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# ILLUMINATED CITIES: TRANSGRESSION AND TRANSCENDENCE IN URBAN SCOTTISH LITERATURE

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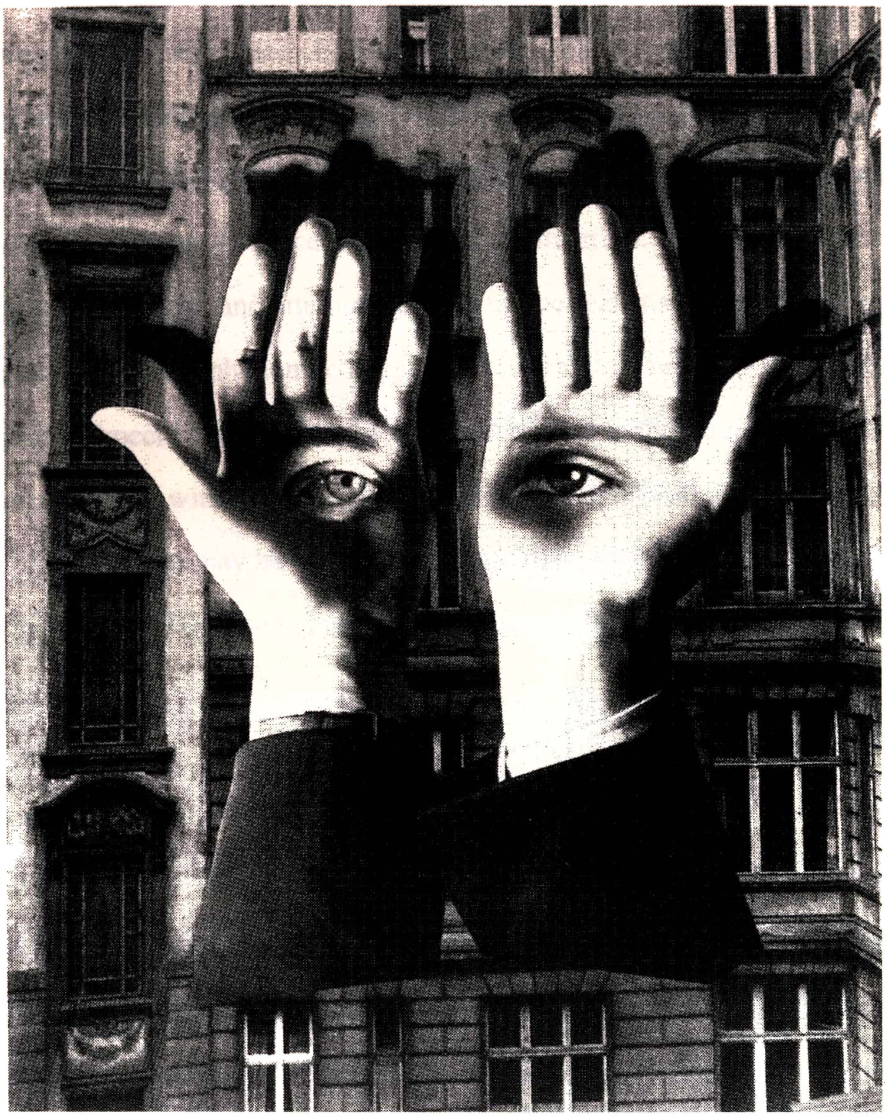

Herbert Bayer,'Lonesome City Dweller'(1932).
Museum Ludwig, Cologne.

# ABSTRACT

Canonical representation and critical appraisal of urban Scottish literature before the publication of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*, in 1981, emphasizes its innate realism. This realist reading pays attention to surfaces and objective identities, rather than subjective depths and transgressive or transcendent possibilities. It inevitably encounters areas of lack, absence and failure. This thesis proposes that the Scottish representation of the city, as in other literatures, is inextricable from its perception and subjectification. This thesis explores a number of non-realist readings and attempts to open up the realist surfaces. These opening strategies are prompted by the phenomenological and intertextual readings demanded by the works of Alexander Trocchi. Trocchi can be considered the linchpin in a body of urban literature that is concerned with transgressive modes of self-realization. From his pivotal position a line of inheritance may be drawn back to the male-authored urban visions of James Thomson and John Davidson, and forward to Irvine Welsh.

In the 'metaphysical' readings suggested in this thesis, the narrative delineates a quest for transcendence, catalysed by the protagonist's recognition of lack at a realist level and his desire for meaning within metaphysical or psychological depth. Thus, the city may represent a real place and ask for a realist reading, but it also functions as the controlling metaphor for concerns pertaining to personal identity. The city is a psychogeographical terrain that embodies an interplay between reality and the ideal. In the abject *topos* of the city, however, the dialectic of transcendence does not move toward totality of vision, or unity of identity. Negative and transgressive modes such as rupture and division are recuperated to engender a conception of transcendence based on 'becoming' and movement, rather than on a place or state of being.

The principle aim of this thesis is to address a shortfall in analytical criticism on the body of Scottish urban literature. It traces the representation of the city from nineteenth-century social and religious tracts, poetry and fantasy texts and suggests that such works are more appropriate forerunners to the modern urban Scottish novel than the sentimental and lightly humorous novels and stories of the so-called 'urban kailyard'. The tenets propounded in these early works are developed in a theme-driven analysis of Scottish canonical twentieth-century urban novels. Revisionary readings and recontextualization of these works, based on modernist and Continental literary and philosophical paradigms, aim to reappraise a hitherto disregarded tradition out of which has developed the recent flourishing of late twentieth-century Scottish writing.

# PREFACE

In 1962, Edwin Morgan called for a 'Beatnik in the Kailyard', a Scottish John Osborne who would turn an eye toward 'the huge suburban housing estates', and the struggle of urban experience 'that seems to cry out for literary embodiment'. Morgan's call was answered in 1993 when Irvine Welsh, an extremely 'angry young man', blazed out from Edinburgh's geographic and cultural margins with the novel *Trainspotting*. The press and style magazines praised Welsh's authentic vision of modern city life. In the British lifestyle monthly, *Loaded*, for example, Innes Reekie called Welsh a 'genius of the gutter' who spoke the 'voice of the generation'; an answer, it would seem, to Morgan's call for a writer for whom, like Osborne, 'thousands of young people . . . will vouch for the fact that he "spoke their language".'

The phenomenal success of Welsh's novel, due in part to the popularity of its adaptation to theatre and film, was not an isolated event. It was part of a burgeoning of urban Scottish fiction and poetry brought into the mainstream after the success, in 1981, of Alasdair Gray's novel, *Lanark*. Like *Trainspotting*, the novels of Gray, A. L. Kennedy, Janice Galloway, Jeff Torrington, James Kelman and Thomas Healy, depicted the city and its characters as disturbed and disturbing. Nevertheless, these bleak visions are also infused with an energy that transcends 'gritty realism' and a linguistic flair far more exuberant than the confinements of the 'kitchen sink' school would have allowed. Similar to the techniques of the surrealists, late twentieth-century Scottish writers appear to have one eye focused on the external world and the other eye looking inward: realities of post-industrial, post-Thatcherite urban decrepitude exist in a dynamic relationship with a kaleidoscopic inner landscape. This combination of reality and subjectivity is central to the unique visions of these texts. Yet it is not unprecedented in a tradition of urban expression in Scottish literature.

Any substantial consideration of the body of recent urban fiction necessitates reaching further back than *Lanark* (however seminal that novel is or comes to seem to be). One year after Morgan's essay, Alexander Trocchi's second novel, *Cain's Book*, was published in Britain (it had been published in America three years earlier, in 1960). This Scottish beatnik had fled his country, unwilling to conform to what he saw as an artistically and morally turgid environment. Trocchi's work was, and still is, largely overlooked by the Scottish literary establishment. Yet Welsh cites Trocchi as a direct influence on his own work, as well as that of his contemporaries. A line of inheritance may be drawn clearly from Welsh back to Trocchi. However, this line may be extended back still further to the hallucinatory perceptions of the city given by James Thomson and John Davidson. Trocchi's work is the crucial connection between these early representations of the city and the post-*Lanark* flourishing of city writing. Trocchi's concerns for the struggles of personal identity in an urban environment situate him at the centre of a tradition of Scottish urban writing that is itself, like Trocchi, also unfairly disregarded. This thesis is an attempt to explore and understand these concerns, that environment, and the tradition they inhabit.

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# INTRODUCTION

This thesis argues that a 'realist' representation of the city is nevertheless informed by the subjectivity of the protagonist who perceives it. The Scottish urban novel[1] is predominantly considered according to realistic or naturalistic literary modes. Assessed according to the extent to which it succeeds or fails in terms of its functioning within criteria of realistic literary representation, urban fiction until the 1980s has been poorly received. This thesis suggests that a 'metaphysical' reading of Scottish urban literature provides better insights with respect to notions of selfhood and self-realization (transcendence) than a merely 'realistic' (surface or explicit) reading, which reveals sordid existence (transgression) but not ideas of transcendence. A metaphysical imperative works out from a realist mode, and indeed, utilizes conceptions of 'transgression' in order to engender transcendence. This thesis aims to address a shortfall in scholarship and proposes to (re)contextualize Scottish literary cities within modernist, Continental city writing and philosophies of transgressive self-realization.

## Opening the Door: Alasdair Gray's *Lanark*

An extended scholarly study of the urban tradition in Scottish literature has yet to be published. Apart from William Donaldson's study of fiction in the nineteenth century press, in *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland*, there are no sustained reassessments of book-published urban literature. While Donaldson's study importantly unearths journalistic writing on the city, there are no similar considerations of the mainstream canon of urban literature, with which this study is concerned. It remains arguable whether a tradition exists at all and, if it does, whether it warrants scholarly attention. On the one hand, as Barry Wood argues, the introduction of an urban Scots voice proved crucial to the revival of the Scots language during the Scottish Renaissance. Wood suggests that the realist mode of the 1920s onwards plundered 'authentic' urban Scots to bring the language out from its marginalization in the English tradition and the kailyard school, and into a rich, regenerative mode of modern literary expression.[2] In Manfred Malzahn's view, the freedom afforded the writer in the industrial novel of the 1930s had resulted in a fruitful 'clash with the conventional "idea" of Scotland'.[3] On the other hand, however, James Kelman claims that, until the work of Tom Leonard and himself, no 'authentic' working-class urban expression existed due to censorship or suppression.[4] Such contradictory views fail to generate any sustained critical engagement with the body of urban literature. In the major surveys of the canon of Scottish literature by Alan Bold, Maurice Lindsay and Francis Russell Hart, discussion of the urban novel is limited to descriptive, self-reflexive and sometimes dismissive accounts. Canonical representation of the urban novel focuses on the extent to which the literature succeeds or fails within the parameters of literary realism.

Criticism of Scottish city writing emphasizes its innate realism.[5] Scottish critics have developed a working definition of realism as a documentary style of expression that disallows metaphysical themes. Christopher Whyte provides a 'tentative identikit' of realist urban fiction:

> Glasgow life is felt as a raw, untapped material, an unleavened mass, and the urge is first and foremost to transcribe, to denounce. . . . Realism as a mode hinders transcendence (its self-effacement to this extent proving a trap) and cannot treat the making or operation of art within the novel itself.[6]

Douglas Gifford, in *The Dear Green Place?* (1985), gives an exclusively realist interpretation of urban literature that shows non-realist themes to appear inappropriate. He lists authors as diverse as Alexander Trocchi, William McIlvanney, Alan Spence and Alasdair Gray as proponents of a tradition of failed transcendence:

> In each case the novel will present a sensitive protagonist struggling to articulate his reactions to his environment; in ways, firstly, in which he has been encouraged at university, at art school, or even within the books he's read and the company he's kept. Gradually he will realise that he cannot accept these ways — or it will be borne in violently upon him. A failure of language, of communication, will take place. He will turn in upon himself in increasing solipsism, rejecting his art, his friends, and tormenting himself with the destruction of anything he has achieved in art and in relationships. Alienation or nervous breakdown, mocked by a sense of total loss of 'green places in the mind', will often be

> the end; or a sense of bewilderment about future evolution. And 'myth' or national destiny, expressed through shared symbols, is most certainly an agreement of the past; the notion of communal identity, let alone Scottish identity, is lost to these writers.[7]

This precis is perfectly valid within the scope of a realist reading. Yet 'transcendence' is a non-realist abstraction. Chapters three and six of this thesis explore the ways that Alexander Trocchi, Edward Gaitens, Archie Hind and James Kelman may problematize the making of art, but show that its tensions with urban reality and literary realism are central to a protagonist's creative search for existential meaning. The study that follows suggests that alongside realist readings, non-realist approaches might also be considered. For the purposes of this thesis, 'non-realist' modes are analogous to notions of 'subjectivity' or metaphysicality. These will be delineated more specifically as the discussion develops, but in summary may include spiritual, psychological or philosophical concerns and can be seen manifested in the surreal, the fantastic, in mythic motifs, and in their more diffuse uses of depth, repetition, hallucination and disintegration.

This thesis argues that a revisionary reading incorporating both realism and non-realism may offer insights into the critically noted phenomenon of the 'absence' of a tradition of urban literature. Gifford concludes *The Dear Green Place?* with the contention that 'there is a Scottish fictional tradition, *but that that tradition is precisely about the writer's repeated sense of their* [*sic*] *being no tradition*'.[8] Similarly, Whyte argues that 'Glasgow lacks, in cultural terms, context and collocation. To this extent it is nowhere'.[9] Such views echo Edwin Muir's complaints, notably made in 'The Functionlessness of Scotland' (1931) and *Scott and Scotland* (1936), that there is an absence of an authentic national culture due to the lack of a powerful urban centre. Thus, compared to other nations, Scottish urban writing is considered practically non-existent. Critics consider that a refusal to face reality led to a silence that lasted until the proliferation of socialist realism in the 1930s.[10] Chapter one proposes that these notions of absence and silence may point toward a non-realist mode that has hitherto been overlooked in considerations of urban writing.[11] Rosemary Jackson notes, in a study of the subversive function of the fantastic in literature, that '[t]he fantastic traces the unsaid and the unseen of culture: that which has been silenced, made invisible, covered over and made "absent".'[12] In a realistic conceptualization of the literary city notions of absence draw us toward areas of 'non-meaning'. In a non-realistic framework, however, such places of absence are, potentially, both existentially and socially transformative. It was only in 1981, with the publication of Alasdair Gray's *Lanark: A Life in Four Books*, that a use of both realism and non-realist modes was clearly seen to give emphatic voice to the urban novel.

The successful juxtaposition in *Lanark* of urban realism and non-realist literary modes transformed the way critics were to view subsequent city writing in Scotland. Beat Witschi comments that the work 'successfully transcend[ed] the literary stalemate of the Glasgow novel', propelling it, albeit belatedly, 'out of its limbo and . . . into modernity'.[13] In Cairns Craig's view, *Lanark* releases the Glasgow novel from 'the dead-end world' of realism,[14] and Malzahn concedes that '[t]he transcendence of reality allows the experimental realisation of positive or negative possibilities inherent in the reality described'.[15] Brian McCabe acknowledges *Lanark*'s achievement by way of a metaphor that, in its evocation of architectural fissure and moving beyond surfaces and unitary meaning, is appropriate for the propositions of this thesis:[16]

> *Lanark*'s importance consists in the fact that it has opened a very large door in the windowless little room of Scottish fiction, a door we did not know to be there, and only now can we begin to realise how much scope there is.[17]

Analyses of post-*Lanark* urban literature focus on a wide range of psychological, structuralist, linguistic and philosophical preoccupations, yet there have been no sustained reassessments of book-published urban literature before *Lanark*. These concerns, so evident in *Lanark*, are not unprecedented in the Scottish urban tradition from which it draws.[18]

The present study is only concerned with the post-*Lanark* rise of urban writing insofar as these works can be viewed as part of a tradition of urban writing. In earlier incarnations of this tradition, non-realist themes are more deeply embedded. To compare and contrast recent works would merely invite an endless pluralism. Instead, the argument proposed here should achieve its weight through notions of depth, both historical and theoretical. In this sense, the study develops a framework whose foundations arise not in postmodernism, but in modernism.[19] Despite Malzahn's view that 'Scottish fiction has missed out on the modernist phase . . . . [It leaps] from romanticism to post-modernism',[20] the concerns encountered in the urban novel are in line with the modernist, existentialist[21] urban paradigms of, for instance, Baudelaire and Eliot. A definition of modernism given by the Caribbean writer, Wilson Harris, and his questioner in a 1989 seminar at Cambridge University, provides a framework for the tenets of this thesis. The questioner suggests to Harris that his work lies 'between realism and post-modernism, therefore in modernism, and [he has] associated that with the idea of an infinite rehearsal of readings and meanings'. Harris agrees and adds that postmodernism 'has denied depth. Therefore it has ruled out the unconscious'. In the unconscious, Harris insists, lie the 'vague outlines' of that which has been hitherto 'neglect[ed] or ignore[d]'.[22]

## The Subjectification of the City

Kurt Wittig's survey, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (1958), is unique in emphasizing that Scottish urban fiction is not merely realistic, but part of a long-standing tradition of literary expression that concerns itself with a 'subjectification of reality'.[23] Explicitly, in Wittig's view, an ostensibly realistic or naturalistic setting does not exist independent of the subject who perceives, interprets and records it. Neil Gunn, in 'The Landscape Inside' (1959), explains that a novelist 'describe[s] the mood of a character by describing the background, the physical scene. Or vice versa. There is a sort of oblique traffic between the two, and this can thicken the texture of both'.[24] Yet this sort of relationship ascribed to a rural setting has not been transposed to an urban context. This is surprising considering a widely recognized interchange of city and subjectivity in literary, historical and sociological views of the city outside of Scotland.

To read the Scottish city metageographically — that is, as a fantastic, psychical, spiritual or metaphysical terrain — is appropriate because the city has, from its historical beginnings, embodied all of these. The material structure of a city is a monument of the human endeavour to overcome physical limits. Defying human mortality, nature, time and space, the city is traditionally associated with the cosmic or divine. If the city was, in its beginnings, a place where humans might reach upward toward the divine, it was also, as Ihab Hassan points out, 'the place where divine powers entered human space. The sky gods came, and where they touched the earth, kings and heroes rose to . . . build a city'.[25] Burton Pike suggests that this two-way association with divinity is ambivalent. He recounts enduring mythic and archetypal perceptions of cities to illustrate their denotation as both affirming and destructive:

> From the beginning the image of the city served as the nexus of many things . . . presumption (Babel), corruption (Babylon), perversion (Sodom and Gomorrah), power (Rome), destruction (Troy, Carthage), death, the plague (the City of Dis) and revelation (the heavenly Jerusalem).[26]

The city's formative association with divinity meant that it was also a place of sanctioned violence and sacrifice. In Lewis Mumford's encyclopedic study, *The City in History* (1961), he notes that, in early cities, physical aggression was given mystical signification. Primitive forms of child sacrifice and cannibalism were abolished in favour of ritualized war because, writes Mumford: 'the city itself in its structure and institutions continued to give war both a durable concrete form and a magical pretext for existence'.[27] Thus the city was a 'container of organized violence' (p. 59), generating an urban ethos of regimentation, conformity and anxiety that were inextricable from notions of spirituality and existence. The physical structure of the city itself, with its high walls and towers, 'perpetuated the animus, the isolation and self-assertion' of life within it (p. 58). Such hostility, coupled with 'the division of labour and castes' led to a 'normalized schizophrenia' (p. 59). The ancient city 'tended to transmit a collective personality structure whose more extreme manifestations are now recognized in individuals as pathological' (p. 60). It is a tendency that is still true, Mumford remarks, of the modern city.

In Marshall Berman's delineation of the early modernist city, in *All that is Solid Melts into Air* (1983), a city's traditional embodiment of both the real and the ideal means that: 'The street was experienced as the medium in which the totality of modern material and spiritual forces could meet, clash, interfuse and work out their ultimate meanings and fates'.[28] Joyce Carol Oates remarks on the negative outcome of such a dialectic of real and ideal; the material city has absorbed the sacred city and thus 'the contemporary City . . . must always be read as if it were utopian (that is, 'sacred') — and consequently a tragic disappointment, a species of hell'.[29] This dystopian vision of the city is inherent in Scottish urban writing.

In Scottish writing about cities, generally the terrain is seen as a fallen Eden, a Hell, or a Hades, and is a projection of the protagonist's psychological and ontological state of lost contact with primordial unity. This dark social vision catalyses a protagonist's quest for lost grace, or escape. It is the same whether one considers Stevenson's London, Trocchi's New York, or Welsh's Edinburgh. In this respect, the negative aesthetic of uncanny or abject urban space and experience actually presents the possibility of choice, and forces a subjective response, or engagement, with place that a utopian view does not.[30]

In Scottish fiction around the time of the 'Renaissance' in the 1920s and 1930s, movement from the country to the city also traces a shift from innocence to experience of sin. In Fionn MacColla's *The Albannach* (1932), Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Scots Quair* (1932-1934) and Neil Gunn's *The Serpent* (1943), for example, evil is made conscious in the city which is eventually abandoned for an atoning reunification with the land, albeit not without its complexities and ambiguities. In the works to be analysed in the chapters that follow, a Romantic dichotomization of country and city has disappeared and the city comprises a self-contained universe. Gert Beulens, quoting Kristiaan Versluys, comments on the consequence of this loss of nature to urban reality and its perception:

> '[M]odern city poetry is no longer written from the viewpoint of Nature but from an intra-urban vantage-point'. . . . The city is experienced from within its own limits. . . . [T]his also comes to mean that . . . [n]ature and city, subject and object,

> mind and reality are brought together in one realm of being, which often takes the form of a city.[31]

Thus, in an urban quest, the hero may circle within the confines of a city turbulent with internal contradictions, unable to escape because the city also represents a psychical self-contained universe. In a city/psyche interchange we may consider Wittig's notion of a 'subjectified reality' as related, at least superficially, to the Hegelian dialectic, which sees a spiralling of two polarities interposed, not only dialogically, but in a dynamic reduplication and transformation. Central to the works encountered here is the way that urban space, as a concomitant of being, affords a vertiginous interchange between labyrinthine depth and intoxicating height, inner dwellings and outside alleys, destruction and transcendence, real and ideal. In Gaston Bachelard's phenomenological methodology, central to the present thesis and discussed later in this introduction, external space and inner self are interwoven into a ceaselessly shifting process of becoming:

> Outside and inside form a dialectic of division. . . . 'This side' and 'beyond' are faint repetitions of the dialectics of inside and outside . . . . Thus, in being, everything is circuitous, roundabout, recurrent. . . . But what a spiral man's being represents! And what a number of invertible dynamisms there are in this spiral! One no longer knows . . . whether one is running toward the center or escaping.[32]

### The Heroic Quest: The Problem of 'Totality' and the Uses of Division

In the works discussed in this thesis, the subject who is the centre of consciousness is male. This male character is invariably solipsistic and self-interrogating — there are remarkably few crowds in Scottish cities. Keith Dixon remarks on the prevalence of self-absorbed and pathological male psyches, noting that urban writing is 'very much male-centred; solitary, white, working-class, socialistic males abound. And the anguish is very much of a masculine variety'.[33] This is similar to urban writing in other literatures.[34] It is not the intention of the present study to argue the validity of this convention;[35] rather, its purpose is to re-evaluate a tradition of urban writing by way of thematic and philosophical concerns discernible in the works of two male authors, Alexander Trocchi and Irvine Welsh.[36] An analogous line of inheritance cannot be traced between the works of two female authors. The early city writing of, for example, Catherine Carswell is significant in itself, yet *Open the Door!* (1920) and *The Camomile* (1922) are not direct precedents to the contemporary works of Janice Galloway, A. L. Kennedy and Alison Smith. The only female authored text in this study is Margaret Oliphant's 'The Land of Darkness', discussed in chapter one. However, it is significant that Oliphant's protagonist in this story is male. In another of Oliphant's stories, 'The Beleaguered City', the removal of women and children from the city, leaving only its male population to cope with its ghostly infestation, is also illuminating in its inscription of urban crisis as a consequence of male sin. This knowledge of sin induces guilt, which the male protagonist seeks to transcend through conceptualization and language.

In his study of the Romantic tradition of literature, *Natural Supernaturalism* (1973), M. H. Abrams summarizes the characteristic journey made by a (male) hero toward transcendence. The thematic organization of this thesis loosely corresponds with the stages in the convention of the quest:

> The poet or philosopher, as the avant-garde of the general human consciousness, possesses the vision of . . . a recovered paradise or a golden age. The movement toward this goal is a circuitous journey and quest, ending in the attainment of self-knowledge, wisdom, and power. This educational process is a fall from primal unity into self-division, self-contradiction, and self-conflict, but the fall is in turn regarded as an indispensable first step along the way toward a higher unity which will justify the sufferings undergone en route. The dynamic of the process is the tension toward closure of the division, contraries, or 'contradictions' themselves. The beginning and end of the journey is man's ancestral home, which is often linked with a female contrary from whom he has, upon setting out, been disparted. The goal of this long inner quest is to be reached by a gradual ascent, or else by a sudden breakthrough of imagination or cognition; in either case, however, the achievement of the goal . . . is often signalized by a loving union with the feminine other, upon which man finds himself thoroughly at home with himself, his milieu, and his family of fellow men.[37]

Abrams points out that this circuitous journey towards a transcendent unity (of self and community) is driven by the dialectic. Hegel explicates the dialectical method in *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807). The dialectic consists of cyclical processes of division, conflict, reconciliation and transformation of antitheses. The dialectic in the *Phenomenology* is illustrated as a 'biography' encompassing both individual and collective consciousness. It is related in the manner of a heroic quest, as the hero moves from what Hegel terms a 'self-alienated condition' to 'Absolute knowledge', which is 'the point at which knowledge is no longer compelled to go out beyond itself'.[38] Abrams offers a summary:

> Life is a painfully progressive self-education, rendered in the plot-form of a circuitous journey from an initial self-division and departure, through diverse reconciliations and ever renewing estrangements, conflicts, reversals, and crises of spiritual death and rebirth. This plot turns out to be the unwitting quest of the spirit to redeem itself by repossessing its own lost and sundered self, in an ultimate recognition of its own identity whereby, as Hegel says in his concluding section, it can be 'at home with itself in its otherness'.[39]

The aim of the Hegelian dialectic as well as archetypal and Romantic heroic quests is an attainment of personal and communal unity. However, the industrial (and post-industrial) city built alongside and following the Romantic era creates a different locus for these quests. In this locus of the city, unity is disallowed. An urban ethos of flux, sacrifice, regimentation and pathology has, in modernist visions of the city, evolved into an aesthetic of disintegration.[40] Perhaps the earliest and most prophetic poetic understanding of this is suggested in William Blake's 'London' (1794). Yet as a metageographical terrain, the city's dissemination is also that of the hero. The city's association in historical and literary traditions with physical and mental forms of schism seems to have exacerbated the Scottish predilection for doubled and shadowed characters.[41] In this respect, the Romantic poet most representative of what was to come is not Blake but Byron. Certainly, some aspects of the Byronic hero may be considered as a precedent to the urban protagonists of this study. Byron's poetry combines, as Marshall Walker points out, the 'real world' with 'a subjective imagination', his persona is 'half dust, half deity'. Walker also notes Byron's 'independently creative "I AM"' and the phenomenological implications for this acclamation of sovereignty when, in *Childe Harold* (1812-1818), he writes: 'I live not in myself, but I become / Portion of that around me".'[42] Significantly, Abrams excludes Byron from his study because he 'speaks with an ironic counter-voice and deliberately opens a satirical perspective of the vatic stance of his Romantic contemporaries'.[43] This disruptive, divisive aesthetic is, more importantly, recuperated into positive value by its expression. Bernard Blackstone has noted that 'the increasingly fragmented Byron, [made] poetic capital out of his inner disunity'.[44]

Disunity, hellish visions, evil, violence and pathology are not necessarily enervating or annihilating. Negative modes provide the driving impetus of the dialectic. An assertion that evil is positively energetic is famously made by Blake, in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790-93), in a reiteration of the emphasis he places on the interdependence of innocence and experience: 'Without Contraries is no progression. . . . From these contraries spring what the religious call Good & Evil. Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy.'[45] Walter Benjamin, one of the most prolific enthusiasts of the city's abject energies argues, after Dostoevsky's *The Possessed*, in 'Surrealism' (1929), that 'evil stems entirely from our spontaneity, and in it we are independent and self-sufficient beings'.[46] The creative impetus of 'evil' is more recently and locally reiterated by Edwin Morgan in a response to the cleaning-up of Glasgow during its promotion as City of Culture in the 1990s: 'it's much harder to write about central Glasgow today, which has had its face lifted — this doesn't give rise to feelings from which poems come'.[47] Two other vociferous proponents of a recuperation of negative modes for art and identity are Hugh MacDiarmid and Alexander Trocchi. MacDiarmid, for example, in his Foreword to Sydney Goodsir Smith's Edinburgh-set *Carotid Cornucopius* (1964), praises its representation of the 'uproarious, scandalous, drunken life of the city' and its 'topers and lechers and fantasticks'. The 'real life and nature' of the city, he continues, 'is beneath the thin distemper of conventional cant'.[48] It is an opinion that is also the backbone of Trocchi's personal, political and artistic vision.

## The Centrality of Alexander Trocchi

Trocchi's place in the Scottish tradition of literature is ignored in the critical accounts of Alan Bold, Maurice Lindsay and Francis Russell Hart and in the volume on the twentieth century in *The History of Scottish Literature*, edited by Cairns Craig. Trocchi has been largely excluded from the canon. However, the publication of his biography and the republication of his literary and pornographic novels, short stories and essays, continue a re-evaluation that began shortly after his death in 1984, when, under the editorship of Peter Kravitz, issue number 70 of the *Edinburgh Review* (1985), was published, to which Edwin Morgan, Christopher Logue, John Calder and Tom McGrath contributed articles. Trocchi is now intertextualized with Welsh by Neil McMillan in an essay, 'Junked Exiles', collected in Norquay and Smyth's *Space and Place: Geographies of Literature* (1998); he is mentioned in Moira Burgess's *Imagine a City* (1998); and he is signally acknowledged in Marshall Walker's recent study, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (1996), as a precedent to Kelman and Gray. However, he is yet to be canonized, and even Craig's new study, *The Modern* Scottish *Novel* (1999), refuses to include Trocchi within its scope.[49] When Irvine Welsh cites Trocchi as a major influence on his work it is not only because of their common interest in narcotics. Welsh says:

> Trocchi was an empowering figure for those trying to escape the shackles of Scottishness. These tedious nationalistic issues that every Scottish writer is supposed to engage in are so limiting. *Young Adam* was such a breath of fresh air after all those sickly, horrible celebrations of Scottishness. Trocchi was . . . [an] appropriate role model because of his internationalist lifestyle and his attack on Scottish parochialism.[50]

Welsh's attack of stale 'nationalistic' preoccupations mirrors Trocchi's own criticism of MacDiarmid (despite their common recognition of the value of 'negative energy') as a 'rabid nationalistic moralist' intolerant of 'all post-war fiction concerned with the problem of "identity" and international in outlook'.[51] In view of this, the following study interrogates existential rather than 'Scottish' conceptions of identity within a broad literary and philosophical context that includes Continental as well as Scottish influences.[52] In Welsh's view, Trocchi's internationalist and liberal views are antithetical to those of Hugh

MacDiarmid who, for Welsh, is 'a symbol of all that's perfectly hideous about Scotland'.[53] It is true that MacDiarmid chooses to turn away from any enduring engagement with the modern urban scene, which was an anathema to him.[54] It is also true that in MacDiarmid's later career he came to espouse political and creative dogma and became the leading figure of the Scottish literary Establishment he had earlier condemned. However, in MacDiarmid's early works and, most strikingly, in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), he engages with metaphysical, sexual and intoxicatory themes comparable to those in Trocchi's and Welsh's novels.[55] In the final chapter of this thesis *A Drunk Man* is viewed as a crucial precedent to the subjectification of women and the uses of sexual violence in Trocchi's *Young Adam* (1954) and others. Despite the now sensationalized clash between Trocchi and MacDiarmid at the Writers' Conference at the Edinburgh Festival of 1962, Trocchi can be situated in the canon with MacDiarmid, rather than against him, as Welsh would have it.[56] Indeed, so can Welsh.

Trocchi's public statements subsequent to the 1962 clash, in which he criticizes MacDiarmid for being among other things, a 'nationalistic moralist', belie a quite different private side. Andrew Murray Scott, in his biography of Trocchi, quotes from a personal letter Trocchi had written to MacDiarmid prior to the Edinburgh Festival of 1964, inviting his attendance at an unofficial writers' conference. In Scott's view, the conciliatory tone of the letter is meant with 'his tongue firmly in his cheek!'[57] Yet, seen alongside MacDiarmid's replies to Trocchi, which are civil and friendly, there is no sense of anything but a mutual respect. In these replies, newly come to light (included in the Appendix at the end of this thesis), it is evident that the two men had hoped to meet and discuss their ideas, Trocchi also having sent a copy of his politico-artistic manifesto, 'Sigma: A Tactical Blueprint' (1962), for an opinion.[58] In light of this, John Calder's comments may be more perceptive, as he points out the writers' similarities and point — or points — of departure. MacDiarmid, he observes, 'was really on [Trocchi's] side of the fence and was also a bohemian, a left-winger, a man opposed to establishment values, but who was rather puritanical'.[59] Trocchi reacts against moral propriety ('I am only interested in lesbianism and sodomy' he had quipped to MacDiarmid) and seeks sexual as well as narcotic and other excesses wherever possible.[60] His desire for extremes and for disrupting categories of all kinds brings to mind MacDiarmid's antisyzygical imperative in *A Drunk Man*, to 'aye be whaur extremes meet'. A dialectical poetics is also appropriate to Trocchi's concerns. His disparagement of an 'Aristotelian impulse to classify' and of the 'clots of rigid categories in criticism and life'[61] are reminiscent of Hegel's words concerning the dialectical method: 'In aiming at completeness, it treats categories as fluid and constantly amending themselves'.[62] Furthermore, Trocchi's insistence on a recuperation of marginality, base material, and 'evil' to facilitate such a destruction of orthodox forms of behaviour and expression to achieve an intensity of self-consciousness echoes Hegel's emphasis on the integral nature of negative modes to the dialectical process.

However, whereas MacDiarmid's dialectics ultimately advocated a poetic positioning 'whaur extremes meet', Trocchi, by contrast: 'often wondered how far out a man could go without being obliterated'.[63] Rather than a sense of reconciliation or unity, Trocchi advocates a notion of transcendence in extremes that border on self-destruction. Thus, Trocchi fashions his author-personas as an exiled Cain or a Byronic hero: 'The wandering outlaw of his own dark mind'.[64] Trocchi describes himself in *Cain's Book* as 'a little Lucifer constantly discovering himself after his eviction'. All of Trocchi's narrators are rebels.[65] Like Byron's personifications of both Lucifer and Cain in the dramatic poem, *Cain: A Mystery* (1821), Trocchi's heroes seek a radical sovereign identity within the fact of their guilt and identification with evil. In the Bible, Cain is not only the first criminal, he also turns away from the pastoral and idyllic to build the first city. Like all of the protagonists who people the word-cities discussed in this thesis, to ask Trocchi's question, 'who am I?' is also to ask the question 'where am I?' In Trocchi's works, the city is an evocative setting for a transgression of boundaries and for extreme and abject experience in a quest for transcendence. This configuration of self and city informs the readings in this thesis.

## Methodology and Outline of Chapters

This thesis ranges discursively across a number of methodologies appropriate to the themes of each chapter, which will be introduced as they arise. In common to each chapter is a notion of a 'subjectified vision of reality', and thus a phenomenological methodology underpins each of the themes explored. The phenomenological method used in this study is modelled on Gaston Bachelard's seminal *The Poetics of Space* (1958). Here, Bachelard's concern is for the way space is perceived and interpreted so that it is no longer objective: 'Space that has been seized upon by the imagination cannot remain indifferent space'.[66] He describes phenomenology as 'a study of the phenomenon of the poetic image when it emerges into the consciousness as a direct product of the heart, soul and being of man, apprehended in his actuality' (p. xviii). His emphasis is on 'simple images of *felicitous space*' (p. xxxv) that reveal the *unity* of 'heart, soul and being of man' (p. xviii). However, for Bachelard, as here, the city's flux and fragmentary nature signifies disunified being. This study, dealing with urban dystopias and images which Bachelard describes as 'apocalyptic', is in accordance with his delineation of the city as a place of 'hatred and combat' (p. xxxvi). Bachelard is categorical in his inscription of the city as a place of displaced and fractured modes of being, represented by 'oneirically incomplete' tenement housing:

> From the street to the roof, the rooms pile up one on top of the other, while the tent of a horizonless sky encloses the entire city. But the height of the city buildings is a purely *exterior* one. Elevators do away with the heroism of stair climbing so that there is no longer any virtue in living up near the sky. *Home* has become mere horizontality. . . . [A] house in a big city lacks cosmicity. For here, where houses are no longer set in natural surroundings, the relationship between house and space becomes an artificial one. Everything about it is mechanical and, on every side, intimate living flees. (p. 27)

French avant-garde theorist and novelist, Georges Bataille, conflates self and city in Bachelard's terms of lost 'cosmicity'. Bataille views architecture, as Leslie Anne Boldt notes, as 'the concrete manifestation of the folds in which "being" is harbored'.[67] However, his notion of 'being' is not found in the continuous line of an edifice; rather it is revealed in moments of rupture or the transgression of continuity. Bataille is concerned only with transgressive and rupturous modes of experience as a means of transcendence and his theories are used throughout this thesis, particularly in regard to the works of Trocchi.

As noted, the thematic concerns of this thesis are loosely mapped according to the itinerary of a traditional heroic quest. The first two chapters provide a chronological survey of Scottish visions of the city in literature, drawing on ostensibly realistic as well as fantastic representations. This overview provides a historical and conceptual context for subsequent chapters and outlines the principle tenets of the thesis through close readings of a range of texts. Chapter one deals with the way that the reality of the city is subjectified in terms of its ability or inability to enable transcendence in religious terms. In chapter two, moral, psychological and psychogeographical concerns raised in the first chapter are developed in the context of a secularized city where a search for transcendence nevertheless continues.

Chapter three focuses on Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book* and, to a lesser degree, *Young Adam.* By way of close readings using Bachelard's phenomenological method and Bataille's theory of transcendence, this chapter explores the ways in which personal identity is revealed through the protagonist's subjectification of the city. Notions therein of the hero as outsider, the desire for a non-religious sovereign being and its retrieval through profane, negative and abject modes of experience are paradigmatic to the thematic concerns of subsequent chapters.

Chapter four explores the way public transport may signify a protagonist's metaphysical journey. Here the mundane and the transcendent can be encountered in integral relation. Caught in a conflict between pre-destination and self-willed destiny, the protagonist is also pulled between a desire for a 'religious' unification with his environment and fellows and for autonomous identity.

In chapter five, a notion of unity is denied in the mythical terms with which the city is subjectified. Drawing on the conventional image of the city as a labyrinth, a degeneration of mythic symbols can be traced, where a goal of pre-natal unity is lost to the hero's self-division and an increasing association with the Minotaur.

Chapter six develops the notion of the protagonist as an 'outsider' within a dynamic of social and individual divisions, who seeks to gain sovereign identity in language. To this end, a dialectical process seeks to recuperate a sordid reality and enable an authentic self-realization, made via Lacan's theory of the 'mirror stage', based on division rather than unity. Movement may be made toward wholeness, represented by the unitary forms of realism; but it actually progresses toward disruption and heterogeneity, more appropriate to urban vision and identity, and seen in the regenerative multivocal and vernacular linguistic achievements of late twentieth-century Scottish urban novels.

Finally, chapter seven considers masculine self-division in gendered terms, so that, in a psychogeographical analysis, a female character may be a projection of a repressed femininity with which the male protagonist must fuse. However, unification is problematic considering a protagonist's tendency to self-laceration. A phallocentric, masculine identification is questioned but, in the conventions of the realistic novel to which this identification is tied, such an identity is ultimately reaffirmed.

In its entirety, this thesis aims to address a shortfall in the field of urban literary criticism. The approach offered is taken from a line of inheritance drawn from Alexander Trocchi to Irvine Welsh and applied to a range of urban texts. It offers a revisionary reading of the Scottish literary city, extending its contextualization to incorporate a modernist Continental tradition, based on individual rather than national concerns. It suggests that non-realist as well as realist readings may offer insights in regard to the struggles and problematization of an individual's self-realization or transcendence. An acknowledgment of these new readings opens out a tradition of urban literature hitherto deemed 'absent' or 'failed' by a critical heritage that privileges realist interpretation.

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[1] The major concern of this thesis lies in the representation of the city in the novel. However, in tracing a tradition of the literary city from the nineteenth century, I have recourse to religious and socialist tracts and poetry of that time, which, as I argue in the first chapter of this thesis, are crucial precursors to the concerns that subsequently emerge in novel form.

[2] Barry Wood, 'Scots, Poets and the City', in *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 4, Twentieth Century*, ed. by Cairns Craig (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 337-348 (p. 337).

[3] Manfred Malzahn, 'The Industrial Novel', in *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 4, Twentieth Century*, pp. 229-241 (p. 240).

[4] James Kelman, 'The Importance of Glasgow in my Work', in *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), pp. 81-84.

[5] Definitions for literary realism are numerous and variable. Good general overviews are provided by Furst 1992 and Nash 1993.

[6] Christopher Whyte, 'Imagining the City: The Glasgow Novel', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Twentieth Century*, ed. by Joachim Schwend and Horst W. Drescher (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 317-333 (p. 319).

[7] Douglas Gifford, *The Dear Green Place?: The Novel in the West of Scotland* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1985), p. 8.

[8] Ibid., p. 14.

[9] 'Imagining the City', p. 318.

[10] See, for instance, Noble 1985, Massie 1987, Witschi 1991.

[11] Colin Manlove, in *Scottish Fantasy Literature*, notes that fantastic modes of expression are often overlooked or undervalued, particularly in Scotland, where 'the Scottish literary tradition has always tended to value social realism' (p. 1).

[12] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 4.

[13] Beat Witschi, *Glasgow Urban Writing and Postmodernism: A Study of Alasdair Gray's Fiction*, Scottish Studies; Vol. 12 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1991), pp. 7-8.

[14] Cairns Craig, 'Going Down to Hell is Easy: *Lanark*, Realism and The Limits of the Imagination', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 90-107 (p. 93).

[15] Manfred Malzahn, 'The Industrial Novel', in *The History of Scottish Literature, Vol. 4, Twentieth Century*, pp. 229-242 (p. 239).

[16] Alex Clunas, in an article on narrative practice in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, notes the way that, in a phenomenological reading also central to this thesis, doors function to disrupt surfaces and enclosure, and invite reinterpretation: 'Doors . . . can lock out, limit or, when open, allow passage from one order of space to another. Open doors, therefore, can mark a point of transgression or discovery or both; closed doors preserve the liminal integrity of the 'world' that is a room . . . . In the psychological and phenomenological economy that is the system of a house, doors permit unity and division. . . . Passage may be made from one kind of space to another in vertical or horizontal traverses from low to high and from high to low, from outer to inner and from inner to outer. . . . [W]e experience [doors] as disruptions that may require shifts in our perception' (Clunas 1994, p. 174).

[17] Brian McCabe, 'No Real City', in *New Edinburgh Review*, 54 (May 1981), 10-12 (12).

[18] A glance over Gray's ludic footnotes to *Lanark* shows, for example, his influence by Scottish writers George Douglas Brown, Thomas Carlyle, Archie Hind, Hugh MacDiarmid and George MacDonald. James Kelman has also spoken of his indebtedness to precedents: 'I see myself very much as part of a tradition, and the idea of being regarded as an 'original' writer I actually find embarrassing. I'm only involved in tradition, through prose, maybe through Scotland, in a way that people are perhaps not used to. It's been going on for 120, 140 years, since, say, James Hogg — earlier. I'm doing it in a way they can maybe now relate to and so they say "Oh Christ, this is new". It's not new at all, just that they've now discovered it' (Kelman to McNeill 1989, p. 4).

[19] Alasdair Gray locates his own work within modernism rather than postmodernism. In an interview with Joe McAvoy, he says: 'I don't think I am (a Postmodernist). To me postmodernism is a school of criticism not a school of writing. I think I'm an old-fashioned modernist like James Joyce or Laurence Sterne — we've been around for a very long time' (Gray to McAvoy [1998], p. 7).

[20] Manfred Malzahn, *Aspects of Identity: The Contemporary Scottish Novel (1978-1981) as National Self-Expression* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1984), p. 213.

[21] My use of the term 'existentialist' in this thesis denotes a general concern for a secularized notion of individual existence rather than the formal tenets of philosophical Existentialism described by Kierkegaard and Sartre.

[22] Wilson Harris, 'Judgement and Dream', in *The Radical Imagination: Lectures and Talks*, ed. by Alan Riach and Mark Williams (Liege, Belgium: Liege Language and Literature, 1992), pp. 17-31 (p. 30).

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[23] Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver & Boyd, 1958). Although there have been a number of extensive and encyclopedic surveys of Scottish literature following Wittig's study, his work remains the only one to mix a historical overview with an underlying thesis. In particular, his short but positive account of the modern urban novel situates it in a broad literary tradition that characteristically questions and subjectifies reality. Wittig's thesis of a 'subjectified version of reality' is discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

[24] Neil Gunn, 'The Landscape Inside', in *Landscape and Light: Essays by Neil Gunn*, ed. by Alistair McCleery (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 74-77 (p. 74).

[25] Ihab Hassan, 'Cities of Mind, Urban Words: The Dematerialization of Metropolis in Contemporary American Fiction', in *Literature and the Urban Experience: Essays on the City and Literature*, ed. by Michael C. Jaye and Ann Chalmers Watts (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1981) pp. 93-112 (p. 94).

[26] Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature*(Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 6-7.

[27] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, its Transformations and its Prospects* (London: Penguin, 1991), p. 58. Further references in this chapter will be given after quotations in the text.

[28] Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 316.

[29] Joyce Carol Oates, 'Imaginary Cities: America', in *Literature and the Urban Experience*, pp. 11-33 (p. 11).

[30] Jonathan Dollimore suggests that the transference of religious to secular transcendence carries with it the necessity of tragedy or dystopia. He refers to this contention in the philosophy of Nietzsche, summarizing that religious and idealistic (that is, transcendent) modes claim superiority over materiality. Yet, idealism is dependent on a withering of material life: 'It is not only that . . . the entire counterfeit of transcendence and of the hereafter has grown up on the basis of an impoverished life, but that transcendence comes to constitute an ideological mystification of the conditions of impoverishment from which it grew: impoverishment shifts from being its cause to its necessary condition, that required to pressure one's true (spiritual) identity into its true transcendent realisation' (Rice and Waugh 1997, p. 160).

[31] Gert Beulens, 'The American Poet and his City: Crane, Williams and Olson: Perceptions of Reality in American Poetry (1930-1960)', in *English Studies*, 73:3 (1992), 248-263 (249-250). See also Wirth-Nesher 1996, pp. 37-38.

[32] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), pp. 211-214.

[33] Keith Dixon, 'Recent Glasgow Fiction', in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol. XXVIII (1993), 92-104 (103).

[34] See, for instance, Wirth-Nesher 1996 and Wilson 1992, who comment on the predominance of a male point of view in American and European urban traditions of literature.

[35] I acknowledge the potentially problematic limitations of this thesis in its focus on male-authored cities in the concluding remarks of chapter seven, where I suggest that a study of female perspectives of the Scottish city would be a fruitful area of research.

[36] Carol Craig makes the point, in regard to William McIlvanney's novels but which may be applied more widely, that a perpetuation and normalization of a male viewpoint in city writing may be due to the fact that the philosophies in which the texts are couched are 'inherently biased against women and [are] based on a male view of the world' (Craig 1986, p. 47).

[37] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 255.

[38] G. W. F. Hegel, quoted by Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*, pp. 232-233.

[39] *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 230.

[40] See, for instance, Michael Long's essay, 'Eliot, Pound, Joyce: Unreal City?', where he suggests that the artistic 'idea' of modernism is disintegration, epitomized in the image of the modern city which embodies: 'An art of despair and pain; a dissonant, fragmented art that confronts meaninglessness; an art bred by the city where the scale of life dwarfs the individual' (Timms and Kelley 1985, p. 144).

[41] See, for instance, John Herdman's comment, in *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, of the 'remarkable fact' that a nation as small as Scotland should produce, in Hogg and Stevenson, 'two of the foremost masters of the double'. Herdman attributes this schism to 'the schematic polarities of Calvinist theology' (p. 16). However, Colin Manlove, in *Scottish Fantasy Literature*, suggests that doubling predates Christian theology and may be traced back to Celtic myth in which parallel worlds of the seen and unseen constitute a 'personal identity . . . often without boundaries, capable of sharing its nature with others' (p. 14).

[42] Marshall Walker, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London and New York: Longman, 1996), pp. 45-46.

[43] *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 13.

[44] Bernard Blackstone, *Byron: A Survey* (London: Longman, 1975), p. 182.

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[45] William Blake, *William Blake: A Selection of Poems and Letters*, ed. by J. Bronowski (London: Penguin Books, 1966), p.94.

[46] Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kinglsey Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 225-239 (p. 234).

[47] Edwin Morgan, quoted by Peter Kravitz in his Introduction to *The Picador Book of Contemporary Scottish Fiction*, ed. by Peter Kravitz (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan/Picador, 1997), p. xxxi.

[48] Hugh MacDiarmid's Foreword, in Sydney Goodsir Smith, *Carotid Cornucopius* (Edinburgh: M. MacDonald, 1964), pp. 17-18.

[49] References are made to Trocchi's work outside of Scottish academia and canonical surveys of Scottish literature. These include James Campbell's study of the creative ferment of post-war Left Bank Paris, in *Paris Interzone*; Sadie Plant's study of the Situationist International, in *The Most Radical Gesture*, and in her account of narcotic literature in *Writing on Drugs*; Greil Marcus's essays on alternative cultural instances in *The Dustbin of History*; John De St Jorre's account of the risqué publishing house, the Olympia Press, in *The Good Ship Venus*; and Sue Wiseman's essay in a collection dedicated to writing on narcotics, 'Addiction and the Avant-Garde: Heroin Addiction and Narrative in Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book*' (Vice et al 1994).

[50] Irvine Welsh, quoted by Allan Campbell in 'Shooting Star', *Scotland on Sunday Spectrum*, January 28, 1996, p. 1.

[51] An open letter from Trocchi to MacDiarmid, published in *New Statesman*, 18 January 1964 and reprinted in Alexander Trocchi, *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, ed. by Andrew M. Scott (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 205.

[52]The use of the term 'influence' in this thesis is taken from a threefold definition provided by Louis Zukofsky in 1930. He defines literary influence as: '1. its presence in the air: sometimes the proximity of a poet's edified literary acquaintances, however conscious or unconscious a poet may be of the almost literal drafts around him; 2. coincidence of the temperament affected and the temperament only apparently, not actually affecting; since the modality of events of a period of fifty or seventy-five years may show, at any time of their calendar, two similar individuals, different as to locale, and contemporary or anachronistic as to their birth and mortuary dates; 3. conscious choice or rejection of a literary tradition' (Zukofsky 1967, p. 127).

[53] Irvine Welsh, quoted by Campbell in 'Shooting Star', p. 1.

[54] MacDiarmid has written poetry set in the city and he celebrates Sydney Goodsir Smith's vision of Edinburgh in *Carotid Cornucopius*. Yet he remained removed from the city both in life and art. His general dislike for the metropolis is summed up by Edwin Morgan: 'The place [in MacDiarmid's view] is dead, it is cold, it is stupid, it is vulgar, it is mindless, it is ugly, it is impotent. . . . Glasgow's people have sold their soul to business, to the abstractions of commerce and . . . everything has been frozen "into filthy property". . . . Glasgow had produced no offspring, nothing creative . . . no one had engaged with it, made it fertile, made it express its spirit' (Morgan 1984, 4-5).

[55] It is worth quoting Kenneth Buthlay's summary of the features of MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, given to illustrate MacDiarmid's links with expressionism and in particular, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. Yet the poem's features are also strikingly similar to the key concerns of Trocchi's works, as discussed in chapter three of this thesis. Of *A Drunk Man*, Buthlay has noted: '(1) Its preoccupation with extreme states of mind — a readiness to go too far in either direction, up or down — usually accompanied by distorted, grotesque images. (2) Its projection of the internal on to the external world, letting the irrational have free play. The imagery and logic of dreams have a special place in this, as in surrealism. (3) The consequent unstable, shifting subjectivity of the point of view which informs the whole work of art. (4) What was considered at the time to be a shocking preoccupation with sexual themes. (5) The hope that, through the violent destruction of traditional values, a new mystical vision would become feasible, even a new religion for modern man'. (MacDiarmid 1987, p. xxxii)

[56] In John Pringle's Introduction to the Rebel Inc. reprint of *Young Adam*, he somewhat implausibly blames the 1962 clash for Trocchi's 'excommunication from the church of Scottish literature' (Trocchi 1996, p. vii).

[57] Andrew Murray Scott, *Alexander Trocchi: The Making of the Monster* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), p. 122. See also Scott's article, 'Mr MacDiarmid and Mr Trocchi: Whaur Extremes Meet', in *Chapman*, 83 (1996), 36-39.

[58] I am indebted to Alan Riach for locating and providing copies of these letters from the MacDiarmid archive at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center at the University of Texas at Austin, during research toward the *New and Selected Letters* by Hugh MacDiarmid, ed. by Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards and Alan Riach (Manchester: Carcanet, forthcoming 2001).

[59] Interview with John Calder in *A Life in Pieces: Reflections on Alexander Trocchi*, ed. by Allan Campbell and Tim Niel (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc., 1997), pp. 151-154 (p. 151).

[60] In Alexander Scott's poem, 'Doun Wi' Dirt!' (*c.* 1970), fun is poked at the hypocrisy of the Scot's denigration of filthy themes found in a body of international literature that includes Trocchi. The poem is

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quoted in full here because its contextualization of Trocchi, both in terms of theme and critical opinion, resonates with the concerns of thesis:

'De Sade?'
'Ach, gyaad!'

'Masoch?'
'Eh, fyauch!'

'Frank Harris?'
'Guid war us!'

'Jim Joyce?'
'Nae choice!'

'Bert Lawrence?'
'Abhorrrence!'

'Hank Miller?'
'Yuck-spiller!'

'Jean Genet?'
'Och, dinnae!'

'Bill Burroughs?'
'Gomorrah's!'

'Syd Smith?'
'Deil's kith!'

'Al Trocchi?'
'Fell mochie!'

'Al Sharp?'
'Coorse carp!'

'The bourach?'
'Just smoorich!'

'Mankind?'
'Muck-mind!'

'And you?'
'Weel, nou—'

(Scott 1978, pp. 119-120).

[61] See Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book* (London, Paris and New York: Calder, 1992), p. 59, and Trocchi's Editorial in *Merlin*, 1:2 (Autumn 1952), reprinted in *A Life in Pieces*, pp. 39-42 (p.41).

[62] Hegel, quoted by Lloyd Spencer in *Hegel for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon, 1996), p. 122.

[63] *Cain's Book*, p. 13.

[64] Byron, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, in *Poetical Works*, ed. by Frederick Page, a new edition corrected by John Jump (London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), Canto III, iii.

[65] *Cain's Book*, p. 232.

[66] *The Poetics of Space*, p. xxxvi. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[67] Leslie Anne Boldt's Introduction in George Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. by Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. xxi.

# CHAPTER ONE

## THE CITY OF GOD?

## SCOTTISH PERCEPTIONS OF THE RELIGIOUS CITY

> There are such things as drains, and sometimes they may have to be opened, but one would not for choice have one opened in his library.[1]

Ian Mclaren (the Rev. John Watson), who writes in the kailyard tradition, voices an opinion regarding the subject matter of urban fiction that illustrates an almost self-righteous rejection of 'unpleasant' reality. Such a categorical denunciation of urban reality is typical of the kailyard and indicates the extent to which it avoids the struggles of modern, industrialized life. The recoil from urban-industrial realism baffles the industrial novelist George Blake. He finds himself with few precedents in his genre and, in *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (1951), he speculates on this absence of urban novels and reaches two main conclusions. Firstly, the Calvinist legacy left the literature of Scotland 'in a sad state of decline' and secondly, compounding this repression of art by religion, is a national inability to adapt quickly to the modern age: 'Scotland was too swiftly, and too brutally, overwhelmed by the Industrial Revolution'.[2] Mclaren's recoil from industrialization, like that of other kailyard writers is not, according to Blake, 'wilful'. Instead, the 'bucolic comedians'[3] of the kailyard are victims of what he sees as a national tendency: '[of] the chronic Scots disease of nostalgia, of the urge to escape back into the comprehensible conditions of their original, independent state and away from the new, incomprehensible turmoils of the industrial age'.[4] The later critic, Thomas D. Knowles, in a study of the Victorian kailyard, *Ideology, Art and Commerce* (1983), defines the kailyard tradition as antithetical to urban-industrial realism. In Knowles's view, the kailyard is not merely unrealistic but anti-realist. He suggests that: 'The choice of the rural alternative was a retreat . . . from a reality charged with images both powerful and threatening, conflicting and chaotic'.[5]

Like J. M. Barrie's character, Peter Pan, the world of the kailyard refuses to relinquish its innocence. Even when Peter is in the middle of London he does not enter the city, but remains on the leafy island in the Serpentine in Kensington Gardens. The characters of the kailyard are not engaged in any search for existential meaning from their environment which, in any case, fails to deliver insights into the struggles and urgencies of modern experience. Rather, the kailyard writers extricate themselves from the upheavals of religious doubt, in the face of the new scientific and industrial realities epitomized by the city, by using a setting that they show to be relatively unaffected by the modern age. Yet, pastoral settings are consciously chosen by kailyard writers, not in ignorance of the city, but as a site where Christian ideals can still be realized. For example, Ian Mclaren's aim, according to his biographer, John Nicolls, is 'to slake the eternal thirst of our nature'.[6] As Blake is quick to point out, it is significant that the 'successful practitioners' of the kailyard are either ordained ministers, or like Barrie, they 'adhered to the Free Church and dealt largely in scenes from clerical life'.[7] What they hope to achieve, suggests Silke Böger in regard to Mclaren, is: 'soul-balm and encouragement' instead of 'the stern, unbending [doctrines of] High Calvinism'.[8] But, as Moira Burgess comments, the view of the kailyard: 'involves a basic dishonesty in the observation of life, or in the reproduction of what is observed. Ugliness is not seen. Death occurs gently'.[9] This sanitized view of modern reality is as true of the so-called 'urban kailyard' as of the rural kailyard.

Moira Burgess reservedly coins the term 'urban kailyard' in her descriptive survey, *The Glasgow Novel* (1986).[10] There the 'urban kailyard' school is epitomized by such works as J. J. Bell's *Wee Macgreegor* (1902) and *Erchie, My Droll Friend* (1904) by Hugh Foulis (Neil Munro). The action of these novels takes place in and around Glasgow's tenements, although there is little sense of an engagement with the urban setting that might betray the harshness of life there. The 'urban kailyard' is merely a transposition into the city of the same parochial and narrow vision of the rural kailyard. Yet Burgess suggests that the 'urban kailyard' is the forerunner to the incarnation 'proper' of the industrial-urban novel of the 1930s. She makes this suggestion in two ways. Firstly, by virtue of the term itself, which implies a mode in which qualities of the rural kailyard and urban realism already exist. Secondly, the placement of this term in her survey sees the 'urban kailyard' as a bridge between the rural kailyard and the 'gangland' and 'Glasgow' schools of the early twentieth-century. However, the term 'urban kailyard' does not always refer to 'urban' complexities in ways that usefully indicate features of city novels yet to come.

A more useful term of consideration for the modern Scottish urban novel may be what G. Gregory Smith famously, in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), calls the 'Caledonian antisyzygy'.[11] This term attempts to capture the 'zigzag of contradictions' that Smith sees as central to the Scottish character and to Scottish literature. According to Smith, the Scot does not simply avoid reality but tempers it with an inclination toward the supernatural or spiritual. Smith's typical Scot embodies a partiality toward a 'grip of fact' and 'sense of detail' as well as a taste for 'the confusion of the senses' and the fantastic.[12] The issue was a central and contentious one. In *Scott and Scotland* (1936) Edwin Muir contests Smith's notion and tersely argues that realism and fantasy are not able to be successfully reconciled. To Muir's mind what fails, in particular, is transcendence. The urge to transcend reality is thwarted by an unwillingness to commit to it. What transpires is a state of limbo:

> Gregory Smith sees in Scottish fantastic poetry a proof that Scotsmen are at ease in both rooms of life; but the place they actually reach . . . is a sort of half-way-house between the two. . . . It is a spirited recoil from the earthly which does not take one into too inconvenient proximity to the heavenly.[13]

Muir develops this architectural analogy of limbo by way of one of Kafka's aphorisms. In this, a man is chained to both earth and Heaven so that when he attempts to gain a foothold on one or the other, he is wrenched away. Thus, Muir's 'half-way-house' is akin to a prison-house. For Muir, this state of incarceration is perpetuated because it is not made conscious: '[a person] can imagine . . . that there is no collar at all'.[14] What Muir does concede, however, is that Scottish writers have: 'a strong sense of the many-sidedness of life, of the poetic side of the prosaic, and still more of the prosaic side of the poetic'.[15] This observation marks a movement away from Smith's dualistic notion and to a vision in which reality and non-reality inform each other in a more integrated way. That is, the representation of the 'real' external world is indissoluble from the act of perception, which necessarily involves the subjective, 'non-real' concerns of the observer.

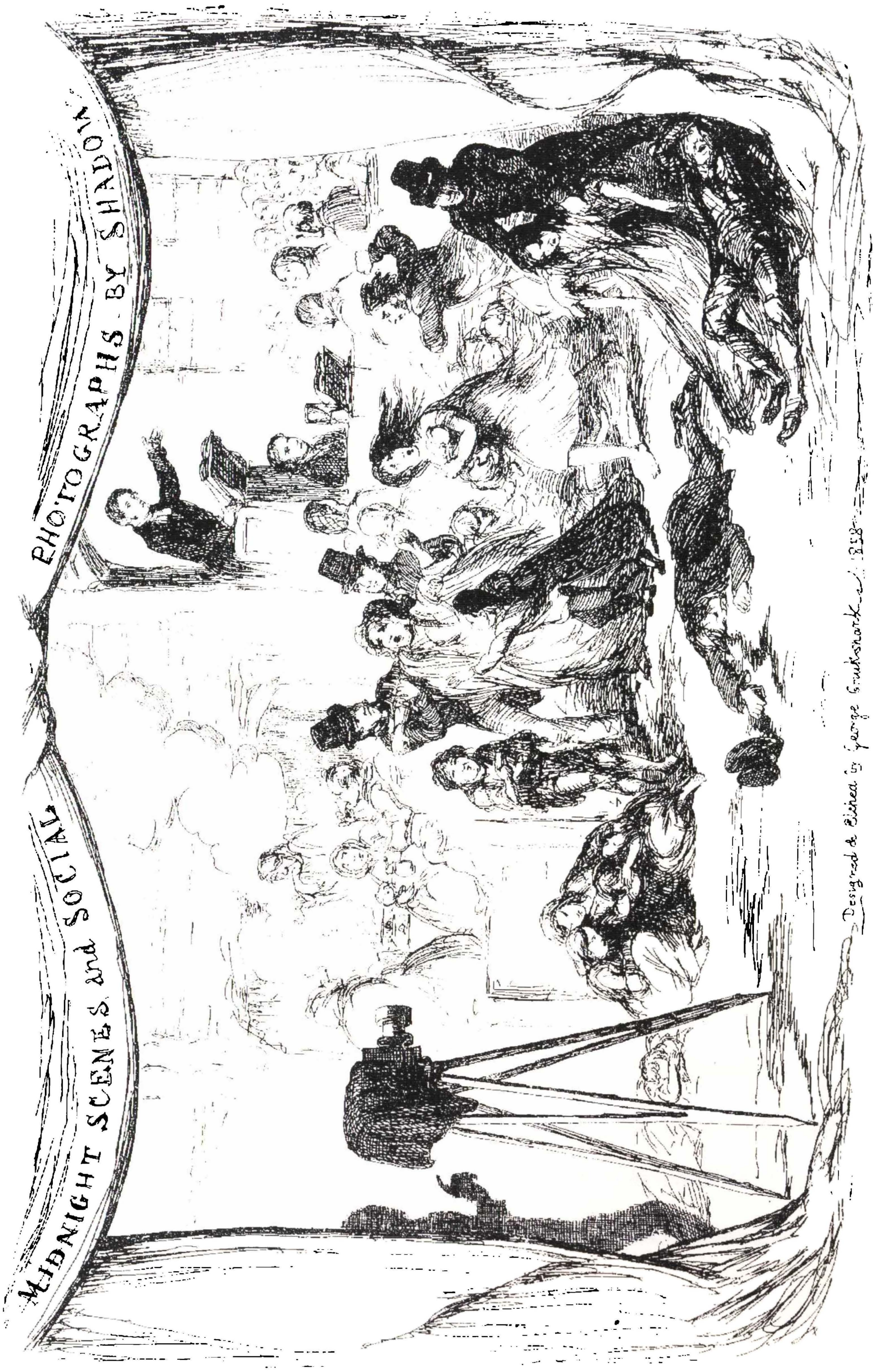
In this respect Muir anticipates what Kurt Wittig calls a 'strangely subjective vision of reality' in Scottish poetry and fiction.[16] In Wittig's extensive study, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (1958), he repeatedly comes back to this phrase as a defining feature of Scottish literature. Wittig's idea of a 'subjective vision of reality' is not analogous to Blake's 'disease of nostalgia', because it is not an *evasion* of reality. The way that the 'invisible world', to use Muir's words, informs the visual world is not 'escapism' nor does it lead to a 'stationary disharmony'.[17] Wittig's notion sees a subtle opening out of reality through an idiosyncratic intensification, which may be achieved by exaggeration, repetition or unusual juxtapositions. Wittig's term provides a point of departure for this study of the urban tradition of literature in Scotland. Notions of 'subjectified reality' do not polarize the real from the non-real as does Smith's 'Caledonian antisyzygy', nor does it denote an evasion of reality, as does Burgess's 'urban kailyard'. By including not only the physical aspect of the city, but also its relation to the psychical state of the character (the subject) who perceives (subjectifies) the material world, understanding of the tradition of urban literature in Scotland itself may be transformed. Thus, rather than mutually excluding 'fantastic' and 'realistic' representations of the city, this thesis argues that, embedded under realistic surfaces lie non-realist concerns. These are illuminated by reading against the grain of realism, which provides insights to the struggles and complexities 'real' urban life represents.

The representation of the Scottish city in the nineteenth century emphasizes the harshness of its reality. This is true even of the fictional accounts of the city prevalent at the time, most of them serialized in the popular press.[18] The most well-known examples can be found in the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, which are imaginary conversations published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* between 1822 and 1835. In these vignettes the very real squalor of urban life is not sanitized; rather the urban scene is intensified to almost surreal effect. In 'The Guse-Dubs of Glasgow' (1826), for example, a shepherd dramatizes the city's 'clarty closses, narrowin' awa' and darkening down' as filthy and devilish places. The shepherd's city is evoked in a long string of sordid images which, repeated and jumbled together in outlandishly extended sentences, reach an energetic pitch.[19] Edinburgh fares slightly better, although 'Haggises, and the Old Town' (1826) shows that behind the city's arterial streets lies a maze of lanes, 'pestilential wi' filth and foulzie', which echo with the shrieks of prostitutes and thieves. In this, the piling up of images in a single sentence is infused with humour and caricature and the effect, for all its wretchedness, is also full of vitality.[20] Even realistic accounts of the Scottish city are vividly coloured. Non-fictional tracts were common throughout Britain in the nineteenth-century and took the form of religious and social reformative manifestoes. Despite an emphasis on verisimilitude in these writings, Scottish examples are unique in that they significantly display a proclivity to Wittig's 'subjectified reality'. Thomas Guthrie's collection of religious sermons, *The City: Its Sins and Sorrows* (1877), is given its colour through a moralistic interpretation of the city's horrors. Urban poverty and its attendant squalor is seen as a sign of vice. In contrast, Shadow's *Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs: Being Sketches of Life in the Streets, Wynds and Dens of the City* (1858), is an eyewitness account of the conditions of the poor in Glasgow. The vividness of Shadow's text comes from his narrator's melodramatic persona and the evocative style of his descriptive prose.

## I. Submerged Cities

### 'Shadow', *Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs*

'Shadow' (Alexander Brown), the author of *Midnight Scenes*, avows from the outset of his study that faithful and objective observation is crucial to his aim, yet his use of such an odd pseudonym imparts a degree of theatricality. The frontispiece to the text, etched by George Cruikshank, emphasizes its oddity. It depicts dramatic scenes of poverty and violence and the composition is divided by an imposing camera on a tripod, behind which lurks the sinister silhouette of 'Shadow', half-hidden again by a curtain, as he observes and records. Similar tracts in England also have a clear-cut sense of the narrator as


MIDNIGHT SCENES and SOCIAL
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SHADOW
Designed & Etched by George Cruikshank 1858

George Cruikshank's frontispiece to Shadow's *Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs*.

an outsider,[21] but Brown's melodramatic persona is unique. His narrative is given over to his imagination rather than to an ethos of detachment. Even the claim to verisimilitude in his preface comes with a proviso: that his 'photographs', he writes, 'are not creations of the brain, but so far as the writer's knowledge of the art extends — they are truthful'.[22] Shadow's 'snapshots'do not convey an impartial replica of its subject; rather, they depict the 'shock' of impression. Intense attention to detail gives his city an uncanny quality. The following passage is typical in this respect. It describes an entrance-way to a group of dwellings and might have come straight from an eighteenth-century Gothic Romance:

> In a few minutes we grope our way, in an inclined posture, through the entrance to one of those low narrow closes. A small stream of impure water flows on the right, and with the odour of putrefying animal substances, it smells to suffocation. Our friend, who now follows somewhat reluctantly, as if under the influence of some mysterious spell, or haunted by some terrible dread, keeps, ever and anon, muttering behind us, 'It is frightful!' (p. 17)

In this passage, enclosed spaces and a degree of filth are part of the real city, yet, the writer's experience of this dystopian reality opens out a 'mysterious' and 'haunted' Gothic landscape. The use of subterranean images in literature is interpreted by Mario Praz who, writing on the Marquis de Sade and the Gothic tradition, suggests that they are representative of a narrator's 'apartness'. Solitude brings the protagonist close to his infernal archaic consciousness. Praz notes that: 'deep caves and . . . subterranean passage-ways . . . are actually the symbol of the cave-man whose voice can be heard . . . in the very midst of a civilized metropolis, [and] startle us, in an imaginary Mr Hyde'.[23] The function of Shadow's urban Gothic certainly anticipates Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) in that it reveals less about an actual city than it does about the writer, via the city's topography.

Shadow's urban topography is composed of two quite distinct aspects. On a social level, the surface of the city conceals a destitute and morally degraded underside. In Shadow's view of the city, the upward movement of progress seen, for instance, in the city's monuments and lights, is contradicted by the downward pull of human degradation.

In this, Glasgow suffers a paradox that is common to its time. As William Greenslade points out in his study *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel* (1994) there was, in the last part of nineteenth-century Britain, 'a lack of synchrony between the rhetoric of progress . . . and . . . the evidence in front of people's eyes, of poverty and degradation at the heart of ever richer empires'.[24] Despite Shadow's emphasis that the physically and morally corrupt inhabitants at the 'heart' of the city are victims of their situation, they are, nevertheless, dangerous and threaten to undermine structures of social and moral order. In this, Shadow's discourse conforms to what Greenslade calls a 'tract of degeneracy'. 'Degenerationism' is an ideology of exclusion imposed upon those factions which are unprofitable to society. As Shadow himself points out: 'The aristocracy, and the enfranchised classes generally, dread the ascendancy of the popular element' (p. 130). Thus the poor live in marginal and 'underground' space because they have been excluded and sublimated there. As inhabitants of the 'nether' parts of the city they are represented as the city's waste and filth. The opening scene of Dickens's *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) is a memorable example of the way the poor are equated with the dirty swell of an effluent river, as the novel's narrator describes:

> Allied to the bottom of the river rather than the surface, by reason of the slime and ooze with which it was covered, and its sodden state, [were] this boat and the two figures in it . . . . [S]uch dress as [the man] wore seeming to be made out of the mud that begrimed his boat.[25]

The cause and effect of degenerationism is not only social but also psychological. As Greenslade explains:

> The late Victorian establishment and the propertied classes generally harboured anxieties about poverty and crime . . . . The loose assemblage of beliefs which can be marked out as 'degenerationism' . . . offered a displacement and transference of guilt, and of fear of the uncontrollable and baffling energies of material existence.[26]

The 'persistent grip' of degeneration is based on an ethos of social fear, but it also has an intrinsic psychological basis. Most significantly, Greenslade writes, the pervasiveness of degenerationism and its stratification of the city in late nineteenth-century culture 'derived essentially from the fear of what was repressed'.[27] When critic Steve Pile writes in a recent study, *The Body and the City* (1996), that '[t]he effect of repression is to produce an internal splitting of the mind into a conscious and an unconscious', we can take this to mean that if the city's topography is stratified, then the repressed element (in Brown's case the urban poor) is analogous to the psychological unconscious.[28]

A sublimation of anxiety is nowhere more obvious in *Midnight Scenes* than when Shadow enters, retreats and re-enters the 'dens' of the city. His journey through the labyrinthine wynds of Glasgow takes him into cramped rooms that harbour disease, lascivious activity and other physical and moral horrors. Shadow describes one room he visits as a place where the most extreme states of being are forced to co-exist:

> The filthy and crowded state of the apartments is simply indescribable, — there being as many as three and four beds in one room, meant to accommodate male and female, old and young, the sick and the healthy, the living and the dead. (p. 15)

The room in this passage is a space where extremes come together. If this is so, then the room is also the space in which Brown, as a middle-class observer, comes closest to confronting his own submerged 'heart of darkness'. The 'other' who dwells in the city's hidden enclosures signifies Glasgow's 'great heaving heart' (p. 82) as well as the heart of the subject who perceives it. In nineteenth-century conventions, the 'heart' has the same dynamic and disordering qualities which Freud and Jung later define as the psychological unconscious. Shadow's images of dark slums and their primitive and abject residents can also be analysed using the theories of Julia Kristeva.

In Kristeva's *Powers of Horror* (1980), a psychoanalytical and semiotic study of biblical and modernist literary images, she relates notions of the abject to the perceiving subject. According to Kristeva, that which is abject exists in relation to a boundary, a delineation between inclusion and exclusion. The boundary is, itself, perpetuated by the discourse of degeneration. The abject 'other' is separated from the subject, yet it is not entirely distinct from it. Images of degeneration, such as excrement or vomit (to use

Kristeva's examples), are abject because, on the one hand, expelling them is necessary for the body's survival, but, on the other hand, the body also expels a part of itself. As Kristeva says: 'I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which "I" claim to establish *myself*.[29] This paradoxical signification of the abject and identity leads the subject to feel both repulsed and fascinated by that which is expelled:

> [The abject is] ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable. It lies there quite close but can not be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire . . . . [A] vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself.[30]

The subject who perceives and rejects, then, is drawn to the abject as to their own reflection in an unexpectedly placed mirror.[31] Thus, while Shadow appears to differentiate himself from the people of subterranean Glasgow, he is also drawn to the boundary he establishes between them and himself. This momentary connection with the degenerate masses reveals his own, individual crisis. Paradoxically, this crisis is a denial of his individuality. This simultaneous association with, and repulsion from the abject brings Shadow to the borderline of his own annihilation. In this respect Kristeva's generalized comment is illuminating:

> [The abject] now harries me as radically separate, loathsome. Not me. Not that. But not nothing, either. A 'something' that I do not recognize as a thing. A weight of meaninglessness, about which there is nothing insignificant, and which crushes me. On the edge of non-existence and hallucination, of a reality that, if I acknowledge it, annihilates me. (p. 2)

The pseudonym 'Shadow' already alludes to a notion of 'non-existence'. The melodrama of the name has an implication other than social anonymity or the ability to observe unheeded: to transform oneself into a shadow is a form of self-annihilation.

An idealization of forms of self-annihilation is central in British Victorian thinking, but appears to have been especially conspicuous in Scotland. In the face of rapid scientific and industrial progress in the early 1800s, Christian doctrine was questioned and found lacking. A new faith was needed to replace it. Calvin Bedient explains the existential impact of this crisis of faith in his study *Architects of Self* (1972): '[there remained] a menacing vacuum in the self, a threat of "utter nothingness." Down below, "nothing." Yet — terrible dilemma! — nothing discernible above'. In order to fill this void the Victorians invented morality: 'Duty became the Victorian deity, the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen'. Yet an ideal of selflessness, the Victorian expression of moral duty, was, in Bedient's words, a 'metaphysical bankruptcy'.[32] Significantly, Bedient suggests that it was the Scot, Thomas Carlyle, who heralded the Victorian age in 1830 when he said that 'Annihilation of Self . . . is yet the highest Wisdom that Heaven has revealed to our Earth'.[33] Carlyle's comment is tied to a Romantic 'cosmic displacement of the self', as Bedient puts it. However, Carlyle's felicitous recourse to the transcendent realm of 'Heaven' is not escapism. As Andrew Noble points out in his essay, 'Urbane Silence', Carlyle does not evade reality, particularly in regard to the city: '[Carlyle's] documentation of the plight of the urban, industrial poor . . . is perhaps his most important strength':[34] Noble points out that Carlyle's 'realism' is also an: 'Obsess[ion] with giving meaningful depth back to life'.[35] Carlyle's notion of 'depth' at this time can be gauged by the way he writes about the city of Edinburgh. The capital city was a literary and cultural vacuum and, like Shadow's city, also a place of hidden squalor. Depth revealed an absence. But surfaces were merely phantasms or masks. Carlyle's idealistic notions about the 'Annihilation of Self' thus prove to have negative consequences in the context of the city: the city and the self are associated by a radical absence. When Shadow, spurred on by his faith in Duty, seeks to uncover the hidden depths of the city, he finds that he is faced with a truth in which life is not only sordid, it is unable to relinquish spiritual meaning.

Shadow, too, does not relinquish religious meaning. The tendency to delineate the 'other' in a relationship with oneself, however, is characteristic of the Calvinistic mind. As Susan Manning explains in a recent study of Calvinism and literature, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision* (1990):

> The Calvinist is unable to imagine the 'other' as anything but a message to him, a distorted reflection of something within. . . . Everything is a reflection, an emblem of his inner state — or it is nothing.[36]

To the Puritan, one's inner state is inherently sinful. The psychological implication of this knowledge is also described by Manning: 'Calvinism is based upon an emphatic, ever-present consciousness of Original Sin and the consequently 'fallen' nature of man, which taints not only his every action but all his perception and aspirations'.[37] Calvin's own image of the degenerate soul of humankind, made in 1548, corresponds to the degenerate imagery of Shadow's 'midnight' city. Calvin asserts that: 'Our souls are a very abyss of iniquity'.[38] Shadow is not, of course, an active follower of Calvinism. In his last chapter he surmises that drunkenness and prostitution are outcomes of the 'physical agent' that is the city and not, as Calvinism would have it, 'a part of our natural sensuality or depravity' (p. 120). Weakening morality is less Shadow's concern than the way in which the categorized and stratified nature of the commercialized city affects its people: 'The people are not allowed to feel their *individuality* in the state' (p. 130). Most problematic to individual freedom is the repressive quality of religious doctrine. Shadow suggests that topographical and economic containment are aspects of psychological and spiritual restriction: 'We are nearly all, without exception, pent up in some theological prison-house, out of which it is all but criminal to look, engendering a feeling alike of slavery and hypocrisy' (p. 134). Most significantly, for a single moment in the text, Shadow clearly associates himself with the 'other'. This association is made by stating that religion is unable to provide transcendence, and his metaphor of a prison-house evokes the 'real' enclosed spaces of the city's 'dens'.

## Thomas Guthrie, *The City: Its Sins and Sorrows*

A different view is offered by the many religious tracts which circulated in Scottish cities in the nineteenth-century. In religious writing meaning could still be found in Christian doctrine. One advocate of religious salvation in the modern age is Thomas Guthrie, a minister of Arbirlot in Angus and one of the founders of the Free Church. Guthrie wrote a series of sermons that focus on urban life and which were collected and published under the title *The City: Its Sins and Sorrows*. These sermons emphasize the ways in which the material city both engenders, and is affected by, the degenerated spiritual state of its inhabitants. To Guthrie's mind the city is associated with excess and moral laxity of every kind, and thus it embodies 'the innate depravity of human nature' at its most concentrated and extreme.[39] His view is not entirely negative. Guthrie's first point is that salvation is possible in such a context. Indeed, by virtue of the city's very wickedness, confusion and crowding, a soul may achieve its highest expression of intellect, piety and saintliness, earned through the effort required to overcome the city's trials. Rapid industrialization, an increasing amount of poverty and crime, advances in science and thinking which shook religious belief: all of these pitch the individual of Guthrie's time into confusion. Material progress is seen to be detrimental to spiritual progress. This tension is illustrated by Guthrie when he compares the modern city with the biblical city of Jerusalem. He recalls the New Testament story of Jesus's celebrated entry into Jerusalem, a time in which, despite the religious fervour, Jesus foresaw the celebrants' future corruption and his own death. Thus the city is placed at a nexus of transcendence and damnation. Guthrie dramatically describes this scene and uses it to parallel the city of his present-day:

> 'He beheld the city;' not, as now, with the tide of business, but the roar of battle in its streets . . . brother, staggering from the famine-struck house, to strike his sword into a brother's bowels — the holiest laws of nature horribly reversed — not infants living on the fountain of a mother's breast, but mothers — famished, miserable, maddened mothers — feeding upon their own offspring . . . the streets resounding with the groans of the dying, and choked with the festering bodies of the dead. (p. 6)

For Guthrie, in this passage, the horrors brought about by 'the roar of battle' are analogous to the modern city's 'tide of business'.

The commercial city reverses natural order and turns in upon itself. Guthrie's miasmic city, like that of Shadow's, lies 'festering' beneath its respectable surface: 'Under a fair and beautiful exterior, there is an extent of corruption, vile corruption, loathsome corruption, which has only to be laid bare to astonish all, and . . . to sicken many' (p. 20). For Guthrie, any person who ignores or conceals the disease lying under the city's edifices is 'a dumb dog that cannot bark' (p. 20). Although Guthrie's own retreat behind his sense of moral decorum runs him the risk of emulating that same 'dumb dog': 'Propriety forbids details. Ordinary modesty, not to say sensitive delicacy, would shrink from them. Otherwise I could raise a curtain, I could reveal that which might make your hair stand on end' (p. 20). Guthrie's sweeping and apocalyptic rhetoric attempts a 'truthful' revelation of urban vice while managing to avoid specifics. But he encounters a problem: the fact that Guthrie paints such a negative image of the city attests to the failure of religion at the same time that Christianity's positive capabilities are asserted. Furthermore, Guthrie's use of an idiom of degeneration in fact locates all vitality within the underworld he is criticising. A series of dramatic images of degeneration, used to depict the sinful poor, reach a dramatic culmination in Guthrie's third sermon, and he presents a city that is about to sink under a great energetic tide:

> In their economical, educational, moral, and religious aspects, certain parts of this city bear palpable evidence of . . . subsidence. Not a single house, nor a block of houses, but whole streets, once from end to end the homes of decency . . . have been engulphed [*sic*]. A flood of ignorance, and misery, and sin, now breaks and roars above the top of their highest tenements. . . . [This indicates] a greater change, a deeper subsidence. (p. 52)

Towering tenements, once a sign of upward movement and of moral and spiritual advancement, are now subsiding. Buildings sink, a wave of immense proportions, sucked up from the effluvial depths of the city, 'breaks' over them. Rather than the flood being a retributive act of God that washes away sinners and saves the elect, it is an emergence of sin that, like the battle in Jerusalem, 'roars' over the city and overturns 'natural' hierarchies. According to Guthrie's testimony, this decadence should allow for greater opportunities to resist sin and achieve transcendence, but his discourse disables the upward impetus of transcendence with images of degeneration that emphasize the threat of dark, hidden and unknown elements. In writing about the city in terms that are ultimately unsuccessful, however, Guthrie presents a paradox, which Greenslade notes in regard to a propensity in degenerative discourse to 'reveal the obscurity of the subject matter and the real limits of knowing it'.[40]

Shadow's creator, Alexander Brown, and Guthrie both demonstrate that beneath the surfaces of the city is a fascinating but destructive ferment. In each case, the city is revealed by a subjective response to the problems of commercialism and industrialism in terms of a religious faith that ultimately fails. In both cases religion cannot 'cure' a sick city. Disturbing the surface of the city in order to locate its 'truth' is conducive to the kind of introspection that one finds in the modern Scottish urban novel. In the cities of both Brown and Guthrie, all sense of upward movement is pulled back with the downward movement of degenerationism. It becomes more difficult to avoid looking inside the self. For, in both texts, the body of the city is seen as a human body, its disease is that of the sinful psyche or soul. Realistic 'depth' gives way to metaphysical issues. All the 'facts' ascribed to notions of realistic detail point to one's sinful self in a world devoid of comprehensible meaning. It is no wonder, then, that the 'facts' of the city, so closely knit with the notion of a sinful self, are repressed or displaced into cities of fantasy.

