

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyse the manner in which contemporary Scottish literature imagines Scotland, especially in the light of the recent political changes in the country, as well as the changes in the perception of its national identity in global terms. The focus will be on the literary representations of the Scottish landscape, following Cairns Craig argument that locality is crucial to Scottish literature and its national imagination. While the fictional rendering of both the rural and urban Scottish landscape might have acted as a ‘paradigm of national consciousness’ in the past, in contemporary Scottish literature it can now be seen as a form of speculative worldmaking that reflects, satirizes and debates the social and political dispensation of the nation, and aims towards the subversion of the representation of a single Scottish national identity. The texts under consideration all deploy the Scottish social and topographical panorama in a unique manner which results in a literary representation of multiple versions of Scotland that often coexist together. This thesis traces the development of this thematic concern in the contemporary Scots novel from the 1980s to the present through the analysis of the works of three major Scottish contemporary writers: Alasdair Gray, Janice Galloway and Iain (M.) Banks.

The first chapter represents the theoretical background on the basis of which the literary analysis is conveyed. Firstly, the relationship “between national identities and the cultural frameworks through which these may be imagined”¹ is discussed. Then, the theory focuses on the novel as a means of cultural representation. Furthermore, the changes in the concept of national identity in the ‘post-modern’ era are analysed.

In the second chapter, a historical background of the most common representational literary discourses employed to depict the Scottish landscape is presented. Tartanry, Kailyardism and Clydesideism are identified as the main trends in the representation of the Scottish landscape, thus providing a context and a point of comparison for the following literary analysis of the chosen contemporary texts.

The critical part focuses on the analysis of various representations of the Scottish urban, suburban and rural landscapes in contemporary Scottish literature. For that purpose, three

¹ Andrew Blaikie, *Scots Imagination and Modern Memory*, ed. Andrew Blaikie, Edinburgh University Press, 2010. ProQuest Ebook Central

<https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cuni/reader.action?docID=536985> 25 May 2017, 138.

novels from three very distinct authors were chosen so that the analysed sample is most representative of Scotland's contemporary reality.

The third chapter traces Alasdair Gray's ground-breaking literary landmark *Lanark* (1981). *Lanark* was chosen as it represents a manifesto of the New Scottish Renaissance, consciously works with Glasgow's topography, trying to reinvent the city imaginatively, thus subverting the fixed stereotypes of national representation through the urban landscape.

The fourth chapter discusses Janice Galloway's *The Trick is to Keep Breathing* (1989). Janice Galloway was chosen in order to present a different, female perspective on the imaginative representation of landscape as in her novel she mostly deals with smaller, more intimate spaces, which range from the space of the house to the area of the Glasgow suburbia, all of which oppress the protagonist.

In the fifth chapter, through the discussion of Ian Banks' novel *The Crow Road* (1992), the analysis moves from Glasgow and its suburbia to Scotland's rural areas. *The Crow Road* is a multi-layered narrative in which Banks not only subverts the representational discourses of Tartanry and Kailyardism, but also points to the effects of deterritorialization that have blurred the distinction between the urban and the rural.

Methodologically, the critical analysis is conducted by comparing and contrasting the texts with the previously established modes of imagining Scotland in literature, Tartanry, Kailyardism and Clydesidism. Then, the representation of the landscape in each of the chosen books is analysed in thematic and stylistic terms, especially focusing on the various important innovations and experimentations in the manner of representation. Finally, the goal of the critical analysis is establishing the extent to which these changes in the fictional rendering of the Scottish landscape reflect Scotland's understanding of its own national identity.

The study concludes with the confirmation of the proposition established in the thesis. Furthermore, its potential deficiencies, such as the preference of the novel to other genres, as well as the relevance of the selected works are discussed. In conclusion, the thesis recognizes the critical potential of the topic and suggests the need for further research.

Key words: topography, worldmaking, contemporary Scottish novel, identity, reterritorialization