

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE - FACULTY OF EDUCATION
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DIPLOMA THESIS

Alison in Front of the Looking Glass

LITERARY REFLECTIONS OF SCOTTISH FOLKLORE
AND ITS ROLE IN THE PROCESS
OF SHAPING ETHNIC AND/OR INDIVIDUAL CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT

This paper attempts at analysing the employment of supernatural motifs in short fiction by (modern) Scottish writers. On the basis of analyses and comparisons of eight short stories it argues that Scottish authors are heavily influenced by the local tradition of oral narration and that they frequently resort to myths and folk- or fairy-tales to draw on. Moreover, the occurrence of supernatural beings in their short stories has often more serious objectives than mere entertainment. It serves as a contrastive background against which contemporary social issues stand out. This method of employment of fantastic motifs is not exclusive to Scotland, but has much in common e.g. with the Latin American magic realism.

Tato diplomová práce hledá odpověď na otázku, jak a za jakým účelem používají skotští povídkáři ve svých dílech nadpřirozené motivy. Za základě rozborů a porovnání osmi povídek autorka tvrdí, že skotští autoři jsou silně ovlivněni místní vypravěčskou tradicí a že si za inspiraci často vybírají pověsti a pohádky. Navíc nadpřirozené bytosti v moderních povídkách neslouží pouze jako zdroj zábavy, ale tvoří kontrastní pozadí, na němž o to lépe vyniknou současné společenské problémy. Takovéto využívání fantastických motivů ale není výlučně skotskou záležitostí (objevuje se např. v latinskoamerickém magickém realismu).

KEYWORDS:

Scotland - Scottish literature - short fiction - the supernatural - magic realism - ethnicity - national identity

Brown, George Mackay - Crichton Smith, Iain - Haynes, Dorothy - Linklater, Eric - Macnicol, Eona - Mitchinson, Naomi - Spark, Muriel - Stevenson, Robert Louis

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I hereby declare that I have elaborated this paper on my own and using only the sources cited.

Prague, 20th Nov 2007
Marie Preclíková

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1. Personal Introduction

My interest in Scottish literature dates back to the time when I was preparing for my six-month stay there. As the number of Scottish short stories I read slowly grew, so did my surmise that the writers seem downright to indulge themselves in allusions to the country's fairy-tales - and finally I decided to explore this trend more closely.

The aim of this paper, however, is not to present a list of supernatural phenomena and their respective occurrences in works by Scottish writers. Instead, every tale, no matter if short or simply told, and even regardless of its genre (love story, horror, tale of the uncanny...) cannot but reveal something about Scotland. Both the nature of the particular writer and the environment in which the plot is set have been helping to shape a living picture of Scots, their opinions, customs, social conventions as well as their problems, bad habits, feelings of injustice... which the reader takes in unawares together with the storyline. This has often enabled the authors to express their ideas more freely and powerfully than if they had been confined to the limits to a wholly realistic setting.

The author of this thesis is very much aware that the limited number of stories analysed, as well as the simple fact that she herself is far from being a native Scotswoman, might mislead her in her conclusions; all the same she ventures to hope is that they are not wholly in contrast with the true state of things either.

2. Theoretical Introduction

2.1. PURPOSE AND MEANS

Using imagination to create tales is perhaps one of the most distinct human qualities. Apes may apply sticks to reach bananas, ants can well live in organised colonies, but possibly only we have been employing our inborn intelligence to produce stories of fates others than those of our own lives. Whether it is to explain the unfathomable and awesome (as in myths and legends) or simply to entertain (by introducing an agreeable level of fear, potentially easy to turn into laughter), traces of fantastic and supernatural seem to be naturally embedded in all cultures of the world.

Of course such an enormously wide field cannot be covered in one thesis. The following chapters will therefore focus on a particular, historically as well as geographically rather specific part of the English speaking world: Scotland. After an introductory outline of historical and theoretical background, analyses of eight short stories by eight different authors (Chapter 3) and some recurrent themes or features

(Chapter 4) will hopefully lead to a conclusion as to the of short fiction written by Scottish writers - what (if anything) connects them, whether they see Scotland in a similar way, and if there are writers coming from elsewhere who tackle issues in an analogous way (Chapter 5).

2.2. INITIAL HYPOTHESES

- a) Fantastic motives can be found in Scottish fiction quite frequently. They derive more or less from the way Scottish people have perceived the world around them in the past centuries. Due to its history as well as geography, Scotland is a country where much can be gained by using local colour to add some attractive features to a literary text.¹
- b) In the 20th century few well-known authors misused this unique opportunity, and some of them made an exquisite use of it even, presumably, the use of ancient motives connected with the supernatural has undergone substantial shifts in the course of the ages. The more recent stories are no longer simply re-narrated, and they often raise serious questions concerning the place of an individual within a particular society. One particular literary tradition which suggests itself for comparison is the South-American magical realism².

2.3. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF TEXTS

- a) *The author must either have been born in Scotland or have lived there for a considerable part of his/her life.* Naturally there are many non-Scottish natives who used Scottish setting in their works, with greater or smaller success (D. L. Sayers, R. D. Blackmore, implicitly even J. K. Rowling), but there are two main reasons why not to take these into account: First, it would be impossible to handle such a wide range of authors. Second, regrettably it has to be admitted that not only canonical writers, but also decidedly low-culture literary production favours using (if not outright abusing) Scottish scenery (especially in the current hunt for everything Celtic).
- b) *The plot takes place in Scotland.* This rules out such jewels as Stevenson's *Messrs. Jekyll and Hyde*, indeed the whole production of A. C. Doyle and also many of the stories by Muriel Spark. Science-fiction and fantasy works set in a time/place-non-specific lands - such as George Macdonald's *Phantasies* or Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* - fall under this restraint, too. *Preferably, even the*

¹ History, (folk) traditions (including music, dance and storytelling) and landscape are often stated by Scots of various age and profession as the most important for their personal sense of regional identity. For more see Devine, Logue (2002)

² Since verifying a possible connection between writers from Scotland and elsewhere is not the main aim of the paper - however interesting it is - the suggested comparison shall not be introduced until the final chapter (namely 5.3).

- fantastic feature is in some way connected with Scotland.* This in practice mostly denotes a connection to a particular place or historical/legendary event,
- c) *The variety of genre is narrowed to the short story,* for several reasons: Using shorter narratives enables the exploration of more authors and their distinctive features; besides, from a non-native speaker's (and a pedagogical) point of view, Scottish short stories are relatively well available to Czech readers in various collections, and, although they are mostly well readable, the smaller amount of text helps to deal with the potential linguistic problems which might arise due to the fact that some writers like to make use of either of the Scottish languages (Gaelic and Lallans or Broad Scots).

2.4. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND³

Recordings of the occurrence of supernatural in Scotland date back as early as 14th century (among them the first account of the encounter between Macbeth and the three weird sisters in Andrew of Wyntoun's *Orygynale Chronykil of Scotland*). Its frequency may have varied, yet the topic never really disappeared from Scottish literary history, emerging in forms as distant as pseudo-scientific analyses on the one end of the scale and folk balladry on the other. The same mixture of awe and anxiousness at meeting with the unknown which lead to the horrors of witchburning was later used as a fashionable flavour in literary works which helped not only to revive the Scottish nation, but also to establish the country as the perfect setting for stories of romance and heroic myth.

A notable upsurge of interest in the regional legends and beliefs came with the beginning of 20th century. Writers more or less connected with what was to become known as Scottish Renaissance started to play with ancient motives, arraying them in new clothes, not only re-telling the plots (as Walter Scott and his contemporaries would do), but, more importantly, re-interpreting them through the eyes of a 20th century individual, rendering at the same time a new insight into the nature of the modern society itself. From then on, the old and the new, the (super)natural and the man-made, the fantastic and the realistic have been blending in numerous works by Scottish writers, proving that these issues, time-old as they might seem, are still far from being exhausted⁴. Moreover, the literary recycling of Märchen is not a one-way process, and any narrative which draws on its folk version is simultaneously adding a new layer of connotations to the original paradigm.

³ The general outline is based on Lindsay (1977) and Themes (on-line source)

⁴ In this context it is worth mentioning that contemporary Scottish fantasy (as a genre based exclusively on work with the unreal) seems to follow not only the general rules of the genre, but it tends to draw on the country's particularity and lets the fantastic adventures take place in Scotland. See App. V - Elphinstone (2000)

This, then, can attribute something of the quality of a myth to the simplest superstition: the fact that it has never become a mere entertainment. The underlying logic which has brought it to the human mind all those centuries ago is still embedded in our lives, ready to show its relevance to events, opinions and attitudes even in the 21st century. It is always possible to deepen one's understanding of the world and one's place in it through looking closer at one's roots. Here Scots have an unmistakable benefit in their literary heritage, which hasn't stopped rethinking itself, not afraid of trips as distant as to the very beginnings of human culture.

2.5. KEY TERMS

Scotland - [Lat. *Scotti*, orig. Irish]. "Constituent country of the United Kingdom, occupying 30,405 square miles in northern Great Britain. Slightly smaller than Ireland, it has the largest population of all Celtic lands, more than 5,200,000; yet not all Scottish persons are of Celtic heritage. It was not always distinguished from the rest of Britain until the Romans failed to conquer it and tried to close it off with walls, Hadrian's in AD 122 and the Antonine Wall further north in AD 138. The native populations of what was then Alba/Scotland were the Caledonii or the Picts. /.../ Irish [Lat. *Scotti*] invaders migrated in large numbers to Argyll and after many centuries of armed struggle with the Picts and the Brythonic kingdom Kenneth MacAlpin (d. 858), merged the three forces into one nation, called Scotland after its most powerful component.

Pressure against Gaelic language began at the top of the power pyramid, as English became the language at court during the reign of Malcolm III, 1058-93, under the influence of his Wessex-born wife, (St) Margaret. Over the next nine centuries English and the English-related Scots dialect (the language of Robert Burns) superseded Gaelic gradually in all but the Hebrides and those parts of the Highlands beyond the Grampian mountains. The Act of Union (1707) with England somewhat diminished the Scottish sense of nationhood. Far more damaging to Highland culture was the failure of the Jacobite Rebellion (1745-6) and the subsequent suppression of the Gaelic language and culture of those who had supported it. Much of the 19th century saw mass migration from the Gaelic Highlands, some of it forced through clearances, in which crofters (tenant farmers) were driven from small farms to be replaced by herds of sheep. At the end of the twentieth century, Scottish Gaelic is spoken by about 65,000 people in Scotland.

Despite the differences in geography and political history, not to mention the Norse invasions and the Reformation, much of Scottish Gaelic tradition remained linked to Ireland. Many Scottish Gaelic stories are parallels of Irish stories and have Irish settings. Characters in Irish stories travel to Scotland and appear familiar with its geography, although often Scotland is seen as a place of magic and adventure, like other foreign countries. From medieval through to early modern times, commerce and social intercourse continued between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland, too; Irish Franciscan missionaries resisted the tide of Calvinism in the Highlands." (Scotland - online source).

"Academic research consistently shows that people in Scotland feel Scottish, whilst not necessarily feeling the need to see that translated into the establishment

of a fully-independent Scottish nation-state. Apart from its own unique family of languages and dialects, helping to foster a strong sense of "Scottishness", Scotland retains its own national church, separate from that of England. The patron saints of Scotland are Saint (Queen) Margaret and Saint Andrew, and Saint Andrew's Day is celebrated in the country on 30 November. These factors combine together to form a strong, readily identifiable Scottish civic culture." (Culture of Scotland - online source).

Nowadays, "the Scottish national identity is largely free from ethnic distinction, and many of "immigrant" descent see themselves (and are seen as), for example, Pakistani and Scottish: Asian-Scots. This contrasts with a tendency in England for such families to be called "British" but not "English". /.../ Some parts of Scotland, like Glasgow, the Outer Hebrides and the north east of Scotland retain a strong sense of regional identity, alongside the idea of a Scottish *national* identity. Some residents of Orkney and Shetland also express a distinct regional identity, influenced by their Norse heritage." (Scottish national identity - online source).

ethnicity - "In social science usage, a term coined (in 1953) to describe that condition 'wherein certain members of a society in a given social context choose to emphasise as their most meaningful basis of primary extrafamilial identity certain assumed cultural, national or somatic traits' (O. Patterson in N. Glazer and P. Moynihan (eds.), *Ethnicity* (1975) 308); a socio-political strategy of selective advantage enacted within a dominant political organisation, which rests on insistence upon the significance of group distinctiveness and identity, and the rights that derive from it. Ethnic identity is not a 'natural' condition, but rather a self-conscious statement using selected cultural traits as diacritical marks. Ethnic groups are thus mutually exclusive, and are more usually constituted with reference to kinship than to territory." (Ethnicity - online source) It should be noted that in this paper the term "ethnicity" will be used neutrally, without any intention to discriminate either those who feel they belong to a particular ethnic group or those who do not. The term also has nothing to do with race.

magic realism - "a kind of modern fiction in which fabulous and fantastical events are included in a narrative that otherwise maintains the 'reliable' tone of objective realistic report. The term was once applied to a trend in German fiction of the early 1950s, /.../ but has also been extended to works from very different cultures, designating a tendency of the modern novel to reach beyond the confines of realism and draw upon the energies of fable, folktale and myth while retaining a strong contemporary social relevance." (Magic Realism I - online source) "Magic realist novels and stories have, typically, a strong narrative drive, in which the recognisably realistic mingles with the unexpected and the inexplicable, and in which elements of dream, fairy story, or mythology combine with the everyday, often in a mosaic or kaleidoscopic pattern of refraction and recurrence. English Magic Realism also has some affinity with the neo- Gothic." (Magic Realism II - online source)

the supernatural - In general, it covers "events, forces or powers that cannot be explained by the laws of science and that seem to involve gods or magic". (OALD 2000, entry "supernatural") Certain types of (folk) tend to feature specific instances

of supernatural; in this paper we will work mainly with those which regularly appear in fairy tales (Märchen) or local legends, overlooking the whole sphere of supernaturalised elements, abstract concepts, weather conditions and related deities (as appearing in myths proper).

2.6. NOTE

In contrast with a longer piece of writing (e.g. a novel), in short fiction a single word or phrase can seriously upset the previously established meaning. This is why the primary sources shall be heavily cited.

Since most of the authors are not necessarily household names, the plots of the analysed stories are to be found in App. I. Also, at the beginning of Chapters 3.1-3.4 a reminder of the location and protagonists is provided for the sake of clarity.

'Single quotes' are restricted for extracts from the analysed short fiction. "Quotes" shall mark all other uses.

The following abbreviations shall be used throughout the paper:

NM	Naomi Mitchinson	-	ITF	<i>In The Family</i>
EM	Eona Macnicol	-	TSH	<i>The Small Herdsman</i>
GMB	George Mackay Brown	-	S	<i>Sealskin</i>
EL	Eric Linklater	-	ST	<i>Sealskin Trousers</i>
DH	Dorothy Haynes	-	TSNSW	<i>Thou Shalt Not Suffer a</i>
RLS	Robert Louis Stevenson	-	TJ	<i>Thrawn Janet</i>
MS	Muriel Spark	-	TE	<i>The Executor</i>
ICS	Iain Crichton Smith	-	TB	<i>The Brothers</i>

5. **Yon caill see it one way and I coill see it a n o t h e u ⁵**

In the following analyses two main techniques were at hand: Either the stories depicted the same or very similar supernatural events, which thus could be contrasted, or it was rather a feature other than the actual supernatural occurrence that rendered itself for comparison. Both approaches shall be used, starting with twinning pieces by different writers. Chapter Four is then confined to reflections of (and on) the ethnic, social and religious situation in Scotland.

3.1. **Do You BELIEVE IN MAGIC?**

In the Family by Naomi Mitchinson & *The Small Herdsman* by Eona Macnicol
as two ways to break romantic illusions about Scotland.

In the Family - *ITF*

an unspecified fictional Highland village
Angus MacMillan and his family (mother,
father, sister Effie), his girlfriend Peigi
MacLean and her family (father, sister), the
Forester

The Small Herdsman - *TSH*

- a fictional Highland village Clachanree
- Ellen (a little girl), Wattie (the
herdsman), Ellen's mother

3.1.1. **When one does not want to and the other wants too much**

At first sight there seems to be little to compare in these two stories. But isn't it often that way, that phenomena too obviously different have in fact unexpectedly much in common? Here, an interesting antipode involves the opposite directions the authors chose to lead their readers through each story. Traces of these appear already in the very first paragraphs. While Mitchinson starts by assuring us that fairies, second sights and other uncanny 'things' do indeed exist, Macnicol's girl narrator stands firmly on her feet on the bracken-covered ground of Clachanree. Only gradually are these antithetic starting points abandoned in favour of their very contraries. Applied to the main characters: One sees what he does not want to see and the other finds something else than what she had been seeking.

Chapter 3.1.3 focuses on the appearance of the beings and whether they satisfy the characters'/readers' anticipations. In 3.1.4 the importance of vocabulary

⁵ A quote from *In the Family* (NM: 213)

choice in creating the requisite atmosphere shall be discussed. The concluding paragraphs (3.1.5) review how the two writers tackled the issue of introducing the idea of a fairy realm in contemporary literature.

3.1.2. The starting poles

From the first sentence of *ITF* it is clear that instead of the commonplace readers' hunger for mystery (often abused by decidedly low-culture writers) there is hardly any doubt about the existence of "things" in the story. Without ever asking for it, the MacMillan family are "insiders" as far as the reality of the supernatural is concerned. In pre-Christian times or among New Age supporters this might have been considered an unusual blessing, but the early 20th century MacMillans' are not exactly happy about their lot. No wonder, since although the unearthly may be taken for granted within a circle of relatives, it is not so in the outer world. Angus, the protagonist, finds himself alternately in danger of being laughed at, accused of deliberate lying or ridiculing people, and losing his girlfriend as well as his job. As in many other countries, the Highland village catches up but slowly with more developed parts of Britain, and, charmed by the wonders of civilisation, it takes too much pride in their achievement to be willing to accept such old-fashioned rubbish as talk of fairies.

It is to this tension that the story owes most of its gentle comedy. One image illustrates the contrast perfectly: a wrench wreathed with the 'bonny wild honeysuckle' (NM: 215). Inevitably one day a technocratic world will reach even the farthest clachan and croft, destroying much of the old traditions and values. Mitchinson's fairies do not launch futile attacks, nor do they surrender - they simply ignore it. Wild plants or human inventions, all can serve their purposes if they need. How their offers will be met is up to us, mortals.

While Angus's passion for both his girlfriend and work makes it more than probable that he is going to spend the rest of his life in the same provincial setting where he was born, raised and schooled, Ellen (the protagonist and narrator of *TSH*⁶) occupies the very other end of the 'insider-outsider' scale. From hints it can be

⁶ The story is clearly retold by an adult, whom we will call "the narrator-Ellen" to distinguish her from the girl Ellen who is undergoing the actual experience.

assumed that the girl does not come directly from Clachanree. More probably she only spends her holidays there at her paternal grandmother's croft. She is therefore not a proper native, though familiar enough with local ways. This is important, because (the narrator-) Ellen's relative detachment allows her to "re-tell" the plot not as a folk story-teller would do (which technically is the position of Mitchinson's hidden, anonymous narrator), but in a more literary way, with a conscious attempt to lead us as if in her own fictitious footsteps.

Contrary to NM's piece, we find ourselves more than halfway through the story before we arrive to where Macnicol wants us to be, with our appetite whetted for knowing all about the actual protagonist, Wattie. The prevalent technique the author uses to build the desired atmosphere is effectively supported by subtler details: For one, Clachanree is supposed to lie close to Loch Ness, a practical synonym for the mysterious in Scotland. Even more importantly, Ellen does not hesitate to avow that her fascination in Wattie is an outcome of more than merely a child's naturally wild imagination. In addition to her sensitive and superstitious mother's ghost stories, a memento of the generations-old storytelling tradition, there is a more artificial source of her enchantment - a further unspecified 'book of Celtic legends' (EM: 9). This links back to the fact that Ellen is but an incomer to the Highlands, and as such she longs for being allowed to enter the world of local myths. To her roused imagination the local grazings, burns and heathery slopes constitute the very land of Faerie. A whole summer spent with poring over the Celtic legend book is one of her attempts to force the entry, as is watching Loch Ness, and indeed, her carefully pre-arranged meeting with Wattie.

3.1.3. So it was a green cloak she was wearing, yon one?

How can one tell that they met with a supernatural being? In Mitchinson's village these encounters are mostly self-explanatory. For most members of the family the question is not how to recognise the being (which happens rather intuitively, as 'it is never the same twice' and 'I will see a thing one way and you will see it another' - both NM: 213), but how to deal with its message. When Angus's turn comes, takes him rather unawares. At first he mistakes the fairy for 'a summer visitor and maybe a painter at that' because of her 'long green cloak of an old-

fashioned kind that our own womenfolk would never be wearing' (both NM: 214). Then, an unaccountable uneasiness precedes all the other proofs: the Gaelic (see 4.1.5), the strange way the woman floats instead of walks, and finally and unmistakably, one that he asked for in the tradition of the unbelieving Thomases of all ages. To make Angus believe her, the Sidhe has to provide a clear sign, perceivable with at least some of the five senses and preferably confirmed by other people (and indeed, it is Angus's mother who first discovers the honeysuckle flower wreathed around his wrench).

Then the truly uneasy times for him come. The villagers' view of life results from their living conditions: simple, and therefore down-to-earth. Especially the younger generation is doing everything to modernise their lifestyle. This brings about a change of attitudes, which ranges from being proud of 'the fine new County Council water supply' and 'some of the houses with bathrooms even' (both NM: 214) to features viewed by contemporary socio- and ethnologists as less fortunate, such as the disappearance of Gaelic as a language of no further practical use. No wonder Angus does not dare to share his experience with his peers, not even with Peigi. Only when he has run out of other arguments he reveals her the true origin of his worries, and even that after a careful preparation phase. Then he is utterly knocked down by her counter-arguments, which are rather sober-minded - and so is her reaction to Angus's proposal as well as her final words (which, nevertheless, close the symbolic circle in the prospect of the secured future of "the family").

Apart from the young folk, two other generations seem to be inhabiting the village. While the oldest - Angus's and Peigi's parents - accept the supernatural warning without as much as a blink, the middle one (embodied by the Forester) is apt to laugh at the mention of a fairy. And worse than laugh. In a remote recollection of the deeds or questions a fairy-tale hero must cope with during his quest, the Forester tries Angus out several times before he finally accepts his account as a fact. During one of these "temptings" the Forester refers to the image of a fairy in the form of a woman in a 'green cloak' (NM: 219). It should not be a difficult thing to imagine her vividly: the long hair, the beautiful face, the statuesque figure...

But what about visualising 'wee dark folk on white ponies with a glitter of gold on the bridle' (NM: 213)? That needs either a fertile imagination or an intimacy with the local folk lore. However, none of the MacMillan family members seem to have the slightest problems discerning who they have just stumbled upon. In fact, the story contains no detailed description of the fairy woman such as the one above⁷, apart from the colour and fashion of the cloak. What has appeared before the reader's eyes is but an illusion, distorted and simplified. Uneasiness dissolves into cheap thrill; all patrimonial and personal value gone, the multifaceted archetype has turned into a cliché, a travesty of authenticity. This kind of reduced depiction flings out the situation into a wholly different light for a moment. The appearance is denied, the experience depreciated as a rather childish example of wishful thinking.

Through this inconspicuous yet notable remark of the Forester leads a shortcut road to the village of Clachanree. To her credit, little Ellen is not to be carried away by images the likes of Tinker Bell. Her book probably contained no adapted bedtime stories, but the original fairy-tales, in which more often than not **Scottish fairies were described as rather repulsive, and worse, mischievous** creatures. One of their favourite tricks was to kidnap a human child, placing one of their own folk in the empty cradle. Usually the horrid appearance of the changeling is vividly described; and indeed, Wattie's mutilated features bear a close resemblance to the folk original. All the uncertainty surrounding the young man - his age, real name, the exact place of his origin - forms a rewarding launch pad on the verge of a cliché. Yet Macnicol does not abide by them only: Wattie's peculiar ways - the fact he feels more comfortable in the presence of animals than people (especially women), but also his manners and use of language, closer to the older generation than to his peers - these are the proper source of the "uncanniness"⁸.

Similarly to an encounter with a witch⁹, the experience affects Ellen deeply. She had supposed it would be easy to fool Wattie, thinking how "clever" she was to hide his sickle. Instead, she ends up gasping and crying even long after Wattie has

⁷ Nor of the "Funeral" witnessed by Mother or Effie's ghost. See App. III - *second sight*

⁸ See Chapter 4.1

⁹ See Chapter 3.3

found his tool and has returned back to his 'cheerful and dignified' (EM: 14) state of mind. Putting on his mask again, he retains his secret.

3.1.4. Talking with and of fairies and changelings

Both authors pay great attention to the language they are using. Macnicol's narrator combines standard English for her commentaries with translations from Scottish languages, colloquial phrases and distinct accent for direct speech. The latter acts as an authenticity marker. In the former, English word stock items are chosen carefully in order to help the suspense grow. Within a single page the state of Ellen's aggravated mind transits from being 'teased' to 'thrilled' by the mystery surrounding Wattie - especially after his innocently meant 'reply a fairy changeling might have made', (all EM: 7) Not much later 'uncanniness' (EM: 7), a **most** poignant dialect word for something 'strange and difficult to explain' (OALD 2000, entry "uncanny") is first mentioned. And the atmosphere starts turning ever darker, when Wattie's zeal for work is described as close to possession. Cultural landscape assumes its inevitable part when Ellen's mother claims the river Eas 'has an evil atmosphere' (EM: 9). Naturally, it is this 'unearthly place' that Ellen feels will be best for her plan to 'charm the mystery' (both EM: 10) of Wattie's past. This choice itself gives out the extent to which she has pushed herself into resonance with what she had read (no matter how much she looks as a Celtic mist fashion victim).

A crucial scene takes place when Ellen finally gets to talk to Wattie tête à tête. Water sound lulls the boy's alertness and memories long repressed come to light again. He speaks 'as if out of a trance', 'falling into a strange tongue', and Ellen, finding it 'fascinating', soon becomes 'spellbound' (all EM: 11). Yet amidst haunting images such as 'nightmare', 'sightless' eyes (both EM: 12), 'strangling', 'terror', and even 'fearful incantation', the narrator-Ellen reminds us that it was 'the high strange speech that conjured up the evil visions' (all EM: 13). If asked, little Ellen might have preferred to ascribe it to pure magic. Only thanks to the narrator-Ellen the readers learn the true (though unbelievably cruel) life-story of Wattie's, when she translates the boy's fragmentary account into everyday English, just sprinkled from time to time with Wattie's dialect words.

