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Notes on Contributors
This edition of the *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* emerged from a two-day conference that was run in May 2009 on the subject of ‘Migrating Minds: Imagined Journeys – Imagined Homecomings’. The aim of the event was to create a forum that would explore the impact that journeys and homecomings have had on Irish and Scottish imaginations through reference to literature (both fiction and non-fiction), personal documents and art. These conceptual frameworks were extended to the intellectual migration of *ideas* between Ireland, Scotland, Europe and the New World. It was our further intention to consider the phenomenon of diasporic writing from other non Irish-Scottish perspectives in order to gain some broader insights into our discipline. One of the many highlights of the conference was a public reading and interview with James Kelman, the world-renowned Glasgow writer. During the interview, Kelman discussed his early experience of emigration to the United States and the effect that this subsequently had on his life and work. On the final day of the conference, conversation was informed by a concluding address from Liam Harte which addressed the Irish experience. However, this journal prioritises Scottish thinking about the diaspora while placing it in a broad international context.

The complementary themes of the journal are explored via several different subject areas. The notion of intellectual migration is considered in Kenneth White’s essay which focuses on the cultural and intellectual nomadism of ‘Scotic’ philosophers like John Scot Erigena and Duns Scotus. White sees himself as working within a similar tradition to these ‘Scoti vagantes’ but also distances himself from the parochial ‘regionalism’ which he sees as enclosing modern-day Scotland. Cairns Craig’s essay on White reassesses this rejection of contemporary Scottish culture while also illustrating how much White’s intellectual and poetic trajectory resembles that of other travelling Scots like Patrick Geddes and Robert Louis Stevenson. The nomadic tendency can therefore be seen, according to Craig, as ‘part of the very fabric of Scottish intellectual life’.
From the more recent context of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Florian Gassner’s paper views intellectual migration from yet another angle, considering the ways in which Scottish Enlightenment thinkers reflected on Russia from a more historically informed perspective than their European counterparts. His paper ends by charting an early instance of Russian-Scottish cross fertilisation in considering a novel that attempted to emulate the style and subject matter of Walter Scott’s Waverley novels (as has been documented, Scott’s treatment of history in his fiction owed much to the thought of Scottish intellectuals like Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith). The ‘writer of Waverley’ also forms the subject matter of Sally Newsome's paper, which considers Scott’s attempts to imagine the Orient. Newsome’s discussion provides a timely revision of those that have criticised Scott’s proto-Imperialist tendencies (such as Edward Said) and convincingly demonstrates the ways in which his narratives served to simultaneously challenge and consolidate ‘British’ perceptions of India.

Subsequent to these initial explorations of the cerebral and the fictive, we move on to consider our theme via two different instances of cultural amalgamation in Canada and the USA. Michael Newton’s paper investigates first encounter narratives between the indigenous population of Nova Scotia and Highland settlers as they were transcribed in Gaelic oral texts. His discussion substantively illustrates the forms of cultural exchange, consolidation and contestation that characterised these meetings. Elizabeth Carnegie looks at the symbiosis of divergent cultural narratives from a more contemporary context; her paper, informed by data compiled from a detailed on-line survey, focuses on Scottish-American identity and the generation of an idealised non-urban image of Scotland by US citizens with a Scottish inheritance. In this respect, the nation becomes a composite of recognisable tropes which gain emotive weight when personalised by those who are (or think of themselves as) former emigrants.

Moving away from the Scottish vantage point, the next two papers by Sumit Chakrabarti and Jendele Hungbo grapple with the topic of enforced migration. Chakrabarti assesses the effect of imposed displacement on one’s sense of ‘home’ through reference to Mourid Barghouti’s elegiac account of his return to Ramallah after partition. The responsibilities of the public intellectual in addressing the experience of ‘exile’ are explored in this discussion via the writings of Theodor Adorno, Julien Benda, Antonio Gramsci and Edward Said. Hungbo’s essay looks at the internecine frictions between Indian settlers and the indigenous populations of Uganda prior to the mass eviction of Asians
under the regime of Idi Amin as dramatised in Jameela Siddiqi’s *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*. In discussion of the novel, Hungbo charts out the potential for a more inclusive notion of identity when considering migrants in relation to their host communities. The subject matter of both papers resonate with aspects of the Scottish experience, such as the historical incidence of forced migration and the difficulties encountered by emigrants who wish to maintain allegiances with the homeland while also affiliating themselves with another culture.

The tensions of immigration and assimilation are further explored in Paul Shanks’ essay on James Kelman’s fifth novel (set in a fictionalised version of the States). The Glaswegian protagonist can only envisage a return to Scotland as a sign of failure rather than a cause for celebration, yet his attempts to gain secure citizenship in his adopted home proves elusive. The novel is notable in that there is little sense of a shared diasporic community and the central character tends to reject any notion of a collective Scottish identity. We conclude with Kelman himself in a transcription of the public interview that took place in May; his comments on the difficulties of migration and resettlement that he experienced with his family and his celebration of a world-ranging radical literary tradition forms a useful counterpoint to White’s essay and an apt bookend for the volume as a whole.

This edition of the journal forms part of the AHRC funded research project on *Irish and Scottish Diasporas from the 1600s to the Present*. It can therefore be grouped alongside preceding volumes which focused on *Irish and Scottish Encounters with France* and *Irish and Scots on the Frontier*. White’s paper reiterates the attraction that France has had historically, intellectually and aesthetically as a domicile for Irish and Scots migrants. However, his work moves from the specificity of ‘region’ towards a territorially open mode of thinking, sometimes defined as ‘world-culture’. In further contrast to the *Encounters with France* edition, the papers by Gassner, Newsome and Newton with their respective reflections on Russia, India and Nova Scotia, allow for a more global context in considering the notion of intellectual and cultural migration. The idea of the frontier and the interaction with new environments is reflected, once again, in Newton’s paper. As a whole though, *Migrating Minds* is chiefly concerned with the binary experience of travelling outwards and returning and the ways that such experiences are reflected upon imaginatively. The sequence which began with *Frontiers* and progresses to the ‘imagined journey’ and the ‘imagined homecoming’ will conclude with a third volume entitled *After the Homecoming* which assesses the influence that settlement abroad and
resettlement within the home countries has on Irish and Scottish communities. Our hope is that these journals will provide a forum for future discussion and extend the possibilities of Irish and Scottish Studies as a steadily expanding field of inquiry.

Paul Shanks

University of Aberdeen
I want to begin by thanking the University of Aberdeen, and in particular the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies, Professor Cairns Craig at its head, for the invitation to take part in this colloquium. If, owing to other engagements, I cannot, unfortunately, be here in person, I am very happy to be present, not exactly as a disembodied voice, since somebody else will embody it, but as a representative of what I’ve called ‘the outer reaches’.

In a first part, I’ll lay out the genealogy of what I take to be the outer reaches of Scotic thought (I use that word ‘Scotic’ to cover both Irish and Scottish). In a second, I’ll present the work I’ve done in my own ‘outer reaches’ in France, parallel to and in connection with a great deal of late-modern, postmodern French theory-practice, and, in a third, I’ll briefly refer to the circumstances and perspectives of my recent re-connection with Scotland.

1. Scotland’s Outer Reaches

One of the first manifestations of the outreaching of Scotic energy and intelligence came from the early Christian monasteries here at the north-west limit of Europe. They were Christian, but in a highly original, unorthodox way. Clement of Rodel, for example, thought that celibacy was maybe not such a good idea, leading to all kinds of phantasmal fermentation, and others questioned the rite of baptism. The very organisation of the monasteries had its own characteristic, with isolation in various far-flung, deserted places (woods, islands), being encouraged. It’s not a square wall organisation, it’s archipelagical. The originality of the context arose from several sources: the presence within the monasteries of elements of Celto-pagan culture borne by the sons of filid (the Christ is often referred to as ‘my druid’); an influence from the Middle East, notably Syria (in the Bangor antiphonary, the monk’s rule is described as ‘black wine brought out of Egypt’), evident both in physical practices and artistic designs; and, above all, the inspiration of Pelagianism. Over against the orthodox Pauline and Augustinian doctrine of Original Sin,
Pelagius, who left the isle of Britain in the 4th century, made first for Rome, then North Africa and the Middle East, dying in Egypt about 430, declared that nature, including human nature, wasn’t contaminated, it was the necessary basis, you just had to work at it, which meant culture.

A lot of work went on in these Celtic monasteries. At the base, tough physical discipline: standing arms outstretched for hours in the shape of the cross, or up to the chin in freezing water chanting psalms. But the main accent was on study, *studium*, with the idea of becoming *nobilissime instructus* (nobly learned). If a designation frequently used in the context was *anchorita* (hermit), others were *magister* and *philosophus*. They studied languages: Gaelic, Latin, Greek, Hebrew; they studied religion, philosophy, poetry; and they wrote books galore, illustrating them beautifully. And, then, in the 6th century, they started to move. They’d moved a lot before (another frequent designation in the monasteries was *peregrinus*), but it was around Iona, Tiree, Jura and Colonsay. Now they began to move farther. Brandan goes up to Iceland, then over to Brittany, and from there maybe to the Azores. Columbanus arrives in 575 on the Breton coast (not far in fact from where I now live), crosses Armorica and the whole of Gaul, founding monasteries, libraries, schools, *scriptoria* all along the way: Luxeuil in France, Bobbio in Italy, and one of his disciples founds St Gall in Switzerland. Eric of Auxerre evokes ‘all those Scotic philosophers landing on our shores – the more intelligent and learned they are, the more they want to travel’. Centuries later, Ernest Renan was to describe them as ‘teachers of language and literature to all the West’. Orthodoxy of course tried to put them down, and succeeded at the Synod of Whitby in the 7th century, but their influence runs like a white thread, like a course of white water, throughout European culture.

I’ve dwelt at some length on this initial stage in the development I want to trace because I consider it as the head-source of much that was to follow. For the stages to come, I’ll be leaping over the centuries and jumping from place to place over space, but a fundamental logic will always be visible.

I come now to John Scot Erigena. As his name indicates, ‘Born in Ireland’. I’ve seen Erigena described as ‘the loneliest mind in Europe’, and he is a man much to my liking. He considered Augustine’s *Confessions*, already established as one of the great classics of Christianity, as a poor book and said so. He had no respect for set hierarchies, preferring movements and moments. While others talked about sin and repentance, he said: ‘The way to paradise is through philosophy’. Philosophy to him meant, in the first place, the neo-Platonists Dionysius, Gregory, Maximus, and he studied them thoroughly. Which is why, looking for a first-rate translation from the Greek, Charles the Bald, king of France, called
him over the water. Not everybody welcomed him. The Vatican, alarmed at his singularity and outspokenness, called him *vir barbarus* and finally put him on the index as ‘that awful Scot’. But he got on well with Charles. There’s a story, which may be apocryphal but which deserves to be true, about a conversation they had one evening at a dinner table where they were facing each other. At once to tease Erigena and get the dialectical ball rolling, Charles the Bald says: ‘*Quod distat inter sottum et Scottum?*’ (What is there between a sot and a Scot?) Back comes the answer like a shot: *Mensa tantum* (just a table). As is evidenced even by this little dialogue, Erigena had an abrupt way of talking and was quick at dialectics. Asked at one point what he was interested in, he answered: *nothing* – not giving himself the trouble to explain to his interlocutor the neo-platonic difference between *nihil per privationem* (the nothing that remains when everything’s gone away) and the *nihil per excellentiam* (the ‘nothing’ that has no name and that you can get to only when you’ve gone through everything). Erigena was happy there in northern France, in the scriptorium at Laon, translating Denys the Areopagite, and working away at his own *opus*, the *Periphyseon*, the ‘book about nature’, ‘nature’ being defined by him in a brilliant lapidary phrase as ‘That which is and that which isn’t’. The *Periphyseon* is a poetico-philosophical cosmology (‘whole in its whole, whole in every part’), that brings theology down to the ground, almost to a phenomenology. ‘A complete sense of place’, says Erigena, ‘demands multiple understanding’, this ‘multiple understanding’ implying sensorial perception, rational knowledge and intellectual contemplation. Where others might talk of theophanies and apotheosis, as he might also, in the bygoing, just to provide a handrail for the faithful, Erigena will tend to talk only of ‘lights’ (*lumina*), the occasion for such ‘illuminations’ being, for example, a lump of quartz or a clamour of gulls.

From Erigena, born in Ireland in the 9th century, to Duns Scot, born near Edinburgh in the thirteenth, it’s not even a hop, step and jump, as I sometimes have to do in my attempts at intellectual synthesis, it’s an immediately connecting hyphen. Duns has that *quickness* which I take to be a characteristic of the Scopto-Celtic mind at its best, and his is a moving spirit. After early schooling in Scotland, he studies at a Franciscan college in England, from where he moves to France (Paris) and Germany (Cologne). Duns Scot’s prime contribution to poetics and thought is *haecceitas*, the ‘thusness’ of things. It will be remembered that the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins described him in an acute, moving phrase as ‘of realty the rarest-veined unraveller’. Duns Scot moves freely in an open landscape-mindscape, seeing the things of the earth, in all their morphological singularity, as extraordinary *there*. He doesn’t ask of a thing *what* it is, enroll-
ing it into some ready-made category, he looks at its *thusness*, and from there moves out with it into the nothingness-totality (what Erigena called the area of ‘that which is, and that which isn’t’). With Duns Scot, we have one of those Ultima Thules of the intelligence that break in now and then on the world-map, dissolving the opacity and lighting up the gloom. His writing has all the rocky outlines, all the illuminated stillness of the Corrie of the Snows.

Up to now I have evoked what I take to be illustrious Scotic names (though their lustre has often been lost over the centuries, existing only, at best, in obscure, pedantic or theological erudition), and I intend to mention more. But before going on, I’d like to recall to notice a whole cohort of anonymous Scotic figures who went under the general appellation of *Scoti vagantes*, and who were prevalent throughout Europe during the Middle Ages. The *Scotus vagans* was part of a general movement of *vagantes*, wandering scholars (*fugitivi clerici et peregrini, monachi vagi*) who had abandoned stable positions and moved about from place to place, country to country, but he had a conspicuous role among them. A medieval French poem describes him so: ‘*Si con Escos qui porte sa savate/De palestiais sa chape ramendée*’ (the Scot with the patched up cloak, carrying his shoes around his neck). He could be found in the universities, looking for knowledge, but also in the taverns, looking for fun, and frequently on the roads, just enjoying the sun, the wind and the rain. Protest ing against heavy ecclesiastical authority and the church’s otherworldliness, the *vagantes* sang the song of the earth in a jazzy Latin that was swinging into French, Provençal, Italian. They represent the break-up and the breaking out of the Middle Ages – into a liberating renaissance.

A prominent figure in Renaissance Paris was George Buchanan. Born at Killearn in 1506, after years as a bright and lively pupil at Glasgow Grammar School, Buchanan was sent to continue his studies in Paris. At the end of that early Paris sojourn, he returned to Scotland and enrolled at St Andrews. But St Andrews seemed heavy and dull after Paris. The local light was a man called Mair. In a quick Latin epigram, Buchanan said that Mair was major in name only, and that there wasn’t one single vigorous page in all he’d written. With that off his chest, Buchanan went back to join the New Knowledge men on the Continent. He taught for a while in Paris, acquiring a reputation both as a brilliant scholar and as the best Latinist poet of his time. Then he went down to Bordeaux, and from there to Portugal, all the time working at a long cosmological poem, *De Sphaera*. In the latter twenty years of his life, he was back in Scotland, as tutor first to Mary Stuart, then to her son, the future James VI. While he was at it, he set about reforming the University of St Andrews,
undertook a radical reading of Scottish history, *Rerum Scoticarum Historia*, that rubbed all the establishment minds the wrong way and tried to reform the whole Scottish State with a revolutionary text *De Jure Regni apud Scotos*. Mary Stuart came to think of him as ‘a damned atheist’, and the Scottish parliament condemned him as ‘a very pernicious author’.

David Hume, born at Edinburgh in 1711, another Scotsman among the most brilliant minds of Europe, was also considered by many in Scotland as a most pernicious author. When he brought out his *Treatise of Human Nature*, written in France, he had all the upholders of Common Sense philosophy after his blood, rejecting his work as atheistical and immoral. Hume got by as best he could. He tried for the Chair of Ethics at Edinburgh University, and got blackballed; tried for the Chair of Logic at Glasgow University and got blackballed again. He finally got a job as librarian at the Library of Advocates in Edinburgh, which he managed to keep, though regularly censured and chastised for bringing in books from the Continent that were considered subversive of right living and correct thinking. Fortunately, he continued, quietly, writing book after book that kept the flame of Scottish intelligence alive and that are still there for our enlightenment and delight.

I jump now to the late 19th century to Robert Louis Stevenson, where we see the same logic at work: a mind on the move in live ways, expanding continentally. It’s in France that Stevenson really comes into his own, and it’s there he writes his first really consequential book the *Travels in the Cévennes*. The Cévennes, mountainous country and Protestant country, were for Stevenson a projection of Scotland, and a lot of the book is a kind of auto-analysis, leading to a liberation. But it’s also a poetics, with Stevenson entering there into the full scope of his writing.

There, then, via travelling monks and *Scoti vagantes*, via John Erigena, Duns Scot, George Buchanan, David Hume and Robert Louis Stevenson, is what I take to be the high line of Scottish endeavour in the intellectual and literary fields.

It’s the line I’ve tried to prolong in my own way.

2. On the French Front

If the minds just evoked were to work all over the continent of Europe, if their influence was to spread in all directions, it was France that was always the main focus of energy, the principal locus of attention.
I certainly knew at the end of my studies in Glasgow (modern languages, ancient languages and philosophy) that it was to France I had to go.

The first sojourn lasted four years, and I came back from it to Scotland with a sense of ‘unfinished business’ and the intention, both inside and outside the University, to open up new cultural space. After four years of this activity, I came more or less to the conclusion that MacDiarmid expressed in a poem (‘To R. M. B.’, from *Stony Limits*): ‘Nae man, nae spiritual force can live in Scotland lang. For God’s sake leave it tae mak’ a warld o’ your ain!’

I’ll just say in passing (I’ll come back on these matters later) that ‘spiritual’ is no part of my vocabulary, and that the world I had in mind (even when, for various reasons, I called it ‘white world’) was very far from being simply ‘my own’. In very broad terms, it was the Hegelian *Weltgeist* I had in mind, but for it to become dynamic, that is, existent outside the sphere of speculative idealism, it needs subjective (maybe rather superjective) power.

When I lived and worked in Glasgow, I was, naturally, aware of the real gaelic etymology of the name, but I tended to think of it in terms of the French word *glas*, meaning knell (something was definitely coming to an end – maybe the classical order of Western culture) and of a syllable ‘go’ that called for a new movement.

First coincidence and parallel in my relationship to what the Americans call ‘French theory’, I’d been living and working for a few years in France when a book appeared in Paris by Jacques Derrida entitled *Glas*, which was a dismantling of Hegel’s speculative idealism, and one of the markers of a fundamental displacement.

Rather than hole-up in what I would consider half-way houses, be they named grammatology, deconstruction, dissemination or whatever, it’s of that general displacement I want to speak in the context of our symposium, with reference in the first instance to Derrida, Foucault and Deleuze, but, back of them, to Hegel, Nietzsche, Husserl and Heidegger.

It’s possible to say that, post ‘45, French thought, while always sharper and more clarified than anything going on in the Anglo-Saxon context (with the sole exception maybe of Whitehead, ex-Brit in America, and Wittgenstein, always and anywhere an outsider), was still largely humanistic.

If, in his narrative of 1938, *La Nausée*, Sartre can have his proto-existentialist non-hero, Roquentin, declare: ‘I am no humanist’, he went manifestly back on this eight years later in his essay, *Existentialism is a Humanism*. What prompted this about-turn were the attacks made on existentialism by Catholics, which Sartre treats with irony, and, much more seriously taken, Communists such as Georg
Lukacs, who saw in it either a nihilism or a quietism. Sartre was out to prove that, whatever its background, existentialism was a doctrine of action not totally outside human solidarity. If Sartre’s move here was primarily tactical, there was in fact objective truth in his new statement. From the point of view of more radical thought, Sartrean existentialism was indeed not only still humanist, it was humanistic. Both in the essay *L’Être et le Néant* (‘Being and Nothingness’) of 1943, and in the *Humanism* essay of 1946, the radical heideggerian term of *Dasein* was still poorly translated as *la réalité humaine* (‘human reality’). It was only after the translation into French of Heidegger’s *Brief über den Humanismus* (‘Letter on Humanism’), written in 1946, first published in the *Cahiers du Sud* in 1953, that more light was shed on the complex background of that ‘being there’ (the literal translation of *Dasein*). For Heidegger, to exist (to ‘be there’) is to stand outside all the presuppositions and post-productions of metaphysics in order to see into, to experience the truth of, ‘being’ (a too-solid word later to be eroded and erased). Only a few thinkers and poets have in Heidegger’s estimation ever done so: say, Nietzsche on the plateau of the Engadine (‘six thousand feet above men and time’), Hölderlin after the existential break in Bordeaux (‘Hölderlin doesn’t belong to humanism for the simple reason that he exists in an original area that humanism cannot even conceive of’).

In the eyes of Husserl and Heidegger, classical humanist philosophy left something aside, something indicated by the *being* of the term ‘human being’, but which the *human* (‘all-too-human’, as Nietzsche says) of that term gradually covered over, thus ushering in secondary social, psychological, cultural and linguistic states, with religious notions such as ‘soul’ and ‘spirit’ only making confusion worse confused. Husserlian phenomenology, which starts with an elementary reduction before moving to a transcendentental geometry, and Heideggerian hermeneutics, which operate primarily via etymological investigation before bringing into action a ‘beginning thinking’ (*anfängliches Denken*), are attempts to uncover that original ground. Both have a direct incidence on language and writing, Husserl insisting that what is in question has nothing to do with the expression of some inner content (all such inner contents being part and parcel of a secondary world), everything to do with the indication of a space, and Heidegger calling for ‘a more original articulation of elements.’

Derrida’s grammatology, deconstruction and dissemination constitute an attempt to push Husserl’s and Heidegger’s investigations still further. If Derrida is attracted, supremely, to Husserl’s geometrics (his first published work, 1962, was the translation, with a substantial introduction, of Husserl’s
Ursprung der Geometrie, 1939), he wants to transfer them from the sphere of objective ideation into the field of subjective, superjective writing (a transfer that Husserl himself had indicated in his studies on formal and transcendental logic). As for his relationship to Heidegger, not only is Derrida less concerned with hermeneutical interpretation, but he feels that, with Heidegger, if onto-theology is refused entry at the front door, it could well return, in disguise, at the back, and certainly does so with many Heideggerians. His own strategy is relentlessly forward, all his writing being a foreword to a book whose possible composition is perpetually deferred.

In 1976, Derrida was invited to the University of Virginia to do a textual analysis of the Declaration of Independence. He accepted the call, but with the intention of subverting and deviating the programme. While paying lip-service in passing to the resolution to ‘dissolve the political bonds which …’ (unless more radical work is done, other bonds will take their place), he used the opportunity to shake up theoretical convictions based on unconscious assumptions about identity, moving quickly from Jefferson to Nietzsche. This is the kind of double-dealing Derrida does all the time, juxtaposing, for example Hegel with Genet, and Plato with Mallarmé, not according to any dialectical method, but in order to work over a whole field involving philosophy, poetics, politics and science, outside all the classical contradictions (spirit and matter, sensitivity and intelligence, nature and culture, conscious and unconscious … ), bringing into relation the radical alterity or absolute exteriority of an outside (never defined, only indicated by traces) with the closed arena of oppositional differences.

Perhaps the most fundamental opposition in discourse is between sensitive image on the one hand and philosophical concept on the other, the passage between them consisting of metaphor. It is this concatenation that Derrida investigates in his essay ‘White Mythology’. Take a coin (an instrument of exchange, an element of communication). On it, in addition to an arithmetical number, there will be a face, a figure, a symbol, an aspect of myth. What philosophy does, what metaphysics does, from metaphorical stage to metaphorical stage (as in Plato), is efface those signs of simple exchange, ideological identity, political allegiance (etc.) in order to attain to a whiteness. Derrida, notably via Mallarmé (the Mallarmé of a fundamental poetic crisis, the Mallarmé outside any simple identity: ‘I am no longer the Stéphane that you knew.’), also moves towards that ‘whiteness’ (Heidegger called it ‘the nameless’) – but not in its ontological, metaphysical, absolute form. The ‘improbable place’ (so referred to in La Dissémination) is approached via a widening of
the (white) margins of philosophy, by the shattering of metaphysics and the scattering of (white) seeds and, as in Mallarmé, by ‘fragments of candour’ as embodied, e.g. in wing or wave.

Anyone who really knows anything about the use I’ve made of a term like ‘white world’ will see just how close my own work is to these considerations. My very first book published was entitled *En toute candeur* (‘in all candour’), and it was not an apology for naivety. A later book, based on the inhabitation of seven rooms in Paris (a metaphorical progression) entitled *Les Limbes incandescents*, written before I’d ever heard of Derrida, could be seen as a process of radical deconstruction – indeed a French critic went one step further, calling it a book of *dissolution*.

I go with Derrida’s general intention, which I see, globally, as a move from philosophy out towards original thinking (a main line also in Heidegger) and from literature to writing. I agree that anything like cogent writing has to be approached by the close, systematic and meticulous reading of selected, elective affinities, and that a certain pluralism (‘talk several languages and produce several texts at once’ – *La Dissémination*) is part integral of any significant, operative work. I agree also that ‘the “logic” of any relationship to the outside is complex and surprising’ (*Marges*) and that any merely declarative claim to be ‘outside’ without work, without signs of work, is not only naïve but noxious. Yet at the same time I felt the need to break away from the science of textuality – just as, while having been interested in the semiology and semiotics of Barthes, I felt the need to break with them, entitling the book of a journey out *Les Cygnes sauvages* (‘the wild swans’, which, in French, comes across phonetically also as ‘the wild signs’). It became more and more obvious to me that there would never be anything like a totally deconstructed field, that to write *differently* (as Derrida put it, with an ‘a’) is not to write differently, and that positioning and re-positioning would never actually enter ‘the exteriority of a different place’ (*Marges*).

After 1968, and its movement in which I participated, in my own way, began for me what I thought of as ‘the great drift’. As from the mid sixties, before my break with Britain in 1967, I had a manuscript on the stocks entitled *Travels in the Drifting Dawn*. When I took it with me to France, I had written a chapter (a section) on ‘Underground London’, another on my Glasgow experience, ‘Time on a Dark river’, and a third on a transcendental trip to Ireland. Followed thereafter other trips around Europe: Belgium, the Netherlands, Provence, Spain … The book was well advanced, and I had opted for a possible French title, *Dérives*, when in 1973, a book appeared by the philosopher Jean-François
Lyotard entitled *Dérive à partir de Marx et Freud*. It was true that it was Marx and Freud that had largely marked French thought after the ’39-’45 war, hence the reference to their names, but the drift involved more than an extension of marxism and freudism, or a derivation from them, it brought in not only new content but a new method. A few years later, Lyotard was to talk of ‘theory-fiction’, which would be neither philosophical treatise, nor novel. Nor, I would add, *conte philosophique* in the style of Voltaire (*Candide*) or Diderot (*Jacques le Fataliste*), examples I’d long had in mind, since I’d used them as the basis of a course in 18th century enlightenment I did at Glasgow University – but something else. I gave form to that ‘something else’, the search along a geographical-existential itinerary for a space-time that could be embodied also in particular places (I’m thinking there of books like *Letters from Gourgounel* or *House of Tides*), in a series of manuscripts that crossed America (*The Blue Road*) and Asia (*The Face of the East Wind*). The former, between the lines as it were, via allusion and quotation, was a recapitulation of the Western mind since Romanticism, the latter, again between the lines, an exploration of the extremest areas of Eastern thought.

I began to theorize all this movement in a manuscript, written directly in French (I saw no opening then for such work in English), *L’Esprit nomade*, which I decided to present as a state thesis in 1979. This thesis was situated in the Anglo-American literature section of the leftist university, Paris 7, but since the work covered an area that was more than strictly literary, including the philosophical, it was proposed that a philosopher be invited into the jury. The choice was Gilles Deleuze.

The choice was obvious. I knew Deleuze’s work, he knew mine. He was one of those French philosophers that interested me, trying to work out a new relationship between theory and practice. I’d appreciated his book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche et la philosophie*, which came out at a time (1962) when Nietzsche was still to many anathema, and it was in a collective book on Nietzsche, *Nietzsche aujourd’hui* (1973), that he’d written an intense essay, *Pensée nomade* (which I’d commented on in the thesis): ‘A drifting, a drifting movement, a deterritorialisation…a field of exteriority…a kind of nomadism, a perpetual displacement of energies…’ As for myself, the figure of the ‘intellectual nomad’ had been with me ever since as a youth in Ayrshire I’d come across a passing reference in Emerson’s *Journal*, later finding it again in a page of Spengler’s *Decline of the West*, but developing it in my own way over the years. Deleuze was to develop his own intuition on re-reading Nietzsche into a theory of ‘nomadology’, which he lays out in section 12 of
Working in the Outer Reaches

the book *Mille Plateaux* (1980), where he refers, confusedly, to my own work, a reference which I took as a point of departure for an essay on my relationship to Deleuze and on my reading of his work, *Dialogue avec Deleuze* (2007). To sum up in this quick report a complex argumentation, I'd say that in Deleuze's *lignes de fuite* (which I've seen translated, inadequately, as 'lines of escape') I see more of a headlong precipitation than of a geometrical projection (or a migratory movement). To put it in another way, musical this time, there comes a moment in jazz improvisation when it becomes too 'free', when it passes over that fine crest between the sensuous and the abstract which I take to be the acme. All this has something to do also with the complex dialectics of territory and deterritorialisation.

The general line I have been following in this account of my relationship (parallels and connections, differences and divergences) to recent French thought has concerned a radical displacement, the discovery of an uncoded space, field, place, allied to a new conception of human being. All my work, be it essay, prose narrative or poem is concerned with that place. It's that place I have been seeking, it's that place from which I speak.

Before going on, another parallel concerning specifically that place-space.

In a lecture, 'Des espaces autres' ('other spaces'), delivered at the Cercle d'Études architecturales in 1967 (later collected in his *Dits et Écrits* of 1994), Michel Foucault speaks of 'heterotopia', defining it as 'a floating piece of space, a place without place, living by itself, in itself, and yet open to the infinity of the sea'. That's a pretty good description of what came across in my book *Scènes d'un monde flottant* ('scenes of a floating world'), situated between West and East, in Hong Kong, which I later 'localised' more particularly in *House of Tides*, that heterotopia being a stage on the way towards what I've come to call, in general terms, atopia, a place radically outside the commonplaces, without being a no-place.

As to the 'being' of human being, worked at, worked out, by philosophical investigation, phenomenology, the human sciences, textualism and a certain poetics, Foucault, in *Les Mots et les Choses* ('words and things', 1966) has this: 'Man is an invention of recent date, as the archaeology of our thought has shown. His end also may be close.'

We have come far from humanism – towards an exit not only from all the superstructures of the past, but from all the forms of rundown humanism that litter the literary and epistemological landscape. And recently the 'exact' sciences have come into the movement. Picking up from Foucault, writing in a collective volume, *L'Unité de l’homme* (1974) the biophysicist Henri Atlan has
this: ‘It’s not because Man, with a capital M, is disappearing, like, as Michel Foucault says, “a face in the sand at the tide’s edge”, that we have cause to lament. The human being that is disappearing isn’t in reality ourselves, it is only a fiction of the imagination… In place of Man claiming to be the absolute origin of discourse as of action over things, but in reality cut off from them, enclosed in a schizophrenic world, it is things that speak and act through us … When we discover a structure in things, aren’t we finding a language that things can speak to us, realising that our own language is not fundamentally different from the language of things? … A unified existence becomes possible, taking place in a universe no longer seen as hostile and destructive of human being once that being lets itself be traversed by it and is able to develop a new coherence, a new ordering, via auto-organisation’ – an auto-organisation which the neurophysiologist Humberto Maturana calls autopoiesis.

Need I insist how close we are here to what I’ve called the general theory-practice of geopoetics?

3. Reconnection

It remains, after all these diasporic investigations, to provide, in the logic of our symposium, at least a brief account of my re-connection with Scotland.

On returning to the English-language context in general and Scotland in particular, I was well aware that I’d have to be ready for a lot of reaction – some of it stemming from sheer ignorance and incomprehension, some of it from a fear that if ideas such as those I carried began blowing over the land, some comfortable cultural niches could well be exposed and under threat. I knew also that if there would be individuals not only able, but eager, to tune in to the work I was doing and the way I did it, because it was close to their own work or to their aspirations, any influence I might have on the general scheme of things would be a slow process, though there might be sudden breaks here and there.

As MacDiarmid (the only Scottish writer I’d kept in contact with) said in his essay ‘Aesthetics in Scotland’ (intended to come out as a pamphlet in 1950, unpublished until 1984): ‘Worst of all is the continued absence of competent modern philosophising in Scotland, and above all the absence of aesthetic thought of any such value as might realign Scotland with other Western European countries and induce aesthetic developments based on Scottish roots and yet able to withstand comparison with the contemporary aesthetic
thought of other countries. The omens are not auspicious. All we can hope for, it would seem, is, as in the past, an occasional voice crying in the wilderness.’

I don’t want to dwell here on the obvious affinities between myself and MacDiarmid (the indictment of a blocked historical context and the attempt to remedy it), or the just as obvious differences: the fact that, in his most interesting work (not the Lallans poems, not The Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle, to which he so frequently gets reduced), MacDiarmid’s work is referential, whereas mine is experiential. As to ‘crying in the wilderness’, that is where MacDiarmid is at his best. When he starts trying to convince himself and others that the ‘Renaissance’ has created a new intellectual, artistic and cultural community, one can only, with sympathy, feel the pathos of it. When we hear him describing Bridie as ‘the great Scottish dramatist’, one flinches. When we see him putting up alongside Hamann’s Geschicchte der Kunst and Burckhardt’s Renaissance Ian Finlay’s Art in Scotland and Stanley Cursiter’s Scottish Art, the discrepancy is painfully obvious. Some will say that sixty years after MacDiarmid’s pamphlet, things have improved. It’s possible, with no lack of evidence to hand, to argue that, exceptions and islands apart, they’ve thickened and worsened. I don’t want to waste energy commenting on all the commonplace fiction, all the self-expression, all the artistic conceptules that, piled up, constitute what is called, in sociological terms, ‘culture’. Institutionally, when my old alma, Glasgow University, prides itself, as though it were a radical cultural enterprise, on the setting up of a Centre for Robert Burns Studies, all one can say is that it’s better than the University of Liverpool’s creation of a Master’s course on the Beatles.

When any real idea, when any real field of enquiry, enters this closed system (not only Scotland, but the whole Anglo-Saxon context), it gets reduced to regional, periodical dimensions. A case in point: Derrida’s ‘white mythology’, a many-facetted concept, gets transposed, by Robert Young, into the racist, colonialist terms of White Mythologies, which becomes a textbook for a ‘postcolonialist theory’ that, compared to the theory-practice necessary and possible, is, at best, secondary, to be catalogued with all the thematism, sociologism, historicism, psychologism, genderism, that also goes the rounds and fills the curricula.

If, well aware of all this, I came back to Scotland at all, it was to manifest my allegiance to what I consider its high line, the one I outlined in the first section of this talk and which I’d never forgotten, and because the land itself has always been part integral of my work – the land, not as region (certainly not sub-region), but as territory. A region is limited, overgrown
with canonical localism and parishpumpish communitarianism. A territory is open.

As to the necessary work involved, as I see it, if we’re to open up anything like real, live cultural-space, let me refer, in an open conclusion, back to Husserl (*The Origins of Geometry*): ‘We have to learn how to master all this confusion of living, give new order to the mass of cultural tradition, and, via a radical realisation, search out, both as isolated individuals and as members of society, the ultimate necessities and possibilities’.

As the man said, work in progress.
Kenneth White and Scotland’s Intellectual Nomads
Cairns Craig

Kenneth White left Britain for France in 1967,¹ despairing of what he later described as a world in which ‘literature was turning more and more into a sub-section of the entertainment industry, situated somewhere between lurid sociology and inturned fantasia’.² A graduate of Glasgow, who had spent time in Paris and in Munich, and had returned to teach at the University, he had, by then, published one book of poetry, The Cold Wind of Dawn (1966) with a second, The Most Difficult Area in press (1968) as well as Letters from Gourgouin (1966), a series of narrative sketches of his life in an old house in the Ardèche. This was a style of writing combining travelogue and the play of ideas about which his publishers were less than enthusiastic—they suggested he try a novel, and so he took himself off to France. His perception of British culture, and of Scottish culture within it, was ‘that it had gone into a slump after the end of the Second World War, and that the situation was in all likelihood going to get worse’.³

I may as well make it clear right from the start that, for me, a creator’s responsibility is first and foremost to his work, not to any community—the individual endowed with energy and intelligence can always go faster and farther than the community, and it is by following the paths of his intelligence, looking for a field adequate to his energy that he will, in the long run, do most for that community (as well as others), perhaps by extending the very notion of community.⁴

The sense of the dead-end nature of Scottish society is perhaps caught in his little poem ‘Rue d’Écosse, Hill of Sainte-Geneviève, Paris’:

¹ Kenneth White, On Scottish Ground (Edinburgh, 1998), 162.
² Ibid., 121.
³ Ibid., 86.
⁴ Ibid.
There’s nothing much in the rue d’Écosse
that dark little cul-de-sac—
just the full moon and a stray cat.\(^5\)

The cat had to stray further to escape the ‘cul-de-sac’ and this dedication to the autonomy of the individual artist led him into a seven-year silence while he meditated, in France, on the nature of his own creative pathway, working on manuscripts which then began to appear at a hectic pace in Paris after 1975. His books of travel—which he calls ‘waybooks’—and of essays were written in English but appeared in French translations; his poems appeared in bilingual editions, with the translations increasingly provided by his wife, Marie-Claude White. Later, he began to publish his essays and theoretical studies directly in French, so that for these—such as \textit{L’Esprit nomade} (1987)—there is no English version. From 1975 till 1989, White published nothing in English or with a British publisher; in that year Mainstream in Edinburgh produced collections of his poetry—\textit{The Bird Path}, his collected longer poems, and \textit{Handbook for the Diamond Country}, his collected shorter poems, as well as a couple of his waybooks, \textit{Travels in the Drifting Dawn} and \textit{The Blue Road}.

By then he had been, since 1983, Professor of Twentieth Century Poetics at the Sorbonne, and in 1989 the founding figure of the Institute of Geopoetics, a cross-disciplinary organisation whose mission was nothing less than to find and to found an alternative to modern civilization: ‘Over the centuries’, White wrote, ‘civilization had been carried by various powers: myth, religion, metaphysics. Although remnants of all these remain, usually in degraded forms, today civilization is carried by nothing—it just grows and spreads, like cancer’.\(^6\) Against the cancer of civilization Geopoetics set out to reconnect humanity with the cosmos, to force humanity to see itself not in a historical trajectory—what White describes as ‘the Motorway of history’—but in a spatial one, a space which has to be continually rediscovered in its originality, implying ‘a new wording, new working, new worlding’.\(^8\) The term ‘geopoetics’ was first used by White in 1979, as he sought for ‘words more precise for designating the end of these “nomadic”

\(^6\) Kenneth White, \textit{The Wanderer and his Charts: Exploring the Fields of Vagrant Thought and Vagabond Beauty} (Edinburgh, 2004), 229.
\(^7\) Ibid., 231ff.
\(^8\) Ibid., 247.
researches around the earth, a world, a language’, pausing briefly over the possibility of ‘biocosmographic’ before settling on what was to become the key theoretical term of his later thinking.

Three contexts gave ‘geopoetics’ a political visibility in France (and at various outposts elsewhere) that turned White into a significant cultural figure in that country. First, in intellectual terms, ‘geopoetics’ provided in a literary-intellectual context a way of incorporating that ‘spatial turn’ in Western thought which had been building through the 1970s and ’80s in the work, in France, of thinkers like Henri Lefebvre, whose *La Production de l’Espace* (1974) began to rethink Marxism in terms of spatial dialectic rather than class dialectic. Second, the Institute was founded during the period of the collapse of communism and the arrival of a capitalism which declared that there were now no alternatives. Through geopoetics, White insisted that there was an alternative. That alternative could also, thirdly, be envisaged as part of the ‘eco-critiques’ that had been heralded as far back as 1962 by Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and which had gained public impact through the activities of organisations such as Greenpeace, founded in 1971. White would himself determinedly resist any reduction of geopoetics to eco-poetics or to a simple commitment to a ‘green movement’, but there can be little doubt that geopoetics gained some of its momentum from the association. The Institute of Geopoetics was by far the most prominent but not the first outcome of White’s career as a cultural activist, a career which had seen him found and run a whole series of small organisations aimed at promoting and disseminating his ideas.

