Scotland as Theory:

Otherness and Instantiation from Mackenzie to the Last Minstrel

Most attempts to define situatedness are embedded in failure and confusion.

David Simpson

Should Scotland situate itself within theory? The call for papers leading to this issue of *IJSL* invites contributors to consider whether Scottish literature must orient itself according to a theoretical discourse achieved elsewhere.[1] Editors Bell and Hames ponder the past and present of 'theory's impact in a "structurally nationalist" field of study'. They challenge us to determine whether a theory energised by its eruption in a larger world must collide with a literature defined by place, or whether theory will deal Scotland only a glancing blow. Perhaps that has already happened, and Scottish literature is reeling from the effect. Yet such effects in Scottish literature may manifest a belated cause for Bell and Hames inquire 'What is the state of Scottish literary studies "After Theory"?'. 'Theory' may constitute a moment that changed the world and disrupted even Scottishness, but it may be a moment that has passed. Alternately, Hames and Bell hint that far from being behind the curve of theory, Scotland may have situated itself outside of it, or operate as a critique upon it. Scottish literature may have pursued 'an ambitious deconstructive project of its own, based on historical reassessment of the very "framing" or incorporating discourse, English Literature, which would enforce the obligatory engagement with "theory"'. However, given that it stands opposed to a discourse apparently '[universal] . . . and [dominant] in the cosmopolitan intellectual market', must Scottish literature operate as inherently or assertively anti-theoretical? From one perspective it should be. As Hames and Bell observe, 'a provincialisation of critical theory [may be] necessary, especially in a country attempting to

reconstruct its "native" intellectual bearings'. Might Scotland, resistant to theory, yet situate itself as a theoretical variety? Or given these roiling possibilities, they wonder, should 'the seeming "acceptance" of theory be mistrusted?'

Such questions seem essential at a time when David McCrone's 'stateless nation' verges toward the nation as state.[2] What will be gained or lost; what moment will now never come, or can be achieved tomorrow? Might a Scotland that has cannily evaded theory, or suffered under it, today chart its separate course and situate itself as an elsewhere that is nonetheless theoretically Somewhere?

Yet posed from within the moment of post-structuralist theory, these questions may miss a contestatory possibility whose moment has already begun. Michael Gardiner argues that since the 1960s Scottish literature has not just situated itself as resistant, but manifested resistance as generic disruption—a reworking of literature *as* theory.[3] Bringing into alignment R. D. Laing's idea of 'existence [as] a flame which constantly melts and recasts our theories' (83), and Alexander Trocchi's notion that 'suspension of categories leads to immediacy of experience' (78-79), Gardiner theorises that Scottish discourse since the sixties responds to contemporary stresses by erupting into otherness: genres bend in the crucible of experience. Scotland is 'forced into *becoming*' (5); it is thus 'formally forward-looking' (5). For Scotland, as a resistance literature, 'The time to "decide about" theory has passed; the theory has already been done' (116). And since Scotland, with all the urgency of its particular experience, has been 'doing' literature as theory for some time, we might infer that Scotland as theory stands in the vanguard for an England yet to discover its role as a '*minor* nation' (5, 11).

But might not Scottish literature, as resistant, have precipitated itself as theory at a much earlier date? Where Gardiner suggests that theory and literature can helpfully conflate in the moment of Scotland's coming into difference, this article contends that they already have—long ago. Drawing on postcolonial theory for a place -colonial yet post- from the moment of its instantiation in 1707, it will suggest that the shifting problematics of Scotland's situation have often produced Scotland *as* theory *in* literature. From this perspective, Scotland is not so much subject to the theory of others, as always reconstituting itself as an innovative theoretical enactment available to others through literature. Indeed, as a literature rendered theoretical by its response to the uniqueness of its multi-valent situation, Scottish literature offers to make true that mantra repeated a generation ago by anxious professors to confused students: the theory is already in the text.

For Gardiner, recent literature constitutes itself as theory in belated response to the Scottish Enlightenment. Having struggled ineffectually and merely oppositionally against categories of

time, place, and language defined by the Enlightenment and poorly deployed through the nineteenth century, Edwin Muir and Hugh MacDiarmid give way to Alexander Trocchi (ch 2; ch 4). The Scottish Enlightenment, Gardiner implies, might have produced a heritage of theory, but it produced instead 'the separation out of academic disciplines and objects of study via a nexus of vision/knowledge and the attempt to master each in the new British Union' (1). Scottish literature enacts or reacts against the later David Hume, who is seen to represent logical positivism with its categorization of spaces, moments, and ideas that opens gaps between subject and circumstance, and between self and other. But reading through a Deleuzean lense, Gardiner also sees Hume as binding self and circumstance through contingent experience: 'Culture . . . is in Deleuze's Hume a reflection of the passions (sympathy), which transcend and thus fix the mind' (13). Because 'Imagination tries to extend its own stability infinitely, making essential use of association. . . . "reason is imagination which has become nature"'. Reason itself 'should [then] be seen as contingent'. Herein lies the problem for Gardiner. Humean philosophy enacts a 'double-sidedness [that] rings throughout Scottish theory' (14). 'As a result' (and with an added impetus from John Macmurray), 'Scottish literature since the early 1960s, like Scottish polity, has struggled to get back *in touch*' (15). For Gardiner, Hume both invites and postpones any literature that might constitute a theory of proximity and specificity—until the 1960s.