There is yet another way of communicating with supernatural beings - on a symbolic level, such as when Angus gave the fairy a gift. There, the pathos of a ritual "sacrifice" was abated; he had to choose from a range of everyday modern gadgets such as a flash or a raffle prize. Whether his present was accepted we do not know, but a similar offering (by Ellen's mother) was certainly refused by Wattie. The boy, unable to overcome **his self-consciousness, preferred to keep his distance,** his dignity. Fairies seem not to feel this urge, but we humans have got used to **reassuring ourselves of our position in the ever-changing world. We live on it as if that was our daily bread.**

That also is a privilege of true fairy-tale heroes: to be able to go on against all odds, no matter what people around them might think. They do not break a promise of silence when their child is being exchanged for a puppy, they behead their best friend when he wishes to, leave their home to follow their lucky star... How many patrician daughters did exchange their gowns and jewellery for a mouse-fur coat in order to avoid an unwanted marriage?

3.1.5. The quest for Faerie

Unlike fairy-tales, modern short stories do not feature truncheon-out-of-the-bags nor last minute *dei-ex-machinae*. People who, in a fit of back-to-nature enthusiasm, swap a city apartment for a charmingly rustic dwelling, soon find to their disappointment that country life is no heaven on Earth either. The inhabitants of large settlements may face the danger of anonymity, mutual estrangement and social deprivation. On the other hand, small communities often develop a net of communication channels nearly as ubiquitous (and sometimes also nearly as deadly) as Orwell's Big Brother¹⁰. To trespass the community's standing rules can mean being filed away, labelled as weird, sneered at behind one's back. Not heaven, but hell.

What then is the ladies' recipe to write about Highland fairies without yielding to either of the extremes (not to mention the unfortunate, yet internationally famed pseudoromantic picture of Scotland)? Both managed to keep a certain balance, though with different counterweights.

Eona Macnicol does in a way idealise the simple and pure way of life in the country, but definitely not on a superficial level - *TSH* is a celebration of hard work as well as respect for the basic human dignity. These she reveals as increasingly lacking in towns and cities, while still preserved in the so far "uncivilised" spots such as Clachanree. The world of little rural villages is far from painless, however. Death and suffering have always been present there as a natural part of the never-ending circle of nature which affects people, animals and crop alike. Yet since life is hard enough there on its own, there is scarcely a reason for excessive cruelty. Wattie's painful experiences were brought about by a combination of poverty - due to unemployment (something the villagers do not know") and alcohol (an easy way to escape a depressive situation). But that is also a face of today's Scotland; and it is a sad truth that people no longer need their fathers' "primitive" beliefs in mischievous fairies harming our children - we manage it ourselves.

Naomi Mitchinson fights the traps with a well-meant, affectionate irony, making fun not so much of the old folk and their earnest beliefs, but mostly of those who in spite of all their modern knowledge and machine-based power find themselves quite helpless face to face with a phenomenon beyond their hitherto experience. Under the surface level of comic there lies a hope: It is possible to live in the Scottish countryside in the twentieth century - what with the oncoming modernisation (today we could even add globalisation) - without having either to sacrifice the specific atmosphere of the region in return for up-to-the-minute gadgets, or to sell it cheap as a tourist attraction. For as long as the fairies do not hesitate to use a wrench as their token, teenagers learn Gaelic as a part of their revolt, and local people gather to sing and dance, the spirit of Scotland will survive.

One more legacy, however, passed down to both short stories all the way down from sources older than fairy-tales (indeed, in some cases the tales' progenitors). A distinct type of ancient myths appears to have lost none of its potency over the millennia, as it recounts something inevitably connected with

¹⁰ See chapter 4.2; this is also the area of interest of Mohl (1997).

¹¹ Here note Wattie's unceasing activity - this, too, could be viewed as a psychohygienic reaction in order to counterbalance the deeply rooted link between inoccupation, binge drinking and needless violence.

humankind: the process of becoming a mature, fully-fledged member of society. Initiation ceremonies symbolise the death of "the old" in the person, and they typically include a painful experience, or one which requires an uncommon level of courage. Both Ellen and Angus find themselves exposed to such situations - and both pass through.

Viewed from this point, the girl might not be crying as much because of Wattie's poor childhood, but more because her own dreams have been destroyed. That afternoon she might well have stopped believing in fairies - but a more significant step towards an adult's point of view was her acquiescing in the knowledge of evil incited by humans. The young lorry driver, on the other hand, had to prove his virtues in trials not unlike those of the chivalry age (surely most of his fooleries were motivated by his beloved's profit). In the line of Mitchinson's gentle irony, the more prosaic the tasks were, the greater challenge they seemed to present for him. In an inverted order of events, the proposal to his bride elect does not feature as the starting point, but instead, as Angus's most heroic deed ever! Stretching the point slightly, without a supernatural assistance he might never have accomplished it. Peigi's final words, 'we will have plenty to speak about' (NM: 222), by which her common sense implies all the down-to-earth issues connected with running a household and starting a family, then in effect epitomise the ultimate "...and they lived happily ever after".

For those who are willing to see it, the fairyland magic flower shoots out, wherever they tread. Angus and Peigi are to get married at last - he sheepish and devoted, she perhaps more cunning than her groom expects, yet open-minded and kind enough to create a safe haven for him as well as for any future members of "the family". The poor orphan found a home, too; never mind the customary half-a-kingdom turned into a highland meadow with cows as the ladies-in-waiting. Insofar as Wattie is happy there, he, too, has been granted a passport into Faerie.

3.2. OF SEALS AND MEN

George Mackay Brown's *Sealskin* and Eric Linklater's *Sealskin Trousers* - human life from a seal's-eye view

Sealskin - *S*

- The Orkney Islands; various venues in Europe
- Magnus Olafson (a composer), Mara (his mother, a selkie), Simon Olafson (his father, a fisherman), grandfather and grandmother (Annie)

Sealskin Trousers - *ST*

- an unspecified holiday resort at the Scottish seaside, a cliff ledge
- Elisabeth (a student), Charles Sellin (her fiancée), Roger (a selkie)

3.2.1. What lies under the (seal)skin

What is there so fascinating about an animal body part that two writers as different as G. M. Brown and Eric Linklater chose it as the title of a story? To find the answer, we must first realise that seals are not the only creatures allegedly able to shed their skin and become humans (Chinese dragons, Japanese foxes...). Fairy tales from all around the world display similar fables of young people stealing each other's clothes or skins in order to prevent them from returning to their native place. The Little Mermaid herself is the selkies' better-known sister. Nevertheless, the Orkney Islands (the real seals' habitat) have certainly added a peculiarity or two to the pattern. No matter if our Orcadian authors knew each other's work or not. Though presumably they were not responding by their selkie tale to the other's treatment of the same, their stories have more in common than a word from the title.

The sealskin as a physical object is connected with characters' emergence on scene. In Linklater it is after the disappearance of the heroine, in Brown before the appearance of the actual hero's mother. In this Brown stays closer to the most widespread version of the original folk tale, in which a young girl is found on the seashore and after living for some years with her finder she chances upon her old sealskin. In spite of all the love she feels towards the children she has borne the fisherman, she returns back to her true home, the sea, and only from time to time she comes to greet and console her children from a sea-rock. It is not until the actual finale that Brown touches on a complementary version (which is also the one

Linklater builds upon), i.e. of male selkies who entice human girls into eloping with them in the animal form.

Settings, plots and cast differ. Yet as both writers elaborate on the selkie (and sealskin) metaphor, their speculations on the differences between seal and human nature coincide. Both *Roger the Selkie* and *Magnus, a half-selkie*, offer us a look-in on ourselves. And as could be expected, not a particularly comforting one.

In the following subchapters we shall focus on different aspects of the selkie metaphor (3.2.1), effective and defective interpersonal communication (3.2.2) and the characteristic attributes of male and female characters (3.2.3). Chapter 3.2.4 discloses an Utopian trait in both stories, and in the last chapter the initial imagery is dealt with once more, only now the seals are there to teach us a lesson.

3.2.2. Since when do seals wear trousers?

There is usually hardly any magic about trousers - unless they happen to be the sole garment on someone's body. At that moment they are most likely to stand for what is, in fact, hidden underneath them. In turn, in the most reduced form of the symbol, the Selkie represents the untamed powers of Nature, and out of these Eros in the first place. Human sexual attractiveness has commonly been expressed in images taken from the animal world, especially slightly haunting ones. Its male form has been typified as a one of wild looks and untamed nature, although more often than not seriously tender-hearted at the same time - from the Beauty's Beast or Notre Dame's Hunchback all the way down to Tarzan. The character of Roger seems a variation on the theme. His mere physical appearance is given rather a lot of attention: an unusually hairy body, thick eyebrows etc. There is no description of Charles, but we can expect the two to be in sharp contrast. From the very beginning, remarks such as about Roger's hands, 'strong but soothing' (EL: 232), or the way he strokes the girl 'expertly' (EL: 234) act as innuendoes against the virtually platonic relationship between the two humans.

However clear their connotation to sex may seem, nothing indicates explicitly that wearing seal fur trousers and being a selkie is in a direct relation (just as a fox fur around a lady's neck does not endow her bearer automatically with the abilities of the Japanese fairy being). For someone who is not familiar with the Orcadian

folklore, Elizabeth's question after the reason for fur trousers seems just as out of place as **Roger's** previous inquiries. **All** this, and some more writer's finesses such as a strictly objective narrator", help to increase tension throughout. Thus, for instant, we never get to know what it was Roger whispered into Elizabeth's ear (probably what she has to think about - or, more scientifically, to keep in line with the tone of the story - which processes she has to consciously activate in her mind that will cause her change into a seal.)

Yet to diminish a selkie to a talking seal which cares for nothing but the flesh would not do. The description of Elizabeth and Charles's pastime declares 'nothing vulgar, no physical contact, in their bliss together...' (EL: 224) - as if physical contact had to be vulgar and unchaste. But the start of Simon's (i.e. a man's) physical relationship with Mara might well have had the form of an enforced, violent act. The selkie herself seems utterly indifferent to it. Clearly, in both these instances the sex drive in an uncultivated form is not solely a selkies' attribute, nor the selkies' sole attribute. Sexuality (frequently referred to, while by no means the main topic) serves as a mere tool. It represents one of the taboo areas around which we humans have woven a net of our do's and don'ts most pronouncedly¹³.

One might argue that it is deceptive to use the same key for unlocking the secret door to the meaning of both stories - the standpoint of a turn-of-the century islanders and English left-wing intellectuals a couple of decades later might well prove incomparable. Yet some notions seem to be so deep-rooted in society that they can be taken as an invariant: For example (to round the topic we have started), open nakedness causes revolt both times. Although Elizabeth is not a nun, but a biology student, she cannot help being influenced by the Euro-American culture based on Christianity. If the future Sellins appear to breach cultural conventions, it is due to their studied inclination towards a non-Christian, left-wing world-view. And that is not all. There is a distinct clash between at least three sets of values:

¹² That somehow clashes with the urgent tone of the confession which frames the actual story; note also the very opposite casting in RLS's *Thrawn Janet*, with "a collector's" introduction and "a villager's" tale.

¹³ Having covered a longer period of time in *Sealskin*, Brown had his characters encounter also with the second big issue, death.

- 1) of *the society in general* (translatable into something like "if you have sufficient means, you can live in luxury without having a job; it is not acceptable that a young woman should watch a naked man; premarital sex is immoral"),
- 2) of *the group* the Sellins identify themselves with - the young left-wing intellectuals ("work is necessary, both to earn a living and to make the world a better place; marriage is old-fashioned, you can have sex with your partner when you decide to"),
- 3) last but not least, of *the couple* itself ("we do not want to get married yet, however, all the couples around us are having sex already, and if we do not want them to find out and despise us, so should we - although personally we do not feel any urge").

On a possible fourth, exclusively personal level, Roger seems to have awoken Elizabeth to some suppressed feelings of her own, and in the concluding paragraph, even Charles confesses to an innermost anxiety.

In a similar way, no matter how fustily the Orcadian villagers may behave outwardly, most of them have long ago abandoned the fundamental variety of Christianity officially promoted by the (Free) Presbyterian Church. Simon makes no scruples to lie with Mara, undergoing the consequent trial, punishment and marriage indolently, as mere empty rituals. But as in the case of Charles and Elizabeth's friends, the island community, too, has developed a system of conventions of its own. This weighs much more with Simon, though not enough to prevent him from mischief - provided his neighbours do not find out. In the harsh conditions of the islands their ostracism might cost him too much (possibly even his life). A milder form of the same makes Simon writhe under the villagers' taunts when Mara disobeys the traditional folk custom and refuses to dance with her husband at the marriage ceilidh. These systems, together with Simon's own egotism, constitute the driving forces in his life. Both he and Elizabeth have been caught in the three-ply set-of-value net.

And here is where the sealskin finally comes in. Conventions as such - being the prerequisite to a common culture, to mutual understanding, to any meaningful

communication - cannot be blamed. But there is one quality readily existing among humans, which the selkies' characteristics, as a purely fictitious construct, aim to highlight by contrast: Hypocrisy. When GB's hero Magnus leaves the Orkneys, his extensive travels bring him among Bohemians in whose company there is no reason to feel tied down by some remote islanders' standards. Despite that he is still unable to find peace of mind. Although some of his inability to cast an anchor may be ascribed to his half-selkie nature, he is much more devastated by the void lurking behind every relationship he has tried to establish.

What a dismal finding, that all man-made rules may turn into empty rituals and that we humans are perpetually doomed to pretend we are keeping them, all only in order to escape other people's scorn! And that in spite of the fact that they may well lead similarly 'wild' lives themselves: GMB's blacksmith, Walter Anderson, was 'rather fond of the bottle when he was not a member of this holy court' (GMB: 142). Hypocrisy can pervade whatever world-view one happens to choose. Sooner or later, everybody falls victim to it. Intellectual snobbery is no better than a primitive peasant's self-centredness. In Magnus's own words, 'everyone, himself included, was compelled to wear a mask'. (GMB: 156) A mask... or a skin...?

The skin metaphor is valid enough to face up being extended into more directions. Whether Magnus realises who his mother really was or not, the knowledge itself is of no use to him. Just as Mara found peace of mind together with her sealskin, the key to her identity, Magnus has to wait until he chances upon the ancient manuscript. He cannot return "home" as Mara did, being neither a full human, nor a full selkie. Yet it may be that he is granted the insight into what he has been destined for, and thanks to this experience becomes able to accept his (i.e. an artist's) fate without hard feelings at last.

EL introduces an interesting antithesis between skin and clothes. At first the trousers help Elizabeth's relief, but as the story unfolds, they became a clue to more sinister truth about Roger, revealing his true identity. The total destruction of Elisabeth's world and values is symbolised by her acceptance of a selkie's fate as she puts aside her own clothes. On another, parallel level, one could also understand the

whole communication between Roger and Elizabeth as one long erotic prelude. Yet what is more interesting here, this action from Elizabeth's part works in line with the fairy-tale principle of losing original identity together with one's clothes, while in Roger's case the principle is breached: As a selkie, his return to the sea should be conditioned by him putting *on* the sealskin! Or does the symbolism lie exactly in the fact that the sealskin has been made into trousers, a token of human civilisation, which as such calls for being abandoned, if he wants to go back "home"?

3.2.3. Sea(l)speak

One of the most fascinating points about these re-interpretations of the old tales is the fact that although they alert us to identical human vices, the individual characteristics the two authors provided their vision of selkies with do not always overlap; or, when they do, sometimes a closer reading is required to find out.

Mara - and even this name was given to her by her host family - is defined by few traits only: She cannot speak, does not know Christian symbols. Above all, her presence is surrounded by a certain eerie chill (see 3.2.3). She may have found her way to survive among humans, but this has the form of temporisation rather than true acculturation. Submitting only to inescapable conventions, she feels free enough to e.g. take a walk on the beach (with a silent intention to find her sealskin) instead of attending her (virtual) mother-in-law's burial.

Mara's true ability to use English remains a mystery. She understands a lot and even answers some questions of the kirk session, but seems not to be aware of the overall purpose of the proceedings. Perhaps she could speak if she wanted to - she can sing anyway! But selkies certainly have other means of communication, and their actions often speak louder than people's words. On their wedding night, all she needs to subdue Simon (who, after some hot whisky, feels 'masterful and arrogant' - GMB: 144) is to undress and go to bed without a word.

Notably, both Mara and Magnus share with Roger an exceptionally fine ear for music, and in both stories the same Orcadian ballad acts as an important identifier. In 5r this is the only occurrence of the word "selkie", since Roger prefers to refer to himself as to a 'seal-man' (EL: 232).

On the other hand, in GMB's writing "verbalised" does not necessarily equal "voiced". Since direct speech has often failed in putting a message across, it makes place to inner monologues which, in turn, blend into descriptions (and these often with a meaning of their own). GMB's distinctive poetics plays with individual motives, letting them recur and interlace into patterns comparable to the ancient knotwork designs in Celtic manuscripts. People's (and selkies') self-expression mingle with details provided by fate or Nature: When Mansie's fiddle 'shivered and cried' (GMB: 151) under his first touch, they echoed Mara's first reactions on dry land; his father's aversion to the thing may well date back to the memory of the wedding night dance when his wife brought disgrace on him by keeping away from the wedding party and not performing her ceremonial duties as a newlywed bride. And although in the last chapter (nr. viii, occupying 9.5 pages out of 24) music and art supersede the island life as the basis for philosophic meditations, ties with the original setting keep re-emerging until they are crowned by the final, universal reconciliation.

Mara never speaks her own mind. Surely she is not free of affection, certainly not towards her son and possibly even her father-in-law. The silence of Simon's mother was hostile; hers seems harmless and mostly indifferent. After recovering her skin she parts with her husband without revenge for having kept it in his possession, and with Mansie without bidding farewell. In EL's story, seals may appear more haunting: Vigorous even on dry land, they seem closer to human beings, also because of their understanding of nature, less technical and more advanced, but not too far from science as we know it. Their attributes resemble those often accredited to dolphins, especially in science-fiction¹⁴.

¹⁴ In some places EL's writing borders the kind of psychological/social stream of science fiction genre as presented by e.g. Ray Bradbury (one of whose short stories, by the way, deals with the encounter with a mermaid). The hair-rising idea that we are being observed from outside, totally unawares, has been found so attractive and therefore reached such prolificity that Douglas Adams eventually caricatured it in his well-known sci-fi parody, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*. Apart from fighting the established notion that it is only us, humans, who are able to do any kind of research (and, indeed, who are interested in researching into other creatures whatsoever), two more similar motives occur in Douglas's book: One of dolphins being intelligent enough to sense the coming destruction of Earth and consequently escape it by their own means, and the other one with an extraterrestrial sent out to spend some time among humans as an observer on order to submit a report on them.

Roger, well-educated and nonchalant, seems to delight in mocking (or altogether breaching) the pragmatic rules of human communication. From his somewhat aloof position he simply has no use for the Euro-American concepts of politeness, decency, distance-keeping, face-saving strategies... But just like the half-mute Mara, he, too, sometimes lets deeds precede or replace words. It is a balanced combination of these two systems - the verbal and the non-verbal - what helps Elizabeth awaken. Her wit allows her to notice his odd remarks and questions but at the same time leads her astray into the danger of becoming priggish. She needs a physical shock to be rescued from her glass house. The way she melts under Roger's touch reveal her hypocrisy (or, to put it mildly, her hunger for a full attachment in a personal relationship). Where his arms cannot reach, Roger's words come in, until the loop tightens and the girl gives up.

3.2.4. As cold as... a woman?

ST is full of words connected with bodily functions, feelings and emotions, all interplaying effectively. However, none of the motif lines there is embroidered upon to the extent of one, simple, yet powerful metaphor in *Sealskin*: The opposites of coldness and warmth. While in EL's story this acts as only a supportive tool, GMB managed to graft the motif onto every conceivable layer of the story.

When found, Mara seems to have been suffering from staying in the freezing water for too long, and 'o/nce the girl was fed a shiver and flush went over the cold marble of her flesh' (GMB: 138-9) as if the care did her good. But (if she is a selkie, as we suppose) the cold depths are Mara's true home. Her whole personality simply emanates chill without having to attend to it. The power of the image comes to light as one after another the reader's senses become roused - hearing, vision and touch: Her screaming at birth 'was such a cold frightening sound.' (GMB: 141) 'She put a cold shy look on' ...the kirk session. (GMB: 142) 'From her nakedness, gently laved by the flame of the lamp, came an intense white bitter coldness: the moon in the heart of an iceberg. Simon in his thick Sabbath suit trembled.' (GMB: 145)

The last instance comes from the wedding scene. Simon has had hot whisky and feels masterful; his bride answers his possessiveness by silently undressing and going to bed - to sleep. Magnus's seed, too, 'it seemed had the coldness and

barrenness of salt.' (GMB: 158) Outwardly, though, he 'had the thick peasant body that rises in a slow fruitful surge of earth to the sun, and falls away again.' (GMB: 158) **Here the first comparison is not with sea, though that would be obvious (waves/tide), but with the fruitful combination of earth and sun.** Arguably, this is not altogether due to his half-human descent, but it might have much to do with the simple fact that he is a man.

At the Scottish seaside warm weather can be hard to come by. Elizabeth and Charles are right to be 'content that the sun should warm and colour their skin'. The quiet gazebo, 'warmed by the afternoon sun' (both EL: 224), is precisely what they need to relax - and what seals like, too. Roger's brown-hued skin emanates no coldness, and he does not hesitate to justify his trousers by admitting that 'when I come out to sun myself on the rock again, it doesn't feel cold and clammy.' (EL: 231)¹⁵

Clearly, coldness is not a selkies' uniforming quality. Rather, in both stories it seems to be connected to women: When Elizabeth starts to be suspicious, 'her words were like the shadow of words, or words shivering in the cold' (EL: 229-230) and at the thought of becoming a selkie she 'gasped, as though already she felt the water's chill' (EL: 234). Back in 5, (emotional) coldness is not exclusively Mara's problem. Simon's father's 'own marriage had gone cold /.../ in the end' (GMB: 147). Should we go into details, we soon find that the father smokes pipe, likes to sit near the fire and uses a red handkerchief, while the mother handles cold water and iron, which clangs like bell.

In a synaesthetic concert, GMB alternates images of material and metaphorical coldness until the creepy feeling gets to the reader's very bones. As we become more sensitive to the notion of coldness, less and less is needed to sparkle the association. At the mention of Mara's 'strange bell-like voice' (GMB: 149 - a bell again!) one could almost feel the impersonal iciness of a piece of metal. The net of imagery covers the entire scope of activities which together form an islander's life:

¹⁵ There are more references to warmth/coldness in the story, but they are nothing out of the ordinary: '/Roger/ answered with more warmth in his voice' (EL: 228), an indirect 7h/is expression '/.../ grew hard as a rock shining undersea.' (EL: 229), or 'The coldness of his face wrinkled to a frown.' (EL: 230)

Mara and Simon 'broke the daily bread with cold hands. They listened to the scripture reading with cold faces.' Under this light, even the mother's 'thrift, her cleanliness, her decency, the golden butter and the black ale' smell more of priggishness than of an exemplary farmwife (such as Nemcova's 'Grandmother').

Do not these constellations resemble Roger's "signature of the sea", the whirl in the form of the Ying-Yang symbol? There, "Yin is the dark, cold, female, introvert, passive side of life, shown as the Black area. Yang is the light, warm, male, extrovert, active aspect, shown as the White area. The T'ai Chi symbol means that everything in the Universe (the "Ten Thousand Things" of the Tao Te Ching) contains both light and dark, good and evil. These are complementary aspects rather than conflicting. The two small dots within each area indicate that Yin contains the seed of Yang, and Yang contains the seed of Yin." (Feng Shui - online source) Light, warm, active... - here comes the 'sun' in GMB's simile! Moreover, the coldness of women is not necessarily negative. It is a part of the ongoing cycle of life, where everything has to find its counterpart in order to retain balance.

3.2.5. Chaos and Order, parallels and intersections

There is one interesting aspect in which these two stories differ from the rest in this thesis. The fact that selkies are not solitary beings, but form an integrated realm, allows the writers to plunge into theories of other civilisations. These have been one of the most rewarding themes of all ages. Fabricated mostly after the current social order, they were often pictured either as an ideal state of things, or as a satiric reminder of what would happen if our seemingly harmless weaknesses were to swell to giant scale. Yet our two authors did not resort to hyperbole. Rather, they focused on the place of humans and selkies in a wider context.

Although .S^end with the new couple's elopement, the selkies' world is not presented as a heaven on Earth. Surely, the life there seems much easier (compare Douglas Adams's dolphins, 'mucking about in the water having a good time'). But there does exist a form of civilisation, with teachers and theories of life elsewhere. And these are just as fallible as humans'; the two actually mirror each other in their misimpression that the other creature simply must be superior in some respect. This, and the mutual finding that neither is correct, that both sides have their pros and

cons, that no one is perfect, leads us on to speculations over what principle might exceed both. EL offers the Eastern notion of balance. If we accept it, even the two "peoples" approach to life could be viewed as complementing each other. When Elizabeth receives the much needed warmth from Roger, she becomes strong enough to support him in turn, when he fears his return under the sea.

Curiously, this is not as far from GMB's Christian-grounded message as one would expect. The Celtic manuscript which Magnus falls upon explains that at the beginning there was Chaos, out of which God made the Web of Nature. The world was granted harmony; metamorphosis was possible, not unnatural, nor harmful. Now, Man is destroying this original state; namely there's too much science (remember Roger's mocking remarks about the current achievements of biology!). The fact that we cannot change our form any more has been distorted into our perception that it is against nature (or indeed against God).

However, these ideas are all presented as human. The reason why *Sealskin* seems zested with an extra dose of mystery is that we are never granted a look into the selkies' own world. The narrator gets closest when remarking that 'the still encrusted the veins that had been nourished too long with corn and milk.' (GMB: 179)¹⁶ On the other hand, GMB's final suggestion that it only is art what holds the world together now and prevents it against returning back to chaos, feels a little bit too explicit. Some readers might well prefer EL's ending, which leaves us to form our opinion about the ruling powers of this world ourselves.

3.2.6. People or pachyderms?

We started this chapter with a question of what lies under a sealskin. Let us finish it with an opposite one - who, in fact, wears a skin they had better shed?

The family into which Magnus was born would probably be a case for a social worker today. Where does the boy fit in this tetrad of ignorance - hostility - blankness - kind suffering? And indeed, where is his place in the wide world that he escapes to? A predecessor of a post-modern person, he embodies an existence floating amidst cultures and sets of values, none of which is fully acceptable for

¹⁶ Still, had there been no such hint, a rational explanation of Mara's eccentricity would still be virtually out of the question.

him. Connected closely not only to nature, but also to the islands' history and even mythic pre-history¹⁷, he 'remembered his father and grandfather with sudden deep affection. /.../ A dark comforting power rose from the vanished generations.' Yet at the same time Vi/t struck Magnus with a sudden chill that the islanders he loved might not want his dust to be mingled with theirs.' (both GMB: 155) 'A coldness gathered about his heart. /.../ He himself felt nothing - only a little irritation at the sloppiness of their mourning. /.../ /H/e was quite cold and unmoved. Standing on that pier, the scales fell from his eyes - the change was not in the islanders but in himself. An artist must pay dearly, in terms of human tenderness, for the fragments of beauty that lie about his workshop.' (GMB: 154)

Tenderness. One of the qualities Magnus had been seeking, one he now has to let go in return for his other, more extraordinary gift. But tenderness is what Elizabeth (*ST*) lacks, too. Apart from the meaning "loving kindness" it connotes sensitiveness, vulnerability and the requirement of tact or careful handling. People often fear and consequently fail to display this. Moreover, even when they do (as well as when they declaredly do not), they often prove but posers. It is they, not the selkies, who put on a skin, a mask, a pretence, when they go out from their habitat into the world!

