# HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

Hugvísindasvið

# Casting a Long Shadow

## *A Study of Masculinity and Hard Men in Twentieth-Century Scottish Fiction*

Jóhann Axel Andersen

Febrúar 2009

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**Enska**

# Casting a Long Shadow

*A Study of Masculinity and Hard Men
in Twentieth-Century Scottish Fiction*

**Ritgerð til M.A.-prófs**

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**SUMMARY**

The aim of this essay is to study the portrayal of flawed and destructive masculinity in twentieth-century Scottish fiction. Its thesis is that patriarchal images of manhood and mythical representations of the Scottish hard man have been instrumental in creating a perception of failed masculinity and the resulting identity crisis of male protagonists. The development of Scottish male characters throughout the century is studied in eight primary novels written between 1901 and 1993. Various secondary novels, texts and articles pertaining to the study of Scottish literature and/or gender studies are also used to emphasise the points being made.

The essay begins with a chapter on the overview of the history of Scotland, Scottish fiction, and the major thematic breakthroughs of men's studies in the twentieth-century. The focus is then turned towards the eight novels: George Douglas Brown's *The House of the Green Shutters,* John MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie,* Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Grey Granite,* James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines*, Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing!,* Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting*, Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice* and William McIlvanney's *Docherty.* Finally, the possible future of the hard man in Scottish fiction is briefly discussed.

The eight novels portray images of Scottish masculinity that have certainly developed and changed throughout the century. At first, the male protagonists are brutal small town patriarchs, but later they are succeeded by strong working-class figures. The post-war era brings about a significant change in society and culture and this is reflected in male characters in Scottish fiction becoming increasingly marginalised and alienated. It seems almost impossible for them to escape the flaws and failures of previous characters or to step out of their patriarchal shadow.

# CASTING A LONG SHADOW:
## A STUDY OF MASCULINITY AND HARD MEN
## IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SCOTTISH FICTION

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CASTING A LONG SHADOW

**A Study of Masculinity and Hard Men in Twentieth-Century Scottish Fiction**

**INTRODUCTION**

There is something about Scottish fiction, something that sets it apart, even from other British fiction, and makes it unique. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what makes it so interesting or why one experiences it as distinctly Scottish, but there is an unexplicable essence to Scottish fiction, especially twentieth-century fiction, which defines it as a whole and no single novel seems to fully escape it. This essence must certainly be in some way influenced by the Scottish past and its vibrant literary history as well as the social and cultural context and the variegated presentation of the Scots language, but something about it will never be fully explained. When reading a number of the most celebrated twentieth-century Scottish novels and searching for collective elements that seem to shape this unexplained essence, one cannot ignore the prominence of rigorous struggles, an identity crisis, harsh reality and gloom within the novels, nor the overwhelmingly salient male characters. Masculinity, powerful male protagonists and hard men play a distinctive role in the essence of twentieth-century Scottish fiction and that is why they were chosen as a research topic for this essay. The term 'masculinity' is certainly equally difficult to define as 'Scottishness' and the aim is not to present any universally conclusive truths about either, but simply to study how they have been portrayed in eight twentieth-century novels: George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901), John MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie* (1914), Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Grey Granite* (1934), William McIlvanney's *Docherty* (1975), James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice* (1987), Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer*

*Swing!* (1992) and Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993). There is a distinct pattern and evolvement of Scottish masculinity throughout the century which can be identified and expounded with these eight novels. During the first half of the century a hard but failed masculinity emerges and becomes almost like a burden that subsequent male characters cannot escape. Society, culture and gender roles undergo dramatic changes in the post-war era, but Scottish masculinity is left behind; the Scottish hard man becomes an anachronism and Scottish male characters experience dramatic identity crises. It is in fact the very nature of Scottish masculinity – the rigidity, pride and lack of emotion – that is to blame for its own downhill trajectory, but its prominence and value make its adoption for any twentieth-century character inevitable. Twentieth-century Scottish fiction portrays an image of flawed and destructive masculinity that is dominated by patriarchal images of manhood and mythical representations of the hard man, and which ultimately results in a masculine identity crisis.

Chapter 1

**Scottishness and Hard Manhood**

When studying literature one must constantly stay alert and open-minded to new aspects of literary criticism, theory and interpretation, as well as taking in all possible elements of intertextuality and cross-references to other works, even outside the genre in question. However, one must also aspire to narrow the study down to within a manageable boundary, adhering to certain criteria, in order to maintain a coherent argument without straying too greatly off target. It is thus imperative, right from the onset, to explain various decisions regarding such criteria which had to be made before the bulk of this essay's research was even started. Firstly, it must be established that a study of Scottish fiction over an entire century can only be done on a *pars pro toto* basis, and that the eight novels in question were selected because of their prominent male protagonists. The novels were not selected at random and thus it could be argued that the evident similarities between the characters are by no means arbitrary and that the eight novels were selected chiefly because of these similarities. This is, however, not the case. The main criteria for selecting the eight novels was to find strong, interesting and memorable male protagonists within the works of some of the most influential and important Scottish male novelists of the twentieth century. The Scottish literati have distinctly canonised some of these novels, and their creators have secured their place among Scotland's greatest writers. Therefore, the selection of the eight novels should not be contested too greatly when it comes to claims of similarities and evident validations of the main thesis. It must also be stated that various other novels are referred to alongside the eight chosen to further emphasise the conclusions.

Another important aspect of this essay, i.e. the question of gender, could also raise questions in regards to the selection of the novels. For instance, why is there not a novel by a female novelist among them or a novel with a prominent female protagonist for simple juxtapositions and in order to explore the differences, deviations and variances in emphasis? This is an important and valid question, which should rightly be raised by anyone reading the text, and must thus be duly confronted. First of all, it was a simple decision made from the start of the research that this would be a study of male characters and male authors by a male student. By narrowing the main focus of the study to a mere eight novels, it seemed imperative to select them wisely in order to gain as much insight as possible into the psyche of the Scottish hard man and to study the themes of masculinity and its development throughout the century. By straying from this restriction one could easily expose oneself to even more valid complaints about the selection. In other words, it would not be sufficient to include one novel about a hard man by a female novelist, in order to study the differences, without also including a novel with a female protagonist, which could lead to an even longer list of variegations to be studied, like female protagonists by female writers, male protagonists by gay writers, English male protagonists and so forth. The list could go on almost forever. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to restrict the study to the male protagonists of Scottish male novelists.

It must also be taken into account that male novelists and male protagonists have simply been more evident within Scottish literature (as well as globally), especially in the first half of the twentieth century. It is not a coincidence that the most memorable and important characters of the Scottish novel are male (the single most evident exception being Lewis Grassic Gibbon's impressive heroine, Chris Guthrie, of *A Scots Quair).* Gill Plain has even gone so far as to

claim that the Scottish male stands as the defining feature in the landscape of Scottish identity.[1] The question as to whether such a statement could refer to the writers or their characters will remain unanswered here and left to the reader to consider.

**Scottish History**

The prominent male characters under scrutiny in these pages did not of course appear out of thin air at the turn of the nineteenth century and a study of such proportions as this could not be complete without a short historical review of Scotland, Scottish literature and the theory of men's studies. Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that this is an essay on literature, not history or gender studies, and that the following historical elements are simply a minor reflection on the past in order to gain a better insight into the roots and origins of the themes under study, starting with the history of Scotland and Scottish fiction and concluding with an overview of the major thematic breakthroughs of men's studies.

The history of Scotland and Scottish fiction is extremely important to the development of the Scottish male characters, be it hard men or any other men. Their society, culture and surroundings are undeniably the most instrumental elements in defining their characteristics and it is meaningless to study the individual surroundings of each character and their intertwined influences without a basic overview of what exactly makes them 'Scottish.' Kurt Wittig's theory on literary studies can prove useful when explaining this importance:

> In the study of literature, we can concentrate on single writers and their
> work, or we can view literature itself in relation to the whole cultural

[1] Gill Plain, "Concepts of Corruption: Crime Fiction and the Scottish 'State,'" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 135.

trend, the thought, the moral, aesthetic and intellectual climate of the particular period to which it belongs. The first of these two ways of studying literature may throw light on the creative process and of the work of art as such; the second may give us a better understanding of literature as an expression of its own day and age.[2]

Both methods will be employed in this essay, as each of the eight novels will be closely examined to gain a better understanding of the major characteristics and each of the four main 'eras' will be studied with regard to changes in the cultural and social surroundings.

Before diving into the vastness of the past, trying to catch the tiniest embers of the most important historical elements, one might consider the very basic question of Scottishness *per se.* What exactly is Scottishness and how can one describe the Scottish character or Scottish identity? Such questions have been circulating among scholars for ages and they become even more interesting when it is taken into account that the Scottish have been under English rule for so long. Surely there must exist some kind of a Scottish essence - something one may call inherent Scottishness – or what? In Marshall Walker's comprehensive overview of Scottish literature since 1707 he warns that one must be on guard against the stereotypical perceptions of Scottish culture and familiar clichés such as these: "The Scot is tight-fisted, brutish, maudlin, canny, repressed, volatile, alcoholic, dourly religious, a complex barbarian worth exhibiting as one of the world's ethnic sideshows."[3] One must also be aware of Margery Metzstein's warning of there being a danger of creating a misleading homogeneity when discussing Scottish fiction: "of seamlessly combining and making

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[2] Kurt Wittig, *The Scottish Tradition in Literature* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 3.
[3] Marshall Walker, *Scottish Literature Since 1707* (London: Longman, 1996), 4.

indistinguishable diverse ingredients such as Scottishness, the history of Scottish literature – and gender."[4]

But what if one presumes, for argument's sake, that such a combining factor can in fact be found? Walker's stereotypical clichés are undoubtedly hyperbolic and closer to a joke than historical accuracy, but there is a seed of truth in every joke. The characteristics he describes as being Scottish clichés can be found in some form in all of the novels under study. This brings up the question of the relationship between fiction and reality, a subject vast enough for its own thesis, which seems to work both ways, i.e. that historical elements must somehow reflect fiction and vice versa. History has taught us that a society cannot exist without the inescapable foundation of the past and the same can be said about man himself: he can never escape his roots. This fact becomes most evident when it comes to artists, especially authors and poets, as literature has almost obtained a life of its own as an art form, with its own inescapable past, in which canonised writers and somewhat overly rigid rules and prerequisites about genres and narration have had an enormous impact on the form. No author can escape the influence of previous authors and thus the conclusion can be drawn that each and every author's characters are unavoidably influenced by the characters that preceded them.

The recent development of cognitive theory in literature deals with interesting aspects of the nature of text, fiction and authors. Cognitive theorists have claimed that there is no difference in kind between literary language and ordinary language, with the same point holding in other areas as well: "For example, literary plots are tighter versions of the tales we tell every day […]. More generally, for most cognitive scientists, there is no difference in kind between the

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[4] Margery Metzstein, "Of Myths and Men: Aspects of Gender in the Fiction of Janice Galloway," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 136.

practices of literature and those of ordinary thought."[5] Elements such as language, society and man's basic ways of thinking are not only influenced by the past, but also bound to it by an indestructible bond, and by applying the theory of the cognitive scientists to the development of Scottish male protagonists, and the hard man in particular, it seems evident that they were created by authors who were influenced by their time and age, as well as the work of writers preceding them, thus creating a bond between each of the characters they create and other characters preceding them. The shadows of the past can never be fully escaped and this becomes even more evident when it comes to the discussion of the most recent novels in question and the obvious influence of older works upon them. This link between past and present on the one hand and fiction and reality on the other has a fundamental role to play when it comes to the formation of national identity, as Cairns Craig has pointed out. It has even been argued that nations are nothing more than narratives and that national identities are in fact established, maintained and elaborated through the form of narrative art.[6] It is thus safe to say that Scottish identity is tremendously indebted to Scottish literature, as well as Scottish fiction being very indebted to the history of Scotland, and one is reminded of Robert Louis Stevenson's famous remark: "For that is the mark of the Scot of all classes: that he stands in an attitude towards the past unthinkable to Englishmen, and remembers and cherishes the memory of his forebears, good or bad; and there burns alive in him a sense of identity with the dead even to the twentieth generation."[7]

This is not the place for a detailed account of the history of Scotland, or a platform for heated discussions about turning back to the Picts in a quest for the

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[5] Patrick Colm Hogan, *Cognitive Science, Literature and the Arts* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 87.
[6] Cairns Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 10.
[7] Robert Louis Stevenson, *Weir of Hermiston*, ed. Catherine Kerrigan (1896; Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), 53.

true Scottish roots or about Roman and Gaelic influences on the nation, or even the division between Highlands and Lowlands. These are surely elements of extreme importance to the basic history of Scotland as a nation, as well as various other historical landmarks, but for the purpose of this essay the greatest importance is upon elements that must have served as defining factors of the Scottish way of life, the Scottish mentality and the infamous Scottishness (we will from now on presume that such a thing exists). These are the elements regarding the social and cultural background of the Scots that have influenced the development of the Scottish fictional characters significantly, both male and female.

The first important element to keep in mind is religion, an extremely powerful force when it comes to the moulding of any nation. The Scottish Church was under the rule of the Roman papacy until John Knox's Scottish Reformation in 1560, and whether it is true or not that Calvinism blighted the arts, its deep and longlasting influence on Scottish national culture cannot be ignored.[8] The question of whether Calvinism was the cause or effect of so much that is characteristically Scottish remains unanswered, but Wittig has claimed that many of the characteristics often attributed to it were already evident before the Reformation, i.e. the austerity, the readiness to argue with everyone (even God), the shrewdness and the mistrust, even of happiness.[9] Scotland has nonetheless been markedly fixated on matters of religion and the Calvinist inheritance, such as moral seriousness and distrust of complacency, has been an evident factor of Scottishness.[10] Edwin Muir also stated in 1948 that the influence of the Scottish church had been in general to encourage a spirit of criticism, leading to a country community where people were more critical of one another than they were in

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[8] Wittig, 126

[9] Ibid., 127.

[10] Walker, 34.

most other societies.[11] This could even be the origination of the tremendous envy that can be found in several degrees within the novels in question.

Religion in Scotland has certainly changed dramatically since the Reformation, and the battle between Episcopalian and Presbyterian parties for control of the church and the souls of the Scots has not only been a defining factor of their character but also of their division (further examined later). Christianity is still the dominant religion in Scotland, with over 40% of the population belonging to the Church of Scotland and over 20% belonging to the Roman Catholic Church or other Christian churches, according to the 2001 census.[12] The male protagonists and hard men of this essay are not particularly religious as such, but the aforementioned elements attributed to the strictness of Calvinism, especially mistrust, overblown pride and rigidity, are still evident and important characteristics in Scottish fiction of the twentieth century.

Another, perhaps even more defining, historical element to keep in mind relates to the relationship between Scotland and England and the fact that Scotland has for so long been ruled by the English. Not only does such a relationship affect the indigenous views on nationality and language, but it must surely also affect the very foundations of identity, in this case the essence of Scottishness. In order to presume such a standpoint one must of course fully renounce the universalistic claims about literature once made by liberal humanists, of demoting or disregarding "cultural, social, regional, and national differences in experience and outlook, preferring instead to judge all literature by a single, supposedly 'universal', standard."[13] Such an approach undermines the significance of each and every "colony's" culture, and emphasises the impact of

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[11] Edwin Muir, *The Scots and Their Country* (London, 1948), 10. Quoted in Christian Civardi, "The House with the Green Shutters: A Chapter of the Moral History of Scotland," *Recherches Anglaises et Americaines* (1972), 198.

[12] Scottish Government Statistics Homepage: "Analysis of Religion in the 2001 Census," Online 16 October 2008 at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20757/53570>

[13] Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 191.

non-independence. Scotland and England have a long and complicated history of wars and changing reigns, with the English claiming the throne and the Scottish fighting for independence as early as the thirteenth century. The most recent development in this matter is the Devolution and creation of a Scottish Parliament, as a result of the Scotland Act of 1998.[14] This means that Devolution was not a fact until after the creation of the latest of the eight novels in question, but some of the novelists (especially Lewis Grassic Gibbon and Irvine Welsh) include clear statements about nationalism and Scottish cultural pride in their novels.

But how exactly has the fact of the Union influenced Scottishness? It must be stated that unlike certain sections of the Irish people, the majority of the Scottish people did not feel that they were a subject race, forced to submit to another, alien domination.[15] Nevertheless, their status as a "colony" has other manifestations. Christian Civardi claims that the Scots lost their common foe with the Union of 1707, thus perverting their grim qualities of struggle, which could now only be expressed within the bounds of small communities:

> Pride and individualism were turned into envy and censoriousness, and singleness of purpose became sheer stubbornness. […] Unlike the English, who could always struggle up the ladder of social, religious, military or political hierarchy, the Scots had no hierarchy to climb, they did not have a vast enough field on which they could vent their pride. When individualism, pride, poverty, and the Calvinist equalitarian dogma were combined within the bounds of small

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[14] "Scotland Act 1998," Office of Public Sector Information. Online 16 October 2008 at: <http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1998/ukpga_19980046_en_1>
[15] James Barke, "The Scottish National Question," *The Left Review* 14 (1936)*,* 739.

communities, they fostered rampant and all-corrupting greed and envy.[16]

This effect of the Union is evident in the first novels in question, which were written at the turn of the century, where subjects such as pride, greed, stubbornness and envy are the part and parcel of their protagonists' characterisation.

The Union also had a deep impact on two extremely important attributes to every nation, namely language and a sense of identity. English was installed as the official language in Scotland after the Act of Union and there followed "an attempt to remove supposed 'Scotticisms' from polite, educated and empowered discourse, as exemplified by James Beattie's *Scotticisms Arranged in Alphabetical Order, Designed to Correct Improprieties of Speech and Writing* (1787)."[17] Naturally there also followed a Unionist myth and low estimate of Scots culture, with ridiculous assertions being made about the Scots being a backward and barbarous nation that had been saved by the Union.[18] Distinct Scottishness regarding language and culture was thus put down by the "colonizers", leading to further damage to the Scottish identity, but also enabling the Scots to empower themselves by fighting for said Scotticism, making it a gesture of pride and strength to speak any version of Scots instead of the politically correct English. Numerous poets and novelists have written in various forms of Scots instead of English – a gesture that can often be attributed to national pride regarding the language – and the intentional use of different forms of Scots and English within a single novel (which Irvine Welsh has mastered) is a much discussed and highly

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[16] Civardi, 197.
[17] Aaron Kelly, *Contemporary British Novelists: Irvine Welsh* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 21.
[18] Walker, 31.

important factor of the Scottish novel, whereas Scottish novelists and poets are in a way regaining the dignity of the Scottish language by these exercises.

The sense of identity must have suffered a similar onslaught as the language after the Union, when Scotland "finally lost [its] nationhood."[19] Such a situation leads the "colony" towards a doubled, hybrid or unstable emphasis on identity, as pointed out by postcolonial critics,[20] which can have both negative and positive effects on the nation. Craig claims that the imagination in Scotland is neither real (having been maimed by Calvinism) nor effectively national due to Scotland's failure to maintain a continuous identity as a modern nation,[21] but Patricia Horton has a more positive approach to the subject, refusing to read motifs like duality, division and fracture simply in negative terms or as symptoms of deformity. She frames them in a more dynamic and fluid concept of identity, where Scotland moves from being a passive victim to being seen as an active agent in the construction and deconstruction of its own identity,[22] even applying Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection to support her theory.[23] This undeniable duality seems to permeate Scottish literature on various levels, eventually leading to the coining of the phrase Caledonian Antisyzygy by G. Gregory Smith in *Scottish Literature, Character and Influence* (1919). The phrase was later immortalised by the poet Hugh MacDiarmid and it most likely means ambivalence, ambiguity or dialogic. No one knows for sure what it means exactly, but a twenty-first-century retrospective reading might boil it down to "the difference between the culture of a nation-state and the culture of a stateless nation, within both of which the people

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[19] Walker, 29.
[20] Barry, 195.
[21] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 21.
[22] Patricia Horton, "Trainspotting: A Topography of the Masculine Abject," *English: The Journal of the English Association,* 50:198 (Autumn 2001), 220.
[23] Kristeva's theory is defined in her book *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982).

of Scotland live."[24] Walker claims that the term means "the conjunction of opposites" and that it was Smith's purpose to apply it to Scottish life and culture.[25] Whatever the exact meaning of the word may be, it will become useful to apply it in this essay as an expression of the duality of the Scottish, which is evident within their literature, and will often be brought to mind as the hard men are studied more closely. The most classic examples of Scottish duality within fiction are Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and his account of the Durie brothers in *The Master of Ballantrae* (1889) as well as James Hogg's experimentations with the doppelgänger Gil-Martin in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* (1824). Emma Tennant's *The Bad Sister* (1978) and *The Two Women of London* (1989) add a late twentieth-century feminist twist to these themes, while another recent example is Irvine Welsh's Bruce Robertson from the novel *Filth* (1998). The idea of the Caledonian Antisyzygy is probably best extolled, however, in *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle* (1926), MacDiarmid's *magnum opus*, where he deals with the issues of Scotland's duality, its constant state of change and the riddle of its identity:

> I'll ha'e nae hauf-way hoose, but aye be whayr
> Extremes meet – it's the only way I ken
> To dodge the curst conceit o' bein richt
> That damns the vast majority o' men. [26]

## Scottish Literature Before the Twentieth-Century

The aforementioned historical elements have surely been instrumental in the birth and development of the hard man's characteristics, but the literary historical elements are even more fundamental. The Scottish hard man was not a self-

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[24] Michael Gardiner, *From Trocchi to Trainspotting: Scottish Critical Theory since 1960* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 19.

[25] Walker, 14.

[26] Hugh MacDiarmid, "A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle" (1926), in *Scottish Literature in the Twentieth Century: An Anthology,* ed. D. McCordick (Dalkeith: Scottish Cultural Press, 2002), 325.

generated or spontaneous creation of George Douglas Brown. As stated earlier, the novelist can never escape his roots, neither historical nor literary historical, and traces of the antecedents and background of the Scottish hard man, who became such an eminent and determinate figure in the twentieth century, can be found in earlier Scottish writings. Even though the examples and information provided here are by no account the result of a comprehensive study of such a background, they should provide indications of the novelists' own influences, in regard to the highlights of Scottish literature, and therefore an insight into the literary conception of the Scottish hard man. It has in fact been stated that the most salient theme of modern Scottish literature is Scotland itself – the *prima facie* evidence being that Scottish writers are without any doubt more concerned with being Scottish than for example English writers are concerned with being English, or Canadian writers with being Canadian.[27] This theme has been evident throughout the entire history of Scottish literature and can in part be explained by the struggle for identity. Scottish literary criticism has also been deeply troubled throughout the twentieth century by the very questions of national authenticity, such as whether a coherent Scottish literary tradition exists despite the loss of statehood, how unmistakably 'Scottish' the Scottish literature is, and finally what exactly makes the Scottish literature so essentially different, if that is in fact the case?[28] Yet again the Caledonian Antisyzygy seems to be in full effect, since it cannot even be established what makes 'Scottish' fiction 'Scottish.' It is therefore quite complicated to pinpoint exactly which factors of the literary history and the infamous 'Scottish*ess*' have interacted with one another.

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[27] David McCordick, "Introduction to Modern Scottish Literature," in *Scottish Literature in the Twentieth Century: An Anthology,* ed. David McCordick (Dalkeith: Scottish Cultural Press, 2002), 7.
[28] Berthold Schoene, "Going Cosmopolitan: Reconstituting 'Scottishness' in Post- devolution Criticism," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature,* ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 9.

Despite such difficult questions being raised within the very study of Scottish literature and its history one can always look for the answers to more basic questions regarding the subject. For example how the Scottish hard man has come to be via the history of literature. S.J. Boyd has traced the beginnings of the Scottish macho-attitude all the way back to the Roman historian Tacitus, who once wrote about the Caledonians being the finest flower of manhood of the British Isles.[29] It is perhaps a bit far-fetched to trace the defining factors of Scottish masculinity back to the first century but the image of this archaic Caledonian hard man is entertaining nonetheless. Wittig's approach is a tad more down to earth, but he states that the Scottish tradition in literature begins with *The Bruce* by John Barbour, written in the late fourteenth century. Barbour's poem was an attempt to commemorate the heroism of the Scottish nation, as the national existence was in jeopardy, in order to preserve it and to inspire patriotism.[30] Furthermore, Barbour's Robert the Bruce (King of the Scots 1306-1329) was level headed, prudent, canny and shrewd - a great leader, ruler and general.[31] *The Bruce* thus proudly stands as the first example of the strong and canny Scotsman as hero in Scottish literature. Another important development of the Scottish character was brought about by Robert Henryson in the fifteenth century, for he was the first poet in Europe to emphasise the dignity of the common man.[32] Such an appeal to the common folk, often revolving around male heroes and heroism, was evident from the fifteenth century onward and the plight of the common man, particularly the working-class man, had become an even more prominent theme in the first half of the twentieth century. The first steps towards the development of the prudent and canny Scotsman as well as the

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[29] Tacitus, *Agricola* (ca. 98). Quoted in S.J. Boyd, "'A Man's a Man': Reflections on Scottish Masculinity," *Scotlands* 2 (1994), 98.

[30] Wittig, 12.

[31] Ibid., 29.

[32] Ibid., 53.

common man, later to become the working-class man, were thus taken quite early.

There seems to have been a rather slow time in Scottish literature between the Reformation and the Union of 1707, but a revival of Scots poetry was seen in the eighteenth century. However, there were some important elements to be found in the poetry before that time, namely the way poets often utilised grotesque irony, absurdity and grim humour to deal with their subjects. Even the love poetry is not memorable for the conventional effusion of tender feeling, but much rather the Scottish inclination for chariness when it comes to the expression of tenderness.[33] This Scottish inhibition, scarcity of expressed emotions, borderline fear of feelings and even full-blown apathy and cold-heartedness are among the key elements of the hard man's characteristics and the interplay between grotesque absurdity and emotional lethargy can be quite interesting, not only as a characteristic, but also as further evidence of classic Antisyzygy.

The grim humour is still among the major traits of Scottish poetry in the eighteenth century but according to Wittig the shrewdness has become almost businesslike and the mocking spirit has gained a pride of place with satire taking on its keenest edge.[34] Perhaps when Scotland lost its independence the Scots themselves vented their underlying frustration towards their 'rulers' by becoming cynically mistrustful of all that is grand and high-sounding. The most influential poet of the late eighteenth century was undoubtedly Robert Burns, who had his finger right on the pulse of the common people and inherited a great deal from past Scottish literary tradition, such as mock elegies, violent satires, poems of

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[33] Wittig, 119-120.
[34] Ibid., 138.

country fairs, folk life and amusement, including drinking songs.[35] Drinking and violence later become increasingly salient in the twentieth century and are among the first words that spring to J.S. Boyd's mind when he contemplates the notion of Scottish masculinity.[36]

When it comes to Scottish literary history it is safe to say that the nineteenth century started with a bang – namely the advent of one of Scotland's most famous and celebrated novelists, Sir Walter Scott. His historical novels, such as *Waverley* (1814), *Rob Roy* (1817), and *Ivanhoe* (1819) have long since secured their place in the Scottish canon and Scott must be duly noted as one of the most influential Scottish novelists of all times. It could be argued that his highly romantic historical novels are miles apart from modern Scottish novels, but certain elements of Scott's fiction are crucial to the development of numerous basic themes highlighted within these pages. Scott often worked with patterns of opposites and many of his protagonists (predominantly male) were moderate men propelled into a conflict generated by historical forces.[37] His real hero is the people, history's irrepressible constant: the ordinary folk who win in the end.[38] He viewed human nature "against the background of the historic past, and tried to interpret it in terms of a man's own family's, church's and nation's traditions. […] Man, to Scott, is no chance being, but a part of the organic life of the community, and he makes us see how the action and fates of men are moulded by their society and its history."[39] This unmistakable link between man and his society and the profound effect that society can have upon a man's character are recurring literary themes in the twentieth century, evident in all the novels in question, perhaps most distinctly in *The House with Green Shutters* and *Docherty.* Again,

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[35] Wittig, 199-205.
[36] Boyd, 99.
[37] Walker, 130.
[38] Ibid., 136.
[39] Wittig, 223.

one is reminded of the unavoidability of the past and its effect upon society as well as literary characterisation when Alan Bold claims that to Scott (and lesser Scots) "the past was a meaningful experience, not an escapist fantasy or a Gothic extravaganza. Scottish history – with its broken men, crushed ideals, and lovingly remembered defeats – was the stuff which Scottish dreams and nightmares dotes on."[40] Furthermore, Scott was troubled by the question of identity and Edwin Muir stated that he was torn between disparate dialects and contradictory polarities of Scottish culture, which remained pinioned between Englishness and Britishness.[41]

But Walter Scott was not the only nineteenth-century writer and novelist of importance to the Scottish tradition. Others worth mentioning are the half-Scottish Lord Byron and Thomas Carlyle, who held up the torch of the Anglo-Scots, while Scottishness was being further explored by writers such as James Hogg and John Galt. These were among the main representatives of the first half of the century while the latter half was undeniably dominated by Robert Louis Stevenson. Stevenson sought deeply into the foundation of his Scots inheritance, mainly the duality and ambiguity closely related to the Scottish combination of religiosity and terror, which has allowed critics to claim a deeply Scottish genesis for many of his stories,[42] and surely such an ardent loyalty to Scottish roots must be found within his entire *oeuvre.* It should also be mentioned that when Scottish writing in the eighteenth and nineteenth century is juxtaposed, one finds that while the former century was enlightened, reasoning and sure of itself, the latter was opinionated, impetuous and unsure, as well as growing in cultural neurosis

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[40] Alan Bold, *Modern Scottish Literature* (London: Longman, 1983), 101.
[41] Kelly, 16.
[42] Roderick Watson, Introduction to Robert Louis Stevenson's *Shorter Scottish Fiction* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1995) vi-vii.

and self-doubt.[43] This should be kept in mind when the first novels of the twentieth century are examined more closely.