Fundamental to geopoetics’ opposition to the Motorway of History is the figure White describes as the ‘intellectual nomad’, someone who sets off from the highway to explore, to discover, to encounter—to engage with space rather than passing through it. The two figures who call White to his destiny as an intellectual nomad are Arthur Rimbaud and Friedrich Nietzsche:

> I saw Rimbaud and Nietzsche as being the first, the one departing from the literary precinct, the other from the philosophical, to leave what I tended to think of more and more as the Motorway of Western Civilization, laid down and directed by Platonic idealism, Aristotelian classification, Christianity, Renaissance humanism, Cartesianism and Hegelian historicism, to mention only a few major stages in its progression. They left the motorway, set out on roads that were no

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more than tracks, and on tracks that were no more than a series of traces, trying to open another space.\textsuperscript{10}

The nomad refuses the organisation of space as defined by modern civilization and seeks a space, and an awareness of space, that requires a geological rather than a historical conception of time:

A country begins with a ground, a geology. When it loses contact with that, it’s no longer a country at all. It’s just a supermarket, a disneyland, or a madhouse… I take it to be common knowledge nowadays in Scotland that the country was not always where it is now, that is, hitched to England. About five hundred million years ago, Scotland was situated on the edge of a continent that linked Scandinavia, Greenland and North America. Later it was to swing down south of the Equator. Later again, about sixty million years ago, it settled in its present position, but without, geologically, forgetting its previous locations, especially that very early one which is written into its bones.\textsuperscript{11}

Connection with the ground is something that was known and understood by primitive peoples, especially through various forms of shamanism—‘when we look, say, at runes on a rock, or at an Oceanic mask, or at an Amerindian totem, we know we are in presence of a power that is almost regularly absent from modern art and modern life’\textsuperscript{12}—and these forces have been recovered by the best of modern artists who uncover a ‘connection with an archaic tradition, allied to an anarchic use of it—let us say an abstract shamanism, away outside any antiquarian reproduction’.\textsuperscript{13}

Precisely because poetry is thus rooted in the archaic, the ‘ground’ to which art is related is not the ground of the nation: it far pre-dates any concept of nationality and one of the things intellectual nomads need to escape is precisely ‘the nation’; they need to encounter a multiplicity of cultures rather than living in one:

Exile of one type or another (and intellectual exile is the most interesting, if not the most soul-tearing and tear-jerking) is part and parcel of every

\textsuperscript{10} White, \textit{Wanderer and his Charts}, 10.
\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 199.
\textsuperscript{12} White, \textit{Scottish Ground}, 19.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 45.
powerfully creative life. It is the lesser poet who is anxious to appear as part of a community: for his song, he needs to belong.\textsuperscript{14}

The ‘nation’ and its borders, like its motorways, are the barriers to nomadism:

… the greatest blockage lies in the ideology of national(ist) identity and in the intellectual regression to culture-complexes that were productive of those identities, which may be looked to as ‘havens of stability’ in a time of cosmopolitan confusion, but which in fact can be no more than half-way houses full of internal dispute, mere parliamentary discourse and pathetic poetics.\textsuperscript{15}

The consequence in literary terms is that the national history of art is entirely irrelevant to the achievement of art: every new creation is a nomad crossing of the border of the nation into another territory than that described by national history:

The history of literature, and especially of this or that country, scarcely interests me. National histories of literature only serve to maintain the illusion that something like a national culture continues to exist. What I present in this book, is a geography of thought, a meteorology of the spirit, in taking Scotland as a terrain for exploration. Such a geography, however fragmentary, is worth much more than a dense history.\textsuperscript{16}

The figure of the ‘intellectual nomad’ disrupts those ‘havens of stability’ that are national histories and forces us to ‘open’ ourselves to an alternative reality. For White, ‘open’ is a key term: it is the openness of the world to the wanderer, it is the world ‘open’ to our discovery, it is the world not imposed upon by pre-existing categories. It is what White describes (in a self-congratulatory denomination that infuriates his critics) as ‘The White World’, a world he finds inscribed in all the major poets that he names as his precursors—Holderlin, Whitman, Hart Crane, William Carlos Williams, Robert Duncan: ‘an elementary-ecstatic state of being which Stefan Zweig, in his essay on Dostoevsky, calls “white glowing feeling”’.\textsuperscript{17} The ‘white world’

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotemark[15] Ibid., 203.
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is the fulfilment of the Kantian sublime that allows us to see into the reality which philosophy cannot penetrate:

Kant affirmed that the ‘noumenal world’, as he termed it, was unknowable, and that the life of Man must be one of practical reason. But it is knowledge of the ‘noumenal world’, which we call the white world, that is the passionate research of poetry, and its supreme realisation.\(^{18}\)

The White World and the world sought by White’s poetry is a world beyond the boundaries of the historical and the categorial:

It is to that level … that what I would like to call, in its most general terminology, open world poetics also tries to penetrate. There may be local reference and colouration, but the thrust will always be through to that open world—beyond the expression of any closed system, of any mediary society.\(^{19}\)

It is a poetry in search of ultimate liberation from boundaries, a poetry following the Heideggerian path into the mysteries of Being that has been concealed from us by the very history of metaphysics which has tried to illuminate for us the nature of reality: the intellectual nomad who was Nietzsche is followed by the Heidegger who lives at the margins of human society, and whose thought passes through the White Country to meet with White, the intellectual nomad, like two hawks in search of the ultimate prey:

Black Forest

Heidegger at home

On the steep slope
of a mountain valley
a little chalet
eighteen feet by twenty

all around
meadow and pinewood

\(^{18}\) Ibid., 66.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., 190.
when snow surrounded the house
  *that* was the time for philosophy:
  following all those
  secret, silent paths
  till cogitation turned into sight

  like this high summer morning
  and two hawks gliding
  round and round
  in the absolute light.\(^{20}\)

Heidegger’s ‘cogitation’ turns into ‘sight’; the poet’s sight of the hawks turns into ‘absolute light’, each a nomad beyond the boundaries of the discipline which would seek to trammel them.

Set in a contemporary context, White, it might seem, could be a standard-bearer for that ‘denationalised’ literature which many recent critics of Scottish writing have been calling for. Here, for instance, is Scott Hames on Don Paterson:

> The mode of recognising poets as spokespeople for the nations is hopelessly reductive, and the transfigurative dimension of Paterson’s work stands against it in every possible way. Whereas the ‘identifying’ procedure thrives on recognising, restating and verifying a preconceived Scottishness, Paterson’s work scorns any mode of repetition which does not transform, however slightly, our perception of the already familiar.\(^{21}\)

The *Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, from which this is taken, is full of such assertions that insist that Scottish writers, post-devolution, are released from the burden of the ‘national’ and free to develop the potentialities of the ‘cosmopolitan’: as Berthold Schoene puts it in his introduction, some Scottish writers still seem ‘unattuned to the majority of new Scottish literature’s experimentation with a less isolationist and more cosmopolitan and “planetary” mode of narration’.\(^{22}\) Significantly, however,
though Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead are both accorded the right to be considered as parts of ‘Contemporary Scottish Literature’, the one Scottish poet who has tried to take literally the notion of the ‘planetary’ as the terrain of his writing—Kenneth White—receives not a mention; someone whose poetry takes its inspiration from Eskimo chants, Japanese haiku, Buddhist poets and thinkers, German philosophers as well as French and American writers might be thought to be a symptom of what Gavin Wallace calls ‘those cosmopolitan imagined communities of writers and far-away readers’. But such cosmopolitanism is given no recognition in this version of ‘contemporary Scottish literature’.

Had it been, however, readers might have discovered a profound counter-current in Kenneth White’s work that works against that ‘de-nationalised’ reading of Scottish poetry. When White moved to France he established himself in Pau, in the Pyrenees. Pau was one of those towns which, after the Napoleonic Wars, became a centre of healthy tourism for the British upper classes, and one of the centres in France for the establishment of British sports—like rugby and golf. For White, Pau represented what he has described as a ‘negative destiny’, a place of refusal in which it would be possible to begin the ‘instauration of a type of thinking freed of (French) rationalism, (English) realism and (North American) materialism, a thinking that would go from the “slavery of fact” to the “freedom of the real”’. But Pau undergoes a strange transmutation in White’s experience of it:

But perhaps I should begin with a window—a geographical and philosophical window—in Pau. From my study window, I could see a great length of the Pyrenean chain, in front of me the Pic du Midi d’Ossau, the last great granite peak before the chain tails off to the West, towards the Pic d’Anie, on the edge of the Basque country, the Mont Orhy and La Rhune. The geographer I most read at that time, indeed the second tome of his Géographie Universelle had been a vade-mecum with me for years, was Elisée Reclus (anarchist as well as geographer, like Kropotkin—and the combination intrigued me) who, as chance would have it, was raised only a few miles from Pau, in Orthez. I remember

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24 White, On Scottish Ground, 204.
reading a phrase of his with a little jolt of recognition: ‘On many a peak of the Western chain one might imagine oneself in rainy Scotland’.²⁵

Pau is, as it were, another Scotland: ‘I recall asking myself too if there was any linguistic connection between the Val d’Aran in the Pyrenees and Aran Isles of Ireland (and the Arran in sight of which I had been raised on the West Coast of Scotland)’.²⁶

The window in Pau is not merely a view on to a similitude of Scotland; it is a window which looks out on the landscape through the eyes of Elisée Reclus, and his connection with Scotland was far from accidental, since Reclus, with his brother, Elie, had been regular attendees at the summer schools that Patrick Geddes had organised in Edinburgh in the 1890s, in the Halls of Residence he had renovated there as part of his transformation of the city’s Old Town. The Reclus brothers—both of whom had narrowly escaped death for their part in the Commune of 1870—were part of an international anarchist network that included the Russian Peter Kropotkin, all of whom Geddes invited to Edinburgh to consider how to transform industrial society and to produce a new kind of society in harmony with its environment—what he described as ‘Neotechnics’. White’s ‘Geopoetics’ is not simply a ‘cosmopolitan’ product of his experience of exile in French culture but one based on specifically Scottish precedents—precedents that had themselves had more than a casual French connection. For it was while studying marine biology at Roscoff in Brittany, and then a broader scientific curriculum at the Sorbonne, that the young Patrick Geddes had begun to think about the inter-relatedness of biology and, as it was later to become known, sociology, and was inspired by the work of Frédéric Le Play on the relationship of *Lieu, Travaille, Famille*, a trinity that Geddes would later render as ‘Place, Work, Folk’ in his analysis of the interconnectedness of cities and their environments.²⁷ The Reclus through whose eyes White sees Scotland in France is mirror-image to the Patrick Geddes who uses French theory to help him see Scotland—as in the famous ‘valley section’ diagram of the relationship between the various parts of a territory.²⁸

Geddes certainly conforms to White’s conception of the ‘intellectual nomad’, since his theories were inspired by experiences in France and Mexico,

²⁵ Ibid., 205.
²⁶ Ibid.
²⁸ Ibid., 123–4.
and found their expression in projects in India and Palestine. Returning from the East after the First World War, Geddes decided to found a new Scots College on the hills above Montpellier in imitation of the original Scots College in Paris: it was an effort which some of his followers, like the American theorist of cities, Lewis Mumford, regarded as folly, but through his window in Pau the logic of it is clear to White:

Closely related to the Scots College, which would house, not a coterie, nor a party, but ‘an evolutionary group’, were, to Geddes’s eyes, the School of Archaeology at Les Eyzies and the School of Regional Survey at Domme in the Dordogne, run by Paul Reclus, the son of an old friend of his, Elie Reclus, the ethnologist brother of Elisée Reclus, the geographer.²⁹

The Scots College that Geddes built aimed to be at the centre of development of a new conception of human history—or, rather, of the transformation of history into geography, as laid out in the vocabulary that Geddes invented for describing the stages of human evolution:

Paleotechnics meant waste of natural resources, blighted landscapes, pandemic cities full of factories, offices, slums and stunted human lives. Neotechnics meant the use of non-polluting energy and the attempt to reunite utility with beauty, city and landscape. Biotechnics would promote new life-thinking, leading to more developed human lives, more expanded psyches. As to geotechnics, it was the means for human beings to learn how to really and fully inhabit the earth.³⁰

The paraphrase is White’s: just as he sees the landscape of Pau through the eyes of Reclus, so his geopoetics views the world through the eyes of Reclus’ friend, Patrick Geddes, and his ‘geotechnics’. Whether White constructed geopoetics on the basis of Geddes’s geotechnics, or discovered Geddes as his predecessor as a result of tracing the roots of geopoetics is not clear—but the relation is one which he is keen to endorse. The first Scottish ‘renaissance’—the one announced by Geddes in the 1890s—adumbrates White’s own ‘reconnaissance’ into a new field, into an open space.³¹

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²⁹ White, *On Scottish Ground*, 137.
³⁰ Ibid., 146.
³¹ Ibid., 42.
The Scottish-French connection represented by Geddes’ Scots College at Montpellier gestures to the longer connection of Scots with France that was inaugurated by the original Scots College in Paris, founded in 1326. The Scots College was therefore the oldest of the Scottish Universities, and the first university of Scotland’s intellectual nomads. The ‘Intellectual Nomad’ is not, therefore, a modern outcome of the need to escape from Scotland—however much modern Scots may feel impelled by that need. It is in fact part of the very fabric of Scottish intellectual life: when Duns Scotus died in Cologne in 1308 he had travelled from Duns in Berwickshire, to Oxford, to Paris and then to ‘exile’ in the Rhineland. The intellectual nomad, it turns out, is not, for White, the antithesis of a Scottish identity trapped within the trajectory of a destructive history but, in fact, the very foundation of a Scottish identity for which border crossing, migration and nomadism is the norm:

Scotland’s contacts with the Continent, and, as we shall see, with France in particular, were to continue at full force at the time of the Renaissance, and the anthropological type of the Continental Scot was still foremost. Even after Scotland had started up its own university system in 1410 at St Andrews, largely on the French model (its founder, Henry Wardlaw, was a graduate of Paris), Scottish students still tended to go to the Continent whenever they could: you find their names … in the archives of Paris, Orléans, Avignon, Louvain, Cologne, Bologna and Padua, and very often with the word pauper after it, indicating that, being without sufficient resources, they were to be relieved of the payment of fees … The number of Scots teaching and writing all kinds of books in France during those times is amazing: George Buchanan in Paris and Bordeaux; Michael Scott in Paris; James Beaton (called by Mary Stuart ‘Monsieur de Glasco’) in Paris; James Kidd in Toulouse; James Crichton (the Admirable) in Paris and Bordeaux; John Cameron in Bordeaux, Adam Abernethy in Montpellier, John Gordon at Avignon … 32

Kenneth White at Pau in the Pyrenees, at Paris and at Trébeurden in Brittany is not an outsider to Scottish tradition, but its reconstitution. If he shares the sense that MacDiarmid and Muir expressed of the decline of Scottish culture after the Reformation, that decline he attributes to

32 Ibid., 108.
This loss of continentality, and intercontinentality [producing] provincialisation and an ingrowing discontent that could come across in many ways; contortions of the psyche; aggressive identity-ideology; the couthy complacency of localism… Add to that locally fabricated ingredients such as hard-bitten Calvinism (leading to aesthetic malnutrition and moral \textit{rigor mortis}), as well as whole regiments of rubber-brained pedagogicals, parochial patterers, evangelical haverers, not to speak of bonnie prince Charlies, and you have all the enemies of large, cogent and coherent Scottishness.\footnote{Ibid., 109.}

This tradition of intellectual nomadism is inscribed in Scottish culture right back to the early Celtic-Christian missionaries to a benighted Europe:

Those Celto-pagan Pelagian-Christian monks were perched there on the cliffs ‘at the edge of the world’, and then in the sixth century, they started flying over the waters, in droves. Again wideflung travelling was written into the tradition… Eric of Auxerre wrote about ‘all those Scotic philosophers landing on our shores’, saying that ‘the more intelligent and learned they are, the more they want to travel’. Brandan, born in Kerry, founds a monastery at Clonfert, and then when a certain Barintus tells of a trip he made to visit a disciple of his on a distant island, embarks for the Hebrides, Iceland, Brittany, and maybe further. St Malo, St Pol, St Renan settle in Brittany… There were so many of them at Péronne the place was called Perrona Scottorum.\footnote{Ibid., 105.}

That Scots are intellectual nomads is ‘written into the tradition’, a tradition of which Patrick Geddes and Kenneth White—prophets of geotechnics and geopoetics—are the modern embodiments, the rediscoverers of an ancient energy that is Celtic in origin:

Brandan built him a boat

he built it of seventeen pieces
making first a framework of pliant wood
covering it with bull hides tanned in oak
smearing the hides with grease and resin—

\footnote{Ibid., 109.}
Kenneth White and Scotland’s Intellectual Nomads

a boat light as a bird to ride the sea!

when the boat was ready, firm and true
he gathered men about him, saying:
‘this will be no pleasure cruise
rather the wildest of wild goose chases
around the rim of the world and further
a peregrination in the name of God
and the promise of white martyrdom’.35

Like Geddes’ regenerative Celticism of the 1890s, White finds in a Scoto-
Celtic tradition an alternative ‘ground’ from which the crisis of modernity
can be addressed. It is, he insists, ‘minds with a Celtic background that get
closest to the Far East’, and if this is clear in the case of ‘Segalen, the Breton,
in China’,36 it is equally clear in the work of both Hugh MacDiarmid and Neil
Gunn. The tradition of Lowland Scotland is, however, no less significant to
the issues posed by modernity:

Philosophy in Europe has been going through a radical crisis, with
questions being raised as to its limits and perspectives. Among the
foremost in this discussion and investigation was Martin Heidegger,
trying to find ways into ‘regions philosophy has never heard of’, and
Heidegger’s doctoral thesis was based, precisely, on Duns Scot.37

Scotland may be a place of the margins, a place at the margin, but the Scotland of
the intellectual nomad is at the very centre of modern intellectual development,
and is, indeed, the hinterland from which an alternative conception of our
relation to the world can begin to be perceived. In his intellectual nomadism,
Kenneth White sees himself not in rebellion against Scottish tradition but as
its fulfilment, a follower of Scottish precursors, from Duns Scotus to Robert
Louis Stevenson, whose journey through the Cévennes White was to repeat
in the 1990s.38 White, the intellectual nomad who has taken ‘passage through
many cultures in order to arrive at a potential world-culture’,39 travels in fact

35 White, Open World, 516,
36 White, On Scottish Ground, 73.
37 White, The Wanderer and his Charts, 14.
38 Kenneth White, Le chemin des crêtes: Avec Robert Louis Stevenson à travers les Cévennes (Paris,
1999).
39 Ibid., 247.
in the footsteps of Scottish precursors, the exponent of a universalism which is still a Scottish universalism, a cosmopolitanism which is always a Scottish cosmopolitanism:

The Wandering Scot

*Scotus vagans*

It was a clear, cool, April-blue afternoon just after the winter snows

I was waiting at a Paris railway station on a train bound for Aurillac (the ‘place of the winds’?) up there on France’s central plateaux

why the hell go to Aurillac—God only knows

in my rucksack (graced with the claw of a grouse) I had *Sartor Resartus* alongside an empty notebook.\(^{40}\)

\(^{40}\) White, *Open World*, 20.
The canonisation of a modern image of Russia, i.e. its ‘integration into the normative consciousness’ of the western world, was achieved relatively late in the process of establishing a new European self-understanding during the rise of civil society. Only towards the middle of the nineteenth century did a consolidated perception become part of the cultural imagination of the European peoples, following a sudden surge of interest in the Tsardom a century earlier. Previously, the territory on the Eurasian steppe had long been imagined as an oriental otherworld populated by a mixture of noble and not-so-noble savages as might be found in popular novels of the eighteenth century, for example in Daniel Defoe’s *Farther Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* and Christian Fürchtegott Gellert’s *Leben der Schwedischen Gräfin von G**. From the mid-1700s onward, however, an animated debate over a more differentiated representation of the growing Empire to the east began to occupy a fair share of intellectual and popular discourse in Europe.

Early efforts to arrive at a more accurate notion of a culturally and economically advancing Russia would lead to remarkably variegated results

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3. The disintegration of ‘Christendom’ as a unifying concept had, as much as the imperatives of power politics in the middle of the eighteenth century, led to the inclusion of a Russia modernised by Peter the Great into the sphere of the European community. See ibid., 160. The immediate vivaciousness of the discourse on the Russian theme may be explained by its origins coinciding with the transformation of the established structures of the *république des lettres* into a discussion platform for the project of national and European identity. For further considerations on the part played by publishers, newspapers, novels and journals in the process of imagining the nation, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006), 9–46.
within the European hemisphere, thus reflecting the various schools of thought prolific in the respective countries taking part in the assessment. In this regard, Scottish efforts to re-imagine the Tsarist Empire deserve special attention, as it had been Scottish thinkers who, by overcoming many dated premises of Enlightenment philosophy, would develop a historicist perspective of which the intellectuals of continental Europe were long unable to conceive. This investigation will therefore seek to contrast Scottish perceptions of Russia with the views of some of their most prominent European counterparts and demonstrate in which way these distinct representations were formed into a consolidated image towards the middle of the nineteenth century, with the aim of elucidating the mechanics underlying the overarching process.

As a point of reference, the first signs of this development may be found in two publications dating from the mid-1800s: the Marquis Astolphe de Custine’s (1790–1857) remarkably successful *La Russie en 1839* (1843) and the anonymously published *Die Europäische Pentarchie* (1839) best summarised what Europeans had by then come to believe about the Tsarist Empire, and thus laid the foundations for further canonization of this image. Their reiteration of popular prejudices, the mix of fact and fiction, of historical documents and conspiracy theories, and, in the case of Custine, the eloquent style, ensured a wide and lasting reception of these texts well into the twentieth century.

The *Pentarchie* presents itself as a forthright address to the nations of Western Europe, suggesting that Russian suzerainty over the entire continent was a necessity. Only ‘Russia as the leading power’ would be capable of facilitating the ‘preservation of the equilibrium of the European Pentarchy’. Read by many as an overt declaration of official Russian foreign policy and propaganda, the text more likely was a cunning attempt to demonize

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5 As a matter of fact, laying down new theoretical foundations for a historicist appreciation of the past was the key achievement of many philosophers of the European Enlightenment, pre-eminently Montesquieu and Herder. However, the example of Russia shows how applying these innovations in a specific case more often than not failed because, ‘despite these new scholarly and technical expectations, most history writing [in the Enlightenment] was motivated by religious or political partisanship’: Christian F. Otto, ‘history, idea of’ in John W. Yolton, Pat Rogers, Roy Porter and Barbara Stafford (eds) *The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1991), 222–4.


7 Custine’s text has remained in print up to the present day, with an increase of editions as the interest in the historical image of Russia escalated after the end of the Cold War.

8 [Goldmann], *Die Europäische Pentarchie*, 70.
Russia in the eyes of the European peoples. Nonetheless, readers across the continent, especially following the near sacking of Constantinople in 1829, willingly adopted this image of an overzealous aggressor on the eastern border, even though just a quarter of a century earlier Russian forces led by Tsar Alexander had been hailed as liberators from French despotism. The Marquis de Custine seconded this position; however, he included an important modification to the argument that had become fairly popular towards the middle of the century. Custine had, in 1839, travelled to Russia where he spent little more than two months in Petersburg and Moscow. Throughout the following four years he compiled a voluminous treatise combining his personal observations with historical accounts and political prognoses. The conclusion he reached was that the aggressive foreign policy of the Tsarist Empire would always be restrained by the country’s cultural and intellectual backwardness, and therefore its dependency on the import of ideas and know-how from the West. For a long time then, this image of the ‘colossus with clay feet’ would come to dominate the perception of Russia, and may even still be regarded as part of the collective imagination of the western world. To gain insight into the impact and longevity of this representation, it is necessary to trace its origins back to its roots in Enlightenment thought.

I

For many European thinkers of the eighteenth century, the Russian theme was a much appreciated discursive field for deliberations on social and political reform. More generally, they ‘explored and exploited’ the ambiguous situation of Eastern Europe on the semantic borderline between Europe and Asia,

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9 The lasting ambiguity of the text is largely owed to the failure to disclose the author’s identity. The supposed authorship of Nikolaj Greč might second the assumption that the reader is presented with authentic Russian propaganda, Greč having been the well-known editor of the largest Petersburg journal with close connections to the Russian court and Benkendorff’s Third Section. Most often, however, the "Pentarchie" is attributed to a certain ‘von Goldmann’, obviously implying an author with a Jewish background, which again raises further questions. Ultimately, these circumstances merit a separate investigation.

10 A summary of immediate reactions to the original publication may be found in Friedrich Giehne, Glossen zu der Schrift über die europäische Pentarchie (Stuttgart, 1840).

11 Martin Malia, Russia Under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum (London, 1999), 87.

fitting it into a scheme of backwardness and development’ in accordance with the premises of Enlightenment thought. Most notably, this enabled them to criticise the autocratic forms of government they themselves were subject to without the risk of becoming subject to domestic scrutiny. Russia thus took on the part of the unprogressive state clouded in medieval darkness to be contrasted with a desired enlightened government, both in the Baron de Montesquieu’s (1689–1755) Réflexions sur la monarchie universelle (1730) and in Voltaire’s (1694–1778) Histoire de Charles XII (1731). The personalised conception of history characteristic of early Enlightenment thought—attributing historical development exclusively to the actions of ‘great individuals’—prevented both authors from considering social particularities as a means of describing the cultural otherness of the Russian people. Peter the Great (1672–1725), to Montesquieu ‘the most barbarous of all men’ (‘le plus barbare de tous les hommes’), was alone to be held responsible for leading his subjects away from an ideal form of government and thus for Russia’s projected demise in the long run. In accordance with most of his contemporaries, Montesquieu was convinced that man is the same at any given time or place—‘les hommes se ressemblent partout’—and it is the legislators’ fault alone should the people not amount to more: ‘C’est la faute du législateur s’ils ne valent mieux.’

This train of thought was taken up by Voltaire, who reduced history to an ongoing antagonism of reason and irrationality, and for whom the ‘civilizing of Russia was … a matter of importing arts across the continent.’ In accordance with this dichotomy, Voltaire attributes Russian backwardness to the lack of ‘the principle virtue’ (‘la principale vertu’) in the sovereign who would have been in the position to reform the country. Yet the absence of ‘humanité’, the key virtue of Enlightenment thought, in the

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15 See Friedrich Meinecke, Die Entstehung des Historismus (2 vols, Munich and Berlin, 1936), I, 87f.
16 Wolff, Inventing Eastern Europe, 205.
17 ‘Humanitarianism, or—more properly speaking—its growth, was, whatever else may be said of their writings, the unifying aim of Enlightenment thinkers … Enlightenment thinkers were by and large hopeful that the reforms they were campaigning for would make for a more opulent, more civilized, more secure future, characterized by humane practices and institutions and the spirit of humanitarianism among its inhabitants.’ Sylvana Tomaselli, ‘humanitarianism’ in Yolton et al. (eds) The Blackwell Companion to the Enlightenment, 228–9.
character of Peter the Great had prevented the nation from progressing in a way similar to that of western European countries.¹⁸

A more differentiated appreciation of Russian affairs, less dependent on the teleological thinking characteristic of many Enlightenment projects, might have been expected from either Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) or Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803). Both had come to distinguish between the overall course of history towards ‘perfection’ and the necessity to evaluate each epoch and each nation according to how they met the respective challenges they faced. Yet when considering Russia specifically, Rousseau’s thought relapsed into the dualistic notions of his era, holding on to the presupposition that there exists but one cultural standard which alone may further the progress of a nation. Peter’s failure lay in his improperly implementing this programme, and at an inconvenient point in time too: ‘the Russians will never be truly policed, because they had been policed too early.’¹⁹ Peter … did not possess the original genius … he sought to civilize the people when all that was necessary was to drill it’ (‘Les Russes ne seront jamais vraiment policiés, parce qu’ils l’ont été trop tot. Pierre … n’avait pas le vrai génie … il a voulu civiliser [le peuple] quand il ne falloit que l’aguerrir’).²⁰ At its core, however, this diagnosis—and the same goes for the assessments made by Montesquieu and Voltaire—was less an appeal directed at the Russian people than a warning addressed to European monarchs. Only by immediately and fully implementing the programme of Enlightenment could a similar corruption of subjects and the subsequent barbarisation of society be averted.

¹⁸ Voltaire, *Œuvres complètes* (52 vols., Paris, 1877ff.), XVI, 164. Later in his life, Voltaire published an extensive History of the Russian Empire under Peter the Great (vol. 1 in 1759; vol. 2 in 1763) which, although still committed to the distinction of enlightened and non-enlightened states, was much more favourable to the first Russian Emperor and, especially, his successor Elizabeth. But the change was rather quantitative than qualitative, as Russia was now merely considered to be a less deficient version of the ideal state pictured by the French Enlightenment. Furthermore, the circumstance that original documents on the rule of Peter the Great as well as valuable furs had been conveyed to the author by Elizabeth’s favourite Shuvalov need to be taken into account when evaluating the text (See Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, 206). Notably, Voltaire’s colleague and friend d’Alembert expressed privately ‘that the work “makes one vomit by the baseness and platitude of its eulogies”’. Ibid.

¹⁹ ‘In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries la police signified enlightened governance, that is, the promotion of civil order in the state, the rational regulation of law and the economy, and the fostering of refined social norms.’ Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes*, 28.

Herder, the great intellectual reformer of his age, followed a similar agenda. In *Journal of my Voyage in the Year 1769* (first published 1846), an early text which already contained key concepts of Herder’s later designs for universal education, the Tsarist Empire features prominently. Herder takes his cue from critics of the purportedly imitative character of the Russians. It is exactly this nature, he suggests, that will eventually help transplant the seed of Enlightenment from the declining western nations to youthful Russia where the movement towards cultural perfection shall be concluded:

> In this lust for imitation, in this childish addiction to innovation I see nothing but the positive disposition of a nation which is educating itself, and is on the right path towards educating itself … Always, Peter the Great will remain the creator of the dawn and a possible day; noon is yet to arrive, and with it the great work of leading the ‘culture of a nation to perfection!’ (Ich sehe, in dieser Nachahmungsbegehrde, in dieser kindischen Neuerungssucht nichts als gute Anlage einer Nation, die sich bildet, und auf dem rechten Wege bildet … Peter der große bleibt immer Schöpfer, der die Morgenröte und einen möglichen Tag schuf; der Mittag bleibt noch aufgehoben und das große Werk ‘Kultur einer Nation zur Vollkommenheit!’).²¹

Thus Herder’s writings, too, confer very little concrete information about the Russian nation yet a lot about the country he imagines might successfully carry out his ambitions of universal education.

In the writings of the most prominent thinkers of the European Enlightenment, Russia was more often than not reduced to a discursive otherworld. It had become a means to argue the case for one’s own cultural achievements and projects by contrasting them with what was perceived as a trailing competitor in the teleological race towards human perfectibility. At the outset of the nation-building process that would determine much of the history of the nineteenth and twentieth century, future conflicts were being intellectually prepared.

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II

Geoffrey Carnall has pointed out that in Enlightenment Scotland historical writing had earlier and more thoroughly than on the continent come to appreciate political, social and cultural otherness.\(^{22}\) To be sure, the historiography of such figures as Adam Ferguson (1723–1816) and William Robertson (1721–93) was methodologically much indebted to the works of their French contemporaries, most notably Montesquieu’s *Spirit of the Laws* (1748).\(^{23}\) Yet they added significantly to his approach by even more emphatically insisting on the necessity ‘to focus attention on the way human societies are constantly changing, but doing so at a variable rate, so that nations coexist in very different phases of social development. Such studies … helped to modify radically the expectation of what was meant by the writing of history.’\(^{24}\) Ultimately, this was the historicist perspective Herder and Rousseau had been unable to apply in their essays on Russia, and a consequence of the particular problems Scottish society was facing in the eighteenth century. In their attempts to modernise the country, Scottish thinkers and politicians alike had to navigate around two possible areas of conflict which had the potential of undermining any movement towards social reform: ‘the Scottish Enlightenment was in its opening phase chiefly preoccupied with the great pair of problems opened by the Union—on the one hand how to commercialise the Lowlands without corrupting their Presbyterian principles, and on the other hand how to presbyterianise the Highlands and Islands without corrupting their Gaelic values.’\(^{25}\) A heightened sensitivity towards the historical and geographical factors determining the specific constitution of peoples and nations was the outcome, as well as a more differentiated appreciation of cultural otherness. The writings on Russia by Scottish authors of the era bear witness to the impact of this intellectual innovation.

As most European nations were establishing close cultural and industrial


\(^{23}\) See especially James Moore, ‘Montesquieu and the Scottish Enlightenment’ in Rebecca E. Kingston (ed.), *Montesquieu and His Legacy* (New York, 2009), 179–98. In *An Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), Ferguson wrote that ‘when I recollect what the President Montesquieu has written, I am at a loss to tell why I should treat of human affairs.’ He excused himself for proceeding with his *Essay* on the grounds that his thoughts were ‘more to the comprehension of ordinary capacities, because I am more on the level of ordinary men’. Ibid., 184.

\(^{24}\) Carnall, ‘Historical Writing in the Later Eighteenth Century’, 214.

ties with Russia, the Scots too pursued the lucrative exchange of goods and know-how with the Tsarist Empire. Civil and military technology from Scotland came to play a considerable part in the modernisation of the country; a development which accounted for the presence of quite a few Scottish visitors and emigrants in the ‘German city’ (i.e. the international quarter of St Petersburg). Among these were entrepreneurs and their skilled workers commissioned by the Tsar for the execution of particularly elaborate engineering projects, as well as soldiers of fortune who would at times serve in the highest ranks of the Russian army.

Tsar Peter’s first successful large-scale campaign against the Turks, the sacking of the fortress of Azov on the Black Sea in 1696, was essentially decided in favour of the Russians through a stratagem devised by General Patrick Gordon (1635–99) of Auchleuchries in Aberdeenshire. This Scottish soldier of fortune, after fighting in the Swedish and Polish army, had entered the Russian service in 1661 and went on to become a general in the host of Peter the Great and, to the end of his life, was one of the Emperor’s closest political advisors. Under the reign of the Empress Catherine, one Sir Samuel Greig (1736–88) of Inverkeithing in Fife was decorated for the part he played in destroying the Turkish fleet in the battle of Chesme in the Aegean Sea in 1770. Following further military success, he rose to the rank of full admiral and received the order of St Nevskij as well as the order of St Vladimir, two of the most prestigious decorations in the Russian Empire. Greig ended his life as commander of the military docks of Kronstadt, where his path would cross that of another enterprising Scotsman. In the 1770s, the Russian government had succeeded in attracting workers from the famous Carron works in Glasgow, primarily to improve the technology of the cannon used on the war vessels of the Russian navy. Among these men, the most noteworthy newcomer to Petersburg was Charles Gascoigne (1738–1806), until then manager of the Carron works. He introduced major innovations to the

26 For a first-hand account of the siege of Azov, see Alexander Gordon, The History of Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia, to which is Prefixed a Short General History of the Country from the Rise of that Monarchy and an Account of the Author’s Life (2 vols, London and Aberdeen, 1755), I, 107ff.
29 Anthony G. Cross, ‘Scoto-Russian Contacts in the Reign of Catherine the Great
armament of the Russian fleet, supervised the installation of a steam pump for the dry docks in Kronstadt (then esteemed a wonder of its age) and, probably his greatest accomplishment, arranged for Russia’s first steamship to be built. Gascoigne was eventually raised to the rank of a knight of the order of St Vladimir and spent his retirement as proprietor of 2,000 serfs awarded to him by Emperor Paul. The successful careers of foreigners in the Russian service not only indicated how Europe was growing together towards the end of the eighteenth century but also reflected the Tsarist Empire’s rise to power. A most remarkable state had emerged on the border between Europe and Asia which induced the curiosity of the philosophes, but also the public in general, entailing the composition of a multitude of treatises on the culture and history of the Russians.

One of the first Scotsmen to provide British readers with a thorough first-hand account of the Russian state of affairs was Alexander Gordon (1669–1752) of Achintoul in Aberdeenshire. He too was an enterprising soldier who had made his fortune in the service of the Tsar, attaining the rank of a Major-General before returning to Scotland in the early 1700s. In 1755, as the continent still emphasised the barbarous elements of the first Russian Emperor’s reign, Gordon’s quite different History of Peter the Great, Emperor of Russia was posthumously published in Aberdeen. Most generally, his account, which naturally abounds with descriptions of battles and military evaluations, contains opinions which, at the time, were widespread in Britain and Europe. Foremost, he concurred with his contemporaries in acknowledging that the rule of Peter virtually constituted an oriental despotism: ‘in short, there is nothing bad in the country but the government, which is too despotic: a man is neither sure of his life, nor can he call what he has his own, as all depends on the will and pleasure of the prince.’ Yet when comparing Gordon’s assessment to that of his French and German contemporaries, a clear change in tone can be made out: ‘there is nothing bad in the country’, he states—this goes especially for the Tsar’s subjects, whom he regards as the monarch’s main and most valuable resource for the future development of the Empire. He goes on to claim that ‘the Russians are of a vigorous and healthy constitution, able to undergo all manner of hardships and fatigue; obedient and submissive to their Prince, and have become of late, lovers of martial discipline: all these


30 Gordon, The History of Peter the Great.
31 Ibid., I, 7.
things make this Emperor one of the most powerful princes on earth’. The author thus qualifies a wide-spread prejudice permeating European public opinion in the eighteenth and much of the nineteenth century by no longer dismissing the Russian people as submissive simpletons; a state which European intervention could at best alleviate.

In the eyes of Gordon, the Russian national character contained a positive disposition which, although differing from the qualities of the average Frenchman or Englishman, would be the cornerstone of the Tsar’s efforts to form his dominion into a great power. Peter himself, he continues, had very early realised that here lay his strongest asset and had thus cultivated it prudently and successfully: ‘tis not to be feared that ever the Russians will return to their old ways; the aged people are all dead, and the young so fond of the new, that it would be more difficult to bring them back to their old methods than it was for Tsar Peter to take them from them.’ But what is most striking about Gordon’s account is that the predicted growth of the Russian Empire does not evoke concerns similar to those later articulated in texts such as the Pentarchie. Rather, he seems to regard it as a very welcome development within an advancing state.

The national character of the Russian is again at the centre of attention in William Richardson’s (1743–1814) Anecdotes of the Russian Empire (1784). Richardson had spent the years from 1768 to 1772 in Russia as a tutor in the service of a British ambassador-extraordinary and was therefore independent from the goodwill of the Tsar’s administration and in no way compelled to moderation in the letters he wrote home, which later would make up the majority of the Anecdotes. Therein he exhibits a profound susceptibility to the social and cultural particularities of Russian society. As Harvey Pitcher argues, ‘the words which [the Scottish sociologist] Mac Rae uses of Ferguson—that “his moral concern drives him into sociology”—can be equally well applied

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32 Ibid., 4.
33 See, for example, the appraisal of August Wilhelm Schlegel, who had ‘avowed that the attempts of Slavs to create states without outside influence or help had mostly been failures. Contrasting these cases with the example of Russia as a Slavic state ruled by Germanic Norsemen, he noted that ‘an unmixed Slavic nation hardly can become anything very worthwhile.’ This was due to the fact, he observed, that ‘Slavs everywhere and under all circumstances are destined to slavery (a word which derives from them, without a doubt).’ Vejas G. Liulevicius, The German Myth of the East (Oxford, 2009), 60.
34 Gordon, The History of Peter the Great, II, 268f.
to Richardson’s attitude to Russian society.36 It is through this focus on the basic constitution of society rather than questions of power politics that the text arrives at a differentiated appreciation of Russian otherness: ‘the most interesting theme that emerges, indirectly, from the Anecdotes, is… the comparison between two societies, British and Russian at different stages of development, and the question of the gains and sacrifices that are made as a society becomes more advanced.’37 This leads Pitcher to conclude that ‘the Anecdotes [have] a strong claim to be regarded as the best work by a British writer on Russia during the eighteenth century.’38 Richardson, like Gordon, did not neglect the shortcomings of the Russian state and, as a strong supporter of British constitutionalism, vehemently rejected the autocratic government. However, his Anecdotes are anything but a political treatise; he is careful to draw a distinction between the character of the people and the national state of affairs and to distinguish Russian serfdom from Russian serfs. It is the condition of the latter that, ultimately, lies at the centre of attention in the investigation. The peasant population is reckoned to be the harbourage of the Empire’s national characteristics and virtues and, moreover, the future driving force behind all potential development. The slavery of the Russian peasant therefore receives unprecedented critical attention insofar as Richardson was interested in a social and psychological appraisal of their state. Accordingly, he challenged the then widespread assumption that submission into slavery and cultural backwardness were inherent to the Russian’s nature:

As a Russian has no property, can enjoy none of the fruits of his own labour more than is sufficient to preserve his existence, and can transmit nothing to his children but the inheritance of wretched bondage, he thinks of nothing beyond the present. You are not, of consequence, to expect among them much industry and exertion. Exposed to corporal punishment, and put on the footing of irrational animals, how can they possess that spirit and elevation of sentiment which distinguish the natives of a free state?39

In such a differentiated perspective, the introduction of Enlightenment

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Richardson, Anecdotes, 192.
principles could no longer provide the simple solution to the problems the
Russian Empire was facing at the close of the eighteenth century. As if he had
anticipated the outcome of the complete and instantaneous overthrow of the
autocratic government in France two decades later, Richardson dismissed the
thought of all at once abolishing serfdom in Russia: ‘To give liberty at once to
twenty millions of slaves, would be to let loose on mankind so many robbers
and spoilers. Before slaves can receive freedom in full possession, they must
be taught to know, relish, and use its blessings.’

Yet—and this is easily the most remarkable aspect of the *Anecdotes*—even
the ideals of the Enlightenment themselves, in the eyes of Richardson, seem
to have lost the right to be considered as the teleological focal point of all
social development. The author is very critical of the idea of establishing
a civil society akin to those of the European nation states in Russia: ‘I am
inclined to view the Russian state as a great oriental empire: and if I may
trust certain symptoms in the character of the nation and its rulers…it will
again return…into its former oriental condition.’ But for Richardson these
cultural differences did not amount to different levels of progress according
to the terms of the Enlightenment philosophers of history. Accordingly, he
emphasised that Russia’s return to its ‘oriental condition’ would in no way equal
a regression, stating his belief that the ‘full completion of the feudal system, as
it arose in the west of Europe’, need be regarded as a contingent ‘singularity
in the history of mankind’. As much as the author was committed to the idea
of European civilisation, he refused to draw as bleak a picture of the Tsarist
Empire as others did. He thus exerted sociological sensitiveness towards
Russian conditions which current scholarship argues emerged no earlier than
in the middle of the nineteenth century when the evolution of societies was
purportedly first appreciated as ‘a process so complex and protracted it could
be driven only by the “genius” of the people rather than by the initiatives of
the state.’ Indeed, Richardson sought to take all circumstances of Russian life
into account and remarked that ‘their social dispositions…and the total want
of care or concern about the future, give them the appearance of having great
spritliness and good humour, and of possessing no inconsiderable share of

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40 Ibid., 194.
41 Ibid., 375. It is remarkable that this assessment dates from the reign of Catherine the
Great, a period in the history of Russia in which the Empire seemingly most strove
to assimilate towards European culture.
42 Ibid., 374f.
43 Martin Malia, *Russia Under Western Eyes*, 125.
enjoyment.’

This awareness in particular was noted by Pitcher, who suggested that, in such instances, the *Anecdotes* adumbrate a conflict arising from a new emphasis ‘on the individual, on his capacity to improve himself materially and morally’ in late eighteenth-century Britain: ‘with this new emphasis, something was bound to pass out of British life; certain qualities of sociability and good humour would have to be sacrificed if one acted on principles calculated to distinguish oneself from other people.’

Richardson was quite aware of the change taking place in his country, ‘and conscious that there may be something to be said in psychological terms for the Russian attitude.’ Thus, his critical appreciation of cultural and social otherness had led him to an exploration of alternative formations of society at the dawn of the modern era, rather than a classification of nations along the lines of the Enlightenment rhetoric of progress.

Much like Richardson, the Russian correspondent for the Edinburgh journal, *The Bee or Literary Weekly Intelligencer* which appeared in the early 1790s, would move away from a personalised conception of history and turn his attention to the base of Russian society. Matthew Guthrie (1743–1807), a Scottish doctor in the service of the Tsars, under the alias of ‘Arcticus’, regularly supplied domestic readers with first-hand accounts of Russian conditions. At a time when the most popular publication on the Empire was Jacob Staehlin’s *Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great*, he too sought in his writings to capture a distinct Russian national character as he observed it in the habits and everyday life of the peasant population. The main intention of his contributions was thus to acquaint the journal’s readers with the originality and the accomplishments of a foreign people and to document the achievements particular to Russian culture.