Without the selkie background, the character of Roger could be degraded, misplaced into a too-simplifying pigeonhole. Magnus Mara the Selkie's son, fits outwardly the Romantic hero mould - a solitary soul, a half-voluntary outcast uncomprehended by his surroundings, interested in art, history, folklore and myth... But in his case the disrootedness has a "real" basis, a *damnosa hereditas* from his mother's side. This is why - no matter how much he would have loved to - he is unable to feel at home among the too earthbound islanders (for his own father a historical fiddle was '/a/ waste of money' - GMB: 151) and the cultivated, worldly bohemians alike. We people would love to meet true Supermen or true Romantic heroes. Sometimes we even feel like becoming them - we want to be strong and charming, or we feel as misunderstood geniuses. Are these characters not something of an adult fairy-tale beings?

¹⁷ The Orkneys are rather peculiar in that their inhabitants can advert to both Celtic and

The cliché, revisited, works well for Magnus and Roger. Due to their descent, they have the "right" to be what most of us at best play at. They are both connected substantially with the great circle of nature, they both are highly sensitive to the balance the world needs. Not that the natural powers would be idealised in the stories - they are described as rough, cruel, unmerciful as well as soothing and gentle. But they do have the essential ability of keeping themselves in balance. The fact that both Magnus and Elizabeth have to "pay" for their extraordinary opportunities only supports this vision of total justice. There is no escape. No one else can pay for them, or actually pay with money.

This idea sometimes bridges the two pieces of writing to the extent of seemingly insignificant details. E.g. when other sea animals are referred to, Roger is capable of diving down from a high cliff and catching a lobster with his bare hand. While doing this, he scratches himself on a limpet, which in Brown's tale serves Simon - a man - as bait to catch fish. A selkie's experience with life, always direct, first-hand, often violent, stands in opposition to human detachedness from it. Not only have we learned to (mis)use some life forms to help us seize more of natural resources. Figuratively, this tendency towards second-handedness has been moulding the relationships between humans. It has been alluring us from our true nature in favour of an artificial persona which would be fitted to current fashion. The sealskin - worn or removed at its bearer's will - could well serve as a visible pendant of the sham mask we never dare put aside in front of others.

3.3. 'IT WAS NA ME!'¹⁸

Who and what wields the power over people's minds in *Thrawn Janet* by R. L. Stevenson and *Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch* by Dorothy K. Haynes.

Thrawn Janet - *TJ*

Balweary, a fictional Highland parish
Rev. Murdoch Soulis, Janet M'Clour
aka Thrawn Janet; (anonymous)
villagers

Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch - *TSNSW*

- an unspecified (Highland) village
- Jinnot, her father (the farmer), Minty
Fraser (a maid at the farm), Beatrice
(a dairymaid at the farm), Jack
Hyslop (a worker at the farm)

3.3.1. 1881 and 1947

Robert Louis Stevenson is the sole representative of all the well-known nineteenth century Scottish classics of mystery tales to be analysed in this paper. Although his piece displays some differences from the other texts, it is impossible to draw any conclusions about the development of a genre from a comparison of such a limited number of specimens. We will therefore settle for a simple enquiry into where the two "witch" stories make common cause with each other despite the sixty-six-year divide between the publishing of *TJ* and *TSNSW*. For example, they both use similar "witch" imagery (3.3.2), show the power of speech (3.3.3) and the gullibility of a crowd (3.3.5).

Stevenson's wife Fanny recalls the moments when the couple read the story aloud together: 'By the time the tale was finished my husband had fairly frightened himself, and we crept down the stairs hand-in-hand like scared children.' (Find Articles - online source) Yet the distance in time have affected the readers' perception. Together with many other 19th century canonical writers, Stevenson's works have for the most part been re-graded (or degraded?) as "adults' and *youths'* fiction"¹⁹. Not that six decades later the hunger for entertainment would be any smaller, but adult readers have grown to look for a more intricate kind of thrill. Muriel Spark lets the character of Uncle (*TE*) suggest that when you want to write 'something strong and cruel, /.../ that is easier to accomplish in a historical novel'

¹⁸ DH: 254

¹⁹ Orig.: *Beletrie pro dospělé a mládež v češtině* - data from the Municipal Library of Prague computer search engine; italics by M.P.

(MS: 201) and indeed the topic Uncle chose was a witch trial. rSMSh does not read as lightly as *TJ*-, and to sweep it away as no more than a horror story will not do. The tension there is unnerving, because its validity has not expired. It is not a tale from the past, about horrible things that used to happen to somebody from time to time; it tells us something about ourselves, something not too flattering.

3.3.2. Romantic concepts revisited

77 begins with the then rather common introduction supposed to give the tale a definite, "realistic" setting. Even the story itself is told in a more or less objective tone, as if compiled from several versions narrated by the villagers, even with several references to particular people as sources. The time and place could not be more explicit - and they could hardly be less explicit in *TSNSW*. Haynes starts in medias res, placing the readers as it were in a cloud of Highland fog. She procrastinates the revelation of important information; some of them, such as space-time specification, the readers are deprived of until the very end. Janet and Jinnot also differ - one is an old woman, a single mother, and the other a young child, an orphan. But (and by this time there is almost no point in saying "interestingly enough") both stories use the same standing props.

'The child sat alone in her bedroom' (DH: 247) - a simple yet powerful beginning. At this point we would expect the girl to be the victim rather than the aggressor - a Gretel of a kind, waiting to be turned into a pie. Dust, hair, creaking floor, rattling door, sealed windows laced with cobwebs and dead flies, 'a haven for everything black and creeping' (DH: 247); this description suits a witch house well. And hay-coloured hair, large teeth, wide mouth, square and dull face, sweaty body, those are the attributes of a witch. More precisely, of Jinnot. Having formed her conception of a witch from what she had heard and seen in her short life, the girl has diagnosed herself as one of these "chosen" (while stigmatised) women. Now, in accordance with the sociological theory of labelling, she does all she can to confirm (if to herself only) she really is one. The circle she has entered by this decision proves vicious. If children did not talk to her before, they would be the shyer to do so now that she has accepted her unkempt appearance as one of her fundamental characteristics. Had Janet M'Clour lived in Jinnot's clachan, perhaps the girl would

have attempted to find a friend in this old solitary woman with an obscure history, this incommunicative person with peculiar habits such as 'mumblin' to hersel' up on Key's Loan in the gloamin', whilk was an unco (*strange, terrible*) time an' place for a God-fearin' woman' (RLS: 4, explanatory translation M.P.). They might even have shared an oddity or two (like crushing the caught flies, for instance).

The same holds for the time schedule. As in Tolkien's *Hobbit*, "We like the dark," said all the dwarves. "Dark for dark business!" (Tolkien 1997: 29) Thrawn Janet is hanged in the night. Jinnot stays awake till morning, too, in her struggle to cause Beatrice to die at childbirth, and is greatly disappointed when nothing happens.

How comes this cliché of a scenery still enjoys its popularity? Certainly it has much to do with our cultural heritage and all the archetype patterns which have been being imprinted in our brains since the first bedtime story our parents told us. But even that apart, there might be another, more individual-focused reason.

Within the purview of supernatural, subtler (and thereby the fouler) evil is likely to refrain from obviousness. (In human history, too, many a tragedy has come about when people believed the outer looks and failed to follow what was not glittering enough.) When fighting with the forces of darkness, it is not always intelligence which counts; intuition often helps save the hero instead. An artist's profundity reveals itself also in his competence to see through the obvious - and a good artist must be competent to convey his findings to the recipient.

Shall we simplify the past conclusion, the more senses involved in creepy feelings, the better²⁰. In this respect, both Stevenson and Haynes succeeded - now let us have a look at how they did it. As could have been expected, they describe stock acoustic phenomena such as shrieking owls, howling dogs, strange sounds in the house. Mr Soulis's haunting memory of the black man returns as 'the overcome of a sang' (RLS: 26) Jinnot, too, is haunted, by Beatrice's questions - they do not sound too far from the dark insinuations of the devil himself.

Physical feelings are more interesting for analysis, since they oscillate between two extremes. If we, as readers, reflect on our aesthetic experience, we

²⁰ That the artfulness has to be joined by profundity of message goes without saying.

usually come to realise that we have created a visual representation of the imagined world. It is to a much lesser extent that we awake to the realisation that this picture would be far from complete if it relied on visual perception only. Not only we tend to undervalue our senses of smell, taste and touch, but especially, from a more complex point of view, the overall perception of one's own body.

At an encounter with a (reputed) witch, the first experience is of a paralysing coldness²¹: 'he took a kind o' cold grue in the marrow o' his banes', 'the swat stood upon him cauld as well-water'. But at the same time, some of the crucial scenes in both tales take place in summer, and an extremely hot one at that. Whereas images of coldness evoke stiffness, inability to move, slackening heartbeat, heat induces feelings of weakness, tiredness, difficulties with breathing, physical sickness. Headache, blurred vision, parched mouth, sticky sweat, the heart beating faster and faster until complete exhaustion... Cold may be bitter; heat is crushing - limbs are too heavy to move, the brain does not function quickly enough. What is worse?

Unlike cold, heat also fuels olfactory images, often linked up with decaying processes (which strongly connote death). On a too hot summer day, our sense of smell is stretched to its limits, overwhelmed by the sensations. Any scent, if too intensive, may turn into a stifling stench. For those who have experienced (or simply heard of) the 20th century war atrocities, smell may even connote all the various types of gas used to kill people. Scent is also an important factor of non-verbal interpersonal communication, and influences the positive or negative perception we have of our partner. The devil as well as other creatures in connection with him (witches among them), hardly ever smells sweet - and if so, it usually is a mere illusion. Unfortunately, a crowd in panic is likely to use topsy-turvy logic, and thus a bad smell or choking odour can become practically one of the distinguishing signs of devilry.

²¹ In cases when the witch is seen as a mortal endowed with supernatural powers, this might be connected with the aforementioned popularity of the night-time for such events. The association between witches and coldness emerges even more intensely in modern fantastic fiction, i.e. original, previously non-existent fairy tales, such as H. C. Andersen's *Snow Queen* or C. S. Lewis's *White Witch* from the *Chronicles of Narnia*, there, witches usually occupy a high position in a purely fictional world. However, this does not apply to wizards, who seem to be more likely to inhabit fiery realms (Tolkien's Mordor, for one). Another proof of the pervasive ying-yang/animus-anima formula, perhaps?

The fine assortment of stimuli featuring in the following extracts will hopefully help to consolidate the above-sketches picture:

7I/t was low an' het (*hot*) an' heartless; the herds couldnae win (*reach*) up the Black Hill, the bairns (*children*) were ower-weariet (*too weary*) to play; an' yet it was gousty (*gusty*) too, wi' claps o' het wund (*wind*) that rummled in the glens, and bits o' shouers that slockened (*refreshed*) naething.' (RLS: 16, translation by M.P.)

7T/he days had lengthened to a queer tarnished summer, full of stale yellow heat. /.../ All the brooks were silent and the nettles by the hedges had a curled, thirsty look, /.../ the floating weeds and mud gave off a bad, stagnant smell.' (DH: 252)

The sixty six years have left its imprint. Pace Stevenson, Haynes surpasses him in many respects. (Taken from a synchronous perspective, that is. There is no question of Stevenson's conspicuousness during his lifetime.) She is cruder, perhaps, using the naturalism practice of painfully precise depictions and nauseous details. But what does most for the evocativeness of *TSNSW* is not solely the content, but also its rendition. According to Wesling, 'narrative form rather typical for the Scottish novel is a 1st person narration'. Particularly in modern writing it is sometimes shifted into a '1st person narration written in the 3rd person' (Donald Wesling as cited in Zderadickova 2004:197).

Although Haynes occasionally diverts from the unifying perspective, empowering us to peep into minds others than Jinnot's, this has a considerable effect - the readers are left to surmise how much is real and what is but the girl's imagination. They have to follow her footsteps, as there is no fictitious space within which they could move freely such as in Stevenson's vividly described area of the Balweary parish. We are not granted the relief of seeing the fog dissolve. Catharsis having defaulted, horror endures.

3.3.3. The power of words

In a rural-based community people influence each other more strongly than in a larger settlement where they can choose with whom to communicate and indeed whom to follow. The villagers have to rely on each other, seeking help or counsel from particular members of the community, who are known to be experienced in the

issue. At the same time, despite the small number of people in authority, the rest of the community does not forget they were granted the higher status unofficially, in the natural course of events, and consequentially they can also be stripped of it just as easily, when the matter seems beyond their competence. In case of folk witch trials, few of these authorities had enough power to save the accused women from their fate. The whole idea was supposed to be based on Christian grounds, and indeed in *TJ* the minister's words do stop the mob. But there is no minister in *TSNSW*, and Jinnot's father, though a head of the household, loses his potency outside the farm grounds. A witch was a threat to the whole community, and the more people feel threatened, the more likely a panic arises. Moreover, the Bible as the ultimate source of regulations could be successfully cited quoted/used by both sides²².

It was not a mere social status, however, which made Mr. Soulis more successful than the unfortunate father. Importantly, he also wields a power of speech, and a large part of the introductory description is devoted to this extraordinary ability of his. (After all, as a minister he was purpose-trained in it.) Not only are the villagers moved by his preaching - what is more, they take for granted that they are supposed to let themselves be influenced by what the Minister says. His words are there to do them good, helping to save their very souls! Then 'a man of God of spotless character and orthodoxy' (RLS: 2), from today's point of view rather a parody of a Presbyterian, Mr Soulis inspires genuine awe among his parishioners, the youngest going as far as literally following his footsteps (RLS: 1).

In Haynes's story we meet with a more sinister example of the same ability. Judging by appearance, Beatrice embodies an absolute opposite of the 'severe, bleak-faced' Mr. Soulis (RLS: 1): She is young, 'handsome, gay'²³. Just as Jinnot's name might hint a certain simplicity of the character (as a local or home-made vernacular pronunciation of the common Janet, proper for someone not considered an adult), "Beatrice" suggests a strive for a higher status, to become "Mrs Hyslop".

²² Balweary parishioners dare to remind their very minister of the witch of Endor (RLS: 5; she was a medium addressed by king Saul when he had turned away from the Lord - Sam 28). DH directly quotes Ex 22:18 (probably the most lethal verse of all), leaving out - in line with her idiosyncratic reticence - the two operative words, "to live" (DH: 255).

To reach her goals, she does not hesitate to employ all means available, even though they will clearly lead to pain mental or physical. Poor Jinnot falls completely under the spell of this Richelieu in skirts, holding her in awe (though not necessarily in love) for her 'wisdom' (DH: 250). But rather than wise, Beatrice deserves to be branded as cunning, worldly. Jinnot never fully realises she has been exploited in this way, not even after Beatrice finally turns away from her when the girl is accused of killing her baby. The rage that led Jinnot to the attempted murder, springs out of another conviction - Beatrice is guilty of Jinnot's realising **she was a young witch**: 'She wanted to curse Beatrice for putting the idea into her head!' (DH: 255)

3.3.4. Who were they?

Jinnot paid for the accusation with her life. But, no matter how intensely she had wished for the boy to die, was his death really of her doing? Who were Janet and Jinnot?

The narrator of *TJ* speaks on behalf of the Balweary parishioners and clearly favours the supernatural: Though mere mortals can only guess in these matters, it is certain that if Janet was not a witch, she was something even worse, because utterly unhuman - a ghost, a black man, a bogle...²⁴ The minister, from his then common position of an intellectual handyman, offers a scientific explanation - a stroke of the palsy - but few believe him. Leaving aside the accounts of all the weird happening around Janet, it is the consequence of Mr Soulis's acquaintance with the old woman which matters. And this (i.e. his appearance and the atmosphere of mixed awe and terror surrounding him) is so important as to form the frame of RLS's tale.

Occupying the very opposite stance, close to the naturalists, DH pays great attention to describing the bleak environment where young Jinnot is growing up. (Although it takes harrowingly long for the actual information to find a way through the fog). Not that her father would not love his only child, but having a whole farmstead to manage, he can not mother the girl. With no-one to care for more than her bodily needs, no friends, no peers around, Jinnot remains emotionally neglected. This is where her desire to be in the centre of attention springs from, the

²³ DH: 250; both words with the original meaning, of course (i.e. "pretty, merry")

²⁴ See Appendix III

unconscious urge to be cared for whatever the price, as well as the susceptibility to bribes both psychological and material (money to spend, ribbons, sweets...).

Whether the unfavourable depiction of her looks is unbiased and truthful, or solely her subjective reception of herself, remains unclear. In the latter case more tokens could be found in the text which might indicate a possible mental deficiency - Jinnot's physical frailty and mental lability, her gullibility, the overly kindness with which others treat her... Again, there is no knowing to what extent the lapses of memory and fits she recall are a mere product of her imagination or signs of a mental or psychic condition (epilepsy for one would match the description), not to mention the fact we do not even know her age. There is no mention of school: Was she too young, or too old for it? What about her talking with Beatrice as 'woman to woman' (of course there is a slight irony in the phrase; still, to use it in the connection with, say, a five-year old appears somehow inappropriate)^ And had she been too old, why was she not involved in household tasks? Was there no school, or no other children? (Oh yes, there were some - DH: 255.) And let us not forget that thanks to Presbyterian resolve that all people should be able to read the Scriptures (which turned Scotland into the first country with universal education), all of them must have attended school.

In the end, Jinnot identifies herself with the baddies, in a desperate attempt to find an easy explanation of her peculiarity. Her mind, following its sense of self-preservation, starts to perceive ostracism as exclusivity. As often, a non-acceptance in the official sphere leads to the stronger affiliation toward the unwanted, negative, dark... Haynes's final verdict of Jinnot's supernatural abilities is neither yes, nor nay; but its importance becomes overshadowed by the gruesomeness of real-life happenings. The spiral of misunderstanding winds on and on, until the accumulated tension breaks it - as they do not know any better, Jinnot is treated by her neighbours as the kind of person whom she aspires to.

3.3.5. And who are "they"?

Who was the first one to come up with the idea that Jinnot killed the baby? And who was it, who labelled Janet M'Clour as 'sib to the Deil' (RLS: 5)? Well, someone from the village, but namely?

There are no names. The commonest title RLS gives them is 'the folk'. This can be further segmented into overlapping groups of 'the serious' (RLS: 3), 'auld, concerned, serious men and women' (3), 'the elders' (15), 'the best folk' (4), 'the grave folk' (14), 'the men folk' (14), 'the younger sort' (3), 'the bairns' (4) and finally 'the guidwives' (5)²⁵. DH is even less communicative when it comes to precise data. The very protagonist is introduced as '/t/he child' (DH: 247) and we only learn her name when she is called by it. Slowly, other characters emerge from the mist: Minty, Jack Hyslop, Beatrice. Anyone else, even a concrete person, remains anonymous: Jinnot's 'father' (or 'the farmer'), 'the doctor'. '/T/he men', 'the farm-men' and last but not least, 'the women'.

Apart from these characters, as if reduced to mere social roles or social (demographic) groups, in both stories we encounter a more elusive "they". 'This common pronoun deserves special attention - although grammatically ranked as "personal", it functions as rather "impersonal" here, offering shelter to members of any of the groups listed above. Witch trials as phenomena required more than half-a-dozen people. Only a fool or a hero antagonises a witch single-handed. Her activity endangers the whole community, and only when this community feels threatened enough to start acting as one, any successful action can be launched. And just as any dictator would achieve nothing without hundreds of troops at his command, in both RLS's and DH's stories there is the multiple-headed crowd of ordinary villagers, frightened, angered and resolved to get rid of the menace at all costs. "They" guarantees anonymity and cleans from accountability, while reserving the right to punish. Communal responsibility can all too easily turn into no responsibility at all. DH realises this very well: In one paragraph, 'kind hands worked to revive' Jinnot, 'the household' (both DH: 251) being mindful of the sick child - and in the next, the nature of the 'difference' in approach to her becomes clear: 'they questioned her' (both DH: 252) The writer also looked for nouns with similar connotations: "the mob", "the watchers", "the others" (when Jack doesn't

²⁵ This last word, though used owing to traditional reasons, has something absurd about itself, should we imagine literally some "good wives" as shrieking and clawing 'the coats off' the back of the unfortunate old woman; and 'mony a guid wife bure the mark of her nest day and mony a lang day after' (RLS: 5).

want to hurt Minty), "men", "the throng", "they all", "someone...", "the crowd". A rowdy crowd indeed, especially when there is no one there to say: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." (John 8:7)

3.3.6. Witches and "black men" among us

In the end it does not really matter whether the heroines were "real" witches. More importantly, we have ascertained that each time the meeting with an "officially approved witch" bears consequences. What became of Mr Soulis's we already know; Beatrice tosses in fever, and as far as Jinnot's father is concerned, 'they (!) did not know what would happen when he came down' (DH: 261) from the attic. Maybe it is no accident that witches are often pictured with facial warts; the verrucous virus is difficult to remove completely and it spreads easily, even from person to person. In a similar way, evil is passed on, whenever somebody suffers harm and does not have the strength to retain the negative energy in him or herself. The wounded person is then the more likely to hurt someone else in turn. The spiral of violence winds up....

In the past centuries people suspected eccentric women of having affairs with the Devil. The belief might have changed, yet the mentality which stood behind the attempts to drown Janet, Jinnot and Minty did not. When RLS was sitting in a Perthshire cottage during the rainy summer of 1881, he did not intend to write anything more than a mystery tale. Haynes clearly had different intentions with *TSNSW*, delivering a tale not of mystery, but of social and mental poverty of Scottish country folk. People's jealousy, hatred, unsettled personal matters - these lie behind the action, not supernatural powers. From football hooligans and visitors of shopping malls to terrorist recruits, the crowd psychology remains the same. Give a mass of people a reasonable cause for action and any thing or person serving as a trigger, and the results, though set in the twentieth (or twenty-first) century, may turn out as horrendous as witch burning could ever have got.

Stevenson's story was more than probably based on something he had heard in the surrounding Perthshire villages. Who knows what would have been told about Jinnot and Minty a dozen of years later? Once upon a time...

3.4. THE CURSE OF THE SOPHISTICATES

Iain Crichton Smith's *The Brothers* and Muriel Spark's *The Executor*
- two haunted Scots' fallacies

The Brothers- TB

a flat in Edinburgh
a writer, born in the Highlands

The Executor- TE

a lonely house in the Pentland Hills
Susan Kyle (niece of a famous
writer); her Uncle; Elaine (his
mistress); Mrs. Donaldson; Jaimie
(Mrs. D.'s son and Susan's lover)

3.4.1. To ghost (verb)²⁶

Since time immemorial people have believed the dead are able to communicate messages to the living. Some of the popular means include apparitions, dreams, table rattling or the voice of a medium during a spiritistic seance. A rather peculiar option of leaving written personal notes (perhaps prompted by the eye-catching verb "to ghost/ghost-write") was chosen by Iain Crichton Smith and Muriel Spark alike as a disguise for an introspective look at how twentieth century Scots struggle with their ethnic heritage.

The heroes in both stories belong to the "enlightened", rational section of humankind, one which would never believe in ghosts. At the very beginning, Smith's narrator - also a writer²⁷ - explains that one of the reasons he turned his back to his Highland home were exactly the local 'silly ghost stories' (ICS: 161). These were so numerous (and worse, probably widely believed), that he inclines to adopt them as a symbolic substitute for the general simplicity of common country people. This approach is not far from that of Muriel Spark's heroine, who, as far as intellectual outlook is concerned, regards herself as way above the average. The two thus live undisturbed in their dream worlds, doing all they can to differentiate themselves from whatever around them still bears connection with the old-

²⁶ To write a book, an article, etc. for another person who publishes it as their own work. (OALD 2000, entry "ghostwrite") Ghostwriters' tasks vary from polishing style of an article to giving a shape to the official author's rough ideas.

²⁷ In order to avoid confusion we shall mark him as Writer, although in the original text there is no capital letter; Muriel Spark also uses a capital U for her Uncle.

fashioned and primitive Scotland of the past. And then, an unexpected and haunting event smashes the illusions they had about themselves into smithereens.

In the first sub-chapter (3.4.2) the nature of this supernatural event will be analysed. Since the two stories are presented as personal accounts, the next sub-chapters will focus more or less on the two unreliable narrators: the key words they are using to defend their (prevaingly groundless) feelings of being maltreated (3.4.3), stubbornness as a potentially typical Scottish trait (3.4.4), and lastly, in what respects the protagonists identify themselves as Scots (3.4.5).

3.4.2. Behind the words

Neither in *The Brothers*, nor in *The Executor* do we find much of the notorious prompts such as howling wind, creaking floors or dark silhouettes of medieval castles illuminated by the moonshine²⁸. Susan and the Writer are therefore perfectly justified in their astonishment upon finding the eerie writings. They both go through similar phases of disbelief (checking if what they saw is still there), of fear after acknowledging it is real, of anger and violent actions (at some point both resort to burning the pages), and lastly of anguished resignation. After having spent sleepless nights sitting near the fire, unable to get rid of the cold and dread, they confine themselves to nervous reactions to the ghosts' more serious harassments. It appears that the beings won't let them lead normal life again - at least not until they have solved a problem they had been lying about to themselves.

Spark's Uncle stays within the Scottish tradition of spirits who appear to people in order to warn them about something, revenge a crime or ask someone to do it in behalf of them. Although he did not manage to reform his niece's behaviour wholly, he succeeded in the cardinal point, making her return the manuscript. How? A particular person whom Susan knew, with a particular message just for her (and thanks to her rendering of the whole affair, also for us): even Thomas More probably was not the first to find out that 'the devill, the prowde spirite, cannot

²⁸ With the exception of 'the moon was shining on my typewriter and making it look like a yellow skeleton' (ICS: 161) which is only there to highlight ICS's use of colours, and has its direct counterpart at the very end where the same still-life gives the impression the moon is 'shining on the corn, ripe and yellow' (172), as a symbol of the Writer's transformation, or, in more general terms, turning from death to new life.

endure mockery' (Lewis: 7). Susan, an exemplary hypocrite, had to be made aware somehow that none of her deeds remain concealed (something omitted from her misshapen religiousness). She needed a dose of shame injected deep enough under her thick skin - the shame of being watched in the bathroom as well as during making love, but also of more general and external issues: of being looked upon as mad, and (long before that) of the shame of being afraid at all.