David Hume: Relating to the Self

Susan Manning recognises more play in Hume's difference, and a greater and earlier effect on the politics that is literature.[4] Here, we might remember that Hume was not only post-Union, but that his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40) was published on the verge of rebellion (1745).[5] Manning generalises: 'the "metanarrative of the Enlightenment" reviled by postmodernists, almost never exists without internal opposition and (at least possible) fragmentation, even in its most positive exemplars' (17). Hume's *Treatise*, under pressure of its recent political circumstances, demonstrates the point. While implying the possibility of unifying thought, it nonetheless foregrounds the mind as constructed from disparate experience. Manning unpicks Hume's implications: 'Our *experience* even of "the union of cause and effect" under analysis resolves itself into a customary association of ideas. . . . The "secret tie or union" which directs the imagination is, then, the aggregative process of association: contiguity rather than causation is the "connective tissue"' (40). Manning sums up the implications for the self: 'As long as we acquiesce unthinkingly in the fiction, then, we remain "whole" to our own perception. But once reflect on the process of this "self-composition" and it dissolves, like a conjurer's act interrupted' (40). The early literature of Union, she goes on to suggest, leans toward Hume's paratactic and federative notions rather than his unifying dynamic.

For Manning, this philosophical and political reconstruction of literature as theory has been fulfilled—but primarily in the overtly federative systems of America. I would suggest, however, that Hume's theory changes, first, his own literature. At a time when philosophy *was* literature—one (less salutary) example being Hume's attempt to purge his scotticisms—Hume's *Treatise* must adjust its structure in order to deal with the ramifications of its theory. In 'Sect. 7. *Conclusion of this Book*', Hume turns to autobiography: 'before I launch out into those immense depths of philosophy, which lie before me, I find myself inclin'd to stop a moment in my present station, and to ponder that voyage, which I have undertaken, and which undoubtedly requires the utmost art and industry to be brought to a happy conclusion' (171-72). But the great infidel invokes no divine or even novelistic comedy to achieve resolution. Rather, autobiography allows him to install sociability, with all its disparate experiences—its differences—within the fictions of personal narrative. Under stress from 'the *intense* view of these manifold contradictions and imperfections in human reason . . . ready to reject all belief and reasoning . . . [seeing] no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. . . . I am confounded'—the contingency of experience leaves its print of impossibility on the self (175). But when selving seems least attainable, 'Most fortunately it happens . . . nature herself suffices . . . either by relaxing this bent of mind, or by some avocation and lively impression of my senses, which obliterate all these chimeras. I dine, I play a game of back-gammon, I converse, and am merry with my friends' (175). The self, adjusted by society, remains a fictive possibility. This problematic story of self-hood, rewritten as a narrative of the self through contact with society, manifests the literary as precipitated into theory (and vice versa) under pressure from the vagaries of philosophical experience. And if Hume's philosophy must produce itself in literature thus pressuring that literature into an enactment of philosophical difference, then there is no rupture between David Hume and the 1960s manifestation of literature as theory.

This is the more obvious if we do not restrict ourselves to the Eliotic and Leavisite notions of canonicity that Gardiner notes have routed Scotland's ability to understand her own texts through delimiting (and English) expectations.[6] Redirecting our gaze to texts of high popularity—if low official value—we can register that a constant and shifting encounter between Scottish literature and experience, producing literature as a difference in theory, stretches at least from Hume through Mackenzie and on through Scott to the authors Gardiner now foregrounds. Perhaps the Scottish mass market looks to literature for oppositional notions of self that paradoxically bind Scots into their own as well as a larger society.