Now, as the forbearers and inescapable influences of the past have been recounted, one should be able to take a closer look at the very factors of Scottishness that have been developing and taking shape through the centuries, in order to understand the hard man's origins as well as the essence of Scottish masculinity. It is interesting that so many of the most beloved Scottish poets and novelists were in fact writing about the common people on the one hand and strong, shrewd and proud men on the other, while dealing with issues of puritan religion, duality, nationality and especially identity. Perhaps the overblown machismo that can be found within the core of the hard man is simply a result of these elements. When the mythology of the urban hard man (especially examined in the chapter on *Docherty)* is studied more closely it becomes evident that his basic characteristics of toughness and pride are in fact a carefully delineated perversion of his core culture. "The Hard Man may be a 'winner' in the sense of exhibiting and benefiting from the supposedly progressive characteristics that typify western capitalist culture, but his victory is really Pyrrhic – enacted on a stage that is only a netherland of the real world, condemned by oppression to remain apart from it."[44] The same can be said about the very image of the hard man in the twentieth-century novel as a whole. The shrewd, proud and apathetic man tries to gain control over the microcosmic realm of the twentieth-century Scottish novel while the image of the Scotsman outside this realm, in the wider literary world, is much closer to the caricature or clichés of the tight-fisted, drunken and somewhat comical brute.

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[43] Walker,165.

[44] Ian Spring, "Image and Text: Fiction on Film," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies,* eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 211.

Before changing gears and turning our attention from the history of Scottishness to an overview of the history of men's studies, one important point relating to both areas of study must be attended to, namely the significance of the predominance of male authors in Scotland. They are themselves stuck within a tradition of male dominance amongst authors and protagonists and, as the hard man evolved, to become a somewhat overwhelming character he managed to bully the writers and their own creations just as he bullied those around him within the world of fiction. MacDiarmid praised the hard men and dour-drinkers of Glasgow, men with granite features, and placed himself very pointedly among them.[45] Others had to do the same, to some extent, and place themselves among the hard men, in spirit if not physically. Scottishness seems obviously interrelated with the hard man and one can imagine how difficult it must have been for modern novelists to break free from his looming shadow. Berthold Schoene has stated that any work of literature "written by an author born or bred in Scotland will inevitably be vetted for traces of a distinctive, typical Scottishness to see if it merits incorporation into the canon of Scottish national literature."[46] This could not only apply to the fundamental issues of identity or duality defined earlier but also the impending figure of the hard man as well as other doughty, masculine figures. Zoë Strachan wrote an entertaining description of the options facing the modern Scottish writers and the close link to the inescapable Scottish themes: "Some writers leave home, others enjoy the sensation of being a big fish in a small pond, and still others nurture a curious love-hate relationship with their muse, a muse they may sometimes want to kick in the balls, if I may gender Scotland as

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[45] Boyd, 106.

[46] Berthold Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men: Literary Masculinities from* Frankenstein *to the New Man* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), 103.

masculine for a moment."[47] When the history of Scottish literature is put in perspective it comes as no shock that Strachan wishes to gender Scotland as masculine, and Scottish literature can thus provide various interesting subjects pertaining to the field of men's studies as well as literary theory.

**Masculinity**

The study of literature can easily lead any student to innumerable fields of study and theories regarding any thinkable science pertaining to the subject matter at hand. Sometimes these different fields of study can easily be adapted in literary theory in order to gain a better understanding of the subject as well as proving useful when it comes to gathering evidence to support one's theses. When it comes to a study of certain stereotypical gender-elements within any type of literature one cannot ignore the importance of the field of gender studies. This particular student was completely unversed in the science of gender studies before work began on this essay but the following exposition should prove useful to the reader and the lack of in-depth knowledge of the sciences will hopefully be excused. Such an extremely gender-oriented subject as masculinity and hard men could never be adequately explored without a basic understanding of important theories regarding masculinity and a humble glance at the vast and progressive field of men's studies. This is, of course, an obviously political field that should be entered with caution, and the application of men's studies within these pages has only one function: to reach for a deeper understanding of literary characterisation with a fundamental exploration of what exactly makes a man, more specifically what exactly makes a hard man. Such questions can never lead to clear-cut and conclusive answers but the field of men's studies can certainly

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[47] Zoë Strachan, "Is that a Scot or am Ah Wrang?" in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 51.

prove helpful when it comes to analysing elements regarding social status, psychological reasons for certain behaviour and the gender-oriented inner struggle of the Scottish hard man.

One important fact must be acknowledged before the summary of what men's studies are and how they pertain to a literary stereotype such as the Scottish hard man. Berthold Schoene, an expert in the field of literature and gender studies, has remonstrated against the difficulties in getting male students to study the representation of masculinity in fiction. It seems easier for them to write about the representation of women and feminist theories, almost as if they are somehow withholding the patriarchy by protecting masculinity.[48] The underlying reason could be that men have been encouraged and authorised to cultivate a kind of gender-specific lack of self-knowledge and have thus found themselves "systematically incapacitated to behold and scrutinise, let alone enunciate, the condition of their singularly engendered interiority."[49] It was thus imperative for the entire field of gender studies that men responded to the predominance of feminism within gender studies and this approach will be utilised when it comes to the gender study of the eight novels; i.e. the hard men will be scrutinised through the eyes of a male student and any references to gender-specific elements will be restricted to men's studies, hopefully with as little feminist input as possible. Surely a counterbalance to feminism should be considered ideal in these pages when Schoene's words are taken into account. Furthermore, the field of men's studies manages to support the selection of the novels, i.e. including only male authors, as it is simply a fact, well known within gender studies, that no author can escape his or her own gender and that a male author's female characters are always a result of a male mind envisaging the

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[48] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, viii.
[49] Ibid., ix.

female, and vice versa.[50] This is further evidence of the importance of selecting only male authors, as they are bound to envisage and present the essence of the hard man in its purest form.

However, as Brod and Kaufman have pointed out, it must be kept in mind that there is a growing recognition within the field of critical men's studies of not studying masculinity in the singular, as if the very essence of manhood were something homogenous and unchanging, but rather emphasising the plurality and diversity of men's "experiences, attitudes, beliefs, situations, practices, and institutions, along lines of race, class, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, age, region, physical appearance, able-bodiedness, mental abilities …"[51] and various other categories with which they describe their lives and experiences. Hearn and Collinson have listed similar items as sources or references of identity that cut across notions of unified masculinity, adding fatherhood and relations to biological reproduction, leisure, marital and kinship status, size and the question of whether a man is violent, militant or a sissy.[52] Therefore, it should be clearly stated that any conclusions regarding masculinity within the pages of the eight novels in question are nowhere near being universal truths about the nature of men, as no such thing could possibly exist, and that the eight protagonists are a very diverse group of individuals if all the aforementioned criteria regarding men's identity are taken into account. In fact, the only elements they all share are being Scottish and Caucasian. There is an entire century between them as well as a difference in age, class, marital status, mind, bodily facility, etc. It could be stated that all of them were heterosexual if it were not for the ambiguity surrounding

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[50] Berthold Schoene, "Alan Warner, Post-feminism and the Emasculated Nation," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 258.

[51] Harry Brod and Michael Kaufman, "Introduction," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod and M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 5.

[52] Jeff Hearn and David L. Collinson, "Theorizing Unities and Differences Between Men and Between Masculinities," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod and M. Kaufman (California: Sage,1994), 109.

Renton's sexuality in *Trainspotting.* Any claims regarding the essence and nature of the hard men should thus be taken with a certain grain of salt and an open-mindedness to harmless generalisations is required in order to understand the Scottish hard man of the twentieth century as having homogenous elements that persist throughout the century, much to the chagrin of the characters inheriting these traits, especially in regard to social and emotional development.

## Men's Studies

Even though it is safe to say that a gender struggle has to a certain extent followed mankind throughout history, it is convenient to start this short historical overview of men's studies at the age of Reason or Enlightenment in the seventeenth century, when the dominant image of masculinity became firmly established and identified with a particular conception of reason. Thenceforward, men have taken control of the public world and defined the meaning of humanity in terms of reason, for centuries silencing the voices of women, as their experiences were identified as lacking reason and being closer to nature.[53] These identifications became almost like a cornerstone of our modern society and have ever since been visible in numerous aspects of society, including literature, as it cannot be denied that the full value and estimate of female authors was not justly respected until the twentieth century. The consequences of such rigid classifications and reservations of patriarchy did not only suppress women but it also embedded the masculine identity within a certain ideal. Such factors of masculinity can be traced even further back to the Reformation, where a certain conception of masculinity, identifying it with notions of self-control, was formed.[54] In the Victorian era the popular cultural ideals meant separating men and women

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[53] Victor J. Seidler, *Rediscovering Masculinity: Reason, Language and Sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1989), 14.
[54] Ibid., 45.

into two diverse social worlds, where men inhabited a public sphere while women inhabited a more private sphere, and certain biologists even assumed that male and female reproductive capacities substantiated the division, illuminating the difference between the sexes. The theory was that males were active and independent while females were passive and dependent on males for completion.[55] Furthermore, this lead to the "infamous" division of the home, where caring and nurturing became the woman's domain even though the home was physically dominated by the man - the consequences of which will become especially evident when *The House with the Green Shutters* is studied more closely.

The first attempt to create a social science of masculinity, centred on the idea of the male sex role, can be traced back to these preconceptions of gender and nineteenth-century debates about sex difference "when resistance to women's emancipation was bolstered by a scientific doctrine of innate sex difference. Women's exclusion from universities, for instance, was justified by the claim that the feminine mind was too delicately poised to handle the rigours of academic work."[56] Such so-called "scientific" conclusions are of course ridiculous today but nevertheless they mark the beginning of a scientific approach to gender and sex difference. A more useful and concrete approach to these studies emerged at the turn of the twentieth century when Freud founded the revolutionary depth psychology, which was vital for the first sustained attempt to build a scientific account of masculinity.[57] Many of Freud's most famous theories have become the benchmark of psychoanalytic criticism of literature and when his innovating contribution to the development of men's studies is added to the

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[55] Michele Adams and Scott Coltrane, "Boys and Men in Families: The Domestic Production of Gender, Power and Privilege," in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities,* eds. M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn and R.W. Connell (California: Sage, 2005), 231.

[56] R.W. Connell, *Masculinities: Second Edition* (Cambridge: Polity, 2005), 21.

[57] Ibid., 8.

equation one cannot deny his importance to the critical approach of gender in literature, as well as the "detours" of his theories headed by his colleagues and successors within the psychoanalytic movement.

Freud's famous theories about elements such as the Oedipus complex and castration anxiety are highly important when it comes to the male psyche, even though they have become somewhat hackneyed in literary criticism, and his theories should always exist somewhere at the back of one's mind when studying paternal or maternal confrontations in literature. Two other important steps that Freud took in his analysis of masculinity was firstly the development of an architectural approach to gender, which was given full play within his famous case history of the Wolf Man, and secondly his account of the structure of personality, especially the concept of the super-ego that judges, censors and presents ideals.[58] These groundbreaking theories in psychology have had an enormous effect on all following studies of gender and masculinity, as well as the basis of psychoanalytic criticism, and even though Freud never wrote a formal account of masculinity *per se* his material related to the subject is abundant because he never stopped wrestling with issues regarding gender.[59] One of the points he most insistently made was that masculinity could never exist in a pure state, as layers of emotions constantly contradict each other and each personality is complex and shade-filled instead of being a transparent unit. When this theory is combined with the Caledonian Antisyzygy one might assume that all the duality and contradiction would make it a Sisyphean task to make any assertions about the nature of the Scottish hard man, but surely that simply makes the task and the thesis even more enjoyable.

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[58] Connell, *Masculinities*, 9.
[59] R.W. Connell, "Psychoanalysis on Masculinity," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod and M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 12.

Freud's disciples took over the torch of masculinity studies, carrying it into their own realm, and the Australian social scientist R.W. Connell has written a comprehensive and useful overview of their work. She justly names Jung as one of the major torchbearers as he argued that the feminine interior of masculine men was shaped by each man's life history and the inherited archetypal images of women, and he also devised a kind of masculine therapy where men could speak to their *anima* (feminine inner personality) in order to educate it and repress their fear of weakness. Alfred Adler and his ideas on radical psychoanalysis were also important to the field of men's studies, especially those regarding his views on the familiar polarity between masculinity and femininity. He claimed that the feminine side of the polarity was devalued in culture and associated with weakness. As children of both sexes are weaker than adults they are forced to inhabit the feminine position and male children begin to doubt their ability to achieve masculinity, leading to an adult neurosis and anxiety, which motivates a 'masculine protest' in the form of an exaggerated emphasis on masculinity and machismo that can lead to aggression and relentless striving for triumph. The torch was then handed to Erich Fromm who wrote catalogues on masculinities and the conditions that produce them and published them in *The Fear of Freedom* (1942) and the collective work *The Authoritarian Personality* (1950). Fromm suggested that a broad historical succession of character types could be found over the centuries and that masculinity was closely linked to economic and cultural settings. This link between masculinity and setting becomes evident when the protagonists of the eight novels are studied more closely and it is quite clear that any novel's setting is a major influential factor on the masculine character. The psychological aspects of gender studies took another turn with the work of Jacques Lacan, who focused on symbolic

processes and stated that the 'Law of the father' *constituted* culture. According to

his theory masculinity was not some kind of empirical fact (as in the more

classical psychoanalysis) or an eternal archetype (as Jung had claimed) but

much rather the occupant of a *place* in symbolic and social relations, wherein the

possessor of the phallus was central.[60] The psychoanalytic movement has also

provided rich documentation of the diverse paths the construction of masculinity

can take,[61] and various further important studies of masculinity and numerous

intricate theories have been put forward, but the above-mentioned major theories

will have to suffice for the purpose of this essay. They will not be used specifically

throughout the exploration of the Scottish hard man but they should nevertheless

be considered when questions of basic characteristics are raised. Factors such

as castration anxiety, feminine/weak sides of men, the 'masculine protest', the

importance of cultural setting on male character and symbolism pertaining to the

phallus are recurrent in the eight novels and the importance of the psychoanalytic

movement upon men's studies as well as literature is simply irrefutable.

Various other approaches to masculinity studies have also been applied

within social sciences over the years, stimulated by Men's Liberation and sex role

psychology, where the key element is "the evidence of diversity and

transformation in masculinities provided by history and ethnography."[62] When the

feminist movement gained strength and literally exploded onto the scene in the

1970s it was concluded that some sort of 'men's history' was needed to

reciprocate. It had to be something different than the highly masculine academic

historical writings of the past. It had to be the history of the *idea* of masculinity, or

the history of the male role. This lead to countless writings and studies on the

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[60] This overview of the major contribution of the psychoanalitic movement on men's studies is based on
R.W. Connell's  *Masculinities,* pp. 8-21.
[61] Connell, "Psychoanalysis on Masculinity," 33.
[62] Connell, *Masculinities*, 27.

subject and it is clear from these studies "that definitions of masculinity are deeply enmeshed in the history of institutions and of economic structures. Masculinity is not just an idea in the head, or a personal identity. It is also extended in the world, merged in organized social relations."[63] It should also be noted that despite research and theories to the contrary, "most people continue to conceive of gender differences as innately given, reflecting some underlying essential dichotomy between men and women."[64] The biological, essentialist distinction between the sexes can, of course, never be refuted but most of the postmodern gender-scholars claim that a clear-cut difference in basic instinctive psychological traits is either non-existent or fairly small and should therefore mainly be traced to social situations and sex-roles, where masculinity is psychosocially created. The character traits of the Scottish hard man are thus evidently deeply rooted within his cultural and societal background rather than being a by-product of any unconscious and timeless truths about differences between the sexes.

**The Essence of Scottish Masculinity**

The preceding overview of historical elements pertaining to Scottish literature and men's studies can provide a basic understanding of the hard men under study as Scots on the one hand and as men on the other. These two overviews have shown that masculinity is almost an unfathomable subject and it is not exactly comforting for a student trying his best to fathom its depths to see an experienced social scientist and expert on the subject like R.W. Connell claim that twentieth-century researchers have failed to produce a coherent science of masculinity, not because they have failed but because the task is impossible.[65] Perhaps the *idea*

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[63] Connell, *Masculinities*, 29.
[64] Scott Coltrane, "Theorizing Masculinities in Contemporary Social Science," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod & M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 45.
[65] Connell, *Masculinities*, 67.

of masculinity can never be fully explicated but that should not deter anyone from studying it within any given field. The following study of masculinity and hard men in Scottish twentieth-century fiction can thus by no means contain a comprehensive conclusion on the nature of masculinity. This is much rather a study of how Scottish masculinity changes within the world of fiction, how the strongest protagonists seem to influence those succeeding them and how setting and social elements can shape certain characteristics. Despite the fact that most of the modern men's studies scholars have rejected the notion of a universal, innate masculinity, their writing on men and masculinity seems to assume, imply and reproduce a relatively stable, normative, masculine essence,[66] and surely such an essence can be joined with the essence of Scottishness to create something called 'The essence of Scottish masculinity.' The elements that have helped create the very foundations of Scottishness are also extremely important when it comes to the historical presentation of masculinity in Scottish literature, as it has shaped both writers and fictional characters to an enormous extent, especially the elements regarding Scottish duality:

> Scottish masculinity occupies no fixed position of indisputable social hegemony but is caught up in continuous oscillation between the diametrically opposed sites of (post)colonial marginality on the one hand and patriarchal dominance on the other. This simultaneous inferiority and superiority make an uneasy blend, highlighting Scottish men's complicity with a system of oppression, while, at the same time, necessitating their commitment to counterdiscursive resistance.[67]

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[66] Debby A. Phillips, "Masculinity, Male Development, Gender, and Identity: Modern and Postmodern Meanings," *Issues in Mental Health Nursing* 27 (2006), 419.
[67] Schoene-Harwood, 106.

The themes of marginality, dominance, oppression and resistance are just a sample of the many elements that seem to typify the world of the Scottish hard man and characteristics such as pride, anger, apathy, rigidity, envy, overblown machismo, fear and lack of paternal emotions seem to be dominant factors of Scottish twentieth-century masculinity portrayed in the Scottish novel, which understandably leads to confusion and an identity crisis as the following study will show.

Chapter 2

**The Shadowcasters:**
***The House with the Green Shutters* and *Gillespie***

It is not surprising that most studies of twentieth-century Scottish fiction begin by mentioning George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* as it marks the beginning of the century both chronologically and thematically. The novel was published in 1901 and its impact upon the Scottish scene cannot be refuted. The novel emerged like a preponderant weed in the middle of the Scottish kailyard and it did not take long for critics and authors to realize that this weed had taken over the kailyard and replaced it as a new and better life form, leading to improvements of the Scottish novel and the birth of a symbolic forefather of all Scottish hard men, John Gourlay, whose shadow the succeeding generations of writers and male characters could never fully escape or step away from. Thirteen years later, John MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie* was published, further exploring the themes of Brown's masterpiece and presenting the world with another archetypical Scottish hard man, Gillespie Strang. Not only are these two novels excellent works of fiction that duly deserve to be counted among the century's first important Scottish novels, but they also mark the commencement of the development of the twentieth-century Scottish hard man and set the standards for all subsequent literary creations of such protagonists. Gourlay and Strang are two unforgettable characters who employ various typical elements of masculinity to defend themselves within their community, as they strive for recognition of their identity as dominant hard men. But both desperately and memorably fail, each in his own way and due to his own faults.

## Out of the Kailyard

The mixture of reason and romance, which had become evident in Scottish fiction in the nineteenth century, created the demand for realism, coupled with a romantic, redeeming factor in literature, which led to the popularity of the so-called Kailyard-school.[68] Among the most famous Kailyarders were novelists like J.M. Barrie, Ian Maclaren (John Watson) and S.R. Crockett and the Kailyard-novels have gained notoriety within Scottish literary history for being unrealistic, overly nostalgic and sentimental, as well as portraying a false image of Scotland. The Kailyard world was "remote from the tentacles of nineteenth-century industrialism with its poverty, alienation and high mortality rate [and] such writing is an idealized projection of early Romantic views of the beneficent power of nature over people who were disposed to live simply and morally in an achievable, detached Arcadia."[69] This misrepresentation, or myth, of the condition of Scotland in a national and social sense is presumably the main blemish on the Kailyard[70] and it is not surprising that, at the turn of the century, young men who regarded literature as a vocation held the names of the Kailyard triumvirate novelists in contempt and were determined to oppose their methods, replacing sweetness and light with the dramatic (or even melodramatic) chiaroscuro of malice and gloom.[71] *The House with the Green Shutters* is undoubtedly the first major counterblast novel to the school of Kailyarders and *Gillespie* sustains the fight admirably, with Hay and Strang picking up the gauntlet where Brown and Gourlay had left it. It must also be noted that when James Hogg wrote his extraordinary novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* in 1824 – an unusual, original and powerful novel – it met with a uniformly hostile

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[68] Gauti Kristmannsson, *In and Out of the Kailyard*, M.Sc. Dissertation for the University of Edinburgh, September 1991, 2.
[69] Walker, 167.
[70] Kristmannsson, 13.
[71] Bold, 108.

reception, as public and critics seemed to prefer the Kailyarders.[72] This further illustrates the importance of Brown's novel and the need for a response to the sentimentality and didacticism of the Scottish Kailyard village life, where the main protagonists were "dour men with hearts of gold and tender women of simple nobility,"[73] as Somerset Maugham put it. Brown even seems to play with the fact that he is fighting the Kailyard tradition by employing and twisting certain elements regarding setting, characterisation and plot. He also makes a point of the timid Mrs. Gourlay reading (most likely) Kailyard novels to escape her morbid situation within her family, under the hard man's heel. Young John Gourlay even does the same to escape his father, fleeing in fear into the world of the Kailyard: "He had inherited from his mother a silly kind of interest in silly books."[74]

Wittig rightfully observes that Brown changed the course of the Scottish novel violently and states that *The House with the Green Shutters* was practically the first Scottish novel since Galt to deal with nineteenth-century Scottish life as it really was, in all its brutal honesty.[75] It can even be stated that Scottish writers of the first half of the twentieth century either followed his lead or took a completely different approach to fiction. Among those who followed Brown's example were Hay, Neil Gunn and Lewis Grassic Gibbon (who will be studied more closely later). These authors were mostly concerned with proletarian issues, regarding, for instance, social change, wealth and the hierarchy within the smaller communities, while the other group of writers, e.g. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and John Buchan, have much rather secured a place in Scottish literary history as entertainers, writing what has often been categorized as 'popular' fiction – such as crime novels and horror stories. J.M. Barrie's work for the theatre could

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[72] Civardi, 204.
[73] Ibid., 205. [Origin of quote not cited.]
[74] George Douglas Brown, *The House with the Green Shutters* (1901; Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005), 51. All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated HGS.
[75] Wittig, 264.

certainly fit the latter category as well. It is of course impossible to claim that the hard man had turned out differently if it had not been for John Gourlay, but Brown's influence on the literary scene is irrefutable and it seems almost evident that novels like Hay's *Gillespie* would never have seen the light of day without Brown's breakthrough novel and thus the hard man would most probably have suffered a different fate. No one, of course, can imagine whether this would have resulted in positive or negative changes in characterisation, but one cannot help but wonder if the extremely interesting and peculiar characteristics of the hard man would not have been quite different and of much lesser importance to Scottish literary history if the Kailyarders and popular novelists had never been countered this way.

A character like John Gourlay and a story like *The House with the Green Shutters* must, however, have been influenced by preceding elements, as everything else in literature. Hopefully the preceding chapter on the historical and literary elements that shaped the twentieth-century novel has shed some light on these roots and shown that Gourlay's birth was neither spontaneous nor immaculate. He is surely an answer to the false, mythical personae of the Kailyard but also an obvious descendant of the Scottish mentality, especially in regards to the remnants of Calvinistic rigidity, pride and envy. The forces that bring about his downfall and shape the basis of his character are unmistakably Scottish. There is also a definite sense of Scottishness surrounding the novel as a whole and the same can be said about *Gillespie* as well. One can easily imagine that Hay would have been heralded as the "breakthrough novelist" of the century's first decades if it had not been for Brown. But the earth from which Gourlay is moulded is not exclusively Scottish and one should keep in mind that various other evident influences can be found within Brown's novel. For instance,

he was deeply influenced by Turgenev, his favourite Russian author, as well as elements from French psychological naturalism.[76] Civardi has also pointed out that the same family pattern can be found in Stevenson's unfinished *Weir of Hermiston*, where a solitary son is coddled by his weak, dithering mother and bullied by his ruthless, self-assertive and brainless father. Furthermore, Civardi claims that Lord Hermiston and John Gourlay both epitomize the grim Scottish qualities of struggle, sternness, straightforwardness and unity of purpose.[77] Brown also looked further back in time and place, all the way back to the Greek tragedies, and his novel has obvious elements reminiscent of and influenced by them. Craig has even implied that the novel is perhaps the foundation of the modern Scottish novel because "in its form, by its use of Greek tragedy in an alien context, it gestures to the inevitable reiterations that govern human experience."[78] According to Aristotle's famous definition in *Poetics,* tragedy is "an imitation of an action that is admirable, complete and possesses magnitude" as well as "effecting through pity and fear the purification of such emotions."[79] Whether or not Brown manages to evoke *catharsis* will be left to each individual reader to consider, but it is evident that his employment of the Greek influences makes his novel much more powerful. In fact, the use of these elements was so powerful that it was in a way imitated by Hay, as well as A. J. Cronin in *Hatter's Castle* (1931). Hay was also a huge fan of Dostoevsky, whom Brown considered exaggerated and obscure, and his admiration is reflected in the extravagant symbolic richness of his outlook[80] as well as the expansiveness of his novel, indicating that perhaps the Russian novelist was an even greater influence on him personally. And yet, despite all the references and influences the two novels

[76] Wittig, 264.
[77] Civardi, 196.
[78] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 58.
[79] Aristotle, *Poetics* (ca.335 BC), translated by Malcolm Heath (London:Penguin, 1996), 10.
[80] Roderick Watson, *The Literature of Scotland: The Twentieth Century* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 338.

are based upon, the most important factors regarding themes, setting and characterisation, are especially Scottish in nature.

## Gourlay and Strang

John Gourlay and Gillespie Strang are proud, domineering megalomaniacs who utilise their strength and resolution to become the "main men" of their towns, Gourlay in Barbie and Strang in Brieston. One could, in fact, claim that they are striving to become what is now often referred to as 'alpha males,' securing their position as the highest ranked and dominant individuals in their social hierarchy. They work hard and do everything they can to gain control, not only of their families but of the townspeople as well, becoming somewhat tyrannical in status, each in his own way. Gourlay is more of a brute, planting the seeds of fear and submission amongst others with sheer strength and brutal force. He could be compared to a fierce grizzly bear while Strang is closer to a sly and cunning fox, terrorising his neighbours with almost inhuman greed and heartless manipulation in order to fulfil his every whim. These two incredibly powerful protagonists are domineering characters within the narrative as well, and every action of other characters is seen in relation to its effect on the protagonists. It is almost as if their entire towns are their own private worlds, but worlds they cannot fully control despite all their wealth, strength or cunning. One could even say that their predominating position within family and society are from the very start destined to become their downfall. They are like kings or superpowers, destined to fall and be replaced. The fate of these two men is undeniably tragic but must have hit a nerve somewhere, as Brown's novel lead to the method of presenting life as a tragic waste of human potential, without the consolation of nobility, becoming a

major mode of representing Scottish society within twentieth-century literature.[81]
In fact, Brown and Hay manage to destroy the myth about the sentimental
Scottish countryside with their grim accounts of the horrible fate of men who
submerge themselves in pride, greed and domination, which eventually leads to
patricide, suicide and doom.