The most interesting aspect of Guthrie’s work was, however, a hypothesis that from the time he published it in *The Bee* underlies most of his research into the culture and customs of the Russians. He believed he had identified a direct link between classical Greek and contemporary Russian culture, suggesting that the latter was the legitimate heir to the former. As he wrote nearly two decades later: ‘whilst collecting the curious information printed in the 9th and 18th Volumes of Dr James Anderson’s *Bee*, under the title “Arts Practised by

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44 Richardson, *Anecdotes*, 212f.
46 Ibid.
47 Jacob Staehlin, *Original Anecdotes of Peter the Great, Collected from the Conversation of Several Persons of Distinction at Petersburgh and Moscow* (London, 1788).
the Peasants in the Russian Villages” … the number of analogies [between the two cultures] noticed in this work rushed most unexpectedly upon us’. Before further evaluating this assessment, it seems first of all necessary to discriminate between Guthrie’s supposition and similar hypotheses of other European thinkers who suggested comparable links with regard to their respective cultures (such as German nationalists in the era leading up to the foundation of the German Empire). Guthrie was neither a misguided classical scholar nor an overzealous ideologue, attempting to directly link Goethe with Sophocles or Ariosto with Homer, but an ethnographer by passion, comparing ploughing techniques and harvesting tools. What drove his research was the determination to open a new perspective on Russia differing from the ‘common place opinion of hasty travellers that the manners and amusements of the Russian villages were barbarous and of Tartar origins’. He thus broke through the then commonplace assumption that cultures were either European and progressive or barbarous and backwards. By overcoming this Enlightenment dichotomy he introduced a third place where a culture inherently different from that of Europe may nonetheless be appreciated beyond the rhetoric of colonialism.

The desire to find a more accurate representation of Russia as a whole led Guthrie into ethnography much as it drove Richardson into sociology and he explicitly defends his approach: ‘we have no Apology to make for choosing [sic] the lower classes of Society in Russia for the subject of our inquiries’, he wrote, ‘because they alone are unchanged by foreign intercourse and manners.’ Even though this last assumption was not altogether new, the conclusion he drew—that this circumstance need not be regarded as the bane of a Russia struggling to assimilate to western culture—in fact was. K. A. Papmehl justly points out that it would be easy to argue that ‘much of Guthrie’s writing on Slavonic and Russian history belongs…to the realm of speculation, and sometimes even fantasy.’ However, the strength of a dissertation may at times stem from the quality of its main ideas alone. As Papmehl continues, Guthrie’s ‘principal merit seems to lie in his showing the other face of Russia—other than the then prevailing image of a despotic semi- Asiatic and barbarous enemy of freedom and progress propagated by the

49 Ibid.
50 Ibid., fol. 178.
51 Papmehl, Matthew Guthrie, 178.
accounts of writers and travellers sympathetic to the French Revolution. Here, Guthrie once more meets with Richardson in pointing out that the Russian Empire may in fact amount to more than merely a deficient version of the purportedly enlightened states of Europe.

III

Comparing the respective takes on Russia by Gordon, Richardson and Guthrie with the canonised image that emerged in the early nineteenth century, it proves difficult to ascertain any direct influence of the former in shaping the latter. But while an immediate impact is not distinguishable, an indirect but nonetheless noteworthy and peculiar connection may yet be established by regarding these texts in the context of historical writing in Enlightenment Scotland in general. Scottish thinkers devised an innovative approach to historiography (which would later come to bloom fully in the works of Thomas Babbington Macaulay) by significantly widening the scope of their inquiries: ‘some of the most characteristic monuments of the Scottish Enlightenment are dissertations on aspects of society viewed in a wide geographical and historical context.’ It was exactly this innovation that would subsequently influence and render possible the historical novel of Sir Walter Scott (1771 – 1832): ‘where Scott does show himself to be a genuine disciple of the historians [of the Scottish Enlightenment] is in his concern with the motives informing his characters’ political actions … It is in conjuring up such sentiments that Scott gives his readers a glimpse of history that is, as Hume would have put it, “entire”.’ Scott’s great innovation was the recourse to a wealth of material for the ‘derivation of the individuality of characters from the historical peculiarity of their age,’ and Georg Lucács argues that it was ‘no accident’ that this new type of novel first emerged in Britain.

52 Ibid., 180.
54 Carnall, ‘Historical Writing’, 215.
55 Ibid., 217.
57 Lucács’ conflation of England and Scotland in his analysis of Scott’s novels, in addition to several other contentious points brought forward in The Historical Novel, is problematic at best. However, these justified concerns are generally superseded by the insightfulness of Lucács’ key arguments and the sustained heuristic potential they exhibit as they continue to be considered by contemporary scholarship. See for
In the eyes of the historical ideologists of progress, England [appeared] as the classic example of historical development in their sense. The fact that England had fought out its bourgeois revolution in the seventeenth century and had from then on experienced a peaceful, upward development, lasting over centuries … showed England to be the practical, model example for the new style of historical interpretation.\footnote{Lucács, The Historical Novel, 31.}

In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution (1688–9) the population of the British Isles, in an unprecedented manner, had come to experience historical change not as a \textit{longue durée} but as an immediate incursion on everyday life. Subsequently, the relationship to history itself required a reassessment. Not only was it now possible to regard it as man-made and contingent but, moreover, as a potential subject for exegesis. In this respect, the accomplishment of the Waverley novels lay in how they had managed to ‘dramatize the discovery of history’s dynamism.’\footnote{Maxwell, The Historical Novel in Europe, 59.} At the same time, they had ‘rescued, from the overwhelming march of time and change of manner, these historical representations of a state of society which even now is curious, but which in no long period will become “a tale of other times”;’ as one reviewer of \textit{Waverley} wrote.\footnote{John Wilson Croker, \textit{Quarterly Review} (August 1816), cited in John O. Hayden, \textit{Scott: The Critical Heritage} (London, 1970), 103.} Scott had thus succeeded in creating a narrative which synthesised the particularities of the Scottish heritage with the depiction of the historical movements that had superseded it.

As the Waverley novels subsequently became a major success throughout Europe during the surge of nationalist historiography in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars (1803–15), their underlying structure was identified by many as the ideal means to construct an image of the nation: ‘in Scott’s historical novels, writers [and readers] across Europe could find analogies for the historic struggles of their own societies, and develop a fictional articulation of the anteriority of the national self for the first time in their history.’\footnote{Murray G. H. Pittock (ed.), \textit{The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe} (London, 2006), 6.} Yet as many of these ‘imagined communities’\footnote{C. f. Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities}.} lacked the tradition of historical writing that had shaped the work of Scott, the successful emulation of his narrative example Richard Maxwell, \textit{The Historical Novel in Europe, 1650–1950} (Cambridge, 2009), 63–7; Jerome de Groot, \textit{The Historical Novel} (London and New York, 2010), 24–9.
strategies within different socio-historical contexts would take its time. For example, Wilhelm Hauff’s *Lichtenstein*—the first German historical novel—was published only in 1826, and the Italian Alessandro Manzoni’s *I promessi sposi* in 1827. Nevertheless, the desire for historical narratives that similarly combined the postulates of *prodesse* and *delectare* had been excited—a desire to which authors and booksellers at times reacted by accordingly labeling works which in no way fulfilled the requirements of the genre. It was only due to these circumstances that a now mostly forgotten novel of little literary and historical value could have had a considerable impact on the image of Russia in the western world.

At the outset of the nineteenth century, Russian literature in translation was virtually non-existent in Europe, as was knowledge of the Russian language. It was only a sudden interest in the Tsarist Empire sparked by the defeat of Napoleon’s *Grande Armée* (1812) that eventually prompted the first large-scale translation of Russian verse. However, Sir John Bowring’s *Specimens of the Russian Poets* (1821) was received rather coolly, most likely due to the lack of a tradition of translating Russian poetry, but also because it contained few examples of the works of the poets whose fame had preceded their writings in the west, foremost amongst which were Aleksandr Pushkin (1799–1837) and Vassilij Shukovskij (1783–1852). On the other hand, it would subsequently prove difficult to mediate the otherness of the works of such authors as Pushkin to a European public. As the literary critic Varnhagen von Ense (1785–1858) stated in a review of *Eugene Onegin*:

> We confess that, although voluntarily following the individual moods in effect, and enjoying a great satisfaction from the whole, we are incapable of penetrating the actual basic disposition that drove the poet to this conception. For us, who are approaching it from the outside, it contains something that cannot be entirely dissolved.  

Above all, the language barrier as much as the long-standing exclusion from the European literary market would put off the reception of Russian authors for yet some time.

Eventually, it was the prose novel that enabled a literary exchange between east and west. However, this was a genre as of yet not established in the

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Russian Empire and only in 1829 would the first of its kind appear in St Petersburg: Mikhail Zagoskin’s (1789–1852) Iurii Miloslavskij and Faddej Bulgarin’s (1789–1859) Ivan Vyshigin. Both are today largely forgotten and the latter is an especially poor specimen, combining an unimaginative use of the language Karamzin and Pushkin had just recently brought to first bloom with outdated motifs of the novelistic tradition of the eighteenth century. Nonetheless, it still retains its place in every major history of Russian literature due to its enormous success not only within the Empire but also amongst the European public. Already by 1832, it had been translated into English,65 French,66 twice into German,67 and was ‘followed later by translations into Polish, Swedish, Italian, Dutch and Czech.’68 Several decades would pass before the work of a Russian author would once again receive similar attention on the European continent. Prior to the translation of Turgenev and Dostoyevsky, Vyshigin would remain the largest success of a Russian work of fiction in Western Europe.

The novel begins by depicting the adventurous circumstances that bring the foundling Ivan to Moscow where he is recognised and taken in by his alleged aunt who only much later discloses that she is in fact his mother. When still a peasant girl, she had engaged in a love affair with a count who, however, had died in battle before the marriage could be carried out. Ivan now receives questionable instruction into the manners of the grand monde. When his love moves to the Russian borderlands, he chases after her only to find her in the arms of another and to be robbed and nearly killed by his associates. He is rescued by the chief of a Mongolian tribe and follows him to the steppes where he spends a year living according to the customs of the uncivilised yet inherently good-natured tribesmen. When Ivan returns to Petersburg, he once more gets entangled with his first love and ends up engaging in fraudulent gaming activities to support her luxurious lifestyle before she finally escapes to Paris with yet another man. Ivan now finds an adequate wife whose high morals he comes to cherish above all. He successfully prosecutes his claim for

65 Thaddeus Bulgarin, Ivan Vejeeghen, or, Life in Russia, trans. George Ross (1829; 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1831).
68 Gilman H. Alkire, The Historical Novels of Faddej Bulgarin (PhD Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1966), 27.
the inheritance his father had left him before his death, takes up the latter’s noble title and ends his life on a country estate in the company of his mother, his wife and his best friend.

What was it that made this third-class novel so appealing to the more refined taste of European readers? Ultimately, it should not have escaped their attention that Ivan Vysbigin was an amalgam of the literary traditions providing the plotlines for Henry Fielding’s *Tom Jones* (1749) and the Abbé Prévost’s *Manon Lescaut* (1731). The text amounts to little more than ‘a series of separate pictures of manners and adventures, connected only by the slender thread of the hero’s continuing life drama’, and even though it ‘appeared well into the nineteenth century, in more than just a few ways it belongs to the eighteenth.’

It was in fact a most conventional adventure novel that even featured the traditional ‘utopian interlude, dominated by a noble savage.’ It was but a poor imitation. Most likely, the key to the novel’s success and wide reception lie in the unwarranted attribution of the genre label with the highest currency at the time: *Vysbigin* had received the trademark of being a ‘novel in the style of Waverley’.

It was accordingly received as a poetically transformed, but nonetheless truthful account of Russian culture and history. Incidentally, the novel thus became suited to reinforce the undifferentiated image of Russia prevalent in Europe since the middle of the eighteenth century and reflected in the writings of Custine and the Pentarchist. It suggested that Russia merits consideration only in relation to European progress and that the Empire, consequently, need be regarded as a backward state dependant on the import of European thought, culture and technology. Thus, once more, an enlightenment project—in this case the historicist appreciation of cultural otherness as a means to further intercultural understanding—had been reverted into its exact opposite. What should have led to a sensitisation of the reading public in fact congealed into a hegemonic discourse in which the semantics of the familiar were imposed on the other.

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69 Ibid., 27.
70 Ibid., 28.
Imagining India in the Waverley Novels¹

Sally Newsome

In 1810, four years before the publication of *Waverley*, Walter Scott wrote to his brother, confiding that ‘were Dundas to go out Governor to India & were he willing to take me with him in a good situation I would not hesitate (altho’ I by no means repine at my present situation) to pitch the Court of Session and the Book-sellers to the Devil & try my fortune in another climate.’² Scott never made this proposed journey to India. The furthest he travelled east was during his voyage to Malta in 1831, a year before his death. However, his imaginative attraction to and interest in India can be traced throughout the Waverley novels. While texts such as *Guy Mannering* and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ make vital and overt use of India as a plot device in terms of setting, Indian allusions are also scattered throughout Scott’s entire output as a novelist. In *Saint Ronan’s Well*, for example, the indomitable Scots landlady Meg Dods complains, “Nabobs indeed! the country’s plagued wi’ them—they have raised the price of eggs and poutry for twenty miles round.”³ During the opening epistle of *Redgauntlet*, Darsie Latimer puzzles over the mystery of his birth, writing to Alan Fairford:

Were it not that I recollect my poor mother in her deep widow’s weeds, with a countenance that never smiled but when she looked on me—and then, in such a wan and woeful sort, as the sun when he glances through an April cloud,—were it not, I say, that her mild and matron-like form and countenance forbid such a suspicion, I might think myself the son of some India Director, or rich citizen, who had more wealth than grace, and a handful of hypocrisy to boot, and who was breeding up privately, and obscurely enriching, one of whose existence he had some reason to be ashamed.⁴

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¹ I would like to acknowledge the support I have received from the Arts and Humanities Research Council which has enabled me to undertake my doctoral research.


⁴ Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet* (1824), ed. G. A. M. Wood with David Hewitt (Edinburgh,
This essay will explore Scott’s imaginative mapping of India in his prose narratives, focusing on two works that straddle the career of the Author of Waverley: Guy Mannering, published in 1815 (a year after Waverley) and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’, published in 1827 (a year after the financial crash that left Scott insolvent). As I shall demonstrate, in the Waverley novels India is frequently constructed as a dream-like space which is vulnerable to appropriation and domination. Both of the texts under discussion present India as a potent source of wealth and imaginative inspiration. Consequently Scott’s novels may be positioned within British Orientalist discourses: as Ros Ballaster has noted, images of India as a dream of riches and exoticism have prevailed in European literature since the seventeenth century. However, as shall be argued, within Scott’s texts India also becomes potentially incomprehensible and dangerous. As the opening section of this essay will suggest, this threatening depiction of India reflects Scott’s own vexed attitude towards the place where several close friends and relatives died while in the service of the East India Company. The following reading of Guy Mannering will examine how the competing narratives of Britons returning from the East served to open up a shifting depiction of India as an unstable sphere containing both rich resources and dangerous alterity. Furthermore, the construction of India as a dream-like illusion reaches its height in ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’; a text in which the action of imagining India is foregrounded by both characters and narrator alike. As I will propose, by repeatedly associating India with the dream-like the Waverley novels resist an essential and homogeneous version of India, while simultaneously interrogating the discourses of literary Orientalism that present a constructed and imagined East.

I

Before examining the representation of India in Guy Mannering and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’, this article will first explore some of the biographical material that supports a reading of Scott’s Orientalist texts as coloured by ambivalence and anxiety. Scott’s letters and prose works reveal a vexed attitude towards India and, furthermore, towards British imperial activity.

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there. As Claire Lamont notes, ‘India was never out of the news in Scott’s youth’, and Scott could hardly have escaped some awareness of the activities of the East India Company after the impeachment trial of the Governor-General Warren Hastings between 1788 and 1795.6 Both Meg’s complaint about the economic chaos caused by returning Britons and Darsie’s fear that he may be the son of a Company employee reflect popular conceptions of the rapacious and avaricious nabob, a stereotype ‘applied to the servants of the East India Company who had returned to Britain equipped with ill-gotten prosperity, an insatiable appetite for luxury, and a desire to climb into elite spheres of power and influence’.7 However, Scott’s knowledge of British activities in India was greatly increased by his many personal ties with the East India Company.8 As both a child and adult, Scott witnessed many friends’ and relatives’ careers in India; amongst a long list of employees of the Company was Scott’s brother, Robert; his nephew, also called Walter Scott; and his brother-in-law, Charles Carpenter. Additionally, Scott recommended several young men, including his godson Walter Scott Terry, to his acquaintances in India. Scott’s connections extended to the highest level of Company administration: he described Governor-General Lord Minto as ‘one of my most intimate friends in that rank of life’.9 Scott perceived his influence with these men to be of such consequence that in 1808 he wrote to his brother-in-law Charles saying:

The present President of the Board of Controul in particular is my early and intimate friend since we carried our satchels together to the High School of Edinburgh… I am sure Robt. Dundas would like to serve my brother. I am also very well acquainted with your present Governor-General Lord Minto… If you see him and choose to mention our close friendship and connections, I am sure you will not be the worse received.10

6 Claire Lamont, ‘Historical Note to The Surgeon’s Daughter’ in Walter Scott, Chronicles of the Canongate (1827), ed. Claire Lamont (London, 2003), 361.
9 Walter Scott to Dr Leyden, 5 July 1806 in The Letters of Walter Scott, I, 309.
10 Walter Scott to Charles Carpenter, 8 February 1808, ibid., II, 14.
As this letter testifies, Scott implicitly supported British imperialism in India by playing an active role in the promotion of his friends’ careers. He was clearly aware of the potential success a career in India could offer to young Scots. Nonetheless, his correspondence reveals an unease that frequently underlies discussion of India and Indian affairs. In 1824, he wrote a letter to Sir Robert Peel that displays both cynicism and anxiety in its consideration of the ‘exportation trade’ of young men between Scotland and India:

You are aware that Scotland is in every sense a breeding not a feeding country and that we send our children and relatives to India as we send our black cattle to England. I can only say that since I dealt in this exportation trade my cargoes from John Leyden’s time downward have usually been of good quality and have given satisfaction to Mother Company. My present stock of griffins is very promising.¹¹

The irony directed towards ‘Mother Company’ is easily discerned in Scott’s commodification of his countrymen into cattle and cargo. Furthermore, the apparently humorous tone of the letter is undercut by Scott’s allusion to John Leyden, exposing a current of embittered cynicism. Leyden was a close friend of Scott who contributed towards Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border (1802–12) and was appointed as an assistant surgeon in Madras in 1803. In 1811, while on an expedition to Java, Leyden entered an unventilated library in search of oriental manuscripts and contracted a fever from which he subsequently died. Scott was clearly distressed upon hearing this news. His letters during late 1811 and early 1812 frequently turn to ‘poor John Leyden’.¹² Leyden’s death seems all the more tragic because, as Scott wrote in his memoir ‘John Leyden M.D.’, he was ‘perhaps the first British traveller that ever sought India, moved neither by the love of wealth nor of power, and who, despising alike the luxuries commanded by the one, and the pomp attached to the other, was guided solely by the wish of extending our knowledge of Oriental literature, and distinguishing himself as its most successful cultivator.’¹³ This tribute elevates the memory of the young Orientalist, while simultaneously condemning the general activities of the British in India as motivated by a desire for money and domination.

¹¹ Walter Scott to Sir Robert Peel, 12 July 1824, ibid., VIII, 331.
¹² Walter Scott to Matthew Weld Hartstonge, 22 December 1811, ibid., III, 47.
When Scott wrote to Peel in 1824, Leyden had been dead for thirteen years: clearly, in Scott’s view, the ‘cargo’ that was required by ‘Mother Company’ was not always guaranteed to find success in India. Indeed, the fatalities of close friends and relations continued throughout Scott’s lifetime. In 1787, he wrote in his memoirs that his brother Robert ‘made two voyages to the east and died a victim to the climate.’\(^{14}\) Walter Scott Terry died whilst serving as a lieutenant in the Bombay artillery and John Lockhart’s brother Richard drowned in the Bay of Bengal.

These deaths affected Scott to the degree that when the possibility arose of his own son Walter going east with his regiment, Scott’s ambivalence towards India erupted into anxiety. As a civil servant, a career in India might have been permissible but Scott could not give his consent to his son going in a military capacity. He wrote:

> you can get neither experience in your profession nor credit nor wealth nor anything but an obscure death in storming the hill fort of some Rajah with an unpronounceable name or under the sabres of Hurry Punt, Bullocky Row or some such fellow’s half-starved black cavalry—or if you live it is but to come back 20 years hence a lieutenant or captain with a yellow face a diseased liver and not a rupee in your pocket to comfort you for broken health.\(^{15}\)

For ‘young men without connections or interest India is a good thing’, but that was not the situation of young Walter, son of the Author of Waverley and the Sheriff of Selkirkshire. As Scott wrote, ‘if you go to India you are entirely out of my reach and must lose every advantage which my connections might procure me.’\(^{16}\) Despite the large numbers of Scots in the country, many of whom were friends, India evidently remained for Scott a dangerous sphere, beyond the reach of his power and influence. He finished this impassioned letter with a postscript; ‘I question much if one of your officers sees British land again till his beard is grey. The custom is to keep cavalry abroad till they are reduced to skeletons to save expence in bringing them back’.\(^{17}\)

\(^{15}\) Walter Scott to Walter Scott, 1 May 1821 in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, VI, 433.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., VI, 434.
\(^{17}\) Ibid., VI, 435.
This letter forms one of Scott’s most overt articulations of the anxieties that generated his imaginative mapping of India in the Waverley novels. The evidence of Scott’s correspondence and prose works demonstrates that his conception of India is one dominated by ambiguity. This unease particularly focused on the uncertain fates of Britons in India, from the young Scottish men who were packed off to the East like cargo to the elderly soldiers who returned with ruined health and empty pockets. India, in Scott’s construction, could hold out the promise of a glittering career but equally it could bring corruption, violence and death.

II

The construction of India as a dangerous space which the British struggle to negotiate reflects a larger destabilization of imperial ideology that a number of critics have recognized in Scott’s Waverley novels. Such criticism responds in part to the influential theory of Edward W. Said. In his 1978 study Orientalism, Said defined the discursive field of Orientalism as ‘a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’,\(^{18}\) and used Scott’s novels to illustrate his conception of Orientalist discourse as internally consistent, promoting conceptions of an essential and inferior Orient. Said wrote, ‘even the most imaginative writers of an age, men like Flaubert, Nerval, or Scott, were constrained in what they could either experience of or say about the Orient. For Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, “us”) and the strange (the Orient, the East, “them”).’\(^{19}\)

However, Said’s viewpoint has been challenged by several readings that find instability in Scott’s construction of eastern spaces. James Watt, examining The Talisman and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’, argues that ‘these remarkable novels eschew the increasingly influential language of racial essentialism, and complicate the mythology of oriental despotism’, concluding that ‘it is difficult to translate such playful and disruptive works into more readable ideological terms’.\(^{20}\) Andrew Lincoln sees ‘the supposed superiority of the

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\(^{19}\) Ibid., 43.
\(^{20}\) James Watt, ‘Scott, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Romantic Orientalism’ in Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorenson (eds), Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism (Cambridge, 2004), 94.
western observer’ as ‘represented—and tested—in relation to oriental “others”’ in Scott’s prose fiction. He continues:

As an Anglo-Briton Scott probably shared this sense of superiority, and he saw the British operations in India as an important opportunity for Scots, including his own family. But his work is also informed by the earlier respect for oriental culture, and by his awareness of the English sense of superiority to their northern neighbours. Scott’s complex attitude generates a deeply ambivalent representation of cultural difference.\(^{21}\)

The disruptions and complexities that Watt and Lincoln recognise in Scott’s construction of Otherness and the Orient inform the present readings of \textit{Guy Mannering} and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’. Indeed, the indeterminacy and equivocation that both critics identify in Scott’s Orientalist texts can be connected with the Waverley novels’ mapping of India in terms of an illusionary dream. By depicting India as a deceptive dream-like sphere, Scott’s texts construct an ever-shifting Orient that resists monolithic ideological interpretation and essentialising discourses.

As indicated in the introduction to this article, Scott’s portrayal of India as a dreamscape reflected an established trope of British literary Orientalism. In her survey of Orientalist fiction, Ros Ballaster identifies and explores the prevalence of this trope of the ‘dream’ of India. Ballaster argues that ‘the specificity of the representation of “India” lies in this conjuring of the idea of a “dream” landscape ripe for appropriation but always enigmatic, indeed incomprehensible … India is a shape that shifts elusively away from the desiring subject, a brittle vulnerable illusion: a “dream of men awake” to the immense riches and power offered by the territory of India, but also to a risky alterity that may finally evade the covetous grasp.’\(^{22}\) While Ballaster’s analysis focuses upon eighteenth-century literature, such criticism offers an extremely useful framework for the interpretation of Scott’s Indian novels. The ambivalence that Scott expressed towards India in his letters is reflected in the Waverley novels’ construction of India as an illusionary space that conceals danger and evades western domination.

Set during the early 1780s, \textit{Guy Mannering} tells the story of three Britons who have just returned to Scotland from India. They are Colonel Guy

\(^{21}\) Andrew Lincoln, \textit{Walter Scott and Modernity} (Edinburgh, 2007), 91.

Mannering and his daughter Julia, and Harry Bertram, who is the long-lost heir to the Scottish estate of Ellangowan. As the novel is set entirely in Britain, the reader must piece together the characters’ experiences in India through their own personal narratives, most commonly through their letters which are interspersed throughout the novel. In *Guy Mannering*, therefore, India is a debatable space, located beyond the borders of the text, and constructed via the stories that returning Europeans tell. These stories, particularly the conflicting accounts of Julia Mannering and Guy Mannering, do not produce a construction of India as a fixed, ontologically stable space. Rather, the varied accounts of India contained in the narrative emphasise the instability of these characters’ oriental stories. As Tara Ghoshal Wallace notes, ‘just as it is difficult to uncover the true narrative among the multiple versions of a traumatic moment in Scotland, so it is about events in India.’23 According to Wallace, ‘the hyperbolic narratives woven around Indian experiences’ may be ‘dismissed by the careful reader’.24 Guy Mannering, Julia, and Harry Bertram can claim cultural authority due to the time they have spent in India but, as Wallace argues, the accounts they produce are nonetheless acts of imagining; ‘narratives which inevitably interweave European fantasies and Indian experiences.’25 The unreliable narratives produced by returning Britons open up India as a shifting sphere that is variously enriching, threatening and illusive. Consequently, the novel eschews a monolithic construction of an unchanging and essential India.

For the young and impressionable Julia Mannering, India offers the rich resources of romance. Writing to her friend Matilda, she constructs India as a potent source of imaginative inspiration:

You will call this romantic—but consider I was born in the land of talisman and spell, and my childhood lulled by tales which you can only enjoy through the gauzy frippery of a French translation. O Matilda, I wish you could have seen the dusky visages of my Indian attendants, bending in passive attention round the magic narrative, that flowed, half poetry, half prose, from the lips of the tale-teller. No wonder that European fiction sounds cold and meagre, after the wonderful effects which I have seen the romances of the East produce upon the hearers.26

24 Ibid., 322.
25 Ibid., 320.
The India that Julia describes is thus a land of creativity, magic and storytelling; a space ripe for appropriation for the western viewer and, indeed, the western novelist. Julia’s narrative is to a certain extent reinforced in the text through the emphasis placed on the creative talents of the returning Britons. Guy Mannering “draws beautifully” and writes poetry. Harry Bertram plays a flageolet, and alerts Julia to his arrival in England by playing her favourite Hindu air under her bedroom by moonlight. Julia teaches Lucy Bertram music and dancing and is a born storyteller, entertaining both Matilda and the reader with her epistles on life in India and Scotland. While Guy’s artistic talents may not necessarily have come from his lengthy sojourn in the East, those of Harry and Julia were presumably acquired while in India. Through the narrative’s association of India with creativity and the art of storytelling, *Guy Mannering* reflects the ‘the representation of India as a (re)source for fiction’ prevalent in British literature throughout the long eighteenth century and Romantic period.

The depiction of India as a rich source of creativity intersects with the numerous stories of Indian wealth that circulate in the novel. The neighbourhood of Ellangowan regards Colonel Mannering, an officer returning from India, as a rich nabob and though (as Wallace points out) ‘the text indicates that the bulk of Mannering’s money is inherited from his uncle’, it is clear that the combination of an English family fortune and career in India has made him very wealthy indeed. When Harry Bertram is restored to both the title and the debts of the estate of Ellangowan, Indian wealth certainly becomes the means for the regeneration of the estate, as the hero vows that ‘though he should be obliged again to go to India, every debt, justly and honourably due by his father, should be made good to the claimant’. In *Guy Mannering*, the available wealth of India becomes the means by which a British son can right his father’s Scottish debts. As Guy says, the rebuilding of the ruined estate of Ellangowan is made possible “with a few bags of Sicca rupees”.

However, the novel does not present an unproblematic depiction of India as a space rich in creative and material resources that is ripe for domination and appropriation. Julia’s description of India as a land of talisman and spell

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27 Ibid., 114.
31 Ibid., 354.
suggests illusion and enchantment. In Guy’s account of his time in India, illusion becomes intertwined with violence and potential corruption and the threatening alterity that exists alongside these rich resources becomes readily apparent. For Guy, the events that occur in India, most obviously the death of his wife Sophia constitute, in his words, “the catastrophe which has long embittered my life”, and it is a torture for him to revisit his memories of this time.32 In a long letter to his friend Mervyn, Guy depicts this eastern space as infectious, violent and ultimately fatal.

In Guy’s narrative, the experience of the Mannerings indicates how the dream of India can give way to dangerous illusions that threaten the emotional and psychological tranquillity of invading Europeans. Guy recounts the breakdown of his marriage after a corrupt cadet suggested that Harry Bertram’s courtship of Julia is directed at Mannering’s wife, Sophia. In this depiction of India, western perceptions become clouded by delusions: Sophia imagines her jealous husband a tyrant and Guy mistakes his daughter’s lover for a man who would tempt his wife into infidelity. According to Guy, India acts as the catalyst that brings this tangled plot to a tragic climax. As he writes: “A very slight spark will kindle a flame where every thing lies open to catch it”.33 Guy challenges Harry Bertram to a duel that takes place beyond the walls of the fortress he commands. Harry falls at the first shot and is attacked and imprisoned by “some of these Looties, a species of native banditti, who are always on the watch for prey”.34 Sophia, who has followed her husband, is surrounded by a group of the bandits. Though she is quickly rescued, as Guy relates, “the incidents of this fatal morning [give] a severe shock to health already delicate” and she dies within eight months.35 Mannering continues: “Julia was also extremely ill, so much so, that I was induced to throw up my command and return to Europe, where her native air, time, and the novelty of the scenes around her, have contributed to dissipate her dejection, and to restore her health”.36

Guy’s depiction of India is of a violent unregulated space where sexual jealousy and infectious illness are rife. India, in his construction, is a place that corrupts and destroys. His story immediately acts as a counter-narrative to his daughter’s description of a romantic idyll populated by gentle Indian nurses telling captivating stories. Mannering’s Indian narrative, in contrast to

32 Ibid., 70.
33 Ibid., 71.
34 Ibid.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid.
Julia’s, displays an anxiety in relation to empire that Nigel Leask has identified as common to much literature of Romantic Orientalism. Like the ‘exotic, composite Orient of the Romantic imagination’, Guy’s construction of India portrays a space ‘invested with an uncanny power to disturb.’\(^{37}\) Mannering’s empire-building activities in India have thus resulted in a violent disruption to the family unit and, in order to repair his relationship with Julia, Guy decides he must remove her from India, the source of corruption and illness. Harry Bertram’s vow to repay his father’s debts through Indian wealth at the close of the novel therefore contains an implicit threat of disaster coming after Guy’s narrative of his Indian experiences. In Guy’s account, India represents a perilous space that threatens colonial invaders with disease and death.

While Guy’s narrative could be read as a ‘realistic’ construction of India that counter-balances the exotic imaginings of Julia, the varied accounts should not be placed in this kind of binary opposition. Rather, Guy and Julia’s stories interweave as part of the novel’s production of a shifting, indeterminate India. What connects their narratives is the illusionary power of India but, as Guy’s letter forcefully emphasises, the dream-state is not always positive. The shifting depiction of India continues with Harry’s own recollections of the East. His memories combine both the dream-like and the realistic. His letters range from discussing the “‘trap-doors and back-doors’” of India that allow a Scottish man to pursue a promising career to describing “‘the height and grandeur’” of sublime Mysore scenery.\(^{38}\) However, his recollections insistently return to the trope of India as dream in a way that mingles memory and illusion. When he first sees the gypsy Meg Merrilies, he muses, “‘Have I dreamed of such a figure? … or does this wild and singular-looking woman recall to my recollection some of the strange figures I have seen in an Indian pagoda?’”\(^{39}\)

*Guy Mannering*, then, finally constructs a picture of India that remains elusive and indeterminate, a dream-like space that contains both fantasy and nightmare.

III

In ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’, Scott’s vexed depiction of India as an illusionary space that evades western attempts at domination and understanding becomes


\(^{38}\) Scott, *Guy Mannering*, 112, 114.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 123.
heightened. This novella was published in 1827 as part of *Chronicles of the Canongate* and is presented to the reader by the fictional narrator Chrystal Croftangry. It tells the story of three young British people and their experiences in India during the mid 1770s, at the time of an uneasy truce between Haidar Ali, the ruler of Mysore, and the East India Company. At the outset, the framing narrative functions to situate the novella that follows as a British fantasy of India. Chrystal has taken up fiction writing, and is advised by his friend Fairscribe to do with his “‘Muse of Fiction’” what “‘many an honest man does with his own sons in flesh and blood’” and send her to India. At this suggestion, Chrystal revels in the imaginative attraction to India that has persisted since reading the accounts of Robert Orme as a child, and exclaims:

> Men, like Clive and Caillaud, influenced great events, like Jove himself. Inferior officers are like Mars or Neptune, and the sergeants and corporals might well pass for demigods. Then the various religious costumes, habits, and manners of the people of Hindustan,—the patient Hindhu, the war-like Rajahpoot, the haughty Moslemah, the savage and vindictive Malay—Glorious and unbounded subjects! The only objection is, that I have never been there, and know nothing at all about them.

In response to this anxiety, the pragmatic Fairscribe replies, “‘Nonsense, my good friend. You will tell us about them all the better that you know nothing of what you are saying’”. By placing this exchange between Fairscribe and Chrystal before the novella, Scott immediately dismantles any notion the reader might have that what follows is an authoritative depiction of India. Even before the novella begins, it has been emphasised that ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ represents Chrystal’s own act of imagining India.

Molly Youngkin argues that ‘Scott’s decision to have Croftangry adopt the view his friend expresses in the Preface seems to reiterate the idea that representations of the Orient may be merely that: simply representations.”

She continues:

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41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
Scott makes none of the claims to cultural authority made in the framing material to *Waverley* and *Ivanhoe*, the very claims that make Orientalist literature so objectionable to Said… He even states his thoughts on representing reality in a manner that discourages readers from looking for cultural authority in his work.44

Even if ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ may appear at moments to revel in stereotypical Orientalism of despotic rulers and exotic palaces, the narrative foregrounds from the outset that this is a fantastic vision of India created by a narrator who has no experience of the East beyond the imaginative.

Several characters within the novella itself repeat Chrystal’s act of imagining India and thus the text explores the extent to which, for westerners in Britain, India functions as a dream-like space on which to project fantasies of a sensual, rich Orient. For Richard Middlemas, the illegitimate son of a Portuguese Jewess, the idea of India holds forth the promise of riches and adventure, the means by which he can escape his origins and achieve a high position in society. Indeed, Richard’s act of imagining India directly parallels that of Chrystal. Just as Chrystal is prompted towards his effusions by the words of Fairscribe, Richard’s dream of India is first articulated when the hero of the novella, Adam Hartley, mentions the possibility of becoming a surgeon in the East India Company. Richard exclaims, “Oh Delhi! oh, Golconda! have your names no power to conjure down idle reflections?—India, where gold is won by steel; where a brave man cannot pitch his desire of fame and wealth so high, but that he may realize it, if he have fortune to his friend!” 45 While Chrystal dreams of the imaginative stimulus India presents, Richard dreams of the money and status India offers. Material wealth and creative inspiration are intertwined in the western daydream of India, and such passages could be read in terms of a self-reflective commentary on Scott’s own imaginative appropriation of the East as a subject for fiction.

Richard is encouraged in his fantasy by the vivid descriptions of Tom Hillary, a recruiting officer for the East India Company. Hillary’s account of India constructs an exotic image of a luxurious paradise, open for western possession:

> Palaces rose like mushrooms in his descriptions; groves of lofty trees, and aromatic shrubs unknown to the chilly soils of Europe, were

44 Ibid., 50.
45 Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*, 198.
tenanted by every object of the chase, from the royal tiger down to the jackal. The luxuries of a Natch, and the peculiar Oriental beauty of the enchantresses who performed their voluptuous Eastern dances, for the pleasure of the haughty English conquerors, were no less attractive than the battles and sieges on which the Captain at other times expatiated. Not a stream did he mention but flowed over sands of gold, and not a palace that was inferior to that of the celebrated Fata Morgana. His descriptions seemed steeped in odours, and his every phrase perfumed in ottar of roses.\textsuperscript{46}

This dream of India is entirely illusionary: a narrative told to enchant men to the East India Company as it searches for recruits. It is the dream of India that in fact enables the Company to continue its imperial activities, for without such narratives as those offered by Hillary the Company would struggle to find enough willing bodies. As Wallace argues, these stories ‘bring to the subcontinent the ignorant and the self-seeking, the unemployable and the unmarriageable’.\textsuperscript{47} Indeed, Hillary is far more useful to the Company constructing tall tales in Britain than actually participating in Indian campaigns and Scott highlights the imagined status of Hillary’s stories by emphasising his lack of experience in India. General Witherington later tells Richard that “Hillary’s services are too necessary in the purlieus of Saint Giles’s, the Lowlights of Newcastle, and such like places, where human carrion can be picked up, to be permitted to go to India”.\textsuperscript{48}

When Richard becomes aware of the falsity of Hillary’s Indian vision, it is too late. He has already become part of the human carrion, recruited into the Company and drugged by Hillary. In Richard’s drugged state, his dream of India becomes a nightmare. Exotic fantasy slips into hellish visions that are filled with imperial anxiety. In his reverie, he dreams ‘a hundred wild dreams of parched deserts, and of serpents whose bite inflicted the most intolerable thirst — of the suffering of the Indian on the death-stake — and the torments of the infernal regions themselves’.\textsuperscript{49} Awakening in a hospital ward in the East India Company’s headquarters on the Isle of Wight, surrounded by feverish and delirious patients, it seems that his nightmares have become reality. Richard’s dreams of the wealth and sensual luxury of India metamorphose

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 203.
\textsuperscript{47} Wallace, ‘The Elephant’s Foot and the British Mouth’, 322.
\textsuperscript{48} Scott, \textit{Chronicles of the Canongate}, 231.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 212.
into horrific hallucinations as soon as he enters the East India Company’s service.

Richard’s nightmare hints at the disorientating danger of India that is realised when the narrative moves to Madras. The India of ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ intertwines illusion and corruption to place the invading westerners in a position of vulnerability. What seem particularly under threat are the stable identities of the Europeans as they traverse this space. Richard’s goal of promotion within the Company is abandoned after he murders his commanding officer and disappears from Madras for several years. When he next appears in the text he has assumed the disguise of a ‘black domestic’, Sadoc, and is part of the household of Adela Montreville. His mistress, Madam Montreville, is a European who dresses in oriental clothing and commands a private army. In this oneiric space, the boundaries of gender and race display a potential fluidity and Adam Hartley appraises Madam Montreville as an “unsexed woman, who can no longer be termed a European”. Negotiating India in ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ does not necessarily result in the reinforcement of a stable sense of a European self. Rather, the novella views India as a sphere where identity can become radically indeterminate. Entering India in ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ risks a confusion of the self with the illusionary and dream-like. While the novella destabilizes notions of India as a fixed, knowable space open for appropriation, it also reveals deep anxieties about the potential vulnerabilities of Britons attempting to dominate such an inscrutable sphere.

India also functions in the text as a realm of plotting and counter-plotting, where motives are seldom openly revealed. Richard brings his fiancé Menie, the surgeon’s daughter, to India, under the promise of marriage. While plotting with Madam Montreville to give the beautiful Menie as a slave to Tippoo Ali in order to gain military power, Richard secretly intends to rescue Menie and betray Tippoo to the British. Madam Montreville, in her turn, intends to betray Richard herself. India is thus mapped as a space of intrigue, one that is particularly associated with concealed agency. Certainly, the Indian characters of the novella operate through collusion and disguise. When Adam Hartley finds out about the plot to enslave Menie, he enlists the help of Barak el Hadgi, a Fakir who, under the guise of a Holy Man, is ‘one of those secret agents frequently employed by Asiatic Sovereigns’. In his attempts to liberate Menie, Hartley travels to Seringapatam and meets Hyder Ali, who is likewise disguised.

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50 Ibid., 261.
51 Ibid., 259.
52 Ibid., 247.
as a Fakir. When Adam begs the disguised Hyder for assistance, the Nawaub remains absolutely inscrutable, regarding Hartley ‘with an inflexible and immovable aspect, similar to that with which a wooden saint regards his eager supplicants’. Even the most powerful of Indians operates through artfulness and veiled agency, evading full comprehension and domination. Consequently, the novella destabilizes notions of India as a fixed space, populated by figures available for essentialist categorisation and description.

The description of Hyder’s palace in the encounter between Hartley and the disguised Nawaub indicates further the elusive nature of India. Here, the narrative reflects western dreams of oriental splendour, but the sumptuous description is intertwined with ambiguity:

Hartley entered without farther opposition, and was now in a grove of mango trees, through which an infant moon was twinkling faintly amid the murmur of waters, the sweet song of the nightingale, and the odours of the rose, yellow jessamine, orange and citron flowers, and Persian Narcissus. Huge domes and arches, which were seen imperfectly in the quivering light, seemed to intimate the neighbourhood of some sacred edifice, where the Fakir had doubtless taken up his residence.

