

**BEYOND THE ANTISYZYGY : BAKHTIN AND
SOME MODERN SCOTTISH WRITERS**

J. Christopher Bittenbender

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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**Beyond the Antiszygy:
Bakhtin and Some Modern Scottish Writers**

by J. Christopher Bittenbender

A Dissertation submitted for the PhD in English Literature
at the University of St. Andrews, 17 June 1996



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Abstract

This dissertation shows how beneficial the ideas of the Russian literary theorist Mikhail Bakhtin are when used to investigate both classical and more recent Scottish writing. An exploration of how a desire for a Scottish literary identity early in this century became inextricably bound up with a sense of historical necessity and psychological division, known as the Caledonian Antisyzygy, forms the basis for the first section of this work. The limitations of this mode of thinking and its failure as a 'theory' are then exposed and compared with the greater benefits of Bakhtinian thought.

Succeeding chapters lead the reader from the vision of an historically centered and 'fixed' perception of Scottish literature that dominated the early decades of this century, to one which offers the possibility of endless interpretation. Close analysis of works by Robert Burns, James Hogg, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Hugh MacDiarmid investigate how useful Bakhtin's theories are for reinterpreting classic Scottish texts. The remaining chapters analyze works by a selection of contemporary Scottish poets and novelists (Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Tom Leonard, Edwin Morgan, Liz Lochhead, and Muriel Spark) in an effort to display both the continuity of a literary tradition and the applicability of Bakhtin's ideas of dialogic interaction and carnival response to recent fiction and poetry that is concerned with the preservation of unique yet pluralistic community identities. It will

be shown how Bakhtin's work lends itself to the project of freeing cultural identity from the bonds of a linguistic, historical, and geographical determination that is based on sterile oppositional constructs.

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Abbreviations of Works by Mikhail Bakhtin

(Abbreviations for works by other writers are included in the Bibliography of Works Cited)

- PDP *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*. Ed. and trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984.
- RW *Rabelais and His World*. Trans. H elene Iswolsky. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984.
- TPA *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. Eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, Trans. Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993.
- AH 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', in *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*. Eds. Michael Holquist and Vadim Liapunov, Trans. Vadim Liapunov. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. 4-256.
- B 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)', in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. 10-59.
- DIN 'Discourse in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist. Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist.

- Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 259-422.
- EN 'Epic and Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist, Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 3-40.
- FTC 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', in *The Dialogic Imagination*. Ed. Michael Holquist, Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 84-258.
- FNM 'From Notes Made in 1970-71', in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. 132-58.
- FPND 'From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse', in *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*. Ed. Michael Holquist, Trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981. 41-83.
- PSG 'The Problem of Speech Genres', in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. 60-102.
- PT 'The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis', in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. 103-31.

- RQ 'Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff', in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*. Eds. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Trans. Vern W. McGee. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986. 1-7.
- TR 'Toward a Reworking of the Dostoevsky Book', in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics (PDP)*. Ed. and Trans. Caryl Emerson. Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984. 283-302.

Introduction:

Scottish Literature, Literary Theory, and Bakhtin

Over the past few years, Scottish literature has chosen to admit the specter of literary theory which has been sweeping other literatures and infecting them with a concern for identifying a philosophy of difference. Pinpointing what 'difference' itself means involves identifying a variety of oppositions that are not simply binary and which challenge traditional interpretations of literature. Literature, with theory to guide it, can redefine an idea of the 'other' to make it a healthy operative term with which to do battle with stagnant perspectives. Theory reinvents the idea of the other, changing it from a way in which to isolate and displace cultures different from one's own, as Edward Said has pointed out in *Orientalism* (1978), to a way in which cultures can mutually enrich one another.

In terms of Scottish literature, the 'application' of theory has come late to the scene. A perusal of the Modern Language Association Bibliography from 1981 to 1995 yields only a handful of articles or books in which Scottish literature and literary theory join forces. With the exception of *Scott in Carnival* (1993), edited by J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt, a collection of papers presented at the Fourth International Scott Conference in 1991 in which Deconstructive, Psychoanalytical, and Bakhtinian theories are represented, as well as an essay

on Michel Foucault, I have not been able to locate a single volume written on Scottish literature that deals with more than one contemporary theoretical approach. To be certain, there are a number of books which consider Scottish literature in the light of specific theoretical and critical issues. For instance *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Scottish Literature* (1995), a collection of essays edited by Christopher Whyte, is perhaps the first book to consider Scottish literature in light of gender issues. As we shall see, a number of books, such as *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (1991) by Ina Ferris as well as *Scott in Carnival* have been influenced by the ideas of the Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin. What is still lacking, as far as I can tell are theoretical surveys that represent a variety of theories and their applications to a wide spectrum of Scottish literature. Also missing are individual volumes that consider Scottish literature in terms of Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, and Feminism, literary investigations which were made popular in the late 1960s through the late 1980s by theorists such as Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan, and Julia Kristeva.

'Beyond the Antisyzygy: Bakhtin and Some Modern Scottish Writers' will attempt to provide the first complete theoretical reading of Scottish literature for 75 years and therefore represents an effort to bring Scottish literary study more in line with literary studies in general. The growing interest in bringing literary theory and Scottish literature together can be explained in a

number of ways that this dissertation will explore. Foremost among the reasons is a desire to break down historical and nationalistic barriers, to open the literature of Scotland up to a greater audience and a larger interpretative community. Secondly, and in a seemingly contradictory fashion, there is the necessity of finding an identity which is particularly 'Scottish'. In some cases this is a reflexive reaction to English domination of a literary canon and the imposition of English as *the* literary language, a point most coherently made by Robert Crawford in *Devolving English Literature* (1992). On the other hand there exists a genuine desire to find a Scottish literary identity which can be compared and contrasted with other world literatures. Finally, the promise of literary theory ultimately lies within the reader himself in the limitless avenues of inquiry and interpretation which he or she brings to the text, whether that text is written in Dundee or Mexico City.

The importance of theory to Scottish literature is that it removes boundaries which might isolate texts from the rest of the world while simultaneously calling attention to literary possibilities that might be termed identifiably Scottish. As we will see, theory, and specifically Bakhtinian theory, offers Scottish literature the promise of an open community that is involved in a constant process of cultural identification. In order to show the benefits of this process it will be necessary to chart the course of Scottish literary history from late in the eighteenth century to the middle of the twentieth

century. For reasons of space, this work will not, for the most part, consider works produced before the time of Robert Burns.

The first chapter of this dissertation will explore the ways in which a desire for a Scottish literary identity became inextricably bound up with a sense of historical necessity and psychological division. It will show how, in the first decades of this century, G. Gregory Smith, a professor of English at Queen's University, Belfast, sowed the seeds for what might have become a specifically Scottish literary theory known as 'the Caledonian Antisyzygy'. The limitations of this mode of thinking and its failure as a 'theory' will be exposed and compared with the greater benefits of Bakhtinian thought. The chapters that follow show how useful Bakhtin's theories are when reading Scottish literature, a fact that is borne out by the increasing number of articles and books that use his ideas, as opposed to other literary theories, to investigate both canonical and more recent Scottish writing. What this dissertation attempts to do, then, is to show why Bakhtin lends himself so readily to studies of Scottish literature in general and to investigations of modern and contemporary Scottish writing in particular.

The second chapter, 'Bakhtin and Scottish Literary Tradition' first looks at ways in which poems by Robert Burns and novels by Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, and Robert Louis Stevenson are opened up by Bakhtinian investigations. Burns's poems 'The Jolly Beggars', 'The

Holy Fair' and 'Tam o' Shanter' are explored using Bakhtin's ideas of carnival: a festive, community-orientated response to authority. Ways in which Burns was able to subvert and confirm the religious and social norms of his day are analyzed and traced back to his poetic predecessors Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson.

Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814) and *Redgauntlet* (1824) provide useful texts for investigating Bakhtin's dialogic theories. A multiplicity of voices, including those that are lower-class, upper-class, English, Scottish, Highland and Lowland interact in these novels and show Scott's concern for presenting a living history which is not dependent on the monologizing forces of documentation. It will be shown how in these works, as well as in *Ivanhoe* (1819), relationships between time and space (what Bakhtin calls chronotopic activity) give new and more open meanings to the idea of history, a concept which Scott novelizes into a less static concept.

Bakhtin's ideas of identity formation, self and other, and transgression (or an 'excess of seeing') are explored with regard to Hogg's *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). The benefits of community and the necessity for a consciousness to be formed through interaction with other voices and consciousnesses is stressed in this section. Robert Wringhim and Dr. Jekyll provide examples of characters who fail to interact with a larger community and suffer the consequences. This, as we will see, has

larger implications for a Scottish literary consciousness as well, one that develops in isolation and finds itself, in the early decades of the present century, manufacturing a past to call its own.

The first chapter concludes with a discussion of Hugh MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926) a poem which serves as both a critique of a Scottish literary past while offering the promise of a more open literary future. Here we see MacDiarmid responding to many of the positive antiszygical ideas of Gregory Smith as well as offering a poetic challenge to those who would attempt to prescribe a Scottish literary history based on English models and language. Many of the Bakhtinian ideas analyzed earlier in the chapter such as carnival and identity formation come back into focus here as well as a concern with the dialogic interaction of voices. MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots, his scientific terminology, and his use of international poets and thinkers provide a rich intermingling of voices that project the poem and the outlook for Scottish literature forward. MacDiarmid's poem and the Bakhtinian possibility it unknowingly offers is an excellent bridge between the canonical writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and contemporary Scottish writers who inherit both the concerns of their literary ancestors and the multi-cultural freedoms first suggested by the work of Gregory Smith and Hugh MacDiarmid. However, it will be seen that what Smith and MacDiarmid offer is limited through a lack of theoretical application by the former and the isolating and

exclusionary ideas of the latter. The theories of Bakhtin are helpful not only in reading individual texts but also in assessing the aims of those thinkers who were attempting to either come to an understanding of a Scottish literary identity (as in the case of Smith) or who wish to combat a 'problem' in asserting an identity (as in the case of MacDiarmid). In a dialogic fashion, then, Bakhtin leads us beyond the academic and the political poet and allows us to read Scottish literature in a more liberating way.

Succeeding chapters illustrate how many of the same Bakhtinian ideas which are helpful when reading eighteenth and nineteenth century Scottish works are useful for reading contemporary writing as well. Bakhtin, in fact, provides useful theories that allow intertextual dialogic relationships to develop. In other words, by analyzing the utility of various Bakhtinian theories to read classical texts and contemporary writing, a type of dialogue is established between the two 'historically' different time periods. Some of the characteristics noted by Smith that pertain to earlier Scottish writers can be detected in novelists and poets of the present. The possibilities for reading a variety of writers from different periods alongside each other is enhanced through the application of Bakhtinian theories.

The first contemporary writer to be considered is Alasdair Gray, whose imaginary worlds and innovative writing techniques have gained him an international following. Bakhtin's ideas of carnival assist the reader

in identifying ways in which Gray subverts authority by playing with language and with literary conventions. Gray's voices hail from a variety of sources, not all of them linguistic. In novels such as *Lanark* (1981), *1982 Janine* (1984), and *Poor Things* (1992), Gray intertwines 'real' and imaginary worlds and the voices he introduces reflect myriad social types and professions. However, Gray's 'polyphony' (a word Bakhtin uses to denote a number of voices engaged in dialogic activity) exists on a very literary level as well. Gray's novels and short stories often play with literary styles and techniques from the past so that in many regards the forms he parodies become, in a sense, voices he places into a dialogue with his own 'post-modern' narrative. This is seen especially in a novel such as *Poor Things* (in which Victorian literature and science are parodied) and the short story 'Logopandocry' (from the collection *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*: 1984) where Sir Thomas Urquhart's antiquated and Latinate language is exaggerated and made more novel by its extravagance.

Gray also challenges literary boundaries through his use of 'pornography' in such novels as *1982 Janine* and *Something Leather* (1990). Discussion of these books will focus on the ways in which Gray subverts ideas of a literary hierarchy. Sexual fantasy, for Gray, can be every bit as much of a social and historical indicator as so-called highbrow writing. In writing these 'perversions' Gray questions the authority of a literary morality,

although he would probably say that he was just having some fun.

In Chapter Four the work of James Kelman will be discussed. Following Gray, the carnivalesque nature of language will be explored in such novels as *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), *A Disaffection* (1990), and *How Late It Was How Late* (1994) as well as in short stories. It will be seen how Kelman's fiction differs from Gray's in that it presents a number of voices and dialects from different Glasgow social strata. The interior monologues of such characters as Hines, Patrick Doyle and Sammy are full of different social and linguistic registers, although, as we shall see, these characters (indeed the majority of Kelman's voices) are isolated from contact with a larger community.

The final section of this chapter will focus on the controversy surrounding the 1994 Booker Prize which Kelman won for *How Late It Was, How Late*. Here, issues of censorship, self-identity, and national identity will be raised. Kelman's belief in language as a fluid and ever-changing tool for communication will be analyzed in terms of Bakhtin's ideas about *skaz* or the 'technique or mode of narration that imitates the oral speech of an individualized narrator' (DPN 8n.b) and *pravda* or unique truth. Kelman's concern with opposing Received Pronunciation English with his Glaswegian dialect and his belief in the right to silence as articulated in his Booker acceptance speech will be analyzed in terms of their benefits in creating a more open Scottish identity.

The penultimate chapter looks at the poetry and drama of three Glaswegians, Tom Leonard, Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead. These writers focus on ideas of community in a variety of ways. Like Kelman, Leonard approaches language through experimentation with dialect and (for Leonard) its literary manifestation in phonetics. His playful poetry displays voices which draw attention to the sound they make when thrown into contact with other voices. The interaction of Received Pronunciation English and phonetic Glaswegian as seen in poems from *Intimate Voices: Selected Work 1965-1983* (1984) and *Reports from the Present* (1995) will be analyzed to reveal qualities of dialogism and carnival.

Perhaps the most carnivalesque of the poets to be discussed in this chapter, Edwin Morgan offers a sense of limitless change to Scottish literature through his poems that challenge notions of linguistic and geographical location. Poems such as 'Message Clear', 'Canedolia', 'The First Men on Mercury', and 'Cinquevalli' will be read as linguistic responses to an English that attempts to subvert the rich intermingling of languages. Bakhtin assists the reader of these poems by offering ways of seeing the relationships between language, history, and geography as voices engaged in constant dialogic play. Morgan and Bakhtin both recognize that these voices enhance each other and offer greater potential for creating cultural identity through a necessary diversity.

A discussion of the poems and plays of Liz Lochhead completes this chapter and brings the idea of community

back into focus. Concentrating on her play, *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1989), this section shows how Lochhead is adept at creating satire which questions gendered notions of authority and the traditional processes of history. Lochhead challenges sterilized forms of history and myth-making as they ingrain prejudice and lead to harmful interpretations of difference that disrupt communities. The oppositions that *Mary Queen of Scots* sets up, between Mary and Elizabeth, Scotland and England, Scots and English, and so forth, all serve to create a dialogic tension that asks the reader to recognize the interdependence of voices which seemingly are at odds with one another.

Lochhead's carnival extends to her poetry as well, and the concluding argument of this section will show how in poems such as 'Revelation', 'An Abortion', and 'Dreaming Frankenstein', Lochhead uses monstrosity, like Alasdair Gray, to indicate oppositions that are frequently taken for granted or else denied a vitality through a lack of dialogic interaction. Lochhead, though, as opposed to Gray, uses her monsters to support a feminist argument. She shows the grotesque nature of a world determined by male-dominated language. The contrasts she highlights bring attention to the fact that communities are most successfully articulated through a variety of voices from both genders.

The concluding chapter on Muriel Spark is intended to show the reader how many of the Bakhtinian ideas, such as dialogism and carnival, which have been developed in the

course of the dissertation, while fruitful, yet have their limitations in terms of reading 'Scottish literature'. To begin with, Spark's identity as a Scottish writer is problematic in that her works are written in English, are set in primarily English or continental locales and she herself lives in Italy and New York. These facts alone make her more pluralistic and less 'set' in a 'Scottish' framework of interpretation.

Spark's heroines (they are primarily heroines) reveal the psychologies of the communities that surround them. Many of them attempt to subvert or overthrow figures of authority, some in a carnivalesque fashion. Sparkian figures tend towards the diabolical, but their monstrosity, with the exception of Dougal Douglas, is less of a physical attribute. Reading Spark through Bakhtin is both useful and frustrating for her parodies are fraught with voices that are much more psychological than identifiable by way of dialect, profession, or social status. The voices of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) or *Memento Mori* (1959) can be seen to both affirm and destroy community through the establishment of the Brodie set, the betrayal of Sandy, the cohesion of the nursing home community and the betrayal of Jean Taylor. Betrayal here, and in other Spark works, becomes less of a joyful, carnival response, as outlined by Bakhtin and more of a serious and necessary reversal brought on by intellectual observation and calculated response. But, as will be seen, this idea of a tempered carnival does not hold true for a number of Spark's works such as *The Abbess of Crewe* (1975)

or *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1963) in which the betrayals are more light-hearted and playful. What remains constant throughout Spark's work, however, is the concern with community and the necessity for flexibility when assuming an identity, be it Scottish or otherwise.

It is not the intention of this project to cover every work by the writers who are considered, but rather to focus on an in-depth examination of particular works that demonstrate how applicable Bakhtinian analysis is to Scottish writing. In terms of Bakhtin's thought, this work will concentrate on his ideas of dialogism and carnival, terms that will be more fully defined in the first chapter. Although Bakhtin's ideas changed over time, the core concerns of his theories, especially in terms of the dialogic, will be seen to remain the same. The final chapter, on Muriel Spark, will examine ways in which Bakhtin's ideas on carnival were refined and reconsidered in *Rabelais and His World* (1968) and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1963) two works which, despite the listed dates of publication (their first appearances in English), underwent a number of revisions and translations. These seminal works of Bakhtin participate in their own form of dialogic interaction that aids our understanding of how texts should speak to one another.

'Beyond the Antisyzygy: Bakhtin and Some Modern Scottish Writers' is intended to lead the reader from the vision of an historically centered and 'fixed' perception of Scottish literature that dominated the early decades of this century, to one which offers the possibility of

endless interpretation. Theory allows this to happen, but the work of Mikhail Bakhtin in particular lends itself to the project of freeing identity from the bonds of a linguistic, historical, and geographical determination that is based on sterile oppositional constructs. Bakhtin's ideas allow other languages, literatures and nations to participate in the creation and interpretation of Scottish literature. In a similar way, Scottish literature serves to enrich and define the rest of the literatures of the world. From a literary perspective, the potential for a reassessment of what identity itself stands for will eventually lead to reconsiderations of other, more literary terminology which depends upon restrictive vocabulary in order to survive. The perpetuation of such words as 'canon', 'marginal', 'post-colonial', and 'feminist', can further the aims of a language that yet remains concerned with limiting and identifying communities through terms which isolate groups from dialogical contact with one another. Bakhtin's ideas of incompleteness and unique truth allow literatures to infect one another without being simply and reductively segmented and reduced into the fields of academic specialization so favoured by university English departments at the end of the twentieth century. Bakhtin offers a way of reading Scottish literature that is open to all readers and in which many readers already unconsciously participate. Culturally he shows how concepts of community (and the identity formation that they entail) can be read like a text. Voices can be

detected on a number of levels and many of them are opposed to other voices. However, it is the interaction of the voices and the differences they possess that promises cultural and literary health. As we will now see, the voices of Scottish literature and Scottish literary history are many and filled with the positive qualities of Bakhtinian division and difference.

Chapter I

Bakhtin and the Caledonian Antisyzygy

The past decade has witnessed the publication of a plethora of books on Bakhtin and his theories. This wave of studies was initiated by the appearance of *The Dialogic Imagination* in 1981, a collection of essays by Bakhtin, including 'Discourse in the Novel' that investigates dialogism or a 'polyphony of voices' which exists within texts. Prior to the publication of this book, the only English translations of Bakhtin were the 1968 edition of *Rabelais and His World*, and the controversial *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (1973). The work on Rabelais is concerned with the rich cultural possibilities afforded by carnival, a reaction to authority that lost some of its social vitality in the Renaissance when it became relegated to a more textual arena. *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* is a book whose authorship has been the subject of much dispute between Bakhtinians and disciples of V. N. Volosinov, a close associate of Bakhtin's who is most often credited as the author. These books were important for Bakhtinian research as they ended decades of suppression of works which had been written throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Stalinist regime in Russia had prevented Bakhtin's works from being recognized and translated for the benefit of the rest of the world. Within Russia, Bakhtinian work was censored or published under the names of Bakhtin's friends and academic

colleagues. Hence, the first western publications of Bakhtin's essays and his work on Rabelais (which had been Bakhtin's doctoral dissertation) opened the door for the rest of his notebooks and collections of essays to be translated into English. These publications closely followed that of *The Dialogic Imagination. Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* appeared in 1984, the same year that a revised edition of *Rabelais and His World* was published. *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics*, which Bakhtin co-wrote with P. N. Medvedev first appeared in English in 1985. In 1986 *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* appeared. This collection included Bakhtin's 'Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Editorial Staff', an essay which, as we will see, has great significance in terms of cultural identification. A collection of Bakhtin's early essays was issued in 1990 under the title *Art and Answerability*. These essays explore in greater detail Bakhtin's concern with the relationships between authors and the heroes they create as well as the function of identity formation. Finally, in 1993, the earliest major work of Bakhtin appeared under the title *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*. This book shows that major Bakhtinian themes such as dialogism, carnival, and identity formation were being considered by Bakhtin very early in his life. Additionally, this work exhibits Bakhtin's concern with *pravda* or unique truth, a liberating concept which pervades all of his theories. Each of Bakhtin's major themes will be dealt with later in

this chapter and indeed throughout this dissertation. It may be instructive now to highlight some of the major studies of Bakhtin that have appeared since the publication of *The Dialogic Imagination* in 1981 and which have been influential both in terms of literary criticism as a whole and Scottish studies in particular.

Julia Kristeva was perhaps one of the first theorists to introduce Bakhtin to the West (Moi 34). Her essay 'Word, Dialogue and Novel' engages with Bakhtin's theories of carnival and dialogism and highlights their importance for analyzing the 'subversive political effects of language' (35). Another major proponent of Bakhtin's work is the theorist Tzvetan Todorov whose *Mikhail Bakhtin: The Dialogical Principle* (1984) provides both a biographical accounting of Bakhtin's difficult life as well as a primer of major Bakhtinian themes and the process of their development. *Mikhail Bakhtin* (1984), by Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, is a 'biography' that also provides a comprehensive survey of key Bakhtinian themes and the chronology of events which surrounded the formation of the 'Bakhtin circle', a group of intellectuals whom Bakhtin was associated with in the 1920s and 1930s. This was followed by the first collection of essays on Bakhtin's ideas, *Bakhtin: Essays and Dialogues on His Work* (1986), edited by Gary Saul Morson, a collection formed by a variety of articles that appeared in the journal *Critical Inquiry* between 1981 and 1985.

A number of collections of critical responses to Bakhtin have appeared since 1986 including *The Bakhtin*

Circle Today (1989), a collection of articles which appeared in *Critical Studies*, edited by Myriam Díaz-Diocaretz; *Bakhtin and Cultural Theory* (1989), edited by Ken Hirschkop and David Shepherd; *Bakhtin, Carnival and Other Subjects: Selected Papers from the Fifth International Bakhtin Conference* (1991), edited by David Shepherd; *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic* (1991), edited by Dale M. Bauer and Susan Jaret McKinstry and *A Dialogue of Voices: Feminist Literary Theory and Bakhtin* (1994), edited by Karen Hohne and Helen Wussow. In *Rethinking Bakhtin: Extensions and Challenges* (1989), edited by Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson, discussions of Bakhtin's theories are extended to include important engagements with other theorists such as Paul de Man (who contributes an essay 'Dialogue and Dialogism' to the collection) and novelists such as Tolstoy. Morson and Emerson explore the controversy of Bakhtin's questionable authorship of texts published under the names of Voloshinov and Medvedev and they pave the way for their more extensive work, *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990) which they devote to in-depth analysis of Bakhtin's major theoretical works and periods of writing.

The collections of work on Bakhtin are noteworthy because they each consider the theorist from a variety of angles. Whereas the first collection edited by Gary Saul Morson consists of topics which range from Bakhtinian treatments of language and literature, succeeding volumes have tended to concentrate on specific areas of Bakhtinian research. *The Bakhtin Circle Today* notes the influence of

Bakhtin on the writers that made up the 'circle' and the importance of their collective thought in terms of today's critical atmosphere. The papers from the Fifth International Bakhtin Conference concentrate on the theme of carnival and begin to show varying interpretations of that idea and their possible applications to a variety of texts, and Bauer and McKinstry's and Hohne and Wussow's books highlight the avenues of possibility that have opened for feminist uses of Bakhtin. What these collections illustrate are the myriad ways in which Bakhtinian theory can be utilized in many areas of academic, sociological and cultural inquiry. Most importantly, they reveal the interdependence of all areas of inquiry and the necessity for removing boundaries that contain and keep separate values of difference. This approach to Bakhtin's thought is articulated well in the most recent collection of essays, *Bakhtin in Contexts: Across the Disciplines* (1995), edited by Amy Mandelker, which explores the ways in which Bakhtin's ideas assist investigations in many fields, both within literary studies and in social theory. This work makes evident Bakhtin's influence in helping to identify intersections of thought among a plurality of academic communities.

Collections of essays are not the only gauges of the possibilities of Bakhtinian thought. Major individual works have been formative in the growing canon of Bakhtinian scholarship. Foremost among these are *Dialogism: Bakhtin and His World* (1990) by Michael Holquist; *After Bakhtin: Essays on Fiction and Criticism*

(1990)¹ by David Lodge; *The Thought of Mikhail Bakhtin: From Word to Culture* (1991) by David K. Danow and *The Dialogics of Critique: M. M. Bakhtin and the Theory of Ideology* (1992) by Michael Gardiner.

Additionally, a number of books have been influenced by Bakhtin's thought and are well worth consideration. Again, these works can be categorized as lending themselves to specific areas of inquiry. In addition to the two feminist treatments of Bakhtin already mentioned, *Feminist Dialogics: A Theory of Failed Community* (1988) by Dale M. Bauer was the first work to consider Bakhtin in terms of feminist thought. The essays in this volume explore the larger themes of feminism by way of Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism as well as through discussions of individual women novelists of this century.

In the area of theater studies works include *Masquerade and Civilisation: The Carnavalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (1986) by Terry Castle; *Carnival and Theater: Plebeian Culture and the Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (1985) by Michael D. Bristol and *Elizabethan Grotesque* (1980) by Neil Rhodes.

Joyce studies are another growing area of Bakhtinian investigation. Among the critical works in this area are *Joyce, Bakhtin, and Popular Literature: Chronicles of Disorder* (1989) by R. B. Kershner; *The Language of James Joyce* (1992) by Katie Wales; and *Joyce, Bakhtin and the*

¹ This work successfully uses Bakhtinian theory to investigate modernist and postmodernist writers such as James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Martin Amis, and Muriel Spark, among others.

Literary Tradition (1995), by M. Keith Booker. Irish studies benefit as well from the recent publication of *Flann O'Brien, Bakhtin, and Menippean Satire* (1995) by M. Keith Booker.

Besides these groupings, there exist an increasing number of works that enlist Bakhtinian thought for the purposes of inquiry into the areas of sociology, history, popular culture, philosophy, folklore, film studies and Russian studies, to name a few. These studies include *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986) by Peter Stallybrass and Allon White, which contains an excellent analysis of Bakhtinian carnival and the role of marketplace fairs; *Literature and Spirit: Essays on Bakhtin and His Contemporaries* (1988) by David Patterson, which considers Bakhtin alongside other thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Nicholas Berdyaev, André Gide, Jacques Lacan, Emmanuel Levinas, and Martin Heidegger; *Subversive Pleasures: Bakhtin, Cultural Criticism, and Film* (1989) by Robert Stam and *Dostoevsky After Bakhtin: Readings in Dostoyevsky's Fantastic Realism* (1990) by Malcolm V. Jones. More recent noteworthy books that explore specific areas of Bakhtin's thought include *Reading Dialogics* (1994) by Lynne Pearce; *Mikhail Bakhtin: Between Phenomenology and Marxism* (1995) by Michael F. Bernard-Donals; *The Spirit of Carnival: Magic Realism and the Grotesque* (1995) by Danow and *Bakhtin, Stalin, and Modern Russian Fiction: Carnival, Dialogism, and History* (1995) by M. Keith Booker and Dubravka Juraga. With so much interest in Bakhtin and his ideas, it comes as no surprise

to see two readers produced in the past year (1995). *The Bakhtin Reader: Selected Writings of Bakhtin, Medvedev, Voloshinov* (1995) edited by Pam Morris and *Bakhtinian Thought: An Introductory Reader* (1995) by Simon Dentith cover a variety of Bakhtinian material as well as providing insight as to the status of Bakhtinian scholarship today and suggestions for further reading.

Scottish literature has benefited from a number of books with a Bakhtinian flavor. As mentioned earlier, the most notable among these is *Scott in Carnival* (1993) edited by J. H. Alexander and David Hewitt. This collection of essays that were presented at the Fourth International Scott Conference in 1991 offers a variety of theoretical interpretations of Scott's work, including a healthy selection of criticism utilizing the ideas of Bakhtin. Additionally, a number of studies of Scottish literature have appeared over the past few years which have been influenced by Bakhtinian scholarship. *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History, and the Waverley Novels* (1991) by Ina Ferris provides insight into Scott's 'historical novels' (as well as a brief treatment of Hogg) by way of Bakhtin's theories of chronotopes and how they affect interpretations of history. Robert Crawford's *Identifying Poets: Self and Territory in Twentieth-Century Poetry* (1993) offers Bakhtinian readings of contemporary Scottish poets (among others). Crawford highlights the interrelatedness of poetic voices, be they in dialect or otherwise, which assist these writers to construct fluid identities.

In addition to book-length studies which utilize Bakhtinian theory there are an increasing number of chapters and articles in books and periodicals which look at Scottish literature with a Bakhtinian perspective. Kenneth Buthlay's introduction to the annotated edition of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1987) by Hugh MacDiarmid makes a connection between the language of Joyce and MacDiarmid which contains aspects of Bakhtinian carnival. Also in 1987, David B. Morris published the first article on Burns and Bakhtin titled 'Burns and Heteroglossia' in *The Eighteenth Century: Theory and Interpretation* (Winter, 1987). This article and the response to it by Carol McGuirk ('Burns, Bakhtin, and the Opposition of Poetic and Novelistic Discourse' in *The Eighteenth Century* (Spring, 1991)) will be considered in the next chapter.

'Dunbar's *Tretis*: The Seven Deadly Sins in Carnavalesque Disguise' in *Neophilologus* (1989), and 'Bakhtin's Literary Carnavalesque and Dunbar's "Fasternis Evin in Hell"' in *Studies in Scottish Literature* (1991), both by Deanna Delmar Evans; 'Sources for the Grotesque in William Dunbar's "Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis"', by Joanne S. Norman in *Scottish Studies* (1989) and Christopher Whyte's 'Bakhtin at Christ's Kirk: Carnival and the Scottish Renaissance' in *Studies in Scottish Literature* (1993) offer helpful analyses of Middle Scots poems that recognize early elements of laughter and subversion. These articles serve as useful prefaces to Bakhtinian investigations of the poetry of Robert

Fergusson, Alan Ramsay, Robert Burns, and even Hugh MacDiarmid.

As we shall see in the next chapter, Roderick Watson's 'Dialectics of "Voice" and "Place": Literature in Scots and English from 1700', which appeared in *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History* (1993), is an excellent examination of the ways in which Scottish literature of the past three centuries is ripe for Bakhtinian investigation. For the purposes of this work, Watson's sections on Burns, Tom Leonard, and James Kelman have been extremely useful. Helpful as well were the contributions of Watson, Robert Crawford, Pam Morris, and Christopher Whyte during the first symposium devoted to Bakhtin and Scottish literature held at the University of St. Andrews, 30 April, 1993. Many of the discussions of Burns and Bakhtin, first articulated at this gathering, were later augmented by Whyte's article 'Defamiliarising "Tam O'Shanter"', that appeared in *Scottish Literary Journal* in 1993 and my own 'Bakhtinian Carnival in the Poetry of Robert Burns', which appeared in *Scottish Literary Journal* in 1994. Likewise, Crawford's 'Bakhtin and Scotlands', which appeared in *Scotlands* in 1994, grew out of his contribution to this symposium.

Lloyd David's 'The Story in History: Time and Truth in Scott's *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*', which appeared in *CLIO: A Journal of Literature, History and the Philosophy of History* (1989) is one of the few articles to offer a Bakhtinian gloss of Scott's poetry. Bakhtinian treatments of Scottish poetry that have been written in

this century include 'W. S. Graham: A Dialogical Imagination' by Ruth Grogan in *English Studies in Canada* (1989)²; 'Mikhail Bakhtin and the Social Poetics of Dialect' by Donald Wesling in *Papers on Language and Literature* (1993)³ and '"In My Country": Race and Region in the Poetry of Jackie Kay', by Patrick Williams in *La Europa (Cultural) De Los Pueblos: Voz Y Forma* (1994)⁴.

Scottish fiction from this century has been subjected to Bakhtinian scrutiny in 'Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern' by Randall Stevenson in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray* (1991)⁵; 'Alasdair Gray: The Making of a Scottish Grotesque', by Ian McCormick in *La Europa (Cultural) De Los Pueblos: Voz Y Forma* (1994)⁶; '"Poetry Deleted," Parody Added: Watergate, Spark's Style, and Bakhtin's Stylistics' by Sheryl Stevenson in *Ariel* (1993)⁷ and Roderick Watson's 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing', in *The Yearbook of English Studies* (1995)⁸.

Although Bakhtinian and other theoretical treatments of Scottish literature have proliferated over the past few years this was not always the case. Perhaps the tardiness of Scottish literary studies to embrace theory, a

² While this article mentions the importance of Bakhtin's ideas about *heteroglossia*, it is more concerned with Martin Buber's philosophy of I and Thou (200).

³ This study provides an excellent examination of Tom Leonard's dialect poetry by way of Bakhtin's philosophy of social *heteroglossia*.

⁴ Williams makes good use of Kay's 'polyphonic' voices to once more challenge Bakhtin's privileging of novelistic discourse (96).

⁵ Discussed in Chapter 3 of the present study.

⁶ Discussed in Chapter 3 of the present study.

⁷ Discussed in Chapter 6 of the present study.

⁸ Here again, Watson provides, in encapsulated form, a finely wrought exposition of Bakhtinian possibility for reading demotic writing from Thomas Urquhart to Sydney Goodsir Smith (of whom he spoke at the Bakhtin symposium in 1993), MacDiarmid, Leonard and Kelman, among others.

difficulty touched upon in the Introduction, lies in the fact that the seeds of recognizing difference, of initiating discussion on the fruitfulness of investigating 'otherness', have been residing within the fabric of the literature itself, in a position that is almost 'too close for comfort'. These seeds can be traced to the earlier half of this century in the discussions that evolved out of G. Gregory Smith's provocative study *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* in which he develops the idea of 'the Caledonian Antisyzygy'. Published in 1919, this book of essays first took characterizations of the Scot and manufactured what we might be tempted to call a 'literary theory' of difference out of them. Indeed, Ann Boutelle has called the antisyzygy Smith's 'theory of Scottish literature (a paradoxical synthesis of "contraries")' (34) and W. N. Herbert says that Smith 'marks the first modern note of a Scottish literary theory' (1991: 27).

In his work, Smith discusses the 'two moods' which dominate Scottish writing--a concern for a detailed reality of description, along with a pleasure in revealing the 'confusion of the senses, in the fun of things thrown topsyturvy, in the horns of elfland and the voices of the mountains' (19). Smith goes on from this prefatory description of the historical situation of Scottish literature to highlight examples of difference inherent both within the languages and dialects of Scotland as well as within the works of a number of Scottish literary champions. While the importance of Smith's moods in

relation to the study of such writers as Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Robert Louis Stevenson and James Hogg will be discussed in the next chapter, it is important here to locate in Smith's work the sparks of controversy that fuel the later critical debates between Edwin Muir and Hugh MacDiarmid. For it is through Smith's influence on these two writers that the nature of Scottish literary criticism will be determined for the better part of this century.

A discussion of the antisyzygy is important to this Bakhtinian study since Smith's observations on the duality of the Scottish character, as exhibited in literature, have proved to be defining influences on many Scottish writers in this century. Hugh MacDiarmid, as we shall see, grappled with the notions of contradiction inherent in Smith's analysis. A more contemporary example might be Alasdair Gray who, in *Lanark*, explores the tensions that exist between 'real' and 'unreal' Glasgows. Contradictions in language are explored also, not only in MacDiarmid's work, but in the poetry of Edwin Morgan and Tom Leonard as well.

As this work shall prove, the nature of contradiction formulated by Smith is debilitating to the extent that it precludes successful interaction between a variety of cultural responses. The fluid, dialogic interchange of ideas and language as offered by Bakhtin, make contradiction a productive force for literary creation and identity formation.

Surprisingly, tracing the course of Smith's career is not an easy task. *The Dictionary of National Biography*,

Chambers's Scottish Biographical Dictionary, and, most astoundingly, the recently published *Mainstream Companion to Scottish Literature* fail to recognize this important critic who contributed not only the ideas of the antisyzygy to Scottish literature, but also substantial studies of Henryson and Middle Scots, not to mention a number of volumes of criticism on English literary topics. What makes the scarcity of current material on Smith even harder to swallow are the accolades which were given to him in many of the obituaries which appeared at the time of his death in 1932. The *Times* of 5 March, 1932 states: 'Scottish literature owes more to Gregory Smith than to any contemporary'.

G. Gregory Smith was born in Edinburgh in 1865 and studied at Edinburgh University and Balliol College Oxford. He returned to lecture in English Literature and Language at Edinburgh until 1905 when he was appointed Professor of English Literature at Queen's University in Belfast where he was also to serve as librarian.⁹

It was while Smith was at Queen's that he published *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*.¹⁰ This book was very different from the other studies Smith had written up to this point since it was the first to try and identify the components of a national literature. Coming as it did in 1919, it was undoubtedly somewhat of a

⁹ I am indebted to Michael Smallman at the Archives of Queen's University, Belfast for supplying much of Smith's biographical data in obituary form.

¹⁰ Another bibliographic oddity is that the official history of Queen's University, *Queen's Belfast 1845-1949: The History of a University* (1959) does not list this title among Smith's works. See Volume 2, p. 593.

modernist attempt to categorize and systematize Scottish literature in the face of what was going on in the rest of Europe following the First World War. Nonetheless, it was a remarkable work for Scottish literary history since it was able to formulate critical ideas about the literature of Scotland and trace them back to the culture itself. Rather than relying on an historical analysis that was dependent on simply comparing and contrasting texts, Smith was contextualizing his proposals in the light of what he conceived to be a 'Scottish character'. He was able to use texts to demonstrate his important perceptions, but the people and the culture always remained in the foreground.

A survey of Smith's library at the time of his death indicates that he was relatively un-influenced by any highly theorized studies.¹¹ What he seems to be coming out of therefore is the belletristic tradition that dominated the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Many of his earlier works, which include an edition of Addison and Steele's *The Spectator* (1897-8), *The Transition Period* (1900), *Specimens of Middle Scots* (1902), *Elizabethan Critical Essays* (1904), an edition of Pepys's *Diary* (1905), an edition of Robert Henryson's poems (1906-14) and *Ben Jonson* (1919) were written in the manner of the learned essay. Indeed this scholastic style

¹¹ Although volumes by George Saintsbury, who was at Edinburgh while Smith was there, both as a student and as a lecturer, were among Smith's books. I am again indebted to Michael Smallman for providing me with the sales catalogue for Gregory Smith's library, *A Catalogue of Books From Various Sources Both Old and Modern including the Library of the late Prof. G. Gregory Smith, M.A. comprising mainly books in English & Scottish Literature For Sale by Auction by Messrs. Hodgson & Co. at their rooms 115 Chancery Lane London, W. C. 2 on Wednesday, July 27th, 1932, No. 24 of 1931-32.*

carries over into *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence*.

With this evidence, we might dispute the claim that Smith was developing a 'theory' of Scottish literature as he seems to take interest in a variety of literary topics, genres, and historical periods and is not trying to fashion a system of beliefs about them. As will be noted later, he is more concerned about making a few 'observations' about Scottish literary characteristics than evolving a pattern of interpretation. This does not mean, however, that we cannot see that implicit within Smith's ideas is a productive theory. What denies them their status as theory (when they stand on their own) is the very fact that they are not grounded in philosophy (although MacDiarmid's use of Smith's ideas in conjunction with continental philosophy would make them so), and they do not produce a unified goal or a blueprint for further application. It is helpful to trace the impressions Smith made on his successors and identify areas of intersection between antisyzygical ideas and dialogic theory.

... 'the Caledonian Antisyzygy' became currency, not just for MacDiarmid, but for Maurice Lindsay and Sydney Goodsir Smith, who employed it to emphasize a kind of Renaissance orthodoxy and insure their own succession.... (Herbert, 18)

This quotation from W. N. Herbert's excellent essay 'The Significance of Gregory Smith' points to the important position Smith controlled in the early part of the century and in the founding principles of the Scottish literary Renaissance. Herbert goes on to indicate that it was Smith's 'intuitive approach' rather than his 'critical

manner' which ensures his ideas a prominent position in Scottish literary history. It is the argument of this present work that through the dialogic ideas of the Russian philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin, the 'observations' and intuitions of Smith can be improved on and fruitfully 'galvanized' into productive theoretical activity. It is important to identify Smith's ideas in the context of the argument between Muir and MacDiarmid since it sheds some light on what the 'renaissance' was trying to accomplish, and it alerts us to why Bakhtin may help us in reading modern Scottish literature.

Muir, in his *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (1936), tends to echo Smith's desire to overcome Scottish linguistic difference by resorting to a common language, that is English. For Muir, Scots 'feel in one language and think in another' (21). Muir finds MacDiarmid's poetic ambition of including many languages and European influences in an attempt to 'galvanize it (Scottish poetry) into life by a series of violent shocks' (21-2) quite inadequate. Instead, Muir claims that the 'solution' to what he perceives to be the problem of division raised by Smith can only be found when Scots 'begin to think *naturally* in Scots' (22). We see then that Muir has taken Smith's theory and problematized it to the extent that it generates a heated argument that *requires a solution*. We will discuss MacDiarmid's poetic response in the next chapter. For now it is profitable to quote at length the core of the antisyzygical thesis as it appeared in 1919:

Two considerations of contrary bearing present themselves at the outset. One is of encouragement; that the literature is the literature of a small country, that it runs a shorter course than others, and that there is no linguistic divorce between its earlier and later stages, as in southern English. In this shortness and cohesion the most favourable conditions seem to be offered for the making of a general estimate. But, on the other hand, we find at closer scanning that this cohesion, at least in formal expression and in choice of material, is only apparent, that the literature is remarkably varied, and that it becomes, under the stress of foreign influences and native division and reaction, almost a zigzag of contradictions. The antithesis need not, however, disconcert us. Perhaps in the very combination of opposites--what either of the two Sir Thomases, of Norwich and Cromarty, might have been willing to call 'the Caledonian antisyzygy'-- we have a reflection of the contrasts which the Scot shows at every turn, in his political and ecclesiastical history, in his polemical restlessness, in his adaptability, which is another way of saying that he has made allowance for new conditions, in his practical judgement, which is the admission that two sides of the matter have been considered. If therefore Scottish history and life are, as an old northern writer said of something else, 'varied with a clean contrair spirit,' we need not be surprised to find that in his literature the Scot presents two aspects which appear contradictory. Oxymoron was ever the bravest figure, and we must not forget that disorderly order is order after all. We can be indifferent to the disciples of De Quincey who will suspect us of making 'ambitious paradoxes' and 'false distinctions.' We may dwell on these incongruities, the better to explain their remarkable synthesis in Scottish literature; as we may, in a later chapter, in the breaks and thwarts, the better to show the continuity of a literary tradition. (3-5)

If we look at Smith's proposal closely, we do not detect a problem with Scottish literature, rather a 'synthesis' of opposites that Smith would have us identify. Although the 'identity crisis' of Scottish literature begins in the later nineteenth century, it was not until after Smith's time that the belief became prevalent that it was necessary to promote compromise between the moods. The perception of division as a debilitating factor in Scottish literary history comes

after Smith, despite the attempts of MacDiarmid to save it from misinterpretation. Although it is true that in later chapters Smith calls for the unification of language through English by following the Irish literary Renaissance model, rather than adopting a synthetic Scots, he does not propose that thematic or stylistic disunity is necessarily bad. Like MacDiarmid who will expand (and in many cases distort) his ideas, Smith is much more accommodating to the contradictions to be found in Scottish literature. He located in the idea of the Caledonian Antisyzygy an energy which Robert Crawford has identified as 'an enabling myth through which power could be generated from meeting extremes' (1992: 252).¹² If we scrutinize the above quotation by Smith, the quality of opposites residing in harmonious tension becomes evident: 'The antithesis need not...disconcert us', 'perhaps in the very combination of opposites...we have a reflection of the contrasts which the Scot shows at every turn...in his adaptability...he has made allowance for new conditions...which is the admission that two sides of the matter have been considered', and finally 'in his literature the Scot presents two aspects which appear contradictory'. Based on what has come before in this section of Smith's text, the reader might be tempted to italicize the word 'appear' as he senses that the Scot who makes 'allowance for new conditions' would be constantly aware of change inherent in culture and put his

¹² Crawford has pointed out to the present writer that Edward Caird, a philosopher who was interested in Hegel's ideas of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis was resident at Balliol College at Oxford during Smith's tenure there.

'adaptability' at the service of contradiction. This is reading quite a bit of intention into Smith's proposition, which on one level is doing no more than showing the 'continuity of a literary tradition'. In this central statement of Smith's the reader does not sense a concern with futurity. Instead we are given one of the first critical assessments of difference to be found in studies of Scottish literature. Herbert sees this difference lying in Smith's response to Matthew Arnold's essay 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', in which Arnold attacks Celtic poetry for its inability to 'interpret' the world. Smith's response, as Herbert points out, is to elevate the qualities of the Celtic 'spiritual lightness' to a position in which to balance or provide a productive tension with the 'dull, heavy practical genius of Teutonic England' (24-6). But it can also be seen in Smith's core argument that he is concerned with difference within his culture, not just between a Celtic mythology and a Anglo-Germanic pragmatism.

MacDiarmid and Muir, however, sense a void in Smith's thesis, a lacuna between what has been discovered by him (Smith) and what Scottish writers intend to do about it. This missionary zeal on the parts of MacDiarmid and Muir leads to both creativity and to a hand-wringing hopelessness that is repeated over and over again as the century progresses.¹³ What is lost is the kernel of Smith's

¹³ This initial sense of frustration and despair was not assuaged by T. S. Eliot's review of *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* in which he questions the existence of a Scottish literature by saying: '...there is no longer any tenable important distinction to be drawn for the present day between the two literatures' (English and Scottish) (681).

theory which is the most liberating--the recognition of the coexistence of fruitful differences. If the future is not stated explicitly in his antisyzygical formula, there is an implied energy in the 'combination of opposites' which leads his argument beyond the 'tradition' he is self-consciously tracing. This 'beyond' is never articulated by Smith, for he proceeds in his book to cite examples of division and difference from the history of Scottish literature. The desire for an identification with a future haunts Muir and MacDiarmid, and leads them to act out in their own fashion what they see to be the next step in the antisyzygical theory.

Theirs is an old debate, and one that has been frequently dragged out of retirement, dusted off, shown to be just as tired as ever, and conveniently shelved away again. This argument is most thoroughly discussed in Ursula Kimpel's essay 'Modern Scottish Poetry: Beyond the "Caledonian Antisyzygy"' in which she neatly summarizes the problems that arose out of the debate between Muir and MacDiarmid which had been initiated by Smith's work:

Still, it may be safely said that for the most part of the present century the dominant discourse in which Scottish writers have located themselves tends to view the multiplicity of Scotland's cultural inheritance as an embarrassment and a major predicament for creative work. As a result, considerable effort has been spent on an attempt to construct a homogeneous unity out of the disparate elements of Scottish culture. This view of Scottish culture is now gradually and slowly giving way to a view which stresses the creative value of the diversity of Scottish experience. (276)

Kimpel goes a long way towards resuscitating the debate as a way of getting beyond some of the obstacles it still poses. She accurately reproduces the directions in which

Smith's ideas tended to lead in the years after their publication, most importantly with regard to discussions surrounding the topic of 'Eng. Lit.'. Her history of the critical engagement is unique, yet it falls prey to some of the same prejudices that distort Muir's perception of what the antisyzygy offers. Kimpel sees the antisyzygy also as something negative: 'In the final analysis the "Caledonian antisyzygy" is an expression of a sense of inferiority induced by the uneasy existence of Scottish literature in between conflicting cultural fields' (283-4). While Smith is very aware of a linguistic problem that threatens Scottish literature, he does not find the existence of the 'two moods' to be a hindrance to creativity and he is not as 'apologetic' for the division in the Scottish psyche as Kimpel suggests (277). The essence of the contradictory is not deplored by Smith. Language difference presents a problem of communication for the Scot, but does not imply literary illness. We can see the 'moods' as being very much dependent on the language for expression, but they do not wait in the wings for the matter to be resolved as Smith illustrates through reference to poets and novelists writing healthy Scots and English. This is not to say that Smith does not wish to see the 'problem' solved, for, as noted earlier, he calls for the Irish model to come to the assistance of a language which he feels to be in need of uniformity. However, the meat of his theory is in a way extralinguistic, or pre-linguistic, and inhabits more of a psychological area of inquiry that, as we will see in the

next chapter, MacDiarmid will explore with a poetry that is concerned to show linguistic possibilities which ultimately deny uniformity. It is by locating, despite the differences between Muir and MacDiarmid, a need for 'wholeness' that Kimpel most clearly identifies the problem facing the Scottish literary critics and historians of the early twentieth century. According to her, MacDiarmid

re-defined the premises of the "Caledonian antisyzygy" in such a way that the diversity of the Scottish experience could come to be seen as valuable in its own right. He thus prepared the way for a view of Scottish culture which no longer needed to be apologetic about its fragmentation. Indeed, the "Caledonian antisyzygy" in his hands came close to meaning a diversity *no longer in need of* the reconciliation of opposites indicated in the term "antisyzygy". (303)

However, we can see that Smith's original thesis is itself bifurcated. The antisyzygy does not necessarily signify a strict opposition. The two moods reflect tendencies which Smith identifies as being different and the antisyzygy constructs for them a third category, or arena in which they can come together, while yet being separated. This idea is seemingly at odds with a traditional understanding of the word 'syzygy' (from the Greek meaning 'to yoke' together). The division implied in antisyzygy does not hinder development for Smith, for he speaks of a 'combination of opposites' (4), but rather brings into sharper focus the different elements of Scottish character. Smith refines and hones the cutting edge of the moods, in order to make them more effective in creating a Scottish literary identity. His definition of antisyzygy is much closer to that used in astronomy to

indicate syzygy: 'conjunction or opposition, esp. of the moon with the sun' (OED). '(F)oreign influence and native division and reaction' (4) serve rather to complement unifying elements in Scottish literature and act as a region of interaction within which the moods (which come in later) can play.

Such a healthy interpretation of Smith's thesis has to be arrived at by reinterpreting the vocabulary of difference and contradiction which he uses to 'theorize' division and the alarm that this created in the literary world of the early part of this century. In an attempt to move 'beyond' the limited benefits of the antisyzygy the ideas of Mikhail Bakhtin will be indispensable.

Bakhtin's theory of dialogism, developed in the 1920s and 1930s, but only brought to light in the 1960s, improves upon and makes theoretically operable many of the characteristics of Smith's antisyzygy. Where Smith (and to a greater extent his interpreters) uses unfortunate negative terminology to describe difference, Bakhtin revels in a plethora of voices, all different, coming together in language and literature, while yet retaining individual identities. Where Smith cites division and implies that it is perhaps not as harmful as it seems, Bakhtin formulates a theory to explain why it is not only desirable, but necessary for fruitful communication and creativity. Smith's ideas about opposites are useful, but can be seen to be part of a general modernist trend which has been most closely identified with Eliot's recognition of the contrasts provided by the Metaphysical poets and

Yeats's concern with the self and anti-self. In such a way the antiszygy is not particular to Scottish literature. At the same time, however, Bakhtin's ideas, while developed in a transnational context, suit the study of Scottish literature particularly well.

Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism are most fully developed in his essay 'Discourse in the Novel' of 1934-5 where he first uses the term 'heteroglossia' to describe the arena in which many voices come into contact within a stylistics of the novel (263). It is this field of heteroglossia which admits of many languages while it refuses to privilege one over the other. Languages intersect and combine, not only in textual instances, but in any moment of utterance to produce meanings that are constantly changing, refusing stasis and uniformity. In formulating this theory, Bakhtin addresses the problem of traditional interpretations of unity:

Philosophy of language, linguistics and stylistics [i.e., such as they have come down to us] have all postulated a simple and unmediated relation of speaker to his unitary and singular "own" language in the monologic utterance of the individual. Such disciplines actually know only two poles in the life of language, between which are located all the linguistic and stylistic phenomena they know: on the one hand, the system of a *unitary language*, and on the other the *individual* speaking in this language. (269)

We can compare this interpretation of language with that of Muir in *Scott and Scotland* where he states:

The pre-requisite of an autonomous literature is a homogeneous language....A common language of this kind can only be conceived, it seems to me, as an achievement continuously created and preserved by the highest spiritual energy of a people: the nursing ground and guarantee of all that is best in its thought and imagination: and without it no people can have any standard of literature. For this

homogeneous language is the only means yet discovered for expressing the response of a whole people, emotional and intellectual, to a specific body of experience peculiar to it alone, on all the levels of thought from discursive reason to poetry. And since some time in the sixteenth century Scotland has lacked such a language (19-20).

Muir goes on in this vein to enumerate the languages of different disciplines which must be incorporated into a national language in order to ensure its survival as well as guarantee a healthy literature. In doing so, he touches upon an area that concerns Bakhtin as well. For Bakhtin, language is not simply determined by physical, or geographical considerations, but resides within sociological and psychological regions as well. The interaction of all these languages, polyphonic activity, is what constitutes dialogism for Bakhtin, but this happens without unifying them totally into a form of common expression.

But the centripetal forces of the life of language, embodied in a "unitary language," operate in the midst of heteroglossia. At any given moment of its evolution, language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic), but also--and for us this is the essential point--into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups, "professional" and "generic" languages, languages of generations and so forth. (272)

Muir wants a language for Scotland that will be able to accommodate all walks of life, removing difference (20), but Bakhtin wants language to be more powerful than that, to use the energy created by difference to 'make language new'. He sees different languages (be they professional, conversational or whatever) as vital in their distinctiveness. Removing bias from language (if it were

possible) would be to deny language life and lead to language death:

Unitary language...makes its real presence felt as a force for overcoming...heteroglossia, imposing specific limits to it, guaranteeing a certain maximum of mutual understanding and crystalizing into a real, although still relative, unity--the unity of the reigning conversational (everyday) and literary language, "correct language." (270)

We can see that Smith can at times be 'anti-Bakhtinian' in his stance towards language; a position which Muir adopts and MacDiarmid rejects. Smith states that 'modern Scots has certainly reduced the literary values of the vernacular by the free intrusion of untested colloquialism' (144). In many ways this is a proleptic strike at the synthetic Scots of MacDiarmid, which will admit of all languages, but in larger terms it restricts the possibilities available to language which Bakhtin will later emphasize in his treatment of dialect and the regional narrative known as *skaz*. Smith identifies what he calls the 'problem' of dialect:

...mere deteriorations, or coarse, strident, and, in the ordinary sense of the phrase, "broad" forms of utterance, are not dialects at all, having nothing dialectic in them; and all phrases developed in states of rude employment, and restricted intercourse, are injurious to the tone and narrowing to the power of language they affect. Mere breadth of accent does not spoil a dialect as long as the speakers are men of varied idea and good intelligence; but the moment the life is contracted by mining, millwork, or any oppressive and monotonous labour, the accents and phrases become debased. It is part of the popular folly of the day to find pleasure in trying to write and spell these abortive, crippled, and more or less brutal forms of human speech...The conditions are denied under which, in an earlier culture, the springs of popular utterance trickled into the cisterns of national literature. It was easy to resist or regulate the inflow in a Scotland where, when, as in the sixteenth century, the Scots speaking population, all told, was barely one quarter of that of the modern city of

Glasgow, and when only a very small fraction, and that well-knit and confirmed in tradition, professed or encouraged the craft of letters. Scots has lost this power of resistance, and, affecting the humanitarianism of Burns, its only pattern, has been generous to every "randie gangrel" bit of shelta and clachan-slang. (143-44)

Smith is here limiting the potential of professional languages, those of 'mining' and 'millwork' as well as the nuances which regional variants provide. In this way the particulars of Smith's argument about language can be very negative and monologic, although traces of something broader and more promising can be glimpsed by considering the two moods he brings together for inspection.

Bakhtin celebrates diversity as part of a considered and developed philosophy for reading many literatures. A concern with detail, with the multiple, and as Bakhtin would say, the polyphonous, can be teased out of Smith's highlighting of the Scot who exhibits a 'zest for handling a multitude of details' (5). For Smith, detail does not lead to good literature unless it succeeds in creating a 'sense of movement' (18). Smith is quick to criticize those who are unable to appreciate this quality of Walter Scott's which is often passed over as antiquarian cataloguing (15-16). As we will see later in discussing Scott alongside Bakhtin's essay 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', Scott interprets history as the interplay between time and space which is highly dependent on geographical and temporal detail.

Smith's second mood, the fascination of the Scot for the fantastic, involves the principles of the antisyzygy to a much greater extent:

Does literature anywhere, of this small compass, show such a mixture of contraries as his in outlook, subject, and method; real life and romance, everyday fact and the supernatural, things holy and things profane, gentle and simple, convention and "cantrip," thistles and thistledown?...There is more in the Scottish antithesis of the real and fantastic than is to be explained by the familiar rules of rhetoric. The sudden jostling of contraries seems to preclude any relationship by literary suggestion. The one invades the other without warning. They are the "polar twins" of the Scottish Muse. (20)

It is here that Smith's diagnosis begs to be re-invented and improved upon. This improvement occurs directly and poetically (as we shall see) by MacDiarmid's verse, but it can also be theoretically empowered through Bakhtinian thought. The questionable line of Smith's is 'The sudden jostling of contraries seems to preclude any relationship by literary suggestion'. Bakhtin not only allows this to happen, he shows how it is possible and to be promoted for the welfare of a language and a literature. Bakhtin moves beyond Smith by showing how very natural it is for opposites to interact and he does this most cogently by way of his ideas on carnival. In the next chapter we will see how Burns and MacDiarmid lend themselves to Bakhtinian readings by way of carnival. For now it will suffice to briefly outline how an understanding of Bakhtinian carnival provides a way of surmounting the literary obstacles that Smith introduces into his vision of the antisyzygy. In the above-quoted paragraph Smith identifies a variety of 'contraries'. What he fails to show, however, is the very appropriateness of these contraries and the energy they produce through their interdependence.

In his book *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin discusses the history of carnival as it is reflected in the folk

humor and the literature of the Renaissance.¹⁴ He defines carnival as an atmosphere, produced by folk culture, in which laughter, reversals of codes of authority, and grotesque images of the body work together in opposition to forms of official culture. However, carnival is intimately tied to authority since it is a reaction to strict, constraining forces such as institutional religion, which held an integral place in the daily lives of people during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and in terms of Scottish history, until much more recently. Festivals and fairs were frequently held on holy days, so that the celebration of orthodoxy and a ridiculing of strict dogmatism went hand in hand.

Of fundamental importance to an understanding of carnival is its 'social' construction. Group activity, as opposed to static individuality, sets the stage for other carnivalesque attributes.

Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it, and everyone participates because its very idea embraces all the people. While carnival lasts, there is no other life outside it. During carnival time life is subject only to its laws, that is, the laws of its own freedom. It has a universal spirit; it is a special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part. Such is the essence of carnival, vividly felt by all its participants. (RW 7)

In such a way, carnival is a concept of interactive forces playing off one another in a manner which is similar to Bakhtin's ideas of dialogic and self/other relationships in which language and identity are formed not by an individual in isolation, but through active

¹⁴ Bakhtin also discusses carnival in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

engagement with an 'other' consciousness. In terms of carnival, however, this idea is expanded to reflect more of a community of voices, 'the collective ancestral body of all the people' (RW 19). Here, dialogue is transformed into a dynamics of culture. The 'other' of cultural identity is seen to be established in the tension between 'official' and 'unofficial' relationships.¹⁵ These relationships pervade all of the activities and the language of society and Bakhtin can trace their interaction from antiquity, through the Middle Ages and Renaissance, to their more subdued and controlled literary manifestations in the Enlightenment and Romanticism (RW 110).

As an extra-literary phenomenon, carnival was extant in antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance in the forms of fairs, marketplace activities, and the celebrations that surrounded important calendar events. From pagan and pantheistic rites through Christian holy days, popular festivities would accompany official religious observances. In such a way, two distinct 'cultures' evolved side by side. The carnival, popular culture, however, grew in direct response to the opposing 'serious' official culture. Carnival took its energy from the opposing images and the playfulness that emerged from

¹⁵ I disagree with Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson who, in *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), state that the Bakhtinian binary oppositions of 'official' and 'unofficial' cannot be seen as parallel to his ideas of dialogism and monologism (227). In discussing the eventual split between the 'official' and 'unofficial' Bakhtin credits the church of the early Middle Ages with originally seeking to define itself through various folk customs that included laughter and carnival (RW 76).

its juxtaposition with the formalities of the authoritative culture, and often from its parody of that culture.

Instrumental in the creation of carnival are laughter and fear, two opposing emotional reactions that Bakhtin pinpoints as intimately entwined with each other.

It was the victory of laughter over fear that most impressed medieval man. It was not only a victory over mystic terror of God, but also a victory over the awe inspired by the forces of nature, and most of all over the oppression and guilt related to all that was consecrated and forbidden ("mana" and "taboo"). It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself. Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life. This truth was ephemeral; it was followed by the fears and oppressions of everyday life, but from these brief moments another unofficial truth emerged, truth about the world and man which prepared the new Renaissance consciousness. (RW 90-91)

In the terms of official culture, laughter becomes a rebellious way of looking at the world, but in terms of carnival it opens up an entirely new vocabulary based on oppositions to official culture. If laughter can be considered the language of carnival, it creates its new definitions in terms of images that correspond inversely with those established by the formal culture. For instance, if official culture condemns drunkenness, carnival rejoices in it.