From this point of view Iain Crichton Smith's narration should not properly fall under the ghost story heading; spirits hardly ever come in crowds. The Writer himself is not clear about the issue: 'some being whose name and form I did not know knew all about me and was determined to destroy me' (ICS: 163), 'familiar and fatal' (ICS: 169). Sometimes their expressions resemble E.T.s', as when a message 'WE ARE COMING FOR YOU JOSEPH WE ARE COMING TO TAKE YOU HOME' typed in capital letters 'seemed to emanate from a different world, one far from mine', or those of animals, or they come as 'a menace' from 'another world, a world that existed long ago with its irrational gods and stiff hieratic clothes'²⁹. Those beings, 'alive and barbarous and drunken' sing 'a lament and a song of triumph', 'menacing and despairing and fruitful' (ICS: 171). Having been brought up on Czech fairy-tales, one can't help being reminded of the haunting chorus used by Jezinky to lull Smolicek: "We merely stick one finger in and then we'll be on our way again...", or even of the anonymous mass of Blanik Knights, only that this time they are not exactly coming to help³⁰. The attribute "brothers" designates the symbolic link between the Writer and Highland peasants as well as the relationship among themselves: There is no name, no occupation or rank mentioned, only the pronoun "we"; the overwhelming effect brings the readers close to a Utopian world where no one is better than the other, indeed, no-one seems to differ. There is something pathetic about the way this otherwise mute crowd lifts up its voice unanimously; we do not need to know much about Smith's intellectual and political background to guess it was not introduced in the story by accident.

²⁹ All three ICS: 170; this might be an allusion to Egypt just as well as to the Highlands.

³⁰ From a different perspective they could remind us of Kosmas's "old men", the alleged sources for his *Chronicle*. They, too, are a direct connection to living history; they, too, are anonymous, yet highly personal.

The ghost voices and emerging Gaelic script are not the only examples of the mysterious in *TB*. Smith lets the Writer experience hallucinations engaging all the senses. Gradually, the original Oriental sounds, smells and colours recede in favour of **similarly sensuous and suddenly vivid memories** of the Writer's **Highland** youth. These lead him back to his roots, disclosing on the way not only his old scars, but also his own history of hatred and violence. The message is clear again, but this time it is rather a mass e-mail than a personal note. Notably, the Writer lacks a name - he too is but a specimen of his kind, as when the aliens who are said to visit the Earth from time to time pick a chance human to examine. This then cuts a clear line between Spark and Smith: the urgency of the moral message, either working as an axe around which everything in the story circles, or as seasoning needed to turn a heap of ideas into more than just a witty narration.

3.4.3. Between the lines

The heroine of *The Executor* is an exemplary hypocrite, brilliant not merely at glossing, but especially glossing *over* what is happening around her. The list of her bad qualities includes being incredibly self-centred, having a lover and keeping back things (first household money, later an unfinished manuscript, with the intention to 'enhance its value' - MS: 201) Her witty uncle (a writer, by the way) recognises this very soon, hence his ironic attribute, 'a Scottish puritan girl' (MS: 199). Susan bases her sense of superiority mainly on her urban background. But for all the education and outlook, and all the vigour with which she has set about taking care of Uncle, her certitude soon proves seriously ill-founded. Its artificiality leaks out on the semantic as well as linguistic levels: While pronouncing harsh judgements on everybody around, Susan fails repeatedly to identify irony (especially if directed to herself). This contradiction is sometimes so blatant that one cannot help feeling she knows all too well she is wrong and exerts herself to persuade the reader of her innocence.

The means MS has Susan use to achieve the effect are rather interesting: As people are more suspicious of subjectivised narration, Susan tries to persuade us that her version is as objective as possible. Frequently, she re-tells what was said, or quotes it directly; the verbs "to say", "to tell", "to call" are so frequent they could be

seen as key. The innocently and reliably looking statements are however infiltrated with Susan's comments and comparisons with "ordinary people" or Uncle himself. Another way to nourish a positive self-image of hers is to withhold any negative information as long as possible - usually until Uncle has mentioned it in his writings. This reveals not only her hypocrisy (a static, long-lasting quality), but also the current state of her mind (which is more interesting to us as a dynamic quality, a development of the character): 'I took a dose of salts.' (i.e. Epsom salts, a laxative; MS: 206). Despite its relative frequency in any English text, "I" could qualify as another key word, given the heroine's self-centredness. In fact she never ceases measuring herself against the world around.

Compared with the relatively simple story-line of *The Executor*, the structure of *The Brothers* is fairly complicated. Smith's Writer assumes he has only been struggling with the topic of his next opus, when all of a sudden he finds his own personality first likened to and later even fusing with the one of Joseph of Egypt. Smith relates the apocrypha to us and his own hero at the same time. The situation the anonymous Writer faces is more and more confusing as he accepts a new point of view together with undergoing his own transformation into a biblical character. The change comes slowly, although it is being foreshadowed from early on. The scene in which Joseph gazes at the pyramids, 'comparing them to the hills of home' (ICS: 161), may echo a similar astonishment of the Writer, when he first met, in the world outside the Highlands, the mountains of Kafka and Proust³¹.

It is not clear at which point the protagonist starts identifying himself with Joseph - possibly from the moment when he comes to understand the Gaelic text as an impudence aimed at himself solely. This shared sense of frustration provokes the Writer into imagining himself in Joseph's place. He feels like a victim, frightened and angry: 'I must not surrender at this point or I would surrender forever.' (ICS: 165) However, he does surrender, and that in the blink of an eye: 'Why should I allow this being, whatever it was, to tell me /.../ how I ought to write? I was only

³¹ A small, perhaps insignificant detail: Just before he discovers the Gaelic pages, he remembers his own writing with *pride*, after overcoming the first fit of panic and resuming the work, he again feels satisfied with his new achievement. As if a supernatural intrusion was triggered by overly self-satisfaction...

doing what I thought I ought to be doing. Did I not have free will?' Without **bothering to** notify the reader, the Writer relocates his position within two sentences; he starts speaking for Joseph, or rather a "Joseph Unbound": 'If I wished to abandon my homeland, if that was what I was doing, why should I not do so? Indeed, in doing so was I not being an exception? Was I not in fact setting out to create a new being? That is, the exile who is able to speak from another land and in another language? I had been betrayed by my own land. What therefore did I owe it? I too had been mocked by my own brothers, if I could call them that. Well then, let me stay in my Egypt. Let me adopt it as my promised land. Let my ambitions be fructified here. After all, wasn't Egypt the pinnacle of achievement?'(ICS: 165-6)

At this moment the character draws close to Susan, arguing with the beings, automatically offering excuses and reasons for his previous actions in order to put himself into a more positive light: 'And in Egypt could I not gather my corn together and feed my own lost rustic brothers who came down there from my own lost land? /.../ Wasn't that what the Joseph story taught, that the murderous brothers were dependent after all on the dreamer who lived in another and more powerful country?' (ICS: 166) Even now the hero is not fully aware of what has happened to him and the reader has to wait another half a page for a final affirmation: 'I wrote how Joseph left the prison, because he was able to interpret the dreams of the baker and the butler. I thought of myself as Joseph, the dreamer who had such great powers.' (ICS: 166)

Susan - and risking a slight over-interpretation one could attribute this to her (and her creator) being a woman, more willing to share - familiarises us (or pretends to) with her lifestyle and philosophy. Indeed, the more details she provides, the more the situation will appear to her benefit. The Writer, on the other hand, never discloses if only his own name, not to mention the reasons for leaving his birthplace; ICS's fictional world remains restricted to some two rooms of the Writer's flat. We only can surmise that the Writer's story was similar to Joseph's - maybe he was a dreamer, a born intellectual, not fit for the hard life of a farmer, and his folk were insensitive enough not to accept him as he was. And so he ran away, keeping but the bad memories.

But after an initial overflow of fear ('I knew that some spirit was moving about me, determined to destroy me' - ICS: 165), more positive memories come to the surface, and ease the protagonist's mind: 'a more local perfume, such as I had often smelt so long ago. It was the perfume perhaps of heatherbells, of brine. It was harsh and pure and severe and it suffused my whole body. It was a perfume that I almost seemed to remember.' (ICS: 171-2) The transformation completed, he resolves to welcome the spirits 'not with hauteur but with deference': 'I saw my brothers broken by defeat and starvation but still human and rustic and brave. /.../ I seemed to see faces, worn and lined, and they were more beautiful than any other faces I had known. /.../ It was their voices speaking through me, maimed and triumphant and without sophistication.' (All ICS: 172) 'And I was happy. I overflowed with the most holy joy.'³²

Already in the previous lines the reader could have noticed a speciality of ICS's style: More than a sender/transmitter, the Writer is a receiver, who fights with the attackers but in his imagination. Although "I" is again by far the most frequent pronoun, there is no hint of Susan's constant struggle to persuade the readers she has outmatched everybody around. ICS places accent on the sensual and emotional, with a variety of verbs of sensory perception: 'I thought I saw', 'I decided', 'I felt the cold', 'I looked into the mirror', 'I waited as if listening for songs but I heard nothing', 'I can't tell the visions I saw that night' (ICS: 167), 'I imagined', 'I listened', 'I knew'... (ICS: 169) Other key words of the story are 'sophisticated', which characterises the writer's standpoint, and three concepts relating to the negative, ambiguous and positive attributes of "the brothers": 'to destroy', 'rustic', and 'pure' respectively.

This in a way makes the narrations truly appropriate - the imaginative **descriptions of the artist complement the diary style language Susan is using.** One can almost hear the former being read aloud in a lecture hall, while the latter, with

³² ICS: 173; perhaps unawares, ICS is using more and more biblical (or even specifically New Testament) imagery as the story develops ('It was as if I was a king, a real king, because I had ceased to think like one' -172). And, quite surprisingly, Christian *terminology* too: 'I knew that it was I who was the sinner' (173).

its apologetical comments, in a psychotherapist's (or Alcoholics Anonymous') consulting room.

3.4.4. Nemo me impune lacessit

The motto of Scotland ("None provokes me unpunished", or the brusque Scots "Wha daur meddle wi' me?"; Nemo - online source) matches the ghosts' determination to sober their "relatives". But did the spirits achieve their goal? ICS devotes the opening passages to a thorough explanation of the hero's initial point of view, trying to present it as impartially as possible, and then lets us accompany him through the process of adoption of his final stance. As to Susan, a question remains whether she has managed to persuade herself that there is nothing wrong with her, or whether she is wilfully lying into the reader's face with the base intention to move us to compassion.

But how revolutionary was the Writer's change, and how much unmoved did Susan really stay? In his introduction, the Writer speaks in the present tense - about himself not believing in ghosts, not being able to live back in the mountains and expecting to remain in Edinburgh. The story itself is narrated in the past, as one single event ensued by a total acceptance of the past and his roots. He has finally come to understand his ancestors, to acknowledge their heritage, and although he cannot step back literally, reassume a life in the hills, get rid of his Penguins, forget about Kafka and Proust and start watching sheep, he feels as one of "the brothers". Instead of the previous indignation, he envisions himself as an offspring, a scout who has been set forward in order to prepare way for the rest, for their acceptance in the whole wide world. The narration ends in a moment of extreme, almost cliffhanging exaltation - if it had not been for the clear purpose of the piece, one would almost expect a sequel, in which the cliff-hanger would be followed by a hangover, the kind of "Snow White Ten Years After". However, ICS's message is probably too serious for that.

To the very end, Susan strives to keep the outer appearance as if nothing had happened. There is Mrs. Donaldson for one thing, and second, it is bad enough to admit that the late Uncle is communicating with her and were she to allow that she acted against her proclaimed morals, the public disgrace would undermine her self-

esteem so seriously that in fact it would equal destruction. So although the images of destruction and (false) sophistication do underlie Spark's story, too, the heroine fights against accepting it is so. For readers familiar with psychology, Susan's subtle yet constant reassertion of her aptitudes might smell of an inferiority complex: 'I am no fool' (MS: 199, 200), 'I could see he was forced to admire my good sense', 'I'm not a one to let the grass grow under my feet' (both MS: 200) etc. Note also the use of present tense throughout ('I am no fool' instead of 'I thought...' or 'I was...') as well as the fact that her real personality is only revealed gradually, in discreet remarks dropped here and there. (That is also one of the reasons the story reads so well, and is perceived as rather witty and satirical, and its light style stands out in sharp contrast with that of *TB*, which is at places as heavy as an Oriental perfumes.)

Life in the north of Scotland, incredibly hard as it was, might well have turned the local people cruder, harsher than elsewhere. But it did not strip them of their humanity wholly. There still remained a lot to be hurt by the insensitivity of people - Englishmen, Lowland Scots, foreigners - who either did not know the conditions there or have turned their backs on them as soon as they could, such as ICS's Writer. There are no other people physically present around, and he does not feel ashamed to inform the readers about every move of his mind: 'I am very fearful and I lock the windows, and the door is always locked' (ICS: 162). (Compare with Susan's 'I wished with all my heart that I was a strong woman, as I had always felt I was, strong and sensible.' MS: 202) He feels justified enough to voice his objections: He despises them because of their simplicity, hates the idea of pole-axing cows, remembers with mixed emotions his mother's rendition of Bible stories. But under these pretences the same old inferiority lurks: 'when I was growing up they seemed to laugh at me' (ICS: 164). The deeply embedded frustration manifests itself in questions, often in the negative, as if seeking the reader's approval: 'Why should I'...? (ICS: 165) 'Did I not'...? 'Why should I not do'...? 'Was I not'...? What 'did I owe'...? 'What was wrong with that?' (All ICS: 166)

The crucial fallacy of the two protagonists lies in their failure to undraw the veil of self-esteem and look in the mirror which the ghosts have been holding out for them the whole time. Susan is not made any more virtuous by the fact her Uncle

'was an open and avowed sinner' (MS: 205). Yes, she does pray in times of distress, but somehow forgets to turn to a Christian figure for a template of behaviour; instead, she recalls Mrs Thatcher - Susan, the Scottish nationalist.

Iain Crichton Smith's *Writer* is no better than her, though. His claim that he could get no 'important insight' from the Highland 'people and a culture which have not moved into the twentieth century' (both ICS: 161) clashes with his interest in Egypt, and it takes him painfully long to awaken to all the parallels between Joseph and himself. At long last the *Writer* starts to apply the key concept of destruction to himself: 'For some reason or other I thought of all the family photographs I had destroyed' (ICS: 169). As the memories which started as unpleasant flashbacks become more frequent, a milder side of Highland life appears: its poverty, yet purity.

3.4.5. The quest for real Scotland

Among our sample texts, ICS's story is definitely the one most explicitly concerned with Scottishness. But even MS, who commonly drew on her experiences outside Britain, remained "at home" this time. What then does the Scotland the two heroes live in look like?

Writer and editor Alan Bisset still remembers the disappointment after he once asked his father to take him to Scotland. 'You're in Scotland,' Mr Bisset said. 'Yes/' replied Alan, 'I know. But I want to go to the real one... where the Loch Ness Monster lives and people wear kilts.' (Devine, Logue 2002: 21) For the boy, 'Scottishness was something dusted off and brought out from the cupboard for football matches or Hogmanay. Neighbours and relatives piling round, the Corries and bagpipe music playing, everyone singing about 1314.1 loved it. It was the 'real' Scotland I'd asked my dad to take me to as a kid.' (Devine, Logue 2002: 22)

But this is not an everyday experience, and certainly today's Scots hate to see their national particularities being reduced in such an extent. Why is that? When in the late 19th century "the Scottish Lowlands became very much the same as any other industrial area, /.../ accepting the symbolism and iconography of the Highlands provided a powerful means of distinction. /.../ On the other hand, the fact that it is the most backward and barbarous part of the country is also rather interesting, and

perhaps could be seen as somehow contributing to 'the Scot's feeling of inferiority. /.../ The consequences of the fact that the *real* Scotland is rural Scotland can be felt in the altogether schizophrenic feeling the Scottishness seems to purvey." (Zderadickova 2004:196)

The preceding idea seems to work well with both stories. The Writer moved from the Highlands to the same city that Susan left (and if she did that with a bleeding heart, then only because of her steady 'job in the government office, a job with a pension' - MS: 199). Both feel superior to the country people, not realising that their own lives are full of idiosyncrasies; the way they overreact and make up extenuations shows that they have not come to terms with themselves.

Spark makes sure to plant the story firmly in Scottish realia - yet without labouring the point. Apart from vague geographic location (Pentland Hills) she uses typical personal names (Jaimie, Mrs Donaldson), utters a sincere sigh that '/g/olf is the curse of Scotland.' (MS: 203), or lets Susan switch off the Scottish BBC. But all this has a sole role: To prepare the scene for a brilliant satire in which she gradually discloses her heroine's true personality.

Susan claims to be 'proud to be a Scot', even to 'feel nationalistic' (MS: 199). The way she speaks of her neighbours, however, makes it look as if she would rather they lived somewhere else, or changed their mentality altogether. Jaimie, for one, does not mean anything more for her than a pet, a provider of physical pleasure; his education as well as social position place him far below her status. Naturally, she does not hesitate to kick him off once she finds out he has been unfaithful to her. But before that, Susan's self-esteem auto-pilot had been automatically purging him (and herself alongside) in the readers' eyes: 'it isn't his fault he's out of work' (MS: 202). Soon it is clear that in reality, Susan has the same low opinion of all the local people, including the sisters Greta and Elaine (despicable 'I have always suspected the family' - MS: 203; also a remark about Elaine's lack of education) and Mrs. Donaldson.

There is something almost aristocratic about Susan's use of personal pronouns when she wants to pinpoint the distance between herself and the rest of people around: 'you could be falling down dead - *they* never look at you' (MS: 204,

italics by M.P.) or 'the midday meal which we called lunch and *they* called *their* dinner' (MS: 203, italics by M.P.). Note the opposite use of "we" in *TB* - Smith speaks in this way in behalf of exactly the mass of country folk that Susan, the axis of her own "we", meaning "we, the intellectually gifted", despises. By the way, who is that we? Susan and her reprobate uncle? Susan and some never-mentioned acquaintances from Edinburgh? Or simply Susan, Susan and Susan?)

Spark does not say much directly about Uncle's feelings about being Scottish, but in spite of his obvious tendency to use whatever suited his momentary purpose, his stance still comes out as much more natural. He makes fun of obsolete representations of Scottishness, as he does of everything superficial. His mocking attribute might well aim at Susan's knack for handling money, too! In his bohemian attitude to decorum he does not hesitate to call into play ancient folk traditions in order to give the affair with Elaine a bit of gloss. Unsurprisingly, Susan rejects them - but what then she wants to build her nationalistic feelings on, if not 'the nineteenth-century folklore; and it's long died out' (MS: 199)? And again, her other remark that '/p/eople in those days had very little to do' shows that she was not all too well acquainted with the then living conditions. (MS: 200) Susan's contemporaries seem to fall either under a category of despicable insects, or at best "ordinary"³³ letters of alphabet, with the few exceptions of people like Uncle, who was 'a genius and a character' (MS: 199) - and, above all, a comparatively rich old relative. But while Susan only stays in the house because she plans to help her income by renting rooms, the last big journey of Uncle's lead him back for the material for his 'most metaphysical work' (MS: 206), the ultimate novel '*The Witch of the Pentlands*'.

What will be the effect of the awakening that ICS's Writer was brought to, we cannot guess. Judging from the cold tone in which the beginning of the story is written, his experience was closer to the Buddhist Kensho (an initial realisation) than to Satori (the permanent enlightenment)³⁴. What concrete form will his fight for the oppressed brethren take? Will he gather the strength to define himself anew, not

³³ Susan would never put 'a letter from Angus Wilson or Saul Bellow in the same place as an ordinary "W" or "B", a Miss Mary Whitelaw or a Mrs Jonathan Brown'. (MS: 199)

³⁴ See Satori (online source).

in a far-fetched attempt to escape memories which had been haunting him long before they materialised as "brothers"? Will he find way out of his solitary confinement - a way to open his own heart and win other people's hearts, too? Or will he stay closed in his little untidy flat for ever?

There is one important quality which differentiates the Writer from George Mackay Brown's Magnus (a composer) who left his native islands to plunge into the whole wide world. The Writer's remaining in Edinburgh suggests an unsound attitude, as when a battered wife sticks to her violent husband. Edinburgh, though a city big enough to prevent the Writer from being approached by his neighbours, seems not far enough to allow him breathe freely again. Until he has sorted out his inner turbulences, he will ever willy-nilly revolve around topics which have been gnawing at his mind. A fine proof of a recovery would be a trip to the native place, if for inspiration only (just as Uncle would have done - free from scruples, free to draw on whatever he wished), but guessing from the initial paragraphs, this eventuality is still up in the air.

An important ingredient of the two protagonists' hypocrisy is their reluctance to forgive other people their flaws. They forget there is no such thing as an irreproachable character; moreover, the vices they resent are often exactly those they display themselves (loose morals) - or, striving to avoid them, they fall into the opposite extreme (ignorance of high culture - despising everything which does not rank as high culture). Should we have to vote for either Susan or the Writer, we would probably find six of one and half a dozen of the other. And so in the end it is the Uncle who remains as the only character presenting at least some positive features of a Scot³⁵: tolerance, open-mindedness - and, definitely, a sense of humour.

³⁵ According to the Research to Support Scotland's Strategy for Stronger Engagement with Germany, carried out by the Scottish Government, Scots were seen as *confident and proud of their traditions as well as friendly, affectionate, helpful and hospitable, liberal, open-minded and tolerant, clever, creative, inventive, down-to-earth, pragmatic and natural*. **Only those** who had none or little experience of Scots and who were relying on hear-say used more **negative attributes**: *miserly and narrow-minded; economical with words; excessive in the use of alcohol - and as such sometimes aggressive; stubborn and opinionated; abrasive in contact/interaction with others*. "Government Publications (online source), italics by M.P.

A. *C o m m o n S t r a n d s* in **the Stcmies**

The word "strands" is highly accurate here, since the following issues inter-link heavily with each other; however, the fact that one notion or another appear in more texts often does not in the least imply that they will be treated in the same way or with the same results. Nor is the final picture the reader has assembled clear-cut in any way. If the writers themselves often fought with their own ideas and conceptions of life, universe and everything (including their country), how are we supposed to find an easy answer to their questions? This must be kept in mind throughout this chapter.

4.1. WEAVING THE SPELLS OF LANGUAGE

4.1.1. The more languages you know...

There is something magical about the way the language we use influences our perception of the world. In *TSNSWihe* power of not more than a cunning use of English is shown in its full potency. Now when there are several varieties to choose from, the relation between them allows for many more possibilities. As pieces of folk wisdom such as the Czech proverb "Kolik jazyků znáš, tolikrát jsi člověkem" testify, people detected this long ago. Later, Sapir and Whorf stated that '/J/azyk /je/ údajně víc nežli jen zvuky a slova - je klíčem, mostem do světa. Navíc: pomocí jazyka se na svět pohlíží, jako osobitým prizmatem, zcela svébytným způsobem; jazyk dokonce ,nutí' pohlízet na svět určitým stylem. Každý jazyk si vytváří specifickou ,vizi reality', zároveň se jedná o ,společnou paměť etnika'.' Šatava (2001: 55)

The complexity of language situation in Scotland merely mirrors the country's inhabitants' ethnic roots. After years of discrimination, both the Celtic Scottish Gaelic and the Germanic Lallans or Lowland Scots (although that is usually not considered a separate language but headed under geographical varieties of English) enjoy something of a renaissance today. Scottish writers have been playing a momentous part in the fight to prove the value, autonomy and self-sufficiency of Scots and Gaelic as languages of poetry, fiction and non-fiction, creating texts as

well as translating works by themselves and by other authors from all around the world³⁶.

Although the major linguistic medium in our stories is English, we do meet both Scots and Gaelic there, in varying proportions, and in some cases even a conscious and purposeful switching of the codes. The complex language situation in Scotland provides an unusual opportunity to use differentiate between them and to pick the most appropriate for the particular message. Therefore, a theoretical introductory sub-chapter (4.1.2) will be followed with three others devoted to concrete codes, and in 4.1.6 one more vocal means of communication - singing - shall be explored.

4.1.2. Storytelling tradition and code-switching

No matter the reason for not writing them down, sacred myths, hero sagas, cautionary tales or simple amusing histories were traditionally passed on orally. The ancient Celts seem to have a religious prohibition against recording their myths; for whatever we now know of the traditions and beliefs on the British Isles we have to thank to early Christian monks (8^h-13^h cent.) and, with regard to fairy-stories in particular, scholarly tale-collectors (17th century onwards). Nonetheless, the latter have often been involved in various nationalist or Celtic revivalist movements, which implicates that their rendering of the stories is not necessarily faithful to the original³⁷.

Fiction writers who use fairy-tale motifs in their works have an undisputed advantage over antiquarians: It is their right and duty to introduce something new

³⁶ A Scots classic of this kind is Rev. Mortimer's *New Testament*, in which every gospel is represented by a slightly different local variety of Scots in order to retain the stylistic subtleties of the original. Scotstext (online source) provides both original and translated works (from Goethe to Solomon's Proverbs), while highly ambitious project Scots Online (<http://www.scots-online.org>) features not only linguistic information, dictionaries, mp3 files and a chat-room, but all the navigation button inscriptions in Scots, too! 1968 saw the founding of the Gaelic Books Council; Gaelic poetry in especial remains very much alive today, with the 1990 anthology *European Verse in Scottish Gaelic*, and a respectable 825-page anthology of 20th-century Gaelic verse published in 1999. (Contemporary Gaelic Literature - online source)

³⁷ This also holds for Czech fairy tales collected and edited by B. Němcová and K. J. Erben (allegedly the more objective of the two). Přemysl Rut provides interesting insights into the

in their usage of the motif; their adherence to it is seen as a failure. While in old recordings of fairy-stories the content and not the wording was focused on, compared and pigeonholed (see Propp's division of motifs and their combinations), in the hands of an artist every single word can potentially be laden with meaning. Variations become apocrypha (in the contemporary sense of the word).

Given the source of leitmotifs, it is no surprise that six out of the eight writers concerned chose to work with the ich-form, natural for a (folk-)narration. Contrary to a collector-transcriber, it is me - the writer - who creates the plot, and, as an inevitable by-product, also creates the character of the narrator (who in the former case was a flesh-and-blood entity). And not only can I wield it - as a purely new and auctorial construct - in the same way as any other persona in my story. In addition, I am not compelled to alert my readers of its presence, leaving entirely up to them if they manage (or fail) to realise that, without their knowing, they might have taken over the narrator's (although that does not necessarily equal the author's) point of view. In other words, the stylised tale-teller is a potent tool for impressing a subjective opinion on the recipients. (More of this in the correspondent chapters.)