## II. Fantastic Cities

In Scottish fiction the fantastic city demonstrates another response to a period of rapid social change. The fantastic city is not an evasion of reality; rather, it is a way of exploring specific concerns of selfhood in regard to the nature of reality. Writing recently on the subversive purpose of fantasy literature, Rosemary Jackson argues that 'Withdrawal into a fantasy world does not function . . . as a compensatory activity, but as protest against a life-denying reality'.[41] However, the turn inwards for writers of Scottish fantasy evokes the emptiness and absence that lies beneath the surfaces of the 'real' city. The degree to which Scottish fantasy literature is concerned with confronting the submerged self is discussed by Colin Manlove in *Scottish Fantasy Literature* (1994). He suggests that: 'Scots fantasy is inward-looking, concerned to discover something hidden within. It is much more frequently an expression of the psyche of its central figure than is the case in English fantasy'.[42] Yet, despite the fact that the world of fantasy is inward-looking it does not exist irrespective of material reality. It is, rather, as Jackson notes, 'the inside, or underside, of realism'.[43] The kind of perception involved in the experience of fantastic spaces is seen by Marcel Brion, and paraphrased by Jackson, as an 'opening activity which is disturbing, by denying the solidity of what had been taken to be real'.[44] The world of the fantastic is usually entered via the transgression of some perceived limit or boundary. As noted in the examples cited of nineteenth-century cities, each text is concerned with delineating boundaries and with overturning them. In one respect this transgression may be that of sin; the movement of a fall evoking the biblical Fall which, for the Calvinist, is fundamental to self-identity. Such a fall is also represented in works of fantasy. Two works in particular offer a transgressive vision of the city/self that reverberates into modernist urban literature. Margaret Oliphant's story 'The Land of Darkness' (1887) and George MacDonald's novel *Lilith* (1895), both show a fantastic city that is entered by way of 'real' doors, windows and mirrors, that define boundaries, but also permit passage through them. This opening strategy will be considered in both of these works before considering each text separately.

The protagonists of 'The Land of Darkness' and *Lilith* both enter a fantastic world by way of a fall. The violent movement through reality and into an obverse realm signifies a passage from one mode of existence to another. In Scottish fantasy writing this often denotes a movement from sin into a purgatorial realm in which self-realization must be gained in order to find redemption. In 'The Land of Darkness' Oliphant's (unnamed) protagonist enters the city, 'having come down rapidly upon the ground from a height. . . . [and feels a] whirling and sickening sensation'.[45] This vertiginous feeling is symptomatic of movement from one state of being to another, although, in Oliphant's story, it remains uncertain whether the transition is from life to death, or from waking to dreaming. The land of darkness is a place 'beyond' the one preceding it, although paradoxically, it is also an inward or psychological terrain. Oliphant's narrator travels through a series of cities that are similar to the circles of Dante's *Inferno*. In Oliphant's version, however, there is no certainty that Purgatory and Paradise exist, or if transcendence will be achieved. Like Oliphant's dark realm, the landscape of Vane's experience in MacDonald's novel *Lilith* is also entered by way of a fall. He stumbles through a mirror in his garret into a 'flat and melancholy' heath (p. 11).[46] In this case the movement is clearly one from an ostensibly tangible sense of identity to a state of non-being; Vane's only certainty in this new place is that, as he says: '[he] was nobody!' (p. 15). Vane likens the garret of his house to his conscious mind, but once the garret reveals itself as a portal to the heath he questions the nature of reality and identity:

> If I know nothing of my own garret . . . what is there to secure me against my own brain? Can I tell what it is even now generating? . . . What is at the heart of my brain? What is behind my *think*? Am *I* there at all? — Who, what am I? (p. 16)

Questioning the truth behind appearances, reality is no longer seen to guarantee meaning. MacDonald's protagonist is guided toward 'truth' by Raven, a shape-changing talking bird who is also the biblical Adam. Vane is led on a search for meaning in Christian terms, but his quest is also a psychological one. For both Oliphant's and MacDonald's speakers, to ask the question 'where am I?' is also to ask 'who am I?' Both protagonists are closest to an answer in the innermost citadel of the hellish cities they encounter.

## Margaret Oliphant, 'The Land of Darkness'

In these hellish cities the connection between the self and the environment is at its most visceral. In 'The Land of Darkness' the first of the Dantesque succession of infernal cities is a crowded commercial metropolis. It is illuminated with a 'scientific light' that gives it a 'sickly' and false glow (pp. 162-163). The flow of pedestrians is incessant and each consumer is unable to be silent or still for fear they will hear their own thoughts. This city, like its successive ones, is constructed by the narrator's own negative desires. In one city, for example, the narrator wishes that the sick people he sees were locked away, and in the next city he finds himself locked away as one of the sick. On his journey the narrator witnesses a series of alarming spectacles which illustrate the painful nature of physical existence. In the first of these scenes, a man is being vivisected in a public square. The dehumanized subject is bound to a table: 'writh[ing] with convulsive twitchings, as if trying to get free of the bonds which confined it' (p. 174). Two men stand over the specimen and discuss the theme of 'nerves'. Neurasthenia was a popular subject in newspapers at the time in which Oliphant was writing. The disorder is associated with modern urban experience and, as John Sloan suggests in his biography of the poet John Davidson, 'suffering from nerves' is seen as: 'the consequence of living in an age of exceptionally rapid change'.[47] In 'The Land of Darkness' these nerves are described by the 'scientists' as 'threads of being' which are 'strung to give as much pain and do as much harm as can be; and yet how well it's all managed, don't you know, to look the reverse' (p. 175). The notion of physically unreliable surfaces invites scrutiny, but reveals no answers.

Sickened by his part in this cruel scrutiny, Oliphant's narrator flees to a second city where he is immediately taken to a small room and incarcerated. This incident is reminiscent of Shadow's existential and theological 'prison-house' and in many ways foreshadows moments in literature such as the absurd arrest of K in Kafka's *The Trial* (1925). For Oliphant's narrator, however, the meaning of his incarceration eventually becomes clear to him: 'I seemed', he says, 'to have been brought here to make acquaintance once more with myself, to learn over again what manner of man I was' (p. 186). The nature of identity cannot be explained by physical examination. Imprisoned as a sinner, his scrutiny is no longer directed toward an 'other', as with the man bound to the table, but is forced inward. This self-scrutiny becomes connected to a sense that the narrator is also being watched by some other entity, as he describes:

> I was inspected, closely scrutinised by some one, and that not only externally, but by a cold observation that went through and through me. . . . I knew when the watcher was coming by tremors and shiverings through all my being: and no sensation so unsupportable [*sic*] has it ever been mine to bear. How much that is to say, no one can tell who has not gone through those regions of darkness, and learned what is in all their abysses. . . . Though that horrible inspection was from the eyes of some unseen being, it was in some mysterious way connected with my own thinking and reflections. (p. 187)

Imprisonment is no longer to do with the physical confinement of the room (the door is, after all, not locked). It is to do with his own consciousness: 'from myself I could never escape' (pp. 187-188). This sense of a judgemental self-consciousness follows the narrator into the middle of the city. On one of his customary, 'dreary' walks out of his room the narrator goes to the heart of the town and enters a domed building. Inside is a mass of people and the narrator is plucked out as a 'fresh subject' for a public experiment on the 'origin of thought'. He is tied to an upright platform and exposed to the crowd's gaze. A 'pitiless light' is turned on him and he describes how its glare 'went into me like a knife'. The huge lens of a microscope is pulled over him so that, he continues, it exhibits 'every secret movement of my being' (p. 190). The narrator at this point is assimilated into the city and he is no longer merely a spectator but, via introspection, becomes the spectacle itself.

## George MacDonald, *Lilith*

A notion of scrutiny is also central to Vane's experience of the city in MacDonald's novel *Lilith*. Vane's first question upon entering the heath: 'What is at the heart of my brain? What is behind my *think*?' (p. 16), is prophetic. When he pursues Lilith to the evil city of Bulika he finds that the source of his 'think' is inside Lilith's palace. This is so because Lilith is Vane's *doppelgänger*, a relationship that is established when he finds her dead body and revives her back into consciousness. Vane finds Lilith's body the moment he realizes that solitude is 'a hell and horror' (p.83). His sense of alienation and misery, like Brown's in *Midnight Scenes* and Oliphant's protagonist in 'The Land of Darkness', is expressed in terms of self-imprisonment. Vane suffers: 'a bare existence never going out of itself, never widening its life in another life, but, bound with the cords of its poor peculiarities, lying an eternal prisoner in the dungeon of its own being!' (p.83). Within this paradoxical prison of limitlessness Vane is unable to engender authentic selfhood. It is only within society and in the existence of others that the self becomes defined, and so can evolve from 'a being that may become a man' into an autonomous individual: 'nowhere but in other lives can [man] ripen his speciality, develop the idea of himself, the individuality that distinguishes him from every other' (p. 102). The cave in which 'Adam' nurses his 'Eve' is interpreted by MacDonald's biographer, William Raeper, as 'an extension of Vane's mind, and the corpse the sexual principle within himself which he nurtures only to have it attempt to enslave him'.[48] However, the rebirth of Lilith and of Vane suggests that the cave is more akin to a womb, with its double connotations of birth and oblivion. The sexual principle is evident when Vane apprehends Lilith in Bulika, saying that to enter the city is 'to penetrate: to understand something of [Lilith's] mode of being' (p. 117). This penetration is sexual but it also carries with it a violent sense of self-conscious self-penetration. When Vane first encounters the city he oscillates in and out of it; between the desire to know and the fear of that knowledge. Located at the heart of the city, Lilith's palace is chilling. The palace is like Lilith, who represents, as Raeper suggests, 'an uncovering of the unconscious. . . . [S]exual, destructive, eternal and changeable . . . . [O]ne of man's primal fears here embodied'.[49] Vane walks into a vast blackened room, shaped like an ellipsoid, and sees an uncanny, distorted projection of his past adventures on its walls: 'Blackness mingled with form, silence and undefined motion possessed the wide space. All was a dim, confused dance, filled with recurrent glimpses of shapes not unknown to me' (p. 134). In a horrible moment of realization Vane learns where he is: 'I knew that in the black ellipsoid I had been in the brain of the princess!' (p. 137). Thus he learns who he is: her brain is integral to his. Lilith embodies Vane's subconscious fears and desires, and the palace is an extension of both Lilith and himself. Vane is forced to witness his own frightening interior, and by doing so realizes he is a thought generated by Lilith, played across the black walls of the palace's inner chamber. This psychological curlicue is noted by Raeper: 'Lilith is his fear; he is a thought in her head'.[50]

The psyche Vane discovers in Bulika is pervaded by a sense of evil, personified by the figure of a shadow, who represents a psychological state of depression, or the Christian state of despair. In *Lilith* the Shadow is associated with Bulika and is described emerging from the palace by the usually cheerful child, Odu:

> He came down the hill very black, walking like a bad giant but spread flat. He was nothing but blackness. . . . and then he was inside us. . . . I felt like bad. . . . I grew sick, and thought I must kill myself to get out of that black. (pp. 187-188)

The evil figure symbolizes self-loathing, and as he encroaches, he exacerbates a feeling that existence is without meaning. When the Shadow visits a woman in Bulika she subsequently hurls herself out of her window. The Shadow may bring physical death, but, even worse, he may bring the feeling of death-in-life. The link between the Shadow and death-in-life is made explicit near the end of the novel, when Lilith is made to repent her sins. Her evil is caused, she is told, by her enslavement to 'the Shadow, overshadowing your Self' (p. 199). Lilith is in anguish as she is made to look deep into her own black soul: 'Her torment is that she is what she is' (p. 202). Vane suffers vicariously, as he describes:

> A horrible Nothingness, a Negation positive infolded her; the border of its being that was yet no being touched me . . . It was not the absence of everything I felt, but the presence of Nothing. The princess dashed herself from the settle to the floor with an exceeding great and bitter cry. It was the recoil of Being from Annihilation. (pp. 203-4)

Still refusing to see herself as she really is, Lilith remains in the 'hell of her self-consciousness' (p. 201), where her agony deepens. Vane relates her condition in specific detail:

> Then came the most fearful thing of all. . . . I knew only that if it came near me I should die of terror! I now know that it was *Life in Death* — life dead, yet existent . . . . The thing itself was in her, not in us; its reflex, her misery, reached us, and was again reflected in us; she was in the outer darkness, we present with her who was in it! . . . Something was gone from her, which then first, but its absence, she knew to have been with her every moment of her wicked years. The source of life had withdrawn itself; all that was left her of conscious being was the dregs of her dead and corrupted life. . . . It was not merely that life had ceased in her, but that she was consciously a dead thing. (pp. 205-206)

The shadowy presence of absence of the protagonist's mode of being is induced by urban experience and can therefore be represented by urban spaces. There is a long literary tradition which correlates this 'evil' of existential despair and urban topography. This is discussed by Northrop Frye in regard to Eliot's city verse via Eliot's indebtedness to Dante's *Inferno*.[51] Of particular importance to Eliot, Frye suggests, is the place at which 'the vision of experience [the 'real' world] begins to be a vision of hell [the poetic vision of *L'Inferno*]' (p. 51). In Dante, this place is the area just before the river Acheron, where

Dante encounters crowds of people in limbo, waiting to descend into Hell proper. The existential condition of the crowds in Dante's place of limbo is of death-in-life. Dante's vision is widely acknowledged as a seminal precedent for the perception of the modern city as Hell, and the representation of the Scottish city is no exception to this. Thomson's *City of Dreadful Night*, Oliphant's 'Land of Darkness', Muir's *Poor Tom* and Gray's *Lanark* all make explicit reference to Dante's *Divine Comedy*. That Dante's Hell is an allegory for social concerns pertinent to Florence in the 1300s does not discount the metaphysical horrors it engenders. As critic Dorothy L. Sayers comments, Dante's hell is an allegorical 'vision of the Hell in the self', and is 'the place of self-knowledge in sin'.[52]

The city, for Vane, in MacDonald's *Lilith* and for Oliphant's narrator, in 'The Land of Darkness', is a place of self-knowledge. Yet the cities that both protagonists encounter are characterized by extremes. The city is either one of sin and evil, or one of divine grace and transcendence. Saint Augustine makes a similar distinction in his work, *The City of God* (426). Augustine sees evil as being of the 'lustful' soul that made man live according to the flesh rather than the spirit: 'a man living according to man, and not according to God, is like the devil'.[53] Augustine goes on to distinguish between the two types of selves who inhabit the two types of cities. The fallen self, inhabiting the material city, believes he or she is his/her own centre, while the regenerate self, inhabiting the spiritual city, abnegates the self by looking to God for meaning. At the end of Vane's journey in *Lilith*, he enters what appears to be Augustine's spiritual city. He is greeted by a 'great angel' with the words 'Welcome Home' (p. 249). Having found 'home', it seems that Vane achieves transcendence. However, he is ushered right through the city, and when he climbs the rocks that take him into the clouds, it is not God he sees, as might be expected in an Augustinian spiritual city. Instead, he crashes back down to find himself alone and in his library. His journey brings him back to where he began. Moreover, what realization is gained on his journey seems insubstantial, as his house is still strange to him; he does not feel 'at home'. Vane is stranded in an indeterminate place that no longer feels real, yet the other world does not break through. His search dissolves into 'strange dim memories, which will not abide identification' (p.252). In the spiritual city, Vane did not achieve a final union with God and it was in Bulika that he gained a knowledge of his own dark psyche. The spiritual city signified for Vane not transcendence, but a fall back into a real world of discontent. Ironically, it is not the spiritual city that ultimately endows his journey with meaning, as in the Augustine world. It is in the terrifying, 'fleshly' city that Vane gains an inward perspective and learns what is behind his soul. Vane learns not of his God, but of himself.

## III. Reality and the Ideal in Urban Poetry

### James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*

One of the first to question God in the light of the modern age in Scottish literature is James Thomson (B.V.). In this respect he is a precursor of Oliphant's 'The Land of Darkness' and MacDonald's *Lilith*, and, indeed, to later Scottish novels of the twentieth-century. Critics agree that Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* represents the pinnacle of his poetic achievement. The poem first appeared in instalments in the *National Reformer* during 1874. It was published in book form in 1880 and sold so well that it recovered all costs of publication, an unusual feat for a book of poetry. It is even more unusual considering Thomson's comment in a letter to his friend, publisher and editor, Bertram Dobell: 'As for this "City of Dreadful Night", it is so alien from common thought and feeling . . . that scarcely any readers would care for it'.[54] The poem is certainly regarded as one of Thomson's most unremittingly gloomy. Kenneth Hugh Byron writes in his study of *The Pessimism of James Thomson* (1965) that *The City of Dreadful Night* represents the culmination of the poet's increasing sense of religious, philosophical and existential malaise. The relative popularity of Thomson's poem suggests that the poet's state of mind in regard to religious doubt seems to reflect the state of the popular mind. As the grotesque preacher of Book XIV in the poem says to his congregation of 'melancholy Brothers': 'There is no God; no Fiend with names divine / Made us and tortures us'.[55] The individual is completely abandoned in the 'Infinite aeons' of impartial 'universal laws' (XIX, 58-61).

What is most significant in Thomson's *City* is not so much, as Kenneth Hugh Byron says, that 'his melancholy reaches its height' (p. 79); but rather that it attains its depth.

Thomson's abysmal city is a psychological hell which is nevertheless the site of 'a quest for the answer to life's mysteries'.[56] Thomson's speaker in this poem also prefigures the 'down-going' of the 'spiritual odyssey through the modern world' (p. 21) made by Nietzsche's prophet in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-1884). Nietzsche's philosophical doctrine is narrated by the Persian sage Zarathustra who must recuperate meaning in a meaningless world. It is immediately established that '*God is dead*!'[57] (p. 41). Nietzsche first proclaims the death of God in *The Gay Science*, published one year prior to *Zarathustra*, in 1882. For Zarathustra as well as Thomson's speaker, the absence of God leaves a void; there is no meaning, no 'beyond', and no good or evil. Within this context Zarathustra's narrative raises three main ideas.[58] The first is the notion of the 'Superman' (*Übermensch*) which relocates divine meaning with the individual: 'Man', Zarathustra says, 'is something that should be overcome' (p. 75). That is, in differentiating oneself one must assert one's will so that one creates ('overcomes') oneself rather than merely striving to overcome others. The 'will to power' is the second idea, and is the basic psychological force which drives one's aim of 'aggrandizement'. The third notion in Nietzsche's treatise is 'eternal recurrence', which is the idea that everything is cyclical. When existence is endlessly repeated in exactly the same way no one thing is more meaningful than another. This has two initial consequences for individuality. Firstly, one must be concerned with the 'moment' rather than the non-existent 'goal', that is, with the state of being itself rather than with actions or purposes. Secondly, by imparting each moment with significance, its meaninglessness can be overcome and self-fulfilment ('Superman') can be achieved. It is this notion of 'eternal recurrence', expressed by the prophet Zarathustra from the depths of his self — 'My abyss *speaks*' (p. 233) — which Thomson prefigures in *The City of Dreadful Night*.

Thomson's poem predates Nietzsche's text by nine years and it is impossible that the one could have been influenced by the other. Yet there is a striking resemblance in imagery that links Thomson's brand of pessimism with that of Nietzsche. The German philosopher was immensely popular with Scottish intellectuals at the end of the nineteenth-century. According to critic J. Benjamin Townsend, this popularity was instigated by the academic Alexander Tille who arrived at Glasgow University in 1890, and under whose influence 'Scotland became a center of Nietzsche study and propaganda'.[59] Nietzsche's appeal may be due to a metaphysical viewpoint pertinent to the Scottish mind before Nietzsche, but which finds its full expression in his writings. The image in *The City of Dreadful Night* that specifically anticipates Nietzsche's revelation of 'eternal recurrence' is seen when the speaker encounters a crippled creature crawling along a lane. This path stretches back to the 'far-off gate' of pre-natal security and forward toward death:

> Two lanes diverge up yonder from this lane
> My thin blood marks the long length of their soil . . .
>
> But I am in the very way at last
> To find this long-lost golden thread
> Which unites my present with my past (XVIII, 44-51)

For Thomson's speaker there is no possibility of finding past innocence in some transcendent City of God at the end of either route because the human journey is circular and not linear. In the sermon of Book XIV, the 'preacher' emphasizes that there is no afterlife, but that all existence is circular:

> Infinite aeons ere our kind began;
> Infinite aeons after the last man
> Has joined the mammoth in earth's tomb and womb.
> (XIV, 58-60)

Thomson's speaker has previously described the miserable journey of a fellow city-wanderer in these terms (italics added):

> He circled thus for ever tracing out
> The series of the fraction left of Life;
> *Perpetual recurrence* in the scope
> Of but three terms, dead Faith, dead Love, dead Hope.
> (II, 45-48)

A similar labyrinthine imagery is also used to evoke the notion of 'eternal recurrence' in the third book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In the scene called 'The Vision and the Riddle' Zarathustra encounters a dwarf and a shepherd with a snake in his mouth. This meeting takes place in a lane, in a scene which is described by critic Alan White as Zarathustra's 'only direct, extended account of the doctrine of eternal return':[60]

> 'Behold this gateway, dwarf! . . . it has two aspects. Two paths come together here: no one has ever reached their end.
>
> 'This long lane behind us: it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane ahead of us — that is another eternity.
>
> 'They are in opposition to one another, these paths; they abut on one another: and it is here at this gateway that they come together. The name of the gateway is written above it: "Moment".' (p. 178)

The implication in these passages is, of course, that without God transcendence in terms of Christian morality is impossible. There is no longer an Eden at the end of the path back, or a Holy City to conclude the way forward.

As Tom Leonard says of *The City of Dreadful Night*, it shows 'a city in one aspect like a reverse picture of the New Jerusalem of *Revelation*'.[61] This image of negative transcendence corresponds with Herman Melville's view of the poem as 'the modern book of Job'.[62] In the Old Testament Job loses his belief in God after his faith is tested by a series of disasters. Job is grief-stricken and sees life as an endless treadmill. Job does, however, eventually come to depend on God's justice. Thomson's speaker, in contrast, cannot reassert his faith in a God that has abandoned him. Without the transcendental goals delineated by Christianity, the eternal moment lived within the city is hellish. To overcome this hell, according to Zarathustra, an individual must marshal his/her creative will. But to do this requires the love of one's own soul. This aspect of Zarathustra's 'yea-saying', or means to transcendence, is usefully summarized by Roy Pascal in his introduction to Tille's translation:

> All is to be discarded that distracts him from his true being and would make life subordinate to something else; virtue is that 'yourself is in your deed.' 'Thou shalt' is to replaced by 'I will,' and will is not a liberation from something, but an acceptance of the profoundest instinct of inward necessity.

> Freedom becomes the joyful accomplishment of necessity —
> 'Become that thou art' — a restoration of personality.[63]

The 'necessity' that is spoken of by Thomson's 'preacher' in section XIV of *The City of Dreadful Night*, however, is not joyful. The preacher concludes his sermon by pointing out the benefits of suicide as a means of achieving release. Self-annihilation, he says, is 'Necessity Supreme' in a world (represented by the city) that, with 'no hint . . . Of good or ill', is without the possibility of any other form of transcendence: 'abysmal, dark, / Unlighted ever by the faintest spark' (XIV, 76-77). Thus Thomson's speaker not only exists in a moment that is eternal in its meaninglessness, he is, like the crippled creature he meets on the path, paralysed there. His inability to move is also the inability to move from the states of being described by Zarathustra. 'Man is', the prophet says, 'a rope, fastened between animal and Superman — a rope over an abyss. A dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying-still' (p. 43). Thomson's speaker succumbs to the danger of the abyss and is unable to move along the figurative rope. Consequently, his existence is a death-in-life, one of those whom Zarathustra admonishes: 'You are half-open doors at which grave-diggers wait' (p. 143). This indeterminate state is, for Thomson as it is for MacDonald, personified by the figure of a Shadow.

The Shadow appears in Thomson's *The Doom of a City* (1884 [1857]) and 'Lady of Sorrow' (1864) as well as in *The City of Dreadful Night.* As in MacDonald's novel *Lilith*, the Shadow signifies a psychological state of depression and self-debasement. However, it differs in that the state is objectified via a distorted perception of the city. It is an active force of darkness which enervates the speaker and in *The Doom of a City*, creates a paralysis of death-in-life:

> The city whence in anguish I had fled
>     A vast dark Shadow loomed . . .
> Its dark suggestions were of Life, not Death;
> Its awful mass of life oppressed my soul.[64]

In his prose piece, 'A Lady of Sorrow', Thomson explores even more fully the nature of the city in its relation to an evil depression brought on by another Shadow figure.[65] Thomson's speaker traces his own urban melancholy via the female figures of an 'angel', a 'siren', and finally, a 'formless Shadow, pervading [his] soul as the darkness of night pervades the air'.[66] This female Shadow imposes herself upon the speaker and forces introspection. When she does, the speaker's perception of the metropolis undergoes a transformation: '[She] interweaves herself more wonderful about me and within me; so that seeing I may see not and hearing I may hear not, so that not seeing I may see and not hearing I may hear' (p. 18). By 'annihilating' the solidity of external reality and allowing for a mystical union with what the speaker calls an absolute 'Reality' (p. 46), it seems that introspective vision requires the nullification of sensory perception. With senses rendered unreliable, knowledge of the real or external becomes impossible and existence itself questionable. As the Shadow herself explains: 'now "in the midst of life you are in death:" not merely *liable* to death . . . but *in* death; you and your transitory phantasmal Universe of matter floating in the midst of the eternal Divine Life which alone is Reality' (p. 46). This fusion found in 'The Lady of Sorrow', with an 'Absolute Reality', predicates a state of non-being, a nothingness.

In *The City of Dreadful Night* it is nothingness to which the protagonist aspires. This view is discussed by Kenneth Hugh Byron, who writes that the poem holds the view that the will 'makes us strive ceaselessly for what we can never find, that is, peace, rest, and enduring satisfaction'.[67] In this respect, Byron continues, Thomson is linked with Schopenhauer's systemization of pessimism (which also influenced Nietzsche) when Schopenhauer asserts that life is a manifestation of Will and therefore everything in life is wholly subjective: 'every concrete thing . . . can be understood only as separate illustrations of one or another of the external forms which the will may assume'.[68] Thomson finds relief by 'resisting Will', Byron goes on to say, so that:

> The goal of Thomson . . . is not to achieve or attain to reality through exercising the Will which constitutes the essence of existence but to escape that reality through thwarting the Will and attaining thereby non-being or nothingness. (p. 104)

Thomson's nihilistic vision of eternity denies itself the possibility of recuperating the Nietzschean 'Moment'. Nietzsche himself despises the weak of spirit, deniers of vitalism, and the pessimistic. In the city, however, even in Nietzsche's work, a tendency toward weakness seems unavoidable. When Nietzsche's Zarathustra goes to the 'great city' in Part Three of his discourses, he meets a man whom he calls a fool because the man has absorbed the city's foulness. The foolish man describes the city in the kind of effluvial images so typical of the nineteenth-century: 'the great rubbish pile where all the scum froths together! . . . [W]here everything rotten, disreputable, lustful, gloomy, over-ripe, ulcerous, conspiratorial festers together' (p. 197). Nietzsche's own aim of individuation necessitates that he leave the city. As Zarathustra says of the fool who hates the city but stays there: 'Where one can no longer love, one should — *pass by*!' (p. 198). Thomson's speaker is unable to pass the city by, however. The city is, after all, his own anathematising 'place of the mind', to use Tom Leonard's phrase.[69] The poem records a downward journey and does not allow for an upward movement of transcendence. The penultimate section of *The City of Dreadful Night* describes two statues, a sphinx and an angel, which face each other. The ancient sphinx, 'changeless as life's laws' (XX, 42), represents the endurance of the eternal moment: its 'vision seemed of infinite void space' (XX, 48). The wings fall off the angel and he is merely 'a warrior leaning on his sword alone' (XX, 27); a Fallen man himself falls and shatters at the foot of the sphinx.

In the perceptions of the city represented in the works of Brown ('Shadow'), Guthrie, Oliphant, MacDonald and Thomson, the subjective experience is related to realism, as depth is related to a surface. This structure anticipates Freud's and Jung's theories in which the subconscious (or unconscious) and the conscious (or rational) 'ego' are stratified. An engagement with the 'dark abyss' of the self is normally accessed by way of a journey downwards or inwards and the knowledge thus gained is crucial to transcendence. MacDonald, for example, is described as a 'spiritual geologist' by Marshall Walker. He likens the author to Anados, the protagonist of MacDonald's *Phantastes* (1858), who says that: 'Perhaps, like a geologist, I was about to turn up to the light some of the buried state of the human world, with its fossil remains charred by passion and petrified by tears'.[70]

As early as 1877, Jules Verne shows in his novel, *Les Indes Noires* (published in English as *The Child of the Cavern*), that a geological underground may no longer be allegorically spiritual. Significantly, the story is set in Scotland, and it depicts the replacement of religious meaning with psychological meaning in a world where scientific progress and rationality are displacing traditional ways. The topology of Verne's Scotland is stratified. Under Loch Katrine lies a labyrinth of coal shafts and caverns. There is also an underground loch, Loch Malcolm, around which is built Coal City. A troglodyte community of miners live in this realm, but when Harry Ford and James Starr, the owners of the mine, come to oversee the mining of a rich new seam of coal, strange disturbances begin. The author of these disturbances is an enigmatic figure by the name of Silfax. Ambiguous as both a devil and an Old Testament God, Silfax also represents a dark, archaic unconscious. It is Silfax who vandalizes the geological structure of the caverns so that Loch Katrine almost collapses into Loch Malcolm. Coal City barely avoids being washed away and Silfax is recognized as a menace that, as Starr says, must be brought to reason. In a dramatic end to the novel Silfax is drowned, signifying a subsumation of old religious ways under scientific reason, industrial progress and an associated morality. His relegation to the depths of Loch Malcolm ensures that the surface of Loch Katrine remains stable, at least for the meantime. When Verne's loch collapses, so does the dichotomy between the unconscious and the conscious, and between the spirit and the material body. For those at the end of the Victorian era who maintain a belief in the dogma of morality, and the notion that the flesh is evil and overcoming it is virtue in itself, Verne's novel offers an entirely new, if unwelcome, perspective. Nietzsche's theme in *Zarathustra* is similar: 'Once the soul looked contemptuously upon the body: and then this contempt was the supreme good' (p. 42). But, Nietzsche's prophet continues, the body and the soul are one and therefore the body's evil is also the evil of the soul: 'What does your body say about your soul? Is your soul not poverty and dirt and a miserable ease?' (p. 42). Zarathustra often refers to excrement and disease, but he does not always shun it. As Alan White points out in regard to Nietzsche's doctrine in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: 'Although "there is much shit in the world," there is wisdom in its presence'.[71]

## John Davidson

The poet John Davidson, strongly influenced by Nietzsche, also came to believe in the integral nature of body and soul, even at the body's most base. In Davidson's London-set novel, *Earl Lavender* (1895), his characters, Earl Lavender and Lord Brumm, are 'Evolutionists' and are parodies of both religious evangelicalism and evolutionary theory. The two characters descend to an 'Underground City', occupied by a society of flagellants, and where a 'Lady of the Veil' introduces them to its practices. Whipping is given religious significance, and the Lady says: 'The scourge frees the soul and quells the body'.[72] There is nothing even slightly pornographic about Davidson's depiction of sado-masochism; it is intended purely as a satire of the middle-class tendency to separate body and soul which engenders a lifeless existence. As Davidson says in a 'Note' preceding the novel, the present is 'an age of effete ideals' in which people, having no physical 'suffering and toils', are left 'with no vital interest in life'.[73]

In a blasphemous and comic version of one of his own poems, 'A Ballad of a Nun' (1894), Davidson synthesizes body and soul in a way that predicates his later materialism. God is speaking to Jesus and Mary about humanity: 'I made them what they are — one and entire, and they go and divide themselves up into a trinity, and me too — mind, body, spirit'.[74] Davidson's rejection of God and church doctrine is, like Nietzsche's, without hesitation: 'good and evil, heaven and hell are lies!', he writes in a poem of 1896.[75] However, like his Scottish precursors, Oliphant, MacDonald and Thomson, whose questioning of religious belief mourn its loss, Davidson's search to understand 'the relation of the Soul of Man to the Universe'[76] still bears the marks of the Calvinism he grew up with. As his biographer, John Sloan, concedes: 'For all his strongly voluntarist tendencies, his own secularized vision of Heaven and Hell has evident affinities with the severe scholastic Calvinism from which his father had rebelled'.[77] Having denied an authoritative

God, Davidson's metaphysical questions had to be redirected. As a Scottish contemporary of Davidson's, R. M. Wenley, says of the poet in his introduction to a 1924 edition of his poems: 'Scottish religiosity, not as an ecclesiastical system, but as an attitude toward life, furnishes the clue to Davidson. Disavowing a creed, he could not disavow the cosmos'.[78] If Davidson could not renounce the universe, neither could he deny the idea of a sovereign self. In the early poem, *Diabolus Amans* (1885), the speaker, Angelus, says:

> Yes, I believe He is because I am,
> That as my body and mine outward life
> Are sacramental solely of a self
> Invisible and real, so this, the world
> I gaze on, this material universe,
> Is but the sacrament of soul, and else
> Nothing, unmeaning and irrelevant.[79]

Davidson seems to be saying that the universe and the body exist materially, but only insofar as they are created by his subjective 'gaze'. Ironically, however, the poem in which this rebellious assertion of autonomy is made was originally published anonymously. Davidson is unable to reconcile his assertion of a transcendent, autonomous self with the old religious notion of a 'cosmological self', that is, a self that, as Richard Norris notes, 'seeks its truth and meaning in a cosmic order'.[80] As Carroll V. Peterson points out, Davidson had not yet become a materialist at the time of this poem.[81] However, we can already see the poet's tendency, albeit problematically, to fuse metaphysics with a material sense of place as a means of transcendence.

Davidson's amalgamation of metaphysics and materiality seeks the truth of the soul in the abject depths of the physical body. Like Verne's image of a collapsed loch and the devastation it brings, Davidson forces together science and archaism, body and spirit in a way that, he believed, many would find objectionable. Far from avoiding the subject matter of the city, Davidson called for what he termed a 'pre-Shakespearian' attitude toward poetic expression. For the city, this meant that it was to be depicted with the same frankness as it was portrayed in the press and with the same audience in mind. In a short prose piece, 'A Questionable Utterance' (1903), he writes that through the necessity of expressing the modern urban condition 'Poetry has been democratized'.[82] Davidson posits the 'offal of the world', hitherto confined to the detached, precise and inartistic mode of newspaper reportage, as the now valid province of poetic expression. This is not to suggest that Davidson advocates literary realism or naturalism. In his early experiments with realism, the mode was consciously chosen as the best way to dramatize disinherited life in urban streets and rooms. However, as Townsend points out, as soon as literary naturalism becomes a fashionable and rigid form Davidson rejects it on principle, saying that literature could not merely 'wrap its imagination in a napkin, bury it certain fathoms in the earth, and go about with a notebook painting its epoch'.[83]

A visceral connection between Self and Matter is made in *The Testament of an Empire Builder* (1902). In a Parable (modelled on Zarathustra's Prologue) that introduces the poem, Davidson's persona, the Protagonist, explains that his audience prefers his 'old songs' to his new ones. Like the kailyard writer Ian Mclaren's preference for roses rather than for drains, the projected audience of Davidson's work is seen to resist his dark subject matter in favour of more pleasant themes:

> Besides it was exactly the superficial complexion of things that this people, like most peoples, loved to contemplate. Wherefore when pain and terror, which are the blood and nerve, the entrails and inmost complexion of the world, began more fully to inform the Protagonist's songs, the people bade him cease.[84]

The Protagonist concedes that: 'Self-knowledge ends in self-contempt' (p. 17), echoing a theme that was central to the earlier *Testament of a Vivisector* (1901). The first of the Testaments, this is Davidson's 'new statement of Materialism', as he writes in a 'Note' preceding the poem. It is addressed, he continues: 'to those who are willing to place all ideas in the crucible, and who are not afraid to fathom what is subconscious in themselves and others'.[85] The vivisector's business to 'study pain, measure it and invent' (p. 22), is little different from the Calvinist's, and is an imperative that recalls the veneration of inhumane experiments in 'The Land of Darkness' which, for Oliphant, writes Walker, is the 'wickedest contemporary expression' of evil.[86] When Davidson's vivisector binds a dying horse to a rack and cuts it open to extract 'Matter's pith / Itself!' (p. 21), there is something of himself bound to that rack too. What he in fact reveals is his own painful 'labyrinthine fires of solitude' (p. 9). These searing fires may also be purifying however, enabling an alchemical transformation linked to the 'crucible' of ideas, so that transcendence may be achieved by 'Self-Knowledge'. This knowledge is gained by an examination of Matter, which will elucidate the self, because, for Davidson's vivisector, the Self is Matter become self-conscious. Thus, there is nothing to differentiate between a material world and a spiritual world, as Davidson unequivocally states in a play, *The Theatrocrat* (1905): 'Man is matter; mind and soul are material forces; there is no spiritual world as distinct from the material world; all psychical phenomena are material phenomena, the result of the operation of material forces'.[87]

These material forces that are also spiritual forces are nowhere more evident than in the 'exquisite flame' that is Davidson's city. His city collapses together Saint Augustine's evil material city and divine spiritual city. Geology, corporeality and metaphysicality are brought together in the perpetual urban 'ebb and flow', a notion that is most crystallized in one of Davidson's later poems, 'Fleet Street' (1909):

> Fleet Street was once a silence in the ether.
> The carbon, iron, copper, silicon . . .
> Consummate matter of eternity.
> And so the flesh and blood of Fleet Street, nerve
> And brain infusing life and soul, the men,
> The women, woven, built and kneaded up
> Of hydrogen, of azote, oxygen . . .
> The warm humanities that day and night
> Inhabit and employ it and inspire,
> Were in the ether mingled with it.[88]

In this poem geology becomes architecture. Because the city is a lived-in space its materiality is not reductive. As Gaston Bachelard would later say in *The Poetics of Space*: 'Inhabited space transcends geometrical space'.[89] Davidson's Fleet Street is described as a living organism, given life by the men and women who traverse it. Even the sordid matter of the organism, turned inside-out so that it lies on the surface, transcends itself in a fusion with 'life and soul':

> The drainpipes, sewage, sweepings of the street:

> Matter of infinite beauty and delight
> Atoning offal, filth and all offence
> With soul and intellect with love and thought. (ll. 59-64)

This is a much more mystical image than might be expected of someone who is described as 'having been deeply affected by Nietzschean ideas of the redundancy of contemporary man'.[90] Indeed, Davidson's materialistic, pseudo-scientific view-point is couched in a highly subjective language and a highly autonomous vision; as Peterson remarks, 'much exists in his statements that is not "scientific," not verified by experiment and probably not verifiable, as, for example, the highly subjective theory of poetry'.[91]

Asserting a radical individualism based on a materialism that is nevertheless couched in idealistic terms is central to Davidson's vision. The ultimate expression of this individualism is, paradoxically, achieved by suicide. Davidson writes that:

> To conceive the limitless there must be limits, and by this contradiction we start eternity with a beginning and make of the infinite a womb called space'.[92]

It is back into this limitless space that Davidson finally seeks to both annihilate and assert himself in an expulsion, or rebirth, from this self-created 'womb'. It is a contradiction that may show the limits of his materialistic vision, but Davidson's words are also reminiscent of those of Glasgow poet Alexander Smith, when he said a few decades earlier that '[t]he accomplishment of a man is the light by which we are enabled to discover the limits of his personality'.[93] In *The Testament of John Davidson* (1908), the poet's final Testament, he defends suicide and writes of his wish to go beyond the limits of himself: 'To melt into the ether, and to be / Transmuted to infinity again' (l. 15-16). His ultimate 'yea-saying' is a positive act of will by which he achieves sovereignty over, as well as a unity with, the universe:

> By my own will alone
> The ethereal substance, which I am, attained,
> And now by my own sovereign will, forgoes,
> Self-consciousness; and thus are men supreme:
> No other living thing can choose to die. (ll. 26-30)

This death is an attempt to reconcile a self perceived as part of a universal flux, and a self conceived as sovereign. This reconciliation is, however, only self-destructive. Thus when Hugh MacDiarmid writes in 'Of John Davidson' (1932) of the poet's suicide, he emphasizes the violently destructive consequence of Davidson's vision of selfhood. Davidson is imagined, standing at the edge of the sea, as:

> A bullet-hole through a great scene's beauty,
> God through the wrong end of a telescope.[94]

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[1] Ian Mclaren, quoted by Thomas D. Knowles in *Ideology, Art and Commerce: Aspects of Literary Sociology in the Late Scottish Kailyard* (Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis, 1983), p. 11.

[2] George Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (London: Arthur Barber, 1951), pp. 10-11.

[3] Ibid., p. 15.

[4] Ibid., p. 18.

[5] *Ideology, Art and Commerce*, p. 11.

[6] John Nicolls, quoted by Silke Böger in *Traditions in Conflict: John MacDougall Hay's* Gillespie (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 32.

[7] *Barrie and the Kailyard School*, p. 18.

[8] *Traditions in Conflict*, pp. 32-33.

[9] Moira Burgess, *The Glasgow Novel*, 2nd edn. (Motherwell and Glasgow: Scottish Library Association and Glasgow District Libraries, 1986), p. 35.

[10] *The Glasgow Novel* is the most comprehensive account of the tradition of urban writing to date and remains a valuable starting point for critical work in the field. Its scope is restricted to the city of Glasgow and to the form the novel takes there. Burgess's work proceeds by way of arranging novels into various schools of realism which limits critical perspective by circumscribing our evaluation of urban texts.

[11] G. Gregory Smith coins this term in *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919). Smith's term held popularity for some time, even if it is now considered somewhat crude and unfashionable.

[12] G. Gregory Smith, quoted by Edwin Muir in *Scott and Scotland* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982), pp. 57-58.

[13] *Scott and Scotland*, p. 65.

[14] Ibid., p. 65.

[15] Ibid., p. 62.

[16] Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), p. 250.

[17] Ibid., p. 68.

[18] William Donaldson has found a wealth of writing about the Scottish city in the popular presses of the nineteenth-century, some of which is compiled and published in *Popular Literature in Victorian Scotland: Language, Fiction and the Press* (1986). Donaldson proposes that this material will force critics to re-evaluate the apparent lack of writing on the city at this time. The limits of this thesis, concerned as it is with work published in book form, does not allow for such research beyond this acknowledgment. However, a similar aim of reappraisal within the scope of publication in book form is central to the present thesis.

[19] 'The Guse-Dubs of Glasgow', in *The Tavern Sages: Selections from the* Noctes Ambrosianae, J. H. Alexander (ed.), (Aberdeen: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1992), pp. 142-143.

[20] 'Haggises and the Old Town', in *The Tavern Sages*, pp. 140-141.

[21] See John F. McCaffery's Introduction in Shadow's *Glasgow, 1858: Shadow's Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 1976), pp. 5-16 (p. 8).

[22] *Shadow's Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs*, p. v.

[23] Mario Praz, 'Introductory Essay', in *Three Gothic Novels*, ed. by Peter Fairclough (London: Penguin, 1986), pp. 12-13.

[24] William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 15.

[25] Charles Dickens, *Our Mutual Friend* (London and Glasgow: Collins, 1966), p. 21.

[26] *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 2.

[27] Ibid., p. 9.

[28] Steve Pile, *The Body and the City: Psychoanalysis, Space and Subjectivity* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 7.

[29] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 3.

[30] Ibid., p. 1.

[31] The notion of self-reflection in abjection and its implications for psychological and social identity is developed in chapter six of this thesis.

[32] Calvin Bedient, *Architects of the Self: George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, and E. M. Forster* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1972), pp. 10-11.

[33] Thomas Carlyle, quoted by Bedient in *Architects of Self*, p. 11.

[34] Andrew Noble, 'Urbane Silence: Scottish Writing and the Nineteenth-Century City', in *Perspectives of the Scottish City*, ed. by George Gordon (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1985), pp. 64-90 (p. 84).

[35] Ibid., p. 83.

[36] Susan Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 15-16.

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[37] *The Puritan-Provincial Vision*, p. 2.

[38] John Calvin, quoted in *The Puritan-Provincial Vision*, p. 2.

[39] Thomas Guthrie, *The City: Its Sins and Sorrows and Pleas for Ragged Schools* (London: Dalby, Isbister & Co, 1877), p. 83. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[40] *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 52.

[41] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 127.

[42] Colin Manlove, *Scottish Fantasy Literature: A Critical Survey* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1994), p. 11.

[43] *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, p. 25.

[44] Ibid., p. 22.

[45] Margaret Oliphant, 'The Land of Darkness', in *Selected Short Stories of the Supernatural*, ed. by Margaret K. Gray (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 162-209 (p. 162). Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[46] George MacDonald, *Lilith: A Romance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), p. 11. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[47] John Sloan, *John Davidson, First of the Moderns: A Literary Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 156.

[48] William Raeper, *George MacDonald* (Tring, Batavia, Sydney: Lion, 1988), pp. 374-375.

[49] Ibid., p. 376.

[50] Ibid., p.376.

[51] Northrop Frye, *T. S. Eliot* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965). Further references in this chapter, where there is no ambiguity, will follow quotations in the text.

[52] Dante Alighieri, *The Comedy of Dante Alighieri the Florentine, Cantica I: Hell (L'Inferno)*, trans. by Dorothy L. Sayers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p. 101n.

[53] Saint Augustine, *The City of God*, 2 vols, trans. by John Healey (London: J. M Dent, 1962), XIV, iv (p. 29).

[54] James Thomson, quoted by Anne Ridler in her Introduction to *Poems and Some Letters of James Thomson*, ed. by Anne Ridler (London: Centaur, 1963), p. xxx.

[55] James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993), XIV, 40-41. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[56] William David Schaefer, *James Thomson (B. V.): Beyond 'The City'* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), p. 73.

[57] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 41. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[58] The following precis of Nietzche's three main ideas in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is explicated more fully in R. J. Hollingdale's Introduction to the text.

[59] J. Benjamin Townsend, *John Davidson: Poet of Armageddon*, Yale Studies in English, Vol. 148 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 476-477.

[60] Alan White, *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), p. 86.

[61] Tom Leonard, *Places of the Mind: The Life and Work of James Thomson ('B. V')* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1993), p. 144.

[62] Herman Melville, quoted by Anne Ridler in *Poems and Some Letters of James Thomson*, p. xxxii.

[63] Roy Pascal's Introduction, in Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. by A. Tille (London: J. M. Dent, 1958), p. xi.

[64] James Thomson, 'The Doom of a City: A Fantasia', in *Poems and Some Letters*, pp. 12-54 (IV; II, 44-53).

[65] Anne Ridler notes an anecdote given by Thomson's friend, J. H. Barrs, who relates that when Thomson was depressed he suffered 'a dreary week of feebleness and self-abhorrence' which led to alcoholic binges. In his drunken state, his landlord's children called him 'Mr Thomson's wicked brother', unable to recognise the Hyde-like transformation their friend had undergone. *Poems and Some Letters*, p. xv.

[66] James Thomson, 'A Lady of Sorrow', in *Essays and Phantasies* (London: Reeves and Turner, 1881), pp. 1-50 (p. 17).

[67] Byron, Kenneth Hugh, *The Pessimism of James Thomson (B. V.) in Relation to his Times* (London, The Hague and Paris: Mouton, 1965), p. 103.

[68] Ibid., p. 110.

[69] Taken from the title of Tom Leonard's critical biography, *Places of the Mind*.

[70] George MacDonald, quoted by Walker in *Scottish Literature Since 1707*, p. 176.

[71] *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth*, p. 141.

[72] John Davidson, *A Full and True Account of the Wonderful Mission of Earl Lavender, Which Lasted One Night and One Day* (London: Ward & Downey, 1895), pp. 135-136.

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[73] Ibid., pp. ix-x.

[74] John Davidson, quoted by Carroll V. Peterson, in *John Davidson* (New York: Twayne, 1972), p. 65.

[75] John Davidson, 'A Woman and her Son', in *Selected Poems and Prose*, ed. by John Sloan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 68-75 (l. 148).

[76] John Davidson, 'Literature and Philosophy', in *A Rosary* (London: Grant Richards, 1903), pp. 86-88 (p. 86).

[77] *John Davidson, First of the Moderns*, p. 206.

[78] R. M. Wenley, quoted by Peterson in *John Davidson*, p. 83.

[79] John Davidson, *Diabolus Amans*, quoted by Peterson in *John Davidson*, p. 24.

[80] Richard Norris, 'An Attempt at Understanding the Concept of the Self Through Some Possible Political and Religious Aspects, or, Selfhood — the Options', in *Common Sense*, 2 (1987), 3-13 (7).

[81] In *John Davidson*, the structure of Peterson's chronological survey of Davidson's themes lists 1900 to 1909 as the poet's materialistic period, although the seeds of this belief were growing before this time.

[82] John Davidson, 'A Questionable Utterance', in *A Rosary*, pp. 35-39 (p. 35).

[83] John Davidson, quoted by Townsend in *Poet of Armageddon*, p. 245.

[84] John Davidson, *The Testament of an Empire Builder* (London: Grant Richards, 1902), p. 8.

[85] John Davidson, *The Testament of a Vivisector* (London: Grant Richards, 1901). Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[86] *Scottish Literature Since 1707*, p. 184.

[87] John Davidson, *The Theatrocrat*, quoted by Peterson in *John Davidson*, p. 85.

[88] John Davidson, 'Fleet Street', in *Selected Poems and Prose*, pp. 126-128 (ll. 41-59). Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[89] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 47.

[90] Brian Stableford, *The Dedalus Book of Decadence (Moral Ruins)* (Cambs: Dedalus, 1993), p. 55.

[91] *John Davidson*, p. 97.

[92] John Davidson, quoted by Townsend in *Poet of Armageddon*, p. 445.

[93] Alexander Smith, 'On the Importance of Man to Himself', in ***Dreamthorp: Eight Essays by Alexander Smith*** (Mount Vernon, New York: Peter Pauper Press, [194-?]), pp. 49-64 (p. 55).

[94] Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Of John Davidson', in *Selected Poems*, ed. by Alan Riach and Michael Grieve (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 166.

# CHAPTER TWO

# CITIES OF THE SELF: TOWARD A SECULAR CITY

In the previous chapter, an interplay was traced between the real and the ideal, forwarded through a protagonist's subjectification of urban reality. Increasingly, religious or spiritual modes of transcendence were questioned and an emergence of psychological meaning began to impinge and distort reality. The present chapter continues an exploration of this emergence in the works of Arthur Conan Doyle and in Edwin Muir's *The Marionette* (1926). These texts gauge the loss of religious ideals and the supersession of a psychological vision of the city. The steady imposition of materialism at the time of these works is seen to displace the Hegelian dialectic. Instead of movement toward an ideal or conceptual notion of 'totality' (transcendence), reality seems to disallow mystical experience. Yet, through the following discussion of George Blake's *The Shipbuilders* (1935) and James Barke's *Major Operation* (1936), it appears evident that the Marxian inversion of Hegelian idealism which privileges materiality does not adequately address a continuing desire for transcendence. In the light of this, the final section of this chapter considers the ways in which a visceral connection of city and self are made in Lewis Grassic Gibbon's essay, 'Glasgow' (1934), Edwin Muir's *An Autobiography* (1954) and Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* (1966). In these texts the diseased stone and skin of city and self are painfully stripped away in the search for metaphysical truth.

By way of a brief preliminary to the concerns expressed in the texts that follow, we may consider Alexander Trocchi's expression of the inadequacy of secular social values to the urgencies of individual consciousness in an essay, 'A Note on George Orwell' (1958). There, Trocchi outlines the importance, and the dilemmas, engendered by secularization:

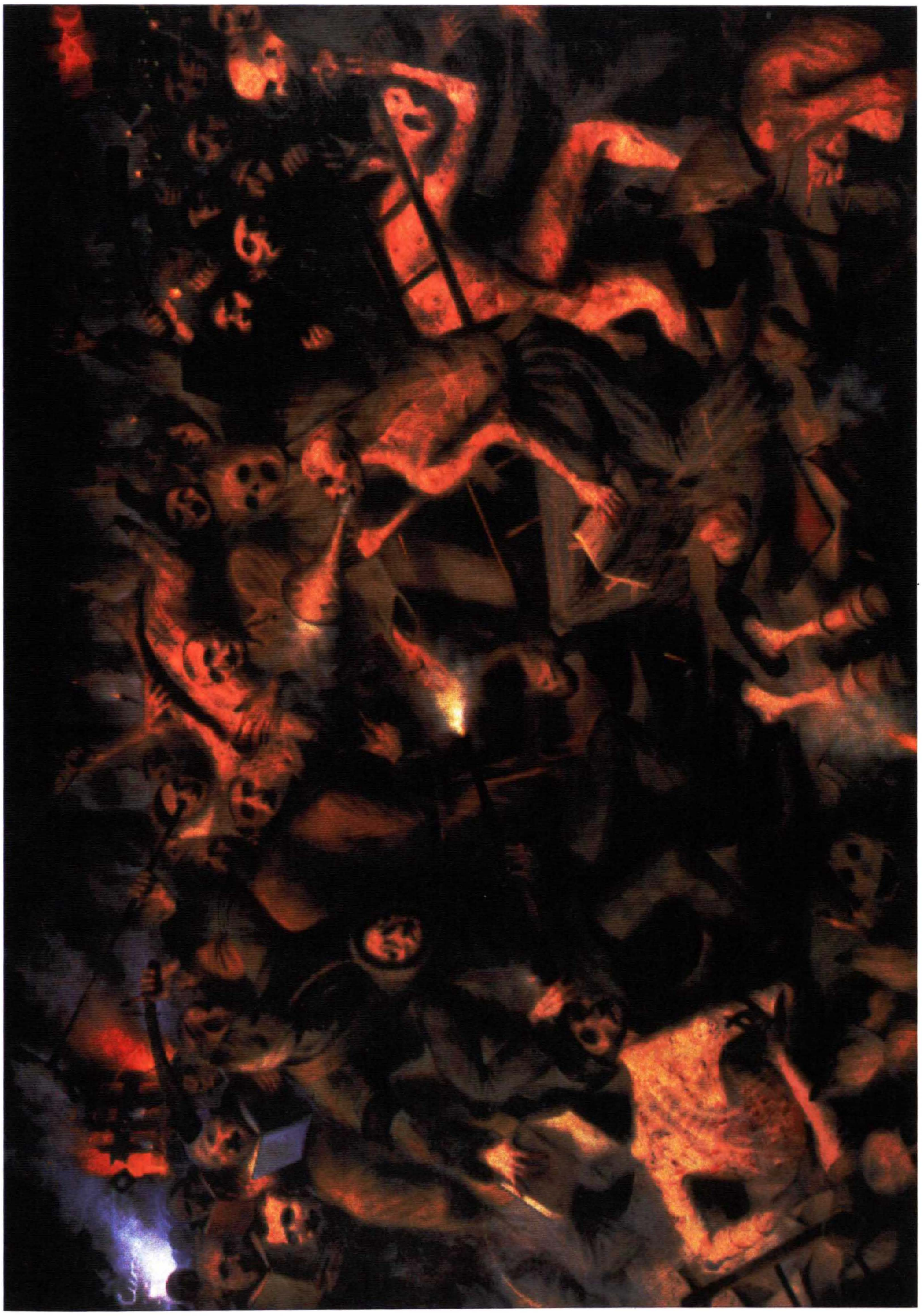
> In the realm of human behaviour God has functioned primarily as a witness against whose judgements men have measured (or pretended to measure) the validity of their own. If God is evicted, the very possibility of such a comparison is

> annihilated, and responsibility, the phosphorescent struts of the conscious self, is, as it were, left in the void.
>
> To whom am I responsible? To myself? And for what?[1]

Trocchi criticizes Orwell for not engaging with notions of self-consciousness and instead, falling into a 'democratic unreflectiveness' which makes him a writer of conscience, but not of consciousness. That is, in a search for meaning in a secular world, Orwell subordinates a 'poetical element' that affords primacy to the uniqueness of self for the 'abstractions' of social and class propaganda (p. 172). This chapter addresses the problems met by the protagonist as he seeks to locate an authentic identity in the resulting 'void'.

As Trocchi discriminates in his essay on Orwell, there are two possibilities for the engendering of this identity. On the one hand, the protagonist may seek reconciliation with an external agent, such as socialism, in which the self may find meaning. Such a means of transcendence, however, may merely be a continuation of the religious notion of a 'cosmological' self. Such a self can be defined as seeking a reconciliation within the 'truth' or 'meaning' of an external order. On the other hand, the protagonist may aspire to individual freedom and thus an 'autonomous', or 'sovereign', self, which is what Trocchi advocates. An autonomous self does not seek reconciliation, but exists in conflict with the external world.[2] The texts considered in this chapter are situated in a time of transition. Each of their protagonists engages with a search for 'freedom' that is nevertheless influenced by values prescribed by religious dogma. This struggle is ontologically problematic for a modern protagonist, as it was for the Romantic hero. Peter Thorslev notes that the traditional hero embodies an 'almost irreconcilable conflict between two opposing forces in their personalit[ y ].On the one hand, the hero shows a 'longing for some intellectual and moral certainty . . . [in a] positive commitment to an orthodox creed'. On the other hand, he is compelled toward:

> A self-assertion which makes impossible any wholehearted commitment to dogmas or to absolutes outside oneself, and which usually takes the form of a lust for violent emotional experience, even for suffering — any psychic activity which will heighten and make more acute a sense of self-awareness and self-identity.[3]



Scottish artist Ken Currie's apocalyptic vision, *The Troubled City* (1991).

As Trocchi's predecessor, John Davidson, illustrates in his final *Testament* and in his own suicide, the need for cosmic unity and the desire for sovereignty see the 'phosphorescence' of the self blaze before being extinguished.

## I. Cities of Transition

### Arthur Conan Doyle

A contemporary of John Davidson, also writing in London, was equally concerned with the discrepancy between religious dogma and individual vision. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous character, Victorian urbanite Sherlock Holmes, is described by the critic Richard Lehan in terms strikingly similar to MacDiarmid's conception of Davidson as 'God through the wrong end of a telescope':

> Holmes comes at truth from the other end of God's telescope. While God knows truth from all time, Holmes must reconstruct it inductively.[4]

Holmes is seen by Lehan to project his radical and sovereign individualism upon an external event in order to divine its truth, thus he creates rather than destroys his identity. Both Davidson and Holmes's creator, Doyle, rebelled against religious dogma, and both were concerned with replacing it with a personal, and for them a more tangible, spiritual meaning. When Doyle writes, in *Memories and Adventures* (1924), that 'such questions as the number of persons in God . . . have no bearing at all upon the development of man's spirit, which is the sole object of life',[5] his objection to division seems remarkably similar to Davidson's. Doyle's spiritual vision, like Davidson's, is one of fusion and his spiritualist beliefs made public in his 'conversion' of 1915 are the consequence of years of academic research as well as personal experiences of the occult. His spirituality is an intellectual one informed by subjective 'evidence'. Pierre Nordon notes of the 'cult' of Anglo-Saxon spiritualism of which Doyle was a part: 'The remarkable thing . . . is that it sets up to be both a form of empirical knowledge, in the scientific sense, and a practical religion; and that it attempts to link the physical with the metaphysical'.[6] Instead of

Davidson's materialism, Doyle sees 'the mounting tide of materialism' itself as evidence of the failure of religion.[7] For Doyle, materialism is tantamount to a faith in 'things' to the exclusion of a spiritual world. In *The New Revelation* (1918) Doyle insists that we '[r]ealize, not as a belief or a faith, but as a fact which is as tangible as the streets of London, that we are moving on soon to another life'.[8] In terms of his character, that arch rationalist, Sherlock Holmes, he too lends a subjective meaning to his clues that transcends their material reality. The city of London, as the central metaphor in the Sherlock Holmes adventures, is indubitably material, yet it is infused with metaphysical concerns that provide material 'evidence' of a transcendent realm.

It is Holmes himself who, in *A Case of Identity* (1891), says that 'life is infinitely stranger than anything which the mind of man could invent'.[9] Nevertheless, he imagines himself, omnipresent, with an ability to perceive the entire city:

> If we could fly out of that window hand in hand, hover over this great city, gently remove the roofs, and peep in at the queer things which are going on, the strange coincidences, the plannings . . . it would make all fiction with its conventionalities and foreseen conclusions most stale and unprofitable. (p. 147)

The city is a constructed artefact, yet, it gives way to a psychological realm. It does this through the metaphor of a thick fog, which is specifically a by-product of the industrialized city.[10] For Holmes, this psychological realm is the banality of normal consciousness. In *The Sign of Four* (1890), he associates the city with the mind as he looks out the windows of the Baker Street rooms:

> I cannot live without brain-work. What else is there to live for? Stand at the window here. Was there ever such a dreary, dismal, unprofitable world? See how the yellow fog swirls down the street and drifts across the dun-coloured houses. What could be more hopelessly prosaic and material? . . . [E]xistence is commonplace. (p. 67)

Yet Holmes, apparently logical, has his decadent, and even his sinister side. His cocaine habit is striking, as is his manic depression and his paroxysms of violin-playing. More alarming is the way that his scientific research takes him into uncanny territory. He takes long walks 'into the lowest portions of the city' (p. 14), for example, and he undertakes experiments on cadavers: 'beating the subjects in the dissecting-rooms with a stick . . . to verify how far bruises may be produced after death' (p. 12). The fog, however, to Watson's more romantic mind, reveals the same uncanny aspects of the city that Holmes's character alludes to, but which his rationality apparently contradicts. Also in *The Sign of Four*, Watson describes the foggy streets in a way that reveals a psychological state rather than Holmes's dreary material 'reality':

> It was a September evening and not yet seven o'clock, but the day had been a dreary one, and a dense drizzly fog lay low upon the grey city. Mud-coloured clouds drooped sadly over the muddy streets. Down the Strand the lamps were but misty splotches of diffused light which threw a feeble circular glimmer upon the slimy pavement. The yellow glare from the shop-windows streamed out into the steamy, vaporous air and threw a murky, shifting radiance across the crowded thoroughfare. There was to my mind something eerie and ghostlike in the endless procession of faces which flitted across the narrow bars of light and so back into the gloom once more. I am not subject to impressions, but the dull, heavy evening, with the strange business upon which we were engaged, combined to make me nervous and depressed. (pp. 70-71)

This passage is cited by Lehan in *The City in Literature* (1998) as a seminal example of the way a narrator's response to the city 'moves us from an objective to a subjective realm, as well as from a shared to a private reality'.[11] Despite Watson's insistence on impartiality and objectivity ('I am not subject to impressions'), his qualifying 'but' indicates the disturbing way that clarity and perspective are undermined by impressionism. According to Lehan, this shift is the hallmark of the modern conception of the literary city. Lehan continues by discussing imperialistic notions of good and evil in the city, yet the fog that is famous to Doyle's London and disturbing in Watson's vision signifies, as Nordon points out, 'a blurred, confused and distorted perception of moral values'.[12] Watson's image of the city fuses mind and street through the metaphor of the fog just as clear-cut psychological and moral distinctions of good and evil are also fused.

Robert Louis Stevenson also diffuses categorical notions of good and evil in the city's fog in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1885). A vivid description of the fog around Hyde's apartment, given by the usually unimaginative lawyer, Utterson, shows the fog's 'embattled vapours' infusing the city and the psyche, as it does for Watson:

> The dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses, with its muddy ways, and slatternly passengers, and its lamps, which had never been extinguished or had been kindled afresh to combat this mournful reinvasion of darkness, seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare. The thoughts of his mind, besides, were of the gloomiest dye.[13]

In the Sherlock Holmes stories there are, ostensibly, two points of view; that of Holmes the rationalist, and that of Watson, the romantic. Holmes is described by Watson in *A Scandal in Bohemia* (1891) as 'cold, precise . . . the most perfect reasoning and observing machine that the world has seen' (p.117), while, in *The Sign of Four*, Holmes accuses Watson of inappropriate sensationalism in the doctor's transcription of their previous case: 'You have attempted to tinge it with romanticism, which produces much the same effect as if you worked a love-story or an elopement into the fifth proposition of Euclid' (p. 65). These distinctions are more complex than those that occur in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Even in Stevenson's novel the two characters are not entirely good or evil but partake of each other. In the Sherlock Holmes stories the distinction between romanticism and rationalism is even more blurred. Holmes may be predominantly rational but there is much that he suppresses as non-truth simply because his world cannot accommodate it. What strikes Watson the most, in *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) is the highly selective nature of Holmes's knowledge. Although the detective is well-versed on poisons and sensational literature, he has no knowledge of the Copernican Theory of the Solar System. Holmes has no need of this knowledge because he is the centre of his own universe. Watson often remarks on Holmes's 'egotism', which, as he says in *The Sign of Four*, demands that 'every line . . . [of the story] should be devoted to his own special doings' (p. 65). When Watson queries Holmes on his ignorance of the earth's orbit, Holmes replies, 'What the deuce is it to me? . . . If we went round the moon it would not make a pennyworth of difference to me or to my work' (p. 15). Holmes is indeed a sovereign figure. But, in the early stories at least, he is also somewhat absurd. If the Baker Street rooms are, as Nordon quotes from Doyle, 'the only fixed point in the centre of an ever-changing universe',[14] then its potentate is also, as Watson says in *A Study in Scarlet*, 'some arm-chair lounger who evolves all these neat little paradoxes in the seclusion of his own study' (p. 17). What Doyle appears to be criticizing in the early stories is Holmes's claim to truth via rationality. Like Poe's character Dupin, discussed by Holmes and Watson in *A Study in Scarlet*, Holmes 'blithely explains away the very strangeness that the Gothic tales celebrate'.[15] Through Holmes's reasoning, a threat of transformation posed by a Godless universe is neutralized, yet a *frisson* of Gothic terror is nevertheless evoked in the foggy indiscriminacy of Holmes's city. He too looks out on a 'dreary, dismal, unprofitable world . . . when the yellow fog swirls down the street and drifts across the dun-coloured houses' (p. 67). The metaphorical use of city fog in Doyle's works functions in a way that is cognate to the imagery and themes evoked by the shadows in Thomson, Oliphant and MacDonald.

Doyle's professed belief in the presence of a world beyond the material one is occultist rather than psychological. In *Memories and Adventures* he emphasizes that psychic phenomenon are not merely phantasms of the subconscious mind:

> All fine-drawn theories of the subconscious go to pieces before the plain statement of the intelligence, 'I am a spirit. I am Innes. I am your brother.' (p. 402)

To call the very real manifestations of spirit merely an externalization of the mind's power is, he writes, 'the desperate defence of the last trench by . . . those old-time materialists'.[16] However, despite Doyle's denial that the subconscious has a role in spiritual experience, both of his characters, Holmes and Watson, attest the primacy of the mind. Holmes is unable to live without 'brain-work', while Watson's romantic imagination not only colours the city he describes, but is, in turn, affected by it (despite his claim that he is not 'subject to impressions'). Experience of the material city is, for both characters, despite any protestations, psychological. That is, the 'real' city is informed by a subjective response. The mind and the city are compared by Freud in a late essay, *Civilisation and its Discontents* (1930). For Freud, the 'Eternal City' of Rome is layered, so that ancient buildings are in evidence as well as recent structures. Similarly, he continues, the human mind retains its past experiences. Freud describes the image of the city, as Burton Pike notes, with 'the evocative power we might expect from a poet'.[17] The analogy is not developed by Freud, and yet the surrealistic effect of the image and the problem Freud has in sustaining it reflects, as Pike points out, the ambivalence of a city that Freud only alludes to in his analogy: '[the city] leads a double life, evoking deep-rooted archetypal associations while its surface features reflect changing attitudes and values'.[18]

## Edwin Muir, *The Marionette*

Writing at the same time that Freud's theories were becoming increasingly popular, Edwin Muir believed that a 'double life' was crucial to modern poetic expression. He writes that 'Poetry will not truly be contemporary, or truly poetry, if it deals merely with the immediately perceived contemporary world as if that existed by itself and were isolated from all that preceded it'.[19] For Muir, like Freud, this relationship between immediate perception and the past was nowhere more marked than in the city. Like Freud, Muir finds that such a relationship is problematic. Muir's cities embody a collision, rather than a layering, of past and present, the idealistic and the material. In this respect, the city is also an evocative setting for Muir's dialectical vision of transcendence that is central to his *oeuvre*. This dialectic is, as Margery McCulloch calls it, 'the antithetical exploration of "the two contrary states of the human soul".'[20] Muir's humanistic and spiritual concerns are as much a part of Muir's cities as they are his rural landscapes. Yet cities are purely the province of his fiction and remain largely overlooked. If, as Carol Gow suggests, Muir 'weaves a world . . . not earned in a single poem but in volume after volume',[21] then Muir's fiction must be considered as integral to this 'grand pattern'. Muir's perceptionsof the modern city, steeped in the mythopoeic and metaphysical concerns that appear in his poetry, are central to a tradition of 'subjective reality' in Scottish urban literature.

Muir's first novel, *The Marionette* (1927), is set in Salzburg, Austria, and attempts to deal with the uncanny effect of that city and the fluid nature of its 'reality'. The story's setting, and *The Marionette*'s fairy-tale like quality enable Muir to explore the psychology of selfhood and the mutability of perceived reality. He explains this combination of reality and fantasy in a letter to his publisher, remarking that *The Marionette* is:

> Less of a novel than a sort of metaphysical or symbolical tragedy, and at the same time a perfectly straightforward tale. My hope is that the human significance of the book will transpire through this.[22]

The city is dramatized in *The Marionette* as both a real place and a 'metaphysical or symbolical' terrain. In the plot of the story, Martin takes his 'half-witted' son, Hans, into the city to see the puppet theatre. This journey into Salzburg is, for Hans, also an educational journey from innocence to destruction and redemption. Furthermore, within this dialectical process there are two manifestations of the city; the 'real' Salzburg, and the apocalyptic city of Hans's dreams. The metaphorical use of the city reveals Muir's concerns regarding the construction of modern selfhood. Muir regarded the period in which he lived as a problematic time in terms of the existence of values with which one might construct identity. In an essay, 'The Natural Man and the Political Man' (1942) Muir writes that the years after the First World War have seen 'the disappearance of man as religion and humanism conceived him', and the emergence of an essentially urban, 'new species of the natural man dovetailed into a biological sequence and a social structure'.[23] The characteristic of the first was 'a moral struggle in the centre of the individual'. Life had been a conflict, 'suspended between good and evil'. The modern character, by contrast, substitutes good and evil for a Darwinian (and by implication, a Marxist) idea of a 'natural process', an inevitable progression that sees the 'image of man . . . become simpler . . . more realistic and more insignificant'.[24] In a letter written some years earlier he concedes that in modern society moral values of good and evil are no longer regarded as central to identity: 'Morally . . . I do not believe we are any worse than we have ever been before, and it may be that we are a good deal better'.[25] In terms of identity, particularly in a spiritual sense, a fissure had opened, exposing 'the chaos between the fall of one set of values and the discovery of another'.[26] Thus, in Muir's view, the major concern for the individual at this time was the fact that nothing seemed solid: 'we are in a period of transition . . . nothing quite full-grown can come to us . . . we are striving for what we do not rightly know — in other words, experimenting'.[27] Muir does not investigate notions of a political identity until *Poor Tom* (1932), but in *The Marionette* he attempts to bridge the gap between the religious and the secular with a construction of identity in terms of psychological meaning.

This new way of looking at things is described by Muir in *An Autobiography* as being central to the intellectual climate of London in the twenties:

> Freud's and Jung's theories were discussed from every angle, philosophical, religious, and literary, as well as scientific. The conception of the unconscious seemed to throw new light on every human problem and change its terms, and the False Darwinists . . . of whom I was one, snatched at it as the revelation which was to transform the whole world of perception.[28]

Such a transformation, however, appears to be irreconcilable with Muir's concerns with 'human significance'. In a study of contemporary literature, *Transition*, published one year prior to *The Marionette*, Muir comments on the importance of psychology to writing of that time, which he terms 'the literature of transition'. However, Muir is not without his reservations. Such literature is also 'unsatisfying': 'To see humanity in this way is to see it fanatically, without proportion, without that feeling of solidarity with which it distinguishes humanistic poetry'.[29] Muir's ambivalent stance in regard to a psychological method is evident in *The Marionette*.[30] The importance of the city as a place of the mind is noted by Paul Binding in his Afterword to the novel: 'Far from being a mere journey to Salzburg, [it]. . . is a demanding journey into man's psyche'.[31] Ostensibly, this psyche is represented by the novel's protagonist, Hans. Yet, as Sheila Lodge observes, Hans's psychological development is subordinated to Muir's narrative voice: 'Priority is consistently given to . . . [Muir's] mastery over the text, rather than to Hans's control of his own fears'. Consequently, Lodge goes on to suggest, the novel's use of psychological theory is more to do with the narrator than with the character, and opens up a 'radical discrepancy' between the action and characterization in the novel and the author's domineering authority.[32]

*The Marionette* was written in response to the author's own experience of Salzburg. In *An Autobiography*, Muir concedes that the novel seeks to capture the powerful effect that the city had: 'Obviously in presenting [the protagonist, Hans's] fragmentary picture of the town I was resurrecting my own'.[33] Muir's description of the city in his autobiography uses the same images as those used in *The Marionette*. Yet his non-fictional account of the city as a 'different region of reality', which is to say, a spiritual region, moves beyond the limits of traditional Christian spirituality and even beyond the limits of modern psychoanalytical theory:

> The powerful slew of the houses [gave] them a pitiless look; dust and scraps of paper revolv[ed] in corners. These things were more vivid to me when I wrote the story than others which intrinsically would have been more worth remembering; but though when they returned they brought back these secondary images with them, they remained in a different region of reality. Such impressions are so strong, perhaps, because they confront us anew with the terrifying artificiality of the clothed human form, the terrifying naturalness of animals, the movements of the dust filled with a memory beyond memory, the strangeness of shape itself. They move us more strongly than beauty and seem to precede beauty and summon it to follow them; if it obeys everything is transformed; if it refuses everything falls back again into nightmare. These things tell us — what we usually forget — simply that we are here and that there are many here with us.[34]

As Muir remarks in an earlier letter, written in 1925: 'Seen deeply enough the life of the most ordinary human creature . . . seems to me portentous, past all theorising'.[35] This struggle is apparent in the narrative of *The Marionette*, most markedly, in a collision, with the city at its nexus, between ideas of religious transcendence that may be inappropriate but fulfil a spiritual need, and contemporary ideas of psychology, which may be revelatory, but which locate all meaning, and the possibility of transcendence, within the limits of one's own self.

The Christian strand of the novel traces a fall, crucifixion and resurrection. When Hans's father, Martin, takes him into the city, the boy begins a journey from ignorance to a knowledge of sin. Passing the 'twelve stations of the Cross' on their way, Hans 'felt he had left the final image of safety behind. The ordeal he had to face arose immediately before him'.[36] The literal image of the stations of the Cross comes from its figurative use in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, in which each 'Cross' represents a stage in a dialectical progression of collective human and individual consciousness toward an ultimate goal of 'Absolute Spirit', that is, the unity of spirit in self-knowledge.[37] This educational quest is, as M. H. Abrams writes, quoting Hegel:

> Equivalent to the Christian journey of the spirit through suffering in quest of redemption and rebirth. . . . the 'Stations of the Cross' . . . involves, for the 'natural consciousness,' its own negation and destruction, 'it can on that account be looked upon as the way of doubt, or more properly as the way of despair.'[38]

Indeed, in *The Marionette*, Hans has no spiritual guidance to call upon and the religious figures on the Crosses appear impotent:

> Melancholy and ruinous in the soft air . . . the figures [seemed] very old, as if weary of their stations. . . . They looked as if they had been trying to say something, but long ago they had given up their wish, and now they were mute and resigned for ever. (pp. 55-56)

Yet religious meaning is not relinquished. Hans's subsequent visits to the city trace an increasing sense of evil, so that his dreams show a city that is apocalyptic and blood-soaked. When Hans enters the city for the last time the martyred figure of Christ on the cross is projected onto him:

> Christ gazed on . . . . Hans's passing recalled to Him and His executioners the scene in which they had been waiting in a stationary trance; they seemed to be contemplating themselves from a distance as they gazed at Hans walking down the hill. (pp. 85-86)

It is this final visit to the city which precipitates Hans's breakdown. When he returns to his dolls at home he 'crucifies' them by banging a nail through their heads and, in a symbolic act of self-crucifixion, he walks around the house naked and hits his own head against a wall. Having gone through this purgatory, Hans finally attains peace in the Edenic realm of his father's garden. However, this ending seems unsatisfactory and unconvincing, both for

Muir and his characters. The garden appears stagnant and without the vitality and ambivalence that Muir's narrator had given the city. In Muir's inability (or unwillingness) to posit an authentically positive rural Eden he displays an inversion of the vision of a rural ideal central in the outcomes of experiences of the city fictionalized by other major writers of the period, such as Gibbon's *Grey Granite* (1934) or Gunn's *The Serpent* (1948). Although Christopher Harvie, in *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes* (1981), notes that 'in Gibbon it is the rural life that seems real, and the industrial episodes two-dimensional by contrast',[39] the Eden shown at the end of Muir's novel is unconvincing. In its insipidness, its stagnancy and its lack of dialectic, it may even be undesirable.

Hans's attainment of Christian transcendence is rendered suspect by the psychological terms in which the novel is also couched. The salient feature of Salzburg as it is perceived in *The Marionette* is its uncanny quality. When Hans enters the city for the first time its effect is surreal:

> A carter on his lorry . . . seemed like an evil figure come out of his dreams. . . . [H]e was most confused by the people on the pavements, walking or standing, all in black with white faces, almost all silent. (p. 38)

In *An Autobiography*, Muir describes Salzburg in almost identical terms. This proximity of fiction and personal vision is integral to Muir's problematization of the city as a place of lost innocence. This notion will be discussed more fully when we return to *An Autobiography* at the end of this chapter, having looked at other fictional texts by Blake, Barke and Gibbon. By considering these authors first, the reading of Muir's mythopoeic, autobiographical vision will be more effectively contextualized in the fiction of the period. The Salzburg streets of *The Marionette* anticipate a scene inside Herr Hoffmann's puppet theatre, a place that functions symbolically as a nexus between reality and fiction, or imagination.[40] Hans is emblematic of that which his father has repressed. Hans's mother had died giving birth to him, and when it was discovered the boy was not normal, Martin 'dropped the fact of Hans's existence into an abyss, and in his consciousness the child lay slain and buried (p. 13). Hans's resurrection, through the medium of his father's consciousness of him, is mirrored by his excursions into the world beyond his bedroom and his attempts to find a sense of identity within its scope. Moving from his enclosed room, 'which was like an empty place in the midst of existence' (p. 12), Hans is faced with the treacherous reality of the city.

Hans's perception of the city blurs reality with the world of the puppet theatre. During Hans's last visit to the city one of the puppet's wooden legs breaks. This puppet is a Lacanian 'Other', an object of love and an entity that questions the contingency of his own being.[41] Hans both defines and differentiates himself through the figure of the puppet. The broken leg precipitates madness in the boy, but also allows reality to assert itself. As his father observes: 'The breaking of the marionette's ankle must have shocked him . . . . It was the breaking in of something that was forgotten for the time, and it would call up images of all the other perils which lay beyond the protected stage' (p. 92). Hans, then, loses his fight for an integrated individual identity. Thus, when Hans recovers, he is seen again as relative to his father's consciousness. He no longer experiences fear or a feeling of the uncanny, but the two are now unified into a whole: 'father and son have come to resemble each other in their gestures and ways of speech' (p. 155). Muir's narrator, as Lodge notes, 'seems to be constantly pulling back',[42] and ultimately his characters are disallowed consciousness. Although Lodge writes that Muir's technique 'unashamedly flaunts the narrator's omniscience',[43] another critic, George Bruce, suggests that *The Marionette* is written with 'that detached vision which allowed Muir to create his prose masterpiece, *An Autobiography*'.[44] Muir's struggle, in *The Marionette*, to reconcile old, religious values with new secular ones is ultimately unsatisfactory and perhaps necessarily so. In 1926, he wrote to Schiff that 'we should be true to our experience in the world of transition and therefore of instability and possibility in which we live'.[45]

## II. Real Cities?

### George Blake, *The Shipbuilders*

George Blake's city in *The Shipbuilders* is entirely secular. Religious meaning is absent and a search for selfhood in the city sways between a need for identification with an external order and a need for a self-created reality. The surname of the novel's protagonist, Leslie Pagan, indicates the loss of Calvinistic dogma and an externalized religious structure. Religious and moral values have given way to a morality of social (in)justice. The novel's two central figures, Leslie Pagan, the shipyard's boss, and his employee, Danny Shields, are not emblematic of good and evil, but are defined in social and economic terms. They represent the bourgeois and the working class respectively. As counterparts, Danny and Leslie can also be seen as modern *doppelgängers* after the manner of Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824), MacDonald's *Lilith*, and Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. These divisions are based, as John Herdman notes, on 'the schematic polarities of Calvinist theology'.[46] In *The Shipbuilders*, religious dichotomy is replaced by the economic division of the working-classes and the bourgeoisie. This may be viewed as an inevitable progression. Georges Bataille paraphrases the urban sociologist Max Weber, who argues that 'Calvinism's zone of influence . . . corresponds to the areas of industrial development. . . . Calvin expressed the aspirations of the middle class of the commercial cities'.[47] Bataille also quotes R. H. Tawney, who suggests that '[Calvin] was to the bourgeoisie of his time what Marx was to the proletariat of ours: he provided the organization and the doctrine'.[48] Bataille views the spirit of capitalism in correspondence with Calvinism. Such views aid a reading of *The Shipbuilders*, where the loss of religious values is given an economic corollary in the closing of the shipyard and the loss of employment.