Henry Mackenzie: Relating Beyond the Text

Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling* (1771) may be one such text.[7] Post-Union and post-rebellion Mackenzie produces an apparently non-Scottish text—unlike Maureen Harkin, I find no evidence to locate the hero as a Scot.[8] Yet the hero, who represents lack as, in fact, the heart of that text, points toward a way of making meaning and implying significance beyond the novel. Within the novel, Harley manifests incapacity; in his encounter with the world, he constantly falls into tears that may indicate his sensibility, but that invite judgment according to the more competent society surrounding him. At his death, however—at the moment of his failure within the world—Harley's incapacity translates into excess, for the never understandable and now inaccessible Harley is figured through an evaluative relation required of a reader who must intuit yet cannot grasp his meaning. An ungraspable meaning is intensified by attempts to grasp it such that it seems too substantial for appropriation. By the operations of a fragmented text, and the response required of an invested but incapable reader, Harley has transcended his circumstances. Perhaps under pressure from Mackenzie's situation as pro-Union and yet a Scot, operating within a genre fixed into categories by the efforts of (for instance) Dr. Johnson, the text structures itself to perform a different kind of value. Mackenzie declared his work to be deliberately 'as different from the entanglement of a novel as can be' (xiii). To read Mackenzie's novel is to enact a theory of relationality—an intense sociability across the impossibilities of a text—that implies an excessive meaning elsewhere.

I may seem to offer an unlikely elevation for Mackenzie's text. As Ralph E. Jenkins notes it has been set outside the canon as interesting only to 'two kinds of reader: the modern scholar who is concerned primarily with historical questions, or the occasional atavistic reader who likes a good cry'. [9] And historically, readers did cry—to the point of their own embarrassment. They were, in fact, required to cry. The *Monthly Review* declared: those 'who [weep] not over some of the scenes . . . [have] no sensibility of mind'.[10] Not surprisingly then, Lady Louisa Stuart recalled 'my mother and sisters crying over it. . . . And when I read it . . . I had a secret dread I should not cry enough to gain the credit of proper sensibility'.[11] Yet in 1826 she admitted: 'I am afraid I perceived a sad change in it, or myself—which was worse; and the effect altogether failed. Nobody cried, and at some of the passages, the touches that I used to think so exquisite—Oh Dear! They laughed'. But what looks like a failure in the text interestingly turns Lady Louisa not so much against the novel, as toward a consideration of readers' relationships. This, she considers, 'is a theme well worth [Walter Scott's] handling'. That is, *The Man of Feeling* operated as a test of sensibility for a British audience on its publication, but over time, as the reader's first overheated and generically determined response to the text fades, it stands forth as a test of a different kind—a question posed about readers, texts, and meanings. I suggest that *The Man of Feeling* presents itself in fully Enlightenment terms as a data set—but one that requires a practice beyond crying, and implies a theory.

Mackenzie's novel depends on how we bring together its pathetic fragments. The author was well aware of this dynamic, writing to a cousin: 'You remember a Miss Walton; you have nothing to do but to imagine (Harley) somehow or other wedded to her & made happy;—so must all stories conclude you know; the Hero is as surely married as he was born; because marriage is a good Thing & made in Heaven'.[12] Mackenzie's declaration, rendered doubly ironic by the realities of his text (Harley expires at the merest hint of Miss Walton's reciprocal feeling), points to a making of meaning and an immanence of significance well beyond the conventions of textuality within Sensibility.

Even as Mackenzie provides moments intensified by their separation from narrative and that thus invite emotional over-investment, he equally thematises the wrenching and rending—and thus the necessary suturing—that constitutes the gaps on which these moments depend. Maureen Harkin, in one of the most thoughtful and challenging readings credited to Mackenzie's under-rated novel, reads across *The Man of Feeling*'s intensely felt ruins, fragments, and failures an emphasis on loss and lack: 'The novel habitually, even obsessively, tends to characterise all forms of change in terms of loss and the decadence of modern manners' (329; 324). For her, although the novel 'lends, or attempts to lend, the position of the sentimentalist a prestige and dignity it had not heretofore possessed, making sentimentalism respectable. . . . In ennobling the man of feeling . . . Mackenzie essentially succeeds in rendering his position peripheral and powerless' (329). Readers may be invited to compensate for Harley, for they are encouraged to notice that 'Harley is operating below [their] level . . . he offers a foil rather than a guide to further interpretive activity', but ultimately the novel insists that 'literary texts can only speak to those who already possess the right "inclination"' (330; 335). That is, 'Mackenzie [abandons] the notion that literary experience constructs social practice' (336).

I would argue, however, that by enacting literature as lack, *The Man of Feeling* requires the *reader* to operate as foil, sensing and supplementing textual gaps not with anything so reductive as meaningful narrative, but with an implication of excess immanent elsewhere. Literature *is* a social practice, for to read is, importantly, to register the possibility of meaning by elaborating the function of relationality through the self and in the absence of text. We locate ourselves the more intensely around the idea of Harley because there is nothing there.