The most transparent way to show my narrator's distance from the narrative is by using a different register for his/her commentaries. But this does not make him/her any more real; a certain level of self-stylisation is always present, even when there are explicit statements as to the authenticity and autobiographical relevance. At the same time, the narrator can tell us much about the background or underlying notions of the story and contributes largely to its overall atmosphere. For example, Charles's introduction to *ST*, abounding in laboured phrases and references to himself, seems to support the overall impression of him as a cold fish with no true affection for his fiancée - until the very end, when he expresses his despair of 'life among human beings'. Does that mean Charles lost his faith in people's good will? Or is he himself a non-human being, lost on the Earth and having an only refuge in the relationship with Elizabeth (which would also explain his impassivity)?

mechanisms of such manipulation in his acclaimed book of essays *Pan Když a slečna Když* (Brno: Petrov 2005)

Unlike the best part of the so-called West Europe, Scotland has long been a poor territory dependent mainly on its natural resources. Owing to that, the original lifestyle of the country could survive there much longer than in other, less neglected parts of the United Kingdom.³⁸ Language was (and in some places still is) an important way of expressing or supporting one's identification with a particular (ethnic) group. The Republic of Ireland is a well-known case, and the Scotland devolution fans follow the high status Irish Gaelic have been enjoying there with **envy**. Of course, as Šatava states, "Irština zaujímá v životě Irska spíše symbolickou roli. S prosazením praxe ‚volního‘ přihlášení se k etnické příslušnosti navíc vlastně není znalost příslušného jazyka teoreticky ani nutná; ve skutečnosti však jazyk hrál **a hraje ve většině případů mimořádně silnou (i emoční) roli. Proto se někdy v dané souvislosti hovoří i o ‚filologickém nacionalismu‘ či ‚etnicky definovaném jazyce‘.**" Šatava (2001:36)

The question of language revitalisation is far from simple and as such it goes beyond the scope of this paper. Let us therefore settle for the statement that in Scottish fiction, the language code used by a particular character radically foreshadows the speaker's personality traits, social status, world-view and so forth. Furthermore, revitalisation processes are often inherent in a more general effort to balance the current globalisation trends by promoting local cultures, traditions and lifestyles. This is manifested in the ever growing popularity of world music, ethnic-inspired fashion and hairstyle; Even in the Czech Republic, historic events such as battles or coronations are being re-enacted, castles are being repopulated with ghosts and folk tale characters, and yearly village fairs with a display of local produce and crafts have become a welcome source of finance for the local budget. Returning to Scotland and the issue of language, apart from the living tradition of folk dance and pipe bands, tale-telling is being revived again notably³⁹.

³⁸ Perhaps a parallel could be found in today's Romania, namely in the primarily Czech settlements such as Banat, a place newly discovered (and thereupon destroyed) by Czech tourists, especially young ones, who are enchanted by the inimitable atmosphere of nineteenth century village life.

³⁹ See *Storytelling* (online source)

4.1.3. Scots

As few readers nowadays can fully appreciate the literary qualities of a text completely in Scots or Gaelic, writers often only choose to season the story with a few words or expressions or, to gain more vividness, use it in direct speech.

Scots has long been the *langue quotidienne* of the large and populated Lowlands. Higher education was naturally only achievable in English, therefore the marked use of Scots in literature usually denotes a lower social status of the speaker. That is nevertheless not a detestable quality in our case, because when it comes to (real or stylised) folk narratives, these are the most likely to contain instances of the supernatural. The most straightforward example (including code-switching between the "narrator" and the "collector") is *Thrawn Janet*, with only a would-be-explanatory introduction in English.

4.1.4. Highland English

Mitchinson presents quite an interesting variation, with stylistic features of English used by Highlanders, as well as with Scots words. This endowed the text with an almost colloquial flow; with no forced stylisation, it asks outright to be listened to. The narrator never discloses him/herself to the reader and refrains from using Scottish tartanry props, but the language itself does to give us a precise image of the location of the village. There is no mistake that NM was very much aware of the sonic qualities of Highland English.⁴⁰

Macnicol does likewise (though most characters speak in Scots, here and there with Gaelic words, with a careful translation for those wholly impenetrable). She even lets her heroine explicitly remark: T did not this time ask bluntly, in the way of the world beyond, "Wattie, how old are you?" I went more roundabout, in the way of Clachanree: "And, Wattie, how old might yourself be?" (EM: 7)

This is not the only instance of code-switching in *TSH*. Later on Ellen recognises she is entranced by the strange speech of Wattie; that might be a hint towards the boy's origins, maybe one of the distinctive accents of either Edinburgh,

⁴⁰ She said: "I am not a Gaelic speaker but I realised early that Gaelic grammatical structure underlay West Highland speech - so different from that of the farm servants, mostly from the Mearns, at my Haldane Grandmother's house at Cloan!" Urquhart, Gordon (1982: 210)

Glasgow or one of major Lowland towns ('the south' - EM: 7). Furthermore both NM and EM remind us of a peculiar atmosphere surrounding Gaelic which is definitely the most remarkable code used in the short fiction analysed.

4.1.5. Gaelic

Scottish Gaelic is a Celtic language closely related to Irish and Manx, and more distantly to Welsh, Breton and Cornish. Thanks to the Celtic form of Christianity, Gaelic was the third literary language in Western Europe after Greek and Latin. By the 11th century, the kingdom of the Scots covered most of what is present day Scotland. Yet that was the high point of the Gaelic language in Scotland and it gradually lost prestige and influence while English took its place at the court. By the time of the Union of the Crowns of England and Scotland in 1601, the Gaelic was restricted mainly to the mountainous Highlands and Islands. After 1746 the Gaels became a scattered people; in 1999 they numbered just over 1% of the Scottish population. (Based on Pedersen - *Minority Languages* 1999: 26-27)

Generally speaking, the use of Gaelic in fiction emerges as the more marked, the more unlike English it is - and again, how troubled its history has been. As an ancient and rare language incomprehensible to ordinary English speakers, it has gained a reputation of a secret tongue of spells and incantations known only to the initiates: the fairies and a chosen portion of sagacious mortals (such as the generation of Angus' and Ellen's parents). This coheres with the aforementioned Sapir and Whorf's idea - as if the minute one starts speaking Gaelic, a pair of special glasses was put on her/his eyes, he/she could see through the ordinary reality and accept the different laws which are in force there. At the same time it explains the notably frequent presence of Gaelic whenever historical allusions occurs (that includes explicit links as well as rather misty ones, stretching to the very beginnings of history, as remote as the 'ethnic memory' can reach). At its bottom we often have a chance to touch the mythical roots of the Scotti, and with them the supernatural beings, which existence would go unchallenged for many centuries. The veil, which in the 20th century literature sometimes hangs over direct references to history, enables us (as a short-cut, as it were) to experience a point-black encounter with the irrational. A mere mention of Gaelic associates the presence of a mystery; its usage

wrenches out (the characters and the readers alike) from the workaday routine and like a magic gate it allows us into brand new worlds.

In Clachanree everybody communicates in the local dialect of Scottish English, having abandoned the use of Gaelic for everyday purposes. Ellen confesses that her 'Gaelic was imperfect,' - yet adds in one breath that 'only in Gaelic did /my mother/ ever tell ghost stories' (EM: 9). The mother's proneness to superstitions might have helped the stories to appear even more haunting or trustworthy. The minute the sensitive child (if subconsciously) takes over this faith, the way for the delusion that the small herdsman is actually a fairy changeling is free. The power of the form (in contrast with the subject matter) of the message is further proved in the scenes when the boy, recalling more and more distant and gruesome events from his life, starts to speak with a strange accent and thus brings both children to a state close to trance. Clearly, even an accent or dialect can act as a prism of its kind, and alter our perception of reality.

In Mitchinson's story it is the parents, too, who keep the language alive. They use it for a much more prosaic purpose, 'to one another across the table the way bairns would not be understanding them, and Angus was that angry at this when he was a wee fellow that he started to learn the Gaelic out of pure devilment to know what his elders would be saying.' (NM: 214) But no matter what the reason, the result is that Gaelic works as a secret code again, managing to turn any topic, however commonplace, into a mystery. Should we carry on looking for parallels between Angus and the Simple Simon prototype, the Scotsman's zeal for mastering the language suits the hero image well - as a reaction to encountering one of the requisite obstacles in the initiation process, which therefore calls for being overcome. The acquired knowledge enables Angus not only to understand the warning from the ultimate Gaelic speaker, a "real" fairy woman⁴¹, but also later to clear his (and Peigi's) honour and vindicate the unheard-of act - as if even the usually down-to-earth and pragmatic villagers were inclined to accept the existence of supernatural beings as long as the communication with them runs in an appropriate code: 'It is fortunate altogether that you have the Gaelic.' (NM: 219)

⁴¹ Let us recall that Wattie, a "false" fairy, speaks Scottish English, not Gaelic.

At the same time, both Macnicol and Mitchinson witness indirectly to the irreplaceable function of the family and its immediate background in promoting a language vitality.

However, both these stories took place within remote communities where the choice of language was not anything to dwell on and the knowledge or use of Gaelic did not bear any consequences in everyday life. This approach covers the first two aspects of ethnicity, as defined by Joshua Fishman: „Etnicita se týká nejenom existence dané osoby spjaté s původem (paternita) a chováním (patrimonie), ale i významu, který tato osoba své existenci spjaté s původem a chováním přisuzuje (fenomenologie).“ Fishman (1977: 23)

The third aspect is virtually absent in *TSH* and *ITF*, it is more nakedly present in *TB*, due to Iain Crichton Smith's nationalistic orientation. For his hero it is only natural to write his books in English, as a part of his all-embracing denial of anything connected with his youth in the Highlands. Just as the knowledge of a minority language can help one consolidate one's identity within the minority, the Writer strives to acquire a wholly new personality as a convert to the English (or, at least, Lowland Scottish) culture. From the initially antagonistic position, Smith has his hero reconcile with his roots and even accept a new role as a fighter for his oppressed brothers' rights (and among these, the right to use Gaelic). The words used to describe this rebirth are most powerful, intense, and in effect support the idea of the Highlander as a prototypal "noble savage".

For illustration, here are some of the attributes of Gaelic writing (italics by M.P.): '*rougher* and more *passionate*' 'I had read them before somewhere'; 'the typing was not unlike mine, but it was slightly different, the touch was *lighter* and *surer*. There were fewer erasures' (ICS: 162); '1 *without erasure*' (ICS: 164); 'They were strong, *powerful* pages, in fact *better* than mine, *simpler* and perhaps *cruder*. It's difficult to explain why they were so much better, but I think it must have been because their language was *less abstract*.' (ICS: 165) - this might relate to the lack of academic education (a con) or the simple down-to-earth thinking of peasants and farmers (a pro). The passage even contains something of a hint that there was more

to the problem than merely the Writer's inaptness, when the Gaelic prose is described as '*stronger than my English*' (ICS: 168).

The Gaelic texts soon start to feature first cryptic, later open accusations: 'Joseph had abandoned his land for another land and that in doing so he had betrayed his own' (ICS: 162). The writer finds himself overwhelmed (had there been slightly less rationality, one would say "enchanted") by the potency of the imagery: 'All around him was Egypt which he had learned to love and whose language he spoke.' (ICS: 164) Then comes the revelation, the heart of the apocryphal level of the story: 'Joseph was a traitor. His journey was arrogant and aristocratic. We brothers believe that he betrayed us, that he hated our *language* and our way of life. We *speak* for the oppressed and inarticulate countrymen who live in the small places far from the city.' (ICS: 168 - italics by M.P.) The language has become a key metaphor, an essence of what it brings about to come from the Scottish Highlands.

Last, but not least, George Mackay Brown introduces Gaelic once more as a language fit for mediating ancient wisdom to contemporary humankind: One of the turning points of Magnus' life comes when he happens on an old Irish manuscript. Here, more than an evocation of a pan-Celtic community, the universality of human nature and origin is being underscored, as ever more ancient history is being referred to - a collective memory from the times before the Scotti left their first homeland.

4.1.6. Cantare et incantare

There is one more issue closely connected with language and its (sonic) qualities, which deserves special notice. We have already mentioned Corries and the famous Scottish bagpipe bands.. Smith refers to the intonation of Gaelic and the mingling of "the brothers'" message with 'the words of the song I had heard on the record player' (ICS: 165). Unmistakably, music is a very important element of the Scottish culture. The following paragraphs might have been filed under the chapter about Scottish society, had the topic been taken from a different perspective. They appear here because of the specific qualities of music which prove rather elusive when it comes to a reasonable explanation of their potency, and thus is, in more primitive cultures, ascribed to magic. Indeed, the very word "incantation" contains

the Latin "cantare", meaning „to sing" (and "to enchant" came into English from Middle French "enchanter", i.e. "en-" + "chanter"; Paranormal - online source).

When put together with what we have said about the power of language, virtually any tune has a potential to be perceived as magical. Likewise, the combat between the Sirens' singing and Orpheus' harp proves that even when there is no verbalised magic formula, tones and rhythm can bewitch on their own. Definitely folk songs cannot be treated on the basis of the subject matter only, as they sometimes do not exactly distinguish between meaningful lyrics and euphonic lilting. A special way of singing in Gaelic, called *puirt-a-beul* (= mouth music) features lyrics generally meaningless or nonsensical, since they are written primarily for dancing to. (Puirtabeul - online source) When Thrawn Janet sings (or "croons") at washing clothes, 'there was nae man born o' woman that could tell the words o' her sang' (RLS: 26).

Moreover, folk tunes commonly alter lyrics, and that often with a major shift in content (as in the popular Irish 'Star of the County Down' and 'I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say'), or the same lyrics are sung to various tunes. These processes resemble what has been happening to myths, folk- and fairy-tales in general. And verily, many of the songs are in fact epic stories, rhymed and fitted to a tune as to be better retained in memory. On the other hand, purely instrumental folk music has an unquestionable value, too. A variety of Scottish dances depend on the performance of local musicians, and ceilidhs rare as they might have become, are enjoyed by old and young alike even in this age of wide opportunities and entertainment business. Magnus (5) himself probably did not start on his fiddle with Paganini, nor even with scales and études, but with an Orcadian reel, jig, hornpipe or strathspey.

Talking of ceilidhs, to sing and dance together has been viewed as an important reason for gathering together (in cultures all around the world). Thus for Angus (777) singing is partly a hobby, partly an opportunity to socialise (and to see his girlfriend more often). The songs he would sing were probably in English or Scots, while Gaelic lyrics played an important role as one of the few sources of the language.

Remarkably, none of our stories plays on the Celtic twilight fashion (which, in a larger perspective, is but a part of the overall world music wave). No pathetic pipes, clarsachs or tin whistles, nor even the fife-and-drum sound of military tattoos. **Nevertheless** they seem to assure us of the importance of (folk-)music in various ways. Curiously enough, the two Selkie tales contain the beginning of the same song, 'The Seal of Sule Skerry'. Its "coincidental" appearance in Linklater's story adds a sense of **fatality** to the **already heavy laden** parable. First it is **described** as 'a little enchanting tune' (EL: 232), forming part of Roger's non-verbal communication with Elisabeth. This time it serves as an explanation or an introduction to the undersea realm and helps the girl to relax and calm down. At the end, it turns into a witting mockery, and by an irony of fate, Charles remembers having listened to it with Elisabeth in the fishing-hotel. Since the latter episode only appears in the final part, "re-told" by Charles himself, the "honest" comment that the selkie's voice 'was singularly sweet and the tune was the most haunting I have ever heard' (EL: 237) is most remarkable - it seems to uproot the image the readers has made about him, as a rational person, rather cold, 'indifferent' (EL: 224) to the Nature's beauties. And within the next paragraph, our opinion of Charles is once for all shattered by his enigmatic words about being 'abandoned to the terror of life alone life among human beings' (EL: 237).

In *Sealskin*, the purpose of art (and music as its synecdoche) is central to the piece; "harmony", another keyword, connects effectively the musical term with the metaphorical description of the original state of the word. On the plot line, Magnus seems to be partly riding the wave of the turn-of-the-century Celtic revival (though with a distinct Scandinavian sway), with compositions called 'Eynhallow' (a place name), 'The Blue Boat', 'The Seal Women' or 'his setting of the twelfth century lyrics of Earl Rognwald Kolson' (all GMB: 152), and it is his dream of writing music 'with Celtic themes' (GMB: 159) which brings him to the revelatory words featured in an old Irish sermon. The Selkie song is only sung once, by his "real" selkie mother, yet the performance takes place during one of the crucial scenes - the one of Magnus' parents' theatrical wedding "for decency's sake". Mara, similarly to Roger (57), uses it as a lullaby, this time for her baby son. Perhaps there is another form of

communication going on, too, because as we know, Mara is reluctant (or unable) to translate her thoughts into verbal expressions.

The actual Sule Skerry is an islet about sixty miles from the Orkneys. A "skerry" - and here we return back to the original language question - is a "small rocky island, usually defined to be too small for habitation." It is a Nordic word (with a Gaelic cognate "sgeir"). (Skerry - online source). GMB colours *Sealskin* with more words of Nordic origin, e.g. "byre". This enables him to put across a feeling of an exquisite cross-cultural inclusiveness and interconnection in phrases such as 'the Infant in the straw, the Man and the Woman, the Beasts and the Star and the Angels /.../ reminded him of the byre at Corse, and how there had seemed to be always a kind of sacred bond between the animals and the farm-folk' (GMB: 157-8). The simple dialect word suddenly embodies the whole lifestyle, living conditions, way of thinking, problems and treasures of Orcadians, while putting the whole situation **in a much more universal perspective, accessible by the majority of readers.**

4.2. IT'S AYE BEEN

Common points of departure as well as departures from tradition.

Since the question of Scottish identity and its idiosyncrasies is a topic to fill whole bookshelves, it must suffice here to claim that the phenomenon once labelled by Mac Diarmid as the Caledonian Antisyzygy⁴² can be traced in any one of the proses analysed. The following chapter will therefore focus on selected issues connected with Scottish society and culture: town vs. village life (4.2.1), the importance of family (4.2.2), the transforming attitudes to (extramarital) sex (4.2.3), the self-image of Scots (4.2.4). In the last sub-chapter, a current sociological theory linking myths and interpersonal communication shall be introduced in order to complete the picture.

⁴² See App. V - According to Zderadickova (among others), Scottishness is to a large extent "created of competing images no matter whether one concentrates on the Caledonian Antisyzygy and the clash between the Scottish heart and the British head, or the discrepancies between the Highlands and Lowlands, the present and the past etc". (Zderadickova 2004:196)

4.2.1. Once upon a time, there was a clachan...

The majority of the eight plots is based in the countryside, and those which do not feature peasant characters then at least deal with the question of pros and cons of life in town in some way too. In her study *Village Voices*, the Danish sociologist Perle Mohl presents the results of several years' fieldwork in a rural community in Central France. Despite the location, many of her findings can be successfully applied to Scottish conditions, too. For example, "it's aye been", a Scottish saying which implies that things have always ("aye") been this way and they should stay so, Mohl formalises as a discovery that 'humans are profoundly both social and individual, and that the tension between these two "natural" tendencies give rise to a series of small paradoxes all reflecting a larger one, namely the balance between autonomy and dependency. /.../ /The villagers/ find that times are changing, that things don't endure, and regret that people are increasingly occupied with themselves and less with others - more autonomous and less dependent.' Mohl (1997:197)

These words may sound rather disapproving, and someone might prefer to take overview it from the villagers' point of view, as anonymity and danger versus human touch and safety. The approach which prevails by far in the examined proses takes into account both; a certain preference some of the authors appear to give to this pastoral mentality may in fact be a figurative attempt to offset the negative impact the urban lifestyle had on the country. Confronted with the allurements of the rapidly developing cities (never mind only some of them are indisputable, and most merely fancied), the countryside seems doomed to surrender - and artists have always tended to side with the oppressed, especially when they could build on a fellow feeling. At the same time, much as the artists have been contributing to (false) myths, they often ventured to break them, too. Scotland in particular has always been a positive battlefield for contradictory ideas⁴³. After all, "nothing is perfect", and, at the same time, "every bird thinks its ain nest best" (Scotstext - online source).

⁴³ Again, see App. V - Zderadickova (2004)

For the villagers, modern cities present a topos virtually equipollent to a magical forest - a dangerous, uncharted territory full of beings with unsuspected powers and mischievous purposes. They also host awe-inspiring institutions such as universities, and who knows what kinds of uncanny knowledge might be **flourishing** there (Cf. *TJ*). Even the **MacMillans** (*ITfl* see **sending someone** to hospital in Glasgow as just as inadvisable as a doctor would consider keeping the patient at home.

So far, these were mere superstitions, moreover voiced by the "narrow-minded" villagers themselves. But most of our writers leave an impartial point of view in order to raise another, seemingly legitimate objection to town life: The devastating effects of degradation of living beings into numeric codes and file folders, of attempts to escape problems by escaping into anonymity, of lack of curative human touch...⁴⁴ Thus, while Susan (*TE*) as well as the writer (*TB*) refuse to regard the peasants as their equals, neither of them has anyone in Edinburgh to open their heart to, either. Magnus (5) lost touch with his former Orcadian playmates without having found surrogates for them: He 'had many pleasant friends, but found himself lonely among the rugs and poems and wine-cups.' (GMB: 158)

Wattie, the small herdsman, comes from urban environment too. There he was only one of the numerous children born to people who have turned to drink so as not to have to face life below the line of poverty. The bestiality of the conditions he was brought in are fully exposed when the boy admits he preferred a dog to his own brother: 'They said he wis deid. /.../ Na, I wisna sorry. He was aye greetin' (*weeping*) and coughin'. He was a chairge on me. I didna mind. /.../ It wis the dog I minded!' (EM: 13) Here we see how our glorified "civilisation" proves devoid of meaning when it fails to secure its members against such subhuman treatment that they choose to actually prefer animals. And yet, in a "simple", "primitive", "still

⁴⁴ This is by no means an outdated attitude, nor is it confined to the oldest generation only. In a short private research among contemporary inhabitants of Scottish countryside, the author of this paper got invariable replies to her questions on the difference between village and city life: There is too much hassle in the city, the pace of life is needlessly accelerated... Whereas in the country people are used to help each other (if somebody needed to harvest

uncivilised" region the boy found enough support to restore what humane had been left in him.

Does Wattie's story sound too much like a romantic fairy-tale? Mohl recounts a similar case which she came upon in France: "He was an orphan from child welfare, and was taken in and eventually adopted by a couple. /.../ Today, he is often called by his orphan name as a reminder of his origins and his unmerited luck. But it is not because he came from child welfare that people resent him. Other villagers have similar origins without having to hear about it. /.../ /T/here is a difference between stigmatising someone and judging their actual behaviour." (Mohl 1997:60)

Now, no matter how much the country seems to have stayed out of hurried transformations, a face-to-face encounter with the new reality is bound to happen at some point. The authors were mostly well aware of the two-edged sword which this situation presents. Nevertheless they often chose to leave their opinion hidden between the lines. When in *ITF* the County Council financed a 'fine new water supply', a trace of irony sounds in Mitchinson's remark about 'some of the houses with bathrooms even' (NM: 214). Perhaps the young generation was prone to greet the "improvements" more heartily than they deserved; surely the elders remain more or less suspicious of any changes (remember the mistrust of Balwearians of Mr Soulis's freshly acquired knowledge in *TJ*). This generation gap (no Scottish oddity) threatens to add more friction into the already tense relationships in a close-knit rural community. Some members look for solution elsewhere, mowing away from home. But even those who stay, remain under the pressure to vary their ways constantly. The spread of new information, gadgets and facilities entails the loss of something else - be it water from the (potentially magic) well or knowledge of Gaelic. Unhappily, the living and worthwhile traditions are as likely to be swept away by the inflow as the defunct.

4.2.2. Near the clachan, there was a croft...

Family is certainly among the most challenged structures in the modern-day society, long before the children have grown enough to dare to oppose the parents.

the crop fast, the whole village would summon quickly to lend their hands), town folk do not care for their neighbours (both in the literal and figurative sense of the noun).

Unwholesome household relationships stand behind many a human tragedy, while institutions intended to supersede the family's role in the process of socialisation often fail in their task, or are not available for the needy.

In our stories, the family is present in two basic modes:

- a) as a healthy, functional environment where an individuality can develop in an atmosphere of safety and acceptance,
- b) a dysfunctional, purely formalistic unit, which, at best, prepares ground for future frustrations and complexes.

Under a) fall both of our "fairy" stories. Indeed, NM incorporated the word "family" in the title of her story; the notion of safety and acceptance shows best in the fact that the MacMillans (/77) can live with their supernatural legacy without letting the rest of the world discredit it. No experience is too strange to fit within the family tradition - and the Forester is ready to extrapolate this embrace into the future, too. And if it had not been for the warm heart of Ellen's mother⁴⁵, the little girl would not dare to trespass the borders of the "natural" world in search for a "supernatural" encounter (*TSH*).

The majority of our sample texts present a rather depressing picture of family relationships (i.e. b)). Of these, *The Brothers* (and again, family made it into the title) exploits the motif most thoroughly. The "brothers" from the title 'were not my real brothers, not the brothers I had been brought up with, not the brothers whose toys I had shared or smashed, not the brothers with whom I had bedded in that cramped house so long ago. These were other brothers. And their song was a menacing song.' (ICS: 171) But in the end these frightening beings become much dearer to the writer's heart than his own relatives - the father (the only piece of information we know about him is his experience with the dead fish that he had mistaken for a ghost), the religious mother and lastly the writer's own brothers about whom we know nothing at all, not even how many there were. The distant crowd touched him and roused him more than any memory of living people had ever done: 'I saw my brothers broken by defeat and starvation but still human and rustic and brave. /.../I

⁴⁵ Remember her compassion with sick Wattie, when she brings him a fine meal; his decline of the offer has its roots, in turn, in the boy's unhappy family circumstances which taught him to fear women/ motherlike figures.

seemed to see faces, worn and lined, and they were more beautiful than any other faces I had known. (ICS: 172)

This euphoria reminds us of Magnus's sense of belonging with his dead ancestors: 'Surrounded by these dead, he felt human and accepted for the first time since he had returned to Norday. /.../ A dark comforting power rose from the vanished generations.' (GMB: 155) But already the attribute "dark" overshadows his cheer and later we learn he 'had never shed a tear for the vanishing of his mother or the death of his father'. (GMB: 159) Is that only due to his mum's selkie roots? The answer is no, unluckily; if family circumstances make one's heart harden, few experiences can bring it back to life and ensure a healthy, nourishing environment for the following generations to grow up in.

4.2.3. In the croft there was a bed...

At certain times and in certain levels of Scottish society, the cheerlessness of life conditions was doubled, as it were, by local authorities discouraging the freedom of frolicking⁴⁶. For one, sexual explicitness went through remarkable changes over the times - from the pre-Christian common law pleaded by Uncle for his affair with Elaine, to the Presbyterian principles (well meant, yet at places stricter than necessary in effect) and back to the relaxed (or even lax) attitude of today. For contemporary authors this is an important area for comparing their views of the old and new - and seven out of our eight stories try to capture the atmosphere at different stages of this development.

Against expectations, the (arguable) supernatural origin of some characters does not imply that it is them who violate the established conventions. Indeed, if in the process of Elisabeth's self-realisation is expressed in terms applicable to sexual intercourse, the story does not contain the act itself - and the topic does not appear in Elisabeth and Roger's conversation either. The seal man, much as he seems to aim at seducing the girl, is thoroughly satisfied with the prospect of their elopement. He never suggests explicitly that they should become a couple once they dive underwater, and all his images of Elisabeth as a seal (although they consist

⁴⁶ See App. IV - Carmichael

largely of visualisations of her beauty in the newly acquired seal array) concern her alone, not "her in relation to him".