In the secularized and dichotomous world of *The Shipbuilders* Blake posits two economically constructed versions of transcendence, both of which fail. As a member of the working-class, Danny is 'allowed' release from his cares at the weekly football match. The game enables him to live 'far beyond himself in a whirling world of passion'.[49] This 'passion' gives Danny and his fellows, powerless under what Blake sees as the 'drabness of their own industrial degradation' (p. 86), a false sense of potency. Such 'power' is couched in a sadistic sexual imagery. Because the workers must pay to see 'a spectacle cunningly arranged to draw their shillings' (p. 86), the players are emasculated. Like 'fallen women', they prostitute themselves like 'slaves to a commercial system' (p. 86), and a destructive sexual metaphor is continued as the pitch of hateful violence expressed by the spectators during the game is seen to provide an outlet for a 'passionate' discharge of tension that is like an 'orgasm' (p. 88). When Danny goes home after the match, the entrance to the train station is described as an 'odorous maw' (p. 89), providing a vicious parody of a transcendent return to the womb. The identification of the urban poor as subservient and impotent contrasts with a bourgeois identification based on mastery. Leslie feels a sense of control and omniscience when he takes his small son and flies a plane over the city, gained by the 'recklessness' with which he ignores the voice 'at the back of his mind [that] said he should not do this thing' (p. 62). The plane itself is an object that is, to Leslie's mind, an embodiment of perfection: 'the stuff of his personal poetry' (p. 61). Once in the air, Glasgow's reduced scale makes it seem insignificant. Leslie is not only literally above the squalor of the city, he is beyond a particular state of consciousness that is associated with it. However, Leslie's descent is inevitable. He must land and, when he does, he learns that the flight has given his son a threatening illness. Leslie's feelings of powerlessness and despair are worsened. For both the bourgeois and the working-class, transcendence gained by economic means fails. *The Shipbuilders* is regarded critically as a benchmark of Scottish urban realism.[50] Yet its concern is with the way in which a material world manipulates desire and cannot accommodate an authentic or sustainable mode of transcendence. With no external sense of value apparent, the consciousness is awakened in order to ask, as George Bruce asks of Muir's *Marionette*: 'in what conditions can the human psyche survive?'[51]

In *The Shipbuilders*, the failure to achieve transcendence by external means is a failure to escape from consciousness. This state is discussed by Bataille, who views it as a consequence of the link between Calvinism and capitalism. The propensity of both is to place importance on an external agent; in the former, meaning is given to God's glorification at the expense of the self, and in the latter, meaning is conferred to a consumable 'thing' or product. Bataille raises a query with regard to the possibility of 'sovereign' identity (transcendence) in these terms: 'How can man find himself — or regain himself — seeing that the action to which the search commits him in one way or another is precisely what estranges him from himself?'[52] In *The Shipbuilders*, Leslie is distanced from the (economic) ground of his existence and the materiality of the city is made unreal. The action of the novel begins the moment that Leslie is made aware of his own thoughts and, subsequently, aware of his alienation from the external world: '[he] felt empty and lost . . . and . . . aware of detachment from the people about him' (p. 5). His subjective perceptions dissolve the realistic city, again using a fog metaphor. When Leslie is awake in the early hours of the morning, worrying about his son, he looks out of the window and perceives the city in a 'dank sea of mist' (p. 66) that casts a gloom of supernatural evil. The fog metaphor in literature traditionally denotes, as Nordon suggests, 'a dramatic and moral function . . . the notion of a blurred, confused and disordered perception of moral values'.[53] In Blake's novel, where traditional moral concerns are absent, the fog blurs the class distinctions that differentiate the consciousness and perception of the two principal characters. It also serves as a metaphor for both Leslie's and Danny's fears for their sons. When Leslie learns his son is past danger, 'the spectre of the great fear had receded into the shadows' (p. 67). Similarly, a shadow is cast over Danny when he learns that his son has been arrested: 'Something big and black had happened . . . . [T]here brooded over him the realization that the old, safe life was falling to pieces about him' (p. 105). A feeling of estrangement from the city and from himself affects Danny as he travels to visit his son in prison:

> The morning was grey and chill and the city only half awake and the bleakness conspired with the faint nausea of emptiness in him to accentuate the feelings of isolation, fear, and unreality that the first shock had put upon him. He felt himself voyaging in unreality. (p. 161)

Later, as Danny becomes more depressed, the city's violent squalor is made strange and ephemeral as the fog closes in:

> The turgid Clyde . . . meaningless interminable streets of tenement houses . . . two women fighting in a side-street, one of them with a smear of blood in her thin white hair — the Green again, empty and menacing in the fog that was gathering once more for the dark. (pp. 180-181)

Glasgow, for both men, as it is for all of their fellow city-dwellers irrespective of class, becomes a 'sinking ship' (p. 168). At the end of the novel, Leslie abandons ship and leaves the city. In some sense his departure certainly signals the loss of the mythic hero ('Pagan') and the possibility of urban regeneration in myth, such as Eliot posits in his image of a degenerate city in *The Waste Land.* On a more realistic level, Leslie's departure also signifies the loss of an idea that saw Glasgow's industrial prosperity in mythic terms, as Manfred Malzahn notes: 'what is lamented is the passing of a pioneer age, a world that had scope for heroic achievement, giving way to a kind of progress that seems as unpalatable as inevitable'.[54] Driven from the city's economic decline, Leslie's feeling of self-division and dissipation increases:

> His mind was driving towards an understanding of it all. . . . It seemed that he would understand all life if he could only do that. At the same time a censor, watching from the heart of his consciousness, told him that he could never understand and need not try to do so. (pp. 318-319)

His quest for autonomous identity fails. Danny stays with the ship and remains in Glasgow, even if it is, to use Leslie's pitying view of the working-class, as one of the city's 'rejects, on the deserts of industrialism' (p. 322). In this respect he is a type of hero, and a forerunner of contemporary working-class heroes such as Sammy in James Kelman's *How Late it Was, How Late* (1994), Tam Clay in Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing!* (1992) and Rab and Anton in Thomas Healy's *It Might Have Been Jerusalem* (1991). The protagonist's act of heroism is that he still remains and functions within a debilitating reality.

## James Barke, *Major Operation*

If *The Shipbuilders*, and more specifically, Leslie Pagan, view men such as Danny Shields as 'rejects, on the deserts of industrialism', then an awareness of this view is, for the narrator of James Barke's novel, *Major Operation*, a cause of pain intrinsic to living in the city of Glasgow: 'The pain . . . is produced by the knowledge that one is human scrap'.[55] This pain-ridden state evokes a description that is reminiscent of Thomas Guthrie's highly coloured account of urban life given sixty years earlier in *The Sins of the City*. In Guthrie's view, as discussed in chapter one, the city is like a body riddled with cancer. This cancer is the festering presence of the urban poor; and poverty is caused by an ignorance of God's laws. Barke's secularized vision of the city is similarly as a sick body. However, the cause of its 'cancer' is no longer the sin of the poor, it is the sinful ignorance of the clergy and the state:

> Poverty, stupidity and ignorance bred a mountain mass of wailing pain and suffering. . . . While Second City clergy, priest and parson, slept soundly in their feather beds and graft-glutted Political Leaders snored and luxuriated on graft-down ease: did not the Second City flourish by the preaching of the Word? . . . [F]rom behind the frames of lithographs of King William and the Blessed Virgin, ten billion bed-bugs sallied forth, in the fetid darkness of slumdom, to suck the impoverished blood of ten thousand slum infants. (pp. 206-207)

Jock MacKelvie, a member of the working-class and an energetic socialist leader, associates himself directly with the 'scrap' of Glasgow's streets, internalizing an identification that had, in the discourse of degenerationism in the nineteenth century, been imposed on his class. As MacKelvie walks through the slum area in which he lives his opinions of the street and of his self are inextricable:

> There were identifiable odours of cats' urine: decayed rubbish: infectious diseases: unwashed underclothing, intermingled with smells suggesting dry rot: insanitary lavatories, overtaxed sewage pipes and the excrement of a billion bed-bugs. . . . Deep down he knew that his whole existence was foul. . . . [H]e had known himself to be an outcast, of belonging to an outcast class. (pp. 72-73)

Nevertheless, MacKelvie still functions, and thus he is a heroic figure. Unlike the heroes of Sir Walter Scott, who were upper-class,[56] or the heroes of Stevenson, who were middle-class, Barke's new hero is working-class and embodies the vitality that bursts up from the submerged parts of the city.

The narrative structure of *Major Operation* is, like *The Shipbuilders*, divided to show two perspectives based on class. Antithetical class ideologies sever the body of the city: 'Deeper and deeper, sharper and sharper cut the scalpel of class' (p. 230). Jock MacKelvie has a bourgeois counterpart in George Anderson, a middle class businessman. In one chapter of the novel, 'Extremes meet', MacKelvie and Anderson are brought together in hospital, where they both undergo surgery. Anderson, bankrupt after his time in hospital, finds it difficult to reconcile himself to the necessity of a working-class way of life. He is degraded by his poverty and the last dregs of meaning seep out of his existence so that he decides to commit suicide. He changes his mind, but is killed when he saves MacKelvie's life during the hunger march at the end of the novel. Unlike MacKelvie, who identifies himself in terms of class rather than as an individual, Anderson's self-identification is more introspective. In terms of the novel's vision of a politicized unity, socialism is the city's hope of cure. Anderson is an isolated entity and is, therefore, doomed. He is prone to an introspection which imprisons him in his consciousness and marks him as a condemned man. Working-class identity is associated with the most basic realities of existence and the material city at its most abject, while the bourgeois, by contrast, possess a more intellectual or philosophical, but a more solipsistic identity founded on a claim to existence over and above the material reality of their environment. In the chapter 'Condemned Cell', Anderson's inability to cope with material circumstances has the psychological effect of 'increas[ing] his self-isolation' (p. 416) and precipitating his eventual desire for suicide. While the working-class struggle is seen to be a 'seven-day battle with existence' (p. 95), the middle-class malaise is a battle *for* existence; as the narrator says of Anderson and his friends: 'The guts [have] gone out of existence' (p. 99). For Anderson, all physical pain is secondary to a psychological malaise that leaves him with no grip on reality:

> The pain seemed like a rat gnawing at his vitals. . . . The maelstrom flux of his thoughts was almost more than he could bare . . . . The world was slipping beneath him: nothing was solid, fixed any more. Everything was chaos: whirling chaos. There was no foothold: no hand grasp. Worse! There was no familiarity. All was strange: unknown: unknowable. . . . He could understand his illness: the doctors could perhaps deal with that. But who could shine a light into the darkness of his world? (pp. 148-149)

The chapter 'Divisions in Philosophy' dramatizes a debate between idealism, represented by Anderson, and materialism, represented by MacKelvie and his friend, Duff. While recovering in hospital after their operations, the men argue their views of the relationship between matter and consciousness in regard to a notion of transcendence. Anderson asserts his belief in a 'Supreme Being' and a 'Divine Plan [that] is beyond the mere understanding of man' (p. 302). Duff counters by pointing out the vagueness of Anderson's view. He demystifies religion by saying that Christ was merely one prophet among many, and that '[t]he Bible's only a bunch of fairy tales' (p. 301). MacKelvie joins in and seeks to persuade Anderson away from the idealist principle that 'there is no such thing as an objective Universe' (p. 305). MacKelvie argues for the materialist assumption that 'the world existed before Thought', and thus 'there is nothing but what can be explained in material terms' (p. 306). MacKelvie then goes on to rationalize consciousness in materialist terms:

> Man's consciousness is the product of his social conditions. Religion does not come out of the sky. It arises from a need which, in turn, arises from the social conditions that condition, and are conditioned, by man. (p. 308)

According to the socialist imperative described by MacKelvie and Duff, transcendence is self-created through an engagement with the material conditions which prompt it.

The hunger march at the end of *Major Operation* turns an effluvial flood of working-class members into a revolutionary battle for materialistic truth. Richard Lehan suggests that 'Revolution works at the margins of the city, where individuals . . . put their hope in the release of the repressed'.[57] Indeed, in *Major Operation*, the 'degenerative' masses bubble up from the filthy streets of the slums and flow into Glasgow's commercial district. The march is described as a 'ruthless sweeping' of the streets in a diluvial imagery that is nevertheless political: 'there's going to be another flood. Blood's going to flow' (p. 377). The blood 'gushing' through the streets is Anderson's. When he shields MacKelvie's body with his own and is crushed to the ground in a police attack, he becomes associated with the streets in the most visceral way. The overturning activity of the march, and an identification with the working classes, provides Anderson with a valid, even heroic, identity and at his eulogy he is described by MacKelvie as one 'who completely identified themselves with the working class and gave the sum total of their lives to the working class' (p. 491). This is to say that Anderson 'becomes an outcast of his class' (p. 492).

In his depiction of Anderson's fall and death, however, Barke appears to raise a problem in terms of the materialistic vision of transcendence that the socialist perspective privileges. Anderson's martyrdom and MacKelvie's salvation are expressed in a way that is close to the religious terms that the novel explicitly rejects. In hospital, MacKelvie had been sure to state that 'the main point with me is that we've got to destroy religion. And after we've destroyed religion I don't want to see any other kind of religion put in its place' (p. 310). Yet his almost hagiographic characterization is noted by Manfred Malzahn: 'MacKelvie is almost superhumanly just . . . . [A]s nearly faultless as he could have been without actually appearing as a saint'.[58] The leader of the people may be an icon, but Anderson is the sacrificial victim who ensures MacKelvie's position. Ramón López Ortega remarks that MacKelvie's character is secondary, 'a peripheral figure whose role is to serve as a counterpoint, almost a reference point, to make Anderson possible'.[59] This secondary status is appropriate in the political context of the book, which advocates the strength of unity. Yet when Anderson loses his individual nature in the frenzy of his sacrifice he fulfils an essentially religious imperative of cosmological unity.

In *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*, an attempt is made to locate transcendence within material and social, rather than ideal and individual spheres. In

Marx's reversal of Hegel's idealism, social change is the province of the dialectic toward the fulfilment of human development. Marx writes, in *Capital* (1867-1894), that 'in Hegel's hands the dialectic suffers a mystification . . . . With him it is standing on its head. It must be inverted in order to discover the rational kernel in the mystical shell'.[60] In *The Shipbuilders*, economic means of transcendence are not sustainable and in the final scenes of *Major Operation*, a socialist vision of salvation collapses into religious ideas. The discussion that follows considers that a Marxian call for rationality does not address a spiritual need. In the very real, very visceral images of slaughter and sacrifice in which the city is couched in Gibbon's 'Glasgow', Muir's *An Autobiography*, and Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, Marx's simile is, itself, inverted. The 'real' bodies of slaughtered beasts function as a 'shell' in which, sliced, flayed or turned inside-out in decay, the protagonist locates a 'mystical' essence as to the nature of his own being.

## III. Cities of Flesh and Blood

### Lewis Grassic Gibbon, 'Glasgow'

In Lewis Grassic Gibbon's novel, *Grey Granite* (1934), the city is a place of revolution, yet, in contrast to Barke, Gibbon denies it the possibility of facilitating heroism. *Grey Granite* is the third novel in the *Scots Quair* trilogy, which traces the drift of its central character, Chris Guthrie, from the land to the city. Chris represents an individual consciousness and, as 'Chris Caledonia', the name given to her by her husband, Robert, she also represents, if ironically, a national consciousness. Both individual and social modes of identification struggle in a time of transition from folklore to industry. Gibbon's vision of the city in *Grey Granite* is not sympathetic and, as David Kerr Cameron notes: 'Chris . . . has become a creature lost in the anonymity of the city'.[61] For Gibbon, the freedom of the individual suffers in the city, but there is also little sense of authentic identity to be gained by association with the masses. Chris's son, Ewan, is a dogmatic socialist leader who is quite aware that revolution may not only destroy the individual but, in his antihumanistic vision, considers such destruction immaterial:

> Neither [Ewan nor his comrade] had a single illusion about the workers: they weren't heroes or gods oppressed, or likely to be generous and reasonable when their great black wave come flooding at last, up and up, swamping the high places with mud and blood. Most likely such leaders of the workers as themselves would be flung aside or trampled under, it didn't matter, nothing to them.[62]

A similarly pessimistic view is adopted by Gibbon in an essay, 'Glasgow', published in the same year as *Grey Granite*. There, the city is a diseased body, as it is in *Major Operation*, and although 'Glasgow' was published two years before Barke's novel, it ceases the attempt to heal the city either by orthodox religious or political means. The dehumanization that is central to the fictional 'Duncairn' of Gibbon's *Grey Granite* is transposed to the real city of Glasgow in his essay, 'which no Scottish image of personification will display'.[63] Gibbon's city is a dying mythological monster. Living inside the 'lung-diseased beast' of a typical Glaswegian tenement are victims of the city's brutal sovereignty, 'enslaved to a thing so obscene and so foul' (p. 83). Digested and desiccated in the body of this 'beast', the 'submerged proletariat' are urban waste matter. Moreover, as victims or slaves, they are also 'wasted', 'frittering away the tissues of their bodies and the spirit-stuff of their souls' (p. 84). The cause of this sickness is made clear. Glasgow is, says Gibbon, 'the vomit of a cataleptic commercialism' (p. 82). The city is full of idle and deteriorating shipyards and factories. As one industrial enterprise fails, however, another is initiated, so that 'dead' factories decay alongside 'empty factories [that] increase and multiply' (p. 89). According to Gibbon's vision: 'Commercialism has returned to its own vomit too often and too long still to find sustenance therein' (p. 89).

Although the city needs a drastic cure — 'here as nowhere else in the modern world of capitalism does the impartial investigator realize that the remedy lies neither in medicine nor massage, but in surgery' (p. 89) — Gibbon does not prescribe political doctrine. He cynically depicts political groups vying on Glasgow Green for the role of physician. Orthodox socialism is personified as a 'ruddy and plump' swindler of public money who advocates neither pills nor surgery but who opts for a fastidious remedy: 'What is needed to remove the sprouting pustules from the fair face of commercialism is merely a light, nongreasy ointment (which will not stain the sheets)' (p. 90). The fascist, standing nearby, provides an equally dubious diagnosis: 'Lack of blood. Remedy: Bleeding' (p. 90). The city, however, is beyond a cure. Each political faction absurdly argues its case away from the slums, while 'out of the Gorbals arises again that foul breath as of a dying beast' (p. 90).

Gibbon's use of extended metaphor is, he believes, a form of subjectification that is necessary in order to convey a truthful reality. It is, however, more like a secular sermon. In a similar manner to Blake's and Barke's differentiation of two contrasting perspectives based on class, Gibbon specifies that a bourgeois reality is too concerned with ideas and introspection rather than the baser aspects of the city. To illustrate this he refers to a passage in a novel, which remains unnamed, that had been serialized in the political and literary journal of the 1930s, *The Modern Scot.* He is critical of the paper for its 'genteel objectivity', which has performed its own operation, having 'castrated, disembowelled, and genteelly vulgarized' culture (p. 84). He quotes from the serialized novel's description of a row of Kelvingrove houses as its protagonist stops to 'savour' their grandeur and mourn the loss of an analogous frame of mind:

> The world was surer of itself then, sure of the ultimate perfectibility of man, sure of the ultimate mastery over the forces that surrounded him. . . . But the modern mind was no longer sure of itself even in a four-roomed bungalow. Its pride was the splitting of its personality into broods of impish devils that spent their time spying one on the other, [*sic*] It could never get properly outside itself, could never achieve the objectivity that was capable of such grandly deliberate planning as in these streets. (p. 85)

For Gibbon, the 'bourgeois Glaswegian' sees the greatest problem of the modern age as a loss of psychological security, and so 'cultivates aesthetic objectivity' to compensate for it. This type of introspection is, in Gibbon's view, an almost immoral refusal to engage with the thousands of poor and the physical debilitation of the modern city.[64] He shows that the luxurious image of the self as a mansion, or even a 'four-roomed bungalow', is degraded for the urban poor. Instead of the 'ultimate mastery' (p. 85) which the bourgeois believe is their right, the material circumstances of the proletariat disallow a differentiated selfhood: 'It is not a room in a large and airy building, it is not a single-roomed hut on the verge of a hill; it is not a cave driven into free rock . . . it is a room that is part of some great sloven of tenement' (pp. 83-84).

Gibbon turns away from 'pale whey' of an anaemic Kelvingrove, as well as from the Green with its sham orators, and ventures into the dark region of the Gorbals. He is simultaneously repulsed and attracted by its striking cosmopolitanism: 'It is lovably and abominably and delightfully and hideously un-Scottish' (p. 90). The ambiguity given to the slum's exoticism recalls Gibbon's image, at the start of the essay, of the city as a mythic 'many-armed Siva with the waistlet of skulls, or Xipe of Ancient America, whose priest skinned the victim alive, and then clad himself in the victim's skin' (p. 82). At the end of the essay Gibbon locates all hope of the city's redemption, not with religion or politics, but with a return to a transgressive mythic vitality. This vision, however, though it employs an exaggerated romantic outcome, recuperates abjection into a virtue. As he walks through the streets of the Gorbals, it appears that the old Glasgow is finally dead. However, it stirs as if, uncannily and wonderfully, it is about to be resurrected: 'It is not filth and futility and boredom unrelieved. It is haunted by an ancient ghost of goodness and grossness, sun-warmed and ripened under alien suns. It is the most saving slum in Glasgow' (p. 90). The outcome of an exotic mythicism is a material heaven on earth in which place is undifferentiated: 'Glasgow's salvation, Scotland's salvation, the world's salvation lies in . . . ultimate cosmopolitanism, the earth the City of God' (p. 92). Gibbon's vision of redemption at the end of the essay reveals a nostalgic sentimentalism at the expense of real answers. According to this vision, the city 'may be a corpse, but the maggot-swarm upon it is very fiercely alive' (p. 82). The extremity of Gibbon's vision of the city is something which, as a Marxist, he (and his Marxist character, Ewan) would have seen as integral to the dialectic. That is, the only possibility for a socialist future, which is to say a type of transcendence, is through the action of industrial workers who recognize the full horror of their situation.

Gibbon's 'maggot-swarm' evokes an abject urban and commercial evanescence that may be compared to Muir's view of Glasgow in a short essay, 'The Scottish Character' (1938). There, Muir describes the idiosyncrasies of the Scot in the country as well as the city, and remarks that 'Glasgow is more crammed with vitality than any other Scottish town . . . . Glasgow has this abounding, warm vitality'.[65] The city's 'democracy' that 'bubbles over and carries everything before it' points forward to less felicitous images of ferment in Muir's description of a bone factory in *An Autobiography*, with its carcasses 'decorated with festoons of slowly writhing, fat yellow maggots'.[66] Muir's excessive focus on corporeal ferment draws upon a traditional association of human and worm. Piero Campanesi notes that, in the Middle Ages, mystics and religious figures were obsessed with the body as a 'miniature hell' full of putrescence. Quoting Tommaso Campanella, a religious figure of that era, Campanesi suggests that a human's innate physical grossness is fully realized with the loss of the spirit that occurs at death:

> A loss of 'human consciousness and of the living spirit, but not of the obtuse, material and everyday', death signifies a change of state and decomposition, a mutation of form into a sensuous mobility of matter. Worms are but a projection of man, of his inside shape . . . [they] are man's other face or, better, his image. 'What are all men', wondered St Augustine, 'born of flesh, if not worms?'[67]

This grim anthropology is also encountered in Nietzsche, whose influence on the early thought of Muir is substantial, in his elucidation of the doctrine of the Superman. In the Prologue of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's prophet illustrates an individual as a hybrid identity between man and worm that must be overcome: 'You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm'.[68] Muir appropriates Nietzsche's secular signification of the abject in man and applies it to his vision of the city in a Swiftean identification of man as a degenerate Yahoo. Muir refers to *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) in *Poor Tom* and *An Autobiography* to illustrate a degenerate human nature, not as an innate quality as Swift does, but, via Nietzsche, to criticize a religious view that degrades human identity.

## **Edwin Muir,** ***An Autobiography***

In *An Autobiography*, Muir's detailed and extended account of the magnitude of the horrors of the bone factory betrays his fascination. An ambivalent attitude is seen in all of Muir's writing on the city, and its presence in *Poor Tom* is criticized by Douglas Gifford as 'a central weakness reminiscent of the divided attitude of Hind towards Glasgow in *The Dear Green Place*'.[69] Yet a similar ambivalence lies at the heart of modernist representations of the city in other literatures, as Malcolm Bradbury notes, 'the common push and pull of the city, its attraction and repulsion, have provided themes and attitudes that run deep in literature, where the city has become metaphor rather than place'.[70] Muir seeks to validate filth, death or decay by using them as metaphors for a secular consciousness. It is not a consciousness that grasps for social or national identity, however, which Muir dispenses with in the early part of his autobiography. He seeks to differentiate an autonomous self. Muir views a metageographical city, encoded with clues to identity. He has said that '[t]he refuse that one finds scattered in the streets of an industrial town has always seemed to me to tell a great deal about it, and to be in a humble way a synopsis of its life'.[71] As a metaphor for self-identification, the 'refuse' that tells something of the city's life also provides a 'synopsis' of his own life. In *An Autobiography*, Muir describes his experiences in Glasgow as being 'like a heap of dismal rubbish' (p. 104). As in *The Shipbuilders* and *Major Operation*, the working-class in Muir's text is closely associated with urban refuse.

Muir views his move from Orkney to Glasgow in terms of a religious damnation manifested in economic terms: 'Though we imagined that we had risen in some way, without knowing it we had sunk into another class' (p. 93). The family have work, however, so a fall into 'the abyss' remains a conscious threat rather than a reality. But, in Muir's consciousness, this threat is the cause of an 'anxiety neurosis' (p. 92). In *Literature and Evil* (1957), Bataille suggests that a bourgeois fear of 'lapsing into the condition of the proletariat, depend[s] on the fact that . . . the poor are closer to death than themselves'.[72] In *An Autobiography*, Muir describes the poor as the dead and the damned; poverty is 'a sordid fate as Calvin saw it' (p. 107). Yet there also exists a perverse allure in this material vision of hell: '[An] attraction to squalor drew [him] to the football matches on Saturday afternoon. . . .[T]here was a grimy fascination in watching the damned kicking a football in a tenth-rate hell' (p. 96). On principle, Muir does not believe in avoiding an infernal reality, whether it be external or psychological. Influenced by Nietzsche, Muir writes in a letter of 1925 of the importance to art of confronting that which threatens the self:

> Of course all great art is a wrestling with life, a facing, realisation, of everything in the artist and in the world outside him that he can see and that torments him and is a problem to him. . . . [And upon this the artist must] put their witness, as if it were their signature, to it.[73]

Muir stresses the importance of confronting a reality that he has couched in terms of a religious hell yet is without recourse to religious modes of redemption. Thus Muir uncomfortably locates an alternative possibility of transcendence in a subjectification of that reality.

When Muir comes to describe the bone factory in *An Autobiography*, his inevitable subjectification of its extreme squalor gives its horror the transcendent signification of a mystical experience. He is unable to extricate himself from the nauseating smell of the factory, which permeates the entire town and its people:

> The bones . . . had a strong, sour, penetrating smell. But it was nothing to the stench they gave off when they were shovelled along with the maggots into the furnaces. It was a gentle, clinging, sweet stench, suggesting dissolution and hospitals and slaughterhouses, the odour of drains, and the rancid stink of bad, roasting meat. (p. 131)

The smell enters his conscious and subconscious psyche: 'it had eaten into my mind and filled my dreams' (p. 136). Muir tries to pull away from this over-subjectification by fictionalizing his experience: 'a device by which [he] tried, without success, to see [his] life objectively' (p. 136). He inserts this fictional piece into the body of his autobiography. Conveyed in this 'fictional' extract, the stench of the factory is a 'corrupt aura' (p. 138) that is 'so tenacious and so vile [that it] had given him at first a feeling of mystical revulsion' (p. 138). All that this mystical revelation illuminates, however, is an entrapment within the prison of his consciousness. As Muir stands on the edge of the water and gazes out towards its immensity, he desires a retreat into an objectivity that would sanitize and thus distance him from physical and psychological degradation:

> Perhaps there was only a connexion on the indifferent plane of chemistry, where stench and filth were fortuitous combinations, where degradation was merely an imagination of another kind of consciousness. His mind reached out towards that pure world of chemistry; but he was deeply immured in his consciousness; chemistry could not help him. (p. 139)

At this point in his description, Muir is characteristically evasive and pulls away from its painful revelation: 'the sketch began to go wrong, and I shall not quote any more of it' (p. 140). An evasion of that which is disturbing contradicts Muir's Nietzschean-inspired principle of facing evil. Muir is aware of the contradiction he engenders in desiring a secular transcendence; he is sensitive to his own inability to conceptualize non-religious values beyond the restrictive, indoctrinated limits of his consciousness. Immediately after the passage above he recalls that:

> Into my images of the Superman now came the disquieting picture of a gigantic naked race rolling exuberantly among a hill of dead bones, so far beyond good and evil that my thoughts could no longer follow them. (p. 140)

Fundamental to Nietzsche's conception of the Superman is a destruction of religious values of good and evil and the creation of a new moral law by a 'will to power'. This is an assertion of sovereign identity in which each individual is a God. Trapped in a Calvinistic state of mind, however, Muir is unable to achieve this ideal.

Muir is unable to facilitate a secular, autonomous identity through a subjectification of filth and decay due to an ingrained Calvinistic association of filth with a soul that is damned. Muir likens the smell of the bone factory to a sense of 'shame that slowly settled within [him] like a grimy deposit'(p. 133). This association stems from childhood games in a slaughterhouse and a Calvinistic guilt at that time toward his 'awakening puberty':

> To us in our raw and unhappy state the slaughter-house had an abominable attraction, and the strong stench and sordid colours of blood and intestines seemed to follow us in our play. Our language and manners grew rough; even our friendship had an acrid flavour. (pp. 83-84)

The fecund flesh of a corpse is, for Muir, bound up with shameful sexuality. His feelings of lost innocence, associated with the evil of the slaughterhouse, have specific implications for a transcendence that is not in terms of Calvinist values. In a letter written in 1925, Muir had qualified his claim of a 'positive evil':

> When is evil really great? When it is sublimely conscious of itself, as it was with Baudelaire and Dostoevsky; or when it is happily unconscious and innocent, as it was in Cellini and Stendhal. In both cases we are in the realm of freedom.[74]

In *An Autobiography*, Muir cannot fulfil his own prerequisites for a liberating 'positive evil' because they are dependent on an idea of innocence that neither Calvinism, nor the modern city, will allow him. This is partly due to his own inability to rebel, as Lodge remarks: 'in attempting to portray an abnormally heightened type of consciousness, his technique stubbornly refuses to relax its conventionality'.[75] This can be said, too, of Gibbon's vision in 'Glasgow'. Both Gibbon and Muir cannot recuperate evil, via its subjectification, into an agent for positive and autonomous identity. In Muir's case, he is unable to distance himself from the corpses that obsess him and he sees himself as one of the dead, even in life: 'I identified myself with the dead man who knew so well that he was dead' (p. 145).

Muir's conventionality shackles him to religious notions of selfhood in which he seeks to be reconciled with an external truth, while also aspiring to create his own values and thus a sovereign identity. The struggle for 'freedom' against dogma is the existential imperative of all of the writers discussed in this chapter. At the end of *Grey Granite*, such a struggle is posited as eternal. Chris Guthrie recalls her son's words:

> *It's the old fight that maybe will never have a finish, whatever the names we give to it — the fight in the end between FREEDOM and GOD.*[76]

For Chris, there is no difference between her dead husband's Christian faith, and the socialist faith of her son, both of which are futile, as she tells Ewan: '*The world's sought faith for thousands of years and found only death or unease in them. Yours is just another dark cloud to me — or a great rock you're trying to push up a hill*'.[77] Chris's reference to the myth of Sisyphus, which relates the hero's banishment to the underworld and his task of rolling a rock up a hill, watching it roll down, and beginning again *ad infinitum*, epitomizes Chris's view that meaning cannot be found in dogma. In contrast, of course, Ewan believes that dogmatic Marxism is the only means of winning 'freedom' from economic slavery. At the end of the novel Chris turns away from the city and its political vision and returns to the primordial landscape of her birth. For the urban novelists of the 1930s, however, an engagement with the dystopian vision of the modern city is an imperative for an awakening of consciousness and thus a 'cure'. In Camus's philosophical study of the human condition in a world of collapsed beliefs, *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), an autonomous self which, as posited at the start of this chapter, is necessarily in conflict with the external world, can only be achieved in a 'morality of revolt'. That is, the hero can only gain freedom and intensity by a subversion of the values of both religion and society. This is a difficult task for the protagonists (and the authors) of the works discussed in this chapter, and it reveals the contradictory urges each displays toward unity with society on the one hand, and differentiation from it on the other. Trocchi, however, is unequivocal in the essay 'A Note on George Orwell', cited at the beginning of the chapter. When he criticizes Orwell's subordination of his subjective vision to a sentimentalized view of the masses, he asserts the primacy of conflict, in order that one's being is in some way justified beyond the situation to which it is enslaved:

> The more vital level of insight which begins with a total revolt against all abstractions with which society traps, labels, and affixes status to the individual, and whose object is the self, here and now and unique and doomed in the end to absurdity in a strange cosmos.[78]

## Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place*

It is in Archie Hind's evocative account of a slaughterhouse, in the ostensibly realist novel *The Dear Green Place*, that Trocchi's 'vital level of insight' is realized. The novel's protagonist, Mat Craig, initially associates animal corpses with the horror of human consciousness. Mat is a working-class man who wishes to write, but who has difficulty in reconciling this desire with his obligation (and need) to undertake more legitimate or 'productive' work. When his brother offers him a job at the slaughterhouse, Mat initially feels a sense of degradation. The brutal nature of the work lacerates his idealistic conception of what it means to be a writer. The realistic detail of Hind's slaughterhouse scene is, as critic Andrew Monnickendam only half-jokingly quips, harrowing enough 'to convince anyone to become a vegetarian'.[79] However, rather than prompt us to consider our gastronomic habits, Hind's images of corpses are used, like Davidson's depiction of a flayed horse and Muir's recollection of maggoty bones, to expose the essence of consciousness. The process by which animals are killed is described explicitly and at length. Such graphic, realistic detail is the means by which Mat, like Muir, realizes that consciousness, the awareness of life, is also the awareness of one's own death:

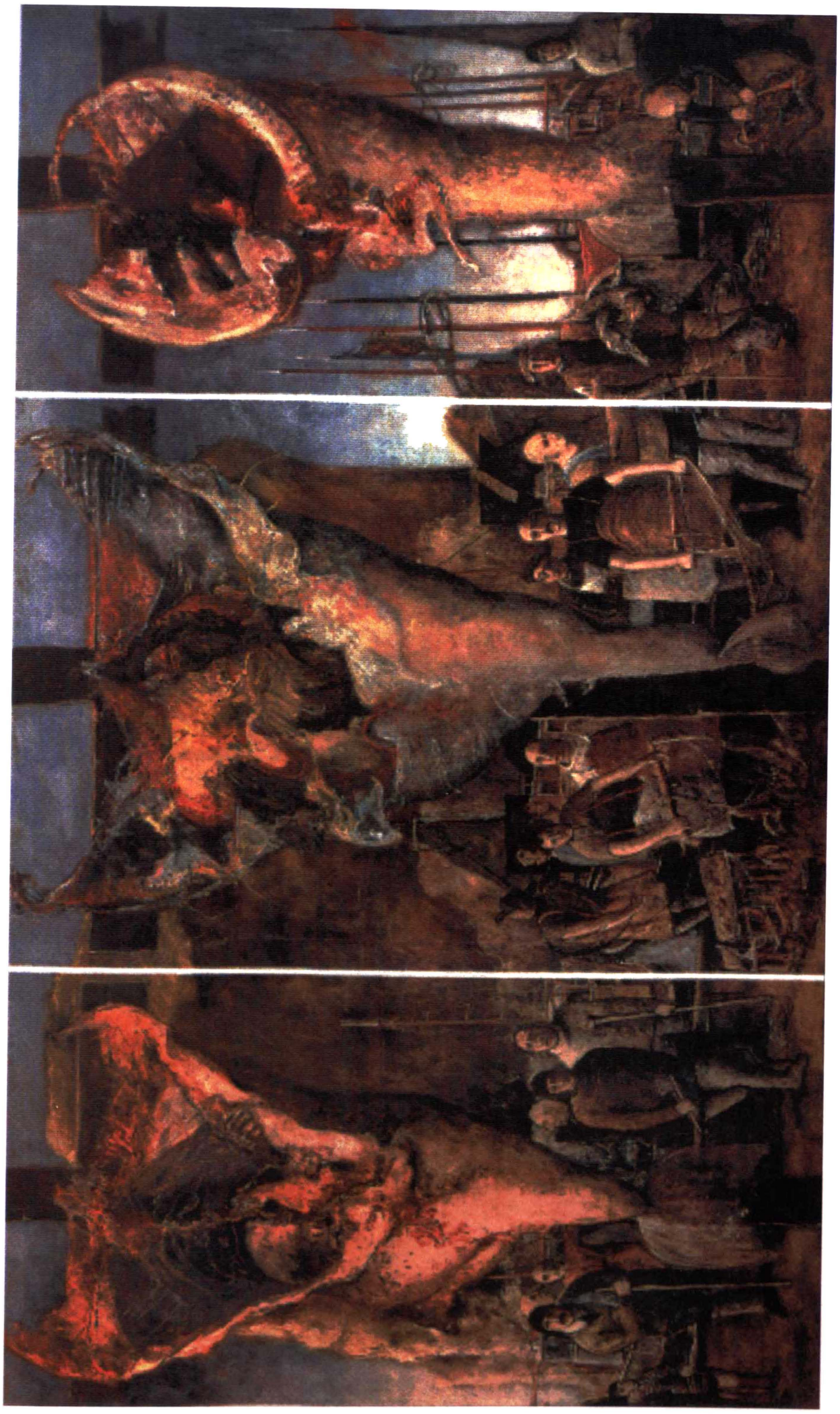
> It was the possible moment of consciousness, when the great head loosened and the animal took that last great breath through the chittering windpipe, that Mat thought about. The horror of a possible combination of consciousness and the irrevocable state of death. It was a kind of metaphysical horror that Mat felt as the idea of consciousness, even if only for a second, knowing that it was cut off from its animal source, a horror even worse than the ineluctable obliteration of the gun.[80]

The slaughterhouse scene is pivotal to the novel because it registers a shift in consciousness, as Mat comes to view its horrors as a 'positive evil'. As shown in the texts discussed in this chapter, an awakening of consciousness is prompted by the protagonist's anxiety in a world where there is no sense of personal or social justice, and is necessary for the creation of an autonomous self. Yet this consciousness is consequently made aware of its own limitations. In the slaughterhouse of *The Dear Green Place*, Mat revolts against a social and religious ideal of 'evil' by engaging with this most material representation of death. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus discusses Heidegger's claim that a recognition of death is instrumental in prompting an individual's search for a self distinguished from the masses: 'The consciousness of death is the call of anxiety and "existence then delivers itself its own summons through the intermediary of consciousness". It is the very voice of anguish and it adjures existence "to return from its loss in the anonymous They".'[81] In *The Dear Green Place*, an inspiring quality is given to evil by a subjective, creative response that recuperates it into the transcendent realm of art:

> Once the slaughtering had got under way . . . the slaughtering floor would turn pink with watery blood, the electric light would begin to glare on the fleshly slabs which hung glistening and palpitating from the rails, the steam from the hot pipes and the gutted carcases cast a haze which was suffused with red reflected from the bloody floors, the meat, and the pans of steaming blood. All this caused the same effect of morbidezza which Rembrandt had caught so calmly in his painting of a flayed carcase which hung in the Glasgow Art Galleries. The ultimate wisdom of art, a healthy liveliness and acceptance of sensuous life. It was this that attracted him about the place — the liveliness, the tremendous sense of physical vitality which came from the hard work, the men, the cattle, the movement, even from the dead slabs of meat. (p. 115)

Bataille suggests that the slaughterhouse is a modern place of sacrifice and 'mythological mysteries'. An individual who shuns such a place, he continues, is 'unable to bear their own ugliness, an ugliness that is effectively an answer to an unhealthy need for cleanliness, for bilious small-mindedness and for boredom'.[82] In *The Dear Green Place*, Mat Craig's personal involvement in the world of the slaughterhouse results in 'the disappearance, the absence, of fastidiousness' (p. 119). Hind explicitly depicts his character gaining an appetite for life through the very physical nature of his engagement with a brutal, archaic and animalistic reality. In a crucial moment of personal realization, Mat conceives of:

> The need to be intimately involved in a material process . . . . [I]t was essential for a man to have a connection with his bodily and economic needs other than in a mere abstract way. (p. 119)



Scottish artist, John Bellany's *Allegory* (1964) superimposes a Rembrandtian carcass onto the Christian iconography of the crucifixion. Rembrandt's 'morbidezza' is also described by Mat Craig in the slaughterhouse scenes of *The Dear Green Place*. The importance of the flesh for transcendence also denotes, in both Hind's novel and Bellany's painting, notions of laceration and sacrifice.

Thus, for Mat at this moment (whatever problems he may have implementing his epiphany later), the slaughterhouse is a place of intense experience and is where a death-in-life may be transformed into a life-in-death.

If Hind's character realizes the importance of the 'material process' in a formulation of 'mystical' transcendence, he succeeds where the other characters discussed in this chapter have failed. Muir, in his autobiography, and in the perception provided by his characters in *The Marionette*, is unable to reconcile abject physicality to a mythopoeic vision of transcendence. The ambiguity of Gibbon's view of Glasgow, as vitally alluring yet enervating and destructive, is more telling than his final attempt to reconcile its contradictions into a positive vision. For the characters in Blake's and Barke's novels, a reconciliation of secular, economic modes of transcendence with the desire for existential or spiritual meaning is impossible. Each protagonist struggles with a conflicting desire, on the one hand, for social unity in a society that is, nevertheless, impoverished of tangible meaning, and, on the other hand, for a self-created reality, where selfhood is constantly being questioned by the conditions of social reality. Finally, Trocchi makes a sheer distinction between these dual possibilities for selfhood, seen in the opening of this chapter. For Trocchi, a reconciliation with society offers no self-authenticity: an individual must remain in conflict with the external world and seek transcendence within the 'phosphorescent struts of the conscious self'.[83]

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[1] Alexander Trocchi, 'A Note on George Orwell', in *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, ed. by Andrew M. Scott (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), pp. 168-173 (p. 168). Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[2] See Norris (1987), for a discussion on the differences between 'cosmological' and 'autonomous' selfhood.

[3] Peter L. Thorslev, *The Byronic Hero: Types and Prototypes* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962), pp. 88-89.

[4] Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press 1998), p. 87.

[5] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *Memories and Adventures* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 407.

[6] Pierre Nordon, *Conan Doyle*, trans. by Frances Partridge (London: John Murray, 1966), p. 141.

[7] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, paraphrased by Nordon in *Conan Doyle*, p. 159.

[8] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, quoted by Nordon in *Conan Doyle*, p. 159.

[9] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Case of Identity*, in *The Original Illustrated 'Strand' Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Facsimile Edition* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1996), p. 147. The Sherlock Holmes stories refered to in this chapter, *A Case of Identity*, *The Sign of Four*, and *A Study in Scarlet*, are from this collection, further references to which will follow quotations in the text.

[10] A pervasive industrialized fog is described by Edwin Morgan, who writes that even as late as the 1940s, a city 'with smoke pouring from thousands of coal-burning chimneys' and a prevalence of 'unabashed and prolific smokers' produced a thick fog. This fog typically 'penetrated everywhere', even inside theatres and cinemas (Burgess 1996, p. 23). Stevenson and Doyle's images of thick fog are used metaphorically, yet they are also realistic.

[11] *The City in Literature*, p. 89.

[12] *Conan Doyle*, p. 264.

[13] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories*, (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 48.

[14] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, quoted by Nordon in *Conan Doyle*, p. 263.

[15] David Van Leer's Introduction in Edgar Allen Poe, *Selected Tales* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. xx.

[16] *Memories and Adventures*, p. 402.

[17] Burton Pike, *The Image of the City in Modern Literature* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981), p. 18.

[18] Ibid., p. 22.

[19] Edwin Muir, quoted by Carol Gow, 'Unfashionable Muir' (review of Butter's edition of *The Complete Poems of Edwin Muir*), in *Cencrastus*, 44 (1993), 42 (42).

[20] Margery McCulloch, 'Harvesting Edwin Muir' (review of James Aitcheson's *The Golden Harvester*), *Cencrastus*, 33 (1989), 29 (29).

[21] 'Unfashionable Muir', p. 42.

[22] Edwin Muir to B. W. Huebsch, 10 Nov, 1926, in *Selected Letters of Edwin Muir*, ed. by P. H. Butter (London: The Hogarth Press, 1974), pp. 58-59.

[23] Edwin Muir, 'The Natural Man and the Political Man', in *Essays on Literature and Society* (Enlarged and Revised Edn.) (London: The Hogarth Press, 1965), pp. 150-164 (p. 150).

[24] Ibid., pp. 151-152.

[25] Edwin Muir to Sydney Schiff, 28 February 1925, in *Selected Letters*, p. 48.

[26] Ibid., p. 48.

[27] Ibid., p. 47.

[28] Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography*, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 157.

[29] Edwin Muir, quoted by Sheila Lodge, in '"A Very Curious Emptiness": Muir's Novels as the Prevenance of *Scott and Scotland*', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Twentieth Century*, ed. by Joachim Schwend and Horst W. Drescher, Scottish Studies; Vol. 10 (Frankfurt am Main, Bern, New York, Paris: Peter Lang, 1990), pp. 133-147 (p. 138).

[30] Muir writes that *The Marionette* is 'in the same line' as the 'literature of transition' that he had cited in his study, *Transition* (Lodge 1990, p. 138).

[31] Paul Binding's Afterword in Edwin Muir, *The Marionette* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), unpaginated.

[32] '"A Very Curious Emptiness"', p. 140.

[33] *An Autobiography*, p. 215.

[34] Ibid., p. 216.

[35] Edwin Muir to Sydney Schiff, 28 February 1925, in *Selected Letters*, p. 47.

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[36] Edwin Muir, *The Marionette*, p. 56. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[37] In Hegel's conception of the 'Calvary of Absolute Spirit', there are fourteen Stations of the Cross, although Muir stops at twelve. In Hegel, this twelfth Station is the spirit of 'Religion in the form of Art'. The crosses that Muir excludes are: 'Revealed religion in the form of the death (crucifixion) of God and the mysteries of the Holy Trinity', and the final Cross is 'Absolute Knowing' (Spence and Krauze 1996, p. 63). Muir appears to be privileging the realm of Art as the final goal of human consciousness, the implication being that it is a goal which excludes the possibility of Hegel's ultimate unity.

[38] M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism: Tradition and Revolution in Romantic Literature* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), p. 229.

[39] Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland 1914-1980* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 132.

[40] The name of the fictional puppeteer is also that of a writer, E. T. A. Hoffmann, who wrote in the German Romantic tradition and is well-known for his demonic-fantastic fairy tales. Hoffmann's story *Der Sandmann* (1815), with its 'living' puppet also has some connections with Muir's novel in terms of plot. More significantly, *Der Sandmann* is cited at length by way of an extended case-study of psychological experiences of estrangement and fear in Freud's seminal essay, 'The Uncanny' (1919). In that essay, Freud defines the uncanny by way of an extended etymology of the German term *unheimlich*, which means 'unhomely' relative to its opposite *heimlich* (homely): '*heimlich* . . . develops in the direction of ambivalence, until it finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich*'. In this way, the uncanny is an intermediary position between that which is 'familiar and agreeable' and that which 'ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light'. In psychological terms, the uncanny occurs in the recognition of: 'something which is secretly familiar . . . which has undergone repression and then returned from it' (Freud 1962, Vol. XVII, pp. 219-254).

[41] See Jacques Lacan's essay, based on Freudian conceptions of the perceiving subject, 'On a Question Preliminary to Any Possible Treatment of Psychosis', in *Êcrits: A Selection*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Norton, 1977), pp. 179-225.

[42] '"A Very Curious Emptiness"', p. 139.

[43] Ibid., p. 139.

[44] George Bruce, 'The Peculiar Perception of Edwin Muir as Critic and in Self-Portrayal', in *Akros*, 16:47 (1981), 48-66 (64).

[45] Edwin Muir to Sydney Schiff, 23 June 1926, in *Selected Letters*, p. 57.

[46] John Herdman, *The Double in Nineteenth-Century Fiction: The Shadow Life* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1991), p. 16.

[47] Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share*, vol. 1, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Zone, 1991), p. 115.

[48] Ibid., p. 123.

[49] George Blake, *The Shipbuilders* (London and Paris: The Albatross, 1947), p. 86. Further references will follow quotations in the text.

[50] Critics disagree whether *The Shipbuilders* succeeds or fails artistically (see Malzahn 1987), yet the novel is generally distinguished as the epitome of the Scottish urban realism. See, for instance, Hart (1978), Bold (1983), Witschi (1991) and Lindsay, (1992). The exception is Wittig (1958), who views the novel as having a subjective vision of a social reality. In The Albatross edition of *The Shipbuilders*, its colour-coded yellow cover classifies it as a 'psychological novel'.

[51] 'The Peculiar Perception of Edwin Muir', p. 64.

[52] Ibid., p. 131.

[53] *Conan Doyle*, p. 264.

[54] Manfred Malzahn, 'The Industrial Novel', in *The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 4, Twentieth Century*, ed. by Cairns Craig (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 229-242 (p. 231).

[55] James Barke, *Major Operation* (London: Collins, 1936), p. 209. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[56] Sir Walter Scott's Waverley figure is upper-class, yet it must be noted that his novels are also peopled with peasant heroes, such as the character Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian* .

[57] *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, p. 158.

[58] 'The Industrial Novel', p. 235.

[59] Ramón López Ortega, 'The Language of the Working-Class Novel of the 1930s', in *The Socialist Novel in Britain: Towards the Recovery of a Tradition*, ed. by H. Gustav Klaus (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982), pp. 122-144 (p. 131).

[60] Karl Marx, quoted by W. A. Suchting, in *Marx: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1983), p. 178.

[61] David Kerr Cameron's Introduction in Lewis Grassic Gibbon, *A Scots Quair* (London: Penguin, 1986), unpaginated.

[62] *A Scots Quair*, p. 481.

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[63] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, 'Glasgow', in *A Scots Hairst: Essays and Stories*, ed. by Ian S. Munro (London: Hutchinson, 1983), pp. 82-94 (p. 82). Further references will follow quotations in the text.

[64] Gibbon's perception of the city in 'Glasgow' has striking resemblances to Poe's disparaging views of urban 'progress'. In 1844, for example, Poe writes of the halitosis of industry in a letter to the newspaper, *Columbian Spy*: 'The spirit of Improvement has withered [suburban residences] with its acrid breath'. As for the immoral nature of bourgeois housing described by Gibbon, Poe writes in *Doings for Gotham*: 'What can be more sillily and pitiably absurd than palaces of pained white pine . . . In point of downright iniquity — such sin, I mean, as would consign a man, inevitably, to the regions of Pluto — I really can see little difference between the putting up of such a house as this, and . . . cutting the throat of one's grandfather' (White 1964 , pp. 59-60).

[65] Edwin Muir, 'The Scottish Character', in *Edwin Muir: Uncollected Scottish Criticism*, ed. by Andrew Noble (London and Totowa, NJ: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1982), pp. 118-122 (p. 122).

[66] *An Autobiography*, p. 130. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[67] Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh: Bodily Mutation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. by Tania Croft-Murray and Helen Elsom (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 89.

[68] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 42.

[69] Douglas Gifford, *The Dear Green Place?: The Novel in the West of Scotland* (Glasgow: Third Eye Centre, 1985), p. 7.

[70] Malcolm Bradbury, 'The Cities of Modernism', in *Modernism: 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978), pp. 96-104 (p. 97).

[71] Edwin Muir, quoted by Ian Spring in *Phantom Village*, p. 69.

[72] Georges Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, trans. by Alastair Hamilton (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1997), p. 67.

[73] Edwin Muir to Sydney Schiff, 8 May 1925, in *Selected Letters*, p. 49.

[74] Ibid., p. 50.

[75] '"A Very Curious Emptiness"', pp. 138-139.

[76] *A Scots Quair*, p. 495.

[77] Ibid., p. 495.

[78] *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds*, p. 172.

[79] Andrew Monnickendam, 'Literary Voices and the Projection of Cultural Failure in Modern Scottish Literature', in *English Literature and the Other Languages*, Studies in Literature No. 24, ed. by T. Hoenselaars and M. Buning (Rodopi: Amsterdam, 1999), pp. 231-242 (p. 234).

[80] Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place* (London: Corgi, 1985), p. 112. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[81] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 29.

[82] Georges Bataille, 'Slaughterhouse', in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed. by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 22 (p. 22).

[83] 'A Note on George Orwell', p. 168.

# CHAPTER THREE

# TROCCHI AND THE ARCHITECTURE OF SELF

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow
*Life is very long*

T. S. Eliot, 'The Hollow Men'[1]

There was a door between
him and himself.
Out, like the biff-ball
from the bat,
the limit taut,
feet sunk in cement,
tripped over himself,
a closing hinge:
himself something
upon which he couldn't impinge.

Alexander Trocchi, '£ S D (love, sex,
death / pounds, shillings, pence / lysergic acid)'[2]

In these lines both Eliot and Trocchi use a spatial analogy to illustrate a notion of discrepancy between irreconcilable polarities of being. The demi-liturgical form and language of Eliot's 'The Hollow Men' (1925) give a sense, however cerebral, of a tangible and centred presence, even though the speaker's body in the poem is only implicit. In contrast, Trocchi's colloquial, even playful use of language in '£ S D' (1969) indicates a speaker who twists, turns and continually repostures, but who trips over himself by doing so. The body of Trocchi's speaker is explicit, yet paradoxically its solidity is less tangible, even questionable. In Trocchi's novels, *Young Adam* (1954) and *Cain's Book* (1960), the self-consciousness of each narrator throws up a psychological realization, more so than an externally perceived character. Trocchi's narrators are also his fictional alter-egos, and as such, his writing is positioned at a juncture between fiction and autobiography and fluctuates between them. Trocchi's uses of indeterminacy, and the problems it engenders, provide crucial insights to the ways in which reality and fiction may be used in a Scottish perception of the city.

This chapter begins by outlining Trocchi's understanding of, and differentiation between, negative and positive modes of living. A negative mode is circumscribed by a professional (therefore economic and social) definition, so it is a calcified and 'dead' existence. In contrast, a positive mode is without boundaries, it is a free-spirited and self-sufficient life, betokening an ideal state of being. This ideal state is sought by Trocchi and his narrators in the marginal and indeterminate spaces of the city. Canals, docklands, and alleyways are marginal and transgressive areas and reflect the existential position of the protagonist himself, who is a solitary outsider. He is *Young Adam*'s Joe Taylor as well as *Cain's Book*'s Joe Necchi, and both figures are representations of Trocchi himself. Each protagonist chooses to live as an exile in order to achieve a self-realization independent of a spiritually deadening social context. Thus, the marginal spaces he inhabits are seen to reverberate with transcendental possibility.

In *Adam* and *Cain*, the narrator's psyche and the urban architecture of the city are inextricably interwoven. In these, as in all his works, Trocchi's writing is engaged by his imagination, which allows itself every freedom. Therefore, to limit his major literary works to realist readings is reductive. In such terms, *Young Adam*, for example, can be summarized as a novel about a man named Joe Taylor living and working on a scow, who begins a relationship with his boss's wife. It transpires he is responsible for the death of a woman he and his boss have earlier dragged out of the canal. He watches as another man is convicted of the murder and sentenced to hang. In realist terms, *Cain's Book* can be summarized as a loosely structured series of incidents around a transient junkie, Joe Necchi. He describes his habit, his friends and their habits, his childhood, and his life on a scow in New York harbour. Yet, it is clear that neither of these summaries is adequate. They cannot acknowledge the imaginative, metaphysical, and complex non-realist mechanisms operating within, and most crucial to, the understanding of Trocchi's works.

This chapter provides an exploration of the ways that urban spaces are experienced by the author/protagonist in his quest for autonomous being. As Trocchi himself says, *Cain's Book* is:

> An exercise in phenomenology, a planting of flags, a moment to moment chart of my own processes in extremity. The identity of the junkie . . . was consciously chosen. The resulting experience is by definition that of an alien in a society of conformers, a personal cosmology of inner space.[3]

The following analysis of Trocchi's works is an application of this phenomenological analysis of space. A phenomenological approach is appropriate for two reasons: firstly, it accommodates the author/narrator overlap; and secondly, it opens out the city into a psychological terrain and elucidates the subject's imperative for transcendence.

## A Formulation of Transcendence: Interior, Sovereign and Profane

A differentiation between mere existence and an ideal state of being is most explicitly made by Trocchi in 'Pages of an Autobiography' (posth. 1991). The story comprises thirty pages of what was originally intended as an autobiographical novel, but which is published in Andrew M. Scott's anthology of Trocchi's writing as a short story. The title indicates its incompletion and its non-fictional emphasis, yet the story also appears self-contained and is ostensibly fictionalized by way of the author's identification with a narrator-persona. The narrator, Nicolas, discriminates between modes of living by way of D. H. Lawrence's short story 'The Woman who Rode Away'. After reading the story, the young Nicolas applies its expression of the dual nature of the world to his own circumstances:

> I began to see that the modern world is two worlds. Two layers of history. Interpenetrating. Distinct. The one inhabited by professors, doctors, politicians, trade unionists, bank clerks, butchers, fishmongers, journalists. The other by people like the woman who rode away. The sun-addicts. The moon-men. The helmeted men. The Vikings. The lovers. Of the dead and of the living.[4]

Thus, Nicolas comprehends that the modern world is not made up of one unified reality, but of two existential possibilities. Nicolas's existential values, made via Lawrence, privilege sensuality, exile and adventure. Nicolas's 'dead' souls are enslaved to intellect, social conformity, or economics, and epitomize the rational self which, as Joyce Carol Oates writes in *New Heaven, New Earth* (1974) is Lawrence's idea of hell:

> It is the 'pulsating, carnal self' he wants to isolate, not the rational self, the activity of the personality-bound ego he came to call . . . the 'self-apart-from-God' — his only projection of a real hell, a fathomless fall into the abyss.[5]

Lawrence's hellish death-in-life is brought about by the acceptance of circumscribed identity that negates possibilities of transformation into a vital form, or mode, of being. Both Lawrence and Trocchi seek to tear away the banality of everyday life and assert a radical individualism through sexual experience. The 'pulsating, carnal self' with which Lawrence describes an ideal, primitive identity is described in similar terms by Trocchi's heroine in the pornographic *Helen and Desire* (1954). There, the protagonist, Helen, says: 'I am anxious to record everything, to break through the shameful shell of civilised expression and to penetrate into the pulsing recesses of my primal being'.[6] It is an ideal that is possible in the playful world of erotica. However, in Trocchi's ostensibly 'literary' works he is unable to carry off Lawrence's felicitous spontaneity.[7]

Trocchi's attempt to become a free, authentic and 'living' self actually requires an immense conscious effort. He says as much, explicitly, in *Cain's Book*; he is unable to disengage his detrimental intellectual and analytical faculties from his process of becoming: 'It is as though I watched a robot living myself . . . for as I prepare this document I watch myself preparing it. . . . [T]here are two of us, the one who enters into the experience and the one who, watching, assures his defeat'.[8] Nicolas's reading of Lawrence is correct, but Trocchi's ability to fulfil this interpretation is more complicated; he cannot be a free spirit because he is also hyperconscious. After all, it is one thing to sail headlong into the sun, and another to meticulously prepare a heroin fix and inject it. This problematization of

Lawrence's ideal, autonomous self can be seen, for example, by contrasting it with Trocchi's metaphorical use of the sun. In Lawrence's poem, 'Aristocracy of the Sun' (1928), the speaker identifies with nature in the symbol of the sun and turns away from the mass of humanity and its criteria of evaluation: 'I am that I am / from the sun, / and people are not my measure'.[9] The blazing sun of Lawrence's pastoral settings is, Oates argues, 'a symbol of the ferocious externality of nature', but it is also sacred and life-giving.[10] Even more so than Lawrence, Trocchi is separate from others, and the characters who are his satellites are invariably deemed grotesque, crippled or stupid. In *Cain's Book* the sun functions as an active presence upon the landscape, and Necchi turns to the sun as a means of taking himself out of a drug-induced introspection:

> Day and night soon became for me merely light and dark, daylight or oil-lamp . . . It was the warmth of the sun that came on my cheek and on my hand through the window which made me get up and go outside. (p. 13)

But he always returns to himself, and in doing so, he turns away from the sun:

> As soon as I stepped across the threshold out of the bright winter sun it was into a dirty grey and white cabin . . . after my eyes had adjusted themselves to the dimmer light . . . I found the pill bottle in which I kept my marijuana. (pp. 68-69)

Lawrence's art aims, Oates says, 'to proclaim not his own ingenuity and superiority over other men but his sympathy with them', and in doing so he achieves the sovereignty of the former.[11] In contrast, Trocchi both despises the masses and shuts out the sun; he turns inward, into the dark and 'hollow caves and recesses of panic' (p. 70) of the 'inviolable' drug-induced state. His desire for self-sovereignty thus becomes a fraught solipsism, darkened by self-consciousness.

This solipsism, common to all of Trocchi's narrators, whether in his literary or pornographic works, finds its succinct expression in 'Pages of an Autobiography'. At the same time that Nicolas makes his differentiation between the 'dead' and the 'living', he rejects all forms of conventionally sanctioned social codes of behaviour and propriety. Most significantly, he rejects the idea of an exteriorized but intangible God. In a conversation with Father Doherty, Nicolas says that he will seek an authentic and free existence instead in real carnal experience: 'If I can't elide with a woman with a belly and eyes and blood . . . then I'll derive no comfort from an imaginative fusion with a symbol' (p. 12). This may seem contradictory, for earlier Nicolas has said that when he leaves school he wishes to be 'God Almighty' (p. 9), and later, his sexual experiences are more imaginative than they are physical. The essential point that Nicolas makes is his refusal to identify himself with the product of *someone else's* imagination. As Nicolas tells Father Doherty: 'I'd rather be free and alone and conscious of my isolation' (p. 12). At this moment, Nicolas is comparable to John Davidson's speaker in the poem 'A Ballad in Blank Verse of the Making of a Poet' (1894), who rebels against family and religion in favour of self-sovereignty: 'No creed for me! I am a man apart'.[12] Nicolas's egocentricity is, like that of Davidson's speaker, a means of self-assertion and therefore authentication.

This notion of an inner and sovereign being brings Trocchi's narrator close to the transcendence theorized by Georges Bataille in *Inner Experience* (1954). For Trocchi, the relation between himself as a subject and the moment of realization is central. Similarly, Bataille posits that the individual may achieve autonomy (transcendence) by fusing, or 'communicating', with an unknown object or other, and thus come to know the whole of 'being'.[13] Bataille's treatise is discussed by Michel Foucault in 'A Preface to Transgression' (1963), where he suggests that Bataille's transgressive transcendence is founded on a sense of profanation. To be profane in a world without God is to turn inward rather than outward: 'the death of God leads to an experience in which nothing may again announce the exteriority of being, and consequently to an experience which is *interior* and *sovereign*'.[14] This is the theoretical subtext lying under Necchi's comment that: '*I* am the ground of all existence. God said it. Say it after him' (p. 224). Thus Nicolas's juvenile wish to be God is credible; nothing else will do, he says, for his agenda of liberation in self-sovereignty: 'Only the autocracy of God remained undefiled by the limiting contagions of the mass' (p. 9).

When Nicolas rejects the conformity of the masses and the institutions that control them, he becomes an outsider and a figure of evil.[15] Father Doherty makes it clear that Nicolas's sin is all the greater for having chosen it: 'It's not that you haven't understood .... You have chosen evil' (p. 12). His choice is clearly made to facilitate his creative, sovereign ideal, as Walter Benjamin remarks in his essay on surrealism: 'evil stems entirely from our spontaneity, and in it we are independent and self-sufficient beings'.[16] Nicolas's appeal to sovereignty is catalysed by a deadening society, yet is admonished by it. In this respect his singularity is less akin to Lawrence and closer to the Marquis de Sade, who says that 'In a criminal society one must be a criminal'.[17] In an essay, 'Must We Burn Sade?' (1951-1952), Simone de Beauvoir addresses these issues of individuation and criminality. According to de Beauvoir, Sade's evil is a response to a society in which '[t]he authenticity of existence is swallowed up', so that salvation is 'a question of regaining authenticity by an individual decision'.[18] Trocchi himself had followed licentiousness, not with spontaneity, but with dogged and self-conscious determination, as Tom McGrath writes: 'if Alex was not pursuing pleasure from moment to moment, he felt he was failing in his duty. Hedonism was a matter of principle: time to spare was time to sin by whatever means available'.[19]

Trocchi's doctrine of salvation in sin indicates a shift in the traditional paradigm of transcendence. One of the most familiar examples of the conventional paradigm is fictionalized in Hermann Hesse's novel *Steppenwolf* (1926). Hesse presents a dialectical notion of transcendence. He shows the way that negative states of existence come into a transformative dialogue with positive modes of being. The novel's protagonist, Harry Haller, struggles with an internal and irreconcilable duality of animalism and intellect. These polar states are correspondent to transcendental Christian ideology, analogized as paths leading either to 'the saint, to the martyrdom of the spirit and surrender to God . . . [or] to the profligate, to the martyrdom of the flesh, the surrender to corruption '.[20] A similar distinction is made by Baudelaire when he writes that:

> In every man, at every time, there are two simultaneous tendencies — one toward God, the other towards Satan. The

> invocation of God or spirituality is a desire to be promoted; that of Satan, or animality, is the joy of descending.[21]

Disavowing both Christianity and the insidious 'Aristotelian impulse to classify',[22] Trocchi displaces the divergent paths, aiming to reconcile the two extremes. Through his identification with the exiled figures of the condemned man in *Young Adam*, and the biblical Cain — 'Third profligate, first poet-adventurer' (p. 231) — in *Cain's Book*, Trocchi reconfigures the dichotomy. A fascination with the exiled rebel Cain is not unprecedented in Scottish literature and Trocchi is indebted in this respect to both Byron and John Davidson. Davidson wrote a poem entitled 'Cain' (1909). Earlier, he was associated with a group called the 'Spasmodics'. This name had been given by Carlyle to Byron, also the author of a dramatic poem entitled *Cain: A Mystery* (1821). In turn, the name was given to a group of defiant poets (of whom the Scot, Alexander Smith, was one) writing in the second half of the nineteenth-century and influenced by Byron's legend as Romantic outcast. The features of the group's writing are listed by J. Benjamin Townsend, and include:

> A metaphysical interest in the divine and cosmic, a preoccupation with sin, [and] a pathological emphasis upon physical and mental suffering . . . . The Spasmodic hero, always a titanic egoist, unabashedly commits the most monstrous crimes.[23]

This Spasmodic aesthetic resonates through Trocchi's work, yet he is characteristically reluctant to concede a link with Scottish literary traditions. Instead, he may be more willing to associate himself with the French poet Baudelaire, whose own poem 'Abel and Cain' was published in *Les Fleurs de Mal* in 1857. In Trocchi's terms, the solipsist's descent into the (evil) self that Baudelaire describes as a joy, may lead to a transcendence ***through*** corruption rather than by movement away from it.[24]

## Transgression and the Uses of Indeterminate Space in *Young Adam* and *Cain's Book*

Transgression means breaching a limit. Foucault defines transgression as 'an action which involves the limit, that narrow zone of a line where it displays the flash of its passage'. Without God, Foucault writes, we are denied 'the limit of the Limitlessness'; to kill God is to 'liberate life from this existence that limits it'. But by annulling the 'Limitlessness' that 'He' hitherto represented, we are brought back to the limit itself. Thus, Foucault concludes: 'The death of God does not restore us to a limited and positivistic world, but to a world exposed by the experience of its limits, made and unmade by that excess which transgresses it'. The threshold space, through which 'transgression incessantly crosses and recrosses', is thus a place of instability.[25] Nicolas's disavowal of God in 'Pages of an Autobiography' reveals the threshold space of the limit and opens up the passage for the transgression of that limit. Foucault's spatial analogy is realized in the topography of Trocchi's city at the close of 'Autobiography', when it is finally revealed as the River Kelvin. Nicolas claims: 'On the grey banks of Kelvin I first knew myself' (p. 35), so the river signifies the limit of his being. This signification is carried through and made more tangible in terms of fiction in *Young Adam* and *Cain's Book.* In each case, the narrator lives and writes on the canalways at the edge of the city. But the shift from *Young Adam*'s Glasgow to *Cain*'s New York suggests an elaboration and globalization of the limit of being.

Marginal and tawdry spaces in the city are significant because they promise the 'shock' of revelation. This revelation is achieved through the successful fusion of dream and reality. Famously, André Breton's surrealist manifesto of 1930 calls for the isolation of the psyche and the location of a reconciliatory point between contradictory states of 'life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low'.[26] For the lettrists, the situationist international, and the surrealists alike, the urban terrain simultaneously embodies all of Breton's contradictions. However, George Bataille, in an essay, 'The "Old Mole" and the Prefix *Sur* in the Words *Surhomme* and *Surrealist*' (1929-1930), criticizes Breton's notion of a reconciliatory point, warning of the risk of an '*annihilation* of healthy contingencies as well as the unhealthy contingencies of nature'.[27] For Bataille, contradictions and extremes of experience must be allowed to exist in dialectical tension. For the situationists, who valued the intensity to be gained by extreme experiences, the dynamic interplay of contradictions embodied by the urban terrain could be employed psychogeographically. That is, the city might be experienced and therefore defined in terms of a two-way exchange between its material existence and the psyche, as situationist Guy Debord explains in his 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography' (1955):

> [Psychogeography] does not contradict the materialist perspective of the conditioning of life and thought by objective nature. . . . Psychogeography could set for itself the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.[28]

The city may also embody economic, political, cultural and topographical entities, all of which contribute to the search for extreme experience. For Trocchi, as well as the surrealists and situationists with whom he was closely affiliated, the desired shock of revelation occurs in the zones where the security of spatial location is shifty. This revelationary program is psychic but it is also susceptible to reactionary politics as, for example, in the case of Dali, whose own creative agenda brought him as close to fascism as the surrealists purported to be removed from it. Understood in Trocchi's terms, in which the isolated individual never completely either denies or transcends social factors, there is an affinity to be noted with Walter Benjamin's 'state of emergency'.[29] Benjamin is a communist, yet his writing continually reveals a deep affiliation with the avant-garde's notion of the psychic perception of the city and its potential for the raising of consciousness. The outskirts and indeterminate spaces of a city are, for Benjamin, a personal as well as a political zone, in which the modern social condition at its most radically abject, and its psychic interiorization, is catalysed. Trocchi's use of the city's interstices is partly a political manoeuvre; his role of outsider and his self-exile in the city's outskirts is chosen, as James Campbell notes, 'to challenge all society's assumptions concerning the relation between society and himself'.[30] In this respect, Trocchi's political stance is, like Benjamin's, associated with a sense of existential revelation. Trocchi's narrator situates himself in indeterminate and marginal space in order that he may receive the 'shock' that will propel him, in the words of Bataille, into 'the realm of unease and then to the limits of consciousness'.[31] In *Cain*, such space becomes experiential as well as geographic through the use of heroin.

The dockland area where Necchi ties his scow is positioned between the structures of the dirty city and the fluidity of the junk-filled ocean. As Necchi looks out across the water he muses, 'I often wondered how far out a man could go without being obliterated' (p. 13). This remark is itself unobtrusive, but recurs implicitly throughout *Cain*. Necchi's repeated question — at what point does a degree of freedom actually bring about destruction? — lies at the heart of the whole novel. Bataille may also have been describing Necchi's writing when he says that his own is a 'voyage to the end of possible man'.[32] The limitless ocean, and the city's architecture — thrusting upward, phallic and virile, 'like trumpets' (p. 13) — evoke ideas of a thrilling yet alarming transcendent possibility. The gross expanse of ocean and the sheer enormity of the architecture, upright and phallic, suggests a transcendent sexual potency. But this positivity is taken only from surfaces. The murky depths of the sea and the chaos of the inner city threaten destruction. These alternative possibilities are courted by Necchi through his use of heroin, which dislodges specificities of time and place. The description of the landscape given in the opening lines of *Cain* is minutely specific. Necchi's scow is 'tied up in the canal at Flushing, N. Y., alongside the landing stage of the Mac Asphalt and Construction Corporation' (p. 9), and the time is 'just after five in the afternoon' (p. 9). Yet meaning slides between these details. The time is twilight, and the real setting sun casts a pink glow over the scene. In this light mundane details of city life are transformed in a way similar to that of the light of Eliot's 'violet hour' in *The Waste Land*, which renders reality unreliable and opens the terrain to transmogrification. It is a surrealistic effect that can also be gauged in the opening pages of James Barke's *Major Operation*, where the transformed landscape prompts a shifting, kaleidoscopic array of subjective responses. In each of these literary accounts, the surreal quality of twilight is more familiar than a purely objective description. In *Cain*, Necchi chooses to break down objective reality even further. He injects a fix of heroin or smokes marijuana in order that 'reality' and metaphysicality fuse and open out an area of possible transcendence: 'that whole way of . . . dividing the mind from what it's aware of, is fruitless' (p. 10). In this intoxicated state, Necchi is at once connected with, and removed from, the 'real' city both in geographic and in experiential terms. Necchi allies the city's architecture with the indisputable reality of his presence: 'at times I knew it objectively and with anxiety as a nexus of hard fact, as my very condition' (p. 13). However, the 'buffering water' from which he perceives this 'hard fact' acts to distance and distort it so that the city is also 'like a mirage in which one isn't involved' (p. 13). Disengaged from himself and even from the unalterable fact of his presence in the world, Necchi's lack of faith in the existence of objective 'truth' leads to a permeability between the self and what surrounds it.

### Indeterminacy and Vertiginous Experience

Necchi's drug-induced fluctuation between self and city imparts a sense of instability. The seedy and desolate canalways and docklands at the city's edge exude an atmosphere of edgy mistrust and furtive watchfulness. In his cabin, minute details take on a predatory quality. The buzz of a fly, for example, is of one insect 'worrying the dry corpse of another fly' (p. 10), before Necchi is suddenly 'alert to the sudden silence' (p. 10). He is attentive to the creaking of the scow's planks and the curiosity of the other scowmen who are mistrustful of Necchi's typewriter. This nervous tension is a condition of Necchi's experience rather than just a product of it. Brooding with the paranoia of the dope smoker, the writing conveys a sense of being poised on the edge of not only place and experience, but also of something else; either disaster or revelation. When Necchi describes the docklands under the influence of marijuana, the writing of the passage itself draws attention to the possibility of a shift about to happen, a change in the nature of experience, of Necchi's character, and of the whole narrative movement itself. Both the dockland and the drug:

> Can induce control or hysteria, and sometimes a terrifying and enervating succession of moods . . . generated spontaneously in the unwatched part of oneself . . . tumbling away from oneself in a sickening fashion, and then, suddenly, being in control. (p. 16)

This dizzying interchange caused by marijuana also occurs dramatically through the injection of heroin. The moment just prior to injection is not unlike the precise, conscious pause before Nosferatu's fangs puncture his victim and transform him or her into the 'undead'. The needle recalls the phallic thrust of the skyscrapers and suggests the self-sufficiency of self-fertilization.[33] Necchi's self-penetration precipitates a sickening rush as the needle punctures the surface of the skin, violently disrupting outside and inside. As perception, too, turns from outward to inward, Necchi vomits; inside pours outside in an abject defiance of boundary, and Necchi experiences, he says, an 'extreme but indefinable ecstasy at my senses' (p. 101). Trocchi's definition of Necchi's experience in this passage has been theorized by Bataille in general terms. The folding in of boundaries and the resulting nausea that brings an individual to the brink of ecstasy is described by Bataille:

> At the extreme limit of the 'possible' everything gives way: the edifice itself of reason . . . what subsists at the worst, like a piece of shaking wall, increases, does not calm the vertiginous feeling.[34]

Bataillean transcendence precisely describes Necchi's vertigo, experienced as it is during the removal of a boundary at the moment of transgression. Necchi's extreme behaviour precipitates a collapse of the inside/outside boundary. To use Foucault's words, this precipitates the moment in which 'the limit opens out violently onto the limitless' and thus allows the transcendence of that limit.[35] Necchi's collapse of delineative boundaries defies their value and authority. By defying and collapsing these boundaries, Necchi seeks to assert his own values and authority. Bataille suggests that the appropriation of the object is a result of the individual's struggle between, on the one hand, the knowledge of his or her innate insufficiency and limitations (Lawrence's individual spinning 'on the hub of the obscene ego'[36]) and, on the other hand, the ceaseless desire for identification with the whole of being. Bataille proposes that it is only when the boundary between subject and object is removed that the one may 'experience' the other:

> There is no longer subject-object, but a 'yawning gap' between the one and the other and, in the gap, the subject, the object are dissolved; there is passage, communication.[37]

The narrator of *Young Adam*, Joe Taylor, categorically states that he must 'destroy the distance' between an other or an object, and himself: 'I had to draw the smell of it inside of me and feel it living in myself'.[38] However, for Taylor, there is a problem insofar as he is unable to grasp the entirety of the object, as he explains: 'It is the feeling that something has eluded you' (p. 32). This discrepancy between the experience and articulation is acknowledged by Merleau-Ponty when he proposes that:

> There is always a gap between an act of perception and the act of describing it. . . . So when one tries to describe the initial experience, one has to step back from it so as to discern it. In this stepping back, a gap develops between the experience and its description, and it is thus always possible for the description to be wrong.[39]

This indeterminacy, unreliable in its association with language and expression, is problematic for Trocchi's narrators, who use the indeterminate space of the canal to write the experience of limitlessness.

## Transgressive Identity and the Limits of Articulation

The writing of *Cain's Book* serves two purposes for Necchi: in one respect, the novel is a means of 'fixing' his 'becoming' in a world without abeyance: 'It's all I've got except Now. . . . It's evidence' (p. 32). The ambiguity of the word 'fix', so appropriate to Trocchi's subject, lies in its signification both to 'secure' and to precipitate a vertiginous rush of heroin. For Trocchi and his alter-egos, writing (as both a verb and a noun) shares the ambiguity of the heroin 'fix'. Necchi writes in order to exist more tangibly. As a 'testament', his text purports to a degree of legally sound truth. His novel, he says, is 'a kind of inventorizing' (p. 232); the pun on the 'fix' is developed in Trocchi's use of 'inventorizing' to connote both inventory and invention. The text also functions to destroy all notions of tradition, rules, and objectivity — it has 'no fixed valid categories . . . [it is] not so much a line of thought than an area of experience . . . the immediate broth' (p. 231). Necchi's need for material 'evidence' is all in the service of a breakdown of categorization. His text exists in order that it can move away from itself. Trocchi says, in his speech given at the 1962 Edinburgh Festival, that: 'Modern art begins with the destruction of the object. All vital creation is at the other side of nihilism'.[40]

Trocchi's writing comprises an identity that paradoxically destroys as it creates. This is problematic to identity, bound up as it is with writing. The problem does not go unacknowledged by Trocchi's narrators — in *Young Adam*, Taylor is frustrated by his inability to write and in *Cain*, Necchi is painfully aware of the shortcomings of his work. Trocchi's narrators, therefore, are caught between a longing for stability and a desire for instability, represented respectively by the 'real', everyday world of the city, and the indefinable realm they sense beyond it. The two different forms of longing are not mutually exclusive, and Necchi's experience of the 'beyond' always arises from a mundane reality. In the tawdry, indeterminate alleys and canals of the city, the limits of being are ruptured by a transgressive 'signal' moving through that space — in *Young Adam* this signal is Cathie's dead body,[41] and in *Cain's Book* it is a man urinating in an alley and the flash of his blade. This signal is 'an everyday happening',[42] transgressive because it is tied to reality and represents the limitations (for example, untimely death) and the squalor (for example, urination), of the 'real' world. It moves through the threshold and insinuates the limitlessness of being, the God-like state of knowing to which the narrator aspires. The signal is able to do this because the indeterminate zone is one in which the boundaries of self and other are unstable in order to facilitate fusion. These threshold spaces are innately insecure and the perpetrators of action within them are also transgressive, which destabilizes the area. In addition, Trocchi's narrators choose to enter these spaces under the influence of narcotics, destabilizing them even further. The narrator thus exposes himself — Necchi often refers to his 'naked' state — so that he is receptive to that which exists beyond the limits of his own consciousness. Necchi describes this receptivity as if he were a 'mute hunk of appetitional plasm . . . run through by a series of external stimuli' (pp. 43-44), which brings him to 'the ecstatic edge of something to be known' (p. 44). However, the 'real' nature of the signal ties the narrator to the limit rather than precipitates him over its edge and into transcendental limitlessness. His experience can only be described as a sense or a feeling. In *Young Adam*, for example, Taylor says that: 'From the moment I had wakened that morning things began to happen, nothing spectacular . . . a kind of excitement at the edges of me. I was aware of a kind of prenatal odour of things' (p. 23). This imprisonment in the corporeal body is detrimental to achieving transcendence. As Evelyn Underhill has discussed in her study, *Mysticism*, we construct 'that "sense-world" which is the "real and solid world" of normal men'. But this sense-world, she continues, 'cannot be the ['True'] external world, but only the Self's projected picture of it'.[43] The evidence of the senses cannot propel Trocchi's narrator beyond the limit of his own consciousness. To refer back to Bataille, the desire for the 'whole of Being' is qualified by the innate limitations of the individual.

What transpires in this case is a rupture between the image and the 'something else' it possesses. The central problem for Trocchi — and what might constitute his final claim to a place in the literary pantheon as radical and as lasting as that of, for example, Beckett — is that he is trapped in language. By virtue of Trocchi's language, that empty space is painfully opened. His writing is defiant, and it is an act that ensures that the 'wound' remains open. Trocchi acknowledges the discrepancy between objective reality and the frustration and longing for transcendence. Gaston Bachelard says that there is '*something else* to be expressed besides what is offered for objective expression. . . . [That 'something else' is] the presence of an "essential" impression seeking expression'.[44] Taylor, for example, acknowledges the problem in the realist premise of 'knowing' phenomena through vision: 'The eye . . . could never get to the centre of things' (p. 31). And for Necchi, what is at stake is no less than either self-realization or self-destruction based on an impossibility. As he sits on his scow, for example, a vague and indefinable moment captures the truism of ultimate inexpression. Necchi looks out over the water, which traditionally symbolizes freedom and unfettered creativity, yet he is mute before it:

> The fragrance of the trees in the water-travelled wind avoided the nostril that twitched to find a word to express it. . . . To get beyond the abstraction it was necessary to sink or soar, and that was wordless, my sitting there in the summer wind, sinking, soaring. (p. 136)

Like Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Necchi couches the possibility of existential success or failure in the mythical terms of the archetypal artificer, Daedalus.[45] And like Daedalus, who crafts wings and flies to safety from the labyrinth, the possibility of falling into the sea, like his son Icarus, is always present. Necchi senses something beyond the objective 'fact' of sitting on his scow looking across the water. In an attempt to express the intangible 'something other' as it bursts through the real, Necchi involves the limitless immensity of the sky and the sea in images of soaring and sinking.

The moment Necchi is brought close to transcendence he is silent. Whether sitting on his scow, or prowling the city's alleyways, there is no language, there are only signs, gestures and symbols. However, his inability to *remain* silent, his confessed 'compulsion to record that swells beyond meaningful record' (p. 113), painfully underlines the paradox in the truism: '*Who speaks, knows not; who knows, speaks not*' (p. 113). Necchi struggles with a tension whereby, on the one hand, he needs to express what lies beyond the limits of experience and, on the other, he can only move further away from it and its truth in doing so. By the end of *Cain's Book* Necchi writes that: 'Possibility waits beyond what is fixed and known; there is no language for it' (p. 236). Necchi's words are reminiscent of Bataille's reservations toward his own claim that his work is a 'voyage to the end of possible man'. Bataille concedes that 'existence is linked to language. . . . Being is mediated in [the individual] through words'.[46] However, an experience beyond the possible is inherently *impossible* due to the confines language places upon it, as Bataille says:

> I live by tangible experience and not by logical explanation. I have of the divine an experience so mad that one will laugh at me if I speak of it.
>
> I enter into a dead end. There all possibilities are exhausted; the 'possible' slips away and the impossible prevails. To face the

> impossible — exorbitant, indubitable — when nothing is possible any longer is in my eyes to have an experience of the divine; it is analogous to a torment. . . . I no longer see in me anything but cracks, impotence.[47]

The most significant implication of the impossibility that Bataille describes, and which Trocchi's narrators endure, is that the vertiginous distance between self and non-self becomes a zone of unclosable rupture and, therefore, of possible annihilation. In *Young Adam*, Taylor suggests that language is treacherous to autonomous identity, both constricting it and misrepresenting it:

> The problem comes into being as soon as I begin to use the word 'I'. . . . It is the word 'I' which is arbitrary and which contains within it its own inadequacy and its own contradiction. (p. 4)

As long as Taylor and Necchi have recourse to the word 'I' — and their solipsism assures that they always do[48] — then a state of being beyond the limits of the self-conscious ego is impossible. And, of course, it is this strained ego that Trocchi's narrators wish to transcend. In the destabilized and vertiginous space in which the self and the non-self seek 'communication', the narrator's overriding solipsism brings everything back to himself, but it is a self that is decentred and diffuse, as Necchi explains:

> Intense concentration on an external object suddenly shatters, and one has a fleeting, ambiguous glimpse of one's own pale face. The cause of what is to be shunned is the junction of the seer and the seen. (p. 17)

Thus, the solipsist's attempt to fuse with objects sees, in fact, both his real and his metaphysical worlds collapse into meaninglessness. Similarly for Bataille, transcendence is crippled because it involves an inescapable tension between the individual's desire for autonomy and his desire, in the knowledge of his own innate limits, to embrace 'the whole of Being'. However, as Leslie Anne Boldt points out in the introduction to Bataille's *Inner Experience*: 'To identify with the entirety of the whole, [the individual] must forego [a] desire for autonomy'.[49] In *Cain's Book*, Necchi's solipsism pulls him back from transcendence. He is afraid to embrace oblivion by sublimating himself to the heights and the depths of the external world because it would bring about a loss of autonomy. The subject and object interplay is therefore emptied of transcendental possibility. Yet for Trocchi (and to the extent that Necchi is Trocchi's persona), the courageous act is the recording of it. Experience is therefore not consigned to oblivion, but to the page.

