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After Scotland: Irvine Welsh and the Ethic of Emergence

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AFTER SCOTLAND:
IRVINE WELSH AND THE ETHIC OF EMERGENCE

A Dissertation

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by
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Giving to my beloved friend, partner, and counselor,
Joni,
and to the wee cateran and reiver who has stolen our hearts,
Geordie Park.

Remembering a man who made a bad situation better,
George Parker Dexter, Jr., 1916-2000.

In itself nothing but a new way of seeing things, it made of a monotony that had seemed unshakeable something incomprehensibly new that was also comprehensibly familiar.

—Candia McWilliam, *Debatable Land*

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Abstract

In "After Scotland: Irvine Welsh and the Ethic of Emergence," the author's objective is to mirror what he argues is the Scottish writer Irvine Welsh's objective: to chart out a future Scotland guided by a generative life ethic. In order to achieve this objective, the author lays open and reengages Scotland's past, discovers and commits to neglected or submerged materials and energies in its past, demonstrates how Welsh's work is faithful to those and newly produced materials and energies, and suggests that Welsh's use of those materials and energies enables readers to envision a new Scotland that will be integral to an alternative postmodern world that countervails one ruled by late capital.

Each chapter builds toward a Marxist ethic of emergence, which is composed of four virtues uncovered in Scotland's historical-material fabric: congregation, integration, emergence, and forgiveness. To bring these virtues to the surface, the author historically grounds Welsh's novels and short stories—*Trainspotting*, *Glue*, *Porno*, *Filth*, "The Granton Star Cause," "The Two Philosophers," and *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. Through this historiographical process, each virtue is uncovered and analyzed in the context of a particular historical period: medieval, Reformation, Enlightenment, and postmodern. Each context presents a unique set of materials and energies; each also presents an epistemological and ethical focus. The author brings the first three contexts and virtues together to formulate the ethic of emergence within the postmodern context. Throughout, the author stresses how this ethic and each of its virtues are embedded in Welsh's work and in Scotland's historical-material fabric. The author then suggests what he and Welsh hope will emerge from that fabric according to such an ethic.

Because Welsh is a contemporary writer who has gained relatively little attention from literary scholars, another aim of this study is to situate Welsh's work by connecting it with

literature produced inside and outside of the Scottish and postmodern contexts: e.g. Gaelic prehistorical and epic literature, Chaucer, morality plays, Robert Burns, and the modern mystery genre.

The author concludes the study with an afterword, relating his project to recent events that have occurred in Scottish politics.

Chapter 1

Introduction

If it wasnae for the weavers what would we do?
We widnae hae clothes made o' woo,
We widnae hae a coat neither black nor blue,
If it wasnae for the wark o' the weavers.

—David Shaw[1]

All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to
mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the
comprehension of this practice. . . . The philosophers have only *interpreted* the
world in various ways; the point is to *change* it.

—Karl Marx[2]

Irvine Welsh? *L'enfant terrible* of Scottish letters? The schemie bairn turned junkie, turned construction worker, turned college student, turned MBA, turned civil servant, turned writer, turned charity boxer? Scotland's postmodern prophet of postmodern decay? The writer who says that he does not write but just tells stories? The guy who has published a collection of twisted tales, a collection of "chemical romances," an exposé on the half-baked schemes of heroine addicts, a tragic saga of government-housing kids' lives, case studies on environmentally-induced schizophrenia and psychosis, and most recently, a sardonic combination of all these in a novel dealing with pornography? The Irvine Welsh who includes some sort of animal mutilation in almost every novel? The left-leaning writer who enjoyed a brief stint as a diarist for the right-wing British *Daily Telegraph*? The man whose books are dominated by "cunts," "gadges," and "punters"? The one who writes in a Scottish underclass dialect that puts the daunting invented English syntax of Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange* to shame? Yes, that Irvine Welsh.

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[1] David Shaw, "Wark o' the Weavers," performed by Ewan McColl, *Four Pence a Day: British Industrial Folk Songs* (Stinson 1993).
[2] Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton (New York: Penguin, 1992) p. 423.

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Welsh is the most significant writer for Scotland at the present time because he has proved to be the best able to connect Scotland to the humans who compose it, connect Scotland to readers (and moviegoers) who know little or nothing about it, connect Scots who never read to reading, connect Scotland to an alternative Scottish future, and ultimately connect Scotland to an alternative postmodern global probability. I do not make light of downplaying the work of Welsh's contemporaries, such as Janice Galloway, James Kelman, A. L. Kennedy, and Duncan MacLean; however, Welsh has so far proved to be the most literarily, socioculturally, philosophically, and politically profound. In many ways, he is more than a writer; he is what I refer to as a conduit.

The term "conduit" might seem strange in a literary and theoretical context, but it is the most appropriate term to use when describing a historical-material understanding of the role of the artist in artwork. Extending Theodor Adorno's conception of artists' relationship with artworks, I view a "good" writer as a conduit of historical, material, and cultural elements and energies, which means that an artist is neither a transcendent master nor a mere stenography machine.[3] A conduit, on the one hand, is a medium. It transfers energy or materials from one location to another. An artist certainly does this. Saying so might come across as an insult to artists. It is not an insult, but it does countervail the notion that an artist has a position of privilege in the artistic process. If an artist is a medium, he or she is on par with ink, paint, costuming, lighting, and celluloid. To a great extent, this is true. Nevertheless, a conduit is a medium with a creative aspect. Instead of being a mechanism that just transfers something from one location to another, a conduit is also the dynamic within which various materials and energies converge and mix. In modern chemical engineering, for instance, a conduit is commonly a multi-valve chamber where a variety of processes continuously take place and

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[3] Theodor W. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997) pp. 148-53, 168-73.

where transference is ongoing. In electrical engineering, a conduit is a site of energy convergence, redirection, and dispersal—a junction. One function of a conduit, therefore, is to serve as a converter or transformer.

A wool dyer, for example, creates various colors by mixing dyes in a receptacle. The dyer is at this point not the master of the receptacle, but integrally interacts with the receptacle. His or her energy, along with the dyes, flows into the tool; consequently, the tool realizes the dyer's labor. Dyer and receptacle become *interimplicated* to convert individual dyes into a new dye. However, the dyer at this point is not yet a conduit, only a conduit in waiting. He or she has not yet produced anything because he or she has not connected the new dye to anything. The conduit realizes itself not only in conversion but also in transference—hence one connotation of *trans-formation*, the movement of forms. To become more than just a mechanism that holds a new color, the dyer is a means of distributing the dye onto the wool that will then be transferred to another person, the weaver, and then to another, the wearer. The needs of the weaver and the wearer are provided for by the dyer, and the dyer is realized through providing for them. And they glorify the dyer when they weave with his or her yarn and wear the sweater produced from it. Only through such a social network do any of their individual activities or needs take on significance. A conduit, therefore, is not just a medium; a conduit is also a means of *generation* and *connection*. A conduit is an integral but not superior poetic (i.e. transformative) aspect in a process. An artist is just such an aspect in an artwork.

All writers arguably fulfill the role of conduit, and postmodern Scotland undeniably has a growing number of remarkable writers. Nevertheless, Welsh practically sets out to be such a conduit instead of an author of novels.[4] To expand the textile metaphor introduced above, which

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[4] Welsh aligns himself more with the storytelling tradition than the official writing culture: "I grew up in a place where everybody was a storyteller, but nobody wrote. It was that kind of Celtic, storytelling tradition:

is evocative of Scotland's deep historical connection to textiles, Welsh is a weaver who creatively and exhaustively channels and combines threads gathered from the materials of the world to produce a truly vibrant fabric. What he produces, therefore, is of the world, but the product—the commodity—he produces presents the world in an unusual, scintillating way to those who live in it. In effect, his work is a historically-materially informed, living, prophetic map.

Weaving, however, does not always result in a comfortable blanket, a utilitarian bag, a flattering shirt, or an inspirational tapestry. In the case of Welsh, the textiles he produces are often rough on the skin of the mind, rubbing off its old scabs and opening it anew. But his fabric is unexpectedly medicinal, too: it breathes, allowing previously poisoned blood to be drawn out and diffused so that healing and movement can occur with new vigor. In other words, Welsh works in good faith with the materials he has, and his work often has a healing effect despite its harsh truths.

Even though Welsh is now a member of the middle-class literati, he spent his formative years in Edinburgh's government housing schemes and mean streets, from which he garnered many of the experiences and insights that inform his novels' characters, plots, and themes. The hodgepodge of working-class mores, lumpenproletariat despondency, middle-class aspirations, unemployment, poverty, substance abuse, domestic violence, cynical worldliness, bigoted provincialism, deep-fried diets, and vicious soccer fanaticism are not exotic to Welsh. These

everybody would have a story at the pub or at parties, even at the clubs and raves. They were all so interesting. Then I'd read stories in books, and they'd be dead." He continues, "I used to sort of socialize with the [writing] crowd in Edinburgh, but we never really regarded ourselves as writers." Moreover, he indicates that writing is less a professional role and is more a mediatory process: "There's a tension between excitement and intellect [in writing]. Again, going back to *The Acid House*, I wanted to write something that was exciting, that turned pages, but also hopefully made people think about things. But it had to turn pages. There's a tradition in novel writing that's self-consciously intellectual rather than intelligent. The two aren't often the same. It's not knowledge and ideas for their own sake, it's story and character. Posturing and posing, doing that intellectual dance, isn't really serving plot or character." See Irvine Welsh, interview with Dave Weich, *Powells.com*, 12 June 2001, 13 Aug. 2005 <http://www.powells.com/authors/welsh.html>.

form the reality that he and a great number of Scots call home. He does not throw out this rough

flax and impure wool; in fact, his fabric is dominated by the rough and impure because most of

the materials he has at hand are rough and impure.

Welsh's fabric would not be the kind used to make a brilliant tartan for one of Scotland's

great clans, even if it does contain some of the same threads. Nor would Welsh's fabric be the

clothing of choice for the heaven-taught ploughmen and balladeers of the Highlands and

Borders, even though its texture retains impassioned honesty. His weaving might most often

take place in the context of millennial Edinburgh, where he employs the materials piled in its

historical storehouses, but what he weaves is not the velvet that might have been worn by the

eighteenth-century literati who filled Edina's salons and clubs or roamed the halls of its esteemed

university. No, his fabric is the tartan of a Scotland *after* the Scotland of kilted chieftains and

lairds, *after* the Scotland of rustic songsters, and *after* the Scotland of cosmopolitan geniuses

who supposedly brought us the modern world.[5] His tartan cannot help but retain the old filial

relations, the old folk wisdom, and the modern epistemological revolution. In fact, the presence

of the past cannot help but be apparent because, in his work, the threads of the past are shaken

from their tight and seemingly complete formations, their ends pulled and then threaded into the

fabric of the present. But the past does not repeat itself: Its materials are threaded differently

than before, and new threads are added; consequently, new intersections emerge, new patterns

materialize, and new materials are produced.[6]

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[5] The latter claim—that the Scots brought us the modern world—is most notably made by Arthur Herman,
*How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our
World and Everything in It* (New York: Three Rivers, 2001). Though frequently informative and astute, Herman's
work is frequently in the service of neoliberal triumphalism. Historian Michael Lynch indicates that such neoliberal
revisionism actually threatens Scotland's historical significance by "shifting concentration towards the dramatic
impact that the [Enlightenment Scotland in particular] made and away from the storehouse of existing ideas on
which [that Scotland] drew" (*Scotland: A New History* [London: Pimlico, 1992] p. xvii).
[6] "Artworks derive from the world of things in their performed material as in their techniques; there is
nothing in them that did not also belong to this world and nothing that could be wrenched away from this world at

Tartans are not some colorful plaid skirts that bagpipers wear for thrills—they are multidimensional historical and genealogical maps. Each major Scottish family or region has a unique fabric, like a fingerprint. What color intersects with another, how a distinct line interacts with a field, and which hues are used all signify family namesakes, regional ecology and weather, battles, and sociopolitical affiliations. Welsh, though, is a postmodern tartan maker originally from Scotland's groundless, clanless lumpenproletariat, who drifted into the middle-class world that he despised and that he now practically works to expose and to implode.[7] So, the tartan he weaves cannot help but be rough and unrefined, according to received standards. But again, this does not mean that it is bad, that no attention is paid to pattern or to tone or to history. Indeed, Welsh is highly sensitive—tuned in—to everything in Scotland.

Weaving anything is both physically and psychologically demanding work. Weaving a tartan is even more so. Weaving a postmodern tartan for postmodern Scotland takes the work's intensity to the extreme. Like the tartans made by the weavers of old, the tartan that Welsh weaves is infused with tears shed for lost comrades and a country's conflicts, the tinctures of the time and location that envelop him, as well as the blood that he himself has spilled and lost. Welsh does not omit the less than glorious events, the unflattering stains, or the self-inflicted

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less than the price of death. . . . Art desires what has not yet been, though everything that art is has already been. It cannot escape the shadow of the past. But what has not yet been is the concrete" (Adorno 134).

[7] My use of the term "lumpenproletariat" in this instance and elsewhere throughout this study will probably be greeted with suspicion by more "orthodox" Marxists. But as with other terms, I intentionally employ it to bring alive its provocative energy. Indeed, my understanding of the term does not differ that much from the one that Marx gives in *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowkes, vol. 1 [New York: Penguin, 1976] p. 797. Nevertheless, the position of the lumpenproletariat in the empire of late capital is integral instead of peripheral, as it arguably was during the era of modern capital. I agree with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri when they write: "*the poor, every poor person, the multitude of poor people, have eaten up and digested the multitude of proletarians. By that fact itself the poor have become productive. Even the prostituted body, the destitute person, the hunger of the multitude—all forms of the poor have become productive. And the poor have therefore become ever more important: the life of the poor invests the planet and envelops it with its desire for creativity and freedom. The poor is the condition of every production. . . . The discovery of postmodernity consisted in the reproposition of the poor at the center of the political and productive terrain*" (*Empire* [Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 2000] pp. 158). Implied in my understanding of "lumpenproletariat," therefore, is that the old delineations and roles of the classes must be reconceived—from the ground up.

wounds. Added to this, he does not serve the courts of chiefs, lairds, kings, Ministers of

Parliament, or CEOs. He serves those on whose shoulders courts are built, a heretofore faceless

and alienated multitude. He would, therefore, do this multitude a disservice if the tartan he

weaves does not honestly tell their historical, material, and cultural biography. More

importantly, he would do Scots a disservice if he does not give them a fabric that is theirs, from

which they may continue to weave. Welsh, as the following chapters will demonstrate, does

anything but a disservice.

Welsh's weaving produces maps that bring about some understanding of contemporary

Scotland, but because both his work and Scotland are inextricably connected to—interwoven

with—the rest of the world, his maps lead to engagement with the current global situation.

Ultimately, they are maps that uncover an alternative ethical probability on the debatable land of

postmodernity. As a consequence, they are maps that enable, inform, and inspire the objective of

this study: *to chart out a future Scotland guided by a generative life ethic*. In order to achieve

this objective, I will 1) lay open and reengage Scotland's past, 2) uncover and commit to

neglected or submerged materials and energies in its past, 3) demonstrate how Welsh's work is

faithful to those and newly produced materials and energies, and 4) suggest that Welsh's use of

those materials and energies enables readers to envision a new Scotland that will be integral to an

alternative postmodern world that countervails the one currently ruled by late capital, which is

also known as multinational or postmodern capitalism.

Because I am dealing with the work of a strange sort of weaver who makes maps that are

far from prescriptive, are descriptive, and are certainly open-ended, I am effectively put in the

position of being a weaver-mapper, too. I have to mirror Welsh's process as well as produce

something from what I find or connect to in his work. The map I produce will, consequently,

add at least one more dimension to Welsh's. Therefore, as a good cartographer would, I need to provide a key to help us keep our bearings as we proceed.

After signifies place and process. The more obvious meaning is adjectival, implying a thing or event occurring subsequent to something else. "After," in this sense, can occur temporally or spatially (or both) following another position in time or space. In this study, both the temporal and spatial aspects will be in play. On the other hand, there is an adverbial meaning, implying that something is actively being sought or followed. This connotation, too, is valid in the current context. Thus, "after" signifies both descriptive spatiotemporal location and analytical movement, making it a perfect term for dialectical historical-material study and construction. I, following Welsh, will lay out Scotland, but to do so means that I must chase after what Scotland has been as well as what it is. Ultimately, I will be in pursuit of its future probabilities, as Welsh is.

Scotland is not as simple as it might seem because it signifies a lack of coherence, not an autonomous, unified state.[8] Indeed, Scotland the country is stateless; even calling it a unified nation stretches historical-material reality. From its very beginnings as an identifiable entity, Scotland's sociocultural diversity has been apparent. Its very name literally means "land of the Irish," deriving from a Latin word that the Romans applied to the Irish, *Scoti*. However, the Gaels that came over to Scotland from around the Ulster region of Ireland, the Dál Riata (Dalriada in Scottish Gaelic), were by no means the majority. In fact, they were not a strong presence until around the fourth and fifth centuries AD. The Britons (i.e. Welsh) and the Picts, who were more than likely distant Brythonic cousins of the Britons, dominated, respectively, the

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[8] This claim is an extension of Tom Nairn's assertions concerning Scotland's lack of a truly modern national phase. See Tom Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1981) pp. 92-195; and Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism: Janus Revisited* (London: Verso, 1997) p. 180.

south and north of what we today call Scotland. Then added to the mix were the Norse, the Anglo-Saxons, and later the Normans.

Efforts to create a unified kingdom that connected Northumbria, the Lowlands, the Highlands, and the Islands did not ever really succeed, except nominally. The Romans failed to subdue Scotland. The Holy Roman Empire did not fare much better because Scotland—along with various parts of Ireland, England, and Wales—did not unequivocally adopt Roman Catholicism. Celtic Christianity preceded the arrival of the official Roman Church, and it held sway through much of the first millennium. Where Scotland did adopt Roman Catholicism, it favored the monastic instead of the diocesan form of church structure, which perhaps explains its general resistance to episcopal governance, a top-down model dominated by bishops, until the Scottish Reformation. Only at the beginning of the second millennium (c. 1018-1153 AD)— under Malcolm II, Malcolm and Margaret Canmore, and their son David I—did Scotland seem to consolidate. Nevertheless, when a Scottish kingdom was nominally established, the reality was that Scotland (whether called Caledonia or Alba or Scotland) was really a loosely-knit multitude that shared similar social structures, as well as pre- and post-Christian cultural traditions. Even after David I and his primarily Norman associates introduced feudalism into Scotland, the new sociopolitical system just did not take. Feudal estates merely peppered a terrain dominated by clanships, self-sustaining agricultural communities, and the like. The feudal powers did manage to create a burgh system. This brought about a network of larger towns, in which mercantile and ecclesiastical power could be consolidated. Even so, feudal lords, their ecclesiastical partners, and the burgh fathers confronted extreme difficulty when it came to gaining control of what was a diverse and loosely-connected population. It would not be until early modernity that Highlanders, Borderers, Islanders, and even constituencies in large rural areas of the Central Belt

between Aberdeen and the River Tweed would be sufficiently subjugated. This subjugation was facilitated by a Scot, James (Stewart) VI of Scotland, who became James I of England. It was through the 1707 Union of Parliaments under James's crown that Scotland would become an officially subordinate "nation" within the United Kingdom, remaining so until 1997's devolution referendum. Even after 1997, Scotland would still remain practically subordinate. During most of modernity, Scotland's internal incoherence had been contained, but it actually proliferated internally: most common Scots were displaced, transported to British colonies, and effectively imprisoned in mines, shipyards, poverty-stricken urban centers, and land-lorded rural wastelands. Therefore, Scotland has never been, according to dominant historical standards, what one could identify as an autonomous, coherent, or modern nation-state. This status as non-state might explain why one major perception of Scotland resigns it to failure.

Like so many other subordinate and "underdeveloped" countries throughout the world, Scotland, the reasoning goes, is such a minor player now in global politics and economics because it has historically failed to organize itself in a way that would have allowed it to benefit from the undeniable movement of Western progress—whether sociopolitical, ecclesiastical, cultural, national, or economic. Subsequently, its subordinate status in the United Kingdom and now in a global capitalist empire is just deserts. To use Mark Renton's words from Welsh's first novel, Scotland is a mass of "failures in a country ay failures . . . colonised by wankers," which makes Scots the "lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation."[9] What right do Scots have to complain?

Despite Renton's apt though defeatist analysis of one Scotland, historical-material reality evinces an alternative Scotland and, paradoxically, a promising one at that. If the sociopolitical,

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[9] Welsh, *Trainspotting* (New York: Norton, 1996) p. 78.

ecclesiastical, cultural, global, and economic hegemony of today's America is supposed to be the culmination of "Western Civilization," then Scotland and countries like it throughout the world might prove to be a saving grace—not just despite of but because of their lesser status. The threats of perpetual war, government of and for moneyed power elites, exponential destruction of ecosystems, homogenization of cultural life, sophisticated theocracy, and political disenfranchisement promised today are exactly the things Scotland has historically encountered, resisted, and to some extent exorcized over the last two millennia. Although seemingly powerless and backward according to modern and postmodern standards of progress, subordinate Scotland emerges from a ground rich with historical materials and energies. It is, therefore, not the failure that some, including plenty of Scots, might assume. It is because of Scotland's particular situation—its historical-material genealogy—that Scotland may prove well-equipped not only to weather but to emerge from the daunting, uncertain global situation that will play out over the next millennium.

Even with that note of hope being struck, I do not accept another Scotland that is becoming increasingly popular. In order to counter a Scotland characterized as a historical aberration, if not failed abortion, a growing number of commentators have hitched onto the Scottish Enlightenment as if it were a Nietzschean phoenix that left in the ashes a barbaric Scottish past. Their Scotland is not only a neoliberal paradise; it is also the source of much of the West's, particularly America's, ability to ascend to global hegemony.[10] If such is the case, then Scotland is responsible for postmodern capitalist imperialism, which is something that Scots might not want to own. I certainly agree that Scotland is not and has never been a hopeless

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[10] To the list containing Herman, add Duncan A. Bruce, *The Mark of the Scots: Their Astonishing Contributions to History, Science, Democracy, Literature, and the Arts* (New York: Citadel, 1998); Robert W. Galvin, *America's Founding Secret: What the Scottish Enlightenment Taught Our Founding Fathers* (New York: Rowan and Littlefield, 2002); and Michael Fry, *How the Scots Made America* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2005).

failure; in fact, I think of it as a site of alternative postmodern potential. However, any serious, good-faith study of Scottish historical-material reality makes preposterous any claim that Scotland is or has ever really been a great source of and then beneficiary of modern and now postmodern capital, whether in its sociopolitical, cultural, or economic forms. Do those who are the descendants of people forcibly displaced, betrayed by others and themselves, exploited, and subjugated under modern and now postmodern imperialism really want to turn around and celebrate it? If so, the historical-material bad faith and self-sacrifice involved severely undermine any supposed triumph. There are, though, alternatives to such ahistorical sophistication.

The Scotland that will be pursued here is one *after* the Scotland cast off as a congenital failure and *after* the Scotland remade as Western Civilization's carefully hidden secret society of savages-turned-savants. This Scotland *after* those Scotlands is their countervailing postscript, and it is the detective on their case. To pursue this *after-Scotland* will, therefore, entail confronting and analyzing the others. This will not mean repeating them, but it will mean emerging from them while never pretending to transcend them.[11]

The Scotland that precedes the Scotland that Welsh is pursuing and that we will be pursuing with him is a *situation*. "Situation" connotes a terrain of being.[12] Within this terrain—which I will also refer to as a "context," "ground," or "fabric"—are all the materials and energies of human life. A situation, therefore, is the social space from which humans can produce and emerge.

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[11] Such a view reflects an understanding of Marxism as an "'untranscendable horizon' that subsumes . . . antagonistic or incommensurable critical operations, assigning them an undoubted sectoral validity within itself, and thus at once canceling and preserving them" (Frederic Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* [Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1981] p. 10).

[12] See Alain Badiou, *Ethics: An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*, trans. Peter Hallward (London: Verso, 2001) pp. 129-31.

Ethics has become one of those terms that can mean whatever someone wants it to mean; therefore, it has become hollow, propagandistic, and self-parodying.[13] The very fact that the words "business" and "ethics" are even joined in the context of postmodern capital is a good indicator of how insubstantial ethics has become. Moreover, ethics has been conflated with such strange creatures as "moral values." For the most part, barring the philosophers and theologians who are sincerely engaged in exploring and deepening ethics, ethics is effectively just a commodity zipping along in the currents of capital. This commodity's rapid exchange gives the patina of legitimacy to capital's systems and their managers, which are only interested in accruing more materials and energies—more power—with no interest in the just distribution of power to those who produce it. As a capitalist commodity, ethics serves as a tool of rationalization that lubricates and thus quickens alienation, expendability, and the consolidation of power—a phenomenon illustrated time and again throughout Welsh's body of work.

Particularity has become the idolatry of the postmodern, signifying the severe anemia of ethics. Inadvertently, the avatars and defenders of difference—poststructuralist, deconstructivist, postcolonialist, feminist, postmodernist, and so forth—have actually produced for capitalism its ethical veneer.[14] Their work gives legitimacy to nihilistic self-abandon on the one hand and

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[13] According to Badiou, what is today called ethics is really a "return of ethics" as a theme instead of as an integral part of human life and thought—a sort of coping mechanism that "governs how we relate to 'what is going on,' a vague way of regulating our commentary on historical situations (an ethics of human rights), technico-scientific situations (medical ethics, bio-ethics), 'social' situations (the ethics of being-together), media situations (the ethics of communication), and so on. . . . This norm of commentaries and opinions is backed up by official institutions, and carries its own authority: we now have 'national ethical commissions,' nominated by the State. Every profession questions itself about its 'ethics.' We even deploy military expeditions in the name of 'the ethics of human rights'" (2). He concludes, therefore, that today's "theme of ethics," which has subordinated integral ethics, is "compatible with the self-satisfied egoism of the affluent West, with advertising, and with service rendered to the powers that be. Such are the facts" (7).

[14] The most pointed indictment to this effect is made by Badiou (4-38). A more sympathetic response to the various ethics of difference comes by way of Hardt and Negri (*Empire* 135-59). Badiou, Hardt, and Negri are tapping into one of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels's insights: "Individuals have always proceeded from themselves, but of course from themselves within their given historical conditions and relations, not from the 'pure' individual in the sense of the ideologists" (*The German Ideology* including *Theses on Feurbach* and *Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy* [Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1998] p. 87).

egoistic individualism on the other. To privilege a finite "other" or an absolute "Other" drives alienation from the self by projecting power toward a sociocultural fragment or to an ambiguous ideal. Such an ethics of difference, which demands the sacrifice of the self, fosters a kind of masochistic solipsism, if it does not ultimately foster an escapist nihilism. On the other side of the same coin, making an idol out of one's identity—whether cultural, sexual, religious, or racial—reduces one into an easily exchangeable fragment, paradoxically defusing one's power to compose and assert autonomy. In both cases, humans are cut off from composing practical and mutually enriching connections or alliances. This might explain why many in and out of academia have blamed moral relativism on the diverse theorists and theories that fall under the postmodern label. However, the blame is typically misplaced because making idols out of particularities is a symptom, not a cause of the fragmentation of ethics. Capitalism is the culprit.

That being said, though, difference, dissensus, and so forth negatively testify to an undeniable, disturbing truth. For too long, the West, itself a particular set of particularities, has waged war on other particularities, typically in an effort to accumulate economic, religious, social, and cultural power for whatever particular interests that it, the West, as a particularity espouses at a particular time. This march toward consolidating all other particularities for the sake of one religious doctrine, supreme sovereignty, private property, a military-industrial complex, a master-narrative, global capitalism, or the end of history is responsible for practically erasing or liquidating human autonomy. The ground that people depend on and produce from has been ripped from underneath them and then is parceled out to them for the dear price of sweat, blood, and love. If particularity—whether called sexual difference, cultural identity, nationality, the West, or something else—is left alone and taken as an end in itself, then it

promises the destruction of true individuality, subjectivity, and political power.[15] However, if particularity implies particular individuals in a cooperative process, then it promises the emergence of the whole human being and political power. Therefore, when I refer to a "particular human" or to a "human individual," I will be implying the potentiality of a whole human being, not the egoistic, isolated individual.

Vibrant individuals, uniqueness, cultural identity, sexual empowerment, and freedom are only probable in *healthy and just social networks of constituents—a multitude.*[16] Along with "autonomous human being" or "autonomous human individual," "constituent" is a term that I will use when referring to a whole human being, a particular individual who has realized him- or herself in cooperative social involvement with others. One cannot be an individual, different, or self-actualizing without being connected to and actively engaged with others and the social forces that intersect in oneself. The dialectical process of bringing about the constituent and the multitude runs this way:

> *A multitude depends on the interaction of autonomous constituents, and such constituents are sustainable only through cooperative connections—multitude-building. Consequently, a global multitude depends on the interaction of autonomous particular multitudes (constituencies), and such constituencies are sustainable only through their cooperative connections. Constituents and constituencies dialectically sustain, enliven, and expand the whole multitude*

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[15] "But the essence of man is no abstraction inherent in each single individual. In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations" (Marx, *Early Wrings* 423).

[16] My understanding of "constituent" and "multitude" comes by way of the recent visionary work of Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies: Constituent Power and the Modern State*, trans. Maurizia Boscagli (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1999); with Michael Hardt, *Empire*; and with Hardt, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2004). Of course, Negri is extending a line of thought that began with Marx and Engels: "Only within the community has each individual the means of cultivating gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community. . . . In the real community the individuals obtain their freedom in and through their association" (86-87).

through their cooperative interaction; conversely, the dialectically-produced,

growing multitude nurtures each constituent and constituency through ongoing

distribution of materials and energies.

In this process, the whole or autonomous human individual realizes in him- or herself a whole

network of other autonomous human individuals, and that network realizes each autonomous

human individual. In other words, an individual is whole when he or she incorporates the whole

multitude and when he or she recognizes him- or herself in every facet of the multitude.

According to Marx, this is called *species-being*.[17] A vital ethics in our time, counter to the empty

vessel called ethics these days, will not only have to incorporate but will need to perpetually

emerge through this dialectical process of the multitude.

Whenever I am confronted with an entity, practice, or concept that has been all but

obliterated for the sake of power-accumulation and injustice, I am not one to let it "go gentle":

ethics, like Scotland, is a case in point. There must be a way to connect to and build with its

fragmented materials in order to unleash its buried energy. Thanks to Francis Hutcheson, David

Hume, Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, Jean-Paul Sartre, Raymond Williams,

Michel Foucault, Edward Said, Alasdair MacIntyre, Alain Badiou, and Gilles Fauconnier—a

strange alliance indeed—I have been directed to a method, which is both analytical and poetic:

Take something out of circulation, rub it against what is uncritically taken as

common sense, shake loose its rigidified fabric, locate a still vibrant fiber, and

then begin composing anew and differently from that particular point with the

materials that have been shaken loose.

In the instance of ethics, I am fortunate enough to have an etymological hint to make this

task go easier. A Greek word from which we derive "ethics," *ethos*, literally means "use."

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[17] Marx, *Early Writings* 234, 328-29, 347, 350-51.

Unraveled to this fiber, therefore, ethics is concerned with how one uses something, how one is used, and how one uses oneself and others. The charm of ethics is, nevertheless, also its curse. It is a seemingly neutral process. This, perhaps, is why it is so easily ab-used. An individual or group can come up with a system and call it ethical even if it "justifies" torture, rape, murder, genocide, or even eternal damnation. Ethics, however, is concerned with activity in and of itself. Herein whispers the secret that those who abuse ethics want to neutralize: ethics is about the perpetuation, generation, and enrichment of life, pure and simple. Any attempt to alienate, subordinate, liquidate, or obliterate life contravenes ethics. Still, when I speak of "life," I am not speaking of the issues of biological reproduction that hypocritical theocrats and moralists-for-hire have highjacked. I am speaking of life as a holistic, interconnected web of human activity. Life is social practice—*praxis*.

Throughout most of the history of ethics, praxis is a submerged generative aspect; as long as it is submerged, practical and generative ethics is impossible. Practice is not the same as custom or habit. Practice works toward a creative, burgeoning movement. At its core, ethics is predisposed to *emergence*.[18] Consequently, I reassert this radical aspect of ethics by presenting an ethic of emergent praxis—the *ethic of emergence*. This ethic defies rigidity, mere performativity, simple consumption, and so on.

However, I do not want the ethic of emergence to be misconstrued as some explosive, undisciplined theory. Indeed, it consists of the interaction of four historical-material *virtues*

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[18] Emergence is not to be confused with transcendence as it is generally understood in a bourgeois framework. Emergence indicates a historical-material movement beyond what has been or what is—by engaging, wrenching free, and producing something new out of what has been or what is, not escaping from historical-material reality. Marx uses the term "transcendence" in his writing to imply both the harmful alienation effected by capitalism and the historical-material revolution that he envisions. When I use the term "emergence," I am intensifying the latter connotation, and I am making a direct reference to Marx's most explicit use of the term "emergence": "the *whole of what is called world history* is nothing more than the creation of man through human labour, and the development of nature for man . . . palpable and incontrovertible proof of his self-mediated *birth*, of his *process of emergence*" (*Early Writings* 357).

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submerged in Scotland's ground: *congregation*, *integration*, *emergence*, and *forgiveness*. A virtue is a dynamic, indispensable aspect of an ethical system—the ethic of emergence in this context. A virtue arises from a particular sociocultural ground; therefore, it is not automatically universal in application, even though it may be translated into other situations or adopted and incorporated by other ethical systems.[19] In Scotland's case, I have uncovered the four virtues mentioned above.[20] The first three virtues form the "machinery" of the ethic of emergence, and the last virtue is the "spirit" of the ethic. I briefly offer here a glimpse of these four virtues, which I will explore in greater detail as this study progresses. Congregation brings emergent materials and energies together. This convergence, however, is impossible without the human individual who can integrate these materials and energies into his or her being. Integration connects emergent materials and energies to the individual so that he or she may enter into the cooperative process of congregation with other individuals. These two interrelated processes, though, are not by themselves necessarily productive. Incorporating and sharing materials might not produce alternatives to the status quo of a situation. The virtue of emergence brings about a constructive dynamic when it enters into relation to the other two virtues. When integration and congregation are connected to emergent force, a creative navigational process begins, in which alternative probabilities begin to materialize. The virtue of forgiveness does not exist independently of congregation, integration, and emergence. These three apparently mechanical virtues and the productive ethic to which they give rise produce something non-mechanical but

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[19] Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame, Ind.: U of Notre Dame P, 1984) pp. 220-25.

[20] Some will notice an affinity between the approach I am charting here and the "medieval system" of interpretation that Jameson sketches out and is inspired by in *The Political Unconscious*: interpretation of something occurs on different "levels" or "senses": i.e. anagogical, moral, allegorical, and literal. Jameson, though, intentionally begins and ends with interpreting interpretation, putting off an "exploratory projection of what a vital and emergent political culture should be and do which Raymond Williams has rightly proposed as the most urgent task of a Marxist cultural criticism" (10). Therefore, instead of the present study being a reflection or continuation of Jameson's project, it is an emergence from it, moving toward the probability—an "exploratory projection of what a vital and emergent political culture should be and do"—that he envisions but does not pursue.

nevertheless integral to them. Forgiveness is not a spirit that we can insert into the tripartite praxis that makes up the ethic of emergence; it is one that this praxis brings into being. Even so, forgiveness cannot be taken as a given. In order to continue as an emergent practice, the process that gives rise to forgiveness must continue to intentionally reincorporate forgiveness into every aspect and thus into the whole.

Each of the three "mechanical" virtues is tied to a certain way of knowing—to an epistemological aspect. In the following chapters, I will draw lines between congregation and *mythos*, integration and *pathos*, and emergence and *logos*. "Mythos" has many connotations, but we will operate under the notion that it is genealogically original, evocative, volatile, and metaphorical knowledge that attests to a historical-material world that might be shrouded but is not completely buried.[21] This aspect informs and is informed by the other two aspects, logos and pathos. However, it resists predetermined knowledge, thus unlocking epistemological probabilities. Information gathered from mythos compels the logos to expand or to reconfigure knowledge in order to accommodate it. Moreover, mythos maintains a strong connection to pathos as logos downplays, to its detriment, its connection to pathos. Logos is the authorial reasoning aspect. This aspect archives information gathered from events, analyzes what has occurred and is occurring, and weaves together knowledge—an epistemological map—out of the materials that it and the other two aspects accrue and produce. Pathos is the emotional and sensorial aspect. This aspect embodies and sensually informs the other two, thus enabling them

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[21] Bringing mythos into the fray means to touch on a very heated category of epistemology; nevertheless, I do so in a historical-materialist manner. As I will touch on in chapter 2, my approach owes much to Walter Benjamin's understanding of history and his appreciation of what is called mythological knowledge, which he viewed as a crucial part of any historical-material process and subsequent analyses. The logocentric bias, particularly after the Enlightenment, has allowed philosophers to treat knowledge as an abstraction, thereby allowing them to segregate and then hierarchize logos, mythos, and by extension, pathos. This has restricted epistemology and has, as we will venture in chapters 4 and 5, contributed to alienating knowledge from the multitude. For an in-depth argument along these lines, see Phillip Stambovsky, *Myth and the Limits of Reason* (Lanham: University P, 2004) pp. 45, 55-89.

to have meaningful, practical existence. Moreover, it is the bridge which connects mythos and logos to each other and across which experiential, sensorial data travels to them. Pathos is also the connective tissue of bodies politic—the permeable membrane through which mythos and logos can pass to and from the world and through which humans can connect to other humans. Taken together, mirroring and informing their respective virtues, these ways of knowing create an integrated epistemological basis for ethos. Therefore, they are integral to the ethic of emergence presented here.

Greatly informing this study of Welsh's work and the construction of the ethic of emergence are the monumental cultural theories formulated by Antonio Gramsci and Raymond Williams. Discussing both Gramsci and Williams in a study concerning Scotland is appropriate: Gramsci has greatly informed Scottish socialism, and as a British national, Williams was certainly intimately aware of what occurred to people throughout Britain, including Scotland.[22] Both twentieth-century theorists brought Marx to bear on popular culture. In effect, they led the way—along with Benjamin, Adorno, Louis Althusser, and Pierre Bourdieu—toward understanding how economics, class consciousness, and revolution are not restricted to the factory, union halls, or city barricades. The classroom, the church, the painting, the novel, and the song are also where the conflicts occur between capitalist human alienation and socially-enabled human autonomy. In other words, Gramsci and Williams made evident that all aspects of human life are up for grabs.

Gramsci observed that popular *common sense* is capable either of settling into *bad* (*folkloric*) *sense* or of producing revolutionary *good sense*.[23] In environments where human

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[22] Jonathan Hearn, *Claiming Scotland: National Identity and Liberal Culture* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 2000) p. 21.

[23] See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings*, eds. David Forgacs and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, trans. William Boelhower (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1985) pp. 188-95, 420-21; and Gramsci,

autonomy would threaten an elite's accumulation of power, an uncritical, disengaged acceptance of the status quo is encouraged by the dominant social institutions. Hence, a common sense geared toward conservatism, acquiescence, and provincial opinion is promoted. In such a situation, the alternative, good sense, becomes not only a nuisance but a threat. In a capitalist situation, for instance, good sense will be diffused by cultural productions which relegate it to the level of spectacle, fantasy, naiveté, idealism, and so forth. Good sense is presented as alien or impractical so that it can be dismissed. Or, as is the case in post-9/11 America, it is not presented at all. As Gramsci saw first hand, creative energies aligned with good sense are also appropriated by bad sense in order to diffuse and neutralize good sense. Because bad sense becomes natural (or hegemonic), humans will consume themselves and thereby neutralize their own productive power for the sake of the systems that dominate them. Nevertheless, bad sense can never totally obliterate good sense because it still depends on some of the energies and materials of good sense to sustain itself.

Williams uses different terminology to explain this process.[24] Humans' productive energies are degraded to the level of *residual culture* (henceforth called *residual force*), which allows for those now fragmented and contained energies to be managed and used for the accumulation of power. Creativity paradoxically becomes a means of rigidification. As with good sense, though, the probability of something else occurring is always present, no matter how submerged it might be. The materials and energies indicative of *emergent force* promise alternative, generative probabilities.[25]

Selections from the Prison Notebooks, eds. and trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International, 1971) pp. 323-43, 348-51, 419-25. For a masterful exposition of Gramsci's theories on common sense, see Marci Landy, *Film, Politics, and Gramsci* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1994) pp. 73-98.

[24] See Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1977) 121-27.

[25] Emergent practice, therefore, "is never only a matter of immediate practice; indeed it depends crucially on finding new forms or adaptations of form" (Williams 126).

It is, therefore, by synthesizing the currently submerged aspects of Scotland, ethics, and common sense that a Scottish ethic of emergence becomes the philosophical and practical heart of this study. As I will argue, this is also the heart of Welsh's work. What has submerged Scotland and ethics is the manner in which they have been used; likewise, what have subordinated most humans to the systems that dominate and steal life from them is how humans have been used and, more importantly, how they have used themselves and each other. Nevertheless, a Scotland *after* Scotland, ethos, good sense, and emergent energies and materials cannot help but suggest alternatives, one of which I will further elaborate and systematize throughout the body of this study.

The map key I have provided here is by no means exhaustive. Throughout the study, I will expand and elaborate each of the concepts introduced so far. Moreover, other key concepts will emerge as we proceed, which I will accordingly flesh out. Presently, though, we have enough to begin exploring Welsh's maps and to begin weaving our own.

The weaving-mapping figure I have employed indicates that the map before us has many layers, connecting points, and knots. Accordingly, I have chosen a method of study that reflects this reality. Each chapter will be characterized by a particular historical-material context, an epistemological aspect, at least one literary genre, and a virtue that emerges from the Scottish ground. Therefore, each chapter is itself a small-scale map feeding into the larger map of the study.

In chapter 2, "Medieval Thread: Outlaw Congregation," the virtue to be arrived at is congregation. I will focus on what I call Welsh's trainspotting books: the novels *Trainspotting*, its sequel *Porno*, and *Glue*, the figurative and literal glue between the other two. They permit access to mythos. These texts practically establish the prehistorical or mythological fabric of

Welsh's Scotland. They also disclose the medieval historical-material strands that run through postmodern Scotland. The narrative technique Welsh uses in these books strengthens these links. The three novels are written in modes similar to what one finds in ancient Gaelic lays, Scottish wonder tales, early British historical chronicles, and Gaelic sagas—Fenian literature in particular. Consequently, we will explore how Fenian outlaw morality still figures greatly in Scotland's society and culture. We will also explore how Welsh's trainspotting books can be linked to the Highland caterans, the Border reivers and the Celtic Christians that have nearly been forgotten by history.

In the third chapter, "Reformation Thread: Covenant of Integration," the virtue to be arrived at is integration. Two texts will serve as touchstones: a novel, *Filth*, and a short story, "The Granton Star Cause." As a whodunit turned psychological thriller, *Filth* is a postmodern twist on the modern mystery genre. The novel's subject matter explicitly uncovers the bad sense unleashed by the Reformation as a historical and philosophical rupture, and it implicitly cries for the good sense of Calvinism to emerge before the bad sense of ultra-Calvinism all but obliterates it. "Granton Star" is a postmodern, Calvinist morality play that has passed through a Kafkaesque looking-glass. In it, Welsh turns on their heads the presumed nature of God and humans' relationship with him. Both stories confront humans' inability to understand or control the secular and religious gods of their own making, their inability to identify generative instead of self-destructive virtues, and their inability to reconcile with themselves and with each other. These stories cannot be adequately understood without discussing the Reformed theology of, primarily, John Calvin and John Knox. Admittedly, the theocratic bent of Calvinism in general and Scottish Calvinism in particular has overshadowed their radical democratic aspects; moreover, aspects of Calvinism have been appropriated by capitalism to rationalize the

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neutralization of human autonomy and the liquidation of human life. To help illuminate and

chart a way beyond overwhelming Reformation evil and its dreadful impact on individuals and

society, Francis Hutcheson and his concept of a "moral sense" will prove crucial to redeeming

generative energies that emerged from the Reformation.

Then, in chapter 4, "Enlightenment Thread: Mapping Emergence," the virtue to be

arrived at is emergence. I will enter a short story from *The Acid House*, "The Two

Philosophers," into a dialogue with a Robert Burns's poem, "The Twa Dogs." The genre of the

two tales is in the estate satire tradition, both tales employing the pilgrimage technique most

famously used by the medieval English poet Geoffrey Chaucer in *The Canterbury Tales*.

Seemingly anachronistic in both the modern and postmodern contexts, the pilgrimage estate

satire is extremely timely. The effects of unequal distributions of sociocultural power are as

pressing, if not more so, than they were during the later Middle Ages, when the bourgeois classes

were just emerging. More importantly, Burns's and Welsh's tales bear directly on what occurred

in the eighteenth century, the modern epistemological crisis. They are deeply concerned with

what has been and still is being passed off as reality in situations dominated by truly disturbing

historical-material forces. As a consequence, they seek alternative probabilities. Because

empirically knowing the difference between what is probable or not probable is a major concern

of this chapter, I will focus here on the epistemological aspect of logos. It is no coincidence,

then, that David Hume's epistemological and moral theories form the philosophical touchstone

and problem of this chapter. Welsh homes in on and liberates something that Hume had

uncovered in his theories of knowledge but had progressively sidelined in his moral philosophy

and personal life: the best way to enable alternative probabilities is to take what is, produce

anew with it, and then imaginatively build towards the alternative probabilities that emerge

during the process. Welsh taps into this Humean good sense that, remarkably, is also substantiated by recent cognitive science. Accordingly, Gilles Fauconnier's work in the area of mental mapping (or cognitive construction) will serve a vital role in building toward the ethic that this study uncovers in Scotland by way of Welsh.

In chapter 5, "Postmodern Loom: Emerging through Forgiveness," the virtue we will arrive at is forgiveness. As far as genre goes, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* fits into one of the oldest literary traditions, the epic. It will seem, therefore, that the study ends before where it started, particularly when I draw a line connecting an unmistakably postmodern novel to a literature that is even older than the Fenian literature discussed in chapter 2. The protagonist of *Nightmares*, Roy Strang, is surprisingly evocative of the Ulster Cycle's hero Cúchulainn *and* the ambiguous Gaelic goddess Morrígan. However, when one takes into account that many of the Gaelic sagas and epics, such as the Ulster Cycle, were presumably written during periods of monumental historical-material and sociocultural upheaval, the connection is not fanciful. We are in such a period ourselves. The connections between *Nightmares* and tales about Cúchulainn are not just literarily analogical. There are battles in both between a society based primarily on generation and one based primarily on destruction. What will not be surprising, though, is which type of society has proved dominant. Even after the Christian and the later socialist revolutions—or perhaps because of them—the progress of what is effectively an empire of death has gone almost unchecked. To arrive at an alternative future informed by forgiveness, the various threads that have been untangled and engaged in the preceding chapters will be brought together to weave a map towards an emergent postmodern Scotland. This Scotland will open way for conceiving a global alternative probability. Such a view reflects Marx's conviction that the emancipation of one particular situation—Germany in Marx's case, Scotland in ours—is the

emancipation of all people.[26] A world built on that conviction could be one that countervails the empire of late capitalism. Such a world would be a world *after* Scotland, *after* Colombia, *after* Vietnam, *after* Algeria, and so on.

Finally, in an afterword, I will re-ground this whole project in recent political events that have occurred in Scotland and the rest of Britain, and in my personal rationale for taking on this topic.

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[26] Marx, *Early Writings* 257.

Chapter 2

Medieval Thread: Outlaw Congregation

The past is all forgotten now
This is a young, modern land
Fit for zeros

—The Proclaimers[27]

". . . and the friendship that you have not found up to now, you shall now have."

—*Acallam na Senórach*[28]

Alan Johnson-Hogg replies over the phone to Spud, "this is a badly written celebration of yob culture and of people who haven't achieved anything noteworthy in the local community."[29] Johnson-Hogg is the director of a major Scottish publishing firm, Scotvar Publishing Ltd., who unexpectedly receives a call about a form-letter rejection he had sent to Spud. The manuscript rejected: Daniel "Spud" Murphy's history of post-1920 Leith, "a history ay Leith fae the merger [with Edinburgh] tae the present," as told by the people of Leith themselves, "the *real* characters" (*Porno* 147, 260). The method of writing such a history: "Start oaf in 1920, n maybe go back a bit, then forward again, like aw they fitba-player biographies" (*Porno* 147). The first reason for writing such a history: "Leith wis sucked intae Edinburgh against the people's will. That was when aw the problems pure started, man! Four-tae-one against, man, four-tae-one against" (*Porno* 185). The second reason: "Aw that info, aw that history, even if it's selectively written by the top cats tae tell their tales. . . . But ah reckon thit thir's other stories thit kin be teased oot" (*Porno* 257). The ultimate reason for writing the history: "Yuv goat the Scottish Office at one end and yuv goat the new Parliament at the other. Embourgeoisement, man, that's what the intellectual cats call it. Ten years' time, there'll be nae

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[27] Craig Reid and Charlie Reid, "A Land Fit for Zeros," performed by The Proclaimers, *Persevere* (Nettwerk America 2001).

[28] *The Tales of the Elders of Ireland (Acallam na Senórach)*, trans. Ann Dooley and Harry Roe (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1999) 172. Henceforth, I will refer to this text as *Acallam*.

