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SLCJUS001

MA LITERARY STUDIES

DISSERTATION (25%)

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AFTER JAMESON: SCOTTISH FICTION AND THE AMBIGUITIES OF POSTMODERN IDENTITY

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I investigate the ways in which postmodern fiction may be said to be politically engaged in an effective manner. While postmodern cultural products are either regarded by one set of critics as politically ineffectual, or by another as inherently progressive, I argue against both of these viewpoints. I assert that theoretical conceptions of the postmodern ignore both questions of agency and the position of the culturally marginalised. The discussion of Fredric Jameson and Linda Hutcheon's writings on postmodernism thus demonstrates the ways in which these theorists ignore struggles for identity outside of the hegemonic viewpoints of their theoretical totalities. The fiction of Alasdair Gray and Iain Banks stands as counterpoint to these arguments, as representative of both postmodern and politically reformative texts, in that they represent a marginalised viewpoint as Scottish writers. I argue that postmodern fiction, or postmodernism as style, can be regarded as politically progressive if it is grounded in just such an expressed marginality, and if it is working against these hegemonic and centrist viewpoints.

Chapter One examines the work of Fredric Jameson in some detail, arguing that Jameson's totalising "periodising hypothesis" loses all force when it attempts to deal with the local. Linda Hutcheon's work on

postmodernism is shown to be as disabling when removed from the cultural fields which determine the centre.

Chapter Two examines the ways in which Scotland figures as marginalised locale, as dominated by the literary establishment of England.

Chapter Three examines Alasdair Gray's Lanark and Iain Banks's The Bridge as texts which are postmodern in style, yet find their political force through an investigation of the conditions of marginality and an attendant struggle for an autonomous identity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the University of Cape Town for financial assistance throughout the completion of this degree.

I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Lesley Marx for valuable criticism and encouragement, and for introducing me to Alasdair Gray in the first place.

I would like to thank Darrel Bristow-Bovey for many discussions on Fredric Jameson's work, and for the always incisive comments he has made.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

> Manichaeism is the irreconcilable antagonism between two forces. Morality is merely the opposition of two values. In the order of values, there is always a possibility of reconciliation. The disorder of forces is irreconcilable.
>
> **---Jean Baudrillard, Cool Memories**

> The basis as a possibility of the universal development of the individual, and the real development of the individuals from this basis as a constant suspension of its barrier, which is recognised as a barrier, not taken for a sacred limit.
>
> **----Karl Marx, Grundrisse**

The novels which I will examine in this dissertation are not innocently contained, in the historical period of the 1980s. Neither is the fact that these are the imaginative works of writers who are Scottish an innocent, or random, event (or choice). It is certainly true that the 1980s saw an eruption in western academies with preoccupations of what has come to be called "colonial discourse", and its correlative "postcolonial theory",[1] often hand-in-hand (or perhaps, foot in mouth) with the adoption of poststructuralism's valorisation and celebration of difference. Nevertheless as Robert Crawford points out, there were also areas of difference which "almost all the

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[1] For collections which sum up the movements, constructive or otherwise, in this field, see Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds. 1994) and Ian Adam and Helen Tiffin (eds. 1991).

consciously theorised writing of that period, as well as the more traditionally orientated criticism, obscured or ignored in a gesture which, deliberate or not, curiously reproduced distortions perpetuated by traditional literary criticism or historiography" (1992:1).

The "obscured or ignored" difference which Crawford is representing is of course Scotland, and his book makes a strong point of showing how it was in fact the tradition of a Scottish literary and academic establishment which "invented" the practices of "English" literary criticism. Indeed, Crawford's assertion that Scotland is one area which has been ignored by the new politics of difference is a crucial one, for most studies of the postcolonial, no matter how enlightened and enlightening they may be, tend to think of the culturally dominating precepts of English in politically naïve terms. English, as the dominant and dominating colonialist language throughout the globe is assumed as a monolithic entity, with little or no attention paid to the illusion of unity present in the very context of its construction. A totalising of the constituent parts which make up English Literature, one which ignores any matters of local origin, is in itself an act of naïve cultural imperialism (Crawford, 1992:7).

While I do not wish to be party to an assumption that would deny the very crucial gains that are being made within the field of postcolonial studies, nor to be blind to the political and cultural force of those postcolonial writers who write in English (or english, as the

fashionable vernacular would have it), I do wish to assert that Scotland occupies a unique and crucial cultural locale for significant questions surrounding cultural politics. Indeed, the novels I will examine, Alasdair Gray's Lanark: A Life in Four Books (1985) and Iain Banks's The Bridge (1986), are not blind in themselves to the Scottishness of their construction.

This returns us to the remark I opened with, namely that the fiction in question belongs to the 1980s, a decade which is bracketed by the era of Thatcherism, and it is this era which both forms and informs the historical and political textures of the writing. This is not to say that those rather obvious political responses which, at least on the part of the left, have entered into a common language of sorts when confronting the Reagan/Thatcher era, are the overt concerns of these texts, but rather, that these novels traverse a border between the dominant metropolitan politics and culture of England, along with the attendant history which accompanies that centre, and a more localised preoccupation with the cultural politics that occupy a position on the margins.

At the same time, the fiction of both Gray and Banks is illustrative of what has come to be called "the postmodern novel". It is important to emphasise here that postmodernism has been characterised along roughly two lines: the first, seen primarily in the work of the (un)holy triumvirate of Jameson, Lyotard, Baudrillard, is concerned with the existence of postmodernism as, in

Jameson's phrase, "a cultural dominant", that is with postmodernism as a lived cultural and historical stage, as symptomatic of and grounded in postmodernity.[2] The second concerns itself primarily with a descriptive discourse around various features of postmodernism as style. A few words are in order here about the latter.

Too often a discussion of postmodern literature will centre on grandiose claims regarding the instability of language, the loss of referentiality, the celebration of disjuncture, and so on, that is on descriptive tropes of styles or generic modes.[3] What these readings leave us with is very far from an attempt to explain any of the historical moments of postmodernism. They are in many cases merely a description, a catalogue of stylistic features. This is not to say that we can ignore such a "traditional" reading, but that such a reading fails to think postmodernism historically.

What I wish tentatively to assert, for reasons which will become clearer, is that these kinds of readings have become part of the postmodern, in the sense that they have, to borrow a phrase from Jameson, "forgotten how to think historically" (1990:ix). Of course, this assertion immediately brings with it another problem, and this is

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[2] I do not wish to imply that Jameson, Lyotard and Baudrillard think of the postmodern in the same way, but merely wish to point to the way in which they appear to set up camp in a totalising view of postmodernism (despite Lyotard's tricky desire not to).

[3] For a particularly banal analysis of this type see Patricia Waugh (1984).

one which involves itself with the very notion of definition. We cannot ignore the conceptual problems postmodernism places before us as "it", and I am thinking here of precisely that descriptive form of postmodernism. The postmodernism of a Linda Hutcheon (1989) or Brian McHale (1987), does not conceive of itself (in an odd agentless manner in these discourses) problematically and resists definition under a historical discourse/narrative. At the same time, such readings as I have alluded to above, are subsumed in an odd manner by the postmodernism of the historicist: they become merely another instance of the postmodern. What I wish to attempt then is an investigation into the very ways in which just such strategies, a postmodern style if you will, can be tied into a broader perspective, that of the political.

It is against prevailing views of the postmodern that I will attempt to chart, through a close reading of Alasdair Gray's Lanark and Iain Banks's The Bridge, novels which are manifestly postmodern and politically engaged, the extent to which that strange beast "the postmodern novel" can be said to be a part of political praxis, can be said to engage with the postmodern world in an effective manner.

Of course, the statements I have made above are slanted towards a specific version of postmodernism, a version which would take into account the historiography of its productions, the historiography of the postmodern itself. Certainly, my preoccupation is with just such a

historical intent, but I wish also to take issue with theorists of the postmodern who deal with its cultural forms in a totalising and dominant fashion. It is with this in mind that the lengthy discussion of Fredric Jameson's work forms a preamble to the discussion of the novels. While Jameson stands as probably the most influential Marxist intellectual in the world today, and probably also as the most important theorist of the postmodern, I will argue that his totalising theories of the postmodern not only become confused with the relationship between style and dominant, but also that they are unable to deal with the local. Jameson's postmodernism, as Jennifer Wicke puts it, "is hugely systemic -- that is at once its great strength and its great weakness, in that it can't quite locate the local, although it knows it must be there."(1990:15). It is of course the local which is of interest to my argument, and it is within the locale of Scotland that I will attempt to traverse the border between postmodernism as style and postmodernity as cultural dominant.

Chapter One

DEVOLVING POSTMODERN TOTALITIES

The question of politics and postmodernism is of course a highly contentious one, for the logic of our decentered and global cultural present has in some ways appeared to deny the possibilities of a radical cultural politics. Indeed, those very historical moments which mark the beginnings of what has come to be called postmodernism, have largely receded into rhetorical memories. As Jonathan Arac writes in his introduction to Postmodernism and Politics: "the radical social and political activities, the urgency of questioning that formed the atmosphere from which postmodernism condensed, no longer define our immediate world" (1986:ix). Certainly, the dominating cultural practices of our present are no longer invested with the old certainties of the recent past: Arac has in mind the heady exhilaration in left academic and political circles following the events in May 1968. Nevertheless, the terrains which govern the existence of critical studies must not go unchallenged, (I am thinking of the new orthodoxy of poststructuralism which has tightened its hold on the western academy) but rather we are to make our criticisms of the cultural present in terms which may invest in struggles which, however remote they may seem, mark the present conjuncture of history.