   *Gillespie* is a much longer novel than *The House with the Green Shutters*
and therefore it is not surprising that Hay gives his readers a fairly good
description of Strang's background and the curse surrounding his family from far
back in time. Brown, however, starts his tale when Gourlay has already made his
fortune and seemingly secured his place as the main man in the village. His
downfall is nonetheless forecast in the very first paragraph, where a chamber-
maid of the Red Lion flings water from her pail and the smooth round arch of the
falling water glistens for a moment in mid-air before falling with a swash (HGS, 1).
Gourlay and his family are gradually introduced to the scene and it becomes
evident that Gourlay has managed to monopolise the carrying trade in his town
and build the house with the green shutters as a monument to his own pride, as
Wilson calls it (HGS, 79). The other townsmen, especially the malignant
backbiting and gossiping Bodies, envy Gourlay of his success and constantly
make fun of his weaknesses, mainly his lack of intelligence. One is again
reminded of Edwin Muir's previously quoted statement about the influence of the
Scottish church, and how it encouraged a spirit of criticism, which again led to
envy. The Bodies are extremely critical of Gourlay and seem to bask in the glory
of his downfall, naturally leading to the fact that Gourlay's most valued moments
are when he can boast and make the most of his success with overblown pride
and self-complacency. Brown writes that for many reasons "intimate to the Scots

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[81] Cairns Craig, Introduction to George Douglas Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters* (1995;
   Edinburgh: Canongate, 2005), vi.

character, envious scandal is rampant in petty towns such as Barbie" and that due to history, climate, social conditions and the national beverage, the Scot is an individualist, fighting for his own hand (HGS, 32). This again leads to constant competition and envy and the other townsmen seem to long for revenge against Gourlay, hoping that someone will knock him off his perch. This behaviour can also be traced to the fact that Gourlay has almost secured his dominance over the other villagers and his displays of fearlessness bring out the underlying fear of the others. Craig has illustrated this by pointing out that his 'manhood' is an elemental force, which the others have denied in themselves: "…its existence within the community is a defiance of their communal values, their shared participation in self-denigration and self-denial."[82] This is the reason for the whole-hearted welcoming of Wilson, who appears suddenly as Gourlay's rival and nemesis, instituting his downfall.

There is not enough room within these pages for a detailed account of the story line of each of the eight main novels but it is imperative to mention the themes, plots and characteristics that are of most importance to the development of the male protagonists. Gourlay's relationship (or lack thereof) with his wife and children is critical in this aspect and will be studied more closely later, but the results of his domination are of the highest importance when it comes to his downfall. When Wilson has gotten the better of Gourlay and his proud achievements have all been lost, he looks to his neglected son for salvation. He spends the rest of his money on Young Gourlay's education, hoping that he will become rich enough to support his entire family. Gourlay has no idea that his tyrannical, callous and brutal domination over his family has left his son a complete and utter loser. His son is the second most important character in the

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[82] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 48-49.

novel and his faults and vices can easily be traced back to his father. Thus it becomes evident that even though Gourlay's downfall is brought about by various outside elements, they can all be traced back to himself and his own disadvantages. It is safe to say that he is himself his own worst enemy. In the end Gourlay loses his wealth and status, and even though he stands proud through all his ordeals without flinching, one cannot help but feel pity for the family as a whole as Brown squeezes the life out his characters in a morbid and almost melodramatic manner where Gourlay's son, his own flesh and blood, murders him and becomes so haunted by his father's image and the horror of his act that he takes his own life, only to be shortly followed into death by his mother and sister, leaving the former monument of pride dark and terrible beneath the radiant arch of the dawn. It is not only tragic but also extremely symbolic that Gourlay finally falls by the hand of his own son - his own making.

Hay's *Gillespie* is a somewhat similar story in the sense of its dealing with a tyrannical, domineering male protagonist who blindly strives for his own advancement while emotionally crippling his family. There is, however, a major difference in the main story lines of the two novels, for Gillespie Strang's character and his rise and fall within his community is much more complicated than Gourlay's, chiefly because of the difference in the length of the two novels. Gillespie's past and his devious methods for control are extremely important to his development as a character and he thus emerges as a much more comprehensive hard man, but the difference between the two protagonists will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. The voluminous plot of *Gillespie* is too extensive to recount here but the main aspects must of course be traced. First and foremost it must be kept in mind that Gillespie Strang is a shrewd and cunning hard man who slyly works his way to the top of his social pyramid within

the small town of Brieston, where the image of the 'Bodies' in *The House with the Green Shutters* has been replaced with "…the Pump, black with age, the chiefest thing of the street, the eyrie of the town. It is the home of censure, the seat of wrangling, and the folk who live by it are all middle-aged or old."[83] Strang's head is full of big ideas and schemes to promote his advancement and his almost inhuman apathy towards his family suggests that he is completely submerged in his greed. His dealings with the townspeople seem to bounce him between goodwill and hatred and the town's attitude towards him does not evoke a particularly pretty picture of the Scottish small-town psyche. Gillespie manages to claw his way up to the top of his society, clearly becoming the most important man of the town, and this makes him the subject of envy and backbiting, or even direct actions against him, fused by hatred and a blind sense of revenge. Gillespie deserves all the ill will he is shown as he manipulates his fellow men like an evil capitalist wrapping the proletariat around his finger in order to accumulate more wealth for himself. And yet, despite his ruthless, callous and even unethical manipulation of the town, everyone seems to turn a blind eye whenever Gillespie shares his wealth, i.e. when the others benefit directly from his schemes and see him as a giant, a god or the king of their town. Gillespie's greed is of course the source of his downfall, similar to Gourlay's pride, and the two vices share various interesting elements. However, Hay dives much deeper in his text, placing emphasis on other agents of Gillespie's downfall like fate and revenge. There are also many other intricate characters to be found within the novel, especially Mrs. Galbraith who serves as Gillespie's chief antagonist and nemesis, swearing to exact her revenge on him as he is directly responsible for her husband's death as well as her financial ruin. She is described like a dove, while Gillespie is like a

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[83] John MacDougall Hay, *Gillespie* (1914; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1983), 39.
   All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated G.

hawk (G, 34) and he seems to fear her superior intellect without fully realizing the extent of her power. Gillespie's relationship with his family is also in the forefront, especially his appalling mental abuse of his wife, Morag, whom he married for financial purposes only, and the strained paternal relationship which is reminiscent of the two Gourlay's, especially in regard to Gillespie's younger son, Eoghan. The terrifying fate of the family is largely caused by Gillespie's blind ambition and greed as well as his blatant disregard of his family's needs. It is therefore safe to say that the two hard men are brought down by such major faults as greed and pride but also by their lack of maintaining a sensible and beneficial relationship with their family and neighbours.

These emotional shortcomings of the two hard men's character are a recurring theme in the portrayal of Scottish masculinity in fiction throughout the twentieth century and even though Gourlay and Strang are undeniably among the most extreme cases they seem to set the pace for future generations of men, for instance in regard to their relationship with women. One should keep in mind the various conditioning factors of the patriarchy and how it affects the two men in their basic treatment of their wives, i.e. the aforementioned theories of gender scholars about how men took control of the public world as self-proclaimed bearers of reason and secured their place within the public sphere, dominating the home, while women were placed within a more private sphere, with the caring and nurturing environment of the home as their main domain. It seems evident that the two hard-headed brutes were indeed of this same persuasion. They never seem to listen to their wives or even as much as notice them. Both of them are even guilty of marrying for financial gain and Strang is even the more immoral of the two, as he is clearly shown thinking that he would have married Mrs. Galbraith if there had been any silver to gain from her. Not only are the two men

disrespectful towards their wives but they also go much further in their maltreatment of them and should be filed as downright misogynists. They secure the old ways of the patriarchy with strong hands by brutally and tyrannically subordinating their wives, resorting to both emotional and physical abuse to secure their status. One only has to point to the tragic demise of the two women and the fact that both hard men were instrumental in their downfall and death. Gourlay is right from the start shown to regard his wife as a poor and incompetent trollop who could never keep the house tidy and he is filled with rage as he concludes that she is unworthy of the House with the Green Shutters (HGS, 17) and therefore unworthy of himself and the status he has fought for within their society. Later, when she becomes seriously ill, Gourlay does not seem to care or even notice it. The poor woman has even become so downtrodden and oppressed that when Gourlay hits her and an abscess begins to form in her breast she sees it as a consolation and a way out, thinking every time when Gourlay verbally abuses her with scorn and irony that it will all end soon. She thinks of the abscess as a friend in her breast that will end her suffering one day (HGS, 246). In other words, she sees death as the only possible means of escape from Gourlay's tyrannical claws, and finally becomes equal to the 'Most High' with her feebleness, yielding entirely to the fate that swept her on, "imbued with its demoniac power" (HGS, 248).

Hay goes even further in his description of masculine tyranny in the way Gillespie Strang treats his poor wife, Morag, but also with his dealings with Mrs. Galbraith and even Topsail Janet, whom he takes on as a kind of servant when she is down on her luck. From the moment he starts to woo Morag he treats her on the basis of a commercial agreement (G, 27) and starts to regard her as his possession. Hay's description of Strang's emotional side is beautifully compared

to the crystal heart of an iceberg where Morag touches something unresponsive to fire, which burns fiercely until the gross ice extinguishes it and it is gone forever (G, 29). This flame is short lived and it rapidly burns out as the ice of greed grips and sterilises Gillespie's heart (G, 59). He begins to share Gourlay's feelings towards his wife and resents her lack of understanding for his demands on her as a perfect housekeeper. He begins to regard her as cumbering his house: "She was slow of her hands, laggard in business, unpunctual, stupid in house-work" (G, 88). This leads to his ever-growing antipathy towards her as he first neglects her, then ignores her and finally despises her. He does not even seem to care about her steadfast spiralling into madness and he is completely oblivious to the way Mrs. Galbraith manipulates her and pushes her into whoredom and self-destruction in order to get back at Gillespie. Her final words are that Gillespie Strang is "hell" as she reveals to Eoghan all the agony of her life, "of loneliness and slavery, of neglect and extreme misery, overshadowed by terror, sullen hatred and fear […] sublime in its resignation to tyranny and cruelty. Her soul had been battered to death" (G, 423).

**Domineering Men**

When reading such horrendous accounts of the wretched lives of the hard men's wives one cannot ignore the obvious misogyny of the two protagonists. They treat their wives like possessions or cattle, never fully bonding with them on any emotional level and venting their frustration on the ones closest to them, i.e. attacking their wives for any possible shortcomings, demoralising them and leading them to lives of desperation and ultimately death with their spiteful and hateful attitude. However, it must also be noted that the hard men's hatred and spite goes even deeper and could be categorised as misanthropy. Their wives

are not the only victims of their terrible temper or spite, but much rather everyone around them. Friends, family and enemies are all treated equally badly. Anyone who crosses Gourlay can expect a violent retort and he is in fact the "archetypal Scottish hardman who strikes first and asks questions later"[84] while Gillespie is more inclined to stab others in the back, although these responses can in fact be expected by anyone who crosses their paths in general. Gourlay, for instance, completely demoralises his son by constantly attacking his character, bossing him around and finally placing an illogical responsibility and burden on his back when the business fails and he claims that his son will become a successful minister and take care of his family. In other words, Gourlay attaches himself to the future of his son who becomes the sheet-anchor of his hopes (HGS, 182). Such excessive faith on a man he has mentally abused his entire life is of course extremely irrational and Gourlay is even so preoccupied with his own little world that he doesn't even realize that his son is a complete failure who has muddled his education and found shelter in alcoholism. In fact, Gourlay totally breaks his son's spirit, sends him slinking away *animo castrato* and his actions are as bad as the rape of a woman (HGS, 210-211). This could certainly be regarded as a case of the father successfully completing the castration in the eyes of the son according to a Freudian reading. Gourlay's simplistic attitude of wanting to control and bully others also gets in his way of securing his place as the most successful businessman in Barbie. When Wilson arrives as Gourlay's first worthy adversary his reaction is one of discontent from the very start and Wilson is portrayed as being one step ahead of Gourlay in almost every way, apart from sheer muscular strength. His wife and son are much more presentable than Gourlay's and it becomes evident that his strength lies in his sharp wit and language while

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[84] Bold, 113.

Gourlay suffers from an impotence of speech. One could even claim that the main difference between the two men and the reason why Wilson succeeds while Gourlay fails is the difference in attitude towards others. Wilson has a jovial and benign disposition and manages to befriend others in town while Gourlay is proud, self-complacent and bad-tempered towards others. He brings out the envy and resentment in others and thus alienates himself from the community on which he depends for maintaining his status.

Gillespie's attitude to his community is somewhat different, as he seems to alternate between grace and ill will, depending on how others can benefit from him, as stated earlier. His relationship with his two sons, especially the more significant character, Eoghan, is similar to that of the two Gourlays. His overbearing tyranny and domestic abuse result in Eoghan describing his father as a ruthless despot (G, 269) and becoming an emotional wreck, similar to Young Gourlay at first, and later descending into deeper madness, with evident traces of the dour Calvinistic inheritance increasing his spiralling mental state. The image of Gillespie as a despot or king is shared by various other characters and it becomes a recurrent theme throughout the novel. He even takes on a role similar to that of a tyrant who maltreats his subjects when a depression hits Brieston. What sets him apart from Gourlay when it comes to his relationship with others is the fact that Gillespie is much shrewder and he manages to persuade people to like him with false gestures of aid or support when things are going badly. He sees an actual advantage in being "kind" to others. But behind the mask it is almost as if his main objective is to make every single person in town his slave. This theme is emphasised by his treatment of Topsail Janet and Morag, whom he undoubtedly regards as his slaves, and even prides himself in having captured them. Whereas Gourlay's mistake is to alienate himself from the people around

him, Gillespie is much rather guilty of mentally adopting a somewhat perverted status as a patriarchal figure for his entire town, striving to become the master of a macrocosmic household and dominating not only members of his own family and any person affiliated with them but the town's entire population as well. This has a clear influence on his downfall and Hay gives a subtle hint about Gillespie's fate when he reminds the reader of how Rome fell by her slaves (G, 117).

One must, however, keep in mind when scrutinising the character of the two hard men that their behaviour can partly be explained by their social surroundings and the setting of the novels. Their brutality should certainly never be condoned in any critical approach but their fierce struggle for their goals can in some way be understood when it is put into perspective. Barbie and Brieston are Scottish rural small towns where people are on the brink of discovering new techniques and technologies and where the old is being fast overrun by the new. The old school method of gaining control over the small town is of course the one they employ, one of sheer strength and a striving for total domination. Gillespie is actually more in touch with the new wave and has far-seeing ideas about business while Gourlay is all about equating strength with muscles and fearlessness, but the two men are nonetheless stuck in the old school mentality of patriarchal power leading to control. The very hegemonic definition of manhood has in fact for ages been equated with being strong, successful, capable, reliable and controlling; and the quintessential "man" is a man *in* power, *with* power and *of* power.[85] The two brutes can thus find an inkling of an excuse for their behaviour in the fact that they themselves are victims of the patriarchy and that they were most definitely brought up in an environment were strength and control were lauded as the essence of manhood and that previous generations of men

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[85] Michael S. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod and M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 125.

before them could never have reached a status such as theirs without utilising their strength and domination. The truth is that both protagonists go too far with their alpha male endeavours and perhaps it would have sufficed them to show their strength and superiority more sparingly and with a hint of subtlety instead of shoving it down the communal throat.

**Failed Patriarchal Masculinity**

It has already been claimed that the most significant factors contributing to the downfall of the two men are their apathy and lack of emotional connection with others as well as blind pride, greed and aspirations for power and domination, but each individual character has various other characteristics that help to define him, as well as the archetypical hard men, which are thus of great importance to the subject at hand. Gourlay, for instance, is not only overly proud but also extremely brave, fearless, headstrong, dogmatic, violent and even stupid. This stupidity is perhaps what proves most decisively that he is human. He can easily portray super-human characteristics, like before the birth of Young Gourlay when he drives like "the devil o' hell" to get a young doctor in the middle of a terrible thunderstorm that sends others hiding below their beds as though it was Judgement day (HGS, 42), but the Bodies can always cushion such heroic tales of unbridled machismo by sneering at his lack of wit, laughing at his expense and thus transforming their own insecurity into mockery. Gourlay fights back by trying to terrorise the Bodies but can never escape the fact that he is outnumbered as well as being socially and intellectually inferior to them. It is also interesting to read Alan Bold's analysis of this situation, for he claims that Scots are motivated by malice according to Brown's experience and resent any man who surpasses the situation he inherited. Furthermore, such a man would get his just desserts,

thanks to the workings of the Calvinist God: "A humble man was a Godfearing man; an overbearing man was diabolical. John Gourlay was proud and unbearably overbearing so, to the locals of Barbie [he] was simply tempting fate."[86] Several of Gourlay's characteristics could thus be traced back to the way the Bodies judge him and it is a clear indication of his limitations that he constantly looks to the Bodies for approval and is deeply troubled by his incapability for finding a retort when the Bodies sneer at him. He is always the one on the receiving end of the Bodies' gibes and innuendos and their words seem to scar him deeply, proving that his pride is in fact fragile despite his professed fearlessness. Cairns Craig claims that Gourlay's ability to appear fearless to the Bodies is his only positive quality, as he is neither wise, moral, generous nor forgiving and not even a good husband, father or businessman: "But in the context of the destructive fearfulness that rules the town of Barbie his fearlessness comes to seem like a challenge to the very nature of the universe."[87] This juxtaposition of the fearful against the fearless is a major theme of the novel and the basic elements of the plot could be described as a fearless father, a fearful son and a fearing community,[88] as Craig expresses it in an introduction to the novel. Brown himself even emphasises this point when Gourlay recognises the superior cunning of his rival, Wilson "with a vague uneasiness – not with fear, for Gourlay did not know what it meant, but with uneasy anger" (HGS, 89). Fear is in fact an emotion that seems to reappear in Scottish fiction throughout the century and will be studied more closely in a later chapter.

If Gourlay's fearlessness and stupidity are best explained in connection to the Bodies then several other characteristics become most evident when juxtaposed with Young Gourlay as some of the father's most important masculine

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[86] Bold, 112.
[87] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 49.
[88] Craig, Introduction to *The House with the Green Shutters*, xi.

aspects become almost antipodal in the son. Young Gourlay unfortunately inherits all of his father's arrogance without any of his strength of character[89] and Brown brilliantly describes how he finds confidence in alcohol and believes that drinking raises his spirit and makes it easier for him to express himself and proclaim his identity. "In plainer language, when he was drunk, he was less afraid of being laughed at, and free of that fear he was a better speaker. He was driven to drink, then, by every weakness of his character" (HGS, 144-5). He is a nervous hypochondriac and dullard who needs constant stimulus to get ahead. Brown states that there is nothing worse for a weakling than a small success (HGS, 157) and when Young Gourlay's drinking is combined with his winning an essay-prize he becomes just as intolerable in his pride as his father and this is perhaps the only scene in the novel where father and son have something in common, i.e. an excessive ego-boost brought about by the son's minor achievement. It could also be stated that Young Gourlay's downfall is brought about by him striving to inherit his father's merits in an utterly false and perverted manner. Alcohol gives him the sense of feeling like a master instead of a slave and when the Bodies think that he is doing well and act friendly towards him he makes the incredibly stupid decision to hang around with lowlifes and ragamuffins to show the Bodies that he does not need their company. He tries to turn his hatred towards the Bodies into his own advantage and constantly drinks in order to maintain the illusion of being brilliant and wasting his talents, thinking that it looks better than being sober and everybody realizing he has no talent at all. The father's pride is thus mirrored by the son in an almost uncanny way, further emphasising the way Old Gourlay's tyranny and domination poisons everything around him. This could even be simplified in the manner of the son striving to become like the father but simply

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[89] Bold, 114.

inheriting the faults and thus failing most horribly. In a way both men are thus victims of the authoritarian Scottish patriarchy. Civardi has taken a similar approach to this interpretation, claiming that Gourlay is an embodiment of the pride and individualism that had for ages sustained the Scots' struggle for existence while his son is an embodiment of fear and escapism in the nineteenth century.[90] Furthermore, he states that while Old Gourlay is a proud fighter, a man very much in the tradition of Cameronians, Jacobites and Wee-Frees, his son is, like the Scotland of his time, incapable of assuming and asserting his individuality.[91]

Gillespie's major characteristics also become most evident when studied in regard to his impact on family and town and his interaction with various other characters. Like Gourlay, he is constantly seeking the approval of his neighbours and cannot escape their standards, but while Gourlay is rather seeking their approval Gillespie is seeking their subservience. Other characters have several different ways of describing him in the novel and he is, for instance, described as a leech, a pirate, a predatory beast and an anti-Christ.[92] Maurice Lindsay states that Gillespie uses his fellows in the small community to achieve a dominant hold over them, psychologically, and that this was a very Scottish interest at the time.[93] John Burns has also pointed out that Gillespie was not simply an extreme version of the mean and miserly Scot of popular imagination but much rather emblematic of modern man who loses his way in the quest for material riches.[94] Perhaps this is the most interesting element of Gillespie's character, i.e. the fact that he fully utilises Gourlay's method of dominating others (using sneers, mockery and

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[90] Civardi, 196.
[91] Ibid., 200.
[92] Bob Tait and Isobel Murray, Introduction to John MacDougall Hay's *Gillespie* (1979; Edinburgh: Canongate, 1983), vii.
[93] MauriceLindsay, *History of Scottish Literature* (London: Robert Hale, 1977), 354.
[94] John Burns, "Gillespie: Facing the Elemental," in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Twentieth Century*, eds. J. Schwend and H. W. Drescher (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1990), 85.

rudeness as weapons instead of sheer muscular strength) but at the same time being a harbinger of a new era and fully embracing modernity in order to make more money. He certainly succeeds in many ways as a businessman but surely he would have done even better for himself by not cheating everybody so ruthlessly on every possible occasion. His ability to think ahead and make the most of every situation is what secures his position but at the same time it is what shakes his very foundation until he tumbles down.

The single most startling element of Gillespie's character and the horror of his ruthless quest for silver and power is the way he directly ruins the lives of almost everyone around him. Gourlay certainly breaks his son's and wife's spirit but he is a saint compared to Gillespie when it comes to the actual path of destruction. Gillespie is directly responsible for the deaths of Mr. Galbraith and Andy Rodgers but also of his own son, Iain, who drowns in a boat that is unseaworthy because of Gillespie's stinginess. He also ruins Queebec mentally, Mrs. Galbraith financially and Topsail Janet psychologically. He condemns his father to a life of poverty and illness, drives his wife into alcoholism, prostitution and madness and in the end she murders their son, Eoghan, who has also become emotionally crippled and high-strung because of his father. He enjoys making people dance to his music without fully realizing the evil and almost satanic tune he is playing. And yet, somehow, he is certainly as mesmerising as a devil in disguise as he constantly manages to squeeze forgiveness out of his neighbours, becoming their hero or benefactor whenever the opportunity presents itself. After one of his escapades, which many others gain from, he becomes "not a man, but a god" in Brieston, but at the same time one of the women at the Pump claims that he is a bloodsucker who will suck the town dry (G, 152). And furthermore, despite all the terrible things he does, Hay manages to evoke pity for

him in the end, when all has gone horribly wrong and even Mrs. Galbraith puts aside her burning hatred for him in order to help him through his last days, as he feels an unknown feeling stirring within his breast – the compassion of God (G, 438). Perhaps Gillespie Strang is the very epitome of the Caledonian Antisyzygy: he acts like an old school patriarch but embraces modernity, cheats everyone mercilessly, but manages to become the town's hero whenever he needs to, and finally evokes pity despite being an unmistakably disgusting villain. It must surely be impossible to find another Scottish hard man more tightly wrapped in duality.

Despite the many thematic elements shared by both novels and the similar portrayals of domineering patriarchal masculinity there are various differences between the two. Even though *Gillespie* is certainly an epic expansion of *The House with the Green Shutters* in a structural sense[95] the thematic difference is variegated. Roderick Watson safely assumes that Hay had read Brown (it is impossible to assume otherwise) and he points out the various similarities between the two novels, but also states that Hay's literary tastes owed nothing to Brown and that he had much rather looked to Dostoevsky for inspiration: "There is an extravagant symbolic richness to Hay's outlook and on every page he elevates the Scottish penchant for descriptive detail to overpowering heights – like a development of Mannerism in prose."[96] Several other critics have discussed in detail the difference between the two novels and the two protagonists. Wittig claims that Hay was doing much more than Brown, diving much deeper into his themes, making the life that surged in his novel much richer and subtle. He claims that while Barbie only existed in its hostility against Gourlay, Brieston had a life of its own, consisting of the whole community, and also that Hay succeeded better than Brown by making Gillespie's malice a clear

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[95] Bold, 117.
[96] Watson, *The Literature of Scotland*, 338.

insult to God's universe.[97] This is an interesting argument and one cannot help but concur with Wittig in saying that Gillespie's malice seems to stem from a deeper root of pure evil and his villainy becomes much more threatening than that of Gourlay. One could even go as far as to equate Gillespie with a demonic foe, difficult to outsmart, while Gourlay is much more like a thick-headed Lurch. Walker explains the difference between the two megalomaniacs mainly with Gillespie's power deriving not only from adamantine egotism and application but also from an ability to employ cold-bloodedly rapacious capitalist business methods against an entrepreneurially primitive community, in other words being a pure capitalist, while Gourlay is driven by a comparably obsessive strength of purpose and uses commerce as a way of rising above the slicker citizens of Barbie but fails in business because his methods are outdated.[98] Francis Russell Hart has also pointed to the significance of the difference between the final showdowns of the two novels, stating that Hay makes Brown austerely tame by contrast by ignoring the pastoral awe that closes Brown's novel in a radiance of remote natural innocence. "Nature for Hay is violent, erratic, in collusion with the amoral natural force of Gillespie."[99] Nevertheless, the portrayal of the two men's masculinity clearly stems from the same (or at least a similar) root, as both are clear portrayals of the patriarchy's abusive nature, excellent examples of hard men and the first emblems of the hard Scottish masculinity in twentieth century fiction.

**Marketplace Manhood**

When the characterisation of Gourlay and Gillespie has been studied and scrutinised it is interesting to put it into the perspective of gender studies. Michael

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[97] Wittig, 273.
[98] Walker, 220-221.
[99] Francis Russell Hart, *The Scottish Novel: From Smollett to Spark* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1978), 138.

S. Kimmel has studied the idea of masculinity in previous centuries extensively and he claims that by the 1830s a new vision of masculinity emerged, Marketplace Manhood, of which Gourlay and Gillespie should without any doubt be regarded as prime examples:

> Marketplace Man derived his identity entirely from his success in the capitalist marketplace, as he accumulated wealth, power, status. He was the urban entrepreneur, the businessman. Restless, agitated, and anxious, Marketplace Man was an absentee landlord at home and an absent father with his children, devoting himself to his work in an increasingly homosocial environment – a male-only world in which he pits himself against other men. [100]

Furthermore, Marketplace Manhood required proof, or the acquisition of tangible goods as evidence of success. The two hard men's behaviour is thus not an isolated Scottish element but a documented form of patriarchal masculinity that was common in the nineteenth-century. This mentality is of course deeply connected to the basic mentality of capitalism and from a sociological standpoint it is interesting that the first hard men under study within these pages are capitalists because such tendencies vanish completely in the following decades when the hard men lose their status as rural capitalists and become urban proletarians.

The image of the Marketplace Man seems to fit the two megalomaniacs perfectly. Their power and wealth is indeed the very foundation of their identity (in their own minds) and family and feelings are left behind. It is extremely ironic how both men utterly fail and only manage to enjoy their status for a short while until they are destroyed by the consequences of their own selfish actions. This short-

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[100] Kimmel, 123.

lived status is nevertheless achieved by elements of high importance to the development of the Scottish hard man, such as pride, strength, rigidity and lack of emotion. Gourlay's pride is without doubt his main characteristic and he even manages to pass it on to his wife and son in a perverted manner, but Gillespie is also guilty of the same capital sin and seems to take pride in his manipulation of others as well as valuing everything and everybody only in relation to his own relevance and ownership. The two brutes are also guilty of an almost hyperbolic lack of emotion and seem incapable of experiencing or expressing such essential human feelings as love, affection and compassion. Gourlay, in fact, seems indifferent to his own misfortunes until his horse dies: "But the sudden death of his gallant roadster, his proud pacer through the streets of Barbie, touched him with a sense of quite personal loss and bereavement" (HGS, 119). This lack of emotion is most evident in the decrepitude of their wives but also in the strained paternal relationships. There are strong Oedipal undertones in both novels, perhaps best described by Eoghan's wild ravings when he looks upon his sick mother, wishing he could arm the stars or fire the town to safeguard her from prying eyes and slanderous tongues, and, finally realizing that his father is the cause of her wretched state, he mutters: "He is a vampire; I could kill him now in bed" (G, 286). But perhaps the poor women were also made to suffer because of psychological faults with the men's sexuality. According to Victor J. Seidler the Protestant tradition sees sex as basically evil and inevitably threatening to any kind of moral or civilized behaviour: "There is a close identification of the sexual with the bestial, so that giving in to our sexual feelings is compromising our sense of ourselves as rational and 'civilized' men."[101] It could thus be stated that the two men were afraid of partly relinquishing their power and command by giving in to

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[101] Seidler, 58.

emotions they could not fully control. It is also quite evident that both men are completely and utterly in the dark when it comes to dealing with women as human beings. They are so hopelessly restricted and caught up in their own masculinity that they become totally oblivious to the existence of femininity within their sphere and have no idea how to handle it. They become disgusted by their wives, look upon them as liabilities to their success and treat them like lackeys or slaves.