[29] Welsh, *Porno* (New York: Norton, 2002) p. 380.

gadges like me n you [Begbie] left doon here. . . . They want us aw oot in schemes oan the edge ay toon, Franco, ah'm telling ye, man" (*Porno* 261). As nonplussed as Johnson-Hogg is by actually receiving a phone call from a rejected writer—a taboo which all professional intellectuals obediently do not violate—Spud is shocked by the crass insincerity of the rejection letter after he has contacted the undeniably pro-establishment Tory operative or New Labour hack or kailyard Scottish Nationalist (all amounting to the same). He throws his manuscript into the fireplace, watching that "wee part ay ma life go up in smoke like the rest ay it" (*Porno* 380).

It is difficult to pick just one reason for why Spud's book is rejected, at least according to the established publishing standards of our time. Let us, nevertheless, begin with style. Spud's stated method of historical narrative is to start off from a specific historical point "n maybe go back a bit, then forward again." This indicates a more elliptical than linear approach to narrative. Spud demonstrates his awareness that a point in the past is not *the past*, and in order for a point in time to be historically meaningful at all, one must show from what contextual materials and energies it emerged. In effect, the genealogy of a particular historical event must be charted before the import of that moment may be recognized, as Walter Benjamin illustrated in his monumental, incomplete project on the arcades of Paris.[30] Moreover, all that proceeds from a particular historical moment certainly affirms and transforms the significance of that moment, which is never totally finished or absorbed. Like Peter Pan's shadow, the past lives on in the present and future, even if that past is an ambiguous one. The type of narrative that Spud will write, therefore, will be a helix whose spirals will emerge from a common point (Figure 2.1), never losing their bond with it. And to complicate things further, such a narrative will constantly

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[30] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1999).

draw connections between the spiral that leads to the central historical moment and the one that proceeds from it (Figure 2.2). Thus, Spud's history will be a living constellation.

Figure 2.1   Figure 2.2

Most popular and academic publishers would reject outright a historical manuscript written in such a way. It would be accused of lacking focus, coherence, linearity, readability, and so forth. But Spud would never think of writing his history any other way; he probably could not. His history of Leith is not so much a history of or about Leith; it is a living Leith given back to itself in all its richness and complexity.

There is another intricacy involved in Spud's historiography. Whereas most historians write to summarize, elucidate, or formalize for posterity the actions and events that have affected a certain group of people or people in general, Spud tries to write into life humans who have *practically* been erased by history: in historical *practice*, they have been subordinated, and for the sake of narrative *practicality*, they have been muted. To write such a life means to effectively write in a different language, the language of the "the *real* characters," the "no ones." Therefore, the narrative methodology of Spud's project alone is equivalent to rupturing established narrative with its own submerged materials.

Therefore, how could Spud's rejection be anything but inevitable?

Fortunately, Welsh has overcome rejection, and the phenomenal success of his novel *Trainspotting*, along with the success of its movie adaptation, has secured him relatively safe passage in the publishing world. And because he submits his work as fiction, he does not have to

abide by the standards confronting historians. Hence, Welsh has found a way to do what Spud is

not allowed to do by Johnson-Hogg: to tell the history of the no ones by sneaking it into fiction.

Welsh not only knows "thit thir's other stories thit kin be teased oot"; he knows how to weave

those stories together and deliver them.

However, he is not just any kind of storyteller. He has a very serious agenda. We

already know what it is because it is the same as Spud's. One key difference is that Welsh

attempts to do for all of Scotland and all human beings what Spud attempts and fails to do for

Leith. Like Spud, Welsh chooses Leith and Edinburgh as his starting point and construction

yard, but Welsh's scope is global. If we look at what connects *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, and *Porno*,

we might understand why Welsh cannot restrict his vision for Scotland, even though his works

are certainly Scottish in origin.

The three trainspotting novels, as I will call them, are connected by the characters'

collective, overwhelming sense of not belonging anywhere. This sense culminates in the general

impression that Scotland is a non-place. Technically, home for the trainspotters of *Trainspotting*

and *Porno* is, as Spud's manuscript attests, Leith. Nevertheless, Spud's attempt to bring this

place to historical life negatively indicates that Leith is nonexistent to most people outside of it.

Historically, the life of Leith was virtually evacuated from it when "Leith wis sucked intae

Edinburgh against the people's will." Any life that now exists in the non-place of Leith is being

pushed "aw oot in schemes oan the edge ay toon." The same goes for the hooligans in *Glue*,

who hail from the schemes of Edinburgh, not the glorious Edinburgh to which academics and

festival-goers typically flock. Widening the scope, Mark "Rents" Renton concludes that the

Scotland that he and the others inhabit is "a place fill ay nosey cunts who willnae mind their ain

business. A place ay dispossessed white trash in a trash country fill ay dispossessed white trash.

Some say that the Irish are the trash ay Europe. That's shite. It's the Scots. The Irish hud the

bottle tae win thir country back, or at least maist ay it" (*Trainspotting* 190). He goes even further

when he angrily responds to Tommy's kailyard nationalism in the film adaptation of

Trainspotting:

> I hate being Scottish. We're the lowest of the fucking low, the scum of the earth,
>
> the most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat into
>
> civilization. Some people hate the English, but I don't. They're just wankers.
>
> We, on the other hand, are colonized by wankers. We can't even pick a decent
>
> culture to be colonized by. We are ruled by effete arseholes. It's a shite state of
>
> affairs and all the fresh air in the world will not make any fucking difference.[31]

The message in all cases is that Scotland does not exist, at least not a viable Scotland.

Scotland's peripheries, therefore, are windows through which to ascertain the whole

Scottish situation. By way of the peripheral narrative windows that Welsh gives us, he indicates

that there is certainly a historical terrain on which Scots exist, but its topography is inconclusive.

Welsh resists even negatively affirming Scotland as a nation-state, as a unified sociocultural

entity, or even as an "imagined community," to use Benedict Anderson's famous term. Welsh

illustrates that Scotland is a non-place. Coincidentally, it is not surprising that Welsh would

couch his characters in the schemes of Leith and Edinburgh, non-places within a non-place

called Scotland: non-places of dispossessed no ones in a non-place full of dispossessed no

ones.[32]

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[31] John Hodge, *Trainspotting* (New York: Hyperion 1996) p. 46.
[32] The architect and theorist Paul Virilio has theorized such absent or emptied spaces in his work. See, for example, Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P, 1991); *Lost Dimension* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P, 1991); and *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997).

Scotland's historical-material status over at least the last half-dozen centuries begs the question about its national existence in terms that modern perceptions might recognize. Arguably because Scotland has never actually recognized itself as an actual, homogenous, and autonomous historical reality, Scotland has proved so susceptible to being reduced to a catalogue of kailyard nationalist fetishes—i.e. a fantastic place of fresh air, craggy vistas, kilted parades of noble-savage Highlanders, heaven-taught Lowland ploughmen, single malt whisky, and golden oatmeal—or of being abstracted to the level of a neoliberal utopia—i.e. Edinburgh-land as a source of modern Western Civilization's triumph over Dark Age barbarism.

Welsh is most certainly not a kailyard nationalist or Edinburgh-land neoliberal. In his work, Welsh refuses to employ the essentialist identity politics and neoliberal truisms that have done more to subordinate Scotland than anything else. National identity and bourgeois ideology are abstractions that have excluded the majority of Scots, "the *real* characters." These abstractions are occlusive master-narratives "selectively written by the top cats tae tell their tales," not generative narrative sites in which to engage the actual "shite state of affairs." Welsh refuses to follow the lead of the "fuckin parasite politician[s] that ever stood up and mouthed lies and fascist platitudes in a suit and a smarmy smile" (*Trainspotting* 228). In fact, one could easily argue that he is extremely concerned about the present and future of Scotland—not as an ideal place, but as a vital, empowered terrain of no ones which can connect to and cooperate with other domains of no ones.

Even though Welsh practically documents Scotland's status as a non-place, and even though he does not buy into either reduction of Scotland, Welsh is not anti-Scottish. Some of the few commentaries on Welsh mistakenly claim that he is because they get too distracted by Renton's authoritative tone, forgetting that Renton is perhaps the least trustworthy of all Welsh's

characters, including Simon "Sick Boy" Williamson.[33] Renton is undoubtedly a fantastic

diagnostician of the current "state of affairs," but his jadedness, lack of compassion, and inability

to commit to anything or anyone, including himself, undercuts his ability to produce anything

like hopeful alternatives. Renton is probably anti-Scottish; however, this would be so mainly

because he hates himself and, as a result, feels disconnected from anything or anyone outside of

himself. Welsh, however, is not Renton, and again, he is not anti-Scottish. If Welsh were anti-

Scottish, he would contradict his whole objective: to locate a vibrant Scotland and map it out.

Perhaps it is best to think of Welsh as a writer who has an "outlaw" understanding of Scotland.

From the margins, he observes what Scotland could be beneath the bad sense that has

overwhelmed it.

Welsh does not assume that there is a healthy preexisting community to which Scotland's

dispossessed may simply return: a primal, ethnic, or national Ur-state. "But we can never have

what we had," Carl "N-Sign" Ewart tells himself, "it's all gone: the innocence, the lager, the

pills, the flags, the travel, the scheme . . . it's all so far away from me."[34] Through the mouths of

practically all his characters, Welsh indicates that the abstractions of self, home, community, and

nation condemn humans to creating for themselves "a smokescreen of bullshit and baubles"

(*Glue* 463). Nevertheless, Welsh explicitly or implicitly returns to the idea that amidst all the

injustice, bullshit, and death, "something [hangs] in the air between [us]. There [is] just

something, some kind of second chance" (*Glue* 455). Amidst all the chaos that Welsh discloses

in his books, he illustrates how a new history and life—a living biography—is realizable through

congregating apparently disparate materials and energies within an undoubtedly bleak context,

such as a Scotland, on the margins of postmodern capitalism's empire. He does not just sense an

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[33] See, for example, Grant Farred, "Wankerdom: Trainspotting As a Rejection of the Postcolonial?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103.1 (2004): 215-26.

[34] Welsh, *Glue* (New York: Norton, 2001) p. 418.

alternative world, existing somewhere in the genes or in the ether; indeed, he recognizes it as existing within Scotland's historical-material fabric.[35] This alternative, though, is deeply submerged, and the representatives of it are elusive because they live on the margins.

In this chapter, therefore, we will hypothesize that Welsh is, in fact, put in the position of creating a prehistory for Scotland from which he can then build towards an alternative Scottish history. To build this hypothesis, we will first look at what sorts of stories Spud fails to have published, which are the sorts of stories that Welsh does tell in his three interrelated trainspotting novels. Then, we will look at the literary tradition and epistemological category within which Welsh is arguably working. That will enable us to uncover affinities which Welsh's Scots have with specific marginal groups of medieval Scots. As a consequence of our hypothesizing and analysis, we will arrive at the virtue of congregation.

2.1 First Medieval Strand: Outlaw Tales

The following synopses of Welsh's trainspotting books might give an indication of what Spud's history recounted before being burned.

Mark "Rents" Renton went through school, and he did well. He went through a trade apprenticeship, but mass unemployment made that an absurdity. So, he went to Aberdeen University for a couple of terms, majoring in history. He could have done well, but he detested the culture of deception that it represented: a middle-class culture of spiritual anemia masked by physical appearances, of lies veiled as truths, and of sadomasochism veiled as Civil Society. Then, when we actually meet Renton in *Trainspotting*, he has turned to heroin, "smack," because it is "an honest drug, because it strips away these delusions. . . . It doesnae alter yir

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[35] This is a Benjaminian position which Joseph Mali masterfully elucidates: "Benjamin conceived of origin (*Usprung*) in genealogical rather than in biological terms, contending that it was not to be found in the moment of intuition but rather in that of recognition" ("The Reconciliation of Myth: Benjamin's Homage to Bachofen" *Journal of the History of Ideas* 60.1 [1999]: pp. 165-6).

consciousness. It just gies ye a hit and a sense ay well-being. Eftir that, ye see the misery ay the

world as it is, and ye cannae anaesthetise yirsel against it" (*Trainspotting* 90).

But the world of delusions, the middle-class world, is dominant, and Renton cannot fend

it off, perhaps *because of* his drug addiction. He makes a few attempts to go clean, to be a

contributing member of society. The first time that he attempts to go clean, he takes methadone

for awhile, but then he squanders the detoxification drug by abusing it. He makes a visit to

Mother Superior, a major Edinburgh narcotics guru, to break his heroin fast. Renton takes a bad

hit, and he ends up in the infirmary. As a result, his parents place him under house arrest so that

he can make a clean break. This is the turning point for Renton, which has dramatic impact on

him and his ragtag collection of friends: most notably, Spud, Simon "Sick Boy" Williamson,

and Francis "Franco" Begbie—a saintly junky, a sadistic con artist, and a raging psychotic,

respectively. The world that Renton detests has broken him, and it has done so through the very

people it has subjugated: his working-class parents, his hapless friends, and the destitute scheme

culture as a whole.

Despite the bold declaration he makes midway through Welsh's first novel—"Well, ah

choose no tae choose life," as in the "life" prescribed by capitalist bourgeois-liberal Western

society (*Trainspotting* 188)—he hatches a plot, within a drug plot hatched by Sick Boy, to make

his escape from the Scottish lumpenproletariat. He steals thousands of pounds that he, Second

Prize, Spud, Sick Boy, and Begbie make off a major drug deal. Renton abandons his comrades,

slipping off to Amsterdam, the Netherlands. They go to prison, flee to London, or fall back into

the government housing-schemes of Leith, on the outer edge of Edinburgh. After Renton crosses

the North Sea, we discover in *Porno* that he owns and runs a lucrative discotheque. Again,

despite his bold declaration, he does choose the life of "societal reward . . . sustained by the

socially-supported condoning of wealth, power, status, etc." (*Trainspotting* 186). Thus, he presumes, that free from his friends "for good, he could be what he wanted to be. He'd stand or fall alone" (*Trainspotting* 344).

Things do not go much better throughout most of *Glue*, which is a tragicomic love story. A core group of four childhood friends grow away from each other—Carl Ewart, "Juice" Terry Lawson, Billy Birrell, and Andy "Gally" Galloway. This dissolution occurs, as it does in *Trainspotting*, because of betrayal. Except here, the betrayals that accumulate for a span of nearly thirty years are rarely intentional or terminal, just recurring. Whereas Terry, Billy, and Gally take for granted a lumpenproletariat code of *posse comitatus* among Scotland's dispossessed, Carl figures that abiding by strict alliances to his childhood friends imprisons him and them. He decides that their affiliation perpetuates the cycle of self-destruction which a foundationless postmodern world is more than willing to accommodate. Ironically, to achieve his dream—to be a world-renowned rave DJ—he will have to abandon what amounts to a pre-modern existence in Edinburgh and delve into the very heart of the postmodern world that feeds off the perpetual self-destruction of people like him and his mates.

Deeply intimate, loyal relationships are a hindrance to success in the age of late capital, but they are also what can keep humans from becoming totally groundless. Nevertheless, in Carl's mind, he cannot continue to enable the egocentric sex addict and con artist, Juice Terry. He cannot continue to worry about the introverted boxer, Billy, who lives under his older brother's and organized crime's shadow. And Gally is too harsh a check on reality: he is the embodiment of working-class Scotland's social, cultural, and economic decay; consequently, he is the embodiment of psychological and sociological anomie. A life of petty crime, alcoholism, soccer hooliganism, and psychological denial has contributed to their all being dominated by

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what Juice Terry calls "the grey," which consists of the "scheme, the government employment scheme, the dole office, the factory, the jail" (*Glue* 456). Carl must escape this abject situation and his comrades so that he may make a lucrative career out of staging escapist pseudo-events at nightclubs—weaving hypnotic beats, cascading sounds, digitally hybridized recordings, and entrancing light effects.

However, as the disjointed series of episodes in *Glue* progresses, something almost imperceptible happens. Even after moving to New South Wales, Australia, Carl cannot escape, and he ultimately does not want to. Carl is, in fact, not the primary gravitational force in his world. He realizes that his future as a human individual, not to mention as an artist, is impossible without Terry, Billy, the memory of Gally, as well as the adoration of his parents and the socialist-Presbyterian ethic they represent.[36] Carl returns to Edinburgh as a result of this realization. Upon the little tribe's reunion, the former street scruffs not only save a dried-up pop star's musical career; the friends of thirty years reaffirm their bond by reckoning with personal and sociocultural ghosts, even though this puts them back on the margins of postmodern success. Learning from their friend Gally, who "apprenticed [them] all to loss" and who died because he could not love "himself as much as he loved the rest of the world," the three remaining friends ultimately try to love each other and the world as much as they loved themselves (*Glue* 418).

So, what happens when we meet the schemies of *Trainspotting* and *Glue* in the early twenty-first century—who are now more or less off hard narcotics, who are now in their thirties and forties, and who want to make a legitimate mark on the world? *Porno*. One could use Sick Boy's words to understand the surface narrative of Welsh's fifth novel: "an erotic tease, but with extended hard-core fuck scenes . . . inserted into it" (*Porno* 90). The book is a "tease" because it plays on its readers' expectations; likewise, the "fuck scenes" have more to do with readers being

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[36] Welsh, interview.

confounded than with sexual arousal. Welsh practically carries out a social experiment, exploring what happens when people like Renton, Sick Boy, and Juice Terry enter the middle-class world. The fantasies that are enabled by owning a discotheque, running a bar, prostituting in a massage parlor, and making B-grade pornography videos will not prove at all exotic against bourgeois norms: a little money to put away, a chance to travel, funds for college tuition, gaining notoriety amongst peers, and power.

After returning from years in London following the drug plot in *Trainspotting*, Sick Boy decides to enter the mainstream by buying an Edinburgh bar and running a porno film business on the side. His business scheme and the narrative plot of *Porno* are mirror images of *Trainspotting*'s. As was the case with its predecessor, Welsh employs a well-worn story along the lines of Chaucer's *The Pardoner's Tale* in order to ironically disclose a deep set of serious problems. When individuals are reduced to and segregated by their private desires and faults, they are destructive. They become mutually destructive and, therefore, self-destructive.

Since he betrayed and abandoned his mates in *Trainspotting*, Renton is certainly alone at the beginning of *Porno*, even though he has been successful as a club owner and has had a relatively "normal" domestic relationship with a German woman. His solipsism has increased, though; consequently, he has become an almost obsessive traitor. Spud is in worse shape than he was before—more drug-addled, more emotionally broken, and more needful of comradeship than ever. He wants love, friendship, and truth, a combined desire which does more to alienate him from those around him as they pursue accumulation of power. Sick Boy's sadism has evolved into sociopathy. The thrill of making the "next big deal" in one of his many self-described schemes is no longer good enough. An increase in others' suffering must correlate with any increase in personal success. Juice Terry has become a parody of himself: no longer

Carl's manager, he is literally reduced to a broken penis, the result of starring in Sick Boy's films. The already vicious, psychotic Begbie has become violence incarnate, hell-bent on exacting revenge against the traitorous Renton for a decade-long stint in prison after the drug deal in *Trainspotting*. When Begbie is released, Sick Boy orchestrates a nearly fatal confrontation between the former soccer hooligan and his betrayer. Nikki Fuller-Smith appears as Welsh's first serious female character. She hails from the middle class that Renton, Sick Boy, and Juice Terry are trying to enter. This in itself is important, for she demonstrates that being in the middle class is far from a cure for lower-class subordination. To keep herself in university, she makes money on the side by giving handjobs to professional men in a salon. She is also bored: hence her love affair with an abusive, risk-taking Sick Boy, her stint as a porn star in his films, and her ultimately betraying him by running off to America with Renton, all the porno money in tow. All that *Porno* seems to prove is that humans cannot help but abuse and be abused.

Despite the morose character of these novels, the basic plot of all of them seems simple enough: a boy gets tired of his home and friends, leaves, and returns somewhat wiser. However, depending on a plot to understand Welsh's books really leads nowhere. The way a story is told is everything to Welsh, and he rarely takes a simple path. Second only to the difficulty a non-Scot might experience with the Lowland Scots language that permeates much of Welsh's fiction will be the difficulty one might experience because of the dialectical interaction of many particular narrative strands. In the case of the three trainspotting books, immediately apparent is the absence of a consistent spatiotemporal location and authoritative voice. The reader is taken in and out of various narrative levels, which coincide with different states of consciousness and alternative spatiotemporal dimensions.

The movie *Trainspotting* is quick to stress this disjointedness. It opens with a scene in which Renton (Ewan McGregor) dives into a pub toilet to retrieve a suppository, and the world he enters is an aquatic dreamscape.[37] He reemerges from the toilet with suppository in hand and then, soaking wet, exits the pub. In view of this and many other instances in that movie and the novels, it would not be an exaggeration to link Welsh with the magical realism most commonly associated with Latin American writers. Moreover, the reader, or movie spectator, hitches a ride with a given character, who might or might not be narrating his or her experiences and thoughts. Then, once a reader has become accustomed to one character or narrator, he or she will probably experience what linguists call a "rough referential shift," as another character or narrator abruptly enters into focus.

The books' section and chapter titles imply some sort of coherence, but they also signal the disjointed situation that the novels uncover. For example, in *Trainspotting* we may discern some sort of historical progression from the section titles: "Kicking," "Relapsing," "Kicking Again," "Blowing It," "Exile," "Home," and "Exit." Within most sections, however, we are confronted with a virtual cacophony of chapters, which are formally and conceptually different. "Exile," for instance, is composed of the chapters "London Crawling," "Bad Blood," "There Is a Light that Never Goes Out," "Feeling Free," and "The Elusive Mr. Hunt." Renton narrates "London Crawling," which covers what he experiences and the observations he makes during one of his escapes to London. Renton narrates differently at different times in the trainspotting books. In this instance, he employs a thick Scots dialect and adopts the posture of a decidedly streetwise Scottish junky and hooligan. Elsewhere, he adopts a more measured, middle-class, and generally British tone. "Bad Blood" seems completely unrelated to the rest of the chapter

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[37] *Trainspotting*, dir. Danny Boyle, perf. Ewan McGregor, Ewen Bremner, Kevin McKidd, Jonny Lee Miller, and Robert Carlyle, Miramax, 1996.

and novel. It is narrated from the perspective of Davie Mitchell, a character not directly connected to the trainspotters. He is HIV positive and plots revenge on the man who gave him AIDS by raping Mitchell's girlfriend. Both "There Is a Light that Never Goes Out" and "Feeling Free" are set in the same pub on the same night, but they seem unrelated because of their differing narrative perspectives. Like a movie camera, the omniscient narrator of "There Is a Light" moves from observing at a distance a pub and pub culture to going deep into the activities and conversations within. And for a rare moment, we see Spud, Begbie, and Renton together as a group, as if in a snapshot photograph. Spud narrates "Feeling Free." This story is consistent with Spud's rhetoric in most of his other stories: a blend of self-deprecating internal monologue, gregarious banter, elegy, psychological analysis, social commentary, and negotiation. Finally, in "The Elusive Mr. Hunt," which takes place in another pub at a different time, an omniscient narrator serves as a vehicle for an old bar joke: a *double entendre* based on a phone call to a bartender who subsequently calls out to someone with a sexualized name, "Mark Hunt" ("more cunt") in this case. But despite the comic relief, the narrator permits us to observe one of the few instances in which Renton is forced to move out of his egocentrism to acknowledge the feelings of others.

Moreover, the stories are meaningless without sociocultural context. Welsh takes us into the underworld of Edinburgh's schemes, and we follow the characters as they trek around Britain and the globe during what many would characterize as a key period of cultural and economic transition in global, as well as Scottish, postmodern history—the 1970s to present.[38] The rave culture emerging during the early 1980s of *Trainspotting* becomes dominant, along with its drugs of choice, heroin and ecstasy. Discotheques and super-heroic DJs come to replace concert arenas

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[38] This is of course a simplification of complex economic history. See, for instance, Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century* (London: Verso, 1994); and Robert Brenner, *The Boom and the Bubble* (London: Verso, 2002).

and larger than life punk rockers. The dysfunctional Scotland under Margaret Thatcher's neo-imperial United Kingdom becomes the slightly devolved, dysfunctional Scotland under Tony Blair's neoliberal, US-controlled Britain. The government social projects, such as public housing developments (schemes), that came about during and following the World Wars have disintegrated, displacing further the working and lower classes and the communities that they had developed. With the passage of a little over three decades, the claustrophobic tinge that consumes the trainspotters and hooligans wherever they go begins to disperse, and by the end of *Porno*, seeping in is the recognition that globalization is a euphemism for the global dispossession of the working class and lumpenproletariat. But along with this recognition is anticipation—that, to borrow from Welsh's epigram by Nietzsche, a festival may emerge from the cruelty.[39]

It is the preceding recognition that will help us to better understand how Welsh tells these tales and why he tells them the way that he does. The task that Welsh has set before himself, therefore, is to artistically break the hegemony of the general anti-social and, thus, anti-human terrain of "nastiness," as Spud calls it: "ma nastiness is like a kind ay passive nastiness, a sortay nastiness by omission, by no daein anything cause ah dinnae really care aboot anyone strongly enough tae sortay intervene" (*Porno* 284). This terrain of nastiness is a virtual burial ground for Scotland and human life in general. Welsh's trainspotters and hooligans fuel this nastiness by their self-destructiveness and lack of concern for their fellow dispossessed. Welsh, however, is not interested in just laying out the terrain of nastiness and indefinitely chastising his characters. That terrain, along with the people on it, is the place from which to begin. Instead of abandoning Scotland because it is a site of defeat, betrayal, subordination, and alienation, Welsh turns to a

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[39] The epigraph from Friedrich Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* that prefaces *Porno* reads, "Without cruelty, there is no festival. . . " (ix).

seemingly hopeless Scottish situation so that he may discover the alternative potential—the good sense—buried under the nastiness.

Superficially, *Porno* obliterates whatever reconciliation could have occurred after *Trainspotting* and whatever hope could be emerging in the last chapters of *Glue*. Superficially, the third trainspotting book is a farce with a comic ending; in actuality, it is a tragedy of the deepest, most classical proportions. One could conclude, therefore, that taken together, all three novels are an open and shut case on betrayal and failure. We should be suspicious of such a conclusion, though. Using unorthodox narrative techniques, Welsh is after something else: a world where "real choice" overwhelms "consumer choice," where injustice is not obscured by society but eradicated by it, where "all you need tae dae in life" is to just "be yourself" (*Glue* 386, 462-63, 367). However, when one is a working-class heroin addict, thief, football hooligan, con artist, or idealist, a world in which one can "be yourself" would certainly be a world beyond most people's comprehension. The dispossessed already do not exist in the mainstream mind. Moreover, if we just look at what is explicitly presented in the novels—frenetic tales recounting the half-baked schemes and total failures of delinquents, misfits, and the lumpenproletariat in general—then we will miss what Welsh is envisioning through his tales: an alternative world that bubbles up in the gaps and on the fringes of what seems to be a hopeless situation peopled by hapless and worthless individuals. What would such an alternative world look like?

Such a world will, to the post-Enlightenment mind, seem to exist in a dream, nightmare, fairyland, or myth. As Carl and other Welshian characters understand, though, making any alternative "unnatural" or "unrealistic" is exactly how a dominant society maintains its superiority. We can safely assume, therefore, that Welsh understands that there "is no document

of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism."[40] The true barbarism: civilization silencing all opposition to itself. Dominant society shuts out alternatives by dropping a veil between so-called fact and so-called fantasy, by "setting up a smokescreen." This segregation of knowledge reflects a deeper process of alienation: the segregation of being into useful being (practical, civilized) and un-useful being (impractical, barbaric). This divorce at the very root of human life opens the way for all kinds of divisions, which Welsh's trainspotters and hooligans certainly demonstrate. The world can be broken into ever-increasing fragments. On the one hand, bonds between thought and action, dream and reality, self and other can be dismissed as superstition, naïveté, or idealism. On the other hand, as capitalism has sublimated its exploitation, these bonds have been made so elusive that they become siren songs luring humans further away from engaging directly in cooperative, autonomous historical-material production.[41] Therefore, an alternative world where these bonds are the rule and not the exception—where "being yourself" is not something you *might* attain only through *hard work* but is the foundation, means, and end of the whole world—will seem mythological.

As Welsh reminds us time and again throughout his work, and as Marx asserted almost two-hundred years before Welsh, the duplicity of this process is astounding. The so-called real world of bourgeois capital founded itself on making unreal the bonds between human practice and thought, human society and the human individual, and human power and what that power can produce. Nevertheless, this duplicity—this bad sense—dominates modern and now postmodern common sense. So, we cannot help but proceed under the mythological label.

What we can do, though, is assert a very specific understanding of the mythological, a historical-material understanding. We will operate under the notion that mythos is original,

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[40] Benjamin, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1968) p. 256.

[41] Marx, *Early Writings* 378.

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evocative, and metaphorical knowledge that attests to a historical-material world that might be shrouded but is not totally engulfed by "a squalid stink of low expectation which could choke the life out of you if you let it" (*Glue* 456). [42] Unlike essentialist mythologies that grew to dominance from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, historical-material mythology is not interested in retroactively predetermining a biological legacy for the sake of domination. Instead, it is committed to teasing out how materials and energies have been used, unused, or abused in the past and, consequently, how those materials and energies might be used to produce a vibrant future based on something other than alienation and domination. In effect, a historical-material mythos is not so much a settled category of knowledge as it is an epistemological space in which people may construct, *in the present*, a prehistory in which to ground, *in the present*, an alternative future. As a consequence of historical-material mythos opening up a living history, human engagement in historical production is reopened instead of alienated.

The presence of such a mythos is certainly reflected in Welsh's work. Welsh is not interested in *maintaining* preexisting mythologies, "these trivial things, they petty jealousies" (*Trainspotting* 190). He is interested in unlocking their emergent materials and energies in order to work towards a world where we have learned "tae love oorsels" and are "drawn by a greater need, the need to belong to each other, to hold on to whatever force has fused" us (*Trainspotting* 272, 263).

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[42] In *Illuminations*, Benjamin observes that in modernity's rational historicism there is the tendency to content "itself with establishing causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical [i.e. "real"]. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years"; alternatively, the historical-materialist parts ways with this official historicism and "stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time" (263). If history is recognized as living— "filled with the presence of the now" (261)—then it will probably seem unreal and, therefore, mythological because it defies the bourgeois-liberal conceptions of normalcy and progress.

By employing mythos in such a way, Welsh effectively sets out to open up a truly "medieval" space.[43] I am not referring now to the historical medieval, as in the Middle Ages. We will get to that soon enough. Instead, as I did with "ethics" in the Introduction, I am returning to an etymological meaning of the term "medieval"—"mid-age/period/phase"—and linking it to mythos in order to reawaken the emergent and generative aspects of both "medieval" and "mythos." Such a space is not unlike the "thin places" of Celtic pre-Christian myth and Celtic Christian spirituality, in which one can glimpse another world that exists in the midst of this world, a place in the middle of another.

Is Welsh alone in trying to work in such liminal, marginal locale with the materials and energies that dominant society has cast off? No. In fact, he is in league with a very old literary tradition, which is native to both Ireland and Scotland by way of the Gaels.

2.2 Second Medieval Strand: Fenian Scéalta[44]

Welsh does not exaggerate when he aligns his writing with a "kind of Celtic, storytelling tradition," in which "everybody [is] a storyteller."[45] Closer evaluation of the trainspotting books within a Scottish context reveals that far from being avant garde, as it were, Welsh works squarely within an ancient, still active, though critically overlooked literary tradition native to Ireland and Scotland: Fenian storytelling.[46] Fenian literature is by nature an amalgamation of oral and literary history, legend, wonder tale, and elegy concerned with the life of a marginal

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[43] By positing such an emergent and generative connotation of "medieval," and by claiming that Welsh opens up a "medieval" space, I have discovered that Welsh's work is in line with Benjamin's description of one who practices "materialistic historiography": such a person operates according to a "constructive principle," taking "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past. He takes cognizance of it in order to blast a specific era out of the homogeneous course of history" (*Illuminations* 263).

[44] The word *scéalta* is Gaelic for "tales."

[45] Welsh, interview.

[46] See Joseph Falaky Nagy, *The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1985) pp. 7, 57.

constituency antagonistically linked to the dominant sociocultural centers of Gaeldom.[47] Even

the most comprehensive embodiment of Fenian narrative, the twelfth-century *Acallam*, is "a

loosely framed anthology of Fenian stories, poems, and trivia," a "potpourri."[48] Though

interesting and rich, the *Acallam* is far from a smooth read if one approaches it according to

modern narrative standards. Multiple temporalities exist side by side, a situation which is

accentuated by an ancient Fenian meeting and accompanying Saint Patrick (c. 389-c. 461)

hundreds of years after he should be dead. Celtic mythology and Irish history interweave. Pre-

Christian and Christian religious beliefs exist side by side as well; oftentimes, they intersect and

illuminate each other. Narrative perspectives are in perpetual flux. The legendary Fenian poet

Caílte is able to, through his incredible poetic abilities, bring the past into the present, thereby

bringing Finn and other major Fenian figures to life.[49] Alternatively, Patrick is virtually guided

through the past to witness ancient events and meet legendary figures for himself.

"'May victory be yours, Caílte, with my blessing,' said Patrick. 'You have lightened our

spirits and our mind, even though our religious life is being disrupted and our prayers

neglected.'"[50] The Patrick who is so diplomatically chastising Caílte is none other than Saint

Patrick of Ireland. Caílte is none other than the legendary Fenian poet. Approximately three

hundred years after they should be dead, Caílte and Oisín, the son of the legendary Fenian Finn

mac Cumaill, inexplicably emerge in fifth-century Ireland. They are the last remaining Fenians.

Their heroic powers significantly reduced, the two Fenians part ways. Caílte comes across

Patrick and his fellow monks. From that point, the *Acallam* is a collection of tales about the

"elders," the heroic but liminal Fenians of pre-Christian times, that are told by Caílte at Patrick's

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[47] Nagy writes, "Cultural realities . . . are reflected in these tales in forms that may strike us, and may have struck their original audiences, as fantastic" (13).

[48] Nagy 4.

[49] Ann Dooley and Harry Roe, Introduction, *Acallam* xvii-xxiii.

[50] *Acallam* 11.

request. This all seems straightforward enough. As noted, though, the truth of the matter is quite different. The Fenian tradition is far from straightforward, and its subject, the Fenians themselves, is not an easy one to pin down.

The very small passage from the *Acallam* quoted above is indicative of what kind of literary tradition and subject material we are confronting. When Patrick says, "victory," he could feasibly mean a few things. As the official representative of Christianity, he may mean "glory," as in "God's glory." Because the *Acallam* was an attempt by the twelfth-century Irish church to subsume pre-Christian traditions under Christian hegemony, such a conclusion is appropriate. However, context is everything, and the context of the *Acallam* is dominated by Caílte recounting stories about pre-Christian battles, hunts, and expeditions that occurred centuries before. In view of that, Patrick may very well be giving Caílte and the Fenians his best wishes as they enter into those battles, hunts, and expeditions—for things that they have already done!

Because of its polylogical and multi-temporal characteristics, an agenda deeper than pure entertainment is not evident when one first reads the *Acallam*. Much the same could be said of Welsh's work. However, closer evaluation indicates that a very serious agenda is afoot.[51] By literarily making synchronous the materials and energies of the prehistorical and historical past with those of the present, the writer of the tales "releases the text and allows it to convey meanings of a more up-to-date kind."[52] One can aptly extend this understanding of *Acallam*'s style to argue that its writer is trying to convey meanings of a more prophetic kind. Is the writer (more likely writers) of the *Acallam* unique in his or her methodology? All indications are that

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[51] Dooley and Roe xx.
[52] Dooley and Roe xxi.

the *Acallam* is far from an original form of Fenian literature, just a more comprehensive instance of it.[53]

Indeed, the Fenian genre is a well-established genre and had been before and after *Acallam*'s inscription; nevertheless, it is a genre which, like its subject matter, is a liminal one that cannot be attributed to one "author" or to a specific "folk" within Gaelic history.[54] Fenian literature is both extremely longstanding in duration and democratic in spirit. Therefore, when we return to Welsh's narrative method, as illustrated in his work and practically described by Spud, we can see that he is tied to a formal tradition in which "at any given point in its historical span or throughout that span, every story has something to say about every other story within the tradition . . . every story, in both a thematic and a structural sense, 'flows into' every other."[55] Or as Spud might put it, every story starts off in one place, "n maybe [goes] back a bit, then forward again."

The stylistic aspects of the Fenian tradition allude to a profound sociocultural force in Gaeldom. Let us return again to the above quote from the *Acallam* in order to uncover that force. Patrick follows his wish of good will to Caílte with this: "'You have lightened our spirits and our mind, even though our religious life is being disrupted and our prayers neglected.'" Patrick's statement is equivocal, to say the least. On the one hand, he is grateful for what Caílte has given to him and his fellow monks. The poet has enriched their lives with pre-Christian, prehistorical stories. Nevertheless, almost out of guilt for enjoying the Fenian tales so much, Patrick points out to Caílte that he has disrupted the life of the official world, the hegemonic Christian world that the twelfth-century scribes were retroactively telescoping into the fifth century. As isolated as this incident might seem, it is socioculturally momentous. Christendom had not been as

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[53] Nagy 4-7.
[54] Nagy 7.
[55] Nagy 15.

successful as it thought it had been in submerging alternative systems. Moreover, this moment illustrates how the Fenians as a sociocultural force had always related to a dominant power.

When Johnson-Hogg characterizes Spud's history of Leith as "celebration of yob culture and of people who haven't achieved anything noteworthy in the local community," he could just as well have been describing the subject of Fenian literature and society. Fenian culture was yob culture among the ancient Irish and Scottish Gaels. Composed of literal bastards, runaways, abused children, exiles, refugees, fugitives, misfits, and general outlaws, the *fíana* were what loosely translates into "war bands." However, "war bands" is not a term that does adequate justice to what we should call "congregations of outlaws." Like Welsh's trainspotters and hooligans, the *fíana* were by no means totally innocent outcasts; nevertheless, according to a rich folkloric tradition that exists to this day, as outlaws they were generally held to be marginalized members of society who had either become invisible within society, had been wronged by society, or both. If "ye dinnae join in and tow the line," Juice Terry observes, "yir a mug" (*Glue* 200). One can see the Fenian plight evident in the Scot J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan stories, vis à vis the Lost Boys of Neverland, and in the Scottish national J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter stories, vis à vis the students at Hogwarts Academy. Children who had been abandoned, abused, or ostracized entered into bands led by typically longtime, if not terminal, outcasts.

To be a member of what the ancient Irish called a legitimate *túath*, or what the Scots called a clan, one had to have a clear genealogical relationship to a major family or chieftain. Only the most elite members of society could usually establish such lineages, and according to ancient Irish law, lineages were only formalized upon becoming an "adult." Becoming an adult was synonymous with receiving one's inheritance; this means that one had to have an inheritance

to receive in order to ever be considered a possible adult.[56] So, for example, if one was not the first son in an elite family, if one was an illegitimate child in or out of the elite estates, if one was a daughter who bore a child out of rape or outside of a society-approved relationship, or if one was a member of the common majority who did not have an inheritance to inherit in the first place, then one was technically a *fénnid*, a Fenian. In other words, practically everyone, barring a very few, were latent Fenians if they were not already active ones. Not only were the chronological youths Fenians, as Finn mac Cumaill and his son Oisín can attest. In fact, *fíans* (individual bands of Fenians) comprised a sociocultural limbo whose membership consisted of all those individuals wronged by society (typically chronologically, not legally, "adults") and those people who had not transitioned or would never transition into adulthood (chronologically or legally "youths").[57]

The Fenian tradition of legend and mythology, therefore, arose out of a very real historical phenomenon which arose out of the unequal distribution of sociocultural materials. Thus, historical Fenians were yobs who gave rise to the Fenian literary tradition, "a celebration of yob culture." The question now becomes whether or not this Fenian/yob phenomenon continued anywhere else outside of literature, as in the more concrete historical-material fabric of Scotland.

2.3 Third Medieval Strand: Historical Fenian Continuum?

To accentuate further the importance of yob culture in Scotland's fabric, it will help to expand our historical net—first to the secular and then to the ecclesiastical Scotland of the Middle Ages. In medieval Scotland, there was a huge sector of Scottish society about which no historian has been able to uncover any substantial or unambiguous record. Arguably, Scotland

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[56] Dooley and Roe xi-xii.
[57] Nagy 18-21.

has had a sizeable lumpenproletariat since at least the beginning of the Middle Ages: its members were the "lowest of the fuckin low" in the peasant hierarchy, below husbandry workers and cottars, which is a good indication of where they were in the whole Scottish socioeconomic scheme of things.[58] Images of some sort of Scottish pastoral and maritime utopia are the stuff of tourist brochures and Scottish National Party propaganda. These people were more than likely serfs to servants, were migrant laborers, or were destitute and homeless. If they had any affiliation at all, they might have had only the scarcest of clan affiliations, thus some form of social protection. However, it is undeniable that the Scottish economy and social system could not have survived without them.[59]

Enter the Highland caterans and Border reivers. These were groups on both the northern and southern poles of Scotland who emerged from the unenviable social, economic, and geographical environment that Scotland presented to many of its inhabitants. They are phenomena we can use to illustrate and historicize lumpenproletariat power in medieval Scotland. This is not to say that all peasants—or even many—were directly associated with the caterans and reivers, just as the majority of today's Scots are not heroin addicts, football hooligans, or porn actors. But for us today, these two historical groups should be taken as symptoms of an underreported and sometimes romanticized force in Scotland's biography. They represent a Scottish multitude that is a substantial pregnant absence in official histories, not just "a bunch ay radges oot oan the piss" (*Glue* 229).

What brings these two groups together as an indication of emergent force in the Scotland of the Middle Ages are their Fenian-like social structures, mores, and relation to dominant power

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[58] See David Ditchburn and Alastair J. MacDonald, "Medieval Scotland, 1100-1560," *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From Earliest Times to Present Day*, eds. R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (New York: Penguin, 2001) p. 137.
[59] See Ditchburn and MacDonald 134-9.

centers in London, Edinburgh, and clan seats. There is not much recorded about the caterans (*ceatharn* in Gaelic), barring most notably their involvement in a series of power grabs during the fourteenth century by one of the early Stewarts. Alexander Stewart (1343-1405), the "Wolf of Badenoch," "imposed himself on the Highlands and Islands" by depending almost completely on an "armed force of a most unruly and undisciplined kind."[60] The Stewart family, which was ascending at the time, was not closely connected to the clans in the areas that they were attempting to control because the Stewarts, along with some other ascending families, were Norman imports who began arriving under the auspices of David I (1124-53). This observation points to why at least one Stewart depended on the caterans. It also indicates that the Stewarts themselves had always effectively been outsiders within royal Scotland.[61] There is another, deeper implication embedded in this area of medieval Scotland's historical terrain: while the Stewarts were not integral members of the Highland elites, the mercenary groups that fought for them represented a powerful though incoherent native Highland class much farther down the sociopolitical hierarchy and therefore more alienated than their Norman Scot leaders. As with the *fíana*, this underclass must not have been as chaotic as some might assume. Such a claim is not fanciful if we take into account nearly half a century of the Wolf's military successes, which included the sacking of the Moray coast, a major power hub at the time. Moreover, later stereotypes of Highland culture—as outrageously violent, bloodthirsty, wicked, disobedient, oversexed, and so forth—came as an unfair response from the Central Belt (i.e. Edinburgh,

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[60] See James Hunter, *The Last of the Free: A Millennial History of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 1999) pp. 120-25. See also Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: PIMLICO, 1992) pp. 68-9.
[61] The Stewarts' dramatic ascendancy and tenuous hold on power in Scottish history is a recurring issue in many Scottish histories.

Glasgow, and other Lowland power centers) toward the activities of the caterans under direction of the Wolf. [62]

Even though he was a Norman Scot tearing through the Highlands, Stewart was practically one of the Lowland's own. In other words, as a son of Lowland power, he hired members from a dispossessed Highland class to gain power in the Highlands and to be recognized by his Lowland contemporaries. As a consequence, these outlaw Highlanders were estranged even further from their native lands; so were their clan-aligned compatriots, who were guilty by sociocultural association. In addition to increased displacement, Highlanders in general were practically cut off from the emerging powerhouse to the south. On the one hand, this situation planted the seeds for what would happen centuries later at Flodden (1513) and Culloden (1746); on the other, this is a true precursor in the Middle Ages of the capitalist sleight of hand—the alienation of labor power from the laborer—if there ever was one.

Medieval Highlanders were not alone in their historical and political quandary. To the south of the belt of ascending power in the Lowlands were the Scottish Borderers. These were also a marginalized population nearly lost from official Scottish history, save for some popular ballads. Borderers were people who gave royalty and each other fits during the thirteenth through sixteenth centuries. The Borderers lived in the Border Marches between Scotland and England. The southern Lowland Scots and the northern English claimed their respective sides of the Border, but they were anything but loyal to the governments in Edinburgh or London. Also, they did not follow the patterns of the official Scots or English when it came to religion. Until

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[62] Hunter asserts, "there may be doubt as to whether Alexander Stewart's *ceathern* actually behaved more violently than fighting men had been behaving for centuries. . ." (123). Regardless, as a result of the burning of Elgin Cathedral at Moray and of a changing political landscape, the Lowland power elites applied to the *ceathern* a new Broad Scots name, "'cateran'—a wholly pejorative noun afterwards applied to armed robbers, bandits and law-breakers of all kinds. The manner in which this occurred was indicative of a much wider shift in Lowland opinion—a shift which ended in Lowlanders regarding almost every inhabitant of the Highlands and Islands in a highly unfavourable light" (123).

the eighteenth century, they remained predominantly Catholic even after the Anglican movement, the Reformation, and the Presbyterian ascendancy. They had complex, Fenian-like familial and community structures that were very similar to the Highland clans. These affiliations could expand or contract, and they were not necessarily ethnically determined: Scot could love or hate Anglo-Saxon or Scot, and vice versa. Alliances and affiliations were constantly mutable and negotiable; negotiations were often facilitated through the theft of livestock and land. Like the society of Welsh's trainspotters, their "boundaries were invisible tae outsiders, but [if one was part of that society] you gained an intuitive feel for them" (*Trainspotting* 75).

The Borderers, not unlike many Highlanders, were radically nomadic in both social and cultural terms. One writer goes so far as to characterize their life as "guerrilla living."[63] Mainly because the Borders were in perpetual chaos because of the conflicts between two kingdoms, "ordinary Borderers . . . learned to live on the move, to cut crop subsistence to a minimum and rely on the meat they could drive in front of them. They could build a house in a few hours and have no qualms about abandoning it; they could travel great distances at speed and rely on their skill and cunning to restock supplies by raiding."[64] Moreover, the Border Marches—like the Highlands—were known for instances of abject brutality. It would be risky, therefore, to give the impression that these people were either some sort of pure anarchists or pure democrats.

Indeed, the Borderers' most radical element parallels the Highland caterans: reivers— whose name derives from a derogatory Broad Scots word connoting banditry, lawlessness, and so forth—were an important aspect of Border life. Typically in opposition to the official Border Wardens appointed by London and Edinburgh, they shaped the legal and social environment of

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[63] George MacDonald Fraser, *The Steel Bonnets: The Story of the Anglo-Scottish Border Reivers* (Pleasantville, NY: Akadine, 2001) p. 29.
[64] Fraser 29.

the region. Border Law, as it was called, reflected the chaotic situation in which the Border

Scots, along with English Borderers, found themselves.[65]   Altogether, we are definitely dealing

with an always profound but frequently wretched phenomenon when we are dealing with the

Borderers.

There is another significant aspect of Scotland's medieval history that indicates a Fenian

strand deep within Scotland's sociocultural fabric, the Celtic Church. Celtic Christianity

emerged after missionaries from the Near East and a newly-converted Rome visited Britain and

Ireland during the first three or four centuries. Nevertheless, contact with the Continent and the

Near East was scarce and inconsistent, which was reflected in the more monastic character of the

early Christianity. Subsequently, Christianity among the Celts took on a more local form,

interweaving with the existing sociocultural fabric. Monasticism in the context of early-

medieval Britain and Ireland contradicts the perception of monastic life most prevalent today.

As the Scottish Saints Ninian (c. 360-c. 432) and Columba (521-97) demonstrated in fact,

contrary to popular legend, monks did not live in terminal isolation, cloistered away in their

home bases at Whithorn, on the island of Iona, and on the island of Lindisfarne.[66] More

important than composing such awe-inspiring texts as the *Book of Kells* and the *Book of Durrow*,

Scottish monks were deeply involved in not only the religious life but also the political life of

communities throughout a region that extended from today's Yorkshire to beyond today's

Aberdeenshire.

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[65] Fraser explains that the Border, "in a sense, was a bloody buffer state which absorbed the principle horrors of war. With the benefit of hindsight, one could almost say that the social chaos of the frontier was a political necessity" (30).

[66] Daphne Brooke, *Wild Men and Holy Places: St. Ninian, Whithorn, and the Medieval Realm of Galloway* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994) 8-33. Ian Bradley, *Columba: Pilgrim and Penitent* (Glasgow: Wild Goose, 1996) 28-45. Adomnán of Iona, *Life of St. Columba*, trans. Richard Sharpe (New York, NY: Penguin, 1995).

However, Celtic Christianity had been marginalized since its earliest days—not by non-Christian Celts, but by other Christians. In 431, at the Council of Ephesus, Saint Augustine of Hippo's efforts to outlaw the theology of a British monk, Pelagius (c. 355-c. 425), succeeded. Pelagianism, as the heresy is known today, contradicted what would become the very basis of the early Roman Catholic Church and thus of practically all Western Christianity: humans are born of sin and can only reconcile with God through a mediated faith in Christ by way of the Church. In effect, what Juice Terry says about the Tories could apply as well to the imperial form of Christianity arising during the fourth and fifth centuries: the "biggest achievement" was "tae make huvin principles cost ye" (*Glue* 200). Alternatively, Pelagius and his followers, like some Eastern Christians of the first millennium, held that God had always existed in all things and that Jesus Christ was the realization of this preexisting truth.[67] As opposed to the abstract faith of Augustinian Christianity, Pelagian Christianity espoused a more practical, material, and immanent version of faith. The Pelagians' position reflected their affinity for the Gospel according to John, the Hebrew Psalms, and their interpretation of Paul's letters to the Romans.