This passage strongly reinforces the liminality of the space Hartley traverses and again pulls against a stable depiction of India. Scott’s description draws upon the vocabulary of British Orientalism in its portrayal of scented flowers, nightingale song and eastern architecture, but these objects are all seen imperfectly through ‘twinkling’ and ‘quivering’ light. Hillary’s stories of India present a visual and material India that is fixed in the gaze of the westerner, embodied in the oriental dancing girls looked upon by their English conquerors. In contrast, the passage above presents a fluid vision of India that seems poised to dissolve. It is an elusory space that retains the potential to escape European perception. In this text, Indian landscapes and people can only be discerned faintly, and it is not a Fakir that Hartley meets but the most powerful adversary of the British, Hyder Ali.

The climax of the novella reveals the full extent of the dangerous alterity of this illusionary realm. Reclaiming his identity as the ruler of Mysore, Hyder Ali puts an end to the conspiracies of Richard and restores Menie safely to Hartley. However, he still insists on Richard being named the Governor of

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53 Ibid., 275.
54 Ibid., 274.
Bangalore. The unsuspecting Richard readies himself to mount an elephant for his triumphal procession throughout the city. However, the magnificence that seems to confirm Richard’s power is in fact the means of his destruction. Telling Richard to “accept now what is the fruit of the justice of Hyder”, Hyder makes a small gesture with his finger, and the elephant throws Richard off his back, with one stamp of ‘his huge shapeless foot’ putting ‘an end at once to [Richard’s] life and to his crimes’. Richard’s Indian fantasies end with him being reduced to a “lump of bloody clay”, his identity obliterated to the point where he is no longer recognisably human. The moment in which he seemingly gains command of this space as the Governor of Bangalore is in fact the moment at which his own death is made certain. In India, the illusion of triumph conceals death, and the dream-like sphere finally resists western understanding and domination. At the close of the novella, Hyder Ali rejects an unstable truce with the East India Company and vows to be a “destroying tempest”, leaving the reader with a promise of more bloodshed in the Mysore wars. Indeed, for Europeans in India, there can be no happy ending. Unlike Guy Mannering, ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ ends not with marriage but with tragedy. Menie’s health and happiness are so damaged by her experiences in India that she cannot consider marrying Hartley. The ‘gallant and disinterested’ Hartley himself only resists the dangers of India for two years before he contracts a contagious disease and dies. The bleak ending of the novella thus reinscribes the danger that is inherent in Britain’s dream of India.

IV

Imagining India in the Waverley novels is loaded with complexity and ambivalence. As this article has argued, the ambiguity evident in Scott’s personal letters and non-fictional writing about the subcontinent continues to dominate the construction of India in his narrative fiction. Guy Mannering and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ together reveal a rising sense of imperial

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55 Ibid., 284.
56 Ibid.
57 Ibid.
59 Scott, Chronicles of the Canongate, 285.
consternation centred upon the vulnerability of westerners attempting to negotiate this eastern space. The various acts of imagining India in the Waverley novels produce a construction of India as an illusionary sphere which conceals danger and corruption behind its apparent treasure store of wealth and creative inspiration. Moreover, the texts’ repeated foregrounding of the act of imagining India resist notions of an ‘essential’ India. In the novels, India does not function as an ontologically stable space existing in a fixed binary with Europe: it remains fluid, indeterminate and inscrutable. The various narratives of India, encompassing Julia’s creative idyll, Guy’s corrupting and violent realm, and Hillary’s luxurious and sensual paradise, are placed in dialogue within individual texts and Scott’s oeuvre as a whole, resulting in a complexity which is not accounted for in a Saidian reading of the novels. While *Guy Mannering* and ‘The Surgeon’s Daughter’ may seemingly collude in an Orientalist daydream of the East by presenting accounts of an exoticised India, such narratives are persistently deconstructed. By returning insistently to the trope of the India-dream, Scott highlighted the constructed nature of British Orientalist discourse and positioned Orientalist narratives, including his own, as a western fiction.

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By the thirteenth century anglophones in Scotland were projecting negative characteristics such as bellicosity, sloth, thievery, and savagery upon the Gaelic-speaking aboriginals of Scotland, type-casting them into the role of ‘Other’. Polarisation between the Gaelic-speaking Highlands and the English/‘Scots’-speaking Lowlands continued during the medieval period, with Gaels being increasingly marginalised and disenfranchised by the formal institutions of the nation state geographically, politically, economically, culturally, and linguistically. By the time of the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when King James VI of Scotland became King James I of England, schemes for creating plantations in the Gàidhealtachd to contain, assimilate or expel the native inhabitants had been proposed and, in several cases, attempted. Contemporary evidence indicates that the stereotypes held by anglophones about the peoples encountered during efforts to colonise Gaeldom in Scotland and Ireland and the ‘New World’ influenced one another.¹ During the eighteenth century many Highlanders were either dispossessed of their land outright or so severely disadvantaged that emigration to North America became the only option for survival. These experiences gave them a basis for empathising with other victims of colonisation such as Indigenous Americans,² even if they did not


² There is considerable disagreement and debate about which ethnonym is most appropriate to designate the peoples indigenous to the Americas not only in the political apparatus of modern nation-states of Canada and the United States, but in and between local communities themselves. I have chosen, for the purposes of this paper, to use ‘Indigenous Americans’ to refer to these people (despite my reservation that indigeneity is a dimension of culture not specific to any continent or ethnic group); ‘Indian(s)’ as a translation of the Gaelic term Innseanaich (itself a Gaelic adaptation of the English ‘Indian(s)’); ‘Mi’kmaq’ when referring collectively to the indigenous people of Nova Scotia (who consider ‘Micmac’ as an obsolete ethnonym with colonial overtones); ‘Mi’kmaw’ as the adjective associated with them and their culture, or a single member of the nation.
always choose an empathetic response in their encounters.

Small numbers of Scottish Gaels came from the Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland to North America in the seventeenth century, but the migration of nuclear families, extended families, and communities did not begin until the 1730s when settlements were established in New York, Georgia and North Carolina. As socio-economic conditions deteriorated in the Highlands, increasing numbers of Gaels relocated to North America under a variety of unfavourable circumstances, showing a marked preference for migrating as kin-groups into the mid-nineteenth century. Of all of the Gaelic settlements in North America, immigrant communities in Nova Scotia have remained the most resilient culturally and linguistically, and thus provide the best surviving evidence about their early experiences. Small groups of Scottish Gaels began to explore Nova Scotia in the 1770s, with the bulk of migrants settling the mainland of Nova Scotia from the 1790s onwards and Cape Breton in the early nineteenth century.

Neither Indigenous Americans nor Scottish Gaels were single, homogenous groups about whom it is safe to make facile generalisations: these groups were comprised of individuals who had been conditioned by specific experiences and who had particular agendas of their own. Scottish Highland immigrants encompassed a range of roles and backgrounds: soldiers employed to execute the orders of the British Empire; disbanded soldiers settling on land-grants given as reward for military service; fur traders working on behalf of a multi-national corporation such as the Hudson's Bay Company; emigrants spurred by economic hardship and religious intolerance; and dispossessed peasants expelled to North America. These varying circumstances embedded them in particular power relations and ideological paradigms that had significant impacts on their perceptions, choices, actions, and reactions when they encountered Indigenous Americans in specific places and contexts.

Indigenous Americans had reason to be suspicious and hostile towards Europeans swarming into their territories and no particular reason to distinguish Highlanders from other Europeans. Gaels were seldom the first colonists in most of the places they settled. Gaelic communities formed in Nova Scotia well after the dominance of anglophone institutions and the devastation of Mi’kmaw communities: by the end of the Seven Years’ War the Indigenous population in Nova Scotia had been reduced to a tiny remnant whose land rights had been made forfeit. Mi’kmaq wishing to have their land legally recognised had to compete with other applicants, but in practice the government was ineffective in allocating plots and not able or willing
to reinforce their rights as increasing numbers of immigrants squatted on them. Violent clashes must have happened, if only in self-defense. Indeed, as demonstrated below, many Gaelic narratives reflect an awareness of this encroachment.

Once we start to pose questions about Gaelic perceptions of Indigenous Americans, especially amongst the non-élite, it is crucial to answer them by reference to texts composed in the language that the vast majority of non-élite Highlanders spoke at this time: Scottish Gaelic. The range of texts now available for analysis is limited by the fact that few Gaels were literate in their own language and most Gaelic-speaking communities in Canada lost their language and oral traditions before they could be recorded accurately by folklorists or historians. This makes those that do survive from Nova Scotia very valuable relics indeed.

Gaelic oral narratives recorded from the Nova Scotian community about their relations with Indigenous Americans, from first encounters through to later settlement, do not reflect the essentialist notions of racialism (inherent superiority rooted in biology) or even the presumptions of linear social evolution dominant in imperial discourse. They instead depict a meeting of kindred peoples who resolved competing interests on commonly understood terms, even if these resolutions involved contests of strength and brawn. At the same time, the tales reveal a sense of guilt about occupying territories once inhabited by Indigenous Americans.

I Literary and Cultural Encounters

The perceptions and significance of encounters between peoples are shaped and influenced by a number of factors, not least the categories transmitted by narratives and imposed by the imagination. As historians have long noted, Europeans had a range of contradictory myths about ‘the New World’ which conditioned their responses to Indigenous Americans, seeing them variously as innocents in paradise or violent, pagan barbarians in a forbidding wilderness:

Europeans encountered savages in America because their minds and their senses had been molded by a powerful mythic formula that

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equated societies less elaborately organised than their own with the primal condition. This myth enabled Europeans to make sense out of America, to reach an accommodation between the new continent and a venerable abstraction basic to European beliefs. Unfortunately, the American native as savage bore little resemblance to the real Indian. As a consequence Europeans went to the New World ill-equipped to understand or deal with the societies they met there. Tension arose immediately between what Europeans thought they saw and what actually existed, but no means were available to reconcile anthropology with myth. Once classified as savage, the Indian could be expected to play out his role in relation to the civil order.\(^4\)

It is certainly no accident that Indigenous Americans were commonly portrayed as ‘savage’ as this image played a central role in imperial ideologies of conquest.\(^5\) While having also been depicted as ‘savage’ by anglophones, Gaels themselves were not immune to these ideologies, as they themselves were both colonised and acted as colonisers during the expansion of the British Empire.\(^6\)

Although in many cases Gaels were able to draw from their own cultural background to create imaginative bridges that spanned the chasm to the culture of Indigenous Americans, the potential for suspicion, fear, and hostility equally existed as well. Indeed, it seems that frightening tales depicting Indigenous Americans as brutal and forbidding savages were already in circulation in Scotland before many emigrants left. Military officers who had fought them in the Seven Years’ War (1756–63) no doubt brought tales of their fierce enemies back to Scotland, although imaginative literature in English may have well played a part as well in such perceptions. An anecdote recorded in 1910 (almost certainly based on Gaelic oral traditions) about Eòghan Camshron, a native of Lochaber who migrated in 1801 to Pictou, states:

If there was anything more than others that Scottish immigrants dreaded, in coming to this country, it was the Indians or red-skins of America. From exaggerated reports of them received at home, the very name suggested scalping, bloodthirstiness, and all conceivable forms of


cruelties and atrocities. They regarded them as scarcely human, much less Christians.\textsuperscript{7}

That such apprehension may have existed in Gaelic form is also suggested in oral narratives recorded later, as discussed below.

Not all depictions of Indigenous peoples anticipated antagonism and conflict: Robert MacDougall’s 1841 \textit{Ceann-iùil an fhir-imrich do dh’America mu-thuath} (The Emigrant’s Guide to North America), on the contrary, attempted to allay the fears of potential emigrants by relating the landscape, peoples, and languages to what they already knew in the Highlands, especially their own native language. He provides Gaelic etymologies for place names, personal names, and ordinary words in Indigenous American languages. Given the central role of identity in culture, this implies a notion of kinship. In fact, he draws a wide range of parallels between Highlanders and Indigenous Americans, including their postures, clothing, and social structures.\textsuperscript{8}

The kennings and nicknames coined by Gaelic speakers provide significant clues in themselves about perceptions. North America was commonly referred to as \textit{Dùthaich nan Craobh} (The Land of the Trees) and Indigenous Americans by the nickname \textit{Coilltich} (People of the Forests).\textsuperscript{9} The close association between Indigenous Americans and the forests is strongly evident in Gaelic narratives and analysis of the implications will be further developed below.

It is also important to note the possibility that elements of Gaelic narratives of the ‘supernatural’ may have influenced the perceptions of Indigenous Americans. In the late nineteenth century Rev. Ronald MacGillivray of Antigonish County likened the increasingly scarce natives with the fairies of Gaelic tradition, mentioning the contemporary theory that stories about the fairies emerged to explain the fading remnants of the Druids.\textsuperscript{10} Like many other immigrants, the Scottish Gaelic community in the Codroy Valley of Newfoundland was wary of the preternatural abilities attributed to Indigenous Americans. One folklore item in particular resonates with older Highland tradition: ‘If you were in the woods … when they’d be deer hunting or hunting wild game like that, well they could witch your gun so that your gun could fire

\textsuperscript{7} Quoted in \textit{Casket}, 23 October 1913; reprinted in D. MacFarlane and R. A. MacLean (eds), \textit{Drummer on Foot} (Antigonish, n.d.), 47.

\textsuperscript{8} Robert MacDougall, \textit{Ceann-iùil an fhir-imrich do dh’America mu-thuath} (Glasgow, 1841), 34–46.

\textsuperscript{9} Newton, \textit{We’re Indians Sure Enough}, 121, 172–3, 177; idem, ‘Celtic Cousins or White Settlers?’.

but you wouldn’t kill nothing.\textsuperscript{11} On the one hand, this anecdote suggests an awareness of competition between Indigenous and incoming communities for animal resources; on the other hand, it may also reflect ancient Gaelic narratives about territorial goddesses who are equated with wild nature and protect non-domesticated animals, especially the deer.\textsuperscript{12}

\section*{II First Encounter Tales}

As an exhaustive list will not be possible until much more work is done to collect and index Gaelic sources, I must simply highlight a few of the oral narratives that I have located, recorded from the 1920s to the 1960s.\textsuperscript{13} These are given below in the order in which they were committed to writing, with some notes on the motifs that appear in these tales. Most of these texts are difficult to find so I include the original Gaelic text in this paper as well as my own translations.

\textit{A. MacNeils Come to Christmas Island}

Archibald MacKenzie’s 1926 \textit{History of Christmas Island Parish} is an early exemplar of how Gaelic oral traditions can be used to illustrate the history of a local community, particularly at the non-élite level.\textsuperscript{14} Although most of the traditions recorded in the book were translated into English, many phrases remain in Gaelic and a sizable appendix of Gaelic songs is included. The sketch of one emigrant includes an account of a first encounter between Gaels and Mi’kmaq in Malagawatch, Inverness County (on the west shore of Bras d’Or Lake).

This Rory McNeil was a foster-brother of one of the chiefs of Barra. Judging from the stories related about him he must have been a very powerful man. Four of his sons and one daughter came from the Gulf

\textsuperscript{11} Margaret Bennett, \textit{The Last Stronghold: The Scottish Gaelic Traditions of Newfoundland} (Edinburgh, 1989), 128.


\textsuperscript{13} The caveat must also be explicitly made that this article only explores oral traditions as they have been transmitted and recorded by Gaelic speakers. The work of comparing how they correspond to the historical record of contemporary events must be left for future research.

\textsuperscript{14} There is an interesting account about Archibald MacKenzie in John L. Campbell (ed.), \textit{Songs Remembered in Exile}, 2nd. ed. (Edinburgh, 1999), 25, 73.
and settled in Cape Breton; these were John, Donald, Neil, James and Mary. It appears that they were among the first immigrants that came from Barra to the Gulf. One of them, ‘Big James’, dissatisfied with conditions at the Gulf, set sails to his boat and came to Cape Breton. When months had passed and no tidings from him had reached his brothers, they became uneasy about him, and they feared that he had been killed by Indians. John, Donald and Neil came in a boat by the way of St Peter’s to search for him along the shores of the Bras d’Or Lakes. When they reached Malagawatch they found an Indian village there; and when their boat touched the shore, a party of hostile Indians, headed by a big squaw carrying a long scalping knife, met them; and by their actions they gave the white men to understand that they (the Indians) would scalp them when they went on shore. The squaw was the most hostile of the lot, and she even went so far as to climb into the boat to attack the McNeils; but one of them caught her from behind and threw her into the sea. At this juncture another squaw came to the shore and began to remonstrate with the Indians over their hostile attitude towards the whites. The McNeils recognised this squaw as one who used to visit the houses of the settlers at the Gulf. She could speak some English; and they received the intelligence from her that the brother for whom they were seeking was living and working in a shipyard at Baddeck. After this the Indians became more friendly, and they offered to exchange some eels ‘gàdach’ for some of the potatoes which the McNeils had in the boat—an offer which was gladly accepted.\footnote{Archibald MacKenzie, \textit{History of Christmas Island Parish} (n.p., 1926), 130.}

The unease about the fate of Big James and the initially hostile stance of the Mi’kmaq of Malagawatch might be seen as acknowledging the competing interests of natives and incomers, although these tensions are certainly used in the narrative to heighten the drama. The Mi’kmaq occupy the land while the Gaels approach by boat and do not come to land until a resolution to the conflict is negotiated. Women take the prominent leadership roles taken by males in Gaelic society. This observation may serve to highlight the alienness of the Indigenous American social order. The long scalping knife carried by the woman who first confronts the Gaels symbolises her power.

The potentially violent encounter is conciliated by another female leader, one with whom the Gaels had a previous relationship. She appears to be a
cultural mediator: she speaks English, comes to the shore (a liminal space between ocean and land), and has previous experience inside the domain of non-Indigenous peoples. Friendly relations between the Indigenous Americans and the Gaels are cemented through the exchange of food items. In fact, food is at the centre of many socially integrative ceremonies and re-appears in this manner in other narratives.

On the whole, this particular narrative is a rather bare one, having a number of key motifs but lacking the elaborations and stylistic characteristics of Gaelic narratives in the tales discussed below. This is what we might expect, however, given that the author is writing in English for an outside audience.

B. ‘The Knife of the Great Indian’

The periodical Fear na Céilidh was printed in Sydney, Cape Breton, and featured articles, tales, and poetry in Gaelic. Calum (no surname given) contributed an anecdote entitled ‘Sgian an Innseanaich Mhóir’ (‘The Knife of the Great Indian’) which depicts an encounter near Framboise (Richmond County, south-east Cape Breton) in the year 1815.

Fada mu’n d’thàinig Gaidheal no Gall gu ruige Framboise, bha Iain Dubh Innseanach a’ gabhail tàmh ann; agus, coltach ri Melchisedec, chan eil eachdraidh ag inmse cia às a thàinig, no cuin a thàinig, no càit’ an deachaidh an duine mór, càir sin; ach air aon nì tha fios: gun robh e fhéin is Màiri a bhean a’ fuireach aig bun a’ Chaoil Mhóir, am Framboise, roimh’n bliadhna 1815.

Anns a’ bliadhna sin thàinig Eachunn Saor (MacFhionghain) agus Aonghus MacDhomhnaill, le’n cuid theaghlaithein, a-nall thar farige às na h-Earadh, ’s an t-soitheach d’am b’ ainm “Hercules.” B’e Sidni a’ cheud phort a bhnuail iad. Thàinig an dà theaghlach air tir, agus stiùir iad an càrsa air an taobh a deas de’n eilean. Dh’fhàgadh an dà theaghlach air tìr, stiùr iad an cùrsa air an taobh a deas de’n eilean. Dh’fhàgadh an dà theaghlach air tìr, stiùr iad an cùrsa air an taobh a deas de’n eilean. Dh’fhàgadh an dà theaghlach air tìr, stiùr iad an cùrsa air an taobh a deas de’n eilean. Dh’fhàgadh an dà theaghlach air tìr, stiùr iad an cùrsa air an taobh a deas de’n eilean. Dh’fhàgadh an dà theaghlach air tìr, stiùr iad an cùrsa air an taobh a deas de’n eilean.

An uair a ràinig iad bun a’ Chaoil Mhóir, shuidh iad sios a leigil an analach; agus air dhaibh a bhith sealltainn mun’ cuairt air àilleachd oibre nàdair, chunnaic iad nì a chuir mòr-ìonghnalb orra—beagan astair bhuapa campa agus smùid ceò às. Choisich iad snas gu faicheadh dh’ionnsaigh a’ champa agus an sin a chunnaic iad

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16 Campbell, Songs Remembered in Exile, 55.
an t-Innseanach agus a bhean a’ tiginn a-mach. Bha sgian mbòr air a crochadh le éill mu cheanas an Innseanaich, agus bha tuagh aig an sga’ ‘na aimh [sic?].

Cha robh fios glè mhath aig na fir dé b’ fhearr dhaibh a dhèanamb. Thuirt Eachunn ri Aonghus, “Tha am bàs air tiginn oirnn.” Fbregaír Aonghus, “Mas e ’s gur h-e ’m bàs a th’ ann, creiceamaid ar beatha cho daoir ’s a dh’fhaoadas sinn.” Agus thilig e deth a chòta. Ach is e hh’ann gun do dh’fhàiltich an t-Innseanach iad gu càirdeil, agus chuir e impidh orra a dhol a-steach do’n champa, a chum ’s gun ghabhadh iad biadh.

Ghabh iad gu toileach ris an tairgse a fhnair iad, oir bha iad fann sìth agus acrach. Ach gu dé chaidh a chur mun còmnaibh air píos beileig ach caibb de mbusgaist a chaidh a bhrùich air son na dìnnearach. Cha robh mòr chabhaig air na fir gu tôiseachadh ri ithe o chionn nach robb fìile loidir na mugsais’ a’ tiginn ri’n càil. Nuair a chunnaic Iain Dubh nach robb na coigrich a’ tôiseachadh air ithe, ars esan, “Sposum you not like musquash—tryum duck.” ’s e aig an aon am a’ cur air am beulaibh pìos tunnaig a chaidh a bhrùich cómbla ris a’ mbusgaist.

Bha an t-acras mòr orra co-dhùibh, agus dh’ith iad pàirt de’n tunnaig; ach bha iad ag innse an dèidh sin gun robb blas na mugsais air an t-sìthinn cho mòr ’s gun robb i a’ bagairt tilleadh air ais orra. Dh’ith Iain Dubh ’s a bhean an sàth de’n mbsuigais, agus chuir e mòr iomhnaidh orra nach blàiseadh na coigrich a thàinig an rathad air féidh cho blasda.

Thog Eachann Saor agus Aonghus dà thaibh bheag air aodann cnúc mu chaiteal a’ mhuile o bhun a’ chaol agus an úine ghoirid thug iad an cuid theaghlachean a-nnas cómbla rintha. An uair a thug an t-Innseanach mòr gun robb a thuair air na coigrich an dachaibh a dhèanamb ’na nàbachd, cha robb e idir cho càirdeil ’s a b’ àbhaist dhà bhith; cha robb e toilichte bhith ’faicinn thaighean ’gan togail timchioll air; agus aon fhneasgar ciùin fòghair, chunnacas Iain Dubh is Màiri a bhean a’ fàgail a’ champa, eallach air druim gach aon dhùibh, agus chun fhucas an dubb no an dath riambh an dèidh an fhneasgar sin.

An ceann latha no dhù, chaidh na fir sios a choimhead do’n champa, ach bha gach ni air a thrusadadh air fàlbh. A-measg nan sliseag, fhnair Eachunn sgian mbath a bha mun chòig òirlich dhubh a dh’fhaid’, agus cas de dh’adharc fèidh intme. Tha an sgian sin ri faicinn fhathast ann an taigh oghba do dh’Eachann Saor agus tha i cho gur ’s gun toireadh i an fhneasg bharr duine. Thaíg Geangach fichead dolair oirre
bliadhna no dba air ais, ach cha dealachd ogba Eachainn Shaoir rithe; cha reiceadh e sgian an Inseanaich Mhóir air òr no air airgead.\textsuperscript{17}

Long before Highlander or Lowlander ever came to Framboise, Black-haired John the Indian lived there; and, like Melchizedek, there is no history about where he came from, or when he came, or where that great and goodly man went. But one thing is certain: that he himself and his wife Mary were living at the base of Grand Narrows in Framboise before the year 1815.

In that year Eachann the carpenter (MacKinnon) and Aonghus MacDonald came with their families across the ocean from the island of Harris in the vessel which was named ‘Hercules’. Sydney was the first port where it landed. The two families came to shore and they set their course for the south end of the island. The women and children were left in Mira and after three weeks the men reached the shore of Framboise, tired and weary.

When they reached the base of the Grand Narrows, they sat themselves down to rest, and after they had been gazing upon the beauty of nature, they saw something that greatly amazed them — there was a camp a short distance from them from which smoke was rising. They walked carefully over towards the camp and there they saw the Indian and his wife coming out of doors. There was a great knife hanging from a thong around the waist of the Indian and his wife had an axe.

The men were quite uncertain as to what they should do. Eachann said to Aonghus, ‘We are going to die.’ Aonghus answered, ‘If we’re going to die, let’s put up a good fight,’ and he threw off his coat. What should happen instead but the Indian welcomed them in a friendly manner and urged them to come inside of the camp so that they might have some food.

They gladly accepted the invitation that they were offered because they were weak, tired, and hungry. But what was put in front of them on a piece of bark but a steak of muskrat that had been boiled for

\textsuperscript{17} Fear na Céilidh, 2 (1929), 38–40.
dinner. The men were in no great hurry to eat it given that the strong smell of the muskrat did not agree with their tastes. When Black-haired John saw that the strangers were not beginning to eat, he said, ‘Sposum you not like musquash—tryum duck,’ setting a piece of duck before them which had been boiled with the muskrat at the same time.

They were extremely hungry anyway, and they ate some of the duck; but afterwards they said that the taste of the muskrat was so strong on the meat that it was threatening to come back up on them. Black-haired John and his wife ate their fill of the muskrat, and they were greatly surprised that the strangers who came their way would not take a taste of such a delicious feast.

Eachann the carpenter and Aonghus built two houses on the face of a hillock about a quarter of a mile from the base of the narrow, and after a short time they brought their families over with them. When the great Indian realised that the strangers appeared to be making their homes in his environment, he was no longer as friendly as he used to be; he was not at all pleased to be seeing homes being built close to him; and one peaceful autumn afternoon Black-haired John and his wife Mary were seen leaving the camp, a load of goods on the back of each one of them, and no sign of them has ever been seen since that afternoon.

After a day or two, the men went down to look at the camp, but everything had been taken away. Eachann found a good knife [that had been left] amongst the wood chips that was about fifteen inches long made with a deer antler handle. That knife can still be seen in the house of one of Eachann the carpenter’s grandchildren, and it is so sharp that it can take off a man’s beard. A Yankee offered twenty dollars for it a year or two ago, but Eachann’s descendant would not part with it; he would not sell the knife of the great Indian for gold or for silver.

The narrator opens by acknowledging Indigenous Americans as the original possessors of the land. The names of the characters ‘John’ and ‘Mary’ give them a generic, archetypal quality, almost as though this encounter might be generalised to Indigenous Americans as a whole. The tale, however, is given
a specific place and time, which reinforces its veracity, as does the physical existence of the knife. The two Highland immigrants are given names and origins which also assert the historical reliability of the narrative. Their journey of three weeks, however, may be indicative of the traditional fondness for the number three rather than an historical fact.

The smoke the men see is a sign of fire and (as obvious as it may sound) fire is a symbol of human civilisation. The first depiction given of the Mi’kmaq is one in which they are fully empowered individuals, as symbolised by their weaponry: John wearing a big knife and Mary an axe. The immediate assumption of the Highlanders is that they will be subject to aggression. While this may be a projection of their fears and guilt over trespassing in alien territory, it is also a narrative strategy to build dramatic tension. They prepare to die in an honorable manner, as prescribed by the warrior ethos and reflected in many Gaelic heroic tales.\(^\text{18}\) Despite their apprehension, John and Mary welcome them over into their homestead and offer them food.

Feasting again appears as a socially integrative ritual, except that instead of creating a mutually symbiotic bond, the food itself does not cross social boundaries: muskrat, palatable to the Mi’kmaq, is revolting to the Highlanders.\(^\text{19}\) The Mi’kmaq are able to feed themselves and even extend their largesse to foreign guests; hospitality and generosity are arguably the highest of virtues in Gaelic culture,\(^\text{20}\) as in many others. Despite this, there is a fundamental incompatibility between their civilisations that this event presages. John and Mary are confused by the inability of the Highlanders to ingest and appreciate their offerings while Eachann and Aonghus can barely contain the duck because it has merely come into contact with the muskrat.

When the Gaels erect homesteads and begin to impinge upon Mi’kmaw territory, John and Mary realise the implications and become less friendly. It would be more accurate to say that the narrator reflects the awareness of Gaels that the Mi’kmaq did not welcome Highland settlement in their land, that it had negative repercussions for Mi’kmaw civilisation, and that there were fundamental and irreconcilable differences between cultures as represented by


\(^{19}\) While this may be indicative of the Highland palate in general, there were Gaels who did eat and enjoy muskrat, as confirmed by the autobiography of a renowned tradition-bearer who ate it during the year that he lived with a Mi’kmaw healer: Lauchie MacLellan, *Brìgh an Òrain / A Story in Every Song*, ed. John Shaw (Montreal & Kingston, 2000), 88–91. Thanks to John Shaw for this reference.

\(^{20}\) Newton, *Warriors of the Word*, 81, 116, 152–4, 155–6, 175, 188.
the homes themselves. John and Mary, belonging to a more mobile culture, retreat and disappear. The season of the autumn, when they disperse, parallels the symbolism of decline and death.

John and Mary, however, leave an impressively large knife behind them (not unlike antler-handled dirks used in the Highlands), which, as seen from the previous narrative, represents their power. The knife still remains potent: we are told that ‘it can take off a man’s beard,’ where ‘beard’ might be read in relation to manhood and potentially threatening forces. The power inherent in the knife, however, is claimed and kept by one of the Highland settlers. It becomes the valued memento of the first encounter, providing a visual symbol of the past and the former glory of its first inhabitants.

C. Feast at Sanndra

Another oral narrative describes an encounter between Catholic immigrants from the isle of Barra and Mi’kmaq at the locale that Highland settlers later named ‘Sanndra’ in Gaelic. Calum MacLeòid, a native of the Isle of Lewis who taught Celtic Studies at Saint Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, claimed in an article written in 1952 that he had recorded it from an unnamed man who was nearing eighty years of age. He repeats this tale in his 1969 collection of Gaelic tales where it is attributed to Eòghann MacCoinnich of Grand Narrows. The general elements of the tale were well known to Gaels in the region, for variants have been recorded from other tradition bearers.

Sheòl Iain MacNéill, a bhean, is a thriùir mhac, á Barraidh anns a’ bhliadhna 1799. An déidh iomadb gàbhadh is cunnart-mara chur seachad, thàinig iad air tir an Siorramaich Phictou, is às a sin iad breacan-á-baile do Arasaig an Siorramaich Antigonish, air tir-mòr na h-Albann Nuaidhe. Ged a bha an dùthaich seo a’ tìghinn ruintha gu gasda an iomadb dòigh, bha an-fhlois ’nan anam; bha fadachd orra gus a faiceadh iad beanntan is òban Cheap Breatainn, oir chuala

21 While Calum MacLeòid gives a different spelling of the name, I here use the form given in Seumas Watson, ‘Ás a’ Choillidh Dhuibh: Cunntasan Seanchais air a’ Chiad Luchd-àiteachaidh an Eilean Ceap Breatainn’ in Colm Ó Baoill and Nancy McGuire (eds), Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2000 (Aberdeen, 2002), 275.
22 About whom see Campbell, Songs Remembered in Exile, 35.
23 Calum MacLeòid, Sgial is Eachdraidh (Glasgow, 1977), 80.
25 A later and shorter version of this tale from another informant is given in Watson, ‘Ás a’ Choillidh Dhuibh’, 275.
iad fathunn gur b-i seo an tìr a b’ fhaisge an cruth ’s an cumadh ri Barraidh aca fhèin. Cha robh iad gun fhios cuideachd gun robh móran Innseanaich a bha air leth borb aineolach a’ tàmh an “Tìr a’ Gheallaidh,” ach a db’aincdeoin gach cnap-starraidh a bha rompa, dh’fhág iad Arasaig an ceann trì bliadhna.

Chuir iad cùl nan còig ris a’ Mhór-Roinn is sheòil iad suas caoiltean a’ Bhtras d’Or. Lean iad ris a’ chladach a b-nile ceum, a’ cumail sìula ri fhuaradh, is ri fasgadh air son nan Innseanaich ach dh’fhàirtich orra eadhon aon diùbh fhàicinn. ’S beag a bha fhios aca gun robh na b-Innseanaich a’ leantainn an cìrsa gach lathra, is a’ fuireach gus an tigeadh iad gu tìr.

An dùil gun robh a b-nile nì aig fois, is na daoine allmharra mìltean air falbh, dhlùthaich na Barraich ri còrsa mu leth-cheud slat a tuath air far am bheil Seanntraigh an-dingh. Shiubh iad ris a’ choillidh a gheàrradh às a bhonn, is bothain-logaichean a thogail, ach mun do gheàrr iad a’ chriad chràobh, thuirtinn faochd de na b-Innseanaich orra le’n làn armachd. Cha robh na b-Innseanaich idir toilichte an uair a chunnaic iad na Barraich a’ gabhail fasdaidh air an fhearann. Thug na Barraich seo gu math luath, is leis an eagal a ghabh iad gum faobhadh na b-Innseanaich ri dith-cheannadh a dhèanamh orra, chaithd Iain MacNéill air a ghlùinean, is rinn e comharradh na croise. Cho luath agus a chunnaic ceann-cinnidh nan Innseanaich an iomairt seo, rinn e réite ris na Barraich oir b’ ann de’n aon ehrideamb a bha iad le chèile. Air an dearbh lathra sin fhùair na Barraich cead am fearann a bhith aca fhèin.

Chuir an cunnradh seo a leithid de aoibhneas air na Barraich is gun tug iad cuireadh do cheann-cinnidh nan Innseanaich greum bidhe a gabhail cuide ri rithba. Chladhbaich na Barraich dà sbloc mhòr anns an talamh. Bhruch iad iasg iir ’s a’ chriad sloch, is buntàta ’s an dara sloch. An uair a fhùair ean air ceann-cinnidh an earrann-bidhe aige fhèin, chrath fear de na Barraich gràinean salainn air an iasg. B’ e seo a’ chriad naor a bhlaís an t-Innseanaich air sthùb de’n t-seòrsa seo, is leis a’ mhagaid a ghabh e air an annas iir seo, dh’òrdhaich e risg craobhbeithle lom làn salainn a bhith air a lionadh dbh.

’S na linntean a db’aom bha duine a’ faighinn còir air fearann ann an dà dhòigh: le còir a’ chlaidheimh, no le còir “ceathaich is uisge.” ‘S e sin ri ràdh, bha agad ri sabaid, no bha agad ri teine a thogail air an fhearann, is uisge a thòirt gu goil air an fbonn a bha dhìth ort. (’S e an “allodial system” a their iad ris ’s a’ Bheurla chràraidh.)
Iain MacNéill, his wife, and his three sons, sailed from Barra in the year 1799. After getting through many dangers of the ocean they came to land in Pictou County, and from there they moved to Arisaig in Antigonish County, on the mainland of Nova Scotia. Although this land suited them very well in many ways, their spirits were restless. They had a longing to see the mountains and bays of Cape Breton, for they had heard a rumor that it was the land whose landscape was closest to that of their own Barra. They were not unaware that there were many Indians who were exceedingly barbaric and ignorant living in ‘the Promised Land’, but despite every obstacle that was before them, they left Arisaig after three years.

They left the mainland behind them and they sailed over to the straits of Bras d’Or. They followed the shore constantly, keeping an eye on the prevailing wind and on available shelter from the Indians but they failed to see a single one of them. Little did they know that the Indians were following their course every day and waiting until they would come to land.

Expecting that everything was safe, and that the strange people were miles away, the Barramen closed in on the coast that is about fifty yards north from the present location of Sanndra. They were about to begin to cut away the trunks of the trees, and to build log-cabins, but before they felled the first tree, a troop of Indians fell on them with a full complement of weaponry. The Indians were not at all pleased when they saw the Barramen taking possession of the land. The Barramen realised this very quickly and they became so frightened that the Indians would behead [i.e., scalp?] them, Iain MacNéill went down on his knees and made the sign of the cross. As soon as the chieftain of the Indians saw this action, he made peace with the Barramen, since they both

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26 MacLeòid, Sgialachdan à Albainn Nuaidh, 26–7. Note that it is unclear whether the final two paragraphs were provided by the informant or whether they were additional commentary by MacLeòid.
belonged to the same religion. On that very same day, the Barramen received permission to have their own land.

This [land] settlement so pleased the Barramen that they invited the chieftain of the Indians to share a portion of food with them. The Barramen dug out two large pits in the ground. They boiled fresh fish in the first pit, and potatoes in the second pit. When the chieftain received his own share of food, one of the Barramen shook some grains of salt on the fish. This was the first time that the Indian had tasted this foodstuff, and he took such a liking to this new curiosity that he ordered the bark of a birch tree to be filled completely with salt for him.

In past eras a person asserted his right to land-holding in two ways: with ‘sword-right’, or by the right of ‘steam and water’. That is to say, you had to fight, or you had to build a fire on the land and bring water to boil on the soil that you wanted. (This is called ‘the alodial system’ in the harsh English language.)

It is on that green knoll, where the agreement was made between the Indians and the Barramen, that the Church of St Columba was built, and the Fair Piper was the first person to be interred in the graveyard next to the church in the year 1845.

As in previous tales, the Highlanders were warned that the Mi’kmaq were a savage people. The expectation of violence serves to heighten the drama of their encounter. The constant reminder that the Highlanders are being carefully watched and followed by them sustains the thrill of the chase. The deprecatory terms *borb* (barbaric), *allmharra* (foreign), etc., create irony in the resolution of the story as the Gaels discover that they had more in common with the ‘savages’ than they had been led to believe by previous informants.

The recurrence of triplism in the tale—three sons, three years, and three residences in North America—suggests the influence of oral narrative styles. This narrative draws upon the tree symbolism mentioned previously. The immigrants intend to initiate their possession of the land by clearing it of trees: it is precisely when they are about to ‘attack’ the trees that the Mi’kmaq appear, presumably emerging from the forest itself. They assume a threatening pose, fully armed and displeased that the Highlanders have assumed occupation of their territory. A potentially violent encounter is prevented when the Mi’kmaq
recognise that the Highlanders are also Catholics (unlike many of the other British settlers). The resolution between ethnic groups is followed by a land grant giving Gaels ‘official’ permission to occupy the lands.

The peaceful co-existence of the two communities is cemented by a communal feast of fish and potatoes, echoing the modern idea of Thanksgiving and featuring primary foodstuffs emanating from the sea and land respectively. During the feast, the Gaels introduce the Mi’kmaq to salt; a condiment which supplements the elementary subsistence represented by fish and potatoes. The immigrants thus enhance the civilisation of their Indigenous neighbors with a token of their own culture which almost implies a kind of financial transaction.

The short discussion at the end of the tale about the two means of asserting possession of land—by force, or by fire—underscores that Gaels did not do so by force. The celebratory meal of boiled fish and potatoes, cooked with fire, seems to represent the second option, with the additional benefit that the feast has created a bond between the two peoples. The church built on the site of this encounter reinforces their common religious bond. It may also be significant that Saint Columba was the missionary responsible for converting the pagan Picts in early Scotland and was remembered for this in Gaelic tradition.

John L. Campbell of Canna made the first audio recording of an oral narrative in Mi’kmaw in 1937.27 This tale, narrated by Grand Chief Gabriel Syllibuy, who is said by his granddaughter to have spoken Gaelic, describes how in the first encounter between these two people gifts were ritually exchanged: the Mi’kmaq gave the Highland settlers fire while the Highlanders gave the Mi’kmaq the Gaelic language. Like the Gaelic narrative, this tale needs to be read symbolically: each group gave the other some essential element of their own culture.

D. The Camerons

The idea that the land struggle could be resolved through individual contests of physical strength — that is, according to the ideals of heroic society — is found in another tale from Cape Breton. The ultimate source of this tale is unclear: in MacLeòid’s 1969 collection it is said to come from a manuscript written by Seumas Eòghainn (James Hugh MacNeil of Sydney, Cape Breton) and in MacLeòid’s possession (but since lost).28 The same tale appears almost

27 Campbell, Songs Remembered in Exile, 27.
28 MacLeòid, Sgialachdan a Albainn Nuaidh, 41, 150.
verbatim (although missing a few flourishes given here) in the 1964 anthology by Creighton and MacLeòid. It is said in that source to have been recorded on disc from D. D. MacFarlane of South West Margaree,\(^{29}\) but it is clear on the recording that MacFarlane is reading aloud from a text, presumably one supplied to him by MacLeòid.\(^ {30} \)

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\(^{30}\) Thanks to Anne Landin for a copy of this recording.
Well over a hundred years ago, one Gilleasbuig Cameron came from Strathglass, in Scotland, and he settled himself and his family in Margaree, in the island of Cape Breton. His sons cultivated lands for themselves close to their father, and each one of them was busy felling the forest, improving the land, and making preparations to build houses in which they would go to live.

One day, one of the sons who was named Aonghus was busy felling trees on his own homestead when he noticed a large Indian who seemed to be coming to where he was working. Using strong words as he indicated with his facial expressions, he issued a demand that the white man leave the place immediately; that he was the one who owned this land, and that he had the proper rights to it. The other man did not let on that he heard him, and he continued his work half-heartedly.

\[31\] MacLeòid, *Sgiachdan à Albainn Nuaidh*, 41–2.
and silently. The Indian visited the land of the white man day after day, constantly remonstrating, and asserting his rights to the place, but he got nothing for it. Finally, when the Indian realised that talking would not do him any good, he said the following to the Gael, ‘Let’s wrestle, then. If you are the one who will prevail, I will leave your place, but if I am the one who will prevail, you are the one who must leave.’ The other man took the offer willingly, and they agreed about the time and place that they would meet.

The Indian kept to his word, and early the next day he was present with his wife at his side. They were both in good spirits for the fight and without further delay the wrestling began. They were both strong and brave. Each man put every technique to use that he knew. For a good while it was difficult to say who would win. The Indian’s wife was jumping around like a madwoman while she shouted at her partner to throw down his opponent.

The men were now fighting roughly with each other. They would make rocks of the marsh and a marsh of the rocks; the little stones descending and the big rocks ascending. The place that they would sink the least, they would sink to the knee; the place that they would sink the most, they would sink to the belly. But the white man thought that he was close to his enemies, and he gave that clear, little push to the Indian, and in the blink of an eye he threw him to the ground. The Indian arose, he shook the hand of the Gael; he gave his farewell, and in a short time, he left Margaree.