It is certainly the contention of arguably the most eminent theorist of the postmodern, Fredric Jameson, that postmodernism -- in the hands of its advocates as the "end of history", as a destruction of the conditions which bind the image to its real conditions of existence, as a unilateral and Utopian celebration of difference -- disavows the realm of the political, or more specifically in Jameson's formulation, that which makes the political possible, History. In his grasping of the postmodern not as a "style but rather as a cultural dominant" (1992:4), Jameson's assertion that we have lost the ability to think historically, that history lies outside our reach, is bound up in the contention that all "postmodern" cultural products are by necessity not political precisely because they have become artifacts under late capitalism, immediately commodified and appropriated (1992:22-25).[4] Thus Jameson writes of E. L. Doctorow's novel Ragtime

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[4] Jameson's argument is tied here to the stylistic features he identifies with postmodernism: a prevalence of pastiche and collage; a multiplicity of 'flat' styles; the disappearance of a unified and individual subject, replaced by a new and schizophrenic one; the expansion of media and advertising industries. Indeed, these kinds of 'lists of the postmodern' are quite common within theoretical discussions of the term. Dick Hebdidge's list, in "Postmodernism and the 'Other Side'", runs thus: "the decor of a room, the design of a building, the diegesis of a film, the construction of a record, or a 'scratch' video, a TV commercial, or an arts documentary, or the intertextual relations between them, the layout of a page in a fashion magazine or critical journal, an anti-teleological tendency within epistemology, the attack on the 'metaphysics of presence', a general attenuation of feeling, the collective chagrin and morbid projections of a post-War generation of Baby Boomers confronting disillusioned middle-age, the 'predicament' of reflexivity, a group of rhetorical tropes, a proliferation of surfaces...". The list is not exhausted.

that, although it is obviously politically engaged, it can "no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about the past" (1992:25). For Jameson, the relative autonomy of the cultural sphere so important to Althusser (the separation of cultural and economic terrain), has all but disappeared under this new logic of late capitalism of which postmodernism is a natural reflection; the cultural and the economic are now merely part of each other, and as such, all cultural productions can only operate under the signs of capitalism, are necessarily lost to the realm of history.[5]

It is in the spirit of this assertion that Jameson begins his book, or rather, his collection of essays, on postmodernism with the following sentence:

> It is safest to grasp the concept of the postmodern as an attempt to think the present historically in an age that has forgotten how to think historically in the first place.(1992:ix)

This is where Jameson's problematic begins, where his political agenda ultimately rests, and it forms the major preoccupation of his writings on postmodernism. Jameson's attempt to bring postmodernism under the totalising gaze of his Hegelian/Marxist hermeneutics appears to contain a movement from a perspective on the diverse stylistic and structural features, the symptoms, of cultural products

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[3] It is worth noting that this is not an original notion. Adorno and Horkheimer argue roughly the same point, although in a different context, in their essay "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception", published in the mid-1940s.

which may be said to belong to a genre of postmodern texts (different for a number of significant reasons to "postmodern" cultural products as we will see later) to the grand totality of the postmodern as it corresponds to the third movement of capital, what Ernest Mandel has termed "Late Capitalism" (Mandel,1986).

Jameson's theoretical project is summarised as follows:

> The exposition will take up in turn...constitutive features of the postmodern...a brief account of postmodernist mutations in the lived experience of built space itself, some reflections on the mission of political art in the bewildering space of late or multinational capital.(1992:6)

This summary of the programmatics, the polemics, of the essay certainly appear to be entirely plausible, proceeding as it does through his examination of certain paradigmatic texts (Diamond Dust Shoes, the Bonaventure Hotel, Ragtime, Nam June Paik and Jenny Holzer's video art, and so on) as postmodern, touching on the ways in which these cultural texts articulate the subject's relation to its new spatial characteristics, and culminating in a new political programmatics which will lead art out of the historical impasse presented by postmodernism and into a new spatial orientation for the subject, where "we" may once again begin to grasp our position within a collective entity and be reendowed with the ability to act and struggle.

This emphasis on a "way forward" for postmodernism is not an unusual instance in Jameson's work. The Political

Unconscious, his highly influential work of the early 1980s, is concerned with just such a collective ideal, the transformation of criticism (as opposed to literary criticism) towards the evolution of the consciousness of the subject. For the Jameson of The Political Unconscious, the principles of interpretation which apply to any given text (he uses allegorical readings of the New Testament as a specific example) will always serve as a constitutive force of ideological structuration, where ideology is rendered in Althusserian terms as the imaginary relationship between individuals and a real condition of existence. Indeed, the political force of Jameson's writings on postmodernism form just such an attempt to inscribe an ideological horizon onto the interpretation of the historical moment. The rallying call of the essay on postmodernism, "cognitive mapping" , is cut from the same polemical cloth as the opening exhortation of The Political Unconscious: "Always historicise!".[6] Of cognitive mapping Jameson has recently remarked that it is to be seen as an attempt to view class

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[6] This is not to say that the Jameson of The Political Unconscious is theoretically the same as the Jameson of the writings on postmodern. On the contrary, the crucial question of historical terrain has altered here -- in the movement from the disabling gap between the private and the social which capitalism perpetuates, to the obliteration of that gap, although in no less of a disabling movement, under *late* capitalism. What remains constant is the commitment to a Hegelian notion of totality, where for Hegel history, or historical time would reflect the essence of a social totality. For interesting comments on The Political Unconscious see Tony Bennet (1990,205-220); Terry Eagleton (1981) and Cornel West (1985). For an interesting aside on Jameson's theoretical shift here, see Stephen Greenblatt (1987:13).

relations on a global scale whereby we may be placed in an exemplary position to create adequate representations [1994].

As such it is postmodernism's inability to historicise, perhaps more accurately to be historicised, that positions Jameson's reading of our cultural present, while behind this desire to historicise lies Jameson's faithfulness to the Hegelian structure of totality. Jameson's postmodernism, characterised above all by an estrangement from History, must thus be dealt with through an attempt to uncover/recover that conception of history as horizon, in order to, as it were, make us whole again. It is in this spirit that he offers what he calls a "periodising hypothesis", an attempt to bring together under the determining and enclosing structure of history that cultural moment which appears to resist any conceptions of historicity.

It is within the sphere of just such a political call to arms that the essay begins, with a paragraph which clearly states an oppositionality:

> The last few years have been marked by an inverted millenarianism in which premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that (the end of ideology, art, or social class: the crisis of Leninism, social democracy or the welfare state, etc., etc.); taken together all of these perhaps constitute what is increasingly being called postmodernism. (1992:5)

It is immediately apparent that Jameson's concern here will be with the redemption of premonitions of the future.

Indeed his assertion that the end of everything is being proclaimed by postmodernism ("what is increasingly being called") must suggest, couched as it is in the passive voice, that postmodernism operates in an agentless fashion, naming both itself and its proclamations. One may well ask who it is that speaks in these terms, as we will come to ask, in turn, who Jameson speaks for. It is this very question of agency which will conspire to haunt the precepts of Jameson's thesis as it progresses.

All the stylistic features he identifies with the postmodern-- prevalence of pastiche and collage, a multiplicity of "flat" styles, the disappearance of the unified and individual subject which has been replaced by a new "schizophrenic" one, as well as the expansion of the media and advertising industries (the list is not exhausted) -- he in turn identifies as the direct result of our diminished sense of history (1992:6-25). Jameson's account will thus attempt to restore to an inexplicable and uninterpretable social and cultural experience a totalising structure which will invest in the present the hermeneutic understandings of its past and return its future to a meaningful and predictable continuum.

Jameson's insistence then, is on the need to think our postmodern present in a necessarily historical manner. Furthermore this insistence is inextricably linked to a political programmatics, a programmatics which seeks to identify the way forward for political art. As he writes:

> ...this has been the political spirit in which the following analysis was devised: to project some conception of a new systematic cultural norm and its reproduction in order to reflect more adequately on the most effective forms of any radical cultural politics today.(1992:6)

The crucial term here is of course that which conceives, implicitly, of postmodernism as a "new systematic cultural norm". It becomes here a historical conception of the cultural field, as opposed to a stylistic one, and associates the postmodern with the emergence of a different kind of historical era, a "new" cultural field.

It is to this end that Jameson conceives of his project as a "periodising hypothesis"(1992:3), as this allows him to place a historical analysis at the forefront of his thesis. We may well be wary here that we are entering the territory that Lyotard (1992) has warned against: the old master narrative. Yet, Jameson is well aware of the problems associated with such a periodising concept. He identifies the age we live in as one in which "the very conception of historical periodisation has come to seem most problematical indeed" (1990:3).

What then, we may ask, causes these disabling effects, this loss of history? Jameson does begin his discussion of the postmodern in a way which constitutes its stylistic differences from modernism: a comparison of Warhol's Diamond Dust Shoes and Van Gogh's painting of peasant shoes. Van Gogh's shoes offer to Jameson an account which illustrates the "object world of agricultural misery, of stark rural poverty, and the whole

rudimentary human world of backbreaking peasant toil", in short, a "sense in which the work in its inert, objectival form is taken as a clue or a symptom for the vaster reality which replaces it as its ultimate truth" (1992:7-8). On the other hand, Warhol's shoes "evidently no longer speak to us with any of the immediacy of Van Gogh's footgear; indeed I am tempted to say that it does not really speak to us at all" (1992:8).[7] One is indeed tempted to say that Jameson is more than "tempted" here, that his polemical structure encounters its first problems within the rhetorical structure he employs.

Jameson describes postmodernism as, initially at least, an oppositional structure, coming to fruition in the aftermath of modernism. In these terms, the techniques and figures associated with that older movement have become canonised and institutionalised, inaugurating a historical context within which the "younger generation of the 1960's confront[ed] the formerly oppositional modern movement as a set of dead classics" (1992:4). At the same time, and in an odd historical moment, those artworks which may be termed postmodern have received a canonisation of their own, are "at one with the official or public culture of Western society" (1992:4). It is this historical structure which leads to the assertion

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[7] One may well note the rhetorical movement from Warhol's 'shoes' to Van Gogh's 'Footgear', a descriptive and metaphorical trope which clearly emphasises the difference between the ornamental and the necessary.

that one cannot restore Warhol's shoes to a full and lived historical context.[8]

The question we may easily pose here is "What hinders the possibility of Warhol's shoes being restored to the fullness of a historical context?" Jameson's answer comes in the rather glib manner with which he presents answers to all questions of this nature (as was described earlier in the example of Ragtime): Warhol's shoes foreground the explicit and debilitating commodity fetishism of late capitalism, whereby aesthetic production in general has become a part of commodity production (1992:8)

This is precisely where we arrive at the crux of Jameson's thesis. His attempt to identify a postmodernist field, or to define what that elusive term may mean, comes within an attempt to conjoin the cultural with the social and the economic. As Jameson puts it, he wishes to "correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order" (1983:113) The postmodern world is in these terms a violent extension of Western capital:

> ...this whole global, yet American, postmodern culture is the internal and superstructural expression of a whole new wave of American military and economic domination throughout the world: in this sense, as throughout class history, the underside of culture is blood, torture, death, and terror. (1992:5)

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[8] It is interesting to note that Jameson does instill a form of context, albeit a potential and imaginative one: a "pile of shoes left over from Auschwitz"; "the remainders and tokens of some incomprehensible and tragic fire in a packed dance hall" (1992:8).

The somewhat hysterical phrasing of this sentence perhaps obscures the interesting connections which are made here: the conflation of postmodernism and capital, and the conflation of a global sphere with an American one. It is important to stress Jameson's insistence on the "American-ness" of postmodernism, but more importantly, that it is first American, and then, global. This insistence on the American "origins" of postmodernism sits rather uneasily with the privileged view of spatial characteristics he identifies as specifically, or perhaps fundamentally, postmodern.

Nevertheless, what makes Warhol's shoes apolitical artifacts is the historical period of the postmodern. Jameson's point here is that the reception of the shoes have nothing to do with the style or the content which they represent; what they have to do with is the moment of their reception within the cultural dominant of late capitalism, postmodernism. Indeed, the problem lies precisely in Jameson's complacent passing over of the structural difficulties he encounters when dealing with the set of formal features which characterise a "new way of living".