Recent scholarship suggests that Augustine's enmity toward Pelagius was more political than theological.[68] The imperial impulse was arguably already well-established in Christian Rome. Consequently, indigenous Christianities were a threat to Rome's ecclesiastical and, more importantly, political authority, which depended on a very strict hierarchy controlled by "top cats," a bishopric answerable only to Rome. Even so, Pelagianism reflected a Christianity that existed in various degrees throughout what we today call the British Isles and Ireland. The *Acallam* is, in part, a literary indication of the "unorthodoxy" of Celtic Christianity, which is

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[67] Bradley, *The Celtic Way* (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 2003) pp. 8-11. J. Philip Newell, *Listening for the Heartbeat of God: A Celtic Spirituality* (New York: Paulist, 1997) pp. 8-22. B. R. Rees, *Pelagius: Life and Letters* (Woodbridge, UK: Boydell, 1991).
[68] Newell 20.

characterized by the interweaving of existing Celtic secular society and a Celtic spirituality based on perpetual regeneration with early Christianity's practical understanding of communion and eternal life.

In contrast to Roman Christianity, indigenous British and Irish Christianity was not threatened by the pre-Christian or so-called pagan beliefs of the local Celts (Gaels, Britons, and Picts). Alternatively, historical evidence indicates that the Celts had very little difficulty in accepting monotheism because they did not interpret it as a system of exclusion but as a system of integration. Celtic Christians did not observe a binary opposition between monotheism and pantheism. This perspective, which applied not only to the Celtic Christians but also to Christians in the East as well, is sometimes referred to as "panentheism": "the sense that God is to be found both within creation and outside it."[69] Spud echoes this Celtic theology when he suggests, "We'll never likesay, learn tae love oorsels, until we kin look eftir weaker things, likesay animals n that" (*Trainspotting* 272).

Two hundred years after Rome had outlawed Pelagianism, the Celtic Christianity of Scotland and much of the surrounding Celtic world remained strong. Such was the case until, first, the Synod of Whitby in the seventh century and, second, the convergence of secular feudalism and ecclesiastical diocesanism in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. In 664, Celtic Christianity and its monastic tendencies were officially ruled illegal. Celtic churches persisted, but during the following centuries, they were increasingly marginalized by local governments and congregations aligned with the Roman Church. Then, at the turn of the first millennium, the efforts of the Canmores—particularly Queen Margaret (1046-1093) and her son David I— brought the Scottish Kirk into total line with the Roman Church, a process that coincided with introduction of European feudalism into Scotland. The former venture was somewhat more

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[69] Bradley 35.

successful than the latter; consequently, Saints Ninian and Columba, as well as Saint Bride, were supplanted by the canonical Saint Andrew as the patron saints of Scotland. Christianity became a state religion with its center planted close to the Continent, at St. Andrews outside of Fife. What was undeniably achieved by both the Synod meeting in 664 and the millennial Canmore dynasty was the alienation and submersion of Celtic Christianity as a viable spiritual and political force. Perhaps, as some suggest today, traces of Celtic Christianity in Scotland are evident in the Presbyterianism and social structures that emerged from the Scottish Reformation.[70] Even if this is so, Celtic Christianity is still an estranged emergent force— virtually a Fenian Christianity.

Taken together, caterans, reivers, and Scottish "panentheists" call attention to a marginal or outcast power deeply embedded in Scotland's biography. Most of the characters in Welsh's trainspotting books are, therefore, the figural descendents of the medieval caterans and reivers. And one could easily perceive characters like Spud and Carl as devalued counterparts of Celtic monks. As noted before, most Scots were and are still ignored or exploited by the power elites. And they have rarely been loyal to a given power elite. It is in these secular and ecclesiastical medieval outlaws, therefore, that we can observe the very real historical existence of a Fenian-like constituency that persisted and still persists in Scotland. They arguably represent a large contingency of no ones who nevertheless enable and fuel the official history of the "someones."

In view of this historical background of Scotland during the Middle Ages, a key point to keep in mind is that one of the aspects of the historical *fíana*—who were mirrored by their Christian counterparts and whose legacy effectively continued in the later caterans and reivers— was that they were an indispensable part of ancient Gaelic society, even though on its margins.

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[70] Marcus Tanner, *The Last of the Celts* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2005) p. 40. John MacLeod, *Highlanders: A History of the Gaels* (London: Sceptre, 1996) p. 49.

This is an aspect that Johnson-Hogg also gets wrong about "yob culture." The importance of the legendary and historical outlaw constituencies explains why Fenian lore remains, in one form or another, so culturally powerful in Ireland and Scotland.[71] The big secret that was apparently not such a big secret to ancient Gaelic society was that if it were not for the outlaws intervening from their posts in the surrounding forests, hills, and islands, then Gaelic society would crumble under the weight of its oligarchic elites. We observe, therefore, an almost invisible alternative sociocultural reality that was not as much out of bounds as it was a check on the bounds of hegemonic society.

In other words, if it were not for the Fenians breaking the law—testing it, pointing out its faults, undermining it—then Gaelic society and culture would enter into a self-destructive process that would not only harm those within its bounds but would also infect others outside its bounds. Hence, Fenian resistance and intervention were not destructive in a broad sense. They worked dialectically: from deconstructing dominant society, to redistributing sociocultural power, and thus to promoting continued sociocultural life.

The Foucauldian reader, however, might reasonably argue that the Fenians actually maintained the center of power by being its venting mechanism: that, at most, the *fíana* were reforming agents and, consequently, were by no means revolutionary; that, yes, they might have contributed to society, but only inasmuch as they diffused internal resistance to dominant power. Sent to the margins, the argument might continue, Fenians actually secured Gaelic society's laws by being a correlative "other" which served as a gauge for self-correction. In effect, the Fenian exception negatively affirmed the hegemonic Gaelic rule, thereby maintaining and strengthening the rule. There is, though, a significant blind spot in such a view. The Fenians might have also positively alluded to an alternative sociocultural possibility that had been submerged under

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[71] Nagy 1.

hegemonic society's dominance. When, for example, a Fenian band would enter a village, rob it

of prized cattle, and then deliver the cattle to another village which had been wronged by the

other, the band was not necessarily enforcing established laws. Indeed, the Fenians arguably

demonstrated that laws passed down through custom or by ruling elites failed to address the

needs of living human individuals and, therefore, of living human society. Because Fenians

were "below" the rank of a "citizen" (or in Gaelic society, below the rank of a *fine*, "family

member"), they represented a concept of human social relationships that official Gaelic society

tried to hide and that, by extension, future societies would continue to hide: human individuals

are social before they are members of an officially constituted family, village, clan, city,

kingdom, or, later, state.

It is with the latter, non-Foucauldian attitude that we can better appreciate the Fenian-like

characters and tales in Welsh's prehistory. Welsh brings together life histories that initially seem

bonded only by their "collective insanity," the "grey [that] gets in," "the rows [they] have about

nothing at all," and "a dynamic which will draw [them] right back into the slaughter"

(*Trainspotting* 98, *Glue* 456, and *Porno* 139, 365). The trainspotters' and hooligans' lives are

virtually lives on the Borders and in the Highland hinterlands.   They are mercenaries up for sale.

They are kin unified only by their marginality. They are, as Renton describes his set, a "mutual

coincidence of wants" (*Trainspotting* 321). However, the real objective of Welsh's weaving

together their stories is to counter such common-sense bonds, which have hardened into bad

sense, with the good sense they negatively affirm. Their stories are altogether the generative

social negation of an estranging egocentric negation of human life.[72] What emerges as a result?

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[72] Concerning the social negation of an alienating negation, see Marx, *Early Writings* 277-78, 349-50, 358. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith, vol. 1 (New York: Verso, 2004) pp. 83-8.

2.4 Fourth Medieval Strand: A Postmodern Medievalism

The preceding sections of literary and historical background are not digressive. It would be more apt to describe them as archaeological or genealogical. What we have uncovered is a rich stratum of materials and energies that have gone unused, have been abused, and have been silenced. Knowingly or unknowingly, Welsh taps into this seam of castoff literary methods and historical materials in order to write his three trainspotting books.

In Fenian-like fashion, Welsh confounds fiction-writing standards with his tendency to stow away his preferred genre in a dominant genre.[73] As will become apparent in this and later chapters, Welsh's mode of writing employs more contemporarily accepted forms of narrative in order to conduct less common and perhaps more "traditional" storytelling. He takes, in effect, a viral approach to narrative: a host genre delivers and is then consumed by a virus genre. What seem to be straightforward plots driven more or less by a single protagonist are vehicles in which he, like Caílte, delivers a virtual multitude of stories, themes, and problems. We noted above that when Caílte tells his stories to Patrick and his followers, the Fenian poet disrupts the life of the official world, the hegemonic Christian world that the twelfth-century scribes were retroactively telescoping into the fifth century. To put it another way, Caílte ruptures a dominant situation by opening a space in it with materials and energies that the dominant situation had presumed to be subordinated. Welsh and his work operate similarly; nevertheless, there is a key difference. In the *Acallam* at least, Caílte brings apparently subordinated Fenian materials and energies into the present in order to gain legitimacy from the present, whereas Welsh dredges up subordinated historical-material elements in order to open up the emergence of an alternative probability, an alternative world in the future.

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[73] Welsh demonstrates a way in which emergent culture can appear on the terrain of a dominant culture. See Introduction, and see Williams 121-27.

Historically, Scotland did not undergo the divorce between the pre-modern and modern that the major players of the Western world presumably did.[74] As will be stressed throughout this study, Scotland did not totally become caught up in the modern revolutions of the Renaissance and Reformation as they were experienced on the Continent and in England. Moreover, Scotland's crucial role in the Enlightenment had more to do with its seemingly groundless nature than with its being a well-established modern nation-state.[75] The reasons for this seemingly anomalous status are historical, cultural, economic, and political. For instance, something that in bourgeois-liberal terms would probably be laudable today hindered Scotland's movement into modernity as an autonomous nation-state: its diversity. Scotland's greatly heterogeneous composition, which existed during and after the Middle Ages, was a detriment to Scotland when it came to forming a modern nation-state. It was a hodgepodge of diverse pre-feudal Celtic societies, Anglocentric feudal networks, international economic and political centers in the Central Belt, nearly anarchic Lowland Border societies, ethnic and linguistic variety, and so on. Moreover, directly related to Scotland's national identity problem was its political and economic relationship with England. As a subordinate, Scotland became merely the southern kingdom's northern appendage or hinterland, and Scotland's development would ultimately have to be stunted in order for Britain to become a modern and modernizing force.

Current symptoms of Scotland's historical medievalism can be found in modern and postmodern Scotland. Geographically, Scotland is a medieval construct, as a whole and in its constituent parts. Legal and educational institutions stem from the medieval period, even pre-

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[74] See Keith M. Brown, "Reformation and Union, 1560-1707," *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From Earliest Times to Present Day*, eds. R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (New York: Penguin, 2001): "During the close of the sixteenth century, Scotland was in the midst of a late flowering of the northern Renaissance. By comparison with the artistic achievements of contemporary England and Holland this was unimpressive," and the most notable beneficial result was increased attention to education, which significantly reduced illiteracy (227-228). But in comparison to other "reawakened" societies, Scotland was far from a success story.
[75] Nairn, *The Break-up of Britain* 92-125.

medieval in the case of Scottish law, which is a derivative of Roman law. Scotland's general

lack of dissent and deviation during modernity—which arguably inhibited "innovation,

intellectual curiosity and enterprise"—indicates the persistence of stifling medieval residues.[76]

Despite spurts of significant development, such as those of the eighteenth century (intellectual)

and late-nineteenth century (industrial), Scotland has generally gone the direction of

underdevelopment.

This underdevelopment becomes evident in areas like health. During much of the

twentieth century, Scotland was reminiscent of the fourteenth century: birth mortality was high,

overcrowding and squalor were a norm, stairwells and streets were the places for human

defecation.[77] The last three facts frequently find their way into Welsh's fiction. Moreover, if we

keep an eye towards medieval residues in postmodern Scotland, it might give us a unique insight

into the fact that in a small country where middle-class emigration persists, over a million Scots

live in poverty.[78] This is not to mention that the loss of Scottish capital to the English continues

even when Scottish capital increases.[79] This is certainly a bleak picture, particularly if we look at

it with well-established bourgeois assumptions. However, Scots must have some power that has

allowed them to endure, even if on the margins of power.

Beyond the bleakness, one could argue that Scotland's standing attachment to certain

medieval materials and energies has been a matter of survival. What sustained Scotland in the

absence of having substantial, unified control over a diverse population, sovereignty, religious

institutions, natural resources, and economics? Arguably, the various, seemingly chaotic social

and cultural systems that had developed from the Neolithic Period onward maintained the

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[76] Ditchburn and MacDonald 176.

[77] Rosalind Mitchison, *A History of Scotland* (London: Routledge, 2000) pp. 402-405.

[78] Scottish Parliament Information Center, *Poverty in Scotland* (Edinburgh: Scottish Parliament, 1999) p. 2.

[79] Mitchison 411-12.

Scots.[80] This does not imply that we should romanticize those systems, but it does imply that we should probably not ignore that there might be something positive or emergent in the Scotland of the Middle Ages. And if this medieval something has been a source of power for the Scots, finding out what that energy is might prove instructive in the present and as we look forward (hence the rationale behind the "genealogical" section preceding this one).

In such a light, Welsh's task is undoubtedly monumental because the historical materials and energies with which he has to work are so heterogeneous and volatile. The Scotland of the historical Middle Ages does not provide much guidance, just rich potential, as he opens a generative "medieval" space in our midst. It bears reiterating that Welsh has to first open a mythos-infused "medieval" space in which to work with heterogeneous materials and energies so that he may begin mapping an alternative Scotland. Thus, Welsh's "medieval" space is not just a window onto another Scotland but is, more importantly, a space from which to generate that Scotland: it is a spatiotemporal domain in which the materials and energies of the past will be unlocked, redistributed to those people from whom those materials and energies have been taken, and then used by those people to produce their future.

For the trainspotters and hooligans and porn stars of Welsh's three trainspotting books, such a space is necessary in order to persevere, as Spud comes to discover when he begins to write a history of Leith (*Porno* 181). For them, there is effectively no such thing as Scotland,

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[80] As much as I wholeheartedly agree with so much Nairn writes about Scotland's past and future autonomy, I disagree with him when he lambastes the Scots' embrace of their radically inconclusive status, which he interprets to be "a strangely helpless nationalism: a passionate will to look forward driven—by what weird machinery of self-contradiction?—into fits of backward-looking self-laceration" (*Faces of Nationalism* 184). Does he not see the intense dialectical energy here? Even among the bourgeois Scottish politicians and intellectuals with whom he tends to associate at dinner parties, there is strong evidence of Benjamin's historical-material call to "brush history against the grain" (*Illuminations* 257). When Welsh and Scotland's working-class and lower-class constituency enter the scene, this evidence is even more profound. Nairn's theories would, therefore, probably be better served if he would dive into the proverbial "Caledonian Antisyzygy," not throw superficial invectives at it. The "neo-national" Scotland he is looking for is not somewhere else, but is right in front of him, bubbling up through that cacophony of contradiction which he too quickly dismisses.

just fragments and disappointments—nastiness and cruelty. But frequently bubbling to the surface is the recognition that something else is possible.

To combat the nastiness and cruelty, Welsh's stories document the terrain of nastiness and cruelty so that we may, in negative relief, observe other possible terrain. The gaps and conflicts between various characters' accounts are fundamental to Welsh's technique: the potential for an alternative story emerges between individual characters' stories, in their congregated interaction. Furthermore, we are forced to constantly adjust our perspective on the larger situation. Welsh's stories persistently unsettle the historical-material ground of their telling, hence creating an environment in which despair and hope are in vibrant conflict. Then after we read awhile, intersections among the stories materialize and an uncertain "something" emerges on the horizon. In the trainspotting books, Welsh puts various narrative perspectives into interaction with each other—he congregates them—in order to demonstrate that the possibility of collectivity still exists despite the fragmentation. These narrative characteristics, therefore, allude to another way of perceiving the world—an "outlaw way" to which our world of transparency, linear systems, consumption for the sake of consuming, and "going somewhere" might not be well-attuned.

2.5 Medieval Virtue: Congregation

"Yip," observes Spud in one of his soliloquies, "ah'm jist no a gadge cut oot fir modern life n that's aw thir is tae it, man. Sometimes the gig goes smooth, then ah jist pure panic n it's back tae the auld weys" (*Porno* 63). The "life" to which Spud is referring is not technically the world of Finn mac Cumaill, fifth-century monks at Whithorn and Iona, or of fourteenth-century caterans and reivers. Obviously, the "modern life" to which Spud is referring is the world of late capital, and the gig is capitalism. It is a world *after* Finn, *after* Ninian and Columba, *after* the

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virtually nameless mercenaries who served the Wolf of Badenoch, and *after* Border bandits, who

went by names like Kinmont Willie, Auld Wat, Geordie Burn, and Cleave the Crune. But one

can still question how close Spud and company are to this world, and one can still question how

far away they are from the concerns of their figurative and literal predecessors. As today's no

ones, do they not enter the "medieval" space or "thin place" of all no ones, where alternative

worlds are submerged?

As endearing or perhaps as pitiful as Spud might be, he comes across as something as

near to a non-subject and non-author as possible. He is not protagonist material. "Even in his

Ma's womb," muses Renton, "you would have had to define Spud less as a foetus, more as a set

of dormant drug and personality problems" (*Trainspotting* 328). In effect, Spud is neither a

subject nor an object, just a collection of sociocultural refuse. "Nothing had gone right for Spud.

The world had shat on him, and now his mate had joined it," an omniscient narrator continues

after Renton has betrayed his mates near the end of *Trainspotting* (343). Spud is truly liminal.

This is why a reader might privilege the more "concrete" Renton, Sick Boy, Begbie, Juice Terry,

Nikki, or any other character when, in fact, Spud's liminality should draw more attention.

Indeed, it is Spud's marginal relation to society that also goes a long way toward

explaining why his history of Leith is completely unacceptable to Johnson-Hogg. Without

intending to, Spud puts his finger right on the problem of legitimate historical narrative, whether

it is Scotland's or practically any other nation's history. It is a propagandistic master-narrative

created by a hegemonic minority for the purpose of maintaining the hegemony of that minority—

"Four-tae-one against, man, four-tae-one against." It is the reduction of the majority—the

potential multitude—into a "people" or into an undifferentiated "mass," a reduction which makes

way for the sanctification of "top cats" who are supposedly responsible for the dominant

narrative's success. Consequently, so-called history is really about producing "identity,"

"society," "culture," and "nationality" as too-easily consumed commodities or too-easily

sanctified fetishes. In such a situation, common humans' histories are, using Renton's words,

degraded to "trivial things, they petty jealousies." Or as Spud demonstrates figuratively and

literally, most of human history is marginal, prehistorical, and mythological. It is "medieval" in

the sense that it is between legitimate narratives of history. Instead of being recognized as the

active participants in the generation of and movement within their respective situations, most

humans become *personae non grata* in an over-history or master-narrative that manages and, in

fact, profits from the reduction of common human life into petty concerns and trivia.[81]

Historicalness—the active social production of materials and energies and life—is taken out of

history; subsequently, history becomes nothing more than flattened, "homogenous, empty

time."[82] All that is left are hegemonic state and corporate self-promotion narratives composed

for the purposes of accumulating and containing historical activity, not for the purpose of

generating history. Many of Welsh's characters tell us about this situation, but it is Spud who

demonstrates it for us.

So, what is Spud? Spud, as we have noted, has a completely unorthodox relation to

history and way of telling it, which directly reflects Welsh's methodology in his three-volume

prehistory of Scotland. Without Spud, as well as Carl, *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, and *Porno* would

arguably be disconnected fragments pasted into cardstock covers, lacking any real connective

spirit or purpose. Spud is a diffuse presence that connects all the fragments. He is a figure for

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[81] Marx exclaims in a Renton-like tone: "What a spectacle! A society infinitely divided into the most diverse races which confront one another with their petty antipathies, their bad consciences and their brutal mediocrity and which, precisely because of their ambivalent and suspicious attitude towards one another, are dealt with by their *masters* without distinction, although with different formalities, as if their *existence* had been granted to them on *licence*" (*Early Writings* 246). See also *Early Writings* 212-41, 246, 260-61, 263-70, 274-77, 322-34.

[82] Benjamin, *Illuminations* 261.

the potential multitude. And in Welsh's fiction, his function is that of a conduit. Through Spud, Welsh introduces us to an alternative world that is certainly connected to the dominant world, that is as complicated and troubled as the dominant world, but that is also one which challenges the dominant world's legitimacy. To elucidate further, let us return to Johnson-Hogg's rejection of Spud.

Johnson-Hogg only gets things half right about yob culture, or perhaps he indicates the devaluation of the Fenian in our time. He states to Spud that Leithers, both of yesterday and today, are people "who haven't achieved anything noteworthy in the local community." Historically, he begs the question. In fact, during the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries, Leith was the equivalent of a Glasgow East, a major shipbuilding hub and trade port between Edinburgh and the Continent. The common Leithers were who made it what it was, and the trainspotters of *Trainspotting* and *Porno* are their descendants. Spud is attempting to congregate the materials and energies of them all in order to bring about the emergence of something better than the nastiness that has consumed him and his friends' lives.

Like Welsh, Spud has set before himself a very difficult task. Spud is the first to admit that when confronted with the hardships that he experiences under late capitalism, he goes back to his "auld weys," which means descending further into drug-induced dementia. He, like his mates, becomes a hopelessly isolated fragment of a human. Unlike the hills, forests, and islands to which the *fíana* would go after intervening in the affairs of Gaeldom, the "auld weys" to which the trainspotters and hooligans run do not offer recuperation and regeneration. Much is the same when compared to Scottish monks, who could retreat to their spiritual centers after having gone on difficult missions to Pictland. Even when compared to caterans and reivers, who certainly lived in harsh circumstances, Welsh's characters inhabit a world that does not even give

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them a little credit for persevering. The "auld weys" for Spud and company do not strengthen their resistance to late capital; they confirm and increase its dominion over them.

Practically all of Welsh's characters turn to some equivalent of a drug when confronted with the postmodern capitalist empire. But they are far from alone. Indeed, we can take drug abuse as a metaphor for the typical response to today's capitalist situation. The use of drugs—alcohol, pain killers, ecstasy, and heroin—are completely in keeping with postmodern capitalism's religion of choice, which is parodied by Renton in *Trainspotting*:

> Choose us. Choose life. Choose mortgage payments; choose washing machines; choose cars; choose sitting oan a couch watching mind-numbing and spirit-crushing game shows, stuffing fuckin junk food intae yir mooth. Choose rotting away, pishing and shiteing yersel in a home, a total fuckin embarrassment tae the selfish, fucked-up brats ye've produced. Choose life. (187)

Despite Renton's rebellious tone, his and other drug addicts' choice "no tae choose life" is really their total concession to the bourgeois systems that they either despise or envy.

"Choice," the postmodern incarnation of a bourgeois-liberal conception of individual "freedom," is actually a term that indicates labor power divorced from its source, the actual individual. When this separation occurs, power becomes ephemeral. This power becomes a ghost of itself that humans purchase and consume in order to momentarily make themselves feel as if they have regained it—by making a "choice." Like a vampire, this alienated power transforms into an entity that consumes the humans that originally created it; subsequently, this alienated power gains more control over them, making their own power increasingly alien.[83] In such a situation, humans become trapped in a progressive (or is it regressive?) cycle of consuming and being consumed, as the characters of Welsh's trainspotting books illustrate time

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[83] Marx practically exclaims, "*Commodities*, in short, appear as the purchasers of *persons*" (*Capital* 1003).

and again. Humans dislocate even more of their power every time they consume in the capitalist situation, mainly because they will work increasingly harder to consume more. This power is "good junk," and humans understandably want more. Therefore, they will continue to go to their pushers—department stores, electronics outlets, frozen dinner aisles, insurance salespeople, stock brokers, movie rental shops, fast food restaurants, and so forth—to perpetuate their habit. And rarely do humans concern themselves with the fact that the commodities and services which they consume are stolen from their and others' wages, made in sweatshops by virtual slave labor, made with less-than-par materials from exploited regions, and made to steal more power away. In such a situation, humans become increasingly isolated as individuals, leading to their increasing fragmentation. Does anyone have time to be concerned about such things when choice calls? Is there real freedom? Is there freedom from "meaningless choice"?

Where are the Fenians now?

At the beginning of the *Acallam*, Caílte and Oisín part ways. We have already discovered where Caílte goes. What of Oisín, Finn mac Cumaill's son? Isolated from his fellow Fenians—the powerful congregation of outsiders, misfits, delinquents, outcasts, and abused—he retreats to the Gaelic Otherworld, *Tír na nÓg*. However, he knows that he cannot continue in such a place. It is not a place conducive to true comradeship—to true life. Even though the Celtic Otherworld is lively when compared to other Otherworlds of antiquity, it is still the realm of the dead. Living there is like living in a perpetual ecstasy or heroin trip. Even though one might feel alive there, one is actually far removed from life. Oisín decides to leave paradise for the trees, hills, plains, and most importantly, the fellowship of humans. As he departs, he is told that his feet must not touch the ground of the outside world. If he does, he will lose all his Fenian powers; in addition, he will lose the gift of eternal life that he gained when he entered *Tír*

na nÓg. He continues, nevertheless. When he enters the outside world, he discovers that all Fenians are gone. He travels alone throughout Ireland on his horse, and one day he hears hundreds of people crying to him, "'Come over here and help us! You are much stronger than we are!'"[84] He sees a group of men being crushed underneath a huge slab of marble. The onlookers plead again, "'Come quickly and help us to lift the slab or all these men will be crushed to death!'" From his horse, Oisín is able to maneuver the flagstone off the men, but the buckle on his saddle breaks. The Fenian jumps on the ground to recover balance. The instant he does, his strength leaves him, and his body shrivels to that of a frail old man.

As with any mythic tale, the one that recounts the demise of the last Fenian is overflowing with possible meanings. In the present context, this story serves as an analogue for Spud's situation. Spud cannot afford to remain in a state of drug-induced fantasy. It keeps him away from species-being, living a real life with fellow human beings. He and his mates have got to engage "modern life" even if they do not feel cut out for it, even if they "jist pure panic." Oisín is obviously not "a gadge cut oot fir the modern life" of his time either. Nevertheless, he does not panic and return to *Tír na nÓg*. He saves human life. Moreover, his coming down to the ground and becoming mortal is not a price or sacrifice as much as it is a realization of human species-life. He already paid the dearest price when he had entered a supposed paradise, removing him from his fellow Fenians. But what he gains when he steps out of a static utopia and onto the land of the living far exceeds anything the Otherworld could have given him. He enters into true connection with the Irishmen he saves, and one can be confident that his work will be glorified by them. Like Oisín, Spud might suffer for his efforts. Indeed, his function in Welsh's trainspotting books is not just to be a fellow Fenian-like historian, a virtual descendant

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[84] Marie Heaney, "Oisin in the Land of Youth," *Over Nine Waves: A Book of Irish Legends* (London: Faber and Faber, 1994) p. 221.

of Caílte; he is also the peacemaker in his fiction, which tends to get him emotionally and physically hurt. Spud knows that if he does not touch the figurative ground and bring others together—as well as save their collective life in his history of no ones—then they will be "[s]ortay like the saber-toothed tiger," extinct (*Porno* 63). He recognizes that there is a power greater than drugs, violence, solipsism, and despair. This power alludes to an alternative world that is neither a Gaelic fairyland nor neo-Darwinian dystopia.

Carl negatively alludes to an alternative in *Glue*—a world free of "meaningless choice," which would be a world of true autonomy—when he recognizes how the gig of choice operates:

> by the time you've made the token choice you've eaten up a bigger chunk of your allocated three score and ten than any drugs could have. They try to con you that making that kind of choice day in, day out, makes you feel free or alive or self-actualised. But it's shite, a lifebelt to stop us all from going fuckin mad at the lunacy of this fucked-up world we've let them shape around us. . . . Freedom from meaningless choice. (386)

As has probably become apparent, Welsh does not explicitly state what this alternative free world looks like or where it might be located. Beneath and between the surfaces lies the alternative world. As recent astrophysics suggests, it is a mistake to base the existence of the universe on what can be seen but on what cannot be seen, which cosmologists call dark matter. Supposedly, the gravitational pull of dark matter is what holds the universe together, not just the gravitational pull of perceivable stars and planets. Returning to the language of our study, the alternative world lies in the no ones as a collectivity—as an interconnected multitude.[85]

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[85] This multitude, which is a body "beyond measure," will bring about an "intensification of the common" by the interaction of the particularities who compose this body; consequently, the multitude will bring about "an anthropological transformation such that out of our struggles comes a new humanity" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 392).

According to recent Marxist thought, humans are constituents involved in cooperative social networks before they are subsumed under a constitutional entity.[86] Any constituted society, therefore, proceeds only because of the constituents' socially-realized work. Constituents—the particular members of the multitude below and on the edges of the surface of the official world—precede constitution—the surface. Socially-engaged constituents, not a constituted society, are primary to generating any world. Spud's history "ay Leith fae the merger [with Edinburgh] tae the present," as told by the people of Leith themselves, is nothing less than a testament to this fact, which is the actual reason behind Johnson-Hogg's rejection of it. The publisher—as a sentinel of dominant, constituted society—is relatively comfortable with the hoi poloi as long as they keep showing up to their jobs, taking the dole, rotting away in schemes, consuming bad drugs and bad food, and waging war on each other. However, the moment they attempt to be recognized as the source of human society and culture, then the Johnson-Hoggs of the world must cast them even further into the depths and onto the margins. Spud intuits how this works, which he indicates when he exclaims to Begbie, "there'll be nae gadges like me n you left doon here. . . . They want us aw oot in schemes oan the edge ay toon."

When Spud makes this warning about further historical-material estrangement on the horizon, he is not making some weak, egocentric call for self-preservation; nor is he raising undue alarm. He is issuing a wakeup call to the overworked, underemployed, unemployed, supposedly faceless, and supposedly expendable: *Resist the antihuman erasure of the common multitude, and emerge as the practical foundation of human life.*

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[86] According to Negri, "The law and the constitution follow constituent power: constituent power gives rationality and substance to the law. Constituent power stands as a revolutionary extension of the human capacity to construct history, as a fundamental act of innovation, and therefore as absolute procedure. The process started by constituent power never stops. The question is not to limit constituent power, but to make it unlimited" (*Insurgencies* 24).

Spud's whole objective in writing the history of Leith is effectively Fenian, which means that it is radically pro-social and pro-human. Therefore, Fenian Spud is like the Fenians before him: far from being anti-social, the *fíana* were extremely social, and individual Fenians were known to act cooperatively when it came to defending general sociality—species-being—against society's injustices. Accordingly, when Spud homes in on the fact that "Leith wis sucked intae Edinburgh against the people's will," he reflects the Fenian concern with rectifying the injustices of dominant society. He is not interested in merely telling subaltern tales to entertain or to make him and his mates feel better about themselves. The stakes are too high for that. He wants people like him, in Scotland and elsewhere, to "agitate for change" and to get back into producing human history (*Porno* 259). He takes to heart what Renton, his best friend who double-crosses him, passes off as a convenient cliché: one is "better making history than studying it" (*Trainspotting* 147). Therefore, Spud's history of Leith is not just an exposé on a little-known part of Scottish history; it is an attempt to reopen from a particular situation universal historical production. He is calling for the congregation of the dispossessed.

Even though Welsh shows in his Scottish prehistory that an intense, well-established process of self-perpetuated alienation is hindering human individuals from productively short-circuiting and emerging from the current situation, he continually points to a persevering mythos of submerged good sense and emergent force lurking in the background. This persevering knowledge will not allow those who recognize it to give in to the "life" so provocatively described by Renton and Carl. Spud in particular can no longer abide by the "auld weys." Even after Spud suggests that he is not "cut oot fir modern life," he discovers in his historical research "that Leith's motto is persevere," and he consequently says to himself, "ah've goat tae dae jist that," persevere (*Porno* 181).

All things considered, though, what is Welsh telling the potential Scottish multitude and perhaps the potential global multitude to persevere from or to persevere towards? The first part of the question has been answered in the preceding pages: persevere through low expectations, the grey, nastiness, weird symbiotic relationships, false freedom, and estranged life. The second and most important part of the question is somewhat more complicated, but its answer has also been disclosed in the preceding pages: in our alienated states, persevere *together* towards ourselves as true *individuals*. To be more precise, congregate.

"Congregation," in both its nominal and verbal forms, is an interesting concept which is similar to such concepts as "community" and "communion." However, it retains an aspect that those concepts have arguably lost. Integral to any community or communion is the individual. As they stand today, though, "community" and "communion" have been practically emptied of this truth and, therefore, their practicality. "Community" implies a homogeneous, alienated state. As such, it is narcissistic and segregationist. This is perhaps why "community" is such a popular common-sense idea in the context of late capital. On the terrain of late capital, communities are really just active or potential markets that will increase capital's profit margins by diversifying patterns of consumption. Perhaps because of its association with and centrality to established Christian institutions, "communion" implies assimilation: i.e. one is permitted to be absorbed into an elect group. Like "community," "communion" falls in step with capitalism's process of political neutralization through particularization. Alternatively, "congregation" still strongly implies a historical-material process involving the convergence and active collaboration of multiple individuals. "Congregation" connotes a process that does not abide by a predisposed set of affiliations. To congregate is to first emerge as an individual, come together with other individuals, lay bare one's individual materials and energies, collectively work with all presented

materials and energies, generate alternatives as a result, and thus enable further emergence. Institutional, economic, or societal acceptance is not what brings legitimacy to congregation; instead, congregation itself brings about its own legitimacy because the individual and the congregation realize themselves in the other.

Congregation is *not*, however, a matter of casting off differences and entering into a blissful embrace with fellow latter-day Fenians, caterans, reivers, or Celtic Christian monks. Congregation is *not* a matter of coming together *despite* differences. Throughout his "medieval" Scottish prehistory, Welsh makes clear the self-destructive implications of not openly confronting and working through differences: denial, neglect, violence, uncritical group-thinking, and death. These are what dominate *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, and *Porno*. Congregation is, instead, a process of individuals bringing differences together, each individual seeing others' differences as his or her own, cooperatively working through those differences, and thus producing the opening for further congregation.

Despite overwhelming nastiness, Welsh is like Spud: he cannot let go of hope. To keep this hope alive for his characters and his readers, Welsh concludes each of the trainspotting books with instances of congregation. Thus, he demonstrates that congregation is here in waiting, but individuals have to bring it about. As Renton is en route to Amsterdam, he glimpses the congregation he is leaving behind through the guilt he feels for betraying his friends (*Trainspotting* 342-44). In the page before the three-page coda of *Glue*, Juice Terry, Billy, and Carl walk together across a park, "three men, three middle-aged men. One looked a bit plump, the other muscular and athletic and the final one was skinny and dressed in clothes some might have considered a bit young for him" (464). Welsh also implies that the memories of Gally and Carl's father are with them, becoming the spiritual glue that keeps the group together. In *Porno*,

three parallel but unexpected convergences occur, their common bond being the psychotic Francis Begbie, of all people. Renton demonstrates a rare instance of loyalty in attempting to return Spud's cat. While Renton is on a payphone asking Spud to meet him for the cat, Renton observes Begbie crossing the street. Renton knows that Begbie is coming to kill him. As Begbie crosses the street, he is hit by a car. Without hesitation, Renton runs over to a prostrate Begbie:

> I'm over there without consciously knowing what the fuck I'm doing. I'm down at his side, supporting his head, watching his busy eyes blaze and jive, brimming with baffled malevolence. I don't want him like this. I really don't. I want him punching me, kicking me. –Franco man, ah'm sorry . . . it's oot ay order . . . ah'm sorry, man. . . . I'm greeting. I'm holding Begbie in my arms and I'm greeting. I'm thinking of all the old times, all the good times and I'm looking into his eyes and the rancour is leaving them, like a dark curtain being drawn back, to let in a serene light as his thin lips twist into a wicked smile. . . . He is fucking well smiling at me. Then he tries to talk, says something like: —Ah eywis liked you, or maybe I'm just hearing what I want to hear, maybe there's a qualification. Then eh starts coughing and a rivulet of blood trickles oot from the side of his mouth. (*Porno* 470)

After Renton has conned the conman Sick Boy once more, Sick Boy and Begbie converge while Begbie is in the hospital. Begbie grabs Sick Boy's wrist, "his hand is like a vice around it," and when Sick Boy looks up, Begbie's "eyes have opened and those blazing coals of enmity are staring right into [Sick Boy's] lacerated, penitent self" (*Porno* 484). Granted, these instances of congregation are inconclusive. Even so, congregation does emerge from the terrain of nastiness.

These particular instances in the trainspotting books are indicative of hope. That hope, though, does not come from the ether. It is grounded. It is not a hope based on denial or naiveté or idealism; it is a good-faith hope built from the very materials that have hitherto denied hope. Returning to Carl's statement after his father Duncan's death, this hope is "just *something*, some kind of second chance" that materializes right when "pieces of the circumstances of . . . death" are coming together (*Glue* 455, 457). The circumstances of death always originate in life. Along with Spud and other Welsh characters that we will encounter, Carl realizes that those circumstances could be redirected toward life. We can look at Welsh's tales in the three trainspotting books as documents of those circumstances. Taken alone, Welsh's tales are fragments scattered on the terrain of nastiness, like the fragmented details we have about the Fenians, Scottish monks, caterans, and reivers. As such, they are certainly testaments to solipsism, cynicism, defeatism, self-destruction, and estrangement—i.e. *death*. Borrowing Spud's words, they are "wee parts ay life going up in smoke." When taken together as a congregated whole, however, these tales from yob culture point to something significantly different. The key to continuing congregation is not the perseverance of an isolated individual for him- or herself, as Spud discovers, but is the perseverance of multiple individuals for each other. To persevere in the latter case, though, implies more than just coming together: a deeper connection is involved. Congregation, therefore, must work in conjunction with some other virtue, which we will discuss in the following chapter.

Chapter 3

Reformation Thread: Covenant of Integration

". . . for their worm shall not die. . . ."

—Isaiah[87]

Meanwhile, the people were preparing the reaction against this splendid
parasitism in the form of the Protestant Reformation. . . .

—Antonio Gramsci[88]

In *Porno*, Begbie offers this explanation for why he has murdered Chizzie, a convicted

child molester:

> But they tell ays thit the Bible says thit God made man in ehs ain image. So ah
>
> take that as meaning thit *no* tae try tae be like God wid be a fuckin big insult tae
>
> the cunt, that's the way ah see it. So aye, ah wis playin God whin ah wasted the
>
> nonce cunt. (*Porno* 409-10)

Begbie directly associates himself with a certain kind of God: a God who, with cold and brutal

rationality, puts things into their rightful, preordained order. Acts of prejudice are their own

justification.

By situating himself this way, Begbie is able to rationalize his own brutal habits and

subsequently to raise them to the level of paternal care because, according to him, he has "made

the fuckin world a better place, cause they fuckin things deserve tae die, that's the wey thit ah

fuckin well see it. Too right. The polis, if they wir bein honest, wid tell ye the same thing"

(*Porno* 409). Such care does not extend to appreciating or understanding that child abusers, for

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[87] Is. 66: 24. This and all subsequent biblical references come from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible: New Revised Standard Version with the Apocrypha*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford UP, 2001).

[88] Gramsci, *Selections from Cultural Writings* 230.

instance, are themselves typically the former recipients of child abuse, as was Chizzie's case. To be caring in the sense described, though, does not mean to sympathize.[89]

The terms "sympathy" and "sympathize" are often associated with sentimentalism. Empathy, therefore, has replaced sympathy as the appropriate way to express one's appreciation of another's situation. In other words, one only has to safely imagine what another person is experiencing, not risk taking on as one's own what another is going through. One reason for this shift from "fellow-feeling" to "in-feeling" is arguably to reflect the significant insights of Modernism and existentialism: that we are alone and incapable of actually knowing anything outside our individual selves. But the bourgeois pedigree behind this insight is unmistakable. Solipsism is one side of a coin whose other face is self-sufficiency or "rugged individualism." Then moving into the context of postmodern capital, the potential moral consciousness involved in being an existential "alone-self" has been replaced by consumer-centered marketing. Loneliness, angst, and anxiety are now privacy and customer satisfaction. Nevertheless, the change is only a superficial one; indeed, it covers a deep lack of pathos and thus a meaningful, feeling life. Emptiness is where emotional bonds should be. Juice Terry and Spud refer to this emptiness as "the grey" and "nastiness" (*Glue* 456 and *Porno* 284). This emptiness is not outside of the individual; it emanates from fragmented individuals. It seems to come from the outside, but it is perpetuated and expanded by human individuals. In the case of someone like Begbie, this emptiness is intensified and redirected violently at others. Begbie is an unsympathetic God.

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[89] George Lakoff's analysis of "strict father morality" (unmistakably Calvinist), which he argues is dominant in the Protestant United States, is also helpful when applied to the logic Welsh uncovers in a Scottish context. See George Lakoff, *Moral Politics: What Conservatives Know That Liberal's Don't* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996) pp. 65-107.

Indeed, sympathy would hinder Begbie as he bolsters whatever order it is that he deems to be good. Accordingly, he can come to this conclusion about murdering Chizzie: "ye could say thit ah took fuckin pity oan that cunt, cause eh's jist gaunnae git abused again, n the nick n that. Best fuckin deal aw roond" (*Porno* 410). According to such thinking, pity does not prohibit killing; in fact, pity might actually require it. It is far removed from sympathy. Pitying people is an act of leveling judgment on them so that the rightful order of the world—strong over the weak and the elect over the reprobate—is maintained. Justice must be served. Therefore, the God that Begbie emulates is one that operates according to a strict righteousness, "righteousness" being the biblical term for "justice."

The way to maintain such justice is to keep people and their activities within well-defined boundaries. While often a mystery to everyone else, these boundaries are well-defined to Begbie. To shore up these boundaries, he enacts either preemptory or reactionary terrorism, in both physical and psychic practice. In *Trainspotting*, for instance, he throws a pint glass into a pub crowd, purposely creating an antagonistic situation to sort out, "like a psychopathic detective oot ay an Agatha Christie whodunit, cross-examinin every cunt" (80). In *Porno*, Begbie beats June, the mother of his first two children, because he wrongfully suspects that she has had sexual relations with Spud. Begbie does not care for this woman or her children, whom he abandoned long before. Nor is he particularly jealous of Spud. What Begbie jealously guards is his control of everyone he encounters. Without any regard for circumstances or facts or feelings, Begbie's primary interest lies in reminding people of their place. For this reason, Begbie is a jealous God.

Begbie is also a vengeful God. Begbie is interested in retribution and reprisal for "trivial grievances," as Renton calls them (*Trainspotting* 21). This is best demonstrated in *Porno*. Begbie is obsessed with finding Rents and making him physically pay for what Begbie himself

would have probably done—betray his mates and run off with the money that the *Trainspotting* gang made in their nearly twenty-thousand pound drug deal years before. Furthermore, Begbie blames Renton for any harmful act that he has committed since, including the murder of a man, hence making Renton's blood price even higher:

> Renton hud been muh mate. Muh best mate. Fae school. And eh'd taken the fuckin pish. It's aw been Renton's fault. Aw this fuckin rage. N it's nivir gaunnae stoap until ah kin git that cunt back. It's his fuckin fault ah goat the fuckin jail. That Donnelly goat wide, but ah widnae huv done um sae bad if ah hudnae been fuckin crazy about bein ripped oaf. (*Porno* 129)

For Begbie, this is also part of justice, making people pay with life and limb for theirs or others' sins. In Gaelic, a word for this is *díoltas*. The Norse and early Anglo-Saxons had a term, *wergild* or "man-price." In Anglo-Scottish Border Law, it was called "cold trod," to chase down a robber long after the robbery has occurred. In today's ironically less subtle terms, it is called "getting even." Regardless of the name, this is a powerful form of bad sense.

How in the world does Begbie get to this point? His theological position is the exception, not the rule, right? He has got Christianity totally wrong, does he not? Is he not just using God as an excuse? We will hold the first question for later and now address the other interrelated questions.

Historically, Begbie's theology is in tune with major swaths of official Christian doctrine, which have been handed down to us from at least Saint Augustine of Hippo's day. When we consider Begbie in the context of Scottish Christianity, he is a well known type of Christian, a severe and self-righteous Calvinist.[90] The ground from which such Christianity comes is a large

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[90] See Robert Burns's masterful parody of this kind of Scottish Christian, "Holy Willie's Prayer," *Complete Poems and Songs*, ed. James Kinsley (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1969) pp. 56-9.

and rich one, owing much to some of the more stringent strands of the Old and New Testaments: e.g. Leviticus, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Proverbs, Matthew, and Revelations. Perhaps most important, though, are three verses of one chapter in Saint Paul the Apostle's Letter to the Romans:

> We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of the Son, in order that he might be the first-born among many brethren. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.[91]

If one is looking for the most succinct biblical rationale behind the doctrine of predestination in the Reformed and Presbyterian branches of Christianity, this is it. But austere Calvinist theologians, pastors, and elders in France, Switzerland, Holland, and Scotland were by no means the first to fixate on this and similar other passages in the Bible.

In Book 5 of Saint Augustine of Hippo's (354-430) monumental theological systemization of Christianity, *The City of God*, the quoted section of Paul's letter to the Romans haunts practically every page.[92] Indeed, this fifth book is part of what could arguably be called Augustine's Ten Books to the Romans. In it, Augustine counters the secular and pagan elements of the Roman Empire by arguing that the Christian God—not Greek or Roman gods, philosophers, or poets—informed and empowered Rome's pre-Christian history. From the very beginning, then, Augustine's project demonstrates predestinarian logic. In equally important

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[91] Rom. 8: 28-30
[92] Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (New York: Modern Library, 2000).

political terms, Augustine ensures that any great human achievement, such as the successes of empires, is not human in origin but is preordained by God.

Practically in the middle of Augustine's ten-book groundwork for revealing the City of God, Paul's verses make a somewhat veiled but incontrovertible cameo appearance:

> In [God's] supreme will resides the power which acts on the wills of all created spirits, helping the good, judging the evil, controlling all, granting power to some, not granting it to others. For, as He is the creator of all natures, so also is He the bestower of all powers, not of all wills; for wicked wills are not from Him, being contrary to nature, which is from Him. . . . For one who is not prescient of all future things is not God. Wherefore our wills also have just so much power as God willed and foreknew that they should have; and therefore whatever power they have, they have it within most certain limits; and whatever they are to do, they are most assuredly to do, for He whose foreknowledge is infallible foreknew that they would have the power to do it, and would do it.[93]

By way of an argument with none other than Cicero about fate and free will, Augustine's interpretation of Paul goes something like this: God is pure good from which all other good comes. The difference between God's goodness and mortal goodness is that God's is untainted by creation, which he himself made, whereas mortals are tainted by creation. Humans are formed by God, which means that they are good, but they are less than good because they were formed. So, humans must conform their goodness as much as possible to pure goodness, as it is embodied in God, even though mortals cannot fathom God's goodness. Those who are evil were never of God, so they never will be of God. Those who are good—whose conformity to God's goodness is solid—are justified and are consequently guaranteed to enter into God's pure

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[93] Augustine 155, 156.

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goodness. This homecoming to the City of God will occur during the Last Judgment of Armageddon, according to Augustine.[94]

As authoritative as all of this may sound, it represents a strand of theology that is negligible in the four Gospels and is inconsistently present in Paul's letters; nevertheless, it is a strong thread running throughout much of the Old Testament. Perhaps this predestinarian aspect of Augustine's theology owes more to Paul's background as a Pharisee than to the gospel message at the center of his letters. The Pharisees were Old Testament literalists, religious fundamentalists, and theocrats. Including Paul (nee Saul) before his conversion to Christianity, they also happened to be the most troubled by the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth; consequently, they caused him, his disciples, and the majority of their Jewish contemporaries the most trouble. Indeed, one of Jesus' and then Paul's most annoying habits, according to the Pharisees, was to violate the Old Testament by arguing for the inclusion of all people in the promise of unconditional love and everlasting life.

What might be surprising is that the theological father of the Roman Church, in many ways second only to Saint Peter as a patriarch, is far from refuted by the father of the Reformed Church, John Calvin (1509-64). In his massive theological systemization of Protestant Christianity, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Calvin first signals his agreement with Augustine by reasserting that the "secrets" of God's will, "which he has seen it meet to manifest, are revealed in his word—revealed in so far as he knew to be conducive to our interest and welfare"; then quoting Augustine, "'We have come into the way of faith . . . let us constantly adhere to it. . . . [I]f the last day shall find us making progress, we shall there learn what here we

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[94] Augustine 710-62.

could not.'"[95] Not to be outdone by Augustine, Calvin asserts that predestination is not merely a reflection of God's will but is a manifestation of his *pleasure* and *mercy*:

> We say, then, that Scripture clearly proves this much, that God by his eternal and immutable counsel determined once and for all those whom it was his pleasure one day to admit to salvation, and those whom, on the other hand, it was his pleasure to doom to destruction. We maintain that this counsel, as regards the elect, is founded on his free mercy, without any respect to human worth, while those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment.[96]

Calvin's God takes pleasure in condemning people to eternal damnation without any indication of why. In this way, the doctrine of predestination reflects a sadistic God, Begbie's God. Nevertheless, Calvin's claim to clear biblical justification of this doctrine begs the question about this doctrine's validity. Throughout an extensive, labyrinthine argument for predestination, he raises Hebrew laws concerning inheritance to declarative statements by God concerning predestination. He also takes statements from Paul out of context, without qualifying them according to the unique situations that determined each of Paul's epistles.[97] This is not to mention that Calvin's use of the four Gospels in his lengthy argument for predestination is unusually cavalier for a man who is otherwise extremely rigorous when it comes to interpreting scripture.