The second selkie tale inquires into the necessity of communication in maintaining a relationship which would fulfil both partners. People often fail to consider their neighbours' needs and desires (as when Simon lies with Mara - only because she is at hand and has no means to defy him, or when old Annie cannot stand the thought of another woman in the house); the more sophisticated ones again face frustration of not being able to find a soul mate amongst all the available sexual mates. This is yet another thing Magnus shares with his grandfather: while the old man recalls with nostalgia the 'dozen joyous lusty years with old Annie'⁴⁷, the marriage clearly ceased to be a fulfilling partnership long before Annie's death (if indeed it had ever been).

What we cannot estimate is the old man's true view of Simon's relationship with Mara. Did he assume the same attitude towards the Kirk's imperatives, the feigned abasement (as when /Simon/ 'was willing to thole any penance the kirk session might see fit to lay on him' - GMB: 142). Probably not, and his letter to the session, in which he claims that Simon and Mara 'wish before harvest to be married in the manse if it so be the minister's good will' (GMB: 143), was candid.

The Highland home of Angus and Peigi (*ITF*) seems miles away from the rigid Orkneys. But the final verdict upon Simon (5), 'the usual thing, I think' (GMB: 143), shows that all over the country young people find it difficult to restrain their sexual urges. Angus, in his innocence, would not touch Peigi, yet he was 'getting plenty from his mates of what could be done with a nice lassie in the cab of a lorry or in the back of it even'. And what about 'they all thinking it was for badness he had taken her away and kind of half proud of him'? (both NM: 220) Obviously, the word "badness" had lost its pejorative tint in favour of humorousness (similarly to e.g. the Czech word "certovina"). By the way, what are "they" proud of, and who "all"? Angus's sheepishness in this matter contrasts with Peigi's feminine subtlety, which is the real reason why the lass reacts so priggishly to the young man's curious insinuations. As a matter of fact, it is she who regrets openly the wasted opportunity

of **'having a nice time on the hillside and we just ourselves'** (NM: 221) - but only as long as the couple is secured against possible attacks on their future social position in the village by a prospect of marital status. In a similar way, Beatrice's determination to entice Jack Hyslop (*TSNSW*), which proves lethal for Minty, might well be driven by her ambition of gaining a higher position⁴⁸

The older generation, of course, takes things rather seriously, and although the discrepancy in these two stories seems not to be as vicious as in 5, there is still the danger that should there come an offspring earlier than a date proportional to the date of marriage, the girl (at least) would suffer from disgrace (not to mention the future stigma attached to the child). The same accident precipitated the onset of Janet M'Clour's segregation (*TJ*) and contributed to her infamy; no matter how well **it might have been confirmed that her child's father was a soldier, in more primitive people's eyes she might have had an affair with the devil himself, just as well.** And, in accord with the labelling theory⁴⁹, the more such a woman felt segregated, the less was she inclined to assimilate to the society which repulsed her.

What about Scottish youngsters, then? Peigi's (*ITF*) remark cast a revealing light on the real state of morals among the majority of twenty-somethings in Scotland. Indeed, for Susan (*TE*; she came to the Pentlands from Edinburgh) it is not too hard to find a sexual partner - while he, in turn, does not feel ashamed of courting two women at a time. Characteristically, though, the "Puritan" side of Susan prevents her from calling the spade a spade, and she prefers more tentative terms, such as 'experiences'. (MS: 202) In this respect, the Uncle - despite his age - is much more "far-out", or avant-garde, than his niece.

The self-contradictory notion of marriage in *STxvas* already discussed in the relevant chapter, as was the notion of one's behaviour conditioned by several layers of conventions⁵⁰ - rather like a shot made with a camera with several filters on. It is impossible not to spot the world of difference between the situation in rural

⁴⁷ GMB: 147; a remark somewhat astonishing for the reader who has filed the old man as primarily passive, pious and sticking to protestant morals.

⁴⁸ This shift projects into the text in the form of a suddenly different reference to the characters: 'Mistress Hyslop' (DH: 259) as opposed to mere 'Beatrice', and 'Hyslop' (DH: 257 and 259) instead of his Christian name plus surname used when he was a single farm hand.

⁴⁹ See Labeling theory (online source)

Scotland and the (ostensible) freedom enjoyed by Elizabeth, Charles and Magnus (5), settled in the tolerant "civilised" south. This sharpens the edge of ICS's Writer's explicit statement that 'my sexual experiences have been limited and I know whom to blame for that' (ICS: 163) The readers who find the writer's recountal too slanted might raise several objections: For one, it was not the Highlanders' fault that the writer was 'seeing very few people' (ICS: 161) - nobody asked him to move particularly to Edinburgh and its stony houses, 'no places for friendship'. (ICS: 165). Second, why should be sexual inexperience considered as something to be ashamed for? Conformity to this suggestion is as degrading as the previously enforced chastity; in the case of Charles and Elisabeth (57), in spite of its seeming expediency, it only contributes to the artificiality of the relationship. And third, Magnus's story shows that sexual freedom is no universal cure for one's complexes and frustrations. As the old proverb says, "Aa's no gowd that glitters, nor maidens that wiers their hair" (Scotstext - online source).

4.2.4. The Scottish catch

Given the cliché of a technicoloured Scot running downhill with a waving kilt and dagger in hand, ready to lay down his life in defence of his (or her) fatherland (as typified by the - US based - *Braveheart* or *Rob Roy* movies), the real self-image of our eight Scottish writers is rather an agreeable deviation from what an unknowing reader expects. It is not England against which the authors define their heroes. The "outlook" which many of the protagonists wish for coincides only in principle with the "southern" lifestyle. 'T/he placid unchanging world which knows nothing of Kafka or Proust or the other great writers of the world' (ICS: 161) can be located anywhere; moreover, the knowledge of famous names (Angus Wilson, Saul Bellow in *TE-*, Rilke, Blok, Mahler in *Sealskin*) does not exclude a mean or superficial character. On a less elevated level, the supposed England-Scotland gap concerns activities executable in any major city (and in that sense the gap could just as well be narrowed to the area of the Highlands vs. the Lowlands or broadened to the regular differences between a developing country and more developed ones).

⁵⁰ See also App. V - Mohl (1997)

It was perhaps GMB who managed to word the prevailing mood of the eight texts most pregnantly. Consider this synecdoche: '/Magnus/ whose early life had been shaped by the starkness of sea and earth was at a loss with railway timetables, cheque books, wine lists.' (GMB: 156). Although GMB was referring to Orcadians in particular (and it is true that they tend to see themselves as an autonomous ethnic group rather than a part of Scots), his findings can easily be extended to the Scottish mainland - e.g. as when he speaks about 'a peasant's practical outlook': 'Everything about a croft is there for some specific purpose: the plough, the oar, the quernstones, the horse-shoe, the flail. Each implement symbolised a whole segment of labour in the strict cycle of the year, so that the end might be fruition, and bread and fish lie at last on a poor table.' (GMB: 158) 'He knew of course that there was poverty, and such sins as lust and avarice and pride. /.../ /I/f each man's seventy years could be **compressed into a short time, his laborious feet, however plastered with dung and clay, would move in a joyous reel of fruition.**' (GMB: 153)

Yet Scottish society is an intricate organism, and as readers of fiction based in Scotland we should keep that in mind, so that we avoid the trap of oversimplifying the situation. Once more in GMB's words: 'The guests would say, going home in a late-night tramcar, "Is he not charming, this Magnus? And how shy! /.../ He is so gentle and sensitive, this man from the north." What they were describing was the mask; few of them had seen the cold dangerous Orphean face behind.' (GMB: 157) 'It was all a game, to keep sharp the wits of people who had not to contend with the primitive terrors of sea and land.' (GMB: 156)

The life in Scottish countryside can be viewed as rough and with limited intellectual resources - or as quaint if not exactly idyllic (including hard work as part of the deal). Our writers deserve commendation for taking into account both sides; the final picture of the society depends on the particular aspect the author focused on, or, if he/she aimed at portraying both, which direction was preferred (from idyllic/positive towards harsh/negative, or vice versa). Although in a cross-national comparison it usually is Scotland which comes off worse, the rusticity and ensuing intolerance (which clearly are a thorn in many of the writers' flesh) are by no means country-specific. The Scottish nation provides enough space for

establishing discreet personality types, especially when the writers do not let themselves be tied down by clichés.

4.2.5. What stands to reason

Affairs of mortals often prove puzzling enough on their own, even without a supernatural intrusion. The MacMillan family (*ITF*) 'could have done without seeing the most of what they saw' (NM: 212). But was the rest of the village really as immune against the unearthly as they thought?

At this point it could be useful to resort to Perle Mohl's term "resonance". The Danish sociologist uses it in rather a wide sense, "temporally to apply to meaning, describing the phenomenon where stories and ideas travel through time and space and are kept alive, like a surname. /.../ /It/ could also be applied to myths, and to so-called oral traditions in general. For if certain stories, myths, poems and songs go on being told, sung and recited, it is because they go on making sense, in the triple meaning of the expression (producing sense, conveying sense, making people sense), whereas those forgotten have lost their relevance: they have stopped being resonant because they no longer contribute meaning to, or are supplied with new energy from, that which they encounter." (Mohl 1997:194)

She even goes as far as to broaden the scope of mythicity to "all (oral) manifestations expressing the fundamental principles of social existence, in this case, the relations between people and households, and the interplay between their inter-dependence and their autonomy," (Mohl 1997: 68) because she thinks she can see "some parallels between myths and stories /about neighbours/, both in the way they can be analysed and in the way they are perpetuated. Furthermore, as we have seen in some of the stories, mythical elements can be parts of daily talk, and the forms should not be necessarily be dissociated" (Mohl 1997: 66).

If this is true, we could perceive a community as knit together by its oral tradition; the particular utterances might differ in their content (which reflects the temporal position), but continue to pass on the same meaning it had in ancient times. Myths "are good stories. They convey important meaning, they are remembered, told and retold, and every time, they are interpreted and adapted to current situations. That is how they stay alive and why they vary." (Mahl 1997: 66)

The world seems to change ever faster, and some aspects of traditional culture might well have lost their point. The trouble is that in most cases this is impossible to claim in absolute terms, since all we can say is that one custom or another is no longer valid in our times (or not yet, although this would be a topic for sci-fi authors). Of the ideas which do not appear past their "use-by date" yet, a reasonable amount is contained in stories containing the supernatural. Not that some of them would not have reached the "sell-by" date, i.e. people no longer believe them, or certainly not in the way they used to be presented. But when writers include them in an otherwise contemporary story, peopled by ordinary humans who act upon the currently binding (or fashionable) principles, the process of passing the myth on continues. Side by side, they put on display the pros and cons of both the old and the modern, and there is no foretelling which ideas will prove more valid.

The minute we were born (and in some cultures even before that) we became subject to an impalpable net of our native culture. Myths have always been a part of it; we cannot escape them, for the only way to get rid of one belief is to embrace another one. But the influence is bilateral, and every time the myth is recounted, passed on, revived, necessitates a change. More and more people strive to find the strength to withstand the harming demands of their culture and resist being dragged through their lives as marionettes on the stage. Hopefully, they manage to base their identity not on a simplified extremist philosophy, but despite the mind-boggling complexity of the world, they try and stay true to what they had identified as individual to their personality. Already Yeats recollects such characters, such an Irishman with a Mohawk Indian tattooed on his arm who would never doubt the fairies because "they stand to reason" (Yeats - online source).

It is a blessing of our times that we are granted a space for re-thinking and re-evaluating the messages of myths, for reincorporating them in our lives, should we find it useful or reasonable. In this respect we are also most equipped for finding a way to other people whose approach to life resonates with our own - even across cultural barriers.

4.3. ALL THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

Christianity and its position in Scottish mystery tales

At the beginning of the third millennium it can be actually quite hard to imagine what life was like in the past. Modern day conveniences such as electricity, literacy, sanitation spring readily to our mind - but we tend to forget something, which in reality had a much more serious impact on our ancestors' life: the implicit omnipresence of faith and religion. For almost nineteen out of the past twenty centuries the idea that the universe came into existence by an accident and human life is not much more than a line of chemical reactions was virtually unthinkable. In the countryside, it was not that much a matter of whether people were or were not be allowed to think there was no God - it simply never occurred to them that He⁵¹ might not exist.

The history of states, nations and ethnic groups has often been so closely interlinked with religious issues that this paper would not be complete without an attempt to analyse their position. Even now that the right to choose one's confession is guaranteed by international laws in most countries, it is practically impossible to stay untouched by the heirloom of years and decades of Christianity; it affects everyone, including people who are too terrified by the idea of organised worship to pledge allegiance to any congregation as well as those who did, and denounced it again at some later point in their life. Religion has been underlying the foundations of law, education, social care systems; at times, religious leaders had legal authorities level with or even more powerful than their secular counterparts. And more than that, Christianity also claims a right to bear judgement upon matters concerning the supernatural, which is the primary reason why it deserves to be dealt with in a bigger detail here.

It behoves to start with the basics, therefore in 4.3.1 the Bible shall be in the centre of attention. Then we move on to people - first to the two big rivals, the Catholic and Protestant churches (4.3.2), and later the Kirk itself (4.3.3). And then it is twice from the visible to the invisible - from congregations to individual people's ideas (4.3.4) and from humans to supernatural beings (4.3.5).

4.3.1. Wisdom 'in the neuk of a plaid'⁵²

It behoves to start with the basics - a book small enough to be carried out and about in one's pocket, though often considered to contain all the knowledge one needs to lead a good life crowned by salvation.

For the Balweary parishioners (TJ) the Bible amounts to an infallible source of truth. In their traditionalistic perception of the world, academic education deserves suspicion rather than amazement. Mr. Soulis's writing seems 'scant decent' (RLS: 3) to them and they would clearly prefer to abide by their own reading of the Bible. This self-assigned judiciary is an unexpected drawback of the Kirk's effort to bring literacy (and the resulting knowledge of Scriptures) to every place in Scotland. In 7/as well as in *TSNSW*lay people see or actively present themselves as religious authorities, and not always with the most honest of intentions (remember Beatrice exploiting the quote from Exodus to serve her cause). The danger is obvious; if the (social) situation happens to play into the hands of a naive (or worse, evil) person - be it layman or minister - there is no knowing to what ends a twisted reading of the Bible could lead.

One of the witty and well-aimed taunts by Uncle (*TE*) recommends his niece to look up the Acts of the Apostles 5:1-10 (cited from King James Version); given the context, the reader may wonder if MS fashioned the plot of *The Executor* after Ananias and Saphira's story, or if she simply was lucky to find such a perfectly fitting image. Besides, Susan's reaction to the passage sums up her attitude to truth: She drops reading after the opening three verses, because she "knows" how it went on. With her tendency not to tell the whole truth, Susan might have concealed from us that the reason she stopped reading was to avoid confrontation with the end of verse 4: "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God." The self-styling into a knowing position smells of pride; as if she knew better than God himself, as if the admonition did not apply to her.

Human pride and self-centredness concerns GMB, too. *Sealskin* features two word-for-word extracts: An alleged old Irish sermon at the very end of the story

si vVe will follow the Christian tradition of referring to God with masculine pronouns.

⁵² The phrase refers to the size of the Bible; 'neuk' - corner, obscure place (RLS: 3).

clarifies the origin of human isolation and hypocrisy, pointing to the first sin of Man in the garden of Eden⁵³. The other one (and the only direct quotation of the Bible, which is otherwise more alluded to in images than in speech) comprises two whole verses of Ecclesiastes (9:11-12). Their exact purpose is not that straightforward as Spark's; most likely it is to reinforce the underlying notion that certain twists in human life are inescapable: 'The people, viewed from Paris, moved like figures in an ancient fable, simple and secure and predestined, and death rounded all.' (GMB: 157) The biblical passage also contains references to birds and fishes, creatures which appear as recurring motifs throughout the story.

The assumed collective knowledge of the Word enables artists to allude to it in many more ways than just by quoting a verse - from a simple image ('the dove broods upon the water' - GMB: 154) to an allegorical frame. By a curious paradox, ICS, the author of *TB*, was himself an atheist - but then his stance allowed him to paint on the Old Testament undercoat more freely perhaps than a believer would⁵⁴. ICS does not hesitate to turn the narrative 'inside out' - as the biblical Joseph merges with the actual protagonist, his original perception changes from an unappreciated genius, ousted by his fellow countrymen, to a base opportunist. He does not present this heretical reading openly, though, as he could have done by making it the subject of the Writer's planned book. As it is, the readers are lead into conviction the Writer himself is still in the process of plotting his apocrypha. At first, he expresses but a restrained opinion: 'After all, it is one of the great stories of the world.' Yet soon he lets slip what his heart smoulders with: 'My mother had told it to me many years before in a voice of rigour and appalling judgment. But since then I had read Thomas Mann.' (Both ICS: 163) 'After all, I hadn't believed in the Bible, or thought of it only as fiction. Well, if it were fiction, then alternatives were possible.' (ICS: 168) Notwithstanding, a major change in the nature of the biblical narrative is to come about. The Writer, in the popular manner of re-casting myths

⁵³ Let us note here that GMB, himself a converted Catholic, provides the proper interpretation of the biblical passage; the cause of the banishment from Paradise was pride, the wish to become level with God, which provoked Adam and Eve to eat from the forbidden tree, not the action of eating the fruit (nor indeed any of their consequent acts).

⁵⁴ And presumably he delighted in it; his bibliography contains a novel *Consider the Lilies* as well as another apocryphy about Joseph.

with characters of modern mentality, imagines Joseph 'gazing at the pyramids' in astonishment which soon turns love. Egypt (read "Edinburgh") appears twofold here: a 'sophisticated' world, 'the pinnacle of achievement' and a 'civilisation that would have produced /.../ vast inhuman monuments' (All ICS: 166). These key antipodes mirror the parallelly ambiguous status of the urbanised Scottish Lowlands: 'I imagined outside my room the tall stone buildings as if they were pyramids. Inside them were all the buried kings, the tyrants and despots.' (ICS: 168) Seemingly, the parallel only touches the condition under which Joseph and his brethren lived. But in the background of this relatively innocent extended simile there lurks a more powerful notion: a similarity between the Gaelic-speaking Scots and the Chosen nation. From the perspective of today's Scots⁵⁵, however, this image appears not as much heretic as overblown.

4.3.2. The Scottish Derby

Unlike the situation in Ireland, the discrepancies between Scottish Catholics and Protestants have not developed into such a bloody issue, although they have not ceased altogether either - all the Glasgow Celtic and Rangers fans know that the clubs' rivalry has its roots in discordance between different denominations to which the first players belonged.

Since the 1560's Scotland has had its own church, independent of either the Pope or the British rule, and its members now count 42% of the population (though probably with not more than 12% actively involved). The second most numerous denomination is Roman Catholic (16%), with its core in the Islands and the West Central Belt (the latter area became the destination of Irish refugees from 19th and the beginning of 20th centuries - hence also the friction between Rangers and Celtic). 28% of Scots do not see themselves as belonging to any particular religion.

These figures correspond roughly with the attention the examined writers paid to the matter. Catholics are only mentioned in two of the stories: Once to prop

⁵⁵ Save perhaps those professing Judaism - but those represent 0,1% of the Scottish population only. (This as well as the following data are cited according to the 2001 census; CoS - online source)

the "authentic Highlander" image of the narrator of *TJ* with the appropriate stance⁵⁶: 'kirkyard /.../ consecrated by the papists before the blessed licht shone upon the kingdom'. In spite of that 'it was a great howff (shelter)' and 'a bielder (cosy) bit' (all RLS: 17), favoured by Mr Soulis (perhaps for the peculiar atmosphere of such sites, inviting to meditation). The remark has its pendant in *Sealskin* - the only place in Orkneys where Magnus feels 'human and accepted' is, paradoxically, an old kirkyard at the shore, situated 'about an ancient roofless (probably Catholic) chapel' (both GMB: 155). No contempt, no voiced disapproval: The resultant ambience matters, and the historicity of the place, not its actual history.

4.3.3. Kirkwall, Kirknewton, Kirkgunzeon...

The basis of the Church of Scotland - or the Kirk, as it is more commonly known, has been Calvinism, a virtual cognate of strict morals. It was not until the past few decades that its sternness has started to melt. What a difference between the situation described by Alexander Carmichael in his introduction to *Carmina Gadelica*⁵⁷, and the prevailing openness and preparedness for inter-denominational or indeed inter-religious dialogue we witness today! For nineteenth century Scottish women, who were not allowed to sing and dance (and certainly not with men) it would have been unimaginable to think that a minister's daughter should feel free to attend a T'ai Chi session (if for the sake of exercise only) after a day at work as an assistant in a sheltered workshop run by antroposophists⁵⁸.

The stricter the demands of the presbyters might have been, the more probably some of the members would succumb to hypocrisy. This issue is often raised in our stories, and all the authors concerned happen to deal with it not as much fiercely as using persiflage. After all, any institution consists of human beings, who are as a rule fallible. The Kirk is by definition Presbyterian, i.e. with no extensive hierarchy, the only "superior" person in the congregation being the

⁵⁶ Although not as marked as e.g. in Walter Scott's *Wandering Willie's Tale*.

⁵⁷ A collection of Gaelic songs and prayers mainly from the Islands, published at the turn of the 20th century - see App. V - Carmichael

⁵⁸ And yet such a person does exist, and is actively involved in the local Church of Scotland congregation (where, by the way, the author of this thesis, though officially and openly a Roman Catholic, was given a most warm welcome during her visit).

minister. His conspicuousness thus makes him an easy prey to fiction writers and he often ends up satirised, as an epitome of all that might gone wrong under his leadership.

There are several possible patterns of relationship between the shepherd and his flock:

- a) **The minister is an internalised authority.**
- b) The minister is an authority mostly because of tradition, but is still respected in public.
- c) The minister is not really respected.

Of these three, RLS's Balweary parish would suit the first description. People there have their doubts of young Mr Soulis' capabilities, but this is due to his extraordinary education, which goes beyond their conception of what befits a man of his age and position. Moreover, their doubts are not aired during some evening gossips; they appeal to God for the reverend's salvation and peace of mind. The direction is not towards a secular stance, but towards its opposite.

For GMB, faith and religion certainly present pivotal points. In his vision, the Kirk comprises ordinary people who, when gathered together on a serious issue, feel urged to put on a lofty mask - especially in the presence of the (exemplary stern) minister. Their speech starts overflowing with elaborate expressions which sound somewhat amiss from the mouths of fishers and joiners:

'Yes, he /i.e. Simon/ had carnal knowledge of the said Mara in the barn of Corse, also in the seaward room of Corse, on sundry occasions /.../ Yes, he was aware that he had offended seriously against God and the kirk. Yes, he was willing to thole any public penance the kirk session might see fit to lay on him.'

"She is said to be a seal woman," said Walter Anderson (who was the blacksmith and rather fond of the bottle when he was not a member of this holy court). "Mr Anderson," said the minister coldly, "I think we will not adulterate our proceedings with pagan lore." (Both GMB: 142)

The different registers used for speech in these two extracts betray the characters' true conviction: At least as far as the villagers are concerned, a formal

style of the public pronouncement is likely to hide an indifferent if not contradictory personal opinion.

It is somewhat between those two positions that we could set the location of *ITF*. Probably, most of its inhabitants still attend the church, but morals apart, they do not come to the gatherings to meet and listen to the minister alone. Indeed, any unsatisfactory relationship between him and some of his sheep is a well-known secret: '/Angus/ knew the Minister was no great favourite with the Forester, on account he had complained that the noise of the saw-mill was stopping him from composing his sermons, and everyone in the place knew that the half of them came out of books' (NM: 213). This deficiency on the Minister's side, however, does not provoke much concern or attempts to change the current situation, as happened in Balweary (TJ). Already a major shift from the preceding overscrupulous religiousness can be seen, and the main function of the Kirk has become to provide a platform for get-togethers, with activities such as the choir, which 'had been practising all winter, and the time came when they were to go over and give a concert in aid of the church funds at Auchandrum, and there was to be a dance after, they would hire a bus and it would be just fine, with all the folk singing away to pass the time on the road and going back with the lassies' (NM: 214). That is, nonetheless, the standpoint of the youngest generation; for the congregation en masse (even without an inspired leader), issues such as premarital sex remain out of the question.

A similar by-effect appears in *TSH*, too, when 'at times of state or ease such as the Sabbaths and Fast Days /.../ it was the custom in Clachanree after the three-mile walk to and from the church to Lochend to inspect, though not to work, one's fields' (EM: 7-8). Obviously, the stroll gave the farmers a rare opportunity to discuss farm and family business for which there was no time during week-days. The 'road to kirk on Sabbath' also presented one of the few occasions for Simon (5) to cast an eye on a woman, while his mother was silently cursing the 'parish Jezebels'. (Both GMB: 137)

Having explained the impact of the Kirk on the everyday life of Scots, a failure to mention it in a piece of writing has its significance, too; this stands out

remarkably in those of our eight short stories which seemingly draw most on the Bible. In *TB*, Presbyterian hard-liners might have well contributed to the writer's flight from his native place. If ICS does not bring the issue up, it is presumably because its complexity would demand more space than a short story can provide. And, as shown already, in *TSNSW* the absence of ministerial authority enables demagogy to get the better of the panicky crowd, while in *TEit* allows Susan to stick to her illusion of moral self-sufficiency.

4.3.4. Christ be with me, Christ within me...⁵⁹

By the 20th century, a total embrace of the Christian doctrine (Presbyterian or Catholic) has been already bereft of much of its inviolability. Most notably, it lost its aura of ancestral, virtually innate quality. Not that the previous generations would not follow their own sets of values when it suited them; but the surroundings did not allow them to renounce their churchmanship openly. As Scotland gradually became more and more open, artists dared to pronounce on the matter. Most of our writers reflect the situation, too, usually by having their protagonists face a vexing dilemma: Should I stay or should I go?

Similarly to the previous chapter, there seem to be three options:

- a) to surrender to the pressure of the traditionally inclined community, remain a church member and become a hypocrite, or
- b) to leave the community and assume an overallly more sophisticated lifestyle, which includes the (factual, not only assumed) freedom of religion (including the option of agnosticism or atheism), and finally
- c) to stay and continue looking for viable options to carry on whatever is healthy and beneficial in the current tradition.

All the same, it should be kept in mind that no matter how much the authors satirise inefficient practices of Christian establishment, they never denounce religious feelings or personal faith, as long as it stays authentic.

The remoteness of Scottish islands, their exposedness to the rigours of weather and the sea, and the resulting low standard of living might well be one of

⁵⁹ A line from *St. Patrick Breastplate*, a famous Celtic hymn, similar in form to texts from Carmichaels' *Carmina Gadelica*. To be found at e.g. *St. Patrick* (online source)

the reasons their inhabitants have conserved religious traditions more scrupulously perhaps than elsewhere in Scotland. The Catholic Outer Hebrides as well as the Presbyterian Orkneys also present examples of a close-knitted rural community, where everyone's doings are at all times monitored by his/her neighbours (more of that in the preceding Chapter 5). Under these circumstances all deviations from the standard must be kept indoors, if not entirely to oneself. Such is also the situation in the Olafson household (5). GMB's concept of warmth and cold has already been introduced; suffice it here to claim that the picture of Christianity goes much in line with it. No wonder Simon remains inwardly untouched by Christian belief. His mother represents the cold, merciless, judging version of Christianity, while the father, who did come to acknowledge the affectionate, merciful side of it, is too old and enervated to support his inner profession with much action, and thus fails to pass his experience on.

