit choice, but the actions of the men themselves do not appear to widen their horizons. They are struggling for subjectivity in the midst of entrapment, but often they only bring further containment on themselves. For example, decisive actions can lead to capture or potential capture by institutions that act as agencies of constraint. Hines is living under the threat of the inactivity of the dole queue if he loses his job, and this is an increasing possibility because of his bad timekeeping. When he receives a 'line', an order to go to head office for disciplinary action regarding his timekeeping, and he refuses to go, he is fully aware he is putting his job in jeopardy. Hines's objection is that he will not be paid for the time it will take to do this. He does not refuse directly but asserts that 'what I don't understand is how it's to be accomplished' (*BH* 184). This assertion that something cannot be done is the negative of a decision. Hines is trapped into a refusal to undertake an action that he perceives will encroach on his freedom. This inability to act is experienced by Hines as a negative action, reflecting on himself, 'when all's said and done he is a negation. Being a negation is peculiar' (*BH* 202). Eventually, even after a vote by his fellow workers to strike in support of him, he resigns in the face of the intransigence of the bosses. This is an action which certainly returns him to the mind-numbing inactivity of the dole. But, interestingly, it will also make him primary carer of his young son as Sandra will now work full-time in her office job.

The most vivid example of decisive action leading to containment is Sammy punching a policeman near the opening of *How Late*. 'But he had decided. Right there and then. It was here he made the decision' (*HL* 3). First he 'lays into' the policemen in 'civvies', harassing them for money and finally provoking them to move him on. '[T]hen his hand was on Sammy's right shoulder and Sammy let him have it, a beautiful left cross man he fucking onered him one, right on the side of the jaw, and his fucking hand, it felt like he'd broke it' (*HL* 5). In return the police severely assault him and arrest him, and Sammy ends up incarcerated. Decisive action here, if momentarily liberating or exhilarating, is ultimately disempowering and self-destructive. This contradiction further illustrates the irresolvable tension in these texts which results from Kelman placing assertions of subjectivity side by side with the pressures of objectification.

In response to this tension and in the face of the self-destructive nature of such acts, Geoff Gilbert perceives a potential for resistance. In an essay on oppositional textual strategies in Kelman, Gilbert states that a characteristic of his writing is a 'movement, where a recognition of the absolute negligibility of certain agents in the face of the reproduction of social structures is recuperated as a resistant aesthetic autonomy'.[34] Sammy's punch is one such occasion. With the punch, it is Sammy himself who initiates the sequence of events that leads to his beating by the police and his blindness. Gilbert characterises this event as one of 'the actions of a "low type" that make "nothing" happen, but which produce an unstable but predictable intensification of affect around the unveiling of power'.[35] The reaction of the police to Sammy's punch is certainly an exposure of a balance of power. Sammy's action is inappropriate and out of context; it is better suited to a boxing match ('a beautiful left cross') where it can be contained and controlled. From this perspective, the punch

may be a desperate reference to the lost masculinity which is now enclosed in the boxing ring. The reaction of the police is also outside of their remit, the equivalent of using the force of a sledgehammer to crack a nut. Their power to contain far outweighs Sammy's momentary escape of containment. The certainty that they will not be accused or punished for this action ensures that 'nothing' will come of it.

The significance of an action of this kind is that it maintains differences between individuals and is a sign that registers that difference. Sammy is constructed as a criminal by figures of authority in the novel, and this opinion is reflected in the reactions of critics who, in reviews of *How Late*, often obscured Sammy's full humanity with labels like 'drunk', 'ex-prisoner' and 'ex-con'. His punch justifies his being written off by a 'moral majority', his criminal status. But simultaneously it is an act that insists on marking Sammy's difference from those for whom his status is less than fully human. This is also one purpose of Kelman's prolific use of 'bad' language in his work. It is an anti-elitist gesture that differentiates his men from the establishment. 'Dont use the word "cunts" again, it doesnay fit in the computer' (*HL* 160) Sammy is warned by the interviewing police officer, and Ally the self-styled rep tells him 'ye're gony have to watch yer language [...] it's just it's a good habit to get into for official purposes' (*HL* 238). As Gilbert points out, 'language is not being used to communicate here, but rather takes part in a contest of opposed positions.'[36]

Significantly, these oppositional actions also register a gender difference for these men, in effect enhancing their masculinity. It is certainly true that, in line with Peter Schwenger's assertions, women in Kelman's writing do not usually swear, and even take offence to crude language. Alison winces when Doyle uses the word 'arse': 'it was the word of course, arse, she didnt like it and hadni been able to cope when he had said it' (*AD* 146). The bad language and the violence of actions like Sammy's

punch are also, stereotypically, behaviours associated with the working class, suggesting a more authentic masculinity. As Maley stresses, 'swearing is the phatic communion of the factory, the barracks, the pub, the street.'[37] And, as argued by Whyte, a more authentic masculinity also suggests a more authentic Scottishness. Though it is doubtful that this is an effect sought after by Kelman, this emphasising of male traits does, according to Whyte's argument, enhance the conjunction of masculinity and Scottishness.[38]

There are moments in these novels when the men's actions can be construed as a last resort to traditionally conceived masculine behaviour. The aggression of the boxing ring context of Sammy's punch is one of these. Accusations of blatant sexism are also levelled at Kelman, but these are often exaggerated. In an essay on *Hines* Neil McMillan discusses the opening of that novel where Sandra is bathing in a baby bath in the living room. McMillan writes that 'Hines enjoys the spectacle of Sandra bathing – a familiar scene of male voyeurism and female objectification' amounting to a 'narrative privileging of a heterosexual masculine perspective which produces women as erotic spectacle'.[39] Though this scene may be interpreted as an attempt to set up these relations, the connotations are, I would argue, more complex. Far from being a typical erotic spectacle, the fact that Sandra is bathing in a plastic baby bath seems more likely to infantilise her, her helplessness exacerbated by Hines being the one to fill the bath with water from the heavy soup-pot that has boiled on the stove. But the obvious poverty, as well as the lack of privacy, illustrated by this bathing arrangement is the cause of the tension in the scene, just as it is responsible for their awkward relationship throughout the novel. Hines attempts to diffuse the situation: 'Heh, what about the time my knees got stuck? Eh! Thought you were going to have

to send for the Fire Brigade or something' (*BH* 10). He fails, and only emphasises his own helplessness.

As diversions to a sexist mind-set, a last resort to traditional acts of male dominance, these scenes do not succeed but often lead instead to further entrapment. If actions like Sammy's punch do signal a resistant aesthetic autonomy as Gilbert argues, then they are only signifiers of rebellion, symbolic of an impossible and inescapable situation. In their recalling of traditional masculine traits, these moments, especially that punch, may be significant in Ben Knights's terms when he writes that, in reference to men's narratives, 'so much of the weight of the available narrative stock concerns male success, triumph, or triumph's counterpart, glorious defeat'.[40] Arguably, then, these moments are attempts to gain such a 'glorious defeat', especially as the men here are not only resisting the repressive establishment, but also the demise of their masculine power. These are moments of male defiance, but in Kelman's narratives they inevitably fail to provide glory and to aggrandize these defeated characters.

The failure of these men to successfully embody a traditional masculinity is played out through a process of shaming, involving the recognition that they are less than they thought they were. This is more than an acknowledgement of weakness, and is in fact a reminder of an integral aspect of Sartre's conceptualisation of the subject in his famous keyhole scenario: if I am unexpectedly apprehended spying at a keyhole trying to overhear or see what is happening in the room I feel shame at being caught. 'Shame [...] is shame of *self*; it is the recognition of the fact that I am indeed that object which the Other is looking at and judging.'[41] The power of the gaze is the power to objectify, and this is the process Sammy describes in a reconstruction of a moment from childhood:

> What did it matter but what did it matter; cunts looking at ye. Who gives a fuck. Just sometimes they bore their way in, some of them do anyway; they seem able to give ye a look that's more than a look: it's like when ye're a wean at school and there's this auld woman teacher who takes it serious even when you and the wee muckers are having a laugh and cracking jokes behind her back and suddenly she looks straight at ye and ye can tell she knows the score [...] The jokes dont sound funny any longer. The auld bastard, she's fucked ye man. With one look. That's how easy you are. And ye see the truth then about yerself. Ye see how ye're fixed forever [...] ye're just a wee fucking coward, trying to take the piss out an auld woman man pathetic, fucking pathetic. (*HL* 12)

The gaze of a teacher 'fixes' Sammy as a coward, a shaming moment from which he still feels the heat.

Feminist film studies has been foremost in analysing the gaze and its relation with subjecthood. For example, E. Anne Kaplan writes, 'Our culture is deeply committed to clearly demarcated sex differences, called masculine and feminine, that revolve on, first, a complex gaze-apparatus; and, second, dominance-submission patterns'.[42] Traditionally men as bearers of the gaze have used this power to dominate and objectify women. In Kelman's work this power relation is problematised and often reversed, as with Sammy above; men are objects of the gaze, at times objects of the gaze of women. One of the advantages that Sammy tries to make of his blindness is that he 'wouldnay see cunts looking at him' (*HL* 12); he can resist that objectifying look. But at the same time it deprives him of the gaze and the status it confers. In the light of this power relation he is now in the feminine position, a feminisation which in Kelman's writing indicates a general helplessness in his men. It is a patriarchal point of view that equates femininity with weakness, and Kelman would seem to be writing from this very position when he constructs a feminised status for his men, a context that necessarily has implications for women.

III: Flight to the Feminine

From a traditional and masculinist viewpoint, there are several general qualities that characterise femininity, such as weakness, dependency, passivity, and, most importantly, a less rational and more emotional way of thinking and dealing with reality. A breakdown in an individual's rational capacities, of which hysteria might be one instance, is often characterised as a feminine 'weakness' of mind. It is significant that the men in these narratives all feel unable to cope with life and close to psychological breakdown at some stage, a situation that puts into question their capacity for control. This instability often takes the form of personal fragmentation:

> I am a likeable personality. If you are not an unlikeable personality why then, we may converse. Hullo back. I am your alter ego. Alter alteris masculine. When your personality splits I am the back end. I am the ugly bit, the counterforce. In order to release me as a pleasantly docile manifestation you have to resort to instruments of wind – pipes can suffice. What they do they release me, and I am another likeable personality. Thus we have us two and the ugly one. Then as well as you get this other yin, me; I creep in, I creep in while yous all sit about gabbing in that friendly getting-to-know-ye type of way; I creep in and edge closer and closer till I'm so much part of the company you didnt notice my absence earlier, that a gap had existed, that it has now been filled. (*AD* 210)

This sinister passage from *A Disaffection* illustrates Patrick's increasing lack of equilibrium. This is signalled in a more allusive way by his obsession with the eighteenth-century Spanish painter Goya, particularly his 'Black Paintings', pictures Goya painted on the walls of a darkened room in his house depicting grotesque and monstrous scenes such as Cronos eating his children. These paintings were executed when Goya was an old man and struggling with depression and mental instability. They are treasured in the Western art tradition as intimate portraits of an unsound and anguished mind. Patrick's personal identification with the Goya of this period, and his preoccupation with his fate and that of the tragic poet Hölderlin from the same era

who also suffered mental breakdown, is an indication of Patrick's own fragile state and his fears concerning his own sanity and future.

The inner fragmentation of Kelman's men sometimes suggests a schizoid splitting of identity: 'Of course, shouted a voice. Whose fucking voice was it. Funny how voices come along and shout, just as if they were something or other, knowledgeable fucking parties' (*BH* 164). But more often their desperation simply reduces them to tears, a traditionally feminine expression of emotion and loss of self-control: 'He sat down on the armchair and started to greet. It was a strange thing. His face didnt alter and nor did his eyes redden and he stopped it right away' (*BH* 163). Even as a stunted and unsatisfying act, crying consolidates the men's emasculation and helplessness. This conjunction of male breakdown and weeping is a feature of other Scottish narratives from the period.

Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine* (1984) chronicles the breakdown of Jock McLeish. He is a man who has obsessively formed his identity around being in control of surveillance, in his job installing and maintaining surveillance equipment, and in his pornographic fantasies, starring a character called Janine, which run like films in his head of which he is the director. But this control is slipping due to his alcoholism which is exposing and undoing the falsely constructed nature of his life. The boundaries between the surveyed and the surveyor become blurred until it is obvious, and Jock admits, that Janine is a version of himself: 'I did not notice that this was the story of my own life. I avoided doing so by insisting on the *femaleness* of the main character.'[43] Though the action in Jock's fantasies never succeeds in being brought to a climax, the passive Janine does suffer humiliation and violence, and so through this oblique parallel between himself and Janine, Jock's masculinity is severely compromised. This revelation sheds light on his disintegrating state of mind, and he

takes an overdose of painkillers, but the alcohol he has drunk makes him sick. The text represents Jock's complete breakdown through the formal disintegration of the novel. At several points the narrative dissolves into blank pages (187-190), or a diversity of type faces occupying different spaces on the page (178-180), or half a page of upside down 'Y's (117). The final stage is represented by the word 'Ach' placed in a column down the centre of three pages after which Jock concludes: 'Dry this tearwet face on corner of flannel sheet. Thus. I feel different. A new man? Not exactly the same man anyway. What is this queer slight bright fluttering sensation as if a thing weighted down for a long time was released and starting, a little, to stir?'[44] Jock is weeping. His breakdown is overcome finally by the salvation of crying.

Ron Butlin's novel *The Sound of my Voice* (1987) is another Scottish novel of the period which repeats this formula of the breakdown of rationality followed by the warm reconstruction of tears. Here the narrator/protagonist signifies his split self by his inability to use the first person 'I' in reference to himself: he always uses 'you'. The novel opens, 'You were at a party when your father died – and immediately you were told, a miracle happened', and it proceeds in the same way.[45] The cause of the fragmented identity is the man's bullying father and a childhood characterised by a lack of affection: 'You longed to pull all the world's darkness into yourself and to hide the unbearable shame he had thrust there.' A unified facade is maintained once again through a drink habit which has turned into chronic alcoholism in adult life. And this novel too ends in tears: 'When the car comes to a halt on the hard shoulder you are weeping uncontrollably. Your tears – and mine.'[46] The final statement signifies an acceptance of self long made impossible by a loveless upbringing.

In both Butlin and Gray crying signifies salvation, a reinstated unity of identity. It indicates that the men are finally acknowledging their 'feminine side' and this

grants them the wholeness they have been missing, a reunion with the 'queer slight bright fluttering sensation [...] weighted down for too long'. Crying signals a connection between rationality and emotion, the two estranged parts of the male self. The reasoning behind such a move is the conception of men and women, masculinity and femininity, as complements of each other. Shameful male crying becomes liberation for these men, a giving in to emotion and their own inherent femininity. Such emotional indulgence reflects a deep concern of the men's movement, the loose collectivity of writers and activists that have engaged with the reassessment of masculinity since the 1980s.[47] Much of this thought has emphasised the part played by the suppression of emotion in asserting masculinity, and stresses the importance for men of becoming emotionally 'literate' and expressive.

This emphasis has itself been criticised by other commentators who find its tone of 'piety' exasperating, and fear that there is 'a risk that the only political action that results will be wholly personal'.[48] Lynne Segal echoes these misgivings about the deeper significance of the new male emotionalism when she writes, 'It is this new diversity in masculine styles and behaviour that has suggested to many feminists that men are simply superficially accommodating to new times in new ways.'[49] Besides showing that men can 'have it all', both the power of masculinity and the vulnerability of femininity, this situation raises the question of how this male liberation affects power relations generally.

It is significant that Kelman's men do not experience such dramatic life-changes through their tearful moments, demonstrating in this a lack of conviction in notions of gender complementarity. There are no simple routes to salvation here and these texts uphold similar reservations regarding the feminisation of these men. Knights points to this when he explains Hines's position as a type of 'spoiled male adult child'. In

his helplessness and dependency, Hines 'has usurped a conventionally feminine position' as a way of dealing with his own powerlessness. But, significantly, Knights still understands Hines in terms of a masculine ego: 'It is as though being extraordinarily bad at managing his own life constitutes both an appeal to sympathy, and even a perverse kind of claim to centrality.'[50] There is an open admission of weakness and vulnerability in these narratives, but as victims Kelman's men appropriate the oppressed position of a feminised status as a way back to centrality.

If Kelman's men are feminised, it is a patriarchally defined feminine space that they occupy, bordered by qualities and attitudes stereotypically associated with women. These include dependence, vulnerability, submissiveness and passivity. As Knights describes it with reference to Hines, these men are 'embedded in a deeply unpatriarchal ability to survive what counts as failure, even to survive a man's own judgement on himself for succumbing to the ordinary'.[51] But this is, of course, failure in masculine terms, an absence of the glory that comes with either victory or dramatic demise. And this has been, traditionally, the everyday experience of women – failure in masculine terms. This is a stereotypically negative view of women and femininity, defined in opposition to men.

Such an attitude does not go unchallenged in Kelman's work, by women themselves. For instance, Patrick Doyle in *A Disaffection* is characterised as 'sentimental' throughout the novel, an attitude that relates to the feminine capacity for emotion. This becomes apparent, for instance, in his particularly romanticised opinions on the natural aptitudes of boys and girls. Speaking of his niece and nephew he says, 'Maybe it has to do with an essential difference between the sexes [...] Elizabeth [...] she's got a sense of peace. John has it as well right enough but I think

she has it more. It's a real sense of peace' (*AD* 313, 314). Their mother, his sister-in-law Nicola, soon disabuses him:

> Pat. Women have to listen more than men, that's why they've got a sense of peace as you call it; they're used to listening – that's what they have to do all the time, listen to men talking. Yet to hear them you'd think it was us did it. And not only listen to them, women have to watch them all the time as well, they've got to study their moods, they've got to see it's alright to speak if this is the bloody time you can ask the question or no, is it the wrong time and you'll have to wait because half the time men just areni willing to listen to something if they dont want to hear it, it gets ye down [...] I'm not criticising you Pat but I think you've got a glamourised view of women which is wrong, it really is wrong. (*AD* 315)

Nicola asserts that the behaviour of women is not due to a feminine essence, but due to power relations and social conditions. Similarly Patrick's opinion of the Red Road Flats as having a beautiful view down the Clyde valley from the top storey is deromanticised by Nicola: 'The Red Road Flats is an awful place to live. When I was at school in Balornock I had a friend and she had a cousin living there and her mother killed herself' (*AD* 315). Patrick's sentimentality is not granted the status of insight but is disconnected from material reality, a typical charge made against feminine sensibility. Kelman is signalling here the impotence of personal change without structural social change, echoing Segal when she writes, 'personal change is important. But beneath and beyond possibilities for personal change lies the whole web of interconnecting social, economic and political practices, public policies, welfare resources and understandings of sexuality which actually confer power upon men.'[52] Patrick's feminised attitude is not validated here, but more significantly the pragmatic realist attitude more associated with men is asserted by Nicola. This is a gender reversal that is echoed elsewhere in these narratives.

The world of Kelman's novels reflects the feminisation of the workforce that came with the changes of the 1980s. Women go out to work and have a life separate

from the one at home in a family environment where the man is either not working or is threatened with unemployment. Gender roles as traditionally conceived are becoming blurred here. Hines's wife Sandra is given the opportunity of going to work full-time just as Hines is in danger of losing his job. This change is signified in other smaller events in the novel, for example, when Hines replaces Sandra by doing her rota duty at the nursery (*BH* 42). With Patrick Doyle's brother Gavin and his wife Nicola the traditional roles have already been swapped as she goes out to work and he looks after the children. 'He's a good cook, he's better than me – when he can be bothered' (*AD* 311) Nicola says of her partner. Gavin indulges his stay-at-home status by inviting his neighbours round for an afternoon of drinking homebrew and listening to music, admitting that he has irresponsibly forgotten to pay the overdue electricity bill that morning. He says of Nicola, 'she'll no be too pleased [...] I would probably feel like keeping out her road all the gether' (*AD* 278, 284). It is obvious who is responsible for keeping the family going, an old responsibility for women but one that newly compounds their status as breadwinners with the disempowerment of the men in the family and beyond.

Younger working-class women (and even middle-class ones like the teacher Alison in *A Disaffection*) have an equal stake in family life and decisions, and at times even have the economic upper hand (Hines's friend Griff shouts at his wife: 'How can I sign-on if you'll no give me the bloody bus-fare!' (*BH* 124)). In taking over the role of breadwinner and, effectively, head of the family, these women are occupying a traditionally masculine position. The industrial environment is now rewarding them for their employment adaptability and their greater suitability for the new hi-tech industries. With this relative empowerment, however, comes a degree of conservatism and support for the social status quo. When Patrick talks to Alison of

them as teachers being 'responsible for the present polity' by teaching children 'rightwing keech' she retorts that he is talking nonsense: 'It's a ridiculous thing to say [...] Also I think it's damn silly' (*AD* 149). Nicola, who is the only woman Patrick feels comfortable talking to, also refuses to indulge his political discomfort: 'all you're doing, complaining [...] I dont understand ye. You're clever and you've got a good well-paid job. You've only got yourself to look after. You can do whatever ye want' (*AD* 319).

These attitudes are resonant of a common characterisation of women, particularly in working-class fiction, as a conservative and reactionary political force.[53] However, Kelman does problematise this representation in several ways. Firstly he demystifies the traditional woman's role as supportive mother figure. What Carolyn Steedman calls an 'iconography of working-class motherhood',[54] as found in well-known memoirs like Richard Hoggart's *Uses of Literacy* (1959) or Jeremy Seabrook's *Working Class Childhood* (1982), is not present in Kelman's writing. Here mothers are not so much 'Mum, the formidable and eternal Mum, virago, domestic law giver, comforter and martyr'.[55] They are exhausted and worn out from spending their lives looking after men, being ignored and unappreciated; they are 'going about in a daze and it's awful to see it, and it's because of him I mean she doesni know what time it is' (*AD* 317), as Nicola says of Patrick's mother. In contrast, the younger women are assertive and active and more in control of their own lives, but this leaves them open to a different charge, one of class betrayal. As Neil McMillan argues,

> [I]n the specific ideological ensemble which makes up Kelman's work, the 'other' space which women occupy is also consistently identified as bourgeois. Alison and Sandra, like most of the women in the earlier Glasgow novels [that is, novels from the 1930s], are middle class, or at least upwardly mobile [...] Kelman persistently identifies womanliness with negative bourgeois aspirations.[56]

In their conservative attitudes Kelman's women put pressure on their men to conform, to be content with how things are, and to share in their 'bourgeois aspirations'. Sandra, for instance, constantly expresses her desire to save and buy a house in a 'better' area, hoping to overcome Hines's resistance to the plan.

McMillan sees such a representation of women as part of a tradition emanating from the Glasgow novels of the 1930s, where women were often complicit in the downfall of 'good working men', and their bourgeois values meant decadence, loose morals, and an absence of loyalty. That this female conservatism and feminine bourgeois status resonates in Kelman's work makes it, according to McMillan, inherently sexist and masculinist in terms of Kelman's validation of anti-establishment and, therefore, masculine values.[57] But Kelman's women are not demonised in the same way as in those earlier narratives. Their seemingly bourgeois values are a result of their own greater empowerment in social and material terms, and their increased status and control as regards their family lives. The social conditions are now favouring and privileging them more than their men, and their loyalty to the status quo is a means of maintaining that standing, often the means of surviving in the face of men's social incapacity and disengagement. They are, in effect, occupying a traditionally masculine position, signalling that men's feminisation is accompanied by women's masculinisation. Therefore, this perceived female conservatism could arguably be interpreted as a trait of their masculinised status, differentiating them from the reactionary women of those previous narratives.

The apparent role reversal between women and men does not signify alternative power relations, simply a reversal of the existing relations between the genders. Men are insecure, emotional, uncertain and not in control of themselves, whereas the women are breadwinners, pedantically realistic and ambitious. This reversal

perpetuates gender relations as a site of conflict. It also continues to define success in a traditional and masculinised way, validating competition over cooperation, and domination over integration. The masculine models and limitations continue to order the way the self is conceptualised, as based on these practices. But men are in a state of suspension in these texts and their masculinity is undermined, yet they are unable to fully accept their feminised status and lack of authority. They resist, either through sporadic outbursts of meaningless violence, or by hysterically indulging in their victimhood, contemplating death and demanding attention through their ineffectual helplessness. These men are, then, suspended between male and female social positions, and between the masculinised subject and its other. They have nowhere to go within this model of reality, except to appropriate the position of the oppressed and constitute their situation as one of injustice. In its lack of genuine social change this outcome is a pessimistic one, where the feminine is articulated by Kelman's men, but it is a patriarchal and negative feminine that always verges on defeat.

The nature of the closure of these narratives supports this conclusion. The last we see of Hines is him sitting looking out of a bus window during one of his last shifts, passive and resigned. Patrick is left in a state of paranoid uncertainty, walking home after the drinking session at his brother's house, convinced that the police are shouting after him, though the reader cannot be sure of this. 'They must have come running after him, to be shouting. What are they shouting. They're just shouting they hate him they hate ye we fucking hate ye, that's what they're shouting' (*AD* 337). Sammy at least is planning to leave Glasgow and is seen driving away in a taxi at the end of *How Late*. But this life of exile can only be more alienated, uncertain and unsettled than ever; 'that was him, out of sight'(*HL* 374).

These defeated conclusions illustrate a lack of potential for creative self-invention in these men. As white males from a western industrial tradition and environment there have always been roles for them before, and others to dominate. They have never been in the position they occupy here, where their authority is denied. Such men have never had to create identities, a positive sense of self, from 'nothing', the nothing that is the otherness of being female or ethnic minority, for instance. Other oppressed people survive by inventing new cultures, new language, and ultimately new selves that are affirming and self-sustaining. These men have not had to resist the inhumanity of objecthood in quite so fundamental a way, to face the void of existence so lightly armed. They are lost, with no direction, and suspended in a state of stasis. Their mantle of victimhood is a defiant cry for attention and for their loss to be acknowledged, but it makes no room for a wider assessment and transformation of power relations, maintaining the present social polity and organisation. But as Knights describes it, these men have 'an unpatriarchal ability to survive', which means a capacity to live without glory and the drama of self-destruction. This, at least, is a position to move on from.

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This analysis of three of Kelman's novels determines them as a literature of crisis. They chronicle a time of intense uncertainty for men, in their masculinity, and therefore in the sense of self they have grown up with. No longer breadwinners or dominant patriarchs, Kelman's men embody a passive, neurotic, tearful, dependent, hysterical and powerless masculinity, and they live static lives defined by inescapable repetition and feelings of entrapment. These characteristics 'feminise' Kelman's men, a word Whyte uses to describe the hard men of contemporary Scottish fiction.[58] But it is a patriarchally defined feminine that they come to embody, denoting weakness,

defeat and failure. This masculinised model of identity is underlined by the fact that the women in these texts are more empowered than the men, having jobs and often being the breadwinner of the family. In terms of Whyte's argument, then, they are masculinised, reversing the traditional power relations of gender. If Kelman manages to separate masculinity and femininity from male and female bodies respectively, he does not successfully undermine the masculinised, patriarchal conception of these identities. These texts enact the social and psychological confinement that prevents creative self-invention. If anything, a new valorisation of the feminine is necessary if the masculinised model of the self and identity, as premised on dominance and exclusion, is to be left behind. Kelman exposes the defunct nature of this model, but leaves it to others to imagine an alternative.

Chapter 2: Janice Galloway – Patriarchal Decline and Female Identity

Janice Galloway's fiction is about women and the female struggle to attain a coherent sense of self in a hostile, male dominated world. She foregrounds female desire, not as a pure and personal emotion but as a social structure in order to highlight the problematic engagement of women with patriarchy and its delineation of male/female relations. Galloway encapsulates her concerns in an interview she gave in 1992 concerning the work which would later become *Foreign Parts* (1994): "'It's about a perennial female problem that I don't think feminism addresses very much – it's about what you do when you fancy men but you don't like them – big problem" she laughs.'[1] Galloway's work explores the possibility of rejecting masculine models of social and personal existence while not rejecting men themselves, and to this end cameo roles of redeeming male figures are a characteristic of her novels. But her antagonism towards dominating masculinism shapes her outlook in all aspects of life, particularly in her relationship with her own writing community and contemporaries. She characterises the Scottish literary scene of the 1980s and early 1990s as overwhelmingly masculinised:

> It got so the word 'Scottish' started to mean this media-thing rather than anything else: I was having difficulty perceiving what I was about from what the media seemed to be telling me 'Scottish writers' were about [...] Now that Scottish writing has a profile, it's a bloke's profile, and one that I wish to distance myself from.[2]

Though she continues to live in Scotland, Galloway actively pursues this desire in her work.

Galloway's novels are concerned with the decline of patriarchal authority, but as a problem for women as well as men. Though men are often noticeable for their absence in her work, male power retains its dominating influence. These narratives explore this ubiquitous presence and women's concomitant feelings of unease that may result in them feeling out of place in their surroundings, and even lead to incapacitating alienation. As Cristie Leigh March writes, her work 'reveals textual women who know the societal traps, see potential lives they feel they ought to have, but are unable to break free from cultural confines'.[3] These women invest in romantic ideals that can only be undermined by gender relations based on dominance, and female desires produced by such ideals often trap them in oppressive roles. The tension here between individual agency and environmental influence is complex, as it is in Kelman's work, though Galloway more graphically names desire as a complicating factor in the realisation of selfhood.

Galloway was born in Ayrshire in 1956 and studied music and literature. Unable to sustain a career as a classical singer, she worked as a schoolteacher before turning to writing full-time. Her first novel, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, was published in 1989 and brought her to the attention of literary and media circles. It captures the intense grief of Joy Stone after the accidental death of her lover Michael, relating Joy's subsequent psychological crisis, including her eating disorders. The novel explores the fraught social status of the legally unrecognised female partner (Michael was married to another woman) and the importance of social recognition for a coherent sense of self. Joy's quest for acknowledgement and intimacy through stereotypical femininity and masculine desire leads almost to self-destruction in this often comically bleak narrative of the dangerous path to self-realisation.

Galloway's second novel *Foreign Parts* (1994) is less severe in its execution as it follows two women, old friends Cassie and Rona, on a driving holiday together in France. The narrative charts how their relationship moves from antagonism to mutual recognition in a sometimes moving account of female relations between apparently ill-matched individuals. Again the text explores personal female loss in relations with men, but considers this along with the grand narratives of art and history that define and perpetuate masculine authority. The final reconciliation between the women acknowledges the importance of relations in selfhood, and imagines a situation where a positive acceptance of difference is established in opposition to the dominance that regularly characterises relations.

Galloway's third novel, *Clara* (2002), takes as its subject the life of the celebrated nineteenth-century German concert pianist Clara Schumann, married to the composer Robert who is far more widely known in our period. This narrative represents a male consciousness for the first time in Galloway's novels as it engages with Robert Schumann's struggles with the rigours of composing and debilitation of mental illness. It seeks to challenge the Romantic myth that conflates individual creativity and madness, demystifying the creative process, especially in the figure of Clara herself. (In these themes it is similar to A. L. Kennedy's third novel *Everything You Need* (1999). This narrative is also set outside Scotland, and likewise enters a male consciousness in order to interrogate art and creativity, here through the figure of a writer.) *Clara* is also a polyphonic narrative that attempts to represent more fully a community and the influence individuals have on each other. Galloway has also published the short story collections *Blood* (1991) and *Where You Find It* (1996), and in 2002 her first book of poetry, *boy*

book see, a fitting development for a writer whose work has been described as 'poetic prose'.[4]

Regarding her publishing career as a lone author, Galloway asserts, 'I get seriously fed-up working on my own and consider stopping doing it every day.'[5] Perhaps for this reason she has worked on a variety of other projects. These include co-editing several volumes of *New Writing Scotland* (8, 9, 10) with Hamish Whyte, and working as a writer-in-residence in four Scottish prisons. She has also collaborated with other artists on *Reading Rooms* (1996), an art installation with Jackie Kay and Michael Bracewell, *Pipelines* (2000), an art installation with Anne Bevan, and *Monster* (2002), where she wrote an opera libretto for a project undertaken with the composer Sally Beamish based on the life of Mary Shelley. Trained as a classical singer, music is an ongoing passion for Galloway that threads itself throughout her work. *Clara*, for instance, begun as a collaborative work on a performance of a song cycle by Schumann, is structured around that same song cycle. Galloway's fiction reflects her aversion to isolation in its preoccupation with relations and strategies of representing them. She creates women who 'want and need some other person; a continuing tension in women's lives'.[6]

This tension is intensified by an impression of male absence in the novels. Death is foregrounded, whether in Michael's fatal accident in *The Trick*, or in the French graveyards of the First World War in *Foreign Parts*, reminding Cassie and Rona of the victims of that conflict, including Rona's grandfather. But another aspect to this absence is the emotional distance men create in their relationships with women. Men put themselves beyond intimacy with women through a masculine identity that idealises the independence of isolation and necessitates a pathological rejection of femininity. There

is in fact a disdain and exploitation of women by men in Galloway's novels, as men renege on what Barbara Ehrenreich perceives as the responsibilities of patriarchy, which 'like feudalism, implies a relationship of mutual obligation' (see Introduction).[7] Galloway's women attempt to fit the traditional gender roles, but these no longer function in relation to the greater female freedom and expanded expectations produced by decades of feminist struggle and also the changing patterns of work and production. In order to preserve their status, men become defensive and distance themselves so that the protective role of patriarchy is lost as women become competitors instead of domestic support. This is the context of Galloway's writing where the absence of men is not the expression of a desire on the part of women, but a fact with which women have to come to terms.

Galloway's women are very unexceptional in that they are no longer young, but have jobs and independence, the benefits of a generation of feminist campaigning. They are not party to the 'new politics of femininity' as Angela McRobbie describes it, the 'new sexualities' promoted by girls' magazines since the 1990s 'which break with the conventions of feminine behaviour by representing girls as crudely lustful young women'.[8] Unlike these younger, more assertive and hedonistic individuals, Galloway's protagonists are still struggling with traditional romance as a model of relations between men and women, and their desires continue to be influenced by romantic ideals of passive female passion submitting to sexually dominant men. These novels are not necessarily narratives of liberation. They create a sense of 'ensnarement and passivity' as Smith writes of *The Trick*, and an atmosphere that is 'inexpressibly bleak', even if the work is 'exceptionally powerful in its bleakness'.[9] The passivity and conformity of Galloway's

female characters is particularly disturbing to some readers, and these are often painfully negative portrayals of ordinary women.

The perceived pessimism of these novels is not, however, simply a result of the engagement with romance, but is also apparent in what Smith describes as Galloway's 'unwillingness to trust the transformational powers of fiction'. Smith describes the style of *The Trick* as a 'late-eighties-Scottish-dirty-realism' which now seems 'stylistically *of* a time, like the membership badge of a club of an era that's passing'.[10] Galloway admits the influence of Glasgow writers like Alasdair Gray and also James Kelman, to whom the 'dirty realism' tag is usually directed. Further, the Scottish subject matter of her writing is open to interpretation in terms of national specificity and even nationalism, and to being co-opted into a Scottish particularity that interprets women's experience in terms of the greater 'colonial' picture, or the 'inferiorism' of the divided Scottish psyche. But, as I have indicated, she also desires to distance herself from this scene. So *Foreign Parts* is set in France, and *Clara* is a historical novel set in Germany. This move of location is in common with A. L. Kennedy's *Everything You Need*, which is set mainly on an island off the coast of Wales, and James Kelman's fifth novel, *Translated Accounts* (2002), which uses an unnamed country, ostensibly a conflict zone, as its barely realised backdrop.

In contrast with the charges of pessimism, and particularly in relation to Kelman's work, Galloway's narratives appear to follow a 'positive trajectory', a term used by Glenda Norquay as indicative of the increasingly positive outcomes of the first two novels.[11] But the term can also apply to the social contexts of the individuals in the texts as well as the outcomes. To compare with Kelman, his first novel, *The Busconductor Hines*, focuses on Hines in the context of his family and his job; *A Disaffection* has

Patrick Doyle, a single man but one who has a career; in *How Late it was, How Late* Sammy Samuels is a social outsider; and finally, in *Translated Accounts*, there are only unnamed and unplaced individual voices, refugees perhaps, suggesting complete social breakdown. It is as if Kelman loses faith in communal relations as he writes. In contrast, Galloway reverses this trajectory: *The Trick* deals with a lone social outcast; *Foreign Parts* has a female couple; and *Clara* engages with a community. Galloway's work emphasises and insists upon the importance of the community, even in a negative mode as in *The Trick*. This positive trajectory makes this work both 'deconstructive' and 'reconstructive' according to Norquay.

As deconstructive texts, Galloway's novels interrogate discursive formations of power and question dominant representations of our world and our selves. They have 'a specific agenda in exposing and undermining the language, textual practices and discourses we live by'.[12] Her experimental textual strategies produce fragmented texts that challenge the coherent world view which naturalises norms of behaviour and attitudes. *The Trick* for instance is disrupted by competing discourses undermining those norms and the authority they represent. Typographical errors, words in the margins, a variety of typefaces and the interruption of lists, playscripts, gaps and blank and unnumbered pages mimic Joy's psychological disorientation and breakdown. Joy's state of alienation, from her community and her self, is created by an outward gaze, away from her own inner consciousness of her thoughts and feelings, a gaze by which she scrutinizes herself and her actions and surroundings. This strategy embeds Joy in her environment, placing the cause of her predicament not simply in her own individual weakness and failure but in the social conditions through which she knows herself. Going beyond the

individual, the novels also undermine the stereotypical constitution of female relations as supportive and nurturing. Mothers are cold and distant and female friendships are often competitive and antagonistic. In Galloway's work, identity is a social matter, not an isolated individual formation, and women cannot rely on the support of the 'sisterhood' to substantiate themselves. The deconstruction of the self and its relations in these texts is a process of denaturalisation, undermining the validity of traditional roles and exposing the power structures of gender stereotypes.

On the other hand, these texts are reconstructive in their attempt at a certain rehabilitation of men in several redeeming male figures. These are youths that appear in all the novels, and some short stories, and they are potential saviours of the women at moments of crisis: David in *The Trick* is Joy's lover and appears in time to stop her succeeding in her attempted suicide (he is also incarnated in the short story 'David' in the collection *Blood* in which a schoolteacher has sex with one of her pupils at a party); the Algerian student that Cassie and Rona briefly meet at the end of *Foreign Parts* is also a positive and open young male figure after the disappointment of other men encountered throughout the novel; the young composer Brahms in *Clara* is a life-line and support for Clara towards the end of her crumbling marriage to an increasingly unstable Schumann. Though these relations may appear to mimic a particularly masculine model of desire, of older men for younger women, the young men are not simply sex objects, and this is not redemption through sex. As caring and supportive figures they promote a reconciliation between the sexes in their openess and gentleness, symbolising the possibility of new relations between men and women.

These scenes of understanding are only one aspect of a positive impulse in the narratives. For Norquay the novels are 'reconstructive fictions which attempt to offer a refashioning of concepts of identity'.[13] For women at least, this involves the possibility of an escape from masculinised notions of the gendered self, a model founded on an authentic unity that is revealed here to be a construct. As psychological fracture and debilitating breakdown threaten all of Galloway's female protagonists, these narratives enact a reconstitution of the self upon a constructed unity, through embodiment in *The Trick*, positive female relations in *Foreign Parts*, and creativity in *Clara*. This 'self-fashioning' illustrates the underlying premise of Galloway's work, that identity is not a given or a stable and essential quality of the individual, but a groundless and constant process or performance.

In spite of these hopeful conclusions readers, like Smith, are often overwhelmed by the 'bleakness' of Galloway's emphasis on oppressive social structures. This mood threatens to undermine the positive trajectory that she is careful to install in her fiction. However, if self-fashioning is a possibility then Galloway insists that it is a difficult process based on the recognition of the impermanence of the values and lifestyles by which we live. It is necessary to overcome the investment individuals make in traditional roles, and escape the patterns of desire and loss that structure lives. This is not an easy challenge, and in her conforming and dissatisfied women Galloway is sometimes charged with undermining much needed imaginings of positive change in gender relations. In particular, the prognosis for change in men and masculinity is quite hopeless in these narratives. Unless already formed in the redeeming and unthreatening guise of youth, men's fate would appear to be emotional isolation and/or death as change eludes them.

In these circumstances it is certainly appropriate to question Galloway's ability to trust, as Smith puts it, the 'transformational powers of fiction'. The following analysis considers how traditional gender relations and, particularly, dominant forms of femininity are undermined in these narratives, and questions their outcomes in terms of the validation of alternatives.

I: *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*

Galloway's first novel is a graphic account of the decline of male authority, but this is represented through the breakdown of a central female character. Joy Stone is a woman who actively conforms to the expectations of traditional femininity. As Margery Metzstein points out, 'Galloway can be read as a link in the chain of women writers who have forged their female protagonists from the unpromising material of a recognisably male stereotype [...] they risk cliché in their construction', even if they are 'transmuted into figures who break the mould of masculinist discourse.'[14] Joy Stone is such a woman who attempts self-definition through the rituals of femininity and exists through her relationships with men. The representation of her shocking dependence on men dramatically deconstructs gender relations, but also illustrates her own reliance on the authority of masculinism. She too is a victim of its decline, a state she must eventually escape.

Joy finds herself adrift in the world after the accidental death of her lover, Michael, who drowned in a swimming pool while on holiday. He was a married man with a family before embarking on an affair and eventually living with Joy, and after his death she finds herself socially isolated and unsupported, especially at the school where they both worked. Her traumatised and fragile mental state eventually leads her to spend time in a

psychiatric unit, an experience that seems only to consolidate her estrangement and fails to provide any comfort or clarity. It certainly does not diffuse her alienation, which is manifested in depression, self-harm and anorexia. She eventually makes an unsuccessful suicide attempt, the ultimate violence of which appears to shake her out of her despair. The final images are of Joy breaking out of her self-imposed feminine conformity.

Joy enters the text as a fractured subject, an object to herself. She begins with a statement of alienation: 'I watch myself from the corner of the room' (*TKB* 7). In this context, the traditional femininity she obsessively seeks to achieve gives her a sense of self and a social position that can be recognised and related to. In addition, this is also an identity that can be bought and consumed. Joy has spent her life inserting herself into a male dominated world in order to become indispensable there. Such a dependence on men is an alternative to the problematic relationships with women that are a characteristic of her life. At this time of personal crisis she seems particularly bereft of female company and support; her only friend Marianne is away working in the States, communicating only sporadically by post and phone, and Marianne's mother Ellen's attempts to provide maternal care through home baking and stodgy meals are distressing occasions for the anorexic Joy.

The problem of female relations stems from Joy's own family, her relationship with her mother and her sister Myra. As is common in Galloway's work, there is no father figure here. This family relationship is filled with uncertainty for Joy and remembered as a fearful time. 'I've been afraid of Myra ever since I remember. She and my mother/her mother were pregnant at the same time. She could have been my mother [...] Myra's baby died. I didn't. Maybe that was why she hit me so much' (*TKB* 59). Joy's

paralysing dread of her sister – 'She could just stand and scare me to death' (*TKB* unnumbered page 58) – is effectively evoked by the resonances of the name 'Myra', long associated in Britain with the demonised Myra Hindley, convicted accomplice to child murder. Both the real and the suggested violence of the relationship, and the uncertainty of her own origins, undermines any notion of family bonds for Joy as she struggles with the concept: 'I couldn't say what she was. Just couldn't get my mouth round *sister*' (*TKB* 72). There is a lack of intimacy here that is the opposite of the stereotype of the family as a centre of warmth, comfort and affirming support. The natural love and affection that traditionally defines this domestic and feminised realm is negated, cut off, perhaps, by the lack of social legitimacy caused by the male absence and uncertain parental relations. If Myra really is Joy's biological mother the resentment of such a scandalous event and its social consequences has obviously been taken out on Joy in her 'sister's' aggression and her 'mother's' distance. This situation undermines any future pleasure or comfort for Joy in the company of women.

Perhaps through attributing her family members' unhappiness to a lack of stable relations with men, Joy invests heavily in such relationships, defining herself through them. She feels that she is only made whole by male presence: 'This Sunday night he's coming round. Maybe I will be embraced, entered, made to exist. The physical self is precarious' (*TKB* 46). In fact she goes to extremes to immerse herself in male company, taking a Saturday job at a betting shop, for example, experiencing her solitary femaleness there as a kind of endurance test. She is suffering such an acute lack of self-esteem that validation only comes with male attention. She may also be punishing herself as a result of Michael's death. His is a meaningless demise, a tragedy that has no greater

significance than to illustrate human, even male, vulnerability. It is the definitive proof for Joy of the impermanence of relations and connection in the world, but she finds his disappearance hard to believe:

> I started smelling Michael's aftershave in the middle of the night [...] I knew he wasn't just a carcass liquefying in a wooden box but an invisible presence hovering in a cloud of Aramis above my bed. I also suspected I was lying. When I found the bottle, tipped on its side and leaking along the rim I knew for sure. I had put it there myself ages ago so I could reach for it and smell his neck when I wanted to feel like hell in the middle of the night. Then I must have knocked it over and been too wilful to admit to what it was later. My own duplicity shocked me. (*TKB* unnumbered page 83)

Joy's intense grief evades her informed rationality, illustrating to some extent her investment in delusion and her lack of control over her own desires. The scene is a miniaturization of the concerns of the novel, of the subjugation of an individual to the structures of desire and her eventual escape of them.

Joy has spent her life perfecting a typically feminine persona, submitting to complementary masculine and feminine roles. She describes herself as 'a good wife going to waste' (*TKB* unnumbered page 41), and illustrates this by relating her formative early adult years through an analysis of her first relationship with Paul. 'I lived with a man for the better part of seven years. We met at school: fifth form romance [...] I learned to cook good meals and run a house. The fridge was always well stocked and the cupboards interesting' (*TKB* 41-2). But gender complementarity also necessarily involves difference and separation: 'I knew there was something missing [...] I thought the answer was soul-searching and he thought it was split-crotch knickers' (*TKB* 42). This confusion of emotional intimacy with sexual intimacy is an enduring theme of the novel, a reductive attitude regularly associated with men, but one which traps women too.