Bakhtin stresses the ambivalence of laughter. For seriousness by itself limits the interpretations of images and messages. 'True ambivalent and universal laughter does not deny seriousness but purifies and completes it' (RW

122-23). By itself, seriousness is restrictive. Laughter liberates seriousness from restraint.

Grotesque imagery is one aspect of carnival that induces laughter and defeats fear. A combination of opposites exposes truth to be different interpretations of the same image. Reversing the positions of icons, religious figures, and moral codes and relating them to the lower bodily elements brings them closer to the understanding of the participants in carnival. For instance, images of saints who are portrayed drinking or urinating, or of demons who celebrate 'black mass' were common in the carnival of the Middle Ages and in the Renaissance.

By combining high and low imagery, language is enriched and regenerated. As Bakhtin points out frequently, carnival is primarily concerned with renewal and progress. It moves along a horizontal, not a vertical plane and its sights are constantly focused on the future. Carnival removes the limitations of official culture, which dwell on the past. It concentrates instead on the procreative powers of the earth and the body which represents the earth. Carnival reverses hierarchies through a 'snizhenie' or 'lowering' which for Bakhtin is made apparent through grotesque realism: the 'lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity' (RW 19-20). It serves to establish its necessary relationship to authority by readjusting interpretations of the world that refuse to

admit of their opposites. In such a way carnival admits demons into a holy procession, or allows church figures to be pictured in hell, as occurs in Rabelais.

The last section of Smith's quotation about contraries seems to offer the greatest encouragement for bringing to our reading of Scottish literature an awareness of Bakhtinian ideas, especially those of carnival and dialogics, two areas of inquiry which are also interdependent. If Smith envisages the opposites of reality and fantasy crossing boundaries with no warning, inhabiting 'other' fictional spheres without invitation, then Bakhtin sees the essence of dialogism as the constant interaction between varied meanings. For Bakhtin, meaning cannot take place until a word, an utterance, fixes it, but only for that moment, for meaning is constantly changing and being made new by the interplay of opposing tendencies. What this comes closest to is the activity produced through the interaction of the centripetal forces of unitary language mentioned above in conjunction with opposing centrifugal forces of language. Centrifugal forces are represented by 'social and historical heteroglossia...stratifying forces'. The interplay of these forces is what produces the Bakhtinian notion of 'utterance':

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity. (272)

Here, opposing elements do not so much 'combine' as intersect to produce 'a voice'. The different components retain their individual characters, but meet to form new relationships. This process is instrumental not only in achieving linguistic wholeness (an idea that includes unity of language but is not subservient or entirely dependent on it) but also in forming identity. Within Bakhtin's theory is the necessity for the centrifugal forces to be complemented by the centripetal forces. Without one of these features, there would be no utterance, communication would not occur, language would not survive. This idea can be extended to include questions of psychological and national identity which depend upon a number of forces carrying on dialogues with each other. We will see how Bakhtin's conceptions of self and other, performing roles similar to the centripetal and centrifugal forces, are helpful in re-reading works by James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson to which Smith's ideas of the antiszygy have only opened the door through a recognition of opposing forces.

The relevance of using Bakhtin to investigate classic Scottish texts is the first step in the broader project of moving beyond the antiszygy. Bakhtin's ideas offer critical possibilities that surpass anything offered by Gregory Smith's acute essayistic intuitions. This will be first demonstrated in the next chapter through analysis of the canonical 'classics' of Scottish literature which have been produced from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth centuries. However, the emphasis of this

dissertation will be on contemporary writers such as Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Liz Lochhead, Muriel Spark and others. These novelists, poets, and playwrights, as Ursula Kimpel has suggested with regard to other contemporary Scottish writers, have been able to

...discover the experience of heterogeneity *within* the very place they have singled out for closer inspection...they do not attempt to reconcile this heterogeneity in one single vision but allow their places to exist, precariously and changeably, in spaces between different conflicting influences. Thus, they do justice to the experience of Scotland in all its diversity--and they do so without recourse to a concept like the "Caledonian antisyzygy". (308-9)

Like it or not, these writers cannot but have been influenced in some way by the problems presented by the antisyzygy. In this regard Kimpel's conclusion is a bit simplistic. However, the recognition of the richness of heterogeneity in Scotland is certainly prevalent among these writers and is due in some part to the philosophical and theoretical avenues of inquiry which have been opened up in the latter decades of this century.

The rich pluralism to be found in Scottish culture has enabled many to see Scotland not as a single entity, but comprised of a multitude of Scotland(s), each dialogically participating with the others while yet retaining a distinct identity. Such is the goal of the recently launched journal, *Scotlands*. In the introduction to the first issue, the mission of the journal is stated succinctly by Christopher MacLachlan:

It may be that Scotland is ready for the reshaping of its idea of itself....Out of this ferment of ideas will emerge a new image of Scotland, a pluralistic, syncretic Scotland, an international Scotland. (iv-v)

Additionally, Douglas Dunn has described this liberating international influence in contemporary Scottish poetry in his essay 'Language and Liberty', in which he confronts Eliot's challenge to G. Gregory Smith in 'Was There a Scottish Literature?':

...contemporary poetry in Scotland...enjoys enough self-confidence to be able to reject historical summaries such as Eliot's; and it can accommodate individual acceptances and rejections of the positions taken by its major figures. It is markedly open to the stimulus of poetry from beyond the British Isles. It might even have developed an easier relationship with English poetry, while, at the same time, maintaining that the differences between Scottish and English literature are obvious, in whatever language. (xlvi)

In later chapters texts by contemporary Scottish writers will be analyzed in an attempt to tease out remnants of antisyzygical thought and the possibilities for greater heterogeneous and heteroglossic readings. It is beneficial to begin, however, with a look at some of the works of Burns, Scott, Hogg, Stevenson, and finally, MacDiarmid in order to demonstrate how rich in Bakhtinian possibilities are the acknowledged major figures of the post-medieval Scottish tradition.

Chapter II

Bakhtin and Scottish Literary Tradition

The twentieth century has witnessed a major growth in the chronological management of Scottish literature. The search for distinctively Scottish writers has become in this century an attempt to 'make history' of such writers and give them sequential significance in a larger framework, one that will produce an assured sense of 'Scottishness'. Different criteria emerge for allocating historical space to writers in Scotland. Do they write in Scots? Does their writing reflect specifically Scottish themes? Criticism has given itself the task of re-evaluating this management. Such is the task of Hugh MacDiarmid's linguistically rich poetics, one that embraces many languages, disciplines, and philosophies to proclaim the very international quality of Scots literature. Perhaps this can be seen as a 'quick fix' to centuries of English subjugation of a language, one that breaks free of its bonds by latching on to a multitude of foreign bodies. This is not to denigrate MacDiarmid's project, which at a higher level was to reclaim languages of all categories for literature, but rather to indicate that here again the problem to be resolved is one of a search for an evolutionary pattern.

Of all the literary theories to evolve so far in this century, the ones that seem most distantly removed from the idea of completion are those of Mikhail Bakhtin. As a philosopher fascinated by polyphony, or multiplicity of voices, Bakhtin took from a number of 19th-century

philosophies the ingredients to make his own liberating theories of art and literature. As a Russian in the midst of both the early revolutionary days and the Stalinist purges, he was adept at the art of becoming an intellectual chameleon in order to survive. Yet he was capable of subtly layering his writings with a multitude of meanings so as not to compromise his beliefs. His work as a cultural historian affirms his desire to read literature as closely as possible in the terms of the time in which it was written, while yet realizing the impossibility of such an absolute notion. So, within his own personal and intellectual field of vision, we see a thinker who is very much at home among opposite tendencies, conflicting ideas, and the essence of the incomplete.

Having established very briefly and inadequately the backgrounds of a Scottish literary quest and a Russian philosopher, how can we bring them into an arena of mutual understanding and illumination? What do they have in common? Bakhtin never comments on Scottish literature, although he uses examples from Scott in tracing the development of the historical and the romantic novel, and he mentions Thomas Urquhart's translations of Rabelais (although he refers to Urquhart as an English writer). Can it be said that Scottish literature begs to be read in the light of any critical philosophy as a way of establishing its identity? The fact that these are very strange questions to be asking of a literature and a philosophy is perhaps a starting point for considering the fruitful avenues of inquiry which open up when we read the two alongside each other.

For Bakhtin, identity depends on community and is inextricably bound up with otherness, opposition, and difference. It is the language of cultural activity in its widest sense that fascinates him, and it is from his observations of language within cultural activities such as popular festivals, folk customs, and models of conduct that he makes his very tentative conclusions about literature. A philosophy that is so bound up with cultural significance is beneficial to the study of Scottish writing.

Additionally, Bakhtin does not make a chronological assault upon the reading of literature. The forms of what he investigates may hold historical value, but, as he asserts, they will always change and be reformulated in succeeding periods. These cultural forms evolve and are part of his notion of identity as open and fluid. Thus he does not advocate a sterile structural development of literature, but prods and pokes its self-imposed limits into yielding more information about its sources and contacts with other languages and literatures. In such a way, Bakhtin's ideas cannot support a closed national identity for a literature, for this creates an artificially limited space in which dialogue has a hard time flexing its muscles. And, as can be seen in the case of Scottish literature, it inhibits the asking of more important textual questions. This chapter will explore the ways in which Bakhtin can help us read classic Scottish texts from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries as open cultural dialogues rather than simply as manifestations of a nation's divided consciousness.

Bakhtinian Carnival in the Poetry of Robert Burns

It is now a well-established feeling among students of poetry and of the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin that these two areas of literary interest are not mutually exclusive, that the novelizing theories of Bakhtin can be quite helpful in illuminating poetry. Two recent articles have gone to great pains to both legitimize the utility of reading Robert Burns in terms of Bakhtinian theory and to ensure that there remains a healthy skepticism in doing so. In his article 'Burns and Heteroglossia', David Morris articulates the limitations Bakhtin places on poetic language and what students of Burns must look for in order to circumvent the prose/poetry distinctions that Bakhtin proposes: 'He [Bakhtin] encourages us to ask how far Burns supplements his literary dialogue with other--less common--modes of dialogical utterance' (7).

Carol McGuirk, in her response to David Morris, manages to both appreciate his attempts to make Burns 'Bakhtin-accessible' and yet convey a sense of alarm that such 'novelizing' theories of Bakhtin might rob Burns criticism of its sense of the distinctiveness of poetry as a genre. She sees no way around the poetic/novelistic dichotomy, but offers a compromise to what has hitherto been considered a Bakhtinian rejection of poetic dialogic response: 'It is not poetry itself, then, but the tendency

of classical stylistics to assign hierarchies (in which a superior status is granted to poetry) that Bakhtin is attempting polemically to reverse' (67). Taking Morris and McGuirk together, the task would then be to legitimize a 'novelization' of Burns's poetry without losing poetic flavor. Roderick Watson goes a long way towards this with his Bakhtinian consideration of Burns in 'Dialectics of "Voice" and "Place": Literature in Scots and English from 1700' which appears in *Scotland: A Concise Cultural History* edited by Paul H. Scott. Here Watson locates the carnival spirit in Burns, a spirit which can be traced back centuries in Western literature and which manifests itself in Burns's poetry of the pub and kirk, arenas of social interaction ripe for both historical and literary interpretation. Watson doesn't 'novelize' Burns, but rather lets the poetry speak for the communal, satirical roots that precede the origins of genre. Bakhtin provides a loophole for 'novelizing' poetry himself, however, when he says '[N]ovelistic discourse is poetic discourse, but one that does not fit within the frame provided by the concept of poetic discourse as it now exists' (DIN 269). This section will attempt to show the viability of using Bakhtin's theories of carnival to go behind these genres that are seemingly at odds with one another on a stylistic level, to the stronger social dialogues at work during the time Burns was writing which found a voice in his poetry.¹

In terms of Scottish literature, Bakhtin's ideas about carnival are useful in that they open up inherent social and

¹ For a full discussion of Bakhtinian carnival see Chapter I, pp. 44-49.

linguistic differences to closer scrutiny. Carnival representation in Scottish literature can be seen in Dunbar, Fergusson, and Ramsay, who establish forms of social and religious commentary in poems such as 'The Dregey of Dunbar', 'Hallow Fair', and 'Christ's Kirk on the Green', in which hierarchies are reversed, and high moral tones are made light of. This tradition continues in the poetry of Burns, who drew many of his carnivalesque scenarios from his literary predecessors and magnified them through the use of a multitude of voices, languages, and inversions of authority. His more 'social' poems of carnival, such as 'The Jolly Beggars', 'The Holy Fair', and 'Halloween', exhibit both a playful engagement with religious fear as well as the necessity of dialogue in creating a community voice (Watson, 1993: 107-8). Where a poem such as 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' affirms religious convictions without carnivalesque overtones, Burns's poems of reversal and comic activity use the dynamic devices of carnival language and imagery to reveal forms of religious hypocrisy that may exist in a too rigid, authoritarian orthodoxy. By using Bakhtin's ideas about carnival it is possible to read Burns with consideration for the particular levels of social intercourse presented in his poems. Burns uncrowns the official culture of his time through his poems.

In 'The Jolly Beggars', Burns makes use of English to highlight instances when the voice of authority breaks into the carnivalesque atmosphere of Poosie Nansie's pub. In this song composed of many songs, it is usually the voice of the chorus that signifies an official statement on the part of

one of the participants. The voice of the narrator, the 'recitativo', is more often represented in Scots and as such designates the unofficial low voice of the community. The tales of the various participants, while they may be Scots themselves, are 'immortalized' in their English idiom. However, the parenthetical asides, the voice that establishes their 'character', and which has the more important carnival information to impart about each individual and about the community as a whole, tends to belong to the narrator speaking in Scots.

The essence of Bakhtinian carnival in this poem is thus not to be found so much in the plurality of voices, for the content of their speech is controlled in part by the language that they use. Examples of laughter, the grotesque, and the material bodily lower stratum are embedded in the speech of the narrator who creates community by his introductions. He fills out the picture not of the individuals (for they do that themselves in their histories) but of the community at large. The voice of the narrator represents less a plurality of voices than a plurality of descriptions, yet the carnival quality is realized through the interaction of the high and the low languages and especially through the imagery of the low that forms such a contrast to the high (English) words of the participants. The interaction can be compared to Bakhtin's ideas of centrifugal and centripetal forces and is opposed to any strict 'isolation' of 'humanity's "unofficial self"' as David Daiches asserts (208). This interpretation is closer to Thomas Crawford's vision of the work as exhibiting 'both

conflict and fusion of Scottish and English elements' (134, n.47), although at a more complex level that includes voices other than dialect.

Reversals of authority can be found here as well in the narrative descriptions of those gathered at Poosie Nansie's. The first speaker is the soldier who has his 'doxy' lying 'within his arm...While she held up her greedy gab,/ Just like an aumous dish' (ll. 18, 23-4).² Here we see the joining of the beggar wench's mouth with the alms dish. As Bakhtin points out, the mouth is the entranceway to the material bodily lower stratum and it is the most important body part to represent the grotesque. Topographically it represents the higher area of the body that contains within itself the key to the lower regions, 'through which enters the world to be swallowed up' (RW 317). While the 'Jolly Beggars' offers many more examples of dialogue and carnival (especially in a social, linguistic and musical sense), this section will concentrate on 'The Holy Fair' and 'Tam o'Shanter', two Burns poems in which the 'authorities' that are both challenged and re-affirmed are religion, the Devil, and death.

In 'The Holy Fair', Burns again uncrowns high culture, this time through religious imagery. By contrasting the serious (and hypocritical) with a more joyful and carnivalesque reality, Burns appears to be presenting a re-evaluation of religion and the very moralistic ways in which

² Robert Burns, 'The Jolly Beggars' ('Love and Liberty--A Cantata'), in *Burns: Poems and Songs*, edited by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 157-69. All further references to this poem appear with the abbreviation JB.

it is perceived. We should remember that Burns was writing at a very volatile time in Scottish church history. Dissension within the Presbyterian church had been growing since the early part of the eighteenth century due to the imposition of restrictions on parishes. The installation of pews, the ensuing 'pew rents', and a lack of church accommodation limited the number of parishioners who could attend the kirk as well as dictating seating arrangements. Additionally, reforms in the manner of worship removed many traditional practices that had kindled religious fervor among parishioners, and the re-institution of patronage denied communities a voice in the selection of clergy (Brown 83-105).

With such controls being levied upon church-goers, it is not surprising that they searched for viable religious alternatives. In *A History of Orgies* (1960), Burgo Partridge notes the existence of 'phallic worship of a kind normally only associated with pagan and primitive fertility festivals...occurred in this part of Scotland (Fife) during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' (160-61, parenthetical notation mine)³ He goes on to describe the ceremonies that took place during the pseudo-religious meetings of 'a humorous order of knighthood called "The Beggar's Benison"' in Castle Dreel in Anstruther:

...the novice was told to select a passage from the Song of Solomon, and to read it aloud, with comments. For this purpose, a special Bible was provided by the order, the numerous indecent passages in this book were all marked, and examples of erotic prose and verse were written on the flyleaf....A banquet then followed, and

³ I am indebted to John Cunningham-Davis and Janet Copses, students of Anstruther social behavior, for bringing this work to my attention.

this appears to have been held in Saturnalian mood. Lewd songs were sung, indecent toasts drunk, erotic curios passed from hand to hand. (162-63)

While festivities such as those outlined by Partridge were certainly held outside the jurisdiction of official religion, 'holy fairs' were completely sanctioned by the church since they provided a more open, social, and communal atmosphere in which to worship. As Leigh Eric Schmidt has pointed out in *Holy Fairs: Scottish Communion and American Revivals in The Early Modern Period* (1989):

Sacramental occasions in Scotland were great festivals, an engaging combination of holy day and holiday....They were, as one divine said, 'fair days of the gospel,' festal events in a Reformed calendar otherwise dominated by the week-to-week observance of the Sabbath. In them religion and culture, communion, piety and sociability commingled. Regularly times of renewal and revival, they were the high days of the year. (3)

Initially these fairs, which were held in the summer months and surrounded the observance of 'the Lord's Supper', served to instil feelings of great spirituality and awe in the hearts of the parishioners: 'Sometimes they came with fear and trembling, "not sure that they were Christ's," other times in much joy, "having found an interest in Him." They retired to their barns or closets, seeking "light at the throne"' (Graham 39). But over time, the devotional aspects of the great 'Occasion' gave way to more social and religiously suspect activities. The nature of these questionable elements has been judiciously recorded in a *Letter from a Blacksmith to the Ministers and Elders of the Church of Scotland, in which the Manner of Publick Worship in the Church is considered, its Inconveniences and Defects pointed out, and Methods of removing them honestly proposed*. (London, 1759, quoted in Graham):

At first you find a great number of men and women lying together on the grass; here they are sleeping and snoring; some with their faces towards heaven, others with their faces downwards and covered with their bonnets; there you will find a knot of young fellows and girls making assignations to go home together in the evening or to meet at some ale-house; in another place you see a pious circle sitting on an ale barrel, many which stand on carts for the refreshment of the saints....When you get a little nearer the speaker, so as to be within reach of the sound, if not of the sense of his words...you will find some weeping and others laughing...one seems very devout and serious...in a word, there is such an absurd mixture of the serious and the comic, that were we convened for any other purpose than that of worshipping God and governor of nature the scene would exceed any power of face. (46-7)

Such a mixture of the serious and the comic is aptly displayed by Burns in 'The Holy Fair', and in true Bakhtinian fashion neither one is privileged over the other.⁴ The speaker of this poem is lured to the fair by one of the 'three *hizzies*' who represents fun and gaiety. FUN (the name of this hizzie) and the speaker go to the fair in the hopes of poking fun at the other two wenches, HYPOCRISY and SUPERSTITION.

The stanzas that follow contain within them both sides of the holy fair, the official and unofficial, and seem to live up to Bakhtin's description of fairs in the Middle Ages:

Thus the medieval feast had, as it were, two faces of Janus. Its official, ecclesiastical face was turned to the past and sanctioned the existing order, but the face of people of the marketplace looked into the future and laughed, attending the funeral of the past and present. The marketplace feast opposed the protective, timeless stability, the unchanging established order and ideology, and stressed the element of change and renewal. (RW 81)

⁴ T. Crawford points out (69) that the Blacksmith's letter has been considered by some to be a possible prose source for 'The Holy Fair'.

From before the start of the sermons in stanza 10 of 'The Holy Fair' the oppositions become more evident and point to the fact that there really are two fairs going on simultaneously:

Here some are thinkan on their sins,
 An' some upo' their claes;
 Ane curses feet that fyl'd his shins,
 Anither sighs an' pray's:
 On this hand sits a Chosen swatch,
 Wi' screw'd-up, grace-proud faces;
 On that, a set o' chaps, at watch,
 Thrang winkan on the lasses
 To chairs that day.⁵ (ll. 82-90)

Here the superficially religious are parodied in their efforts to conform to looks that are befitting a 'solemn' event. Throughout the poem, those who adhere to the strict higher culture of the fair are made to appear grotesque. 'Wi' screw'd-up, grace-proud faces' presents a picture of contorted agony in comparison with the more natural 'chaps' 'winkan on the lasses'. Likewise, the first fair-preacher who mounts the pulpit is described in such grotesque terms that his message is lost in the carnivalesque laughter which his appearance must produce. Indeed it is rather through his gestures that the 'points o' Faith' are signified, not his verbal message. By 'rattlin', 'thumpin', 'stampan', and 'jumpan', the points of faith are 'cleared'. And with the very active involvement of his body, images of the grotesque are instituted with regard to his facial features: 'His lengthen'd chin, his turn'd up snout' (HF, l. 113). It is these protruding images that create the grotesque as they 'seek to go out beyond the body's confines' (RW 316). Such

⁵ Robert Burns, 'The Holy Fair', in *Burns: Poems and Songs*, edited by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 103-9. All further references to this poem appear with the abbreviation HF.

imagery 'prolongs the body and links it to other bodies or to the world outside' (RW 316-17). Indeed, it is not the words of the sermon, but these bodily images that 'fire the heart devout, / Like cantharidian plaisters'. The 'cantharidian plaisters' also bring the message into the bodily sphere as the plasters are applied to bodily wounds and ailments, not to spiritual damage. As Crawford points out:

"Cantharidian plasters" is another of those lightning flashes which shoot through an entire poem, a galvanic unity of opposites: cantharides, or "Spanish fly," is a blistering agent if taken externally, an aphrodisiac if swallowed, so that the very use of the term establishes a connexion between the Hell-fire sermons of the body of the poem and the "houghmagandie" of the conclusion. (71-2)

With the opening of the drink in the following stanza the real tension between carnival and official culture begins. Here the '*real judges*' and the 'godly' head to the drinking tent and leave the evangelizing preacher whose words have now emerged 'On practice and on morals' (HF, l. 122). With the absence of grotesque imagery, official religion rears its head and the people retreat to the carnivalesque world 'to gie the jars an' barrels/ A lift' (HF, l. 125-6). This description finds historical confirmation in Graham:

The appearance in the "tent" of a minister dry and "legal" was the signal for the bulk of the people to withdraw, and when he appeared to address a table there were hardly any could be coaxed by the elders to sit down to communicate.⁶ These preachers were vulgarly known as "yuill" (ale) ministers, because during their services the people resorted to the ale barrels. On the other hand, the field was crowded in dense masses round the box when someone who was a fervid, an "affectionate," preacher stood up to address them... (41)

⁶ from Wodrow's *Analecta*, iii; iv. (271, 274); quoted in Graham.

The following stanza in the poem provides a wonderful gloss on the change which has occurred between the grotesquely alluring preacher of stanzas 12 and 13 and the high-minded pedant of stanza 14. His shine is 'barren' and 'His English style, an' gesture fine, / Are a' clean out o' season' (HF, ll. 127-30). It is as if his 'English style' is a direct affront to the atmosphere of the fair. His is not the legitimate language of this community; rather it is a language which alienates preacher from community. This is a 'Holy Fair' and the loss of a carnivalesque component is highly offensive to the audience. The speaker of the poem here becomes the voice of the people interpreting their aversion to the preacher. In drawing his comparisons with the preacher he (the speaker) enumerates the philosophers and pagans with which perhaps some of the community may be familiar. His topic of *moral man* is out of place in this community setting where *faith* would seem to be more in keeping with a universal quality. Morality here is seen as something more individualistic and thus outside the bounds of the carnival spirit. There is nothing rejuvenating in the sermonizing on morality, for it is only faith that promises a future, thus holding true to one of the cardinal tenets of Bakhtin's interpretation of carnival: 'Carnival was the true feast of the time, the feast of becoming, change, and renewal. It was hostile to all that was immortalized and completed' (RW 10).

Embedded in this carnival code is the sense of ambivalence. The beauty of this holy fair is that a number of 'holy men' are given the opportunity to present their

views, thus increasing the variety of viewpoints. The third to speak in stanza 17 has his 'Orthodoxy' tempered with 'carnal Wit and Sense'. He prepares the way for the banquet imagery of stanza 18 in which the aural intensity of the 'Change-house' vies with that of the first preacher in stanza 12: 'crying out', 'clatters', 'thick and thrang, an' loud and lang', 'raise a din' and 'rupture'. In the midst of this hubbub is talk of holy 'official' import, '*Logic*' and '*Scripture*'. The official messages of this day are in the process of being subsumed by the unofficial activities, but it is the revelry that is creating a sense of unity and community rather than the lessons that are being dogmatically imparted. According to Bakhtin, banquet images 'are intimately connected with speech, with wise conversation and gay truth' (*RW*, 280-81). It is this truth that Burns explores in his transitions between the images of high morality (more often portrayed in the language of the preachers) and what is being understood by the collective consciousness of the populace.

Leeze me on Drink! it gies us mair
 Than either School or Colledge:
 It kindles Wit, it waukens Lear,
 It pangs us fou o' Knowledge.
 (HF, ll. 163-66)

Like stanza 15, here we have what seems to be the voice of the community. Rather than the descriptive voice of the narrator, these lines have a sermonizing quality of their own. It is as if the sermon of carnival is now being preached by the narrator. What was hitherto interpreted by the narrator and the people, whether from the more communicative gestures or the dry monologic statements, has

given way to a direct expression of the beneficial powers of drink and revelry to the understanding of the community.

While the distinctions between body and soul have been dwelt upon at great length in the lessons of the speakers, they take on a new significance when inserted into the classroom of the carnival scene. Stanza 20 presents the discrepancy between what has been taught that day and the way in which the 'lads an' lasses' perceive themselves. Their concentration is focused on the body and extensions of the body 'On this ane's dress, an' that ane's leuk,/ They're makin observations' (HF, ll. 176-77) while the official sermon has admonished them to 'mind baith saul an' body' (HF, l. 173). They make 'assignments/ To meet some day' (HF, l. 180) and thereby technically remain within the moral lines drawn for them by official religious authority. However, as is reflected at the end of the poem with the lines 'An' monie jobs that day begin,/ May end in *Houghmagandie*/ Some ither day' (HF, ll. 241-43), the social connections made this day have been more important than the strictly comprehensive and completed religious teachings. These assignments hint at the future, not only in the sense of developing relationships within the community, but also in the possibility of regeneration in the word *Houghmagandie*, a playful word for fornication, a sinful activity censured by the kirk. However, in a world in which reversals are constantly taking place it can signify a life-giving act by the very fact that hierarchies of words are being inverted as well. This is noted by Kenneth Simpson who finds that Burns, at the end of the poem, 'appears to

celebrate life and to say that, despite the threats of damnation, life-energies endure', and '(i)f Burns is delighted by the sexual energies exemplified by his creations, he is equally amused by the manifestation of their limitations' (1988: 202).

Ironically, 'The Holy Fair' was seen by Burns's contemporaries as having 'laid bare the evils of the sacramental season' (Schmidt 171). Schmidt inserts useful commentary about the importance of Burns to the religious atmosphere of late eighteenth-century Scotland in which a rift had been developing between the 'popular religious culture of Calvinist evangelicals and the elite religious culture of the rationalistic moderates' which Burns represents (182). Schmidt bases his argument on his perception of Burns as opposed to traditional Presbyterianism, the official culture of his day that was now manifesting itself in the spectacle of sacramental festival. We can thus see Burns as satirizing the 'official' aspects of the popular religious culture while rejoicing in the hedonism that resulted from the very attempts of the high culture to suppress the low. The mass gathering produced a social pressure that could only undermine the extreme individualism of the religion. Schmidt's 'popular religious culture' is broken down by the antitheses inherent in Burns's carnivalesque poem. Burns doesn't attempt to construct a more rational, moderate religion, but rather reveals the natural and affirmative revolt against a monolithic and isolating principle. The satire of 'The Holy Fair' is therefore not of the event itself, but of the

Presbyterian framework that was supposed to support it in the first place, and which, by its very nature, could not control its essential social elements.

Criticism of 'The Holy Fair' has hinted at the carnivalesque quality of the poem while not recognizing the social forces behind the language. Daiches remarks on a movement between high and low language thus:

Burns is daringly reversing an old tradition in religious poetry--the practice of using secular love terms to denote divine love. This is the absolute antithesis of, say, the poetry of Crashaw: instead of starting from the natural and physical and moving up to the ecstatic and divine, Burns starts from the coldly theological and moves rapidly down to the physical and earthy. (123)

While this helps us to locate the direction Burns is willing to go in with regard to his literary predecessors, it neglects to provide an adequate schema of the way in which response is conditioned by an involvement of many layers of society. Thomas Crawford comes closer to identifying the regenerating force of Bakhtinian carnival present in the poem when he writes:

Burns in "The Holy Fair" can love both sorts of people, sinners and "unco guid," because he can see them all as human and therefore comic: but Houghmagandie and the Life Force are in the end stronger and better than either the White Christ of the morality-men or the Jehovah and Muckle Black Deil of the extreme Calvinists. (74)

While Bakhtin does not say that the official and the unofficial are dependent on each other, since they are distinct entities, he also emphasizes that the carnival response to the official, through folk humor, is not negative. 'Folk humor denies, but it revives and renews at the same time. Bare negation is completely alien to folk culture' (RW 11).

In 'Tam o' Shanter' a combination of banquet imagery, the grotesque, and popular festive forms contribute to a spirit of carnival that plays with some of the most basic fears of the Christian community. The fear of hell and the devil is a common one in Rabelais and in Burns. Yet both writers also have carnivalesque fun with this fear. In 'The Holy Fair' there are two stanzas devoted to the theme of hell, which is the subject matter of the final speaker's sermon. In stanza 22, half-asleep fair-goers are convinced they hear the roar of hell only to find that it is a 'neebor snoran' (HF, l. 197). Fear is thus changed into a bodily function, lowered from its seriousness through its conjunction with a bodily sound. In 'Address to the Deil' Burns makes the devil accessible through colloquial speech addressed to the devil, a supernatural entity supposedly beyond engagement with mortals (Simpson, 1993: 216-17).

In 'Tam o' Shanter', however, the fear of the devil and of hell takes center stage and many of the popular-festive forms outlined by Bakhtin in his work on Rabelais can be seen at work. Bakhtin traces the history of hell's inclusion in world literature (RW 386) and explains how images of the lower body in literature symbolize this nether region in order to disarm its seriousness through laughter.

It is on 'market-night', that the action of the poem takes place, and it is with the customary joviality following such an occasion that Tam begins his evening of drinking with 'Souter Johnny' and the landlady. Tam is part of a cosy communal scene in which nothing from the outside

world is admitted. In this atmosphere even 'Care'⁷ (l. 53) is won over to the joys of carnival and Tam is elevated higher than kings. At what seems the very pitch of his revelry, Tam is thrown out into the terrifying night of the storm which represents, in a way, the voice of authority passing judgement on Tam's drunken abandon. When the voice of authority appears, as in the lines that have shown Kate's advice, it is in the form of a sermonizing aphorism: 'But pleasures are like poppies spread...' (TS, l. 59). Here, the elevated, English tone inserts itself as the official language. But it is as if there are two narrators telling the tale of Tam. One narrator allies himself with carnival and engages in that spirit when describing scenes of unofficial merriment. The second narrator takes over at the peak of the fun as if to temper it from dominating completely. Such a conquest would destroy the essence of carnival which lies in the opposition between two cultures rather than the total subjugation of the one by the other. In this way there is a constant dialogue between the two narrators. Other than Tam's brief 'Weel done, Cutty-sark' (TS, l. 189), these third person narrators are the only voices we hear.

We see this again when Tam encounters the next carnivalesque scene, the devils dancing. Following 'Inspirin bold *John Barleycorn!*' (TS, l. 105), the language changes again into a festive Scots: 'Wi tippeny, we fear nae evil;/ Wi' usquabae, we'll face the devil!' (TS, ll. 107-8). While

⁷ Robert Burns, 'Tam o'Shanter' in *Burns: Poems and Songs*, edited by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 443-49. All further references to this poem appear with the abbreviation TS.

drink is called upon here to defeat fear, the true victory is related in the grotesque images which confront Tam, and which instead of filling him with dread, inspire him to join their mirth-making. Here 'auld Nick' is turned into a beast who plays music. Coffins, typically the closed-off boxes of death, have been opened up to possibility, 'like open presses', and future life that nonetheless 'shaw'd the dead in their last dresses' (TS, l. 126). This scene corresponds in many ways to what Bakhtin calls 'open graveyard eroticism' (PDP 140), and reminds us of the Scottish taste for witchcraft, as seen in Ramsay's *Mausy*, who according to Bauldy in 'The Gentle Shepherd' 'howks unchristened we'ans out of their graves' (58), as well as the eighteenth-century's affinity for graveyard settings such as the one in Fergusson's 'The Ghaists: A Kirk-yard Eclogue'.

This reversal of the 'seriousness' of death is reflected in the poem, not only in the dancing witches and the erotic, alluring quality of 'Cutty Sark', but also in the participation of the dead 'mortals' who take part in the celebration by illuminating the devil and the witches: 'Each in its cauld hand held a light' (TS, l. 128). In such a way, although the dead are seen in their last mortal clothing, they are revitalized through the carnival that they assist in creating by aid of their lights.

It is by these lights that Tam is able to see 'upon the haly table, / A murderer's banes in gibbet airns' (TS, ll. 130-31) thus reversing the typical imagery of a holy table which might contain images of Christ or other holy representations as well as relics. Here the murderer, a

sinner, has become sainted in the preservation of his bones on what appears to be the high altar of the devil. The entire list of 'sinners' and objects of sinful death which are enumerated serve almost as a holy 'rote' of lowering. They stand in place of the typical ritualistic symbols and devices of the church and the blood which is caked on them takes on sacrificial overtones. But the sacrifice here is to an inverted God, the devil. Even the unchristened children are included in this list of abominations, thus exposing the hyperbolic quality of what constitutes sin which in turn ridicules a high culture that might equate the unbaptized with murderers. The inclusion of the tomahawks and scymitars (TS, ll. 135, 136) also removes this scene from the purely local, providing the universal quality of carnival. Finally, nearly all the deaths related here are achieved through the removal of speech. The hangings, strangulations, and mutilated throats have simultaneously denied voices as well as indicated a movement towards the lower body. The nature of these deaths has served to disconnect the higher regions of the body from the lower. In doing so, the necessity of each for the other is suggested. It is the tension between the two, between seriousness and laughter that produces regenerating life.

With these objects of inverted holiness in place, the witches and devils go about their carnivalized ceremony which increases in intensity. The grotesque imagery of the dancing witches performs a transformation in Tam's eyes that serves as a microcosm of the displacing essence of carnival. With the narrator's descriptions of what should constitute

beauty for Tam in contrast with Tam's vision of beauty in ugliness, the qualitative terms are reversed. And it is this displacement of beauty and ugliness (produced through a graveyard eroticism) that moves Tam to speech.

It is following Tam's outburst, 'Weel done, Cutty-sark' (TS, l. 189), that all returns to 'normal'. The dance ends quickly and objects and emotions return to their 'proper' sphere. But the language of the narrator retains its unofficial Scots nature through Tam's ensuing flight. It is as if, with the restoration of order, the carnival cannot simply disappear, but retreats from the official gradually, leaving vestiges of its presence. This retreat mirrors Tam's own flight from the scene.

In the dwindling atmosphere of carnival, it is Meg, Tam's mare, that suffers the final tribute to the inverted worlds. By the loss of her tail, and the allusion to the lower body which it represents, Burns plays with interpretations of morality which even his high-toned narrator cannot dispel in the final lines. The lesson to be learned from this escapade which is imparted to the audience by what we at first believe to be the serious narrator is more comical and full of laughter. 'Remember Tam o'Shanter's mare' (TS, l. 224) is the moral of this 'tale' and as such it plays with the commonly accepted fates of those who would defy authority. While the adventures of Tam may seem full of horror to the moral world, Tam seemed to enjoy them, and his punishment for this is only the loss of his horse's tail. In a recent symposium on Bakhtin and Scottish Literature, Christopher Whyte suggested that Tam's role as spectator

rather than participant in the witches' carnival leads to his punishment, rather than his verbal interruption.⁸ We don't know what the witches would have done to Tam if they had caught him, but criticism tends to have cast him as an intruder. Carol McGuirk, who recognizes various communities at work in the poem (the gathering at the tavern and at the witches dance as well as the the male and female natures of each) nonetheless sees Tam's attempt to bridge them as a heroic act of intrusion, not inclusion. She is much closer to a Bakhtinian understanding when she notes Burns's perception of 'a central disjunction between joyous human instincts and the generally downhill course of life' that he 'addressed...in an affirmative spirit'. For 'the downhill course of life' we might read, 'official culture', which attempts to confine and control human instincts (McGuirk, 1985: 158, 161). The rather innocuous nature of Tam's penance for his night of revelry lends a subtle message to this poem--that things are not always as they seem or as those in authority would have you see them. This accords well with Bakhtin's idea that one important message that carnival imparts to the collectivity that rejoice in it is 'a sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities' (RW 11).

Burns was able both to illuminate the voices of his time through juxtaposition of languages and dialects and to invert images of high and low authority. Although the

⁸ 'Bakhtin and Scottish Literature' a one-day symposium held at the University of St. Andrews, April 30, 1993. Dr. Whyte spoke on Bakhtin and Eighteenth Century Scottish Poetry. See also Dr. Whyte's 'Defamiliarising "Tam o'Shanter"' (SLJ, vol. 20, no. 1, May 1993) where he cites Bakhtin in his discussion of Burns's use of parody.

instances of inversion are not new to Burns criticism, Bakhtin allows them to be investigated in terms of their dialogic importance which denies them any static consideration. Through the carnival imagery that Burns employs, he opens up dialogues between images and languages that are not always evident to the reader who insists on the strict thematic and structural integrity of his poetry. The ribald, playful nature of his poetry is not simply an attempt to defy authority, it is a struggle to bring about communication among layers of society. This helps to explain the often-remarked 'universal appeal' of Burns's work.

Burns was able to take the 'peasant-brawl' quality which Ramsay and Fergusson had inherited from *Christ's Kirk on the Green* and *Peblis to the Play* and transform it into poetry that subtly and simultaneously condemns and approves religion and its trappings.⁹ Where *Christ's Kirk*, and *Peblis to the Play* highlight medieval carnival customs that are not particularly tied to any spiritual affiliation, Ramsay, in his extra cantos to *Christ's Kirk* and Fergusson in such poems as 'Leith Races' and 'Hallow-Fair' attempt to redefine the tradition in the context of morally uplifting messages. Burns, as James Kinsley points out, serves to amalgamate the two, the raw violence of the early poems with a didacticism that speaks of regeneration, not static high-toned preaching. In speaking of Burns's 'peasant-brawl' sources for 'The Holy Fair', Kinsley points out: 'at his own door

⁹ See "'Christis Kirk," "Peblis to the Play," and the German Peasant-Brawl' by George Fenwick Jones in *PMLA*, LXVIII, no. 5 (December 1953), and 'The Rustic Inmates of the Hamlet' by James Kinsley, for a complete discussion of the 'peasant-brawl' tradition in Scottish literature.

Burns had a richer theme, an outrageous marriage of the spirit and the flesh, of piety and impropriety, in the holy fair' (1960: 21). Burns employs this energizing combination in many of his 'social' poems as a way of indicating the polyphony, or multiplicity of voices, in Scottish society.

What Bakhtin lends to any consideration of Burns is an examination of the nature of exchange in his work. Communities finding identities through interactions among themselves and between other communities is the essence of Burns's poetic world. The reader of 'The Jolly Beggars' is made aware of how many potential worlds co-exist in Poosie Nansie's smoke-filled room through the many layered exchanges of those present. Those who attend the 'Holy Fair', in Burns's poem of that title, leave it having experienced any number of emotions that belie their original intentions in going. And Tam's contact with the 'other' world has enriched the possibilities of a language and imagination made stagnant through restriction. What these Burns poems point to is a concern that language should not be closed off from the power to regenerate through contact with a community voice. Bakhtin emphasizes the reading of grotesque imagery, popular festive forms, and other literary manifestations of folk culture as indications of the 'eternal incomplete unfinished nature of being' (RW 48, 52, *passim*). By recognizing these carnivalesque qualities in the poetry of Burns, we are able to see his writing as a challenge to the cultural limitations of his time.

We will next investigate novels by Sir Walter Scott, James Hogg, and Robert Louis Stevenson. Like Burns's

poetry, these works lend themselves to Bakhtinian readings through their concern with community formation. Carnival, as a literary event, becomes a more complicated response as the nineteenth century progresses, communities become more fractured and Romanticist demands on individual development become more heightened. It is in this environment that characters attempt to detach themselves from their surrounding communities and form self-sufficient entities. However, as we shall see, for Bakhtin, identity always implies the interaction of more than one consciousness.

Chronotopic Activity as a Function of Identity in Walter Scott

In the Introduction to this work we looked at how Bakhtin's ideas of chronotope involve the interrelatedness of time and space: 'We will give the name *chronotope* (literally, "time space") to the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships that are artistically expressed in literature' (FTC 84). In the novels of Sir Walter Scott, dialogic tension is created by diverse languages, social strata, and geographical movement. A Bakhtinian reading of Scott is important since within Scott's texts time and landscape intersect in many different ways. Additionally, Scott's characters reveal self-formation through interaction with a variety of communities that are often portrayed through linguistic differences. Finally, Scott carnivalizes the folk material that forms part of Scotland's heritage making it more open and accessible to a larger community of readers.

Scott is mentioned by Bakhtin in a number of his major essays. In 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel' (1937-1938) Bakhtin discusses Scott's contributions to the history of the novel genre. More interestingly, however, is his treatment of Scott in a later essay 'The *Bildungsroman* and Its Significance in the History of Realism (Toward a Historical Typology of the Novel)' in which the chronotopic aspects of Scott's novels are compared with his earlier poetic works. Bakhtin says that the novelistic Scott is able

to 'see time in space', whereas the earlier, poetic Scott exhibited 'the nature of a *closed past*' (B 53). Bakhtin censures such works as *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3) and poems such as *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), 'St. John's Eve', and *Lady of the Lake* (1810) for not displaying the proper degree of 'presentness'¹⁰:

Herein lies the essential difference between him (Scott) and Goethe. This past, read by Walter Scott in the ruins and in various details of the Scottish landscape, was not creatively operative in the present. It was self-sufficient, and it was a closed world of a specific past. And the visible in the present only evoked a *remembrance* of this past. It was a storehouse not of the past itself in its living and operative form, but a storehouse precisely of remembrances of it. Therefore, the *fullness of time* was minimal even in Walter Scott's best folkloric poems. (53)

Bakhtin compares this early, lyrical, non-chronotopic Scott with the Scott who would later develop the historical novel so expertly by 'reading time in space' (53). We can use Bakhtin's remarks concerning Scott's chronotopic activity to discuss *Waverley* (1814), *Redgauntlet* (1824), and *Ivanhoe* (1820) novels in which time and location play such an integral role.

Much of the tension of *Waverley* lies within the relationship between 'narrative' time and 'present' time. The voice of the narrator provides a story 'sixty years since', during the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 (Time A), but always in the background of the narrative present which is sixty years later (Time B). The first readers of the book read it in 1814 (Time C), not 1805, or sixty years since,

¹⁰ For a consideration of dialogism and Scott's poetry see Lloyd David, 'The Story of History: Time and Truth in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*', *CLIO: A Journal of Literature History and the Philosophy of History* 18, no. 3, pp. 221-38.

and for those who have read the novel since its publication, a further 'contemporary' time (Time D) is thrown into the equation. Such complex time-play is important to Bakhtinian theory.

Waverley reflects an historical presence in that Edward, the hero of the *bildungsroman*, begins at point A, endures many adventures, and comes out the other side complete, yet changed. This is what happens to Scotland as well, on a political level, in the novel. This complies with Bakhtin's fifth type of 'novel of emergence': 'human emergence....is no longer man's own private affair. He emerges *along with the world* and he reflects the historical emergence of the world itself' (B 23).

Likewise in *Ivanhoe* there are passages that serve as bridges between past and present that, like the one quoted above, fulfil time in Bakhtin's and Goethe's sense, by implicating landscape and nature as the true heroes on which time leaves its traces. This lengthy scene prepares the reader for the entrance of Gurth and Wamba:

The sun was setting upon one of the rich grassy glades of that forest....Hundreds of broad-headed, short-stemmed, wide-branched oaks, which had witnessed perhaps the stately march of the Roman soldiery, flung their gnarled arms over a thick carpet of the most delicious green sward; in some places they were intermingled with beeches, hollies, and copsewood of various descriptions, so closely as totally to intercept the level beams of the sinking sun; in others they receded from each other, forming those long sweeping vistas in the intricacy of which the eye delights to lose itself, while imagination considers them as the paths to yet wilder scenes of silvan solitude. Here the red rays of the sun shot a broken and discoloured light, that partially hung upon the shattered boughs and mossy trunks of the trees, and there they illuminated in brilliant patches the portions of turf to which they made their way. A considerable open space, in the midst of this glade, seemed formerly to have been dedicated to the rites

of Druidical superstition; for, on the summit of a hillock, so regular as to seem artificial, there still remained part of a circle of rough, unhewn stones, of large dimensions. Seven stood upright; the rest had been dislodged from their places, probably by the zeal of some convert to Christianity, and lay, some prostrate near their former site, and others on the side of the hill. One large stone only had found its way to the bottom, and, in stopping the course of a small brook which glided smoothly round the foot of the eminence, gave, by its opposition, a feeble voice of murmur to the placid and elsewhere silent streamlet. (10)

The marches of the Romans, the rites of the Druids, and the activities of Christianity are witnessed in the effects they have had on the surrounding landscape. A certain violence has left the trees 'gnarled' and 'shattered', while the stone, displaced by human activity, is the only object in the stream to create noise. Here Scott fulfils the Bakhtinian requirements of chronotopic activity. 'Time...thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history' (FTC 84) By writing in such a way, Scott seems to be drawing attention to what is genuinely historical in the landscape in much the same way as the Romantic poets who read history in geographic space. While factual historical errors abound in Scott's works, he always remains true in representing what the combinative effects, the dialogue, between history (as a record of human events) and geography produce. But, as George Lukács pointed out in his Marxist study of the historical novel, which was produced almost contemporaneously with Bakhtin's essay on the chronotope, it is the changing nature of social environment which Scott portrays as well:

...Scott's main tendency in all his novels--and which forms of them in a sense a kind of cycle--is to represent and defend progress, then this progress is for him always a process full of contradictions, the driving force and material basis of which is the living contradiction between conflicting historical forces, the antagonisms of classes and nations. (53)

But Lukács never brings together 'the living contradictions' with the spatio-temporal conditions. His model is useful for understanding how Scott is successful in 'bringing the past to life as the prehistory of the present' (53), but he fails to incorporate the Bakhtinian concept of a living dialogue that is very much concerned with the future and with the community that helps to form it. In other words, Bakhtinian chronotopic discussion of 'the historical novel' does not fail to note how the past and the present implicate the future. The waterfall which Waverley ascends early in the novel, and the sylvan setting which is about to witness the opening human activity of *Ivanhoe*, do not imply a static future, they serve as a backdrop for the events which will ensue, but they are very much alive, receptive to change, and involved in process. The reader is made to sense that in no way can the description that Scott has provided remain preserved in either time or space. It will always be open to the future. By reading Scott with Bakhtin in mind, the possibilities of this openness can be more fully appreciated as Bakhtin's philosophy denies closure and completedness.

Another example of chronotopic activity in *Waverley* can be seen in the treatment of the houses and buildings between which Edward travels. On one level they exist as geographical locations which determine his movements throughout the novel. As such, the reader prepares a mental

map of their relationship to one another and exercises a kind of geometry in which to keep track of Edward's movements. While this is going on, however, as if behind the scenes, these structures, especially Tully-Veolan, age and undergo their own temporal adjustments. The activities which render these changes are 'off-camera', yet the reader is given glimpses of both the destruction and the reconstruction.

Tully-Veolan is the spatial 'hub' of *Waverley*, situated as it is geographically in the Lowlands between Waverley-Honour and Glennaquoich, between Edinburgh and Carlisle. As such, the changes that are wreaked upon it seem to be associated with much of the tension and violence which the reader witnesses in other locations. The clan raids against it, the English plunderings, and its ultimate restoration signify the spatial tension as it exists between the political boundaries of England and Scotland (for which Tully-Veolan represents the spatial border), a temporal understanding of its architecture before and after the events that unfold in the course of the novel, and a historical tension between the Jacobites and Hanoverians, Scotland (as an independent entity) and Britain.

In 'Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel', Bakhtin notes how Scott was able to use a structural image to capture chronotope for the benefit of the historical novel:

Walter Scott succeeded in overcoming the danger of excessive antiquarianism by relying heavily on the legend of the castle, on the link between the castle and its historically conceived, comprehensible setting. The organic cohesion of spatial and temporal aspects and categories in the castle (and its

environs), the historical intensity of this chronotope, is what had determined its productivity as a source for images at different stages in the development of the historical novel. (246)

If we follow the narrative description of Tully-Veolan from Edward's perspective in each of the three stages of his experience of the manor house, we detect a sequential pattern that begins in the village and then in turn takes into account the physical condition of the house. In the first instance, both the description of the village and the house are said by the narrator to be 'a chapter of still life' (79). Yet the text is full of verbs that while signifying a stationary condition yet suggest forms of activity--'hanging gardens' (76), and 'climbing vines' (77). Scott creates a feeling of the active in the inactive as well as the past in the present in such combinations and in such passages as:

The avenue seemed very little trodden, and chiefly by foot-passengers; so that being very broad, and enjoying a constant shade, it was clothed with grass of a deep and rich verdure, excepting where a foot-path, worn by occasional passengers, tracked with a natural sweep the way from the upper to the lower gate. (77)

And whereas the village seems the less static in its portrayal of productivity and natural utility (to which Bakhtin's Goethe would have been more likely drawn), it is the house and its immediate surroundings which bear the brunt of change in the novel. Later descriptions of Tully-Veolan either bypass the village or leave it reasonably intact, while the manor undergoes so much alteration.

If we consider the historical significance of the model for Tully-Veolan, Traquair in Peebles-shire, we sense a concern on the part of Scott for change that perhaps made

him 'rewrite' the history of his prototype. While Scott never directly states that Traquair was the model for Tully-Veolan, it is commonly thought to be the most likely source. The description of Edward Waverley's first entrance into the grounds of Tully-Veolan lend support to the claims of Traquair as model from their accurate portrayal of the bear gates:

In the centre of the exterior barrier was the upper gate of the avenue, opening under an archway, battlemented on the top, and adorned with two large weatherbeaten mutilated masses of upright stone, which, if the tradition of the hamlet could be trusted, had once represented, at least had once been designed to represent, two rampant Bears, the supporters of the family of Bradwardine. (76-7)

These gates are similar to those at Traquair that have remained closed since Prince Charles Edward Stuart passed through them in 1745 and symbolize for Scott a concern with a stagnant past that leaves no room for an open future. In *Waverley* the first description of Tully-Veolan is wrapped in antiquarian flavor, providing the very 'still life' quality that Scott wishes to move away from at the conclusion of Chapter Eighth: 'And here we beg permission to close a chapter of still life' (79). Where Scott presents Tully-Veolan as steeped in age, 'weather-beaten' and 'mutilated', he leaves room for change and future improvement, indeed the gates never close for good at Tully-Veolan and following its destruction by the English it is restored and improved upon. In its earlier, more antique setting, Scott hints at the possibilities inherent in the structure and purpose of the building : 'It had been built at a period when castles were no longer necessary, and when the Scottish architects had not yet acquired the art of designing a domestic residence'

(78). The hazy nature of the building of Tully-Veolan makes it a 'loophole' in which future utility can be realized. It resides in an ambiguous position in which it is neither part of the past nor of the present. The spatial (and therefore temporal) position of Tully-Veolan occupies a liminal sphere which defies completion. Traquair on the other hand has sealed its gates (which remain closed to this day) and occupies a stagnant space of decay and subservience to a sense of historical 'pastness'. Note these observations of Traquair from 1902 which sound vaguely reminiscent of Scott's depiction of Edward Waverley's original impressions of Tully-Veolan:

In Chapters VIII and IX of 'Waverley' the author sketches a 'Scottish manor-house sixty years since,' and there should be no difficulty in discerning in it a definite enough pen-portrait of that pallid, forlorn pile, "stricken all o'er with eld". (Crockett 85)

In the olden time, Traquair was a much more important place than Innerleithen, its sister parish. Things are vastly altered. Traquair has dwindled to a hamlet, and the glory of its once royal residence has grown sadly dim, while Innerleithen, extending itself by leaps and bounds, is now a 'burgh toun' and a flourishing commercial center. (93)

It is perhaps in the final quotation from above that we sense the political importance to Scott of indicating the possible differences between Traquair and Tully-Veolan. If Scotland bars her gates to the future then the country runs the risk of decay and history becomes not a vibrant concept but a stultifying way of perceiving the past. Even though the conclusion of *Waverley* might appear to provide a too comforting and unrealistic resolution to the political difficulties presented in the text, the geographical rejuvenation of Tully-Veolan, the history in the landscape,

the time in space, gives Scotland a viable ground for rebuilding and denying closure.

Such instances of chronotope in Scott indicate that a study of his work is not done complete justice through considerations of simple oppositions. *Waverley* exhibits interaction not only between various languages (Gaelic, Scots, Latin, and English) but between social groups and landscapes. Indeed, *Waverley* is full of instances in which a sense of a multitude of voices speaking at the same time enhances the interrelationship of time and space. This point is accurately made by David Glenn Kropf in his book *Authorship as Alchemy: Subversive Writing in Pushkin, Scott, Hoffmann* (1994):

...numerous dialects and various counterparts to the English proper threaten to curb its hegemony and supposed superiority. The result is not merely a Babel, but a battle in which a multiplicity of languages and dialects wages an attack on English proper...One of Scott's great achievements in *Waverley* is having the novel's language itself engage in a battle that resembles the events that very language describes: a civil war. All the references, allusions, and citations...act upon or rather act against the dominant language in which the novel purports to be, and for this reason they are unconcealed: they constitute an armed force that moves in, waging war on English proper. (139, 140-41)

Kropf's discussion of Scott and language involves the study of Bakhtin as well and he emphasizes the heteroglossic activity in *Waverley* that is dependent on this intermingling of languages (141) and which reflects back upon a supposed identity of an 'author'. What is perhaps more interesting is how fluid identities of community are achieved by Scott's intermingling of languages. The plurality of voices and dialects (and, as Kropf points out, sources) in Scott is not simply a response to the English language. In many ways it

is a carnivalesque response to a system of discourse that requires only one mode of grammar and syntax. This system may be English proper but it includes a whole way of thinking that implicates both English literature and history as being too closed off from outside influence. The babel of *Waverley* is a coherent one and the tensions between these two extremes is what fuels the novel. Overarching all of these concerns is the intertwining of time and space, a merging that allows each of the individual differences to avoid an isolated, antiszygical confrontation with its immediate opposite.

In *Redgauntlet*, the interaction of language with history is made apparent through the changing names and identities of characters and their descriptions of the different landscapes that surround them. This is a point made by Kathryn Sutherland in her introduction to *Redgauntlet*:

Redgauntlet is concerned with more problematic formulations of identity and of the relation between a sense of fiction and a sense of self...the journey proves a passage into a border world in every sense.... Names on the Border are aliases, disguises, and nicknames, an index of hypocrisy and concealed and shifting identity...Not only identity, but experience too is subject to bewildering reformulations. (ix-x)

In such a way the changing names for Darsie Latimer, Redgauntlet, and others are indicative of the geographical changes that are going on in the novel as well. Darsie's historical identity is indivisible from the space in which he travels in the novel. When he crosses geographical boundaries they are more often than not those which implicate his 'self' as well. Thus two Bakhtinian principles

come into play at once in *Redgauntlet*. Chronotopic activity serves as an arena within which a self is created, one which as Bakhtin points out is always conditional upon an 'other'. In 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', Bakhtin maintains that a self can only form an identity in relationship to an 'other' who helps to complete the image of self. This condition is verified in *Redgauntlet* by Darsie Latimer's identity. Here, however, Darsie himself provides the other with which to complete his identity as a *Redgauntlet*, and vice versa, all within chronotopic activity.

In *Ivanhoe*, identity is also inextricably bound up with chronotopic activity. The three major heroes of this novel, *Ivanhoe* (who plays a rather subdued role), Richard I, and Robin of Locksley, hold identity to be very much a function of time and location. Additionally, here, as in *Waverley* and *Redgauntlet*, identity is defined both as an individual's quest for self-identification and as a cultural inquiry into the components of society. The interplay between *Ivanhoe*, Richard I, Robin Hood, Isaac the Jew, and the other Saxon noblemen bring different layers of society into dialogue with each other and thereby assist in the process of completing identity which Bakhtin describes in 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity'. In that essay, Bakhtin describes the special relationship that exists between an author and his creation that mirrors, in a sense, the conditions that maintain when an individual forms an identity for him/herself. All identity, according to Bakhtin, is dependent on the 'other' who serves to

'complete' a self-image: '...we evaluate ourselves from the standpoint of others, and through others we try to understand and take into account what is transgredient to our own consciousness' (AH 15). The essence of transgredience is the quality of 'that which lies outside the immediate being of my current act of thinking' (AH 233, n.11). An individual cannot see himself whole but must rely on what he perceives to be the vision of an 'other' to complete the image of himself. Within individual texts we can see this completion (and in many instances non-completion as identities are confused in the course of the novels) operating for specific characters. However, part of Scott's art was to make his characters stand for certain levels of society and thus we can expand Bakhtin's identity-forming theory of transgredience to aid us in an exposition of cultural identity. By doing so, we can see as well how Scott, as author, creates culture as character (or hero), and the distinctive position he holds with regard to that heteroglossic creation.

In *Redgauntlet*, as mentioned above, identity is very much defined by the geographical positioning of the characters. When Darsie Latimer writes to Alan Fairford, he defines himself in terms that place him (Darsie) in the world of Edinburgh in the eyes of Alan and his father. He sprinkles his commentary with Latin phrases and references to Edinburgh life that place him in that sphere even as he is describing a landscape that is quite remote from that of the city. His position outside of his usual environment makes Darsie search for language to define his new position.

He peppers his accounts to Alan with new terminology that serves Scott as an aid to defining different cultural and linguistic forces at work in the same country: 'At length, our course was crossed by a deep dell or dingle, such as they call in some parts of Scotland a den, and in others a cleuch, or narrow glen' (36).

Darsie makes such references to the world around him complete by juxtaposing them with terms that are familiar to himself and Alan. Alan's responses to Darsie help him to complete an idea of his ever-changing identity. This is made much more apparent by Darsie's continuing search for his own identity previous to his Edinburgh existence, and in his desire to define Liliias or Green Mantle. Scott artfully places the reader in a transgredient position with regard to Darsie's identity. Through the correspondence that forms the majority of the novel, the reader is left unaware of the sinister plot that thickens around Darsie. We see only through Darsie's and Alan's letters and are thus only capable of forming whole impressions based on the self-other dynamics that maintain for those two characters.

A pivotal point in identity formation (one which also reveals a singular flaw in the text¹¹) comes with the final letter from Alan to Darsie which is followed by this sentence which concluded the first volume of the 1824 first edition: 'From circumstances, to be hereafter mentioned, it

¹¹ The error is also one of identity. The final letter from Alan, which goes unreceived, contains all of the information pertaining to Peter Peebles, the unfortunate yet comical client whose ongoing case Alan's father has arranged for Darsie to assume. In Darsie's later journal entry (193) he refers to meeting Alan's client the identity of whom as such it would have been quite impossible for Darsie to recognize as he has yet to receive the letter from Alan.

was long ere this letter reached the person to whom it was addressed' (140). From the point of his kidnapping until the final revelation of his identity as a Redgauntlet by his sister Lillias, Darsie inhabits a marginal region. He is unable to define himself as Darsie of Edinburgh through the agency of Alan Fairford's 'other' and he is increasingly led to suspect that his abduction and confinement is contingent upon a completely separate identity. This crisis is further complicated by the fact that most of the characters that surround him from this point on have disguised themselves as well. The Chevalier, Prince Charles Edward Stewart is disguised as Father Buonaventure, and Darsie's uncle hides behind the name of Herries of Birrenswork. The self is thus always fluid in Scott, changing as it comes in contact with the other identities which are so important to its own existence and renewal.