Many years after this a young man from Margaree went on a trip to Newfoundland. After he had been traveling one day, he came to an Indian’s camp and he went inside. There was an old man lying in the corner of the camp, and when he realised that the stranger had come from Margaree, he asked him if he was familiar with one Aonghus Cameron who lived there. The other man answered that he knew him very well. ‘That is one very strong man,’ the old man said, as he let his head down on the pillow. When he fell asleep he was probably dreaming about being once again back in Margaree amongst his friends and relations, and wandering around ‘the hills and glens’, as the late poet Calum Gilles wrote about the Bràigh :—
'There is no place in the world
In which I would prefer to live
Than Bràigh na h-Aibhne, amongst the heroes
From whom the Gaelic tunes would be gotten.'

The encounter in this tale happens once again when a Mi’kmaw comes forth from the trees that a Highlander is felling. Clearing land of trees can be read in an agricultural society as a symbolic act of domesticating the landscape and taking possession of it. The Mi’kmaw’s protest against the occupation of land in the tale reflects Gaelic self-consciousness of the contention over land and resources. The initial response of Aonghus Cameron is to ignore these claims until pressed on the issue; this may be a reflection of realities at the time of settlement, when the Highland peasantry spilled into Cape Breton without official titles and Mi’kmaw had little means of asserting their own rights.32

The challenge to resolve this conflict of interest by means of single combat reflects the heroic ethos of Gaelic society and relates to the notion of còir claidheimh (sword-right, a practice that can be seen in other Gaelic ‘clan sagas’33) mentioned in tale C. The Mi’kmaw is portrayed as a worthy opponent who ‘kept to his word’ and is closely matched to the strength and techniques of the Highlander. The narrative clearly bears the influence of Gaelic heroic tales: the section from ‘Dheanadh iad creagan de’n bhogan’ (They would make rocks of the marsh) to ‘bhuail e ris an talamh e’ (he threw him to the ground) is a ‘run’ (formulaic passage consisting of alliterative words and phrases) to be found in other early heroic tales.34 This relates the action of Aonghus to Gaelic heroes of the past, thus elevating his status as an ancestral figure in the settlement of Cape Breton.

The second episode occurs not in Cape Breton but in Newfoundland, to which many Mi’kmaw from Nova Scotia resettled.35 Here the unnamed Margaree Gael walks into a Mi’kmaw settlement without opposition: the absence of encounter may signify friendly relations between people, or perhaps that the power to resist encroachment has waned. That the latter may be intended is reflected in the depiction of the only human in the camp; an

32 Dickason, Canada’s First Nations, 206–8; Calloway, White People, Indians, and Highlanders, 210–12.
33 Newton, Warriors of the Word, 142.
34 Ibid, 110, 196.
35 Bennett, The Last Stronghold, 30–1.
elderly man who is half asleep. This is clearly meant to be the same man who lost to Aonghus Cameron in the wrestling match; he acknowledges the Highlander’s strength, presumably to endorse Cameron’s occupation of his former territory, and returns to his slumber.

The tale seems to reflect a lingering sense of guilt for occupying lands once held by Indigenous Americans in a way that also reflects the Gaels’ own sense of exile. The ending of the tale quotes a song written by Malcolm Gillis of Margaree (†1929) which has nearly attained the status of an island anthem amongst Gaelic speakers; it equates the nostalgia of the Mi’kmaw with that of the Highlander for the same locale.

E. MacThòmais has a dirk

A prose narrative background to the satirical song ‘Tha biodag aig MacThòmais’ was given in the popular book Sàr-Obair nam Bàrd Gaëlach (1841), a volume that was reprinted in expanded form in Halifax in 1863. This source states that a claimant for the Fraser chieftaincy escaped to North America after killing a piper who played this satirical song about him, but says nothing of his life thereafter. Calum MacLeòid recorded an anecdote from Màiri Ealasaid NicNéill of Grand Narrows in Cape Breton no later than 1952 which picks up the story from there.

Seadh, ma-tà, gu dearbh, chuala mise am port sin roimbe, ’s theireadh cuid às an t-Seann Dìthachaì guin robb e càirdeach do MhacShimidh, ceann-cinnidh nam Frisealach. Uill, seo agaibh seanchas chuala mise mu dhéidhmh MhicThòmais.

Ann’s a’ bhliadhna seachd cend deng dá fòicheadh ’s a naoi, bba feachd de shaighdearan Gàidhealach a’ fiureach an Louisbourg, an Siorramachd Cheap Breatainn, is air latha Sàbaid àr aird bhaid iad a-mach air chuairt. An uair a raòign iad iomall a’ bhaile nach d’ fhuaire nh b-Innseanaich greim orra. Thugadh iad falbh iad gu ceann-cinnidh nan Innseanach an Easasonaidh. An uair a thuig an ceann-cinnidh có às a thàinig iad, leig e cotbrom coiseachd leotha ’s thuirt e riutha guin inne do dhuine an Altainn gum b’ esan MacThòmais nam biodag. A-réir eachdraidh, theich MacThòmais le a bheatha á Altainn an déidh dhì piobaire a mbarbhadh, piobaire a bha a’ chluich a’ phuirit “Tha biodag aig MacThòmais” aig donnse àr airdh, ’s MacThòmais fhéin ’s an eisdeachd. Raòign MacThòmais Alba Nuadh is ri tìde fhuaire e inbhe ceann-cinnidh nan Innseanach. Tha iad ag ràdh eadbh

36 Eachann MacDhughail (ed.), Sméirich nan Cnoc’s nan Gleann (Glasgow, 1939), 1–2.
37 MacLeòid, Sgial is Eachdraidh, 81–2.
Yes, then, indeed, I have heard that tune before, and some people from the Old Country said that he was related to Fraser of Lovat, the chieftain of the Frasers. Well, I’ll give you some lore that I heard about MacThòmais.

In the year 1749, there was a troop of Gaelic soldiers which was stationed in Louisbourg, in Cape Breton, and on one particular Sunday they went out for a trip. When they reached the outskirts of the settlement, the Indians got a hold of them. They were taken away to the chieftain of the Indians in Eskasoni. When the chieftain realised where they were from, he allowed them to go for a walk and he said to them not to tell anyone in Scotland that he was MacThòmais of the dirks. According to history, MacThòmais fled for his life from Scotland after killing a bagpiper, a bagpiper who was playing the tune ‘MacThòmais has a dirk’ at a particular dance while MacThòmais himself was in the audience. MacThòmais reached Nova Scotia and in time he attained the rank of the chieftain of the Indians. Even to this day they say that ‘Thomas’ is a common name amongst the Indians in Cape Breton.

The tale is set before Highland communities began to settle in Nova Scotia but after individual Highlanders had come to the region as soldiers in British regiments. Stories about their service as far back as the Seven Years’ War (probably the intended era of this tale, making the date given by the narrator about a decade too early) have been circulating until the present in Gaelic oral narrative in the region.39

According to the tale, MacThòmais flees for his life and finds shelter amongst Indigenous Americans after he commits an offence against a Highland chieftain. There are rough structural analogues between this and the emigration of Gaelic communities from Scotland: MacThòmais corresponds to common Gaels; Simon Fraser of Lovat corresponds to landlords and the

38 Idem, Sgialachdan à Albaín Nuaidh, 80.
39 See, for example, Màiri Chamshron, ‘Beagan m’a Sinnsirean agus an Caitheamh-Beatha an Albainn agus an Canada’, Tocher, 42 (1990), 402–7.
Highland élite (although, by coincidence, the emigration agent responsible for bringing many Barra people to this area was Major Simon Fraser); the offence corresponds to the taint of Jacobitism, religious recalcitrance (the immigrants in this locale remained Catholic), and perhaps the existential guilt of being less valuable than sheep.\footnote{Campbell, \textit{Songs Remembered in Exile}, 41, 49.}

As soon as the soldiers go beyond the bounds of the military outpost, they are apprehended by the Mi’kmaq. This underscores the claim that the Mi’kmaq have on the territory as its natural occupiers. The capture of the soldiers by the Mi’kmaq also signals that control of the narrative has been taken over by them, relocating the scene of action from the military outpost of Louisbourg to the Mi’kmaq capital of Eskasoni (this detail, however, is an anachronism reflecting political geography at the time of the narration rather than the mid-eighteenth century).

The initially hostile encounter is alleviated by the chieftain who is a cultural mediator, belonging to both societies. That the chieftain was actually a Highlander in disguise has the potential to suggest that Highlanders and the Mi’kmaq have enough in common for Gaels to live in and assimilate into their society. The motif of a European becoming the chieftain of an ‘Indian tribe’ was a very common one in Euro-American literature and folklore, so this may be evidence of influences from popular fiction in English (a possibility also explored in the next tale). It is possible to read this motif in a positive light: MacThòmais is leading the Mi’kmaq against Anglo-British hegemony; a struggle that resonates with Gaelic Jacobite tradition.\footnote{Ibid., 46–52. That the offence is committed with a dirk—a weapon representing his individual power—suggests symbolic connections with Tale B.} This again suggests that the tale could counter guilt Gaels may have felt about their presence worsening the living conditions of the Mi’kmaq.

The narrative suggests the need in the Gaelic community to build imaginative bridges towards the Indigenous community and to forge connections that will ultimately leave Gaelic influences upon Indigenous Americans without entirely (or even discernibly) altering their culture and identity. It also suggests the need to extend narratives begun in Scotland into the immigrant communities in North America: a need for narrative and cultural continuity. This narrative suggests the signs of interaction between oral tradition and printed texts, albeit in this case a Gaelic text from a popular songbook.

\footnote{Newton, \textit{Warriors of the Word}, 34–5, 70–1.}
F. The Bard MacGilleathain and the Kidnapped Son

Iain MacGilleathain (‘Iain mac Ailein’ in patronymic form, ‘John MacLean’ in English translation), also known in Gaelic by his complementary title Am Bàrd MacGilleathain in Nova Scotia, is an iconic figure in Gaelic immigrant tradition: one of the last of the professional poets who composed encomia for Highland gentry, he migrated to Nova Scotia in the year 1819 and his songs about his experiences have been sung continuously by Gaelic communities since that time in both Scotland and Nova Scotia. In fact, MacGilleathain used songs consciously to influence the decisions of his friends and relations still in Scotland, particularly in his native island of Tiree.

One narrative about his settlement in Nova Scotia was preserved in Tiree until recorded in 1966 by John MacInnes from Domhnall Chaluim Bàn. It begins with an accurate account of the method by which the virgin forest was turned into fertile agricultural fields by the pioneer settlers. Unfortunately, the recording is very difficult to understand and does not seem to have been transcribed previously. Uncertain words and phrases are marked with angle brackets.

Bha e fhé agus a’ bhean a losgadh chraobhan, is a’ leagail chraobhan, a’ deanamh réiteach air son <gnothaich?> agus bha balachan beag aca air an robb ‘Teàrlach’. Agus thàinig Innseanach mun cnairt agus sheas e tacan dha<m feitheamh>. Agus leum an t-Innseanach agus rug e air a’ bhalach agus a-mach e leis a’ bhalach. Agus a-mach Iain mac Ailein agus a’ bhean as dèidh an Innseanach. Agus b<??> an Innseanach, agus <b?>ba astar mór as a dbéidh. Agus thàinig iad gu abhann agus tha talamh gè bh’bhreàgha ann. Agus leig an t-Innseanach às a shim e. Agus bha Iain mac Ailein <toileach?> gu leòr. Cha robb réiteach no losgadh chraobhan <a thàinig an seo?> air an talamb réidh mar a bha e is bha an abhainn <los?>. Is lean an t-Innseanach còir. Chuir e suas shed còir. Agus dha na treis mbòr <??> as a dbéidh sin bhiodh e air ais ’s air aghaibh sin am fearann a bha aig Iain mac Ailein a bha air a’ chrich aige, ’se an t-Innseanach a fhuaire dha e. Bha e cur dragh air an Innseanach a bhith feitheamh an obair a bh’ aca. Cha dèanadh e réiteach gu bruth. Bha an t-Innseanach eòlach is thug e leis iad is siud an doigh a rinn e, ghoide e am balach. Agus <??> a’ bhalach a thoirt leis, <??> thug e ionnsaigh an fhéarainn, an fhéarainn bh’bhreàgha tha seo air taobh abhainn Bhàrnaidh.

43 Alexander MacLean Sinclair (ed.), Clàrsach na Coille (Glasgow, 1881), xix, 96.
44 Recording held in the School of Scottish Studies SA1966-104 (but also available from the Pròiseact Thiriodh website http://www.tiriodh.ed.ac.uk/, accessed 31 July 2009). Thanks to Rob Dunbar for pointing this source out to me and for providing me with
He himself and his wife were burning trees, and felling trees, making improvements for [agricultural] work and they had a very small son who was called ‘Teàrlach’. And an Indian came around and he stood for a while watching them. And the Indian leapt out and he grabbed the boy and went off with the boy. And Iain mac Ailein and his wife went off after the Indian. And the Indian <??>, and they were far behind him. And they came to a river and there was very beautiful land there. And the Indian let go of him there. And Iain mac Ailein was certainly pleased. There were no improvements or tree burning that had ever been done there, the land was ready as it was, and the river was <??>. And the Indian remained agreeable. He built a nice shed. And for a good while after that he went back and forth, and that is the land that Iain mac Ailein had, his own territory, and it was the Indian who found it for him. It bothered the Indian to be watching their work. He [Iain] would never have it finished. The Indian was wise and he took them there and the way in which he did it was that it kidnapped the boy. And <??> to take the boy with him, he took them towards the land, this beautiful land on the side of Barney River.

As in previous narratives, the encounter happens when the settlers are domesticating the landscape, represented by the felling and burning of trees. The encounter appears to be a hostile one initially, and the kidnapped progeny symbolises the precarious state of the future of the Gaelic community in the face of Indigenous opposition. The drama of this conflict is sustained by the chase through the woods.

The flow of events, and thus the narrative itself, is in the control of the Mi’kmaw in this tale: Iain mac Ailein and his wife can only follow him. Despite the assumed ill intentions of the Mi’kmaw, he kidnaps the boy only because he has no other way of communicating with Iain about the more desirable land he knows to be elsewhere. His goodwill towards the Gaels is clear. The unnamed Indigenous American creates an edifice for himself on the land, although he is constantly going ‘back and forth’; he thus seems caught between the sedentary lifestyle of European civilisation and the peripatetic lifestyle of Indigenous Americans (at least as commonly represented in imaginative literature). This liminality reflects his role as a cultural mediator on behalf of the immigrants.

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Novels about Europeans who had been kidnapped by Indigenous Americans were quite popular in the nineteenth century and it is not beyond question that these may have had some influence on this narrative. That Gaels found Indigenous Americans to be compelling characters is suggested by several translations from English into Gaelic appearing in the popular periodical *Cuairtear na nan Gleann* in 1840 and a tale about Tecumseh which was included in the 1841 emigrant guide to North America written in Gaelic and mentioned above.

### III Conclusions

The recurrence of specific motifs across these narratives—weapons representing power, food and feasting representing social integration (or the inability to integrate), felling trees as a European mode of domesticating landscape, the close association between the forest and Indigenous Americans, the role of individual Indigenous Americans as cultural mediators—confirms a common symbolic vocabulary for describing and explaining these first encounters within the immigrant Gaelic community, based on the inherited repertoire of Gaelic oral tradition. Having become Gaelic oral narratives, these tales acquired the characteristics of that medium and must be read and understood according to traditional rhetorical and stylistic conventions. Even if motifs were borrowed from narratives (oral or written) in English, they have been adapted within a framework of traditional Gaelic literary conventions and aesthetics for the purposes of the Gaelic community.

The significance of these tales is not in their accuracy in recounting ‘historical facts’ but their articulation of perceptions. These perceptions may be a reflection of those at the time of settlement to some degree but cannot be safely projected back beyond the time at which they were narrated. Some of these narratives acknowledge contention over land rights between natives and incomers but the outcome is not rationalised through recourse to notions of racial superiority or claims of being members of a more advanced (and hence worthy) civilisation, as generally found in the polemics of empire and

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45 *Cuairtear na nan Gleann*, September 1840, 155–8; November 1840, 206–8.

46 Reprinted in Richard Cox and Colm Ó Baoill (eds), *Rì Linn nan Linnteann: Taghadh de Raog Gàidhlig* (Ceann Drochaid, Scotland, 2005), 65–7. The tale related his name to the Gaelic words *Deagh-Chuimse* (‘Good-Aim’) and the author (probably Robert MacDougall) makes explicit parallels between Gaelic and Indigenous American societies, as well as their common loyalty to the British authorities.
white supremacy. Although the first encounter always looks hostile initially, these appearances either turn out to be false or to be resolvable through some kind of mutually agreed upon process which reflect the heroic ethos of Gaelic society, a common religion, and/or the ideals of hospitality.

Tale C acknowledged that Gaelic tradition recognised two means of acquiring land, one of them being còir claidheimh (sword-right). This term was used to describe the de facto right-by-force land occupancy which Highland clans had practiced for centuries in contest against each other and, often, against the will of the Crown. While Eòghann MacCoinnich (the reciter) did not state that this was practiced against Indigenous Americans in Nova Scotia, disgruntled inhabitants of the estates of MacLeod of Harris were said in 1772 to be eager to emigrate to America where they could conquer land 'from the Indian with the Sword'. That violent clashes did occur can hardly be doubted; one spot near the shore in Antigonish County was called Rubha nan Innseanach (Indian Point) because of 'the hostility of the Indians' (although no narrative is provided).

Tale C looks like it may be a mythical reworking of Tale A. They concern the same settlement of Catholic MacNeills in Christmas Island in which Highlanders come to land from the sea, are met by hostile Mi’kmaq, and cement friendly relations by means of an exchange of fish and potatoes. Tale C has many more of the stylistic features and elaborations of Gaelic oral tradition, suggesting how the portrayals of first encounters may have developed as they circulated in the community (or how they may have been expurgated in creating accounts for an English-speaking audience).

Indigenous Americans are not just passive victims in these tales: they typically initiate contact and often establish the means of resolution of conflict. This must have a basis in historical experiences but it may also reflect the desire amongst the Gaelic community, fresh from their own traumas, to believe that Indigenous Americans wanted to find peaceable solutions that would be mutually binding and beneficial.

The sense of exile and dislocation projected upon the Indigenous American characters in some of these narratives was not just a reflection of the initial migration from Scotland to Canada: from the last quarter of the nineteenth century to the present day the Nova Scotian Gaelic community has struggled to remain rooted, despite unfavorable economic conditions and the lure of

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48 Eric Richards, 'Scotland and the Uses of the Atlantic Empire' in Bernard Bailyn and Philip D. Morgan (eds), *Strangers within the Realm* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 111.
49 MacLean (ed.), *History of Antigonish*, 45.
urban centres in Canada and the United States.\textsuperscript{50} This idea is quite explicit in Tale D but seems to colour the background of other tales as well.

This article suggests ways in which pre-existing narratives, narrative structures, and motifs in Gaelic tradition, brought by the immigrants with them from Scotland and perpetuated in some communities to the present, helped to condition the interpretation and narration of current and past events. The function of these narratives would have also had an influence on their form and content. Tales were told in immigrant communities over the generations to explain their origins, assert the resilience of members in the face of difficult conditions, and provide a sort of charter myth justifying the existence of communities. Heroic characters provided precedents and role models for ongoing challenges. Gaels were aware of the hardship endured by Indigenous Americans during this time and such foundation tales may have been psychologically useful to counter guilt and cognitive dissonance over the displacement of Indigenous peoples.

The analysis also demonstrates that any penetrating account of the Scottish Highland experience requires careful consideration of Gaelic culture, especially its literary and linguistic expressions and conventions. The history of Highland settlement in North America far too often relies solely on documents written in English by and/or for anglophones and reveals little about the perceptions and experiences of the immigrants themselves. This problem can only be rectified by means of the record made by and for the Gaelic community itself, even if these materials are used in conjunction with the more numerous texts in English.\textsuperscript{51}

While it is difficult to determine how common the sentiments in these tales were amongst North American Gaels, it is notable that into the twentieth century Gaelic tradition bearers displayed a great interest in the customs and beliefs of neighbouring Indigenous Americans.\textsuperscript{52} Some Nova Scotian Gaels had knowledge of Mi’kmaw customs and appeared to have absorbed their antipathy for their enemies, the Mohawks.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{50} Margaret MacDonell (ed.), \textit{The Emigrant Experience} (Toronto, 1982), 165–83.
\textsuperscript{52} Mac-Talla 17 February 1894; MacLeod, \textit{Sgialachdan à Albainn Nuaidh}, 62–3. Amongst the lore recorded in Gaelic from a native of Barra who emigrated to Canada but soon returned to Scotland were detailed observations about the burial customs of Indigenous Americans (School of Scottish Studies SA1974.58.B3).
\textsuperscript{53} As noted by Robert Dunbar, ‘Identity and Images of Other Peoples: How Other
A great deal of work remains in locating and indexing primary sources in Gaelic—manuscripts, newspapers, audio recordings, and other primary records—which may yet bring other such texts to light from Nova Scotia and elsewhere in North America. These may contribute substantially to our understanding of the wider dynamics of the Gaelic immigrant experience, especially regarding the responses of Highlanders while under pressure to assimilate to the norms and expectations of the dominant anglophone hegemony and to identify with the ideologies of conquest and colonisation.  

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Ethnic Groups are Represented in Nova Scotia Gaelic Tradition*, unpublished paper presented at Rannsachadh na Gàidhlig 2002; a negative view of the Mohawks is demonstrated, for example, by the satirical song ‘Óran nam Mohawks’ in Calum I. M. MacLeòid (ed.), *Bardachd à Albainn Nuaidb* (Glasgow, 1970), 75–7.

Newton, ‘Celtic Cousins or White Settlers?’. 
More an Emotion than a Country? Scottish Identity, 
Nationhood and the New World Diaspora

Elizabeth Carnegie

I found the sound of the bagpipes extremely moving. It awakened my sense of Scottish history with its violence and its pageantry and its fatal predilection for the lost cause…Scotland came for me more an emotion than a country.¹

On 19 September 2007, The Times published an article which argued that ‘despite all the money, the glossy adverts and the brand marketing’ Scotland’s international image is personified as ‘offensive, angry and ginger’ as typified by the cartoon character Willie from The Simpsons. The article, based on a United States Mori poll, went on to note that Willie, as a ‘a red-haired, bearded, foul-tempered, incompetent, haggis-eating, testosterone-filled boor who spends his private time secretly videotaping couples in their cars’ was the ‘worst possible stereotype of the Scot’. Survey respondents, many of whom were students, when asked to ‘identify images that typified Scotland’ came up with ‘hills, golf, tartan and sheep’. They described the Scottish character with ‘the words hearty, traditional, family orientated, fighting and principled’. Some students even questioned whether the internet had reached a Scotland they generally viewed as ‘a backward, old-fashioned, rural country’.²

Contemporary Scotland, if this article is to be believed, is a land of stereotypes, albeit some of these are of mythological, indeed monstrous, proportions. Yet this view of Scotland seems at variance with the passion for, and promotion of, Scottish identity that many diasporic Scots Americans evidence within their leisure and cultural lives. This suggests there are clearly differences in opinions and attitudes of Scottish Americans towards Scots in Scotland and as forefathers within the diaspora. Thus, The Times article became the impetus for a study of how diasporic Scots resident or born in the United States explore, identify and develop their sense of Scottishness.

¹ David Daiches, Two Worlds (Edinburgh, 1957), 59.
In this paper, I consider whether, or to what extent, the New World Scot inhabits Paul Basu’s ‘clanscape’ whilst imagining the old Scotland as Brigadoon’s fantasy landscape and contemporary Scotland as an urban wasteland.\(^3\) I consider whether, and in what ways, John Caughie’s three mythologies of Scotland—‘Tartanry’, ‘Kailyard’ and ‘Clydeside’—are embedded within the diasporic consciousness and show how these myths are also reflected within the global marketing of the Scottish nation.\(^4\) I determine that, as in the Daiches quote above, embracing Scottishness is a form of emotional engagement with an ‘imagined community’ and that this community is not located in Scotland as a country but helps define and shape individuals’ American identity.\(^5\)

I begin by drawing upon a number of sources, including academic texts, popular histories and promotional material, to explore how ideas about Scottish identity, of characteristics and ‘intrinsically’ Scottish products which have been sustained in the New World, have been, and indeed are, shaped by Scots themselves. I discuss Scottishness as a concept and a link to nationhood. Furthermore, the Scots-Irish, although a distinct cultural group, are discussed in the context of this paper in terms of their distinct contribution to the shaping of Scottish identity with America. I then go on to discuss the survey in some detail, developing a snapshot of contemporary Scots-American attitudes to, and emotional engagement with, their ‘imagined’ pasts. Additionally, I highlight how survey findings suggest that the Scotland of the imagined past represents a purer form than the one visited or envisioned in the modern world. Ultimately, I argue that American identity is expressed through a Scottishness that shapes and reinforces ideas about pioneership, and political, cultural and religious freedoms.

I Of Myths and Scottish Men

A threatening autumnal sky blows away over a desolate rocky vista. Three red deer look warily around from a foreground of shattered rock and the only sign of human presence, a sunlit road, twists its way

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through the middle distance and points to the empty glen slanting off to the right.\(^6\)

Horatio McCulloch’s 1864 painting *Glencoe* (described above) depicts, according to John Morrison, ‘the archetypal Scottish landscape’ that is ‘representative of the essential qualities of the nation itself.’\(^7\) Arguments about Scottish stereotypes or myths being created by the Scots themselves are not new as can be seen in Murray Grigor’s *Scotch Myths* (1982). As Cauthe notes:

> The tartan myth of Brigadoon, triumphal defeatism of Culloden, the couthy community of the kailyard are both massively regressive, and, at the same time, provide some of the images by which Scottish people recognise and misrecognise themselves and insist on some kind of nationality.\(^8\)

Morrison queries why the Scots, ‘who were then in an unprecedented paroxysm of industrial and urban development, should have embraced empty desolation as a national defining image’.\(^9\) Yet notions of Scottishness have evolved, been created and recreated to reflect abiding ideas about Scotland and its people at home and abroad. Many authors including Basu argue such myths serve an essential purpose in creating a sense of group, familial or cultural identity.\(^10\) As Caughie’s piece argues, ‘mythologies cannot simply be construed as false consciousness to be corrected by hard facts … they are probably foundational for national memories’.\(^11\) Sean Field goes so far as to argue the importance of myth in identity shaping. He states that ‘wrong statements are still psychologically “true”’ and that ‘life stories are not necessarily incomplete, the sense of self not whole, unless completed through myth’.\(^12\) Within contemporary debates, as Field, drawing on Alesandro Portelli, notes, authenticity often matters less

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\(^{7}\) Ibid, 1.

\(^{8}\) Caughie, ‘De-picting Scotland’, 92.

\(^{9}\) Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, 1.


\(^{11}\) Caughie, ‘De-picting Scotland’, 92.

than perceived truths and ‘has more to do with the creation of meanings than with what exactly happened in the past’.13

Basu argues that within the Scottish diaspora myths are what people live by through ‘pursuing genealogical research, attending clan gatherings, learning clan stories’.14 Elsewhere he argues that ‘affiliation to a clan is frequently central to the practice of being Scottish’ in North America and ‘yet [it] can be founded on a number of erroneous assumptions. Myths and memories combine with historical accounts’.15 Caughie stresses that ‘the evidence isn’t either in myth or in documented history but in the exchange between them’.16 In creating—or condoning—a sense of Scottishness driven by the mythologies of people and place, cultural identities are shaped then reinforced in the present and can indeed be repackaged back to the diasporic groups whose heritage is defined by them. Such is the power of myth to create central ‘truths’, as is apparent in Patricia Ferguson, Minister for Tourism Sport and Culture’s claim that the ‘great thing for me about Tartan is that it says so much about our history but it can also be used to market our modern Scotland’.17

Tourism marketing creates an expectation of a mythical Scotland based on emblems and icons which in turn creates a demand for such representations. Deborah Kerstetter and M-Hea Cho argue that consumers ‘depend more on their own internal sources’ when shaping their expectations of what a destination will be like. Consequently, the destination will respond by creating an experience which best fits consumer expectations and which will ‘theoretically lead to satisfaction’.18 Keith Hollinshead’s work on ‘worldmaking’ argues that this privileging of interpretations leads to their becoming accepted narratives.19 The memory of the Highlands has in fact been shaped by immigrants.

Visitors come seeking the Scotland that has been imagined for them or by them. Akhil Gupta and June Ferguson suggest that ‘remembered places’ serve as ‘symbolic anchors for communities’ and George Hughes determines

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13 Ibid., 34.
that the *remembered* past and *imagined* past combine to create the ‘geography of the imagination’. Where this becomes problematic is that Scottish myths also conjure up visions of an uninhabitable and inhospitable Scotland that needs to be left behind in order for its (essentially nomadic) people to flourish and of a New World ready to welcome them. These accepted ‘truths’ lead to the kinds of cultural judgements evidenced in the *Times* article as I will now discuss.

II The Global Nomad?

*Scotland the Brave* tells us we are from the ‘land of the shining river,’ which is true, but it also tells us we are from the ‘land of thy high endeavour.’ Mother Nature created us to do worthwhile things—even when they are difficult.

(Survey Respondent, 12 July 2007)

The Scottish character is established within the body of literature that defines the social and cultural history of the nation as essentially nomadic; borne of either an entrepreneurial spirit or desperation. Although Marjorie Harper estimates that Norway and Ireland had similar patterns of outward migration, she notes that ‘emigration central to Scottish identities was woven indelibly into the fabric of Scottish life and lore’. Gordon Donaldson, in the preface to *The Scots Overseas*, states that ‘the history of the Scottish nation has for many centuries now been something more than a history of the inhabitants of the geographical bounds of a small, poor remote island’. Jeanette M. Brock stresses that this view of the Scots as a migrant people is borne out as ‘it is becoming increasingly clear that Scots have always emigrated in significant numbers, this culture of emigration being established well before the seventeenth century’. Donaldson points out that Scotland was by no means unique in this as ‘almost every country in Western Europe had formed


a settlement of some kind in America before the middle of the seventeenth century’. Yet Michael Brander outlines that by the ‘1790 census (there were) 189,000 people of Scottish origin in United States coupled with ‘some 200,000 of Scottish decent from Ireland’.

Mythologies of migration seem based on the individuals who were migrating and what this meant for those left behind. Brock notes that there tended to be significant gender bias with young men being in the majority although family groups were not uncommon. During the nineteenth century, she evidences a growth in urban emigration with numbers growing substantially during the second half of the nineteenth century. She notes that from 1846–54, 58.9 per cent were males and this number increased to 79.9 per cent from 1885–8. She suggests numbers of young males were as high as 8:1 in 1880. Helen Smailes highlights though, what seems generally believed to be the case that ‘emigration from the highlands tended to be a communal affair’. In all, Brock suggests some 28 per cent of the population of Scotland provided one third of emigrants to the new world during the eighteenth century.

It has been noted by several authors (such as Donaldson) that migration was perceived as a drain on Scotland’s resources and such impressions may well have contributed to the myth of a Scotland emptied of its young and entire settlements and of its entrepreneurial population. Brock acknowledges that as a consequence of the Clearances, Scotland ‘developed a historiography of enforced diaspora, fuelled by polemicists, poets and novelists, which portrayed the movement from Scotland primarily as an outflow of unhappy highlanders’. Smailes determines that the ‘epidemical fever’ described by Samuel Johnston began to affect Scotland seriously in the mid eighteenth century. The main causes (rural poverty and over population in relation to resources) were exacerbated by the improvement of farming techniques and were not eliminated by the expansion of trade following the union of 1707. Indeed, Brock argues, that increased urbanisation leads to the potential for

28 Brock, The Mobile Scot, 20
29 Donaldson, The Scots Overseas, 217.
30 The Mobile Scot, 20.
31 Smailes, The Scottish Empire, 11; Douglas Kelly with Caroline Switzer Kelly, Carolina Scots: An Historical and Genealogical Study of over 100 years of Emigration (South Carolina, 1998).
capitalist development of the rural and in the case of a developing Scotland the highlands were required to be rationalised to produce food to service the cities.\footnote{Brock, \textit{The Mobile Scot}, 8.}

Drawing on contemporary accounts Brock argues that Queen Victoria’s 1837 assisted emigration scheme ‘came to be regarded as a panacea—a remedy for social discontent, a provider of markets and raw materials, and an expedient for fulfilling the expansionist and mercenary ambitions of the empire’.\footnote{Ibid., 11.} The Passenger Acts of 1803 pushed costs up as ships were compelled to carry fewer people. However, Brock shows that migration did become faster and cheaper after the famine in the mid nineteenth century making emigration a more attractive option and more readily affordable.

Between 1865 and 1910, the United States became the most popular destination for Scottish migrants.\footnote{Ibid., 35.} Brock suggests that during this time migration was not necessarily a choice but reflected the ‘boom and bust cycles in both countries’, although she maintains that the decision to emigrate was ‘not just linked to economics’ but reflected a ‘propensity to emigrate more significant than the nature of the country’.\footnote{Ibid., 204.} As Rob Gibson notes, this propensity to emigrate, albeit temporarily, is again being seen as a cultural trait.\footnote{Rob Gibson, \textit{Plaids and the Bandanas: From Highland Drover to Wild West Cowboy} (Barr, 2003).} Brock determines that between 1825 and the outbreak of World War 1, at least 1,841,534 emigrants left Scotland for non-European destinations.\footnote{Brock, \textit{The Mobile Scot}, 204.}

Brock also notes that the image and mythology of Scottish migrants impacts on our understanding of reality. She maintains that:

the dominant image of the impoverished highland emigrant, just as hagiographical studies of the achievements of individual Scots abroad, retarded scholarly investigation of the overall economic, social, cultural and political impact of the Scottish presence.\footnote{Ibid., 20.}

Marjory Harper argues that the projection and protection of Scottish identity and symbols provides for ‘corporate identity, ethnic anchors and practical tools for their economic or social advancement’ while Basu believes that
these symbols of Scottish identity helped diasporic communities to maintain their strong cultural affiliations.\textsuperscript{39} This network in turn encouraged further migration, as Harper notes:

Inter-war emigrants, like their nineteenth-century predecessors, were influenced primarily by personal persuasion, private assistance and increasingly sophisticated ethnic and regional networks, which both stimulated and sustained a long tradition of diaspora.\textsuperscript{40}

It seems then that there is both a mythology of the nomadic Scot and evidence of patterns of Scottish migration to America and elsewhere which argues for this definition. The conscious positioning of the emblems of Scottishness helps create a positive brand image for the Scots overseas but may also mask any negative connotations associated with exile, including poverty. The subsequent histories of the Scots within the United States diaspora have clearly influenced how people view their contribution, role and ultimately—through the successes of notable Scots—determine their right to be there and share in the Glory (as the original flag of the United States is often referred to). Billy Kennedy proclaims:

Heroism was a distinct characteristic of the Scots-Irish immigrants who settled on the American Frontier in the eighteenth century. The raw courage shown by this dogged, determined people in very difficult circumstances helped shape the fabric of the United States as an embryonic nation, and ultimately, as the world power that is it today.\textsuperscript{41}

The mythologies of the successful immigrant are counterbalanced by the narrative of the Clearances which Basu notes is one that is recounted and accepted by individuals that he interviewed in his survey. These tended to view their shared past through the frame of a whole-scale cultural and class rejection and subsequent forced ejection from the homeland.\textsuperscript{42} Basu notes that families’ narratives tend to become more positive as they are handed down, suggesting there are accepted mythological accounts which impact on Scots as a people.

\textsuperscript{39} Harper, \textit{Emigration from Scotland between the Wars}, 5; Basu, ‘Macpherson Country’, 125.
\textsuperscript{40} Harper, \textit{Emigration from Scotland between the Wars}, 214.
\textsuperscript{41} Billy Kennedy, \textit{Our most Priceless Heritage: The Lasting Legacy of the Scots-Irish in America} (Greenville, 2005), 1.
and personal accounts which shape the lives and memories of individuals. Importantly, these sometimes disparate accounts also influence the way that the diasporic communities view, or rather imagine, their homeland.

### III The Mark of the Scots

Ironically, it was while being taught the history of the United States of America that many of us became aware of the massive contribution made by our eighteenth-century fellow countrymen.\(^{43}\)

Duncan Bruce’s 1999 work *The Mark of the Scots: Their Astonishing Contributions to History, Science, Democracy, Literature and the Arts* builds on the vision of an enlightened Scotland but transfers these attributes to the diasporic Scot. By drawing on the successes of a small number of Scots it creates an imagined geological connection and lineage for all diasporic Scots. This lineage is evident in the 1921 piece *Scotland’s Mark on America* which cites:

> Some 1,500 Scots of importance in the government, armed forces, professions, industry, finance and the arts. Apart from fifteen judges of the Supreme Court, more than 100 governments of states since the Revolution are listed as well as many notable leaders in other fields.\(^{44}\)

One of the marks of Scots in the USA was (and remains) the promotion of their Scottishness as an aspect of their daily lives. In New York, the first Scots Society was founded in 1744; the successor to this, the St Andrews Society, was founded in 1756. The first Burns Club in New York was founded in 1820 and inns such as the Burns Tavern and the Blue Bonnet show a clear projection of Scottish identity as well as providing a place for Scots to meet.\(^{45}\) The impact of Scottishness was not so evident in the social arena: Ron Chepesiuk argues that this was because of the large numbers of Scots-Irish and their role in the development of education and religion; the major part they played in the fight against ‘political privilege; promoting democratic principles; supporting the War of Independence and participating in the winning of the west’.\(^{46}\)

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\(^{43}\) Kennedy, *Our Most Priceless Heritage*, xv.

\(^{44}\) Brander, *The Emigrant Scots*, 104.

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 91, 100.

\(^{46}\) Ron Chepesiuk, *The Scotch-Irish* (North Carolina, 2005), 146.
Brander concludes that the preservation and promotion of the customs and traditions of Scotland ‘surely sums up the principal motivation of every emigrant Scot’. 47 Here the expression of Scottishness is presented not just as a voluntary badge of identity but as an expected way for a diasporic Scot to conduct himself overseas. The loyalty to all things Scottish that developed within the diaspora was carried through generations, although the Scots-American was required to develop a dual loyalty or, in the case of the Ulster-Scots, embrace Scottishness as part of a wider cultural identity. Subsequent generations of Scots-Americans identify with recent American history and their contribution to the development of the United States; their current (and perhaps only known) land may merge with earlier pre-migration memories. Brander notes that:

While pre-eminently wanderers, the Scots felt a tremendous loyalty to their homeland, and never more so than when abroad. This yearning for the land of their birth was generally transmitted to their children and passed onto their grandchildren and even to their great grandchildren. Thus even when blood has been diluted many times over and their names changed almost beyond recognition, those with Scots blood retain their feeling for Scotland and all things Scottish with a singular tenacity. 48

Given this continued interest in Scottishness, as Donaldson suggests, ‘it would have been surprising if it had not been common for descendents of Scottish emigrants to attempt to trace their ancestry’. 49 Moreover, people who feel strong connections with the dominant narratives of the Scottish diaspora can, through engaging with their Scottishness, ‘recover a sense of belonging to a historical community’. 50

IV Methods and Context for the Study

I now explore, with reference to a North American case study, where that community might be geographically located. Is it in the imagined Scotland of

48 Ibid., xvi.
fiction, past or present or within the imagined America of the early Scottish settlers or indeed a mixture of both? How have Caughie’s three mythologies of Scotland: ‘Tartanry’, ‘Kailyard’ and ‘Clydeside’ been adopted by, and adapted to, the American Scots’ sense of contemporary Scotland?

The case study discussed in this paper is drawn from a larger project that focuses on the Scottish diaspora within both the United States and Canada. Although the impetus for the study came from a Mori poll as discussed earlier, it also builds on my own experiences from fieldwork undertaken with Scottish Americans in the Southern States of America in 1988. This study aims to offer a contemporary snapshot to determine how people who are Scottish or who claim Scottish descent and who are currently resident within North America view, celebrate, explore, and indeed perform, their Scottishness. Subsequent discussion is concerned only with the United States element of the survey and focuses primarily on those questions which reflect the key aims of the paper: how the mythologies of place and peoples inform and are reflected in the performance of Scottishness as a badge of identity.

The findings are based on a twenty-one question survey designed around a number of qualitative and quantitative questions. Some questions allow for multiple answers and, where this is the case, findings may be expressed according to the number of persons who ticked each box rather than as a percentage of the whole survey. Questions aim to discover participants’ sense of their own Scottishness, their attitudes to Scotland, and to determine who they consider famous or successful Scots both in Scotland and in North America across the artistic, cultural and political spectrum. In short, the survey aims to discover Scots-Americans’ relationship to Scottish Americans, Scots in Scotland, Scotland as an imagined place, and Scotland as a place they have visited (or intend to).

Additionally, the questionnaire explores the material culture of the Scottish diaspora (including items they have in their homes which they deem to have a connection with Scotland) and Scottish cultural activities they are involved in locally which links them with Scotland. In shaping this questionnaire, I was also trying to determine whether there were differences in attitudes to Scotland from those who had visited, those who had only imagined Scotland and the degree of Scottishness ‘owned’ or claimed by the participants. The survey was carried out during the presidential campaigns leading up to the 2008 election and a question relating to whether participants would wish their incoming president to have Scottish blood was withdrawn at the pilot stage in response to comments about the potential of this question to cause offence. Many
of the responses to Question 12, ‘Name some famous Scottish Americans’, claimed Scottish blood for previous presidents including ‘Abraham Lincoln, Washington, Jefferson (1/3 of the US founding fathers) President Johnson, [and] President Taft’.

The survey questions which are most relevant to the aims of this paper and discussed here in some depth are Question 13: ‘Name the qualities you feel best represent the Scots’; and questions 16 and 17 which explore these themes further. Question 4: ‘How far back does your Scottish ancestry go?’ aims to determine a timeline for emigration; and Question 6: ‘Why did your family move to the United States?’ explores the motivations for (and sometimes the mythologies of) emigration. All of the questions allow for free comment but some guidance is offered when appropriate. Choices given for Question 6 include religious freedoms, looking for employment, forced to leave, a better life, or other. I consciously did not use the term ‘Clearances’ in these potential responses although it can possibly be inferred from all responses. I inserted ‘religious freedoms’ into this question as this was a key reason given for leaving during my studies in the United States in 1998. Kennedy, for example, argues that the ‘fundamentals of faith and freedom’ were ‘profound, meaningful and enriching to the proud pioneering people’ but one might ask whether these values and perceived virtues are still extant.51 I was keen to find out if there had been a narrative shift in the intervening two decades.