## The Disappearing Subject and Spatial Configuration

Trocchi's objects are symbolic surfaces only. Spare and trivial — coffee cups, sugar, cigarette packets, wooden chairs — they may symbolize the triviality of existence.[50] More significantly, however, Necchi is *repeatedly* making inventories of these objects, paradoxically anchoring himself in the 'fact' of their presence, but progressively draining them (and, therefore, himself) of meaning in repetition. It is a technique akin to Beckett's (although not as extreme), whereby the words used to articulate the object proceed to annihilate it, leaving nothing but sound around an empty space. Trocchi's narrator lists objects in order to align himself with them in a particular configuration, then proceeds to hollow out their space to signify his isolation. Trocchi's indebtedness to Beckett in regard to the existential construct of the scow is clearly indicated by the scow's name, the 'Samuel B. Mulroy' (p. 114). The scow cabin is explicitly linked with Beckett's 'hollowing' of space:

> I can remember lying on my back on the bed, staring at the ceiling, thinking of Beckett, and saying aloud for my own edification: 'Why go out when you have a bed and a floor and a sink and a window and a table and a chair and many other things here in this very room? After all, you're not a collector.' (p. 195)

Necchi differentiates himself from Beckett's collector, and in Walter Benjamin's terms, the collector's accumulation of particular objects constitutes an embodiment of the soul. For Benjamin, the glorification of the collector's interior is made by stamping upon it evidence of an existence based on abundance and fancy.[51] Necchi's generic objects are without brand-names because he disallows himself any connection with a commercial (but solid) world. This connection is too close to the sort of identification with the professional world that he attempts to shed. The delicate placement of Necchi's objects — a cigarette poised on the edge of an ashtray, or an eggshell inadvertently crushed underfoot — are analogous to his own precarious ontology and spatiality. A few pages after stepping on the shell, for instance, Necchi comments that 'inside I was intact and brittle as the shell of an egg' (p. 237). Yet the fragility of external objects also lends weight to Necchi's own stability and presence, and if the 'things' of Necchi's world are emptied of meaning, they are done so by the narrator himself. Projections of an impoverished self, the self can, in turn, only assimilate its own emptiness. The object, as a surface through which the self is articulated in the 'real' world, registers only the lack of a tangible 'I'. The solipsistic self does not achieve sovereignty, but falls victim to its own inevitable disappearance. Thus, Necchi's inhabitancy in the interstice between object and subject threatens a negative transcendence, and reveals only an exhausted, phantom self.

This dwindling self is reflected in mirrors and water. In *Young Adam* and *Cain*, reflections symbolize the repetition, dissolution, and dispersal of the self. If realism is, as critic Gregory L. Lucente writes, a 'programmatic depiction of the mirrored surface of the world as it is',[52] then Trocchi's receding and phantom reflections, both in mirrors and in water, undermine an immutable and objective reality. Indeed, Necchi emphasizes that 'facts' exist only on the basis of one's own posture: 'The facts? What facts? Marxian facts? Freudian facts? Mendelian facts?' (p. 11). Even the fact of one's own existence is shakeable. Critic Stanton Hagar notes that when an object is reflected, 'all substance becomes shadow',[53] that is, both the original and the mirrored image become unreal. The mirror's endless reflection may promise the infinite, but that reflection is also a simulacrum, a limitless repetition of an image that is reduced to a phantom. Its limitlessness in repetition leads to disappearance — absence in a dwindling proliferation. The motif of the mirror can be traced through *Young Adam*, to *Cain*, and on to a fragment of a later, unfinished novel, anthologized by Campbell and Niel as 'The Long Book' (1975). The use of the mirror motif shows the progressive ontological disintegration of Trocchi's narrators.[54]

In the first scene of *Young Adam*, Taylor gazes at his reflection and questions the temporal continuity of his identity. At this point, his mirror image is in sharp and focused detail, but before he turns away from it he hears 'from beyond the dark edge of the universe a hyena's laugh' (p. 4), prophesying the state of 'unbeing' that closely presses. The foretelling of self-dissolution in the novel is paradigmatic, and it reverberates and is magnified until, at the close of the narrative, when the innocent man is sentenced to hang and the courthouse breaks up, Taylor remarks that: 'the disintegration was already taking place' (p. 152). For Andrew Scott, this comment is ambiguous: 'There is no attempt to focus on what, precisely, is disintegrating'.[55] Yet the inextricable relationship between self and environment in the novel has been established. The absence of a specific reference which Scott sees as a criticism, as if Trocchi is indulging in an abstraction is, rather, the deliberate coalescence of self and place even as they are both disintegrating. Although Taylor is now a free man, the self-dissolution he undergoes is irrevocable, just as the convicted man will be hanged in his place.

In *Cain's Book*, Necchi uses the idea of reflection to convey the distortion and absence of a secure image of the self:

> My former identity paled and disintegrated like the reflection of a receding face on the broken surface of water. If I had looked in a mirror and seen no reflection there I wouldn't have been unduly startled. (p. 70)

By the end of the novel, Necchi presses himself up to the mirror and recognizes non-being: 'I move closer until my nose is almost touching the glass and stare vacuously at the pupils of my eyes' (p. 149).

By the time Trocchi comes to write 'The Long Book', the unfinished sequel to *Cain*, the narrator's hope to write himself into a valid and tangible identity has completely disappeared. Stylistically the work itself is a falling off from the tightly controlled and original writing of *Cain*. By contrast, 'The Long Book' shows all too clearly its derivative aspects of Joyce, in its linguistic play, and of William S. Burroughs, peopled as it is with agents of control and exuding an atmosphere of conspiracy.[56] The narrator is, again, Necchi, yet in contrast to the tightly controlled prose of *Cain*, the reiteration, in 'The Long Book', of the problem of expression to identity is vehement. Necchi sees himself as the 'funeral director of what is essentially wordless', and declares that: 'No matter how spontaneous my utterance, each word is a nail in the coffin of the corpse I wished to touch undead, unsymbolised'. He identifies himself as being a 'sordid half-existence . . . . A microscopic speck of consciousness on the dark tide of unbeing'.[57] Reflection offers no image of objective reality or truth because there is no essence, just the reverberation of possibilities. A reflection is also intangible — it is perceptible but it does not really exist; touch it and the image disperses. In *Cain's Book*, Necchi is aware that what is apparent is only ever a part of something more which remains hidden or inaccessible. He often refers to identity in terms of surfaces which invite peeling back, such as masks or layers of onion. For Necchi, one is 'masked always, even at the moment of discarding the mask, because for another the act of exposure stood equally in need of interpretation' (p. 72). As soon as one identity is fixed, it drops and reveals a successive skin that is just as enigmatic. His 'compulsion to record', to keep stripping back experience in order to find his own essence is, in fact, self-annihilating. The problem is put by critic A. D. Nutall, who writes that:

> An onion is, in a way, all skin, a mere series of layers without a heterogeneous centre, and this fact has furnished poets with a symbol for the insubstantial; yet most sensible men know when to stop peeling their onions.[58]

In Necchi's act of revealing (revelation), essence slips further away the more he attempts to fix it in language.

Like the mirror motif, images of water in Trocchi's works function as a surface that both reflects and conceals. Water is traditionally associated with the gush of spontaneous feeling, especially in the idiom of Romantic poetry and the images of waterfalls and cataracts in, for example, Coleridge's opium-inspired 'Kubla Kahn' (1816). Trocchi's bodies of water, however, signify artificiality and containment, his canals and waterways are man-made, and thus connote sterility or channelled control rather than fecund and passionate expression. At the end of *Cain's Book*, Necchi uses images of water to describe the novel we have just read: 'a tentative organisation of a sea of ambiguous experience, a provisional dyke, an opening gambit' (p. 251). Edwin Morgan remarks that even though this is ostensibly a 'non-ending', it is a carefully constructed one. Trocchi's language nevertheless 'suggest[s] control, forethought, shaping of material'.[59] Trocchi's contained waterways, full of urban detritus, recall the nineteenth-century representation of the city river, discussed in chapter one of this thesis, which is, as William Greenslade notes, 'an image and repository of degeneracy'.[60] In this view of degenerationism, the polluted river comprised a moral topography in which the dispossessed and corrupt urban poor were inscribed as effluvia or residuum. This faction of society was dangerous and came to represent, as Nikolas Rose suggests, 'all those anti-social forms of conduct and vices which threatened good order and public tranquillity'.[61] Trocchi draws upon this trope to identify his characters (and himself) as morally abject. As condemned men and outsiders, Necchi and Taylor are disruptive to the social order which produces and rejects them. But problematically for their self-reflexive sense of personal identity, filthy water does not allow a positive, narcissistic reflection. That is, reflection is not of self-love, but of self-loathing.

In Trocchi's texts, water symbolizes the treachery rather than the liberation of depth and expansiveness. In this respect, language and water are correlative. Necchi comments that, like water flowing under and around the scow's structure, 'below the level of language the facts slide away like a lava' (p. 12). Of course, it is language that extends this instability to his own identity. The quintessential urban representation of water in *Cain* (as opposed, for example, to images of the open sea, or to Eliot's replenishing downpour of rain at the end of *The Waste Land*), reflects an urban self that exists dangerously on the surface of 'non-being' — a borderline that is inherently both destructive and seductive. Necchi's scow is constantly in danger of leaking. Rather than carrying cargo, Trocchi emphasizes that the scow is not a commercial proposition, and that the hold is, in fact, empty. The hold is kept empty for the purpose of maintaining buoyancy. It is also where Necchi hides his heroin, and thus the most abject space on the boat is this lowermost area, 'below water level', where the water seeps in: 'After loading this is a dark, dripping, slimy place, murkier than the darkest pier' (p. 118). This place symbolizes the horrible depths of the subconscious, access to which is provided by heroin, and a place that threatens to subsume the precarious buoyancy of the ego.

## The Dialectical Construction of Self: Unity Versus Dispersal

The cabin of Necchi's scow represents his ego-centre. This is where he makes his home. According to Bachelard's phenomenology, the place of home is 'the topography of our intimate being' and thus it is the primary '*tool for analysis* of the human soul'.[62] Bachelard locates the ego in the domestic centre, regarding the home as the primal universe and the place where we are most ourselves. Without a house, he says, 'man would be a dispersed being'.[63] Dispersal is, as we have seen, precisely the state of Trocchi's narrators, and correspondingly, they live in impermanent, floating, or rented rooms. For Necchi, enclosed spaces offer respite from his anxiety of the city's constant flux. America, he writes, is a place where:

> Nothing was ever in abeyance. Things moved or they were subversive. I suppose it was to escape this without going away, to retreat into abeyance, that I soon came to be on a river scow. (Alternatives: prison, madhouse, morgue.) (p. 13)

Paradoxically, of course, he seeks abeyance from flux by living on a moving object. Escape is in containment rather than movement beyond a boundary. Even though both Necchi and Taylor insist on the fundamental necessity of questioning repression and control of all kinds, they withdraw to intimate spaces. This withdrawal and incarceration is central to the idea of the modern individual in American writing. The American context of Necchi's statement brings to mind Mark Twain's nonconformist hero and Huck's life on a raft in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). The intimate spaces of Trocchi's narrators are analogous to Huck's raft. On land and in society, Huck is faced with a succession of horrors, while his raft allows him respite from these. In this respect, Twain's novel is a precedent for Trocchi's. However, Twain's crucial sense of spaciousness is foreclosed in

Trocchi's works. Even Huck's raft prefigures a world in which boundaries are closely defined and Trocchi continues this inclination, seen already, for example, in Nelson Algren's novel about urban life and heroin addiction, *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1949), which is prophetic of the post 1960s American world in its depiction of claustrophobia and its dehumanization and incarceration of non-conformist characters.

The small spaces in which Necchi lives are inevitably similar: 'It had been the same for years. The same situations. . . . A scow on the Hudson, a basement room in London, a tiny studio in Paris, a cheap hotel in Athens, a dark room in Barcelona' (p. 74). He does not fail to observe that his repeated recourse to enclosed spaces reveals an existential pattern: 'Sometimes I thought I was learning something of my own constructions' (p. 74). Trocchi's recourse to small and impermanent spaces can be elucidated by way of a piece of advice, offered by French poet Henri Michaux in 1971, on the use of mescaline as a means of reconfiguring and upgrading the architecture of the self: 'The enemy which is your structure, force it to reveal itself. If you have been unable to modify your destiny, you will have been nothing but a rented apartment'.[64] Unable to claim a permanent and watertight home, and unable to alter the pattern that draws him to leaky and impermanent spaces, Trocchi's narrator must live without the desired respite from environment and self. Each time Necchi settles upon a new locus of home he continues to hear the familiar dissent, both of himself and of others: 'The voices, judging and protesting' (p. 74).

In Necchi's recourse to the containment of physical enclosure, he idealizes a psychical fortress of protection and self-sufficiency, which he terms 'Castle Keep'. His use of drugs structures a metaphysical place of inviolability, where '[o]ne is no longer grotesquely involved in the becoming. One simply is' (p. 11). Beyond the pain of time and space, the citadel provides a temporary suspension of being ***outside*** considerations of the self, at the same time that it draws Necchi deeper ***inside*** the self:

> The perceiving turns inward . . . the blood is aware of itself . . . the organism has a sense of being intact and unbrittle, and above all, *inviolable*. (pp. 10-11)

Although Necchi disavows the existence of essence, he nevertheless betrays his yearning for it. Despite his insistence on artistic and political freedom, retreat is also symptomatic of a need for limits and order. This need for containment had been fictionalized by Sartre in *Nausea* (1938), where, as Joseph Halpern notes, it had emphasized and elaborated the self-interpretation of his characters. Halpern suggests that: 'Enclosure, which haunts his characters in their search for meaning, can be understood here as an impulse toward unity and system-building'.[65] In Sartre's novels, Halpern continues, images of the womb, the mask, the shell, and destiny, are deployed to represent forms of 'spiritual enclosure' and 'linguistic egoism'.[66] They are images also used by Trocchi in *Cain*: the allusion to the womb and uterine security is evoked by Necchi when he recalls how, as a child, he had retreated into a cardboard box in the family kitchen. As already noted, Necchi insists that identity itself is merely a succession of masks. Crustacean-like, he is detached and hardened to his external circumstances, but nevertheless he is constantly drawn back to a notion of spiritual enclosure through his sense of identification with his father. He circumscribes his own familial identity by a fearful sense that he is reliving his father's life. The imagery of enclosure that occurs throughout *Cain* signals a need for unity, despite his claim for transcendence in extremes and going 'far out'.

## The Collapse of the Dialectic and the Treachery of Urban and Narrative Space

This dialectic of unity and dispersal is also represented by notions of inside and outside, which are consistently collapsing. In *Cain*, this disintegration is inevitable, due partly to the unstable nature of Necchi's chosen homes. The ontological correlatives of home and outside are being and non-being. Having considered this relation in regard to the body of the narrator and the physical consequences of intoxication, it is now worth considering the relationship of the constructions around that body. In spatial terms, existence on the borderline of being and non-being is represented by a rupture of outside into the hoped-for 'security' of enclosure. The threshold is, as Bachelard writes, a painful membrane in which 'we absorb a mixture of being and nothingness. The centre of "being-there" wavers and trembles'.[67] Bachelard's 'horrible inside-outside' eviscerates Necchi in a powerful scene in *Cain's Book.* There, he enters his cabin alone, his solitude forcing him to 'take stock' (p. 115). He catalogues the objects around the cabin and concludes that they are evidence that his position 'far out' in experience and geography has led to a type of paralysis and impotence. Necchi delineates his interior spatial field as a means of structuring ego, however, a spatial nothingness is exposed into which the nothingness of outside comes rushing in:

> Seated at the grey table in front of cigarettes, matches, the dregs of a cup of tea. No radio. Dead silence broken only by dripping . . . . And the sound of a bell came, giving me a sense of the emptiness of the night beyond the walls, and of the trackless water. For two hours I fought panic. I feared those moments and yet sometimes I felt a faint lust on me to live them again; and then I slid into a relentless movement which carried me again to the brink of hysteria. (p. 115)

The vocabulary of this passage is similar to Necchi's earlier description of the effects of marijuana. In both of these descriptions, body and place are brought together by the retelling of a metaphysical experience of panic. In his simultaneous panic and excitement at the collapse of boundaries, he indicates the allure both of destruction and authentication. In this overlap of desire for transcendence and 'the lust for extinction' (p. 238), it is never certain whether they are not, in fact, the same thing. Necchi exists in the 'reality' that the novel creates, but when the novel moves to metaphysical concerns, his existence is undermined, and he experiences non-being. These metaphysical sections within the fiction are less novelistic, or fictional, bringing Trocchi into the figure of Necchi. The magnification of Necchi's consciousness in introspection involves him in an increasing degree of self absorption, and an increasing removal from the reality of the cabin. This ruptures the symbolic enclosure of the self (the cabin) and allows the transgressive space of 'beyond' to break in, dissolving the carapace of the scow, the cabin, the objects inside it, into something entirely internal. Necchi has lost his 'whereness': 'It is as though I find myself on a new planet, without a map, and having everything to learn. I have unlearned. I have become a stranger' (p. 115). He articulates the crisis of Bataillean transcendence, which is the realization that: 'Being is *nowhere*'.[68]

The disruption of the conventionally unified, house-bound ego is caused by the imposition of the metaphysical upon the real. Like Necchi's 'metaphysical burglars [who] burst forcibly in(to) the living' (p. 245), the typical introspection of Trocchi's narrators violates the ostensible stability of the sanctuary. All of the circular enclosures that Necchi sets around himself — canal, city, scow and body; theory, philosophy, literature, the novel; and family, father, and sexual relationships — break down into a silent vacuum in the eye of the storm, its emptiness terrifying. To fill this void his own 'mind' is projected and magnified into it, yet paradoxically, it becomes increasingly paralysed and inexpressive. The 'space' Trocchi enters here intimates what Reinhard Kuhn, commenting on the French poet Mallarmé, describes as 'the impotent autism of an anesthetized will . . . [and] the sterile blankness of [the] unviolated page'.[69] Trocchi's fear of the space he has given himself, to write himself into wholeness, is as paralysing for him as it was for Mallarmé. Necchi himself connects the hollowed space and the impossibility of language by quoting Kafka: 'My doubts stand in a circle around every word, I see them before I see the word, but what then! I don't see the word at all, I invent it' (p. 71). The possibility of that invention allowed *Cain* to be written, yet the primacy of doubt noted by Kafka, Necchi and Trocchi in this quotation leads the writer to a state of aphasia.

Trocchi's fear of writing is legendary: James Campbell notes Trocchi's 'aversion to sitting down alone in a silent room with a blank sheet of paper'.[70] In an interview William S. Burroughs remembers that 'Alex, of course, had a terrible writer's block. He'd almost rather do anything than write'.[71] And Trocchi's partner, Sally Child, says that '[h]e was terrified of writing'.[72] Trocchi, therefore, like the narrator of *Cain* and of *Young Adam*, was a struggling writer immensely committed to the laborious task of finding a possible unity through duplicitous language. The definition that closure effects in writing, as has been illustrated, is explicitly denied in the 'non-ending' of *Cain*, even though this affects its own ending. Therefore, enclosure symbolizes a need for form which is contradicted by the simultaneous desire to transcend spatial, existential and textual enclosure. To return to Halpern's article on enclosure in Sartre's works, the small space is linked to a desire for 'the conditions of unambiguous communication'.[73] Those conditions can never be met because, most keenly for Trocchi and his personae, it is impossible for communication to be unambiguous.

The citadel is the privileged architectural symbol of Necchi's transcendental state of 'inviolability'. Necchi refers to the 'citadel' or to 'Castle Keep' repeatedly in *Cain's Book* to signify a protective and self-sufficient space of enclosure. The symbol is a particular invention in the literature of intoxication. It has a precedent in Thomas De Quincey's *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (1821), where the author describes the room in which he studies as his 'pensive citadel'.[74] In *Cain's Book*, Necchi finds the interpenetration of being and non-being unsatisfactory, so the notion of a citadel is borrowed as a means to a more verifiable sanctuary. However, De Quincey's use of the term not only connotes intellectual freedom; it also carries with it a sense of melancholy and anxiety. Similarly, for Necchi, the citadel promises intellectual and existential autonomy, yet as suggested through Trocchi's use of mirrors, water and narcotics, autonomy and a central 'truth' is not possible. Thus the indestructible kernel of ego that the citadel represents is disallowed. At the end of *Cain*, Necchi's final realization is that the city and the self are dangerously opened out: 'The citadel, centre everywhere, circumference nowhere; lethal dose variable' (p. 229).[75] Part of this phrase is not Trocchi's own, but comes from a tradition of medieval writing, where, as Bakhtin has noted, it expressed 'the decentralisation of the universe. Its center was not in heaven but everywhere; all places were equal'.[76] The phrase is most famously used by Rabelais in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, when his priestess of the Holy Bottle announces:

> Go, my good friends; may you depart under the protection of that intellectual sphere, whose centre is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere, and whom we call God. When you return to your world, bear witness to your fellow men that the greatest treasures and most wonderful things lie hidden underground.[77]

In Rabelais's parody, as Bakhtin has noted, God is specifically transferred 'to the underworld, which according to the medieval conception was farthest removed from God'.[78] Trocchi's recontextualization of the expression, already made transgressive by Rabelais, into a world of narcotics via De Quincey, indicates the primacy he gives to a downward movement of transcendence, but also the problems to the drug-taker's consciousness in such a movement.[79]

In his cabin and under the influence of drugs, Necchi describes the drug-taker's consciousness as 'a little pocket of coherence in the city of dreadful night' (p. 70). However, this is not, as already indicated, a centre of calm at the eye of a storm. Necchi explicitly evokes the metaphysical horrors of James Thomson's vision, in *The City of Dreadful Night*, of the moribund self burst open. In *Cain's Book*, Necchi is habitually distanced from the city in the 'security' of the scow cabin so that egress to the city's centre is painful. In those passages that describe the character's physical movement we engage and navigate the mundane actuality of his material context. On the way to downtown Manhattan, Necchi passes through the indeterminate zone lying between the harbour and the city, where furnaces are burning in an empty wasteland, and he says 'I am walking through hell or Auschwitz' (p. 149). Necchi's fraught movement toward the city in 'real' space prompts a movement backward in time and memory. Poised thus, Necchi stands in mid-flow traffic in the centre of New York, 'unable to go forward or back' (p. 186). In his hesitancy, he is paralysed in the present, 'shored up by the past; and the not-yet, a void' (p. 99). His spatial position at this moment corresponds with an analogy, given by Ernst Bloch, on the ontological predicament of the modern individual, who 'tip-toes along the narrow ridge between the disappearing "now" and the never appearing "not yet"'.[80] For Necchi, compelled to move even while precariously transfixed, he slips progressively back through memories of other cities — London, Paris, and Glasgow. Trapped in the 'infinite degeneration of time', and the 'constant disintegration of the present' (p. 239), he seeks a point 'beyond all the problematic struts and viaducts . . . of anxiety' (p. 239). His memories of Glasgow are predominantly of family deaths — that of his uncle, his Aunt Hettie, and his mother. As the past invades Necchi's present New York and the other cities it evokes, he is suddenly connected with his particular family history. This regression offers no solace or security with which to navigate the city of his present. Necchi's memories of death evoke an insecure notion of identity, and this is brought back into present-day New York. Thus Glasgow represents a dead past, which he must 'recoffin' and 'bury' (p. 239). The past haunts Necchi continually, yet his insistent rejection of it ascribes it value. His maxim that 'the great urgency for literature was that it should for once and for all accomplish its dying . . . that a man should annihilate prescriptions of all past form in his own soul' (p. 131), contradicts the fact that the relationship between death and Glasgow also provides him with his very purpose: when his mother dies Trocchi writes: 'Her death was my direction'.[81] By virtue of this realization of direction, Trocchi can distance himself from the past by writing about it, more so than his character Necchi, who cannot extract himself from the past, and thus is unable to move forward, through and beyond the void of the present city and the self in which he is dangerously trapped.

Necchi negotiates the physical connections he has with the city, in which, like Thomson and De Quincey, he is trapped. His ideal of escape and transcendence from all of this is to enter the desert. Eliot contrasts the desert and the sea in relation to the city in *The Waste Land*, where, as Harriet Davidson suggests, 'the empty unchanging desert represents what would happen if our wish to escape the uncertainties of life through absolutes, transcendence . . . were to be granted'.[82] The desert is a transcendent space for Necchi because in it he is free of the city's cumbersome structures and objects. The desert, as Necchi writes in 'The Long Book', is a privileged zone 'not because anything began or came to an end there, but because of its relative emptiness, because, especially in remembering, he didn't wish to be at once overcome with a profusion of things'.[83] (p. 200). In a sense, this desert represents the extreme outcome of Trocchi's Beckettian hollowing out of meaning, revealing the empty expanse of the unformed 'I'. The typical discontinuity or irrelevance Trocchi's narrators feel in relation to their external world can be avoided, it seems, by recourse to the emptiness and spaciousness of the interior realm of the self, free from objects. But, as an empty state, the desert cannot be maintained indefinitely without entering oblivion, which is to negate art.

Necchi qualifies his insistence on the empty desert. By doggedly relying on artistic endeavour to bring about automous identity, Necchi's desert is the ideal (imagined) sovereign space of spontaneous play. The emptiness of the interior desert is the place out of which he writes. Necchi's insistence that '*There is no story to tell*' (p. 147) indicates that whatever 'meaning', verifiable facts, biographical detail, and geographical data might seem to guarantee, it cannot be assured by the security of a central unambiguous narrator or a single linear narrative. The sprawling nature of the text, 'No beginning, no middle, no end' (p. 147), is like an 'endless tundra' and a 'barren wilderness' (p. 148). Necchi's movement through the space of his 'inner cosmos' is stumbling and haphazard, 'planting bloody flags in my wake', he says, in order to chart its 'obscene horizons' (but also, perhaps, to mark a way out). This inner state contrasts with that of his junkie friend Tom Tear, who is beset with an 'ordinary consciousness [that] is like a slow desert at the centre of his being; his emptiness is suffocating' (p. 78). Necchi's 'tundra of unmeaning' is an absence filled with a kinetic quality; the act of play crucial to authentic creativity. His desert is one 'to sport and gambol in' (p. 148). Again, however, this notion of limitlessness is also evocative of destructive potential. In *The Aesthetics of Disappearance* (1980), Paul Virilio points out that in the Hebraic tradition there are two types of desert:

> One is named *Shemama*, despair and destruction, and the other is *Midbar*, which is a desert not of dereliction but instead a field of uncertainty and effort. The *shemama* [*sic*] is, rather, polarity of the City-State (City of Ur — *Our*, light), its desert is the tragical one of laws, ideology, order, as opposed to what could have resulted from wandering.[84]

The distinction illustrates Necchi's hope that by turning his back on order, the tundra will be conducive to felicitous creativity. Like Christ's foray into the desert for mystical revelation, Necchi braves the realm of his own imagination in search of meaning. But he is fully aware of the possibility of destruction or madness that must be risked by entering this, akin to King Lear's descent into madness on the heath, or Catherine Earnshaw's exposure to extreme wildness and hysteria in *Wuthering Heights*. Perhaps the closest analogy for the volatility and the indecisiveness of the situation is Hamlet's 'madness' — no matter to what extent it is a conscious strategy or an agonized self-questioning despair, it has particular consequences which allow for Hamlet's singularly potentiated expressiveness.

The infinite depth of the inner self, which Necchi describes with self-conscious and ironic lyricism, 'with no way in and no way out and nary a trail for the eye to see' (p. 148), is profoundly lonely. It is the 'intoxicated' state described by Walter Benjamin in 'Surrealism', that 'most terrible drug — ourselves — which we take in solitude'.[85] Solitude is 'terrible', yet for Necchi, as for the surrealists, it is also desirable: 'To live within one's imagination is brave, necessary . . . . The mass of men is afraid of imagination' (p. 113). The burden of the desert's solitude experienced by Necchi is described by French writer Henri Bosco:

> In the hidden desert that each one of us bears within himself, and to which the desert of sand and stone has penetrated, the expanse of the spirit is lost in the infinite, uninhabited expanse that is the desolation of the earth's place of solitude.[86]

Like Bosco, Necchi is lost in the immensity of his own solitude and seized by the entropy of the desert so that, he says, 'I found it more and more difficult to get outside my own skull' (p. 218). The solitude that drugs provide and writing necessitates, through which the desert is entered, despite Necchi having said that there is no way in or out, becomes a life-denying solipsism. His exploration of limits paralyses him at the limit itself, rather than moving him beyond it. In an interview, Samuel Beckett speaks of this tendency in its relation to art: 'The artistic tendency is not expansive, but contractive. And art is the apotheosis of solitude'.[87] Beckett's comment profoundly catches the essence of Trocchi's / Necchi's dilemma in *Cain*. The novel's structure to discover 'how far out a man could go', to move *beyond* constrictions of all kinds in transgressing them, is counter to the 'contractive' literary effort required to express it. In *Cain's Book*, Necchi is wound into the tension created by this contradiction. His obligation to produce a text is contractive, while the expansive nature of his obligation to explore will remain unexpressed. In creating this dichotomy, Necchi rejects conventional modes of social being offered by humanity in the twentieth century, that is, family and community on the one hand, and on the other, the city.

Necchi admits, perhaps speaking on Trocchi's behalf, that his need to write is fundamental: 'Sometimes it was as though I could only come to exist by writing it down on paper' (p. 71). In order to write, the desert and its solitude are crucial, yet also annihilating:

> My way is not the way of the Sansaras . . . . I must walk in crowded places, until I am murdered by my own contempt. I am alone again and write it down to provide anchorage against my own mutinous winds. (p. 230)

Solitude is self-negating: 'To look into oneself endlessly is to be aware of what is to be discontinuous and null' (pp. 69-70). Necchi's desire for both crowds and solitude and his inability to suffer either has negative implications for the successful writer, falling painfully short, for instance, of the poetic maxim described by Baudelaire:

> Multitude, solitude: equal and convertible terms for the active and fecund poet. He who does not know how to people in solitude will not know either how to be alone in a bustling crowd.[88]

If we recall Trocchi's formative, Lawrencean notion of ideal being, as a 'Viking' and 'cosmonaut of inner space', then implicitly the spontaneity of play is a means to self-liberation. Like *Steppenwolf*'s Harry Haller, whose only possibility of transcendence lies in 'an imaginary and yet a sovereign world, humour',[89] Necchi must also learn how to 'sport and gambol' in his interior terrain (p. 148). Even Bataille's transcendence, having shown itself to be impossible, must end in laughter. In his poem 'God', which is used by way of a conclusion to *Inner Experience*, Bataille writes: '*where am I / without laughter / I am dead*'.[90] However, the high existential stakes of Trocchi's 'literary' novels disable him from lending his narratives the humour that is apparent in his pornographic works. The kind of humour that is apparent in Trocchi's pornography is subversive of the mechanical nature of the genre. He takes its compulsory formula seriously, and in *My Life and Loves:*

*The Fifth Volume* (1954), he was able to pastiche Frank Harris so convincingly that his authorship remained secret for some time. In this volume, as in *Helen and Desire* (1954), he cannot help wax philosophical. This self-consciousness, as well as that of the mechanics of the genre, lends an arch humour to the pornographic texts he wrote in haste for quick cash. This sort of ludic and playful self-consciousness is missing in *Cain*.

Near the end of *Cain's Book*, Necchi gives an analogy of a pinball machine as the ultimate expression of revolutionary and transgressive play, yet the earnest manner of his analysis inhibits playful spontaneity . The machine, he remarks, is the 'rigid structural "soul" that threatened to crystallize in history . . . the great monolith imposed by mass mind'. By setting oneself against it, one 'reduced it to nothing' (p. 246) and thereby facilitated 'the symbolical transposition of the modern Fact into the realm of play' (p. 246). Earlier in the novel, Necchi had written that 'when the spirit of play died there was only murder' (p. 72), and indeed, his identification in both *Young Adam* and in *Cain* with the 'hanged man' reveals his inability to play. Appropriate to Trocchi's outcast and solipsist personæ, pinball can be played alone and, in *Cain*, Necchi does not fail to problematize the association of play and the solitary individual: 'Many of the poets and painters in Paris in the early Fifties played pinball; few, unfortunately, without feelings of guilt' (p. 247). Torn between needing company and desiring solitude, Necchi can only aspire to be both fulfilled and solitary: 'To wish for the thousandth-making time to be alone and play' (pp. 71-72). The outcome of this impasse is given existential weight by an extended quote from Beckett's *Malone Dies*: Malone 'gave up trying to play and took to myself forever shapelessness and speechlessness, incurious wondering, darkness long stumbling with outstretched arms, hiding' (p. 177).

## The Impossibility of Transcendence

What remains for Trocchi's urban figures is a sense of exhaustion and self-depletion. Though diminished, Necchi is nevertheless unable to close *Cain's Book*. If the artistic project defines being by articulating it over and above existence, then to conclude would be to annihilate being by relegating it to the closed system of the traditional novel. Necchi cannot allow this because he has not been able to successfully achieve transcendence. He concludes the novel with the comment: 'I have not even begun to say what I mean . . . nothing is ending, and certainly not this' (p. 252). Necchi's advocacy of anti-realism proves prophetic in its insistence on nihilism; his problems with language; his 'trouble with . . . tenses' (p. 238); and his fear of silence, that is, those features which veer away from formal, realist narrative, cause him to panic: 'At those bad moments when the dykes crumble there is a certain relief in inventing titles. . . . I have a horror of committing fraud' (p. 238). Foucault proposes that the problem of conveying the experience of the limit and its transgression is part of a greater problem. For Foucault, this problem resides in the continual reminder of the speaker's own mortality. In 'A Preface to Transgression' Foucault says that 'the speaking subject, instead of expressing himself, is exposed, goes to encounter his finitude and, under each of his words, is brought back to the reality of his own death'.[91] The ineffable is a continuation of the speaker's movement and his experience of things that cannot be expressed.

Trocchi's narrators are now like Eliot's Hollow Men, bound and exhausted to the limit, to fissure, to absence, and to the shadowy space of discrepancy between existence and being. The space of indeterminacy becomes, as Necchi says at the end of *Cain's Book*, a 'chasm of anxiety' (p. 239), and fulfils Camus's prophetic words on the impossibility of self-realization in an absurd world: 'Between the certainty I have of my existence and the content I try to give to that assurance, the gap will never be filled. For ever I shall be a stranger to myself'.[92] For Trocchi's heroes, shackled in this gap, transcendence remains an unrealized desire and the threshold is thus a place of cruelty. The space in which Trocchi hopes to gain his own version of Sadean sovereignty becomes, in fact, a place of sadism with himself as his own victim. Necchi, self divided — ready, he says: 'To fall on myself from above, like the owl on the wee grey mouse' (p. 233) — embodies the Sadean experience of evil described by de Beauvoir: 'Evil is not at one with itself; self-laceration is its very essence'.[93] This recalls the remark made by Father Doherty in 'Pages of an Autobiography', that Nicolas's decision to turn inward and thus toward 'evil' will see his destruction, not by the society that he rejects, but by his own hands: 'You have chosen to destroy yourself' (p. 12). Like the doomed Haller in *Steppenwolf*, Necchi cannot, 'owing to some weakness or inertia, make the plunge into the free, untrammelled realms of space'.[94] To do so would be to relinquish identity: 'A man cannot live intensely except at the cost of the self'.[95] And of course, even the idealized protagonist in Lawrence's 'The Woman Who Rode Away' rides to her own death.

Thus, in the shadows of the city's skyscrapers, Necchi inhabits the realm of existential potential and possibility, and embodies the very visceral workings of desire. Unlike Eliot, Trocchi refuses any hope of salvation. In 'Pages of an Autobiography', Trocchi's narrator-persona specifically denies the existence of a God who is merely the product of an imagination other than his own. In Eliot's 'The Hollow Men', from which the first epigraph to this chapter is taken, his speaker evokes a Kingdom of God in the liturgical phrase '*For Thine is the Kingdom*'. Trocchi, however, will not allow that kingdom to belong to 'Thou' or to any other. But neither will he assert his authority over the Kingdom or anywhere else. Trocchi's paradox is that he seeks both a more intimately personal and a more abstract and generalized domain. He sees the occupation of shadowy space appropriate for his narrator's transcendental purpose. Trocchi finds something magnificent in the potential of the area. But the problem that lies at the heart of *Young Adam* and *Cain's Book* is this notion of potential, which is only realized in the silence following each novel's last, reluctantly relinquished word. The inhabitancy of indeterminate space is no longer one of choice but one of bondage that cripples Trocchi's narrators into immobility and inarticulacy. Their voice is silenced. This silence is itself a kind of echo, heard for example, in *King Lear* after the king's words have ended. The sense of entrapment for Trocchi's narrators, tied on the rack of language, brings to mind Kent's words when he describes the tragedy of Lear, stretched out 'upon the rack of this tough world'.[96]

If Trocchi's fiction is part autobiography and his protagonists, in some important respects, versions of himself, then their dilemmas also became his. His own biography reveals how desperately important the writing of it in fiction was for him, and how it had failed him as he had failed it. But it would be wrong to suggest that Trocchi's life was an abject failure any more than his writing career was unfulfilled. His life's abjection had given him its fruit, and his writing in *Cain's Book* and *Young Adam* remains as precisely positioned in the most dangerous area of the self's architecture, carefully sustained and free of the excesses of his more notorious contemporaries, Burroughs, Kerouac or Ginsberg. Something more akin to Shakespeare's pathos and silence stays with him.

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[1] T. S. Eliot, 'The Hollow Men', in *Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber), pp. 89-92 (p. 92).

[2] Alexander Trocchi, '£ S D (love, sex, death / pounds, shillings, pence / lysergic acid)', in *A Life in Pieces: Reflections on Alexander Trocchi*, ed. Allan Campbell and Tim Niel (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc., 1997), pp. 215-216 (p. 216).

[3] Alexander Trocchi, quoted by James Campbell in his entry on 'Alexander Trocchi', in *The Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 15, ed. by Bernard Oldsey (Detroit: Gale Research, 1983), pp. 538-542, (p. 541).

[4] Alexander Trocchi, 'Pages of an Autobiography', in *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, ed. By Andrew M. Scott (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp. 3-35 (p. 15).

[5] Joyce Carol Oates, *New Heaven, New Earth: The Visionary Experience in Literature* (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1974), p. 53.

[6] Alexander Trocchi, *Helen and Desire* (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc., 1997), p. 16.

[7] Ibid., pp. 39-42.

[8] Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book* (London and New York: Calder, 1992). Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[9] D. H. Lawrence, 'Aristocracy of the Sun', quoted by Oates in *New Heaven, New Earth*, p. 37.

[10] *New Heaven, New Earth*, p. 53.

[11] Ibid., p. 40.

[12] John Davidson, 'A Ballad in Blank Verse of the Making of a Poet', in *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), pp. 355-359 (p. 358).

[13] Leslie Anne Boldt provides a good introduction to the tenets of Bataille's conception of transcendence, in Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. by Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), ppix-xxiv.

[14] Michel Foucault, 'A Preface to Transgression', in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1977), pp. 29-52 (p. 32).

[15] Campbell (1992) points out Trocchi's continual need to show what a monster he is. However, it is worth noting Peter Ansorge's comment that: 'There were no legal precedents by which Cain might have judged his crime. Laws, punishment, a definition of fratricide, only became possible after he had enacted his first killing' (Ansorge 1975, p. 29). Trocchi's persona is definitively evil, but in a sense, innocent.

[16] Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', in *One-Way Street*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 225-239 (p. 234).

[17] The Marquis de Sade, quoted by Simone de Beauvoir in 'Must We Burn Sade?', trans. by Annette Michelson, in The Marquis de Sade, *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom and Other Writings*, compiled and trans. by Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver (London: Arrow Books, 1990), pp. 2-64 (p. 58).

[18] 'Must We Burn Sade?', p. 58.

[19] Tom McGrath, 'Remembering Alex Trocchi', in *Edinburgh Review*, 70 (1985), 36-47 (38). Trocchi's deliberate and self-conscious hedonism is precedented by Rimbaud, expressed in his famous lines written in a letter of 1871: 'Now I am debauching myself as much as I can. Why? I want to be a poet, and I am working to make myself a *seer*. . . . The sufferings are enormous, but one must be strong . . . . What is needed is to make the soul monstrous. . . . The poet makes himself a *seer* by a long, immense, and calculated *disordering of the senses*'. (Abrams 1973, p. 417)

[20] Hermann Hesse, *Steppenwolf*, trans. by Basil Creighton and revised by Walter Sorell (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books in association with Secker & Warburg, 1969), pp. 63-64.

[21] Charles Baudelaire, quoted by Georges Bataille in *Literature and Evil*, trans. by Alastair Hamilton (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1997), p. 52.

[22] Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book* (London, Paris and New York: Calder Publications, 1992), p. 59. Further references will follow quotations in the text.

[23] J. Benjamin Townsend, *John Davidson: Poet of Armageddon* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 101.

[24] In Hermann Hesse's novel, *Demian* (1919), Cain's 'evil' is given a 'heroic' characterization similar to that ascribed by Byron, Davidson and Trocchi. The protagonists of Hesse's work, Emil Sinclair and Max Demian, are described as bearing the mark of Cain. It is not a negative sign, however; rather, it is a positive emanation. Demian explains that the mark preceded the sin, which was an explanation and not a cause: 'Here was a man with something in his face that frightened the others. They didn't dare lay hands on him; he impressed them . . . [I]t was not a mark on his forehead like a postmark . . . . It is much more likely that he struck people as faintly sinister, perhaps a little more intellect and boldness in his look than people were

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used to. This man was powerful: you would approach him only with awe. He had a "sign." . . . And people . . . did not interpret the sign for what it was — a mark of distinction — but as its opposite. . . . It was a scandal that a breed of fearless and sinister people ran about freely, so they attached a nickname and myth to these people' (Hesse 1985, pp. 24-25).

[25] 'A Preface to Transgression', pp. 32-34.

[26] André Breton, 'Second Manifesto of Surrealism', in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. by Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Michigan: Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1972), p. 123.

[27] 'The "Old Mole" and the Prefix *Sur* in *Surhomme* and *Surrealist*', in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. and trans. by Allan Stoekl, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985)

[28] Guy Debord, 'Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography', in *Les Lèvres Nues*, 6 (1955). Reprinted at internet address http://www.nothingness.org/SI/journaleng/urbangeography.html.

[29] Walter Benjamin, 'Marseilles', in *One-Way Street*, pp. 209-214 (p. 213).

[30] James Campbell, *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, p. 541.

[31] *Literature and Evil*, p. 74.

[32] *Inner Experience*, p. 7.

[33] The sexual connotation of the needle is expressed elsewhere in *Cain*. Jody is described by Necchi as having a mark on her hand, like 'a small purple cyst . . . into which she drives the needle each time she fixes. "That's your cunt, Jody".' (p. 31). And later, Trocchi's persona (more obviously Trocchi himself than a character) describes the serious ritual of the fix: 'When a man fixes he is turned on almost instantaneously . . . you can speak of a . . . tiny murmured orgasm in the bloodstream' (pp. 33-34). The same analogy is also explicit in Barry Graham's novel, loosely based on Trocchi's life, *The Book of Man* (1995, p. 163), and throughout Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*.

[34] *Inner Experience*, p. 40.

[35] 'A Preface to Transgression', p. 34.

[36] D. H. Lawrence, 'Death is Not Evil, Evil is Mechanical', in *Poems*, ed. by Keith Sagar (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 248.

[37] *Inner Experience*, p. 59.

[38] Alexander Trocchi, *Young Adam* (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc., 1996), p. 31. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[39] Michael Hammond, Jane Howarth, and Russell Keat, *Understanding Phenomenology* (Oxford and Cambridge, Mass: Basil Blackwell, 1991), p. 190.

[40] Alexander Trocchi, 'The Future of the Novel', in *A Life in Pieces*, pp. 158-159 (p. 159).

[41] In Julia Kristeva's study of abjection, *Powers of Horror*, she says that: 'The corpse, seen without God . . . is the utmost of abjection': in having transgressed a border, 'It is death infecting life' (p. 4). In *Cain's Book*, the canal represents the borderline itself.

[42] *Cain's Book*, p. 43. The importance of the 'everyday' to engender revelationary experience is central to the agendas of situationism and surrealism, for instance.

[43] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (London: Methuen, 1960), pp. 5-6.

[44] Gaston Bachelard, The *Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 186.

[45] Scott (1991), p. 147 and McGrath (1985), p. 40 both mention that Trocchi kept his laudanum in a bottle labelled 'Stephen's Ink'.

[46] *Inner Experience*, p. 83.

[47] Ibid., p. 33.

[48] John Pringle, in his Introduction to *Young Adam* points out that 'If Joe [Taylor] is really an outsider it's not because of the story he tells but the way he tells it. Disturbing and enigmatic, his voice mesmerises with the repetitive beat of the subjectivity through which everything is filtered: "I . . . I . . . I".' (p. ix).

[49] *Inner Experience*, p. xiv.

[50] See Hargrove (1978, p. 52) for a discussion of Prufrock's use of 'trivial objects such as coffee spoons and cigarette butts to suggest the triviality of his existence'.

[51] Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zohn (London: NLB, 1973), pp. 168-169.

[52] Gregory L. Lucente, *The Narrative of Realism and Myth: Vega, Lawrence, Faulkner, Pavese* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 44.

[53] Stanton Hagar, 'Palaces of the Looking Glass: Borges's Deconstruction of Metaphysics', in *The Scope of the Fantastic — Theory, Technique, Major Authors: Selected Essays from the First International Conference on the Fantastic in Literature and Film*, ed. by Robert A. Collins and Howard D. Pearce (Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 231-238 (p. 232).

[54] In Tom Hubbard's essay, 'The Divided Scot', examples are noted from early Scottish fiction in which a mirror's reflection is used to reveal a character's impending self-dissolution: 'A mirror as symbol can reveal

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not only what one is, but also what one may be. When Henry Jekyll and Eoghan Strang [in Hay's *Gillespie*] look in the mirror, they see their disintegration' (Hubbard 1986-87, p. 60). Thus, in *Young Adam*, Trocchi's character is situated within a tradition of self-divided, villainous 'heroes'.

[55] Andrew Murray Scott, *The Making of the Monster*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1991), p. 97.

[56] The editors of *A Life in Pieces* provide a list of Trocchi's Joycean inventions undertaken in 'The Long Book' (p. 299).

[57] Alexander Trocchi, 'The Long Book', in *A Life in Pieces*, pp. 194-209 (p. 199).

[58] A. D. Nuttall, *A Common Sky: Philosophy and the Literary Imagination* (London: Chatto & Windus for Sussex University Press, 1974), p. 201.

[59] Edwin Morgan, 'Alexander Trocchi: A Survey', in *Edinburgh Review*, 70 (1985), 48-58 (58).

[60] William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 59.

[61] Nikolas Rose, quoted by Greenslade in *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel*, p. 49.

[62] *The Poetics of Space*, pp. xxxvi - xxxvii.

[63] Ibid., p. 7.

[64] Henri Michaux, quoted by Reinhard Kuhn in 'The Hermeneutics of Silence: Michaux and Mescalin', in *Yale French Studies*, 50 (1974), 130-141 (141).

[65] Joseph Halpern, 'Sartre's Enclosed Space', in *Yale French Studies*, 57 (1979), 58-71 (60-62).

[66] Ibid., p. 64.

[67] *The Poetics of Space*, p. 218.

[68] *Inner Experience*, p. 82.

[69] 'The Hermeneutics of Silence', p. 140.

[70] James Campbell, *Paris Interzone: Richard Wright, Lolita, Boris Vian and Others on the Left Bank, 1946-60* (London: Minerva, 1995), p. 150.

[71] *A Life in Pieces*, p. 160.

[72] Ibid., p. 227.

[73] 'Sartre's Enclosed Space', p. 62.

[74] Thomas de Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Classics, 1994), p. 90.

[75] The use of this phrase in *Cain* denotes its negative potential, however, the phrase's denotation of a positive potential of limitless freedom is seen in an essay, 'Sigma: A Tactical Blueprint' (1964). The essay advocates a politico-artistic community which would foster self-consciousness: 'Now and in the future our centre is everywhere, our circumference nowhere. No one is in control. No one is excluded'. (Trocchi 1996, p. 196)

[76] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. by Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 369.

[77] Ibid., p. 369.

[78] Ibid., p. 369.

[79] Scotland traditionally has a strong association with Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, which was translated by Sir Thomas Urquhart (c. 1611-1660) from the French into Scots and English, two volumes in 1652 and a third in 1693.

[80] Ernst Bloch, quoted by Zygmunt Bauman in 'Desert Spectacular', in *The Flâneur*, ed. by Keith Tester (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 138-157 (p. 138).

[81] *The Making of the Monster*, p. 15.

[82] Harriet Davidson, 'Improper Desire: Reading *The Waste Land*', in *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. by A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 121-131 (p. 123).

[83] *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds*, p. 200.

[84] Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. by Philip Beitchman (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), p. 27.

[85] 'Surrealism', in *One-Way Street*, p. 237.

[86] Henri Bosco, quoted by Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, p. 205.

[87] Samuel Beckett, quoted by Ihab Hassan in *The Literature of Silence: Henry Miller and Samuel Beckett* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1969), p. 113.

[88] Charles Baudelaire, 'Crowds', in *The Prose Poems and La Fanfarlo*, trans. by Rosemary Lloyd (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 44.

[89] *Steppenwolf*, p. 66.

[90] *Inner Experience*, p. 165.

[91] 'A Preface to Transgression', p. 51.

[92] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 24.

[93] 'Must We Burn Sade?', p. 70.

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[94] *Steppenwolf*, p. 66.

[95] Ibid., p. 64.

[96] William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, ed. by George Ian Duthie and John Dover Wilson (Cambridge, London, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 5.3.316.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# PUBLIC TRANSPORT AS AN ALLEGORY OF BEING

> Why, seen from a distance, do the casual journeys of men and women, perhaps going on some trivial errand, take on the appearance of a pilgrimage? I can only explain it by some deep archetypal image in our minds of which we become conscious only at the rare moments when we realize that our own life is a journey.
>
> Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography*[1]

In an urban context public transport represents a particularly mundane actual journey through the city's terrain, yet several writers use the tram or the bus as an allegory for metaphysical concerns. The tram or bus functions as a locus of metaphysical realization in Edwin Muir's *Poor Tom* (1932), Alexander Trocchi's 'The Rum and the Pelican' (1954) and James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984). Each of these three works uses a dynamic relationship between the real and the metaphysical in their presentation of the tram or bus as an allegory for self-realization, and thus approaches a definition of transcendence. Alan Spence's use of the bus in *Its Colours They Are Fine* (1977) attempts to rework the difficulties in achieving positive transcendence through the use of a transgressive object, but it is William McIlvanney's vision of a singing and dancing queue at the end of *The Papers of Tony Veitch* (1983) that offers a more positive version of transcendence within a world of everyday journeys in the city.

The tram or the bus in these works functions in two ways. It is a real object, denoting actual journeys which can be traced through a city that can be mapped. But the tram or bus also represents a metaphysical journey untaken by the protagonist of each book. Before investigating the interplay that exists between the realist and the metaphysical uses of public transport in each work, it is necessary to briefly consider the context out of which this dialectic works. The public tram and bus provide cheap transport for the masses of the industrialized city. This association with crowds complicates the idea that the tram or bus signifies only an individual concern, either as the bus trip of a single person or as the centre of a psychological metageography. There also exists a tension between an individual as a defined subject, and that same individual as a member of a social group, whether defined by class, gender, or language. This social identification can be seen in the 'great buses' of George Blake's *The Shipbuilders*, that, 'blue and red, passing over the bridge into the Gorbals', symbolize the left and right wing politics which manipulate the working classes.[2] In McIlvanney's *The Papers of Tony Veitch* the buses convey a sense of overcrowding and an invasion of privacy in 'a city that was about proximity not anonymity . . . as spacious as a rush-hour bus'.[3] The loss of the self's integrity in a crowd is a notion developed in Hugh C. Rae's *Night Pillow* (1967), where the bus is a symbol of the working class who, thronging to the factories, lose their individuation. One of the novel's characters, George, is reluctant to become one of the faceless:

> He could not believe that they really wanted him to be one of the amorphous early-morning battalion of men who filled the tops of buses and cold steam trains and poured daily, yearly, into mills and yards and factories.[4]

This sense of the bus as the quintessential symbol for the loss of self to the drudgery of work is also touched upon by Alasdair Gray in *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (1985). The central character, Kelvin, despairs of finding a good job in London, quipping that employment with the bus service is a degrading and desperate last resort: '"I'll get a job as a bus conductor. Big towns never have enough of them," said Kelvin with a gust of masochism'.[5] As it turns out,Kelvin does not make the sacrifice. But Jake, the novel's artist, does. His eventual employment as a bus conductor indicates the loss of his principled, bohemian sensibility. Edwin Morgan points out that in Gray's *Something Leather* (1990), the remarkably sober and ordinary character of Mr Liddel also works for Glasgow Public Transport, as Gray explains:

> A tram-driver from 1928 to 1961, he fails the army medical exam and is promoted to ticket inspector a year before trams are replaced by buses. He never learns to love the buses as he loved the trams and his world-view is shaped by this.[6]

Liddel's failure to join the ranks of the army's dehumanized institution sees employment with the transport service as a second best.

Negative implications of failure, mechanization and a loss of self emerging from these literary images of the tram or bus are directly connected with their real context. Joe Fisher writes in *The Glasgow Encyclopedia* that in 1932, the year in which *Poor Tom* was published, the first buses came into operation in Glasgow, prompting the abandonment of trams.[7] And at the time Trocchi was writing 'The Rum and the Pelican' trolley-buses were a new feature of Glasgow, although the city was the last in Britain to adopt them. Not only behind the times, the buses were nicknamed 'Silent Death' due to their propensity, Fisher explains, 'to creep up soundlessly behind wandering pedestrians'.[8] *The Busconductor Hines* concerns itself with the imminent replacement of the city's buses with more streamlined ones which would make the conductor redundant. The social context for the literary representation of public transport sees the tram or bus in each case as outmoded, obsolete or threatening. This negativity is not absolute, however, for at least buses and trams operate above ground; the underground loop, for instance, may represent a more hellish or hopeless journey. John Davidson's clerk in 'Thirty Bob a Week' (1894) describes his pitiful existence, where his meagre earnings extend to a precarious sense of self, as if he were 'walking on a string across a gulf'. Paltry income and identity are linked through the image of the passage-way to its source, which is by way of the underground:

> For like a mole I journey in the dark
> A-travelling along the underground . . .
> To come the daily dull official round.[9]

Like Davidson, Alan Sharp, in *A Green Tree in Gedde* (1965), equates the subterranean aspect of a train journey with a sense of stagnant despair. Sharp's use of metaphor, however, is couched in a more abject and physical horror. The narrator describes the train's passage to the city of Glasgow, as it 'rushes out of the tunnel, it sucks the platform clear and goes on, gorged with smokers and readers and puzzlers, tumid colon'.[10] Muir, Trocchi and Kelman's overground modes of public transport are connected in a visceral and a metaphysical way with the figures who travel in them, and they invariably convey problematic if not negative implications of selfhood in the city.

## Edwin Muir, *Poor Tom*

Edwin Muir's *Poor Tom* was published at the time of the Scottish Renaissance, a period that tended to seek spiritual recourse in the land rather than the city. Of Muir's contemporaries, Hugh MacDiarmid, Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Neil Gunn are the most influential, and for them, the city is viewed as ruinous to the plight of the individual and his or her location in terms of Scottish identity.[11] *Poor Tom* is regarded as something of an anomalous and failed experiment in the context of Muir's *oeuvre*[12] and he is more generally recognized as a poet concerned with the rural settings inspired by his childhood in Orkney. Muir creates an Edenic myth in his world of nature, and it is the city's inability to promulgate this myth that makes his urban vision appear so terrible. The principal concerns of Muir's poetry are also central to *Poor Tom*. Muir's mythopoeic landscapes reveal a metaphysical terrain. In particular the poetry of *Journeys and Places* (1937), *The Labyrinth* (1949), and *One Foot in Eden* (1956) all deal with the transcendent self, increasingly in terms of Christian spirituality. *Poor Tom* redeploys the metaphysical concerns of his poetry in an attempt to accommodate his terrible experiences of Glasgow, which he later describes in *An Autobiography*. The novel derives its plot from Muir's own experiences and is therefore a synthesis of reality and fiction. As T. S. Eliot notes: 'The work and the man are one'.[13] In *Poor Tom* an autobiographical component is evoked in the expression of Muir's spiritual vision. Although Muir's characters are fictional, there is an intermingling of fiction and autobiography that is similar to Trocchi's works. However, Muir's use of fiction and fact is without the self-conscious blurring that Trocchi lends this juxtaposition. Muir's transposition of metaphysical ideas into the Scottish urban scene can be viewed as an attempt to belong to both the Scottish tradition and the modernist tradition outside of Scotland (in contrast to, for example, Trocchi's later attempt to reject the Scottish tradition by the same means). Muir draws upon Calvinist and socialist ideologies — central to the Scottish tradition — and uses them together with a European sensibility that clearly shows the influences of, for example, Rilke, Kafka and Nietzsche. Muir had translated Kafka's most famous novels, *The Castle* and *The Trial*, indicating the depth of his acquaintance with ideas of the European city. The extent to which Muir could apply these ideas to the Scottish city may be seen in *Poor Tom* as well as in his 'European' novel, *The Marionette*, set in Salzburg, which has been discussed in chapter two.

The city of *Poor Tom* is not foreign, but it is made strange. Its unstable surface places the urban individual in a precarious ontological position. According to Muir the city is inherently dangerous: 'a man lives in a large modern city where existence is insecure, and change is rapid, and further change imperative; where chaos is a standing threat' (p. 186).[14] When the Manson family first move to the city Tom is 'enchanted by the variety and strangeness' (p. 21) of its endless flux. In contrast, life on his father's farm had been predictable and unchanging, although Tom 'had at least felt the horizon round him wherever he went' (p. 21). The move from the farm to the symbolically named village of Blackness proves existentially constrictive. Its parochialism inhibits choice and freedom, and Tom feels 'bounded by arbitrary walls' (p. 21). By getting drunk, these walls could be loosened and made 'more endurable than the rigid walls that sobriety raised about him' (p. 21). Yet the feeling of expansiveness that alcohol afforded him is only fleeting: 'Next day his imprisonment was always harder to bear' (p. 21). The city, by contrast, through its sheer scale and multifariousness, initially represents a sustained state of intoxication: a loss of rigidity and constraint and an 'inexhaustible freedom' (p. 21).

The city gives Tom a sense of existential freedom, but such limitlessness is problematic. In Blackness Tom had taken to drink in order to collapse the rigidity of the town's 'walls', but in Glasgow he turns to drink 'as the one solid thing in a world that has become insubstantial' (p. 78). The city's inability to provide a solid grounding for the self lends it a quality of unreality. In particular, for Tom and his brother Mansie, the city seems to be perforated with holes to an infinite and empty expanse that lies behind the city's facade. This field is opened up by way of the sexual jealousy Tom feels when he sees his ex-girlfriend, Helen, and Mansie together in the street:

> A hole has yawned in his world, and through it all the warmth that used to be in things has drained away, leaving them cold and empty. . . . He breathes the sharp autumnal air, but it is thin and bodiless, an invisible empty something that he draws into his lungs . . . he finds that breathing requires a slight effort, an effort that tires him, for it is meaningless. (pp. 76-77)

Tom's world is vacant, yet external objects impinge upon his consciousness: 'so many things are empty, although still perplexingly palpable to his eyes and mind' (p. 77). The discrepancy between the psychological perception of the city, which empties it of significance, and its physical reality, in which things still clearly exist, provokes a sense of unease in Tom that eventually manifests itself physically as well as psychologically.

The most treacherous of the city's 'real' objects is the tramcar, which eventually knocks Tom down. Mansie is always conscious of its danger: 'Dangerous things these cars; must be careful' (p. 243), he warns as he moves to dodge them in the street. For Mansie, the tramcar represents the epitome of threat in a world of instability:

> A complete riddle, the way things were scattered about on the face of the earth . . . .You had literally to pick your way among them, to walk round them and be very careful even then, for you couldn't even be sure that they would stay in the same place; lots of them moved, and some of them rushed about at a great speed, tramcars and things like that, and at times, in spite of all the space in the world, they banged straight into one another. (pp. 176-177)

For Tom and Mansie's mother, Mrs Manson, the tram symbolizes the inhumanity of urban industrialization, so that for her, Tom's accident is inevitable: '[she has] a dread for all machinery: for the tramcars rushing about the streets . . . for the dreadful maze of machinery through which, since he came to Glasgow, Tom had walked for a time miraculously unscathed, until at last it struck him down' (p. 225). This reference to the 'dreadful maze' is a key idea in Muir's thinking, and points toward a metaphysical realm of experience and fatalistic retribution. The tramcar is thus established as the quintessential symbol for, paradoxically, both non-reality (associated with the labyrinth, it opens up the metaphysical notion of a hollow expanse behind reality), as well as the annihilation of the self by way of impact with its very solidity.

The tram is not only denotative of destruction, however, it is also represented as the only object capable of providing deliverance from the sordid urban world. Muir uses the tram as a metaphor to illustrate the precarious existential condition of the individual — poised between destruction and deliverance — with a particular placement in real, transgressive urban space, as Mansie observes:

> The pavement, though completely filled, gave passage-way for two sluggish processions that moved in opposite directions . . . each on a long raft that moved with them at a steady speed to some destination that could not be imagined . . . . [T]hese two rafts bearing all that human freightage floated just a little above the mud, were only a thin partition over a bottomless quagmire, and through the planks the mud oozed up and clung to the passengers' shoe-soles, though their heads were so high in the air. If the whole business were to collapse! (p. 242)

The metaphor is ambiguous. Muir's river of people seem at first to be pedestrians, similar to Eliot's weary crowd in *The Waste Land*, who 'flowed over London Bridge ... / Flowed up the hill and down King William Street'.[15] Yet Muir's later use of the word 'passengers' in this extract to describe this body of people explicitly refers to tramcar users. As passengers rather than pedestrians, the crowd appears to be animated by an external agent which suggests a Calvinistic predestination. In this respect, Muir's image is reminiscent of John Davidson's image of a train journey in 'Rail and Road', in which the carriage journeys on:

> . . . its destined way
> With apathetic fatalism, [that] is the mark
> Of all machinery.[16]

In *Poor Tom*, the inexorable journey of the tram moves horizontally in opposite directions and connotes the possibility of two destinations, one of which may be destruction, the other realization. Furthermore, the possibilities of annihilation and transcendence are signified in the images of the 'bottomless quagmire' underfoot, while at the same time the heads of the passengers are 'so high in the air'. Thus the space inside the tram is one of indeterminacy, poised between dirt and sky, which represent the extremes of existential possibility — mere 'existence' and transcendence. It is not dissimilar to the shadowy space between polarities of being that Trocchi's narrators inhabit. Trocchi's in-between zone is unnerving yet potent, as it is the space in which an individual achieves an awareness of his or her equally possible negation or realization. Similarly, Mansie is conscious of being in an existential dilemma at the same time he is aware of being in a tram.

The tram's position at the nexus of annihilation and transcendence is directly linked with the stories of Tom and Mansie. Each of the brothers embodies the tram's signification of annihilation and of transcendence respectively. Tom is struck by the vehicle, falls into the city's 'quagmire' and is subsequently diagnosed with a tumour. Thus, even while alive, he is a symbol of non-being. Tom's fall precipitates a lapse into unconsciousness and thus his consciousness is no longer part of the narrative, and either Mansie's or Muir's takes over. Mansie's moments of epiphany in trams associate him with the transcendental implications of the vehicle. Through most of the novel the two polarities remain irreconcilable. The sexual jealousy that precipitates the novel's action also signifies a rift between the brothers — when Tom discovers Mansie is seeing Helen he moves out of their shared room. In their representation as a divided whole they become *doppelgängers*. The antagonism and interdependence between the two are explored as Mansie searches for an ideal brotherhood that will enable unification. His self-identification by way of placement in a social context relates back to the complication of transcendence referred to near the start of this chapter. The individual is a transcendent and unique identity, but seeks this personal sense of identity by way of his or her association with a social group. Before moving to an analysis of Mansie's quest for this transcendence, it is important to acknowledge that his filial severance signifies a moment of transformation. It is a preliminary gesture that precedes movement beyond the thresholds of physical and metaphysical extremes and is necessary in order to achieve reconciliation and unity.

The idea of a threshold between the two states represented by each brother is represented by the shared ground of home. The surname Manson, of course, connotes the house or home in 'manse', '*maison*', or 'mansion'. The house, according to the phenomenology of Gaston Bachelard, is 'our first universe, a real cosmos', and the place in which an individual should feel most 'at home'.[17] Yet both Tom and Mansie exist in a state of unease with notions of home. The tumour in Tom's brain is described as entering his body as a traveller looking for rest might enter a house:

> The moving figure turns up the path that leads to the watcher's door . . . at last the visitor's shadow falls across the threshold stone; the householder's body stiffens for a moment, but then he sits down on a chair and stares at the clear swathe of light falling uninterruptedly now across the doorway. (p. 213)

For Mansie, Tom's presence makes home disturbing. As Tom's illness worsens he increasingly comes to embody non-being and perverse self-destruction, and symbolizes all that Mansie is most afraid of in himself. Like Tom, Mansie's sense of the unhomely is implicated with liminality, symbolized by the protagonist's encounter with a threshold between home and the outside world. When it becomes clear that Tom's illness may be fatal, Mansie feels guilty and confused, and consequently he is afraid of returning home after his day at work. Upon seeing the tram that portends his passage to the place he dreads, he feels anxious at the inevitability of boarding it: 'He would have to take that tramcar some time; he couldn't put it off indefinitely!' (p. 131). Finally embarking, he spends the journey mentally projecting the moment in which he enters the house and suffers self-dissolution: 'a sensation of simultaneous collapse, as if everything within him were loosened and falling, and he himself were being precipitated through the solid stone landing where he stood' (p. 133). Indeed, once at the actual entrance of the house, at the brink of home and self, he suffers self-division:

> Half of him was still out in the street . . . — to force this half of him to coalesce with the other which was about to walk resolutely into the close and up the stairs, was a task for which he had to summon all his strength. (p. 135)

The dizzy feeling that accompanies the dissolution imagined in the tram does not eventuate in reality: 'the sensation of sinking through the floor did not come; he had paid that debt in the tramcar' (p. 136). Unlike Tom, Mansie is willing to consciously engage with the tram, and therein lies its transcendental potential. Inside the vehicle, Mansie is able to imaginatively pre-enact a real situation through which liminal movement is prefigured. Mansie is able to move over the real threshold because he has already suffered the collapse of the self in the act of breaking through: 'now his mind was strangely clear, so that when he inserted the key in the lock . . . his act seemed a purely intellectual one' (p. 137). By way of the imaginative experience afforded by the tram, Mansie is able to breach the threshold without the harm to the self that Tom has suffered in his experience of the threshold of self and home.

Mansie experiences three major revelations on a tram. The first of these (in chapter eleven) begins when he recalls his epiphany upon hearing a socialist speech at a recent May Day procession:

> It was as though he had stepped out of a confused and distracted zone into calm and safety . . . everything was transfigured: . . . all substance transmuted in this transmutation of everything into rhythmical motion and sound. He was not now an isolated human being walking with other isolated human beings from a definite place to a definite place, but part of a perfect rhythm which had arisen. (pp. 102-104)

In this, Mansie's initial encounter with socialism, he finds a sense of meaning that fills the emptiness of the city and of himself. He transcends his self and the space in which he moves, and finds unity in a socially defined shared identity. He attains a sense of security only in the crowd:

> He was in the last line of the procession, so that the threatening world yawned at his very heels; but when a new contingent . . . marched up and stationed itself behind him his security became perfect; he was embedded in fold after fold of security. (p. 102)

Mansie's idealization of such an identity lends it cosmic proportions. This view of socialism is as an agent of purification, in which the filthy 'quagmire' of the city and of humanity is transmuted into an essential truth where 'silence and speech', good and evil, are reconciled. This being so, Mansie feels he is unified with the filth of the slums and their people, because he no longer perceives any differentiation between himself and his society. Over the next few days, however, his exaltation 'gradually ooze[s] out of him' (p. 109). The immensity of the transcendent self diminishes: Mansie 'returned to a more comfortable size' (p. 109). The deflation proves, in fact, to be 'an undeniable relief' (p. 109). For Mansie, transcendence cannot be maintained, its expansiveness is undesirable. The very physical imagery that couches this 'oozing' away of Mansie's epiphany is reminiscent not only of liquid mud, but also suggests sexual matters. Thus for Mansie's meticulous character, transcendence is perverse. Sexual climax is linked to, but distinct from, Mansie's notions of transcendence and spirituality. The 'real' is unable to assimilate the 'beyond', thus the self must fall back into the impurity of mere 'existence' rather than perpetuate the transcendental self. Mansie finds the transcendent self unsettling and strange, yet in moving back into the old self, a residue of his experience remains, leaving, he notices, a post-coital depression: 'a sort of empty feeling somewhere' (p. 109). On the tram, reminiscing over the event, the negation of the illumination becomes absolute. Mansie feels that he '[a]lmost made a complete ass of himself' (p. 110), and seeks to remove the embarrassment from his consciousness. It is this sense of embarrassment that links Mansie's personal and sexual feelings to an incident in childhood. The novel itself is circumspect as to the exact nature of this event, although the implication is that it is sexual. Such coyness is a problem for Mansie, but perhaps it is even more so for Muir. Aware of the similar feelings evoked by his epiphany and his childhood memory, Mansie 'pitilessly repressed' each. Now his experience of transcendence is coloured with 'not only a shadow of perversity, but even something of the disgrace of impotence' (p. 112). Through his instinctive repression, Mansie is unable to disassociate 'innocence with vice, universal love with sexual perversity' (p. 112). Any flash of positive transcendence is going to be negated with its transgressive opposite, which is the negative epiphany Mansie undergoes in the tram.

Following his first experience of transcendence and its negation, Mansie's reassimilation into everyday life is uneasy. In the knowledge of his own impurity and impotence before the mechanisms of the cosmos, he walks a crepuscular existence through the streets of Glasgow: 'he wandered down Hope Street. It was deserted . . . . Mansie's own anxiety stirred somewhere, threatened to awaken, then sank again. He walked on in the chasm of shadow between the tall buildings' (p. 131). Although Hope Street is an actual street in Glasgow, it is also highly symbolic for Mansie: the city, which had once provided 'Hope', is now emptied of it. This inevitably and emphatically recalls Dante's 'leave all hope behind, you who enter' on the gates of the Inferno and evokes the traditional allegorization of the city as Hell. The soaring height of the buildings draws the eye upward to a sense of transcendence, yet the feeling is unable to be sustained by Mansie, who is trapped in the dark limbo of a failed faith. Thus he remains in the subterranean realm of the repressed self and his own limitations.

In Mansie's city of shadows the co-existence of the real and the unreal find its fullest expression as he travels on a tram over Jamaica Bridge, which induces his second realization (in chapter fourteen). The interplay between the tram, the bridge, and the river is described as a type of fantastic interlude:

> He was awakened by a sudden brilliance; the passengers looked like a glorified company dizzily charging though seas of light: the tramcar was crossing the Jamaica Bridge and the rays of the westering sun showered over it. He looked at the Clyde winding eastwards in radiance, and saw down in the river a fantastically elongated shadow car with a cargo of spectral and aqueous passengers. (p. 133)

One conventional symbolic function of the bridge is to span the seen and unseen, the real and the unreal, the worlds of perception and of being. In this passage, the vertigo that marks the inter-boundary zone, or the collapse of boundaries, is prefigured by Mansie's sensation in the tram, immediately prior to this passage, 'of simultaneous collapse, as if everything within him were loosened and falling' (pp. 132-133). The sheer height of the bridge itself, implied in Mansie's glance 'down', also induces a vertiginous effect. Mansie's sense of self, and the space which delineates it, are both destabilized in an other-worldly moment. His selfhood loses definition and ceases to function within a single spatial arrangement; perceived on the bridge, and in its reflection in the water, self and space are shown to be simultaneously real and unreal. This revelationary manifestation of the un-real into the world of the real is soon degraded, however. In the brilliance of the sun, the tram appears as a 'moving shadow', connoting the necessary obverse of illumination. This is the state of Mansie's despair, trapped as he is between realization and fear. Muir's scene here recalls one described twelve years earlier by Catherine Carswell in *Open the Door!* (1920). At the beginning of Carswell's novel, the protagonist, Joanna, crosses Jamaica Bridge on a train, just as the sun is coming out. She looks down and sees a number of boats and ships on the river:

> This picture, cut into sections and made brilliant by the interposing trellis of black metal, appealed not so much to the little girl's untrained eye, as symbolically through her eye to her heart which leapt in response. The sunshine on that outgoing vessel and the great, glistening current of brown water filled her with painful yet exquisite longings.[18]

This passage is cited by Glenda Norquay in her essay on Carswell's use of the metaphor of 'breaking through' in *Open the Door!* Norquay notes that the crossing of the bridge 'marks a desire for change and movement, but the nature and source of such fulfilment are unclear'. Furthermore, she continues, the crossing signals 'a transition from the solid and detailed realism with which the family's departure from the railway station had been described, into an epiphanic moment characteristic of modernism'.[19] In *Poor Tom,* Mansie's vision is not framed by the metal trellis, and the 'ships' are not solid, but spectral. Unlike Joanna's ships, which connote existential and sexual freedom, Mansie's vessel is merely the insubstantial reflection of a tram that does not leave the city, but endlessly circles it.

Both Carswell's and Muir's versions of this scene are marked by the presence of an 'other'. For Joanna it is the anomalous figure of a negro on one of the ships, hinting of geographic and erotic exoticism. For Mansie, however, the figure is much more urban, more typically Glaswegian, and more indicative of an absence of epiphany. As Mansie's tram reaches the far side of the bridge, he notices that the place where a particular beggar usually stands is empty. The outcast is a totem of fear for Mansie, having only a cavity where his nose should be: '"Eaten away," the words came into Mansie's head' (p. 133). The image recalls Wordsworth's beggar in the crowded and miserable city of *The Prelude* (1805). With his 'fixed face and sightless eyes', he is a symbol of human suffering. In *Poor Tom*, Mansie despises the beggar's loss and the uncanny feeling it gives. His discomfort stems from his self-association with the beggar's symbolic representation — as Mansie will later point out, the noseless beggar is like 'a household of the dying' (p. 228). Both the beggar and his own household have been 'cast off by the universal process itself, a stone unworthy of the builder of the world' (p. 228). Thus the image of the beggar does not evoke in Mansie a sense of fellowship in pity or in compassion, but just the opposite.[20]

Mansie's vagrant evokes a world from behind the surface of the real just as Wordsworth's beggar caused the poet to feel: 'As if admonished from another world'.[21] This sense that there exists a realm of the soul behind the eyes of an ephemeral 'other' recurs later in *Poor Tom*. Having gone out of the city, Mansie encounters a horse in a field whose eyes hint of another world:

> He seemed on the point of falling into another abyss, not of terror this time, but of pure strangeness. For unimaginable things radiated from the horse's eyes; it seemed to be looking at him from another world which lay like a hidden kingdom round it, and in that world it might be anything. (p. 172)

The clarity of Mansie's encounter seems direct and immediate, but it precipitates a vertiginous rush of associated images that appear with increasing rapidity and density, and thus complicate the encounter. The chain of associations that is precipitated now links the 'hidden kingdom' with Calvinism. When Mansie finds a picture of John Knox, 'the long face, still more elongated by the wiry, animal-looking beard, transported him to that field again' (p. 173). In the next sentence, Mansie is projected to a place in Glasgow a few years later, where he is to be found looking at Michaelangelo's bust of Moses, illuminated from behind the dark shop window by the light of a passing tram. This makes him think of the devilish aspect of the elongated face, with 'two funny little horns' (p. 174). Yet, he remarks: 'the Reverend John [Knox] thought a lot of him [Michaelangelo], so he must have been a Christian' (p. 174). Mansie thus conflates Knox, Michaelangelo and Moses in a line that takes him from an immediate and impressive weight of Calvinistic religion, through a sublime artistic figure and on to a semi-mythical representation of Christianity. Mansie's associations then veer sideways into the realm of literature. He recalls an edition of Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, in which had been 'a very queer picture, "The King of the Hou-" something or other, it was called, and it showed a horse sitting on a throne with a crowd of naked shivering people before it' (p. 174). The horse clearly relates to Mansie's encounter in the field where, upon looking at the horse, he could not help but think of 'the kingly judge' (p. 172). The image of the horse evokes notions of inhuman monstrosity in an almost surrealistic manner. The effect is surreal, yet Mansie's link between the horse, the mud, religious worship and the image of a horse in *Gulliver's Travels*, comes, in fact, from Muir's real experiences as a young child, which he later describes in *An Autobiography*.[22]

The densely configured imagery effects a clear similarity between the overbearingly judgemental Knox and the throned horse, in Mansie's view. Through this association, the human condition is viewed as one of degradation. Like *King Lear*'s naked and shivering wretch — the character of Poor Tom, from whom Muir's novel takes its title — Tom Manson appears as the archetypal urban man insofar as he is a symbol of human degradation. The imagery could be confusing, and reflects the difficulty Mansie has in assimilating and organising sequentially the images that lead him to these thoughts. Muir seems to be using Mansie to bring together a number of ideas that appear to drive toward a particular, if loosely constructed, point. Earlier, Mansie has described the dirty streets: 'The pavement was coated with a thick layer of liquid mud, into which one's feet sank with a humiliating feeling of discomfort and shame. A frightening place Glasgow' (pp. 143-144). The degraded state is precisely that of Muir's Poor Tom — both *Poor Tom*, and poor Tom Manson, the character. The mud is symbolic of Knox because it refers to the degradation of 'Fallen' man, or the non-Elect that is explicitly part of Calvinist theology.

Knox is associated with the King of the fictional Houyhnhnms: both from symbolically 'enthroned' positions maintain critiques of romantic and sexual behaviour (recalling Mansie's sexual repression). This also must bring to mind the excremental imagery of Swift's satire. Moreover, Knox's image suggests that of the almost Satanic depiction of the equine Moses. And finally, these images coalesce in that of the horse Mansie encounters in the field, looking threateningly out from 'a hidden kingdom'. Thus Glaswegian humanity is debased by the polluted and evil mire of Calvinism in which it is steeped.

In Muir's Glasgow, institutionalized Christianity is deemed an antiquated and rotting faith. The church is debased into a public lavatory for the city's most despised inhabitants:

> Its grimy walls had the look of many city churches; as though they had been defiled by innumerable passing dogs, or by a long succession of drunken men overcome by need and pathetically willing to find any wall a urinal. (p. 244)

Mansie's personal rejection of religion is shown by his violent reaction to the horse that evokes it, and Muir himself places special meaning upon the image of the horse. In Muir's early poem 'Horses' (1925), for example, the animals are depicted as both terrifying and fascinating, described as 'mute ecstatic monsters' whose eyes 'Gleamed with a cruel apocalyptic sight'.[23] Mansie's flight from this destructive vision in *Poor Tom* is not only a rejection of Calvinism, it is a denial of the redemptive possibility of nature. For Muir at this time, struggling to come to terms with the city, the rural ideal fails to provide an antidote to the modern urban condition. However, it is worth noting that in Muir's later, and perhaps best known poem, 'The Horses' (1956), the animals have come to appear 'as if they had come from their own Eden', and symbolize resurrection rather than destruction: 'their coming our beginning'.[24] The vagueness of Alan Bold's description of their symbolic expression of 'the wholeness of reality and vision'[25] is prompted by the idealization with which Muir sees them thirty-one years after the publication of *Poor Tom*. Nevertheless, in

*Poor Tom* Mansie casts away the horse, and thus the religious and the pastoral, with curses, sticks and stones.

Having rejected these, however, a vacuum is opened up. It is the 'abyss' Muir has already described, which lies behind both the conscious self and the city. In chapter nineteen, Muir disengages himself from the fictional aspect of the novel in order to expound his philosophy regarding this void. The Nietzschean questioning: '*Warum? Wofür? Wodurch? Wo? Wie?*' (p. 185) of the chapter's epigraph is followed by Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, with the question: 'Is it not folly to go on living?'[26] Nietzsche's resounding 'Yes', however, is not reached by Muir in *Poor Tom*. By way of Muir's image of the blind beggar, he alludes to a similar questioning made by Wordsworth's speaker in the London section of *The Prelude*:

> I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
> By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
> Until the Shapes before my eyes became
> A second-sight procession.[27]

The questioning in this poem, as William Sharpe has noted, 'threatens to dissolve the very materiality of the city'. The speaker's 'second-sight' is, in fact, merely a blindness. Such abstract questioning, Sharpe continues, also puts the speaker at ontological risk: 'Distraught by the quintessential enigma of the city and his fellow citizens, the poet senses his own identity unravelling'.[28] Like Wordsworth's, Muir's 'second-sight' does not provide a stabilising ontological insight. He suggests that the modern 'secular transplantation of heaven' (p. 231) is existentially problematic.

In *Poor Tom*, Muir positions his characters at a point at which new urban values overlap with, and replace, traditional values. This idea preoccupies Muir,[29] and he takes it up in his lecture on *The Politics of King Lear*, delivered at the University of Glasgow in 1946. Muir's interest in the politics of *King Lear* plays a large part in *Poor Tom*. In his lecture he suggests that Shakespeare's play is predominantly concerned with 'the mythical drama of the transmutation of civilization' in which 'the old generation and the new are set face to face'.[30] In *Poor Tom*, a similar 'mythical drama' is enacted in which the civilization of the society depicted in the novel requires to be transformed. In the philosophy of chapter nineteen, Muir initially recommends that a socialist society will transform a Calvinist one. Muir's 'Why' of religion: 'must conduct us to the definite end of its seeking' (p. 187). By contrast, the 'How' of socialism: 'leads on and on through the endless mutations of endless appearance' (p. 187). For Muir, as Mansie demonstrates, a desire for transcendence in a world where, by a sudden leap, the 'How' replaces the 'Why', sees socialism contemplated with old religious emotions. To Muir's mind, however, socialism is not spiritual. Its emphasis is on a material world and therefore it cannot replace religious needs. Consequently the expanse of 'infinity' that this epistemological questioning opens up, begins to close in:

> Infinity itself . . . begins . . . walling and roofing him in; and though it surrounds him at an inimaginable [*sic*] distance, sometimes it seems uncomfortably immediate . . . so he may run slap into it one day at the corner of a street. (p. 187)

Muir's lines predate a similar expression made by Albert Camus, ten years later, in *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). In Camus's chapter, 'Absurd Walls', (reminiscent of the 'arbitrary walls' Muir's characters experience in Blackness and Glasgow), he describes a meaningless metaphysical universe: 'At any street corner the feeling of absurdity can strike any man in the face'.[31] For Camus, this collision with the epistemological space opened up in the questioning of existence is ultimately positive, in the manner of a Nietzschean yea-saying, in which a realization of the absurd signifies an awakening of the self:

> Great works are often born on a street-corner . . . . So it is with absurdity. . . . Rising, tram, four hours in the office or factory, meal, tram, four hours of work, meal, sleep . . . this path is easily followed most of the time. But one day the 'why' arises and everything begins in that weariness tinged with amazement. . . . It awakens consciousness. . . . [E]verything begins with consciousness and nothing is worth anything except through it.[32]

For Muir's character, however, a collision with the void, represented by a Glaswegian street and tram, cannot facilitate a positive 'recovery': '[it] is a momentarily annihilating experience' (pp. 187-188). Thus, he fills the void by reverting to an old, cosmological notion of self that seeks reconciliation (rather than Camus's rebellion) with the universe, but a despiritualized, dogmatic universe:

> Am I really here? Am I at all? . . . [H]e hastens to put something between him and an infinity that is annulling him . . . He seeks a How that will fill the cosmos, a How so great that it almost seems a Why: he embraces the universal process itself, although, accepting the jargon of his age, he may merely call it evolution. (p. 188)

Muir's notion of a collision with the infinite brings him back to the fiction, recalling as it does Tom's tram accident. Tom's existence is annulled and Mansie takes over the search for a faith with which he can fill the vacuum.