Another thematic element of the two novels, which becomes increasingly important to the development of masculinity in Scottish fiction, is the presence of fear. Craig has traced this theme back to its Calvinist roots and studied the development of fear, horror and fearful impotence within Scottish fiction. He states that the ethics of fear are evident in the Kailyard novels and that Brown constructs a model of a society where creative imagination and the community which it has to express were utterly sundered from one another. This is why "fear has become an immovable obstacle, locking the society into an eternal moral stasis, no matter what changes are thrust upon it from without."[102] Even though Gourlay himself is described as fearless, fear itself is important in both novels and becomes one of the defining factors of the sons' downfalls. The environment of their upbringing is so horribly poisoned by their fear-inspiring father figures that they have to seek refuge and escape. Eoghan finds his answer in religion and succumbs to madness while Young Gourlay finds salvation in the bottle. This is another important factor to keep in mind when the development of the hard man is studied, as alcohol and drinking become one of his major traits as the century progresses, becoming increasingly prominent in the latter decades, and create monolithic monsters in the novels of Welsh and Butlin. Brown was in fact one of

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[102] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 63.

the first Scottish novelists to portray alcoholism as a real problem and until his novel, the Scots overt tendency to heavy drinking had either been regarded as either a funny and rather congenial idiosyncrasy or totally ignored.[103]

## The Influence on Future Generations

All of these aforementioned themes and characteristics become elemental to the development of the Scottish hard men throughout the century and one could even throw out the metaphorical statement that hard men of the following decades were subjected to the joined parenting of John Gourlay and Gillespie Strang. Elements such as pride, rigidity, lack of emotion, fear, drinking, violence, overblown machismo, strength, social structures and even the strained paternal and marital relationships are recurrent themes in the portrayal of Scottish masculinity throughout the century, as will become evident when further protagonists will be studied more closely. It is interesting that these characteristics are so blindly adopted by future generations of male protagonists when one considers the fact that Gourlay and Gillespie are utter failures. It is true, as mentioned earlier, that the rural setting and their roles as Marketplace Men, are in a sense calling for these characteristics, but nevertheless they seem to adhere to the following generations as well, despite completely different settings and social conditions. It is difficult to state exactly why these characteristics become so persistent but it is evident that the two brutes are looming over their subsequent torchbearers of Scottish masculinity, casting their long tyrannical shadow over their paths and obscuring their search for a positive identity.

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[103] Civardi, 202.

Chapter 3

**To Be a Working-Class Hero:**
***Gray Granite* and the Scottish Renaissance**

As this study of masculinity in Scottish fiction progresses it must be noted that just eight novels can never fully cover every important era or literary movement of an entire century. Therefore, it is imperative to limit the study to the eras or movements of most importance to the subject matter and several other movements, novels and writers are thus unavoidably unmentioned within these pages. However, the importance of the next movement, following the anti-Kailyard movement started by Brown and Hay, is undisputed and must be analysed here because of its impact on the following decades of fiction as well as its enormous influence on images of masculinity brought about by the social conditions it sprang from. This movement or era has been referred to as the Scottish Renaissance and in a sense it implements modernism in Scottish fiction. It is most often dated between the 1920s and the 1930s, when several important Scottish novels were written and extremely popular and influential novelists were emerging. One of these novelists was James Leslie Mitchell, who wrote under the *nom de plume* Lewis Grassic Gibbon, by which he is better known today. Gibbon's trilogy *A Scots Quair* was a major cornerstone of twentieth-century Scottish fiction[104] for many reasons, especially, for instance, because the main protagonist was a strong, independent and proud woman, Chris Guthrie. The first part of the trilogy, *Sunset Song* (1932), deals with Chris' upbringing and her family's hard life in the town of Kinraddie, while the second part, *Cloud Howe* (1933)*,* continues her story as the wife of a minister, Robert Colquhoun. The third and final part, *Grey Granite* (1934)*,* is the third novel under study in this essay.

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[104] *Sunset Song* was voted Scotland's favourite book in 2005 at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. Scottish Arts Council, "The Best Scottish Book of All Time," Online 11 October 2008 at: http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/artsinscotland/literature/projects/archive/bestscottishbook2005.aspx

Gibbon continues Chris' story but places even more importance on the character of her son, Ewan Tavendale. Ewan was also a character in *Cloud Howe* but *Grey Granite* follows his journey into manhood. Gibbon was deeply influenced by the Renaissance movement when writing the final part of his beloved trilogy and it is interesting to study how Ewan Tavendale comes to grips with the images of masculinity and his identity as a Scottish man in a social setting that has changed significantly since the times of Gourlay and Gillespie.

**The Scottish Renaissance**

The Scottish Renaissance movement was in fact more evident in poetry, but it had a vast influence on fiction as well. The movement was led by Hugh MacDiarmid in the 1920s and he "demanded a fresh, contemporary but still uniquely Scottish literature, fuelled by a newly invigorated Scots […] which included all the new experimental themes and techniques which were then spreading across Europe."[105] His poems were an amalgamation of Scottish folk influences and modern techniques and the working-class undertones were never far off. Michael Gardiner has in turn claimed that the movement stretches back to the 1890s and simply culminated with MacDiarmid,[106] but its most evident influence on fiction occurred at the movement's pinnacle in the twenties and thirties, chiefly with the emergence of Gibbon and Neil M. Gunn. Both writers wrote prolifically about the antithesis of country and city, the quest for self, the search for identity and urban alienation – all of which is deeply in the vein of the Renaissance:

> In Gibbon the pathos of the epic effort to live well is felt in the
> contrast between human action, which is fallible and transient, and

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[105] McCordick, 4.
[106] Gardiner, 2.

the land, which is aloof, impersonal and enduring; in Gunn's novels

the earth is full of messages, part of the action in a set of variations

on the epic theme of the relation between land and people.[107]

This interplay between man and land is often highlighted in *Grey Granite*, especially when Chris and Ewan walk along the old Pict fort, built by the men of ancient times, where a great gang of modern men have torn down the walls and flung them aside, leaving deep ruts where the carts had been driven and the char and ash of a great foolish fire.[108] Ewan starts to think about the old Picts and the earlier times when all men were equal, before the calamity that fell on the world with gods, kings, culture and classes. It does not take a political scientist to notice the deeply socialist roots of such thoughts and the socialist and nationalist essence of the Renaissance is self-evident.

The socialist undertones of the Renaissance fiction are perhaps most clearly revealed by the proletarian characters and the working-class struggle, but also by the very setting itself. The novels that avoid the sentimental portrayals of the mythical and green Caledonia seem to move from the rural small towns (like Barbie and Brieston) into the urban environment of the city, which becomes the field of Scottish fiction for the first time. The *Scots Quair* trilogy is in fact an embodiment of this transition as it starts out in rural Kinraddie and ends up in the fictional city of Duncairn. This shift of perspective into the city and the interest in folk-life and folk-history became widespread in Scottish fiction and Wittig asks the question if it was perhaps a projection of the old Scots egalitarian spirit.[109] Whatever the reason may be, the fact is that the large city and the plight of the common man became the chief subject matter of novelists of this era and was

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[107] Walker, 231.
[108] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, *Grey Granite* (1934) from *A Scots Quair* (1946; London: Penguin, 1986), 386. All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated GG.
[109] Wittig, 325.

explored in many important novels like *No Mean City* (1935) by Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long*,* George Blake's *The Shipbuilders* (1935), Dot Allan's *Hunger March* (1934)*,* James Barke's *Major Operation* (1936) and Edwin Muir's *Poor Tom* (1932) (even though Muir later turned away from MacDiarmid and the Renaissance movement, claiming that Scotland could only create a national literature by writing in English).[110] Gibbon utilises the thematic significance of the city as a setting to the full and creates a society within *Grey Granite* that shows the trouble of the working-classes and the proletarian struggle with authority and plutocracy. The reasons for such a setting and characterisation are of course highly political, but nevertheless, Gibbon manages to avoid any glorification of the proletarian struggle by showing the frail nature of his characters. The political aspects of *Grey Granite* have been studied intensely and Gibbon most certainly had various important messages to promote but the most significant element for this essay is the development of Ewan Tavendale as a man and his search for a masculine identity within the working-class environment.

**The Working-Class Man**

Working-class masculinity is in fact a well documented form of masculinity, especially when it comes to miners and other manual labourers of the lower classes. According to Collinson and Hearn, studies have revealed a symbolic and material significance for male manual workers of "specific forms of masculine practices and identity work for making sense of their (relatively subordinated) lives."[111] Informal interaction between male manual workers is often deeply masculine, aggressive, sexist and derogatory. It is humorous yet insulting and

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[110] Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (London: Routledge, 1936),178.

[111] Jeff Hearn and David L. Collinson, "Men and Masculinities in Work, Organizations, and Management," in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities,* eds. M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn & R.W. Connell  (California: Sage, 2005), 294.

playful but degrading, where the masculinity of newcomers is constantly tested. It has even been stated that a close link can be found between such behaviour and the masculine military culture, which has also been studied intensely.[112] Most of the masculinity scholars seem to concur on the theory that social status is a key element in the development of gender roles and identity and the fact that Scottish Renaissance fiction relied so heavily on urban working-class characters was a defining factor of Scottish masculinity in fiction before and after the Second World War. Levant and Pollack have asserted that certain male problems (which can easily apply to the working-class hard man), such as aggression, violence, homophobia, misogyny, detached fathering and neglect of health, are unfortunate but predictable results of the male role socialization process[113] and these characteristics are evident in various Scottish working-class novels throughout the remainder of the century. It is also important to keep in mind that men often learn to identify strength with independence and self-sufficiency.[114] Such identifications are intensified when the men have to rely on their strength in the workplace and can easily lead to detachment at home, where their manhood is not rated by physical strength. This problem will resurface bitterly in Scottish fiction in the latter half of the twentieth century where one must keep the impact of the working-class hard man in mind.

When studying the preceding masculinity of the Marketplace Man it became evident that men such as Gourlay and Gillespie needed many of their characteristics to achieve their goals, even though they both fail in the end. The same can be said about the urban hard men who inherit many of the old tyrants' characteristics (which could in fact be called faults when seen in perspective) and

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[112] Hearn and Collinson, "Men and Masculinities in Work, Organizations, and Management," 295.
[113] Ronald F. Levant and William S. Pollack, "Introduction," in *A New Psychology of Men*, eds. R.F. Levant and W.S. Pollack (New York: Basic, 1995), 1.
[114] Seidler, 143.

adopt other specific traits that either help them to get along or restrict them in a changed environment. Gourlay and Gillespie used these masculine characteristics to secure their power and domination, but the urban hard man is much rather preoccupied with proving his strength within his own social group to gain respect and acceptance by his peers. He must be tough, wise and calculating to survive in a society that is impoverished, squalid, sordid and ruthless.[115] These are the characteristics of the male characters emerging from the working-class environment, especially when working in mines, steelworks, shipyards, etc. It has even been noted that while hard labour in factories and mines literally uses up the workers' bodies, the hard men use that destruction as a proof of the toughness of their work as well as of themselves, demonstrating their masculinity with their broken bodies.[116] There is also an increased risk of these men becoming violent, seeing that strength and hardiness are considered laudable merits. Violence is, in fact, often the single most evident marker of manhood and men tend to promulgate their willingness to fight (much rather than a desire to do so) in order to prove their unfaltering masculinity.[117] The emphasis on strength and violence can certainly secure these urban working-class hard men's position within their society, especially within a group of other similar hard men, but the downsides are obviously most profusely felt within their homes, where detached fathering, apathy and emotional inhibition continue to encumber the Scottish hard man and his chances of having intimate relations with others. All of the abovementioned characteristics can be found in the story of Ewan Tavendale and it is interesting to study how he slowly manages to accumulate these traits and attribute them to his masculine identity, either within the boundaries of the workplace or the proletarian struggle. Four decades later, the

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[115] Spring, 210.
[116] Connell, *Masculinities,* 36.
[117] Kimmel, 132.

same themes reappear in McIlvanney's *Docherty,* but that is a discussion reserved for a later chapter.

Before turning to a more thorough study of *Grey Granite* and the character of Ewan Tavendale it is apropos to mention another novel where all the elements of the urban hard man are extremely evident and which almost managed to secure a place as one of the eight main novels under study in this essay, namely *No Mean City* by Alexander McArthur and H. Kingsley Long, which was published in 1935. The novel deals with the lives of hard men and razor gangs in the Gorbals (a run-down slum in Glasgow), and the male protagonist, Johnnie Stark, is a prime example of the tough, violent and sexually rapacious Glaswegian hard man. He takes on the role of 'The Razor King' and becomes the ringleader of a large Gorbals gang, terrorising the slum with his girl, Lizzie, in order to gain the admiration of others. "Johnnie Stark constructs a fiction of manliness, defining himself in accordance with the only two models of masculinity he thinks are available to the working-class man – the proletariat and the criminal. He is both gangster and dedicated worker, both monster and man."[118] He requires the testimony of others for the survival of his masculinity and constantly demonstrates it with typical alpha male arrogance. His razors are evident Freudian phallic symbols, as Christopher Whyte has pointed out, and his *performance* as a hard man, swinging his razors, is rooted in vanity and therefore narcissistic.[119] He proudly declares that he chooses to be a gangster in order to escape becoming the victim of an exploitative system, but each success he makes as the Razor King entails his failure as a man[120] and finally his reputation is all he has left and he is beaten to death and "dethroned" by younger hard men

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[118] Sylvia Bryce-Wunder, "Of Hard Men and Hairies: *No Mean City* and Modern Scottish Urban Fiction," *Scottish Studies Review* 4:1 (2003), 113.

[119] Christopher Whyte, "Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction," *Forum for Modern Languages Studies* xxxiv:3 (1998), 275-276.

[120] Bryce-Wunder, 115.

when they catch him without his razors, thus taking over his role. His rise to the position of Razor King, the fact that his downfall and death is a clear reaction to his previous actions and the importance of pride and egotism to his destruction is a clear reminder of the fate of Gourlay and Gillespie. Sylvia Bryce-Wunder claims that the argument underlying *No Mean City* is "that adherence to the British class system coalesces with the acceptance of abusive and exploitative gender relations, producing the social and economic conditions for the development of damaged working-class identity."[121] Whether such a statement is accurate or not, all evidence seems to point to the fact that Scottish working-class environment, especially in the urban setting, is most likely to produce a damaged masculine identity, where the sense of manhood is deeply scarred by the relevance of strength and violence within the social setting.

**Grassic Gibbon and *A Scots Quair***

Lewis Grassic Gibbon was a dedicated follower of the Scottish Renaissance and even wrote one of the manifestoes of the left-wing Scottish nationalism of the thirties, *Scottish Scene, or the Intelligent Man's Guide to Albyn,* with Hugh MacDiarmid. It can be argued that he turned towards a more explicit form of Communism later on, but he was most definitely submerged in the Renaissance movement when writing *A Scots Quair.* David McCordick claims that MacDiarmid's influence is most notable in the trilogy, which Gibbon wrote in a rhythmic Scots (partly of his own making, like MacDiarmid) and fused with the ideas and energy of the Scottish Renaissance as well as the realistic mode and traditional Scottish preoccupation with their land and its history.[122] But Gibbon was not only writing in the vein of the Renaissance. He was also continuing the

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[121] Bryce-Wunder, 119.
[122] McCordick, 4.

anti-Kailyard struggle, started by Brown and Hay, writing with obvious contempt for the sentimentality of the Kailyarders. However, the critics seem to disagree about his views on Brown. Jessie Kocmanová claims that Gibbon wrote with clear hostility towards Brown's exaggerated pessimism[123] while Alan Bold states that Gibbon wrote with an enormous admiration for Brown's novel.[124] Whatever the truth may be, Gibbon obviously directed a famous early passage of *Sunset Song* towards Brown, when the new minister describes the town of Kinraddie as the Scots countryside itself, "fathered between a kailyard and a bonny brier bush in the lee of a house with green shutters. And what he meant by that you could guess at yourself if you'd a mind for puzzles and dirt, there wasn't a house with green shutters in the whole of Kinraddie."[125]

Wittig claims that Gibbon's trilogy moves on three distinct levels: personal, social and mythical. On the social level, the first part deals with the breakdown of the crofting system after the artificial boom of the war, the second with the disintegration of small-town society and the third with the fermentation in the city and the resultant upsurge of socialism and communism. Furthermore, he claims that this third part is in fact sometimes doctrinaire and artistically inferior to the other two.[126] Other critics of various philosophical and critical outlooks have stated that *Grey Granite* is in fact neither so creatively successful nor so firmly based in social facts as the other two volumes.[127] It might thus seem like a peculiar decision to choose this third part for scrutiny, but as stated earlier this part is of most importance to the subject of masculinity and, despite Gibbon's magnificent portrayal of Chris Guthrie, her son's search for a masculine identity is

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[123] Jessie Kocmanová, "*A Scots Quair* and its Relevance to the Scottish Proletarian Struggle of the Nineteen-Thirties," in *English Literature & the Working Class,* eds. F.G. Tortosa and R.L. Ortega (Sevilla: Universidad de Sevilla, 1980), 80.

[124] Bold, 130.

[125] Lewis Grassic Gibbon, *Sunset Song* (1932; Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001), 24.

[126] Wittig, 330.

[127] Kocmanová, 77.

of more importance to this essay. However, there are certain elements regarding the most popular part of the trilogy, *Sunset Song,* which must be brought to light before Ewan takes the stage.

The landscape of Scottish literature has certainly changed since critics in the 1930s reacted with disgust to *Sunset Song's* frank treatment of sex and childbearing, its scorn for the rich and powerful and strident anti-clericalism, and stated that its unredeemed close-packed filth, meanness, spite, brutality, lying squalor and stupidity was wearisome.[128] Today one could almost ironically recount these very elements as prerequisites of the Scottish twentieth-century novel. These gloomy elements are evidently treading on Brown and Hay's territory and Gibbon was most certainly under their influence when creating Chris' father, and Ewan's grandfather, John Guthrie, who spends his miserable life in bitter, endless toil and dominates his family with a firm and often violent hand. He is an archetypical agricultural Scot - bigoted, brutal, insensitive and ignorant - and his whole attitude to life is one of negativity.[129] His treatment of his family is similar to that of Gourlay and Gillespie, even though Guthrie is nowhere near being the "Big Man" of the town like the other two brutes. He is often pushed to the edge by his own rage, fears nothing dead or alive, is overtly proud and systematically breaks his son's spirit, beating him up for the smallest of mistakes: "So Will hated father, he was sixteen years of age and near a man, but father could still make him cry like a bairn."[130]

The characteristics of the tyrannical and patriarchal hard man are thus in Ewan Tavendale's blood, but he somehow manages to escape the terrible fate of previous offsprings of hard men like Young Gourlay and Eoghan Strang. One

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[128] Tom Crawford, Introduction to Lewis Grassic Gibbon's *Sunset Song* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 2001),vii.
[129] Bold, 131.
[130] Gibbon, *Sunset Song*, 30.

could even claim that his mother, Chris, is the very foundation of his salvation, as she endures her father's tyranny without succumbing to it and manages to secure her identity and independence in a manner Young Gourlay and Eoghan could never have dreamed of. She simply is a much stronger character and Ewan's later hard man traits are much rather passed to him via his society than the image of his overbearing grandfather, or even his father for that matter. The older Ewan is a vulnerable, tender and caring man who is later turned into a crude and indifferent beast by the First World War. He is, nonetheless, capable of outbursts of physical and verbal abuse before and after the war and passes these traits on to his son, even though they become very distinct from his father's.[131] Julian Meldon D'Arcy has pointed out that when the older Ewan loses control "it is almost always an instinctive and impulsive reaction or when he is under emotional pressure and the influence of alcohol" while the younger Ewan "always seems to be in control of his somewhat limited feelings, sexual or otherwise, and thus his acts of physical or verbal abuse seem much more calculated and impersonal."[132] Ewan's character begins to develop in *Cloud Howe* and perhaps the most interesting characteristics are his violent acts and fantasies and the fact that he seems to be contemptuous of girls, even smacking a girl when she invites him to make love to her. However, the descriptions of his actual search for identity and manhood are more thorough in *Grey Granite.*

**Ewan Tavendale**

It could be said that the development of Ewan's character goes through three different stages in *Grey Granite.* At first he seems to be stepping out of adolescence with a childish sense of pride and arrogance; then he discovers the

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[131] Julian Meldon D'Arcy, "Chris Guthrie, Ellen Johns and the Two Ewan Tavendales: Significant Parallels in *A Scots Quair*," *Scottish Literary Journal* 23:1 (1996), 44.
[132] Ibid., 45.

things that shape him as a man, such as love, the proletarian struggle and the masculine proving of himself within the workplace; and finally he turns towards a colder form of communism, seemingly abandoning all of his emotions and feelings. When Ewan is introduced through Chris' eyes she sees him as a boy of eighteen, who acts more like twenty eight or even eighty-two at times (GG, 358). He quits college before graduation, abandoning his mother's dream of his university education, and starts working as an apprentice for Gowans and Cloag, smelters and steel manufacturers. Chris worries that he's indifferent and remote and that nothing seems to matter to him. The main reason he gives for becoming a working man instead of finishing school is that he does not want to live off his mother, especially when she has so little to live off herself. However, it is quite difficult to imagine why exactly he chooses this life over his education, especially as he is described as bookish and sometimes lost in deep thought. There is no indication of him having failed school and it much rather seems as if applying for the apprenticeship was simply an arbitrary decision on his behalf. The decision is also quite peculiar if his basic characteristics are taken into consideration, namely his arrogance and pride. He portrays a superior attitude towards the other workers, disparagingly referring to them as "keelies", and keeping much to himself when he starts his work. He seems to approach his work pretty much the same way as a school subject, reading about the trade by himself and thinking the other "insanitary devils" (GG, 372) are none of his business. The other workers seem to live by a completely reversed dogma, frowning upon any educated apprentices and despising Ewan's stuck-up attitude. In fact they have every right to do so, as his superior attitude is quite insufferable at first, as seen when his mother dislikes his derogative use of the word "keelies", reminding him that his father was a ploughman. "A ploughman's not a keelie" he replies and

claims that even though his father was a ploughman and his mother came from a kitchen, that has got nothing to do with him: "I'm neither you nor my father: I'm myself" (GG, 374-375).

Ewan is gradually knocked off his perch by the other workers and they slowly begin to accept him as soon as he proves himself within their social surroundings and embraces the group's norms, politics and camaraderie. One could easily categorise Ewan's transformation as being quite Lacanian in nature, as he seems to begin creating his identity, or sense of Self, in relation to the Otherness of his group, i.e. he begins to see himself through the eyes of the Other.[133] It is also interesting to note that as the hard man asserts his masculinity, he renders it performative, and the act of defending the masculinity can be sparked off by a certain sense of hysteria, thus giving the very image of masculinity itself a certain feminine element.[134] Various theorems of the working-class man have been mentioned earlier in this chapter, and Ewan's acceptance and ascent within the group depends deeply on some of these theorems, mainly the ones concerning prowess, violence and a sense of a unified proletarian movement fighting as one. The group's need of Ewan having to prove himself is quenched when a) he puts up a good fight when the others attack him, b) he does not report them for beating him up badly, and c) he starts talking to the others during breaks instead of secluding himself with his books. It is, of course, a very working-class-masculinity related theme that the group's use of violence seems to strengthen the interior bond, and later on this sense of violence is combined with the group's sense of unity and the horrible consequences of a violent conflict with the authorities. Ellen Johns, Ewan's girlfriend, is also very influential on his character, explaining to him the fundamental righteousness of

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[133] See Dr. Mary Klages' overview of Lacan's theories: "Jacques Lacan." Online 5 October 2008 at: <http://www.colorado.edu/English/courses/ENGL2012Klages/lacan.html>
[134] Whyte, "Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction," 276.

socialism and evoking his interest in the proletarian struggle until he agrees to give the keelies a chance. Furthermore, she tells him not to feel so horribly superior, stating that he can never lead if he cannot be an equal (GG, 388). However, it must be made clear that Ewan is in no way feigning an interest in socialism in order to gain Ellen's attention. Their romantic relationship is much rather instigated by Ellen and when they fall in love it could even be said that Ewan's feelings for her are alternatively cool or tinged with sadism and pity.[135] On one occasion a drunken man enters Ellen's room in order to "pay her his respects" and she calls out to Ewan, who rushes to her, hits the drunkard and knocks him out cold. This might seem like a chivalric reaction, motivated by Ewan's sense of wanting to protect his lover, but he himself claims that the reaction was more in the vein of "stags in rutting time" (GG, 421), thus indicating a more carnal or machismo attitude.

When Ewan has embraced his status as a working-class hard man he becomes ever more involved with the proletarian struggle, finds his place as the other men's equal and later as a sort of labour leader, just as Ellen had predicted earlier. Alan Bold states that the novel's main point is to show Ewan's transformation from an ideal socialist into a hard-bitten communist who "twists the means to justify the revolutionary end."[136] The duality of Ewan's thinking throws him back and forth between regarding himself as a keelie and somehow being above them. He discusses the socialist ideology profusely with Ellen, each doubting the other's determination, and later turns towards the communist movement. He starts to realize that he is a part of the whole and that the cool boy he had once been "with the haughty soul and cool hands, apart and alone, self-reliant, self-centred, slipped away […] and was lost from his life forever" (GG,

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[135] D'Arcy, 49.
[136] Bold, 138.

430). But the single most defining moment of his conviction is after the worker's strike, when the police brutally beat him up and he becomes a sort of broken and bloodied martyr, in his mind representing all those tortured and tormented by the world's masters and experiencing a kind of stinging bliss when realizing that he himself was a part of the people's army, or the dark sea of faces, enslaved and oppressed through thousands of years but rising up with banners red in the blood of the prisons, ready to fight to the death for justice (GG, 451-452). He replaces his stepfather's God with the communist ideal of freedom from capitalist control and becomes grey granite down to the core. "The rock-like purity of his political commitment is at once the source of his strength and of his cruelty to Ellen Johns."[137] Thus he becomes the Marxist hero at the price of turning coldly inhuman. This is an interesting point in terms of the study of his masculinity. It is clear that Ewan builds his identity along with the group-identity and emerges as a Man when having taken an almost Christ-like punishment upon himself, completely willing to suffer for the salvation of his group. He pushes Ellen away from him with utter contempt and compares her to a whore when she abandons her initial beliefs and simply wants a better life with him. Ewan has in fact never shown any real emotional depth, but when he has found his place within the communist movement it is as if the tiniest shred of emotion is nowhere to be found within him. Finally he decides to lead the national hunger march to London, and takes on the role of a completely dedicated revolutionary.

**Identity of the Hard Man**

It is interesting to study how Ewan finds his identity and masculinity within a group of urban working-class hard men and is completely engulfed by their

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[137] Walker, 237.

ideology until he becomes one of them. Gibbon's evident left-wing tendencies find a good home within the working-class setting, as one might expect in any novel dealing with the proletarian struggle. However, it is much rather the social than the political aspect of the workers' environment that influences Ewan to such a great extent until he is persuaded of the notion that his only chance of becoming a man is to become like the other men around him and a part of a masculine whole. This attitude is certainly miles away from the image of the Marketplace Man, who seemed to suffer profoundly for his marginalised status as a capitalist master of his town. The setting of the Scottish Renaissance novels has certainly changed from rural to urban environments, but is there any indication within the novel that the socialist ideology and the male bonding can produce a better form of masculinity or a more wholesome example of the hard man? This is a difficult question to answer and even though Ewan's story does not conclude with a tragic Gourlayesque destruction it seems like the basic characteristics of Ewan are just as flawed as Gourlay's or Gillespie's in the sense that he utterly fails to perform on the emotional level and becomes fixated on the single goal of proving himself. The working-place environment is so utterly fraught with overblown machismo and a penchant for physical prowess that any man who wishes to survive within the community of the workers has to keep his emotional side at bay, thus refusing this side of his development as a man as its most essential ingredient. Ewan is cold-hearted, violent, angry, detached and aggressive, and while these attributes secure his place within the ranks of the urban hard men, it leaves him lacking something very important as a human being and as a man.

Chapter 4

**Despondency and Demolition:**
*The Busconductor Hines* and *Swing Hammer Swing!*

It might seem a bit peculiar to the reader to jump straight from the proletarian struggle of the thirties into a chapter about novels written in 1984 and 1992. In fact the final five novels under study were published after 1970. There is a simple explanation for this gap, as the initial aim was to study four novels that took place before the Second World War and four novels that took place after the War. The fourth and final novel categorized as a pre-war novel will be studied in chapter 6, for reasons that will be explained later. It is thus imperative to point out that Scottish fiction did not go through any creative post-war slump in the 1950s and 1960s. The stubborn hard man was actually living quite a good life on the written pages of fiction and his struggle against social injustice continued. There had been a movement within the Renaissance that went back to the mythical and organic images of Scotland, but Gibbon's *Grey Granite* seems to have captured a certain spirit that lived on throughout the 1950s and 1960s and he will have to serve as a spokesman for those decades for the purpose of this essay. The late 1970s and early 1980s witnessed the beginnings of a new and more radical phase in twentieth-century Scottish fiction, which was led by Glasgow writers such as Alasdair Gray and James Kelman. This movement was indebted to the parameters of working-class urban realism established in the preceding decades but simultaneously transcends them by redefining the restrictions of defeatist realism and redeeming it within a wider experimental context.[138] This movement has often been referred to as the Glasgow-school and the two novels studied in this chapter are excellent examples of the themes most commonly explored by

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[138] Gavin Wallace, "Introduction," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 3.

novelists pertaining to this certain movement, especially in regards to the portrayal of masculine protagonists. By this time the hard man has seen a significant transition in his post-war environment, where gender roles have changed dramatically and the specific function of masculinity has been redefined by society. However, the male protagonists are still heavily influenced by a sense of patriarchy and have extreme difficulty in realizing their role and position, often resorting to the old characteristics of the Scottish hard man, which have become completely obsolete, thus taking on a somewhat anachronistic role within a more modern society, a situation resulting in fear and their own marginalisation.