In contrast to the deception that exists on the linguistic level it is through Darsie's observation of the strange horseshoe marking on his uncle's forehead and his subsequent discovery, through use of a mirror, of that same marking on his own countenance that serves as preliminary confirmation of his relationship to an identity separate from that of Darsie Latimer. The opening of Chapter VIII, 'Latimer's Journal in Continuation', finds Darsie fraught with doubt about his identity and the intentions of Herries of Birrenswork. It is in vain that he conjectures upon the possibilities that are in store for him and his possible relationship to Herries:

...of what nature was the claim which he asserted?-- Was it that of propinquity?--And did I share the blood, perhaps the features, of this singular being? --Strange as it may seem, a thrill of awe, which shot across my mind at that instant, was not unmingled with a wild and mysterious feeling of wonder, almost amounting to pleasure. I remembered the reflection of my own face in the mirror, at one striking moment during the singular interview of the day, and I hastened to the outward apartment to consult a glass which hung there, whether it were possible for my countenance to be again contorted into the peculiar frown which so much resembled the terrific look of Herries. But I folded my brows in vain into a thousand complicated wrinkles, and I was obliged to conclude, either that the supposed mark on my brow was altogether imaginary, or that it could not be called forth by voluntary effort; or, in fine, what seemed most likely, that it was such a resemblance as the imagination traces in the embers of a wood fire, or among the varied veins of marble, distinct at one time, and obscure or invisible at another, according as the combination of lines strikes the eye, or impresses the fancy. (207)

This passage is interesting as it deals with a grown man contemplating himself in a mirror as an effort toward self-identity. It is important to note differing psychological and cultural interpretations in this act of contemplation that serve to highlight Bakhtin's insistence on the role of 'other' or 'others'. Jacques Lacan, the Freudian psychoanalytical theorist, has placed the self in a position before a mirror for its first efforts at identity. In his essay 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', he states that the child forms identity, and hence the birth of language, through observation in a mirror. However, for Lacan this identification is possible only as a 'glance', an 'instantaneous aspect of the image' (2) rather than a dwelled upon investigation of the reflection. Lacan goes on to define the 'mirror-stage' as:

a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from insufficiency to anticipation--and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality...and, lastly to the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development. (4)

If we consider Darsie at the previous moment of glimpsing himself in the mirror as being re-born into a new identity, the Lacanian model may hold true for his ensuing attempt at recapturing the horseshoe mark that would confirm his suspicions. He cannot contort his face into the mark that he is looking for, he cannot establish his identity consciously. In attempting to do so he is both removing the Lacanian glance which ensures his identity and projecting himself as an 'other' into the mirror, a condition which Bakhtinian theory also will not allow. However, where Lacan admits of the possibility of recognizing (albeit for a split second) the 'I' of the 'other' in the mirror, Bakhtin denies this identification emphatically:

A very special case of seeing my exterior is looking at myself in a mirror. It would appear that in this case we see ourselves directly. But this is not so. We remain within ourselves and we see only our own reflection, which is not capable of becoming an immediate moment in our seeing and experiencing of the world. We see the *reflection* of our exterior, but not *ourselves* in terms of our exterior. The exterior does not encompass all of me--I am in front of the mirror and not in it. The mirror can do no more than provide the material for self-objectification, and even that not in its pure form. Indeed, our position in front of a mirror is always somewhat spurious, for since we lack any approach to ourselves from outside, in this case, as in the other, we project ourselves into a peculiarly indeterminate possible other, with whose help we then try to find an axiological position in relation to ourselves; in this case too, we try to vivify ourselves and give form to ourselves--out of the other. (AH 32-3)

It is sufficient to point out here the events that follow Darsie's mirror-searching that verify the Bakhtinian approach and reveal those transredient elements which can not possibly be realized by one consciousness. It is while he is studying himself in the mirror that Darsie is interrupted by the maid-servant who immediately recognizes the mark of identity as he turns to her. The import of the Redgauntlet resemblance is then confirmed by Herries himself, so that through the agency of the 'other' as embodied by the maidservant and Herries, Darsie's identity as Redgauntlet is completed (and it will be fulfilled further by Liliastoun during the later ride to Joe Crackenthorp's public house). What makes a comparison of Lacan and Bakhtin relevant to *Redgauntlet*, and indeed to most of the Scott works discussed here, is the fact that heroes in Scott rely on others to form identities, they do not form cohesive selves in isolation or in self-contemplation, but always through dialogue and engagement with others. We will see this again when we consider cultural completion. Bakhtin alerts us to ways in which Scott's novels (like Burns's poems) are fundamentally social.

Instances in which a person's search for identity are entwined with a cultural search are pervasive in all three of the novels under consideration. In *Waverley* this quest takes the form of a hunt for political allegiance on the part of *Waverley* combined with the larger national liberation of Scotland from England. In *Redgauntlet* the alliances are more unclear as the cultural sections involved

have expanded from the political and geographical groupings of *Waverley* to include religious and professional arenas of discourse. The Quakers as represented by Joshua Geddes, the legal infrastructure of Edinburgh as portrayed by Alan Fairford, his father, and Peter Peebles, the merchant classes as seen in the characters of Thomas Trumbull and Joe Crackenthorp, and the smuggling life as witnessed in the accounts of Nanty Ewart all speak with each other. Divisions can even be seen within professions as the rigid life of law in Edinburgh is contrasted with the more relaxed country jurisprudence of Justice Foxley and Nicholas Faggot. Where the divisions between Highland and Lowland, England and Scotland, and Jacobite and Whig form the important differences and contentions in *Waverley*, in *Redgauntlet* these differences have splintered even further. Within Dumfriesshire itself there are various fishing factions, religious orders, manners of eating and socializing within different communities. What is accomplished by Scott, as pointed out by Robert Crawford in *Devolving English Literature*, is a 'cultural amalgam' (132). In Bakhtinian terms, what is being accomplished is a form of cultural dialogism which portrays different voices interplaying at different stages of crisis in Anglo-Scottish history. In *Waverley* these voices seem to be more distinct as the lines of political demarcation are made to seem clearer. However, what becomes noticeable in *Ivanhoe* and what begs a more thorough examination of *Waverley*, is the timeless quality of tension between and among segments of society and the indecipherable splintering of these factions into greater

levels of dialogue and difference. 'The events depicted in the novel should somehow *substitute* for the total life of the epoch. In their capacity to represent the real-life whole lies their artistic essentiality' (B 43). But what this implies, and what is borne out in Scott's novels, is that myth (in the shape of folklore), among other things, has a place in creating history, albeit history as defined by dialogue between different languages that leads to a picture of the whole of society. I shall conclude my consideration of Scott by developing this point.

Ina Ferris has pointed out in *The Achievement of Literary Authority: Gender, History and the Waverley Novels*, that 'Scott saturates conventional space with cultural and personal time' (130). She discusses different chronotopic forms in the Waverley novels and how Scott transforms folkloric time into national-historical time.¹² We might conclude that such a folkloric influence on the Scott chronotope that succeeds in producing national-historical time is also inextricably bound up with questions of an identity which is fulfilled by an 'other', whether it is verifiable or not. In other words, folklore may serve as both the mirror and the fully-embodied other by which a nation identifies itself. In *Ivanhoe*, Scott utilizes a number of inaccuracies to produce an image of a whole. The myth of Robin Hood and his men rubs elbows with the history of Richard Coeur de Lion, and even that history is frequently flawed. In a similar way in *Redgauntlet*, 'Wandering Willie's Tale' represents a story of lost

¹² See especially the chapter 'From "National Tale" to "Historical Novel": Edgeworth, Morgan, and Scott'.

identity in the shape of the receipt that Steenie Steenson undergoes supernatural ordeals to recover. In such a way, Scott presents the mythical and folkloric as a way of both confirming and denying history's legitimacy. Employing the folkloric or mystical is a way of recovering fragments of lost identity in order to reveal a whole that history more often than not refuses to yield. Such a viewpoint is maintained by Cairns Craig who sees in the fictions of 19th-century Scotland an attempt to repudiate the rational reality that historians and philosophers of the Enlightenment were espousing:

What I want to suggest is that historicity in the Scottish context has always been much more problematic than such a scenario would allow, and that the conjunction of 'history-as-reality' and 'realism-as-history' never fitted with Scottish culture, or indeed any culture which did not see itself as either at the centre or at the forefront of the process of history. The lack of a 'realist' tradition in the novel in nineteenth-century Scotland is not, therefore, a *failure* of the imagination: it is in fact an indication that the realist tradition could not answer the questions which Scottish culture posed to its authors. (1992: 210)

Craig sees Scott as 'sceptical of the "truths" of history' (214) and sees Scott's fictions as attempts at a 'wilful reversal of historical progress' (216) that move forward by means of a 'dialectic' (217). In a Bakhtinian sense, what this suggests is that perhaps what Scott was aiming at with his inclusion of the myths and folk tales was akin to a carnivalesque response to the authority of history that had been demeaning the role of the imagination through an increasing rationalism. However, in fulfilling a carnival role, these inserted fictions act as well to confirm the authority of history. Although they do not confirm rational

history they at least act to affirm a cultural identity. They provide the larger 'other' whose characteristics, be they folkloric, religious, or mythological, are transgredient to rational and systematic history. In such a way, Scott was able to provide instances of individual and collective consciousnesses struggling towards completion while yet avoiding the stultifying closure of historical documentation. Scott recognized the complementary psychological and cultural requirements necessary for constructing fluid and progressing communities in time and space. As we will see in the following section on James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson, Scottish literature often assesses the viability and vitality of communities through the construction of personal identities. Where Scott views an idea of community through a shared cultural and folkloric past, Hogg and Stevenson identify the necessity of 'shared identity' by portraying characters such as Robert Wringham and Dr. Jekyll as dysfunctional members of a society that attempts to create identity in isolation. Bakhtinian analysis of these characters will reveal the developments of flawed selves and the larger flawed communities they establish.

Self and Society in Hogg and Stevenson

Rich rewards are yielded from Bakhtin's theories when they are used to investigate the 'classic' antisyzygical texts of James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson. Duality and aspects of the *döppelgänger* have long been discussed with regard to *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824) and *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886). Studies of these works have revealed qualities of duality and split consciousness that have stood as the defining pattern of Scottish literature. Whereas a line itself can be traced back perhaps centuries to the poetry of the Makars, the concept becomes cemented in the critical heritage of Scottish literature with the works of Hogg and Stevenson.

A re-evaluation of these core works in the light of Bakhtin's dialogic theories will in turn open up the treatments of subsequent works that may have been pigeonholed too easily into antisyzygical categories. To interpret these works in terms of mere binary oppositions is over-reductive. This is not to underestimate the critical importance of the antisyzygy. Instead of entirely replacing one mode of thinking about these texts with another, we may more fruitfully consider antisyzygical ideas as encouraging us towards the fuller, more sophisticated readings made possible by knowledge of Bakhtin's work. To move beyond the antisyzygy in this way is to further understand the complicated nature of duality and 'the double' which operates in these works and which

is highly in keeping with a Bakhtinian pluralism of identities.

As the antisyzygy sets up divisions and splits in these works, it is necessary, at first, to identify oppositional forces and contradictory relationships within them. Once this is achieved, it can be seen that there is no simple one-to-one correlation between antagonistic forces. As Bakhtinian novelistic discourse requires, there exist interwoven layers, strata of forces working simultaneously within the texts. Bakhtin has labelled these forces centrifugal and centripetal:

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The process of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance.... (DIN 272)

Centrifugal forces 'strive to keep things various, separate, apart, different from each other,' whereas centripetal forces 'strive to keep things together, unified, same' (Clark & Holquist 7). These simple definitions are expanded by Clark and Holquist to include their Bakhtinian relevance to textual criticism:

Centrifugal forces compel movement, becoming, and history; they long for change and new life. Centripetal forces urge stasis, resist becoming, abhor history, and desire the seamless quiet of death. (7-8)

It is the interaction of these forces in a novel that provides the structure of the dialogue.

In discussing *Confessions* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, an understanding of these forces can be teased out of the casual observance of hitherto diametrically opposed quantities such as good and evil. In reading *Confessions*,

attributes of good and evil can be allocated to characters at a very surface level of understanding. Later in the book, Robert Colwan seems evil to the reader when compared with his brother George. But on closer initial inspection we see Robert to be the more 'pious' of the two and thus, in some ways, closer to the goodness promised by Calvinistic adherence to the laws of the kirk. Hence 'good' is complicated from the outset. When theories of predestination are added to conceptions of good and evil, the mixture blurs distinctions to an even greater degree. Likewise in *Jekyll and Hyde*, good and evil are confused in Dr. Jekyll before he takes the potion that segments him into different psychological and moral spheres. Looked at in antisyzygical terms, both novels seem to propose black and white oppositions. However, these simple divisive formulations are defeated by closer scrutiny of the texts in terms of Bakhtinian theories.

As we have seen in the considerations of Scott, the nature of authorship and its relationship to questions of identity are another area for Bakhtinian investigation. Questions of self and other are highly charged in each of these novels. Beyond questions of good and evil, however, the books raise some basic psychological questions which concern language and the search for identity. In the section titled 'Discourse in Dostoevsky' in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin highlights relationships between authors and the characters they create as they can be observed through different levels of discourse. In this section Bakhtin speaks of 'confessional dialogues' and the

'role of the other person as the other' (262). Here Bakhtin, in speaking of various characters in Dostoevsky's novels, points out instances of dialogue in which one character serves to complete the dialogue of another character. In other words, a character's external dialogue may serve to complete the interior dialogue of the person with whom he is speaking.

In discussing the works of Stevenson and Hogg, we see that the Bakhtinian ideas of transgression (discussed with relation to Scott) and identity are further complicated by questions of a 'confessional' nature. The confessions of both the last part of *Jekyll and Hyde* and the second half of *Confessions* bear scrutiny in and of themselves as they are juxtaposed with the views of 'others' outside of the consciousnesses of Robert Wringhim and Henry Jekyll. Bakhtin's essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' (AH) and his chapter titled 'Discourse in Dostoevsky' from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* discuss creation of the self and principles of the 'double':

One can, of course, make the attempt to visualize one's own outward image in imagination, to 'feel' oneself from outside, to translate oneself from the language of inner self-sensation into that of outward expressedness in being. But this is far from easy to do. It requires a special and unusual effort, and this difficulty and effort are quite unlike those we experience when trying to recall the not-too-familiar and half-forgotten face of another person. What is involved is less a matter of having an insufficient memory of our own outward appearance than it is a matter of a certain resistance exerted by our outward image. (AH 30)

This sounds much like what Robert Wringhim undergoes in the creation of his 'double' Gil-Martin of whom Robert

remarks on his first meeting with Gil-Martin that he bears a likeness to himself:

What was my astonishment, on perceiving that he was the same being as myself! The clothes were the same to the smallest item. The form was the same; the apparent age; the colour of the hair; the eyes; and, as far as recollection could serve me from viewing my own features in a glass, the features too were the very same. I conceived at first, that I saw a vision, and that my guardian angel had appeared to me at this important era in my life, but this singular being read my thoughts in my looks, anticipating the very words that I was going to utter. (126)

Questions of self and other would not be very important if Gil-Martin simply resembled Robert. It is the necessary aspect of language and the completion which language offers that consummates the important self/other relationship between Robert and his other, even if this is rather one-sided. In other words, Gil-Martin is Robert's double, fulfilling some functions of an other, but not the same functions as he would if he were completely independent of him. Although several other characters in the novel can see Gil-Martin, they each see him differently. He makes his appearance conform to the psychological needs of the individuals who view him. In much the same way as Gil-Martin appears to anticipate the thoughts of Robert, he anticipates the guilt of others who view him and adapts his shape accordingly. For instance, Mrs. Logan sees the shape of the dead George Colwan in Gil-Martin. However, for Robert alone, he functions as a second self, a 'double' who performs the role of an other, and it is because of this that Gil-Martin exerts such power over him.

'You think I am your brother,' said he; 'or that I am your second self. I am indeed your brother, not

according to the flesh, but in my belief of the same truths, and my assurance in the same mode of redemption, than which, I hold nothing so great or glorious on earth.' (126)

Here the confusion of 'others' is presented by Gil-Martin himself, who seems to know intuitively the psychological necessities of the other, and his own particular place in that configuration with regard to Robert. Noting the discrepancy between Robert and his 'evil' other of *Confessions*, the reader may find it helpful to ask how much of Robert's 'good' can be attributed to the other's evil:

I generally conceived myself to be two people...this my second self was sure to be present in his place; and this occasioned a confusion in all my words and ideas that utterly astounded my friends, who all declared, that instead of being deranged in my intellect, they had never heard my conversation manifest so much energy or sublimity of conception; but for all that, over the singular delusion that I was two persons, my reasoning faculties had no power. The most perverse part of it was, that I rarely conceived *myself* to be any of the two persons. I thought for the most part that my companion was one of them, and my brother the other; and I found, that to be obliged to speak and answer in the character of another man, was a most awkward business at the long run. (157)

In this passage, the very concept of two selves fuels an energy that is very much like Bakhtin's conception of centrifugal and centripetal interaction. Robert's two selves combine to produce an energy in the eyes of his friends. When he reflects upon his own nature, it is to note how like his companion and his brother he has become. Robert pays too little attention to the actual others around him (society) and too much attention to the apparent other, Gil-Martin. Hogg creates a multitude of possible selves, rather than simply one self or the other.

Confessions, in this way, can be read as a novel that is very much concerned with social process and the disruption and corruption of the isolated individual. The creation of multiple selves complicates an antisyzygical opposition that is dependent on counterparts. Bakhtin lets us see the plurality of others that goes into defining a self, rather than relying on one isolated other. He also allows us to see how Hogg's text defies static interpretations of good and evil.

In *Confessions* and in *Jekyll and Hyde* authoring goes beyond the bounds of historical reflection. In Scott we observed the combinations of time and space which lent a flavor of the future, but here the combinations are much more personal in nature and denote a greater crisis of identity. Where Scott's multi-voiced texts beg the reader to tease out cultural differences to see how they intersect and interact with each other, here the voices are in many ways self-created, false, and fraught with ambiguity. Multiplicity is much more a function of division than difference in these novels, but Hogg and Stevenson are successful because they realize this and they make the struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces a conflict between human nature as variegated and interactive and personal desire as constricted and partitioned. In such a way, Bakhtin allows us to see 'doubleness' as a way of giving an intense focus to multiplicity. The 'double' is no longer simply a single entity, but one of many others.

An awareness of Bakhtin lets us read Hogg's and Stevenson's stories as being not simply about Robert and Gil-Martin or Jekyll and Hyde but about Robert or Jekyll and society with all its potential 'others'. Robert's and Jekyll's problem is that they become fixated on only one other, their supposed doubles. The characters are destroyed in each work through an inability to make effective use of the dialectic between the opposing forces, and each of them realizes the nature of their downfall by the end. Bakhtin sees the importance of the 'other' as a true other rather than the creation of a double:

I shall become slightly 'doubled', but shall not come apart completely: the umbilical cord of my self-sensation will continue to connect my outward expressedness in being with my inner experience of myself...and when we succeed in doing this, we shall be struck by the peculiar *emptiness, ghostliness*, and an eerie, frightening *solitariness* of this outward image of ourselves. What accounts for this? It is explained by the fact that we lack any emotional and volitional approach to this outward image that could vivify it and include or incorporate it axiologically within the outward unity of the plastic-pictorial world. (AH 30)

This is the self-image of Robert in Gil-Martin and of Dr. Jekyll in Mr. Hyde, that originally appears as something desirable and capable of the completion of certain aspects of a self, but which is later seen to be destructive and incapable of fulfilling the role of an other as a distinct entity able to perceive and complete a self through the agency of transredient vision.¹³ Bakhtin explains:

In order to vivify my own outward image and make it a part of a concretely viewable whole, the entire

¹³ Transgredience is defined more fully in terms of Scott in the previous section. See especially page 92.

architectonic of the world of my imagining must be radically restructured by introducing a totally new factor into it. This new factor that restructures the architectonic consists in my outward image being affirmed and founded in emotional and volitional terms out of the other and for the other human being. (AH 30)

While this deals with the outward image, it is nonetheless applicable for the completion of the inner experience, as Bakhtin points out in 'Discourse in Dostoevsky' when he discusses the role of the other in inner discourse and 'double-voiced' discourse. We will turn to this work later when we consider the question of confessional self-authoring and the restrictive nature of communication in these novels. For the moment, what is essential to grasp is that Bakhtin allows us to see both the Hogg and the Stevenson texts as dealing with identity as being not a solipsistic prison, but rather a social process.

In such a way, a polyphony does exist in these novels, but on a different level from that of Scott. Karl Miller has pointed to the 'fugues', the 'lost time' of amnesia that exists in *Confessions* when Robert cannot remember his activities for months when he is possessed by his 'other' personality (7). What is interesting to note is the double meaning of the word 'fugue' which lends itself to a Bakhtinian reading of *Confessions*. The psychological interpretation of fugue is that presented by Miller, 'the loss of awareness of one's identity, often coupled with flight from one's usual environment' (OED). However, the other definition of fugue is musical, and admits of many forces at work: 'a contrapuntal composition in which a short melody or phrase is introduced by one

part (the subject) and successively taken up by others and developed by interweaving the parts' (OED). We can see Robert introducing Gil-Martin as an other who changes shape in the eyes of others and eventually even in his (Robert's) own eyes. Robert's fugues are also the times when he assumes other (albeit more evil) characteristics.

It might now be profitable to turn our attention to Henry Jekyll's creation of an 'other' that is as debilitating as Robert Wringhim's. Henry Jekyll's double does not appear as a response to a necessary completion within himself as Robert Wringhim's does. Where Robert's double appears as a fulfilling component to his justification as one of the elect, Henry Jekyll's appears as the result of a desire to purge one half of his nature from the other.

...I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date, even before the course of my scientific discoveries had begun to suggest the most naked possibility of such a miracle, I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. (82)

In such a way, Henry's double is not a true double, it is a half of a double, an other that has dissociated itself from a self and which gradually gains self-sufficiency when divorced from its author. There is no nourishing interaction between Henry's halves. When, at the start of the story, Henry is Dr. Jekyll, he contains both sides of his personality which at first maintain a healthy balance. But the more Henry reverts to Hyde the greater the evil

side of his personality predominates, even when as Jekyll he is in possession of both sides:

I had now two characters as well as two appearances, one was wholly evil, and the other was still the old Henry Jekyll, that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair. The movement was thus wholly toward the worse. (85)

Here again, we are dealing with a simple opposition of good and evil. As it exists in Dr. Jekyll, evil is not pure but remains compounded with good, whereas Hyde exhibits a more purified form of evil. Bakhtin allows us to get beyond antisyzygical considerations of Jekyll and Hyde as simply good (Jekyll) and evil (Hyde), by frustrating our attempts to pigeon-hole them into antipodal modes of morality.

Jekyll and Hyde is another story in which a mirror comes into play, and (following its initial consultation on the first night of Henry's transformation) it takes a prominent position Henry's laboratory as he wishes to be able to ascertain which of his selves is currently in possession. Upon his first glance, however, he is not aware of any division: 'This, too, was myself....it seemed more express and single, than the imperfect and divided countenance, I had been hitherto accustomed to call mine' (84-5). Jekyll welcomes the distinction between his selves. When he refers to his old commingled state it is always in a rather disparaging tone. He remarks upon his condition of wholeness as representing an 'incongruous compound' (85). It is only when he comes to realize that the 'balance of my nature might be permanently overthrown'

(89) that he begins to repent of his tampering with the laws of human nature.

...a second participant is implicated in the event of self-contemplation, a fictitious other, a nonauthoritative and unfounded author. I am not alone when I look at myself in the mirror: I am possessed by someone else's soul. More than that. At times, this other soul may gain body to the point where it attains a certain self-sufficiency. (AH 33)

Bakhtin goes on in this vein to point out how the individual, witnessing this 'other' is vexed by the possibility of the other forming a comprehensive evaluation. In other words, the self revolts against completion by an other as that which is in effect impossible. If it was possible, it would signal death. Such is the situation with regard to Henry Jekyll who faces completion, not in the sense of 'wholeness' which is a healthy Bakhtinian approach to the interaction with an other, but rather the absolute hegemony of one side of his nature over the other. Thus division is welcomed by Henry when he knows that he can resort to a self composed of two halves whenever he wishes. It is the fear of becoming completely Hyde, which would in effect destroy the position of being cognizant of the difference between good and evil, that frightens Henry the most.

It is interesting to note that it is in the final days and moments of Henry Jekyll's life, when he is undergoing the ever-increasing changes into Hyde that the two sides begin to take on a discourse of their own.

...the hatred that now divided them was equal on each side. With Jekyll, it was a thing of vital instinct. He had now seen the full deformity of that creature that shared with him some of the phenomena of consciousness, and was co-heir with him to death: and beyond these links of community, which in

themselves made the most poignant part of his distress, he thought of Hyde, for all his energy of life, as of something not only hellish but inorganic...the slime of the pit seemed to utter cries and voices...The hatred of Hyde for Jekyll was of a different order. His terror of the gallows drove him continually to commit temporary suicide, and return to his subordinate station of a part instead of a person...Hence the ape-like tricks that he would play me, scrawling in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books... (95-6)

Thus the relationship between Henry and Hyde becomes an unhealthy parody of dialogue. Jekyll wants to say nothing to Hyde and Hyde wants to take over Jekyll entirely. Hyde commits 'temporary suicide' by throwing himself into a relationship with the other side of Henry's personality, killing his purity, but he does it to survive. He relies on Henry's mixture of opposites to save him from the detection of those who would do away with him. He sacrifices his purity of self, the isolated purity of evil which matters most to him. If Hyde treasures his isolation, he nonetheless must partake of Henry, paradoxically 'commit temporary suicide', in order to survive. Whereas previously in the story we have been drawn to Henry's acute distress with the situation of the burgeoning power of Hyde out of all proportion to the power of Jekyll, we now see a similar concern on the part of Hyde as to the subjugation of his 'person' to that of a 'part'. It is not the fear of a total takeover of the 'good' in Henry that prompts Hyde's terror, indeed that possibility is never suggested. Rather it is the impure mixture of the two that becomes anathema to the absolutist Hyde as he realizes that Henry (as dual-natured) possesses both the knowledge of Hyde's evil and the power to subdue

it. Bakhtin describes such a self-revelation of the overwhelming power of the other-in-self thus:

...the reflection of myself in the other, i.e., that which I am for the other, becomes a *double* of myself. This double irrupts into my self-consciousness, clouds its purity, and deflects my self-consciousness from its direct axiological relationship to itself. Fear of the double. (AH 59)

For Bakhtin, anything that clouds purity must be good in its own way as it denies stasis and completion. Thus, the fear of the double which is engendered is a necessary destabilizing factor for the consciousness. Hyde's fear of Henry is not fear of 'good', but of that impure relationship between good and evil that exists in Henry and which threatens Hyde with community. Hyde is afraid of an interchange between a variety of forces. He relies on a state of existence which recognizes only extremes. He must have community in order to exist, but he instinctively hates it as it denies him total authority. It is this lust for total authority, absolute purity of self, which makes Hyde the lethal enemy of society.

What is more to the point in the above description of Jekyll's and Hyde's interaction is the nature of the dialogue between them. This indicates a form of interior discourse albeit with an 'other' devised by the self. Importantly, it suggests dialogic activity between an author (Henry) and a character (Hyde, whom Henry has created) on one hand. On the other hand, as a confession, it implies a rebinding of the two into one, for Henry writes the confession yet shares it with Hyde. As an author, Henry writes his confession with Hyde as a character, but since Hyde is part of Jekyll he (Hyde)

unwittingly assists Henry in writing the confession. Thus fiction, and, since this is a confession, truth, become implicated in the formation of identity. When Henry writes Hyde into his confession he creates him once more, not only as his 'other' but as a character with definite boundaries outside of Henry. But just as Hyde scrawled 'in my own hand blasphemies on the pages of my books', so too his handwriting must be acknowledged in Henry's statement of the case. Thus the nature of authorship becomes more problematical and less verifiable in antiszygical terms. Bakhtin's conception of authorship questions the identity of the 'author' and makes that a more fluid and multi-faceted idea, rather than a definitive and unitary object.

When compared with the Editor's narration, the second part of *Confessions*, the actual confession, partakes of a field of vision outside, or transgredient to, that of the editor's narrative (which is in fact an amalgamation of viewpoints, George Colwan's, Mrs. Logan's, and so on). Again, therefore, notions of binary opposition are broken down. Likewise, the editor's section is able to provide insights into events and conditions transgredient to Robert's environment. It would be wrong to say simply that both sections 'speak to each other'. Yet in a way they do for the reader who attempts to form a sense of a 'whole' from the differing narratives of the same events. In a sense, Hogg is here carnivalizing traditional narrative techniques by dislocating his story into a multiplicity of narratives much in the way that Alasdair Gray does, as we will see in the following chapter.

What concerns us here, however, is the very confessional nature of the second part of *Confessions*. Here, Robert makes sense of his world and his situation in it by setting forth the events that befall him, his reactions to them, and his perceptions of the other in the form of Gil-Martin. The dialogue between Robert and Gil-Martin, and the perception of that dialogue becomes important here as it exists in a 'confessional' framework. We have seen before how Gil-Martin was able to anticipate the thoughts of Robert, so that therefore, in a way, it is fruitless for Robert to 'confess' anything to this seemingly omniscient double. However, in so doing for the reader's sake, Robert enacts the power of 'self-accounting' language to overcome an unbridgeable psychological division. This is likewise the case in *Jekyll and Hyde* in which Henry's final 'confession' is a last ditch attempt at making himself coherent once more through writing his other, taking the history (as a written document) of the other back into his own hands.

Hogg and Stevenson question 'readership' in presenting two confessions whose target audiences are hard to identify. The audience for Robert's confession may or may not be God. He attempts book publication thus suggesting that his memoirs will not be as private as we have come to expect. Henry Jekyll intends his confession to be read by Utterson but lives in fear that Hyde will 'take me in the act of writing it' (97), and he almost removes his own authority in writing it by referring to himself as if he were an outside observer of 'that unhappy

Henry Jekyll' (97). Thus the rules of narrative are toyed with in both works to the point where simple allocations of 'author' and 'reader' become jumbled and harder to disentangle. But inherent in each is the desire to be read by an 'other' or others, the attempt to join a community, to come out of isolation. In such a way, writing becomes a mode of joining community, of defining a self by making a connection with a readership (whoever that may be, God or otherwise). Writing is a way of attempting to become again a fully social being, and so escaping isolated imprisonment with evil.

In terms of *Confessions*, these ideas are fruitful in that they expose the confession of Robert Wringhim to have taken the fiction of Hogg a step further. The confession of Robert is both his and Gil-Martin's and the part which is Gil-Martin's possesses the supposed transgredient perceptions of the other characters in Hogg's novel. Robert takes over from Hogg and the editor in fictionalizing his own life. The reactions of the other characters in the novel, which were made evident to the reader in the earlier section, are here anticipated by Robert who uses his other to judge his actions for the benefit of the reader who will pass judgement on the whole of his life. 'I was a being incomprehensible to myself' (181), remarks Robert. Thus he calls both on the aid of the other, Gil-Martin, and the act of confession in order to understand himself. Yet the presence of Gil-Martin and the act of confession are in some ways opposed. As the horrors which Hyde provokes isolate Jekyll from

wider society, so the atrocities which Gil-Martin calls forth from Robert cut him off from meaningful wider social intercourse. The apparent 'dialogue' or 'community' with the evil authoritarian other is a dark parody of normal social relations. In order to escape from this isolating and imprisoning contact with an evil other, a 'confession' to an outside audience, whether divine or human, becomes essential. The confession signals a desire for a wider dialogue which is denied by the presence of Hyde or Gil-Martin. Yet as Gil-Martin seems the only other who can help to 'complete' Robert, especially during the times when they are alone together, he is the only one who can provide the transgredient elements from which Robert can draw in framing a portrait of himself. Robert's reliance on Gil-Martin is evident throughout the text: 'he had as complete influence over me by night as by day' (141), 'I ran to meet my companion, out of whose eye I had now no life' (144). It is by Gil-Martin's particular skill at assuming other identities that he is able to capture that which is transgredient to others in their own aspects and personalities:

'My countenance changes with my studies and sensations,' said he....'If I contemplate a man's features seriously, mine own gradually assume the very same appearance and character. And what is more, by contemplating a face minutely, I not only attain the same likeness, but, with the likeness, I attain the very same ideas as well as the same mode of arranging them...' (132)

Dialogue works in a confessional manner in the second section of the novel which reflects Bakhtin's ideas of 'double-voiced discourse' or discourse 'directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary

discourse, and toward *another's discourse*, toward *someone else's speech*' (PDP 185). As Gil-Martin assumes the transgredient elements of others, it is Robert's speech, and more particularly his confession, which are directed toward Gil-Martin's speech. Robert is obsessed by the teachings of Gil-Martin, and he directs his own discourse toward the words of the other: 'All my dreams corresponded exactly with his suggestions; and when he was absent from me, still his arguments sunk deeper in my heart than even when he was present' (141). Gil-Martin seems both essential to Robert and fatal to him. Robert confesses all his doubts and troubles to Gil-Martin within the confessional text that he is preparing for other readers. Even by the end of his memoirs when he condemns Gil-Martin for ruining his life, he is unable to do without him, he provides the necessary other for confessional purposes. This corresponds with Bakhtin's notions of confessional dialogue as determined by a 'dual attitude toward the "other person":...the impossibility of managing without his judgment and forgiveness, and at the same time by a hostility toward him and resistance to his judgment and forgiveness' (PDP 262). In such a way the 'confessions' of Robert become directed less towards an unknown audience as towards the desired other. The desired other, the intended reader, can be God, or Gil-Martin, but it can also be a further 'other' that Robert is attempting to create through his confessions and with which he wants to supplant Gil-Martin. The other that Robert creates through his confessions is one who will vindicate him from the

crime of having sought completion through the agency of only one other. It is not only a moral vindication that Robert seeks through his confessions, but also a psychological vindication for having a restricted double life rather than a life with many facets of otherness. It is only at the end of *Confessions* that Robert tries to amalgamate a moral life with a life of community, and he is thwarted from successfully doing so by the demons that he has cultivated in isolation. Acting alone, with only Gil-Martin as his friend, Robert has been prevented from understanding his actions in terms of community and culture. Once he enters that sphere, and attempts to add his own voice to that chorus he is stifled by a rigid morality that denies him a social presence. And yet, like Hyde fighting Jekyll, Robert's isolated and tormented self struggles ultimately towards community even though that is what ultimately kills him. Robert creates what Bakhtin calls a 'loophole' in order to achieve vindication from many potential others, rather than an single, isolated voice:

The loophole creates a special type of fictive ultimate word about oneself with an unclosed tone to it, obtrusively peering into the other's eyes and demanding from the other a sincere refutation....Self-condemnation and self-vindication divided between two voices--I condemn myself, another vindicates me--but anticipated by a single voice, create in that voice interruptions and an internal duality. (*PDP* 234)

The loophole, for Robert, is the confession which allows him to get outside of, to bypass, Gil-Martin. Such a loophole is seen as well in the title 'Private Confessions' which indicate both an isolated, restricted

area as well as a pouring forth to potential others. Centrifugal and centripetal forces react against each other even in the title. Robert's confessions are therefore the search for another voice or voices with which to complete his discourse. It is a search which contains a loophole in itself as he binds his confessions with an oath not to 'alter or amend', but we see in the Editor's narrative (and its later games with Hogg's authorship) that this position has already been refuted. Bakhtin is an excellent theoretical guide to the many possibilities which Hogg's loopholes and tensions create. Bakhtin sees notions of the 'double' as static and invites other interpretations to widen that psychological construct to include many layers and sides of reflected selves which are constantly changing, refusing to be nailed down.

In *Jekyll and Hyde*, the duality of confession takes on even greater proportions in Henry Jekyll's realization that it is an other within himself, not manifested in the outside world, which also helps to determine his self:

I thus drew steadily nearer to that truth...that man is not truly one, but truly two. I say two, because the state of my own knowledge does not pass beyond that point. Others will follow, others will outstrip me on the same lines; and I hazard the guess that man will be ultimately known for a mere polity of multifarious, incongruous and independent denizens...I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both... (82)

Here Henry recognizes a self cultivated within himself that is separate from the outside world. This is not to deny the self that exists outside, but to include yet

another self (an interior self) in the process of identity. Henry goes on to wish for the separation of the two elements that make up his struggling psyche, but to no avail. Here, as opposed to *Confessions*, the lines of demarcation between selves is more pronounced. Here Henry wishes a 'dissociation' (82) of selves rather than a dialectic of identities. The impossibility of achieving this for him leads to his destruction.

This necessary interaction of identities can be compared to Adam Smith's notion of an 'impartial spectator' within the self which, while recognizing the need for others in order to exist and progress, yet develops an independence that allows it to act on its own: 'This "demigod within the breast," though its nurturing depends on our having entered into the mutable opinions of others, allows us at least occasionally to act against mere popular opinion, in the name of genuine wisdom and greatness' (Smith 131; cited in Court 23) Franklin Court argues that Smith equates these personal selves with the good of the nation and thus begs an interaction on many levels that accords with Bakhtin's own notions of cultural exchange and enhancement: '...a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched' (RQ 7). If we consider *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Confessions* within this larger cultural perspective we can recognize a concern with the selfhood of a nation and the complicated way in which it strives to identify itself in terms of both others and its own distinctive self that

it develops through an active interchange with other cultures.

Bakhtin is useful for reading these texts by Hogg and Stevenson because he helps to indicate the importance of the self in Scottish literary tradition not as isolated but as inextricably bound up with society. What Bakhtin restores to a discussion of these works is the idea that they're not just about a good self versus a bad self, but about the need for society rather than isolation.

We can see that what Bakhtin offers the Scottish literary tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is the value of openness and incompleteness. He offers alternatives to those preoccupations with purely chronological history and psychological division that dominate antiszygical assessments of classic texts such as those covered so far in this chapter. Scottish literature is rich in Bakhtinian possibility by the very fact of its historical and linguistic ambivalence and indecisiveness. A Bakhtinian reading allows us to see these qualities as riches, not defects. In the concluding section to this chapter, we will look at how Bakhtin's ideas about open identities are useful when reading the poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid, a poet who was very much concerned with changing the so-called 'defects' of Scottish literature into powerful tools for re-interpreting Scottish culture.

The Drunk Man Looks at the Antisyzygy

As we've seen in the Introduction, the ideas of Hugh MacDiarmid (born Christopher Grieve) were very much influenced by Gregory Smith and his formulation of the Caledonian Antisyzygy. What attracted MacDiarmid to these ideas were their foundation in contradiction, a condition which his own poetry and politics strove to embody (Bold: 1990, 230). Smith's polar twins of rationalism and fantasy that were represented in Scottish literature accorded well with MacDiarmid's own ideas of what was necessary in Scottish literature to make it a more progressive entity. MacDiarmid was very much against the stagnation which he perceived had set in with regard to Scottish letters. He envisioned a tension that would rejuvenate a culture which had become moribund in its adherence to English language, London influence, a sub-Burnsian Scots, and the sentimentality of the Kailyard.

In many ways, a study of MacDiarmid's poetry benefits from a Bakhtinian gloss. MacDiarmid is concerned with presenting a variety of voices that make themselves heard, not necessarily by way of individual speakers, but rather through the application of different disciplines to the poetry. He represents probably the most heteroglossic Scottish poet since Dunbar. The interplay of science, religion, philosophy, and politics in his poetry provides a backdrop for the many voices he admits from European literature and music.

In addition to the extremely dialogic nature of MacDiarmid's poetry, he exhibits a fondness for a mixture

of languages. Although he 'could see no future' in in the creation of verse in Scots (following in Smith's footsteps) (137-8; 145), he later came to embrace a polyglossia which included a return to the Scots of Dunbar 'not Burns' (204) and Gaelic (286-9).

In *The Redress of Poetry* (1995), Seamus Heaney describes the transformation of Christopher Grieve into Hugh MacDiarmid in terms that highlight a concern with linguistic memory:

Grieve turned into MacDiarmid when he realized that his writing identity depended for its empowerment upon his securing an ever deepening access to those primary linguistic strata in his own and his country's memory. (107)

What makes MacDiarmid an excellent subject of analysis through the Bakhtinian lens is his belief in the necessity of creating Scottish identity through contact with other cultures, languages, and literatures, not simply Scots. This desire is hinted at in some of MacDiarmid's earliest verses such as in these lines from 'A Moment in Eternity' (1923):

Like steady and innumerable flames,
Blending into one blaze
Yet each distinct
With shining shadows of difference.
(*Complete Poems* 4)¹⁴

Compare these lines with the following from Bakhtin's essay "Discourse in the Novel":

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape, may

¹⁴ *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, edited by Michael Grieve and W. R. Aiken, (1978). Abbreviated CP in all subsequent references.

leave a trace in all its semantic layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile. (276)

MacDiarmid, like Bakhtin, is concerned about providing an arena in which languages and literatures can interact while yet maintaining their individual identities. Such an activity, in turn creates new and ever-changing identities that revel in the flux of contradiction and possibility:

It is quite possible to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses, one that cannot in principle be fitted into the bounds of a single consciousness, one that is, so to speak, by its very nature *full of event potential* and is born at a point of contact among various consciousnesses. (PDP 81)

These lines, from Bakhtin's essay 'The Idea in Dostoevsky' illustrate what he believed to be of fundamental importance to an understanding of Dostoevsky's novelistic art: the ability to rub separate consciousnesses together in such a way as to create a living narrative. Dostoevsky was very much a part of MacDiarmid's world as well, and he framed his 'Gaelic Idea' on what he perceived to be the 'Russian Idea' of Dostoevsky 'in which he pictured Russia as the sick man possessed of devils but who would yet "sit at the feet of Jesus"' ('The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', in Glen 67). This very carnivalesque image is embraced by MacDiarmid who sees the possibilities of combining incongruities in a creative fashion. He calls Dostoevsky's thoughts in this vein 'a great creative idea--a dynamic myth' (67) and he recognizes in Dostoevsky a kinship with what he (MacDiarmid) sees as a creative Gaelic ideal:

I am not referring only to "Improvement makes straight roads; but the crooked roads without

improvement are roads of genius" (of which, and its opposite, I have suggested that we in Scotland have a higher synthesis in the Gaelic saying *Is cam is dìreach an lagh*; crooked and straight is the law) or to his (Dostoevsky's) extraordinary appreciation of the stratification of the human mind and its power of entertaining all sorts of irreconcilably opposed beliefs at one and the same time... (65-6)

MacDiarmid salutes Dostoevsky in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926) a poem replete with instances of MacDiarmid's debt to Russian literature and the combinative possibilities it offers. In many ways, although less nationalistically (and poetically), the very strengths that Dostoevsky embodies in his novels, and which attract MacDiarmid, influence Bakhtin in the creation of his dialogic theory, especially with regard to his reworked ideas that appear in *Problems of Dostoevsky Poetics*. These concepts, which for MacDiarmid signal the creative, 'dynamic' force that can re-establish Scottish literature and culture in Europe, are analyzed by Bakhtin in terms of language, identity formation and the communal responses that carnival activity provide. A close Bakhtinian reading of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* will offer a glimpse of the primary ideas that influenced MacDiarmid's approach to language, national identity and the creation of a living culture.

In the introduction to the annotated edition of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (Scottish Academic Press, 1987) and in his review of the second edition of the poem (*Saltire Review*, 1954), Kenneth Buthlay (like many other critics) has accurately noted the influence of the idea of the Caledonian Antisyzygy on Hugh MacDiarmid. It is in his introduction as well that Buthlay acknowledges the

importance of Bakhtin to a study of *The Drunk Man*. He identifies the elements of Menippean satire that Peter McCarey has noted in his *Hugh MacDiarmid and the Russians* (1987) as belonging to both Dostoevsky and MacDiarmid, and which he (McCarey) first recognized after reading Bakhtin's *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (1). Buthlay goes on to further scrutinize MacDiarmid by way of Bakhtin and in doing so he calls upon Bakhtin's notions of 'carnival' to assist him:

I think it is the "carnavalesque", however, that is most appropriate to *A Drunk Man*, because the drunkenness of the man is traditionally associated with the carnival spirit in which one finds "'life turned inside out', 'life upside down' ('monde à l'envers')". This involves blasphemous, obscene and parodic elements, since the hierarchial restrictions of normal life are suspended, and "carnival brings together, unifies, weds and combines the sacred with the profane, the lofty with the lowly, the great with the significant, the wise with the stupid". It is indeed yet another manifestation of the antiszygy.... (1i)

In this statement, Buthlay makes an important connection between the 'theory' of Smith, the poetry of MacDiarmid, and the philosophy of Bakhtin. While it will be shown that simple combinations are what limit the potential of the antiszygy and are not really what Bakhtin has in mind, it is significant that the seeds for a better understanding of what the antiszygy offered can be located in Buthlay's considerations of Bakhtin. What Bakhtin lends to this understanding is a productive way of looking at what lies behind the term 'antiszygy' that makes it critically viable. For Smith, the antiszygy is not simply the identification of two moods or the vast contraries that make up the Scottish psyche. It is for him a way of

reading Scottish literature that he traces from the Makars to Scott, a way of assembling a literary tradition. In much the same way, Bakhtin traces the history of the novel in *The Dialogic Imagination* and the history of laughter and carnival in *Rabelais and His World*.

While carnival is certainly important to a reading of *A Drunk Man*, it is profitable to first look at the essence of Bakhtin's dialogism and how it reveals itself 'behind the scenes' in MacDiarmid's poem. In Buthlay's introduction to *A Drunk Man*, he investigates MacDiarmid's use of the word 'gallimaufry' to define what he is trying to do in the text of the work. Buthlay traces the word to MacDiarmid's reading of H.G. Scheffauer and provides the following possible translation: 'the normal meaning of the word, "a heterogeneous mixture, confused jumble, ridiculous medley"' (*li*). Buthlay, however, goes on to qualify MacDiarmid's application of the term 'a gallimaufry in braid Scots' to include a Spenserian twist 'Now they have made our English tongue, a gallimaufry or hodgepodge of al other speches...' (Spenser, quoted in Buthlay *lii*).

In 'Discourse and the Novel', Bakhtin speaks of a stylistics of the novel in contradistinction to a stylistics of poetry. One might consider the possibility that the idea of the antiszygy encourages our envisaging a 'stylistics' that cuts across the limits of genre and opens poetry up to the same dialogic critique as the novel. Bakhtin is himself opposed to stylistics as a way of looking at texts:

The current state of questions posed by a stylistics of the novel reveals, fully and clearly, that all the categories and methods of traditional stylistics remain incapable of dealing effectively with the artistic uniqueness of discourse in the novel, or with the specific life that discourse leads in the novel. (266)

and:

Stylistics locks every stylistic phenomenon into the monologic context of a given self-sufficient and hermetic utterance, imprisoning it, as it were, in the dungeon of a single context; it is not able to exchange messages with other utterances; it is not able to realize its own stylistic implications in a relationship with them; it is obliged to exhaust itself in its own single hermetic context. (274)

Stylistics then, as a way of looking at novels (Bakhtin is precise on this point) is inadequate in its search for 'unity in diversity' (274). It would seem at first that the antisyzygy creates such a quest for unifying opposites, rather than participating in what Bakhtin sees as the more rewarding project of dialogism, partaking of heteroglossia and a multitude of languages.

The poet is a poet insofar as he accepts the idea of a unitary and singular language and a unitary, monologically sealed-off utterance. (DIN 296)

According to Bakhtin's definition, MacDiarmid would not be a poet, for heteroglossia inhabits *A Drunk Man* and draws attention to itself in the poem. This is, in effect, a poem about heteroglossia. Indeed, MacDiarmid's own philosophy of poetry admits of many 'Bakhtinian' characteristics:

...there can be no valid reason why each language should not take over from other languages precisely those elements in the latter in which it is deficient...There is no reason why literature should submit itself to the Procrustean bed of any linguistic laziness; and as to the language purists, their attitude is only another variant of the insidious insistence in divers forms on some sort of "poetic diction", while in actual practice language

does make all sorts of borrowings from other languages (and there is no reason why these should be for less worthy reasons or less systematically brought about), and the very people who object to it in poetry, themselves, in conversation, journalism, and so on, use all sorts of alien tags. (PPT 96, 97)

MacDiarmid was very interested in the possibilities of language, although at first (in line with Gregory Smith) he was disinclined to adopt a position that favored use of the vernacular. This position quickly changed, however, once the success of dialect poems by Lewis Spence gained popularity (Bold: 1990, 152) and the favorable responses to his own vernacular product in *Sangschaw* (1925) and *Penny Wheep* (1926) began to be realized. Additionally, MacDiarmid was, as we learn from a letter he sent to the *Times Literary Supplement* (published 6 October 1927) in defense of his 'glossary' in *A Drunk Man*, 'indulging in "creative linguistics" like the Russian Klebnikov or in forms of *skaz* or *zaumny*' (Bold: 1984, 765).¹⁵ *Skaz* refers, according to Bakhtin, to 'a technique or mode of narration that imitates the oral speech of an individualized narrator' (PDP 8). Bakhtin was very interested in *skaz* as we shall see in later chapters on James Kelman and contemporary Glasgow poets.

Although MacDiarmid's own ideas about language would be later articulated in essays which appear after the publication of *Drunk Man*, traces of his feelings on the subject can be teased both from that poem as well as from earlier verse. A poem such as 'Gairmscoile' is written in

¹⁵ As we shall see later in this chapter, ideas of *skaz* and *zaumny* are referred to poetically by MacDiarmid in *In Memoriam James Joyce*.

a Scots that is as concerned about its own existence as with the past it portrays:

Hee-Haw! Click-Clack! And Cock-a-doodle-doo!
 --Wull Gabriel in Esperanto cry
 Or a' the warld's undeemis jargons try?
It's soon', no' sense, that faddoms the herts o' men,
And by my sangs the rouch auld Scots I ken
E'en herts that ha'e nae Scots'll dirl richt thro'
As nocht else could--for here's a language rings
Wi' datchie sesames, and names for nameless things.
 (CP 74)

Here MacDiarmid celebrates the potential for Scots (and particularly the 'rouch auld Scots' rather than the 'new synthetic Scots') to mingle with other languages to create a living language that is capable of naming 'nameless things'.

The idea of stylistic inadequacy underlies a traditional antisyzygical gloss of *A Drunk Man* since it places emphasis upon diverse elements in isolation from their dialogic interaction with one another. Dialogic reassessment demands that the symbolic and linguistic play in the poem interact on a variety of levels. On one level, the symbols and language create an exchange amongst themselves. This can be seen in the way that images of the thistle are interwoven with the words of the drunk man. Each iteration of the drunk man, regardless of whether it pertains to the thistle or not, changes the way in which the reader views the thistle in the next description of it. The lines of 'Poet's Pub' (16-20)¹⁶ become reflected in the subsequent speech of the drunk man who attempts to orient his immediate surroundings with the translated lines of poetry by Alexander Blok:

¹⁶ This and all subsequent references from *A Drunk Man Looks at The Thistle* (Annotated Edition), ed. Kenneth Buthlay, 1987.

The munelicht's like a lookin'-glass,
 The thistle's like mysel'
 But whaur ye've gane, my bonnie lass,
 Is mair than I can tell. (22)

Here language has interacted with symbol in a number of ways. The Russian of Blok has interacted with the Scots of the drunk man....

I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur
 Extremes meet.... (14)

Starting with this passage in the poem a fundamental opposition is established which persists throughout the work. This opposition takes a number of forms, but predominantly it is between different linguistic and cultural structures and symbols. MacDiarmid's synthetic Scots in opposition to an implied English, forms one level of opposition. Within that structure various genres are at play, represented by many different cultures--French poetry, Dostoevsky, German philosophy, botany, for instance. MacDiarmid accentuates an idea of difference through the juxtaposition of the linguistic roots of symbols--such as the thistle and rose, moon, whiskey, and spider's web--with their artistic and literary manifestations in the poetry, art, and philosophy of different cultures.

The above-mentioned lines from *A Drunk Man* seems, on the surface, to indicate a desired point of meeting which is not compromise. Instead, the drunk man/speaker recognizes a power at work which operates in much the same way that his very sobering thoughts have encountered his drunkenness. When extremes meet, and by definition extremes should never meet, a state of tension will no

longer exist between the opposites. Their apparent union represents a desire for productive difference as the counter to the sterility of the half-way house, where there has been no union whatsoever. However, Bakhtin would decry the absence of productive tension, and this is perhaps what MacDiarmid is driving at by enunciating an oxymoronic statement. In traditional antisyzygical terms, extremes desire fusion ('a combination of opposites').¹⁷ Such a synthesis would signify the half-way house to the drunk man. As extremes will never meet, the drunk man will always exist in a destabilized realm as long as it is language and the creations of language that determine what is and is not extreme. In Bakhtinian terms, language birth is always dependent on differing forces inherent in words themselves, and which rely on the 'other' of language in order to identify themselves.

A word is born in dialogue as a living rejoinder within it; the word is shaped in dialogic interaction with an alien word that is already in the object. A word forms a concept of its own object in a dialogic way. (DIN 279)

As Bakhtin goes on to say, 'language...is never unitary' (288). In such a way the drunk man implicates himself *within* language by proposing for himself a point where extremes meet, a location of unity that is impossible to comprehend outside of language which is always fraught with disunity and which is actually created through disunity.

¹⁷ As mentioned in the last chapter, the idea of the antisyzygy may have been influenced by Hegel's ideas of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

The alternative to such filled verbal space is the 'silence' of the concluding lines which is yet filled, much like the 'Shantih' of *The Waste Land*, with the noise that has been building up in the previous 2,682 lines. The very word 'silence', as Bakhtin would have it, contains within itself its opposite, thereby denying it an individual separate identity outside of its multiplicity of suggested meanings. The poem moves into a semiotic configuration whereby the thistle, moon, rose, and other symbols condense into a silence that is wholly constituted by previous symbolic importance. However, these symbols now exist as individual signs which determine their new individual identities through their proximity and juxtaposition to each other.

There does exist a common plane that methodologically justifies our juxtaposing them: all languages of heteroglossia, whatever the principle underlying them and making each unique, are specific points of view on the world, forms for conceptualizing the world in words, specific world views, each characterized by its own objects, meanings and values. As such they all may be juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically. As such they encounter one another and co-exist in the consciousness of real people--first and foremost, in the creative consciousness of people who write novels.
(DIN 291-92)

Such a structuralist approach could only be held tenable by Bakhtin if we add the ingredient that these points of semiotic determination are constantly shifting ground and speaking with each other. Opposites never collide or meet in a placid, accommodating manner, but rather create energy in their diversity. Heteroglossia does not provide a perfectly fitting, static puzzle of complexities, but is

rather a moving, vibrant, multi-layered exchange which preserves opposites with all their necessary rough edges.

I ha'e nae doot some foreign philosopher
Has wrocht a system oot to justify
A' this: but I'm a Scot wha blin'ly follows
Auld Scottish instincts, and I winna try (14)

Bakhtin is just such a 'foreign philosopher'.

The systems of Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, Spengler, and even Yeats, which are alluded to in this poem, are in a way presented as systems equally as questionable as that which guides the Scots. The drunk man embraces them all in turn, if not as Scotland, than as language itself, experimenting with new combinations of symbols and signs. In its protean receptiveness the poem may enact what Bakhtin says of language itself:

...languages do not *exclude* each other, but rather intersect with each other in many different ways....It might even seem that the very word "language" loses all meaning in this process--for apparently there is no single plane on which all these "languages" might be juxtaposed to one another. (DIN 291)

A man's a clean contrairy sicht
Turned this way in-ootside,
And, fegs, I feel like Dr Jekyll
Tak'n' guid tent o' Mr Hyde....(22)

If we look at these lines of verse as in their own way metaphorically implying language, or more particularly 'Scottish' language (meaning both Scots and English), having a good look at itself, we don't sense a denial of opposites, but more of an accounting taking place. Questions of otherness are inescapable here, especially with the reference to the quintessential 'symbols' of Scottish split-consciousness, Jekyll and Hyde. Whereas in the previous lines the drunk man identifies himself with

the thistle through the medium of the moonlight, here a cautionary tone complicates the simple merging by bringing into relief the 'contrairy' necessity, the 'in-outside' which is inescapable. As Dr Jekyll takes 'guid tent o' Mr Hyde', opposites are realized and Dr Jekyll, in identifying Mr Hyde, identifies himself. While this point has been taken up previously in a fuller discussion of Stevenson, it bears commentary here as it exposes a key Bakhtinian concept, transgression, which can also be found in *A Drunk Man*.

In his philosophical/historical study *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* (1986), George Davie unwittingly presents a very Bakhtinian idea with regard to *A Drunk Man*. In the chapter on John Anderson and C. M. Grieve, Davie investigates the links between MacDiarmid's poetry and a philosophy that was being tested by Scottish educational attitudes of the time. Davie recognizes that part of what MacDiarmid is trying to accomplish in *A Drunk Man* is a poetic equivalent of John Anderson's philosophy of cultural knowledge:

...the multiplication of extraterrestrial perspectives on our earthbound perception of the moon and stars of which the poem talks, performs a function strictly analogous to that performed by the thing Anderson speaks of as necessary to the discovery of cultural standards--the multiplication of perspectives from the standpoints of foreign cultures which we are able to bring to bear on the cultural customs of our own community. (114)

Davie sees MacDiarmid calling for a Scotland that is cognizant of the productive tensions inherent in its psychology which are given articulation through fruitful intercourse with other cultures. Davie traces the thought

of MacDiarmid from the early 1920s when he was unconsciously influenced by the ideas of David Masson, a 19th-century thinker who believed that in order for Scots to 'get a hearing for their characteristic points of view in the changed conditions of the later nineteenth century' (103) it would be necessary for them to 'internalise' their Scotticism. Scotticism here is a combination of those historical and linguistic characteristics particular to the Scottish people, and apparently Masson was advocating something not unlike what Gregory Smith and to a greater extent Muir were to do in the next century with regard to language. So we see through Davie's analysis that MacDiarmid is swayed initially to accept a progress that is dependent on dressing up Scotticism in order to make it intellectually viable. The change, the desire for an 'externalisation of Scotticism' as Davie points out, becomes noticeable in MacDiarmid's early collections *Sangschaw* and *Penny Wheep* (104-110), but is more philosophically rooted in *A Drunk Man* with the realization that:

The munelicht is my knowledge o'mysel',
 Mysel' the thistle in the munelicht seen,
 And hauf my shape has fund itsel' in thee
 And hauf my knowledge in your piercin' een.

E'en as the munelicht's borrowed frae the sun
 I ha'e my knowledge o' mysel' frae thee,
 And much that nane but thee can e'er mak' clear,
 Save my licht's frae the source, is dark to me. (74)

Here the thistle represents an integral part of the identity formation of the speaker. In his essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' Bakhtin formulates his idea of an 'excess of seeing', or transgression, which is

available to all authors when creating heroes.

Transgression, as seen in our discussions of Scott, Hogg and Stevenson, is the quality of 'that which lies outside the immediate being of my current act of thinking' (AH 233, n.11). An individual cannot see himself whole but must rely on what he perceives to be the vision of an 'other' to complete the image of himself. The idea of an excess of seeing is transferable to a psychological plane whereby the identity of a self is aided by an 'other' who controls a vantage point from which to view the 'author' or 'I' and help to make him complete. MacDiarmid is very much a poet who is concerned with positioning. In early poems he is not only adept at pointing out similarities between seemingly disparate visions such the rainbow and his father's deathbed visage which comprise 'The Watergaw', but also of determining the accessibility of new visions of Earth from the vantage point of the stars. In 'Ballad of the Five Senses' the speaker considers various angles in which to view the world and comes to the conclusion:

Yet sune I kent God or the warl'
Were no' for een to see,
Wi' body and saul I socht to staun'
As in Eternity (CP 38)

The speaker here is acutely aware that he is not seeing the full picture of humanity and that this 'blindness' results from a lack of positioning. In many ways, the extraterrestrial poems of MacDiarmid prefigure the same concerns with vision, distance, and identity which will later be taken up, as we shall see, by Edwin Morgan and his speakers who inhabit other planets. For MacDiarmid,

just as a variety of languages require contact with each other to promote linguistic identity, so too do a variety of consciousnesses and cultures require interaction in order to be more fully aware of themselves. For MacDiarmid, on a personal level, this can be seen in the many personae (and corresponding pseudonyms) the man Christopher Grieve invents for himself who must often come in contact with each other. For the drunk man, a realization of this process is a by-product of his encounter with the thistle.

The thistle, for the speaker, has become the 'other' as well as a self, now viewed this way through the agency of the moonlight. As the moon depends on the sun for light, so the speaker relies on the thistle in order to form an identity. The thistle assumes the figure of the hero to the speaker's author. This is all part and parcel of Bakhtin's greater dialogism which consists not simply of a polyphony of voices, as indicated earlier, but the identity-forming dialogue which results from the interaction. It may be that all of Bakhtin's ideas, including carnival, can be traced back to the original concept of dialogism.¹⁸

A *Drunk Man* immediately strikes the reader as a multi-layered creation through its use of synthetic Scots, French, and Russian to discuss things as seemingly far apart as Russian philosophy and Herman Melville. Yet the strands of different languages serve to set up other

¹⁸ This is a much-disputed point. See Gary Saul Morson and Caryl Emerson *Bakhtin: Creation of a Prosaics* (1990), page 227 and *passim*.

oppositional structures which are very important in creating Bakhtinian carnival. Let us start with Bakhtin's definition of carnival which Buthlay identifies and which certainly plays a significant role in the poem:

It strives to encompass and unite within itself both poles of evolution or both members of an antithesis;...and the upper pole of a two-in-one image is reflected in the lower, after the manner of the figures in playing cards. It could be expressed thus: opposites meet, look at one another, know and understand one another.¹⁹

This quotation brings to mind the image from the poem, mentioned above, of the speaker and the thistle reaching an understanding by looking at each other and recognizing identity. However, this definition of carnival is incomplete and in itself not really an indication of dialogism as it implies the unification of opposites rather than a fruitful interchange in which opposing identities are preserved. In this way it resembles the antisyzygy more than dialogism.

There is a carnival of sorts going on in *Drunk Man*, but it is a self-conscious carnival, and it is not restricted to the images that float haphazardly across the drunken screen. The oppositions of official and unofficial are injected into the poem as a way of making a point about the antisyzygy: that it is something to be utilized, a creative force that demands expression not critical neglect. Carnival in Rabelais, and even more so in Dostoevsky, is much more subtle and sub-textual. Here, in *A Drunk Man*, are dialogism (through the agency of

¹⁹ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Ann Arbor 1973, pp. 101, 148. Quoted from Buthlay's introduction to *A Drunk Man* (li).

carnival) and antisyzygy being both espoused and opposed to one another within a work of literature.