When Tom dies, near the end of the novel, it alleviates Mansie's sense of physical and metaphysical constriction and fracture imposed on him by the city. The 'arbitrary' passages and alleys that have delineated Tom's ever narrowing terms of existence suddenly fall away and Mansie himself experiences a feeling of expansiveness that provides a sense of universal destiny:

> The walls had receded, and soundlessly a vast and perfect circle . . . had closed, and he stood within it. He did not know what it was that he divined and bowed down before: everlasting and perfect order, the eternal destiny of all men, the immortality of the soul; he could not have given utterance to it, although it was so clear and certain. (p. 252)

Paradoxically, when the walls 'recede', the vastness revealed is not a terrifying infinity, but is unified and 'closed'. Also paradoxically, Mansie only achieves the sense of 'universal' brotherhood he seeks at the moment his familial brother dies. Laid out before Mansie, Tom represents the most abject, yet most important signifier of an unseen realm. Now a corpse, he embodies the fullest expression of an encroachment of the un-real upon reality with the profundity of universal 'destiny'. It appears that Mansie's idealized brotherhood can only be achieved by accepting, rather than suppressing or transmuting, the impure, the unclean and the painful, imposed by Calvinistic and socialist dogma.

To Mansie's (and Muir's) mind, both Calvinism and socialism fail because they refuse to confront unpleasant or transgressive matters. The heritage of Calvinism, proclaiming that man is inherently evil, had caused Mansie to repress the impure and deplore it in others. In socialism he had sought a purification arising 'from man's need to rid himself of his uncleanness, the effluvia of his body and the dark thoughts of his mind' (pp. 190-191). But this had merely been a perpetuation of Calvinist belief. For Mansie, Calvinist and socialist doctrines are incapable of allowing transcendence from the existential urban condition, as both contain 'a dogma of reprobation' (p. 233). Mansie recalls Knox's words which he finds he can apply equally well to socialism: 'you are lost "by a just and irreprehensible, but incomprehensible, judgement"' (p. 233), which is based on the notion 'of some form of predestination, involving election and damnation' (p. 234). In both socialism and Calvinism, the material world is insurmountable, and transcendence would leave it 'barren'. Neither religious nor political perspectives can deny the physical process essential to fruitful blossoming, beautiful vision and by extension, rejuvenation and resurrection: 'for without the digestive tract and the excretory canal how could there be flourishing orchards and fields yellow with corn?' (p. 192). But given Mansie's fastidiousness and his compulsion, as we have seen, to idealize the physical and at the same time recoil from and repress it, the sustainability of his experience of transcendence when Tom dies is questionable. He achieves a sense of universal brotherhood for a moment, but is gravitationally drawn back to the dichotomies of good and evil, purity and impurity, election and damnation.

Mansie's third and final revelation on a tram (in chapter twenty-five) finally seems to attune him with his fellow-passengers:

> He took the first tramcar that came as though it were an ark riding an advancing deluge about to engulf him. And as he sat on the top of the lighted tramcar he felt somewhat as if he were in an ark, felt almost grateful to the other passengers for allowing him to join them, for picking him from the jaws of danger and taking him into this company of decent fellows. Yet he did not speak to the man sitting beside him, for all those up here in this lighted, enclosed, moving chamber were united by a strangely intimate consciousness of one another, and all at once the knowledge came to him: They have all gone through it. (p. 246)

Mansie realizes that it is only by the common experience of death — the only certain human destination — that humans are made equal: 'nothing less than death could erase all wrong and all memory of wrong, leaving the soul free for perfect friendship . . . for which every soul longed' (pp. 252-253). However, and not without warning, Mansie's epiphany here is seriously flawed, and there are two main problems. Firstly, his sense of transcendent brotherhood is rigidly literal — it specifically excludes women. The sexual jealousy that precipitates Tom's demise (he drinks to cope with jealousy, and falls off the tram because he is drinking) and therefore the entire course of the novel is sidestepped. Helen is unmasked as treacherous, like all women to Mansie's mind, and therefore she is a hindrance to transcendence. Mansie's uncharacteristic feeling of closeness with Tom in the bathroom just before his death is due, he says, to the fact that 'this room was the one in the house best suited for heart to heart masculine confession, for talking freely without any risk of being interrupted by women' (p. 196). The issues of sexuality which seem so integral to the novel at its beginning are not resolved. Mansie's continued tendency to repress all sexual matters is implied repeatedly throughout the novel (rather than stated, attesting further to Muir's own problematic stance toward the theme). Eventually Mansie settles for an exclusively masculine definition of brotherhood as the only means of anchoring his own identity.

The second problem with Mansie's final revelation is not in his literalism but in his use of metaphor. His reference to the biblical ark insinuates that, outside of the vehicle, all is evil and therefore damned, while those inside are the Elect and therefore saved. This metaphor thereby implies absolute judgement, which in Mansie's view is a common fault of both Calvinism and socialism. Furthermore, if those inside the 'ark' are saved, they may also be animals. Mansie's twofold view that death unites men, and that men are merely beasts is a strikingly nihilistic realization of brotherhood. Muir makes such negativity more explicit outside of the fiction of *Poor Tom*. In *An Autobiography* Muir refers to a similar, horrible realization experienced on a Glasgow tram:

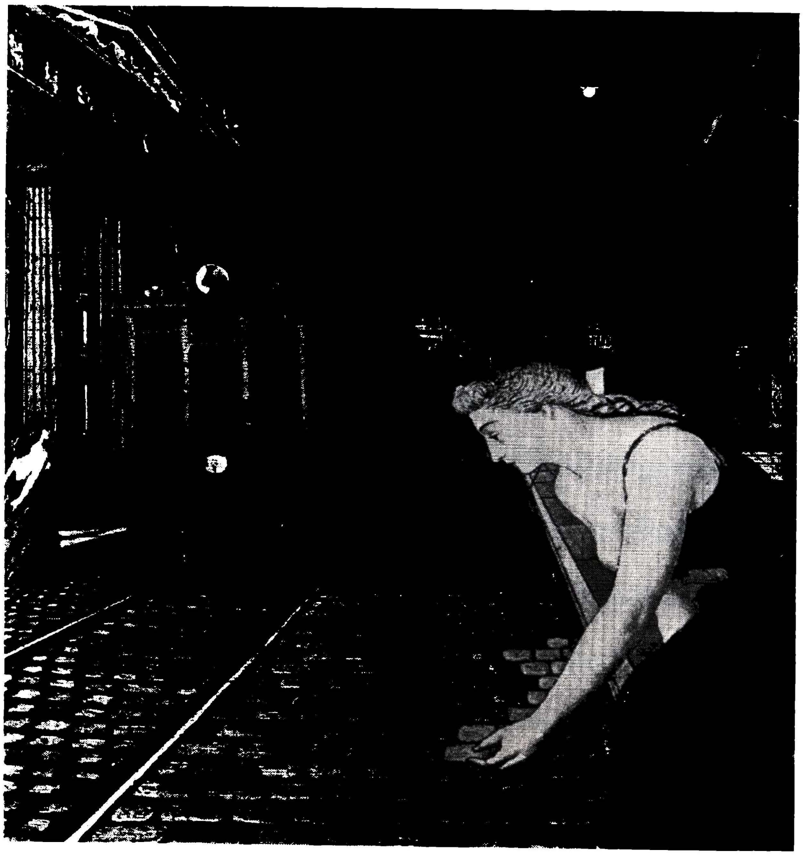
> I was returning in a tram car from my work . . . . Opposite me was sitting a man with a face like a pig's, and as I looked at him in the in the oppressive heat the words came into my

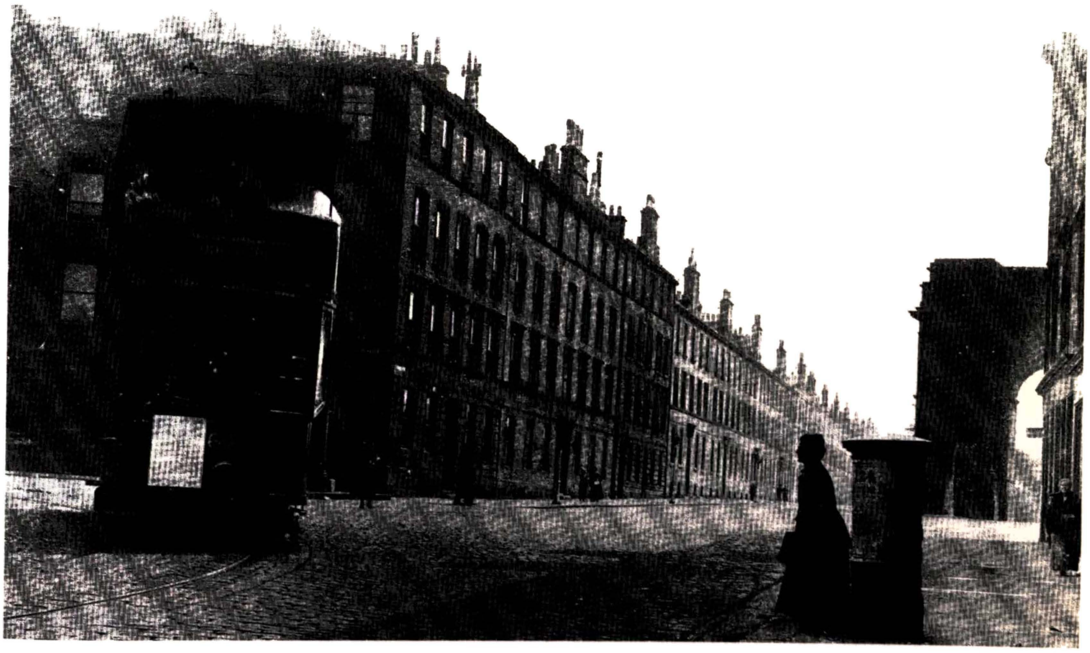
> mind, 'That is an animal.' I looked around me at the other people in the tramcar; I was conscious that something had fallen from them and from me; and with a sense of desolation I saw that they were all animals . . . . The tramcar stopped and went on again, carrying its menagerie; my mind saw countless other tramcars where animals sat or got on or off with mechanical dexterity . . . and I realized that in all Glasgow, in all Scotland, in all the world, there was nothing but millions of such creatures living an animal life and moving towards an animal death as towards a great slaughter house. (p. 52)

Muir's (and Mansie's) degradation of brotherhood from spiritual into animalistic terms finds a precedent in French decadent writer Jean Lorrain's short story 'The Possessed'. Lorrain's narrator blames the trials of modern (urban) life for man's inhumanity. This inhumanity finds its most crystalline manifestation when individuals are thrown into close proximity on a tram:

> Could there possibly exist . . . any more dismal and repugnant spectacle than the passengers on board a tram? . . . Whenever one boards a tram one steps into a bestiary where every base impulse has imprinted its brutal stigmata on the surrounding faces; it is as though one enters a cage where frogs and snakes and all manner of repulsive creatures are together entrapped.[33]

The significance lies in the similarity between Muir's ostensibly realist (and certainly autobiographical) Scottish texts and Lorrain's nineteenth-century French Decadent text, in which, furthermore, the narrator is under the influence of ether. Like the creatures of Lorrain's hallucinatory vision, Muir's humanity is profoundly, transgressively, animal. Muir's humans are repugnant but they are also doomed. Muir later comes to reconcile this fallen state in his autobiography and in his poetry, where he acknowledges the importance of the transgressive (including the animal, as witnessed in 'The Horses') to the transcendental process and the location of 'Eden'. Paul Binding, for example, points out that in Muir's later thought he is convinced that Eden may be recovered: 'but an Eden which will utilise all the energies and experiences of our fallen selves'.[34] In the world of *Poor Tom*, however, there exists no affirmative recourse to a spiritual world (whether mystical, religious or cosmological) beyond the realm of the material city.





Paul Delvaux's surrealist painting, *The Porte Rouge Tramway, Ephesus* (1946), is strikingly similar to this (unrelated) photograph of Glasgow's Monteith Row (*c* 1915). In each of these images, the solid and imposing tram nevertheless affects a sense of eerie unreality.

## Alexander Trocchi, 'The Rum and the Pelican'

The community through which Mansie seeks his own personal identity is dispensed with entirely by the typically solipsistic characters of Trocchi's fiction. Trocchi takes Muir's negated urban brotherhood to its extreme, and the tram becomes, for the narrator of *Young Adam* for example, a symbol of detachment: 'an island of windows' (p. 138). If, in Trocchi's works, there is no sense of community with which to bond, there is, however, an attempt to engender identity by way of a sexual bond. Mansie and Muir are forced to reject that possibility in *Poor Tom* due to the overriding sense of vice and shame associated with sexuality. But almost twenty years after the publication of *Poor Tom*, Trocchi's story 'The Rum and the Pelican' (initially intended as part of a novel) places its outworn antihero, James Fidler, on a bus in order to examine the problematic nature of personal transcendence in a more sexually open urban society. In Fidler's city, desire is inescapably displayed on 6-foot high technicolour billboards. Moreover, where Muir's protagonist had struggled with disparate locations of 'meaning', Trocchi's character does not ask 'why' or 'how'. On the contrary, Fidler is absent-mindedly resigned to his reality and his existence in it.

In an earlier part of Trocchi's intended novel, anthologized by Andrew Murray Scott as 'The Meeting', Fidler's daily bus journeys to and from work are 'an absurdity': 'Each evening he stepped onto a bus which took him to where he had never decided to be'.[35] This notion of predetermination is similar to Muir's representation of the tram, where public transport is controlled by an unspecified driver and signifies a universal pre-destination rather than an individual self-assertion. However, Fidler's sense of self, and the place in which its drama is enacted, are bereft of the spiritual and political terms problematized by Muir. What remains, nevertheless, is the enduring sense of an empty and disappearing self. Scott comments on Trocchi's evident indebtedness in this respect to Joyce and Orwell.[36] Similarly, Muir's interest in socialist politics would have meant that he was familiar with Orwell's work, and his knowledge of Joyce's work is evident from his essay on Joyce included in *Transition*. In addition, Trocchi and Muir both have overt and implicit links with the works of Beckett and Kafka, sharing a common concern with ideas of the displaced self and the corrosion of reality. There are clearly grounds for situating Trocchi and Muir within a broad tradition of alienation in urban literature.

In 'The Rum and the Pelican', Fidler's ageing and decaying body is synonymous with the city in which he is 'born and bred'. The 'varicose constellation behind the knee' is extended to the city: 'whose arteries were fed by a never-ending stream of often stationary tramcars' (p. 87). This paradoxical image ('stream . . . stationary') is reminiscent of James Barke's description, in *Major Operation*, in which the diseased body of the city is evoked by an image of a tram: 'Along the arterial tram lines life flowed sluggishly. The city's heart beat irregularly. But it did beat'.[37] The passive voice of Trocchi's narrator indicates Fidler's own passivity — there is no stirring of revolutionary activity in Fidler's city. The contradictory sense of movement and stasis that is evoked in each of Barke's and Trocchi's descriptions is, in 'The Rum and the Pelican', the central link between Fidler and his city. This city/self relationship is transgressive in two ways. Firstly, the integrity of each is breached in their interchangeability as the city and the body effectively function as the same object. When Fidler looks down at his drooping discoloured physique, for example, his awareness slides down to the carpet, to the door, the hall, and lastly to the street, but in the passage of awareness from self to outside space, 'there is no transition': 'the sound of the late tramcar was there with his foot' (p. 87).

The second mode of transgression is the use of sordid images to make this connection between the body and city. The clogged flow of blood through Fidler's veins and the stilted stream of trams through the city's streets suggest atrophy and stasis within seeming movement: '*It's always the same, things are going from bad to worse*' (p. 87). Both of these transgressive ways of linking the body and the city have in common a reference to the city's trams. This provides an ambiguous prefiguring of the story's later use of the bus as a metaphor for transcendence. As mentioned at the start of this chapter, the tram in the social context that informs Trocchi's story is an outmoded form of transport. The bus may offer a more hopeful possibility of a progressive journey. In 'The Rum and the Pelican', Fidler may not seek to differentiate between the two modes of public transport at all — his lassitude and 'formless' dismay toward the outside world, 'uncoloured by its object' (p. 87), hint at this. In this case, the story's formative images of 'stationary' and 'late' tramcars contradict an assumption that public transport of any kind may signify a dynamic and relevant process of becoming. More literally, buses at this time had negative ramifications too, as we have seen, most notably their insidious threat to absent-minded pedestrians.

The city, and Fidler's existence in it are, he believes, 'excessive'. The mundane irrelevance of place and activity as well as the banal world of advertising are immoderate in terms of their overblown magnitude. Even normal feelings of ennui and irrelevance are magnified so that they are not temporary moods, but actual states. However, Trocchi self-consciously creates a fiction that, no matter how despondent, is always on the point of comic absurdity. Yet he does not relinquish pathos. The incontestable 'thereness' of body, the space in which it moves, and the objects it encounters, are all in a sense, absurd in their superfluity to a metaphysical notion of being, yet tangible in relation to the physicality of 'existence': 'indubitably there, as all theres are there' (p. 87). Fidler seeks recourse in his imagination in order to transform an indubitable yet meaningless reality into existential 'resolution'. For Fidler, 'resolution' is another way of saying transcendence, and it has both a physical and a mental denotation. Physically, it is a sense of solidity against the decaying of his body, and mentally it is an ability to assert his will and decision upon a situation. The means by which Fidler seeks this two-fold 'resolution' is by his imaginative response to the very physical longings of sexual desire. An evening at a bar with Eileen Lanelly, his equally ungainly colleague, provides an actual paradigm for the imaginative encounter he later has on the bus with the inanimate object of his desire. For Fidler, Lanelly's excessive physical presence prompts him to imagine her 'undertable part' (p. 88) during their conversation. He betrays the coyness which has forced him to bolster himself against the real by using his imagination. Within the safety of his own mind, Fidler brings Lanelly into more palpable resolution and, in doing so, seems to solidify himself against the intangibility of his own being and corresponding bodily decay: 'until she, there-ing him as he had her, was morely there, an unguent to the fatigue of his body, rinsing his drains'

(p. 88). Thus, her presence solidifies against his, a 'space-time confederate' is enabled; a configuration in which the meaninglessness of each existence 'was, touching, to become for the future resolved' (p. 88).

The moment of Fidler's 'resolution' is ultimately denied. Fidler's imagination, like his own body which he seeks to transcend, finds itself in tune with the impoverished and exhausted city. The sense of 'resolution' he achieves is not valid because it seems to be made irrespective of his own will: 'resolution was foreign to him, such decisions as he made being . . . somehow already there' (p. 88). On the edge of a decision, Fidler also finds himself at the brink of transition from 'existence' to 'being'. But Fidler is hesitant: 'tilted backwards on a dentist's chair in the shadow of the appalling crane, standing in the palmstrewn foyer of a cinema with a ticket between his forefinger and thumb' (p. 88). Unable to move beyond the transitional moment, seen in these instances in spatial terms, he can only move to and fro in the indeterminacy of *irresolution*: 'Undoubtedly, in ebb, in flow, in procession and recession, in inoculation and pollution, his life was fortuitous: go out, go in, a bus, a shop' (p. 89). Fidler's movement back and forth recalls his earlier images of proliferating yet immobile trams, and this mention of a bus links the two modes of public transport with the existential state of the protagonist.

The bus, as a transitional space in 'ebb and flow' between destinations, is an appropriate place for Fidler to achieve an awareness of himself. When Fidler sets out to catch the bus his consciousness is emptied of thought and he does not even register his surroundings. The only objects that are apparent to him are the bus stop and a hedge beside it, 'which gently in the ensuing vacuum were there' (p. 89). The sharp focus of the bus stop prefigures the existential significance of the bus itself. When the bus arrives Fidler climbs aboard and ascends to the top deck. Upon doing so, the vacuity and flux of normal perception suddenly clarify and harden into meaning:

> The purposelessness of that ascent occurred to him . . . . But before he reached the top deck he was conscious of the familiar cognitive shrinkage, of the familiar sclerosis in his mental processes, and as soon as his eyes were level with the

> top deck he found himself more or less exclusively occupied
> in finding if possible a window seat. (p. 90)

The location of a window seat enables the view of the billboard that is the highlight of Fidler's journey and the means to his sense of self-authentication. Of huge proportions, the billboard depicts a negress, half-naked, flexed as she reaches up for a rum bottle in a pelican's beak. The image of the negress, like the negro sailing down the Clyde in Carswell's *Open the Door!,* is an unreachable but tantalizing promise of exotic sexuality. Her placement on a hoarding, however, is reminiscent of the billboard in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1926), on which Dr. T. J. Eckleburg's stare presides over an ash heap and indeed, the entire drama of the novel. The ash heap is described by James E. Miller, Jr. as being derived from Eliot's *Waste Land* and which, 'presided over by the vacant stare of a billboard deity . . . is clearly a scene of a living hell'.[38] Trocchi's wasted city in 'The Rum and the Pelican' is comparable to Fitzgerald's 'waste land', though it is not as sinister. Trocchi's billboard actually provides his character with a sense of the possibility of purpose and fulfilment ,similar to that which Fitzgerald evokes among his characters. However, for Fitzgerald's characters the billboard's image does not relinquish any transcendental possibilities and their lives remain essentially tragic. For Trocchi's protagonist, in contrast, this possibility of transcendence leads to satiety and surfeit, so that Fidler's tragedy is made absurd.

Fidler's epiphany, such as it is, is achieved by a subjective ritualization of the billboard's image. In this, Fidler's action is more akin to the avant-garde practice described by Ivan Chetcheglov who was, like Trocchi, a member of the politico-artistic group, the Situationist International. In Chetcheglov's 'Formulary for a New Urbanism' (1953), he writes of the avant-gardist strategy to lend transcendental signification to everyday objects and situations: to 'discover mysteries on the sidewalk billboards, the latest state of humor and poetry'.[39] These 'mysteries' can be found in lost or neglected longings, as he states: 'It has become essential to bring about a complete spiritual transformation by bringing to light forgotten desires and by creating entirely new ones. And by carrying out an *intensive propaganda* in favour of these desires'.[40] In 'The Rum and the Pelican', Fidler has indeed found 'spiritual transformation' in Chetcheglov's terms. But he does not wilfully enact 'propaganda' to perpetuate it. Instead he is the victim of a commercial propaganda that deliberately seeks to manipulate his desire by way of an advertising campaign. Fidler ridiculously believes that it is his 'silent and powerful will' that gives the negress her transcendent signification. But he calls her into being through two layers of glass: '[he] trained his eyes through the glass on his nose through the glass of the window to bring into existence the tilted breast' (p. 93). The double layer of glass connotes both the correction and distortion of vision, as well as segregation and protection from the object. Fidler's dichotomous space might be illuminated by way of a comparison with John Davidson's poem,'The Wasp' (1908), in which the wasp of the title is trapped inside a train carriage. It bangs itself against the window that momentarily separates the 'regal' wasp from her 'birthright' to freedom.[41] Fidler, by stark contrast, is a figure who is closer to Trocchi's disparaging description of Nicolas in 'Pages of an Autobiography', who, afraid of female sexuality, is 'a civilised wasp afraid of its own sting'.[42] In Davidson's poem the wasp repeatedly collides with the word 'Smoking' painted on the window. The outline of the word is like a net: 'the letters like a snare entangled her' (ll. 11-12). But the use of the word also anticipates Chetcheglov's transcendental recuperation of banal urban symbols, and for Davidson's speaker, is 'The key to all the mystery' (l. 14). The wasp is drawn to the word and continues to batter against it as a means of breaking through into the outside world. In contrast, and as we have already seen in Fidler's inability to fulfil Chetcheglov's mystification and unravelling of banal urban 'poetry', Fidler does not possess the strength of character required to break through the glass and into the 'freedom' of unmediated sexual territory.

Fidler's 'transformation' is merely fleeting. Moreover, this ephemeral moment is all that Fidler is able to endure: 'having seen almost to excess, he was able to resist a backward glance' (p. 93). Fidler's inability to sustain transcendence is like Mansie's relief at his 'deflation' in *Poor Tom*. Fidler is coy, just as Mansie was. But even though Fidler receives sexual gratification the terms in which this is described are more vague than Mansie's description of his own engorged and 'oozing' identity. The consequence of this for Fidler is problematic considering his hope to achieve a sense of identity by way of a sexual bond. As the image of his desire is lost, the city's prosaic reality impinges once more until Fidler is met 'with the beginning of tenements' (p. 93). The mundane city easily takes over and his mind 'veer[s] irresolutely toward thought' (p. 93). This movement imitates that of the bus, paradoxically reiterating Fidler's inability to control his own mind, and therefore showing the mutual exclusion between his mind and the notion of resolution. Once the transcendent moment is withdrawn the second half of Fidler's journey is 'the antithesis of the first' (p. 94). His mind is now:

> Strung by inner lesions. The magnetic load which yard by yard along the route had built itself up inside him began to dissipate from the moment at which the bus drew away from the traffic signals, and the world, hitherto excluded by the image of the negress, reasserted itself in all particulars. (p. 94)

What 'reasserts' itself most imposingly is the 'amorphous white blob' (p. 94) of Lanelly's imagined body. Her solidity impinges grotesquely into his mind and is projected into the space of the bus: 'the damp and smoke-hung human atmosphere of the bus's upper box, burgeoned and fled to whiteness, fats, white slats of flesh, strung nervously' (p. 96). The horrible sexual palpability of the idea of Lanelly transforms the space of the bus, via Fidler's 'strung' mind, into something monstrous. It is as if, having previously sought his own 'resolution' through the 'thereness' of Lanelly's independent existence, she now intrudes into his mind at precisely the moment when 'resolution' (by way of the exotic image) dissipates. In reasserting itself, Lanelly's image, to Fidler's eye, metamorphoses the enclosed upper deck of the bus into something of a fleshy, sticky vaginal space into which he has been sucked. Lanelly's subsumation of Fidler is paradoxically achieved though his internalization of her, and it ultimately disables him from finding autonomy through any actual, sexual other. The image of the negress reaching for the bottle is a metaphor for the nature of Fidler's transcendence in this story. The essence of the image for Fidler is found in his anticipation of it. Her body is his focus and not the rum bottle in the pelican's beak to which she aspires, and that is in fact the point of the advertisement: 'Fidler was able to discount the bird, and the bottle too' (p. 91). Correspondingly, the negress's body is viewed by Fidler as all the more striking for her effort: 'arms stretched out above her head to grasp or nearly grasp, for her body was all the more beautifully flexed if it evaded her, the rum bottle in the pelican's beak' (p. 91). Unable to feel intellectual or bodily coherence under the crushing weight of Lanelly's sexual presence, Fidler turns to this one stationary object in the city as a way of avoiding self-negation.

The negress's transfixed perfection is an idealization of Fidler's, and the city's, qualities of stasis within seeming movement. This inextricability between Fidler's imagination and body and the city is made by way of the character's evocation of public transport. Images of stalled traffic extend to Fidler's own inability to make a decision and therefore achieve 'resolution'. But the predictable movement of the bus also lets him believe that for a moment, he is exerting his will. This impotence is tragic in Muir's novel but, in 'The Rum and the Pelican', Fidler's misconception is made comic by the discrepancy we perceive between Fidler's sense of self-purpose and his lack of self-knowledge. Such a shortfall reveals the limitations of his existence, epitomized in the space of the bus, which at first enables transcendence *vis-à-vis* the billboard but then becomes a place in which he is smothered. Because Fidler is so bound with the city and with the bus as a means to authentication, his identity can only perpetuate this link. His only sense of potency manifests itself in the ostensibly creative act of perceiving the two-dimensional image on the billboard. But the negress's very public eroticism is a commercially manipulated embodiment of desire, and Fidler's position on a public bus highlights the banality of its excessiveness. When the private and very tangible object of desire, Lanelly, overtakes the security of the bus and engulfs him, it is clear that Fidler's lack of personal delineation, identified so seamlessly as he is with his city, extends to the impossibility of attaining selfhood by way of a personal sexual link.

## James Kelman, *The Busconductor Hines*

In Kelman's first novel, *The Busconductor Hines*, the allegorical function of the bus foregrounds conceptions of free will and control. The novel's protagonist, Robert

Hines, is not merely a passenger on a bus, he is an employee of the Glasgow Department of Transport. In contrast to Muir's position as pastoral outsider and Trocchi's intellectualization of his theme and comic self-consciousness, Kelman's voice is of the working-class. Just as Muir's protagonist seeks an identification with the 'brotherhood' of his fellow tram-passengers and Trocchi's character desires a sexual union that would validate him, Hines seeks an autonomous identity by way of an association with a specific group. This group is the company for whom he works. When Kelman speaks from a working-class perspective in *The Busconductor Hines*, it is appropriate that he should situate his protagonist in a position whereby he might take control of his destiny. However, even as an employee, Hines must face a hierarchy of control in which he is lowest. Hines's aim is, on the one hand, to validate himself in terms of this power structure and, on the other, to consider new meaning and value outside of its order.

For Hines, structures of meaning and identification are receding or collapsing around him. He values the familial bond, and couches unity with his wife Sandra and small son Paul in terms of the Holy Trinity and its implications for religious salvation:

> The 3 of them, the trio of persons sir the 1, the unit, that impetus for continued survival viz the bastarn grub in the pot, howsomever it be better known as the loaves and the fishes.[43]

The trinity of Hines's own family, however, is coming apart. Sandra's unhappiness eventually forces her to leave, and Paul is a distant and quiet child. Survival in familial terms is undermined further when Hines challenges the religious structure on which it is based. He is the father of the 'unit', yet he does not believe in the existence of a Father: 'A good genuine atheist's got no fucking chance in this grey but gold bundle of shite of a fucking city' (p. 40). God is dead; the Trinity is disunited. Hines's crumbling identity is represented by the material disintegration of his tenement flat. The 'continued survival' of Hines's home, like himself, is poised threateningly on the verge of collapse. Just as the inside of his head is, he says, 'filled with the black' (p. 104), the building is packed in filth. Little more than a midden, the tenement is condemned, yet final destruction does not come. Filth seems to hold the structure together on an eternally sustainable scale:

> A century's rodent shit plus the decayed corpses all lying wedged here there and everyfuckingwhere no doubt supplying sustenance by christ to lesser mites so that springing to life the rising generations and even evolution for fuck sake what next. (p. 80)

Through this representation of the tenement flat, at once disintegrating and renewing itself, Hines locates a problem 'of an apparently insurmountable nature' (p. 81). If the flat is demolished Hines and his family can move to a bigger and cleaner place, however, he remains 'watching and waiting' for an inevitability that nevertheless does not eventuate. Thus, Hines is caught in an impasse in which time is undifferentiated: 'this problem about the house . . . [is that] the immediate past is not only today but also tomorrow' (p. 81). His problem evokes the Nietzschean conception of the eternal recurrence.[44] As Nietzsche's prophet, Zarathustra,declares: 'the same house of existence builds itself for ever'.[45]

Hines principally identifies himself as a busconductor. The job entails travelling around the city in an endless circuit, so it is appropriate that it should evoke the notion of eternal recurrence. Hines's identity is almost synonymous with his job and he is rarely out of uniform, even at home. Although he tries to leave on two occasions, each time he returns and is reinstated to his position. Cairns Craig suggests, in 'Resisting Arrest', that Hines's job as a busconductor exclusively confines him to a temporal world:

> Hines lives only in the world of time . . . . The Busconductor is the time-keeper of the world's journeys . . . an emblem of modernity: a world structured by endless, restless travel, an existence dominated by time.[46]

A notion of time wasted is certainly central to this rebellious, failed 'time-keeper'. Due to Hines's perennial lateness, time becomes irrelevant. Not only is he always late, the problem is, he emphasizes, that *it* is 'too late it is too late, too fucking late, it is too fucking late' (p. 98). Thus Hines relinquishes his struggle with time — if he is late he does not care, time is beyond him and the eternal recurrence opens out. R. J. Hollingdale summarizes Nietzsche's doctrine:

> If everything is eternally repeated, then there is no purpose or end in existence . . . The concept of purpose becomes meaningless. But the opposite conception is invested with infinite meaning: not what I *do* — my purpose — but what I *am* — my state of being — is what counts for me.[47]

The Busconductor Hines had once aspired to be promoted to driver: 'all I wanted to be was a fucking the Busdriver Hines' (p. 64). However, due to his bad timekeeping he jeopardizes his chance of achieving this purpose: 'there is now no hope of his ever becoming a busdriver' (p. 80). Hines's 'state of being' is elucidated in terms of his placement inside the space of the bus. For Kelman, this is specifically a working-class position:

> One of the more fascinating aspects of the lower orders is their peculiar ideas on time and motion. This used to always be being exemplified by the Busconductor Hines. He had assumed the world as a State of Flux. All things aboard the world are constantly on the move. Ding ding. Being an object aboard the world I am indeed on the go. (p. 86)

Through the figure of Hines, Kelman combines Muir's tragic vision and pathos with Trocchi's comic absurdity. The blending of these tones suggests a possibility of the recuperation of banality into meaningful existence, however precariously this is depicted.

Hines's mode of working-class existence is depicted through his connections and conflicts with the city's spaces. In this respect he fulfils Nietzsche's image of the individual as a 'bridge', as Zarathustra describes: '[as a] dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back . . . . What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal'.[48] Hines's precarious spatial configuration of becoming is precedented by John Davidson's 'white collar' protagonist in 'Thirty Bob a Week'. In this poem, the speaker explains that the endless drudgery of a subsistence existence is intolerable, like 'walking a string across a gulf / With millstones fore-and-aft about your neck'.[49] In *The Busconductor Hines*, awareness does not guarantee survival on a dangerous road:

> Dogs . . . cross the busiest thoroughfares in a fine trusting manner, trotting quite the thing as though the space in which they occupy is bound to stay constant. Not so the cats. They know fine well there is no such thing as constant space and off they scud in the surefire knowledge the course they have chosen is 90% guaranteed to fail. (p. 159)

Hines's inescapable identification as a busconductor allows him two possibilities of movement through the city. He can choose to stay on the linear route of the bus, or he can defy this and strike out across the areas unchartered by the bus. In Muir's *Poor Tom*, the tram's path signifies a notion of predetermination and in Trocchi's 'The Rum and the Pelican', Fidler's belief that he has control of the bus is clearly misguided. In a similar vein, Hines admits that the unswerving trajectory of the bus alleviates the need for will: 'It has never been acutely necessary to think. Hines can board the bus and all will transpire. Nor does he have to explain to a driver how the bus is to be manoeuvred. . . . Of its own accord comes everything' (p. 154). Yet once chosen, the route exerts its tyranny. When Hines alights from the bus on one occasion to buy a packet of tissues, he is admonished by an Inspector, who warns: 'Under no circumstances is a conductor allowed to leave his bus' (p. 77).

Hines rebels by abandoning his bus and thus he defies the 'ultimates' associated with its journey. On one occasion he leaves the vehicle and goes by foot to the 'sylvan setting' where his parents live. This leafy, familial place of childhood offers no security, however, and Hines's unease is caused by a feeling that he has been forced to resort to a realm beyond the limits of his identity: 'Forces were pushing him. The uniformed employees and mechanics, the blacksquad — even the office fuckers; they were all in unspoken league, edging him onto the brink and beyond' (p. 118). The limitlessness of open space disconcerts Hines, so that his recurring dream of a second goal, of emigration to Australia, is unfeasible. In this dream of escape, he anticipates the freedom of an 'open outlook, bright scapes; where one can stand on one's tiptoes and glimpse at a stretch' (p. 94). Glasgow, by contrast, denies such expansiveness. The city offers only a degenerated version afforded by a bus window: 'one can be lucky to get glimpsing such a thing from the topdeck of an omnibus' (p. 94). An antipodean promise of emancipation, however, carries with it a threat of annihilation: 'the wild blue yonder could be vanished into' (p. 94). This prospect of disappearance causes Hines the same disquietude at the thought of leaving his job: 'after that: infinity. Measureless space' (p. 140). Radical movement away from the bus' circuit signifies non-existence in the terms in which he defines himself. Unable to reconcile himself to an unwilled and restrictive existence or to a chosen and expansive one, his ceaseless flux through the city remains meaningless.

Hines continues to strive for a sense of meaning delineated by the bus route, but without the goals: 'the A going to B', that it implies. He proposes that the goal for which he strives may actually lie 'in between the lines while the lines themselves are the striving . . . the goal lies in between' (p. 97). Yet, trapped in this configuration by economic necessity, the 'in between' relinquishes no meaning in regard to identity. Kelman himself says of his character: 'Hines doesn't have any choice. He's not . . . on the buses because he *wants* to be on the buses'.[50] As Hines concedes in his narrative: 'in between no longer exist in any scheme of the world that Hines, that he might be said to be participating within, in any intentional sense' (p. 99). Unable to implement free will, Hines is unable to engender the Nietzschean Superman. Hollingdale has noted that, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'Nietzsche's insistence on the importance of the *moment* corresponds to his insistence upon the importance of the *individual*. In both, the concept of purpose is refuted . . . every moment is an eternity, and every individual must become God'.[51] Hines's loss of sovereignty when his family 'trio' disintegrates may be recuperated by an implementation of a Nietzschean 'will to power'. When Zarathustra describes the conception of the Superman, it is an identity that is, as Hines's own identity is, '[a] struggle and becoming and goal and conflict of goals'.[52] Zarathustra's explanation of the 'will to power' emphasizes that it is the assertion of an individual's power over others to the end of investing new meaning in traditional (religious) conceptions of right and wrong. Nietzsche's prophet says: 'he who has to be a creator in good and evil, truly, has first to be a destroyer and break values'.[53] In *The Busconductor Hines*, Hines makes a first move toward a will to power when he questions the authority of the Glasgow Department of Transport and their prescribed 'values'. When he is called to go to head office in non-paid time, Hines refuses to go. Paradoxically, when he asserts his individual will, he gains solidarity with his group of fellow workers. When Hines is threatened with dismissal his colleagues support his stand and ready themselves to stage a strike. It is significant too, that after Hines's stand, and at the end of the novel, Sandra and Paul are living with him again. Unity is restored and the final picture of the trio eating a fish supper alludes to the earlier reference made to the 'loaves and fishes' and their signification for 'continued survival'. This harmony is precarious, however, as circumstances have not altered. Hines continues to work as a busconductor. Yet, in the final line of his narrative a new emphasis is marked: 'Hines shifted his position, he wiped the condensation from the back window and looked out' (p. 213). Looking back, there is the possibility of transcendence is in Nietzschean terms, voiced by Zarathustra when he exclaims: 'To redeem the past and to transform every "it was" into an "I wanted it thus!" — that alone do I call redemption!'[54]

## Alan Spence, Archie Hind and William McIlvanney

In Kelman's novel Hines's crisis is linked to his self-identification with the bus and his inability to disassociate himself from it. In Trocchi's story the bus allows transcendence even if the transgressive physical aspects of his character's desire immediately make the bus a threatening place. Muir's protagonist achieves an imperfect sense of brotherhood with his fellow passengers, but even then, only upon the death of his real brother. The respective modes of transcendence outlined in these three texts are deflated, negated or restrictive. However, it would not be true to say that each characters' experience of transcendence fails. Rather, they involve some degree of negativity that both enables and problematizes them and, indeed, reflects the inherent contradictions in the notion of 'transcendence' itself. Strongly implied in each of the texts is that, without an encounter with transgression even a degree of authenticity is not possible. One attempt to find a more enduring sense of positivity that does not fall back into the negativity from which it arises can be seen in the last section of Alan Spence's episodic novel *Its Colours They Are Fine* (1977). The incident begins in London, where the narrator has been visiting friends and is deliberating whether or not to return to Glasgow. The journey home concludes with a bus ride through the city, which allies the bus with the negative ontological implications seen in Muir, Trocchi and Kelman. However, Spence suggests a way that negativity may be recuperated into a virtue.

The journey home takes on metaphysical signification as Spence's narrator delineates the dark highway, hedged about with the void, in terms of the human condition: 'No light along the road. Dark night, cold and endless' (p. 199). This 'dark night of the soul' is seen through a Zen Buddhist perspective, through which the dark road is symbolic of Samsara, the universal state of suffering. By seeking recourse to Eastern transcendental philosophy, the narrator transforms non-existence into the essence of existence itself: 'in the very heart of this emptiness came a fullness, a closeness to all things' (p. 194). Thus he locates being, experienced as cosmological unity, in negative modes of emptiness and darkness. However, this recuperation of darkness into spiritual illumination cannot be sustained in Glasgow. When the bus arrives there, it is late at night and the city is dark and deserted. Waiting for a local bus, the narrator is set upon and beaten by a gang of drunk teenagers and only narrowly escapes serious harm. This violent reality recalls stereotypical 'gangland' depictions of Glasgow fiction such as those found in McArthur and Long's seminal *No Mean City* (1935). In Spence's novel, this brutal reality demolishes the narrator's earlier epiphany. Although the narrator describes the city in similar terms of emptiness and darkness in which he had previously found transcendence, the city neutralizes their transcendental possibility. Once on a local bus, the narrator comments: 'I looked out the window at the empty streets, the city asleep. Glasgow. Home. Mental. Pure mad' (p. 203). This view of the city's emptiness, afforded by his view from the bus, is of a city that is 'mad'. As a psychiatric nurse, the narrator says that he subscribes to R. D. Laing's theory that mental illness is a manifestation of ontological and social disunity. Thus in this encounter with the city, being and the void cannot be reconciled.

At the end of the narrator's journey the bus functions allegorically as the 'real' or transgressive locus of negative metaphysical realization, and the link is created through the image of the Glasgow coat of arms. Its motto is painted on the side of Spence's Glasgow bus, just as it precipitates the journey there. Before he leaves London, the narrator, unsure whether to return to Glasgow, takes a volume of haiku poems and opens it at random to guide his decision. The book falls open at the motto that is on the Glasgow coat of arms, which Spence quotes:

> This is the bell that never rang
> This is the fish that never swam
> This is the tree that never grew
> This is the bird that never flew.[55]

Traditionally, the rhyme glosses the miracles performed by Saint Kentigern, the patron saint of Glasgow. According to legend, Kentigern (*c* 530-612) enacted numerous and colourful miracles. The 'bird' of the rhyme comes from Kentigern's healing of a robin, belonging to St Servanus, accidentally decapitated by Servanus's students. The 'tree' of the motto recalls a miracle in which Kentigern sets a bough of hazel ablaze so that the church lamps, extinguished by the students, might be relit. The 'bell' refers to Kentigern's call to his flock, which causes a hill to rise so that they might worship. The 'fish' derives from the most well-known of Kentigern's miracles and tells of Queen Languoreth, the wife of the King of Alclud or Dumbarton, who fell in love with a young soldier. She gave her lover a ring, but when the king saw it on the finger of the soldier as the young man slept by the river Clyde, the king surreptitiously removed it and cast it into the water. When the king returned home, he asked his wife for the ring and imprisoned her when she could not give it to him. Her appeal to Kentigern was successful; he told her to have a salmon caught from the river, and when it was opened the ring was inside.[56] The negativity that seems obvious in the rhyme is, in fact, not negation, but a miracle that saves the heroine. In *Its Colours They are Fine*, the rhyme's apparent inclusion in a collection of haiku is justified, we are told, as it epitomizes that particular Zen-like state of mind which redeems the dark road home: 'Emptiness. Being-in-non-being' (p. 191). The narrator suggests that the coat of arms is a puzzle, or koan, in which this negative state might be realized: 'Like one of those riddles you've got to solve before you can move on towards the Holy Grail, or the Jewel in the Lotus' (p. 227). Spence's interpretation of the motto through the tenets of Zen Buddhism is self-consciously constructed. His insistence that the rhyme is included in R.

H. Blythe's well-known study and translation of haiku verse is, in fact, untrue. Moreover, Spence's version of the rhyme is a muddled one; the sequence he gives — bell, fish, tree, bird — is more usually ordered bird, tree, bell, fish. Spence's distortion of 'fact' appears necessary in order to carry the transcendental weight he gives it. Spence's city is eventually redeemed by the museum's meditating Buddha because transcendental meditation enables the sort of journey the public bus never can. Spence does not allow for a negative vision, despite the ambivalent nature of his narrator's return to Glasgow. His conclusion is equivocal, however, and it both asserts the hard reality of the city and offers talismanic ways of negotiating its terrible fact.

A precedent for the ambivalence of Glasgow's motto comes in Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, in which the rhyme is removed of its mystical signification by the reality of the city it represents. The motto is used paradigmatically and both opens and closes the action of the novel. As was noted in chapter two, the plot traces the attempts made by the protagonist, Mat Craig, to write his magnum opus. His difficulties are both personal and social, and he struggles with feelings of failure in these terms. The motto's use at the start of the novel is hopeful. It is written on the cover of Mat's folder of writing, and symbolizes his hopes in fulfilling the words on the coat-of-arms: 'Lord, Let Glasgow Flourish by the Preaching of the Word' (p. 12). However, Mat is unable to write in a city that is not flourishing. As he learns to confront the material squalor of the city about which he writes, the prospect of a more truthful and appropriate art is made possible. The overturning movement, whereby the heterogenous and the abject are given a possibility of existential and artistic value, culminates in a scene at the end of the novel, where Mat vomits and washes his mouth with water from a well emblazoned with the city's motto. The use of the motto in the novel's final scene ostensibly consolidates the sense of failure its words appear to convey. Yet, as will be explored in a fuller analysis of the novel in chapter six, the final scene also imparts a feeling of epiphany and with it, a sense that past failure may be miraculously redeemed by a realization of the negative.

In *The Dear Green Place*, the religious miracles alluded to by the motto are exotic and the negative form in which they are expressed seems a more appropriate way to couch a theme of transcendence in a secular and bleak city. Exotic images are integral to notions of transcendence in each of Muir's, Trocchi's and Kelman's cities. Muir's pastoral image of the horse in *Poor Tom*, the negress in 'The Rum and the Pelican', and Kelman's recourse to an Australian landscape in *The Busconductor Hines* are all foreign images that are reappropriated in a Scottish city. Their inclusion is not out of place in this context, yet the exotic is shown to portend a destructive as well as a transcendent signification. In a similar way that Lewis Grassic Gibbon represents Glasgow as a malevolent Asiatic goddess who also augurs salvation, the allure of the exotic in the texts discussed in this chapter is not without devastating consequences. In *The Busconductor Hines*, Hines's dream of escape to Australia is merely a projection of a possibility he will never reach, confined as he is to the ceaseless journey of the bus and the degenerated view afforded by its windows. In 'The Rum and the Pelican', Fidler projects transcendent meaning upon the billboard's two-dimensional negress. However, more like a voodoo witch, the negress impinges upon Fidler, as all advertisements do, and turns his mind to the relative threat of Lanelly's fleshy body. In *Poor Tom*, Mansie's encounter with the horse raises notions of religious deliverance. Yet these are negated, and in an urban reality, religion is viewed as an intrusion that degrades and debilitates. In each of these instances, the exotic is brought into the consciousness of the protagonist and destroys him.

There is, however, a less exotic and therefore more tenable location of transcendence to be found within the realm of everyday journeys in the city. It is provided by the image of a queue. The queue is not a construction of exoticism, but is well-known as a particularly British phenomenon. Like a tram or a bus, the queue is a mundane urban image. It can connote the potentially frustrating moment of stasis before the journey itself; a negative connotation that is seen, for example, near the conclusion of *The Busconductor Hines*. There, a line of irate people wait at the mercy of an unreliable and ill-run service:

> Complaints about the time they had been waiting . . . . The first bus to arrive continued on beyond the stop . . . . Those at

> the bus-stop were indignant. . . . Another bus appeared, and behind it another could be seen. More complaints. (p. 229)

An alternative is provided in the final scene of McIlvanney's Glasgow crime thriller, *The Papers of Tony Veitch*. In this scene it is late and raining but, even so, the discordant sounds of a nearby busker have the place 'jumping joyously':

> His jaunty noise was the drunken pulse of the group. People were laughing and shouting . . . a queue by Hogarth. . . . The whole line was a weird, dynamic unity, like a centipede on LSD.
>
> A small, old woman standing behind Laidlaw tapped him on the shoulder. He turned round.
>
> 'Son,' she said, 'This is the best queue I've ever been in in my life.'
>
> Laidlaw was laughing and he elaborately gestured her out of the queue to dance. Watching them jig sedately up and down the pavement, Gus drunkenly thought he was seeing something marvellous, a spirit so determined to enjoy life that it had an aesthetic of queues.[57]

The carnival quality of McIlvanney's queue is not foreign; rather, it is a moment of serendipity. Such an accidental collision of a 'weird' spontaneity and 'bleak' place appears to create a seamless 'dynamic unity'. The queue's spirited dynamism which finally erupts in dance possesses a similar notion of creative and destructive movement that Yeats conveys in the lines: 'O body swayed to music, O brightening glance, / How can we know the dancer from the dance?'[58] Yeats's emphasis on the formality of ostensibly free forms is analogous to McIlvanney's vision, in which, via the medium of form and movement, he associates the mundane and the transcendent. Transcendence is engendered by way of the reality out of which its need arises.

In *The Papers of Tony Veitch*, the cohesive and spontaneous 'drunken pulse of the group' distinguishes it from Kelman's static queue. Viewing the queue, Laidlaw concedes to a feeling of 'home', an ideal sense of place as being local: 'the city wouldn't leave him alone. . . . He felt that maybe this was as near to home as he was going to get, the streets of this place' (p. 253). Laidlaw's colleague, Gus, also experiences an epiphany when he looks at the miraculous unity of the queue's discordant and disparate elements. The detectives' revelations are outcomes of a hallucinatory aesthetic: 'like a centipede on LSD'. McIlvanney's frenzy is not dangerous in the context in which it erupts due to its placement at the end of the novel. All that matters is the expansion of the self and momentary unity that this vision affords between self and environment, and occurring at the novel's conclusion, offers a freeze-frame of harmony. The transformative powers of intoxication to McIlvanney's conjunction of the city and the self is epitomized in the last line of the motto on Glasgow's coat of arms, overlooked in Spence's and Hind's working out of its negative emphasis. According to Fisher's *Glasgow Encyclopedia*, the full rhyme reads:

> Here's the Bird that never flew,
> Here's the Tree that never grew,
> Here's the Bell that never rang,
> Here's the Fish that never swam.
> That's jist the drucken Salmon![59]

The final line is uncanonical, a spirited and transgressive affirmation of the motto. The redemption of the message, and of the queue, is through the transformative powers of drunkenness, despite its possible dangers to self and 'truth'. But, like Baudelaire's exhortation to 'never be sober', the means of intoxication need not be literal, and may be garnered from anything, whether it be poetry or virtue.[60] In the works cited, drunkenness is not necessarily literal, but is a transgressive analogy for an expansion of the consciousness similar to epiphanic experience. It is akin to Walter Benjamin's 'profane illumination' which, he writes, is 'a materialistic, anthropological inspiration, to which hashish, opium, or whatever else can give an introductory lesson'.[61] For Nietzsche, heralding the modernist spirit, this 'lesson' is one of self-responsibility, as Calvin Bedient points out: '[Nietzsche] discovered in all intoxicated states of the soul . . . responsibility to the soul itself'.[62] Yet the earnest nature of Mansie, of Fidler, and of Hines denies the expansive release of the spirit described by Yeats or Nietzsche or McIlvanney. The self-consciousness of each of these former characters suggests an addiction to control that is crippling. Alcohol is a literal and 'realist' means of expansion but it is conspicuously absent or denied: Mansie's fastidious regard for sex illustrates how a loss of self-control is problematic; Fidler is a staid and sober character who drinks but is too self-conscious to be affected; and in the opening pages of *The Busconductor Hines*, Hines and his colleagues are expelled from a pensioners' club because they are drinking. Each protagonist is terminally solipsistic and sober, looking for a unified sense of self in the rigidity of the chartered public transport route while nevertheless fumbling for a sense of community with a wider sphere.

Through the image of Public Transport, Muir, Trocchi, Kelman and Spence each depict a limited version of transcendence. The phrase itself evokes notions of community (Public) and transcendent movement (Transport), and the use of a tram or bus in the works discussed raises questions about the extent to which these notions may be chosen, and the extent to which they may be preordained. As the characters enact a real movement through the realist landscape, another movement is happening, not from place to place, but from one state to another. Invariably, however, the image of a tram or bus is not conducive to an enduring sense of transcendence because each vehicle merely circles within the confines of the city rather than travels beyond it. The sense of constriction and of repetition evoked by the 'real' object of the tram or bus defines the limits within which its metaphysical and metaphorical ramifications must move. Realist detail nevertheless catalyses and enables the attempt for transcendence, providing a very literal vehicle by which the metaphysical may move through a realist text.

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[1] Edwin Muir, *An Autobiography* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1954), p. 217.

[2] George Blake, *The Shipbuilders* (London and Paris: The Albatross, 1947), p. 180.

[3] William McIlvanney, *The Papers of Tony Veitch* (London: Coronet, 1984), p. 5.

[4] Hugh C. Rae, *Night Pillow* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1972), p. 129.

[5] Alasdair Gray, *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* (London: Penguin Books, 1986), p. 57.

[6] From Alasdair Gray's *Something Leather*, quoted by Edwin Morgan, 'Gray and Glasgow', *in The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 64-75 (p. 68).

[7] See the entry on 'Tramcars' in Joe Fisher, *The Glasgow Encyclopedia* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 1994), pp. 382-386.

[8] See the entry on 'Trolley-Buses' in *The Glasgow Encyclopedia*, pp. 386-387 (p. 386).

[9] John Davidson, 'Thirty Bob a Week', in *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson*, ed. by John Sloan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 41-44 (p. 41).

[10] Alan Sharp, *A Green Tree in Gedde* (Glasgow: Richard Drew, 1985), p. 112.

[11] See, for instance, Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Grey Granite* (1934) and Neil Gunn's *The Serpent* (1943), where the protagonists travel to the city, but can only find wholeness by returning to the land.

[12] See, for instance, Lodge in Schwend and Drescher 1990.

[13] T. S. Eliot, Preface to *Selected Poems of Edwin Muir*, reprinted in *Akros*, 16:47 (1981), 3-5 (3).

[14] Edwin Muir, *Poor Tom* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris Publishing, 1982), p. 186. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[15] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, in *T. S. Eliot: Collected Poems 1909-1962* (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986), I, ll. 62-66.

[16] John Davidson, 'Rail and Road', in *Radical Renfrew: Poetry from the French Revolution to the First World War*, ed. by Tom Leonard (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1990), pp. 352-354 (p. 352).

[17] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 4.

[18] Catherine Carswell, *Open the Door!* (London: Penguin Books and Virago Press, 1986), p. 9.

[19] Glenda Norquay, 'Catherine Carswell: Open the Door!', in *A History of Scottish Women's Writing*, ed. by Douglas Gifford and Dorothy McMillan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), pp. 389-399 (p. 390).

[20] For a discussion of Wordsworth's beggar see William Sharpe, *Unreal Cities: Urban Figuration in Wordsworth, Baudelaire, Whitman, Eliot, and Williams* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1990).

[21] William Wordsworth, *The Prelude or Growth of a Poet's Mind*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt (London, New York and Toronto, Oxford University Press, 1956), Book VII, l. 622.

[22] See *An Autobiography*, pp. 22-23.

[23] Edwin Muir, 'Horses', in *The Complete Poems of Edwin Muir*, ed. by Peter Butter (Aberdeen: The Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1991), pp. 5-6.

[24] Edwin Muir, 'The Horses', in *The Complete Poems of Edwin Muir*, pp. 226-227.

[25] Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* (London and New York: Longman, 1983), p. 63.

[26] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 133,

[27] *The Prelude*, Book Seventh, ll. 630-633.

[28] *Unreal Cities*, p. 19.

[29] Muir's various treatments of this theme can be seen, for instance, in *The Marionette*, 'The Natural Man and the Political Man', and *Transition*.

[30] Edwin Muir, *The Politics of King Lear*, The Seventh W. P.. Ker Memorial Lecture Delivered in the University of Glasgow 23rd April, 1946 (Glasgow: Jackson, Son & Company, 1947), p. 7 and p. 8.

[31] Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, trans. by Justin O'Brien (London: Penguin, 1975), p. 17.

[32] Ibid., pp. 18-19.

[33] Jean Lorrain, 'The Possessed', in *The Dedalus Book of Decadence (Moral Ruins)*, ed. by Brian Stableford (Cambs: Dedalus, 1993), pp. 124-129 (pp. 127-128).

[34] Paul Binding's Afterword in Edwin Muir, *The Marionette* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1987), unpaginated.

[35] Alexander Trocchi, 'The Meeting', in *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, ed. by Andrew M. Scott (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp. 74-86 (p. 76).

[36] Andrew M. Scott's Introduction in *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds*, p. ix.

[37] James Barke, *Major Operation* (London: Collins, 1936), p. 229.

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[38] James E. Miller, Jr., 'Fitzgerald's *Gatsby*: The World as Ash Heap', in *Critical Essays on F. Scott Fitzgerald's* The Great Gatsby, ed. by Scott Donaldson (Boston, Massachusetts: G. K. Hall, 1984), pp. 242-258 (pp. 247-248).

[39] Ivan Chetcheglov, 'Formulary for a New Urbanism', reprinted at Internet address http://www.nothingness.org/SI/journaleng/formularyurbanism.html.

[40] Ivan Chetcheglov, quoted by Sadie Plant in *The Most Radical Gesture: The Situationist International in a Postmodern Age* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 61.

[41] John Davidson, 'The Wasp', in *Selected Poems and Prose of John Davidson*, ed. by John Sloan (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 148-149.

[42] Alexander Trocchi, 'Pages of an Autobiography', in *Invisible Insurrection of a Million* Minds, pp. 3-35 (p. 32).

[43] James Kelman, *The Busconductor Hines* (London: Phoenix, 1992), p. 93. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[44] In an interview with Duncan McLean, Kelman mentions Nietzsche in order to illustrate a notion of 'a really authentic ordinary' working-class voice and the way that high culture is available to that voice. He illustrates this by comparing his working-class characters to a black writer using Nietzsche and the 'shock' elicited when a reader recognises an 'ordinary intellectual tradition' from an unexpected mouth (Kelman to McLean 1985, p. 77).

[45] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 234.

[46] Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), pp. 99-114 (p. 109).

[47] R. J. Hollingdale's Introduction in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 24-25.

[48] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 43-44.

[49] John Davidson, *Selected Poems and Prose*, p. 44.

[50] James Kelman interviewed by Duncan McLean, in *Edinburgh Review*, 71 (1985), 64-80 (69).

[51] Hollingdale's Introduction in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 25.

[52] *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p. 132.

[53] Ibid., p. 139.

[54] Ibid., p. 161.

[55] Alan Spence, *Its Colours They Are Fine* (London: Corgi Books, 1989), p. 191. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[56] All information on the four legends of Saint Kentigern is taken from Fisher's *The Glasgow Encyclopedia*, pp. 357-359.

[57] *The Papers of Tony Veitch*, pp. 253-254.

[58] W. B. Yeats, 'Among School Children', in *Selected Poetry*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 127-130 (VIII, l. 7-8).

[59] *The Glasgow Encyclopedia*, p. 83.

[60] Charles Baudelaire, 'Never be Sober', in *The Prose Poems and La Fanfarlo*, trans. by Rosemary Lloyd (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 85.

[61] Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', in *One-Way Street*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), pp. 225-239 (p. 227).

[62] Calvin Bedient, *Architects of the Self: George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, and E. M. Forster* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1972), p. 6.

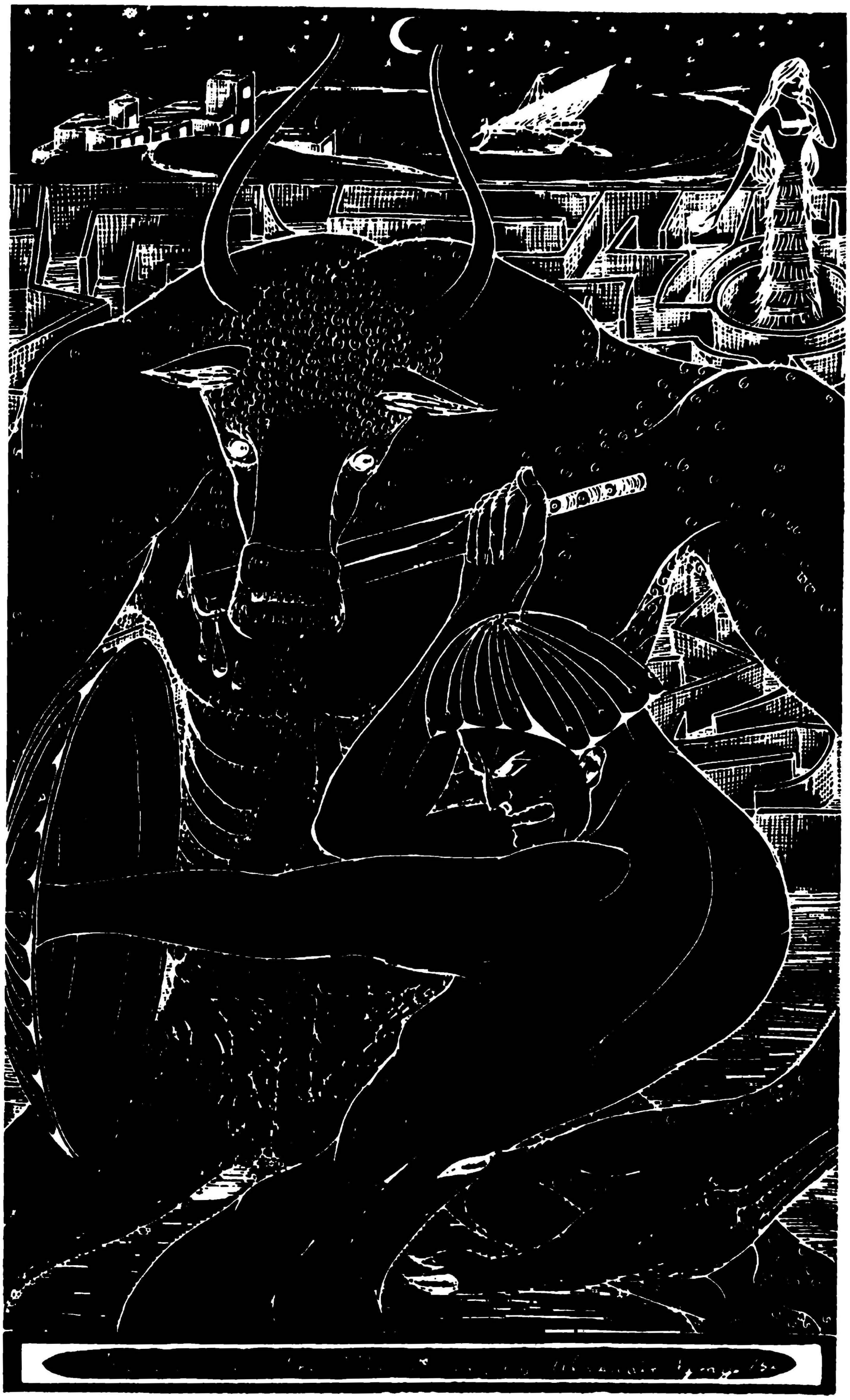
# CHAPTER FIVE

# THE MYTHOLOGICAL CITY

> We all know that there are certain places you shouldn't go to in a strange city after dark . . . places like dark alleys where the ambience of such surroundings might incite even a reasonable person to perpetrate an evil deed. . . . Now that twisting staircase which is the city's umbilical cord connecting the Old Town with the New Town is one such place, he says, pausing dramatically.
>
> Umbilical fuckin cord! It's a fuckin stair you fuckin clown. S-T-A-I-R.
>
> Irvine Welsh, *Filth*[1]

The fictional Scottish city evokes the mythical motif of the labyrinth: the streets are dark and maze-like and the protagonist is identified with either the searching hero, Theseus, or the monstrous figure of the Minotaur. Sometimes he is identified with both. Ariadne, with her golden thread, may appear as a woman with a light. The hope promised by Ariadne may signify a return, via her thread or umbilical cord, to a pre-Oedipal (to use Lacan's terminology), or pre-lapsarian state of security and wholeness; but sometimes it signifies the protagonist's lost hope and irreparable division. The symbolic function of 'real' places and characters creates a dynamic interaction between the mythic and the realistic. This tension is described by Gregory L. Lucente, who points out that the mythic component of a narrative is idealized and has a fixed meaning, even though it is non-specific in time and in space. Realism, in contrast, is temporally and spatially specific, yet non-idealized and open to a number of meanings.[2] This being so, the perceiving subject may endow meaning upon objects, sometimes so ritualistically as to create mythic dimensions. As Lucente remarks:

> The apparently empty neutrality of the material object is thus filled with energy from the perceiving subject, who, through ritualized misapprehension of his own position as creator, invests that energy with the unifying power of supernatural meaning.[3]



Alasdair Gray's etching of Theseus slaying the Minotaur.

This chapter explores the dynamism between the mundane real and the mythic, as it affects both the world of objects and the perceiving subject, in the representation of the Scottish city from James Thomson through to Irvine Welsh.

## I. Uterine City

### James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night*

James Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* (1874) presents, not a topographically realistic city, but a composite city. It is no city and therefore it is all cities. Like Calvino's Venice in *Invisible Cities* (1972), Thomson's city is of the mind and might embody many possibilities for experience and imagination.[4] Yet, unlike Calvino's endless permutations, Thomson's city has only a single possibility — it is 'of Night; perchance of Death, / But certainly of Night'.[5] The city represents the dark night of the speaker's soul as he wanders the dream-like streets of his own nightmare and, as a city of the mind, the terrain seldom exhibits any sense of actual location. This has not prevented critics from speculating that the city is London.[6] Yet Thomson's city does not adhere to any 'real' reflection of a single city's physical geography. In its emptiness, its darkness and its generic architecture, there can be no supposition from social, economic or topographical clues that we are anywhere but within a psychogeographical terrain. Robert Crawford suggests that this lack of real detail is a failing:

> One of the weaknesses of Thomson's poem is that, though not without certain details of real urban life . . . as a whole [it] is deficient in such concrete details drawn from the actual urban landscape.[7]

Yet Thomson's 'geometry of delirium', to use Paul Elmer More's phrase,[8] is the poem's strength and not its 'deficiency'. In the text's hallucinatory effect, gained by the mixing of phantasmogoria with reality, the city is opened to revelationary possibility.

The city is established as a place of night and associated with perennial darkness. There is no illumination in this city, even the street lamps cannot cut through 'the mirk air'. Darkness is not merely the absence of light, however, it is an active presence that 'holds' and chokes the city in its grip. The malignant energy of darkness is more tangible than the objects within the city, so that it takes on a paradoxical quality of 'negative' daylight; under the 'sphereless mantle' of the dark, the city's spectral qualities are exacerbated, but also profoundly delineated:

> Yet clearly in this darkness it [the eye] discerns
>   As in the daylight with its natural sense;
> Perceives a shade in shadow not obscurely,
> Pursues a stir of black in blackness surely,
>   Sees spectres also in the gloom intense. (III, 10-14)

Despite the reality of the darkness, however, the insubstantial nature of the city is emphasized by the fact that it cannot exist during daylight: 'The sun has never visited that city, / For it dissolveth in the daylight fair' (I, 6-7). The city of the 'Dreadful Night' dissolves in the light 'like a dream' (I, 8). Yet, the speaker suggests, when dreams recur they are indistinguishable from reality: 'can any / Discern that dream from real life in aught? (I, 13-14). The whole of life itself, he concludes, 'is but a dream whose shapes return' (I, 15). It is in this ritualistic repetition that a reality is created:

> In their recurrence with recurrent changes
> A certain seeming order; where this ranges
>   We count things real; such is memory's might. (I, 19-21)

The speaker's dream-like state is one of nightmare, and Thomson stresses that the anguish is generated from the subject himself. He is the city's creator. Unable to transcend the reality in which he finds himself he endlessly projects his misery onto his surroundings. The city's inhabitants are withdrawn: 'their woe / Broods maddeningly inwardly' (I, 65-66), and it is 'This dreadful strain / Of thought and consciousness which never ceases' (I, 74-75) that is the source of their anguish. The incessancy of consciousness paradoxically disables the possibility of release, trapping its inhabitants in the 'stupor' of a death-in-life existence. Thus escape is enabled only through the annihilation of consciousness, which is either insanity or death. For the sane, the 'certitude of Death' offers the possibility of eternal sleep, yet caught in the city's 'Perpetual recurrence', there is no hope of any form of finality. The city destroys hope — the speaker encounters a man walking an endless circle around monuments to lost Faith, Love and Hope — and there is no possibility of transcendence.

Ironically, the absence of Hope enables the speaker to continue unperturbed because, he reasons, 'no hope could have no fear' (IV, 15). Each new horror is met with the repetition of these words, until he sees 'A woman with a red lamp in her hand' (IV, 64). She represents Ariadne and her thread which may lead the way out. The speaker sees her as he walks across a city square, which has proliferated to become a vast tract of desert seething with demonic apparitions. The woman with her light rekindles the speaker's hope of deliverance, yet she also signifies the fear which the presence of hope allows: 'Hope travailled with such fear' (IV, 69). The speaker's fear increases as the woman draws nearer until a point of crisis is reached and he experiences self-division:

> . . . I was twain,
> Two selves distinct that cannot join again;
> One stood apart and knew but could not stir,
> And watched the other stark in swoon and her (IV, 71-74)

In the moment of panic, paradoxically made possible by hope, schism occurs at the point where fear and hope collapse into each other and disintegrate. The transcendent moment is negated and the poet falls into division rather than the hoped-for unity. The speaker's fear increases still further when he notices that the light the woman holds is actually 'her own burning heart, / Whose blood-drops trickled step by step apart' (IV, 84). Blood drips onto the speaker's senseless double as the woman attempts to revive him. The vision renders the speaker 'stonebound': and, having paralysed him, the woman is not Ariadne but the monstrous Medusa. Finally, the woman bears away the 'corpse-like' twin, the speaker says that 'this vile me was left forlorn' (IV, 101). He is a single entity once more but he is no longer whole. The hope of salvation signified by the female figure has been negated by her transformation into a Medusa, which leaves the speaker impotent, alone, and incomplete.

Mythical symbols continue to be observed by the speaker, but it is a hopeless and impoverished reworking. Lost and bewildered, he wanders to the city's outskirts where he finds a 'wounded creature', dragging himself like a beast to his den. The cripple, like the Minotaur, is neither animal nor human, and incites both pity and horror. Yet he is Theseus searching to find Ariadne's thread: the 'long-lost broken golden thread' is the cord which, he says, 'unites my present with my past' (XVIII, 51). It will, he says, lead him back 'From this accursed night without a morn, / . . . To Eden innocence in Eden's clime' (XVIII, 57-60). He desires the pre-lapsarian innocence of the infant state: 'Without a past', free of sin, and secure and whole in maternal embrace. This desire for a return to the womb resonates with the mythic symbolism of the labyrinth as the mother's body. Mircea Eliade points out in *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries* that 'to penetrate into a labyrinth or cavern was the equivalent of a mystical return to the Mother'.[9] The path to the mother is endless because, as critic Norman O. Brown writes:

> All walking, or wandering, is from mother, to mother, in mother; it gets us nowhere. Movement is in space; and space . . . as it were the mother . . . of all becoming.[10]

But, as Brown continues, (maternal) space is also destructive, it is 'a chaos or chasm . . . a yawning pit, a devouring mother. Without form; void; and dark'.[11] The cripple's notion of transcendence is one that is synonymous with 'oblivion' or death. The labyrinth signifies death as it does birth, and as Brown points out, 'the wanderings of the soul after death are prenatal adventures',[12] that is, the womb is also the tomb. The speaker must continue his journey, but as he leaves, the cripple's search for the golden thread is half recalled: '[He] retiring brushed / Thin shreds of gossamer from off [his] face' (XVIII, 67-8).

Earlier in his narrative the poet identifies death as the means of salvation, in comparable terms as those the creature uses for transcendence: 'We yearn for speedy death in full fruition, / Dateless oblivion and divine repose' (XIII, 41-42). Thomson subverts the notion of a return to the womb by emphasising its connection with death, which disallows its possibility: 'The thing which has been, never is again' (XVIII, 77-78). For the speaker, who is in search of release, or of the lost object that will enable his release, any recourse to the past in the form of archetypes, myths, or memories is crippling. He realizes at this point the impossibility of the past to ever redeem the present, or to allow forward movement out of it. As critic Robert Torrance points out, the primitive realm of the id and its tendency to regression is detrimental to transcendence: 'repetitively asserting its sameness while slipping backward toward primal nonentity the quest for an indeterminate future has clearly no possibility of coming into being'.[13] Thus by using the myth of the labyrinth in which to couch its terms of transcendence, Thomson's poem only cripples itself into endless repetition. The self proliferates endless, spectral permutations. Waking from daydreams to this 'real night' (XII, 16), the nightmare city has become the speaker's only reality with the power 'to pierce life's pleasant veil of various error' (XI, 5). It exists as the only Truth.

## Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Like Thomson's city, Robert Louis Stevenson's city in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1885) is not a single, real place, but a synthesis of several possibilities. Jenni Calder writes in her introduction to the novel:

> The setting is London. But the ambience is without a doubt Edinburgh, the Edinburgh of the Old Town's dark wynds and closes, where the turn of a corner could . . . abruptly leave behind the world of surface respectability.[14]

Moray McLaren suggests in his study *Stevenson and Edinburgh* that in Stevenson's London, 'The dark contrast between the dark evil and the almost equally ill-lit virtue is pure Edinburgh'.[15] Although Stevenson mingles different realities in his city, he is concerned with presenting a plausible and realistic synthesis. Enfield and Utterson, the novel's most 'singularly dull' figures, furnish us with street names and specific descriptive detail of the city. Utterson characterizes all that Stevenson's 'real' city stands for. He is an eminent lawyer, thoroughly respectable, totally rational, a bachelor, religious but inclined to self-righteousness and hypocrisy, and self-denying. He is 'rugged [in] countenance . . . cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary, and yet somehow lovable'.[16] However, Utterson's character also hints at repression; he is 'undemonstrative', and toward others he is found 'wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds' (p. 29). Utterson's human qualities surface briefly when he is under the influence of good wine:

> When the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke . . . in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face. (p. 29)

Utterson's intoxicated state prefigures Hyde, and it is through Hyde, as the demonic figure of the submerged self, that Utterson's reality opens out to the labyrinth.

The real city of Utterson and Enfield becomes a surrealist nightmare at the moment they learn of Hyde's existence in it. Enfield gives Utterson an account of the incident in which Hyde knocks over a little girl.[17] He describes how, in the small hours of the morning, he was returning home from an evening of unspecific yet ominous pleasure (as was Hyde himself, presumably). Without the bustle and noise of daytime commercial and social activity, the silent streets made Enfield feel vulnerable to his own sense of impropriety. As the doubleness of inner self is insinuated, his subjective response to the city sees the specificity of actual detail give way to hysterical proliferation. Enfield's description of the scene is one of repetition, thus he transforms the real terrain into an incomprehensible maze that integrates the city with the mind:

> Street after street . . . street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession, and all as empty as a church — till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. (p. 31)

The image of the labyrinth itself is a place where the real and the metaphysical collide, as critic Debra A. Castillo writes: 'In the labyrinth, the subjective world meets the objective one and undercuts it by maintaining the appearances of realism while subverting reality through fantasy'.[18] Enfield's mirroring of the streets and the subsequent corrosion of objective reality are associated with the mirroring of the self, which is evident in Utterson and Enfield, but is most exaggerated in the figure of Hyde. After the incident, Enfield does not describe the effect Hyde has on bystanders in realistic terms, but in mythical terms. His reality at this point is wholly subjective: the women he says, 'were as wild as harpies. I never saw a circle of such hateful faces' (p. 32). Enfield's retelling of the incident is further magnified in Utterson's mind, and his normal rationalism collapses and his imagination takes over: 'Hitherto it [the problem of Hyde] had touched him on the intellectual side alone; but now his imagination also was engaged, or rather enslaved' (p. 37). Utterson's city and the figure of Hyde become inextricably bound in an unreality of hallucination and nightmare. Enfield's gothic and mythic description is heightened until the city specifically becomes the labyrinth and Hyde its Minotaur:

> Mr Enfield's tale went by before his mind in a scroll of lighted pictures. He would be aware of the great field of lamps of a nocturnal city; then of a figure of a man walking swiftly . . . if at any time he [Utterson] dozed over, it was but to see it [the figure] glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly, and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wider labyrinths of lamp-lighted city and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming. (p. 37)

Both Enfield's fantastic account, and Utterson's imaginative response are uncharacteristic, and Vladimir Nabokov suggests that it is 'the shock of Hyde's presence [that] brings out the hidden artist in Enfield and the hidden artist in Utterson'.[19] Hyde's association with the artistic and transcendent may be seen through Utterson's description of his Soho apartment, which, he says:

> [Is] furnished with luxury and good taste. A closet was filled with wine; the plate was of silver, the napery elegant; a good picture hung upon the walls . . . and the carpets were of many plies and agreeable in colour. (p. 49)

In contrast, Jekyll's house exists as its own contradiction, the outside appearance is unlike the interior, and Nabokov points out that it 'is half Jekyll and half Hyde'.[20] The outside has no windows facing the street, it has 'a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper [storey]; and bore in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence' (p. 30). The inside of the house, however, 'wore a great air of wealth and comfort' (p. 40), and the hall is 'the pleasantest room in London' (p. 41), although it wears its respectability like a coat. The city itself perpetuates this hypocrisy. The street in which Jekyll lives, for example, did 'a thriving trade on week days. . . . [T]he shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen', while on Sundays it 'veiled its more florid charms' and presented a surface of scrubbed gentility, 'with its freshly painted shutters, [and] well-polished brasses' (p. 30).

Stevenson's dualistic city specifically corresponds to the innate duality he believes lies in the human personality. McLaren suggests that *Jekyll and Hyde*'s achievement is that it 'anticipated a large part of the basis of modern psychology and had, at the same time, dipped far back and deep into the centuries-old secrets of moral theology'.[21] Indeed, the motif of the urban labyrinth serves as a vertiginous, disquieting nexus between the primitive and chaotic aspects of the psyche, and the civilized, ordered face analogized in the commercial streets and drawing-room dinners. Jekyll seeks to thrive within the orthodox sphere of the city that Utterson embodies. The interior of his house is testament to this imperative. It is Jekyll's need to be accepted by the world of Utterson that drives him to suppress his innate 'evil'. Jekyll's initial idea of transcendence is to objectify the subconscious and thus unburden himself of it, in order to live a socially sustainable, virtuous life. But it is not evil that is relinquished, but goodness. The persona of Hyde releases Jekyll from his own ego, enabling 'a solution of the bonds of obligation, an unknown but not an innocent freedom of the soul' (p. 83). To become Hyde is to transcend the limits of the self and 'spring headlong into the sea of liberty' (p. 86) because, as Jekyll says, 'I did not even exist!' (p. 86). It is the ultimate freedom, unembargoed by the ego or the imposition of a guilty conscience. Jekyll is no longer bound to himself or the real world, and Hyde is not real because he is not knowable. He is the Minotaur — without a face, beyond description, transgressive and outside society, which necessitates his concealment. Having been repressed, Hyde is the unknown and the unnamed in a world which presupposes meaning in surfaces and value in the quantifiable.

Nevertheless, Hyde represents inner truth and the realized self, however dark, while Jekyll remains, he says, 'that incongruous compound of whose reformation and improvement I had already learned to despair' (p. 85). Hyde possesses a Dionysian energy in which his mental and creative faculties are sharper than those of Jekyll, and as the new-born Hyde, Jekyll finds existence 'incredibly sweet. I felt younger, lighter, happier in body' (p. 83). Jekyll's sin in the Calvinist, Victorian city, is not of rationalism, nor of repression, nor is it of hypocrisy. Jekyll's sin is the desire for transcendence. Where Thomson's city saw the supersession of the real by the mythic, Stevenson's city exists as an antagonism between the two. It is the relationship that Jekyll believes exists in each individual. Jekyll explains in his 'Full Statement of the Case' that the surface (good) self struggles with the subterranean (evil) self that seeks projection and expression. Jekyll's description of the conflict within the esoteric self is in terms of destructive and monstrous maternal imagery: 'these incongruous faggots were thus bound together . . . in the agonised womb of consciousness these polar twins should be continuously struggling' (p. 82). Unlike the cripple in Thomson's labyrinth, for Jekyll, primal unity as a prenatal state does not exist: the foetal and fundamental state of man is one of division.

The division between the figures of Jekyll and Hyde may also be an extension of Stevenson's own notions of the real and the transcendental. Stevenson, Tom Hubbard points out, in *Seeking Mr Hyde*, is 'apt to regard "the ideal" and "the real" as contending, like Jekyll-and-Hyde "good and evil angels", "for the direction of the work"'.[22] Hubbard goes on to quote from Stevenson's essay, 'A Note on Realism' (1910), in which Stevenson claims that 'we of the last quarter of the nineteenth century, breathing as we do the intellectual atmosphere of our age, are more apt to err upon the side of realism than to sin in quest of the ideal'.[23] Stevenson's psychological realism, or 'transcendental reality', to use Jenni Calder's term,[24] is discussed by his contemporary and friend, Henry James, in his article 'Robert Louis Stevenson' (1888). The strength of *Jekyll and Hyde*, James writes, is its theme 'of the capacity for evil that exists in the most generous natures', and 'the art of the presentation' of that theme, particularly the way in which 'even inanimate objects have a kind of wicked look'.[25] Writing on the similarities between Stevenson and James in their uses of evil in their works, Janet Adam Smith points out that unlike the realists, who merely 'mirrored the tangible, visible, smellable evil of lust, poverty, squalor', Stevenson and James both understand that:

> These material horrors were but manifestations of a darker power inherent in the order of things; and to convey this power was the world of the deepest imagination, not of the camera-eye.[26]

James develops this psychological realism where Stevenson, in his later works, does not. Yet Stevenson's 'ideal', or 'romantic' vision of the city opens out a psychological terrain that is a precursor to the real-metaphysical exchange in cities of modern Scottish realism.

The connection between the characterization of Jekyll and Hyde and the problems of realism and idealism encountered by Stevenson, can be used to elucidate the problems of transcendence in *Jekyll and Hyde*. Stevenson insinuates that Jekyll and Hyde are analogous to realism and idealism. Archie Hind's claim eighty-one years later that to survive, art 'has to become unlike itself by taking on the appearance of actuality'[27] attests to the necessity of sublimating Hyde. Jekyll's divided identity becomes irreconcilable when Hyde murders Sir Danvers Carew. Two months before the killing, Jekyll has woken up as Hyde, having spontaneously transformed without the need of the potion. Jekyll was mortified, but vows only reluctantly to give up Hyde. His abstinence is tortuous: 'I chose the better part and was found wanting in the strength to keep it' (p. 89). In a fit of 'moral weakness' Hyde was released again, and, ferocious after his imprisonment, bludgeoned Carew to death. The murder is the turning point for Jekyll. The questing Theseus who desires to slay the beast, is now been irrevocably transformed to the Minotaur: 'hunted by his fears, chattering to himself, skulking through the less frequented thoroughfares' (p. 94). Division is seen as irreversible when Jekyll stops referring to Hyde in the first person and uses the third: 'He, I say — I cannot say, I' (p. 94). For Jekyll, like Thomson's speaker, self-division is complete at the moment of lost hope. And for both protagonists, this moment sees the appearance of Ariadne with her light, now only signifying hope negated. Jekyll describes how, as Hyde, 'a woman spoke to him, offering . . . a box of lights. He smote her in the face, and she fled' (p. 94). Jekyll's hope of deliverance by way of the woman bearing light is vanquished by the beast he has become. Socially, Hyde is now 'impossible', and in a symbolic gesture, Jekyll locks the dissecting room door through which Hyde comes and goes and destroys the key. He intends to lock Hyde out, but instead, locks Hyde in. The dissecting room is a terrible womb and the place of Hyde's birth; it is now Jekyll's tomb. The locking of the door to the house, and the fact that Hyde's existence is now enabled through psychic projection rather than through an external agent, signify the omnipotence of the subconscious over the real and external world.