**Post-War Fiction**

Shortly after the war, in the 1950s, British society had trouble in supplying viable means and strategies to accommodate the young male energy it had glamorised into a kind of heroic masculinity during the war. At the same time "attempts at domesticating the male by redefining the masculine role as that of a breadwinner, considerate partner in marriage, responsible father and DIY expert resulted in the Angry Young Man backlash"[139] as well as the fact that men were experiencing a certain kind of disorientation in regard to their roles. Among the best known examples of the Angry Young Man in literature are Jimmy Porter in John Osborne's *Look back in Anger* (1956)*,* Alex in Anthony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* (1962) and the iconic screen heroes portrayed by James Dean and Marlon Brando in America. The Scottish counterparts can much rather be seen as deluded men trying to find their place within society, not by rebelling as Angry Young Men, but simply preserving a very Scottish dogged masculinity. At this time the Scottish novelists have a strong tendency to portray bleak, grim or even

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[139] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, 69.

brutal images of the city, and several novels written between the 1930s and 1970s deal with the harsh reality of the urban struggle, often with socialist working-class undertones but also with hints of something rotten or sick within the very foundations of the urban society. Edward Gaitens' *Dance of the Apprentices* (1948) is about working-class sensibility trying to break free from capitalist determinants by way of pacifism and socialism,[140] James Kennaway's *Tunes of Glory* (1956) focuses on the post-war masculinity of Scottish soldiers and the tense relationships "between people whose identities are threatened by each other in the context of corrupt or disintegrating value systems,"[141] and Hugh C. Rae's *Skinner* (1965) is "a dauntingly believable portrayal of a psychopathic killer [and] the people who come under his spell, a composite image of a sick Scottish society."[142] Similarly, Rae's second novel, *Night Pillow* (1967), deals with the pathology of post-war Glasgow and the violence and cynicism promoted by the changed social conditions and the alienating town-planning.[143] Many other novels could be mentioned, but the general idea has been made evident enough. There was definitely something rotten in the state of Scotland and novelists were portraying the troubles that the Scottish society was facing in rebuilding itself in a positive and constructive manner. It could be interesting to study how exactly Scottish society and the communal identity coped with the post-war rebuilding of standards and morals in a sociological manner, but the images put forward by the Scottish novelists are quite bleak. Even when they are writing satirical or humorous novels, the vanity, frustration, alienation and bleakness are never far off, as in Muriel Spark's *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961) or Alasdair Gray's "fantasy" novel *Lanark* (1981).

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[140] Walker, 324.
[141] Ibid., 320.
[142] Ibid., 326.
[143] Ibid.

It seems as if Scottish novelists were fully taking part in the nation's search for identity, and the portrayal of masculinity in the 1950s and 1960s takes a slightly different turn in the 1970s and 1980s. At this time a new group of Glasgow-writers was emerging, for instance the poet Tom Leonard and novelists William McIlvanney, Alan Spence, George Friel and James Kelman, along with Irvine Welsh, who actually wrote more about life in Edinburgh but could nevertheless easily be categorised with the others. The major characteristics of this school of authors are "verisimilitude of detail, working-class subject matter, heavy use of Scots, and social protest (against the degradation of the working classes, against the emptiness of modern life). And, as is traditional for realism, we see a constant search for new, often shocking subject matter (drugs, unusual sex, crime, violence, corruption)".[144] Christopher Whyte argues that novels written before the 1950s were doubly marginalised (as Scottish within a British context and as urban (not Scottish) fiction within a pre-war Scottish context) and that once urban fiction was assigned a central position, "its class and gender placements took on national implications" where the hard man became a Scotsman.[145] Furthermore, he claims that a crisis in masculine representation, more specifically a masculine self-presentation, had thus moved to the centre of the literary stage in Scotland.[146] It is exactly this crisis that will be studied more closely within this chapter.

The two novels chosen as examples of masculine crisis and marginalisation in the latter half of the twentieth century are James Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* and Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing!* Both novels deal with alienated men trying to come to terms with their masculine identity and their role as men within a society and city undergoing dramatic changes. The

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[144] McCordick, 5.
[145] Whyte, "Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction," 278.
[146] Ibid., 279.

other two post-war novels under close study (by Ron Butlin and Irvine Welsh) were actually also written in the 1980s and 1990s, but the nature of the characterisation within them and the thematic importance of substance abuse and ever-increasing alienation makes them stand decisively apart from Kelman's and Torrington's novels. Kelman stated in *Some Recent Attacks* that the urban working-class had either been stereotyped or absent in literary history and that whenever he found somebody with his own sort of background in English literature they were confined to the margins and kept in their place where one could only see or hear them but never get into their minds.[147] The Scottish Glasgow-writers certainly managed to change this image drastically and Kelman had a significant role to play in dragging the urban working-class back into the spotlight. In fact, urban working-class characters became increasingly more salient within the Scottish novel right up to the turn of the twenty-first century, and in a sense it is still difficult for Scottish novelists to shake free from the presence of the urban working class. But it must be made quite clear that this working-class representation is miles away from the visionary proletariat of *Grey Granite.* The working-class masculinity as portrayed by Kelman, Torrington and many of their contemporaries is poor, alienated, marginalised and confused while still retaining numerous traits of the typical hard man, which only serve to make their lives even more miserable.

**James Kelman**

James Kelman is undoubtedly one of the most influential Scottish novelists of the 1980s and 1990s, alongside Alasdair Gray and Irvine Welsh. Ever since the publication of his first collection of short stories, *Not Not While the Giro* (1983)

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[147] James Kelman, *Some Recent Attacks: Essays Cultural and Political* (Stirling: AK Press, 1992), 81.

and his first novel, *The Busconductor Hines* (1984), he has had an enormous
impact on the nature of writing in Scotland in three crucial areas: the
representation of working-class life, the treatment of "voice", and the structure of
narrative.[148] The first of these areas is of course the one of most importance to
this essay, namely the vivid and extraordinary images he portrays of working-
class characters, mostly male, who have become isolated within their own
society. Gavin Wallace has claimed that Kelman's Beckettian and depressing
blueprint for the worthwhile Scottish novel consists of various constituent
complaints, such as:

> … the spiritual and material deprivations of unemployment and
> decaying communities, failure to find – or accept – self-fulfilment in
> education, work, emotional relationships; inarticulacy and alienation
> escaped through alcoholism; destructive mental instability; the
> paralysing hyper-awareness of class and cultural differentiation;
> crippling incapacities to give love, or to receive it.[149]

This could seem like a rather morbid blueprint for successful fiction, but Wallace's
recitation is fairly accurate. All of these elements are evident in some form
throughout Kelman's fiction, especially in *The Busconductor Hines.* Several other
critics have made similar claims about Kelman's fiction and their prevailing
opinion is that Kelman's portrayals of working-class alienation are highly realistic,
even though they certainly tend to emphasise the negative sides of Scottish
reality. But perhaps this is exactly where Scottish reality and Scottishness is to be
found, within the margins of the struggling working classes. Kelman's central
characters are symbols "of the collapse of working-class life into a dispirited and

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[148] Cairns Craig, "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies,* eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 99.

[149] Gavin Wallace, "Voices in Empty Houses: The Novel of Damaged Identity," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 217.

isolated endurance" without sustenance in community or any hope of transformation.[150] There is no way out for these characters and they revert to anger, confusion or even nostalgia. Simon Baker has pointed out how Kelman himself categorises his writing through a character in his short story "Naval History" from *The Burn* (1991) where the narrator is asked if he is still writing wee stories with a working-class theme and he responds angrily that he is into "fucking realism."[151] Furthermore, Baker claims that Kelman attempts to make the reader aware of his characters by showing them from *within* the narrative instead of observing them from the *outside,* by abandoning the traditional narrative structures and plot motifs of urban realism, which centre on the lost potential of the individual, forced by a capitalist environment to lead a frustrated life without fulfilment.[152] It can actually be difficult to pinpoint exactly what it is that has pushed Kelman's characters to the margins of their society, but various elements can be counted as causes of this masculine marginalisation, as will be studied later in this chapter.

But why exactly does Kelman choose such representatives of urban or "fucking" realism? Why is his portrayal of working-class experience so unflinching in its ferocious bleakness, repetitiveness and hopelessness, as Beth Dickson puts it?[153] Michael Gardiner seems to think that political issues are to blame, and that Scottish writers needed to distinguish themselves after the failed 1979 referendum (when devolution was not enacted despite a majority vote because 40% of the registered Scottish electorate were needed to vote Yes in order to make it valid). Gardiner claims that: "Much of the impetus behind the movement

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[150] Craig, "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman," 101-102.
[151] Simon Baker, "'Wee stories with a working-class theme': The Reimagining of Urban Realism in the Fiction of James Kelman," in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: 1945 to the Present*, ed. S. Hagemann (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1996), 235.
[152] Ibid., 238.
[153] Beth Dickson, "Class and Being in the Novels of William McIlvanney," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 56.

to establish a separate Scottish culture was anger at the apathy and chicanery behind 1979."[154] Even though it is probably true that the failed referendum induced the Scottish people to pull more closely together and develop a more clearly defined and morally superior sense of national identity,[155] one could doubt that Gardiner's assertions actually referred to the characters Kelman and many of his contemporaries created as images of an eminently Scottish urban realism, whereas it seems a rather dull political statement to choose dead-beats, alcoholics and layabouts as representatives of a separate, unique culture. If, for instance, the character of Hines was meant as a political statement of sorts, Kelman justly succeeds in creating empathy for his marginalised status but fails in illuminating what exactly caused this status and why. Douglas Gifford and Beth Dickson have pointed out that Kelman (and Gray) never fully answer the questions about whether their protagonists are victims of a deprived post-war environment and upbringing or simply troubled by faults that lie essentially within themselves.[156] Craig has given a somewhat deeper but more credible reason for Kelman's choice of subject matter and characterisation by stating that for Kelman most literature is an evasion of reality: "either because it is located in a social environment irrelevant to most people […] or because it operates in genres deliberately designed to deny reality. […] Kelman's fiction sets out to resist becoming 'literature' by a fundamental commitment to realism in content and language."[157] Craig emphasises this theory with Kelman's own words about how ninety percent of the literature in Great Britain concerns the emotional crisis of people who have great fortune in matters of money and luck,[158] and one can

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[154] Gardiner, 152-53.
[155] Schoene, "Going Cosmopolitan," 7.
[156] Dickson, 61.
[157] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 100.
[158] James Kelman, "The East End Writers' Anthology, 1988," in *Channels of Communication: papers from the higher education teachers of English conference held at Glasgow University* (Glasgow: HETE 88, 1992), 25. Quoted in Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 100.

easily understand why any novelist would want to change such a tendency. Walker shares Craig's theory of Kelman resisting 'becoming literature' by a fundamental commitment to realism in style and content and points out a precedent for Kelman's position in Alexander Trocchi's *Cain's Book* (1960),[159] which ironically also has a precedent for various junky-related elements that are later to be found in Welsh's *Trainspotting.* This theory seems much more probable than Gardiner's idea of a sort of political response to a failed referendum of devolution, even though such an event was most certainly bound to have some effect on all the Scottish novelists at the time. Kelman's portrayals of the grim urban working-class realism, fragmentation and marginalised masculinity are so brutally honest that it seems highly probable that he was trying to get closer to creating a sort of representation of reality than a work of 'literature.' The reader is thrust into the grim urban realism, where he feels the alienation and breathes the very essence of the characters while Kelman firmly avoids the stereotypical representation he has come to despise. However, it must be made quite clear that Kelman was not creating a brand-new image of the Scottish man, but much rather moving the image of the changed Scottish masculinity and several of the hard man's personality flaws into a modern context, as can evidently be noted when one of his best known protagonists, the busconductor Hines, is studied more closely.

**Failed, Domesticated Masculinity**

It is much more appropriate to refer to Robert Hines as the protagonist rather than the hero of *The Busconductor Hines.* Kelman's portrayal is rather more humane than heroic as the reader follows Hines through his repetitious existence

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[159] Walker, 330.

as a busconductor, catching a glimpse of his sporadic dreams, anarchic imagination and search for a meaningful role inside a family and society he does not seem to fully understand. The images projected of Hines' life are gloomy and depressing and his position is one of unfaltering alienation and marginalisation. There seems to be nothing positive to say about him and the fact that his life is just as utterly miserable in the end as it was in the beginning indicates an incredibly pessimistic vision of urban realism. It is in fact incredible that Kelman actually managed to write an entertaining and challenging novel with such a morose protagonist in such a gray and depressing environment, and many readers are sure to be put off by the almost morbid sense of depression encasing the story. Kelman even makes a joke of this in the novel when Hines is fed up with his co-workers and asks who could ever be interested in hearing about "the trials and tribulations of driving buses."[160] But Hines is not just a poor, grouchy and depressed busconductor, he is also a fine example of what might be referred to as 'failed domesticated working-class masculinity.' If one concurs with the theory of Kelman creating glimpses of urban reality much rather than 'literature' one cannot deny the importance of such writing to the basic understanding of masculine realism, i.e. that his portrayal of the Scottish urban hard man in the 1980s should be fairly accurate and therefore of utmost importance to the study of Scottish masculinity in the twentieth century. It must also be noted that Hines is not an exclusive or unique example of such characteristics, as various other novelists portray a similar representation of this type of masculinity within their work, such as Gray, Trocchi, George Friel and Jeff Torrington, to name a few.

The novel introduces Hines to the readers with scenes of mundane despondency and in the very first pages he is described as a poor, bibulous,

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[160] James Kelman, *The Busconductor Hines* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons, 1984), 157.
All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated BH.

chain-smoking, unpleasant, inarticulate, unmotivated and irresponsible loser whose sexual advances are shunned by his wife. These images are only reinforced as the novel progresses and when the reader gets to delve into Hines' mentality it becomes obvious that he is a frightened, bewildered and deluded individual fighting with anxiety and an inadequate sense of responsibility. Furthermore, he is struggling with his role as a man, even a hard man to some extent, in a changed society where his function as a breadwinner has been taken over by his wife, who is much more successful than he is, not only career-wise but also in a more general sense, as a functional individual with her own dreams and ambitions, as well as a sense of a defined place or niche within society and the family. Kelman carefully manages to avoid marginalising Hines as a character (seen from the outside) but within the world of the novel he is completely and utterly marginalised within his family and his society, alienated and devoid of any ambition or means to find and express his identity. He knows that the work of the busconductor is about to become redundant and becomes "obsessed by the impossibility of realising the unity in multiplicity that would allow him to escape the isolation of one and become part of some larger unit"[161] as well as neither being able to suffer in isolation nor to merge into the identity of the family unit. In fact, the only meagre attempt he shows of any kind of ambition is to become a busdriver instead of a conductor, but he never manages to find the gumption or impetus within himself to go for it and put it into practice. He is even more willing to go on the dole and seems content with being unemployed. Scott Hames relates this to a familiar theme in Kelman's work, which he calls "the total hopelessness of men making 'progress' in the realisation of their fantasies" and claims that throughout his work "efforts to escape the 'objective' imprisonment of

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[161] Craig, "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman," 108.

work often lead to self-entrapment in a bunker of interiority, constructed to defend against the depredations of the job."[162] Hines fears that he will soon be shown the door "for being a bad busconductor" and feels there is no hope of him "ever becoming a busdriver" (BH, 80). He even goes as far as to imagine that the only way out of the situation (which he has labelled as hopeless in his mind) is to buy a gun and leave the world, reminiscent of Arthur Miller's Willy Loman in *Death of a Salesman.*

It is of little use to go through the novel's plot, as it seems to be rather nonexistent, and nothing has changed in the end. There is no evident sense of a climax, denouement or catharsis within the reader's mind and the brutal honesty of Kelman's realism probably has no place for such 'literary pedantry.' The novel's strongest point is the protagonist and Robert Hines possesses a cornucopia of characteristics to study in relation to masculine theory. The significance of these characteristics and the social setting they emerge from will be studied later on in the chapter but the following outline of Hines' characteristics shows the traits that most strongly define him as a character, as well as a 'failed domesticated working-class man.' Several of Hines' negative characteristics have already been mentioned but the novel is full of scenes, thoughts and interactions that help to define him. For instance, it is interesting to study his relationship with his wife, son and co-workers. His wife, Sandra, is starting a career in an office and wants to work full time, thus shattering Hines' patriarchal idea of him being the breadwinner and causing his extreme jealousy and suspicion towards her. She is also much more responsible than him, proposing sensible actions that are eventually thwarted by Hines, who takes on the role of the stubborn male. Sandra even wanted to buy a house when they started living together but Hines wanted

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[162] Scott Hames, "Dogged Masculinities: Male Subjectivity and Socialist Despair in Kelman and McIlvanney," *Scottish Studies Review* 8:1 (2007), 74-75.

to rent their current apartment, which has slowly run down and become a complete dump which they cannot move out of because of his low income. Around the middle of the novel, when Hines seems to be "losing it" and his almost lunatic ravings suggest that his mental health is in danger, he thinks of Sandra as a spy and hints are made about their marriage almost falling apart because of his erratic behaviour, lack of responsibility and inadequacy in regard to the fulfilment of his role as the man of his house. Hines' sense of emasculation affects his relationship with his friends and co-workers as well, where an overblown machismo is portrayed through the use of violence, excessive drinking and foul language. The hard man has moved from the mine, where strength and prowess were needed at work and served as an ideal forum for proving oneself, but somehow the rough and robust characteristics of the manual labourers have been passed on to Hines and his friends, even though their work entails no physical labour at all. It is also extremely demonstrative of Hines' character that when he feels his bosses have maltreated him and the other workers rise for him, ready to strike, Hines' reaction is one of frustration, as he shuns the responsibility of having caused the strike and thinks the others should find their own reasons for action: "Anyway, to be perfectly fucking honest with yous all, I don't want anybody going on strike on my behalf. I want to do it on my tod. It's my strike, yous can get your own. I mean they're fucking easy to find" (BH, 205). His sense of competition and pride are completely misplaced and the sense of social responsibility felt by Gibbon's Ewan Tavendale is completely missing from Hines' mind, partly because of the changed working-class setting but also because Kelman's idea of realism over idealistic social commentary. Hines' failure to perform is also evident on a third level, namely paternity and his relationship with his son. It must be handed to him that he tries his best at certain times to have

some sort of a meaningful relationship with his son, but his best is nowhere near enough. He is an absent father, cold and unemotional, and never manages to approach his son in a loving manner. He simply does not seem to know how.

When the emotional issues, coldness, apathy and misplaced pride are joined with the overblown machismo announced among other men, one cannot ignore the conclusion that Hines is portraying evident hard man characteristics. Not only is he an example of a 'failed domesticated working-class masculinity' but also of a failed hard man. It is true that the pre-war hard men mentioned in this essay failed utterly as human beings and that their hard man characteristics were not to their advantage, but these traits were at least understandable when the social setting was taken into consideration. In Hines' case these traits have become completely obsolete and anachronistic but he seems shackled by them nonetheless. Sylvia Bryce-Wunder claims that Kelman was subverting the hard man stereotype with a scrutiny of vulnerable and dependent working-class masculinity, and this seems a rather plausible theory.[163] It is at least safe to say that Hines has no chance of succeeding as a hard man, and an even lesser chance of succeeding as an ordinary one.

### *Swing Hammer Swing!*

Several similar and parallel themes are explored in Jeff Torrington's *Swing Hammer Swing!,* which was published in 1992 but takes place in the late 1960s, when the Gorbals area in Glasgow was being redeveloped and the gritty slum tenements were being demolished and replaced with motorways or new high-rise housing schemes. Apparently it took Torrington thirty years to write the novel, so it is safe to assume that parts of it were written when the actual demolition took

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[163] Bryce-Wunder, 124.

place. It is surprisingly difficult to find articles or studies on this novel, even though it is an extremely vivid and well written account of a marginalised and frightened man, Tam Clay, living on the brink of environmental destruction. It is also a very interesting account of life in the Gorbals before the redevelopment and hopefully it will get its due place within the canon of Scottish twentieth-century literature of the urban realism genre. It came as quite a shock that during the research and writing of this essay Jeff Torrington passed away, in May 2008, especially since some of the most prominent themes of his novel concern fear, destruction and death. Perhaps the very reasons for these evident themes can be traced to the fact that Torrington was suffering from Parkinson's disease, a degenerative disorder that is not categorised as a fatal disease but progresses with time and lowers the patient's life expectancy. There are various images of death, danger and destruction in the novel, the most memorable and ironic being the bum who comes to the public lavatory dressed up like Death. Shug, the "officially appointed keeper of the keech" refuses to allow him to do his business so the bum pisses down the stairs at him and Tam and runs away. Shug follows him, only to return later, red-faced and panting: "Death had given'm the slip."[164] Tam Clay is also often seen thinking about death, danger and that nobody would really miss him if he died and he is actually afraid to go to his friend's funeral. In fact the novel is swarming with images of fear and Tam is repeatedly thinking of new things to dread, seeing danger lurking in every corner. The Gorbals was surely a dangerous area in those times but Tam's fear reaches much further than to the hoodlums on the street. He seems to be afraid of almost everything and portrays a stark contrast to Gourlay's fearlessness. He faints when he sees "an injection kit, dental pliers, or a suture needle" (SHS, 75); he is obviously afraid of

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[164] Jeff Torrington, *Swing Hammer Swing!* (1992; London: Minerva, 1993), 142.
   All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated SHS.

any sort of commitment (an ongoing theme in the novel); he fears for his life when he comes across some crazy hard men in the roughest part of town; he is afraid his step-parents and his wife's family hate him; he fears that a man might kill him for sleeping with his wife and he is afraid of heights as well as being claustrophobic. The broken grandfather-clock at the back of his car is also a reminder of death and the way our lives are governed by the continuing countdown of time. Craig has studied the thematic importance of fear in Scottish literature and how Calvinism has shaped a fearful Scottish identity in his book *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination.* He points out that while the world of small-town Scotland is dominated by fear in Brown's *The House with the Green Shutters*, Gourlay seems immune to fear and the same can be said about Ewan Tavendale in *Grey Granite,* who has achieved a similar fearless isolation.[165] Furthermore, Craig states that a transcendence of fear was the goal of all the novelists of the Scottish Renaissance, as well as a discovery of a self that was immune to fear and an escape "from the confrontation of the fearful and the fearless into a world defined by a denial of fear, a denial that is not simply the imposition of the fearful self upon the rest of the community but the discovery of values that lie beyond the boundaries of the ethics of fear."[166] This sense of fearlessness has been completely lost in *Swing Hammer Swing!* and the same could be said about Robert Hines, whose fear of commitment, responsibility and action is overwhelming. This element of fear is perhaps rooted in the characters' sense of lost identity or confused gender roles and when Tam Clay's character and his actions are studied more closely one can clearly see how utterly despondent and demoralised he has become because of his own fear and alienation.

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[165] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 48-68.
[166] Ibid., 69.

Baker has pointed out that Kelman's relocation to the margins of urban life was a recognition of the fact the traditional working-class communities, often eulogised in urban realism, had simply ceased to exist; that his characters were not struggling for power or desiring to escape; and that they were much rather portrayed as single units, uncommitted to a definite course of action and either jobless or about to become redundant in every sense of the word.[167] Torrington is obviously treading the same course with his creation of Tam Clay and he deliberately avoids the slightest sense of a plot. In fact, the novel is "a series of meanderings, tableaux and misadventures related via the keen, if well-bevvied, eyes and coruscating patter of [an] amateur philosopher and dedicated waster" as Christopher Brookmyre puts it.[168] Ironically, Tam claims in the novel that "Plots are for graveyards" and that he would rather drag his eyeballs along barbed wire "than read a plotty novel" (SHS, 162). The lack of plot and emphasis on inner struggle are of course elemental in the novel's basic feel of urban realism and even though Tam's interior monologue and meanderings are in a sense reminiscent of Leopold Bloom in Joyce's *Ulysses,* the vivid images of life in the Gorbals and the unmistakable 'Scottishness' of place and characterisation make this a unique novel and Tam Clay a memorable character as well as a no less important example of the 'failed domesticated working-class man' than Robert Hines.

It would be questionable to refer to Tam Clay as a hard man, in the sense of the word which has been chosen for this essay, and his character would much rather require a made-up tag such as 'weak-man.' This is clearly known to the reader because of the intimate first-person narrative and the fearful thoughts Tam

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[167] Baker, 244.
[168] Christopher Brookmyre, "Book of a Lifetime: Swing Hammer Swing! Jeff Torrington,"
in *The Independent* 20 May 2005. Online 11 October 2005 at:
<http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qn4158/is_/ai_n14634701>

shares with the readers, but it is clear that his façade is totally different and he is careful not to expose his fear on the outside. It is also evident from his dealings with other people that he acts much prouder and stronger than he actually is, which is an almost universally masculine trait in itself. Tam and Hines share this façade and one could even state that, along with their drinking and loud behaviour amongst other males, this is some sort of a defence mechanism against the alienation felt by the man who has somehow lost his place in the world. The need for them to act tough and strong is actually non-existent within modern society and the fact that they come nowhere close to hard labour results in them being weak, physically as well as mentally. Despite these weaknesses and Clay's overwhelming sense of fear, he acts tough and even portrays characteristics that are strikingly similar to those of the hard man. It is almost as if the hard man's legacy has been passed on to this very different type of male despite the extreme social changes. For instance, it is evident that his relationship to his wife, Rhona, is troubled by his lack of emotion, inability to express his feelings and his fear of commitment. The hard man's apathy has certainly changed dramatically since the days of the hateful and tyrannical brutality that Gourlay and Gillespie exposed their wives to, but the apparent lack of sentimentality and affection is still troubling the Scottish man. Whereas Hines seems incapable of showing his wife the slightest shred of affection outside a purely sexual basis, Tam is much rather incapable of being serious or open-hearted. He uses humour, irony or lies as a response to anything serious, reinforcing the idea that his behaviour is largely caused by an inherent defence mechanism to his own fear. When his wife, Rhona, scolds him for not being serious at the maternity-ward when asking him important questions about the child they are about to have together, he thinks: "She was right, it was high time I

tossed away my dog-eared script with its quips and repartee for all occasions. Time, too, for me to cut out that harlequin prancing around her emotions, the verbal skipping from one corner of a lie to another" (SHS, 84). It is as if he realizes his own faults and shortcomings and fully acknowledges them, but nevertheless it seems difficult for him to change. When he lies to Becky, with the intention of seducing her under a false name (which he later does) he thinks that if there really was such an entity as the human soul then his would be packing its astral bags and getting ready to ram the clenched gates of his body, because no self-respecting spectre could endure being trapped inside such a stew pot of mendacity as himself (SHS, 109). Later in the novel he seems to realize that he is up to his neck in hypocrisy and that if there was such an institution as the Museum of Morality he would occupy his own glass case in it with the identity tab: "Urban Hypocrite: A striking example of a Twentieth-Century Urban Hypocrite. Note especially its thick skin which possesses a chameleon-like ability to blend with its background" (SHS, 249). The irony is thus even existent in his own mind, where he always tries to find the funny sides to his obviously horrible characteristics such as hypocrisy, deceit and unfaithfulness.

Another defining characteristic of Tam Clay, pushing him even further out to the margins, is that he seems alarmingly unfit for anything he tries to accomplish, no matter how trivial it actually is. He will fail completely as a husband and father without dramatic changes being made, he cannot secure a steady job and he cannot even find the man who owes him money. He is unable to stay faithful to his wife, he is unsuccessful as a writer and his novel has been rejected four times, he cannot discuss anything serious with anybody, and he even fails at the easy task of taking Rhona's nephew to the museum without losing him. It is certainly extremely symbolic that his entire neighbourhood is

being torn down, and perhaps this is exactly the moral of the novel on a much higher level than the one concerning Tam Clay as an individual. Perhaps it was time for the Scottish man to break down the barriers all around him, shake loose from the discouraging shadows of the emotionally lethargic hard man and emerge as a new type of man, strong on the inside, where it actually mattered for his development as a human being. Perhaps it was for the best that the hammer would swing, forcing Tam Clay to change and accept the responsibility that comes with being a grown man, husband and father, instead of hiding out on the margins, trying to come to terms with the fact that the hard man's characteristics have long become obsolete and anachronistic. Sadly, such a cathartic and dramatic change is not to be found within the stories of Tam Clay or Robert Hines (even though there seems to be an inkling of some hope for Tam) and the next step in the development of Scottish masculinity can easily make things even worse, as best portrayed by the work of Irvine Welsh.