Dissatisfied with the relationship, Joy has an affair, but admits that 'I couldn't see it wasn't the sex I missed so much as someone to care whether I missed it or not'.

The need for emotional intimacy and personal validation drives Joy's pursuit of sexual relationships with men, in order to be 'made to exist'. To this end she continues to work on her femininity, studiously researching and practising it. She obsessively purchases magazines from the supermarket, the kind that are full of recipes, diet plans, problem pages and fashion tips. They are not the girls' magazines McRobbie writes about that promote the 'new sexualities', but they contain conservative images of women as homemakers and wives, defined by their usefulness and attractiveness to others. They provide a regime for the achievement of a stable femininity. The domesticated ideas of romance, reduced to step-by-step instructions – 'Kiss me Quick Lips – we show you how!' (*TKB* 27) – categorise female experience producing expectations and promising results. Their confident tone exudes knowledge and authority and all Joy need do is submit.

Joy actively conforms to the dominant stereotypes of femininity. Cooking is one of them, a ritual that is pleasurable in the order it brings, with the kitchen that 'glitters', the 'shining tins', 'the beautiful sound of the words' of the recipes that she reads out loud: 'On Sundays, I bake [...] In two hours there will be a Dundee cake, Ginger squares, Oatmeal scones and Fresh Orange Tarts. After that I might make preserves' (*TKB* 40-1). This idealised scene is significant for Joy; as an anorexic she does not eat the food she cooks but the ritual is proof of her feminine skill. It is also a site of self-denial, a particularly feminine selflessness. In fact, without a man to eat the food, this behaviour is a paradoxical formality of Joy's own effacement.

There is also what she calls '*The Bathing Ritual*':

> I stand up in the bath draining away the ordinariness that floats with the scum on the water, rinse myself with fresh water from the taps. The cold water runs on while I sit and soap each leg in turn, then lift the razor, checking the edge is keen. It gives a better finish slicing upward, against the hair: it severs more closely. I have to be careful it doesn't catch or draw blood. That would be unsightly. The water runs down each foreleg while I shave, carrying the shed animal hair away down the black hole under the taps. Fleeced, I turn off the taps and step out to rub my skin hard with the flat loops of the towel till it hurts [...]
>
> I leave my armpits free from chemical interference: deodorant matts, it tastes bad. This is my token to naturalness in case this is what he prefers [...]
>
> I am to be entirely inviting in case. In case. (*TKB* 45, 46-8)

This cultivation of desirable physical femininity is also for the consumption of a man. But Joy's own adverse view of herself is exaggerated here as she displays her self-hatred. Her judgmental tone ('that would be unsightly'), her violent choice of words and imagery (the razor 'severs'), and particularly her references to herself in animal terms ('foreleg', 'animal hair', 'fleeced') starkly objectify and dehumanise her. The process of producing feminine desirability according to the stereotypes is a deeply alienating experience, pathological in its undermining of self-esteem.

Joy's disconnection from her body betrays a doubt in her own existence that is apparent from the early stages of the novel. In another bathroom scene she signals her personal fragmentation:

> Hello
>
> The mirror behind the tap that shows a kneeling torso, head chopped off sheer at the white plastic rim. I put the mirror there because I couldn't work out how to hang it up without knocking lumps in the wall. Now I like it there: like looking through a window at someone else. (*TKB* 10)

The mirror is an important reference point in *The Trick*, illustrating Joy's relationship with herself. Here any sense of coherence is lost as she experiences the image in the mirror as a stranger, 'someone else'. In the absence of affirmative relationships, this fragmented image traps Joy as the only vision of herself available. The representation of the distorted and partial female body becomes emblematic of Joy's truncated life.

A desire to escape her alienation through the validation of sexual intercourse leads Joy to have several lovers, but this also leaves her vulnerable. Men distance themselves from intimacy according to Victor Seidler, and 'sex as an achievement replaces any notion of sexuality as pleasure'. This makes 'heterosexual male sexuality an issue of power in which men are concerned to assert their power over women'.[15] This is certainly the case with at least one of Joy's lovers, but they all avoid emotional intimacy as much as they can. No partner adequately satisfies her emotional needs. For instance, her young lover David is an ex-pupil at the school where Joy works as a drama teacher, though not one of her students. He is affectionate but cannot commit time to the relationship; the first time he stays over he has to phone home and make an excuse for staying out. But it is Tony, her boss at the betting shop, who really fits Seidler's description. He pesters Joy to go out with him and finally her weakness, physically and psychologically, enables him to overpower her resistance. They end the evening with mechanical and upsetting sex: 'His mouth over mine was warm and made me lonely [...] Afterwards, he said he wished I had talked more. I should have spoken to him, said things. And shouldn't I stop crying now' (*TKB* 174, 175). The experience leaves her feeling more alienated than before, as do all her attempts to conform to feminine stereotypes.

Femininity only brings distress and discomfort for Joy, symptoms of her objectification by these rituals and experiences. Her increasing rage at her exploitation ('Something caught in my throat when [Tony] spoke. A spark of terrible anger that he should dare say things like this, expecting me to listen' (*TKB* 175)) and her inability to express or act on that rage ('A spark. I swallowed and said nothing') leads to self-hate, evident in eating disorders like anorexia and bulimia, and self-harm. As well as endangering her life, this behaviour obliterates her 'natural' female characteristics, such as menstruation, replacing them with other, neurotic ones. 'There are marks on the sheets too: trails from half-hearted cuts. I don't menstruate but I bleed other ways' (*TKB* 92). All this increases her alienation, but also suggests that femaleness itself is not a natural given if a fundamental characteristic like menstruation can disappear. Femininity, as produced by Joy's rituals and behaviour, is just a performance, and one that does nothing to enhance her treatment at the hands of men. It is pathological, a threat to her sense of self as she becomes an object for herself and others. Joy is left feeling adrift as femininity is exposed as the result of empty habits not biological presence, as a construction around a fundamental absence.

The vacuum of Joy's self-delusion is exposed by her circumstances. Michael's death has far reaching consequences for her, beyond the immediate grief. The tragic loss of her lover is compounded by her own negation, her social death in the community. Joy pinpoints the exact moment this happens, at a memorial service for Michael in the school where they both worked as teachers. Here she is a witness to the authority of patriarchal bonds as the presiding clergyman extends the sympathies of the gathering to Michael's wife and family, an action depriving Joy of a 'husband' and 'family':

1. The Rev Dogsbody had chosen this service to perform a miracle.

2. He'd run time backwards, cleansed, absolved and got rid of the ground-in stain.

3. And the stain was me.

I didn't exist. The miracle had wiped me out. (*TKB* unnumbered page 79)

The restored legal relationship means that Joy's pain is not recognised and her mourning is not licensed. This symbolic erasure marks the beginning of her psychological fragmentation.

To highlight her own negation Joy is associated with death throughout the novel. She relates not only Michael's fatal accident, but also the probable suicides of other female members of her family (*TKB* 199), and the death of her mother, also associated with water. Joy's mother walked into the sea in an attempt to commit suicide, although she died later of heart failure. Significantly, Joy herself is associated with the sea from the beginning of the novel. The opening, where she is sitting in her living room in the early hours of the morning, suggests an atmosphere of airless existence, as if the room is submerged under water: 'The furniture glow[s] at the edges, like bits of sunk ship rising out of the wash of green [...] The carpet [...] looks like seaweed [...] Liquid black. Still wet' (*TKB* 7). The underwater environment suggested here is an alien one, unsuitable for human life.

Formally, too, Joy is associated with death. The text is not divided into conventional chapters but split by what Cairns Craig calls a 'marker', 'ooo', like a giant ellipsis, a strategy familiar from Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines.*[16] Here, as in that text, it indicates an emptiness, not just a passing of time or the omission of events. As narrator, it links Joy directly with Michael's death through the repeated motif of the figure 'O' in the sections where that event is remembered: '*A group of men stand in a rough O, staring with their eyes down* [... The child] *points at the group of men. Their circle grows.*

Signora. Your husband is dead' (*TKB* 29); '*I look down and his mouth is a red O. White water runs through his hair. His mouth is a red O, eyes wide to the sky*' (*TKB* 40). This marker 'becomes the encoded representation of the trauma from which the narrative begins',[17] a periodic 'moan of pain',[18] or more symbolically, the restatement of Joy's own negation through Michael's death. The 'O' is symbolic of the central absence or void made real by death and the 'ooo' marker is in fact a repetition, a mini death, a regular reinstatement of the existential void.

In highlighting Joy's negation, the text registers her existence as a crisis of signification. She has no role, no place, and therefore no meaning in terms of traditional gender relations, as the reinstatement of Michael's marriage proves. Yet the traditional femininity which she is attempting to maintain only qualifies her for that relationship, a heterosexual marriage supporting the patriarchal authority of a husband. Joy perceives no alternatives in her traumatised state, so that within the discourses of femininity she is subject to, her position is truly negative.

The text itself begins to break up under the pressure of this invisibility, losing its unity and stretching its coherence, replicating Joy's own fragmentation. The narrative, like her life, is out of her control, and the smooth regularity of familiar forms of representation are disturbed here by formal disarray. Amidst the unregulated sections of the novel, the main body of the text is interrupted by italicised scenes which recall Michael's fatal accident, like dream images or memories that erupt unbidden into Joy's consciousness so that she relives the trauma at unforeseen moments. There are gaps, unfinished sentences, fragments in the margins and unnumbered pages. The text also mutates and diversifies into a multiplicity of forms and discourses such as playscripts,

recipes, horoscopes and other extracts from magazines and self-help books, often out of date and irrelevant. These challenge the text's stability and meaning. This is especially the case with the fragments in the margins which suggest that the novel is a palimpsest, the main text having been written over the top of another. The idea of unknown layers is a constant concern: 'I shove unidentifiable debris under the rug and hope it stays put. Superficially everything looks fine but underneath is another story [...] The trick is not to look' (*TKB* 92). The existence of such layers undermines the authenticity, stability and singularity of any meaning.

The absurdity of the world for Joy sometimes overwhelms the text and it becomes a satiric parody of the everyday. Playscripts flatten experience, especially with figures of authority who are usually men:

> Patient I'm not sleeping. I'm still not sleeping.
>
> Doctor Try taking the yellow things an hour earlier in the evening. And the red things later. There's nothing left to do to the green things on this theme. Keep them as they were. [Already writing prescription] Do you need more?
>
> Patient Thank-you. I feel terrible.
>
> Doctor Well, let's leave it for a while, see how you are next week. One thing at a time, eh?
>
> I come out like a steamrollered cartoon: two-dimensions to start with then flattened some more till I'm tissue. (*TKB* 50-1)

Reducing her doctors' appointments to the form of a bad joke flattens identities and illustrates the ridiculous and empty relationships that constitute the social scene. The use of playscripts emphasises the formalised relations, emptied of meaning and significance, prescribed lines performed mechanically. The roles are not adequately descriptive of human experience; here they diminish it to a mechanistic ritual of traffic-light simplicity

(like the red, yellow and green pills). The effect of such scenarios throughout the novel is bleakly comic.

The playscripts often ridicule authority, particularly that of the doctors. At the psychiatric unit where Joy spends time attempting to deal with her grief and depression, the anonymous psychiatrists (Doctors one, two, three, four and five) do not remember her name or who she is and fail to provide either treatment or understanding:

> Patient Dr Two said something about it last week. He said you'd have worked out some sort of treatment.
>
> Dr Three What sort of treatment do you want?
>
> Patient I don't know. What do you suggest?
>
> Dr Three Ah but that's the whole point. I'm not suggesting anything. You asked to see me and now you're just wasting my time. (*TKB* 164)

These doctors fail to help Joy, or to even relate to her as an individual, making her responsible for her own recovery. But they are flattened and anonymous for her just as she is for them; their masculine authority bears no significance and their power appears diminished. These relations are matched in the equally dismissive and oppressive religious personnel referred to as the Reverend Dogsbody or Dogcollar, and the wholly unsympathetic boss, the Head of Joy's school. But these figures signify an abdication of responsibility as regards Joy and her welfare. Away from these male agents of authority Joy seeks the advice of tarot cards and horoscopes and readings are interspersed throughout the novel along with excerpts from self-help books, magazine problem pages and fragments of letters from Marianne. These are alternative perspectives, as significant or as unreliable as any other discourse, mere guidelines in the making of choices.

Stability of meaning, like the meaning of Joy herself and her social position, is a trick or a convenient fiction in this novel.

Joy's dilemma is, however, more than a crisis of signification. It is translated physically through her neurotic disorders to become a real threat to her well-being and physical existence. Her eating disorders contribute to Joy's insubstantial status by reducing her material presence, bringing to a head a physical and psychological convergence on nothingness, and constituting a particularly passive threat, and therefore a very feminised one. The nothingness is literally visualised by the scan she undergoes to test for pregnancy because she has stopped menstruating. 'I looked. I was still there. A black hole among the green stars. Empty space. I had nothing inside me. The doctor smiled directly at me for the first time. Nothing for either of us to worry about then. Nothing at all' (*TKB* unnumbered page 146). The confirmation of the void, by both scan and doctor, officially sums up Joy's own fears and feelings. Her femininity, her subjectivity and her body even, are constructed around a void. That empty space could represent the groundless foundation of identity generally, or of femininity specifically. Or it could signify Joy's dead lover without whom she has fallen apart. Or even, in a related sense, the false foundations of patriarchy which defined her identity. Whatever we feel is at the centre of Joy's self, it is a self built on nothingness.

Joy's powerlessness to challenge this void is ironically resonant in Cairns Craig's attempt to appropriate the image of her emptiness as a symbol of the Scottish nation. 'That "black hole", that "nothing at all" is the image not only of a woman negated by a patriarchal society but of a society aware of itself only as an absence, a society living, in the 1980s, in the aftermath of its failure to be reborn.'[19] This is a reference to the defeat

of the movement for devolution in the 1979 referendum. Craig overwrites the specific experience of female oppression by incorporating it into the perceived neurosis and lack of anchorage in the contemporary 'postcolonial' Scottish experience after this disaster for nationalism. Such a move subjects Joy's loss of identity to the overarching loss of national identity that afflicts the Scottish people generally, for the two cannot be equated as images of nationalist identities are still overwhelmingly male. So has Craig performed a miracle on the scale of the Reverend Dogsbody? His displacement of the woman's body exposes the relative and lesser significance of the woman's experience in a hierarchy of discourses of oppression, and his analysis only serves to magically 'disappear' the gender-specific reasons for Joy's emptiness, displacing the blame onto a colonial history that absolves specific Scottish patriarchy.

This issue brings up a major concern of the novel, the potential invisibility of female oppression as well as an impulse towards invisibility of the ordinary female body under patriarchy. Joy's crisis of signification is a result of such pressure, produced here by the unwillingness of the mainstream community to recognise and relate to non-conformist elements in its midst. But Craig's appropriation, for example, proves that Joy does signify, that her state can be manipulated to express a variety of meanings. It is, in fact, impossible not to signify, and it is only that Joy does not control the meanings she holds. Like the text itself, she does not completely fall apart; it is still, for the most part legible, and so is she in the eyes of society. The way others see her finally catches up with Joy:

> A mirror spread out behind the space where he had been. There was a woman in the frame, gawping, the fountain bubbling up at her back. She was listening to a distant kiddyride playing Scotland the Brave. Her coat was buttoned up wrong so the collar didn't sit right, the boots scuffed

> and parting from the sole. The hair needed washed and combed and my eyes were purple. I looked like a crazy-woman/wino/raddled old whore. (*TKB* 191)

The woman here, Joy herself, is an illustration of the 'other' of acceptable femininity. In contrast to the mirror image of the fragmented female body, here Joy sees the whole figure, from head to toes. It is an equally alienating image. This is a painful moment of revelation as she now fits the demonised model of 'women like her' – the 'crazy wino', the 'raddled old whore' – which translates in the dominant discourse of femininity into the sexual woman without a husband. Suspended in that reflection, unable to escape its surface, Joy 'sees her *self* as her Other'.[20] This reverse image of favourable femininity brings to a head Joy's feelings of worthlessness initiated by the ceremony of her social erasure.

Galloway suggests that the community colludes in defining Joy as an outsider, a hysterical woman, until 'whore' is the only suitable label. The invisible social inscription of Joy's status is symbolised by a scar. The fragmented image in the bath mirror shows 'pale, tight thighs and a pink scar where I was scalded a long time ago. The scar only shows when I wash but it's there all the time: waiting to surface through the skin when I hit the water, like invisible ink' (*TKB* 10). This invisible, indelible mark is like a branding, a negative transformation that emphasises the inescapable materiality of the body, a body that signifies as unclean, unruly, perverse and the threat to social order that constitutes 'whore'. Joy's body is a surface inscribed by that reflection in the mirror of a communally understood 'bad' woman and she finally recognises her worthless self in that image.

Eventually this negative self-image overwhelms Joy: 'I took another long look [at the reflection] and went into the chemists though it was closing and bought the biggest bottle

of paracetemol I could find' (*TKB* 191-2). Suicide seems the only answer or escape, the final realisation of the threat to Joy's existence represented in the novel. But in the middle of the suicide attempt there is a knock on the door: 'If I answer I have to accept what it says about me. That I don't want to die. That I don't want to live very much but I don't want to die' (*TKB* 203). She is saved at that moment by David, her young student lover. But it is Joy who eventually saves herself by taking control of her image and reinventing herself:

> With a pair of dressmaking scissors I face the mirror and cut my hair short. Spiky. I colour it purple with permanent dye I bought ages ago and never used. While the colour sets I use the scissors to cut short my nails. I tint my eyebrows black. Tomorrow I will have my ears pierced, twice on one side. It will scare the hell out of David. (*TKB* unnumbered page 232)

This is almost a reverse of the previous bathing ritual, the creation of a 'punky' image that suggests an assertive, 'spikey', powerful and very visible femininity that owes nothing to male approval ('it will scare the hell out of David'). Here the dressmaking scissors, used earlier to cut out clothes from patterns, are used in constructing herself. She is opposing the male-defined dominant female stereotypes for the first time in the novel. The new image is another performance of a feminine identity, but it signals resistance in its embrace of the opposite of typical, socially acceptable femininity.

Joy's action is a sign of self control, an effort to become visible, marking a choice to remain outside the mainstream, to give up the authority of the patriarchal models of identity that have proved so unsustainable and pathological. She vows 'to submit to terrifying chaos and not revert' (*TKB* 223), finally realising that chaos is unavoidable, and only disguised by the rituals and stereotypes of identity. These are performances, fictions sustained by social power structures. Joy's acceptance of that existential void so

vividly suggested by the image of the scan, of the groundless and contingent nature of existence, is illustrated by the close of the novel. As she imagines herself swimming in the sea, that which has all along been connected with death now becomes part of a metaphor for life:

> Another mouthful, picturing the sea. Casting out long arms into the still water. I am naked, hair long as a fin down the pale spine ridge, flexible as a fish, the white profile against black waves, rising for air.
>
> A little light fiction [...]
>
> I read somewhere the trick is to keep breathing, make out it's not unnatural at all. They say it comes with practice. (*TKB* 235)

Naturalness here is itself a performance, 'a little light fiction'. Identity is a 'trick', an illusion, a self-deception, even, that takes practice. Joy is unlearning the stereotypes, and this image of swimming represents a unity of action that embodies a coherent strategy in the face of constant movement and change, a figure of self-sufficiency in the midst of the unknown. It is eerily resonant of Rosi Braidotti's image of new ways of thinking for feminist philosophers, 'free at last from the encumbering pursuit of completion, synthesis, fullness', where the only guiding thread is a 'tightrope stretched above the void'.[21]

Significantly, Joy is now much closer to occupying her body, in contrast with the alienated and split individual who watched herself from a corner in the opening of the novel. 'Whisky washes wide in my chest' (*TKB* 235) and 'inside the headphones I hear the rise and fall, the surf beating in my lungs' (*TKB* unnumbered page 236). She hears her voice saying 'I forgive you' and claims 'nobody needs to know I said it', an assertion that defies dependence on negative outside approval and authority. Joy's transformation

is complete, a narrative trick of self-sufficiency and unity on Galloway's part. Her escape from male definition involves the performance of opposition and an embracing of outsider status, a conclusion that is full of hope for the possibility of change. However, Joy's only positive engagement with men is with an ideal masculinity, a disarmed youthful projection of a man once again, if only accidentally, in the role of saviour. So as far as relations are concerned, the conclusion is also a utopian one, strangely enough for such a 'bleak' writer. Galloway's second novel continues the exploration of failed ideals and their consequences.

II: *Foreign Parts*

Galloway's second novel engages with the patriarchal metanarratives that underpin and define male power, including discourses of art and history. She relates these to the personal lives and everyday experiences of two women in another exercise of deconstruction. *Foreign Parts* is principally concerned with Cassie's disillusioned but clinging engagement with the ideals and expectations of traditional romance and gender relations. She finally comes to the realisation that 'fancying men and not liking them very much must be a common enough complaint' (*FP* 250), repeating Galloway's own thoughts on the subject. Late in the novel Cassie admits:

> I think I also have a problem getting over the training, all sorts of addictive shite I learned from fairy tales and bride dolls and out the Jackie and every bloody pop song since the year dot and godknows. I keep thinking Love is possible. That it might vincit omnia. (*FP* 249)

In exploring the consequences of this, the novel restates Angela McRobbie's assertion that 'breaking down the myth of romantic love which most women have been exposed to in popular culture – and in teen magazines as they used to be – has been necessary for

survival and for participating in a much crueller and more disappointing world'.[22] At the same time, Galloway admits in this narrative, with heartfelt candour, the difficulty of escaping the myths of romance.

The novel is, on one level, a parody of the 'romance plot', a subversion of the traditional story of courtship and marriage where 'a passive heroine only finds true happiness in submitting to a masterful male'.[23] Here there are no romantic heroes and the couple is a female one, though not romantically involved with each other. The narrative is concerned with undermining and ridiculing the conventions of romance, and this foregrounds the issue of representation that is a preoccupation of the novel. This is apparent in the distrust of dominant forms and discourses, and the concern with the instability of meanings, values, and power structures that the text exposes. Galloway begins here to explore more intently alternatives to masculinised discourses, by questioning objects and traditions, and by introducing alternative 'feminine' sensibilities.

Foreign Parts follows two female friends, Cassie and Rona, on a driving holiday in France. Narrated principally from Cassie's point of view, the journey takes them from a bad-tempered beginning to a reconciled end, passing along the way the cemeteries of the First World War, medieval cathedrals and chateaux, and lush French countryside. Cassie looks back on past romantic relationships as they drive, and this personal history is presented alongside the dominant male-centered European 'grand narrative' of History as represented in art, architecture and the memorials of war. Galloway juxtaposes these broad constructions of men and masculine dominance with the women's own experience of ex-lovers and men they encounter along the way. The comparison of the ideal and the

reality constitutes one method of breaking down romantic myths of patriarchal responsibility and male gallantry.

The notion of the grand narrative is undermined further by the disjunctions of the text which once again, like *The Trick*, resists the authority of any single discourse. It is not as fragmented as the first novel, and there are, for example, discrete and numbered chapters. But there are also three distinct 'levels': the main body of the text in which Cassie narrates the journey; excerpts from a (fictional) guidebook, 'Potted France', blocked off by linear boxes; and indented sections in which Cassie describes and comments on a series of photographs from previous holidays, mainly of her ex-boyfriend Chris. The prose is also interspersed with Galloway's familiar textual strategies of unfinished sentences, lists, blank pages and playful typography, for example, a whole page of columns of the word 'glass' to suggest an aspect of the cathedral at Chartres (*FP* 99). These interruptions intercept the grand narratives, dispersing their influence among the experiences of the women and their everyday dealings with men.

Though crucial to the romance myth, men to a large extent are absent in this novel. They are dead, as in Rona's war-hero grandfather, or virtual like Cassie's ex-boyfriend who is referred to only through photographs, or peripheral waiters and shopkeepers who are not engaged with beyond necessary functional communication. It is this lack of significant interaction between men and women that is the real absence here. Death, however, is a pervasive theme, and the vast war cemeteries of northern France are the initial focus of the women hoping to find a memorial of Rona's grandfather who died in the conflict in that region.

The opening 'chapter none' introduces the theme of the Great War. Here an unidentified child is described gleefully running away from her mother, past 'the stone soldier, the wee hat and the bayonet edged with streetlight on the corner. The War Memorial. A bayonet and a grey face. The real men outside Mario's not needing to be worried about because you were past.' (*FP* 000). This is a sharp juxtaposition, where the war memorial presents an image of a heroic masculinity to be revered, courageous in victory and death, but the 'bayonet edged with streetlight' suggests the insubstantial, representational nature of that masculinity. The calcified ideal is also a static figure, inaccessible to the living men who are 'not needing to be worried about', oblivious to the child's misbehaviour. The men's authority, founded on images like the War Memorial, is in question here.

It is the mother who restrains the child, 'with a face like the moon coming down over your shoulder [...] and her hand pressing you down so the shoulder jars and it is no longer possible to keep going' (*FP* 00). Her mother then tells her that her father has died: 'Do you hear what I say? Your daddy's died. He's dead. The man you visit at Aunty Nora's, his sister Nora is your Aunty Nora and he is your daddy that you visit on Sundays. That man. Is it that man she means? [...] You've no daddy anymore' (*FP* 0). This scene sets a tone of confused relations which further undermines male authority and, like *The Trick*, questions the notion of the traditional family. Like the soldier, the 'father' is dead and no longer relevant. The final image of that chapter suggests that the solid and isolated masculine ideal is being eroded, just as the sea is surrounding the metal girders of the bridge, 'Washing solid iron into atoms' (*FP* 0).

This opening section introduces the preoccupation with how contemporary men live up to the romantic myths of masculinity. The dead soldiers of the First World War provide one point of comparison for present day men. When Rona's grandfather wrote to his wife 'I hope to be spared to come back & to do more for you than I have in the Past' (*FP* 244), Cassie, as if talking from experience, cannot help but judge him harshly ('he maybe never would have acted on it anyway' (*FP* 245)), though she also sympathises ('Then he never got to act on it. The whole thing is hellish'). Male identity is ambiguous in the soldier's letter. He was previously selfish perhaps, but now he is humble, candid and possibly remorseful.

In the women's present experience such ambiguity is not a possibility. For example, 'Frenchmen were supposed to be suave. They were supposed to have close-shaved chins and mesomorphic outlines, suggestion of muscle rippling under the polo shirt material [...] But there were only these four men with stains and a rude bugger needing a shave' (*FP* 24). In a similarly deflated vein, Cassie's 'deconstruction' of her relationship with Chris continues nearly throughout the novel in her commentary on a series of holiday photos that chart their relationship from beginning to end and beyond. One critic melodramatically describes this process as 'a time-lapse sequence showing the slow slaughter of a sexist pig'.[24] But here at least Chris condemns himself, as his behaviour and motivations are exposed by the searing gaze of Cassie's hindsight.

Chris's eligibility for the status of romantic hero is fundamentally undermined by Cassie's recounting of one incident. On holiday in Istanbul Cassie is humiliated when, wearing a mini-skirt to please her boyfriend, she is followed down the street by a growing pack of catcalling men: Chris 'spat and said YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN' (*FP* 142),

leaving her to extricate herself from the situation by eventually purchasing and donning a kaftan. In the light of such incidents Cassie is candid and does not retreat from the fact of women's collusion in the shoring up of masculine pride, their own retreat into complementary supportive feminine roles. She admits that she let Chris live under the illusion of his being in control, that they never got lost because of his great sense of direction, for example (*FP* 80). She says of one photograph of her washing clothes by the roadside in Greece:

> When his things got dirty he'd stand there looking down at them regretfully and I was meant to come to the rescue. I didn't mind, I suppose. I mean I did like something about it, the washing and the open air. It made me feel part of a tradition of women doing the same thing: stoic and purposeful or some such rubbish. Scarf tying my hair back. Probably to hide the fact that it needed a wash. He said it made me look Greek. Ancient Greek. Jesus though look at me. I'm only twenty-nine and look at me. Bashing shirts off the roadside with that grim determination on my face. I look so bloody old in it. (*FP* 111)

Here Cassie provides a re-interpretation of the event. She admits that at the time she enjoyed the air of essential femininity that washing clothes lent her, but with hindsight she can see her own self-delusion. Now the tradition and the stoicism she associated with it are dismissed as rubbish, her purposeful poise is really grim determination, and even any romantic veneer to be salvaged from the Ancient Greek joke is destroyed by its redefinition as just 'bloody old'. This commentary amounts to a feminist rewriting, redefining the traditional gender roles and emphasising them as performances.

On a larger scale, Cassie and Rona struggle to define their relationship with the grand narratives of history, as encountered in the contexts of WW1 cemeteries and the art of medieval cathedrals. Puzzled by the benign demeanour of some of the sculpted figures making up a frieze at Chartres cathedral, Cassie forces herself to remember that 'You

couldn't afford to let the beauty of the thing seduce you too far or you forgot the truth and the truth was always hard as iron bloody bars. Because to produce something like this people had been broken into bits' (*FP* 96). And her sceptical perception of other features is heightened when she reads in the guidebook that, 'the archivolts show the seven liberal arts, depicted twofold: allegorically by women and historically by the men considered to be the outstanding exponents of each art' (*FP* 93). This is just one example of the peripheral postion of women in terms of history and its construction of an 'authentic' reality. When they are not mythical or 'allegorical', women are objects of art and history, and often idealised in this vision.

> The Musée de Beaux Arts [...] says it has a fine selection of paintings from every European tradition. We see only paintings by the men of that tradition. They've painted lots of women to make up. There is a
>
> Woman (attrib)
>
> Woman at a mirror
>
> Woman at her toilette (pastel)
>
> [...]
>
> Woman on her deathbed [...]
>
> Culture fatigue, she says. I vote we go back to the room and look at each other. (*FP* 239-40)

This narrative is countered by Cassie's photos where Chris is trapped in representation, defined and bounded by Cassie who is, in her own way, turning the tables on centuries of male representation of women. We can see Man here reduced to the hapless Chris, just as Woman is singularly represented in the paintings. This ridiculous proposition illustrates the reductive and objectifying premises of western art regarding women. If Galloway's intention is to highlight the manipulation of representation and undermine its aspiration to 'truth', she succeeds, and consequently brings male

disapproval upon herself (for instance, Tom Shone's melodramatic description of the 'slaughter of the sexist pig', and in the same review his call for Galloway to relinquish what he disparagingly labels her 'feminist baggage'). Galloway's reversal of the subject/object, male artist/female model relation of western art activates a female agency denied and suppressed in the grand narratives, and hers is an alternative perspective that provides hope of escaping the limitations of the masculinised model of representation.

The gender relations found in the metanarratives of art and history are reflected in the everyday relations of Cassie and Rona with men. Galloway is careful to draw these parallels, between the representational, the political and the social. In the novel the women, especially Cassie, search for escape from these grand narratives and ultimately the text poses Cassie and Rona themselves as an alternative. In the repeated mantra 'Cassie and Rona/Rona and Cassie' Galloway suggests an equality between them that challenges the traditional hierarchies of relationships and representation. This may suggest that they are interchangeable, but, as the novel illustrates, this would be a mistaken premise.

As usual in Galloway's work, this is not a harmonious female relationship. It is full of antagonism, even though they have been friends for a long time. They are not at all similar, in appearance, temperament or lifestyle choices, though they do work together in a welfare organisation. From the beginning of the novel Cassie is bad tempered, full of criticism for Rona and self-consciously isolating herself, refusing to engage with anyone or anything. She wonders 'how it would be if [Rona] hit the accelerator instead of the brake' (*FP* 1) as they drive onto the ferry to begin their trip to France; she describes how 'you were always on your own with Rona' (*FP* 4); she observes that 'occasionally you

looked at Rona and you remembered she was another person. Someone else entirely' (*FP* 53). For her part, Cassie either tries to dominate the relationship, or feels dominated by Rona.

Though uncomfortable and dissatisfied with the prevailing world view, Cassie is always seeking to replace masculinised grand narratives with alternative but similar ones, desiring to define and delimit experience in a familiar way. She wants rational knowledge that can explain and encompass everything, in the tradition of science and reason. She is constantly searching for answers to impossible questions. In comparison Rona usually has a different angle on life. 'What are we doing here?' asks an existentially preoccupied Cassie, and Rona replies simply, 'We're On Holiday' (*FP* 63). Again and again Cassie interrogates her; 'what do WE think we're doing? What are we looking at it FOR Rona is what I'm asking you. What investment do we think we're making here? What's it meant to MEAN? [...] looking at all that OLD STUFF in there [...] I want to know why [...] If we have any choice' (*FP* 184-5). Rona's response is to embrace uncertainty:

> It's ok not to know what it's for. Just like it while you're doing it: let yourself enjoy looking at nice things. It's ok to not give yourself a hard time every so often. It's called relaxing, Cassie. You might as well ask what's a bee for. It's not for anything: it's just there. Just allow yourself to let it be there. Try to enjoy it. Ok? (*FP* 186)

Eventually Cassie comes to value the contrast between them. Rona is 'limitless, fearless of mortality. Boundless as a cracked egg' (*FP* 194), everything Cassie is not. Rona's alternative way of seeing the world helps Cassie to break down her limited perception, freeing her from her blinkered and obsessive mental processes, as figured in one late scene:

> Slim white shaft, bulbous green tip. It was a marzipan penis, septic colour glittering faintly with icing sugar. Cassie looked at it hard. Then she looked at Rona.
>
> Rona why did you buy me this?
>
> Souvenir, she said. I nearly got you an artichoke but they were too dear. That was nicer anyway. I bet you thought it was a bluebell but it's not. Asparagus.
>
> Cassie looked back down, watching the penis metamorphose. Not completely but enough. Asparagus. She shrugged her eyebrows, bit the tip off the sweet and rolled it in her mouth, offered the remaining piece to Rona. (*FP* 207)

Rona subverts Cassie's preoccupation with men and sex ('There is definitely a weakness in that area' (*FP* 249)). Whether the comestible is a penis disguised as asparagus, or vice versa, the singularity of representation and meaning is undermined here as the primary signifier, the all-powerful phallus, is obscured and ridiculed, reduced to a sweet eaten by the women. Like a parody of a pagan consumption ritual where the power of the totem is ingested and appropriated, this scene confirms the women as lighthearted agents of an irreverent iconoclasm.

Significantly, the novel offers alternative routes for female sexuality and pleasure. In one particularly charged episode Rona takes Cassie on an 'adventure':

> Sex. We let them [men] away with it because there seems to be no alternative and it's so hard not to want
>
> > different skin, the way the hair thins out at the top of the thighs into perfect smoothness before the pubic hair begins to crowd in, thicker, deep and
>
> Rona this isn't the right way.
>
> [...]
>
> Outside was just sunflowers. Squares of countryside choking with them: great fireballs facing up to the sky [...]

> Cassie could feel heartbeat pulsing in her wrists, adrenalin trying to steady itself and failing. Her mouth was opening and closing, breath suddenly stuck in the gullet. Just commercial crops but still. They were flowers as well. Designed to attract. The open petals and the chests bursting out like that, all this raw sex in the middle of the French countryside. (*FP* 172)

This scene takes Cassie away from her male fixated fantasies and replaces them with a more diffuse orgasmic sensibility. The flowers, like women, are 'designed to attract', but the power of sexual desire signified by 'open petals' and 'chests bursting out' should not be underestimated as mere trappings of attraction. Cassie's arousal is liberating, symbolic of an escape from the traditional limitations of female pleasure, a discovery of a freedom to define her own sexual object. A short while later the reinscription of the phallus as 'a windmill on the horizon [...] getting bigger, poking into the skyline' (*FP* 173) suggests its power is an illusion; windmills are, after all, what Don Quixote mistook for monsters in that parody of the medieval romance. Cassie revels in her new vision: 'Look at this place, Rona. Pure filth'. The transformed landscape is a bawdy joke confirmed by Rona's 'dirtiest laugh in the world', the subversive, liberating laughter of women.

This scene, particularly, characterises the novel as a subversive parody of the romance plot. On the one hand, it appears to invoke stereotypes equating women with nature and the Earth by linking their desire with flowers and natural imagery, positing nature as an escape from oppressive masculinised structures. But this is also a parodic use of such imagery, making of it an opportunity for the subversion of the dominant structures, not a model of a permanent alternative. This is indicated by Cassie and Rona's laughter. After all, the parody of the romance is foregrounded. Here we have a couple, but they are female, an obsession with heterosexuality, but its failings not its

success, and women actively escaping the limits this model places on female pleasure. Ultimately anyone approximating the male romantic hero is constantly displaced and discredited, so the novel cannot end in marriage. But Cassie furthers the subversion of the romance model when, towards the end of the narrative, she makes a proposal to Rona that they live together: 'We could make a go of it ourselves. Look after each other [...] Cut costs, save fuel, half the time you spend washing up; enjoy stimulating conversation and witty exchange at any time of the day or night with an in-house companion' (*FP* 251). This would indeed prove to be a kind of unification between the two women.

Rona's reaction is initially silence, then 'mild rasping noise' that eventually resolves into nothing more significant than snoring. Any idealistic sentimentality threatened by this turn in the relationship is convincingly negated by this snoring, as is any notion of an easy and satisfying alternative to the romance. As if to undermine Cassie's resolve, she hears the couple in the next hotel room having sex; for her, however distant and unhealthy the heterosexual relationship is ('Heterosexuality, Rona. A sick joke right enough'), it is also part of an ever-present, palpable desire for sexual intimacy with men. In contrast, Rona asserts that 'I don't miss anything [about men]. Not since I grew up' (*FP* 247), that they 'use up too much energy' and 'need a lot of attention' and 'I suppose there's other things I'd rather be doing' (*FP* 246).

This female couple is never resolved into an easy unity, and the differences between them remain. But these are now interesting, constitutive, constructive, an ever-present focus. The final image in the novel summarises this new, evolving relationship: 'Rona and me. We stand in separate places, looking out over water that is just water' (*FP* 262). This scene reminds us of the beginning of the novel where water washed 'solid iron into

atoms'. There the importance of water is emphasised as it signifies the triumph of liquid over solid and movement over stasis. Here the iron is gone and between Cassie and Rona 'water is just water' and the unyielding man-made construction is no longer present. Power struggles over definition are not urgent and the women agree that 'water is just water' from their different viewpoints. The agreement between them is a point of unity that promotes a positive relationship rather than an antagonistic one, and the image of unity they present is multiple, not singular, based on difference not sameness. This is a relationship which recognises the importance of the 'dialogic relation with the other' as Craig describes it,[25] one that is a prime illustration of the reconstructive impulse in Galloway's work.

The close of *Foreign Parts* is an imagining of a community in Cassie and Rona, one that is figured as female. This is an alternative to, say, Kelman's male community, but Galloway insists that this is not separatism by the presence of another sensitive young man, an Algerian student the women meet on the beach at the close of the novel. He does not speak English so communication is difficult, yet contact beyond words is made: when they ask his name 'his face is luminous with pleasure'; when they shake hands Cassie observes that 'he's warmer than me and still frozen' (*FP* 259), two things at once, acknowledged similarity and difference. This meeting could be a model for positive male/female relations in Galloway as there is foreignness but also openness, difficulty in communication but a relationship that can be worked at, and vulnerability. The young man represents unthreatening difference, unthreatening masculinity and he suggests the possibility of new relations.

In this these young, hopeful male figures resemble Rona. She is never central but also never an object in the text. She is too much of an unknown quantity to be fully defined by Cassie, to be fully familiar and therefore objectified. For example, at the end of the novel Cassie is lamenting the conclusion of *Madame Bovary* which she has just finished reading. Rona replies with some succinct analysis: 'Flaubert sets her up. Charles as well. He constructed them to keep their field of possibilities as narrow as possible. All that stuff about women who read certain kinds of novels, literary point-scoring' (*FP* 255). Rona deals 'romance' a blow, pointing to its constructed nature, indicating that she 'got over the training and addictive shite' long ago. Cassie can only 'look at her, astonished. Rona and her secrets. I don't know the half'. This is part of the process of their relationship, the constituting differences that are never fully overcome. The same can be said of the young men, that they are familiar yet unknown, leaving them neither objectifying or objectified by the text. Galloway is pointing towards an equality within and beyond gender difference.

III: *Clara*

In *Clara*, Galloway relates the life of Clara Schumann, the celebrated nineteenth-century concert pianist whose life and reputation have been overshadowed by that of her husband, the composer Robert Schumann. The novel is modelled on Robert's song cycle 'Frauen Liebe und Leben' ('Women's Love and Life'). Galloway's preoccupation with the life of Clara Schumann first saw light as a collaboration on a performance with the composer Sally Beamish which aimed to 'feminise' the eight song cycle and update its 'antique meanings': 'For the woman in the song, for example, life only starts with the love of a man and ends when he dies.'[26] Along with this aim, the inside-cover notes of *Clara* state

that the novel is 'dismissing the clichés of Great Art and scathing in its rejection of the romantic conflation of Madness and Creativity', a conception that Galloway elsewhere calls 'a stupid, elitist notion'.[27] In *Clara*, then, Galloway continues to undermine romance, but also deconstructs nineteenth-century notions of creativity and the heroic, usually male, model of the artist that Romanticism promoted, and which prevail in the present. She is 'writing about the process of creativity from another perspective – the female creator's perspective'.[28] The text concentrates on the struggle to create amid domestic and personal chaos, highlighting the mundane nature of the process as an antithesis to the mania and depression of, in this case Robert Schumann's, mental illness. For Galloway, creativity may be an escape from insanity, but not a product of it.

Clara is a historical novel. After a short prologue, the novel covers four decades of Clara's life, progressing from her childhood to Robert's death. She is a musical prodigy, the daughter of Friederich Wieck, a piano teacher in Leipzig who moulds her talent into a showcase for both their skills. He is an obsessively controlling man who directs her career from an early age as she tours Europe giving concerts to great acclaim. For all his efforts, Wieck spectacularly fails to stop Clara marrying Robert Schumann, a pupil of his. The marriage is soon clouded by Robert's precarious mental health, and he often succumbs to the mania and paranoia that debilitate him and eventually, after a failed suicide attempt, cause him to commit himself to an institution for the last three years of his life. Besides supporting Robert in the practicalities of everyday life, Clara is also the greatest enthusiast and promoter of his work, all the while maintaining her own career, forced as she is into the position of breadwinner for the family of eight children. That she

outlived her husband by many years and continued performing until the end of her life is hinted at in the prologue, but the novel ends at the time of Schumann's death.

As in the previous novels, Galloway questions patriarchal authority and emphasises the failure of patriarchal ideals. The protection of women in return for their submission to male dominance is particularly undermined; they are more likely to be dominated and exploited, and in Clara's case, left to their own devices when their male partners are unable to fulfil their patriarchal role. In this the historical nature of the text is significant, being set in the nineteenth century, an era of increasing political and ideological oppression of women. In *Foreign Parts* Cassie and Rona observed the masculine grand narratives of history and art from a contextual distance, in a foreign country and from the contemporary vantage point of their own political and economic independence. In *Clara*, Galloway takes the reader inside those grand narratives, where women lived subject to the abstract and practical constrictions of male-dominated social reality. Through meticulous research of the lives of the Schumanns, their work, their writings in journals and letters, their own literary and musical influences, Galloway attempts to recreate their lives. But instead of situating them in the broad canvas of those grand narratives she focuses closely on Clara and the day-to-day potential and limitations of her life, that of a woman who was also a leading artist. This aim is suggested by the cover of the novel which shows a tight close-up of one half of Clara's face from a portrait painted in 1840. The magnified perspective emphasises the broken texture of the painted surface which resolves into an eye and one half of a nose and mouth, illustrating the less than smooth and unitary surface of a painting, and a life, when examined closely. Such is Galloway's method in dispelling the grand myths of creativity and the production of art.

In *The Trick* and *Foreign Parts* the protagonists are somewhat isolated. Joy Stone is alienated from a community that has rejected and negated her existence, and she withdraws into a destructive cycle of self-loathing. Cassie and Rona are on holiday in France and do not intimately engage with their surroundings, but maintain a visitors' distance. In contrast, Clara is embedded in her community and it is impossible to imagine her outside those intimate relations through which she lives her life. Galloway attempts to create that community in deliberately producing a polyphonic novel, a text that dispenses with a single narrator and moves between a trio of characters: Clara herself, her father Friedrich Wieck, and her husband Robert. The free indirect prose mediates the voices of friends, family and the community itself, directed through these three individuals. Sue Vice describes this Bakhtinian strategy: 'In a novel, particularly a polyphonic one [...] the whole point is to keep the different viewpoints consistently distinct, even though each viewpoint is partly constructed out of utterances and words from others'.[29] For example, often the collective voice of the community is directly mimicked:

> Herr Wieck has a fine house, a busy house. It sits on the slope of a hill, is solid and dry. Anyone can show you where it is, over the warehouse. He makes his living from Steins [...] He holds *soirées* where all sorts turn up [...] His wife ran away, it's true [...] but they'll say this: she left with good reviews [...] He's the best teacher in Leipzig – in Saxony! Anyone will tell you. (*C* 39)

Here Wieck is recounting the image he wants to believe the community has of him. The tone of gossip puts him inside and outside that community and his opinion of himself and the public opinion of him are so entwined here it is difficult to know which is which. He tempers the unavoidable negative aspects ('his wife ran away, it's true') with positive assertions of his status. But the negative is reiterated in order to assert the positive, and

in this way the wider public opinion seeps through his arrogant construction of himself and he is inextricably immersed in his relation with the community.