Yet despite this open declaration of Christianity as most vulnerable to human egotism, Brown takes great pain to portray faith as something worth building one's life on. The father, though old-fashioned and senescent in many ways, 'had always been a truly religious man', but the nature of his devoutness is a far cry from that of, say, Reverend Murdoch Soulis (*TJ*). Yes, he reads the Bible nightly, but that does not make him 'careful and troubled for mony (*many*) things besides the ae (*one*) thing needful' (RLS: 3, explanatory translation by M.P.). Instead, he has reached a composedness of mind to be envied by many a Zen master. He thinks of death without fear, feels he should complain neither of his harsh life nor Simon's wrecked marriage, and finds happiness in trivialities: a healthy grandson, the sun's warmth... Whereas the mother, praised by everyone for 'her cleanliness' and 'decency' (both GMB: 140), would rather see Mara back where she came from, the father gathers what is left from his authority (after all, according to 1 Cor 11:3, 'the head of the woman is the man'), first shushing his wife by the remark that 'We're supposed to be Christian', followed by a gentle yet firm assurance, 'You'll stay, my dear.' (both GMB: 139) - and that in spite of all the questions surrounding the girl. 'And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have

done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.' (Mat 25:40)

Something of this humble attitude comes down to Mansie, too, although the composer leaves church membership behind together with the Orcadian lifestyle. He does not have to hide his thoughts from self-righteous villagers, but from similarly hypocritical intellectuals, and he cannot find his place among either of them. It is a great relief to him to find an affirmation of his surmise in the old Irish sermon; although it probably would not push him any closer to becoming an active Christian. The memory of 'the harshness of Presbyterian services' prevents him from embracing the idea of art as 'the handmaid of religion', too. When during a Christmas Mass in Notre Dame Magnus feels moved a little by 'the crib with the Infant in the straw, the Man and the Woman, the Beasts and the Star and the Angels' (all GMB: 157), it is because at last he caught a glimpse of the true purpose of Christian churches: to represent on Earth what can only be fully experienced in Heaven - an evolutive, wholesome, synergic relationship between individuals, based on mutual acceptance and resulting in a secure, though not overprotective environment. The image of a family or a household can well represent the ideal, too: 'It reminded him of the byre at Corse, and how there had always seemed to be always a kind of sacred bond between the animals and the farm-folk who were born and died under the same thatched roof.' (GMB: 157-8) Despite his own affiliation to Catholicism, Brown lets the hero remain distanced from any particular confession. As an artist, Magnus has come to a more panoptic point of view; the simple scene from his birthplace is but a link to the 'sacred web of creation - that cosmic harmony of god and beast and man and star and plant' (GMB: 160). For all that *Sealskin* owes to GMB's spiritual metamorphoses, it gives evidence of the growing need for amendments to what of the church tradition has turned stale. As the lack of capital letters in the last but one paragraph hints, Magnus's final stance could be described as one in the "grey zone"⁶⁰, a group of Christian sympathisers too shy, too truthful or conscientious to regard themselves as traditional Christians.

⁶⁰ P. Tomáš Halík's term, used e.g. in his book *Oslovit Zachea* (Praha: LN 2003)

The narrator of *TJ* stays away from excursions to most character's minds. Firstly, this is due to the genre rating. Secondly, a look at *how* this is achieved **without the story becoming tedious pinpoints the narrator's anonymity, and the fact he (she) only covers someone else's story, not his (her) own. Moreover, the careful wording of the narrator's remarks declares his (her) belonging to the 'auld, concerned, serious men and women'** (RLS: 3).

If Annie Olafson (5, Simon's mother) **never ventilated** her true opinions, Susan the Executor does so - since it is she who narrates the story, she is spared the necessity of an open confession face to face with the facts. All in all, Susan displays the regular outward signs of a Christian: She prays, has her own bible, "knows" its contents... But inside of her there is no God but her self. Susan's perception of world is so self-centred that, in her naivety, she even supposes (or has us suppose?) that God sees the situation in the same manner as she does: 'O God omnipotent and all-seeing, direct and instruct me as to the way out if this situation, astonishing as it must appear to Thee' (MS: 205). As if it did not occurred to her that what she hates most about Uncle's ghost is exactly this omniscience, the "I-don't-see-it-therefore-you-can't-see-it-either" attitude makes her unapt to decipher the ironic undertone in Uncle's epithet 'Scottish puritan girl' (MS: 199). Her puritanism is purely outward.

In a sharp contrast to the presence of a Bible quote in its title, Dorothy Haynes' story bears few mentions to religion. The girl's 'evening-prayers'⁶¹ are something to be seen to, as teeth-cleaning nowadays; the superficiality of religious upbringing equally shows in the fact that Jinnot never really turns to God with her torment. When at one point she even turns to the Devil, it is by no means a premeditated action, but rather a childish response to feeling of abandonment, an impulse driven by pure despair.

While humankind appears prone to delusions of devoutness, seals prefer fair-mindedness - at least in EL's *ST*, where few mentions of religious and philosophic theories do not imply a marginalisation of faith as such. Roger explains: '/W/e in our innocence respected you because you could work, and were willing to work'. But this 'burden of human toil' has more purposes than a means to obtain

⁶¹ insert page DH

one's bread and butter. The resulting 'surplus of wealth' provides for free time (and thus far, selkies were right in their observations), which is supposed to allow further development of the non-material aspect of our existence: 'wisdom and charity and the fine arts'. The semicolon placed by EL between the last quote and the end of the sentence, 'and became aware of God', opens up space for an interesting discussion whether the knowledge ensues from the development of culture or appears alongside it.

Then comes a dash in the text, and a sceptical question if that is 'a true description of the world'. (All EL: 253) Both the selkie and the woman answer "no" - and again, it is up to the readers to decide the width of scope covered by the interjection. Does it mean that humans failed to see God, or that the very assumption that He exists was wrong (this being the reason why the seals did not become aware of Him). Similarly, the reference to T'ai Chi, reserved and carefully worded, does not imply that Asian philosophers 'are in the right of it' (NM: 213) either. There is no winner, except for a person truthful with him/herself.

4.3.5. Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers⁶²

One of the reasons Christianity spread so successfully was its readiness to take over exploitable features of the host culture and transform them "after its likeness". What remained of the early forms of Christian cult in Celtic regions in particular displays many reminders of the original customs⁶³. Especially in the countryside (despite the cutback in traditions and rituals, which accompanied the changeover to Protestant standards) the belief in the supernatural long coexisted with the official creed, manifesting itself in various acts, sayings and superstitions. Above all, embracing Christianity does not necessarily entail denying the *existence*

⁶² Rom 8:38

⁶³ Frazer (1994) recorded the characteristic mixture of the pagan and the Christian in Scottish rituals concerning St. Bride, a blend of a local saint and the Celtic goddess of fire and fertility. And as to the formal elements, *Carmina Gadelica* demonstrates beautifully that an invocation to the Lord God and a pagan incantation against evil spirits do not have to differ significantly. Frazer (1994), *Carmina* (online source).

of supernatural beings - provided it is curbed by firm persuasion about the supremacy of God over all such creatures, "visible and invisible"⁶⁴.

The Bible describes numerous spirits and beings subordinate to God. Naturally, the Scriptures speaks disapprovingly of most of these "other" spirits, because they are supposedly in direct relation with the Devil. And since it does not do for a human to meddle with what is beyond his powers, any wilful communication with them would more than probably result in perdition. Certainly all who misuse their own or anyone else's singular abilities for their own profit (wizards, witches, soothsayers or those with "familiar spirits", i.e. able to talk to ghosts of the dead) deserve damnation.

The church, as a natural successor to Christ's first apostles, privileges itself not only to judge, but also to heal and save those who have fallen into Devil's snares. Most of the protagonists in our stories, fortunately, do not have to answer to religious authorities for their dealings - most of them did not mean to get involved with the beings in the first place. Those of the priesthood who are compelled to deal with the supernatural tend to display an "enlightened" attitude - we have already cited the deprecatory answer with which he Orcadian minister passes a hint that Mara 'is said to be a seal woman' (GMB: 142). Clearly he knew better than to take such smears too seriously. Had Mara been called a witch, then perhaps some measures would have been taken; although one of the aims would be to prevent the girl from having to undergo a folk trial, a test which ends with death independently of the final verdict⁶⁵.

Ghosts and revenants, on the other hand, are creatures ambiguous by nature. When they come uncalled for, with a serious message (as the old king Hamlet did), who is to say they were not sent by God? And the Catholic Church, for one, pays

⁶⁴ "I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible," is the opening of the Nicene crede. To be found at e.g. Nicene Creed (online source)

⁶⁵ Either the presumed witch drowns, in which case she "was innocent", or she floats, "because the Devil prevents her from drowning" - upon which she is taken out, bound to a stake and burned.

considerable attention to recordings of encounters with "apparitions" of angels and saints (chiefly Virgin Mary)⁶⁶.

With supernatural beings of local folklore the case is yet more complicated. Although they are not listed directly in the Bible, the peasants' practices related to them partook too much of idolatry and sinful superstition to be officially recognised as unharmed. Their pre-Christian provenance is apparent from the traditional attire and language (Gaelic) they have kept; while some denominations were willing to overlook that, the Presbyterians certainly were not⁶⁷. What approach to choose then, if you have no say in the question whether you want to meet the Sidhe or not?

For Angus and the rest of his family (*ITf*), it is the authentic experience what matters: 'gin the Kirk is against it, and the schools, and the newspapers and the wireless forby, you will find it hard enough to believe your own eyes and ears. /.../ Yet it might be the Ministers are in the right of it and we should not be speaking of such things at all.' The church, having lost its privileged ranking, has become just one of the variables, and a mention of personal faith is altogether absent. Along these lines it only comes natural that Angus, the 'well-doing laddie' (both NM: 213), gets up at night in order to bring a sacrifice to the fairy woman. If he 'stood and he said a kind of half prayer' (NM: 219), it was not in denial of his Christianity, but in acceptance that there is more to the Highlands than meets the eye. For these hills are not only the dreamy home of a European sub-species of the noble savage, but, by the same birthright, also the home of various non-human creatures.

These chapters have sought to demonstrate that (Christian) religion penetrates all the eight stories, though in varying shape - from its full glory to mere relics (comic or tragic), with some of its practices detected as antiquated and burdensome, others valuable and unexpired. If this is so, do the writers (Christian and non-Christian alike) try to convey a shared message? It might well be that no one should let him/herself be manoeuvred on the basis of a single piece of information, be it presented as serving the best purpose conceivable. Or that of all

⁶⁶ In *Celtic Twilight*, Yeats provides an unlooked-for parallel with *TSH*, when he recounts how a young Protestant girl was mistaken, much to her distress, by a group of Catholic children, for the Virgin. Notably, the children could not reach a consensus at first, some of them claiming she was a fairy of the sky, or a foxglove fairy. (Yeats - online source)

the sins and bad qualities, pride (hand in hand with selfishness) seems the most dangerous of all, because it blinds us to everything and everyone around. And that includes the pride with which Man asserts that we have mastered - both in the sphere of knowledge and control - the world.

In the Beginning, Thene Wene Answers...

Scottishness and the role of the supernatural in corroborating ethnic (and/or individual) consciousness⁶⁸

5.1. WHY BOTHER IN THE FIRST PLACE?

With fresh memories of all the troubles set up by overly nationalistic feelings, one might almost start to feel like abandoning the question of ethnic/national identity as more harmful than helpful. And it has to be admitted that the increasing sense of belonging to the "global village" and the awareness of the interconnection between remote spots blurs the differences between particular communities. But on the other hand, there is the "think globally, act locally" approach, which takes into account the threat of shifting responsibility and relying on the top to cater for everything. Also, those who do realise that the universal assertion of human rights brings not only more freedom, but also greater accountability for one's own deeds and decisions, tend to choose which group to identify with more carefully, first assuring themselves of the soundness of its principles; then, in reward, they pay great care to their maintenance.

The satisfaction of having established a functional notion of the particular nation/ethnic group identity is by no means dissipating. A. D. Smith proclaims that national identity often saturates people's needs of being rooted in a cultural background, of feeling safe and related to other people. The idea of a common ethnic spirit (not to be confused with a team spirit!) as something effectively

⁶⁷ See App. V - Yeats

⁶⁸ The title of the chapter is taken from the opening lines of 'In Remote Places/Scottish Fiction', a song by the Edinburgh-based band Idlewild. The lyrics continue as follows: 'Then they came along and changed/All these questions and their answer seem to change'.

surpassing any conceivable achievements of a single life-span gives the group's affiliates a sense of eternity.⁶⁹ They all - down to the objectively least important member - partake in its history which renders no limitations on either end of the time line. This virtue grants the community (and the environment it has grown in) a power big enough to contest the very laws of nature; if extrapolated into the past, it establishes the group as an integral part already of the pre-historical world, i. e. the world of myths and archetypes. As a rule, the then members were reportedly capable of wielding supernatural forces or leastways of communicating with such beings (which were likewise at home there); this knowledge (potentially perceived as a surviving legacy), reinforces in turn the cohesion of the group.

5.2. SCOTTISH MEDLEY

Now to the crucial question: Is there something particularly and unmistakably Scottish (apart from the artificially nurtured and export-oriented Tartan myth, of course)? And if so, how does it project into the analysed stories?

The following conclusions are grounded on a premise that as every human individual is in fact an intersection point of his or her genetic predisposition, family upbringing, education, socio-economic position., so is the nature of a particular nation. Especially in agricultural areas it is the landscape what lies at the basis of the process of shaping the nature of its own inhabitants⁷⁰. In Scotland its power can be still felt in the (declining) divide between the "countryside life" and the "town life", especially that of the Lowland belt between Edinburgh and Glasgow. Not that the situation on either location would be any easier - and here comes the second most important factor: the (socio-political) history of the people(s) living in the area. In our case a number of factors have contributed to the final picture: from the very beginning of the Scottish nation (the "Irish" origin) via centuries of intra-British quarrels to the strong influence of the Kirk. But humans are not mere passive victims. They themselves play the crucial roles in historical events, setting the direction which the region will take as a consequence, and, having come full circle,

⁶⁹ See App. V - Smith (1995)

⁷⁰ See App. V, Warren (2002) and Elphinstone (2000).

make crucial impact on the landscape and nature itself (which, in turn, conditions their future doings...).

As can be seen, "Scottishness" successfully evades being summed up - and the more so, should we presume that a nation's identity is more than a sum of its elements. For instance, local village life bears much resemblance to any other country (e. g. France). In Ireland, the country closest to Scotland in terms of roots (and their remnants observable in the present-day folk culture and traditions) it took years of friction for the Gaelic language to regain a certain level of its former status. Arguably, the Irish republic is not a part of Britain, but then is not the Scots' position similar to, say, the Welsh, both regions not only consisting largely of hills covered with sheep flocks, but also neglected (if not outright oppressed) by their big English brother? And having its own church is nothing too exceptional now, either, while strict morals based on holy scriptures seem to re-establish their position in cultures ostensibly as distant as the Middle East and the USA. The acclaimed Highland-Lowland divide? What about the differences between the North and the South of Italy? And so we could go on and on.

An assertion that it is exactly this unique combination of curses and blessings which makes Scotland Scottish could sound as an all too easy way to bluff out of the pickle. Yet the daring description of Scots as "a mongrel nation" comes from William McIlvanney, a prominent contemporary writer and a Scot himself! (Themes - online source.) Moreover we must bear in mind that today's Scots are no longer willing to acquiesce in what is presented to the wide public as "genuinely Scottish" (even if that brings about having to accept other, less splendid aspects). This is important, because, as Mohl claims, 'identity and self-definition take place somewhere between one's actions and other's talking. For identity is not something one fashions alone, there is never only ^e/^definition. /.../ Instead of just talking about oneself, one must act in order to fashion identity, and then depend on others to do the talking and finish the picture, as it looks in the present. For one's actions are no signs of oneself if there are no interpreters of those signs.'⁷¹

⁷¹ Mohl (1997:188-9); see also App. V - Bauman (1996)

This approach sheds interesting light on our sample stories. If expressed in Mohl's terms, in a piece of writing, both "acting" and "telling" is present, in the plot, and in the descriptions or the narrator's comments respectively. For readers from outside Scotland it does not really matter which is which, because for them even the "telling" constitutes an "act" of showing how important the issue of autonomous Scottish identity is (in other words, to which extent and in what way the author feels urged to openly present an image of Scotland).

Let us dwell on this new aspect for a while. Irrespectively of the actual subject matter of "Scottishness", the writers were given an option to (or not to) reflect the fact that their story takes place on a specific location. EL opted not to, and as a result, the message delivered through *ST*- however hard it is to imagine the encounter to happen somewhere else - is universal, not necessarily confined to Scotland. Similarly, perhaps, Haynes's witch-hunting tale, though firmly planted in Scottish background, could be transferred to, say, Africa or Ukraine without a major loss of poignancy as far as her portrayal of human vices is concerned.

A choice to let the narrator (or protagonist) take on a detached or "sophisticated" point of view then presents the aforementioned "act", in the sense that it demands an expression of his/her sentiments concerning "Scottishness". For instance, Stevenson actually does so twice, once when the "collector" describes the old Mr Soulis, and then in the body of the tale - each time evaluating a different world, as it were. In contrast to Linklater, Brown (together with his visions of the way the world is run and a true artist's fate), paints a picture of the particular piece of land which formed the hero.

The message can, again, be conveyed by "acts" proper (in *TSH* little Ellen reading the fairy-tale book) or "speech acts" (the inner disputations of Smith's Writer). Spark stands somewhere half-way, letting Susan (*TE*) muse over being Scottish, but without the grace of serious detachment - she never turns the words into deeds. Mitchinson closes the parade with her narrator showing very little interest to what is going on beyond the village borders.

From a perspective of audience participation, the fact of including or omitting a reflection of (more or less) traditional Scottish attributes has a specific

and interesting by-effect on the recipient⁷². The less glosses or attempts to clarify the background the text contains, and the more we are left to figure things and people out by ourselves, the more we feel authorised to perceive ourselves as being taken (or admitted) in, as being allowed to participate in the inner world of Scottish village (or city). To use a simile close to British hearts, members of the home team are not reminded about where their lockers are. This implicit invitation to membership in the local community has a bearing not only on the recipients' susceptibility to take over the opinions expressed therein, but also on their openness to accept the occurrence of supernatural events and beings as thoroughly complying with the (natural, physical, social...) laws of the particular imagined world. The ultimate impression on the recipient is further multiplied by the formally realistic rendering of the encounter.

5.3. THE SCOTS' OVERSEAS COUSINS

In 5.1 we have come across the connection between a nation/ethnic group and the supernatural beings populating its hypothetical motherland. In 5.2, the questions of a society's uniqueness and the means of expressing this in a literary piece were raised. All this was done in a tone general enough to draw a parallel with yet another literary tradition: It is the Latin American branch of literature known as "magical realism", which deserves our attention in particular.

The fact that "magical realism" as a term has never been clearly defined, gave rise to considerable space into which at least some of our eight stories might fit well (and that despite their mutual difference). In an attempt to bring at least some order in the otherwise confused situation, each of the most established opinions⁷³ shall be explained and then matched with one of the Scottish stories:

- a) Octavio Paz (1914-98), when speaking of a magical cosmos, ascribes it the quality of behaving as a living organism, namely as one whole, whose parts are connected with a mysterious flux and which is subject to continuous change. *This corresponds with both of the selkie tales.*

⁷² Given the presentation of most of the tales as (stylised folk-) narratives, the word "recipient" is particularly apt in our situation - it can stand for both "reader" and "listener" (and perhaps even "viewer").

- b) Julio Cortazar bases his definition of magical world on a contrast between itself and a world governed by rationalist vision (which aims for gaining control of the reality). In order to be capable of contact with it, a person has to either be endowed with extraordinary abilities (*e.g. a poet/magician - such as the characters of artists described by ICS and GMB*) or destituted of certain abilities (*e.g. a primitive person incompetent to rational understanding of reality - the too-old Janet and too-young Jinnod*)
- c) Alejo Carpentier (1904, favoured the social novel as a means to promote one's ideas) introduced another term "magical reality", claiming that the South American reality is privileged to host extraordinary features which are distinguishing it from European reality⁷⁴, and even surpassing Europe in this respect. The other condition of the establishment of "magical reality" is that the writer has to actually believe in its existence in order to experience it. (*Perhaps ICS would share something of this opinion.*)
- d) Lastly, one of the most eminent names in magical realism, Garcia Marquez (1928) takes over his perception of magical reality from the Native South Americans. The narrator should accept the existence of the magical as commonplace, exactly as they did; at the same time he/she should present "ordinary" reality as something magical, similarly to a child which is exploring the world, astonished by its findings. (*Does not that ring a bell? Yes, the MacMillan family and the little herdsman.*) It was Marquez's own grandmother who brought him to this idea by teaching him the art of folk narration, and he envisages his sense of miraculous and supernatural as a specific heritage of immigrants into the Caribbean from both Africa and Galicia (which, despite its location in today's Portugal, is not a Romanic, but Celtic area, by the way). The writer also claims that a love story is as good for expressing opinions on various issues as any other type of tale (*which supports the choice of this motif by NMand EL*).

⁷³ This general taxonomy is based on Lukavska (2003)

⁷⁴ Again, see Elphinstone (2000)

Hopefully it will not be far from Marquez's point that the knowledge of the existence of the magical breaks the face of objective reality, if we end this excursion by stating that to judge people's behaviour we must take into account what has brought them to it - and quite often this proves to be a projection of their communal identity. Thus, the objective (the behaviour) has to be decomposed (thanks to a supernatural intervention) and its discrete parts inspected under bright light (cast from an unexpected direction, unobtainable under circumstances which rely on the objective, "ordinary" reality only). This process enables a much more faithful observation of the current state of affairs.

5.4. IT'S DRY TALE THAT DISNA END IN A DRINK⁷⁵.

Supposing we disregard the unmistakable realia, our hitherto findings do not authorise us to establish a conclusion as to what distinguishes Scottish short fiction among that by writers from other countries. Nevertheless, we can say with certainty that our sample texts feature a representative cross section of topics that Scottish society has been struggling with (such as the question of national/ethnic identity, the miserable living conditions in both the agricultural provinces of the Highlands and Islands and the dehumanised/dehumanising milieu of the industrial Lowlands - plus the divide between these two -, as well as the two-edged legacy of the Reformation way of thinking).

In the course of history, the way the supernatural is introduced in (short) fiction has been changing. From the initial recordings without avowed additives from the collectors' side, to adaptations, imitations and variations by definite authors with definite purposes. (From our collection, RLS alone would fall into this category). But even throughout the existence of modern Scottish literature, the (local) supernatural was referred to extraordinarily often, which can be successfully explained by the viability of folk narration (be it spoken in prose, recited or sung).

With the arrival of the 20th century, we find numerous Scottish writers (irrespective of their social, religious or political background) employing what can arguably be labelled as magical realism techniques. The reason for this approach was most probably the prospective freedom from conventional perception of the

world around. **Similarly** to the "original" **South-American** magical realists, the 20th century Scottish writers then use this opportunity for different purposes, most poignantly perhaps to portray a human personality in its ambivalence.

If transferred into a pre-logical, mythical environment, actions which in other people's eyes appear bereft of logic can prove their outstanding validity - and, on the other hand, seeming success and accomplishment is easily laid bare and convicted of superficiality. But as if the writers were all too much aware of the dangers of escapism, they do not grant a mind tormented by the paradoxes of human existence to find peace in supernatural surroundings; after, the characters must return and face again (though inevitably changed by their encounter with the inexplicable - including "temporarily" inexplicable, too!) the challenges of 'life among human beings'. (EL: 238)

Unfortunately it is not possible to base any future prognosis on what has been discussed in this paper, but there are certain hints that in correlation with the post-modern attitude to an individual, authors of the turn of the millennium tend to dive ever deeper for sources of inspiration. As we increasingly experience our identities as being defined on global or pan-human rather than purely ethnic basis, so too, contemporary fiction writers from Scotland⁷⁶ may prefer to project their visions against a horizon extending further (both geographically and temporally) than to solely Scottish supernatural phenomena - without losing the potential for producing a veracious picture of today's Scots' mind and soul.

5.5. A GLIMPSE OF TRUTH? (CONCLUSION)

⁷⁵ A Scottish proverb (Scotstext - online source)

⁷⁶ For example, one of the currently most prominent Scottish writers, Alasdair Gray, makes extensive use of the mysterious (often in its absurd form), but - significantly - it is scarcely (if ever) tied in with the folk narrative tradition. His most famous novel, 'Lanark', concerns Scottish urban scene solely, overlooking the countryside. And again, in one of the few short stories of his which would roughly suit our initial criteria, *The Comedy of the White Dog*, the alleged provenance of the haunting animal is in no way restricted to Scotland - its occurrence is said to have been testified all around the world and throughout the ages. Yet another contemporary writer, Margaret Elphinstone, locates her story *An Apple from a Tree* half in the Edinburgh Botanical Garden and half in an echo of the Garden of Eden.

When I came up with the idea which was later to become the topic of my thesis, I had been simply taken aback by the fact that in Scotland magic seemed to lurk behind every stone and hedge. Naively, I supposed that it would be easier to analyse the way Scottish folklore was reflected in literature, if I focused on short fiction instead of novels, and if my specimen came from within a limited time-span. I had no idea that I would end up far from the comfortable armchair and the cup of tea where I started. I stepped onto a road which lead me not only to literary history and theory, but also to politics, social studies, ecclesiology, and to regions as distant as Latin America and China.

The scope of this thesis does not allow us to pronounce a clear judgement. However, some of the findings support the initial hypotheses, and several more hypotheses could be formulated on the basis of the analyses.

- c) Fantastic motifs in Scottish short fiction often do derive from the local folklore. Any story which contains such supernatural events/beings, reflects how Scottish people have perceived the world around them in the past centuries. In the 20th century, Scottish authors did not put the supernatural away. But they changed the mode of employing it, and sometimes even its purpose.
- d) As a result, the analysed writers differed notably in both the way and the purpose of employing the supernatural. There was no literary school or a community of authors who would be joined by a common interest in these topics. But a number of writers felt an urge to express their opinions on the current socio-political development in Britain and its causes or consequences in Scotland. Supernatural events and beings gave them a free hand in choosing suitable imagery and provided mythological backdrop for their artistic pursuits. It offered new metaphors and fresh points of view, while retaining a strong link to Scottish culture and society.
- e) In this respect, the situation in literary Scotland seems much akin to Latin America. There, authors separated by country borders as well as differing ideas were summarily termed magical realists. Should this term be accepted for writers

from outside Latin America, most of the eight analysed writers (namely Linklater, Brown, Mitchinson and Smith) deserve the label.

f) Despite the limited number of analysed texts, there seem to be two distinct groups of problems which our authors deal with.