**Post-War Masculinity**

The basic images and representations of masculinity within these two novels make an interesting contrast to the ones of the pre-war era. As stated earlier, Clay and Hines are suffering from a sense of marginalisation and alienation brought about by changes in the social structure and the post-feminist reversal of the patriarchy. One could even say that the resignation from their male responsibilities, the obsolescence of male prowess and alpha male performance, the collapse of the patriarchal male dominance and the sense of unstable and ever-changing gender roles result in an emasculation or feminisation of masculinity. This can in fact be traced back to World War II when women's role and importance to the workplace was increased by the lack of male workers,

which consequently led to an increase in women's advancement within the workplace as well as changes in gender roles, especially within the family unit. The patriarchal role men had created for themselves as breadwinners who dominated their families was abolished. In a society such as the one found within the Scottish urban working-class, where being a hard man was in a way some men's only known way of proving themselves to their peers, this results in a crisis of masculinity. The hegemonic masculine ideals had provided the Scottish men with power and privilege in the home and society, at the cost of a certain alienation from their family life, which led to tension "between the ideals of masculinity and the experience of family life that is expressed in 'feminized' terms of nurturance, caring, self-sacrifice, and dependence."[169] When the only known precedents the Scottish man has known of real masculinity are the brutish hard men, it is no wonder that simpletons like Clay and Hines feel alienated and out of place, as they were brought up in a society where men have been taught to be strong, dominant and impassive but suddenly have to reverse all those values and find inner strength, emotional stability and a loyalty towards the family unit instead. The crisis and alienation is even enhanced in a situation where the man fails to live up to his social responsibilities, i.e. being upwardly mobile in the workplace and keeping away from alcohol or other indulgences. David Morgan states that around this time the respectable breadwinning working man and the sober, rational member of the bourgeoisie had a lot in common in terms of a sense of what it was to be a man,[170] and the fact that Clay and Hines fill neither category could explain their subconsciously panic-driven reaction to marginalise themselves.

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[169] Adams & Coltrane, 242.
[170] David Morgan, "Class and Masculinity," in *Handbook of Studies on Men & Masculinities,* eds. M. S. Kimmel, J. Hearn and R.W. Connell (California: Sage, 2005), 176.

The failure of men such as Clay and Hines within their families and society, as well as their incapacity to live up to the changing standards, should by itself be sufficient to drive them out to the margins, as has been explained, but the pressure is also increased by the fact that they are failing the patriarchy and abandoning the symbolical position the hard man had built for himself within his society. Not only are they obviously failing as 'domesticated' modern men but as hard men as well. Schoene has pointed out that the hegemonic configuration of masculinity that legitimises the patriarchal domination of men and subordination of women is always bound "to constitute an impossible, phantasmatic ideal that ultimately no man can live up to or fulfil" and that as a result "all flesh-and-blood masculinities must ineluctably find themselves in a position of either complicity, marginality or subordination."[171] One can only imagine the effect of this theory on any man trying to live up to the image of the Scottish hard man and its overblown machismo. Characters such as Hines and Clay are almost brutally subjected to their own inferiority with the changed gender roles, in a social and domestic sense. Hames has stated that the masculinity of Kelman's protagonists is vexed: "his men of inaction are stoic but ineffectual; if they are enslaved by objective circumstances, they are unchallenged masters of the interior reality to which they escape, the ideologically 'feminine' space where their moral and intellectual selfhood is most firmly anchored."[172] This could also easily apply to Tam Clay and Hames further emphasises his point by quoting Ben Knights, who has identified Kelman's many narratives of men who find their situation unbearable but have nowhere to go: "Forced by poverty into the private world of flats or lone wanderings, the only place to flee is into an interior world, a virtuoso performance to an audience in the head. The isolated man acts out imaginary roles before an

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[171] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, xii.
[172] Hames, 68.

interior audience."[173] This might seem like a rather damaging escape route and in fact the two novels suggest that this can easily lead the characters into an emotional cul-de-sac of sorts, but when compared to the alternative escape route under study in the next chapter this particular route seems ideal and exemplary by comparison.

Another important element to keep in mind regarding the masculinity portrayed in the two novels and its sociological relevance is the inescapable sense of apathy and lack of emotion. It is quite astonishing to study how each and every one of the eight main male protagonists suffers from this same personality flaw. Throughout the century, Scottish men in fiction do not get along with their wives or girlfriends; almost every relationship between father and son is troubled; they are unable to express their feelings or thoughts; and they have difficulty in showing emotions, as if it were a weakness. Any such generalisation should of course be taken with a grain of salt, but nonetheless these flaws can be found within a vast majority of Scottish twentieth-century novels, written by male authors and concerning male protagonists. The strong Calvinistic roots and their appendant austerity, moral seriousness and rigidity are certainly to blame to some extent, as well as the prevailing sense of patriarchy within Scottish history and literature. Boyd states that the Scotsman in love seems to have a difficulty in expressing himself and that terms of endearment do not come easily to him,[174] but perhaps one could even reach even further and state that the Scotsman in love has a difficulty in expressing his emotions to *himself*, i.e. fully realizing the importance of feelings associated with love and affection. Perhaps, at this place and time (Scotland between the 1970s and 1990s), men were simply shaking free from the patriarchal chains that kept them in old Gourlay's shadow and needed

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[173] Ben Knights, *Writing Masculinities: Male Narratives in Twentieth-century Fiction* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 190.
[174] Boyd, 102.

time to fully comprehend the emotional masculinity that was suddenly on offer. Michael Kaufman has studied exactly how the transformation of masculinity from the dominant patriarchy has led to fear and pain and his results could almost suggest that Hines and Clay had been used as examples or guinea pigs in his studies. Kaufman claims that men who cannot escape the patriarchy's idea of hegemonic masculinity tend to suppress "a range of emotions, needs, and possibilities, such as nurturing, receptivity, empathy, and compassion, which are experienced as inconsistent with the power of manhood" because they come to be associated with the femininity that men have rejected as parts of their quest for masculinity. But when men begin to actually experience the range of needs and feelings that have been deemed inconsistent with manhood they become the source of enormous fear and pain.[175] Kaufman continues by pointing out that this pain and fear shapes a certain sense of manhood where masculinity becomes a form of alienation, which is in fact caused by ignorance of men's own emotions, feelings, needs and potential for human connection and nurturance. This is why men tend to distance themselves from women as well as other men even though they find ways of male bonding through clubs, sporting events, locker rooms etc.[176] The ideal manner for the Scottish male in the 1970s to exercise any kind of male bonding is of course in the pub, but any type of emotional bonding with women seems non-existent in the fiction. It must also be stated that a man's lack of emotion could be traced to the fact that men were encouraged to think that feelings and emotions could have no place in a rational determination of their behaviour. Victor J. Seidler even argues that men have been taught to despise their emotional selves from an early age because softness means weakness and

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[175] Michael Kaufman, "Men, Feminism and Men's Contradictory Experiences of Power," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod and M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 148-149.
[176] Ibid., 150-151.

can put any man's masculinity in question.[177] It would thus be questionable to state that Hines' and Clay's behaviour is a particularly Scottish phenomenon, but nonetheless the hard man's dominating image only serves to fortify these elements, making the Scottish male protagonists of the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s especially sensitive to them, as masterfully portrayed in the two novels by Kelman and Torrington.

It should also be made clear that the two novelists were themselves struggling with patriarchy and the image of the hard man, just like any other Scottish novelist is bound to do. "It is almost as if the Glasgow writer, like the Glasgow man, should not be seen to be soft, should not be seen to be not macho" as Edwin Morgan expresses it.[178] The influence and importance of male novelists in Scottish twentieth-century fiction has already been made clear and the same could of course be said about their male creations. This seems obvious to a Scottish female writer like Zoë Strachan, who states that even though Kelman was a huge influence on her, she could never identify with any of his female characters: "It was the male characters who compelled me. I admired and identified with their yearning, their angst."[179] It is always dubious to overemphasise the autobiographical elements of any novel, but surely Kelman and Torrington felt similar pressure to perform as did Hines and Clay. The fictional characters had to prove that they were strong but sensitive, emotional but apathetic, and their creators had to prove that they could write about the men everybody knew but at the same time creating something new, and they succeeded in shifting several of the hard man's personal traits or flaws into confused and alienated men who tried to stay strong, as they had been taught,

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[177] Seidler, 49-50.
[178] Edwin Morgan, "Tradition and Experiment in the Glasgow Novel," in *The Scottish Novel since the Seventies*, eds. G. Wallace and R. Stevenson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 90.
[179] Strachan, 55.

while distancing themselves from emotions and intimate relationships, which resulted in an overwhelming sense of fear and marginalisation.

**The New "Hard" Man**

This is perhaps the very essence of the Scottish masculinity portrayed in the novels of the last three decades of the twentieth century: The hard man has been replaced by an alienated man who has to struggle with the leftovers of many of the hard man's personality flaws. This transition is perhaps nowhere as clear as in Alexander Trocchi's novel *Young Adam.* Trocchi was actually a bit ahead of his time, as the novel was written in 1954, but it is an excellent starting point in the transition and easily sets the tone for others, such as Kelman. The novel tells the story of a young man who has actually been driven by fear and bewilderment into murdering his pregnant girlfriend. He escapes his Glasgow surroundings by working on a barge with an older couple, where he slowly replaces the hard man (Leslie), not by becoming 'the man of the house' but simply 'the man in the bed.' Leslie had been a big man when he was younger "and he was still big at the time, but his muscles were running to flesh and his face was heavy round the chin."[180] He is also tattooed all over, with serpents, monograms, wreaths, hearts and anchors, each tattoo representing one woman he had been with.[181] He is cold on the outside as well as the inside and cannot even perform in bed anymore. Just like the typical hard man, he has become obsolete and useless. He allows the younger protagonist to drive him off the barge, without the slightest objection, and to take his place in his wife's (Ella's) bed. But Ella had always been the owner of the barge and it becomes evident that she is in charge. She manipulates and dominates the younger male protagonist and almost becomes a mother-image for

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[180] Alexander Trocchi, *Young Adam* (1954; New York: Grove Press, 1996), 7.
[181] Ibid., 18.

the lost and alienated man to escape to. He thinks suspiciously often about her belly and in one sex scene between them he has the impulse to abandon himself and his freedom to the sheer physical power of the woman while she thrusts her abdomen towards him, wanting to place himself quietly at her mercy.[182] It is almost as if the young male has replaced the old hard man without knowing what he was getting himself into. One could even go as far as to categorise the novel as an allegory for the post-feminist reversal of the patriarchy, but for the purpose of this essay it will have to suffice to call it an extremely symbolic representation of the transformation that takes place in the literary haracterisation of Scottish post-war masculinity. The hard man has lost his dominance over his home and society and the dramatic social changes have brought women out from their limited role as homemakers and into the workplace, creating an extreme transition of gender roles. However, the overwhelming puissance of the Scottish hard man's character cannot be escaped so easily and the result is a masculinity that society fails to domesticate. The manifestation is an uninspiring, marginalised man, suffering from inertia and trying his best to utilise the few defence mechanisms he can still muster. In the case of the busconductor Hines, Tam Clay and several other male protagonists, there exists within them a remnant of the failed hard man's masculinity which has a devastating effect on the men's search for masculine identity and a place within the new society. But, as stated earlier, things get even worse when these men start to fight back through anti-social behaviour, self-destruction and the utilisation of one of the most powerful escape mechanisms known to man - substance abuse and intoxication – as will be studied more closely in the next chapter.

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[182] Trocchi, 104.

Chapter 5
**Junk and Drunk Dilemmas:**
*Trainspotting* **and** *The Sound of My Voice*

The four novels chosen to represent masculinity in Scottish post-war fiction are split into two groups, not between two distinct literary movements, genres or eras, but basically between two thematic differences within the four novels. The two novels by Kelman and Torrington studied in the previous chapter portrayed poor, frightened, unmotivated men who had become marginalised by changing gender roles within society and the family unit, and the characters studied in this chapter are in a somewhat similar position despite the obvious difference in their reactions to it. Kelman was a huge influence on Scottish fiction in the 1980s and 1990s and characters such as Hines became an almost familiar feature in Scottish literature, but writers such as Irvine Welsh and Alasdair Gray chose a completely different manner of characterisation. First of all, their use of grotesque reality, fantasy and several of man's darkest possibilities gave their novels a new and exciting edge and a possible escape from the stasis of Kelman's urban realism. At the same time their characters delved even deeper into being marginalised, becoming completely lost and resorting to extreme escape mechanisms, such as fantasy, substance abuse and over-indulgence to name a few. These mechanisms provide a delusional way out for the characters, while at the same time strapping them even tighter into the reality they wish to escape. The most ideal example of such a novel is *Trainspotting* (1993) by Irvine Welsh, who is regularly referred to as the 'poet laureate of the chemical generation,' whatever that means. Welsh is the perfect representative of the modern era in Scottish fiction and even though his characters share many of the melancholic traits and characteristics found in the urban realism of the 1970s and 1980s, Welsh manages to shine a completely different light on his characters by moving

deeper into the harsh reality, while at the same time making it extremely uncanny. It would also have been ideal to include a novel by Alasdair Gray but it must be admitted that this essayist's fascination with Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice* (1987) was the defining factor in its choice as one of the eight, even though many of Gray's novels, especially *Lanark* (1981) and *1982, Janine* (1984) would have made excellent alternatives. Butlin's novel is simply so masterfully crafted that it had to be included in the essay, especially since the male protagonist suited so many of the elements under study. The fact that the story is about an upper middle-class male even made it a welcome relief from working-class masculinity. Both novels deal with men in crisis, where alienation, marginalisation and fear are involved, but the subject-matter is handled differently than in the novels by Kelman and Torrington. In these two novels the escape via drugs or alcohol has become the main issue and it is also quite interesting to witness the resurrection of the overblown hard man with Welsh's creation of Francis Begbie. It is in fact safe to state that the downward spiral of Scottish masculinity in twentieth-century fiction reaches its bottom in these two (and other similar) novels.

**Further Marginalisation**

The changed social structure that Scottish men were facing in the 1980s and 1990s has already been explored in the previous chapter, and it is important to keep the Kelmanesque approach to the modern crisis of masculinity in mind. Several of those elements can certainly be found within the work of Welsh and Butlin, as well as many of Alasdair Gray's novels. For instance, the marginalisation of Duncan Thaw in Gray's *Lanark* could easily earn him a place in the same category as Kelman's *Busconductor Hines*, while the excessive, imagined scenes of sexual perversion in *1982, Janine* and Jock McLeish's

apparent alcoholism and urges for escapism deserve a place alongside Welsh and Butlin. One could even use Gray as a sort of link or bridge between the two approaches. In Schoene's excellent essay on *1982, Janine,* called "This Stiff State Does Not Suit Man," he points out the important images of masculine presentation within the novel. He claims that being a man has seriously affected Jock's emotional maturation and brought his life to a virtual standstill with the ensuing tedium and insufferable monomania finding relief in a compulsive reiteration of self-aggrandising masturbatory fantasies of control and mastery. Furthermore, he states that Gray's novel represents a male author's exposure of traditional masculinity as little more than delirious, automatised self-abuse wherein patriarchal man is permanently engaged in a pathetic wrangle with his own inadequacies and insecurities, troubled by a paranoid fear of impotence and inferiority.[183] Gray masterfully explores these themes in an extremely Freudian manner via Jock's fantasies, and the fact that Jock is inert and motionless while placing the women in his life in obedient roles that he controls in his fantasies is a symbolism that should not escape anyone. Many of the elements studied in the essay can be found in the novel, for instance the troubled relationship between Jock and his wife and family; his constant fear, suicidal tendencies and longings for domination over women; Freudian hints of an extreme Oedipal complex and the distortion of penis-envy into penis-terror; abuse in several forms; the way changes in society affect masculinity, etc. The patriarchal shadow and the modern man's need to rebel against it is also ironically brought up when Jock thinks that his father would have detested the nasty sexual world he has devised: "I am sure he felt in his bones that sexuality was wicked. Which is why I feel in my bones that wickedness is sexy."[184] In the later half of the story, after Jock's failed

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[183] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, 130.
[184] Alasdair Gray, *1982, Janine* (1984; Edinburgh: Canongate, 2003), 147.

suicide attempt, he goes through a certain kind of catharsis, puts his life on track, gets in touch with his feelings and increasingly identifies with the potentially subversive position of feminine marginality,[185] so it could be said that Gray provides this essay's first example of an exploration of the Scottish male's possibilities for a sort of redemption.

Welsh, on the other hand, is not concerned with any kind of actual salvation or the slightest effort to rescue his characters. In fact, the main characters of *Trainspotting* are typical examples of what David Morgan calls "the failed masculinity of the downwardly mobile individual" whose failure in class terms may be read as an indication of a weakness of character that might be gendered (lack of ambition, alcoholism, etc.).[186] Another factor only serving to reinforce the downwardly mobile status, is the fact that nobody seems to expect anything from these characters, and no matter how deep they sink into the mire, nobody seems surprised. Welsh has stated that the old morals were going through drastic changes during the Thatcher-era, when being working-class was to be disenfranchised and that the additional factor of being Scottish within an English dominated union made people doubly marginalised.[187] He also states that the resultant crisis of identity could be seen in various forms, including the changes of gender roles, where a man who did his best to become a 'good man' according to the previous standards was now suddenly considered a loser.[188] These changes seem to have affected Welsh and Butlin just as they had affected Kelman and Torrington, but they make the sense of alienation and escapism much more evident with the introduction of drug-abuse and heavy drinking. The male protagonists have completely abandoned their roles and become utterly

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[185] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, 142-143.
[186] D. Morgan, "Class and Masculinity," 171.
[187] Ian Peddie, "Speaking Welsh: Irvine Welsh in Conversation," *Scottish Studies Review* 8:1 (2007), 133.
[188] Ibid.

victimised by their own alienation within society. Gill Plain claims that the world Welsh describes "…offering a career trajectory of drink, drugs, violence, prison and hardened criminality, is a male world, reminding us that Scotland, like most nations, is constructed and understood through reference to masculinity."[189] The two novelists, through their portrayals of addicts and alcoholics, are thus examining the worst possible trajectory of Scottish masculinity, or what one could refer to as the Scottish patriarchy's most horrifying offspring. Things seemed utterly hopeless in the works of Kelman and Torrington where men had become despondent and marginalised by fear and a sense of lost identity, but Welsh and Butlin drag things down to a completely different level of despondency and grotesque realism, where abuse, violence, racism, sexism and homophobia become by-products of a deformed masculinity. However, it must be stated that the authors were simply reflecting the reality that was facing them, for the de-industrialisation and mass-unemployment of the late 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with the influx of cheap heroin into Scotland, was blighting the poor working-class environment with problems such as drug addiction, crime and the spread of AIDS, trapping a vast number of the country's poorest citizens in horrible surroundings.[190] Heavy drinking and alcoholism have also been constantly on the increase in Scotland ever since the 1980s, especially among the 'manual social classes.'[191] It is therefore sad to say that Welsh and Butlin's portrayals were reflecting the bleak reality for some, even though the presentation is grotesque or even hyperbolic, as in Welsh's case. This simply reinforces the idea that the two novelists' *fin de siècle* portrayals of abusive masculinity serve as important

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[189] Plain, 134.
[190] Kelly, 3.
[191] Alcohol Information Scotland: "Alcohol Consumption," Online 4 October 2008 at: <http://www.alcoholinformation.isdsscotland.org/alcohol_misuse/ controller?p_service=Content.show&p_applic=CCC&pContentID=1437>

contribution to the study of how Scottish masculinity has progressed in fiction throughout the century.

**Irvine Welsh**

Even though Welsh and Butlin get to share this chapter of the essay it is unavoidable to devote more space to Welsh, seeing that he is one of the most important modern Scottish novelists and probably the best-known outside Scotland, largely because of the enormous success of Danny Boyle's film adaptation of *Trainspotting* in 1996. Welsh brought Edinburgh into the largely Glasgow-dominated category of the post-1970s urban novel with such force that the label 'Glasgow-novel' almost became outdated. The prevailing story (or myth) about Welsh is that he was a bad-boy and former junky who turned novelist by mistake,[192] and Aaron Kelly states that Welsh is often viewed as a Scottish William Burroughs because of his dubious past, brushes with the law and eighteen month stint as a heroin user.[193] This dark-side of his past and his strong nationalistic tendencies were most likely the chief inspirations for *Trainspotting* and the brutally honest and detailed descriptions of the life of heroin-addicts was clearly written from first-hand experience. It even made such an impact that innumerable imitations have been written ever since its publication. The novel was followed with a sequel, *Porno*, in 2002, which will not be included in this study for obvious chronological reasons. It is difficult to imagine how time will treat Welsh or if he can ever step out of the shadow of *Trainspotting*, but he has certainly written several other interesting and important novels, mostly about people on the margins of society and often focusing on the bizarre, grotesque or carnivalesque. Some critics have claimed that increasing splattershock

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[192] Robert Morace, *Irvine Welsh´s Trainspotting* (New York: Continuum, 2001), 5.
[193] Kelly, 4.

sensationalism and waning artistry has been troubling his later novels, and there is some truth to these allegations, especially regarding Welsh's need to constantly shock his readers by stretching further over the edge.[194] Nevertheless, he should be praised for inspiring confidence in other Scottish novelists as well as being instrumental in the creation of a global market for Scottish fiction.[195]

Welsh's 'druggie writing' is profusely influenced by Burroughs and Alexander Trocchi (another Scottish addict and writer), but he also acknowledges the tradition of Scottish literature "with split or multiple selves, formal fracture and different modes and registers of voice"[196] that has filtered into his own work. He has traced a line of influential precursors back to Hogg and emphasised the importance of Kelman, Gray, Grassic Gibbon and McIlvanney, even pinpointing *The Busconductor Hines* and *Docherty* as vital influences, (which serves as an interesting point of inter-textuality for this essay). Welsh has, however, managed to create his own distinct voice and undoubtedly secured his place amongst these other giants as an influence on future generations of Scottish novelists. Characterisation is without doubt Welsh's strongest point and several of his characters seem to share certain traits and elements in relation to the recurring themes of his novels. For instance, many of his (predominantly male) characters are violent, sexist, racist, homophobic, marginalised, alienated, confused or downright rotten to the core, and many of them are hooligans, drug addicts, alcoholics and psychopaths. Horton has pointed out that Welsh's characters "are not nostalgic for old working-class certainties, in part because they were always already excluded from them anyway" and that they are "crucially ambivalent figures who problematise the traditional notion that youth subcultures are to be

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[194] Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting*, 14.
[195] Robert Morace, "Irvine Welsh: Parochialism, Pornography and Globalisation," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 227.
[196] Kelly, 11.

understood solely through their opposition to the mainstream."[197] Elements of rebellion and images of the Angry Young Man are evident within his novels, especially *Trainspotting,* where the main characters find the worst possible way of fighting back from their alienated status within society and creating their own identity with a sort of miserable counter-culture where every possible law, moral code and standardisation of modern society are shattered.

It is interesting to study how this counter-culture and escapism affects the image of masculinity within Welsh's novels. In fact, Kelly claims that gender "fractures the supposedly homogenous fabric of the nation as much as the class tensions in Welsh's work" and that Welsh links this disempowering crisis in class solidarity with a crisis in masculinity, or an emasculation of the collective.[198] Furthermore, Welsh satirically acknowledges the shift in gender relations within consumer capitalism "whereby men are no longer secure as merely the dominant subjects who affirm their power through the scopic regulation of women as objects, and are becoming the object of various social, commercial and cultural gazes themselves."[199] The protagonists of Welsh's novels *Marabou Stork Nightmares* (1995) and *Filth* (1998) are perhaps his most hyperbolic and carnivalesque representations of dominant, misogynistic and oppressive masculinity that gradually implodes as Welsh offers a kind of "zero condition of masculinity in which there are only two options available: either to participate fully in a hyper-masculine psychosis or to undergo self-annihilation."[200] In fact, both of these protagonists portray a certain demise of the oppressive masculinity, as Roy Strang (perhaps a descendant of Gillespie?) narrates his story from a coma and is later murdered by a woman he had previously raped, whereas Bruce

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[197] Horton, 226.
[198] Kelly, 19. Kelly is in fact paraphrasing from Irvine Welsh's article "City Tripper" in *The Guardian*, G2 (16.02. 96), 4.
[199] Ibid., 95.
[200] Ibid., 172.

Robertson carefully maintains the façade of a brutally violent hard man who in private dresses up in women's clothing and is being invaded by a tapeworm which slowly takes over the narrative and serves as a tormenting inner self. Welsh devotes much time and attention to the portrayal of masculinity in his novels and it is quite interesting to study how far these men have actually strayed from the foundation of Scottish masculinity in twentieth-century fiction, which was laid by Gourlay and Gillespie, while at the same time still hanging on to several of the typical hard man's most dangerous and destructive characteristics. It could be said that Welsh was simply carrying the torch of the 'Caledonian Antisyzygy', fully realizing the importance of the Scottish duality. In fact, Welsh has himself shown a strong tendency towards a personal 'Antisyzygy' as his association with football hooligans and male subcultures, including writing a column for *Loaded,* make an interesting contrast to his MBA dissertation on the disadvantages suffered by women in the workplace and his participation in men's self-help and awareness groups.[201] It is comforting to know that the author has a softer side, especially as a contrast to the horribly grotesque representation of masculinity in his novels. The gender issues are certainly widespread throughout his novels and his contribution to the study of masculinity in modern Scottish fiction is invaluable, but the portrayal of the major characters from his debut novel will have to suffice for the purpose of this essay.

### *Trainspotting*

Kirstin Innes states that "Scotland's literary landscape has never quite recovered from *Trainspotting*" and that it has "imprinted itself indelibly on the Scottish

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[201] Kelly, 4.

psyche."[202] This becomes a somewhat troubling fact when it is taken into account that many of the novel's major thematic elements involve a sense of absence, loss and alienation that leads to violence and drug abuse, a nihilistic, self-destructive ethos of decadence, cruelty towards animals, misogyny, racism and xenophobia, and images of utter malignance, death, brutality and horror. It is in fact astonishing how Welsh manages to create such a strong, important, relevant and profound novel with such alarming ingredients, but his stylistic approach of surrounding the text with an aura of airy satirical irony and humour is extremely successful. The humour is intensely physical, grotesque and scatological and Welsh seems to have a somewhat Rabelaisian preoccupation with human orifices, needle holes and bodily fluids.[203] The cynicism is often masterfully crafted, like when Renton, a heroin addict, thinks of the terrible poison people have ingested by eating meat and sardonically reflects to himself: "You have to watch what you put into your body."[204] The structure of the novel is also somewhat unusual and Welsh constantly shifts his narrative between different narrators, but in such a way that each character becomes vivid and unique, each with his/her own approach to language, which helps to define and identify them. The characterisation is simply superb, despite the variegated interior monologues and constant shift in point-of-view, and Welsh somehow manages to portray a solid ensemble out of the different voices, creating a sort of microcosmic society of which each unique character becomes a spokesperson.

Social criticism is evident in the novel and Welsh portrays a horrible side of working-class life at the end of the twentieth century - a much more horrible side than Kelman and others before him – where the working-class community is

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[202] Kirstin Innes, "Mark Renton's Bairns: Identity and Language in the Post-*Trainspotting* Novel," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 301.
[203] Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting*, 35.
[204] Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993; London: Vintage, 1999), 148.
All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated T.

simply not working, in the sense that it is characterised by mass unemployment and indolence, as well as having lost the sense of a network of collective experience and tradition that earlier working-class communities had shared.[205] Kelly claims that even though the novel is driven by "an indomitable rage and resistance to dominant accounts of social improvement and access for it" it also harbours a sense of deeply pessimistic musing "upon the internecine and regressive violent identities that can be borne out of this disintegration of traditional class and masculine alignments."[206] Gardiner observes that the novel's key themes range from sectarianism to gender and points out that it was published after fourteen years of Conservative government, where the figure of the junkie was placed at the bottom of the social ladder in a system that reinstated the 'deserving poor', and that Welsh's characters were merely seeking to survive within the world of Thatcherism.[207] It is also important to point out that, at this particular time in history, large numbers of youths were growing up without any expectations of stable employment around which the familiar models of working-class masculinity were organized. Instead, they were facing economic marginality and severe deprivation, which had a devastating effect on their sense of masculinity.[208] Thus it seems as if the social criticism in the novel was not only directed at the shattered society and working-class community, but the very idea and images of working-class masculinity as well.

It must also be pointed out that in Renton's mind, Scotland becomes almost like an image or embodiment of the loss of identity, masculinity, a healthy society and even humanity. He calls Leith "A place ay dispossessed white trash

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[205] Kelly, 40.
[206] Ibid., 39-40.
[207] Gardiner, 89.
[208] Connell, *Masculinities*, 94.

in a trash country fill ay dispossessed white trash" (T, 190) and Scotland a country of failures:

> It's nae good blamin it oan the English fir colonising us. Ah don't hate the English. They're just wankers. We are colonised by wankers. […] What does that make us? The lowest of the fuckin low, the scum of the earth. The most wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic trash that was ever shat intae creation. Ah don't hate the English. They just git oan wi the shite thuv goat. Ah hate the Scots.
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> (T, 78)

There is no point in Welsh explaining pedantically how or why society has created such an utterly shattered sense of identity, but he manages to drag it out of the shadows, out from the margins without the slightest sense of political correctness, and perhaps this is exactly why the novel is so important.