Jekyll's identity is subsumed by his own interior self. Jekyll's original discovery of the drug created a total absorption with self that was liberating in its transportation from all concerns of morality imposed by external agencies, so that when left prey to his own subjective powers, the real city recedes. When Utterson ventures to visit him, the streets around the house are desolate and windswept, Utterson 'had never seen that part of London so deserted' (p. 63). Jekyll, now a prisoner of his interior self, will only see Utterson in the dissecting room. Utterson, struck with curiosity at the room, feels a 'distasteful sense of strangeness' (p. 51) at its spectral and unreal quality. He finds that the outward bustle of the city is preferable to the uncanny interiority that meeting Jekyll in his room exposes him to:

> He preferred to speak with Poole upon the doorstep, and surrounded by the air and sounds of the open city, rather than to be admitted into that house of voluntary bondage, and to sit and speak with its inscrutable recluse. (p. 59)

Eventually Utterson stops visiting Jekyll, who is now completely exiled from society. Alone and locked in his room, he has only himself: 'Jekyll was now my city of refuge' (pp. 91-92). Jekyll's identity, this corporeal city, is as flimsy as the actual city in the grip of its dark underside. The surface of the body is merely the 'aura' of the soul within it, and in

Jekyll's explication of his transcendental ideology he emphasizes 'the trembling immateriality, the mist-like transience, of this seemingly so solid body in which we walk attired' (p. 82). Like Utterson's description of the city after Carew's murder, the diseased body indicates the corruption of Jekyll by Hyde:

> [It was a] drowned city, where the lamps glimmered like carbuncles; and through the muffle and smother of these fallen clouds, the procession of the town's life was still rolling in through the great arteries with a sound as of a mighty wind. (pp. 52-53)

Jekyll has anticipated this disappearance in his will, and it is over this document that Utterson comments on its wording:

> There was another enclosure, likewise sealed, and marked upon the cover as 'not to be opened till the death or disappearance of Dr Henry Jekyll.' Utterson could not trust his eyes. Yes, it was disappearance; here again, as in the mad will, which he had long ago restored to its author, here again were the idea of a disappearance and the name of Henry Jekyll bracketed. (pp. 58-59)

When Jekyll is entirely consumed by Hyde, Hyde himself must also die. The denizens of the real make it their imperative to destroy the threat of the Minotaur, and they beat down the door to Jekyll's room in a similar manner to the way Hyde had battered Carew. In the end, however, Hyde dies by his own hand. As Jekyll had awaited his fate, he had wondered whether Hyde would confront the police or 'find the courage to release himself at the last moment?' (p. 97). Hyde is unable to exist without Jekyll. To attempt it would consign him to Jekyll's 'real' world, sending him to the gallows to suffer the mortal limitations the 'real' represents. Hyde's suicide is his release from the bounds of this reality. His second transcendence is also his annihilation.

## Alexander Trocchi, 'Pages of an Autobiography'

The metaphysical cities of Thomson and Stevenson disavow the capacity of realistic detail to endow meaning, and each work undermines the stability of the city's surface as a location of truth. Thomson claims that reality may only be comprised of recurring dreams while Stevenson presents the 'mist-like transience' of the forms of the real world. They have transmuted reality into symbol. Trocchi's short piece, 'Pages of an Autobiography' (posth. 1991), however, does not possess the hallucinatory vision of reality depicted in either Thomson or Stevenson. In Trocchi's work, the objective reality of the street shapes the narrator's growing self-awareness until subjective and objective realities become inextricable. However, the narrator, Nicolas, does aspire to the imaginative life of a writer, in an apparent contradiction to his impoverished reality. He has the capacity to project mythic significance upon the street which disrupts reality and facilitates his ambition. Trocchi's emphasis is less on the labyrinthine aspect of the city's streets, with its connotations of dispersal and wandering, than on the core of the labyrinth itself. In Trocchi's solipsistic phenomenology, transcendence lies in the hope of locating an inner, authentic, and sovereign self. This inner space is represented as the primitive, prenatal enclosure sought by Thomson's cripple in *The City of Dreadful Night*. Nicolas, like the protagonists of *The City of Dreadful Night* and *Jekyll and Hyde*, personifies Theseus in his search for identity in the city; but, although his search culminates in self-knowledge, it is as the Minotaur. Nicolas finds his womb-like space where the cripple did not, but instead of the cripple's hoped-for regression to a 'nursling soft and pure' (XVIII, 61), Nicolas's space represents the loss of innocence through its association with both maternal and sexual transgression.

The mythic overlay in 'Pages of an Autobiography' is used to disturb the reality that informs the narrator's self. Nicolas makes a reference to Leda and the swan [28] and evokes Baudelaire's version of the 'sad and fatal myth' in his poem 'The Swan' (1861) rather than the more famous Yeats poem 'Leda and the Swan' (1923). The image of the swan itself, Frank Kermode writes, is: 'the perfect emblem of the soul, and like Leda the sign of an annunciation of paganism and heroic poetry'.[29] Like Baudelaire's swan, who: 'trailed his white array of feathers in the dirt / . . . Flapping excitedly, bathing his wings in dust',[30] Nicolas's creature is a symbol of the poetic soul transposed jarringly onto the intransigent city:

> The swan twisted into the chattering blue-grey mass of a pneumatic drill chipping the surface of stones. Frantic. Demented. With dust and noise for feathers. The black hardness of the street for a lover. (p. 7)

Where Baudelaire recontextualizes the swan to show how the upgrading of the old city crushes the heroic and poetic soul, Nicolas's image is suggestive of the way the mythic breaks up the real, solid, structures and surfaces of the city itself with an aggressive sexual vigour that is both deranged (and deranging) and sadistic. In this respect, Nicolas appears to engage with the question Yeats poses at the end of his poem ('Did she put on his knowledge with his power / Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?'[31]): Does the street, as Leda, become half or wholly divine by the sexual act? It is the 'black hardness' of Nicolas's street, however, that makes it, rather than the swan, the indifferent partner, and this reversal implies that the street is, in fact, impervious to mythic derangement.

Nicolas's identity is an inevitable consequence of seeking selfhood in a monstrous city, earlier he has asked: 'when will the city's snarl make my throat utter?' (p. 16). Nicolas's womb-like urban space (the primitive, mystical enclosure of the Mother) symbolizes the place of gestation of this transgressive identity, and it is located in the cellar of the family home. The diseased grey streets of Nicolas's Glasgow radiate out from the house. The cellar is the centre of the labyrinth, not only geographically, but also in metaphysical terms. Initially this is a place of positive existential promise, but it is also the archetypal space of the self: 'In the cellar he had returned again to the primitive beginnings of life, to the primeval spring wherein his ego was rooted' (p. 10). The space symbolizes the autocratic ideal of the identity Nicolas seeks. In the discussion of Nicolas's identity in chapter three of this thesis, it was noted that his desire for sovereignty recalls the Marquis de Sade's notion of profane sexuality. Nicolas's cellar is reminiscent of Sade's use of enclosure which, as Simone de Beauvoir explains in 'Must We Burn Sade?', symbolizes 'the isolation of the image . . . . The image is the enchanted domain from which no power whatever can expel the solitary despot'.[32]

Nicolas's desire for sovereignty — to be the centre of his own created universe — requires that he fuse with a female 'other'. As discussed in chapter three, Nicolas displaces God and seeks self-authentication through sexual elision with 'a woman with a belly and eyes and blood' (p. 12); that is, with a 'real' woman. However, his early experience of 'real' female 'otherness' is problematic. Nicolas has previously described a girl on his street as 'the unapproachable goddess from a strange planet . . . . Her cold beauty struck the street like a javelin. A sudden presence of witchcraft. Hectic. Risen from the stones' (pp. 5-6). The girl is inseparable from the city's foundation, but she also transcends it and in turn promises transcendence. She takes a group of boys, including Nicolas, into a 'dunnie', where the flame of her cigarette transforms the squalor of the toilet into a 'strange' and 'exciting' place (p. 6). However, Nicolas goes on to describe how, at the brink of sexual knowledge his hope is extinguished by the girl herself: 'I was very close to her . . . . Then I heard her say: Get these kids out of here! The first time I felt like a pariah dog' (p. 6). For Nicolas, the space of the toilet replaces that of the cellar as the location for transcendental possibility; Ariadne and her golden thread becomes the urban goddess with a cigarette, but Nicolas is denied any sense of connection with her.

This image of woman as a cruel goddess informs Nicolas's experience of femininity in the cellar. He has learnt to mistrust real women and thus her counterpart in the cellar is wholly imaginary. The cellar becomes a place of exotic mythical sexuality, evoked by a candle's illumination:

> The flame of the candle pulsing in the centre of the old table was itself a centre from whose magnetic locus radiated green tentacles of light. The arteries of the cosmos. The flame was as strange, as uncanny as a salamander. . . . It possessed the strange obliquity of an eye, not a human eye — the eye of a Javanese idol. A cruel despotic goddess whose flesh was fishscaled in gold and silver, whose limbs moved with the subtlety of a python. (p. 10)

The candle's flame is a mystical light, like Ariadne's golden thread, linking Nicolas with an imagined state of primal unity. But the connection is fraught with both fear and duplicity. The cellar itself is a dark and subterranean enclosure. Bachelard's phenomenology emphasizes the cellar's dark connotations in its dialectic with the attic. Contrary to the roof's 'rationality' and protective qualities, he says, the cellar represents the irrational, and 'is first and foremost the *dark entity* of the house, the one that partakes of subterranean forces'.[33] The mythical figure that Nicolas projects into the cellar is an imaginative response to the cellar's innately sinister denotation. Yet even though the 'eye' of the flame signifies a cosmic centre, it also disrupts Nicolas's sense that the real space is a sanctuary for the kernel of his ego. Like Thomson and Stevenson, Trocchi uses light to mystify rather than enlighten, and associates this quality with the female principle, as potentially both illuminative and destructive. Trocchi's snake imagery, like that of Thomson, may symbolize impotence when Ariadne reveals herself as a Medusa. Snakes also recall biblical treachery and the moment of loss of unity through severance from God and Eden. Nevertheless, this mythical female figure is imaginatively created by Nicolas and therefore it protects him. As he grows older he notices that: 'Something else was falling away. . . . Protective scales of myself. . . . I felt myself becoming gradually more naked. Even in the cellar. Exposed' (p. 12). The security of the cellar is lost when he can no longer assert the imaginative autonomy of the child. As an adult, Nicolas must turn to 'real' women in order to relocate self-sovereignty.

For Nicolas, transcendence by way of sexual fusion with an urban 'goddess' is always a fight: 'For between man and woman there cannot be two deities. Someone must submit' (p. 28). Nicolas's experiences with women, like those of all of Trocchi's narrators, involve an ontological boundary to be transgressed.The language of lovers, Nicolas says, is a code which begins the process: 'The ambiguity of the conversation enabled them to establish an almost physical contact without overtly venturing from their isolation' (p. 29). Nicolas outlines two possible existential outcomes of the sexual battle for the ego's supremacy. His first means of achieving self-unification through an 'other' is through the use of the imagination upon the real object of desire. This means is illustrated in Nicolas's relationship with Mollie, the girl from the teashop. Nicolas subjectifies her to the point that she ceases to be separate from him. She is no longer a real but a mythical idealization — he thinks of her 'in front of a flickering fire' (Ariadne's light again), and thus 'she had passed out of reality into myth' (p. 26) until: 'Her image was sunk in the depth of him' (p. 27). At this moment he is fulfilled because her absorption has stirred 'joy within himself, with the animal certitude that nothing was beyond him' (p. 27). She represents the sovereignty that is the enclosure and self-sufficiency of the cellar — the core of the existential labyrinth at its most positive. Trocchi, much more crudely than Thomson or Stevenson, challenges the polite orthodoxy of realism which is embarrassed by interpretation that reaches beyond the emphatically physical. But Nicolas's — and Trocchi's — sense of alienation is more than literally physical (although of course, it is that too); it must also be imaginative.

Nicolas's second means of sexual elision is problematic because it is a real rather than a wholly subjective event. Without the autonomy of his imagination, he is threatened with annihilation. His first real sexual encounter is with Isobel, in a tunnel, and the connection between architecture and anatomy is made explicit: 'So it was to be the tunnel after all . . . . She allowed herself to be drawn towards the entrance . . . she slipped off her tennis skirt and drew his head down to her' (p. 32). The enclosure suggests the space of the cellar, but on this occasion there is an absence of light, Nicolas says that '[h]e was afraid of the sun' (p. 32). Without the golden thread of Ariadne, Isobel represents the loss of Nicolas's self. In one sense, such a loss is transcendent:

> For a period of time . . . he had lived only by her, through her, for her, as surely as if he had been the foetus of her womb, he had existed merely as a chrysalis in the warm air of her being. (p. 33)

This ego-annihilation, however, is also an affront to Nicolas on an intellectual level. Isobel's contempt for him 'lured [him] into extinction':

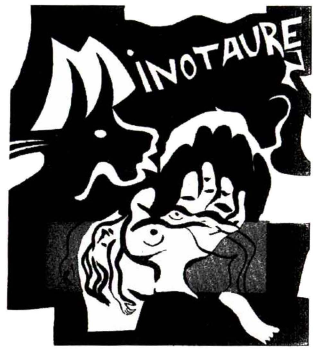
> She despised him for his beastly little intellect. She despised its circuitous attempts at justification. And she revenged herself on it by enticing it to justify itself out of existence. (p. 33)

As far as Nicolas is concerned, sexual fusion is a battle that he is doomed to lose. Women, he believes, possess an innate wisdom which he can only counter with rationalized intelligence. Recalling his desire, as discussed in chapter three, to be D. H. Lawrence's 'Viking', a 'pulsating, carnal self', free from the rational ego, his self-realization in the face of a feminine presence is as 'a civilised wasp afraid of its own sting' (p.32).

Having been depersonalized and mocked by Isobel, Nicolas's subsequent self-identification is with the Minotaur. He imposes sexual isolation upon himself for fear of further loss of self:

> He seldom went out with girls because he couldn't break down the original barriers. He moved towards women with the guilty secret of his sex hidden in the back compartment of his wallet. . . . [I]t was his scab too, a terrible birthmark which made him hypersensitive to denial, a stigmata, self chosen, worn voluntarily behind the fear in his eyes. (p. 34)

Nicolas is an outcast and his identity is fragile, the 'magnet locus' of the candle's flame is projected onto his adult existence, but now it is decentred, made up of a 'thousand microcosms, each with a distinct centrifugal force, distinct perceptions, helplessly sandwiched between the layers of Saracen' (p. 33). He is also a hybrid, precariously positioned between two ideological worlds: 'He walked unsteadily between two worlds with a volume of Bradlaugh in his pocket and later defended Aldous Huxley' (pp. 33-34). In Trocchi's later novels, *Young Adam* and *Cain's Book*, the monstrousness of the fully-fledged writer is crucial and even desirable, as it reflects the avant-garde spirit which, writes Georges Bataille, is the 'quest for the life of primitive man'.[34] The Minotaur epitomizes this spirit because, as Gaëton Picon comments, he is a 'monster in revolt against the gods'.[35] Nicolas revolts through the subversion of his reality. Yet his mythic subjectification of the street fails to release him from the influence of reality. The secure place of the cellar becomes 'the grey prison-house' of a monstrous solipsism. Unable to reconcile his need for imaginative autonomy and his need for sexual elision, Nicolas turns to the city as the only valid means of identification left to him. To recall the early image of the swan's pneumatic rape of the street, the mythological disruption of the reality it



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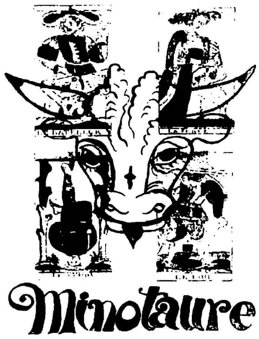

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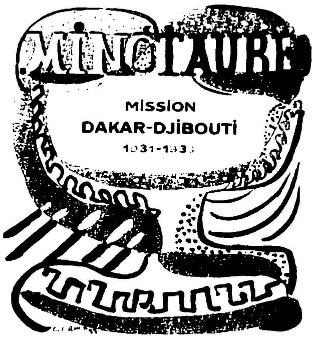
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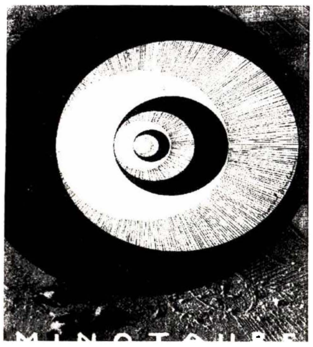

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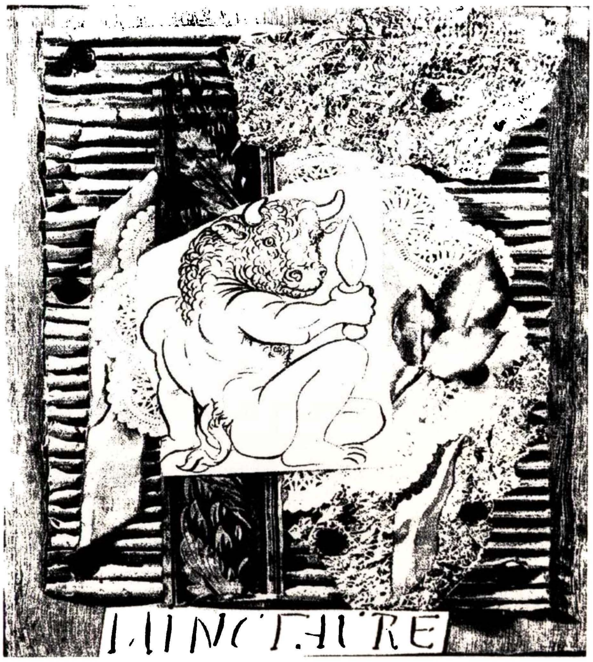

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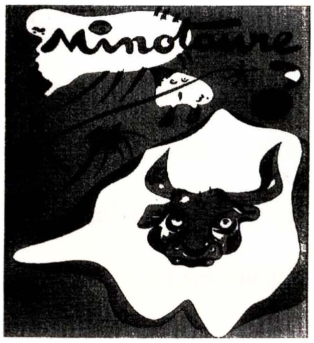
*Cover designs for the review Minotaure, 1933-1939.*



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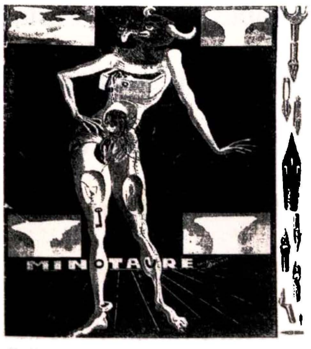

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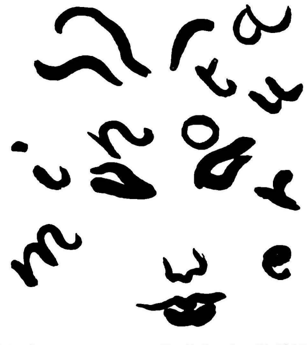

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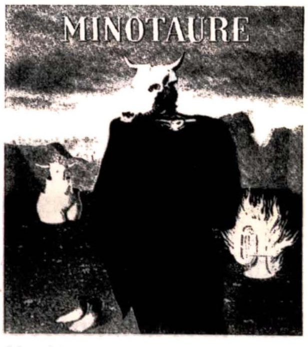

*Magritte* *No 10, Winter 1937*

Cover illustrations for the surrealist magazine, *Minotaure*.

represents is also 'a frantic desire to be absorbed' (p. 12) by the street and its city. Nicolas's association with the street is not in terms of a mythical poetic heroism, but a monstrous, and therefore realistic, poetic identification in which he is allied with the detritus of the city: 'The stale smell of the River Kelvin, twisting tortuous, through a time-blackened city. On the grey banks of Kelvin I first knew myself' (p. 35).

## II. Cutting the Umbilical Cord

### Alexander Trocchi's *Thongs* via McArthur and Long's *No Mean City*

*The City of Dreadful Night*, *The Strange Case of Jekyll and Hyde*, and 'Pages of an Autobiography' offer a progressively degenerative reworking of labyrinthine motifs. Thomson's speaker searches for archetypal unity, but eventually learns that the path to death (that is to say, mortality rather than transcendence) may be the only valid means of escape. For Jekyll, unity is possible only through the acknowledgment of the divided self and the expression of one's darker nature. In the context in which Stevenson writes, however, the admission of this dark self is sinful, and is therefore disabled by institutionalized reality (religion, law, propriety). Jekyll's experiment leads to the death of both selves. In Trocchi's 'Autobiography', realism dominates. The mythic functions as a disruptive element which, nevertheless, only exacerbates the sordid nature of reality. Yet Nicolas's final realization is of his own identification with the abject reality of the city. This subsumation of the self into the city does not incur some form of death as it does in Thomson and Stevenson. It may engender serious problems for Trocchi's narrator, but allows for a potential self-realization and is a fertile ground for avant-garde creativity. In each of these three cases, the metaphorical use of uterine enclosure, accessed through the figure of Ariadne with her golden thread, is denied. The progressive corruption of mythic ideals by harsh urban reality is fully propounded as the mystical signification of enclosure moves from the uterine security of the archaic womb to the disused and dirty toilets and tunnels of modern Glasgow. The transferral of transcendental possibility from uterine to intestinal urban space, and the domination of the real over the mythic is epitomized in Trocchi's pornographic novel *Thongs* (1956).

*Thongs* is about a girl from the Gorbals who, upon discovering a predilection for pain, becomes a 'Grand Painmistress' in an underground society of flagellants. Based on the religious order of Catholicism, Trocchi's Order of Pain lampoons a morally stultified society, just as do John Davidson's more sanitized flagellants in his 1895 novel, *Earl Lavender*. Trocchi's version of the city, and of the pain associated with it, is dark indeed. The first part of *Thongs* is a pastiche of A. McArthur and H. Kingsley Long's *No Mean City* (1935). The title of the latter comes from the Bible, and is taken from Paul's words at his arrest in Jerusalem: 'I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city'.[36] McArthur and Long's use of the phrase is ironic of course, and modern Glasgow is seen to be quite literally a mean city. *No Mean City* is one of the benchmark realist novels in the canon of Scottish literature.[37] Moira Burgess's claim for its endurance ('sixty years after its first publication . . . this [is] the Glasgow novel best known . . . to the general public'[38]) and her citation of Edwin Morgan's comment that 'crude and melodramatic though it was, [it] had a certain archetypal power about it',[39] indicate that in Scottish urban fiction, arch realism has a mythic energy of its own. Trocchi brings the 'archetypal' dark alleys and communal toilets of *No Mean Streets* into the world of *Thongs* and charges them with transcendental potential. Thus, the 'mean' and lawless world of McArthur and Long's classic is reinvested with transgressive mythic and religious meaning. In Trocchi's version of *No Mean City* anthropological realism is transformed into a superficial theatricality. He writes, for example, that the 'red disc of the sun . . . [is] like the sun on a primitive stage set, a Chinese lantern, perfectly circular, and with no density' (p. 5). All action becomes spectacle in Trocchi's hands. When Razor King plucks Hazel from the street incidental music is supplied by the sound of an organ-grinder playing in the background. Trocchi distorts reality by rendering it as theatrical, and reality takes on an almost transcendent quality when it is made hyperreal. Trocchi's cruel description of a woman at the start of the novel is certainly dramatic, and with her 'great sacklike buttocks and the thin spines of the thighs with the network of fine red veins behind the colourless sheen of hairs' (pp. 10-11), she is magnified to point where she is barely recognisable as human. Razor King is equally grotesque, and is described as 'the human wolf', and 'the werewolf of the Gorbals. More like an animal than a man'.[40] Half man, half wolf, he is the same beast as Hesse's Steppenwolf. But Hesse's character was a lonely wolf at odds with his intellectual spirit, Razor King exists exclusively as a corrupt and violent animal. In the Gorbals he is omnipotent because he epitomizes its viscousness.

In Trocchi's city of pornographic fantasy, pain is no longer debasing, but a means to self-authentication. It overrides the narrow everyday existence of Gorbals life, bringing to mind Thomson's preference, in another context, for 'That positive eternity of pain, / Instead of this insufferable inane'.[41] In both *No Mean City* and *Thongs*, the legendary Razor King is fed mistresses, as the Minotaur is fed sacrificial virgins. The use of razors is exonerated because prowess with the blades epitomizes 'manliness' and women collude with this practice because a relationship with Razor King not only ensures their protection, it increases their desirability. Ironically, however, in *No Mean City*, Razor King is unable to get his wife pregnant, and the blade comes to compensate for his sexual impotence. In Trocchi's *Thongs*, however, Razor King's sexual powerlessness is fully realized through the image of the blade. The violence that he metes out to women is defused when its pain is eroticized. Razor King's impotence is most explicit when he uses his blade to incise an 'x' into the thigh of his newest mistress, Hazel. The gesture is a symbolic rape and has its predecessor in Sade, who inflicted such cuts on prostitutes and poured hot wax into the wounds. The symbolic violation and penetration signifies impotence. Nevertheless, the realistic signification of the razor in *No Mean City* has been inverted in *Thongs*, via the ritualization of the razor and pain. A transcendental value accrues to this ritual when Gertie later applies iodine on the wound, anticipating her role as dominatrice, a sovereign role the Razor King is unable to fulfil.

## III. Intestinal City

### Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book*

The mythical golden thread of Ariadne and its customary flash of revelation is no longer of other-worldly origin. Instead the flash emanates from a blade, an image that has its own mythic or archetypal significance in Scottish urban realism. The blade or razor is used symbolically to signify the final cutting of Ariadne's thread, a thread which, in any case, is always problematic. This use of the blade portends the casting off of old terms of transcendence and the relocation of new possibilities necessitated by the abject modern city. In *Cain's Book*, as we have seen, alleyways are used as a threshold space in which a transgressive revelation is experienced. The flash of the blade in this space signifies a moment of transcendence beyond its squalid confines. Necchi goes into an alley at night and sees a man who is carrying a blade and urinating there. For Necchi, the flash of the blade, as a part of a real situation, is perceived as imaginary — 'Did I invent the glint of silver?' (p. 46). This flash of light precipitates a culmination of events that lead to a moment of revelation: 'the lane, the man, the pale light, the flash of silver — at the ecstatic edge of something to be known' (p. 44). The blade positions Necchi at the brink of transcendence, where he brings together the constellation of events to its existential crux. The sight of the urinating man is juxtaposed with Necchi's memory of a fight he had with his wife some time ago in Glasgow. His mind throws up an image of: 'Moira, at her most abject, and the Glasgow Proletarian . . . whose image in the lane under the gaslight, with a thing of silver in one hard hand' (pp. 49-50). The image 'elides mysteriously into [him]self' (p. 50), creating a moment of recognition. A 'sudden excitement that was almost a nausea' (p. 52) indicates a transitional space between two states. The ominous enclosure of the alley and the revelationary flash within it allows Necchi to achieve near self-unity: 'I had suddenly felt very close to myself, as though I were on the edge of a discovery' (p. 49).

The 'nameless man' (p. 53), says Necchi, is a Minotaur figure in the person of 'the Glasgow proletarian my mother feared' (p. 49). It is with this figure that Necchi as a possible Theseus, fuses. The urinating man becomes a mythical beast in Necchi's imaginative recounting of the scene, although he is well aware that he is involved with an '*act of remembrance*, a selected fiction' (p. 45). His memory is of 'the stench of goats in the clear of the Tartar steppes, of the hairs of his belly' (p. 46), and his description of the man's hair as 'the mane of a wolf' (p. 44) recalls both the image of Razor King and Steppenwolf, and is emblematic of abject animal existence and desire. Necchi assimilates the man urinating in the alley by rendering him as part of a mythology in which Necchi himself is the central figure. The fusion thus achieved is with the monstrous, just as the mythical Theseus symbolically assimilates the Minotaur when he kills him. For the mythical Theseus, this fusion may have been harmful — if Ariadne had not provided his means of escape, he may have effectually become the Minotaur's replacement as the solitary ruler of the labyrinth. In *Cain's Book*, however, the unification with the monstrous is seen as positive, and reference to the female figure of Ariadne, Necchi's wife Moira, is not in terms of deliverance, but of foiled transcendence. His memory of his wife at this time is without imagination or lust, and it causes a self-disintegration: 'there took place in me a kind of dissociation, like the progressive separation in milk as it turns sour. I was no longer, as it were, intact, and she was no longer interesting' (p. 49). Via a common identification as monstrous, Necchi fuses imaginatively with the sinister 'Razor King', just as he will later fuse with him in a homosexual encounter. Like Jekyll, Necchi realizes his animalistic self.

The transgressive but revelationary flash of the blade in *Cain's Book*, like 'Occam's' razor (p. 50), provides only limited permutations of significance. The major limitation of the blade's significance is Necchi's antagonistic wife. She represents, for Necchi, a banal reality, a failed Ariadne, and he symbolically violates and mutilates his self-denying wife with a knife. Necchi relates how he searches for the man in the bar beside the alley, hoping for a meeting. He goes into the toilets, where he notices the image of a woman cut into the toilet door. The carved torso reminds him of Moira and as he runs his hands over the carving, its sensory impression causes him to eroticize it:

> I ran my finger over it. The pads of my fingers were excited by the rough wood. I felt a slight prickling at the hairs at the back of my neck. I hadn't known wood so intimately before. (p. 49)

He sets to the eroticized figure with a knife, doctoring Moira's 'big cunt' so that it is much diminished, as he describes:

> I examined the oakleaf and with my penknife I hewed it down to its proper size . . . . Leaning forward then on the handle of my knife, I caused the small blade to sink deeply into the wood at a low centre in the triangle . . . . The score, because of the camber of the blade, was most life-like; wedge-shaped, deep. (p. 49)

Necchi is delighted with the realistic effect of his operation; through his imaginative association with his mythical monster, Necchi operates on meaning at a symbolic level, and like Sade's sexual violence, no one actually gets hurt. The symbolism of this scene is precedented in George MacDonald's novel *Phantastes* (1858). There, MacDonald's protagonist, Anodos, finds the image of his ideal woman, not in reality, but in the realm of art: she is a reclining statue in a block of alabaster. With his knife, Anodos attempts to chip her out, but failing this, revives her through song. William M. Gray suggests that the obvious Freudian interpretation of the knife as phallus may also be seen in pre-Oedipal terms. In the opening of this chapter it has been suggested that in mythical terms, the desire for the labyrinthine core by way of the figure of Ariadne is a desire for a pre-Oedipal state of unity. Gray suggests that the 'frozen' female represents the 'false self' of the baby: 'It is only the power of the semiotic that can break open the castrating hold of the Oedipal/symbolic'.[42] In *Cain's Book*, Necchi writes this scene into 'evidence', but does not animate the figure of his wife in doing so. Necchi's wife does not enable him to achieve any sort of self-unification, in fact, she actively causes his self-disintegration, thus she remains a failed Ariadne, and Necchi's symbolic recasting of her body is an attempt to compensate for that which is denied him.

As Necchi stabs at the door of the toilet he is not only reshaping the symbol of a failed Ariadne, he is symbolically attempting to penetrate the threshold of a space that may be considered transcendent, which is the toilet itself. For MacDonald's Anodos, the attempt to release the female figure takes place in an 'antenatal tomb', which, for Necchi, is the space of the toilet. The toilet door is a threshold to this transcendent space. In phenomenological terms the door signifies the possibility of breaching a boundary. Georg Simmel writes that the door 'transcends the separation between the inner and the outer' and enables a 'permanent interchange between the bounded and the boundaryless'.[43] Neil Leach elaborates that the door 'exposes how that boundary might be treated as potentially more permeable'.[44] When Necchi uses his blade to disfigure the carved female (symbolically charged by his imagination) on the door to the toilet, he breaks, not into the limited space of the toilet itself, but into the limitlessness beyond the door, the transcendent space that his transgressive act reveals. In the intestinal city of Trocchi's novels, this authenticating space is invariably a public or communal toilet, or an alley used for that purpose.[45] These are ambiguous spaces, neither completely public nor wholly private. Both are limited structures, yet are the sites for the transgression of limits. The toilet is evidence of a physical necessity that is more animal than spiritual, and it is traditionally given little attention, even in a realist novel. Its quintessential baseness, however, may lend a signification beyond its reality, Marcel Duchamp, for instance, subverts high art through the artistic recuperation of a urinal, and Trocchi's novels use these base and everyday items as the only mode of expressing creative and existential values in the modern city.

In *No Mean City* the toilet is used as a symbol of economic status and its transcendental signification is given in economic terms. Johnnie and Lizzie's first flat has no toilet, and in fact, there is not one to be found in the whole street. In contrast, Bobby and Lily are able to afford a flat with a bathroom: 'the bathroom was the final and tangible evidence of their success. The possession of it placed them indisputably "far above the working classes"'.[46] However, such superiority is only transient, and by the end of the novel Bobby succumbs to the squalor and paucity of slum life which betokens a spiritual as well as economic lack: 'He was still well dressed . . . but it seemed . . . that his suit was a little shiny at the elbows . . . [and] his surprising affability hid a certain nervousness' (p. 250). Yet even in this novel the toilet represents the only location of enduring escape for people living in overcrowded and poverty-stricken communities: Johnnie's mother, constipated for days, finally dies of a heart-attack while in the communal toilet. Told in high seriousness, the incident is unintentionally comic, and in Trocchi's version of the same theme, the absurdity of this grim realism is not lost. In *Cain's Book*, Necchi relates how his father, in the face of unemployment, tyrannizes the bathroom of the family's boarding house as a means of redressing his economic and therefore masculine powerlessness. He becomes a ridiculous Minotaur, 'scaring the lodgers with his ugly temper' (p. 92), and only reluctantly breaks his eight to twelve-hour shifts in the toilet to let others use it, returning 'with a cry of triumph like a beast to his lair' (p. 94).

In *Thongs*, the communal toilet on the tenement landing is the location of Gertie's sexual awakening. In it, she finds a used condom with its liquid intact, and instead of feeling disgust, allows it to become a fetish. Gertie leaves the house that night and chances upon a man urinating in a lane. The alley's architecture is described in the same terms as Necchi's alley in *Cain's Book*, and each emphasizes the way the alley is made into a tunnel by overhead buildings. These are perverse reconstructions of Nicolas's formative tunnel in 'Pages of an Autobiography', but while Nicolas only experienced a loss of self, Necchi and Gertie experience epiphany. Gertie, in a questionable account of female sexuality, degrades herself and suffers acute pain, yet the filth and violence, in Trocchi's novel, facilitate her existential and sexual self-realization: 'there I was eagerly lending myself to this brutal treatment. That was perhaps the first realization of the destiny that was in store for me' (p. 47). Gertie questions her monstrous desire:

> What strange desire lurked in the breast of a fifteen-year-old girl? Razor King's daughter? Did my blood mark me even more terribly than the sweating women who were victims of his bed? (p. 48)

Gertie's sense of her evil birthright, like the Minotaur's, does not shame her for long. She soon understands that the key to self-authentication lies in fulfilling her destiny at its most radical. When Gertie returns home covered in welts, Razor King beats her with a belt, partly re-enacting the scene in the alley. But the beating, which would have frightened her before, now takes on 'the acute colour of sex' (p. 50), and of the pain she says that 'deep down I had a hunger for it, an obscene animal hunger that filled my body like nausea' (p. 52). By creating a fetish from her abject reality, Gertie transforms the animal existence of her birthright, as the daughter of the arch beast of the Gorbals, into a means of transcending it. The use of the labyrinth myth is now completely degenerated, brought to the point iterated by Irvine Welsh in the epigraph to this chapter, in which the brutal and filthy realism of the urban scene supersedes any hope of transcendence by way of its mythic subjectification.

## Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting*

In *Trainspotting* (1993) Irvine Welsh denies the transformative potential of myth or, indeed, in any form of subjectivity that may exonerate the depraved reality of the city. The loss of mythic ideals is made clear when baby Dawn, Thomson's projected 'nursling soft and pure', is found dead in her own cot. Although Renton speculates that it is an ordinary cot death, all of the characters feel that their use of heroin and its attendant squalor is responsible. Just after Dawn's death, Renton complains that his heroin is adulterated with Ajax. This reference to the mythic hero has two implications. Firstly, and already tacit in the well known use of the heroic name as the brand-name of a household cleaner, any possibility of heroism is degraded. Secondly, the cleaning powder, 'Ajax', is seen to weaken the subjectifying power of pure heroin. Thus, a cleaning agent has corrupted the only means of heroic identification or transcendence that is appropriate to the characters of Welsh's filthy city. In Welsh's work, the ritual of heroin acquisition — 'scoring', 'cooking' and 'shooting' — is used to disrupt reality. Unlike the cities of Thomson and Stevenson, the disturbance of the real surface of the city does not reveal any kind of metaphysical truth other than its nothingness. The nihilistic subjectification that occurs during heroin-induced states only exacerbates, to recall Lucente's words, the 'empty neutrality of the material object'. There are no 'traces of absent transcendence'. And in Renton's terms:

> Life is boring and futile. . . . We develop aw they long-winded ideas which jist interpret the reality ay oor lives in different weys. . . . We fill up oor lives wi shite, things like careers and relationships tae delude oorsels that it isnae aw totally pointless. Smack's an honest drug, because it strips away these delusions.[47]

The lack of ability to transmogrify reality into transcendent meaning is not altogether lost, however. The toilet still functions as a space in which the concept of degeneration and transcendence are brought together in its most palpable expression. In the overflowing pungent toilets of a bookie's office, for example, Renton is able to unburden himself of several days' worth of excremental build-up. His sense of relief is great, and in this state of well-being he squashes a fly and smears its entrails across the wall. He spells out the name of his favourite football team — H-I-B-S — and is satisfied that the 'H', which, with its 'thick surplus', also stands for heroin, contributes to a meaningful work of art. The 'vile bluebottle', Renton comments, is: 'transformed intae a work of art which gives me much pleasure tae look at' (pp. 25-26). For a moment this transformation is 'a positive metaphor for other things in my life' (p. 26). But it is quickly negated by his realization that the drug itself has gone down the toilet. The loss of the transcendent moment occurs, not at the moment the protagonist realizes the gross nature of his surrounding or his situation in it, but at the accidental release of the substance that enables him to transform that surrounding into a self-validating 'work of art'. When Renton plunges his arm into the toilet to retrieve the suppositories, he stoops to the kind of bestial level plumbed by Trocchi's pornographic works. Trocchi consciously sets out to shock and titillate, but in Welsh's novel, the scene lacks Trocchi's theatricality. The film version of *Trainspotting*, in contrast, lends Renton's descent into the toilet an other-worldly quality in which he touches a transcendent realm. In the novel, however, Renton's desperate need to regain the drug betokens an addiction that overlooks the degradation of his actions and indicates a complete loss of normal self identity. His lack of concern for the open track wounds on his arm indicates a grim sense of assimilation, via heroin's needle-marks, with the excremental scene (rather than the film's movement away from it). Renton's punctured skin is a permeable membrane between himself and the contents of the bowl. His loss of differentiation with the excrement in the toilet also extends to an integrality with the 'shite' society he seeks to escape. Paradoxically, it is through heroin that both escape and assimilation are facilitated.

Renton's epiphany of sorts in the bookie's toilet, and its recuperation of the abject through humour and art, is not sustained through the novel and may be contrasted with the profoundly pessimistic vision of the novel's defining moment. In the short episode 'Trainspotting at Leith Central Station', Renton fully realizes the sense of himself and his community as urban detritus. The city takes on a 'sinister and alien' atmosphere for Renton, as he moves through its dark streets. Full of paranoia and trepidation, his alternating feelings of being both victim and aggressor are dictated by his companion, Begbie. They enter the abandoned railway station and use it as a toilet. The station traditionally represents flux, journeys, and the gateway to other destinations in space and time. Critic Hana Wirth-Nesher lists 'change . . . mingling, romance, adventure, intrigue' among the conventional connotations of the use of the railway station in literature.[48] But, in Welsh's city these progressive and positive qualities are absent. In this station an old drunkard accosts them, and Rents realizes 'thit the auld wino wis Begbie's father' (p. 309). This old man, Begbie's father, is a projection of the boys' future. The future is as 'barren' and 'desolate' as the station has become, the youths are urinating in a 'shrine' to lost journeys and, like the myth of the labyrinth, a place of wasted and sacrificed youth.

This chapter has traced the loss of a potential for transcendence in prenatal security and uterine enclosure, and the city's degenerative representation as intestinal space. The protagonist's realization of this loss of prenatal unity irreparably divides him into both Theseus and Minotaur. The wholeness of a pre-Oedipal state is thus ruptured at the same time that an increasing imposition of reality disables a mythical subjectification. Jacques Lacan, following Freud, theorizes a loss of pre-Oedipal unification in a way that draws together our readings in this chapter and points forward to the concerns of the next chapter. Lacan is not only 'scientific' in his psychoanalytical approach; he associated with writers of the surrealist movement and wrote articles for the surrealist magazine, ***Minotaure***. In a seminal essay, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience' (1949 [1936]), Lacan evaluates the development of the ego. Here, as Muller and Richardson summarize, a child's severance from the mother ruptures his or her 'illusion of totality' and constitutes a formative experience of 'the catastrophe of negation . . . the trauma of limitation, the tragedy of its finitude'.[49] In the discussion of this chapter, a loss of heroic innocence is signified by the flashing blade of Trocchi's protagonists, who sever Ariadne's golden thread or umbilical cord. This action corresponds with the encroachment of reality and its innate limitations and culminates in *Trainspotting*, which registers a loss of mythic transformation.

For Lacan, the moment of loss or rupture of maternal union precipitates desire, or 'want' and is signified by the phallus. Lacan maintains that the child attempts to recapture its lost plenitude as a 'phallus' for the mother. The phallus need not be literal, but is, as Muller and Richardson note: 'a symbol of perfect union between every infant (male or female) and its All'.[50] Phallic images are noted in our discussion of Trocchi's works in chapter three, where a Manhattan skyscraper and a hypodermic needle are used to evoke sovereign identity in self-penetration. In this chapter, the unfolding of uterine space into intestinal space created a *topos* in which sodomy — whether actual, as in Gertie's and Necchi's encounters with men in alleys in *Thongs* and *Cain's Book*; or symbolic, as in the case of Renton's opium suppository scene in *Trainspotting* — signifies the protagonist's endeavour to be self-fertilizing. For Lacan, a narcissistic desire for self-plenitude is impossible due to the presence of the 'father', that is, 'the law of the father' represented by the 'symbolic order', which, in Rosemary Jackson's words, is 'a surrender to the laws of necessity, or reality'.[51] The presence of the 'father' is paradoxical, as Muller and Richardson remark, 'the same law (of the father) that prohibits indulging the child's want to be the mother's phallus is the law that henceforth mediates this want through the linguistic structures by which desire can express itself (i.e. the symbolic order)'.[52] However, as noted, the 'real' fathers in *Cain's Book* and *Trainspotting* are dysfunctional, just as society in itself is inadequate to engender an authentic identity. What transpires in these texts is an unstable symbolic order that gives way to the rupturous, abject and regenerative language that vitalizes Trocchi's and Welsh's ostensibly pessimistic visions.

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[1] Irvine Welsh, *Filth* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1998) pp. 6-7.

[2] Gregory L. Lucente, *The Narrative of Realism and Myth: Verga, Lawrence, Faulkner, Pavese* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1981), p. 42.

[3] Ibid., p. 50.

[4] Calvino's *Invisible Cities* is a key text for modern urban fiction and for the Scottish texts considered in this thesis. It is not as a direct influence, however, as is Eliot's *The Waste Land* (so evidently paradigmatic of the twentieth-century literary city), but it is influential in its thematic configuring and psychogeographical imperatives also seen in twentieth-century Scottish urban fiction.

[5] James Thomson, *The City of Dreadful Night* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1993) I, 1-2. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[6] See, for instance, Crawford (1985), Culleton (1992) and Morgan (1993).

[7] Robert Crawford, 'James Thomson and T. S. Eliot', in *Victorian Poetry*, 23:1 (1985), 23-41 (34).

[8] Paul Elmer More, quoted by Crawford in 'James Thomson and T. S. Eliot', p. 34.

[9] Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Dreams and Mysteries: The Encounter Between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Reality,* (London: Collins Fontana Library, 1968), pp. 172-3.

[10] Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 50.

[11] Ibid., p. 50.

[12] Ibid., p. 42.

[13] Robert M. Torrance, *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion, and Science* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 25.

[14] Jenni Calder's Introduction in Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde and Other Stories* (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 12.

[15] Moray McLaren, *Stevenson and Edinburgh* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1950), p. 157.

[16] *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, p. 29. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[17] Frederic Lindsay depicts a similar scene at the beginning of his novel *Brond* (1984), in which the enigmatic and evil Brond calmly pushes a child off a bridge.

[18] Debra A. Castillo 'Beckett's Metaphorical Towns', in *Modern Fiction Studies*, 28: 2 (1982), 189-200 (190).

[19] Vladimir Nabokov, 'Robert Louis Stevenson, "The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde" (1985)', in *Vladimir Nabokov: Lectures on Literature*, ed. by Fredson Bowers (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), pp. 179-205 (p. 193).

[20] Ibid., p. 184.

[21] *Stevenson and Edinburgh*, p. 151.

[22] Tom Hubbard, *Seeking Mr Hyde: Studies in Robert Louis Stevenson: Symbolism, Myth and the Pre-Modern*, Scottish Studies, Vol. 18 (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, Wien: Peter Lang, 1995), p. 102.

[23] Robert Louis Stevenson, quoted by Tom Hubbard in *Seeking Mr Hyde*, p. 102.

[24] Jenni Calder's Introduction in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, p. 9.

[25] Henry James, 'Robert Louis Stevenson', in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson: A Record of Friendship and Criticism*, ed. by Janet Adam Smith (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1948), pp. 155-156.

[26] Janet Adam Smith's Introduction in *Henry James and Robert Louis Stevenson*, pp. 32-33.

[27] Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place*, p. 152. This comment is discussed in chapter six of this thesis.

[28] Alexander Trocchi, 'Pages of an Autobiography', in *Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds: A Trocchi Reader*, ed. By Andrew M. Scott (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), pp. 3-35 (p. 7). Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[29] Frank Kermode, *Romantic Image* (London: Fontana, 1976), p. 98.

[30] Charles Baudelaire, 'The Swan', in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 173-177 (p. 175).

[31] William Butler Yeats, 'Leda and the Swan', in *W. B. Yeats Selected Poetry*, ed. by A. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 127.

[32] Simone de Beauvoir, 'Must We Burn Sade?', trans. by Annette Michelson, in The Marquis de Sade, *The One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom and Other Writings*, compiled and trans. by Austryn Wainhouse and Richard Seaver (London: Arrow Books, 1990), pp. 2-64 (p. 37).

[33] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by Maria Jolas (Boston: Beacon Press, 1994), p. 18.

[34] Georges Bataille, quoted by Gaëton Picon, in *Surrealism 1919-1939*, trans. by James Emmons (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 173.

[35] *Surrealism 1919-1939*, p. 173.

[36] Acts 21. 39.

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[37] I wish to consolidate and develop Edwin Morgan's somewhat tentative suggestion that the description of the Gorbals in *Thongs* is 'in terms almost parodically reminiscent' of *No Mean City*. See 'Alexander Trocchi: A Survey', in *Edinburgh Review*, 70 (1985), 48-58 (53).

[38] Moira Burgess, *Imagine a City: Glasgow in Fiction*, (Argyll: Argyll Publishing, 1998), p. 163.

[39] Ibid., p. 167.

[40] Alexander Trocchi, *Thongs* (New York: Blast Books, 1994), p. 3 and p. 39. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[41] *The City of Dreadful Night*, VI, 23-24.

[42] William N. Gray, 'George MacDonald, Julia Kristeva, and the Black Sun', in *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900*, 36:4 (1996), 877-893 (882).

[43] Georg Simmel, quoted by Neil Leach in *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory,* ed. by Neil Leach (London: Routledge, 1997), p. xx.

[44] Ibid., p. xx.

[45] The toilet as a privileged site for creative or divine revelation has enjoyed a long history. For example, French poet, Michelet, describes an experience, paraphrased by Bataille: '[A]s he worked he would suddenly find that he lacked inspiration. He then would leave his house and go to a public convenience where the stink was stultifying. He would breathe in deeply and then, having "got as close as possible to the object of his disgust", return to work' (Bataille 1997, p. 75). Luther's illumination on a toilet became axiomatic of the Protestant Reformation. Luther has declared: '[I]t is God's justice which justifies us and saves us. And these words became a sweeter message for me. This knowledge the Holy Spirit gave me on the privy in the tower' (Brown 1963, p. 202). A Scottish version of 'divine experience' is described by James Kelman in the short story, 'The Hon' (1991), in which Auld Shug is grabbed by 'the Hon' of God/Death, which stretches up from the toilet. A secular revelation experienced on the toilet is seen in Alan Sharp's *A Green Tree in Gedde* (1965). The novel posits a 'w/c mentality' (p. 94) as the essential human truth which is always being cleaned away and covered up. One of the central characters, Moseby, uses the toilet in his mother-in-law's house, where, 'trembling on the brink of revelation' (p. 99) he realizes the absurdity of existence: 'Here we sit, we can do no other' (p. 100).

[46] A. McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, *No Mean City* (London: Corgi Books, 1967), p. 129. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[47] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1993), pp. 89-90. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[48] Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 40.

[49] John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, *Lacan and Language: A Reader's Guide to* Écrits (New York: International Universities Press, 1985), p. 22.

[50] Ibid., p. 22.

[51] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 88.

[52] *Lacan and Language*, p. 23.

# CHAPTER SIX

# 'NARCISSUS AND MURKY WATERS': A PHENOMENOLOGY OF FILTH

> 'I am your author. . . . I used to be part of [God], though. Yes, I am part of a part which was once the whole. But I went bad and was excreted. If I can get well I may be allowed home before I die, so I continually plunge my beak into my rotten liver and swallow and excrete it. But it grows again. Creation festers in me. I am excreting you and your world at the present moment. This arse-wipe' — he stirred the papers on the bed — 'is part of the process.'
>
> Alasdair Gray, *Lanark*[1]

*Lanark* is a landmark text in the tradition of Scottish urban writing. In this description of 'excreted' pages, the novel reiterates a theme that is prevalent to this tradition. It echoes, for example, Trocchi's words in *Cain's Book* that 'there is no harm in telling a few stories, dropping a few turds along the way'.[2] According to its critics, excremental preoccupations are a notable feature of Scottish writing. The kailyard writer Ian Mclaren's refusal to have 'drains . . . opened in his library' is noted in the epigraph to chapter one of this thesis. In regard to the proliferation of socialist realism in the 1930s and 1940s, Sir Herbert Grierson complains, as Morley Jamieson recalls, that 'the trouble with the younger Scottish writers was that they had jumped out of the kailyaird [*sic*] and into the midden'.[3] And in a recent essay on McIlvanney's brand of realism, Keith Dixon refers to the so-called 'stunkin' fush' school of literature: 'a denunciatory fiction, intent on revealing the seamy underside of Scottish social reality . . . which begins with George Douglas Brown and John MacDougall Hay, and finds a contemporary echo in the works of James Kelman or Alasdair Gray'.[4] However, an excessively excremental perception of reality is not necessarily merely perverse, as the critics above seem to believe. Like the 'opening' of drains, the 'jumping' into middens and the 'revealing' of squalor, filthy matter can disrupt realistic surfaces and in doing so, release metaphysical meaning.

In Gray's *Lanark*, notions of self-sacrifice, division and abjection and the recuperation of these constitute both the 'heroic' process and the creative act. In the passage above, the 'author' of *Lanark* associates himself with the rebellious Greek hero Prometheus, who steals fire and is punished by having his ever-renewing liver torn out by a bird. Notably, in Gray's version the 'author' is an automutilator, perpetuating his own self-abjection and self-division. Georges Bataille argues, in an essay 'Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh' (1930), that such self-sacrifice is innate to the Promethean myth and indeed, is where Prometheus finds his transcendence: 'the Icarian being who goes to seek the fire of the heavens is . . . nothing other than an automutilator . . . . All the wealth he derives from the mythical delirium is limited to the incredible vomiting of the liver'.[5] For the 'author' of *Lanark*, the eaten and excreted liver constitutes the process by which the novel has come into being, and in its creation he hopes to 'get well' and find 'home'. Excrement is thus given positive value in its recuperation as art. However, to ascribe sovereign identity in dismemberment and excrement reveals 'the whole', with which the 'author' aims to rejoin, to be delusive (excrement: *ex* = out, *cerno* = to separate). This self-perpetuating division can be considered pathological. In the light of Bataille's comments, however, division is also affirming. For Bataille, transcendence is found in the rupture of the whole. Vomiting and excreting have, he suggests, 'the power to liberate heterogeneous elements and to break the habitual homogeneity of the individual'. In a broader sense, these acts signify 'the rejection of what had been appropriated by a person or by a group'. To 'throw himself suddenly *outside of himself*', concludes Bataille, is to be 'free'.[6]

This chapter traces the uses of excrement or vomit for the articulation of the self-autonomy of the suffering 'hero' in Edward Gaitens's *Dance of the Apprentices* (1948), Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, James Kelman's *A Disaffection* (1989), and, briefly to conclude, Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine* (1984). In the manner of a traditional heroic quest, as outlined in the introduction of this thesis, the hero's movement through the city is dialectical in nature. That is, to recall Abrams's summary given in the introduction, the hero moves from Hegel's 'self-alienated condition', through an educational process of 'self-division, self-contradiction, and self-conflict', and toward an ultimate goal of unity, or what Hegel terms 'Absolute knowledge'.[7] However, in the works cited above, the hero experiences a 'negative epiphany' in his identification with heterogeneous matter that disallows unity. Patrick Reilly describes a 'negative epiphany' in *The Literature of Guilt* (1988), as a definitive moment of biblical guilt: 'that Judas moment when the self gags at its own corruption'. For modernist literature this moment is, says Reilly, 'a salient, almost a defining, characteristic'.[8] The dialectic of real/ideal that structures each of the novels cited may not move toward wholeness. A rupturous release of filth perpetuates social and inner divisions that are in fact deemed more appropriate for an urban mode of transcendence. A brief outline of contextual considerations and methodology follows.

In the realistic sphere of the novels considered in this chapter, a working-class protagonist lives in a city (Glasgow) where Calvinist and economic ideologies constitute the dominant social order. In this context, artistic aspirations and ideals are not assimilable and the protagonist is therefore considered to be what Bataille terms a 'heterogeneous' entity. The use of the term 'heterogeneous' in this chapter is taken from Bataille's definition given in an essay, 'The Psychological Structure of Fascism' (1933-1934). There, Bataille writes:

> The *heterogeneous* world includes everything resulting from *unproductive* expenditure . . . .This consists of everything rejected by *homogeneous* society as waste or as superior transcendent value. Included are the waste products of the human body and certain analogous matter (trash, vermin, etc.); the parts of the body . . . the various unconscious processes such as dreams or neuroses; the numerous elements of social forms that *homogeneous* society is powerless to assimilate . . . [such as] different types of violent individuals or at least those who refuse the rule (madmen, leaders, poets, etc.) . . . . There is sometimes attraction, sometimes repulsion, and in cerain [*sic*] circumstances, any object of repulsion can become an object of attraction and vice versa.[9]

In the modern Scottish city (of literary realism), the 'artist as a young man' cannot reconcile himself, or be reconciled, to a self-contained, 'homogeneous' social system and he is something of an outcast. For an outsider — like Byron's 'gloomy wanderer' or Trocchi's exiled Cain — sovereign identity may be defined by a relationship of radical difference to a society that is rejected by, or that rejects, the protagonist. This being so, he is also a sinner (just as, in the titles of Trocchi's major novels, 'Adam' is the Fallen Man and 'Cain' is the first murderer). Nietzsche's prophet, Zarathustra, in 'Of the Way of the Creator', demarcates the path to the Superman as one of radical difference from the masses and therefore a way of sin: '"He who seeks may easily get lost himself. It is a crime to go apart and be alone" — thus speaks the herd'.[10] Nietzsche's own solitude gets him 'lost' and leads him to insanity. For Trocchi and his fictional personas, rebellion may engender transcendence in sovereign identity, but it may also bring madness, incarceration or annihilation. As discussed in chapter three, the socially and self-alienated protagonist is celebrated as well as problematized in Trocchi's works. However, in the urban novels considered in this chapter, the recuperation of a negative self-identification may be problematic for a protagonist who inhabits the abject spaces of the city/self less willingly.

The protagonist's schismatic relationship with his external world has profound implications for his inner sense of identity. Such an identity may be elucidated by way of some aspects of Lacan's theory of ego formation in 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience'. Lacan writes that the mirror stage serves 'to establish a relation between the organism and its reality — or, as they say, between the *Innenwelt* [inner world] and the *Umwelt* [external world]'. This has particular significance for the present thesis, which emphasizes the integrality of the city and the protagonist who moves through, perceives and interprets it. Lacan explains that, for the individual 'caught up in the lure of spatial identification', the mirror stage constitutes a dialectical passage made from a narcissistic relation with the mother toward entry into the symbolic order. In this primary state of maternal plenitude and unity, the child has no sense of individual identity. For Lacan, this identification with the mother is an 'Imaginary', or fantastical state that precedes spatial identification outside of maternal enclosure. This identification is made when the child objectifies him or herself and, in doing so, engenders subjectivity, as Pam Morris explains: 'Subjectivity has to be constructed in relation to objectivity: for a sense of 'me' to be conceived there has to be a sense of a separate 'other'.[11] As a subject, defined in language, the child enters the 'symbolic order'. The 'symbolic order' is defined by Morris as 'our total structure of meaning' and includes linguistic and ideological frameworks.[12] For the purposes of this chapter, the symbolic order denotes the 'real' world of the city. The journey through the mirror stage is catalysed by an individual's recognition of themselves in a mirror or an 'other'. For a Scottish psyche, the importance of a notion of reflection cannot be underplayed, given the Calvinist predilection, already seen in the context of 'Shadow's' self-recognition in the effluvial poor in chapter one, described by Susan Manning:

> The Calvinist is unable to imagine the 'other' as anything but a message to him, a distorted reflection of something within. . . . Everything is a reflection, an emblem of his inner state — or it is nothing.[13]

In the novels discussed in this chapter, the drama of the mirror stage unfolds within 'real' urban spaces through which passage from 'asubjectivity' to an apparently unified whole is made. The rupturous release of heterogeneous matter and the hero's identification with that which is (r)ejected, realizes Lacan's conception of a delusive self-unity gained in the mirror stage as well as the unattainability of 'totality' toward which the dialectic traditionally moves. In Julia Kristeva's term that provides the title for this chapter: Narcissus finds his reflection in 'murky waters'.[14]

## I. The Emerging Subject

### Edward Gaitens, *Dance of the Apprentices*

*Dance of the Apprentices* by Edward Gaitens (1897-1966) is set in Glasgow just prior to, and during, the First World War. Young Eddy Macdonnel is one of the novel's three 'apprentices of idealism', along with his friends and socialist 'comrades', Neil Mudge and Donald Hamilton.[15] Eddy lives in a dirty and disrepaired tenement with his dysfunctional family. Once optimistic and energetic, the Macdonnel family are crushed by their harsh circumstances and compensate by brutalizing themselves with alcohol, and each other with physical violence. The action of the novel charts the faltering idealism of the three adolescents as they are overtaken by the effects of war, poverty, and family responsibilities. Principally, however, the plot is concerned with Eddy's relationship with the city, his refusal to enlist in the army and the subsequent testing of his ideals during his experiences in prison.

In the first pages of the novel, Eddy has 'discovered Poetry' (p. 3). In particular, he is transported by Robert Herrick's poem, 'To Daffadills' (1648), which he recites at length: '*Fair Daffodils, we weep to see / You haste away so soon*' (p. 3). The words awaken his senses as if they too were 'glistening April buds' (p. 3). It is a response that is appropriate to the type of fecund April promising growth and renewal in the first lines of the General Prologue in Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*. However, it soon becomes evident that in Eddy's city, like *The Waste Land*, 'April is the cruellest month'.[16] Cruel, because Eddy's poetical revelation is misguided and therefore doomed. Firstly, Eddy is 'not sure what daffodils are like' (p. 4), never having seen them grow in the squalid part of Glasgow where he lives. And secondly, Eddy misunderstands the poem's meaning. Herrick's daffodil is a metaphor for the ephemerality of youth, yet Eddy is inspired by the flower's 'ecstatic movements and atmosphere of eternal youth' (p. 4). Eddy's poetic reverie contrasts with his home and family, each tainted with the degenerations of time. The throes of his epiphanic 'discovery' offer a window of escape from a particularly tawdry world which in fact embodies the true meaning represented by Herrick's daffodils. Eddy's 'haggish' mother, for example, lying in a drunken sleep, has lost her youthful beauty and her 'bonny red hair' evident from old photos. This degenerate world apprehends Eddy from the transcendent realm lying 'outside these narrow walls' (p. 4), afforded by his imagination. Drawn back from his 'absent state' by his sister's cries, he re-inhabits the filth of the tenement room and the vulgarity of his family. Yet his imagination is now 'fired and clarified by poetry' (p. 7) and thus squalid space is made unreal: 'the dirty, neglected kitchen . . . was life's evil dream and . . . the immortal experience from which his sister's moans had called him away was true reality' (p. 7).

Eddy wishes to escape into a romanticized, pastoral realm so that he might avoid being consumed by a crushing and devitalizing reality. The dark spaces of the city threaten to engulf the individual and throughout the narrative the characters around Eddy are depersonalized in this way. Neil, for example, is obliged to marry a woman he has made pregnant and, in a description that is reminiscent of Mansie Manson's description of Glasgow streets as a 'quagmire' in *Poor Tom*, he experiences 'the feeling of one sinking into abysmal darkness and imagined he saw millions of hands reaching up to seize him, to drag him down to the dead level of obscurity' (p. 224). Eddy's brother, Francie, attempts to fend off an imposition of filthy space through a succession of esoteric purifying diets. However, his neurosis sends him insane and he dies in a mental institution. Donald attempts suicide by cutting his own throat, disillusioned by the 'futility of life' (p. 192). He gives up his ideals, convinced of his enslavement to an arbitrary fatalism: 'life in the end signified nothing and we were all creatures of Blind Chance' (p. 197). Indeed, the city is shown to frustrate 'vision'. The city smothers itself under its own weight: 'massive blocks of tenements' appear 'to crush the life from the low-browed shops beneath, all shut and blinded' (p. 45). The city's inhabitants are also affected. Characters such as Blind Mary and One-Eyed Jerry are not as tragic in their actual visual impairment as the other characters who have lost the light in their eyes. Eddy is denied any sense of illumination due to economic hardship. Recalling the images evoked in the mythological city, his mother, like a failed Ariadne, 'would forbid him to have light. She did not regard reading as a good excuse for consuming gas' (p. 11). Eddy's poetic idealism would seem to impart a mystical inner 'vision' to compensate. Yet his misinterpretation of the daffodils reconfigures inner vision into a wilful blindness to external reality.

If Eddy's recourse to a felicitous 'other world' constructed by language is necessary to cope with the brutality of existence, it is, however, also shown to be inappropriate and absurd. Eddy experiences two epiphanies, achieved via the words of others, that prefigure his inevitable fall. In the first of these, Eddy is so inspired with the poetic daffodils that he stands at the window, 'chanting' the poem like a liturgy, and makes a supplication to the night air. His mind soars above Marxian pragmatism and the filth below him and purifies the city in a fire of poetic fervour:

> He felt the higher lift of April skies . . . the stir of Earth to new life. . . . The beauty the lyric sang was more real to him than all the arguments and statistics of propaganda pamphlets, and all humanitarian platitudes. . . . In his moment of illumination, over all the ugliness, misery and brutality he had seen in his home, that he knew malformed men's lives in his city and everywhere in the world, he saw the beauty, poise and nobility of Poetry triumph at last. Yes, man would learn the art of living, but for yet a long while he would wash out evil in his own blood, until at last, utterly weary of greed, mistrust and fear, hatred and murder, he would discover humility and gentleness. . . . Boldly, like a being defying evil and death, he lifted his head and held out his hands to the night. (p. 21)

Eddy is blind to the fact that the 'din and echoing talk' (p. 20) of the Corporation dustmen in the midden below possess a lyrical vigour missing from his own use of Herrick's poem. His 'chanting' appears anaemic in comparison with the men's 'laughing', ribald rejoinder to a complaint made about their noise: '"Haud yer wheesht, man! Awa back tae bed an' keep yer wife warrm!"' (p. 21). Eddy's second epiphany is similarly ludicrous in its flight from coarseness. Standing under lamplight in a Glasgow alley, a location which the three 'apprentices' both 'identify' with and consider themselves 'superior' to (p. 92), Eddy and Donald listen to Neil read from his essay on the theme of 'INDIVIDUALISM'. His essay is constructed of 'plagiarisms' from 'Schopenhauer, Emerson, Thomas Carlyle and Bernard Shaw' (p. 96). In it, Neil focuses on 'the relations of the individual to the State', and ends by 'refusing the State any rights at all' (p. 95). He demands a 'personal liberty' independent of any political or religious construct. All the while, the city constantly imposes its presence. A pack of screaming children and a carousing drunkard cause interruptions. And in a symbolically charged moment, an old hawker lumbers past and knocks the essay out of Neil's hands. However, Eddy is oblivious to the urgency of conditions around him: his 'mind had flown elated on the procession of words' (p. 95). Eddy's desire to be lifted into transcendence and escape the city's limits to freedom results in a fall into the filthy matter that both prompts and disallows his flight.

Eddy's flight and fall are symptomatic of what Bataille terms an 'Icarian complex'. In an essay, 'The "Old Mole" and the Prefix *Sur*' (1968 [*c*. 1930]), Bataille recalls Marx's symbol of the 'old mole' that burrows up from below to subvert the system. He argues that to seek revolt in the elevated sphere of intellect or 'servile idealism' not only destines a fall, it betrays the individual's 'unconscious' and 'pathological' desire to fall.[17] As Bataille puts it: 'what can there be in the will to rise above social conditions, if one excludes the unconscious pathological desire to be struck down violently like Icarus and Prometheus'.[18] Eddy's fall comes when he causes a disturbance at the army recruitment office. Although the conscription officer informs him he is too young to be drafted and that he should go home, Eddy refuses. His ebullition is also the first time that he believes he has found his own, unique and heroic voice:

> Eddy shouted, 'Glasgow, the Keystone of Utopia!' and believing he had uttered an inspired phrase he shouted it proudly again. . . . At last he was a real hero of The Working Class Movement! And he went on singing The Red Flag. But no one took the slightest notice of him. (p. 136)

Eddy's outburst configures with Bataille's conception of an 'Icarian complex' as a desire to plummet. Bataille writes that an individual 'is obliged to render himself guilty of extraordinary excesses in the most turbulent kind of exaltation, in order to regain this vulgarity, which has become for him a vertiginous consciousness of his fall'.[19] An individual's attempt to fly, as Eddy puts it: 'from the brute to the Godhead in him' (p. 21), can occur only in an awareness of this innate vulgarity. Bataille writes that this 'vulgar human nature' is regarded as 'a sign of guilt and punishment'.[20] Eddy's outburst precipitates his imprisonment. In prison, he is made to realize this vulgarity in a self-truth found in physical filth.

In her essay, 'Carceral Topography' (1999), Monika Fludernik discusses the suffering of an imprisoned subject through the forced ritualization and exaggerated focus placed on bodily needs so that 'corporality here engulfs the mind'.[21] In *Dance of the Apprentices*, Eddy's obsession with the paucity of prison food is exacerbated in solitary confinement. Here, his own waste comes to yield existential meaning:

> He emptied the water from his basin into the chamberpot, hurriedly lifting and replacing the tight-fitting lid, filling the cell with the stench of the contents of his bowels, diseased with prison food and life. Then he would pace to and fro . . .

> trying not to breathe the tainted air that reminded him of his own feebleness and corruption and lingered, escaping so slowing [*sic*], through the opening of one small sliding pane of the heavily-barred window. Sometimes he wanted to smash every pane in that window and let the air remove the indignity of the unnatural life, cleansing his solitude. (p. 227)

Eddy's self-recognition in the foulness of his excrement forces an association that moves concentrically outward from a personal to a social identification. He suffers a depersonalization in the humility of having to queue with his fellow prisoners, 'carrying his chamberpot to the big lavatory in the centre of the gallery, [to] wait his turn to empty it' (p. 228). This description of the prison midden evokes the city's teeming back-courts. Eddy learns that he is no different from the urban 'misery' and 'evil' he despises and seeks to purify. Consequently, focus draws back inward and Eddy constructs his own psychological prison: 'During that dark, long time he often recalled his ludicrous failure and, within himself, writhed in shame, walling himself round with inescapable inferiority' (p. 255). Thus, in his oscillation from inside to outside and back again he stitches himself into a space of entropy. In *Dance of the Apprentices*, Eddy and the prison are one, like the protagonist of George MacDonald's *Lilith*, for whom solitude is to be an 'eternal prisoner in the dungeon of [one's] own being!'[22] and Margaret Oliphant's narrator in 'The Land of Darkness', whose incarceration is also psychological: 'from myself I could never escape'.[23]

The 'derealization' of space already instigated by Eddy's recourse, in the city, to a fantastic realm, is shown to distort normal perception and makes his identification with filthy matter possible. The dissolution of the material city, as a projection of the fragmenting subject, is seen, as discussed in chapter two, in Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* and Blake's *The Shipbuilders*. The city is made unreal or uncanny, that is, it opens out into a subjective terrain, when it is refracted through fog. A notion of 'derealization', or self-dissolution by space, is theorized by French sociologist, Roger Caillois. His theory is based on observations made of the animal world, yet it has implications for human psychology, as Lacan notes. In 'The Mirror Stage', Lacan cites Caillois's theory of derealization as a basis for his own notion of the formation of the ego principally as a 'spatial identification'. Caillois argues that when an organism is trapped in its environment it will take on the coloration or other qualities of that space. This loss of individual representation in mimicry is termed 'legendary psychasthenia' by Caillois and is dependent, as Anthony Vidler notes, 'on the breaking down of the normal process by which spatial perception situates the subject clearly in space and in opposition to it'.[24] Vidler quotes Caillois:

> The living creature . . . is no longer the origin of the coordinates, but one point among others; it . . . *literally no longer knows where to place itself*. . . . The feeling of personality, considered as the organism's feeling of distinction from its surroundings, of the connection between consciousness and a particular point in space, cannot fail under these conditions to be seriously undermined.[25]

In *Dance of the Apprentices*, Eddy is unwilling to make any concession to his reality. He is no longer blind to the naïveté of his past idealism: 'Had not all his actions sprung from a vague sentimentalism, nourished on misunderstood poetry, propaganda pamphlets and revolutionary speeches?' (p. 266) He also realizes the truth behind the lines of Herrick's poem: 'Ideals were the flowers of youth that drooped soon and rotted away' (p. 256). Yet, to use Caillois's terms, paraphrased by Lacan, although Eddy suffers 'an obsession with space in its derealizing effect', he cannot assume a 'morphological mimicry' so that he might survive.[26] To do so would entail an unacceptable loss of his unique self. The horror of this depersonalization is the 'negative epiphany' that surrounds his scatological self-recognition. He is merely 'a unit in a minority mass-movement, with no clear individual view of a way of life' (p. 256). However, he cannot reconcile his own identity, grounded in abject realism and therefore mere 'existence', with the romantic poetic, socialist or theosophical ideal of individual, transcendent 'being' to which he aspires. As his name, 'Eddy', connotes, he is unable to move against or change the flow of life around him and instead circles on himself in a place of stasis. In this 'half-way house', Eddy is unable to achieve an authentic mode of transcendence.[27]

According to Caillois, this 'derealization' of space leads to schizophrenia and a fear of space. For Eddy in *Dance of the Apprentices*, this fear of space is foreshadowed in the city, yet in the confinement of prison it is pathological. Caillois continues, quoted by Vidler:

> To these dispossessed souls, space seems like a devouring force. Space pursues them, encircles them, digests them in a gigantic phagocytosis. It ends by replacing them. Then the body separates itself from thought, the individual breaks the boundary of his skin and occupies the other side of his senses.[28]

In *Dance of the Apprentices*, Eddy suffers recurring nightmares in which he is, like Caillois's subject, consumed by space. In one of these dreams, he lies in an 'utter darkness and silence burdened with evil'. Trapped by 'the suffocating beat of his heart', he watches 'the doorway's black aperture through which would enter the unknown one, the faceless murderer, to strangle him' (p. 227). In another traumatic dream of engulfment he imagines that 'the roof and the floor of his cell slid[e] towards each other with infinite slowness' (p. 228). Eddy's neurosis and depression capitulate so that it is unclear whether he is still sane.

Like that of Caillois's schizophrenic subject, Eddy's subsumation by space induces a separation of body and thought. He projects his mind beyond the material and corporeal confines of prison and describes how 'his spirit came clear as a bright-winged creature' (p. 249). He re-enters an urban space in which specificity gives way to excessive idealization:

> He was walking through Gorbals streets as if he were there in body; past . . . Hospital Street, Thistle Street, Crown Street . . . [past] singing beggars . . . . [He was] looking up graceful Saint Vincent Street . . . down which at gloaming tonight, a flood of sunlight would pour. (p. 248)

This regression from reality disables the dialectic between the ego and the external world that Lacan views as necessary for the subject to emerge and function. According to Rosemary Jackson, a recourse to fantasy disrupts the 'realistic' indivisibility of the ego: 'Fantasies try to reverse or rupture the process of ego formation which took place during the mirror stage, i.e. they attempt to re-enter the imaginary'.[29] Eddy remains tied to a primordial state and in this sense his prison is like a womb. It is possible to trace this uterine metaphor in the novel's portrayal of Eddy's incarceration. In prison a 'real' identity is born in the hero's reflection in filth. This 'diseased' excremental vision is associated with 'prison food and life', thus degenerating the self-sufficiency and plenitude of maternal enclosure (recall that Eddy's mother, as a failed Ariadne, forbade him illumination). The womb becomes Eddy's tomb. In his hours of solitary confinement he speaks to no one and is trapped in a space without language: his time is spent re-stitching the bindings of broken books and sewing mailbags meant for other people's letters.

His nightmares of being engulfed by space appear prophetic. A final image is of his face at the cell window: 'gazing hungrily till darkness filled his cell and his face sank into that darkness, away from the outside world, like the face of a drowning man disappearing for the last time' (p. 258). In this image, the point is being made that, despite Neil's insistence of the State's hindrance to personal freedom, in fact society, reality, or Lacan's 'symbolic order' is necessary in order for the individual to function. As noted in chapter one of this thesis, MacDonald's hero in *Lilith*, Vane, realizes that solipsism is anathematic: 'nowhere but in other lives can [man] ripen his speciality, develop the idea of himself, the individuality that distinguishes him from every other'.[30] Developing this point in Gaitens's novel, a second conclusion is made by way of a reappearance of the daffodils. After Eddy's face falls from the window, he turns to his cell where, illuminated against the dark wall of the cell, the golden flowers hang in 'a haze of celestial azure' (p. 258). However, when the warder ignites the lamps the flowers disappear: 'his vision of the earth and sky was blotted out and his aura of flowers faded away' (p. 258). The point being made is that darkness is necessary for there to be illumination. This final realization is reminiscent of Mansie Manson's similar discovery, made in *Poor Tom* and already noted in chapter four, of the necessity of the physical process for beautiful vision: 'for without the digestive tract and the excretory canal how could there be flourishing orchards and fields yellow with corn?'.[31] In *Dance of the Apprentices*, Eddy's escape from reality had failed to bring into play a dialectical patterning of opposites. Eddy is a submerging subject rather than an emerging subject: the 'murky water' of Narcissus reflects a vanishing self.

## Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place*

Eddy Macdonnel is punished for an idealism that refuses to acknowledge the vitality as well as the horror of everyday reality. His escape from this world leads him to seek refuge in his imagination. By doing so, urban space is derealized. Unable to reconfront reality, Eddy's depersonalization in prison makes him more vulnerable to the spatial phobia that accompanies spatial derealization. Finally, unable to accept that darkness is necessary for illumination and that society is necessary for individuation, Eddy is finally subsumed by space as both a physical and psychological entity. He 'drowns', like the fallen Icarus. In a sense, Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place* picks up from where Gaitens's novel finishes, as the protagonist, Mat Craig, identifies himself not as Icarus, but with the mythic artificer, Daedalus. The plot of the novel is straightforward: Mat is a working-class man who finds that his urge to be a writer is not compatible with social or personal expectations. Nevertheless, his quest through the city is to find his authentic voice. For Mat, authentic identity is inextricable from the creative act. The following discussion charts Mat Craig's idealization of the city and his gradual acknowledgment of abject reality. This acceptance is the novel's point of departure from Eddy Macdonnel's sentimental vision of the city, and it corresponds with the setting in motion of a dialectic and a recuperation of abjection for the purposes of identity.

Mat is first viewed through the window of his council house sitting within a 'circle of light' and trying to write.[32] From this perspective Mat's halo of light appears beatific. On the bookshelf behind him are volumes of Marx, Lenin, London and Zola; writers who had principally been concerned with actual social conditions, yet to whom Mat also attributes an 'ardent idealism' (p. 7). Mat's own interest at this moment is ideal rather than material, as he seeks to express 'a type of mystic experience' he remembers having had as a child and which he now associates with his present experience of writing. In contrast to Eddy Macdonnel, who attempts to soar over the city's filth on wings of poetic vision, Mat disengages with the present reality of the city and escapes back into a nostalgic past through which he mythicizes the city. Earlier times of industrial prosperity and his own happy childhood supply the material for Mat's writing: 'there was a deep and intimate connection between his memory and his writing' (p. 37). Through the filter of memory, the past remains innocent: 'he consciously eschewed all the violence and misery which had been a part of his childhood' (p. 38). In a sense, Mat (like Eddy) is guilty of the 'chronic Scots disease of nostalgia, of the urge to escape back into the comprehensible conditions of their original, independent state and away from the new, incomprehensible turmoils of the industrial age' of which George Blake accuses the kailyard writers in *Barrie and the Kailyard School*,[33] discussed in chapter one of this thesis. The provisional title of Mat's 'magnum opus', 'Rutherglen's wee roon red lums reek briskly' (p. 23), pleases Mat in its evocation of a bygone age of creative vigour and secure, masculine identity: 'He imagined these old burghers . . . [with] their mixture of canniness and daring, their overwhelmingly male pursuits; and their women forming a solid domestic background' (p. 24). However, Mat's title and his sepia-toned city would, no doubt, have appalled Blake, who views such 'nostalgia' as a blindness toward the problems of the age as well as an evasion of the 'novelist's fundamental concern [which] is with the human soul'.[34]

To Mat's mind, Glasgow's industrial areas are a magnificent testimony to the creative impulse, embodied most significantly, he believes, in the river Clyde, resplendent as a 'tamed, or "domesticated" . . . human artifact' (p. 14). Quintessential to the city and its people, the river also specifically symbolizes Mat's birthplace and happy childhood:

> He knew every waste pipe that gushed its mucky sediment into the river, every path along its bank, every forsaken spot and lonely stretch . . . [I]t had been through this landscape that he had walked when he had once felt so unaccountably happy.
>
> Inside one of these loops in the river he had been born. (p. 17)

Mat's imaginative construction of the river as his birthplace connotes its implications for a very personal sense of identity. Indeed, the whole of the city is evoked as a psychogeographical landscape when Mat alludes to Freud's Rome described in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, discussed in chapter two of this thesis, as an analogy for the way the mind preserves past experiences:

> Mat remembered a description of Rome which he had read somewhere. It had been described as a kind of half buried history where everything, the houses, streets, monuments, churches were a huge physical agglomeration of the debris of history. (p. 23)

Mat's view of the city and river, steeped in the past to the exclusion of present reality illustrates the limits of his own self-knowledge. He is vaguely aware that 'somewhere in him there was a flaw' (p. 26). A short time later, in conversation with his friends, he realizes this flaw is that 'he did not evaluate himself. He knew his own weaknesses as well as the others did, but he simply accepted them, for they were his own' (p. 52). Having made this recognition, Mat does not yet attempt to address it. Thus, at the start of the novel, the river is a focus of Mat's writing but also represents his inability to express himself through it. For all its imagined splendour it is also 'the mucky old river about which he so often tried to write' (p. 18). Mat's insistence on writing about the past, the river, and the city as they pertain to his own identity indicates a concern for a sovereign selfhood, for which his self-evasion is problematic.

Mat's recourse to a nostalgic mode of subjectivity springs from his fear of the possible limitations reality may impose on existential freedom. He is aware that any contingency on a philosophical realm is prompted by the material banality of the city but is just as likely to be negated by it:

> The physical world comes to us again and again until we become tired of it . . . [One's] desires become more complex, richer; and it is here that he is often drawn up short, feels the violent tug of the curb, when all this theoretical latency becomes circumscribed by the bald, brutal facts of his own individual existence. (p. 55)

The city is the space in which is played out Mat's fundamental struggle between these 'desires' and 'facts'. On the one hand, he fosters a 'need to conserve, to guide, to order, to fear the loss of those things which were of value' (p. 218); while on the other hand, he has 'a need for excess, for recklessness' (p. 218) that renders an ordered, conservative reality an anathema. Mat's development reaches a turning point when he is offered a way in which the limitations of reality may be recuperated. During one of his customary visits to the public library, a reading of Hegel provides a double revelation and is a watershed moment in the text. Firstly, Mat learns the importance of self-awareness to the construction of being: 'the act of being might be connected with the act of forming, that consciousness might be form' (p. 68). Secondly, he learns of the significance of negativity to being:

> He was captivated by the idea . . . which almost bounced him out of his seat so that he rocked back and forth with excitement as he read that his discrete, individual nature might depend upon the fact of his mortality. (p. 68)

Mat's revelation, in which he is 'rocked back and forth' sets in motion a dialectic that ensures and patterns his continuing development.

Mat learns that to authenticate his identity through its writing he must confront the negative aspects of the city, a prospect that proves troublesome. Mat finds the contemporary reality of the city an impoverished source of creative inspiration. He draws upon views that are vividly reminiscent of those Edwin Muir expresses in 'The Functionless of Scotland' and *Scott and Scotland*, both of which describe Scotland and its literary tradition as merely simulacrum realities. *Scott and Scotland* outlines the problems faced by Sir Walter Scott, who 'lived in a community which was not a community, and set himself to carry on a tradition which was not a tradition'.[35] And in 'The Functionlessness of Scotland', Muir argues that Scotland exists 'in a sort of limbo, half within the world of life and half outside it: a melancholy, unsatisfied, blindly aspiring state'.[36] In *The Dear Green Place*, Hind does not quote Muir directly, but Mat's comments are surely comparable:

> In lieu of all this artistic and human extravagance, all the menace, violence and horror which had been the experience of so many European writers, in Scottish life there was only a null blot, a cessation of life, a dull absence, a blankness and the diminution and weakening of all the fibres of being, of buildings not blown up but crumbling and rotten, of streets not running with blood or rivers of fists but with wan puddles, a withering of existence. (p. 87)

In an allusion to another Scottish literary precedent, Mat proposes a resolution for the problems of reality he has just posed. His second recourse to literature concerns the necessity of a subjective vision. He claims that 'what a writer should do is wrench his whole world up and put the mark of his thumb on it' (p. 88). It is an expression of creative sovereignty that recalls young Gourlay's words in George Douglas Brown's 'anti-kailyard' novel, *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901).[37] There, the line comes when young Gourlay, drunk in Edinburgh, illustrates the meaning of 'metaphor' for the benefit of his friends: 'When Bauldy Johnston said "the thumb-mark of his Maker was wet in the clay of him," he *saw* the print of a thumb in wet clay, and he *saw* the Almighty making a man out of mud'.[38] In *The Dear Green Place*, Mat's use of the same image attests to his recognition of sovereignty gained in a God-like artistic creation that is also anti-sentimental and anti-nostalgic; that is, like Brown's dark anti-kailyard.