Galloway's prose suggests a continuous relationship between individuals and community, and between the individuals themselves as it flows unheralded between the three consciousnesses. Though the text is punctuated by lists, letters, poems and musical notation in typical Galloway style, such disturbance is not as common in *Clara*, which is twice as long as the previous novels. The strategy does not produce the same discursive tension as the fractured juxtapositions of form that characterise those other texts, here serving communication between the characters. The presence of music notation particularly highlights a fundamental theme of the novel, the close relation of art and life, and art's intimate entwining with the conduct of everyday life:

> Three house moves in seven months. Eight concerts in six. Even the houses were strange. How are we to stop making war with our neighbours with such huge windows? she complained. Every sound will carry. And so it did. Street hawkers woke them at five, and cabbies' iron-wheeled scraping kept them open-eyed till late. Every maidservant was sour, every cook smart-mouthed. On the positive side, the string section was good. The strings were very good indeed. (*C* 336)

The novel emphasises interdependence and coexistence, of art and life, and of individuals. The plurality of voices signifies the importance of others, and a dialogic process of self-awareness through which an individual develops. For instance, on her first concert tour without her father, travelling alone, Clara experiences the loss of the affirmation of significant relations. 'She learned not to look for father's face when the applause came, learned to stop it hurting that only strangers looked back' (*C* 167).

Clara engages with a community, differentiating it from Galloway's previous work, and, for the first time in her novels, the text enters a male consciousness. For the most

part, particularly with Robert, this is a sympathetic portrayal that illustrates the failure of patriarchal ideals from a male perspective. Wieck, the dominating and controlling father, while training Clara for a career, also exploits her for the good of his own reputation and status as a music teacher. In developing the child prodigy he also inflates his own self-regard. This is illustrated by the diary that he starts writing for his daughter, ostensibly in her voice: '*Father deserves my greatest devotion and gratitude for his ceaseless efforts on my behalf*, he writes – no sense of irony at all' (*C* 61). When Clara, still in her teens, decides to marry Robert he does his best to stop the marriage. 'Clara was already spoken for, he said. Art had spoken for her [...] no real artist – Schumann considered himself an *artist*, did he not? – would wish upon the object of his love the obscurity which would undoubtedly follow their marriage' (*C* 136-7). Eventually the struggle between Clara and her father becomes more desperate as both become more determined.

> He will bury your playing! he roars as she closes her bedroom door. Even without conscious effort! He will burden you with financial cares and ruin all my hopes! He rattles the handle, furious at the sound of her turning a lock. He will foist children upon you! Make you nothing more than a breeding cow! And what then, lady? Without a penny from me, what then? (*C* 145)

Wieck's protest over his impending loss of control over his daughter eventually reaches hysterical levels of abuse against the young composer, and Robert wins a slander case against him in the courts, paving the way for his marriage to Clara.

The relationship between Clara and Robert comes to revolve around Robert's mental illness, and after the dramatic and romantic beginnings of their love affair Clara realises that 'there was no avoiding and no cure, none even hinted. And this as a picture of their future shocked her to the bone [...] that the gift of love alone was not, would never be, enough' (*C* 245, 6). Galloway systematically undermines any aura of romance that clings

to this relationship, just as she dispels any notion of Robert's illness being the source of his art. 'It is when he cannot write that he is [...] downhearted' says Clara at one point. 'But when he works, when the ideas carry him along, he stays awake and thinks too wildly' returns his friend Reuter (*C* 243). It seems from whichever perspective, it is Robert's relationship with his work, too little or too much, that determines his mental health, but his instability does not enable him to be productive. Galloway deliberately aims to discredit that Romantic notion of the troubled creative genius, emphasising the relationship of art and life.

Robert is an artist obsessed with death, a fear that makes him worry to the point of distraction about mortality, aging and decay. 'Now there was not a day that passed without his awareness that the time in which to attain Transcendence in any shape or form was melting; not a day without feeling he would die unannounced and unattended, without having written his best, that he would die believing his suffering had meant nothing after all' (*C* 277). This concern with transcendence marks a need to escape the physical world, the feminine realm of the body and the mundane everyday. It belies a desire for control of life and death, for a glorious demise and subsequent immortality. In this, Robert's is a masculine crisis of creativity.

Clara's problems with creativity are inevitably different. Not only has she to accommodate herself to the running of the family and the household, the consecutive pregnancies. She also has to be attentive to Robert's needs, both of his work and his moods. One scene in the novel sees her placing a shawl under the hammers of her piano, damping the strings so that they make no sound to disturb him. She plays, 'imagining the grandeur of the sound that should have been there' (*C* 205). Clara's is a very modern

choice between career and family. Her father is correct in his analysis: marriage does stultify her creativity. For all his bullying, he does realise the near impossibility for a woman to have both relationship and career at that time. And so *Clara* is an account of the stifling limitations of the life of a female artist. For Clara herself, her not so modern choice is actually between two men who both make demands and limit her selfhood. Her domineering father dictates every aspect of her life from her music programme to the dress she wears. Robert is increasingly ill, becoming helpless to the point of an inability to engage in everyday life, and needing constant care and attention, just like his children. Away from the total submissiveness demanded by Wieck, she takes on the sole burden of supporting her and Robert's family, touring alone to earn money, arranging opportunities for Robert, the necessary house moves and domestic routines. Galloway does not shy away from the sometimes gruesome detail of Clara's complex vocation as she enlarges on her life. At one point the text finds Clara deliberately playing a concert soon after a miscarriage:

> Clara wished to play. Sitting on inch-thick towelling and a constant slither of blood-clots, her face white but composed enough, she played a concert as soon as it could be set up for some local hall, and for not much more than the asking. She would have worn black in case of staining but had brought none, so maroon served. Maroon, she decided was practical. (*C* 292)

While playing Clara feels most like herself, away from the limitations, the grief, and the guilt of everyday life. In a crisis she reconstructs herself through music and performance, 'gripping the piano lid for support and finding it' (*C* 293).

Clara's formidable self-control and assertiveness in her own and her family's promotion make her a masculinised figure in contrast with her tragically unwell husband, and even her father in his hysterical loss of temper over her marriage. But Galloway

emphasises from the outset the prevailing material conditions that work against Clara's agency, setting out the social parameters of femininity as physical ones. Nowhere is this more evident than in the conventions of women's dress, the thirteen layers of clothes listed in the prologue that wait to be worn by Clara, that cause her to wish that the weather will not swelter or rain and bring mud. Fully attired, 'She crosses the room in this dress heavy as slate, its drag at her legs unsteadying' (*C* 6). Everything in a woman's environment seems calculated to physically limit her and provoke her stasis, inevitably producing the appearance of female passivity. Echoing this, the short prologue ends with Clara sitting at the window as 'she has nothing to do but wait' (*C* 7). The text is in fact framed by this image as this is also the final sentence of the novel, with Clara at the window of Robert's hospital room in the moments after his death.

But if the close of the novel returns the reader to the beginning, the text does not in fact end where it began. The prologue gives us an older Clara who has been living and working since Robert's death (she died in 1896, forty years after her husband). This gap between the beginning and end projects Clara beyond the pages of the novel and the confines of the original song cycle. The text gives the lie to the passive posture of waiting with which it is framed; Clara is mother and worker, wife and breadwinner, an artist in her own right. She constructs her self and her life through her relationships with others and with music. It is a life of unceasing activity that can be summed up concisely in her own description of a Schumann sonata: 'Proof that sheer effort of will could construct a wholeness where none existed' (*C* 289). The control of passion 'is the medium through which all else flows' (*C* 5) and it is through her control of the groundless and chaotic flux of life and art that Clara survives. In this she echoes Joy

Stone in her taking control of the raw material of her own life at the end of *The Trick*. The reconstruction of Clara in the prologue chronologically follows the deconstruction of the rest of the novel.

Also echoing the previous novels, the young composer Johannes Brahms appears towards the end of the narrative, initially as a musical disciple of both Clara and Robert. This passionate, naïve young man, 'her hapless boy', supports Clara through the final years of her troubled marriage. She was, 'she realised, appalled by her own stupidity, half in love with Johannes Brahms' but decides that she 'must not be so free in his company again' (*C* 412). In the novel their relationship is sublimated into a space for the preservation and promotion of the iconic status of Robert Schumann and his work. In this it is a utopian construction on Galloway's part as Brahms is a chaste substitute for Robert, whose legacy lives on through their relationship. Galloway says in an interview: 'In their letters they called Robert HE like he was God. You don't screw God's wife, you just don't.'[30] As in all these novels, the young man in *Clara* represents a relationship that is a possibility rather than a reality.

Galloway attempts to rehabilitate men in the form of these youths, but they signify an ideal and perhaps desirable masculinity. It is as if the death of the father is necessary to find faith in these 'sons'; traditional masculinity must be discredited and destroyed before new relations are possible. This situation is reminiscent, perhaps, of Freud's imagined scene of the origins of religion in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). Here the selfish and possessive father who refuses to share his power and his women with his sons is killed by them, then eaten in a cannibalistic meal symbolic of their appropriation of his power. This 'totemic meal' represents both celebration and mourning. As already mentioned in

the Introduction, Rosi Braidotti refers to this scene when she writes about possibilities and consequences of change in social, especially gender, relations.

> My point is that the new is created by revisiting and burning up the old. Like the totemic meal recommended by Freud, you have to assimilate the dead before you can move on to a new order [...] We need rituals of burial and mourning for the dead, including and especially the ritual of burial of the Woman that was [...] We need to take collectively the time for the mourning of the old socio-symbolic contract.[31]

For Galloway, the 'Man that was' also needs to be mourned as women give voice to and overcome their own sense of loss at the decline of patriarchy. Such a process is necessary if change is to be successful.

Conversely, the situation at the conclusion of these novels may be altogether more selfish, as these youths assuage the loss felt by Galloway's women at the decline of the patriarchal ideal. Or this may simply be another power reversal. These young men are 'blank slates', easily manipulated by the older women. Men who represent more traditional and dominating forms of masculinity are cast aside, no longer relevant or desirable. If this is the case, male critics like Tom Shone do have something to fear from Galloway's discrediting and rejection of the traditional masculine ideal. The mourning for the old masculinity in these novels assumes that it is already dead and moves women on to the celebration of their own self-fashioning and relations on their own terms. This leaves the general population of men out of the equation and it is now up to them to catch up and adapt to these changes.

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Between them, *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, *Foreign Parts* and *Clara* chart the decline of patriarchy and the credibility of the metanarratives of masculinism that support

patriarchal power relations. Galloway's fiction explores the effects of this decline on women who themselves have emotional investment in patriarchal models of relations and desire. The difficulty in escaping these structures often characterises Galloway's narratives as painfully negative portrayals of women's lives. But ultimately they reach the feminist conclusions of a faith in self-invention and the definitive importance of positive relations in constituting identity. In this they are both deconstructive and reconstructive texts. Most importantly they undermine male dominance, through the ridicule and parody of male authority, the debunking of traditional grand narratives, and feminist rewriting. Equally, these texts undermine the masculinised model of the self, promoting an ungrounded and performance based mode of identity that leaves open the possibility of radical self-invention. In this thorough deconstruction of patriarchal power the only way of including men is in the idealised youthful figures that bear hope for future gender relations. Galloway's message would appear to be that the old models must go before the new ones can take hold. This is a pessimistic scenario for men stuck in the old ways; their chances of changing are seen as non-existent here. They will die out before they adapt, while the women will always survive. This vision is perhaps a slightly simplistic and utopian (or alternatively heartless and impatient) outcome to the complexity of contemporary gender relations. But it is a vision that understands it is not up to women to save men from themselves. Exploring other possible outcomes of the deep entanglement of desire and identity in gender relations is left to others.

Chapter 3: Being Between – Passing and the Limits of Subverting Masculinity in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*

Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* (1998) explores the idea of identity as performance, particularly in the relationship between masculinity and men. Here Kay poses the question 'what makes a man?', and in doing so exposes the far from secure boundaries of maleness. *Trumpet* is a novel about passing, the practice of an individual successfully living a role not deemed appropriate or natural for that individual. Joss Moody, the central character of *Trumpet*, is a man who is 'discovered' to have the body of a woman on his death. The story of his successful passing is based loosely on the infamous life, or more exactly death, of a lesser known American jazz musician, Billy Tipton. When he died in 1989 Tipton was revealed to have the body of a woman, although he had lived his life as a man, including marrying several times and being the father of three adopted sons. Kay takes the paradigm of the cross-dressed musician for her novel, incorporating several small details from the reports of Tipton's death.[1] But she makes the story her own by writing Joss as biracial and Scottish, and switching Tipton's piano for a more phallic trumpet. Through this approach the text itself appropriates a middle space, somewhere between reality and fiction, documentary and storytelling. This is an appropriate gesture for a protagonist who questions the boundaries between categories.

Passing is a state of being between. In the case of black or biracial people passing as white, or women passing as men (or vice versa), for example, the naturalised racial and gender identities that form the foundation of social hierarchies are undermined. Linda Schlossberg writes, 'If passing wreaks havoc with accepted systems of social recognition

and cultural intelligibility, it also blurs the carefully marked lines of race, gender, and class, calling attention to the ways in which identity categories intersect, overlap, construct, and deconstruct one another.'[2] This is particularly true of *Trumpet*. Kay's questioning of 'what makes a man' exposes the contradictions in masculinity and also in the practice of passing itself.

In an essay on the representation of transgender people, Judith Halberstam notes that transgender biography, that is, both fictional and non-fictional accounts of people who 'refuse normative gender categories', often 'recasts the act of passing as deception, dishonesty, and fraud'.[3] In texts such as Diane Middlebrook's biography of Tipton, *Suits Me: The Double Life of Billy Tipton* (1998), passing is characterised as a lie that masks the 'truth' of the 'real' identity, an interpretation that morally denounces the transgender subject in terms of eccentricity, doubleness, oddness and self-hatred, 'as if other lives – gender normative lives – were not odd, not duplicitous, not doubled and contradictory at every turn'.[4] Like Halberstam, Kay questions whether there is a 'true' identity that is hidden by the act of passing. They both investigate how the phenomenon of passing affects the status of authentically 'real' naturalised and dominant identities, and what the consequences are for the established hierarchy of social relations.

Jackie Kay's writing is deeply concerned with questions of identity, often ones that emerge from her own life and relationships. She is a Scottish writer who no longer lives in Scotland. 'Tired of having to assert herself as a black person in Scotland' Kay now lives in Manchester but maintains a relationship with the country of her birth, not only creatively in her work but emotionally: 'I love the country, but I don't know if the country loves me.'[5] It is a relationship at the border and Kay's writing thrives on liminal

identities. She is herself a biracial lesbian, born in Edinburgh to a Scottish mother and a Nigerian father, adopted by a white couple and brought up in Glasgow. But rather than appropriating a marginal position dictated by 'outsider' status, Kay's work deals instead with a space more accurately characterised as simultaneously inside and outside the mainstream. This is an in-between space, essentially uncertain but also a potentially domesticated realm where love and fulfilment are always possible if not always achieved. In contrast with James Kelman's outsiders, or the misfits in the work of another of her contemporaries, A. L. Kennedy, Kay's protagonists refuse the margins. For example, in the poem 'In My Country' the speaker answers the suspicious question '*Where are you from?*' with '"Here", I said, "Here. These parts".'[6] Where Kennedy often highlights the extraordinary lives of ordinary people, Kay emphasises the opposite, 'how so called extraordinary people can live ordinary lives'.[7] In both cases the existence of the 'ordinary' is both doubted and asserted.

A major theme throughout Kay's work is the questioning of dominant models of social relations, especially ones that encourage racism, the primacy of blood ties, and the naturalisation of heterosexuality. Her biracial inheritance means that issues around 'belonging' are especially significant. The title sequence of her prizewinning volume of poetry *The Adoption Papers* (1991) relates the story of the adoption of a biracial baby girl by a white Scottish couple from the viewpoint of the adoptive mother, the birth mother and the girl herself. The significance of blood is undermined in the consideration of issues of motherhood. 'Closer than blood. Thicker than water. Me and my daughter' says the adoptive mother.[8] And finally, as she waits for a letter from her birth mother, the daughter finds herself dwelling not on what her birth mother looks like, but 'whether

she'll underline First Class / or have a large circle over her '*i*'s.'[9] Representation substitutes for physical being, an admission that all relations are mediated and that even biological mothers are not naturally knowable. Blood ties are not necessarily more significant or different to other relations.

An early play, *Twice Over* (1988), also questions the priority of blood relations. It focuses on the lesbian relationship between two older women and the secrecy in which they have lived their lives. When one of them dies, the role of the bereaved partner is slowly recognised as their secret is revealed, and she is allowed to take her privileged place in the rituals of mourning. Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* similarly deals with issues of bereavement in illicit relationships. Kay's theatre piece does in fact contain themes and events that resurface in *Trumpet*: the central character is already dead at the opening; the central relationship hides a secret, which is only revealed after the death; there is a slow coming to terms with the situation by a family member formerly ignorant. Also both texts foreground a concern with the issue of representation: in the play it is Cora's self-narration through her diaries that is given precedence; in the novel, Joss's carefully constructed self-invention is at risk from sensationalist tabloid exploitation.

Conversely, there is also a significant difference between the two. In *Twice Over* lesbian identity is promoted as equally valid and authentic as straight identity, and it is represented in terms of unity and fullness: 'Maeve filled the spot she [Cora] never knew was empty till it was filled' Cora has written in her diary.[10] *Trumpet* primarily explores gender, not sexuality, and the dislocation it represents between body and gender role fragments identity into a series of performative acts that have no origin or authentic

foundation. This is a significant shift on Kay's part, aided perhaps by a move towards prose in her writing. Prose brings together the live presence of drama with the imaginative and figurative concerns of poetry, in a form that foregrounds issues of representation and the construction of reality.

The move from identity to embodiment reflects similar changes in the political concerns of 'queer' (that is, non-mainstream-heterosexual) communities over the 1980s and 1990s. As gay identities became more socially tolerated it was apparent that certain kinds of gayness were becoming normative and more acceptable. These models were not fully inclusive of a diverse queer community and produced their own limitations and exclusions. In the early 1990s the naturalisation or domestication of gay identities that was partly the product of 'identity politics' gave way in some spheres to the aim of promoting a denaturalisation of all identity. The focus moved to the body as a 'final frontier' of the deployment of essentialism, to be overcome on the way to a truly liberated subjectivity and society. Joss Moody is an illustration of this shift as his self, though certainly queer, defies categorisation. He cannot be definitively described as lesbian, or transsexual, not having gone 'all the way' in his transformation. In his doubleness, incorporating the successfully passing male identity and the female body, he is a refutation of the naturalised static body/gender relationship and unified and singular model of the self. Doubleness can also describe Joss's racial identity, a black Scottish identity that is not an expression of 'neither one thing nor the other' as Kay has one character say in her short story 'Trout Friday', but is more a declaration of an inclusive in-betweeness, an 'either/and' formation that exceeds categorisation.[11]

This multiplicity is a reminder of a Scottish literary tradition famous for its 'antisyzygy' or schizoid conjunction of opposites. Joss Moody's divided self could be appropriated as another cultural symptom of a national identity that is split within itself and therefore weak or inferior. In rejecting the typically negative connotations of the antisyzygy, Cairns Craig bemoans the fact that 'too often in studies of Scottish culture the apparent lack of unity of the self is taken to be a symptom of a failed identity'. For him the Scottish divided self is an 'exploration of the limitation of notions of the self which have themselves reduced the self from its true complexity in order to produce a false unity [...] [limitations] which are founded on false assumptions about the fulfilment of identity being the achievement of singularity and unity'.[12] In contrast to such negative illustrations as R. L. Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, Kay's novel celebrates Joss's successful life, with its conjunction of opposite states, and like Craig, Kay is also critical of a culture that fails to comprehend Joss due to the nature of its conceptual tools. Significantly, it is Scottish culture that, at the close of the novel, is represented as moribund in its inability to change, reflecting perhaps Kay's own ambivalent relationship with the country of her birth.

In a primary aspect of his doubleness Joss embodies the figure of the transvestite, one reading of which has been clearly illustrated by Marjorie Garber. In her study of cross-dressing and culture, *Vested Interests – Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (1993), she asserts that '*transvestism is a space of possibility structuring and confounding culture*: the disruptive element that intervenes, not just a category crisis of male and female, but the crisis of category itself'.[13] The cross-dresser, like the biracial individual, confounds dominant binary thinking by occupying two categories simultaneously, not quite fitting

either one. S/he occupies the middle space of the binary, undermining the exclusivity of the categories. But a paradox exists, illustrated by the situation in *Trumpet*, that this category crisis is only fully realised in both the transvestite and the biracial individual when s/he successfully passes. The space between the apparently stable categories of the binary is unreadable and unrepresentable, so the instability of those categories and their relation can only be illustrated by permeating their boundaries and crossing from one side of the binary to the other. Ironically, this theoretically radical scenario often entails the promotion of conservative social formations and the preservation of binary relations like the gender roles it has the potential to undermine. Arguably, this is the case in the representation of Joss Moody as his masculinity is respectable, successful and, to all appearances, heterosexual. As Garber further points out, 'there is a tendency to subsume [the cross-dresser] within one of the two traditional genders', and these conservative aims amount to the recuperation of a disturbing presence.[14]

In *Trumpet*, Kay resists the reiteration of dominant relations, but can only overcome this threat in as much as she succeeds in representing the unrepresentable in-between space. Her primary strategy of resistance is to allow the two states of the transvestite to be simultaneously present, and therefore she reveals Joss's masquerade early so that he is present as both masculine and feminine, man and woman. This ensures that we look *at* the transvestite, not *through* him, as Garber describes it.[15] Like the ambiguous image that is one second a rabbit, the next second a duck,[16] Joss flickers, constantly moving between male and female, crossing that middle space that we have difficulty in naming and imagining. In this way his identity is always in motion, a process of becoming, and he is

never stuck on one side of the binary. So Kay's representation of the in-between achieves partial success, at least in circumscribing it.[17]

Kay's exposure of Joss's masculinity as a construction, dependent on a process of successful repetition, is reminiscent of the ideas promoted in the work of Judith Butler, most memorably in her book *Gender Trouble* (1990) and later clarified in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). Butler's theory conceives of the total denaturalisation of all identity. An un-centered or decentralised model of the subject is constructed performatively through the 'citation' of pre-existing 'laws' or norms circulating in the discourses of identity. Butler writes, 'Where there is an "I" who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that "I" and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will. Thus there is no "I" who stands *behind* discourse and executes its volition or will *through* discourse.'[18] The subject only becomes 'legible', that is, coherent and understood, through the citation and approximations of norms already produced in the dominant discourses. The process is performative in that citing the norm creates what it describes, and these norms only achieve their prescriptive power through their repetition by the subjects so constituted. *Signify or die* is the founding rule of human identity, here asserted as *repeat or die*. For Butler this repetition creates an illusion of naturalised permanence in the law and essential and stable 'depth' in the subject, but there is no inner essence that determines gender, or any other identity.

The potential liberatory consequences of this theory were quickly seized upon, as the possibility of subversive repetitions was posited as 'agency'. Butler almost promoted this reading in her book *Gender Trouble* where she picked out drag, or the imitation of

women by men and vice versa, as an example of subversive repetition that denaturalised traditional gender categories.[19] The law produces the possibility of its own undermining, and as Butler reminds us (unfortunately falling into the language of volition), 'The task is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and, through a radical proliferation of gender, to *displace* the very gender norms that enable repetition itself'.[20] Such repetition, then, would give rise to a blurring of the boundaries of the binary and a middle space, where the hierarchical binary power relation would no longer hold.

Early interpretations of the theory tended to reduce performativity to performance, the unconscious to the conscious, as if identity was a simple matter of 'putting on' and 'taking off', a choice easily made as an expression of gender as a 'free theatricality'.[21] Butler later criticised this reading, restating the complexity of her theory and its reliance on psychoanalysis, 'resituating performativity within the interior workings of the psyche' in her next book *Bodies That Matter*.[22] *Trumpet* itself follows the trajectory of these arguments, appearing to act out Butler's theory in Joss's passing but also warning that the subversive potential of this process can be undermined by the reinstating of the norms of masculinity. This is not, then, an unproblematic representation. Kay does attempt, however, to resist trivialisation of the process of subject formation by illustrating the complexities of the performative concept, especially through the theme of jazz.

Jazz is central to the novel, as Kay explains: 'I wanted to write a novel whose structure was very close to jazz itself'.[23] There are two effects of this engagement. Firstly, it is a way of emphasising black identity in the novel, especially against a background of a very white Scottish culture. In the absence of Scottish role models Kay employs African-American culture, especially jazz, in order to create a context of

Scottish blackness in Joss. This is not an original move, of course, but a significant choice, and one that is familiar to other black writers such as Toni Morrison:

> I have wanted always to develop a way of writing that was irrevocably black [...] I use the analogy of the music because you can range all over the world and it's still black [...] I don't imitate it, but I am informed by it. Sometimes I hear blues, sometimes spirituals or jazz and I've appropriated it. I've tried to reconstruct the texture of it in my writing.[24]

For Kay, jazz serves a similar function, and through it she installs black culture into a Scottish context.

Secondly, the performative possibilities of jazz are a founding trope in the text, and, it could be argued, jazz itself provides a working model of Butler's theories. It is an art form founded on improvisation, the exploration of different ways of playing a piece of music within the boundaries of that piece. The common image of jazz music is of the 'variation on a theme' that periodically takes place, the individual solo, referred to by Kay when she says 'I wanted to tell a story, the same story, from several points of view'.[25] This describes *Trumpet*, in which Joss himself is constructed in a series of alternating, individual testimonies, principally those of his wife Millie and son Colman whose accounts are interspersed with those of friends and public officials like the doctor and the registrar. It is in these variations on a central narrative that the novel most obviously imitates a piece of jazz music.

In addition, jazz improvisation also provides a model of identity formation. Peter J. Martin asserts that the general understanding of improvisation as 'entirely spontaneous', involving 'unpremeditated, spur-of-the-moment decisions' made in 'the suddenness of the creative impulse' is a misconception. 'The spontaneity and creativity [...] must be set within the context of a musical culture with its own conventions and constraints [...] It is

collaborative and collectively organised [and] the impulses and aspirations of the individuals must somehow be reconciled with the configuration of normative conventions that confronts them'.[26] In other words, a performance is only possible within a learned model, a tradition and an interpretive community. The tradition thrives on awareness of its history and the reworking of that history in new versions of old songs, especially in the individual instrumental solo. For example, Charlie Parker is renowned for his reconciliation of tradition and innovation, particularly in the strategy of 'quoting' which enhances this engagement with tradition. Here a soloist takes phrases from one piece and uses them in another in a subversive repetition that creates moods of nostalgia or anarchy, playful recollection or irreverent parody.

Martin points out that in jazz, contrary to Western classical music, 'the primary aim is not the production of "works", but the creation of performances', and the virtuosity of jazz musicians and the technical fireworks of their improvisations often ensure that a performance cannot be repeated.[27] The impossibility of perfect repetition is, of course, a founding feature of Butler's theory. The nature of such a process as regards jazz is illustrated by Ralph Ellison:

> There is a contradiction implicit in the art form itself. For true jazz is an art of individual assertion within and against the group. Each true jazz moment [...] springs from a contest in which the artist challenges all the rest; each solo flight or improvisation, represents (like the canvasses of a painter) a definition of his identity; as individual, as member of the collectivity and a link in the chain of tradition. Thus jazz finds its very life in improvisation upon traditional materials, the jazz man must lose his identity even as he finds it.[28]

According to this model, identity as a constant reinvention of self is not a purely self-contained individualistic formation, but illustrates a communally produced musical

identity. Such reinvention is echoed in the practice of renaming that is a feature of the jazz world where many musicians take on or are given epithets. These can also be classed as subversive repetitions, as demonstrated by the prevalence of Counts and Dukes among jazz musicians.

Jazz is also the production of a particular time and place, and refers to African-American history in the United States and the whole tragedy of slavery and emancipation, segregation and civil rights. With its roots in songs sung by slaves as their only connection with the African culture of their ancestors, jazz is the music of loss and mourning as well as celebration of marginalised lives. The issue of loss is of fundamental thematic and structural importance in *Trumpet*, a novel in which the central character is absent. But more than this, the performative model of identity that Joss illustrates is shown to be founded on loss, of who he was and who he could be. This is inherent in the structure of the novel which revolves around a void, the basis of identity here.

In privileging loss, *Trumpet* exposes the limit of Butler's performative theory. The paradox is that Joss is most subversive when he is dead, when his gender doubleness is revealed. The common celebratory interpretation of Butler's theories often refuses to consider not only the psychic consequences but also the very real physical danger of living a life of subversive repetitions. The challenge of *Trumpet* is how to live a revolutionary life without being dismissed as not-normal, and ultimately without being destroyed.

The novel has no answer. Joss, unlike those other divided Scottish selves, safely negotiates the in-between space of the binary to live an ordinary life. But his success

illustrates the tension not only between competing narratives, but also between performativity and the need and desire for narrative in the process of subject formation. Here the successful life would appear to come about through controlling the narrative of the self, and this is *Trumpet*'s challenge, to preserve Joss's dignified self-representation, without minimising or capitulating to the force of the narrativising pressure of the social realm and its binary categories. This chapter investigates Kay's success, and how and why, if the essence of masculinity is rendered obsolete in this novel, that essence is remembered and mourned in the paradoxical shape of a cross-dressed woman.

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In *Trumpet* Kay undermines the traditional view of masculinity as an essential attribute of a male body. The successful passing of a woman as a man for nearly a whole lifetime is a subversive representation that disrupts the naturalised relation between body and gender. The concept of passing conceives of identity as a construction, a performance that contradicts the idea of a personal inner core and exposes it as not the essential and unchanging entity it claims to be.

The consideration of identity as masquerade has often been associated with women, most famously by Joan Riviere in her paper 'Womanliness as Masquerade' (1929):

> The reader may now ask how I define womanliness or where I draw the line between genuine womanliness and the 'masquerade'. My suggestion is not, however, that there is any such difference; whether radical or superficial, they are the same thing.[29]

Riviere's comments not only refer to her own discipline of psychoanalysis but allude to an approach to femininity found throughout the western philosophic tradition. The inauthenticity of the feminine is a recurring theme as woman is figured as a defective man, lacking unity, rationality and access to the truth; 'woman is a lie, adornment is her

truth' is Nietzsche's assessment.[30] Riviere did not question the authenticity of men, but the decentring of the subject in postmodern writing inevitably leads to such questioning. In *Trumpet* Kay immerses herself in the problematisation of gender through the representation of maleness as masquerade. In this she is not only engaging with a common theme in philosophical discourse, but reversing that discourse.

The narrative of *Trumpet* resembles, ironically, the layout of a tabloid magazine, a media form that foregrounds fashion and social trends in its obsession with artifice. Different sections have headings like 'House and Home' for the mourning and reminiscence of Joss's wife Millie, 'Cover Story' for the hurt bewilderment of his adopted son Colman, and various others including 'Music', 'Letters', 'Interview Exclusive', 'Sex', which are fairly self-explanatory. The sections involving journalist Sophie Stones highlight the issue of tabloid sensationalism in her aim of cashing in on Joss's new notoriety by ghost-writing a vivid account of his father by Colman. Interspersed throughout are sections headed 'People' giving the testimony of friends, acquaintances and the administrators of death, including the Doctor, the Funeral Director, the Drummer, and the Cleaner.

The magazine format refers, of course, to the phenomenally popular section of the media that mixes in its pages the lives of the rich and famous, 'true life' stories, and prescriptive lifestyle advice. As Joy Stone found in *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, these magazines often have an intimate tone that creates an easy familiarity, an illusion that promotes identification with the people and lives portrayed. In the novel that identification is problematised since the text of each section does not reveal easily contained lifestyle formulations, but confused and uncertain attempts to come to terms

with Joss's indefinable life. The juxtaposition of this format with such soul-searching exposes the reductive nature of the media in the face of such complexity. But the magazine form also acknowledges the necessity of categorisation for communication, and seems to suggest that the nature of all representation is to some extent incomplete. By incorporating the format in a novel *Trumpet* points towards both a fictional aspect to magazines and a fact-based aspect to novels, as the text itself exists around the blurred boundary of fact and fiction.

Joss's life from early adulthood is chronicled in Millie's narrative. Here, his female body is revealed early in the novel, installing him as an ambiguous individual from the outset. Millie recalls their first intimate encounter when Joss undressed in front of her:

> Underneath his vest are lots of bandages wrapped round and round his chest. He starts to undo them. I feel a wave of relief: to think all he is worried about is some scar he has. He should know my love goes deeper than a wound. 'You don't have to show me,' I say. I feel suddenly full of compassion. 'Did you have an accident? I don't care about superficial things like that.' I go towards him to embrace him. 'I'm not finished,' he says. He keeps unwrapping endless rolls of bandage. I am still holding out my hands when the first of his breasts reveals itself to me. Small, firm. (*T* 21)

This event is a starting point for the exposure of the construction of Joss's masculinity and the process is literally acted out when the unveiling is reversed later in the text as Millie describes helping him to dress and reconstruct the masculine image:

> I wrapped two cream bandages around his breasts every morning, early. I wrapped them round and round, tight. I didn't think about anything except doing it well. Doing it well meant wrapping tight. The tighter I wrapped, the flatter his breasts. That was all he was concerned about [...] He put on his boxer shorts and I turned away whilst he stuffed them with a pair of socks. He pulled on his trousers, constantly adjusting his shirts and the stuffing. He was always more comfortable once he was dressed. More secure somehow. My handsome tall man. (*T* 238)

Masculinity is put on with the clothes, and this is emphasised by Millie pointing out that in their initial encounter, 'His clothes are spreadeagled on my floor like the outline of a corpse in a movie' (*T* 21), suggesting the demise of Joss's male identity with the discarding of the clothes. So Joss's masculinity is created from the surface of the clothes rather than the depth of the body.

Concern with surface and the performance aspect of identity is an issue throughout the novel. The significance of clothes is especially dwelt on: 'How do I look?' Joss would ask when he finished dressing (*T* 238), but all the characters are aware of the importance of image. Millie dresses carefully so that 'I can at least look presentable to the world. I cannot have it said that Joss Moody's widow has gone to the dogs' (*T* 22). Sophie Stones is more conscious than most: 'A wardrobe thick and dense [...] is a wardrobe of the woman I'd like to be. I know I'm not her yet; but the clothes can lie' (*T* 233). Even Mary the old school friend dwells on the careful selection of clothes for her meeting with the journalist (*T* 247). This acute awareness of image augments the performance of identity that the novel strongly promotes, particularly in association with the jazz world. Colman contends that 'All jazz men are fantasies of themselves, reinventing the Counts and Dukes and Armstrongs, imitating them' (*T* 190). This analysis is confirmed by Joss himself: they 'impersonate themselves. Mimic. Parody. Act themselves. He says jazz can get away with that better than most stuff' (*T* 163). And the jazz audience is involved too, in an act of creation through performance in which they 'listen to the music as if they themselves were creating it' (*T* 17).

Joss himself performs his identity as if he is creating it, constructing a specific type of masculinity. He is represented in photographs as a 'handsome, tall man in dark suits' (*T*

251). In fact he is never recalled in the novel as wearing anything but a suit, a significant choice which symbolises male authority and superiority. He can 'walk like a man, talk like a man, dress like a man, blow his horn like a man' (*T* 37). This is often qualified with reference to his 'gentleness' (*T* 172) or 'baby face' (*T* 147), but these characteristics are brushed over by those close to him in acceptance of his overall maleness in relationships sometimes spanning decades. Along with the suit, his characteristic mildness of temperament evokes a certain middle-class masculinity that fits an urbane and romantic image of the tall, dark hero. This class advantage aids the creation of a commanding and authoritative presence. His race is also significant here because intimations of effeminacy recall the colonial feminisation of the racial other. So his blackness would also be an aid to his passing, providing an excuse for his 'difference' in the predominantly white and racist environment of post-Empire, 1950s Britain. It is all part of Joss's convincing performance and lifestyle that leads to his successful attainment of a stable and authoritative male identity.

The foundation of that stability is the overwhelming normality of Joss's lifestyle. He is an enthusiastic family man, happily married to Millie (who is 'beautiful. Really quite stunning' (*T* 253) according to Sophie Stones), with an adopted son who looks just like him. He loves fishing (he is working in a fishing tackle shop when Millie meets him) and having breakfast with his family on a Sunday at home ('Sunday Brunch!' (*T* 198)). This ordinary life is founded on Joss being the dominant partner in a heterosexually-figured relationship, a situation demonstrated in several ways in the text: economically, socially, and particularly sexually. This is apparent, for example, in Millie's memories of lovemaking: 'He pushes himself into me. He mutters things in my ear. I am possessed'

(*T* 36); 'I feel myself being taken away [...] I feel myself being turned around. He straddles me. Pushes himself into me [...] He is smiling. Full of himself. I am weak. I am totally and utterly loved' (*T* 197). Millie's passivity constructs her in opposition to Joss, to his active 'possession', his 'fullness'. Her femininity contrasts Joss's masculinity, fulfilling an ideal of gender complementarity. She muses that in helping to bandage Joss's chest, 'I don't remember us saying anything whilst I did this. I don't remember thinking much. I had to help him to get dressed so that he could enjoy his day and be comfortable' (*T* 238). Or 'be himself' she could add, so that she could be herself. It is as if both of them come alive, come to themselves, once Joss is dressed and presentable as a man and they can inhabit their normative gender roles.

As the successful head of the family, Joss asserts his power and authority. For example, Millie recalls that 'Joss and I nearly divorced when it came to naming Colman [...] Joss wanted a jazz or a blues name. What about Jelly Roll, I laughed. Or Howling Wolf, Bird, Muggsy, Fats, Leadbelly. I was bent over double: Pee Wee. Joss slapped me across my face. "That's enough" he said. "White people always laugh at black names"' (*T* 5). Her epistemological ridicule is a nuanced attack on Joss's race and his black masculinity, the racism of a white woman. It is met with violence, an action that conjures up the ghost of domestic abuse that signifies the power imbalance between a man and a woman. Though such violence is never referred to elsewhere, this event suggests enforced male authority and the dominant paradigm of gender relations. In a reference to a subversion of this paradigm, Irene Rose proposes that 'Kay represents Joss as a "stone butch", a male-identified lesbian', a sexual identity historically associated with the 1950s. She goes on, 'Wrenching butchness from its derogatory associations with pathology

[Kay] creates a narrative that presents female masculinity as a viable, affirmative and fully functional sexual identity in its own right.'[31] Joss's success at passing, however, ensures that this viability is a well-kept secret.

In fact, the masculinity that Joss comes to signify is traditional and heterosexual, almost nostalgic in its stereotypical characteristics. This nostalgic mood is also evoked through his attachment to Scotland and his Scottish identity. Colman remembers that 'My father clung on to his [Glasgow accent]. Determined that everyone would know he was Scottish' (*T* 50-1). But Scotland is figured as a place of the past. Torr, the Moodys' Scottish retreat, 'is not the same Torr any more [...] It is a new place, with a new chubb and yale. It is familiar the way a memory is familiar, and changed each time like a memory too' (*T* 92). In this Scottish refuge from the urban modernity of London the community is polite and tolerant, but in an ignorant and reductive stasis at the same time. This is suggested by descriptions of people such as, 'The Family Butcher, B Savage, [who] has been here since I was a girl. His son runs the shop now. He's also called Bruce, like his father. They both have butcher's red cheeks and hands' (*T* 23). Like Joss's conservative masculinity, Torr is a refuge for the past, for an outmoded certainty that is now a fading fantasy reality. Even when various members of the community acknowledge Joss's death they do not mention the sensational revelation, though they must be acquainted with it through the media. Perhaps this conservatism is one reason why Joss himself loves the place, its isolation, its privacy, its old habits. It suits his own invented self.

From this perspective there is no radical proliferation of gender in *Trumpet*. In fact, Joss's successful passing up until his death seems to reinstate the binary of normal gender

roles. Theoretically, Joss's female masculinity is subversive in that it denaturalises the relationship between gender and the body, but it is also socially conservative. Joss can be read as an example of what Judith Butler calls 'denaturalising parodies that reidealise heterosexual norms *without* calling them into question'.[32] Kay moves to stabilise Joss's identity through reiterating norms of masculinity that are easily interpreted as produced by an eternal male essence.

The disruption of the relationship between the male sexed body and masculinity as figured in Joss Moody cannot be taken for granted as a move that dispels essentialism from the model of the self in this text. Conservative discourses around transsexuality, such as the characterisation of a 'man-trapped-in-a-woman's-body' (or vice versa), have often resulted in a redeployment of essentialism in conceptualising gender and a degree of conservatism in some transsexuals' views about masculinity and femininity and their appropriation of the characteristics of gender roles. There is no doubt that this is significantly due to the medical institutions, whose insistence on proof of the need for sex change surgery often relies on conformity to stereotypical and conservative expectations of gender.[33] Joss's own conservatism can certainly be interpreted in this way; a performance of traditional masculinity increases the possibility of social acceptance, especially in a period like the 1950s when traditional gender roles were being consolidated after the upheaval of the second world war. But his convincing maleness also invokes the essentialised transsexual narrative that 'deep down' he is really a man and so he is only succumbing to 'natural' tendencies.

The naturalisation of Joss, through his family particularly, is an example of what Marjorie Garber has called the 'Progress Narrative' of the transvestite, 'a way in which

cross-dressing is treated, explained, and explained away'.[34] It is a process of looking *through* rather than *at* the cross-dresser, attributing motives and recuperating them into a normative identity. She points out Billy Tipton as a prime target of this impulse. His transvestism was often 'explained' and normalised through narratives of socio-economic necessity, 'to get a job, escape repression or gain artistic or political "freedom"'. This theorising of the transvestite as a 'stage' necessitated by other circumstances 'maneuver's [*sic*] him into the position of a subject with limited and circumscribed agency', 'a cultural symptom' that reinstates the binary and ignores the 'transvestic subject' as an end in him/herself. There are, she contends, good reasons for ignoring the transvestite in this way; as a 'third term' s/he acts as an 'interruption [... a] disruptive act of putting in question [...] binary thinking'. Here 'the "third" is a mode of articulation, a way of describing a place of possibility. Three puts in question the idea of one: of identity, self sufficiency, self knowledge', and signifies 'the crisis of category itself'.[35]

The cross-dresser, then, can be instrumental in dismantling all hierarchical binary categories. The 'third term' status of the transvestite reverberates in *Trumpet* when Joss refers to Josephine Moore, his name as a child: 'he'd say 'Leave her alone', as if she was somebody else. He always spoke about her in the third person. She was his third person' (*T* 93). In fact, the text of *Trumpet* does express a desire to explode the binary as it attempts to describe the middle space. Joss embodies the in-between: as a cross-dresser he is both male and female; being married to a woman he is both straight and lesbian; as biracial he is both black and white. And, of course, he is simultaneously none of these and is in excess of any one of them. For example, he is proud of the black identity he embraces, the oppressed component in the hierarchical racial relation. But at the same

time he fails to occupy the in-between space and only passes through it ending up stationary on one side. As regards gender, his stasis is the result of his conservative masculinity; he overturns the binary but does not explode or dismantle it, or reimagine the in-between. That middle space is unrepresentable in terms of the binary categories through which the text defines Joss.

In normalising Joss, Kay is strongly resisting defining him as perverse, the label which describes identities that do not conform to the dominant ones. In a popular media world dominated by sensational exposés, an individual like Joss Moody would be a quintessential subject for such a branding. Sophie Stones's projected biography of the cross-dressed trumpet player is just such a discourse. This narrative is familiar from the tactics of tabloid newspapers and magazines where such media stories focus on transgression, often of an erotic nature, and set out to arouse and tease the reader. In Colman's early sections of the novel his bewildered references to his father's genitals fit into Stones's plans for such a narrative. 'My father had tits. My father didn't have a dick. My father had tits. My father had a pussy. My father didn't have any balls. How many people had fathers like mine?' (*T* 61).

Interestingly, Sophie Stones is the only character to ponder on the possible erotic reasons for cross-dressing, to look directly at Joss as a cross-dresser, as opposed to any other progress narrative: 'It dawned on me [...] It turned her on. There has been too much talk about Joss Moody just wanting to play the trumpet' (*T* 263). But in looking *at* Joss she constructs a pervert, someone who transgresses the boundaries of the normal, and Stones uncovers her own motives for writing the story: 'The public might hate perverts, but they love reading about them' (*T* 264). This statement encapsulates the

purpose and effect of these sensationalist narratives, that they act to reinforce the dominant discourses, the binary identities, by reasserting and restating what is not normal and, therefore, the boundaries of what is permissible.

A different approach to transgression characterises another Scottish novel of the period, Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory* (1984). This is a narrative of gothic mood and structure that also explores the relationship between gender and the body. In a bizarre and cunningly horrific novel, Frank, the central character, is a disconcerting individual, going about his grotesque daily rituals in a calm and rational manner. By the time he is sixteen he has murdered three people including his young brother and cousin in deviously constructed freak accidents. The revelation at the end of the novel is that Frank is not a boy but a girl whose enhanced masculinity is produced by hormones administered by his father, along with a suitable 'castration' myth to accompany the transformation (that he was attacked and mutilated by the family dog when a young child). 'There was no revenge that needed taking, only a lie, a trick that should have been exposed, a disguise which even from the inside I should have seen through, but in the end did not want to' says Frank at the close.[36]

The novel is a convincing demonstration of how masculinity is constructed. Any essentialised notion of gender is undermined here as Frank admits his attachment to his socially and chemically constructed identity. At the same time, the sensational plotting that places the revelation close to the end of the novel creates a maximum shock effect that threatens to reinstate the primacy of essential gender identity. Arguably, in the timing of this moment of unveiling, the text appears to blame Frank's gender dysphoria, his 'unnatural' crossing of the gender divide, for the horrors unleashed in his terrible acts.