While emphasising again and again his desire not to see postmodernism as a style among many but a cultural dominant, he still feels able to assert that he is "far from feeling that all cultural production today is postmodern" (1992:6), surely admitting that he <u>is</u> seeing postmodernism as a style among many and not as the

cultural dominant. This confusion is prevalent throughout the essay: Warhol's shoes, which represent the postmodern stylistically, come to represent the dominance of postmodernism through their metonymic translation into a comment on the fundamental mutation of lived space and the way in which the subject is disposed towards that space (1992:10).

This insistence on postmodernism as cultural dominant allows Jameson to assert that it arises before the assumption of postmodernism as style or aesthetic. It is worthwhile repeating that Jameson's linking of the cultural to the social and the economic rests on the assumption that the sphere of culture has been transformed in contemporary society, that contemporary society is one which is dominated by "late capitalism". Jameson, and this conception follows very closely that of Mandel's, wishes to show that there has been a recent shift in global economic organisation. As such he identifies three steps in the evolution of capitalism:

> These are market capitalism, the monopoly stage or the stage of imperialism, and our own...multinational capital. (1992:35)

This third stage in which we find ourselves is marked increasingly by a growth in international corporations which transcend national boundaries (Connor,1989:45) and is in itself the "purest form of capital yet to have emerged" (Jameson,1992:36)

Culture in postmodernism becomes, in terms of this model, inseparable from the sphere of capital:

> Everything...that we have been calling postmodernism is inseparable from, and unthinkable without the hypothesis of, some fundamental mutation in the sphere of culture in the world of late capitalism, which includes a momentous modification of its social function. (1992:47-8)

Once again, Culture has expanded throughout the social realm to the point where everything can now be said to have become cultural. This point is linked to an earlier one Jameson makes about representation, where all the aspects of cultural forms, from production to consumption have become inextricable parts of economic activity.

The assertion is, of course, that that which causes the postmodern -- late capitalism -- has become the postmodern. As such Jameson's uneasiness about the political possibilities of postmodern culture becomes clear: how does one create political art if the very means of culture are those which must be resisted? Again, this point is linked to the place which representation has come to occupy within postmodernism. To return to his discussion of Doctorow's novel Ragtime, a text which he asserts is politically engaged, Jameson concludes that it can nevertheless "no longer set out to represent the historical past; it can only "represent" our ideas and stereotypes about the past." (1992:25). The realism of such an exercise is thus merely that of the simulacrum -- signs no longer refer to reality, but to a history which

is way beyond our reach, precisely because the images of postmodern society are those which are fixated on the signifier, on the perpetual present of the schizophrenic (Jameson,1992:26-9).

If this is indeed the case we may well ask how that notion of a textual representation differs from one which has the "real" object of history in its grasp. Is it not symptomatic of Jameson's insistence on a cultural dominant that precisely these forms of textual historiography are derided and deprived of their historical and contextual import through a missed trajectory which would chart the lived and full reality of the subject and the depthlessness of the so-called "new" postmodern subject, predicated above all on the maginot line, so easily by-passed by Jameson himself, separating style and totality?

If we thus view the postmodern as the cultural dominant we must ask of Jameson just how he comes to construct that dominant. As I have shown earlier, this construction arises within a conflation and contradiction of the earlier attempt to maintain a distance between the conception of postmodernism as style and as cultural dominant. Again, when Jameson wishes to show how the loss of history, in the form of a schizophrenic mutation, is characterised by a radical shift in the subject's experience he falls into the same trap which characterises his inability to traverse the space he locates between the deferred symptom and the given dominant. He emphasises that the loss of history is accompanied by a loss of any

notion of temporality, causing a shift in emphasis towards the spatial and the attendant heterogeneity which that implies:

> If indeed, the subject has lost its capacity to extend its pro-tensions and re-tensions across the temporal manifold and to organise its past and future into coherent experience, it becomes difficult enough to see how the cultural productions of such a subject could result in anything but 'heaps of fragments' and in a practice of the randomly heterogeneous and fragmentary and the aleatory. (1992:25)

So what we are faced with in this new spatiality is something which is akin to a sheer play of difference. Yet, that spatiality is in itself a homogenising form of totality. The Bonaventure Hotel is described thus:

> ...we are here in the presence of something like a mutation in built space itself. My implication is that we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied by any equivalent mutation in the subject. (1992:38)

Here we find that the newfound emphasis on space leaves the subject without the capabilities to map his or her surroundings. The subject is caught within the multinational networks of postmodernism without any possibility of a cognitive understanding.

What occurs between these two paragraphs is an inability to navigate questions of agency. Jameson evokes a change in the disposition of the subject to explain what constitutes the production of postmodernism as a general style. At the same time he is unable to explain how those

random cultural productions which he has earlier identified as constitutive of the cultural dominant may come into being. The subject is faced with a transformation at the same time as the exterior reality of objects undergo a "mutation in built space", clearly implying that the space has both transformed the subject and mysteriously transformed itself. Attendant on these assertions is the contradictory pronouncement that, on the one hand, postmodern culture is inconceivable without recourse to a random heterogeneity, a premise on which Jameson bases his notion of schizophrenia, and on the other it appears to us in such a way as to make it inconceivable anyway. These problems are not restricted to the above examples and they stem from the model Jameson attempts to produce, linked to an earlier point he makes as regards periodisation.

Jameson is wary of periodisation because it tends to 'obliterate differences". It is for this reason that he resolves to regard postmodernism "not as a style but as a cultural dominant" as this will allow for the "presence and coexistence of a range of very different, yet subordinate, features" (1992:5). A little later he writes that if we do not conceive of a cultural dominant "we will fall back into a view of present history as sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a coexistence of a host of different forces whose effectivity is undecidable" (1992:6). One may well ask how it is possible to conceive of a cultural dominant without subsuming everything under

that banner, and as we have seen Jameson does just that in his conflation of the cultural with the social and the economic -- that which produces postmodernism becomes postmodernism. This occurs to the detriment of the agency he seems at times to evoke, precisely because it only becomes possible as a kind of causality which the conception of postmodernism as cultural dominant metaphorically evokes.

At the same time there is an odd conception of the workings of late capitalism in its production of the cultural dominant. Jameson asserts that there is a lack in capitalist countries today of just such a dominant: "...the advanced capitalist countries of today are now a field of stylistic and discursive heterogeneity without a norm" (1992:17) The cultural dominant has become, not as the historicist would have it, late capitalism, but sheer heterogeneity, random difference, a conception which would sit uneasily with the assertions of Mandel's book, belonging as it does to an era where the possibilities of political intervention were not as vague as they are today.

Jameson does explore this problem in a lengthy essay, "Secondary Elaborations", which serves as a conclusion to his collection. Here he writes of the problems of periodisation and totality:

> ...the deeper paradox rehearsed by the attempt to grasp "postmodernism" in the form of periodising or totalising abstractions...lies in this seeming contradiction between the attempt to unify a field and to posit the hidden

> identities that course through it and the logic of the very impulses of this field, which postmodernist theory openly categorises as a logic of difference or differentiation. (1992a:342)

Nevertheless, this is merely an acknowledgement of the problem and not in any way a resolution of the contradictions he does not appear so openly and benignly to recognise in the earlier essay. Where Jameson errs most seems to be in his assumption that those forces which form the economic and the social form the cultural in exactly the same way. As Connor points out there is

> "an unexpressed contradiction at the heart of the model: on the one hand postmodern consumer capitalism represents the final term in a logic of reification (alienation, differentiation, splitting of the signifier and signified), while on the other, there seems to be an absolute collapse of differentiation, as the cultural realm becomes identical with the socio-economic" (1989:47).

Jameson is faced with the problem of accounting for the "loss of history" -- the formative instance of a perpetual present, the result of late capitalism -- within the analytical framework he has identified: a cultural space for which there is no possibility of forming a coherent map. As Simon During succinctly points out:

> On the one hand 'postmodernity' names the loss of critical distance in the world today, and on the other, it names the delegitimation of those categories by which a cultural centre or a socio-economic base might be identified. So writing about postmodernity implies its absence. If there is no critical distance under postmodernity, then how can there be distance enough for analysis of it to proceed? And if it is knowable only as decentered then how can its essence be recognised at all? (1987:32)

Jameson finds himself in just such an untenable situation. Having identified postmodernism as the cultural dominant in which we all find ourselves inextricably entwined he must find a way in which to occupy a space where he may analyse that phenomena and attempt to find a way out of the dilemma he has created.

In his attempt to theorise the postmodern in a way which will make it not only "knowable" but will also inaugurate a way forward for political intervention, Jameson attempts to grasp this cultural dominant dialectically. This is in itself the attempt to identify "some moment of truth" amongst the myriad falsehoods of the postmodern cultural field.

It is at this point that the essay finally, and rather belatedly, addresses the task it set for itself from the outset: to find a space for a radical cultural politics. Once again, this discussion is prefaced by a return to the need to grasp postmodernism as a cultural dominant:

> I cannot stress too greatly the radical distinction between a view for which the postmodern is one (optional) style among many and one which seeks to grasp it as the cultural dominant of the logic of late capitalism: the two approaches in fact generate two very different ways of conceptualising the phenomena as a whole: on the one hand, moral judgements (about whether it is indifferent whether they are positive or negative) and, on the other, a genuinely dialectical attempt to think our present of time in history. (1992:45-6)

Yet, this dialectical reading is perfunctory at best. All Jameson seems to offer is the vague notion that certain

aspects of postmodern culture may be seen as attempts to explore ramifications of just such a cultural dominant, cultural products which may be read as "peculiar new forms of realism (or at least of the mimesis of reality), while at the same time they can equally well be analysed as so many attempts to distract and divert us from that reality or to disguise its contradictions and resolve them in the guise of various formal mystifications"(1992:49).

There is, however, no intimation as to how such works would be evaluated in a dialectical assessment of postmodernism. As During points out, as soon as Jameson attempts to inscribe the forward progress of history into his notion of postmodernism, which is of a totality arising out of a totality, he is no longer viewing the cultural dominant but a historical stage (1987:35). In an attempt to think the postmodern dialectically, in itself an attempt to formulate the cultural dominant in a progressive way, Jameson turns to its "internationalism" (1992:50),[9] an assertion which sits uncomfortably with his insistence on the fundamentally American nature of postmodernism. Indeed, we may well ask what happens to those radically different moments he so carefully inscribes within the periodising hypothesis.