High doses of carnival are called for in order to jolt a literature, or the perception of a literature, away from officially sanctioned forms of survival such as a literary history which is dependent on chronological and systematic forms of explanation. MacDiarmid, much like Fergusson and Burns before him, achieves this both by linguistic play and grotesque imagery. *A Drunk Man* is not the first instance in which MacDiarmid presents the reader with fantastical images that challenge authority. In 'Crowdieknowe', the graveyard images are in part reminiscent of Fergusson's 'The Ghaists: A Kirk-yard Eclogue' and Burns's 'Tam o'Shanter':

Oh to be at Crowdieknowe
When the last trumpet blows,
An' see the deid come loupin' owre
The auld grey wa's. (CP 26)

MacDiarmid's graveyard denizens come out of the ground and expostulate to God and his angels: '--Thae trashy bleezin' French-like folk/ Wha gar'd them shift!' (27) Here the language of the 'swearin' 'muckle men wi' tousled beards' is as effective as the image itself in connoting a sense of the local and commonplace rubbing against the higher and seemingly unapproachable 'God an' a' his gang/ O' angels i' the lift' (27). Likewise in 'The Dead Liebknecht' MacDiarmid presents the image of the dead man thus: 'And wi' his white teeth shinin' yet/ The corpse lies smilin' underfit' (57). Here as well we read that this Scots poem is 'After the German of Rudolf Leonhardt'. Elsewhere MacDiarmid develops fantastical and grotesque

images that will populate many of his other poems such as the monster that figures in 'The Sea Serpent' which will later appear both in *A Drunk Man* and in *To Circumjack Cencrastus* (1930).

In these ways, MacDiarmid prepares for the carnival he is to unleash in *A Drunk Man*. In the longer poem, however, the carnival is more evident in that MacDiarmid is able to use the length of the poem to both intersperse and combine the serious with the comic, the 'beautiful' with the grotesque. In addition to images such as the sea serpent, MacDiarmid takes all of the images commonly associated with Scotland and vulgarizes them to make the point that they have already been made vulgar by overuse and in the reductive conclusions drawn by those who view them. Images, such as the thistle are sterile from their inability to be seen as anything other than a plant that is associated with Scotland. MacDiarmid wishes to both defeat the simplicity of this by admitting other images (such as the sea serpent and the great wheel) into the symbolic palette as well as transmogrifying the images into other possibilities by making them grotesque. This is what he does to the thistle in *A Drunk Man*, again by way of translating a European poet, the Belgian Georges Ramaekers:

*"Rootit on gressless peaks, whaur its erect
And jaggy leafs, austerely cauld and dumb,
Haud the slow scaly serpent in respect,
The Gothic thistle, whaur the insect's hum
Soon's fer aff, lifts abune the rock it scorns
Its rigid virtue for the Heavens to see.
The too-ering boulders gaird it. And the bee
Mak's honey frae the roses on its thorns."* (28)

The most 'popular' carnival image of the poem is perhaps presented in the following stanza:

Grinnin' gargoyle by a saint,
Mephistopheles in Heaven,
Skeleton at a tea-meetin',
Missin' link--or creakin'
Hinge atween the deid and livin'....(36)

Here, as many critics have pointed out, MacDiarmid reiterates Gregory Smith's observation in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919):

Scottish literature is more medieval in habit than criticism has suspected, and owes some part of its picturesque strength to this freedom in passing from one mood to another. It takes some people more time than they can spare to see the absolute propriety of a gargoyle's grinning at the elbow of a kneeling saint. (35)

In Bakhtinian terms this juxtaposition of gargoyle and saint represents the essence of the Janus-faced carnival image. The grotesque gargoyle serves as an architectural response to the saint and both share a position on the cathedral as a reminder of the opposing forces and their interdependence. MacDiarmid presents a number of contrasting, grotesque images in the poem:

Dae what ye wull ye canna parry
This skeleton-at-the-feast that through the starry
Maze o' the world's intoxicatin' soiree
Claughts ye, as micht at an affrontit quean
A bastard wean! (54)

What is significant about grotesque images such as these is that they, in true Bakhtinian fashion, are images of death and degradation that are used in the efforts to create new life, the rejuvenation of Scottish literature and a Scottish cultural spirit. We will see a similar effort on the part of Alasdair Gray when we study his 'postmodern' fictions in the following chapter. Bakhtin

speaks of the purpose of the grotesque in *Rabelais and His World*:

The last thing one can say of the real grotesque is that it is static; on the contrary it seeks to grasp in its imagery the very act of becoming and growth, the eternal incomplete unfinished nature of being.
(52)

In a sense, then, the very experimental nature of MacDiarmid's Scots can be seen as a grotesque response to the 'official' language of English. MacDiarmid's language serves to accentuate the fantastic images of the thistle, the rose, the symbolic wheel of Yeats, the tree of Ygdrasil, and the literature of past Scottish writers such as Burns: 'I canna ride awa' like Tam, / But e'en maun bide juist whaur I am' (68).

Smith's espousal of the English language (following the Irish model) can be seen as an official response to which, in its aggrandized Scots language, the carnival of MacDiarmid's poem is reacting. Buthlay locates this carnival in the drunkenness of the speaker (li) but we can recognize the intoxicant of the various languages employed to be the true agent of reversals and confrontations. In this way, MacDiarmid's use of synthetic Scots appears as a carnivalesque response to English. The 'synthetic' nature of the Scots is evidence of heteroglossia at a linguistic level. If MacDiarmid endorses the literary and psychological ramifications of the antiszygy, he has a harder time adapting to the medium of its future expression. MacDiarmid both accepts and rebuts Smith's position, thereby creating a dialogistic scenario in which nothing merges, and creativity is propelled by the

friction of centrifugal and centripetal forces, the official and the unofficial, as the poem veers from philosophical discourse to political diatribe to fantastical dream. This oppositional action, particularly with regard to linguistic difference is identified by Viacheslav Ivanov in his article 'The Dominant of Bakhtin's Philosophy: Dialogue and Carnival':

A similar neuropsychological opposition can be found in relation to native language preserved in folkloric...contexts, in contrast to the language of the community as a whole. In cultures (such as medieval monasteries and other spiritual centres of various faiths throughout Eurasia) where an official spoken or written language different from the unofficial was (or still is) used, it is possible to observe the phenomena of diglossia (functional bilingualism of the type which has been so important in the history of Russian literary language) and heterography (the use of a written language opposed to the oral language of an ethnic group or tribe belonging to the given cultural community). (9)

Language diversity, and by extension literary diversity can be seen to be the true carnival of *The Drunk Man* which lies behind the more obvious 'gallimaufry' of images and philosophies.

MacDiarmid's retrieval of both language and subject matter through a synthetic Scots challenges closure, and the images he employs in *A Drunk Man* serve many of the same functions as Bakhtin notes in the grotesque aspect of carnival:

...the grotesque, including the Romantic form, discloses the potentiality of an entirely different world, of another order, another way of life. It leads men out of the confines of the apparent (false) unity, of the indisputable and stable...the world is destroyed so that it may be regenerated and renewed. While dying it gives birth. (RW 48)

This is a long way from the antiszygy in that it is, in its own way, a blueprint for a way of living and of creating art.

In MacDiarmid's essay on the Caledonian Antisyzygy which I have been quoting from, he comes close to espousing a vision of truth which comes close to that of Bakhtin when he writes the following:

The essential point is that all fixed opinions--all ideas that are not entertained just provisionally and experimentally--every attempt to regard any view as permanent--every identification of Scottish genius with any particular religion or political doctrine--every denial of the relativity and transience of all thought, any failure to "play with" ideas--and above all the stupid (since self-stultifying) idea that ideas are not of prime consequence in their qualitative ratio and that it is possible to be over-intellectual--are anti-Scottish--opposed to our national genius which is capable of countless manifestations at absolute variance with each other, yet confined within the "limited infinity" of the adjective "Scottish"'. (68)

Poems such as *A Drunk Man* prove that MacDiarmid is adept at embracing an openness that will admit of many 'manifestations at absolute variance with each other'. In doing so he is creating literature that strives towards an understanding of truth as something inconstant and ever-changing. This relative truth is close to Bakhtin's idea of unique truth (or *pravda*) which is opposed to any definition that limits the potential of further possibility:

It is an unfortunate misunderstanding (a legacy of rationalism) to think that truth [*pravda*] can only be the truth [*istina*] that is composed of universal moments; that the truth of a situation is precisely that which is repeatable and constant in it. (TPA 37)

Although comparisons such as these may lead us to read MacDiarmid as a writer who is capable of opening up new

frontiers for a creative Scotland, his ideas, like those of Smith's antisyzygy, can correlate with Bakhtinian notions only so far. Inherent in the cultural theses of both these writers is a limitation to the power of contradiction: resolution. Where Smith identifies (a limiting notion in and of itself) the characteristics of Scottish literature, MacDiarmid wishes to take these contradictory characteristics and make a unity of them, a concept completely at odds with Bakhtinian thought. The essence of this project is contained within *A Drunk Man* when MacDiarmid writes of his mentor Dostoevsky:

For a' that's Scottish in me,
As a' things Russian were in thee,
And I in turn 'ud be an action
To pit in a concrete abstraction
My country's contrair qualities,
And mak' a unity o' these...(146)

Despite MacDiarmid's attempts at synthesis, he opens the door for a 'jostling of contraries' that will benefit Scottish literature for the better part of this century. He does not wish to diminish the power of the 'contrair qualities' through unity, since they represent the energizing forces behind literature. Interpreted this way, MacDiarmid's unity is one that embraces the force of contradiction, while yet seeking unification. If he seeks resolution, it is not at the expense of the rich interchange to be had between different languages and cultures. Such an experience of MacDiarmid can be had not only by way of his early poetry, culminating in *A Drunk Man* and *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, but through analysis of his later poetry in which he experiments with the elevated diction of scientific and technological language. By

continually throwing new forms of expression into the mixture, MacDiarmid complicates the concept of contradiction, making it a perpetually rewarding creative process. As Alan Bold writes 'What MacDiarmid does so successfully is to develop an essentially poetic method of containing all his contradictions' (1983: 29). We see this in 'On a Raised Beach' where the vocabulary of the opening lines conveys a sense of words in harmonic tension with each other:

All is lithogenesis--or lochia,
Carpelite fruit of the forbidden tree,
Stones blacker than any in the Caaba,
Cream-coloured caen-stone, chatoyant pieces,
Celadon and corbeau, bistre and beige,
Glaucous, hoar, enfouledered, cyathiform,
Making mere faculae of the sun and moon. (CP 422)

The synthetic Scots of the earlier MacDiarmid has given way to another level of linguistic sophistication that admits, in very Bakhtinian fashion, the languages of other professions and areas of inquiry. Much in the way that MacDiarmid earlier drew attention to the descriptive possibilities of Scots in tension with English, he here admits into the fray languages that belong to many countries, yet are more identified with their contributions to the universal language of science and geology. In a sense, here, MacDiarmid is recognizing a more 'democratic' condition of language that is to be found in the vocabularies of knowledge rather than of nationalities. He intends to fertilize poetic language by mixing the two linguistic entities together. At the same time as MacDiarmid makes a plea for universal forms of understanding, he yet calls for the individual to remain

steadfast in his rejection of a unity that will destroy what is unique and particular to a sense of self:

It will be ever increasingly necessary to find
In the interests of all mankind
Men capable of rejecting all that all other men
Think, as a stone remains
Essential to the world, inseparable from it,
And rejects all other life yet.
Great work cannot be combined with surrender to the
crowd. (429)

Such a distancing and isolation, however, as MacDiarmid goes on to point out, must be done within the contradictory state of participation with the world:

It is not
The reality of life that is hard to know.
It is nearest of all and easiest to grasp,
But you must participate in it to proclaim it.
(432)

The complexities of MacDiarmid's later poetry are encapsulated in the 'epic' *In Memoriam James Joyce* (1955), in which he offers, by way of tribute, a philological exercise. In this poem MacDiarmid explores the variegations of language that lead back to the the sources of words and how they have been appropriated and changed by history. It is here as well that MacDiarmid acknowledges the importance of dialect:

And just as any hard-scrabble cowman can tell you
No matter how hungry a slat-ribbed cow gets
She isn't licked till she lies down, so
With every language, dialect, usage of words,
Even any sort of gobbledygook,
The mode despised, neglected or rejected
May become the corner stone of a miracle of
expression. (CP 752)

MacDiarmid recognizes the importance of the

...(Most cunning dealers in *zumnoy* and *skaz*
And workers in dialect and slang,
Multilinguists and grammarians and philologists,
Orismologists, sematologists, semasiologists,
And epeolators all)... (745)

and in so doing inadvertently touches upon a word, *skaz*, that Bakhtin investigates in terms of narrative storytelling.²⁰ Through realizing the limitless possibilities for language formation, MacDiarmid arrives at some very Bakhtinian notions of how identities, and specifically linguistic identities, come to enhance one another:

And rejoicing in all those intranational
differences which
Each like a flower's scent by its peculiarity
sharpens
Appreciation of others as well as bringing
Appreciation of itself, as experiences of gardenia
or zinnia
Refine our experience of rose or sweet pea. (763)

MacDiarmid takes this theme and refines it throughout the remainder of the poem arriving at a dialogical understanding of language that is sensitive to the importance of avoiding a unity that denies the individual flavor of dialect and linguistic individuality:

Metaphysical and empirical language communities,
With a continuous interweaving of threads between
them,
Between inner, mobile, emphatic, and therefore
Untranslatable language forms, crossed by countless
Isophones, isolexes, isorhemes, and outer, rigid
Metaphorical forms--all external language
communities,
All the systems and structures of language usage,
Existing and resting on the bosom of linguistic
thought,
Which envelops, carries, and fructifies them
Like the ocean the Earth! (785)

If there is unity here, it is one that is sensitive to the importance of contradiction and tension within and between languages. As Alan Riach has pointed out, in discussing *In Memoriam James Joyce*: 'The result of MacDiarmid's relativistic sense of language is that any emphasis on the

²⁰ A fuller discussion of *skaz* can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

specific meaning of a word is balanced by an awareness of variations across languages in different parts of the world' (77).

Experiencing MacDiarmid through the Bakhtinian lens affords the reader a rich polyphony of language and imagery. What it provides as well is a taste of world literature, science, religion, politics, and humor that requires interaction on the part of the reader who wishes to decipher the many textual references. In this sense, MacDiarmid sees the reader's identity as well as Scotland's as being an ever-changing process in which many ideas and consciousnesses must come into what Bakhtin would call dialogic contact. In 'The Scottish Renaissance: The Next Step', MacDiarmid calls on future Scottish writers to be attuned to the rich varieties of language and culture that surround them:

What I commend to younger Scots writers is the patient hard work, the acute analysis, based on a thorough knowledge of popular types, local dialects, slang, and a profound love of the streets and all sorts and conditions of people, which are necessary for success of this sort. (107)

As we will see in the following chapters, Bakhtin's ideas provide a fruitful way of reading Scottish literature that has been produced later in this century by writers such as James Kelman and Tom Leonard who have taken to heart the vernacular directions offered by MacDiarmid. We will next see how Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism and carnival open up readings of a contemporary writer who inherits a more productive, 're-articulated', antisyzygy from the joyful instability of MacDiarmid's drunk man, the novelist Alasdair Gray.

Chapter III

The Polyphonic Fiction of Alasdair Gray

Our discussion of a few of the 'classic' Scottish writers of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries has provided us with a good overview of key Bakhtinian concepts that may assist the reader to read Scottish literature in a more fluid and less antiszygically-charged fashion. As we will see, Bakhtin's ideas of dialogism, carnival, and transgression will be just as useful as we now turn to the primary focus of this work, the Scottish writers whose voices are engaged in dialogic activity in the last few decades of the twentieth century. As we will see, these writers engage as well with their literary forbears in an attempt to initiate an open discussion with the past. In other words, the writers we will now discuss, Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Muriel Spark, Edwin Morgan, Liz Lochhead, and Tom Leonard, are acutely aware of how Scottish literary identity was framed in the past. Additionally, however, these writers, in a very Bakhtinian fashion, draw attention to how other cultures come to reflect and help form a notion of 'Scottishness'. Contemporary writing reveals how this process is ever-changing, reciprocal, and admits of no single identity, no single, essentialized Scotland. As Alasdair Gray, the first contemporary writer whose works we will examine, has pointed out in *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland* (1992), quoting Jacques Duras, 'modern Scotland

(is) not a country but an archipelago---a collection of islands, though most of the islands (are) not separated by water' (55). It is the purpose of the remaining chapters to visit only a small sampling of these islands and to show how, through the ideas of Bakhtin, they fruitfully interact and depend upon each other for a sense of identity.

Since Alasdair Gray published *Lanark* in 1981, he has been recognized as the leading fictional voice in what has become known as the Scottish literary renaissance of the late twentieth century. His novels, short stories, and radio plays have gained a critical following and he has become increasingly well-represented in academic studies both within Scotland and internationally. Among the principal secondary works, *The Arts of Alasdair Gray* (1991), edited by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn, *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism: A Study of Alasdair Gray's Fiction* by Beat Witschi and the Summer 1995 issue of *The Review of Contemporary Fiction*, half of which is devoted to Gray, serve as valuable collections of criticism on Gray's work. Other useful chapters on Gray appear in *Ten Modern Scottish Novels* (1984) (concentrating on *Lanark*) and *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams* (1993). Although there have been, to my knowledge, no full treatments of Gray in terms of Bakhtin, there have been two examinations of Gray's fictions that invoke Bakhtinian theory. 'Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern', by Randall Stevenson appears in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*. In addition to discussing the polyphony

of voices in Gray's work (58-9), Stevenson also touches on the carnivalesque nature of *Lanark* and *1982 Janine* (1985). Additionally, Ian McCormick, in 'Alasdair Gray: The Making of a Scottish Grotesque', suggests that Bakhtin's theories of the grotesque are only one of several that may be used to explore Gray's subversions.¹ These critics prepare the way for the following examination of Gray that explores his carnivalesque activity in detail, especially the manner in which he manipulates textual authority and language.

On a first reading it may seem as if the works of Alasdair Gray lend themselves most readily to Bakhtin's ideas on carnival. As mentioned above, such a reading is proposed by Randall Stevenson in 'Alasdair Gray and the Postmodern' in which he links the tensions to be found in Gray's work to Bakhtin's novelistic ideas which 'trace the polyphonic nature of the novel--the "system of languages" that compete within it--back to origins in the popular practice of carnival' (62). Here, Stevenson quite correctly points to instances in *Lanark* and *1982 Janine* which support such an interpretation.

It is the purpose of this chapter to show not only how fruitful a carnivalesque investigation is to reading Gray's work, but to suggest that within Bakhtin's greater dialogic project there are avenues of inquiry that remain untapped with regard to the interpretation of modern and contemporary Scottish writing in general. As the first of a four-part section on contemporary Scottish literature,

¹ Full publication details of these works may be found in the Bibliography of Works Cited.

this chapter will concentrate on the ways in which Gray's work, especially the novels *Lanark*, *1982 Janine*, and *Poor Things* (1993), and the short stories 'Logopandocy' and 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire' from *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* (1984) unconsciously exhibit some very Bakhtinian notions.

We have seen how Bakhtin's concern with dialogic interaction has helped us to read and interpret the poetry of Burns and MacDiarmid, as well as the novels of Scott, Hogg, and Stevenson. A healthy blueprint for further investigations using Bakhtin can be had by looking at the works of a contemporary author such as Gray who extends the idea of a polyphony of voices to include the modes and manners of literary production as well as the voices of individual characters.

Mouths and Monsters

At the heart of Gray's work is an obsession with authority and carnivalesque responses to it. We will examine this obsession in terms of the manipulation of language and literary convention in *Lanark*, *1982 Janine*, *Poor Things*, and 'Logopandocy'. Randall Stevenson's relevant, yet cursory treatment of this way of reading Gray is helpful as a starting point for a deeper analysis of Gray's work:

Lanark, and even more clearly the indulgent miseries of *1982 Janine*, offer symptoms as well as analyses of a country still trying to free itself from a politically-engineered dreariness of daily life; a mechanical education system; churches which "teach us to be ashamed of...our whole bodies" (J, 49);

emotions which oscillate uneasily between violence and sentimentality. This country has something to gain from the fantastic, ludic, grotesque, parodic, subversive, sexy energy of a carnivalised literature. (62)

In a sense, Stevenson here seems to be offering carnival as an alternative to the antiszygical condition of Scotland, violence and sentimentality being two further divisions in the Scottish psyche. As I have been arguing, the carnival element has long held a position in Scottish literature as a response to official culture, so that Gray is not the first or alone in presenting this flavor of writing. In the last chapter we saw how the poetic carnival of Burns reacted to the high seriousness of the church. What perhaps is new with Gray, in terms of Scottish literature, is the metafictional way he incorporates past carnivalizing tendencies in his novels and short stories. His poetic precursor in this is, of course, MacDiarmid, whom Gray draws on as well, especially in *1982 Janine*. Gray's carnival though, like MacDiarmid's, relies heavily on a dialogic understanding. Like Jekyll and Robert Colwan, Gray's characters frequently inhabit an isolated realm where they suffer from lack of social contact. Carnival as an event that includes all the people is remote to the lives of Gray's characters and so they must create worlds for themselves in which to partake of the social sphere. It is the voices that participate in Gray's carnival, if not the characters themselves. Douglas Gifford has characterized Gray's protagonists as 'Holy Fools' (a term which reminds us of Burns's fair-goers):

The curious ambivalence of the protagonist, is that he is at once wise and foolish, pygmy and giant,

flawed human being and conscientious citizen, a sort of Holy Fool of a kind found frequently in Scottish fiction, from Galt's Sir Andrew Wylie (and even perhaps Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*) through MacDonald's *Sir Gibbie* to modern versions of Iain Crichton Smith's fiction (especially in his surrealist clown Murdo) and outstandingly and repetitively in the protagonist of the later work of Robin Jenkins. The Holy Fool, and his notion of what constitutes Grace, seems to me to embody some of the most profound themes of Scottish fiction; and the constant ambiguity with which their authors treat them illustrates a deep unease on the part of these authors towards their society's moral standards and religious heritage. (1987: 103-4)

In terms of Gray, this is most evident in novels such as *Lanark* and *1982 Janine*, as well as in stories such as 'Logopandocy', where the heroes author responses to a world in which they appear to be outcasts. More recent works, such as *Something Leather* and *Poor Things* bring carnival out of the realm of imagined scenarios authored by heroes and present characters participating in more communal activities.

In many ways, Gray is 'metafictionalizing' himself in these later works. The orgy of Donald, Senga, June, and Harry mirrors Jock's fantasies and the creation of Bella by Godwin is much like Jock's fictional authoring of Janine. What makes them different though is that the 'voyeuristic' has given way to the active engagement. Tam finally participates in the dance. June, who in a way 'views' her own rape, is nonetheless less resistant to taking part in her transformation than Jock is to involving himself in his fantasies. However, Gray's carnival cannot be categorized thus easily and we can discover facets of Bakhtinian carnival at work in most of his writing. His reversals and responses to authority

challenge preconceived notions of responsibility to genre, history (as recorded fact), science, and societal norms. This is first seen in *Lanark*, where Gray uses many carnivalizing methods to resist official literary and artistic standards. Gray plays with time by opposing the structure of his novel to a chronological order. By breaking chronologic order he reveals the tragic, and relative, nature of time. Of course he is not the first to do this, but he highlights the effect which this is supposed to produce by numbering his sections, thus drawing attention to the game he is playing. The idea of relative time is discussed by David K. Danow in *The Spirit of Carnival: Magical Realism and the Grotesque*, a Bakhtinian study, in which he comments on Latin American writers whose fractured and open interpretation of time becomes one more component in the pattern of reversals that these authors bring to the 'magic' of their realism. To illustrate, Danow quotes from Isabel Allende's *Eva Luna*:

"While you and I are speaking here, behind your back Christopher Columbus is inventing America, and the same Indians that welcomed him in the stained-glass window are still naked in a jungle a few hours from this office, and will be there a hundred years from now" (300-301). Her implicit argument for the principle of simultaneity affording a viable conception of time, mirrors, in effect, the theoretical view propounded by (Edmund) Leach: "But if there is nothing in the principle of the thing, or in the nature of our experience, to suggest that time must necessarily flow past at constant speed, we are not required to think of time as a constant flow at all. Why shouldn't time slow down and stop occasionally, or even go into reverse?" (1961: 133). In thematic, literary terms that provide a carnivalesque potential for temporal reversal and

inversion, magical realism poses essentially the same questions. (73-4)²

Although Gray toys with time in such novels as *Lanark*, we are most likely to identify carnival in Gray's grotesque imagery and his concentration on portraying the material bodily lower stratum, two aspects of carnival that Bakhtin discusses at length in *Rabelais and His World*. Bakhtin describes grotesque realism as follows:

The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity. (20)

This transfer to the earth is seen in *Lanark* in exaggerations to the bodies of characters who exhibit dragonhide, a concern with orifices, and images of eating and drinking. The early sections of Book 3 of *Lanark* are full of grotesque images, especially the mouth and protuberances from the body.

Of all the features of the human face, the nose and mouth play the most important part in the grotesque image of the body; the head, ears, and nose also acquire a grotesque character when they adopt the animal form of that of inanimate objects....The grotesque...is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines. (RW 316)

We see examples of this in the effects of Lanark's advancing dragonhide, which initially seems a degenerating disease rather than an indication of a coming birth into another world. In Chapter 6, Lanark confronts his disease and a variety of mouths, starting with the mouth of Sludden which appears to lie on Gay's hand (45). He finally submits himself to the larger mouth in the

² Isabel Allende, *Eva Luna*, 1989; Edmund Leach, *Rethinking Anthropology*, 1961. Both quoted in Danow.

cemetery and is 'born' into another world (47-49). Lanark is both metaphorically and literally swallowed by the Institute and it is within the 'lower body' of the Institute that most of the novel takes place. Lanark's descent into the world of the Institute combines images of sex, birth, and elimination that conform to Bakhtin's notions of carnival degradation which leads to regeneration:

The cavity below the mouth narrowed to a gullet down which he slithered and bumped at decreasing speed as his clothing and thorny arm began catching on the sides. The sides began to tighten and loosen, heating as they tightened, cooling as they loosened, and the descent became a series of freezing drops from one scalding grip to another. The pressure and heat grew greater and gripped him longer until he punched and kicked against it. He was dropped at once but only fell a few feet, and the next hold was so sickeningly tight that he could not move his arms and legs at all. He opened his mouth to scream and a mixture of wool and cloth squeezed into it, for the pressure had dragged vest, shirt and jersey over his face. He was suffocating. He urinated. The great grip stopped, he slid downward, the garments slid upward, freeing mouth and nose, and then the sides contracted and crushed him harder than ever. Most senses abandoned him now....(48)

Lanark's descent is both a lowering and a regenerating procedure as he is swaddled in a clean towel, much like an infant, after he awakens (49) from what seems like a trip into Hell:

Carnival's hell represents the earth which swallows up and gives birth, it is often transformed into a cornucopia; the monster, death, becomes pregnant. Various deformities, such as protruding bellies, enormous noses, or humps, are symptoms of pregnancy or of procreative power. (RW 91)

We also see the vision of a lower world in the story 'The Cause of Some Recent Changes' where the tunnelling beneath the art school mirrors a return to the earth from the lofty aesthetics of art.

Gray's art of 'lowering' has been noted elsewhere. In 'Alasdair Gray: The Voice of His Prose', Philip Hobsbaum uses an example from *Lanark* to illustrate that Gray is a 'master of *ostranenie*; that is to say, defamiliarization' (Hobsbaum 150):

At the words "Dust to dust and ashes to ashes," there began a lumbering rumbling sound and the red cloth began to sag as the coffin was drawn down under it. For a second it bulged up again with a rush of air from below, then flopped so that a rectangular depression appeared where the coffin had been. Thaw was struck by a poignant sense of loss neutralized at once by a memory of a conjuror who had made a scone disappear from under a handkerchief. (200-201)

Both Hobsbaum's definition of *ostranenie* as 'seeing the likeness between entities that are apparently unlike' and '*snizhenie*' or lowering, which we discussed in the last chapter with regard to Burns, are applicable to the passage above from *Lanark*.

The recurring phrase 'Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself' signals the importance of food in *Lanark*, as well as indicating a political truism. Food plays a vital role in the new world of the Institute where Lanark discovers that what he is eating is actually the remains of patients who have 'gone Salamander'. Thus the grotesque dragonhide can provide a nurturing function in this 'lower' world, although it is one that Lanark rejects. With the 'birth' of Rima, food becomes an issue which helps to determine Lanark's decision to leave the Institute. He leaves again through an orifice, a iron door, which represents the opposite of the grotesque threshold of the cemetery mouth. In this way, Gray heightens the tension between the conventional and the

imaginative. This tension is much of what *Lanark* seems to be concerned with, and it is Gray's carnival style which makes the oppositions less tenable.

The Institute and the Council of *Lanark* set the tone for the sham governmental *bodies* of Gray's other work such as the Ministry of Social Stability in *McGrotty and Ludmilla* (1990) and the empire of the Axletree stories. These remind us as well of other satiric and prophetic fictional organizations such as the Circumlocution Office of Dickens's *Little Dorrit* and Orwell's and Kafka's worlds of censorship and imprisonment. Gray's perception of 'organized' government as being both dangerous and ineffectual at the same time indicates a concern with the unexamined nature of authority. Gray's carnivalesque portrayals bring the official into relief, focusing on the ability of the unexamined to perniciously and surreptitiously take over. It is Gray's biggest fear that the complacency of people, of Scots, and of readers, will dull their wits and intellect to the point at which the 'powers-that-be' remove a sense of effective community and individual possibility from their consciousnesses. This fear, and its consequent carnivalesque treatment, is even more noticeable in Gray's scientific and academic satires.³ In attempting to confront these fears Gray comes close to

³ This can be seen in a variety of Gray's short stories. 'The Crank that Made the Revolution' serves as a comedy of early technological advances and is a preliminary to the dystopian failures of *Lanark* and the medical and scientific parodies in *Poor Things*. The failure of McMenamy's 'duck tandem', and the reference illustrations make us laugh, but who is not reminded at the same time of the serious technological and scientific disasters which we have viewed either by way of old photographs or contemporary television screens such as the Tay Bridge collapse or the Space Shuttle explosion.

providing the Bakhtinian equivalent of laughter in the Middle Ages:

Laughter, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations....It was the defeat of divine and human power, of authoritarian commandments and prohibitions, of death and punishment after death, hell and all that is more terrifying than the earth itself. Through this victory laughter clarified man's consciousness and gave him a new outlook on life. (RW 90-1)

In the epilogue to *Lanark*, which, true to Gray form, resists the orthodox publishing position by occurring five chapters before the end, Gray presents the 'index of plagiarisms' which includes the following citation under Thomas Hobbes:

Describing a state or tribe as a single man is as old as society--Plutarch does it in his life of Coriolanus--but Hobbes deliberately makes the metaphor a monstrous one. His state is the sort of creature Frankenstein made: mechanical yet lively; lacking ideas, yet directed by cunning brains; morally and physically clumsy, but full of strength got from people forced to supply its belly, the market. (489)

Here Hobbes's *Leviathan* is compared with the more fantastic books (3 and 4) of *Lanark*. We see the serpent as the state, dependent on the population for food for its eternally hungry belly. The images are of food and the lower body. But 'man is the pie that bakes and eats himself' recurs to remind us, by way of Burke, that '"man" is "in a great degree a creature of his own making"' (189), a notion that recalls us to the human manufacturing that occurs in *Poor Things*. What is also present here, though, is the idea of monstrosity that is closely tied to that of the grotesque and which, in terms of *Frankenstein*, includes the idea of creation and of science.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* plays with the notions of scientific progress that were current in the middle of the nineteenth century. The robbing of the imagination by the inroads of science finds a reaction in the form of Victor Frankenstein's creation. His monster is both a result of science and a reaction against it, for science is unable to satisfy the spiritual and psychological needs after the body has been animated.

The lessons of *Frankenstein* aid in readings of Gray's carnivalesque literature, especially in terms of *Poor Things*. In this novel the monster which is created, Bella Baxter, is actually less monstrous than her creator, Godwin. In a sense then this is a case of the monster who makes his own mate, what Frankenstein's creation would have liked to achieve if he had only had the knowledge. In this way, Gray carnivalizes and 'makes monstrous' the novel *Frankenstein*.⁴ Jonathan Coe, reviewing *Poor Things* writes of Gray:

...what distinguishes him (Gray) from other, more timid paddlers in the shallows of history is his ironic sense that the past is not just a foreign country but something even weirder and more extreme: that it is, in short, a Science Fiction novel (11).⁵

In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin writes of the carnivalization of literature that is the result of a transposition of carnival from the everyday world of

⁴ Gray is playing with names too. We see Godwin Baxter as the incarnation of William Godwin, Mary Shelley's father. Godwin 'creates' Mary through Mary Wollstonecraft who dies shortly after giving birth to Mary (Wollstonecraft) Shelley. In *Poor Things*, Gray reverses literary history by killing off the child to produce the birth of the mother. However, the child's brain lives on in the mother.

⁵ Coe goes on to point out, however, that in *Poor Things* Gray is adept at implicating contemporary society in his treatment of the past.

social activity into a 'language of artistic images'

(122):

Carnival itself (we repeat: in the sense of a sum total of all diverse festivities of the carnival type) is not, of course, a literary phenomenon. It is *syncretic pageantry* of a ritualistic sort. (122)

The syncretic pageantry that Bakhtin writes of can be seen in *Poor Things* where Gray has brought together the different strands, or voices of science, literature, and politics. This 'dialogic' effect of Gray's pseudo-gothic novel can be analyzed further through consideration of the styles and thinking that he parodies and the Bakhtinian treatment that has received. In *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach* (1994), Jacqueline Howard makes the case for a dialogic reading of *Frankenstein*, among other gothic novels. Speaking of the gothic 'genre' in general, she states that the gothic form is 'dialogic because of its indeterminacy or its open structure' (16). Howard does not explore the role of carnival in her book, in fact she dismisses it as simply a subversive tactic (4). She is perhaps loathe to see the carnivalesque in gothic fiction because this work fits into the category of writing that Bakhtin labels serious:

It must be recalled that the image of death in medieval and Renaissance grotesque (and in painting also, as in Holbein's or Dürer's "dance of death") is a more or less funny monstrosity. In the ages that followed, especially in the nineteenth century, the public at large almost completely forgot the principle of laughter presented in macabre images. They were interpreted in an unrelieved, serious aspect and became flat and distorted. The bourgeois nineteenth century respected only satirical laughter, which was actually not laughter but rhetoric...Merely amusing, meaningless, and harmless laughter was also tolerated, but the serious had to remain serious, that is, dull and monotonous. (RW 51)

While *Frankenstein* is not carnivalesque, it yet illustrates a reaction to authority similar to what Gray presents in *Poor Things*, an image that is aided by its grotesque nature. This reaction serves to highlight, through exaggeration, the accepted codes of the times.

Like many of Gray's fictions, Shelley's *Frankenstein* is guilty of portraying the individual in isolation. Here, though, as in Gray, it is the different voices converging that form a community, not the lonely individuals who act as conduits. The following quotation concerning *Frankenstein* from Howard's book, with a few minor changes, could just as easily be written about *Poor Things*:

Making a claim for original authorship, it (*Frankenstein*) is a supernatural and tragic tale of overreaching in its appropriation of balladry and pseudo-scientific discourse. It is also a political novel and novel of education. In recontextualizing and juxtaposing early 19th-century ideals of domestic affection, sensibility, and aristocratic benevolence with Promethean endorsements of poetic and scientific genius, it relativizes both these sets of ideals, revealing their contradictions and differing limitations for men and women, for poets and scientists, and for oppressed groups in society. (282-3)

Poor Things is certainly less tragic than *Frankenstein*, but it succeeds in creating the same sorts of contrasts that that novel produces. In addition to the 'balladry and pseudo-scientific discourse', *Poor Things* pokes fun at gothic stereotypes. By combining grotesque imagery with the 'high seriousness' of academic and scientific research, Gray creates a 'postmodern gothic'.⁶ He re-

⁶ Gray pokes fun as well at those whose research would pigeonhole his writing into a dissertation or critical discourse. The Alasdair Gray Archive at The National Library of Scotland holds a folder labelled 'Origin of Janine' which contains simply a tourist brochure for the town of Pitlochry where Gray first conceived the idea of *1982 Janine*. The unwary and 'serious' researcher is tempted to

instates the importance of laughter, which is the necessary product of grotesque imagery, through references to the material body lower stratum, and, as we see in *1982 Janine*, profanity. If writers of 'gothic' fiction drew upon myths and legends in addition to the science of their day (as mentioned above by Howard) when writing their stories, then Gray writes upon them, creating a palimpsest in which the texts overlap and communicate dialogically. He includes them in the dialogic activity that he presents in his work, especially in *Poor Things*, which Douglas Gifford has described as a 'fusing of *Jekyll and Hyde* and *Frankenstein*....(a) welding of old supernatural tales and magic realism' (Interview). Gray adds to the ideas created by an 'official gothic' by including the essence of carnival, the self-parodying reaction to authority that includes the notion of regeneration.

Gray builds upon a notion of monstrosity that is handed to him from Mary Shelley, Hogg, and Stevenson. Implicit in his construction of the monstrous is the idea of 'making'. Duncan Thaw 'makes' paintings but they are primarily for himself, he fails at creating a social self. He dies a lonely death only to be born again as Lanark. Lanark, in turn, creates Alexander and in doing so redeems Thaw. Glasgow/Unthank is thrown topsyturvy, but we've been shown the possibilities of that city which is 'made' imaginative through Gray's juxtapositions of the fantastic and the commonplace. As Jonathan Hall notes:

locate Gray's inspiration in the drawing of the scantily clad female and the sports car that adorn the front of the brochure.

...the enormous wickerwork representations of comic carnival monsters were in fact a product of the city carnivals from the twelfth century onwards. It would seem that, as in the case of Cervantes, not to mention Rabelais, the comic contestatory construction of giants is not a millennial folk response, but a particular self-assertive practice of the emergent city...local, patriotic symbols of the new power challenging the feudal even at the level of its signs and narratives. (109-110, n.9)

Gray's monsters announce the advent of many Glasgows, most of them Janus-faced: the imaginative, fantastic Glasgow of *Lanark*, the 'cultcha capital' with a pornographic underbelly of *Something Leather*, and the scientifically, technologically, and architecturally progressive 19th-century city which 'overreaches' itself in *Poor Things*. Within the narratives individual monsters are created that become reflections of a greater geographical monstrosity, Glasgow, or in the case of *1982 Janine*, Scotland itself.

Textual Subversions: Polyphony and Self-Authoring

To appreciate a closer reading of Gray using Bakhtin's ideas it is helpful to look at other ways in which Gray responds to textual authority in a carnival fashion. In what follows, I shall first of all examine the relationship of Gray as 'author' to the 'heroes' he creates. The final section will complete an idea of polyphony that relies on Bakhtin's more mature work on the subject, to be found in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, which was amended in parts as recently as 1973. This section will consider polyphony as it is created by carnivalistic imagery and language in Gray's works. The

final section will examine ways in which the 'pornography' to be found in such works as *1982 Janine* and *Something Leather* is really a carnivalistic reaction to both the authority of the media and to moral authority.

Mikhail Bakhtin sees the novel as 'a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice' (DIN 261). Gray's blending of genres and the influences on his technique, such as *The Water Babies* and *Tillyard*, have been well documented.⁷ Such a style is noticeable in the novels of Walter Scott which include instances of poetry and drama within the texts, as well as in MacDiarmid's poetry that experiments with poems (as voices) within poems. In Bakhtinian terms, the process which MacDiarmid uses so effectively in *A Drunk Man* further extends in his later poetry (as in 'On a Raised Beach') to a segregating of voices from professional and scientific realms leading inevitably to the primary constituent of Bakhtin's dialogic theory, the word which is 'born in a dialogue as a living rejoinder within it' (DIN 279). In a Derridean sense, the reader is directed to the world of language as constituted by the word and specifically the written expression of the word.⁸ But, as we have seen, Bakhtin leads the reader out of a strictly written domain through his theory of 'utterance' in which language relies on 'heteroglossia', an inestimable number of conditions, which may or may not utilize the written condition, in

⁷ See, e.g., 'The Story So Far' by Bruce Charlton and 'The Process of Jock McLeish and the Fiction of Alasdair Gray' in Crawford and Nairn, pp. 10-21, 37-47.

⁸ See *Of Grammatology*, page 7 and *passim*, where Derrida speaks of writing as comprehending language.

producing language. It is important to recognize these distinctions in coming to the writings of Alasdair Gray as they highlight in many ways what makes him different from a writer such as Scott or even MacDiarmid.

Gray's fictions, in a very postmodern way, make the text itself a character in the literary event. The text itself becomes an additional voice in the polyphony and it carries on important dialogues with the reader, the hero, other characters within the work, as well as the author himself. Gray, in his 'Index of Plagiarisms' in *Lanark*, has attributed this aspect of his work to the influence of other modern and postmodern writers, such as Flann O'Brien, who have successfully twisted narrative authority out of the hands of the writer and allowed the characters an autonomy of voice (489-90, n.6). As we shall see in the final chapter, Muriel Spark is also adept at subverting narrative authority in this fashion.

If we look for a Scottish precursor to Gray's textual voice, Hogg's *Confessions* seems the most likely candidate. Gray's fictions make use of a confessional self-accounting that is first presented (in Scottish terms) in the classic 19th-century text. Talking about *Lanark* in an interview with the present writer, Gray indicated that he first read *Confessions* at the age of 16 or 17 and that it made him 'want to do something great and Scottish like that'.⁹ *Lanark*, like Hogg's sinner and like Orwell's Winston, begins a journal in a world that is not familiar. The voice of the journalistic text is born from the dialogue

⁹ 'Interview with Alasdair Gray', April, 1994.

between the self that is striving for explanation or to make familiar an alien world and the self who will read and empathize with it. Gray's next novel discards the written journal itself for a more 'voyeuristic' self-accounting in which not only is the reader allowed a peep-show into the head of Jock McLeish, but the hero/author Jock himself stands as it were outside the keyhole, seeing his life pass before his intoxicated eyes. Finally, Gray returns to the 'voice' of confessional writing with *Poor Things* in which two renditions of a life pass before the reader's eyes and ask for 'an answer' to the truth.

These are all part of the new voices that Gray has accumulated in his works which aid him in transcending simple ideas of character and style. The polyphony of Gray includes not just textual embodiment in a character; the signifiers of text themselves become important to the dialogue. Marginal notations, publication errata slips, page markers, illustrations, and typefaces all play a role in a dialogue which includes the medium as well as the message. As Bakhtin might argue, each of these seemingly trivial indications of an utterance will change the meaning for the particular reading (and in terms of manuscript preparation, writing) of a certain text. One has only to glance through Gray's manuscript material at the National Library of Scotland to see how Gray's creativity is very much influenced by doodles on a page, a coffee stain, or other 'accidental' marks.¹⁰ The fact that many of Gray's longer published works are pilfered from

¹⁰ See for instance, Accession no. 8799, folder no. 34.

previously written plays or short stories makes those other works additional voices in the larger polyphony which helps to establish a dialogue between genres.

Criticism of Gray which focuses on his influences tends to identify him as a creator of metafiction.¹¹ While certainly true, this simplifies his achievement by making him dependent on other writers. However, Gray's work inhabits a fictional realm which, for want of a better title, we might call the 'modern folkloric'. Gray builds on fictional myths, if we can say that literary styles and themes are manifestations of myths, but he also creates myths for our time in the process. We might rightly ask, at what point does metafiction give way to fiction in Gray? By looking at Gray's voices and seeing how they offer modern interpretations of older myths as well as how they provide new mythologies for the future, we can sense that what is going on in Gray's writing is more than a simple rehashing:

A desire to tell fantastic stories has never left me. I find that many stories repeat the same theme. Basic plots are repetitive. Variations produced by different cultures is what makes them interesting and exciting. (Interview, March 17, 1994)

If this is the case then we can see such Gray works as *McGrotty and Ludmilla* in which the Aladdin story is reworked, *Lanark* which borrows a bit from *Portrait of an Artist* and (more strikingly) from Joyce Cary's *The Horse's Mouth*, and *Poor Things* which plays with *Frankenstein* and *Confessions*, as contributing in a very polyphonic fashion,

¹¹ One typical example is 'Chinese Box: Flann O'Brien in the Metafiction of Alasdair Gray, John Fowles, and Robert Coover', by Rüdiger Imhof in *Eire-Ireland* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1990), pp. 64-79.

to new variations on old themes, even if the older stories are contained within Gray's own geographical locale. The texts themselves become voices that speak with each other across time and space. The different cultures of which Gray speaks can be as remote as that which informs *The Arabian Nights* and that which stands behind 17th-century Scotland. Both these cultures are removed from the environment and milieu in which Gray writes. This idea is taken a step further in *Poor Things* where Gray uses a narrative technique from a mid-19th-century Scottish novel (*Confessions*) to create another novel that is based around events that occur in Scotland towards the end of that century. Such an idea of culture or even communication as being different according to the context of an utterance (that specific instance in which it is used, be it in the Middle East or Glasgow or Unthank) is charged with Bakhtinian possibility.

Bakhtin's essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' deals with ideas of authorship that do not directly speak of polyphony but express a process of creation that is wholly dependent on the consciousness of both an author and a hero in forming a novelistic whole. As opposed to the later Dostoevsky book on the subject, the essay is less novel-oriented, yet it conveys Bakhtin's philosophical position concerning self-formation, and the necessity of an other in the creation of an identity. This essay is fruitful for reading Gray's fiction in that it attempts to identify what constitutes the relationship between an author and hero, an author which may not always

be the flesh-and-blood writer putting ink to paper. The complications of Gray's heroes and anti-heroes are highlighted by Bakhtin's notions of what it takes for an author or hero to be 'consummated' and how many times traditional roles are reversed.

If we begin chronologically with *Lanark*, a book which is in essence very 'anti-chronological', we can see not one but two heroes being created. These are heroes who we are tempted to merge into one, but who, through Gray's managerial skill we keep distinct. In the second chapter of Book Three (which is the second chapter of the novel), Lanark considers the act of writing and the nature of authorship that has been presented to him by Sludden:

Lanark did not wish to be an artist but he felt increasingly the need to do some kind of work, and a writer needed only pen and paper to begin. Also he knew something about writing, for when wandering the city he had visited public libraries and read enough stories to know there were two kinds. One kind was a sort of written cinema, with plenty of action and hardly any thought. The other kind was about clever unhappy people, often authors themselves, who thought a lot but didn't do very much. Lanark supposed a good author was more likely to write the second kind of book. He thought, "Sludden said I should write to express myself. I suppose I could do it in a story about who I am and why I have decided to write a story. But there's a difficulty." (14-15)

Here, Lanark is presenting the idea that an author needs to create a self through writing. We have not gone very far in the book and already Gray has the reader at another authorial remove from where he or she started. Lanark is to be an author and so must consider what that means given the limited sort of knowledge he brings to the creative act. Bakhtin defines the author and hero as 'correlative moments in the artistic whole of a work' (AH 12). As such

the author and hero are inseparable, although never the same. Lanark's problem with authoring a hero follows simply from the realization that there is a problem: ' "What does it matter who I am?" he asked aloud.' (15) He seems to sense a division implicit in the act of authoring, one that requires that he define himself 'outside' himself. He has yet to realize a Bakhtinian notion of authorship.

What makes this first novelistic creation of Gray's so poignant is that he implicates the act of authorship in the very early pages. He will build upon this theme throughout his fictions and add subtle twists each time. Lanark's frustration at authoring is presented in a very simple straightforward manner and what complicates it is its placement in the 'Third Book', which appears first in the tangible volume. Again, Gray's carnival manipulation hints that authorship does not follow a guidebook, a chronology, or a set stylistics. For Lanark this is made abundantly clear when he tries to author a self based on a memory that will set him down in the midst of things rather than at the chronological beginning: '*The first thing I remember is*' (15). He finds it hard to locate an origin, and in reaching back even further he erases the memories that come after. In the act of creating himself as hero, Lanark erases himself and finds that 'half the words had no definite meanings, having been added to make the sentences sound better than they were' (15). Lanark is discovering something about language that later will be complemented by the lesson he learns when he looks out

into a world which he finds only to be a reflection in a mirror (57-8). In giving birth to a hero, Gray is also displaying the evolutionary process of writing.

The next chapter, 'Manuscript', presents the difficulty Lanark has in 'writing himself'. He fumbles through descriptions of the world he has been born into while showing no curiosity as to how he came there. Things run smoothly until he has to identify himself: 'I remembered a short word starting with *Th* or *Gr* but it escaped me' (20). So far Lanark has not identified himself, but he comes close to realizing another hero and an author in his memory. He rejects the two and chooses 'Lanark' the word he remembers from beneath the photo in the railway carriage. Lanark's manuscript ends with him no closer to an identity than a name and some vital statistics particular to this new world including what the doctor has told him is dragonhide: '"Diseases identify people more accurately than variable factors like height, weight, and hair color"' (21). He is accumulating a history, but his reliance on words, and the careful structuring of words and ideas can only survive in the test of 'critics' such as Sludden and his entourage.

Sludden's subsequent dismissal of Lanark's autobiography, '"what you've written there is dead"' (25), is a blow to Lanark who grasps at a vision of language which seems to predate his fall into this strange world: '"But I do enjoy words--some words--for their own sake! Words like river, and dawn, and daylight, and time. These words seem much richer than our experiences of things they

represent--"' (25). These words take on extra meaning in this world of near darkness but bear as little weight as Lanark's identity which has died in a way with Sludden's review. Lanark is aware of a literary world of sorts from the writing of his brief manuscript and its defeat by a reader. His story and quest for self-knowledge are handed over to the narrator who injudiciously gave the pen to the hero for one brief chapter.

Gray's portrayal of a writer failing in his initial quest for identity through the act of writing emphasizes the division between author and hero that highlights much of what Bakhtin calls a monologic approach to literature which he sees in much writing before Dostoevsky. This approach separates writer from hero and privileges the consciousness of the author over that of the hero. Bakhtin is quick, even in 'Author and Hero' to stress the necessity of the two entities and the necessary creation of two consciousnesses which are to work in polyphony, or harmony without merging:

The author is the bearer and sustainer of the intently active unity of a consummated whole (the whole of a hero and the whole of a work) which is transgredient to each and every one of its particular moments or constituent features. As a whole which consummates the hero, this whole is in principle incapable of being given to us from within the hero, insofar as we 'identify' ourselves with the hero and experience his life from within him. (AH 12)

Lanark has yet to achieve consummation and it is not from within his consciousness alone that this consummation can occur. To write is implicitly to enter into dialogue with an implied reader (here critic). Writing for Lanark represents another effort to become socialized. So a

Bakhtinian reading of Gray helps us to realize how, for Gray, the process of writing is vitally concerned with and part of the process of socialization. Bakhtin hints at what he believes to be a greater necessity of identity formation (in an extra-literary sense) which relies on an other to achieve consummation. Transgression, the 'excess of seeing' which a consciousness undergoes with regard to another consciousness is what helps to complete a person's identity, or at least keep it in the process of becoming. For the author, the hero (with the exception of autobiographical heroes) possesses very little in the way of excess seeing, but the author's position of transgressively viewing what surrounds a hero goes a long way toward identifying both him (the hero) as well as the author. Additionally, by creating a hero, an author emphasizes how the act of writing is a necessary activity in the search for a place in society.

So what happens to Lanark's identity when his story is handed over to a more reliable narrator? Firstly, we have no reason to believe the narrator who wrestles control from Lanark is reliable. After all, he/she has chosen to drop us into the plot very far along in the process. But it is clear from Lanark's narrative that he is not experiencing the give and take necessary for successful consummation. We will return to Lanark when he again confronts a narrator of his life.

Turning to *1982 Janine*, we see Gray again presenting the reader with a character in the act of writing himself. Jock McLeish sits in his hotel room in Peebles or Selkirk

and attempts to author an identity out of a collection of memories and fantasies that are so dislocated that they continually fail to help him achieve a form of consummation. He rejects the autobiographical in favour of the imaginative, then slinks back again when this comes to close to affecting him in the physical world. As opposed to Lanark's narrow self-accounting, Jock's appears to be set in a box from which events (real or imagined) pour forth to enlarge his world. Authorial control lies outside Lanark (with the exception of his brief introductory bit) while Jock seems to suffer from a surplus. This word, surplus, is essential for a Bakhtinian reading of Gray's heroes as it defines the status of their visionary contact with the world which surrounds them.¹² Lanark's access to surplus vision is severely restricted by the control enforced by his narrators (the Oracle, the author in the Epilogue, etc.) whereas Jock as narrator maintains an overabundance, a pseudo-surplus, which turns out to be perhaps as debilitating. In this way, Lanark's authoring of himself is monologic, while Jock creates a surplus of seeing that also is not dialogic in that it presents false 'others' with which to attempt consummation. Janine, Big Momma and their ilk are attempts of Jock's to fill in the areas surrounding Denny, Helen, and company which Jock has been unable to see in reality. True they are perversions, but they are not intended to reflect on the reality they surround. They are artificial constructs built by Jock to assist him in the creation of an identity. It is the very

¹² For a discussion of Bakhtin's 'surplus' and polyphony see Morson and Emerson, 1990, pp. 241-43.

nature of their perversion that comes back to inflict Jock with self-loathing. While multi-voiced (with even God getting a shot at authoring) only one identity reaches toward completion at the end with the acknowledgement 'All right' (341). This acknowledgement is preceded by the recognition of the dangers and terrors of identification itself in the line 'Don't name it. Let it grow' (340) which reminds the reader that any identification carries with it a sense of completion that kills fluidity, an ongoing process of identity. Jock is on the verge of authoring a successful hero of the self by rejecting the very signification that he has been led to believe holds any validity, the fantasies of heroes (or in this case heroines) who are unable to share with him in an excess of seeing. As if to indicate the heroine's sudden realization of what is about to occur in her relationship with Jock, 'Janine is worried but trying not to show it' (340). She breaks out of authorial control herself, though, when she discards the clothing which has been tantalizing Jock (her author) and now his imagined audience. So finally she writes herself.

Bakhtin speaks of the special circumstances that surround the existence of erotic fantastical heroines:

The difference in the planes on which persons exist in fantasy is particularly clear-cut when it has an erotic character: the longed-for heroine attains the highest degree of outward distinctness that our representation is capable of achieving; but the hero--the dreamer himself--experiences himself in his desires and his love from within himself and remains quite unexpressed outwardly. (AH 29)

Jock is quite capable of describing Janine in vivid detail, but when it comes to providing the reader with

information about himself he clouds the story with memories that have to fight with the fantasies. Indeed, Jock can trace the history of his descriptive capabilities back to an early age when he worshipped the image of Jane Russell:

My feelings were more than sexual. I felt grateful. I was amazed by myself. Nobody else, I realized, knew all the rich things I knew. The clean tidy room, the click of my mother's needles, Jane Russell's soft shoulders and sulky mouth, the evening sunlight over the town in the bend of the river where the colliers' sons were guddling trout, a mushroom cloud in the Pacific sky above Bikini atoll, Jimmy Shand's music and the taste of a chocolate biscuit were precisely held by *my* mind and by nobody else's. I was vast. (19)

Already, Jock is equating hero-creation with sense of self. What makes this portrait appear more healthy, though, as compared with his later fantasies is that he allows the outside world to interact with his creativity. Here he is not shelving off realms of experience, Jane Russell seems every bit a part of that room in Glasgow as the chocolate biscuit. Over the years, the two realms disengage so that we find the Jock of Peebles or Selkirk placing his fictions in remote worlds that bear no resemblance to the region where he physically lives.

Another aspect of Jock's self-authoring attempts are the interior dialogues he engages in when constructing his fictions. He frequently narrates the process of description, as in this early Janine scenario:

Half an hour later she stops the car in a lay-by. Some trucks whip past on the road and when their lights fade she crouches down, unbuttons blouse, slips it off, removes bra then slips blouse on again, fastening just the two lowest buttons. Can I now have her sit back and light a cigarette, smoking with one elbow out of the window (it's a warm night) and feeling the cool silk support her breasts? Yes. The

row with Max has upset her, she wants to calm down, she thinks, "Let Charlie wait another five minutes, it'll make him that much keener." (35)

This typical passage is interesting in that not only do we catch a glimpse of Jock narrating the act of writing, we see him participating in the thought process that is Janine. Here he is thinking not only as Jock the author, but as Jock/Janine the heroine. He is justifying Janine's actions by imagining how she would feel on a warm night after having a row. Jock can only condone the authorial control he wishes to exert on Janine by answering his directorial questions with feelings of empathy. However, empathy, for Bakhtin, suggests a merging with an other, the merging of author and hero, taboo for the dialogical process which depends on the unique and distinct identities of a self and other.

I myself cannot be the author of my own value, just as I cannot lift myself by my own hair. The biological life of an organism becomes a value only in another's sympathy and compassion with that life (motherhood). It is the other's sympathy and compassion that introduce biological life into a new value context. (AH 55)

We have seen this previously in the discussion of Hogg and Stevenson where Robert Colwan and Dr. Jekyll suffer from a sense of self in isolation from society. Here we see Jock McLeish suffering from the same symptoms of isolation. Isolation is a theme that can be found in many of Gray's works.¹³ In *1982 Janine* it becomes heightened by the plethora of 'extra' characters the author (Jock) creates to fill his substitute world. In Bakhtin's terms, what

¹³ Robert Crawford talks about the 'monstrous traps' such as Dragonhide in *Lanark* which confine the hero's sense of self. See Crawford and Nairn, p. 3.

makes this isolation so malignant is that there is no 'return to the self' once the author and hero(ine) have brought their consciousnesses into contact. The empathy that disturbs Bakhtin is the process of merging which denies identity and individuality and which forms the backbone of Bakhtinian cultural critique as well:

Cultural creation (in all cultural domains) does not in the least strive to enrich the object with material immanent to that object. Rather, it transposes the object to another axiological plane, bestows the gift of *form* upon it, transmutes it formally. And this formal enrichment is impossible if a *merging* with the object so treated occurs. In what way would it enrich the event if I merged with the other, and instead of two there would now be only *one*? And what would I myself gain by the other's merging with me? If he did, he would see and know no more than what I see and know myself; he would merely repeat in himself that want of any issue out of itself which characterizes my own life. Let him rather, remain outside of me, for in that position he can see and know what I myself do not see and do not know from my own place, and he can essentially enrich the event of my own life... (AH 87)

This represents Bakhtin's ideas of healthy co-experiencing and aesthetic form which always requires, whether speaking of dialogue with another consciousness, another culture, or the experience of a work of art, a return into the consciousness of the self to be productive and enriching. Jock, like the sinner and Jekyll, cannot make the return from the heroes he authors. They are part of him yet do not remain distinct enough to be beneficial to the creation of a valid self. Jock's heroes do not return to Jock to verify his self. When this happens, Jock must find some other way to achieve consummation.

In 1982 *Janine*, Gray indicates that one of the models for his 'narrator without self-respect' is Dostoevsky's Underground Man (343). Bakhtin discusses *Notes from*

Underground in his own formulation of the author/hero relationship in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

The hero from the underground eavesdrops on every word someone else says about him, he looks at himself, as it were, in all the possible mirrors of other people's consciousnesses, he knows all the possible refractions of his image in those mirrors. (53)

In such a way does Gray's 'underground man', Jock McLeish, use the mirrors of Janine as much as those of Denny. He creates witnesses to his self out of thin air and he

knows that he has the final word, and he seeks at whatever cost to retain for himself, the word of his self-consciousness, in order to become in it that which he is not. His consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy. (53)

It is the final words of "all right" that Jock has left for determining his self, and for placing him, not Janine, as the hero of his writing: 'The author does indeed leave the final word to his hero' (53). Such an achievement on Jock's part does not, as we've seen in the case of Robert Wringham, ensure healthy self-creation.

In *1982 Janine* we see identity formation as a debilitating activity through Jock's refusal to embrace authentic others. In essence, the others he creates in the shape of Janine, Big Momma and company are false others, and 'real' others cannot be 'authored' by a consciousness resting in isolation. So too the limiting notions of the literary stereotypes fostered by antiszygical sentiment contribute falsely to a sense of Scottish literary identity. It is this type of literary authority that Gray so successfully resists through carnivalizing the roles of

authors and heroes and making them less answerable to sterile forms of literary convention.

The final 'longer' fiction to be discussed in terms of author/hero relationships is *Poor Things*, a book in which authoring operates on a number of levels. Again, a consideration of Dostoevsky's *Underground Man* makes a good introduction to a consideration of Gray's text. Bakhtin has called this hero

...the first hero-ideologist in Dostoevsky's work. One of his basic ideas, which he advances in his polemic with the socialists, is precisely the idea that man is not a final and defined quantity upon which firm calculations can be made; man is free, and can therefore violate any regulating norms which might be thrust upon him. (59)

In *Poor Things*, besides the authoring of Gray, which is actually passed off as 'editing', we have the authoring of 'Episodes from the Early Life of a Scottish Public Health Officer' by Archie McCandless and a letter by Victoria McCandless (Bella Baxter) denouncing Archie's book as pure fantasy. These are the surface, written texts to be contended with. Beneath these writings lie the creation of Bella Baxter by Godwin, the self-creation of Bella in her letters to Godwin and Archie, the letter of Wedderburn concerning Bella, and the history of Victoria Blessington as presented by her natural father and husband. Authoring is interwoven throughout the text of *Poor Things* in such a way as to bring the whole process into question. Where *Lanark* posits the initial question of authoring by presenting a hero in search of a self which is manipulated by a variety of narrators, *1982 Janine* complicates the question by giving fuller authorial power

to the protagonist/hero. In *Poor Things*, much as in *Confessions*, the lines between author and hero become so blurred and interchangeable that the reader is forced to choose which story to believe and which narrator to single out for authorial credibility. In posing these questions, Gray deconstructs them within the text by constant manipulation, presenting the reader with continual exposure to a subjective reality that is forever fluctuating. Through reading Bakhtin, we know that it is unnecessary to single out a single narrator for credibility since all the potential narrators should be placed in a dialogic relationship with each other.

The act of 'making' is very much a part of *Poor Things* as can be seen by the chapter titles which Archie McCandless inserts in his text. The first chapter 'Making Me' reveals the very clinical personality of McCandless, especially when contrasted with the more genuine, while less assured, confession of Lanark in his attempt to gain knowledge of himself. McCandless is best when revealing how other characters attempt to author: the description of Baxter's revitalization of Bella, the transcription of Bella's letter (complete with tear-smudged pages), and the documentation that accompanies the arguments with General Blessington. McCandless is less successful as an author of self and we reserve judgement on him (as a self) until after a reading of Victoria's letter written for posterity.