Question 3: ‘How would you define yourself?’ had five options: as Scottish, as Scottish American, as Scottish and another nationality as well as American, as simply an American Citizen, or other. Question 4 queried how far back people believed their ancestry to go, Question 7 asked if participants had living relatives in Scotland and Question 8 asked how they celebrate their Scottishness. Question 16 asked participants if they have visited Scotland, if they would like to and how often they have been there. Following on from this, Question 17: ‘Did your visit to Scotland live up to your expectations?’ offered a Lickert scale to determine a quantifiable answer. This question helped determine whether participants believe the ‘real’ Scotland is as good (or as bad) as the Scotland left behind.

The survey was carried out during 2007/8. The online link to the questionnaire was sent to 100 named individuals listed on Scottish association web sites, for example St Andrews Associations and Burns Societies. They were also invited to forward the link. Although the survey was allowed to

51 Kennedy, Our Most Priceless Heritage, 3.
run online for over a year many of the responses arrived overnight and the majority within the first few days. Through snowballing, I was able to achieve a high response rate and indeed over a quarter more than were sent out with 127 responses. The Canadian study brought over 260 responses from an initial 100.

The US responses represented thirty different states, although Texas provided the greatest single number of responses. The survey shows that Scottishness is keenly felt in areas beyond the traditional emigration ‘heartlands’ of the east coast, Appalachians and Nova Scotia as the following comment highlights: ‘here in California you cannot believe how important Scottishness is to a large number of Americans and expats. There is quite a community of persons dedicated to preserving the music, dance, sports and culture’.

As well as the completed questionnaire, I received many personal communications, invites to attend events, links to various sites and several papers and genealogies from participants who were researching their own relationship with Scotland. These were usually positive although one commented that, ‘as a dispersed Scot, descended from those who suffered the burnings and other assorted horrors of the Clearances, you may wish to understand that a “questionnaire”, per se, as often as not, will hide more than what it reveals’. Accepting these limitations, the survey must also be viewed as reaching ‘the converted’ as it is likely that only people who are to some extent engaged with Scottish societies or are connected to people who are would have seen the questionnaire. As one of the participants stated, ‘re-introducing and supporting the Scottishness of those who are from or descended from Scotland’ is an aim of many of these organisations. Another forwarded ‘Some thoughts on being Scottish’ which opened with a call to Scots to recognise the need to be actively Scottish:

When, as a Scot, I think of Scotland and the Scots who live there—and the many of Scottish blood living in every other country on earth—I feel there is something we must all keep in mind. Something intangible which may not exist to the same degree it once did. Something we must do all we can to preserve, but also develop and advance. What I am referring to is something called Scottishness.

Therefore, we can assume that people who are linked to societies are keen to, and indeed actively encouraged to, keep their sense of Scottish identity alive. The timing of this project meant that it did not benefit from or provide
information about the Homecoming (2009) events where people might have been expected to have a heightened sense of their Scottishness. It now becomes necessary to discuss the findings in some detail.

V Findings

‘Scottishness’ in a person must live and breathe, or it is no more than a stag head on a wall when compared to a living, breathing stag in the moors.

(Participant email communication)

Two thirds of the responses were from men and the majority of all participants were in the higher age bracket with 85 per cent over forty-five years old with the largest single age group represented being fifty five to sixty five. They covered a range of professions, although some tended to stress work activities that reflected their commitment to expressing their Scottishness, as in ‘teach the bagpipes’ or ‘teach Scottish dancing’. Besides teaching there was a significant number in law enforcement, civil service, fire fighting or retired military, although other professions were represented, including several medical practitioners and one chaplain. Other responses included ‘mechanic’ and ‘bartender’ and 28 per cent of survey respondents were retired.

Some 88 per cent of respondents answered yes to Question 1: ‘Do you consider yourself to be Scottish?’ although further exploration in Question 2: ‘How much do you consider yourself to be Scottish’ broke this percentage down with 50 per cent being Scottish on one side, one third stating that both parents have Scottish ancestry, some 8 per cent saying both parents were Scottish and 8 per cent who were themselves born in Scotland. In answer to Question 3: ‘How would you define yourself’, the largest number of responses at 38 per cent was ‘As Scottish American’ with a further 19 per cent ‘as Scottish and another nationality as well as American’. Only 23 per cent defined themselves solely ‘as American Citizen’.

Responses from the 21 per cent who described themselves as ‘other’ ranged from the impressionistic to the precise. These included: ‘American citizen with Scottish ancestry’, ‘Scots Cherokee (Native American)’, ‘English/American’, ‘American with Scottish descent’, ‘American of German, Irish and Scottish descent’, ‘French (50 per cent), ‘English’ (25 per cent), ‘Norwegian’ (25 per
cent’), and ‘1st Texan, 2nd American, 3rd Scott-American’. A significant number (21 per cent) defined themselves as ‘Celt’ or included Celt as in ‘An Italian, German, Scottish, Irish, Viking Celt!’ and ‘Celtic American’.

Question 4: ‘How far back does your ancestry go?’ elicited a wide range of responses. Some had clearly researched this as an important part of their expression and celebration of their Scottishness. As the comments below show, participants were not just going back in time but also linking themselves with notable or titled Scots. Basu notes that many diasporic Scots are seeking to ‘find the missing link that connects their own family histories with those … lineages that emerge simply from Scottish mytho-history’.

One respondent wrote:

I just recently discovered my Scottish ancestry. Mom never talked about it. I was very fortunate to find Grandpa and Grandma Primrose from Dunbarton, Great Grandpa and Grandma Macgregor from Aberfoyle, Great-Great Grandpa and Grandma Robertson from Bonhill and Great-Great-Great-Grandpa and Grandma Collins from Bo’ness all in one cemetery. My Primrose line goes back to the Earl of Roseberry in 1490.

A few of the answers were precise about dates: ‘03/27/1813’, ‘documented to 1633’, ‘1745 Scotch Irish on the one; 1875 on the other’, ‘traceable to 1575, no records before that’, ‘traced back to 1700s, although ancestor came from Ayrshire in early 1800s’. Some 22 per cent said they were from nineteenth-century arrivals, 21 per cent eighteenth century, four sixteenth century, three fourteenth century, and two people said thirteenth century. Only four proved to be twentieth-century arrivals. Some comments link in with mythologies of Scottish people, places and clans and are often referred to in historically vague terms. These include ‘ca. 430 a.d. (Cormack Mor MacErc of Dalriada); ‘700s – yes, that’s seven hundreds’; ‘from the beginning?’; ‘my clan is said to be of Pictish origins’; ‘Kenneth MacAlpine is an ancestor’; ‘fourth generation American on one branch; the rest much earlier arrivals in the US’, and ‘Scots Irish who arrived in the colonial period documented to 1633’. Some admitted they did not know and typical comments included the following: ‘it’s been centuries at least’ or ‘we’re not done investigating yet’. One man added that:

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I find it interesting as well why people over here consider themselves Scottish. Many people can not even trace their family history to Scotland but like me have a Scottish last name. I however have family over there and can trace the exact route in which my family took to get to the US.

The answers to this question illustrate the respondent’s belief in a long history of Scottish ancestry but also demonstrate a strong sense of connection with the country of their domicile, America. This is shown clearly in the following comment: ‘Ever since reading Robb Roy [sic] as a young boy (under twelve), I have been fascinated with ideals and spirit of Scots. I produce our community’s 4th of July celebration.’ The findings suggest that the majority (61 per cent) see themselves as Scottish Americans or Americans with Scottish ancestry. Yet when asked to say ‘how proud they were of their Scottish identity’ (Question 5), the vast majority (84 per cent) rated their pride at five and a further 10 per cent at four, rendering 94 per cent very proud or proud of the ancestry that shaped their cultural identity. Survey respondents were involved in a number of Scottish activities such as playing bagpipes, hosting Burns Suppers, favoured television shows such as Monarch of the Glen, watched Braveheart, Chariots of Fire, Rob Roy and Tunes of Glory. They favoured Burns, Buchan, clan and cookery books, and, above all, loved Sean Connery. Several people mentioned that they were learning, or intending to learn ‘the language’ (referring to Scottish Gaelic) which again reflects the abiding draw of the Highlands. They have clan plaques, wear kilts and tartan, and are also proud of their American Scottish lineage as well.

This pride is evident in the responses to the ‘name famous Scottish Americans’ question with claims of Scottish ancestry being made for many eminent Americans, including, as mentioned earlier, ‘most US Presidents’, ‘many of the signers of the Declaration of Independence’, ‘most of the Southern Confederate Generals during the Civil War, John Quincy Adams, and our newest New England Hero, Johnathan Pappalbon of the Boston Red Sox’. One participant goes so far as to argue that the number of eminent Scots proves there is something special about them as a people. He notes:

Look at the incredible contribution the Scots have made to the world, in so many fields, and relate that to the small part of the world’s population which Scots comprise. There has to be something special at work. Maybe it’s our Celtic blood, with a touch of Pictish (if that’s different) but whatever it is, I feel we should all be directing whatever
effort it takes to make sure that Scottishness lasts. Scotland—and the world—would be a lesser place without it.

One respondent though was keen to point out that ‘some of the best known were poor examples of humans—better were many signers of the American Declaration of Independence’. One mentioned Betsy Ross, who is often credited with sewing ‘Old Glory’, one of the key symbols of Americanness. Several people mentioned that ‘many US astronauts have had Scottish blood (i.e. Neal Armstrong)’ which highlights not only personal achievement but seems in keeping with the mythology of the Scot as nomadic explorer. Unsurprisingly, given his legacy within America, Andrew Carnegie was the most mentioned historical figure, cited by 30 per cent of the sample.

The answers to Question 6: ‘Why did your family move to the United States?’ highlights the loyalty to and favouring of the new country as a land of opportunity and/or sanctuary. Responses also reflect the literature on mythologies of diaspora. The largest response (sixty-four people) agreed that they left Scotland or believed their ancestors left in order to find ‘a better life’ and a further thirty-six persons said they or their family member(s) left to seek employment. Another twenty-one respondents said they or their family members were forced to leave, with only nineteen persons agreeing migration was linked with religious freedoms. There were thirty-nine persons who selected ‘other’ with one noting ‘Sent by King George in 1764 from Ireland’, while another recounted that a presumed ancestor, the ‘Baron of Caskieben was on wrong side of an argument with the king, and had to flee’. One said his ancestor came because they were not first born. Another cited ‘independence’ and one stated the opposite—‘indentured servant’.

Only one person mentioned leaving the industrialised heartlands of central Scotland, noting ‘things were tough on Clydeside in the ’50s’. One respondent admitted he did not know why their family had moved and one other mentioned that emigration to the United States was possible because of family connections. Of the sample, 55 per cent of persons still have family in Scotland.

One comment highlights that the pride in a Scottish heritage can be transferred to ‘adopted Scots’:

I myself am not Scottish, but have been told even by my husband, that I am more Scottish than some of the people in Scotland itself. I have fallen deeply in love with it, and as I have read the history and
especially the history of the Camerons. I could not have fallen in love with a better man if I tried, nor could I have picked a better heritage for my children or chosen a family with a last name that has a history that is ancient and deep in history as are the Camerons. Plus they have so many beautiful tartans!! Seriously, I am very blessed to be part of such a wonderful family/clan.

Question 13 aims to explore the essence of Scottishness as it invites respondents to ‘name some qualities you think best represents the Scots’. Respondents could chose from pioneering, hard working, religious, and humorous and also comment in the other box. The favoured options were hardworking with 109 ticking yes and twelve responding no; brave with ninety-three ticks for yes and seventeen for no, and pioneering with eighty-four voting yes and twenty one no. Humorous elicited seventy-three positive responses with forty-four persons disagreeing. Most significantly, there was a slight majority (fifty-eight persons) saying no to religious against fifty-four for yes. This could imply that the Scots in Scotland are deemed less religious than their American counterparts who ‘kept the faith’—and indeed left to be able to have freedom of worship. It may also imply a liberalisation of values and assumptions of a decline in the central importance of religion in contemporary society. The ‘other’ box inspired some further comments, including ‘inventive, philosophical, spiritual’, ‘uncooperative with authority’, ‘appreciative of education and knowledge’, ‘intensely loyal, passionate about causes’, ‘democratic and egalitarian, respectful of personal accomplishment and merit’, ‘thrifty (different from cheap) and efficient—practical’, ‘very strong willed, to the point of stupid’, ‘adaptable and versatile, fierce, romantic about the past and about causes’, ‘rebellious (which I consider a good thing!)’, ‘great story-tellers and poets & musicians (throwbacks to the oral culture)’. The most mentioned individual who was again deemed to sum up all these qualities was, once more, Sir Sean Connery.

The characteristics that are expressed here do seem to offer a mixture of the mythologies of the Scots as typified in Braveheart with overtones of Groundsman Willie (fighting, rebellious, fierce, romantic, uncooperative with authority), and with the qualities required by the early emigrants in the new land (hard working, brave, pioneering, appreciative of education and politically egalitarian). Indeed, these are all the same arguments which come through the literature about the role the Scots and Scots-Irish played in the development of the constitution. (It is no accident that Tartan Day is celebrated on the day
of the signing of the Declaration of Arbroath which, some argue, is the basis of the US Constitution with world heritage site status currently being sought for Arbroath Abbey). Within these larger narratives and hero myths there is also evidence of more intimate, perhaps family-orientated, accounts—the oral history and the story-telling and music making that provides links back to, and indeed with, present-day Scotland.

Of the sample, a majority at 58 per cent had actually visited Scotland, although the answers to ‘question 15: ‘How did you form your ideas about Scotland?’ were mixed. The greatest influences were summarised as ‘been there’, ‘from friends’ and ‘from books’. The answers to question 14: ‘Name three words that you think consider best reflects Scotland’, draw on a number of mythologies that evidence the seeming merging of place with nationhood noted earlier by Morrison. Eleven people wrote ‘proud’ and ten put ‘brave’. There were thirty-three people who said ‘beautiful’ and eleven ‘historic’. There were also seven mentions of whiskey, four of tradition, and only two of ‘haggis’.

The responses to this question were almost entirely reflective of rural Scotland, suggesting that the ‘archetypal Scottish landscape’ of McCulloch’s Glencoe still dominates the imagination (at least of Scots-Americans). There were no mentions of Edinburgh or Glasgow, the castle or the shipyards and, for a small country, a surprising number describe a Scotland akin to Brigadoon, ‘mysterious, and empty’. Typical responses were ‘barren, beautiful, historic’, ‘vast, empty, beautiful’, ‘beautiful, haunting, captivating’, ‘rugged, beautiful, peaceful’, ‘magical, mystic beauty’, ‘mysterious, legendary, beautiful’, ‘rare, beautiful, open’ and the ‘The Lord’s Land’. Only a couple of the comments were personalised as in ‘mountains, sea, home’ and ‘to me Family, History, Presbyterianism’.

These comments suggest an unliveable and seemingly uninhabited place, not unlike the Scotland represented in the Times 2007 article. They depict a version of Scotland that comes easily to the imagination, without electric light and inhabited by angry red-haired throwbacks, if inhabited at all. One person commented, ‘my sister lives in St Monans in Fife and I think that is amazing she has been able to make the transition to living and working there. I am not sure I could’. This imagined Scotland is vast, barren, and empty and yet incurs a longing and fulfils the category of innately understood and known homeland. One respondent noted:

When I go to Scotland I feel as if I am going home (genetic); like going someplace you have never been before and you seem to know
the landmarks or you have walked the streets and paths; when I go to Peebles and Edinburgh I have this feeling.

Scotland, nonetheless, is the left behind even deserted *non-home*. For Scottishness ‘to live and breathe in a person’ it must be kept alive, as the opening comment of this section argues, and kept alive *elsewhere* and beyond Scotland’s shores. It is surely easier to leave behind a land which cannot give you the tangible benefits of the new world. Responses to Question 17: ‘Did your visit to Scotland live up to your expectations?’ shows an evident split with slightly over two thirds voting that the visit had exceeded or far exceeded their expectations. The other third responded that it fell below their expectations. No one said their visit was far below their expectations. Given their overall view of Scotland, I am left to question whether the expectations, good or bad, if based on the mythologies of Scotland and the dominant narratives of the diaspora, were low to begin with. As one respondent, merging place and peoples commented, ‘Scotland today still has a wonderful people, but it is a shadow of what it once was—from a creativity point of view’.

**VI Conclusion**

It is a belonging a tying together to each other. It is beyond words.

(Survey Respondent)

Given the small sample size, I am making no great claims for these findings. Nonetheless, the questionnaire did reach the majority of Scottish societies listed from state to state and thus can offer an impressionistic and contemporary sense of the role of Scottishness as an identity to those who value it. The wider study compares and contrasts the Canadian and American responses and other work explores artistic influences more fully. The responses discussed in this paper do seem to reflect the influence of the mythologies of Scottishness on subsequent generations of Scottish Americans. This seems true in relation to the grand narratives of the Scottish diaspora and the personal family stories handed down from generation to generation. This flagging of Scottishness reflects that ‘cultural dynamics are affected not only by the spatial migration of people and things, but also by the migration of meanings and discourses
across and between groups’. It also reflects an assumed need for individuals to reflect on belonging through those symbols of Scottishness.

Thus, I can conclude that the flagging of Scottishness in these terms suggests the ‘banal nationalism’ discussed by Michael Billig where identity is performed in daily life based on the emblems which become the expression of cultural belonging. As the Scottish people claim a key role in the development of the American nation this blazoning of Scottish Americanness can, as the following survey respondent’s comment suggests, be interpreted as making claims for Scottishness as having shaped the characteristics of old-fashioned Americanness: ‘I grew up in the Southern culture and that culture is a perfect transplant of the Scottish culture I discovered in Scotland. That’s why Scotland seemed so familiar and so much like home.’

Does this performance of Scottish identity then become an expression of American patriotism? In the debates about the imagined homeland of the imagined community that is Scotland it seems that people feel their Scottishness emotionally; as the opening epigraph from David Daiches suggests, this emotional engagement transcends the realities of place, although the props and symbols of that imagined Scotland enables them to express those feelings. As Basu argues, identification with the symbols of Scottishness provides a link to the homeland, although I would suggest that this might be less in relation to a perceived homelessness as an exploration of a dual identity which can be safely explored within the land that welcomed them. As one American and Scottish woman put it:

The first time I went to a Highland Game, and heard the bag pipes, I started to cry. I knew, that I knew, that I knew I was Scottish. The sense of pride and honour I felt was overwhelming. I am Scottish by blood and connect with my ancestors wholeheartedly.

The notion of a homeland becomes more important in times of uncertainty and social change: as one participant noted, ‘Scottishness has steadily increased in popularity in the US’. Although this study suggests the homeland left behind is imagined in a ‘purer’ form than the one that exists today, perhaps this wish for the homeland of old creates more emphasis on the rural rather than the urban reality of a modern Scotland. Can it therefore be inferred that

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54 Michael Billig, Banal Nationalism (London, 1995).
respondents do believe their ancestors ‘better’ than the current inhabitants of the left land allowing for the contemporary and emerging mythology, the ‘Williescape’?

It is worth noting, however, a point possibly missed by the generation of Mori poll students; that *Simpsons*’ Willie is an export, an American Scot who inhabits the imagined land of contemporary America. If Willie were to be real he would surely be one of ‘the poor examples of humans’ not favoured by the hagiographic accounts of famous men or sought as family by those diasporic Scots seeking to connect with chieftains and worthies. As one participant argued for the re-emergence of the glories of the Scots of old, ‘Scottishness has been severely dented over time by Anglicization, Americanization and Globalization’ but that ‘we must never try to see what we can get out of our heritage—our Scottishness—but rather what we can put into it’. However, as one correspondent to the *Times* blog wrote, ‘You know you’ve truly made it when you’ve been lampooned on the Simpsons. Congrats Scotland!’.

*Sheffield University*
In literary circuits and social and political debates, we frequently discuss the reasons and consequences of war and the pity that it distills. In the wake of the two world wars, we have spoken about the sense of loss and failure, the physical violence, the organised cruelty of mass slaughter and economic drainage. More often than not, such discussions have veered toward questions of morality and ethics; an encompassing debate on how to set things right and restore dignity to human civilisation. In post-humanist times, particularly since the almost meteoric rise of anti-humanist rhetoric in the latter half of the last century, these debates have taken a curious turn from the social towards the individual; from the macrocosmic sense of a clash of civilisations to the microcosmic ironies that unfold within the space of the private and the personal. The reason I associate this movement towards the personal with anti-humanism is because of the way the latter has problematised the idea of ‘location’ of the post-war individual both within and beyond the boundaries of the nation. The idea that war has more to do with the individual’s private struggle rather than with a nation’s formative or constructive consequentiality has gained increasing currency in this anti-humanist mode of thought – and thus ‘location’ is more of a psychological than a geographical habitation for the individual who has lived through such experiences.

It is from this individual anxiety of location that I want to examine the idea of ‘exile’. My use of the word ‘exile’ departs from its very political meaning of forced displacement – the causes, the results, the inferences that can be drawn from them. My intention is to look at the interiority of the word as it relates to the personal loss of home and history, something that is intensely subjective and psychologically challenging. All his life Theodor Adorno had struggled with this loss of individual history within a war-torn society, ultimately seeking solace in intense privation beyond both politics and society. In *Minima Moralia* (1951) he associated complete seclusion with the only possibility of a sane and moral existence:
The house is past… The best mode of conduct, in the face of all this, still seems an uncommitted, suspended one: to lead a private life, as far as the social order and one’s own needs will tolerate nothing else, but not to attach weight to it as something still socially substantial and individually appropriate. ‘It is even part of my good fortune not to be a house-owner,’ Nietzsche already wrote in the Gay Science. Today we should have to add: it is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home.¹

The extreme reaction that Adorno advocated can be seen as a movement into nihilistic space but one also needs to understand that this ‘movement beyond’ was also a way of trying to exile oneself unconditionally before the individual subject be pitted into a condition of political exile that is coercive and undignified.

Adorno’s phrase ‘not to be at home in one’s home’ keeps coming back to my mind as I read Mourid Barghouti’s memoir, I Saw Ramallah (1997). Barghouti, as a political exile, seems almost to be toying with this Adornoesque idea of complete segregation, on the one hand, and articulates his intense desire to communicate with his people, on the other. Barghouti is not a loner like Adorno, and thus his need to communicate both as a social being and as a poet who wants to stand by his Palestinian people gives the book a complexity that is both personal and political. I Saw Ramallah is the memoir of a poet who conditionally returns to his homeland, to the place of his birth, thirty years after he was exiled from it. In a ‘Foreword’ to the book Edward Said pointedly notes the apparently simple problems that Barghouti’s narrative explores — simple, but unique to an exile and occasionally difficult to comprehend for those that have never inhabited such a world:

Necessarily, there is a good deal of politics in Barghouti’s book, but none of it is either abstract or ideologically driven: whatever comes up about politics arises from the lived circumstances of Palestinian life, which, most often, is surrounded by restrictions having to do with travel and residence. Both of these related matters, taken for granted by most people in the world who are citizens, have passports, and can travel freely without thinking about who they are all the time, are

extraordinarily charged for the stateless Palestinians, many of whom do in fact have passports but nevertheless, like the millions of refugees all over the Arab world, Europe, Australia, North and South America, still bear the onus of being displaced and hence, misplaced. Barghouti’s text is consequently laced with problems related to where he can or cannot stay, where he may or may not go, for how long and in what circumstances he must leave, and what, most of all, occurs when he is not there.²

Thus, the entire narrative of Barghouti’s memoir bears testimony to the extraordinariness of an ordinary life, and this is what is so peculiar about the condition of being in exile. There is no physical violence in exile; the violence is psychic, and hence indelible. At the same time, the hurt is nowhere to be seen; it is implicit and poignant.

I

Prior to discussion of the text, I shall attempt to lay out a perspective of the intellectual as exile on which I intend to build my argument about Barghouti’s narrative and its political implications. Since Edward Said has written a ‘Foreword’ to this book, and since he has been one of those public intellectuals who have argued about the Palestine question almost throughout his career, I shall use some of his arguments as a kind of an envelope in which to place Barghouti’s narrative. It is relevant at this point to note that both Said and Barghouti are ‘partisan’ as intellectuals. In their roles as public intellectuals there has always been a clearly defined pattern of political involvement that presupposes taking sides. This is unlike what either Adorno in his extreme privation or someone like Julien Benda (who locates the intellectual on a transcendental plane) would understand. Neither would Antonio Gramsci, for example, who sees the intellectual merely as a professional and sometimes far less. It is important to clarify the frames of reference within which I want to locate Barghouti as different from these others that I have mentioned. He is a public intellectual who, on the one hand, clings dearly to the private (in terms of personal history and memory), while, on the other, becomes extremely public in his affiliations.

Julien Benda tends to conceive of the intellectual as part of a tiny band of super-gifted and morally superior philosophers, whose words have a vatic, universal appeal. They, for Benda, uphold what might be called eternal standards of truth and justice that are beyond question, let alone subject to discursive qualifications or considerations of agency. Benda considers real intellectuals to be ‘those whose activity is essentially not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages, and hence in a certain manner say: “My kingdom is not of this world”.’ It is evident from Benda’s almost transcendental definition of the intellectual that he subscribes to a world-view that is purely humanist in its import. In Benda’s hands the intellectual acquires a kind of synthetic, messianic stature; someone who is essentialized in his/her very conception. There is no way in which he/she can participate in the low political life of his/her time or stoop to become part of what might be called ‘public’ life. Obviously in the anti-humanist surge of theoretical writings after the Second World War, such a sterile, essentialist definition of the intellectual did not hold ground. The intellectual is now definitely, or needs to be, earth-bound in order that he/she can successfully battle the continuous attempts at co-opting him/her by myriad agencies of power that would use him/her for various political aims. It is cogent to note, however, that of all those that Benda considers to be intellectuals (namely, Spinoza, Voltaire, Ernest Renan et al), Jesus is the only non-European who gets his approval. The politics of the world around us has changed since Benda and has ceased to be one of binary opposition between the ‘West’ and the ‘rest’, and thus, issues of representation have acquired multiple polarities that could not possibly have been imagined by Benda.

Gramsci, however, sees the intellectual as a person who is nowhere near Benda’s intellectual priest. For Gramsci, the intellectual is a professional who fulfils a particular set of functions in society. For him, a journalist, an academic, a management consultant, a lawyer, a policy expert, a government advisor, a labourer, are all intellectuals who perform their given functions in the society. He is rather impatient with the kind of distinctions generally made between intellectuals and non-intellectuals:

All men are intellectuals … When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring only to the immediate social

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function of the professional category of the intellectuals, that is, one has in mind the direction in which their specific professional activity is weighted, whether towards intellectual elaboration or towards muscular-nervous effort. This means that, although one can speak of intellectuals, one cannot speak of non-intellectuals, because non-intellectuals do not exist… There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*.

That is to say that, for Gramsci, any human subject is able to pursue some form of intellectual activity or participate in a particular conception of the world and carry out conscious lines of moral conduct thereby bringing in new modes of thought. In making this claim, Gramsci does not mean that each individual has a splendidly original revelation to make but that every person is differentially unique in his or her thought and therefore also an intellectual. Although Gramsci’s definition of the intellectual is far removed from that of Benda; he is also, in a sense, defining the intellectual more philosophically than politically.

In the face of these definitions, Edward Said’s definition of the intellectual seems to be more relevant in terms of the ‘public’ role that more and more intellectuals are adopting these days, and also considering the kind of politics of representation that I am negotiating here. Said envisions a strictly public role for the intellectual, one that is neither transcendental like Benda’s nor the very pedestrian one of the intellectual as professional as envisioned by Gramsci. While Benda’s definition is not acceptable to Said for obvious reasons of Eurocentricity, he finds Gramsci’s suggestions ‘pioneering’. It is due to Gramsci’s idea of associating the intellectual with the production and distribution of knowledge (that is to say his ‘organic’ presence in a particular field of work) that, Said thinks, the intellectual has become a subject of study:

> Just put the words ‘of’ and ‘and’ next to the word ‘intellectuals’ and almost immediately an entire library of studies about intellectuals that is quite daunting in its range and minutely focused in its detail rises before our eyes… There has been no major revolution in modern history without intellectuals; conversely there has been no major counter-revolutionary movement without intellectuals. Intellectuals

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have been the fathers and mothers of movements, and of course sons and daughters, even nephews and nieces.\(^5\)

However, what Said is concerned about is that in this Gramscian attempt at making intellectuals of all human beings, the intellectual becomes only another professional lost in the maze of information and detail. Instead, Said insists that the intellectual is an individual with a specific public role to play in society, whose function cannot be easily reduced to faceless professionalism or somebody who just goes about his business like anybody else:

The central fact for me is, I think, that the intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public… [He is] someone whose place it is publically [sic] to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d’être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug. The intellectual does so on the basis of universal principles.\(^6\)

Said thus emphasises the public role of the intellectual. It is the intellectual’s duty to see to it that those around him get justice and freedom. The obvious issue of representation is enmeshed with these ideas. The state, or the nation, or the other centres of power are incessantly, in their various ways, trying to violate the sovereignty of the human subject. It is the duty of the intellectual to talk about this, to make people aware of these violations of their individual rights and freedom, and to assume the role of the public intellectual who addresses the people directly. That is to say, in spite of all barriers, the intellectual should visibly represent a standpoint and articulate this representation to his/her public.

Said mentions Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre as the kinds of intellectuals who have spoken to their people directly, articulated their likes or dislikes publicly, and been very political presences in their respective societies. Most definitely, Said does not want the intellectual to mince words, as he writes: ‘least of all should an intellectual be there to make his/her audiences feel


\(^6\) Ibid., 9.
good: the whole point is to be embarrassing, contrary, even unpleasant. Said has thus charted the trajectory of the intellectual’s vocation in no uncertain terms. The purpose of the intellectual’s activity, he emphasises, is ‘to advance human freedom and knowledge’ in terms of speaking truth to power, of playing the role of the parrhesiastes, and becoming a political reference point in the society around him/her.

It is this same role of the intellectual as a public figure that Said discovers in Mourid Barghouti. As a poet and an intellectual who is allowed to visit ‘home’ after thirty years, Barghouti has a role to play. He represents the exiled intellectual who has a distinctly political role; that of encountering his subjectivity in a way that is both private and public. While the Adorno-like private self shuns all intrusions, the public self of the exile is almost deliberately political in its import. Said observed of this condition:

I speak of exile not as a privilege, but as an alternative to the mass institutions that dominate modern life. Exile is not, after all, a matter of choice; you are born into it, or it happens to you. But, provided that the exile refuses to sit on the sidelines nursing a wound, there are things to be learned: he or she must cultivate a scrupulous (not indulgent or sulky) subjectivity.

It is this cultivation of a scrupulous subjectivity, verging on the political, that we continuously discover in the narrative of I Saw Ramallah.

II

Mourid Barghouti was forced to leave his homeland in June 1967 when Ramallah, his hometown, fell to the Israeli army. By the time he had completed his education at Cairo University, he was already a much discussed and controversial poet. On the eve of Anwar Sadat’s visit to Israel, he was refused entry into Palestine, and Egypt did not want to keep him. He was deported

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7 Ibid., 9–10.
8 Ibid., 13.
9 For a detailed discussion on the notion of parrhesia and of the intellectual and his ability to speak truth to power, see Michel Foucault, Fearless Speech, ed. Joseph Pearson (Los Angeles, 2001).
11 On 19 November 1977, Anwar Sadat became the first Arab leader officially to visit
to Hungary, was allowed to live in Budapest, and could not come back to Egypt for almost seventeen years. During most of this time he had to remain separated from his wife, the Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour, and their only son Tamim. It was only after the Oslo Accords of 1993 that Barghouti was allowed to visit Palestine.\(^{12}\) His return to his ‘home’ in Deir Ghassanah, near Ramallah, is the context of the memoir.

Barghouti’s narrative is stark in its frankness, and the shock the reader might feel is necessarily qualified more by the author’s experience of exile and a sense of seething and despondent psychological anxiety at his rootlessness (born out of an aporetic absence) rather than by the immediate physical consequence of a war between two nations and its political effects. War, by its disruptive nature, separates one physically, uproots a person from the familiarity of a ‘home’, creates new borders, and prohibits passage. All of this unfolds in Barghouti’s memoir in the form of a complex, psychological narrative that uses language as a mechanism of disruption. In a sense, this linguistic disruption counters the physical/geographical/locational disruption of war and becomes a potent weapon in the hands of the author. He does not use complex metaphors, or the literary art of rhetorical suggestions, or symbolic nuances with complicated meanings. His purpose is to shock his reader out of complacently engaging with the narrative as an objective observer. His account is straight and simple and therein lies the disruption. He says what he sees, almost in the form of a report, as he comes back to a familiar city rendered completely unfamiliar by the pity of war. Barghouti knows the simple use of language, and its power to disturb and disrupt. This deliberate method of disruptive intervention through language is Barghouti’s way of avenging his personal cause at being thrown out of home by political exigencies that were beyond his control. He takes it out through his, perhaps somewhat exaggerated, comparisons between what was and what is, and a language that is meant to annihilate all presumptions of a possible peace process initiated by the Oslo agreements. He speaks for

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12 The Oslo Accords, finalised on 20 August 1993, officially called the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements or Declaration of Principles (DOP) was a milestone in Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It was the first direct, face-to-face agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. It was also the first time that the Palestinians publicly acknowledged Israel’s right to exist.
his countrymen but, more overwhelmingly, he speaks for himself – the assault on his individual autonomy as a Palestinian – and this is perhaps the reason behind his subtle, but deeply embedded intention of politicising the subject position of the individual, the marginalised, the exile:

I marginalised myself in order to put a distance between myself and the slightest hint of cultural or political despotism. The intellectual’s despotism is the same as the despotism of the politicians of both sides… They stay in their positions forever, they are impatient with criticism, they prohibit questioning from any source, and they are absolutely sure that they are always right, always creative, knowledgeable, pleasant, suitable, and deserving, as they are and where they are.13

Barghouti is vacillating between two locations – the personal and the political – and his ‘moment of politics’ is perhaps defined by a heterogeneity that is beyond him.14 Returning to Ramallah, Barghouti feels like an exile that belongs nowhere; he is rootless and insecure. His sense of estrangement is both an affectation (in the political sense) and a reality (in its intense subjectivity) and he tries consciously to maintain this differential between himself and those that live in his village now. They are his kin, yet far removed by the simple fact of his position as an exile; a fact through which he discovers the potential of a distant gaze – an objectivity that empowers him to comment on the fate of those people and their homeland. It is also his reality but he guards this under a controlled language, only to reveal it brutally at key moments in the text. In his essay, ‘Reflections on Exile’, Said wrote:

13 Barghouti, I Saw Ramallah, 125.
14 I borrow the phrase ‘moment of politics’ from Homi Bhabha. At this ‘moment’ he tries to create an ambivalent, heterogeneous political space of (non)-representation. What he is trying to do is to enunciate a political moment for the individual that is differential in its import and ever-vanishing in its non-representativeness. This is a conception of subjective politics in the postmodern sense, where the subject incessantly eludes representation. I find a similarity between Bhabha’s attempt and Barghouti’s in the sense that the latter is continuously vacillating between the private and the public, the personal and the political in order that he is never caught within the paradigms of essentialist politics. However, this is my personal opinion, and I do not think that Barghouti is exactly aware of the game that he is playing. This struck me as a possibility within his representative politics; a position that he has unconsciously, yet successfully assumed. For a detailed discussion on the ‘moment of politics’ see, Homi Bhabha, ‘The Commitment to Theory’, The Location of Culture (London and New York, 1994; rpr. 2004), 28–56.
Clutching difference like a weapon to be used with stiffened will, the exile jealously insists on his or her right to refuse to belong…

Willfulness, exaggeration, overstatement: these are characteristic styles of being an exile, methods for compelling the world to accept your vision—which you make more unacceptable because you are in fact unwilling to have it. It is yours, after all.¹⁵

This sense of not belonging is used as a strategy of resistance against all assimilationist techniques – political or otherwise – and Barghouti creates a doppelganger for himself, who looks at himself reflexively, as if from the beyond of engagement. It seems, at times, there are at least two Barghoutis at work: the individual, the subjective presence that walks the streets of Deir Ghassanah, and the writer of the memoir, the poet who reports what he sees, exactly as it is, without a hint of the political agency that is so much a part of the implicit agenda of the book:

Writing is a displacement, a displacement from the normal social contract. A displacement from the habitual, the pattern, and the ready form. A displacement from the common roads of love and the common roads of enmity. A displacement from the believing nature of the political party. A displacement from the idea of unconditional support. The poet strives to escape from the dominant used language, to a language that speaks itself for the first time.¹⁶

He refers to the political and the personal and the two are suddenly inseparable in their belonging to the self that is physically walking on the streets of Palestine, separated from the writer of the memoir who is located beyond the margin and who becomes the ‘stranger’. Barghouti is a poet, and this kind of ambivalent poetic dimension to his thought is perhaps intrinsic to his narrative style; the quality that enables one to engage from the outside, yet remain central to the core of the narrative.

It is difficult to miss the masochism in Barghouti’s narrative, either when he speaks about Israel as a political construct or the Allenby Bridge as a personal/locational construct. The difference lies in the tone/persona in which the exile addresses a political question as distinctly separated from the personal one. In a tone of detached, impersonal commentary he writes about Israel:

¹⁶ Barghouti, I Saw Ramallah, 132.
Israel allows in hundreds of elderly people and forbids hundreds of thousands of young people to return. And the world finds a name for us. They called us nazibeen, the displaced ones.

Displacement is like death. One thinks it happens only to other people. From the summer of ’67 I became that displaced stranger whom I had always thought was someone else.\textsuperscript{17}

It is this deliberate distancing from the self that forces Barghouti to remove ‘himself’ from the dynamics of memory as he stands in front of the bridge after thirty years of separation. He consistently refuses to define himself in spite of an overwhelming urge to do so and that is where the narrative acquires such a stark and poignant complexity.

Throughout the entire text he vacillates between the self and its doppelganger, paralysed at the thought of any nominative certainty that would lead to the myriad kinds of essentialism that serve to locate an exile. In the opening chapter, he stands in front of the Allenby Bridge, the entry point to the West Bank:

\begin{quote}
A distant childhood. The faces of friends and enemies. I am the person coming from the continents of others, from their languages and their borders. The person with spectacles on his eyes and a small bag on his shoulder. And these are the planks of the bridge. These are my steps on them. Here I am walking toward the land of the poem. A visitor? A refugee? A citizen? A guest? I do not know … Is this a political moment? Or an emotional one? Or social? A practical moment? A surreal one? A moment of the body? Or of the mind? The wood creaks.\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

The moment of exile is also the moment of history, the coalition of the private and the public, the moment when the history of the nation is neatly sutured into the history of the personal; the body-politic. It is a moment of homogeneity that the autonomy of the self tries in vain to resist; the moment where the self becomes the nation, the geography, the roads you walk or cannot walk, the houses you leave behind, never to return, or return to under exceptional circumstances. It is a moment of politics that subsumes the self along with relationships, familiarity, and the security of an existence that is ‘performed’ everyday, unconsciously, by the family. Pitted against these tensions, Barghouti

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 3.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 10–11.
prefers to locate himself in the realm of the political that is beyond essentialist historiography; the political that one carries with oneself to ward off the psychic violence that unfurls everyday in a war-torn socius. It is the moment of politics within the family that dissolves the private and the public and opens up the socio-personal situation to an unforeseen heterogeneity:

Politics is the family at breakfast. Who is there and who is absent and why. Who misses whom when the coffee is poured into the waiting cups … Politics is the number of coffee-cups on the table, it is the sudden presence of what you have forgotten, the memories you are afraid to look at too closely, though you look anyway. Staying away from politics is also politics. Politics is nothing and it is everything.\(^\text{19}\)

It is within this paradigm of the contingency of representation that Barghouti frequently plays out the subtle differences between the private and the personal. The personal is the family, relationships that are formed or broken, paths that one walks, houses that are no longer there. The private is an engagement with each one of these in one’s mind; a complex interplay of memories that cannot always be articulated. The personal is where politics is incessantly at work; it is capable of creating deep furrows of loss, regret and, in times of emergency, mistrust. The private sits still deeper within the unfathomable recesses of the mind, untouched by politics and, in the case of an exile, touched at the core by insurmountable sadness. Politics as the semiotic at the level of the private is frequently qualified by the one at the level of the personal or the real-political: the exile can never escape the feeling of a continuous and uncontrollable vacillation from the personal to the private as he is increasingly torn away or segregated from the familiar registers that qualify meaning. Mourid Barghouti is exiled in Budapest; his wife and son come to visit him from Egypt. The son does not know the father and thus the personal (with all its political implications) explodes as the private is born again in this moment of politics:

This boy – born by the Nile in Dr Sharif Gohar’s Hospital in Cairo to an Egyptian mother and a Palestinian father carrying a Jordanian passport – saw nothing of Palestine except its complete absence and its complete story. When I was deported from Egypt he was five months old; when Radwa brought him with her to meet me in a furnished flat

\(^\text{19}\) Ibid., 43–4.
in Budapest he was thirteen months old and called me ‘Uncle’. I laugh and try to correct him. ‘I’m not “Uncle”, Tamim, I’m “Daddy”’. He calls me ‘Uncle Daddy’.  

One sometimes feels that Barghouti is keenly aware of the kind of heterogeneous space that he has opened up within the politics of representation – a space that Homi Bhabha frequently talks about in his writings. The theoretical is born out of experiential contingency, and Barghouti realises this after a poetry reading session in his village, Deir Ghassanah. The moment of the theoretical is also the moment of the political, and each member of the audience is ‘enunciatively’ aware of the complex dynamic of location within a society rent apart by war and exile. As Barghouti reads out his poetry in front of a village audience consisting of ploughmen, and shepherds, and mothers, and grandmothers, he becomes keenly aware of the differential quality with which his poetry touches each one of them. As an exiled intellectual he is exhilarated at such knowledge about his own people as seen from a distance. He writes, ‘there is no completely innocent audience. Each person has his own experience of life, however simple’.