As both During and Aijaz Ahmad (1987) assert, Jameson's internationalism, particularly as regards "third world texts", linked as it is to progress, cannot accommodate the retrogressive, residual, primitive or

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[9] See also Jameson (1986).

irrationalism of other cultures. One may recall here the early statement that postmodernism will be seen as "the force field in which very different kinds of cultural impulses -- what Raymond Williams has usefully termed 'emergent' and 'residual' -- must make their way" (Jameson,1992:6) There is no intimation as to how these cultural impulses may, or do, "make their way", save a recourse to a rather odd political strategy.

That strategy is of course what Jameson terms "cognitive mapping", and it becomes necessary as a direct result of our inability to find a spatial orientation where that very notion has become increasingly out of reach:

> ...the conception of space that has been developed here suggests that a model of political culture appropriate to our own situation will necessarily have to raise spatial issues as its fundamental organising concern. I will therefore provisionally define the aesthetic of this new (and hypothetical) cultural form as an aesthetic of cognitive mapping. (1992:51)

This new cultural form is required to engage in a contradictory moment of production: it has to "hold to the truth of postmodernism...the world space of multinational capitalism...at the same time at which it achieves a breakthrough to some as yet unimaginable new mode of representing this last." It must thus expose the loss of spatial co-ordinates while at the same time attempting to find a way of co-ordinating the subject spatially. This new mode is to become that space in which we may again

begin to grasp our positions as individual and collective subjects and be reinscribed within a politics which allows us the capacity for action and struggle (Jameson,1992:54).

This is clearly the historicist's call to arms -- the desire to recreate that old subject endowed with the possibilities of a new cognitive knowledge. Yet, this new (although it has not yet appeared) political strategy sits uncomfortably with the elision of difference so central to Jameson's problematic. As Ahmad (1987) and During (1987), as well as Denzin (1991) and Young (1990), have asserted, Jameson's theory excludes any conceptions of race or gender, and as I have shown there is a clear contradiction between his notions of a periodising hypothesis and his expressed intentions of keeping difference alive. Jameson's assertion that in our historical age ideology can no longer fill that space between scientific knowledge and existential experience (as if it ever did), that ideology can no longer articulate the dialectical dimensions of individual and collective experience, in fact that ideology is no longer "producible" under postmodernism, serves to push the margins even further away from this cultural dominant. This in turn serves to force his system into an expressively causal one where the political struggles of the centre alone are taken into account, political struggles which he in turn is adamant cannot take place anyway.

Jameson attempts to clarify the problems he associates with the fragmentation of the present, the

disruption and erosion of the subject, through the proliferation (he terms it a problem) of "micropolitics", seen in the "badges of affirmation of ethnic, gender, race, religious and class-factional adhesion" (1992:16), in an odd manner which rallies the existent and emergent subjectivities and identities of groups against the notion of the subject. The dominant feature of the postmodern which Jameson identifies becomes in itself a dominating rhetorical and metaphorical structure. To return to the comments of Simon During:

> In order to name postmodernism as a cultural dominant expressing itself in postmodern artefacts Jameson has to assume the coming to power of neo-imperialism, and to inflect postmodernity positively he has, for a moment, to become complicit with it. (1987:35)

This is the crux of the matter, for in the attempt to think of a way in which we may articulate postmodernism from within postmodernism itself, a spatial problem which occurs within his own theoretical hypothesis, Jameson becomes trapped in his own formulation: that which produces the culture is just like the culture. In these terms Jameson's insistence both that his paper is not a return to "some older and more transparent national space" and that it is against "the disastrous realignment of socialist revolution with the older nationalisms" (1992:54,50), forces him to ignore the struggles of localised nationalisms for autonomy and identity. Indeed, the "we" which Jameson so readily resorts to in his moments of rhetorical certainty is not the "we" of a great

global dominant, but the "we" of a centrist and hegemonic viewpoint which cannot begin to account for the struggles of those for whom late capitalism does not mean the end of the unified subject.

As During again puts it, any conception that "we" live in postmodernity is dependent on "the annihilation of the postcolonial condition"(1987:33). It would seem perhaps more instructive to conceive of postmodernism not as a cultural dominant, but rather, and this is During's phrase, as an effect of discrete cultural systems, where each arises out of its own specific historical moments. This would allow the symptoms of postmodernism which Jameson so succinctly describes to be acted against according to a slightly different agenda, one in which we are perhaps already historicising, one in which the postmodern as style is not necessarily the hegemonic moment of depoliticisation, but rather, the coming into being of a new and radical cultural politics which enables a struggle for identity in the margins.

What I wish to propose then, is an examination of the issue of marginality, an examination of the ways in which the distinctive subject may be seen as an active agent within cultural politics. More specifically, what I wish to suggest is that the rhetorical certainties which accompany Jamesonian postmodernism, the descriptive topos which would see the contemporary global space as a vast

and decentered network of simulacrum and pseudo-event,[11] cease to exercise any normative effect on unique local contexts. Indeed, in such an epistemology, centre and margin become meaningless and, crucially, depoliticised terms. My reading of Lanark and The Bridge would thus seek to restore the possibilities of political praxis to postmodernism, when, and this is a crucial when, it operates in and from the margins.

It is necessary then to reinsert notions of centre and margin into any debate around postmodernism. A hegemonic cultural epistemology, which would seek to abandon the concerns of the marginalised -- and I hope I have shown the ways in which Jameson's thesis does precisely that -- must by its very nature tacitly adhere to a "centre", no matter how elusive that centre may appear.

While the problems associated with Jameson's specific brand of postmodernism should be apparent at this stage, it would be foolish to ignore the very persuasive points he does make about the stylistic features of postmodernism. While I do not wish to dwell on these here, for reasons which will become apparent, I do wish to point to the development of a different kind of postmodern theory, a version of the postmodern which concerns itself primarily with a descriptive or stylistic framework.

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[11] See Boorstin (1962: 21-54), for an explication of the 'pseudo-event'.

While Jameson is concerned with postmodern style as expressive of a particular socio-historical phenomenon -- late capitalism -- purely descriptive accounts make no recourse to the historical or economic situations which ground such a style or genre. One such theorist whose work has received a fair amount of attention is Linda Hutcheon, and while I do not propose a sustained critique of her work, a few points here shall serve as illustrative of the problems with this approach.

Hutcheon does attempt to bring politics into her argument, but this endeavour is framed by her preoccupation with style as somehow politically reformative. The predominant analytical framework proposed by her is one which is primarily concerned with discursive aspects of the postmodern; one in which postmodern art "cannot but be political" because it serves to denaturalise accepted cultural representations, because it "works to turn its inevitable ideological grounding into a site of de-naturalising critique" (1989:3). As such, armed with the implicit assumption that postmodernism is capable of transforming "real" politics at the level of critique, Hutcheon proposes that postmodernism is, in and of its very nature, political.

This is obviously a simplified version of the argument (Hutcheon makes her claims around Foucault on discourse, Barthes on representation, Derrida on writing itself; in short, in specifically poststructuralist terms), but the problems are apparent. Hutcheon at once

accuses those who would reject postmodernism's inherent political engagement of inflexible political naiveté (1989:3) while at the same time her own thesis cannot escape just such an accusation. Her initial description of the postmodern will stand as a sufficient example to illustrate this claim:

> ...it seems reasonable to say that the postmodern's initial concern is to de-naturalise some of the dominant features of our way of life; to point out that those entities that we unthinkingly experience as 'natural' (they might even include capitalism, patriarchy, liberal humanism) are in fact 'cultural'; made by us, not given to us. Even nature, postmodernism might point out, doesn't grow on trees. (1989:2)

Reasonable indeed! What Hutcheon proposes here is an understanding of postmodernism which negates even the simplest questions of agency. Instead of a conceptualisation of postmodernism which has recourse to a historical context or grounding, postmodernism is suggested here as a given entity which somehow de-naturalises "reality" of its own accord. The point, surely, is that any such "de-naturalising", operating as it does as some kind of scythe through the epistemologies which govern "our way of life", without being informed by any categories or structures which may serve to evaluate that process, merely leaves behind an epistemology of another kind; one in which the propositional moments of political praxis are replaced by rhetorical movements of disablement and stasis, what Cornel West (1982:189)

rightly identifies as a kind of defeatism impossible to defeat on its own terms.[12]

It should be clear that both instances of the postmodern which I have described are complicit with a centre, no matter how they might insist on the decentered spatiality of our present. While Jameson disguises his centre underneath the mantle of late capitalism, Hutcheon disguises hers underneath the rhetorical structure of her argument, where the de-naturalising of those concepts that "we unthinkingly experience as 'natural'", are celebrated without the merest glimpse into what the "naturalness" of that "we" might entail. What I wish to stress then is that the instant one displaces emphasis from the centre one can no longer be content with either of these versions. In precisely the same way that issues surrounding language, historiography, canonicity, and so on, take on a different form of cultural valency, indeed become sites of intense struggle for self-identity, in the margins, so too, the forms postmodernism takes in those marginalised areas must be informed by a different set of discursive and historiographical features.

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[12] Indeed, I have had to become complicit with Hutcheon here in criticising her stance. Rather than disclosing Hutcheon's own metaphors as forms in which strategies are made known, I have had to assume for the moment that these strategies form the moment itself. For my own part, I would again assert that postmodernism is both complicit with, and a reaction against, the movement of late capitalism.

Chapter Two

POSTMODERN SCOTLAND

> helluva hard tay read theez innit
> stull,
> if yi canny unnirston thim jiss clear aff then,
> gawn,
> get tay fuck ootma road
>
> ----**Tom Leonard** Good Style

> But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. Imaginatively, Glasgow exists as a music hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside.
>
> ----**Alasdair Gray** Lanark

> I'll hae nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whaur extremes meet, it's the only way I ken to dodge the curst conceit o brin richt that damns the vast majority o men...
>
> ----**Hugh MacDiarmi d, "A Drunk Man"**

If we accept, then, the "postmodern-ness" (a clumsy term, but perhaps the only one which may convey a status as fiction) of both Gray's and Banks's fiction, and it would be difficult not to, it becomes a rather easy task, in the midst of all the structural categorisation of postmodernism, to overlook the relatively simple fact that Gray and Banks express a history which is marked by its "textual" otherness. It is my contention that Gray's Lanark and Banks's The Bridge find their basis for a historical signification which is expressly marginalised,

in the textual figures which traverse the border between centre and margin.

I do not wish to involve myself in an elaborate discussion of the ways in which these texts can be seen as postmodern. We might say that Gray has done this job for us in his "Epilogue", an explicitly metafictional instance in the "narrative" (and I use this term lightly) where all the devices and features ascribed to postmodern literature are glaringly obvious. It seems prudent to heed Gray's tacit warning, or collusion if you like, that he has included notes which will "save research scholars years of toil" (483).

What I wish to propose then, is a reading which will think of these texts as simultaneously postmodern in style and political in their engagement with the relationship between margin and centre. Indeed, it seems to me that these texts operate in the only way in which we may read a political agenda into a postmodern style, as a series of contingent and present interventions, around which the crucial questions of identity must make their way.