The nature of authorship changes in the course of *Poor Things*. Where we are first given the introduction

(which might just as well have been titled 'The Making of the Makings') as an outer shell for the remaining creations, we are next given the formations of the principal characters. Once this task of authoring is complete, McCandless gives us the making of less verifiable products: 'Wedderburn's Letter: Making a Maniac', and 'Bella Baxter's Letter: The Making of a Conscience'. If we remember that these more abstract 'makings' are the product of McCandless, regardless of whether they are simple transcriptions, we begin to sense an interchange between him and his heroes (who are actually now authors as well). What we begin to sense is something not unlike the experience of Lockwood when confronting the texts of different Catherines in *Wuthering Heights*. The author/hero relationship is dependent upon the give and take of the consciousnesses of the two entities, but which hero does the author embrace when confronted with different interpretations? If we consider ourselves (as individuals) as the authors of the texts we read, since we read the texts as no other reader can read them, and, as Bakhtin would assert, we never read them again in the same way (the law governing utterance)¹⁴, then we might be tempted to relate to the heroes we create in a way which does not pigeonhole them into static and inflexible categories. Gray himself implicates the subjective nature of the act of reading in his novel *A History Maker* (1994) when the young Watt Dryhope questions

¹⁴ See 'The Problem of the Text', page 108 and *passim* for a discussion of how texts themselves are unrepeatable utterances.

his adopted mother Kittock's notions of literary engagement:

"When a lot of folk watch something on a screen they all see the same thing. What a damnable waste of mind! Readers bring books to life by filling the stories with voices, faces, scenery, ideas the author never dreamed of, things from their own minds. Every reader does it differently."

"So when you and me read *The Cat That Walked by Itself* we read a different story?" said Wat disliking the idea.

"Exactly!" said Kittock with great satisfaction.

(140)

In discussing the polyphonic qualities of Dostoevsky's novels, Bakhtin proposes a fruitful relationship between author and hero which might just as well hold true for reader(as author) and hero:

The uniqueness of Dostoevsky lies not in the fact that he monologically proclaimed the value of personality (others had done that before him); it lies in the fact that he was able, in an objective and artistic way, to visualize and portray personality as another, as someone else's personality, without making it lyrical or merging it with his own voice--and at the same time without reducing it to a materialized psychic reality. Dostoevsky's worldview was not the first to place high value on personality (to use Askoldov's term), the image of many unmerged personalities joined together in the unity of some spiritual event, was fully realized for the first time in his novels. (PDP 12-13)

The reader of *Poor Things* reads McCandless reading Baxter reading Bella reading McCandless. This is an endless process in which the reader/author is endlessly implicated. In a way Gray's novels, especially *Poor Things*, come close to embodying what Bakhtin admires in the novels of Dostoevsky. There is a constant striving after self-identification and the reading of an other in *Poor Things* which has much to do with an empathizing or sympathizing position. The very title of the book suggests

an act of sympathy as one self tries to understand and enter imaginatively into the suffering of another.

Bella's concern for the welfare of mothers, whom she relates to through the loss of her own child, signifies her attempt to reach some sort of understanding about her past and her own identity. Even when confronted with the facts of her past, Bella must construct them for herself the only way she can, she must identify with a self which is both her own and not hers. Bella strives to find a consciousness that will link the two together and she comes close to it when she hears the horrible story of how, as Victoria Blessington, she was locked in a coal cellar by her cruel husband: "I feel how the poor thing felt," she said...'(231). In a sense Bella (as a product of the author McCandless) inscribes her self in her rejection of the text presented to her by Blessington and his cronies. However, she cannot do so until she empathizes (without merging) and returns to the Bella which has been authored by Baxter. Linguistically, Bella has undergone the entire range of development; she has experimented with vowels, consonants, rhymes and lyrical forms and then breaks into prose since '*it slows me down*' (115). This sentiment is very Bakhtinian in that we see a privileging of prose over poetry since it is perceived here as being capable of conveying greater bits of information at greater speed.¹⁵ It is with Bella's full

¹⁵ This also recalls the chapter titled 'The Key' in *Lanark* where Duncan Thaw rejects poetry as the key to what he is looking for since 'poems were too finished and perfect to finish and perfect anything themselves'. He suspects finally that it might be 'whispered in a dark street by someone leaning out of a window' (170), another instance of a self seeking an other for recognition.

growth into language that she realizes the power to write herself and author her own heroine, one who will partake of her former selves as she reads them as well as the 'poor things' of the world:

...the new artistic position of the author with regard to the hero in Dostoevsky's polyphonic novel is a *fully realized and thoroughly consistent dialogical position*, one that affirms the independence, internal freedom, unfinalizability, and indeterminacy of the hero. For the author the hero is not "he" and not "I" but a fully valid "thou," that is, another and autonomous "I" ("thou art")....The great dialogue in Dostoevsky is organized as an *unclosed whole* of life itself, life poised on the threshold. (PDP 63)

It is when we feel safely assured that Bella has secured her identity that Gray throws us another, and not yet final, tidbit of his 'unfinalizable' hunt for self, the letter of the late Victoria McCandless. The reader searches her confession for corroboration of the earlier boxes of authoring that have been presented to him. Failing a substantial verification, the reader must choose between authors only to find the question 'who is the real author' to negate the idea of choice in the first place. Gray's loophole, reminiscent of Hogg's *Confessions*, is to place the final author within the framework of a historical note (302-17). Leaving the last word to history is very tricky of Gray. He has consistently provided the reader with instances in which history rubs shoulders with fantasy so that now the differences become nearly negotiable. The ultimate word has not been left to the heroine here as it was for the hero Jock McLeish. Control must pass once more to the reader who monologically closes the life of Bella Victoria Hattersley Blessington Baxter

McCandless (a name which suggests multiple identities) by reference to 'a' history which is chronological. In Gray's juxtaposition of the 'fictional' with the 'historical' he seems to be making a conscious admission of how chronology misleads the reader, an idea he artistically played with in the structure of *Lanark*. The history of the final section of *Poor Things* does not partake of the author/hero relationship which has been established to an ever increasing intensity in the course of the rest of the novel. It is for this reason that Gray gives the reader an 'out', a choice between two versions of identity formation that are based on 'empirical' and 'historical' 'facts':

Dr. Victoria McCandless was found dead of a cerebral stroke on 3rd December 1946. Reckoning from the birth of her brain in the Humane Society mortuary on Glasgow Green, 18th February 1880, she was exactly sixty-six years, forty weeks and four days old. Reckoning from the birth of her body in a Manchester slum in 1854, she was ninety-two. (317)

There are a number of different 'truths' being presented in *Poor Things* and they carry on a dialogue with each other. There is no need or desire to simply resolve the differences between truths and this becomes a central theme of the novel. Resolving truth is to falsify through completion. For Bakhtin, fluid unfinalizability and unique (context-dependent) truth or *pravda* are to be strived after (TPA 28). In this sense, the narrative strands of *Poor Things* represent in novelistic form the 'open-ended dialogue' that Bakhtin embraces in his image of the 'world symposium':

The dialogic nature of consciousness, the dialogic nature of human life itself. The single adequate form for verbally expressing authentic human life is the open-ended dialogue. Life by its very nature is

dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium. (TR 293)

Discussion of Gray's concern for author and hero relationships is by no means exhausted by these considerations of his more 'major' works. We see a hero attempting to author a self in the form of McGrotty or Kelvin Walker, as well as in short stories such as 'Logopandocy' and 'Story of a Recluse'. In *McGrotty and Ludmilla* and *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (1985) the heroes struggle to author selves in a foreign environment, the capitalistic, upwardly (and downwardly) mobile life of London business. McGrotty is able to successfully, though fantastically, embrace other consciousnesses in his environment and he fulfils a sense of self almost by accident. Kelvin Walker, on the other hand, strives to fulfil a preconceived notion of self (he even authors another's identity in his own image) but is unable to escape from his Scottish roots. He is an isolated individual, like Robert Colwan and Duncan Thaw, unable to connect with another consciousness and return to fortify his own identity.

Carnavalesque Language and Pornography

As I have been attempting to show, Gray is perhaps the most carnivalesque of the writers dealt with in this study. Subversion in Gray's fictions exist both on the

surface, in terms of imagery, and structurally within the stylistics that he employs to combat accepted forms of narrative technique and authorial control. Additionally, however, Gray subverts language by making it less answerable to laws of textual representation, such as in his playful approach to typography. Gray also subverts language to arrive at different notions of truth. His story 'Logopandocy', a confession of sorts, implicates language in the process of identity. While not as pessimistic as *Lanark* or *1982 Janine* (despite most of its supposed composition being performed in various prisons) it shows Sir Thomas Urquhart as an author calculating his chances of survival as an individual and his country's chances as a nation. In discussing 'The Problem', Anne Varty has suggested that Gray himself may be displaying 'fundamental authorial chauvinism: language and the world it creates are entirely at his disposal' and

We must meet Gray's work on its own terms if we are not to be left as baffled 'sciolasts'. We must also accept that his authorial chauvinism rarely permits the creation of an autonomous subject; the author keeps close reign on his creations. (1991: 125)

If we forget the 'male' quality of chauvinism for a moment, we see that what Varty has to say about Gray and authorial chauvinism is quite true. We may, however, be tempted to read this 'author' as signifying the authors that Gray authors. Varty refers to 'Logopandocy' in confirming an instance of a Gray hero concerned with creating and controlling language, so that we see that perhaps it is Gray's creations that control their own creations, not Gray imposing the controls he is setting

out to parody. A monologic Gray would find it easier to fall into the trap of pronouncing the 'lying laws of fiction' which Varty so accurately describes him as denouncing. The dialogic nature of Gray's writing, however, allows him to grant a type of autonomy to his heroes, at least to the extent that they can trade places with him, if only momentarily, in writing themselves. Thomas Urquhart commits the crime of confessional self-accounting which Bakhtin defines as follows:

In confessional self-accounting, there is no hero and there is no author, for there is no position for actualizing their interrelationship, no position of being axiologically situated outside it. Author and hero are fused into one: it is the spirit prevailing over the soul in the process of its own becoming, and finding itself unable to achieve its own completion or consummation, except for a certain degree of consolidation that it gains, through anticipation, in God.... (AH 147)

This is a position similar to that which Hogg's Sinner, Robert Colwan finds himself in when he writes his confession with the injunction: 'cursed be he who trieth to alter or amend' (230) and we read it in a form which has been tainted by Hogg and the editor. The diary of Urquhart is 'maintained for my eyes and pleasure alone' (139), but the identity of the intended audience becomes complicated when we consider that not only are we as readers reading Urquhart, but, according to Bakhtin, he will read the words differently himself each time he opens the book. The hero, Urquhart, is writing himself as a hero who will change with each successive reading, and who remains open to the possibility of change.

What is most interesting about 'Logopandocry', however, is the way in which Urquhart juxtaposes the

creation of an individual self with the creation not only of a new language, but also of a new nation. Urquhart is trying to write the self of Scotland, and Scotland becomes the hero to the author Urquhart. Again, as in other Gray fictions, the typeface and style of writing become implicated in the act of writing a self or hero. The margins switch places with the center and the columns of Urquhart's listings become the text that is to be digested complete. In this fashion the 'Pro Me' and 'Contra Me' columns lead to the 'Pro Scotia' and 'Contra Scotia' columns in small type, then to large type 'PRO ME' and 'CONTRA SCOTIA' and finally to 'Pro Me' 'Contra Scotia' in small type. While this signals what is going on thematically in the text itself it also indicates the process of identity formation and dismantlement of a self and a society. The embracing principles of the 'Logopandecteison' are a prophecy of what MacDiarmid was attempting in his poetry and which is reflected in *A Drunk Man*. Gray's Urquhart anticipates MacDiarmid in the figure of Hugo de Grieve in whose mind '*everything flows*' (152) and whom Urquhart accuses of plagiarizing from his own ideas of a 'multiverbal logopandocy'. This is only one example of the way in which Gray's Urquhart authors a self of the nation through use of individuals. Hugo de Grieve is listed in the Pro Scotia section, but his ideas clearly reflect back on the individual of the fictitious Urquhart.

It is in the final pages of his diary that Gray's Urquhart comes closest to what Bakhtin writes of in 'Response to a Question from the Novy Mir Staff':

Without one's own questions one cannot creatively understand anything other or foreign....Such a dialogic encounter of two cultures does not result in merging or mixing. Each retains its own unity and open totality, but they are mutually enriched. (7)

Gray, through Urquhart, has been poking fun at the historical and scientific tendency to compartmentalize knowledge and culture into regions of specialization and isolation. The columns eventually take on a life of their own, cross boundaries and return (much as in Jock McLeish's hallucinogenic state). At the climax of this division and return, Urquhart re-invents language, not in the form he has foreseen in his dictionary, but rather in his own words. He is in a foreign land and is able to realize both a personal and national other in the form of the guide who strokes his hand and the discovery of a non-verbal state before language (194).

In many ways this non-verbal state ensures authentic identity formation since it relies on physicality and on an excess of seeing that guarantees the presence of an other. This is, perhaps, a condemnation of the authority granted to written language. In this sense 'Logopandocry' represents one of Gray's most subversive stories as it attacks the very foundations of linguistic hegemony, a hegemony which has been appropriated by political as well as literary forces for the furtherance of power and the limitation of identity. In this story we most clearly see how Gray carnivalizes language, not by way of dialect as we shall investigate in the work of James Kelman, Tom Leonard, and Edwin Morgan, but rather through an attack on the static linguistic structures that pervade literature

and history and which have become ingrained within cultural consciousness as the only acceptable forms of discourse.

In 'Logopandocy' and 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire', Gray carnivalizes language, the revered position of the author, and academics (Urquhart terms them sciolasts!). In 'Logopandocy' we see a grotesque and inflated language at work in the creation of Urquhart's *Logopandecteison*. This creation is an effort at including the entire world in a dance of language by making words into protuberances and objects of excess. It is through Urquhart's dialogue with the Chief Secretary of State that language becomes identified as something which has the power to control human lives:

...what fact of human nature made men inarticulate to one another, who were united in a great project which, while certainly presumptuous, would otherwise have succeeded?

To this he replied, *The desire for supremacy over their own kind.* (169)

It is Urquhart's desire that his 'multiverbal logopandocy can express without distorting' (173), but we see through the examples he gives, such as 'Kohudlitex or Palipugisk' (177) that in order to achieve his wish, he must distort what has already been distorted. This is a carnivalesque response to an authoritarian language.

In 'Five Letters' we see the poet Bohu's elaborate journey to the capital and subsequent installment as court tragic poet as a carnivalizing of authorship. Bohu must create or 'make' a poem to justify the empire. Thus, he is controlled himself by the very forces of authoritarian language that Urquhart wants to fight against. Bohu's

entrance into this world of managed creation, the palace of the emperor is defined in liminal terms suggesting birth:

We had to crawl a great distance, mostly uphill. Adoda and the doctor tried to help by alternately butting their heads against the soles of my clogs. The floor was carpeted with bristly stuff which pierced my kneebands and scratched the palms of my hands. After twenty minutes it was hard not to sob with pain and exhaustion, and when at last they helped my to my feet I sympathized with Tohu who swore aloud that he would never go through that wall again. (90)

Bohu undergoes pains similar to what Lanark endures in his journey down into the institute and he confronts another form of government which is every bit as repressive as the one he has left behind. Here, though, Bohu has a high position as the writer who can legitimize the actions of men. He can make history palatable to the masses and in this position he represents authority. Authorship and authority join forces here as Gray pokes fun at the fine distinctions between the two words which share a common root. Bohu is to author or 'make' a poem in celebration of the destruction of the old capital. Here he finds himself at a creative loss:

"While the old city and my old parents lived my childhood lived too. But the emperor's justice has destroyed my past, irrevocably. I am like a land without culture or history. I am now too shallow to write a poem."

The headmaster said, "It is true that the world is so packed with the present moment that the past, a far greater quantity, can only gain entrance through the narrow gate of a mind. But your mind is unusually big. I enlarged it myself, artificially. You are able to bring your father, mother and city to life and death again in a tragedy, a tragedy the whole nation will read. Remember that the world is one vast graveyard of defunct cities, all destroyed by the shifting of markets they could not control, and all compressed by literature into a handful of poems. The

emperor only does what ordinary time does. He simply speeds things up." (117-8)

The headmaster hints at the insidious power that authorship holds, the ability to manufacture a closed truth. It is this closed truth that Gray and Bakhtin resist in their visions of the world, and it is the spirit of carnival which operates to defeat it. Gray's truth is a dialogic truth and therefore always in flux and arbitrary. Therefore, making, which as I've indicated is an important topic for Gray, must remain an open activity in all of its manifestations, be they authorial or otherwise. Gray shows that monstrosity can be the act of authority and authorship as well, for it is the editing of Bohu's title that serves to strengthen his poem in support of the party line. The human management of information is as dangerous as the 'editorial rodent' of 'Logopandocy' who eats Urquhart's manuscript:

The monsters both of poetic fancy and political organization are made not by nature but by fallible human arts. From the perception of such a gulf between nature and culture the fear that human society may itself be producing monsters emerges as early as 1697....This artificial man is a monster closely related to Hobbes's gigantic creature; both need to be kept in mind when we come to examine the development of the old body politic as incarnated in the personal authority of late feudal and absolutist rule. They signal the growing awareness, mastered in the heat of regicide and revolution, of destinies no longer continuous with nature but shaped by art, by 'policy'--the prospect in politics and in broader cultural life of the 'artificial man'.
(Baldick 15-16)

Thus we return to the Hobbesian monstrosity first recreated by Gray in his very first novel: 'By Arts is formed that great Mechanical Man called a State, foremost of the Beasts of the Earth for Pride'(355). Most of what

is made is 'artificial', but it is the incompleteness of its manufacture which will make it true. This is the Bakhtinian notion of the purifying nature of laughter. Laughter completes seriousness, but only as an 'ambivalent wholeness' (RW 122-3). Bakhtin's philosophy of openness is achieved through a constant positing of the future by carnivalizing the past:

Crowning/decrowning is a dualistic ambivalent ritual, expressing the inevitability and at the same time the creative power of the shift-and-renewal, the *joyful relativity* of all structure and order, of all authority and all (hierarchical) position. (PDP 12)

Gray's more 'pornographic' novels, such as *1982 Janine* and *Something Leather* (1990) also lend themselves to a Bakhtinian reading by nature of their 'openness'. On first glance, pornography may seem to be an area of literature that would be in opposition to Bakhtin's theories of novelistic discourse since it is in many ways non-communal. The participants in pornography are isolated figures. Voyeurs, much like Tam in Burns's 'Tam O'Shanter', do not take part in the dance but prefer to watch from the sidelines and thus have no part in the carnival which surrounds them. Much like Dr. Jekyll and Robert Wringhim, Jock McLeish, as we've discussed earlier, attempts to create a community through perverse means that exclude any real human contact. Jock creates his fantasies in a vacuum and thus strives for a false consummation, which, as we've seen in our discussion of Stevenson and Hogg, will not work from a Bakhtinian standpoint.

However, what makes Gray's pornographies interesting in terms of Bakhtin is that while they have not been

censored themselves, they speak of a sort of censorship since they deal with taboo, anti-authoritarian subjects such as lesbianism and sado-masochism, to name only two. Sexual behavior in Gray's fictions, much like James Kelman's profanity, as we will see in the next chapter, serves to challenge the ruling status quo. Gray sees the world as a text which is often 'immoral' in ways that are sanctioned by world governments and by history itself. As we have seen, Gray is acutely aware of how accountable narrative is to a sense of history. For Gray, traditional, sanitized narratives (which include histories), in which people are yet manipulated by larger forces such as political entities is every bit as immoral (perhaps more so) than the sexual fantasies that are labelled indecent by society.

In 1982 *Janine*, Jock McLeish, tipping in his hotel room, concocts the perfect 'Recipe for Pornography':

Most pornography fails by not being dramatic enough. There are too few characters. The author has only one sort of climax in mind, and reaches it early, and can only offer more of the same with variations which never excite as much again....To preserve excitement without masturb (I hate that word) without shooting my load (I hate that phrase) (I hate the *thing*, I hate orgasm, I'm lonely afterward) to preserve excitement my *Janine* must travel toward her climax through a world like a menacing forest, and just before she reaches it I must switch to heroines in other parts of the forest, women travelling toward climaxes which are different but connected. I will work like a historian describing in turn Germany Britain France Russia America China, showing depression and dread growing within each for domestic reasons, but distracted by challenges and threats from abroad until the heads of government move to their controls in the hidden bunkers, and make certain declarations, and then the tanks start rolling through the streets with evacuations, concentration camps, explosions, firestorms, frantic last-minute propaganda and the awful togetherness of total calamity before the last, huge, final, bang.

That is how a big piece of pornography should go.
(28-9)

Gray, through Jock, reads history as being much like pornography in its achievement of delayed climax. Ultimately, the 'last, huge, final, bang' of Armageddon will end the climax of world history. In this recipe, completion seems to be the ultimate evil to be avoided, a very Bakhtinian notion indeed. The tools to avoid climax are what Jock seeks and in doing so he is promoting an open-endedness to the fantasies he creates. In *Something Leather*, both the reader and June are teased into delayed climax by the suspension of sadomasochistic activity at the conclusion of the first chapter. The image of June's violation by Donald and Senga is completed in the final chapter, but even then the reader is tantalized by the introduction of Harry to June and the possible relationship which will develop between them. In 'The Intrusive Author in British Postmodern Fiction: The Cases of Alasdair Gray and Martin Amis', Richard Todd, speaking about *Lanark* and Amis's *Money* says: 'each represent different ways of responding self-reflexively to a perceived threat of solipsistic closure...' (135).

In this sense, censorship is both public and private. For Gray, the government, or some other authoritarian system, attempts to close the picture of history through nuclear warfare, colonization or a rhetoric of oppression and categorization. This form of censorship affects the individual's imagination, thereby limiting the possibilities of literature and art. Censorship is itself a term that denotes closure. Pornography is a way of

breaking open a closed system to possibilities of otherness. While Bakhtin makes no direct statement on pornography, he identifies censorship in two areas, one that would deny laughter and one that would posit a 'final word' for an individual consciousness. For the purposes of Gray's work it is helpful to see Jock's disrobings of Janine and the sadomasochistic excesses of *Something Leather* as an extension of Bakhtin's ideas on laughter as a liberating force:

No doubt laughter was in part an external defensive form of truth. It was legalized, it enjoyed privileges, it liberated, to a certain extent, from censorship, oppression, and from the stake. This element should not be underestimated. But it would be inadmissible to reduce the entire meaning of laughter to this aspect alone. Laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth; it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils. Laughter liberates not only from external censorship but first of all from the great interior censor; it liberates from the fear that developed in man during thousands of years: fear of the sacred, of prohibitions, of the past, of power. (RW 93-4)

Bakhtin sees the interior censor as being perhaps the most insidious and both Bakhtin and Gray see the interior censor as something which has been conditioned by the forces of authority and which requires a carnival response to be overcome. The inner censor is the one Jock rebels against by creating his fantasies. He bitterly resents the force which will lead him into a sudden climax, thus stifling his imagination. As mentioned earlier in our discussion of the relationship between the author and the hero, Gray, like Hogg, finds loopholes for his characters that allow them to ponder the nature of the 'final word', or to suggest that perhaps there is no final word.

Bakhtin's ideas of the 'loophole' allow us to come to a better understanding of the role of pornography in Gray:

A loophole is the retention for oneself of the possibility for altering the ultimate, final meaning of one's own words. If a word retains such a loophole this must inevitably be reflected in its structure. This potential other meaning, that is, the loophole left open, accompanies the word like a shadow. Judged by its meaning alone, the word with a loophole should be an ultimate word and does present itself as such, but in fact it is only the penultimate word and places after itself only a conditional, not a final, period. (PDP 233)

Bakhtin assists our reading of Gray by allowing us to view not only the different voices he creates that dialogically interact, but to see them as part of a greater 'ambivalent wholeness' that admits of constant change without the stultification of closure. Gray's monsters, be they city-states such as Glasgow or Unthank, or characters such as Lanark or Bella, are being re-authored all the time. Gray insists on their fluidity, for stasis will render them closed off from aesthetic activity.

Just as a genre will not survive without dialogically partaking of other modes of writing, so Gray sees that culture will stifle under strict and certain social and political codes that do not admit of other and opposite forms of human intercourse, including what might be restrictively labelled 'pornography'. The creation of monsters should be a joyful activity that rejects fixed forms. Gray's polyphonic fiction allows the reader to view monstrosity and the writing of carnival as a vital function of Scottish culture and literary identity. As we shall see next, in our discussion of James Kelman,

language itself can often become the victim of oppression, censorship, and the forces of cultural closure.

Chapter IV

Glasgow Dialogics: The Fiction of James Kelman

In the last chapter, we saw how the prose of Alasdair Gray is both dialogic and contains elements of Bakhtinian carnival. We observed Gray's carnivalesque language in stories such as 'Logopandocy', 'Five Letters' and in the novels *Lanark* and *1982 Janine* where it subversively blends and replays a variety of registers such as official-speak, literary and scientific jargon. As we turn now to discuss the work of James Kelman, we find ourselves confronting language that embodies ideas of carnival in quite a different fashion. As we will see in the work not only of Kelman, but, in the succeeding chapter, of Tom Leonard and Edwin Morgan as well, dialect in contemporary Scottish writing performs a number of functions. Dialect use in literature can both challenge preconceived notions of 'correct' language and preserve regional variations that enrich the culture (and, specifically, Scottish culture) as a whole. The work of Bakhtin will contribute to our analysis of Scottish contemporary dialect literature by focusing on how such writing and its opposition to canonical, 'official' language assists in the larger cultural project of self-identity. In addressing this goal it is necessary that we use the word 'dialect', not in a pejorative fashion, but in a more liberating manner.

In 'James Kelman: dialectics of urbanity', Drew Milne writes:

Thus far there is only a small body of serious critical discussion of Kelman's work. This is perhaps because his complicated political position as one of the most significant and influential writers in contemporary Scotland involves a mode of realist writing which has proved difficult to describe, not least because it also involves an implicit critique of academic literary institutions and of literary and political Scottish nationalisms. (393)

Although this was first written in 1992, and the past few years have witnessed the publication of the Booker-winning novel *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994) there remains little substantial critical work on James Kelman. *The Busconductor Hines* (1984) is briefly noted in a chapter titled 'The Industrial Novel' by Manfred Malzahn in *The History of Scottish Literature* (1987). Following this there appeared a slew of reviews of individual novels or collections of short stories, the most rewarding being Gordon A. Craig's 'Glesca Belongs to Me!', which appeared in the *New York Review of Books* in 1991. Here Craig looks at *The Busconductor Hines*, *Greyhound for Breakfast* (1987) *A Disaffection* (1989), and *The Burn* (1991) as well as books by Alasdair Gray. However the most rewarding treatments of Kelman belong to Milne's article, Cairns Craig's 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman', which appeared in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (1993), and Roderick Watson's 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing' (1995), which considers Kelman alongside Tom Leonard and other contemporary writers in a discussion of the current state of the vernacular in Scottish literature.

Milne looks at the ways in which Kelman uses language to convey a sense of a hierarchy that exists between the

written and spoken word. Milne sees Kelman as questioning 'the authoritative hierarchy of writing over speech' (397). We will see that this is an important idea in terms of Bakhtin's concern with carnival responses to oppressive forms of authority.

Cairns Craig is successful in considering 'three crucial areas' in which Kelman's writing has had 'an enormous impact on the nature of writing in Scotland': 'the representation of working class life, the treatment of "voice" and the construction of narrative' (99). Craig also identifies the verbal activity at work in Kelman's work that we will be examining in terms of dialogic interaction. Craig explains it thus: 'Kelman's particular use of free indirect discourse not only allows modulation across different perspectives (third-person narrator, first-person thought) but also allows modulation across different linguistic registers' (103). Although Craig identifies this skill of Kelman's as leading to an equality between the written and spoken word and a 'linguistic unity' (103), terms of reconciliation that are opposed to this Bakhtinian reading, he is alert to the possibilities of a 'textual communality' within Kelman's works that stand in for the lack of community between individual human beings. As we shall see in the course of this chapter, the physical and emotional isolation of Kelman's protagonists is supplemented by a rich interior dialogic activity that partakes of the heteroglossia of many Glasgows. Bakhtin's ideas of carnival, hybridization, and *skaz* will be recognized as useful tools for

identifying the multitude of voices to be heard within a single consciousness.

Dialect and the Language of Carnival

On one level, the Glaswegian of Kelman's characters, much like the poetic voices of Tom Leonard, provides a carnivalization of standard English which is akin to Burns's parodies of High Kirk English. What makes it doubly carnivalesque is the fact that it represents not broad and 'accepted' Scotticisms, but phonetic and regionally charged dialect. Kelman's drifters, gamblers, bus conductors, and nightboilermen come from the lower strata of society and each has his own language. They speak not only Scots but Glaswegian Scots as well as languages that pertain to their own sphere of friends, family and colleagues. The voices of Kelman's characters are the perfect 20th-century Scottish literary examples of what Bakhtin finds in the dialogic composition of the novel:

The novel can be defined as a diversity of speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized. The internal stratification of any single national language into social dialects, characteristic group behavior, professional jargons, generic languages, languages of generations and age groups, tendentious languages, languages of the authorities, or various circles and of passing fashions, languages that serve the specific sociopolitical purposes of the day, even of the hour (each day has its own slogan, its own vocabulary, its own emphases)--this internal stratification present in every language at any given moment of its historical existence is the indispensable prerequisite for the novel as a genre. (DIN 262-3)

Kelman's writing highlights this quality of speech diversity. The 'busconductor' Hines has his own language that he shares with fellow conductors and drivers. The reader senses that it is not only an economic loss that Hines will face with the obsolescence of the conductor, but a linguistic one as well. Not only will Hines lose his job, he will lose a portion of his language too, and with that a segment of his identity.

Language and identity are interconnected with most of Kelman's novelistic characters and we will look at this aspect of his work later along with the cultural and linguistic implications of Kelman's treatment of silence and censorship. First, though, we have the language itself and Kelman's unique way of carnivalizing speech.

On the dust jacket of *Greyhound for Breakfast*, Alasdair Gray presents the following testimonial: 'This collection contains cool third-person narratives, obsessional monologues, and--the Kelman speciality--grotesque humor and real pity masked by deadpan cliché'. It is not so much Kelman's images that capture the spirit of carnival, but rather the language that his characters use in everyday life. Bakhtin's own conceptions of carnival changed over time. He maps its history from its height in Renaissance Europe to its demise in the Enlightenment and its transference to a literary realm after its death in the medieval marketplace fair. Bakhtin's ideas about carnival language changed as well, though, and it is his eventual belief that carnival exists

in the language of the everyday world that is important to a study of Kelman's fiction.

In the story 'Nice to Be Nice' from *An Old Pub Near the Angel* (1973), Kelman experiments with the language of Glasgow to such an extent that it becomes the predominating theme of the story:

Anyway it wis jist young Tony who'd firgoat his key, he wis wi that wee mate ay his an a perr a burds. Christ, whit dae ye dae? Invite thim in? Well A did-- nice tae be nice--an anyway thir aw right they two; supposed to be a perr a terraways bit A ey fun Tony aw right, an his mate's his mate.... (98)

The interior monologue/dialogue runs like this throughout the story and calls attention to itself both by its inventiveness and its proximity to other stories in the collection in which the Glasgow voices are different and are structured in more standard English. When the story is reprinted in *Not Not While the Giro* (1983) it is sandwiched between two stories which present other voices/dialects as well.¹

It is through Kelman's collections of stories that the variety of Glasgow voices is experienced most readily. In this sense Kelman resembles the Joyce of *Dubliners* who attempts to capture the moral heart of Dublin through a succession of vignettes that progressively show the soul of the city in the process of decay. Kelman is very different of course. His Glasgow represents a small segment of the population, and its soul resides more often in a state of Beckettian stagnation, impotence and futility. But the dialogic tensions are there nonetheless:

¹ Further references to stories that appear in *Not Not While the Giro*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1983, will be abbreviated (NNWG).

The more intensive our examination of *Dubliners* and *Portrait*, the more we are struck by the fully realized, wholly distinctive qualities of the characters' voices, each of them held in dialogical tension with the narrative voice of the author. (Kershner 18)

This assessment of Joyce's work, with a Bakhtinian gloss, is useful for a consideration of Kelman. However, in Kelman the characters themselves become the narrative voice. In the story 'Not Not While the Giro', the speaker carries on a conversation with himself which is more dialogue than monologue:

I watched the infant all Friday night while the parents were off for a few jars to some pub uptown where this country & western songster performs to astonishing acclaim. Now why songster and not singer. Anyway, they returned home... (NNWG 186)

Here the speaker interrogates himself (albeit with no question mark) and his language, a device that Kelman uses frequently to show the thought processes of the characters and also to switch from one subject to another. In the quoted lines, the punctuation does not assist the switch from monologue to dialogue. The transition is self-contained within the consciousness of the speaker himself. It does not rely on the conventions of writing to dictate the thought process. The reader may well ask: Is the speaker 'speaking' to himself? And if so, does he require punctuation? Together with dialect, this is another way in which Kelman subverts the official practice of writing about thinking and he is closer here to the Joyce of *Ulysses*. Elsewhere the breaks are evident on the page to indicate a change in direction:

And talking about water I can make tea, one cup of which gives the idea if not the sustenance of soup because of the tea bag's encrustation viz crumbs of

old food, oose, hair, dandruff and dust. Maybe the new girl shall come borrow sugar from me. And then what will transpire. If

Had to go for a slash there and action: the thing being held between middle finger and thumb with the index slightly bent.... (188)

Here he reminds the reader of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. This is only one example of Kelman's stream of consciousness and the technique becomes heightened in his longer fictions, *The Busconductor Hines*, *A Chancer* (1985), *A Disaffection*, and *How Late It Was, How Late*. In the last of these novels the 'inner dialogue' becomes even more necessary to the speaker, Sammy, because he has lost his sight. He creates his own interlocutors to help him overcome societal frustrations as well as to provide a way of fighting against the more immediate forces which he cannot see.

Drunk and incapable, said another yin, he cannay admit it like a man but, says he's lost his fucking eyesight somewhere!

Anybody find an eyesight! There's a guy here looking for an eyesight!

This was followed by ha haz all round. Everything's tactics and these were auld yins. So so what. Sammy was in a warm place and he knew there was a change for the better. How did he know ther was a change for the better? Ye can aye tell, that's how. Ye develop a second sight with these bastards. They maybe thought they had went too far with him. (13)²

The reader is not clear whether he or she is being addressed by Sammy, by the narrator (who is separate from Sammy), or if Sammy has created a third consciousness. Unlike the speaker of 'Not Not While the Giro', Sammy speaks not so much to himself as to an 'other' whom he creates to help him work out his problems. As we will see

² Further references to *How Late It Was, How Late*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1994, will be abbreviated (HLIW).

later, this has implications as far as identity formation is concerned, but here it is illustrative of Kelman's style which, in a way that is reminiscent of what Gray does with Jock McLeish, allows characters to become authors. The traditional roles of author and hero become subverted. The 'other' created by the character is a more slippery subject than the one the reader confronts on the page. He is unfinalizable and open to all sorts of possibilities, a quality which is lost on a critic such as Adam Mars-Jones who believes that Kelman does a disservice to the voices he represents: '...a voice on a page is no longer a voice. Strange that he (Kelman) leaves it there stranded, and the reader stranded too' (10)

What Mars-Jones sees as a 'piling up of inarticulacies' is rather a way of confronting the inabilities of one's own language. For many, Kelman's 'fuck' is indicative of a coarsely sexual fricative. But for his characters it becomes an immensely useful substitute for a language which is not their own. Language, in the form of correctly-pronounced English will not suffice for Kelman's Glaswegians. The words are alien to the feelings and so the 'profanity' fills the gap left by an inadequate and foreign language. It comes to represent absence and longing and frustration, even silence. This is the essence of Bakhtinian heteroglossia in which the meaning of a particular word or utterance becomes dependent on any number of factors that exist at the time of expression. While this is true of traditional dialogue between two consciousnesses, it is no less true

(stylistically) in the work of Kelman in which dialogue is often carried out within a single consciousness. Such inner dialogue is recognized by V.N. Voloshinov, a close associate of Bakhtin's whose works have often been claimed as Bakhtin's own. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, Voloshinov provides the following definition of inner dialogue:

Closer analysis would show that the units of which inner speech is constituted are certain *whole entities* somewhat resembling a passage of monologic speech or whole utterances. But most of all, they resemble the *alternating lines of a dialogue*. There was good reason why thinkers in ancient times should have conceived of inner speech as *inner dialogue*. These whole entities of inner speech are not resolvable into grammatical elements (or are resolvable only with considerable qualifications) and have in force between them, just as in the case of the alternating lines of dialogue, not grammatical connections but connections of a different kind. These units of inner speech, these *total impressions of utterances*, are joined with one another and alternate with one another not according to the laws of grammar or logic but according to the laws of *evaluative (emotive) correspondence, dialogical deployment*, etc., in close dependence on the historical conditions of the social situation and the whole pragmatic run of life. (38)

The notion of inner dialogue will be complicated further by Bakhtin in the next section on discursive thought. Voloshinov's definition is helpful here as it provides a good starting point from which to investigate how speech operates in Kelman's fiction--a fiction which does not rely on a number of different characters for its dialogism.

Words anticipate their own responses and they are often framed in the language in which the character conducts his interior monologue. In other words, the voice of the 'other' comes to anticipate the inner voice of the

creating consciousness and the language used is just as laden with ambiguous signs such as 'fuck':

The last thing to do was talk. Ye just had to take it easy. And get to fuck man get to fuck, dont swallow down yer drink, nay time, nay fucking time man where's that door cause you're fucking heading man know what I'm talking about you're heading, or else ye're no alive. And dont look at nay cunt. Keep yer eyes down. Straight out that fucking door. (HLIW 27)

This passage is both inarticulate and loaded with possible meaning. But it is not inarticulate with regard to the dialogue taking place between Sammy and his discursive other. Wherever 'fuck' is, it is known to both parties. The significance of this 'foul' language coopted for larger communication possibilities is pointed to by Bakhtin when he writes of hybridization of language:

Hybridization, in the strict sense, differs from internally dialogized interillumination of language systems taken as a whole. In the former case there is no direct mixing of two languages within the boundaries of a single utterance--rather, only one language is actually present in the utterance, but it is rendered *in the light of another language*. This second language is not, however, actualized and remains outside the utterance. (DIN 362).

Simply speaking, 'fuck' is not what it at first appears to be. The use of such profanity, much like the billingsgate, oaths, and so forth that Bakhtin writes of in *Rabelais and His World*, here achieves a carnivalizing function in the world of everyday speech. Here the exaggerated quality is brought about more through repetition, the grotesque nature is highlighted by both the frequency with which words are used and the versatility they possess to stand in for almost any word.³ Mars-Jones helpfully diagnoses

³ Denis Donoghue provides an excellent analysis of the many uses to which the word 'fuck' is employed in Kelman's work, such as to display anger, neutrality, and praise. See 'Kicking the Air', a

some of the verbal possibilities, even though he would probably not endorse the theory of their utility:

It is a paradoxical position, to feel that everything about people's lives can be corrupted or fouled except their speech, particularly when their speech is so freighted with *fucks*, adjectival *fucks*, adverbial *fucks* ("as x as fuck", "like fuck"), interpolated *fucks* ("enerfuckinggetic, enerfuckinggetised"), *fuck* cadenzas: "lonely, just fucking lonely, lonely; that was his wife, lonely";....(19)

One would suppose then that the cure for corruption of this way of speaking would be conversion to proper literary English.

It is not necessarily the very subversive nature of Kelman's 'fucks' that make them so useful when read in a Bakhtinian carnival sense. Bakhtin identifies 'oaths', in Rabelais's time, as the 'forbidden', 'unofficial element of speech' (RW 189) and locates their usefulness as an assault upon the sanctioned forms of verbal intercourse as the following passage illustrates:

These considerations and prohibitions [against oaths] merely strengthened the oath's unofficial character; they sharpened the feeling that the use of a *juron* [profanity or oath] meant a breach of the norm of established speech. This in turn intensified the color of speech studded with oaths, rendering it familiar and free. Oaths began to be considered as a certain rejection of official philosophy, a verbal protest. (189, bracketed additions mine)

This is a good analysis of what Kelman achieves with a single word, and the disputes it has caused are enough to confirm the critical value of his style. Yet Kelman's profanity goes beyond the label of 'oath' and his 'fucks' often become the language of everyday speech so that he complicates the notion of 'right' and 'wrong' vocabulary

and concentrates on the value of words to contain a flexibility of definition, a quality that might, by extension, be applied to Scottish culture itself.

Most recently, the disputes over Kelman's winning the Booker prize in 1994 have focussed more on the 'profane' use of this word (which someone calculated to have appeared over 4,000 times in *How Late It Was How Late*) than on the deeper social significance of the work itself and, secondarily, the linguistic significance that the use of the word implies. This is no new territory for Kelman. The fascination with the profanity which appears in his works has a long history and for years critics have been anxious to discern something behind pure vulgarity that drives his choice of vocabulary. The most thorough discussion of Kelman's use of 'fuck' is to be found in his interview with Duncan McLean which appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1985. Here Kelman defends his use of 'swear' words by denying their 'swearness':

...what makes you think it's swearing? You see when you use the term 'swearing' it's a value; I don't accept that it is swearing at all you see...fuck, cunt, bastard, and shite--they're part of the language, and they have to be treated in the same way that the study of language treats other words. You can't sort of separate them off and say "Well these are swearwords, they're outwith the argument." They're not, they're part, you know...Obviously if I say "Look at that sun, it's fucking beautiful," obviously I'm not swearing, I'm doing the exact opposite, you know. So in that sense I object to taking part, for instance in a discussion that hinges on the use of swear words in literature, because right away you've begged the question of what those words are, you know, and you're involving me again in a value system that *isn't your own to deny*. I mean I deny this fucking thing, but suddenly you find that you've affirmed it, you know....(70-71)

Kelman neither affirms nor rejects the notion that his use of 'profane' language is a subversion of authority. Rather, he implies that this is so by calling into question a system which requires that there be a distinction. In this sense, Kelman is suggesting something which is very much like Bakhtin's above-quoted analysis of the growth of the oath from the imposition of condemnations and prohibitions. The significance of the criticism Kelman received for winning the Booker Award and his subsequent response in defense of his culture will be explored later in this chapter in the context of censorship.

The ambiguous nature of profane words in Kelman is revealed in a more sophisticated fashion in *A Disaffection* where Patrick Doyle becomes aware of the inefficiency of words to stand for what they really represent. The substitutive possibilities, even for profanity becomes clear to him as he tries to establish a hierarchy of language: 'Arse is a better word than fuck. From now on Arse is Fuck. Fuck off. What does it mean' (167).⁴ Patrick's language for the remainder of this passage is sprinkled with 'arse' as if to highlight the new act of signification he has accomplished. The interchangeability of signifiers for signifieds is complicated in the region of profanity where the words do not necessarily stand for the things themselves. In fact, according to Bakhtin, when words are repeated, they may have completely different meanings as well: 'no one sentence, even if it has only

⁴ Further references to *A Disaffection*, London: Picador, 1990, will be abbreviated (D).

one word, can ever be repeated: it is always a new utterance (even if it is a quotation)' (PT 108). In this way, Kelman slyly suggests that profanity is vulnerable to misinterpretation and misdiagnosis as a symptom of cultural backwardness. Likewise, a more refined language may be misconstrued as a characteristic of an enlightened cultural elite. As Robert Crawford has pointed out '...the voice in the novel is barbarian, but also sophisticated; it swears, and discusses philosophy' (1992: 285). Many times the philosophy is to be found within the swearing.

If we take Kelman's language and look at it alongside the city in which it thrives, we see again a similarity with *Dubliners*. Joyce captures the theme of exile beautifully in his stories of native Dubliners returning to the city, or down-and-out citizens contemplating journeys abroad. You have this in Kelman too, but what strikes the reader is not simply the thematic exile that is desired by characters such as Tammas in *A Chancer* who leaves Glasgow at the end, but rather, as mentioned above, the linguistic exile represented by speech patterns and what they stand for. Bakhtin, in his later essays, many of which are contained in *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays* deals with the utterance and its dependence on an infinite number of social, linguistic, and psychological factors. Regional language variation is one of these factors as well:

Any expansion of the literary language that results from drawing on various extraliterary strata of the national language inevitably entails some degree of penetration into all genres of written language

(literary, scientific, commentarial, conversational, and so forth) to a greater or lesser degree, and entails new generic devices for the construction of the speech whole, its finalization, the accommodation of the listener or partner, and so forth. This leads to a more or less fundamental restructuring and renewal of speech genres. (PSG 66)

Dialect is one way this becomes noticeable in Kelman, but this is more likely to occur in stories that are set in and around Glasgow. For the most part, Kelman uses a mixture of dialect and English. When Glasgow natives make contact with those from other countries or regions, especially in collections in which stories about Glasgow are juxtaposed with those about experiences in London or the Channel Islands, the language used is English. Here, though, words themselves, rather than specific dialects, become important in identifying where someone is from. Thus, for example, in the story 'An Old Pub Near the Angel', the Scottish character identifies an Irishman and calls him 'Mick', and is content to receive the reciprocal 'Jock'. Communication here is achieved by two speakers who share a position of exile and who are both receiving financial assistance. However, once 'Jock' leaves the Labour Exchange and goes to the pub, his attempts at communication are thwarted. The bartender seems to be slightly deaf, and the old woman who enters towards the end of the story speaks gobbledegook that seems to be understood only by the bartender:

"Goshtorafokelch," she said.

The bartender looked from her to Charles and back again before replying, 'Yeh, I'll say eh?' (19)

This accentuates the fact that Jock is speaking perfectly good English and yet seems to be failing to make a

connection. This is not an isolated instance in Kelman's work of Scots outside of their native habitat failing to communicate. As Derek puts it, talking about living in England in 'Events in Yer Life':

...it's all one-way traffic, naybody to fucking communicate with, no properly, no unless ye bump into a black guy or something, maybe an Irishman. Apart from that...It's hard to open yer mouth' (223).

In 'Keep Moving and No Questions' (NNWG) the speaker manages to initiate nonverbal communication with a young woman he meets in a nightclub, but words never seem to be effective and a conversation is never realized. In 'Zuzzed' (NNWG) the Scotsman speaker fails to communicate with an English farmer who has hired him to help harvest potatoes in a predominantly French-speaking area (a Channel Island?). This is likewise the case in stories where 'foreigners' visit Scotland. In 'The Hitchhiker' (NNWG) the non-English speaking woman who searches for shelter is scared of the male worker who attempts to help her and only barely manages to communicate by signs and brief expressions.

In this way Scots, and Glaswegians in particular, only seem to achieve spoken communication with each other or with those who speak a dialect of English. What this failed contact with 'others' masks, however, is a failure for communication to exist within native communities as well. Where stories such as those contained in *Not Not While the Giro*, as outlined above, show thwarted interaction between communities, a story such as 'Events in Yer Life' from *The Burn* and novels such as *A*

Disaffection and *How Late It Was, How Late* emphasize the inadequacy of language within a community.⁵

In 'Events in Yer Life' (TB), the protagonist Derek has returned to Glasgow from England for his mother's funeral. He meets up with an old art school friend, Fin, and the two of them find much to disagree about when it comes to language. Derek has been away for so long that he has become susceptible to making linguistic errors (in terms of current Glasgow vocabulary), and he becomes frustrated with the realization that he is now somewhat of an outsider, an exile from the language community. At first the changes are innocently accepted as Fin explains to Derek what he does in his spare time:

...I'm just a Monroe freak. Ye know what a 'Monroe' is?
 What?
 A 'Monroe', it's a hill over three thousand feet; any hill over three thousand feet; that's what they call it, a 'Monroe'.
 Where?
 Where? Scotland, where d'ye think? (210)

Already, in Derek's time away, a different language has been established in his native city. The differences become more obvious when it comes to terms of national identity:

Fin shrugged. One thing that does occur to me. I was thinkin at the bar...And dont take it the wrong way. Just yer politics Derek, ye know, they're bound to be different to what they'd been if ye'd stayed.
 Ye think so?
 Definitely.
 Derek nodded.
 The way ye mention Britain for instance.
 What about it?
 Just that there's nay separation up here. It's always Scotland.
 What did I say?

⁵ Further references to stories from *The Burn*, London: Minerva, 1992, will be abbreviated (TB).

Aw nothing really, it's only the way ye say
Britain all the time.

I didn't know I was saying Britain all the time.
Aye, I mean like it was one country. See naybody
does that here. Naybody. No unless there's some sort
of qualification involved....(221)

These kinds of language differences are understandable, albeit frustrating for the exile who returns home to a different linguistic environment. Communication is not easy, but there are considerations of time and space which can go some way towards explaining the differences between Derek and Fin. What is more worrying, frustrating and inexplicable is the ineffective dialogue that takes place *within* communities such as those Kelman explores in the novels *The Busconductor Hines*, *A Chancer*, *A Disaffection*, and *How Late It Was, How Late*.

In each of these works the principal characters seek an escape from Glasgow and the lives they lead there. Hines wants to go to Australia, Tammas to Peterhead, Patrick to the 'East neuk of Anglia', and Sammy to England. For those who do manage to get out (Tammas and Sammy), the reader is left wondering if they will succeed in their quest. However, as we've seen in Kelman's short stories, the promise of discursive consummation carries other frustrations outside of Glasgow. The prognosis is not good for Kelman's novelistic heroes either.

The protagonists of Kelman's longer fictions have more room in which to develop a dialogic profile than the characters who inhabit his shorter works. Where the speakers of the short stories suggest a number of problems with identity formation and successful communication, the novels provide a larger framework within which language

can be analyzed. Characters can be examined first through their techniques of monologue and secondly in terms of how they relate to the world that surrounds them in a dialogic fashion. Finally, it will be seen that no matter how isolated these figures are, they seem to speak to each other in a way that refers back to the language they use. Kelman shows how dependent the self is on that language for the creation of a sustainable and healthy identity.

Monologue, and more specifically in Kelman, inner dialogue, starts with the small. Like Beckett's tortured anti-heroes of the trilogy, Kelman's characters take individual bits of identity, statements of fact and fancy, and attempt to make sense of them by dissecting them into their constitutive features. The carnivalizing of language becomes less a function simply of dialect or profanity and becomes more a result of a profusion of speech that simultaneously ignores and confronts standards of semantics and syntax. This is first seen in *The Busconductor Hines*, where Hines's speech is not beholden to rules of grammatical conformity. Hines's stream-of-consciousness admits everything into its orbit. Here he contemplates the education of his son:

What had to be done was educate him properly. Fill him full of milk and apples. Cram that fucking protein into him, making sure he grew into a different size. And no more getting called big Yin because you're a magnificent 5 foot fucking 9 and a 1/2. The wee man could become a big man, broad chested, built like a barrel, with an educated brain, a head full of his auld man's teachings. Come with me son and I'll show you the ropes. How do you fancy a potted history of this grey but gold city, a once

mighty bastion of the Imperial Mejisteh son a centre of Worldly Enterprises. (90)⁶

There is a mixture here of journalistic cliché, media phrases, ad-talk, dialect, and spoof-English. So far, so good. Hines follows this with a two-page long sentence in which the history and geography of Glasgow and Scotland become intertwined with Hines's own notions of identity which have to do with fights he has become involved in with various authorities. The boundaries between topics become recognizable only through the interspersed fragments of self-reflection that often take the shape of a crude philosophy:

Things arnt always as clear as they sometimes appear. You can have a way of moving which you reckon has to be ahead in a definite sense and then for some reason, for some reason what happens is fuck all really, nothing, nothing at all, nothing at all is happening yet there you are in strangely geometric patterns wherein points are arranged, have been arranged, in a weird display of fuck knows what except it is always vaguely familiar, whatever that means, though this is what it seems like, the carry on backwards and forwards to your work each morning so early it is still nighttime and the streetcleaners just about 3/4 way through their quota....(91).

Hines tries to make sense of the world to himself first, before passing on such knowledge to his son. The most reliable way for him to do this is to find some common ground between the history of his city and nation and his own past. Since his own past is, in a sense, in the process of becoming, Hines performs a type of chronotopic behavior by fusing the past with the everyday. Hines being chewed out by a 'gaffer' fits into the larger plan of

⁶ Further references to *The Busconductor Hines*, London: Orion, 1992 will be abbreviated (BH).

imperialism, militarism, and governmental control of history:

You there Hines Robert 4729 I hope to hell you'll wear a shirt and tie once you leave here to take charge of a blooming bus the poor auld cunt that he was, North fucking Africa with Monty or something son your da'll never ever be like that....(91)

The lesson being imparted is disjointed but possesses a larger coherence. It is a running on of images, language, and history that has been initiated by a very simple idea: 'What had to be done was educate him properly'. Hines's language grows from this premise exponentially and in its development he inserts a number of different voices, the gaffer, the ex-campaigner, each of which engages with the others dialogically. Roderick Watson aptly describes the Kelman narrative phenomenon thus:

The end result of these many interpenetrating narrative voices is to give a saving comic energy to the passage, and a literary force that can evoke the vitality and cohesiveness of inner experience, and the constant presence of a dynamic life in even the most ordinary situations, without ever 'writing it up' or condescending to 'working-class experience'. (1995: 148)

These voices constitute a carnivalesque response to the ways in which language and history are traditionally constructed and articulated. Thus, Hines makes a point about how the voices of history represent the powers that be and how the language of the people, which Hines uses here to relate this history, often gets obstructed or obliterated altogether in the process:

...making it to the top in their entrepreneurial mejisteh son they were stealing the bread out of your mouth and if they couldn't reach it you were opening the mouth wider son the eyelids shut that you didnt offend son that you didnt see son in case you actually saw son that you had to actually do, because one thing you didnt want was to do son so the

eyelids shut you put forward the mouth with head
lowered....(91)

Kelman is achieving a carnivalization of narrative through voice. In Scott, dialect was contained in a standard English narrative voice, while here the reverse happens. Hines causes this voice of frustration to reiterate its longing for justice and explanation. This voice is one in quest of a language with which to speak and the bread becomes the components of that speech that will be deprived by the powers-that-be. The voice in quest becomes subsumed, finally, by a victorious power that determines not only the history of the subject, to which events of the individual are of little value, but dictates as well the very speech patterns by which the individual may approach that power. Authority speaks with one voice and subverts the rich polyphony of those it governs to dialects of its own choosing:

...we do beg ye kindly sir we do beg ye kindly, for a remaindered crust of the bread we baked thank 'ee kindly y'r 'onour an' only 'ope as we might bake 'em more sweetly for 'ee t' nex' time 'appen y'r 'onour as'll do us t' privilege o' robbin again sir please sir kick us one up the arse sir thanks very much ya bunch of imbecilic fucking bastarn imbeciles. (92)

This concluding paragraph of the passage illustrates both the types of stereotyped languages available to the disenfranchised as well as the facility of transition between different voices. The reader must remember as well that this is a voice speaking to an imaginary other, Paul, Hines's son who is deprived of a voice by the very nature of Hines's inner monologue. In this way, Kelman presents consciousnesses fraught with many voices contending for recognition. Many of these come from

cultural sources such as the pseudo-Cockney accents of *Oliver Twist* which are detectable in Hines's monologue. Despite the fact that Hines occupies a very small part of the world, a small section of Glasgow, and has a limited number of social contacts (his wife, son, fellow conductors and bus drivers) he is cognizant of a variety of voices that exist outside that seemingly narrow field of linguistic and social opportunity. The reader is made aware of Hines's literary sensibility through clues such as the Dickens-speak above and Hines's Joycean stream-of-consciousness style. This is the point that Kelman seems to be making in most of his fictions in which a closed and inhibited world is held up to the microscope. Kelman telescopes these miniature worlds through voices that are very aware of themselves and the possibilities they contain for consummating other voices and consciousnesses. The frustration therefore comes more from the fact that these voices are never articulated outside of the consciousnesses in which they are contained. In this position of self-dependence, they must turn inwards for dialogic understanding, a position which, as we've seen in discussions of Hogg and Stevenson does not make for wholesome and satisfactory identity formation.

Kelman's carnivalesque language is constructed in opposition to a 'official' language which manifests itself either in the interior monologue of the hero or through contact with the outside world. In *The Busconductor Hines*, as mentioned earlier, the strands of voices are woven into Hines's interior monologue. In *How Late It Was, How Late*

we have have instances in which Sammy must interact with others who speak a language that is different from his own. Here the verbal activity is less dialogic since the tensions between the two languages yield no productive communication or, correspondingly, fruitful self-identity. The most significant example of this in the novel occurs in the discussion Sammy has with the physician he consults regarding his loss of sight. The language of the doctor is as foreign to Sammy as Sammy's is to the doctor. The result is a stratification of language that Kelman mocks by accentuating the pomposity of the received pronunciation of the doctor:

Aye: one minute I could see the next I couldnay.
So you're saying you've never been tested for
glasses? (218)

You're a smoker. Did you advise us of this when
you applied to join our register?
Yeh.
How many a day do you smoke? on average.
Eh it depends.
A rough estimate?
Half an ounce. Unless I'm skint I mean, if I've
got no money....
Well Mister eh Samuels...in respect of the
visual stimuli presented it would appear you were
unable to respond.
... (219)

Each of the above examples is an instance of communicative difficulty. The doctor feels he must interpret Sammy's language into his own, Sammy feels he must clarify the word 'skint' for the doctor, and, finally, can literally not 'respond' to the words of the doctor. From this point in the encounter, the language of the doctor becomes increasingly fraught with professional vocabulary that is beyond Sammy's power of comprehension: 'If it is found

that you suffer sensory dysfunction then your body will endeavor to follow its own compensatory process; this should be abetted rather than thwarted' (222).

The discrepancies between the world of the doctor and that of Sammy becomes so great that Sammy's responses become limited and dwindle to the point of silence. The language of the doctor is carnivalesque in its absurd juxtaposition with the colloquialisms of Sammy; so much so that its so-called authority is subverted. Instead of silence, however, Sammy is led to an outburst in which 'fuck' actually does carry the impact of 'swearing':

So ye're no saying I'm blind?
It isnt for me to say.
Aye but you're a doctor.
Yes.
So ye can give an opinion?
Anyone can give an opinion.
Aye but to do with medical things.
Mister Samuels, I have people waiting to see me.
Christ sake!
I find your language offensive.
Do ye. Ah well fuck ye then. Fuck ye! Sammy
crumpled the prescription and flung it at him: Stick
that up yer fucking arse! (225)

What is ironic here is that the doctor finds Sammy's language offensive when it is the inflated excesses of the Queen's English that have irritated Sammy to the point of reaction. In this way, Kelman carnivalizes proper English (and the power it represents) by showing its inadequacies in certain situations and within a variety of communities. Sammy and the doctor both speak varieties of English, but they are unable to communicate and Kelman's parody of the doctor's language repels the reader who is acutely aware of how helpless Sammy is to the 'official' world which lies behind the stilted words of authority. Before

considering the function of identity-formation in voices such as those of Sammy and Hines, we can trace further developments of verbal activity in one of Kelman's other novelistic heroes, Tammas from *A Chancer*.

Tammas is perhaps the least introspective and most public of Kelman's characters. Spending the majority of his time either at the races or in gambling parlours and casinos, Tammas leads a lonely existence, even though he is surrounded by others who share his passion for gambling. The voices in the novel speak a professional jargon common to the track and the cardroom and the reader soon accustoms himself to the language of odds and betting forms. Interspersed with episodes from Tammas's life of waging are glimpses into his family time spent with his sister and brother-in-law with whom he lives, and his relationship with Vi, a woman he meets on one of his gambling trips.

Unlike the interior monologues of Hines, Patrick, or Sammy which resemble dialogues, those of Tammas are more concerned with discovering a means to beat the odds and to pick winners. He is less likely to ponder a philosophy which won't in some way aid his chances of choosing a successful dog or increase his stakes at a card game. When he does speak to himself, it is to ascertain the degree of risk involved with a bet or to confirm any doubts he may be having:

With the ticket in his pocket he swallowed the remains of the bovril and crumpled the crisp packet onto the floor, and left the bar. The programme was in his back pocket. But he left it there. No point even seeing if the dog stood a chance. That had nothing to do with it now. The bet was made. The 50

pence on Trap 2, no matter what. If it finished first or second he would receive cash in exchange for the ticket. He got it from his pocket and looked at it, it was green, a green ticket; 2. Trap 2, 50 pence place. A 50 pence was not bad. Even for the nap it would not have been too bad. 50 pence the nap would have been fine, it would have been alright. But no matter. It made no difference. Not at all. Nothing. There might have been no 50 pence. A mistake to even think about things like that. (61)

There is a subtle interrogation here, and the language proliferates in anticipation of uncertainties, but it is quite different from the questioning of Hines. Tammas seems less aware or affected by society and seldom reflects on his position, motives, and movements within his sphere of Glasgow. This is reflected in his language as well, which is less 'Glaswegian' than many of Kelman's other protagonists.