Numerous critics have sensed this phenomenon in Mackenzie's novel. To Ralph E. Jenkins, Mackenzie 'juxtaposes separate incidents without providing narrative transitions, and the reader is expected to see the contrasts or parallels and draw the right conclusion' (Jenkins, 15). For Mark Wildermuth, '[Mackenzie's] own literary criticism indicates that he expects novels in general to appeal to judgment as much as to passion. The fragmentation of form or the emphasis of character over plot need not preclude an inductive structural paradigm in a novel'.[13] And April

London notes that 'The Man of Feeling testifies at once to its author's keen awareness of the prestige attaching to the classical modes and to his sense of the extensions of meaning that the novel's less prescriptive understanding of genre allows'.[14] Yet each presents Mackenzie's literary effect as a kind of calculation, a balancing out of data, context, and predictable readerly behaviour.

We must turn to Mackenzie's textual gaps to provide the theory that constitutes the point. One gap, interestingly neglected by criticism, opens the case, and indicates the further possibilities of the text. Critics routinely observe instances where the fracturing of the novel's form intensifies a moment and invites sensibility, or where Harley himself, as a stupendously naïve subject, potentially cracks open a sentimental situation (he is constantly being taken advantage of). But what of a moment when the text points to a fissure that refuses to gape? Rushing to meet Miss Atkins, Harley races back upstairs to get her address: '"What a wretch I am!" said he; "ere this time, perhaps——" 'Twas a perhaps not to be born:——two vibrations of a pendulum would have served him to lock his bureau; but they could not be spared' (54). Were this *The Vicar of Wakefield*, disaster would surely ensue, and pathos be required. But here, Mackenzie continues through an unusually coherent sequence of chapters running from 25 to 29, that contain numerous nested stories—and never returns to the bureau, lying open to criminal London. Why raise the possibility if not to evoke sentimental tears by it? Such a choice invites the reader to register a gap; imagine a supplement; note its failure to materialise; understand the immanence of meanings elsewhere; and ponder the relationship between self and text (produced yet unfulfilled by narrative) that allows such awareness.

Mackenzie's many narrators similarly require us to recognise our own relationship with the text and how that points to significance through the reading self as a textual construct. Harley comes to us not as narrative, but through relationships. We first encounter him by means of a hunter whose inadequacy connects him to Harley in the detritus that represents a biography—Harley's life is already fragmented as scrap paper in the form of gun wadding. 'My dog had made a point', the narrator remembers: 'It was a false point' (3). 'There is no state where one is apter to pause and look round one, than after such a disappointment'. So he does, and sees an old house, and the melancholy Miss Walton. His friend produces Harley's history, abandoned (presumably) by its author, and now reduced to tatters in process of the shoot. 'I don't believe there's a single syllogism from beginning to end', the friend remarks (5). Harley's story is in pieces, lacking the coherence of plot, and even the symptoms of cause and effect. What holds it together for us is its relation to the inadequate huntsman—who effectively called it forth.

Within Harley's story a friend offers him a series of relationships to unrealities. Having visited Bedlam, Harley must now meet 'one of the wise' (35). But here again, the fragments of

experience foreground the phenomenon of relationship. The supposedly wise gentleman has experienced disappointment. Now he abjures any connection to the world. His discourse fractures community into 'I' and 'you'. Addressing all as one, and thus Harley as all, he declares: 'You have substituted the shadow Honour, instead of the substance Virtue. . . . You have invented sounds, which you worship. . . . Truth . . . you are at pains to eradicate. . . . your philosophers . . . impose on my judgment'—and so on for four pages, or really more, for in the middle 'a considerable part is wanting' (39-42). The diatribe is such that the passive Harley actually feels moved to intervene. 'Sir!' he attempts, only to be silenced (39). But the silencing of Harley here points both to the inappropriateness of the speaker's lecture when directed to him, and to its role in situating us in relation to the 'wise man' and the text. We stand at once proximate and apart, subject to critique, implicated alongside the speaker in the critique (for have we not judged Harley?) and inferring critique and meaning beyond the bounds of the text.

The novel's conclusion makes clear this deployment of textual fragmentation as enactment of a theory of readerly relationality. Harley connected past to present to make a new future when he viewed a decayed school and orphaned children then subsequently related them to his friend Edwards in a re-established society. He declared: 'let us never forget that we are all relations' (97). Relationship is not just a fact but an activity. Now a narrator reads Harley's grave: 'It is worth a thousand homilies; every noble feeling rises within me! Every beat of my heart awakens a virtue!' (133). His view begs a question '—but it will make you hate the world.' '——No', he replies: 'there is such an air of gentleness around, that I can hate nothing; but, as to the world—I pity the men of it' (133). The fragments that represent Harley's life both manifest and produce a range of narrators—including 'the Ghost' who may answer but more likely ask the question here. As they both fail and accumulate, these narrators imply the difficulty of the text. Such difficulty constitutes the text as a lack that gestures toward excess—our primary narrator even notes (and this echoes Mackenzie's own comment): 'Harley's own story . . . I found to have been simple to excess' (xiii; 126). The simplicity of Harley's story poses a difficulty that requires the excessive efforts of inadequate readers—the men of the world—attempting to force coherence from limited textual realities. The story, then, is 'wadding' in the fullest sense: it is the overplus that—when sparked through the reader—projects lack as unavailable meaning. And what is unavailable seems all the more substantial.