Of course, we are moving across shaky terrain here. The categorisation of Gray and Banks as "Scottish" writers may imply a forced marginalisation on their work, a marginalisation which excludes them from the citadel of the English Literary Establishment, and which regards them in some respects as "ethnic products". Nevertheless, both writers' work is specifically rooted in a Scottish context and it is clear from even the most cursory reading of

Lanark or The Bridge that the narratives are overtly concerned with the political status of Scotland in relation to England.

Gray's text portrays, on the most simplistic of levels, an imaginative journey through the past, present and future of Glasgow, peppered with images of labour, industrialism and Scottish history. The twin cities of Glasgow and Unthank, correlatives in their portrayal of an abused working class, resonate widely with the industrial and political history of Scotland. At the same time, Gray writes in the language of the metropolitan centre.[13] His English is not one which concerns itself with dialect or with the nationalism associated with a particularly Scottish form of English.[14]

Gray's cultural location, and this is equally true of Banks's, contains within it a split: he is involved in the attempt to "reconstitute experience through an act of writing which uses the tools of one culture or society and yet seeks to remain faithful to the experience of another" (Ashcroft et al, 1989:60-61). As such, Gray portrays the history of Duncan Thaw's Glasgow in strikingly realist terms. ("Let Glasgow flourish by telling the truth" [119]) The context of the narrative which describes the life of

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[13] It is important to note that Scotland is regarded by a number of academics, most notably Scottish sociologists as a colony, in fact as the first colony of England. As Tom Nairn (1977) puts it, it is last of the emergent first world countries, or first of the Third World ones.

[14] For an in depth discussion of the relationship between Scottish 'English' and nationalism see Caroline Macafee (1987).

Duncan Thaw is one which negotiates an economically depressed Glasgow during and immediately after the Second World War. The city is furthermore removed from the spatial hegemony of English culture, where behind the trees lie "nothing...but farms and fields. And England, eventually" (131), but not its political hegemony. So Glasgow is a city dislocated from the metropolis, yet caught up in the webs of its influence. Gray's writing is thus turned in two directions: it faces the cultural space which both constitutes and consumes it, the literary tradition of English, and it faces its own specific context, the historical site of its writing, Scotland.[15]

By the same token Banks concerns himself with just such a split between the political reality of Scotland and the "unreality" of a Scottish identity predicated on precisely the historical forms that reality delineates. His writing is tied inextricably to Scotland as locale, as geographical and cultural space, while at the same time attempting to erode those historiographic moments which render that locale ambiguous and marginalised. Both novels in turn concern themselves with the homogenising structure of late capitalism, with the ways in which the local is both marginalised and denied identity through the proliferation of a codified centrality with unlimited powers. Indeed, Banks's nightmare world of

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[15] In another sense, Gray's drawings (themselves occupying a border in the text) present a representation of this divided space, where the city and its surroundings are portrayed in opposition to each other.

"cartelization",[16] "The Bridge" is remarkably similar to the dystopian world of "Unthank".

These texts thus work against the dominant metropolitan constructs, the cosy familiarity of English letters. It is precisely this seemingly innocent and natural "Englishness", which Iain Chambers describes as a "native tradition" of "Westminster, the Monarchy, Oxbridge, the Royal Navy, the public school system, the syllabus of 'English'" (1990:16), that exerts its influence in/on the world of Duncan Thaw from the outset, most particularly in the school system and in the reactions to his "art". So, the first real choice to be made is one between Latin and French:

> You all know Latin is needed for entrance to university. A number of benevolent people think this unfair and are trying to change it. As far as Glasgow University is concerned they haven't succeeded yet. (149)

Classics studies reflect what the schoolmaster explicitly terms the "tradition", and the natural instance of his "inward smile" following this pronouncement depicts the assuredness of the national culture and its traditions. This is echoed in Gray's Something Leather where the distinction between Glasgow and London is ever-present:

> 'You see Glasgow is in Scotland and from oua point of view Scotland is slightly like Rhodesia in the early yias of the century ... Glasgow is the headquarters of Scottish Opera, Scottish Ballet, Scottish National Orchestra, the Burrel Collection, the Citizen's Theata, the Third Eye Centa and an

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[16] McHale (1987:67) uses the term in relation to Lanark.

> international drama festival: all of them directed by the English of course.'
>
> 'But shooali the natives have some cultcha of tha own...?'
>
> 'Some novels by Glasgow writers have received rave reviews in the Times Lit. Sup., but I'm afraid they leave me cold.' (1990:172-4)

An obvious form of separation is taking place here, a discrete and impenetrable otherness, grounded both in dominance over Scottish cultural forms, and in indifference to those forms which are not controlled. It is in these moments that Gray is confronting and attempting to go beyond, in a manner which will become apparent, the cultural marginality which necessarily informs his work.

In Chambers' terms then, the construction of a specifically English history and letters finds its naturally assured space outside of "the mechanical rhythms and commercial logic of industrial society and the modern world" (1990:17). An official culture has been created which is profoundly mistrustful of modernity, mass culture and democracy, and deeply tied to the authority of tradition (Chambers,1990:17). This would place an official version of Englishness as "natural", as somehow removed from history. Furthermore, there is a profound dislocation in the evolution of an official culture, a dislocation which is expressed between the constructs of images of the city and the country (Williams,1973). As Chambers notes, the wealth generated by the Empire was enough to keep Britain from experiencing a particularly strong industrial capitalist development in the nineteenth

century. Thus, the image of the country, with its empty landscape, provided a neat and uncontested site for "a national, and prevalently nostalgic, myth of 'Englishness'...everywhere tied to the stable logic of community" (Chambers,1990:33). The city in turn functions as a cipher for a homogenised culture, where culture assumes the highest form of its economic and social development.

Gray's novel works throughout against the very notion of "Englishness" described by Chambers. In doing so, it occupies a space within postmodernism -- the canonical stylistic form of the centre -- which can be seen as reinventing the very conceptions of a naturally demarcated national culture. Gray's writing establishes its own vigour, its own struggle for recognition, within the established grounds of the metropolitan centre.[17] This is born out particularly in his evocation of a tradition through plagiarism (the "Index of Plagiarisms"), a move which simultaneously renders the tradition impotent and lends political force to his own text. It should be clear that this is not merely the "de-naturalisation" of that which appears natural "to us" that Hutcheon so effusively champions, but a more complex interaction between centre and margin.

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[17] I am here following Andrew Ross's notion that terms within postmodernism can be appropriated for different contexts and different causes because they are no longer guaranteed a stable meaning (1988:xi).

The novel finds its resonance in MacDiarmind's phrase, "whaur extremes meet", where the reality of Glasgow and the futuristic nightmare of Unthank blend into each other. Scottish culture has itself been described in precisely these terms, as divided, split and deformed (Nairn,1977). Lanark/Thaw echoes this split in his attempt to find some form of identity: as he traverses the space of Unthank he carries with him the space of Glasgow; this schizophrenic site is ultimately all that comes to characterise him: he is Lanark/Thaw, neither Lanark nor Thaw. As David McCrone (1989:162) points out, the traditional view of Scotland, and this is one which Tom Nairn identifies as well, is that it is divided between the "heart", representing the past, and the "head", representing the present and future.

What is immediately apparent from this metaphor of "separation" is that the so-called "head" is inextricable from that which provides the basis for marginalisation, the dominance of English cultural forms. Once again both novels echo this "head that rules the heart": Gray's evocation of "the creature", a transnational entity which is all-pervasive in its deployment of power, and Banks's "Bridge", powerfully evocative of the world space of multinational capitalism. Yet, it is interesting to note here, as Aijaz Ahmad (1992:130) does, the rather odd trope that is "multinational", operating as it does as if "it" (capitalism, industry, the company,etc.) had no origins, as if the origins were mere myth. Both the "Bridge" and the creature" operate in much the same way as the concept

of Englishness discussed above, where a national culture posits itself as natural in just such an "originless" way. Scottish culture has been demarcated and defined through forms of linguistic and cultural imposition. My readings of Lanark and The Bridge attempt to see the novels as oppositional works, ones which struggle against English literary imposition and against traditional notions of Scotland.

The culture of Scotland has been defined, and always from outside, in the context of a number of "traditions". These constructed traditions, in some cases blatant stereotypes which reinforce the dominance of a naturalised English culture, include Kailyard or "cabbage patch" literature, Tartanry and Clydesidism. The most enduring of these notions has been Kailyardism. It is in the words of Tom Nairn:

> ...the definition of Scotland as wholly consisting of small towns full of small-town characters given to bucolic intrigue and wise sayings. At first the central figures were usually Ministers of the Kirk (as were most of the authors) but later on schoolteachers and doctors got into the act. Their housekeepers always have a shrewd insight into human nature. Offspring who leave for the big city frequently come to grief, and are glad to get home again. (1977:158)

This tradition was in sharp contrast to that of English culture, which was an "organic or "rooted" national culture in which literature -- from Coleridge and Carlyle up to F. R. Leavis and E. P. Thompson -- has consistently

played a major role" (Nairn,1977:156-7).[18] The Kailyard existed alongside the wider tradition of "Tartanry" and latterly that of Clydesidism, traditions which could not hope to compete with the fully formed English national culture.

What these national stereotypes portray is far more than would at first be apparent. The very language in which Nairn phrases his description resonates with a deeper discursive distinction. This is one which demarcates the Scottish tradition as playing out an inner conflict between city and country, between the influence of the metropolis and the mythology of a rural past. Nairn describes the chief characters of these literary works as part of the professional classes -- clergymen, teachers, doctors -- part of an educated strata linked traditionally to the city. Furthermore, the authors were traditionally émigrés; that is, they had left Scotland for the greater economic pastures of England and were in many ways attempting to construct a mythologised and romantic view of Scottish culture, a reconstruction of the margin within the centre, but nevertheless a reconstruction based on a decidedly metropolitan viewpoint. Kailyardism was regarded as Scotland's "high" culture, in the sense that it was the only significant moment of cultural production afforded to Scotland by England. The construction of Kailyardism was accompanied by the rise of Tartanry as a

[18] One may well note the odd collection of names which Nairn uses here as indicative of English literature, in itself an unusaul instance of construction.

national symbol, as a form of "low" culture, primarily through its appropriation by the British army during its colonial wars and through its popularity as an English fashion item.[19]

In many senses then, the construction of a Scottish national culture is based upon a profound discursive dislocation, one which plays itself out on the border between metropolis and margin. The one truly internal nationalistic cultural discourse is that of Clydesidism, with its images drawn from "real" working class life and from the discourse of class (McCrone:168). Yet, this seemingly authentic version of Scottish life is in itself redolent of the heart/head split identified earlier, with its evocation of early twentieth century images of Scottish working-class life, essentially an aggrandisement of a past which no longer exists.