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[95] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) p. 204.

[96] Calvin 210-11.

[97] Though universal in scope, Paul's letters are singular or particular in the sense that they are personal and contextually determined. See Badiou, *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism*, trans. Ray Brassier (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2003) pp. 18, 20-22, 31, 66, 110.

In Calvin's theology, as well as Augustine's, something suspicious is occurring. When addressing the topic of predestination, two of Christianity's greatest thinkers employ reasoning and rhetoric that would make a high school debater blush. In all fairness to Augustine and Paul, it would be wrong to reduce all of Augustine's theology to the doctrine of predestination, and despite the views and actions of many of Calvin's theological descendants, predestination is not central to Calvin's theology.[98] Nevertheless, the presence of this doctrine in their major works and their bold defenses of it cannot be avoided. Moreover, at the time of this writing—when ideas of religious, sociocultural, ethnic, historical, and economic election are at the base of almost every conflict on the planet—the doctrine of predestination appears alive and well in practice.

In effect, if not in intention, Augustine and Calvin underpin the legitimacy of Christianity's emergent force with a residual force: the promise of universal love, equality, and peace is, to use Calvin's adjective, "gratuitously" reserved for the elect.[99] Thus, predestinarians neutralize Christianity's emergent force. As much as they might depend on Paul to buttress their arguments, predestinarians violate the ecumenicalism that dominates Paul's missions to the Gentiles, of which his letters are a testament. It is probably unnecessary, therefore, to say that their doctrine of predestination flies in the face of Jesus' teaching and acts.[100] However unintentionally, Augustine and Calvin place at the core of Christianity anything but a clear doctrine. Instead, backed by disembodied scriptural passages and tautological arguments, they introduce a black hole of contradiction into a revolutionary spirituality of reconciliation. The

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[98] J. K. S. Reid, ed. and trans., Introduction, *Concerning the Eternal Predestination of God*, John Calvin (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997) p. 9.
[99] Calvin 209.
[100] Tom Mongar, *Only With Marx and Jesus* (Lanham, MD: UP of America, 1997) p. 42.

implication of this move is not the glorification of God but the alienation and accumulation of power from humans.

The effects of predestination's ascendancy, not only as a theological doctrine but also as a sociocultural one, are starkly evident in Scotland's history. Using presbyterian structures,[101] which contrasted with the bishop-centered model that had dominated much of Europe before the Reformation, the Calvinist theologians who came to dominate the Scottish Church (Kirk)—such as John Knox, Samuel Rutherford, James Durham, James Fraser of Brea, John Brown of Haddington, and Andrew Melville, among others—recognized that formerly secular social institutions would be indispensable vehicles for gaining control of practically all aspects of the Scots' lives.[102] Education, which had always been a cornerstone of Scottish sociocultural life, became a means of indoctrination. Most often in their parish sessions, presbytery meetings, and sometimes at the General Assembly, Scottish Presbyterians employed juridical power as a form of figurative and sometimes literal witch hunts. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, what various Kirk leaders and sects did with their newly gained secular authority virtually perfected the bad habits of Anglo-Saxon, Gaelic, and Catholic royals: nepotism, narrow-mindedness, self-service, domination, and gratuitous persecution.[103] Morality as a theological concern turned into a political and juridical obsession; the Protestant Kirk became a vehicle of religious and secular repression. Morality became the rationale and acid test for almost all

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[101] The word "presbyterian," the moniker of the major Reformed denomination, derives from the Greek word *presbuteros*, "elder." A presbyterian political structure is based on the New Testament practice of electing elders to govern local congregations and communities. Ideally, it is a grassroots form of government: lay people elect elders to a church session for an appointed term, the elders govern and maintain their church, and they represent their local constituency at the meeting of Presbyteries (regional collections of congregations) and at a General Assembly, in which the whole Church's policies and procedures are decided by vote. On this model, the Presbyterian Kirk became both the religious and secular ruling body of Scotland through much of the early-modern period. It is generally held that America's form of representative democracy borrowed from the Scottish presbyterian system.

[102] Mitchison 201.

[103] See MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: U of Notre Dame P, 1988) 241-59; Mitchison 199-289; Jenny Wormald, *Court, Kirk, and Community: Scotland 1470-1625* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1981) pp. 95-139.

human activity between the late-sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[104] Therefore, what Martin

Luther's and John Calvin's protests and reforms challenged in the Holy Roman Empire is exactly

what a radical Scottish version of Calvinism, which we will call ultra-Calvinism, gave to a

predetermined syndicate of God's chosen. [105]

Returning to *Trainspotting*, when Begbie intentionally throws a pint glass in a crowded

pub so that he may interrogate, persecute, and terrify just about everyone, he demonstrates the

premeditated negative judgment that Augustine and Calvin theorized, and that early-modern

Scottish Presbyterians enacted through psychological and physical violence. He demonstrates

his superior goodness by creating a test, by then implicating everyone else in guilt over the

incident, and by finally putting himself into the position of judge, "examinin every cunt."[106]

Victims of Begbie's violence become enactors of his violent will, proliferating victimization that

cannot be traced back to its origin, and if it were traced back, Begbie would feel obliged to

unleash inordinate wrath on any who questioned him. Begbie becomes a latter-day version of an

early-modern protestant judge at a heresy trial, representing the gratuitous will and pleasure of a

jealous, vengeful God.

Today, most of Scotland's Christians are practicing or lapsed Catholics, which reflects

the huge part that recent immigrants from Ireland have played in Scotland's recent history;

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[104] Margo Todd, *The Culture of Protestantism in Early Modern Scotland* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2002) pp. 24-83.

[105] Mitchison 115-16; Murray G. H. Pittock, *A New History of Scotland* (Phoenix Mill, UK: Sutton, 2003) pp. 156-57.

[106] Examination was a publicly practiced part of Scottish Calvinism. In the form of a tribunal—typically conducted at the local level through congregational sessions and meetings of presbyteries, but sometimes occurring in major Kirk centers, such as Edinburgh, for high profile cases of heresy and the like—an individual's faith and theological correctness would be judged. But the most powerful form, which should be no surprise to the reader of Michel Foucault's studies on disciplinary systems, is the process of self-examination. See *The Scots Confession: 1560*, ed. G. D. Henderson (Edinburgh: St. Andrews, 1960), reprinted in *Book of Confessions: Study Edition* (Louisville: Geneva, 1996) p. 46; Todd 73-83; and M. Charles Bell, *Calvin and Scottish Theology: The Doctrine of Assurance* (Edinburgh: Handsel, 1985) p. 98. See also Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995) pp. 170-94.

nevertheless, Scotland is still socially, culturally, and politically Presbyterian.[107] More than William Wallis and Robert the Bruce, more than the Stewarts and Jacobites, and more than David Hume and Adam Smith, Scottish Calvinism has had the greatest overall impact on all aspects of Scottish life. Just from what has been presented in this background, one can catch glimpses of how powerful certain aspects of Calvinism can be. In the context of Scotland, preordained superiority, justified subordination of the reprobate, gratuitous judgment, and the like are not exactly a blessing. As the previous chapter and the above account of Begbie illustrate, these aspects can easily be blamed for the subordination that many Scots and Scotland as a whole have experienced. On the scales of preordained judgment, Scotland does not historically seem to be in the ultra-Calvinist God's favor—being apparently a nation of the reprobate rather than of the elect. Moreover, the draconian aspects of Calvinism obscure much of what was good about the Reformation in general and the Scottish Reformation in particular. Once again, bad sense obscures good sense; thus, with sometimes disastrous results, Scotland's emergent materials and energies have gone relatively untapped and unused.

How did things get to this point? The question we posed above but held off on answering—How does Begbie get to this point?—is one we will redirect and expand before answering. Let us pose the question this way: Why is Begbie where he is, and by extension, why are we where we are?

In these questions, the place implied by the words "point" and "where" is the same terrain of nastiness discussed in chapter 2: the situation of subordinates under the empire of late capital. Within that terrain of nastiness, ultra-Calvinism is a significant factor. It has left the domain of

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[107] Pittock 297. See also Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Twentieth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1998) p. 175.

theology and has entered into the domain of late capital.[108] Indeed, it has been appropriated by it. Most humans in the world are, to some degree, under the nebulous sovereignty of ultra-Calvinistic late capitalism, and the implications of living in its empire are more than just theoretical.[109] When we look to Scotland, therefore, we are not treating Scotland as an isolated case; instead, Scotland is a window through which to observe global processes and, thus, to explore the challenges confronting the potential global multitude. In chapter 2, Welsh opened that window for us in *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, and *Porno*.

In the questions posed above, the terms "point" and "where" also indicate a state of being. In Welsh's writing, we are encouraged to confront why, say, a Renton, a Spud, or a Begbie acts the way he does. The reason cannot be—and is not—as simple as this: each of them is a congenital failure. To claim such would be rather prejudicial and negligent. We know that they represent sociocultural outcasts that have proliferated through the long process of the multitude's or common humans' alienation from power and autonomy. Consequently, humans have become destructive toward themselves and each other, despite themselves. In the previous chapter, which connected the postmodern present to its medieval materials and energies, we explored how the disintegration of social networks has contributed to the self-destructiveness of marginalized groups. As we did so, we only touched on some of the effects that the fragmentation of society into isolated individuals has on those individuals. Here, we will intensify that line of inquiry, but instead of making connections to the medieval, we will connect our present concerns to Reformation materials and energies.

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[108] On this, Max Weber is half correct in his classic work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1930). Protestantism, Calvinism in particular, does inform capitalist ideology. However, the idea that Protestantism is the cause of modern capitalism, as well as ostensibly being the ideological model for capitalism in general, is putting the cart before the horse. Capitalism absorbed and naturalized many of the characteristics of ultra-Calvinism while it neutralized the Reformation's emergent materials and energies.

[109] For another excellent literary rendering of this internal and external "colonization" by capitalist empire from a Scottish viewpoint, see Candia McWilliam, *Debatable Land* (London: Bloomsbury, 1994).

The virtue we have already arrived at is congregation. Even so, the individual, or lack thereof, is today the greatest stumbling block for congregation. In the age of late capital, the disintegration of the individual into incoherent sets of egocentrisms, empty moral truisms, prejudices, and dysfunctions is nearly, if not totally, complete. As the trainspotters and hooligans we have already encountered illustrate, human individuals have been fragmented by trivia, petty grievances, and escapist consumption patterns. Such a situation does not allow for sympathy; thus, individuals are hollow, eliding their lack of pathos (feeling) with self-consuming habits. To use Sick Boy's words from the closing lines of *Porno*, all individuals are "lacerated" and perhaps "penitent" selves (484). To be lacerated and penitent indicates that one is in a state of fragmentation and lack. In effect, all individuals are wee Scotlands—subordinate in their dispossessed-ness and self-destructiveness. In order for congregation as a virtue to persevere after it emerges as a key element of an alternative world, another virtue must therefore be in play: integration.

With Welsh's third novel, *Filth*, and his short story, "The Granton Star Cause," we will first look at how antisocial and destructive an individual can become in the empire of late capitalism; then, we will "tease oot" the virtue of integration from emergent materials and energies in Scotland's Reformation fabric. In *Filth*, Welsh provides a historical-material and psychological case study of Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson, perhaps the vilest, most ultra-Calvinist character in Welsh's whole body of work. [110] In our reading of *Filth*, we will uncover 1) how the situation of late capital informed by ultra-Calvinism makes way for an individual's internal disintegration and 2) the disastrous results of that disintegration. Our study of "Granton Star," a postmodern and Calvinist morality play that features the clueless amateur soccer player Boab Coyle and God, will consider 1) Welsh's rereading of Calvinism, and 2) his judgment

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[110] Welsh, *Filth* (New York: Norton, 1998).

concerning the complicity of human individuals in their disintegration and their power to bring about something else.[111] What will surface during our exploration of both texts is the recognition of a major hindrance to human integration: the corruption of pathos and its disconnection from both mythos and logos. As I noted in the Introduction, pathos is incarnated sensory knowledge. This kind of knowledge embodies and sensually informs the other two, thus enabling them to have meaningful, practical existence. Moreover, it is the bridge which connects mythos and logos to each other and across which experiential, sensorial data travels to them. Pathos is also the connective tissue of bodies politic—the permeable membrane through which mythos and logos can pass to and from the world and through which humans can connect to other humans. With all of this brought to the surface, we will ultimately use Francis Hutcheson's post-Reformation reformation of Scottish Calvinism to articulate the virtue toward which Welsh's two stories point: integration.

3.1 First Reformation Strand: The Worm That Shall Not Die

"Same rules apply." This is the mantra of Bruce Robertson, perhaps the most loathsome character to appear in Irvine Welsh's fiction. In his third novel, *Filth*, Welsh delivers us into the banal, bigoted, and perverse world of Detective Sergeant Bruce Robertson. Barring a few key exceptions, the reader perceives everything through Robertson's internal monologue, which is more like a catalogue of a psychopathic and burnt-out police officer's mundane daily activities, delusions, and half-baked opinions. One striking consequence of this novel, however, is that it intentionally fails to give the reader what he or she would presume to find in it. The novel initially presents itself as a standard twentieth-century whodunit, in which one will find out who murdered the journalist-son of a dignitary from Ghana. But even when this mystery is technically solved, the actual mystery is far from being solved because it is located elsewhere.

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[111] Welsh, "The Granton Star Cause," *The Acid House* (New York: Norton, 1994) pp. 120-36.

For starters, the case of Efan Wurie's brutal death is the case Robertson is trying to solve, if Robertson can be believed. And he cannot be believed. Robertson already knows who murdered Wurie. As he finally discloses in the last pages of the novel, he did. In fact, dressed as his wife Carole, Robertson has killed Wurie in a jealous rage because Carole had slept with a black man.

So, with that wild goose chase out of the way, what is it that we are supposed to be after? What crime is Robertson circumscribing with his self-deceptive charade before he kills another person, a schemie named Lexo, and before he ultimately hangs himself? Welsh forces the reader to be the unfortunate sleuth in this whodunit, to chart out the circumstances and the motives for Robertson's actions. All clues point to a crime much deeper and complex than the one suggested in the early pages of the novel. This crime is one which has drawn in quite a few victims, not just Wurie and Robertson. The scope of *Filth*'s mystery, therefore, takes us well beyond the pale of typical mystery novels.

Narrative theorists have for around half a century made narrator intent or reliability the standard fare of undergraduate literature students' term papers. So, is Robertson an unreliable narrator? The question implies its obvious answer. The problem or point of the book apparently rests on the credibility of the detective who seems more concerned about his promotion to an inspectorship and about his various sadistic sexual and criminal adventures during business hours than he is about the murder case he heads. As we will come to find, his whole world and his power over it depends on keeping a vast assemblage of mysteries in play—like the "smokescreen" to which Carl Ewart refers in *Glue* (463).

Granted, most detective mysteries are at least as focused on their protagonists as they are on the cases at hand. Often, the way a case pans out frequently gives the reader insight into the hero, the sleuth. So, is Robertson a psychological case study? Again, the question implies its

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obvious answer. The generally accepted founder of mystery writing, Edgar Allan Poe, masterfully exploited such a strategy. The psychology of the mystery-solver is the key to understanding so many of his stories. In this vein, are not the eccentricities of Oedipus, Sherlock Holmes, and Hercule Poirot what often draw people to Sophocles', Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's, and Agatha Christie's mystery classics? (Peter Sellers made quite a career out of spoofing sleuth mystique in the *Pink Panther* movies.) Therefore, saying that Robertson's internal conflicts are important is not radical at all when considering the mystery genre.

What is literarily unique about Welsh's psychological narrative approach has to do with the split in the narration between D. S. Robertson's conscious voice and the voice of the others that live in the deeper strata of his being. Even though one might complain about the over-determined psychological aspect of *Filth*, Welsh does not make Robertson's mind an easy one to figure out. Unlike the trainspotting books, this book is claustrophobic in the sense that, for the majority of the narrative, it traps the reader in *one part* of *one narrator's mind*. And because Robertson only permits the reader to have access to what is the most superficial layer of his life, he becomes an increasingly disturbing mystery as the story progresses. Robertson is effectively a purloined letter, to borrow from Lacan's analysis of Poe's famous story "The Purloined Letter."[112] Determining the psychological state of the main character is still a mystery even after the last page because there is such a disjointed relationship between D. S. Robertson and the other voices or personalities Bruce Robertson contains—including his estranged wife and a tapeworm. For these reasons and perhaps others, *Filth* and a few other texts by Welsh sit comfortably alongside Samuel Beckett's *How It Is* and *The Unnamable*.

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[112] Jacques Lacan, Seminar on "The Purloined Letter," trans. J. Mehlman, *Yale French Studies* 48 (1972): pp. 38-72.

Moreover, the mystery at the core of *Filth* also bears a strong affiliation with the doctrine of predestination. Like Begbie, Robertson's dominant surface persona adopts the role of an ultra-Calvinist God. In Calvin's doctrine of predestination, God is an elusive and arbitrary force. God's treatment of the damned (the reprobate) of the world, as compared to the chosen (the elect), is what both punctuates his indecipherability and bolsters his power: "those whom he dooms to destruction are excluded from access to life by a just and blameless, but at the same time incomprehensible judgment." Even so, the question cannot help but emerge: Why does a supposedly omnipotent God need to bolster his power by judging what he himself foreknew and created from his own perfect being?

It is easy to forget that this is a question that stems from a highly suspect Christian doctrine that moves to abstract God from human life while at the same time ascribing to God what are undoubtedly human desires for supreme power. Indeed, it is a doctrine that not only violates the spirit of the New Testament but also violates two interrelated commandments of the Decalogue handed to Moses on Mount Sinai: the prohibition of graven images and the prohibition of bearing false witness.[113] As Calvin introduces his argument for predestination, he indicates that he is treading on very dangerous ground, "penetrating into the recesses of the divine wisdom, where he who rushes forward securely and confidently instead of satisfying his curiosity will enter into an inextricable labyrinth."[114] But Calvin cannot help himself, despite warning everyone else to not enter this labyrinth. This betrays a high level of presumption on Calvin's part: that he is not only one of the elect but that he is also an elite member of the elect.[115] As noted earlier, he enters what is effectively a labyrinth of his own making, and he makes it even more complicated. Like the arrogant artisan Dædalus, he creates a mysterious

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[113] Ex. 20: 4-6, 16.
[114] Calvin 204.
[115] Calvin 22.

structure from which he himself cannot escape. Calvin tries to organize the mind of God, which he himself says cannot be fathomed. This is Calvin's graven image. Then, based on a confusing examination of others' preordained degrees of belief, Calvin presumes to know who God has chosen to be the elect and the reprobate.[116] As a consequence of flouting the second commandment, Calvin cannot help but to violate the ninth, bearing false witness against his fellow mortals. When it comes to the doctrine of predestination, therefore, Calvin's systematization of the Christian religion becomes a mystification of it. Instead of helping humans understand God, he has compounded the mystery; thus, he has further alienated the very God he elsewhere tries to bring closer to humans. Not only that. He attributes to God a pathological "secret pleasure" in his arbitrary treatment of the reprobate.[117] By aligning himself with such a God, Calvin betrays his own pleasure, which we might call *Schadenfreude*. What Calvin offers us, then, is not as much a doctrine as it is a document of his own pathology. It should come as no surprise that, in the context of Welsh's Scotland, the pathology of this labyrinthine version of God is also the pathology of someone like Robertson.

As Calvin unintentionally demonstrates, to take on the psychology of God is to actually take on one's own psychology. By no means is doing psychological analysis in itself a bad thing to do. Sometimes, though, such analysis might be a distraction or, even worse, an obfuscation of a deeper problem. In the case of *Filth*, it is putting the cart before the horse. The novel's primary narrative voice and its literary implications are greatly intriguing. Moreover, its psychological insights can be greatly unsettling, as we will surely find. Yet taken alone, the psychological terrain is a symptom of a deeper social terrain. Getting to the latter through the former is the ethical purpose behind Welsh's foray into mystery. To say so does not mean that

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[116] Calvin 214, 218-20, 222-24.
[117] Calvin 220, 224.

psychology is off limits—far from it. But psychology cannot be alienated from historical-material terrain when confronted with someone like Robertson. Calvin's predestinarianism demonstrates the disastrous, antihuman implications of such alienation. Therefore, to better understand the evidence of the crime at hand, we as sleuths will have to analyze the scene of the crime. Returning to terminology introduced in the previous chapters, we will need to assess the historical-material situation—the fabric, terrain, ground—that gives rise to the psychological state and sadistic actions of the perplexing Robertson, who guards his mysteriousness like ultra-Calvinism's God.

The crime scene, per se, is presented to us by Robertson's tapeworm. All indications are that Robertson is actually infested by first two tapeworms and then, after passing one of them, only a single tapeworm. The one which remains is sentient. Whether or not there is actually a remarkably cognizant parasite inside Robertson is beside the point. The tapeworm is more important as a figure. Like a genealogy, it is a collection of epistemic segments stacked on one another, and each segment informs the whole genealogical body. Even after Robertson has managed to evacuate one tapeworm from his bowels, the remaining sentient tapeworm cannot even consider abandoning Robertson. "How can I forgive you?" asks the tapeworm, and then answering itself, "But forgive you I must. I know your story" (*Filth* 260). The tapeworm *knows* Bruce Robertson's story—his life—because it has *ingested* his story. Therefore, Robertson's story has become the tapeworm's history, genealogy, biography, and life. Robertson and the tapeworm are literally and figuratively, mentally and physically inseparable.

As the novel progresses, the tapeworm discloses more details about why Robertson hates himself and everyone else, about why he is a misogynist, homophobe, racist, classist, sexual predator, and murderer. He was born out of rape, abused by his stepfather, abused by middle-

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class teachers, accidentally caused his brother's death, witnessed the horrible death of his high school girlfriend, witnessed the mutilation of crime victims, lives as a repressed bisexual, and has apparently been accused by his daughter of sexual abuse. Like segments shed by a tapeworm, the details come in disjointed fragments, and the reader, along with Robertson, is responsible for putting together the pieces. Consistent in method, Welsh again encourages us to weave a map in order to first figure out a situation and then to seek for that alternative "something" in an otherwise bleak situation.

Some fragments that will help us to reconstruct the historical-material ground of Robertson's situation are related to a series of major twentieth-century labor movements. After his demoralizing school years and stints in hard labor in coal mines, Robertson joined the Edinburgh police force in the mid-1980s. He entered law enforcement not because he was devoted to the law. He entered law enforcement for power, the source of laws. As the tapeworm explains, "Power was everything. . . . It wasn't for an end, to achieve anything, to better one's fellow man, it was there to keep and to enjoy" (*Filth* 261). Marxists know this power as the accumulation of capital. Robertson's first real taste of this power came when he violently broke the resistance of striking Scottish coal miners, such as his stepfather, as a rookie policeman during the 1984-85 British labor strikes (*Filth* 160, 261).

When compared to labor strikes that took place in the early 1970s, the treatment of striking miners in 1984-85 demonstrated a significant change in policing procedures under the Tory regime of Margaret Thatcher.[118] Strikers saw increased police numbers and increased police aggressiveness.[119] For every miner on strike, there might be two or more police officers.

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[118] John Foster, "The Twentieth Century, 1914-1979," *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From Earliest Times to Present Day*, eds. R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (New York: Penguin, 2001) p. 476.

[119] Penny Green, *The Enemy Without: Policing and Class Consciousness in the Miners' Strike* (Milton Keynes, UK: Open University P, 1990) pp. 43-82.

Not only mines, but whole mining villages would be cordoned off and patrolled. As strikers

would proceed to their picketing sites, they would be confronted and provoked. In the case of

large pickets, more officers would be called in as picketers were arriving, and these "officers

would then pile out of the vans with a military-style surgency and march in paramilitary fashion

to the existing police lines, thereby enhancing the atmosphere of conflict."[120] In addition to

blatant intimidation, outright violence was by no means the exception; it was the rule. Beatings

and torture were par for the course.

When Robertson boasts—"what I still love, and always fucking well will, is that good

old-fashioned two-on-one with a scumbag in the interview room" (*Filth* 160)—he is thinking

nostalgically back to his earliest days as strike-busting police corporal during Thatcher's militant

anti-labor heyday. It makes him bristle "with excitement and satisfaction. It's that front-line

feeling; that rush when you're at a picket-line . . . and you've got your truncheon and shield and

the whole force of the state is behind you and you're hyped up to beat insolent spastic scum who

question things with their big mouths and nasty manners into the suffering pulp they so richly

deserve to become" (*Filth* 160). He feels confident of his position as one of the sociocultural

elect because his treatment of the "suffering pulp" of the reprobate is authorized by the

government.

Indeed, Robertson is the personification of the late-twentieth-century British

government's attitudes and social policies. At the foundation of Thatcher's and Tony Blair's, as

well as most capitalists', antipathy toward low-skilled, unskilled, and surplus workers is the fear

that those workers will realize that they are the majority and the foundation of society. They

might entertain the idea that they are not the reprobate after all. To keep the potential multitude

in line, the leaders in such a situation do not personally enforce "the games," as Robertson calls

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[120] Green 55.

life under the empire of late capital. They enlist the literal and figurative children of workers who have entered middle-class professions like law enforcement and corporate middle management. These middling people are the most powerful sentinels of capitalist imperialism.[121] They are the best at keeping under wraps the emergent materials and energies of subordinated people because they intimately know those people, their sociocultural life, and their weaknesses. They are the best at keeping the potential multitude on the margins of power. "Zero tolerance of crime in the city centre," thinks Robertson, "total laissez-faire in the schemie hinterlands. That's the way forward for policing in the twenty-first century. Tony Blair's got the right idea: get those jakey beggars out of the city centres. Dispossessed, keep away . . . we don't want you at our par-tay" (*Filth* 273). The role of enforcer subsequently becomes a whole way of life, an all-pervasive moral code. "That's what life is all about," muses Robertson: the "management" of each subordinate's "uncertainty levels. We don't want this cunt getting too big for his boots, thinking that he somehow counts" (*Filth* 195).[122]

It would be a mistake, however, to believe that Robertson's Thatcherite-Blairean perception and treatment of labor is something new, an aberration. Systematic political, economic, and even military alienation of labor power from those who produce it is part of pre-capitalist and capitalist civilization's history; or to use Benjamin's idiom, it is the barbarism at the core of any civilization. As Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels recognized in the nineteenth century, few situations illustrate this as well as Britain's. Therefore, we will remain focused on Britain and, more specifically, on early-twentieth-century Scotland to further build the genealogy of Robertson's class consciousness (or lack thereof).

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[121] Marx, *Capital* 914-26.
[122] "'Divide and conquer' is thus not really the correct formulation of imperial strategy. More often than not, the Empire does not create division but rather recognizes existing or potential differences, celebrates them, and manages them within a general economy of command. The triple imperative of the Empire is incorporate, differentiate, manage" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 201).

The nexus and breakdown of the power of Scottish workers occurred in and around Glasgow during the early 1900s. The Clydeside uprisings (1914-18) are, depending on the historian, collectively the greatest or most tragic event in Scottish labor history. It was more than likely both.[123] Granted, it gave us the Clydeside Reds and their school-teacher-turned-Marxist-revolutionary leader, John MacLean (1879-1923). Whether the Red Clydeside movement was more legend than reality misses the point.[124] If the Clydeside events were a success, they were so because they uncovered once and for all the unholy marriage between a presumably democratic government and capital. If they were a failure, it was for the same reason.

Using the British military and all the muscle of his Liberal premiership, Prime Minister David Lloyd George (1863-1945) deported labor leaders, imprisoned socialists, shut down the pro-worker Labour newspaper *Forward*, and the like. He did so in order to bring workers of all kinds (e.g. shipbuilders, steel workers, munitions workers) into line with the will of his government and its business partners.[125] Moreover, skilled labor and middle management, such as engineers and shop stewards, were also significant in delivering what the British industrial-military state wanted. They would break the resistance of workers through methods of intimidation, con-artistry, and disinformation. It was only a matter of time before the striking workers' power was absorbed.

When the institutions and representatives that are supposed to be answerable only to the constituency separate themselves from the constituency and bond themselves to the institutions and representatives of capital, then the subordination of the constituency and its appropriation are easy to attain and maintain. Consequently, the constituency's sociocultural, economic, and political power is ready to be continually dissolved and absorbed by the capitalist state, for the

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[123] Harvie 15-23.

[124] Iain McLean, *The Legend of Red Clydeside* (Edinburgh: John Donaldson, 1983).

[125] T. M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation: A History, 1700-2000* (New York: Penguin, 2001) pp. 309-11.

capitalist state. In such an environment, the individual member of the constituency is painfully aware that he or she does not "somehow count." The individual knows that he or she is one of the reprobate.

However, individuals such as Robertson come to think that they somehow count. This is a well-oiled trick employed not just by ultra-Calvinist-informed capitalism but by any imperial system.[126] To adequately and loyally maintain such a system, the military officer, the office manager, the shop steward, the small business owner, the church minister, and the professor must be under the illusion that they are equal shareholders of accumulated power. Nevertheless, with ultra-Calvinism as a potent ideological tool, capitalism surpasses the efficacy of previous empires in sustaining this illusion. Again, power is a sign of a more universal kind of election in such a context: those who have power *over others* are so because they are the elect, and those who are subordinate to power are the reprobate and must submit to the elect. In such a framework, the so-called Protestant work ethic is an effective tool for capitalism, teasing the delusional non-elect with the chance of becoming elected through playing "the games." All the while, these middling people avow unthinking obedience to the "same rules" of discipline: hard work, strong moral fiber, and stoic persistence that presumably "have to apply in each and every case" (*Filth* 12). Accordingly, to keep the Bruce Robertsons of the world (the middle classes) in such a delusional state, imperial capitalism offers them a drug better than heroin: the *gratuitous* domination of the means of production, power over other humans and the *pleasure* that comes out of it.

After he has had sex with a prostitute while on holiday in Amsterdam, Robertson encounters a group of young men and, without provocation, "slyly" connects a punch to one of the men's ribs "and he's winded and bent over double as I push through the crowd, sliding away"

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[126] Concerning this tactic, see Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* 206-76.

(*Filth* 160). This gratuitous act metaphorically indicates how the narcotic of power can work among those people in the middle classes (and even in the working and lower classes) who believe themselves to be beneficiaries of capital. Under the influence of such a drug, other individuals are merely catalysts and receptacles for the immediate gratification of one's impulsive desires. They are merely "something to smash" (*Filth* 160).

But there is a twist deeply hidden in capitalism. As we discovered in chapter 2, the consumption of a drug becomes a perpetually self-consuming habit because the empowerment that it offers is fleeting and disconnected. Humans who consume such a drug must, therefore, enter into an endless spiral of consumption, which thereby consumes them. In other words, one's delusions of being the elect of late capital are contingent on one's perpetual subordination to late capital. Not only that: it is contingent on continually subordinating others. Mirroring Calvinist double justification, this is a process of double estrangement—the estrangement of the self and the estrangement of others.

Robertson's sister-in-law Shirley asks the detective after they have sex, "why is it you have to savour everything bad that happens to others" (*Filth* 253). He offers an ultra-Calvinist answer: "It stems from a belief that there's only a finite number of bad things that can happen in the world at any given time. So if they're happening to someone else they ain't happening to me. In a way, it's a celebration of *joie de vivre*" (*Filth* 253). Robertson sums up the underlying predestinarian logic of his ultra-Calvinist predecessors and cuts to the heart of what motivates such logic—self-righteous, self-perpetuating, and unsympathetic gain. His celebration of what he says is the joy of life, echoed by what Juice Terry calls the "spice of life" in *Glue* and *Porno*, comes at the perpetual expense of others. This surpasses *Schadenfreude*, for it is more than just an attitude or secondary emotional gain. It is an existential practice. When it comes to his

profession as a policeman, he advances above his colleagues by making "a point of remembering his associates' [Achilles' heels]. Something that crushes their self-image to a pulp. Yes, it's all stored for future reference," when he makes final judgment on the poor, unsuspecting souls (*Filth* 20). This ultra-Calvinist capitalist approach to human beings produces the systematic destruction that Robertson plans and carries out against his one male civilian friend, Clifford Blades:

> The more our friendship has developed, the more the destruction and humiliation of this sad little creature has grown to obsess me. He needs to be confronted with what he really is, he has to feel, see and acknowledge his inadequacy as a member of the human species, then he has to do the honourable thing and renounce that membership. And I will help him. (*Filth* 174)

As if this were not enough, he attaches a Thatcherite slogan to his juridical practice, echoing Nazi rhetoric and the worst bad sense of Calvinism: "The Robertson solution. *Real* zero tolerance" (*Filth* 74). Indeed, through the course of the novel, Robertson collects all of his moral positions under the principle of "zero tolerance," which he also calls "in a word, professionalism, and I'm a total fucking pro. . . . Same rules apply in each and every case" (*Filth* 75).

Robertson's tapeworm is suspiciously astute when it comes to understanding how this process works. "You must accept the language of power as your currency," explains the worm to Robertson, "but you must also pay a price. . . . The price is your soul. You came to lose this soul. You came not to feel. Your life, your circumstances and your job demanded that price" (*Filth* 262). As a result of Robertson's internal deadening, he reproduces what the dominant system needs to perpetuate itself—inequality, instability, hatred, division—but his labor is productive insofar as it is destructive, a key point to keep in mind when analyzing capitalism.

The presumptive elect, like Robertson, are only possible in an unsympathetic world built on an increasing number of the reprobate. To keep elect status, the wretched status of the non-elect must be maintained through psychological, social, cultural, political, and economic violence. But the capitalist twist continues to turn: all humans, including the members of the middle classes who have come to believe that they are running "the games," are not the elect and never will be. Only capital is the elect; all humans are merely reprobates who secure capital's preeminence.[127] While teasing them with the possibility of election, capital encourages humans to facilitate their own disconnection from personal power. Thus divided against themselves—internally and socially—humans are condemned to sustaining the status quo that imprisons them.[128] They are perpetually consumed; this is their gratuitous, merciful reward.

Through our study of this crime scene, we have finally discovered the body at the center of the crime, and the body we have found is both the victim and perpetrator of a horrible, ongoing crime.

We noted above that the tapeworm knows Robertson so well because it has accumulated his life-history, like a genealogy. But as the novel progresses, we find that the tapeworm is not just some bizarre sort of biographical archive. In the more dramatic sense, the tapeworm has *consumed* Robertson's life—from his birth to his youthful attempts at being a good son and brother, to his adolescent stint in the coal mines, and finally to his adult work as a police officer. Robertson's power—his labor power—as an autonomous human being has been sapped away. The tapeworm teases Robertson with the possibility of regaining autonomy, giving him enough hope to continue living despite the emptiness of his life. But as we have seen, Robertson continues to live—to labor—with little other purpose than to torment others. His labor, though,

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[127] Marx, *Capital* 739-40.
[128] Badiou, *Ethics* 10-17.

can only come to naught because it is all based on the absence of real autonomy and power. The tapeworm's survival depends on Robertson's efforts to save himself from total oblivion; however, the tapeworm knows it must also keep Robertson from something it calls the "Self" (*Filth* 260).

The tapeworm is, in fact, the figural representation of late capital. So, who better to turn to than the tapeworm for further elucidation of how capitalism operates on the human individual:

> I live in the gut of my Host. I have an elongated tube-like body, eloquently
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> adapted to the Host's gut. It's indeed ironic that I seem to have no alimentary
>
> canal myself, yet live in that of my most generous landlord's . . . as I continue to
>
> eat, ingest and excrete through my skin. (*Filth* 139)

The Host is Bruce Robertson. He is not an autonomous subject but is merely a vehicle for capitalism. Robertson is also a parasite within capitalism, as are all those who live under it. In this light, Robertson is the real tapeworm of *Filth*, representing the status of the individual in the global empire of capital. Hollow inside and barely connected to anything outside of himself, he is in a perpetual dynamic of consumption and excretion. In the alchemical and paradoxical process of capitalism, he is consuming and being consumed, all the while growing and decaying. Robertson, as a representative of the individual in the empire of late capital, has been transformed into a miniature copy of capitalism.

This figure of an infinitely emptying, infinitely consuming membrane that has the capability of perpetual growth while in a state of perpetual decay evokes Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's characterization of capitalism.[129] Capitalism evacuates its center in order to fuel its insatiable, perpetually growing body. It empties internally to make room for what it

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[129] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Mark Hurley et al. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) pp. 217-71.

consumes externally, all to produce an infinite body. Of course, because it has a body—no matter how expansive it is—it cannot be infinite; therefore, it cannot stop consuming. It will consume forever, in a perpetual loop of consumption-expansion-disintegration-consumption.

The fact that the tapeworm, taken as a separate entity, is more credible as a subject than Robertson brings into sharp relief Robertson's status as not only radically inhuman but also as something not even identifiable as a complex living organism. The tapeworm has alienated and appropriated what could have enabled Robertson to become an autonomous human being. Consumption in such a situation has become the only legitimate activity, and the system in which consumption occurs is the only legitimate system. For all practical purposes, this dynamic is today's ultra-Calvinist God. What, then, is the individual human's relationship to such a God? Through the perpetual process of consuming and being consumed, without attaching to anything or anyone except to bolster one's egoistic power, one becomes a disassociated fragment. Reduced to a mere hollow thing—as both consumer and commodity—autonomous human subjectivity falls out of view. Therefore, the gratuitously damned reprobate fuel and pave this God's kingdom; they enable this God to accumulate his secret pleasure and to jealously enjoy it.

Is the tapeworm the figural second-coming of Calvin's God? Is the Kingdom of Heaven really reflected in the earthly empire of capital?

3.2 Second Reformation Strand: An Individual Bigger Than One Individual's Ego

God answers:

> —Jist hud oan a minute, pal. Lit's git one thing straight. Every fuckin time ah come doon here, some wide-o pills ays up aboot what ah should n shouldnae be fuckin daein. Either that or ah huv tae enter intae some philosophical fuckin discourse wi some wee undergraduate twat aboot the nature ay masel, the extent

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ay ma omnipotence n aw that shite. Ah'm gittin a wee bit fed up wi aw this self-
justification; it's no for you cunts tae criticise me. Ah made yous cunts in ma ain
image. Yous git oan wi it; you fuckin well sort it oot. That cunt Nietzsche wis
wide ay the mark whin he sais ah wis deid. Ah'm no deid; ah jist dinnae gie a
fuck. It's no fir me tae sort every cunt's problems oot. Nae other cunt gies a fuck
so how should ah? Eh? (Welsh, "Granton Star" 129).

This is the earful that twenty-three-year-old Robert Anthony Coyle, "Boab," gets from God after

he has been kicked off his third-tier church-league soccer team, asked by his parents to find his

own place to live, dumped by his girlfriend for his archrival on his now former soccer team,

thrown in jail and beaten by the police for defacing a payphone, fired from his job at a moving

company, and punched by a café owner for being short on change. All of this has occurred

within a twenty-four hour period. Then, when he sits down in a pub for a much-needed pint of

lager, God sidles up next to Boab to chastise him. Could it get any worse?

Yes it could, and it does. As punishment for being a "lazy, apathetic, slovenly cunt,"

God transforms Boab into a bluebottle fly: "Yir a piece of slime," God says to Boab, "An insect.

That's it! An insect . . . ah'm gaunny make ye look like the dirty, lazy pest thit ye are"

("Granton Star" 130-31). After becoming a fly, Boab visits his former soccer captain and friend,

Kev, the one who had kicked Boab off the Granton Star football team. Boab is able to

communicate to Kev by first using catsup and later ink, which he traces across walls or paper in

response to Kev's questions. Because Kev has been so kind, Boab decides not to take revenge

on him. Boab does exact vengeance on his ex-girlfriend Evelyn and her new boyfriend Tambo,

who had replaced him on the Granton Star team. Boab regurgitates cat feces onto their takeout

supper of curry. He gets back at his former boss Rafferty by dropping bits of rat poison on his

sandwich. Finally, he reaches his parents' home and finds them involved in feminine-domination sex. Their tryst is interrupted by a phone call from Boab's sister. When his mother hangs up the phone, she spots a fly on the wall, Boab, and swats it with a newspaper. Then, she and Boab's father resume their activities. The next morning, the Coyles find their battered son, naked behind the family sofa. His massive internal injuries prove fatal.

Based on this summary, we might sympathize with Boab. Nevertheless, Boab has, in many ways, truly brought all of this on himself. Right? Boab is like some other Welshian characters that we have encountered: most notably, Renton, Sick Boy, Begbie, and Robertson. He has gone through life believing that he, as an isolated individual, is the center of the world. His shock at being asked by his parents to give them some space, at being removed from Granton Star, at being dumped by Evelyn, at being beaten by the police, at being abused for not having enough money, at being fired from his job, and at being visited by a God in which he has never really believed indicates just how disconnected, unsympathetic, and egocentric he is. Heaven forbid that he ever consider what other people go through everyday. During his whole life, he has never thought about anyone else or others' needs. He has assumed that everyone and everything were put on the earth to serve him. And he has not taken responsibility for his actions (more often inactions). Like Robertson, he is a parasite. This is not to say that what happens to Boab is not awful. What happens to Boab is certainly tragic. Welsh's God's point is that, despite the awfulness and tragedy, Boab is responsible—sort of.

So, what exactly is "Granton Star"? And following that, what is its point?

This sixteen-page story may be called many things. It is a farce. The ridiculous plot and sardonic tone that Welsh employs make this one of his most hilarious stories. It is part intertextual homage and part parody. Playful all the while, Welsh manages to implicitly or

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explicitly incorporate or allude to some of the so-called classics of Western literature: including the biblical stories of the Fall of Adam and Eve, Jacob wrestling the angel, Jesus wrestling the devil, and Jesus casting the demons into swine; Homer's *The Odyssey*; the medieval morality play *Everyman*; John Milton's *Paradise Lost*; Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown"; Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*; Jean-Paul Sartre's *No Exit*; and, of course, Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." As noted earlier, the story is also a tragedy, conceptually on par with Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare's *King Lear*.

Of all these literary affiliations, "Granton Star" is in closest league with the medieval morality play *Everyman*. In the late-medieval period, morality plays were performed during religious festivals. Such plays are allegorical renderings of the Christian quest for salvation. The protagonist confronts the Christian obstacles of sin, temptation, and mortality. Usually, a darkly humorous trickster figure confronts the protagonist, thereby forcing the suffering Christian "everyone" to confront his or her moral status. A few factors, though, must be kept in mind when we address Welsh's foray into this genre.

Welsh is a postmodern Scot from Calvinist Scotland. Therefore, the materials and energies he must deal with make his morality play, as it were, a bit different from medieval morality plays. Unlike *Everyman* and many other of its contemporaries, "Granton Star" is informed more by Calvinist doctrine than by Catholic doctrine. As such, the story begins from failure and continues to fail. If predestination is Calvinism's only legacy, then a moral allegory is completely moot. There can be no quest toward salvation because everything has already been decided. Moreover, as Welsh ironically hints, this is a morality play written after Nietzsche, after the presumed death of God. Again, moral allegory is moot. It is also written within the

postmodern situation. In this situation, God has been either appropriated or replaced by capitalism, faith in God is either non-existent or reductive, and religion is either passed off as a commodity or as a passé superstition. It might be surprising, therefore, that Welsh of all writers would employ this genre and unearth the concerns that such a genre entails. Despite his reputation as an iconoclastic rebel of the so-called chemical generation, Welsh is very concerned about morality, and this includes the interrelation of Christianity and society.[130] Moreover, he is not one to accept the common sense of the status quo as the whole truth. In the case of "Granton Star," he accordingly takes on the postmodern situation's common sense by making it confront itself; he does so through an old, seemingly passé genre.

As "Granton Star" suggests, the conflict between the morality of late capital and the morality of John Calvin and John Knox (c. 1505?-72) has reached critical mass. God has had enough, and Boab, as our representative, pushes the envelope too far. Hence, there is still a story to be told, a moral to "tease oot," as Spud might say. Something has to give. A transformation must occur if human beings *and* God are to mean anything. Well, every good moral allegory contains a transformation, and Welsh honors this fact. Outside of Boab's obvious physical transformation, a major transformation in this morality play is Calvinism's. To bring about this transformation, Welsh opens a situation in which the bad sense of Calvinism confronts the good sense of Calvinism. Welsh's story is about the sins, temptations, and dramatic death of one kind of Calvinism, ultra-Calvinism.

So far, we have discussed Calvinism according to the doctrine of predestination, undoubtedly Calvinism's bad sense. According to such a view, God is arbitrary, gratuitous, jealous, and vengeful. There is plenty in the Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, which

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[130] Candia McWilliam, telephone interview, 5 September 2001; and Welsh, interview.

attests to such a God.[131] There is also plenty in the Bible to challenge such a God.[132] For a

dialectical mind like Welsh's, such a contradictory situation is not a *seal* of hopeless

impassibility; instead, it is the *site* from which hope can emerge.[133]

As discussed earlier, Augustine, Calvin, and ultra-Calvinists placed a contradiction at the

core of Christianity with the doctrine of predestination. Over time, one side of the contradiction,

predestinarianism, became hegemonic, subordinating the supposed unconditional love of God as

a result. But the conflict still exists. It exists between Paul's interpretations of Jesus and Jesus'

teachings and practices.[134] Indeed, it exists in the passage from Romans quoted above. Most

important for us as we deal with the Scottish situation, this contradiction is at the core of

Calvinism itself. For example, in an argument for preordained justification, Knox begrudgingly

admits, "but yet we must suffer God to work in us."[135] In this admission, he is indicating that

even though God has preordained everything, human beings must still be engaged in the matters

of this world. The Reformers themselves knew that there was a significant gap in the doctrine of

predestinarianism.

This should lead us to wonder how loyal Calvinists were and are to this doctrine. To gain

some perspective, we do not have to look farther than Calvin himself. Even though Calvinism

and predestination have practically become synonymous (thanks primarily to Calvinists

themselves), predestination was at best a peripheral concern in Calvin's theology. Despite what

was actually Calvin's anger-driven attempt to lock his Roman Catholic persecutors out of God's

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[131] William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology, and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1994) pp. 3-10.
[132] Placher 11-21.
[133] Adorno, *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford: Stanford UP, 2001) p. 79.
[134] Mongar 15-19.
[135] John Knox, "Justification," *John Knox: An Account of the Development of His Spirituality*, ed. Henry R. Sefton (Edinburgh: St. Andrews, 1993) p. 51.

good favor, the Covenant of Grace is what Calvin intended to be the heart of his theology, and it is, therefore, the ultimate concern of Calvin's *Institutes*.[136]

Before the Reformation, the Covenant of Works was privileged in practice, if not in thought. *Everyman* is a prime literary illustration of this covenant: by righting one's sinful ways through good deeds, one can reconcile with God. The Covenant of Works is basically the covenant of the Old Testament, which asserts that by humans offering up their labor to God, the human relationship with God can be secured. This explains the importance of offerings, sacrifices, a plethora of laws, and the specialization of church vocations in Jewish and Christian antiquity. However, since the time of Adam's supposed betrayal of God, and since the subsequent eviction of humans from paradise, so-called good works and a growing mountain of imperatives, prohibitions, and priests had never really worked that well. This covenant had the opposite of its intended effect: humans and God had become increasingly estranged from each other; consequently, humans had also become alienated from each other.[137]

Enter the Covenant of Grace. With the life, teachings, and death of Jesus of Nazareth, and with the subsequent realization of his Christhood, God washed away all human sin, debt, and death, according to general Christian theology. Instead of continued sacrifice and the multiplication of laws, God entered integrally into human life instead of dealing with it imperially. Ceasing his insistence that humans become more like him, he became human. Through this integration, reconciliation occurred. "Immanuel," one of Jesus' Jewish names, indicated that God was no longer separate from humans but was with them.   By God becoming vulnerable and personally risking suffering, he forged a real social and material bond with humans, replacing the abstract bonds of mediatory sacrifice, ecclesiastical representation, and a

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[136] Calvin 27-30.
[137] Mongar 41.

laundry list of laws.[138] From the crucifixion onward, it was through this reconciliation that the grace of God—boundless, unconditional, freely given love—became integral to everyone and everything. It was this interpretation of scripture that led Luther, Calvin, and other Protestants to rebel against the Roman Catholic Church.

In Calvinism, the doctrine of grace is obviously important as a theological concern, but its practical, political implications are perhaps even more so. Regardless of whether one is a Reformed Protestant or not, the implications of Calvin's theology have affected everyone. Exceeding even Calvin himself, Calvinism indirectly asserted through theology and directly asserted through political practice the sacredness of the equal distribution of power. The political implications were consequently enormous. Calvinism, despite Calvin's later conservative turn,[139] effectively established the constituent members of the multitude as the agents of sovereignty.[140] In other words, without the obedience of the common people, the kings and bishops would be powerless.[141] Moreover, by alienating the power from the multitude, appropriating it, and then profiting from it, the secular and religious lords were challenging the power of God, for he was represented by the multitude. This emergent strand of Calvinism is a prime example of liberation theology.

In few countries is the influence of an emergent Calvinism more evident than in Scotland. The Reformation and Scottish Kirk did in many ways descend into religious zealotry, cronyism,

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[138] Placher 18-21.

[139] Harro Höpfl, Introduction, *On Civil Government*, John Calvin, in *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1991) pp. 47-86. Höpfl , Introduction, *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority* pp. xvi-xxiii.

[140] This is explicitly reflected in the James Harrington's proclamation in revolution-era England: "'The voice of the people is the voice of God'" (quoted in Negri, *Insurgencies* 123).