Walter Scott: Author-itative Relations?

Post Ossian and post *Minstrelsy*, lawyer Walter Scott came under pressure to maintain a double life as national author.[15] Macpherson had asserted the nationality of authorship yet incautiously problematised it; Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders* had embraced the problematics of

Macpherson's text, offering wilful and highly successful reconstructions across poetic gaps, and had situated the author perhaps too centrally for security within the Scottish community as it was beginning to imagine itself. But Scott could theorise himself differently according to Mackenzie's novelistic practice. Scott knew well that Mackenzie was no mere man of feeling, inadequate to experience. He recognised his friend to be 'alert as a contracting tailor's needle in every sort of business, a politician'.[16] Setting Mackenzie against Fielding, Smollett, Richardson and even Sterne, Scott notably credits this 'Scottish author' with 'the rare and invaluable property of originality'.[17] Mackenzie's literature operated as and produced a difference—something other. I would suggest that through a text and a hero figured as lack, Mackenzie had demonstrated how absence might imply more significance than presence ever could. In *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), Scott builds from Mackenzie a further iteration of literature as theory. This time, what is inaccessible seems not just excessive, but excessively authoritative.[18] If Mackenzie through his literary practice suggested a theory of excess via relationality, Scott puts authorship within a relation that cannot contain or direct it, and which it then must exceed and may control.

The poem begins unpromisingly—but in a mode that we know from Mackenzie may produce more. The minstrel seems to figure lack and loss.

> The way was long, the wind was cold,
> The Minstrel was infirm and old;
> His wither'd cheek, and tresses gray,
> Seem'd to have known a better day;
> The harp, his sole remaining joy,
> Was carried by an orphan boy.
> The last of all the Bards was he. . . .

<div align="right">Introduction.</div>

Dissolution seems imminent. Indeed, we have no reliable way to fix the minstrel in the world from which he appears bound to fade. The poem assembles geographical markers aplenty—Newark, Yarrow. Amid these the minstrel moves, yet nowhere can he stay: he passes; he gazes; but admitted within the gates, seems 'wildered'. Moreover, the minstrel cannot be placed precisely in time. We know that 'Old times were changed, old manners gone; / A stranger filled the Stuarts' throne', and from the fact that 'The bigots of the iron time / Had call'd his harmless art a crime' we infer an era post Cromwell and at least post William and Mary. But even the clues that the minstrel remembers 'King Charles the Good, / When he kept court in Holyrood' and 'The hour my brave, my only boy, / Fell by the side of great Dundee' fail to situate him precisely within a moment by which he can be defined (Introduction; Canto Fourth v. 2). And this may be the point: 'His tuneful brethren all were dead; / And he, neglected and oppress'd, / Wish'd to be with them,

and at rest' (Introduction). The minstrel projects himself outside of this world. But does he do so as belated—'The last of all the Bards'—or, as I suggested in *Possible Scotlands*, as the latest thing?[19] Is the minstrel, as inaccessible, somehow also ineffable?

The answer may lie in the story he tells. In the past, the Lady of Branksome tower enters her secret bower. Heir to 'a clerk of fame', she has been taught to conjure: 'to her bidding she could bow / The viewless forms of air' (Canto First v. 11; 12). The ineffable and inaccessible appears at her command. However her invocation produces a discourse she cannot control. River and Mountain spirits foretell the conclusion of border strife only in the person—implicitly through the marriage—of the Lady's daughter. Given this unacceptable prediction, the Lady invokes a superior power in the form of the wizard Michael Scott's mystic book. Presumably, she aims to wield this discourse to more acceptable effect. And certainly, the book seems accessible. William of Deloraine retrieves it, then his blood serves to open it. But already the book has fallen from the Lady's control. She does not fetch the book; it is not her power that opens it; in the moment of its opening, it is in the hands of another. That other, the goblin page, instantaneously experiences the wizard's discourse as constituting a power of transformation—he reads a spell that 'had much of glamour might, / Could make a ladye seem a knight' (Canto Third v. 9). But 'He had not read another spell, / When on his cheek a buffet fell, / So fierce, it stretch'd him on the plain, / Beside the wounded Deloraine' (v. 10). Even when the wizard's book is in hand, it cannot be possessed or controlled. Indeed, represented through a spell of transfiguration, the book implies mutability, inaccessability, an overplus of meaning-making in the spaces between persons (the Lady and the goblin) and utterances (the Lady's spell, and that of the book). This space is occupied by Michael Scott.