These images of Scotland find their resonances in Lanark and The Bridge not in the ways in which the texts seek to deconstruct prevailing myths about Scotland, but rather in the ways in which the novels play out the profound dislocation between the metropolitan centre and its periphery, a dislocation I have shown to be inherent in the way Scotland is perceived. As such these novels forge a path between the two extremes of country and city, what Raymond Williams has termed "an unresolved division and conflict of impulses" (1973:297).

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[19] For a full discussion of the construction of 'Tartanry' as an national symbol see McCrone (1989:164-6).

In Chapter Three I shall investigate the ways in which this "conflict of impulses" forms a movement towards a provisional identity in the work of Gray and Banks. Turning first of all to Lanark this trajectory is tied to Lanark/Thaw's impulse towards self-identity in the twin cities Glasgow/Unthank.

Chapter Three

AMBIGUOUS IDENTITIES: LANARK AND THE BRIDGE AS DECENTERED TEXTS

3.1 Unthank/Glasgow:

It is not surprising that Lanark should begin with a description that is particularly urban, the Elite Café, a space in which identity is of itself negated. So, the interior of the Café is such that it makes "the skins of the customers look greyish and dead", where the proprietor "was dumb or unusually reticent. He never spoke" (3). It is here where we also find Lanark (although he is as yet unnamed), and significantly, he is outside of the Café, perched on the balcony overlooking the city. The central character is thus portrayed as outside, to some extent, the city itself, searching as he is for "light".

There is another inversion which occurs here: the interior of the Café is decorated in colours which are emblematic of brightness -- crimson, scarlet -- and of outside -- the green lights:

> The room seemed dingy, not because it was unclean but because of the lighting. A crimson carpet covered the floor, the chairs were upholstered in scarlet, the low ceiling was patterned with whorled pink plaster, but dim green wall lights turned these colours into varieties of brown and made the skins of the customers look greyish and dead. (3)

The Café is a divided locale; it signifies a "light" space in contrast to the darkness outside, yet that light is dissolved at the same time. The "green lights" turn the bright colours into dingy ones. At the same time, the interior of the Café, its lighting, turns the patrons into lifeless subjects. This is contrasted with Lanark's gaze which takes in the "black sky" outside. The very space of the Café thus serves to problematise the notions of margin and centre: Lanark is positioned as neither inhabitant of the city, nor inhabitant of the outside of that city, and the space he finds himself in is as contradictory.

Lanark's preoccupation with the outside is born out of his desire to see daylight, that is to glimpse the sun. "I'm looking for daylight", he says, and this is his way of measuring time. Light stands here not only as figure for time, but also as figure for the history Lanark is trying to regain. He says of light,

> I can measure time with it. I've counted thirty days since coming here, maybe I've missed a few by sleeping or drinking coffee, but when I remember something I can say, 'It happened two days ago or ten or twenty.' This gives my life a feeling of order. (5)

Sludden's response to this desire to find a teleological order in existence is characteristically dismissive:

> No wonder you've a morbid obsession with daylight. Instead of visiting ten parties since you came here, laying ten women and getting drunk ten times, you've watched thirty days go by. Instead of making life a continual feast you chop it up into days and swallow them regularly like pills. (5)

While Lanark's preoccupation with daylight is for him a means of knowing the past, of evoking memory, for Sludden life revolves around a perpetual present, dependent on a series of repetitions -- "visiting", "laying", "getting drunk". Lanark's fixation on daylight serves to evoke both a past and a future for himself, in strong contrast to the characters around him, and resonates with Thaw's desire for light because of its necessity for his artistic aims.

Lanark's desire to demarcate the past surfaces again in his attempts at writing. His "manuscript" evolves out of the questions "What does it matter who I am?" and "Why should I care why I came here?" (15), age-old preoccupations which are turned into postmodern ones through the emphasis on the constructedness of the text, and through Lanark's writing of his own history. This writing of himself (the chapter titled "Manuscript") does not, however, answer these questions in any way. What is interesting here is that the chapter appears as an integrated part of the text. The shift in the narrative is one from omniscient to first person narration forcing a conflation between text and character and lending a form of control to Lanark. In writing himself he becomes part of a history, albeit textual.

Yet, that body is already a fragmented one. He remembers that he had a name, "a short word starting with Th or Gr" (20), but can get no further. Eventually he

chooses for himself a name that he has seen on a photograph:

> The earliest name I could remember had been printed under a brown photograph of spires and trees on a hilltop on the compartment wall. (20)

The name Lanark, of course, evokes the Scottish town of the same name, and also the word "landmark". Lanark, in naming himself, carries Scotland with him -- the signs of Scotland are organised literally through his body. He is part of the land itself and Scotland becomes inscribed within him. Furthermore, the Scotland he represents through his name is the Scotland of the country -- the small town with its spires and trees on the hilltop.

This inscription of the country in the name he chooses for himself is contrasted with the anonymity of the city, and this is in turn tied to political processes. He may not know the name of the city for security reasons (31). When he first asks what the city is called the clerk at the welfare office replies:

> Mr Lanark, I am a clerk, not a geographer. (22)

This statement is then repeated, albeit in a different register, when he is at the "Institute". Lanark asks Dr. Munro how deeply they are within the mountains to which the doctor replies:

> I don't know. I'm a doctor, not a geologist. (48)

These answers both draw a distinction between differing kinds of work. The repetition of the prefix "geo-", literally "of the earth", in both cases serves to posit a disjuncture between the "inside" of the city, and the "outside" of a natural environment. Yet that "outside" is as elusive and confused a space as the interior of Unthank or the Institute. The "outside", which Lanark covets greatly while in the Institute, is merely a reflection, a simulacrum of some greater reality.

The above statements also collapse the distinctions between the "cities" (the Institute forms its own economic and social system, fulfilling the function of the metropolis as a homogenised whole), and this elision is further enhanced by the way in which Ozenfant is likened to Sludden in his reaction to Lanark's desire to "want the sun":

> "I'm leaving when I find a suitable companion."
> "Why?"
> "I want the sun."...
> "But you are no Athenian, no Florentine, you are a modern man! In modern civilisations those who work in the sunlight are a despised and dwindling minority. Even farmers are moving indoors. As for lovemaking and friendship, humanity has always preferred to enjoy these at night. If you wanted the moon I could sympathise, but Apollo is quite discredited."
> "You talk like Sludden." (78)

Here the future rulers of the two cities, Ozenfant over the "Institute", Sludden over Unthank, become entwined in much the same way that their political and economic relationship will come to be defined later in the text.

At the same time, Lanark is shown, once again, to be outside of the dominant preoccupations, his fixation on daylight something which emphasises the difference between country and city.

It is not only the temporal characteristics of the social milieu which lose any meaning but the spatial characteristics as well. This tendency reaches its conclusion with the merging of Glasgow and Unthank, and the merging of the "Council" and the "Institute" to form "The Ministry of the Earth". This conflation of the spatial terrain is indeed an eerie echo of Jameson's discussion of the Bonaventure Hotel in Los Angeles. If we recall the earlier discussion, Jameson regards this building as perhaps the ultimate expression of postmodern architecture. He writes that

> this mutation in space [the hotel] ... has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organise its immediate surroundings perceptually and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. (1992:44)

This is the nightmare vision of the world Lanark finds himself in. Named after a place, a geographical and spatial coordinate, he nevertheless finds himself without any means of locating himself (Lanark actually physically throws his map out of the train window before he arrives in Unthank [17]).• The answers of the doctor and the clerk to Lanark's spatial questions exclude the possibility of him finding a spatial orientation. This image of spatial confusion is again reiterated in the journey he and Rima

attempt from the "Institute" to Unthank, with their inability to traverse the landscape in a normal manner, culminating in the Intercalendrical zone where they pass the body of Rima ensconced in the past.

Munro frustrates Lanark's attempts at orientation:

> "And have you never heard how far and fast light travels? And how masses warp it and surfaces refract it? You have seen a city and think it in the future, a place to reach by travelling an hour or day or year, but existence is helical and that city could be centuries ahead. And what if it lies in the past? History is full of men who saw cities, and went to them, and found them shrunk to villages or destroyed centuries before or not built yet. And the last sort were the luckiest."
>
> "But I recognised this city! I've been there."
>
> "Ah, then it lies in the past. You'll never find it now." (60)

This statement with its emphasis on the impossibility of spatial and temporal orientation -- that light refracts, that existence is shaped like a spiral, and so on -- culminates in the assertion that history is unknowable, that if Lanark remembers something it is forever in the past. The resonances with Jameson's notion that the postmodern is that moment where history has slipped from our grasp are quite obvious here.

Nevertheless, the narrative turns this notion around, and interestingly it does this through the very notion of writing itself. Lanark comes to know history through the telling of his own story, the life of Duncan Thaw, and this is done not through his own memory, but through an Oracle. The positioning of the narrative of Thaw's life

in the middle of the narrative of Lanark's serves to conflate the two. As such, Books Three and Four are lent historical force through the linking of Lanark to a specifically Scottish/Glaswegian history. It is here where the history of Scotland comes to penetrate the fabric of the entire text, as we are forced to identify Lanark as historical figure.

It must be noted that although the text offers clues that point to the linking of Lanark with Thaw, it also serves to undermine these links. The correlations between the two are numerous. Both are marked by disease: asthma in the case of Thaw and "dragonhide" in the case of Lanark. In both cases their diseases function as means of identification. Thaw's narrative is obsessed with his fight against his disease, while for Lanark disease is part of the arbitrary power structures he must work within, a "more accurate" means of identifying people. The name Thaw itself reinforces this link. Lanark's disease is one of heat-retention, while "thaw" literally means to melt. Thaw's suicide, prefaced as it is by the possibility that he murdered someone, finds resonance in Lanark's recollection when he meets a woman at a party that he may have killed her. At the same time, Lanark's search for light echoes Thaw's search for love; each quest operates to establish an identity for the character.

These similarities are then undercut by the Epilogue, where Lanark has an audience with the Author. The Author tells him that

> The Thaw narrative shows a man dying because he is bad at loving. It is enclosed by your narrative which shows civilisation collapsing for the same reason. (484)

And in a footnote:

> But the fact remains that the plots of the Thaw and Lanark sections are independent of each other and cemented by typographical contrivances rather than formal necessity. (493)

Gray's rather obvious self-conscious device in the Epilogue does not, however, serve to diminish the impact the two narratives have upon each other. Rather, it serves to lend more force to the concerns of each. By having "the author" literally "saying" that the Lanark narrative encloses the Thaw narrative, the obviously historical concerns of the latter are lifted out of the relatively ahistorical context the author places them in, "a man dying", into the historical concerns over "civilisation dying".