[141] Quoting Harrington again, "'The multitude is wiser and more constant than a prince'" (Negri, *Insurgencies* 123).

and terrorism.[142] Indeed, the person many look to as the initial firebrand of ultra-Calvinism is

Knox. Such a perception of Knox is not unfounded.[143] However, Knox challenged bad-sense

elements within Calvinism.[144]

When Knox was banished to the Continent because of his Reformist activities, he

befriended and studied under such major figures as Calvin himself. Ultimately, however, Knox

became disappointed with Calvin because Calvin's theology did not adequately materialize in

Calvin's politics or in his political advice to Knox. The theological liberator counseled Knox to

become more moderate in his political radicalism in Scotland. In Knox's view, Calvin conceded

the sovereignty of a throne over that of God's multitude. Partly because of Knox's more

democratic bent, arguably a consequence of his own subordinate socioeconomic status, he would

not make such a concession. His strained, often incendiary relationships with both Queens

Mary—not to mention his infamous treatise *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the*

Monstrous Regiment of Women[145]—demonstrated at their core his insistent conviction that no

person should have power over another.[146] Both Calvin and Knox were actually interested in the

right of humans to be free of authorities who abused them, to be the Church instead of under the

Church, and so forth. This meant that humans were empowered to live life in relative autonomy

rather than serve a master—except for Jesus, of course, who was supposedly a servant to his

servants. And it entailed that humans were part of a human family of equals. Unfortunately,

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[142] Of course, the term "terrorism" is almost meaningless today because it is frequently misused, overused, or both. This is not to mention that those who utter it most frequently are in fact using it to rationalize more terror: i.e. the agents of the "War on Terror" or of Holy Jihad. But a review of Oliver Cromwell's scourges in Britain and Ireland, witch hunts in Europe and colonial America, and the execution of Catholic and atheist heretics in Scotland and elsewhere are good examples of terrorism.

[143] James H. Smylie, *A Brief History of the Presbyterians* (Louisville, KY: Geneva, 1996) pp. 29-31.

[144] See Rosalind K. Marshall, *John Knox* (Edinburgh: Berlinn, 2000) pp. 70-71, 116, 191.

[145] Knox, *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women*, in *On Rebellion*, ed. Roger A. Mason (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1994) pp. 3-47.

[146] Nevertheless, these relationships and polemic also represent the Knoxian bad sense: as the title of his polemic suggests, his motivation for confronting the two monarchs was also attributable to misogyny.

Calvinist bad sense overwhelmed Calvinist good sense, and made a mockery of what the actual Protestant Reformation originally stood for.

It is part of Welsh's objective to overturn—transform—what Calvinism and its God have become by dredging up Calvinist good sense. As we have uncovered, this good sense is certainly present in Calvinism, even though it is submerged. Indeed, Welsh's morality play is impossible to understand without Calvinist good sense in mind. With it now in mind, we are prepared to unlock the moral of his deceptively simple story.

Boab Coyle, along with D. S. Robertson and Francis Begbie, is the logical culmination of Calvinist bad sense. If we extrapolate the doctrine of predestination into the postmodern context, we arrive at the apathy, lack of sympathy, and antisocial behavior that we have witnessed in a number of Welsh's characters. Indeed, like Boab, one does not even have to believe in God to assume that one is of the elect, and if one is of the reprobate, there is no act that can change that status. In a strange way, then, the doctrine of predestination brings about a cynical equality by making human life and human history pointless. The elect and the chosen are both subordinates to a preordained end, and any free will that exists is really only a means to keep oneself from being completely bored in the interim. Therefore, there is really no reason to be concerned about, by, or for anything except assuaging one's boredom.

Welsh uses this lack of concern as a launching point for making both Boab and the reader extremely concerned, if not appalled. He suggests that God is not as incomprehensibly rational and superhuman as the God envisioned by Augustine and Calvin. Welsh's God cares deeply about what happens to people. He will become a ragged, self-deprecating barfly in order to talk some sense into us. He will admit that he has been wrong. Moreover, he will contradict all preconceived notions that we might have about him. For instance, Welsh's God plays the Old

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Testament devil, the tester which the biblical God would send to help humans realize something about themselves. This role is in keeping with the darkly humorous trickster figure of the morality play genre. Accordingly, God tests Boab in order to have Boab reach a point of transformation. God also plays the penitent protagonist of the genre. Even though he says that he cannot punish himself because he is immortal, even though he says that he is tired of "this repentance shite," and even though he says that vengeance is his, he does actually punish himself, and the story demonstrates that vengeance is not totally his ("Granton Star" 130).

Despite all the angry words, God tries to give Boab a second chance. At first, it seems that Boab might make something of his second chance. For one, he forgives Kev. As a fly, Boab appreciates life more than ever before. He is grateful for any and all kinds of food, including feces. Like Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, he becomes fond of the society of all others, including flies. He learns through observing his parents that other people also have desires and needs. Nevertheless, Boab's internal transformation does not match up to his external one. He squanders his second chance. Boab primarily uses his new powers to become the jealous, vengeful, and gratuitous God of ultra-Calvinism. In effect, *he* punishes the God that he had met in the pub by proving him right. Moreover, it is not God but Boab's own mother who literally brings Boab back down to earth.

Earlier, we noted that Boab is responsible—personally responsible—for what has happened. This is true, but it is true in a paradoxical way. The interesting thing about an individual's responsibility is that it is a node of responsibility in a whole web of responsibility. Personal responsibility, as it is most commonly understood today, is a chimera unleashed by bourgeois-liberal society. It is egocentric. True personal responsibility is the individual's recognition that human life is the shared responsibility of each and every individual. In light of

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this, Boab's punishment is everyone's punishment. After witnessing the transformation and death of a friend he betrayed, Kev takes to drinking heavily, and his performance as a footballer declines. Evelyn, Tambo, and Rafferty become extremely ill. Moreover, Rafferty becomes hyper-vigilant because he cannot figure out which employee poisoned him. The Coyles lose their son. The awfulness and tragedy of the human condition—the nastiness, as Spud calls it— belongs to each and every individual, God included.

As the God of grace, in contrast to the God of predestination, Welsh's God is in each and every human, Boab's mother included. Welsh cleverly hints at this during Boab's inquisition of God:

> Boab found God's whingeing pathetic. —You fuckin toss. If ah hud your powers . . .
>
> —If you hud ma powers ye'd dae what ye dae right now: sweet fuck all.
>
> ("Granton Star" 129)

For the next page of the story, God offers Boab a litany of things that he could have done in his life. These most recently include contributing more to his soccer team, being more sensitive to Evelyn, being a human with needs who recognizes that his parents are humans with needs, and being able to defend himself against unjust treatment by a café owner and Rafferty. God concludes this litany by saying, "So ye hud they powers, ye jist couldnae be bothered usin thum. That's why ah'm interested in ye Boab. You're just like me. A lazy, apathetic, slovenly cunt" ("Granton Star" 130).

Because "Granton Star" is a morality play, we are safe to assume that Boab is everyone; moreover, when God says that Boab is just like him, he is saying that he and Boab are the same person. Therefore, when Doreen, Boab's mother, inadvertently kills her son, she not only brings

judgment down on everyone but also on God. We might be reminded here of the Nietzschean mad man's proclamation that it is we who have killed God.[147] But Welsh will not let us off the hook. Welsh's God has already indicated that Nietzsche "wis wide ay the mark." God is not just in Boab. He is also in all of the other individuals that populate Welsh's fictional world and that compose the potential multitude of Scotland and of the whole world. God is everyone, and as long as there are people around, God's post mortem cannot be signed.

As the morality play genre's name makes explicit, there is a moral. Welsh's morality play is no exception. Because Welsh tends to work on multiple levels at once, there are multiple but intertwined morals in "Granton Star." Without knowing themselves, humans cannot know God, for God is within each and every one. Grace is not some gift from above, but a bond that emanates from within human life. Carl implies as much in *Glue*, when he muses, "The best ye can do, what *is* in yir power is tae acquire grace" (279). Lastly, humans choose which kind of God exists: either 1) an alienating, alienated, arbitrary, jealous, vengeful, and gratuitous God; or 2) an integral, compassionate, just, gracious, and loving God. To again borrow words from *Glue*, God is "nae some cunt else" (278).

As our discussion of *Filth* has uncovered, and as our discussion of "Granton Star" has indicated, the kind of God with which humans have collectively come to associate themselves is certainly not a graceful one. This goes a long way toward explaining why Welsh has chosen to undertake the daunting task of putting on a Reformed morality play within the postmodern empire of late capital.

3.3 Reformation Virtue: Integration

Welsh is interested in uncovering and then promoting the emergent, practical aspects of Christianity and Calvinism. Whether or not Welsh is a practicing Calvinist Christian is not

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[147] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage, 1974) pp. 181-82.

important. What is important is that he attempts to shake loose a very important thread in Scotland's historical-material fabric so that it may contribute to a world based on something other than dogma, segregation, estrangement, and gratuitous judgment. There must be a world that is not founded on "zero tolerance," on the "same rules" applying in each and every case, and on "the games." Humans must be more than parasitical, scavenging worms and flies, whose only connection to each other is their mindless consumption of each other's power.

One Scottish philosopher, theologian, and pastor during the early years of the eighteenth century thought so, too. Francis Hutcheson contended with the bad sense of the Reformation legacy while at the same time keeping a cinder of its good sense alight. He presented an alternative to the categorical, universally-applied principles that effectively aimed toward transcending the messiness of human life. He spotted a productive, connecting energy in the midst of human contradiction and conflict: a "moral sense." He was arguably able to do so because his theories carried forward emergent elements of the Reformation and embraced emergent elements of the Enlightenment that bourgeois ideology and capitalism could not tolerate: passion, unconditional love, liberation from dogma, distributed power, and the unconquerable potential of humans. Enabling the emergence of these elements was a sixth sense, for lack of a better term.

For Hutcheson, a moral sense was incorporated in human individuals. Nevertheless, this sense was only productive when humans socially connected to each other. Hutcheson, therefore, was not interested in merely finding "zones of relative freedom to retreat into, those light, delicate spaces where new things, different, better things can be perceived as possibles" (*Filth* 3).

Hutcheson was concerned with demonstrating that a healthy world was universally probable by way of the interconnected life of human individuals.[148]

However, the reader of *Filth* and "Granton Star" might find it difficult to locate such vital human material. At best, humans seem to connect for what is "mutually advantageous to baith parties, likesay," until they find their "ain place" ("Granton Star" 122). Reflecting the predestinarian logic of ultra-Calvinism, the commonplace rationales that prop up late-capitalist society and culture do not make division a vice but a virtue. In his time, Hutcheson could not abide by the cold rationality that was gripping the burgeoning modern world, the world that would ultimately bring about the postmodern empire of late capital. He saw a social situation that had appropriated Calvinist bad sense and was taking it to its extreme.[149]

The influence of the Reformation's emergent force on Hutcheson's thought is inescapable. The absence of a mediator between humans and their God, as asserted by the early Reformers, is something that Hutcheson takes even further by practically grounding God in human beings. The affiliation between God and humans is not mediated by reasoning but is in nature itself.[150] Furthermore, knowledge of God is an affective, not rational knowledge.[151] Epistemology is not, therefore, a matter of reason; it is, instead, a matter of what Hutcheson would call affection and passion. Pathos, therefore, is the primary form of human knowledge. From it comes sympathy, the means and end of the moral sense. Consequently, Hutcheson's

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[148] See Francis Hutcheson, *Philosophical Writings*, ed. R. S. Downie (London: Everyman, 1994); *Illustrations on the Moral Sense*, ed. Bernard Peach (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1971); *An Essay on the Nature and Conduct of the Passions and Affections with Illustrations on the Moral Sense* (Menston, UK: Scholar Press, 1972); and *On Human Nature: Reflections on Our Common Systems of Morality and On the Social Nature of Man*, ed. Thomas Mautner (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1993). The most illuminating recent commentary includes MacIntyre 209-280; Mark Strasser, *Francis Hutcheson's Moral Theory: Its Form and Utility* (Wakefield: Longwood Academic, 1990); Thomas Mautner's introduction to and overviews in *On Human Nature*; and R. S. Downie's introduction to *Philosophical Writings*.

[149] Mautner 38.

[150] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 261.

[151] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 262.

moral theory does not take us away from or above material human life. It takes us directly into it.

The Hutchesonian moral sense is, therefore, material. In Hutcheson's words, it is "in the constitution of the soul."[152] The moral sense is inextricable from human life. Though not in a particular organ, the moral sense is a material reality and a physiological part of humans that becomes active when humans interact with each other. It is, however, situated in human particularity: i.e. how it operates in each individual is unique, just as with other senses. So, even though the moral sense adapts to the diversity presented by individual humans, it is not monopolized by any individual. It instead becomes active when individuals open themselves to others or share themselves with others. This is an important point to stress. The moral sense is not automatically "turned on"; like other senses, it must be stimulated or, as Hutcheson would put it, excited.

A century after Hutcheson, through the vantage of dialectical materialism, Karl Marx effectively places the same dialectical process of sympathetic integration at the center of dialectical materialism's ethic:

> the *whole of what is called world history* is nothing more than the creation of man through human labour, and the development of nature for man, he therefore has palpable and incontrovertible proof of his self-mediated *birth*, of the *process of emergence*. Since the *essentiality* [*Wesenhaftigkeit*] of man and of nature, man as the existence in nature for man and nature as the existence of man for man, has become practically and sensuously perceptible, the question of an *alien* being, a

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[152] Hutcheson, *Philosophical Writings* 132.

being above nature and man—a question which implies an admission of the

unreality of nature and man—has become impossible in practice.[153]

Marx establishes that the ultimate concern of human social, political, and economic life is not

glorifying an abstract, alienated, and estranging power, such as a gratuitous, incomprehensible

God. (Today, that God is the empire of late capital.) The ultimate concern of human life is to

make collective human life probable by recognizing the practical, material, and autonomous

power of the graceful human individual, *"profoundly and abundantly endowed with all the*

senses."[154] Therefore, it is through the integration of all human power—sympathy—in the

human individual that congregation emerges as a probability.

Bruce Robertson's and Boab's sin—the greatest sin in Marxist *and* Christian terms—is

that neither one recognizes others' lives in his own particular life. Therefore, neither Robertson

nor Boab recognizes that his particular life is connected to others' lives. By not integrating what

Marx calls the species-being into their lives, they are doomed to a living death, like the one Jesus

describes in Luke: "'for you are like graves which are not seen, and men walk over them

without knowing it."[155] Being alive as a human entails integrating the whole social life of all

human individuals—their sympathetic life—into oneself. Instead of the parasitical life of a

tapeworm or fly, an integral life "acquires grace" by revering what others have produced; this

reverence is most evident when the human individual produces vital materials and energies for

them.[156] Thus, humans produce a "world without end."[157]

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[153] Marx, *Early Writings* 357.
[154] Marx, *Early Writings* 354.
[155] Luke 11: 44.
[156] Alastair McIntosh, *Soil and Soul: People versus Corporate Power* (London: Aurum, 2002) p. 141.
[157] "Glory Be to the Father (Old Scottish Chant)," *The Hymnbook* (Richmond: PCUS, UPCUSA, RCA, 1985) p. 446.

Now, let us discover what practice Welsh employs to map such an emergent world without end.

Chapter 4

Enlightenment Thread: Mapping Emergence

Being thus acquainted with the nature of man, we expect not any impossibilities
from him. . . .

—David Hume[158]

For ilka thing a man can be or think or dae
Aye leaves a million mair unbeen, unthoucht, undune. . . .

—Hugh MacDiarmid[159]

A bad bar joke happens to be one of Welsh's most humorous, provocative, and
conspicuously philosophical stories as well as one of his explicitly "Scottish" stories. The joke
goes something like this. Two longtime philosopher friends from two major Scottish universities
meet up at a university bar and then go to a working-class Glasgow pub. They talk shop with the
locals and get drunk. They are challenged by a football hooligan to settle their philosophical
dispute in a fistfight. The snobby one loses to his down-to-earth comrade. The police break up
the fight and haul them off to the station. The snobby one gets beaten again by the cops, while
his mate is released. "The Two Philosophers" is deceptively simple, which is part of what makes
the story even more hilarious and, for us, all the more worthy of attention.[160]

The two philosophers in the ten-page short story are long-time academic rivals. One, Lou
Ornstein, is a Jewish man from Chicago, a Marxist, and a devotee of Thomas Kuhn's assertion
that knowledge is not innocent (i.e. accepted truth or science is censored and manipulated
knowledge), and that breaks with official knowledge are necessary to the growth of knowledge.
He holds a professorial position in the University of Edinburgh's philosophy department. His
counterpart, Angus "Gus" McGlone, is a Glasgow native, a classical liberal in the bourgeois

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[158] David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (New York: Prometheus, 1992) p. 602. Unless otherwise
noted, Hume references are attributed to this text.

[159] Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. John C. Weston (Boston: U of Mass. P,
1971) p. 18.

[160] Welsh, "The Two Philosophers," *The Acid House* 108-17.

eighteenth-century tradition, a Conservative Party member, and devoted to Karl Popper's

theories about the evolutionary and transcendent reason (i.e., true knowledge is not contingent on

experiential factors but becomes purified through rational criticism). McGlone teaches

philosophy at the University of Glasgow. Despite their philosophical differences, however, the

two philosophers have much in common: successful academic careers, success at drinking,

lesser success at womanizing, and failure at convincing each other.[161]

Ornstein comes to Glasgow and finds Gus at the bar of the Byres Road hostelry, which is

popular amongst the university crowd. Gus is talking to one of his undergraduate students, who

is making advances on him. She leaves after also flirting with Ornstein. The two philosophers

gradually descend into their usual habit, rehashing the Kuhn-Popper debate about knowledge and

politics. Both have been looking for a way to put this tired topic to rest, after years of fighting it

out in conference papers, journal articles, and drunken conversations. It is Ornstein, though, who

comes up with the perfect solution: have someone outside of the ivory tower, a seasoned

Glasgow barfly at a working-class pub, judge their arguments and declare a winner.

A man after Gramsci's heart, the American-born dialectical materialist thinks that the

organic intellectual, the knowing man in the street, will be the best arbiter. The effete patrician

McGlone is at first unsettled by the prospect of presenting his case before inebriated plebs, but

his curiosity and competitiveness will not permit him to back out. So the two philosophers hash

out their positions before two domino players—talkative middle-aged, working-class men—at

Brechin's Bar. Unsurprisingly, one of the men, "auld Tommy," sides with Ornstein's more

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[161] Here are some suggestions for further reading related to Kuhn and Popper: Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1970). Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (New York: Routledge, 2002). Robert D'Amico, *Historicism and Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 1989). Paul Horwich ed., *World Changes: Thomas Kuhn and the Nature of Science* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P, 1993). Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave eds., *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1974). Howard Margolis, *Paradigms and Barriers: How Habits of Mind Govern Scientific Beliefs* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1993).

down-to-earth and optimistic attitude over McGlone's elitist, dismissive one. Tommy's counterpart does not side with McGlone or Ornstein; instead, he finds that quibbling over closely related epistemological categories begs the question about knowledge: "S'only names bit. . . . Magic, science, whit the fuck's the difference? S'only names we gie thum" ("Two Philosophers" 114). Overhearing the debate, auld Tommy's mate's son, a soccer enthusiast wearing a blue Rangers strip, thinks the two philosophers might be having fun at the older men's expense. Auld Tommy tries to reassure him, but he is still suspicious. After listening a bit longer, the young man and his mates have had enough and insist that the two professors settle this academic feud once and for all by taking it outside and really fighting it out: "Yous two in a squerr go ootside" ("Two Philosophers" 15). McGlone is, of course, taken aback, but Ornstein takes the suggestion seriously. Also encouraging the two philosophers is the threat of a worse fate at the hands of the hooligans.

They do as the drunken young man with the blue strip suggests. Ornstein beats McGlone to the ground and then kicks him. The police intervene and interrogate the professors. McGlone brandishes his bourgeois academic credentials, which has exactly the opposite result he had anticipated. Duty Sergeant Fotheringham punches McGlone in the stomach and sends him back to lockup. Ornstein, on the other hand, gets on well with the police and is soon freed. As he walks through Glasgow on the way to the subway system, the Underground, he is surprisingly pleased with himself for doing something he had never done before, and he concludes that this was the perfect antidote for the abstract philosophical reasoning promoted and protected by bourgeois academia. For the Chicago materialist, the fight proved his point: unknown knowledge is not make-believe or magical; one just needs to walk out the door and wrestle knowledge to the ground. Ornstein's now substantiated epistemology effectively blends

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Kierkegaard, Marx, and Mohammed Ali: knowledge is produced by having faith in its presently unknown truths, grounding it in material reality, and giving accepted knowledge or common sense a "squerr go ootside."

But what in the world does this story have to do with Scotland? Speaking broadly, it has everything to do with it. Speaking more particularly, it is a literary rupture that uncovers a complex of forces which have composed Scotland and its identity during what we call the modern era.[162] However, we are getting ahead of ourselves. In order to assert whether Scotland even exists, how it exists if it does exist, and, as we will postulate in the next chapter, what kind of Scotland is in the offing, we will travel down a few interconnecting paths. These paths will trace across a specific spatiotemporal terrain. As with the previous chapters, this chapter will focus on the relation between contemporary Scotland and a particular historical-literary period from its past—in this case the emergence of modernity from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century. We will first follow a literary path that places Welsh's story in close connection to the work of another Scottish writer, Robert Burns. In fact, Burns's poem "The Twa Dogs" is a springboard, touchstone, and template throughout much of this chapter.[163] The formal and conceptual qualities of the comparable literary pieces discussed will bring us to an intersection, connecting our literary exploration with philosophical investigation. David Hume's epistemological and moral philosophy is not only linked nominally to Welsh's short story; his theories directly bear on broader topics related to social knowledge and Scottish nationality, both of which entail deep-seated internal conflicts. Then, we will cross paths with cognitive science. Even though this convergence might not be an obvious one now, its validity will become more evident after following the paths mentioned. Cognitive science—cognitive linguistics in

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[162] Concerning such a "rupture," see Badiou, *Ethics* 42-43.
[163] Burns, "The Twa Dogs. A Tale" 110-16.

particular—will shed light on what Welsh, Burns, and Hume, among other Scots, have been up to and still are up to since the 1707 Union of Parliaments: they have been building Scotland through a dialectical process of cognitive construction. Therefore, following chapters that have focused on the epistemological categories of mythos and pathos, we will be traveling in the domain of logos, the rational aspect of knowledge. These encounters on our Enlightenment pilgrimage will help us to locate Scotland, re-envision nationalism, and lay the groundwork for considering a global politics that is boosted, not threatened, by particular social groups or nations. Such a politics will be enabled by the virtues of congregation and integration; nevertheless, it will also incorporate a virtue of emergence.

4.1 First Enlightenment Strand: Knowing Pilgrimages

As far as literary genre is concerned, "The Two Philosophers" might arguably be an allegory or parable, a tale that imparts some moral truth through a relatively simple, predictable plot. As mentioned above, though, the story is also a popular type of joke: "Two people go into a bar. . . ." Many narrative jokes are allegories with a twist, replacing a moral with a punch line. In other words, such jokes are destabilizing allegories that challenge one's epistemological or moral assumptions. They often tear away the façade society wears to rationalize its often hypocritical norms; therefore, jokes demystify human life by exposing the supposedly sacred as at least mundane, if not profane. Geoffrey Chaucer's body of proto-modern work, particularly *The Canterbury Tales*, is emblematic.[164] He strings together a whole network of such narrative jokes, one playing off at least one of the others. Ultimately, the individual narratives come together to compose a masterful example of the estate satire.

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[164] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales: Nine Tales and the General Prologue*, eds. V. A. Kolve and Glending Olson, critical ed. (New York: Norton 1989). I use the term "proto-modern" to describe the medieval Chaucer's work in order to call attention to the fact that he was tapping into emerging bourgeois energies and materials on a feudal terrain. In this light, Chaucer is more early-modern than medieval.

In order to give his body of tales coherence while retaining a democratic or polyphonic voice, Chaucer employs a travel motif. This approach is, of course, not new. In the history of Western literature, it is common to find some sort of physical movement connected to the overall growth of a character or characters, literally moving the plot along by enabling encounters and crises, mapping out both physical and conceptual terrain, and so forth. Sometimes travel logs, sometimes quests, and sometimes pilgrimages, such narratives are highly conscious of human experience's materiality. Physicality and thought coincide, one compelling the other. Each also reflects the other.

This integration of the mind and body is reflected in how people will frequently use spatial and temporal metaphors to describe works of art, such as novels or movies. When many people describe a good story, for example, they make statements like these: "It moved me." "I could relate to the characters." "I felt like I was there." "You get a good sense of where the hero is coming from and where she is headed." Moreover, because of the integral connection between bodily movement and cognitive activity, it is not therefore surprising why so many parables, allegories, jokes, narrative songs, and the like have been popular in most cultures for much of human history. To wax Socratic, thought is weak unless the body is involved. To wax Sartrean, "doing and understanding are indissolubly linked."[165] However, we cannot, as Socrates and his students allegedly did, all pick up and walk around a tree to think. Therefore, singers and storytellers have come up with ingenious ways to help us still experience physical thought. They help us to unite "the organism with the environment."[166]

The characteristics of proto-modern Chaucer's narrative techniques are certainly in postmodern Welsh's fiction. We noted previously the multi-voiced structure of such books as

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[165] Sartre 93.
[166] Sartre 90.

Trainspotting, *Glue*, and *Porno*: individual characters tell their respective but interlocking tales, not unlike the characters in *The Canterbury Tales*. It is also true that the estate satire has been most successfully employed by writers from subordinate social classes—both writers fill this bill. Chaucer writes from the burgeoning middle class of the medieval period, and Welsh writes from the lumpenproletariat-cum-middle-class of the postmodern era. Both write in their respective vernaculars: Middle English and Scots. The old hierarchies are not sacred to them, and hastening those hierarchies' decline is certainly an objective. In fact, pointing out the upper estates' faults turns out to be more than a joke. It is a serious deconstructive cultural engagement with significant political, economic, and, yes, philosophical implications. But to be significantly political and so forth, such a story must be topical, which means it must be embedded in its social and historical context. It must deal with the materials and energies that intersect in its singular moment and place. It would, therefore, be a mistake to rest easily on just drawing a correlation between Welsh and Chaucer. Accordingly, to get nearer to Welsh while nevertheless continuing to trace out a literary genealogy, we should look beyond Chaucer's emerging England. We should look closer to Welsh's home, to Scotland, to Robert Burns.

Despite Burns's reputation as a noble savage—a "heaven-taught ploughman"[167]—Burns is sophisticated in the sense that he cleverly plays off of people's expectations and prejudices. Even so, he is a Romantic, in the best sense of the term.[168] If there is one thing positive about Romanticism, it is its celebration of life during the emergence of modernity. This celebration frequently takes the form of a focus on common life. However, paying attention to common life and putting it on a pedestal are different things. Burns is not always consistent when it comes to the latter point, yet his most compelling works are arguably those wearing a critical Janus face.

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[167] This is the characterization applied to and adopted by Burns to rationalize how a rustic like him could write good poetry.

[168] Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism* 209.

In many of his poems and songs, Burns does critique those one might expect: the English, religious zealots, the socioeconomic elites, and so on. Careful attention, though, uncovers how seriously he criticizes those whom he supposedly romanticizes: Scots, Jacobites, humble Presbyterians, the poor, and so on. Though Burns was an early figure of the Romantic era, he was also one of Romanticism's greatest deviants—much as J. M. Synge was later for the Irish Literary Renaissance. It is one thing to give voice to or honor those people and places on the edges of "respectable" society and culture, but it is wholly another to permit them to be insular or esoteric. It is generally assumed that Burns is guilty of the latter, but a closer evaluation of his work uncovers his critical dedication to the former. "The Twa Dogs," for instance, exemplifies Burns's ability to both laud and censure Scots while making it seem that he is primarily interested in deriding the English.

In this dramatic poem, Burns produces his own estate satire from an interesting vantage point, that of two dogs. Caesar, a dog of an indeterminate continental breed, and Luath, a ploughman's collie named after Burn's deceased dog (which was named after Cuchullin's dog in Ossian's *Fingal*) sit down on a knowe, or hill thought to be a fairy mound, to compare notes about their masters' stations. Caesar's name and Continental connections associate him with nobility and the Classical world. Luath, on the other hand, is tied to Gaelic myth, tenant farmers, and lower-level peasants in general. Caesar is worldly, while Luath is somewhat provincial. Each is in the dark about the other's experiences under a different social class—that is, until they complete their conversation and descend from the knowe.

The poem's movement, however, alters the pilgrimage pattern Chaucer has given us. Instead of following a relatively linear or progressive path, the two dogs converge for an afternoon on a hill, and they part ways after the sun has set. Traveling has certainly occurred,

and it allows for the encounter. However, substantial movement itself effectively takes place

offstage, much as it does in, say, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* or *Endgame*. Whereas

humans on pilgrimages must strike out to voyage abroad in order to locate themselves, a process

which Chaucer ironically parodies, the dogs instead converge from abroad, or below, in order to

situate humans, the topic of their dialogue, in a problematic sociocultural context: in effect, they

come together to map out the ground below, on which the humans live.

Arguably, Burns is compelled to flout the pilgrimage tradition because he is actually

trying to locate Scotland. Maybe Chaucer was likewise looking for a post-feudal England, but

he was more accurately shoring up "Englishness" by humorously purging it of its less savory

characteristics. Indeed, the tales do virtually form a peristaltic journey, documenting a voyage

through England's bowels. Burns, however, is not boosting an already established

"Scottishness." To do so would be to presume that Scotland is, to use a popular psychological

term, self-actualized. Both Chaucer and Burns are sensitive to their respective sociocultural

moments—their respective historical grounds—which compel them to differ in their use of the

same genre. Chaucer employs the travel motif to analyze and dissolve the feudal systems that

were, during his time, still relatively stable and hegemonic, despite the burgeoning middle class.

Burns, on the other hand, writes in a late-eighteenth-century Scotland dealing with a

disintegrating, not emerging situation. This disintegration occurred despite, if not because of, the

1707 Act of Union.[169] Chaucer's England was on the rise; Burns's Scotland, as discussed above

and below, was at best in limbo, and so his poem reflects that. Nonetheless, the political

situation for Burns is, as it was for Chaucer centuries before, inextricably connected to the

historical and epistemological ones.

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[169] Harvie, *Scotland and Nationalism: Scottish Society and Politics: 1707 to the Present*, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998) pp. 34-78.

As discussed in previous chapters, Scotland has been subordinate in many regards—nationally, politically, economically, and culturally—for at least three hundred years. Despite moments of autonomy in some of those regards over the same period, it is still practically a dog, at least in the view of those who have been dominant, the English. Burns takes this subordinate position, though, and elevates it. However, he does not elevate it to subordinate the English or some other. He just brings the subordinate to the level of equality so that it can achieve some sort of autonomous productivity.

Burns decides that the best medium through which to get closer to the Scots is through humans' proverbial best friends, loyal servants, and fellow carnivorous pack animals, canines. So, instead of denying the status of Scots as virtual dogs, Burns makes this status a point from which to launch one of his most decisive appraisals of Scotland's situation.[170] Certainly, "Ye Jacobites by Name" and "Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn" are powerful Scottish self-evaluations. Burns, though, is most compelling when he comes at a topic by a less conspicuous, more complex tack, such as in "The Twa Dogs." The closer he gets to the ground and the people who live on it—instead of flying into nationalist and ahistorical abstractions—the more incisive and productive are his critiques, which are frequently leveled at his fellow Scots.

In this and other poems and songs, Burns does not elevate the Scots over the English, the poor over the rich, or the humble moderate over the zealot. Burns, like other Romantics, attempts to find if humans are possible, how they are possible, and what kind of world they might make. For Burns, humans are not reducible to biological determinations, and neither are they justified by metaphysical ideals. Humans living strictly as animals—like mice, lice, or dogs—is not what he observes or wants; humans living strictly as rational or spiritual beings—

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[170] In ancient Gaelic culture, dogs were associated with extraordinary power. See Nagy 45, 54, 60-62.

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like the "unco guid"[171]—is also not an option. Burns's view, demonstrated through the body of

his work, is not that far removed from his fellow Romantics; but he is more tied to and more

explicit about local politics. Yes, he too celebrates the two Revolutions of the eighteenth

century, the Rights of Man, and universal freedom from tyranny; however, he does not approach

them through odes to immortality, the sublime, sage savages, and almost other-worldly

songbirds. For Burns, mice, lice, dogs, and less-than-perfect laborers are not merely satiric

stand-ins for higher concepts; they are the very media through which such concepts are forged.

And more often than not, these mediatory materials are particular to Scotland.

Satirists rarely write without intending for something to emerge from the tangle of their

situations, and Burns is no exception. He, along with writers such as Hugh MacDiarmid, is

proud of something in Scotland, even if it has not yet crystallized. And whatever that something

might be, it will be based on something other than idealized social groups or some essentialist

notion of nationality. It will emerge from the realities on the ground, where dogs and humans

share their lives. As in many of his poems and songs, Burns therefore begins his investigation

close to the ground. In the case of "The Twa Dogs," being close to the ground is both a harsh

Scottish self-analysis and an affirmative point of epistemological *and* ontological emergence.

Openly admitting that he, the Scots, and Scotland are in a state of subordination , Burns seizes

that ground from which to observe the potential materialization of something else.[172]

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[171] Scots for "self-righteous." The unco guid are frequent targets of Burns's pen. See, for example, Burns's "Address to the Unco Guid" and "Holy Willie's Prayer" (37-39, 56-59).

[172] Nairn makes the assertion that Scotland is a nation that is not a state (*Faces of Nationalism*180). I agree with his point, but the phrase "state of subordination" fits here because of its allusion to estate or status, which Burns and later Welsh undermine. I am also intentionally employing a play on words. Scotland historically is a collection of sub-nations, thus a non-nation, which contributed to its subordinate post-Union status, which was a consequence of the ordination of Scotland's James VI as England's James I. Such play, though, is serious, as Burns's and Welsh's works attest. Having subordinates—e.g. peasants, dogs, heroine addicts, or pub crawlers—serve as ironic and frequently playful agents of critique is not a celebration of the state of subordination but is more likely a method of short-circuiting a system that, based on dominance and subordination, creates such a state. Therefore, if I may

Additionally, as a consequence of his fidelity to the materials before him, Burns arguably tries to discern *whether* Scotland and the Scots are possible beyond subordination. If they are possible, he is then focused on discerning *how* Scotland and the Scots are possible, which leaves him once again working with the materials that converge and shift before him, not some predetermining myth or transcendent dream. Burns, therefore, is a cartographer. He maps out the *is* in order to lay the groundwork for something else to emerge—from that same *is*. It just so happens that in this instance, two dogs work as his surveyors.

Once Caesar and Luath sit down, they begin to share their observations. Caesar starts by describing how opulently his master's set lives (lines 51-70). Caesar's "*Laird*" and the laird's "flunkies" do not have to worry about having warm enough clothes, having heated rooms, knowing how the coal is dug and delivered, and so forth. Such work is done by the *personae non grata*, the lowest orders of hirelings and peasants, whose own clothes are rags and whose makeshift homes cannot keep out the cold. Another fact that preoccupies Caesar is food distribution: the "*ha' folk*" and even the worthless "*Whipper-in*" have more food than they can eat, but the "*Tenant-man*" and his fellow "*Cot-folk*," who procure the majority of the food, have scarce a morsel to eat.[173] The laird thanks these workers by yelling insults at them, incarcerating them, and stealing from them (lines 93-100). The logical assumption Caesar comes to is that the lives of people like tenants and cottars are barely worth living, for "surely poor-folk maun be *wretches*!" (line 102). Nevertheless, he is shocked by the fact that they persevere despite their totally miserable circumstances.

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use Sartre's language from *Critique*, the two writers "negate a negation," which opens the current ideological and national terrain to something "new" (83-88).

[173] "Laird" is Scots for "squire"; "ha' folk" for "estate servants"; "whipper-in" for "games keeper"; "tenant-man" and "cot-folk" for "cottars/cottagers/lesser peasants."

Caesar, however, discovers that the lower orders do not live in complete misery despite their miserable circumstances. Luath discloses, "They're no sae wretched 's ane wad think" (line 103). According to the Highland collie, the folk traditions, close-knit community, and Kirk are what give his people—the wretched of Scotland—their perseverance (lines 107-38). They have, according to him, a life filled with riches that are not so-called material wealth, but shared cultural and spiritual wealth. But Burns sneaks into the poem a critical observation. The poor romanticize the rich, which indicates the laborers' acquiescence. Luath thinks that the lairds of the land are at heart noble people (lines 146-48). Caesar, though, has some unexpected news for Luath. Luath is surprised to find out that the affluent, the supposed stewards of Britain, are petulant, self-absorbed, and morally bankrupt (lines 149-70, 191-228). Their loyalty is to accruing wealth and to Continental high society, not to Britain and most definitely not to peasants.

So, what does Burns uncover in reference to the persistent question before the Scots, "Whither Scotland?"[174] As to *whether* Scotland and the Scots are possible, the initial impression is not very positive. If Scotland exists, then as of the late eighteenth century, it was composed of self-deprecating slaves living under petty aristocrats—"Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation."[175] This is not a pretty picture, which Burns makes every effort to show. However, his negation of Scotland, at least through his undressing these two major social classes, is paradoxically an affirmation of Scotland. And what amounts to a negative affirmation opens the door to figuring out *how* Scotland is possible and ultimately *what kind* of Scotland is possible.

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[174] "Whither Scotland?" is a question that members of the Scottish Renaissance posed to themselves and to their compatriots during the first few dozen years of the twentieth century. This question is reflected in much of modern and postmodern Scottish letters, including that of Burns, MacDiarmid, Nairn, Neal Ascherson, Candia McWilliam, and Welsh.

[175] "Such a Parcel of Rogues in a Nation" is one of Burns's most famous nationalist songs, played as a dirge, which scolds the Scots for allowing themselves to be sold to England for "English gold" when Lowland elites signed the 1707 Act of Union (511-12).

4.2 Second Enlightenment Strand: Reasoning with Antisyzygy[176]

The title of Welsh's estate satire, complete with a voyage through Glasgow from a university bar to a football fans' pub, could just as accurately be titled "The Two Humes." As with Kant, and arguably as with any significant philosopher, there are more than two Humes. For our purposes, though, we will stick with two. Gus McGlone and Lou Ornstein represent these two Humes. With Ornstein-Hume, we have the radical speculative empiricist, and with McGlone-Hume, we have the conservative anglophile. The speculative empiricist, or populist skeptic, demonstrates a materialist stance. Like a Gramscian, Ornstein-Hume sees what is and charts the alternative probabilities out of it. The classic liberal McGlone-Hume, on the other hand, asserts *what should be* and pushes *what is* in its direction by appealing to civilized norms.

Enlightenment Scots' ideas—such as Hume's, Adam Smith's, and Adam Ferguson's— have become well-entrenched commonplaces and ideologies since the eighteenth century. Instrumental knowledge—along with its sociopolitical counterpart civil society—is probably their greatest collective legacy. However, there is a problem in this legacy of the early-modern bourgeois revolution. In their efforts to preordain enlightened knowledge or moral civility as the universal ground of all human life, prominent Enlightenment thinkers—including Hume and

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[176] Antisyzygy is a concept attributable to G. Gregory Smith, who held that Scotland and its literature are "a combination of opposites," which is 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" (*Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918-1939: Source Documents for the Scottish Renaissance*, ed. Margery Palmer McCulloch [Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2004] p. 6). In short, antisyzygy is the paradoxical core of Scottish life. Ontologically and epistemologically, Scotland is a fabric of contradictory elements that weave together to make a mutable, potentially evolving whole. It is, therefore, no surprise why MacDiarmid would have been attracted to this concept, which surfaces throughout much of his work: i.e., Scots and Scotland are the consummate embodiment of dialectical processes. In fact, MacDiarmid expanded the concept, particularly in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, and even made it the nominal subject of one of his poems, "The Caledonian Antisyzygy" (MacDiarmid, *Selected Poetry*, eds. Alan Riach and Michael Grieve [New York, NY: New Directions, 1993] p. 230).

later Immanuel Kant—satisfied their liberalism, but they also unintentionally undermined the

very human subjects they attempted to empower.[177]

Hume, in the last book of *Treatise of Human Nature*, and Kant, in his second and third

critiques of reason, promote a social framework in which enlightened individuals tap into a

common stream of experience or knowledge which will lead them to civil society or moral

consistency.[178] Now, it is only fair to admit that such ideas were and are certainly a breath of

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[177] Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism* 75.

[178] Contrary to much of what he writes in *Treatise*, Hume appeals to the wisdom of custom when it comes to humans' sociopolitical activities. See in particular sections 7 through 11 of Book 3. We are dealing with one of two Humes, McGlone's Hume. Anticipating Popper, this Hume sides with an evolutionary optimism when it comes to social institutions and relations: "Time alone gives solidity to [a government's] right; and operating gradually on the minds of men, reconciles them to any authority, and makes it seem just and reasonable" (556). Admittedly, Hume does so with great equivocation. In an effort to remain descriptive, he notes how the interests of a government and its constituency can be at odds, which his empirical observation of history demonstrates. But he is pulled in the direction of justifying the necessity of civil society, in spite of the plethora of evidence that questions its very feasibility: "Few enjoyments are given us from the open and liberal hand of nature; but by art, labour, and industry, we can extract them in great abundance. Hence the ideas of property become necessary in all civil society: Hence justice derives its usefulness to the public: And hence alone arises its merit and moral obligation" (David Hume, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp [Oxford, UP: Oxford UP, 1998] p. 87). Hume is locked in an indefensible position not because some sort of just or egalitarian world is impossible. He is caught in this cul-de-sac because part of him is almost uncritically dedicated to bourgeois hegemony over human labor, which is founded on the unequal distribution of materials and power—vis à vis the natural rights of rulers and private property. Even though we can connect one Hume's speculative empiricism to Marx's dialectical materialism, the other Hume is no Marx, and he is not interested in a paradigm shift that would upend the "natural" evolution of civilization. Revolution for the bourgeois Hume is only justifiable as a correction within civil society: for example, when a tyrant must be resisted or overthrown for the sake of national interest. In view of this, not only is this Hume no Marx; he is no Tom Paine either. The Hume of civil society believes in the priority of abstract relations—property, allegiance, obligation, and so forth—when it comes to the sociopolitical life of humans. This Hume, though, is at stark odds with the Hume of human possibility—the Hume who does connect well to Marx, the Hume who guides us here (see his epigraph above). Immanuel Kant, on the other hand, does not have to equivocate, for he is not trying to have it both ways, as it were: the human individual is justified as long as he or she constantly moves to conform his or her will to reason (*Critique of Practical Reason*, ed. Mary Gregor [London: Cambridge UP, 1997] p. 102). This, for Kant, is also the basis of a civil—even holy—society. He famously writes, "the human being (and with him every rational being) is an *end in itself*, that is, can never be used merely as a means by anyone (not even by God) without being at the same time himself an end, and . . . humanity in our person must, accordingly, be *holy* to ourselves: for he is the *subject of the moral law* and so that which is holy in itself, on account of which and in agreement with which alone can anything be called holy. For, this moral law is based on the autonomy of his will, as a free will which, in accordance with its universal laws, must necessarily be able at the same time *to agree* to that which it is to *subject* itself" (110). Some would argue that Kant's seamless consistency makes his theory much more powerful than Hume's. Perhaps as a rhetorical matter, this is so. But as an ethical matter, Hume is more pro-human than Kant. Kant's is an agonistic or monastic morality, while Hume's is a communitarian ethic. Alternatively, like many utilitarians, Hume is on the side of social justice that originates from the needs and interests of most people; however, despite the appeals to the proto-utilitarian concept of civil society already discussed, he inadvertently betrays a lack of confidence in institutions based on precedence, not to mention that he is more than suspicious of social systems based on moral laws. Justice is only possible if all parties act justly, which makes justice impossible in a society founded on the accumulation of wealth and thus the unequal access to wealth

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fresh air when considering the logic of feudalism that preceded them and the logic of totalitarianism that has followed since. On their faces, Hume's appeal to experience as the basis of knowledge and his subsequent appeal to shared social values would apparently be in league with what we have been promoting in this study. Likewise, Kant's appeals to idealized reason break the stranglehold on truth so long imposed by, for example, kings or the Church. Both philosophers, like their political counterparts in the Renaissance and their religious counterparts in the Reformation, emancipate the individual from tyrannical pre-modern systems. That being said, though, the Hume of the *Treatise*'s third book and the Kant of the last two critiques might not have broken as much as they had hoped from the status quo or from vulgar appeals to predestination. On the one hand, they moved to wrench reason away from religious and monarchic ridiculousness; on the other hand, however, they succeeded, even as they tried not to, in helping to formulate the modern alienation of reason and society from most humans. Hume's appeals to experience and dominant social values do not, upon closer examination, include the wider multitude's experiences or values outside of emerging bourgeois society. The possibility of inclusion is there; Hume, however, officially desired something else.[179] Kant does in fact liberate reason from imperialistic human institutions, but he leads it further away from the human multitude—to an even higher and remote plane, to God. Knowledge and social life, therefore, have become products that have been extracted from their actual producers, humans,

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(*Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morality* 83-98). Hume is consistently adamant about its being impossible to establish or enforce a "system of eternal rational measures of right and wrong" (466). In Hume's case, then, "Caledonian Antisyzygy" is more than evident.

[179] Hume is consistent in his contradictoriness. He desired to be one of England's elite, even though he suspected that he would not be accepted because of being unmistakably Scottish. Because England was not going to, in his mind, be a receptive home, he favored France. And when he did describe what his identity should be, he claimed the predictable Enlightenment cosmopolitan rank of "a citizen of the world." See Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Historical Age of the Historical Nation* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001) pp. 58-61. There were also times when he would embrace being a Scot. Some argue that, in fact, Scottish Presbyterianism, Scottish law, and the clannish communitarian social systems in the south Lowlands were the materials from which he constructed his philosophy. See MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 281-86. Some, such as Frantz Fanon or Nairn, would recognize Hume's inconsistency or hybridity as a symptom of his subordinate socio-cultural status.

and have been relocated in what is for most an unapproachable domain. In other words, the system makers become subordinate to their own systems, and the systems become further removed from their ground even as they mine it for resources at an accelerating rate.[180]

However, this is where the paradoxical or negative affirmation mentioned above, in relation to Burns, may come in. If humans in their common life make reason, knowledge, society, culture, and so forth, then there is the possibility—and to continue a more militant tone, the *probability*[181]—that humans will wrestle them back down to the common plane or mortal coil and reintegrate them into their particular situations. Some might argue that this privileges intuition, irrational knowledge, uncertainty, and so forth. To an extent, it does; however, neither reason nor society is thrown out, just repositioned. What we call reason today owes its birth to very irrational beginnings, and civilization to frequently barbaric forces.[182] I say irrational and barbaric because an empirical review of human history, sociology, and psychology will tend to undermine the validity of temperate reason and civil society being the foundations of human thought and action. Humans might rationalize, or give reason, to their lives by building mental structures in which to plug their experiences and presuppositions; however, any reason that comes about is the effect, not the initial cause or basis, of their lives. Humans might live

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[180] Or, to put it politically, constituent power is neutralized by the establishment of constitutions, as we touched on in chapters 2 and 3.

[181] Probability, not certainty, is the cornerstone of Hume's thought. Probability begins as a possibility, but as one's experience increases and consequently as one's ability to work with experience's materials improves, a possibility may become more than a fantasy, belief, or hope. It becomes probable because, to use Hume's idiom, it is a possibility that contains more "rigour and firmness." This does not mean that other possibilities will be foreclosed, as it were. They will always be entailed by a probability and will perhaps also become more valid with the accumulation of materials (information, elements, and so on) and speculative (projective) production with them. (Hume 106, 124-55).

[182] Again, Benjamin's observation about the barbarism inherent in civilization is apt.

according to reason and social norms that stem from it; however, reason and its mechanisms are secondary *though integral* aspects of human existence, not the core.[183]

The Hume of the first and second books of *Treatise*, along with the Hume of such writings as *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, arguably knew this.[184] The first book of *Treatise* reads like an essay on physics, and to an extent, it is just that—an essay on the movement of things, impressions, passions, and ideas. Hume basically argues that there is no epistemological ideal or meta-knowledge, or to put it another way, there is no pre-written master-narrative to which we can refer or on which we can depend. Establishing the certainty of initial causes, overarching ideals, and predetermined truths is, to him, contrary to the movement of life. Then, in the second book, Hume follows Francis Hutcheson in charting out how the interactions between the material world and human senses, or passions, create knowledge and, more importantly, increased probabilities for humans in the world. He renames Hutcheson's moral sense and calls it sympathy, in an apparent attempt to make it more secular. But without splitting hairs too much, the two concepts refer basically to the same thing—a collectively activated

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[183] Human energy, what Hume following Hutcheson would call "passion," is the basis of all human life; therefore, reason "is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (Hume 415).

[184] Hume, *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Tom L. Beauchamp (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1999). I must, in all fairness, write a brief apologia at this point before we turn our direction to Hume and Scotland. As much as it might seem like it, I am not dismissing Kant. In fact, he is good company as we chart out the material and political ramifications we face when confronting radically fragmented global capital and its postmodern imperial logic. Kant was extremely concerned about the tyranny of baseless dogma and anti-thought that he witnessed throughout history and during his life. To be frank, a Marxist would be hard-pressed to find a better example of a theoretical predecessor in the bourgeois revolution, except perhaps for Hume, as we will explore below. The latter point leads me to the second part of this apologia. The reason that Hume will be brought to the foreground here, but not Kant, is because we are dealing with the particularity known as Scotland. By no means will Kant be absent. Kant's specter cannot help but haunt a discussion about Hume because much of Kant's work, which is today more influential than Hume's, was in large part a response to the Scottish skeptic. But the Scottish skeptic, even more so than Hutcheson before him and Kant after him, rode on the crest of and contributed to one of the most powerful ruptures in humans' comprehension of their own lives, the Enlightenment. Hume's being at the right place at the right time had much to do with him being in the middle of eighteenth-century Scotland. Indeed, as we have suggested, Hume's personal and political battles with Scotland and "Scottishness" go a long way toward explaining how he could be a founder of both modern particularistic empiricism and modern universal civility. They also go a long way to understanding modern Scotland.

physical sense that connects individual human beings regardless of socio-cultural differences. Indeed, Hume's ethic, like Hutcheson's before him, is an integral thus communitarian life ethic.