In asserting 'I *am* still me; I *am* the same person' Frank emphasises the notion that his actions are not due to his gender.[37] But the image of a world turned upside down and the terrible consequences of that is also a significant sensation at the end of the novel.[38] The gothic structure also makes this narrative a 'safe' one, outside the boundaries of everyday life.

By normalising Joss, Kay reverses the process of shock that potentially reinstates the natural status of gender in *The Wasp Factory*. Unveiling Joss at the beginning of the novel encourages familiarity and his acceptance in his multiple state. Paradoxically, in showing the ordinariness of Joss's life *Trumpet* refuses the boundaries of transgression and extends them, illustrating how the abnormal exists within the range of the normal, blurring the divide between them so it is not possible to tell where one ends and the other begins. Kay avoids a Sophie Stones-like reinscription of perversion, emphasising instead that perversion is constructed in and of the normal.

Kay's cross-dresser resists the label of pervert in a display of convincing masculinity that questions the essentialised model of the male subject. But the problem arises that in the conservative and traditional gender role that he plays, Joss is so domesticated that he is almost disarmed of the subversive potential of the third term status of the transvestite. Almost disarmed, but not completely because Kay does resist this reinstatement of masculine norms by insisting on the presence of the figure of the transvestite, one who never completes the progress towards 'full' (that is, post-operative) transgender status. In keeping the transvestite to the forefront of the text, in transforming Joss several times from one gender to another in full view of the reader, Kay ensures that the category crisis that this uncertainty and fluctuation produces is an ever-present threat. Joss's normality

is not the full story as he exceeds this and all other efforts to define him. But if this fact is not represented in his image and actions, it is present in other aspects of the novel, in its structure and in particular tropes that recur throughout the text.

In countering his normality, the suggestion of transgression is never far away from Joss and is figured particularly in the image of the bandages that bind his chest. They appear throughout the text as different people take them off and put them on Joss's body. In one resonant moment after his death, the doctor describes them as 'lying curled on the bed like a snake' (*T* 44). The snake image is a reminder of Eve's original temptation and that original transgression. The bandages, hiding Joss's breasts as they do, signify his giving in to temptation and the transgression that is his crossing of boundaries. They are a symbol of that boundary. In producing his masculinity they simultaneously remind us of his femininity, so they both stabilise and destabilise Joss's identity. The bandages serve to keep his double signification before the reader, reminding us of his multiple status, forcing us to look *at* the transvestite, not *through* him. Like the ambiguous figure where two images are present simultaneously, the bandages exist at the seam of those images of Joss, and like a hinge they cause the perception to flick between them, keeping both present in an unstable repetition while helping to produce an illusion of stability and permanence.

In the initial revelation of Joss's female body Millie thinks the bandages are hiding a scar. It is not, of course, a scar that is revealed but Joss's breasts. But Millie's suggestion of a wound employs the language and evokes the image of castration, the original and eternal threat to masculinity. Ironically, Joss's loss of maleness in this revelation scene is not figured as a lack (as in the Freudian model of sexual

differentiation when the little girl is found to be lacking a penis) but as feminine excess. Kay reverses the dominant discourse with the effect of complicating Joss's appropriation of masculinity. Contrary to opinion that due to the unequal power relations existing socially it is not surprising that women desire to be men, here Kay subtly suggests the loss that is also involved in that masculinising process.[39]

The revelation may appear to present the age old equation of femininity with the body, but Kay confounds this by figuring femininity as excess. The apparently castrated female does not lack some vital male animation; she has to bind and control the signs of her own female life, hide its presence, in order to appear male. Masculinity is figured as a lack here. This process enacts the masculine denial of the body that is a characteristic of traditional western thought where the body is something passive to be transcended. The loss involved in such a separation is one consequence of masculinity and here it is brought to its ultimate conclusion in Joss's death. His attempt to deny his body stops him from seeing a doctor and being treated for an illness which kills him probably before his time. The bandages, then, symbolise a point of transformation and they are a reminder of what is lost in that process as they bind not his lack but his excess.

Joss's identity is dependent on denial, a process that highlights his multiplicity, but also a founding loss as the construction of one identity is accompanied by the death of another. Lacanian models of subject formation base identity on an originary loss, but in *Trumpet* this is figured as an ongoing process. Such absence of permanence and stability begs the question of whether there is anything behind this process of destruction and reconstruction, whether, as Butler asks, there is a 'doer behind the deed'. On this point, Tracy Hargreaves suggests that the text 'gestures towards a postmodern account of self-

hood' while simultaneously appearing to 'instate a self-determining humanism'.[40] But while *Trumpet* grapples with loss and mourning and strives to 'humanise' its complex subject, it only interrogates a humanist discourse that would necessitate attributing motivation and psychological agency to Joss himself. Instead it seeks to highlight the opportunity for liberation from constricting identity presented by Joss Moody in an exploration of a particularly postmodern self-invention.

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In *Trumpet* the subversive potential of Joss's identity is undermined by his conforming masculinity, necessitated by his need to pass. Consequently, while he is alive, Joss does 'reidealise' and reinstate dominant norms of heterosexuality and masculinity. But after his death, when he is unable to conceal his feminine excess, unable to continue the illusion of passing, it is then that his identity is most subversive. The illusion of natural permanence and stability is exposed as just that, but only after his death is it possible to prove his achievement. The constructed identity has to be deconstructed at some point in order to fulfil its potential as the disruptive third term. Butler's theory contends that this construction and deconstruction of identity constitutes the repetitive process of subject formation, happening in each individual on a psychic level constantly, in every minute behavioural decision. It is this process that gives rise to normative or subversive repetitions.

Trumpet enacts this deconstruction and reconstruction, uncovering the processes of a decentred, discursive production of identity through its dead protagonist and, significantly, through the void it reveals as the foundation of his identity. The absence of an essential core in Joss is demonstrated in the structure and shape of the novel. The

centrally placed 'Music' section around which the text revolves is a telescoped 'history of the self', Joss's self. The story is in his music; 'He is blowing his story. His story is blowing in the wind' (*T* 136). The portrait is a mystical mediation that takes in everything in Joss's life, from the midwife to the undertaker, young girlhood and adult manhood. The creative force of its performance contains Joss's story, but the revelation is that Joss's identity is based on nothing:

> When he gets down, and he doesn't always get down deep enough, he loses his sex, his race, his memory [...] All his self collapses – his idiosyncrasies, his personality, his ego, his sexuality, even, finally, his memory. All of it falls away like layers of skin unwrapping. He unwraps himself with his trumpet. Down at the bottom, face to face with the fact that he is nobody. The more he can be nobody the more he can play that horn. Playing the horn is not about being somebody coming from something. It is about being nobody coming from nothing. The horn ruthlessly strips him bare till he ends up with no body, no past, nothing [...] Nothing weighs him down. (*T* 131, 135-6)

Joss 'loses' himself in the music; it is like a 'little death'. His identity slips away making this section of the text a hole that he escapes ('explodes') through, an existential void at the core of himself and the novel. But the performance is also reconstructive, a creative process through which he 'brings himself back. Slowly, slowly, piecing himself together' (*T* 136). It is an enactment of repetition, a process of creation of the self from nothing into the modes of identity: 'Scotland. Africa. Slavery. Freedom. He is a girl. A man. Everything, nothing' (*T* 136).

The void described is both Joss's centre and the unrepresentable middle of the binary. The novel here is charting Joss's journey across that in-between. This reduction to nothing is a little death that demonstrates the risk involved in making that journey, the fragility and instability of identity. It illustrates the process of repetition involved in living any identity and represents the gap between repetitions; a minute temporal space in

which an identity could dissolve and never resurface whole or in the same configuration. This institutes the possibility of creative radical repetition, but also there is a palpable sense of loss in this section, of all the people Joss has been, has wanted to be, and will never be again, and, of course, the people he is not allowed to be.

To reinforce the void of the 'Music' section as a middle space of transition, Joss is situated on a journey between death and birth in *Trumpet.* The text embodies a 'reverse discourse', travelling from Joss's death towards the circumstances of his birth, related at the end of the novel in a letter from Joss to his son Colman. This constitutes the only 'direct' intervention by Joss in the novel, though his mediation in the form of a letter reinforces his 'discursive production'. The story of his origins is really the story of his father's arrival in Scotland from Jamaica at the beginning of the twentieth century. It therefore hints at the possibility of movement further back in time, and the impossibility of defining and stabilizing origins at all. Ending on the death of Joss's father it is a reminder of his own death, promoting a return to the beginning of the novel. Joss's assertion that 'I will be your son now in a strange way. You will be my father telling or not telling my story' (*T* 277) emphasises the circularity of the narrative in its reverse progression and role reversal. There is no conclusion or closure here, no coming to rest, no certainty, only the movement of a narrative folding back on itself in a constant process of reinvention.

The stability of a temporally progressive trajectory is further undermined by the competing narratives it contains. Those of Millie and Colman proceed in real time while moving in and out of the past, and they construct Joss from youth to maturity along a progressing axis. Counter to this, the construction of Joss through the narratives of the

other People complicates the time frame as it moves him backwards from death to birth. But this motion is always in relation to the central 'Music' section, the empty middle of the novel. The first half moves forward in time towards the centre through the doctor, registrar and undertaker. The second half moves backwards in time through the consecutive memoirs of those who knew him, starting with the most recent, the drummer, going back through the cleaner, the mother, the school friend and finally the letter from Joss himself. It is as if, in looking to the past, the second half of the novel also faces the void of the centre. Thus, structurally, the novel constantly highlights and emphasises that centre, drawing attention to the emptiness at its core.

The testimony of the People sections reflect the process of deconstruction and reconstruction of identity in another way. The first half of the novel deconstructs Joss in public. Apart from the original revelation, the People here – doctor, registrar, funeral director – represent various public discourses – medical, legal and that around death – and they all attempt to securely categorise Joss. The doctor 'thought Mr Moody must have been one of those men that had extra flab on top – male breasts. But they were really too big for that' (*T* 43-4). She crosses out 'male' and replaces it with 'female' on the death certificate. The red ink of her 'emergency red pen' indicates the violence of the forced transformation, while the 'large childish letters' suggest the lack of maturity in her judgement. The funeral director echoes this action in his desire to use his own red pen: 'If he could have the satisfaction of brutally and violently obliterating "male" and inserting "female" in bold, unequivocal red, then at least he would have something to do' (*T* 112-13). The registrar prevents this second act of categorical violence by writing on the death certificate 'Joss Moody' and ticking 'female' (*T* 81), preserving at least part of

the lived identity. But Joss himself escapes their categories, effectively evading the discourses they attempt to enforce. He is a boundary, proof of their failure to police the discursive gap he escapes through.

The second half of the novel reconstructs Joss in private, by redrawing his mangled public persona as the loved individual familiar to friends and family. The people here are intimate acquaintances – the drummer, the cleaner, Joss's mother, the old school friend. They shape Joss's excess into readable form, as a sensitive employer, a dutiful child, a desirable partner. As May the old school friend understands it: 'Looking at Josie all dressed up as a man, May realised that she'd missed her all her life. Didn't she have style! Look at that suit! Her Bert never looked like that in a suit' (*T* 252). Joss's performance of gender takes precedence over the prescriptive legality of discourse based on the 'deeper truth' of his body.

Mary's sense of loss is echoed throughout the novel. The testimonies of the People, the civil servants of death, of his son Colman and even of his wife Millie, who was 'in on the secret', are bewildered and often grief stricken, not only because of Joss's death, but also through the death of who he was for them since the unveiling of his woman's body. Their bewilderment is a reminder of the norms that have been transgressed, a re-statement of the original revelation of the transvestite. The death of Joss's masculinity figures not only the dissolution of his identity because the void at his core is not emblematic of him alone. The self-possession of each of them is brought into question through this process and his death is a threat to everyone's identity. For example, Millie, who has lived her life in complementary opposition to Joss, now feels unsure of herself. From the opening of the novel she often refers to her feelings of lack: 'I look unreal. I

look unlike the memory of myself' (*T* 1). Even Colman feels his masculinity threatened and has a need to reassert it in his own mind. In a parody of his father's lovemaking he imagines intercourse with the journalist Sophie Stones: 'All tabloid hacks must like it. Fucks full of cruelty and sleaze. He mutters filth into her ear' (*T* 140). Afterwards, he sits watching television and 'doesn't do up his zip', insistently displaying his phallic organ. The insecurity that comes with the undermining of the stability of identity affects everyone in the novel.

Trumpet demonstrates the disappearance of the subject, 'the doer behind the deed', in Joss's radical and subversive repetition of masculine norms that destabilises the foundations of all identity. But only his death initiates the proliferation of gender that Butler imagines is possible, and it is this that suffuses the text with the sense of loss and melancholy.[41] If the radical subject must be destroyed in order to signify, what hope is there of dismantling the oppressive hierarchical binary for those left in the here and now? Joss's conventional masculinity is a permissible performance that is 'not quite not right' (to paraphrase Homi Bhabha[42]), and it exposes the gaps in a discourse of binary identity that constructs the conditions of it own subversion, but only at the expense of his own 'being'.

Like the breasts wrapped in bandages that are a sign of his femininity, Joss finds himself simultaneously inside and outside the text, present but not present, contained in but in excess of the discourses and narratives that constitute the text. In the radical consequences of his conventional life, Joss Moody exposes the possibilities and the pitfalls of living in-between. That he only becomes a resignifier through his death is illustrative of the irony that when a subject is most subversive they are in most danger.

This is not only from the violence of the intolerant, which is all too common. But for Joss, what kills him before his time is his unwillingness to see a doctor or go to the hospital for fear of exposure, which would socially isolate him and cost him everything he cherishes – the privacy of his family life and the space to create his music.

Trumpet not only illustrates the very human problem of living with loss, but also demonstrates the material difficulties that shadow the liberatory potential of radical discursive models of subject formation like that of Butler. As Hargreaves writes, 'Problematically, perhaps, locked into its own solipsism, Joss's life and music advances no new political programme, offers no visible identity politics, declines to embrace or to name transgender, butch-femme, or female masculinity.'[43] *Trumpet* does address the radical complexity of the successfully passing subject, but finally it is the *not passing* that is most subversive and politically significant, and consequently it is those that fail to pass in the dominant identities (both queer and heterosexual in fact) that are in most danger. As Jay Prosser argues, often it is not fear of the same or of the other that is the danger, but fear of bodily crossing, or 'transphobia'.[44] The question is how to successfully avert that danger to live a comfortable life. This is the problem of the world of Joss Moody and *Trumpet* is its articulation, and the illustration of one temporary solution.

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Jackie Kay's novel succeeds in breaking down the naturalised relationship between men and masculinity through Joss Moody's achievement in passing as a man. In answer to the question 'what makes a man?', the novel responds that it is not nature or essence. *Trumpet* endorses a performative model of the subject, and represents a sense of individual multiplicity, in its textual structure and strategies. But in the face of simplistic

interpretations it emphasises above all the complexity of this model, recalling Prosser's assertion that transsexual narratives 'return us to the complexities and difficulties that inevitably accompany real-life experiences of gender crossing and to the personal costs of not simply being a man or a woman'.[45] The subversive quality of Joss's identity is only fully realised after his death; his life ironically reinforces the gender binary in his conservative appropriation of masculinity. *Trumpet* does not retreat from such contradictions, but allows them to stand unresolved. Through its sense of loss and its restatement of the gender binary the novel appears nostalgic and pessimistic, but its lack of centre or foundation for the self does successfully unhinge the subject from its Enlightenment moorings. The text sends Joss scatting through the memories of others, ultimately undefinable, at once installing and transgressing the traditional 'laws' of identity. It enacts a model of the self that is, if not a permanent revolution, then a permanent problematisation of subjectivity. Peter Clandfield claims that as Kay 'negotiates a path between facile optimism and disabling pessimism', definitive understanding is deferred, meaning acceptance of 'otherness' is not an immediate transition but a long process.[46] Regarding the masculine subject, *Trumpet* signals the undermining of the gender binary that supports its dominance, but this is just the beginning of a precarious process.

Chapter 4: A. L. Kennedy – Seeking Faith in Uncertainty

A. L. Kennedy's engagement with masculinity in her writing is ambivalent: she is reverent and affectionate as well as nostalgic, fearful and despising. Unlike in Janice Galloway's novels, where there is mourning for a masculinity that is presumed dead, Kennedy's work attempts to negotiate with the living. She is a professed humanist, having more than once made a point of defining herself not as a woman but as a 'person'; being a woman 'has some bearing, probably, but it's not what defines my work'.[1] And further, with regard to feminism she has said, 'I never got the feminist thing [...] I like equality, but I'm a humanist.'[2] Humanism, a perspective that traditionally puts the human subject at the centre of experience, relates to a generalised conception of the individual which prioritises sameness not difference. Kennedy's stance is therefore in contrast with Galloway who foregrounds women's experience and aims to make women visible within the Scottish literary tradition.[3]

Kennedy deliberately dissociates her writing from any such agenda, asserting a neutrality that would seem to preclude the terms of the analysis of this thesis, that Scottish fiction in this period is concerned with the effects of a decline in masculine authority. Her themes are presented as general ones, the concerns of humanity, the uncertain condition of which centres her writing on an impossible quest, a yearning for direction that can be described as the search for faith in a faithless world. Characteristically, all her work offsets the human desire for transcendence and the material reality, a conflict that is the source of productive tension in Kennedy's fiction. Further, in meditating on the process of writing Kennedy employs metaphysical and sometimes religious language, describing her vocation in terms of faith and spirituality, an attitude that entrenches her humanist aspirations and resists

the analysis of this thesis. In contrast, the writing itself foregrounds exactly the issues of gender this study concerns itself with: the decline in male authority and the crisis in identity and relations this provokes. This chapter challenges the neutrality of Kennedy's outlook, demonstrating that the language and imagery she employs in her writing, even more so than characterisation and plot, question her humanist aspirations, not least through her metaphysical concerns and preoccupations with transcendence.

Alison Louise Kennedy was born in 1965 in Dundee, though she has lived in Glasgow since the late 1980s. Her parents divorced when she was eleven years old and she has not seen her father since that time, a fact that may or may not explain the extended concern with father/daughter relationships in her novels. 'It's not a conscious thing' she says, but 'my own experience is not having a father and I've never dealt with that.'[4] At Warwick university she studied drama and theatre, and her writing developed from composing dramatic monologues during this time. Her first collection of short stories, *Night Geometry and the Garscadden Trains* published in 1990, emerged from this process. Her prolific output since then includes three novels and four collections of short stories, and she has been placed twice in the Granta list of twenty best young British novelists, in 1993 and 2003. She has also written for stage, film and television as well as non-fiction and journalism in a variety of media and publications.

Since 2002, Kennedy has lectured in creative writing at St Andrews University, a post necessarily engaged with the process of literary production. Yet for Kennedy writing is an indefinable practice, and in excess of the subject matter of a course. It is both a rigorous occupation or regime and a divine vocation. 'I find it psychically necessary' she says in one interview, which also describes how she 'writes almost

every day for hours and hours at a stretch'.[5] She has also referred to writing as a 'sensual rather than an intellectual process' and as a 'complex sensual and spiritual experience of enormous power'. At the same time she insists that 'a writer is no different from anybody else, you just do certain very specific things that everyone else does very very often', and that it is necessary to develop your craft.[6] The sense of hard work and regimen is spliced with a metaphysical outlook on writing in Kennedy's interviews: 'It's about an absence of self [...] You go away from yourself – you're absent for an indeterminate period of time as far as you can remember. It's a meditative occupation.'[7] In less mystical terms she has also described writing as 'like the process of improvisation', which, as we have seen in reference to jazz, is less an expression of individual mastery or mystery than interaction with a tradition and a community.

The underlying concern with faith and transcendence in Kennedy's fiction can be traced in her commentary on the process of writing, and she made the issue explicit in *On Bullfighting* in 1999. The question of whether writing is a job or a calling became a central one for Kennedy when she famously described her inability to write, her writer's block as far as fiction was concerned, in the opening pages of that book. She asserts, 'I'm a writer who doesn't write and that makes me no one at all' (*OB* 3). She introduces the text, the result of a commission to write a book about the *corrida*, or traditional Spanish bullfight, as a quest: 'I wanted to discover if the elements which seemed so much a part of the corrida – death, transcendence, immortality, joy, pain, isolation and fear – would come back to me. Because they were part of the process of writing and, good and bad, I miss them' (*OB* 8). In equating writing with the corrida, an event that she describes in various terms including as a 'religious mystery' (*OB* 168) and an 'act of faith' (*OB* 89), Kennedy characterises her inability to write as a

loss of faith. She articulates a loss of personal meaning and purpose, an encounter with the void if you like (she feels like 'no one at all'), as a loss of belief.

This formulation is suggestive of religious conviction, but also echoes humanist discourse in its apprehension of unitary meaning and truth. Generally the term humanism is applied to discourses of modernity that focus on the generic Man, of (hu)mankind, and human agency, and the prioritising of rationality as an essential human quality.[8] In stressing the use of reason in overcoming human problems, humanism is often conceived of as an alternative to organised religion. It is significant that Kennedy refers to herself as a humanist yet evokes religious, specifically Christian, imagery in her work and in relation to the process of writing, and speaks particularly of 'faith'. This term, after all, is associated with the discourses of religion which discourage belief in the existential autonomy of men but emphasise a humanitarian outlook that promotes human welfare. There are interesting parallels in the secular and the sacred world views which Kennedy explores in her work. Not least of these are the concepts of faith and transcendence.

Kennedy's intention, perhaps, is to promote the credibility of humanist discourse and its asserted goals of universal equality and justice, in the light of sustained philosophical attacks. The authority of both the dominant humanist metanarrative of western culture, enlightenment individualism, and Christianity has been increasingly undermined over the last century or so. For one thing, as related in the introduction to this thesis, the enlightenment, Cartesian model of the subject has been exposed as founded on inequalities such as an unjustified masculine dominance. This means that the model and the social reality it underpins is now more a matter of faith than fact. Kennedy's employing of 'faith' to describe a sense of lack in her own life reflects this changing grasp of the world, and in her work religious imagery constitutes a strategy

of opposition to the anti-humanism of contemporary trends in philosophy and social theory.

Simply put, both Christianity and enlightenment individualism subscribe to a view that human individuals are more than the sum of their physicality, and they both explain that existential gap, to some degree, in processes involving a flight from the body. Through faith the soul transcends the body and salvation comes with escape from the material world into eternal life after death. Through reason and the instrumental use of knowledge the 'mind' overcomes its physical, bodily confinement to control the self and its environment. Both religious and secular transcendence return us to the notion of control, which, as I discussed in the introduction to this study, is itself suggestively gendered. To reiterate Victor J. Seidler's assertions, masculinity is identified with self-control and 'a form of domination over our emotions, feelings and desires', a controlling impulse which is also, of course, directed outwards.[9]

Transcendence is similarly a marked concept. Genevieve Lloyd in *The Man of Reason*, her already cited study of the symbolism of the male-female distinction in relation to the concept of reason in the discourse of philosophy, writes that 'rational knowledge has been construed as a transcending, transformation or control of natural forces; and the feminine has been associated with what rational knowledge transcends, dominates or simply leaves behind'. And further:

> 'Transcendence' in its origins, is a transcendence *of* the feminine [...] What I am suggesting here is that the ideal of transcendence is [...] a male ideal; that it feeds on the exclusion of the feminine [...] It is breaking away from a zone which, for the male, remains intact – from what is for him the realm of particularity and merely natural feelings. For the female, in contrast, there is no such realm which she can both leave and leave intact.[10]

This illustrates the risk of humanism, that a seemingly gender-neutral concept like transcendence conceals a masculinist symbolism and so undermines attempts to theorise a general human individual. The considered 'norms' of human life are often male standards, or ones that prioritise a masculinity constructed by such norms.

Significantly, however, transcendence, spiritual or secular, is always frustrated in Kennedy's fiction. Escape, intact, from the material bodily realm always fails. And if, as suggested, transcendence does describe a process of male triumph, of escape from a feminised 'ground', then I would argue that the failure of this process in Kennedy's writing signals a countering of masculinism and even a crisis of traditional masculinity. Focusing its analysis on her novels, this chapter begins with this premise of masculine crisis and considers how Kennedy produces that crisis and attempts to contain it for the sake of her humanist principles, in effect embarking on a kind of mourning for masculinity.

In each of Kennedy's novels a crisis of masculinity is played out, negotiated and brought to an ambiguously presented conclusion. In *Looking for the Possible Dance* (1993) Kennedy explores Margaret's relationships with her father, her boyfriend Colin, and her boss Mr Lawrence. They each make claims upon her and try to exert control over her. The novel's violent climax, where Colin is crucified by being nailed to a warehouse floor by Glasgow gang members, represents a reinstatement of male authority which is an issue throughout the novel. In the surrealist *So I Am Glad* (1995) Jennifer is a woman who shuns intimacy and is in fact masculinised by her lack of emotional response. The category crisis that Jennifer therefore suggests is brought dramatically into relief by the appearance of the legendary Renaissance man, Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, in contemporary Glasgow. Risen from the dead, in Jennifer's confessional narrative at least, he helps her to overcome her emotional

sterility and relational crisis. Finally, *Everything You Need* (1999) chronicles Mary Lamb's development into a writer under the tutoring of Nathan. He is her father, though she is unaware of this, and her success accompanies the demise of his own writing career as he contemplates the failure of his relationships, his ambition, and his vocation. There appears to be a progression from Kennedy's earliest to her latest novel, a tentative gathering optimism regarding the increased status and independence of women. Meanwhile the men become increasingly disempowered.

Traditional, patriarchal masculinity is uncertain and unstable in this writing, specifically denied its power and aspirations of transcendence through a strategy of 'complicity and critique'. Linda Hutcheon's term describes a technique that installs a traditional or conservative theme in the narrative only to undermine and discredit it.[11] A pervasive example of this strategy in Kennedy's writing is her subversion of grand themes and transcendent metanarratives by an insistent focus on unruly, unpredictable and undisciplined material reality. *On Bullfighting* vividly illustrates this technique, and, though it is a work of non-fiction, it illustrates a model of composition followed by Kennedy in much of her prose fiction. The text manifests all the craft and themes of her fiction, alternating between painstaking research and details of personal life related in her own inimitably intimate voice. It also brings into relief the risks Kennedy takes in her writing and is therefore an intriguing place to begin an investigation of her fiction.

On Bullfighting is ostensibly a book about the corrida, and as such it is a scholarly investigation concerning the history, rituals and cultural significance of the bullfight, complete with footnotes and a glossary of technical Spanish terms. But it is also a declaration of Kennedy's relationship with writing. It opens with an account of her suicide attempt, undertaken because 'I'm a writer who doesn't write and that

makes me no one at all' (*OB* 3). It ends with her back in her study, contemplating the 'vocation which has now closed with me outside. I don't know what to do' (*OB* 168). In between is Kennedy's struggle with this estrangement: 'In writing this book, I am looking for faith. I am not unaware that I need it' (*OB* 12). The corrida is the almost perfect embodiment of faith. In essence, it is an act of secular faith in the skill of the individual that is most nearly summarised in the symbolism and vocabulary of religion: ritual, sacrifice, exorcism, and transcendence. For Kennedy this is a fitting description of the act of writing which in this text she clearly desires to understand as a mystery, a vocation, a spiritual experience.

At the centre of *On Bullfighting* is a conceit – the corrida as a metaphor for writing. This results in Kennedy's identification of herself, at different times, with both the matador and the bull, a sense of doubleness which, as we shall see, threads through her work. This strategy could be seen as an overblown effort to seal the fate of The Writer in parallels with a ritualised blood sport. The arrogance of Kennedy the writer is supreme here; the parallels of physical risk between writing and bullfighting are of course untenable (notwithstanding fatwas and other terrors which are not our context here). The pretentious nature of the comparison is not lost on Kennedy who is only too aware that she is hitching herself onto the glamorous coat-tails of the corrida. The commitment made by the bullfighter to face death every working day is 'a commitment which I'm pointing out I know that I can't equal' (*OB* 5). It is in the nature of the book that the significance of the connection between writing and bullfighting is undermined as much as it is asserted, derided as often as it is grandiosely appropriated. This is evident both in Kennedy's admission, late in the book, of the less than noble nature of her reasons for writing, and in the

disappointment of the corrida, when the ritual fails and it becomes the messy, ugly and violent spectacle that is characteristic of many events.

As *On Bullfighting* relates, Kennedy is prevented from trying to kill herself by jumping from a window of her apartment because she suddenly hears the tune of a popular folk song, 'Mhairi's Wedding', being sung in the distance. She decides that she cannot kill herself to the strains of the hated song: 'I can't wait here and listen to *Mhairi's Wedding* and still prepare myself to die with even a rag of credibility. Equally, I can't face jumping while the bloody thing is still being sung. Murdering myself to this accompaniment is more than I can bear' (*OB* 4-5). It is interesting how the word 'murder' here situates Kennedy as both perpetrator and unwilling victim of this act, a split of subjective unity not so much associated with the more usual description of 'committing suicide'. A few pages later she relates how she told a friend of her death wish:

> He said – and I do remember this exactly, 'Don't do that, Alison. You would look so silly.' He had guessed, quite correctly, that the last thing I'd want my death to be is silly [...] I very much wanted to make one last, grand gesture and to make it *properly*. If there was nothing else for me to say and no one to listen, in any case, then at least I could find a way to make my death speak. Then my kind friend made it beautifully plain that I could make myself dead very easily, but not dead and in control, not dead and also eloquent. (*OB* 9, 10)

Fear of ridicule overcomes the grand and noble gesture of facing death. Kennedy's admission reveals something of the personal side of her vocation, the less than grand vanity of the writer and the less than noble need for control. Writing, like faith, is a risk, a total self-exposure that may end up being simply ridiculous. And this is the risk she takes in her central conceit of comparing writing and bullfighting.

The comparison itself also risks failure because of the unpredictable nature of the corrida and the uncertainty of its success. The fact that Kennedy initially sees the

elements of death, transcendence and immortality as defining and enobling the corrida also means that her conceit is dependent on unattainable ideals. After attending her first bullfight she has to concede that 'The corrida, it seems, can only reveal what beauties it might have if the observer is willing to ignore a great deal of clumsiness, ugliness and confusion, a great many failures of good faith and technique' (*OB* 137). And further, 'I do not understand how the aficionado's passion for toreo can tolerate the shambles which is a bad corrida' (*OB* 138). However, the failure of the corrida enhances, ironically, Kennedy's metaphor. It not only perfectly undermines her own arrogance, but it also symbolizes her consistent theme, the denial of transcendence by the physical reality of the world we live in. The corrida's failure as a ritual is an illustration of her own overreaching ambitions in her attempt to get to 'matters beyond common sense, to questions of love and faith' (*OB* 138).

This is the crux of Kennedy's work. Her writing presents in any situation a simultaneous potential for both glory and ridicule, transcendence and humiliation. There are times when the corrida does succeed in being a 'religious mystery', when 'the sight of man willing in, taking in, an animal's life' amounts to a religious experience. 'It is a strange thing to watch: an elaborately prepared transgression, a sacrifice and a sin, ugly and peculiarly moving' (*OB* 166). If Kennedy aspires to such a glorious paradox in her writing, it is also something she is careful to undermine by relating the disturbing scenes from the not-so-mystical corridas. She also demystifies the faith she has stated she is searching for when, late in the book, she briefly relates a personal episode. She recalls being abandoned by a man for another woman, but she is critically dismissive of her poignant return to this moment: 'This is the stupid little place where I left my faith. And I'm not in Madrid to get it back' (*OB* 93) she writes, contradicting her earlier assertion. Her loss of faith is not simply a spiritual matter,

the disappearance of her 'gift'. It is also a result of humiliation and betrayal, of human rather than divine concerns.

In this manner, after the initial grand aspirations of its quest, *On Bullfighting* undermines the value of the corrida, writing, the human spirit and Kennedy herself. But not before setting in place some contingent hope of fulfillment, or simply stating the necessity of that eternal pursuit of life's higher meaning. This is the shape of all Kennedy's fiction, the result of a tension produced by the impossibility of completing the self-imposed quest for faith and meaning. Of her trip to Madrid she continues, 'I'm here to understand something which is, by its nature, incomprehensible as a flutter of sudden blood' (*OB* 93). Through this tension of the setting up of hope beside the undermining of its aims, Kennedy disarms the risk of instating a single authoritative discourse, of unquestionably reiterating the gender bias of humanism. Specifically, her strategy of complicity and critique does manage to avoid 'triumph, or triumph's counterpart, glorious defeat', Ben Knights's description of a dominant feature of masculinist fiction.[12] In relation to this, there is no glory in the demise or defeat of masculinity in Kennedy's fiction. The violence of the attack on Colin, or Jennifer's sado-masochism, or Nathan's suicide attempts, these are all particularly inglorious, like the pointless and painful death of a matador in the plaza.

Kennedy's engagement with masculinity is not, however, always a negative one. Her focus on father figures and their relationships with their daughters, especially in *Looking for the Possible Dance* and *Everything You Need*, is a reminder of Jackie Kay's recuperation of a father/child relation towards the end of *Trumpet*. This has been a difficult subject for women writers who in the past were more likely to trace relationships with mothers. As Sarah Dunnigan writes, 'To speak (as a woman) of this love is immediately to invoke a taboo', a feminist reading that 'might perceive the

daughter as a "gift" of exchange in a male economy of desire.'[13] In addition, the importance of fathers in Kennedy's fiction contrasts with the stark absence of mothers. Perhaps this signals a recognition of changing power relations and the less formidably detached and more approachable nature of masculinity. It could also signal a kind of 'post-feminist' reconciliation with men, a maturing relationship where not all men have to be classified as 'the enemy', where their nurturing qualities can be sought and recognised, and where the need for conciliation in order to live side by side is accepted by women.

In Kennedy's novels these father/daughter relations are lovingly drawn, but are also complex, full of desire, regret, and attempted control on the part of the men. In one way, the texts chronicle the 'decline of the paternal metaphor' that Rosi Braidotti, for one, describes as symbolic of the crisis of patriarchal authority; they portray the loss of power these men are experiencing, especially as fathers.[14] But the texts are also attempts to negotiate with these failing men, to incorporate them in loving relationships where they are disarmed but still valued. In this way Kennedy acknowledges that there is no clean break with the failing power structures of the past. And as in Galloway, women also have an investment in that past. But here, with more subtlety than Galloway's novels, the decaying enlightenment and patriarchal ideals exist side by side with a postmodern condition that undermines them. Men attempt to reinstate their lessening power, and the claims of the past continue to exert pressure. But if the positive trajectory of the novels is considered, there is no going back as a process of mourning, marking the slow transition to something new, is underway. A nostalgia is present, evoked by the search for faith and desire for transcendence that is not allowed to triumph. This complex dual character of looking

both backwards and forwards is embedded in Kennedy's novels, giving them a distinctive quality.

This dualism, I would argue, also relates to Kennedy's desire to accommodate humanist discourses, in that she is interested in the stability rather than the instability of her subjects. As such, she does not utilize the radical formal fragmentation of Galloway or represent subjective dislocation in the manner of Kelman. In the face of a changing social landscape she is more interested in what keeps individuals functioning and together rather than what 'cracks them up'. It is typically the fear of losing control that drives Kennedy's characters and their desire to avoid any confrontation with existential emptiness, or the groundless nature of life as experienced by the characters in the Kelman, Galloway and Kay texts encountered so far. Faith becomes a medium of stability, and the foregrounding of faith transforms the void at the centre of life in those other novels into a mystery to be overcome, to be transcended in Kennedy's work. Transcendence, the possibility of 'rising' beyond human experience and material reality, is in itself suggestive of a kind of supra- or super-human control. Consequently, her texts represent in themselves exercises in control, with greater formal unity than the novels already considered, and employing, in effect, a more traditional realism. But in their contradictions and indeterminacy, not least in regard to transcendence, and their prominent themes of memory and the relation between past and present, they also expose the uncertain nature of any stability achieved by her protagonists. Kennedy's prose refuses disintegration, however, and instead explores the tense space of an uncomfortable and unresolved unity.

The metaphysical concerns of Kennedy's writing cause it to be associated at times with a new kind of 'supernaturalism', a trend that Douglas Gifford identifies in

the work of various contemporary Scottish writers including Edwin Morgan, Alasdair Gray and Liz Lochhead. He connects this to 'the revaluation of attitudes towards Scottish history and values' which marks a 'synthesis of old and new [...] perspectives on Scotland' since the 1980s. This 'magic realism' represents a 'new kind of imaginative relationship with [Scotland] and its culture, a relationship which refused to accept a simple realism of generally bleak and economically deprived urban character', and one which reintroduces 'elements of magic and myth, employed for symbolic and social-political reasons.'[15] Certainly, this is true of a significant part of Kennedy's writing, especially her second novel *So I Am Glad*, and points to the fact that her fiction occupies an in-between, indefinite space.

The literary space described in Patricia Waugh's comments on Muriel Spark is also suggestive of Kennedy's work:

> [She] embraces neither a complacent liberalism nor an anarchic postmodernism. Her stories [...] are neither 'true' nor simply 'lies'; they are neither mimetic representation nor simply the play of signification; they neither assume a fixed human moral order nor abjure morality altogether. For these reasons, her novels, too, cannot easily be assimilated to the dominant aesthetic categories of realism, modernism, or postmodernism.[16]

Like the Muriel Spark Waugh portrays, Kennedy's novels seem to hover between genres, forms, and the '-isms' of contemporary literary classification. Overall, however, in the face of grand humanist themes, her novels, like those of the other writers in this study, have an intimate quality. She disarms the unbearable melodrama and hysteria of her characters' personal existential crises with the mundanity of their ordinary, everyday lives. This chapter explores the contradictions of Kennedy's novels and the consequences for gender identity and relations.

I: *Looking for the Possible Dance*

A. L. Kennedy's first novel, *Looking for the Possible Dance*, charts the relationship of its protagonist, Margaret, with her father, her lover, Colin, and her boss, Mr Lawrence, all men making claims on her time and attention. It is structured around a train journey that Margaret takes from Glasgow to London, and her memories of these relationships and the events leading up to her journey. Until recently she has worked in a community centre for the unemployed, a setting that highlights the social uncertainty and instability of the period. The novel therefore considers male insecurity against a background of social division and potential crisis. This context is also set against moments of symbolic social and personal cohesion and harmony in events such as the ceilidh, and dancing is an important trope in the novel, as signified by the title. For Douglas Gifford a central premise is that 'Margaret is trapped in Fatherland, unable to cross to Colin'; that because of her intense relationship with her father she is unable to commit herself to her lover.[17] But as we shall see, Colin is, in fact, as much a part of Fatherland as the father, and Margaret resists this authority throughout the novel.

The tension of conflicting desires is implicit in the structure of *Looking For The Possible Dance*. The novel is a 'non-linear but associative narrative' which oscillates between the present of Margaret's train journey and the past evoked in her act of remembering.[18] It is as if she is suspended between the immediate environment of the train and her personal history, a conjunction that signals the presence of the past in the present. Cutting frequently between the two and sometimes repeating events (for example, a significant meeting of Colin and Margaret in a cafe occurs twice, on page 30 and page 216), the text is jumpy and threatens to fragment. But like a choreographed dance, the two narratives, that of the train journey and the events

leading up to it, progress forward in time in parallel with each other producing a tense unity. Anxiety shadows the text, as in a typical Kennedy feature, the 'flash forward', a technique similar to the kind of authorial intrusion employed by Muriel Spark, in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) for instance.[19] In Kennedy, like Spark, the comforts of memory are disturbed by reminders of violence to come. For example, 'In his future, Colin has this memory' (*LPD* 91); 'Another year will pass before Colin has his pain' (*LPD* 130). But these temporal leaps also serve to unify the narrative, adding to 'an overall pattern of circularity', suggested particularly by the 'motif of the journey, the acts of departure and return' that pervade the novel.[20] Margaret's round trip from Glasgow to London, which starts near the beginning of the novel, with the return journey being looked forward to at its close, is the principle example. Such circularity gives movement to the narrative, but simultaneously confounds it with a sense of stasis, as people return to where they began their journeys. Both Margaret and Colin return to Scotland after studying in England, for example. In such a structure the proximity of the past disturbs the present, and they become locked in an inescapable two-step.

Dancing and the ceilidh, the traditional Gaelic musical gathering, are central to all aspects of the novel. From the title, through scenes of entertainment, political protest, and violence, dancing is a touchstone for the text, significantly a space both of freedom and the imposing of order. According to Margaret, dancing is a pointless gesture 'in a country where pointless gestures were all they had left to make' (*LPD* 39). In a demonstration against the Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher, in her student days, Margaret remembers that 'they ran and danced: irrelevant and defeated. Their gestures were pointless, but glorious' (*LPD* 40). But the feelings of glory are temporary as Margaret later admits she 'couldn't dance away that deathly fucking

peace. But still, she wanted to. Sometimes, like a rise of feeling beneath an antidepressant haze, she would find herself becoming desperate; looking for the possible dance, the step, the move to beat them all' (*LPD* 40). In this novel, dancing symbolises transcendence, the possibility of escaping from mundane reality into 'glorious' freedom or a more spiritual realm. While dancing, Margaret is 'always miles above [the other dancers] and away' (*LPD* 30). But as she admits, this transcendence is temporary, and the placing of the present participle in the title of the novel underlines the search for transcendence as ongoing.

The ceilidh is where all these contradictions of dancing are acted out, and such an event is at the centre of the novel. At the ironically dubbed 'Fun Factory', the community centre where Margaret works, an unemployed man called Graham, an autodidact of 'almost religious fervour' (*LPD* 73), organises a fund-raising event. Christopher Whyte has pointed out that the ceilidh can be used, by a writer like Neil Gunn in his example, to manufacture a 'fake Gaelic heritage' where a timeless and pre-Clearance society represents an essentially natural way of being.[21] It can signify an attempt to install a 'traditional' order. In Kennedy's ceilidh these impulses are present but are undermined by the chaotic freedom that also comes with communal singing and dancing.

In his written introduction, '*THE CEILIDH – NOTES FOR THOSE NEW TO THE COUNTRY OR OTHERWISE UNINFORMED*', Graham points out:

> *As every languageless, stateless, selfless nation has one last, twisted image of its worst and best, we have the ceilidh* [...] *The purposes of the ceilidh, a uniquely unsullied flowering of Scottish culture, are many. Among these are the taking of spiritous liquors, the singing of songs, the playing of music, dancing, joking, wynching, fighting, greeting, eating stovies and looking at the moon while vomiting or contemplating the certainty of death* [...] *A woman may drink and fight while joking, a man may vomit while eating stovies and having a good greet.* (*LPD* 146, 145).

This promises a carnival atmosphere where traditional roles are overturned, a space for chaos. But Margaret's last memory of the end of that ceilidh is one of harmony, a transcendent moment of 'dancing a Saint Bernard's waltz with Colin in a room without music, but full of stepping and spinning couples. She can hear the slide and stamp of their feet, steady clapping and someone humming under their breath' (*LPD* 198).

This image is given a timeless and elemental quality as it is a reminder of Margaret's first memory of a ceilidh, where her father was 'so graceful, stepping and sliding as if it were all that he ever did or could ever want to do' (*LPD* 2). Her father is introduced in the very opening pages of the novel in an account of this event which took place when Margaret was a small child. Here he is presented as a loving parent; we find out later he acts as both father and mother to Margaret. He is feminised, associated with the moon and familiar with it: 'His swaying finger seemed to nudge at the fat, white circle; leave a little mark' (*LPD* 1). He even looks like the moon, in 'the shine of his big, white face' (*LPD* 4). He tells Margaret, 'The moon looks down at us and we look up at her and it's wonderful. She's telling us, "Everything else is a waste of time"' (*LPD* 1). In this and his exhortation that 'being alive is important' (*LPD* 4), his elusive manner distances him from the instrumental and definitive rationalising stereotypically associated with masculinity.

That initial ceilidh produces another resonant image, of Margaret resting on her father's feet as he walks her through the dances, leading her in the choreographed patterns and teaching her the woman's part. The image effectively shows him demonstrating the order of traditional gender roles for his small daughter, engaging her in the patterns of a heterosexual as well as a paternal male/female relationship. And the blurring of the boundaries of their relationship is not always benign. When

Margaret plans to move down south permanently after university her father accuses her of abandoning him:

> 'Please. You were always such a good girl. If you leave me, I don't know what I'll do. I can't bear it. Your mother went away. She never came back. You'll never come back.'
>
> His breath flailed out again.
>
> 'Of course I'll come back. Silly. I'll come back. Mum can't come back – she died. I love *you*. I still love you.'
>
> 'She didn't die, she fucking left me. Did you think I would tell you that? Your mother was a fucking slut? She ran away the first chance she got because I was no bloody good? She might as well have died. Leaving her baby. Leaving me. You're like her, you know that, you always were like her. I knew it.' [...]
>
> He pulled her away, but she lifted her hands to his head, gripped it, held it still, and kissed him. (*LPD* 66)

This revelation exposes him as a weak and emasculated man, a negative aspect of his feminisation. For this he blames both the women in his life, conflating them into an elemental object of scorn. This uncharacteristic outburst is more like that of a jealous lover, and Margaret's performance of the kiss gives a sense of herself as a substitute wife. As Kennedy writes early on in the novel, 'They were both near the end of those twenty-three years they had together. Twenty-three years. As long as a marriage, maybe two' (*LPD* 20). The pressures of the complex relationship, combining as it does dependency, hidden resentments, guilt and desire, are not resolved. Even so, for Margaret 'her father and her pleasure have always been close' (*LPD* 6), and it is the love that she prefers to highlight.