The most defining element of the characteristics portrayed in the novel is the unmistakable escapism, which defines the very essence of the young men's rebellion. But even though Welsh makes heroin the most prominent escape route, he provides other ways as well, similar to those of American author Hubert Selby Jr. in his magnificent novel *Requiem for a Dream* (1979)*.* For instance, Begbie uses alcohol, violence and overblown machismo while Sick Boy uses sex and domination over women, and the evident links between these characteristics and the images of the hard man will be explored later. Renton is in fact the only one who systematically claims that heroin is the perfect escape from society and the banality of everyday life. Renton is the character most likely to receive the status of the protagonist, even though one could argue whether or not he is a hero or an anti-hero. His narrative voice seems to be the most salient; the novel starts and ends with his voice; the *Junk Dilemma* chapters are his; several other characters

are linked to the story through him and one could even say that in a way he gives the novel coherence and a sense of purpose.[209] Renton is also an extremely ambiguous character and his deliberate destruction of his obvious talent makes him somewhat cryptic. He is clearly more intelligent than any of his friends and he seems completely aware of his own alienation and botched rebellion. Like Torrington's Tam Clay, he realizes his own faults and self-deception, but it does not seem to discourage him. In fact he gives a rather convincing self-analytical account of his problems. He states that society cannot be changed to make it better and that he cannot change to accommodate it. This state of affairs induces depression on his part and all his anger turns inward. The depression results in demotivation and a void grows within him, which he fills with heroin. Heroin also satisfies his need to destroy himself because of the inwardly turned anger (T, 186). Such an intellectual account of one's own psychological complexes suggest a more than able mind and a fair share of intellect and Renton is clever enough to switch between accents whenever it is needed, using English when it is to his obvious benefit. He also operates a complicated gyro-scheme whereby he collects unemployment benefits from five different locations. He has to be dishonest in order to finance his habit, but there are also various hints of him actually being a rather bad person. He sees something ugly in everyone else in order to gain confidence, is cruel to animals, has developed the junkie's skill of lying with conviction until he lies more convincingly than he tells the truth, and in the end he steals from his friends.

Renton's ideas about the state of society and masculinity follow Welsh's obvious emphasis on these matters. For instance, when a girl called Ali claims that heroin "beats any meat injection… that beats any fuckin cock in the world" (T,

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[209] Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting*, 56.

9), Renton becomes extremely unnerved to the extent that he has to feel his own genitals through his trousers to see if they are still there. This bout of Freudian castration anxiety is not simply humorous, but it also shows that Renton's alienation from his own male body "adumbrates the novel's broader detailing of the abjection of traditional identities."[210] The social commentary and images of a masculinity crisis are also brilliantly brought together in Renton's anti-nationalistic ravings where Scotland is seen as powerless, inferior or even feminised.[211] Furthermore, it is even suggested, both by his nickname (Rent boy) and a homoerotic encounter with another man that he is a homosexual, or at least bisexual, which makes him an interesting contrast to Begbie's transparent homophobia. Renton is in fact quite different from all of his friends in numerous aspects, even stating at one point that he never feels more alone than when he is surrounded by the cunts that are closest to him (T, 175). Thus the sense of alienation becomes overwhelming and the necessity of the final act of choosing a realistic escape route is vital to his survival.

Of the numerous other characters in the novel, the most memorable (and the ones who reappear in *Porno*) are Spud, Sick Boy and Begbie. Spud is perhaps the most pitiful member of the group and often acts more like a child or simpleton. His interior monologues are hilariously simple-minded, but honest and sincere at the same time. He barely manages to put a coherent sentence together and is without a doubt the novel's most victimised character. He has a sense of decency which the others do not seem to share, and feels sick when witnessing Renton hurting a squirrel. He is also the victim of the most obvious emasculation in the novel, experiencing a sense of being raped when Begbie makes him partake in violence and later being burned with Vicks vapour rub

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[210] Kelly, 41.
[211] Horton, 227.

when his girlfriend accidentally applies it to his member instead of a lubricant. A definite contrast to Spud's character can be seen in Sick Boy, especially when it comes to the masculine trait of womanizing. Spud is clumsy, timid and withdrawn around women while Sick Boy bursts with confidence and claims his alpha male status through sexual prowess. He enjoys hurting people and animals and has interesting fantasies about some sort of connection between himself and Sean Connery (the very image of Scottish on-screen masculinity in the latter half of the century). There also seems to be something slightly demonic about Sick Boy, especially in regards to his seductive powers. He is a user of both drugs and people "and his entrepreneurial instincts find an outlet in his preying upon and pimping numerous women,"[212] which results in him later becoming a full-blown pimp in *Porno*. He thinks of himself as a yuppie instead of a junkie and reveals his extravagant pride by thinking that his friends are all losers while he is "*numero uno,*" knowing that all his friends suffer from sexual jealousy. However, such attributes are only skin-deep and his failure as a man and father is represented with the death of his daughter, Dawn. It seems as though the masculinity portrayed in the novel is hopelessly unfit for measuring up to any demands from society or family and Sick Boy's powers are reminiscent of the hard man's characteristics that have repeatedly been mentioned within this essay. Renton and Spud have several attributes in common with the Kelmanesque images of masculinity while Sick Boy and Begbie's attributes can be traced back to the times of the mythical hard men, and they could in a way be seen as caricatures or hyperbolic representations of Scottish hard men or ultra-men in contrast to the other two weaklings. It is obvious that Welsh studied the various representations of Scottish masculinity in fiction and Francis Begbie deserves the title of 'the

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[212] Kelly, 58.

resurrected hard man' and a closer inspection in this essay as well as claiming the throne of 'Scottish twentieth-century fiction's most hyperbolic hard man.'

Francis Begbie is without a doubt the novel's most menacing character and Morace justly labels him as "violence in its purest and most gratuitous form."[213] He is an unscrupulous, immoral, boastful and brutal sociopath, megalomaniac and hyperbolic hard man who bullies everyone around him, mercilessly beats up his girlfriend, while having the audacity to blame her for making him do it, and manipulates his friends with the threat of violence, unlike Sick Boy who uses people with shrewd seductive skills. The group has even created a whole "Begbie mythology," regarding his sense of humour, hardness, strength and loyalty, which even Begbie himself has started to believe (T, 82-83). The facts of the matter are that everybody fears Begbie and nobody is willing to test his strength (due to his apparent insanity). Begbie is like the working-class machos of the pre-war era and makes a performance of his hardness with displays of violence and brutality as well as constantly telling stories about himself as a strongman and stud. He is reminiscent of one of Fromm's archetypical types of masculinity, which he called the 'authoritarian type.' This type was particularly involved in the maintenance of patriarchy: "marked by hatred for homosexuals and contempt for women, as well as a more general conformity to authority from above, and aggression towards the less powerful. These traits were traced back to rigid parenting, dominance of the family by the father, sexual repression and conservative morality."[214] The novel does not shed a light on Begbie's youth but one can imagine that this criteria applies, especially when the history of Scottish rigidity and dominant masculinity is kept in mind. Begbie's father appears as a bum in the novel and Begbie's reaction to seeing

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[213] Morace, *Irvine Welsh's Trainspotting*, 55.
[214] Connell, *Masculinities*, 18.

him is boiling anger and frustration, which he vents on some innocent bystander by brutally beating him up. Begbie can easily be categorised as an example of 'authoritarian masculinity' and one cannot help but recall the images of manhood portrayed by Gourlay and Gillespie, even though Begbie has no logical reason for his tyranny, such as a battle over the marketplace.

A hatred for homosexuals and homophobia is an important element of Begbie's character, not only as an authoritarian characteristic, but as a widely studied phenomenon of masculine psyche. Kimmel claims that homophobia is men's fear of other men unmasking them, emasculating them and revealing to them and the world that they do not measure up and that they are not real men. But men are afraid to let other men see this fear and it makes them ashamed, because the recognition of fear in themselves is proof that they are not as manly as they pretend to be.[215] Kaufman adds that childhood images associated with dominant masculinity are pictures of omnipotence, which no man can obtain. It is impossible to live up to them (just like the image of the hard man itself). Men cannot help but experience needs and feelings that are deemed inconsistent with manhood and this becomes the source of enormous fear, which leads to homophobia as the vehicle that simultaneously transmits and quells the fear.[216] Begbie would, of course, rather fight every man alive than admitting that his homophobia is the result of fear, but that is exactly the point. The images of the hard man he constantly puts on display are so utterly hyperbolic and impossible to live up to that his identity becomes degenerated. No human being can possibly be so hard. Perhaps Welsh is like a Shakespearean jester, placing much more truth in the hyperbolic and ironical creation of Begbie than one might think at first glance. Perhaps it is even a reminder of the hard man's irrational nature, which is

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[215] Kimmel, 131.
[216] Kaufman, 148-9.

best portrayed by a hyperbolic or allegorical representation. It is also quite ironic and symbolic that while Renton's parents are chastising him, they tell him to be more like Sick Boy (who is much more rotten on the inside but puts on a better show) and Begbie: "…total fuckin crazy psycho Beggars, is held up as an archetypal model of manhood Ecosse" (T, 198).

**Butlin and the Voice**

Ron Butlin gives an interesting contrast to the grotesque world of *Trainspotting,* but at the same time sharing several elements with it, in *The Sound of My Voice.* The novel is mostly an interior monologue of the protagonist, Morris Magellan, an executive of a biscuit company who has been driven to alcoholism by an alarming inner turmoil, mostly caused by his apathetic father and his sense of lost identity within his own family. The main contrast to Welsh's novels is, of course, the fact that the protagonist is a member of the upper middle class who seems to "…embody the narrow vision of '80s-style success: good job, house in the suburbs, nice wife and kids, conformist lifestyle."[217] The novel is thus a welcome escape from the gloomy working-class setting, while unexpectedly sharing many of the problems associated with it. For instance, Magellan's position and status (the one accepted and encouraged by modern society) has no positive effect on his sense of identity or manhood. In fact, it drives him even further out to the margins and into his chosen form of escapism via heavy drinking. On the outside, Morris is the embodiment of Thatcherite values, but on the inside he hides a weak and shattered identity and a sense of masculinity in severe crisis. Welsh has pointed out that unlike the anti-heroes of the New York- and London-based yuppie novels, Magellan does not simply emerge as a mere victim of 1980s

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[217] Irvine Welsh, Introduction to Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice* (London: Serpent's Tail, 2002). vii.

excess. He is not overindulging and hoping to find the right woman, have kids and settle down. He has already acquired all these things, but they do not seem to ease his mind or give him a sense of accomplishment, and thus he becomes a terrifying ghost at the feast of 1980s consumerism.[218]

Butlin is also writing about the question of Scottish identity and Wallace even goes so far as to refer to his novel as the most ambitious rendition of all the tropes of damaged identity hitherto achieved by a Scottish writer, wherein the protagonist struggles to escape a poisoned Scottish past that has exacerbated his increasingly destructive alcoholism.[219] Furthermore, he claims that the narrative voice is "the sound of the Scottish divided self locked into a newly-deranged and disarming conflict; damaged identity skinned down to the raw of its exposed nerves."[220] It is true that Magellan has several elements in common with other fictional Scottish twentieth-century males and when his characteristics are studied it becomes evident that he shares many of the most prominent elements of Scottish masculinity emphasised in this essay: overblown pride, a tendency towards violence or excessive rage, a demoralising father, callousness, the inability to express himself, a troubled marriage, superficiality and downright failure to perform as a man on several levels. The predominant factor is Magellan's relationship with his father, a typical Scottish paternal tyrant who crushes his son's emotional side and instils within him a shattering sense of masculine rigidity and pride, resulting in utter alienation in the modern setting and a crippling sense of guilt and shame. His father is completely unemotional in an almost Gourlayesque manner and when Magellan was younger he knew that if he dared reach out to his father in any way or make the slightest demand upon him, he would be ignored: "Any affection you showed, he withdrew from. Any love you

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[218] Welsh, Introduction to Ron Butlin's *The Sound of My Voice*, viii.
[219] Wallace, "Voices in Empty Houses," 228.
[220] Ibid., 229.

expressed, he crushed utterly."[221] Even the innocent act of singing a silly pop song about love results in his father shouting angrily "What could you possibly know about *love*?" (SMV, 8) and repeating the word 'love' over and over again with scorn and disgust. When his father dies Magellan almost rapes a young girl, gathering into one moment all the years of his hatred and cruelty and longing to push them far into her (SMV, 16). He never fully experiences a sense of release from his father's influence and in turn becomes just like him in adulthood, i.e. unable to express his feelings or cope with his emotions. Butlin's own relationship with his father was apparently appalling and dominated by intolerable mental cruelty, stopping short of physical abuse, as his father would go for "the soul rather than the body,"[222] so he seems to have been writing with first-hand experience about the old Scottish paternal tyrant.

Magellan's emotional disabilities alienate him within his family in a similar manner as Hines or Tam Clay, but in his case the reversal of the gender roles in the workplace does not affect him. The shattering of his emotional side in his youth is mostly to blame, as the modern demand for masculine intimacy must surely be almost unbearable for the son of a rigid Scottish brute to muster. Adams and Coltrane state that whereas men 'come from' or 'have' families they can often experience difficulties being 'in' them "insofar as they typically seem incapable of offering the emotional intimacy or providing the personal care that have become the hallmarks of modern family life."[223] This should especially apply to those who have the shadow of the Scottish hard man looming over them. The troubles of the modern man and his inability to perform as a member of his family

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[221] Ron Butlin, *The Sound of My Voice* (1987; London: Serpent's Tail, 2002), 8. All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated SMV.

[222] Nicholas Royle, "Ron Butlin; 'In your mid-thirties, you've painted yourself into a corner. Drink is another layer of paint'" in *Independent* 10 August 2002. Online 30 November 2008 at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts entertainment/books/features /ron-butlin-in-your-midthirties-youve-painted-yourself-into-a-corner-drink-is-another-layer-of-paint-639351.html>

[223] Adams and Coltrane, 230.

(either as a husband or a father) can all be superficially washed away with alcohol and when Magellan drinks he ceases to struggle and slips gradually below an imagined surface where nothing can touch or hurt him: "All movement is slowed down, all noise silenced. Anxiety and even anger are no more than gentle disturbances in the atmosphere, caresses almost, ebbing back and forth" (SMV, 24). Alcohol serves as such an overwhelming escape mechanism for Magellan that it begins to take the form of an alternate reality or parallel world for him, where nothing and nobody can touch him and all the troubles associated with being a responsible individual are simply washed away as he floats in the womb-like world of intoxication. But similar to the other post-war men in crisis, he fully realizes his own faults and wishes he could change the seemingly hopeless situation. When his wife tries to reach out to him he briefly wishes that he was a snowman so that her touch could melt into him, soothing the pain deep inside, which he was unable to reach (SMV, 46). In several other scenes he wants to talk to her, express himself, reach out to her, hold her, apologise to her or show her the slightest bit of emotion, but he is completely incapable of doing so. He has even become unable to perform sexually and he cannot support his children with the slightest sense of paternal love or care. He has, almost in every sense of the word, failed as a man, unless when it comes to outside appearances, which he is constantly careful to maintain. He is performing, just like the working-class men in the times of Ewan Tavendale, but in a different and middle-class manner. While working-class masculinity is collective, physical and embodied, his middle-class masculinity is individualist, rational and relatively disembodied[224] and therefore his performance is superficial, as he fights to give the impression that everything is all right and strives to make things look good on the outside instead of fixing

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[224] D. Morgan, "Class and Masculinity," 170.

them on the inside, as has become typical in the modern world of materialism. He even manages to rationalise his drinking by thinking that he is not an alcoholic as long as he manages to show up for work.

It is quite interesting that alcohol has been following the men under study right from the time of Young Gourlay, who was the first to find solace in it, and it is fitting that the twentieth-century is concluded with novels about pure and simple abuse of alcohol or drugs. But it is also fitting that the century is concluded with the one aspect that sets Butlin's novel miles apart from the other seven, i.e. the sense of hope for Scottish masculinity. When Magellan has reached the lowest point of despondency, witnessing a stranger's death and feeling it to be his own and thus realizing that he has to overcome his fear before it completely overwhelms him, the novel's narrative 'voice' finally gets through to him and a sense of catharsis commences: "You have reached a moment quiet enough to hear the sound of my voice: so now, as you stare out into the darkness, accept the comfort it can give you – and the love. The love" (SMV, 103-104). By listening to this almost godlike inner voice of conscience and reason and accepting the emotions his father had so brutally banished, he manages to remove the shackles that have inhibited him from functioning and having sincere human emotions for so long. He confronts his past and his childhood, where all gestures of love, affection and self-respect had been crushed by his tyrannical father and the destructive Calvinist heritage, which so often leads to alcoholic compensation as a deadly inheritance.[225] And finally, as the 'voice' leads him and supports him, the image of his father symbolically vanishes from his sight and he weeps uncontrollably, thus providing the reader with a sense of hope for his future as he succumbs to a genuine human emotional outburst. It becomes quite clear that if

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[225] Wallace, "Voices in Empty Houses," 230.

Magellan manages to take one day at a time and allow the 'voice' to support him he can maintain the intimate relationship with his wife and children that seems to be developing at the end of the novel.

This sense of hope and catharsis and the positive conclusion to the masculine crisis is nowhere to be found in any of the other seven novels, and *The Sound of My Voice* is, in fact, the only primary source of this essay that ends on a distinctly positive note. However, one similar positive conclusion, which has already been mentioned, can be found in Gray's *1982, Janine* where Jock McLeish comes to grips with his past after his failed suicide attempt. As a young man, he had belonged to the group of "wee hard men" who "hammer Scotland down to the same dull level as themselves"[226] as the character of 'the writer' puts it, and later he allows a young woman to manipulate him into marriage with the help of her Docherty-esque father and brothers. He allows his work to consume him, makes himself completely predictable and stops growing or changing, helping the firm grow instead of himself, and becoming "a damned chilly gentlemanly mildmannered selfcrushing bore"[227] like his father. Like Magellan, he has been hiding for too long in the shadow of his alcoholism, as well as being consumed by perverted sexual fantasies where he exacts his revenge on the women whom he feels have dominated his life. In the end he seems to finally wake up and accept the fact that there is no one to blame but himself: "I used to be surrounded by love, I floated upon it without seeing it and rejected it again and again."[228] One might even say that the secret to Magellan's and Jock's salvation is to break free from the burdensome past and look ahead, as well as realizing that each man is instrumental in the making of his own destiny and the quality of his own life. It is also, in a sense, reasurring that at least two Scottish novelists,

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[226] Gray, 278.
[227] Ibid., 323.
[228] Ibid.

writing about masculine crisis in the 1980s, could find a positive conclusion to their protagonist's desperate predicament and the stories of Morris Magellan and Jock McLeish serve as a welcome counterbalance to the pessimism of Welsh's grotesque modern reality.

## Masculine Crisis

But what exactly have the four post-war era novels been stating about the status of masculinity in Scotland? Christopher Whyte claims that Welsh (along with Gray and Alan Warner) portrays a deeply disturbing picture of the crisis of masculinity where men struggle "to re-establish authority in a world which will no longer attribute it unquestioningly to them on the basis of their gender and their empowered position in society."[229] The power struggle and the changes in society have led to their alienation, which they resolve with the only means known to them, by asserting their power through violence, homophobia or anger, or by reverting to intoxication as a means of escaping. They encounter extreme troubles when searching for their appropriate niche within society and their family. Researchers into family violence have studied the contradictory coexistence of felt powerlessness and actual (if latent) power and found out that "men's subjective sense of lost or slipping control is often a precursor to wife beating"[230] and Kelly points out that Welsh's male characters often relate to women as objects upon which they project their various anxieties, hostilities and desires.[231] Perhaps the masculine crisis, so evidently portrayed in the four novels, is simply caused by the power struggle, where men are losing their patriarchal dominance over women. This feeling is reinforced intensely when the hard man's genes are brought into the picture, and the idea that the hard man is losing the power

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[229] Whyte, "Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction," 284.
[230] Coltrane, 55.
[231] Kelly, 51.

struggle seems to partly explain why exactly the masculinity of the 1970s through to the 1990s becomes so warped. It even becomes so degenerated that in another of the era's most important Scottish novels, Iain Bank's *Wasp Factory* (1984), a confused man is so horribly intent on getting rid of any feminine influence on his isolated existence that he raises his daughter up as a boy, telling her that she lost her phallus when a dog attacked her, pumping her full of hormones and creating a monster. The "boy" she becomes appears as "a manufactured, entirely fictitious creation, obsessively overcompensating for an imaginary, patriarchally inflicted lack of natural manliness by pursuing an extremist ideal of violent masculine perfection."[232] This is precisely what has been troubling the Scottish male characters throughout this era. They have been constantly chasing the tail of their own masculinity, trying to live up to the completely outdated images of the hard man and suffering deeply for the cold, rigid and dour conceptions of Scottish manhood. Their only hope is to break free from the tyrannical influence of the patriarchy and acknowledge how the hard man's influence poisons their ability to love themselves as well as others. Like Morris Magellan, they have to achieve a state of inner silence in order to hear what their inner voice has been saying all along and reach the point of reconciliation and healing to which it has been gently leading them.[233] The four protagonists of the post-war era novels are all fully aware of their own faults and they all share the need to reach out and belong. They simply have to realize that they have nothing to prove; that escapism and marginalisation are not the answers; that every human being is equipped with emotions and the ability to love and share intimacy; that it is impossible to live up to the standards of the hard man; that it is human to fall but divine to rise again and that they will utterly

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[232] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, 104-105.
[233] Wallace, "Voices in Empty Houses," 230.

and miserably fail if they try to assert their imaginary power and domination over everyone around them. There is hope for the modern man and he is fully capable of finding his place and identity, even though he is Scottish.

Chapter 6

**The Harder They Come:**
***Docherty* and the Awesome Wee Man**

When it was decided that William McIlvanney's *Docherty* would be one of the eight novels under study it posed a slight problem in regards to chronology and its correct placement within the essay. The novel was published in 1975 (which obviously makes it a post-war novel, written just nine years before *The Busconductor Hines)* but it tells the story of struggling working-class characters in the first decades of the century (which thematically earns it a place alongside Gibbon's *Grey Granite)*. The thematic elements seemed to outweigh the date of publication, and the novel was thus placed as the eighth and final novel to be studied and categorised as a pre-war narrative. This placement seems justified by the fact that McIlvanney's representation of masculinity has often been criticised for endorsing conservative and outdated emblems of working-class machismo,[234] and Christopher Whyte has even referred to him as Neil Gunn's successor in the 'gender kailyard', stating that his nostalgic paeans to heroic masculinity, for which post-industrial Scotland no longer has a place, render the man as a totem, which McIlvanney treats with almost religious reverence.[235] But the fact of the matter is that McIlvanney's portrayal of masculinity in *Docherty* is quite important nonetheless. It is written as a retrospective and nostalgic representation of working-class masculinity, which gives it a special edge amongst the eight novels in question, especially in contrast to Gibbon's contemporary account of the proletarian struggle as well as the gloomy presentation of marginalised masculinity in the 1980s. The novel also portrays an excellent example of the Scottish hard man and an important glimpse into the life

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[234] Hames, 70.

[235] Christopher Whyte, "Introduction," in *Gendering the Nation: Studies in Modern Scottish Literature*, ed. C. Whyte (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), xi.

of the hard man's family and the impact his characteristics have on his children, especially his sons. The hard man's personality flaws are certainly evident within the story, but it could also be said that the nostalgic images of his strength and pride have positive connotations that have been lacking in any of the other seven novels. It has already been implied that John Gourlay could be seen as a symbolic father-figure for the Scottish hard man and that Francis Begbie is the hard man's most hyperbolic presentation, and thus it is only fitting to crown Tam Docherty with the title of 'the archetypical Scottish hard man.'

## William McIlvanney

It could be said that McIlvanney marks a certain transition between the socially conscious novelists of the Scottish Renaissance and those who focused more on bleak urban realism in the 1970s and 1980s. Beth Dickson has pointed out his connection to writers such as Neil Gunn, Eric Linklater and Lewis Grassic Gibbon by being one of the few contemporary Scottish writers to be actively involved in politics.[236] He has for instance contributed an essay to a book examining the causes of poverty in Scotland, as well as having been associated with the Scottish National Party. He says in *Surviving the Shipwreck* (1991) that he was motivated to write because of the absence of what was called 'literature' in the life he came from and because he wanted to write a book that would create a literary genealogy for his family predecessors, whose memorials are parish registers.[237] Thus, there is understandably an obvious element of nostalgia in his novels and even though he avoids the transparent moralising of the Renaissance texts he finds "dignity and quiet heroism in the predicaments of men struggling to recover

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[236] Dickson, 55.
[237] William McIlvanney, *Surviving the Shipwreck* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 1991), 223.

their self-worth in condition of economic and social destruction."[238] This is in fact the most remarkable element of his work, especially *Docherty* and *The Big Man* (1985), i.e. the nostalgic resurfacing of the strong (and sometimes violent) hard man who fights for his existence in a decaying working-class environment, unlike the Kelmanesque slugs who seem to have no fight left in them and are completely demoralised by fear and alienation. In Craig's excellent analysis, he states that underlying working-class fiction "is the drive to confront both characters and readers with a realisation of the fundamentally destructive nature of the industrial process and the enormous sacrifice in energy and creativity required to resist its dehumanising pressure" and that working-class fiction is dominated by the implication of a lost potential "and has to take its focus from characters whose experience is viewed as being, in some sense, central to the whole of working-class life in that loss."[239] This sense of loss is evident in the Docherty family, as well as in their society, both in the streets of Graithnock and amongst the men in the mines, but McIlvanney's men refuse to give up without a fight, or at least a dream or ambition for something better. McIlvanney's hard men simply could not have survived in the contemporary setting of the decaying city and the decision to place the Docherty family in the first decades of the century is perfectly understandable, especially since the hard men actually worked in the mines in those days instead of being troubled by unemployment or lethargy.

There is also something inherently masculine about McIlvanney's working-class themes and he locates masculinity "in traditional patterns of collective life, rather than in private revolts from the socially normative, and stages its performance in the concrete, objective social world realised by his poetic God-narrators, rather than within the fraught echo-chamber of masculine

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[238] Hames, 50.
[239] Craig, "Resisting Arrest: James Kelman," 100.

subjectivity."[240] He fully exploits the possibilities of the manual workers' environment to develop his characters as angry, strong, hot-blooded and violent men, knowing that Scottish working-class hard men must have defined their masculinity mostly through labour and performance within the group. Connell has pointed out that heavy manual work calls for strength, endurance, toughness, a touch of insensitivity and group solidarity and that emphasizing "the masculinity of industrial labour has been both a means of survival, in exploitative class relations, and a means of asserting superiority over women."[241] McIlvanney plays with these elements in *Docherty* and several other novels, but manages to keep his characters level-headed and clear sighted despite their violent nature. It is as if they are powder-kegs, ready to explode, but they are fully aware of their destructive nature. One could even say that McIlvanney's masculinity is troubled by many of the typical flaws and faults that can be seen in the other seven novels, while simultaneously possessing a certain charm and positivity, unseen in other embodiments of the Scottish hard man.

It must be pointed out that McIlvanney is also very well known for his violent crime novels, which are often categorised as 'Tartan Noir' and feature Detective Inspector Laidlaw who hunts down criminals in 1970s Glasgow. These novels were published after *Docherty* when McIlvanney was facing a certain contradiction about his writing: "To write from within working-class culture about working-class culture in the form of the novel is to be trapped in a false gospel: the novel has to negate its own implicit values and its own history if it is to reach towards the truth of working-class experience."[242] This is why he abandoned the 'serious' novel and took up the form of the detective novel, hoping to reach a bigger audience and connecting with working-class readers, claiming that the

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[240] Hames, 71.

[241] Connell, *Masculinities*, 55.

[242] Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 214.

detective story was a popular form, capable of sustaining 'serious' writing.[243] He was certainly true to his violent and brutal representation of masculinity within these gloomy detective stories but he has never abandoned the nostalgic 'serious' novels, and he even published a novel in 1996 (*The Kiln)* about another Tam Docherty (our Docherty's grandson) who lives in Edinburgh in the 1990s and tries to make sense of his life by understanding where he comes from.

**Return of the Working-Class Hero**

It has already been stated that the working-class environment has various specific ways of creating a kind of group identity and that working-class masculinity is collective, physical, aggressive and embodied, often leading to downright violent behaviour. These elements are extremely important in *Docherty* and the working-class setting is in fact instrumental to Tam Docherty's basic characteristics. The setting provides a society with a distinct sense of identity, where capitalism becomes the big great 'evil' and the manual workers struggle within their own group and family to prove their strength and dominance. In fact, High Street and the community as a whole represent the world of the masculine worker, where the patriarchy has not been disrupted by the post-war changes or feminism – a further reminder of why McIlvanney could not place his story within a contemporary setting. This particular working-class society is dominated by men and physically expressive masculine ideals and the only security the people have is in one another. This habit of community even follows Mick Docherty into the war where: "In the beginning was the word. And the word was with man. The men were the only identity he had left. He survived only as one of them."[244] This is perhaps the most prominent theme throughout the novel, and the highly

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[243] Dickson, 56.

[244] William McIlvanney, *Docherty* (1975; London: Coronet, 1985), 193.
  All further references in the text (in parentheses) are to this edition, abbreviated D.

masculine working-class ideology, with emphasis on strength and unity, is in fact what defines almost every single character in the novel. All the men find their identity within the theorems of the hard man and try to live up to the demands of manhood: "In High Street the most respected measurement of a man tended to be round the chest" (D, 15). The women, on the other hand, have to find their own place within the masculine society by accepting the brutal condition of being dominated. In Kelly's view, this society and the tradition of the Scottish hard man, typified by Tam Docherty, is satirised by Francis Begbie and he implies that *Trainspotting* undercuts the mythic and idealised violence of such figures.[245] However, it must be said in McIlvanney's defence that he is not idealising the violence and masculine domination as much as one might think. The inhabitants of High Street are all slaves to something: "the pit, the factory, the families that grew up immuring the parents' lives, the drink that, seeming to promise escape, was the most ruthlessly confining of all" (D, 15), and the machismo and dominance of the hard man are simply ways for these men to define themselves and fight for identity in an utterly despondent situation. McIlvanney manages to evoke sympathy for the people who suffer under this system as well as criticising its destructive nature. The importance of strength and the violent culture is certainly idealised and glorified by his characters, but solely extrovertly.