Even though morality is technically the topic of the third book of *Treatise*, Hume's ethic is operating from the first book onward. Hume's is a practical ethic, and a human-friendly one at that.[185] According to Hume, attempts to locate first causes or to fathom providential intention lead people into a futile world of infinite regressions and mystifying beliefs. In other words, searches for capital-T Truth do more to lead people away from engaging and producing living truths. By undermining optimism based on providential design, Hume resituates power in humans, at least until he appeals to the primacy of civil society in the last book of *Treatise*. There are sections of the third book that consistently follow the epistemological, psychological, and sociological insights of the first two books; however, Hume waxes more and more conformist as he proceeds, effectively undermining the revolutionary probabilities that dominate the majority of his groundbreaking work.

Welsh's story illustrates Hume's contradictory positions, but like us, he sides in favor of Hume-the-materialist instead of Hume-the-classical-liberal; in effect, Welsh finds the former more valid than his antithesis. Philosophically, one could certainly make the argument that Kuhn's theories on knowledge, which Ornstein favors, are the direct postmodern descendent of Hume's empiricism. Alternatively, on McGlone's side, one could say that Popper's also are, if one looks at the latter part of Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature*, his political tracts, and his historical writings. Contradiction is in fact a significant characteristic of Hume's philosophy—as well as his life.[186] An interesting biographical commentary on this contrariness emerges when

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[185] Hume 177.
[186] According to Tom L. Beauchamp, Hume bases his moral philosophy between particularity and universality, which allows for his "moral diversity, but do not translate into either a pure conventionalism or an

Welsh bases McGlone in Glasgow, where Hume wanted to go for a "legitimate" academic career. McGlone represents the establishment and retroactively anticipates what would have ostensibly happened to Hume if he had succeeded in procuring a position at the university where his mentor and greatest influence, Hutcheson, had taught. McGlone does represent Hume's conservative, or classical liberal, politics—bourgeois politics. Ornstein, however, hails from Edinburgh, where Hume had ended up serving as a librarian after being rejected for professorships at Edinburgh University and the University of Glasgow. Ornstein is originally from the New World, the American Midwest. Not Ivy League and not part of Britain's patrician intelligentsia, Ornstein represents the renegade philosopher. He also undermines the classism and imperialism still extant in Anglo-Saxon politics. What we are dealing with is not just a philosophical matter or a biographical matter—it is also a political matter.

McGlone-Hume represents the quintessential citizen of the British Empire. Hume's politics were at least moderate and often conservative. He was one of the Edinburgh intellectuals who helped man the city walls when the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion came down from the Highlands. And his calling himself an Englishman for most of his life, along with writing one of the popular English histories of his time, made clear where his predominant socio-political loyalties were. Like Swift before his expatriation to Ireland, Hume was radical philosophically, but his politics were far from antiestablishment, which means far from a resistance to English imperialism. In fact, Alasdair MacIntyre provocatively links Hume to the Anglicization of Scotland and the virtual sellout of Scottish philosophy.[187] The standards of modern civil society—not to mention international relations—that are justifiably affiliated with eighteenth-century England do in fact owe much of their existence to Scottish Enlightenment thinkers, such

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unqualified cultural or historical relativism of standards" (Introduction, *An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 45).
    [187] MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 281-99, 300-25.

as Hume, Adam Smith, and Adam Ferguson.[188] Whereas Ferguson's theories of civil society were based on the martial aspects of ancient Rome and the Scottish Highlands,[189] Hume's ideas about an ideal government were obviously modern and bourgeois, formed with Westminster (not Holyrood) in mind. In view of this, Hume himself practically defied his own insight about experiential knowledge by attempting to disassociate himself from Scotland and its unique philosophical and sociocultural heritage. He might have, as MacIntyre suggests, tried to shoot straight toward an ahistorical universal—Anglo-British hegemony—by bypassing what he personally considered to be a constricting immediate context—Scottish antisyzygy.[190]

But as another example of negative affirmation—or the other side of his antisyzygy—Hume's materials were nevertheless Scottish. Historically, politically, personally, socially, and culturally, Hume was in the middle of an intersection that was categorically Scottish, even if being categorically Scottish meant being categorically scattered. He might have wanted to support the hegemony of Englishness in the United Kingdom, practically begging for his mind to be appropriated south of the Borders. But the forces buzzing around him in eighteenth-century Edinburgh, that liminal city of Scotland, made him Hume, not his predecessor Newton or contemporary Locke. Hume's knowledge was formed in the conflicted reality only a Scot could know.

This is the fact that Welsh ironically brings home when he has Ornstein pummel McGlone. One can almost hear Welsh saying, "You cannot call yourself an empiricist unless you are willing to deal with reality or, even better, you cannot call yourself a Scottish

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[188] Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism* 73-89.
[189] Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1995).
[190] MacIntyre *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* 312, 324.

philosopher unless you can handle a squerr go ootside." Knowledge is not based on reasonable, civil ideals. It is based in human, material production—being, becoming, living.

Ornstein-Hume represents the Scottish Enlightenment's heretic. Hume violated even the liberal stance of the Presbyterian Moderates, including Hutcheson. His staunch atheism, unlike the more popular deism of the eighteenth century, broke with British polite society, including the academic tolerance of universities in Scotland's Central Belt. Consequently, he did not get the highly coveted Professorship of Ethics and Pneumatical Philosophy at Edinburgh University, so he spent much of his academic career as a librarian, not as a lecturer, in Edinburgh. His thick Broad Scots dialect and gregarious personality are thought to have led to suspicions about his legitimacy as a respectable British thinker. But such setbacks did not stop Hume from continuing his research or his writing as an increasingly popular public intellectual. Even if his peers could lock him out of the halls of academia, they could not avoid having to deal with his theories. His work's significance is verified by the attention it received during and after his life. Moreover, he was irresistibly friendly and great company, not unlike his younger Continental counterpart, Kant. He was and is a key figure of the Enlightenment overall, and of the Scottish Enlightenment and Scotland in particular.

We will direct our attention to aspects of this latter Hume. I am not ready to concede totally to MacIntyre's premise that Hume was the thinker who handed Scotland's mind and thus its body to England. One Hume probably did do this, but another Hume, Welsh's Ornstein-Hume, set the groundwork for something else. When McGlone chooses Popper as his theoretical predecessor, he violates one of the basic Humean tenets: Reason is not primary, but secondary. Consequently, knowledge is not a miraculous, pure, linear, and impeccably logical unfolding of destiny. On the contrary, knowledge is when two forces—bodies or passions—come into

contact and spark an impression. Even then, knowledge might merely be an intuition or a partially apprehended event. It might form the basis of a new habit, or it might rupture habituated knowledge (beliefs, assumptions, and the like) to open the way for other probabilities. One's imagination might encourage him or her to move toward another probability, connecting impressions that would lead to the materialization of that probability, and perhaps rupturing the status quo. Or one's imagination might entangle a probability in fantasy, thereby disabling its materialization. [191] Is there some tool or filter that might help knowledge out of its logjams, ensuring fidelity between impressions and material reality?

Enter logos. Reason is what Hume calls a "calm passion," which functions as mechanism that situates impressions and ideas so that they do not become bogged down in contradiction, imagination, and so forth.[192] With reason, therefore, Hume does not provide us a path connecting experience with a predetermined end. In other words, he is not giving us a treasure map with an "x" marking the spot. He provides us with something much more democratic and ethical. Before us, he lays out how we actually know—through materially grounded interaction, emotion, connection, correlation, speculation, and correction. What Hume calls reason is fidelity to a truth emerging from a situation. Reasoning, therefore, is mapping out the materials before us so that we have firmer ground to stand on. We put them into their possible combinations. As we do so, we begin to place them in their most valid or probable combinations, corresponding to the particular characteristics of a given situation. And from the present's probabilities, we can then project future probabilities. Then, of course, when we enter the future—the next present— we will continue likewise: locating, situating, correcting, and projecting truths. Hume,

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[191] Hume 250.

[192] Hume 179. Compare to Hutcheson's characterization of the moral sense, discussed in chapter 3.

therefore, finds in humans the ability to produce understanding of the *is* but also the ability to produce *what can be* by working rigorously with *what is*.

Is, though, is apprehended first and foremost from what is immediate, according to Hume. Extrapolating his thought, the immediate includes not only immediate objects, immediate needs, immediate family, and so forth; it also includes the immediate social, cultural, economic, and historical forces that each human encounters. In larger part, Hume's philosophy does not support radical bourgeois individualism, in which humans, by some execution of individual will, single-handedly and ahistorically form the universe to their liking (that ultra-Calvinist capitalist God rears it head again). Instead, as Marx later would, he finds the individual human being to be a focal point from which to ascertain what some have called human nature or humanity—but what we, following Marx, have been calling species-being.

The individual is the integration of diverse forces in a specific time and locale which congregates with other individuals. Preceding Marx, Hume observes that general human experience, which is shared through the social interaction of individual humans, enables humans to produce their world.[193] As a consequence, we come face to face with one of Hume's most important insights—the speculative, or creative, nature of the *labor* of human knowledge. Knowledge is projective; that is, knowledge is built in the spatiotemporal immediate but is

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[193] At one point in the third book of *Treatise*, the revolutionary Hume emerges right in the middle of a passage by the conservative Hume: "Nothing is more vigilant and inventive than our passions. . . . Nature has . . . trusted [human relations] entirely to the conduct of men, and has not plac'd in the mind any peculiar original principles, to determine us to a set of actions, into which the other principles of our frame and constitution were sufficient to lead us" (526). Even though the sentences surrounding these intend to substantiate civil society with "three fundamental laws of nature"—stability of possession, its transference by consent, and performance of promises—these two sentences point to an alternative, emergent probability—the common. Elsewhere, Hume becomes even more explicit about the importance of the common: "Reduce a person to solitude, and he loses all enjoyment . . . and that because the movements of his heart are not forwarded by correspondent movements in his fellow creatures. . . . The more we converse with mankind, and the greater social intercourse we maintain, the more shall we be familiarized to [our] general preferences and distinctions, without which our conversation and discourse could scarcely be rendered intelligible to each other" (*An Enquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* 109, 115). Compare to Karl Marx: "Whenever we speak of production, then, what is meant is always production at a definite stage of social development—production by social individuals" (*Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy (Rough Draft)*, trans. Martin Nicolaus [New York: Penguin, 1993] p. 85).

always opening to possibilities. With this characteristic of speculative knowledge, we approach the next portion of our answer to the question, "Whither Scotland?"

4.3 Third Enlightenment Strand: Cognitive Cartography

How are Scotland and the Scots possible? Let us turn again to "The Twa Dogs" for suggestions. Through the personages of two dogs, Burns demystifies the terrain before him. Granted, he does retain a fondness for certain aspects of the "cot-folk's" sociocultural life; however, and most significantly, he undermines the nobleness of both poverty and affluence. He distributes blame to all Scots for Scotland's status, which is a negative affirmation: because of their own acquiescence and self-destruction, Scotland and the Scots are not only possible but regrettably very real. They are instrumental in the production of Scottish subordination in general and their self-defeating estate system in particular. What Burns does is this: he takes the status quo of Scotland—a dissolute, subordinate stateless nation that may not even be a nation— and galvanizes it. Conflict was always probable because residual and emergent socio-cultural energies existed before the Scots even came to the west of Scotland from Ireland in the fourth and fifth centuries AD, and after they entered into the Union in 1707. Class conflicts, existing before and after feudalism, were always probable; however, because of various historical and material reasons, they had not been systematically activated or they had settled into bad sense, submerged under residual forces. Burns, however, makes a systematic attempt to activate or transform latent energies by intentionally agitating underlying conflicts. He does so by employing a challenging though well-worn literary structure, allegorical estate satire. As noted above, he modifies that genre by placing the meaningful action or labor off stage and into the world of the spectator. And, not unlike what Swift does to the Irish in "A Modest Proposal," Burns turns his dramatic poem against Scots to ostensibly spur them into resisting his

characterizations of them. Effectively, Burns makes it impossible for Scotland and the Scots to not exist. He vivisects them, which ironically affirms their existence and promotes their autonomy.[194]

By means of a discursive trick, he encourages a situation in which *not* becoming an active subject is invalid, even if one begins out of anger, pride, and so forth. But unlike Swift, a virtual outsider in Ireland during his time, Burns's ability to alter his and Scotland's situation is more likely. His poems and songs not only point to how Scotland was, but they also point toward envisioning and building alternative probabilities for Scotland. On the surface, poems like "The Twa Dogs," "Holy Willie's Prayer," and "Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn" might seem to do little more than chastise the Scots for their failures. In the case of "To a Mouse," for instance, humans in general are taken to task: their "best-laid schemes" are bound to fail when they are disconnected from the ground of daily human life.[195] (Moreover, if Burns seems harsh, Welsh's critiques of Scots make Burns's pale in comparison.) However, despite patinas of cynicism, fatalism, and disappointment, there is something highly affirming in Burns's satirical and polemical poems. (The same goes for Welsh's fiction.) How is this possible? A complex productive practice of mapping is sparked in each literary instance.

There is a strong mapping tradition in Scottish letters since, if not before, the Enlightenment. Moreover, there is arguably a national purpose in this mapping, whether intentional or not. In the eighteenth century, Tobias Smollett's *Humphry Clinker* and Janet Schaw's *Journal of a Lady of Quality* are good examples of this tradition. In the Romantic and

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[194] In this respect, Burns reflects the third phase of the native intellectual theorized by Frantz Fanon: such an intellectual is one who defends "his nation's legitimacy and who wants to bring proofs to bear out that legitimacy, who is willing to strip himself naked to study the history of his body, [and] is obliged to dissect the heart of his people" (*The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington [New York: Grove, 1963] p. 211). If we may extend postcolonial status to Scotland—while certainly doing so with necessary qualifications—we will observe Burns as an intellectual for whom building an autonomous post-imperial Scotland means first mapping out its less than savory aspects.

[195] Burns 101-102.

Victorian phases, we have, as discussed, many of Robert Burns's poems and songs, and we have Robert Louis Stevenson's stories as examples. Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *A Scots Quair* and Hugh MacDiarmid's epic poem *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* are exemplary of the Modernist period. And the postmodernists often turn to this cartographical tack: e.g. Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, William McIlvanney's Laidlaw mysteries, Duncan McLean's *Blackden*, Candia McWilliam's *Debatable Land*, and A. L. Kennedy's *So I Am Glad*. What they have in common, despite their differences, is an acute consciousness of historical and psychological displacement and fragmentation. Consequently, there is an impulse to map out the disjointed terrain before them. But there is also uneasiness in these writers' works when it comes to pinning things down too much or marking out too definite a territory.

Tobias Smollett, for example, scatters his characters all over the United Kingdom, all the way down into Wales, in *Humphry Clinker*.[196] The theme of illegitimacy, the frequent occurrence of absurd coincidences, the disjointed epistolary narrative, and the radically opposing opinions and personalities make this book intentionally frustrating and hilarious. The Sterne-like playfulness is, as it was for Lawrence Sterne, serious. A ragtag collection of individuals from different generations, social classes, and typecasts are on individual or group pilgrimages. Like *The Canterbury Tales*, the whole body of this eighteenth-century novel is a collective voyage. But as we have noted about Burns's poetry, the voyage is a dynamic process: A Scot builds Scotland by first dispersing and then recombining its fragments.

In the next century, Robert Louis Stevenson similarly tracks down evidence and connects the dots of a dualistic entity in *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.[197] City streets, buildings, rooms, and mental pathways reflect and influence each other. As the psychological

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[196] Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker* (New York: Penguin, 1985).
[197] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (New York: Penguin, 1994).

thriller progresses, one may sense how the barriers between physical structures and psychological states are all but nonexistent.

Then, in the early years of the postmodern phase, Alastair Gray's *Lanark* takes things a step further than its predecessors by making place and person indistinguishable while at the same time making place and person continually mutable: both Lanark-the-person and Lanark-the-city are subject to frequent, unexpected spatial and temporal anomalies.[198] For instance, Lanark-the-person's skin becomes that of a reptile. Buildings, roads, and other structures come and go without explanation. Distances bear little relation to travel time. Time itself speeds up or slows down depending on where a character is at a given moment. Close literary comparisons can be made to Samuel R. Delany's novel *Dhalgren* and his *Neveryòn* series.

The mapping in such works reflects and advances the insights of Hume's speculative philosophy discussed above. Hume is in good company with these writers, for his theories helped open the door to the sorts of experiments his literary counterparts have pursued. Speculative empiricism, which is as much a creative cognitive system as it is a phenomenological or epistemological philosophy, brings to the fore not only situation-specific analysis—mapping out the *is*—but it also insists on extrapolating probabilities. Expressly, if some thing, some place, or some situation can be thought of, then it can be.[199] To do this, humans actually use the probabilities of the present—in the "medieval" space discussed in chapter 2—to imagine something else, which makes that something else probable as well. The veneers of apparently static sociocultural significations and predetermined historical movement are pulled away, opening up alternative probabilities, situations, or spaces. To echo Hume, speculation based on material reality enables us to break the hold of prejudice, which actually

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[198] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in 4 Books* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace, 1996).
[199] Hume 236.

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forces a disconnection from material reality.[200] To borrow Hume's famous phrasing, intransigent

custom and prejudice are based on *what ought to be* instead of *what is*.[201] Hume's theories,

though, enable us to project another world (or other worlds) from our world instead of referring

to idealized models.[202] Hume's avoidance of normative or predetermined systems points to his

ethic: sympathy for humans as they are and confidence in their productive capabilities. His

science, as he called it,[203] demonstrates a conviction that humans can produce better *is*es when

they grapple with the *is* that they inhabit than by producing more *oughts* to escape it. This

Humean ethic may help us to understand why seemingly fantastic literature is in fact very

realistic, and it highlights the ever-present ability of humans to produce their world.

Thus, *Humphry Clinker* is not a chronicle of weird characters' journeys and opinions. It

is a document of sociocultural and economic forces that affect Scottish identity. Mr. Hyde is not

just some monster that Stevenson created to thrill readers. He is a figure who calls attention to

the unsteadiness of identity, the limits of juridical and scientific laws. *Lanark* is not an

ungrounded aesthetic experiment. It is an attempt to situate humans in a society, if not a world,

that is consistent only in its instability. What we have are writers dealing with the materials they

have been dealt, and they are trying to locate and construct something different—and more

vital—out of those materials.

In chapter 2, we approached this topic of production from a more historiographical

viewpoint. We were interested primarily in locating the raw, or prehistorical, productive energy

that powered historical production, which we then explored further in chapter 3 when we

discussed the possibility of integrating that energy. Here, we will focus on how such production

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[200] Hume 421-22.
[201] Hume 470.
[202] Hume 431.
[203] Hume 273. Marx, *Grundrisse* 83.

occurs in practice. The discussion about Humean epistemology that has brought us to this point—specifically our focus on Hume's speculative knowledge—lays the groundwork for an exploration of the practice of mapping in the modern Scottish national context.

In good Humean fashion, we should probably first state the *is* of "The Twa Dogs" and "The Two Philosophers." Earlier, we looked at the poem in a more literary and historical way, which is certainly appropriate. Now, we are going to move even deeper into the systems and structures underpinning the tale. The "reason" that arguably controls the world of laird and cottar in "The Twa Dogs" is a hybrid socioeconomic system that sets up what is, overall, a rigid binary estate system: decaying clan society, pseudo-feudal hierarchies, and burgeoning capitalism form the environment for Scotland's exploitative, self-absorbed property owners and stoic, self-destructive laborers. This system is completely "reasonable" to the people of the poem, for it satisfies the ideals of an established hierarchy that both the higher and lower orders accept and perpetuate. Indeed, this system was still at work in Burns's time, perpetuating the cruelly rational predestinarian logic discussed in the preceding chapter: some are the *a priori* elect, and most are the *a priori* reprobate. According to that system's members, therefore, they lived in a civil society. But to continue as Hume would instruct us, we should see if there are other probabilities emerging from the *is* before us.

The dogs, contrary to human common sense, find the human social system to be totally irrational and anything but civil. In fact, they ultimately find it to be pathological. The satirist himself, Burns, obviously discerns not only a radically antihuman logic in this system; he finds a radically anti-Scottish one. If not acknowledged as secondary to basic biological and psychological needs and labor, the logos and the *civitas* founded on it are biologically, socially,

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and morally destructive to humans in general and to Scots in particular. The dogs give us a

starting point from which to move toward probabilities they do not actually state but imply.

The similarities between Welsh's "The Two Philosophers" and its eighteenth-century

predecessor might not be readily apparent beyond their literary affinities; however, they both

confront similar situations, and they similarly open up to alternative probabilities. The "reason"

that rules late-twentieth century academia in Scotland echoes eighteenth-century social

hierarchies. Before the two philosophers even step foot into Brechin's Bar, Ornstein's thesis has

been proved. Knowledge is contextually determined—determined by time, space, material

factors, ideological factors, cultural factors, and so forth. It depends on human beings, their

social interaction, and their usage of materials at a given time, in a given place. The very fact

that two intellectuals have been having the same argument for years—at conferences, in journals,

and so forth—points to the existence of certain material realities: The academic world to which

they belong is only possible in a particular socioeconomic environment. Not unlike international

corporations, "The Academy" is really a collection of fragmented bourgeois enclaves throughout

a generally impoverished world. The University of Glasgow is a case in point. Glasgow, one of

the first industrialized "New Towns" in Europe, is now like so many towns of its kind: the

greater number of its inhabitants are trapped in cycles of poverty and in unsatisfying jobs

because of dried up industries, while those in the minority are mobile professionals who live and

work in areas practically removed from the larger material reality. The very idea that a dialogue

about knowledge is restricted to trained professionals is also an indicator of a hierarchy similar to

the one uncovered in Burns's poem. Institutionally recognized intellectuals—patronized by the

ruling class via universities, endowments, grants, and so forth—are the postmodern equivalents

of the laird's flunkies. They have very little knowledge of the labor that actually creates and

maintains the basic material and societal structures that enable academic discourse, publishing, and so on.

The auld Tommys of the world are integral to the intellectual labor of the philosophers, yet the academy is inaccessible to them. Welsh, through Ornstein, accordingly points out that knowledge is only possible through reintegrating the so-called immaterial labor of intellectuals and the material labor of machinists, bartenders, neds, and the like.[204] Or to put it more bluntly, as Welsh does, the mind has to be embodied, literally connected to the physical world. Knowledge can no longer be the monopoly of one select group of humans. Knowledge is generated by everyone, and therefore, it must be redistributed to everyone in order for it to be viable. Scotland, along with many places like it, is subordinate because of disintegration and misdistribution; consequently, as we are suggesting here from a Humean-Marxist perspective, distinguishing between lack in materials and lack in knowledge is superfluous. Accordingly, Scotland's self-concept and historical material status are practically one and the same. So, again, one might ask, "How Scotland?"

To find out how something occurs, it is advisable to find out what that something is made of. Systems and structures—whether social, economic, or symbolic—are founded on a particular historical-material *ground*. This goes for nations, too, which are systems composed of a matrix of other systems.

In "The Twa Dogs," Burns first gives us specific references to establish a ground. We know, for instance, that the dogs are not only in Scotland, but in a specific area of Scotland. The place that bears the "name o' auld king COIL" is Kyle, Ayrshire. Burns launches the tale from very near the place of his birth, which is culturally and socially more similar to the Border

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[204] Following Hardt and Negri, we will take the segregation of material and immaterial labor as a symptom of capital's inherent divisiveness. Together, laborers of all stripes form the multitude, "all those who work under the rule of capital and thus potentially as the class of those who refuse the rule of capital" (*Multitude* 106).

Marches and Highlands than it is to the Central Belt, the power center of Scotland during the eighteenth century. So Burns situates the tale in a Scotland frequently ignored or made exotic. Moreover, the poem is unmistakably situated in the eighteenth century. References throughout the poem to cottars (tenant farmers) and the relationship they had with lairds (landed gentry in a pseudo-feudal system) are references to an economic phenomenon that really came into being after the Reformation, the revolution that began the disintegration of monarchic hegemony north and south of the Borders. Moreover, by explicitly invoking an ancient Scottish king's name, Burns connects Scotland to a pre-English past, when the Gaels who emigrated from Ireland, the Dalriada Scots, were settling the western coast and islands, and when they were absorbing the Picts to the north and battling the Brythonic Celts to the south. A temporal marker also opens a fertile seam at the base of Scotland. The placement of the poem in June puts it close to the Summer Solstice, one of the most holy days in ancient agrarian religions, including the religion of the Celts. This connection is suggestive because of the dualistic characteristics and possibly emergent message of the poem. According to Celtic myth, the Summer Solstice is the time of year when heaven and earth are married; consequently, the sun god impregnates the earth goddess in order to secure his rebirth following the winter. It is also the mythical death of the oak king, which enables him to transform into his winter double, the holly king. Burns was well-versed in Scotland's folklore, so such mythological elements cannot be ruled out as part of the ground. Thus, in the first stanza of "The Twa Dogs," before we even get to Caesar and Luath, we already have a ground that implies all of Scottish history, from the days of Gaelic chieftains to a beautiful midsummer day in the eighteenth century.

Welsh, on the other hand, presents us with a ground that consists of one of the Enlightenment's most profound epistemological battles, and it contains a Scottish common sense

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haunted by self-congratulatory defeatism.[205] The philosophical concerns of the Enlightenment were symptoms of dramatic changes since the Renaissance: in technology, politics, population, economics, literacy, and so on. Just as Scotland's folk history is not erased from the world of two Enlightenment dogs, the Scottish Enlightenment haunts the world of two postmodern philosophers. Moreover, as reflected in the work of Hutcheson and Hume, Scotland's contributions to the Enlightenment include the notion that humans are interconnected at a deep, practically physiological level. The punches and kicks flying in the last quarter of "The Two Philosophers" literally drive that notion home. Welsh also locates in the ground a consistent tendency in Scotland to protect itself by abandoning itself—in effect, success through failure. In the name of conservatism or "classical liberalism" or provincialism, Scots have facilitated Scotland's subordinate status and its subservience to Scottish and, thus, English elites.[206]

So, is "The Twa Dogs" a medieval tale? Is "The Two Philosophers" actually an eighteenth-century argument? Burns's poem is modern; likewise, Welsh's tale is postmodern. Even if many of their materials are obviously from the past, both tales are significantly determined by their particular situations. Neither tale is based in the past, but the materials of the past are integral to their grounds. As we discussed in chapter 2, the present does not produce itself *ex nihilo*, out of nothing. The past comprises the materials from which the present *and*, therefore, the future are made. There is a continuum of substances, even though the forms may differ: history does not repeat itself, but it does build on or transform itself with materials produced along the way. Therefore, a ground is a rich, dynamic space of the present.

So, now that we have located a ground for both literary works, what do we do? First, we might think back to the problem presented in the previous section, "Whether Scotland?" The

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[205] Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism* 191.
[206] Nairn, *Faces of Nationalism* 184.

problem was generally resolved by pointing to a negative affirmation: Scottish antisyzygy—

whether historical, philosophical, artistic, or psychological—is proof of Scotland. The

question—"Is there a Scotland?"—asserts Scotland's existence. This might still seem too

abstract, even if it is not an abstraction according to speculative empiricism. An initial reading

of Burns's poem, for example, could understandably lead one to believe that Scotland is

disintegrating beyond hope, that it has been thrown to the dogs, that it practically does not exist.

One would be justified in assuming that Burns is just pointing out Scotland's success at being a

failure. But even in a brief analysis of the first stanza, we have found a Scotland that is an

undeniable and rich historical-material reality. This does not mean, though, that Scotland's

status, as presented throughout the tale, is the healthiest of probabilities. As a consequence, we

are endeavoring here not only to validate a negative affirmation but to also demonstrate how

Scotland can exist affirmatively despite its subordinate and self-destructive status. Establishing a

ground is the first step in mapping out what Burns and Welsh present to us. With that said, we

are now ready to do some mapping.

Designating a ground and mapping out from it—versus, for instance, establishing a

prefabricated national ideal and making everything fit into it—better enables us to understand

how Scotland exists and what forms it can take. This directly and intentionally reflects an

insight of recent cognitive science: instead of forming knowledge according to strict semantic

rules or to an ideal, humans build knowledge spatially and temporally from a particular

experiential location while tapping into a densely packed set of materials. Humans do what is

called *mental mapping*,[207] which is a major recent discovery and subject of analysis. To

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[207] According to Gilles Fauconnier, a mapping, "in the most general mathematical sense, is a correspondence between two sets that assigns to each element in the first a counterpart in the second"; and "mappings between domains are at the heart of the unique human cognitive faculty of producing, transferring, and processing meaning" (*Mappings in Thought and Language* [Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 1997] p. 1).

investigate an instance of mental mapping, one in fact has to conduct mental mapping oneself. Accordingly, we will conduct a fairly thorough mapping of Burns's Scotland in "The Twa Dogs" to illustrate the process, as well as introduce the terminology used by cognitive scientists to explain that process. Then, we will be prepared to conduct a briefer but more interpretive analysis of contemporary Scotland via "The Two Philosophers." [208]

Through his presentation of the dogs' dialogues, Burns expands the ground, Scotland, through *cognitive construction*.[209] In cognitive construction, *mental spaces* are opened up from the *ground*, **S** in this case (Figure 4.1).[210]
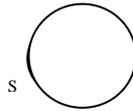

Figure 4.1

With the production of new spaces comes the possibility of producing even more spaces. Spaces can then connect to others, self-correct according to new data, and so forth.[211] As a consequence,

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[208] Our investigation will be informed by cognitive science, particularly cognitive linguistics. As with any interdisciplinary activity, we will be synthesizing specialties: in this case, cognitive science, historical materialism, and literary analysis. The intricacies of each field are many, so to make this investigation approachable for a broader audience, I will not touch on every aspect of, say, mental mapping. Mental mapping theory is in fact an extremely active field, and its vitality is reflected in a growing amount of literature, key texts of which will be mentioned here. Furthermore, we will be using an adaptation of a theory that has to this point been used primarily on analysis of individual syntactical units, brief instances of interlocution, and so forth. We, of course, are looking at larger materials: e.g. concepts, historical information, folklore, sociocultural systems, and so forth. Nevertheless, we will attempt to remain faithful to the core insights of the theory.

[209] Cognitive construction is the production of "mental spaces" (Fauconnier 34).

[210] Mental spaces "are the domains that discourse builds up to provide a cognitive substrate for reasoning and for interfacing with the world" (Fauconnier 34). The ground is background information; to be more specific, the ground is a particular event, its spatiotemporal context, and its participants. See Fauconnier 42; and see Jo Rubba, "Alternate Grounds in the Interpretation of Deictic Expressions," *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar*, eds. Gilles Fauconnier and Eve Sweetser (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1996) p. 231.

[211] Contemporary mapping theory echoes Hume in a number of regards, but two in particular stand out in this context: connection and correction. Like Hume, cognitive science is generally not prescriptive but descriptive; therefore, it does not apply a truth to a situation first and then find it in that situation. Such would amount to an accountant "cooking the books" for a client. Accordingly, mental mapping theorists "consider not the abstract relations of ideas, but their real connexions and existence" in natural language, a point which we extrapolate to the study of sociocultural production (Hume 453). Correction of misapprehensions is also not effected by some revelation of truth, but by truths that emerge during cognitive production, or what Hume would call experience:

the ground and the knowledge it produces can expand. This is certainly a dialectical process, and according to leading practitioners of mental mapping theory, it is an experiential and physiological phenomenon.[212] "The Twa Dogs" is a compelling instance of this process in action.

Before Caesar and Luath even speak, they expand the ground by entailing rich historical materials. Caesar enters first, and his very characteristics imply correctly that Scotland or at least certain classes in Scotland are involved in maritime activities that connect Scotland to the Continent: "he was nane o' Scotland's dogs; / But whalpet some place far abroad, / Whare sailors gang to fish for Cod" (lines 10-12). International relations have proved profitable, as Caesar's engraved gold collar indicates (lines 14-15). Luath, on the other hand, implies a more landlocked and less materially profitable side of Scotland, which historians say was the dominant side of Scotland during the period: "The tither was a *ploughman's collie*" (line 23).[213] However, as noted earlier, Luath implies non-capitalist wealth, for lack of a better term; Luath also entails a connection to Scotland's mythological, Gaelic past.

Through these two dogs, Burns is able to first designate two focal points, or referents, in a *frame of reference*. The frame we will be using relates to the material history of eighteenth-century Scotland; accordingly, the referents are the elites and the lower-level laborers, which we will respectively designate **a** and **b**.[214] He also begins opening *spaces*[215]: **C** for Caesar and **L** for

      [212] Rubba 240.
      [213] See Bruce P. Lenman, "From Union of 1707 to the Franchise Reform of 1832," *The New Penguin History of Scotland: From the Earliest Times to the Present Day*, eds. R. A. Houston and W. W. J. Knox (London: Penguin, 2001) pp. 280-85, 290-96.
      [214] Frames are "structured understandings of the way aspects of the world function," which "general human cognitive capacities appear to include the ability (and the need) to set up" (Fauconnier and Sweetser, "Cognitive Links and Domains: Basic Aspects of Mental Space Theory," *Spaces, Worlds, and Grammar* 4). "Frames . . . can be very schematic or more specific, depending on how far we delve into our knowledge base to take into account

Luath. When Caesar is introduced, frame **a** is established in the ground, and space **C** is created; when Luath arrives, frame **b** is established in the ground and space **L** is created (Figure 4.2).
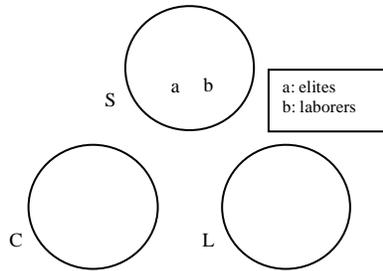

Figure 4.2

From this point on, each consecutive passage of dialogue creates a new space: e.g. C_i, L_j, C_k, L_l, and so forth. And these spaces *connect* through *references* to the foci **a** and **b**. [216]

When Caesar does speak, he refers to the hegemonic minority of Scotland, **a**, from which he comes; he does so on his way to focusing on the marginal majority of Scotland, **b**, from which Luath comes. Caesar first comments on the fact that the laird and even lower-level servants on the laird's estate eat "a dinner, / Better than ony *Tenant-man* / His Honor has in a' the lan': / An' what poor *Cot-folk* pit their painch in, / I own it's past my comprehension" (lines 66-70). Based on the materials to which he has access, Caesar's first space is connected to the ground via a^1's reference to referent **a**, and b^1's reference to referent **b**. Caesar maps out a cottars' Scotland in which hunger and destitution are the norm. Most of Luath's first response (lines 71-82) validates Caesar's assessment, so **C**'s fidelity to the ground is to this point intact. Nevertheless, Luath adds a little more information: "But how it comes, I never kent yet, / [That his master's people are] maistly wonderfu' contented; / An' buirdly chiels, an' clever hizzies, / Are bred in sic a way

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contextual specifications" (Fauconnier 12). There is a high probability that each situation can have multiple frames and referents. However, for the purposes of clarity, focusing on a smaller number of frames and referents at a time can yield deeper results.

[215] These are also known as "cognitive domains."

[216] Mental spaces are "externally linked by *connectors*, that relate elements across spaces, and more generally, structures across spaces" (Fauconnier 39).

as this" (lines 83-86). Despite the cottars' lack of nourishment, they find some way to live, if not thrive. Therefore, **L** is connected to the ground by b^2 referring to referent **b** (Figure 4.3).
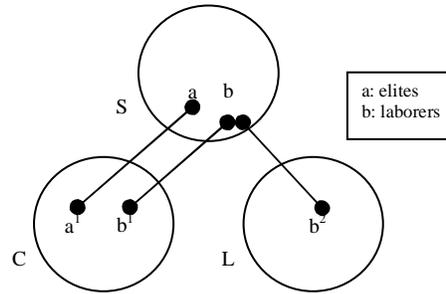

Figure 4.3

Something significant occurs after Luath makes his observation. Caesar is not ready, based on the empirical evidence before him, to accept Luath's information. In effect, he points out the lack of fidelity in Luath's space **L**. He notices how Luath and his people are "negleket . . . huff'd, an' cuff'd, an' disrespeket," and equated with cattle (lines 87-90). Then he goes on to describe how inhumanely the laird treats them (lines 93-100). He concludes that "surely poor-folk maun be *wretches*" (line 102). Therefore, Caesar creates space C_i, which is an expansion beyond **C** based on the additional data. It connects to the ground by linking b^3 to b^1; because it downplays Luath's data, though, the link is indicated by a broken line (Figure 4.4).[217]
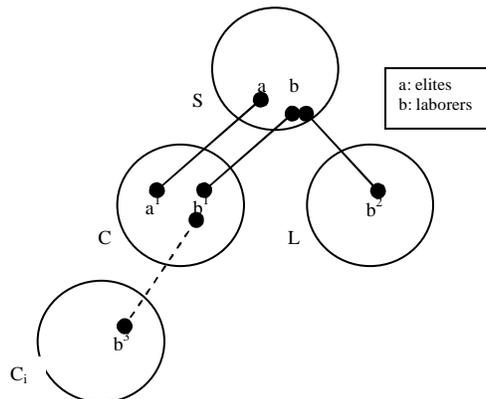

Figure 4.4

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[217] Because a^1 has so far proved faithful to **a**, **a** is presumed to be entailed by it; therefore, a^1 practically operates as the referent.

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Luath, "a gash an' faithful *tyke*" (line 29), cannot disagree with the presence of elements in Caesar's construction, but he adds new, more substantial data to the mix, elements about which Caesar had been ignorant. Luath provides a litany of the "poor-folk's" riches, which include their families, conversations about religion and politics, harvest celebrations, New Year merry-making, and so forth. To drive the point home, Luath adds, "My heart has been sae fain to see them, / That I for joy hae barket wi' them" (lines 137-138). The collie, therefore, creates space L_j, connected to the ground via a link between b^4 and b^2 (Figure 4.5).
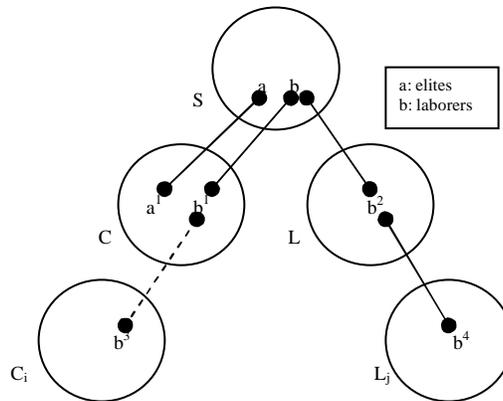

Figure 4.5

Despite Caesar's earlier doubts, Luath's mapping has proved its faithfulness to the ground. In fact, with the emergence of space L_j, C_i cannot stand as it is and be valid.

To retain fidelity in his mapping and thus project probability, Caesar would have to construct another space to establish fidelity to the ground, C_{ij}, connected by a link between b^5 and b^3, as well as a cross-spatial connection via a link between b^5 in C_{ij} to b^4 in L_j. This in turn would correct the misapprehensions of the first C_i. However, it is important to note that even if a previous space might be invalidated, in part or whole, it is still conserved.[218] No materials are

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[218] Modifying Fauconnier a bit, we are using the psychological concept of conservation, which cognitive linguists sometimes term "presupposition float." Moreover, reflecting Raymond Williams's notion of "residual," we will hold that even if a presupposition is challenged and halted, residues of it will continue to surface. Fauconnier's theory does not rule out such a possibility: "A presupposition will float up into higher spaces, until it is halted. It

lost, just re-calibrated. Caesar, though, does not actually construct $\mathbf{C_{ij}}$ in the poem.

Nevertheless, based on the dialectical nature of the poem and on the personalities of the

characters, Caesar would presumably create such a space and branch off from it, and that is why

we will still construct the space (Figure 4.6).
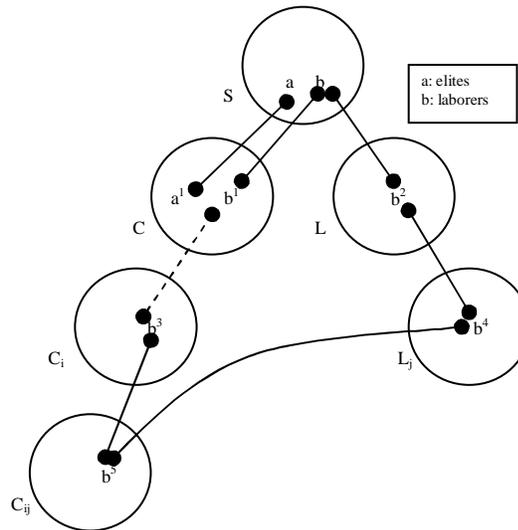
Figure 4.6

The turn of the poem comes about halfway in the poem—at the twenty-first stanza, right

after Luath discloses that he has barked in joy with the "*Cot-folk*." Luath brings his attention to

the people of the higher estate, the world of Caesar's laird. He sees an increase in greedy rascals

entering the aristocracy, doing their best to destroy laborers and undermining the *noblesse oblige*

of nobility who "aiblins, thrang a parliamentin, / For Britain's guid his saul indentin" (lines 144-

48). So, Luath opens space $\mathbf{L_k}$, connecting it to the ground by linking $\mathbf{b^6}$ to $\mathbf{b^4}$ and $\mathbf{a^2}$ to $\mathbf{a}$ (Figure

4.7).

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will then *remain* in force for the mental spaces into which it has floated. In other words, inheritance is not an 'all or nothing' process" (62). Hume would say that such residues are possibilities that lack vivacity and vigor.

Figure 4.7

It is at this point that a mapping situation emerges which is parallel to the one that focused on the laborers. Sometimes forgiving to a fault, Luath has constructed a space in which the hig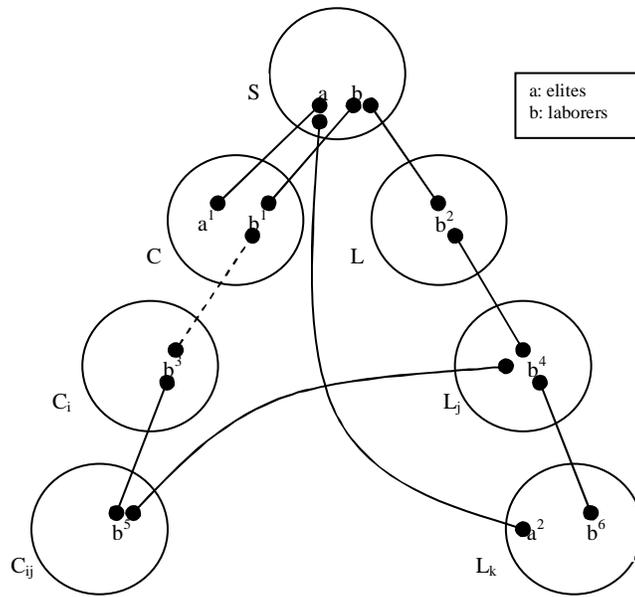her Scottish nobility is noble in every sense of the word, but the lower nobility and ascending aristocracy are not. Caesar is quick to provide Luath with more accurate and, for Luath, incredible data. The nobility, their cronies, and all their flunkies are the scourge, not stewards, of Britain. They are far from being "*For Britain's guid! [They are] for her destruction! / Wi' dissipation, feud an' faction!*" (lines 169-70). Caesar creates space C_l, which links to the ground by way of a link between a^3 and a^1. Caesar's evidence causes Luath to create a new space, L_{lm}. L_{lm} reflects Caesar's information and is connected via links between a^4, a^3, and a^2. Like C_{ij}, L_{lm} reestablishes fidelity to reality. But unlike Caesar earlier on, Luath continues to equivocate and thus also creates another, counterintuitive, space. L_n is a space Luath constructs to perpetuate his idealization of not only the nobility but also of the cottars. He imagines that if the upper classes would only take part in more folk activities, then they would be honorable once again (lines 175-88). He connects this space via linking a^5 and a^4, as well as b^7 to b^6. These

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connections mean that space $\mathbf{L_n}$ still includes Caesar's information but in a repressed form, hence the broken lines in Figure 4.8.
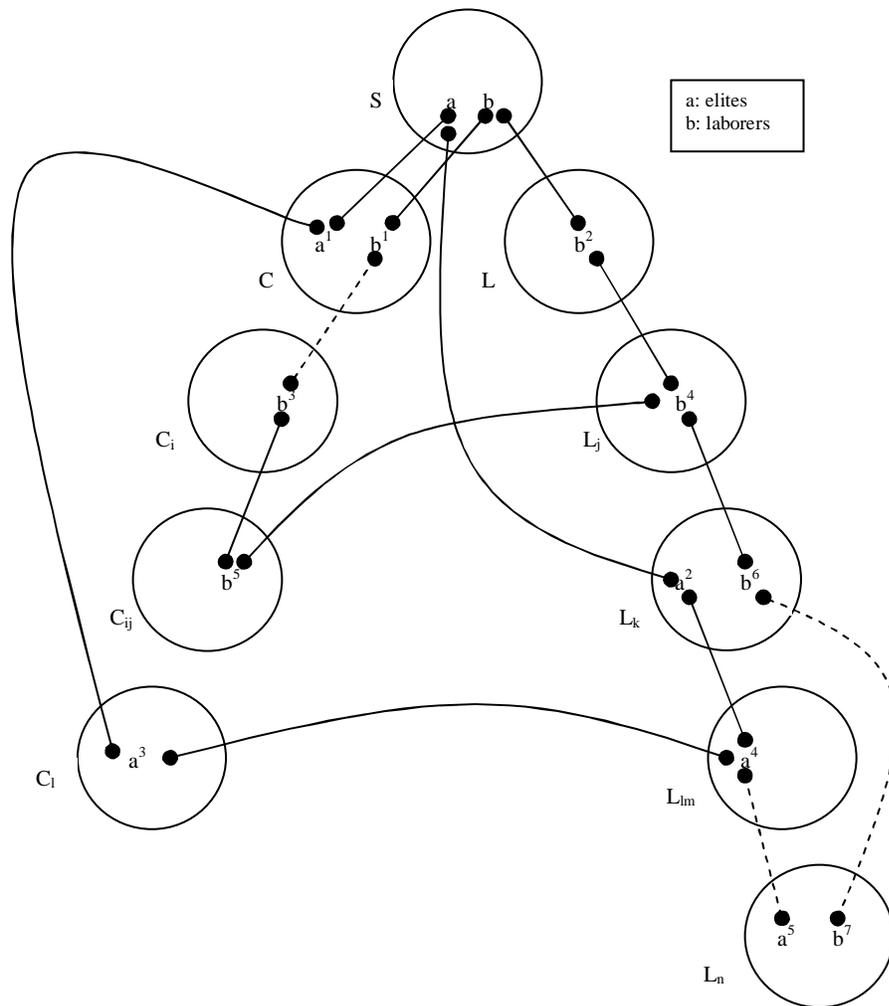
Figure 4.8

If Luath had been shocked into denial by having his romantic view of the nobility shattered, Caesar is apoplectic by Luath's insistence on rehabilitating the laird's set. He exclaims, "L—d man, were ye but whyles where I am, / The gentles ye wad ne'er envy them!" (lines 289-90). As Luath does in stanzas fifteen through twenty, Caesar provides a litany of facts about the higher estate. Unlike Luath's litany, though, Caesar's does not provide a flattering picture of his estate. He also uses the actual, not idealized, facts of laborers' existence to contrast

the two estates. Caesar, therefore, constructs space C_o, connecting to the ground by way of a link between a^6 and a^3, and by linking b^8 to his last reference to b, b^5. As a consequence of the information Caesar has shared, Luath would have to create another space, L_{op}, in order to retain fidelity to reality. As with a similar situation mentioned above, this does not actually occur in the poem, but we will go ahead and assume that such a projection would occur. Despite instances of Luath's folkloric conservatism, he is generally affable and open-minded. L_{op} would, therefore, be connected to b in the ground by linking b^9 to b^7 *and* cross-spatially to b^8. It would be connected to a by linking a^7 to a^5 *and* cross-spatially to a^6 (Figure 4.9).

In their dialogue, which is effectively an exercise in Humean empiricism, the two dogs have in fact refined, reintegrated, and consequently enlarged the ground they both come from. When we refer to fidelity in mental mapping, we are actually delineating between possibility and probability. The two instances in which Caesar and Luath lack fidelity to actual reality, they are certainly still dealing with possibilities, but these possibilities do not reach the level of probability. Particularly in Luath's case, we are confronted with one of those *oughts* that so perplex Hume, not to mention Caesar. Another consequence of the dogs' exchanges is that they have helped Burns reach his satirical objective: readers, presumably his contemporary Scots, are encouraged to analyze themselves, to reconnect with the actual reality of Scotland, and to engage in a little cognitive construction of their own. Now that we have the cognitive process and terminology of mental mapping in hand, we can now explore what Welsh is up to in "The Two Philosophers."