The wizard epitomises lack: he is dead and buried—but in a mode that dreadfully implies his continued vitality as subject to and agent within diabolical power. The watching monk tells Deloraine: 'I dug his chamber among the dead, / When the floor of the chancel was stained red, / That his patron's cross might over him wave, / And scare the fiends from the Wizard's grave' (Canto Second v. 15). Michael Scott lies below that most lively of saints, the warlike St. Michael, and constitutes a hub of fiendish activity. Moreover the opened grave reveals a wizard only debatably dead: 'Before their eyes the Wizard lay, / As if he had not been dead a day' (v. 19). In fact, when 'Deloraine, in terror, took / From the cold hand the Mighty Book . . . / He thought, as he took it, the dead man frown'd' (v. 21). Worse, Deloraine and the monk are hounded from the scene by 'Loud sobs, and laughter louder . . . And voices unlike the voice of man; / As if the fiends kept holiday, / Because these spells were brought to day' (v. 22). But which fiends? Those who seek the book, or the fiendish Michael Scott, immanent as absence whether invoked or not—the author as ineffable author-ity?

In fact, when the Lady imagines that she invokes Michael Scott, and already when she calls up the spirits of river and mountain, the power of the absent wizard is moving in the land. The prophecy of the spirits is fulfilled through the use of the book not by the Lady, but by the goblin. The goblin, active throughout the time of the tale, is in the service of Michael Scott. The Lady simply operates to access the book and make it available for use by the Wizard's occulted representative. When the prophecy is fulfilled in the marriage of daughter Margaret with the goblin's putative owner—the knight to whom the goblin has attached himself—both 'page' and book are called home:

> The elfish page fell to the ground,
> And, shuddering, mutter'd, 'Found! found! found!'

<div align="center">

XXV

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> Then sudden, through the darken'd air,
>   A flash of lightning came. . . .
> When ended was the dreadful roar,
> The elvish dwarf was seen no more.

<div align="center">

XXVI

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> Some heard a voice in Branksome Hall,
> Some saw a sight, not seen by all;
> That dreadful voice was heard by some,
> Cry, with loud summons, 'GYBLIN, COME!'
>   And on the spot where burst the brand,
>   Just where the page had flung him down,
>   Some saw an arm, and some a hand,
>   And some the waving of a gown. . . .
> . . . . Deloraine. . . .
>   . . . . he darkly told . . .
>   That he had seen, right certainly,
> *A shape with amice wrapp'd around . . .*
> And knew—but how it matter'd not—
> It was the wizard, Michael Scott.

<div align="right">(Canto Sixth)</div>

The authority of the poem resides in an absence always capable of speaking difference against and within the reductive determinations of a given moment.

That absence erupts within a deliberate generic difference. Like the minstrel, claiming to speak an earlier time, Walter Scott invokes the past to disturb a comfortable present. His preface to the first edition claims that the poem 'is intended to illustrate the customs and manners which anciently prevailed on the Borders'. The scenes of the time are 'highly susceptible of poetical ornament'. But since scenery and manners were 'more the object of the Author than a combined and regular narrative, the plan of the Ancient Metrical Romance was adopted, which allows greater latitude'. That is, situating his tale in the past, Scott understands the forms of present and past, chooses those suited to the past, but through them accesses change in the present: 'The same model offered other faculties, as it permits an occasional alteration of measure, which, in some degree, authorises the change of rhythm in the text. The machinery, also, adopted from popular belief, would have seemed puerile in a Poem which did not partake of the rudeness of the old Ballad, or Metrical Romance'. We need only look back to the supposed eruption of Michael Scott to see the effect: structure and a society that supports minstrel and Lady, and Lady and Goblin, and Goblin and Michael Scott, slip together, pointing to the immanence of authorship through the oddity of text.

This accounts, too, for the perplexities of the bardic competition at the wedding of Margaret and her English knight. In place of paeans to marriage, the bards fresh from battle offer tales of betrayal ending, in succession, with an invocation to 'Pray for their souls who died for love'; the image of 'The gory bridal bed, the plunder'd shrine, / The murder'd Surrey's blood, the tears of Geraldine!' and 'The dirge of lovely Rosabelle' (Canto Sixth v. 12; 20; 23). The truth lies not in the predictable romance. Rather, the disruptive and productive meaning is in the minstrelsy. In fact, it is not the meaning that matters, but its remaking. Marriage is meaningless: Author-ity is the opportunity.