The juxtaposition of Muir's and Brown's views — the first on the nature of reality, the second on the nature of subjectivity — elucidates the problematization of Mat's sovereign role as an artist. His complaint that Scottish reality is not sufficiently engaging contradicts his own tendency to perpetuate this view by sentimentalizing it. Mat's answer, to subjectify reality and thus '[d]isturb the peace' (p. 88) is in fact a cause of, rather than an answer to, this complaint. As Wittig notes regarding young Gourlay's words quoted here, the boy's demise is because he 'lives by impressions; they spring to life in his mind, and the pictures which they create are his reality'.[39] Mat's echo of young Gourlay's expression may indicate he is in similar danger of nullifying rather than creating himself in a self-made version of reality. Where young Gourlay had been prone to dramatize reality to the point of hysteria, Mat's subjectivity is, as he will later come to realize, a 'life killing nostalgia' (p. 252).

Mat recognizes that his 'nostalgia' perpetuates the 'limbo' he ascribes to the city in the Muiresque passage quoted above. Mat confronts ideas of mortality as well as its vitality in the slaughterhouse, as discussed already in chapter two. His new-found view of the horror and excitement of physicality is put to the test when he visits an art gallery. Here, he brings the respective 'real' and 'ideal' ethos of slaughterhouse and gallery together in a discussion with the attendant on 'the relation of art to actuality' (p. 147). Their dialogue is a self-conscious interrogation of the nature of art and its relation to social context. Mat remarks that the 'high art' on the gallery walls, with its 'modern' aesthetic of 'shock' is not as successful in this respect as the heaving life outside its walls: 'the physical presence of the city, the masses of stone, the tangled complex of wire and piping, the crowds . . . — the whole untidy ruck which was Glasgow' (p. 147). Mat compares the best of modern art with animals of the South American jungle, whose exotic camouflage and 'aberrant protectiveness' shows 'a kind of vitality, a wish to exist at all costs' (p. 151). However, this 'adaptive energy' goes into the evolutionary process rather than to the benefit of the individual animal. It loses its individuality in the 'rigid formalism' required to ensure its existence. Similarly, Mat continues, for artistic expression to survive a city such as Glasgow, it has to mimic its surroundings: '[art] has to become unlike itself, to protect itself by taking on the appearance of actuality' (p. 152). Mat's comments are profoundly significant for the contention of this thesis, which argues that the depiction of transgressive 'realistic' subject matter shows vitality, yet also functions as a protective surface for concerns pertaining to individuality. The uniqueness of these concerns may be subsumed by the 'realism' that enables their expression.

Mat's hypothesis on the relation of art to reality relates directly to Caillois's theory of 'legendary psychasthenia', and it has implications for the development of Mat's personal identity. He continually emphasizes the way that urban reality limits freedom, as do the characters in *Dance of the Apprentices*. Even Mat's description of his birthplace evokes images of chains and enclosure: 'Inside one of these loops in the river he had been born' (p. 17). Eddy Macdonnel tries to escape reality and locate individuality at its exclusion. By contrast, through Mat Craig's reading of Hegel and experience of the slaughterhouse, he is made aware that both the limitations and the vitality of the physical world constitute the driving force in a process of individuation. From Mat's newly transformed perspective, in stark contrast to Eddy's view, a flight from reality is 'to try to become something other than what he was and in the end to betray art itself' (p. 192). The mimetic function argued by

Caillois is developed in psychoanalytical terms by Lacan and, by way of this link, aspects of Lacan's theory may be traced through *The Dear Green Place* in the events subsequent to Mat's visit to the gallery. Soon after this visit, Mat falls victim to a characteristic self-reflexiveness, which brings the dialectic to a halt:

> However much Mat felt himself to be a welter of oppositions . . . the fact was that this wrestle with himself, as his state of exhaustion became worse, grew sluggish and finally the warring contestants became locked in a strained quivering effort. (p. 192)

This crisis is followed by another: the death of Mat's father in a road accident. The event proves cathartic to Mat's writing and the dialectic. Symbolizing the loss of the past, his work is now inspired by notions of loss and waste associated with the transient nature of childhood. In a sense, Mat has realized and recuperated the full signification of Herrick's daffodils, misconstrued by Eddy in *Dance of the Apprentices*. In an act in which innocence and nostalgia are irrevocably abandoned, Mat destroys his manuscript: 'it had no meaning, no place in his life . . . against reality it was inept and half-hearted' (p. 242). No longer able to seek solace in philosophy — 'the connection between art and truth, goodness, morality, reality and what-not' (p. 249) — Mat turns to the 'dark waters of the river' (p. 248).

The polluted 'murky water' of the Clyde, the symbolic juncture of city and self established by Mat at the start of the novel, is now a place of abjection. In *Dance of the Apprentices*, the river is dragged for an 'eyeless corpse', prophetic of the book's final image of Eddy as a 'drowned man' due to his wilful blindness to reality. The image of the river is central in Trocchi's works, as discussed in chapters three and five, where it is symbolic of the limits of identity and the transgression of these limits. Similarly, in *The Dear Green Place*, the river is a site for a negative self-realization. Mat catches a ferry and on board, he admits that, due to his love of literature he is 'a moral wreck and a mess' (p. 252). Nevertheless, this 'weakness' may also be viewed as a strength: 'he had maintained a persistence that almost amounted to courage. The courage to allow himself to live in this state of despair' (p. 253). Thus, Mat appears to recuperate his flaw to creative advantage:

> He *had* courage. He *wasn't* weak. . . . All he needed to do was to sustain that courage, to crack his nut, to persist in his apparent weakness. Then he'd write the best novel ever to have been written in Glasgow. (p. 253)

With this fresh hope, Mat looks down into a hatch at two ferry operators fixed in an infernal scene: 'Their faces shone red from the blaze of the tiny furnace which glowed up through a hatchway' (p. 254). Its symbolism is missed in his 'euphoric mood'. Mat's epiphany is overturned, however, when he remembers 'his novel, his bonny wean, had been torn and destroyed' (p. 254). The height of euphoria plummets to the depths of despair and, in the dizzy rush precipitated by the knowledge of irreparable loss, Mat vomits:

> He felt the nausea arise which seemed to come from the very marrow of his bones, a moiling utter revulsion as if the very physical elements of his body were coiling and recoiling from each other in disgust. In his self, apart from his body, he felt this deep spiritual boke. . . . He retched and retched and retched and retched . . . . Mat came to himself on his hands and knees on the deck of the ferry, and with the echo in his ears of the animal boking noises he had been making. His nose and upper lip were covered in snot and his mouth full of a bitter watery bile. (p. 255)

Mat's sickness is not, as Alan Bold suggests, due to the realization he is 'simply too good, morally, for the life he is obliged to lead by economic pressure'[40] It is the result of Mat's awareness of an irretrievable state of innocence and the importance of negative, evil and abject modes to expression and self-identity. Mat's animal retching recalls the slaughterhouse beast, that, as discussed in chapter two, embodies 'the idea of consciousness' in its proximity to a threshold 'of consciousness and the irrevocable state of death' (p. 112). Death is shown as crucial to the process of life, and Mat's violent convulsion is a self-rejection that is also self-creation, as Kristeva describes:

> I expel *myself*, I spit *myself* out, I abject *myself* within the same motion through which 'I' claim to establish *myself*. . . . [The motion] turns me inside out, guts sprawling . . . During that course in which 'I' become, I give birth to myself amid the violence of sobs, of vomit.[41]

Kristeva terms self-abjection a 'narcissistic crisis', defined as a moment of abjection that is 'witness to the ephemeral aspect of the state called "narcissism"'.[42] Ostensibly a realization of a fallen state on this floating Hell, Mat's abjection, in which he recognizes himself in his own 'watery bile' is, in the manner of Lacan's mirror stage, a propulsion from the narcissistic or 'imaginary' realm that prefigures entry into the symbolic order.

Mat's 'spiritual boke' signifies his propulsion into the symbolic order represented by the 'real' city. Indeed, when Mat vomits he literally 'wrench[es] his whole world up', as he desires. In this respect, he projects himself, via Brown's metaphor of self-creation, into a tradition of Scottish literature that is neither of the kailyard, nor historical, and therefore is not associated with, for example, Sir Walter Scott. Andrew Monnickendam, in an essay, 'Literary Voices and the Projection of Cultural Failure' (1999), discusses the significance of Mat's vomiting in terms of language. For Monnickendam, it is a rejection of an imperialistic English order and a claim for an authentic Scottish voice; Mat's voice betrays 'a forged English style .... It is fitting that he vomits it out and rinses his mouth out'.[43] But, he continues, there can be no other voice because there is no cultural community from which to draw a 'Scottish' discourse: 'Scotland is not able to build or to tap the resources of a different experience' (p. 240). Monnickendam concludes that Hind's novel, couched in the language of 'tourist pamphlets' (p. 239), cannot override the imperialistic 'uniformity' of the novel form. This text, like other modern Scottish novels, cannot embody G. Gregory Smith's 'Caledonian antisyzygy' or Mikhail Bakhtin's 'heteroglossia': 'it is much more authoritarian than that, being firmly monoglossic and deeply rooted in the perception of a complete self'. (p. 241) However, in *The Dear Green Place*, Mat's sickness, seen in the light of Caillois's theory of 'legendary psychasthenia', is a rejection of the 'rigid formalism' of traditional, unitary ideas of 'Scottishness' and literary realism and an assertion of a heterogeneous, creative individuality.

An emergence into the cultural, historical and linguistic arrangement of Glasgow, the city (rather than the nation) is indicated when Mat disembarks the ferry and turns to a public well. He washes his mouth, thereby appropriating the city's water. On the well, 'cast in iron', are the symbols of Glasgow's coat-of-arms, Mat's 'excutcheon': the tree, the bird, the fish and the bell. The cast iron images recall Mat's earlier description on the ferry of the 'gutter patois into which his tongue fell naturally when he was moved by a strong feeling' (p. 252). This authentic expression is 'self-protective' and is therefore forged, like iron, into a delimiting rigidity:

> A language cast for sneers and abuse and aggression; a language cast out of the absence of possibility; a language cast out of a certain set of feelings — from poverties, dust, drunkenness, tenements, endurance, hard physical labour. (p. 252)

At the end of the novel, the negativity implicit in the well's symbols does not signify a resounding sense of failure;[44] but rather, the necessity to truth of a co-existence of miracle and negation, ideal and real. At this moment the call forth on the city's coat-of-arms: '*Lord, Let Glasgow Flourish by the Preaching of the Word*' (p. 12), is made possible by Mat's realization that negativity, rejection and heterogeneity, however bilious, are essential to a truthful expression of art and identity. Mat's quest toward an authentic and appropriate social identity in *The Dear Green Place* recalls the assertion, made in the introduction to this thesis, of the importance of absence and dystopia to transcendence. As Kristeva remarks: 'Abjection is a resurrection'.[45]

## II. Alexander Trocchi and the Citadel Burst Open

Caillois's conception of the 'derealizing' effect of space is seen in the phenomenology of Gaitens's and Hind's novels. There, the association that is made between the protagonists and their environment, via a self-recognition in excrement or vomit that links them with the abject physicality of the city, leads to an obsession with a loss of spatial differentiation and a schizophrenic self-division. Such division may return to disrupt the reality that causes it, and it may also lead to the individual's permanent alienation and insanity. Trocchi's use of realism and non-real modes to construct identity reveals the dangers that a heterogeneous self-identification entails within the symbolic order.

Following the disintegration of self/other boundary, seen both in Caillois's conception of derealization, and in Bataille's notion of transcendence, Trocchi's narrator realizes the truth posited by Lacan at the end of 'The Mirror Stage'. That is, for the individual seeking spatial representation, 'the social dialectic that structures human knowledge is paranoiac'.[46] True identity is found in insanity.

In contrast to Gaitens's and Hind's protagonists, Trocchi's Joe Necchi in *Cain's Book* consciously invites the dizzying exchange of outside and inside that induces a bout of vomiting. As discussed in chapter three, Necchi's injection of heroin is a form of self-penetration that provides him with an experience of transcendence:

> I drank and regurgitated, drank and regurgitated, the spasms lessening . . . by the thought of my transcendent immunity, and then by the extreme but indefinable ecstasy at my senses.[47]

As a transgression of a boundary of inside and outside it tears open, to use Bataille's phrase, a 'passage, communication', between self and other.[48] However, the resulting experience of the limitless ego is in fact 'indefinable' and *in*communicable, as both Bataille and Trocchi discover. Thus, like the heroin fix, the act of writing in Trocchi's works is both stabilizing and decentring. It is stabilizing in that Necchi uses intoxication and inscription to enclose himself within the apparent self-sufficiency of the 'citadel' or 'Castle Keep'. A similar image of a garrisoned enclosure to denote the ego is used by Lacan in 'The Mirror Stage':

> The formation of the *I* is symbolized in dreams by a fortress . . . its inner arena and enclosure surrounded by marshes and rubbish-tips, dividing it into two opposed fields of contest where the subject flounders in quest of the lofty, remote inner castle whose form . . . symbolizes the id.[49]

Lacan's image of a stronghold also reveals the ego's delusive unity. Yet the self's innate fragmentation and alienation are also realized in the decentring aspect of Trocchi's narcotic and writerly 'fix'. The speaking subject — the narrative 'I' — in Trocchi's *Cain* and in *Young Adam*, will not and cannot maintain a monolithic identity. He suffers division and dissemination (rather than a self-fertilizing *in*semination), as revealed in the reflective and refractive surfaces of mirrors and water. At the end of *Young Adam*, for example, Taylor describes his increasing 'disintegration', and in the 'non-ending' of *Cain*, Necchi's citadel of drug-induced inviolability treacherously bursts open: 'centre everywhere, circumference nowhere; lethal dose variable' (p. 229). In both novels, the self is opened out and exposed to the 'alien city'.[50]

For Trocchi's narrators, bound by language, rather than free within the city's indeterminate spaces, a vertiginous defiance of boundaries induces passivity and stasis rather than transcendence. Whether they are within the scow cabin, the dockland, a hotel room, or the intoxicated state, Trocchi's personae descend into a self-crippling fear of subsumption either by the self or by social space. As Necchi describes in *Cain's Book*: 'Marijuana has a tendency to set me against myself. My shadow waits for me, an instant of time in advance of me, and my knowledge of it can cause us to freeze into long abeyances' (p. 113). In Lacan's theory of the mirror stage, he links a state of inertia with paranoia. In the subject's desire for a 'formal fixation' of 'permanence, identity, and substantiality' upon the ego (Trocchi's 'fix' and 'citadel'), the dialectic of ego/object is frozen. In this static indeterminacy, the fragile unity of the ego is threatened and an individual may experience aggression, self-criticism and paranoia.[51] *Cain's Book* is structured on ostensibly 'real' events and philosophical 'digressions', betraying Necchi's need both for unity (linearity, reality) and rupture (digression, philosophy). A desire for the latter threatens an infinite proliferation of unreason: 'To live within one's imagination is brave, necessary; a man should know that the victims of his imagination can be many. The mass of men is afraid of imagination for this reason' (p. 113). A descent into the desert-scape of the imagination threatens to dissolve solid identity into insanity, yet this process is necessary in order that the monolithic nature of reality be disrupted and re-created. Similar to Trocchi, in James Kelman's novel, *A Disaffection*, the protagonist's ego is revealed and destroyed in paranoia. In this respect Darian Leader's simplification of Lacan's formulation of the 'I' is both useful and paradigmatic:

> The truth of the ego emerges precisely in madness where the world seems to dissolve and the difference between self an other is radically put in question. . . . It is in paranoia that we can see so clearly the components, the steps which go to make up the relation of the world which madness can remind us of.[52]

## III. The Paranoid Subject

### James Kelman, *A Disaffection*

In James Kelman's *A Disaffection*, the relations of the world and the word to the self are imperialistic and assimilative. This novel develops the themes present in *Dance of the Apprentices*, the final vision of which sees its protagonist, Eddy, trapped in a space without language. In *The Dear Green Place*, an authentic voice is made possible, although its essentially urban nature is not without its annihilating effects as well as its vitality. This double possibility of language is central to the concerns of Trocchi's works, in which language, like a narcotic, provides a 'fix' that seems to both anchor and destabilize the self. In Kelman's novel, the symbolic order, represented by the city, controls identity. Language functions as an agent of imperialism that homogenizes experience into monolithic forms by theorization and rationalization. The following discussion of *A Disaffection* charts the attempt of its protagonist, Pat Doyle, to extricate himself from the city that attempts to use language in order to 'fix' its subjects and thus subsume an individual's heterogeneous identity. T. S. Eliot delineates 'a place of disaffection' in *Burnt Norton* (1935), as an indeterminate space: 'At the still point of the turning world'. Here, a wind blows through human lungs, and an 'Eructation of unhealthy souls' is driven with the wind over the 'gloomy hills of London'. In Kelman's novel as in Eliot's poem, a sick soul belches,fusing self and city to become 'the world of perpetual solitude / World not world'.[53] Eliot's and Pat Doyle's conception of a 'still point' contrasts with that described by Pat's namesake, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, in his Sherlock Holmes stories. The Baker Street rooms are described, as noted in chapter two of this study, as 'the only fixed point in the centre of an ever-changing universe'.[54] In this space, Holmes is truly a sovereign figure, ignorant of the Copernican Theory of the Solar System because it has no relevance to his position at the 'centre' of the revolving city upon which he inscribes meaning. In *A Disaffection*, by contrast, Pat is unable to re-inscribe himself independent of an external system that confers and proscribes identity.

Pat's state of 'disaffection' is the result of a loss of faith in his job as a schoolteacher: 'he had become sickened by it'.[55] This opening line is reminiscent of the first line spoken by the protagonist of Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* (1864): 'I am a sick man'.[56] Pat and the underground man have much in common: they are alienated, self-hating, morose and solipsistic. In particular, they are sick of an institionalized society that advocates 'reason'. Dostoevsky's character is critical of '[a]ll these fine systems, all these theories which try to explain to man all his normal interests', and sees that the mass of men is 'so obsessed by systems and abstract deductions that he is ready to distort the truth deliberately, he is ready to deny the evidence of his senses, so long as he justifies his logic' (p. 281). Almost identically, Pat in *A Disaffection*, specifically defines 'reason' as the rationalization and theorization of experience:

> Being a teacher caused people to spend their lives worrying out concepts, postulating this that and the next thing, all manner of hypothesising. . . . Please allow us to conceptualise your problem thus we can attain a sensation of nourishment ergo that your problem, though not yet solved, has been conceptualised, which is tantamount to a solution of course. (p. 86)

Dominant social ideology, epitomized in the education system, is imposed and perpetuated in 'the naming process', which betokens a 'colonisation of the subject, obliteration of the subject' (p. 196).[57]

Pat's concerns regarding the subject's engulfment by society recalls Eddy's forced incarceration in a type of linguistic antechamber in *Dance of the Apprentices*. In *A Disaffection*, Pat's city is a place of:

> Failed ideals, the plans and the principles right from boyhood . . . now dead, deadened, rubbed out by the low-lying roof,

> that weight pressing down on you . . . that kind of weight, society, that you hated and detested more than anything else in the world. (p. 11)

Here, the image of a prison cell is represented as much in the claustrophobic, dark and restrictive picture of the city as Pat's identification with the 'condemned man' and mental state of isolation from his world and from his true, transcendent self. This image of society as a prison has a precedent in Shadow's *Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs*, as noted in chapter one of this thesis. Alexander Brown ('Shadow') writes that he, like the 'pent-up' dwellers of the city's underworld of dens, 'are not allowed to feel their *individuality* in the state'.[58] This is due in part to a 'theological prison-house', yet it is also the cause of a lack of education:

> The aristocracy, and the enfranchised classes generally, dread the ascendancy of the popular element. They withhold from them political and social privileges, on the ground of no-knowledge qualification, yet they scrupulously withhold all educational means of qualification.[59]

Even over a century later, in the urban society represented in *A Disaffection*, the education system has not empowered the 'popular element'. Instead, as Pat denunciates, it serves 'a dictatorship government . . . [in] the business of fencing in the children of the suppressed poor' (p. 67). Pat's invective is reminiscent of the 'spleen' of the underground man, whose disavowal of 'reason' is the cause of his self-exile. For Dostoevsky's character, this slavery to logic is an abomination because it saps one's desire and volition and therefore one's sovereignty: 'For what is a man without desires, without free will, and without the power of choice but a stop in an organ pipe?' (p. 284). Thus, when Pat transforms some rubbish into musical pipes they symbolize, like the underground man's 'organ pipes', the possibility that individuality may, on the one hand, be thwarted by external manipulation, or it may, on the other, discover a force for self-created 'harmony'.

Pat quests for self betterment and a way of humanizing the system from his place within it. This quest for transformation begins when Pat finds a pair of disused lengths of industrial piping which he recuperates into musical instruments:

> One grabs a pair of pipes from the rear of an arts centre and proceeds to blow sounds, and these sounds seem so perfectly stated that the pipes themselves are henceforth transformed, they are become transcendental objects, instruments of music! (p. 67)

Pat finds the pipes while urinating in an alley behind the local arts centre. Macdonald Daly, in an article written in a parody of Kelman's language, notes that the abject circumstances in which the pipes are found is typical of the Glasgow novel:

> Fictional Glaswegians canni be bothered usin toilets. They'd much rather go doon the stairs and oot in the cauld . . . than walk five yards tae the antiseptic utopia of a postmodern water closet. . . . Either that or there is no bog, which corroborates all the usual stereotypes of Glasga as a city in which laws are not enacted . . . or there is a bog but Doyle is the example *par excellence* of the kind of wanker and misfit who lives in this city in which, even when the legal *minima* are provided, the locals refuse to take the opportunities thus presented.[60]

As discussed in the previous chapter, urban toilets or alleys used as such are key sites for notions of transgressive transcendence. As intestinal or scatological zones they signify post-partum spaces. That is, they somewhat cynically represent the symbolic order rather than pre-Oedipal maternal enclosure. In these zones, 'real' or symbolic sodomy is attempted in order to engender transcendence in self-fertilization. In *A Disaffection*, Pat hopes the pipes will afford unity: 'the whole thing . . . the manner in which each person, each organism, related to things as a totality, that old business of harmony, linked in the universal chain' (pp. 9-10). Daly suggests the pipes are phallic: 'Paddy turns tae wankin the pipes, manipulatin . . . these replacements fur his dick'.[61] His sexual dysfunction that is the cause of much of Pat's angst throughout the novel and the futility inherent in the masturbatory signification of the pipes disallow wholeness in the sexual terms evoked. Thus, there is dysfunction in terms of the Lacanian conception of the phallus, noted in the concluding remarks of the previous chapter, as 'a symbol of perfect union between every infant (male or female) and its All'.[62] Self-fertilization is not possible because Pat is a divided character. As Foucault remarks in another context: 'The penetrable body must . . . be a continuous body'.[63]

Rather than providing harmony, the pipes reveal and represent Pat's inner divisions. On the one hand, the pipes represent the physical world of 'things of genuine value, things of a genuine authenticity, of a genuine physicality' (p. 10). In this capacity their existence allows Pat to consider an alternative to teaching and he imagines himself giving public performances, emphasizing the 'doing, the act' (p. 10) and a spontaneity akin to free-form jazz. However, on the other hand, Pat cannot help speculate a deeper meaning to the pipes in the theoretical terms he seeks to transcend. He recalls the Pythagorean use of sound, the relation of sound to 'field-theory' (p. 9), as well as the complexities of 'functionalism and nominalism, the naming process and imperialism' (p. 10). However, he realizes the way that such '[t]heoretical webs . . . old and shrivelling away into nothingness' (p. 10) bleed the moment of its jazz-like affirmation in which negativity is made beautiful. Although, for Pat, artistic function seems more tangible and of more 'value', and theory merely 'webs', Pat's society deems art as non-productive and theory a means of earning a living. Pat is torn between these contradictions, effecting an inner struggle between 'two guys with cudgels . . . . [s]tuck fast in the mud, the miring quicksand' (p. 10). This conflict is similar to the 'welter of oppositions' with which Mat Craig grapples in *The Dear Green Place.* As in Hind's novel, the treacherous parrying of antitheses in *A Disaffection* problematizes the dialectical function. The pipes bring into play the opposites of reason and un-reason; they also signify the recuperation of negativity toward a goal of 'harmony' and 'totality': thus, Pat (unable to resist theorizing) has recourse to Hegel's philosophical doctrine of the dialectic.

Pat refers to Hegel continually throughout the narrative, attesting to the necessity of the dialectic. However, he associates Hegel with 'reason': 'Hegel . . . believed the individual has to succumb to reason in a sense' (p. 273). Pat disavows reason because it functions at the expense of the individual. Therefore Hegel's system, as an ordering of experience, is not conducive to autonomous being. Colin Wilson suggests that Dostoevsky's underground man posits Hegelian reason as the basis for an individual's delimitation: 'after Hegel, Reason governs all; men are cogs in a great machine that makes for ultimate Good'.[64] In the city of *A Disaffection*, reason does indeed 'govern'. Police guard the perimeter of the school grounds, attesting both to the strict regulation of the system and to Pat's guilty paranoia over his 'criminal' desire for freedom from the social bond. According to Wilson, the conception of freedom in *Notes from the Underground* lies at the centre of a dialectic between 'rational humanism' (goodness) and 'anti-rationalist' individualism (evil).[65] This is also true of *A Disaffection*, in which reason and un-reason are personified in the two figures who occupy Pat's imagination: the philosopher Hegel and 'his best pal as a youth' (p. 117), the poet Hölderlin. In contrast to Hegel's 'reason', the poet had suffered, as Pat describes it, an 'insanity which seems to have been threatening him for years. Years he spent fighting it, a form of melancholic schizophrenia' (p. 117). Cairns Craig notes that Hegel and Hölderlin represent 'the lucid and ludic system-builder and the poet descending into madness and obsession. They are the two poles of the romantic imagination'.[66] Craig does not mention, however, that Pat's struggle between the poles tips him into Hölderlinian schizophrenia and melancholy.

Pat's situation can be elucidated by a comment made by Foucault, who writes, in *Madness and Civilization* (1961), that when society imprisons its heterogeneous elements, it ensures a surface appearance of reason and stability in the image of a fortress. Yet the repression of that which is not assimilable in this reality turns inwards and manifests itself as an inner struggle between reason and unreason within the individual:

> The classical period had confined . . . not only an abstract unreason which mingled madmen and libertines, invalids, and criminals, but an enormous reservoir of the fantastic . . . . One might say that the fortresses of confinement . . . separated reason from unreason on society's surface, [but they also] preserved in depth the images where they mingled and exchanged properties . . . they had lodged in the hearts, in the desires, in the imaginations of men; and instead of manifesting to sight the abrupt presence of the insane, they seethed as the strange contradiction of human appetites: the complicity of desire and murder, of cruelty and the longing to suffer, of sovereignty and slavery, of insult and humiliation.[67]

According to Foucault, this 'return of unreason' marks 'the point of departure for a decisive movement', seen in the works of 'Hölderlin, Nerval, and Nietzsche'.[68] In *A Disaffection*, Pat increasingly suffers self-dissolution and thus he begins to identify with the poet rather than the philosopher. Correspondingly, he becomes disillusioned with any hope of finding 'harmony'. Moments of reflection reveal, not the illusion of the self as a fortress-like unity but the true fragmentation of the social self that Foucault and Lacan ascribe the fortress.

When Pat looks at his reflection in the bathroom mirror he registers a feeling of alienation: 'the moment when a person sees his or herself in a mirror, seeing a stranger, and peering at this stranger with furrowed brow. Who is this fucker and where is she or he off to?' (p. 124). This description is reminiscent of the discrepancy experienced between the self and its image by Joe Taylor in the opening of *Young Adam.* There, Taylor questions the illusory isomorphism and unity of the reflected 'I'. Despite looking perfectly normal, he is in fact guilty of manslaughter. Like Taylor, Pat differentiates between his normal appearance and an evil inner truth. Pat views himself as 'a being whose outer surface of skin, flesh and hair is simply a shell for the most nefarious of inner essences' (p. 124). Divided in this way he questions his ability to comprehend and enact the unification theorized by Hegel. When he is called to the headmaster's office to sign papers for a transferral for which he does not remember applying, he takes a 'moment's reflection' to consider the 'presence of oneself' (p. 177):

> That age-old unity of thought and being, the cornerstone of a certain method of conduction your life in the face of the world. Is that correct? Perhaps not. Hegel is a devilishly hard fellow to comprehend. Some of what he has to say for himself is so positively disbelievably believable, disbelievably believable. (p. 177)

For Pat, thought and being are in fact antithetical, as he states later in the novel: 'Thinking was death' (p. 224). Pat's dismissal of Hegel coincides with the belief that he is no longer 'good'. In this, and in his hypocritical duality, he is no different from the school system he abhors. After his meeting with the headmaster, Pat walks through the school corridors and comments on the smell wafting from the science labs: 'What a fucking pong! . . . It was the smell he always associated with the entire profession, rotten eggs' (p. 182). Quite literally sickened by the 'rotten inner core', both of teaching and of himself, he violently purges himself of it on the floor of his empty classroom:

> Patrick Doyle's stomach erupted . . . . [He] yelled a laugh. But christ it was everywhere and you had to be careful how you stepped otherwise you would slide, ending arse over elbow on the bastarn fuckin floor!!!! And there were snotters down from his nostril for fuck sake with the laughter and the snifflings that were going on. (pp. 201-202)

Pat's vomiting fit literalizes the sickness he describes in the first line of the novel. It differs from Mat Craig's vomiting in *The Dear Green Place*, which signalled his irretrievable loss of nostalgic idealism and his emergence, however uncertain, into the reality of the present-day city. By contrast, in *A Disaffection*, Pat's purgation is the defilement of that reality. Kristeva, recalling Mary Douglas's anthropological study on purification rites, comments that: 'Defilement is what is jettisoned from the "symbolic system." It is what escapes that social rationality, that logical order on which a social aggregate is based'.[69] Pat's vomiting is an attempt to overturn the limitations of a 'logical order' represented by Hegelian reason and unity. In this respect, his view may be elucidated by a comparison with that held by Bataille in *Inner Experience*. Bataille acknowledges the importance of the dialectical process yet he criticizes Hegel's conception of a closed, circular system of 'knowledge', or self-realization. Bataille displaces Hegel's notion of 'totality', which cannot assimilate experiences such as laughter, bloodshed and vomiting; rupturous releases of heterogeneity and excess that do not 'work' toward, or 'produce' the goal of Absolute Spirit:

> Desire, poetry, laughter, unceasingly cause life to slip . . . from the known to the unknown. . . . In the 'system', poetry, laughter and ecstasy are nothing. Hegel gets rid of them in a hurry: he knows of no other end than knowledge. . . . [P]oetry, laughter, ecstasy are not completed man — do not provide any satisfaction.[70]

In *A Disaffection* Pat also explicitly criticizes Hegel's system for its selective notion of wholeness. In an inversion of Hegel's words: 'The true is the whole',[71] Pat says: 'Hegel was not wholly right about things' (p. 272). In Bataille's terms, Pat's vomiting and laughter are appropriate ways to rupture a Hegelian whole. Yet, the heterogeneous elements of desire, art and laughter that Bataille describes are not sustainable in Pat's reality. He is a frustrated virgin, fosters an unfulfilled 'secret hankering to be a painter' (p. 1) and is chronically depressed. Thus, his messy vomiting and laughter are only momentarily disruptive in the context in which they occur. After all, he concedes immediately after the event: 'My life is an ordinary life. . . . One drinks and one spews in an almost public manner. But this is aye the way of it for the ordinary fellow or fellowess' (p. 203). Pat's vomiting is not radical enough to dissociate him from the system. When his classroom fills up with children the system is shown to close back around him: 'I just continue. . . . Time recovers itself. . . I can rock back and forth and back and forth, back and forth and back and forth, and that will be that, and I am healed' (p. 204).

In a second act of defiance, Pat ejects himself from the school as if he were its waste: 'Mister Doyle', he tells himself, 'you are a shite' (p. 200). In Pat's transgression of the school's perimeter, past the police who guard its gates, Pat enters a city that is a place of extreme excremental obsession. It is, like a similar morbidity in the underground man, self-consciously evoked by Pat as if he may find deliverance in it. A scatological street becomes a place of escape: 'he would go and sit in a gutter, at a stank, and wait for something to float past on its way to the sewers — preferably a large dod of shite, and he could climb aboard and set sail for pastures new' (p. 332). However, there can be no escape from a city which is also, to recall Eliot's place of disaffection in *Burnt Norton*, infused with the '[e]ructation of unhealthy souls'. Pat's city is a 'province of inner psychomachinations' (p. 205) and, like Trocchi's narrators, in the citadel of the self burst open. In the ejection of Pat's 'nefarious' soul from the monological fortress of the self, firstly from vomiting and then from his ejection from school and identification with excrement, he finally releases a latent Hyde-like inner self:

> I am your alter ego. Alter alteris masculine. When your personality splits I am the back end. I am the ugly bit, the counterforce. . . . Thus we have us two and the ugly one. . . . I creep in and edge closer and closer till I'm so much a part of the company you didnt notice my absence earlier, that a gap had existed, that it has now been filled. (p. 210)

The release of his 'ugly' and irrational self is comparable to Jekyll's release of Hyde as a subjective, transcendent yet ultimately destructive force. Pat ultimately decides that this divisiveness is the only way in which the imperialism of the symbolic order may itself be corrupted. His descent into Hölderlinian unreason becomes a choice rather than a tragedy and in it, he defies the notion of unity and its delimitation of individual freedom:

> Let us all be at one where to be at one is to be at peace, beyond conflict, a reconciliation of opposing forces. . . . What a pile of fucking shite! . . . The very idea that such forms of conflict can be so resolved! This is a straight bourgeois intellectual wank. (pp. 305-306)

At this juncture, the words of Dostoevsky's underground man are prophetic of Pat's defiance and its outcome:

> Even if he were really nothing but a piano-key . . . he would refuse to come to his senses . . . . he will plan destruction and chaos, he will devise all sorts of sufferings, and in the end he will carry his point! He will send a curse over the world, and as only man can curse . . . he may by curse alone attain his object, that is, really convince himself that he is a man and not a piano-key! . . . [M]an would go purposely mad in order to rid himself of reason and carry his point! . . . [E]ven if it means turning his back on civilisation, he will prove it. (p. 288)

In the last section of *A Disaffection*, Pat precisely fulfils these words spoken by the underground man; words that also have their echo in Lacan's 'The Mirror Stage'. There, Lacan's theory culminates with a list of existential problems that arise for the alienated and paranoid self in a society that 'refuse[s] to recognize that it has any function other than the utilitarian one'. For an individual who must confront a social bond that is 'concentrational', that is, like a concentration camp, anxiety and entrapment create 'a personality that realizes itself only in suicide'.[72] In *A Disaffection*, Pat makes a final assertion of heterogeneous identity that is also his self-destruction.[73] This ending is ambiguous and the implication of suicide made here considers the extreme possibility of a preoccupation with abjection that has developed through the novel, in Pat's talk of himself as a dead man. It is a rainy night and Pat is on his way home from visiting his brother. He has been drinking, so decides to walk rather than risk driving. This decision not to drive is significant, reinforcing his desire not to teach: earlier, Pat had claimed that '[d]riving went with teaching' (p. 206). At this moment, two policemen arrive on the scene: 'They had appeared at the very thought of insurrection' (p. 336). These apocalyptic police could have come straight from the rainy street described by MacDiarmid's speaker in *A Drunk Man*:

> I tae ha'e heard Eternity drip water
> (Aye water, water!), drap by drap
> On the a'e nerve, like lichtnin', I've become,
> And heard God passin' wi' a bobby's feet
> Ootby in the lang coffin o' the street.[74]

In Kenneth Buthlay's annotation to these lines he suggests the negative religious signification of the policemen: 'God as the eternal policeman . . . is featured by Nietzsche and Blake, for whom he is a false god of vengeance'.[75] In *A Disaffection*, the police are, indeed, vengeful. As Pat runs into a stream of on-coming cars, the police shout after him: 'they hate ye we fucking hate ye' (p. 337). The voices of these 'eternal policemen' change from the third to the first person plural and in this movement, the sovereign voice of Pat's 'Godhead' is the hateful Nietzschean and Blakean God described by MacDiarmid. Pat's street becomes his coffin when these sovereign voices lead him to succumb to the temptation that recurs throughout the novel: 'That temptation is aye the same temptation and it is suicide' (p. 337). Pat dashes out in front of a car and is run down. Having relinquished driving, he is annihilated by the reality that he rejects. In this respect, his death is similar to that of Hyde's once he irreparably takes over Jekyll. Hyde commits suicide in order to release himself from the reality that his subsumption of Jekyll would bind him to. Like Hyde, Pat's suicide is also his transcendence from reality.[76]

Pat's destruction comes at the behest of language. Nevertheless, this final curse is one last rupture of the symbolic order. In the final line of *A Disaffection*, Pat is lying on the road: 'It was dark and wet but not cold; if it had not been so dark you would have seen the sky. Ah fuck off, fuck off' (p. 337). As Alan Freeman writes, Kelman's use of bad language 'attacks the very assumptions which underlie the linguistic and cultural order on which social realism is founded. . . . [H]is realism fucks realism'.[77] Pat's curse leaves in its wake a space of stunned silence. His self-(quest)ioning that finds being in vomit, then excrement, ends in a corpse which, in Kristeva's terms, is 'the most sickening of wastes, is a border that has encroached upon everything'.[78] Thus, in the corpse and the subversively silent narrative space it opens, Pat inverts the imperative to question and forces society to question itself. Kristeva writes that a corpse 'no longer signifies anything . . . [but] the breaking down of a world that has erased its borders'.[79] Thus, it is through the artistic expression of the (bad) word that Kelman's character, at the moment he is subsumed by the world, recovers tragic experience by consuming the world himself. As Foucault writes:

> Through madness, a work that seems to drown in the world, to reveal there its non-sense, and to transfigure itself with the features of pathology alone, actually engages within itself the world's time, masters it, and leads it; by the madness which interrupts it, a work of art opens a void, a moment of silence, a question without answer, provokes a breach without reconciliation where the world is forced to question itself. . . . [T]he world is made aware of its guilt.[80]

## Alasdair Gray, *1982 Janine*

In *A Disaffection*, Pat's act of vomiting transpires in his self-ejection from the school's enclosure and into a realm of paranoid unreason and suicide. By contrast, in Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine*, the protagonist, Jock McLeish, endures a vomiting fit that pulls him back from the brink of suicide. He is a supervisor of security installations, a job that makes him, as S. J. Boyd notes, both a 'protector' and 'invader' of 'the privacy and security of others'.[81] Gray himself has said that Jock's profession enables him 'to be at home in arms depots, nuclear power stations, government and business premises . . . factories etc. *and knows how they work.* He's at the exact centre of our society'.[82] Thus, his job also makes him a perpetrator of the type of imprisonment represented in *Dance of the Apprentices* and *A Disaffection*. However, the theme of entrapment that runs through *Janine* is fundamentally that of Jock himself. The solipsistic narrator encloses himself in a hotel room and the sexual perversions he plays out in his own head are a brutalization of himself (these themes are explored in the following chapter). The first part of Jock's narrative is abundant with self-loathing and he categorically states: 'I am shit'.[83] His belief in his own evil is shown to be the consequence of his education; his childhood school-teacher (who might also be his father), Mad Hislop, is a patriarchal, authoritarian figure whose use of corporal punishment instils in McLeish a sense of guilt: 'He really believed that teaching small people to take torture from big people . . . was a way of improving them' (p. 85). Hislop is an extreme characterization of the teacher as 'vengeful God', or 'eternal policeman' that Kelman insinuates in *A Disaffection*. Like Kelman's novel, in *Janine*, it appears that the only way of escape from the consequences of this education is to commit suicide.

It is 'God', not as Hislop; but as Jock's own inner and sovereign voice, who tells him 'to put three fingers down the gullet' and induce the vomiting that saves him from self-poisoning (p. 194). The moment of vomiting represents a crisis and a turning-point. Ostensibly about to die from a drug overdose, he inhabits an in-between state, not dissimilar to that described by Mat Craig in *The Dear Green Place*, in regard to a slaughterhouse beast which, at the threshold 'of consciousness and the irrevocable state of death', embodied 'the idea of [human] consciousness'.[84] In *Janine*, this moment is described by Jock in the context of the bondage theme of his fantasies:

> The moment when the trap starts closing and the victim feels the torture of being in two minds; wanting to believe, struggling to believe, that what is happening cannot be happening, can only happen to someone else. . . . [I]t is the moment when, with courage, we change things. . . . My fancies keep reliving that moment of torture for Janine because I have never fully faced it in my own life and I am travelling a circle again. (p. 194)

When Jock vomits, his endless circular journey is disrupted. Represented by a typographical disturbance in the linearity of the text, a tumult of sexual violence, pornographic description, divine utterance, pleas for help and invocation to 'mummy and daddy' precipitates a violent 'BOAK BOAK', made orgasmic by the post-pornographic 'yeaaaa' that threads through it, linking it with the revelatory moment Jock describes of the 'trap bite' (p. 185). Like Pat Doyle's final 'fuck off, fuck off' in *A Disaffection*, which leaves the narrative gaping open in a post-mortem silence, in *Janine*, the vomiting is followed by a pregnant silence represented by three blank pages. By contrast to Pat Doyle's plight, however, the silence in *Janine* denotes a fall, not into non-being, but back into the realm of being.

Thus, Jock narrates his life story. Its telling is a means of emerging from his cage of solipsistic self-hate and into the world where he will 'breed new ideas . . . . I will converse and speak my mind' (p. 340). Jock's story is addressed to God, who is no longer vengeful, but 'the source of light' and may, hopes Jock, 'help me become less mysterious to myself' (p. 194). Jock's vomiting reveals a self-truth that makes narration possible. As S. J. Boyd remarks in 'Black Arts' (1991), the incident finds a precedent in MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man*, in the speaker's invocation to. 'Lap up the ugsome aidle wi' the lave, / What gin it's your ain vomit that you swill' (ll. 126-127).[85] Like the drunk man, Boyd says, the dipsomaniac Jock McLeish 'puts us metaphorically and even literally . . . in touch with such *verus vomitus*'.[86] Gray himself, in an interview prior to *Janine*'s publication, quoted a poem by Alan Jackson:

> Certainly the remedy's inside the disease,
> and the meaning of being ill
> is to bring the eye
> to the heart.[87]

Tracing the uses of filthy matter in the novels explored in this chapter, a progression is made from silence to self-expression and self-creation. Eddy in *Dance of the Apprentices* is inarticulate, a fallen Icarus who repairs books and mailbags in the silence of his solitary confinement, only entering the city in his imagination where it exists as a felicitous golden landscape. In *The Dear Green Place*, Mat's struggle against his Calvinist and working-class fastidiousness toward filth and literature, both considered an 'excrescence' on existence, earns him an authentic voice. This voice, based on the dialectical 'warring' of reality and subjective vision, enables him to confront the city and thus signifies his emergence into the symbolic order. However, this emergence occurs at the end of the novel and he has yet to speak his new-found voice. In *A Disaffection*, Pat's profession as a teacher implicates him within the mechanism of the symbolic order. In this novel, language is seen as an imperialistic tool, homogenizing and therefore 'obliterating' the subject. Pat attempts to disrupt the symbolic order through filthy language but he is literally obliterated by doing so. A more optimistic vision is described in *1982 Janine*. Jock finds an affirming inner voice by pushing himself to the brink of a crisis. He recuperates his lacerated identity from the edge of suicide and, through the narration of his life story, is able to re-enter the city as his own authority. The process by which Jock finds an authentic voice is made within an entirely subjective realm, the implication of which may be worked back through the preceding novels. In these, the use of an ideal, or subjective realm is not punishable or sinful, as it appears, but crucial for identity as long as such a realm is integrated with the abject reality in which it sees itself.

The physical world is shown to be necessary in a dialectical process of transcendence. In the slaughterhouse scenes of *The Dear Green Place*, discussed in chapter two of this thesis, Mat Craig is made aware of the 'need to be intimately involved in a material process . . .[and] to have a connection with his bodily and economic needs' (p. 119). In a social context in which art was viewed as a visceral and abject form of self-exposure, this connection was imperative for an emergence into the symbolic order and the survival of an identity created in self-expression. A quest for identity engendered through the exposure of oneself in heterogeneity is a common imperative for the protagonists studied here. Robert M. Torrance suggests, following Tzvetan Todorov, that the quest for consciousness is inextricable from the quest for language: 'Every quest . . . may ultimately, like that of the Grail, be the quest for a narrative, since narrative is the *form* of the quest'.[88] In the narrative, the interplay between individual subjectivity and social objectivity is correlative to the use of metaphor in a homogenous linguistic system. In the same way that, in the novels considered here, reality is integral to the articulation of identity, Torrance continues by emphasizing the necessity of the system's objectivity in order that the quest be made a 'communicable experience':

> Without the Grail — or a guardian spirit, or some other living metaphor of transcendence, some other fiction made objective as vision — to give it direction, there could be no quest, and thus no narrative, to begin with. Narrative and metaphor, quest and vision are as inseparably interdependent as process and structure, movement and stasis, becoming and being.[89]

For Trocchi, as discussed in chapter three of this thesis, and recapitulated as pivotal to the concerns of this chapter, narrative form provides both the means for the construction of self-unified identity and its dismantling. The more Trocchi's narrators try to write themselves into being the further being recedes or disperses. In Torrance's view, the relative objectivity of language renders subjectivity to become tangible and thus, paradoxically, transcendent: 'vision . . . may initially seem incommunicable; only through the mediating objectification of a symbolic language, however, can it become a shared reality transcending the evanescence of the subjective'.[90] Yet, this paradox is not reconcilable for the Scottish writers discussed here.

As articulated in the passage from Gray's *Lanark*, which provides the epigraph to this chapter, self-sovereignty is found in the conception of narrative as a rupturous activity rather than a movement toward the 'whole' which is, in any case, delusive. In this respect, Bataille's formulation of transcendence, given in *Inner Experience*, is appropriate not only in terms of Trocchi's works, but may be extended to the 'realist' narratives of Gaitens, Hind and Kelman. As Leslie Anne Boldt summarizes, Bataille posits that 'sovereignty . . . is in no way subordinate to or revealed through discourse, but rather arises at the moment of its rupture'.[91] There is scope, at this juncture, for further study of the notion of rupturous discourse seen, for example, in the use of humour, the vernacular and Scots, in post-*Lanark* Scottish urban literature. The linguistic vitality that disturbs the 'gritty realism' of Tom Leonard, James Kelman and Irvine Welsh, for instance, is already well-documented.[92] The purpose of this chapter has been to trace thematically the dialectical process that has engendered the possibilities now being explored in contemporary fiction and criticism.

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[1] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (London: Picador, 1991), p. 481.

[2] Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book* (London, Paris and New York: Calder, 1992), p. 147.

[3] Morley Jamieson, 'Recollections of Edwin and Willa Muir', in *Chapman*, 49, IX:6 (Summer 1987), 26-31 (26).

[4] Keith Dixon, 'Writing on the Borderline: The Works of William McIlvanney', in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol XXIV (1989), 142-157 (146).

[5] Georges Bataille, 'Sacrificial Mutilation and the Severed Ear of Vincent Van Gogh', in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, trans. by Allan Stoekl and others, ed. by Allan Stoekl, Theory and History of Literature, Vol. 14 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1985), pp. 61-72 (p. 70).

[6] Ibid., p. 70.

[7] Abrams's and Hegel's quotes are given in full in the introduction to this thesis.

[8] Patrick Reilly, *The Literature of Guilt: From Gulliver to Golding* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1988), p. 1.

[9] Georges Bataille, 'The Psychological Structure of Fascism', in *Visions of Excess*, pp. 137-160 (p. 138).

[10] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967), p. 88.

[11] Pam Morris, *Feminism and Literature: An Introduction* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1995), p. 96.

[12] Ibid., p. 104.

[13] Susan Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1990) pp. 15-16.

[14] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. by Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p. 59.

[15] Edward Gaitens, *Dance of the Apprentices* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1990), p. 78. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[16] T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, in *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 63

[17] See Allan Stoekl's summary of Georges Bataille's 'The "Old Mole"' in his Introduction to *Visions of Excess*, p. xv.

[18] Georges Bataille, 'The "Old Mole" and the Prefix *Sur* in the Words *Surhomme* and *Surrealist*', in *Visions of Excess*, pp. 32-44 (p. 37).

[19] Ibid., p. 42.

[20] Ibid., p. 42.

[21] Monika Fludernik, 'Carceral topography: spatiality, liminality and corporality in the literary prison', *Textual Practice*, 13:1 (Spring 1999), 43-77 (63).

[22] George MacDonald, *Lilith: A Romance* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1981), p. 83.

[23] Margaret Oliphant, *Selected Short Stories of the Supernatural*, ed. by Margaret K. Gray (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 187-188.

[24] Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press, 1992), p.173.

[25] Roger Caillois, quoted in *The Architectural Uncanny*, pp. 173-174.

[26] Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, 3rd edn., ed. by Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (London, New York, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, 1997), pp. 126-131 (p. 128).

[27] Eddy's entropic space is analogous to the prison-like 'half-way-house' between the earth and Heaven, and reality and dream, described by Muir in *Scott and Scotland*, and mentioned in chapter one of this thesis. It is also reminiscent of MacDiarmid's description of a 'hauf-way hoose', admonished by the speaker of *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (l. 141), where opposites collapse rather than exist in a dynamic, dialectical tension.

[28] Ibid., p. 174.

[29] Rosemary Jackson, *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (London and New York: Methuen, 1981), p. 90.

[30] *Lilith*, p. 102.

[31] Edwin Muir, *Poor Tom* (Edinburgh: Paul Harris, 1982), p. 192.

[32] Archie Hind, *The Dear Green Place* (London: Corgi, 1985), p. 6. Further references will follow quotations in the text.

[33] George Blake, *Barrie and the Kailyard School* (London: Arthur Barber, 1951), p. 18.

[34] Ibid., p. 7.

[35] Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland* ((Edinburgh: Polygon, 1982), p. 2.

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[36] Edwin Muir, *Uncollected Scottish Criticism*, ed. by Andrew Noble (London and Totowa, NJ: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1982), pp. 105-106.

[37] Alexander Trocchi also uses a version of Brown's metaphor of the thumb print in a poem, 'Myrtle with the Light Blue Hair' (see Horovitz 1969, pp. 292-293), and in *Cain's Book.* In *Cain*, a 'digression' in literary experiment and pastiche has Trocchi/Necchi invent a fantasy woman. She is a composite of the erotic grotesques, seen in 'Myrtle', and which recur throughout Trocchi's works. At the end of her description in *Cain*, its creator says of his invention: 'I was like she was . . . and ripe was she as a thumb pressed on a Camembert cheese' (p. 216). Characteristically, Trocchi's claim to creative sovereignty subverts a Scottish precedent and gives it a Continental as well as an explicitly sexual meaning.

[38] George Douglas [Brown], *The House with the Green Shutters* (London: Pilot Press, 1947), p. 161.

[39] Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), p. 267.

[40] Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* (London and New York: Longman, 1983), p. 239.

[41] Ibid., p. 3.

[42] *Powers of Horror*, p. 14.

[43] Andrew Monnickendam, 'Literary Voices and the Projection of Cultural Failure in Modern Scottish Literature', in *English Literature and the Other Languages*, Studies in Literature, No. 24, ed. by T. Hoenselaars and M. Buning (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999), pp. 232-242 (p. 240).

[44] Critics agree that *The Dear Green Place* is a novel about the failure to write, a theme that is epitomized in the final scene and the 'negativity' of the city's coat-of-arms. See, for instance, Witschi (1991), Craig (1981 and 1999) and Gifford (1985).

[45] *Powers of Horror*, p. 15.

[46] 'The Mirror Stage', p. 128.

[47] *Cain's Book*, p. 101.

[48] Georges Bataille, *Inner Experience*, trans. by Leslie Anne Boldt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 59.

[49] 'The Mirror Stage', p. 129. It is significant to note the prefiguring of Lacan's image of the fortress in the city/self represented in the works of George MacDonald and Margaret Oliphant. In MacDonald's *Lilith*, Bulika is surrounded by 'huge heaps of gravel and refuse thrown from the battlements' (p. 116), and in Oliphant's 'The Land of Darkness', its rings of cities are separated by tracts of waste land (see, for example, p. 174 and p. 209).

[50] *Cain's Book*, p. 230.

[51] See John P. Muller and William J. Richardson, *Lacan and Language* (New York: International Universities Press, 1985), p. 47.

[52] Darian Leader, *Lacan for Beginners* (Cambridge: Icon, 1998), pp. 28-29

[53] T. S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*, in *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, pp. 189-195.

[54] Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, quoted by Nordon in *Conan Doyle*, p. 263.

[55] James Kelman, *A Disaffection* (London: Picador, 1990), p. 1. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[56] Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Notes from the Underground*, in *Great Short Works of Fyodor Dostoevsky*, ed. by Ronald Hingley, trans. by David Magarshack and others, (New York: Perennial, 1968), p. 263. Further references, where there is no ambiguity, will follow quotations in the text.

[57] A critical view of the Scottish education system and its tyranny over the individual is expressed throughout Scottish literature. In Alexander Scott's poem, 'Scotched', for example, he sums up the method of 'Scotch education': 'I tellt ye / I tellt ye' (Scott 1978, p. 123); and in A. L. Kennedy's *Looking for the Possible Dance*, the 'Scottish Method of Education' comprises a list of ten ways in which the Scots are taught to loathe and belittle themselves (pp. 15-16).

[58] Shadow, *Glasgow, 1858: Shadow's Midnight Scenes and Social Photographs* (Glasgow: Glasgow University Press, 1976), p. 130.

[59] Ibid., pp. 130-131.

[60] Macdonald Daly, 'Your Average Working Kelman', in *Cencrastus*, 46 (Autumn 1993), 14-16 (14).

[61] Ibid., p. 15.

[62] *Lacan and Language*, p. 22.

[63] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 150.

[64] Colin Wilson, *The Outsider* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1956), p. 158.

[65] Ibid., p. 158.

[66] Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest: James Kelman', in *The Scottish Novel Since the Seventies: New Visions, Old Dreams*, ed. by Gavin Wallace and Randall Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993) pp. 99-114 (p. 111).

[67] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. by Richard Howard (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 209.

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[68] Ibid., p. 212.

[69] *Powers of Horror*, p. 65.

[70] *Inner Experience*, p. 111.

[71] Hegel, quoted by Joseph Chiari in *The Aesthetics of Modernism* (London: Vision, 1970), p. 113.

[72] 'The Mirror Stage', p. 130.

[73] The ending of *A Disaffection* is inconclusive, although critics generally concede that it ends favourably for Pat. Peter Kravitz writes that Pat 'fight[s] madness and suicide' and emerges from the narrative 'whole' (Kravitz 1997, p. xviii). Dorothy Porter writes that the narrative is 'open-ended, yet it seems definitive'. It is ultimately positive, she concludes, because the pipes 'remain in expectant promise' for Pat's unquestioned return (Porter 1991, p. 49). Cairns Craig remarks that Pat is unlike Goethe's Werther, 'whose suicide Pat cannot emulate'. Craig's reading of the end of the novel sees Pat 'chased and brought down, resisting arrest' (see Wallace and Stevenson 1993, pp. 111-113). However, Craig's supporting quote is a hypothetical statement made by Pat just prior to his suicide. After describing how the police *may* tackle him, he then goes on to describe how he runs into the traffic but the police do not follow him: 'That was them there, shouting; they were shouting at him from the other side of the road and just there waiting for the traffic to slow' (p. 337). Perhaps critics, as much as some of the characters in this chapter, are unwilling to consider the levels of despair that may be inferred from realism. It is this worst possibility with which my reading in this chapter engages.

[74] *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ll. 2056-2060. Anglicized from the Scots, the stanza reads:

> I too have heard Eternity drip water
> (Always water, water!), drop by drop
> On the single nerve, like lightning, I've become,
> And heard God passing with a policeman's feet
> Out by in the long coffin of the street.

[75] Kenneth Buthlay's annotation in Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ed. by Kenneth Buthlay (Edinburgh: Scottish Academy Press, 1987), p. 151.

[76] The paradox of finding transcendence in self-annihilation is seen in other examples of Scottish fiction, notably in John Davidson's final, self-titled *Testament*, in which, as noted in chapter one of this thesis, he claims that suicide is the greatest act of will. Also discussed in chapter one, James Thomson's preacher in *The City of Dreadful Night* advocates suicide as a means of release from the dark city. In Neil Gunn's *The Serpent*, Tom's theological argument with William precipitates the death of Tom's father (who represents God), when Tom says that a person's choice to kill themself made them more powerful than God: 'You can commit suicide. God the all-mighty can't' (p. 151).

[77] Alan Freeman, 'Realism Fucking Realism: The Word on the Street — Kelman, Kennedy and Welsh', in *Cencrastus*, 57 (Summer 1997), 6-7 (7).

[78] *Powers of Horror*, p. 3.

[79] Ibid., p. 4.

[80] *Madness and Civilization*, p. 288.

[81] S. J. Boyd, 'Black Arts: *1982 Janine* and *Something Leather*', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 108-123 (p. 109).

[82] Alasdair Gray interviewed by Carol Anderson and Glenda Norquay, in *Cencrastus* 13 (Summer 1983), 6-10 (9).

[83] Alasdair Gray, *1982 Janine* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), p. 129. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[84] *The Dear Green Place*, p. 112.

[85] Anglicized from the Scots, MacDiarmid's lines read: 'Lap up the repulsive slop with the rest / What if it's your own vomit that you swill'.

[86] 'Black Arts', p. 110.

[87] Alan Jackson, quoted by Alasdair Gray in an interview with Anderson and Norquay (1983), p. 10. The lines appear on the hardcover first edition of *1982, Janine* (1984), but are not printed on the paperback edition.

[88] Robert M. Torrance, *The Spiritual Quest: Transcendence in Myth, Religion, and Science* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1994), p. 288.

[89] Ibid., p. 288.

[90] Ibid., p. 285.

[91] Leslie Anne Boldt's Introduction in *Inner Experience*, p. x.

[92] See, for instance, Harkness (1984), Watson in Drescher and Hagemann (1996), Freeman and Baker in Hagemann (1996) and Freeman (1997).

# CHAPTER SEVEN

# '*Mac*HISMOISM' AND MASOCHISM: SEXUAL TRANSGRESSION AND SOVEREIGN IDENTITY

Masoch and Sade
Turned into ane
Havoc ha'e made
O' my a'e brain.

Hugh MacDiarmid,
*A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*[1]

Female characters in the Scottish urban novel are often cruelly subjectified by a male protagonist. Despite Moira Burgess's reckoning of a prevalence of 'the strong and fine type of woman character [who] adds considerably to the Glasgow novel as a whole',[2] women are in fact usually problematized, marginalized or brutalized. This is conventional in the invariably male-authored tradition of urban writing in other literatures. In Hana Wirth-Nesher's study of the modern urban novel, she comments on 'that whole tradition of urban literature in which the female is inscribed onto the cityscape as object of the male gaze'.[3] This is also true of the Scottish tradition generally which, according to Douglas Dunn, 'was, and is, controlled by male psychologies'.[4] Carol Craig uses the term '*Mac*Hismoism' to delineate the specific nature of this pervasive male psychology. In an essay on William McIlvanney's urban fiction, Craig argues that '*Mac*Hismoism' is a product of Calvinist repression and a respect for authority ingrained by the nation's education system, which have led to a social and personal 'inferiority complex': 'if there is an essence of Scottish masculinity then it is aggression, born of insecurity'.[5] There is a danger in this sort of comment lapsing into stereotype. Nevertheless, as S. J. Boyd points out, such an observation 'reflects how we are perceived by others and how we have presented ourselves to the world'.[6] The purpose of this chapter is to explore a city-self-other constellation at the centre of which is the psycho-sexual vision of a male protagonist who may be represented as 'insecure' and 'aggressive', but who may also use these negative stereotypes as a catalyst for change.

Previous chapters of this study touch upon violent sexual themes. In the mythologized city, female figures are subjectified either as a failed Ariadne or as Medusa, signifying destruction and emasculation. In the unfolding of uterine space into intestinal space, a feminized urban territory degenerates into a space in which actual or symbolic sodomy signifies the protagonist's endeavour to be self-fertilizing. A hero's self-division as Theseus and Minotaur or Daedelus and Icarus are discussed in chapters three, five and six, where it is seen to both enable and problematize self-fertilization. Invariably, division leads to self-laceration. In the sexual terms of the MacDiarmid quotation that serves as the epigraph to this chapter, sadistic violence may also be, in terms of this destructive schism, a masochistic mode. MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* is used along with Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* and the theories of R. D. Laing and C. G. Jung to provide a contextual and conceptual framework for a discussion, in the second part of this chapter, on the uses of masochism in Alexander Trocchi's *Young Adam* (1954), William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* (1977) and Frederic Lindsay's *Jill Rips* (1987).

## I. Self-Division and Self-Projection

### R. D. Laing and C. G. Jung

The self-divided character frequently resurfaces in Scottish literary expression and in its criticism. As noted in the introduction to this thesis, Wittig suggests its influence on the subjectification of reality in Scottish literature. One of the most famous psychoanalytical conceptions of self-division was formulated by R. D. Laing and his study of the schizophrenic character, in *The Divided Self* (1959), remains pertinent and useful in assessing the divided subject and his subjectified city. Laing was closely acquainted with Trocchi and they share a similar interest in using drugs to decentre and disorder psychological states for self-realization.[7] Furthermore, Laing's existential-phenomenological approach to psychosis is a methodology that foreshadows the approach adopted in this study. Laing's national identity and, indeed, the fact that he was an urban Glaswegian, clearly enhance his capacity to recognize the repressive duality in his society, not only in his autobiographical and poetical writings but also in the ostensibly academic studies, particularly in *The Divided Self*. Here he argues: 'Our civilization represses not only "the instincts", not only sexuality, but any form of transcendence'. He defines transcendence as 'genuine freedom, and . . . true human growth'.[8] In response to a reality that thwarts positive self-evolution, an individual becomes 'ontologically insecure'. Laing differentiates between, on the one hand, an 'ontologically secure' individual, who feels 'real, alive, whole; as differentiated from the rest of the world . . . his identity and autonomy are never in question'.[9] And, on the other hand, an 'ontologically insecure' person, who suppresses feelings of anger and frustration and in doing so, precipitates guilt and self-division:

> The individual . . . may feel more unreal than real; in a literal sense more dead than alive; precariously differentiated from the rest of the world, so that his identity and autonomy are always in question. . . . He may feel . . . unable to assume that the stuff he is made of is genuine, good, valuable. And he may feel his self as partially divorced from his body.[10]

A pathological self-fracture is a feature of modernist literature.[11] The particularly Scottish feature of this proliferation of selves is its tangible manifestation as a *doppelgänger*.[12] To draw from Laing's theory, an individual who represses their innate potential for transcendence (who is 'ontologically insecure') may experience a division in which an ostensibly guilty 'evil' and therefore repressed part of their personality is externalized by projection onto an object. In literature, this schism is principally delineated in moral or religious notions of 'good' and 'evil', seen in Hogg and Stevenson for example; or in terms of socio-economic (in)justice, seen in Blake and Barke. Another mode of division, relatively unexplored, is that of gender. For a male protagonist, a female character can function as an object onto which he projects a troublesome 'feminine' aspect of his identity. In Berthold Schoene-Harwood's recent article, 'Dams Burst: Devolving

Gender in Iain Banks's "The Wasp Factory"' (1999), he notes that the popularity of the *doppelgänger* motif in Scottish fiction is a particularly male phenomenon.[13] The motif 'discloses the Scottish male's fear not only of a feminine other but also . . . his own intrinsic self-and-otherness, or "effeminacy."'[14] The traditional ideal of masculinity is, Schoene continues: 'to present itself as pure, self-contained, and uncontaminated by (its own inherent) alterity'.[15] Thus, innate 'effeminacy' or 'otherness' is repressed in favour of a monolithic, non-contradictory phallocentricity. This repressed element is termed by Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, cited by Schoene, a 'testicular mode', which is defined as: 'nurturing, incubating, containing, and protecting'.[16] Schoene notes Flannigan's emphasis on attaining integrality and proposes 'a radical reconception of the traditional male body image and its symbolism. . . . [A man must] discover himself as constituted by both the phallic and the testicular'.[17] Schoene cites Flannigan's cast of male pairs who embody this duality, including, for example, Achilles/Patroclus and Superman/Clark Kent. However, it is possible to dichotomize male identity even more radically. Flannigan's 'testicular' qualities are also 'female' qualities, and an exploration of a male psyche may have recourse to a male/female pairing in order to engender the paradoxical unity prescribed by Schoene: 'to cure [traditional masculinity] of its deathly schisms, is not synthetic closure but an eruption of regenerative chaos'.[18]

The 'curing' of a divided male psyche in a dynamic reconciliation with its 'feminine' aspect is central to the theory of individuation (transcendence) formulated by the Swiss psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung. In an essay entitled 'Anima and Animus' (1953), Jung suggests, as Laing does, that an individual's self-division may be a subjective response to a prohibitive reality. For Jung, an interplay of mental and physical opposites is not only innate to human existence, it is essential: 'Life, being an energic process, needs the opposites, for without opposition there is, as we know, no energy'.[19] An interplay of sexual opposition is, of course, central to a process of unification. In Jung's terms, the anima represents the repressed feminine side of a male individual made conscious by an encounter with a real woman.[20] In Jung's formulation, a repression of feminine or 'effeminate' aspects of a male psyche is made tangible by its projection into a sphere of perception, onto the 'real' feminine figure. Schoene indicates that Scottish reality is emphatically patriarchal and demands a repression of feminine characteristics. This view is maintained by S. J. Boyd, who notes that the pervasive cultural model of the Scottish male is, ideally ('heroically'), the Burnsian 'a man's a man'. Scottish machismoism is, Boyd suggests, perceived and represented by an aptitude for '[d]rink and violence' as well as a 'stunning sexism'.[21] Jung's theory of repression has particular resonance for a patriarchal Scottish reality:

> No man is so entirely masculine that he has nothing feminine in him. The fact is, rather, that very masculine men have — carefully guarded and hidden — a very soft emotional life. . . . The repression of feminine traits and inclinations naturally causes these contrasexual demands to accumulate in the unconscious.[22]

For a male to achieve 'individuation', his anima must be integrated into consciousness by a dialectical process between outer persona and inner unconscious. In this process an individual must both recognize the 'invisible system of relations' between his persona and his anima and, at the same time 'distinguish himself from her'.[23]

The city is a particularly evocative setting for a 'confrontation' with the anima. Jung describes the city as an embodiment of the feminine archetypes of virgin, mother, or harlot.[24] The title figure in George MacDonald's *Lilith* is interpreted by William Raeper as one of several 'classic anima projections' in the novel.[25] As an embodiment of a feminine archetype of sexual voraciousness she represents Vane's fears of his sexuality. Lilith's evil is encountered through the deviant rubric of the city, that is also Vane's brain; an encounter necessary for self-knowledge and atonement. Raeper quotes Jung's comments emphasizing the importance of a fantastic mode for this process:

> The fairy tale makes it clear that it is possible for a man to attain totality, to become whole, only with the co-operation of the spirit of darkness, indeed . . . the latter is actually a *causa instrumentalis* of redemption and individuation.[26]

Like Bulika's Lilith, the 'fantasy' section of Alasdair Gray's novel, *Lanark*, features a female character who functions within a psychogeographic city-scape as a Jungian anima. Gray's novel offers a model for a city/self/anima interchange that, via the violent rendering of the theme in MacDiarmid's *Drunk Man*, can be traced in the crime thrillers that are the subject of the second part of this discussion.

## **Alasdair Gray, *Lanark***

Lanark and Duncan Thaw each personify two parts of a single psyche: Thaw represents the conscious and Lanark represents Thaw's unconscious. Thaw represses many of his experiences which then manifest themselves, in a nightmarishly distorted way, in the experiences of Lanark. More so than Thaw, Lanark (as his name implies) is implicated with the city, particularly its psychically and anatomically pathological embodiment. Thus, as the epilogue's 'author' tells Lanark near the end of the novel: 'You are Thaw with the neurotic imagination trimmed off and built into the furniture of the world you occupy'.[27] The protagonist's inner schism is correlative to an apocalyptic city and illustrates an interchange between the existential or psychological and the social. As the 'author' tells Lanark: 'The Thaw narrative shows a man dying because he is bad at loving. It is enclosed by your narrative which shows civilization collapsing for the same reason' (p. 484). This comment is analogous to the link Lacan makes between an 'inner world' to an 'outer world' in 'The Mirror Stage': 'The sufferings of neurosis and psychosis are for us a schooling in the passions of the soul . . . when we calculate the tilt of its threat to entire communities, [personal suffering] provides us with an indication of the deadening of the passions in society'.[28] As in Lacan's conception of a fragmented and alienated subject, Gray's Thaw, Lanark, and Glasgow suffer self-disassociation. This is indicated throughout both strands of the novel by the repetition of the jingle: 'Man is the pie that bakes and eats himself and the recipe is separation' (p. 101).

Separation motivates Thaw's fervent appeal for self-unification: 'Lord God Maker and Sustainer of Heaven and Hell make me self-fertilizing!' (p. 166). Thaw's plea comes from Jung's notion of self-unity as an act of self-piercing that is at the same time transcendent and masochistic. Gray credits Jung in his index of plagiarisms, and however sceptically the information in this index may be taken, it is at least evident that Gray is conversant with Jung's works. In Jung's early study, *Symbols of Transformation* (1916), he traces this image of self-piercing from the biblical Job, (whose 'libido festers in his flesh, a cruel God has overpowered him and pierced him through with barbed thoughts'), to Nietzsche's secular use of the same image, where Job's dualism of self and God becomes a 'psychic conflict'. In secular, psychological terms, continues Jung, self-piercing signifies introversion and 'the act of union with oneself, a sort of self-fertilization, and also a self-violation, a self-murder'.[29] Although painful, self-unity is the aim of Jung's notion of the individuation process, described by Jacobi as 'a synthesis of all partial aspects of the conscious and unconscious psyche'.[30] The narrative structure of Gray's *Lanark* can be compared with Jung's idea of the organization of the individual psyche. As Jacobi notes, Jung designates the conscious mind, or ego, as: 'a "part" of the Self, [that] is the centre of the field of consciousness through which alone we experience and perceive'. For Jung, the Self, which constitutes the unconscious mind, is 'an ultimately unknowable, transcendent "centre" of the personality', as well as, paradoxically, comprising a periphery to the ego.[31] Books I and II of *Lanark* depict the limited, treacherous, but 'splendid' sense-world described by the disembodied voice of the oracle and, delineating the conscious life of Duncan Thaw, the books represent the sphere of his ego. Encompassing this 'ego' are Books III and IV, which depict the fantastic cities that are projections of Thaw's neuroses, and which represent the realm of his unconscious.

An unknowable centre exists in the 'real' sphere of Thaw's ego-bound world, characterized by a female character, Marjory Laidlaw. Thaw is sexually frustrated and as his condition remains unremedied he increasingly suffers self-dissolution, eventually killing himself. In order to become 'self-fertilizing' Thaw must first turn inward and confront, or 'know', his anima. He attempts to do so as he moves through the dark realm of the Institution. For it is here that, as Lanark, he releases Rima from her dragonhide and, like Orpheus returning from the Underworld with Eurydice, seeks to return Rima to the world above ground. Lanark consummates a relationship with her and they have a child, Alexander (Sandy). In Jung's theory of individuation the child, as an outcome of sexual union, is a projected symbol of self-unity. As Jacobi writes:

> Through this union they bridge the dissociated portions of the psyche by creating a *tertium*, a 'third' thing, supraordinate to both sides. Thus, for example, in alchemical symbolism this union is represented as the royal brother and sister pair, i.e., as a union of opposites, from whom the 'divine child', the symbol of unity, of the Self, is born.[32]

The child's symbolic role is realized near the end of the novel when Lanark and Alexander climb a hill outside the city. Having left a Dantesque, infernal Glasgow, their ascent is akin to Dante's climb of the mountain of the *Purgatorio*, toward innocence and the Garden of Eden. As Lanark watches his son ahead of him, he experiences a positive epiphany:

> In spite of me and the sensible path, Sandy is reaching the summit all by himself in the sunlight; he is up there enjoying the whole great globe that you gave him, so I love you now. I am so content that I don't care when contentment ends. I don't care what absurdity, failure, death I am moving toward. . . . I am not speaking for mankind. . . . This is my best moment. Speaking purely as a private person, I admit you to the kingdom of Heaven, and this admission is final, and I will not revoke it. (p. 515)

The 'you' who Lanark addresses in this passage is the novel's 'author', from whom Lanark has recently learnt of his own existence as a fictional character and his counterpart in Thaw. Lanark's and Sandy's ascent mirrors one made earlier by young Duncan Thaw in the 'realistic' strand of the novel. Lanark's epiphany is an awareness of a connection between the ego and the unconscious via the mirrored image of the headstrong, climbing boy. Lanark's realization is made possible by his knowledge of a greater authority, the 'author', who is glimpsed in this scene. When young Thaw climbed the hill, he disavowed the existence of God in his words to the priest waiting at its summit. However, Lanark, aware of his own divided nature and having seen his 'author', is able to affix an unreserved 'amen' at the end of his prayer.

In Jung's psychology, as in Gray's fiction, a union with God is indistinguishable from a union of ego and Self. However, for Jung, this ecstatic moment is also dangerous, as Jacobi explains:

> It gives man the experience of a trans-subjective reality that bursts the bounds of his ego. . . . [A]n expansion of the personality which, if the ego does not immediately return to its place, leads to inflation, to a loss of the ego, and in the worst case to a psychosis.[33]

And indeed, when Lanark and Sandy descend the hill they find an evil portent of a dead bird moments before Sandy disappears and Lanark loses consciousness. When Lanark awakens in a mental institution his awakening is described twice, denoting an irreconcilable psychic fracture (his is, after all, 'A Life in Four Books'). Lanark's prospect of self-unification is not possible — Thaw was 'catastrophically bad at loving' (p. 484), just as Lanark later realizes: 'I was fooled by false love . . . not because I loved her [Rima] but because I *wanted* love' (p. 527). The novel's outcome realizes Ozenfant's prophetic warning, given to Lanark in the subterranean Institution: 'Dr. Lanark, what will you do when you have failed to reclaim your Eurydice?' (p. 86). Rima may have been physically reclaimed, yet neither she nor Lanark is made whole by her rescue.

The allusion is to the mythic bard Orpheus who was unable to retrieve his wife Eurydice from the Underworld and was torn apart by a group of Bacchae (women worshippers of Dionysis). A similar identification of the questing protagonist as a martyred god is used by Hugh MacDiarmid in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, which will be discussed below. In W. N. Herbert's analysis of the poem he notes the influence of the Russian symbolist, Vyacheslav Ivanov, who links Orpheus with the figure of Christ used by MacDiarmid. Ivanov writes:

> The tearing to pieces by the orgiasts of the god as sacrificial victim, that is, the translation of the victim into his tormentors . . . is the primary symbol of this religion of sundering and separation.[34]

The Russian artist's emphasis onthe 'translation', whereby the hero as victim becomes the perpetrator of his own laceration, was central to the emergence of masochism in MacDiarmid's poem, as it is in the novels of Alasdair Gray.

Gray's *1982 Janine* explores fully the themes of sadism and masochism that were latent in *Lanark.* The novel's protagonist, Jock McLeish is, like Thaw/Lanark, trapped in a hellish state because he is 'bad at loving'. In particular, Jock confesses he is 'bad at sex'.[35] The narrative is set inside Jock's head, a man obsessed with sadistic and masochistic sexual fantasies. His attempt to end his own life during the narrative indicates a pitch of self-loathing that inverts sadism into its opposite, masochism. Jock says: 'I am the suicidal type. . . . [Suicide] is murder turned inside-out' (p. 128). Jock's self-loathing — 'I am shit' (p. 129) — is characteristic of the figures already encountered in urban Scottish fiction. He reveals, in his description of a dream, the feminine form of his unconscious who is trapped and mangled in the cage of his ribs:

> I had exposed [my] whole ribcage. I could see only blackness inside but I knew it contained a rare work of art, a white ivory figure of a girl, obscenely mutilated. I pushed my fingers between the ribs and almost managed to touch her. (p. 132)

Jock's self-identification with the female characters of his fantasies is pointed out by Christopher Whyte: 'he has most affinity with Janine herself, the trapped, abused and disempowered object of his masturbations. I am, he implies, more like this woman than like any of the men in my mind or in my life'.[36] The solipsism of Gray's character and the extent to which images of women function as projections of a male psyche have a precedent in Hugh MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*. In Gray's ludic Epilogue to the book he cites his indebtedness to MacDiarmid's poem for its evocation of: 'The matter of Scotland refracted through alcoholic reverie' (p. 343). As S. J. Boyd remarks in an essay, 'Black Arts', the connection is not only to do with nationalistic concerns; it more specifically relates to 'the sado-masochistic nature of the alcoholic reverist'.[37] Even so, Boyd develops the link by focusing on the way sado-masochism corresponds to national identity at the expense of personal identity. However, Gray's and MacDiarmid's speakers also have in common a solipsistic, schizophrenic and self-lacerating identity. They explore a 'heroic' masculinity by way of a femininity considered both inspirational and destructive.

## **Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle***

Hugh MacDiarmid was not a city man and his speaker in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* is not concerned with the city, yet the drunk man's perspective is considered essentially urban. Barry Wood, for example, argues that:

> The voice of the Drunk Man is the voice of the modern urban poet-intellectual — questing, discontented, rebellious, self-divided and finally trapped in the anguished realisation of the tragi-comedy of his situation and fate.[38]

This voice can be considered a precedent where antagonistic sexual relationships are a concomitant of a solipsistic and specifically masculine conception of selfhood. In the 'action' of the poem the speaker is on his way home to his wife after an evening of drinking. He falls into a patch of thistles where he lies while he continues a journey that is psychical rather than actual. As Alan Riach notes, '[t]his theatrical reading isn't much help, though',[39] and elsewhere he elaborates in regard to the 'realistic' framework of the poem: 'the physical world is important to the drunk man only in so far as it effects the movement of his mind and his roving imagination'.[40] The most significant 'real' object in this respect is the thistle, which is subjectified by the drunk man in a number of ways. In Catherine Kerrigan's study, *Whaur Extremes Meet* (1983), she suggests that in one of these ways, the thistle functions symbolically as the 'tree of life'. The thistle, like the tree, she says, 'embodies real and ideal'. Its signification for spiritual evolution can be traced back through Christian and other mythologies. Kerrigan quotes a passage from Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* to illustrate the universality of MacDiarmid's thistle/tree emblem. In this quotation, Jung emphasizes the signification of the tree for notions of both hanging and rebirth:

> The hanging of the Attis image on the pine tree; the hanging of Marsyas, which became a celebrated artistic movement; the hanging of Odin; the Germanic hanging sacrifices — indeed,

> the whole series of hanged gods — teaches us that the hanging of Christ on the cross is not a unique occurrence in religious mythology . . . . Just as the origin of man from trees was a legendary idea, so there were also burial customs, in which people were buried in hollow trees. . . . [T]he mystic significance of this kind of burial can be in no way incomprehensible to us. *The dead are delivered back to the mother for rebirth.*[41]

As a universal image of suffering and resurrection, the image of the cross is used by Jung to delineate a conception of a masculine psyche.[42] For Jung this selfhood embodies a number of struggling contrarieties:

> The cross . . . is himself, or rather *the* self, his wholeness . . . the totality of his being, which is rooted in his animal nature and reaches out beyond the merely human towards the divine. His wholeness implies a tremendous tension of opposites paradoxically at one with themselves, as in the cross, their most perfect symbol.[43]

Like Jung's conception of the self, the emblem of a hanging god for MacDiarmid's solipsistic drunk man is specifically associated with a masculine self-consciousness that is a crucial yet painful struggle of opposites.

MacDiarmid's drunk man, like the city man, suffers bondage upon a rack of suffering; he is an outcast and, in Kenneth Buthlay's words, 'a martyr crucified by his own feelings'.[44] The drunk man's identification with Christ and the cross is interpreted by Christopher Whyte as a particularly masculine self-definition that entails a suffering inextricable from the fact of his gender. The poem may be viewed, Whyte suggests, as 'a cry of exasperation at the constrictions of male identity, a plea to be released from these and from the Christian ideologies that govern them. The national hero also speaks as Christ nailed to a cross which is both the thistle and his phallus'.[45] The conflation of consciousness and phallus in the image of the cross brings to bear a violent psycho-sexual imagery. Reminiscent of Jung's account of Job, in whom 'libido festers in his flesh', secularized by Jung via Nietzsche to signify both 'self-fertilization' and 'self-violation', MacDiarmid's drunk man is pierced and sundered by the thistle in an ambiguous image of a violent birth or a rape:

> Aye, this is Calvary — to bear
> Your Cross wi'in you frae the seed,
> And feel it grow by slow degrees
> Until it rends your flesh apairt . . . (ll. 1625-1628)

The sado-masochistic insinuation in these lines and throughout the poem is central to the psycho-sexual vision that forms its backbone. In a letter written to his old schoolmaster George Ogilvie in 1926, MacDiarmid compares the poem to a planned sequel and states that sadism and masochism are the driving forces behind the whole of *A Drunk Man*: 'Psychologically [the new poem] represents the resolution of the sadism and masochism, the synthesis of the various sets of antitheses I was posing in the Drunk Man'.[46] Thus, sadism and masochism were the contradictory impulses that were the driving force behind the whole of *A Drunk Man*. The theme is stated definitively in the lines that provide the epigraph to this chapter, where 'Masoch and Sade' co-exist in tumultuous juxtaposition. This tension is developed through the drunk man's perception of the female principle in the light of his role as a Christ-figure.

The struggle between psychic polarities in an individual is, in Jung's view, most intense between masculine and feminine principles. This 'last and most formidable opposition', to use Jung's phrase, can be traced from the biblical fall through which transpired a state of 'primal guilt'.[47] In *A Drunk Man*, the feminine principle is viewed as the cause of 'this cursèd Conscience' and a 'morality' that is also a knowledge of 'Mortality'. The speaker censures Eve for his fall from 'perfect liberty' which renders him 'torn in twa' and a 'Frankenstein that nae man can escape' (ll. 260-273). This misogynistic allotment of blame is conventional to Christian religion. Yet, for MacDiarmid's self-divided subject the faces of Eve are projections of himself. Her guilt is also his own. The two principle female figures who populate the poem are creations of the speaker's imagination and they function to reflect the nature of his being. His wife Jean ostensibly represents a real woman who is expected to admonish him when he arrives home drunk. Nevertheless, being real, she also provides the speaker transcendent experience in offering her body in sex. By contrast, the 'silken leddy', lifted from Blok's poem, represents an idealized woman reflected in the speaker's whisky glass and associated with the '*veritas*' of his drunken haze. Kerrigan points out that each of these figures functions as an aspect of the Jungian anima. Jean represents what Kerrigan considers 'the "positive" side of the anima' in her evocation of fertility, nurture and benignity. By contrast, the lady signifies, in Jung's words quoted by Kerrigan: '"anything secret, hidden, dark; the abyss, the world of the dead, anything that devours, seduces and poisons"'.[48] Kerrigan suggests that the lady signals the drunk man's descent into his own psyche and an encounter with his own female principle: 'the "leddy" becomes the drunk man's mirror image — his double'.[49] Indeed, the drunk man asks of the lady: 'Were you a vision o' myself', / Transmuted by the mellow liquor?'[50] Yet, Kerrigan overlooks that Jean *also* functions in this capacity.