1) Some issues are clearly connected with Scotland; they are often local and/or temporal in their significance (local patriotism, the "Scottish puritan girl").

2) The second big group comprises of human vices which can be spotted in any person: hypocrisy, inability/ unwillingness to communicate, the exploitation of one's inferiors (due to lack of age, education, life experience...).

In this way, e.g. the impact of the Church of Scotland could be untwined into two strands: One of the historical-geographical conditions of its genesis and existence, and one of the way each individual member was inspired (in a positive sense) or affected (in a negative sense) by its presence in his/her life. Since a literary reflection does not work with general ideas, but with personal life-stories, our authors usually took into account both, only with a differing ratio.

g) A newly emerged question worth exploring in the future is whether the ratio changes in time. (I had hoped to gather some evidence for my hypothesis that it does, and that the more contemporary authors place greater emphasis on more universal qualities.) At the same time, folklore (though possibly not restricted on one's native country) remains as an important source of inspiration.

Apperaôices

6.1. APPENDIX I - SYNOPSES OF THE PLOTS

6.1.1. In The Family

Angus MacMillan, a good-hearted if not too sophisticated young man, comes from a family with a tradition of *second sight* (see below). His peers are far from believing the old folk stories and he himself works as a forestry lorry driver. Once, however, he is approached by a fairy (or a *banshee*) who warns him not to let his girlfriend Peigi go to a charity concert in a neighbouring village. After some hesitation he decides to follow the fairy's advice and when he fails to persuade the girl, he practically kidnaps her, keeping her in the lorry just long enough for her to miss the departure. After their return to the village they discover that the bus had a bad accident and had Peigi travelled on it, she would most probably have died. Angus has to explain his daring deed to his employer as well as to Peigi's family, which is rather difficult for the shy lad - but in the end he surpasses himself, proposes to Peigi, who accepts.

Narrated in er-form.

6.1.2. The Small Herdsman

Ellen is a small girl who spends her summers at her grandmother's croft, with a book of Celtic fairy tales and a mother who tells her ghost stories in Gaelic. One day the girl decides to find "the truth" about Wattie, a young man who works as a cowherdsman nearby. She suspects him of being a fairy changeling, but he turns out to have been a neglected child born in (presumably) one of the big Scottish cities - he never knew his father properly, his mother was an alcoholic, he had to look after a small brother who later died of an illness, and Wattie himself was almost hanged by his mother's friends. At the end of his narrating, Wattie resumes his former calm appearance, leaving the appalled Ellen to her fate.

Narrated in ich-form.

6.1.3. Sealskin Trousers

Elizabeth, a young left-wing intellectual interested in biology, is on holiday with her fiancée, presumably on the Scottish seaside. Once when she arrives at their favourite spot at the cliff, she meets a bewildering person there - a young man in nothing but trousers made of sealskin. They had seen each other before, in Edinburgh, but in the course of their conversation, Elisabeth finds[^]liat Roger is not an ordinary man, but a *selkie*. Upon this finding Roger refuses to let her return and persuades her to become a *selkie* too. He explains her how to do it and Elizabeth, for once in her life, lets her hair down and follows him undersea.

Narrated in er-form, framed by Charles's account of the shock he suffered when he only found clothes on the cliff and saw two seals "mocking him" in the sea below (ich-form).

6.1.4. Sealskin

This story touches on three generations of Orcadians - the old Olafsons', their son Simon and his son Magnus (or Mansie). Simon finds a strange naked woman on the beach and takes her home despite the mother's objections. Later the girl (called Mara by the family) becomes pregnant and she and Simon get married. The marriage is not happy. Mara disappears after having discovered the sealskin Simon had found on the same day when he

rescued her (which seems to confirm the hypothesis that she is really a *selkie*). Magnus learns to play the violin and leaves the islands to become a composer. He has many acquaintances among artists and intellectuals, yet somehow does not feel at home among them, but when he travels to Orkneys, he finds that there, too, he has become a stranger. Troubled by his solitude and a quest for a real purpose of art, he happens to read an old manuscript which seems to explain many of his queries.

Narrated in er-form.

6.1.5. The Executor

Susan is the niece of a famous Scottish writer who invites her to look after his affairs when his former partner (Elaine) has died. The writer dies too, establishing Susan as his literary executor. She sells everything to a museum, keeping back an unfinished manuscript which she wants to finish herself and publish under her own name. The late uncle starts leaving her messages on the pages of the notebook where the novel is written. He (together with Elaine) is aware of everything his niece does, and this causes Susan to gradually lose her nerves. When finally the museum staff announces they have found the final chapter to the novel, she gives in and hands the novel over, claiming she only found it recently. She ends up as a nervous wreck, drinking, having lost touch with other people.

Narrated in ich-form.

6.1.6. The Brothers

The hero is a writer who moved to Edinburgh from his native Highland village. He was unhappy there, because it did not provide for his talent, intellect and ambitions. He is working on a book about Joseph and his brothers when all of a sudden the pages in the typewriter change to a text in Gaelic. The writer comes to the conclusion that there is a crowd of his "brothers", the oppressed, poor and unsophisticated Highland people. At first he argues with them, bums the pages etc., but later as he starts to see more and more parallels between the biblical tale and his own life-story, he experiences strange visions in which Egyptian imagery mingles with his memories of the Highlands. Finally, he lets go, avows his hypocrisy and finds a new goal in life - to become a speaker for this mute crowd.

Narrated in ich-form.

6.1.7. Thrawn Janet

When Reverend Soulis came to Balweary, he was young and fresh from studies. His interest in books seemed suspicious to the parishioners, but they respected him and when he saves an old woman Janet M'Clour from being labelled as a witch, they release her. But the next day she appears with a palsied neck and unable to speak and everybody ascribes this to her dealings with the devil - apart from Mr Soulis who takes Janet to the manse as a housekeeper. But gradually, even he starts to sense there is something about the accusations. After several upsetting experiences he once hears horrible sounds from Janet's room. He goes there and finds Janet dead, hanged; but her ghost (or the devil in her form) tries to attack him. He manages to get rid of him, but the experience leaves marks on his mental state and the vigorousness with which he promotes Christian faith from then on.

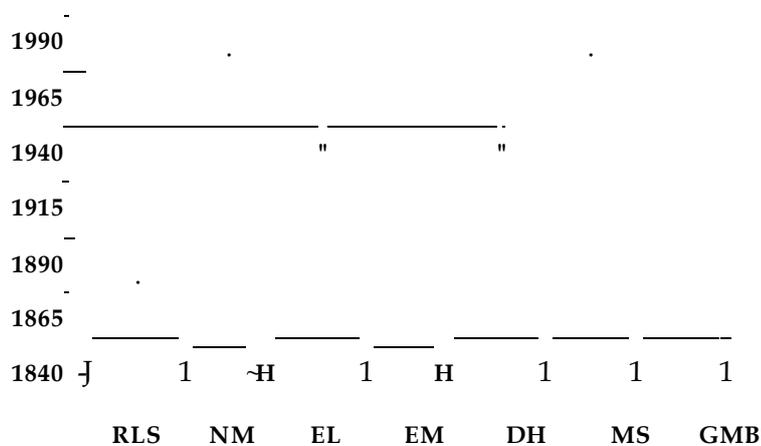
Narrated in er-form in English heavily influenced by Scots, introduced with a description of Mr Soulis's awesome bearing as if witnessed many years after the narrated event.

6.1.8. Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch

Jinnot, a girl of unspecified age, lives at her father's farm in/near a Highland village and is looked after by one of the farm maids, Minty Fraser, because her mother has died. A new dairy maid, Beatrice, is determined to steal Minty's boyfriend, Jack Hyslop. She bribes Jinnot into accusing Minty of being a witch, and the maid drowns during a "test". Beatrice marries Jack, gets pregnant and loses interest in Jinnot. The girl (who has no friends and sometimes suffers from strange fits) muses over the reason of her loneliness, and comes to the conclusion that she is a young witch herself. She wants to take revenge on Beatrice and wishes for her to die at childbirth. This does not happen, but the new-born baby dies after Jinnot's visit. She is accused of witchcraft and drowns, too.

Narrated in er-form, mainly from the girl's point of view. As a result, the line between what is a fact and what is Jinnot's distorted perception of the world around remains blurred.

6.2. APPENDIX II - BIOGRAPHIES OF THE AUTHORS



The authors' life-spans and the years of issue of their work

Brown, George Mackay (1921-96)

- studied in Edinburgh, but spent most of his life in his native islands
- poet, author, dramatist
- nominated for the Booker Prize in 1994
- Composer Peter Maxwell Davies collaborated with GMB for many of his Orkney-inspired works.

(George_Mackay_Brown - online source)

Haynes, Dorothy (1918-87)

- born in Lanark, educated in Aberlour Orphanage
- known for her services to the Girl Guides, never missed a day of church in her life
- a member of Lanark Town Council 1972-75

- innumerable stories published in magazines and anthologies, contributed regularly to the *Scots Magazine* and *The Scotsman*, had over 50 of her stories broadcast and many published in horror anthologies
- won the Tom-Gallon Award in 1947
(Urquhart, Gordon 1997: 205; Dorothy_Haynes - online source)

Linklater, Eric Robert Russel (1899-1974)

- having been brought up principally in Orkney, identified strongly with the islands
- born in Wales, educated in Aberdeen
- initially a medical student, later went into journalism, a full time writer since the 1930's
- wrote over 20 novels, short stories, travel writing, autobiography, and military history
- Stood (unsuccessfully) in the East Fife by-election of 1933 as the National Party of Scotland candidate
(Eric_Linklater - online source)

Macnicol, Eona (1910-?)

- born a member of the Fraser Clan in Inverness; her parents had been both born and brought up in a village set high above Loch Ness, and her knowledge of this community where during her early childhood her grandparents still lived, provided a background for her collection of short stories, 'The Hallowe'en Hero.'
- spent part of her life in India, where both her and her husband lectured in English
- carried out a research on the life of St. Columba (2 historical novels)
- concerned with the World Development Movement and Amnesty International
(Urquhart, Gordon 1997:209)

Mitchinson, Naomi (1897-1999)

- born in Edinburgh, spending most of her young days at Oxford where her father, Professor J. S. Haldane, was working, but always coming back to Scotland for holidays
- since 1937 lived on the Kintyre coast, being much involved with local politics; also a member of the Highland Advisory Panel as well as the Highland Council
- about 70 books including short stories, novels, autobiography and children's books
(Urquhart, Gordon 1997: 209-10)

Smith, Iain Crichton (Iain Mac a'Ghobhainn) (1928-1998)

- born in Glasgow, but moved to the isle of Lewis at the age of two, where he and his two brothers were brought up by their widowed mother in a small crofting town, a close-knit, Presbyterian, Gaelic community, learning English as a second language at school.
- took a degree in English at Aberdeen, then became a teacher in various towns from 1952
- became a full-time writer in 1977 with many novels and poems already published wrote in both English and Scottish Gaelic, and a prolific author in both languages.
- known for poetry, short stories and novels; friend of the poet Edwin Morgan
- although he was more prolific in English than in Gaelic, he translated some of his contemporaries' works as well as some of his own poems from Gaelic to English; much of his English language work is actually directly related to, or translated from, Gaelic equivalents.
- being an atheist, he disliked dogma and authority, and this, as well as his political and emotional thoughts and views of Scotland (especially the Highlands), is reflected in much of his work
- the Highland Clearances, elderly women and alienated individuals are common themes in his work
(Iain_Crichton_Smith - online source)

Spark, Muriel (1918-2006)

- born Muriel Sarah Camberg in Edinburgh to a Jewish father and an English mother
- during her life she stayed in Zimbabwe, New York and Italy
- worked in intelligence during World War II, but after the war, she began writing seriously under her married name, beginning with poetry and literary criticism
- in 1954 joined the Roman Catholic Church, which she considered crucial in her development toward becoming a novelist
- her most successful novel is *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie* (1961)
- became Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in 1993, in recognition of her services to literature.

(Muriel_Spark - online source)

Stevenson, Robert Louis Balfour (1850-94)

- born in Edinburgh, Scotland in a family of distinguished lighthouse designers and engineers; spent the greater part of his boyhood in the house of his maternal grandfather, a professor of moral philosophy and a minister
- during his youth he read widely and enjoyed especially Shakespeare, Walter Scott, John Bunyan and *The Arabian Nights*
- a degree in law at his father's request, but due to bad health he did not pursue this career, and instead made long and frequent trips to France, the USA and the Pacific, becoming a journalist, novelist, poet, and travel writer
- a leading representative of Neo-romanticism in English literature and a celebrity in his own time; condemned by authors such as Virginia Woolf and Leonard Woolf, while admired by such big names as G. K. Chesterton, Henry James and Vladimir Nabokov and having influence on Joseph Conrad
- with the rise of modern literature he became relegated to children's literature and horror genres, gradually excluded from the canon (entirely unmentioned in the 1973 2,000 page Oxford Anthology of English Literature)
- re-evaluated in the late 20th century as an artist of great range and insight, a literary theorist, an essayist and social critic, a witness to the colonial history of the South Pacific, and a humanist; according to the Index Translationum, he ranks the 25th most translated author in the world
- an amateur musical composer, a flageolet player

(Robert_Louis_Stevenson - online source)

6.3. APPENDIX III - COMMON SCOTTISH SUPERNATURAL BEINGS AND OCCURRENCES

second sight The power to envisage events, frequently unpleasant, that have not yet taken place, widely accepted in vernacular Celtic tradition, especially in Gaelic Scotland. A person endowed with second sight might see a phantom funeral cortège passing down a road escorting a man then still robust and little expecting to die but who did die shortly afterwards. Having this power does not cause events to take place, nor does it bring any joy in seeing them. TT/^(Second Sight - online source)

banshee Also *bean sidhe*, Scottish forms: *bansith*, *bean siith* [fairy woman, woman of the fairy mound]. A female wraith of Irish and Scottish Gaelic tradition thought to be able to foretell but not necessarily cause death in a household. Observations and portrayals of the banshee in literature were not common before the 17th century. Since that time, the banshee has been depicted so often and so variously that generalisations about

her appearance and role are difficult to make without many qualifications. She may be seen as a beautiful maiden weeping for the coming death of a loved one, or she may be a gruesome hag foretelling it. Lady Jane Wilde (1888) seems to be the first to opine that the beautiful banshee is more common in Ireland and the ugly more common in Scotland. The banshee may also wear a grey cloak over a green dress. Her eyes are usually fiery red from continual weeping. The beautiful banshee has long hair which she strokes with a gold or silver comb. /TFiBanshee - online source)

fairies Folklorists generally use the term 'fairy' rather loosely, to cover a range of non-human yet material beings with magical powers. These could be visible or invisible at will, and could change shape; some lived underground, others in woods, or in water; some flew. Some were believed to be friendly, giving luck, prosperity, or useful skills to humans who treated them respectfully; many were regarded as troublesome pranksters, or, in extreme cases, as minor demons; sometimes they were blamed for causing sickness, stealing human babies, and leaving *changelings*. Human adults might be invited (or abducted) into *fairyland*.

Fairies can be divided into two major groups: 'social' fairies, imagined as living in communities and pursuing group activities such as dancing and feasting; and 'solitary' fairies, of which some (the *brownie* type) attach themselves to human households as helpers and luck-bringers, while others (the *bogey/boggart* type) haunt an open-air site, often as a more-or-less serious threat to passers-by. But it is not always clear-cut; *pixies*, for example, can be either 'social' or 'solitary'.

The clergy usually insisted that all such creatures could only be devils; many realised their similarity to the fauns, satyrs, nymphs, etc., of classical mythology, which they also regarded as demons. In popular belief, however, fairies were fitted into the Christian frame of reference in ways which left them morally ambiguous. Alternatively, they could be identified with *ghosts*.

Belief in the household *brownie* (or *pixy*, or *puck*) was closely linked to farming; he threshes com, tends horses, herds sheep, churns butter, cleans the kitchen, and so on, like an ideal farm servant. He also brings prosperity, and can take it away again if offended; he punishes anyone who mocks him, and those who work badly. *TSH- something between a changeling and a brownie* (Based on Fairies - online source)

Sluagh [ScG *sluagh*, people, folk; multitude; host, army]. Also *sluagh na marbh* [host of the dead]. Hosts of the unforgiven dead in Scottish Gaelic folklore, the most formidable of Scottish fairy people. They may approach from any direction but the east, usually taking crescent form, like a flight of grey birds. They are said to be able to pick up a person bodily and transport him long distances through the air from one island to another. Although they can rescue a man from a dangerous rock cleft, they usually bode no good to mortals. They may be seen after dark and are said also to injure cattle. *TB* (*Sluagh* - online source)

6.4. APPENDIX IV - GLOSSARY OF SCOTS WORDS)

<i>chan</i> <i>cei/jtʃh</i> (G&tʒI.J)	village, hamlet dance, social gathering
<i>kirk</i>	church
<i>canny, cannie</i> <i>cannily</i>	cautious, careful, gentle, skilful etc. cautiously, carefully, gently, skilfully etc.
<i>uncanny, uncannie</i>	unskillful, clumsy, careless, awkward, dangerous, insecure, threatening, malicious, malignant
<i>thrawn</i> <i>unco</i>	thrown, twisted, difficult, stubborn, perverse, obstinate uncommon, strange, terrible
<i>sib</i>	related, akin
<i>guid-wife</i>	wife, the mistress of a house, a landlady of an inn
<i>lass, lassie</i>	girl
<i>lad, laddie</i>	boy
<i>bairn</i>	child, baby

6.5. APPENDIX IV - REFERENCED MATERIALS

Bauman (1996)

„Národ je od začátku až do konce imaginární komunitou; jakožto entita existuje jen potud, pokud se jeho příslušníci duševně a citově identifikují' s kolektivem, s většinou jehož členů ani nikdy nepříjdou do fyzické blízkosti. Národ se stává duchovní realitou, a jako takový je imaginární.“

- Bauman, Z.: *Myslet sociologicky*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství, 1996, pp. 162-163, as cited in Šatava (2002: 23)

Warren (2002)

Charles Warren, a university lecturer (geography, environmental management and glaciology) **has this to say:** "The bonnie, bonnie banks/ 'your wee bit Hill and Glen', 'over the sea to Skye'. Landscape has been integral to perceptions of Scottishness for generations. /.../ Land has always been - and remains - a defining issue for the people of Scotland, whether in politics, rural development or the arts."

- Devine, Logue (2002: 274)

Elphinstone (2000)

In her paper on contemporary Scottish fantasy (as a genre based exclusively on working with the unreal, though often with an escapist intention), the writer Margaret Elphinstone renders Colin Manlove's theory: "Manlove emphasises the relationship between fantasy fiction and a living tradition of folk and fairy tale, which he asserts has survived more strongly in modern Scotland than it has done in England. /.../ Manlove rightly suggests that Scottish fantasy tends to locate the workings of the supernatural, or irrational, at the heart of the world we inhabit, rather than to construct a parallel world, which is the predominant theme in most English (and, I think, American) fantasy. Where there is a parallel world, Scottish texts often link it to a realistic dimension by using dual or multiple

narratives (Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* and Iain Banks's *The Bridge* are obvious examples), but this is by no means a uniquely Scottish device. The disruptive element in much Scottish fantasy (and here Manlove aligns it with a European tradition) is that it is not a reflection of our own world, but an alarming dislocation of where we assume our world to be. The metaphor of location is very relevant here, as—and this is a fundamental aspect of Manlove's thesis—, the location of the fantastic in the real world is often tied in with a precise topography of the Scottish landscape. I think this is a peculiarly Scottish feature; nowhere else do I find, in the middle of reading fantasy, that I have to follow it, literally, on the map. The fantastic is not located in a different dimension; as readers we experience it as part of a seamless whole, which is the reality the text presents. Fantasy, as a reflection both of the individual subconscious and a collective past tradition, is central to how this world operates."

- Elphinstone (2000)

Smith (1995)

„Národní identita /.../ je mnoha lidmi pocíťována jako cosi, co uspokojuje jejich potřebu kulturního naplnění, kořenů, bezpečí a bratrství. /.../ Konečně, národy jsou spjaty články paměti, mýtu a symbolu do široce rozšířeného a trvalého typu společenství, ethnie, a to je to, co jim dává jedinečný charakter a co má hluboký vliv na přání a představy tak velkého množství lidí. /.../ Globální kultura se zdá být neschopna nabídnout kvality kolektivní víry, důstojnosti a naděje, které může zajistit pouze ‚náhražka náboženství‘, s jejími přísliby teritoriálně-kulturní komunity napříč generacemi. Nad každým politickým či ekonomickým prospěchem, který může etnický nacionalismus poskytnout, a v jejich pozadí je to tento příslib kolektivní, avšak pozemské nesmrtelnosti, čelící smrti a zapomnění, který pomáhal zachovat tolik národů a národních států v době bezprecedentních společenských změn a oživit tolik etnických minorit, které se zdály být na pokraji zkázy v éře technologické uniformity a podnikové výkonnosti."

- Smith, A. D.: *Nations and Nationalism in a Global Era*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995, pp. 159-160, as cited in Šatava (2001: 25-26)

Yeats

"In Scotland you are too theological, too gloomy. You have made even the Devil religious. 'Where do you live, good-wyf, and how is the minister?' he said to the witch when he met her on the high-road, as it came out in the trial. You have burnt all the witches. In Ireland we have left them alone. To be sure, the 'loyal minority' knocked out the eye of one with a cabbage-stump on the 31st of March, 1711, in the town of Carrickfergus. But then the 'loyal minority' is half Scottish. You have discovered the faeries to be pagan and wicked. You would like to have them all up before the magistrate. In Ireland warlike mortals have gone amongst them, and helped them in their battles, and they in turn have taught men great skill with herbs, and permitted some few to hear their tunes. Carolan slept upon a faery rath. Ever after their tunes ran in his head, and made him the great musician he was. In Scotland you have denounced them from the pulpit. In Ireland they have been permitted by the priests to consult them on the state of their souls. Unhappily the priests have decided that they have no souls, that they will dry up like so much bright vapour at the last day; but more in sadness than in anger they have said it. The Catholic religion likes to keep on good terms with its neighbours. These two different ways of looking at things have influenced in each country the whole world of sprites and goblins. For their gay and graceful doings you must go to Ireland; for their deeds of terror to Scotland."

- Yeats - online source

6.6. APPENDIX V - SOURCES

6.6.1. Primary literature (writers' surnames in alphabetical order)

- GMB

Sealskin by George Mackay Brown, first published 1947

Hawkfall and Other Stories, London: Triad/Panther Books, pp. 137-160

- DH

Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch by Dorothy Haynes, first published in 1947

MacDougall, Carl (ed.): *The devil & the giro: two centuries of Scottish stories*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 1991, pp. 247-261

- EL

Sealskin Trousers by Eric Linklater,

Murray, Ian (ed.): *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Short Stories*, London: Penguin Books, 1983, pp. 223-238

- EM

The Small Herdsman by Eona Kathleen Macnicol, first published ????

MacDougall, Carl: *The Devil and the Giro*, Edinburgh: Canongate Books, 1991, pp. 6-14

- NM

In The Family by Naomi Mitchinson, first published 1983 (?)

Murray, Ian (ed.): *The New Penguin Book of Scottish Short Stories*, London: Penguin Books, 1983, pp. 212-222

- ICS

The Brothers by Iain Crichton Smith, first published 1972

Gordon, Giles (ed.): *Prevailing Spirits. A book of Scottish ghost stories*, London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1976, pp. 160-173

- MS

The Executor by Muriel Spark, first published in the *New Yorker*, 1983

The Complete Short Stories, London: Penguin Books, 2002, pp. 198-203

- RLS

Thrawn Janet by R. L. Stevenson, first published 1881

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Nrs. provided refer to paragraphs.

6.6.2. Secondary literature

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OALD (2000): Hornby, A. S.: *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English*, Sixth edition, Oxford University Press, 2000, in the form of Oxford Advanced Genie software (2002)

Šatava (2001): Šatava, Leoš, *Jazyk a identita etnických menšin*, Praha: Cargo Publishers, 2001

Tolkien (1997): Tolkien, J. R. R.: *The Hobbit*, London: HarperCollins Ltd, 1997, p. 29

Urquhart, Gordon (1982): Urquhart, Fred and Gordon, Giles (eds.), *Modern Scottish Short Stories*, London: Faber and Faber, 1982

For citations from the Bible, The King James Version was used throughout, in the form of Speedbible Bible software. <<http://greeknewtestament.com/freehelp/kjv.chm>>

6.6.3. Online sources

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CZECH QUOTES AND REALIA

All translations and explanations by M. P.

lezinkv - a group of evil fairies from a tale about a small, disobedient boy Smolíček, who cannot resist their promptings, opens the door and they kidnap him.

The Blaník Knights are a legendary host of medieval soldiers who have been asleep inside the hill Blaník located to the south-east of Prague, near Vlašim. They are supposed to come to help the Czech nation in the time of its worst crisis. (both p. 45)

"Kolik jazyků znáš, tolikrát jsi člověkem" - a Czech proverb, loosely translatable as "the more languages you know, the more personalities you have". (p. 56)

Bauman (1996)

"A nation is from the beginning to the end an imaginary community; as an entity it exists only so far as its members identify (mentally and emotionally) with the collective, in spite of the fact that they never get in the physical presence with the majority of its members. A nation becomes a spiritual reality, and as such it is imaginary." (p. 109)

Fishman (1977: 23)

"Ethnicity applies not only to the existence of the concerned person which is related to his/her origin (paternity) and behaviour (patrimony), but also to the meaning which this person attributes to his/her existence related to origin and behaviour (phenomenology)." (p. 63)

Smith (1995)

"National identity /.../ is by many people felt as something which saturates their need of cultural fulfilling, roots, safety and brotherhood. /.../ In the end, nations are linked by memory, myth and symbol into a widely spread and permanent type of community, ethnically, and this is what gives them a unique character and what affects deeply the wishes and ideas of such a great number of people. /.../ The global culture seems not to be able to offer the qualities of collective belief, dignity and hope; these can only be ensured by a substitute of religion, with its promises of territorial-cultural community across generations. Over every political or economic advantage, which can be provided by ethnic nationalism, and in their background it is this promise of collective, but earth-bound immortality. This promise has been helping to keep all those nations and national states in the times of unprecedented social changes and to revive all those ethnic minorities which seemed to have been on the verge of destruction in the era of technological uniformity and company production rate." (p. 110)

Satava (2001: 36)

"Irish has a more or less symbolic role in the life of Ireland. In fact the knowledge of the particular language is not necessary due to the extensive practice of voluntary approval to the membership in an ethnic group. Yet in reality, language has been playing an uncommonly strong role (including an emotional role) in most cases. This is why sometimes the terms 'philological nationalism' or 'ethnically defined language' is used in this context." (p. 59)

Satava (2001: 55)

"Language is supposedly more than simple sounds and words - it is a key, a bridge into the world, moreover, language acts as a specific prism, through which we perceive the world in our own peculiar way. In fact, language 'makes' us perceive the world in a certain way. Each language creates its specific 'vision of reality', and at the same time it establishes a 'common/shared memory of the ethnic group'." (p- 56)