Margaret's relationship with Colin repeats the blurring of roles found in her relationship with her father. Dancing with Colin at the community centre ceilidh, Margaret recalls that 'She feels something like the small heat of her father's smile and remembers flattening her hands against Colin's back and thinking he danced as if he

might be family' (*LPD* 198). The association of Colin with Margaret's father is further suggested by Colin's insistence on a kind of ritual exchange between the two men, even though her father is dead:

> 'I have to take his place.' [...]
>
> 'OK. Edward Alisdair Hamilton, I'm taking away your daughter now and I hope that we're both very happy.'
>
> 'He would want that; for us to be happy.'
>
> 'I know. If I have a daughter, I'll be the same.'
>
> 'Oh.' (*LPD* 150-51)

The ambiguity of 'I hope that we're both very happy' unsettles the moment; this could refer to himself and the father, not himself and Margaret as she understands. Colin also directly identifies himself with fatherhood. The 'pact' between the men is completed later when Colin and Margaret make love, 'gently, Colin almost paternal' (*LPD* 153). Such scenes point to the notion of what Gifford calls a 'Fatherland', but here Colin is an integral part of it, not outside it as Gifford contends. This patriarchal scene is traditionally maintained through marriage which completes the relation between men in the formal exchange of women between them. Colin's insistence that Margaret marry him is an attempt to legitimise this patriarchal relation, and with it his dominance in the relationship. He even buys Margaret an engagement ring as a Christmas present without consulting her.

The men put pressure on Margaret to conform to male ideals of femininity. 'You should dress like a woman sometimes, you know?' (*LPD* 128) she is told by her father. And Colin has similar opinions:

> 'It's just, that job's so fucking bad for you. It's so pointless. Why don't you give it up. We could live off my wages.'
>
> 'I see.'

> 'Until you got something else. I could help you out until we found something better. And when we're married, there might be other things. Just think, you wouldn't have to plod about in jeans and sweaters all the week.'
>
> 'I didn't realise my job was pointless.'
>
> 'I mean it's a waste of what you could be doing.'
>
> 'Whereas sitting at home and living off your money wouldn't be. Because I'd be so much better dressed.' (*LPD* 212)

The slip in pronouns indicates Colin's appropriation of authority: from 'until *you* got something else' to 'until *we* found something better.' Unable to take her challenge he terminates the argument with a wounded 'I fucking trusted you. Fucking pathetic' (*LPD* 213). This scene highlights a consistent concern of the novel, Margaret's inability to commit herself to marriage, the kind of legitimate relationship Colin wants, though in her own way she is committed to him. As usual Colin chooses to understand her refusal as an act of betrayal, a threat to his vision of the relationship, and also, therefore, to his masculine identity. His insecurity erupts into anger and eventually he withdraws from the relationship. Both Colin and Margaret's father are dependent on Margaret to accept the traditional terms and roles assigned to women, as daughter and wife. Their own identities can only exist in relation with these roles, and they depend on the authority they have in these traditional relationships for their own purpose and self-esteem.

Margaret's boss at the community centre, Mr Lawrence, similarly has a role in mind for her as his unspoken flirtation disturbs their working relationship. And his behaviour is also couched in a paternal attitude: 'He always called her Margaret, her private name, the one her father used [...] "I know you're on your own now. I didn't know your father, but ... one hears things. Please ask for any help you need"' (*LPD* 22, 3). Despite this affected concern his presence makes Margaret 'wonder why she

suddenly wanted to wash' and further, 'Why did he stand so close to her? Why did he look so sad? What could somebody like Lawrence want? He must be twice her age' (*LPD* 27). Lawrence seeks consolation from Margaret for the disappointment of his own life, and when she denies this he punishes her in the most dramatic way possible.

Though obsessed with order and rules at work, his private life is in chaos, dominated by his wife Daisy, a tragic alcoholic bullied by Lawrence and a source of shame for him. In an event once again linked to the community centre ceilidh, Daisy dies at home, choking on her own vomit, while Lawrence is at the party. He has returned there to insist that Margaret dance with him, but is frustrated in this by the presence of Colin. Later, in a vengeful mood, he blames Margaret for the death of his wife: 'If I hadn't been with you and she hadn't been alone, I believe she would be alive now. Can you see that I ... don't you feel even a little responsible for this?' (*LPD* 201). Lawrence's sense of betrayal of a relationship that never happened echoes similar moments, as we have seen, with Margaret's father and Colin. They also accuse her of betraying them when she refuses to submit to their visions of how those relationships should be. Lawrence's hysterical, irrational and unjust accusation precedes his revenge when he engineers her sacking through spurious allegations of drug related incidents. He therefore reasserts his authority and order on the community centre after the carnivalesque licence of the ceilidh.

All three men make demands on Margaret, then, and seek to mitigate their own sense of uncertainty and masculine unease through her. With Colin this unease becomes a crisis towards the end of the novel after he is severely injured in an attack by criminal gang members. At the community centre he exposes and confronts a shady loan shark who, in the guise of a credit union agent, is offering money to the desperately poor (*LPD* 89-90). Colin's gesture is a brave one in itself, but also, in

Ben Knights's terms, a glorious individual male act, and one that ends in a spectacular defeat. Colin's exposure of the man leads to the retribution of his bosses, an organised criminal gang. He is kidnapped and taken to a disused warehouse and tortured. This involves a macabre dance choreographed by his torturers and set to Mozart's clarinet concerto:

> The Adagio rippled over the boards and through the dust Colin lifted as he moved. He kissed feet as he was told to, fat notes cool inside his head, running up and up, most especially sweetly, even when feet kicked his face, his kidneys, and set him off crawling again to somewhere else. (*LPD* 229)

Colin is then nailed to the floor of the warehouse by his hands and feet in a shocking act of crucifixion. He survives but is permanently psychologically scarred by the experience. It is this event more than any other that makes Colin a Christ-like figure, but this association is present throughout the novel. From his college days he is marked as an ascetic character and known as 'elder McCoag'; he spends three 'wilderness' years away from Margaret in London; and he drives the moneylenders from the community centre. In the text Colin's crucifixion is the climax of this subtle transfiguration, of his representation as a good and just man. It is an image that problematises Margaret's unwillingness to permanently commit herself to their relationship on his terms. If he is such a hero for others, why not for her? In the café scene where Colin walks out of their relationship she is unable to utter the placating words to stop him (*LPD* 32). But like her father, Colin is an ambiguously feminised figure. He is a caring and sensitive defender of the poor, yet he feels emasculated by Margaret's refusal of his terms.

Colin's Christ-like 'passion' at the hands of the gang heightens the complexity of his situation. He is left permanently damaged and disabled by his experience, a powerless state that further emasculates him. But he is also positively feminised by

the association with Christ, whose attributes as healer, peacemaker and pacifist contrast with assertive and aggressive masculinity. Luce Irigaray, for one, is not convinced of the benign nature of this conception. In a deconstruction of Christ as a feminine figure, she asks whether 'Christ takes upon himself, mimics, the female in order to effect the passage back and beyond that creature whose flesh constantly incites men to lose control'.[22] For Irigaray the appropriation of femininity by a male figure continues to undermine and efface women. At a time when the male-centred world view is unstable and men are increasingly insecure, the appropriation of femininity is perhaps a bid for moral authority that ensures authority generally remains with men.

The crucifixion is an opportunity for Colin's superiority to become apparent, a context for him to overcome the physical, to transcend the material confines of his life. Christ's crucifixion is the precursor of the supreme moment of transcendence, the moment of dying before the resurrection into eternal life. But Colin is only left more closely tied to the material world as he is permanently damaged, constantly cowering from the recurring memory of his ordeal. In an echo of the treatment of memory throughout the novel, here the music of Mozart is a catalyst for the precipitation of this past event into the present, a communication channel to that past that is forever open. In his immersion in the past as well as the present Colin fails to achieve any kind of transcendence; he does not become a martyr by dying, or a superman in his survival. He is in fact punished for his engagement with a feminine realm of care and respect, specifically denied transcendence. He is a sacrifice in the restatement of the destructive masculine values he has threatened. His vulnerability comes from his own failure to commit fully to the feminine and to seek community in that, and from his tendency to signal his feminised concerns in a typically

individualist, assertive and masculine way, for instance, in his expulsion of the loan shark from the community centre.

Colin, as we have seen, is certainly an ambivalent saviour in Margaret's eyes, demanding and domineering, in need of constant proof of her loyalty, proof of his status. He now repeats his demand for commitment. Before his ordeal Colin had finished the relationship with Margaret and she had planned to move to London. Referring to this trip he says, 'You have to go away to London and if you're ever going to leave me, you have to do it then. Just stay away. If you come back, it has to be forever' (*LPD* 247). It is this journey that structures the novel, and at the end of it Margaret has made her decision to return to Colin, potentially signalling her capitulation to the patriarchal structures he has always, overtly or covertly, furthered.

Colin's disempowered status means Margaret is returning to a weakened man. This situation is a reminder of Jane Eyre's marriage to the blinded Rochester, which has sometimes been described as a relationship of equals.[23] But the terms of Margaret and Colin's relationship remain fraught:

> 'I go to sleep and then I hear music. I need you to be there when that happens.'
>
> 'I will be.'
>
> 'But it has to be forever. You have to stay with me forever. I can't let you go. Be with me. I think I would kill you if you went away. I think I would. Please.' (*LPD* 247)

It is significant that he conceives of killing her rather than himself. This self-preserving impulse reveals the inadvertent and unintentional nature of his sacrifice, and reminds us of Margaret's own sacrifice in returning to him. The consequences of this are somewhat justified by the fact that the text blames Margaret, to some extent, for Colin's ordeal. In the café, unwittingly she betrays him to his torturers in a further echo of the Christ narrative (*LPD* 33). This interpretation also informs Gifford's assertion that Margaret is unable to cross to Colin from Fatherland. Gifford's reading

is reminiscent of a psychoanalytic perspective in which Margaret's excessive attachment to her father implies that she has not successfully negotiated the Oedipus complex by substituting him with another man. She is therefore denying Colin the fulfilment of his purpose in life which is to become a father himself; she is endangering his survival in a chain of immortality. He is justified, then, in expecting consolation from her.

The close of the novel, however, is more ambiguous. The fact that 'her track is beginning to bind itself under others' is a 'resolution' for Dunnigan, and it is true that this image reflects Margaret's decision to return to Colin, and to marriage.[24] The engagement ring that she simultaneously 'without noticing [...] winds around and around her finger' (*LPD* 249) emphasises this. There is no indication here that this is not what Margaret wants; she has already told Colin 'I want to be with you. Nobody else. That's all I know' (*LPD* 32). And she has also admitted the uncomfortable plight of being single, 'when people were always expected in pairs, like eyebrows or like gloves' (*LPD* 53). It is possible that Margaret is returning to the relationship on her terms, but the final image of the novel is ambivalent in this respect:

> The late sun outside the station is very strong and from a distance its doorways seem white, more like curtains of white than ways made through walls and into light. Margaret walks to one door and sinks into brilliant air, becoming first a moving shadow, then a curve, a dancing line. (*LPD* 250)

The sun eclipses the moonlight which opened the novel, a substitution of a traditionally feminine symbol for a masculine one. The reappearance of this 'late sun' into which Margaret emerges suggests a resurgence of masculine values, as violently reinstated by the gang. But in addition to this, these final lines of the novel create a context of performance, with the curtains of white that could lead onto a stage. There is an aura of artifice about her future. In taking her part Margaret is reduced to a

'curve, a dancing line'; her performance is a mark, a representation of her identity. That she 'sinks' into this role suggests a lowering of her status. It is significant and resonant of all Kennedy's writing that the almost ecstatic and transcendent quality of the language here ('into light', 'brilliant air') is undermined by contradictory connotations, exemplified in the word 'dancing' which, in different contexts throughout the novel, has suggested both traditional order and a degree of anarchic freedom.

This conclusion may signal the completion of Margaret's enrolment into a traditional male-dominated life, Colin's eventual triumph in their relationship. But this is an uncertain victory. It suggests that the role-play this entails is just that, a performance of identity and not a natural state. The close of the narrative also alludes to the possibility of subverting these roles in its contradictory language, and especially in the proliferating significance of dancing. Margaret's exit from the novel amidst these conflicting signals is like an act of faith, as she sinks into 'brilliant air'; the future is groundless and built on such faith. The reinstalling of masculine values that is the ultimate message of this novel is shown to be contingent and unstable. Even so, though the patriarchal scene has been fundamentally problematised and troubled in Margaret's journey, she has not yet escaped it.

II: *So I Am Glad*

Kennedy's second novel, *So I Am Glad*, is a surreal tale of category crisis in which the legendary seventeenth-century French writer, Cyrano de Bergerac, is resurrected in contemporary Glasgow. The novel is narrated by Jennifer Wilson, a woman caught up in her own crisis, alienated in her own social position and relationships. There is a temptation to read this novel 'psychologically', as noted by Gifford when he asks if 'unhappy Jennifer has invented the lover needed to repair the traumas of her deviant

lovelife'. But Kennedy's magic realism confounds this interpretation with the consistent verisimilitude of its relationships and detail (Jennifer is not the only one to engage with Cyrano), even referring to real-life events, such as the 1994 football world cup final, to highlight and underline its realism as well as its magic. As Gifford comments, 'Kennedy teases her readers, anticipating their old-fashioned questions of how and why.' Her answers, or evasions, are 'postmodern sleights'.[25] As such, Kennedy's novel articulates a category crisis around death and gender, and so echoes similar themes in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*. Here too in *So I Am Glad*, death initiates the exposure and liberation of secrets rather than their suffocation.

Kennedy's novel transgresses the boundary between magic and realism in its troubling of the life/death distinction, a manoeuvre subtly but intimately related to the destabilising of gender here. For instance, Jennifer's problematic femininity is in itself not without precedent. Margaret Elphinstone, in an essay on contemporary feminist fantasy, points to the strong tradition of myth and folklore in Scottish literature in which the figure of the 'dangerous woman' is present as a 'significant part of the Scottish heritage for women writers now':

> In twentieth-century writing she may sometimes seem to align quite ideologically with a feminist perspective, but she refuses to become quite ideologically sound. She is too sinister for that. She has appeared since the ballads as the daughter of the other world, with all the danger and glamour that that implies. In modern fantasy her refusal to accommodate herself to a world of known boundaries and social realism may be related to her psychological alienation from the patriarchal model.[26]

As we shall see, there are certainly echoes of the dangerous woman in Kennedy's socially alienated narrator.

Jennifer is a psychologically isolated and damaged individual who has grown up in a family of abusive strangeness. She eventually comes to believe that a new and

unknown lodger who turns up inexplicably in her shared house is Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, the Renaissance poet and philosopher, resurrected from the dead. With him she finds the love and intimacy that have so far eluded her. At the end of the novel his reincarnation is mysteriously reversed leaving Jennifer alone, a changed person. The theme of transcendence is once again central, not only in Savinien's short overcoming of death, but in the issue of writing, Kennedy's secular act of faith. Jennifer's self-conscious narration lays bare her hopes and desires, to 'reverse or at least to arrest the passage of time' (*SIG* 186), and Savinien himself is hopeful that his own writing will bestow upon him immortality. Though they are disappointed, they both transgress traditionally natural boundaries in that they both problematise the difference between life and death, and between male and female. They echo Kay's Joss Moody in occupying two states simultaneously.

Jennifer's condition is one of alienation, from the world around her and from herself. The opening pages of the novel, for example, are remarkable for their description of her feelings about sex, which amount to a disavowal of intimacy.

> I find I take strange exercise. I am tired and unathletic and I am weary back in to my blood and bone, but I willingly waste the priceless hours next to daybreak in an activity which is neither rest nor sleep.
>
> Not surprised, just disappointed, I discover I am having sex again. (*SIG* 1)

This is no moral failing on her part but a habit or a performance of intimacy that replaces any feelings of pleasure or connection. 'I'm sad to say that I have found it to be of one use only – when I'm having sex, I'm not also expected to speak' (*SIG* 3). Ironically then, sex for Jennifer is something that precludes intimacy, something to do instead of talking, an easy way to be 'intimately active instead of intimate' (*SIG* 4). She admits that her principle characteristic, which she describes as calmness, 'other people have called it coldness, lack of commitment, over-control, a fishy disposition.'

(*SIG* p 4). The pervasive underwater imagery in the novel ('Each street lamp supported a kind of fish shoal halo' (*SIG* 139); 'the silent underwater glow of the television' (*SIG* 232)) is reminiscent of the opening of Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* where Joy Stone's lifeless marine-like living room symbolises her shipwrecked life. The suggestion of an alien environment situates Joy's abject state somewhere between life and death, and Jennifer's predicament appears similar.

In these opening pages Jennifer admits to a lack of feeling, an absence of emotion that sets her apart from the majority of people:

> I am not calm, I am unspontaneous. When something happens to me, I don't know how to feel [...] Seemingly, most people have whole hordes of feelings, all barrelling round inside them like tireless moles [...] Almost the first thing I noticed about me when I was very, very young [...] was that I had a certain moley something missing [...] For no good reason, no reason at all, I am empty. I don't have any moles. (*SIG* 5-7)

The fact of living without feelings, even in the dismissive tone of the Disney-like animated 'mole' vision Jennifer conjures up in this opening section, raises questions about her state of mind. Lack of emotion, when not associated with criminality, relegates the individual to a human twilight, to a flat, numb experience of life. This might be a kind of 'dead zone', where Jennifer is suspended, like Joy Stone, somewhere between life and death. This predicament of the opening scenario is emphasised because Jennifer is female, and women are traditionally conceived of as inherently emotional in opposition to the controlled rationality of men. In not being able to feel Jennifer may be experiencing a crisis of femininity. This is particularly suggested because the characteristics she describes, fear of intimacy, sex as a substitute for intimacy, lack of emotion, a desire not to talk, are all characteristics stereotypically associated with men. The opening pages, then, highlight Jennifer's masculine qualities, posed as a conundrum because she is a woman.

According to Jennifer, there are no obvious reasons for her emotional lack, and she asserts this quite unequivocably:

> As I write this, I can see extremely clearly that nothing terribly bad has ever happened to me. I can't recall a single moment of damage that could have turned me out to be who I am today. I can dig down as deep as there is to dig inside me and there truly is nothing there, not a squeak. (*SIG* 6-7)

She essentialises her nature here, insisting this is the way things are. Later in the novel this unquestioning explanation is complicated by the inferred psychological effects produced by her relationship with her parents. As a child Jennifer was forced to take part in the sexual exhibitionism of her parents as their audience, and she regularly watched them engage in sexual acts. 'I can only suppose they may have needed me to be there, wanted me [...] for their own, closed reasons' (*SIG* 71). It is here, at a very young age, that Jennifer's isolation begins. She realises that something is not right and decides 'that no one should ever come home with me', but 'friends are not so difficult to make, it took a good deal of work to escape having even one' (*SIG* 70).

Along with this social withdrawal there is also an emotional one, a desperate need to control her feelings. 'All I did was watch. I knew, when they looked at me, that they couldn't tell how I was inside, unless I showed them. They were trying to see what I thought, but I didn't let them' (*SIG* 71). And on another occasion, when her father identifies with a desire she has expressed, she consolidates her survival strategy. 'I was completely determined that he shouldn't be able to tell how I felt, ever again. I would rather disappear than have that. So I did' (*SIG* 136). Despite Jennifer's denials, her relationship with her parents would appear to be the source of her grown-up 'calmness', which is a refined ability to strictly control her emotions. She even fulfils her childhood wish to disappear in her job as a radio announcer where

she is disembodied, a 'living bellows [...] a mouth without a brain' (*SIG* 217). Jennifer's conceptualisation of her emotionless state as natural is belied by her childhood experiences, and their effect certainly appears to frame her adult life.

Jennifer's assertion of never feeling anything is also undermined by an episode she narrates involving an S and M ('Seedy and Mad', *SIG* 125) sex session with former boyfriend Stephen. Here, as she plays Captain Bligh to his submissive Fletcher Christian, she gives way to all her feelings of loneliness, isolation and anger. After tying him to a table she proceeds to lash him with the buckle end of a belt to a point of serious bodily harm:

> I feel the movements of it in me now. I know that the swing in my arms continued in time with the ache of my breath and I uncover that feeling under my heart and along my spine of finding an edge and stepping beyond it and finding an edge and stepping beyond it and gripping that edge and throwing it away. (*SIG* 127)

This transgressing of boundaries contrasts sharply with the rigid self-discipline of the rest of Jennifer's life, in which the maintenance of personal borders and distance is of paramount importance. It is the loneliness of this existence that pushes her to this extreme: 'There [Stephen] is, alone with his pleasure, and it seems I can do no more than push him even further beyond my reach. I feel all alone'. Eventually she finds herself weeping and admits, 'I find it rather pleasant to feel, all at once, so much' (*SIG* 131). The violent freedom of this transgressing of boundaries liberates her emotionally, but it is only through an act of supreme control over another individual that feelings can be experienced. Yet this is an act of control more than loss of control, the manipulation and management of a situation for the gratification of certain needs. As we have seen in the introduction, masculinity is defined by control, and, interestingly, Jennifer's situation is verified in Susan Faludi's account, in her book *Stiffed: The Betrayal of Modern Man* (1999), of the personal stories told at a

group therapy session for male perpetrators of domestic violence. For these men it was typical to find that the moment of violence was a moment of control, often 'the only one in his recent life'.[27]

According to this scenario, such violence is a last refuge of a disempowered masculinity, a masculine identity that, at its root, may be pathological in its obsessive need for self-control and its fear of emotion and vulnerability. In exhibiting similar symptoms, Jennifer is a masculinised woman, a personal crisis produced by her extreme need for self-protection. She embodies the characteristics that have come to signify the problematic position of men as the authority of masculinity is undermined, and this means she is caught up in a crisis of masculinity that has become her own. Her category crisis, as a woman who behaves more like a man, undermines the notion of fixed gender identity and highlights the vulnerability of this order of classification to disruption. Of course, it also supports the correctness of gender fixity as it can be argued that had Jennifer developed a 'normal' femininity she would not have become isolated and potentially violent. Her pathological behaviour could, then, be used to support the naturalness of traditional gender categories, which on disruption become dangerous. As a counter to this, the figure of Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac further highlights the constructed nature of masculinity and femininity amidst his own transgressing of boundaries, and in him Kennedy demonstrates the historical contingency and lack of fixity that categories of gender are subject to.

Savinien, as he likes to be known, matches Jennifer's category crisis with a fantastic one of his own when he crosses the barrier from death to life. In this he is the opposite of Jennifer, the trajectory of whose life has so far taken her into a kind of living death. His is the ultimate confusion of categories. It is therefore significant that he is a man of the Renaissance, an era characterised by overreaching heroes like

Tambourlaine and Faustus who revel in transgressing boundaries. As Kennedy herself says, '[The historical Cyrano] was still at the age where science and religion and spirituality were mingling and influencing each other', and his writing illustrates this.[28] He was an early advocate of the death of God, 'rejecting the authority of traditional customs and opinions', especially that of religion and the bible.[29] In his work he 'deprives man of any privileged position in the universe', yet he asserts that 'the only hope for man lies within himself, in his imagination, in his capacity to know and profit by his knowledge'.[30] He embodies Renaissance self-determination and hopes for the transcendence of the limits of the material world, a nascent humanism.

Savinien is also another Christ-like figure, and, as with Colin in *Looking for the Possible Dance*, there are several parallels with the Christ narrative. Firstly his resurrection from the dead which he describes early on: 'I can hear and feel that I am in the process of plunging up and into a variety of morning [...] I came to a halt – boff – as if I had hit my head on a ceiling, except that the ceiling was a floor' (*SIG* 17). Interestingly, instead of rising up out of death he seems to fall out of it, a reverse of the traditional conceptualisation of a resurrection. Secondly, he spends time in the 'wilderness', living rough on the margins of society with other dispossessed individuals. And thirdly, he disappears at the end of the novel by way of a reverse ascension, head-first into a French pavement. Whereas the epiphanic moments of Christ's life appear as transcendent examples of the spiritual in the realm of the everyday, the inverse nature of Savinien's resurrection and ascension makes these moments examples of a negative epiphany, undermining his apparent transcendence of death, and his association with Christ.

As the putative prototype of various romantic literary and filmic representations, Kennedy's Savinien is not particularly heroic and appears to be a confusion of

oppositional categories and qualities. He is small, fragile, moody, has thinning hair, is violent and unglamorous. Significantly, he has 'the air of a prize fighter turned poetic, or a dancing butcher [...] like Red Riding Hood's granny mixed in with her wolf' (*SIG* 9). He is apparently a soldier and a poet, a duellist and a gardener, combining violence with pacifism, aspects of the masculine and the feminine, in a way that particularly moves Jennifer.

> I found it so strange to hear Savinien talk about violence, killing, even war, with such love and regret. Although he had confiscated the lives of two or three times as many men as Charlie Manson, there was a tenderness in him I'd never managed to find. Then again, he also had a pain about him I didn't want to feel. Tenderness is dangerous, softly cataclysmic and never in the places you'd expect. (*SIG* 129)

In her own experience of violence and abuse Jennifer has never felt love or tenderness. She is surprised to come across an individual who can indulge and experience all these things that in herself are under lock and key. By his example, Savinien does save Jennifer; he is a kindred soul, a fully human being who makes possible an intimacy that allows her to feel, safely, and without the fear of appearing perverse and abnormal. He enables her to feel love for him and to feel loved by him, therefore loving herself at the same time. 'I'd been alive for more than thirty years to reach that evening [...] Thirty-five years of sleeping, waiting, shuttered months before I could make and feel and mean a sentence about present love. Worth the wait, I think' (*SIG* 233). In this sense, Savinien is Jennifer's saviour.

The reverse is also true, that Jennifer saves Savinien. She looks after him and takes time to care for him in his traumatic transferral from seventeenth-century Paris to twentieth-century Glasgow; she explains modern life to him, pays his rent, feeds and clothes him, and most of all, she believes him when he confesses who he is. It is, perhaps, his total vulnerability that enables her to care for him, to initially be a

mother-figure. As he points out, she is the first woman he hears after his mysterious 'birth'/resurrection, and 'that would really make you my mother, eh?' (*SIG* 19). Jennifer as mother, lover and feminine saviour as well as violent sadist and unfeeling loner creates a confusion and mobility of roles and identities which undermines the power of oppressive categories to order people's lives in this novel.

Love makes Jennifer come to life, and as she gradually wakes up to the world around her she realises what a disturbing and unsafe place it is. The news bulletins she reads are full of reports of political corruption and sleaze and exploitation of the poor and defenceless around the world. The urban realities of homelessness and dispossession are taking on a new dimension at this time:

> My adopted city is, like many others, breeding Streetpeople. They have always been here – made a different colour from other people, a different shape, with faces that are not like other people's faces [...]
>
> Now my city, like many others, has made its moves to take what was a kind of embarrassing hobby much more seriously. We have Streetpeople who are undeniably young, very vulnerably insane, clean, sad, sober, ostentatiously human and even talkative. (*SIG* 118-9)

Jennifer reacts by developing a 'tone' in her necessarily neutral broadcasting voice, 'an air of negative comment' (*SIG* 218), marking her increasing engagement with her life, her return from the 'dead zone'. The harsh reality of the contemporary social scene is an antidote to the 'magic' of Savinien's presence. His own addiction to drugs during his time in the wilderness and his painful detox indicates that he does not occupy any privileged place in the material world. These episodes illustrate the heightened physicality of his existence and further distance him from any divine or transcendent status.

Significantly, as Jennifer comes alive, Savinien approaches death once more. They travel to Paris where he revisits the scene of his original death and is

mysteriously taken into the ground in a reverse ascension, a 'descension'. Jennifer makes a decision not to follow him: 'I did not wish to die with him, to go with him. I could not, I tried, but I could not want that' (*SIG* 276-7). Like Joy Stone, Jennifer discovers that she really wants to live, therefore completing the reversal of the twin trajectories of their lives together. Savinien's transcendence is symbolically negated and Jennifer is left in the material world, though significantly changed. In the opening lines of the novel she signals the masculine trend of her thinking when she writes, 'I don't understand things sometimes', expressing 'discontent' that 'I always end up asking for answers I can't have' (*SIG* 1). Here she betrays her need for control. In contrast, by the end of the novel there is an acceptance of ambiguity, that apparently opposite states can coexist. She writes, 'I will miss this and I will miss Savinien and I will be glad' (*SIG* 280), embracing both loss and optimism. This is a statement of faith that Jennifer now has in the future, an agreement to forego the search for meaning, for 'answers I can't have', and to just live. But this comes at the end of her memoir which in itself is an attempt to surpass the present and renarrate the past.

Jennifer's decision to write her memoir of Savinien is an attempt to transcend the present. 'I want to reverse or at least to arrest the passage of time. I am standing in the face of nature which is as pointless as trying to pin back a waterfall. Silly and maybe even harmful. But I want to live again in minutes and hours which are gone and to forgo my present because it is less satisfactory' (*SIG* 186). Savinien, an established writer of his time, voices a similarly ambitious reason for writing, one that Jennifer would also recognise. 'I had something cold under my heart, it seemed there was only space inside my ribs and not the material of a man [...] I needed to be mistaken for something more than what I was, for fear of disappearing' (*SIG* 43). The

act of writing satisfied this need for him. 'To write was to go home. No, to be, of myself, my own home' (*SIG* 192). Jennifer is similarly 'homeless' and for her too writing holds a particular promise:

> Here is where I'll put something down that's for me, a corner of all this writing which is only mine and not a confidence I'm going to offer [...] I would like to take a part of my past in the past and set it down so it will stay. I will let it go from me and keep this record here because I wish to. Here I will see and understand this thing and then I will put it down. This is heavy and has come too far with me already and now I am tired and I am going to put it down. (*SIG* 69-70)

She then goes on to describe details of her relationship with her parents. There is almost an attitude of faith towards writing in this passage. It is a medium through which the past can be recreated, absence made present. But more than that, it enables you to leave behind anything unpleasant that is exposed, depositing the emotional investment in this physical 'record' where it will stay, causing no more trouble. In this writing is a means of confession, a metaphor and a secular setting for a spiritual unburdening as well as a way of recreating Savinien.

Inevitably, the faith of both Savinien and Jennifer in writing is tested in this novel. Savinien's work does not survive as he intended. In the national library in Paris he finds, though it was translated and published by his friends after his death, it is altered in ways that change the meaning completely, and 'there is not even a good sentence' (*SIG* 271). Jennifer is also disappointed as she realises that 'at the end of a page, a chapter, a day of work, I have to stop. I have to come back. Just when I'm tired, when I've allowed myself a certain sensitivity to events, I have to come back and leave everything behind' (*SIG* 187). Finally she cherishes Savinien's love letter to her, not for the words but because 'if I do not touch the paper often I hope that when I lift it out and warm it there will always be something about it like the scent of

him' (*SIG* 236). The writing is no substitute for the sensual presence of Savinien himself, and she understands that the illusory transcendence of writing, in its promise of making present what is absent, has not saved him for her. At the end of the novel, then, Jennifer remains in the material world, not death-like, not transcendent, but glad of the life she has regained.

At the novel's close, Jennifer has achieved a more balanced relationship with the world in place of the stunted self that she described in the beginning. She overcomes her own masculine crisis with the aid of a Renaissance man who embodies the humanist ideals of the Enlightenment. He is a sympathetic character but he does not survive, and hopes of transcendence die with him. The possibility of escaping the pathological masculinity that appears to be a legacy of that early modern period is signalled by a woman. It is Jennifer who is the inheritor of these ideals at the close of the novel, and her attachment to the material world gives hope that dreams of escape will eventually be forgotten, and only this world will provide the arena for a new understanding and equality. This conclusion signals a throughline between the past and the present, that the effacing of men does not wipe out their influence. But the novel's destabilising of fixed gender categories and its denial of transcendence disrupts that influence and signifies a search beyond the present certainties. *So I Am Glad* looks backwards in order to look forwards, risking nostalgia but eventually curtailing the obsession with the past in favour of the present.

III: *Everything You Need*

Acts of writing, crucial to *So I Am Glad*, are even more dominant in Kennedy's third novel, *Everything You Need*, which is populated by authors. The text focuses upon writing as a way of life, and the danger of attempting to replace life with writing, or more specifically of desiring to author life like one authors a book. The fatal

attraction of the god-like role of the writer as creator is illustrated in Nathan Staples, a troubled middle-aged novelist. For him, writing is a process of appropriation, a masculinist discourse of control where reality can be shaped by the power of an individual. Through him *Everything You Need* records the decline of male authority and searches for an alternative process of creativity, one that is less concerned with domination. The notion of a more feminine writing is tentatively presented in Nathan's daughter, Mary Lamb, whose progress as a novice writer is another strand of the narrative. As in *On Bullfighting*, which is almost a companion volume to this text, there is a primary concern with the quest for faith and transcendence which is embedded into the themes, narrative and structure of the novel. And, as in Kennedy's other work, such a quest is both asserted and undermined in the search for an alternative creative practice that is a major impulse here.

Everything You Need begins and ends with Nathan, an established author who lives among a fellowship of writers on an island off the coast of Wales. His daughter Mary Lamb comes to the island in order to be tutored by Nathan in creative writing on a seven year 'scholarship' (we are not informed how this has come about). The novel is therefore divided into seven sections corresponding to the period of Mary's apprenticeship. Through Nathan, and seven 'autobiographical' pieces written by him and dispersed throughout the text, we learn about their relationship and the events of the past that led to their estrangement. Mary is unaware that he is her father as her parents separated when she was four years old. She assumes he is dead, as she was subsequently left by her mother Maura in the care of her maternal uncle, Bryn, and his male partner Morgan, and brought up by them in the Welsh valleys. The novel charts, at a distance, Mary's development as a writer alongside a close analysis of Nathan's gradual acceptance of the loss of his own creative credibility, and indeed the loss of

his precarious masculine authority. In the rich detail of Nathan's journey, *Everything You Need* mourns masculinity more profoundly than any of Kennedy's previous work.

Nathan's home is 'Foal Island' and the fellowship of seven writers, consisting of himself, the founder Joe Christopher, Lynda, Ruth, Louis, Richard, and finally Mary. The island is a marginal location, apart from the mainland and mainstream society, and its alternative name, 'Island of the Dead', emphasises its significance. The present commune that Mary joins in this retreat is made up of writers who no longer write, who have lost their creative powers or, as Kennedy describes it in *On Bullfighting*, their faith in their vocation. As Joe says, 'a writer who doesn't write – what's that if it's not dead?' (*EYN* 483), and death is certainly a preoccupation for this group, as described through Nathan:

> That was the deal. Anyone on Foal Island was free to put him- or herself in the way of dying at any time. Their aim should not be suicidal, but should make genuine efforts towards exposure to absolute risk. Joe was always keen that people should try their best. And, having survived, he was also keen that people tell him all about it. [...]
>
> Joe's personal theory was that Technicolor, widescreen contact with the Beyond would infallibly compose itself into clear, metaphysical sense.
>
> *And seven tries for eternity are supposed to work the fucking charm.* [...]
>
> Anyone after a cure for anything was intended to find their states of mind and body had been altered by extreme experience. And, if not, it didn't matter – the odd insight or enlightenment was pretty much guaranteed. (*EYN* 42-3)

The writers are on the island to regain their faith in their vocation, and they pursue this state of grace by defying death in actions of suicidal self-abuse, or as Joe terms them, 'an exercise in humility' (*EYN* 44). The island is a purgatory-like space where these individuals do not simply await death and rebirth, but actively chase them. The preoccupation is really with transcendence, as if the overcoming of actual, physical death symbolically enacts the overcoming of their demise as writers. There are

several of these episodes in the novel, involving Louis and Ruth as well as two suicide attempts by Nathan. But unlike Joe, who 'really believed in the island cure – he wanted to be a saint', Nathan 'really didn't believe it – he just wanted to be a corpse' (*EYN* 43). The entwining of death and faith, transcendence and writing, produces a symbolic topography in the novel in which fiction and reality are conjoined, a feature of all Kennedy's fiction.

This is illustrated by the Island of the Dead and its associated mythology, a source of mystery which, for Joe at least, gives hope for a 'cure'. One explanation of this name comes from a story of a Tudor lord who appropriated the island for his horses. He mysteriously lost his seven sons as one by one they went to the island to tend to them; in revenge the lord killed the horses. In devising their system of 'near-death pacts' this group has, perhaps not unwittingly, become associated with the mythic history of the island, and the connotations of mysterious death and spirituality. But if there is hope of accessing some mystical power, it is negated by the experience of their system in practice. The feelings of transcendence and exhilaration that accompany the survival of these suicide attempts are short lived, too transient to be of any lasting significance or use. For Nathan the exercise brings 'Nothing. Fuck all' (*EYN* 44).

The dead writers on the island of the dead is just one instance of the fraught symbolism of this novel. Another example is the pervasive presence of the number seven, in the seven years, the seven autobiographical pieces, the seven 'rules of writing' that Nathan makes up as he goes along, which gives the novel the structure and atmosphere of a quest. There is also the inferred significance of names, such as Mary Lamb, or the loaded initials of Joe Christopher. Ultimately, though, that symbolism is undermined when it is brought up against the material world of the

novel. It does not express a higher meaning, only suggests structures of interpretation. It is as though the novel assents to a need for symbolic representation in order to define reality for ourselves, but it also undermines the naturalised significance of the meanings we conjure. Faith is the key here, and stories create faith, and faith perpetuates stories in an ever-receding blur of fact and fiction. Kennedy's novel complicates and questions this relation.

Symbolic stress is also overlayed and undermined in the name of the male protagonist, Nathan. In the Old Testament (2 Samuel Ch. 12) the prophet Nathan tells the story of a poor man who has only one lamb which he loses. In contrast, this Nathan is the man who loses his lamb, his daughter Mary Lamb. The effect of the transition illustrates the instability of symbolic value. In this context 'Nathan' is separated from the power of a prophet and becomes the object of a story; he is reduced from author to authored, subject to object. This journey is the story of Nathan's life, and characterises the loss of personal authority that is accompanied by the decline of his faith in his creative power. He loses his control of the masculinised discourse of creativity and becomes a purveyor of formulaic fiction, a mere vendor in the marketplace. The novel traces the trajectory of this crisis of subjectivity for Nathan, his journey from subject to object and his subsequent 'death', the ultimate passive status.

Nathan's loss of his ability to write is in stark contrast to Kennedy's own rambling achievement in *Everything You Need.* The epic length of the novel (567 pages) and the array of characters all testify to Kennedy's control and stretching of the traditional realist novel, even if the contradictory reactions of the critics and lacklustre sales are suggestive of an unsatisfying lack of coherence. Alex Clark wrote at the time, 'This complex, painful novel is [...] enormous in its scope and ambition, it

demands reverence.' In contrast, Adam Mars-Jones believed, 'By stretching a situation that could have been fully dealt with in the course of a single season (and 200 pages) over seven years (and more than 500 pages) [Kennedy] takes on a task that is beyond her.'[31] Whatever the critical conclusion, it is ironic that Kennedy's most ambitious novel is about writer's block. There is proliferation of form and an interweaving of narrative strategies, ranging from third person narration to direct first person internal monologue and rapid movement between the two. This often gives a spontaneous internal commentary on external action, blurring the distinction between observer and observed, ultimately putting into question the unity of the self. Kelman demonstrates the same impulse in his writing, where the slippage between pronouns effectively questions the agency of his subjects. Kennedy's technique is more laboured though, and, in contrast to Kelman's seamless transitions, her text crudely jumps from one perspective to another, discouraging any fundamental disorientation for the reader at the level of the text; that is, it is always clear who is speaking.

The formal complexity of the novel, however, highlights and exaggerates Nathan's failure as a literary writer as opposed to formulaic author of genre fiction. Part of Nathan's problem has been his overreaching ambition. It becomes apparent in the narrative that he has always attempted to control the life around him, to be the author of his social reality as well as his books. Such obsessive need for control signifies a desire to transcend the limitations of material life. However, this is a joyless transcendence, and ironically, this need also binds him even more strongly to the reality he wants to control; it gives him a purpose. Even though Maura tells Mary that 'he wrote more and more and lived less and less' (*EYN* 337), this apparent withdrawal from life is more accurately understood as an attempt to create his own:

> 'Underwear, that was the thing. To be honest.' Maura took a hissing sup at her cigarette, not looking at Mary. 'He started buying underwear for me – the silly, uncomfortable things you

might expect. I let him. Why not? But then he wanted to buy it *all*. He only wanted me to wear things that he'd chosen, nothing else. Then he suggested I should change my hair to please him [...] I started to get a feeling of suffocation. Ownership [...] And then there was that whole thing of being the professional man's wife. Not myself. I lost my name. I'm not saying he *intended* I should disappear, but in the end it seemed that he really didn't mind if I only existed by way of him ... As if I was someone that he was imagining.' (*EYN* 332)

It is significant here that Nathan appears to be imposing a male-sanctioned style dictated by a male-dominated value system, in the 'uncomfortable things you might expect' for instance. He is not asserting independence, merely instituting the discourses of male power in the relationship. This is a hint that, even early on in his life, he is subject to social discourses, controlled rather than controlling. His status as agent is therefore in question form the start.

Maura sees this relationship being repeated with their daughter:

'Some days, everything seemed natural – the way that a father and a daughter ought to be – but then I'd see his eyes, and I'd know he was still working, studying you, writing you somewhere, out in the back of his mind. Even when he was playing with you – he was sort of waiting, too – until you were old enough to be like him [...] He wouldn't let you stay a child.' (*EYN* 337)

This attitude eventually prompts her to take the child away, threatening to accuse Nathan of abuse if he tries to stop her. In a way, his snuffing out of the child's own identity is a type of abuse, akin to the physical kind in Maura's eyes because, as she says, 'with your father, the mind was everything' (*EYN* 338). Years later, Nathan's obsession resurfaces in his relationship with Mary as he observes that 'at some point today she'd had her hair cut rather shorter than he would have liked' (*EYN* 375). But this is only a thought. His whole life has since been directed towards relinquishing control.

If Nathan's relish for the role of the author signals his desire to transcend the limitations of material reality, he is denied such transcendence throughout the novel,

not only by Maura's withdrawal, but by the inescapable and resistant nature of that material world. The body, particularly, always interrupts any flight from the physical. After his first Foal Island suicide attempt, Nathan experiences something less than enlightenment: 'Nathan was still feeling the after-effects of his little sash-cord adventure. His throat flinched when he spoke, his head ached appallingly and the whites of his eyes were Bloody Mary red. What a sodding mess' (*EYN* 43). In this novel every move towards transcendence results in physical damage, and sometimes death.

Away from the ascetic excesses and isolation of the island, *Everything You Need* also focuses on the decadent London publishing scene, where the aim is to forego the pursuit of enlightenment and concentrate solely on the escapism of pure pleasure. Here Nathan's friend and editor, Jack (J. D.) Grace, exemplifies the urban indulgence in the more mainstream but equally transient means of transcendence, namely alcohol, illicit drugs and sex. Jack's physical being permeates the novel, from the bingeing drunk at the beginning to the pitifully incapacitated, hospital-bound invalid near the end. The extremes of his addiction know no bounds; his search for the ultimate alcoholic high, when the normal procedures of consumption begin to fail him, leads him to an S and M practitioner who gives him alcohol enemas and extracts teeth as payment. Such indulgence ultimately kills him. And as well as details of the passage of Jack's abused body towards death, the text also gives us his corpse, on the slab of a teaching hospital, headless. Nathan, carrying out Jack's last wish that he track down his body, only recognises him by his nicotine stained fingertips. Such insistent physicality undermines any trace of transcendence in the novel, even and especially after death.

The objectification of the body also permeates Kennedy's portrayal of the metropolitan literary scene in this novel, where writers and their work become commodities in a marketplace of desire. One scene exemplifies this notion: when Nathan reveals to Mary for the first time that she is a published author they are standing in front of a sex shop in Soho (*EYN* 226). If writing is like prostitution, it is compromised in its promise of transcendence, of authorial control. Certainly Nathan's relationship with writing has been ambiguous, and at one point he echoes Jennifer's disappointment in *So I Am Glad* at the failure of writing to transform life:

> *You never do exorcise anything. You don't even manage that other thing: the making of the silk purse from the pig's shit, from the wreckage of yourself. It doesn't work. In the end, you only put things down to say they happened, to say* ***you*** *happened, and to hope you have a chance of making it all less real. Even if you never manage, even if you always still remember, anyway.* (*EYN* 521)

Nathan's work has in fact been part of that commodification of writing that characterises the literary scene. He became successful with novels about women taking revenge on men for their abuse and betrayal, '*formulaic gore – a bit of splat and trickle for the ladies*' (*EYN* 221). He begun this work after the trauma of the break-up of his marriage, from which he has never really recovered. He still hopes to win back Maura, and these novels are written specifically for her. They are statements of contrition and self-abasing acts of remorse, to convince her of his penitence, and of his changed nature.

In this process he belittles himself for Maura; even if Nathan has not seen her since the break-up, she may still be reading his books. The contrite representations of victorious, avenging women are an attempt to give them the upper hand, at least in fiction, and overturn the power relations between men and women, especially as he tried to impose them in their relationship. Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares*

is just such a narrative, where a rape victim violently avenges her attack (see the Conclusion to this thesis for a brief reading of this text). As we find in that novel, making women dominant only reverses the problem of power and does not resolve it. By this strategy Nathan is disempowering himself; he is left emasculated, violated and pathetic, and the integrity of his own sense of self is threatened, as illustrated by a scene early in the novel. Nathan has a photograph of Mary as a child, his only momento of that time. Sometimes, in a bid to maximise his misery and feelings of loss, he looks at the picture:

> The fully cocked and loaded photograph – tonight, he was going to look at it again. No need to be just sad when he could be truly, thoroughly suicidal. [...]
>
> His own imagination was performing a type of well-informed rape: penetrating him painstakingly with a ghost, with a time past restoring, an unreachable skin. (*EYN* 4-5)

The 'snapshot' has him in its sights and not the other way around, and he becomes its object. He feels violated, 'raped' by a memory, and this feminises him, sealing not only his loss of masculine power, but his status as a subject. Though he pursues and wallows in these self-abasing acts, a symptom of his lost self-esteem, he is ultimately angry and frustrated by his loss, feelings often expressed in sterile violence towards himself and others. But his irascible and frightening demeanour is only the ghost of a power he no longer has.