It is in Books One and Two where the overtly political moments of the novel occur. The narrative moves through manifest displays of working class discontent, represented mostly by the figure of Coulter; unemployment, as represented by Thaw's own family; and poverty, seen in the problems Thaw has in acquiring the material support he needs to continue painting, and in the images of the children rummaging in the scrapheaps for discarded goods they can sell.

It is here, too, where the narrative displays a particular disjuncture between metropolis and countryside,

between "the sea", cut off by the "valley of roofs", and the city, between Scotland and England. The examples are numerous, but one particularly lengthy moment will suffice to illustrate this notion:

> Thaw felt bored and walked to the railings. He was sure he was going on holiday and that holidays meant the sea. From the edge of the playground's high platform he looked across the canal and the Blackhill tenements to remote hills with a dip in the middle. Looking the opposite way he saw a wide valley of roofs and smokestacks with more hills beyond. These hills were nearer and greener and so distinct that along a gently curved summit a line of treetops joined like a hedge and he saw the sky between the trunks underneath. It struck him that the sea was behind these hills; if he stood among the trees he would look down on a grey sea sparkling with waves. His mother shouted his name and he strolled towards her slowly, pretending he had not heard but was returning anyway. She adjusted the string of the gasmask which had got across his coat collar and was cutting the side of his neck, then made the coat sit better on his shoulders with tugs and pats which shook his head from side to side. He said. "Is the sea behind there? (130-131)

This passage shows the radical disjuncture between the city and what lies beyond it. Thaw's gaze is hindered in a number of ways. He is positioned behind railings, literally cut off from the countryside he is looking at. At the same time his view is not clear, each element of the surroundings being seen through the vestiges of the city's structures. The treetops are themselves "joined like a hedge", domesticated in a manner which brings them under the yoke of the spatial characteristics of an artificially "naturalist" perspective. Furthermore, Thaw is hindered by the gasmask around his neck, an intrusion

of a greater historical reality into his attempt to view that which lies outside the city.

Ultimately, it is not the sea which he glimpses through the trees, but, as his mother says, "...nothing but farms and fields. And England, eventually" (131). The disjuncture lies not between the city and the country, but between metropolitan England and Scotland. Thaw does indeed leave the city, but it is a journey prefaced by war -- a war which was England's -- and as such, only a temporary excursion. The object of Thaw's gaze lies ultimately in the structures which govern Scottish life, the cultural and political space of England which is beyond the farms and fields.

Thaw/Lanark's identity is a displaced one, one which acts as a cipher for a displaced national identity, but also a dis-placed postmodern identity. It is the loss of temporal and spatial co-ordinates within postmodernity which Gray's book maps, and as such, it is in this mapping of the present and its status as an "other" text, as a marginalised fiction, that Lanark finds its political force.

Lanark is certainly a "postmodern text", in the sense that it is stylistically consistent with both Jamesonian and Hutcheonian postmodernism. Yet, its political vigour is neither negated, Jameson's position, nor is it inherent, Hutcheon's position, as a result of that style. While Jameson is probably correct when he writes of Ragtime that it has no political potentialities,

restricted as it is to the centre, the very terms of his thesis disallow him from positing the same "judgement" on Lanark. Rather, the text finds its vigour in the mapping of a marginalised history, where an experience other to that of the centre is expressed in the centre's own terms.

3.2 Crossing the Bridge

I have attempted to show in the discussion of Gray's novel the ways in which the narrative problematises the very space of the city, and through that the separation between the metropolis and the margin. There is a constant tension, in Lanark/Thaw's attempts to create an identity for himself, between the city and that which lies outside of it. These tensions are seen particularly in Gray's representation of labour. The Unthankian version in particular seems to force a reinvestigation of the ways in which we negotiate the spatiality we find ourselves in. The space here is a Baudrillardian nightmare where labour has become a simulacrum of itself, where work seems to have no relation to production (Baudrillard,1975). This conception spans the entire social sphere, whether it be the ineffectual efforts of Lanark's political protests, the workers who are now merely "makers", or the seeming randomness of economic activity. These images resonate with the "other" narrative, the narrative which deals with a real and historical Glasgow, lending an even greater

force to the images of an abused and alienated working class.

In Banks's The Bridge questions of identity and subjectivity are as crucial to the workings of the text as they are to Lanark. The narrative "progresses" on a superficial level with the central character wandering through a mire of potential subjectivities. These potentialities are however formed outside of any recourse to a greater reality: the "I", known only as "Orr", is throughout the unfolding of the narrative literally removed from cognitive perception as he is in a coma following a near-fatal accident. As such, the quest for identity revolves around a number of synchronic interjections, through the form of dreams, delirious thoughts from the hospital bed, half-remembered incidents from his past, and what appears to be a reality of sorts, "life" on "the bridge".

With the exception of the dreams and the incidents from a "real" and lived existence, the novel is narrated in the present tense and by a first-person narrator. Thus, the text unfolds in a manner which would point to the seeming ahistoricity of the narrative: a series of fragmented temporal leaps, passing from one geographical and historical moment to another, interact with each other, ostensibly held together by the narrating figure of Orr. It is within each of these fragments that a subjectivity is evoked: each instance of the narrative becomes a structural explication of this or that identity.

Yet, these identities are further complicated by the structural relations which embody the very act of narration. Orr has lost all semblance of memory, making the central narrative perpetually present, merely a succession of arrested instances, each of which evokes, though not explicitly, a context born out of some form of descriptive positionality.

Furthermore, it is not only the narrating figure who is depicted as a disembodied or fragmented subject. All of the characters who drift in and out of the narrative are shown as having as tenuous a relationship with their subjectivity, are shown as occupying a position marked by some form of alterity: the engineer Brooke, who occupies a stable economic and social position, as well as being an insomniac, has no conception of either historical or metaphysical concepts; Abberlaine Arrol, representative of the moneyed and politically powerful on "the bridge" -- although all the inhabitants appear unaware of political or religious discourse (50,57,125) -- nevertheless acts against the interest of that position in her association with the fallen Orr; the Field Marshall's authority is undone through the otherness of his sexual activities; and none of the officials and bureaucrats Orr comes into contact with have any conception of any context outside of the mundanities of their work on "the bridge" or in the "Republic".

Dr Joyce, who appears at first to possess a stable and reliable identity, who appears as the antithesis to

Orr's dismembered historical past, is shown to be as unstable as Orr is. Thus, Dr Joyce, in the first descriptive instance, is shown in opposition to Orr:

> Dr Joyce is all pink and grey: grey fizzy hair, pink face, and mottled grey-pink arms and legs poking out from his grey shorts and shirt. His eyes, however, behind the gold-rimmed, chain-secured glasses,are blue: sharp, hard blue and set in his pink face like fragments of glass stuck in a plate of raw meat. He is breathing hard (I am not), perspiring profusely (I only broke sweat in the last point), and looking very suspicious (as I've said with good reason). (27)

The description of Dr Joyce places him in sharp contrast to Orr. The parentheses which describe Orr's circumstance here underscore the distinct differences between the two; the particular physical characteristics of Joyce -- hard breathing, perspiration, and the emotional state of suspicion -- are played off against the distinctive indifference (or lack) of any of these characteristics in Orr. At the same time, the conflation of "pink" and "grey", colours which evoke animation and oppression at the same time, point to the tenuousness of that very physicality. This is reinforced by the depiction of the doctor's eyes as "glass stuck in a plate of meat", where the eye-glasses come to stand for the eyes themself, where the physicality of sight is reduced to the physicality of the refracting object.

What occurs here is thus a conscious othering of Joyce in relation to Orr, a marginalisation which unsettles the structures which govern the relationship between doctor and patient, between the historically

constructed and stable, and the ahistorical and rootless, subjects. Joyce's position is further undermined by Orr's asides wherein he asserts that he is not telling the truth: "(I don't blame him really, this is all a pack of lies)" and "(A lie.)" (26, 27), and this notion is augmented by the fragmentary spatial position the doctor inhabits, where the location which determines what ideational power he has over Orr -- his consultation rooms -- is constantly re-positioned within "the bridge".

What these instances point to then is the continuous emphasis throughout the text on the instability of any lived subjective experience. Banks suggests both that the cultural present is a fragmented one, and also that the experience of the marginalised must form the basis for an investigation into the ways in which a real and lived subjectivity may function. The notion of marginalisation is analogous with Orr's situation in each moment of the text as an intruder within the space of the dominant social structure. This places Orr at the centre of a narrative where he forms a nucleus around which displaced networks of subjectivity function.

Nevertheless, whatever centre Orr occupies is constantly in conflict with other centres of interest, be they the bureaucratic structures on "the bridge" or in "the republic", or the political conflict seen in the otherness of his "real" history in Scotland. What is important then is that Banks does not offer an other centrality within which the marginalised may make "its"

way to full subjectivity; rather the text hints at the impossibility of such a position. The margins (which paradoxically operate as centres as well), are occupied by a host of characters who flit through the bureaucratic mire of an explicitly politically and culturally structured space, and are shown to be as unstable as any centre.

Let me make this clearer. While the novel makes its situation in the present distinctively felt -- through the asides which mention the cultural products and political events of its time, from music to popular fiction, from the Falklands War to the re-election of Margaret Thatcher-- it also evokes an emblematic effect within which larger struggles around identity must make their way. Orr is thus initially represented as a blank slate, a dismembered body onto which any identity may be placed:

> Pain. Circle of pain on chest. Like a brand, a circular impression (am I a figure on a stamp, postmarked? A piece of parchment embossed with 'From the library of.....'. Please complete:
>
> (a) God, esq
> (b) Nature (Mrs)
> (c) C. Darwin & Sons
> (d) K. Marx plc
> (e) All of the above)) (12)

Orr is described here in terms which emphasise not only his status as fragmented subject, but also the explicitly economic and political nature of that fragmentation. The subject is here depicted as structured by a number of competing discourses, each subscribing to a specific structure which is explicitly political and implicitly

economic in its effective deployment. This notion is again emphasised when Orr recounts the origin of his "name", given to him because of the circle on his chest (29).

It is around this notion of identity as fragmented that the text paradoxically grasps a coming into being of a subject. While the narrative begins with a depiction of confinement ("Trapped. Crushed. Weight coming from all directions, entangled in the wreckage..." [11]), of a space within which no awareness of any context is possible except that confinement, it ends with the evocation of a lived and full subjectivity, an expressly historical moment ("I have remembered my name" [288]). Crucially, this invocation is tied to the "real" existence of Orr as marginalised, is tied to his immediate historical context. What is crucial here is that while Banks offers a full and lived identity to Orr at the end of the novel, that identity is marked as provisional, as tied to a context which is precarious precisely because it is marginalised.

While the Orr who wanders through "the bridge" is one who is devoid of historical significance, the Orr who populates the lived reality of an existence in Scotland is clearly not devoid of the significance which accompanies that position. It is thus the identities which he is faced with on "the bridge" which ultimately and paradoxically inaugurate his struggle for the recuperation of that history.