Through his restructuring of the modes of minstrelsy in verses and Ladies, goblins and wizards, Scott established the author himself according to the relations of the text. He thereby, and well in advance of the 'Author of Waverley', expressed in literature a theory of the ineffable otherness and occulted authority of authorship.[20]

Relating Differently? New Relations

In these three circumstances, it seems that the past as well as the present constitutes a case for Scottish literature as literary theory. Hume, Mackenzie, and Scott, each in very different

moments, but each under pressure of experience, consolidate that experience within a textual problematics both structural and thematic. Is this genre-bending a phenomenon of textuality in general? Or is experience in Scotland in particular impressed upon text, as Gardiner suggests, by the sheer urgency of the local situation (5)? Gardiner is careful to claim for Scottish literature only its priority: he anticipates a 'tidal wave of resistant literature which will arise in England' (11). I too am reluctant to make any claim for *How the Scots Invented the Modern World*.[21] But it does seem from the nature of genre-bending practiced by these three authors that, because of their situations in a Scotland -colonial and yet post-, they develop a literature that theorises resistance to the assumption of situatedness—and it is situatedness, the relation between texts in traditions, on which the notion of a literary canon depends. No wonder Scottish literature fits neither the traditions of text nor those of theory.

David Simpson notes that we seek 'a fantasy of true knowing'.[22] We are 'under the influence of a rhetoric that seems to promise certainties where there are only ambiguities' (54). The Enlightenment, he observes, 'even as it proposed the task of specifying the nature of situations . . . knew that to speculate about situatedness is to think about everything that is around one' (3). 'The declaration of one's situatedness is [thus] often an admission of one's limits rather than a claim to authority' (28). Could it be that the pressure for Scots as post-Enlightenment subjects to situate themselves within literature has required a bending of genre such that the genre of Scottishness is to point to the inappropriateness of situatedness, and its inaccessibility? Julia Kristeva argues that rather than dividing ourselves from the other, we must recognise the other in ourselves.[23] Post Freud, she says, 'foreignness . . . irrigates our very speaking-being, estranged by other logics. . . . Henceforth, we know that we are foreigners to ourselves, and it is with the help of that sole support that we can attempt to live with others' (170). Through its complex pressures, might Scottish literature enact that we are always out of place, playing within shifting relations, and thus 'strangers to ourselves'? Might it show what power emanates from a self situated inevitably in the otherwheres of literature, arising only yet awe-fully in relation to what is not?

Yet we must ask whether, even then, the genre-bending that arises within a literature uncomfortably situated as Scottish is any different from that of more obviously postcolonial situations. And at a moment when postcolonialism reels under its inability to avert a world newly colonial (see the anguished musings in a recent *PMLA* over imperial America), is any postcolonial dynamic capable of generating effective critique? [24] The theorising enacted through a Scotland at once first world, not quite second, but in its own perceptions sometimes oddly aligned with the third, may yet imply that postcolonialism has hopes of changing power dynamics from its constant eruption as critique through genre-bending in complexly situated and subjected literatures. Might it point to an excess always inaccessible through the genres of canonicity and the codes of

power, and only available to those capable of recognising and enacting relationality as otherness? Might it show that in the most unpromising circumstances, postcoloniality inevitably precipitates theory as a type of resistance?

And we must also ask, turning the light now uncomfortably upon Scotland, can this matter—and can such meaning-making continue—for a Scotland with a new Parliament? As Scotland strives to manoeuvre from otherwhere to a centre of its own designation through newly available and cunningly wielded political power, will Scotland's literature necessarily cease in its role as theory? Lacking the primary pressure of its otherness, will Scottish literature become untheoretical, merely canonical?

Michael Gardiner notes that Alan Warner's post-Parliamentary *The Man Who Walks* yet registers resistance:[25] 'the walker in *The Man Who Walks* makes history by encountering the resistance of the upwards slope of a hill, on a comically dubious quest, nevertheless pointedly low-tech and ploughing on' (10). Indeed, I would note that the novel figures in part Warner's resistance to the Parliament itself. In an interview on his 1995 novel *Morvern Callar*, Warner declared: 'When you don't feel politically represented, you get angry. . . . I think that Scotland is headed for independence; it's just a matter of time.'[26] But in *The Man Who Walks*, the nephew (interestingly under pressure to perform for a local radio station actually off the air) suggests that every situation spawns its resistances. To him, the new Scotland suffers under 'our pimp, our own wee parliament, big hotel in the sky for our representatives. . . . like the grandest of old Parisian brothels' (204). 'It was packaged long ago' (205).

Ali Smith, in her aptly named *Hotel World*, punning on her characters' interaction within a vaguely situated Global Hotel, similarly, if more positively, registers the pressures of the moment in a genre-bending that goes beyond the necessity of ending.[27] Here, voices pass, meet, collide, miss. They are the voices of the outside: illness, social ostracism, even beyond death. Together, they patch together a fragmentation that is itself life. Between the gaps, they point toward a literature that continues to be theory from Scotland. They relate a message from otherwhere (237-38):

> remember
> you
> must
> live
>
> remember
> you

most

love

remainder

you

mist

leaf

As Smith suggests, better enjoy the journey!