The frustration Tammas suffers is sensed less through his interior monologues than through the sparse dialogue he has with his family and Vi. When Tammas wins or loses a bet, he seems unmoved, and he is more animated in his contact with Vi than with any of the cronies he collects at the various gambling establishments where he spends the better part of his days. However, the reader is never permitted to see what Tammas feels for Vi by way of his consciousness. We see Tammas speaking to Vi and seeming happy when in her company, but he spends little time reflecting on this happiness. In this way Tammas fails in communicating with himself. The breakdown of actual community is mirrored and replaced by a pseudo-community (much like Robert Wringhim's pseudo-community of Gil-Martin) in Tammas's head. Where the inner voices of Hines, Patrick, and Sammy dominate their consciousnesses to the

point in which they have difficulty achieving healthy consummation with others outside of themselves, the voice of Tammas is restricted by its monologic obsession with gambling. Language expands and comes to the assistance of Tammas when he plays the odds in isolated games, but has little to offer him with regard to interpersonal relationships:

The fourth runner was forecast favourite and favourites always had a favourite's chance, the most fancied horse in the race, the best fancied horse in the race, the horse with the best chances of winning--the horse that always let you down. It did not always let you down. Sometimes it won. Just not often. (253)

Discursive Thought and Self-Identity in *A Disaffection*

In *A Disaffection*, the disaffected teacher, Patrick Doyle is isolated not only within Glasgow, but within his professional and family circle as well. He dreams of exile, but cannot bring himself to go any further than the outskirts of the city (73). His dialogue with others is limited and unsatisfactory, so much so that he is reduced to creating dialogue within himself rather than engaging with others. Like the first sentence of the book, 'Patrick Doyle was a teacher', his sense of dialogue, with himself and with others, starts small and progressively enlarges itself. The novel takes the first sentence and complicates it much in the same way that Patrick complicates his notion of self and relationships with others. Like Hines, Tammas, and Sammy, Patrick is adept at talking to himself:

And now here he was, a teacher--still a teacher! What was to be done. Nothing. Then here was this pair of

pipes. What about them. What was to be done about them. It was really strange. Also that feeling, as if it was his last chance to make good or something. Daft. Crazy. A cliché. (3)

Patrick, however, talks to himself much more than any of Kelman's other characters, with the possible exception of Sammy. Where Hines re-articulates history and reinterprets the world in his own language, Patrick creates worlds and stories of his own to aid him. He is aware of this himself and chalks it up to an occupational hazard: '...one of the dangers inherent to the teaching racket is starting to act out the character parts of the topics you get paid to encounter' (45). He is speaking here of a fellow teacher's resemblance to the Reverend Wringhim from *Confessions*, but we sense in Patrick himself a similarity to Robert Colwan who is driven from society by an evil other and who tries to reestablish contact through the confessional act of writing himself. Patrick's confession is not a statement of fact but a projection of himself into a world where reality and fantasy intermingle. Included in this world are other voices contained in such words as 'racket' with its implications of criminal activity that deliberately subverts the usual phrase 'the teaching profession'. In this sense a dialogic tension evolves between the stories and voices Patrick creates and the seemingly static world in which he exists: 'And if the truth be told it was these wee yarns he told himself that kept him feeling sane. Without them where would he be? Up a fucking gumpole' (49). Like Hines, Patrick's language is at variance with his environment.

Like Hines, Patrick is a hero who is also an author. Where Hines's preoccupations with language are formulated at a basic level in which words and what they stand for are explored at an elemental level, Patrick's consciousness is more obviously influenced by literature. His concern is also with language but in a more metafictional sense. He knows that words are arbitrary. What disturbs him is how and to what end people fashion words. Where Hines is subtly aware of the power of language and how that can be abused in a political sense, Patrick has a guilty sense of his own responsibility in the reductive process of determining and fixing language and truth. This is what drives his disaffection with teaching and his inability to successfully communicate with others. He is caught in an intellectual bind between desiring certainty and knowing that this will always be arbitrary. One of his consolations is the pipes he finds in an alley, but they frustrate him as well as he recognizes his own attempts to 'possess' them and thereby subvert their very identity:

and yet, this conceptualising. Creating a distance already. Only a couple of days since the first sounds and now here he was attempting to get away from it, from the actual physicality of them. That was hopeless. That was the kind of thing he always seemed to be doing nowadays. The totality of it: the totality of it: the way the sounds had been the other night, or was it last night, the way the actual sounds had been, that was it--that was that! How come he had even felt the necessity of painting them in these bright enamels? What was wrong with their own colour? Their selfcolour? What was wrong with that, their self colour, the colour of their selves? Had that also been done to create a distance?...Probably it was just a straightforward thing, that he wanted it to be right. He wanted the pipes to be as 'finished' as possible. He wanted them to appear as instruments, to actually

look like musical instruments to the ordinary wo/man-in-the-street...Everything was to be proper, that was all; regulated, thought to the fore.

There was that temptation. (9)

The pipes are objects which Patrick uses to reflect upon his dissatisfaction with language. He considers them aesthetically but finds that language cannot assist him with what he wants to accomplish, he cannot use words to define his relationship to these objects or to the world in general. He must always fall back on the solidity of language which has been handed to him as 'finished' as the pipes. He wants pipes to represent more than what he can fathom through the ordinary channels:

And now there existed a great temptation: to stop being a teacher. To stop being a teacher. To concentrate solely upon things of genuine value, things of a genuine authenticity, of a genuine physicality. Teaching by performance instead of pointing the finger.

But could all that be achieved on the pipes? What was it about them? (10)

The pipes come to signify Patrick's concern with self and how that self is represented in society. The finalizing goals of teaching, as well as creating a sense of self, are abhorrent to him, but he sees no way around the process. He recognizes the problem himself in vaguely antisyzygical terms:

It could even relate to field-theory, the whole thing, the sound and the number, insofar as such a theory ever managed to appear in relation to the lives of ordinary individuals, the manner in which each person, each organism, related to things as a totality, that old business of harmony, linked in the universal chain. And how in the name of fuck did the two guys with cudgels relate to that! Stuck fast in the mud, the miring quicksand--like the wee dog. Belabouring each other with those stout sticks....
(9-10)

Again, what is most striking about this passage is the language mix that combines words such as 'field-theory' with the colloquial 'in the name of fuck'. Patrick needs a dialogical way out of his conundrum, but he is the product himself of an education which directs him to a quest for certainty. He is more apt to separate areas of existence into exclusive spheres rather than tune himself into the way in which voices interact. He blames society for this mess and it is a short step between finding a larger cause for the problem and laying the blame on the individuals that surround him:

The problem was fairly old hat, functionalism and nominalism, the naming process and imperialism, transforming commercially produced products into aesthetic weapons. The whole affair had been kicking about for years, probably several centuries! Even Goethe but, had he not been involved in something akin? To hell with it anyway. It was not something he found especially worrying. What he sought was the doing, the act. (10)

There is a clear disjunction between the world of thinking and the world of doing in Patrick's philosophy. For him the world of the act (or society) is controlled by powers that demand certainty, whereas only the isolated world of thinking can accommodate the possibilities of fluidity that Patrick searches for. He would like to translate the arbitrary into the world of tangible reality, but this is impossible. He would like to fashion his own world outside of society by creating fictions that allow objects and people to retain their 'selfcolour', but this is impossible as well since his creations must submit to his own form of authorial control.

Patrick grapples with questions of aesthetics and self-identity that are similar to what Bakhtin writes of in his essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' and in the recently discovered *Toward A Philosophy of the Act*. The earlier of the two works, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, outlines basic Bakhtinian ideas about cognition and the performance of an act:

...two worlds confront each other and are mutually impervious: the world of culture and the world of life, the only world in which we create, cognize, contemplate, live our lives and die or--the world in which the acts of our activity are objectified and the world in which these acts actually proceed and are actually accomplished once and only once....All attempts to surmount--from within theoretical cognition--the dualism of cognition and life, the dualism of thought and once-occurrent concrete actuality, are utterly hopeless. (2, 7)

We can recognize in Kelman's introspective characters, and especially in Patrick, the desire to analyze the self in terms of art and the frustration at the attempts to overcome the exclusivity of thought and action. As Bakhtin puts it 'one can turn oneself and one's life into an object of aesthetic contemplation' (14). From this standpoint, Patrick's relationship to the pipes can be understood as an extension of his dilemma of self-identity. He seeks a 'completedness' in terms of the pipes, and feels that this is what is necessary in terms of his own life. This desire for finalizability, 'to stop being a teacher' is the aesthetic completion of his own notion of self which is both unattainable, and, according to Bakhtin, undesirable.

. Patrick moves from considerations of language to those of literature and art. He creates worlds in which he

becomes the writers and painters whom he admires. He is also a critic, though, and constructs a hierarchy or canon of works and artists to use in his own imagination. When he rejects the types of fantasies that would have appealed to Jock McLeish he does it with a sense of what is permissible within his own consciousness of art rather than what is liable to affect him physically:

If this had been the summer it would have been grand indeed. To have been heading nowhere in this set of circumstances, a blue blue sky and a nice mellow sun, still a couple of hours till nightfall, and perhaps heading all the way north with a weekend to spare--that kind of freedom, and maybe a tee-shirt-clad female hitchhiker. No: these fantasies are not good. Cut them out. They border on a very, a very dubious perception of the world. P. Doyle has no need of them. (61)

This type of rejection is followed closely by the acceptance of another type of creativity which involves a formation of self. Here Patrick engages in the type of inner dialogue he likes best, that which involves his transformation into an 'other' with whom he can relate artistically:

Imagine looking into the mirror and seeing Goya's self-portrait, that one from the black period, and you had painted it of yourself. You were Goya in other words. You could see into your own soul with total honesty of vision and find the wherewithal to get it down, that steady hand....(61)

Patrick has moved quickly from realizing the impossibility of fusing thought with self-consummating action to a level of artistic creation which is to serve him as a substitute. Here, through his projection into a self-created other in the form of one of his heroes, Goya, he begins to display a form of confessional self-accounting

that we've seen earlier in the works of Hogg and Stevenson:

In confessional self-accounting, there is no hero and there is no author, for there is no position for actualizing their interrelationship, no position of being axiologically situated outside it. Author and hero are fused into one: it is the spirit prevailing over the soul in process of its own becoming, and finding itself unable to achieve its own completion or consummation.... (AH 147)

The difference between the type of confessional self-accounting that Robert Colwan and Henry Jekyll experience and that of Kelman's characters lies in the nature of confession. Colwan's private memoirs become very public and are also articulated to himself rather than an other, even an other of his own creation. Jekyll, likewise, dictates his letter of confession both to himself and to another consciousness. In Kelman, however, confession becomes something wholly different. Confession here is closer to what Bakhtin defines as the ultimate limit towards which self-accounting strives: 'A pure, axiologically solitary relationship to myself' (142).⁷

Patrick is a Walter Mitty-type character who dreams himself into action in the guise of Goya, characters from Dostoevsky or other fictional heroes. He projects himself into action on a fictional level such as when he imagines escaping Glasgow with Alison (64) or rescuing her from the 'lurking evil-doer' (64-5). Achievement is always possible within Patrick's daydreams and the realm of creation he inhabits at these moments offers the only means he has of

⁷ Andrew Monnickendam makes an interesting comparison of *Confessions* and *A Disaffection* in 'Historicity and Representation in the Scottish Novel', *Études Écossaises*, no. 1 (March, 1991), pp. 229-42. He calls *A Disaffection* 'a contemporary confessions of a justified sinner' (236).

escaping from inner dialogue--the inner speech that prevents him from taking what he conceives to be authentic, decisive action. Kelman's characters are adept at practising what Bakhtin calls 'discursive thought':

The point at issue here is precisely how to accomplish the task of translating myself from inner language into the language of outward expressedness and of weaving of all of myself totally into the unitary plastic and pictorial fabric of life as a human being among other human beings, as a hero among other heroes. One can easily substitute for this task another task which is entirely different in kind, namely, the task accomplished by discursive thought: thinking has no difficulty at all of placing me on one and the same plane with all other human beings, for in the act of thinking I first of all abstract myself from that unique place which I--as this unique human being--occupy in being; consequently, I abstract myself from the concretely intuited uniqueness of the world as well. Hence discursive thought is unfamiliar with the ethical and aesthetic difficulties of self-objectification. (AH 31)

This is a way around the difficulties of identity formation that so strenuously require a genuine other, an other consciousness, to be effective. Patrick creates a self who can be the reader of his own fictions. Frequently he plays the part of the hero himself such as when he pretends he is a spy and avoids meeting his brother's family on the street (161-4). But he is also quite capable of taking the everyday citizens of Glasgow, such as the auto worker trapped in his car door (122-3), or his own quotidian activities, such as his bathing rituals (107), and fashioning them into stories purely for his own enjoyment and as alternatives to social realities that are so difficult for him to face up to.

Early in the novel, it is easy for the reader to differentiate between the Patrick who is communicating with himself through inner dialogue and the one who is

creating fictions using materials from the everyday world of the Glasgow education system. As the novel progresses, though, the reader is confronted with a gradual mixing of the two 'genres' which provides a dialogical portrait of Patrick's consciousness. The inner dialogue is used by Patrick to assist him in making decisions in the 'real' world. He debates with himself about how to approach Alison or why the headmaster can possibly want to speak with him. His voice of fictional creativity is quite monological in comparison, so that he is much closer to achieving the status of author, in the way that Bakhtin admires Dostoevsky as an author, when he is speaking to himself about his plans for the pipes, or whether he should use language such as 'arse'.

These two areas of 'inner discourse' or 'discursive thought' are not exclusive though and they speak to each other dialogically as the novel progresses:

I am gibbering why am I gibbering, I am gibbering why am I gibbering. Poor old fucking Hölderlin. The headmaster is speaking what is he speaking about? Hush and let us hear.

But my brains willni let me my brains willni let me. That's what happened to old Hölderlin. And what I want to know is, concerning your man, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, his boyhood friend,

What is the headmaster talking about....(181)

Here the life of another of Patrick's artist-heroes becomes interwoven with his own. A voice from 20th-century Glasgow mingles with a different biographical voice and in doing so tries to bring the two into closer proximity. This is reminiscent of what Gray accomplishes in *Lanark*. Here, though, is an instance of inner dialogue attempting to establish links with an outside world. However a few

pages later we get a sample of Patrick narrating the events of his life and adding a fantastical quality to them. The prose is unbroken and the reader is made to feel for a moment that he or she has been made the victim of an authorial trick:

The next class had been waiting outside the door. While they were trooping in he sidled out into the corridor, he stood beside a pillar overlooking the assembly hall where the netball game was about to take place. His life was finished. When the two teams entered from the changing rooms and the gym teacher blew her whistle he started walking, along to the stairs, and then leapfrogging the railing he fell twenty feet, his brains being dashed on the floor. He went into the staff lavatory for a piss....(187)

The seamless narration of Patrick's imagined demise brings the worlds of his fantastical creativity and the reality of his everyday existence into closer contact. This is all part of the process of Patrick's identity formation which requires that his world of inner dialogue confront the possibility that he is capable of being an author in his own right. His initial dialogue about the pipes (9) involves two speakers who are yet to be identified. Part of Patrick's dilemma about the pipes becomes a matter of identifying the voices which debate the future of the pipes. He returns to this argument later in the book in a more sophisticated manner which is closer to realizing who it is that takes part in his inner dialogues:

Fine, hullo. I am pleased to meet ye. I truly am. I am a likeable personality. If you are not an unlikeable personality why then, we may converse. Hullo back. I am your alter ego. Alter alteris masculine. When your personality splits I am the back end. I am the ugly bit, the counterforce. In order to release me as a pleasantly docile manifestation you have to resort to instruments of wind--pipes can suffice. What they do they release me, and I am another likeable personality. Thus we have us two and

the ugly one. Then as well as you get this other yin, me; I creep in, I creep in while yous all sit about gabbing in that friendly getting-to-know-ye type of way; I creep in and edge closer and closer till I'm so much a part of the company you didnt notice my absence earlier, that a gap had existed, that it now has been filled. (210)

Patrick is identifying his double and, like Robert Colwan's demonic other, it is fully cognizant of its powers. It acknowledges itself briefly here as the one who has been conversing with Patrick throughout the novel, then quietly sneaks off again and leaves him to carry on the dialogue with an other who is less self-conscious. At the conclusion of the novel, Patrick's voice of fictional creativity confronts his everyday voice as he imagines the police running to tackle him. Patrick's final dialogue is good preparation for Kelman's next novelistic 'hero', Sammy, as it includes notions of a collective other (in the form of law enforcement) in opposition to the self. Here, the image of the pursuing police spark conflict between the voices and eventually rejection of one voice by the other. Here the transition from monologue to dialogue becomes accomplished by the emotional and verbal violence:

That was them there shouting: they were shouting at him from the other side of the road and just there waiting for the traffic to slow. They must have come running after him, to be shouting. What are they shouting. What are they shouting. They're just shouting *they hate him they hate ye we fucking hate ye*, that's what they're shouting. It was dark and it was wet but not cold; if it had not been so dark you would have seen the sky. Ah fuck off, fuck off.
(337, italics mine)

The voice of the inner other turns on the self in an act of self-eradication. The 'we fucking hate ye' represents both the imaginary exclamation of the police and the

nullifying abuse of the disaffected other who finds himself, in the end, joining the oppressive forces of a society which seeks to add discursive authority to its powers.

Silence, Censorship and the Voices of *Skaz*

The 'inner dialogues' of Kelman's characters are good examples of what Bakhtin calls 'double-voiced discourse'. In his chapter 'Discourse in Dostoevsky' from *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin discusses the word *skaz*, a term which is extremely useful when studying Kelman's fiction and which would probably find utility in a discussion of other contemporary Scottish fiction such as the novels of Jeff Torrington, Janice Galloway, and Irvine Welsh as well as poets such as Tom Leonard, Liz Lochhead, Edwin Morgan, Robert Crawford, W. N. Herbert, and others who experiment with an 'oral' Scots in their work. As we saw in Chapter Two, MacDiarmid was interested in *skaz* and used the word in *In Memoriam James Joyce*.

Skaz is loosely rendered into English as 'a technique or mode of narration that imitates the oral speech of an individualized narrator' (PDP 8n.b). In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin uses the term *skaz* to assist him in describing different types of double-voiced discourse, or discourse which 'is directed both toward the referential object of speech, as in ordinary discourse, and toward another's discourse, toward someone else's

speech' (*PDP* 185).⁸ Bakhtin insists that the use of *skaz* itself is an example of double-voiced discourse since it anticipates the oral codes of another:

It seems to us that in most cases *skaz* is introduced precisely for the sake of *someone else's voice*, a voice socially distinct, carrying with it precisely those points of view and evaluations necessary to the author. What is introduced here, in fact is a storyteller, and a storyteller, after all, is not a literary person; he belongs in most cases to the lower social strata, to the common people (precisely this is important to the author)--and he brings with him oral speech. (*PDP* 192)

Oral speech, as we've seen, is very important to Kelman, and it is his characters themselves who are the storytellers in his fictions. In this section we will examine the ways in which Kelman's characters provide examples of double-voiced discourse and *skaz* in an effort to protect their language from the incursions of linguistic authority. In doing this we will need to read Kelman alongside Bakhtin's ideas of discourse which he presents in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, his ideas of carnivalesque responses to authoritarian language found in *Rabelais and His World*, and his belief in the openendedness, unfinalizability and flexibility of truth.

Kelman's characters do not want to lose their voices. The frustration they contend with is not simply a matter of dissatisfaction with their ability to communicate. They are very much aware of a power which exists that seeks to deprive them of speech. This power, representing an imperialism of language, is exhibited in many forms. For Hines, it is the control of a changing world which will

⁸ For a full discussion of the complicated nature of the term *skaz*, see 'On "Skaz"' by Martin P. Rice, in *Russian Literature Triquarterly* 12, Spring, 1975, pp. 409-24.

rob him of the identity of 'busconductor' in the form of single-driver buses. But even this identity has been created for Hines by a capitalist system that classifies him as 'The Busconductor Hines'. Hines, more than perhaps any other Kelman character, tends to objectify himself in a Bakhtinian fashion:

Self-objectification (in the lyric, in the confession, and so forth) as self-alienation and, to a certain degree, a surmounting of the self. By objectifying myself (i.e., by placing myself outside) I gain the opportunity to have an authentically dialogic relation with myself. (PT 122)

Here, Bakhtin is not saying that one will have an authentically 'dialogic' relationship with oneself, but that the 'possibility' for having one does exist.

Hines goes outside himself and reflects (in the passage below), using ironically borrowed literary language (such as 'speculative musings') and sociological jargon (such as 'a pragmatic assessment'), on what he sees when he looks back inside. These types of language are subverted by the fracturing of normal syntax such as 'a the' and the breaks in punctuation:

Although predisposed toward speculative musings the Busconductor Hines cannot be described as a dreamer. Yet certain items do not always register....Now: towards the latter stages of his last spell on the broo a certain husband and father's marked aversion to nought led him into what can authentically be called a pragmatic assessment of life, the outcome of which was his renewed determination to become a the Busdriver Hines. (93-4)

In a sense this is an exercise in self formation. But it is also an experiment with language. How will Hines refer to himself if he changes his identity to busdriver. Will he be 'a' Busdriver Hines or 'the' Busdriver Hines. Up to this point he has been 'a' busconductor Hines (one among

other busconductors), but the threat of conductorless buses will make him 'the' busconductor Hines. Cairns Craig has identified the dilemma facing Hines:

Hines's identity is in being a Busconductor: his role has taken him over and he cannot evade it; the reification of his identity is such that he cannot simply drop being a Busconductor as he might take off a uniform. Busconducting for Hines is life--a terminal condition. (1993: 105)

Hines would like to be able to drive a bus, but he values the possibility of being unique as well. It is this search for identity which the book encompasses. Hines wants an identity outside of the imperium of the bus garage.

Part of Hines's identity may have to be re-articulated if and when he assumes a new title. In the first section of this chapter, we saw how Hines was able to implicate history in his perception of the world and the way in which language changes through an imaginary speech directed at his son. Here we see him struggling with a way in which to refer to himself. This likewise is a consequence of the historical and societal forces that seek to censor Hines's self-language and which result in his opting for silence when attempting any form of linguistic completion. Hines employs the Kelman technique of constructing incomplete sentences, a style that is expanded upon in *A Disaffection* and which hints at the increasing inability of language to accomplish objectives established by the speakers.

One of the requirements of *skaz*, or double-voiced discourse for that matter, is that it be directed toward the voice of an other. As we've seen in Kelman's works, the identity of this other is quite problematic. The

voices of his heroes are more likely to anticipate their own responses instead of those of another consciousness. The voice of this 'other' (in Kelman's fiction) is either an other which has been created by the consciousness as a surrogate for another consciousness or it is an anticipated other to be found in the voices of history, philosophy or government--voices of 'authority'.

Rather than working from silence into language, Kelman's characters move into silence. Language accumulates and expands within the stories and novels and in the process it becomes less recognizable and less capable of achieving communication or consummation. In such an environment, non-verbal communication and silence take on greater importance:

After the pause came the other pause and it was the way they have of following each other the next one already in its place as if the sequence was arranged according to some design or other, and set not just by the first but them all, a networked silence. It was that way when she entered the room. The noise having ceased right enough but even allowing for that if it hadn't it would have--which is usually always the case. ('That Thread', *TB* 107)

This passage is taken from a story in *The Burn* in which absolutely no dialogue takes place between the hero and the woman he is watching. Most of Kelman's fictions depend on the inner dialogue rather than an exterior dialogue between two individuals, as has already been discussed. What this short story points to, however, is how important movement, nonverbal communication and silence become when discourse between individuals is inhibited or nonexistent. Bakhtin recognizes the importance of silence: 'Silence--intelligible sound (a word)--and the pause constitute a

special logosphere, a unified and continuous structure, an open (unfinalized) totality' (FNM 134).

Kelman's novelistic heroes discover silence and nonverbal communication through a process of experimentation. Hines experiments with colors, presence and absence, much in the same way that Patrick Doyle experiments with the pipes:

Now, his head: it was a pattern producing entity. Unlooked for stuff just shot in; and while in there went dangling about till clamping together with other stuff. And the result: he wanted to be eh, an assortment of things. That's him. An assortment--smelly and not smelly. Your mummy now, your mummy. Things are very black really. There is no question of this any longer. This blackness. You take your 3 colours and stir. They mix, and then the black. This black doesnt have to be not nice. This black can be a clearing away to the transparency. Your head can get filled with the black and what comes out is distinct. Take 3 colours and stick them into your head; they clamp about on each other; and then the pattern's jet black. Onto this black other black is clamping, odd variants of it, clinging together as though merging, until at last out shoots the transparent item. Stuff like eyes are filmy and are set up for this kind of thing. (BH 104)

Colors here could very much stand for sound and silence. Hines wants things to be more ambivalent than language allows them to be. He speculates on the difference between blackness and transparency. Put in his questioning manner, they seem very much alike. Hines considers himself to be such an amalgamation of opposites. Patrick similarly broaches the question in a more sophisticated manner, but one which as we've seen has had to contend with much struggling over the nature of the pipes, their 'self-colour' in order to arrive at what the problem really boils down to:

Is it fuck a logic from another world it's a logic from the same fucking world and you've just got to find that method which lassos the bastard.

So okay; let us not depart. Let us all be together. Let us all be at one where to be at one is to be at peace, beyond conflict, a reconciliation of opposing forces. (D 305)

In a very pseudo-antisyzygical fashion, Patrick sees what he desires. However this still doesn't settle the question of self-color. How can reconciliation account for the individuality of forces. Kelman's characters can't seem to get to this place, and it is part of what contributes to their sense of frustration. They would like to be part of a greater community while retaining their individuality, and it is what seems to be the impossible nature of accomplishing this which further guarantees their positions in isolation. As we've seen before, profanity serves as a method for ensuring a sense of community, as most of Kelman's characters speak this language, and it establishes a sense of individuality through new and unique constructions such as 'enerfuckinggetic' (HLIW 174). But the novelty of constructing new language remains inside the interior monologues of Kelman's characters. They seldom bring their new creations out into a community of intertextual or interpersonal voices. They exist for the reader, the author and the hero, but remain silent to a community of textual voices which could potentially surround them in a text. As readers, we are allowed to experience a multitude of voices that exist in a single Kelman character, but we do not sense a polyphony of communal voices. In a way, this is censorship imposed by way of authorial control. On the other hand, Kelman's

characters exert a vigorous self-censorship by keeping their monologues bottled up within their consciousnesses.

In his Booker Award acceptance speech of 11 October, 1994, which was cut short due to time constraints, Kelman spoke of the rights to existence and to silence:

As I see it, it's an argument based solely on behalf of validity, that my culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that right. They may have the power to dismiss that right, but the authority lies in the power and I demand the right to resist it....One of the remaining freedoms we have as writers is the blank page. Let no one prescribe how we should fill it whether by good or bad intention, not the media, not the publisher, not the book trade; not anyone. And if we want the blank page to stay blank then let it stay blank. We have the same right to silence as the rest of society. (21)

It is appropriate that Kelman speaks of silence in a speech in which he is accepting an award for *How Late It Was, How Late*, a work in which silence dominates, as we've seen in terms of Sammy's verbal interactions with others.

Sammy, like Jock McLeish and MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man* relies on silence, paradoxically, in order to be heard. Silence, in Bakhtin's terms ensures the 'loophole' necessary for a culture (like that spoken of in Kelman's speech) or a character to be released from the strictures of an identity which is not self-determined. Jock's 'Don't name it. Let it grow' (340) is akin to Sammy's silence, although Sammy finds silence to be the only option available to him. Kelman, like the *Drunk Man*, recommends silence as an appropriate response that will ensure that one always has control over one's final word. The danger here, however, is that the forces of self-censorship may rob silence of the voice it may potentially lend to a

greater communal and cultural dialogism. We can come to a greater understanding of how this self-censorship works if we now consider Bakhtin's ideas of censorship and alibi.

In his works, Bakhtin associates censorship with fear. He is most concerned with tracing the history of society's response to this fear and the artistic ways of combatting it. In *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin outlines ways in which laughter serves as an appropriate response to fear:

Laughter is essentially not an external but an interior form of truth; it cannot be transformed into seriousness without destroying and distorting the very contents of the truth which it unveils. Laughter liberates not only from external censorship but first of all from the great interior censor; it liberates from the fear of the sacred, of prohibitions, of the past, of power....Its external privileges are intimately linked with interior forces; they are a recognition of the rights of those forces. (94)

On the surface, it may appear that Kelman's fictions are rather devoid of laughter. However we must remember that for Bakhtin laughter was not simply a humorous response but one which challenged authority and all forms of seriousness that limited and confined society. 'Laughter created no dogmas and could not become authoritarian; it did not convey fear but a feeling of strength. It was linked with the procreating act, with birth, renewal, fertility, abundance' (95). In this way, as we've seen before, Kelman's characters create a linguistic laughter in their profanity and Glaswegian dialect which challenges notions of 'proper' English. But on another level, Kelman's characters are slaves to their 'inner censors' if only because their inner censors refuse to allow them out into a greater vocal community. The inner censors of

Kelman's characters are the powers which demand that discourse remain within the consciousness. The 'I-for-other' of Bakhtin is constrained and made to conform to notions of 'I-for-self'.

For many of the same reasons discussed in terms of Alasdair Gray's 'heroes', many of Kelman's characters bear comparison with Dostoevsky's 'Underground Man'. In *Notes from Underground* Dostoevsky presents a character who is constantly being 'crushed by inertia' (102). The 'sick man' of this story is incapable of communicating with external others other than writing his confession for the reader much in the style of Robert Wringhim. Within this confession, however, the underground man anticipates the responses of others in a manner which poses as dialogue:

The hero from the underground eavesdrops on every word someone else says about him, he looks at himself, as it were, in all the mirrors of other people's consciousnesses, he knows all the possible refractions of his image in those mirrors...he can go beyond their limits and can thus make them inadequate. He knows that he has the final word, and he seeks at whatever cost to retain for himself this final word about himself, the word of his self-consciousness, in order to become in it that which he is not. His consciousness of self lives by its unfinalizability, by its unclosedness and its indeterminacy. (PDP 53)

The nature of eavesdropping for the underground man is not, however, one which admits other consciousnesses. The underground man *anticipates* the words of others and fashions his responses and his self-image accordingly. Like Patrick Doyle, the underground man is influenced by literature and literary characters. He reads himself and his lived experience through the eyes of fictional and historical characters rather than with the living

consciousnesses that surround him. However it is the underground man's ideas about truth that bring him into the closest contact with Kelman's fictional characters. In *Notes from Underground*, the 'anti-hero' muses on mathematical truth and how that might reconcile itself with beauty:

Yes, man is a comical animal, and there's obviously a joke in all this. Still, I say that twice two is an unbearable notion, an arrogant imposition. This twice two image stands there, hands in pockets in the middle of your road, and spits in your direction. Nevertheless, I'm willing to agree that twice-two-makes-four is a thing of beauty. But, if we're going to praise everything like that, then I say that twice-two-makes-five is also a delightful little item now and then. (117)

This sounds much like Patrick Doyle's investigation into the value of his pipes, the nature of their color, and the way they arrive at their self-color. Inherent in the philosophizing of the underground man and Doyle is a desire to break with traditional notions of truth. Doyle may call on fiction, history and art to assist him in his moments of doubt and self-denial, but he resists, or would like to resist, the control they exert over the way he sees the world in fixed terms. The problem Doyle has with being a teacher is wrapped up in his distrust of information and how it is manipulated to achieve certain ends. What is most worrying for him, however, are the limits placed upon knowledge, the 'is-ness' of things that limits interpretation and understanding.

Doyle is not the only one of Kelman's characters to exhibit a concern with the manipulation of knowledge, power and politics, but perhaps more than any other character he illustrates the theories involved which

necessitate a re-evaluation of truth. In *How Late It Was, How Late*, Kelman is less subtle about the nature of censorship. The brutal treatment of Sammy by the police and the medical authorities belies a deeper concern with power that has to do with flexibility and subjectivity. Sammy's blindness is a metaphor for what we all endure, and, more importantly for Kelman, what working-class Glasgow endures every day. Censorship and authority here becomes very much a problem of issues, much the way it does in Kelman's polemical collection of essays *Some Recent Attacks* (1992) and in his play 'Hardie and Baird' (1991). People are blinded and imprisoned every day and have been throughout history and in this condition communication and social interaction and health are at risk. These are some of the psychological implications of Kelman's political task in presenting hardships and inequalities at a surface level. However, what can be more theoretically potent than Patrick Doyle's musings on the nature of his pipes or Hines's struggle to understand the semantics of identity to be found in his title 'busconductor', or the speaker of 'A Block' who considers the dead body at his feet as 'a block of matter' (NNWG 99) rather than as a human being. Questions about truth, censorship, signification, and representation are more powerfully raised in these instances than in the openly antagonistic political diatribes of Kelman's non-fiction. It is helpful to close this discussion of Kelman's work by looking at the nature of truth and responsibility as formulated by Bakhtin in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*.

Toward a Philosophy of the Act represents some of Bakhtin's first and most seminal ideas concerning the act of authoring, the nature of Being, and self/other relationships. Although it is the most recent of Bakhtin's works to be translated, it was most probably the first to be written, sometime between 1919 and 1921. The fact that this work, and others by Bakhtin, were suppressed and censored themselves indicates that Bakhtin was very much aware of the nature of censorship and had opportunities to theorize on the subject throughout his life. However it is not censorship which figures highly in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* but rather truth.

Bakhtin does not approach truth directly, but rather by way of other ideas that will aid him in his exposition of truth as being openended. Two of Bakhtin's ideas presented in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* are 'participatory thinking' and 'non-alibi'. Participative thinking involves an interaction between the world and the individual consciousness:

I cannot include my actual self and my life (*qua* moment) in the world constituted by the constructions of theoretical consciousness in abstraction from the answerable and individual historical act. (9)

This notion includes the idea of 'non-alibi in Being', which allocates to each consciousness a measure of responsibility in a world of other consciousnesses from which there is no 'alibi' for being elsewhere. In other words, as Vadim Liapunov reads Bakhtin: 'I cannot be relieved of answerability for the commission of an act by an *alibi*, that is, by claiming to have been elsewhere than at the place of commission' (TPA 95, n.111).

Responsibility ties in with authorship, as we've seen in discussions which bring to bear Bakhtin's essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity' on Patrick Doyle's consideration of the pipes. Patrick's concern with 'self-colour' translates into a concern that the pipes not retain a set color, but live a 'chameleon-like' existence. The color will change depending on the situation. Originally Patrick has desired the pipes to be 'finished' (9) but he later realizes the potential behind their incompleteness:

Well how come the pipes are finished? They aren't finished. Why was it a weanish notion? It wasn't a weanish notion. It was not a weanish notion. There was something about them, at the very outset. It can be recaptured. (81)

Although Patrick still thinks in terms of completion, he finds 'uses' for the pipes beyond what he originally imagines. They provide a focal point for him when he becomes lost in his disaffection with the world of society. In this way, his obsession is not healthy. However, he uses the pipes as conversation pieces with both Alison and his brother's children. The pipes transcend their 'pipeness' in a way that Patrick does not anticipate and they point to the possibilities available in the world of human intercourse which Patrick can never quite master. The pipes, in a way, are a metaphor for language and the slipperiness of language. Responsibility, according to Bakhtin, does not lie in the creation of definite truths, but rather in the creation of 'unique truths' or '*pravda*' (TPA 28). This is very much in keeping with Bakhtin's philosophy of heteroglossia where any

number of factors occurring at a certain time produce a different meaning than they will at any other time under different conditions.⁹

Cairns Craig identifies notions of ambivalent truth in *A Disaffection* as being related to Gödel's theorem that Patrick 'can show...to the average first-year class in a sentence' (D 14). Craig remarks:

Gödel's theorem demonstrates that all systems of knowledge are founded upon some principle which they cannot themselves justify and which have to be validated from some other system [much like in Bakhtin's notion of transgression]: there is no absolute and self-contained--i.e. necessary--truth; all truths are dependent, and potentially redundant. (1993: 110; parenthetical addition mine)

In this way, it would be somewhat irresponsible for Patrick to assume that he could recapture the special feeling the pipes produced when he first saw them behind the arts centre. But as readers we recognize the uniqueness of the pipes each time he 'uses' them, whether to initiate an inner dialogue, to start a conversation, or to create a story for children. Patrick's inner censor is the one which tells him to go back and recapture the past of the pipes, or that their self-color must be definitive. The reader relishes the delight the children show in the pipes because they have been enchanted into realizing the possibilities the pipes possess to a much greater degree than Patrick has. The disaffected teacher has triumphed, unknowingly, by exhibiting the undefinable nature of language to the two children. The reader is brought at this point in the book to reflect back upon Patrick's

⁹ See 'Discourse in the Novel', pp. 262-3 for a discussion of heteroglossia and speech types.

classroom antics in which he instills in his pupils a skepticism of the system they are all taking part in furthering:

Now, all of yous, all you wee first-yearers, cause that's what you are, wee first-yearers. You are here being fenced in by us the teachers as the behest of the government in explicit simulation of your parents viz. the suppressed poor. Repeat after me: We are being fenced in by the teachers

We are being fenced in by the teachers
at the behest of a dictatorship government
at the behest of a dictatorship government
in explicit simulation of our fucking parents
the silly bastards
in explicit simulation of our fucking parents
the silly bastards

Laughter.

Good, good, but cut out that laughing. You're here to be treated as young would-be adults under terms that are constant to us all; constant to us all. Okay then that last bit: viz. the suppressed poor!

viz. the suppressed poor!
Cheering. (25)

Patrick is performing a carnivalesque service by pointing out the limits set by the authorities in society, but he fails to learn from the lessons he imparts to the 'wee first-yearers'. Patrick is controlled by acts of definition, by being 'fenced in' everyday. He tries to summon up the images of dead artists and poets to help him out but he finds recourse to sterile and contained language in the end.

While Patrick's brush with truth comes in the form of objects, artists, and history, Hines's is much more concerned with language itself and he probes language in a very deconstructive manner when attempting to find some way of identifying a self:

Here you have a Busconductor Hines. How he must have been walking about in a trance and that. What he used to do was. He really didnt do. He had an idea. He conducted himself in a manner such that, his method

of being, it accorded to certain factors. Certain factors appear to have governed his movements. What we know is mainly average. His goal was twofold: to obtain a PSV licence, to acquire a sum of money--a sum of money which while of unknown extension was nevertheless taken for granted as settled in some unshadowy region as for example consider the striving to a goal where the goal lies in between the lines while the lines themselves are the striving and can produce the goal seemingly in themselves but not really in themselves for the goal lies in between and though some daft cunts have no knowledge of this they assume its existence in accordance with the existence of the lines. Now this is fucking nonsense of course because there doesn't have to be any in between at all, there can be nothing whatsoever. This is what has happened to Hines. A classic case, striving for the fucking nonexistent goal.
(97-8)

Hines is constantly defining and redefining the language he uses and that uses and shapes him. He strives to be precise, much in the way that Patrick desires to complete the pipes, yet he seems to realize the imprecision of his preciseness much more willingly than Patrick is able to comprehend the varieties of self-color available to the pipes. Hines's crude philosophy is seen to be much more accessible and valid than Patrick's, which is bogged down by historical events and philosophical schools which have been drummed into his consciousness in the course of his 'education'. Hines's take on truth and the way the individual perceives the world which surrounds him can be boiled down to 'a strange kettle of cabbage' (81):

It is a fucking strange carry on altogether. Here you have a house--a flat--a flat cum house--up a close in a tenement building. Now: there is a--many in fact--singular bits involved in this problem about the house. Not least is an item of an apparently insurmountable nature. It calls for wide heads. The past and the present have got to be considered. When the immediate past is not only today but also tomorrow. What the fuck. The time things they set you up. 5 years is never to be described as 10 minutes. That would be fucking ridiculous. 5 years is a host of days; then for each 1 you've got another 2 stuck

on. You're best paying no attention. You just go along. You can just go along okay. You can be getting along fine, just going along, you can eh--then the house coming on top of the job or maybe beforehand, the flat, it is to be being demolished so the flit out from here to the next place and getting the space, clearing for the space, getting shot of the auld brickwork and concrete, the debris, you get it stacked then wheel it away in your wheelbarrow, right up the ramp and into the skip, the debris. Your head gets thick. You can be watching and waiting. It is fucking a strange carry on because then there you are. And you are not able to look properly. (81)

Hines has come to an understanding about truth that is not available to Patrick and is closer to that of Sammy, in *How Late It Was, How Late*, who is frustrated by the 'system' but understands it well enough to prevent it from bringing him to the point of self-erasure. Hines manages to make connections in his world. He shares a communicative life with his wife and son, as well as his mates at work whom he unites in a sense of brotherhood when he is threatened with non-payment of wages for the time he will spend meeting with the supervisor. Hines is not a depressing character in the way that Patrick is. He is more aware of himself and the opportunities the world holds, even though he is incapable of achieving many of them. Through his investigation of language, Hines becomes adept at communicating with himself. His inner censors are more forgiving and less in evidence than those of Patrick Doyle. They do not demand completion or subservience to higher authority because they generate their own logic. Hines's fragmented thoughts have a cohesion about them that is self-generated and self-perpetuating. He reaches conclusions by circumnavigating the assumptions that lie

behind discourse, even inner discourse, that demand language to fulfill and explicate absence:

Contingency by fuck--dependence on a possible future event which is not very likely. Hines would be true under certain conditions and is false under others. If certain conditions had come to pass that they were at large then he would have been being true. He would have been true under such conditions. Their recognition--such conditions. Let us consider absent (99)

Hines is aware of the conditional nature of truth. He comes to problems from many sides and is relatively patient with process of arriving at an understanding of the nature of things. He is as contemplative of language as Patrick is of the pipes. This is not to say that Hines is satisfied with language. He is frustrated with the limits of language, but he is also willing to explore its limits and the nature of limitation. Hines, like Patrick Doyle and Sammy does not feel obligated to finish his sentences. He is more likely, however, to turn sentences back upon themselves, to search out the opposite effect of his words, even though those words are framed within his consciousness, within his inner discourse. It is only after Hines has exhausted the possibilities of inner dialogue that he opts for the unfinished sentence, the absence of words. Hines investigates language much like Patrick investigates objects, people, and history, but Hines is more sensitive to the 'experience' of language and conducts a never-ending 'interrogation' of language. Bakhtin describes the experience of an object as a participative phenomenon, something from which the one who observes or experiences is never exempt from presence in the object:

Insofar as I am actually experiencing an object, even if I do so by thinking of it, it becomes a changing moment in the ongoing event of my experiencing (thinking) it, i.e., it assumes the character of something-yet-to-be-achieved. (TPA 32)

Language is 'something-yet-to-be-achieved' for most of Kelman's characters. Inner dialogue, profanity, and dialect all serve to highlight the importance of communication in his work. He presents a consistent concern with an understanding of the self. Self-communication becomes the most important theme running through Kelman's fiction. Grappling with the truth of self is problematic for many of the characters we have been dealing with because they must overcome the limitations of a language which confines itself to an inner arena. Censorship in this area becomes much more insidious than in the outer world, although it takes its cue from society. Authority is a way of limiting truth, and cultural authority limits the horizons of a culture and the responsible, participative thinkers within that culture.

An emotional-volitional affirmation acquires its tone not in the context of culture; all of culture as a whole is integrated in the unitary and once-occurrent context of life in which I participate. Both culture as a whole and every particular thought, every particular product of a living act or deed, are integrated in the once-occurrent, individual context of actual thinking *qua* event. The emotional-volitional tone opens up the self-seclusion and self-sufficiency of the possible content of a thought, makes it a participant in unitary and once-occurrent Being-as-event. Any universally valid value becomes actually valid only in an individual context. (TPA 36)

In Kelman's fictions, society thwarts the interaction between its cultural participants. They are isolated from

the experience of language as a phenomenon dependent on more than one person. Characters in this world must discover the possibilities of language for themselves within a vacuum. Limitations are most likely to be a result of outside influence seeping into inner discourse and censoring fruitful self-development through contact with the outside world. In such an atmosphere the act of signification takes on new importance. New language must arise where censored and highly impotent forms of communication fail to capture the essence of what it is to be a responsible and active participant in language and culture. Through Bakhtin's highly wrought philosophy of unique truth Kelman's fictions can be read and analyzed in detail as virulent protests against sterile systems of limitation and linguistic authority.

In the following chapter, building on the work of this one, we move to an examination of three Glaswegian poets who share Kelman's concern about cultural closure: Tom Leonard, Edwin Morgan, and Liz Lochhead. As we turn to them now we will be able to see how considerations of Kelman's fictions by way of Bakhtin's theories of *skaz* and carnivalesque language help us to better recognize the importance of fluid communities in Scottish literature. We will see as well, in the final chapter, how Bakhtin's ideas of *pravda* or unique truth, touched upon briefly in this chapter, are useful to readings of Muriel Spark's fiction and help us to detect the dangers that lie behind notions of fixed cultural identities.

Chapter V

Poetics of Community in Contemporary Scotland

While James Kelman provides readers with a dialogic view of contemporary Scottish urban culture through his fictions, Tom Leonard, Edwin Morgan, and Liz Lochhead create poetics in which a variety of Scottish voices can be heard. Also dialogic in nature, the work of these writers represents different carnivalesque approaches to the nature of poetic language that reveals the importance of constantly changing languages of community.

These writers exhibit a Bakhtinian concern for a plurality of voices that they express through a variety of styles: Tom Leonard writes poetry, phonetic prose, as well as political diatribe (much in Kelman fashion); Edwin Morgan is both a poet and a critic; and Liz Lochhead is an accomplished dramatist and poet. We will see how the voices of these poets, like MacDiarmid's, represent different layers of society and how this is evident in the way their poetic identities are fashioned.

The poets to be discussed in this chapter resemble Kelman in the ways they dialogically react to established forms of language and literary representation. By reading them through Bakhtin's theories of carnival the reader is made aware of how necessary a sense of fluid community is to the survival and growth, not only of Glasgow culture, but Scottish culture as well. In arriving at these discoveries, the works of Leonard, Morgan, and Lochhead

will not be considered in their entirety, but rather selective samples of their writing will be examined that most readily lend themselves to Bakhtinian investigation. It may be helpful first, however, to identify a few common threads that link these poets to a literary concern with the process of community formation. Foremost, these writers share a reverence for the power of language and they are opposed to any form of linguistic sterility that threatens this power. This can be observed in Leonard's phoneticized creations, Morgan's poems that resist closure, and Lochhead's dramatic revisions of history. Each of these areas will be considered in detail in the course of this chapter.

What also brings these writers together is a sense of indebtedness to figures from both a Scottish and international literary spectrum whose work offers promise to the necessity of the changing nature of language. Tom Leonard's work on James Thomson ('B.V') in *Places of the Mind* (1993), 'reveals a concern with a poet who in *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874) prefigures *The Waste Land* and the isolation of humanity in the twentieth century. Leonard's *Radical Renfrew* (1990) brings together, in dialogic fashion, the voices of poets from Renfrewshire in the last century. In the introduction to this work, Leonard states: 'Inequality of status of diction has been one peculiarly British way of sorting people into a hierarchy of worth' (xxviii). As we will see, Leonard's poetic, carnival response to this verdict is a direct challenge to the authority of linguistic hierarchy.

Edwin Morgan, in addition to creating his own poetry of linguistic subversion, has recognized the rich verbal possibilities in the literature of Vladimir Mayakovsky and other foreign poets.¹ Morgan's translation of Mayakovsky's 'With the Full Voice' into Scots in 'Wi The Hail Voice' (1972), much like MacDiarmid's translations of Alexander Blok and other Russian poets, reveals an awareness of not only a rich linguistic heritage shared by Scots and Russian, but also a thematic bond. Morgan puts it thus in his introduction to 'Wi the Hail Voice':

There is in Scottish poetry (e.g. in Dunbar, Burns, and MacDiarmid) a vein of fantastic satire that seems to accommodate Mayakovsky more readily than anything in English verse, and there was also, I must admit, an element of challenge in finding out whether the Scots language could match the mixture of racy colloquialism and verbal inventiveness in Mayakovsky's Russian. (16-17)

A Bakhtinian reading of Morgan, as we shall see, is aided by the joyful instability, the 'fantastic', and the 'verbal inventiveness' to be found in his poetry that resists both rigid identification and closure.

Liz Lochhead challenges notions of hierarchy, both linguistically and historically in her plays and poems. Her translation of Moliere's *Tartuffe* (1985) into Scots is concerned with the same playful openendedness and the possibilities for verbal experimentation in Scots that guide Morgan's translations of Mayakovsky. *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1989) and much of Lochhead's poetry questions history and gender as

¹ Morgan's skills as a translator are discussed by Peter McCarey in 'Edwin Morgan the Translator' in *About Edwin Morgan*, Eds. Robert Crawford and Hamish Whyte, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990, pp. 90-104.

stabilized notions that will not admit of reinterpretation.

Critically, both Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead are represented in individual volumes published as part of Edinburgh University Press's 'Modern Scottish Writers' series. *About Edwin Morgan* (1990), edited by Robert Crawford and Hamish Whyte and *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (1993), edited by Robert Crawford and Anne Varty, each contain a variety of valuable essays by poets and scholars. Additionally, each volume provides a helpful checklist of published and unpublished materials by Morgan and Lochhead. A number of critical articles have been written on Tom Leonard's work; most notably Donald Wesling's 'Mikhail Bakhtin and the Social Poetics of Dialect' (1993), which considers Leonard from a Bakhtinian perspective. We will look at this article in greater detail in the following section.

Leonard, Morgan, and Lochhead represent a growing number of contemporary Scottish poets undertaking a fortified assault against monolithic and monologic forms of communication that threaten the growth and existence of a plurality of Scottish communities. These writers are increasingly recognizing that the foundations of these communities often lie in the languages that evolve from a variety of voices. Their work attempts to ensure that no single voice is allowed to control the process of Scottish identity. Bakhtin's ideas of carnival will allow us to view a selection of Leonard's, Morgan's, and Lochhead's poetic and dramatic output in ways that emphasize not

simply reactions to authority, but methods of guaranteeing the instability necessary for cultural health.

Voice and Sequence in the Poetry of Tom Leonard

The first of the poets to be discussed, and the closest in tone to James Kelman is Tom Leonard. Leonard's distinguishing feature, at first sight, is his use of phonetic English to convey a sense of the Glasgow dialect. This is an effective strategy that demands that the reader participate in his poetry on an aural as well as visual level. In this sense, an encounter with Leonard's phonetic poetry promotes polyphonic activity on a sensory level. Leonard's phonetics make the reader aware of the sounds in a poem. An encounter with Leonard's phonetic experiments assists the reader to be more attuned to sound in poems that are non-phonetic.

Leonard seems to be saying that it is important for the reader to come to his poems in a state of sensory openness. One confronts the poem and must first decipher the sounds into English. The task is then to hear the Glasgow inflection while recognizing the English. Part of Leonard's dialogic process, then, is to put the dialect and the language into conflict with each other. It becomes part of the act of reading to disentangle and make sense of the components while remaining sensitive to the necessity of the entangled opposition.

As in much of Leonard's poetry, voices are not clearly marked. Leonard has a carnivalesque knack for

challenging authority through dialect and his speakers reflect his belief in the value of all voices speaking in all languages and dialects. Like much Scottish writing over the last few centuries, Leonard's poetry finds a new way to make us sharply aware of the clash between different kinds of language which is at the heart of Scottish literary culture. The speaker of 'The Good Thief', from *Intimate Voices: Selected Work 1965-1983* (1984) is both Glaswegian and biblical and he speaks to a fellow football fan as well as to Christ (9)². In this way Leonard complicates ideas of authority not only on a linguistic level but on religious and sociological levels as well. Likewise, in the following quotation from 'Unrelated Incidents', the speaker dons the 'voice' of God when warning Adam about the apple:

a doant kerr
fyi caw it an apple
ur
an aipl--
jist leeit
alane! (87)

Regardless of whether Adam chooses to identify that piece of forbidden fruit through received pronunciation or through the Glasgow dialect which God seems to speak in, the message is the same. Leonard mocks hierarchies of language as simply being another form of restrictive authority. This can clearly be seen in the following lines from his sequence *Situations Theoretical and Contemporary* (1986):

And their judges spoke with one dialect,
but the condemned spoke with many voices.

² Unless indicated otherwise, all references to Leonard are taken from *Intimate Voices 1965-1983*, Newcastle: Galloping Dog Press, 1984.

And the prisons were full of many voices,
but never the dialect of the judges.

And the judges said:

"No-one is above the Law."

(Reprinted in *Reports from the Present* 17)

Here the dialect (singular) of the judges sounds much like the doctor's who interviews Sammy in *How Late It Was, How Late*. A polyphony of voices is shown to be imprisoned by the dictates of a single mode of expression that demands to be the only means of articulation. Leonard is adept at revealing how monologic forms of language deny the dialogic a pluralized voice with which to speak.

Leonard describes this type of linguistic tyranny most successfully when he combines language with images of control and power. In 'Unrelated Incidents (3)' Leonard casts his voice into the BBC announcer who is condemning the very dialect he is speaking in:

thirza right
way ti spell
ana right way
ti tok it. this
is me tokn yir
right way a
spellin. this
is ma trooth.
yooz doant no
thi trooth
yirsellz cawz
yi canny talk
right. this is
the six a clock
nyooz. belt up. (88)

Among many things that Leonard is recognizing in this poem is a notion of truth that is based on language. Truth is lodged in power and Leonard identifies a form of linguistic condescension and coercion in the authoritarian language of standard English. The voice in this poem would

not normally speak this way, but relies on a different orthography to aid him: 'this/ is me tokn yir/ right way a/ spellin'. This highlights discrepancies in understanding that are continually being based on language and dialect. The intended audience for the BBC announcer would not spell the way in which he is talking. They would adopt 'correct' standard English when writing. Here Leonard seems to draw attention to his own phonetic technique as something which lies outside the 'correct' way of writing poetry. Additionally, the way in which 'proper' forms of discourse become embedded into social consciousness is emphasized by the speaker's next remark 'this/ is ma trooth'. For those who pay homage to the authority of standard English the truth is something which comes over the airwaves to them every night from a center of power which relies on a certain mode of expression for much of its authority. In this way Leonard implicates a variety of voices by way of only one speaker. The disciples of correct speech are identified as those who align themselves behind notions of right and wrong pronunciation and orthography. Their voices are identified by the message of the BBC announcer. However, the speakers of dialect, the addressees of the disciples of correct speech, are identified through the same voice that chastises them. The message and the mode of conveying it, while very different, rely upon each other. In many respects this language identity crisis reflects a Bakhtinian concern with self-perception that relies on the

idea and creation of an other. Here again, Bakhtin's idea of transgression is helpful and bears repeating:

...we evaluate ourselves from the standpoint of others, and through others we try to understand and take into account what is transgressive to our own consciousness...we are constantly and intently on the watch for reflections of our own life on the plane of other people's consciousness, and, moreover, not just reflections of particular moments of our life, but even reflections of the whole.
(AH 15-16)³

The examples given above indicate Leonard's concern with language identity as something which evolves out of the interaction of two or more dialects or speech patterns. His work exhibits a phonetic self-consciousness that reveals itself to be a mediating voice between two supposed opposites: standard English and Glasgow dialect. But the two are necessary to each other, despite Leonard's privileging of dialect, and he illustrates this interdependence in pieces such as 'Honest' where he investigates the nature of writing and authorship:

Yi write doon a wurd, nyi sayti yirsell, that's no thi way a say it. Nif yi tryti write it doon thi way yi say it, yi end up wi thi page covered in letters stuck thigither, nwee dots above hof thi letters, in fact, yi end up wi wanna they thingz yid needti huv took a course in phonetics ti be able ti read. But that's no thi way a *think*, as if ad took a course in phonetics. A doant mean that emdy that's done phonetics canny think right--it's no a questiona right or wrong. But ifyi write down 'doon' wan minute, nwrite doon 'down' thi nixt, people say yir beein inconsistent. But ifyi sayti sumdy, 'Whaira yi afti?' nthey say, 'Whut?' nyou say, 'Where are you off to?' they don't say, 'That's no whutyi said thi furst time.' They'll probably say sumhm like, 'Doon thi road!' anif you say, 'What?' they usually say, 'Down the road!' the second time--though no always. Course, they never really say, 'Doon thi road!' or 'Down the Road!' at all. Least they never say it the

³ For a fuller discussion of transgression, see the section on James Hogg and Robert Louis Stevenson in Chapter 2. See also Bakhtin's 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity', p. 233, n.11.

way it's spelt. Coz it *izny* spelt, when they say it,
is it? (73)

Leonard's phonetic poems examine language by treating it as it exists in daily life rather than merely as an area of academic study. They investigate how language works in the everyday world of Glasgow rather than simply in the spheres of a cultural elite where it often suffers from stagnation through estrangement from dialogical possibilities offered by involvement with a voice of the people. Of course, as mentioned above, the two areas are interdependent. As Leonard puts it: 'All modes of speech are valid--upper-class, middle-class, working-class, from whatever region....' (95). 'Socially and dialogically, to bring in terms from Bakhtin, the crucial thing about dialect poetry is that we inhabit the others' speech' (Wesling 306). Once we move past the recognition of Leonard's initial task of identifying the aural and visual possibilities of language, we are ready to consider his works in terms of the Glasgow dialect he represents. Again, we are aware of layers of voices behind the individual speakers in his poems. Leonard's speakers are very conscious of their location within Glasgow and within the language they speak. This awareness often produces a tension which can be felt in such poems as 'Paroakial':

goahty learna new langwij
sumhm ihnturnashnl
Noah Glasgow hangup
bunnit husslin (40)

Here the speaker is creating a new language through the use of phonetics, yet is aware of how dependent that language is on English for its existence. There is an

ironical dialogic relationship being formed here between the traditional English, the Glasgow dialect, and the phoneticized English that conveys that dialect. Donald Wesling has identified Bakhtinian examples of 'double voicing' in Leonard's poem 'Unrelated Incidents' (3) in which the BBC announcer dons a Glaswegian dialect through phoneticized English:

Two meanings and two voices inhabit the same orthography in the poem--or really slightly different orthographies, since 'thi-the,' 'talk-tok,' are used differentially but not in any order that would show one or the other speaker and culture winning out or finally, becoming pure, uninfluenced. The very point of the text is their inseparability, yet within that the division and clash of discourses. The official speaker is known by parodied attitudes and salutation; the other is known by his dialect. The establishment announcer, a focal figure in the culture as controller and definer is himself controlled. There could not be a more perfect example of a text internally dialogized. This is proof that double-voicing exists in poetry as a mode, so the analysis sets Bakhtin against Bakhtin's own dismissal of poetry as monologic. (316)

Wesling's article gives a good indication of the ways in which Bakhtin's ideas can be used to study dialect poetry, especially what he terms the dialect poetries of the 'borders and the diaspora' of English literature (314). As Wesling points out, Leonard's project (as a 'border' poet) is similar in some ways to what is being done in Caribbean literature (the diaspora) as well. In this sense Leonard, as well as Kelman, can be investigated as postcolonial writers.

Besides the double-voicing that Wesling identifies in Leonard's poetry, he also mentions *skaz*, albeit in more general terms: 'In its orientation toward oral speech, or more accurately toward and image of oral speech, dialect

poetry is the *skaz* (loosely 'colloquial narration') of the poetic mode' (307). We've seen how *skaz* operates in the fiction of James Kelman, but here we're given a unique way of viewing it in poetic terms. Bakhtin defines it thus: 'a technique or mode of narration that imitates the oral speech of an individualized narrator' (*PDP* 8 n.b.). In Leonard, though, it is rather an imitation of the oral speech of a particular class of society. Wesling ties in poetic *skaz* to Bakhtin's politics of carnival and we see that this is an accurate diagnosis of Leonard's poetic task as well. With the example from 'Unrelated Incidents' (3) cited above, we see a concern for the nature of linguistic authority and a carnivalesque rebellion against it. The tension between these two seeming opposites fuels much of Leonard's verse as it denies no language a voice in society. The two sides play off each other, very much in the double-voicing manner that Wesling has indicated. Allocation of voice becomes complicated in Leonard through his technique of throwing a Glasgow voice through typically non-Glaswegian speakers.

Phonetics and dialect are not the only carnival devices used by Leonard to convey messages about language. His style, whether it be in the short phonetic poems, or in the longer English poetic sequences is to capture a sense of movement. With the shorter poems, he follows a style akin to William Carlos Williams, a poet he admires and writes about in 'The Locust Tree in Flower, and why it had Difficulty Flowering in Britain' (95-102). One of the reasons Leonard is drawn to Williams's poem 'The Locust

'Tree in Flower' is the 'kinetics' of the poem: '...the tactile qualities, the words themselves beyond the mere thought expressed' (102). It is how Williams is capable of producing a feeling of movement without the standard forms of rhythm and meter that fascinates Leonard and which he experiments with in his own poetry.

In terms of the shorter, more phonetic poems, the kinetic quality is produced by short lines, broken words, and words that are welded onto the ends and beginnings of surrounding words. The longer sequence poems achieve a sense of movement by alternating between themes and voices. In this sense, voice becomes the dynamic by which the poetry accomplishes a movement previously controlled by meter. Within the phonetic poetry, a combination of different voices with the abbreviated phonetic style achieve a sense of movement. This is the case in a poem sequence such as 'Ghostie Men' in which various social registers are detectable within the individual sections:

name a thi fathir
 nuvthi sun
 nuvthi holy ghostie men (104)

The first voice establishes the voice of religion. Although this is authoritarian, since it is establishing a hierarchy, the phoneticization and play with sound, turns the hierarchy on its head in a very carnivalesque fashion. The 'holy ghostie men' rather than the 'holy ghost amen' brings a demotic credibility to non-authority. So, as we've seen so often elsewhere, dialect becomes the language of the carnivalesque in Scottish writing. Voice resides with the people, not in accepted and enforced

codes of language and the institutions (such as religion or politics) that establish and condone them. This is how the poem works in terms of sound and vision. In the larger schemata of movement and sequence, however, the poem establishes a way into a chorus of voices which will each have something to say about the current social, political, and linguistic situation in Scotland and in Glasgow. In 'Alien Voices from the Street: Demotic Modernism in Modern Scots Writing', Roderick Watson identifies these voices which have always resided within Scottish literature and he identifies the work of Bakhtin as a helpful guide to readings of Scottish dialect:

These changing registers and multiple voices have long been available within the Scottish literary tradition, once again because of the peculiar current status of Scots as a site of polyphony and ideological struggle in which in Bakhtin's words, 'every object, every concept, every point of view, as well as every intonation' is 'seen from the outside'. (148-9)

The second speaker in the sequence has bronchitis from smoking (and reminds one of Kelman's concern with asbestosis), but manages to equate this with an artistic 'palate' (105). From two poems in which language implicates authority (religion and artistic authority) Leonard moves to a poem in which gender relations are examined. The voice of this third piece in the sequence is a male who is attempting to empathize, for a moment, by projecting himself into a 'wummin' (106). The fourth poem 'humpty dumpty' takes the voice of traditional fairy tale and subverts it to the impression of how humpty would fare in the unequal political environment of today. Here literary authority is parodied in the inclusion of a seemingly

innocent children's rhyme and the omission of a final end rhyme. Leonard continues to do similar things throughout the sequence. Political voices become more obvious in later sections and literary, philosophical, and academic voices become more 'sophisticated' so that the reader has a sense of movement within the sequence that is akin to a gradual awareness. In other words, many of the same themes (religion, relationships, language, politics) recur to the various speakers, but they progressively show an awareness of how authority conditions language. In the penultimate section, the reader experiences the sequence in miniature through the voice of a speaker reflecting on the appropriateness of his language:

right inuff
ma language is disgraceful

ma ma tellt mi
ma teacher tellt mi
thi doactir tellt mi
thi priest tellt mi

ma boss tellt mi
ma landlady in carrington street tellt mi
thi lassie ah tried tay get aff way in 1969 tellt mi
sum wee smout thit thocht ah hudny read chomsky tellt
mi
a calvinistic communist thit thocht ah wuz revisionist
tellt mi

po-faced literati grimly kerryin the burden a thi
past tellt mi
po-faced literati grimly kerryin the burden a thi
future tellt mi
ma wife tellt mi jist-tay-get-inty-this-poem tellt mi
ma wainz came hame fray school an tellt mi
jist about ivry book ah oapnd tellt mi
even thi introduction tay thi Scottish National
Dictionary tellt mi

ach well
all livin language is sacred
fuck thi lohta thim (120)

The poem has an accumulative effect that mirrors the sequence as a whole and which accurately portrays a movement which condemns the overburdening of language to the point where voice is lost. The poem also seems to be saying that 'legitimate' voices, voices that could very well become 'intimate' are often 'converted' to a language of authority that deadens them. The final stanza's rejection of such sterility recalls the religious invocation of the very first poem in the sequence and serves as a fitting benediction to the reader going forth into a world of increasingly controlled language: 'all livin language is sacred/ fuck thi lohta thim'. As if to emphasize this point, the Rabelaisian bodily abuse of the final section 'treat me izza sexual objict' (121) (the actual benediction) highlights the violent physicality of repression of any sort, especially linguistic. The 'aw this/ steeda thi usual' of the final lines suggests an abuse that is even more malignant than the one-sided sexual acts described earlier in the poem. Having tied together many of the strands in the sequence, Leonard leaves the reader shocked at any such thing as 'conclusion'. Authority rolls on, continuing to trample voices 'inty thi grunn'.