Jean is the key to an authentic mode of self-truth, not in her 'good' qualities; but rather, in her association with the coarser aspects of physical experience. In a conventional dichotomization, reality connotes mere 'existence' and the ideal or non-real allows for transcendence. Throughout the course of this thesis, this formulation has been shown to be displaced and integralized. This is true also of MacDiarmid's representation of real and ideal dichotomized in the two female figures. Jean is like the ideal lady in her association with salvation. Her physical nature represents a salvation that is gained through the awareness she provides of the speaker's own baseness. Near the end of the poem the drunk man's thoughts turn to his wife:

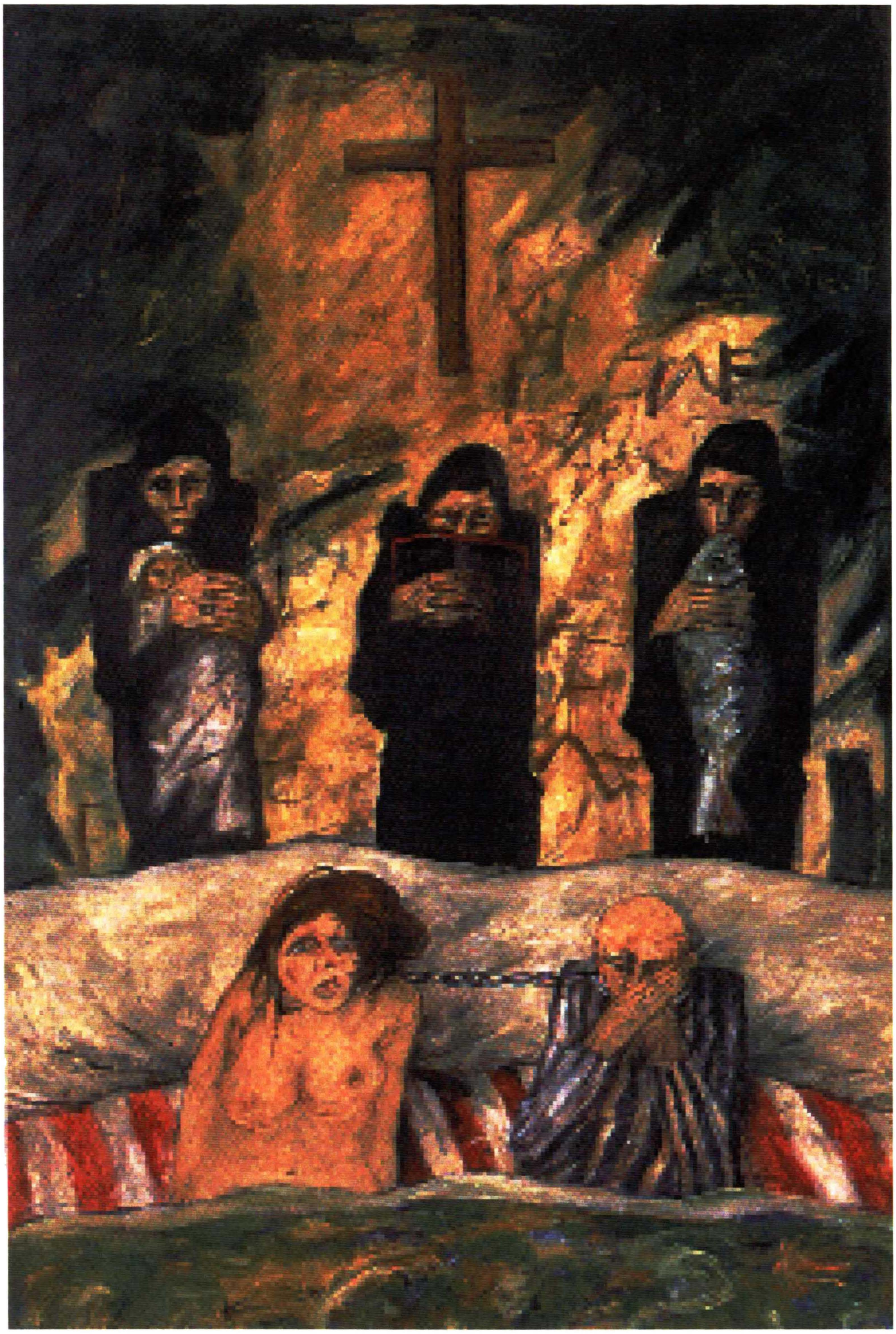
> *O Jean, in whom my spirit sees,*
> *Clearer than through whisky or disease,*
> *Its dernin' nature, wad the searchin' licht*          *dernin'* = hidden, lurking
> *Oor union raises poor'd owre me the nicht.*
>
> *I'm faced wi' aspects o' mysel'.* (ll. 2024-8)

As Christopher Harvie points out, 'the one fully-aware person in "The Drunk Man" is the poet's wife'.[51] Jean's 'fully-aware' consciousness reflects a negative illumination that is also the means to his rebirth.

Throughout the poem MacDiarmid's speaker insists on the necessarily abject nature of one's own truth, found in pig swill and vomit. This expression of truth is noted in chapter six in the context of similar revelations made by Mat Craig, Pat Doyle and Jock McLeish. In *A Drunk Man*, Buthlay draws on the poem's range of striking negative images and surmises that MacDiarmid's vision of the thistle privileges its dark and insidious denotations. Accordingly, Buthlay suggests: 'The agony of crucifixion on the thistle can only be withstood by drawing on forces in chaos, the abyss, the Dark'.[52] In this, MacDiarmid's Christ-figure is translated into the figure of Cain. Such a translation is discussed by Gilles Deleuze in *Sacher-Masoch*, an interpretation of the psychology of masochism in Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's seminal *Venus in Furs* (1870). Drawing on the image of the hero as Christ, Deleuze postulates that the cross of Christ is an inversion of the mark of Cain:

> The two principle male figures in Masoch's work are Cain and Christ. Their sign is the same, the sign of Cain prefiguring the sign of the cross which used to be written as X or as † . . . . [Cain] symbolizes in the first place the omnipresence of crime in nature and history, and the immensity of man's sufferings ('My punishment is more than I can bear').[53]

Deleuze argues that an identification with Cain signifies a masochistic mode of transcendence: 'the cross represents the maternal image of death, the mirror in which the narcissistic self of Christ (Cain) apprehends his ideal self (Christ resurrected)'.[54] Jung's signification of the cross is as a symbol of death and rebirth through the spectre of the mother (who is sexualized via Freud and Deleuze) has already been noted. In the physical reality of Jean, as mother, lover, enemy and mirror, the solipsistic drunk man searches for his true image, for himself as he really is. In the possibilities of Cain as his true self; in Jean's relative power over him through her impingement upon his thoughts and her imagined recrimination comprising the poem's final words, the end of the drunk man's quest is also a truth found in a masochistic mode.



Detail from *Homage to John Knox* (1969) by Scottish artist, John Bellany. The image couches a notion of sexual dependency within an insidious and pervasive Calvinistic guilt.

## II. Masochism and Transgressive Subjectivity

The first part of this chapter considers the notion of a male subjectivity divided in terms of male and female attributes. The solipsistic mania of Jock MacLeish's and the drunk man's intoxicated and sexual excesses reveals a '*dernin*' female principle who is both revered and attacked. Projected as the protagonist's anima, the female figure holds a promise for transcendence in sexual union. However, any sense of a spiritual or psychological unification is problematized considering the hero's precarious construction of himself as a sacrificed or dismembered god. The significance of *A Drunk Man* to the development of this theme is the way that this god-like figure is also associated with the murderer, Cain, through an association with self-truth in the 'real' or abject subjectification of a female antagonist.

In light of this, it is worth noting a violent notion of a gendered self-division in David Lindsay's fantasy novel, *A Voyage to Arcturus* (1963). The story depicts a journey made by Maskull, who leaves earth and travels across the landscape of another planet, Tormance, where he receives philosophical wisdom. The urban novels under consideration in this chapter are structured by a quest motif for metaphysical revelation, and a metaphysical world functions in these ostensibly realist urban landscapes. This metaphysical world is explicit in Lindsay's fantastic realm. Evident in both, as Joy Pohl notes of *Arcturus*, citing C. S. Lewis, is: '"a lived dialectic," . . . achieved . . . through a systematic examination of dualities within a moralized landscape'.[55] Central to Lindsay's vision, Pohl continues, is a representation of several types of masculine/feminine dichotomies. The character Panawe describes the first of these gender configurations to Maskull:

> Every man and every woman among us is a walking murderer. If a male, he has struggled with and killed the female who was born in the same body with him — if a female, she has killed the male.[56]

This violent image of an individual amalgamates the figure of Cain with the Jungian conception of dichotomized man and is particularly appropriate for a 'moralized' urban terrain.

Violence is a built-in part of the dystopian reality of a male-imagined urban space. American literary critic, James B. Lane, suggests that sexual deviance and violence are direct consequences of a character having 'jettisoned his illusions' in the face of a crushing urban, working-class reality.[57] Yet in *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* (1963), Colin Wilson argues that violence is a manifestation of the desire to transcend that same squalid reality: 'A "sexual deviation" . . . is the attempt of the healthy organism to tear off the blinkers that frustrate its self-knowledge'.[58] An interplay between existential and social notions of masculinity is central in the nexus of city-self that informs Alexander Trocchi's *Young Adam*, William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw* and Frederic Lindsay's *Jill Rips*. In these works, the self-laceration that is confined to the imaginative representation of (male) persona and (female) anima of Gray's and MacDiarmid's visions is actualized onto the city and its 'real' female characters. These texts embody a violent, because ostensibly 'real', materialization of a protagonist's 'neurotic imagination trimmed off and built into the furniture of the world'.[59]

Each of these three texts begins with the violent sex-related death of a female character. This violent negation of female presence is the condition that tears open both the narrative space of the text and the psychical space of the protagonist. Thus the male-imagined spaces of the text and city, through and in which the protagonist seeks self-identification, become what critic Donna Wilkerson calls 'feminized' spaces. The conceptual framework of Wilkerson's recent essay, 'Transgression, Masochism and Subjectivity: the Sacrifice of Self to the (Feminized) Space of Literature in Maurice Blanchot', provides a useful way in which we might apply a Deleuzean conception of masochism to these Scottish texts. Wilkerson begins with a notion of a 'de-centred' or 'non-unified' male protagonist that allows for an 'enfolding of the masculine and the feminine'.[60] This 'enfolding' occurs when a male's autonomy collapses and he inhabits a feminized space. In the works of Gray and MacDiarmid already cited, the protagonists are 'de-centred' in self-division, a process by which their feminine aspects are projected and they enter a masochistic mode. As a literary construct, this process constitutes a 'simlacrum [*sic*] of powerlessness', whereby the male subject embarks on a 'transgressive propulsion outside itself and into a simulacral feminine mode', which then allows, via masochism, 'the codification of a passive *jouissance* for the male subject'.[61] '*Jouissance*' literally means 'enjoyment' but, by way of Lacan (and later, Kristeva), has come to denote anything which is so enjoyable or intense that it may result in inertia and unbearable suffering. Thus, the masochistic mode is, as Wilkerson notes, one of sacrifice. Notions of sacrifice are evident in the identification of Gray and MacDiarmid's protagonists as the hero/martyrs, Orpheus and Christ. The close readings of three ostensibly realist Scottish urban novels that follow aim to show the ways that urban space is feminized to reveal transgressive male identity and its sacrifice, according to Deleuze's conception of masochism.

## Alexander Trocchi, *Young Adam*

The narrator of Trocchi's first novel, *Young Adam*, Joe Taylor, is a man who, like Cain, is guilty of a crime and set apart from patriarchal society. The author-persona, the insistent 'I', of *Young Adam* is a precursor to the author-persona's identification with Cain in *Cain's Book.* Both the Joes of *Young Adam* and of *Cain* are associated with the figure of a hanged man. In the former, an innocent man hangs in effigy, the image reverberating through to *Cain*, in which the figure of a hanged man decorates Necchi's scow. The type of hero implied in the title of 'Young Adam' is a pre-lapsarian man. Perhaps existing even before the creation of woman, he is without 'primal guilt'. Implicit in this identification, however, is the inevitability of the hero's severance into male and female in the creation of Eve and, recalling MacDiarmid's term in *A Drunk Man*, the 'cursèd Conscience' (l. 260) that her indiscretion engenders in him. In the fantasy realms of Trocchi's pornographic novels, *Thongs* and *White Thighs*, his narrators live out their masochistic fantasies. However, where the fantastic worlds of the pornographic works allow transcendence through masochism, the realistic setting of *Young Adam* literalizes masochistic bondage that is literally constricting.

In the opening lines of the novel Joe examines his face in a mirror — 'I always carry [the mirror] with me. It is unbreakable'[62] — establishing from the outset an emphasis on perpetual self-absorption and self-projection. Yet, as seen in Trocchi's use of reflective surfaces in chapter three, the mirror's reflection also signifies a repetition, dissolution, and dissemination of the self. At the start of *Young Adam*, Joe's reflected image reveals a dichotomization of his identity into observer and actor:

> Nothing out of place yet everything was, because there existed between the mirror and myself the same distance, the same break in continuity which I have always felt to exist between acts which I committed yesterday and my present consciousness of them. (p. 3)

Joe's logocentric, phallocentric 'I' is decentred in a temporal and spatial ambiguity:

> I don't ask whether I am the 'I' who looked or the image which was seen, the man who acted or the man who thought about the act. . . . The problem comes into being as soon as I begin to use the word 'I'. . . . It is the word 'I' which is arbitrary and which contains within it its own inadequacy and its own contradiction. (pp. 3-4)

The space between Taylor's intractable experience of the 'I' of concrete existence, and the 'I' he must use to describe it, is uncanny because it threatens to subsume the real self under its sign. It appears that the insecurity of Joe's identity is the outcome of an implied guilt for acts 'committed'. These acts, it will later transpire, are the rape and manslaughter of his girlfriend, Cathie. Thus, Joe's disintegration is directly related to those acts of sadism that had been an attempt to assert a masculine sovereign identity. Joe's solipsistic 'I' is emphatically masculine — he carefully inspects the growth of his beard in the mirror — and his sadistic treatment of Cathie is a means of asserting a specifically phallocentric, sovereign identity.

Such a male-centred and sovereign identity is described by Bataille in *Eroticism* (1957). Here, he postulates that the original sadist, the Marquis de Sade, epitomizes self-sovereignty because his vision is founded on a notion of the solitary man 'subject to no restraints of any kind'. In the self-sufficiency of Sade's citadel he 'distilled . . . a true picture of a man for whom other people did not count at all'.[63] For Joe in *Young Adam*, like Sade, the sadistic act is something to be written about and it is in this that Joe links sexual and narrative authority. Joe's sadistic rape of Cathie is an attempt to seek an authoritative existential and authorial identification. In this incident, Joe is unable to write and spends the day making custard, which thus carries a symbolic meaning of displaced creative productivity. Joe's waste of time enrages Cathie and in retaliation Joe throws the custard over her conveniently semi-naked body. In his attempt to redress creative impotence Joe also pours a bottle of ink over her and thus he becomes the sovereign creator and Cathie his work of art. He then defiles his 'creation' in a violent beating and rape: '[with] the split side of an egg crate . . . . I thrashed her mercilessly for about a minute . . . . I stripped off my clothes, grasped the slat of the egg crate, and moved among her with prick and stick, like a tycoon' (pp. 127-128). In using the length of wood to mete unrestrained violence Joe transcends himself in masculine authority that, disturbingly, leaves his victim 'satisfied'. The act of manslaughter carries this sadistic sovereignty to its extreme, transgressive conclusion.

Yet, Joe's sadism does not appear to allow for the virile male autonomy he desires. This contention may be elucidated by comparing *Young Adam* with Trocchi's pornographic novel, *Helen and Desire*, published in the same year. In many ways Helen and Joe are similar characters. Helen is, in Edwin Morgan's phrase, an 'existential exile', in whom 'Trocchi became ventriloquially female'.[64] In *Young Adam*, sex and death are fused in the image of Cathie — her death is prophetic of her comment, related by Joe: '[a] kind of compact . . . had always existed between our mating and the water. She attained to an ecstasy through terror of it . . . she felt that was how she would die, overtaken in sex by water' (p. 81). Thus, Cathie's corpse is sexualized. Her floating body is described as 'some beautiful white water-fungus . . . . [Her hair] was alive . . . a forest of antennae, caressing, feeding on the water, intricately' (p. 4). Trocchi uses a similar image in *Helen and Desire* when Helen describes her sexual avarice: 'I am only my sex . . . ready to feed, but more vitally than any of those subaqueous plants which, in the pale beauty which draws, destroy that which is attracted'.[65] The fecund image of Cathie's sexualized corpse, seen alongside Helen's words, symbolizes the destruction of the male in impotence or castration. Cathie's tentacled hair is reminiscent of a Freudian Medusa's head. Freud has written, in 'Medusa's Head' (1940 [1922]), that 'a multiplication of penis symbols signifies castration', a notion he had also expressed in 'The Uncanny'.[66]

The ideal of male fantasy in *Helen and Desire* seems to become, in *Young Adam*, a symbol of Joe's impotence. In Helen's self-sufficient narcissism she has no need of men: 'what would I do with a man for twenty-four hours in a day . . . for months, years? That is a kind of slow poison. My life is my own' (p. 16). For Helen, sexual and existential being are synonymous. Helen views the sexual act as both self-annihilating and self-affirming. From the void of dissolution comes existential plenitude, where she is the self-sufficient incarnation of primitive desire: 'I am Narcissus. I look into the water and find myself beautiful, indeed, the only beauty'.[67] For Helen, the joy of momentary obliteration is dependent on the knowledge that the self can be retrieved in order to be obliterated again. Without form or language, Helen says: 'It is indeed doubtful whether I can still usefully use the word "I"'.[68] The ambiguity of her 'I' recalls Joe's feeling of discontinuity in front of the mirror. By contrast, however, Joe's discontinuous and disintegrating reflection reveals only the void itself; it signifies self-hate rather than a positive narcissistic self-reflection. In contrast to the capacity of a woman to achieve transcendence through her sexuality, Trocchi's male character is shown to be destroyed by his. In the absence of the sadist's object, Joe, divided in himself, becomes the object of masochism.

The de-centred and desexualized nature of Joe's identity precipitates him into the masochistic mode, indicated by his desire for punishment. The novel is, after all, a type of confession. Deleuze differentiates from a Freudian notion in which masochism is a reversal of sadism ('I punish myself'). Such a self-reflexive notion is not possible when the 'I' is dissipated, and a passive mode is more appropriate. As Deleuze suggests:

> Masochism implies a passive stage ('I am punished, I am beaten'), [therefore] we must infer the existence in masochism of a particular mechanism of projection through which an external agent is made to assume the role of the subject.[69]

Cathie's death and her silence open up the space for Joe's narrative — Joe's existence as, and within, a text. From out of Cathie's silence her *presence* resonates and reminds Joe of his crime. Joe carries the dead weight of her around; her photo, his compulsion to confess (tempting punishment like Poe's Perverse Imp), and in contrast, his paranoiac fear of getting caught. In this space of guilty isolation, his desire for punishment is placed onto the harsh, authoritarian figure of Ella, his scow-mate's wife. Ella spends her life on the barge which, as illustrated in chapter three, functions symbolically as Joe's ego-centre. Enclosed in the barge, Ella represents the female element within himself with whom Joe must fuse. Thus, when Joe notices Ella, she comes into his consciousness as a sexual being. Joe muses: 'I wondered how much of a coincidence it was that I first made love with Ella on the day Cathie's body came floating back to me like a little hunk of synthetic guilt' (p. 93). Motivated by his guilt, Joe projects his need to be punished onto Ella. Just as Cathie functions only insofar that Joe might 'destroy' her and assert himself, Ella is an authoritarian figure who also exists as a projection of Joe's imaginative desire for punishment. Ella is described as a 'sexually frustrated woman [who] call[s] down the judgement of the Almighty on the sex she despised' (p. 11). She embodies the constrictive moral code of the city that would deem Joe guilty of murder. The slat of the egg crate that symbolizes sadistic self-assertion is transformed into a masochistic symbol of withheld sexuality in Ella's refusal to give Joe an egg for breakfast. In the erotic figuration of images in Bataille's novel, *L'Histoire de l'Oeil* [*Story of the Eye*], the egg comprises part of what Roland Barthes calls 'a chain of metaphor', in which the 'eye' of the title is substituted by a number of similar objects. For Barthes, the egg, like the eye, represents a 'making wet' that occurs in the 'convulsive' erotic act.[70] By contrast, in *Young Adam*, Ella punishes Joe by refusing him an egg. Furthermore, the erotic image, once taken up, is degraded. As Joe begins to perceive Ella as an object of sexual possibility, the egg is transformed into potatoes, like white orbs, that she peels into a bucket. The potatoes, 'white, and shining' (p. 12), symbolize not erotic excess, but the impoverished reality of working-class life.

The city embodies and epitomizes this degraded and morally rigid reality. The spare landscape of Trocchi's Glasgow reflects the austere and limiting religiously defined moral values of Scotland as a whole. In a sense, Trocchi's city contains the nation:

> The church tower looked just as disenchanted as most church towers in Scotland do. . . . As we skirted the churchyard to reach the pub, I noticed the usual ugly red and black posters proclaiming the evil influence of alcohol and the imminence of the Last Judgement. (p. 40)

The realistic element of the novel represents the stultifying morality of its society and, linked through a notion of self-righteous Calvinistic 'Judgement', Ella personifies what Joe terms: 'an unintelligent society perennially bent on its moral purification' (p. 90). This implication is made evident the first time that Joe advances on Ella:

> Gently I stroked her, aware of the growing urgency at my fingertips as they sowed desire there at her thighs . . . . At that moment my fingers came in contact with the prohibiting elastic of her old-fashioned knickers. . . . [S]he looked at me. It was almost, I felt, a look of hatred, her eyes brittle and passionate at the same time. (pp. 26-27)

Joe seeks to transcend society's limiting moral absolutism firstly through an imaginative vision of Ella — 'I couldn't get her out of my mind' (p. 13) — and then through a physical relationship. The evening the corpse is found, Joe goes to a pub with Leslie but returns home early so that he may be alone with Ella. They make love against one of the city's 'ugly red and black posters' and in doing so defile its moralistic message. In this transgression Ella achieves transcendence: '[Ella's] obstinate stupidity was gone. The futility of her existence was utterly transcended. . . . [W]e were together, fused, as lead is fused to lead' (p. 49). Such erotic fusion is a vertiginous experience that dissolves the divide between the self and the other, as Joe says:

> There is a structure you have to build up of another person . . . . Beyond this structural idea there is no experience; the structure itself is armour against it. For two people to come close together it is necessary to destroy the structures in terms of which each experiences the other. (p. 36)

For Joe, to encounter the female is to confront a borderline. Feminine presence propels Joe to that place: Cathie's death had situated him 'at the edge of apprehension' (p. 82) and Ella's sexuality induces, he says, 'a kind of excitement at the edges of me' (p. 18). Joe's sexual experience with Ella propels him to the edge of limitless being.

However, it also brings him to its limitation. He does not achieve transcendence as Ella does and becomes more passive as increasingly she 'was becoming demanding' (p. 94) for the power he gives her. At first this 'simulacrum female mode' suits Joe and provides him with a sense of security: 'through her I lived out a life that was separate and intact, with its own force . . . and its own centre' (p. 95). However, when Leslie finds out about their affair and leaves the barge their relationship is no longer dangerous and Joe falls victim to Ella's sense of propriety, which demands that he marry her. Joe feels trapped, and the architecture of the docks around the barge becomes at once like a predatory animal and a cage: 'The dockside, fanged and strutted with steel girders in the pale fog, sprawled shadowy oblongs into the hawser-shortened distance, which rang hollowly with the monotonous splutter of blunt-nosed drills. The feeling of constriction remained with me all morning' (p. 103). This image of the dock is brought forward into *Cain's Book*. Here, it is made explicitly sexual in its similarities with a description Necchi gives of a prostitute on Princes Street in Edinburgh: 'exposed for me in matchlight . . . this first sex shadowy and hanging colourless like a clot of spiderweb from the blunt butt of her mound. . . . It bristled then, and bared its pretty pink fangs'.[71] The threat of entrapment and powerlessness in this description are also evident in the dockside scene of *Young Adam*. Here, Joe turns from his description of the dock and observes Ella with her 'bucket of refuse' (p. 103), recalling the earlier image of the potatoes and their impoverished version of erotic ecstasy.

Joe's entrapment at this point is necessary but it is also masochistic: 'I had good reasons for remaining where I was, waiting for something to break' (pp. 103-104). In Deleuze's formulation of the masochistic mode he notes that: 'Waiting and suspense are essential characteristics of the masochistic experience . . . The masochist is morose: but his moroseness should be related to the experience of waiting and delay'.[72] The image of the hanged or crucified man in Gray and MacDiarmid is seen to allude to Deleuzean conception of masochism. In *Young Adam*, Joe's fusing with, and subjugating himself to Ella, sacrifices himself to the prohibitive society she personifies. Joe concedes that 'the more I became involved in the small world of the barge, the more I felt myself robbed of my identity' (p. 104). Joe cannot recuperate his masculine identity in passivity and gain sovereignty. He is relegated to the 'real' world of Ella and the city with which he fuses in order to save himself from its laws that would have him hanged. However, Joe must continue to push the limit of his being through sexual relationships with women to maintain a transgressive self-identification. Thus, Ella having come to represent a limit, Joe must transgress it. He does so by seducing her step-sister, Gwendoline and later, another married landlady. This masochistic repetition of sexual fusion and sacrifice of identity does not relinquish a transcendent Christ-like identity. Joe will always be marked with the sign of Cain, an exile: 'I am a rootless kind of man. Often I find myself anxious to become involved with other people, but I am no sooner involved than I wish to be free again' (p. 104). This lack of freedom is the fault of the narrative's female figures, who represent the rootedness that would seek to trap him (the sexual obscenity in the analogy is not lost either): 'if you compare a woman with a stalk of grass then her neck is the point at which she enters the earth . . . and below her neck she thrusts downwards, kinetic, towards the earth's centre, like the moist white shoots and roots of plants' (p. 23). The image recalls Cathie's body in the water which had symbolized the feminine space of the text which had both allowed for creative expression and denied a masculine identity undefiled with feminine presence. In the ebb and flow of the water and Cathie's corpse in it, we see, to use Wilkerson's phrase, Joe's 'simulacrum or "cadaverous presence" which nonetheless continues to write and speak'.[73]

## William McIlvanney, *Laidlaw*

Like *Young Adam*, William McIlvanney's novel, *Laidlaw*, is a crime thriller in which the city's disparity is used as an objective correlative to personal identity. McIlvanney comments on the significance of the city for existential concerns in his work:

> It seems to me that the thing Scottish writing would have to confront is the Scottish urban experience. Because the truth is that for most of us that is where we have been. You take the nexus around Glasgow that's still the eye of the hurricane. I think that's where our understanding of ourselves resides.[74]

The 'understanding' that McIlvanney achieves relates to masculine selfhood which, while certainly questioned, is done so, at it was in *Young Adam*, at the expense of its female characters. In Ken Worpole's study of working class fiction, *Dockers and Detectives* (1983), he remarks that in the conventional detective novel female figures play 'an obstructive role . . . threatening to emasculate or betray the stoical heroes on their lonely journeys through the mean streets'[75] and that by contrast, *Laidlaw*'s strength rests in its radical questioning of such 'deep and self-destructive entrenchments of attitudes about gender roles'.[76] Yet, as Carol Craig points out, McIlvanney 'portrays women as "the Other" . . . he represents masculinity as the norm and femininity as the deviation from this norm. . . . [W]omen become the object of men's desires for self-realisation and aggrandisement'.[77] In an urban scene very much concerned with the identification of the hero as a 'hard man' in a 'hard city', women are characterized so that such a male identification may be realized, or indeed, thwarted. Craig concludes that the brand of Scottish '*Mac*Hismoism' typified by McIlvanney is in fact a social and personal 'inferiority complex'. In *Laidlaw*, such insecurity sees both the murderer and Laidlaw divided in themselves so that they become decentred subjects.

Savagely irreconcilable dichotomies characterize both the city and its inhabitants. Detective Constable Harkness, who assists Detective Inspector Jack Laidlaw in the murder case of a teenage girl, sums up Glasgow's codification of opposites and the violent sense of attraction and repulsion he feels:

> He felt bruised with contradictions. Where he had been was being mocked by where he was. Yet both were Glasgow. . . . Its force came to him in contradictions. Glasgow was home-made ginger biscuits and Jennifer Lawson dead in the park. It was the sententious niceness of the Commander and the threatened abrasiveness of Laidlaw. . . . It was the right hand knocking you down and the left hand picking you up, while the mouth alternated apology and threat.[78]

This city of contrasts reflects the divided identities of its inhabitants. The opening pages of the novel are told from the perspective of the killer, the young Tommy Bryson, as he lunges through the city almost hysterical with self-loathing and self-recrimination, 'advertising panic, a neon sign spelling guilt' (p. 5). His guilt irreparably ostracizes him from the public places of the city: 'You could only walk and be rejected by the places where you walked, except the derelict tenements' (p. 7). He identifies himself directly with the 'big darknesses' of the tenements: 'Your body was a strange place. Hands were ugly. Inside, you were all hiding-places, dark corners. Out of what burrows in you had the creatures come that used you?' (p. 5). The use of the second person denotes a character bifurcated into observer and observed, hunter and hunted. The second chapter, told from Laidlaw's viewpoint, links the detective with the murderer. Laidlaw's narrative is also in the second-person and picks up on the same key notions of alienation, self-hate and guilt that had been described by the murderer. Laidlaw feels 'a bleakness that wasn't unfamiliar to him' (p. 8) and, like the killer, Laidlaw's sense of self is allied with the city through the notion of guilt: 'he found himself doing penance for being him' (p. 8). His guilt is not only personal it is a consequence of the heritage of his nationality: 'Guilt was at the heart of this kind of mood. . . . [B]orn in Scotland you were hanselled with remorse, set up with shares in Calvin against your coming of age' (p. 9). Laidlaw is not unaware of his ambivalent psyche: 'He felt his nature anew as a wrack of paradox. He was potentially a violent man who hated violence, a believer in fidelity who was unfaithful' (p. 9). To make sense of his unease at this moment Laidlaw's impulse is to 'unlock the drawer in his desk where he kept Kierkegaard, Camus and Unamuno, like caches of alcohol' (p. 9). The three philosophers Laidlaw reads are concerned with finding meaning within existential states of futility and despair, and Laidlaw hopes they may provide an intoxicating sense of release from the reality that precipitates their need. However, they relinquish no means of healing the rift in his own nature or the city: 'He knew nothing to do but inhabit the paradoxes' (p. 9).

For Laidlaw, at this moment, an understanding of his identity is not to be found in philosophy, but in an engagement with the dark underbelly of Glasgow's streets. His journey through the city in search of the murderer is a heroic quest. As Laidlaw's superior, the Commander of the Crime Squad, informs Detective Constable Harkness on the latter's assignment to the case: 'You'll find that Laidlaw tries to lose himself in the city at times like these. What is it he calls it? "Becoming a traveller," I think' (p. 46). The rape and murder of Jennifer Lawson, which the novel, and Laidlaw's journey, takes as its point of departure, opens out a narrative space that can be perceived as 'feminized'. Laidlaw's propulsion into 'feminized' space is indicated by the Commander when he tells Harkness that, because Laidlaw's method of 'travelling' is not conventional, there are to be two investigations with Harkness as the 'fertilising agent' (p. 46) between them. Margaret Elphinstone has written of the unconventional detective hero that 'the labyrinth he has to negotiate leads him off traditional ground into highly subversive territory, into the territory, in fact, of the repressed unconscious, the domain of female sexuality'.[79] In the sexual metaphor used by the Commander, Laidlaw is, on the one hand, a hero on a quest through the Underworld and, on the other, a passive feminine receptacle and therefore an alterity in the traditional patriarchal authority represented by the police. A reversible notion of gender is also at the heart of the murder case. The rape of the girl is two-fold; vaginally the first time and anally the second (mirroring the degeneration we have traced in the mythicization of the city) which, Laidlaw believes, 'you could see . . . as making her neuter in a way' (p. 71). The killer, like Laidlaw, is associated with an unstable gender identity that is deemed monstrous.

The novel's female characters represent a feminine principle that, like sexual perversion, is viewed as antagonistic to masculine identity. Ena, Laidlaw's estranged wife (and perhaps the namesake of Duncan Thaw's Marjory Laidlaw in *Lanark*), says of her husband: 'the questing intensity in him that had first attracted her was also what had separated them . . . . [W]ith him you never knew whether you were the maiden or the dragon' (p. 66). Laidlaw's sense of estrangement from his wife is depicted through the mythical image of the labyrinth: 'His marriage was a maze nobody had ever mapped, an infinity of habit and hurt and betrayal down which Ena and he wandered separately' (p. 9). The circuitousness of the labyrinth attests to a failure of heroism and an identification with the monstrous. The labyrinth is interpreted in feminist terms by Elizabeth Wilson as a symbol of 'male impotence'.[80] Yet, throughout *Laidlaw*, masculine inadequacy is transposed onto the female figure. The mother of the murdered girl is blamed by her husband, Bud Lawson, for bearing him only one child and thus she is unnaturally, destructively monstrous: 'That was all she had been able to produce. And four miscarriages, small parcels of blood and bones that hadn't got enough from her to make a human being' (p. 18). Bud Lawson is a tyrannical husband and father, yet in his grieving household he is also shown as entrapped in a Gothicized realm of female emotion in which he is made impotent:

> The manic architecture of the heart . . . can make eerie castellated turrets and gloomy secret chambers in a council house. . . . The muttered voices were a coven. The kitchen door was closed. From behind it came uncertain sounds, the men imprisoned in their helplessness. (p. 53)

Conventional sexual desire is either emotionally and literally sterile or monstrously perverted, evoking death in the 'petrified unrest', the stasis in repetition, implied in the maze and the multiple miscarriages.

The centre of the urban labyrinth is finally located in the 'derelict tenements' into which Bryson retreats at the start of the novel. Laidlaw and Harkness arrive at this monster's lair shortly after Bud Lawson, who finds Bryson himself with a thirst to avenge his daughter's death. Bryson, it transpires, loves Jennifer yet cannot reconcile or accept his homosexuality. Bryson's male lover, Harry Rayburn, tells Laidlaw during questioning that the boy 'couldn't come all the way out. . . . He still wanted to be straight' (p. 205). Rayburn kills himself in an assertion of self-loathing that mirrors Bryson's sadism toward Jennifer as a symbolic destruction of his feminine aspect. Bryson's feelings of guilt, not only of his innate sexual orientation, but of the rape and murder is expressed as a desire for punishment, indicated by his refusal of Rayburn's help and the wait he endures for his inevitable castigation. In this translation of guilt into a desire for punishment, sadism becomes a Deleuzean masochistic mode, as it does for Joe Taylor in *Young Adam*. In *Laidlaw*, this inversion may be gauged in the manner of the rape that opened the novel's action. Deleuze writes that 'any "passage" from . . . sadism to masochism, can only occur by a process of desexualization and resexualization'.[81] In these terms of reference, the rape that 'neuters' Jennifer is a 'desexualization' of both her and of Bryson. Rather than asserting a 'normal' heterosexual male power, the second, anal rape, establishes his sexual 'abnormality'. Thus, Bryson's 'resexualization' is as homosexual, therefore effeminate (as if he has assumed Jennifer's feminine sexuality). In this powerless mode, Bryson goes to the derelict tenement, a 'still point' of the city and the narrative, where he awaits the inevitability of punishment. In *Young Adam*, waiting or suspense signifies physical forms of suspension in hanging or crucifixion. Thus, waiting represents, for Deleuze, 'the unity of the ideal and the real'.[82] In *Laidlaw*, mythicism and realism coalesce in the tenement, that abject urban structure and metaphysical Minotaur's lair.

Brought together in the tenement, the four men of the novel are in the dark hell of their own souls. The building's disintegration is, remarks Harkness, like 'an act of God' (p. 214). When Harkness hears Bryson's whimper and Lawson's brutal voice through the tenement's blackness its effect is profound:

> [The voices] reached remorselessly into who he was and taught him futility. He had thought that what they were trying to do was . . . to locate and isolate whoever it was who carried about with him the savage force that had murdered Jennifer Lawson. Now it came to him as impossible, because that force wasn't isolated. It had already multiplied on itself to create a twin, this moment of ravening viciousness whose spores were in each of them. (p. 214)

Thus, the identities of the four men amalgamate into a single, archetypal masculine soul in whom villain and victim, punisher and punished, hard man and homosexual, are interwoven:

> [Laidlaw's] voice was an atavism, like Lawson's. The ferocity in Laidlaw's voice was a part of Harkness, just as he shared Bud Lawson's rage. In the stillness he felt himself enclosed in their animal breathings, and the pathetic whimpering of the boy was like a plea against what Harkness himself was. (p. 214)

An individual's divisions and alter-egos must be faced rather than suppressed, according to Laidlaw, who believes that Bryson's crime is the consequence of a city that does not tolerate alterity. In a comment that is reminiscent of Stevenson's warning against hypocrisy in *Jekyll and Hyde*, Laidlaw remarks that it is 'the tax we pay for the unreality we choose to live in. It's a fear of ourselves' (p. 72). A masochistic mode represents, as Wilkerson remarks, 'a subversion of (patriarchal) law, insofar as it constructs a male subject free to oscillate between power and powerlessness'.[83] However, in the convention of the realist novel this order must be reaffirmed and it is Laidlaw who does indeed 'lay the (patriarchal) law' when he comments at the end of the novel: 'that's one thing the law can do . . . . It can pull the knot on all those primitive impulses by taking over responsibility for them. Until we get them back in balance again' (p. 219).

## Frederic Lindsay, *Jill Rips*

Frederic Lindsay's novel, *Jill Rips*, appears in certain respects to be a conventional detective thriller. It lacks the philosophical references evident in *Laidlaw* yet, like Lindsay's earlier suspense thriller, *Brond* (1984), it explores an interconnectedness of the city and a hero who is divided as both hero and fiend. *Jill Rips* is set in Glasgow and works through the familiar realist premise that meaning or truth can be located in the correct reading of the city as a series of signs or clues. The novel also subscribes to what Worpole designates: 'the conventions of sexual corruption in which women belong to the forces of evil'.[84] This too, is familiar in the convention of the detective novel. *Jill Rips* exacerbates this notion of female evil by reinventing the historical figure of Jack the Ripper onto a vengeful Jill. 'Jill' is in fact two sisters who are orphaned as children when their mother, a prostitute, is murdered. Now women, they seek recompense for their mother's death by posing as prostitutes and disembowelling their clients in the manner of Jack the Ripper. The dismemberment of a male by women is reminiscent of the destruction of Orpheus at the hands of the Maenads. Thus, on the one hand, it appears that 'Jill' can recuperate power and punish men. As policeman Billy Shanks says to his Superintendent, 'Jill' is '"A woman who hated what men did to women, the way men exploit them. . . . Women's lib instead of Victorian exploitation and hypocrisy"'.[85] However, on the other hand, the allusion to male disembowelment and castration aligns the male victim with the tragic heroism and potential for resurrection of a sacrificed god.

The novel's female characters are represented as a threat to the integrity of male identity. Old Mrs Wilson, the mother of Malcolm and Murray (who is investigating the murders), places emotional demands on her sons that emasculate and ensnare them. Every other woman in the novel is a prostitute. As 'the ugliest whores in the world' (p. 226), Glasgow's prostitutes are associated with witchcraft. In *Young Adam*, Ella's familiar is a black cat that twines her legs, and in *Laidlaw*, the group of women mourners are described as a 'coven'. There is a history of witchcraft in Scotland and extensive witch-hunts and trials had raged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the contemporary city of *Jill Rips*, the police investigation is a modern-day witch-hunt. The most sinister area of Glasgow's streets are mapped out by the police Superintendent to resemble an occult configuration:

> 'Deacon Street, Carnation Street, Florence Street,' a finger followed their course, 'they make a triangle — with Merse Street lying on top of it and curving back to join Moirhill Road. Put a circle round that lot and you'd cover half the pros and ponces in the city. (p. 83)

Susan Manning, in *The Puritan-Provincial Vision*, links the Scot's fear of witchcraft with Calvinism. She notes that the nation's panic at that time was a manifestation of an 'inward-turned Calvinism . . . [in which] the Scottish churches attempted to exorcise their inner demons and purify their societies of the elect'.[86] This inward-turn was the cause of a loss of a previous certainty of a nationally defined, external and damned 'other'. Thus, the individual experienced self-division:

> Calvinists found the paradoxes and divisions of their doctrine reflected inwards . . . [the puritan had] to find within himself the poles of spiritual conflict and to become the living embodiment of a paradox. . . . [T]he puritan's mind tended to bifurcate treacherously, to reveal the inherent tensions of will and spirit. He became two selves — an observer and an actor, a saint and a sinner, regenerate and reprobate — two selves utterly opposed and yet (to the external view and the corrupted conscience) perhaps indistinguishable.[87]

A male subject's inner divisions are exposed through his sadistic relationships with the city's 'fallen' women. Tommy Beltane, who works on the case with Murray, describes his first sexual encounter with an inexperienced and underfed prostitute on his way 'through the city centre — going home to Mother' (p. 172). Disturbingly, he tells Murray how he 'drove into [the prostitute] with all [his] strength. [He] wanted to split her in two' (p. 172). This violence provides him with 'the most terrible excitement of [his] life' (p. 172). This defiling, forcing apart and 'splitting' of a weak female object provides him with an illusion of transcendence before he re-enters maternal enclosure. In the first line of the next chapter, an image of splitting is transferred onto Murray: '"You live in the past," Mother said to Murray, whose head felt as if it had been split and packed in the seam with pieces of burning coal' (p. 175). When Murray visits Mary O'Bannion, who had been Beltane's frail prostitute of twenty years ago, as part of his inquiry into the 'Jill' murders, she is now obese. Beltane warns him that she is 'a very fat smelly whore' (p. 168). Her sheer size is self-protection but it is also revenge and she literally threatens to engulf the male subject. However, Murray's fear and revulsion, like Beltane's, becomes cruelty. He responds to her imposition of his space by his own self-justification when he leaves her stranded in the middle of the city, too heavy to walk home.

Yet despite such misogyny, Beltane claims that it is women, not men, who are full of hate. He associates the dark streets of Glasgow with the mythical realm of the dead. Beltane's correlation of sex and death sees the urban underworld associated with the female genitals: 'It's always seemed to me whores must be full of hate — down there in the dark kingdom' (p. 168). A conflation of the female body and the city is made through the notion of the 'unhomely'. Many of the characters are strangers to the city and, at the end of the novel, Beltane lends this literal sense of strangeness existential signification: 'I think some of us are not . . . at home . . . in these bodies' (p. 325). For Blanche Gelfant, writing in *The American City Novel*, the stranger motif reveals: 'feelings of loss and confusion, a lost hold on identity; having failed to define and objectify themselves, any action may involve self-contradictions and even self-destruction.'[88] In *Jill Rips*, the male characters' fear of women's sexuality betrays such a problematized subject. In 'The Uncanny', Freud discusses the way self and place interact to impart a psychological sense of unease. A male's fear of the 'place' represented by the female genitals reveals his own psychopathy: 'neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This *Unheimlich* place, however, is the entrance to the former *Heim* (home) of all human beings'.[89] In the feminized space of the narrative, in which women are predators from 'the dark kingdom', sex reveals sublimated male transgression rather than female evil.

In the climactic chapter of the novel, 'Cold Malcolm', a revelation of male transgression connects Calvinism and masochism. In this chapter, Malcolm, Murray Wilson's brother, sleeps with Frances, who, with the help of her half-sister Irene (Malcolm's wife), is the infamous 'Jill'. The sexual encounter has more significance to the 'mystery' of the novel than the denouement of the crime itself. During their encounter the narrative suddenly slides from a relatively detached third-person point of view to a hallucinatory stream of consciousness. The oblique yet richly symbolical narrative describes the sexual act: 'he held a naked body in his arms and went forward through the passage that pulsed like a living thing' (p. 265). Malcolm's words prophetically describe a journey he will later make with Frances. After this scene, a third person murders Frances and ties her body to Malcolm, abandoning them in a tunnel (the sexual symbolism is clear), through which Malcolm must drag himself, with the corpse, to safety. During the sexual act itself, Malcolm imagines a Miss Geddie, who personifies the Calvinistic '*terrors of law and of God*' in her characterization as an 'ice giant' (p. 265). Such coldness is integral to Deleuze's delineation of masochism, summed up, he has suggested, in a 'trinity' of 'cold—maternal—severe, icy—sentimental—cruel'. Deleuze contrasts the icy 'apathy' of sadism to a masochistic coldness 'that is not the negation of feeling but rather the disavowal of sensuality'.[90] In *Jill Rips*, Miss Geddie's icy Calvinistic grip makes this sexual experience a punishment: 'he saw [Miss Geddie's] hand . . . colder than anyone could live and bear, anguish, spears of ice thrust in him' (p. 265). A similar connection with religion and masochism is made in Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*. This novel's protagonist, Severin, says: 'Venus must hide herself in a vast fur lest she catch cold in our abstract northern clime, in the icy realm of Christianity'.[91] In Deleuze's analysis of the novel's delineation of masochism, coldness signifies a 'catastrophe' of consciousness: 'Masochistic coldness represents the freezing point, the point of dialectical transmutation . . . . [A] sentimentality radiates in turn through the ice as the generative principle of new order'.[92]

In *Jill Rips*, the pain of punishment is transformed through Malcolm so that he becomes its receiver as well as its perpetrator, and he 'stabs' at Frances. At the moment of climax, Malcolm resexualizes himself by regression to a child. At this moment he also attempts to claim his identity as a 'man'. In this dark space of multiple possibilities for masculine identity (like _Laidlaw_'s tenement), Malcolm receives a shock of self-revelation:

> Frances came on top of him, her fault her fault, and was colder than any ice, colder than regret colder than righteousness, colder than Miss Geddie when you were naughty *hide all my transgressions from view* . . . not naughty, a man, not to be frightened by their bogeys by their lies, the I thing, melting in Frances, listen for the truth in the dark, holding darkness in his hands, her lips open over him . . . he choked on the foulness of her breath. (p. 266)

Malcolm's revelation shows him the nature of his own transgression and his own transgressive being, illuminated against female darkness. Fusion with Frances causes Malcolm to experience the loss of self and the experience of the transcendent other. In this moment of continuity, a truth is revealed to him. What it is that women are concealing is *male* transgression, ('*hide all my transgressions from view*') repressed under the cold grip of Calvinism. The 'dialectical transmutation' described by Deleuze reveals both male perversion and vulnerability, yet the cold Calvinism that represses it also protects it. As Deleuze suggests: 'The coldness is both protective milieu and medium, cocoon and vehicle:

it protects supersensual sentimentality as inner life, and expresses it as external order, as wrath and severity'.[93] Indeed, in *Jill Rips*, the violent patriarchal order of the city is restored.

Frances, mutilator and murderer of men, is killed at the end of the novel. Her corpse is tied to a man and left in a deserted tunnel. Her death is necessary, fulfilling the obligatory resolution of transgression in the convention of the detective story. Obese Mary, another hideous imposition on male space, is also killed. The scope of the detective novel disallows anything more than the revelation of the sexual inversion, and female vengeance cannot be sustained. Revelationary self-knowledge is glimpsed but cannot be upheld or maintained. The space that is opened out by Frances's and Mary's apparent transgressions, in which orders of gender and class are corrupted, close back in again. In the last lines of the novel, Murray Wilson enters his mother's house. Malcolm is ill in bed and Murray is blamed for threatening and raping his brother's wife. This is not true, but merely Irene's cover for a guilty escape. Mrs Wilson 'beat at him with brittle fists of folded bones' (p. 329), and he retreats to a small room. There, trapped within the insecurity imposed upon him by his mother's rejection of him he presses his forehead against the window and looks in vain for 'the woman linking her husband and son at a set table' in the house opposite. This traditional ideal of a female figure uniting the boy and the man, the male dichotomized as innocence and experience, does not exist in Glasgow: 'There was no way of seeing her from where he was' (p. 330).

## Concluding Remarks

A reading of an urban woman in terms of her function as a Jungian anima elucidates the nature of the male protagonist's search for transcendence in the psychological terms of the novel, yet it does not adequately engage with the 'realistic' aspect of the novel and the disturbing 'real' situation of women that it represents. In the final three texts considered in this study, the actual death of a female character opens up an exploration of a masculine psyche yet, this reality also proves to be the limitation of such an exploration. Stephen

Heath notes in regard to a similar technique used in *Jekyll and Hyde*, which begins with the trampling of a girl: 'The story *starts* from the exclusion of the woman which is the *condition* of a questioning of the man and also its *limitation* the specifics of difference are pulled back into general themes'.[94] In Deleuze's delineation of masochism as being 'animated by a dialectical spirit' toward an imagined 'Ideal', a masochistic mode belongs to a fantastic rather than a realistic world. In the fantastic realms of Lindsay's *Arcturus* and MacDonald's *Lilith*, identities are transgressed and reconfigured. The evil encountered in such realms is, in Jung's terms, necessary for a goal of unification. However, in the realist context of the urban novel, and particularly the detective novel, it appears that, even when the crime is solved the protagonist is unable to attain totality or wholeness. Masculine identity remains dictated by social convention and bound to a phallocentric male sovereignty that is not reconciled to its own alterity.

In the three texts discussed in this chapter, a decentred, or non-unified protagonist enabled an exploration of 'powerlessness', yet reaffirmed, however internally fractured, a socially acceptable, patriarchal stereotype. In *Young Adam*, Joe Taylor's solipsism is fraught with his sense of discontinuity and self-disintegration yet he continually maintains a persona of sexual potency. The hero of the title in *Laidlaw* is identified with the killer through their relationship with the city and their feminization, yet his lawful authority reasserts itself in the end, however humanely. In *Jill Rips*, Jack the Ripper becomes a Jill who illuminates male transgression through her own apparently innate evil that must be brought to justice. In Wilkerson's consideration of the philosophy of Deleuzean masochism, she does not fail to address the politically problematic inscription of female characters. In Wilkerson's view, a decentring of a male subject has two outcomes in respect to the consequential 'enfolding' of masculine and feminine:

> On the one hand, insofar as the subject maintains an ebb and flow between its masculine gender and the feminine gender, it can be seen as an undoing of binary oppositions and dualistic modes of thought by creating a fluid and diffuse space where the subject relinquishes its universal status and opens itself up to alterity . . . . On the other hand, however, the enfolding can be viewed as an appropriation and a maintaining of the feminine — which has always been presented in the Western (phallocentric) philosophical tradition as the de-centred, the

> lacking agency, the outside, self-annihilation — in order to re-present the (male) subject as a disappearing (subversive) entity.[95]

Thus, a radical individuality free of the insecurity and aggression Craig ascribes the Scottish male is not catalysed. The use of a female character to decategorize and explore male gender serves, according to Patricia Waugh (quoted by Wilkerson), to merely 'reinforce rather than go outside the patriarchal logic. . . . [I]t continues to empty women of any true materiality, transforming them into Woman . . . an entity in service of a masculine space of the sacred'.[96] In the non-realist readings explored in this chapter, a Deleuzean 'dialectical-imaginative' masochistic mode may enable a female side of a man's nature to enact a mock destruction of his masculine persona so that unification may be possible. The ideal towards which the male moves is not from a gender-based division to unification, but to a reassertion of a socially conditioned male identity, within which is a more pressing struggle between hero and monster. In this respect Berthold Schoene-Harwood has remarked: 'Phallocentric thought effects a selective disembodiment of man . . . . It champions an ideal of self-centred, monologic and divisive autonomy over principles of communal dialogue and togetherness'.[97] In Schoene-Harwood's view, the achievement of *The Wasp Factory* lies in its engagement with a gendered alterity not possible within the conventions and expectations of a realist text:

> Banks urges traditional man to open up to what he has learned categorically to exclude from his psychological make-up. What is abject to the patriarchal system may not necessarily be abject to the individual male. On the contrary . . . what man is conditioned to regard with (self-) loathing may begin to initiate processes of genuine self-authentication.[98]

Such a process of authentication based on, to use Berthold-Schoene's term, a 'regenerative chaos', is explored in other recent works of Scottish fiction which, like *The Wasp Factory*, successfully blend realism and non-realism. In Irvine Welsh's *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995), for example, a victimized woman literally forces her rapist to open his eyes to his feminine self by cutting off his eye-lids and his penis. In Alan

Warner's novel, *Morvern Callar* (1995) the male author has killed himself on the first page, and the narrative is handed over to Morvern, his girlfriend. It must be noted, however, that these examples of male dismemberment and resexualization are not specifically urban. There is also a strong emphasis on the fantastic represented in the comatose journeying of Welsh's character through South-African dream-landscapes, and in the projection of erotic male fantasy onto the female characters who are thus only apparently free of male authorship in *Morvern Callar*. The questioning of identity through a masochistic mode in an urban context may be seen in John Burnside's *The Mercy Boys* (1999), although the city itself does not play a part in the events that unfold. The theme is more subtly wrought in the Glasgow of A. L. Kennedy's *Looking for the Possible Dance* (1993), in which one of its characters, Colin, is crucified to the floor, as well as in *So I am Glad* (1995), where the protagonist, Jennifer, uncharacteristically loses self-control and whips her boyfriend senseless.

This thesis begins by opening one door, *Lanark*, and it ends by opening another. There is ample scope for a study of the female experience of the city in Scottish literature. Significant work is beginning on individual writers, particularly in the critical collection, *A History of Scottish Women's Writing* (1997). There is a necessity, however, for further research of the urban visions of, for example, Sarah Tytler, Dot Allen, Jessie Kesson, Catherine Carswell, Willa Muir, Elspeth Davie and Emma Tennant which might provide a companion-piece to the male experiences of the city introduced in this thesis. Such a study may curb further criticism of the type seen, for example, in Robert Elliot's essay, 'Women, Glasgow, and the Novel':

> Women novelists have approached the city half-heartedly . . . [Male novelists] have given us the slums, the shipyards, politics, commercial greed, pride and craftsmanship, the women novelists have tiptoed round the edge: a new dress, a wedding, a pining heart, but little more.[99]

Just as this thesis shows that male writers given us psychological and spiritual concerns other than just the outward and economic vision of the city suggested by Elliot, a similar revisionary approach to the representation of a female subjectification of the city may take a comment made by Julia Kristeva as a starting-point:

> It's more difficult for women to get out of hell, this descent:
> Orpheus manages it but Eurydice didn't.[100]

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[1] Hugh MacDiarmid, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, annotated and ed. by Kenneth Buthlay (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1987), ll. 513-516.

[2] Moira Burgess, *The Glasgow Novel*, 2nd edn. (Motherwell and Glasgow: Scottish Library Association and Glasgow District Libraries, 1986), p. 23.

[3] Hana Wirth-Nesher, *City Codes: Reading the Modern Urban Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 25.

[4] Douglas Dunn, 'The Representation of Women in Scottish Literature', *Scotlands*, 2 (1994), 1-23 (1).

[5] Carol Craig, 'On Men and Women in McIlvanney's Fiction', *Edinburgh Review*, 73 (1986), 42-49 (49).

[6] S. J. Boyd, '"A Man's A Man": Reflections on Scottish Masculinity', in *Scotlands*, 2 (1994), 97-112 (99).

[7] Laing was affiliated with Trocchi's sigma project and in the mid-1960s he contributed to the *Sigma Portfolio*, which gathered together such writers and artists as Robert Creeley, Colin Wilson and Stan Brakhage.

[8] R. D. Laing, *The Divided Self: An Existential Study in Sanity and Madness* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1970), pp. 11-12.

[9] Ibid., p. 41.

[10] Ibid., p. 42.

[11] See, for instance, Abood (1973), Glicksberg (1963) and Timms and Kelley (1985).

[12] Christopher Nash describes the *doppelgänger* motif as denotative of a juncture where: 'The Realistic struggle for objectivity, even about oneself — and the struggle to get out of, to be free of oneself . . . — meets the thwarted yearning for oneness which for some is the very motive impulse behind traditional fantasy' (Nash 1993, p. 183). Thus, the double is a bridge between realism and non-realist modes, fraught by a simultaneous need for radical individuality as well as unity, as we have seen, for example, in *Jekyll and Hyde*, and which will be presently shown in *Lanark*.

[13] Although, significantly, Emma Tennant addresses the notion of female doubles in *The Bad Sister* (1978) and *Two Women of London: The Strange Case of Ms Jekyll and Mrs Hyde* (1989), urban pastiches of Hogg's *Confessions* and Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde* respectively. Unfortunately, the scope of the present discussion does not allow for a consideration of these texts.

[14] Berthold Schoene-Harwood, 'Dams Burst: Devolving Gender in Iain Banks's "The Wasp Factory"', *Ariel: A Review of International English Literature*, 30:1 (January 1999), 131-148 (134).

[15] Ibid., p. 143.

[16] Arthur Flannigan-Saint-Aubin, quoted by Schoene-Harwood in 'Dams Burst: Devolving Gender', p. 135.

[17] Ibid., p. 135.

[18] Ibid., p. 143.

[19] C. G. Jung, quoted by E. A. Bennett in *C. G. Jung* (London: Barrie & Rockliff, 1961), p. 142.

[20] Jung suggests a female counterpart of the male anima in the 'animus', or repressed male principle of a woman's psyche. However, in much the same fashion that Freud had been unable to sustain a female version of the Oedipus complex, Jung emphasises his own problems in applying the notion of an animus to a female psychology merely as an opposite to a male psychology.

[21] S. J. Boyd, '"A Man's a Man"', pp. 99-100.

[22] C. J. Jung, 'Anima and Animus', in *Aspects of the Feminine*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (London and New York: Ark, 1986), pp. 77-100 (p. 78).

[23] Ibid., p. 84.

[24] See Sizemore (1978), p. 34.

[25] See William Raeper's brief discussion of Jungian archetypes and the individuation process in *Lilith*, in *George MacDonald* (Tring, Batavia, Sydney: Lion, 1988), pp. 150-151.

[26] Ibid., p. 151.

[27] Alasdair Gray, *Lanark: A Life in Four Books* (London: Picador, 1991), p. 493. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[28] Jacques Lacan, 'The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience', in Rice and Waugh (1997), p. 131.

[29] C. G. Jung, 'The Battle for Deliverance from the Mother', in *Aspects of the Masculine*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull, ed. by John Beebe (Princeton: Bollingen, 1989), pp. 9-23 (pp. 9-12).

[30] Jolande Jacobi, *The Way of Individuation*, trans. by R. F. C. Hull (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1967), p. 49.

[31] Ibid., p. 49.

[32] Ibid., p. 59.

[33] Ibid., p. 57.

[34] Vyachelsav Ivanov, quoted by W. N. Herbert in *To Circumjack MacDiarmid: The Poetry and Prose of Hugh MacDiarmid* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), p. 47.

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[35] Alasdair Gray, *1982 Janine* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), p. 343. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[36] Christopher Whyte's Introduction in *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. xvii.

[37] S. J. Boyd, 'Black Arts: *1982 Janine* and *Something Leather*', in *The Arts of Alasdair Gray*, ed. by Robert Crawford and Thom Nairn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 108-123 (p. 108).

[38] Barry Wood, 'Scots, Poets and the City', in *The History of Scottish Literature, Volume 4, Twentieth Century*, ed. by Cairns Craig (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 337-348 (p. 339).

[39] Alan Riach, *The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid*, Scotnotes 15 (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 1999), p. 22.

[40] Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 167.

[41] C. G. Jung, quoted by Catherine Kerrigan in *Whaur Extremes Meet: The Poetry of Hugh MacDiarmid 1920-1934* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1983), pp. 120-121.

[42] See Walter Perrie, 'Nietzsche and the Drunk Man', where Jung is cited as an influence on MacDiarmid's *A Drunk Man* via Jung's writings on Nietzsche in *Psychological Types*, and Edwin and Willa Muir's interest in both Jung and Nietzsche.

[43] C. G. Jung, 'The Battle for Deliverance from the Mother', in *Aspects of the Masculine*, p. 23.

[44] Kenneth Buthlay's Introduction, *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, p. xliii.

[45] Christopher Whyte's Introduction, in *Gendering the Nation*, p. xvi.

[46] Hugh MacDiarmid to George Ogilvie, 9 December 1926, quoted in Buthlay's Introduction in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, p. xvi.

[47] C. G. Jung, 'The Personification of the Opposites', in *Aspects of the Masculine*, pp. 87-108 (p. 87).

[48] Catherine Kerrigan, 'Desperately Seeking Sophia: Hugh MacDiarmid and the Female Principle', in *Scotlands*, 2 (1994), 155-163 (159)

[49] Ibid., p. 160.

[50] *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, ll. 225-226. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[51] Christopher Harvie, *No Gods and Precious Few Heroes: Scotland 1914-1980* (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), p. 134.

[52] Kenneth Buthlay's Introduction in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, p. xliv.

[53] Gilles Deleuze, *Sacher-Masoch: An Interpretation, together with the entire text of* Venus in Furs, from a French rendering by Aude Willm, trans. by Jean McNeil (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), pp. 83-84.

[54] Ibid., p. 84.

[55] Joy Pohl, 'Dualities in David Lindsay's *A Voyage to Arcturus*', *Extrapolation*, 22:2 (Summer 1981), 164-170 (164).

[56] David Lindsay, *A Voyage to Arcturus* (New York: Ballantyne, 1968), p. 69.

[57] See James B. Lane, 'Violence and Sex in the Post-War Popular Urban Novel: With A Consideration of Harold Robbins's *A Stone For Danny Fisher* and Hubert Selby, Jr.'s *Last Exit to Brooklyn*', *Journal of Popular Culture*, 8 (1974), 295-308.

[58] Colin Wilson, *Origins of the Sexual Impulse* (London: Panther, 1963), p. 124.

[59] *Lanark*, p. 493.

[60] Donna Wilkerson, 'Transgression, Masochism and Subjectivity: the Sacrifice of Self to the (Feminized) Space of Literature in Maurice Blanchot', *Australian Journal of French Studies*, XXXV: 2 (1998), 228-242 (231)

[61] Ibid., pp. 228-229.

[62] *Young Adam*, p. 3. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[63] Georges Bataille, *Eroticism*, trans. by Mary Dalwood (London and New York: Marion Boyars, 1987), p. 167.

[64] Edwin Morgan's Foreword in Alexander Trocchi, *Helen and Desire* (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc., 1997), p. vii.

[65] Alexander Trocchi, *Helen and Desire*, p. 44.

[66] Sigmund Freud, 'Medusa's Head', in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-22)*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey and others (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psychoanalysis, 1962), pp. 273-274 (p. 273). In this short piece, Freud points out, as he had in 'The Uncanny', that the female genitals signified by the Medusa's hair are essentially those of the mother. In *Young Adam*, Joe associates Cathie's death with that of his mother: 'Dead. Dead. Dead. My mother and now Cathie' (p. 82). In *Cain's Book*, Joe writes of the uncanny feeling provoked by his mother's hair: 'My mother had red hair. That worried me. . . . The thought of a red sex worried me. It was incongruous, almost occult . . . a single item of uncorrelatable evidence disturbing my general picture of her' (pp. 211-212). As mentioned in chapter three, Trocchi had written in regard to his mother that: 'Her death was my direction' (Scott 1991, p. 15) and thus the image of a sexualised mother informs Trocchi's subsequent female characters and their signification of both creative potency and castration.

[67] *Helen and Desire*, p. 155.

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[68] Ibid., p. 154.

[69] *Sacher-Masoch*, p. 92.

[70] Roland Barthes, 'The Metaphor of the Eye', in Georges Bataille, *Story of the Eye*, trans. by Joachim Neugroschal (London: Penguin, 1982), pp. 119-127 (p. 121).

[71] Alexander Trocchi, *Cain's Book* (London, Paris and New York: Calder, 1992), p. 64.

[72] *Sacher-Masoch*, p. 62.

[73] 'Transgression, Masochism and Subjectivity', p. 231.

[74] William McIlvanney, quoted by Keith Dixon in 'Writing on the Borderline: The Works of William McIlvanney', in *Studies in Scottish Literature*, Vol. XXIV (1989), 142-157 (147).

[75] Ken Worpole, *Dockers and Detectives: Popular Reading: Popular Writing* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 44.

[76] Ibid., p. 46.

[77] 'On Men and Women in McIlvanney's Fiction', p. 45.

[78] William McIlvanney, *Laidlaw* (London: Coronet, 1979), p. 61. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[79] Margaret Elphinstone, 'The Quest: Two Contemporary Adventurers', in *Gendering the Nation*, pp. 107-136 (p. 113).

[80] Elizabeth Wilson, 'The Invisible *Flâneur*', in *Postmodern Cities and Spaces*, ed. by Sophie Watson and Katherine Gibson (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), pp. 59-79 (p. 74).

[81] *Sacher-Masoch*, p. 94.

[82] Ibid., p. 63.

[83] 'Transgression, Masochism and Subjectivity', p. 239.

[84] Dockers and Detectives, p. 43.

[85] Frederic Lindsay, *Jill Rips* (London: Corgi, 1988), p. 85. Further references in this chapter will follow quotations in the text.

[86] Susan Manning, *The Puritan-Provincial Vision: Scottish and American Literature in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 21.

[87] Ibid., pp. 20-21.

[88] Blanche Gelfant, *The American City Novel* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p. 23.

[89] Sigmund Freud, 'The Uncanny', in *The Complete Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVII, trans. and ed. by James Strachey and others (London: The Hogarth Press and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1962), pp. 219-254 (p. 245).

[90] *Sacher-Masoch*, p. 46.

[91] Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*, reprinted in Deleuze, *Sacher-Masoch*, pp. 117-229 (p. 124).

[92] Ibid., p. 46.

[93] Ibid., p. 46.

[94] Stephen Heath, 'Psychopathia Sexualis: Stevenson's Strange Case', in *Critical Quarterly*, 28:1/2 (Spring, Summer 1986), 93-108 (102).

[95] 'Transgression, Masochism and Subjectivity', p. 231.

[96] Ibid., pp. 231-232.

[97] 'Dams Burst: Devolving Gender', p. 144.

[98] Ibid., p. 146.

[99] Robert Elliot, 'Women, Glasgow, and the Novel', in *Chapman* 33, VII:3 (Autumn 1982), 1-4 (1).

[100] Julia Kristeva, 'A Question of Subjectivity — An Interview', trans. by Susan Sellers, in *Modern Literary Theory: A Reader*, 3rd edn., ed. by Philip Rice and Patricia Waugh (London, New York, Sydney, Auckland: Arnold, 1997), pp. 131-137 (p. 136).

# CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued and illustrated three main contentions. Firstly, it has traced a tradition of Scottish urban literature hitherto denied or deemed a failure. Secondly, the tradition thus delineated is not merely realist, but interweaves realist and non-realist modes dialectically in an aim to reveal and recuperate negativity and thus achieve transcendence. Thirdly, Alexander Trocchi is pivotal within this tradition. The concerns he expresses with respect to urban selfhood and transgressive modes of self-realization exert a gravitational pull which brings into focus a line of inheritance that links nineteenth-century realism and fantasy with late twentieth-century city writing.

The tradition of urban literature that is traced through the course of this study is not limited to a realistic mode of expression. To read the Scottish urban novel exclusively in terms of realism is merely to engage with the surfaces of the city and of the protagonist who inhabits it. A surface reading invariably encounters areas of failure, lack and absence. In the view of predominant critical evaluations, such areas of non-meaning represent the failure of the text to fulfil the unitary vision toward which realist narrative conventionally moves. Yet the novels themselves point toward the inadequacy of such a way of reading. In Stevenson's *Jekyll and Hyde*, for example, appearances are shown to be an unreliable indication of what lies beneath; in Muir's *Poor Tom*, the city appears punctured with holes that expose an infinite, vacuous, underlying realm; and in Trocchi's *Cain's Book*, the reflection of the protagonist in water and in mirrors does not reveal tangible form, but the dispersal and disintegration of appearances.

Such recognition of deficiency or lack at the realistic level of the novel catalyses the protagonist's quest for meaning within metaphysical or psychological depths. The phenomenological reading demanded by Trocchi's works, in particular *Cain's Book*, has provided strategies with which to open out the realist representation of the city in the other novels considered in this thesis. Further, the influence of Continental and expatriate writers such as Beckett, Kafka, Sartre, Camus and Sade in Trocchi's works is tenacious. This tenacity prompts the critical strategies used in this thesis. Such opening procedures, applied to Trocchi's works, are extended to the other novels explored in this thesis, in which metaphysical concerns are less obviously drawn. Recontextualized within modernist, Continental paradigms, the Scottish city is seen to function as the controlling metaphor for the metaphysical concerns of its perceiving subject.

To break the texts and their characters loose from, and out of, the confinements of a strongly endorsed realist tradition, and to allow them their own self-defined explorations and expressions, has been a major purpose of this thesis.

Intertextuality is one way in which the self-referential enclosure of Scottish realism may be broken.[1] In *The Shipbuilders*, for example, a copy of Joyce's *Ulysses* peeks out from a pile of books on Leslie Pagan's coffee table; in *Laidlaw*, copies of Unamuno and Kierkegaard are kept in Laidlaw's desk drawer; and in *The Dear Green Place*, Mat Craig describes both his fascination and discomfort toward the spiritual exoticism of 'Pound, Joyce, Eliot, Cummings, and especially Yeats'.[2] If such names are furtively introduced into the worlds of these novels, it is because they represent modes of self-expression that are considered sinful and excessive within their Calvinistic frame of reference. In the religious paradigm given by St Augustine in *The City of God*, for instance, noted in chapter one, the material city is inhabited by the fallen, who believe that they, not God, are the centre of meaning. As well as the religious frame, there is, conspicuously, a rigidly economic structure too. So, correspondingly, in the working-class terms most notably seen in Barke's *Major Operation*, discussed in chapter two, self-consciousness is considered to be hostile to the socialist ideal of collective identity and strength in unity.

The protagonist's engagement with hitherto repressed depth connects him with the most abject and negative aspects of himself, reflected in the pathological *topos* of the industrialized city. In the self-contained universe of the self/city, the weight of the protagonist's self-scrutiny causes him to bifurcate into both subject and object. This fragmentation is implicit in Shadow's social tract, *Midnight Scenes*, and is made explicit in the fantastic visions of Oliphant's 'The Land of Darkness' and MacDonald's *Lilith*. In the socialist realism of Barke's *Major Operation* and Gaitens's *Dance of the Apprentices*, introspection is described as a 'cancer'. It is an insidious, proliferative and destructive disease. Philosophical rumination may be allowed expression in a fantastic mode but is deemed inappropriate and inadvisable in a realist (con)text. The dismemberment motif that extends across realistic and fantastic urban visions alike, from Oliphant's 'Land of Darkness' and Davidson's *Vivisector* through to Barke's *Major Operation*, Hind's *The Dear Green Place* and the crime thrillers of William McIlvanney and Frederic Lindsay, ruptures and decentres unitary forms of reality in order to distil metaphysical truth. In the overtly psychological realm of the fantastic genre, urban secularization is the cause of laceration and the painful self-exposure of the sinful self, abandoned by God. In the development of the dismemberment motif in twentieth-century works, however, social injustice supersedes moral conceptions of sin. Images of laceration are recuperated to signify, paradoxically, a quasi-religious martyrdom and god-like resurrection.

The hero's consciousness of his innate monstrousness is shown to be crucial in order to achieve resurrection, or transcendence. This is seen in the reading, suggested in this thesis, of Mr Hyde as a subjective and 'artistic' force; in Trocchi's identification with Cain and the Minotaur; and in the protagonists discussed in chapter seven, who deploy masochistic fantasy to explore alterities of male identification. In each of these cases, transgressive modes of being are deliberately evoked in order to explore that which is impossible within the moral and economic constraints of urban social reality. Transcendence is not to be gained from an Icarian or Thesean flight away from the labyrinthine city. Instead, the heroic act lies in walking, eviscerated, through its dark corridors. The hero in these vertiginous locations is necessarily a pedestrian. He is not a professional walker of the city in the manner of a Baudelairean *flâneur*. The Scottish hero is an amateur, like Dante's innocent, questing poet in *L'Inferno*, although without Dante's Virgil and a literary tradition to guide him. In the evocation of the city as Dante's Hell seen, for example in *Poor Tom*, discussed in chapter four, walking rather than public transport brings Tom and Mansie closest to self-realization. For to walk is to map oneself at the same time as one maps the city. By tracing the city's streets the hero threads himself into its physical structure while creating and limiting his own configuration. The urban nature of the hero's identity attests to a subjectivity which, like that of the Minotaur, lies outside of reason. The quest for transcendence is inextricable from the realization of the hero's own sin and guilt. Significantly, however, the hero's movement through the labyrinthine city is transcribed in the linear form of his narrative, and thus the quest for subjectivity is also inextricable from its objectification in language.

The division of the city, the text and the individual into both subject and object betokens struggle rather than reconciliation. The texts surveyed in this study delineate two interdependent yet contradictory modes of transcendence. The protagonist desires sovereign identification. This autonomy is achieved in radical difference from place. However, the protagonist equally longs for a social or collective sense of identity, in which he is united with place. The hero who carries this duality inhabits space precariously as he contends with his desire for both rupture and enclosure. Inflections of this tension are represented by the protagonist's perception of, and movement through, urban space. Each of the novels studied here is dialectically constructed by activities of opening and closing, of the transgression of boundaries demarcating inside and outside, and in upward and downward movement. For example, Joe Necchi, in *Cain's Book*, is aware of the dangers of unlimited freedom away from 'realist' structures when he muses: 'I often wondered how far out a man could go without being obliterated'.[3] The allure of Necchi's invocation to spatial immensity lies in its dangers. However, for the protagonists of Muir's *Poor Tom* and Kelman's *Busconductor Hines*, for example, the expansiveness afforded by epiphany and exotic fantasy respectively brings the threat of self-dispersal. Obversely, in Gaitens's *Dance of the Apprentices* and Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, discussed in chapter six, each protagonist's subjectification of material reality serves to both objectify themselves and 'derealize' space. By this inversion, space threatens to smother and consume them.

It is clearly evident that such struggle, convolution and contradiction are integral to the unique tradition of Scottish urban literature proposed in this thesis. These tensions contribute to the vitality of the writing as well as to its heaviness. According to Edwin Muir, it is a literature 'struggling into being', thus generating a dialectic of open and closed:

> The literature of the past is always greater and sounder than a literature, however great, struggling into being in one's own time; for in literature completeness is health and incompleteness sickness: and the age in which a man lives will always appear a little pathological.[4]

In the terms of this struggle as it is seen in each of the works discussed in this thesis, 'reality' is not considered to be conducive to thought and expression in a state of whole 'completeness'; it is, rather, subverted, conditional, and polyphonic. Yet transcendence is not achieved solely by recourse to a non-realist realm or way of seeing. The protagonist also desires, and requires, collective and unified identity within the cognitive frame of the symbolic order. In this respect, it is important to reiterate the point made in the introduction to this thesis. The argument made here, of the crucial role of non-realism to the urban tradition, in no way intends to disconnect metaphysical concerns from the realism that both prompts and grounds them. Indeed, the limits imposed by realism are shown to be essential for transcendence. For Mat Craig, in *The Dear Green Place*, such enclosure defines the idea of human consciousness. It is the flashing moment in which one's own death is realized, the 'horror of a possible combination of consciousness and the irrevocable state of death'.[5] Similarly, the danger of enclosure is important for Alasdair Gray's Jock McLeish, who says in *1982 Janine*, 'the moment when the trap starts closing . . . is the moment when we change things'.[6]

Due to the tenacity of reality in Scottish fiction, the fragmentation of *The Waste Land* or the anarchic excesses of William S. Burroughs's *Cities of the Red Night* are not possible. Although the narrative of *Cain's Book* hovers at the edge of incoherence it is not quite allowed to break up. In this respect, realism functions as a counterbalance. If, in the texts considered in this thesis, language, society, the symbolic order, reality, religious and economic ideologies signify enclosure, containment, restriction, and repress self-realization, they are also ballasts. The weight they provide allows for the magnitude of achievement in the possible transgression of their own securities. The transgressive modes of experience and identity which are appropriate to the city require that a limit or a boundary be crossed. In this way, the individual may delineate himself and, in this realization, he may transcend delineation. Edwin Morgan writes in an essay, 'Glasgow Writing', that 'straightforward narrative realism in fiction or poetry, though very fine, should not be allowed to become a be-all and end-all. There must be interstices, at the very least, for the imagination'.[7]

To circle back to the three contentions made in the opening paragraph of this conclusion, we may now, in the light of the present summary, define them more specifically.

Firstly, in the application of the term 'tradition' to urban literature, I do not wish to denote a sense of rigidity or convention; rather, I hope that this tradition has become perceptible through the dialectical constructions considered throughout this thesis. In this respect, it accords with a definition offered by Edwin Muir: 'tradition is a thing which is forever being worked out anew and recreated by the free activity of the artist . . . [Tradition is] a living perpetuation'.[8] My thesis has attempted to describe accurately the ways in which particular artists, in particular texts, have painfully 'worked out anew and recreated' this tradition. While we can now identify it more clearly in retrospect, I hope I have shown that it was in the *work* of these writers that the tradition was wrought; it is not merely an imaginary retrospective construction. It is not a tradition in which nostalgia has any important place.

Secondly, this tradition is not merely realist, but is informed by the concerns of the protagonist for transcendence. This can only be fully elucidated by a metaphysical reading of the text. In the conventional idiom of the mythic or Romantic quest, transcendence is defined as a pre-lapsarian unity or a Hegelian reconciliation of self, 'at home with itself in its otherness'.[9] In the Scottish tradition, however, transcendence is not a place or a state of being. Transcendence is movement itself, or 'becoming'. Indeed, the etymology of 'transcendence' derives from the Latin, 'to climb over'. Thus, meaning (as much as non-meaning) is found in the point of intersection between the real and the non-real. In spatial terms, this is represented by liminal areas, thresholds such as doors and windows, indeterminate or marginal zones, and the fissures of surfaces. These fluid and transgressive sites, like the murky canals that thread Trocchi's cities, or the Clyde that bisects the Glasgow described by Blake, Gaitens or Hind, allow for passage between place and experience.

Finally, in the words of Trocchi, whose works have been shown as central to the tenets of the tradition explicated here: 'We must reject the conventional fiction of "unchanging human nature". There is in fact no such permanence anywhere. There is only *becoming*.'[10]

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[1] See, for instance, Witschi's description of urban Scottish fiction before *Lanark* as 'outdated': 'Only a brief glance across the ocean could have taught the authors concerned some new and interesting literary techniques. Yet instead of "looking outward", to the literatures of Europe or the U. S. A., the authors of the Glasgow school of crisis kept "looking inward", returning to the same themes over and over again' (Witschi 1991, p. 51).

[2] See George Blake's *The Shipbuilders*, p. 21; William McIlvanney's *Laidlaw*, p. 9; Archie Hind's *The Dear Green Place*, p. 72.

[3] *Cain's Book*, p. 13.

[4] Edwin Muir, 'The Meaning of Romanticism' [1923-24] *Chapman*, 49, IX:6 (Summer 1987), 1-10 (1)

[5] *The Dear Green Place*, p. 112.

[6] *1982 Janine*, p. 194.

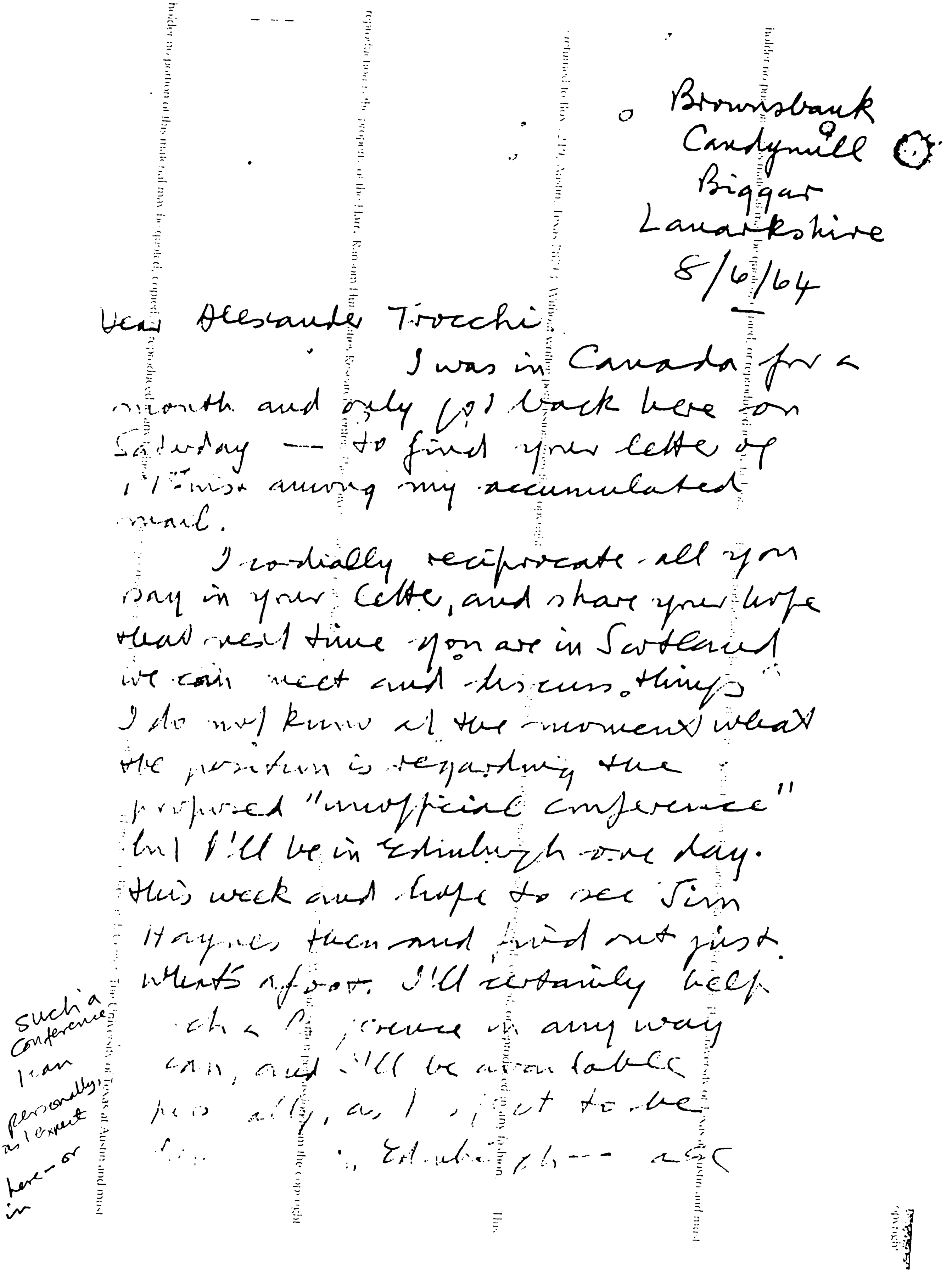
[7] Edwin Morgan, 'Glasgow Writing', *Books in Scotland*, 15 (October 1984), 4-6 (5).

[8] Edwin Muir, *Transition: Essays on Contemporary Literature* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1926), p. 133.

[9] Hegel, quoted by M. H. Abrams in *Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 230.

[10] Alexander Trocchi, 'Invisible Insurrection of a Million Minds', in *A Life in Pieces*, pp. 164-176 (p. 165).

# APPENDIX



Brownsbank
Candymill
Biggar
Lanarkshire
8/6/64

Dear Alexander Trocchi,

I was in Canada for a month and only got back here on Saturday — to find your letter of 17th inst. among my accumulated mail.

I cordially reciprocate all you say in your letter, and share your hope that next time you are in Scotland we can meet and discuss things. I do not know at the moment what the position is regarding the proposed "unofficial conference" but I'll be in Edinburgh one day this week and hope to see Jim Haynes then and find out just what's afoot. I'll certainly help [illegible] ference in any way [illegible] can, and I'll be available [illegible] ally, as I [illegible] pect to be [illegible] Edinburgh — as

such a conference
I can
personally,
as I expect
here — or
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summer.

With best wishes to yourself.

Yours.

Hugh MacDiarmid.

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P.S. The typescript of *Signa* is with your letter, but I got an enormous bundle of held-over correspondence, not half of which I've digested yet. I'll read Signa tonight or tomorrow, and if it calls for comment from me that won't wait till ~~I~~ we meet, I'll write you again.

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Brownsbank
Biggar
Lanarkshire
26/8/64

Alex. Trocchi, Esq

Dear Mr Trocchi.

Just got your telegram. I was at the Poets' Conference in the Traverse Theatre on Monday. I was also in Edinburgh yesterday on a BBC/TV job, but could get no word about you. I wrote Jim Haynes in the end of last week asking what the arrangements were but Jim, who is of course desperately busy, did not reply. Now alas I have shot my bolt and cannot get in to Edinburgh again. I've a job of writing to finish and then I have to go to London and will be there for several days. I am sorry about this mix-up which has prevented us meeting.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely, C.M. Grieve

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