Ultimately, Barghouti is talking about representation – the implacable trauma of trying to locate oneself within the unfamiliarity of a life lived piecemeal. Such an awareness constitutes the heterogeneity of the experience of exile; the presence of the moment of enunciation that refuses all essentialist agendas. The exiled is always in a movement, and each individual subject-position is differentially linked to his/her history. Barghouti might not have been theoretically aware of this, neither did he need to be. What his experiences entail, however, is the consolidation of this complex position of the exiled intellectual. As he describes his life in hotels around the world, for example, the contingency of representation and its consequent anxiety becomes apparent:

I felt comfort in hotels. They taught me not to hold on to a place, to accept the idea of leaving… In a hotel you are not responsible for the

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20 Ibid., 130.
21 I have borrowed this idea of enunciation from Homi Bhabha who writes that ‘politics can only become representative, a truly public discourse, through a splitting in the signification of the subject of representation; through an ambivalence at the point of the enunciation of a politics.’ Bhabha, ‘The Commitment to Theory’ in idem, The Location of Culture, 36.
22 Barghouti, I Saw Ramallah, 84.
plants or for changing the water of the vase… You have no books to worry about giving to friends and neighbors [sic.] before your enforced departure, a departure planned by others. There is no cruelty in leaving the paintings hanging on the walls of your room. They are not yours and mostly they are ugly.²³

*I Saw Ramallah* thus constantly reminds us of life lived in the instant, transient and slippery, each differential slice of time qualified by a meaning uniquely its own. The moment is also hybrid and heterogeneous, where representation constitutes anxiety; there is a strained effort in the self of the intellectual (poet, memoir writer) to evade its doppelganger in the self of the exiled subject who is being essentialised at every moment by the various workings of politics. This is indeed a complex process of (non-)representation which cannot, perhaps, be entirely successful. The game continues throughout the narrative and it is not always easy to reach reconciliation.

However, one could also argue from a postmodern perspective that Barghouti problematises the position of the power-centre, in this case Israel, as a nation that has to deal with the dialogic presence of the exiled. The Janus-faced heterogeneity and the shifting subject-position of the Palestinian exile cannot be subsumed into a unitary register of binaries, and this opens up the political space of a new and complex hybridity that belies simplistic assumptions of power or resolutions of conflictual spaces. That is to say, by talking about the hybridity or heterogeneity of Israel, its complex history, and its idea of the nation, the debate about Palestine and its exiled intellectual can be further problematised. I particularly emphasise the intensely subjectivist and therefore arbitrary nature the debate might assume, and hence the possibilities of exploring the moments of politics that involve minutely differential anxieties about place and space. The opening up of various and multiple possibilities of representation in Israel, and their theoretical imports, could lend newer perspectives to the very claim that it makes about nation and nationality and reclaiming of the lost land. Yet perhaps, in this memoir, Barghouti is too caught up in the struggle for self-representation to examine these possibilities of the politics of representation, and nobody can blame him.

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²³ Ibid., 92–3.
Othering Identities and the Conflicts of Migration in Jameela Siddiqi’s *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*

Jendele Hungbo

The question of identity has always been a major issue in cultural and literary discourse. For literature, the question of identity is a crucial one as it puts in perspective those issues that determine the categorisation of works and their producers as well as the communities for which such works are intended. As people take on different identities, depending on their history and cultural orientation, there is often the likelihood for them to be invested with new characteristics, both real and imaginary, based on certain observations and constructions made by others about them. The aim of this article, therefore, is to examine the fluidity of identities of both migrants and host communities as a result of migration and in spite of attempts at a conservative preservation of the culture of the ‘homeland’ by each of the two communities. While imagining the question of identity beyond the mere categorisation of colour and race, the paper seeks to expose the conflicts resulting from stereotyping, misgivings and the clash of cultures, which often lead to unceasing conflicts between ‘host’ communities and migrant populations, with reference to the Ugandan novelist Jameela Siddiqi’s first novel, *The Feast of the Nine Virgins* (2001).

Migration generally refers to the movement of people from one particular place which can be regarded as their ‘home’ to another place that becomes a ‘new’ home. The concept has, over the years, acquired different kinds of connotations which make it a very complex idea to deal with in any field of study. The difficulty of the term stems, in the main, from the different varieties of migration which can be identified in today’s globalised world. From mere movements or dislocations to finding new homes in strange lands or settlements originally inhabited by other people, different forms of migration now define the location of different categories of individuals or groups. Such migrations have equally affected relationships among different races all over the world. As Angelika Bammer observes:

> The separation of people from their native culture either through physical dislocation (as refugees, immigrants, exiles, or expatriates) or
the colonising imposition of a foreign culture… is one of the most formative experiences of our century.¹

The kind of separation that Bammer refers to is brought about by varying factors, which in most cases are beyond the control of the migrant population. In the course of such movements entirely new communities emerge while the likelihood of a kind of hybridised society is also a possibility. Where migrants decide to settle permanently and create a new home for themselves, we often find conflicts which arise as a result of the demarcation of identities between the original occupants of a particular location—those who claim to be natives—and the immigrant population who are seen as ‘strangers’. This demarcation also comes in addition to certain characteristics, implicit and explicit, which give away the difference in identities. While original settlers seek to lay claim to the land and the opportunities it offers, migrants also find the need to assert themselves through a form of citizenship which then results in the othering of identities in a separatist fashion. The tendencies to take such acquired citizenship for granted and assume privileges, which may draw the envy of those who are considered natives, usually prepares the stage for different kinds of conflict that characterise communities with migrant populations.

In some other instances, the major source of conflict and mutual distrust stems from the imagining of Diaspora populations as ‘possible political actors—as minorities’.² Strongly implicated in this process of identity creation, as Arturo Escobar observes, is ‘the continued vitality of place and place-making for culture, nature, and economy’ as a result of the dynamics of globalisation which alter the social ecology of various communities across the globe.³ Place therefore becomes a major determining factor in the attainment of many goals, including the determination of privilege and the quest for its sustenance. In some cases, there is a resultant hegemony which also constitutes a potential source of friction in mixed societies as multifarious interest groups maneuver their ways towards cultural, political and economic domination of space. Concomitant with this is the obvious emergence of a subaltern group or identity which often materialises as a result of the contestation for space

¹ Angelika Bammer (ed.), Displacements: Cultural Identities in Question (Bloomington, 1994), xi.
which characterises communities inhabited by different categories of people. The situation also becomes somewhat more precarious when the group which deems itself the host slides to the position of the subaltern with the attendant deprivations and loss of place which often becomes the norm in such circumstances.

The question of migration and the othering of identities are major thematic concerns in *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*. The novel, which is the first to be written by Ugandan writer Jameela Siddiqi, chronicles the author’s experience with migration and its effects on identity in a multicultural society represented by a fictional country called Pearl. Taken as a metaphor for Uganda in the 1970s, Pearl provides space for different groups or races who incidentally find the maintenance of social cohesion difficult as a result of prejudices which keep defining their relationships in an otherwise beautiful land. The narrative contains multiple plots. The first, and perhaps the most crucial to the appreciation of the multi-layered conflicts in the text, is told from the innocent perspective of an eight-year-old child, simply identified as The Brat. This aspect of the narrative carefully illustrates the politics of race, class, religion and gender which dominates existing relationships among the different groups resident in Pearl. The relationship of The Brat with the entire (Indian) Mohanji family helps to bring to the fore the dynamics of race relations and how different forms of stereotypes develop in the shared community. The narrative ends with the expulsion of Indians or Asians from Pearl which also signals the beginning of another round of migration.

Jameela Siddiqi provides a hint in the opening to the novel of the inevitability of migration. This she does through the idea of *qismat* or destiny which brings to mind the limitation of choice that an individual or even an entire community is able to exercise in relation to the issue of migration. The notion of rootedness also becomes problematic:

> Born in Bombay, raised in Mombasa, married in Kampala, educated in London, worked in Tehran, lived in New York, then Stuttgart, then Hong Kong, and died in Vancouver. Where was this person actually from? Where does anyone live these days?4

The inability of people to have total control over their destiny in terms of movement presupposes a fluidity of home or the idea of the homeland. It is

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usually convenient for people who are born in a particular place to so-called indigenous parents to see their homeland and therefore themselves as being spatially privileged over others who, for instance, are also born in the same location but to immigrant parents. It is quite clear that neither of these two categories of individuals have any role in determining either their place of birth or their ancestry. What this reminds the reader of, therefore, is the fact that ‘everyone lives in a space inside their head’ and ‘when destinies become intertwined, the world becomes a very small place’.

The notion of ‘home’ becomes problematic through the global concepts of travel, exile, migration and dislocation in addition to narratives of domestic life or inter-family relationships. The emergence of transnational kinships in the modern world has, indeed, further problematised the idea of home, rendering it fluid and complicated. As Habib Chaudhury and Graham Rowles contend, home is ‘where we belong. It is our experience, recollections, imagination, and aspirations. Home provides the physical and social context of life experience, burrows itself into the material reality of memories, and provides an axial core for our imagination’. In a way therefore the reminiscence of home never departs from the migrant individual as he journeys through life even when he is deemed to have physically settled in a new space, either welcoming or hostile. The major point to note here is the move away from a fundamental interpretation of home as a concrete or physical space to a more psychologically inclusive historical experience in the life of every individual, including the migrant. So in a sense, immigrants bring different national histories with them to their new places of settlement thereby affecting the socio-cultural dynamics of the new ‘home’. The significance that underlies the memory of home for migrant populations is firmly established by Siddiqi as she draws attention to the way the Asians in Pearl hold on to their cultural practices and values which they have brought with them to the new space they now inhabit. The most obvious illustration of this is seen in the representation of the Mohanji family as one holding tenaciously to Indian ways of doing things while abhorring African and European ways of life. Another instance of this conservative attitude towards home is evident in the second plot of the novel where the mysterious moneybag who commissions an Urdu-speaking filmmaker to make a film insists on the film starring a famous Bollywood actress. Such practices

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5 Ibid., 1.
tend to bring to the fore ‘the sustaining memory of home’ through some form of ‘imaginative and emotional homecoming’. The construction of home, whether at the physical or imaginary level, is important for the individual as it is for many of Siddiqi’s characters because this process ‘provides the tools for both enduring and evolving possibilities of the self’. In other words, the idea of home becomes a crucial element not just in the formation of identities but in the determination of the progress of the individual at different points in time. This way, home becomes a great influence on the past, the present and the future of the individual.

The concept of migration can then be approached from both metaphorical and literal perspectives. While at the metaphorical level we can find a shift in attitude or orientation which does not necessitate physical movement of the individual, migration in the literal sense presents us with a situation in which the individual is physically separated from a particular location. In The Feast of the Nine Virgins, migration at the domestic level occurs as Mohanji’s children keep shifting their roles in order to meet the aspirations of their father. Clear evidence of this can be seen in the manner that the children rotate their visits to the cinema and re-enact the actions seen at the movie for the rest of the family. The point here is that through a kind of migration the child who goes to the cinema acquires knowledge which he is made to transfer to the other members of the family on return. In the case of the six-year-old Brat, we encounter migration in varying dimensions. The invitation the Brat often gets to attend feasts in the homes of those who offer thanksgiving to God for accomplished wishes gives her an insight into the convolutions that characterise human existence and also a chance to learn about the world outside her immediate home, as made available via her mother. In a sense, therefore, migration holds its own value in the exposure and knowledge that it confers on the individual who embarks on a journey beyond his or her immediate habitat. Pearl, initially for the Brat, is no more than the coziness she sees in her immediate environment until she begins to explore the world outside her mother’s cocoon:

Gradually, the truth began to dawn on me. Yes, we too lived in the same world. It’s funny how once I came to terms with the fact that our little paradise was not situated anywhere else but was also part of

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world, I began to become aware of everyone’s problems. It is then that I realised there was pain, and suffering and injustice.\(^9\)

The Brat’s relationship with the Mohanji family, on the other hand, serves to invest the narrative with a class dimension as she is able to see the kind of life lived by the not-too-educated Indian middle class who exist in different conditions from their upper middle-class compatriots in spite of the similarity of race. It is also important to point out here that the Brat is not static in age as she grows from a six year old to an eight year old over the course of the narrative.

The concept of home keeps redefining itself as it becomes more convenient for the individual to regard wherever s/he finds peace or comfort as home. In the course of doing this, however, various other intervening factors combine to create a new set of problems between the immigrant and the host population, and thereby turn the new home into a site of conflict where both the immigrant and the host communities are affected. The historical event on which Siddiqi’s novel is based clearly illustrates this. The expulsion of Indians from Uganda by Idi Amin in 1972 fractured relationships and created social dilemmas for both the immigrant Asians and native Africans whose interest the regime pretended to represent. In addition to this was the economic downturn resulting from the collapse of businesses, job losses and the mismanagement of expropriated property after the expulsion. The cost of Amin’s action can then be said to be enormous, pointing to the inadequacy of blaming ‘aliens’ for the socio-economic malaise of communities with considerable migrant populations. In terms of migration, a new wave of dislocation was kick-started as it became imperative for the Asians in Uganda to look for a new ‘home’. The fluidity of home is further reinforced in the way the narrative ends in *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*. The different kinds of dislocation that the characters in the novel suffer often leads them to look for new ‘homes’ instead of remaining rooted in a particular place or returning to a space previously occupied by them. The implication of this is that people continue to seek new zones of comfort as new challenges confront them in places they inhabit either as migrants or even as part of an indigenous population. The Widow, who survives the tragedy of deaths in the wake of the expulsion, does not return to India, which can be said to be her ancestral home, but rather relocates to Britain where she hopes to renegotiate space by capitalising on the obsession of the native Briton with

material wealth and unbridled desires through her mastery of dreams. This relocation, however, makes her more nostalgic as it becomes more difficult for her to find virgins to invite to the feast she had promised God for twenty years. For Jameela Sidiqqi, anywhere could be home but people, migrants especially, may not appreciate what the space they occupy at a particular moment means to them until they lose possession of it. As she notes in an essay on the 1972 expulsion of Indians by the Idi Amin regime in Uganda:

> the vast majority of Indians never thought of Uganda as home. But when ousted heartlessly—and inhumanly—many cried bitter tears for the ‘homeland’ from which they were being forcibly evicted. It took an expulsion to make Uganda feel like home.\(^\text{10}\)

The pain of the fragmentation of life which the expulsion represents is given a more vivid description in Siddiqi’s novel: ‘Two weeks to park up an entire lifetime—a humanly impossible deadline—and then a massive, desperate, panic-ridden rush to the airport: a throng of brides all hurrying to get away, under a sentence of death’.\(^\text{11}\) Home then becomes a significant space that is imbued with emotions that transcend mere geographical borders. The nostalgia which Zarine experiences in the novel notwithstanding, the point seems to have been made as to the import of home in the modern world. Home then becomes that place where, at a particular moment, the individual is able to live a comfortable life with little or no hardships. The fact that some of the killings witnessed during the expulsion were carried out by ‘opportunist Muhindis’ also gives the impression that the dangerous tendencies of the Diaspora are not the exclusive preserve of the host population.

The racial dimension to these issues also makes them crucial to the understanding of the dynamics of pre-expulsion Ugandan society which the author attempts to recreate. In representing the experience of the Indian community in Uganda during this period, Siddiqi supplies the reader with a template on which to examine the idea of migration closely, to consider its effects, and to appraise the question of the ownership of space as represented by various nation-states whose borders are now clearly marked and whose citizenship have also become fluid because of the need to be in tune with the

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\(^{11}\) Siddiqi, *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*, 281.
realities of the new world we live in. The story is presented to the reader in the context of racial, religious, cultural and sexual contradictions brought about by the contact between two different cultures. The culture of the diaspora community of the Gujarati shopkeepers as seen in the lifestyle of the Mohanji family and more elitist professional Indians like Mrs Henara who moved to the British-colonised part of East Africa, in this case Uganda, immediately after the Partitioning period, is presented in contrast to that of the indigenous black community where people see themselves as bearing the brunt of colonialism on two fronts. From a literary perspective, the question of identity and national affiliation becomes complex and indeterminate with the new mode of multiculturalism that becomes the norm in an infiltrated society. As Dominic Head observes, ‘the novel has proved to be a fruitful site for investigating the hybridized cultural forms that might be produced in an evolving, and so genuinely multicultural [society]’.12 Through the eyes of the Brat, Sidiqqi tells the story of the multicultural community that Pearl represents while at the same time examining the depth of the human condition through the experience of Diaspora. In addition to this, we also encounter in Pearl how the domineering tendencies of immigrant populations may also be detrimental to the nation and its nationals.13

At the level of religion, questions of faith usually engage a lot of emotion as it becomes for many people an integral part of an identity which cannot be compromised. This generates another level of conflict in societies inhabited by migrants. Some migrants carry with them elements of faith which may be at variance with the beliefs of their hosts. In some cases, religious conflicts erupt among people of the same faith or ethnicity. In The Feast of the Nine Virgins, this conflict is evident in the relationship bringing the Brat in contact with the bald-headed but heavily bearded Guru and the Maulama. While each of the religious teachers would like the Brat to seek knowledge in accordance with their own religions, she chooses to believe in an ‘obscure’ Moon God—Moses and the “Ten Condiments”—thereby creating a crisis of confidence as both the Guru and the Maulama find her character too strange for comfort. When, for instance, a singer encourages the Guru to respond to the inquisitiveness of the Brat he (Guru) simply dismisses her on the basis of her faith:

13 The word ‘national’ is used here to refer to any citizen of a state who displays allegiance to that state irrespective of the controversial dimensions to citizenship often brought to the fore by questions of ancestry.
She just likes hanging around where she’s not wanted. She’s not even from among us. They are Muslims. Her mother likes listening to bhajjans, so they come here, and I never stop them. This is God’s house after all and everyone is welcome. And then the Muslims in town are so reasonable, completely in line with our Panchayat … We’re all Indians you know, same culture, bhai-bhai, we can all get on.  

This othering of the individual on the basis of faith speaks to the question of conflict not just among different religious beliefs but at times within the same religion in the proliferation of sects. Social cohesion is almost always threatened where there are religious differences and migrants often have a deep sense of commitment to the protection of religious capital. Religion at times becomes a tool with which they negotiate contacts and socialise themselves into the community of fellow immigrants who they find useful for survival purposes. In this vein, there are instances when religion becomes a pull factor for migration or for a migrant to identify with a particular group of individuals.

In spite of the multiculturalism that permeates societies like Pearl, where migration has resulted in a hybrid population, the struggle for space, economic and political power often leads to serious dichotomies which set the stage for the ‘othering’ of identities. The process of ‘othering’, which seeks to draw a line between a particular group and another based on cultural practices and perceived orientations, usually begins with an aggregation of stereotypes and an analysis of the implications of the presence of the ‘other’ for the well being of a group. In history, there are cases where migrant populations have become so powerful as to enjoy more privileges than ‘natives’. A good example of this is seen in the relationship between colonial powers and the subjects of the colonies where certain privileges accrue only to the colonisers whose presence in the first place was brought about by migration. Such a development was personified in the apartheid institution of the old South African order. As Mahmood Mamdani points out, there are different political logics applying to different categories of people and even in different geographical spaces in the bifurcated colonial state. In this case, even the rights of free association and political representation are denied on the basis of racial and racist exclusions. In this instance, citizenship becomes a thing that people struggle to attain.

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when the concept is viewed from the point of view of what volume of rights or privileges accrue to individual subjects. In *The Feast of the Nine Virgins* the overt domination of the economic space coupled with oppressive profiteering and capitalist tendencies displayed by the immigrant Indian population sets the stage for conflict. Mrs Henara’s conviction that ‘Mohanji added sawdust to the red chilly powder to increase its weight’ is, for instance, a potential source of mutual suspicion and conflict which defines the relationship between the upper middle class and the lower middle class represented by the individuals concerned.\(^{16}\) Another crucial contention represented in the text is illustrated in the treatment meted out to the Black Africans in the culture of water distribution:

Unofficial apartheid manifests itself in the strangest of ways. The Africans were sold their drinking water in empty jam or fruit tins, complete with jagged edges where the tin had been clumsily and primitively cut open. It required real skill to drink from such a container without shredding your lips. The Indians got their free drink of water in a stainless steel cup, but good manners dictated that the mouth should not be allowed to touch the cup… But European hippies received a real glass into which to pour their free beers and sodas, which were then sipped from multi-coloured, candy-striped straws.\(^{17}\)

The repulsion felt by the author resonates in the way she introduces the issue of water which is considered a basic amenity in any society. The blame for the indecent treatment of the Black Africans is squarely laid on Mohanji: ‘he then charged Black Africans ten cents for the privilege of being able to drink an ice-cold version of the sweet water of their own land, a land abundant with rivers and fresh water lakes’.\(^{18}\) This kind of discrimination on the basis of colour reflects a provocative humiliation of the native, degradation of the self and hegemonisation of the White ‘other’ which defines the politics of power and identity as represented in the text.

Even with cosmopolitan citizenship, which is one of the major stakes of globalisation reinforced by free movement of labour and capital, this kind of imbalance is noticeable in the way privileges are conferred on different categories of people in spite of the attempt to present the entire world as

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\(^{16}\) Siddiqi, *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*, 47.

\(^{17}\) Ibid, 17.

\(^{18}\) Ibid.
the constituency of everyone irrespective of nationality. This division is, in fact, becoming more obvious with the neo-liberalism of multi-national corporations like the soda manufacturers alluded to by Siddiqi in *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*. From all indications, Pearl has two forms of invasion to contend with; the one imposed on it by colonial authority and that which is posed by the new community of settlers who have found a new haven in this land. These examples further signpost the strife between the rhetoric of globalisation and the reality of nation-statehood as ‘many people in the contemporary world are structurally placed so as to have multiple loyalties’ like the colonial masters and the Indian settlers in Pearl.\(^\text{19}\) This kind of structural alignment brings to mind the fact that the ‘ecumenical or universalistic and inclusionary political culture’ which the disciples of unbridled globalisation often attempt to force down the throat of the entire universe is ‘limited in its reach and import by identity politics’.\(^\text{20}\)

The politics of identity, which often characterises communities inhabited by natives and migrants like we have in Pearl, provides a huge amount of material for study of the frosty relationships that sometimes develop between migrants and their hosts. In fact, a good proportion of the crisis spots in the world today have come into being as a result of migrancy and its after effects. In most cases, such crises are a product of the contestations for power which produce different kinds of hegemonies or the attempt by one group to unjustly dominate the other. Inasmuch as we can plead the inevitability of migration in the world we live in today, the lack of proper understanding of the different cultures that keep grappling for space in the resultant multicultural society remains one major factor that keeps making the avoidance of conflict in such societies a mirage. Adekunle Amuwo, though vilifying the host community for a shortcoming which is not its exclusive preserve, contends that:

> Cosmopolitanism is a fascinating phenomenon, but is often limited and circumscribed by the backgrounding and foregrounding of different cultures and the inability or unwillingness—or both—of host cultures and peoples not to dialogue with—or even attempt to understand—the cultures of the different others... In other words, whilst, on the


one hand, we are living in a supposedly exciting world—a world of multiple identities and imagined cosmopolitan citizenship—we are also confronted with the territorial hegemony of particularistic cultures that assail and rubbish cosmopolitanism.21

The problem with this lack of understanding and the absence of willingness in appreciating the other is clearly not that of the host community alone as Amuwo contends but that of both sides. In fact, the opposite of Amuwo’s thesis is presented in *The Feast of the Nine Virgins* where the migrant population distances itself from the host to the extent that it is completely unwilling to risk the taboo of inter-racial marriages. The green-eyed second born of Mohanji is the least intelligent of his children, yet as the narrator states:

He is the nicest looking of all the Mohanji boys, and many Dukavallas hoped they would acquire just such a son-in-law via their virgin daughters. But the green-eyed one disappointed everyone by falling in love with a Black African girl. Mohanji maintained she had used ‘Jadoo’—witchcraft—to ensnare a good-looking Indian boy.22

For Mohanji and his fellow Indians, racial orientation forbids any genuine love between a Black African and an Indian. The tragedy of the violent death which the girl suffers in the text points to the desperation which attends such racial biases in multicultural societies. This violent prohibition of miscegenation, which tends to further fracture society in various other ways, is reminiscent of the Immorality Act (1950) in apartheid South Africa. In Pearl, as was the case in South Africa, there is an overt construction of the black population as so degenerate as to warrant a containment of its genes or, where outright containment proves ineffectual, avoid a contamination of the other race(s) which erroneously confers on itself a phoney superiority.

It is instructive to point out the importance of dwelling on the institution of marriage here. In one sense, marriage can be read as a form of migration because of its association with movement and relocation; it signifies a kind of fraternising intercourse between different cultures or different classes of people. In the case of the different races in Pearl, marriage would have been one of the institutions to be deployed for cultural translation and better integration but for the lack of willingness on the part of the different racial

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21 Ibid.
22 Siddiqi, *The Feast of the Nine Virgins*, 16.
groups and the superiority strife which makes such contact impossible. This kind of discrimination also tends to deny the essence of migration which has a productive creativity in both biological and epistemological terms. The issue of marriage, in another sense, brings to mind the census politics which marks multiracial societies. In this instance, population is a kind of power and if we are to think of the import of modernist democratic culture, the idea of the majority in terms of number becomes crucial in the question of access to power. To give out a daughter especially in marriage would be to inadvertently add to the population of the other as a result of the inherent productivity that defines the institution. The culture of separation which is encapsulated in the aphorism, ‘Don’t mix with the natives’, is further strengthened by the establishment of a separate morality committee to moderate Indian moral values. In the novel, the ‘Panchayat’ or The Indian Morality Committee of Five Elders who are at the same time the ‘Custodians of Shame, Honour, Dignity and Female Chastity’ are bothered only by the affairs of Indians in the community as the blacks are not considered ‘civilized’ enough to handle moral conflicts involving the Indians because ‘they were as shameless as the Whites’.

The assumption of cultural superiority is also carried on to the gastronomic level in the novel. Food is no doubt a very important element in the institutionalisation of culture in that it occupies a pride of place as one of the major markers of cultural difference. It should be noted, for better understanding of this difference, that what is considered food in a particular culture may not be seen as such in another. For people in the Diaspora, therefore, food can even be a rallying point where cultural memory is evoked and a sense of satisfaction can be conjured. The celebration of the feast which runs through the narrative as well as the constant cooking and the abundance of food in Mohanji’s house can be seen as foregrounding what Michael Duffy refers to as ‘gastronomic chauvinism’. The fact that Mrs Henara allows her child to attend the feast and also eat the food can be seen as a kind of cultural solidarity given vent by the perceived assurance of gastronomic security. As the Brat informs:

> Even my snobbish mother always insisted I go, although more often than not, these events were held in poorer neighborhoods. Not the kind of areas my mother would normally have approved of. But class

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23 Ibid., 45.
difference temporarily collapsed on such occasions, for this was an essential religious ritual.\textsuperscript{25}

Gesa Stedman reminds us that:

Food in general is a useful marker of cultural exchange because changes in diet as well as changes in the representation of diet tell us something about the way one culture reacts to the impact of another, not only in material terms but also in terms of self-definition and self-fashioning.\textsuperscript{26}

Added to the question of identity and definition is the gratifying and consummative dimension of food, especially for people living in places that are at a far remove from their ‘original’ home.

The portability of identity and memory which makes it possible for people to traverse both spatial and temporal spaces with a good amount of their cultural heritage can be adduced as one of the major reasons behind the possibility of a proliferation of cultural practices which, when not properly managed, degenerate into conflicts in multicultural societies. Apart from the obsession with food which we find in \textit{The Feast of the Nine Virgins}, there is a preponderance of the popular art forms of the migrant population which, as the writer suggests, dominate the art space to the detriment of the cultural heritage of the natives. This is evident in the central stage taken by Bollywood in the novel as well as by the presentation of Indian popular music as the most appreciated form of music from the cacophony of sounds at the Market Square:

Sewing machines screeching in tune with dozens of shop-radios blaring Indian film songs, and occasionally, very occasionally, the sounds of African pop music—Congolese bands—hastily lowered in volume, in preference to the orchestral sounds of Bollywood. It was proudly asserted by the likes of Mohanji that if the shop radio pumped out melodies from Shankar-Jaikishen and O. P. Nayyar, then his Black customer volume doubled. This was cited as proof that the Blacks, the indigenous native population to whom this beautiful country belonged, were, after all, capable of understanding and appreciating the finer things of life.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{25} Siddiqi, \textit{The Feast of the Nine Virgins}, 3.
\textsuperscript{26} Stedman, ‘Pox on Your Raggi, Your Supos, and Your Catlotti’, 270.
\textsuperscript{27} Siddiqi, \textit{The Feast of the Nine Virgins}, 14.
The endangering of the culture of indigenous people which this kind of scenario engenders can only be a breeding ground for conflict. In contrast to the man on the street, the black government, which seeks to protect the cultural heritage of the land, is likely to see any attempt at abrogating indigenous culture as a danger to the normative practices of its people.

Proponents of global integration often seek to convince us of the immense benefits of a seamless transnationalism. But evidence, as we see in the trajectory of the Asian and black African populations in Pearl, has shown that migration does not necessarily reduce disparities in development across the world. Some ethnographic studies have shown that multiculturalism, if not properly managed, further fans the embers of discriminatory imagination of identities which tones down development or at least skews it in favour of a particular group. As Dhoolekha Raj rightly observes, ‘multiculturalism is a product of a sociocultural environment in which “otherness” is an overt policy concern’. This concern usually stems from the advantages and disadvantages as well as the lack of balance in the distribution of opportunities which attend the concept of transnational identification in the modern world. Therefore, migration and inequality have continued to assume a kind of mutuality that dictates some form of circumspection when we try to consider the implications of transnationality and its underpinnings.

The vulnerability which the politics of identity generates tends to detract from what ordinarily should have been the gain of transnationalism for communities populated by a democracy of cultures. The basic idea of cultural relativity presupposes an allowance of space for the cohabitation of a multiplicity of customs and traditional practices which, in the course of interaction, should have resulted in a form of creativity and robust egalitarianism which could have made even the migrant feel, in the words of Doris Sommer, ‘at home abroad’. As Sommer suggests, the oxymoronic sense which comes out of the ‘othered’ hyphenated identities of people makes it

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30 Different forms of migration are also bound to bring varying effects in their wake.
difficult for them to show a complete sense of belonging which, in certain cases, should have been to the advantage of the community.\textsuperscript{31} Cultures, no doubt, have a way of rubbing off on one another. In multicultural settings, therefore, it is possible for people to select aspects of cultures other than their own which can be of benefit to them in the way they grapple with the challenges of daily life and the overall understanding of the realities of the hybridized community which they have to confront. In other words, the coming into contact of different cultures ought to provide an opportunity for people to take advantage of more diverse positive ways of dealing with the challenges of the modern world than be an incentive for rancor as we witness in \textit{The Feast of the Nine Virgins}. The manifest opposition which marks relationships among the Africans, Indians and Europeans who all dwell in Pearl makes the kind of social cohesion required for the reaping of such benefits a remote possibility.

It is becoming more obvious by the day that as borders keep collapsing people will have more reason to migrate. Even within the geography of nation-states, as Paul Silverstein argues, ‘there has occurred a series of shifts in the imagination of internal and external boundaries’.\textsuperscript{32} These migrations will also continue to produce multicultural societies in which identities become multiple. The need to shift ground and transcend sentimental differentiation of the non-inclusive population as the ‘other’ and be prepared to negotiate the borderlines of identity to let others in will presumably become more urgent. There is a need to embrace that pragmatic spirit which John Dewey describes as a revolt against the ‘habit of mind which disposes of anything by tucking it away in the pigeon holes of a filing cabinet’.\textsuperscript{33} The ‘babelization’ of identities which is likely to attend a failure to find conciliatory means of approaching the question of space, citizenship and nationality can only lead to further conflicts which, in the long run, confer no special status, in the real sense of the word, on any hegemonic group. Since ‘foreignness’ suggests that which is unhomely and unfamiliar, a more careful approach to labeling in the process of identity politics will, hopefully in the long run, ‘bring home’ the excluded and create a diverse cross-cultural new nation in which suspicion may give way to solidarity and a better understanding of cultural differences brought about by transnational identities, be they prefixed or hyphenated. Though it may be


\textsuperscript{32} Paul Silverstein, \textit{Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race and Nation} (Bloomington, 2004), 75.

inconceivable to think of a world without the ‘other’, the more people come to terms with the phenomenon of migration and its inherent implications the quicker we are likely to attain a regime of fewer conflicts arising from cultural tensions and, by implication, a less volatile world.

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James Kelman’s reputation as a writer rests on his nuanced rendering of Glasgow speech and his politically committed representations of working-class experience. Thus far, few critical studies have considered the predominance of migration as an ongoing motif and plot device in his fiction. The down-trodden and rootless characters that feature in the novels and short stories frequently long to escape from Britain, and the notion of emigration—especially to America, Australia and New Zealand—often becomes a key aspiration. In his fourth novel, *How late it was, how late* (1994) the central protagonist has a love of country music and entertains fantasies of fleeing to the States. Given his circumstances over much of the narrative, these reflections are brutally ironic. After a beating by plainclothes policemen he goes blind before being released from custody to feel his way home without a penny to his name. Towards the end of the novel, after being kept in custody again for interrogation, he realises that it is only a matter of time before he is locked up for good and he makes plans for an escape from Glasgow. As he ruminates over his options, he is still able to formulate visions of an idyllic lifestyle, even to the extent of the comic and the ludicrous (as when he imagines having his own DSS office in the South of England). However, he draws the line when his thoughts return to Texas:

> Ah fuck London. Maybe he would go somewhere else all the gether. Luckenbach Texas. Shut yer fucking mouth.  

The synaptic pattern denoted here, daydream followed by rejoinder, forms something of a motif in Kelman’s work. It is noteworthy that in this instance the fantasy is cut short before it has even the chance of causing any trouble:

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1 Simon Kővesi is the exception here; his discussion of Kelman’s second novel, *A Chancer* is complemented by useful contextual material on migration from Glasgow in the 1970s and 80s: *James Kelman* (Manchester, 2007), 77–86

2 James Kelman, *How late it was, how late* (London, 1995), 255.
for Sammy Samuels, the idea of travelling to Texas is both desirable and impossible.

Instances like the above, where migration is contemplated as ‘daydream’ rather than ‘reality’ function as refrains in many of Kelman’s novels and short stories. The earlier work, rather than detailing the experience of travelling to the New World and settling there, focuses on the impact that such journeys have on those who are not in the economic position to go anywhere but who are hugely sensitised towards the discourse of emigration as one of several myths of self-betterment. The early short story, ‘A notebook to do with America’, centres upon an old man’s visit to the wife of a deceased friend in the dilapidated ‘single-end’ of a partially demolished tenement. The woman, who has prepared a solitary wake for her husband, asks him if he will be ‘going to America’ and subsequent dialogue reveals that the man and the deceased often talked about travelling there.\(^3\) After going through to the kitchen to view the body of his friend, the man leaves with a notebook which has been set aside for him by the woman. Nothing is revealed about the book other than that which is indicated in the title of the story but the reader may speculate that it contains sketches and plans for the journey that the two intended to make. The belated ineffectuality of such fantasies is made all the more poignant when set against the backdrop of an older Glasgow that is gradually disappearing.

Kelman’s fifth novel, *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* (2003), forms something of a departure from earlier work in that it is set exclusively in America. It becomes evident, however, that the Glasgow-born protagonist that narrates this novel has failed to assimilate within his new domicile. It is also the case that the version of America featured in the text is extremely idiosyncratic, filtered as it is via the worldview of the protagonist.

**I A Failed Emigrant**

Jeremiah Brown has been living in the States for twelve years. He now intends to go back to Scotland but is far from certain that this is a journey he will ever make. For much of the novel he lingers in a state of indecision over his options. He considers his time in the US to have been a failure on a number of counts—economic, personal, and political—and describes himself as a ‘failed

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fucking immigrant’. Glasgow, on the other hand, offers only a few family ties (he has some affection for his mother but not his siblings) and the idea of returning there fills him with trepidation. Throughout the narrative, he constantly changes his mind as to whether he will leave the States or not and, at one point, he contemplates tearing up his flight ticket. It is ironic that in the one novel where the central character has actually made the journey to America and lived there for a period of time, the reader encounters the same sense of impotence, recurrent daydreams and thwarted ambitions that tend to distinguish Kelman’s other protagonists.

The novel begins on the evening before Jeremiah is due to fly home. Because of itchy feet, boredom with his own company, and the desire for beer and entertainment, he leaves his motel and ends up in a nearby town. Where this town is situated on the map remains uncertain, though the reader may surmise that it is somewhere in Colorado and fairly near Denver. Jeremiah firstly lands up in an establishment called ‘The Shooters and Horses Sports Bar’ where he manages, albeit inadvertently, to offend the bartender and one of the clientele. After several lite beers (his beverage of choice throughout the novel), he beats his retreat and resolves to go back to the motel but his resolution is broken when he catches sight of a Jazz bar offering live music. He remains in this location for much of the rest of the novel, and commentary on his immediate situation is intercut with lengthy reminiscences regarding the last twelve years.

The cover of the first edition of the novel, showing a sword-bearing Statue of Liberty, like the one described in Kafka’s unfinished novel, *The Lost One*, cues the reader into realising that the America presented here will not be quite the same as the ‘real’ one. In both the ‘Shooters and Horses’ bar and in the Jazz bar, Jeremiah is asked to produce ID confirming his legal settlement as an alien in the US. We find out that he has a Red Card III, which marks him out as an atheist-socialist and thereby anathema to the political mainstream. The Red Card, of course, is fictional, but there are subsequently other details that present a deliberately skewed and warped version of the ‘Land of the Free’.

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5 ‘A sudden burst of sunshine seemed to illumine the Statue of Liberty, so that he saw it in a new light, although he had sighted it long before. The arm with the sword rose up as if it newly stretched aloft, and round the figure blew the free winds of heaven’: Franz Kafka, *America*, trans. Willa and Edwin Muir, in *Franz Kafka* (London, 1976), 133. See the front cover of *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* (London, 2004).
Jeremiah speaks in a recognisably Glaswegian idiom but his allegiances to the city and land of his birth are thin. Most of the statements he makes about Scotland are negative, from an account of being knifed outside a chip shop in Glasgow to a general hatred of role models like Andrew Carnegie in the States.\(^6\) He frequently mentions his attempts to gather information regarding a long-lost ancestor and namesake but nothing is ever discovered beyond hearsay and his own extravagant suppositions. There are, moreover, no encounters with other Scots over the course of the narrative and little sense of a diasporic community. In this respect, Jeremiah distances himself from the stereotype of the homesick emigrant eager to maintain connections with his or her countrymen: ‘other exiles think about hame much of the time, they get together and talk about the guid auld days and stuff. I could chat about the dear auld motherland as well but it was aye with an uncommon sense of relief at no being there’.\(^7\) For all that, he appears to enjoy parodying the pseudo-historical lingo of clan mythologies and the Gaelic inheritance of Ireland and Scotland and takes a recognisably revisionist stance in suggesting that narratives of national and cultural origin are fabrications. At one point, he expresses a desire to learn Spanish as a means of distancing himself from any shared sense of a Celtic identity:

Spanish was one of the languages I often tried to learn, like Gaelic—if only because every time I had the bad luck to find myself in a stage-oirisch bar I bumped into these stage-oirisch pricks who got very blood and soil and linguistically pure and I wantit to confound them to the very marrow of their traditionalist beings. St Patrick was a fucking Skatchman anywey from the town of Dumbarton. Of course us Browns originated from oillin, the MacDiumhns, and we had wur ayn business with St Patrick, no to mention the auld Fenians and yer man Connal Gulban. That is the trouble with heritage, ye can do anything ye like with it.\(^8\)

Jeremiah’s diatribe is aimed at those selective genealogies of nationhood which claim key historical personages (such as St Patrick) as their own. A further debunking of nation and inheritance is intimated in the phonetic rendering of names like Scotland, England, Ireland and America; ‘oillin’ suggests a rather

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\(^6\) Ibid., 8, 396–7.
\(^7\) Kelman, *You Have to be Careful*, 16.
\(^8\) Ibid., 105.
'stage-oïrisch’ Irish accent while ‘Skatchman’ caricatures US pronunciation. In such instances, the ‘finality’ of the national as part of a ‘symbolic order’ is decentred by the oral. There is, however, another form of cultural allegiance to which Jeremiah gives more credence. When an acquaintance from an Indian family tackles him on the subject of his history, his response is that ‘working-class people … don’t have a history’.9 Yet he speaks in respectful terms when referring to American radicals like the Socialist and Union activist, Eugene Debs and the former slave and civil rights advocate, Frederick Douglas (‘with the auld Skarrisch connection’).10 In instances like these, Jeremiah identifies with a radical history that appears to exceed the national parameters that he claims to despise. It is not so much history itself that he rejects; it is the history of nations (with all the cultural baggage that they sometimes carry).

In seeking Jeremiah Brown the Elder, the reader discovers that the protagonist has spent a lot of time travelling between the West and the East coast, sometimes with a fellow gambler buddy called Hayden. He settles in New York after taking flight from the West coast (over some unspecified yet dangerous trouble he has become embroiled in). While in New York, he lives in a cramped apartment (or ‘cupboard’) with little furniture, has insufficient clothes, has a poorly paid evening bar job from which he longs to escape, and occasionally goes on gambling sprees. He also reveals that he is trying to write a novel; an unlikely detective fiction which he hopes to turn into a film. His fortunes turn when he meets Yasmin; a black jazz-blues singer with whom he becomes besotted. The two settle into a relationship, although even after they have a child together they live apart due to Jeremiah’s precarious financial circumstances. It is suggested that part of the reason for the distance in the relationship may be racial and cultural (i.e. Jeremiah’s status as an unassimilated immigrant and a ‘pink Skarrischucker’).11 Due to his marginalised status and his lack of economic security, attempts to form lasting ties or to set up a family prove elusive. An unlikely change in occupation from bartender to Airport Security Operative seems, at first, to offer a solution to these difficulties. Jeremiah manages to get the job because of a widespread increase in the security industries due to a phenomenon called the ‘Persian bet’.

The ‘Persian bet’, a coinage that develops from the term ‘perishing bet’, emerges from a down turn in airline insurance due to increases in airplane crashes. It begins as an advertising joke but soon takes on a life of its own.

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9 Ibid., 46.
10 Ibid., 60.
11 Ibid., 47.
via the machinations of Hollywood and television propaganda. According to
the scheme, the bookie becomes insurer and the passengers make bets as to
whether they will survive the flight or ‘perish’; if they survive, all is as it should
be, if they perish, their nearest and dearest win a large quantity of cash. The
satire here is timely, the novel referring obliquely to the paranoid aftermath
of the 9/11 bombings. The Persian bet also illustrates the real meaning of
life insurance when pared down to its essentials; the monetary gain from such
schemes is dependent on one’s demise or the unlikelihood of one’s survival
following a plane crash.

Persian bet insurance is soon taken out of the hands of the bookie by
those with ‘corporate interests’. What also becomes apparent, however, is
that the people involved in the bets are from the lower echelons of US society:
‘those who speculated on the “Persian bet” were poverty stricken bodies on
an income so far below what official government experts reckoned it took to
stay alive that the term “income” was dropped’. Bets are also taken up by
bankrupts and ‘would-be-suicides’. Interests in cheap flights and the Persian
bet subsequently leads to a mass influx of the poor who begin to gather at
airport terminals ‘bearing blankets or pushing grocery carts’. Because of the
incremental rise in bodies there is an expansion in airport security: even those
identified as ‘aliens’ are able to get a job. Ironically, the socially marginalised
employees become responsible for fencing in a mob of predominantly
indigenous American citizens.