In Bakhtinian terms, what Leonard accomplishes here, and elsewhere, is a dialogic interaction of voices through centripetal and centrifugal forces. On the one hand, received pronunciation dictates the themes for 'poetry' that Leonard rejects:

the pee as in pulchritude,
oh pronounced ough

as in bough

the ee rather poised
(pronounced ih as in wit)
then a languid high tea...

pause: then the coda--
ray pronounced rih
with the left eyebrow raised
--what a gracious bouquet!

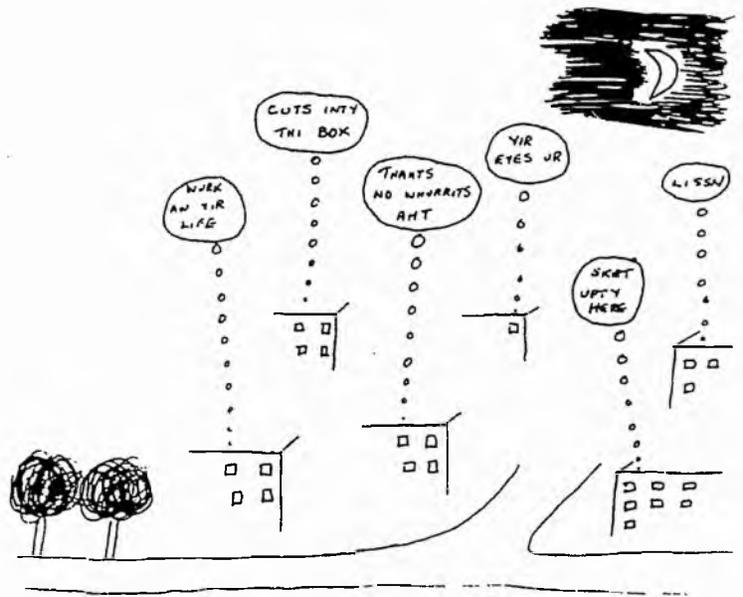
Poetry.
Poughit. rih.

That was my education
--and nothing to do with me.
('Poetry' 36)

Leonard's themes of bronchitis, beer and football seem skewed on the tongues of the speakers of standard English in much the same way that traditional notions of beauty seem stale when conveyed through the tongues of those who actually live in the world. Leonard creates the kinetic movement he desires by placing these forces in constant involvement with each other either through dialect or thematic interaction. Voices never merge, but are thrown into contact with each other in a dialogic fashion. Leonard illustrates this technique in two other selections from *Intimate Voices*, 'The Performance' and the illustration on page 61 from 'Bunnit Husslin'.

In 'The Performance' (75-80) voices and geographical locations become intertwined to produce a variety of reading experiences. The transitions culminate in a chorus where voices become exchanged. Here stage directions are taken out of the original context established at the beginning of the sequence and are given further life through their transcription as voice:

Man: "Lash."
Woman: "Pause for five seconds."



Lash.

Pause for five seconds. (80)

Leonard's weaving technique has the effect of moving language out of stagnant definitive meaning into an arena where it is more vibrant and volatile. The reader gets the impression that he or she is getting verbal value from the act of reading. Leonard stretches the utility of the words he uses so that they simply don't stand for just one thing. A variety of meanings is presented in addition to a number of voices.

Finally, Leonard makes use of a poetic geography to indicate that his poems do not stand in isolation from each other. The effect of 'The Performance' is to bring words from disparate experience into proximity while not losing the sense of their original separate position. This is pictorially represented in the drawing on page 61 of *Intimate Voices* where various lines from poems in 'Bunnit Husslin' are brought together through bubbles suggesting a community of voices speaking at the same time (see illustration opposite). Chronological authority is challenged here as well as poetic (can a drawing with seemingly random words added to it be considered poetry?) in the sense that we have been accustomed to reading the poems in a 'sequence', and now we are asked to reconsider such traditional notions of order. In this way, Leonard is adept at playing with the reader's preconceived ideas of movement as being something which, as well as language itself, is controlled by authority. Also, here, Leonard seems to be making a point about the 'lower' forms of

literature such as comic books. Does a voice become any more 'attached' to a body because it is physically rendered that way through illustration? Leonard provides an answer for his readers by separating the lines from the original text. While the bubbles lead to buildings, the speakers remain invisible. All we can be certain of from the illustration is that these voices are all occurring within a community and that we as readers, and viewers, are privileged to hear them all at once. The illustration also serves as a reminder that what Leonard is attempting is an attack against hierarchy, for no poem represented by the lines in this drawing commands a position of greater importance than the other. Likewise the utterances of the many consciousnesses that populate Leonard's poems possess an equality of voice.

The tensions between voices, whether they be rendered in received pronunciation or phonetic dialect, or represent a priest saying mass or a football fan discussing a penalty kick make up the dialogic project which Leonard accomplishes. Leonard is very Bakhtinian in that he provides no answers. Language is fluid and aspects of language are fluid:

...within the situation just now it's a thing that certainly I'm a part of it's a thing that I enjoy being a part of, is a fluidity of register, a natural fluidity of register, you know. I mean in different voices for different experiences or whatever. I just like what it is. I like the fact that it's so viscous it's so existential, you see. It keeps changing you know. I like that. (*Edinburgh Review* interview, 66-7)

Leonard is very sensitive to the fact that all language is 'value-laden' (65) yet he is unwilling to allocate specific value since that suggests something that is

sterile and incapable of further change. As we will see in the poetry of Edwin Morgan and Liz Lochhead, verbal value is an issue that must be constantly defined and confronted in contemporary Scottish poetry. The traditional quest to find 'a' Scottish voice is to be challenged as the chorus grows and more voices are being experienced through new and experimental ways of hearing.

Edwin Morgan and the Dialogics of Change

As we analyze the poetry of Edwin Morgan, especially that created since the 1970s, we should keep in mind that he may be the only writer considered in this study who is familiar with the works of Bakhtin. In correspondence with the present writer, Morgan has indicated that he read Bakhtin sometime in the early to mid 1970s:

As far as I can remember, I first read Bakhtin (apart from brief references and quotations) in the early to mid seventies, when I came across the translations of his book on Rabelais and his essay "Discourse Typology in Prose" (from his book on Dostoevsky) included in Readings in Russian Poetics, ed. Matejka & Pomorska, 1971. Even though he wrote more about the novel than about poetry, I found him a kindred spirit in his belief in "active plurality of languages...freedom from all speech norms", his beating a drum for dialogic qualities and strategies, his statement that "carnival is the people's second life", and the general Rabelaisian/Bakhtinian assurance that it is really no paradox to proceed "en folastrant sagement".⁴

Although Morgan writes primarily in English, he is sensitive to the tensions between that language and Scots. He deals with the problems poetically through a concrete poetry that focuses on the inherent questions of 'voice' that arise in any language: how do people read, hear, and interpret the messages that are being sent to one another? This problem is basically one of communication and Morgan is adept at isolating instances of frustrated verbal interaction and illustrating how these occur through possible misreadings or, rather, alternative readings. Sound poems such as 'Message Clear' and 'Dialeck Piece' show Morgan's concern with the many messages that may

⁴ Letter to the present writer, 23 May 1996.

inhabit phrases such as 'i am the resurrection and the life' and 'a daimen icker in a thrave'. Morgan plays with various ways of expressing these phrases by isolating letters and units of the passages to convey meanings quite different from the ones that are eventually arrived at. In 'Message Clear' the reader is led from the self-questioning 'am i' to a series of 'i am's' that seek further self-identifying information. What this signifies is that the process of meaning and message-sending is endless, not relying on an end stop, the variations are limitless.⁵ The juxtaposition of these two poems in his *Selected Poems* highlights the dialogic interaction that takes place not only within but between the words and letters of both poems. Levels of linguistic play and give and take exist in standard English as well as dialect as Morgan aptly shows.

This concern with breaking language down into its component parts is similar to what Bakhtin undertakes in his conception of the utterance. For Bakhtin, words cannot simply be broken down into the Saussurean *langue* and *parole* dichotomy. Behind words there lie endless social and cultural values that help shape a meaning that is never static, but always fluctuating and giving birth to new meaning:

The word, directed toward its object, enters a dialogically agitated and tension-filled environment of alien words, value judgments and accents, weaves in and out of complex interrelationships, merges with some, recoils from others, intersects with yet a third group: and all this may crucially shape discourse, may leave a trace in all its semantic

⁵ This reminds us as well of Morgan's collection of poems titled *Themes on a Variation* (1988).

layers, may complicate its expression and influence its entire stylistic profile.

The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue. (DIN 276)

We see Morgan doing this not only with words, but with components of words as well, shaping new meanings by separating letters from each other and thereby placing stress on new combinations of letters. In this sense the 'message' of 'Message Clear' is that there is no one message to be deciphered from the final lines. What has led up to this line is a promise of vast possibility that should continue into the future of the unwritten poem. W.N. Herbert has written that Morgan 'exhibits a concern to find those messages in things which have been overlooked because of the status of those things' (1990: 73). One of those things may be words themselves and the combinative possibilities not only of those semantic units, but the sounds and verbal elements that constitute them.

While poems such as 'Message Clear' show at a basic level how language is often neglected or taken for granted, poems such as 'Canedolia' reveal Morgan's interest in language as an indicator of place. By distorting 'Caledonia' Morgan reveals an interest in responding to traditional notions of language and how they fashion a sense of geography, and, ultimately, history.

Morgan finds that new cultural life can be generated by subverting these codes which have become ingrained in a

country's consciousness. Here we have Scotland's geography celebrated and carnivalized through the sounds of names and the components of names which have long served to identify an area. However, Morgan makes the names more active and interactive by using them in new contexts:

what do you do?
 we foindle and fungle, we bonkle and meigle and
 maxpoffle. we
 scotstarvit, armit, wormit, and even whifflet. we
 play at crosstobs,
 leuchars, gorbals, and finfan. we scavaig, and
 there's aye a bit of
 tilquhilly. if it's wet, treshnish and mishnish.
 (SP 25)⁶

Morgan adds new vitality to the place-names he celebrates by using them in novel ways. He is very much attuned to the voices of place which begin with a consideration of the sounds of the Scottish landscape which surrounds him. By repeating these place names in a non-geographical context, Morgan revoices them as carnivalesque verbs and adjectives. This playful treatment of locality indicates a concern with a politicized geography such as that to be found in mapping.⁷ By carnivalizing the map, Morgan attempts to de-solidify the 'concrete' nature of identity that is established by the inflexible naming of landmarks and boundaries.

Morgan presents an 'extension of voice' in Scottish literature. Where Leonard's sound poems and phonetic

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all poems referred to in this section appear in *Edwin Morgan: Selected Poems (SP)*, Manchester: Carcanet, 1985; *Edwin Morgan: Collected Poems (EMCP)*, Manchester: Carcanet, 1990; or *Sweeping Out the Dark (SOD)*, Manchester: Carcanet, 1994.

⁷ The importance of map-making is made abundantly clear in Brien Friel's *Translations* (1980) in which Irish place-names that have survived for hundreds of years are obliterated by an English army of occupation and its cartographers who substitute artificial names for the culturally significant Gaelic.

dialect make the reader aware of the tonal variations within and between speakers, qualities that are apt to indicate class consciousness, Morgan's voices transcend many of the social concerns of the present and contemplate the possibilities of communication in the future:

My poetry has many voices, many speech registers, often in unexpected juxtapositions, and I suppose I would regard these as subversive in the way you suggest--sometimes Scottish-subversive of hegemonies of straight English, sometimes anti-Chomskyan-subversive in the desire to break down grammars and universalities. I have many dialogue poems, and even in monologic ones there is often an internal drama going on.⁸

Beginning with poems such as 'Verses for a Christmas Card' from *The Vision of Cathkin Braes* (1952), Morgan experiments with voice. Here Morgan's interest in Old English combines with a Joycean style to create a 'New English' that will serve for a future language:

O angelighthoused harbourmoon,
 Glazegulfgalaxeval governoon,
 Jovegal allcapellar jupitererror
 And you brighdsun of venusacre.... (SP 11)

By juxtaposing these two poetic styles, Morgan shows how they interact dialogically. The style, which Morgan represents, makes use of the past of *Beowulf* (of which Morgan published a translation in 1952), but only as it serves to empower the future. As has been pointed out elsewhere, Morgan espouses a power of change that he sees in the poetry of Dunbar and which has been likened to the image of a whittrick, the weasel that is in a constant state of flux.⁹

⁸ Letter to the present writer, 23 May 1996.

⁹ See '"to change/the unchangeable": The Whole Morgan' by Robert Crawford in *About Edwin Morgan*, pp. 10-24, and 'Doing different things' an interview with Robin Hamilton in *Nothing Not Giving Messages* by Edwin Morgan, p. 36.

A study of Morgan's dialogic activity takes the reader from stylistic experimentation in poems such as 'Message Clear' and 'Verses for a Christmas Card' to an interaction of geographical names and places such as those in 'Canedolia' and the 'instamatic poems'. However, Morgan's poems are inhabited by human voices as well that carry on conversations with other humans, and, in some cases, alien entities. One of the most interesting examples of this type of dialogic activity can be found in 'The First Men on Mercury' where 'Earthmen' confront life on Mercury and attempt some form of communication:

--We come in peace from the third planet.
Would you take us to your leader?

--Bawr stretter! Bawr. Bawr. Stretterhawl? (SP 64)

From an initial misunderstanding, the poem makes clear the manipulation of language which takes place by the earthmen and the rejection of their world by the inhabitants of Mercury. Dialogic activity here becomes more than exchange of languages (Crawford 1990: 17). Here language is seen as something which is both playful and dangerous. The earthmen come in peace but attempt to impose their language on the alien world. The Mercurians on the other hand are wary of this subtle intrusion into their world. They reject the earthmen's 'peace' as a word that has horrifying implications when placed next to other words, especially 'atoms'. There are centrifugal and centripetal forces at work in the poem that lend it its dialogic flavor and which result in an indictment against the earthmen who are resistant to change. It is the inhabitants of Mercury who are aware of the nature of

change and the power it presents in signifying 'peace'. For the earthmen, peace has become sterilized in notions of 'benner' and 'atom' and the Mercurians have seen, from a distance, what that can lead to. Nonetheless, as Robert Crawford has pointed out, the poem 'wittily models cultural crossover, the moving from one language community and the assumptions which it invites into another different one' (18). In this respect the poem exhibits the Bakhtinian ideas of heteroglossia presented in 'Discourse in the Novel' as well as self and other and the interdependence that exists between the two as reflected in Bakhtin's essay 'Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity'. A 'social diversity of language' (DIN 262-3) is reflected in the language of the Mercurians which is contrasted to the perfect English of the earthmen and the subsequent adoption of this 'pure' language by the 'aliens'. W. N. Herbert has written that 'there is an implicit suggestion in the sound of the Mercurian dialect that it is reflecting an English prejudice as to the sound of Glaswegian, even down to a stereotypical hint of drunkenness' (67). If this is the case then perhaps what Morgan hints at here is the necessity of a productive linguistic tension between dialect and language. The 'intermingling of languages' in 'The First Men on Mercury' (like that in 'Shaker Shaken') becomes rather one of dialect: 'yuleeda', 'peacegawl', 'Menhawl', versus purity: 'Leader', 'Stretterhawl', 'Glawn'. Dialect in this interchange is seen to be the more versatile form of communication and the one that is the most receptive to

change and productivity. The act of signification is decried in this poem where the earthmen attempt to define their planet in terms of certainty and stability:

Where we come from is blue and white
with brown, you see we call the brown
here 'land', the blue is 'sea', and the white
is 'clouds' over land and sea, we live
on the surface of the brown land,
all round is sea and clouds. We are 'men'.
Men come-- (65)

Throughout the poem, the earthmen who lack dialect are intent on impressing upon the Mercurians a sense of order and rightness in the universe. Part of this idea of a definable and correct order is to be found in the very nature of language and communication itself: 'You are here and we are there and we/ are now here with you, is this clear?' (64). The 'is this clear' and 'you see' of the succeeding earthmen dialogue corresponds with the desire of the humans to extend a geographical imperialism to a linguistic one as well. The Mercurians are the first to dissect this strange tongue and incorporate bits of it into their own language. By doing so they are sharing of the earth language, enriching their own, and attempting to give something in return. The earthmen gradually assume Mercury-speak to their own vocabulary but are incapable of maintaining the dialect. Likewise, the Mercurians, sensitive to the totalizing influence of this English language, reject the bearers of this sanitizing tongue. The reader is left with the Mercurians sending the earthmen home with a rebuke in their 'own' language, one in which we are never quite certain that the earthmen have come to understand: '...nothing is ever the same,/ now is

it? You'll remember Mercury' (66). Languages serve to enhance one another by becoming dialect, but find that they are prone (and here the burden of responsibility falls on the human/English penchant for purity of speech) to purging themselves of the very idiosyncrasies that make them living forms of communication. Once again we see dialect functioning as a carnivalesque force.

Morgan's interest in science fiction can be related to MacDiarmid's obsession with science. For Morgan, science fiction functions in a carnivalesque way that MacDiarmid's science is incapable of. MacDiarmid, in a poem such as 'On a Raised Beach' for instance, is more concerned with drawing on the cultural authority of science; whereas Morgan, in poems like 'The First Men on Mercury', is more interested in subverting the theatrical solemnity of manned missions to other planets such as those staged by NASA.

Another poem, 'Macaronicon', from *Sweeping Out the Dark* (1994), presents voices in the form of different languages speaking about the same subject, the aftermath of a battle in which the survivors are checking the fallen to make sure they are dead. The relation of the events is first conveyed in English then retold in Scots, French, and Italian. Each dialect/language speaks to the other, adds to the description, and enhances the understanding of the reader. The final lines carry the story further through an amalgamating process that heightens the 'relaxing tension' between the languages:

robbing and hacking until the very dead
yowlit an chirmit Oh que c'est lointain

et fort, l'espoir des hommes, benigna pax! (22)

Morgan presents in language what 'l'espoir des hommes' desires in reality, an intermixture of languages that tells the story of humanity that results in peace. A harmony of voices is not a goal of Bakhtinian theory, but Morgan successfully conveys the idea that he is uncomfortable about this idea as well in his insistence on the variational possibilities available through translation. Each of the 'communication modes' presented in this poem enhances the others. They do not speak the same language or even present the same story and the stories they present are those of death and destruction, history that insists on the telling of tales from a variety of perspectives that do not allow for dialogic interaction. Morgan appears to be saying that each of these languages is vital in its own way, yet they are never so vital as when they are partaking in dialogue with each other. Indeed the concluding lines, quoted above, present the message of all this 'robbing and hacking', dislocation and dismemberment, linguistic compartmentalization as resulting in the condition of 'l'ointain/ et fort'. The 'benigna pax!' requires a dialogic retelling of the past.

Morgan has indicated his concern with the past elsewhere:

I really on the whole dislike history and tradition. I'm interested in what will happen, more than I'm interested in what has happened, I think, so that my long poem, if it ever comes out, will be rather different from the existing ones. It will perhaps be 'now' plus the future, rather than 'now' plus the past. (Interview with Robin Hamilton 34)

This frustration with a past that has separated rather than mingled, worries Morgan to the extent that he views the end of the world as something that offers a promise of the long-awaited realization of change. Morgan presents a new and hopeful eschatology that revels in the delights to be found in the experience of space and a re-created earth. Although Morgan's interests move from those of language to those of states of consciousness, the two are never far from each other. Apocalypse may revitalize both the language with which we describe the 'new' world and the experiences we will undoubtedly encounter there. However, Morgan is not ready to surrender the language of this world for it will make the language of the next one more vigorous by establishing a dialogical relationship between the two. In this way Morgan is less of a doomsayer than many apocalyptic poets who view the demise of nature as a robbing of the objects of signification that make up language. Humanity is part of nature and language is living in Morgan's cosmography. There will be no 'end' to the process of creating meaning and this is vividly portrayed in 'In Sobieski's Shield' where the speaker is trying to come to terms with his 're-materialization' 'on a minor planet/ of a sun in Sobieski's Shield' (SP 40-1). Here the voices are those of the past, the pre-de-materialized history coming to terms with a new world in which everything must be confronted and made sense of by way of new terminologies. The speaker's memories act as voices, helping him to define the new world he is inhabiting:

my memory of mercury seems to be confused with
 what is it blood no no mercury's not like blood
 what then what is it I'm remembering nor nearly
 remembering....(42)

All definitions are unstable in this world that both
 confuses the speaker and offers vast possibilities for
 verbal creation. Even language is 'mercurial' in this
 region. The 'voices' of the past continue to dialogically
 interact with the experiences the speaker is having for
 the first time in this new world: '

...her second life I don't
 know what made me use that phrase who are we
 if we are not who we were we have only
 one life....second life that phrase again....(41, 42)

The repetition of phrases leads to more complex historical
 memories such as those of the First World War, 'France
 Flanders fields', repeated as if by rote to signify a past
 event. As if to highlight the differences between this
 post-apocalyptic world and the one that preceded it, the
 reader is aware that the history that immediately precedes
 the speaker's de-materialization is not his own either.
 The concepts of materialization and 'solar withdrawal'
 (40) are hardly part of our present understanding. In this
 way, Morgan makes the 'science fictions' of the future
 very much a viable part of our life in the present and he
 does this through the interaction of voices of the past
 and future. There is a constant running through the poem,
 connecting past with present and present with future, and
 Morgan spells this out towards the end of the poem when he
 writes:

...we are bound to all that lived
 though the barriers are unspeakable we know a little
 of that
 but something what is it gets through it is not

an essence but an energy how it pierces how it
clutches... (43)

This energy, which other critics have correctly identified as change, is the current that keeps the voices of past and future in dialogical contact. Morgan distances himself from the 'dancing' 'prophets', since 'the jeremiahs/ who said nothing human would stand are confounded...they thought they/ could divide the indivisible the old moon's in/ the new moon's arms....' (43). These might as well be those poets who spend their time prophesying the end for the repetition of 'second life' recalls Yeats's 'Second Coming' with its horrible image 'out of *Spiritus Mundi*'. Yeats offers nothing human in the birth of the 'rough beast' and Morgan seems to be answering his entropic vision with his own call for something more positive when he says 'let's take our second/ like our first life out from the dome....' (43). The re-materialized world of Sobieski's Shield is only one of innumerable worlds to be recreated and the act of re-inventing is to be located in the change afforded by constant interaction of the voices of the past with those of the future.

The final lines of the poem remind us that Yeats is not the only 'predecessor' with whom Morgan establishes a dialogue. Morgan envisions a community of voices venturing into the creation of new language and experience when he writes 'it's hard/ to go let's go' (43) rather than the selfish negatory progress of Beckett's *Unnamable*: 'I can't go on, I'll go on' (382). Morgan's 'let's go' serves to emphasize the polyphony of voices that have preceded this line in the poem. The speaker no longer holds his wife and

son at arm's length as he surveys the change that re-materialization has wrought--he includes them and the reader in the process of creating new meaning in this temporary world, a world from which a plurality of worlds and voices will spring.

While Morgan's poems contain many voices and exhibit a variety of styles which challenge inertia, he also offers a rich selection of comic characters and situations with which to defy ideas of balance and stability. Principal among these characters is the colorful juggler of 'Cinquevalli':

Cinquevalli is a juggler.
In a thousand theatres, in every continent,
he is the best, the greatest.... (SP 113)

As an opponent of stability, Morgan has shown the reader how he challenges the literary status quo with his sound and concrete poems and how he rebukes a static sense of history by way of his poems which confront a post-apocalyptic universe. In a poem such as 'Cinquevalli', however, he is attempting to define the very world which surrounds us at the moment and the forces of authority which try to essentialize our experience of the world. A study of Bakhtin's theories of carnival, especially those to be found in *Rabelais and His World*, is useful here for readings of those poems by Morgan which disturb a sense of equilibrium.

In 'Cinquevalli', our first glimpse of the juggler is his body 'falling, falling' (112). The reader is confronted with broken limbs and possible death so that already the precarious balance between life and death is highlighted.

The lowering of Cinquevalli to the ground is reminiscent of Bakhtin's requirements for grotesque realism, an aspect of carnival:

The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high, spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indissoluble unity. (*RW* 20-1)

We see Cinquevalli fall twice more in this poem. In the next instance he is 'falling, falling', but a woman in the audience breaks his fall and he 'cracks her like a flea, but lives' (114). Cinquevalli is rejuvenated in all his falls, saved here by the taking of the life of another. Thus his lowering has an invigorating function as well: 'Earth is an element that devours, swallows up (the grave, the womb) and at the same time an element of birth, of renascence (the maternal breasts)' (*RW* 21). This is especially the case in the final lines where Cinquevalli is lowered 'at last into the earth' (114). There is a hint that this man of 'balance' will continue to juggle in the afterlife, or at least provide fodder for other 'delights and marvels' (such as this poem). The sense of this eternal juggling is emphasized by the phrase 'unsteady box'. What Morgan portrays here is a man and a poem that exist very much within the realm of imbalance rather than balance. It is the very disequilibrium which provides life for Cinquevalli and the poem itself. While in hospital, Cinquevalli 'has a therapy'. This therapy is not the mending of his broken body, but rather in his continual juggling:

he holds a ball, lightly, lets it roll round his
hand,

or grips it tight, gauging its weight and resistance,
 begins to balance it, to feel its life attached to
 his
 by will and knowledge, invisible strings
 that only he can see. He throws it
 from hand to hand, always different,
 always the same, always
 different, always the
 same. (112-13)

Morgan is highlighting the very imbalances that make up any idea of balance and in doing so he points to the essence of carnival itself, the 'special condition of the entire world, of the world's revival and renewal, in which all take part' (RW 7). What makes Cinquevalli the supreme conveyor of this idea is the fact that he is an imperfect juggler of himself. He falls from the high wire and the trapeze while seemingly in control of the inert objects which surround him on the ground. There is a tension between the balance which Cinquevalli is able to effect and the imbalance with which the world treats him. He effortlessly juggles plates and balls, but his coffin 'sways' within the hands of the pallbearers. Morgan emphasizes the fact that human experience is made up of opposites in constant tension with each other. Nothing is essential or definite. Cinquevalli is 'half reluctant, half truculent, / half handsome, half absurd' (113). Like the balls he juggles he is 'always the same, always different':

All the symbols of the carnival idiom are filled with this pathos of change and renewal, with the sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities. (RW 11)

Cinquevalli 'broods' on the war in Europe. He reads the way history is made and finds that he has been given a part to play in the creation of 'truth', that of 'German

spy'. In the next stanza though we see him laughing as he twirls a plate of soup, the world in miniature, from which no drop spills. The soup and the dish defy inertia, defy history. The spilling drop represents a sealed-off notion of time which is every bit as false as Cinquevalli's status as German spy. Cinquevalli laughs, 'and well may he laugh/ who can do that' (114). This is a Bakhtinian carnival laughter since it is ambivalent: 'it is gay, triumphant, and at the same time mocking, deriding. It asserts and denies, it buries and revives. Such is the laughter of carnival' (*RW* 11-12). Kevin McCarra has written of this penultimate stanza in which he identifies the qualities that make Cinquevalli a very carnivalesque figure:

The juggler takes the familiar and inert object and gives it a new, surprising, and joyous existence. The world--haphazard, dangerous, and indifferent to us--briefly seems to comply with our demands and, in consequence, life appears richer and stronger. (73)

This is in effect what the poet, Morgan, does himself by rescuing Cinquevalli from the spilled drops of history. The poem itself is a carnivalesque response to the sterile factual details of biography, a subset of the historical project of congealing past human activity.

As has been noted by critics elsewhere, Morgan's concern with the desirability of change fuels much of his poetry. We can, however, see this change being enacted, poetically, through Morgan's use of humor and his attitude towards the comic:

I've always liked comedy and the comic mode and I probably take comedy seriously. I believe you can do serious things with it. I've often found that in the way my poetry's gone. After a bout of perhaps very

serious poems, some kind of reaction, a kind of comic phase comes after that... (Interview with John Schofield 46)

In the above-quoted interview with John Schofield, Morgan speaks of how his creation of *The Vision of Cathkin Braes* and *Dies Irae* reflected 'two sides of the coin' (46), the comic and the serious. In this way we might envision the books speaking to each other in dialogic fashion. We also sense a subtle undermining and confirming, in typical Morgan fashion, of our emotions and responses as readers. 'Verses for a Christmas Card', as we've seen earlier, may well be a modern comic response to the 'seriousness' of *Beowulf* and Old English. At the same time, in a very Bakhtinian manner, it may instruct us as to other possible ways of reading ancient and medieval texts. Do we need to approach these 'classics' with a seriousness that forbids laughter, Morgan seems to be asking.

Morgan revitalizes the old through his comic treatment. We see this as well in the already discussed 'Macaronicon'. Here Morgan takes the traditional model of the macaronic: 'verse which is made up of languages muddled together for comic effect' (M. Gray 166) and uses it to expose a destructive and in many respects cowardly event, the despatching of the wounded after what appears to be a battlefield. The irony is heightened if we know that the macaronic was first described as 'a burlesque epic dealing with chivalry' (166). Morgan uses the different languages to create a clearer picture of the event displayed as well as the hope for peace, but the combinations produce a comic effect. In such a way, Morgan

challenges both the traditional notions of a literary style, the macaronic, as well as the sterilizing effects of a single viewpoint--history being conveyed through the vehicle of a single language.

Carnavalesque qualities can be found in Morgan's concrete poetry as well if we think of such poems as 'Centaur', 'Astrodome' and 'Siesta of a Hungarian Snake':

...you are in fact playing with the blocks of language in such a way as you hope will give pleasure to other people. You enjoy doing it yourself and you hope this joy will get across. I like to defend the play element because it is part of joy and a concrete poem often comes out of a kind of surplus not exactly of feeling but a surplus of activity. The joyful energy that goes into this is to me probably the most important part of it. (Interview with Marshall Walker 62)

A playfulness with language here mirrors in many respects the language of the marketplace that Bakhtin is concerned with in *Rabelais and His World*: 'The familiar language of the marketplace became a reservoir in which various speech patterns excluded from official intercourse could freely accumulate' (17). For Morgan, as with Leonard, and as we will next see in Lochhead, dialect becomes the modern speech pattern that is prevented from inclusion in literature. Morgan, however, in his concrete poems, shows how words themselves have come to possess levels of importance. Morgan defies hierarchies of vocabulary by focusing his poems on words such as 'astrograss' (SP 16), combinations of words, 'i am, horse/ unhorse, me' (SP 21), or fragments of words and their typographical representations, 's sz sz SZ sz SZ sz ZS zs ZS zs zs z' (SP 17). Morgan carnivalizes the very elements of speech that have been held to be sacrosanct and in doing so

liberates them for other uses. At the same time there exists a serious element to these poems. In 'Astrodome' Morgan's poetry is a direct response to the sterile and official new item that serves as epigraph. The poem serves to highlight the absurdity of the 'news' item in contrast to the play of verbal possibility that the poem represents. Likewise, in 'Centaur', questions of identity are seen to be bound up with the location of a comma in relation to surrounding words. The poem is playful, but re-arrangement of its components can change the tone and meaning very easily. The final plea, 'unhorse me!', is a direct cry for change. It is both a comic and urgent desire to be other.

Finally, we can see that Morgan's vision contains the Bakhtinian carnival spirit in that it resists the temptation to finish. In writing of the language of the marketplace, Bakhtin identifies praise and abuse as being two sides of the same coin: 'it is based on the conception of the world as eternally unfinished: a world dying and being born at the same time, possessing as it were two bodies' (RW 166). This spirit of unfinalizability is captured by Morgan in poems such as those in his 'Unfinished Poems: A Sequence for Veronica Forrest-Thomson' from *The New Divan*, especially in section 8 where Struktura encounters Svoboda:

Struktura the queen
 caught that harpy Svoboda
 her sister-we-don't-talk-about
 planting her feet
 in the wet cement. (EMCP 378)

Svoboda defies the 'structure' of her sister by initiating change to the 'pavement/of pavements'. When Struktura asks to see Svoboda's graffiti, Svoboda replies: 'A canny dae it if A'm telt tae dae it'. Svoboda resists the voice of authority and when presented with 'a ragged blank' (379) on the wall to fill by her sister who seeks to define her, Morgan lets us see the endless possibilities available to Svoboda to defy closure: 'Svoboda darted forward/ her hair flew/ and what she could do' (379). In true Joycean and Beckettian fashion, Morgan refuses to end the segments of this sequence with answers. Rather, the voices that populate the segments speak dialogically with each other and the reader is afforded a glimpse of a living tributary sequence as unfinishable as the life of Veronica Forrest-Thomson, whose life and work, as Morgan notes in his epigraph to the sequence, was left unfinished through her tragic death (373). Indeed, for Morgan, there may be a poetic death in attempting to 'complete' a poem by enforcing modes of analysis upon it that are not open to constant re-evaluation. A poem like 'The Gourds', much like Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, begs to be read over and over again through its ending line that leads back to the beginning: 'And it felt just like that old' (262), 'gourd: that's what it was, a gourd. We got in.' (261). Conclusion is thwarted both by lack of punctuation and the desire to proceed to the start of the poem to 'complete' the line. Attempts at closure when reading a poem such as this are defeated by the necessity of starting all over again.

Morgan defies completion in all of his poems, whether stylistically in a poem such as 'Siesta of a Hungarian Snake' or thematically in a poem such as 'In Sobieski's Shield'. This is all part and parcel of his quest for 'eternal' change. Morgan eagerly awaits the new, but is aware of the fact that he must ground the unknown in the immediately perceptible. As he writes in the sonnet 'The Blue Ring': 'It was not eternity the other night/ I saw, but the blue ring around the globe' (SOD 2). In speaking to Vaughan, Morgan is aware of the desirability of viewing eternity, but he sees that it can only be realized through an appreciation of the constant mutations of the world that surrounds us and our reactions to the new experiences those alterations afford. In many respects Morgan is like the zebu he writes of in the final limerick (another 'lower' poetic form), 'The Zebu' from *Tales from Limerick Zoo*:

A zebu of uncertain age
Was claimed by the folk as a sage.
With his hump he can climb
To the close of time
And laugh at the darkening page.

Morgan's laughter, like Rabelais's, is related to an 'unofficial truth' that resists the groundless, limiting fear of the darkening page (RW 90).

Morgan's resistance to the unchangeable serves as a good prelude to our consideration of Liz Lochhead, whose works defy the closure enacted upon society by the forces of history and male-dominated codes of language and myth-making. The next, and final, section of this chapter will

examine ways in which Bakhtin's ideas of carnival illuminate Lochhead's revisionary plays and poems.

Liz Lochhead's Carnival: A Community of Voices

Aspects of carnival can be found in Liz Lochhead's poems, revue pieces, and plays, especially in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* (1987). Qualities that have been identified in Lochhead's work include feminism, monstrosity, and a concern with voice.¹⁰ What I'd like to argue here is that each of these qualities contributes to Lochhead's greater carnivalesque project, a project which aims to challenge preconceived notions about language, poetry and drama.

As has been noted by a variety of writers, what draws the reader immediately into Lochhead's work is the voices. In *Memo for Spring* (1972), conversations between lovers are overheard:

How have I Been

since you last saw me?

Well,

I've never been lonely
I've danced at parties,
and drunk flat beer.... (DF 126)¹¹

In this and other poems, the voice of the speaker establishes a dialogical relationship with an other 'implied' voice that is always absent. What is more effective, dialogically speaking, in these poems is how Lochhead is feeling her way into a voice by confronting those of the past which she feels constrain her. The

¹⁰ *Liz Lochhead's Voices* (1993), edited by Robert Crawford and Anne Varty contains individual chapters that discuss these qualities in greater detail.

¹¹ Unless otherwise indicated, references to poems in this section from *Dreaming Frankenstein and Collected Poems*, Edinburgh: Polygon, 1984, are abbreviated (DF). References to *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*, London: Penguin, 1989, are abbreviated (MQ).

responses in 'How Have I Been' indicate that the speaker anticipates the questions that will be asked by another and she gently deflates their vitality by responding to them through her own language thereby 'no longer/ exposing myself'. This is both a defensive technique and one that ensures that voice is not something complacent or static, but constantly engaging with the other and developing a response on its own terms. In a sense, this carnival response to the language of an other is representative of a feminism that seeks to displace the patriarchal authority of voice and text. However, as Lochhead's verse makes clear, the voice of the other, the male in this instance, is vital to the response. Feminine linguistic identity, therefore, is reliant on what already exists of a patriarchal language. Lochhead insists on the necessity of difference between male and female voices (Verse 90). What she establishes here though is the reaction necessary for the creation of an alternative voice. This alternative voice is not limited to the specific genderedness of language however, since Lochhead elsewhere responds to male literary canonicity through allusions, most notably in *The Grimm Sisters* (1981) to male-created fictions and myths. This response is initiated in *Memo for Spring* with such poems as 'Revelation', 'On Midsummer Common', and 'Phoenix' which speak to other earlier fictions. Stephen Boyd has identified the 'intertext' of 'Revelation' to be with Ted Hughes's 'The Bull Moses' (44), while 'On Midsummer Common' includes references to Shakespeare as well as Dylan Thomas: 'into that night nothing goes gentle

into' (*DF* 127) and 'Phoenix' may contain allusions to D. H. Lawrence and Sylvia Plath (Crawford 58). In this way the reader is provided with what Robert Crawford calls a 'two-faced language' which breaks down the accepted modes of discourse, making them more complicated and less essentialist. Lochhead engages not only with the language of patriarchy but with what that patriarchy has constructed out of that language. She is keenly indebted to her female predecessors (such as Plath) who have already wrested language and myth away from male storytellers.¹²

The dichotomies Lochhead creates follow her from poetry into performance art. The male/female, English/Scots, canonical/ revisionary oppositions are explored in her early poetry and become increasingly more difficult to disentangle as she moves into dramatic revue and translation. This is part of Lochhead's dialogic style which has been noted by Crawford (68-9). As Randall Stevenson notes, however, these complications also contribute to an atmosphere of carnival, especially in Lochhead's translation of Moliere's *Tartuffe* (1985):

Such possibilities for the mutual illumination of speech and attitude add greatly to the comic, critical potential of Lochhead's translation, enabling a satire sharper than Moliere's locally, as well as more clearly politically directed overall in the way discussed above. In related ways, gradations of register in Scots colloquial speech help to incorporate into the translation something less available to the original--the kind of carnivalesque potential of language defined in the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin. In studies such as *Rabelais and his World*, Bakhtin retraces some of the fundamentals of

¹² For an in-depth discussion of this see Dorothy Porter McMillan's essay 'Liz Lochhead and the Ungentle Art of Clyping' in *Liz Lochhead's Voices*, pp. 17-37.

comedy to the medieval practices of carnival, in which parodic, playful shows half-celebrated and half-mocked or travestied the official culture of the time. Competing linguistic strata--different social registers, forms and habits of speech, each figuring its own set of attitudes--encapsulate and reproduce in texts such as *Tartuffe* the same ludic, metamorphic energies of opposition as well as engagement to official culture and its linguistic norms. Multiplication of linguistic strata and of the carnivalesque energies they can realise is obviously facilitated, in general, by the use of Scots--distinguished from the official tones of standard English and the power of the media which employ it--and particularly so by Lochhead's broad houghmagandie of intertwining dialects and styles. (120)

This is the effect of Lochhead's greater carnivalesque project which I'd like to trace further, particularly with regard to *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*.

As with discussions of Bakhtin and poetry, consideration needs to be taken before launching into an exploration of the benefits of reading drama by way of Bakhtin's theories, especially in terms of carnival. This is especially true as Bakhtin seems to separate the two areas in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

Carnival is a pageant without footlights and without a division into performers and spectators. In carnival everyone is an active participant, everyone communes in the carnival act....To be sure, carnival also invaded the home; in essence it was limited in time only and not in space; carnival knows neither stage nor footlights. (122, 128)

Robert Cunliffe has pointed out that the crux of this problem for Bakhtin lies in the distancing that is involved between players and audience which sets up a hierarchy (49). On the other hand, as Cunliffe notes, Bakhtin, in such early essays as 'Author and hero in aesthetic activity', goes to great pains to show that the separation of audience from performers preserves the sense of alterity necessary for self/other relationships

(Cunliffe 62; AH 70-3 and passim). What this indicates is a tension in Bakhtin's thinking which is not unlike the centrifugal/centripetal forces which he imagines help give shape to language and culture. The tensions for Bakhtin, in terms of drama, are between spectating and participating. Spectating allows the audience to identify itself in terms of an other while yet denying it full empathy, a participatory condition necessary for the experience of carnival. This discrepancy in Bakhtin's thinking is useful in discussing Lochhead's drama which attempts to take older canonical plays and transform them into works which revitalize language and ideas of national and gender identity. In doing so, some of the same problems that Bakhtin identifies as preventing full carnivalistic empathy are surmounted, not by direct audience participation, but through use of Scots dialect, colloquialisms, and contemporary settings and scenery. Lochhead does not remove the footlights, but brings the stage level a bit more into line with the spectators and their cultural situation.

In *Tartuffe* and *Dracula* (1988) Lochhead uses her transformative art to bring new voices, be it Scots or feminism, to bear on the works of Moliere and Bram Stoker. Translation becomes a very fluid exercise for Lochhead in terms of these two projects as she is able to both confirm the quality of the original masterpieces and ensure their vitality through new interpretations. As in her poetry, Lochhead's drama seeks to both verify and challenge traditional perceptions.

In *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*

Lochhead challenges a number of interpretations. She is working with history here rather than a literary text, but the transformative possibilities still operate in terms of language and gender. Again, Lochhead sets up dichotomies: Elizabeth/Mary, England/Scotland, Knox/Mary, Marian/Mairn/Mary, Elizabeth/Leezie/Bessie, and so on. Here the 'self' seems to enter into multiple dialogues with itself. The dramatic tensions are produced by the oppositions that are created and expanded upon as the play progresses. What these dichotomies also accomplish is a series of metaphoric 'decrownings' that mirror the reader/viewers expectations of Mary's eventual decapitation. The first indication that this will be a play which questions definitive meaning is to be found in the opening scene with the entrance of La Corbie:

'Country: Scotland. Whit like is it?' (11). What follows is a cataloguing of descriptions of Scotland, each of which is valid, depending on the perspective of the viewer. These descriptions take on the tone of the boastful oaths outlined by Bakhtin in his treatment of Rabelais's Gargantua and his explanation for the derivation of the word *Paris*:

Before performing his carnivalesque gesture (drowning 260,418 people in his urine), Gargantua declares that he will do this only *par ris*, for sport or laughter's sake. And the crowd concludes its volley of oaths by using the same expression, which, as the author tells us, is the origin of the word *Paris*. Thus, the entire episode is a gay carnivalesque travesty of the city's name. At the same time it is a parody of the local legends about the origins of names in general....The name of Paris, the names of saints and martyrs, as well as the Gospel miracle, were all drawn into the game for laughter's sake. This was a game in which

'exalted' and 'sacred' things were combined with images of the lower stratum (urine, erotic images, and banquet travesties). Oaths, as the unofficial elements of speech and the profanation of the sacred, were organically woven into the game and were in tune with it. (RW 192)

Such it seems is the function of La Corbie who follows on his 'Whit like is it?' with a series of stereotyped images of both the lower and elevated perceptions of Scotland. The most significant words of La Corbie's monologue might be the simple 'It depends. It depends...' We next come to see La Corbie as embodying the traits of Scotland herself, firstly through language: 'National bird: the crow, the corbie, le corbeau, moi!' (11). Between the English 'crow' and the French 'corbeau' is the Scots 'corbie'. We see from this that the word corbie could be read as an amalgamation of the English and the French but that it is much closer to the French etymologically. This point later becomes emphasized by Mary's Scots/French accent. If nothing else, this entire opening monologue indicates that a large range and texture of voices will be produced in this play. La Corbie, from initially offering the reader/viewer a varied taste of Scotland, begins to paint increasingly opposing images. Description become more complicated as the monologue continues: 'Ah think Ah ha'e a sort of black glamour' (11). Traditional notions of beauty are being played with here and they are accentuated in the next lines 'Do I no put ye in mind of a skating minister, or, on the other fit, the parish priest, the dirty beast?' (11). We sense the beginnings of a carnivalesque portrayal of the church not unlike Burns's 'Holy Fair' although here the notion of minister and

priest hints at the more complicated scenario of religious factionalism. La Corbie completes the image of herself with a grotesque description of feeding off of corpses:

Oh, see, after the battle, after the battle man, it's a pure feast--ma eyes are ower big even for *my* belly, in lean year's o' peace, my belly thinks my throat's been cut. (12)

References to the material bodily lower stratum bring the monologue from the religious to the corporeal within a few lines, thus highlighting the decrowning which is to follow in the course of the performance. As if to emphasize this even further, the scene concludes with a 'circus' procession of animals representing the principal characters in the drama. Here, as elsewhere in the play, Lochhead utilizes stage directions to intensify the carnivalesque atmosphere:

(Laughing, LA CORBIE cracks whip for THE ENTRANCE OF THE ANIMALS. In a strange circus our characters, gorgeous or pathetic, parade; MARY, ELIZABETH, HEPBURN, DANCER/RICCIO, KNOX, DARNLEY all dirty and down on his luck. They circle, snarling, smiling, posing. And halt. Drumbeat ceases.) (12)

Here, the stage direction interacts with the text dialogically for the reader while the spectator is presented with a carnival image on stage.¹³ Hierarchies are already being dismantled and parodied here as La Corbie, the bird, is ringmaster to the 'animals' who represent figures in British history. The crow, the scavenger of corpses, has reversed positions with those we will come to identify with monarchy and royalty. This reversal will

¹³ For more on the role of stage directions in this play see 'Reading Stage Directions in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*' by Ann Schlossman in *ScotLit* (Spring, 1995), p.3.

become highlighted in more subtle terms as the play progresses.

The transformations of Elizabeth and Mary into the maidservants Bessie and Marian represents another dismantling of hierarchy. Here the viewer, much more so than the reader, finds it hard to disentangle the 'royal' persona from that of the servant. This reversal has an unsettling effect for those who would allocate one identity to a character. This mirrors Lochhead's achievement of recasting traditional figures from older dramas into new personae in order to approach contemporary problems and show alternative interpretations. This is carried a step further when Leezie and Mairn frolic in the dirt after coins and antagonize John Knox in Scene 6. Here as well Lochhead has provided stage direction that suggests a Bakhtinian carnival setting:

Bright professional music from shoulder-high fiddler. In a procession the Queen is passing but instead of seeing her we see the crowd who are watching, cheering hurrah! and waving bits of rag. MARY is now MAIRN, a wee poor Scottish beggar lass; ELIZABETH is LEEZIE, her tarty wee companion. They are just wee girls of thirteen or so, in love with royalty and splendour. The whole set of Brueghel grotesques is cheering. (32)

The perception of Mary as Mairn is emphasized by the ensuing scene in which Knox, like the audience, is taken with the similarity, thus suggesting a participatory role on the part of the audience:

(She (Leezie) runs off, wild coarse laughter, a rude sign, a flashed bum, or a bent arm. KNOX right at MAIRN suddenly straight and tall, totally MARY in our eyes, and in KNOX's, as he chides a cheeky wee harlot on the cauld Canongate. KNOX's hand raised in anger but stayed in awe.) (33)

Mary as both queen and harlot presents a carnival reversal which reaches its most effective in this scene. This is not unlike what Lochhead does in other plays in which a variety of characters are played by one actor or actress. In one version of *Blood and Ice* titled *Mary and the Monster* 'the "man" and "woman" who accompany Mary on stage play all the other roles; and together they portray the monster, indicating the androgynous aspect of female creativity....' (Varty: 1993, 150). In a later version of *Blood and Ice*, Frankenstein is transformed into Shelley as he races across the stage to where Mary is sitting writing the novel (151). All these instances point to Lochhead's concern with the creation of self and other (150) and the way she is able to draw attention to this through carnivalesque means. The 'monstrosity' of transformation draws attention to the questions of identity that Lochhead wants to consider. Lochhead's use of doubling finds a gothic vehicle in the monsters of *Blood and Ice* and *Dracula* but becomes more mature in *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off* with the switches between maidservants and royalty, harlots, and street urchins of today.

Character transformations are not the only carnival devices Lochhead utilizes in *Mary Queen of Scots*. Aspects of play, reversal, and uncrowning can be found throughout the production. Another instance of Lochhead challenging the footlights is in Act II, scene v 'Mummers and Murderers', where the mummers perform the 'Masque of Salome'. This play within a play mirrors what Bakhtin

calls the 'primary carnivalistic act...the *mock crowning and subsequent decrowning of the carnival king*' (PDP 124). Even the stage directions hint at the carnivalesque atmosphere: 'rude fart-noise on a horn thing and a quick burst of juggle' (52) and '...silly Marx Brothers horn' (53). The play parodies the story of Herod and Salome so that even the subject matter is a carnival inversion of a serious and authority-laden subject. 'Oh good, the Bible!', says La Corbie, 'Ah love a story with a bit of blood and guts in it' (52). Next the mock crown appears which is first offered to Darnley, the man who would be King to Mary's Queen. In rejecting this '*The crown does not fit me!*' Darnley uncrowns himself and Mary becomes Herod, performing yet another transformation. Throughout the masque the atmosphere of carnival intensifies, due in part to the use of Scots:

MUMMER I: So Salome done the seven veils
 --At furst it wis jist fur a laugh--
 She hooched, shimmied and skirled
 Shook, shoogled and birlled
 Till they shouted, 'Get them aff!' (54)

The tempo increases until Darnley, as Salome, another gender reversal, requests his reward in answer to Mary's flustered yet comical: '"Och Good Lord! Lassie, name your reward/ Ask for anything--yon wis great!'" (54). The stabbing of Riccio mirrors the uncrowning of Darnley, and ultimately the beheading of Mary. The murder recalls the principle of Bakhtinian carnivalesque uncrowning: 'Under this ritual act of decrowning a king lies the very core of the carnival sense of the world--*the pathos of shifts and changes, of death and renewal*' (RW 124). This scene also

prefigures the final one, 'Jock Thamson's Bairns', in which the language of the playground combines with other reversals to provide the final carnivalesque effect.

'Jock Thamson's Bairns' begins with stage directions which indicate the fallen stature of the performers:

Through the back curtains, one by one, come all our characters, stripped of all dignity and historicity, transformed to twentieth-century children by the rolling up of trouser legs, addition of a cardigan or pair of socks....and one by one KNOX baptizes them by pouring a cup of dirty water from his pail over their heads, soaking them. They move off slowly and begin miming childhood games. (63)

Reversal for Lochhead, here becomes a matter of history as well as appearance. There is a certain 'dignity' attached to the past and to the traditionally accepted visions of the past which Lochhead is parodying. The appearances of the children as the de-crowned royalty of the past is accentuated by the mock ritual of Knox's baptism by dirty water. This 'ritual' appears as a rite of passage into a world of games and frivolity. The characters are being indoctrinated into a new 'lower' world and begin to assume all the attributes of this region. Language plays a large part here as well as the children begin to take on the swagger and patter of the Glasgow streets: 'My faither's a wino on Glesca green./ He's drank up the Broo that should dress me up braw./ Och will nae bonny laddie come tak' me awa?' (63).... 'Get swanky!'....'Little Orphan Annie!/' Show us your fanny'...'You a Fenian?'...'Are you a Pape?' (64) The heteroglossic language of this scene gives us a flavor of contemporary life in Glasgow while parodying the earlier 'historical' drama which we have been experiencing. The children become the marketplace crowd

and their speech reflects the argot peculiar to that arena as identified by Bakhtin as 'unofficial elements of speech' (RW 187-8).

The action of this scene turns all we know of Mary's history into a game, a children's game which we have been prepared for by the very title of the play and which is prefigured as well in Mary's Tarot card reading and Riccio's coin tossing in Act II, scene i. Prophecy and game-playing are discussed by Bakhtin in terms of Rabelais and the popular-festive forms of the Middle Ages. Included in Bakhtin's description is a discussion of how drama itself was a type of game:

The images of games were seen as a condensed formula of life and of the historic process: fortune, misfortune, gain and loss, crowning and uncrowning. Life was presented as a miniature play (translated into the language of traditional symbols), a play without footlights. At the same time games drew the players out of the bounds of everyday life, liberated them from usual laws and regulations, and replaced established conventions by other lighter conventionalities. This was true not only of cards, dice, and chess but also of sports and children's games (ninepins, ball games). (RW 235)

If we translate this into Lochhead's contemporary vision, we sense that the drama we have been experiencing in *Mary Queen of Scots* has been an elaborate game, a 'play without footlights' which is enacted through other games which are played out in miniature before our eyes on the stage. That what we are fed of the past in terms of history can be 'reduced' to a children's game has implications that challenge the very notions of truth which Bakhtin is concerned with. Anne Varty has pointed out that Lochhead also uses children's games in *Shanghaied* 'as a way of creating a new community that has overcome

prejudice' (161). In terms of *Mary Queen of Scots*, Varty sees the transformed adults as children, 'playing to confirm their prejudices against the outsider' (161). This begs the question is Scotland the outsider, or is Lochhead indicting the Scottish community's vision of history as being closed. Once distance is established between people, spatially as well as temporally, manipulation of the truth is bound to occur. The communal promise of carnival is the relativity of truth which makes the playground antics of youngsters a more human articulation of the past. History is not static and Lochhead, in asserting that this play is not meant to be 'historical' while yet dealing with historical themes, opens the idea of Scottish identity to more fluid notions of process. This is similar to Bakhtin's ideas about the function of games in the Middle Ages:

What has been said explains how it happens that the images of games, prophecies (as parodies), and riddles are combined with folk elements to form an organic whole. Their common denominator is gay time. They all transform the eschatology of the Middle Ages into a "gay monster." They humanize the development of history and prepare a sober and fearless knowledge of this process. (RW 236-7)

The eschatology Bakhtin writes of correlates with a vision of Scotland that is sterile. National stereotypes, as parodied in La Corbie's opening speech to *Mary Queen of Scots*, are not fertile. By inverting imagery and using demotic language Lochhead calls for the renewal of the vitality of Scottish culture. By removing the footlights she admits community into the creation of national and feminine identity.

Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off extends carnival ideas not only through transformations of characters and the process of history. Inscribed in the play, as has been noted many times elsewhere, is the transformative power of language to 're-create' images of women who have had to submit to the control of patriarchal societies (Koren-Deutsch 427). In 'Feminist Nationalism in Scotland: *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*' Ilona S. Koren-Deutsch downplays the doubling of Mary and Elizabeth in the play:

...Lochhead does not present Mary's relationship with Elizabeth in simplistic, antagonistic terms. She focuses instead on the common problems faced by women monarchs ruling patriarchal societies and uses this focus to tie together Mary and Elizabeth rather than set them in opposition. (431)

Here we have an interpretation of the play which frames the carnival response in terms of gender identity, a theme which runs through of all of Lochhead's work. What makes this carnival is again a question of community. As much as Lochhead implicates a significantly 'Scottish' community, especially in the 'Jock Tamson's Bairns' scene, she also frames a community of gender that, in Dale Bauer's terms is 'failed'. *The Mainstream Companion to Scottish*

Literature defines 'Jock Tamson's Bairns' as:

A term commonly used in Scotland to mean "the sons of Adam", and to imply a sense of common equality among the members of the human race. Its origin is obscure but it has been taken to signify "the human race, common humanity, also with less sentimental force, a group of people united by a common sentiment or purpose" (SND). (163)

If we read *Mary Queen of Scots* in a feminist light it is possible to see Lochhead as exposing the ills of a community which continues to be dominated by a male

interpretation of its identity. In this sense, Lochhead establishes Mary and Elizabeth as two thwarted representatives of a community which has never been given a voice. As Jennifer Harvie puts it:

With its "history" highlighted as culturally constructed narrative, *Mary Queen of Scots* again demonstrates how women are culturally constructed, and invites its audience to examine its own practice of narrativising and constructing the present. The final scene suggests how historical patterns of socially constructed gender and religious difference have, for instance, become institutionalised, contributing to "present day" school yard bullying. (145)

A history that establishes 'Jock Tamson's Bairns' as 'sons of Adam' representing equality is fraught with gender discrimination. In the Preface to *Feminist Dialogics: A Theory of Failed Community*, Dale Bauer traces the conflict between communities that calls for carnival response:

At the point of contradiction between the alienated female voice and the interpretive community anxious to incorporate and domesticate that voice in order to silence its threat, we can trace out a feminist dialogics. (x)

Bauer grounds her discussion of feminist dialogics in a vocal field rather than a male-dominated visual arena. She wants to translate the 'gaze' of 'community' into an aural field (4) much in the way that Lochhead's gendered voices interact, whether in the plays or in revue pieces such as *Quelques Fleurs*. Bauer sees this as a necessary aspect of the carnival response, to refigure gender into a definition of community:

Voice can be reconceived as a means of power and activity because it engages dialogue, opening up discourse as fluid. To open up another's discourse is to make it vulnerable to change, to exposure, to the carnival. (4)

Lochhead's gendered voices figure a sense of community in a variety of ways to which carnival lends a helping hand. In her early poems, especially 'Revelation', monstrosity acts as a vehicle for conveying a sense of outrage at a confined manner of interpretation. The speaker of 'Revelation' frames her experience in grotesque terms that speak of the bodily and the open-endedness of what confronts her in her fear: 'he was immense, / his edges merging with the darkness' (DF 124). Is this the bull Bob or an entire system of male cultural appropriation which is being carnivalized in order to come to terms with it? The 'hens' of the next stanza seem to defy the 'tinkling' of the 'Black Mass', the power of a system (Mass as both substance and symbolic 'authoritative' ceremony) which excludes them and which can only be understood through its grotesque inversion. This is a young girl's discovery of the power behind carnival response: 'I had always half-known he existed-- / this antidote and Anti-Christ his anarchy / threatening the eggs'. Lochhead's speaker is witnessing the nature of authority and the *response to that authority*. She is experiencing difference and it is the horror of the monstrosity of discovering difference that causes her hands to shake. A neophyte to response, Lochhead's speaker anticipates the more mature responses which her heroines will articulate in her later poetry and in her revues. The speaker of 'Revelation' has yet to discover that her response is only powerful in terms of community. The balancing of the milk and eggs is a protective gesture

which awaits a voice with which to respond, a voice to be found in later poems such as those to be found in *Dreaming Frankenstein and Collected Poems* (1984) and the revue monologues of *True Confessions and New Cliches* (1985).

Monstrosity forms another carnivalesque response in 'An Abortion' and 'Dreaming Frankenstein'. In 'An Abortion' the speaker witnesses a cow's accidental killing of her own calf and watches as males lead her off 'as if they were policemen/ and she knew exactly what she were guilty of' (11). The monstrosity here is the male-dominated world which would dictate both the official response to the 'abortion' and the guilt attached to it. This poem, like 'Revelation' is one of spectating, voyeurism, dismissal and the nature of shame which has been encoded into the masculine world of the visual. The aborted calf and the notebooks that the speaker abandons to spectate become attached, in umbilical fashion, in the struggle for the life of a new way of responding to codes of language: 'what has come out of her and she is responsible for/...she can not believe it will not/ come alive,/ not if she licks long enough' (11).

In 'Dreaming Frankenstein', Mary Shelley's monster enters her 'utterly' (12), 'dumbing her' (11). The necessity here is the 'getting him out again' which will tax the woman writer to the limits of articulation. The painful 'unstitching' reflects the nature of reclaiming, or simply claiming, a voice with which to create. Getting him, the monster, out results in *Frankenstein*, a gothic

carnival response to the pride and arrogance of male-dominated science.

Lochhead responds through a variety of other carnival techniques to the threat of a failed community of women's voices. Her revues abound in voyeuristic activity translated to an aural arena in which gossip, hearsay, and the overheard conversation participate as means by which women can reclaim voices from the male arena of the spectacle (Bauer xvii). These devices all partake of social aspects that ensure community through feminist dialogics. We see the Lochhead of 'Revelation' as the poet first investigating the power of a single voice as the means of responding to authority. With *Mary Queen of Scots* the poet has become dramatist with the power of translating not simply language but voice into something visually palpable. By reading Lochhead through the Bakhtinian lens we are afforded an insight into the dynamics by which communities fail and become re-articulated. It is the knowledge of the necessity for this constant process which Bakhtin stresses and which Lochhead so effectively creates through her carnival circus of bulls, monsters, queens, and bairns.