The social and institutional setting of the male manual workers and their specific construction of masculinity has been studied intensely by scholars, and Collinson and Hearn have provided an interesting abstract of various theories and studies relating to the subject, which show, for instance that: a) in the United Kingdom workplace power can be crucially shaped by masculinities; b) working-class boys construct counter-cultures that celebrate masculinity and an imagined

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[245] Kelly, 60.

freedom and independence from manual work; c) male manual workers tend to construct working-class, masculine identities based on the negation of 'others' such as management, office workers and women; and d) informal shopfloor interaction between male workers is often masculine, aggressive and sexist. All of these elements have a symbolic and material significance for the manual workers' sense of identity but leaves them increasingly vulnerable to challenges and changes caused by the coming of global economic developments and other transformations.[246] McIlvanney utilises these elements in his reconstruction of the old working-class values of the manual labourers in the pits and justly emphasises their significance to the foundation of the male characters' identity. Tam Docherty and his three sons, Cornelius, Angus and Mick, are all victims of this patriarchal and overtly masculine social setting and it is interesting to study how these elements affect each character, while at the same time joining them together as a group.

Tam Docherty could be seen as the novel's protagonist, even though his sons are also quite prominent, and this is perhaps the first of the eight novels where the protagonist actually deserves to be called the novel's 'hero.' He is nonetheless a flawed character and he represents many of the faults associated with the hard man and the masculine working-class environment, but he also displays a certain ideology of pride, heroism, altruism and protection of his family and friends, which is admirable in its own way. Isobel Murray and Bob Tait have observed the duality of Tam's characterisation which McIlvanney evokes in the reader's mind. They claim that during the first reading the novel strikes the reader as "...warm, celebratory, witty and uniquely affirmative of the value of Tam Docherty" but a re-reading may sooner or later "…precipitate the reader to a very

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[246] Hearn and Collinson, "Theorizing Unities and Differences," 294.

different view of the novel, seeing it as essentially gloomy and pessimistic," undermining Tam's faith, which is always seen by the reader as precarious and doomed: "Tam Docherty will be defeated: this is inevitable, and we know it from the start."[247] In other words, it is almost as if they are reading the novel as a depiction of a downward spiral in which Tam's ideals and dreams will ultimately be shattered by the hand of fate. Craig reads something quite different from the story and states that the focus is on the heroism of the working-class survivor, "a heroism based on a belief in a fundamental set of communal values: by the end of the novel, those values have not yet been translated from the individual to the society of which he is a part, but such a translation is held out as the possibility on which redemption of working-class lives will be based. If the defeated hero's nobility can be emulated and made politically active, redemption is still possible."[248] This seems like a much more positive view of the novel than Murray's and Tait's and the fact is that despite the violence and brutality this portrayal of the working classes seems much less gloomy than the ones later provided by Kelman, Torrington or Welsh. There is at least something inherently uplifting about reading a novel where the hero fights to the very end, never gives up and even dies in an act of unselfish altruism to save someone else's life. The mythical and semi-idealised portrayals of violence and patriarchal society are certainly as politically-incorrect as they can possible be in this day and age, but nevertheless Tam Docherty somehow manages to rise above the other examples of Scottish masculinity studied within these pages, at least as the least-flawed one, and perhaps as the one who is dominated the most by his own masculinity, while at the same time managing to adopt an identity of manhood's purest and least degenerate form.

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[247] Isobel Murray and Bob Tait, *Ten Modern Scottish Novels* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), 169.

[248] Craig, "Resisting Arrest," 101.

Tam is described as looking almost frail, his face frighteningly colourless, as if pale from a permanent anger, with heroic shoulders and with every movement making a swell of muscle on the forearms (D, 14). He is considered the hardest of the hard men in Graithnock: "He's a wee man but he makes a big shadda" (D, 181), and he asserts his place with brute force. However, he is not an evil man, and his violent tendencies are caused by dormant rage and pride. He is constantly fighting for his ideals, against the system, religion and capitalism, always ready to sacrifice himself for what he believes in with almost blind conviction and pride. He is also heavy-laden with personal troubles, that he expresses either in violent rage or drinking, mostly regarding his family's place and status and his dreams for a better world for his children. There is a certain Scottish duality within him and his dormant bad and bitter side can destroy what he loves most if he unleashes it. His family simply has to live with his bouts of rage, as he tends to vent his anger against anything nearest to him (his wife, children or an inanimate object), which makes a stark contradiction to him regarding his family as the only oasis in the desperate landscape of his life (D, 44). He sees his family as little fortresses of loyalty and sanity and mutual concern (D, 93) and at one quiet moment, when he thinks about his family he feels an enormous upsurge of identity and grows aggressive on it: "He almost wished he could fight somebody now on their behalf" (D, 54). This aggressive and protective side later becomes evident when their neighbour is troubled by a peeping Tom, who Tam almost beats to a pulp. In fact, the entire family relies on Tam's strength as the centre of their survival and identity, and he becomes like a symbolic shelter for them. As soon as he loses his composure and cannot portray the image of unfaltering strength to his family, he divests himself of the image they had always given him "and in the moment of losing it their dependence on it

became clearer than ever" (D, 212). His masculine strength and performative hardness is thus not only utilised to secure his dominant status within his society or the group of male manual workers, but also as a sort of protective cocoon around his family. The violence and anger are certainly caused by this intense importance of strength, but the major contributor is nevertheless the social surroundings and the utter desperation of the poor proletariat. Dickson and Watson have pointed out that Tam Docherty is trapped and crushed by larger social and economic forces, but Dickson also states that he upholds basic standards of decency "as a bulwark against a dehumanising society."[249] It is even safe to say that Tam is basically created and destroyed by his society. He is obviously completely defenceless against the ruling forces, no matter how strong he is, but the horror of his situation and the glory of his altruism come together in his final stand, where he sacrifices his own life in order to save another miner, and his friends and family forever remember him as "an awesome wee man" (D, 324).

**The Three Brothers**

Tam Docherty's three sons all seem to go different ways in their search for identity and male roles within society, but none can escape the overwhelming influence of the masculine working-class ideals or fully step out of their father's shadow. Cornelius, or Conn, is the one the reader gets to know better than the others and he is also Tam's beacon of hope as well as providing him with a subject for a renewal of lost dreams. In other words, Tam begins to envision a positive and glorious future for Conn, which of course comes crashing down the minute Conn decides to work in the pits like his father. When Tam tries to

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[249] Dickson, 61-62.

persuade Conn of the importance of education and how horrible life is in the pits he spreads his arms and shakes his head as if offering his own image as irrefutable proof of the failure and horror associated with the pits, but paradoxically "what Conn saw were the forearms bulging from the rolled up sleeves, the hands that looked as tough as stone" (D, 161). The immense power and magnetism of the machismo that rules their society cannot be resisted and Conn eventually gives in and decides to work in the mines and become a hard man. By this he can feel "closer to his father, although he does not understand Tam's loss of hope,"[250] i.e. he experiences the sense of unity within the masculine group of labourers without realising that his father had dreamt of a much better life for him. The novel brilliantly traces Conn's search for identity and how he cannot truly be content until experiencing himself as a strong and able male, miner and hard man.

Angus' search for the same elements is no less important and provides an interesting contrast to Conn, mainly because it seems as though it is simply his fate all along to step into his father's footsteps. When the boys are growing up, Mick tells stories about places he had heard of and would like to visit, while Angus is much more immediate and macho, talking mostly about boys he has fought, and earning Conn's immediate respect and admiration (D, 57). It always seemed obvious that he would work in the pits and he has not worked there long until he starts fighting for his place, aiming for the status of alpha male and dreaming about becoming so strong that no other man can stop him from doing what he wants (D, 151). This turns into a brutal competition between him and his father, as Angus becomes obsessed by the idea that he somehow has to prove to the world that he is a stronger, harder man than his father. He rebels against his

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[250] Murray and Tait, 183.

father's principles and constantly challenges him to mental or physical games in order to outdo or topple him, evoking stark images of the importance of sports to the masculine psyche, wherein sporting prowess can serve as a symbolic proof of men's superiority and right to rule.[251] Angus is evidently victimised and dominated by the performative elements of working-class masculinity, but it must also be kept in mind that "masculinity ultimately represents a normative fantasy whose superheroic aspects condemn boys and men to live in a permanent state of paranoid uncertainty about their personal adequacy and competence."[252] It is hard enough for men in general to live up to the masculine ideas of perfection, it becomes even harder in the working-class environment, and it surely becomes almost unbearable when the mythical image one competes with is of an awesome hard man such as Angus' father. In fact, Angus' competition turns into a form of rebellion against his father's pivotal principles, not only when he refuses to marry the girl he had impregnated and accept his responsibilities as a man, but much rather when he starts working as a paymaster in another pit in order to make more money. Tam is infuriated by this and feels his own son has turned into a capitalist who "sells his mates fur fuckin' pennies" and cares for nothing (D, 276). Angus thus rebels against his father by serving his own needs above the communal needs and by becoming what Tam despises more than anything else. Indeed, he manages to evoke such extraordinary rage in Tam that he renounces him as his son and throws him out of his home. One could even say that Angus finally manages to defeat his father by driving him to destroy what he loves most – the unity of his family.

Mick is perhaps the least important and obtrusive of the three brothers but important masculinity-related aspects can be found within his story nonetheless,

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[251] Connell, *Masculinities*, 54.
[252] Schoene-Harwood, *Writing Men*, 48.

mainly on two levels. The first level concerns the communist tendencies that he adopts after having returned wounded from the World War I; these portray an interesting contrast to Angus' capitalistic back-stabbings. He also goes through a painful process of self-education, overtaking his father and demonstrating his limitations[253] by demoralising Tam's idealistic and naïve dreams of a better future and the belief that someone will fight for the proletariat and save them from their wretched status. He brutally attacks his father's morals and ideology and claims that he is both pathetic and blind to the reality of the outside world, thus symbolically denouncing and rejecting his father, alongside Angus (D, 259). The second level of Mick's importance concerns the fact that he is the only son who joins the army and fights in the First World War. Combat, war and the army have significant connotations to images of masculinity and David Morgan even argues that war and the military "represent one of the major sites where direct links between hegemonic masculinities and men's bodies are forged" and that insofar as masculinity continues to be identified with physicality "then there are strong reasons for continuing to view military life as an important site in the shaping and making of masculinities." Furthermore, Morgan states that other occupations, such as mining "may come to replace the military as a major site linking embodiment with masculinities." [254] It has already been mentioned how Mick found his identity through the solidarity of the men in the war, but it is also interesting to study Tam's reaction to the news of his enlistment through Jenny's eyes: "Aware of the masculine assumptions around her – Mick's that he must fight, Tam's that Mick must be allowed to make an untrammelled choice, she despaired of the stupidity of things" (D, 139). One can also juxtapose how the two overtly masculine arenas (war and mining) infuse the two men with images of

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[253] Murray and Tait, 182.

[254] David Morgan, "Theater of War: Combat, the Military, and Masculinities," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod and M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 168.

solidarity and strength, but leave them weak, injured or dead in the end. When the stories of the three brothers are compared it seems evident that, despite their differences, they all somehow manage to fight their father and rise up against him. Ironically, the same can be said about Tam himself, who rejected his own father and his religion. Perhaps McIlvanney was simply reminding us that it is a part of becoming a man to rebel against the father, which is certainly an extremely Freudian theme, but also important to study in relevance to the subject of Scottish masculinity.

**Strength and Violence**

The working-class society of Graithnock is dominated by masculine ideals and provides the most interesting setting of all the novels in regards to the study of masculinity as such, especially as it actually produces Scottish hard men and provides the younger men, who search for their identity, with only one solid answer. This is a society of poor manual workers who find unity within the group of men and overemphasise the value of physical prowess and masculine strength within their specific social group in a desperate attempt to surmount their hopeless situation within society as a whole. It is as if the world of the Scottish working-class hard man serves the role of a certain counter-culture in the novel. The men's pointless contests of strength have the same ancestry as their love of gambling, drinking and fighting: "It wasn't only, as the socially conscious were inclined to say, the pathetic desire to escape from their condition. They were, much more profoundly, the expression of that condition. They gambled to gamble, they drank to drink, they fought to fight" (D, 243). They have worked hard, struggled and endured their pain long enough to acquire a sense of the unmerited privileges of others as well as their own worthlessness.

Understandably, the male-oriented society that places exaggerated importance on physical strength leads to a profusely violent culture, which is quite evident in the novel. "Sometimes men would disintegrate spectacularly, beating a wife unconscious one pellucid evening or going on the batter with cheap whisky for a fortnight. Such bouts of failure were not approved of, but they also never earned a permanent contempt. They were too real for that" (D, 33). Tam and his sons display violent behaviour on numerous occasions and for various reasons, for instance when venting their rage, asserting their strength or fighting for their position. The unavoidable result is that women and everyone else weaker than the violent hard man are victimised by the patriarchal ideology of supremacy as the privileged group of hard men uses violence to sustain its dominance: "Violence is part of a system of domination, but at the same time a measure of its imperfection" as a thoroughly legitimate hierarchy should have no need for such intimidation.[255] The violence thus becomes an excellent example of what is wrong with the über-masculine society that McIlvanney portrays and any criticism regarding his idealisation of violence is ill-founded. In fact, McIlvanney has himself argued that "though people object to the depiction of physical violence, the violence of the social structures depicted in his novels does not receive the same criticism, though it is the greater evil."[256] Therefore, one must not regard Tam Docherty's violent tendencies as an essential part of his heroic manhood but much rather as a destructive symptom of his surroundings, i.e. the male-dominated society and the despondent situation of the proletariat to which he belongs.

It is also interesting to follow Tam's sons as they search for identity within this particular social setting and how it affects their choices. In such a male-

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[255] Connell, *Masculinities*, 84.
[256] Dickson, 59.

dominated society any young man is bound to ask what exactly it is that makes a man and how he can achieve such a status himself. Conn is perhaps the most vivid example in the novel and his search for manhood is described in detail. He grows up admiring his father for his strength, and later turns his gaze towards Angus, noticing how he slowly becomes more like their father. When he is slightly older, he and his friends start meeting in a secret place, engaging "in a kind of group hypnosis, hallucinating manhood" (D, 147), where they smoke, chew grass, dismantle leaves and skin twigs to willow wishbones. The boys seem to think that in order to become men they must swear without noticing, spit long distances and smoke. The tremendous impact of masculinity on their environment is thus reflected through their games and fantasies. Later, when Conn reaches the point where he starts to have dreams about what he might become, all of which involve strength and energy to some extent, he starts to cry, feeling that the time between then and when he becomes a real man is an endless and ridiculous waste. "Then with his hand he wiped the damp patch on the pillow where the last of his boyhood had drained out of him" (D, 185). As stated earlier, he finally finds his place as a hard man in the pits, thus crushing his father's higher hopes for him. It is not until he becomes a miner, a socially accepted hard man, that he finds peace and the sense of having found meaning in his manhood. Angus, on the other hand, had acquired this status much earlier without being content with it and his need to outdo every other man around him (especially his father) is where his search ultimately leads him. He lives in a man's world, "a social world of power and subordination in which men have been forced to compete if they are to benefit from their inherited masculinity."[257] Ultimately, these elements of violence, strength and competition all come together in a climactic fight between Conn and

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[257] Seidler, 21.

Angus after their father's death. The final showdown between the two brothers is a powerful scene, where all the resentment and anger against the world and themselves is unleashed: "They bumped into their father's failure, backed against countless incomprehensible memories, struck against their mother's pain. And in their rage they made wreckage of it all and tried to heap it on each other's head" (D, 315). Dickson has pointed out that in *The Big Man* (1985), McIlvanney shows fighting as a means of gaining knowledge, where men have to dig deep into themselves to find out who and what they are,[258] and perhaps this plays a part in the brothers' fight. But they are not only fighting to find out who and what they are – they are also fighting the violent and brutal nature of the masculinity they have adopted. By turning against each other they are turning against themselves and fighting their inner hard man, the only way they know how.

**The Archetypical Hard Man**

*Docherty* serves an important role in the general picture of Scottish masculinity in twentieth-century fiction and portrays an enlightening view of the essence of the mythical hard man. Tam Docherty is the archetypical hard man in most ways, despite the fact that McIlvanney grants him a certain emotional sensitivity, altruism, paternal instincts and love for his family that are not present in any of the other seven novels, which can of course be traced to the fact that the novel is written in the post-war times of feminism and changing gender-roles while portraying certain nostalgic elements about working-class life and the urban pre-war hard man. These personal traits and Tam's heroic death all serve to make him comparatively the best of the bunch when all eight novels and different representations of masculinity are concerned. He is certainly too proud, violent

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[258] Dickson, 59.

and angry and one could even say that he utterly fails in passing on his positive traits to his sons, but what sets him apart is that he is somehow fighting the system and realizing its faults with dreams and hopes for his children. His dream of Conn's success and achievement suggests genuine concern and care for his son, instead of being the result of pride and selfishness as in Gourlay's case. Tam thus represents the lost breed of ambitious, strong and mythical hard men in an era of Kelmanesque losers while simultaneously serving as an icon for the demise of the earlier form of Scottish hard man. In fact, his death and his sons' subsequent confrontation serve as a symbolic *coup de grace* to the overbearing tyranny of the image of the Scottish hard man.

Chapter 7
## The Hard Man's Future:
## Twenty-first Century Scottish Fiction

Even though the mythical Scottish hard man was in a way destroyed, metaphorically with the death of monoliths such as Tam Docherty and thematically with the grotesque and deformed masculinity of 1990s authors such as Irvine Welsh, it will be quite a challenge for Scottish novelists to escape his influence completely. It is in fact quite extraordinary that so many of his evident character flaws managed to survive through the century and that so little was learned by the mistakes and failures of others. The obvious faults and shortcomings of the Scottish hard man have even become such an integrated part of Scottish masculinity in fiction that it has obtained a somewhat symbolic status, almost to the part of being a clear-cut sign of Scottishness. Hopefully this study of the eight novels has provided a fair idea of masculinity and hard-men in Scottish twentieth-century fiction, but what has been going on in Scottish fiction in this first decade of the twenty-first century and where are the Scottish novelists heading? It is of course impossible to predict the future, but this study cannot be concluded without at least a short glimpse of what has been going on after the turn of the century, as well as asking the question if and how the Scottish hard man can survive modernity's ever-changing times?

Any turning point such as the advent of a new century and a new millennium causes people to turn back and scrutinise the past with a certain animadversion. As far as Scottish fiction is concerned, it seems impossible to escape the fact that the twentieth century provided male-oriented novels wherein a bleak and depressing society served as a demoralising setting and the Scottish psyche was still unable to escape the influence of religious rigidity, pride, duality and a sort of inferiority complex and uncertainty regarding identity. Fiction always

serves to portray reality to some extent, and perhaps twentieth-century Scottish fiction reveals more about basic Scottishness and Scottish reality than the Scots themselves would like to admit. This only serves to add a certain pressure on modern Scottish novelists who must always strive for new ways to express themselves and point out the flaws in their society. But is it possible for modern Scottish novelists to adopt a new cultural identity without the instability and urban horror of what has preceded them? The answer must surely be no, as it is impossible for any novelist to make a completely fresh start out of thin air and the overwhelming aspects of the past can never be fully escaped. However, there is always the possibility for gradual changes and hopefully the Scottish literary scene can scrutinise the past, find what has to be amended and develop something new from the existing ingredients without abandoning the past altogether.

The most prominent changes in the modern Scottish literary scene are undoubtedly the increasing importance of female writers as well as the fact that modernism (and later post-modernism) have opened so many doors for literature worldwide that the diversity of writers, genres and subjects seems infinite and ever increasing. There have also been several influential social and political changes in the global and Scottish milieu, which will affect novelists' self-image as well as their fiction. After the establishment of a Scottish parliament in Edinburgh in 1999 it was imperative for the Scots to cease to identify themselves in opposition to all things English and the emphasis of what exactly 'Scottishness' is became less important, as it was always contingent on being 'Un-Englishness.' The debates on contemporary Scottish identity much rather concern "class, sexuality and gender, globalisation and the new Europe, cosmopolitanism and postcoloniality, as well as questions of ethnicity, race and postnational

multiculturalism."[259] These elements and the changed environment of Scottish

literature are discussed in detail in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary*

*Scottish Literature* where various critics, authors and journalists discuss the future

of Scottish literature and several interesting facts are brought to light. For

instance, the increasing importance of female, gay and ethnic writers will certainly

change the landscape dramatically, which will hopefully mitigate the misogyny,

homophobia and racism in some recent Scottish fiction, even though old habits

die hard and it will take some time to cleanse Scottish masculinity of its bigotry.

Alan Bissett points out that the Glasgow-novel has changed drastically since the

1960s and 1970s and that between the years 2004 and 2005 there were

seventeen novels published by writers who hail from, or have written in or about

Glasgow, dealing with variegated aspects of the city and its developments. Many

of these novelists are female and even though they continue to write about

working-class characters they gradually re-imagine Glasgow within a new

globalised context,[260] and the same could apply to Scottish literature as a whole.

Perhaps the only place left for the Scottish hard man is within crime fiction, which

has adapted "the hard-boiled private investigator of modernist American legend

while also, of course, drawing upon an indigenous tradition of Scottish urban

working-class fiction."[261] An excellent example of the portrayal of this tradition is

Ian Rankin's introspective and anti-establishment Rebus, who proudly maintains

the image of the hardboiled inspector in novels and TV-series which have been

categorized as 'Tartan-Noir.' However, fully synchronised with Scottish duality

and the changing times, it is an amusing fact that despite the popularity of the

hard-headed Scottish detective, one of the most popular characters of any

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[259] Berthold Schoene, "Introduction: Post-Devolution Scottish Writing," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

[260] Alan Bissett, "The 'New Weegies': The Glasgow Novel in the Twenty-first Century," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 66.

[261] Plain, 132.

Scottish crime novelist today is Alexander McCall Smith's Precious Ramotswe, the African woman who runs the no. 1 ladies' detective agency in Botswana.

But the modern changes not only result in more variety and diversity, but also in a certain dilemma for Scottish male authors who wish to continue writing about male characters. The demand for changes in Scottish masculinity is evident and even though this new form of crisis was begun by the feminist movement, and escalated during the 1980s and 1990s, it has reached the point of presenting any Scottish male author with a complicated predicament, of which Alan Warner's fiction is an ideal example. His first novel, *Morvern Callar* (1995), starts with the symbolic suicide of a male author who leaves a manuscript of his novel as a sort of suicide note. His girlfriend puts her own name on the manuscript and becomes a successful female author. Warner's first three novels deal with girlhood femininities but in his more recent novels he has switched to self-conscious portrayals of emasculated males. In *The Man Who Walks* (2002), the two central characters' "dysfunctional uncle/nephew relationship, their sexual ambivalence, and their fatherlessness render them queer outcasts to discourse of patriarchal linearity and legitimacy"[262] while the protagonist of *The Worms Can Carry Me to Heaven* (2006) suffers from crippling nostalgia, hypochondria, ennui and a minimal sperm count. The image of the inert and emasculated masculine narrator can also be seen in the works of Welsh and Gray, in novels such as *Lanark, 1982 Janine* and *Marabou Stork Nightmares* to name but a few. It is as though the predominance of male authors and male characters in Scottish fiction of the past has resulted in the male authors questioning their ideas of masculinity as well their characters' manhood.

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[262] Schoene, "Alan Warner, Post-feminism and the Emasculated Nation," 255.

However, the emasculation of Scottish male authors and characters should never be seen as an ideal reply to their dominance in the twentieth-century and even though the feminist objective of bringing down the patriarchy is understandable and necessary for society as a whole, it must not turn into an ideal of bringing down masculinity *per se*. The waning of men's social dominance cannot be refuted and it is due "not only to feminism's success in achieving greater equality for women but also, far more significantly for some commentators, to the terminal decline of the traditionally male-dominated heavy industries, which proved particularly significant in Scotland, a country historically dependent on them."[263] This naturally results in an increasing crisis for masculinity and widespread confusion about the meaning of manhood, but masculinity theorists and followers of the men's movement are searching for answers, drawing on several different traditions and theories, in order to either fight back by trying to reinstate the machismo ideals or searching for ways for men to accept the changes in society and to create new gender roles for themselves. The extravagant "mythopoetic men's movement" has perhaps gone to the most extremes, stating that the new man is incapable of standing up to women and is turning into a wimp: "he is the problem, not the solution, and manhood needs to be rescued from such sensitive Mama's boys."[264] The fact is that manhood needs to be rescued from itself as well as feminism. The patriarchal images of male dominance and tyranny are just as destructive to men as the hardcore-feminist emphasis on emasculation and the destruction of phallic authority. The only way for men to settle for a masculine identity is to own up to their past and to settle for change. It is, of course, impossible to explain exactly

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[263] Carole Jones, "Burying the Man that was: Janice Galloway and Gender Disorientation," in *The Edinburgh Companion to Contemporary Scottish Literature*, ed. B. Schoene (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 210.

[264] Michael S. Kimmel and Michael Kaufman, "Weekend Warriors: The New Men's Movement," in *Theorizing Masculinities,* eds. H. Brod & M. Kaufman (California: Sage, 1994), 265.

what masculinity is, but it is certainly something that has been shaped by the patriarchy and deserves just as much introversive examination as femininity. It is not sufficient for men to get in touch with their feminine side until they have come to grips with their masculine side.

When these facts and theories about the state of masculinity are applied to Scottish fiction, one cannot help but feel for modern Scottish male authors. It must be extremely difficult to escape the shadow of tyrants such as John Gourlay and Gillespie Strang, refute the mythical depiction of hard-men such as Tam Docherty and Ewan Tavendale, shake free from the lethargy and apathy of urban slugs such as Robert Hines and Tam Clay, avoid the utter escapism of Morris Magellan and Mark Renton and even to fight a hyperbolic defence-mechanical hard man such as Francis Begbie. But the fact of the matter is that there is no need to shun or renounce these characters. They are an extremely important part of Scottish fiction and must be allowed to influence future generations of novelists, without becoming exemplary. Male authors should not be afraid to look to these characters, if only to learn from their mistakes, instead of feeling guilty for their own gender's dominance in the past. There is no need to emasculate the Scottish man even though the Scottish hard man has surely been exorcised, and hopefully the long shadow cast by his historical, fictional counterpart will provide more contrastive and instructional shades than darkness in this coming century.

**CONCLUSION**

Some questions will simply never be answered. This is a truth one has to acknowledge and accept and it must be stated clearly that it was never the aim of this essay to unravel the mysteries of Scottishness or masculinity in order to provide a satisfying answer to what these things actually are. Trying to explain the cryptic nature of the opening sentences and to search for the very elements that make Scottish literature so quaintly interesting have even been avoided. But hopefully the goal of providing an informative and comprehensive overview of Scottish masculinity in twentieth-century fiction has been achieved. Previous centuries have certainly shaped the images of masculinity with elements such as the Calvinist inheritance and the physical and mental struggle for independence and identity, as well as the subsequent form of duality. When the influence of Scottish history and the rebellion against the Kailyard's sentimentality was joined with the image of the Marketplace Man, the result was a hard man who fought for domination over town and family by either sheer strength or shrewdness. This hard man was himself dominated by pride, greed, rigidity, apathy and a hunger for power, which ultimately led to his destruction. These horrible elements left him detached from others around him and unable to perform as a father, husband or lover. When the focus was moved from the small towns into the urban setting, the hard working-class men became the emblem of Scottish masculinity. But the Scottish working-class society of the former half of the century was dominated by masculine ideals of strength and hardiness, and men were subjected to the pressure to perform as hard men. This only served to reinforce the flaws of marketplace masculinity and surround it with an even more primitive patriarchal ideal of physical prowess that only lead to violence and an increase in apathy. It

is safe to say that the Scottish pre-war masculinity was deeply flawed, but somehow kept up in a sort of proud and boastful manner. In the latter half of the century, society and culture had changed dramatically and elements such as feminism, the collapse of heavy industry and the demand on men to get in touch with their emotions simply did not sit well with the Scottish hard man. With the post-feminist reversal of gender roles the characteristics of the strong and proud hard man became complete anachronisms, but the male protagonists of Scottish fiction seemed simply incapable of abandoning patriarchal ideals so easily. The image of the rigid, proud, emotionally detached and strong male had been so profusely embedded within them that they failed to adapt to the social changes. The result was utter marginalisation and alienation within post-war society, where men struggled to find meaning and a new form of identity amongst the ruins of the concept of the hard man. This masculinity crisis forced the Scottish male characters out to the margins, where they either sank into utter despondency and desperation or sought even more destructive escape mechanisms such as suicide, heavy drinking or drug abuse. But even though the presentation of Scottish masculinity and hard men in twentieth-century fiction is riddled with failure, it has produced many extraordinary and stimulating male characters and despite the fact that twenty-first century males will undoubtedly gradually accept the social changes and adopt a more humane and positive form of masculinity, the awesome wee men and the miserable hard men of the last century will surely somehow find a way to survive and to continue casting their long shadow on Scottish fiction.

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