The drifters that congregate at airports in order to partake in ‘Persian bets’
are difficult to control. Their mute yet intractable presence is conveyed in
phantasmic terms: ‘they didnay seem to fucking grasp that orders were orders.
These bodies were clogging up corridors, reception and gate waiting areas
and were even finding their way onto the goddam airfields themselves. It was
like they were phantom apparitions or something’. The description of these
unwitting insurgents indirectly recalls the unruly bodies that crowd the districts
and corridors of the Law in Kafka’s The Trial. A key to their significance can
be found in Kelman’s idiosyncretic reading of the latter novel where he argues
that the forces of the Law pitted against Joseph K find their basis in class
conflict: ‘[Joseph K] was not having lies told about him: he was living a lie.

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12 Ibid., 123.
13 Ibid., 127.
14 Ibid., 125.
15 Ibid., 128.
16 Ibid., 135.
He assumed that the values of “his” society…were the supreme authority of humankind and then discovered they were subservient to a greater power, that of the Law which allowed his social inferiors to assume authority over him’. While such an interpretation may appear tendentious, these comments cast light on the function of the airport vagrants in You Have to be Careful. Collectively, they form an uncanny reminder of the hidden lives that persist at the bottom of the social ladder while also illustrating, in estranged ghost-like form, the latent power of the ‘folk’ to resist and impede the workings of commodity capitalism. The simultaneously phantasmal and subversive presence of these visitants is intensified when various Security Operatives in the airport begin to witness a phantom grocery cart pusher (later named the ‘being’) who seems to haunt the whole airport. The ‘being’ eventually appears in a VIP suite where his/her (the gender remains ambiguous) grocery cart explodes causing mayhem.

II Speaking in Tongues

In contrast to those instances where the reader is offered a ‘paranoiac’ or distorted version of US culture, North America is also ‘translated’ in the novel via the Glasgow idiom of the narrator. An early intimation of the style adopted in You Have to be Careful can be found in one of Kelman’s earlier pieces, entitled ‘More complaints from the American Correspondent’. This text forms part of a sequence of fragmentary and playful shorts in the collection, Greyhound for Breakfast (1987). It is possible to surmise that the story, with its exaggeratedly formal title, is one of a series of letters from a Glasgow émigré to someone who may share (or be familiar with) his cultural background:

Jesus christ man this tramping from city to city—terrible. No pavements man just these back gardens like you got to walk right down by the edge of the road man and them big fucking Doberman pinchers they’re coming charging straight at you. Then the ghettos for christ sake you got all them mothers lining the streets man they’re tugging at your sleeves, hey you, gies a bite of your cheeseburger. Murder polis.

18 James Kelman, You Have to be Careful, 248.
19 James Kelman, ‘More complaints from the American Correspondent’, Greyhound for Breakfast (London, 1999), 133. Kelman is paraphrasing Edwin and Willa Muir’s
The reader familiar with Kelman’s work will recognise the itinerant drifter type that narrates here. The overall impression is one of culture shock. The speaker-narrator describes himself as ‘tramping from city to city’ in a way that appears primarily at odds with the automobile culture of urban centres like Boston etc, where middle-class suburbs tend not to have pavements and where loitering pedestrians are looked upon with suspicion. What is notable is the way in which these experiences have been ‘translated’ into a recognisably Glaswegian idiom; the final phrase, ‘Murder polis’, a common enough imprecation taken from a popular Glasgow Street-Song, is both comfortingly familiar and weirdly out of place. In contrast, the confrontation in the ‘ghettoes’ suggests a form of cultural symbiosis in that the encounter is rendered in a mixture of Glaswegian and American vernacular. The reciprocity in the narrator’s choice of language not only suggests an attempt to recreate his experiences in the language of his home city but also that the ‘mothers’ (an American vernacular phrase) are in a condition of penury that the narrator recognises partially as his own (‘hey you, gies a bit of your cheeseburger’).

The meeting of registers that pertain to Glaswegian and American culture is developed more fully in You Have to be Careful. Like the narrator of ‘More complaints’, Jeremiah claims to have considerable experience of tramping on foot. In the following passage, he recalls (or restages) a conversation with his girlfriend Yasmin, who wonders how he has such an extensive knowledge of New York:

All yous indigenous folks wonder how come furnirs know their way around the highways and byways of this city. It is because we walk, we walk, everywhere we go we walk… I spent the night in wigwams, under trees and under bridges, under roads and in trenches and caves and ditches, beneath aqueducts, chuckalucks and pipe ducts; tree huts, riverbanks and various shady groves and leafy hollows. One night I slept near a small loch

Pardon me?
Like a wee lake, a wide stretch of water.21

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20 The term ‘speaker-narrator’ is used by H. Gustav Klaus to describe Kelman’s first-person narrators: c.f. James Kelman (Tavistock, 2004), 3.
21 Kelman, You Have to be Careful, 86.
Most of what Jeremiah says is to be taken with a pinch of salt as he has a penchant for drawing out a yarn and his verbal effusions tend to develop their own momentum, often completely departing from the realms of the plausible. As with ‘More complaints’, his speech contains North American and Scots phrases: the Scots collective second-person pronoun (‘yous’) is contrasted with a phonetic approximation of North American pronunciation (‘furnir’). Likewise, the Scottish ‘loch’, which is glossed by Jeremiah, contrasts with the North American ‘chuckaluck’. There is more to the latter term than meets the unsuspecting reader; to spend the night beneath a chuck-a-luck, essentially a game of chance where three dice are tumbled in a structure resembling an hour-glass shaped bird cage, is clearly a thinly veiled euphemism for an evening spent gambling.

In addition to Jeremiah’s often-parodic imitations of North American speech idioms and lexis there are numerous instances in which the phonology and sometimes the orthography of other languages encroach upon the page. As Liam McIlvanney observes in his review of the novel, this may indicate the type of person that can barely speak a sentence without putting on a funny voice.22 Earlier in the review, McIlvanney envisages the kind of academic criticism that might emerge from this aspect of the novel: ‘one can already imagine the Bakhtinian analyses of You Have to be Careful, which will celebrate its boisterous voices, its “dialogic” use of language. In fact, the foreign tags and phrases do little to disguise the crushingly monologic nature of the work’.23 Admittedly, when reading the novel, it is sometimes possible to feel entirely trapped by the speaker’s unmitigated and often hysterical loquacity. At a purely visual level, however, the use of the ‘foreign tags’ has an alienating effect, suggesting someone whose speech is subject to the depersonalising relativism of a so-called global culture. In the following passage, Jeremiah provides his own marching orders:

Nay wonder people got sick of me. Who wants to listen to some girning-faced furnir prick constantly moaning. Why dont ya fuck off hame to yer ayn country and moan. Yeh, precisely, le billet is booked monsieur. So gie us a smoke to celebrate. And le bier, oú est le bier. Donde está la la señorita! Eh hombre, gie us el brekko.24

23 Ibid.
24 Kelman, You Have to be Careful, 52.
This diatribe of self-loathing disintegrates into a barrage of vernacular Scots, American, French and Spanish phrases. The hotchpotch of idioms may remind the reader of those myths of America as melting pot where cultures are able to coalesce and combine. There is a further sense that the speaker’s discourse is permeated by a banal and impersonal globalism in which the stock phrases of one culture may be used in lieu of another. In order to understand fully the disquieting externality of these renderings, however, it is necessary to address Kelman’s ongoing concern with the scission that exists between speech and writing and the formal experimentation in his preceding work, *Translated Accounts* (2001).

The latter text is one of Kelman’s most uncompromising and opaque: set in an imaginary province under martial rule, it contains fragments of confessions, first-hand accounts of paramilitary violence, streams of consciousness, and public speeches. These have been rendered into a stilted and un-idiomatic translatorese that simultaneously fails to grasp nuances of meaning yet is somehow capable of conveying the incommunicable horror of political atrocity. For many readers, *Translated Accounts* seemed to indicate a departure from Kelman’s long-term commitment to representing the local and the concrete in his Glasgow fictions. Yet it also served to highlight the ways in which the earlier texts, far from suggesting an unproblematic mimesis of Glasgow speech, illustrated the tension involved in transposing the ‘oral’ into the ‘written’.

Given these factors, it becomes easier to identify what Kelman is attempting to achieve formally in *You Have to be Careful*. The reader is presented with the seemingly guileless effusions of the first-person narrator. However, as was the case with *Translated Accounts*, the sense of an external agency is also conveyed in the way that the text is represented on the page, suggesting that parts of the narrative have been mediated in their transposition from speech to writing. It is in this respect that the impeccably rendered foreign tags gain a more sinister resonance and an anxiety in relation to that which is ‘outside’ is intimated.

### III The Problem with Boundaries

McIlvanney has argued that *You Have to be Careful* is essentially static in structure. Until the last thirty pages, little of note takes place within the
framing narrative other than Jeremiah’s progressive drunkenness, his paranoia regarding a ‘pentagon fucker’ observing him from the bar, and his attraction to a barmaid called Sally. In a text where there are no chapter divisions and no clear breaks in the narrative, the reader is subjected to an unrelenting interior dialogue where memories of the past mingle with polemical diatribes against global capitalism. For these reasons, the novel can be accused of lacking any cohesive structure. Yet perhaps this is the point. Jeremiah has difficulties in maintaining boundaries: the disjointed and seemingly random flow of his reminiscences indicates someone who lacks control over their own thoughts. There are also numerous points where he is unsure whether he is speaking aloud or not (an effect made possible in the text due to the lack of quotation marks for reported speech). He is given to compulsive behaviour (‘mine was a compulsive, obsessive, addictive personality’),\(^{26}\) has a predilection for gambling (although he always loses), and sometimes loses control over his body (there are numerous instances where he is prone to uncontrollable erections). There is a sense Jeremiah’s status as an ‘unassimilated alien’ in the States with ID that marks him out as an unwelcome subversive may be the cause of such phenomena. The situations in which he is asked to produce ID constantly remind him of his status within the domicile country; the fact that his beliefs are at odds with the ‘official’ line; and that he may be called into account and ‘exposed’ at any given moment. Given these details, it may be argued that the form reflects the content. In another sense, the narrative possesses—and to a greater degree than any other Kelman novel—an existential ‘openness’ that avoids the ‘closure’ of more conventionally narrated novels and manages to convey ‘a feeling of the dragging of time’\(^{27}\). For all that, if the narrative style of *You Have to be Careful* appears to be ‘free’ with its loose and digressive structure, the subject matter of the narrative, which includes Jeremiah’s failure to build a successful family, to gain a career and find permanent domicile in the States, veers towards the fatalistic.

Due, in part, to the amount of booze consumed and the unrelenting nature of this Glasgow-voiced narrator’s reflections, it is tempting to align the novel with other drunken-Scots monologues such as Hugh MacDiarmid’s epic poem, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), a hallucinogenic mosaic

\(^{26}\) Kelman, *You Have to be Careful*, 2.

of Scotland realised via the conceit of inebriation (*in vino veritas*), and Alasdair Gray’s novel, *1982 Janine* (1984), where ‘an alcoholic, insomniac supervisor of security installations’ mingles sexual fantasies with regret at the promise of his early years during a single night in a hotel room. What is significant about these texts is that the speakers appear simultaneously immobile in space while being vulnerably exposed to the torsions of their own thoughts as they relate to the external world. Certainly, Jeremiah frequently has a sense that his personal borders are being encroached upon in the text and is often verbaholic in situations where he feels his autonomy threatened. In some instances, his anxieties take the form of paranoia; in others, his suspicions find their counterpart in reality.

The only moments of respite from the non-stop barrage of the narrator’s musings and recollections occur when the reader is presented with dialogues between Jeremiah and other characters. Nevertheless, as soon becomes apparent, even the words of others are altered, expanded, and embellished via the central narrator’s consciousness. At the same time, there are instances in which Jeremiah’s control over his own narrative becomes destabilised in the text, as becomes apparent in ‘The Shooters and Horses Bar’ when he offends the clientele without realising it or when it becomes evident through the words of the barman that he has been speaking his thoughts aloud. Other characters in the narrative, alongside the reader, are party to phenomena in the narrative that escape Jeremiah. This estranging effect is also achieved within the framework of the character’s own reminiscences. About halfway through the novel, Jeremiah recreates (or relives) his job interview for the post as Security Operative. The interview, conducted by a panel of three, is also a ‘personal interrogation’ and the discussion veers towards the kind of discursive non-realism that characterises Kafka’s *The Trial*.

The elder male said, Hey Jeremiah, we know all about you so why dont you relax. You are the problem that we address. Once we have you figured we decide the areas suited to your particular weaknesses. In the Security industry people’s weaknesses should be highlighted, they can be more crucial than strengths. In this agency we go further; the way we see it these weaknesses are the true strengths.  

In the records, Jeremiah is also described as ‘a libertarian socialist atheist’.

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28 James Kelman, *You Have to be Careful*, 150.
In response to the interviewers’ questions, he begins an implausibly long confession regarding his beliefs, aspirations and his keenness to get the job. These are interspersed with more comments from the panel that suggest the interviewers have information on file that relates to things Jeremiah has said in the past i.e. ‘do you consider that fate deals a hand in life and that we are left to pick up the pieces?’ There are several interpretive possibilities here: 1. as in other encounters Jeremiah is embellishing the whole scene by putting words in his own mouth as well as that of others; 2. Jeremiah is indeed party to such an interview within the fictional world of a novel which teeters between mimesis and the uncanny (according to Tzvetan Todorov’s definition of these terms); 3. questions of verisimilitude are irrelevant as the scene is merely a prop for political satire; 4. the interview never happens, Jeremiah has made the whole thing up; 5. the reader is to infer that parts of the narrative have been doctored or ‘written up’ by an unspecified interlocuter. Such crises in interpretation are provoked by the formal tension in the text between speech/ subjectivity, written language/ spoken language, concretion/ externality; the cumulative effect is similar to that which Cairns Craig noted in his discussion of Kelman’s first published novel, *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), where ‘voices can erupt into the self because it is already the space of the Other’.

One of the interviewers in the episode just discussed, speaks of those, like Jeremiah, who are ‘not afraid of the world that lies outside these shores’, unlike other US citizens who ‘wont have a map in the house; even the sight of our country in outline causes tension because it posits the existence of the beyond’. In the final section of the novel, Jeremiah gets lost while looking for a public toilet and somehow ends up outside the Jazz bar where he ends up traipsing the streets through freezing snow: we leave him, in what constitutes a rather slapstick ending, face to face with a policeman after he has slipped in the snow and fallen on his backside. The indirect suggestion conveyed by the potentially hostile silence of the policeman is that during his time in the ‘Land of the Free’ Jeremiah has, in fact, been loitering on enemy territory. In this

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29 Ibid., 152.
30 ‘[In the uncanny], events are related which may readily be accounted for by the laws of reason, but which are, in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected, and which thereby provoke in the character and in the reader a reaction similar to that which works of the fantastic have made familiar’: Tsvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic* (Ithaca: 1975), 46
31 Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel* (Edinburgh, 1999), 102
32 James Kelman, *You Have to be Careful*, 154.
instance, the ‘Land of the Free’ championed by those stranded within the UK in Kelman’s other novels, is represented as a kind of police state.

It is noteworthy that despite the setting and the frequent references to American culture, *You Have to be Careful* has a pattern entirely fitting with Kelman’s later novels (especially *How late it was* and *A Disaffection*). In these texts, a paranoiacally heightened version of the ‘real world’ is represented where individual autonomy is threatened by the impersonal forces of state power. The implication is that the non-real (or surreal) elements in these narratives merely accentuate the kinds of experience that people from Kelman’s own background have to confront. However, the protagonists of these novels are often outsiders who are effectively isolated from any sense of community (although a radical sense of working-class solidarity is occasionally invoked as an ideal). Within the main narrative frame of *You Have to be Careful* (Jeremiah’s evening of binge drinking), there are no phone calls, no encounters with acquaintances and only passing conversations with other people. Events from the past are relived and re-dramatised but the fact that they are tempered by Jeremiah’s selective memory heightens the overall impression of dislocation from other people.

It would appear then that the social, political and personal displacement of Kelman’s protagonists is consolidated rather than resolved by the experience of emigration as dramatised in this novel. The lack of connections with other Scottish expats and Jeremiah’s feeling that a return to Scotland is the ultimate sign of his failure (no jubilant homecomings are intimated) diminishes any impression of a collective diasporic identity while his inability to entirely assimilate within his adopted country or be recognised as a permanent resident leads to a condition of rootlessness and homelessness. Such a negative reading of the novel is tempered by the exuberant manner in which the narrative incorporates American vernacular and aspects of the history and culture of the US into its maw. In this respect, the narrative could be seen as offering a Scottish-American symbiosis, at least at the level of language (although such interpretations are complicated by the instability and mediation of the text, as I have illustrated).

The longing that Jeremiah has for lasting connections with the other becomes apparent in his almost infantile longing for the feminine, as when he reminisces about his relationship with Yasmin or when he suddenly becomes besotted with the bartender in the Jazz club. These desires conjoin with the character’s simultaneous sense of displacement and longing to be accepted within his adopted country. A useful cadence can be brought to bear on
Jeremiah’s condition if we turn again to a passage from *Translated Accounts*. Throughout the latter text the unidentified speakers often refer to a female figure who is absent from their lives; in some instances, this is due to the breakdown of a relationship, while in others the woman has unaccountably gone missing. In what is a fairly common trope (though not stated explicitly), this absence leaches into the characters’ sense of belonging: ‘This place also, now it was strange to me, that it might cease to exist by virtue of my becoming part of it. But I could never truly be part of it. No matter what transpired it would lie always outside of myself’.

University of Aberdeen

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One of the highlights of the ‘Migrating Minds’ conference in May 2009 was undoubtedly the public interview with James Kelman which took place at King’s College on the evening before the WORD Festival (14 May). The main purpose in inviting Kelman to speak was not only due to his standing as an author of world stature but also because of the experiences he had recently written about concerning his migration to the USA as a young man. The Kelman family moved from Glasgow to California when he was seventeen but were forced to return within less than a year. As Kelman remarked, the experience served to split the family; two of his brothers remained in the States (one settling there permanently) and, shortly after the return to Glasgow, James moved southwards in order to find employment. In recent years, he has returned to the US and has spent some time living and working there as a teacher of Creative Writing (including a substantial tenure at Austin, Texas). These experiences were reason enough for arranging the event. However, it is equally pertinent that the idea of migration often filters into Kelman’s fiction and sometimes serves as a central plot device. The characters in the novels and short stories frequently have aspirations towards leaving the UK for the English-speaking provinces of the New World: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and, of course, the US. Such desires often manifest themselves in the form of daydreams as Kelman’s protagonists rarely have the economic means to hold even a chance of following through their inclinations. Given the downtrodden predicament of many of these protagonists, it is unsurprising that the one novel that Kelman chose to set in America (You have to be Careful in the Land of the Free, 2004) centres upon a ‘failed emigrant’ who has plans to return to Glasgow.

Over the course of the interview, Kelman offered a number of illuminating insights into his life and work; he also spoke about his sense of being part of a radical tradition that is simultaneously political, philosophical, cultural and literary; which spans from the eighteenth century to the present; and which includes figures as diverse as James Hogg, Noam Chomsky, Helen Crawfur and Amos Tutuola. At the time of the event, he had just been shortlisted for
the International Booker Prize and would subsequently receive a Scottish Arts Council Award for the novel, *Kieron Smith, boy* (2008). After an introduction from Cairns Craig, the evening began with a brief reading from the latter text:

**James Kelman:** The issues of immigration and emigration are fairly strong themes within all of my work... although it's not often picked up, and I mean by that the Irish connection with Scotland. Cairns mentioned *A Disaffection* (1989), you know, but the central character is a Protestant atheist by the name of Paddy Doyle. This boy's on his way to becoming a Protestant atheist whose name is Kieron Smith. The central character in *How late it was, how late* (1994), his name's Sammy Samuels, which when I was growing up—there was a Jewish boy in my class, Samuels is a Jewish name. For me the naming of characters has always been crucial but the irony is very rarely touched on. Another strong character in *How late it was* is Ally. Now it's always assumed, and assumed by the central character, that this is Alasdair. But if you look, if you read the text in fact, this strong peripheral figure is Ally but should it be spelled Ali? Sammy is blind and can’t see remember, and all he hears is the Glasgow speaking voice of this guy and he’s dealing with issues around race and immigration, apart from when he’s supporting a guy like Sammy. These are the issues that he deals with, and it’s quite overt within the text. In Scotland, or rather in Glasgow, I always assumed that everybody would be saying, who’s this Protestant called Paddy Doyle? Nobody ever says that. I’m the only one that ever says that! [Laughter] Anyway, I’m going to read a little bit of this novel and it’s a bit where some of these kinds of issues as they affect childhood come to the fore…

(Reads extract from *Kieron Smith, boy*)

**Paul Shanks:** Great stuff! I found when you were reading that passage that there was a simultaneous impression of overhearing the character’s thoughts but also that it’s a story being told in the past tense. There’s also this sense that the boy in the story is really trying to figure things out for himself. What was it initially that made you decide to turn to childhood in this latest novel? I mean the idea of the ambiguous name and that sense of a missing piece of information comes across strongly in quite a bit of your fiction, but why was it you chose to focus on that aspect of the boy’s experience?

**JK:** Well, it’s not really the way I work in a way. I just work all the time really—and it depends on how stories are going. Some stories move on more readily than
others, and I just kind of go with them. This *Kieron Smith* novel is quite tricky in terms of the grammar, the syntax. It’s written in a … it’s a peculiar thing in a way because it gives the impression of being written in Standard English, and it’s not. It’s Standard English in a sense, it seems to suggest Standard English literary form, and it’s not that at all. It’s using grammar also as users use it, as we use it as speakers. So it’s the way people use language as speakers, how we think etc, so the grammar operates differently from literary form.

In terms of how we speak, especially in communication with people, it includes a lot of non-verbal communication and various things; and what we as writers, many writers have been doing for many, many years has been trying to find ways of … eh … it’s almost like transcribing the oral form onto the page. There’s really a tremendous tradition in this, and it’s not only a Scottish tradition. There are obvious figures going back; James Hogg, and further than Hogg, and it’s quite obvious now that we think of what he was doing in the *Justified Sinner*, which is a really complex, technically a very complex work, and he’s using language that’s really … I don’t know of anyone who was using it at that time; language as complicated, as rich as he uses in the *Justified Sinner*. But even then, there was that tradition that he would be aware of as a poet; so right into the eighteenth century, the politics of language and culture at that time, and what was going on from people like David Hume and the whole anti-indigenous Scottish thing linguistically, which in a way I’d regard it as … I feel strongly now, more than I ever did … that it has been a bad thing really. It’s been a bad thing for our culture, because what is involved in that becomes the denial of a culture, or denial of central parts of the culture, that I think have been really not good at all—and they still pertain just now—to do with assimilation towards the authority of the Imperial power, which then and now continues to be this High English form, which has really been very destructive in various cultures throughout the world. Writers have often attempted to fight back and defend against this, and I regard my own work as being part of that tradition.

In contemporary literature over this last forty years or so, if we think of what was happening amongst writers within parts of Africa and parts of the West Indies and the Indian sub-continent, places where the English Imperial voice had been forced on the people, and writers ultimately trying to make sense of this with their own voices being denied them … I’m sure I’ve spoken about this before in Aberdeen, but I’ll refer again to it: the best example for me would be contemporary Nigerian literature really, in terms of prose fiction, and I’m thinking of Amos Tutuola and Ken Saro Wiwa. These writers and
the type of debates that went on in Nigeria during the sixties, seventies and eighties; really powerful ideas to do with de-colonisation rather than post-colonisation, and trying to make sense of your culture, your own culture, and give it a value. I would rather just say the freedom to be a writer with whatever means are at your disposal.

I know in Nigeria, without getting bogged down in it, somebody like Chinua Achebe for example would have an axe to grind with some other writers from Nigeria because he was brought up in an English-speaking household and demanded the right to write in English, whereas other writers were trying to find a more radical way in that sense. And these struggles, I find that they’re just part of precisely the same as what we’re doing. They’re never given, even just now in this contemporary period, they’re still not given credit, it’s still de-valued, and I find this makes the whole of English literature, the world of English literature…I’m only hesitating about using the term corrupt.

[Laughter] Why is it I daren’t say fucking corrupt; because it’s debilitating, let’s put it that way. Whereas the verve and the excitement of literature is English Language literature, but the problem and the reason why sometimes I think corrupt is right, although maybe it’s better to go with Chomsky and talk about the myopia of the intelligentsia or something, because it means because of what they’ve done they fail to see what’s under their nose, and they’ve failed to see maybe the beauty of what Emily Bronte’s doing in *Wuthering Heights*; and they actually fail to see the beauty of some of the stuff that even Dickens does; Dickens in his later work, where he’s actually… you think, Christ, he’s actually involved in trying to find a way into voice here; how people use language as speakers, and not just as the standard grammar in the page, which to some extent was a nineteenth-century issue in terms of language, not only in our culture, in English-language culture. It was an issue. An obvious place would be within Yiddish literature, well, the thing that became Yiddish literature in the mid nineteenth century, because they had that same struggle, fighting against, almost the Fascism of the language owned by the main elite in society, and that same struggle took place in places like Italy, in parts of Yugoslavia.

So it’s kind of a nineteenth-century struggle in a way, as part of that nationalist stuff maybe. However, where was I? [Laughter]

**PS:** Well, actually you’ve covered a lot of the material that I was going to ask you about [More laughter] at the end of the question session, where I was going to ask a little bit about language hierarchies and English Language literature. But could we just do a little scale back to the beginning; go from the end to
the beginning? I suppose the interest of today’s event is really finding out more about, not only the experiences you’ve had of migration but also the different connections given your rootedness in Glasgow, and the other cultural influences that you’ve had over your life, and maybe the way that’s filtered into your work.

First of all, in the recent afterword to *An Old Pub near the Angel*, you talk about your family connections with Aberdeen, and I believe your grandfather is buried on St Peter’s Cemetery in King Street.

**JK:** And great-grandfather too, yes.

**PS:** Yes, and you professed an early interest in Aberdeen Football club, but I think you might be a little bit more ambivalent about that now. [[Laughter]] I wondered whether these strong affinities with Aberdeen have ever affected your work in any way.

**JK:** Well, it was through my grandfather, the paternal grandfather. Kelman is a very North East name, as people who are local to here will know. It’s the kind of name from MacDuff, around that area. So yes, in that sense of immigration, or not quite being from Glasgow, because my grandmother was from Lewis and she was a Gaelic speaker, and that was on my paternal side, and then the other side, my maternal grandfather, his dad was from Gateshead. They came to Vale of Leven for the shipbuilding around about 1880 or something like that. And the maternal grandmother, my other grandmother; her people came from around Dumfries and that area, South Ayrshire, and Ireland. So, on the one hand you’ll say, well, that’s just a standard Glaswegian boyhood. I don’t know about Alan for instance, Alan Spence is here [in the audience], but we have a kind of shared boyhood in a way. Both of us are from Govan. It’s funny how the writers of Glasgow all come from Govan. Now, a great many of us come from Govan and, in a sense, have very much an ordinary Glasgow background where immigration, you have such a strong sense of that, and even I would say that there’s the sensibility that that brings about, has been to the fore politically; the radical political core that has been in Glasgow politics right from the eighteenth century since the Calton weavers were murdered by the British State, which would’ve been around about 1780, at the time of Thomas Muir, and that whole period around that time; from there through to the Scottish insurrection: that period, 1819 from 1780, right through that period, and you had, well, a guy from here who was very crucial, Thomas
Reid, and you had this tremendous melting pot in Glasgow, and the great Francis Hutcheson, who came from Dublin. I would think probably, maybe the central figure in the Scottish Enlightenment is Francis Hutcheson. But you saw the whole thing as you get in any culture where you have all these different influences, intellectual influences, coming in. You get a very strong culture in ways that often become quite radical politically. If there are minorities that are still being treated badly, sometimes shockingly badly, as has happened in Glasgow over two hundred odd years and more years, then there is this sense of a intellectual excitement that grows politically.

Well, I find that to the fore right the way throughout our politics really, in Glasgow, but it’s that immigrant thing that’s given it strength. The thing that I’ve come to be aware of so much, which I used to put it down to, as most of us would do here, as the suppression of radical politics. For example, Hardie and Baird: I’ve written somewhere that I didn’t know anything about Hardie and Baird or such a thing as a Scottish Insurrection, or that people were murdered by the British state at that period, and all the papers have been taken out, you know. You can’t get hold of anything to do with them properly. I knew nothing about that until I was in my late twenties, and I wrote a play about it [Hardie and Baird, pub. 1991], and I became aware from that period, very much about… which seems a cliché, the suppression of radical history.

Over the years or latterly, maybe since I started to teach in the States, some of my own experiences as a teenager returned, and you meet Scottish people in the States and Irish people, and it made me think more that part of the thing that’s going on is not only a suppression of radical history; that part of the suppression is that of the Irish voice, or the right of Irish immigrants eventually to be known as Scottish without reservations. I found that by the time I’d finished working through Kieron Smith and other things that that to me is almost like one of the missing links. Certainly when you look at radical history in central Scotland, not only West Central Scotland but also in Edinburgh, around Leith, you start to see the importance of it, and you think; why does no one talk about James Connolly as being central to the Scottish radical tradition when he was the first full-time paid member of the Scottish Labour Party? Why do we have to go and dig through books on republicanism or on early Sinn Fein and The Easter Rising? If we don’t look at that, how can we explain James Connolly’s response to the death of Keir Hardie? How can we explain the response of the radicals around in Glasgow at that period to the death of James Connolly? How do we explain Jim Larkin; what he was doing around at the docks, in the yards, and that
radical political situation then? How can we explain the republicanism of John MacLean?

These things stop us from making our own history, and even the denial that John MacLean was essentially murdered by the British State; we don't take these things onboard. It's this denial that in a sense—and those of you who know Frantz Fanon's work and, you think, Fanon is really absolutely right when he talks about inferiorisation—that to me is the essence of contemporary Scotland, inferiorisation, and I don't see much of a change. I still see boys like James McCarthy or Aidan McGeady choosing to play for the Republic of Ireland, and you think that wee boy [Kieron Smith] would've chosen that too simply because of the victimisation that goes on; it's just such a part of the culture. People will deny, adults will deny it is still such a part of the culture; it's been a part of the culture for nearly three hundred years: nobody will take it on. Well, people do take it on, but it means that those things are denied, and it also means that some of the people who we should regard as heroes, we don't even know they're heroes. Nobody even knows about them. We have something like Helen Crawfurd's autobiography lying as a manuscript in the Mitchell Library. How the hell can we have something like that; the woman who invited Paul Robeson to fucking Dunoon—as far as I know. A tremendous figure, a powerful figure right through the Women's Suffragette Movement, right the way through the 1930s and into the forties, who was with Sylvia Pankhurst when they met with Lenin in 1920; how do we not know these damn things?

**PS:** Yes that radical inheritance certainly seems to be a presence in your work and also in your writing and essays. And of course there's the more recent novel you wrote; _Translated Accounts_ (2001) where you have these voices striving to be heard through this translatorese. I'd love to talk about that, but I think we need to home in on this US experience. I wondered if you could just start off by recounting some of your experiences of living in California as a teenager. I mean, you've written about this quite extensively in the Afterword to _An Old Pub Near the Angel_ (2007) and which may be on sale. One copy, so get in there quick! If you could just recount to the audience about some of those experiences?

**JK:** I should put in a word for Polygon Books here by the way, who are republishing about seven books of mine. They did a new issue of _An Old Pub Near the Angel_, which is great really, because it had never been published in
the UK before. It was published in the States in 1973, and it’s now available here, and they allowed me in fact to write an afterword too, which I finished in California because I was teaching in there at the time. It was a coincidence, not an irony really, that it was the first time I’d spent any length of time there. I’d been through California quite a few times but I’d never ever worked there or been there any length of time since I was seventeen. And it was while I was there that I started to get into doing the afterword, or I said to Polygon, ok, I’ll take on this afterword, because it was quite meaningful for me to be there. Well, you don’t like to sentimentalise yourself, which is very easy to do, because most of us do. It’s really good if you’re on your own, and my wife was back in Glasgow, and I could go out and drink as much as I wanted, and look at myself in the mirror and think, I’ve had some life, and then cry myself to sleep. [Laughter]

Anyway, sorry, so I was actually doing that one night, and there was a great radio station; the last of the independent radio stations based in San Jose, San Francisco and, as I say, a truly independent one, and I was listening to the radio, and on came a pal of mine, George Gallagher, he was a member of The Poets—remember The Poets Alan?—a great sixties band. They did some really fine music at that time, and John Lennon was fond of it. Anyway, I’m sitting here in San Jose, only two years ago, and on came George Gallagher from 1965, with this great fan base in California, and that was one of the things that took me back into writing this essay.

It was a tricky period for me personally, because I’d left school when I was fifteen and I was working. I was serving my time as a compositor in Glasgow. So when I went to California I was seventeen and I’d been working two years. But in California you can’t work at seventeen unless you know the local economy or something. You just can’t work, although I had a Green Card and all that, you’re too young. So I used to just walk around all the time in LA. I was living in Pasadena at that time; it was eleven miles from central LA and I just used to walk in to save money to buy twenty Marlborough because my old man was skint. My elder brother was working but I didn’t like to borrow money all the time because he was very good, he would give me money, but I didn’t want to take his money for twenty fags. So I used to do a lot of walking to save money and go looking for a job. I didn’t give up but it was a very long walk in and I got into doing quite a lot of walking in Los Angeles.

We moved from there into a district called Hawthorne, which is just on Watts. Some of you will have heard of Watts. That was where the riots began in 1965; that was that horrible time. Well, as a young guy from Glasgow, it was
just at that time Malcolm X was doing great work up in New York and East Coast and the whole Civil Rights Movement was coming to the fore ... what had happened in Montgomery and places, and there was a lot of horrible stuff. It was surprising to know in LA at that time also that African Americans still had to sit at the back of the bus. Now, as a young smoker, when I got on the bus, we always smoked at the back of the bus, so I used to go and I used to wear a sharp Italian suit. It got me into a lot of trouble in other places. [Laughs] However, it looked very weird, sitting at the back of the bus, and I used to get some very strange looks; but at that time, I wasn’t aware that that kind of apartheid existed in the public transport then. It was really quite shocking, and being back in Glasgow later, when the Watts thing happened, it really just made sense in a way because of the pressures and the tensions that were around in that period.

But it did have a big effect on my life, the immigration in a sense. It split our family, and my elder brother stayed in the States because there wasn’t enough money to come home; it was a very typical immigrant’s experience. My father, who was involved in a family business, he was a very good skilled tradesman. He was a picture restorer and gilder and frame-maker and he was having to do very basic work in LA that eventually didn’t suit him and he decided to cut his losses and go home. I’ve got four brothers. He couldn’t afford to take everybody so one of my younger brothers had to stay with my elder brother. I had to go back to Glasgow and help out with the family economy. So a very typical immigrant scene really. I could come back here and get a job, in the cooperative shoe factory in Govan, and earn a man’s wage when I was seventeen and a half or eighteen. My younger brother came home in six months or thereabouts but my elder brother had to stay, and eventually he went into the American army. I would’ve been called up obviously too; that was a period when you could volunteer. You weren’t conscripted, conscription didn’t happen until just a little bit later, but my elder brother eventually had to join for economic reasons. So it did have a big effect; and I was realising recently, talking with my cousins in Aberdeen today, when we came back, even to Glasgow, it was just such a typical scene as an immigrant experience. There wasn’t enough room; we had to live in two rooms and I stayed with my grandmother, and visited, all that kind of stuff. A few months later, I just was off really, went down to England ... When I was doing the Afterword, I was realising how typical an immigrant’s experience it was really, and in a personal way, because it meant I became that rootless type of character, you know? Manchester, working in Manchester and London and the Channel Islands and places like that.
PS: One of the things we’ve been talking about in the conference today, some of the papers we’ve had, are documents of this experience; of passing from one culture to another, and the almost traumatic effect it has, and it does lead to a sense of uncertainty and rootlessness. Would you say that your experience of the US—the immigrant experience—led directly or inadvertently to that feeling of rootlessness which is so much a presence in your work as well, in your writing? And actually, the whole immigrant experience; I only noticed this after you’d written your recent work, but every four pages or so, there’s mention of migration to New Zealand, ‘the greater Englishes’; they are often daydreams but they are also real aspirations. So there’s a constant presence of the idea of migration in your work.

JK: Well yes, but the thing is, immigration was part of my life in Glasgow anyway, whether or not I had gone to the States, simply because of the work situation. For me, I was a compositor, that was my trade, but because I’d gone to the States it was regarded as voluntary expulsion so I couldn’t go back and serve my time. I was forced into being an ordinary labourer; a semi-skilled worker. Now, in Glasgow at that time, in the sixties, there was very, very little work around, and I did some of it, mainly on the buses and then factory work. So Manchester, London, Liverpool and the Channel Islands were four places that people in Glasgow knew intimately. If you went to Jersey and you were picking potatoes… I picked most things until I got robbed once. [Laughter] It’s an anecdote, but once I was away picking potatoes with people from Brittany, because they came from Saint Malo, and I was working beside them. And it was quite good, but it was twelve-hour shifts you worked, and I was living in a wee tent. The weather was good, so I was away picking potatoes, it was that nice time, it must’ve been May, and I was picking potatoes wearing a pair of flip-flops out of Woolworths; ten and six they cost. I’ve still got them, and a pair of jeans, and I have to confess, without underwear—I was on my own and nineteen!—and a tee shirt. [Laughter]

When I came home, everything was gone, everything had been stolen, and so I had actually nothing. I had to send to a friend in London for the fare back to London; that was how I left the Channel Islands. So it was a really difficult time, but wherever you went like, in the next field there would’ve been people from Glasgow (oh, look, there’s such-and-such!), and the same in Manchester. I mean, if you went to the Twisted Wheel Club just off Piccadilly, it was all Glasgow people there. I was in Rowntree’s, that dance place off Piccadilly in Manchester, and there was a pal I used to play football with, a
wee spark I knew, Colin Hendry. How you doing? A pint of lager, and then we just started talking, about anything, something daft. It wouldn’t matter if you hadn’t seen him for a year, it didn’t really matter. He would start complaining about somebody he’d met in Glasgow three weeks ago. To some extent it was the same in London. I’d go to London, because I used to live around the King’s Cross area a lot, and I lived in Kentish Town and worked in various places around there. But the thing about it, as a lot of guys who have worked in London will be aware, if you’re in a pub in London and you hear somebody with a Glasgow voice, you tend to move away.

**PS:** I like those tales of living in the tent in the Channel Islands. It’s like the itinerant stories where you’ve got a lot of these narratives about being reduced to fundamentals and being rather wry about the body and clothing, and things like that. And I suppose what you also have with the narrators of those stories, these itinerant stories, especially the ones that you collected earlier in *Lean Tales*, is that they’re always nameless. You’ve got the rootlessness of the characters, the short sketches, and they always seem to be nameless. Is this the same narrator, or is it several different voices?

**JK:** Yes, but originally that should’ve been a novel. I think if I had been in an economically advantageous position, it would’ve been a novel. It would probably have been my second novel, but at that time I was married, we had two kids, and I was on the buses, and it was difficult to have time, as I’ve said previously, to do the work properly. You just could not do the work properly; and a novel, as people know, it’s very hard to sustain it over a period of time, and you do really need to be working every day and it’s difficult to do. So that should’ve been a novel really.

However, I didn’t and there’s also that sense some writers here will be aware of that there is a shift in the narrative point within a story, and you realise that maybe, especially if something isn’t quite working, that it’s not working because that shade in the character is almost making it become another character, and that also happened within that collection. But I also wanted to have the character being quite anonymous for different reasons, and I wanted that kind of enigmatic quality. Some of it, I reckon, was a political position of my own; it was my own disenchantment with the English literary tradition that thrust voices like mine into dialogue at best. Otherwise it was off the page altogether, where people who use language as my culture, from within my community, were not allowed a proper voice in English literature; it was treated in an
elitist and, I would argue, a racist manner within this Standard English literary tradition that derives from ideas of canon. That is really what I would argue, so my heroes at that time would’ve been some from Russian literature, some German, some French, and some American. There was absolutely nobody in English literature … but I didn’t know as much obviously, at that age, because I didn’t go through higher education. So I followed my nose and I just stopped reading stuff, because every time I saw a Glasgow character he was being scorned in one way or another. As a young writer, it was virtually impossible to write a story about my grandfather that did not condescend to him, and I found that throughout my adult life as a shocking thing. But that is the reality, I mean, that extraordinary elitism which is at the core of English literature.

I find that’s such a destructive thing, so part of what I was trying to do, and also finding the first person, these stories that Paul’s talking about, they’re mainly first person because in the first person you have that freedom for your character really to be anything. It doesn’t matter whether it’s a minor aristocracy in Moscow or if it’s somebody working on the buses in Partick or having a tent burnt down in the Channel Islands or working in a copper mill in Salford or something like that. It doesn’t matter; in the first person you have that possibility, because the inner psyche will be central to the story. I had to find a way to work through, and try and make the third party narrative; it’s what I was always after. I wanted to steal that from the ruling class. I succeeded with *Busconductor Hines* (1984), fuck them. Right, has that been recorded?

**PS:** Yeah, I’m glad.

At the end of the interview the floor was opened for questions from the audience. Given the interest in the interviewee, time inevitably ran over. The event was eventually cut short because a University-based Conservative Party Society had scheduled a meeting at the same venue for the subsequent hour. Irony is perhaps too slight a word.

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Notes on Contributors

Elizabeth Carnegie’s work is concerned with the role of material culture in identity shaping and its symbolic value within the Diasporic imaginary. She holds a PhD in Scottish Ethnology from the School of Scottish Studies (Edinburgh) and is co-author, with Helen Clark, of *She Was Aye Workin’* (2003), a study of women’s lives in the tenements of Glasgow and Edinburgh.

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Florian Gassner is currently completing a PhD at the University of British Columbia where he teaches German and Russian culture and literature. His research focuses on European cultural history of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, with special emphasis on Russian-European relations. Additionally, he is working on a monograph on the Austro-Hungarian poet Nikolaus Lenau which is due for publication in late 2011.

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Paul Shanks is a research fellow at the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at Aberdeen and is interested in literary and cultural overlaps in twentieth-century Irish, Scottish and European writing. He has published several articles on the fiction of James Kelman and is currently completing a monograph introduction to Samuel Beckett as part of the Aberdeen Introductions to Irish and Scottish Culture series.