WOOOoo-

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NOTES

[1] As cited on ScotStInt, 4/2/07. The same issues arise, though slightly differently posed, in the IJSL website call for papers: www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/CFPtheory.htm.

[2] David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London: Routledge, 1992).

[3] Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory Since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006).

[4] Susan Manning, *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* (Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2002).

[5] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[6] Gardiner deplores Edwin Muir's reading of the Scottish literary landscape for deploying T. S. Eliot's terms of 'tradition and the individual talent' and echoing F. R. Leavis's attachment to the organic (p. 23). The problem could be traced back via Matthew Arnold to Dr. Johnson.

[7] Henry Mackenzie, *The Man of Feeling*, ed. Brian Vickers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970).

[8] Maureen Harkin, 'Mackenzie's Man of Feeling: Embalming Sensibility', *ELH*, 61.2 (Summer 1994), 317-40 (p. 321).

[9] Ralph E. Jenkins, 'The Art of the Theorist: Rhetorical Structure in *The Man of Feeling*', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 9 (1971), 3-15 (p. 3).

[10] *Monthly Review* 44 (1771), p. 418. Quoted in Harkin (p. 319).

[11] Louisa Stuart to Walter Scott, 4 September 1826, *The Private Letter-Books of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. Wilfred Partington (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1930), p. 273.

[12] Henry Mackenzie, *Letters to Elizabeth Rose of Tavistock*, ed. Horst W. Drescher (Munich: Aschendorff, 1967), p. 41. Quoted in Jenkins, p.13.

[13] Mark E. Wildermuth, 'The Rhetoric of Common Sense and Uncommon Sensibility in Henry Mackenzie's *The Man of Feeling*', *Lamar Journal of the Humanities*, 23.2 (Fall 1997), 35-45 (p. 40).

[14] April London, 'Historiography, Pastoral, Novel: Genre in *The Man of Feeling*', *Eighteenth-Century Fiction* 10.1 (October 1997), 43-62 (p. 43).

[15] James Macpherson, *The Works of Ossian* (1765); Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border Consisting of Historical and Romantic Ballads, Collected in the Southern Counties of Scotland; With a Few of Modern Date, Founded Upon Local Tradition* (1802).

[16] *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. W. E. K Anderson (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1972), p. 33.

[17] *Biographical Memoirs of Eminent Novelists and other Distinguished Persons*, II (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1843), pp. 11; 9.

[18] As we await the Edinburgh Edition of Scott's poetry, I cite the text easily available in the Wordsworth Poetry Library: *The Works of Sir Walter Scott* (Ware: Wordsworth, 1995).

[19] Caroline McCracken-Flesher, *Possible Scotlands: Walter Scott and the Story of Tomorrow* (New York: Oxford, 2005), ch. 1.

[20] Scott published his novels anonymously. After the success of *Waverley*, readers sought more of the same and Scott adopted the by-line 'Author of Waverley' to identify his texts. From an early date, thoughtful readers recognised Scott as the author, but his anonymity enhanced his authority. See the 'Introductory Epistle' to *The Fortunes of Nigel* (1822), and Caroline McCracken-Flesher's *Possible Scotlands: Walter Scott and the Story of Tomorrow* for data and a full working out of this idea.

[21] Arthur Herman, *How the Scots Invented the Modern World: The True Story of How Western Europe's Poorest Nation Created Our World and Everything in It* (New York: Crown, 2001).

[22] David Simpson, *Situatedness or, Why We Keep Saying Where We're Coming From* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), p. 3.

[23] Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia, 1991).

[24] 'Editor's Column: The End of Postcolonial Theory? A Roundtable with Sunil Agnani, Fernando Coronil, Gaurav Desai, Mamadou Diouf, Simon Gikandi, Susie Tharu, and Jennifer Wenzel', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 122.3 (May 2007), 633-651. Editor Patricia Yaeger situates the problem: 'Occurring, as it did, between the end of the cold war and 9/11, can the institutional consolidation of postcolonial studies be understood as a kind of peace dividend?' Or 'Does the post-9/11 return to an expansionist, Manichaean foreign policy imply a failure of postcolonial studies?' Yaeger admits: 'I do feel a certain despair in this regard: our critiques have proved inadequate to obstruct or reroute the imperialist, racist logic of fighting over there to maintain power over here'. But, she continues, 'this idea of a failure of postcolonial studies seems too simple' (634).

[25] Alan Warner, *The Man Who Walks* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2002).

[26] Larry Weissman, 'A Drink or Two with Alan Warner', www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/0497/warner/interview.html. Accessed 3/12/04.

[27] Ali Smith, *Hotel World* (2001; London: Penguin, 2002).

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