Let me turn then to the ways in which the text structures that movement towards historical reclamation. The novel "progresses" in a manner which posits the seemingly realist instances of Orr's life on "the bridge" and his life in Scotland against the fantasies which encroach upon that "reality". "The bridge", as both a nominative formation for the socio-economic context Orr finds himself immersed in, and as a manifestation of his engagement with the landscape of his past, constitutes a structural link between the isolated narrative moments which inaugurate the varied identities within the novel.

"The bridge", as lived space or social structure, is portrayed in descriptive terms which emphasise an ahistoricity. Orr attempts to regain a semblance of historical memory through investigating "the bridge", yet that search proves fruitless:

> "I looked for records concerning the construction of the bridge and its original purpose; I looked for old books, newspapers, magazines, recordings, films; for anything which referred to any place off the bridge, or before it, or outside it; there's nothing. It's all gone. Lost, stolen, destroyed or just misfiled." (p.33)

"The bridge" appears in the text like Orr himself, as devoid of historical context and meaning. All that Orr can find out about the bridge is that it is "very big" (34). At the same time the nominative structure of "the bridge" forges a link between the ahistorical Orr and the historical subject prior to his memory loss; it forms an ideological coupling between the experience of a lived

marginality and the attempt to forge an autonomous identity in a larger global space.

The historical Orr appears obsessed with the physical structure of the Forth Bridge, a preoccupation which ties him to the landscape of Scotland, to "one of Scotland"s proudest moments" (194). It is the Forth Bridge which "had terribly impressed him as a boy", and it is the very same bridge which both acts as figure for his identity and as that which, to some extent, precipitates the loss of that identity (266). The symbol of the bridge is also tied to his relationship with Andrea. He sees her for the first time on "the North Bridge" (105), and later likens the colour of the Forth to the colour of her hair. The metaphorical construct of the bridge thus serves to hold the structure of the text together, allows the patterning of the different subjectivities to be felt as an overall effect of the text. This notion is again tied to Orr's socio-economic capacity: as an engineer he is involved in the economic effects of construction, placing an emphasis on his real historical experience in relation to the metaphorical trope. When Orr and Abberlaine Arrol consummate their relationship he feels as if he has "just fucked the bridge" (176), as if all of his actions are tied to "the bridge", as both social structure and metaphorical evocation.

It is important to note that the bridge as metaphor acts throughout merely on the level of structural analogon, not as a unifying structure that would bring

coherence or centrality to the narrative. The bridge, as at once an "imaginary" social structure and a component of historical landscape, operates as corollary to the prevailing investigation of identity as inextricably tied to a marginalised positionality. Because of these multiple possibilities Orr cannot discover anything of use about "the bridge"; all that is left to him is speculation:

> "There are three possibilities...The bridge is a link between landmasses...The bridge is a pier...The bridge has no connection with land whatsoever." (130)

His inability to restore his experience on the bridge to one of a lived historical moment is echoed by the "real" Orr's inability to cross the Forth Bridge. At first he and Andrea are unable even to see it:

> Sometimes, on good, really clear days, they would walk right to the end of the beach and climb the highest dune, because he was convinced they would be able to see the three long summits of the Forth Bridge....
> But they never did see it from there. (107)

When they do manage a journey to the Forth, they are prevented from crossing it by the number of people there, and so end up crossing by "the Kincardine Bridge" instead (194).

This notion of "crossing the bridge" is one which occurs in the dreams Orr relates. The most obvious one is the dream when he is forever attempting to traverse a river and the bridge merely moves with him (143-147).

Yet, the dreams occupy an ambiguous space within the text; they are constantly undermined by the uncertainty of their construction, undermined by Orr's insistence that he is fabricating them. What is crucial here is that the bridge as structural construct emphasises the crossing of borders, of spanning the space between two identities. Orr must literally "cross a bridge" in order to restore a full and lived subjectivity to himself. It is this which comes to stand as textual analogon for the reclamation of a Scottish identity, the reclamation of some form of authenticity which will necessarily agitate against a homogenised centre.

The instances of the text which deal with the "real" Orr's existence in Scotland again posit the identity he has here as an ambiguous one. It is the political position of Scotland which acts as overt manifestation of that uncertainty. Orr, as historically working-class, enters into the echelons of a higher socio-economic capacity, through his relationship with Andrea and through his "success" as an engineer. His association with Andrea marks an irruption of the socio-economic sphere, wherein he usurps the power of the dominant class. At the same time, his economic success is rendered ambiguous by his political assertions. While Orr becomes more financially successful, his political pronouncements remain against the rule of Thatcherite England over Scotland. So when the Conservative Party continues to lose elections in Scotland, yet continues to rule Scotland, Orr's

pronouncements on these (241, 246) lend an even greater historical import to the text. The "Devolution Referendum" is described thus:

> And Edinburgh might start to be a capital, albeit in a limited way, once again. Devolution was in the air. (237)

And later:

> The Fabulous Make-Your-Mind-Up Referendum was effectively, pochled -- rigged, in English. A lot of carpentry work on the old High School went to waste. (239)

Banks thus insinuates, and in rather an essentialist fashion, that the political and historical context of Scotland is one of a uniform marginalisation. Orr does not escape his original position as marginalised in his movement between different social classes. Again, it is "the bridge" as metaphorical trope which prefigures and contains these notions.

What Banks's text offers is a subjective potentiality, an opening up of a space within which the marginalised subject may move towards the possibility of a stable and autonomous identity. The text thus positions Orr as marginalised figure: he invades and upsets the stability of each interim context he finds himself in, while at the same time that context is determined by an already fragmented social structure.

Conclusion

POSTMODERN(?) POLITICS?

> They think the wretched deserve to suffer, or
> that their nation is curing -- not causing --
> these miseries, or that God, Nature, History,
> will make everything right one day.
> ---Alasdair Gray, Poor Things

How then are we to think of the postmodern text as political? In Hutcheon's terms postmodernism is working in terms which "de-naturalise" such traditional concepts as narrative forms tied to a beginning, middle and end, in terms which "de-naturalise" the way in which meaning is created and the uncomplicated relationship which exists between the text and the world. How then can texts which are involved with the "de-naturalisation" of historical narrative itself, be said to be political?

It is not sufficient to accept the Jamesonian answer that the dominant culture has lost its sense of history anyway, and therefore the ability to act politically; neither is it sufficient to accept the Hutcheonian claim that postmodernism is political anyway. Where both of these theories lose their way is in their inability to navigate questions of agency, an inability to negotiate the strong claims for the acquisition of a stable identity being made in the margins.

The answer seems to lie in the sense that the political is just one of those spheres which needs

reevaluation in the present we find ourselves in. As Andrew Ross puts it, in postmodernism, what is a political gain for some is not necessarily a political gain for everyone (1988:x). In these terms the notion of politics within postmodernism is immediately removed from the sole domain of the centre and placed within a framework which can begin to accommodate the margins.

Lanark and The Bridge, texts which occupy a provisional border, inside a dominant tendency within contemporary literature, outside the literary canon, ethnographic anomalies, would seem to find their political force precisely in this marginalisation. By bringing the concerns of a politically repressed history, that of Scotland, into representation, and by so doing, into history, Gray and Banks force a recognition of a tradition other to the dominant. As Chambers writes:

> At this point, tradition, historical memory, "roots', become important less for themselves, as though tokens of a vanished 'authenticity', and more as suggestive, active signs, stimulating a personal and collective confidence in assembling effective passages through the possibilities of the present. (1990:46)

As such, institutionalised practices and conceptions are necessarily forced into a position which demands, at the very least, the possibility of a cultural transformation. Indeed the crucial phrase in Chambers' formulation is that of "active signs", at once a stress on the textual nature of these transformations and on the recuperative moments which they must necessarily entail.

These texts, with their preoccupation with the disjuncture between writing and the world, their characteristically postmodernist concerns, and their overtly political stance, open up a space for the appropriation of the dominant cultural forms. As Andrew Ross puts it:

> That [postmodernism] has achieved such diverse cultural currency as a term demonstrates what has been seen as postmodernism's most provocative lessons; that terms are by no means guaranteed their meanings, and that these meanings can be appropriated and redefined for different purposes, different contexts, and, more important, different causes. (1988:xi)

Lanark and The Bridge are reinventing the struggles of the margins through an appropriation of the dominant forms of the centre. The "postmodern-ness" of the texts is thus not a debilitating one, but a vigorous interaction with and usurpation of the "cultural dominant". Gray and Banks paradoxically show us history in an ahistorical fashion, not in a chronological or teleological fashion, but in the only way we may come to know it, through the representation of a discrete moment.

What these texts offer is thus the recuperation of a repressed history and the opening up of a potential space within which that repressed history might become meaningful in the present. What is being asserted is that marginal identities do indeed exist and must of necessity make a claim for authenticity and stability, a claim which will of course upset the homogenising tendencies of a dominant centre.

It is in this sense that both of these novels restore autonomy to the locale which grounds their writing. In both texts Glasgow functions as the most significant historical space. Both novels emphasise the marginal and inert in their descriptions of the city. For Gray, and in the words of Thaw, Glasgow is an "insignificant" locale:

> "Then think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively.... Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the outside world. It's all we've given to ourselves. (243)

Here Glasgow is portrayed as expressly marginalised, as lifeless in relation to the great metropolitan cities. Gray's novel seeks precisely to create Glasgow "imaginatively", to portray it both to the centre and to its inhabitants, to place Glasgow in a historical continuum, as more than just "a statistic" (244).

Banks's text portrays Glasgow in the same light. It is:

> Ghost capital. Real city of varied stones, the great grey place of wynds and winds, old, new and festive by turns, between the river and the hills with its own stone stump, that frozen flow, that fractured plug of ancient matter which fascinated him. (101)

Glasgow is "ghost capital" until the "fascination" which Orr has with its history is resolved, until he begins to function as authentic and stable subject. The city is

described as "ghost capital", as "frozen" and fractured", precisely because of its marginalised location.

In restoring this locale to a populated and stable space, Banks and Gray offer an essential subjectivity, a subjectivity which can lay claim to a reclamation of political and historical moments. These subjectivities or identities are "essentialist" in the sense that they exist as an overall effect of the text, as a form of stable and autonomous singularity. Yet, the identities which populate these texts remain symbols for a provisional and potential marginal authenticity. This is where the texts manage to be both stylistically postmodern and politically engaged. The postmodernism of the fiction is thus not one which would be complicit with traditional postmodernisms' assault on the subject, with either Hutcheon's swathe of "de-naturalisation" or Jameson's sterile and debilitating simulacrum. It is in the practice of decentering the centre that these texts move progressively towards a substitutive action, an action within which the concerns of the marginalised must be rendered evident, an action which must call into question the homogenising precepts of a dominating cultural practice.

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