Nathan journeys from subject to object, and this is emphasised in his various 'deaths' in the novel: he lives on the island of the dead; he has lost a lung due to cancer and points out that during the operation he actually died temporarily while his bodily functions were performed by machines; and during one drunken binge he hallucinates that he is dead and, badly embalmed by Jack, he is left with no fingers (*EYN* 315). The trajectory of the novel leads, inevitably, to Nathan's 'death' as a writer. His autobiographical writings chronicle his relationship with Maura and the

infant Mary, and are in fact a confession to Mary of his identity. Jack Grace calls them a serious book, and though he promises to produce it, Nathan's career is over when he finishes it. Having met Maura and found out that she has a new partner and no longer needs or cares about him, or reads his books, Nathan is relieved of the purpose of his writing. So with this last 'proper' novel, 'he would honour his dead, himself amongst them, the writer who no longer wished to write' (*EYN* 563).

These pieces constitute a confusion of genres; they are autobiographical and confessional, but Nathan also calls them 'stories'. The titles conjure up mythical locations, signifying Nathan's hopes for the transformative power of writing. These locations gradually move away from the physical world: New Found Land; Panagaea; Golgotha; Atlantis; Hyperborea; Paradise; Thinking the World. The final one is perhaps a reference to Nathan's ultimate desire. These romantic titles are in stark contrast with the content of the pieces which focuses on physical relations and feelings in a documentary-like language. The titles aspire to the extraordinary; the texts record the mundane experience of everyday life. In effect, they are a more feminine writing. They undermine the grand narrative with their focus on the minutiae of life. And while a fusion of genres, they are in fact confessional, a form typically described as 'feminine'. Here Nathan perhaps achieves the fullest potential of his transformation, away from dominating masculinity.

The confessional nature of the pieces is highlighted because, as Jack says, 'on paper, he never lies' (*EYN* 380). So the stories cannot hide the love he had, and still has, for his family, but also they cannot hide the obsessive, stifling, controlling and selfish nature of that love. This is particularly illustrated in the piece titled 'Golgotha'. Here he records how, on a promotional trip to Jerusalem, he prostrates himself at the altar on the alleged spot of the crucifixion of Christ, and puts his hand

in the hole, eventually touching what he assumes is the stone of Calvary. In this scene he is possibly another of Kennedy's 'Christ-like' figures, associated with the sacrificed saviour. His motivations, though, are purely personal: '*And I prayed that I could see her again for even only one more time. I asked if I could be with her, but I couldn't use a name. Maura or Mary – any choice was a betrayal*' (*EYN* 224). It is not clear whether this is a betrayal of either of them or of his own desire. This confusion, conflation even, of his daughter and his wife certainly betrays his attitude, suggesting their reduction to a single figure, an essential feminine object of desire. But just as Maura prevents his controlling influence over his family, Nathan is almost stopped in his mission to touch Calvary by a primal fear of the feminine: '*What did you think would be down there?* [...] *Teeth?*' (*EYN* 224). The primeval image of the 'vagina dentata' surfaces as an indication of his disempowerment, just at the moment of possible salvation. There is a masculinist logic here, that his fear and attachment to the feminine is preventing his happiness, his transcendence even. His inability to extricate himself from his wife and daughter undermines his independence, and therefore his masculinity.

Nathan's attempts to live within a masculinist paradigm, to create and control, have all failed. He has lived without his wife and daughter, an absence that has shaped and preoccupied his whole life. He is left with only loss and regret, yet unable to escape his masculine identity with his self intact. His decision to stop writing is perhaps the only escape, but it leaves him with nothing. '*It'll be strange to stop. Not like losing a limb, more like losing my name*' (*EYN* 563). This loss of identity signals the final disappearance of the man that he was, and the surrender of the masculine authority symbolised in the role of the author as Nathan lived it. The loss of his name marks the disappearance of the name of the father just as he is about to reveal himself

to Mary. It signals, then, the end of fatherhood as traditionally conceived, in all its authority. This is an illustration of the decline of the paternal metaphor that serves as justification for patriarchy, and this absence perhaps leaves a space for a different relationship. As he writes to Mary in the final sentence of his book (which is also the close of the novel), 'Please, my darling, have need of me' (*EYN* 567). With this plea he is leaving Mary to decide the terms of this relationship.

Significantly, at the end of the novel Nathan and Mary plan to watch the comet that is gracing the night skies at this time. This falling star could, of course, symbolise the snuffing out of his career. But it could equally represent Mary's rising star. The trajectory of her narrative is in opposition to Nathan's; his demise contrasts with her coming to life as a writer. The assertion of the novel is that Mary will be a different writer to Nathan, and produce a different kind of writing. There are several reasons for this, but to begin with she has not been socialised through the traditional practices of child-rearing as she was brought up by her gay uncles, placing her outside the social mainstream. There is a hint in the novel that she has therefore not been through the Oedipal complex, the Freudian description of the stage in a child's development that brings identification with one parent, usually of the same sex, and desire for the other, instituting the patterns of gender behaviour for adult life. That Mary may still be in a 'pre-Oedipal' stage of development is suggested by her 'erotically misrecognising her father' as Sarah Dunnigan terms it, and expressing a developing desire for him (*EYN* 345).[32] The pre-Oedipal realm is characterised as feminine in psychoanalytic discourse, and as its representative Mary may have access to a different kind of language, a different way of writing.

This is, of course, the premise of *écriture féminine*, the radical writing practice promoted by Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray among other exponents of 'French

feminism'. It is an attempt to move away from the binarised and hierarchical dominant discourse of the masculinised public realm. Though, as Cixous writes, 'it is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing', it is conceptualised as more fluid, more poetic, unbounded by conventions, as illustrated by the blurring of 'theory' and 'creative' writing in Cixous's own work, and that of Irigaray.[33] This is not necessarily writing by women, and in fact, most of the work celebrated by Cixous is by male authors such as James Joyce. In *Everything You Need* the writing of the other women on the island is trapped within masculine discourses. Lynda feels like a 'freak in a Boy's Club profession' (*EYN* 163), and Nathan describes Ruth as a 'bodysnatcher' when she voices her intent to write a poem for a murdered boy, Darren Price, signalling for him her inability to write from her own experience (*EYN* 193). Though Linda and Ruth eventually form a bond of womanly self-interest, it is left to Mary to realise the possibility of a feminine writing. She will perhaps follow on from Nathan's more feminine confessional pieces; he is after all her father and her mentor.

The possibility is left suspended as Mary's writing is not included in the text of *Everything You Need* so the reader is not able to experience its qualities. There are, however, three episodes suggestive of her development as a writer. The novel highlights especially the occasion of the completion of Mary's first piece of writing and its assessment by Nathan. The narration of this event alternates with a shocking commentary of the contemporaneous circumstances surrounding the murder of Darren Price, a boy from the nearby village on the mainland. The chilling report of this event thrusts the reader backwards into a realisation of the murder, an experience of time and action parallel with that of the boy's parents. The repetition of 'would', a word that can express both the conditional and the habitual, gives the passage a quality of unreality, of the disturbance of normal time. The text is caught between the present

and the past, the conditional and the certain, conveying a hope that is negated by the final truth of the event:

> And at lunchtime that same day, Nathan would smile at Mary, at her newly confident face, and lie to her, saying that he had not read her stories yet. This would seem important to him, this small keeping of his child from harm.
>
> And at 17.05 a policeman and his dog would find Darren Price in woods 20 miles from Ancw […]
>
> And later, a little later, Mrs Price would not remember when she screamed. She would be given sedatives.
>
> And quietly, tenderly uneasy, Nathan would walk to his daughter's home and see her through the window for one beating instant, sitting in consideration of a page. (*EYN* 184)

Mary's initiation as a writer is marked by the death of a male, and the filmic 'cutting' between the two events emphasises their inter-relation. Though according to Nathan her writing 'wasn't good', Mary is at least pleased that her work 'existed enough to be fought with' (*EYN* 185), suggesting the combative tenor of the writing and her attitude. Symbolically at least her work appears to succeed at the expense of some masculine principle, and Nathan's dislike may indicate its oppositional and resistant style. But the only hint of her writing available to the reader is the one phrase, 'the sun, like God's bleeding arsehole' (*EYN* 319), that Nathan reads out in disgust from one of her pieces, dismissing the irreverent image as irrational.

It is not certain that Mary's writing represents an alternative to the masculinist discourse of writers like Nathan. The biggest clue is in her method and her relationship with writing. This is more balanced and rooted in a negotiation with the world around her, as illustrated by an incident late in the narrative. When she first discovers how to finish her novel, in the middle of the night, 'She resisted the urge to get up and work, to make even a single note. *That's the kind of thing Nathan would do – run away from a person and on to the page. But I won't.*' Instead she makes

love to her boyfriend Jonno: '*I can at least share the feeling, because that would be the proper thing to do*' (*EYN* 487). Writing is not a substitute for reality here, and she is not deluded by the transcendence it promises but, more often than not, fails to deliver.

Interestingly, Mary does not need to search for transcendence. As Nathan says, 'she's survived everything. [...] she's already been through all seven of our steps without even thinking about it' (*EYN* 482), a reference to various childhood accidents. Being a writer does not divorce her from the material world, and it does not involve untoward sacrifice, as Kennedy suggests in *On Bullfighting* through the central association between writing and the corrida. It is this refreshing attitude of normality instead of fraught and desperate self-importance that sets Mary apart from the other writers in the novel, and gives hope for a more 'feminine' writing process that is less concerned with control. As for the writing itself, its absence signifies the difficulty in imagining an alternative, when to imagine it would undermine its elusive power by fixing its form. The only indicator of such a writing here is Kennedy's own textual experiments, her play of form, time and narrative strategies. Hers is a writing that evades certainty and prevents transcendence through an insistent return to the body. It is the masculine principle as figured in Nathan that fails to endure.

Everything You Need is framed by Nathan, beginning with his tortured existence and regret, and ending with his obsolescence and his plea that Mary have need of him. From his perspective the novel describes a space and a process of male penitence. But it is broadly sympathetic to his personal tragedy, a product of a crisis of authority in his life (and the wider world) that he is unable to satisfactorily resolve. He himself is a victim of male obsessions. Equally the novel is critical of dominant features of masculine identity, especially the fixation with individual creation and control, and

the resulting oppressive social reality. The undermining of masculine authority has presented Nathan with the impossible task of transforming his personality, and the only solution he finds is to eventually withdraw from the social realm. Though he is damaged by his experience, he does survive, signalling a desire in this novel to accommodate men in new social relations. In this the text is an enactment of a period of mourning before life moves on, but it cannot yet imagine what these new relations will be. Even so, Mary's success means that the close is optimistic. She exceeds the frame of the novel, signalling her escape from the masculinised social reality represented by Nathan. She is a published author with a positive future. Even if *Everything You Need* cannot imagine the exact nature of that future, Kennedy presents the possibility of alternative lives and representations.

*

Kennedy complained of writer's block after completing *Everything You Need.* The confession in *On Bullfighting* that 'I don't write. I'm a writer who doesn't write and that makes me no one at all' (*OB* 3) is a direct echo of the themes explored in her third novel. Perhaps this can be related to the feminist 'progression' of her novels. Margaret remains trapped in 'Fatherland', while Jennifer is at least liberated from her own masculine crisis. Finally, *Everything You Need* leaves us with Mary Lamb on the threshold of creative success, with the hint that hers will be a more feminine creative process, different from the masculine will-to-power of Nathan. But how do you write the feminine? This is the ongoing challenge that difference feminists like Cixous and Irigaray say will change the way we think.[34] For Kennedy the difficulty of the next step is bound up in that challenge. Where do you go when the crisis has been analysed and the mourning is over? According to *On Bullfighting*, the answer to that

question for Kennedy is still a matter of faith. But as her work shows, it is getting over the search for faith and transcendence that counts.

Chapter 5: Alan Warner – Escape From Masculinity

Alan Warner is famous for writing female characters, a reputation that originates in his fiction and one that he encourages in media interviews in which he valorises the 'feminine'. Recognition of the verisimilitude of his representation of young women characterises the reception of his two most widely known works, the novels *Morvern Callar* (1995) and *The Sopranos* (1998). These focus exclusively on female experience, *Morvern Callar* being narrated in the first person by a young woman. In these two novels in particular, Warner makes the absence of significant men a founding premise and signals a willingness to attempt an escape from the dominant masculinism. This chapter investigates whether this literary cross-dressing, or 'cross-writing', is a mere mask of femininity, or if it indicates a rejection of traditional masculinity and an acceptance that masculine authority is undermined in the contemporary era.[1] The question is whether Warner is simply a male 'colonist' of female experience.

Alan Warner was born in the Scottish West coast port of Oban in 1964 which provides an often thinly disguised blueprint for the fictional location of his work, the port. His is a self-contained fictional world in which individuals and events are echoed in different novels, as gossip or memories, providing a 'throughline' of a community (a similar strategy is employed by William McIlvanney and Irvine Welsh). Warner is a literature graduate, and has also worked as a barman, bouncer, jazz bass guitarist and train driver. However, as we shall see, his escape to Spain as the Balearic rave subculture took off in the late 1980s is significant for his writing. Trancey, electronically produced 'house' music, psychedelic visual references and the drug ecstasy are the principle

characteristics of this scene from its beginnings in the clubs of Ibiza. When Warner returned to Scotland he wrote *Morvern Callar*, the story of a young woman who, after the suicide of her boyfriend, appropriates the novel he leaves behind and the profits from it to fund a Mediterranean rave spree. Published in 1995, it immediately gave Warner acclaim as part of a mid-1990s revitalization of Scottish fiction which included the publication of Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* in 1993, and James Kelman winning the Booker Prize with *How Late It Was, How Late* in 1994.

Three further novels consolidated Warner's position at the forefront of the Scottish literary scene. *These Demented Lands* (1997) is a sequel to the first, where Morvern arrives on the island across from the port and finds herself in a raucous local Hell that is an exaggerated reflection of the anarchic living world she has just left (arguably, she drowns in the beginning of the novel when the island ferry capsizes). *The Sopranos* follows a boisterous Catholic girls' school choir on a day trip to the capital for a singing competition. His fourth novel, *The Man Who Walks* (2002), is an odyssey through the environs of the port as it follows Macushla as he tries to catch up with his uncle, the Man Who Walks, who has stolen the World Cup kitty from the local pub. Here Warner creates equally wild and bleak parodies of contemporary Scotland, especially in the face of the revisioning of Scottish history by the entertainment industry, in films like *Braveheart* (1995) for example. The novel punctures the national aura of optimism surrounding the reinstatement of the Scottish parliament in 1999.

Warner has also published several short stories, and these have continued to connect him to the rave scene, particularly those in the Scottish collection *The Children of Albion Rovers* (1996), and the *Disco Biscuits* anthology (1997) which celebrated ten years of

rave culture. These served to locate Warner as one of a group of writers known as the 'Chemical Generation' (or, as Steve Redhead labels them, the 'repetitive beat generation', a reference to a description of rave music in legislation designed to control the scene [2]). This loose grouping of authors, including Irvine Welsh, was associated with the rave scene of the late 1980s and 90s and often put the experience of drugs and the rave at the centre of their narratives. Warner describes his characters as 'retreating from hope to hedonism', and, in retrospect, this is an appropriate description of the engagement of this writing with the advance of the liberal individualism and free market economics of the Thatcher and Major conservative governments.[3]

Writing in the period after the depressed environment of the 1980s, Warner does not focus on the failures of men. Positive new models of masculinity are rare in the Scottish literature of the time. For example, James Kelman's men remain moribund in existential crisis, and the death of men is prominent in novels by Janice Galloway, Andrew O'Hagan (*Our Fathers* (1999)), and Irvine Welsh (*Marabou Stork Nightmares*). In contrast, Warner turns his attention to women for some affirmative inspiration. In one interview he says, 'I like writing about young female characters because for me they embody a kind of energy and a kind of honestness. It's probably a romantic view [...] but there's something about their energy that I really like, a certain lack of cynicism.'[4]

Warner's convincing representation of young female protagonists has attracted comment ever since they burst onto the Scottish literary scene. As Melissa Denes says: 'When did he get so good at writing girls? His familiarity with female behaviour and private ritual is frankly spooky. He seems to have been places boys aren't invited –

locked toilet cubicles, single-sex classrooms, teenage bedrooms.'[5] For example, here one of the sopranos describes the finer details of dressing for success:

> silver shirt, wear it three top buttons open and my light coloured stretch pants – those shiny ones that flare out at the feet, with the little pockets here and the side zips and with the black, strappyish sandals, tan toe-nail varnish, ma hair slicked back and glossed, with a parting, and tan eyeshadow, a totty wee sliver of silver cross top of the eyelids here, lighter on the bottom then a coat of black under that, mascara and dark colour lipliner, tan lipstick to go with ma nails an toes then a glisteny lipgloss on top. (*S* 100)

Warner's insider knowledge of the sartorial habits of young women has become an object of curiosity, the acknowledgement of which is part of a general consensus. The searching out of his feminine side provokes questions and speculation as to his feminist credentials, often a contentious subject. For instance, Carol Anderson is hesitant to describe *Morvern Callar* as 'an empowering read for women', arguing that Warner 'has made his name through Morvern, who represents whatever he wants'. Both Anderson and Zoë Strachan have drawn attention to voyeuristic qualities present in Warner's writing.[6]

Warner himself is coy about the reasons for his perceived expertise, only admitting that 'I don't like football, so as a teenager I'd hang out with the girls on Saturday afternoons'.[7] However, Warner's attraction to a certain kind of femininity may also be connected to his engagement with rave culture. From the beginning the rave scene was portrayed in terms of gender equality, represented in the androgynous, baggy clothes, the emphasis on dancing, traditionally a feminised activity, and the non-aggressive (sexual or otherwise) and relaxed atmosphere created by ecstasy, the 'love drug' which accentuates sustained sensual experience. In some ways, not least of all in its iconography, this scene was reminiscent of the 'psychedelic' era of the late 1960s, and its success in empowering

women is equally debatable.[8] Superficially, a valorization of the feminine is characteristic of the rave. The literature around this subculture has grown in the last few years with several academic writers taking an interest, and within this commentary there is a consensus that the rave scene is a feminised phenomenon, which marks 'some kind of shift in masculinity'.[9] Simon Reynolds goes so far as to say, 'rave is a culture of clitoris envy', explaining that the 'drug/music interface acts to dephallicize the body and open it up to enraptured, abandoned, "effeminate" gestures'. This is a reference to the fact that ecstasy can inhibit erection even as it sexualises the body generally. According to Reynolds, the drug gives 'a radical sensation of being without gender'.[10]

This loss of gender and loss of identity generally is a theme taken up by several writers as they posit theories of distinctively postmodern subjectivity. Antonio Melechi writes of the experience of 'the ecstacy of disappearence' (*sic*), and Hillegonda Reitveld asserts that raving involves 'the surrender to the void [...] a dionysian ritual of dance and hedonism, whereby the established self is undone'.[11] Baudrillard and Deleuze are common names in these pieces as concepts associated with their work, such as the 'body without organs' or the 'rhizome', the 'desiring machine', 'lines of flight', are appropriated to try and summarize the rave experience. For example, this extract by Tim Jordan takes a Deleuzian point of view:

> The BwO [body without organs] of raving is the undifferentiated state that supports the connections that the rave-machine makes between its different elements. This undifferentiated state is a collective delirium produced by thousands of people jointly making the connection of drugs to dance, music to dance, dance to drugs, drugs to time, time to music and so on, and thereby gradually constructing the state of raving and so the BwO of raving. The delirium is non-subjective and smooth, as all the connections and functions of the machine give way to simple intensities of feeling.[12]

The contention here is that the total rave experience, involving the music, the drugs, the technology, the collective dancing, provides an opportunity for a utopian loss of identity, a 'disappearance' which constitutes a postmodern collapse of meaning, an escape from the binary categories such as gender by which identity is defined.[13]

Not everyone is convinced by this analysis. For example, Maria Pini, in her study *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity: the Move from Home to House* (2001), observes that the raver referred to in these texts is not genderless, but more often than not the unmarked male. 'The sexed subject clearly finds little place within the kind of "post subject" scenarios which are presented within many of these commentaries. If rave signals a "death of meaning" and a "death of depth" then it is also very clearly seen to signal a "death of the sexed subject".' But she goes on to point out, 'It is also a little suspicious perhaps, that just when practices traditionally associated with femininity (like dancing) come under the critical spotlight, this urge towards sexual neutering emerges.'[14] Other feminist theorists have long been suspicious of this appropriation of a feminised neutrality, especially in recent philosophical work, including that of Deleuze, and there has been similar concern as to the fate of women in this writing.

For example, the term 'becoming woman' is a recurring image in the anti-humanist theorizing of French philosophers Jacques Derrida and Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their work of the 1970s and 80s. According to feminist writers such as Rosi Braidotti there was a renewal of interest in the 'feminine' at this time due to the crisis of the Cartesian subject. The Cartesian model, questioned and undermined in postmodernist theory, is regarded in certain contemporary approaches as masculinised and limited, isolated in exclusionary and hierarchical binary relations (see Introduction). The efforts

to re-imagine the subject beyond the limitations of this model, necessarily involve the theorization and appropriation even of the formerly denigrated 'feminine'.

The becoming woman is a form of deconstruction of masculinised philosophy. For Derrida the becoming woman is a textual strategy which, among others, he uses to destabilize the binary.[15] In his attempt to overcome sexuation of the subject there is a valorization of the feminine as difference or counter-strategy, where the valorization of difference privileges relationship rather than opposition. Deleuze and Guattari present the becoming woman as the primary example of the 'becoming minority', which is a way of moving beyond the 'molar' or static consciousness of the male majority to the 'molecular' or the consciousness-in-process of the minority in order to surmount the dialectical system to arrive at a non-hegemonic form of consciousness.[16]

For all their valorization of the 'feminine', these new philosophical models are not praising empirical women. In these theories, both men and women have to pass through the becoming woman in order to arrive at what Deleuze calls a non-hegemonic form of consciousness. Derrida's method has come under particular suspicion, specially with regard to his view of feminist theory and practice. Braidotti points out that,

> The subject of feminism comes into being in Derrida's thought as the new form of the phallic logocentric stance. In other words: in the early phase Derrida attacks male phallologocentrism, whereas in the more recent work he appoints the feminists to the place of phallocracy, thus freeing the philosopher, which he is, to a creative and phallus-free position, a 'becoming woman' of philosophy.[17]

Similarly for Deleuze, women, because they are in the minority (that is, minority in terms of power), must become the becoming woman first in order to provide an example, if you like, on the way to the annihilation of sexual difference. As Alice Jardine points out,

'might that not mean that women must also be the first to disappear? Is it not possible that the process of "becoming woman" is but a new variation of an old allegory for the process of women becoming obsolete?'[18] In other words, for these poststructuralists the political and material claims and gains of feminism only succeed in turning women into the type of men who are excoriated by these new models. In order to be considered subjects here women have almost to give up these gains; Man, the empirical referent of the Cartesian subject, is in danger of becoming the empirical referent for these new models also.

Warner's women-centered novels raise similar suspicions, that Warner himself is a becoming woman, consolidating his own success at the expense of the women he represents in his fiction. However, in light of the connection of rave culture and femininity, and the recent explication of this connection in terms of poststructuralist theory, Warner's creation of a female raver in Morvern Callar can be interpreted as an attempt to imagine an escape from the dead end of traditional male identity and masculinised models of representation. In investigating his success in this move, it is interesting to note that Warner has more recently distanced himself from the 'chemical generation' label that linked him with rave culture. He argues that his work is not a straightforward celebration of this 'popular culture' but constitutes an attack on various aspects of it. 'It always seems to me that my treatment of that so-called "rave culture" [...] was pretty cynical. I think there is a clear mocking of the ephemerality of it.'[19] Alternatively, Warner has described his literary aspirations as attempting to 'give your story the dignity of a myth', to 'take the little people' and 'make something from their story'.[20] He complicates the reductive impulses of mythologising, in its universalising of

experience, by focusing on the minute and mundane events and actions of everyday life, echoing the style and preoccupation with detail of Galloway and Kelman. Like Kelman, Warner emphasises existential themes in his writing, especially in his concern with absurdity and alienation.

A disturbing characteristic of *Morvern Callar* is Morvern's alienation from her environment and her self. In this she is reminiscent of Jennifer in A. L. Kennedy's *So I Am Glad*, published in the same year, who lacks emotional capacity and lives an isolated life as socially disengaged as possible. Morvern relates her own narrative in a sparse, flat voice devoid of adjectives, one that illustrates her lack of emotion.[21] Warner writes this as dialect, with inconsistent punctuation and a disjointed syntax that is more characteristic of speech, giving the narrative an atmosphere of immediacy that exaggerates Morvern's lack of capacity for emotion. In this Warner's novel is reminiscent of earlier existentialist texts such as Albert Camus's *The Outsider* (1942), also characterised by its simple prose style that harbours a concern with more abstract ideas. This novel considers the emptiness of life and the absurdity of existence through its emotionless central character Meursault. Warner emphasises his own concern with existential absurdity in his novel when he says, 'I think *Morvern Callar* is an existential novel [...] She's rebelling against the absurdity of death, in that way she's heroic I think.'[22] Certainly, simply in being a woman Morvern is undermining the traditionally masculinist discourse of existentialism.[23]

In relation to Warner's description of Morvern, both *Morvern Callar* and *The Sopranos* can be considered as existential allegories. They chronicle symbolic journeys that are attempts to ignore or escape death, that end by the individuals involved finally

accepting death's presence in life. Morvern has to come to terms with the suicide of her boyfriend, and Orla, and the other Sopranos, have to face the recurrence of her cancer. In effect, they are giving up on the possibility of transcendence, of overcoming the material inevitability of death. The unmistakably haunting power of these two novels comes from the consideration of such profound existential concerns by such young protagonists. However, the absurdity of these existential dilemmas is a constant undercurrent of the novels as their protagonists rebel against the meaninglessness of existence and the incomprehensible coexistence of life and the conditions that negate it.

Such absurdity often translates into a subversive humour in the hilarious dialogue of the Sopranos or Morvern's dry reportage of the world around her. Humour is a critical tool which ridicules the attempted decorum of social existence and strengthens opposition to repressive social stereotypes for these young women. Significantly, humour is a 'characteristic approach of feminist narratives', a strategy in forging female resistance and non-conformity and therefore creating the possibility of escaping masculinised models of representation based on male-defined authority and dominance.[24] The question is whether these extraordinary female characters and vivid female voices make the humour in Warner's novels subversive and feminist.

There are two strategies in Warner's female-centered novels that lead to the possibility of escaping masculinised models of the subject. Firstly, *Morvern Callar* considers the disappearance of identity in its connection with and representation of rave culture and its attendant poststructuralist conceptions of identity formation. Secondly, the novels signal feminist resistance to male authority through subversive humour and flouting of traditional expectations. Ultimately, it is men who are dying in these texts, or

leading ineffectual lives, and the women appear to act on their desires to simply leave them behind. This analysis of Warner's work asks if such a representation produces a tenable solution to the impasse in relations between men and women, and whether it is desirable or even possible. There is a rejection of men and male authority here but, as we saw in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, traditional masculinity can survive such an exclusion and disappearance. This chapter investigates the consequences of the demise of men in *Morvern Callar* and *The Sopranos*.

I: *Morvern Callar*

In *Morvern Callar* Warner creates a distinctive character, a woman who is dissatisfied and restless, who resists stereotypes. Morvern Callar is a 21 year old supermarket worker who lives in the port with her boyfriend. Just before Christmas she finds him dead in the kitchen; he has committed suicide. Interestingly, the dead man is a thirty-something, middle-class, unpublished author whose circumstances echo Warner's own at the time of writing (for example, his parents owned a local hotel, and so did Warner's). The author has effectively killed himself off in the first paragraph of his first novel. The writer (we never learn his name as he is always referred to as 'He' or 'Him') has left an unpublished novel on his computer, and in his suicide note he writes that 'I only ask you to get it published. I'll settle for posthumous fame as long as I'm not lost in silence' (*MC* 82). After replacing his name with her own, Morvern does just this, and by this act of plagiarism she steals a life from his death. In order to hide the evidence of this symbolic murder, she then disposes of the body by dismembering it and burying the pieces on the mountainside outside town. With the proceeds of the novel she escapes her Scottish

Highland home and spends several years in the Mediterranean. Morvern is, then, arguably an independent, empowered, liberated, if slightly psychotic, woman.

So from the beginning there is a resistance to feminine stereotypes. The narrative opens like a crime novel, with a dead body, but the body is male, not the usual dead woman that typically occupies this position. And Morvern's reaction sets the tone for the whole novel:

> He'd cut His throat with the knife. He'd near chopped off His hand with the meat cleaver. He couldnt object so I lit a Silk Cut. A sort of wave of something was going across me. There was fright but I'd daydreamed how I'd be.
>
> He was bare and dead face-down on the scullery lino with blood round. The Christmas tree lights were on then off. You could change the speed those ones flashed at. Over and over you saw Him stretched out then the pitch dark with His computer screen still on. (*MC* 1)

Her cool narration is as much a shock to the reader as the scene itself. Through the flat, emotionless voice she appears disengaged, an observer of herself in the scene, giving the impression she is not quite occupying her own body. This alienation is characteristic of Morvern; given the horror of the event, her blankness serves as a kind of veneer, a shock absorber that allows her to control her emotions. Her distance shapes her narration of the opening sequence as here she does not experience emotion, only 'a wave of something going across me', a phrase repeated several times throughout the novel. Feeling is nameless, an alien sensation, almost an animal shudder. However, the austere reportage gives an aura of frankness and immediacy, conceding no hierarchy of importance in the events narrated. The initial discovery, 'He'd cut His throat with the knife', is followed by a description of the Christmas tree lights and the information that 'You could change the

speed those ones flashed at'. There are few adjectives in these stark statements which are presented with equal emotional intensity, the same cursory yet vivid attention to detail.

As Warner describes it, 'She subverts what the novel is supposed to be about, the interior life of a character. Everything is a screen.'[25] Morvern's alienated condition is a withdrawal from that inner consciousness and effectively she 'withdraws' into the external world. The lack of depth in the narrative produces an external view of Morvern from the point of view of Morvern herself. The minutely detailed descriptions of trivial and everyday circumstances and actions, especially alongside the shocking scene of the novel's opening, represent a triumph of the mundane in the suppression of horror, a hallmark of the novel. This often becomes a triumph of the ridiculous in statements like 'I bought easy-cook pizza cause of the body on my scullery floor [...] Trying to get in the oven to heat the pizza His body caused the usual hassles but I soon had it underway' (*MC* 50). The steady familiarising of the horror diffuses its emotional potency; 'He' is now 'the body', an inhuman object and, eventually, disposable.

Morvern's extraordinary controlled blankness, her 'screen', serves as protection, concealing her emotional life from herself as well as the reader. But it also provides a surface for projected images and stereotypes of an almost mythic femininity. For instance, it creates an aura of passivity and mystery around Morvern, 'Woman' as one step removed from the rational and the clearly defined. (Her name reinforces this: 'Morvern' is the name of a Scottish mountain; 'Callar' is Scots for cold, as well as meaning 'to be quiet' in Spanish, appropriate for largely socially silent Morvern.) As Granny Couris Jean says to her, 'You look like an angel come to this earth' (*MC* 38). Her behaviour does not conform to stereotypes though, mythical or otherwise, and this

suggests the screen protects her from their influence and gives her the freedom of independent action. But if this is how Morvern functions, the inaccessibility of her emotions is the price she pays.

The opening scene of the novel continues with the following description:

> I started the greeting on account of all the presents under our tree and Him dead. Useless little presents always made me sad. I start for me then move on to everybody when I greet about the sad things. Her from Corran Road with all sons drowned off the boats. She bubbled till she lost an eye. I greeted in heaves and my nose was running.
>
> I dropped the Silk Cut and it burned to the filter on a varnished floorboard. I stopped the greeting cause I couldnt breathe and was perished cold. (*MC* 1)

Morvern produces her crying like an actor, describing how she works with memories to focus and prolong the emotion. This process gives the impression that the present crisis is not dealt with in an unmediated way, that there is no spontaneous or 'authentic' experience of the feelings it throws up. There is perhaps an avoidance of the present moment in this method. But it also signifies an existential split or fragmentation in that if Morvern is always watching herself and constructing herself then she cannot be fully present in the moment. She challenges the traditional unity of the self.

This mediated experience of emotion is complemented in the novel by isolated moments of unexplained melancholy that disturb Morvern's blank surface. For example, 'I lay on the bed then sat forward on the end with face in hands. I lay back again then started greeting and dead quickly just stopped' (*MC* 147). This image of Morvern sitting with her face in her hands recurs several times in the novel, particularly at moments of heightened loneliness. It is an emblem of feeling rather than an act of feeling, an experience that is cut off from its original, painful, instigation. Such an emblem is a

signifier of an emotion that she has not been able to fully express, an open wound repressed in her psyche. The calm control of her voice and behaviour is belied by these upsetting moments and this emblem is a sign of unease and fragmentation.

Morvern's fractured selfhood is just one facet of a lack of authenticity that threads through her life. Her origins are obscure and uncertain, complicating her connection to the port and the question of 'home'. 'You dont know the story about your own name?' (*MC* 38) asks Couris Jean, expressing mild shock at Morvern's ignorance. She is an orphan brought up by foster parents who 'says I was different from when I was wee [... they] fostered me and took in other Special Girls every summer' (*MC* 19). That the 'Special Girls' are abused children is suggestive of Morvern's own traumatised background. Within this narrative death seems to be a defining moment for Morvern. Her foster mother died when she was young, a loss she has difficulty coming to terms with, as she associates the event with finding out about her origins: 'it was only before my fostermum died they explained I was orphaned' (*MC* 19).

The death of Morvern's boyfriend is similarly significant in that it causes a disturbance of intimacy, an enduring problem of her life. As the un-named boyfriend writes in his suicide note: 'I was happy with you Morvern but things became too cushy for this oldest of chancers' (*MC* 82). The suicide that enacts a drastic escape from that 'cushy' life reiterates the loss of her foster mother, undermining the realisation of intimacy in relationships for Morvern. Further, the loss caused by separation through death is repeated as betrayal throughout the novel. For example, her close relationship with her best friend Lanna is played out in erotically charged scenes of dressing and bathing together. But this friendship is damaged by the revelation that Lanna has slept

with Morvern's boyfriend, and later Lanna's affair with Morvern's foster father, Red Hanna, is a double betrayal reinforcing Morvern's outsider status.

There is no idea of home as a place of secure, loving relationships here, robbing Morvern of a firm emotional and historical foundation. The uncertainty places her in an existential vacuum where traditional relations have little relevance or legitimacy. The illegibility of her past also makes her future uncertain as there is no predictable path from the beginning to the end of the narrative of her life. In fact, like the busconductor Hines in Kelman's novel, Morvern's rigidly monotonous job at the supermarket makes the future exactly the same as the present, effectively cancelling it so that Morvern, like Hines, lives in an everlasting but meaningless present. She exists outside of dominant notions of progressive time and narrative, such as identifiable beginnings and ends, unable to recover a stabilising truth about herself.

In Kelman such stasis signifies a lack of agency and his protagonists' inability to act to control their lives. He produces an atmosphere of sterile and debilitating stasis in his work through repetition, of events, actions, phrases and words. In Warner's novel repetition in the form of habit and ritual also disrupts the plot and meaningful action. But here it is a more deliberate imposing of normality and stability in order to distract from debilitating self-alienation as well as horrific events. Rather than the relinquishing of agency, habits here acquire the aura of deliberate and controlled ritual, steadying the attention on calming activities. For example, soon after discovering the body Morvern runs a bath:

> I kneeled in the bath. I washed my knees and legs and in me. I got my legs warm so there were no goosebumps then shaved them and that. I gave my shin a wee nick with the razor and blood lifted in

a bubble then trickled quick. I put in a splash of the bubblebath and filled the tub. The water was too burny so I put in cold. (*MC* 3)

The repetition of the first person pronoun at the beginning of the sentences here illustrates Morvern's self-absorption as her attention is diverted from the dead body. Throughout the novel she bathes, shaves her legs and paints her nails in a reiteration of this procedure which comes to suggest a process of emotional repression. Similarly, as in Kelman, the smoking of cigarettes punctuates the narrative: 'I used the goldish lighter on a Silk Cut' (*MC* 6) is a frequent phrase, becoming a motif, a repeat-pattern in the fabric of the text that stills Morvern's vision at regular intervals. This habit formation may be a conscious attempt to isolate a moment, to suspend time, memory, and even identity itself in order to escape painful reality.

Escape from the port is Morvern's paramount concern when she publishes her dead boyfriend's novel as her own work, in effect relinquishing her identity. She initially keeps his death secret, ignores it and carries on with her daily routine. But eventually she has to dispose of the body. In the most gruesome scene of the novel she dismembers the corpse in the bath, makes packages of the separated parts, and buries them on the local mountain. This is an event heavy with symbolism. Morvern, named after a mountain, is escaping the limited destiny of her name that places her in the traditional female relationship with nature, as earth/landscape/passive fertile ground. The man is now at one with the land, inverting that traditional relation of passive woman and active man. In addition, she also asserts agency in claiming authorship of the novel he left behind. But this assertion is weakened even in the moment when she commits her act of plagiarism: 'My fingers touched the keys and typed letters over His name [...] I put the stack of pages on the scullery table and you saw what I had typed over the words of His name on

the first page of that novel: BY MORVERN CALLAR' (*MC* 83, 84). Here it is not even herself but her fingers that almost of their own volition commit this act of typographical cannibalism, illustrating her precarious status as an agent.

Warner undermines the illusion of Morvern's agency in the complex system of authorial relations that he mischievously sets up in and around this text. With the parallels between himself and the writer in the novel, it is as if Warner has killed himself, an illusion that gives more power and authenticity to Morvern's first person narration. He even gives us Morvern 'writing a few sentences' (*MC* 228) in a big notebook right at the end of the narrative to increase the illusion. But Morvern is ultimately nonchalant about what is published in her name; she never reads it. If we take the parallels between the writers a little further we could hypothesise that the novel written by the writer/Warner character in the text is in fact about Morvern, just as the novel we are reading is about her. If this is so, Morvern fails to take control of this representation of herself in the text. As Carol Anderson argues, 'the act of creation remains implicitly the dead man's', and Warner's.[26] Morvern is only the medium for the dissemination of both these texts and one male narrative displaces another, placing her back where she started. Through this complex of authorial relations Warner gives us an illusion of freedom but finally points out how Morvern is captured in a web of relations beyond her control that is difficult if not impossible to escape. The web may be social relations, language or discourse. But here Warner is the 'ghost in the machine', that controlling principle, faking his own death and disguising himself as a woman. This strategy reflects similar controversial scenarios in contemporary critical theory, but the text provides its own evidence of the control of the 'authors' over Morvern.

In the novel the writer leaves a suicide note on his computer in which he projects himself into Morvern's future life: 'I love you Morvern; feel my love in the evenings in the corners of all the rooms you will be in. Keep your conscience immaculate and live the life people like me have denied you. You are better than us' (*MC* 82). Communicating from beyond death, he attempts to reinstate Morvern to the feminine perfection that he blames himself and 'people like him' for having spoiled. The tone is remorseful for his part in what he perceives as Morvern's 'fall', and the word 'immaculate' evokes the Virgin Mary. In this allusion to the virgin/whore binary, the writer is perhaps apologising for his role in oppressing women, or, conversely, he may be perpetrating just such a founding fiction. Whatever his intention, even in blaming himself he is lionising himself, declaring his power to define and to judge. If his regretful tone frames his suicide as an attempt to relinquish control, to stop denying Morvern a 'life', he fails to go the whole way. Prior to this unexplained exhortation to the good life for Morvern he instructs her to get his novel published as 'I'll settle for posthumous fame as long as I'm not lost in silence' (*MC* 82). He wants his work, his 'voice', to prevail even if he himself does not. His is a false humility that fails to disguise his desire for continuing control.

By publishing the novel in her own name Morvern evades the writer, making *Morvern Callar*, on one level, a narrative of resistance of masculinised models of representation and male-centered social reality. Before her act of plagiarism, the text illustrates Morvern's entrapment in a significant scene. From the top of the circular folly (a copy of the Roman Colliseum), one of the port's tourist attractions, she looks down on the local scene: 'Up there in the darkness you could see the lights of the whole port, from

The Complex round the back to the piers below, like a model with the small hotels, little lights, circling toy cars and still boats in the bay' (*MC* 13). The smallness of the town reverses the normal perspective; Morvern is like a giant overlooking this model village. But in reality she is part of the port, trapped in this environment. As she explains:

> Cause of tallness I had started part-time with the superstore when thirteen, the year it got built. The superstore turn a blind eye; get as much out you as they can. You ruin your chances at school doing every evening and weekend. The manager has you working all hours cash in hand, no insurance, so when fifteen or sixteen you go full-time at the start of the summer and never go back to school. (*MC* 10).

For Movern the superstore and the town is a trap, a reification of social relations that seek to contain and debilitate her. It owns, yet disowns her, as it uses her services yet denies her liberating opportunity, through education for example. Escape is difficult, and there is only escapism in this symbolic change of perspective from the top of the folly.

The miniature town is materialised in the model Morvern's boyfriend builds in the loft of their flat. This is a faithful replica of the place of his birth, a local village and its surrounding area complete with railway line and trains, 'the hotel with the pointing-up tower, the graveyard path above and the tiny Tree Church' (*MC* 51), a particularly unusual local landmark. This model is an obsessively constructed representation of the local area, a simulacrum more perfect than the real thing in its 'always summerness' (*MC* 51). It is an exercise in containment and control. In the scene at the top of the folly Morvern's perspective on the town mimics the man's view of his model. She takes his place within that relationship, prefiguring her move to take over his identity as author of the novel. But unlike the middle-class writer, who had travelled and 'lived in countries' (*MC* 37), Morvern's only place is within the town, within the model. So her desire is for

escape not control, and she registers her disaffection in an act of vandalism: 'I put the empty bottle on the stone of the folly and, for a moment, port lights were gathered in it: I smashed it against the granite circle' (*MC* 13). This is less a symbolic destruction of the port itself than a protest against it as a place of containment and oppressive relations.

In a more spectacular act of vandalism, Morvern does destroy the miniature world of the model village using its own creator. Having decided to hide the body, she winches it into the loft:

> The body crashed down onto the buildings of His childhood village smashing in one side of the mountain then lying still, face up to the skylights.
>
> His toes at the far end of the pass. His face beyond the railway line. His body crushed the hotel with its pointing-up tower at the top of the stairs. The Tree Church on the sgnurr above where he lay back upon the land. (*MC* 52-3)

The man overwhelms his environment like a giant, like Gulliver in Liliput. When Morvern eventually disposes of the corpse, she is in effect literalising this image of the giant man embedded in the landscape, making it an event in the real world. But significantly, she is reimposing a 'normal' perspective of the smallness of the man in the largeness of the landscape. She is bringing the man 'down to earth', denying his totalising, author's vision that she herself has been an object of. And further, the death of the author allows Morvern to escape the port and its containment. With the profits from the novel she transposes herself to the Mediterranean rave scene.

In contrast to the timeless existential purgatory of the port, the resort is a timeless paradise. The rave scene here is described as 'just evolving on to the next thing like a disease that adapts' (*MC* 145). And this living organism is significant because it provides Morvern with a sense of self she has previously only encountered in her obsession with

music, transcendent moments she now seeks to expand into a way of living. The importance of music in Morvern's narrative cannot be exaggerated. Throughout the novel she obsessively lists what she is listening to and the compilation tapes she makes for every significant occasion. Music is a source of feeling, a substitute for her inaccessible emotions. On the first occasion of her leaving the flat after she has discovered the body she intends to phone the 'police or ambulance or whoever from the box by the garage':

> Miles Davis doing He Loved Him Madly offof Get Up With It was going in the ears. My hands were in the jacket pockets [...] as I walked up to the phonebox I felt the cassette moving next to one pinkie, and it was that bit where the trumpet comes in for the second time: I walked right past the phonebox. It was the feeling the music gave that made me. (*MC* 5)

This is one of the few times that Morvern mentions 'feeling' in any context, and significantly it is a piece of music titled 'He Loved Him Madly' that causes her to respond. In 'giving her feeling' music provides a simulation of a simple, personal and unmediated experience and transports her to a realm of emotion. Her aim is to prolong these moments and this becomes possible through the rave scene. As she perceives it, 'All I know is over there in that resort with a couple of thousand pounds, happiness was as easy as your first breath in the morning' (*MC* 164). This ease of being is like a homecoming for Morvern.

In studies that focus on the phenomenon of rave culture, it is commonly described as producing feelings of communality and a dissolution of personal boundaries and inhibition.[27] As described above, this has often been conceptualised as an 'escape from identity', and Morvern narrates just such a feeling of freedom. In the intoxicated atmosphere of the rave clubs a liberation from the body and identity itself becomes

possible. 'You didnt really have your body as your own, it was part of the dance, the music, the rave' (*MC* 203). This is an alternative experience of self, an unmediated and authentic pleasure for Morvern, as emphasised by the contrast with the humiliating rituals of the 'Youth Med' holiday related earlier in the novel. There, bodily integrity is challenged by sunburn competitions (causing a 'wee black hole right into his leg' (*MC* 127) for one lad), and gender specificity problematisd by games involving the swapping of swimming costumes between men and women around the hotel swimming pool. These activities insistently ridicule difference. In Morvern's experience, however, there is a lowering of personal boundaries and difference is transcended or submerged within the genuine affinity of the individual for the massed crowd. This is suggested in her description of the scene at a club:

> I was so close some boy or girl that their sweat was hitting me when they flicked arms or neck to a new rhythm. I slid my foot to the left. You felt the whole side of a face lay against my bare back, between shoulder blades. It was still part of our dance. If the movement wasnt in rhythm it would have changed the meaning of the face sticking there in the sweat. You didnt really have your body as your own, it was part of the dance, the music, the rave. (*MC* 203)

There is a permeation of boundaries and a dissolving of personal space here in an alternative relation that is anonymous. As Morvern says a little later, 'No judgement: he couldnt know who I was. I wouldn't know him' (*MC* 204).