Ornstein is the first to be introduced. Because of his Jewish-American and educational background, Ornstein indicates that Scotland is an international place and is, at least
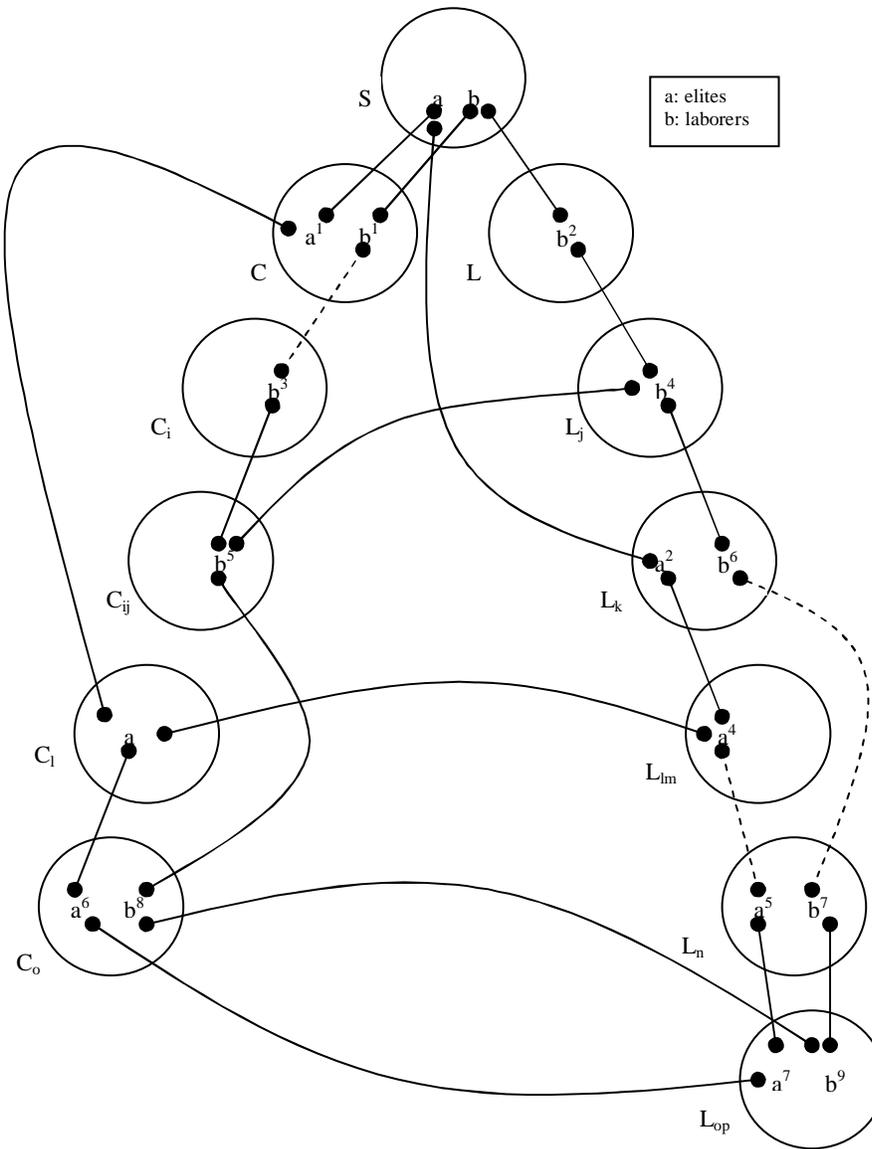
Figure 4.9

superficially, a more tolerant society than it had sometimes been in the past. Moreover, by his

very affiliations in the US and in Edinburgh, along with his Marxist leanings, Ornstein expands

the ground of Scotland to effectively include all of Western academic and political thought.

Ornstein is also greatly aware of his physical and social surroundings. Consequently, the story is

filled with references that help connect not only the reader to the narrative but also to its ground.

McGlone, on the other hand, demonstrates cosmopolitan insularity: he is a snob. As a member

of the recently ascended Scottish bourgeoisie, he has very little interest in associating with fellow

Glaswegians; nevertheless, he is a philosophical universalist, believing that all humanity is

connected through idealized reason. His perspective, though, broadens the ground by connecting

it both to a specific class phenomenon that has occurred in variations throughout modern Scottish

history and also to a general philosophical phenomenon of modern Western history. So, we have

from our initial contacts with Ornstein and McGlone two parallel spaces produced out of the

ground of Scotland, much as we did with Caesar and Luath.

Beyond the two spaces created by the introduction of the two characters, Welsh's story

does not begin mapping in earnest until halfway through, when Ornstein and McGlone leave the

bar at the university hostelry. So that we do not wander too far abroad, it is helpful to point out

focal points, which for us are also referents, and their frame of reference. The philosophers'

respective positions on epistemology supply us our focal points, and our frame is knowledge in

postmodern Scotland: McGlone is the defender of one focus, bourgeois rationalism; and

Ornstein is the advocate for what he calls unknown knowledge, the other focus. When Ornstein

and McGlone disembark from the subway, they enter Govan, a working-class section of

Glasgow.

Immediately, another space opens up, and it is related to McGlone. Among his

colleagues and students, he poses as a man who pulled himself out of the mean streets of

Glasgow, but the truth is something different. In fact, he did not grow up in a Govan but in

middle-class Newton Mearns, where he "had led quite a closeted life" ("The Two Philosophers"

113). Alternatively, from Ornstein's side, a space opens up that connects the Chicagoan's

Jewish-Irish neighborhood to this place that is a "mixture of the traditional and new" peppered

with vacant lots ("The Two Philosophers" 113). On the surface, these two instances of cognitive construction might seem unrelated to the frame we are using. They are autobiographical details about class, place, and personal identity. Nevertheless, as the story proceeds, the frame and spaces are integral to expanding the ground for the next instances of construction. Govan is unknown knowledge, but by comparing it to known knowledge, South Chicago, Ornstein is able to proceed. Unknown knowledge becomes known knowledge, which opens access to more unknown knowledge. Particular situations, such as one's place of origin, are not ends in themselves but are access points to more spaces.

No sooner has Welsh disclosed these personal references to the two philosophers than Ornstein has to ask for directions to the nearest pub. An elderly woman points them to the spot, Brechin's Bar. Ornstein, who is not up on his Scots pronunciations even if he represents Hume-the-Scot, mispronounces the name: "Bretchin's." McGlone corrects him: "It's Breekin's Bar, not Bretchin's" ("The Two Philosophers" 113). Then, Ornstein associates the correctly-pronounced name with a town in Scotland by the same name. He assumes, therefore, that the clientele's football loyalties will be with the town indicated by the name, but he is wrong, as McGlone points out. The color blue on the game strips worn by the people going into the pub signifies the Rangers Football Club.

Such seemingly mundane details are significant to the mental mapping and, therefore, to mapping this tale. Each instance, however mundane, supplies the materials for building spaces. In Welsh's tale, Ornstein consistently demonstrates his epistemological stance by not wasting any moment and the materials each moment contains. Ornstein quickly opens up a new space, and its viability is established by the link he makes with the previously unknown, despite some of the invalid conclusions he draws. What he does not know does not keep him from

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constructing knowledge. McGlone, as the voice of reason, intercedes. This will force Ornstein, if his cognitive construction is to be valid, to modify his knowledge by constructing new spaces. Ornstein, like Caesar and Luath before him, does not seem to be someone who would be too resistant to modifying previous spaces by building new ones that include new data. Because of the sensitivity to signs Ornstein demonstrates throughout the tale, he will have little difficulty creating spaces to accommodate proper pronunciations, differences in places despite nominal similarities, and so forth.

Even though McGlone seems to have the upper hand on knowledge at this point, a look at his own new spaces will demonstrate that he does not. As the narrator tells us, McGlone has led a relatively closeted life, and he is consistently not willing to expand the walls of his knowledge. In the moments after leaving the Underground, McGlone only opens new spaces in reaction to Ornstein's cognitive constructions. McGlone might possess data that Ornstein does not, but it is Ornstein who opens up spaces in the face of new or "unknown" data, such as the location of a pub or the team preferences of the local soccer enthusiasts. Regardless of how McGlone's cognitive processes function, he does nevertheless map out new spaces because he, too, is not previously familiar with the situation into which Ornstein has led him. In effect, if he is to continue on their little pilgrimage together, he has little choice but to open and enter new spaces.

The two philosophers enter the pub, Brechin's Bar, and cognitive construction takes an interesting, physical turn. To start with, both philosophers respectively build new spaces that practically renovate preexisting academic structures. Where the official academy has failed in growing knowledge, the pub reinvigorates it. In fact, the pub has more in common with the academy envisioned by Scots during the Enlightenment than do the corporate institutions of

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higher learning that dominate today's academy.[219] The pub, as in the public's place kept by a

publican, is an institution long tied to the sociocultural life of the common constituency, and in

Britain and Ireland, the pub is a particularly important institution for the working and lower

classes. Certainly, imbibing alcohol is part of the institution, but it is secondary or

complementary to its sociocultural functions, a fact that might escape some Americans. Ornstein

and McGlone also each create new spaces to accommodate their new peers, the two domino

players who not only serve as referees but also as philosophers. Of course, Ornstein has no

problem with constructing these spaces, while McGlone is resistant the whole time. As noted

above, though, when the discussion becomes more heated, it invites the younger pub goers to

intercede. Even with auld Tommy and his mate weighing in, Ornstein and McGlone cannot

seem to adequately deal with their age-old impasse. The drunken, bloated-faced Rangers fan and

his mates pick up on the friction, and they suspect that the two academics are doing the usual:

patronizing the lower estates in order to carry on their petty, self-serving activities, much like the

gentry Caesar describes to Luath a couple of centuries before.

It is important at this point to remember that McGlone and Ornstein have let the cat out

of the bag, as it were, because they have constructed and entered spaces that have not only

altered their discursive context. They have, through cognitive construction, entered into spaces

that include the working-class Glaswegian pub goers and their entailed experiences and thus

knowledge. The previously unknown to McGlone and Ornstein is seeping into the known, and it

quickly begins to flood in. Before they know it, the two philosophers have moved into positions

that overwhelm their biases and assumptions. Along their journey, they have been building up to

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[219] Herman 25, 26, 190-91.

this point where cognition becomes *real*.[220] Knowing is when nerves, blood, muscle, fat, and

fluid work in concert to engage the world and produce something out of that engagement.

McGlone is not prepared for that engagement, which is why he cannot adequately counter

Ornstein's punches when they have their fight on the street outside of the pub. All he can do is

express surprise. McGlone is incapable of employing the data (materials and energies) that he

has before him, and this inability consequently keeps him from building new spaces. He is

literally hard-headed. There is no remarkable change in his attitude even after his skull hits the

curb. His inability to adequately fight his way out of this situation indicates that he has again

entered another epistemological cul-de-sac, but this time the cul-de-sac is not one that protects

his elite status. He tries to disconnect once more from the world and the actual knowledge that is

produced in it—the *is*. However, each blow by Ornstein and then by the police will not permit

him to return to the realm of *ought*, where he would continue to alienate the power of knowledge

from the ground. On the other hand, Ornstein has, through open reception of materials and

through cognitive construction, approached and then built strong connections to what had

previously been unknown. Possibility becomes probability. As a consequence, each punch or

kick Ornstein gives to McGlone is a resistance against the violence of epistemology founded on

fantasy and prejudice—the antihuman core of preclusive reason.

It would be understandable if one assumed that McGlone is basically a tweed-wearing

bearer of wisdom, not much of a threat to anyone except maybe his students at grading time.

One would hardly suspect him of being a cold-blooded authoritarian, perhaps the academic

version of the trainspotting books' Begbie or *Filth*'s D. S. Robertson. When, however, we look

at what he represents in relation to knowledge and thus to human life, he is a very real threat.

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[220] I use this term "real" in its common sense manner, in the experiential sense given to it by cognitive science, and in the Lacanian sense.

Above, I noted that actual cognitive construction does not begin in earnest until midway through Welsh's tale. We find out near the beginning of "The Two Philosophers" that cognitive construction has been in a "cul-de-sac" for most of these two academicians' "parallel careers" (112, 111). The first half of the story does nothing more than document the virtually paralyzed status of knowledge. This is important documentation because it indicates the fact that human cognitive construction is not automatic and can be thwarted by the protectors of official knowledge. Knowledge runs into dead ends because individuals can short-circuit knowing by abstracting it, restricting it, or as Jean-François Lyotard warned, cashing it in for vulgar performativity.[221]

McGlone, of course, does not really mind this dead-ended situation. He is a respected intellectual with a secure position at a respectable Scottish university, and this is not to mention he has students flattering him and making sexual overtures toward him. In other words, he has accumulated a lot of cultural capital, and risking the loss of it is not a likely option. Therefore, he is one of the bastions of the ruling orders, policing the very aspect of human life that makes humans human—the ability to transform materials into thought and thought into materials. McGlone perpetuates the disintegration of labor power, separating the human work of knowing from the work of being and becoming.

To say the least, Ornstein is the veritable voice in the wilderness professing knowledge that is not sanctioned by the McGlones of the world. He is deeply troubled by the status quo, a status quo that alienates and hoards knowledge. He is not only conscious of the intellectual surrender his and McGlone's academic deadlock represents; he is also aware of the dire sociopolitical implications that will arise if production of "legitimate" knowledge continues to be

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[221] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1984) p. 46.

divorced from general human life. He knows that another conference presentation, article in a refereed journal, or class lecture is not going to help the situation either. So he turns to what has never let him down before: "unknown science," the kind of science that Hume proposed two centuries before and that ultimately prohibited Hume from university posts. The primary Humean element of knowledge, an impression sparked by passion, comes most explicitly in Ornstein's first punch. Before the University of Edinburgh professor knows it, the citadel of knowledge, as personified by McGlone, crumbles to the ground. New knowledge floods in. After the fight and after the police station, Ornstein returns to the streets, and like his literary predecessors Caesar and Luath, he descends into the very ground from which he emerged. He reenters the Underground, where the public transport system will presumably carry him and his significantly expanded knowledge into Scotland, where he will connect and construct knowledge. Ornstein, along with other Welsh characters, expresses a basic human need to imagine and realize other probabilities. Nevertheless, as cognitive construction implies and as "The Twa Dogs" and "The Two Philosophers" demonstrate, there are multiple probabilities.

4.4 Enlightenment Virtue: Emergence

We have covered here two aspects of the question, "Whither Scotland." Is Scotland possible? And if so, how so? We have answered by way of looking at the interrelation of cognitive construction grounded in Scottish historical-material experience. But we have actually done more than that. We have encountered a productive process that is not just a matter of abstract signification. Philosophers—from Socrates to the Stoics, from Hume to Marx, and from Adorno to Derrida—have all pointed to the palpability of theory, to the worldly labor of thought. There is no reason, therefore, to assume that particular situations, such as a nation, are split between a material reality and a theoretical one—that the life of Scot who goes to the pub after a

grueling day at the shipyard or unemployment line is divorced from what goes on in the philosophy department at the University of Glasgow. Scotland is not the culmination of some essence buried in the sinews and genes of the *Volk*; nor is it merely some imagined community.[222] To be viable, it is an ongoing dialectic human process that employs material and immaterial labor.

Above, I claimed that Welsh's story had everything to do with Scotland. Scotland is praxis, and mental mapping theory gives us a method to locate and analyze how that practice works.[223] One begins with particularity, but we quickly find that particularity is itself rich with consequences. A single spatiotemporal site is an intersection where many materials flow, and that the individual human is both a product and producer within such intersections. Moreover, and just as important, the cognitive construction is not a monastic individualistic exercise. For it to be valid *and* viable, it must be a radically cooperative venture. It is an open-ended pilgrimage in which the pilgrims dialectically map out and build knowledge together. Burns and Welsh illustrate this insight, and more significantly, they attempt to direct Scots to a praxis enabled by the virtues of congregation and integration but motivated by a virtue of emergence. Poetry and fiction, therefore, are not academic to these writers. Writing is material. Writing is politics. Writing is ethics.

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[222] Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" runs aground when dealing with a situation like Scotland's (*Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* [London: Verso, 1991]). Even though he points to Scotland's longstanding ethnic hybridity, linguistic diversity, and mixed sociocultural systems, his argument about a nation being always conceived as "a deep, horizontal comradeship" is instantly hollow (7). And whatever kind of nationalism is in Scotland is not the kind that has led to the bloody Manichean confrontations he lays at the feet of nationalism. Anderson asserts that nationalism is the equivalent of "limited imaginings" (7). It is hard to disagree that nationalism built out of bad, folkloric sense can contribute, has contributed, and does contribute to some of humans' worst behavior; however, so can, has, and does internationalism or, today, globalism. "National" materials could also be connected in forms that give way to other, more humane possibilities, if not probabilities. As we have implied throughout this study, the deciding factor is how humans individually and socially produce themselves—whether at the level of particularity or of universality. It is a matter of how they use their materials.

[223] For a similar perspective, see Tim Edensor *National Identity, Popular Culture and Everyday Life* (Oxford, UK: Berg, 2002) p. 37.

How Scotland is probable brings us closer to *what* kind of Scotland is probable in the postmodern phase. For a nation that is also not one, what is Scotland to be? Being a nation or a nationalist does not by itself guarantee good sense. Nations, national identities, and nationalisms come in all sorts of forms, and they do not necessarily demonstrate fidelity to truths, to experiential grounds, or to human life in general. We are constantly—and rightly—reminded that the modern period was rife with instances of nations and nationalisms that base themselves on exclusion and even extermination. The glaring examples, of course, are Germany in the 1930s and Rwanda in the 1990s. In both of these cases, racial essentialism was used as a brutal means to national ends. Others, such as the former Soviet Union and today's imperial United States, formulate themselves according to abstract ideals executed through mechanical systems, whether they are called bureaucracies, social services, or something other. The USSR employed an extremely rational antihuman framework in the name of equality. The US employs a highly mobile, protean, and hydra-like collection of systems that defuse resistance in the name of freedom. Brutality is not far removed from either of these systems either, just obscured a bit by the respective ideal adopted by each. There are also nations and nationalisms founded on resistance against or emancipation from an oppressor. South Africa and the Republic of Ireland are examples. These are nations founded on opposition. To generalize, they have a bifurcated nature. On the one hand, they define themselves as former or current victims. On the other, they define themselves according to a national character—ethnic, societal, or religious—that existed before a colonial or imperial situation or that existed on such a situation's margins. There are many other examples, many of which are variations of the ones above or are hybrids. Again, these are generalizations, but they reflect the dominant common sense about how and why nations, national identities, and nationalisms are formed.

Nevertheless, Scotland and most other "lesser" nations or societies do not fit neatly into the sort of grand national narratives glossed above. Presumably all instances of human socialization demonstrate one or more of the mentioned habits associated with building a nation or nationalism. It is not uncommon for differences between people to be distilled into essences. It is not uncommon for some shared aspiration or ideal to emerge in a human community. Most groups of people have had a history of victimization or superiority or both. So, really, the kind of nation or nationalism one has is really a matter of praxis. Thinking back to cognitive construction for a moment, a nation or nationalism is characterized by the way it is mapped out, the probabilities it opens up, the fidelity or lack of fidelity to its ground, the ability or choice to correct itself according to new data, and so forth. In other words, a nation or nationalism is a result of human production, which becomes a basis of further production.

Returning to the etymology of "ethics," the *ethos* of a nation or nationalism is its *use*—its *praxis*. But people's use of something does not necessarily equate to "good" use, as we have noted up to this point. And in this so-called postmodern and post-nationalist era, the uses of nationalism are worthy of scrutiny, to say the least. Nevertheless, re-conceptualizing what it means to be, say, a Vietnamese, Chilean, or Scottish nation today is perhaps a means—a praxis driven by a virtue of emergence—by which not only to glimpse national possibilities but also to produce the probability of a deeply connected, healthy global community.[224] Doing so will help us to explore in the next chapter a Scotland defined independently either of England or of a nationalist ideal while not neglecting its subordination to imperialism and its own folkloric residues. All of this will better enable us to conceive of a cooperatively constructed universal truth—a truth that will materialize in the counterimperial multitude and will make an alternative postmodern world a probability.

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[224] Edensor 33.

Nevertheless, to emerge from "the nastiness," as Spud calls it in *Porno* (284), without inadvertently creating more nastiness, we will need to incorporate one more virtue into the praxis that is the ethic of emergence: forgiveness.

Chapter 5

Postmodern Loom: Emergence through Forgiveness

But Och! I *backward* cast my e'e,
                  On prospects drear!
An' *forward*, tho' I canna see,
                  I *guess* an' *fear*!

—Robert Burns[225]

What awaits us is a history of liberation . . . relentless and as painful as it is
constructive. The constitution of strength is the experience itself of the
liberation of the *multitudo*. The fact that in this form and with this force
constituent power cannot but appear is irrefutable and that it cannot but impose
itself as hegemonic in the always renewed world of life is necessary. It is our
task to accelerate this strength and recognize its necessity in the love of time.

—Antonio Negri[226]

A sacred, magical brown bull, Donn Cuailnge, from ancient Cooley, Ireland, has escaped

and is charging through the Isle of Erin with an entourage of hundreds of cattle. All of the

ancient *Scoti*—the Irish—are after him because the rules of sovereignty depend on it. Medb, a

goddess who has been degraded to the level of a mortal queen by the time of the ancient Gaelic

epic *Táin Bó Cuailnge*, and her husband Ailill have had a domestic dispute over who has the

most power, using their individual material possessions as evidence.[227] They are equal in

everything except a bull that belongs to Ailill. Medb conspires to steal from Ulster Donn

Cuailnge, the most physically and magically powerful bull in Ireland. Her plan is perfect,

considering that the cattle raid (*táin*) will take place while the warriors of Ulster are paralyzed.

During holy periods, particularly during the Celtic new year of Samhain, the men of Ulster are

immobilized by birth pangs, as a result of a curse. But there is one warrior, Cúchulainn, who is

not affected by the curse, a fact Medb and the rest of Ireland comes to regret overlooking.

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[225] Burns, "To a Mouse, On turning her up in her Nest, with the Plough, November, 1785" 101-102.
[226] Negri, *Insurgencies* 336.
[227] Thomas Kinsella's translation of *Táin Bó Cuailnge* is still considered the most authoritative,
approachable one: *The Táin* (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1969). Unless otherwise stated, this is the translation we
will be using.

Accompanied by his charioteer Laeg, the "Hound of Culann," which is the meaning of Cúchulainn's name in Gaelic, becomes the sole protector of Ulster. Cúchulainn is Ulster's King Conchobor's favorite hired sword, even though Cúchulainn comes from questionable parentage and low estate. His special abilities in martial arts and his manic emotional condition prove useful to the kingdom's needs, even though Cúchulainn's volatility is the cause of recurrent comment and accommodation. When word gets to Cúchulainn about Medb's plot and the fugitive bull, he immediately takes on the bandits, which begins a full-fledged internecine war. Among the fords and standing stones on the Murtheimne Plain, he single-handedly engages and kills the majority of Ireland's armies, including former friends and even a foster-brother. Only after he has fended off four kingdoms' warriors for over six months, and after he is near dead himself, the Ulstermen recuperate from their pangs and come to assist Cúchulainn in the final battle. But it is uncertain whether Conchobor and the Ulstermen are truly committed to the cause. After a lengthy battle, Ireland, including Ulster, is exhausted by war, so it is decided that Donn Cuailnge and Ailill's bull will settle the dispute. The bull of Ulster wins against the bull of Ireland and spreads his remains throughout the whole island. Nevertheless, Ireland remains at war over the coming years, and Cúchulainn ultimately comes face to face with his deliverer, a raven.

In the veldt of 1980s apartheid South Africa, a giant Marabou Stork and its entourage of other Marabou Storks threaten to destroy all of the wildlife in a tropical paradise that Scottish émigré and businessman Lochart Dawson plans to develop into elite housing and an upscale nature preserve.[228] None of the black Africans are, according to Dawson, up to the task of protecting the property. So he hires Scots Roy Strang and Sandy Jamieson to take on the job of finding and killing the marauding band of enormous, nightmarish birds. Roy is an unlikely

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[228] Welsh, *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (New York: Norton, 1996).

mercenary because of his extreme lack of self-confidence. He is preoccupied about his and his siblings' parentage, his appearance, and his sexuality. He is also self-conscious about his socioeconomic background, which is the root of most conflict between him and his employer. Even so, he is even more committed than Dawson or Sandy when it comes to the task at hand. The storks prove elusive but belligerent, so the closer Roy and his driver Sandy get to finding them, the more carnage the birds create. The storks kill whole colonies of flamingos—thousands of the birds—as well as anything else that gets in their way. Finally, though, in the last few pages of *Nightmares*, Roy comes face to face with the leader of the Marabou Storks, the monster and perhaps savior that he has been chasing throughout the book.

Both Cúchulainn and Roy might come across as variations of the sort of heroes so popular in Hollywood movies. One can almost hear the screenwriter's pitch: "Despite all reasonable odds, a Celtic warrior faces duplicitous and horrifying foes to come out on top and rid the world of evil." To see our hypothetical pitch coming to fruition, one need only look to two popular "Scottish" movies and an "Irish" memoir-turned-film-sensation that came out in the 1990s: *Rob Roy* (1995), *Braveheart* (1995), and *Angela's Ashes* (1999, 2000). Celtic myth and legend—whether Gaelic, Arthurian, Welsh, or Scottish—are rarely, if ever, unambiguous. Indeed, it is uncertain how heroic Cúchulainn and Roy actually are. It is also unclear whether the two are fighting against evil or fighting for it: both serve as mercenaries to less than credible lords, an arrogant king and a sadistic capitalist, respectively. Indeed, one would be hard-pressed to find in Gaelic mythology or Welsh's body of work an unproblematic protagonist. Cúchulainn's and Roy's death tales further articulate this ambiguity.

Years after *The Táin*, Cúchulainn has done his usual day's work in a battle, single-handedly cutting down hundreds of men and evading magic. Then, unexpectedly, he is mortally

wounded by a cursed spear thrown by Lugaid, the son of a man who Cúchulainn betrayed and

had murdered. Cúchulainn's life's work of killing comes back to haunt him. Cúchulainn drags

himself to a standing stone, and with a belt, he defiantly straps himself upright to the stone so

that he does not sit or fall prone to the ground. This is when Morrígan, an enigmatic goddess

who commonly takes the form of a raven, lands on his shoulder. Her gesture is apparently what

signals Lugaid to come and finish his revenge by decapitating the Hound of Ulster.[229] However,

it is unclear if Lugaid kills Cúchulainn. Perhaps the raven has delivered the hero from death

before Lugaid's blade touches the Hound's throat.

   After Roy has chased the leader of the Marabou Storks for an indeterminate period of

time, a final confrontation occurs. "The large Stork was right there," observes Roy, "But

something was far from right" (*Nightmares* 258). The scene and the personae in it keep

transforming into other places and other people. Roy has difficulty figuring out who is his

enemy: "I hear other voices shouting. Their faces are just at the periphery of my vision"

(*Nightmares* 261). Apparently, he, too, is affected by whatever strange force has descended on

the scene of the final battle, for his trusted companion Sandy has a gun pointed at him. In his

final moments, before Sandy pulls the trigger, Roy looks into a mirror and "sees the image of the

Marabou Stork. It's on the flamingo . . . tearing into it, ripping it to shreds, but the flamingo's

still alive, I see its dulled eyes" (*Nightmares* 262). Is this a reflection of something occurring in

the background? Is it an allegorical or clairvoyant image presented by an oracle-like mirror? Or

is Roy seeing himself, literally and figuratively? If so, is he the stork or the flamingo? We soon

get an idea in Roy's final monologue:

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[229] Maria Tymoczo trans., *The Death Tale of CuChulainn*, *Two Death Tales from the Ulster Cycle* (Dublin: Dolmen, 1981) p. 61.

The sun is rising behind me and my shadow spills out away from it, out in front of me. My spindly legs, my large overcoat, my massive beak . . . I have no visible ears. . . . I have the gait of a comical scarecrow, I shuffle like an old man who has shat his pants. . . . I spread my large, black wings. . . . (*Nightmares* 264)

Nevertheless, Sandy has turned his shotgun on Roy-the-Stork, and it goes off. As in Cúchulainn's case, it is unclear whether Roy-the-Stork flies away before or after the blast. Has the bird delivered Roy to death, or from death?

We will soon return to that question.

It might seem odd that I would introduce such a markedly postmodern ethical system and a markedly postmodern novel with a Gaelic epic that predates even the Fenian literature we discussed in chapter 2. But juxtaposing them as ethical and literary documents of historically distinct sociocultural situations that share common materials and energies helps to set the stage for the following analysis.

Addressing their literary juxtaposition first, the similarities between Welsh's *Nightmares* and the ancient Gaelic Cúchulainn stories from the Ulster Cycle are, to say the least, remarkable. They are both epics in form and scope. They are focused on extremely ambiguous characters. They are written during historical periods of monumental conflict and change. They are both "Scottish" in the sense that they respectively document 1) the situation of the people (the *Scoti*) who would become the primary shapers of Scottish history during the first millennium AD, and 2) the situation of the people who will decide Scotland's future as it enters the third millennium.

Even though these epics are from distinct time periods and are written in different styles (one in Gaelic poetry, the other in modern prose), they share the same basic elements of their shared genre. To achieve the objective of a quest that actually moves on many levels, the

protagonists must go on a journey that is mythological, emotional, and empirical. As epic protagonists, Cúchulainn and Roy are allegorical figures. They are intended to represent everyone. Nevertheless, because epics are typically tied to a particular sociocultural situation (e.g. *The Odyssey* to ancient Greece or *The Bluest Eye* to black America), an epic's protagonist bears the unique problems and hopes of his or her particular situation. Therefore, Cúchulainn is a representative of prehistorical Gaeldom, and Roy is a representation of postmodern Scotland. The former situation is marked by severe unrest and transformation at the dawn of the Roman-dominated medieval period, and the latter marks a situation of subordination on the inner periphery of the empire of late capital. Moreover, what is treated as "historical" in epics is actually a blending of the mythological and the historical. Those events which seem fantastic have substantial impact on those which seem mundane, and vice versa. Also a hallmark of the epic tradition, one narrative strand intersects with, digresses from, or interrupts others, thereby justifying, contextualizing, correcting, or enriching another narrative strand or the whole story. It is a complex process of mental mapping.[230] As students of epics or sagas might also know, the genre is rarely written (or sung) just to entertain, and they are not just told to transmit myths, inspiration, or historical facts. As entertaining and instructive as epics may be, they are significant because they are deliberative and prophetic—they try to solve a problem and project a solution. In effect, they try to make history. They do not, therefore, separate the past, present, and future, but bring them into vibrant though sometimes conflicted interaction.

Thus, Welsh's working in the epic tradition and our touching on it here are not pre-modern regressions. The epic is a dialectical literary process that can perpetually uncover emergent materials and energies, and Welsh's second novel arguably fills the bill on all counts.

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[230] See chapter 4 concerning mental mapping.

Now addressing the ethical juxtaposition of the Ulster Cycle and *Nightmares*, the two

worlds that Cúchulainn and Roy inhabit are ones where forgiveness is all but destroyed. In

Cúchulainn's situation, a world based on regeneration beliefs and a proto-democratic society of

tightly-knit agrarian communities is dissolving under a culture of war and power-consolidation

that is burgeoning throughout Europe.[231] In Roy's situation, the culture of war and accumulation

has become hegemonic and has become an *empire of death*.[232] The plight of the multitude,

which Roy represents in *Nightmares*, is bleak. Nevertheless, an alternative probability is

negatively implied—a generative, cooperative world. What is lacking in both worlds, though, is

the virtue of forgiveness. In the case of Cúchulainn's situation, the consequence is the adoption

of a death-ethic over the life-ethic entailed in much of Celtic sociocultural fabric. In case of

Roy's situation, the potential consequence is the total liquidation of life—human and

otherwise—and thus a tragic end of history.[233]

In both stories, the virtual outcasts of their respective societies—Cúchulainn and Roy—

perpetuate systems that are determined to consume them, not forgive them. These are systems

without room for forgiveness because, as we have charted in the preceding chapters, they depend

on giving up, not giving to, others. Systems of war and death depend on giving up, not giving to,

oneself or others. Therefore, such systems create a situation in which humans do not give to

themselves and to each other the very possibility—no, *probability*—of accessing and producing

what makes them human, life. Consequently, humans become like "some animal being eaten

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[231] Mary Condren, *The Serpent and the Goddess: Women, Religion and Power in Celtic Ireland* (Dublin: New Island, 2002) pp. 23-43, 113-127.

[232] As a term, "empire of death" will at first seem hyperbolic. Nevertheless, if one takes seriously, for instance, Hardt and Negri's arguments concerning corruption and perpetual war, as well as the ecological disasters that are currently underway, then this is not hyperbolic at all (*Multitude* 3-95). Nevertheless, if invoking the terminology still seems like hyperbole, then perhaps it will at least spur further argument and study.

[233] I am purposely alluding to and countering Francis Fukuyama's thesis that neo-liberalism and late capitalism have emancipated humanity from the determinations of historical-material reality. See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992).

from behind while its face seem[s] to register disbelief, fear, and self-hate at its own impotence," as Roy notes about the look on Kirsty's face as he rapes her from behind while holding a mirror to her face (*Nightmares* 183). Estranging life, which is giving up on the vital present that is made probable by past presents and that makes probable future presents, is a catastrophic historical-material phenomenon.

So, returning to our earlier questions about the raven and the stork, do the ambiguous birds that visit Cúchulainn and Roy at the end of their respective tales deliver them to death, or from it? As one might guess by now, the answer is not explicitly stated in Welsh's novel; nor is it clear in its Gaelic predecessor. From here on out, we will focus our attention on *Nightmares*; nevertheless, materials and energies from the prehistory of Scotland's Irish predecessors will periodically emerge. On the one hand, their emergence will illustrate the insights of the historical-material historiography theorized and practiced by such Marxist thinkers as Antonio Gramsci, Walter Benjamin, and Raymond Williams (the historiography and thinkers which have influenced much of this study). On the other hand, the prehistorical Gaelic materials and energies will give us a "language" to use as we analyze *Nightmares*. For example, the figural importance of the Marabou Stork becomes clearer when the Stork is understood as a postmodern emergence of Morrígan, the raven who visits Cúchulainn as he is about to die. As we have discovered in the preceding chapters, Welsh's work invites such connections—congregations and integrations. For Welsh, like James Joyce, everything is in play.

In *Nightmares*, Welsh once again gives us a rich ground of materials and energies from which to construct probabilities; therefore, this last chapter will weave a map that will lead us to our answer about the bird figure. To help us navigate this rich ground and the multiple probabilities it might enable, Welsh effectively gives us a compass. Welsh drops hints

throughout his whole body of work, including in *Nightmares*, that something hangs in the air between us, "just *something*, some kind of second chance" (*Glue* 455). This is admittedly not the most deterministic compass, but it will still help us to not wander aimlessly as we proceed.

To begin addressing the complicated situation presented by *Nightmares*, we probably need to take a somewhat Calvinistic approach to the text: nail down the book, discover its ultimate concern, and do not get lost in the magic that emanates from it.[234] The basic background and plot of *Nightmares* runs like this: Roy Strang, the son of John and Verity Strang, is from Edinburgh's schemes, like the characters in *Trainspotting*, *Glue*, and *Porno*. Unlike the trainspotters and hooligans, Roy is a loner, reminiscent of Bruce Robertson in *Filth* and Boab Coyle in "The Granton Star Cause." Partly because of his socioeconomic status, partly because of being a victim of childhood rape, and partly because he has never had the opportunity to root himself in any ground, Roy is "a dangerous floater" (*Nightmares* 107). When we meet him, he is comatose in the hospital. His coma is the result of a failed suicide attempt. He narrates his story to us while in a semi-vegetative state. From what he tells us, we may piece together what brought him to this point. Despite being acquitted of brutally raping Kirsty Chalmers, or perhaps because of his acquittal, Roy came to realize that he had benefited from the unjust society that had tormented him throughout his whole life. His inability to cope with his life of brutality against others, most notably the brutal rape of Kirsty, compelled him to take his own life. To settle the score, per se, he taped a plastic bag over his head and passed out while watching a soccer match on television. Before he could die, though, he was found and sent to the hospital, the location from which Roy narrates his life to us. During the time Roy is in the hospital, he is tended to by nurses and doctors; he is visited by his mother and father, his two

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[234] To borrow Calvin's words, a reader "stands in need of some guidance and direction, as to what he [or she] ought to look for . . . he [or she] may not wander up and down, but pursue a certain path, and so attain the end to which" the text invites the reader (22).

brothers and sister. He is also visited by a woman who does not disclose herself until the last quarter of the novel. Roy discovers, and thus we discover, that she is Kirsty. As the novel nears conclusion, Roy begins to return to consciousness, and Kirsty realizes this. This is the moment she has been waiting for. She cuts off his eyelids, removes his feeding tube, cuts off his penis, stuffs it into his mouth, and stabs him in the neck with surgical scissors. She leaves him to die, hemorrhaging and suffocating.

The narrative is divided among three levels of consciousness: deep subconscious, subconscious, and semiconscious. Roy moves between a dream world, which is at the deep subconscious level, and a memory world, which is at the subconscious level. Periodically, the external world intercedes when he comes close to consciousness. Therefore, he moves back and forth between two strands of knowledge that we have previously discussed: mythos and pathos. In this novel, mythos is split between a terrain of mythology and a terrain of memory—between the heroic mercenary who hunts the Marabou Stork in beautiful South Africa and the dangerous floater who terrorizes one of Edinburgh's roughest housing scheme communities, Muirhouse. In effect, these are two interconnected mythos-scapes, operating like Peter Pan and his shadow. Alternatively, Roy's pathos-scape consists of basic sensorial stimuli and raw emotions until near the conclusion of the novel.

And logos? The part that logos plays in *Nightmares* is consistent with speculative reason, as explored in chapter 4. The narrator who moves back and forth across the terrains of Roy's consciousness is inextricably linked to each dimension but cannot restrict itself to any particular terrain. All levels of Roy's consciousness present Roy-the-narrator with materials and energies; thus, the narrator is a conduit. As discussed in the Introduction and systematized in the previous chapter, a conduit does not master the various materials and energies that flow to it; instead, a

conduit congregates and integrates those materials and energies to bring about the emergence of an alternative probability. Logos is this compositional mechanism; thus, Roy-the-narrator is a weaver and mapper that mirrors Welsh's writing technique. He is the logos-conduit working with the materials coming to him from the mythos- and pathos-scapes.

At this point, it might prove helpful to restate that these aspects of knowledge have been instrumental in discovering the three virtues that we have located in Scotland's historical-material fabric. Moreover, let us review how those virtues interact. Congregation brings emergent materials and energies together. This convergence is impossible without the human individual who can integrate these materials and energies into his or her being. Therefore, integration connects emergent materials and energies to the individual so that he or she may enter into congregation. These two virtues are actually interrelated processes. By themselves, they are not substantially productive. Incorporating or sharing materials might not produce alternatives to the status quo, "the nastiness" (*Porno* 284). Enter emergence. It brings about a constructive dynamic when added to the other two virtues. When integration and congregation are connected to emergent force, a creative navigational process begins, in which alternative probabilities begin to materialize.

On the one hand, this tripartite praxis might appear too idealistic. Because it entails elements of creativity, sympathy, and purposefulness, it inadvertently gives the appearance that residual bad sense has disappeared—that the nastiness never existed. But as chapter 4 has demonstrated, all materials and energies—whether emergent or residual—continue to exist within emergent constructions. (Effectively, the materials and energies of the past are never lost.) What makes common sense or dominant society good, bad, emergent, or residual is a matter of ethos—*how existing materials and energies are used*. The ethos operating in a

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situation is the key to ascertaining what probabilities will materialize. On the other hand, because of the construction-like characteristics of this praxis, the whole ethic presented here might come across as too mechanical. In light of this, is there a virtue at work as the virtual spirit or soul of the systematic trio of virtues we have already uncovered? Indeed, there is: forgiveness. What is interesting about this virtue is that it does not exist independently of congregation, integration, and emergence. These apparently mechanical virtues and the productive mechanism to which they give rise produce something non-mechanical but nevertheless integral to them. Forgiveness is not a spirit that we can insert into the tripartite praxis that makes up the ethic of emergence; it is one that this praxis brings into being. Even so, forgiveness cannot be taken as a given.

As we have seen throughout this study, and as our discussion of *Nightmares* has already indicated, the three virtues that we have presented (not to mention the three ways of knowing) can be disconnected, perhaps still are disconnected, and can again be disconnected even after they have been connected. Moreover, their disconnection is something that the dominant system of our day—the empire of late capital—desires and facilitates. In order to continue as an emergent practice, the process that gives rise to forgiveness must continue to reincorporate forgiveness into every aspect and thus into the whole process.

Individually, each "mechanical" aspect of the ethic of emergence—congregation, integration, and emergence—implies some level of forgiveness. To bring about congregation, individuals must be willing to take the risk of giving themselves to each other, not despite their differences, but with their differences. In effect, a congregation of individuals must forgive each individual. To bring about integration, each individual must be open to all materials and energies from the multitude of human individuals; thus, he or she must be forgiving. To bring

about emergence in a particular situation, a congregated multitude of integrated individuals must not only forgive any nastiness in that situation; that multitude must also be able to give itself to a previously unknown alternative situation. In effect, such a multitude must "fore-give" itself to the probability that it has mapped out before itself from the materials and energies that it has congregated and integrated.

Nevertheless, as we have discovered, congregation, integration, and emergence cannot occur in isolation, at least not in any substantially ethical way. Congregation must give itself to integration, and vice versa. They must weave in and out of each other. Once the interaction between congregation and integration is established, the congregation-integration process must give itself to the emergent probability that it has enabled. If this process resists continuing toward a probability that it has opened, as McGlone does in Welsh's short story "The Two Philosophers," then it jeopardizes that alternate probability. Equally as important, such equivocation also permits the dominant situation from which the congregation-integration process is emerging to appropriate and neutralize its emergent materials and energies. All told, then, the virtue of forgiveness entails individuals giving themselves to each other, giving themselves to a cooperative praxis, forgiving the situation from which they emerge, and giving themselves to an alternative future to which they themselves have given birth.

In the final pages of this study, we are going to weave together the threads that we have untangled from the Scottish situation. More expressly, we are going to juxtapose the three virtues of the emergent praxis that we have uncovered in the medieval, Reformation, and Enlightenment situations by following the narrative structure of Welsh's *Nightmares*: mythos-scape, pathos-scape, and logos-conduit. On the one hand, this weaving will be an illustrative deployment of the practical ethical system we have been building towards: the ethic of

emergence. On the other hand, it will be an envisioning of a Scotland that is autonomous because of its ability to grow and to connect to other subordinate global entities under the reign of the empire of late capital.

How should we proceed? We should begin with death. If we take death to be not only the conclusion of an isolated individual's life but also the process of alienating individuals from each other, from themselves, and from what they produce or could produce, then we see what Welsh takes on in his whole body of work. He is taking on the empire of late capital, which is an empire of death.[235] He, of course, comes at his target from a particular situation, postmodern Scotland; nevertheless, his ultimate concern is not just Scotland, but what comes *after* Scotland: a Scotland *after* Scotland, a world *beyond* Scotland, and a system of life that *emerges from* the current system of death.

Each of the stories we have explored ends in some kind of death or near-death: In *Trainspotting*, Renton personally cheats death by betraying his friends in a high-stakes drug deal. More importantly, he kills the bond between his mates and himself. In *Glue*, Gally's and Duncan Ewart's deaths haunt the collective life of Carl, Billy, and Juice Terry. In *Porno*, Renton again abandons his mates, but the most dramatic instances of the novel are Begbie's psychotic obsession with killing Renton and Begbie's almost fatal meeting with an automobile. In *Filth*, death is virtually the ground, process, and end. Bruce Robertson's whole childhood is dominated by the death of others and his own alienation. His whole adulthood is about perpetuating a system of death. And his supposedly final end, brought about by hanging himself, is less a conclusion than it is a coda to his existence as one of the living dead. In "Granton Star," Boab dies twice. Like Robertson, he has been one of the living dead; after God effectively kills Boab

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[235] The approach I have adopted in this study reflects the dialectical-material approach that Marx formulates for himself in *Grundrisse* (100-108). Arguably, the method and aim that Welsh uses throughout his body of work share more than a passing affinity with Marx's ethical motivation and his dialectical-material methodology.

as a human—which is really God's attempt to give him a second chance at life—Boab is hell-bent on exacting revenge, which results in his own death and the suffering of others. In "The Two Philosophers," McGlone is like Boab. He is among the living dead until his friend and colleague Ornstein gives him the opportunity to gain a new lease on life. McGlone squanders this opportunity, which results in his being beaten on a curb and then incarcerated by the police. Finally, *Nightmares* is told by a person trapped in a literal and figurative purgatory, and Roy's semi-dead state is apparently ended by the woman whose life he destroyed. Even so, these deaths do not necessarily have to end in death. In each case, death negatively affirms an alternative. Thus focusing our attention on *Nightmares*, we will begin with death on each level of Roy's consciousness in order to locate the submerged alternative life.

5.1 Congregation Spool: Fowl Mythology and Faulty Remembrance

The last moments of *Nightmares* are confusing, to say the least, and the meeting with the Marabou Stork complicates the situation even further just when one might hope that the Stork's appearance would clarify everything. Just as in *Filth*, finding the body or the perpetrator of a crime does not actually solve the case. As a figure, the grotesque, feathered scavenger-predator confounds human conceptions of what is "natural," "logical," and "good." Speaking ecologically, does the Stork protect life by consuming disease-ridden carrion? Or does it serve death by killing such animals as flamingos? One could answer, "Both," and that answer would get us somewhat closer to the complex entity we are dealing with. Thematically speaking, Welsh is concerned about people and institutions that dominate others, and the Marabou Stork thwarts such domination. The staunch pro-apartheid white South African capitalist Lochart Dawson, the dream incarnation of Roy's actual Uncle Gordon Strang, is such a person. Thence the Stork signifies resistance to all that Dawson represents: racism, exploitation, and private

property. To enrich this figure even further, storks are also associated with birth, hence the folklore about storks delivering babies. Thus, it is *more than both* a servant of death and protector of life; it is also a deliverer of life. We are dealing with an animal that is the figural representative of a threefold power: devourer of death, taker of life, giver of birth.

As strange as such a figure might seem, one will frequently discover it in Gaelic myth, legend, and folklore. Instead of coming in the form of a stork, this tripartite force's most frequent and provocative representative is another ambiguous bird, the raven. In European history, ravens have not received much good press mainly because of the role they played, along with rats, in carrying disease, particularly during the plagues of the Middle Ages. If we look deeper into the ancient Celts' understanding of the bird, though, we find a more complicated relation between people, ravens, and birds in general. Ravens, other black birds, and water fowl certainly could be harbingers of impending demise. Like the Norse Valkeries, they could aid in war and deliver warriors souls' to the afterlife. But they were also capable of disrupting war. Moreover, they could indicate change, either positive or negative, and foretell birth. Unlike their messenger-bird or -angel counterparts in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the message implied by ravens' appearances would rarely be self-evident. They represented a multifaceted, holistic life-force instead of an authoritative, hierarchical one. The most provocative embodiment of this force, for the Gaels and for us in this context, is Morrígan.[236]

We will need to turn again to the mythic Celtic seam of Scotland's ground to bring Morrígan to the surface. Just as Roy is really never separate from the Marabou Stork, Cúchulainn's very existence is conjoined with the tripartite goddess Morrígan. In one sense, she

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[236] Concerning ravens, The Morrígan, and other associated Celtic figures, see Condren 35; Rosalind Clark, *The Great Queens: Irish Goddesses from the Morrígan to Cathleen ní Houlihan* (Gerrards Cross, UK: Colin Smythe, 1991) pp. 21-105; Miranda J. Green *Dictionary of Celtic Myth and Legend* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997) pp. 154-55, 174; James MacKillop, *Dictionary of Celtic Mythology* (Oxford, UK: Oxford UP, 1998) pp. 113, 335-37.

was with him generations before he was born. She played a significant role in the lives of his truly mythic predecessors, the Tuatha Dé Danann, the proto-Gaels who invaded Ireland and conquered the Fomorians.[237] Even though it would not presently be appropriate to spend more time on the early invasions and the literature that grows from them, it suffices it to say that Morrígan has always played a significant role in Gaelic culture. Because she is also closely associated with such figures as Medb, Cúchulainn's archenemy in *The Táin*, she is practically omnipresent and certainly ambiguous. When he is a child, Morrígan watches over him in the form of a war crow.[238] When he woos his wife Emer, she foretells the couple's courtship and then complicates it.[239] During the battles between him, as sole protector of Ulster, and the other four Irish kingdoms led by Medb and Ailill, it is Morrígan or one of her surrogates who, through confusing warriors, incites certain battles and frustrates truces.[240] In many of his battles, she flies in raven form beside his chariot or sits on his shoulder. In her other common forms of a washer woman and milkmaid, she tells the hero about his coming death and heals him during battle.[241] In *The Death Tale of CuChulainn*, again in the form of a raven, she sits on his shoulder as he dies against a standing stone.[242] Despite their ambiguous, sometimes antagonistic relationship, Cúchulainn and Morrígan are practically inseparable.

Turning back to *Nightmares*, one will perhaps encounter a significant problem when posed with what may initially seem to be a preposterous question: "Who plays the role of Morrígan?" Indeed, I am asserting that the Marabou Stork is Morrígan, or to be more precise, the Stork is a postmodern emergence of the Gaelic figure. With that qualification out of the way,

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[237] MacKillop 414-16.
[238] Kinsella 80.
[239] Jeffrey Gantz trans., *The Wasting Sickness of Cú Chulaind & The Only Jealousy of Emer*, *Early Irish Myths and Sagas* (New York: Penguin, 1981) pp. 155-78.
[240] Kinsella 98, 141, 155, 223, 238.
[241] Kinsella 133, 137.
[242] Tymoczko 61.

let us return to our seemingly preposterous question. In keeping with Morrígan's habit of perplexing things, and in keeping with Welsh's habit of not allowing a story to ever really conclude, the answer is not at all as simple as one might expect. If one has just finished the last page of the novel, the answer will seem obvious: "Kirsty plays Morrígan, delivering Roy from his wasting body. As the Marabou Stork, she dismembers him—figuratively beheading him by cutting off his penis, then stuffing it into his mouth." However, if one reviews the book, paying even closer attention to the last chapter, up to when Kirsty castrates Roy, it is also evident that Roy is the Stork and thus also Morrígan. He has already figuratively killed and devoured Kirsty—by taking her energy, by taking her soul (*Nightmares* 191, 208, 229, 264). So, we need to delve further to better comprehend how this Stork figure operates.