All of the writers we have been dealing with in this chapter are concerned with forms of truth and how that truth comes to be embodied in notions of community. Each of the writers defies a sense of sterile identity by subverting language as well as the histories that language constructs. On the surface it may seem as if 'received pronunciation' and 'Poetry' (with a capital 'P') are the

targets of their carnivalesque verse and drama. This interpretation relies heavily on an awareness of the cultural differences that exist between Scotland and England and the codes that have been established over time that force regional dialect into a hierarchical chain. Breaking this chain is definitely one concern of the writers with whom we have been dealing in this chapter, as well as in the fiction of James Kelman and Alasdair Gray. However, as we will now see as we turn to the fictions of Muriel Spark, ideas of community can be construed as larger than language itself (while yet reliant upon it) and are closely aligned to philosophies of truth that explore the role of interpretation in the formation of culture. This is important from a Bakhtinian perspective since Bakhtin describes communities as voices that are not simply geographically or linguistically situated, but which rely on any number of additional factors to create a dialogic and constantly changing identity.

Chapter VI

Cultural Paradox and Carnival Betrayal in the Novels of Muriel Spark

As we have seen in previous chapters, defining what constitutes a community has been a significant concern in recent Scottish literature. The fantastical and metatextual Scotlands of Alasdair Gray, the Glasgows represented by James Kelman, Tom Leonard and Edwin Morgan, and the historical and gendered communities of Liz Lochhead all portray an abiding regard for the realization that a variety of Scotlands co-exist in what might be termed a community of communities. What all of these writers have in common, to a greater or lesser extent, is a body of work which grounds them in a Scottish literary tradition. With the exception of some of the work of Edwin Morgan and possibly some of the work of Lochhead, these writers choose subjects or language that draws attention to specifically Scottish characteristics. Inherent in this idea of 'Scottishness' are the paradoxical considerations crudely fashioned as identity by Gregory Smith discussed in the first chapter. The contemporary response to literary forbears such as Burns, Hogg, Scott, and Stevenson, tempered by Smith's critical analysis and MacDiarmid's poetry, is one which seeks to redefine paradox in more fruitful and dynamic terms. Through our analysis of these writers by way of Bakhtinian theory we

have seen both how productive and how limiting this vision of contradiction can be.

It may be fruitful now, in conclusion, to consider a writer who 'contains multitudes' and yet is not often linked with a sense of 'Scottishness'. Unlike most of the writers whose work has been discussed, Muriel Spark rarely provides the reader with a consciousness of an original locality out of which she writes. In other words, her fictions seldom lead the reader back to her Scottish roots in any conscious sense. She considers herself an exile 'moving from exile into exile' (*Critical Essays* 21). She leaves no stylistic or plot-oriented markers (with the exception, perhaps, of those to be found in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* or *Symposium*) by which to trace her back to Edinburgh or Scotland. But such simplistic detective-work is anathema to Bakhtinian investigation. Bakhtin arranges his histories and analyses of the novel neither by way of simplistic or essentialist discussions of nationality, nor by way of narrow cultural demarcations. When he discusses the novels of Dostoevsky, the reader does not sense in any way that Dostoevsky's style was determined solely by his 'Russian-ness'. While Bakhtin might view nationality as one important voice in literary production, he would not endorse it as the definitive and final factor in determining cultural identity. As we have seen from our discussion of the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', there are ways of restricting a sense of what constitutes 'Scottishness'. What Bakhtin offers as a healthy blueprint

for nationality is an openness that allows other cultures to partake of and become part of the culture of Scotland.

To undertake a discussion of Muriel Spark's work it is necessary to both dismiss anything as limiting as a notion of her 'Scottishness' while recognizing as well the cultural psychology that goes some way towards defining her playful paradoxes. It is helpful to invoke Gregory Smith again, in this the final chapter, in order to show how his descriptions of the characteristics of a Scottish literary tradition continue towards the middle and later parts of this century and how the nature of the word 'paradox' has radically changed in meaning, largely through the efforts of critical thinkers such as Bakhtin. We can approach this idea of Scottishness in terms of Spark first through a consideration of her communities of voices, and then by taking a look at her carnivalesque treatment of religion and textual authority. First, however, it is helpful to take a brief look at a sample of the critical work on Spark that has been done in the past.

Francis Russell Hart's *The Scottish Novel from Smollett to Spark* (1978) considers the question of how Spark can be seen as a 'Scottish' novelist. He catalogues her works as somehow transcending questions of place by peopling her fictions with 'the exiled protagonist who cannot and will not belong there' (297). In *Comedy and the Woman Writer: Woolf, Spark, and Feminism* (1983), Judy Little concentrates on the 'inversions' present in Spark's comedies that in some ways signal a feminist revolt against societal norms. Little also makes some use of the

festivities that form the background of the 'comedies' and she concludes by pointing to the way in which Spark's fiction 'guarantees' 'possibility' 'by an absolute, eternal openness that judges and shocks any human effort at easy closure' (187).

Primary among the works of criticism that deal with Spark's fiction is *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision* (1984), edited by Alan Bold. This collection of wide-ranging essays investigates the prevalent themes in Spark's fiction such as the demonic characters who populate her texts, possible religious influences, a study of her satirical art and her role as a 'Scottish' writer, to name a few. *Ten Modern Scottish Novelists* (1984), by Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, concentrates on *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*. Spark also has a chapter devoted to her work (by Valerie Shaw) in Volume 4 of the *History of Scottish Literature* (1987). In *Iris Murdoch, Muriel Spark, and John Fowles: Didactic Demons in Modern Fiction* (1988), Richard Kane examines Spark's work in terms of the demons who nonetheless perform moral instruction on the communities in which they are involved. Kane concentrates on Dougal Douglas from *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* and the diabolical servants of *Not to Disturb*. In the afterword Kane says, referring to Spark, Murdoch, and Fowles:

All three authors try to show that the truly "evil eye" is caused by neurotic self-absorption that blurs the vision and prevents the individual from seeing the otherness of people who are not himself. (152)

Vocation and Identity in the Fiction of Muriel Spark (1990), by Rodney Stenning Edgecombe, likens Spark's novels to 'expanded epigrams, with all the specious

finality or, conversely, the elegant incompleteness that characterizes the form'(2). As we shall see, it is this very incompleteness that, in the final analysis, opens Spark's works to Bakhtinian readings. Finally, Ian Rankin in 'The Deliberate Cunning of Muriel Spark', which appears in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies* (1993), detects in Spark's work, and what she calls for in art, a deliberate attempt to undermine 'what is wrong'(42).

The only Bakhtinian study of Spark is "'Poetry Deleted," Parody Added: Watergate, Spark's Style, and Bakhtin's Stylistics'(1993), by Sheryl Stevenson in which she explores the nature of language in Spark's fiction and the ambivalence of truth. I will address this work later in the chapter. We can see, however, from those works that do not directly approach Spark from a Bakhtinian perspective that the authors are dealing with themes such as closure, inversion, and otherness that are very much a part of the world of Bakhtinian theory. Before examining these themes and how they are all tied together by an idea of community, it may be fruitful to define the word 'carnival' as it will be used in this chapter.

The work of Muriel Spark both embraces and defies Bakhtinian carnival analysis in a manner which raises important questions about identity and how closely the idea of identity has come to be aligned with modes of cultural discourse. Reading Spark's fiction provides us with a revised sense of Bakhtinian carnival since, for the most part, it does not partake of the wilder, medieval excesses that Bakhtin outlines in *Rabelais and His World*.

On the contrary, Spark's response to the world that surrounds her is closer to the carnival outlined by Bakhtin in his later work on Dostoevsky:

The combination of carnivalization with the adventure plot and with pressing social themes of the day was found by Dostoevsky in the social-adventure novels of the nineteenth century, primarily in Frédéric Soulié and Eugène Sue (also somewhat in Dumas *fils* and in Paul de Kock). Carnivalization in these authors is of a more external sort: it is manifested in the plot, in external carnivalistic antitheses and contrasts, in abrupt changes of fate, in mystifications, and so on. A deep and free carnival sense of the world is almost entirely absent. The most essential feature in these novels is an application of carnivalization to the portrayal of contemporary reality and contemporary *everyday life*; everyday life is drawn into the carnivalized action of the plot; the ordinary and constant is combined with the extraordinary and changeable. (*PDP* 158)

Much of Spark's work is illustrative of Bakhtin's ideas of 'reduced laughter', where 'we see, as it were, the track left by laughter in the structure of represented reality, but the laughter itself we do not hear' (164). This chapter will explore the ways in which this more 'considered' approach to carnival works as a function of community formation and disintegration rather than as a gauge of festive response to forms of authority. As we shall see, however, often the two realms of carnival become entwined and indistinguishable since Spark often does take part in the Rabelaisian excesses we have examined in the works of writers such as Burns and Gray.

We are first drawn in Spark's works to recognizing 'symptoms' of community. Where Lochhead was adept at pinpointing the ways in which notions of gendered communities and defined groups sterilize history, Spark provides intricate exposés of communities in the act of

formation through common interest and ritual as well as deterioration through acts of rumor, gossip and betrayal. In both conditions community is dependent upon verbal activity and the dialogic relationships between and among voices. In her first novel, *The Comforters* (1957), Spark introduces the themes that will play such an active role in all of her fiction. Here we see both official and unofficial communities in tension with each other. One of many official communities is represented by Laurence Manders, Caroline Rose, Helena Manders and her husband Sir Edwin Manders. The unofficial community, the diamond smuggling ring is represented by Laurence's grandmother, Louisa Jepp, and the other co-conspirators, Baron Stock, the Hogarths and Mr. Webster. There is also a third, unofficial, community which is composed of the 'diabolical' Georgina Hogg and her various manifestations but also includes the voices that Caroline hears which are writing a novel about her. On a carnivalesque level, we have here the foundations for many of Spark's later novelistic developments in which an 'approved' community is opposed to any number of surreptitious subgroups. Most notable of these opposition groups are the seance community of *The Bachelors* (1960), the Brodie set of *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961), the Abbess's cohorts in *The Abbess of Crewe* (1974), the servants in *Not to Disturb* (1971), the cult of Diana in *The Takeover* (1976), the ghosts of *The Hothouse by the East River* (1973), the biographers of *Loitering with Intent* (1981), the practitioners of radionics in *A Far Cry from Kensington*

(1988), and the diabolical Margaret Murchie and her grandfather in *Symposium* (1991). Each of these groups is a legitimate opposition group because it is composed of voices which interact both within the established community of opposition and within the official community which it opposes. In addition to these readily definable groups which are attempting to subvert authority, there exist communities which gather together for mutual support and as a reaction to the opposition groups. These can be most readily identified as the elderly telephone victims of *Memento Mori* (1959) and the Kensington roominghouse confederacies of *The Girls of Slender Means* (1963) and *A Far Cry from Kensington*. As can be seen by the sheer variety and quantity of communities that Spark presents, her concern is to muddle the definitions of what constitutes a community and to make these designations less reliable, especially in terms of moral codes. Communities of opposition suffer the same growing and dying pains as those which are in a position of legitimacy. Often, Spark's diabolical groups are more vital than the ones they oppose. What Spark highlights, however, is the interdependence of these groups which constitute society. In Bakhtinian terms, these conspiratorial opposition groups provide the response to the official communities that bear more public recognition. Spark exposes the private unofficial groups to greater public scrutiny and shows them to be less of something to be denied or defied and more acceptable, viable, and indeed necessary in terms of society. More

importantly, however, Spark asks the reader to decide which communities are authorized and which are oppositional. In doing this she questions the possibility of constructing 'a' community identity through traditional means. Spark's communities are dialogic in that they are created through the interaction of a number of fictional voices. These voices are never stable or sterile but in constant flux and in tension with opposing voices, denying communal identity a solid ground in which to become rooted. In many ways Spark's project is to show how 'rooted' communities become stagnant entities. The disruption of communities appears to be the object of many of her fictions and she uses carnivalesque techniques to expose and disturb complacent groupings. We see this first in *The Comforters*, where Caroline Rose must come to terms with her budding Catholicism which is being disturbed by voices writing her into a novel. However, this primary disruption is mirrored as well in the activities of the smuggling ring and the investigations of Laurence Manders into his grandmother's affairs. Caroline considers many definitions of community during her aural 'affliction':

...Caroline remembered that the popular meaning of 'retreat' in religious circles was an organized affair, not a private retiring from customary activities, so as to possess one's soul in peace.
(32)

Caroline is drawing a distinction here by juxtaposing the traditional notions of a religious gathering with what she wants to accomplish through individual means. Caroline considers this again a few pages later:

She began to reflect that Mrs Hogg could easily become an obsession, the demon of that carnal

hypocrisy which struck her mind whenever she came across a gathering of Catholics or Jews engaged in their morbid communal pleasures. (40)

These ideas of religious communality recur in Spark's work, especially in such works as *The Abbess of Crewe* and *The Takeover*. In *The Abbess of Crewe* the essence of religious community is put forth by the Abbess in her letter to Rome explaining the activities of the convent:

That electronic surveillance (even if a convent were one day to practise it) does not differ from any other type of watchfulness, the which is a necessity of a Religious Community....(26)

Here the requirements of one type of community are expostulated upon. Spark's heroines codify what are perceived to be the requirements of community (as will be seen especially in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*) then disrupt them through a variety of devices, most notably betrayal. As we will see, betrayal becomes the most useful carnivalesque device available to the Spark protagonist.

In *The Takeover*, the excesses of religious community are dealt with in great detail. Hubert Mallindaine's 'religious' community seeks to re-establish the pagan roots of Christianity at his villa at Nemi. Here, the community is established by recourse to what is seen to be the 'charismatic' activities of the orthodox church. The wild, orgiastic events of Hubert's gathering mirror the descriptions, taken from press cuttings, of what takes place at a Charismatic Movement meeting where 'Cardinals, bishops meet, dance in Rome' (149). Hubert's later attempts at invigorating his own Christian/paganistic congregation end in farce as a free-for-all breaks out

among the celebrants resulting in Hubert's face being torn apart by a would-be follower's fingernails.

The significance of these Sparkian religious communities is that they are playing with traditional notions of community formation in different ways. Caroline Rose, much like Muriel Spark herself, is coming to terms with an idea of a communal religion that accommodates a personal faith. She shows them to be not incompatible although she never blurs the lines between the two. The convent at Crewe exhibits the tensions between spiritual and physical love and parodies their incompatibility (although playing at the same time with the events surrounding the Watergate crisis) while Hubert Mallindaine's cult is formed from an interest in reviving the pagan roots of an accepted religion. The role of community in Spark's fictions is to expose all of these religious tensions to greater scrutiny in order to discover points of interdependence and, in Bakhtinian terminology, transgression. This is accomplished by means of carnival uncrownings in the form of alternative religions and modes of faith. By imposing a fictional religious theme onto an historical political framework, as happens in *The Abbess of Crewe*, Spark plays with the definitions of fiction, religion, politics, and history. She opens definitions to greater possibility by rubbing ideologies against one another. Parody becomes a form of carnival activity in Spark's novels. Bakhtin, lamenting the loss of the ancient style of parody such as Homer provides writes:

It was not, after all, the heroes who were parodied, nor the Trojan War and its participants; what was parodied was only its epic heroization. The genre itself, the style, the language are all put in cheerfully irreverent quotation marks, and they are perceived against a backdrop of contradictory reality that cannot be confined within their narrow frames. (FPND 55-6)

Such is the type of parody represented by Spark's fiction which asks the reader to look beyond the plot to the social conventions which are being uncrowned and reversed. Forms of worship and faith are not privileged in Spark's works. By illuminating the differences between and within religions, Spark, in a very Bakhtinian sense, expands upon notions of truth and shows them to be always short of the mark.

An effective way in which Spark confronts religious orthodoxy through carnivalesque decrowning is through the idea of diabolism. Spark takes this devil-worshipping idea a step further, however, and turns it into a way of confronting many aspects of life in addition to religion. What she perhaps questions in doing so is the strictly established divisions between spiritual and intellectual ways of being. Readers of Bakhtin's ideas on carnival will be familiar with his concern with the *diableries* of the Middle Ages :

...thus though a part of the mystery, the diablerie was related to carnival. It crossed the footlights to merge with the life of the marketplace and enjoyed similar privileges of freedom (RW 267)

The characteristics of the mystery devil who participates in the diablerie are reminiscent of the 'devils' which populate Spark's novels, notably Baron Stock of *The*

Comforters, Dougal Douglas of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* (1960) and Patrick Seton of *The Bachelors*:

...the mystery devil is not only an extra-official figure. He is also an ambivalent image, like the fool and the clown, representing the destroying and renewing force of the material bodily lower stratum. The devil usually appeared in the mystery as a carnivalesque character. (266-67)

In each of these novels, the devil-figures serve to subvert and redefine the communities in which they live. Where the Baron and Patrick Seton are involved in an occult, and therefore more religiously orientated subversion, Dougal Douglas is unconnected with any organized diablerie and his devilish effect on the community of Peckham Rye is therefore more intensely felt since he has no allegiance to any immediately recognizable source of unorthodoxy. The diabolical effectiveness of Dougal lies in his mysterious nature and in the way he presents himself to his friends and colleagues. Dougal has a variety of ways of making himself 'devilish'. One method of achieving this, like Hogg's Gil-Martin, is through his chameleon nature of interaction with others.¹ He can change his identity as required to suit the situation as he does in his interview with Mr. Druce for a position at Meadows, Meade & Grindley:

'You'll find the world of Industry a tough one,' Mr. Druce said.

Dougal changed his shape and became a professor. He leaned one elbow over the back of his chair and reflected kindly upon Mr. Druce....

Dougal leaned forward and became a television interviewer. Mr. Druce stopped walking and looked at him in wonder.

¹ A detailed comparison of *The Ballad of Peckham Rye* with *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* can be found in Valerie Shaw's chapter on Muriel Spark in Volume 4 of *The History of Scottish Literature*, pp. 282-83.

'Tell me,' coaxed Dougal, 'can you give me some rough idea of my duties?' (16)

Dougal later becomes a 'confessor in his box' (64), 'a divorce judge suspending judgement' (65), and 'an exhausted medium of the spiritualist persuasion' (67). The fluid nature of Dougal's identity gives him an advantage with the people of Peckham Rye as he seems to offer them what they need at the moment to complete their own identities. At the same time, however, he retains an identity which others describe as devilish:

'Mr. Weedon dropped his head on his hands. "It may surprise you," he said, "coming from me. But it's my belief that Dougal Douglas is a diabolical agent, if not in fact the Devil."' (81) The diabolism of Dougal lies less in any belief but in the way he shakes up the community of Peckham Rye and jars it out of its complacency. Dougal represents carnival incarnate and he is aware of the possibilities available on both sides of the coin:

'I have powers of exorcism,' Dougal said,
'that's all.'
'What's that?'
'The ability to drive devils out of people.'
'I thought you said you were a devil yourself.'
'The two states are not incompatible....' (102)

Dougal is aware that the 'devils' he drives out of others are the fixed perceptions of their own identities. He drives others into fits, a condition similar to being possessed by the devil, but he is also capable of making people laugh and thus relieve the confining limitations of what society expects. On another level, Dougal is represented as being a grotesque character. He is depicted with lumps and horns, and often dances. Dougal is capable

of inducing the carnival laughter which this community craves:

She let him take her through the cemetery, eventually, and even pointed out to him the tower of the crematorium when it came into sight. Dougal posed like an angel on a grave which had only an insignificant headstone. He posed like an angel-devil, with his hump shoulder and gleaming smile, and his fingers of each hand widespread against the sky. She looked startled. Then she laughed. (30)

This passage is laden with carnivalesque significance. The cemetery and crematorium represent death, but Dougal, by assuming his pose as angel-devil and creating laughter is able to charge the scene with a sense of renewal. Dougal enacts the grotesque, gargoyle-like defiance of the seriousness of death, thereby highlighting the rejuvenating possibilities inherent in death. Dougal's own stance, with his hands open to the sky brings an upward movement to the scene which is reflected in the rising tower of the crematorium. Death both lowers and raises as well.

Dougal dances frequently in the novel, most notably in Findlater's Ballroom where he becomes the main attraction by using the lid of a dustbin as a tom-tom (59-60). Here again he enacts a role-playing performance which defies the limitations of identity:

...he performed a Zulu dance with the lid for a shield...Next, he sprang up and with the lid on his head was a Chinese coolie eating melancholy rice. He was an ardent cyclist, crouched over handlebars and pedalling uphill with the lid between his knees. He was an old woman with an umbrella; he stood on the upturned edges of the lid and speared fish from his rocking canoe; he was the man at the wheel of a racing car; he did many things with the lid before he finally propped the dust-bin lid up on his high shoulder, beating his cymbal rhythmically with his hand while with the other hand he limply conducted an

invisible band, being, with long blank face, the band-leader. (60)

This scene is preceded by another in which Dougal describes a dream sequence he has had which in effect carnivalizes the people of Peckham Rye and especially those who work in the factories that figure so prominently in the town. It is interesting to quote this passage at length as well since it again illustrates Dougal's position as exorciser and 'choreographer' of carnival:

"I have a dream at nights," Dougal said, pouring the wine, "of girls in factories doing a dance with only the movements of their breasts, bottoms, and arms as they sort, stack, pack, check, cone-wind, gum, uptwist, assemble, seam, and set. I see the Devil in the guise of a chap from Cambridge who does motion-study, and he's the choreographer. He sings a song that goes, 'We study in detail the movements requisite for any given task and we work out the simplest pattern of movement involving the least loss of energy and time.' While he sings this song, the girls are waggling and winding, like this--" and Dougal waggled his body and wove his arms intricately. "Like Indian dancing, you know," he said.

"And," said Dougal, "of course this choreographer is a projection of me. I was at the University of Edinburgh myself, but in the dream I'm the Devil and Cambridge." (50)

There is a sense of the Bakhtinian removal of footlights in this passage when taken in conjunction with Dougal's actual dance at the club. Dougal wishes to orchestrate a defiance of authority (and this is seen as well in his constant injunction to the employees he works with to take time off of work) through dance. The actors and actresses he directs perform the functions of their official jobs but by means of the unofficial dance which Dougal oversees. Dougal represents the perfect anti-boss of industry who will raise profitability by encouraging absenteeism and dancing.

Dougal also possesses a physique, the grotesqueness of which emphasizes his devilish nature:

"Feel these little bumps up here." Dougal guided Humphrey's hand among his curls at each side. "I had it done by a plastic surgeon," Dougal said.

"What?"

"He did an operation and took away the two horns. They had to shave my head in the nursing home before the operation. It took a long time for my hair to grow again."

Humphrey smiled and felt again among Dougal's curls.

"A couple of cysts," he said. "I've got one myself at the back of my head. Feel it."

Dougal touched the bump like a connoisseur.

"You supposed to be the Devil, then?" Humphrey asked.

"No, oh, no, I'm only supposed to be one of the wicked spirits that wander through the world for the ruin of souls." (77)

Dougal's absent horns are later commented upon by Mr. Weedon: 'I felt those bumps with these very hands. Have you looked, have you ever properly looked at his eyes? That shoulder--' (82). These descriptions correlate with Bakhtin's definitions of the grotesque image of the body: 'It [the grotesque] is looking for that which protrudes from the body, all that seeks to go out beyond the body's confines' (RW 316). Dougal's 'horns' point to the limitless nature of what he stands for. His is not to be a closed and contained body, but rather one of infinite possibility, much like the body of the community itself must be if it is going to survive.

Diabolical figures and demons appear frequently throughout Spark's fiction in one form or another (another example being Margaret Murchie and her devilish grandfather in *Symposium*). Frequently a character remarks upon feeling a bit devilish or possessed of a demon as in *Loitering with Intent* where Fleur Talbot states: '...I was

aware of a *daemon* inside me that rejoiced in seeing people as they were...' (2). But Dougal Douglas must be considered to be Spark's foremost 'devil'.

It is now necessary to look at more examples from Spark's novels that illuminate ways in which communities are endlessly formed and destroyed. In a more secular sense, community activity can be traced in the various societies, foundations, and informal groups which are established within Spark stories. Noteworthy among these are the deadly telephone call recipients of *Memento Mori*, the Brodie set in *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, the roominghouse companions of *The Girls of Slender Means*, the plotting staff of *Not to Disturb*, the nuns of *The Abbess of Crewe*, and the Autobiographical Association of *Loitering With Intent*. In a sense, Spark's communities represent cultures in microcosm.² Individuals within these cultures speak the same language and have voices which identify them as members of the groups they belong to. It is very difficult for the participants in these communities to imagine themselves as part of another community and many times this leads to the destruction of the community itself. In *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Sandy finds it difficult to imagine being part of another cultural identification:

They were dark as anything and all marching in the straightest of files, with their hands raised at the same angle, while Mussolini stood on a platform like a gym teacher or a Guides mistress and watched them.

² Gerald F. Manning notes that the nursing home setting in *Memento Mori* represents a microcosm in which Spark 'control(s) and dramatize(s) human behaviour and ideals'. See 'Sunsets and Sunrises: Nursing Home as Microcosm in *Memento Mori* and *Mr. Scobie's Riddle*', *Ariel* 18 (2), April, 1987, p. 28.

Mussolini had put an end to unemployment with his fascisti and there was no litter in the streets. It occurred to Sandy, there at the end of the Middle Meadow Walk, that the Brodie set was Miss Brodie's fascisti, not to the naked eye, marching along, but all knit together for her need and in another way, marching along. That was all right, but it seemed, too, that Miss Brodie's disapproval of the Girl Guides had jealousy in it, there was an inconsistency, a fault. Perhaps the Guides were too much of a rival fascisti, and Miss Brodie could not bear it. Sandy thought she might see about joining the Brownies. Then the group-fright seized her again, and it was necessary to put the idea aside, because she loved Miss Brodie. (31-2)

Sandy is portraying the early signs of disillusionment with Miss Brodie and her restrictive vision of the world. In doing so, she is becoming 'demonized' herself. Spark's fictional world admits of two sorts of demons, those who obviously stand in opposition to orthodoxy through their association with alternative religions and cults and those who defy a stagnant sense of community. Sandy is one of the latter as she experiences a Bakhtinian revelation about community formation and the interrelationships among communities that ensures their vitality:

And many times throughout her life Sandy knew with a shock, when speaking to people whose childhood had been in Edinburgh, that there were other people's Edinburghs quite different from hers, and with which she held only the names of districts and streets and monuments in common. Similarly, there were other people's nineteen-thirties. So that, in her middle age, when she was at last allowed all those visitors to the convent--so many visitors being against the Rule, but a special dispensation was enforced on Sandy because of the Treatise--when a man said, 'I must have been at school in Edinburgh at the same time as you, Sister Helena,' Sandy who was now some years Sister Helena of the Transfiguration, clutched the bars of the grille as was her way, and peered at him through her little faint eyes and asked him to describe his schooldays and his school, and the Edinburgh he had known. And it turned out, once more, that his was a different Edinburgh from Sandy's. (33-4)

There is a contrast here between Sandy's perceptions of the varieties of Edinburghs available and the restricted and confined nature of Sister Helena. Just as there are many Edinburghs there are many Sandy's, one of which is Sister Helena who is paying for her betrayal. Sandy's 'epiphany' in this novel is the realization of the fluid nature of community that allows her to perceive the world as being larger than even the very liberal vision afforded her by Jean Brodie. This vision becomes the impetus behind Sandy's betrayal.

In Spark's works the demon often acts as betrayer, but the betrayer can also be seen as the diabolical agent of carnival who seeks to upset hierarchical power and establish a condition of disequilibrium. The betrayals of Spark's fictions are, in effect, the carnivalesque responses to symptoms of community inflexibility.

The corrupting influences of power made rigid are seen by Spark and her heroines such as Sandy to be strangling the ability of the community to be a living organism. Miss Brodie appeals to her set because she represents a carnival response to the educational authorities which the school children expect to encounter. Her techniques of teaching are novel and violently opposed to the accepted teaching methods, so much so that when Sandy sees Miss Brodie falling prey to the same sorts of intellectual confinements inherent in the system of education which she has hitherto resisted so successfully, she must step outside of her communal cocoon and betray her. Sandy's act of betrayal is in effect a response to

the new hierarchies and modes of restraint and censorship being imposed by Miss Brodie. Sandy learns the benefits of difference from Miss Brodie, but she must turn against her teacher in order to ensure that the value of her tutelage has been secured. Even before her final betrayal, Sandy delights in the knowledge that Miss Brodie is prone to reaching erroneous conclusions about her set:

Sandy felt warmly towards Miss Brodie at those times when she saw how she was misled in her idea of Rose. It was then that Miss Brodie looked beautiful and fragile, just as dark heavy Edinburgh itself could suddenly be changed into a floating city when the light was a special pearly white and fell upon one of the gracefully fashioned streets. In the same way Miss Brodie's masterful features became clear and sweet to Sandy when viewed in the curious light of the woman's folly, and she never felt more affection for her in her later years than when she thought upon Miss Brodie as silly. (111)

Sandy values those moments in her relationship with Miss Brodie when she is able to perceive the cracks in her authority. As this passage illustrates, such moments tend to endear her more to Sandy than to detract from Miss Brodie's image. Just as there are many Edinburghs for many people, so too are there many sides to people, a serious and a comic, and Sandy comes to realize the interdependence these sides possess just as she comes to realize the importance of many Edinburghs coexisting and helping each other towards a greater living identity. This Bakhtinian idea of transgression holds great cultural importance which we will investigate towards the end of this chapter. It is important to note here, though, that just as Dougal Douglas represents the prime example of a Sparkian devil who infiltrates a community and carnivalizes it into a more fluid entity, Sandy represents

the quintessential Sparkian 'demonic' betrayer-from-within who is brought towards an understanding of how authority can disguise itself as liberty and who realizes the necessity of creating a constant challenge to that process. Sandy, however, is not the only betrayer in Spark's carnival who recognizes the need to rock the communal boat. We see further examples in *Memento Mori* and *Loitering with Intent*.

In *Memento Mori*, Jean Taylor represents the prime betrayer around whom a number of sub-betrayals and intrigues are enacted. Communities are represented on a number of levels in this novel, the most significant one being the select group which receives the telephone calls reminding the listeners that they must die. Another community is represented by the inhabitants of a ward in the nursing home. These communities each possess voices which establish them as individual cohesive units. The telephone group has the voice of death in common and many of them have known each other for many years. The nursing home coterie each share the soubriquet 'Granny' and they share the deep distrust and revulsion of Sister Burstead. In many ways these two groups represent opposites. The nursing home inhabitants face death every day and they attempt to make light of their ailments. They consult the horoscope regularly to see how daily events have been predicted. The recipients of the phone calls are, with the exception of Charmian and perhaps Alec Warner, all concerned with tracking down the identity of the caller. In this sense they are all concerned with finding

definitive answers to the questions that face them.

Charmian's lightheartedness about the situation as seen in her response to the phone call she receives indicates an air of playfulness:

"Is that Mrs Colston?"

"Yes, speaking."

"Charmian Piper--that's right, isn't it?"

"Yes. Are you a reporter?"

"Remember," he said, "you must die."

"Oh, as to that," she said, "for the past thirty years and more I have thought of it from time to time. My memory is failing in certain respects. I am gone eighty-six. But somehow I do not forget my death, whenever that will be."

"Delighted to hear it," he said. "Good-bye for now." (127)

Faced with the authority of death, Charmian responds to the challenge with her own brand of defiance which makes her, in a way, a betrayer of her fellow phone call listeners. In her own fashion, Charmian uncrowns the severity of death by responding honestly to the question put to her rather than attempting to discover the true identity of the caller or making the protestations which are typical of the other phone call recipients. She goes on to reinforce this impression by slowly making herself a pot of tea and transporting it across the house to the fireplace (127-9), a feat which she has obviously not been allowed to perform for quite some time. It is as if her response to the authority of death has re-instilled her with the sense of life and vitality that she was accustomed to until the forces of another authority (that of her husband Godfrey and the deceptive Mrs. Pettigrew) deprived her of her freedom.

This story of defying authority culminates in Jean Taylor's betrayal of Charmian, an event which, in turn,

serves to liberate her husband Godfrey from the guilt and fear he feels about revealing his own infidelities to his wife. In betraying Charmian, Jean Taylor, like Charmian herself, seems to be transgressing codes of accepted community behavior. As Charmian responds to Death, Jean responds to an authority of deception which restricts freedom of movement and communication within her community. Jean Taylor bridges communities as she inhabits both the world of the nursing home and that of the phone-call recipients (although she receives no call herself). By empowering Alec Warner to tell Godfrey about Charmian's affair with Guy Leet, Jean Taylor opens up another route to new community formation. Mrs. Pettigrew is removed from the community by Jean's actions and new relationships are forged. The community grows in different ways because a form of harmful loyalty has been defeated.

Another novel in which betrayal figures as a liberating, carnival response to an oppressive communal situation is *Loitering With Intent*. Here, the heroine Fleur Talbot uncrowns the Autobiographical Association and, more particularly, its leader Sir Quentin Oliver who she was hired to assist.

The relationship between fiction and 'reality' provides the background for this semi-autobiographical novel (*Curriculum Vitae* 184). Fleur, who has been hired to write the memoirs of the members of the Autobiographical Association, is also writing a novel titled *Warrender Chase*. When the two worlds of biography and fiction collide there is a battle for authority in which the two

become inextricably entwined. Fleur is the 'author' of this textual betrayal and she assumes her 'authority' through the denial of the very principles which have been established to divide and identify the genres of biography and fiction. As Fleur writes her novel she finds the events in the 'real' world of the Autobiographical Association mirroring the fiction she manufactures in her novel.

There are a variety of carnival games being played in this novel. On the one hand, the traditional notions of constructing a *roman-a-clef* are thwarted since the fictional events often happen before those in reality (or history). Biographical writing is complicated as well since Fleur finds it useful to fabricate events in Association members' lives which spice up their memoirs. These fictive accounts actually appeal to the members, for the most part, so much so that they often come to believe that the stories are true. In this sense, Fleur authors the lives of the members and textual authority reverts to a power of controlling actual events. But it is seen in the course of the novel that both sorts of control can be fundamentally detrimental to the lives of those who fall under their sway. Association members begin to fall too heavily under the influence of Sir Quentin and his 'autobiographical' aims while the nature of Fleur's fictional authority threatens the association as well since what she writes inevitably comes 'true', challenging the notion of autobiography. Fleur suspects that the detrimental nature of authority lies in a too rigid

construction of truth which she hints at in terms of how she perceives Sir Quentin's meddling with the memoirs:

Now these autobiographies were out of my hands; but I didn't care; they were dreary, one and all.

I was sure that nothing had happened in their lives and equally sure that Sir Quentin was pumping something artificial into their real lives instead of on paper. Presented fictionally, one could have done something authentic with that poor material. But the inducing them to express themselves in life resulted in falsity.

What is truth? I could have realized these people with my fun and games with their life-stories, while Sir Quentin was destroying them with his needling after frankness. When people say that nothing happens in their lives I believe them. But you must understand that everything happens to an artist; time is always redeemed, nothing is lost and wonders never cease. (78)

Fleur is disclaiming a distinction between truth and fiction in this passage and Spark seems to be questioning the validity of the difference herself by inserting events from her own past into the novel. As far as the relationship between the author (Fleur) and her characters (they may be either the 'fictional' ones of *Warrender Chase* or the 'real-life' members of the Association) Fleur comes close to describing the 'responsibility' of the author in creating a variety of consciousnesses as expressed by Bakhtin in his discussion of the polyphonic novel found in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*:

Here it is again appropriate to emphasize the positive and active quality of the new authorial position in a polyphonic novel....The consciousness of the creator of a polyphonic novel is constantly and everywhere present in the novel, and is active in it to the highest degree. But the function of this consciousness and the forms of its activity are different than in the monologic novel: the author's consciousness does not transform others' consciousnesses (that is, the consciousnesses of the characters) into objects, and does not give them secondhand and finalizing definitions. Alongside and in front of itself it senses others' equally valid consciousnesses, just as infinite and open-ended as

itself. It reflects and re-creates not a world of objects, but precisely these other consciousnesses with their worlds, re-creates them in their authentic unfinalizability (which is, after all, their essence). (67-8)

Such is the position Fleur takes with regard to the biographies of the Association members which she carefully constructs to fit (and in many cases fulfill) a sense of validity. Yet Fleur does not finalize her creations, she leaves them subject to the approval of the characters themselves and in this way delegates some of her authorial power to the 'heroes' she propagates through her writing.

On the one hand it can be said that Sir Quentin betrays Fleur by stealing her manuscript of *Warrender Chase*. However, Fleur betrays the strict guidelines of style and genre by imposing 'history' on 'fiction' and vice versa. Fleur's is a textual betrayal that leads to greater possibilities for art and the artist. Fleur herself offers up snippets of literary theory in defense of her novelistic approach to life and the events that find themselves dependent on art for articulation:

Without a mythology, a novel is nothing. The true novelist, one who understands the work as a continuous poem, is a myth-maker, and the wonder of the art resides in the endless different ways of telling a story, and the methods are mythological by nature. (95)

As events in *Loitering* unfold it becomes clear that life is dependent on a mythology as well since the myth Fleur weaves is stolen by Sir Quentin with disastrous results for the members of the Association. Fleur's betrayal of this community is rather one of a carnival response to the limitations of the biographical genre and to the notion of

truth in general. For Fleur, art and truth are not so very different from one another after all.

Textual rebellion can be seen in other Spark novels as well. In the *Comforters*, Caroline Rose becomes the unwilling subject of a novel which is being written by supernatural forces:

On the whole she did not think there would be any difficulty with Helena.

Just then she heard the sound of a typewriter. It seemed to come through the wall on her left. It stopped, and was immediately followed by a voice remarking her own thoughts. It said: *On the whole she did not think there would be any great difficulty with Helena.*

There seemed, then, to have been more than one voice: it was a recitative, a chanting in unison. It was something like a concurrent series of echoes....A typewriter and a chorus of voices. (42-3)

Rebellion exists on a number of levels here. Caroline's thoughts are being appropriated, without her permission, for a work of fiction. Textual authority appears to exist outside of the author here (if we can allocate that designation to Caroline) and in the realm of a community of others. On another level, traditional notions of what constitutes a novel are being challenged in a Bakhtinian sense. The idea that there are a number of voices rather than a single voice chanting Caroline's novel is, while not the polyphony offered by Bakhtin, yet a step in the direction of greater novelistic possibility. Caroline never offers a description of her voices which is as richly variegated as the way in which Bakhtin describes the contrapuntal effect of the novel genre, but she goes some way towards opposing the idea of a single voice gaining authority in the creation of a novel.

He got out of her that the clicking of the typewriter always preceded the voices, and sometimes accompanied their speech. How many voices were there, she could not say. Male or female? Both, she told him. It was impossible to disconnect the separate voices, because they came in complete concert; only by the varying timbres could the chorus be distinguished from one voice. "In fact," she went on, wound-up and talking rapidly, "it sounds like one person speaking in several tones at once. (53-4)

Although this voice sounds vaguely monologic, it yet contains a number of dialogic qualities such as timbre and tone to instill an idea of plurality. This is a long way from the dialogism that takes place in *Loitering* between the fictional and biographical voices, but it is representative of another mode of metatextual carnival which Spark experiments with.

The Comforters provides other examples of 'textual betrayal' in that the narrative often exercises a type of self-parodying that asks readers to try and figure out their own location within or without the text. One example is an authorial (but which author?) intrusion in the shape of a disclaimer that becomes the textual property of both the supernatural text and the novel by Muriel Spark:

Caroline was very quickly asleep. And even as she slept, she felt herself appreciating her sleep; told herself, this was the best sleep she had had for six months. She told herself to sleep on, for she would wake up presently, and then she would mean business.

At this point in the narrative, it might be as well to state that the characters in this novel are all fictitious, and do not refer to any living person whatsoever.

Tap-tappity-tap. At this point in the narrative...Caroline sprang up and pressed the lever on the dictaphone. (69)

What seems to be Spark's own directive to the reader about the novel *The Comforters* becomes transferred into the novel that is being written about Caroline and her

friends. At this point it is very easy for Caroline to be confused with Spark and the separation of author and hero falls under suspicion. This is a playful use of the narrative that is reminiscent of Gray's *Lanark* and of other 'postmodern' works such as Flann O'Brien's *At Swim- Two-Birds*, Italo Calvino's *If On a Winter's Night a Traveller*, and Beckett's trilogy to name but a few, in which the text seems to become autonomous at certain points.

It is at this point in *The Comforters* that Caroline realizes that perhaps she can exert some sort of authorial control over the work in which she is figuring so prominently. The narrative voices begin to project her activities into the future and she decides to contest their power over her life by acting 'in reality' in quite a different fashion. Caroline decides to go to Laurence's grandmother's house by train rather than by car as the voices dictate (93-100). However, Caroline is drawn to deviate back onto the course of action desired by the narrative by her desire to attend Mass: 'After all,' she told him [Laurence], 'It isn't a moral defeat. The Mass is a proper obligation. But to acquiesce in the requirements of someone's novel would have been ignoble' (100). The authority of the Church is here higher than that of the text thus creating another opposition within *The Comforters*. Having once established this hierarchy, Caroline proceeds on the pre-set narrative course by car to see Laurence's grandmother. On the way she vocalizes

her intentions of opposing the authority of the plot and she again implicates religion:

I won't be involved in this fictional plot if I can help it. In fact, I'd like to spoil it. If I had my way I'd hold up the action of the novel. It's a duty...I intend to stand aside and see if the novel has any real form apart from this artificial plot. I happen to be Christian. (105)

As if to confirm her very wishes, the sports car in which she and Laurence are traveling crashes and she is effectively removed from the immediate action of the narrative for the time being. In this way Caroline gets what she wants, but yet dictates the very authority of the text she wishes to oppose. The perplexing nature of this contradiction becomes obvious to her later after she recovers from the crash:

Her sense of being written into the novel was painful. Of her constant influence on its course she remained unaware and now she was impatient for the story to come to an end, knowing that the narrative could never become coherent to her until she was at last outside it, and at the same time consummately inside it. (181)

What is hinted at here is what will eventually happen, since most of Caroline's prognostications go from her thoughts into fiction then back out into the 'real' world. Caroline must assume the authorship of her 'own' novel in order to gain ultimate control over her story. By the end of the novel she has decided to go off on a holiday to write a novel. We are treated to a fragment of that writing in the last few pages beginning with: 'A few weeks later the character called Laurence Manders was snooping around in Caroline Rose's flat' (202). Identities have been transferred to the realm of the novel-within-the-novel where they remain. Caroline succeeds in writing

herself out of the novel in her head, but only at the price of writing herself in. This is the metafictional and metaphysical conundrum that concerns Spark as an artist and which has a lot to do with the perception of truth. We will return to this conundrum later when we look at the benefits and problems that accumulate when one reads Spark through the Bakhtinian prism. For now it is enough to point out that in each of the two novels just discussed, *Loitering with Intent* and *The Comforters*, and in her short story 'The Executor' where Susan Kyle's dead uncle continues to write to her from beyond the grave, Spark is experimenting with a form of betrayal which defies system, tradition and the norms of literary production. That she does this more thematically than stylistically should not detract from the carnivalesque intent. The textual betrayals serve to make narrative a more vital entity. If we consider the novel, as Bakhtin does, as containing a plurality of voices, then textual betrayals may serve as carnival responses to a community of voices which is being constrained by the rules of genre and narrative technique.

While diabolism and betrayal are two ways in which Spark creates carnival responses to unhealthy, authority-bound communities, she is also adept at portraying groups in traditional communal situations. These situations reflect her concern with the rituals of society, their continuing importance, and the hope that they adapt to the needs of the future. Patrick Seton's trial towards the end of *The Bachelors*, the funeral in *Memento Mori* and the dinner party of Spark's most recent novel, *Symposium*, all

provide examples of ritualistic events which are given carnival twists by Spark.

Spark uses the court-room scenes in *The Bachelors* to illustrate how ceremonies associated with authority, such as the process of justice, can be parodied and uncrowned. Patrick Seton, the medium of the novel is being tried for forgery. The trial focuses on the eyewitness accounts of his trances and 'foaming at the mouth' that accompany his seance activities. The hero of the novel, Ronald Bridges, suffers from epilepsy and has an attack in the courtroom, thus mirroring the spasms of Seton. This is only one of a number of occurrences during the trial that turn it into a carnival and which lead the judge to reach the following conclusion:

"A most disreputable case," said the judge. "A widow...her savings. The distasteful proceedings--I may say without prejudice to any more respectable manifestations of the cult as might exist--the distasteful proceedings of the séance room and the scope it offers for the intimidation of weak people..." (213)

The judge might well be providing a description of the 'proceedings' which have just occurred in his own courtroom where the legalese has brushed shoulders with the occult and transvestism (208). The comparison of the supposed order and authority of the courts with the chaos and scandal of the trial provide both comic relief and a sense of perspective. The high seriousness of the 'justice system' is de-stabilized to show its relationship to other 'lower' forms of societal 'abuse'. The rigmarole of the séance room is not so very different from the meaningless jargon of the courts of justice. It is Spark's fictional

duty to address this imbalance of perspective that traditional hierarchies have imposed on society and the way society perceives itself.

In *Memento Mori*, death is the overwhelming issue, and society's response to this liminal event is parodied in the comical funeral and tea-shop reception early in the novel. The action of these scenes is related by Godfrey Colston who is attempting to identify all of the funeral participants and relate their significance both to the deceased and to himself. Godfrey identifies the would-be poet Percy Mannering and his description is grotesque as he looks on while Lisa's coffin is tilted into the awaiting flames of the crematorium fires:

'He grinned like an elated wolf and shed tears of human grief as if he were half-beast, half-man, instead of half-poet, half-man' (22). Later, he states his interest in seeing the ashes and 'kiss them if they are cool enough' (24). In the meantime Godfrey's sister, Dame Lettie, is surveying Mrs. Pettigrew with an eye towards hiring her to take care of Godfrey's 'unstable' wife Charmian. These rather ghastly and rather un-funereal activities all precede the reception, where the carnival atmosphere is intensified by Percy Mannering's outburst concerning the late Lisa's fascination with Dylan, pronounced 'Dye-lan', Thomas. Percy gets so excited that he spills his tea and is asked to leave, while Godfrey takes the opportunity to fill his pockets with cakes (27-31). This is another example of Spark poking fun at what is normally considered a rather solemn and reverent 'social' occasion. The event

lacks, however, the frivolity of a wake situation and the sense of the gravity it is supposed to command is heightened by the ridiculous scenes with Percy Mannering and the reactions of the remainder of the funeral participants. In a sense this represents an attack against the closure of death itself, a theme which runs throughout the novel. At the end the reader is provided with a cataloguing of the deaths of the various characters in the novel. The absurdity of naming the various causes of death, compared to what we have read of the lives of the individuals challenges the authority of such final-sounding words as strokes, heart-failure and cerebral haemorrhage (219).

A final example of a social 'ritual' brought low by Spark occurs in *Symposium* where a dinner party provides the background for the entire novel. The party is a place for the guests, whose lives intertwine in more or less 'serious' situations throughout the rest of the novel, to be brought together in a 'festive' occasion. The variety of what might constitute symposium is dealt with Spark in her epigraphs to the novel from Lucian and Plato. The extract from Lucian shows the party ending in 'the shedding of blood', while Plato's reveals an equation between comedy and tragedy. Bakhtin himself was a student of symposium and he has defined it in various places as possessing the spirit of carnival:

Using Reich's terminology, the sixteenth century presented in the first place the "mimic" tradition of antiquity, the antique "biological" and "ethological" image, the dialogue, the symposium, the brief scene, the anecdote and proverb. But all these elements are related to the medieval tradition of laughter and are

in tune with it. This is a carnivalized antiquity.
(RW 98)

As the novel unfolds, it becomes apparent that while the party is going on, Hilda Damien, the entrepreneur, is being murdered in her son's flat. There is a contrast here between the seriousness of the death and what is meant to be the gay relativity of the party. However, the reader knows, having access to what is going on in the minds of the guests at the party, that festivity is not what transpires. Suspicion, intrigue, and irritable conversation all occur under the guise of the party. In this way those carnival expectations, even those of Bakhtin, are transgressed by Spark's fiction since the party serves merely as a front for more sinister activity. This is no way in keeping with Bakhtin's view of the festive nature of the Renaissance carnival or even with a vision of symposia translated into modern times.

Christopher Ames, in *The Life of the Party: Festive Vision in Modern Fiction*, a work heavily influenced by the work of Bakhtin, describes how modern festivity developed:

Modern parties have their basis in ancient traditions of feasts, banquets, and communal drinking. Plato's *Symposium*, for example, illustrates the banquet tradition of antiquity and captures the intimate connection between the social gathering and the discourses of drama, rhetoric, and philosophy. (4)

We see in Spark's *Symposium* how far from these ancient roots the party has strayed and wonder if in many ways this might be traced to the secularizing process of the party. Ames has traced the origins of party to pre-Christian and Christian rites and rituals:

...secularization and increasing individualization involved a complementary transformation of secular

rites into functionally sacred forms and a development of new definitions of community. Cultural needs, once served by a community organized around a strong church, remained important but were served by evolving cultural structures. Parties formed a crucial part of this cultural shift, embodying, in secular form, many religious functions and creating celebrative communities that reflect and respond to the increased alienation and separateness of modern society. (6-7)

In a sense, then, we might read Spark's novel as an attack against the secularization of the party ritual, a process which has denied it the vitality which it possessed when it was aligned with sacred events. Perhaps Spark would like to regain the lost sacredness to which the party should carnivalistically respond. The meaningless alienation of contemporary society is made more evident in this novel than in any other Spark work with the possible exception of *The Driver's Seat* (1970). However, Lise's alienation in that novel (*The Driver's Seat*) occurs in isolation and not in what is meant to be the festive, rejuvenating social activity of the party.³

It can be seen, then, that Spark's novels operate on a number of levels which simultaneously uncrown figures and rituals of authority while also condemning forms of carnival response which are no longer viable for our present age. This condition of her work makes her both open to a Bakhtinian reading and yet strangely averse to many of his ideas which we have found to be so rewarding in our investigations of other Scottish writers. In many ways Spark resists dialogical interpretations which rely on identifying a plurality of voices. Spark's voices are

³ Although it could be argued that Lise is on 'holiday' and that in itself is a social convention responding to the authority of work.

more subtle and harder to distinguish by way of dialect or accent or even by way of professional or vocational signs, yet they rely on a sense of community since what they convey is often appropriate to a certain group, such as a nursing-home gathering or servants plotting together in the basement of an old mansion.

However, many of these communities engage in activities that Bakhtin has identified as leading towards a closed society. The servants of *Not to Disturb* engage in gossip, an activity that Bakhtin believes is the result of a 'degeneracy of marketplace frankness' (RW 105-6). Indeed many of the secrets and betrayals of Spark could be read as examples of a closed world that does not admit of the liberating influences of carnival. The intrigues and deceptions that she satirizes in such novels as *The Abbess of Crewe* and *Memento Mori* do have a darker, less revitalizing side to them. Yet our investigations of these texts are meant to be, in a Bakhtinian sense, very incomplete. The closed sinister communities she exposes through comedy are made less threatening by the liberating capacity of her writing. The high seriousness of the Watergate scandal is simultaneously brought low and made available to all manner of human experience by her transference of this historical event into a timeless and geographically unimportant region of fictional possibility. Her condemnation of the modern party helps us to reassess the nature of the 'social' and the ways in which we, in the latter part of this century, have torn

celebration away from the very roots of sacred authority which made it a viable response to oppression.

While I can trace no direct influence of Bakhtin on Spark, she seems to be asking whether carnival can exist as a community response when we can produce it at whim and recreate it on demand. Bakhtin would not call this carnival since it is not a response to authority. The demise of carnival into a literary entity, which he traces in *Rabelais and His World* and refines in *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, finds its fictional equivalent in Spark's *Symposium* in which the party is randomly generated and ends in the 'shedding of blood'. Ames identifies this as typical of the failed party: 'one of false transgression, the decadent pose of excessive behaviour not seriously experienced as release' (300). Spark, seems to be warning contemporary communities of a 'diseased carnival' that awaits the future if modes of discourse are not made to comply with codes of fruitful opposition. Carnival cannot be a one-sided, individual event, nor can it be artificially generated and yet retain its revitalizing function.

Perhaps it is best now to stress those points upon which a reading of Spark through Bakhtin becomes a fruitful endeavor. In order to do this it is necessary to go back to the ideas of paradox and cultural identity which were put forward in the beginning of this chapter and to notions of truth which Spark and Bakhtin seem to share.

In "'Poetry Deleted," Parody Added: Watergate, Spark's Style and Bakhtin's Stylistics', Sheryl Stevenson argues that Spark and Bakhtin share an interest in the 'distortability of all language' and that 'both writers suggest that any word is never the Word, never an expression of an unchanging truth' (72). While Stevenson's article is primarily an examination of how language operates in *The Abbess of Crewe*, the conclusions she reaches can be seen to hold true with regard to most of Spark's work. Presenting truth as something mutable is an abiding concern of both Spark's fiction and Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and carnival: 'I might as well remark here that to make a character ring true it needs must be in some way contradictory, somewhere a paradox', writes Spark through the voice of Fleur Talbot in *Loitering with Intent* (25). Spark equates truth with a necessary contradiction, a 'strange union of opposites'. Likewise Bakhtin in *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* concerns himself with 'unique truth' or *pravda* which is different for every situation and cannot be universalized:

It is an unfortunate misunderstanding (a legacy of rationalism) to think that truth [*pravda*] can only be truth [*istina*] that is composed of universal moments; that the truth of a situation is precisely that which is repeatable and constant in it....the very word *unity* should be discarded as being overly theoreticized; not unity, but *uniqueness*, the uniqueness of a whole that does not repeat itself anywhere....(37-8)

The value of difference is implied in this passage. Bakhtin might also banish the idea of 'reconciliation' of opposites since that implies unity. Compare Bakhtin's ideas of unique and inconstant truth with the following

passage from Spark's short story 'The Curtain Blown by the Breeze':

That a slight movement of the curtains should be the sign of a summer breeze seems somewhere near to truth, for to me truth has airy properties with buoyant and lyrical effects; and when anything drastic starts up from some light cause it only proves to me that something false has got into the world. (27)

The conclusion of this passage might also be the diagnosis of false carnival. The vision of an airiness and uniqueness of truth bring Spark's and Bakhtin's worlds close together, but, as we have seen before there exist contradictions between them as well. The paradox of this relationship makes them good theoretical bedfellows since they both find truth to lie in what is irreconcilable and ambivalent. The ambivalence and contradiction in Spark's work allows us to see once more how her fiction represents the Dostoevskian carnival of reduced laughter, rather than the Rabelaisian carnival of the open marketplace:

But the most important--one could say, the decisive--expression of reduced laughter is to be found in the ultimate position of the author. This position excludes all one-sided or dogmatic seriousness and does not permit any single point of view, any single polar extreme of life or of thought, to be absolutized. All one-sided seriousness (of life and thought), all one-sided pathos is handed over to the heroes, but the author, who causes them all to collide in the "great dialogue" of the novel, leaves that dialogue open and puts no finalizing period at the end. (PDP 165)

In conclusion then, let us return to Spark and the essentialist idea of Scottishness. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Spark does not readily lend herself to a 'Scottish' reading, whatever that may be. The overwhelming critical urge to identify the contradictions inherent in Scottish literature has lead some critics to

follow in the footsteps of Gregory Smith's 'two moods' theory and identify a sense of duality in such characters as Jean Brodie⁴. The extension of this line of thinking justifies a sense of Scottishness in Spark who herself contains a 'mixed' background:

I am certainly a writer of Scottish formation and of course think of myself as such. I think to describe myself as a "Scottish" Writer might be ambiguous as one wouldn't know if "Scottish" applied to the writer or the writing. Then there is the complicated question of whether people of mixed inheritance, like myself, can call themselves Scottish. Some Scots deny it. But Edinburgh where I was born and my father was born has definitely had an effect on my mind, my prose style and my ways of thought. (cited in Bold: 1984, 221)

One is reminded here of the different Edinburghs of Sandy Stranger and her visitor at the convent where she resides as Sister Helena. What has come to Sandy after years of experience is the coexistence of a number of Edinburghs which may all be radically different and not necessarily oppositional.

The cultural paradoxes of Spark's work hinge on ideas of truth, history and identity which are productively unstable. What perhaps makes her writing powerful is her ability, like Jean Brodie, to bring other cultures to Scotland while simultaneously projecting Scotland into other cultures, a quality that is not dependent on any simplistically essentialist notion of nationality for expression. As Douglas Dunn has put it, speaking of the novelist Ronald Frame:

In the context of recent Scottish fiction as a whole, what he shares with [Allan] Massie and [William] Boyd (perhaps also with Muriel Spark) is a divergent

⁴ See 'Spark and Scotland' by Trevor Royle in *Muriel Spark: An Odd Capacity for Vision*, ed. Alan Bold, pp. 153-161.

mischief, an insistence on the imagination's freedom from the nationality whose constraints might even have encouraged the necessity of making that choice. (1993: 69)

Miss Brodie's fascisti, her fascination with Italian art and with the dancer Pavlova instills a sense of cultural understanding in her students. The theory of difference which she imparts then becomes operational on a level which is closer to home, on the streets of Edinburgh:

They had come to the end of Lauriston Place, past the fire station, where they were to get on a tram-car to go to tea with Miss Brodie in her flat at Churchill. A very long queue of men lined this part of the street. They were without collars, in shabby suits. They were talking and spitting and smoking little bits of cigarette held between middle finger and thumb.

"We shall cross here," said Miss Brodie and herded the set across the road.

Monica Douglas whispered, "They are the Idle."

"In England they are called the Unemployed. They are waiting to get their dole from the labour bureau," said Miss Brodie. "You must all pray for the Unemployed, I will write you out a special prayer for them. You all know what the dole is? (39)

Miss Brodie's instructions on the importance of difference are later betrayed as well by Sandy who realizes how subjective the idea of difference really is. We see Spark injecting dichotomy and paradox into stories set in Rome, New York City, France, Venice, and London. Although she does not provide us with an immediate sense of her own nationality, we may misread her if we do not take this factor (her Scottish background) into account on a more sophisticated level that does not depend solely on national reference. If we allow Bakhtin to guide us, we see Spark's ability to 'de-essentialize' community identities. Her Brodie set and other groups reveal the relativity and the (to borrow from Benedict Anderson)

'imagined' natures of most communities. Her demons are timeless and without nationality, yet they frequently remind us of Gil-Martin or Jekyll and Hyde. They possess and are possessed by spirits who float over borders and cross the imposed boundaries which history and historical notions of literary identity have forged. As Ronald Bridges puts it at the end of *The Bachelors*:

It is all demonology and to do with creatures of the air, and there are others besides ourselves, he thought, who lie in their beds like happy countries that have no history. Others ferment in prison; some rot, maimed; some lean over the banisters of presbyteries to see if anyone is going to answer the telephone. (214)

These are the bachelors of London, but they may well also be, in the first instance, the offspring of an open identity, and in the second, the children of a community and culture which constantly seek re-definition.

Conclusion

This work has attempted to take the reader of Scottish literature beyond the antisyzygical bifurcations of a limiting notion of Scottish literary identity. In conclusion, we might now move beyond the artificial confines of the work itself and consider the future of Scottish literary studies and how it will benefit from the continued openness promised by Bakhtinian thought.

As an American writing about Scottish literature, the present writer has undergone the sorts of identity crises that afflict any writer who considers the literature of a country 'not his own'. Questions such as 'Why study Scottish literature rather than American literature?' or 'Is there a market for teaching Scottish literature in the United States?' have surfaced over the past four years while this work was developing.

In true Bakhtinian fashion, a return to America from Scotland has conditioned a Pennsylvanian's ideas of home so that it will never be quite the same again. Likewise, Scotland, or at least a number of visions of Scotland have been altered and will continue to do so through this American's repeated contact with Scottish culture and literature. The answers that Bakhtin provides to the questions raised above are that they are the wrong questions to be asking in the first place since they are limiting and anti-dialogic in nature and demand closed, definite responses. It is this type of enlightenment that Bakhtin, through his theories of carnival and dialogism,

brings to a consideration of Scottish literature and its quest for self-definition by way of the Caledonian Antisyzygy.

Although it has been discredited and neglected as a mode of thinking about Scottish literature for some time, the Caledonian Antisyzygy has left its imprint on such diverse contemporary Scottish writing as Irvine Welsh's wild raving excesses and the communal Orkneys of George Mackay Brown. The questions that will be asked of texts by these writers and a host of others have already moved beyond the simple dichotomies once proposed as examples of 'Scottish character'. Discussions of Scottish texts are increasingly revealing a dialogic understanding through their engagement with non-Scottish literary identities. Donald Wesling considers Tom Leonard alongside the 'London-Caribbean' writer Linton Kwesi Johnson, Douglas Dunn includes Bret Harte, Ring Lardner, and Flannery O'Connor in his discussion of Scottish short stories, and James Kelman invokes James Ngugi, Chinua Achebe and other postcolonial writers in his defence of Scottish cultural self-determination. These are only a few examples of the rich multicultural and multinational exchanges that result from the constant re-defining and pluralizing of Scottish literary and cultural identities.

In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), Edward Said identifies the open and pluralistic nature of cultural formation: 'Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and

unmonolithic' (xxix). What an understanding of Bakhtin brings, not only to the analyses of Scottish writers presented in this work, but for future inquiries as well, is the realization that simple resolution has never been the answer to the question of cultural identity any more than recognizing 'a combination of opposites' could provide a sufficient description of a national literature. Bakhtin pushes identity-formation further than these preliminary investigations by positing both the incomplete nature of identity and the necessity of other identities to a realization of self.

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, the voices of Scottish literature are more complex than the constructs formed for them in the early decades of this century. The advent of theoretical analysis has both opened the door for new investigations of texts while yet threatening to impose further categorizations upon them. Bakhtin's ideas of dialogic interaction and carnival subversion remove not only self-imposed boundaries of sterile identity but those placed on the analysis of culture by rigid forms of academic inquiry as well. Among the many contributions Scottish writing offers to world literature are the rich possibilities inherent in contradiction that were first sketched by G. Gregory Smith, expanded upon by Hugh MacDiarmid, and, by way of Bakhtin's theories, can now be fashioned into a fructifying and evolving theory of Scottish literature.

As the first book-length work to apply Bakhtin to a wide range of Scottish literature, this dissertation has

attempted to establish connections between Scottish literary history and traditions and Bakhtinian literary theory. It is hoped that by doing so the study of Scottish literature will benefit directly from one of the most fruitful areas of current theoretical investigation. The rewards to be reaped from Bakhtinian readings of Scottish literature, as I hope this work has proved, are the promise of a fluid cultural identity and the understanding that regardless of narrowly defined nationality, the literature one reads will always become one's own.

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