The escape from identity verges on a utopian loss of self figured as an expansion of self, a common assertion in accounts of ravers and raving. Maria Pini writes:

> Such stories are about an ecstatic 'insanity', an intense although temporary connectedness to others, a mode of being wherein boundaries between physicality/machine, inner/outer, mind/body/spirit, and self/other become so blurred as to no longer make much sense.

> Rave provides the conditions within which new social identities can be explored, and within which new skills can be learnt. Living with the temporary, coping with confusion and dealing with 'madness' – these are some of the skills seemingly being explored within contemporary rave cultures.[28]

For Morvern the rave is an environment in which she feels safe and 'at home' where, in the atmosphere of drugs and madness, her strangeness is not exceptional. For example, her 'special knee' which marks her as an oddity in the port has symbolic significance in the rave environment. There is Christmas glitter embedded under the skin: 'It was when she was wee she came horsing in the scullery, slid on her knees and skinned one deep on these Christmas cards she was making and the glitter sunk right in her; they never got it all out her at The Hospital' (*MC* 18). The knee sparkles when the light hits it signalling a transformation of pain into pleasure, an illusion that converts the materiality of the body into a shimmering wave of luminous delight. In contrast to Joy Stone's scar in Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing*, which signifies the negative, painful inscription of the inescapable material body, the transfiguration of Morvern's physical boundary symbolises the transcendent possibilities of the rave.

It is not only through her immersion in the rave that Morvern plays out an escape from identity. New patterns of habit emerge that make the resort a timeless paradise. The days are languid replicas of each other: 'Without having to do the asking the waitress with the little mole brought me the usual breakfast' (*MC* 191); 'Without me having to do the asking the waitress brought me the meal as per usual' (*MC* 198). Meals are always the same, eaten in the same way; sunbathing and swimming follow the same patterns. The slow, familiar habits of such a day are set in the prose with repetition creating a rhythm in paragraphs that roll down the page like waves: 'You watched the holiday

makers [...] You saw a girl [...] You saw the old couple [...] You saw the deaf man [...]' (*MC* 192-3). This flattening out of a daily routine represses and disregards the past and the future, and keeps Morvern safe from both, creating the effect of time standing still. Morvern's motives in generating such a routine are not simply hedonistic. She is also running away from death, attempting to ignore, and overcome, the death of her boyfriend.

This utopian escape from identity is only a temporary one and cannot be sustained. Morvern's retreat into a timeless, transcendent realm is undone by visions of decay signalling the re-emergence of a progressive time and narrative. On the way home from a club towards the end of her long sojourn in the resort Morvern observes, 'The beautiful blossom tree had been strangled to death under the mother of pearl psychedelics from a couple of thousand clinging snails'(*MC* 213), a coded reference to the demise of her own beautiful experience.

> I was under the pomegranate tree. All fruits on branches were burst right open and the bright reddy insides had spilled out in the sun. Clumps of flies were feeding on the peeled-back, split skin and glistening flesh. It looked like little burst, mutilated creatures were up the pomegranate tree. [...] As I turned out of the orchard something bright caught my eye. It was a scarlet speck moving over the dry earth by the irrigation sluice: it was one of my broken nails being carried away by ants. (*MC* 213).

This scene is less one of utopia than of Eden after the fall. Morvern leaves the garden and re-enters real-time, arriving back in the port penniless and pregnant with the 'child of the raves' (*MC* 229), an event signifying her failure to permanently escape from gender and identity, as well as the place of her entrapment.

Significantly on her return Morvern finds herself in the Tree Church, that symbolic meeting place of nature and religion. Warner cannot suggest more strongly that she is

back within the model, back in the port and within the constraints of masculine representation. It is winter and the area is frozen under snow and dark due to a power cut, a chilling return that signals Morvern's regression. This constitutes another reversal of perspective, countering her own realignment earlier in the novel when she buried the man on the mountain. And the image of the Tree Church alludes once again, like the man in his suicide note, to the discourses of femininity that Morvern has not managed to escape. Her return situates her within the gender-specific discourses of the port, with motherhood as the only significant and intimate relation for a young woman at the end of the novel. This is a melancholy and reactionary conclusion, emphasised in the last line of the novel: 'I put my head down and closed my mouth. I started the walking forwards into that night' (*MC* 229).

Yet *Morvern Callar* also lends itself as an existential allegory, a representation of an individual life as the enactment of that final phrase, a 'walking forwards into night'. This chilly hell, as opposed to the heaven of the resort, suggests, finally, Morvern's acceptance of death. As she approaches the Tree Church 'He Loved Him Madly' is playing once again on her walkman, as it was when she walked past the phonebox in the beginning of the novel, neglecting to report 'His' death to the authorities. As this song is the first and last piece mentioned in a novel that is obsessed with listing the music being listened to, it frames the narrative and associates Morvern with her boyfriend and so with death itself. Warner insists that the music Morvern listens to throughout the narrative 'is not her music but [...] the favourite music of her dead boyfriend'.[29] In effect he has been with her all the time, but her return symbolises an acceptance of his death after all her running away from it, the conclusion of her grief and the assertion of a profound connection, a

faithfulness even, to him and his world.[30] And his world is one, after all, where death is preferable to the search for new male identity. As he writes in his suicide note, 'I *was* happy with you Morvern but things became too cushy for this oldest of chancers' (*MC* 82).

However, in spite of its bleak vision, the conclusion also hints at a wider interpretation. The fact that Morvern is pregnant imposes a feminine interruption of the dominant model that resists the finality of death, inserting an alternative vision of a cycle of one life being replaced by another. The pregnancy ultimately defers the end of the narrative and posits death as a necessary yet impossible fact if considered beyond the case of the individual. Such a reading is reminiscent of the writer's intentions when he says in his suicide note that he will 'settle for posthumous fame as long as I'm not lost in silence' (*MC* 82), a hope that his novel will defer the end of his own narrative. So this equates Morvern's baby with the writer's book, circumscribing a familiar understanding of sexual difference: the traditional alignment of women with nature and men with culture. In addition, the close of the text with pregnant Morvern alone in the Tree Church shares with the suicide note a faint reiteration of the immaculate conception. (At the end of *These Demented Lands* there is a subversive repetition of the birth of Christ when Morvern gives birth to a daughter in a chaotic nativity scene.) But it is at least an anonymous conception undermining demonstrable and certain paternity, and as such the close of the novel holds out a final threat to the organisation of masculinised social relations.

As a danger, the destabilising of the certainty of fatherhood is a familiar one. Morvern's threat to the man's status as author appears to be a far more subversive move

in the representational economy of the postmodern era. But ultimately she fails to fully exploit her audacious action. As Christopher Whyte summarises, 'The implication is that all an aspirant narrator from outside the compound of straight masculinity can do is overwrite a text originating within it [...] Morvern is condemned to move within a setting articulated by a male imagination, be it her lover's or her author's.'[31] She problematises the premises of the male-defined world but ends up back within its model. At least she gives hope of escape and the possibility that alternative relations can be imagined and, eventually, lived.

II: *The Sopranos*

Warner consolidated his reputation for writing women with *The Sopranos*. This particular novel is a eulogy to the 'pure unadulterated life-force' he perceives in young women, emphasised by the epigram from *Wuthering Heights* that introduces the text: 'They *do* live more in earnest, more in themselves and less in surface change, and frivolous external things. I could fancy a love for life here almost possible.' Besides betraying a Romantic strain in Warner (apparent also in overt references to *Frankenstein*), the epigram illustrates his deep affection and admiration for his wayward creations, even though at first reading it hardly seems to describe the hedonistic schoolgirls who are obsessed with appearance and intoxication.

In contrast to *Morvern Callar*, the novel focuses on a group of young women, still schoolgirls, and the relations between them, a female community 'in this time of their lives' (*S* 324). It relates twenty four hours in the lives of the five girls who make up the soprano section of the choir of a Catholic secondary school, 'Our Lady of Perpetual Succour School for Girls', as they travel from the port to the capital for a singing

competition and back again. It is a subversive engagement with a tradition of schoolgirl fiction, and particularly brings to mind Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) which is also concerned with a group of precocious schoolgirls. In Warner's novel the girls' encounters are chronicled in their own energetic and exhilarating language and exaggerated style as they search for excitement and sexual adventure. In a spirited resistance, especially to the repressive ideals of Catholicism, the girls create and act out the worst nightmares of youthful femininity. They indulge in alcohol, drugs and sex with rigorous attention to detail, and their schoolgirl accessories are accompanied and undermined by their tainted opposite; they drink alcoholic lemonade and replace their school uniforms with mini-skirts and fashionable 'city clothes'. Within this round trip the novel explores the relationships between the girls as they give free rein to their adventurous spirits in the knowledge that they are entering the irreversible cusp of adolescence and adulthood (a friend of the group is already pregnant). Like Warner's first novel, *The Sopranos* also marginalises men, but this a more convincing if less elaborate attempt to escape the limits of masculine models and male-centered representation in its wider concern with a female community.

Men are not entirely absent in this novel but usually only appear in relation to their usefulness in the sopranos' adventure. In the wider world male power is fading, signalled by death, disease, deceit and a generally ineffectual agency. As in *Morvern Callar*, male death haunts the text, but this time encroaches from remote locations to the heart of the community. Orla, one of the sopranos, is in remission from cancer, but the risk of fatality is initially associated with the military. A submarine moors in the bay in order to bring ashore a dead sailor so that he can lie in the cathedral until he is claimed by his family

from another part of the country. Though this sailor dies of a heart attack, the vessel is a reminder that Britain's nuclear-powered submarines are based in Scotland, against often vociferous local protest at their presence. The submarine creates a complex image in reference to both the inferiorism of Scotland and its emasculated status in the British context (see Introduction), and the association of nuclear power, cancer and the military. Another sailor lies in the hospital where Orla is herself receiving treatment for Hodgkinson's disease. This man is a foreigner, 'Norway or Sweden or Finland or something – nobody seemed to know' (*S* 33), and he is semi-conscious, dying of pancreas cancer. In a scene of touching perversity, Orla tries to have sexual intercourse with him, but only succeeds in bringing him to an agonised state of consciousness:

> The sailor was shouting, both arms out sudden. The other glucose drip, tightened up, but instead of following his Frankenstein walk, they tore free at his arm [...] There was a sound and Orla watched as a huge puddle of skitter spread under his skinny buttock and then pee was squirting up helplessly out of him and the blood was all down his arms and it was the look, that awful look, helplessness, bewildered pain that Orla saw, a look like that would be in her eye soon. (*S* 40)

Like a failed Frankenstein's monster, with flailing limbs and trailing wires, the man is fatally weak and vulnerable. Isolated and homeless, he is a terrifying vision of the possible fate of the hermetically sealed submariners who also, in this novel, seem only to return to land to die.

Another male-dominated institution, the Catholic church, is also losing its authority. Father Ardlui, the local priest, is willing to resort to deceit to recapture his waning power and contends that 'you need psychology, something that forces the people to come to you [...] What we need are shrines. We need new miracles; all the old ones are stale or worn smooth at any rate' (*S* 114). Near the end of the novel the priest attempts to create his

own local miracle and asks the sopranos to lie about witnessing an appearance of the Virgin Mary, 'so's he can take it to the church an if they approve it, they can build a shrine, get more folk coming here all year round, hotels, airports an all that like in Knock' (*S* 321). The girls refuse to cooperate with the scheme, exposing his corrupt intentions and demonstrating their own moral superiority. This outright rejection and exposure of the false consolations of religion is in contrast to the end of *Morvern Callar* with Morvern in the Tree Church, back within the confines of a Christian model.

The fading power of the male-centered institutions is reflected in the cases of individual men in the narrative who are generally ineffectual, happy to remain harmlessly drunk or stoned. Significantly there is no representative of the traditional male worker here. In Warner's novels Morvern's foster father, Red Hanna, is the only conspicuous example, a locally famous socialist train driver and trade unionist. But even he loses his retirement pay-off by the end of that novel, having been caught drinking on his very last day of work, a signal of his powerlessness over himself and over the terms of his employment. On the whole, men are useless lovers, absent fathers, irresponsible, stupid, and impotently perverse in the case of Danny, a young man the sopranos meet in the city who steals their school uniforms.

If the men are shown to be weak, the sopranos leave behind traditional stereotypes of acquiescent feminine behaviour. Similar to the women Maria Pini describes with reference to rave culture, Warner's schoolgirls explore 'very different fictions of femininity' insisting upon what Pini describes as 'a right to adventure' and even 'a valorisation of madness' that comes with indulging in 'illegal adventures which have traditionally been primarily the preserve of men'.[32] In their excessive drinking and

predatory attitude towards males, the sopranos illustrate what Angela McRobbie calls 'the new sexualities', a phrase that 'refers to images and texts which break decisively with the conventions of feminine behaviour by representing girls as crudely lustful young women'.[33] They exemplify female 'laddishness', and are assertive in their desires. The worry of some feminist writers is that girls have 'simply become "loutish and laddish"', who by turning the tables on men are merely mimicking them and not undermining the oppressive and objectifying system of interpersonal relations that frames this behaviour.[34]

However, McRobbie claims that in the 'abandonment of romance in favour of foreplay, condoms and sexual pleasure [...] this new form of ironic femininity allows [girls] to participate in all the conventional and gender stereotypical rituals of femininity without finding themselves trapped into traditional gender-subordinate positions'.[35] During the 1980s and 90s magazines for girls and young women promoted such an assertive femininity, and their influence is illustrated by Orla who, in her attempted seduction of the semi-conscious sailor, uses techniques 'like it said in *More*' (*S* 39). Significantly, this behaviour is a reaction against passivity and submission and primarily directed towards the girls' own pleasure.

Replacing the discourse of romance with that of sexuality in the magazines inevitably promotes closeness as erotic, a stereotypically male attitude. Achieving intimacy is therefore conditional on sexual attraction, and these self-styled life manuals are dominated by advice on how to attract a man for 'this new kind of (typically heterosexual) girl'.[36] This is a field where 'stereotypical rituals of femininity' maintain authority, creating a danger that these new femininities will become trapped within male-defined models of sexuality. This is reflected in *The Sopranos* in what Carol Anderson

and Zoë Strachan both perceive as voyeuristic qualities in Warner's writing, moments where the women are constructed as objects of a male gaze. Strachan points out that 'in some cases a male character is present to assume the role of voyeur, at other times it is left up to the reader to do so'.[37] Such moments include scenes of Morvern and Lanna together in the shower, and the sopranos flaunting their sexuality.

However, *The Sopranos* plays out another side to these questions of attraction and sexuality. If women are immersed in a universal model of desirable femininity as promoted by the magazines, it is not unthinkable that they should find the proffered images attractive in themselves, that they not only identify with them and attempt to emulate them, but are attracted to them.[38] Such a hypothesis is explored in the final sections of the novel in a lesbian encounter between Fionnula and Kay. Significantly Fionnula rejects the gay scene while she is in the city, represented by 'a place called Tarantula [...] I was too scared to go in' (*S* 193). Instead she is seduced by Kay, who is not a soprano but a 'second' in the choir.

Kay is the middle-class daughter of a consultant from the 'posh' part of town who has, up until now, been an object of the sopranos' caustic humour. But these class differences are undermined as it transpires that Kay is pregnant, a fate usually reserved for the working-class teenagers of the school. However it is sameness here that determines attraction, based on a similarity of appearance rather than the radical difference of the gay scene, hinting at a kind of autoeroticism.[39] These girls look the same, have almost the same leg length (*S* 4), dress the same (Kay is actually wearing another girl's newly bought mini-skirt, which fits perfectly), and are in effect reflections of each other. In a delightful irony, they embody male heterosexual desire yet subvert it

by having sex with each other.[40] The suggestion of similarity, however, taps into a tradition of mainstream representation of lesbians, where 'the idea that a woman who loves another woman is merely loving herself in a mirror has been a part of received masculine wisdom for centuries'.[41] This common representation of homosexuality, especially lesbianism, as narcissism (in Freud, for example) constructs it as immature, self-regarding and delusional. Though Fionnula admits that this is her closest experience to feelings of love, the lesbian relationship here resonates with these themes and consequently undermines that relationship even as it inscribes it.

The sameness enshrined in this relationship reflects the dynamics of the relationship between the sopranos who have constructed the identity of their group through exclusion. There are differences between the girls as Fionnula for one testifies: 'Ah think ah like girls as much as boys [...] Maybe more. [...] I've been feeling it for years now' (*S* 192, 3). But ultimately the differences are repressed or, failing that, dealt with by extending the boundaries of the group and re-emphasising similarity. Kay, once an outsider, becomes an honorary soprano by the end of the novel now that she is seen to drink, dress and have sex with the same reckless enthusiasm as the rest of them. Her pregnancy associates her with the working-class girls, signalling a further cancelling of difference. The lesbian relation is also 'normalised' ('Orla raised her forehead, I've thought of it myself, trying with a girl' (*S* 315)) and tolerated. As Strachan observes, 'Fionnula at no point refers to herself as a lesbian [...] In Warner's narrative, as in the Port, lesbianism might really be the Love that dare not speak its name.'[42] The group absorbs any oppositional relations.

However, Strachan goes on to assert that another function of the representation of female homosexuality in this novel is as a discourse of subversion.[43] It facilitates the disruption of a mainstream Scottish literary scene in which, as Berthold Schoene writes in an article on the novels of Alan Sharp, 'heterosexual masculinity is still commonly regarded as "the normative gender" and heterosexual men are still widely believed to be the only adequate representatives of our species'.[44] Warner's focus on women is a rejection of this outlook, and lesbianism further challenges a dominant heterosexuality. But this process continues to highlight homosexuality as a perverse 'other' to dominant constructions of sexuality and gender, exploiting this in order to disrupt conservative social attitudes.

So *The Sopranos* presents both an absorption of lesbianism into a dominant sameness and its construction as a radical otherness and subversive difference. These interpretations may appear to constitute a contradiction, but this is a common tension in the representation of homosexuality and reflects the contradictory desire of homosexuals themselves, to be both accepted by the mainstream and recognised as different from the majority. There is also a growing constituency within the 'queer' community that lesbian and homosexual identities should not be fixed and essentialised as monolithic and unchanging. With regard to this position, the novel represents a moment of queer diversity which liberates homosexuality from its own traditional stereotyping.

However, in the novel radical difference is disarmed and domesticated, and the lesbian is rendered socially invisible. Kay and Fionnula are strikingly feminine in appearance, and through them female same-sex desire is expressed via an oppressively heterosexual model of femininity. This is, of course, a discourse generally regarded as

founded on and promoting the objectification of women, and also one that constructs lesbian women as perverse. If homosexuality is made invisible, this enables people to ignore and/or dismiss it, encouraging an attitude of 'we are all the same really' that undermines the radical difference which threatens the naturalised dominant lifestyles. To be subsumed into the culture of the same is to be absorbed into the dominant world view, an echo of the politically liberal concepts of 'colour blindness' and 'gender blindness' which also make difference invisible. The tolerance of Fionnula and Kay's lesbian relationship in *The Sopranos* suggests that it is not necessarily the sexual act itself that is so disturbing. It is the crossing of gender boundaries that is the real threat when it comes to homosexuality, the confusing of these naturalised, discrete categories.

The Sopranos diffuses this threat, ending in a happy compromise. The overt message is a relatively radical one, that anyone can be homosexual. And in valorising the company of women, the novel contemplates a possible escape from the domination of men in their personal lives. But it leaves in place masculinised models of desire and social structures based on dominance and exclusion which disguise the radical nature of the message. Though the text provides inspiration for female self-sufficiency and solidarity, ultimately it asserts a separatist vision. The narrative ends with the sopranos, alone with themselves, in the station café, boyfriends and girlfriends left behind. Though obviously empowered by their separatism and solidarity, the sopranos' disengagement from others, including only rare opportunities for significant relations with men, is a conclusion tinged with pessimism regarding the wider social picture. Furthermore, their rejection of radical difference dissipates the challenge to traditional social relations. In effect, Warner's novel is only able to signal points of resistance in the dominant

discourses, and stretch and manipulate the present boundaries of identity, not break them down or imagine an alternative.

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In *Morvern Callar* and *The Sopranos* Warner celebrates the 'unadulterated life force' of young women and rejects ineffectual and useless men. His own/the author's self-erasure in the first novel abruptly restricts an exploration of alternative masculinities. Instead he usurps femininity and shames his men in derogatory portrayals. But this is another instance of an inversion of power that does not finally succeed in escaping oppressive hierarchical relations. For himself, Warner's notoriety for writing women is translated in the media as a kind of expertise on femininity. It is this that puts him in the league of those 'becoming women' of philosophy, appearing to kill himself off to give way to a centering of women. Though he himself succeeds in eluding the dead end of traditional male identity, he appears to have no alternative but to reinstate the traditional limits of female experience. Though his tone is perhaps regretful of Morvern's fate, Warner is the main one to benefit from his own perceived feminisation, as his representations command authority and become paradigmatic for the 'authentic' portrayal of challenging women. As the blurb reads on the cover of *The Sopranos*, 'It is just as though one were eavesdropping.' After staging his own erasure, Warner achieves a convincing resurrection.

Conclusion: The Dissent of Hegemonic Masculinity

This thesis investigates shifting gender relations in contemporary Scottish fiction, one of the central preoccupations of the period. In the novels discussed the failure of the ideals of patriarchy produces anger, disappointment and uncertainty. There is an interrogation of gender here, on behalf of men, but also in regard to women whose own investment in patriarchal ideals is exposed in the light of the decline of male authority. These texts engage with a gender transition, a historical moment of crisis when traditional relations remain influential and new ones are not yet sufficiently formed. They all impart an intimate representation of our present gender disorientation and the complexities of contemporary relations.

The novels of Kelman, Galloway, Kay, Kennedy and Warner often focus on marginal and alienated figures such as those from the working-class, women, queer individuals and young people, figures that stand apart from hegemonic masculinity. In this they may in some way echo Christopher Whyte's proposal that 'perhaps the most effective way of fostering a solution to the crisis of (straight) masculinity is to offer it a context'. Whyte goes on to state that it is necessary to 'move beyond [straight masculinity] and, quite simply, to pay it less attention. For the doings of violent men neither merit nor repay the time so often spent in contemplating them'.[1] Questionable here is Whyte's conjunction of straight masculinity with violence, his subsequent dismissal of 'hard men' as represented in texts by James Kelman and Alasdair Gray.

Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene 'strongly disagree' with Whyte's proposition, asserting instead that '*all of us together* move beyond [straight masculinity] – and

continue moving – by renouncing once and for all the monadic fixity of all traditional gender identities – be they masculine or feminine, straight or gay – and by embracing a kind of gender "nomadism" instead'.[2] Such a move is, to a certain extent, what the writers in this thesis are investigating. They accept the current lack of gender fixity and are engaged in imagining the consequences. A question remains, however: does the drive towards gender nomadism risk ignoring the present reality of male violence?

Violence is not absent from the novels studied here, but it is usually directed towards the self, particularly in Nathan Staples of *Everything You Need*, and the figure of the writer who haunts *Morvern Callar*. The search for alternative, especially straight male subjectivities is an issue for this study, and the disappearance of men, the decline in their naturalised authority, and the weakening presence of their physical bodies inform that search, and contribute to the trajectory of the thesis as it moves from Kelman's 'wilting' men to the dead writer in *Morvern Callar*.[3] Of course, such representations re-instate men at the centre of attention. Berthold Schoene singles out male writers for criticism, asserting: 'In fact, rather than exploring and negotiating their own feminine quandary of subnational castration, alterity and specularity, Scottish men writers seem prone to merely appropriate and thus upstage the marginality of women.'[4] Ben Knights illustrates this argument in reference to *The Busconductor Hines*:

> In classes I have found that women readers have felt particularly strongly – to the point of almost parental fury with Hines for his helplessness. It is as though in telling his story of helplessness and dependency he has usurped a conventionally feminine position [...] It is as though being extraordinarily bad at managing his own life constitutes both an appeal to sympathy, and even a perverse kind of claim to centrality.[5]

The texts studied here eschew male social violence in their aspirations to imagine alternative models of the self and relations. In this they experiment with form, stretching the conventions of literary realism which, in its dominant style, constructs hierarchical power relations and models of subjectivity based on exclusion and a masculinised process of othering and domination. The alternative literary strategies explored by these writers, particularly their lack of focus on plot development and the progress of time, allow alternative models of the self to emerge; their characterisations of uncertain and emasculated men, and women struggling with femininity, undermine dominant conceptions. As we have seen, however, these narratives do not always convincingly sustain truely alternative subjectivities, a fact that demonstrates gender transition and its representation to be an ongoing process not linear in its progress.

The novels studied here suggest that several models of gender identity and relations often exist simultaneously and struggle for dominance. Having considered texts that, to paraphrase Whyte's words, offer hegemonic masculinity a context, I conclude this study with a brief reflection on two novels that overtly engage with male violence and its social context. One reason for this is to investigate Whyte's assertion that the 'doings of violent men neither merit nor repay the time so often spent in contemplating them'. If we are 'all of us together', in Lea and Schoene's words, to move beyond a masculinised model of identity, then the desires and insecurities that such representations express demand consideration. Secondly, in contrast to the formal experimentation of the novels studied here, it is in more formulaic fiction, especially the immensely popular and widely read crime writing genre, that representations of male violence are most widespread. Such writing reflects common social anxieties, but these texts also constitute a distraction

from the deeper implications of gender transition, providing as they often do familiar narratives and techniques and satisfying closure to assuage those anxieties. This study concludes by briefly investigating whether the strategies of this writing can be employed to reconfigure gender relations.

Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) and *The Cutting Room* (2002) by Louise Welsh are two novels that do endeavour to interrogate, and not simply reproduce, dominant gender relations through the structures of more familiar fiction. *The Cutting Room* is a crime novel, though *Marabou Stork Nightmares* cannot itself be classified as a straightforward work of genre writing. It is more the case that Irvine Welsh appropriates and manipulates popular narrative forms to represent the reality of his chosen location; this novel is a complex mix of a quest motif with the boys' adventure story, *bildungsroman* and urban realism. In this way he is reacting to Kelman's assertion that, 'The unifying feature of genre fiction is the way it denies reality. This is structural. In other words if reality had a part to play in genre fiction then it would stop being genre fiction.'[6] *Marabou Stork Nightmares* attempts a complicated engagement with the conventions of certain popular writing while grappling with the reality of male violence.

In different ways both these novels attempt to expose male crimes against women, to understand their context, and to admit male responsibility. They produce very different outcomes: *Marabou Stork Nightmares* ultimately reinscribes the dominance of masculinity, but *The Cutting Room* ends on a note of mourning for female victims of male violence, providing a pertinent critique of the excesses of patriarchy. Both books demonstrate the risks and the radical potential involved in representing contemporary gender issues, fundamental concerns of this thesis: the violent appropriation of

marginality by straight masculinity in Irvine Welsh's novel is resisted by the centrality of a marginal male in *The Cutting Room*, suggesting a common predicament for those at the margins in relation to hegemonic heterosexual masculinity.

In effect the novels already analysed in this study offer a context, in Whyte's words, for extreme narratives of straight male crisis like *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, not replacing them but existing alongside them. Considering these popular narratives at this juncture serves to emphasise the potentially problematic process of seeking to represent reconfigurations of gender, and the limitations imposed on imagining alternatives by considering the social context of male violence. These texts demonstrate that Lea and Schoene's proposal that 'all of us together move beyond straight masculinity' is a difficult and disturbing option.

I: *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and *The Cutting Room*

In Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* male characters violently and self-destructively appropriate the dominance they feel is lacking in their lives. It is a study of a brutalised young man, Roy Strang, whose violence takes on psychotic and sociopathic proportions. The novel graphically dissects the founding insecurities of masculinity, and the compensatory but destructive power appropriated to offset them. The novel unravels the fabric of masculine identity, but is most alarming in its failure to stitch it back together again. In scenes of football hooliganism, colonial fantasy and Roy's final admission of participation in a brutal gang rape, the novel represents masculinity out of control and in the hysterical grip of a psychotic and shocking misogyny, which is ultimately destructive of everything around it. As much as anything else, it is the text's

desire to understand Roy's behaviour, or at least emphasise its social roots, that causes consternation.

In *Marabou Stork Nightmares* male identity is under duress and is cracking up under the oppressive power of a corrupted and unsustainable masculine ideal. This breakdown is evident in the fragmented form of the novel. Roy Strang, one of Edinburgh's poorest from a Muirhouse 'scheme', narrates his story from a hospital bed as he is in a coma. His narration is split into three 'levels': the real-time present as the nurses and his visitors come and go; events from his past that make up the story of his life so far; and at the deepest level a 'Boy's Own' fantasy world in which Roy is hunting the evil and ugly predator/scavenger bird, the Marabou Stork. The different strands of the narrative are typographically connected up and down across the page as Roy comes 'up' to the surface of the present or recedes 'deeper' into his memories or fantasy world. The text is often interrupted by aggressively capitalised outbursts, transitional pauses of lines of dashes, the lyrics of popular songs that Roy's mother sings for him, and other items that fracture its surface. There is no stability or peace for Roy in this narrative as he strives to maintain control over his consciousness; there is no way of knowing when a memory will disturb his fantasy or an alternative discourse or level take precedence. As the novel goes on he increasingly loses control over his narrative, and over his life, a predicament that reflects on his inability to achieve and maintain an ideal manhood.

'All I'm looking for is a bit of respect. It's my fuckin entitlement' (*MSN* 179) Roy states just before, and also as an excuse for, the violent rape that is one culmination of the novel. Like power and control, he believes respect is his patriarchal right, though of course respect in Roy's skewed psychology is another word for submission. If these

qualities are lacking in his life then he feels cheated and inferior to the ideal. Roy is 'feminised' throughout the novel, weakened in terms of hegemonic masculinity. He is working class, an increasingly powerless position. He is also physically disadvantaged, subject to '"the Strang look" [...] a sort of retarded man-in-the-moon face' (*MSN* 20), compounded by deformity after his legs are damaged and scarred for life when he is attacked by his father's Alsation dog as a young child. Roy's feminisation is affirmed when he is sexually abused by his Uncle Gordon, his father's rightwing, honorary Boer brother, when the family stay with him during their shortlived move to South Africa. Finally as an adult, even though he succeeds in getting a 'good job' as a systems analyst with an insurance company, his female boss denies his personal achievements, appropriating his success for herself and the team. Roy is a routinely disempowered individual.

Roy's life therefore becomes a crusade against humiliation and he attempts to reclaim and assert his masculinity through violence. This is initiated and positively encouraged from a young age by his psychologically unstable and violent father, John. For instance, John organises boxing lessons between Roy and his half brother Bernard, because 'He had a thing about me being too uncoordinated, especially with my limp, and considered Bernard too effeminate [...] Dad would force us to fight until one or both of us broke down in tears of misery and frustration [...] Keep that fuckin jab in ehs eye, Roy! Poke ehs fuckin eye right oot!' (*MSN* 29). Constructing a tough exterior also involves the stringent denial of feelings and the softness and vulnerability they imply.

Roy cannot prevent feelings of inadequacy though, and these and the perceived judgement of his peers creates a self-loathing that has to be projected outwards and

placed elsewhere. This hatred is directed primarily at women who, through personifying femininity, become the source of the feelings he wants to deny. This is pointedly illustrated by his discovery of his capacity to terrorise in a sexual attack on a female classmate at the age of 12: 'I enjoyed the look in her eyes. Enjoyed having the knife at her throat. Enjoyed the power. That was it wi the power, I remembered thinking, you just had to take it. When you took it, you had to hold onto it' (*MSN* 106). In the flight from the feminine, sex is now identified with power for Roy, 'affirming a belief that sex is the only non-demeaning way for men to be intimate with women, which in turn implies that sexual intimacy is about power as much as pleasure'.[7]

Even in this early part of Roy's life, masculinity is a performance, a masquerade. The power that defines it is something to be 'taken', not something that emanates from within giving natural control over the external world. Such control can only be achieved, paradoxically, in psychotic outbursts of violence. But the very idea of masquerade is a feminising one that has traditionally been applied to women. As we have seen, the inauthenticity of the feminine is a recurring theme in Western discourses as woman is figured as a defective man, lacking rationality and access to the truth; 'woman is a lie, adornment is her truth' is Nietzsche's assessment.[8] However, in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* it is men who are adorned with the trappings of an inauthentic masculinity. Joan Riviere's famous statement that 'genuine womanliness and "masquerade" [...] are the same thing' also applies to manliness in this novel.[9] Even his struggle for masculinity marks Roy as feminised, a performer of a corrupt and discredited ideal. His reaction is to assume a hypermasculinity.

In a coma after an unsuccessful suicide attempt, Roy acts out an ideal masculinity in a fantasy of imperial adventure as a hunter in Africa: 'For some reason, I am driven to eradicate the scavenger-predator bird known as the Marabou Stork. I wish to drive this evil and ugly creature from the African continent' (*MSN* 4). The structure of the novel illustrates the theme of the quest, divided as it is into four sections titled 'Lost Empires', 'The City of Gold', 'On the Trail of the Stork' and 'The Paths of Self-Deliverance'. Though at this stage Roy professes to have no memory, he knows the quest is a personal one, admitting that 'The Stork's the personification of all this badness. If I kill the Stork I'll kill the badness in me' (*MSN* 9). And as if in reference to his traumatic past life he asserts that in this fantasy he can 'do the things I wanted to do, the things I tried to do, up there in the real world' (*MSN* 17). He can, then, act out an ideal based on the cartoon nostalgia of an imperial masculinity.

In the hunting sequences Roy and his companion Sandy Jamieson (a caricature of the footballer Jimmy Sandison) travel across an African landscape that alternates between a paradise and a rubbish-strewn, poverty-stricken hell, eating picnics, swimming naked and talking in exaggerated upper-class English accents ('Gosh Sandy, you're a Hungry Horace today, I remarked' (*MSN* 7)). Here Britishness equals Englishness, as it did in the Victorian adventure stories; so both Roy's class and national identities are transmuted away from the inferiority of the working-class Scot. In the fantasy, working-class masculinity is salvaged by way of an imperialist model with which it shares attributes such as fearlessness, stoicism, emotional reticence and physical fitness, translated as strength.[10] In the imperialist discourse, of course, there is also the assertion of British racial superiority, much in evidence in Roy's fantasy world.

Apart from the stereotypes of a bygone 'golden age', this label also refers to a similar present-day scenario, the short period spent in apartheid South Africa during the Strang family's attempt to emigrate there. Here, in a position of social privilege, Roy thrives as he indulges his earnest interest in wildlife and does well in school, becoming putative 'university material', even though his uncle's abuse is also ongoing. The era is, however, short-lived. John Strang is jailed because of a drunken incident and, to Roy's dismay, the family have to return to Edinburgh. 'Edinburgh to me represented serfdom. I realised that it was exactly the same situation as Johannesburg; the only difference was that the Kaffirs were white and called schemies or draftpaks. Back in Edinburgh, we would be Kaffirs; condemned to live out our lives in townships like Muirhouse or So-Wester-Hailes-To' (*MSN* 80). Jackson and Maley call this claim of parallels with Black South Africans under apartheid 'audacious'. As they point out, 'A comparison implies parity, but Welsh's colonial comparison works by equating inequalities, racial and social.'[11] As an attempt at insightful political analysis attributed to Welsh himself, this criticism is more than warranted. But taken as the view of Roy Strang, the statement is more like an hysterical outburst at the prospect of the denial of the recently discovered power of his position in South Africa. It is a cry for attention by the disappointed rather than the dispossessed. Such exaggeration is similar to the violence in his life, a self-aggrandizing gesture that falsely inflates his standing in response to his grossly deflated sense of self. And, of course, hysteria has always been understood as a particularly feminine attribute in its temporary 'loss' of reason.

Roy's selfishly diagnosed 'oppression' is not currency back in Europe, where the consumer society has simply bought off him and his kind, replacing achievement and

meaning with goods and image. He is manipulated by a society that gives him no opportunity to achieve a vaunted 'manhood', leaving him empty and disempowered. He resists by taking personal power through violence, only much later realising that 'power always goes on and on until it finds its limits' (*MSN* 219). Of course in such a context, Roy finds he has no limits.

Control is an issue for Roy throughout the novel, apparent even in the fact that violence is his drug of choice. As he recalls 'I had never really fancied the idea of taking drugs [...] Although I had the odd pint wi Tony or the auld man, drink did little for me, and I wasnae really intae getting pished [...] So I suppose I sort of came to the conclusion that the best possibility for me in having a good crack was with the cashies' (*MSN* 116). As both drugs and alcohol involve loss of control to a certain extent, Roy is more attracted to the semi-organised violence of the football gangs for his kicks. This accords with the findings of Susan Faludi in her research with men who have been perpetrators of domestic violence for whom it was typical to find that the moment of violence was a moment of control, often 'the only one in his recent life'.[12] Other advantages came from membership of a gang: 'being a cashie I had access to aw the fanny I needed. Sometimes just skankers likes, but a ride's a ride [...] it was better than no getting a ride. That fucks up a cunt's self-esteem' (*MSN* 136). Every female is a possible conquest, emphasising the connection of sex and power for Roy, that self-esteem here comes from dominance.

The brutal culmination of this behaviour is the vicious gang rape of Kirsty, graphically described in a chapter entitled 'Respect'. In this account Roy is a reluctant participant and an unsuccessful restraining influence. The shock and revulsion caused by this scene is in part produced by the premeditation of this attack and its strictly controlled

execution. This is not a frenzied, psychotic loss of control of the kind of rape story that dominates social awareness. Using words like 'tenderness' and 'with great care', Welsh identifies the rapists' efforts not to leave signs of a struggle on their victim's body (*MSN* 182, 3). The event is drawn out over several hours, a fact emphasised by its taking nine pages of text. As an act of power it is an act of control, not loss of it, and this is the abhorrent reality of Welsh's representation. Then the whole trauma is repeated in court; as Kirsty says later, 'You raped me once, and with the help of the judge and the courts you raped me again' (*MSN* 259).

The covert social sanctioning of this crime is implied by the defence Q.C.: 'It was obvious he didn't believe a word of what we were saying' says Roy, yet he nonetheless asserts to the rapists that if they put themselves in his hands 'we'll give her a damn good shafting' (*MSN* 206, 7). The masculinised state apparatus combined with convincing court performances by the four men ensure it is Kirsty who is on trial, a case she can only lose. The performances of the men illustrate their expertise in masquerade and their understanding and manipulation of social discourses, as they successfully turn themselves into victims of a woman they paint as vindictive and dangerously out of control. The court appearance is another demonstration of their own self-control; these men are not typically evil monsters but 'stylish [...] and in possession of decent IQs' (*MSN* 137). Here Welsh decisively undermines the case for the 'essential' badness of these individuals, therefore not allowing them to be characterised as beyond reason, examples of an insane inhumanity. These men are apparently normal, as certified by the court. They could, therefore, potentially be any man.

Such 'normalising' of the men risks normalising the crime. But the representation of these mainstream young men with good jobs reflects the arguments of the 'Zero Tolerance' campaign. This Edinburgh initiative began in 1992 and was the first campaign of its kind in the UK, using the mass media to challenge male violence against women and children. Comprising big street placards in prominent places, posters and leaflets, the campaign used images of women in everyday situations with up-front slogans like 'No man has the right' and 'When she says no she means no'. Other signs simply used the letter Z to convey the basic message that there is no acceptable level of violence against women and children. The campaign deliberately normalised the context of the violence and the perpetrators to get its message across, explicitly using 'a feminist analysis of violence as male power and [a] concern with a "continuum of violence" [...] challenging all men to acknowledge male violence'.[13] In the novel this campaign forces itself on Roy's attention during his 'depressed' state of mind after the rape: 'I felt as if I had been punched hard in the stomach [...] Each slogan ripped through me like a psychic machete' (*MSN* 198). In typical violent fashion, this describes the effects that his actions are now having on him.

The fierce self-hate that he is now feeling eventually leads to a breakdown and suicide attempt preceded by a plea for understanding:

> I wasn't a psychopath; I was just a fool and a coward. I had opened up my emotions and I couldn't go back into self-denial, into that lower form of existence, but I couldn't go forward until I'd settled my debt. For me it wasn't running away. That was what I'd been doing all my fuckin life, running away from sensitivity, from feelings, from love. Running away because a fuckin schemie, a nobody, shouldnae have these feelings because there's fuckin naewhair for them tae go [...] This wasn't about opting out. This was about the only resolution that made sense. Death was the way forward. (*MSN* 254-5)

He fails to kill himself though, and by the end of the narrative he is finally forced to remember and admit the real extent of and reason for his self-hate. When Kirsty the rape victim kills him she reveals that he was in fact the main perpetrator of the rape, not the coerced participant he has led us to believe. This is the narrative he has been denying and hiding from himself and the reader all the way through the novel. And the point is driven home in the fantasy world by the revelation that he himself is the Stork he has been hunting, and he is finally shot by Sandy Jamieson. This final shocking twist undermines Roy's whole narrative. His manipulation of his story has succeeded to some extent in justifying his actions, as in the quote above, blaming his oppressive environment and upbringing. Can we now really believe the sincerity of his assertion that 'ah've changed, Bernard. I've allowed myself tae feel' (*MSN* 250)? Is it not the case that death is not the way forward, but only the ultimate strategy of avoiding the public humiliation of admitting his crime, the only action that will really alleviate his guilt and self-hate and stop the terrorising return of the repressed? In this case, then, death is a typically masculine reaction, categorising *Marabou Stork Nightmares* as party to what Ben Knights describes as 'the available narrative stock' which for men 'concerns male success, triumph, or triumph's counterpart, glorious defeat.'[14] Instead of admitting failure, humiliation and vulnerability, Roy continues the destruction and cheats us all of any possibility of change.

As readers we may feel particularly dismayed and disorientated by the manipulation of narrative that makes Roy into a feminised victim. But if we are cheering Kirsty's actions then we are complicit with the dominant masculinised ideology. Citing the same Zero Tolerance posters, she takes her revenge and butchers Roy's body, cutting off his

penis and choking him with it. Significantly, this act produces an image that is uncannily familiar, but it is usually a black man who is the victim, since this symbolic action was common during the lynchings of black men in the American south from the time of the civil war on into the twentieth century. Kirsty tells Roy 'you've made me just like you' (*MSN* 259), and this is a fair summation of her actions. Her revenge is a cathartic act that meets Roy's violence with a similar taking of power. This is a 'refigured masculinity',[15] a conclusion that, as Schoene-Harwood argues, constitutes a 'total eradication of sexual difference'.[16] As the feminised victim he dies; as the masculinised perpetrator she survives. This leaves no room at all for femininity, no possibility of change, but a continuation of the masculinised society of the One, the Same.

Though this is the most depressing outcome of all, it is achieved by gross manipulation on Welsh's part. Firstly, the Zero Tolerance campaign, in effect 'Roy's death sentence', is here presented as a monologic discourse that matches the discourse of the masculinised subject closing down dialogue with the other.[17] It creates excluded others of all men, as well as constituting them as expendable. Therefore, feminism, which is the founding discourse of that campaign, is here a masculinist discourse, repeating the dominance and exclusion of the Cartesian subject.

Further, Roy appropriates Kirsty's position and oppression. 'I understand her hurt, her pain' (*MSN* 264) he opines near the end. He is equated with Kirsty by the strategic late revelation of his own rape by his Uncle Gordon, which he has been repressing all along. In this vein there are also the repeated parallels made between himself and oppressed Africans: 'this colonised nation of your [that is his own] diseased mind/Africa, my Africa' (*MSN* 253), signifying that both himself and the continent have been 'fucked'

by the white man. That final 'lynched' image also equates him with the black American experience under the murderous oppression of race segregation. The focus on the white male experience undermines that of the woman and that of the oppressed black South Africans under apartheid. In the description of the rape Kirsty is repeatedly compared to a frightened animal ('The expression on her face was [...] I remember seeing some documentary about some animal being eaten from behind while its face seemed to register disbelief, fear, and self-hate at its own impotence' (*MSN* 183)). He, on the other hand, remains for us a sentient, human being throughout the narrative, even though he is incapacitated. He is never reduced to the absolute static victimhood of Kirsty, having always shown a spirited resistance, even in the process of repression. This state of affairs constitutes a total marginalisation of women, their reduction to powerlessness. Even Roy's demise is not absolutely hers. As Jackson and Maley point out, 'Kirsty's act does not seem to be particularly empowering; rather than a direct challenge to a violent and potent male sexuality this is an assault on what she calls "a cabbage".'[18] Finally the narrative closes in the fantasy where Roy as the Stork is shot by Sandy, claiming the narrative authority 'as actively and exclusively male'.[19] Roy is not only a feminised victim; he is ultimately the only victim.

Perhaps all this signifies something at the heart of the 'crisis of masculinity', a desperate and hysterical attempt on the part of men to appropriate the position of the oppressed and the excluded, even the position of the most oppressed and excluded, in resistance to the attacks on their erstwhile privileged position. In itself, then, the message of the novel, besides being a radically pessimistic one concerning the victimhood of men, is also a particularly suggestive one, indicating the incredibly destructive lengths to

which men will go in order to maintain the central position in any social formation, in any discourse. Welsh is unable to fully take responsibility for the crimes of his protagonist. Women are not mourned here but eradicated and transformed into co-defendants.