If we return to the passage from *Nightmares* quoted above—in which Roy describes his bird-like features—Roy seems unequivocally to be the Stork. If this is so, Roy is his own murderer, midwife, and savior. We are, therefore, confronted with the fact that in his dreamscape as Roy-the-hero, Roy is actually a twofold character: one part Roy-the-Stork and one part Sandy-Roy, for lack of a better way to delineate them. Like Cúchulainn's charioteer, Laeg, Roy's companion in Dawson's South African Emerald Forest, Sandy Jamieson, is really Roy's idealized counterpart and lover. Sandy is based on the professional footballer Jimmy Sandison, whom Roy was watching on the television when he tried to suffocate himself (*Nightmares* 255). Most importantly, Sandy protects Roy by helping him become a more whole individual, which entails distracting Roy from too quickly completing his mythological quest. Sandy's role also includes being Roy's dream lover (*Nightmares* 123, 257). This role has an interconnected threefold effect: 1) It helps Roy accept his own bisexuality. 2) It helps Roy rid himself of the violent, self-destructive homophobia that curses him because of his uncle raping

him, and because of a patriarchal, anti-sexual, and working-class Calvinist culture. 3) It gives Roy an accommodating companion with whom to share the burden of composing an alternative life. Therefore, Sandy helps Roy make peace with his own self-concept and desires, defusing the destructive bad sense that Roy's self-deception has imposed on him. The twist associated with Sandy's role is this: to ultimately protect and deliver Roy, Sandy has to kill him because Roy is the Marabou Stork.

We might be tempted to say that Roy-the-Stork is the "bad Roy" and that Sandy-Roy is the "good Roy." This temptation could prove dangerous. Sandy is the one who introduces Roy to Dawson, and as the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that Sandy and Dawson have associated before—as employer and employee and probably as lovers. In view of this, Sandy's loyalty to Roy is put in doubt. Indeed, Dawson and Sandy might have been conspiring against Roy the whole time, waiting until Roy has fully disclosed himself as the Stork.

Sandy is probably both Roy's comrade and enemy—a double agent. It is possible that Sandy-Roy betrays and delivers Roy in both connotations of both terms. He betrays Roy by helping Roy's repressed aspects emerge, and he betrays Roy by handing him over to the enemy. He delivers Roy by providing him safe passage through hostile terrain, but he also delivers Roy to his doom. In effect, Sandy is both a John and a Judas to Roy's Jesus. When we remember that Sandy is a character that Roy himself has created, we realize that Roy is his own greatest hope and his own arch-nemesis.

Elsewhere, though, the Stork is directly associated with Kirsty: "She kept coming after me. The nightmares, the Marabou Stork nightmares . . ." (*Nightmares* 221). Kirsty, of course, is who apparently ends Roy's life when she dismembers him. However, as with Sandy, we cannot be too confident in passing judgment on her. As we will discuss below, her intended punishment

of her rapist might be what helps Roy actually ascertain a hopeful alternative world. If she is the

Stork within his dream, as compared to the virtual Stork in his conscious life, then her

elusiveness throughout the novel gives Roy the opportunity to find out that "the pursuit of the

Marabou" is "as fundamental as the pursuit of truth" (*Nightmares* 36). She gives him time to go

on his epic quest, pursuing truth, thereby pursuing life. In effect, she gives him a second chance

at life. One could even argue that she gives him three chances. Exceeding God in "Granton

Star," Kirsty effectively gives Roy a third chance at life when she literally transforms him. As

she carves his body, the intensity of life that he feels literally and figuratively opens his eyes. As

we will discuss in greater detail below, it is the only time, without narcotics, that he truly feels.

Because we are dealing with mythos, we do not have to rule out the possibility that both

Roy and Kirsty are the Stork. Because we are dealing with a Morrígan figure, the Stork is not

exclusionary but congregational, and both Roy and Kirsty fulfill the roles of protector, deliverer,

and devourer; together they bring about the emergence of a postmodern Morrígan in Welsh's

epic.

Nevertheless, what exactly is being protected, delivered, and devoured?

The answer: Roy's memory. Today, memory is popularly treated as if it were merely a

storage bank of empirical facts. Most judicial systems, particularly in the West, have raised the

testimony of witnesses to an almost sacred level, second only to the recently discovered Holy

Grail of justice, DNA evidence. This esteem for the eyewitness is so even in the face of

mountains of evidence produced by psychologists and cognitive scientists which attest to the fact

that memory is as creative as it is empirically referential. Therefore, memory is fallible, at least

in today's juridical environment, because it is, by its very operations, something that fabricates.

This is why I place it under the epistemological domain of mythos and, therefore, why I put it into relation with mythology.

I do not mean to disparage either memory or mythology by associating them in such a way. As generative cognitive operations, they are crucial to human life. Moreover, they are deeply interconnected, and in the case of *Nightmares*, Roy belatedly discovers that it might be a mistake to keep them separate:

> I've been trying to stage things too much in this little world of mine, trying to exercise total control over this environment, instead of trusting myself to react to events with dignity and compassion. So what if my two worlds are coming closer together? It may be the way I get closer to the Stork. (123)

Together, memory and mythology make up the creative consciousness of historical-material reality. Perhaps memory is considered more legitimate because it typically speaks the language of a dominant sociocultural situation, whereas mythology lets circulate what has been filtered and repressed by memory. Roy accordingly explains about his mythological world, "In here I'm doing all the things I didn't do out there. I'm trying to be better, trying to do the right thing, trying to work it all out" (*Nightmares* 119). Therefore, memory and mythology are not bad or good in themselves, particularly if they are recognized as being interimplicated; however, they can be badly or well used. And bad use of them arguably comes about when they are disconnected. Disconnected from each other, mythology can truly become a "fantasy land," and memory can become "practically non-existent" (*Nightmares* 157, 4). However, under the empire of late capital, these two strands of mythos must be separated, just as mythos, pathos, and logos must be divorced from one another. If they congregate their materials and energies, they pose a threat to a system that depends on fragmentation, on a lack of critical and generative synthesis.

Roy says that his memory is "practically non-existent"; however, this does not mean that it is *really* nonexistent. In fact, three quarters of the book is composed of his memories. He only escapes to his mythological dream world—"the beautiful blue skies of Africa" (*Nightmares* 57)—when his memories become too much for him or when he comes too close to regaining consciousness. So, for someone whose memories are practically nonexistent, he remembers much and he remembers often. Let us investigate these memories to see what Roy means by his qualification.

Before nine years of age, during the early 1980s, Roy's memories are scant; however, when he reaches the nine-year mark, they begin to become an overwhelming force. As if the hard life in the schemes and in his extremely dysfunctional working-class family had not been enough, his father's brother, Gordon Strang, agreed to procure Roy's father a job in Johannesburg, South Africa. Any relocation is traumatic, but relocating to a completely different continent, thousands of miles away, is more so, particularly for a child. Moreover, Roy's racist parents were not only excited about their new prospects; they were as equally excited about moving to what they often referred to as "a white man's country," apartheid South Africa (*Nightmares* 24). Despite knowing "fuck all about politics," Roy quickly realized that when it came to his parents' worldview, his emigrant uncle's business practices, and the situation in South Africa, "something wasn't quite right" (*Nightmares* 62, 82). Here, Roy gives us another tentative position. His qualifier—"something wasn't quite right"—is important to keep in mind because, along with the other qualifier he has presented, it is symptomatic of a mindset that is still detached from what has actually occurred.

Roy's comparisons of Scottish subordination and South African subordination are astute, to say the least. Here is one of dozens of such observations:

Edinburgh to me represented serfdom. I realized that it was exactly the same

situation as Johannesburg; the only difference was that the Kaffirs [derogatory

term for black South Africans] were white and called schemies or draftpaks.

Back in Edinburgh, we would be Kaffirs; condemned to live out our lives in

townships like Muirhouse or So-Wester-Hailes-To or Niddrie, self-contained

camps with fuck all in them, miles fae the toon. Brought in tae dae the crap jobs

that nae other cunt wanted tae dae, then hassled by the polis if we hung around at

night in groups. Edinburgh had the same politics as Johannesburg: it had the

same politics of any city. (*Nightmares* 80)

Nevertheless, he has stopped short of integrating this congregated knowledge into his being.

Indeed, he fell in love with South Africa, despite its not being "quite right." His love of it did

not directly spring from apartheid, per se, but sprang from his being accepted by a society that

was ruled by apartheid. He remembers, "What I had gained there was a perverse sense of

empowerment; an ego even. I knew I was fuckin special, whatever any of them [his family] tried

to tell me" (*Nightmares* 88). A year later, after Roy's father was fired, the Strangs moved back

to Edinburgh. "I was Roy Strang," Roy proclaims, "Maybe I had to go back, but it was going to

be different. I wasnae gaunny take any shite. . . . Ah wis going to be strong. Strong Strang. Ah

wis gaunny make sure every cunt kent my fuckin name" (*Nightmares* 88-89). Again, he has not

integrated the knowledge that is right before him: a system of domination has done to others,

such as black South Africans, what it has done to him and others like him in Scotland. Both his

dream world and memory world have been sending him the same message, but he has always

disassociated from his own accumulated knowledge. Not only that: he has personally enacted

the logic of the system that has brutalized him and fellow members of the dispossessed. Instead

of incorporating the knowledge and suffering of the multitude, he has integrated the dominant system into his being, which further estranges him from others and himself.

Punctuating this disconnection is what he does to others after he has been sexually molested and raped by Uncle Gordon. Roy became a sexual predator. Soon after his return to Edinburgh, Roy sexually assaulted a female classmate while holding a knife to her neck, forced a male classmate to perform oral sex on him, tormented his gay brother Bernard, and ultimately masterminded the brutal gang rape of Kirsty. How he remembers the last incident makes his two qualifications—that his memory is practically nonexistent and that something was not quite right—even more disconcerting.

It is not until Sandy is about to blow Roy's head off with a shotgun and not until Kirsty is clipping the lids off his eyes that Roy remembers that it was he—not another recurring Welsh character, Lexo—who had initiated the torture and rape of a woman who was actually interested in dating him. Roy conflated Kirsty with a girl, Caroline Carson, he had held a grudge against since middle school. Years before, Caroline had been a bystander when he was bullied by one of her older male friends (*Nightmares* 99-101). Roy remembers that he was aware that the two women were not the same person (*Nightmares* 261). But he took a stance reminiscent of D. S. Robertson's ultra-Calvinist slogan, "same rules apply" (*Filth* 5). Roy and three of his fellow cashies—football hooligans known for wearing flashy clothes and expensive accessories— drugged Kirsty and lured her away from a party. They proceeded to tie her up, tortured her, left her standing on a table with a noose around her neck for a few hours, and raped her for hours on end after they returned (*Nightmares* 177-90). Later, when the rape case went to court, Roy and his mates persuaded the court that they were the actual victims, their character defamed by a

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woman who was angry at them for not satisfying her insatiable, masochistic sexual appetite (*Nightmares* 207-12).

For over 250 pages, Roy has led not only us but himself on a wild goose chase because he could not integrate the knowledge he gained from his mythological world and memory world. In part, this is so because he has kept those worlds separated for too long. Just as Cúchulainn's bullheadedness (not to mention Odysseus' arrogance or Achilles' rage) keeps him from seeing how other people's lives are tied up in his, Roy's inability to incorporate the experiences of others with his own keeps him from ever practically living, at least not until the final few pages of the novel. However, it is not only the segregation of the two levels of his mythos-scape that makes him a flamingo to Kirsty's Stork: "It's on the flamingo . . . tearing into it, ripping it to shreds, but the flamingo's still alive, I see its dulled eyes." For the majority of his life, he has not been able to feel—he has had virtually no bond with the species-being of the potential human multitude.

5.2 Integration Spool: The Bonds of Flesh

With his eyelids removed and his severed penis in his mouth, Roy observes:

> She's looking into my eyes, my lidless eyes and we see each other now. She's
> beautiful. Thank God. Thank God she's got it back. What we took. I'm trying
> to smile. I've got this severed cock in my mouth and I'm trying to smile. I can't
> breathe and she's showing no mercy. . . . I understand her. . . . I understand her
> hurt, her pain, how it all just has to come out. It just goes round and round, the
> hurt. It takes an exceptionally strong person to just say: no more. It takes a weak
> one to just keep it all to themselves, let it tear them apart without hurting anyone
> else. . . . I'm not an exceptionally strong person. . . . Nor is Kirsty. . . . We're

just ordinary and this is shite. . . . We both understand everything. (*Nightmares*

263-64)

That is Roy's last astute observation before he briefly returns to his dream world to spread his

wings as the Stork and be shot at by Sandy, and before he loses consciousness because of

massive hemorrhaging.

In the first part of his observation, he stresses his attempt to smile. This is no small

matter. In his so-called life before this point, Roy conditioned himself to not express emotion.

Even anger became more mechanical than impassioned—it was "business" (*Nightmares* 152,

171). Even more, feeling any sort of emotion became taboo for him. He "considered that

discretion was the better part of valour": "It was not giving a fuck about anything," just floating

"around in a void of indifference" (*Nightmares* 66, 153, 201). As a consequence, he had become

a nihilistic automaton, for which no act was unthinkable or impossible.[243]

At least this was the case until he saw Kirsty in the courtroom:

It became like she was the one on trial; her past, her sexuality, her behaviour. She

looked really strange in the court. It was the wey she moved. She walked like the

centre ay balance in her body had irreversibly shifted. It wis like the movement

ay some cunt that had come oot fae under the surgeon's knife and who was

recuperating from a chronic and ultimately terminal illness. (*Nightmares* 208)

When he observed her, though, he did not feel sympathy; he was still too disconnected. What he

recognized was a physiological change in Kirsty that implied something else, something deeper

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[243] It is in thoughts and actions of such an isolated individual that Hannah Arendt finds the logic and mode
of totalitarianism: "totalitarian methods of domination . . . develop and crystallize on the basis of the nihilistic
principle that 'everything is possible.' And, characteristically enough, this is precisely the realm that cannot be
limited by either utilitarian motives or self-interest, regardless of the latter's content. [. . .] What runs counter to
common sense is not the nihilistic principle that 'everything is permitted.' . . . What common sense and 'normal
people' refuse to believe is that everything is possible" (*The Origins of Totalitarianism* [San Diego: Harcourt Brace,
1979] pp. 440-41).

than surfaces and abstractions. This something else—the same something else that Carl recognizes in *Glue* (445)—eludes him, but he cannot neglect it. He is drawn towards it, which leads him to his suicide attempt.

Rationalizing what proves to be a failed suicide attempt with Aristotelian ethics reduced to a slogan in a Hemlock Society pamphlet—"GOOD LIFE, GOOD DEATH"—Roy Strang finally made a real effort to connect to himself only to miss the point, both the point of Aristotle's ethic and the point of integrating with himself:

> With any luck, I'd achieve half of this [maxim]. I was dying. I knew it, I felt it. It was beyond transitory depression. I wasn't a psychopath; I was just a fool and a coward. I had opened up my emotions and I couldn't go back into self-denial, into the lower form of existence, but I couldn't go forward until I'd settled my debt. For me it wasn't running away. That was what I'd been doing all my fuckin life, running away from sensitivity, from feelings, from love. Running away because a fuckin schemie, a nobody, shouldnae have these feelings because there's fuckin naewhair for them tae go, naewhair for them tae be expressed and if you open up every cunt will tear you apart. So you shut them out; you build a shell, you hide, or you lash out at them and hurt them. You do this because you think by you're hurting them you can't be hurt. But it's bullshit, because you just hurt even mair until you learn to become an animal and if you can't fuckin well learn that properly you run. Sometimes you can't run though, you can't sidestep and you can't duck and weave, because sometimes it just all travels along with you, inside your fuckin skull. This wasn't about opting out. This was about the

only resolution that made sense. Death was the way forward. (*Nightmares* 254-

55)

How right he is, and how wrong. As we know, Roy does not die; he enters into a coma that

enables him to sustain a narrative existence, including the quoted observation. So, no, he cannot

opt out, even though he tries. He will have to live before he dies. In Aristotle's ethical theory,

the good death is impossible without the good life—without care of the self, which includes care

of others.[244] Roy has not cared for himself or others despite retroactively saying that he had

wanted—*intended*—to. Roy, however, did begin to move toward some version of the good life

when he made this self-evaluation. However, self-evaluation is only part of an emergent praxis,

as we discovered in the previous chapter. Even so, he failed to commit to even his own self-

evaluation, which is indicated by his self-deceptive conclusion: suicide in his case "wasn't about

opting out."

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[244] Throughout *The Ethics*, Aristotle gradually, systematically builds his idea of the "good," "happy," or "excellent" life, stressing its dependence on life-long development and duration (*The Ethics of Aristotle: The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. J. A. K. Thomson [New York: Penguin, 1976]). He asserts early on that "happiness demands not only complete goodness but a complete life" (81). Then, he goes on to explain how goodness is a praxis on which one "spends all his time, or the most time of any man, in virtuous conduct and contemplation" (83). Julia Annas terms such happiness "self-sufficiency," meaning that a person's life produces coherence through time—"comprehensiveness: a final end which is self-sufficient must include all the agent's other ends" (*The Morality of Happiness* [New York, NY: Oxford UP, 1993] p. 41). Put into the context of our discussion, Roy cannot achieve a good death because his life has been, up until this point, void of any identifiable praxis, coherence, or comprehensiveness. Moreover, the life Roy has lived is one dominated by misery, hate, and meanness. According to Aristotle, one who produces a good life cannot "become miserable; because"—and this next qualification is key in understanding Aristotelian and much Classical ethics—"he will never do things that are hateful and mean" to others (84). Expressly, personal happiness is impossible without it being directly tied one's social and political situation—without caring for the self, which entails caring for others. The latter insight becomes the springboard for much of Foucault's later writing, most notably *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality*, trans. Robert Hurley, vol. 3 (New York: Vintage, 1988). For instance, he observes in his reading of Seneca that "care of the self—or the attention one devotes to the care that others should take care of themselves—appears then as an *intensification of social relations*" (51, my italics). Foucault expands elsewhere, "The care of the self is ethical in itself; but it implies complex relationships with others insofar as [the] *ēthos* of freedom is also a way of caring for others" (*Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow, trans. Robert Hurley et al. [New York: New Press, 1997] p. 287). Again, placing this into the present context, what Foucault calls "care of the self" falls under the rubric of emergent praxis. In the case of Roy and Scotland, subordination is, in part, a consequence of a lack of producing a life. Thus, when Roy tries to rationalize his suicide with a significant strand of Classical ethics, he puts ethical systems dedicated almost totally to generation into the service of destruction.

Roy thought that he could atone for his sins through sacrificing himself—taking himself beyond responsibility, out of society, and thus out of life. Again, though, he does not die. He is literally and figuratively forced to compose himself if he is ever to confront what threatened not only his individual, Scottish life but what still threatens human life itself. Up to the point of his self-induced coma, he effectively had no coherent narrative or life history. He was merely flotsam carried on the currents of a fragmented, disconnected world. However, after his failed suicide attempt, these fragments begin to congregate and take on more coherent forms in his mythos-scape. Then, when Kirsty greets him upon his return to consciousness, these forms and all that they entail begin to integrate into his being. His dream world, his memory world, and his sensual world have been sending him materials and energies which he can no longer keep separate from each other and, more importantly, from which he can no longer disassociate.

It is by integrating the congregated materials and energies that he has avoided for his whole life that he is finally able to live, even if this means becoming one with the Marabou Stork, the paradoxical figure of death and life. Perhaps the message here is: if one can sympathize with one's murderer, then one can sympathize with anyone. It is just this type of unconditional sympathy that permeates the moment when Kirsty and Roy are looking into each other's eyes. It is in this moment that they share pure emotion and all that makes up human life: suffering, love, hate, triumph, defeat, lust, sadness, happiness, pity, commitment, betrayal, vengeance, redemption, and understanding. All three aspects of knowing—mythos, pathos, and logos—begin to converge and integrate. This signals that three virtues of the ethic of emergence are beginning to cooperate and enter into producing alternatives.

Where does it all go from here?

5.3 Emergence Spool: Fugitive Histories

"She's going," says Roy, "don't go Kirsty, stay with me for a bit, see this through . . . but no no no I hear her hastily depart" (*Nightmares* 264). We cannot be too quick to pass judgment on Kirsty. She, like Roy, represents us, the particular individuals of a potentially emergent multitude who exist in a situation ruled by the empire of late capital. Because the world we live in is still one of fragmentation and estrangement—despite brief moments of congregation and integration—we cannot expect Welsh's characters to single-handedly do what cannot be done alone; nor should a novelist like Welsh be asked to do all the work for us. He weaves for us quite a detailed, multidimensional map, which takes us to a launching point. Moreover, he gives us an unusual sort of compass: it points to the probabilities that we already know—the bad sense, residual ones—so that we may ascertain what direction we need to go so that we may approach alternative probabilities. All of the stories we have discussed in this study indicate this direction, but as Ornstein finds in "The Two Philosophers," knowing what direction to go and going in that direction are not the same thing. To use his idiom, it is not enough to know that unknown knowledge is a possibility; individuals must build with the materials and energies that they have uncovered to bring about the materialization of a probability that they have recognized in previously unknown knowledge. To use Roy's idiom, one has to enter into "a new situation," all the while realizing "that behaviour always has a context and precedents, it's what you do rather than what you are, although we often never recognize that context or understand what these precedents are" (*Nightmares* 134). More expressly, alternative probabilities—hopeful futures—are not possible if we, as those human individuals, do not build toward them with the "context" and "precedents" that have enabled our apprehension of those probabilities. In short,

we have to honest with ourselves about where we have come from and where we are before we can feasibly understand ourselves and break the hold of bad sense and residual force.

On the political terrain of the 1980s and early 1990s—the era of Margaret Thatcher and John Major's Tory Britain and Ronald Reagan's Republican America—an attitude of zero tolerance became official public doctrine: "Z. THERE IS NO EXCUSE" (*Nightmares* 241). The "wars" on worker's rights, poverty, drugs, culture, welfare, sex, the Third World, and so forth were unleashed. And as Welsh brings into focus, zero tolerance meant, in the case Britain, a war on the lumpenproletariat, working class, and women. The novel, though, exceeds the particularity of that historical period and Scotland in scope. *Nightmares* indicates that zero tolerance is a war waged on the world's majority, its potential multitude: the global South and peripheries, black and brown people, "white trash," the impoverished, women, and the majority of workers. This is not to mention the ecological terrorism being waged for profits and power.

Mentioning zero tolerance today might seem to be an anachronism. Is not everything tolerated now? In one sense, everything is tolerated—if by "everything," one means everything that has to do with cheapening human life by social, cultural, political, and economic estrangement, oppression, and exploitation. In fact, we live in a situation dominated by the epicurean aftershocks of such an approach to human existence. Zero tolerance seems passé because it has become naturalized: it is the hegemonic ideology.[245] Lochart Dawson provides some insight on what this ideology maintains: "Families and communities have to be broken up further, have to be taken to where the work is, have to be denied at all costs meaningful interaction with each other. They have to live in, as our American friends call them, subdivisions. They have to be economically and physically subdivided" (*Nightmares* 45). Roy

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[245] We have in the postmodern world the fruition of "the traditional concept of just war," which "involves the banalization of war and the celebration of it as an ethical instrument" (Hardt and Negri, *Empire* 12).

shocks Dawson by elaborating further: "The key is the increasing of choice through the process of subdivision you alluded to. The increasing experiencing of leisure and sport indirectly, has encouraged a decrease in real participation which is direct communion. Therefore you have the replacement of one or two really decent experiences with loads and loads of crap things" (*Nightmares* 45). Even though it is a war waged primarily through city planning, mortgages, rent, regressive taxes, discount store chains, food aid, the distribution of pharmaceuticals, and so forth, this is undoubtedly a war against the collective life of human beings for the sake of profit, which is domination through dispossession.

We have seen in the preceding chapters and pages of this chapter how this war is waged. The people who fight are not warriors loyal to a sovereignty or cause. They, like Roy, are not really committed to anything, not even to themselves. So, we must not confuse egoism with self-reverence. The combatants are just fragmented individuals, incoherent socioeconomic groups, stereotyped races and genders, and so forth, all consuming like scavenger-predators in the hope that some sense, some narrative, or some cause will emerge through the act of consuming itself.[246] The very enemies of the postmodern global state, the largely itinerant *and* provincial individuals of the potential multitude, are also the fodder sent onto the figurative and literal plains of battle to consume and be consumed. All of this is done to benefit an amorphous, elusive ruling power that depends on the perpetuation of this internally corrupt and self-destructive system in order to maintain sovereignty. The individuals of the potential multitude, such as the diamond miners in South Africa and coal miners in Scotland, have secured the means for this postmodern global sovereignty, even as it requires their mutual exclusion. The victim,

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[246] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels write in *The German Ideology* that this "accidental character [of the conditions of life] is only engendered and developed by competition and the struggle of individuals among themselves. Thus, in imagination, individuals seem freer under the dominance of [capitalism] than before because their conditions of life seem accidental; in reality, of course, they are less free, because they are to a greater extent governed by material forces" ([Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1998] p. 87).

therefore, is also the aggressor. In effect, the reprobate of the world—again, the potential

multitude—create the energy to sustain the empire of late capital, a veritable empire of death, by

tormenting and killing one another. They enter into "a bullshit act," which moves them "further

away from" what they could be (*Nightmares* 50).

One of the many glaring problems with this so-called ethic of late capitalism, which is

seamless in its duplicity, is the fact that any endurable, creative individual or collective life is

increasingly unlikely under its particular interpretation of "liberty." In fact, democracy is

impossible in such a framework. Emergent, productive composition is strangled by static,

nihilistic chaos. Like a tree consumed by vines, a system that could provide for a long-

sustaining, ever-growing, and integrating life is overtaken by a parasite that exploits it for short-

term, immediate, and fragmented gains. The effect for the tree: fruitless self-defense followed

by death. The effect for the vines: a quick rise to power at the expense of life only to fall to the

ground and be consumed by other vines that will be consumed by more vines and so forth and so

on.[247]

What makes this situation all the more sobering, though, is that these metaphorical vines

sap away materials that could feed and form the metaphorical tree of the multitude. In an

interview Welsh gave when *Glue* was being published, he implies that Christianity and

socialism, not to mention Aristotelian ethics, at one time provided more good sense than bad

sense, thereby empowering Scots.[248] But capitalism fragmented their internal coherence and

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[247] This botanical description echoes Hardt and Negri's mechanical one: "As [postmodern Empire] constructs its supranational figure, power seems to be deprived of any real ground beneath it, or rather, it is lacking the motor that propels its movement. The rule of the biopolitical imperial context should thus be seen in the first instance as an empty machine, a spectacular machine, a parasitical machine" (*Empire* 62).

[248] Welsh, interview. Welsh echoes MacIntyre's diagnosis of what has happened to morality, which really today is just a collection of fragmented structures and truisms disconnected from what is considered to be raw or, to use Giorgio Agamben's term, "bare" life: the "joint effect of the secular rejection of both Protestant and Catholic theology and the scientific and philosophical rejection of Aristotelianism was to eliminate any notion of man-as-he-could-be-if-he-realized-his-*telos*. Since the whole point of ethics—both as a theoretical and a practical discipline—

sapped their emergent energies, leaving only incoherent, exchangeable, and consumable fragments.[249]

In light of what we have observed about Scotland throughout this study, this situation is not a mystery. From Renton, Spud, and Begbie to Bruce Robertson, to Ornstein and McGlone, and to Roy and Kirsty, Welsh has illustrated how the lumpenproletariat, the working class, and significant swaths of the middle class are either intentionally or unintentionally killing themselves and each other. Together, competition and consumption are the mechanisms that vampirically and self-destructively feed capital. Unless one is an avatar of American neo-conservativism or British New Labour-ism, this is not what one could call a life-sustaining, holistically productive ethos. Kirsty gives voice to the ethos at work when she prepares to dismember Roy: "I don't know who fucked you up, what happened to make you the sad, wretched excuse for a human being you are and I don't care. It's not my problem. You're the problem, or rather were. Now I'm your problem. Might is right. You *take* the right. I'm taking the right Roy, taking the right to fuck you off, son" (*Nightmares* 261). Today, the scapegoats offer up other scapegoats for sacrifice, and it seems that the more literal and figurative blood shed, the more the capitalist empire needs: exponential sacrifice for the reward of "closure" that never really comes—never-ending *death*.

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is to enable man to pass from his present state to his true end, the elimination of any notion of essential human nature and with it the abandonment of any notion of a *telos* leaves behind a moral scheme composed of two remaining elements whose relationship becomes quite unclear. There is on the one hand a certain content for morality: a set of injunctions deprived of their teleological context. There is on the other hand a certain view of untutored-human-nature-as-it-is" (*After Virtue* 54-55). See also Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998).

[249] "What we possess . . . are the fragments of a conceptual scheme, parts which now lack those contexts from which their significance derived. We possess indeed simulacra of morality, we continue to use many of the key expressions. But we have—very largely, if not entirely—lost our comprehension, both theoretical and practical, of morality" (MacIntyre, *After Virtue* 2).

Despite the fact that late capitalism is hegemonic—its bad sense and residual force practically dominating all aspects of human life—its weakness is that it is not the source of its power. Roy spots this weakness while he continues his argument with Dawson about capitalism:

> But perhaps the superiority of [capitalist] terminology illustrates that sport and the sporting instinct are sovereign and that capitalism is just a branch of sport, a warped, inferior branch of sport, sport with money. . . . Capitalism has had to graft on sporting culture, the culture of games, in order to make the pursuit of money seem a worthwhile endeavour in itself. (*Nightmares* 45-46)

The source of the capitalist empire's power is the common individuals who compose the multitude. By segregating those individuals, exploiting them, and turning them against one another, the empire of capital reigns supreme. However, when those individuals congregate, and then when they appropriate for themselves the means of production, they will materialize as a cooperative multitude that can build toward an alternative world from materials and energies that already exist. Such a world will be ruled by an ethic that negates the naturalness with which capitalism has attempted to paint its ethic. The currently dominant system driven by fragmentation, segregation, and subordination will, despite itself, provide the materials for a system based on congregation, integration, and emergence.

5.4 Postmodern Tartan: Emergence through Forgiveness

Without forgiveness, though, emergence will not occur in any substantial, ongoing manner. There is, as we have seen throughout this study, the constant risk of entering a cul-de-sac (or tomb) right at the moment when emergence is most probable. If we make a superficial gloss of Roy and Kirsty's last moments together, instead of the Stork-centered one presented above, we can observe the possibility of another such dead end. Both Roy and Kirsty perpetuate

the very system that has destroyed them. Not until his final moments could Roy forgive himself for the system of shame, betrayal, and lack of sympathy that he personified. Ultimately, Kirsty cannot forgive Roy. They can "only recognize" each other "through their pain and their thwarted ambitions" (*Nightmares* 49). Comrades in suffering and sacrifice, they cannot connect according to what they need most, mutual love and forgiveness; so they perpetuate a static, destructive cycle. In such a light, Roy's final encounter with Kirsty takes the form of a sacrifice executed in revenge. And Kirsty is a disciple of the vengeance that Roy forced into her during her rape.

To forgive, therefore, is practically impossible if people do not perceive their role in, for example, the cycle of vengeance and then commit to—give themselves to—an alternative probability: "see this through" (*Nightmares* 264). To forgive entails that humans are going to have to do away with sacrifice.[250] In practice, sacrifice is raising death to an exclusive, sacred level. Once it has achieved this height—as an abstract economy—then the lives of individuals and groups become mere commodities for exchange. In such a situation, life is the currency for the perpetuation of death. In a situation of forgiveness, however, life is not simply a medium; it is a conduit in which existing life is congregated and integrated to bring about more life. In such a world, we the multitude can, as Welsh has Roy so poignantly suggest through understatement,

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[250] Sacrifice has been a topic of great concern to theologians and philosophers throughout the ages. In the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and Jacques Derrida, for instance, the biblical Abraham's near-sacrifice of his only son Isaac is commended as the emblem of selflessness. Derrida's *The Gift of Death* is indicative (trans. David Wills [Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1995] pp. 59-81). The ethics and sacred duty of sacrifice, accordingly, is giving up oneself for others and, ultimately, for the absolute Other. As much as I admire and am influenced by such thinkers as Levinas and Derrida, a morality based on such sacrifice is impractical, untenable, and anti-generative. Levinas and Derrida, nevertheless, are not the prime purveyors of the bad sense of giving-as-sacrifice, as compared to giving-as-generation. One can indeed argue that Levinas, Derrida, and others are striving for the latter kind of gift through the obstacle presented by death-logic. Regardless, both the victimizer and the victim are valorized, and in the latter's case, autonomy is further removed, not attained in any practical, historical-material sense. This is a point Badiou tersely makes: "In his role as executioner, man is an animal abjection, but we must have the courage to add that in his role as victim, he is generally worth little more" (*Ethics* 11). Less tersely, Julia Kristeva charts out a genealogy that connects the morality behind religious sacrifice with defusing generative powers (represented by the feminine) and with retribution (*Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* [New York, NY: Columbia UP, 1982] pp. 56-61, 70-79, 115-32).

"consider forgiveness" (*Nightmares* 122). Moreover, as we should take to heart what Bernard, Roy's brother with AIDS, advises, "Life's good. Hang onto life" (*Nightmares* 251).

Welsh's *Nightmares* guides us to a point—or straps us to a standing stone with a strange bird on our shoulder—where, as a congregated, integrated, and emergent body, we can not just imagine but begin mapping worlds that counter the empire of death that lords over us. It is at this point that we can see what kind of Scotland Welsh persistently, even though negatively, conceives. It is a Scotland not divorced from Scotland, but a deeply interconnected Scotland *after* the self-destructive and subordinate Scotland of the past. This implies that Scotland's epic does not have to end in some craggy, mystic past or in some global capitalist menagerie of the future. Instead, it may proceed as a dynamic, emergent subordinate in a world whose majority is composed of potentially emergent subordinates.

Nevertheless, subordinate status should not be embraced but utilized. Because subordinates are obviously not deliberately in control of whatever imperial power that dominates them, they cannot counter that power on an even footing. Roy demonstrates this, in both his "dream life" and "actual life." He cannot overcome the actual enemy that is destroying the South African paradise by becoming its ally. Therefore, he becomes the Marabou Stork. He cannot counter brutality—whether in the form of sexual abuse, economic disparity, and imperialism—by replicating it. So, when the subordinated multitude emerges, there will be risks, and there will be nothing to return to. As Roy surmises when he glimpses an alternate probability, "I saw [the] limitations, the sheer vacuity of what [was] on offer against this alternative. There would, I knew, be risks. Nothing this good came without risk. I couldn't go back though. No Way. There was nothing to go back to" (*Nightmares* 237). Nothing is academic about mapping alternative probabilities. Nothing is academic about the multitude

reworking the materials before it and establishing fidelity to submerged materials and energies. The Roys and Kirstys of the world—not to mention the Rentons, Spuds, Begbys, Carls, Robertsons, and Ornsteins—will be at risk when they are giving each other to each other and themselves to themselves. However, they are already dead on arrival without doing so: they are mere fragments circulating within empire of death.

An alternative world guided by an alternative ethic and informed by an alternative set of virtues would present a real challenge to today's imperial power. Such a world *is* a probability. With such a probability in mind, I cannot accept that Welsh's postmodern Scottish epic—or any of his work for that matter—ends in self-destructive sacrifice. Instead, it is the beginning of a postmodern fable of the ethic of emergence, which produces and renews forgiveness[251]:

> *Roy, the conflicted and winged epic hero of Scotland's past, lies on a gurney, his practically dead body gagging on the figural sword that infected him and everyone he encountered with death. Kirsty, the incarnation of emergent Scotland, walks out of Roy's hospital room, her feet solidly connecting to the ground with each step forward. She takes with her what life was left in Roy—not to inflict more vengeance on Scotland or the world, but to infect Scotland and the world with forgiveness.*

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[251] This is partly an homage and response to Lyotard, *Postmodern Fables*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997). He uses "postmodern fables" to critique the world as we enter the third millennium. I use mine to suggest an alternative as we proceed through it.

Chapter 6

Afterword

The forty-one-year-old working-class single mother of two teenagers raised her right

hand, and when she opened it, a message in bold, black permanent ink emerged: "My oath is to

the people."[252] Dressed in her best blue jeans and a gauzy halter top, Glasgow representative

Rosie Kane took her oath as Minister of Scottish Parliament at Holyrood, in Edinburgh. It was

the middle of spring 2003, five years after a referendum in which 75 per cent of Scots voted for

the establishment of a Scottish Parliament, nearly three hundred years after James VI of Scotland

took the first one with him to London. Not only that, 63.5 per cent voted to gain control of

Scottish taxation.[253] Singing Robert Burns's ode to equality, "A Man's a Man for a' That,"

Kane's fellow Scottish Socialist MSP, Colin Fox, joined in the carnival atmosphere of resistance

that began to infect the 7 May 2003 swearing-in ceremony of newly elected representatives to

Scottish Parliament. Members of the Green Party and Scottish Nationalist Party followed suit by

pledging their allegiance to the people of Scotland, not to Queen Elizabeth II. Most Labour

members, Tories, and Liberal Democrats professed their loyalty to the Queen of England even

though they were standing in the Scottish multitude's house.

Seven months later, in January 2004, Kane went on a brief hiatus from parliament, citing

clinical depression and the "macho culture" of Holyrood as her reasons.[254] Before entering

parliament, she had been a social worker who served scheme-dwelling teens in Glasgow; her

financial situation was meager, to say the least. When she entered parliament, overdue utility

bills and taxes meant that Kane could only receive incoming phone calls at home, had to buy

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[252] Gerard Seenan, "Rosie's Mission," *Guardian* [UK] 12 May 2003, 8 Aug. 2005
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/women/story/0,,953813,00.html>.

[253] Neal Ascherson, *Stone Voices: The Search for Scotland* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002) p. 171.

[254] Kirsty Scott, "New Members Shake Up Scottish Parliament," *Guardian* [UK] 5 Jan. 2004, 8 Aug. 2005
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,1116029,00.html>.

electricity for her apartment on a per use basis, and had her wages garnished. Moreover, her first days as an MSP were under the shadow of her potential arrest because of anti-nuclear protest activities. (Alas, she was not arrested.) All of this was going on while she was single-handedly raising two adolescent girls.

I am not excusing her absence from her ministerial responsibilities. No, I am sympathizing with her reasons for briefly stepping down, which she did publicly. I am expressing awe at her honesty. How many other MSPs, Ministers of Parliament at Westminster, or Congressmen and Congresswomen in Washington, DC, would do as she did? Moreover, she did not quit. She took a break because she could be honest with herself and others about her limits, which were far outweighed by her strengths.

When she returned to parliament a few months later, she returned with renewed vigor. She put herself hard to work on a number of projects to which she had been committed before and during her campaign for office: these included securing rights for asylum seekers being kept in Guantánamo-style detention centers, providing free school lunches for children, abolishing prescription drug charges in the National Health Service, and improving drug treatment programs.[255] She also became a vocal advocate for teen dropouts, derogatorily called "neds," and she was a leading British voice of protest as the US and UK prepared to invade Iraq. Then in 2004, the popular, photogenic leader of the Scottish Socialist Party, Tommy Sheridan, began politically and personally attacking her. Divisions in what had virtually been a one-man party— "Sheridan's Socialist Party"—were coming to the surface, and antagonism between Sheridan and Kane, along with two other female SSP leaders, was reported to have been one of the main causes behind rifts surfacing within the party. Sheridan attempted to paint Kane, Carolyn Leckie, and Frances Curran as estrogen-crazed witches who were using "dark arts" against

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[255] Scott <http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,1116029,00.html>.

him.[256]   In truth, Sheridan had damaged the SSP's good reputation because he badly handled

rumors about having an extramarital affair with a party worker. Sheridan was ultimately

removed as leader of the party that he had helped to found in the 1990s. Nevertheless,

Sheridan's right-hand man, the Burns-singing Fox, became the new leader in February 2005.

The internecine fighting continued, which caused the SSP to only garner 1.9 per cent of the

Scottish vote in the April 2005 elections. As I write, the SSP is a dying party, which is certainly

unfortunate. Before the scandals and rifts, the general consensus in Scotland was that the SSP

would be a strong influence in Scottish politics. Regardless, there is still Rosie Kane, and I

suspect that her impact on Scottish politics will have a lasting effect that exceeds the SSP's.

Perhaps because my mother raised two teens (my sister and me) by herself on a social

servant's salary, I sympathize with Kane. Perhaps I envy her because I was raised in American

social studies and civics classes that trumpeted the merits of a citizen's government, while today,

a US government of, by, and for the people is at best a chimera. Perhaps I hold Kane in high

regard because of the issues that she has chosen to take on, most of which reflect her experiences

as a working-class high school dropout, a single parent, and a social worker. Perhaps I am

humbled by her because she is actually a shy person who, before she entered the SSP, knew

"fuck all about politics," to quote Roy of *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. But she has emerged from

those limitations, becoming one of the most astute and powerful voices in recent Scottish

political history.

I see Kane in the same light as I see many of Irvine Welsh's characters—not as an icon,

but as an "everyone." However, unlike in literature, she is not an allegorical everyone; she is a

practical everyone. "There's thousands of people living in absolute poverty out there who didn't

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[256] Paul Hutcheon, "The Scottish Socialists Vowed to Bring the Struggle to Holyrood, but Since Ousting
Tommy Sheridan, the Party Have Only Struggled with Themselves," *Sunday Herald* [UK] 19 June 2005, 8 Aug.
2005 <http://www.sundayherald.com/50384>.

even know there was an election on, who know nothing about politics," Kane said in an interview after her 2003 election, "I used to be one of those people before I found my voice—and now I've found it no one is going to shut me up. I want parliament to be like the Big Brother house, where people tune in because they care about what's happening, not ignore it because it's full of lawyers using big words they don't understand."[257] The seasoned politician or political junkie—whether Left, Right, or indifferent—would probably accuse her of being naïve, idealistic, a crude populist, or a raving extremist. However, these Gramsci-haunted words from Welsh's character Spud might put Kane's political vision into perspective: "It's funny though, man, but they political gadges aw seem like they come fae posh hames, students n that. No thit ah'm knockin it, but ah think, it should be the likes ay us that agitate for change" (*Porno* 259). Kane is neither a "gadge" nor from a "posh hame." And if she is any kind of "student," she is a student of real, democratic politics, warts and all. Most importantly, she is an "us," a constituent of the multitude.

I accidentally came across Kane in the British press during 2003 because I was habitually reading foreign newspapers at the time, more habitually than I already did. Under the tutelage of President George W. Bush and a Republican-controlled US Congress, the American public and, in all actuality, the rest of the world were being led into a war that many already knew was based on neo-imperial lies, fabrications, and propaganda. Barring rare exceptions, the Democrats had neither the will nor the desire to be an opposition party. The so-called free media of the so-called greatest democracy on the planet were obediently playing their role as a privately-owned, state-controlled Ministry of Information. I have the bad habit of being a skeptic—thank you, David Hume—so I looked abroad for information about what was really going on. Because of my professional interest in Scotland and "South Britain," I already read various online British

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[257] Seenan < http://www.guardian.co.uk/women/story/0,,953813,00.html >.

news sites. But at the time, my interest was peaked even more. Britain was embroiled in a number of Iraq-related inquiries, scandals, and tragedies. Dodgy dossiers, a leaking BBC news anchor, and a beleaguered intelligence operative, along with his consequent suicide, were at the forefront of the chaos. In the midst of all this, Scotland was trying to be something more than the northern frontier of the UK, and Kane emerged.

I tend to look at the world the way that Walter Benjamin did; in fact, his *Arcades Project* has become for me an unexpected source of inspiration and consolation. All sorts of information and events are occurring at any given time, flooding my brain and sometimes overwhelming me. But if I stop a moment, a whole web of connections materializes. If I can keep the moment open long enough, I can begin to read the web, which is inevitably squirming with possibilities that could become probabilities. I have to be quick and locate a focal point to hang onto because such a web resists being pinned down. What I saw when Kane emerged was a central node in one of those webs, and that particular web became the heart of this project, which, in one way or another, I had for some time been trying to write.

My affinity for Scotland had always been a personal one. Since my teens, I had been interested in my Scottish predecessors: Highlanders who had gone into the Lowland coal mines after the Clearances, and Lowland farmers scratching a living along the River Tweed. Three generations removed from the ancestors who had left the mines and farms of Scotland for the coal and iron mines of America, I was like many Americans of Scottish, Irish, or Welsh descent—somewhere between being totally ignorant of my ancestors and being a hopeless kailyard romantic. The two probably walk hand in hand. The ignorance and romanticism, though, occur for a reason. To become "acceptable," my family, like so many recently immigrated families in America, did everything it could to conceal its ethnic earmarks.

Nevertheless, those earmarks would bubble up. The word "wee" made more than an occasional appearance in family conversations. My great grandmother would slip up and recite the nursery rhyme, "Roond a Bit, Wee Little Moosie," while tracing out the mouse's path on my hand and arm until he reached his "wee little hoosie" under my arm. And while helping her cook and clean, she would teach me mouth music. *Puirt-a-beul*, as it is called in Scotland and Ireland, is an almost dead art of Celtic music, which is a type of yodel-like singing that requires complicated tongue movement. Moreover, when her mining father's copy of Robert Burns's poems and songs surfaced, complete with Papa Park's annotations, I knew that "pieces of the circumstances . . . were coming together," to borrow words from *Glue*. But I did not have enough to forge a deeper understanding of my genealogy. Like so many other contemporary Americans of Celtic descent, I fell for everything the late-twentieth-century Celtic Revival industry produced. However, it was Welsh who wrenched me from the kitsch vortex and grounded me with his novel *Marabou Stork Nightmares*. Using Spud's words again, it was "aw startin tae come thegither in my heid" and the "*real* characters" began to emerge. When it came to writing the present study, though, I felt as Spud did when he began his history of Leith. Something was still missing. I had all kinds of researched information to use, and I still had a hint of that kailyard romanticism to keep me inspired. However, concretion, as Marxists like say, was not occurring.

Then, in May 2003, I read a *Guardian* article, and I saw its accompanying photo.[258] A working-class woman who has had more than her share of hard knocks was swearing herself to the people, not only with her words but also with her flesh. Indeed, it seemed to me as if the people had inscribed themselves into her very being, and there she was in a government

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[258] Scott, "Holyrood Socialists Voice Their Defiance," *Guardian* [UK] 8 May 2003, 8 Aug. 2005 < http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,,951297,00.html>.

effectively born at the turn of the third millennium giving the people back to themselves. I knew

that by "the people," she meant her constituents in Glasgow and Scots from the Borders to the

Hebrides, but I felt as if she were speaking to the world. In an inexplicable way, I felt

transformed. Not as a descendent of Scottish miners and farmers, but as a human being

integrally connected to all other human beings, I recognized in her and then in myself an

alternative world. It was then that I knew, in a deep and palpable way, *what Welsh is after.*

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259 Murdo MacLeod, "Personal Allegiance: Socialist MSP Rosie Kane Taking the Oath to the Queen after Her Election in May," *Guardian* [UK] 8 May 2003, 8 Aug. 2005 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/ story/0,,951297,00.html>

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Appendix

Consent Form

From: Murdo Macleod <m@murdophoto.com>
To: Ben Lanier-Nabors <Benjamin_L-N@peoplepc.com>
Sent: Monday, August 22, 2005 5:10 PM
Subject: Re: Photo Permission

Dear Ben,

Be my guest.

Hope you get a good mark.

Best wishes

Murdo

On Monday, August 22, 2005, at 09:41 pm, Ben Lanier-Nabors wrote:

Dear Mr. MacLeod:

I wish to acquire permission to reprint a photograph in a manuscript that I am submitting as a dissertation. There is also a high possibility that the manuscript will be published as a book.

The photograph in question was published in the 8 May 2003 edition of *The Guardian*, adjoining an article by Kirsty Scott, "Holyrood Socialists Voice Their Defiance." The photo's caption reads, "Personal allegiance: Socialist MSP Rosie Kane taking the oath to the Queen after her election in May."

I intend to use the photo in the postscript to my manuscript, "After Scotland: Irvine Welsh and the Ethic of Emergence." I will be submitting the manuscript to a committee on 26 August 2005. Nevertheless, final submission to Louisiana State University will be in the middle of October.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your time and assistance concerning this matter. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,
Benjamin G. Lanier-Nabors, MA, ABD
Doctoral Candidate
Department of English, Allen Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
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225.927.0226

Vita

Benjamin George Lanier-Nabors (1971-) is a doctoral candidate at Louisiana State University. He holds a Master of Arts degree in English and a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education/language arts, both of which he received at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Since 1995, he has taught both high school and college courses in composition and literature. Mr. Lanier-Nabors has published in and edited for refereed academic and literary publications, including *College English* and the *New Delta Review*. Mr. Lanier-Nabors's general areas of interest are British and Irish literature and culture, critical theory, cultural studies, and philosophy. More specifically, his work focuses on modern and postmodern Scottish literature and culture, Marxism, postcolonialism, ethics, and Reformed theology. Mr. Lanier-Nabors currently resides in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where he raises his son, writes, and teaches.