*

Louise Welsh's *The Cutting Room*, on one level, can be interpreted as a response to the pessimism of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. This Glasgow novel confronts male crimes and female complicity, and does not retreat from exposing male shame. It is a crime novel, and exhibits a particularly literary pedigree by heading many of its chapters with esoteric quotes from poetry and classic texts. It challenges the crime-writing genre by subverting at least two of its stereotypical characteristics. The text is narrated by Rilke, a middle-aged gay man who is an antiques dealer. And there is no dead body, only a photograph of a murder committed more than fifty years before. This is the crime Rilke investigates.

While clearing the rich and varied contents of a large house whose owner, Mr McKindless, has apparently died, Rilke finds in the attic an extensive collection of literary pornography. Such a scenario suggests an image of a male unconscious hidden from everyday view, a 'madman in the attic' to counter the Victorian image of the 'madwoman in the attic'. It is among these things that Rilke finds a series of photographs of McKindless himself in pornographic scenes, probably taken in a brothel in Paris in the 1940s. One photograph shows a young woman with her throat cut, and another what looks like her dead body tied up in a sheet. Rilke is initially unsure whether the pictures show a real event or just an acting out of someone's macabre fantasy. But he becomes

convinced that a murder took place when he finds a bracelet among the man's possessions that the girl appears to be wearing in the photograph. His investigations, and complications around the sale of the house contents, eventually expose the circumstances of McKindless who is involved in the illegal trafficking of people for the sex industry. He has faked his own death in order to avoid the police and escape with the proceeds of the sale.

In his preoccupation with the woman in the photograph, Rilke makes the connection between the crime in the picture and present crimes, and sees a through line between the past and the present. He is the moral centre of the novel and exposes the guilt and responsibility of the dominant social classes, as the crimes are committed by apparently rich, respectable, heterosexual men. He can do this because, as a gay man, he too is a victim of straight society, a feminised figure. In fact, with the nick-name of 'the walking dead', he is characterised less as feminine than as a spectre, spiritually homeless in the mainstream world and appropriately distanced from it. As such an outsider Rilke is not implicated in the crimes, and so is able to mourn the victims. At the end of the narrative, during a 'pilgrimage' to Paris, he traces the brothel in McKindless's pictures, now a smart restaurant:

> This might be the place but I felt no truth. No new connection. I sat on a barrel, bowed my head and let the tears come.
>
> 'I cared,' I whispered. 'I cared enough to try. I'm sorry I never knew your name.'
>
> And I found I wasn't crying for the girl in the photograph. I was crying for other victims, present and future. I looked once more at the images, then took out my lighter, touched flame to paper, dropped it on the floor, watched it curl into ash, then stamped on the embers. (*CR* 293)

His burning of the photocopied images is a symbolic cremation of the dead woman, and an act of mourning for 'victims present and future', a tacit recognition of the continuing crimes of male brutality.

In *The Cutting Room* a sense of repentance is achieved for the consequences of a masculine identity founded on violent domination, so graphically portrayed in *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. A crime is exposed, not deceptively disguised as the rape is concealed in the court room in Irvine Welsh's novel. And the suffering of the victim is recognised, not translated into mutually destructive revenge. In *The Cutting Room* a contemporary victim gives her own story in her own voice in a statement found in McKindless's police file. Her voice represents all victims for Rilke: 'As I read, it was as if the girl in the photograph had suddenly rolled over, loosed herself of her bonds, and was addressing me' (*CR* 279). This continuation of past and present crimes undermines the denial of the community that is a feature of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*, and places responsibility in the mainstream of that community, not just with the 'bad' and the 'mad' such as Roy Strang. As the victim Adia Kovalyova says in her statement towards the end of *The Cutting Room*, 'Then I began to think, in a world where such evil exists, are there normal people? Who were the men that used us? Did they go home and kiss their wives, cuddle their daughters, with the smell of our abuse still on their fingers?' (*CR* 282). In its open acknowledgement of the victims of male violence, *The Cutting Room* seeks to bring to the surface the misogynist masculine unconscious, to clear out the madman's attic, and not simply replenish it.

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These readings of *Marabou Stork Nightmares* and *The Cutting Room* would seem to vindicate Whyte's dismissal of the 'doings of violent men'. The former only succeeds in reinstating the dominance of masculinity. The latter, meanwhile, provides what Whyte calls for: a context for straight masculinity in its gay narrator. In this strategy *The Cutting Room* distances itself from the locus of male violence, and conveys its horror at one remove, without graphically indulging itself. On this subject, readers continue to wrestle with the vexed question of whether Irvine Welsh's text is an illuminating exposure or a mere reproduction of the power relations it purports to be criticising. Both these texts do, however, undermine the socially hegemonic identities and relations by exposing their unstable and contingent foundations, a fact that justifies their consideration. But their configurations of gender are not radically different.

The novels of Kelman, Galloway, Kay, Kennedy and Warner attempt such a reconfiguration, also focusing on marginal figures that expose the bankrupt authority of the centre. Many familiar characteristics of the social realm that support hegemonic masculinity and its relations are under threat in these texts. Most obviously, all the novels of these five authors describe a lack of family roots, a fundamental factor that reinforces the social and subjective homelessness and in-betweeness of these protagonists. The threat to their psychological stability and coherence caused by this social and subjective lack of anchorage is a common theme, signalling the inability of these texts, and their reluctance even, to achieve the fluidity of that gender unfixity promoted by Lea and Schoene. Symptomatic of this is their preoccupation with the past, so that although they are concerned with the future they are often looking backwards,

eternally returning to the same location. But like the busconductor Hines, they are 'wanting that becoming' (*BH* 98).

Where there is a possibility of movement beyond the immobilising hold of the past, it is located away from straight masculinity and the identities and relations it engenders, in Galloway's female couple in *Foreign Parts*, Kennedy's female writer in *Everything You Need*, and Warner's female community in *The Sopranos*. These characterizations point to the valorization of new relations and identities, necessary fictions to replace the old certainties. They do, however, tend to leave behind straight masculinity in contrast to Lea and Schoene's hopes of a coalition of straight men 'with women and other formerly subordinate gender identities' moving forward together.[20]

However, the principle exception to the unhappy fragmentation and isolation of many of these protagonists is in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*, which provides the most successful portrait of hegemonic masculinity, traditional gender identity, and family life. Of course, that this is achieved by a transvestite only underlines the denaturalisation of gender in this period. Joss's death ends the illusion and exposes the subversion; but it is only in death that this subversion is realised, a scenario that is not entirely welcoming. This novel proves an odd mixture of respect and disregard for the rules and ideals of hegemonic masculinity. But it highlights a common feature of these texts, those of both female and male writers, that women here are more successful at reinventing and reconstructing themselves in the face of uncertainty and instability. Both Galloway's and Kennedy's protagonists illustrate the possibilities of such processes, and Morvern Callar is also open to a reconsideration of her relationship with both her self and the world around her. This is a reflection of the particularity of female experience: women's greater familiarity with

the contradictions of monolithic authority, and also with the possibilities of dissimulation, a situation arising from their past oppression.

It is the women in these texts who are more able to live and to imagine life beyond the current models of relations, and this characteristic of contemporary Scottish fiction suggests that reimagining identities may more fruitfully begin with a reconsideration and revaluation of the feminine, the traditional goal of feminism, but in relation to men, especially straight men in contradiction of Whyte, as well as women. Men's studies has begun this process and been criticised for its 'emotionalism'; new positive configurations of the feminine are necessary to effect the transition to the gender unfixity that Lea and Schoene eulogise. But as the lack of closure of all of these novels suggests, the gender transition that will result from the present crisis will not be an arrival at stability, but a constant process of deconstruction and reconstruction in an unanchored reality. Such a process signals that there is no possibility of a clean escape from our hegemonic ideals of gender, of clearing the boundaries of identity as they stand. We can only hope to stretch them so that they become unrecognisable in truly alternative imaginings of the self, necessary fictions in an uncertain world.

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Notes: Introduction

[1] See, for example, Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality* (1989); Michael S. Kimmel, *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity* (1987).

[2] Other notable contributions in this area are Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins* (1992), Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (1992).

[3] Jeremy Idle, 'McIlvanney, Masculinity and Scottish Masculinity', *Scottish Affairs*, 2 (1993), 50-57; S. J. Boyd, '"A Man's a Man": Reflections on Scottish Masculinity', *Scotlands*, 2 (1994), 97-112.

[4] Martin McQuillan, 'Introduction – "I don't know anything about Freud": Muriel Spark Meets Contemporary Criticism', in *Theorizing Muriel Spark: Gender, Race and Deconstruction*, ed. by Martin McQuillan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 6-7.

[5] I am thinking here of recent studies of contemporary Scottish fiction such as the survey of contemporary women's writing by Douglas Gifford, 'Contemporary Writing I and II', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy MacMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997) pp. 579-629; and Cristie Leigh March, *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh, McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway and Kennedy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

[6] Titles on this theme include R. W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), *Understanding Masculinities*, ed. by Mártín Mac An Ghaill (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1996), Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth-Century Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), and John Beynon, *Masculinities and Culture* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002).

[7] Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne, 'Dislocating Masculinity: Gender, Power and Anthropology', in *Dislocating Masculinity: Comparative Ethnographies*, ed. by Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 21.

[8] Jackie Kay's *Trumpet* and Luke Sutherland's *Jelly Roll* (1998) are two novels that consider the issue of being black and Scottish. Toni Davidson edited *And Thus I'll Freely Sing* (1989), Scotland's first collection of lesbian and gay writing, and a group of Scottish homosexuals are the subject of Christopher Whyte's novel *The Gay Decameron* (1998). However, queer identity more infamously inhabits the margins of Irvine Welsh (Renton's flirtation with homosexuality in *Trainspotting* (1994),

Roy's brother Bernard in *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995), and the drag queen in his novella 'A Smart Cunt', *The Acid House* (1994)). See Zoë Strachan, 'Queerspotting', *Spike Magazine*, <www.spike magazine.com/059 queerspotting.htm> [accessed 6 August 2002]

[9] Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from Frankenstein to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. xi.

[10] Simon Jenkins, 'An Expletive of a Winner', *The Times*, 15 October 1994, p. 20.

[11] For example, the conception of men as victims resonates in some critical readings of Kelman's work, and the notion has been the subject of two recent studies of American contemporary culture. Sally Robinson engages with this theme in her investigation of masculinity in post 1960s American cultural productions and finds that 'an aesthetic of masochism rules representations of dominant masculinity in crisis', but that this is a masochism 'that is less a struggle between masculine and feminine than it is an attempt to reconstruct the masculine – not as "tough" enough to take self-inflicted or other punishments, but as attractively vulnerable in a culture that is so taken with the dynamics of victimization' (*Marked Men: White Masculinity in Crisis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), p. 12, fn. p. 197). Also David Savran proposed that 'modern white masculinities are deeply contradictory, eroticizing submission and victimization while trying to retain a certain aggressively virile edge' (*Taking it Like a Man: White Masculinity, Masochism and Contemporary American Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 9).

[12] Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, 34.3 (1998), p. 274, footnote p. 284.

[13] Ibid. p. 274.

[14] For example, according to John Beynon, psychiatrist and popular media personality Anthony Clare's book *On Men: Masculinity in Crisis* contributed to creating a 'masculinity-in-crisis' summer on its publication in 2000, provoking wide media coverage (p. 79). Other studies that contemplate the issue include John MacInnes, *The End of Masculinity* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1998), R. W. Connell, *Masculinities*, and Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989).

[15] Beynon, p. 83.

[16] MacInnes, p. 11. The obvious example to come to mind is the First World War and its aftermath, and also the revalorisation of traditional femininity after the Second World War signalled a further crisis.

[17] Connell, p. 84.

[18] Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene, 'Masculinity in Transition: An Introduction', in *Posting the Male: Masculinities in Post-war and Contemporary British Literature*, ed. by Daniel Lea and Berthold Schoene (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), pp. 10-11.

[19] Rosi Braidotti, 'Cyberfeminism with a Difference', in *Feminisms*, ed. by Sandra Kemp and Judith Squires (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 529.

[20] Alan Bold, *The Sensual Scot* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1982), p. 7. 'MacChismo' is a term used by Andrew Noble, 'MacChismo in Retrospect', *Bulletin of Scottish Politics*, 1.2 (1981), 73-81.

[21] Boyd, p. 103.

[22] Bold, p. 61. He refers to Burns's 'Ode to Spring' as an example.

[23] Robert Crawford, 'Robert Fergusson's Robert Burns' in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. by Robert Crawford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 14, 19.

[24] The Bold book includes cartoons of various humorous interpretations of 'Jocus Erectus' and ends with a chapter on 'The Female Hardman'. S. J. Boyd, near the opening of his article, recounts a conversation he overheard on a bus between two girls talking about their boyfriends in which one admits, 'Derek hits me. [short pause] He hits me wi' a baseball bat.' Boyd goes on, 'Hearing it all was an unpleasant experience, but a salutary one: when I am moved (and I *am* moved) by the ceremonials of Scottish arms and the glamour of the Scottish regiments, I remember the baseball bat of Dunfermline' (p. 97). By the end of the article, however, he echoes the attitude of a poem by Sydney Goodsir Smith in his reaction to the hardships of the life of a prostitute – a shoulder-shrugging 'Ach, weill!'; 'It is a phrase which exactly sums up my own attitude to Scottish masculinity' Boyd writes dismissively (p. 111).

[25] Barbara Littlewood, 'Sex and the Scottish Psych', *Cencrastus*, 46 (1993), p. 3.

[26] Esther Breitenbach, '"Curiously Rare"? Scottish Women of Interest *or* The Suppression of the Female in the Construction of National Identity', *Scottish Affairs*, 18 (1997), p. 87.

[27] Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', p. 278.

[28] Ibid. p. 275.

[29] Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay, 'Superiorism', *Cencrastus*, 15 (1984), p. 8.

[30] Breitenbach, p. 88.

[31] The term was apparently coined by G. Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature and Character* (1919). See Marshall Walker, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (Harlow: Longman, 1996), p. 14.

[32] Bold, p. 16.

[33] Tom Nairn, *After Britain* (London: Granta, 2000), pp. 101, 102.

[34] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (London: Minerva, 1997), p. 78.

[35] Berthold Schoene-Harwood points out that Lowland Scots were complicitous in English imperialism, in administrating and largely benefiting from the Clearances as well as further aiding British colonialism. This complicates Scottish identity and the English-Scottish 'colonial' relationship. He observes that this Lowland complicity 'conspicuously reflects that of the white settler colonies of Canada, Australia and New Zealand, who now likewise find themselves in a double bind situation of being at once erstwhile coloniser and contemporary (post-)colonised'. '"Emerging as the Others of Ourselves": Scottish Multiculturalism and the Challenge of the Body in Postcolonial Representation', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 25.1 (1998), p. 59. These settler colonies do, of course, have strong Scottish ties through emigration from Scotland due to the Clearances and other political and economic circumstances.

[36] Ibid. p. 54.

[37] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 114.

[38] Influential and controversial in this field is Tom Nairn's *Break-Up of Britain* (1977). In response, see Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, *The Eclipse of Scottish Culture* (1989). Here the Scottish situation is referred to a colonial context as explicated in the work of Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1965). Fanon describes a process of 'inferiorisation' of the culture of the colonised in the colonial relationship entailing a deferring to the superiority of metropolitan culture.

On the same theme, Linda Cusick, sceptical of the idea, designed an experiment to test the existence of Scottish inferiorism. The experiment involved ranking Scottish and English storytellers. She was forced to conclude, 'My original suspicion that Scottish inferiorism was a myth – since it was so often reported and discussed without any evidence given for it – has now been challenged.' 'Scottish Inferiorism', *Scottish Affairs*, 9 (1994), p.150.

[39] Alexandra Howson, 'No Gods and Precious Few Women: Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland', *Scottish Affairs*, 2 (1993), p. 42.

[40] Bold, p. 7.

[41] T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700-2000* (London: Allen Lane, 1999), p. 592.

[42] Peter L. Payne, *Growth and Contraction: Scottish Industry c. 1860-1990* (Glasgow: The Economic and Social History Society of Scotland, 1992), p. 7.

[43] Beynon, p. 89.

[44] Brittan, p. 189.

[45] William McIlvanney, *Surviving the Shipwreck* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1991), p. 25.

[46] Devine, p. 609.

[47] Ibid. pp. 596, 598.

[48] Alison Smith, 'Four Success Stories', *Chapman*, 74-75 (1993), p. 177.

[49] Connell, p. 84.

[50] This is unexpected for some. For example, John MacInnes writes, 'I suggest that one of the most profound and unanticipated and unintended consequences of the spread of market relations is the rise in modern society of a formal commitment to the equality of all human beings in principle, and social and material pressures which sustain this – what could be called universalism.' (p. 3)

[51] Ibid. p. 46.

[52] Barbara Ehrenreich, 'The Decline of Patriarchy', in *Constructing Masculinity*, ed. by Maurice Berger, Brian Wallis, Simon Watson (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 288-289.

[53] Ibid. p. 289. Lorena Bobbitt cut off her husband's penis in a famous case in 1993.

[54] Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 15, 2.

[55]Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: 'Male' and 'Female' in Western Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. xix., 2.

[56] Susan Bordo, *The Flight to Objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and Culture* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1987), pp. 8, 9, 118.

[57] Lloyd, p. 3.

[58] Bordo, p. 7.

[59] See Rosi Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 53.

[60] Seidler, pp. 4, 7.

[61] Michael S. Kimmel, 'Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame and Silence in the Construction of Gender', in *Men and Masculinity: A Text Reader*, ed. by Theodore F. Cohen (London: Thomson Learning 2001), p. 31, 32.

[62] Connell, pp. 77, 164.

[63] Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, pp. 3-4.

[64] Connell, p. 79.

[65] Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 1.

[66] Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, p. 2.

[67] Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 1.

[68] Michel Foucault, 'Two Lectures', in *Power/Knowledge*, ed. by C. Gordon (Brighton: Harvester, 1980), p. 81.

[69] Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (London: Penguin, 1993), p. 16 (emphasis in original).

[70] Ian A. Bell, 'Imagine Living There: Form and Ideology in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present*, ed. by Susanne Hagemann (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1996), p. 226.

[71] Idle, p. 57.

[72] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, p 82 (emphasis in the original).

[73] Colin MacCabe, 'Realism and the Cinema: Notes on some Brechtian theses', *Screen*, 15.2 (1974), pp. 19, 9. This critique of classic realism took place in articles in *Screen* in the early 1970s, led by writers such as Colin MacCabe and Stephen Heath. The debate is summarised by Catherine Belsey in her book *Critical Practice* (1980). 'Classic realism' refers to the literary form exemplified by the nineteenth-century novel, in the work of writers like Jane Austen and George Eliot. This 'is characterised by *illusionism*, narrative which leads to *closure*, and a *hierarchy of discourses* which establishes the "truth" of the story.' *Critical Practice* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 70.

[74] Belsey, p. 72.

[75] See Tony Davis: 'That relationship [between realism and working-class writing], in one strong tradition, is simply taken for granted.' 'Unfinished Business: Realism and Working-Class Writing', in *The British Working-Class Novel in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by Jeremy Hawthorn (London: Edward

Arnold, 1984), p. 125. Rita Felski writes of feminist fiction, 'Women writers of the last twenty years [...] have frequently chosen to employ realist forms which do not foreground the literary and conventional dimensions of the text, but encourage a functional and content-based reading.' *Beyond Feminist Aesthetics* (London: Radius, 1989), p. 79.

[76] In a critical engagement with this position, Ellen-Raisa Jackson and Willy Maley argue, 'The postcolonial approach, which takes the national and political dimensions of a text seriously, is arguably more useful when it comes to thinking about contemporary Scottish fiction than a postmodern position that separates form and content, and privileges formal experimentation over political commitment.' 'Birds of a Feather?: A Postcolonial Reading of Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares*', *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 41 (2000), p. 188.

[77] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, pp. 106, 107.

[78] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 45.

[79] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, p. 103.

[80] Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, p. 29.

[81] Ibid. p. 28.

[82] Andrea Nye, *Feminist Theory and the Philosophies of Man* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1988), pp. 80-1. 'Hell is other people' comes from Sartre's play *Huis Clos* [No Exit] (1958).

[83] Ibid. p 82.

[84] 'One thing you can notice in Franz Kafka's work, most particularly in his use of third party narrative, he doesn't necessarily detail a thing that exists [...] He fills the page with absences and possible absences, possible realities [...] In talking about this technique critically you could use the terms "negative apprehension" and "the subjunctive mood".' James Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), p. 6.

[85] Lawrence Kramer suggests an alternative to gender polarity is his concept of gender synergy, a state that 'occurs when a single subject occupies both masculine and feminine positions either simultaneously or in rhythmic succession', effectively collapsing the polarized structure (*After the Lovedeath: Sexual Violence and the Making of Culture* (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), p. 12). Jackie Kay's novel *Trumpet* is a successful illustration of such a concept.

[86] Stuart Hall, 'Who Needs "Identity"?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, ed. by Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (London: Sage, 1996), p. 4.

[87] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (1991) and *Bodies that Matter* (1993).

[88] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, pp. 103-4.

Notes: Chapter 1

[1] Nicholas Wroe, 'Glasgow Kith', *Guardian*, 2 June 2001, Review section, p. 6.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Glasgow Women and Film Collective, 'Woman, Women and Scotland: "Scotch Reels" and Political Perspectives', *Cencrastus*, 11 (1983), p. 4.

[4] Andrew O'Hagan, 'The Paranoid Sublime', *London Review of Books*, 16.10, 26 May 1994, p. 8.

[5] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks*, p. 81.

[6] Ibid. p. 82.

[7] Liz Lochhead and Janice Galloway quoted by Ian Black, *The Sunday Times*, 27 March 1994, p. 14.

[8] Roderick Watson, 'Maps of Desire', in *Scotland in the Twentieth Century*, ed. by T. M. Devine and R. J. Finlay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), p. 303.

[9] Duncan McLean, 'James Kelman Interviewed', in *Nothing Altogether Trivial*, ed. by Murdo Macdonald (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 102.

[10] Willy Maley, 'Swearing Blind: Kelman and the Curse of the Working Classes', *Edinburgh Review*, 95 (1996), p. 107.

[11] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks*, p. 82.

[12] Kirsty McNeill, 'Interview with James Kelman', *Chapman*, 57 (1989), p. 5.

[13] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks*, pp. 13, 7, and McNeill, pp. 5-6 (emphasis in original).

[14] McNeill, p. 6.

[15] McLean, p. 123.

[16] McNeill, p. 4.

[17] Peter Schwenger, *Phallic Critiques: Masculinity and Twentieth-Century Literature* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 18. He also quotes the Scottish proverb here.

[18] Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters: Six Myths of Our Time* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. 26.

[19] McLean, p. 109.

[20] Maley, p. 109.

[21] Schwenger, p. 23 (emphasis in original).

[22] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks*, pp. 6, 7.

[23] James Kelman, 'A Situation', in *The Burn* (London: Vintage, 1991), p. 43.

[24] Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman', in *The Scottish Novel Since the 70s*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), p. 109.

[25] Peter Middleton, *The Inward Gaze: Masculinity and Subjectivity in Modern Culture* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 230, 3.

[26] Ibid. p. 48.

[27] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, p 101.

[28] McLean, p. 101.

[29] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, pp. 102, 103.

[30] Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks*, p. 7.

[31] McNeill, p. 9.

[32] Chris Baldick, 'existentialism', *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 77.

[33] Richard Kearney, 'Jean-Paul Sartre', in *The Concise Encyclopedia of Western Philosophy and Philosophers*, ed. by J. O. Urmson and Jonathan Rée (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1991), p. 287.

[34] Geoff Gilbert, 'Can Fiction Swear?: James Kelman and the Booker Prize', in *An Introduction to Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by Rod Mengham (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 225.

[35] Ibid. p. 226.

[36] Ibid. p. 228.

[37] Maley, p. 107.

[38] See Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', p. 275. See Introduction for a more detailed discussion of this point.

[39] Neil McMillan, 'Wilting, or the "Poor Wee Boy Syndrome": Kelman and Masculinity', *Edinburgh Review*, 108 (2001), p. 45.

[40] Knights, p. 182.

[41] Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 261.

[42] E. Ann Kaplan, 'Is the Gaze Male?', in *Women and Values*, ed. by Marilyn Pearsall (London: Wadsworth, 1999), p. 285.

[43] Alasdair Gray, *1982 Janine* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 193.

[44] Ibid. p. 340.

[45] Ron Butlin, *The Sound of my Voice* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1987), p. 7.

[46] Ibid. pp. 114, 122.

[47] These include Victor J. Seidler, Anthony Astrachan, and other contributors to the *Achilles Heel* magazine during the 1980s.

[48] See Middleton, pp. 126, 125. He quotes Jennifer Somerville's critique of the *Achilles Heel* writers' 'hair-shirt penitence'.

[49] Lynne Segal, *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities Changing Men* (London: Virago, 1997), p. 293.

[50] Knights, p. 192. Sally Robinson takes up a similar point when she writes: 'Announcements of a crisis in white masculinity, and a widely evidenced interest in wounded white men, themselves perform the cultural work of *re*centering white masculinity by *de*centering it. In other words, in order for white masculinity to negotiate its position within the field of identity politics, white men must claim a symbolic disenfranchisement, must compete with various others for cultural authority bestowed upon the authentically disempowered, the visibly wounded' (p. 12).

[51] Knights, p. 194.

[52] Segal, p. 294.

[53] Neil McMillan writes on this subject in Chapter 1 of his thesis, *Tracing Masculinities in Twentieth Century Scottish Men's Fiction*, (unpublished PhD. thesis, University of Glasgow, 2000).

[54] Carolyn Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman* (London: Virago, 1986), p. 6.

[55] Quoted from Jeremy Seabrook in Steedman, p. 100.

[56] McMillan, 'Wilting, or the 'Poor Wee Boy Syndrome', pp. 48, 49.

[57] McMillan, *Tracing Masculinities*, chapters 1 and 2.

[58] Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', p. 274.

Notes: Chapter 2

[1] Stella Coombe, Interview with Janice Galloway, *Harpies and Quines*, 1 (1992), p. 29.

[2] Cristie Leigh March, Interview with Janice Galloway, *Edinburgh Review*, 101 (1999), p. 89.

[3] March, *Rewriting Scotland*, p. 110.

[4] Josiane Paccaud Huguet, 'Breaking through Cracked Mirrors: The Short Stories of Janice Galloway' <www.galloway.1to1.org> [accessed 6 August 2002] (p. 12 of 14)

[5] Kirsti Wishart, Interview with Janice Galloway, in *Red Wheelbarrow* magazine. <www.galloway.1to1. org/Wheelbarrow.html> [accessed 7 November 2001] (p. 2 of 3)

[6] Moira Burgess, 'Distrubing words: Rose, Galloway and Kennedy', in *Calemadonnas: Women and Scotland*, ed. by H. Kidd (Dundee: Gairfish, 1994), p. 98.

[7] Ehrenreich, p. 288.

[8] Angela McRobbie, *In the Culture Society: Art, Fashion and Popular Music* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 50.

[9] Smith, pp. 192, 179, 178.

[10] Ibid. pp. 192, 191.

[11] Glenda Norquay, 'Janice Galloway's Novels: Fraudalent Mooching', in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*, ed. by Aileen Christianson and Alison Lumsden (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 133.

[12] Ibid. p. 131.

[13] Ibid. p. 133.

[14] Margery Metzstein, 'Of Myths and Men: Aspects of Gender in the Fiction of Janice Galloway', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies*, pp. 141-2.

[15] Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, p. 39.

[16] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, p. 195.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Smith, p. 177.

[19] Craig, p. 199.

[20] Gayatri Spivak uses this phrase in reference to Antoinette in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*: 'Rhys makes Antoinette see her *self* as her Other, Brontë's Bertha.' That is, she sees herself in a mirror as the subhuman, mad creature she is drawn as in *Jane Eyre*. 'Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism', in *Postcolonial Criticism*, ed. by Bart Moore-Gilbert, Gareth Stanton and Willy Maley (Harlow: Longman, 1997), p. 153.

[21] Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 15.

[22] McRobbie, p. 131.

[23] Alison Light, 'Returning to Manderley: Romance Fiction, Female Sexuality and Class', in *Feminisms*, p. 336.

[24] Tom Shone, Review, *The Sunday Times*, 24 April 1994, p. 7.

[25] Craig, p. 114.

[26] David Robertson, 'Clara's Theme', in *Scotsman*, 22 June 2002 <http://news.scotsman.com/archive> [accessed 6 August 2002] (p. 3 of 5)

[27] Ibid.

[28] Janice Galloway, 'Silent Partner', in *Guardian*, G2 section, 20 June 2002, p. 17.

[29] Sue Vice, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 140.

[30] Julie Wheelwright, 'What's the score?', an interview with Janice Galloway, in *Scotland on Sunday*, 16 June 2002 <http://news.scotsman.com/archive> [accessed 6 August 2002] (p. 2 of 2)

[31] Braidotti, 'Cyberfeminism with a Difference', p. 529.

Notes: Chapter 3

[1] For example, Tipton's drummer Dick O'Neill responded to accusations of Tipton's femininity with the comment 'I would almost fight anybody who said that [...] I never suspected a thing' (quoted in Garber, p. 65). In the novel these words are attributed to Joss Moody's drummer Big Red McCall (*T* 35).

[2] Linda Schlossberg, 'Introduction – Rites of Passage', in *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race and Religion*, ed. by María Carla Sánchez and Linda Schlossberg (New York and London: New York University Press, 2001), p. 2.

[3] Judith Halberstam, 'Telling Tales: Brandon Tina, Billy Tipton, and Transgender Biography', in *Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race and Religion*, p. 14.

[4] Ibid p 24. In this context Halberstam particularly points to Diane Middlebrook's biography of Tipton.

[5] Libby Brooks, 'Don't Tell Me Who I Am', interview with Jackie Kay, *Guardian*, Weekend section, 12 January 2002, p. 37.

[6] Jackie Kay, 'In My Country', in *Other Lovers* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1993), p. 24.

[7] Jackie Kay, interview with *Bold Type*, <http://www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0499/kay/interview .html> [accessed 19 March 2002] (p. 2 of 5)

[8] Jackie Kay, *The Adoption Papers* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Bloodaxe, 1991), p. 34.

[9] Ibid. p. 35.

[10] Jackie Kay, *Twice Over*, in *Gay Sweatshop: Four Plays and a Company*, ed. by Philip Osment (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 141.

[11] Jackie Kay, 'Trout Friday', in *Why Don't You Stop Talking* (London: Picador, 2002), p. 71.

[12] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, pp. 113, 114.

[13] Garber, p. 17, emphasis in the original.

[14] Ibid. p. 9.

[15] Ibid.

[16] These are pictures in which there is ambiguity about which region is the 'figure' and which the 'ground'. It is impossible to see the two possible images simultaneously; the perception flickers between the two. Edgar Rubin's face-vase picture is a another famous example. The artist M. C. Escher also exploited this principle of perceptual reversibility. See Bruce et al, *Visual Perception*, 3rd edn (Hove: Psychological Press, 1996), p. 104.

[17] See Peter Clanfield, '"What Is In My Blood?": Contemporary Black Scottishness and the Work of Jackie Kay', in *Literature and Racial Ambiguity*, ed. by Teresa Hubel and Neil Brooks (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp.1-25. Here Clanfield argues that Kay's work also resists the notion of racial hybridisation as an ideal and transcendent state of being.

[18] Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 225. Butler's theory takes its initial impulse from J. L. Austin's ideas of performativity in language in *How to do Things with Words*, a published series of lectures given in 1955. Here he describes words like the 'I do' of the marriage ceremony as performative in that the issuing of the utterance is the performance of the action.

[19] See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 123.

[20] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 148.

[21] See Jay Prosser, *Second Skin: The Body Narratives of Transsexuality* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pp. 21-60. This section gives a critique of Butler's conflation of performativity and the transgendered subject.

[22] Ibid. p. 34.

[23] Kay, *Bold Type* (p.1 of 5)

[24] Toni Morrison in an interview with Paul Gilroy, quoted in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 78.

[25] Kay, *Bold Type* (p. 1 of 5)

[26] Peter J. Martin, 'Spontaneity and Organisation', in *The Cambridge Companion to Jazz*, ed. by David Horn and Mervyn Cooke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 140-1.

[27] Ibid. p. 137.

[28] Ralph Ellison from *Shadow and Act* (1964) quoted in Gilroy, p. 79.

[29] Joan Riviere, 'Womanliness as a Masquerade', in *Formations of Fantasy*, ed. by Victor Burgin, James Donald and Cora Kaplan (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 38.

[30] Quoted by Stephen Heath, 'Joan Riviere and the Masquerade', in *Formations of Fantasy*, p. 51.

[31] Irene Rose, 'Heralding New Possibilities: Female Masculinity in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*', in *Posting the Male*, pp. 150-151.

[32] Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, p. 231.

[33] For a discussion of these issues see Judith Shapiro 'Transsexualism: Reflection on the Resistance of Gender and the Mutability of Sex', in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, ed. by Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 248-279.

[34] Garber, p. 69.

[35] Ibid. pp. 70, 11, 17.

[36] Iain Banks, *The Wasp Factory* (London: Abacus, 2000), p. 183.

[37] Ibid. p. 182.

[38] See Berthold Schoene-Harwood, 'Dams Burst: Devolving Gender in Iain Banks's *The Wasp Factory*' in his book *Writing Men* for a deeper analysis of the implications of gender in this novel.

[39] 'Women who cross-dressed were not psychotic [...] they merely wanted to be men, which in their society was a highly reasonable, indeed healthy, desire.' (Garber, p. 98)

[40] Tracy Hargreaves, 'The Power of the Ordinary Subversive in Jackie Kay's *Trumpet*', *Feminist Review*, 74 (2003), p. 7.

[41] This situation is reminiscent of Butler's reading of Venus Xtravaganza, a preoperative transsexual in the film *Paris is Burning*, in her essay 'Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion' in *Bodies That Matter*. Venus is murdered by a client presumably, according to Butler, after he found out she was not the woman he believed she was. But it is the presence of her penis underlying her

passing as a woman that gives her the status of a potential resignifier for Butler. As Jay Prosser points out: 'That Butler figures Venus as subversive for the same reason that Butler claims she is killed, and considers indicative of hegemonic constraint the desires that, if realized might have kept Venus at least from this instance of violence [that is, the desire to be fully transformed into a woman through surgery], is not only strikingly ironic, it verges on critical perversity. Butler's essay locates transgressive value in that which makes the subject's real life most unsafe.' (Prosser, p. 49).

[42] Homi Bhabha, 'Of Mimicry and Men', in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 86. Here he writes, 'Colonial meaning is the desire for a reformed, recognisable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an *ambivalence*; in order to be effective mimicry must continually produce its slipping, its excess, its difference.' (Emphasis in original)

[43] Hargreaves, p. 13.

[44] Prosser, p. 47.

[45] Ibid. pp. 11-12.

[46] Clandfield, p. 19.

Notes: Chapter 4

[1] Stephanie Merritt, 'The Book Interview: A L Kennedy', *Observer*, 23 May 1999, p. 13. See also Jenny Turner, 'Portrait of A. L. Kennedy: A Person of Substance', *Guardian*, 28 January 1994, Weekend section, p. 14.

[2] Cristie Leigh March, Interview with A. L. Kennedy, *Edinburgh Review*, 101 (1999), p.107.

[3] See March, Interview with Janice Galloway, p. 92.

[4] Merritt, p. 13.

[5] Turner, p. 14.

[6] A. L. Kennedy, 'Not Changing the World', in *Peripheral Visions*, ed. by Ian Bell (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 100, 102, 101.

[7] March, *Edinburgh Review*, p.107-8.

[8] See Tony Davies, *Humanism* (London: Routledge, 1997) where he begins to revise this view of humanism. For him humanism is difficult if not impossible to define, and has always been more concerned with men rather than Man.

[9] Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity*, p. 48.

[10] Lloyd, *The Man of Reason*, pp. 2, 101-2.

[11] See Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1999). She describes there 'postmodernism's commitment to doubleness, or duplicity [...] to install and reinforce as much as undermine and subvert the conventions and presuppositions it appears to challenge' (pp. 1-2).

[12] Knights, p. 182.

[13] Sarah M. Dunnigan, 'A. L. Kennedy's Longer Fiction: Articulate Grace', in *Contemporary Scottish Women Writers*, p. 150.

[14] Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 16. She mentions François Châtelet and Jean-François Lyotard as philosophers using such imagery.

[15] Gifford, 'Contemporary Fiction II', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, pp. 594, 596.

[16] Patricia Waugh, *Feminine Fictions: Revisiting the Postmodern* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 217.

[17] Gifford, p. 618.

[18] Dunnigan, p. 146.

[19] As Gerard Carruthers writes, Spark 'informs the reader of the eventual thwarting of Brodie well before the unravelling of the plot, so the moral dynamic of the action rather than simply the action itself is placed in the foreground' ('The Remarkable Fictions of Muriel Spark', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, p. 519).

[20] Dunnigan, p. 145.

[21] Christopher Whyte, 'Fishy Masculinities', in *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed. by Christopher Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 59.

[22] Luce Irigaray, *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 166. See especially the final section 'the crucified one', where she writes, 'This is the Christ handed down to us by tradition. The tradition that reveres the wound in the side of the crucified one. In the body of the son of Man there reappears, in the form of a wound, the place that, in women, is naturally open. [...] The threshold that in her crosses the boundaries of the body and gives access to the infinite becomes in him a violent, yet already bloodless, penetration, marking the passage into Eternity' (p. 166).

[23] For example, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar describe the end of *Jane Eyre* as 'The marriage of true minds at Ferndene'. 'A Dialogue of Self and Soul: *Jane Eyre*', in *The Madwoman in the Attic* (London and Yale: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 371.

[24] Dunnigan, p. 145.

[25] Gifford, pp. 620, 621.

[26] Margaret Elphinstone, 'Contemporary Feminist Fantasy in the Scottish Literary Tradition', in *Tea and Leg-irons: New Feminist Readings from Scotland*, ed. by Caroline Gonda (London: Open Letters, 1992), p. 47.

[27] Susan Faludi, *Stiffed: The Betrayal of Modern Man* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1999), p. 9.

[28] A. L. Kennedy, *Critical Quarterly*, 37.4 (1995), p. 53.

[29] Haydn Mason, *Cyrano de Bergerac: L'Autre Monde* (London: Grant and Cutler Ltd, 1984), p. 23.

[30] Ibid. pp. 27, 45.

[31] Alex Clark, *Guardian*, Books section, 12 June 1999, p. 8. Adam Mars-Jones, *Observer*, Books section, 23 May 1999, p. 13.

[32] Dunnigan, p. 150.

[33] Hélène Cixous, 'The Laugh of the Medusa', in *New French Feminisms*, ed. by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivon (Brighton: Harvester, 1981), pp. 255-6.

[34] See *Out of Bounds: Male Writing and Gender(ed) Criticism*, ed. by Laura Claridge and Elizabeth Langland (University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), and *Men Writing the Feminine: Literature, Theory, and the Question of Gender* ed. by Thais Morgan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994). Both these collections of essays dwell on the question of how to write the feminine, particularly from the point of view of male authors.

Notes: Chapter 5

[1] Neil Macmillan describes 'cross-writing' as a 'type of literary transvestism' and attributes the term to Christopher Whyte (*Tracing Masculinities*, p. 200).

[2] Steve Redhead, *Repetitive Beat Generation* (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc, 2000), p. xvi.

[3] Redhead, 'Celtic Trails: Alan Warner', an interview with Alan Warner in Redhead, *Repetitive Beat Generation*, p.133.

[4] Louise East, 'Making Myths of the Mundane', an interview with Alan Warner, *The Irish Times*, 10 August 2002, Magazine section, p. 15.

[5] Melissa Denes, 'Girls' Secrets, Men's Myths', an interview with Alan Warner, *Guardian*, 25 May 2002, Weekend section, p. 40.

[6] Carol Anderson, '*Morvern Callar*', *Scottish Literary Journal*, Supplement 44, (1996), p. 67. See also Strachan, 'Queerspotting'.

[7] Denes, p. 40.

[8] For example, McRobbie writes, 'As gender dissolves in the dancefloor the men behind the turntables are left unchallenged in their control over the whole field of music production.' *In The Culture Society*, p. 146.

[9] Maria Pini, *Club Cultures and Female Subjectivity: the Move from Home to House* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 4.

[10] Simon Reynolds, *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture* (London: Picador, 1998), pp. 411, 12, 13.

[11] Antonio Melechi, 'The Ecstacy of Disappearence' and Hillegonda Rietveld, 'Living the Dream', in *Rave Off: Politics and Deviance in Contemporary Youth Culture*, ed. by Steve Redhead (Hampshire: Avebury, 1993), pp. 32, 58.

[12] Tim Jordan, 'Collective Bodies: Raving and the Politics of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari', *Body and Society*, 1.1 (1995), p. 130.

[13] Pini, p. 46.

[14] Ibid. p. 49.

[15] See, for example, J. Derrida, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style* (1979).

[16] See, for example, G. Deleuze and C. Parnet, *Dialogues* (1977).

[17] Braidotti, *Patterns of Dissonance*, p. 105.

[18] Alice A. Jardine, *Gynesis: Configurations of Woman and Modernity* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 217.

[19] Redhead, *Repetitive Beat Generation*, p. 131.

[20] Alan Warner, interview, *Scotsman*, 20 April 2002, <http://news.scotsman.com> [accessed 6 August 2002] (p. 5 of 6)

[21] In the interview with Denes, Warner relates this anecdote: 'Samantha [Morton who played Morvern in the film of the novel directed by Lynne Ramsay (2002)] had to give a reading of the book at a festival, and I said to her, "God Sam, how did you do it?" and she said, "As if I were reading a statement to the Old Bill." And I think that's exactly right. It's a sort of confession.' Denes, p. 40.

[22] Strachan, interview with Alan Warner, *Spike Magazine*, <www.spikemagazine.com/0300alanwarner.htm> [accessed 6 August 2002] (p. 2 of 10)

[23] See Lloyd, *The Man of Reason* for a discussion of Sartre and de Beauvoir, pp. 93-102.

[24] Norquay, 'Janice Galloway's Novels: Fraudalent Mooching', p. 134. See also Pam Morris, *Literature and Feminism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

[25] Denes, p. 40.

[26] Anderson, p. 66.

[27] For an overview of important texts and conceptualizations in this literature see McRobbie, 'Come Alive London!:A Dialogue With Dance Music', in *In The Culture Society*, pp. 144-156.

[28] Pini, pp. 169, 171.

[29] Redhead, *Repetitive Beat Generation*, p. 132.

[30] This is even more apparent in the film of the novel which ends with the Mamas and Papas song, 'Dedicated to the One I Love', a lament from a lonely lover: 'While I'm far away from you my baby/whisper a little prayer for me my baby/and tell all the stars above/this is dedicated to the one I love'.

[31] Whyte, 'Masculinities in Scottish Fiction', p. 283.

[32] Pini, pp. 191, 170.

[33] McRobbie, *In The Culture Society*, p. 50.

[34] Ibid. p 51.

[35] Ibid. p. 54.

[36] Ibid. p. 50.

[37] Strachan, 'Queerspotting', (p. 5 of 13)

[38] See the work of Angela McRobbie for analyses of the subversive effects of magazines aimed at young women. She made this point herself at a lecture at Goldsmith's College, University of London, March 1999.

[39] Pini points out that autoeroticism is another alternative feminine fiction made available for exploration in rave culture (p. 191).

[40] Strachan observes that, 'Indeed, in one sense Fionnula and Kay embody exceptionally clichéd male fantasy – not only lesbian, but Catholic, and schoolgirls as well!'. 'Queerspotting', (p. 10 of 13)

[41] Gillian Spragg, 'Hell and the Mirror – A reading of *Desert of the Heart*', in *New Lesbian Criticism*, ed. by Sally Munt (Oxford and New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. 123.

[42] Strachan, 'Queerspotting', (p. 9 of 13)

[43] Ibid. (p. 11 of 13)

[44] Berthold Schoene, 'Angry Young Masculinity and the Rhetoric of Homophobia and Misogyny in the Scottish Novels of Alan Sharp', in *Gendering the Nation*, p. 91.

Notes: Conclusion

[1] Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', p. 284.

[2] Lea and Schoene, p. 16.

[3] 'Wilting' is a term used by Neil MacMillan in his essay 'Wilting, or the "Poor Wee Boy Syndrome"'.

[4] Berthold Schoene, 'The Union and Jack: British Masculinities, Pomophobia, and the Post-nation', in *Across the Margins: Cultural Identity and Change in the Atlantic Archipelago*, ed. by Glenda Norquay and Gerry Smyth (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 96.

[5] Knights, p. 192.

[6] James Kelman, 'Elitism and English Literature, Speaking as a Writer', in *And the Judges Said* (London: Secker and Warburg, 2002), p. 71.

[7] MacInnes, p. 14.

[8] Quoted by Heath, p. 51.

[9] Riviere, p. 38.

[10] See Beynon, p. 162 and pp. 27-50.

[11] Ellen-Raisa Jackson and Willy Maley, 'Birds of a Feather?: A Postcolonial Reading of Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares*', *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses*, 41 (2000), p. 191.

[12] Faludi, p. 9.

[13] Fiona Mackay, 'The Case of Zero Tolerance: Women's Politics in Action?', in *Women and Contemporary Scottish Politics*, ed. by Esther Breitenbach and Fiona Mackay (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2001), p. 106.

[14] Knights, p. 182.

[15] Jackson and Maley, p. 195.

[16] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, p. 156.

[17] Ibid. p. 155.

[18] Jackson and Maley, p. 194.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Lea and Schoene, p. 16.